

JAMES L. LANDRUM HOUSE

(Rancho Ciprés)

South side of U.S. Highway 281 (Military Highway)

Approximately 850' East of FM 2520

San Benito Vicinity

Cameron County

Texas

HABS No. TX-3548

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED & INTERPRETIVE DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, D.C. 20240-001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JAMES L. LANDRUM HOUSE
(Rancho Ciprés)

HABS No. TX-3548

- Location: The James L. Landrum House is located on the south side of U.S. 281 (Military Highway) approximately 850' east of Farm-to-Market (FM) Road 2520, south of San Benito, Texas. It is approximately 4000' north of the Rio Grande on a portion of the 1781 Concepción de Carricitos grant. The house is located at latitude 26.04398, longitude -97.69653. This coordinate was taken near the front door and was obtained on 2 December 2007, using a Global Positioning System (GPS) mapping grade accurate to +/- 3 meter after differential correction. The coordinate's datum is North American Datum of 1983. The location of the resource has no restriction on its release to the public.
- Present Owner/
Occupant: Carl Bauer Sr. is owner of the James L. Landrum House and surrounding property.
- Present Use: The James L. Landrum House is currently vacant. The surrounding 1,100 acres are worked by the Bauer family. Outbuildings west of the house, both of historic and recent construction, are used in the farm operation.
- Significance: The James L. Landrum House is both architecturally and historically significant at the local level. Completed in 1902, the house is historically significant as the residence of James L. Landrum, who designed and lived in the house and was prominent in Lower Rio Grande Valley business and civic history. Landrum was a partner with Sam Robertson and Benjamin Hicks in the San Benito Land and Water Company that was responsible for the development of the town of San Benito. Landrum's 1,100-acre *Rancho Ciprés* (Cypress Ranch) was established by his father-in-law, Stephen Powers, an attorney for General Zachary Taylor during the Mexican-American War and former mayor of Brownsville. *Rancho Ciprés* was a cotton plantation that later was sharecropped. Fronting Old Military Highway, the house was a frequent stopping point for the U.S. military and for missionaries who travelled the valley on horseback at a time when the valley was mostly large ranches and plantations. The house is architecturally significant as an excellent example of rural residential architecture in a vernacular interpretation of the neo-classical revival and Victorian styles. It is an imposing, two-story house of blonde brick made onsite. Cypress lumber used in the stairway, ceilings, floors, doors, and door and window trim was brought from New Orleans. The house has an L-plan with a two-story main block with central hall under a side gable roof, and a one-story projecting rear wing for the kitchen and dining room. Notable architectural features are the 17"-thick load-bearing masonry walls; wall dormers on the front and rear facades; quoins on the building corners;

Victorian-style scrollwork detailing on roof gable ends, dormer gables, and rear porch supports; *voussoir* brick window and door lintels with drop ends; tiles with year of construction (1902) and James L. Landrum's initials (JLL); front door with transom and sidelights; and a rear door with fanlight transom and sidelights accessing a small vestibule transitioning the rear wing and living room. Rear porches run the south main facade and east rear wing facade to form a rear courtyard. The house remained in the Landrum family until 1972.

Historians: Marjorie Nowick, Melissa Wiedenfeld, and Lori Vermaas served as project historians/architectural historians.

Project

Information: This project was conducted by HDR under subcontract to Louis Berger Group for the Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston. The project was funded by the Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Historical research and architectural documentation were completed by Marjorie Nowick, Melissa Wiedenfeld, Lori Vermaas, and Chad Blackwell. Photography was completed by Timothy McGrath, principal of Image West, Arvada, Colorado, as subcontractor to HDR on 17–20 February 2010. Architectural fieldwork including description and measurement was conducted on 17–20 February 2010. Architectural drawings were delineated by Susan Cheek, Angles Architecture, Denver, Colorado, as subcontractor to HDR.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

- 1. Date of construction:** The James L. Landrum House was completed in 1902. This is based on the date on the house's dormer detail, and on marker information prepared by Frances Warner Ward for the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark application to the Texas Historical Commission.
- 2. Architect:** James L. Landrum designed and oversaw the construction of the house.
- 3. Original and Subsequent Owners, Occupants, Uses:** James L. Landrum was the original owner, 1902–1936; Martha Landrum Wagner, Pauline Landrum Goode, and Frances Landrum Ward, 1936–1946; Frances Landrum Ward Talbot, 1947–1976; Carl Bauer Sr., 1976–present. The house was used for residential purposes throughout its history; however since being owned by Carl Bauer Sr., it has been vacant except for short periods.¹

¹ Ownership is based on a researched chain of title through Cameron County Clerk of Court; also Eddie G. McNail, "The Landrum Plantation or El Rancho Cepres," unpublished typescript verified by Frances Wagner Talbot and Chris Bauer for Landrum House Recorded Texas Historical Building Marker (Austin, TX: Texas Historical Commission, 1978).

4. **Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:** James Landrum oversaw the construction of the house, including onsite brickmaking. Construction laborers were local Mexicans. Bricks were constructed on the property; cypress lumber from New Orleans, Louisiana, was shipped and barged up the Rio Grande to the Landrum's river landing.²
5. **Original Plans and Construction:** No plans exist. It is not known if plans were drawn or not.
6. **Alterations and Additions:** There have been no major additions to the James L. Landrum House but there have been several alterations. The front (north) facade incurred hurricane damage prior to 1950 resulting in several changes to the front of the house.³ The house originally had two front dormers with a small square window between them on the north facade, and an original front porch with round columns and a shed roof based on historic photographs. The front facade was rebuilt with a third (central dormer) and small balcony at the center bay of the upper story. The original porch with round columns and shed roof was replaced with the current concrete and red brick porch that lacks a roof. Other alterations include removal of an interior wall partitioning a small library or office to enlarge the living room.⁴ The second-story southwest bedroom was reconfigured as two bathrooms, hall, and two closets. To accommodate this, the south interior wall of the northwest bedroom was moved south by 2'. A small bathroom also was added to the first-story northeast bedroom.

² McNail, "The Landrum Plantation or El Rancho Cepres," 2.

³ Carl Bauer Sr. and Trudy Bauer stated that they do not recall any changes to the front of the house and there have been no changes since the property has been in their ownership. This would place the damage to the front of the house to prior to 1972, likely prior to 1950 (Carl and Trudy Bauer to Marjorie Nowick, 20 February 2010).

⁴ Frances Wagner Quiñones to Melissa Wiedenfeld, 18 February 2010.

