

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Formreceived OCT 11 1988
date enteredSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic Brooks, Samuel Wallace, House

and or common Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program

2. Location

street & number 623 East St. Charles Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Brownsville

N/A vicinity of

state Texas

code 048

county Cameron

code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: philanthropic

4. Owner of Property

name Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program, Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 4633

city, town Brownsville

N/A vicinity of

state Texas 78520

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cameron County Courthouse

street & number 964 East Harrison Street

city, town Brownsville

state Texas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Texas Historic Sites Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1975

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin

state Texas

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☒ moved date 1951, 1987

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in an older, largely residential area, the Samuel Wallace Brooks House is perhaps the only surviving example in Brownsville of a wooden, I-plan house. Twice moved, the house has recently been sympathetically rehabilitated and adapted for office use. It retains setback, lot size and the northwest/southeast ridgeline orientation in a residential section that it has had historically. Its ornamental wood fretwork is especially noteworthy.

The Brooks House is a 1 1/2-story, wooden frame residence. The structure faces southwest and is clad in weatherboarding. The entrance front consists of three bays: a centered 1-light, 2-panel, front door with transom flanked by 15-light doors at each side. The second floor features a central, lateral gable emerging from the shingled roof. The gable has paired, 6-light, two-panel doors and alternate bands of (from bottom to top) fish-scale, diamond and square-butt shingles. A modified king-post roof brace is found at the top of the gable, and a narrow bargeboard with small, incised circles extends from the bottom of the king post along the lower sides of the gable. A small balcony with simple balustrade projects beyond the upper door. A veranda with sawn ornamental fretwork extends most of the length of the house front. Slightly projecting over the center steps, the veranda is accentuated by balustrade, entablature and supports sawn with quatrefoil, trefoil, circle and elongated figure-8 motifs. The shallow, hipped veranda roof is clad with standing-seam sheet metal.

The northwest gable end of the Brooks House has no openings at ground floor level and two 1/1 pane windows at the second floor level. The gable detailing is similar to that of the entrance front. A square, corbelled-brick fireplace emerges from the peak of the roof. The southeast facade has a center 6/6 window at ground floor level. Above, the gable fenestration and detailing is virtually identical with that of the front gable. The rear (northeast) facade has only two openings: two symmetrically placed 15-light doors.

The interior of the house has a central staircase hall with Italianate newel post and balustrade. A single room is located at each side, and the northwest room has a center fireplace. The second floor is a large, finished room, with a continuation of the staircase in the center.

At its original Jefferson Street location, the Brooks house had a large, 1-story rear ell at the northeast corner of the house. An L-plan porch and what may have been a later addition extended along the remainder of the rear facade. Two small outbuildings and an L-plan, 1-story dwelling also appear to the rear of the house on a 1930 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map. All except the main block were apparently demolished at the time the house was moved to Jackson Street in 1951.

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At that time, a small, non-historic frame addition was made to the northeast portion of the rear facade. Photos from that period also indicate the front veranda was supported by four wooden posts on brick piers. Second floor balconies had been removed, but ornamental shingles and king-post braces in the gables remained. By 1980, the house was noticeably deteriorated, and Jackson Street had most much of its residential character.

In 1987, the structure was moved a second time to its present location. The structure had been condemned, and a quick search yielded a surprisingly compatible vacant lot. The original location was of course the site of a modern parochial school. In preparation for the move, the 1950s addition was demolished, and decayed and later materials removed. Once moved, missing elements such as the ornamental fretwork on the entrance front were carefully reconstructed from historic photos, and other elements approximated to retain the historic character of the building. The elements of the interior of the house such as the main staircase were restored as possible, and others adapted for modern office purposes. In the absence of historical documentation on its historic appearance, the rear of the house was left as simple as possible.

The Brooks House is on a flat, rectangular lot. The front of the site has a picket fence in the spirit of the historic fence, and the rear of the property is essentially undeveloped. Vegetation on the property is sparse, although mature palms and other trees line the street.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1888, 1987

Builder/Architect Samuel W. Brooks (1888)

Roberto Ruiz/Hector Garcia (1987)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Samuel Wallace Brooks House is a rare Rio Grande Valley example of an I-house. After two moves and a period of decline, the building has recently been sympathetically rehabilitated in an appropriate setting. Its architect and first owner, S. W. Brooks (1829-1903), was an important figure in the history of late 19th century Brownsville. The building meets National Register Criterion C for its architectural significance.

