Decade 1940 to 1949

Development

1940  U.S. Census puts Harlingen's population at 13,306. It is characterized as 62% American, 36% Latin-American and 2% Negro.
9/40  Mayor Hugh Ramsey makes a definitive proposal to the War Department to establish an Army Air Field at Harlingen. On 6/17/40 he had reported to the C of C that land suitable for a base had been pinpointed and that the city was attempting to acquire it.
12/17/40  The Hug-the Coast Highway opens. It runs from Orange, TX (just across the Louisiana state line) to Brownsville and in parts is predecessor to US Highway 77.

1941  Mayor Ramsey and Harlingen City Commissioners J.L. Head, Guy Leggett, Bouldin C. Mothershead, W.E. Gaines, W.C. Anderson, and Arthur Dabney together with U.S. Senators Tom Connally and Morris Shepherd go to Washington to present the city's plans to the War Department.
3/41  Army Air Corps officials in Washington announce approval of Harlingen Air Training Base and in May this is confirmed. Later authority to proceed comes with the approval of a $3.8 million appropriation.
6/30/41  A contract is let for Morgan and Zachary, El Paso and Laredo, builders to start the military airfield construction.
7/41  Harlingen Army Airfield is established for the training of gunnery students. By 1945 more than 48,000 gunners have utilized the facility, now the Valley International Airport. With its palm-lined streets and flowering shrubs it was known as the "showplace of the air force."
11/28/41  Col. John R. Morgan, who will become the airfield commander, lands first base aircraft, a BT-13, on new southeast runway. At this time only a one-chair contractor's shack exists.
12/9/41  The following Associated Press story datelined Harlingen appeared in the San Antonio Press: The 40-mile long Rio Grande Valley from Weslaco to Brownsville was blacked out Tuesday night under an order from Major Grover C. Goodrich, commander of Fort Brown, who announced it was a test. Army planes, he said, would fly over the Valley, in the southern part of the state, to check the effectivenesss of the blackout. Sirens warning of an air raid were sounded. The lights were ordered turned off shortly after 11 p.m. Major Goodrich said the blackout would not be lifted until daylight.

1942  Harlingen building permits slump to $102,160. Only 36 homes and one apartment complex are constructed. The bonded indebtedness of the city is $1,031,800. Its assessed valuation is $9,142,360. The city tax rate is $1.80 per $100 assessed value, the school tax rate $1.00/$100, the state $.50, county $1.63, and the Arroyo Navigation District $.45. The CCWD charge is $2 per acre per year plus 50 cents per acre per irrigation.
Some key statistic for this and the previous year are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Postal Receipts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/31/41</td>
<td>$76,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/31/42</td>
<td>$118,304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
bank deposits $ 2,487,094 $4,173,568
telephones 2,568 3,135
electric connections 3,468 3,376
gas connections 2,293 2,493
water meters 2,246 2,538

1/43 Harlingen citizens purchase $652,690.50 of war bonds and stamps in 1942. The now four square mile city has an estimated population of 16,000.

1944-45 Building permits rise to pre-war levels with $422,510 and $606,764 for each year. Whether from the military or other, Harlingen sees a considerable jump in key financial indicators between 1944 and the end of 1945. Bank deposits rise from $9,580,159 to $14,500,000; postal receipts from $181,148 to $194,080; electric meters 3882 to 4412; gas meters from 2779 to 2902; water meters from 2729 to 3094; and telephones from 3535 to 3643.

1945 The year saw the ratification of the water treaty with Mexico and the letting of the contract to extend the Intracoastal Canal to the Valley from Corpus Christi.

8/45 The U.S. Navy reveals that German submarines had sunk four Norwegian ships and one Mexican ship in Gulf waters off the Valley during World War II.

1/1/46 The "Pivot City" shows record breaking bank deposits at $15 million for 1945, a growth of almost $5 million over 1944. Bank deposits over the decade reflect the importance of the coming of the military to the city. They have been: 1935 $1.015 million; 1936 $1.383; 1937 1.825; 1938 1.747; 1939 1.872; 1940 2.098; 1941 2.487; 1942 4.173; 1943 6.238 and 1944 9.580. Building permits will edge over $600,000 for the year.

2/46 Harlingen Army Airfield is deactivated and formally taken over by the city on March 21. On 3/21/46 the field is taken over by the city.

9/7/46 Harlingen Field dedicated as a municipal airport by Rear Admiral C.A.F. Sprague, commander of the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station. From this field is flown the first air cargo ever from the Valley. It is a planeload of strawberries for Canada.

12/46 Water System assets are put at $897,842.

1946-49 City sees post-war surge in building permits. The four year period averages $2,037,886 per year, a 334% increase over the year 1945.

1947 This year is a bad one for fires. With a population of 22,922, $229,060 are paid as fire insurance premiums, yet insured losses for the year total $493,457 or $21.53 per capita. This is way above any previous years or those to follow.

At $2,004,046 Harlingen building permits set a new record, only to be overtaken by 1947's $68,000 more.

4/22/47 Nationwide Air Transport flies into the All-Valley Airport, Harlingen with the its first international air cargo ever. The DC 3 carries 7,000 lbs. of shrimp from Carmen, Mexico.
1948 The population of the city is said to be 25,348.

1949 After April the CCWD canal between Pierce Street and the Southern Pacific tracks is buried. This allows the creation of 13th Street.

Agriculture/Ranching

8/42 With many Valley citizens off to war the Mexican Farm Labor Supply Program ("Bracero") was put into effect. It allowed for a maximum at any one time of 50,000 Mexican workers in agriculture and 75,000 for railroad maintenance. The latter ended in 1945, but the former continued into 1964.


1944 This is the year Douglas Steve Cantwell and his son Billy Neel Cantwell Sr. bought, for $75 an acre, dryland farmland east of Rio Hondo and were eventually to cultivate between 3-4,000 acres of cotton and grain sorghum. Douglas, a native of Ingram, TX born there 3/1/1902, came to Harlingen in 1930 to join his brother Earl in owning and operating the Cantwell Mattress and Awning Co. It was located on F Street next to the City Cemetery. Brother Earl in 1920 had quit his job in a mattress factory in Sugar Land and soon opened his own in Brady, TX then expanded his operation to Harlingen in 1930. At that time new mattresses cost $6 and rebuilt ones $3. The company's slogan was "You can't sleep well without a Cantwell Mattress" .Doug had married Mackalee Neel of Brady in 1927 and son Billy was born in 1929. In 1936 Earl moved to Corpus Christi and opened another factory that still operates. In the 1950s Doug closed the factory and commenced farming full time with his son Billy. This they continued until Doug was 100 in 2002 and Billy 73. They then retired. Along the way Doug received an award from the U.S. Agricultural Commissioners for his dedicated service and for being the oldest U.S. farmer still actively practicing. He was to die August 2, 2006 at age 104. His son Billy and descendents survived him.

1945 At the invitation of Kumazo Tanamachi, Izamu Taniguchi comes to the Valley after his release from internment in the camp at Crystal City, Texas. He will take up vegetable and cotton farming near Los Indios. This native of Japan had come to Stockton, CA in 1915 and commenced farming in the Brentwood area. In 1967 he and his wife will retire to Austin where architect son, Alan, teaches and operates an architecture firm. A successful cotton cleanup of fields probably forestalls the creation of a non-cotton borer-control zone along the lower border.
8/2/45 The Producers Gin Co. experiences a fire in which 63 cotton bales are lost. This and other damage is valued at $15,211. Fire and losses are a regular feature at the gins, hull facilities, cotton seed plants, and cotton rail loading facilities.

1946 The Valco Co-op Oil Mill is organized to process cottonseed oil. Fred N. Vining will serve as the organizations president for the next 20 years. Upon his resignation in August 1966 Doug Jackson of Harlingen is named president.

1/1/46 After only a short reprieve Office of Price Administration (OPA) administrator Chester Bowles announces that price controls on fresh citrus will be restored on January 4 after mid-Western congressmen complained over a 50-100% increase in prices. A bumper crop is expected this season. Farmers will be pleased however that tire rationing is to end today.