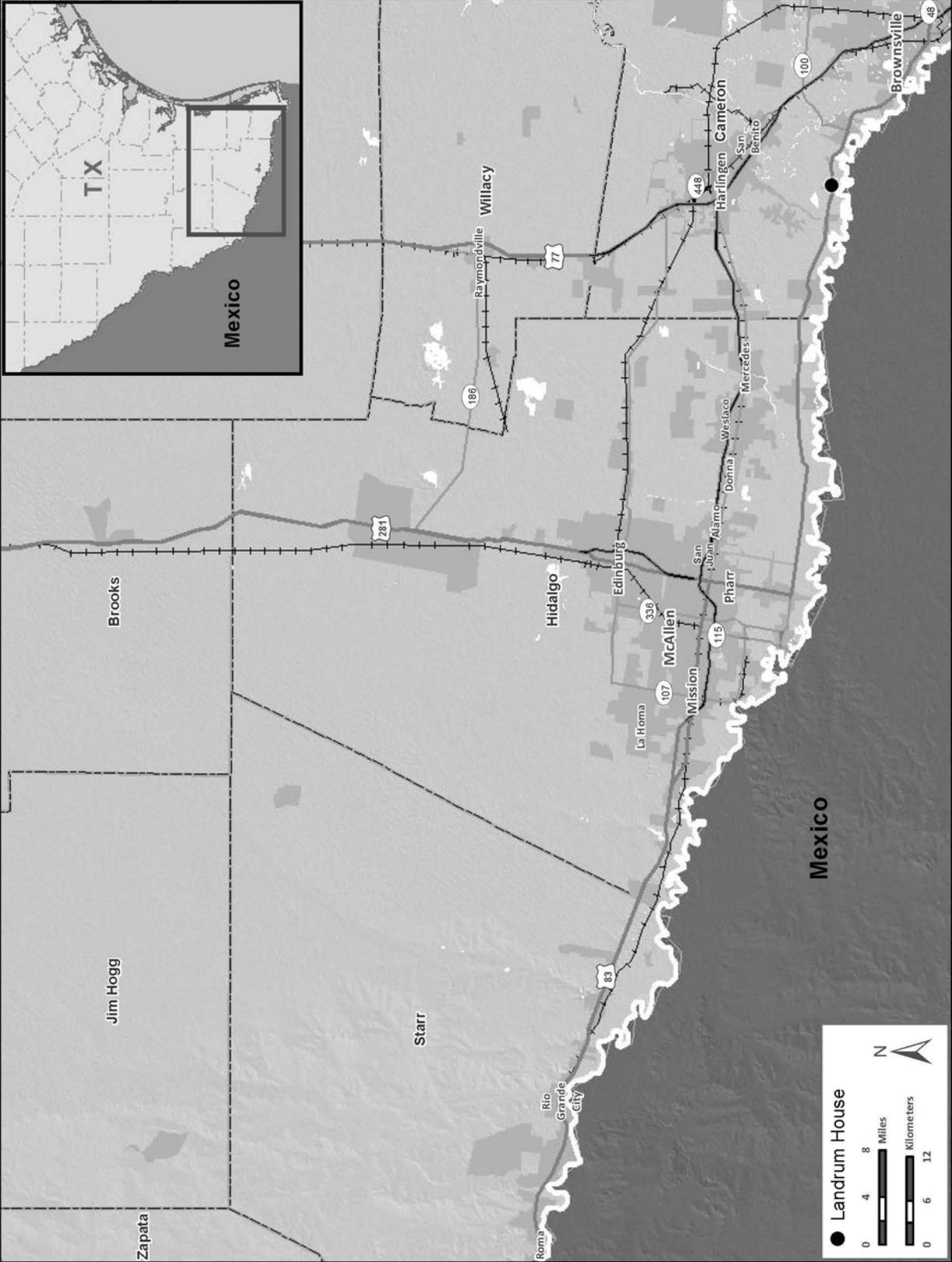


Figure 1. Map of southern Texas showing location of James L. Landrum House

B. Historical Context:

The Lower Rio Grande River Valley

The James L. Landrum House is situated along the Rio Grande in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, a U.S.–Mexico border region stretching from Roma, Texas, to Brownsville, Texas (92 miles west and 17 miles east of the James L. Landrum House, respectively), that has been much affected by Spanish, Mexican, and then American interests.

In 1746, the Spanish Crown commissioned José de Escandón, a Spanish colonel, to lead civilian colonization efforts between Tampico and the San Antonio River to better secure Spanish control of the region. By the mid-1750s, settlers began to establish *ranchos* on the northern side of the river. Wealthy Mexican landowners, or *rancheros*, brought their cattle herds north to the new Escandón settlements, notable as the first European settlements in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.⁵ The Spanish crown distributed land grants called *porciones*—long lots fronting the river for grazing or agriculture that were assigned to settlers in order of seniority.⁶ The *porciones* usually fronted the Rio Grande or other water source for about 0.5 mile, stretched 11–14 miles from the river, and encompassed between 4,200 and 6,200 acres.⁷ The suitability of the land for either agriculture or grazing also determined the size of the *porción*—ranching *porciones* (*sitios*) were larger than agricultural ones.⁸ Some established ranches on the north side of the river became the large ranches of the next century.

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, and the Mexican government provided heads of immigrating families as much as a league or *sitio* for grazing (4,400 acres) and cropland (177 acres) in exchange for certain conditions.⁹ Land agents called *empresarios* were given territories in which immigrants could settle who would then become Mexican citizens.¹⁰ These ranches often grew into small communities close to the river.

⁵ Mario L. Sanchez, *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Heritage Corridor*, 2nd ed. (Austin, TX: Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project and the Texas Historical Commission, 1994).

⁶ Mary Jo Galindo, “*Con un Pie en Cada Lado: Ethnicities and the Archaeology of Spanish Colonial Ranching Communities Along the Lower Río Grande Valley*” (Dissertation, University of Texas, 2003); Knight and Associates, *Evaluation of the Irrigation System of Cameron County Irrigation District No. 2. (San Benito)*, prepared for Texas Department of Transportation Environmental Affairs Division (Buda, TX: Knight and Associates, 2007), 2.

⁷ Galindo, “*Con un Pie en Cada Lado*,” 8.

⁸ Galindo, “*Con un Pie en Cada Lado*,” 8.

⁹ Aldon S. Land and Christopher Long, “Land Grants,” *The Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association), accessed on 20 July 2009, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/LL/mp11.html>.

¹⁰ A. A. Fox, “Historic Anglo-European Exploration and Colonization,” in *From the Gulf to the Rio Grande: Human Adaptation in Central, South, and Lower Pecos Texas*, ed. T. R. Hester, S. L. Black, D. G. Steele, B. W. Olive, A. A. Fox, K. J. Reinhard, and L. C. Bement, 85–92, Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 33, (Fayetteville, AR: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1989).

With the Republic of Texas battling for its independence in the mid-1830s and '40s and the subsequent disputes over control, land ownership based on the Spanish land grants became confused and complicated. Texas was annexed by the United States in December 1845. In 1846, General Zachary Taylor led a force of 1,500 men to the mouth of the Rio Grande at present-day Brownsville to protect U.S. territorial claims, thereby starting the Mexican-American War. The United States captured Mexico City in October 1847, all but officially ending the Mexican-American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, signed in February 1848, established the Rio Grande as the recognized international border between Mexico and the United States; further clarifications of the border took place in 1853.

Following the war, the U.S. Army established forts and outposts along the Rio Grande at large ranch locations. Fort Ringgold was established in 1848 near the Carnestolendas Ranch at present-day Rio Grande City. To commemorate Major Jacob Brown, Fort Texas was renamed Fort Brown, which in turn inspired the naming of Brownsville, the main port city on the river; Roma and Rio Grande City (approximately 113 miles and 100 miles, respectively, upriver from Brownsville) also became important ports for commerce headed inland to the United States and Mexico.