In the later 19th century, Brownsville was one of the few South Texas communities with any standing as a city. The city's strategic location at the southern tip of the state near the mouth of the Rio Grande made it an important trading and shipping center for both Texas and, across the river, Mexico.

One of the more noteworthy Brownsville entrepreneurs of that period was Samuel Wallace Brooks (1829-1903). His career reflects the spirit that brought other ambitious men such as Charles Stillman and Capt. Richard King from the Northeastern United States to remote South Texas to seek their fortunes. As reported in The Twin Cities of the Border (1893),

Mr. Brooks is a Pennsylvanian by birth, but lived in Ohio from the time he was 7 years old until he went to New Orleans and began business there in 1853, as an architect, builder and lumber dealer. He shipped materials for the roof of the Catholic Cathedral in this city, from his lumber yards in 1857, and continued business in New Orleans until 1863. He then came to this section and established himself in Matamoros [Mexico], in the same line of business he had conducted in New Orleans. During a portion of his fifteen years' residence in Matamoros, he had interests in both that city and Brownsville, but the latter place gradually demanded his greater attention; as a consequence, he removed to this side of the river in 1878, and has since that time been a permanent resident of this city.

Brooks was very active in Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley in the later 19th Century as an architect, builder and engineer. He is credited with the design or construction of the Fort Brown Hospital (N.H.L. 1964) and jetties, the Episcopal Church of the Advent, the High School Building, the Browne-Wagner House (N.R. 1977), the Kowolski-Dennett House, the Frank Armstrong House, the Federal Building, and the Old Cameron County Courthouse, all in Brownsville, as well as county courthouses in Hidalgo (N.R. 1980) and Starr Counties. He held the office of Brownsville City Engineer for eight terms, and held a patent (No. 120,237 - 1871) for "Improvements in Machines of Making Paving Blocks." The latter was for the

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bay, Betty Historic Brownsville: Original Townsite Guide. (Brownsville: Brownsville Historical Association, 1980)

Brownsville Daily Herald, 16 February 1903.

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name West Brownsville, Tex.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	4	6	4	9	9	6	0	2	8	6	5	7	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 39, Lot 9, Original Townsite

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark Lund, Heritage Officer (with Peter Flagg Maxson, THC)

organization City of Brownsville - Planning Dept. date July 1987/September 1988

street & number P.O. Box 911 telephone 512/541-6302

city or town Brownsville state Texas

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Curtis J. Funnell

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 30 Sept. 1988

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Dr. Betty L. Savage
Keeper of the National Register

date 11-22-88

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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manufacture of hexagonal pavers, made locally from the wood of ebony trees (Los Ebanos, as they are called locally).

In 1888, when Brooks was likely at the peak of his power and influence in Brownsville, he and his second wife built their home at 1131 East Jefferson Street in Brownsville just southeast of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (N.R. 1980). Architecturally, it was likely considered a very forward-looking house in Brownsville. Because of the city's remoteness and its strong cultural and geographic ties with Mexico, the typical house of the 1880s there harkened back to Mexican or somewhat out-of-date, sometimes Greek Revival-influenced, American architectural traditions. The Brooks' house, while not large in scale, was a modern house for the time and place, a 1-1/2 story residence in a modified I-plan form. The main block was symmetrical especially noteworthy for its front veranda of ornate sawn fretwork and ornamental bargeboard elements in the end and front gables. The house followed popular American stylistic traditions of the 1880s, belying its location four blocks from the Mexican border. The house was apparently a source of pride locally and an illustration of it was published in The Twin Cities of the Border five years after its construction.

