

## Laiseca Store History

### **Cameron County and Brownsville Heritage Council to restore structure**

Jan 15, 2010 (The Brownsville Herald - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX) -- When Marcelino Ybarra was working as a carpenter on the Dancy Building, the owner of the local hardware store across the street used to ask if he needed any tools.

"Crescent wrenches?" Domingo Laiseca, owner of Laiseca Wholesale Hardware Company would ask. "I have them for \$2 or \$3." The structure where Laiseca did business, built in 1887, is now in desperate need of repair. City officials did a walk through Thursday morning to determine how to proceed in restoring the structure located at 11th and Monroe streets, near the Cameron County Courthouse, also called the Dancy Building.

"It's wood-shingled, old, very deteriorated," said Robert Lopez, director of administrative services for Cameron County.

"Cameron County, along with the Brownsville Heritage Council, are going to renovate and restore the building and get it back to its original state." The structure functioned as a store called El Globo Chiquito by three different tenants before Laiseca took possession in 1921, according to information provided by Peter Goodman, historic downtown district director. The building was in a prime location for a business; the Rio Grande Railroad, "one of the first in the Rio Grande Valley, stopped two blocks from the store at 11th and Van Buren streets." Today the double-gabled structure is in desperate need of repair, with splitting shingles allowing pale sky to fall onto the rotting floor. Cabinets still line the walls, and outside, decorative adornments trim the roof.

Goodman said the building is important because of its proximity to the Dancy Building. Cameron County, the city of Brownsville, and other entities involved in the recent restoration of the Dancy Building want to keep the area around that structure in good condition for its historical value. Larry Lof, a member of the Cameron County Historical Commission and the Brownsville Heritage Council, is overseeing the project.

The first priority, said Roberto Ruiz, architect for the project, is to stabilize the structure.

"The roof is gone; the floor is completely gone," Ruiz said. "We are restoring everything historical, the roof, the floor, the walls, anything rotten that needs to be replaced. That's going to be the principal improvement. The roofline has intricate details that will be preserved as far as historical characteristics of the building. There's a brick chimney and fireplace going to be preserved. That's also historical significance. We're going to sturdy

it up as much as we can." Ruiz said the Cameron County Historical Commission plans to occupy the structure once renovation is completed.

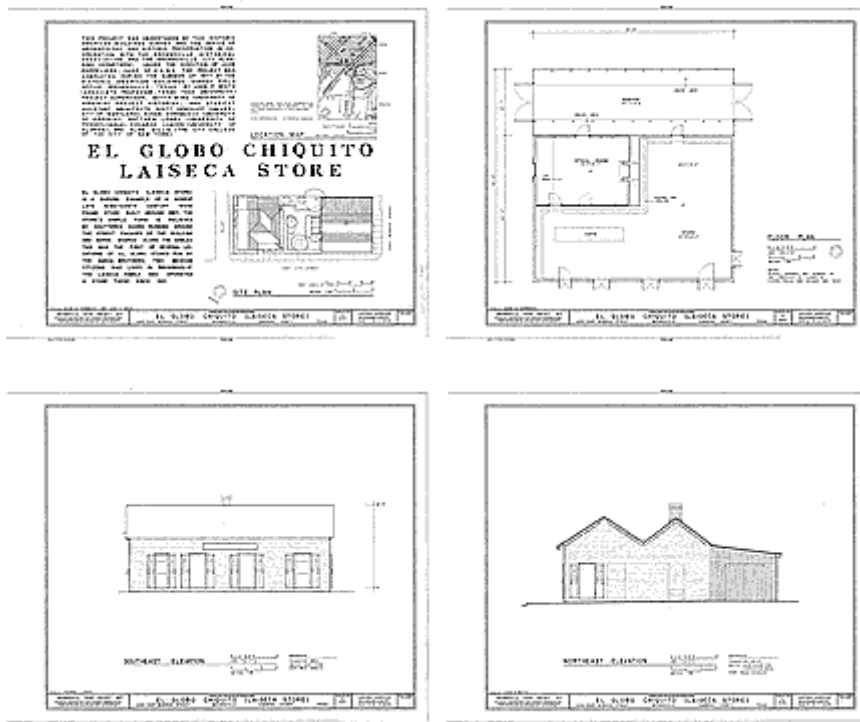
From the Library of Congress:

## Location

(1054 East Monroe Street)  
Cameron County, TX (Brownsville)

## Historic Registrations and Surveys

- HABS (Historic American Building Survey): [TX-3275](#)



EL GLOBO CHIQUITO (Laiseca Store)

TEX,  
31-BROWN,  
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Location: 1054 East Monroe Street, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.

