219 East Jackson Street---Its History

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It was the year 1930 that we first learn that A. W. Trout and his wife Delma are operating a grocery store at their residence at 521 E. Monroe. They continue to do so in the next couple years. By 1935 however the Trout's have moved their residence to 1118 E. Monroe and A. W. is operating Trout's RGV Store at 215 E. Jackson.

Trout is not in this location long, for in 1936 the site now has Caulk RGV Grocery. Trout, as indicated by the Southwestern Bell July 1936 directory, has moved on to Brownsville where at 764 W. Elizabeth he is operating Trout's RGV Store and Service Station. By 1938 Trout is not to be listed for business of any sort.

By the following year (1937) a new structure has come up on the 25' wide lot designated 219E. Jackson. Into it goes Caulk's RGV Grocery and Market. Robert B. Caulk and his wife Lucy are at the time residing at 302 E. Madison. By the following year Caulk is also providing space in the store for William Theeson, a baker. Robert and Lucy have moved to 1113 E. Monroe by 1939. Caulk continues in the commercial building into 1941 then by 1942 moves to 304 E. Harrison where he opens Caulk's Delta Food Store. This same period 1941-42 Trout is to return to 219 with his Trout's Red and White Grocery and Market and his residence is listed as being at the same location. Red and White is a wholesale food operation supplying independently–owned grocery stores. The store in Trout's name is there at least until February 1944 when it is last listed. By 1945 Trout is out of business, likely due to stiff competition from growing chain grocer retailers and seemingly an excess number of grocery stores within a short radius.

The building is acquired by the newly incorporated Harlingen State Bank. The prime mover for the establishment of this bank is Elmer G. Johnson. In 1944 he and his wife were residing at 1110 E. Polk. He has been president of Santa Rosa Incorporated, a Brownsville real estate entity at 429 South E.10th Street.

The premise undergoes extensive renovation to convert it to offices, teller windows, and other bank appurtenances. The building is first occupied by the bank in June 1945, and it is first listed in the telephone directory in 1946. In late 1949 an addition is made to widen the structure from a 25' to a 50' width. The addition is apparently to the west onto the lot at 217. In the rear a 50' x 140' parking area is paved. A rear door provides access to 219 for motorized customers. A hall leading from the rear door to the main banking room leads past safety deposit vaults and private booths. The main banking room has a new arrangement of cashier booths with the executive offices behind them. Cocke, Bowman, and York architects were responsible for the redesign work.

In 1946 Johnson is the president, D. B. Dunkin vice president along with Joe L. Penry Jr. R. W. Thomason is cashier with L. B. Gittinger assistant cashier. In 1950 Elmer Johnson is noted to be the bank's president, D. B. Dunkin one vice president along with Joe L.
Penry Jr., C. A. Balker, and Sam Countiss. Richard W. Thomason is cashier. By 1952 some changes in administration have occurred. Johnson becomes chairman of the board, Dunkin president, and vice presidents are Countiss, R. C. Wheeler, and H. Norman Scott. James L. Mayer is cashier. By April 1951 the bank, in six years has risen to 7th place among 27 Valley banks.

In 1956 the bank is re-charted and becomes the Harlingen National Bank. Over the years it outgrows its headquarters. It constructs a multi-story modern building in 1967 at 115 E. Van Buren. This building's exterior resembles the American Embassy Building in New Delhi, India. This building is occupied by 1968.

219 is then to be occupied in 1969 by a United States Government Small Business Administration branch office. This entity will remain here into 1976. By 1977 the City Water Works has established itself in the building, and by 1980 it will share space for a decade with United Way, Inc., the community charity organization. This may be in the upstairs spaces. Both will continue here until 1999 when the Water Works will move by January 2000 to the former Tropical Savings and Loan Association Building at 134 E. Van Buren. Some other City of Harlingen administrative offices will use the building 1998-2000.

After being vacant for part of the year 2000, the Harlingen Housing Authority will find a home at 219. It has been there ever since.