1/3/46 Fire destroys the garage and shed behind 1772 E. Harrison. W. C. Magee losses, including a car and truck, are moderate because he had moved most of his dairy equipment to his Magee Dairy in San Benito. Pryor Dillard is regularly advertising his land leveling services with modern equipment.

1/11/46 James T. Marshall, a farmer of the Briggs-Coleman area, dies at age 61. Coming here from Clinton, Indiana in 1926, he had recently been elected a water district director. He also served as the president of the Brigg-Coleman School Board. He leaves behind sons Harry B. and Paul H.

6/24/47 Forrest Garling of Harlingen delivers the country's first bale of the season to the Houston Cotton Exchange. He is paid the record price of $1,825 or 3.565 cents per lb. In an unique move it is air freighted to Houston to beat any competitors. This year the annual farm income in the Harlingen area is valued at $132 million or 10% of the total for Texas. The Food Machinery Corp., Texas Division, is on South Commerce and advertises being the originator of the famous "Flavorseal Protective" treatment for fruits and vegetables.

1/49 Sam Gerald commences publication of *The Border Scope*, an agricultural magazine first issued in Harlingen but whose offices later move to La Feria. This publication by a veteran newsman is innovative in that it features 4-color press photos. When later the serious freezes hurt the magazine's subscribers the publication ceases.

As the decade drew to a close the cotton industry in Harlingen was likely peaking. Cotton gins within the city and nearby were the:
- Briggs-Coleman Cooperative Gin, Hardin Ranch
- Clark Cotton Company, 409 Commerce
- Elrod Gin Company, 321 W. Jefferson
- Farmer's Gin Company, 307 N. Commerce
- Hargrove Gin, 1 ½ Mile Combes Highway
- Harlingen Gin Company, 1 Mile Grimes Road, Airbase Road/corner Grimes
- Hub Gin Company, 1 mile North Combes Highway
- Producers Gin Association, 516 W. Washington
- Rangerville Coop Gin, 5 ¾ Rangerville Road
- Sandlin Cotton Gin Company, 1121 N. Commerce.
Cotton oil mills were:
South Texas Cotton Oil Company, Fair Park Blvd.
Southwest Cotton Oil Mill, S. Commerce
Swift and Company, Wilson Road
Valley Co-op Oil Mill, Wilson Road.

Compresses were:
Harlingen Compress Company, Combes Highway
Valley Compress and Warehouse Company, 721 N. Commerce.

1949 There is a unprecedented freeze which injures primarily citrus, but other crops too.

Government/Politics-Local, County, State, National

1940 Fair Park is improved and beautified
12/17/40 The Hug-the-Coast Highway from the Louisiana-Texas state line at Orange, TX to Brownsville is officially opened.

10/1/41 At the beginning of the City's fiscal year it is estimated that it will cost $197,510 to run the city for a year. Around $144,000 will come from taxes such as the $2.25 per $100 valuation just raised from $1.95. $66,720 will need needed to service debt of almost $200,000. New indebtedness includes: $90,000 for airport bonds, $60,000 for storm sewer bonds, $15,000 for airport warrants, and $34,000 for sewer improvement warrants. While the golf course will bring in $6,000 it costs $6,220 to operate. Pay raises for city workers are in the works.
Hill Cocke is appointed chairman of a committee to investigate the burial of the 13th Street canal, a project estimated to cost $80,000.
12/7/41 The U.S. is attacked at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii by Japanese military forces. War is declared against Japan and then Germany and its allies.

1942 The City council passes an ordnance prohibiting the sale of liquor on Jackson Street between Commerce and 4th.
In the war years the Cameron County Ration board was located in Harlingen. It has 25 employees and 50 volunteers. It is ranked one of the three highest in the nation for efficiency.
7/31/42 Total valuations for 1943 tax purposes are $9,040,000, an increase of $2,032,340 over the current $7,007,660. The current tax rate of $2.25 is 25 cents below the legal limit and expected to be cut over time.

1/43 A city tax levy supports the 300 member Harlingen Chamber of Commerce with its budget.
The Fire Department has 36 members but only four paid firemen.
The only public swimming pool is the 50’x150’ one at Fair Park. It is administered by the American Legion Post.
The 72 acre municipal air field is leased to an individual concern.
4/43 This month J.J. Dawson begins his four year stint as fire chief.
July 1943  Jay McCoy, Harlingen city jailor, is stabbed to death in an affray. This First Baptist member leaves behind a widow, four sons and two daughters.

7/30/44  By this date 44 Valley women are serving the war effort in the WAVES. The Harlingen women are Frances Aileen Adams, Ada R. Allerdice, Florence M. Bouldin, May Alice Coleman, Kathleen Johnston, Gertrude R. Lozano, Dathern C. Saulsberry, Eva Mary Sigler, and Alice H. Pettis.

1945 The City purchases the Municipal Water Plant and System from the Central Power and Light Company for $575,000. To finance this purchase the City voted and issued $850,000 in revenue bonds and to secure the bonds, a trust indenture or mortgage was given on the entire water system. The balance of the bond funds would be used for future system expansion. The City Commission then created a Board of Trustees to take charge of the properties and management of the entire operations. The first board included J. Lewis Boggus, Hill Cocke, Sr., Earl Breedlove, and Mayor Hugh Ramsey. Gene McCullough was named recorder and attorney for the board. City voters also overwhelmingly passed a $575,000 bond issue for needed city improvements including remodeling of the city hall, erecting a new fire station, storm and sewer extensions, etc.

5/31/45 Dodds and Wedegartner are awarded the contract to construct the parallel road from Harlingen to San Benito. This will become South Business 77. The city also lets the contract for parking meters. These are a new type developed by Carl C. Magee, former Valley Morning Star editor. Col. Yost is employed as manager of the Arroyo Colorado Navigation District.

1946 R.J. (Duck) Kroeger is mayor. Kroeger has had an interesting career. In the years 1926-35 he is a publisher's representative. In Harlingen in 1938 he starts up C & H News Co., now at 402 North T Street. The initials stand for Cameron and Hidalgo. The company distributes newspapers, magazines and post cards to stores across the area. In time it will grow into a considerable enterprise with 25 outlets in the U.S. and Canada. When Kroeger dies his wife Zola Mae (Peggy) runs the company, which now also distributes pocket books. Having no children, the company eventually goes into the hands of a Corpus Christi nephew. The Kroegers make their home for many years in the Madison Hotel and move into the Reese-Wil-Mond when the Madison burns down. The first city manager of the modern era is Bill Briscoe, an uncle of Gov. Dolph Briscoe. A paid fire chief, Harold Crossett, is hired by the city. Late in the year Fire Station No.3 is set up at the airport.

1/5/46 The first hint of the closure of the Harlingen Army Air Field comes in an AP story noting it will be declared surplus, the last of four such bases in this area to be deactivated. Others have been Moore Field, the Brownsville Army Air Base, and the Laguna Madre Sub-Base of the HAAF. Col. Louis R. Hughes is commanding officer of the 5,000 men, both trainees and permanent personnel, now here. By 1/29 negotiations start on the use of HAAF. On 2/1 the base is placed into inactive status and four days later declared surplus property. HAAF base commanding officer Col. Roy T. Wright had received orders on 9/17 to go overseas. Col. Lewis R. Hughes, deputy CO as of 4/13, then took command of the base. On 10/5/45 Col. John R. Morgan, commanding officer of
the 79th Flying Training Wing with headquarters at HAAF, had been ordered to assume command at Keesler Field, Mississippi. He had been here since 1941.

1/12/46 City passes curfew ordinance requiring unaccompanied minors to be off the streets between 10 pm and 6 am.

1/19/46 Marvin F. Runnion is employed as general manager of the Water System. Here 3 1/2 years, he was a lt.col. serving as post engineer at the HAAF. He will start 2/10.

2/7/46 Parking meters for downtown streets will go into operation on 2/11. They were purchased and installed by Park-O-Meter Mfg. of Oklahoma City.

