Sitting forlornly behind a chain link fence of the Harlingen Arts and Heritage Museum is a building with a history largely unknown to its viewers. This is its story.

Lawrence Sullivan (L. S.) Ross, Jr. was born in Waco, McClennan County, Texas in 1868. He was the second surviving child of Sul (Lawrence Sullivan) Ross (b. 9/27/38 in Iowa) and his wife Elizabeth Dorothy "Lizzie" Tinsley Ross. He was one of six children who survived from nine all told. These were four boys and two girls. His father was famed as a ranger, Indian fighter, sheriff, Texas Constitution of 1876 framer, two times Governor of Texas (1888-1891), and President of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, later to become Texas A & M University. He turned this faltering school around before his death in 1898.

5/4/1909 L. S. Ross and his wife Mollie purchase lots 7 and 8 in Block 74 of the Lon C. Hill Town and Improvement Company Subdivision and later in the year likely build a house upon it. This property will later have the address of 521 E. Harrison Avenue. Rather than from the land company they may have purchased the land from J. C. McGee. Mr. McGee was married to Lon C. Hill's sister and was an early storeowner and postmaster in Harlingen. He had purchased a number of lots in the city to resell. In November 1908 McGee sold a similar double-lot for $250. When the house was constructed on the lots it was only seven blocks from the center of town, yet we could consider it in the suburbs. There were few, if any, other houses around it, and adjacent lots still pastured cows and horses.

The Rosses had been married in Austin on 5/19/1891 when L. S. was in his early twenties. She was Miss Mollie Duffield, daughter of Mr. J. G. Duffield, formerly of Galveston. They were to have no children.

4/1912 L. S. Ross, son of former Texas Governor Sul Ross who was a famous Texas Ranger, is elected Mayor. He was the president of the Harlingen Commercial Club, treasurer of the Rio Grande Construction Association, school board trustee and farmed. He is also president of the Harlingen State Bank in which he is provided a private office for the conduct of city business. He is authorized to purchase office furniture and provide stationery. The bank is the depository for city funds. Ross is also responsible for bringing J. F. Rodgers to "Six Shooter Junction" in 1910. After settling in the Wilson Tract area, Rodgers will enter into a partnership with Ross called Ross and Rodgers Realty. A postcard photograph taken by P. C. Shockey is inscribed "May 5, 1913" and "Farm of L. S. Ross-Wilson Tract, Harlingen, Texas." It shows four men in white shirts, ties, and hats standing just inside a field of tall corn. Obviously it was taken to promote land sales.

1914 Mayor Ross and three aldermen are re-elected. On October 8 while visiting in Harris County Ross dies and Miller V. Pendleton, who works at the bank with Ross, is named to fill the unexpired term. Pendleton is re-elected in 4/16. It is his M.V. Pendleton Oil Company that provides oil to the city during his term in office.

According to a Waco Daily Times Herald obituary, Ross was on a train from Mineral Wells to Harlingen when he was stricken with paralysis. He had been in ill health for some time. The symptoms indicate that he may have suffered a cerebral stroke. He was buried in Waco, where he had been reared before going to Austin when his father was
elected governor. Ross returned to Waco where he was in the wholesale grocery business and in insurance for a time. He left Waco for other endeavors around 1904. He was characterized as "a man of his word in every instance, one that could be relied upon implicitly in connection with any statement he might make." According to his unknown birth month in 1868 Ross was either 45 or 46 years old at the time of his death.

1919 In this year, two year old Betty Nosler, who will later play a major role in this story, comes to San Benito from Indiana with her parents James Bertram and Marie Williams Nosler. He would build and operate the San Benito Electric Gin, the first of its kind in the Valley and which operated until the mid-30s. In 1937 Betty would be graduated from UT-Austin with a degree in education. On 12/27/38 she marries Menton Murray, a young lawyer who has an office in Mercedes but lives in Harlingen. They had two children, Menton Murray, Jr., a District judge for many years, and Betty Marie Murray Smith, now in Tennessee. The senior Murray served in WWII, as a city judge, and in the state legislature from 1947 to 1975.

Betty over the decades amassed a splendid record as a school teacher, in various clubs promoting civic endeavors, and most importantly as an advocate for history and historic preservation. Through her efforts Texas State Historic Commission markers were obtained for city sites. She led efforts to salvage the old F Street private hospital as well as the Ross-Bobo House by moving them to the RGV Museum, now the Harlingen Arts and Heritage Museum. Numerous honors have been bestowed upon her in recognition of her many accomplishments.

11/15/16 A warranty deed is recorded which "included all that certain parcel of land on which is situated a garage and dwelling house on lots 7 and 8 Block 74." It is unclear who the new owner(s) is. Four years later it appears that sisters Sunshine E. and W. Ophelia Harrington of Hidalgo County sell their interest in the property to E. J. Sutton for $500. This indicates that they may have owed a mortgage holder for the remainder. The conveyance document is dated 17 January 1920.