Brooks died in 1903 at age 72. His widow, the former Mrs. Inez Vallejo Falgout of New Orleans, her son and daughter-in law, Charles (Carlos) and Librada Falgout, and ultimately her granddaughter, Alice Falgout Merkling, continued to occupy the family home. In 1951, Immaculate Conception Church announced its desire to construct a school on the site of the Brooks House. As Mrs. Merkling's grandson Ernest Tijerina remarked, "You can't say no to the church," and the house was moved some five blocks to the northeast to 1313 East Jackson Street, a mixed, more recent residential/commercial neighborhood (Brownsville Herald, 16 July 1986). The rear ell and what appears on the 1930 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map to be an irregular east corner addition was demolished at the old site. A small addition made to the eastern portion of the rear facade at the Jackson Street location and a new front porch were constructed.

By the 1970s, both the house and the neighborhood had fallen on somewhat evil times. In Historic Brownsville (1980), Betty Bay noted, "It is ironic and sentimentally sad that the house which Brownsville's most prominent architect of the late 1800's built for his own home should look as it now does - in such a desperate need of renovation" (p.149). The front veranda had been altered, unsightly additions made to the rear and the Brooks House was in a generally deteriorated condition.

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In 1987, owner Niddia G. Arisman contracted to have the condemned house demolished and lot cleared (as it remains today). Members of the City of Brownsville Heritage Council, however, took a keen interest in the house and bought the demolition contract. A sympathetic buyer was found in the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program, Inc., and the task of moving and rehabilitating the Brooks House began.

An appropriate, vacant lot was acquired a half-mile or so to the west of the Jefferson Street site on St. Charles Street. The new location had never been developed with more than a storage shed, although it was surrounded by some of the most significant surviving late 19th- and early 20th-Century residences in Brownsville. The new site approximates the long-lost original setting of the Brooks House. With the exception of the veranda and rear additions, most historic fabric from the original house survived. Photographic documentation of the front and sides of the structure was used to replicate the veranda and other missing elements. The newel post, long since removed from the house, was returned and the staircase restored. As the historic rear ell had been demolished without documentation, it was decided to treat the rear of the building in a simple, non-historic manner without extensions. The upstairs of the house was adapted for current needs, and the downstairs restored as possible to its original two-room/central hall-plan. Every effort was made to preserve surviving historic fabric and accurately reconstruct missing elements. Accordingly, the historic integrity of the house has been restored, and the building -- probably the only surviving 19th-Century structure of its style in the city -- is again a source of pride to the people of Brownsville.

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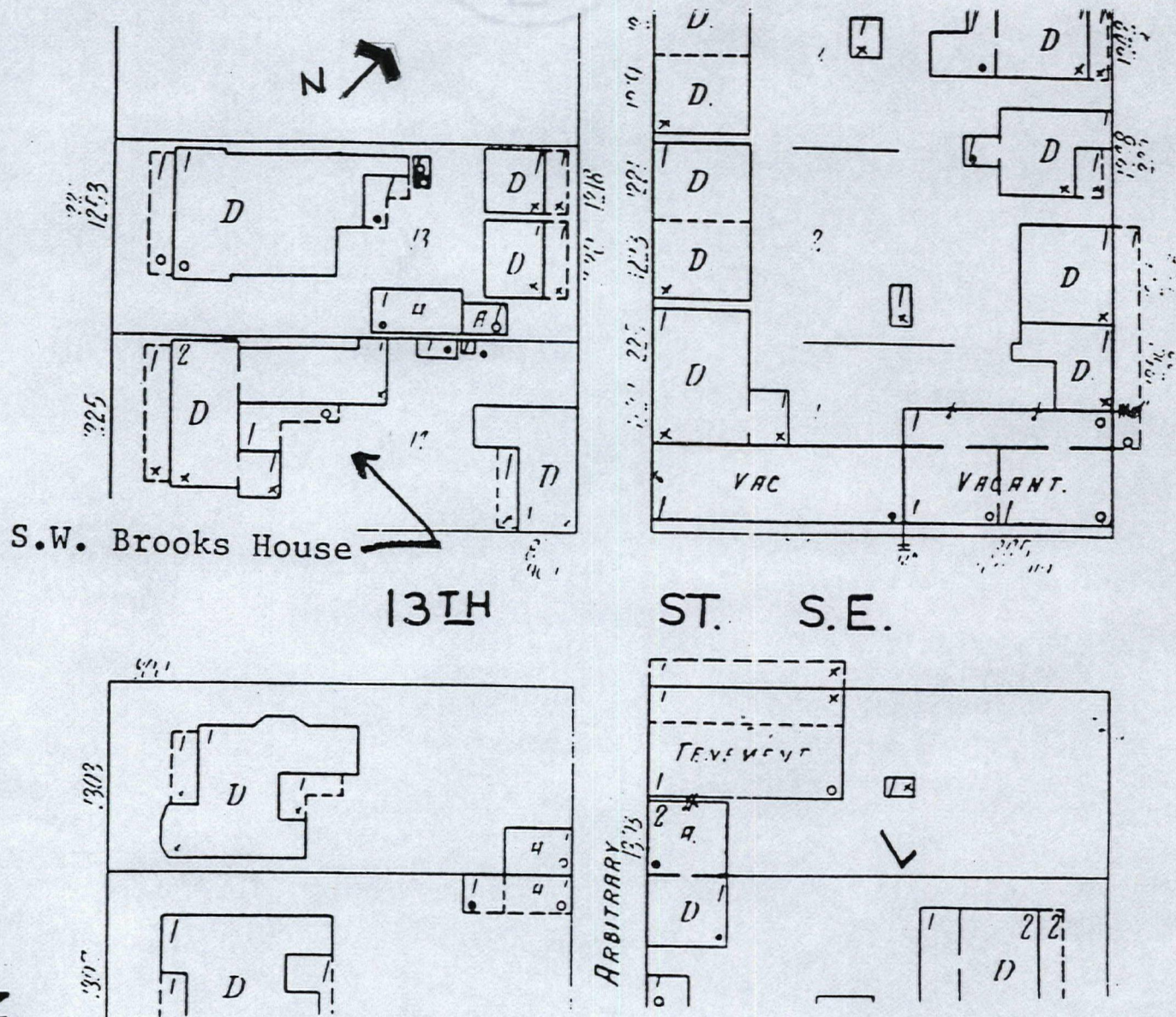
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map

