This building located on the northeast corner of Jackson and Commerce Streets is likely among the three oldest extant commercial buildings, if not the oldest, in Harlingen. 1909 This year sees the arrival in the five-year-old town of Harlingen of the Levi E. and Ed E. Snavely families, the Earl Wetmores, the McDonalds, "Captain" Patterson, Dr. D. B. McGehee, and Drs. C. W. and A. M. Letzerich, physician and surgeon. While the community of Harlingen was established in 1904, it did not formally become a governmental entity until 1910. Even so, it had already attracted doctors to serve the growing population of the community and its surrounds. The physician brothers Casper W. and Alfred M. Letzerich had erected a two-story office building at the corner of Commerce and Main (Jackson) Streets in 1909. Another source says Charles H. Waterwall erected the brick building at 216 W. Jackson on the northeast corner of Jackson and Commerce. It is likely that Waterwall, a builder, was the contractor for the Letzerichs.

The initial property is located in Survey 289 in the Harlingen Land and Water Company's subdivision and the south half of Block 45 on lots 20 and 21. Later (after June 1919 but before February 1925) the triangular-shaped lot 22 will see the erection of an addition. Lot 20 is the standard 140' by 25' in size but the southwest side of lot 21 is cut at an angle where East Commerce Street dissect the property. Together 20 and 21 comprise 6,375 sq. ft. or .146 acre. Lot 22 has about 2,375 sq. ft. or .05 acre. The eventual total property size is then 8,750 sq. ft. or .20 acre.

The construction is solid with three layers thick of yellow brickwork. The original building is approximately 95 feet long and 30 ½ feet wide with a 5 ½ foot alley on its east side. It roof slopes gently to the north to provide natural drainage. The ground floor has a ceiling over fifteen feet high. This height was designed to keep the building cool before the days of air conditioning. The ceiling is the original embossed tin panels. Five equally-spaced steel upright pillars are placed in the middle of the building along its longest axis. These support the second floor since there are no interior walls or rooms in the first floor. The north sidewall of the original structure had two wooden double doors to accommodate freight or large items. These were on either side of a third door for people to use. A wide fire escape staircase once rose in one sweep above the third door to the second floor. Normal second story access was by an external wooden staircase on the east side of the building and accessible from an entrance opening from the alleyway. An internal stairwell juxtaposed it within the building. The former was demolished as it deteriorated over time.