USGS East Brownsville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 14/650670/2865720

Present Owner: Domingo Laiseca, 925 E. 11th Street, Brownsville, Texas.

Present Occupants: Laiseca Wholesale Hardware Company.

Present Use: Commercial.

Significance: El Globo Chiquito (Laiseca Store) is an excellent example of a modest, late nineteenth-century wood frame store. Built ca. 1887, the store's simple but rare twin-gabled form is relieved by shuttered doors running around the street facades of this corner building and by barge boards along the gables. This was the first of several locations of El Globo stores run by the Garza brothers, two Mexican citizens who lived in Brownsville. The Laiseca family has operated a store there since 1921.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The date 1887 is said to have been once painted on the exterior of the building on the Monroe Street side, which was apparently from the beginning the front facade, since the street numbers appear there today. The major openings of the store however, are on the side, where the shop opens up like a market to 11th Street.

2. Architect: None known.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

El Globo Chiquito is located on Lot 1, Block 122 of the Original Townsite of Brownsville, Texas. The following references tracing the title can be found at the Cameron County Clerk's Office, in Brownsville.

1878 Contract to Convey, 4 January 1878, recorded in Supplement E, pages 690-693. Edward Downey, agent for James and Elizabeth Stillman, sold lots 1, 2, 11, and 12 of Block 122 to James C. Browne for \$600.

1921 Warranty Deed, 20 August 1921, recorded in Book 101, p. 273. The Browne Properties sold Lot 1, Block 122 to Domingo Laiseca, father of the present owners.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The Laisecas stated that James Browne built the present structure.

5. Original plan and construction of the building: Originally the building had doors on the Monroe Street facade as well as along 11th Street, where the main entrances are now, and a porch once extended around the street facades.

A dwelling, now demolished, stood on the site of the present garage, attached to the side of the present structure. The back room of the store, with the fireplace, currently used for storage, was once used as part of that dwelling. Some of the original structure of that building is intact--for example, the shelves above the doors, the burge boards on the exterior, and the board-and-batten on the wall between the garage and the store are all original material.

6. Alterations and additions: Upon occupancy in 1921 Domingo Laiseca closed in the chimney on the interior brick wall parallel to the northeast facade and closed off the southwest window of the store so that shelving could be erected along these walls. The original oil lamps were removed and electric wiring and light fixtures were installed. The roof was replaced and the original ceiling of *manta* was replaced with sheet lath. *Manta* is a canvas-like material still used in Mexico for ceilings. This fabric is tacked to the joists and stretched to form a ceiling. It is often coated with lime and then painted. Domingo Laiseca also built a house southwest of the store, at 925 11th Street, with lumber from the J. S. and M. B. Cross Lumber Yard. No architect was used. Mr. Laiseca hired carpenters whom he supervised. The house was begun in August of 1921 and completed in December of that year. Between the store and the house a brick patio, now covered with concrete, was also laid at that time.

In 1930 the original dwelling on the property was torn down and the present garage erected.

In 1933 the porch around the store was destroyed in the hurricane of that year and was not replaced.

In 1945 the original shelves in the store, with the exception of the shelves above the doors, were replaced with the present shelves. The work was done by Domingo Laiseca, Jr., and his father. The original shelves along the northwest walls of the store had been set at an angle creating bins for dry goods and hardware.

In 1947 the roof of the store was again replaced and the storage loft in the back room was constructed. Domingo Laiseca, Jr., and his father did the carpentry work for the loft.

In 1950 the store's present floorboards were laid over the original 1 x 12 boards (1 inch thick, 12 inches wide.)

In 1960 the interior doors at either end of the 11th Street facade of the store were installed and the two doors along Monroe Street closed off because the store had been robbed. Four inches of concrete were poured over the brick patio which had deteriorated.

In 1975 wooden deadbolts were attached to the exterior shutters to make the store more secure.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

The store had been occupied by three principal, and original, tenants before it was bought by Domingo Laisecca. The first provided the historic name. These tenants were two brothers, Manuel and Adolpho Garza who operated the structure as a general store which they called El Globo Chiquito (The little Globe). The Garzas were followed by Alberto José and Manuel Besteiro, brothers, who sold dry goods from approximately 1908 to 1909. The third tenant was Fausto Guigierrez, who occupied the store from around 1910 until World War I. It is probable that all three tenants lived in the dwelling adjoining the store. The Laiseccas remember that Guigierrez and his family used the back room as part of their living quarters. El Globo Chiquito was well located for business since the Rio Grande Railroad, one of the first in the Rio Grande Valley, stopped two blocks from the store at 11th and Van Buren streets.

