

McALLEN HISTORICAL MARKER NOMINATION
for

707 North 15th Street
McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas 78501

October, 2002



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Section 10	Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Samuel Lynn MillerB. Marjorie Ellen WilliamsC. Sam & Marjorie MillerD. Architect & ContractorE. Date and cost of constructionF. Airport, OriginG. City State Bank & Trust, StoryH. City State Bank & Trust, PhotoI. International Bridge, PhotoJ. International Bridge, StoryK. Airport, HistoryL. National Register Approval
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NOMINATION FOR A MCALLEN LANDMARK, HERITAGE PROPERTY, OR DISTRICT

This nomination must be completed and meet all requirements before a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness can be scheduled for a public hearing. All information must be typed.

1. PROPERTY NOMINATION

APPLICANT:

Name _____
Company _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Bus & Home Phone _____
Fax _____
E-Mail _____

OWNER: (if different than applicant)

Name _____
Company _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Bus & Home Phone _____
Fax _____
E-Mail _____

Status of applicant (Check one) ☒ Owner ☐ Representative ☐ Prospective Buyer

2. PROPERTY CLASSIFICATION

Address of property being nominated: 707 North 15th Street Current Zoning: R-1
Legal description: South 1/2 of lot 2 all of lot 3 and 4 and the north 1/2 of lot 5. Block 6 North McAllen Townsite, Hidalgo Co.

Current Use of Property (Check what applies)

☒ residence
☐ business
Type of business _____

Ownership of Property (Check what applies)

☒ private
☐ public/local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources on Property

One _____ building(s)
_____ sites
_____ structures
_____ objects

Proposed Use of Property

Residence _____

Select as many of the following categories as appropriate.

Commercial	Government	Health Care	Religious	Funerary
Industrial	Education	Culture	Recreation	Transportation
Residence	Agriculture	Museum	Scientific	Vacant/not in use

3. ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural Classification

English Tudor Revival _____

Exterior Materials

foundation _____ Cement _____
walls _____ limestone, wood and stucco _____
roof _____ tapered sawn shake wood shingle _____
other _____

Select as many of the following categories as appropriate. Indicate both the main category and the subcategory, if applicable. **Late 19th and early 20th century revivals:** Beaux Arts, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Tudor Revival, Late Gothic Revival, Mission or Spanish Colonial Revival, Italian Renaissance, French Renaissance, Pueblo. **Late 19th and early 20th century American movements:** Prairie School, Chicago, Skyscraper, Bungalow, Craftsman. **Modern movement:** Moderne, International Style, Art Deco.

For materials, select as many of the following categories as appropriate. Wood, Brick, Stone, Metal, Stucco, Earth, Terra cotta, Asphalt, Asbestos, Concrete, Adobe, Ceramic tile, Glass, Cloth, Canvas, Synthetics, or other (need to explain).

4. ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION

Provide documentation that can verify the original date of construction and dates of any additions.

Date of Construction 1937

Date(s) of Additions _____

5. ARCHITECT & CONTRACTOR

Provide documentation that can verify the original architect and builder.

Architect Robert L. Vogler of Edinburg, Texas

Builder Harry Biggers and Jack Langley of San Juan, Texas

6. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PHOTOGRAPHIC - Provide at least one copy of the oldest known photograph of the property. Provide recent, current, simple 4"X 6" color photos of close exterior elevations (the front, rear and both sides), the front including curb, trees, close ups of significant exterior details, if any, and noteworthy interiors or details. In ballpoint pen on the rear of each photo, lightly label photographs indicating subject of the photograph and direction of view.

SITE PLAN - Provide a copy of the current site plan that illustrates footprints of all buildings, resources, objects and major vegetation within the property nomination boundaries. You may start with a copy of a current survey and add to it. Provide reduced copy (on 8.5"x11" paper) of the original architectural exterior plan or site plan.

INTERIOR - Provide a simple, neatly sketched rendering of current interior floor plan of all floors, showing interior walls, doors, window placements, and significant details, i.e., fireplace, staircase, etc., one floor per page. If possible, provide reduced copies (on 8.5"x11" paper) of original architectural interior plans or floor plan.

DISTRICT (If applicable) - Provide reduced copy (on 8.5"x11" paper) of your Landmark or Heritage District boundaries and show your specific property position within the district.

7. HISTORIC OWNERSHIP

Provide documentation that can verify the original owner and all significant later owner(s).

Original Owners Sam and Marjorie Miller (1937-1974)

Later Owners Moreno Family (1974-1976) Jack H. Wright (1976-1995)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

On a separate piece of paper, give brief history of past owners listing their significance to the community. List any of the other significant people or events ever associated with the property, if any, that have made a important contribution to the broad pattern of our city history. Be sure to include dates and any documentation needed to verify your claim. Attach any support documentation.

I certify that I am the legal owner of record; I have secured the property owner's permission and have full authority to make this application and/or appeal. I certify that the above information is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and ability. I agree to provide any additional information necessary for determining eligibility.

RICK DE JULIO
Printed Name and Signature of Applicant

10/23/02
Date

Printed Name and Signature of Property Owner

Date

APPLICATION ACCEPTED BY:

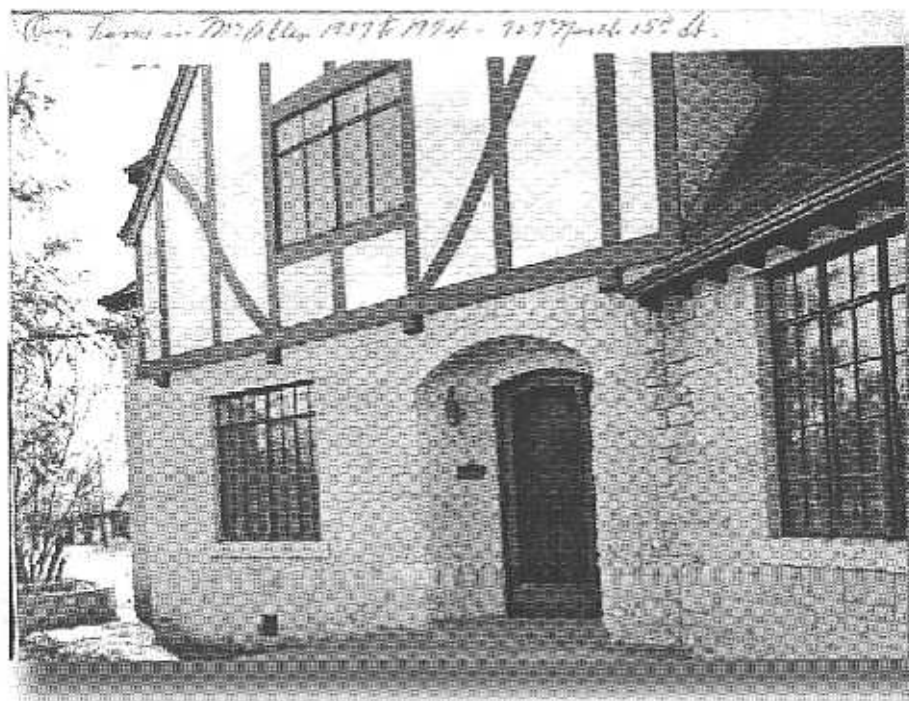
(For official use only)

DATE



Our home on McAllen 1937 to 1974 - 707 North 15th St.

Miller family photos taken in 1937
just after completion of construction

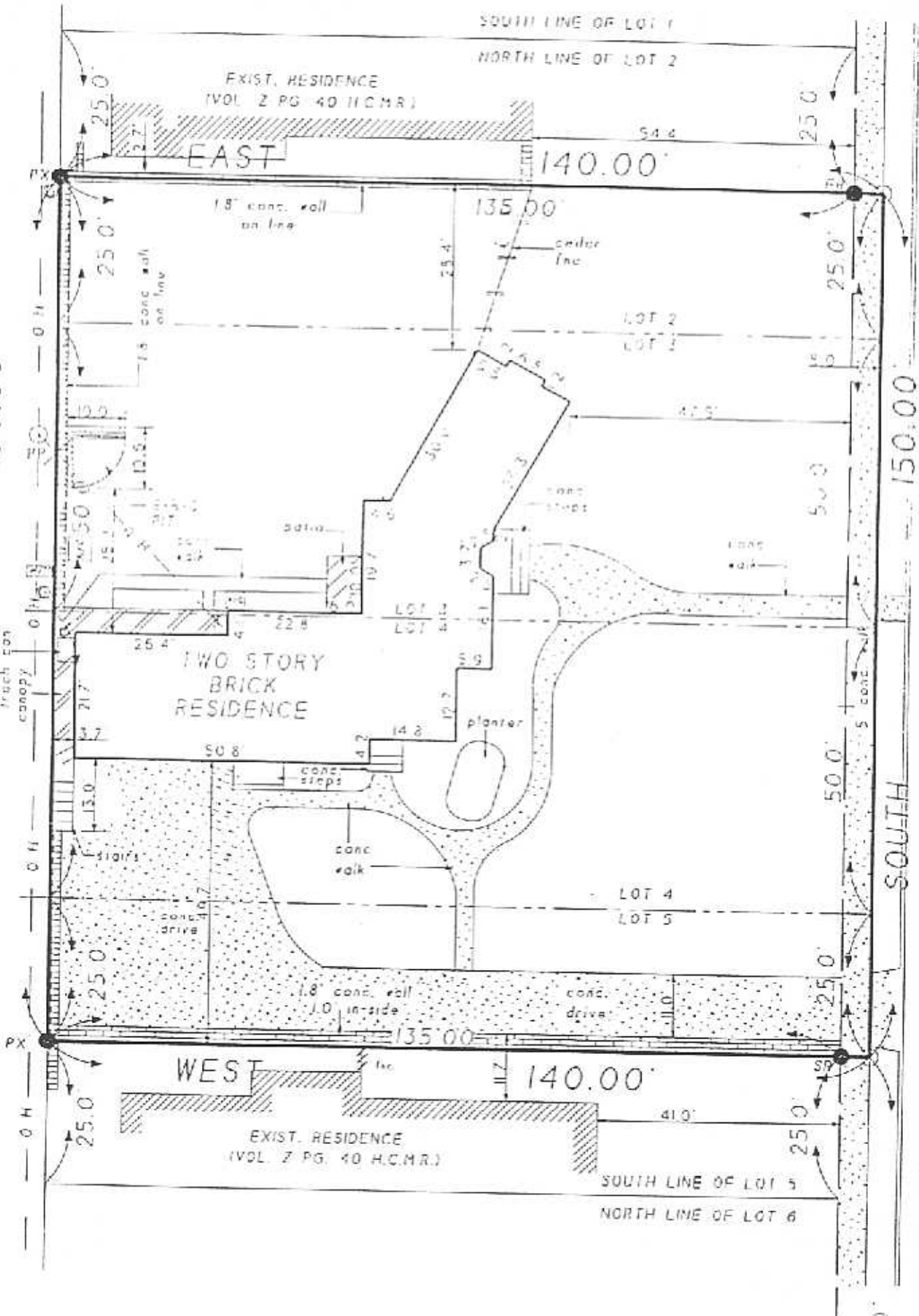


Our home on McAllen 1937 to 1974 - 707 North 15th St.

ROAD
LINE
OF-WAY
CITY
ON CONC.