1930



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National Park Service

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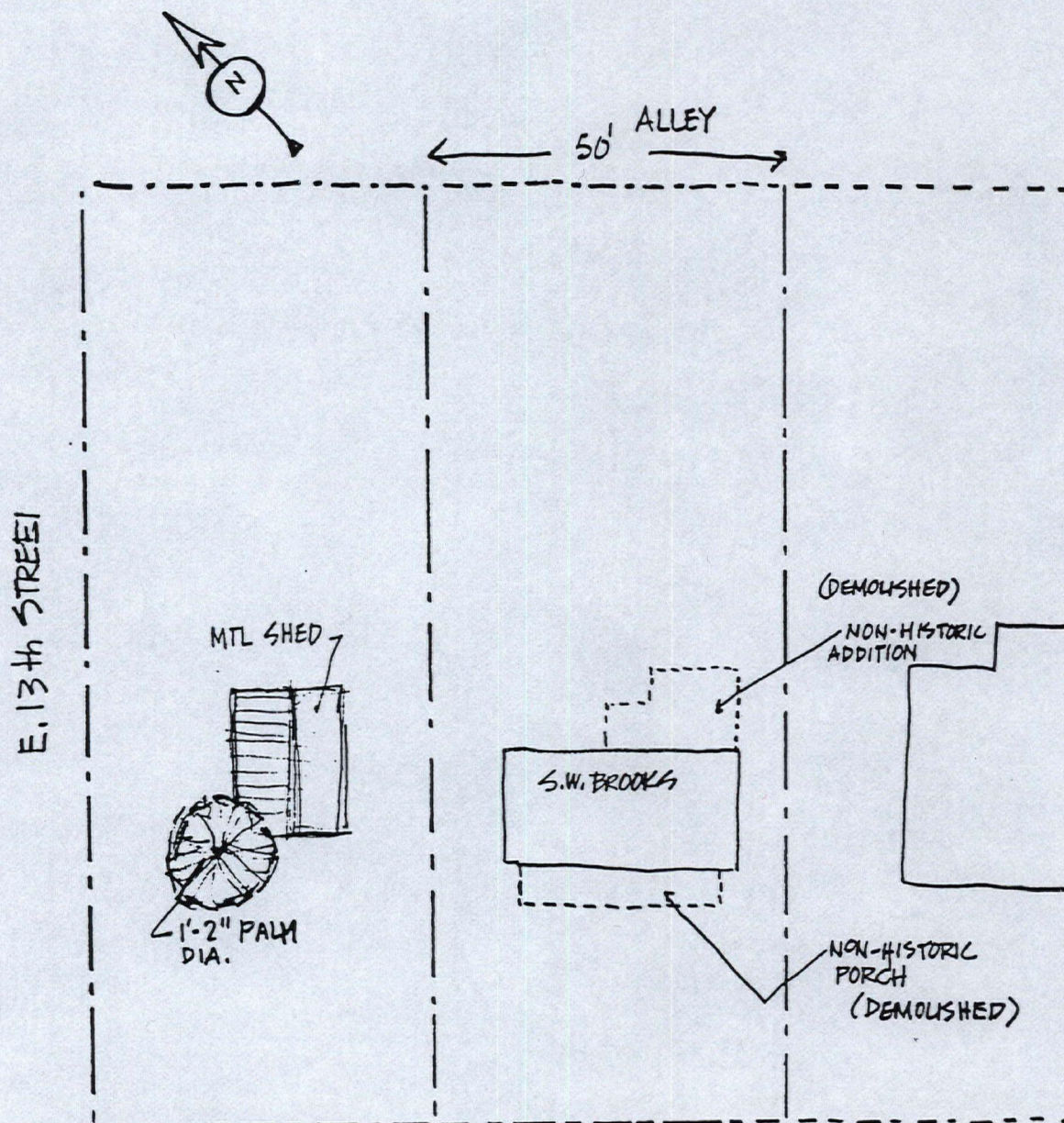
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date entered

