In an era when temperance and prohibition were gaining strength, being the proprietor of a saloon may not have met with great respect. This proved to be no impediment for August H. Weller. Weller and his family were early Anglo settlers to the area. Mr. Weller grew up in a large family. The June 1880 US Census indicates that his father August was 52 and a merchant in Lavaca County. His mother Anna was 45 and had at that time produced Amelia 20, Charles 17, Herman 15, Ida 8, William 6 and Edward 4. August H. was 23 and already married to Augusta 18. While he clerked in a store, she kept house with her in-laws. His father had been born in Berlin, Germany and his mother in Prussia. The family had lived in the small crossroads community of Sublime in the Port Lavaca area. Mr. Weller was in farming, but several years of drought in the area combined with poor soils with which to start led him to sell out for about $80,000 and take a chance on what might be "greener pastures."

One account mentions that they arrived with furniture and other possessions by work train and were unceremoniously deposited at Olmito where the line ended in the spring of 1904. Sam Robertson was not above sneaking settlers into the Valley on the nascent rail line before passenger service was offered. The Wellers then moved into Brownsville. Their other possessions and perhaps livestock were to follow by wagon.

It is in 1906 that the railroad company feels confident enough of Harlingen's future that it constructs a two-story, u-shaped, frame hotel having 10 rooms with two baths and verandas on both floors. Its location is the center of town, Hill (now First) Street and Harrison. Its first manager is Mrs. August H. Weller. [Mrs. Weller's father, Charles Bock, Sr. (also spelled in the original German, Boch), has the distinction of being the first Texas Ranger to enlist in a newly formed company in Goliad in 1851.] She is followed in management by Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Ogan. This hotel will later be called the Mooreland. In 1906 the Weller family is only the fourth family to have settled in Harlingen.

On 9/5/06 Weller buys the three lots at Tyler and Commerce and two lots at Commerce and Jackson. These are the first lots conveyed by the Harlingen Town and Improvement Company. Ten days later Santos Lozano buys two lots at Jackson and "A" Streets. Across from the railroad depot Weller is to build his restaurant /saloon. Sales recorded 10/21/07 in Hill's lumber company ledger indicate local activities and individuals in the community. These include lumber for A. H. Weller's restaurant. This is but one of a series of his saloons around town. The large one is on the south side of Jackson a short distance east of Commerce Street. It has a large false front second story upon which it advertises "Saloon." It looks straight out of a Hollywood western. In time he is reported to have run or leased the premises for thirteen "watering holes." While this may be exaggerated there is no question that he quickly amassed enough capital to move into more acceptable businesses and soon become a pillar of the community.

The first major brick building in Harlingen was Lon C. Hill's large two-story one on Van Buren. When finished in 1909, one of building's first floor occupants, besides the general merchandise store operated by Sam Botts and Fred Chambers, is Harlingen's first bank. It is the Harlingen State Bank. Searcy Chambers is president and M.V. Pendleton, cashier and general manager. Later A. H. Weller purchases the bank and moves it to the Weller
Building at "A" and Jackson Streets. This two-story, brick structure may have been built by Andrew Goldammer, who was to put up four structures for Weller. The building exists in a Robert Runyon photo taken in late 1911. In Runyon's 1915 photos of the building a new sign saying "Harlingen State Bank" sits on the ground on the north side and awaits hanging. As its new president Weller hires Bailey Dunlap of La Feria as supervisor and Hoyte Hicks Burchard as manager.

Mrs. Weller in 1906 steps in to fill a community need when she organizes the Harlingen Cemetery Association. She is active in cemetery affairs for many years. The Wellers in 1908 have moved into their newly constructed residence at the corner of Commerce and Tyler, the site of the current City Hall. Mary Augusta Bock Weller was born 5/26/62. In 1942 she will celebrate her 80th birthday. One daughter, Selma, is to marry Andrew Goldammer, the builder; Kathryne will marry H. D. (Herbert) Seago, who will become County Clerk; Maude will become the wife of Dr. C.W. Letzerich; and Agnes, Mrs. H. B. Verhelle. When the Seagos are married 6/18/12 in the First Presbyterian Church they are the first to be married in the sanctuary.

In a September 1909 school board election for seven trustees, Weller comes in last in eighth place. With the town population now 1,126 in the year 1911, 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. The Council, along with five alderman elected in place, meet twice a month. Members of the first Equalization Board to adjust the tax valuation of property are A. H. Weller, Gordon Hill, C. F. Perry, C. W. Hoot, and R. S. Chambers.

Weller keeps his hand in politics and in 4/12 is elected aldermen together with J. M. Denton, M. V. Pendleton, who was formerly city clerk, H. A. Gibbs, and R. L. Chaudoin. In April 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. Mayor Ross and three aldermen are re-elected in 1914. In October Ross dies and Miller V. Pendleton, who works at the bank with Ross, is named to fill the unexpired term.