20' ALLEY
(CALLEJON)

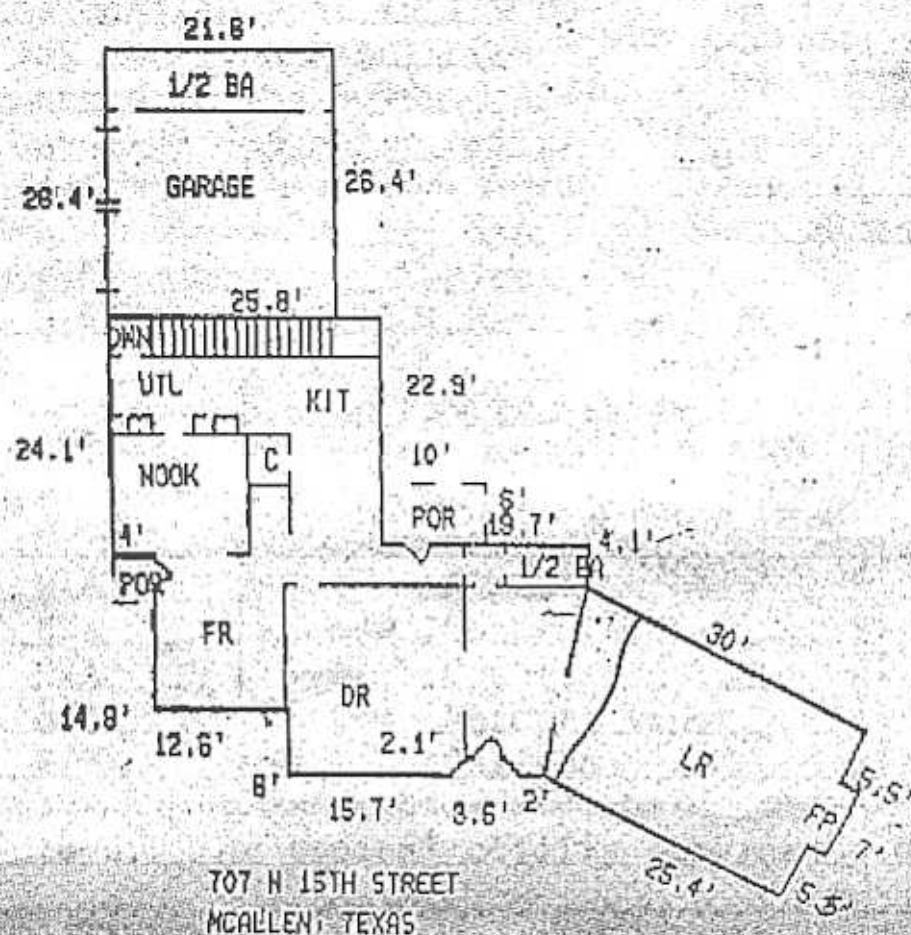
NORTH



N. 15th STREET

R.O.W. = 65'

Site Plan, Interior - 1st Floor



Measurements	Total
2.0' x 44.8' =	89.6'
1.5' x 44.2' =	66.3'
3.6' x 43.4' =	156.2'
1.5' x 44.2' =	66.3'
15.7' x 44.8' =	704.9'
12.6' x 38.9' =	490.1'
4.0' x 24.1' =	96.4'
-19.7' x 22.9' =	-451.1'
4.6' x 36.0' =	166.6'
	1,384.5'

Measurements	Total
25.4' x 18.0' =	457.2'
2.0' x 12.5' =	25.0'
-2.0' x 5.5' =	-11.0'
4.6' x 9.0' =	41.4'
	512.6'
	= 1,384.5'

FIRST FLOOR AREA = 1,897.1'

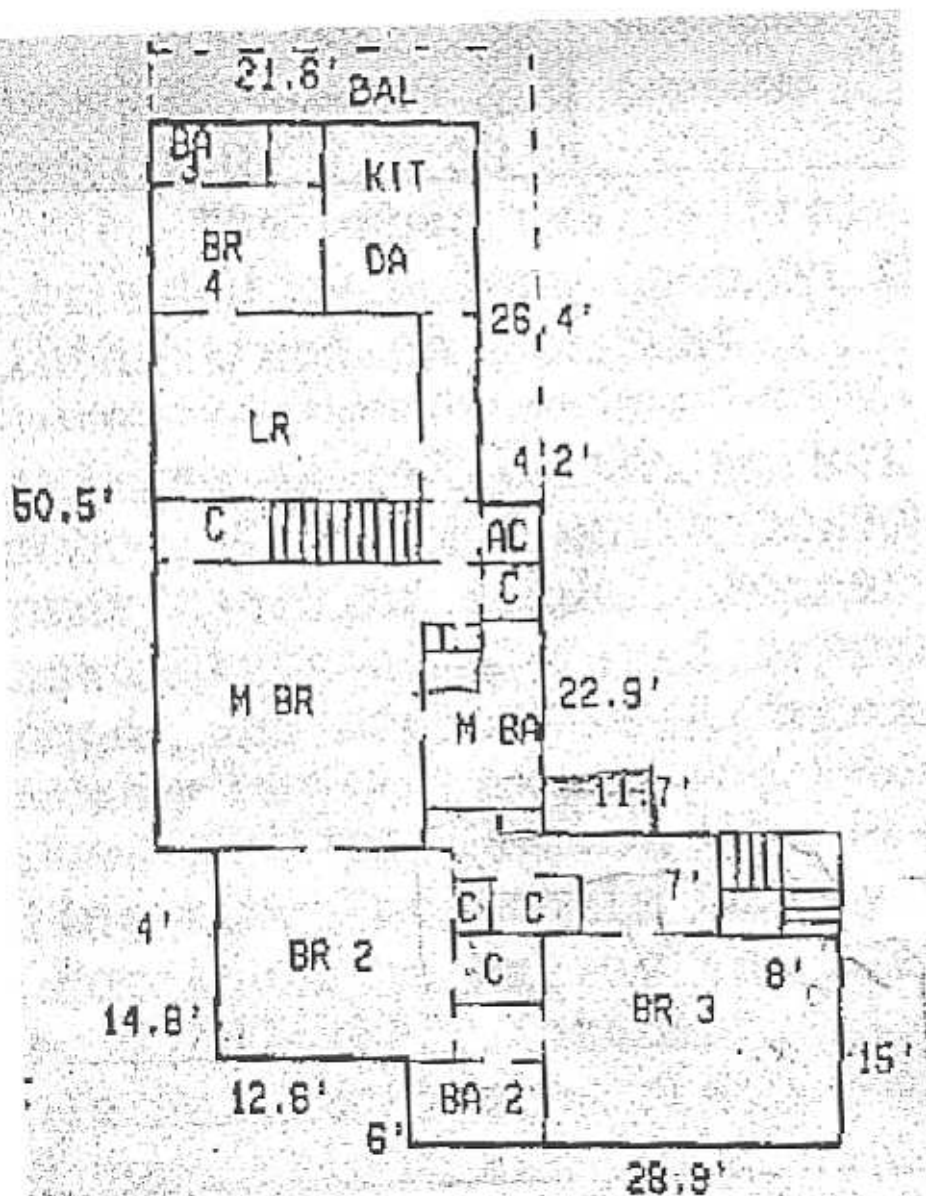
FIRST FLOOR AREA = 1,897.1'

SECOND FLOOR AREA = 1,947.3'

=====

GROSS LIVING AREA 3,844.4'

Site Plan, Interior - 2nd Floor

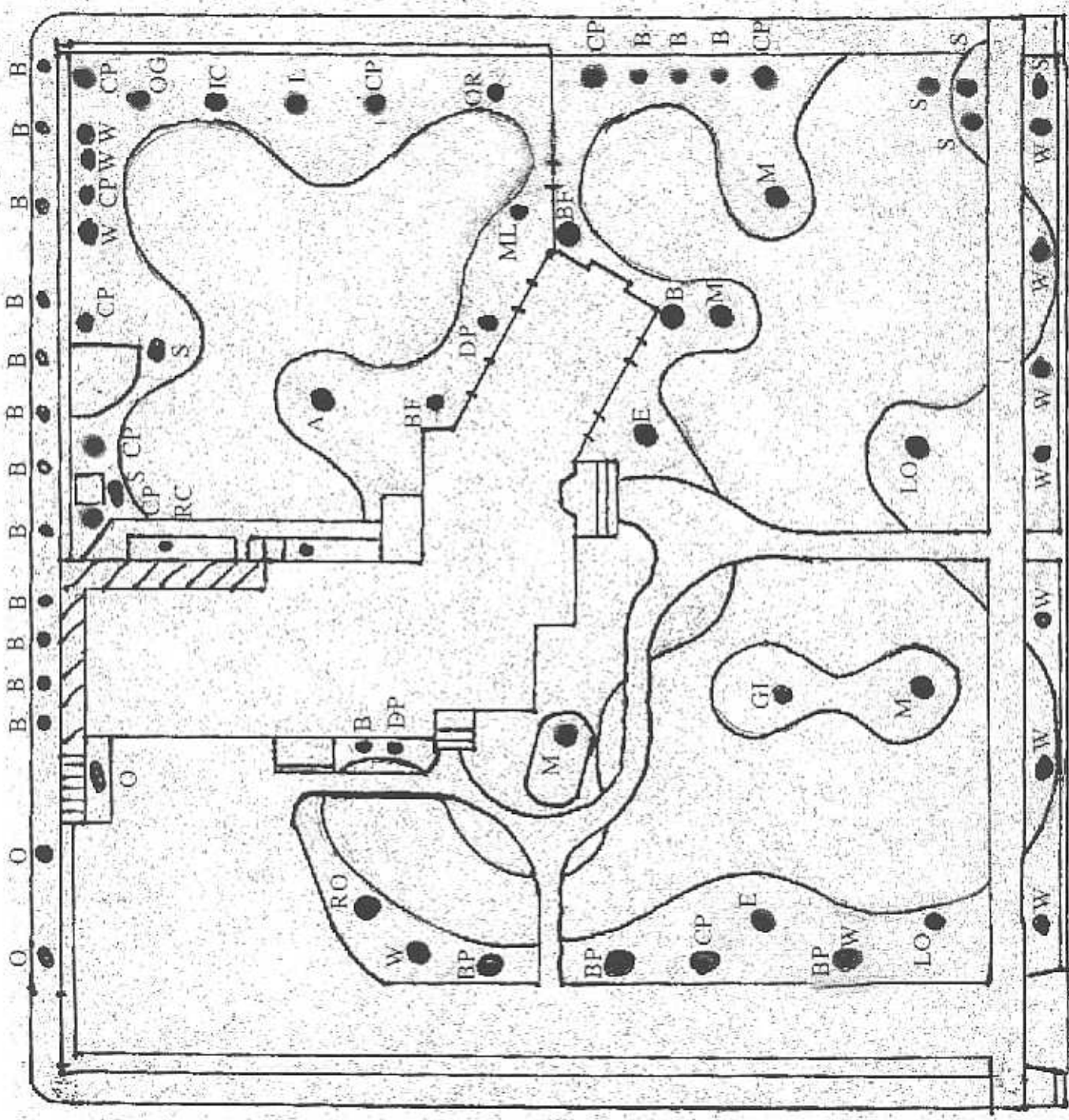


Measurements	Total
12.6' x 65.3' =	822.8'
4.0' x 50.5' =	202.0'
-4.2' x 26.4' =	-110.9'
-11.7' x 49.3' =	-578.9'
-8.0' x 56.3' =	-450.4'
28.9' x 71.3' =	2,060.6'
SECOND FLOOR AREA =	1,947.3'

Exterior Site Plan

Buildings & major vegetation

- M = Mesquite tree
- LO = Live Oak tree
- RO = Red Oak tree
- E = Ebony tree
- ML = Mountain Laurel tree
- A = Anacua tree
- BF = Benjamin Ficus tree
- L = Lime tree
- OG = Orange tree
- OR = Orchid tree
- DP = Dwarf Poinciana tree
- IC = Italian Cypress tree
- CP = Cocos Plumosa palm
- W = Washingtonia palm
- S = Sago palm
- BP = Bird Of Paradise
- B = Bougainvillea
- O = Oleander
- RC = Rangoon Creeper
- GI = Giant Ivy