The United States and Mexico had no established agreement regarding the ever-shifting Rio Grande and its problematic effect on international boundary claims. A protocol to address changes in the river course was established in 1884, and the International Border Commission (IBC) was organized in 1889 to enforce the ratified treaties and oversee border issues.¹¹

In 1850, the Texas Legislature granted authorization to Brownsville lawyer Stephen Powers to incorporate a railroad company in south Texas. Powers's plans never came to fruition; instead local ferries served as the principal means of crossing the Rio Grande—making international trade difficult. In 1866 Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King received approval from the legislature to construct a railroad from Brazos Santiago or Port Isabel to Brownsville. The Rio Grande Railway Company was incorporated on 1 October 1866, but its limited narrow gauge railroad tracks between Brownsville and Port Isabel (approximately 23 miles to the northeast) did not survive hurricane damage during the 1870s and 1880s. It was not until the opening of the Brownsville and Matamoros Bridge in 1910 that the first formal bridge spanned the lower Rio Grande.¹²

In 1911, Mexican revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces fought for control of Mexico, prompting the need for better security on the American side of the border. Lucio Blanco, a general fighting for General Venustiano Carranza's Constitutionalists, marched on Mexican towns in the valley, capturing Reynosa and Matamoros by June 1913. With the

¹¹ International Boundary and Waters Commission, "Treaties Between the United States and Mexico," accessed on 20 July 2009, http://www.ibwc.gov/Treaties_Minutes/treaties.html.

¹² J. Lee Stambaugh and Lillian J. Stambaugh, *The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas* (Austin, TX: Jenkins Publishing and San Felipe Press, 1974), 161–162.

threat of violence along the river's southern side, many Mexican civilians relocated to its northern side. Raiders and bandits led forays across the river and attacked ranches, stores, and trains. Raids were waged against Brownsville and the nascent railroad settlements at Mercedes, Los Fresnos, Harlingen, San Benito, and Donna. The United States stationed troops along the border, including national guardsmen on available property, even that of James Landrum.¹³

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Lower Rio Grande Valley began to develop into one of the most productive agricultural areas in the United States. Treaties between the United States and Mexico in 1906 and 1933 established the distribution of water resources from the river and introduced methods to stabilize and control the course of the river.¹⁴ The introduction of modern irrigation technologies, the emergence of reliable transportation to markets in the form of railroads and highways, and a supply of cheap labor from itinerant workers all combined to create the right environment for the valley to become a successful, albeit fragile, agricultural region.

Rail transportation spurred the development of agriculture as well as settlement of the valley's towns. Uriah Lott, a transplanted New York merchant, and Benjamin Yoakum, a former employee of Jay Gould's International & Great Northern Railroad, incorporated the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway in 1903.¹⁵ By July 1904, the rail line connected Brownsville to Robstown (approximately 140 miles to the north), and by the end of the year a western spur line connected the rail from Harlingen (approximately 28 miles north of Brownsville) through Mission (approximately 42 miles to the west) and on to Sam Fordyce (another 14 miles to the west). The railroad, with its links to markets outside of the valley, facilitated the growth of agriculture and dramatically increased land prices.

Towns throughout the valley competed to become the area's leading community during the early twentieth century. San Benito, with its superior infrastructure, was the clear winner over Harlingen until the years after World War II.¹⁶ Furthermore, the town had constructed a rail network earlier than Harlingen and served as the hub of over 200 miles of secondary rail lines of the "Spider Web" railway, the popular name for the San Benito, Rio Grande Valley Interurban Railway Company. The line initially connected San Benito, Rio Hondo (approximately 9 miles northeast of San Benito), and Mercedes (approximately 20 miles west

¹³ Brian Robertson, *Rio Grande Heritage: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, VA: Donning Company Publishers, 1985), 149–152.

¹⁴ International Boundary and Waters Commission, "Treaties Between the United States and Mexico."

¹⁵ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, prepared for Texas Department of Transportation Environmental Affairs Division (Buda, TX: Knight and Associates, 2007), 11; Robertson, *Rio Grande Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 80–82.

¹⁶ Milo Kearney, "The Shifting Relationship Between Harlingen and San Benito in the First Three Decades of the Twentieth Century," in *Studies in Matamoros and Cameron County History*, ed. Milo Kearney, Anthony Knopp, and Antonio Zavaleta (Brownsville, TX: University of Texas at Brownsville, 1997), 42.

of San Benito); by 1912 the line reached as far as Mission (almost 50 miles west of San Benito).¹⁷

The first push to irrigate the valley on a large scale came from privately owned irrigation and land companies determined to cooperatively develop agriculture in the region. Although George Brulay irrigated his sugarcane as early as the late 1870s, the Brownsville Land and Irrigation Company was the first such company to establish a permanent pumping operation near Brownsville.¹⁸ In 1902, the Hidalgo Canal Company was organized in Hidalgo County on 9,500 acres which were irrigated and then leased to tenant farmers. Irrigation and land companies, although separate entities, worked in concert to bring potential investors and property owners into the region. In 1902, only four irrigation companies existed; by 1910, twenty irrigation companies operated in Cameron and Hidalgo counties.¹⁹ Colonel Sam Robertson's San Benito Land and Water Company, of which James Landrum was a partner, was one such company.

Rising sugar prices in the second decade of the twentieth century created a land boom. Sugarcane cultivation required lots of water, good drainage, a long growing season, and plenty of labor. To process the cane into sugar, growers established collective companies to mill, process, and package the sugar. The San Benito Sugar Manufacturing Company, established in 1911, was one such company.²⁰

The commercial development of the citrus industry began in the 1920s and John Shary became the valley's principal proponent.²¹ Shary developed property near Mission, acquired the Mission Canal Company, and began marketing a land scheme that allowed buyers to invest in the land while Shary's own citrus company supplied the trees, irrigation, labor, and packaging.²² Shary's marketing plan became a model for development across the valley. The Great Depression slowed the citrus boom in south Texas, which was further crippled by a series of freezes after World War II.²³

The construction of the first hard surface roadway connecting the valley to San Antonio (more than 200 miles to the north) in 1921 and the development of refrigerated railroad cars allowed the further development and marketing of winter truck crops in the valley. The valley earned the moniker "The Nation's Truck Farm" for diversifying winter crops and

¹⁷ Kearney, "The Shifting Relationship Between Harlingen and San Benito," 45.

¹⁸ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*.

¹⁹ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 16.

²⁰ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 23.

²¹ Robertson, *Rio Grande Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 184; Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 29.

²² Robertson, *Rio Grande Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 185–186; Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 30.

²³ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 37.

shipping vegetables to northern markets year round.²⁴ The 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression essentially ended private ownership of irrigation companies in the valley. Changes in water law in the mid-1920s had granted more power to public irrigation districts and the private ones were absorbed into them.²⁵ By 1927, twenty-eight irrigation districts existed in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, supplanting the earlier role and reach of the private irrigation companies. Various New Deal programs initiated by the federal government had an impact in the Valley, assisting those out of work and funding infrastructure construction projects. A 1933 hurricane spurred the Public Works Administration (PWA) to provide funds to assist irrigation districts to line canals with concrete and funds for flood control.²⁶ In 1944, the United States and Mexico signed an international treaty on water and irrigation. After World War II, agriculture continued to prosper although corporations that were increasingly invested in agriculture development took over the valley's acreage.

