

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

908



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Teatro La Paz

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: El Cine Rio, Rio Theatre, Café Rio, Joe's Meat Market

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 514, 516, 518 Doherty

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

CITY OR TOWN: Mission

VICINITY: N/A

STATE: Texas

CODE: TX

COUNTY: Hidalgo

CODE: 215

ZIP CODE: 78572

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

July 1, 2002
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

for
Signature of the Keeper
Edsar H. Beall

Date of Action

8/30/02

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	3	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	3	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: Historic and Architectural Resources of Mission,
Hidalgo County, Texas

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater; SOCIAL/clubhouse;
COMMERCE/department store, warehouse, specialty store

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater; COMMERCE/restaurant, specialty store

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS BRICK
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER CERAMIC TILE; GLASS; STUCCO

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

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Teatro La Paz
Mission, Hidalgo County, Texas

DESCRIPTION

Historically Teatro La Paz, the Rio Theatre complex is made up of one- and two-part commercial block buildings built between 1915 and 1933 (Figure 1). The buildings are located in a predominantly residential neighborhood on the east side of Doherty Avenue, between East 5th and East 6th streets, one block east of Mission's historically Hispanic commercial district. The two-story Rio Theatre is in the center of the complex, flanked on the north by the one-story Rio Patio Cafe and Estudios Rio, and on the south by Joe's Meat Market (Figure 2). Constructed of brick made in nearby Madero, the buildings show influences of both late 19th and early 20th century architectural trends. Stylistically, they reflect the Lower Rio Grande Valley's Spanish Colonial roots with Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival details. The buildings sit on level terrain, with vacant lots on the north and south and an alley to the east. In excellent condition, the buildings retain their integrity to a high degree. The complex is both a local landmark and the Rio Theatre was designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1982.

The Rio Theatre is a two-story, rectangular-plan building of load-bearing painted brick construction. Although the construction of the foundation is unknown, it is probably a continuous brick perimeter footing with pier-and-beam interior supports. The false-front gabled roof is covered with corrugated metal panels.

Compositionally a two-part commercial block (Longstreth, 24), the elevation is a symmetrical arrangement of five bays, defined by low-relief pilasters. A wide central bay is flanked by four equally-sized outer bays. The elevation is divided horizontally by belt courses at the transom sill line and above the second floor windows. The slightly-recessed main entrance, filling the central bay, contains a pair of wood doors with full glass panels and a segmentally-arched transom. Three tiled steps lead up to the entrance. The lower elevation is faced with green glazed tile. Tiles are applied plumb (i.e. with horizontal and vertical joints) within the bays and diagonally on the pilasters. Originally open archways, the owners filled the openings with tile in the 1940s. Each of the four bays flanking the entry features a large, glass-fronted display panel for advertising the current feature and coming attractions.

The lower elevation terminates in a belt course which also forms a continuous sill for the segmentally-arched transoms. Each transom is subdivided by a central vertical muntin. The upper elevation is brick, painted tan with brown trim. At the second floor, four double-hung windows flank a single wood door. The four cross-paneled door leads to a cantilevered wood balcony with decoratively-sawn slat railing. Each window is a 1/1 wood sash, double-hung unit with a masonry sill extending the full width of the bay. The window openings have segmentally-arched heads with slender, eyebrow hoods. Just below the line of the window meeting rails, a bolt and washer project from each pilaster. Above the windows, a belt course visually defines the cornice.

The cornice comprises a stepped parapet with dentiled coping and enframed panels in the three middle bays. The central panel contains a flush-mounted, painted sign which identifies the building as the "RIO THEATRE." A narrow belt course spans the middle bay above the panel. Projecting slightly above the parapet, the pilasters terminate in masonry caps. A wood-frame single dwelling occupies the rear of the property.