The property that year is purchased by Charles Pearson (C. P.) Bobo and his wife Louisa Ellen. This is, in fact, the year that the Bobos arrived in Harlingen. Of French descent, he was born 7/20/57 in Smithville, Lawrence County, AR. The surname Bobo is an anglicization of the name Baubeau. C. P. was descended from one Gabriel Baubeau. In 1883 he was graduated from the University of Arkansas with a degree in civil engineering. He married Louisa Ellen Harlow of Smithville on 1/12/88. Their children are Horace Greeley, Scott Schley and Jesse Marion, later to be followed by Lacy Simpson Bobo, Mary Lucille Bobo (Harris), Margaret "Blonde" Bobo (Kirlin), Charles Max, and Grace Ellen Bobo (Berry). This Methodist and Mason became the president of the board of directors and manager of the Cameron County Water Improvement District (CCWD) No.1, having been elected to the board in 1922. He will later serve as a City Commissioner 12/31-12/33 and act in the capacity of Finance Commissioner.

1928 CCWD officers for the year are C. P. Bobo, director, president and manager; J. B. Elmore, vice-president; J. S. Blakney, vice-president; J. R. Grimes (for whom a street later will be named), vice-president; Hugh Fitzgerald, vice-president, Frank H. Brown, assessor and collector; and E. B. Worley, engineer. By the end of this year The CCWD No.1 comprises a total 43, 239.39 acres of which 38, 240.62 are irrigated, the balance of which is being used for canals, roads, drainage ditches, and land too high to irrigate. In this year 26,000 acres are under cultivation. These contain cotton, corn, cabbage, beets,
carrots, other truck crops, and citrus. There is also acreage devoted to dairy and forage. The district has about 160 miles of canals and laterals and a drainage system with 60 miles of ditches. At this time its pumping plant is housed in a substantial iron and concrete structure and consists of four 200hp Fairbanks, Morse and Co. internal combustion engines operating four 36" centrifugal pumps and one 42" one. The total pumping capacity is 132,000gpm. One of the district's canals runs along what is now 13th Street then turns west north of Jefferson Street with a branch going south to replenish City Lake.

1/15/30 Three old board members of the Cameron County Irrigation District No. 1 fail to get re-elected. They are chairman C.P. Bobo, J.B. Elmore and J.R. Grimes. H.L. Starnes and J.F. Blakney are retained. New members are J.W. Wade, F.H. Green, J.S. Blakney, and W.T. Bush. By 1930 others of the Bobo family have descended upon Harlingen. These include C. P.'s son Scott, who is a bookkeeper for the I. E. Malthy's Garage, and his wife Della J. Bobo, bookkeeper for the Brooks Tire Company; Lacy S. Bobo of the Bobo Printing Company, his wife Edna, and Ray G. Bobo, a pressman with the company; and H. G. (Monte) Bobo, a baker with the Valley Baking Company.

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C. P. and Ellen continue to live at 521 until 1935. In his 77th year C. P. is to die this year on April 19. He is buried in the Restlawn Cemetery, La Feria. (In the 1937 telephone directory Ellen is listed as a widow. She is to live until July 1953 at which time she incurred a tragic fall while at her daughter Blonde's home in San Antonio. She was then interred besides her husband at Restlawn.) Her son Jesse, an insurance investigator lives with her in 1937. By 1939 under Ellen's management her home becomes a rooming house. Her son Jesse continues to live there. He is now employed by his brother, who is secretary-treasurer and manager of Scott's Tire Company, Inc. Lacy and his wife also reside in the premise.

By 1941 some family members have left the nest while others have come home. Charles Max Bobo, his wife Geraldine and son Charles Jr. are now at 521. The elder Bobo is used car manager for Lehman's while junior works for the Scott's Tire Co. The following year the Bobos are running the Bobo Apartments at 515 E. Harrison. These have four tenants. Mary Kidd, a stenographer at the Army Air Field, is rooming at 521. Possibly due to wartime callings other Bobos are not in town except for a Leslie H. Bobo and his wife Ann. He is a customs patrol inspector. They live at 102 W. Pierce.