The James L. Landrum House

Located 17 miles west of Brownsville in Cameron County, the land on which the James L. Landrum House sits was a part of the *Concepción de Carricitos* Grant. The grant was given by the Spanish government to Eugenio and Bartolomé Fernández in 1781. Texas' statehood in 1845 intensified ownership issues for land grant holders, Fernandez's heirs included. The state of Texas relinquished claims on the grant lands on 10 February 1852, but ownership disputes continued.²⁷ Brownsville lawyer Stephen Powers, who had served as General Zachary Taylor's attorney during the Mexican-American War and later became Brownsville's mayor, helped the Fernandez heirs to confirm title to land in the disputed area. For his efforts, he was paid with approximately a half-interest in the grant. Later, Powers established *Rancho Ciprés* (Cypress Ranch), a large ranch on his holdings west of Brownsville near the Rio Grande.

Powers died on 5 February 1882, and his will stipulated that "any and all lands of which I may die seized be kept together until my youngest daughter arrives of age."²⁸ Ultimately, he willed part of the ranch to his youngest daughter, Frances Euphemia, but litigation, more than her age, stalled its confirmation until 2 October 1891. On that date Frances was given share No. 3 of the *Concepción de Carricitos* lands, totaling 6,888 acres, "being a portion of private survey No. 461, and the upper one-half of private survey No. 448, [that] encloses within its metes and bounds the Ranch *San José* and a portion of Ranch "*El Ciprés*."²⁹

²⁴ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 31, 36.

²⁵ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 32.

²⁶ Knight and Associates, *A History of Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, 35.

²⁷ Act of the Legislature of the State of Texas, "An Act to relinquish the right of the State to certain lands therein named," Cameron County confirmation no. 10.

²⁸ U.S. Supreme Court, *Transcript of Record, Supreme Court of the United States, October Term 1904, No. 174, James Stillman, Appellant vs. C. B. Combe, Independent Executor of the Estate of Stephen Powers, Deceased; C. B. Combe, et al.* (Washington, DC: Judd & Detweiler, 1904), 114.

²⁹ U.S. Supreme Court, *Transcript of Record*, 114.

Reportedly Frances Euphemia Powers met James Lambert Landrum (1865–1936) at a dance held at a hotel in Uvalde, Texas, where she was visiting friends.³⁰ James Landrum was a Californian whose father had relocated to Uvalde, Texas, because of his wife’s health needs and to raise angora goats. In 1893, Frances Euphemia Powers married James Lambert Landrum and the couple had three daughters: Martha F. Landrum (1894–1981), Pauline E. Landrum (1895–1980), and Frances Landrum (1900–1989). A son, William Landrum, was born in 1896, but lived less than a year. After their marriage, the Landrums began construction on a large house for their family, but the manufacture of thousands of bricks onsite took many years. During the construction, they lived onsite in an adobe house. James Landrum designed their two-story yellow brick house and brought cypress wood from Louisiana by boat for its details. The house was completed in 1902.³¹

In 1904, James Landrum went into partnership with Colonel Sam Robertson and Benjamin Oliver Hicks (son-in-law of Stephen Powers and an administrator of Powers’ estate) to form a land and irrigation company that was responsible for the establishment and settlement of the town of San Benito. They planned to build an irrigation canal to a supply camp named Bessie (named after the daughter of a financial backer who was helping to fund the laying of track for the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway), and to buy 13,000 acres from the Powers estate at \$3/acre. By 1907 the San Benito Land and Water Company was formed with capital of \$500,000 and began subdividing lots into ten, twenty, and forty acres and selling them for \$25 to \$75 an acre. The company “...[agreed] to furnish water at flat rates, depending on the crop to be planted.”³² Settlement exploded, as the company sold 4,000 acres of lots in the first two weeks.³³ Robertson conceived a unique plan for the company’s water system, portions of which were to transport boats loaded with sugarcane as well as to convey water for irrigation. Major components did not come to fruition in part due to lack of financing and control of real estate.³⁴ Robertson initially owned only a small amount of the needed land and so took an option from Hicks, Combes, and Landrum (heirs of Stephen Powers) who owned most of the land in the water district. Capital from the partnership and

³⁰ McNail, “The Landrum Plantation or El Rancho Cepres,” 1.

³¹ Perhaps because of expenses related to developing the property, the Landrums temporarily deeded the property to G. M. Raphael on 26 October 1894 for \$1,100 (Cameron County Clerk of Court, Deed of Trust, DT 3:322-326); on 2 June 1896 the Landrums retired their debt and recovered title to the property (Cameron County Clerk of Court, Release of Deed of Trust, DT 3:529-535; Cameron County Clerk of Court, Release of Mortgage, 24 May 1898 DT 4:53-55).

³² Charles M. Robinson, III, *A History of San Benito* (Harlingen, TX: Sand Dollar Graphics, 1982), 10.

³³ Kearney, “The Shifting Relationship Between Harlingen and San Benito,” 40.

³⁴ Robertson’s design was unique. It initially relied on gravity and headgates at the river to move the water rather than pumping and a pumphouse as was more usual. About 1918 the large San Benito pumphouse was built to move the water from the river. His plan also was unusual in its use of the *resaca* with a series of graduated locks both to convey water and transport boats filled with sugarcane (Knight and Associates, *Evaluation of the Irrigation System of Cameron County Irrigation District No. 2. (San Benito)*, 3–6).

control of land enabled the company to construct the water system and to sell the irrigated land.³⁵

Frances E. Powers Landrum died in Bexar County on 1 February 1908, and widower James Landrum and his three daughters remained at *Rancho Ciprés*. James Landrum continued his business and civic pursuits, and became the president of San Benito Bank and Trust in 1912. He held this post until 1924, in addition to owning and operating *Rancho Ciprés*. This was a time of tremendous growth in San Benito, and Landrum's leadership at the bank was no doubt enhanced by his partnership in the San Benito Land and Water Company. By 1910, the town's population reached 2,500, while estimates of sister city Harlingen's fell as low as 300.³⁶ The fast-growing town was incorporated in 1911. James Landrum continued to involve himself in San Benito's activities, and in 1911 he arranged for the Mexico City Police Band to perform for the annual September 16 fiesta, which was held in the San Benito Bank and Trust's arcades.³⁷ A civic leader, he also donated land for public parks.³⁸

Rancho Ciprés was a popular stopping place and rest point for the military, missionaries, and others traveling the valley on horseback. The house fronted the valley's major thoroughfare, the Old Military Highway, at a time when there were few stopping places. Most development then consisted of large ranches and sugarcane and cotton plantations. James Landrum's granddaughter Frances Wagner Quiñones reported that "*The second floor [of the James L. Landrum House] was used from time to time by the O.M.I. missionaries who rode horse back down the Military Highway to Brownsville from La Lomita. They rested and used a small church built near the big home and a school. At the same time Mr. Landrum lent them his horses so their horses could rest and be ready for the missionaries on their return from Brownsville to La Lomita mission.*"³⁹ The U.S. military also used Landrum's *Rancho Ciprés* as stopping place: "*Military from Fort Brown in Brownsville riding their horse to Fort Ringgold in Rio Grande City would pitch tents on the Landrum property between the house and the school and church.*"⁴⁰ During the period of border unrest, the U.S. military camped in the fields of Landrum's *Rancho Ciprés*. The U.S. Army and National Guard occupied Brownsville, San Benito, Harlingen, and other communities of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.⁴¹

³⁵ Knight and Associates, *Evaluation of the Irrigation System of Cameron County Irrigation District No. 2. (San Benito)*, 3–6.

