1909  A settlement of fourteen families of the Seventh Day Adventist church convinces the State Mission Board of Fort Worth of that church to proceed with the erection of a house of worship, the first of its kind for that specific purpose. This first church building in Harlingen was to be a little one on the northeast corner of 4th and Jackson. Construction materials are purchased from the South Texas Lumber Co. on 5/5/09. The Rev. Mr. Montgomery and his wife were living in a tent, when the church was being built. A tropical storm [perhaps that of June 30,1909 which came ashore north of Brownsville] that year partially collapsed the incomplete church building. Both the minister and his wife were injured. Though his wife recovered, the pastor died of his injuries. For this reason the Adventists never completed their building and, in fact most members of the colony later left for California. By public conscription, the building was later completed so people in Harlingen might have another place to worship. It was shared by several denominations. The Baptists used it before their new church was constructed in 1910. Later the structure was sold to the First Christian Church in 1918 for $400. Improvements to it cost $1,500. It was later sold to the Grace English Lutheran Church for $2,500.

The building was used for community meetings and served as a school house for the town's Anglo children. Mrs. George Pletcher, mother of George Pletcher, Jr., who would enter the nursery business and become mayor of Harlingen, along with Mrs. Wiles' sister Eula were school teachers in the Adventist Church building. Her brother H.C. Ware and his wife owned a home next door to the old Adventist Church building, which was later to become a community building. One student, I.E. (Renus) Snavely, of this period recalls that before the first brick schoolhouse was built classes were held in a succession of places. These were the Adventist Church building, which the Adventists never got to utilize, the Baptist Tabernacle, a red brick building on Harrison Street, and two buildings on the downtown blocks of Jackson. One of these was upstairs over a saloon with a pool hall next door.

2/9/13  The First Christian Church is organized by 31 members. Among its charter members is 29 year old Miss Paul Hill, who would teach Sunday School. Others are her sister Annie Rooney Hill, Mr. & Mrs. John Myrick, Mr. & Mrs. L.K. Shipp, Mr. & Mrs. C.H. Finnegan, Mr. & Mrs. S.A. Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. W.G. Stewart, Mrs. C.L. Ogan and daughter Lois, Miss Lucille Shipp, Mrs. T.L. Phillipps, and Mrs. E.H. Adams. It uses the old Seventh Day Adventist building at 4th and Main Street as its sanctuary around 1913-14. J.W. Rhone, S.A. Thompson, and John Myrick are later to gift the lot at 710 E. Jackson and loan $1,800 for the erection of a parsonage. In the future this five room house is sold to Mrs. Mildred Griffeth for $2,250.

1922  The E.O. Matz Electric Company commences business first as the Barth and Matz Electric Co. Lawrence Electric opens this same year. Ernest C. Barth works out of 217 E. Harrison.
1922 The Rev. H. Lueker, who had arrived the year before, of San Benito continues to serve Harlingen Lutherans after Pastor Meyer's departure. It is decided to make both Harlingen and Brownsville a field separate from San Benito. At this time Harlingen's Lutheran group has 48 souls, 31 communicants, and 11 voters. At the end of this year H. Atrops arrives to take charge of the field. He remains until the end of 1924.


1925 Early in the year a doctrinal disagreement arises among the Lutherans here. Some charter member then left to form another congregation, namely that which would evolve into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

3/25 Traveling missionary, the Rev. Dr. H.W. Emil Listman is ministering to a group of Lutherans here. On 8/23/25 fourteen Lutheran families organize to establish a Lutheran Church of America mission. In the initial group are members of the Hoffman, Matz, W.W. and Clara Altus, Miller, Schmoker, Borchardt, and Laabs families and individuals Mrs. Sanders, Mrs. Elizabeth Bothwell and Ernest C. Barth. The property at 318-322 E. Jackson is purchased then later sold to E.O. Matz. In 1926 its mission is in the small, white, wood frame building on the northeast corner of 4th and Jackson. This is the building which has seen numerous previous uses by the community and various religious denominations. Pastor Nathaniel Sheffer is the congregation's first permanent minister, serving from 1/26 until the summer of 1931. On 6/15/33 a two story parsonage has been built and dedicated to the rear of the sanctuary. Shortly after the church's formation the women of the congregation form a group named the "Evangelical Lutheran Ladies Aid." Mrs. Ed Miller is elected its president; Mrs. John Kretchmer, vp; Mrs. Elizabeth Bothwell, secretary; and Mrs. A.W. Labb, treasurer. Other members are Mrs. Clara Altus, Mrs. Ida Voges, Mrs. Anna Matz, Mrs. E. Listman, Mrs. L. Hector, and Mrs. E. Hibbe.

4/25 St. Paul Evangelistic Church (Lutheran Missouri Synod) is organized. The Rev. A.W. Arndt will become its first resident pastor. First services are held in the Central Ward School. After a $4,000 loan from the District Church Extension fund is secured, four 25 foot lots on the corner of Third and Tyler are purchased and a parsonage is soon constructed largely with volunteer labor. Several months later an additional loan of $2,000 is obtained and in September the congregation votes to build a church. It is quickly erected and dedicated 12/6/25. The wooden structure was to be enlarged in the fall of 1931.

5/17/46 After purchasing the property in late 1945, a Lutheran Service Center is established at 405 E. Jackson for armed service personnel here. With the war ending and the Army Airfield closed the center is discontinued 2/1/46 but used as a ELCA parish hall. In January it had bought the property at 318-22 E. Jackson but then is to sell it to E.O. Matz.
1948  Two surplus Army Airfield barracks are purchased by Grace Lutheran Church parishioners and moved to the 1000 block of E. Jackson to serve as a chapel and as a parish hall. The one-half block property has cost $15,000. The 4th and Jackson property and the former Lutheran Service Center are sold. On 8/22/50 the transformed barracks is dedicated as a sanctuary and will serve as such for 19 years.

1969  Between 10th and 11th Streets along Jackson, a new $84,000 brick sanctuary is erected as Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is dedicated 11/9/69. The transformed barracks serving as a sanctuary previously is demolished to clear the site. Membership is 275 plus 167 winter visitors. In 1987 the two story second barracks serving as a Sunday School/parish hall will also be torn town and in 1988 a brick one erected.

12/25/95  Eleanor Ochsner Matz dies. Born in 1914 in New Jersey she had come with her family to La Feria in 1929. In 1932 she and her family moved to Harlingen where she would eventually marry electrician E. O. Matz. She is remembered for a lifetime of tireless efforts to clean up Harlingen, her civic pride, her community advocacy, commitment to youth, health and beautification. Her children are James and Brant, Joyce Hill and Susan Raybourn. Initially an ELCA Lutheran, she was to become a member of the First Methodist Church.