Immediately north of and connected to the Rio Theatre, the Rio Patio Cafe and Estudios Rio Building is a one-part commercial block (Longstreth, 54) with Spanish Colonial Revival influences. The building is constructed of load-bearing painted brick and has a flat, built-up roof. Three low-relief, stepped pilasters extend above the parapet and define the two bays. Each bay contains a deeply-recessed entry flanked by wood multi-light display windows on bases. A pair of eight-light French doors provide access to the interior. Each entry is sheltered by a Spanish tile pent-roofed canopy, supported by brackets. Ornamentation is limited to narrow recessed panels above the entry, a belt course running the full width of the elevation below the parapet, and pineapple finials topping each pilaster. An ornamental-metal sign,

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Teatro La Paz
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announcing the Rio Patio Cafe, projects from the central pilaster. The building's side and rear walls are unpainted tan brick.

Similar in design to the Rio Patio Cafe and Estudios Rio, Joe's Meat Market is located to the south of the Rio Theatre. The single-bay building is constructed of load-bearing masonry and has an elongated, rectangular plan. The building's principal, or west, elevation is finished in stucco, painted pinkish-tan with brown trim. Low-relief pilasters extend above the flat parapet and frame the elevation. Slightly south of the elevation's centerline, a pair of aluminum-and-glass storefront doors provide primary access to the interior. North of the entry, a wall-mounted, decorative, wrought-iron sign advertises the specials of the day. A green-and-white striped canvas awning shades the entry from the afternoon sun. Above and on either side of the awning, leader heads and downspouts connect to roof scuppers. Decoration is limited to simple recessed panels, belt course parapet coping, and decorative pineapple finials capping the pilasters. A plastic panel sign projects from the upper elevation.

Constructed of painted, ribbed structural clay tile, the south elevation is a blank wall. The parapet progressively steps down from west to east.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION; ETHNIC HERITAGE, HISPANIC ARCHITECTURE

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1915-1952

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1915, c. 1933, 1945

SIGNIFICANT PERSONS: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION:

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Barbéra, Juan Bautista

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-9)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-10)

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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Teatro La Paz
Mission, Hidalgo County, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rio Theatre complex has been a cultural center in Mission since the completion of the original theater, called Teatro La Paz (Peace Theater), in 1915. Showcasing performing arts, lectures and films, it was the only theater in Mission that catered to the large Spanish-speaking population. The theater is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Hispanic ethnic heritage, performing arts and entertainment /recreation and it is associated with the historic context, *Grapefruit's Lone Star Home: The Development Of Mission, Texas*. The number of prestigious performers Teatro La Paz attracted is indicative of Mission's growing importance in the Valley as a prospering town and center for commerce from the 1910s through the 1940s. The Spanish language and Mexican culture preserved in the performances and community events suggest the strong role and influence of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Mission's development. Built by Juan Bautista Barbéra, an immigrant from Spain, the theater showed the most popular Spanish language movies and presented many Mexican performers and influential lecturers. Barbéra later added two other buildings, now the Rio Patio Cafe/Estudios Rio and Joe's Meat Market, to form a business complex that provided an entertainment and community center for the mostly Hispanic, South Mission. The complex is also significant under Criterion C as an outstanding local example of early 20th century commercial architecture in the city of Mission.

A bricklayer from Spain, Juan Bautista Barbéra arrived in Brownsville in 1905 and moved to Mission in 1912. He purchased Mission city lots #2 and #3 in block 90, from Fred B. Garza and J. B. Maples, respectively, and began construction on Teatro La Paz (Barrera 7: 1981). Barbéra completed Teatro La Paz in 1915 and opened the theater to showcase live performers. He had a large and grateful clientele.

Although Mission was founded by Anglo entrepreneurs and heavily promoted to Midwestern farmers in the 1910s and 1920s, the city quickly attracted Hispanic residents, as well. Some were native-born, descended from early Spanish colonists, but others were recent immigrants fleeing from the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution. Many spoke little or no English. Like Barbéra, most of Mission's Spanish-speaking population lived on the city's south side, in neighborhoods that sprang up south of the railroad tracks. Racial segregation in Mission during the first half of the twentieth century was both institutionalized, as in the case of the separate "Mexican" school, and de facto, as evidenced by the cluster of Hispanic businesses that appeared along South Lomita, now Conway, the city's main commercial street. It was in this context that Barbéra built and opened his theater.