Sam & Marjorie Miller House

McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

October, 2002

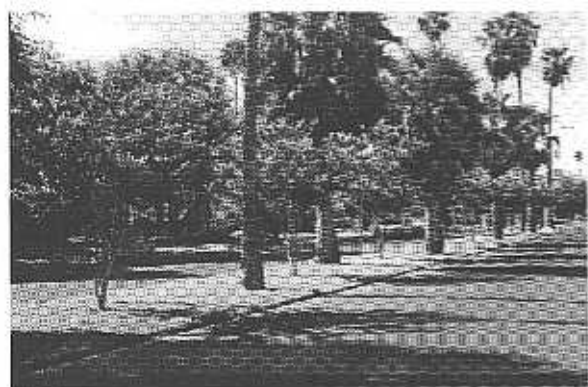
I. Site description

The Sam & Marjorie Miller House was built in 1937 and is a 2 1/2- story, stone, wood and stucco, **English Tudor Revival** with a modified rectangular plan and intersecting half-timbered gable roofs. This 3844 sq. ft. home sits on three lots measuring a total of 150 ft x 140 ft. In the 1960's alterations were made to the den and kitchen area and air conditioning was added. In 1977, in order to allow for separate access to the separate living quarters positioned over the garage, an outside steel staircase was added on to the west back alley side of the garage and a north facing window was changed to a door. (Photo Addendum 13, 14)



Completion of construction, 1937. Section 3

II. Geographical Setting



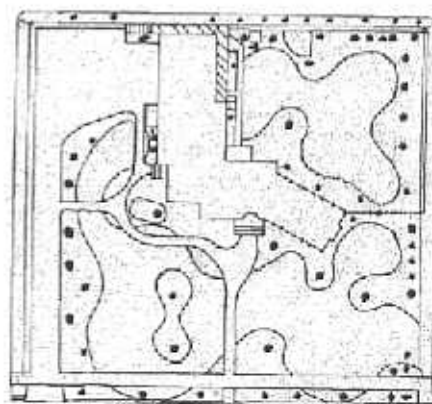
15th Street Boulevard, Photo Addendum 1

The property is in McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas. The neighborhood begins just north of the downtown area. The subdivision has a palm tree lined, island boulevard centered on 15th Street that continues south for seven blocks. (Photo Addendum 1, 3,) Most of the houses built in the neighborhood were built between 1918 to the late 1940's and are positioned on 50 to 150 feet wide by 140 feet deep

lots or larger. Architectural styles within the neighborhood include Tudor Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Colonial Revival Prairie, American Four Square and American Eclectic houses.



The Miller property faces east and fronts on to 15th Street. The driveway entrance is at the extreme southeast corner of the property and moves 140 ft straight west along the fence line to the back of the property and across to the garage. (Photo Addendum 2) Concrete walkways to the front door start from the front sidewalk and split away from the main entrance and move around the southeast corner of the house and split again to the back and side areas of the house. (Photo Addendum 4) Seven washingtonia palm trees front the home on the easement. There are four mature mesquite trees, one mature ebony tree, one mature anaqua tree, eight mature cocos plumosa palm trees, one live oak, one red oak, one fruit bearing orange citrus tree, one fruit bearing lime tree, a mountain laurel tree, an orchid tree, four birds of paradise plants along the driveway, one large mesquite tree trunk overgrown with variegated ivy and the remaining property is accented with cultivated lawn, shrubs and flowered gardens.



Exterior Vegetation Site Plan, Section 7

III. General Characteristics

The construction began with a concrete foundation that sits on reinforced cement piers sunk 15 ft. into the ground to offer better stability and protection from hurricanes. The majority of the exterior walls and chimney are made from Austin area Cordova white shell stone with some second

floor walls finished in wood and stucco that gives it the **English Tudor Revival** style. The roof is tapered sawn cedar wood shake imported from Canada. The majority of the stone work, wood work, and plaster work was done by the hands of artisan craftsman. (Photo Addendum 4-9)

IV. Description of Facades

The house faces east and fronts on to 15th Street. Cement walkways to the front door start from the front sidewalk and split away from the main entrance and move around the southeast corner of the house and split again to the back and side areas of the house. (Photo Addendum 4)

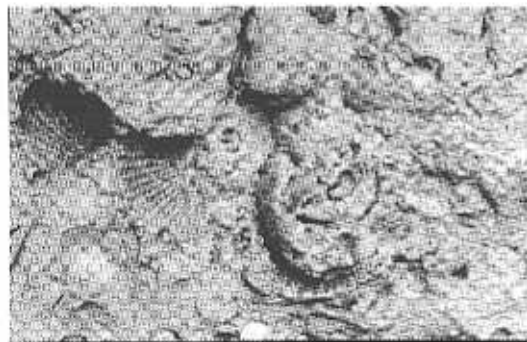
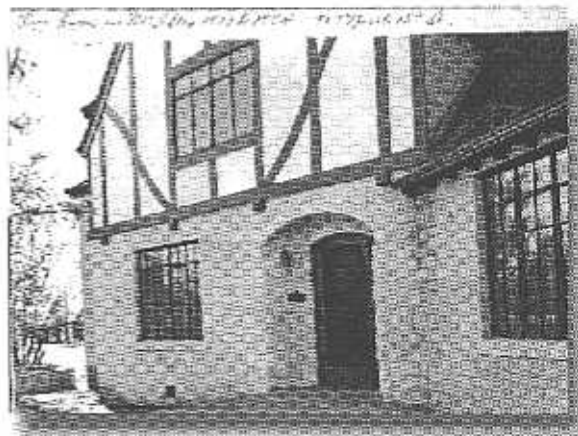


Photo Addendum 8

The Cordova shell stone wall cladding came from the Hill Country near Austin. A closer look at the stone will reveal negative depressions of fossilized sea shells, crustaceans and invertebrate creatures from long ago. (Photo Addendum 8) Large slabs of this stone were shipped to McAllen on railroad flatbed cars. Artesian stone layers then cut from the slabs the individual stone bricks in various sizes, and placed them into position

using a “free form” patterned type stonework. The stone covers the first floor and some areas of the second floor. The focus of the front, back and side second floor facades is the distinctive, traditional **English Tudor Revival** style of vignetting plaster between the outlines of the wood patterns. The front stoop is two large steps covered with rust colored Spanish tile. The gumwood front door is nestled inside a curved recess in the stone front wall. The door is curved at the top accented with in-laid windows. The back door is covered by a small Cordova stone porch with arched passageways. Access from a second story door



Austin based Cordova shell stone. 1937
Photo, Section 3

allows the top of the back door porch to be used as a small second floor porch as well. (Photo Addendum 11) Two other exterior solid wood doors, are covered by copper roofs attached to the stone wall. (Photo Addendum 5, 7, 8) The garage doors are curved at the top as reflected in the front door. (Photo Addendum 9) Other than the upgrading to more efficient garage doors to replace inoperable old ones, there have been no major alterations made to the exterior of the home.

V. Description of Floor Plan

The interior reflects the **Tudor Revival** movement in the handcrafted woodwork and built-in cabinetry in this 3844 sq. ft., 15 room home plus garage and workroom. The gumwood staircase and all the custom door and floor molding was handmade on site by a Mr. Rosinger, an artisan woodworker. Distinctive pointed tudor archways were designed and repeated in the gumwood and plaster doorways in the dining room, living room, foyer, hallway and finally, into the design of the opening of the stone fireplace. The 8-foot wide fireplace is made of the same Cordova shell stone but was polished to a smooth and glossy appearance. The 12-foot living room ceiling is highlighted by six gumwood beams that cross the width of the room. The floors in the living room and dining room are made of pine and the upstairs bedrooms and hallways are made of oak wood. (Photo Addendum 16-20)



Photo Addendum 21



Photo Addendum 19



Photo Addendum 16

Additional details include a second staircase behind the kitchen leading to the master bedroom and separate maid's quarters, laundry shoot from second floor master bedroom to downstairs kitchen, an eight foot wide cedar closet with two built-in storage drawers, built-in ironing board stations in the kitchen and master bedroom, interior access to exterior mail slot, guest bedroom closet has

additional door access to attic storage. Second floor rooms have the distinctive, cove like, dormers around the windows. (Photo Addendum 25) The kitchen has a copper stove hood, two built-in stainless steel dispensers for paper towels, aluminum foil and wax paper. (Photo Addendum 23, 24)

The first major interior alterations came in the 1960's when the house was air conditioned and the kitchen redesigned. The kitchen was made into a "L" shaped galley kitchen adding more cabinets, a brick column in the center of the new wall to house two ovens, a service bar, and to conceal the new air ducts. The new space was used to expand the den. (Photo Addendum 25) The ceiling of a small hallway next to the kitchen and dining room was lowered to accommodate air ducts. The rest of the air ducts fit into the dead spaces of the existing ceilings in all other rooms.



Photo Addendum 14

During the late 1970's the separate quarters over the garage were altered to make a private entry from outdoors. A steel and cement staircase was added to the west side of the garage and it wraps around the ally side of the garage and into a window on the north side of the second floor. A window was converted into a door for private access to the old sewing room and maid's quarters. (Photo Addendum 13, 14) The master bath

(Photo Addendum 26) was also updated during this time, as well as the sink in the second floor guest bath. The tile roof was seriously damaged in 1994 during a wind storm and was completely replaced with tapersawn cedar shake imported from Canada.

VI. Site Features

The house is surrounded on two sides and the back by a five foot fence made from the same Cordova stone. A large, two door wooden gate at the west end of the driveway allows for additional access to and from the alley. The backyard fence has a large, multi-tiered, built-in barbecue pit made from the same Cordova stone. (Photo Addendum 14,15) The garage is incorporated into the main building and, is set at the southwest corner of the lot accessed by a straight driveway from the 15th Street entrance. At the west end of the garage is a plaster walled handyman's workroom complete



Photo Addendum 7

with industrial sink and enclosed toilet with a half-moon hewn into the gumwood door. All the doors and trim in the garage, workroom and storage areas are made of the same gumwood stock. A 10 ft oval Cordova stone flower bed fence surrounds a majestic old mesquite tree on the southeast corner of the house (Photo Addendum 5). Another unusual detail for a house in South Texas is this home has a

basement measuring 16 ft x 11 ft and houses the air conditioner/heater, hot water heater and storage. The basement has an automatic sump pump to extract any collected water.

According to a December, 1937 issue of *Monty's* magazine, the Sam and Marjorie Miller house was built in that year for \$32,000. (Document, 10-E)

In general the property has been preserved in good condition. There are no significant cracks in the foundation. The original water pipes installed were commercial in size and water pressure is excellent. An electrical inspection reported that the original wiring is safe and operative, however it was recommended to be updated to code at a future rehabilitation. The windows are in marginal condition and will need to be replaced or repaired in the near future. Some of the plaster walls and ceilings will be in need of some minor work soon and the wood floors and molding will need refinishing in the next few years.

On July 9, 1997, the National Park Service proclaimed the Sam and Marjorie Miller House a historically significant property and it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (Document, 10-L)



Researched and written by:
Rick DeJulio, McAllen
Updated, October, 2002

Sam & Marjorie Miller House

McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

October, 2002

I. Founding Of The Community

The City of McAllen was incorporated in 1911. The first major growth in the city began in 1916 when political unrest in Mexico forced United States President Woodrow Wilson to send military troops to the Valley to protect the border area. Around 19,000 troops were stationed in McAllen which then had a population of about 2000 people. A rush of wholesale orders for all varieties of goods went out, and new businesses began to line Main Street. Local residents saw



Downtown Main Street circa 1920's

many of the downtown buildings constructed during this period.¹

Main Street, also being 14th Street, moved north and south out of

the downtown area. As the city grew and new businesses were established, business owners began building many of their homes north and east of the downtown area. As part of a 1918 land speculation, early banker Rowland Ernest ((R.E.) Horn bought and managed the property from Ash to Hackberry along 15th Street and built one of the first streets in the city to have an island boulevard of palm trees, bougainvillea plants, and street lights positioned down the middle of the street.² Horn built his own home at 505 N. 15th St. then subdivided and sold this land to others for home construction.

Built on northernmost part of 15th Street, the Sam & Marjorie Miller House was



700 block of North 15th Street circa 1950's

built in 1937 on a site known as Lions Park just seven blocks from downtown.³ The house anchors one of the seven blocks of 15th Street having landscaped islands, or boulevards, in the center of the street.