³⁶ Kearney, "The Shifting Relationship Between Harlingen and San Benito," 41.

³⁷ Robinson, *A History of San Benito*, 11; Kearney, "The Shifting Relationship Between Harlingen and San Benito," 42.

³⁸ Kearney, "The Shifting Relationship Between Harlingen and San Benito," 41–42.

³⁹ Frances Wagner Quiñones, letter to Marjorie Nowick of HDR dated 25 August 2008. Frances Wagner Quiñones is the daughter of Martha Frances Landrum Wagner and Robert E. Wagner, and the granddaughter of James Landrum and Frances Powers Landrum. She was born in 1918 and as of 2010 resides in Brownsville.

⁴⁰ Frances Wagner Quiñones to Melissa Wiedenfeld, 13 August 2009.

⁴¹ Quiñones to Wiedenfeld, 13 August 2009.

San Benito had an active social life, and the Landrum family was involved in many of the town's events and activities. The three Landrum daughters were very cultured, and Pauline studied in Spain. The Landrum family was quite musical, listening to operas and playing music on their grand piano. James Landrum's daughter Mattie (Martha) Landrum was one of the royal party selected to participate in the Hog Waddle, held in 1914 as part of the Cabbage Day Parade, a celebration of the town's agricultural success. With cabbage and hog prices holding at profitable levels, business leaders organized the parade, complete with floats, a queen, and her attendants. As several horse-drawn, decorated floats went down Main Street, the queen's ladies-in-waiting, including Mattie, walked alongside the queen's float. Accompanying the floats (whether fronting them or following them) was the march of around 1,000 hogs waddling down Main Street, when suddenly "the hogs stampeded and scattered to the farthest corners of San Benito," many of which were never recaptured.⁴²

The area around *Rancho Ciprés* was known as Landrum, a place name still on some older maps.⁴³ Landrum's ranch raised cotton as its major crop, which was worked on a sharecropper basis. Landrum's two-story house had a commanding presence over his 1,100 acres. In a courtyard behind the house was a small milk house that may have supported a cistern atop its flat roof. His holdings extended north from the river beyond Military Highway, and east and west of the house. Hick's store, a small school, and a church for the workers were east of the house along Military Highway. The barn and other outbuildings were to the house's west. Landrum's fields were on both sides of Military Highway irrigated by a canal behind the house. On the north side of Military Highway just east of Landrum's house were a cotton gin and a series of small houses with detached rear kitchen structures for the sharecroppers. Also north of the highway on FM 2520 was a cemetery established by Landrum for the laborers. Even today the Landrum family controls the cemetery, often giving permission for unmarried workers to be interred there.

James Landrum remarried in 1920, to Mary Dorinda Talbot (1892–1975), and the couple had three sons; only James Lambert Landrum, Jr. (1921–2001) survived into adulthood. By 1924, James Landrum was no longer president of the bank, and on 23 February 1933, the couple sold their ownership of the two-acre tract "on which is located our residence" for one dollar to Frances, who was married at that time to James Delano Ward.⁴⁴ James Landrum

⁴² Alice H. Mayer, *Pioneer Days in San Benito* (San Benito?: n.p., 1964?).

⁴³ Carl Bauer Sr. to Marjorie Nowick, 20 February 2010.

⁴⁴ Cameron County Clerk of Court, Warranty Deed, DR 244:475–476.

died on 20 December 1936, and he left his entire estate to his three daughters to be equally shared.⁴⁵

About 1950, the elderly widow Mary Talbot Landrum lived at *Rancho Ciprés*. The ranch was in poor condition and without a manager. A friend of Pauline Landrum Goode's son Jim, Carl L. Bauer, approached the family about managing the property. Bauer leased and ran the property then purchased it, raising cotton and a variety of crops. He did not live there. His foreman lived in a small frame house that fronts Military Highway. Bauer reports that there was a big barn on the west side of the house, but it was damaged in a hurricane and removed prior to his association with the property in 1950. All of the buildings west of the house date to prior to 1950.⁴⁶

In 1967 Frances Landrum Ward married Tully McCrea Talbot, her stepmother's brother. She had met him in 1966 at a Christmas dinner following his return from Central America.⁴⁷ They lived together in the house, entertained friends, and travelled. On 13 November 1972, Carl Bauer purchased for one dollar an undivided one-third interest in the Landrum Reserve, including the 1,100-acre farm and the two-acre homesite. On 13 November 1982, he paid off his \$101,726 debt to Frances.⁴⁸ Frances owned two farms—one forty acres, the other seventeen acres—along with the 1902 house, and a one-third interest (probably equally shared among the sisters) in the 1,100-acre farm.⁴⁹

By 1973, Martha Landrum Wagner was a widow living in Brownsville, Pauline Landrum Goode had married Gaines Jasper and was living in Brownsville as well, and Frances and Tully Talbot lived in the house.⁵⁰ The three sisters continued to make decisions regarding the estate, rescinding a 1913 order restricting the sale of alcohol on part of the Landrum Addition in town. Frances Landrum Talbot died in 1989. The Bauer family continues to own and work the former Landrum property today.

⁴⁵ The Landrum family (three daughters) was \$17,000 in debt to a J. R. Locke of San Antonio, Texas, by the end of the 1930s and hoped to pay him off by 1950. In the meantime, Martha Wagner (nee Landrum), et al., sold their father's estate, which included the two acres recently sold to Frances and 1,110.10 acres of the Cypress Ranch in the Landrum Reserve, for \$10 to Winchester Kelso and a substitute trustee on 13 April 1940. They made good on their payments much more quickly, and recovered ownership of the estate on 10 October 1945, (Cameron County Clerk of Court, Deed of Trust, DT 141:1-6, DT 167:321-323, Cameron County Clerk of Court, Deed of Trust, DT 141:1-6).

⁴⁶ Carl Bauer Sr. to Marjorie Nowick, 20 February 2010.

⁴⁷ McNail, "The Landrum Plantation or El Rancho Cepres."

⁴⁸ Bauer was in debt to Frances with eleven promissory notes, one for \$10,000 and ten others totaling \$101,726 (Cameron County Clerk of Court, Deed of Trust, DT 634:857-863); (Release of Lien OR 31:77-79).

⁴⁹ Cameron County Clerk of Court, Deed Records, DR 842:904.

⁵⁰ Cameron County Clerk of Court, Deed Records, DR 976:307.

Frances Wagner Quiñones, granddaughter of James Landrum, related the following history of the property in a letter written in 2008:⁵¹

The property where Landrum House was built is located on the Concepción de Carritos land grant of 1789. King of Spain gave it to Eugenia and Bartolemo Fernandez. Stephen Powers became owner after legal services. Stephen Powers came with Taylor's army as a lawyer. Powers gave it to his daughter Frances Euphemia who married James L. Landrum June 1893.