2/8/46 The U.S. House of Representatives approves funding for Intra-Coastal Waterway construction work. This is after Rep. Milton H. West of Brownsville assures all on 1/11 that the extension of the coastal canal to Harlingen is in the bag, that work on two storage dams is to start, and that a drainage system for the Valley will be built.

3/46 The Police Department gets its first two-way radios. These are installed in three patrol cars.


46-47 The city adopts a budget of $252,000. It is $100,000 over that of the previous year.

1/1/47 W.P. Briscoe commences work in the long unfilled position of city manager. He receives $6,600 a year. He lasts only two years on the job, resigning 12/3/48.

1/7/47 Elected in the 1946 general election, Arthur A. Klein begins his term on the 107th District court (formerly the Criminal District Court.) He will serve until 4/30/54.

3/47 L.E. Reeves becomes the new city jailer and also has the duty of rounding up stray animals. He came to Harlingen in 1942 and worked for CP&L and the Morton Ice Company. The apprehended animals may then be handled by city veterinarian Dr. W.J. Tumlinson.

Harold H. Crosett become police chief. He will serve from 3/1/47 until 4/10/49.

4/47 Henry D. Smith commences in the position of fire chief. He remains in this job until 12/31/49 after which W.W. Garrett becomes acting chief for a two-month period.

4/2/47 The trustees of the Harlingen Cemetery Association convey to the city the deed for the 7.6 acre Harlingen Cemetery.

7-8/47 The state constructs the Business 77 bypass bridge over the Arroyo Colorado. This alternate road to San Benito is widened in 1965 and again in 1989. When it opens in 10/47 it is termed the "Parallel Highway."

A.B. Chapa becomes the first Hispanic elected to the City Commission. This World War II navy veteran serves 1947-1959, 1970-1974, and 1986-91. He also was on the city's Civil Service Commission and the Utility Board of Trustees. On 5/15/91 he was to be honored with A. B. Chapa Appreciation Day. He is to die 7/1/95 at age 79. He owned several businesses and real estate holdings.

The Water Board authorizes contract for construction of a 400,000 gallon clear well at the Jefferson Street plant and engineering study to enlarge the plant and distribution system. The Air Base Filter Plant is acquired by the city to maintain service to the airport and Le Moyne Gardens.

12/4/48 Upon the death of Milton West, Lloyd Millard Bentsen, Jr. is elected in a special election as Congressional Representative for the area including Harlingen. He will
continue to serve until 1/3/55 when he chooses not to run again. He will serve as U.S. Senator from Texas 1/1971 to 1/93 when he resigns to run for the vice-presidency on the Democratic ticket.

1949  Merle Huston is manager of the Harlingen All-Valley Airport.
W.H. Hensley becomes police chief and serves until 1952.
2/1/49  Taking the place of Bill Briscoe who resigned is 54 year old R.J. Brule, former city manager/engineer for 18 years in Navasota, TX. This Palestine native, veteran and experienced government employee starts work in Harlingen as the city's manager and also city engineer, a position just relinquished by Alfred Tamm. His salary is $6,000 a year plus $900 for automobile expenses. He resigns 10/20/50 and the position is filled on an acting basis by city secretary F. R. Lucas until January 1951 when L.M. Crow, Jr. is permanently appointed. Mayor Hugh Ramsey, who was returned to office in 1948 after an interval, had in the past personally handled city management and engineering so was apparently reluctant to give up power and showed it.
4/22/49  The city accepts an offer of the First National Bank, E.C. Breedlove president, to purchase the Van Buren Street city hall site for $75,000. The city must vacate within 90 days after January 1, 1950.
Hill Cocke is appointed chairman of a seven-person steering committee for the proposed $80,000 project to eliminate the 13th Street Canal.
6/7/49  The city awards a $65,611 contract to Lehman, Hoge and Scott of Harlingen to bury the 13th Street Canal, converting it to a 5 foot square aqueduct. It will run 3,825 feet from Pierce to the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. Work will commence within the month.
11/8/49  Fair Park is renamed Lon C. Hill Park and dedicated as such 11/19/50 during the 23rd Annual Valley Mid-Winter Fair. Four Hill daughters are honored in the Pioneer Parade. They are Miss Paul Hill, Miss Annie Rooney Hill and Mrs. M.V. Caul, all of Harlingen, and Mrs. Izaac Hill Morrow of Brownsville,
12/10/49  The Harlingen Housing Authority is created with its purpose to provide apartments and homes to people of low income. Rent charged to each family will be based upon the total family income. In1952 Le Moyne Gardens with 200 units is built. In 1972 the old Reese-Wil-Mond Hotel is renovated into the Heritage Manor having 104 senior citizen apartments. In 1992 Sunset Terrace with 120 units is established.

**Business/Commercial/Industry**

1940  The Howard E. Butt Company moves its corporate offices from Harlingen to Corpus Christi. Some of its offices had been in the Missouri Pacific freight office building.
Bank deposits stand at $2,098,378.
In this era E.J. Waitman, general contractor, is a prominent builder of important structures. He builds the Minnie Gay Junior High School, Temple Beth Israel, The First National Bank, Holsum Bakery, the new Nehi Bottling Co.on Business 77, and Luby's Cafeteria in Coronado Village buildings among others.
8/27/40 Junkin's "Distinctive" Furniture moves from its 201-203 W. Monroe location to its new 19,000 sq. ft. store at 516 W. Jackson. Tom Vines Furniture will come to occupy the old location.

1941 Hygeia Dairy's production has risen to 1,000 gallons of milk and 1,000 lbs. of butter daily. The city is also the site of two cotton oil mills one owned by the South Texas Cotton Oil Mill and the other Swift and Company. The cotton compress is part of the Aransas Compress Co. The sole meat-packing plant, Southwestern Packing Co., handles up to 200 hogs and 40 cattle daily. The large canning plant, Harlingen Canning Co., remains a subsidiary of the Howard E. Butt Company.

9/1/41 On this date the Harlingen Airfield Bus Co. receives a state permit to operate. It has been organized by State Senator Rogers Kelley, atty. J. Cullen Looney, both of Edinburg, and Vance D. Raimond of La Feria to transport military personnel and workers the four miles to and from the city to the new army airfield. Its first bus is a 1941 Ford milk delivery truck purchased from Hygeia Dairy for $350 and outfitted to seat passengers. Three months later one Ford school bus having a capacity of 28 is purchased for $2,100. On 2/24/42 the company grew when it received a permit to commence service from Moore field northwest of Edinburg to Mission, McAllen, Pharr, and Edinburg. Its name then changed to the Valley Airfield Bus Co. Fourteen years later, having changed its name in 5/48 to the Valley Transit Co. (VTC), it operates across the Valley with more than fifty coaches with 37 passenger capacity.

KGBS (later KGBT) radio owned by the Harbenito Broadcasting Co. opens with a 250 watt signal and a staff of eleven. Popular belief is that McHenry Tichenor gives its call sign the initials of his wife, Geneviere Beryl Smith. GBS however is also George B. Storer, founder of Storer Communications which got its start when this chain service station owner purchased his first station in Toledo, Ohio. After selling the local station he wanted to retain the call sign, so in 1950 KGBS was exchanged for the call sign of a Storer station in San Diego. In January 1944 it will become an affiliate of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and later a minor affiliate of ABC.

7/41 Hill Cocke supplies the new Army airfield with Ready Mix Concrete from two small mixer trucks with a total capacity of less than 100 cubic yards per day. His enterprise becomes Valley Ready-Mix Concrete Co. By 1960 the company has five permanent and two portable plants, 36 mobile trucks, and a capacity of over 2,000 cubic yards per day.

Encouraged by Cocke, and even guaranteed the cost of a dragline, Jim Frizzell commences Frizzell's Dragline Service. It will play a major role in providing ditch drainage for the coming army airfield and surroundings as well as clearing the area of native brush.

1942/43 The Grande Theater, 507 W. Harrison opens to show Spanish language films. It is managed by Thomas Cantu and owned by Interstate Theaters, which also operates the Rialto, the Strand both on Jackson and the Acadia on North A Street. These are managed by Thomas A. Howell. The Grande closes in 1989.