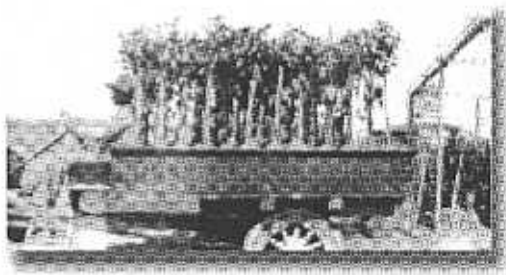
As the housing developed during the depression and early war years, the neighborhood earned the nickname "Silk Stocking Row" referring to the high number of wealthy families who once occupied the houses here. During "wartime" most ladies had to give up their nylons for the war effort and only ladies of wealth could afford them, thus the neighborhood got it's nickname.

II. Background of Historic Persons



Sam Miller, 1921
(Document, 10-A)

Samuel Lynn Miller was born in Basset, Texas, on November 23, 1901. He moved to San Juan, Texas in 1918. Sam and his brother Banks Miller established the Miller Brothers Nursery in 1920 where they experimented with growing sour orange seedlings and budding them with different varieties of citrus fruit for orchard planting.



Miller Brothers Nursery Truck

They sold their trees to citrus orchard owners and planted them all over South Texas from Mission, west to Harlingen and north to Corpus Christi. Sam Miller and his brother were

truly one of the few visionaries in this little known area of South Texas.³



Myron, Zella, Olea and
Marjorie Williams in 1907
(Document, 10-B)

Marjorie Ellen Williams was a farm girl born in Earlaham, Iowa, on May 15, 1903. While growing up, Marjorie rode on horseback to bring water to the men in the broomcorn and potato fields. She helped her mother home make many daily items like soap, sausage, corn syrup. Marjorie and her family traveled in a two seater horse drawn carriage but by 1915 her family bought their first car. In 1917 her family became one of the many Rio Grande Valley pioneers when they decided to move and



Marjorie Williams, 1921
(Document, 10-B)



Sam & Marjorie Miller
1924 wedding day
(Document, 10-C)

to start, what was to become a successful broomcorn farm, in San Juan, Texas, seven miles east of McAllen. They built a two room shack in a part of South Texas that had no electricity or paved roads.²

During her senior year in high school in 1921, Marjorie won her way to Austin by reciting "The Child Of The Alamo" by Guy M. Bryant. She gave that reading in the Texas Senate Chamber at the State Capitol.³

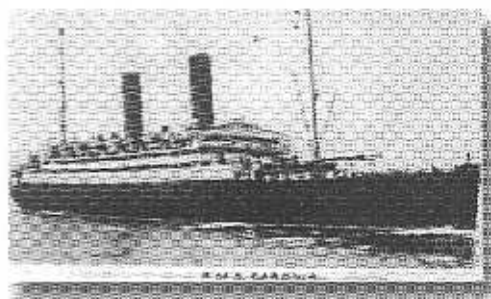
Sam Miller met Marjorie Williams in 1922 and after two years of courtship Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Lynn Miller were married on April 2, 1924. Sam bought Marjorie their first car that year from the Mission Motor Company in Mission, Texas. A Ford Coupe that cost, with extras like a locked steering wheel, \$685.60.²



Sam Miller, 1927
(Document, 10-A)

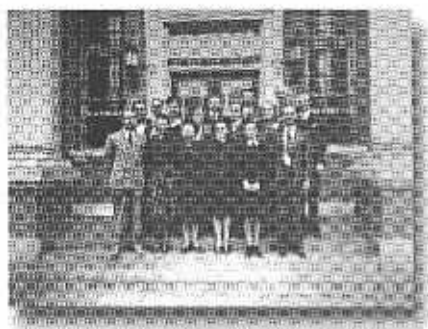
During the late 1920's the demand for Valley citrus was increasing. The Miller Brothers Nursery bought more land and began growing and selling Marsh seedless grapefruit, planting hundreds of acres of citrus. Concerned about the threat of the winter months and the devastation it could bring, Banks Miller invented a "Petroleum Coke Heater". They gave demonstrations at the Fire Pot Foundry in San Juan, Texas where these heaters were made from scrap cast iron, and a number were sold to protect area orchards.³

Sam's success allowed for him and Marjorie to travel through the United States and abroad. It was on a trip to England, in 1927, that the couple became inspired by the English Tudor homes they saw there. They took photographs and made architectural notes that became the basis for the home they would eventually build in McAllen.



7 and a half days to cross the Atlantic
in 1927 on the RMS Caronia.





Back row third from left, Banks Miller, Jr. Third from right, Robert Miller.
(Document 10-H)

The depression of the 1930's closed many businesses, but the citrus industry was doing well. Sam and his brother, Banks Miller Jr., bought the then closed City State Bank Of McAllen In March 1933. With Sam as its new president and principal stock holder the brothers renamed the bank City State Bank and Trust Company. Sam Miller held this position until 1940 when the bank was sold. It was later nationalized under the name First National Bank Of McAllen.¹

As an investment banker, Miller was instrumental in organizing Valley Federal Savings & Loan Association of McAllen in 1934. He was it's first President and held that position until he resigned in 1949.

Medical problems for several years had prevented the Millers from becoming parents but all that waiting was rewarded on July 19, 1933 when to their union was born a 7.5 pound daughter, Barbara Lynn Miller.³

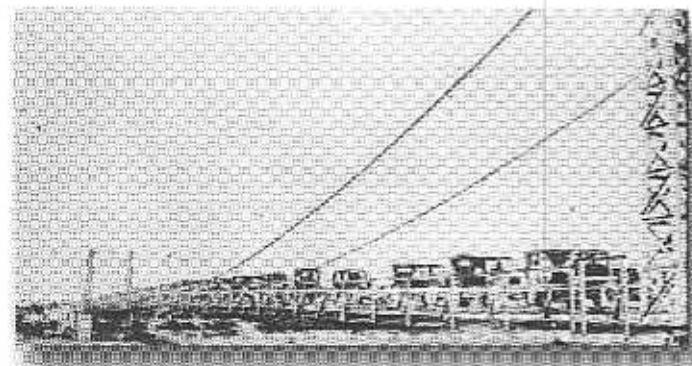
Marjorie was a charter member of the San Juan Chapter #726 of the Eastern Star. In 1933 she was honored by serving as Grand Officer in the Grand Chapter of Texas Order of the Eastern Star. She also became Deputy Grand Matron Of District 5, Section 10 under the leadership of Riva C.

Burnett as Worthy Grand Matron. Just after the birth of her daughter Barbara, Marjorie took her to Grand Chapter in Amarillo. During an inspiring moment, Riva Burnett presented Marjorie and her new baby to 4000 attending members in the auditorium.³

Sam Miller became President of Valley Bridge Company in 1939. Owned by Miller and his partners Joe and Sam Pate, this toll bridge operated between Hidalgo, Texas, USA and Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Miller



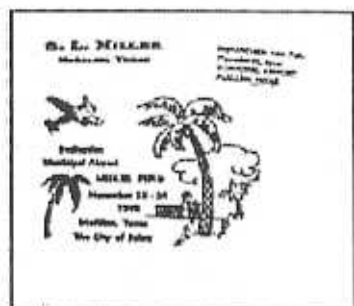
6 month old Barbara Lynn Miller and parents.



United States to Mexico Bridge at Hidalgo, TX, Document, 10-I

remained President until 1952. The bridge was sold to the City of McAllen in 1959.^{3,4}

Sam Miller's civic generosity was exemplified in 1930 by his donation of 109 acres of land, to the City of McAllen, for the construction of a future city municipal airport. The agreement with the city was that if the land was not used to build an airport the land would be returned to him. Miller would later forgive that agreement with the city with the proviso that the "Miller" name



Airport dedication invitation, 1940

would appear in the airport name for at least fifty years. "Miller Field" was finally completed with dirt runways and old military barracks serving as its terminal in 1940 and then dedicated on November 23rd. Daughter Barbara Miller would take part in the dedication. The airport would get it's first paved runways in 1947 and the new name of "Miller Airport". A new more modern terminal would be built 5 years later, as Trans-Texas Airlines inaugurated the first commercial flight into the now renamed "Miller Municipal Airport" on July 19, 1952. Barbara Miller again took part in the festivities by flying on the inaugural flight with officials and dignitaries from Houston. Upon arriving at the airport Barbara christened the the first Trans-Texas flight to McAllen by breaking a bottle of grapefruit juice over the fuselage of the DC-3. The airline later changed its name to Texas International airlines. In 1956 the airport was designated "Miller International Airport". In 1993, the terminal was completely rebuilt into a state of the art facility. Then 90 years old, Mrs. Marjorie Miller and her daughter Barbara Miller Wallace were again on hand for the renaming and rededication ceremonies. Still bearing the Miller name, the new "McAllen Miller International Airport" today offers the community service from two airlines, American, and Continental.^{3,4}



Barbara Lynn Miller christens the first flight of Trans-Texas Airlines to Miller Municipal Airport.

Miller was instrumental in getting his friend Homer Leonard elected Speaker of the House Of Representatives to the Texas Legislature In 1941. Mr. Leonard published the McAllen Monitor, a daily newspaper. Mr. Leonard ran for the Texas House of Representatives in 1930 as a write-in



Betty Dunlevy, Barbara Lynn Miller, Betty Ann Cook and Homer Leonard in 1941.

candidate of the Good Government Party. Following his victory he would serve 16 years in the House and was Speaker of the House in 1941-42. Millers' daughter Barbara was appointed a special page to Homer Leonard in the House Of Representatives during their opening session in 1941.³

Miller served as a member of the Board Of Trustees of the McAllen Public Utilities from 1949 to 1961. He served as Board Chairman from 1945 until 1952. For his civic endeavors he was named

McAllen Chamber Of Commerce "Man Of The Year".³

Sam Miller served as the President of the McAllen Chamber of Commerce in 1941. During that time he was honored as "Most Valuable Citizen of McAllen" by the local newspaper, The Valley Evening Monitor. He was also a long time member of the McAllen Rotary Club.

Marjorie Miller was active in the community by serving as a member and President of several civic organizations such as the McAllen Literary Club, McAllen Garden Club, and the McAllen City of Federation Clubs. She worked in her daughters Brownie and Girl Scout Troop and the PTA.

Mrs. Miller is a Life member of the Women's Auxiliary of the former McAllen Municipal Hospital.³

Sam Miller worked as a real estate investor in and around the McAllen area from 1960 until his death at 74 from cancer in October, 1974. Marjorie Miller lived in Austin near her daughter until 1999 when she died at age 96. Barbara Lynn Miller Wallace, her husband Bert, and their son Greg and wife Theresa, daughter Laura Wallace Pierce and husband Larry all live in the Austin area



Bert Wallace, Marjorie Miller, Barbara Miller Wallace and Sam Miller celebrate the Millers 40th Anniversary in April 1964.

III. Building Practice and Style Development

The Sam & Marjorie Miller House is notable for its advanced construction technology and the use of skilled artesian and quality materials. During their 1927 a trip to England the Millers fell in love with English architecture.

They collected several exterior and interior examples of the local buildings.⁵ (Document, 10-A)



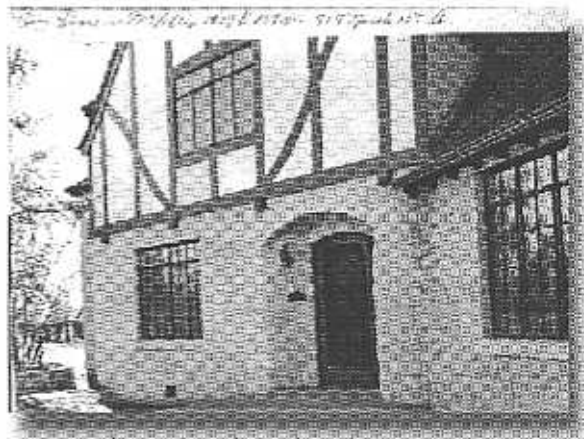
Photo Addendum 9

Upon their return from England, Mrs. Miller drew out the basic floor plan and then commissioned locally prominent architect Robert L. Vogler of Edinburg, Texas to make the formal plans for building the house and builders Harry Biggers and Jack Langley of San Juan, Texas to construct it.⁶ (Document, 10-D)

Contextually it relates to the influence of the **English Tudor Revival** movement in Texas. Secondly, the Sam & Marjorie Miller House relates to Community and Regional Planning in Texas as a product of the urban growth of McAllen and the planned development of the city.