9/13 Hoyte Hicks Burchard and Luallee Pendleton Burchard come to Harlingen by train from Gonzales, TX at the urging of her brother Miller Pendleton. Their daughter Kate Dorothy Burchard, later Mrs. Charles Washmon, is two years old. H.H. takes the position of executive director of the Harlingen State Bank. In 1915 when the Pioneer Building is inaugurated he opens the Burchard Pharmacy in a corner of the building, for he is a graduate of the University of Texas and its School of Pharmacy.

Planters State Bank goes into operation at southeast corner of Commerce and Jackson in the year 1917. A two-story brick building is erected where Mack Crenshaw once ran his barbershop in a small frame building. About this time the Harlingen State Bank had deposits of $78,919.81 and the Planters State and Guaranty Bank $22,516.84. The Planters State Bank organized by B.F. Johnson takes over the assets of the Harlingen State Bank and is later purchased itself by S.A. Thompson on 1/1/19. In 1923 it closes its doors. Its assets are taken over by the Valley State Bank, organized by B.M. Holland, a
former bank examiner. John T. Lomax of San Benito becomes president and Tyre H. Brown vice-president. The Valley State Bank fails in 1931 after occupying the ground floor of the building 1924-1927.

It is on 4/1/18 that R.B. Hamilton comes from Bishop, Texas to become manager of the First National Bank, whose capital stock stands at $15,000. He increases that to $25,000 in 1919. This bank apparently closes within a few years and Mr. Hamilton goes into the insurance business. He is to serve on the City Commission 4/23-12/31 and on other city boards.

By January 1920 all the Weller children have left home. August is now 63 and his wife Augusta M. is 57. In the US Census of that year he lists no occupation. Both Wellers note that their parents were born in Germany.

The First National Bank of Harlingen, the same in the photo (VMS, 6/22/06), was opened 3/1/22 in the west half of Neil Madeley's grocery store at 117W. Jackson. A. B. Hoffman was its first president, H. M. Barton, cashier, and John Nance Garner, the longtime Congressman and eventually Vice President under Franklin Roosevelt, was a stockholder. On 7/1/22 it held $44,468 in deposits; in 1937 more than $1 million when it was in 124 W. Jackson. On 3/26/51 it moved to 202 E. Van Buren. By 1959 its deposits were more than $30 million. After April 1982 and a merger, its name changed to Inter First Bank with 1985 assets of $223 million, later Nations Bank, and today it is Bank of America.

A last mention of Weller arises on 3/16/53 when the newspaper reports a $250,000 fire around the 103 address of W. Jackson. The major blaze destroys or damages seven businesses. The A. H. Weller Estate had leased in what was known as the "Weller Block" space to Rogers Studio, Wilson Sporting Goods Store, Valley Sewing Machine Service, Anderson's Jewelry Store, Palace Barber, Pate Bros. Men's Furnishings, and Max's Shoe Repair Store.

Could beer and whiskey guzzling cowboys, farmhands, and workmen ever visualize back in 1907 that their nickels and dimes could finance banks, businesses, and a large community? Probably not, but foresighted August H. Weller in doing well for himself also did well for the City of Harlingen. This is called free enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Obituary Writeup of the Father of Mrs. A. H Weller

The First Texas Ranger in 1851 Company is Dead.

Chas. Bock Sr.
Harlingen, Texas, Feb. 3, 1913

Charles Bock, Sr., of this city died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. A. H. Weller, at 11 o'clock after an illness lasting about five weeks. Mr. Bock was born in the village of Verncen Braunschweig, Germany, in the year 1833. In 1843 he sailed for America from Bremen, on the Ship Siaona, and landed in Galveston, from where he walked to Harrisburg and then to Houston and later to Columbus, Texas.

At the age of 18 he joined the Texas State Rangers at Goliad. Captain Henry was then in command and he was the first Ranger to be accepted. He fought the Indians for two years and was a Confederate soldier under General Bates in the Civil War, being a private in Captain Sanders' company of Major Brown's battalion; In 1858 he married Miss Katheryne Pelzer in New Braunfels. Five children of this union survive.
Services were conducted at the Weller home here this afternoon, Rev. L. R. Burress of Brownsville officiating. The remains were shipped to Oakland, Texas, for burial in the Bock Home Cemetery and were accompanied by Mrs. A. H. Weller of this city and Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Weller of Brownsville. Deceased was a member of the Masonic Lodge No. 258 at Oakland. – Houston Post.

Mr. Bock was already living with his daughter when the 1910 census was conducted.