Adolpho and Manuel Garza were Mexican nationals who maintained their residence and business in Brownsville. The name El Globo Chiquito continued to be used to describe the property in a Deed of Trust as late as 1918 when lots 1 and 2 of Block 122 were described as "across from the H. M. Field Company, known as Globe Chiquito" in Book 24, page 44. About the turn of the century the Garzas moved to 11th and Madison where the store was called El Globo Nuevo, the New Globe. (See El Globo Nuevo, HABS No. TX-3276.) After 1920 the Garzas moved their store to the east corner of 12th and Monroe into the building presently occupied by the Iglesia Evangelica Lutheran (Mexican Lutheran Church.) Their new store was known as El Globo Segundo or The Second Globe. In 1923 the Garzas dissolved their business and Domingo Laisecca bought out all their hardware stock which included items such as hinges, dishes, and enamelware.

Domingo Laisecca was born on November 30, 1884, in Zalla, near Bilbao, Biscaya, which is the Basque Country of Spain. He married his first cousin, Juliana Fernandez, daughter of Jose Francisco Fernandez who came to Matamoros from Santander, Spain. Domingo Laisecca died July 8, 1954, and Juliana Fernandez Laisecca died on August 5, 1968. Their four children, Domínea, Juliana, Mariano, and Domingo still survive, and run the store today.

El Globo Chiquito was Domingo Laisecca's fifth place of business. In 1908 he established a business at 12th and Jefferson streets, on what

is now the playground of the Immaculate Conception School. In 1911 he moved to Market Square, where he stayed until 1915. From 1915 to 1916 he operated as Fernandez & Laiseca in partnership with his cousins, in a business located at the corner of 12th and Madison streets in the building which had previously been the county jail. In 1916 he moved to a building on the east corner of 12th and Monroe (now demolished) where he remained until 1921 when he moved to the present store.

In El Globo Chiquito the Laisecas sold general merchandise until after World War II when they began to sell hardware exclusively. After 1949 the Laisecas went into the wholesale hardware business, selling to hardware retail stores in Mexico. At one time the Laiseca Store carried over 1500 articles. Harnesses, saddles, wagons, wagon wheels, buggies, wood stoves, sad irons, barbed wire, ploughshares, etc., were sold. The Laisecas were one of the last dealers in the area to carry horse-drawn vehicles and implements for non-mechanized farming. (See correspondence with Standard Vehicle Company in 1955.)

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Affidavit filed by Juliana Fernandez de Laiseca dated June 24, 1958, filed in Miscellaneous Records, Volume 33, page 39, Cameron County Clerk's Office, Brownsville, Texas.

Interviews with Dominica, Juliana, Mariano, and Domingo Laiseca, 925 East 11th Street, Brownsville, Texas, on July 18 and 19, 1977. The four Laisecas, owners of the Laiseca Wholesale Hardware Company, who run the store today, furnished information about the physical history of the store and about the people who have owned it.

Copy of a letter to Laiseca Hardware Company from the Standard Vehicle Company, 323 West High Street, (city not located) dated July 11, 1955.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Sanborn Map, May 1894, showing Lot 1, Block 122.

Sanborn Map, January 1906, showing Lot 1, Block 122.

Sanborn Map, March 1914, showing Lot 1, Block 122. (Sanborn Maps can be found in the Hunter Collection of the City-College Library, Brownsville, Texas, and in the Library of Congress.)

Prepared by: Betty Bird  
University of Virginia  
Project Historian  
1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a very good example of a simple, frame commercial structure built in downtown Brownsville in the latter part of the nineteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The rectangular, four-bay(side) one-story, twin-gabled, building is approximately forty-four feet by thirty-two feet.
2. Foundation: Brick.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Wood siding, painted white, with corner trim. Corrugated metal on garage.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame construction.
5. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney on the ridge of the rear gable, near the center of the building. There is a projecting base of four courses, and the brick extends up to a very narrow projecting band two courses below the cap. The projecting cap is plastered.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors and shutters: The four double openings on the southeast facade open into the sales area. There are similar opening on the northeast facade. The wooden framed openings are shuttered by double vertical wood doors with two cleats on each to receive a wooden bolt. There are two large metal hook latches on each jamb to secure the door. At each opening is a wooden sill. An opening on each end of the southeast facade has a wooden panel door with a glass panel in the top.

Two similar openings on the northeast facade have been boarded up.

- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden windows have double-hung six-over-six light sashes with wooden surrounds. There are adjustable wooden louvre shutters on the exterior. One window on the southwest wall has vertical wood shutters on the interior and is boarded up with wood siding on the exterior.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The double or twin-gable roof is covered with wood shingles painted red. A gutter runs between the gables

connected to a downspout on one end. A shed roof covered with corrugated sheet metal covers the garage.