James L. of Uvalde, Tx married Frances E. in Brownsville. After their marriage they went to live in a small house on El Cyprus ranch. While living here brick was made to build the larger home and to cover all the backyard to the outer buildings. They moved into the large home in 1902 with their three daughters Martha (Mattie), Pauline and Frances.

The large house is two stories. The first floor has two bedrooms, bath, parlor, library, dining room and kitchen. Second floor had four bedrooms, bath and hall. Across the front there were porches which were lost during a hurricane. A porch in the back is across all rooms to the kitchen. A small milk house is in this area.

After ranching was taken over by planting cotton and corn there were 100 little houses for the families who did this work. Each family came to the back porch for their daily milk. Frances E. had rung a bell at 4:30 am for milkers to get to work and be ready to hand out the milk.

Mr. and Mrs. Landrum came from musical families so he had complete operas on his cylinder player for his family entertainment. In later years daughters played a piano, violin, etc. In later years Frances had a baby grand which she played.

The second floor was used from time to time by the O.M.I. missionaries who rode horse back down the Military Highway to Brownsville from La Lomita. They rested and used a small church built near the big home and a school. At the same time Mr. Landrum lent them his horses so their horses could rest and be ready for their return from Brownsville to La Lomita mission.

⁵¹ Quiñones, letter to Nowick, 25 August 2008.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural character:** This imposing two-story building of blonde brick faces north to Military Highway. The house is composed of a two-story, five-bay central block with a one-story, rear “ell” extension extending from the block’s southwest corner. The main block has a side gable roof with three cross-gable wall dormers on its primary (north) and rear (south) facades. A simple gable roof also is on the one-story rear ell wing. There are two brick chimneys with corbelled cap extending above the roof ridgeline, one on either end of the main block, and a third brick chimney near the center of the rear wing. Extending the full width of the front (north) facade is a red brick and concrete porch lacking a roof that is not original to the house. Stairs at the center of the porch lead to the house’s main entrance, which is a painted single-leaf wood door with a single oval light framed by sidelights with pilaster detailing and transom. The front facade has two windows flanking either side of the first-story main entrance, and a window on either side of small balcony and door at the center bay of the second floor. Windows throughout are wood, double-hung sash type with one-over-one lights, plain sills, and brick *voussoir* lintels with drop ends. Most ceilings, floors, window frames, and doors as well as the stairway are of cypress lumber shipped and barged upriver from New Orleans to the Landrum’s river landing. Notable exterior decorative elements include quoins at the corners and decorative trussing and scrollwork trim in the dormer and roof eaves. The initials of James L. Landrum (JLL) are cast in a tile above the east front dormer, and numbers for the year of house completion (1902) are cast in a tile above the west front dormer. At the rear of the house is a rectangular courtyard paved with bricks formed by the rear (south) facade of the main block and the east side of the rear ell. A one-story raised porch with shed roof runs along the south facade of the main house and east side of the ell wing. The rear porch is supported by square columns on brick bases adorned by scrollwork brackets. The southeast corner of the courtyard is established by the former milk house, which is a small, square, one-story building with flat roof.
- 2. Condition of Fabric:** The overall condition of the building is fair. It shows signs of past damage and repair. The brick at the base of the facade has cracks and has been covered with cement stucco contributing to the penetration of moisture into the brick. The primary (north) facade has been altered during the replacement of the original porch with a concrete and brick roofless porch. On the second-story front facade, a third wall dormer with door and small balcony have been added to the central bay. The roof appears to be in good condition although there are large patches of missing shingles where sheet roof material is placed as a patch. No water penetration or water damage is obvious inside the house.

B. Description of Exterior

- 1. Overall dimensions:** The footprint of the house forms an “L” shape by configuring the two-story main block (45’-5” x 38’-7”) with a north-facing primary facade with a one-story rear ell wing (17’-9” x 40’-1”) projecting from the southwest side, thus creating a courtyard on the south side of the building.
- 2. Foundations:** The foundation consists of a load-bearing, double-wythe brick perimeter wall and brick piers in the interior supporting the floor joists and interior walls. The interior walls of the central hall of the house block also are load bearing, corresponding to the block’s perimeter walls. There are no visible footers or pads for the perimeter, and the extent of central hall walls and the depth of the foundations were not observable. The crawl space under the house was viewed from three small holes on the west and east facades but could not be otherwise accessed.
- 3. Walls:** The exterior walls are solid brick double-wythe walls of a common bond brick pattern and sixth course of headers. Wall thickness is 17”. The mortar joints are flush or plain cut. The brick is blond color made from local clay and the mortar is grey. The base of the house from grade to about 4’-0” above grade, including the window sills, has had cement stucco applied over the brick.

Each major corner of the house is adorned with brick quoins that are stacked in an alternating pattern of one large quoin and one small quoin with one brick course between each quoin. The large quoins measure 23” x 11-1/2”, and the small quoins measure 17” x 11”.

The brick lintels over each window and door are of a modified soldier course with bricks angled in the fashion of *voussoirs* with drip or drop ends. Above the lintels of the two second-story windows on the front (north) facade are two tiles, the eastern one with the initials “JLL” (James L. Landrum) and the west one with the date of completion of the house “1902.”

The window sills on the second-floor windows are brick common running bond pattern. The sills on the first floor windows have been covered in stucco.

- 4. Structural system, framing:** The two-story main block has load bearing perimeter exterior brick walls and two load-bearing interior brick walls at the central hall. Additional interior dividing walls are wood framed. The load bearing brick walls support a common rafter system with tie beams, rafters, joists supporting subfloor and tongue and groove decking. The rafters support the asphalt roof cladding. The first floor of the main block is built with 4”-wide wood floor beams bearing on brick piers with 2”-wide wood floor joists, and subfloor and wood tongue and groove floor boards. It is unclear how the second floor is framed but it appears that it dimensionally is framed similarly to the first floor. Similar to the two-story main section of the house, the one-story wing on the rear of the house has load-bearing exterior brick walls and a common rafter system. The attic of the main building block was not accessible.

- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, and bulkheads:** The uncovered front porch extends the full width of the primary (north) facade. It replaced an original shed roof wood porch with columns visible in historic photographs. The current front porch is built on a concrete slab and covered with thin set tile. Brick piers with concrete caps support a decorative metal guardrail, and the front steps to the porch which are centered on the front door are tile-covered concrete and have three uneven risers. There is a brick skirt surrounding the front porch slab.

A front balcony projects from the second-story central bay of the house's front (north) facade that is accessed from a door from the central hall. The balcony is of metal covered by concrete and thin set tile deck, and is supported with structural metal brackets and has a decorative metal guard rail around all three sides. The balcony has been added since the original front porch was removed.

The rear porch has a shed roof and forms an L shape created by the south facade of the main house block and the east facade of the rear ell wing. This L configuration establishes two of the four sides of the rear courtyard. The porch roof is supported by 6" x 4" chamfered wood support posts on 8" x 8" brick footers. Scrollwork brackets adorn the top of the posts. Three concrete steps at either end of the L lead up to the porch level. The porch skirt is concrete stucco covered brick with concrete porch deck. The shed porch roof is built out of wood, has a flat painted wood ceiling, and has asphalt shingles that match the main house's shingles. A low fence of concrete over brick with wrought iron gates marks the perimeter of the rear courtyard.