In order to preserve the structure, and offer added protection from hurricanes, the foundation was built out of cement and placed on concrete pillars sunk 15 feet into the ground.

The Cordova shell stone wall cladding came from the Hill Country near Austin. A closer look at the stone will reveal negative depressions of fossilized sea shells, crustaceans and invertebrate creatures from long ago. (Photo Addendum 8) Large slabs of this stone were shipped to McAllen on railroad flatbed cars. Artesian stone layers then cut from the slabs the individual stone bricks in various sizes, and placed them into position using a “free form” patterned type stonework. The



Austin based Cordova shell stone. 1937

Photo, Section 9

fireplace in the living room was made of the same Cordova stone only it was cut in larger flat pieces, then cut smooth and polished.(Photo Addendum 16)

Australian Gumwood, used on the living room ceiling beams, staircase and doors throughout



Living room with polished stone fireplace. Photo Addendum 16.

the house was shipped in through Corpus Christi and milled in Pharr, Texas, by local miller, Fred Mount. (Photo Addendum 16-21) The downstairs floors are made of pine and the upstairs floors are made of oak.

All the interior walls and ceilings were done by a Mr. Sorenson, a plaster artisan from Norway who had then recently moved to Alamo, Texas, a city

10 miles east of McAllen. The gumwood staircase and all the custom door and floor molding was handmade on site by a Mr. Rosinger, an artisan woodworker. Both men's first names are unknown.

An exceptional example of craftsmanship of a regionally prominent master builder and master sub-contractors, the home is a result of the dissemination of the **English Tudor Revival** philosophy and aesthetic in America during the 1930's. According to a December, 1937 issue of *Monty's* magazine, the Sam and Marjorie Miller house cost \$32,000 to build this home. (Document, 10-E)

IV. Additional Criteria

The house meets the area of a person's significant contributions to the overall growth of the city as the residence commissioned by the prominent businessman, Sam Miller, whose home reflected his belief in the future growth of the community. In the area of Architecture it is one of the best residential examples in the state of **English Tudor Revival** architecture, and as a work of master builders Harry Biggers and Jack Langley. The architecture reveals the joinery, masonry, roofing and plastering techniques utilized by the many craftsmen who built the house.

V. Property Preservation

Progress in the community has brought with it a misguided attitude of "tear down the old and build up the new." The Sam & Marjorie Miller House, along with its neighboring houses and adjoining subdivisions are one of the few remaining structures that reflect the architectural heritage of the city. It must be preserved to remember the cities beginning and the struggle our business forefathers experienced to make the city what is today. It must be preserved to provide an example of the wonderful hand craftsmanship created by local artisans from years past.

VI. Current & Future Preservation

Recent efforts at physical preservation have been to replace the roof and insulate the attic. The exterior walls have been power washed with water. Windows have been recaulked. A security system, and front and back yard sprinkler systems have been installed.

At a future date all the windows will need replacing, floors and some wood work will need refinishing, ceilings and walls will need minor repair. An updating of the electrical system should also be done. Replacement of some interior hardware, electrical fixtures, and bathroom fixtures to bring them back to period would be needed.

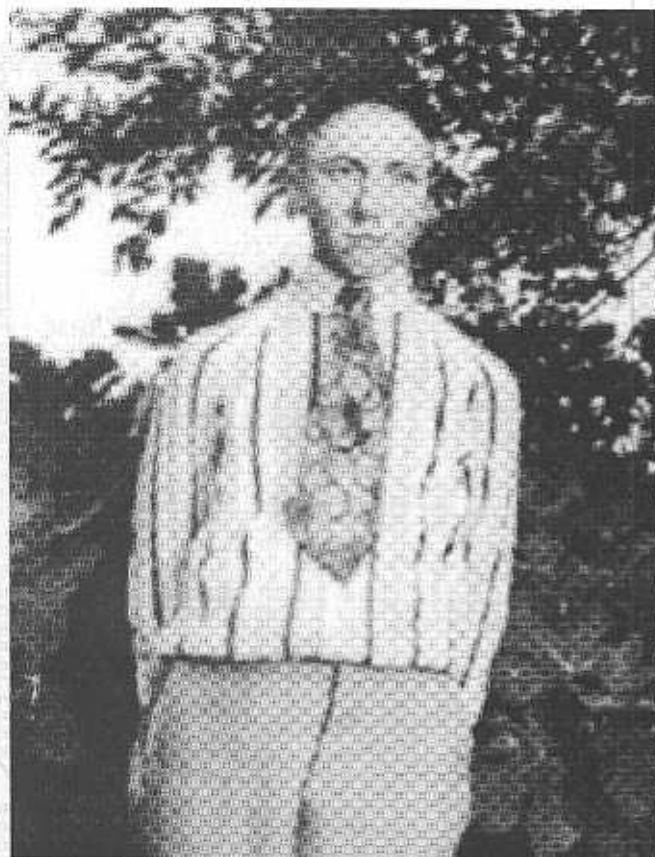


The Sam & Marjorie Miller House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo Addendum 4.

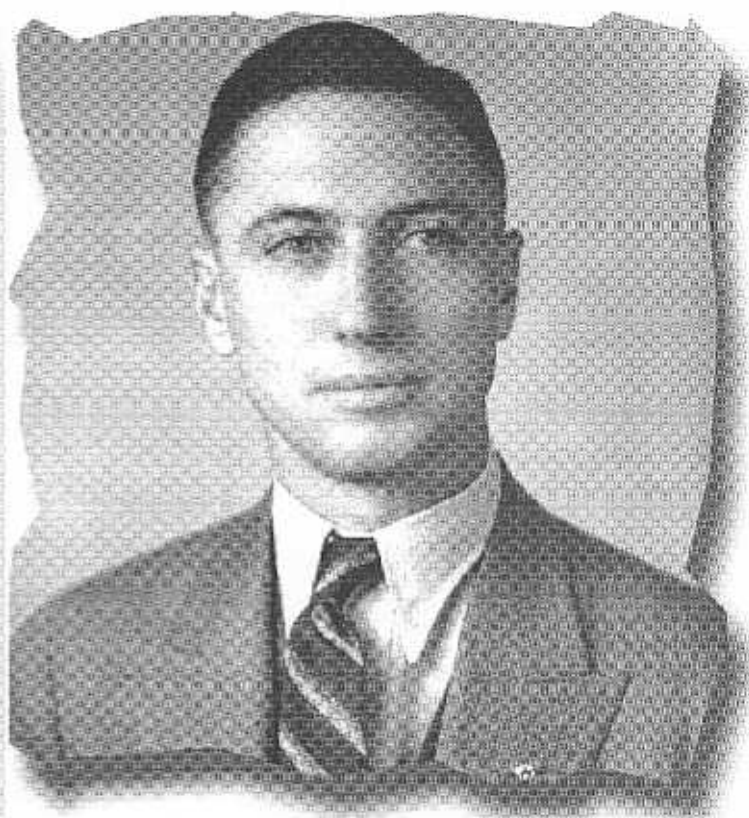
On July 9, 1997 the National Park Service proclaimed the Sam and Marjorie Miller House a historically significant property and it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (Document, 10-L) At a future date we will combine our neighborhood efforts to apply for historical district designation.

Researched and written by:
Rick DeJulio, McAllen
Updated, October, 2002

Samuel Lynn Miller 1901-1974



1921, 20 years old

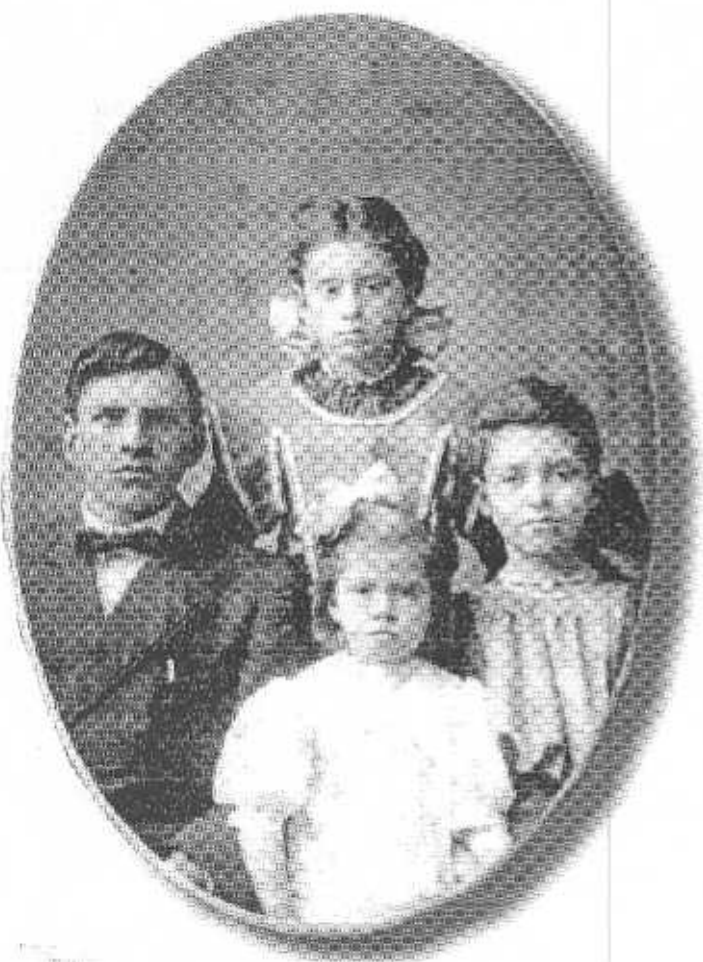


1927, 26 years old



Circa 1960
59 years old

Marjorie Ellen Williams Miller 1903-1999



Myron, Zella, Oleva and 4 year old Marjorie Williams in 1907.