Since Mission's early Anglo theaters did not cater to Spanish-language patrons and may, in fact, have prohibited them from the premises, Hispanic residents, particularly Mexican immigrants, welcomed Barbéra's efforts. His Teatro La Paz quickly became the cultural focal point for Spanish-language arts and entertainment in South Mission and surrounding immigrant communities. During the early years of the theater's operation, traveling companies from Mexico performed Spanish language plays such as *Don Juan Tenorio*, *La Llorona*, and *Malditas Sean Las Mujeres*. Intellectuals and political figures also lectured from the La Paz stage. Nemecio Garcia Naranjo, an exiled official of General Huerta's regime, spoke at Teatro La Paz on his crusade to convince Mexican-American audiences that Huerta's failed conservative government would have been beneficial to Mexico (*The Valley Town Crier* 19 Nov 1986). Jose Manrique, another political figure and Governor of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, also lectured at the theater. When the theater first opened, the Mexican Revolution was still a recent memory in the minds of Mission's citizens and the conflicts on the border had economic and social impacts on both Hispanic and Anglo citizens. The political theme of many productions, including the annual reenactment from the balcony of the "Grito de Dolores" on September 16, Mexican Independence Day, demonstrates the loyalty and ties Hispanic citizens in Mission still felt to Mexico.

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Teatro La Paz
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In addition to live performances, Juan Barbéra also showed silent films distributed from Unique Film Services in Houston. In 1916, the theater had a 1-horsepower Douglas gas engine, a dynamo, and a 5 kilowatt Edison moving picture machine. The theater also hosted social events to present young ladies of the community at Teatro La Paz, which could seat 250 people (Heller 239: 1994). By 1933, Juan Barbéra had added two buildings on either adjoining side of the theater to expand his businesses. New entertainment at the complex included pool tables and a bowling alley in a storefront addition to the north of the theater. A pharmacy occupied the smaller shop to the south. During the Great Depression, Barbéra's efforts to help the community shifted from entertainment to relief. His son, Miguel remembers the long bowling alley being used to distribute food to poor families (Barrera 3: 1981).

In 1944, Juan Barbéra sold the complex and moved to Laredo, where he retired. The new owner, Enrique Flores Sr., spent several months refurbishing the theater with new chairs and a new curtain and renamed it "El Cine Rio," or Rio Theatre in 1945. Enrique Flores, along with manager Arnaldo Ramirez, continued to bring in live performers and Spanish language films. The 1940s and 1950s are regarded as the era of "Classical" Mexican film, similar to Hollywood's "golden age" of American movies in the 1930s and 1940s. Films such as Mexico's *Macario* were shown regularly and American films were also occasionally added to the schedule (Barrera 5: 1981). Ramirez booked numerous singers, dancers, and actors to provide light-hearted family entertainment for the entire community. Favorite entertainers included Joaquin Cordero, a singer and actor, and Ana Berta Lepe, a dancer and singer who also held the title of Miss Mexico. Flores' wife, Carmen, operated a small restaurant and ice cream parlor, named the Rio Cold Spot, in the former pharmacy, now Joe's Meat Market (Muñoz 10/28/98). Enrique Flores Sr., once a farmer and then a grocer, opened a wholesale grocery store in the old bowling alley.