- 6. Chimneys:** There are two prominent chimneys that flank the main two-story roof; both are interior chimneys centered on the ridge, one on the east side of the front center and one on the west side. They are built with brick and have intricate brick detailing and corbelling. A third chimney rises out of the ridge of the one-story wing and is offset slightly to the south end of the wing. It is located where the kitchen and dining room walls meet where a fireplace is located in the dining room 14'-0" from the south wall of the wing. Although it is smaller than the other two, it has similar brick corbel detailing around the top.

7. Openings

a. Doorways and doors: The front door on the primary facade of the house is a wood single-leaf with an oval light that does not appear to be original glazing. The entrance is flanked by sidelights on each side and a transom above. The transom is divided into three lights with a narrow central light flanked by two wider lights. Decorative wood molding pilasters sit between the door frame and the sidelights. The door also includes a wood screen door that has been painted white.

The door that opens on to the second-floor balcony on the front of the house is similar in configuration to the front door but is dimensionally smaller. It has no screen door, and its transom is not divided. The entire wood door, sidelights, and transom trim are all painted white.

On the east wall of the rear ell wing of the house along the back porch are two sets of double-leaf, French-type, two-panel doors with wood screen doors on the exterior. One set leads to the kitchen and one set leads to the dining room. They are both painted white and do not have trim but are directly set into the exterior brick walls.

The main rear entrance of the house is via a prominent door with fanlight and sidelights that leads from the north end of the rear porch into the vestibule that transitions the dining room in the rear ell wing and the living room in main block of the house. The round arched fanlight has brick *voussoirs* of two header courses lined by a third interior *voussoir* course of small painted pieces of wood. The transom is divided by three faux muntins of round dowels mounted from the top. This decorative entrance frames a plain wood single-leaf slab door that is not original. It is flanked with two glass sidelights surrounded by painted wood trim. A painted wood screen door opens to the porch.

On the first-story south facade of the main building block is a single-leaf, wood door with transom. The door leads from the central hall of the main building block to the rear porch. The door does not have trim and is directly set into the exterior brick wall. A painted wood screen door is on the exterior of the door.

b. Windows and shutters: All of the windows, except for one small fixed window, are double-hung, wood sash windows with a single light in each sash. One window in the south gable of the one-story rear ell wing is a double-hung, six-over-six wood sash window. A small window on the east side is fixed and provides light to the vault room. It has an interior matching window that is an awning window that opens into the rear vestibule. It has vertical metal bars behind the operable glass portion of the window. There are no shutters on the house.

8. Roof

a. Shape, covering: The main roof on the two-story main building block and the one-story rear wing are gable roofs with an 8/12 pitch. The main block roof has three 12/12 pitch cross gable wall dormers on the front north roof face and three 12/12 pitch cross gable dormers on the rear south roof face. On the primary north facade, the middle cross gable dormer was a later addition that coincided with the addition of the second-story balcony. These cross gable dormers create additional ceiling height in the second floor rooms and connect into the main gable roof. The back porch has a shed roof that connects to the exterior wall of the main house and wing.

b. Cornice, eaves: The rake boards are the prominent trim details. They are painted wood and have decorative scrollwork with a painted wood panel in the highest part of the peak. There are also painted wood sub-rake boards along the face of the brick walls. The soffits are painted wood. The eaves or fascia boards on the one-story rear wing are of simple painted 1" wood with no gutters. The fascia boards along the back porch are similar to the fascia on the east elevation although there is a sub-fascia that is the beam that the porch columns support.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: See roof shape above. The three cross gable dormers on the south and the three on the north roof faces are a main feature of the main building block.

C. Description of Interior

- 1. Floor Plans:** The two-story building has a central hall plan with a rear ell wing. The house's main entrance on its north facade opens into the central hall, and a rear entrance on the south facade exits to the back porch off the central hall. Stairs along the east wall of the central hall access the two stories. The main house block interior is divided into a living room on the west side of the central hall, and two bedrooms at the northeast and southeast corners off the central hall. The living room occupies the entire west half of the central block and is accessed by two doors into the central hall. A fireplace with mantel is on the west exterior wall of the living room. Two bedrooms occupy the east half of the first story and flank the central hall to the east. Two doors located on the west wall lead into the living room and two doors on the east wall lead to the north and south bedrooms respectively. A door at the southeast corner of the living room leads to a small square vestibule that leads to the rear ell wing. A door in this vestibule leads to the back porch and courtyard, and a second door leads south to the rear ell wing. The exterior door of the vestibule is noteworthy for its fanlight above. In the rear wing are the dining room with small vault room, and a kitchen beyond the dining room. A small vault room accessed from the dining room backs up to the vestibule. It has wood shelves, and small operable windows with iron security bars in its west and east walls. In the dining room is a fireplace with mantel on the south wall. Both the dining room and kitchen have two sets of double-leaf doors on their east wall that access the rear porch and courtyard. The kitchen has a sink with counter on the west wall and wood cupboards mounted above. An electric stove is on the south wall of the kitchen.

The main block of the house has a second floor that is likewise divided by the central hall. There are two bedrooms east of the hall, and a front bedroom and two bathrooms and closets to the west. Doorways off the central hall lead to the east front and rear bedrooms, the west front bedroom, and the hall bath. The northwest bedroom has roughly the same dimensions as the other bedrooms. The southwest corner of the second floor likely was once a single bedroom that has been subdivided by a narrow internal north-south hall leading from the bedroom to a closet, private bathroom at the southwest corner, and linen closet and hall bathroom to the east. A door from the central hall leads to a narrow perpendicular hall and the hall bath. At the south end of the narrow hallway is a door leading to the attic space of the rear wing. The two east bedrooms have an internal doorway between them.

- 2. Stairways:** The two stories of the main house block are accessed by a 3'-10"-wide, straight main stair that begins at the front of the central hall and rises to the rear of the second floor. The stairway is of cypress wood and is a major decorative feature of the interior. The stairway is composed of nineteen risers each 7-3/4" high with 11"-deep treads. The stairs have turned balusters painted brown supporting a painted wood handrail

cap that follows the stairs and turns back at the top of the stairs to create a guardrail around the stair opening. Two brown painted wood newel posts are located at the base of the stair handrail and at the top of the stair between the handrail and the guardrail. Under the stairs is a closet accessed by a door on its south side.