In addition to the Valley Morning Star with its 10,000 circulation, Harlingen is the publishing site of Texas Farming and Citriculture Magazine. This 10,000 circulation
publication is devoted to the development of agriculture in South Texas and was established in 1924. The city has 72 wholesale companies and ranks number one in the Valley with wholesale volume of $6,236,000.

1943 This year Sofia Mata becomes, what is believed to be, Harlingen's first Hispanic businesswomen. Of course, this doesn't take into account the numerous family-owned and Latina manned grocery stores on Harlingen's west side. She opens Sofie's Beauty Shop at 116 ½ S. First Street. By 1948 she will have married Samuel Solis, an employee of Lehmann Implement. For over 50 years she will operate her cosmetology/beauty salon moving to four other locations. Born 3/28/1919 she will die at age 89 on 11/22/08. She was preceded in death by her husband and a son. She leaves behind three sons and family.

1/43 The city has 301 retail stores, 62 wholesale outlets, 26 manufacturing plants, 192 professional groups, and 48 service groups. It is the Valley's retail center with sales of $7,350,000, surpassing both McAllen and Brownsville. Wholesale volume amounts to $6,236,000. Annual payrolls are: retail $727,000, wholesale $850,000, manufacturing $525,000, professional $45,000, and service group $1,155,000 for a total of $3,302,000. District railroad offices in the city, in addition to the Missouri Pacific and Southern Pacific, are Nickel Plate, Cotton Belt, Illinois Central, B&O, and Wabash. Eight passenger trains daily come in and go out.


9/21/43 Finis Easterling and Gayle Van Tyne operate a filling station at Four Corners (F and Harrison streets). They acquire the Harlingen Pontiac agency in 1944 with the former assuming ownership in 1959. He will later own agencies in Brownsville, Alice, Kingsville and Corpus Christi. Easterling had begun his career in 1934 as low man on the totem pole for the Boggus agency. He will serve on the City Commission 12/56 until his untimely death from cancer at age 45 on 12/31/60.

It is in 1943 that the Burk Hotel Co. sells the Reese-Wil-Mond Hotel to Lucille Wolf of Chicago. Later it is partly owned by B.F. and Katherine Weinberg of Jackson County, MO. When they sell a half interest to Howard Hurwith for about $88,700, Jules Bisno associated with Weinberg and Mrs. Wolf retains the other half.

5/18/44 Alamo Express starts business here. By 1985 it is handling over19,000 shipments/year. In 1984 it handles 14 million lbs., much of it in containers.

1944(summer) The Le Noir Oldsmobile Co. is founded by J.P. Le Noir, who was selling GMC trucks during World War II. By 1985 Erlene Folsum owns Le Noir-Folsum Olds-Cadillac dealership on W. Harrison. Her husband had joined Le Noir as a partner in 1947 and purchased the company in 1967. The Cadillac franchise was obtained in 1948.

7/30/44 The B-1 Bottling Company on W. Washington is growing in sales under the management of Don E. Martin. He is an associate of E.L. Martin, B-1 bottler in San Antonio.
Tom Vines is to liquidate his furniture store at 202 W. Monroe. In 1938 he started his business at the corner of Jackson and Commerce having bought the store owned by Mayor Ramsey.

1944-45 The combined deposits in the two Harlingen banks total $16 million. The Valley Morning Star circulation is 10,000. It is published by the Valley Publishing Company, 213 South 2nd Street. Leo E. Owens is its president and publisher; Robert L. Owens vice president and general manager; Harry W. Foehner, executive editor; and W. H. Mayes, news editor.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Favre open the first of several restaurants to occupy the Stuart Place Clubhouse. Favre's Dining Room advertises "The Best Cuisine in the Valley", delightful food served by candlelight, accompanied by recorded music. In January 1961 it will be the Green Acres Restaurant.

1945 Fred Paschall and Miss Marie Edge buy Downs Style shop on Jackson and changes its name to Paschall's. A native of Terrill, TX Paschall came to San Benito in 1930 and worked for the Downs Department Store. On 10/12/60 he will announce his candidacy for Mayor. He has a history of community service by then including Rotary Club president 1954-5, past vice president of the C of C, president of the Harlingen Navy League, and member of the Parks Board. He and his wife Irene live at 2018 Parkwood. Their children are Dr. Charles Paschall and Jeanette Paschall, who at the time works for McGraw-Hill Publishing.

Bank deposits stand at $14,785,612.

The Ramirez Tortilla Factory at 426 South F may be one of the first large-scale producers of its type. It also markets tostados, tacos shells and chalupas Valley-wide.

5/31/45 Phil Edie purchases the Hi-Way Inn.

6/15/45 The Harlingen State Bank, later the Harlingen National Bank, opens for business in a $125,000 building at 219 E. Jackson. Its officers are Elmer G. Johnson, president; Joe L. Penry, vice-president; Dial B. Dunkin, vice-president and cashier; and Richard W. Thomason, assistant cashier. It is only Harlingen's second bank after a lapse of 15 years.

Hygeia Dairy starts branch plants and warehouses in Brownsville and Weslaco. In 1946 it commences the manufacture of ice cream. In 1947 on F Street it completes its new and modern building with a milk-processing plant, executive offices, milk bar, and warehouse facilities.

The telephone directory for 1945 has the first listing for the Valley Drive In Theatre at 1 M. W. St. Highway. The 1959-60 one has its last listing. Forrest D. Martin its resident partner is noted to be retired in 1961. Opening on 2/8/45, it is the Valley's first permanent drive-in theater.

1946 As the year begins the Valley Morning Star has as its president and publisher Leo E. Owens. Robert L. Owens is assistant publisher and general manager, Harry W. Foehner, executive editor, W. H. Mayes, news editor, and Jack Cronenwett, national advertising manager. E. O. Miley is the oldest VMS employee in terms of service, having been on board since 1929. Issues sell for 25 cents per week or $10 per year for local mail.
Harlingen leads the whole Valley bank deposits ($107,364,600) as of 1/31/45. At nearly $15 million is ahead of both Brownsville and McAllen which have about $14 million each.


In 1946 also E.O. Young establishes the Young Flying service. It is purchased by Wayne French in 1979. By 1985 it is a full, fixed base operation handling fueling, and on-call maintenance of smaller aircraft, air charters, sale of new Piper and Cessna airplanes, and rentals. Its 43 employees have a payroll of $437,000 by 1984.

The Harlingen Ice Company at 417-423 W. Jackson adds a fireproof vault to its structure. H.H. Hahn commences his plumbing business in the city.

At 306 W. Jackson the Leonard family commences its Army Surplus Supply store in the former Pepsi Cola bottling plant. In 2004 with Paul Goodrow as manager the store's interior is belatedly updated and considerably more lighting added. Still in its employ is Ellie Villarreal who has been with the store for 51 years.

It is the year 1946 also that Boggus Ford occupies a city block with its new facility at Eye and W. Harrison Streets. In 2001 Boggus will vacate this location for one on the southeast side of the Arroyo Colorado Exp.77/83 Bridge. In February 2005 the Harrison site is cleared of all buildings in order to make it more attractive to potential buyers.

It is this year that the F Street Dairy Bar adjacent to the Hygeia plant opens as the plant commences ice cream and butter production. Fifty-one years later Lee Richards, descendent of a Hygeia founder, still operates the bar that added a deli in the early 1990s.

1/14/46 Judge Lee O. Cox, 71, a Harlingen attorney for 20 years dies of a heart attack. Born in Texas on 9/10/74 he married Susie Cherry, a teacher, in Weathersford, TX on 8/26/97. Survived by four sons, he was in his career city attorney for Stephenville and later counselor to the Southern Pacific at Washington, D. C. and Houston.

Yarborough's is issued a permit to build a concrete/brick structure 50' x 120' at an estimated $14,000 cost on E. Monroe.

2/25/46 At 317 N. 7th, the building and contents of the Harlingen Iron and Metal Co. valued at $9,000 are a total loss to a fire according to owner J. Levin.

12/26/46 The Southwest Packing Co. has a major fire causing $62,000 to its buildings and $61,000 to their contents.