- b. Cornice, eaves: There are boxed cornices and jigsaw decorated barge boards on the gable ends.

C. Decoration of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The four entrances on the southeast or main entrance side, and one (before it was closed) on the northeast end, open into a large L-shaped room. There is an opening at the west corner on the northwest wall to a storage room. A window on the southwest wall has been boarded up. There is wooden shelving around the walls at the northwest and southwest. A doorway leads to the garage on the north end of the northwest wall and one opening on this wall has been boarded up. The store room, on the west corner of the building, has a window on the southwest wall and a doorway to the garage on the northwest wall. A window on the northwest wall has been boarded up. There is a simple brick fireplace with a raised hearth on the northeast wall. The fireplace has brick surrounds, an arched opening, and a stepped chimney. There is a wooden loft above a part of this room. A similar fireplace that opened into the large sales area has been removed. The garage has a large opening on each end.
2. Flooring: Flooring the main building is of wooden boards, tongue-and groove, average width. There is a concrete floor in the garage.
3. Walls, ceiling finish: Horizontal wooden boards are used to face the walls and ceilings. The northwest wall of the store room is brick, painted white. The southeast wall in the garage is board-and-batten siding. Other walls in the garage are exposed structure and corrugated sheet metal.
4. Doorways and doors: Doors are vertical wood panels, wood surrounds.
5. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: There is no heating equipment, except the fireplace.
  - b. Electrical: Modern fluorescent lighting fixtures are used.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces southeast on the west corner of the intersection of East 11th Street and East Monroe, just off Courthouse Square. The twin-gabled end of the store faces East Monroe Street. The long side of the store faces southeast on East 11th Street. The courthouse is across the street to the southeast, and the Field-Pacheco Complex (HABS No. TX-3277) is across the street to the northeast. A concrete sidewalk extends around each side of the street facades.



2. Outbuildings: There is a house on the southwest side of the building connected to the store by a garden. The house, in good condition, has wood siding, painted white. The hipped and gabled roof is covered with wood shingles painted white. At the front of the house is an indented porch with three and one-half wooden columns, painted white. Wooden windows have two-over-two light sashes, wooden louver shutters painted pink, and decorative iron bars over the windows.

A small wire fence extends across the front of the property from the store and extends around the property. There is a large, round, metal water storage tank at the rear of the house that is connected to the metal gutters of the house.

Prepared by: John P. White  
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### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

At the suggestion of a national preservation consultant, Ellen Beasley, this project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in cooperation with the Brownsville Historical Association and the Brownsville City Planning Department. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1977 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Brownsville, Texas, by John P. White (Associate Professor, Texas Technological University) Project Supervisor; Betty Bird (University of Virginia) Project Historian; and Student Assistant Architects Scott Deneroff (University of Maryland), Susan Dornbusch (University of Virginia), Matthew Lowry (University of Pennsylvania), Eduardo Luaces (University of Florida), and Alan Willig (the City College of the City University of New York). Special assistance and support were provided to the HABS team by Mrs. Mary Simmons, Mrs. Sally Fleming, Miss Theresa Champion, and Mr. Calvin Walker of the Brownsville Historical Association; and by Mr. Mario Moreno, Mr. Richard Waldman, Mrs. Graciela Salinas, and Mr. Larry Brown of the Brownsville City Planning Department. Archival photographs of the project were made in February 1979 by Bill Engdahl, of Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago, Illinois. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.



[1. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979, 11TH STREET PERSPECTIVE FROM SOUTHWEST, HABS TEX.31-BROWN.7-1](#)



[2. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979 SOUTHEAST ELEVATION ON 11TH STREET. HABS TEX,31-BROWN,7-2](#)



[3. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979 VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST. HABS TEX,31-BROWN,7-3](#)



[4. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979 SIDE ENTRANCE DOOR \(SECOND ENTRANCE DOOR FROM LEFT\) OPEN. HABS TEX,31-BROWN,7-4](#)



[5. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979 FAR RIGHT SIDE ENTRANCE DOOR, OPEN. HABS TEX,31-BROWN,7-5](#)



[6. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979 VIEW FROM NORTHWEST TO SOUTHEAST. HABS TEX,31-BROWN,7-6](#)



[7. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979 SIDE DOORS SEEN FROM INTERIOR. HABS TEX,31-BROWN,7-7](#)



[8. Historic American Buildings Survey, Bill Engdahl for Hedrich-Blessing, Photographers, February, 1979 STORE INTERIOR. HABS TEX,31-BROWN,7-8](#)