The residence at 112 East Austin was said to have been constructed in the 1935 or so. It is unique to Harlingen, and likely the whole Lower Rio Grande Valley, in that it is constructed of California redwood with both its exterior siding and interior paneling. Adding to its uniqueness is the giant ash tree on its northeast corner. This tree is believed to have one of the greatest diameters of any ash tree in the Valley.

It is difficult to trace the house's occupancy in the comprehensive Wilmot's Harlingen Telephone directories because the area of the home's location was not officially incorporated into the City of Harlingen until after 1948. This year there did appear addresses for 501 through 700 Austin Avenue and the Austin Elementary School at 700. Previously the street was named the Rio Hondo Road, and in 1948 from 1st Street to 5th Street were out of the city limits.

The residence has had a number of occupants over the years. One of the earliest was the Deering family. Some information on the Deerings follows. 9/1/34 From this date until August 31, 1941 E.C. Deering, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., occupied the office of superintendent of Harlingen schools. He holds a BA from Baylor University and an MA from the University of Texas. Elmer Chauncy Deering was born in Colwell, Fannin County, Georgia on July 11, 1895. He was the eighth of 12 children born to John T. and Mary S. Deering. His Missouri-born father was a farmer in Georgia while his Oregon-born mother was a homemaker. By the year 1910 the family had relocated to Kerrville, Texas where the father took odd jobs to make a living. A decade later in 1920 the father put his employment, for the census, as delivery man. Elmer's older brother Charles however was superintendent of schools while one younger sister taught school.

When, in Waco, Texas, Elmer registered at age 21, on June 5, 1917 for the Great War draft, he noted himself to be a ministerial student doing mission work. He is unmarried. Not only would Elmer go off to what would become the WWI, but he would also serve in his older years in WWII and Korea and hold the rank of 1st lieutenant.

The 1940 US Census indicates that the Deerings were living in the Rio Hondo residence in 1935. Elmer's Texas-born wife, Winifred is 39 years old and daughter Dorothy J. is two years old. Elmer's 1942 draft registration indicates that the family is residing at then 14145 First Street and that he is self-employed. Elmer died in Kerrville on September 20, 1990 and was interred in the Barranca National Cemetery, Pensacola, Florida.

It is not clear who may have been the site's next occupant for a few years but, by 1948, the home is occupied by Edmond D. McDonald, his wife Louise and their two children. The address is still 112 Rio Hondo Road. This family has an interesting background, indeed. Louise is the daughter of R. L. and Oga Hill. Mr. Hill is the entrepreneur who started the Harlingen Ice Company. This firm was quite successful for its time. Mr. Hill, no relation to the Lon C. Hill family, also started, in 1935, the Harlingen Cannery Company. He later partnered its growth with Howard E. Butt before H-E-B bought out his share. Hill is today best-remembered for his home at 1102 E. Taylor.

In my Chronological History of Harlingen I state: “Under construction for R.L. and Ola Hill as the Hurricane of 1933 strikes is a Spanish Colonial Revival home at 1102 Taylor. It has notable architectural elements including arched doorways, and windows and a hand-carved front door. The
panels of the mesquite door show brush as the explorers found it here, ranch scenes, brush clearing and the introduction of water, and citrus and palm trees. Eleanor Roosevelt was entertained here as was Gov. W. Lee O'Daniel. The Hills had come to Texas in 1926 from Stroud, OK and Harlingen two years later. He was born in Lowell, Indiana, 8/13/90, and she was from Oklahoma. He ran the ice plant partnership with J.B. Morton of McAllen, and they have prosperous branches across the Valley. He is also to be a partner with H. E. Butt in constructing the huge food processing factory at F Street and West Jackson; later he is its president as well as a vice president of the First National Bank and active on the school board. He owned the Commerce Building as well as property on Jackson St. Struck suddenly with appendicitis in December 1941, Robert Luther Hill is to die at age 50 leaving a wife and two daughters. A surviving daughter in 2005 is Mrs. Betty Lou Hill Nickell.”

Daughter Louise Ola was born in Indiana August 13, 1916. Over the years had taken various positions in the ice company located at 420, then 421-423 W. Jackson. In 1939, the college educated Louise was its bookkeeper, in 1940 at age 22 its secretary, by 1942 its resident partner, in 1944 its manager, and by 1950 its owner. Her husband to-be, Edmond D. McDonald was born October 3, 1914. This college graduate would enlist in the army on March 20, 1941 and become a private. He had been employed as a railroad clerk.

The McDonalds may have married in 1945 or likely post-war in 1946. They lived that year at 1102 E. Taylor with her widowed mother Ola. By 1959 the two children are over age 18 and may be off on their own. It is the 1959-60 Wilmot Directory that has the McDonalds at 122 E. Austin. In 1961 they are residing at 1102 Ferguson Drive and still later will move to 2201 S. 23rd Street and finally 210 Palm Valley Drive. Edmond will die May 18, 1988 and Louise in 1995. They are buried together at Mont Meta Cemetery, San Benito.

The next occupants, by 1961, are William H. Lambeth Jr. and his wife Jane E. Living with them is his widowed mother Frances V. Lambeth, who is a receptionist and nurse for Dr. George L. Gallaher. Although now listed in a directory as an architect with the famed Harlingen architect, Alan Y. Taniguchi, William in 1954 had been noted solely as a draftsman. In 1962 wife Jane was a teacher at Jefferson Elementary School and by 1966 had moved on to Vernon Junior High School. By this year also William is noted to be with the firm Lambeth and Bartholomew, probably working out of his residence. The Lambeths have left 122 by 1971 and in 1972 it has no listing.

By 1974 the occupants are the family of Alfonso Tevino. In 1980 he is employed as counselor with the State Commission for the Blind while his wife Irma is a teacher with the HCISD. The Trevinos are at this location into 1982.

The following year sees George Michael Brown living at 122. He is the son of George Comac and Edith Gunn Brown. He, being born February 27, 1952, is 31 years old. His father in 1956 had been a food distributor living at 102 W. Lincoln in Harlingen. The Browns reside there until 1988. They then leave Harlingen.

When in their 40s, Mark W. Buddle, his wife Robin Burdick Buddle then become the new owner/occupants of the house by 1988. Living with them are daughters Claria, Michaela M., and Jesslyn V. The Buddles rent out the apartment at 112½ by 1996-97. That year the tenant is Leonard Cantu. Others will follow over the years.