12/27/46 Central Power and Light Company completes the sale of its Harlingen cold storage plant to Cecil Carruth. W.E. Smith is to be the plant manager of the five story building, the largest of its type in South Texas. It has the capacity to store 80 carloads. Nearly 1/3 of all the United States shrimp is frozen in this plant. Some is trucked from as far as Port Lavaca. At present spinach is being processed.

3/31/47 Antoinette Moss (Mrs. Moss) Harkrider, in her 30s, opens the second privately run day nursery-school in the city. The Tiny Tot School for children of working mothers only is at her McKinley Street home. Six children are enrolled initially, and this grows to 38 in seven months. Later a new house at 514 Parkwood Drive is designed to accommodate her family in addition to the school. Her teaching career will end in 1973.
In 1947 the Little Creek Motel Courts at 77 Sunshine Strip and Little Creek Street are among the Valley's newest. In the 70s, as the units are abandoned, the front building houses the popular Roundup Restaurant.

KGBS 1240 is the Columbia Broadcasting System affiliate for Harlingen, the Hub of the Magic Lower Rio Grande Valley. Meanwhile the Valley Morning Star has a circulation of 10,000 while the beautiful Valley Drive-In Theater at the very west end of Harrison boasts of having cost $80,000.

1947-48 Trans Texas Airways, with its 21 passenger DC 3s, offers twice daily flights. The city is advertised as the "Valley's Commercial, Industrial and Transportation Center."

1948 Richard's Downtown Place at 103 E. Van Buren opens its restaurant with its" fine foods." It is owned and operated by Richard Bron, a Chicago chef from the Drake Hotel and who has had 30 years experience. It had its own bakery and in back was a butcher shop where it made its own corn beef and pastrami from scratch. Redecorating the facility in January 1950, it seats 60 and the grill 44. In 1956 he sells it to his son-in-law, Jim Wheeler. Taking over again Bron will later operate it and open another one called Richard's Sun Valley Restaurant at a location adjacent to the Sun Valley Motel on 77 Sunshine Strip. For many years it will remain one of Harlingen's finest eating establishments. Its Gold Room is popular in which to hold special functions. Son-in-law, Tom Kane, Sr. will help operate it for 40 years before selling it in the mid-1990s. It will close in 1999.

Lehman Buick opens at 906 W. Harrison.

In 1948 Harlingen leads the Valley in retail sales at $32,864,000. It also has the Valley's largest payroll. 1,877 employees receive $3,650,000 in wages. The city has 370 stores.

E.O. Matz purchases the old Sam Houston School on Jackson but doesn't take possession of it until 6/5/50. He transforms it into a business office complex.

In this year the Azteca Theater owned by Santos G. Garcia and with Mrs. Frances Canas as co-owner-manager opens at 424-26 South F Street to show Spanish language movies. Mr.Garcia had built the building in 1941 and had used part of it as a cafe. In 1966 after sale to Ruben Benevides it is renamed Olmo's Theater. It is gone after 1971.

3/2/48 Trans Texas Airways has its first flight between Harlingen and San Antonio.

3/25/48 The Lyon Poultry Co. at 1201 S. F Street has a fire causing $8,000 damage.

6/48 MoPac files to sell its Missouri Pacific Transportation Co., its bus line subsidiary that also serves Harlingen. Continental Bus Lines buys it that year, and itself would ultimately be bought by Greyhound.

It is 1948 that Jack R. McArver and James W. Kirksey, Jr. become co-owners of the Double Cola Bottling Co., South Commerce Extension, later 11495 Commerce. Jack's sister Kathryn (Katie) will marry his partner James. She, a St. Alban's Episcopal Church member who served on the Altar Guild, will die 12/25/04 having outlived her husband, two brothers and a sister.

8/2/48 The Swift and Co. oil seed factory on Wilson Road outside the city limits sustains a loss of $50,000 in a fire.

10/24/48 Earnhardt Motors advertises a new Beechcraft airplane flight, free hotel and nightclub entertainment in order to save $200 freight on the purchase of a Kaiser-Frazier car. This is a new post-war manufacturer of a U.S. car but ceases operations when it can't compete.
1948 The Valley Publishing company is still owned by Leo E. Owens who acts as its publisher with his son Robert L. Owens as associate publisher. Its plant is at 213 S. 2nd Street.

1949 Val Air lines headquartered in the Madison Hotel building operates two flights daily to San Antonio and return to Harlingen. The C of C budget this year is $18,000.

Holsum Bakery commences operations in its strikingly modern looking plant at 1500 W. Harrison. Its manager, Bill Trammel, has served on the City Commission 12/45-12/47.

9/16/49 A 3-alarm fire at the Cold Storage Plant on N. Commerce generates a $16,000 loss.

People

1941 Orazio “Ray” Cocozza comes to the Valley this year as a 21 year-old enlisted man in the army cavalry at Ft. Brown. Born 5/16/20 in Chicago, IL, he married Billie Jean Brewster after his service discharge, returned to Chicago for a brief period then settled in Harlingen where he worked for the Food Machinery Corp. (FMC). When this firm left for McAllen, Ray opened a dry cleaning establishment here. M.H. Connelly encouraged him to join him in a new insurance venture. After Connelly’s departure Ray headed the firm and took in Bob Shepard and then Bob Walton, both just out of college. Upon Ray’s retirement they bought the firm, now Shepard, Walton, and King. The Cocozzas had four children, two of whom preceded him in death. After 56 years of marriage Billie was to die in 1999. Ray would marry Joan Stanley in 2000. Ray became known as “Mr. Terrific” due to the use of the phrase and his everlasting optimism. He was a civic leader for many years being active in Rotary for which he was district governor, the Literary Center, and St. Anthony’s Church. This man “unselfish of his time and talent” was to die 11/16/06 at age 86 due to complications of leukemia.

12/7/41 Harlingen native and Navy man Johnny Spaeth dies aboard the destroyer USS Shaw while it is in dry dock at Pearl Harbor and is attacked by Japanese military forces. He thus becomes the first Harlingen individual to die in WWII in the service of his country. He will be joined by 92 other Harlingen men who made the supreme sacrifice.

1944 About this year Arthur Kenneth and Marjorie Stone came to Harlingen from Webster Groves, Mo with their ninth grade son Douglas. He would be graduated from HHS where he would meet his future wife Ann and go on to Hardins Simmons College in Abilene though he was awarded a scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music in NYC. As a sophomore he accepted a scholarship to North Texas State University, going on to receive a masters degree in music. With an infant son they returned to Harlingen in 1954. He became a band director in Brownsville then Harlingen. Later he was to be principal at James Bowie Elementary and then Coakley Jr. High School before becoming Superintendent of Federal Aid for the HICSD. He was tympanist for the Valley Symphony Orchestra for 30 years, served on the school board one term, was a CAP and CAF pilot, an allaround sportsman, and an elder of the First Presbyterian Church. Born 1/11/30 he was to die at age 78 on 8/22/08. He left behind his wife, a noted piano teacher, son Boyd and grandchildren.
1945  Michael and Ruth Steib come to Harlingen with their three young children. In 1957 they come to own Durham's Business College in Harlingen and will do so until 1981. After retiring Ruth would go on to be a volunteer for the Harlingen Literacy Center and the HOSTS Program in the public schools. She was recognized by the Texas House of Representatives for her work. Preceded by her husband Ruth, who was born 2/15/21 and later was graduated from the University of Illinois, was to die at age 86 on 2/3/07.

1949  This year Darrell Hester is graduated from the UT Law School. He is then to come to Harlingen where he practices law with Abel Toscano, Jr. until 1971. He had been born in Frost near Corsicana, TX on 2/9/25. Graduating from that high school in 1942 he then served in the U.S. Navy as a communications officer in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters of war. He married Nell Sanders in 1948 and their marriage was to last 57 years until his death on 12/18/05. He made name for himself as judge of the 197th District court from 1971 to 1999 then presiding judge of the 5th Judicial Region. One of his most famous efforts was to clean up political corruption in Duval County in the 1970s. Because of his strict adherence to the law he obtained the nickname "Hang 'em high Hester." This member of the First Methodist Church served on numerous boards and was honored by having a juvenile correction facility named after him.