1921, 18 years old



1960, 57 years old



1927, 24 years old

Sam & Marjorie Miller



1927 Wedding



1927 Passport Photo



1964
40th Wedding Anniversary

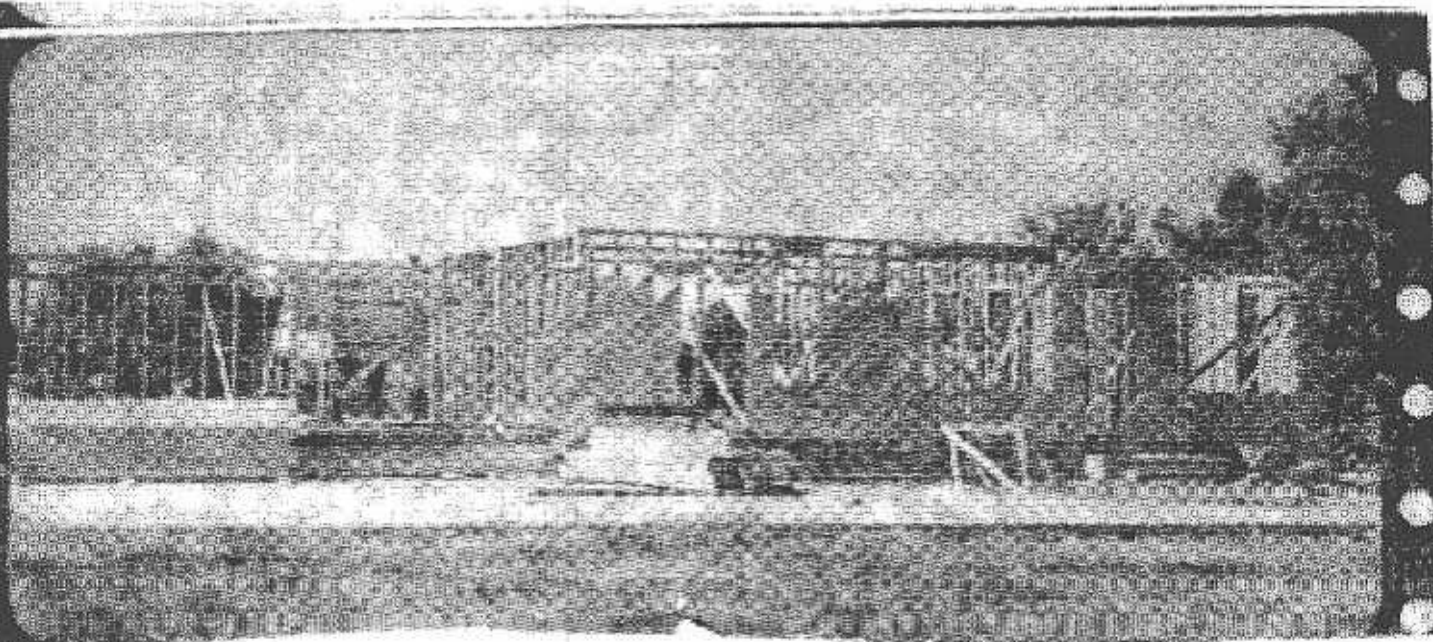


1974
50th Wedding Anniversary

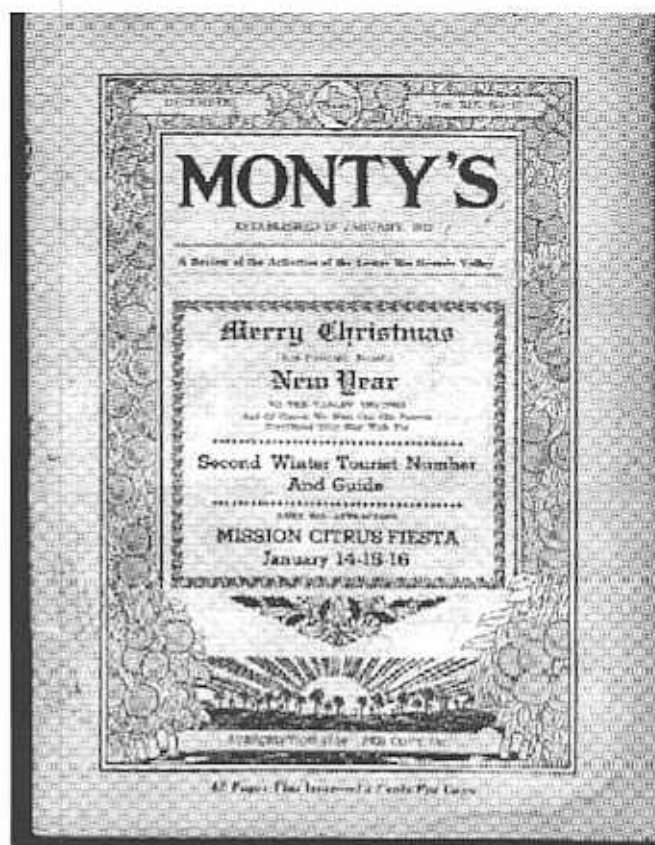
Architect, builder and 1937 construction photo

New Miller Home

Next is the first floor frame work on the Sam L. Miller residence now under construction in McAllen, by Harry H. Biggers, contractor. On a foundation and sub floor of reinforced concrete, this two story home will be finished in rock veneer with half-timbered gables and topped with a shingle tile roof. With its fourteen rooms and three baths it is over one hundred feet in length, giving plenty of outside wall space so necessary for proper ventilation in the Valley. This thirty thousand dollar residence is a product of the architectural office of Robt. I. Vogler, formerly of Edinburg, now located in Corpus Christi.

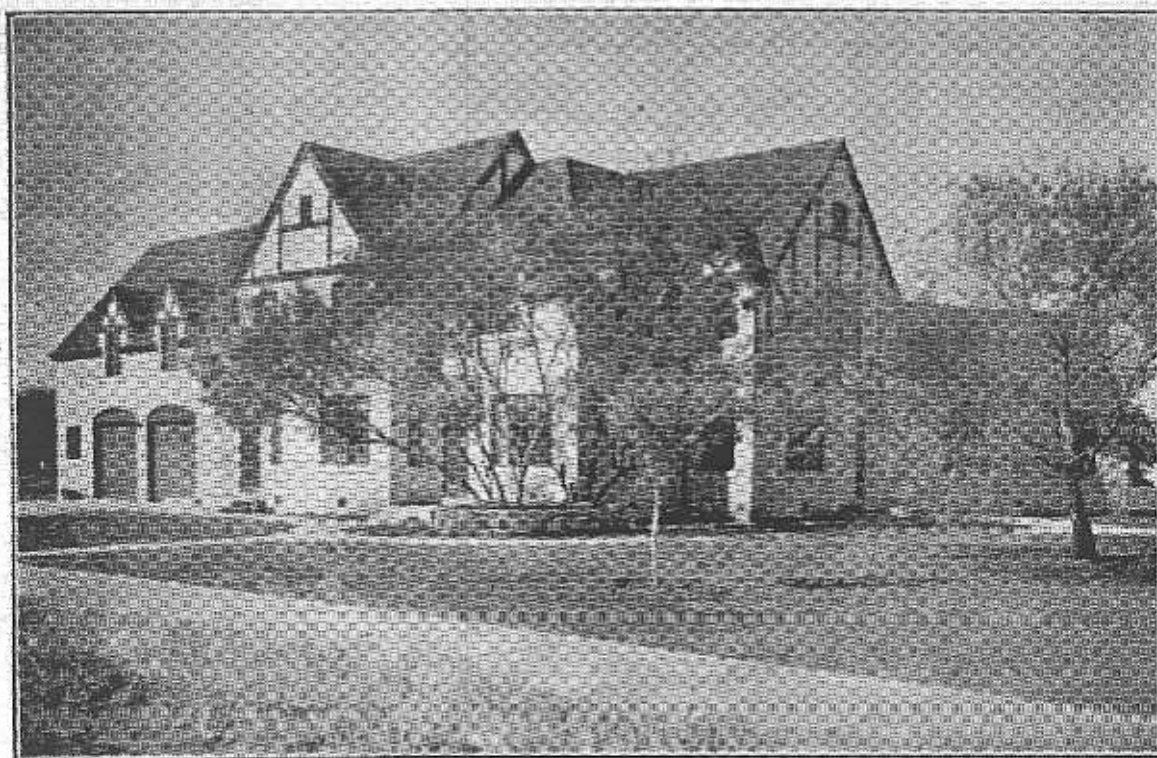


MONTY'S
Published
December, 1937



MONTY'S

23



Magnificent \$32,000 14-room Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Miller, North 15th Street, McAllen, Just Completed.

Airport

mobile, which supplied quicker and easier transportation. The freight divisions of the Missouri Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads continued serving McAllen. Recently, however, Southern Pacific has announced that it is closing its entire operation in the upper Valley and now proposes using Missouri Pacific's facilities to transport goods from Brownsville to McAllen. The results of this announcement remain to be seen.

In addition to the railroad, the airport and bus systems were also economically beneficial for the city and its growth. The airport in McAllen, which made speedy transportation available for people wishing to travel, is one of the three aviation centers in the Rio Grande Valley. In 1930, Mr. Sam Miller of McAllen donated one hundred and nine acres of land to the city to build an airport. The agreement between Mr. Miller and the city was that if the land were not used to build an airport, it would be returned to him. Later, the city asked him to forget this agree-

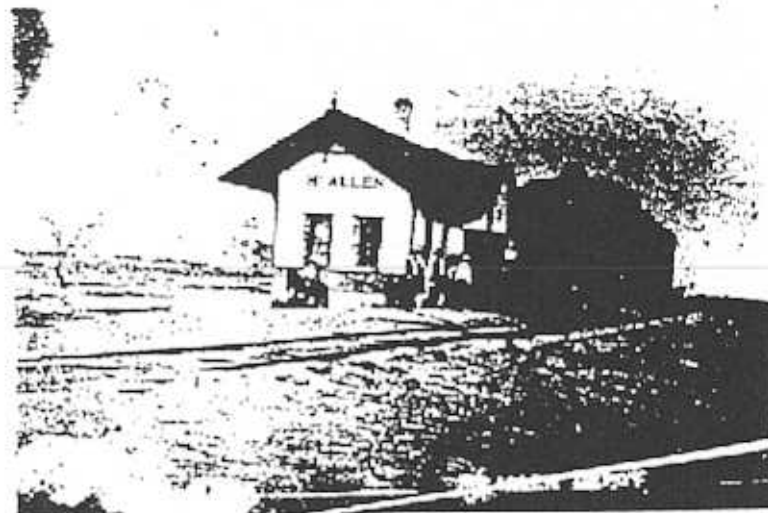


Automobiles remained the exception and continued to attract attention until about 1920.

ment, and he said he would on one condition. This condition was that for fifty years the first word in the name of the airport would be Miller. The city agreed, and the previous agreement was forgotten.⁸

Until 1948, Miller Municipal Airport was just grassland and was used only by twenty-five privately owned planes. In 1947, a

large allocation of Federal aid was given to support the airport's improvement project, and in 1948 the first runway was constructed. In 1952 the runway was lengthened because of the coming of the first commercial airline to McAllen. This airline at the time was named Trans-Texas Airways, but since then it has been renamed Texas International Airlines. To begin with, Trans-



McAllen's first railroad depot (above) was located at the corner of Depot Road and Highway 83.

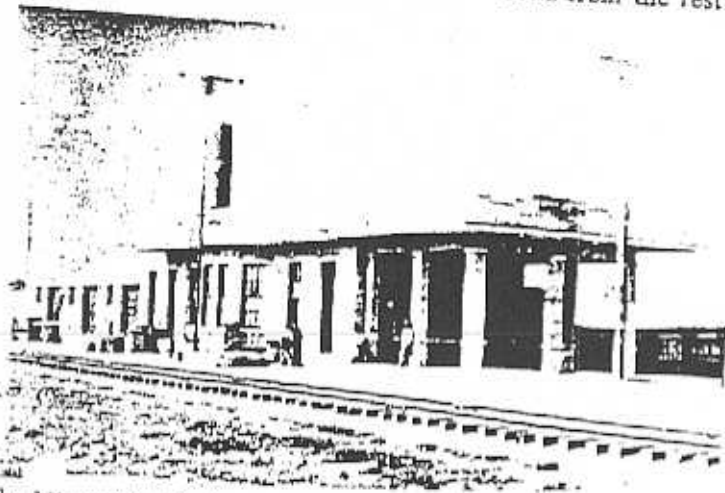
Texas flights came in two or three times a day. It was the only airline that was ever successful in occupying McAllen's Airport. Rio Airlines had attempted at one time to come to the city, but it was unsuccessful.

On July 17, 1956, the airport was designated an International Airport so that planes coming from outside the United States, mainly from Mexico, could clear customs at the McAllen facility. Because of its service expansion, Miller International Airport needed to expand its terminal building. The original terminal was an old barracks building which had been on the land donated by Mr. Miller. The city then built a new terminal in July, 1961. As the city continued to grow, demand for a still larger terminal building increased. Finally, in 1967 a third terminal, which is the most recent, was built.

Many more developments have taken place at Miller Inter-

national Airport since 1948. The runways have been lengthened and widened to accommodate jets, a new control tower and a radio station have been built, and ramps have been placed in the terminal.

Sam Miller realized that an airport would be economically feasible for the city, which was so far removed from the rest of



The Missouri Pacific depot (above) replaced the original frame building which burned down in 1914. The depot was located on the corner of Main Street and Highway 83.

the country. Because of this man's diligent efforts, along with others like him, people throughout the Rio Grande Valley today are able to take advantage of McAllen International Airport and its modern facilities.

