Occupancy History of 202-204 W. Jackson Avenue

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The Lon. C. Hill Town and Improvement Company conveyed Lots 13 and 14 of Block 45 in 1908 to B. F. Hostrasser. The two lots together were about 50' wide and 70' deep. In the 1910 US Census a Benjamin F. Hostrasser, 42, is living in Wharton, Texas with his wife Helen, 28, and daughter Virginia age 1 year 8 months. He is a retail merchant. By 1920 the family has moved to Houston where he is a passenger train conductor. He may have made the lots purchase in the nascent town as a speculation.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance map of June 1919 shows the building there and ready for occupancy. It notes at 202 that a drug store will fill the premise and at 204 a restaurant. In early 1920s Runyon photo does show the two-story red brick building at the northwest corner of Jackson Avenue and A Street. The building though spacious is "plain Jane". The roof cornice offers a weak attempt at decorating the otherwise simple design. Different colored bricks on the east face of the building indicate that this side likely had two entrances, now bricked over. One led to the downstairs while the second apparently opened to a second story stairwell.

In the first telephone directory of Harlingen published for 1930, it is clear that the building was split into three entities. At 202 W. Jackson is the Harlingen Pharmacy with J.B. Symonds, owner, and W.T. Garrison, manager. On the west ground floor at 204 is the Broadway Men's Shop, Inc. Ben Epstein is manager. He and his wife Delma and one child under 18 reside at 324 E. Monroe. The upstairs, accessible at 204 ½, has N.J. Payne, furnished rooms. He and his wife Georgia live in the rooming house.

In the 1931-32 directory the pharmacy now has G. B. Michel as manager. He and his wife Lillian with one child reside at 75 W. Lincoln, Apt. C. 204 now has as its occupant the Hollywood Style Shop with I. Nedler as manager. He and his wife Frieda with three children reside at 1010 E. Filmore. Upstairs has only brick mason Max Van Hoy and his wife Clare living there. He, by 1939, will have gone into the grocery store business.

Learned from another source is that the Day Drug Store was opened at 202 sometime in 1931. Harry E. Day, his wife Louise, and son Leon had come to Harlingen from San Antonio where Harry had been manager of a L.C. Berry Drug Store. After the Labor Day Hurricane of 1933 Day Drug would move into 123 East Jackson. The 1931-32 directory has no listing for Harry nor his drug store; it was undoubtedly published before his arrival.

1935 continues to see change in the building. Both 202 and 204 are occupied by Orloff's (dry goods and clothing). He and his wife Rose and three children live at 1010 S. 1st. Upstairs, at 204 ½, now holds the American Legion Professional and Business Men's Club together with American Legion Harlingen Post 205.

1937-38 finds the Palace Barber Shop at 204. One barber is George Waters, who is also Police Commissioner. He resides with his wife Lena at 913 E. Filmore. A second barber
is Lee Simmons, who with wife Albertine, lives at 420 E. Monroe The Orloffs are no longer to be located in Harlingen.

In 1939 202 and 204 ½ are both listed as vacant. The Palace Barber Shop listing only notes George Waters.

1941 shows the Economy Store, H.N. Greenfield as manager, filling 202. Greenfield and his wife Gertrude live at 213 S. 6th. The barber at what is now the Rex Barber Shop at 204 is W.A. Birger. He and wife Elizabeth live at 414 E. Harrison. Now upstairs at 204 ½ is the Business Men's Club. C. (Charles) M. Hamilton manages the dominoes and pool hall. He and his wife Lora reside at 314 S. 4th.

1942-43 Things remain unchanged at 202 and 204. Upstairs however Hamilton operates only the dominoes parlor while Robin Hood cares for the pool hall.

1944 Greenfield is now noted to be owner of the Economy Store. Upstairs Hamilton remains, but new is Phil Edie operating the pool hall. Philip Robert Edie is already managing Phil's Grill, the Cadillac Grill, and Johnson's Café. He will later go on to own the popular Highway Inn. and Hi-Way Bowling Center. Phil, his wife Helen Mae, and two children are living at 417 W. Buchanan this year. Birger and his barber shop continue next door.

In 1946 the Economy Store continues at 202. 204 however is vacant.

By 1948 the Economy Store is no more. H. R. Bupp has established Bupp's at 202 and 204. [The wall between the two retail spaces may have been removed prior to this occupancy.] It dispenses gifts, books and magazines. H. R. and his wife and one child live at 1122 E. Jackson. On the second floor Hamilton and his Business Men's Club are in operation, so one wonders if the 1946 "vacant" entry was valid.

While Bupp's is there, Hamilton no longer is in 1950.

1952 sees Bupp still in business while upstairs has been filled by the American Legion Recreation Club.

By 1954 Bupp's has also expanded into sporting goods and toys.

In 1956 202 is vacant, for Bupp's has moved to 124 W. Jackson. On the second floor Jack Cary is listed as manager of the American Legion Recreation Club. He and his wife Audrey, who is a bookkeeper, live at 318 E. Madison.

1956-57 sees 202 still vacant.

By 1958 Mitchell's Credit Clothiers, Inc. is filling 202. Francis Ricottelli is noted to be the firm's president and manager. He and wife Emily live at 1521 S. 1st. Things are still unchanged for the second floor.
1959 sees management changes. The 202 occupant is listed in bold print as Mitchell Credit Clothiers, Men's and Ladies Credit Clothiers, J. C. Mitchell president, Leon Johnson, vice president, and Ruby Lee Mitchell, secretary and treasurer. The Mitchells with two children reside at 425 Austin.

1959-60 find matters unchanged with the clothiers and with the Legion still rolling upstairs.

In 1961 while Mitchell continues unchanged the facilities upstairs have become Ken's Recreation Club. Kenneth Harp owner and manager, lives at 421 N. 3rd Apt. C.

1962 sees the occupancy unchanged.

By 1965 both 202 and 204 are vacant. Ken's Recreation Club features a Domino Club.

The years 1965 through 1969 see the whole building standing vacant. By 1971 however the Amigo Stores Inc. has come into 204. The 202 entrance was likely sealed as the interior wall between it and 204 was removed if it hadn't been previously. Bernard Levine and Louis Levine are partners in the Amigo Store dry goods business. The business was previously located at 212 W. Jackson.

This business will continue to operate at this location through the publication of the 1999-2000 reverse directory is published. The following year it is 214 W. Jackson while the Bargain Safari occupies 204 in the year 2000.

204 becomes unoccupied in 2001 and has remained so through 2010. Several year previous, owner Humberto Zamora posited plans for an upscale women's beauty salon in the building, but nothing has come to pass.