Education

1940  Durham Business College opens to train people in stenographic, secretarial, and office skills.
1940-41  The school budget is $199,868 to educate 3,828 students.

1941  The Bryne Select School of Business is at 117 ½ W. Jackson. It exists only this one year. Mrs. Harry (Ethel) Eggleston is superintendent. Her husband is the owner of the Merchants Credit Bureau. An annex is constructed at the Alamo School on F Street. The end of the 1941-42 school year sees the conclusion of 11 years of matriculation for grade school students to receive their high school diploma. Across Texas the school years offered are now extended through grade twelve. Some transitional scheduling for 11-12 graders is offered the next two years. 7/1/41  The new superintendent of schools is Ernest H. Poteet, who will serve until January 15, 1948. W. W. Bollard is the system's business manager this year.

12/31/42  The school enrollment is 3,125 with a faculty of 97. As 1943 commences the public schools are: Harlingen Senior High School (13th St.), Travis Junior High (Polk), Sam Houston, James C. Bowie, Stephen F. Austin, Alamo, Booker T. Washington, and James F. Dishman. The total investment in the physical plants was $800,000. The 75 member uniformed high school band was a proud achievement.

1943  In this year an annex is added to the Sam Houston and to the Travis School.
4/3/44  One of the buildings in the Hardin Ranch School complex east of Briggs-Coleman burns and is a total loss.

1945  Along 8th Street a lengthy annex is built for the Travis Junior High School. Three years later another structure is added to the school at its northeast corner near Tyler. In the year by a 4:1 margin voters approve a $320,000 bond issue to finance the construction of a new elementary school and improve others.

1945-46  The school budget is $334,213 to service 4,505 students.

7/25/46  A school to be associated with St. Anthony Catholic Church, about to be dedicated, is itself dedicated. Its first classes are held 9/1/46 in the structure built next to the church on Harrison in late 1945 and early 1946. The contract for the school's construction was let 3/8/45.

9/47  The Valley Baptist Academy gets its start in Harlingen under the sponsorship of the Rio Grande Baptist Association. Its mission is to teach grade school children primarily from Latin America areas. Its first home is an old store building on E. Madison. Here 28 are enrolled. In its second year it moves to Brownsville and remains there until 1956 when the old Valley Baptist Hospital, 613 South F Street in Harlingen becomes available. By 1962 it has 107 students, 88 of whom live in its dormitories. This same year it becomes an institution of the Valley Baptist Convention of Texas and by 1972 is a primary project of Texas Baptist Men. In 1964, 44 acres of land for a new campus, 5700 E. Harrison, are donated. When the 1972 school season starts and the Academy celebrates its 25th Anniversary it has 165 students, grades 8 to 12, from the U.S. and 11 other countries, mostly Mexico and Central America. The campus has five dormitories, classroom and administrative buildings, the president's house and four faculty houses. There is a staff of 20 teachers, administrative and maintenance personnel. At this time Dr. H.E. Gray has served as the Academy's president since 1952.

Some years after the F Street Valley Baptist structure is demolished, the multi-unit, two-story Robin Hood Apartments are constructed on the site.
It is 1947 that the school district establishes the Colonial Acres School for "exceptional children". It is at 500 Elm Street near the airfield. Mrs. Polk (Lucille) H. Hornaday is first a teacher then after two years principal, and she also teaches the third grade in this seven classroom school with grades 1-6. In the years 1923-25 she taught homemaking before going back to college. In 1937 she began teaching for 11 years at the Alamo School, having a science degree from UT and a MS from Texas A&I. The school begins its classes in September 1948. Within three years the school will grow from five teachers and 127 pupils to 14 teachers and 400 pupils, 90 of whom were second graders transferring from Bowie Elementary. This school will in November 1953 move its location and be renamed Bonham Elementary School.
Mrs. Hornaday will move on to the Austin Elementary school as principal in 1951 after its longtime principal, W.L. Spradling dies. After 17 years there she will retire in 1968. An auditorium and two classrooms are added to the Dishman School and a vocational shop to the high school. The Jefferson School is constructed. By 1951 it already needs the addition of six more classrooms.
1947  The Cardinal footballs teams of the 1940s and especially 1945, 46, and 47 enjoy
great success under coach Weldon "Stoney" Phillips. Future businessman Lewis Levine,
who will go on to the University of Texas, stars at fullback. The teams and fans are able
to view the success in a stadium constructed in 1947.

1948  St. Alban's Episcopal Day School is established. Its first year sees 28 three to five
year olds for the half-day sessions. By 2003 this accredited school serves pre-school (age
2 through 6th grade.) The intervening years had seen numerous transitions, especially
after the air base closed. By 1956-57 there were 85 students through the newly added
third grade. A fourth grade was added the following school year only to see a
retrenchment of both grades in 1958-59.

In this year the West Ward Elementary School is in the 600 block of South J. By 1950 it
has been renamed the Thomas Jefferson Elementary School as much of it is new, having
been constructed in 1946 by Bruce Ramsey to plans by Cocke and Bowman. E. H. Poteet
is superintendent of schools this year and Dr. N.A. Davidson is president of the school
board.

The growing school population necessitates the addition of four rooms to the Austin
School and the same to Bowie which will also add four more in 1951. Travis gets a new
cafeteria.

The Harlingen school system begins to integrate the Wilson and Stuart Place school
systems to become the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District (HCISD).
M.H. Connally becomes superintendent of schools this year and Dr. N.A. Davidson is
president of the school board.

The Booker T. Washington School with two rooms is remodeled and the grade level goes
from 8th through 10th as two grades are added.

The St. Paul Lutheran School is established at Third and Tyler. Its goal is to educate
elementary students together with Christian overtones. The school will later expand to
handle kindergarten through 8th grade. The school at Tyler and Third is sited on four lots
east of the church. These were purchased in 1943 for $1,975 and even included a small 3
room house. In the summer of 1947 the church purchased a large two story officers'
barracks and moved it to the lots in March 1948. This was converted into the school and
a parish hall. In 9/48 the school opened with 28 pupils, the principal and one teacher.

7/48  Zora Belle Moore Cope began teaching bilingual education to 9 to 13 year olds
at the Stuart Place School. She did this for seven years then taught fourth, fifth, and sixth
graders in English. She had been graduated from San Marcos State Teacher's College
with a degree in education and also a Master's Degree. She had come to Harlingen as a
ten year old in 1925 with her parents Levy and Pearl Moore. Born in Floresville 4/28/15,
she was to die 11/29/04 at age 89. Preceding her in death were her parents, her brothers
William Presley Moore, Elvin Moore, Benjamin Yancy Moore, and Earl Moore; sisters
Lillie McCarty, Jesse Stokes, and Nancy Riley. She worked as an elementary supervisor
in the San Benito district and was then principal of the Fred Booth School before retiring
in 1986 at age 70. In retirement she continued to teach, this time Adult Education for
Spanish-speakers trying to learn English. Two children survived her. They are Jane
Evelyn Dunn of Simonton and Richard Moore Cope of Victoria.

12/21/48  A site is given by R.E. Smith of Houston in memory of his mother Minnie B.
Gay of Brownsville. Smith is an oil operator in Conroe. The deed is given to J. Lewis
Boggus, president of the school board. Smith is cited as trustee for his daughter, Bobbie Sue Smith, 1 year old, for whom the tract had been given. Mrs. Gay came to Brownsville from Jefferson, TX in 1908. Her husband, Portes Gay, was chief of the Border Patrol at Brownsville. The 40 acre tract was acquired by Mrs. Gay in 1918 and remained in tact until the railroad cut through leaving 37 acres. Of this, 6.8 acres has been given for the school site next to Cardinal Field. Brownsville attorney Robin Pate, a family friend, is credited with generating the gift. On hand are board members Arthur Purdy, F. Earl Davis, T.D. King, J.R. Fitzgerald, Guy Leggett, and W.W. Ballard business manager. 1948-49 A survey by the Mexican Chamber of Commerce shows that 1,492 children of school age failed to attend in this school year. The present enrollment is 4,700. School superintendent M.H. Connelly points out that children of migratory laborers need to attend. The system loses state funds if they do not.

