In 1902 developer Lon C. Hill purchased 2 ½ leagues or 11,070 acres of School Lands from Cameron County. He paid $13,837.50 or $1.25 per acre. This area north of the Arroyo Colorado and the Concepcion de Carricitos Spanish Land Grant to the brothers Eugenio and Bartolome Fernandez was semi-arid chaparral and of low value. Hill knew that two things could enhance his property – water to irrigate crops and a railroad to transport the commodities to market. In 1907 he commenced building a major gravity-flow canal with a pumping station at Las Rusias. It would eventually extend 14.6 miles north of the Rio Grande.

Hill encouraged his associates to invest in a railroad to the Valley and to dedicate right-of-ways for it. On 4/20/04 the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway reached "Six-Shooter Junction." In need for a station name and a soon-to-be post office, the name Harlingen was selected by Hill to honor Uriah Lott and the railroad builder's ancestral homes in Holland and New Jersey.

With the almost immediate rail spur to the west from Harlingen being constructed, the town became not only a junction but a commercial hub. The nascent cotton industry took root in its surrounding as did citrus and vegetable production. All were packed, refrigerated, and shipped from facilities within the city. The coming of the Southern Pacific railroad line in early 1927 cemented the city's status as the Valley's major transportation hub.

Downtown Jackson Street retains the architectural flavor of the 1910-20s era. The variable architecture and striking beauty of homes of "Silk Stocking Row" along East Taylor Street reflect the affluence of the city's merchants and professionals as the city grew in the 1920s.

"Historic Harlingen" Wording by Norman Rozeff on Los Caminos del Rio Monument Located on W. Harrison Avenue at B Street