The Rio Theatre provided entertainment for Mission's Spanish speaking citizens until Enrique Flores Sr. died in 1969 and the theater was temporarily closed. In 1976, his son Enrique Flores, Jr. reopened the complex as Xochil Art Institute. Flores, an art student at Pan American University, and fellow artist Xavier Gorena, began showing classic, foreign and art films in the theater that they restored with grant funding. The Xochil Art Institute became a non-profit organization that supported the theater and Estudios Rio next door in the former bowling alley, a showcase for the Valley's artists. Enrique Flores Jr. died in 1990 and his sister, Carmen Muñoz and her husband Joe inherited the property. She currently operates a restaurant in the old bowling alley and her husband, Joe Muñoz runs a meat market in the smaller store that was the pharmacy. Mrs. Muñoz shows classic American movies one weekend a month in the Rio Theatre.

Except for the short period in which it was closed, the Teatro La Paz, now the Rio Theatre, has served as a cultural center for Hispanics in South Mission. Through its many transformations the complex has maintained the original goals of its builder: community entertainment and support for Hispanic arts. Teatro La Paz provided a stage and an eager audience for performing Mexican troupes that traveled up and down the Rio Grande immediately following the Mexican Revolution. The Rio Theatre likewise supported Spanish language productions by showcasing Mexican celebrities and even showing Spanish-language films to local high school students. Xochil Art Institute gave Valley artists a venue in which to exhibit sculptures and paintings in the gallery next to the theater. This unique building complex is a landmark in Mission which has played a large role in the preservation and celebration of the Spanish language and Hispanic culture throughout the history of the city.

The Rio Theatre complex is an important and well-preserved grouping of historic commercial buildings in Mission and is also nominated to the NRHP under Criterion C. The two-story Rio Theater, at the center of the complex and its most imposing visual element, illustrates the enduring nature of vernacular commercial architectural traditions. At first glance, the 1915 Rio Theater appears to be a retail store, not a theater, and resembles a common building type erected during the late 19th and very early 20th centuries in small- and medium-sized cities throughout Texas. The Rio Theater has a two-part commercial block massing, segmental-arched second-floor windows, and stepped parapet, typical elements of this distinctive vernacular form. Upon closer examination, however, the Rio Theater lacks large plate-glass windows, a continuous row of transoms, and a recessed entrance with angled display windows, which are usually found on

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contemporaneous commercial buildings. The Rio Theater also has a small decorative balcony and a three-part parapet that is much steeper than those typically seen on contemporaneous used on typical vernacular commercial buildings. The adjoining buildings, Patio Cafe and Estudios Rio, and Joe's Meat Market, are intact local examples of early 20th century commercial buildings and display classically inspired architectural detailing with a nod to the area's Spanish Colonial building traditions. It is one of only three surviving historic theaters identified in an 1995 survey of Mission's 1945 city boundaries. Of those, only the Rio Theatre and the Pueblo Revival style Border Theater (NRHP 1998), remain in operation. It is also Mission's oldest theater, dating to the city's first decade, and the only surviving Spanish-language arts and entertainment venue. The entire complex retains its integrity to a high degree and survives as one of the city's most intact groupings of historic commercial architecture.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Barrera, Elena. Recorded Texas Historical Landmarks Application, 1981.

Heller, Dick J. *The History of Mission, Hidalgo County, Texas: An Historic Lower Rio Grande Valley* City. Mission, TX 1994.

Muñoz, Carmen. Interview with Terri Myers, 28 October 1998.

The Valley Town Crier, 19 November 1986. Available at the University of Texas Pan - American at Edinburg, TX.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES Zone Easting Northing
 14 567480 2899040

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Block 90 / Lots 2,3 Mission Original Townsite

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The boundaries follow the lot and block historically associated with the Rio Theatre Complex

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Terri Myers, Project Director/Historian; Sophie Roark, Research Assistant;
Tom P. Eisenhower, Architect

ORGANIZATION: Hardy-Heck-Moore & Myers, Inc.