Carl A. Scott, who came to Harlingen in 1939 comes to own and operate Durham's Business College this year. He does so until 1959. In 1979 he moves to Agua Dulce. This member of the First Methodist Church was its Sunday School superintendent for 25 years. A lifelong member of the Harlingen Optimist Club, he was also a 32nd Degree Mason and served for many years on the Salvation Army board. This Garland born man died in November 1982 at age 88. He left behind five sons and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

1949 The Minnie B. Gay Memorial Middle School comes into existence on 13th at Madison. Its architects are Cocke, Bowman & York and its construction is by E.J. Waitman. In the 1990s its name is changed to Memorial Middle School as a bone to "political correctness" since the word "gay" has become synonymous with homosexual. During this year the open canal paralleling 13th Street is put underground. The second story of the Alamo School is removed.

Religious

6/16/40 The new First Presbyterian Church sanctuary, 401 E. Jackson, is dedicated.
11/11/40 St. Anthony Church is formerly established as a parish. St. Anthony Catholic Church sanctuary is constructed on 1000 Harrison due to the untiring efforts of its first pastor Father Albert Antoine who had come to Harlingen in 1934.

1943 This year sees the start of the First Baptist Church's mission that will evolve into the Second Baptist Church by 1945.
10/43 El Buen Samaritano Methodist Church is organizing under the direction of the Rev. Baltazar Garcia Vera. It will dedicate its first sanctuary on Filmore Street on 12/17/50. In 1957 it moves to a new location into a building donated by Wesley Methodist. Its present Grant and H Streets sanctuary (July 1957) is supplemented by a parsonage donated by the First Methodist Church. On 3/12/61 its congregation under the pastorage of the Rev. Harold Griffith numbers 94.

2/20/44 The new (1927) First Baptist Church building on Van Buren is dedicated following the last indebtedness payment on 12/28/43. It was constructed when W.W. Lee,
who served the congregation for a decade, was pastor. The Rev. Douglas Carter served from May 1955 until April 1941 to be followed by T.P. Lott, the current pastor.

10/45 St. Alban's Church exchanges the lot it owns at 6th and Tyler with one owned by J. Gordon Nix across the street from its church. It then constructs a $14,500 new parish hall on it. The $6,000 debt incurred is paid off in 1949. In September 1948 the church starts a kindergarten class. It has also purchased from Hugh Ramsey in 11/48 his 1517 E. Taylor Street home for use as a rectory.

1946 Calvary Baptist Church is organized. 4/6/46 The Church of Christ sells its 3rd and Harrison building to Ed Hays for $10,000. It is later used for plumbing storage. The lot and building are purchased by Interfirst Bank and demolished in 2/63 to make room for a parking lot.

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.

9/46 The Second Baptist Church, Harlingen, and of the Southern Baptist Convention, is organized. It later builds a sanctuary on the southeast corner of 1st and Austin Streets. 9/3/46 New St. Anthony Catholic Church sanctuary is dedicated.

12/46 Our Redeemer Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) conducts its first service in Spanish with the Rev. Roland H.A. Seboldt. It is to dedicate its new sanctuary at 1210 W. Grant Street on 3/21/54.

1948 Temple Beth Israel is opened at 1702 E. Jackson. E.J. Waitman was its general contractor. The architects are Cocke-Bowman and York. The organizers are primarily the first generation of Jews to reside in the city. They include the Feldmans, Levines, Koppels, Sondocks, and others. Sam Feldman is its first president.

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.

Early in the year the Church of Christ erects its 8th and Harrison building for $90,000. Bartlett Cocke and Walter C. Bowman are its architects while E.E. Lairabee constructs it. Sam and Seanne Sparks are the first to be married in the new structure on 5/9/48. An education/office complex is added in 1958 and a chapel/multi purpose building in 1975. Fire in late February 1993 necessitates the complete refurbishing of the 1948 building. The First Mexican Baptist Church is established.

5/11/48 New $92,000 brick sanctuary of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church is dedicated at the southwest corner of Tyler and C Streets. The old sanctuary, a 1927 wooden church, had been moved to Lincoln Street to serve the Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church. Father Severino Varona (1901-1982) oversaw the construction of the new church from its groundbreaking 7/13/47 to its dedication. Julian and White of San
Antonio were architects of the semi-gothic building erected by contractor Reginald E. Smith with Seth Pace, construction foreman.

1949 By 1948 Sunday School enrollment had grown to 705, therefore the First Baptist Church erects, at a cost of $118,000, an Educational Building to the immediate east of the sanctuary. Immediately thereafter a program is set up to renovate and air-condition the sanctuary. A member then donates the costs of air conditioning, but the additional expenses are well over $50,000. Additional property with a house is obtained across 6th Street to the east for a primary department for the Sunday School. In this period the church also secured two large lots at Filmore and L Streets to establish a mission for Latins under its supervision. It will have an auditorium and a large dwelling. Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church begins in a framed building downtown then moves in 1949. Part of the church was the original chapel built as the Sacred Heart of Mary Immaculate mission. The parish is established in 1958, and a new larger sanctuary built and dedicated 5/28/67. A major fire destroys it in 1989 and a new one is constructed at 1313 West Buchanan.

9/25/49 The new Education Building of the First Methodist Church is dedicated. A.F. Dabney is chairman of the board of stewards while J.B. Cocke is chairman of the building committee.

Organizations--Social, Civic, Service

1940 The Civic Music Association is organized.

1942 In this year the service clubs in the city are Rotary, Kiwanis, 20-30, Optimists, American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Women's clubs are Afflatus, American Legion Auxiliary, Business and Professional Beta Sigma Phi, Child Study, Fine Arts, Parents and Teachers, City Federated, Garden, Senior Study, Junior Fine Arts, Junior Study, Music Lovers, RGV Art League, Composers and Authors. 10/18/42 The Sea Scouts have their meeting facility at 218 N. 2nd Street.

1944 The Harlingen Kiwanis Club has 144 members.

1945 The Mexican Chamber of Commerce improves Diaz Park, now Gutierrez Park, by installing benches and planting shrubbery along with hiring a caretaker. The Valley Children's Service is established as the Valley Boys Ranch on 49 acres between Harlingen and San Benito west of Highway 83. It is a foster home for troubled boys. In 1954 it will see its first caseworker, and in 1957 a Girl's Residence is established. As the Valley Baptist Hospital celebrated its 25th anniversary this year it had passed through some tough times. During the depression years it had averaged $6,000 annually in charitable work. In 1943 it saw the addition of a new unit increasing the bed capacity from 36 to 82 and from 10 bassinets to 29 for the infant section. In 1944 its parent, the Rio Grande Valley Association, voted that the institution be given to the Texas Baptist General Convention, and this was accepted by the Convention in 1945. In this year the hospital had 23 doctors on its staff. Dr. Charles Amidon was chief of staff and Dr. N.A.
Davidson was chief of surgery. Margret Ethel Lofton was director of nurses. These included 18 registered nurses assisted by 19 other nurses, seven operating room nurses, and four maternity nurses assisted by seven other nurses. The maid and orderly staff of ten appeared to be composed of eight blacks and two Hispanics. While the corporate name of the institution was the Valley Baptist Hospital, its professional name was the Medical Center of South Texas.

2/3/45 The Junior Chamber of Commerce receives its charter.
2/23/45 VBH is to establish a nurse training school. A new building to be completed by September will house 60 nursing students.
2/26/45 With the closure of the HAAF several weeks ago the USO canteen in downtown Harlingen now closes. Lt. Col. W.J. Seldon of the HAAF was a speaker as well as Rev. Fred B. Croft, council chairman. The high school octet sang. Certificates and pins were awarded individual volunteers and participating service clubs. From July 15, 1942 through 2/15/46, more than 850,000 servicemen were entertained at the Harlingen facility.

1946 The Afflatus Club comes into existence. It will sponsor county and city TB clinics and support the annual Christmas TB Seals Drive.

