

La Madrileña - Ortiz Store  
1002 East Madison Street  
Brownsville  
Cameron County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-3281

HABS  
TEX,  
31-BROWN,  
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20243

## LA MADRILEÑA - ORTIZ STORE

HABS TEX, 31-BROWN, 12-

Location: 1002 E. Madison Street, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.  
USGS East Brownsville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 14/650620/2865780.

Present Owner: Miss Lita Ortiz, Mrs. T. R. Tumlinson, Kip Van Johnson Hodge, and Noelle Lynn Johnson Hodge.

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: It stands only as an empty shell.

Significance: La Madrileña (a native of Madrid), built in 1892, is a noteworthy example of a small-scale brick corner store. The brick work of the openings, which extend around the store and the elaborate cornice treatment, are both typical of Rio Grande Valley architecture, although the detailing of the pilasters, corbelling and pinnacles is unusual in a building of this size. The store's massing and proportions are particularly fine. La Madrileña was built by Adrian Ortiz, who operated a general store there until his death in 1957.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1892.
2. Architect: According to Mrs. Claudio Ortiz the store was built by its owner, Adrian Ortiz.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Ortiz Store is built on Lot 6 Block 112, in the Original Townsite of Brownsville. Adrian Ortiz bought lots 5 and 6 from the New York Brownsville Improvement Company on May 7, 1894, for \$350 in United States currency. This was recorded on October 11, 1895, in Book J, pages 547-548. After Mr. Ortiz death in 1957, the property was split among his heirs. Currently his granddaughter, Lita Ortiz, owns 3/6 of the property, a daughter, Mrs. T. R. Tumlinson, owns 2/6, and 1/6 is owned by his great grandchildren, Kip Van Johnson Hodge and Noel Lynn Hodge. References to the title of these lots are found in the Cameron County, Texas, Deed Records.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: H. M. Field supplied the materials for La Madrileña. Field sold lumber and other building supplies, and he also maintained a brick yard. (See Field-Pacheco Complex, HABS No. TX-3277, and Henry Field Papers Box.) According to the Field papers, the names "Santiago McCoy - Contractors," and "Modesto + Estevan Adamo" are associated with the construction of this building.

5. Original plans and construction: According to Mrs. Claudio Ortiz, the procedure for making the brick used in the store was the same as that brought over from Europe by the Marist fathers when they built the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Brownsville. (See HABS No. TEX-3139.) The May 1894 Sanborn Map, shows an L-shaped brick structure with a General Store along the Madison Street side of the property. A dwelling is indicated in the remaining portion of the ell along 10th Street. This map also indicates that there was a wooden cornice or overhand approximately 8 feet in depth on the interior of the ell.

Mrs. Ortiz states that originally there was a large wooden sign on the Madison Street facade between the two central pinnacles which said, "La Madrileña."

6. Alterations and additions: The January 1906 Sanborn Map shows the brick structure with the same L-shaped configuration as the 1894 map. However, the left-hand portion of the front along Madison Street is described as a dwelling and a frame structure has been erected following the interior contour of the ell and extending into Lot 5. This same basic structure appears unchanged in the March 1914 Sanborn Map.

According to Mrs. Claudio Ortiz, who recalls what she was told by her father-in-law, Adrian Ortiz, groceries and hardware were sold in the main part of the store along Madison Street. Ready-to-wear clothes as well as clothes especially made by a seamstress supervised by Mrs. Adrian Ortiz (Manuela) were sold in the back portion of the ell along 10th Street. As the 1914 map shows, the ready-to-wear room was enclosed to make a living room which connected to a three-bedroom frame house which Mr. Ortiz built adjoining the store. Mrs. Claudio Ortiz feels that this frame structure was built on a room-by-room basis, with rooms added on as they were needed.

The frame structure was torn down in 1965 or 1966 because of its deterioration. Lumber salvaged from it was used to build the dwelling on the other side of the alley on 10th Street.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

The store was owned and operated by Mr. Adrian Barrera Ortiz until his death in 1957 at the age of 97. Both Ortiz and his wife, Manuela Cisneros Buitureira, whose family was from the region of Galicia, in Spain, were described as coming from the town of Llerganes in Santander, Spain. (Since this town does not now appear in Santander, it is possible that the the oral history data meant to refer to Llanes, just over the present line from Santander, in Oviedo. It is also possible that, as Llerganes, Llanes was originally in Santander, and that changes in boundaries have placed it subsequently in Oviedo.

Most of the store's customers were farmers, and Mr. Ortiz let them pay their accounts on a yearly basis, without interest, when their crops came in. The goods which were sold in the store were not pre-packaged; shortening, flour, and sugar were kept in tins and Lita Ortiz recalls cookies being kept in jars in the 1940s. According to Mrs. Claudio Ortiz it was learned that Mr. Ortiz would obtain his wines, dried codfish, and imported goods from Juan H. Fernandez, and his other merchandize from the Yturria store and Andres Cueto. During the depression Mr. Ortiz would let people buy goods in any quantity they could afford, and it was not unusual for people to buy 10¢ worth of milk or 5¢ worth of beans. Mr. Ortiz also maintained the custom of *pilón*. Children doing the family shopping were given something extra like a piece of candy or a cookie when they came to place their order. (*Pilón* comes from *azúcar de pilón*, "loaf sugar" or therefore "sugar lump," often given to both horses and children as a treat and a reward for good behavior. Apparently the custom of making such an offering became *pilón*.)