DATE: March 1999

STREET & NUMBER: 1414 W. 6th Street

TELEPHONE: 512-478-8014

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 78703

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet FIGURE-11)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet PHOTO-13)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Muñoz, Carmen and Joe

STREET & NUMBER: 514 Doherty

TELEPHONE: 956-581-2024

CITY OR TOWN: Mission

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78572

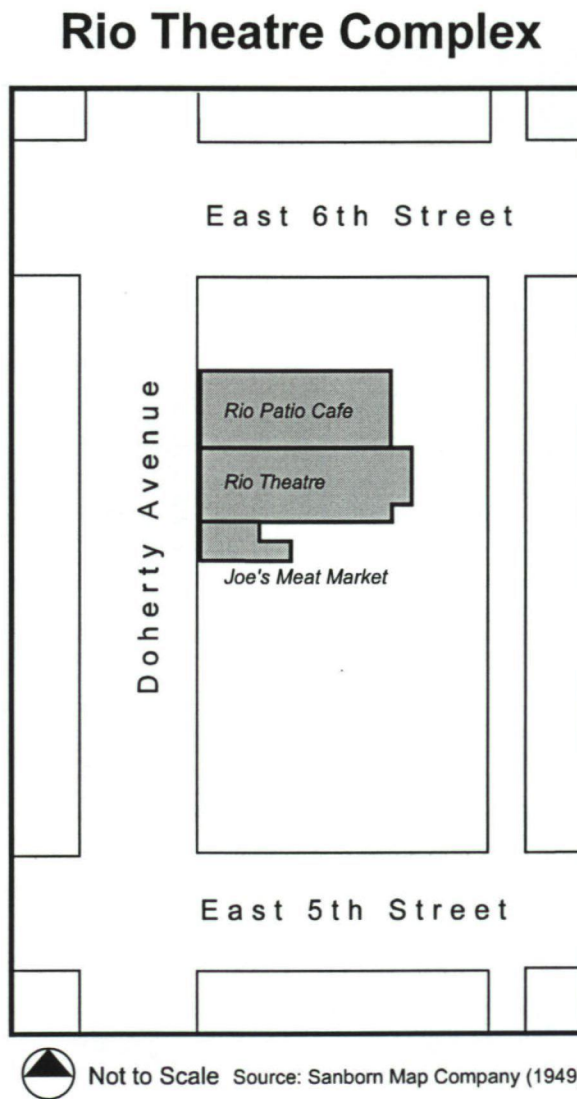
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Teatro La Paz
Mission, Hidalgo County, Texas

Figure 1. Site plan of the Rio Theatre Complex.