1947 The Junior Service League comes into being, with its first president Mrs. Herbert L.(Mary Lou) Wade. Fifty-nine charter members dedicate themselves to aid local welfare organizations and the Cameron County TB Hospital. During the first year the group gave $1,000 in aid. In 1948 it held its first amateur production, a Gay Nineties Cabaret. A year later on 5/6/49, the volunteer service group will put on an ambitious theater production as a fund raiser. It is titled of "Follies of 1949." This year clothing and canned goods are collected for welfare and the Thrift Shop is opened. In 1951 the League furnished the children's wing of the library, and in October 1952 the group donated $1,500 to furnish a room in the maternity ward of the hospital. By the year 1955 the League had raised $10,000 for the Boy's Ranch and Girl's Residence, given $500 to the United Fund, and was donating $1,000 yearly to the March of Dimes. In 1959 the organization took charge of the operations and maintenance of the Cameron County Crippled Children's Center at 9th and Grimes. On its 27th anniversary in 3/74, now under the presidency of Lynn Murphy, the group will put on several performances of "Those Were the Days" Follies of 1974.

1947 This year the city moves an old army barracks to Second and Jefferson Streets at Bowie Park for use of the Winter Tourists. Under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce they will officially organize into the Harlingen Tourist Club in 1950. Shuffleboard tournaments with competition from San Benito and Weslaco will become a major activity. As many as eight tournaments a season with up to 148 entries will occur. The Tourista Fiesta will also be initiated. Club membership will rise to 353. In 1961 after the Casa del Sol became available with its indoor shuffle courts membership would escalate to 1,200. Outdoors there were 26 shuffleboard courts. As many as 145 tables of card players would often be set up on Saturday nights. When in 1969 membership had grown to 1,516 plans for a new building were drawn up. With a $500,000 grant in 1970 the Harlingen Community Center building was erected where the Women's Club once stood at 201 E. Madison. Membership would peak around 1,600 and then slowly drop
over the years as individual parks began to offer more to their residents. The club always served the community in many activities. It dissolved on March 26, 2008 after 68 years of service.

7/47 Mrs. E.C. Bennett past president of the American Legion Auxiliary turns over the gavel to Mrs. R.Q. Brackott. The immediate past president has been Mrs. Walter Lancaster.

1948 The Knights of Columbus have a new hall at 1701 E. Harrison.
11/9-11/48 The RGV Shrine Clubs sponsor the first annual Shrine Circus in Harlingen. It features the Polack Bros. Circus.
11/30/48 The first preliminary meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society is held at the Travis Elementary School auditorium.
12/48 The Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society is organized at Harlingen and chartered 5/49. Its first president is Lon C. Hill, Jr. Its permanent address is the Lon C. Hill Memorial Library. By November 1962 it will have 200 members. One of its 1966-67 projects was the restoration and opening of the Paso Real Way Station when Gerald McKenna was president.

2/16/49 The Stuart Place Garden Club is formed.
9/49 The Masons dedicate their new lodge at 702 E. Harrison. The cornerstone was laid in March 1949 by Dr. Clarence M. Cash, "the man who first set the lodge to work." E.C. Bennett is general chairman of the dedication ceremony.
10/49 125 members of six area garden clubs plant a botanical garden on a three acre site in McKelvey Park. Over time lack of city maintenance leads to its demise and disappearance.

**Miscellaneous**

10/40 It is this month that Dr. Cornelius Olcott, Jr. comes to work at the VBH on F Street. Born in Fort Worth on 4/25/11 he will be graduated from Princeton University in 1931 and Harvard Medical School in 1935. He leaves Harlingen in 1941 to see military service as a doctor on a hospital ship. Later he will rise to the rank of Lt-Col. and Chief of Surgery in hospitals in England and France. He returns here in 1947 and practices until 1977. This St. Alban's Episcopal Church member is to die 11/15/84 at age 73.
12/3/40 The 1st Annual All-Valley Pigskin Music Jubilee is held in Cardinal Stadium. It is viewed by 5,000 who have come to watch the 16 participating Valley bands. The Cardinal Marching Band has 64 members. Its director is Phil Murray, drum major Clar Lie Allison, and three twirlers. This year the Harlingen Cardinal Football Team has won the District 16A.A. Lower Brackett championship. Its coach is Dutch Flory assisted by Charles D. "Chili" Stone.

1941 The Bougainville Trail of Texas, Inc. is organized in Harlingen. Its purpose is to beautify the Valley.

5/8/43 Mayor Hugh Ramsey declares "Aerial Gunner Day" in Harlingen honoring the premier of *Aerial Gunner* which was set and partially filmed at the Harlingen Army
Aerial Gunnery School. Robert Mitchum, who played a very small role in the film, would go on to become a major Hollywood star.

5/8/45  Just as V-E Day (Victory in Europe) is to be announced word arrives here that Sgt. Luis M. Rendon has been killed in action in Germany on April 13. He is buried in a military cemetery in Belgium. Luis had enlisted 6/22/40 at Ft. Brown and been stationed in Europe for one year. His brother Nicolas had been discharged from the army. Left to mourn were Mr. and Mrs. Nicolas Rendon, Sr, three brothers, and seven sisters.

1/4/46  A Victory Clothing Collection sets the Harlingen goal at 40,000 lbs. of clothing and bedding for war-torn Europe lands. George Wroten will furnish the shipping out of the Valley, and Joe Mock handle the publicity.

The postwar housing problem in Harlingen is major. One example of the drive to find housing is that given by Mrs. Beatrice Drake Frase, manager of the Plaza Hotel. In one recent evening during a 4 ½ hour period she received 62 phone calls from those seeking a roof over their heads.

2/46  The Lion's Club sponsors its 4th Annual Golden Gloves boxing tournament. The event is conducted in the Harlingen High School gymnasium.

9/7/46  What is billed as the 1st Annual Air Day in Texas takes place at Harlingen with numerous fly-ins.

1947  Baldemar Huerta, later to become famous as performer Freddie Fender, of San Benito wins a bag of groceries for his guitar playing at Harlingen's Grande Theater talent show. In 1959 while at the city’s Starlite Club Lounge bar owned by Dwayne Duncan and located at 111 W. Van Buren, Huerta will write the song “Wasted Days and Wasted Nights”. Neglected at first, it will in later years become a monster hit recording.

1948  The Municipal Golf Course holds the inaugural "Valley Open" with a $10,000 purse. The tournament lasts only four years after losing money. The noted professional golfers who were champions (in order) were Lloyd Mangrum, Cary Middlecoff, Jackie Burke, Jr., and Chuck Klein. Top notch golfer Craig Wood was also a participant. Other name golfers who will play the Harlingen course are: Walter Hagen, Joe Kirkwood, Patty Berg, Henry Picard, Larry McCool, Ben Hogan, Harvey Penick, Byron Nelson, Dutch Harrison, Jimmy Demaret, Dick Metz, Ralph Guldahl, Barney Clark, Paul Runyan, Sam Snead, Jack Grout, Julius Boros, Harry Ransome, Bobby Lock, Jim Turnesa, Doug Ford, Lawson Little, and Porky Oliver.

2/8/48  The Freedom Train is in Harlingen. It contains an exhibit put together by the National Archive.

4/22/49  The new Harlingen Negro Day Nursery drew 150 people to an open house. It opened this week with four toddlers and two more added soon according to Mrs. L.M. Davis of the Harlingen Day Nursery Board. It is around this time that 40 to 50 families of Negroes serving at the Harlingen Air Force Base are having difficulty finding housing in the community and a committee is formed to look into the problem.

This season and next Harlingen has a minor league baseball team in the Rio Grande Valley League, a Class C league. The team is named the Harlingen Capitals.
8/15/49 The Harlingen Country Club is incorporated and chartered with total assets of $450.00. The incorporating directors are; J.L. Head, A.M. Jones, R. Kroeger, L.R. Baker, Dr. Phil A. Bleakney, E.G. Pink, J.D. Chambers, Jr., H.H. Young, and Karl Gibbon, Sr. Initially there are 150 members.