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Mrs. Claudio Ortiz and her daughter Miss Lita Ortiz, June 28, 1977. This interview supplied information about Mr. Adrian Ortiz as well as information about the building's uses. Mrs. Claudio Ortiz recalled stories her father-in-law, Adrian Ortiz, told her of the building's early history. Mrs. Ortiz stated that all the store's records were destroyed after Adrian Ortiz' death, and that she did not think any other records remained, since Ortiz paid for everything in cash. There are early invoices pertaining to the store in the possession of Mr. Eddie Valent but these are presently not available for examination.

Henry Field Papers, University of Texas Archives, Barker Historical Collection, Austin, Texas. Field's account books have orders placed by Adrian Ortiz as well as the notation that Ortiz paid \$300 to the account of James McCoy.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Miller, Ernest H. Brownsville City Directory. Asheville: Piedmont Directory Company, 1913-1914 (Volume I) and 1929-30 (Volume IV).

Sanborn Map of Brownsville dated May 1894 showing Block 112, lots 5 and 6; Map dated March 1914 showing Block 112, lots 5 and 6. These maps can be found in the Hunter Collection of the City-College Library of Brownsville, Texas, and in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Prepared by: Betty Bird  
University of Virginia  
Project Historian  
1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This shell of a building shows one of the best examples of brickwork of the Brownsville area, and offers great potential for adaptive use.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor. Floors, doors, and ceilings are ruinous, but brick walls are essentially sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: La Madrileña is a one-story, L-shaped building, with five bays on each approximately fifty-foot street side.
2. Foundation: Foundation is of brick, with brick grade beam down the center of both the main block and its ell.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Walls are constructed of pink-tinged tan brick laid up in common bond. On the two street facades there is a pilaster between each opening with corbeled courses which extend out diagonally in the same plane, forming a capital. Along the top of the pilasters there is a four-course corbeled belt course above which are three stretcher courses and a corbeled three-course parapet cap. The pilasters extend through the belt course and parapet cap to form a pinnacle-like projection, gablet-topped. The parapet has brick quarter-round projections, with header-course cap above the cap on each end bay, on each side, and curves up at the next two inner bays. The curved parapet is capped with a header course. The center bay has a parapet straight across, being the highest point of the brickwork, with the same belt coursing repeated there. Along the exterior walls there is a two-course parapet cap. There is a brick ledge at the perimeter of the rooms to receive the floor joists.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick load-bearing walls and frame construction.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: On the southeast and southwest rear walls is the evidence of an L-shaped porch having been removed. The cuts in the brick for rafters and the flashing are still there.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are five double openings on both the northeast and northwest facades. The openings have wooden surrounds and wooden sills. Doors have been removed, with the exception of a fragment of a wood frame that formerly had wood panels. There is a two-light transom with iron bars across the

exterior and no glass. On the exterior at each of these openings is a brick soldier flat arch and on the interior is a brick header segmental arch. A similar doorway is in the center of the southeast facade on the southwest leg of the L. A single doorway is in the center of the facades of each the southeast wall and the southwest wall of the northeast L. Each has wood surrounds and wood sills but no doors.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: There is an L-shaped hip roof with wooden shingles, but much of the roof covering is missing. There is a brick parapet forming a gutter with the roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: There are five double openings on the northwest facade that lead into the large interior space. A doorway in the center of the southeast wall and a doorway in the center of the southwest wall lead from the outside. There are two double openings on the northwest facade leading to the exterior street. A large doorway on the southwest interior wall of the first section (with the two doors) leads into another large room which has three double openings leading to the street. (Together these openings appear to be five identical openings on the main exterior walls of the store.) There is one more opening on the southeast wall to the exterior.
2. Flooring: The flooring has been removed and only the earth remains with a brick grade beam down the center of each room.
3. Walls and ceiling finish: Walls are brick, once painted white, with the paint peeling off. The ceiling is of wide wood boards in the northeast room, partially torn out, and a small remnant of wooden beaded paneling in the southwest room. There is a picture molding around the walls in the southwest room.
4. Doorways and doors: There is a doorway between the two rooms, but it has no door or trim. There is a segmental arch lintel above the door opening.
5. Mechanical equipment: There is no mechanical equipment, only the ceramic escutcheons of the lighting fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces northeast from the southwest side of E. Madison Street, at the southeast corner of the intersection of E. Madison and E. 10th streets. There are commercial, residential, and professional offices around the site. There are several large trees and underbrush along the southeast property line. A large tree is at the corner of the building on the southwest and southeast sides, and a tree in the L at the rear. A brick sidewalk and curb extend part way along the northeast side. A vacant lot is on the southeast side with two large palm trees at the street side.

2. Outbuildings: There is a small residential quarter on the rear of the lot at the southwest. This is a wood frame structure with wood siding, gable roof covered with asphalt shingles, and in fair condition. It sits off the ground on brick piers.

Prepared by John P. White  
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Project Supervisor  
1977

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

At the suggestion of a national preservation consultant, Ellen Bessley, this project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in cooperation with the Brownsville Historical Association and the Brownsville City Planning Department. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1977 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Brownsville, Texas, by John P. White (Associate Professor, Texas Technological University) Project Supervisor; Betty Bird (University of Virginia) Project Historian; and Student Assistant Architects Scott Deneroff (University of Maryland), Susan Dornbusch (University of Virginia), Matthew Lowry (University of Pennsylvania), Eduardo Luaces (University of Florida), and Alan Willig (the City College of the City University of New York). Special assistance and support were provided to the HABS team by Mrs. Mary Simmons, Mrs. Sally Fleming, Miss Theresa Champion, and Mr. Calvin Walker of the Brownsville Historical Association; and by Mr. Mario Moreno, Mr. Richard Waldman, Mrs. Graciels Salinas, and Mr. Larry Brown of the Brownsville City Planning Department. Archival photographs of the project were made in February 1979 by Bill Engdahl, of Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago, Illinois. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.