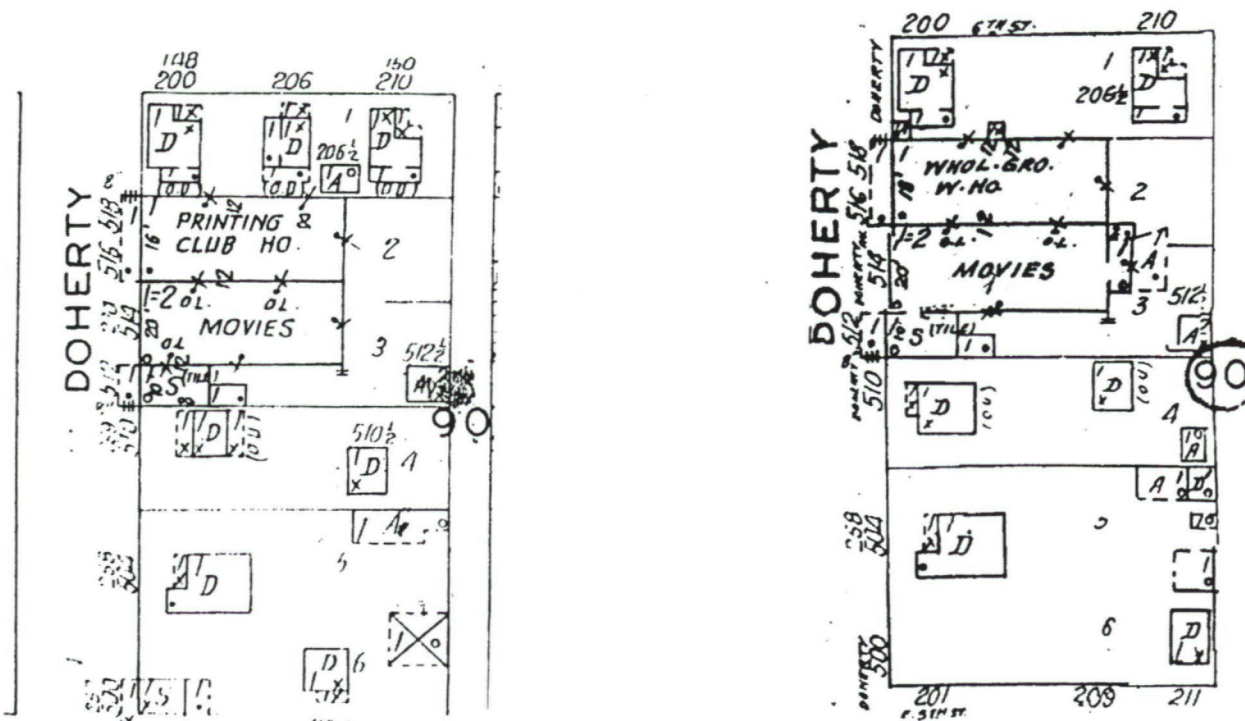
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Teatro La Paz
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Figure 2. (a) 1925 Sanborn map of the Rio Theatre.
(b) 1949 Sanborn map of the Rio Theatre.



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Teatro La Paz
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PHOTO INVENTORY

**Teatro La Paz
Mission, Hidalgo County, Texas
Terri Myers – photographer**

Teatro La Paz – 514, 516, 518 Doherty
View: West elevation
Camera facing: East
Photo 1 of 1
1998

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Teatro La Paz
NAME:

MULTIPLE Mission, Hidalgo County MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Hidalgo

DATE RECEIVED: 7/18/02 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/12/02
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/28/02 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/01/02
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 02000908

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8/30/02 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Interested in the
National Register**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