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1303 E. JACKSON ST.

former location

circa 1951 to August '87

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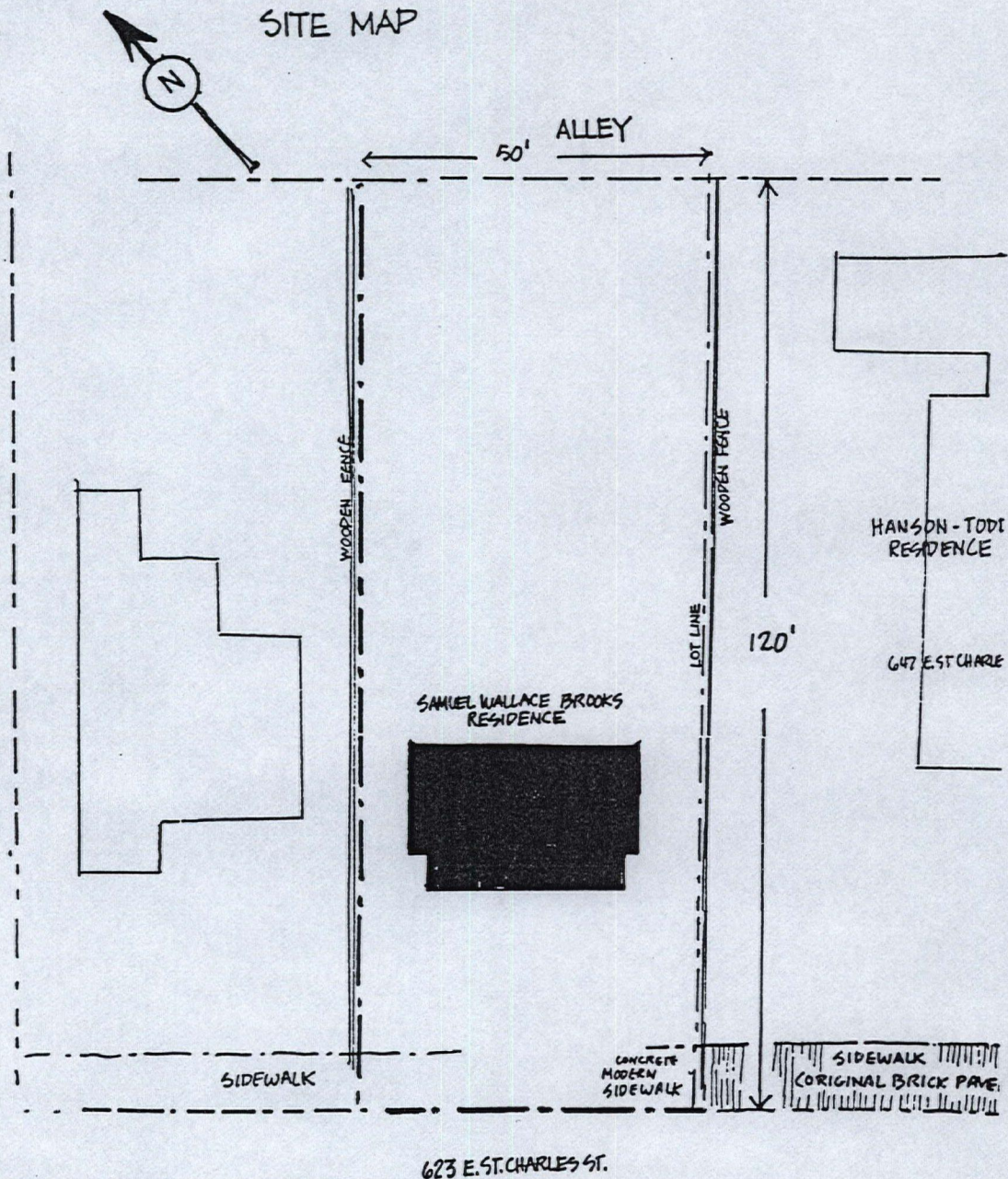
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EAST ST. CHARLES STREET