In 1944 Ellen is listed as the manager for the Bobo Apartments that this year have three tenants while Ellen resides at 521. By 1946 the apartments are no more, and by 1948 Ellen has moved to 214 S. 6th Street. Horace G. Bobo and his wife Iris now reside in the old Bobo residence at 521. He is a contractor who specializes in laying irrigation and water pipes and lining canals. They are first found in Harlingen in 1946 when they live on the Combes Highway where they also own the Bobo Tourist Court. It ceases to operate by 1950. Horace, who was born in Arkansas August 12, 1902 several years before the family first moved to Byers, Texas, earned a degree in pharmacy at Baylor but later became a cotton farmer in Edcouch. In WWII he helped to build the Laredo Air Force Base then returned to farming in the Valley and commenced irrigation pipeline contracting. It had been in 1934 that he married an Edcouch girl, Iris Elizabeth Netz. They were to have one son Kenneth Allen and four daughters, Marjorie Ann, Betty Jane, Nancy Lou, and Sharon Ruth.
1952  Horace and his wife continue to live at 521, and Jesse and his wife Ora return to the
city to live there too.  Jesse is a carpenter.  Iris Netz Bobo, is, in 1956, secretary at Family
Investment and Trust.  Living with her at 521 are Kenneth A. and Marjorie Anne Bobo.
He is a plant foreman with W.T. Liston, and she a bookkeeper with the First National
Bank. Sue Payne, a secretary with Van Wyk adjustors is a roofer at the house this year.
By 1956 Iris has taken the position as secretary of the Tip of Texas Girl Scout Council, a
job she will hold until 1958. While Kenneth and Marjorie have moved elsewhere, Betty
Jane Bobo, a bookkeeper, now lives with Iris.
It is by 1959 that Iris makes a major career decision. She commences a nursery and child
daycare facility. Locally everyone calls the nursery by its catchy alliterative name—
Bobo's Baby Bank. The roomy house is amenable for this particular use while Betty Jane,
now a discount clerk for GMAC, and Nancy Lou Bobo, a student, also utilize the house.
Iris is also busy as secretary of the Women of the Church of the First Methodist Church
and the VBMC Auxiliary.
The daycare business is listed in telephone directories through 1969 after which time only
Iris's number is noted. Unofficially she continues her business well into the 1970s. Her
name and number are last listed in the directory of November 1991. Iris died on October
7, 1992 and was buried in the Ebony Grove Cemetery, Merced. Her husband Horace
had died at his sister Blonde's house in Hartman, Arkansas on March 24, 1963. By 1992
and through 2007 it appears that Majorie Ann Bobo Eastin remains in Harlingen while
brother Kenneth Allen resides in Pharr.
In early 1993 the vacant, rundown Bobo House (as it has come to be known) property at
521 E. Harrison is scheduled to be demolished to make way for a commercial
development. The banker Dial Dunkin, among others, is instrumental in bringing the
house's historical significance to the attention of historian Betty Murray and the Board of
Directors of the Rio Grande Valley Museum. By 3/18/93 a bulldozer is waiting to
demolish the house to clear the lot. By 3/27/93 an inspection of the structure finds it to be
sturdy despite its shabby outward appearance and decrepit sweeping porch. The Valley
Morning Star runs articles in March and April about the historic house. The Board
commences a drive to raise funds for the house's transfer should the City fail to be of
assistance. In seeking financial help from the City, the Museum people learn that the City
is not ready to rule out the fate of the 1909 home. To buy time a $1000 check signed by
Betty Murray and dated March 31, 1993 is given to the Iris Netz Bobo Estate as earnest
money guaranteeing the removal of the structure from the property.
The house is to get a little breathing room. On April 2, 1993 executors of the estate grant
a reprieve of two weeks for the removal of the house. Shortly thereafter City
Commissioner Wayne Potter is to make the motion, seconded by Connie de la Garza, to
have the City contract to move the house to a site at the Rio Grande Valley Museum. It
passes. On April 14, 1993 the historic move is implemented.
The house is approximately 35' by 35'. It possesses a hipped four-sided roof with four
dormers. In order to facilitate its passage across town, the roof of the building is removed
otherwise it would not clear the many utility lines en route to the Museum. The nine foot
wide porch that surrounds the front and half of each side is removed for it is dilapidated
and not salvageable. Once the building is situated in a vacant area on the west end of the
Museum complex, the roof is reunited with it. In the Spring of 1994 a new wood shingle
roof was put on the edifice.
Early preliminary cost estimates to repair and restore the house are made. The estimated costs are: Exterior $17,200 and Interior $26,600 for a subtotal of $43,800. With an additional $8,760 for bonds and insurance plus the contractor's overhead and profit of $13,125, this brings the grand total to $65,685. After this point in time the status of the Ross-Bobo House was left in limbo. No work was conducted on the unsightly house until 2006 when Sue Debrooke started to remove unsightly peeling paint from the exterior of the building.

The lot upon which the Ross-Bobo House once stood is now occupied by Comet Cleaners. The adjacent lot at 515 where the Bobo Apartments were now has on it the attractive law offices of Stapleton, Curtis, and Boswell.

It is hoped that the rooms of the Ross-Bobo House will once again echo with the laughter of young children, for some community-minded citizens wish to restore the structure and transform it into a children's art center as part of the Museum. They will need the financial backing and aid of interested Harlingenites to accomplish this dream.