RIO ART CENTER

RIO PATIO CAFE

ESTUDIOS RIO

ESTUDIOS RIO

RIO THEATRE

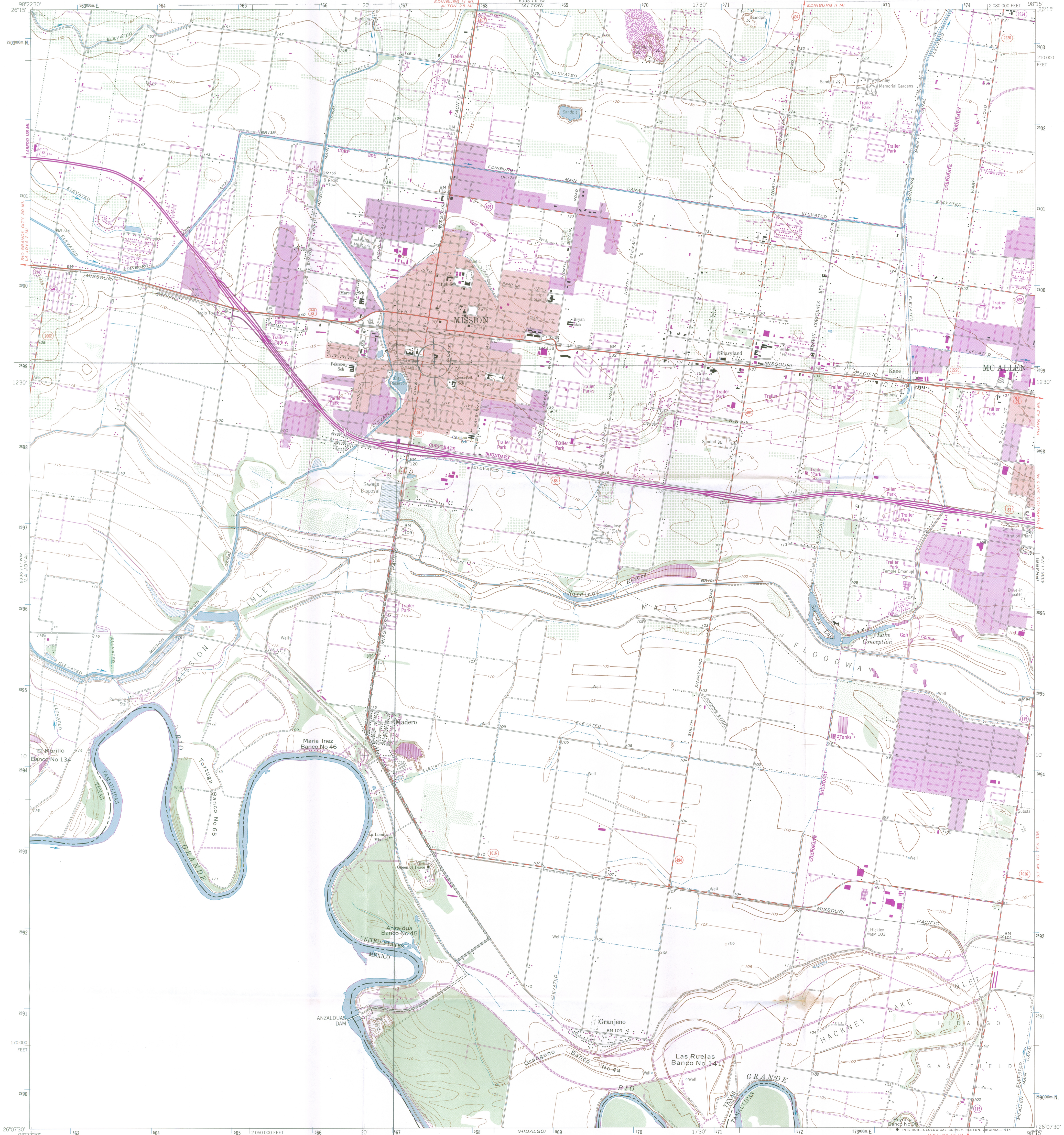
Joe's
MEAT MARKET

JOE'S MEAT MKT.



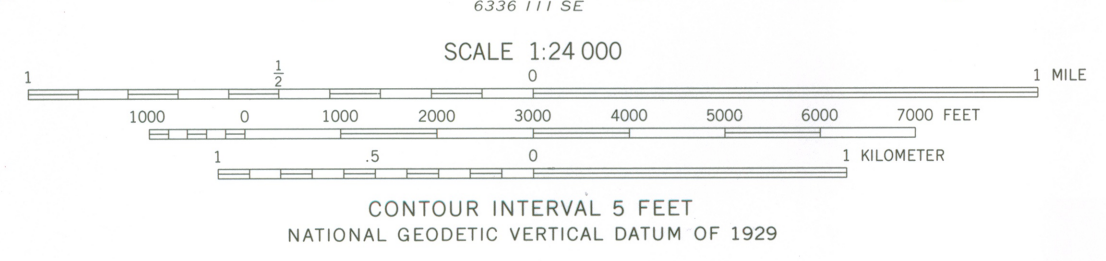
TEATRO LA PAZ
514,516,518 DOHERTY
MISSION, HIDALGO CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 1



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1961. Topography by planetable surveys 1963
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American Datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 33 meters south and
29 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

UTM GRID AND 1983 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET
0°18' 79°
5 MILLS
Revision shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial photographs taken 1980 and other source data
This information not field checked. Map edited 1983



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

MISSION, TEX.
26098-B3-TF-024
1963
PHOTOREVISED 1983
DMA 6336 III NE-SERIES V882

2698-124