- 3. Flooring:** Flooring on the first and second floors is 6"-wide tongue and groove cypress wood flooring. It runs in a north/south direction. The living room, dining room, and first floor bedrooms have carpet, presumably laid over the hardwood flooring. The first floor vault has a concrete floor, and the small vestibule has wood flooring. The first floor bathroom has 8" cobalt blue ceramic tile and the master bathroom has yellow hexagonal ceramic tile. The upstairs hall bathroom has 12" vinyl composition tile (VCT) and the kitchen has recent sheet vinyl flooring. The upstairs bedrooms and the downstairs and upstairs central halls have cypress hardwood floors as described.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish:** The walls are painted plaster over lath with no applied decorative finishes such as wall fabrics, murals, etc. The ceilings are 6"-painted tongue and groove cypress wood running north/south or painted wood paneling with batten strips creating a grid pattern similar to a coffer ceiling. Most of the walls and ceilings are painted white with the following exceptions. The dining room is painted bright red, and the upstairs bedroom on the southwest corner is bright blue. The master bathroom upstairs has yellow 6" ceramic tile wainscot with yellow painted plaster walls and ceilings above. The kitchen's wall plaster is painted pale blue. The downstairs bath has a cobalt blue thin set 8" ceramic tile wainscot with painted plaster above and on the ceiling. Finishes are plain with no ceiling moldings except the master bedroom at the northeast corner of the first floor.
- 5. Openings**

 - a. Doorways and doors:** Interior doors are either four-panel or five-horizontal panel painted, single-leaf or double-leaf solid wood doors with the original hardware. There are four pocket doors in the southwest corner spaces of the second story. The pocket doors lead to the hall bathroom, the linen closet, the master bath, and the master closet. All of the doors throughout the house are trimmed with simple painted wood jambs and a wider head trim board that includes a half round "drip cap" above. There is a painted wood threshold where the wood base meets the door jamb. Double-leaf panel doors in the dining room and kitchen access the rear porch and provide increased ventilation.
 - b. Windows:** First-story windows are boarded up with plywood from the exterior but are intact from interiors. All of the windows are trimmed with jambs, heads, stools, and aprons of painted cypress wood. There are no plinth blocks at the corners of any of the windows. The jambs and heads of the windows in the living room and dining room are painted trim pieces of cypress hardwood with the top corners of the windows connected with mitered joints. The upstairs windows have solid wood jambs without detailing and the head trim is similar to the head trim over the doors with a wider trim piece and a drip cap at the top.

6. **Decorative features and trim:** There are three fireplaces in the building, one in the first-story southeast bedroom; one in the living room; and one in the dining room. The two fireplaces in the living room and dining room have similar painted wood mantel shelves supported by frames of classical pilaster detailing. The firebox inset and base are of red brick. The fireplace in the second-story bedroom is in the northeast corner of the room and is angled. It has the same standard painted wood mantel piece as the other two fireplaces.

The interior of the house is quite plain. The baseboards throughout the house consist of an 8" painted cypress wood board capped by two 1/2"-square moldings and a 1/2"-quarter round molding baseboard foot. The dining room has a plain picture rail molding. The master bedroom has crown molding, a picture frame rail 16" below the ceiling, and an extra trim detail on the head of the door surrounds that is different than any other door surround in the house. Except for simple quarter-round moldings at the ceilings throughout the house, trim is plain without decorative details.

7. **Hardware:** There are original door knobs throughout the house. They consist of standard ceramic knobs on surface-mounted metal lock boxes, crystal knobs, and metal knobs over keyholes that support original antique skeleton keys on interior doors. The exterior doors may have been replaced so hardware is relative to the replaced doors.
8. **Mechanical equipment:** Electrical breaker box is installed in the attic of the rear wing. Otherwise, the mechanical equipment was not accessed or observed.

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The house has gas steam heat in wall radiators installed on the exterior walls of each room. There are three small air conditioning units installed into windows on the front, east, and rear sides of the house.

b. Lighting: Lighting throughout the house is simple incandescent type but there are few fixtures. There is a pendant light fixture over the dining room table in the dining room that could be original. In the bedrooms, kitchen, and bathrooms are simple central ceiling fixtures.

c. Plumbing: Plumbing is upgraded galvanized pipes throughout. The kitchen has galvanized plumbing on its west wall. A hot water heater is installed on the north wall. There are three bathrooms in the house, one in the first-story northeast bedroom and the other two at the southwest corner of the second story. The first-story bathroom likely is a 1940s addition with shower installed against the exterior window and blue tile throughout. The upstairs hall bathroom has a bathtub and is the older bathroom, ca. 1930s. The private upstairs bathroom is the most recent, ca. 1960s, and has a bathtub. The water main and sewer arrangements for the house are unknown.

9. **Original furnishings:** The dining room table and chairs and matching buffet as well as baby grand piano in the living room are the only furniture that may be part of the original furnishings. The house is vacant and has few furnishings.

D. Site

The James L. Landrum House is situated 190' south of and facing north on Old Military Highway (U.S. 281) on a two-acre open parcel. The house was sited to take advantage of both the Rio Grande and Military Highway, a historic road that loosely parallels the river and runs as a spine up the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The front yard is lawn to the north and east with mature palm and ebony trees interspersed. An unpaved driveway extends from Military Highway west of the house, over the canal and levee (and the gap in the U.S. Border Patrol fence), and south through the fields to the river. East of the house are open fields. West of the house is an area of outbuildings and mature trees.

A chain-link fence encloses a rear yard behind the James L. Landrum House and courtyard. The fenced area is 100' north/south from the back of the rear wing of the house and 180' east/west to the field east of the house area. Within this fence area is a paved area that is the width of the courtyard and extends to a garage/laundry building open to the front. Also in this enclosed area are a small shed and trees.

The area west of the James L. Landrum House has many outbuildings and stockpiled equipment and supplies. The outbuildings are of both historic and recent vintage. The most historic is the small L-plan frame house with side gable roof fronting Military Highway that was the residence of the plantation manager. A second frame outbuilding is a small house/shed with a porch.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A Early Views

1. Panorama photograph of the Landrum property facing west, ca. 1912. This photograph shows the northwest side of the Landrum house, front yard, Military Highway, and the north side of Military Highway including detached workers housing. The two front dormers and original porch of the house are visible. Photograph is in the collections of the San Benito Historical Society. Portions of the photograph have been published on the internet.
2. Photograph of the Landrum property facing southeast, ca. 1912. This photograph shows the northwest side of the James L. Landrum House, Military Highway, and part of front and rear yards. Photograph is captioned "Farm House" in reprint of *Irrigation in Rio Grande Valley, Texas*, William R. Compton Company, St. Louis-Chicago (undated, likely 1910).

B. Interviews:

1. Frances Wagner Quiñones of Brownsville, Texas, granddaughter of James L. and Frances E. Powers Landrum. Interviewed by Melissa Wiedenfeld, Ph.D., HDR, at the home of Quiñones on 13 August 2009 and on 18 February 2010. Ms. Quiñones visited the James L. Landrum House frequently as a child and adult.

2. Carl Bauer Sr. and Trudy Bauer of La Feria, Texas, current owner of the property. Interviewed at their home in San Benito by Marjorie Nowick, HDR, on 20 February 2010. Bauer's youngest son Carl Bauer Jr. also participated in the interview. Mr. Bauer managed the Landrum property since 1950, and has owned it since 1972.
3. Chris Bauer of San Benito, Texas, eldest son of Carl Bauer, Sr. Interviewed at the James L. Landrum House by Marjorie Nowick, HDR, on 10 February 2010. Chris Bauer works the former Landrum property on behalf of the Bauer family. He is the eldest child of Carl and Trudy Bauer.

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C. Supplemental Material:

Field Records include historical photographs, historical maps, and descriptive data as well as the three field sketches that were used to create the Measured Drawings.