Sometime before 1925, after checking out both California and Florida, Wimberly McLeod comes to Harlingen to work for real estate developer F. Z. Bishop, who has purchased 1,100 lots (most within Harlingen city limits.) McLeod is a native of Abbeville Georgia where he was born 11/6/92. After leaving Bishop's employ, he is said to have gained more sales experience with the W. E. Stewart Land Company. He strikes out on his own when with Walton D. Hood they buy a large but undeveloped tract with the intention of subdividing it into small acreages. With Hood, formerly a San Antonio banker, financing the enterprise they create the McLeod-Hood Land Company in January 1928 and within it the McLeod-Hood Properties No.1. Located within Survey 274, it is situated just south of the Ojo de Agua Tract, bounded on the east by the Arroyo Colorado, with FM 508 running south to north through it ¾ mile west of the arroyo, and on the west by the Briggs-Coleman Tract.

The approximately 1,870 acres are wild and covered by mesquite. Intentions are to clear it and plant the lots in citrus. The clearing is done by hand. The company organizes its own water district using underground concrete pipes for irrigation water distribution. The subdivision even has a 69 acre reservoir with a capacity of 280 acre feet of water capable of servicing 2,500 acres. The 165 lots vary in size from around 2.8 acres up to 20 acres.

"An orchard company was organized to handle the planting and maintenance for the non-resident owners. This was managed by Walton Donnie Hood, Jr. and Kennie R. Hood, sons of Walter. Both Rio Hondo residents and those in the surrounding area were most cooperative and assisted the developers of the property."

A two-story wooden u-shaped clubhouse is erected on the property to entertain prospective buyers. It has a screened-in porch in its mid section. On the west bank of the Arroyo, it is set up to accommodate 125 prospective buyers and a service staff was employed. As was done by other developers during this period, prospective buyers were brought down on the railroad with all expenses paid. This was the soft sell part. With a stay lasting three days and nights, they were treated to lunch and dinner in Matamoros as part of the package. Approximately 35 automobiles were said to have been involved with this enterprise. Drivers and car owners familiar with the Rio Hondo area also assisted in sales. Once isolated in the clubhouse, miles from civilization the prospects were a captive audience and were then exposed to a relentless hard sell at which Wimberly was an experienced master. Before the Great Depression was to strengthen, "several hundred acres were sold at approximately $800 to $1,000 an acre."

When the 1930 Harlingen telephone directory is published, the entry lists Wimberley McLeod as president of McLeod and Hood Co. with Paul H. Brown as vice-president, and Walton D. Hood as secretary-treasurer. The company's office is in the Politis

---

1 Information in this essay borrows freely from The McLeod-Hood Land Company in the Pioneer History reference file, pp.165-166, of the Rio Hondo Library
Building at 108 ½ North 1st Street. Wimberley's home address is Mission Road. The same business entry appears in the 1931-1932 directory, but by 1935 the company is no longer listed. By this year McLeod is simply noted to be involved with land and having his office in the Rio Grande National Life Building on A Street. He is residing ¾ mile McLeod Road west of the city. [Neither Mission nor McLeod Roads currently exist in Harlingen street lists.] By the year 1931, the McLeods (she is either Clair or Clara) had one young daughter.

The reason the company was no longer listed after 1932 was that it was dissolved in 1931. Later the unsold parcels were sold, in what is described "at a tremendously reduced price" to an insurance company. Conceivably the original purchase price was low and the eventual selling price was not too much of a sacrifice though considerably below what was being asked from out-of-Valley buyers.

The large clubhouse located on the west bank of the Arroyo Colorado was to survive in a strange manner. It was broken into three sections. Frank Davis Sr., John Abbot, and Ruth Ann Campbell each secured a section and moved it to locations not too far where it was originally sited.

McLeod will also sell parcels in the Rice Tract east of San Benito. This land is then cleared by the Bingley brothers of Los Fresnos.