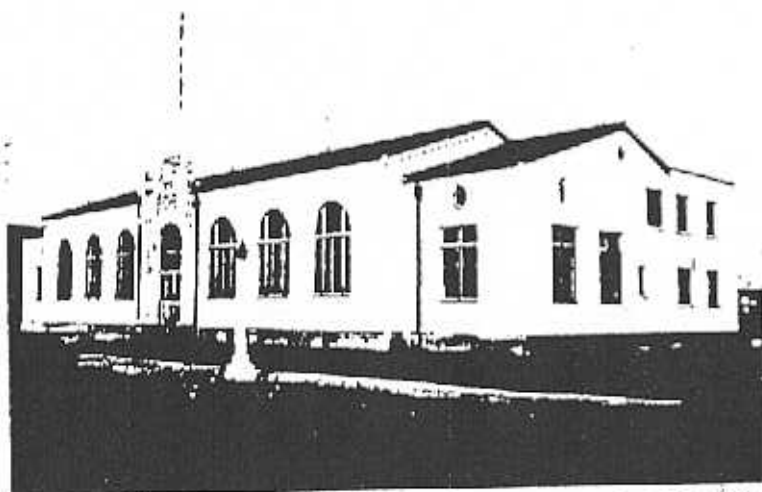
In addition to the airport, the bus systems brought inter-city transportation to McAllen and other Valley towns. In 1927, a man named Joe Amberson began operating Union Bus Lines using a Model T Ford truck with the side board removed and seats placed along the bed. In the beginning of his operation, he transported cotton pickers from San Antonio to the Valley. Refining his operation, he later began hauling paying passengers and purchasing Studebaker cars with the bodies stretched out. At one time, his bus line operated from McAllen in the Valley to Stevenville, San Angelo, Big Spring, Laredo, and Corpus Christi, with the headquarters in San Antonio.⁹



South Tenth Street (above) before it was paved offers a distinct contrast with the four-lane view (below) as seen about 1960.



In hope of keeping his faltering bus company operating, Mr. Amberson traded a portion of his bus route in 1939 to a man who was able to supply him with Beck buses. Finally, in 1945 he sold his entire company to several men from Dallas. Then, in 1946 the Union Bus Lines became part of the national Trailways Bus System as an independent company. At this time, headquarters for the Union Bus Lines became part of the national headquarters for the Union Bus Lines and moved to McAllen with a shop and general office located at Seventh and Beaumont Streets. (This building is being used today as a bus garage for school buses of the McAllen Independent School District). In the earlier days, the bus station was located at two different sites on Highway 83 near Main Street. Shortly after World War II, Union Bus Lines transferred its ticket office to a new bus station on South Sixteenth Street.



The post office building on South Main Street was completed in 1935. In 1958 when a larger facility was completed, this building was converted into offices for other Federal government agencies.

On January 19, 1956, Continental Trailways purchased all of Union Bus Lines with its 1,467 route miles. This bus line then became known as Continental Union Lines. On June 23, 1971, the ticket office in McAllen was moved to 100 North Broadway, where it is presently located.

Today, Continental Union Lines has sixty-eight full-time bus drivers and provides through bus service to major cities in Texas. The Model T Ford truck first used as a bus by Union Bus Lines has come a long way in its forty-eight years.

Another bus company which serviced McAllen was the Valley Airfield Bus Company, which was incorporated in 1942. I



Sam Miller donated to the city the land on which Miller International Airport is situated.

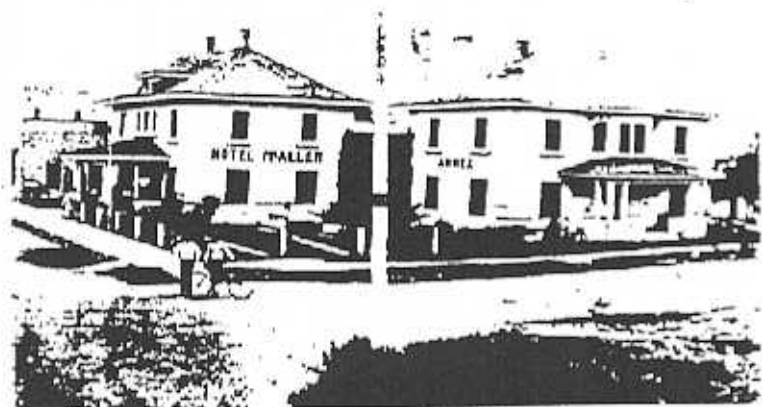
founders were Rogers Kelly of Edinburg, Bob Farris of Harlingen, V. D. Raimond of Harlingen, and J. C. Looney of Edinburg. It was organized to provide bus service from McAllen to Mission, Edinburg, Pharr, and Moore Field. It began with one bus and three or four employees. Valley Airfield Bus Company was basically designed to transport workers to Moore Field and back to the towns they lived in. The men who were stationed at the air base rode to the towns on the weekends.

This bus company existed during the war, and more people rode buses then because of gasoline rationing. At that time, the bus fare was ten cents between towns. In 1945, after World War II, the same stockholders of Valley Airfield Bus Company formed Valley Transit Bus Company. Its first office was located on the corner of Highway 83 and Broadway. The second office

City Bank

and before this store McAllen Drug #1 was located there. By 1929 McAllen had provided enough business to support another bank, the First National Bank, which was located on Main Street.

The First National Bank and the First State Bank and Trust Company both failed during the Depression and were closed for quite some time. In 1933 S. L. Miller merged the assets of the



The McAllen Hotel was located on the corner of Highway 83 and Main Street.

two closed banks and opened the City State Bank and Trust Company with S. L. Miller as President and W. W. Dees as Cashier. In October 1940, Mr. Miller sold his interests in the bank, and O. B. Chapotan became President with W. W. Dees as Executive Vice-President. Mr. Elmer Bentsen and Mr. Lloyd M. Bentsen bought the City State Bank and Trust in November 1945, and Mr. Elmer Bentsen became President, with Mr. Lloyd Bentsen as Chairman of the Board. The City State Bank and Trust Company was located on the corner of Main Street and Highway 83 for many years until the bank nationalized in November 1949. The bank then built the modern four-story building on the corner of Beaumont and Fifteenth Streets where it is now located and known as the First National Bank of McAllen.

While the City State Bank and Trust Company was undergoing changes, the McAllen State Bank was being formed. In December 1945, the McAllen State Bank opened its doors for

business. The bank was located on the corner of Beaumont and Broadway, where Valley Federal Savings and Loan is located presently. Mr. V. F. Neuhaus was the first President of McAllen State Bank and is now Chairman of the Board. The McAllen State Bank grew rapidly, and in November 1961, was able to move into ultramodern banking facilities located on the corner of Broadway and Highway 83. Mr. G. E. Roney is currently president of the McAllen State Bank, which is now the largest bank in McAllen in terms of deposits.

McAllen's increasing depositors have provided sufficient business for two more banks. The Valley National Bank, which was opened October 12, 1971, and the Metropolitan National Bank, which was opened in November 1972, are both growing. The growth of all of the McAllen banks speaks very well for the citizens of McAllen who have created a stable economic system for the city through hard work and determination.

As the population of McAllen expanded, medical and legal services became a necessity. Promoting assistance to these people as well as contributing to the advancement and development of the town were the early pioneer doctors and lawyers.

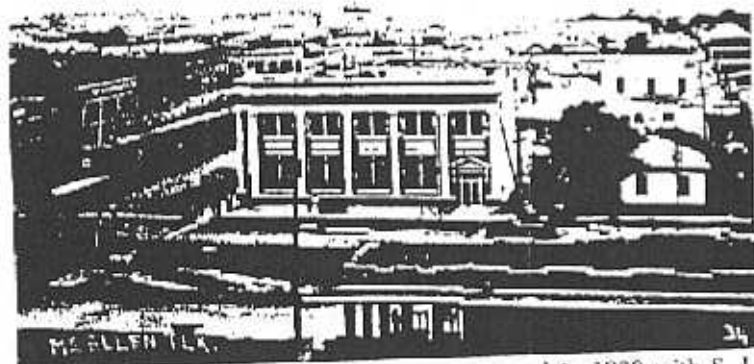
Well-trained doctors started moving to McAllen in the mid twenties. Frank E. Osborn, M.D., is believed to have set up his medical practice by 1925. During the same year, James O. Wharton, who practiced pediatrics, general medicine, and anesthesiology, began his practice here. These two doctors had the responsibility of most of the sick townspeople until Dr. Kincy I. Scott came in 1927. Closely following Scott were Dr. S. Joe McKinsey and surgeon Dr. William Whigham. Dr. Carlos Balli came in 1929, and in 1930 surgeon Octavio Garcia, F.A.C.S., F.I.C.S., started his practice. Through the years, more doctors arrived in the area. Some of these in the order in which they began practicing in McAllen include Frank W. Bennett, Walter W. Hatfield, Loyal H. Moore, Alfred S. Osborn, Wallace Duncan, Hjalma Sybilrub, and Joe D. Schutz.³⁰

Most of the early doctors had their offices located on Main; however, some doctors' offices were above the present Klinck's building on Broadway.

In the early days of McAllen, many people were involved in land transactions. This was the subject of most of the civil law cases during that period. To solve these problems and to assist

At first, test results were very poor, but Woods never lost faith in the accuracy of the fortune teller. Woods would say about the oil, "It's there; I can taste it," although test results still denied its presence. Woods was so certain of success that he set casing, an expensive metal pipe used as a lining for wells. Nonetheless, Woods continued to strike mud and not oil. Finally, on September 19, 1934, oil was hit. Observers claimed that a column of oil shot over one hundred feet into the air before drillers could shut off the valve.²⁷ As the oil flow was brought under control and directed into a pit, production was measured at twenty-five barrels per hour. By September 22, pressure was at 430 pounds and increasing.²⁸ Production peaked later at 4,800 barrels a day. A quarter-inch choke was placed on the well to help control the oil flow, and production was decreased to 1,050 barrels a day.²⁹

As news of this discovery spread, oil fever hit Hidalgo County, and oil scouts flocked to the area. Oil men became engaged in



The City State Bank and Trust Company opened in 1933 with S. L. Miller as President. It was located on Highway 83 and South Main. The old McAllen Hotel Annex can be seen at the back of the bank.

feverish leasing and royalty buying and selling throughout the Valley. Telephone and telegraph companies were bogged down with an unusually large amount of business. Despite this great excitement, most drillers in the McAllen area continued to find gas and not the valuable oil desired so much. The vast natural gas reserves of the McAllen area were regarded as worthless.



McAllen's first banking institution was the First State and Trust Company on the corner of South Main and Austin. The Columbia Theatre is seen at the far right.