Substantial and continuing billing of the South Texas Lumber Co., 10/15/09 through 4/1/10, to Dr. Letzerich likely indicates the building being erected in this period. It will later house the Harlingen Pharmacy owned by Hugo L. Letzerich on its first floor and the offices of his brothers, Dr. Casper W. Letzerich, and Dr. Alfred M. upstairs. A sign on the two upper floor windows says "Dentist." By 1910 Harlingen had a resident dentist. He is Mount C. Wild, 46 and a Canadian. Here with him also is his wife Margaret, 42 and a son 19. Wild, had in fact purchased lot 6 in block 94 in September 1908. Very likely
arriving the last quarter of this year is another dentist, Dr. Brutus C. Roberts. He is a cousin to Joe Roberts and unmarried. Georgia-born, September 1868, Dr. Roberts was practicing in Stephenville, Erath County, Texas before coming to Harlingen where he will practice for 18 years before leaving in 1928. He is to die 4/6/30 and his body is returned to this city for burial in the Harlingen Cemetery. He had no direct descendents. Hugo Letzerich first saw Harlingen as a mail clerk on the first train through the community in 1904. When the post office was in the Letzerich Building he was its postmaster. After his official appointment by the Federal government as postmaster in 1911, he was renominated for another four years in 1915. Hugo will marry in 1916 when his fiancée Alma, who was born in Oakland, TX, arrives here. She is a dedicated Methodist whose work for the church will be recognized on Alma Letzerich Day in April 1977. Hugo, who was born in Warrentown, TX 1/6/81, will die in 1936 at age 55. Casper, age 59, will die 9/5/35 of a heart attack while his wife Maude Weller Letzerich will die 7/7/50 of a heart attack. This First Presbyterian member was residing at 202 E. Tyler at the time of her death and had been for numerous years. His brother Alfred and Alfred's wife Myrtle apparently died in 1951 or thereabouts. In 1905Andrew Henry Goldammer of Fayette County, Texas comes to the Valley and first locates in Brownsville but then comes to Harlingen. Early on he constructs two buildings for the Letzerichs, four for Weller, and the home, which is removed in 1960, of Dr. C.W. Letzerich at 2nd and Tyler. He is estimated to have built 50% of the modern structures in Harlingen in the late teens and in the decade of the 1920s. Dr. A.M. Letzerich is appointed (1/24/10) as the town's first health officer but he resigns by July. 4/4/11 In its second municipal election, 44 votes are cast in the office of Cunningham and Ernst. For this election Cunningham was presiding judge; James H. Ewing and Hubert Barry were judges; and S.P. Eaton and R.I. Dudley, clerks. John D. Hill receives all the votes for Mayor as does Dr. C.W. Letzerich for Commissioner. R.S. Chambers receives 42 votes. 1911 With the town population now 1,126, this makes it eligible under state law to change to the city council form of government. Presiding Judge H.D. Seago certifies that the 26 votes were cast in favor of such a change. E.L. Fender, Jacob Miller, J.M. Denton, and Dr. C.W. Letzerich along with Mayor Cunningham constitute Harlingen's first City Council. In 1923 Harlingen's first hospital, a modest frame building facility on F Street, opened. Doctors who staffed the hospital included, among others, the Letzerich brothers, Casper and Alfred, and Noah A. (Semny) Davidson. It is on 7/24/25 that the new Valley Baptist Hospital on F Street has its formal opening. One of its attending physicians is Dr. A. M. Letzerich. The famed Valley photographer Robert Runyon took photographs of the Letzerich Building on his periodic trips to Harlingen. The first appears to have been taken in late 1909 or early 1910. The upstairs windows advertise "Dentist" while on the ground floor in its larger windows are advertised Hugo’s "Harlingen Pharmacy". Canvas awnings are visible to be dropped in order to shade these large windows. To the rear of the building on its Commerce Street side is a non-legible sign, perhaps indicating the post office. Other Runyon photos were taken in 1915 and in 1917 or thereafter. Not only do they reveal the Letzerich Building but how Harlingen's main thoroughfare and commercial
center grew over the decade. One change evident is the permanent solid overhang erected in the front of the building and also its neighbor. These afforded not only protection from the rain but also the hot South Texas sun.

In the first Harlingen telephone directory available in the Harlingen Library Archive Room, that of 1930, both physician bothers are listed at 216 ½ W. Jackson. This reveals a second floor site for their offices. 216 W. Jackson is noted to be vacant. The following year 1931 will see the Hicks Rubber Co. occupying the ground floor premise. A 1928 aerial photograph shows that a triangular-shaped addition has been added to the west side of the original building and a warehouse section to it extends all the way north to the service alley. This addition has been made to take advantage of the building's excellent commercial location and to utilize an odd-shaped but potentially valuable piece of real estate. It too retains its tin embossed ceiling. Likely earlier but by 1930 for sure, this addition, numbered 218 W. Jackson, has a tenant, the New York Store, which sells dry goods and clothing and is managed by Mrs. A. Adolphs. This firm will stay here for several years but by 1936 will have moved to 110 E. Jackson and later to 212 W. Jackson, each time pursuing larger quarters. Hugo has apparently sold his pharmacy (there to at least 1926 as an old photograph indicates). In July 1928 a newspaper ad lists Clarence B. Meyers as manager. By 1930 it is owned by J. B. Symonds who has moved it to 202 W. Jackson where it is managed by W. T. Garrison. Within five years the Harlingen Pharmacy is no more as both local and national chain drug stores offer increasing competition.

Over the following years the building will house an everchanging variety of renters. Alfred will remain upstairs until 1939 when he will have removed to the nine-story Rio Grande National Life Insurance Building down the street. This same building will house many of the City's professionals. Following his brother's death in 1935 Alfred will by 1937 rent out Casper's former office to a Mrs. Margaret Hancock, possibly as a low-cost residence. Alfred will retire in 1949.

In 1936 Hicks has gone and been replaced by Stevens Stores. The latter is managed by R. R. Jackson, and it sells radios to a wholesale market. This is just a transitory tenant, for in 1937 the Magnolia Finance Co. is in the site at 216. The neighboring 218 still attracts no occupant and remains vacant.