Dan Palmer, who is in his late 70s, is married to Billie Bingley, daughter of George, one of the brothers. He recalls that Wimberly, upon learning that the brothers wanted to purchase 1,600 acres from the owner of Rice Tract land jumped in and took an option on it before they had taken action. They then had to pay him an extra commission in order to obtain the land. The owner had several times sold the land before, each time reclaiming it when the purchasers defaulted on payments. He was shocked when the Bingleys started clearing it with bulldozers, for this meant that it would be put to productive use. He then commenced a lawsuit which dragged on for many years but which he eventually lost.

Palmer also recalls duck hunting on the pond that McLeod had created in his Rice Tract subdivision. The area had no power yet, so when McLeod built a two-story residence–clubhouse on the property in the early 1940s (probably earlier), Palmer's automobile dealership, which also dealt with butane, installed a butane system for the building. This structure had a crude appearance as half logs were used for its exterior walls. The McLeods used the upstairs while the bottom floor was used to wine and dine prospective buyers. Palmer noted that Wimberly was a very persuasive and talented speaker and salesman. When visitors wandered off track he would corral them and recommence his spiel. After the last acreage on the Rice Tract was sold the last, the guest house burned down.

The following item taken from some Episcopal Church, Harlingen history indicates that McLeod was likely already in the city between 1921 and 1924:
2/1921 An official Episcopal Mission is established here. Ten people are its organizers. They are Mr. Thompson, the undertaker, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Tamm, Mrs. Burke, Mr. and Mrs. Stephenson, Mrs. R.R. Ambert, Mrs. Pendleton, Mrs. Winter, and Mrs. Irving Webb. They will meet in various locations including the home of Wimberly McLeod, the Rialto Theater, John T. Thompson's Mortuary, the Presbyterian Church, and the Central Ward School. On 6/17/24 the St. Alban's Episcopal Church is organized. Its first building is constructed at 317 S. 6th at the corner of 6th and Tyler on a lot purchased for $250. L.H. Moore heads the building committee which is to erect, at a cost of $1,500, the wooden sanctuary capable of seating 50 people. It is only in October 1938 that the mission becomes a parish.

In a promotional brochure for the city published in 1925 by the Valley Morning Star, McLeod is given a full page spread, but it contains more fluff than details. However a full second page has a photo portrait of him. Both were very likely purchased for this special supplement.

Hood was to leave a more lasting memory, for he constructed a large, attractive, two-story stucco-faced family home on what is now designated FM 106. They moved into it in 1930 or 1931. It still sits on the left hand (north) side of the highway a short distance before the bridge crossing into Rio Hondo. "It was sold in 1932 when the Hoods moved back to San Antonio, but it still stands in good repair."

Sharon Newell, a Rio Hondo area native, tells us a little of the Hood descendents:

Walton D. Hood's oldest son, Walton Donnie Hood, Jr., married Josephine Marchbanks of San Benito on December 30, 1930. As a matter of interest to Valleyites, she was the first Anglo-American baby born in La Feria (October 18, 1910). They resided in Harlingen. Gladys Mae Hood, the only daughter, was married on May 30, 1931 to Hubert B. Herren, formerly of Alabama, of Harlingen. They would reside in Houston. Kennie R. Hood, the second son, married Edna Earle Gregory of Vernon, Texas in 1934. They resided in Dallas.

In 1930 Walton and Lillie Hood lived at 610 W. Buchanan Street, Harlingen with their three children. While W. D., Jr. was listed as manager of the service department of McLeod-Hood his brother Kennie was also an employee in the service department.

In this same year Hubert Herren was secretary-treasurer of the Herren Realty Company in Harlingen. His Father Thomas S. Herren was president of this firm and his older brother Clifford A. Herren was vice president. With mother Annie C., Hubert lived with his parents at 902 E. Harrison while another brother Reuben M. was a student attending the University of Alabama.

By 1937 Hubert had struck out on his own and has a real estate office in the lobby of the Commerce Building. He and Gladys resided with his parents at 902 E. Harrison in 1939 but by 1941 have departed the Harlingen scene. The McLeods have left Harlingen by 1937.