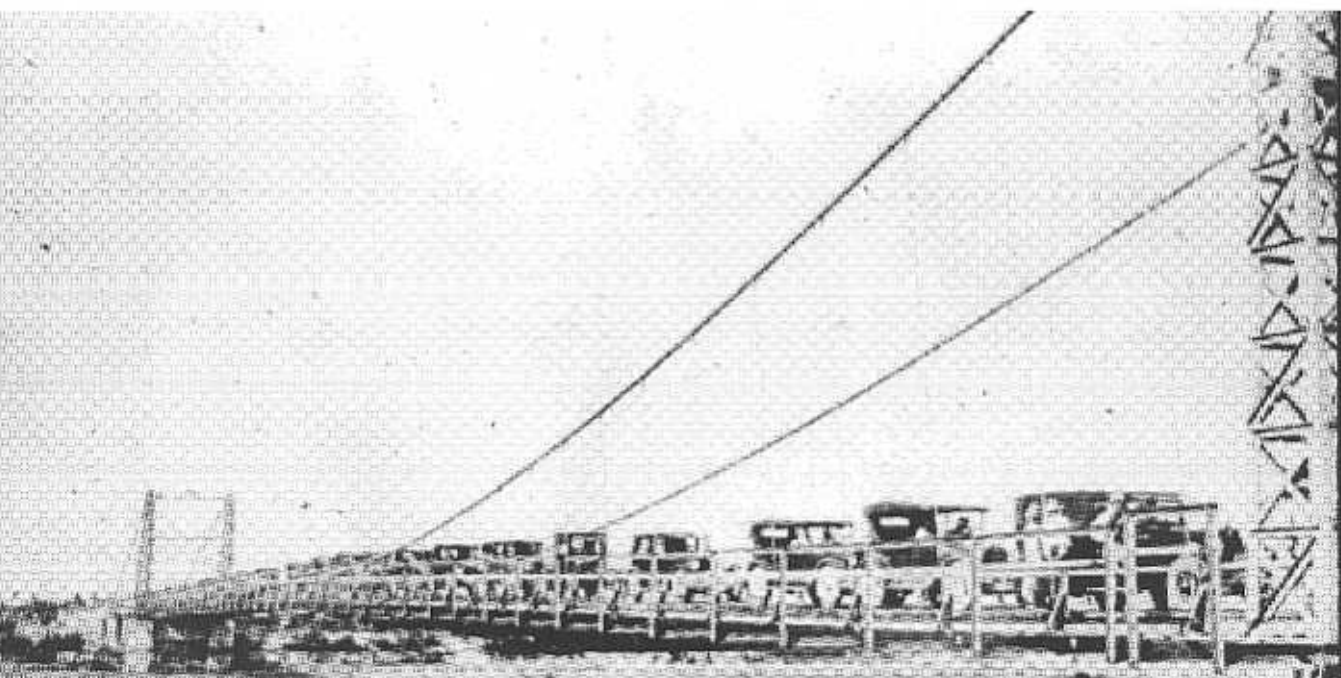
In 1936 Dr. Burton McCullum, a Houston scientist, initiated an investigation of the McAllen gas field. McAllen citizens had been discouraged by previous oil drillers who discounted the mineral value of the land. They were reluctant to cooperate with Dr. McCullum, but within a couple of weeks of the scientist's arrival in McAllen, owners signed leases giving him the opportunity to drill for gas. The first well to be drilled was on the property of J. J. Lynn between McAllen and Pharr. This well was not hailed as a great success, but as the value of natural gas slowly increased, McAllen did experience a big gas boom upon the completion of the No. 1 E. M. Card well near the southeast corner of McAllen. Later, the Rio Grande Valley Gas Company obtained a contract to buy gas from that well, and in 1939 McAllen residents were supplied with local natural gas.³¹ As the demand for natural gas and oil increased throughout the nation and as it was discovered that the McAllen gas dome alone held 1,200,000,000,000 cubic feet of natural gas, Valley gas and oil production increased.³² In 1961, \$32,000,000 of natural gas and \$24,000,000 of

City State Bank & Trust Company



Back row third from left, Banks Miller, Jr. Third from right, Robert Miller.

Valley Bridge Co. at Hidalgo, Texas, USA
and Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico



Suit Attacks Bridge Leases

EDINBURG — Management of the Valley Bridge Co. at Hidalgo is involved in a suit filed in 23rd District Court Saturday.

J. T. Bowman Jr. of San Antonio, claiming he is a minority stockholder in the bridge company, complains in the suit about leases he alleges were made of the international bridge to Valley Operators and later, Rio Grande Valley Operators, for 20 years.

He asks that the alleged lease be canceled, that the books of both the Valley Operators and the Rio Grande Valley Operators be produced in court and that an audit of them be authorized by the judge.

He also asks that a \$250,000 dividend be declared in court for the minority stockholders of the Valley Bridge Co. He claims he is one of 10 minority stockholders and he is bringing the suit in his own behalf and theirs.

Defendants in the suit with the Valley Bridge Co. are J. E. Pate, J. W. Pate, of Hidalgo, W. W. Dees of Brownwood, S. L. Miller of McAllen, Mrs. Josephine Pate Kidd and Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Ray Jr., all of Hidalgo, all directors, or former directors of the bridge company, according to Bowman.

He claims Valley Operators, to which he says the bridge was first leased, included Pate, members of his family and Miller, and Rio Grande Valley Operators, now holding a 20 year lease, included Pate and members of his family.

Airport History

Chamber Has Had Role In Growth of McAllen

"Community-building labors by the McAllen Chamber of Commerce during the past year have set a stimulating example to similar civic agencies in both big and little cities." Written in 1946, this statement rings just as true today.

From the Businessman's Club in 1909, the McAllen Chamber of Commerce has evolved into the leader of McAllen's development, the point

of impetus for making the city a better place to live and work.

The following are just a few of the milestones for McAllen over the past 70 years in which Chamber involvement helped serve as a catalyst:

- 1924 — The U. S. Border Patrol comes to McAllen.
- 1926 — A second railway, Southern Pacific initiates McAllen service.
- 1930 — Sam Miller donates land to establish Miller International Airport. (Until 1948, the facility remained grassland used by 25 privately owned airplanes.)
- 1946 — Farm Labor Center established as housing for migrant workers.
- 1946 — The Convention and Civic Center is built.
- 1947 — Miller Airport begins work on first paved runway.
- 1949 — The International Water and Boundary Commission constructs Falcon Dam.
- 1952 — Runway expansions completed to accommodate Trans Texas Airways.
- 1956 — Miller Airport designated "International Airport" by FAA.
- 1960 — Spring Fiesta Celebrations initiated.
- 1971 — McAllen Foreign Trade Zone #12 opened.
- 1975 — McAllen Civic Center expanded.

Jobs Created By Industry

Creating new local jobs and payrolls through industrial development and foreign trade is the focus of the McAllen Industrial/Trade Zone, Inc. This non-profit corporation is a joint venture of the City of McAllen and the McAllen Chamber of Commerce.

During 1980, in spite of a nationwide recession, the Industrial Board saw little change in rapid industrial development activity. The Board hosted 126 industrial prospect visits and generated 74 serious industrial location prospects.

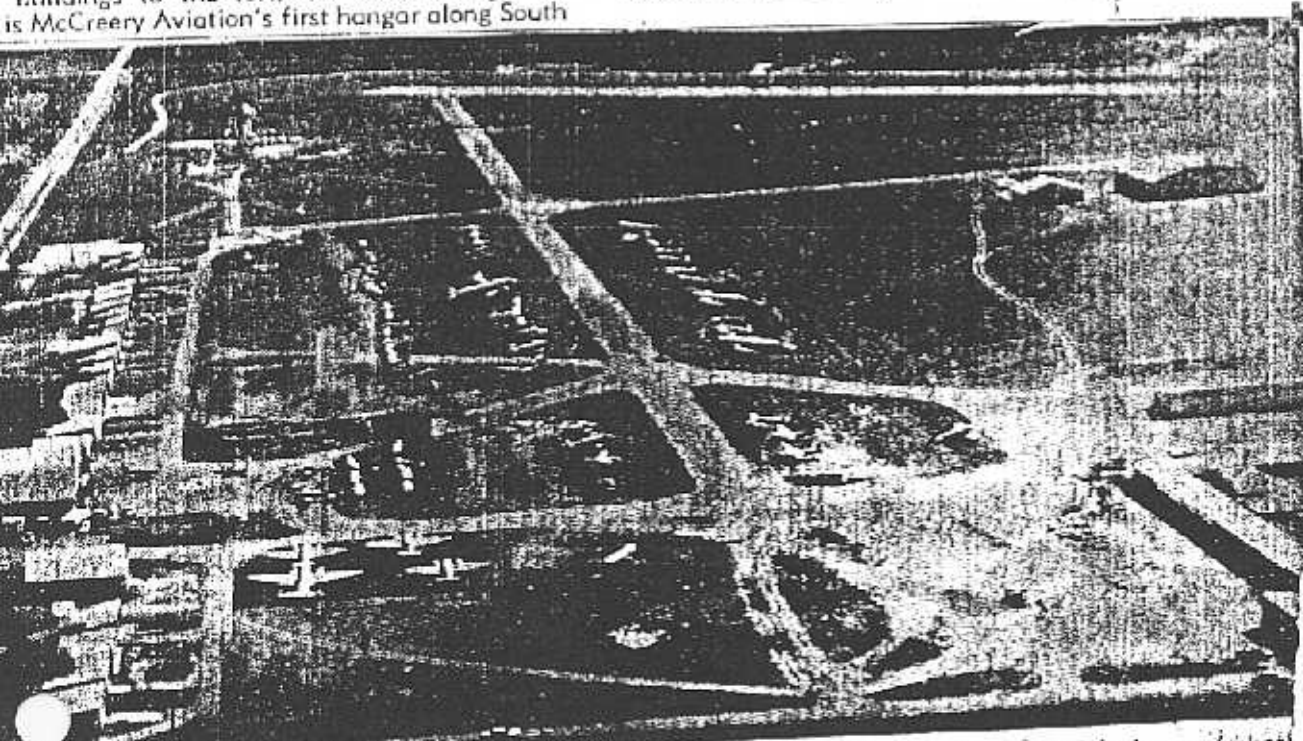
Several hundred new local jobs were created during the year, both through new manufacturer locations and the expansion of existing industry.

Age Came to McAllen Two Years Ago



AIRPORT — View of McAllen's Miller International Airport taken August 1947 looking from south of airport to the north. Visible as an "L" shaped building at the top center of photo is presence of Upper Valley Air Park with U.S. Border buildings to the left. On extreme right of photo is McCreery Aviation's first hangar along South

10th St. Runways were unpaved and consisted of dirt and sod. Barely visible just below Upper Valley Air Park are three aircraft. Street visible at top of photo is Wichita Avenue. Total buildings on the airport at the time numbered but five. (Photo Courtesy of McCreery Aviation)



TODAY'S AIRPORT — McAllen's Miller International Airport as it appears today. View is taken from north looking south with Wichita Avenue in foreground and are Upper Valley Air Park buildings with McCreery Aviation Hangars and building just below center left of photo. Group of buildings and hangars at left of photo are Valley Aviation Co. Trans-

Texas Office is at extreme upper right hand of photo. New terminal building under construction is not shown. Customs and immigration building is the dark-roofed building at top end of hangar line paralleling South 10th St. on left-hand side of photo. Main runway is seen at top of photo. (Main Photo by Hank Henry)



TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

George W. Bush • Governor
John L. Nau, III • Chairman
Curtis Tunnell • Executive Director

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

July 24, 1997

Rick and Marilyn DeJulio
707 N. 15th Street
McAllen TX 78501

RE: Sam and Marjorie Miller House
707 N. 15th Street
McAllen TX 78501
July 9, 1997

Dear Mr. & Mrs. DeJulio,

Congratulations! The National Park Service listed your property in the National Register of Historic Places on the date referenced above. As the nation's official list of historically significant properties, National Register listing denotes that your property is especially worthy of preservation. Your property joins some 2200 properties in Texas with this designation.

Various historic preservation programs may be available to aid in the preservation of your property, including investment tax credits for certain income producing properties. Although funding is limited, grants may also be available to aid in the further preservation of your property. For more information regarding grant programs, contact the THIC's Division of Architecture at 512-463-6094.

Enclosed is a certificate of listing and an application for a National Register plaque should you wish to purchase one through the Texas Historical Commission.

Thank you for all your efforts to recognize this historic property. Your continued interest in the preservation of Texas' heritage is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,


Curtis Tunnell
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures
CC:

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3. Miller, Marjorie Williams, *Willtams Family History*, Austin: Family Publication, 1993
4. "The Monitor", 1956, 1981, 1986, Hidalgo County Historical Museum, Archives, Edinburg, TX.
5. "Homer Leonard", *The Internet*
www.cemctery.state.tx.us/pub/user_form.asp?step=1&pers_id=2450
6. "Monty's", McAllen: Lloyd Glover 1937. Helen Snyder Collection, McAllen TX.



PHOTOGRAPHIC ADDENDUM
for
707 North 15th Street
McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas 78501

October, 2002