In 1939 Texas Plumbing and Heating takes over 216 when Magnolia seeks larger office space at 122 W. Van Buren. Household Furniture is to be found at 218 this year, and the upstairs rooms are not being utilized. Continuing the trend of short-term rotating tenants, Jarrett's Hat Shop takes over 216. This is operated by hatter Lon Jarrett, who with his wife Opal resides at 210 W. Madison.

By 1941 the Sherwin Williams Co. of Texas, the well-known paint company, moves into 218 and apparently splits the property with a depression-era federal creation, the WPA or Works Project Administration's Sewing Room at 220 W. Jackson.

220 finally gains a steady tenant in Sherwin Williams. The outlet is under the supervision of J. C. Norris, the local manager, until in 1944 when Larry D. Best takes over. This same year, when wartime housing is tight in the city, Shirley Slade, a Women's Air Service Pilot (WASP) takes up living quarters upstairs for a short time. T. E. and Lena C. Baker will move in by 1950. Sherwin Williams will stay put in 220 through 1948 after which time the premise will be vacant for two or three years.
W. Vernon Walsh and his wife Mildred will run their real estate office out of 218 in 1948. Two year later, in 1950, 218 will once again be gathering dust as it sits unused for two years. 220 will by 1951, however, find an occupant in the Firestone Stores with H. W. Engstrom as local manager.

A firm which got its start in Brownsville in 1906, Edelstein's Furniture, and has had a branch in Harlingen from the early 1920s is by 1960 to occupy 218-220 for one of its subsidiaries while its regular store is across the street at 207. In 1954, with Olen Little as manager, it is listed as Edelstein's Used Furniture. This latter designation likely covers repossessed items, display goods, or damaged furniture. It later uses the name Edelstein's Bargain Outlet Store for several years, first when Norbert Betz is manager in 1961. He is succeeded by Raul Mendoza the following year. A. G. Velaquez is its last manager before it closes its doors in 1967. Edelstein was likely responsible for knocking out the wall which separated the one story triangular 220 structure from the adjacent two-story 216 premise. It also added the one story cinder block storage structure to the building's north. This generated a sprawling interior.

During its tenure in the building Edelstein had tried to modernize the exterior by placing plywood panels over the upstairs windows, replacing the downstairs windows with larger plate glass ones, and painting the whole brick structure a creamy beige color to give it a newer and unifying appearance.

Throughout the whole decade of the 1970s there were no commercial listings for any part of the building. At minimum it may have been used for storage. It was in 1980 that The Pereion Antiques, later The Pereion, Inc., came to occupy the site now listed as 218 W. Jackson. It did so from this year until 1985. This firm was likely the first of its category (antiques) to come to Jackson and would later set the stage for many more.

Again vacant for several years, in 1988 Joe Cano Gonzalez moved in with Joe and Jesse's Cabinets, Joe's Cabinets, and Occasions Framing. Several years later (1987) space was let for Little D's Bouquet.

In 1990, video rental entrepreneur Bill DeBrooke was to purchase the property. It was a miracle that it had survived destruction since it was essentially a "white elephant." Once again the site entered a long fallow period in the first half of the 1990s. DeBrooke was a hands-on, energetic personality, who was later to purchase numerous run-down downtown Harlingen properties and restore them to a useful life. At 218 he removed the extraneous architectural elements which had changed the very nature of the building over time. Façade elements and the parapet were painted to reflect an earlier period. The results were dramatic and a handsome and attractive structure emerged from its nondescript recent past. The windows in the front of the building were restored to their original appearance. Plywood was removed from the other windows, and they were given a more permanent and tasteful covering. In 1998 Downtown Antiques was to occupy the site (numbered 218) and currently Jackson Street Antiques, owned and operated by Carmen and Leo Garza, continues to do so.

Upon entering the spacious store patrons are taken back in history by the high ceilings faced in embossed tin paneling. High on the east wall are a series of mural panels painted by famed Harlingen artist Normah Knight. They originally were commissioned for the new Holsum Bakery Building but were removed here when the old bakery site was being refurbished. The nostalgic building is a perfect complement to its present use to display antiques.
For whatever reason the first bank building in La Feria, the Cameron County Bank of La Feria, is the same exact building as the Letzerich Building except for some additional ground floor windows. This structure, which carries a Texas Historical Commission marker, was built in late 1911 or early 1912 by the area's local contractor, W. A. Strickland. This leads one to believe that the building design blueprints may have been a common one offered for sale to contractors.

In October 2008 the Garzas closed their large upscale antique business at the site. An artist later was to rent the space.