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88002530Date Listed: 11/22/88Samuel Wallace Brooks House
Property NameCameron
CountyTexas
StateMultiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Betty K. Savage
Signature of the Keeper11-22-88
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

The documentation should be amended so as not to show 1987 as part of the period of significance, but rather to indicate only 1888 (the house's construction date) as the significance period. Also, the official record should correctly indicate less than one in the property acreage category.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

SLR

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Brooks, Samuel Wallace, House

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Cameron

DATE RECEIVED: 10/11/88 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/25/88
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/10/88 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/25/88
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 88002530

NOMINATOR: STATE

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: Y SAMPLE: Y SLR DRAFT: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 11/22/88 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Although this property has been relocated twice, it is architecturally significant based upon the rarity of its I-house design within the Rio Grande Valley. The house's present location is compatible with its original siting and orientation. An SLR form was completed to clarify questions concerning the period of significance and the property's acreage.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept - C
REVIEWER Noble
DISCIPLINE Historian
DATE 11/22/88

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

CLASSIFICATION

___ count ___ resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

___ historic ___ current

DESCRIPTION

___ architectural classification
___ materials
___ descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

___ summary paragraph
___ completeness
___ clarity
___ applicable criteria
___ justification of areas checked
___ relating significance to the resource
___ context
___ relationship of integrity to significance
___ justification of exception
___ other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

___ acreage ___ verbal boundary description
___ UTMs ___ boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

___ sketch maps ___ USGS maps ___ photographs ___ presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

___ Phone ___

Signed ___ Date ___



Samuel Wallace Brooks House
623 East St. Charles Street
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Historic photo, c. 1930; photographer
unknown, negative on file with City
of Brownsville Planning Office

House on original location; southwest front.
Camera facing northeast

Photo 1 of 6



Samuel Wallace Brooks House
623 East St. Charles Street
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Historic photo, c. 1940; photographer
unknown, negative on file with City
of Brownsville Planning Office

House on original location - veranda detail

Photo 2 of 6



Samuel Wallace Brooks House
623 East St. Charles Street
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photo by Mark Lund, January, 1988;
negative on file with Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

Southwest elevation; camera facing northeast

Photo 3 of 6



Samuel Wallace Brooks House
623 East St. Charles Street
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photo by Mark Lund, January, 1988;
negative on file with Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

West oblique; camera facing east

Photo 4 of 6



Samuel Wallace Brooks House
623 East St. Charles Street
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photo by Mark Lund, January, 1988;
negative on file with Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

South oblique; camera facing North

Photo 5 of 6



Samuel Wallace Brooks House
623 East St. Charles Street
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

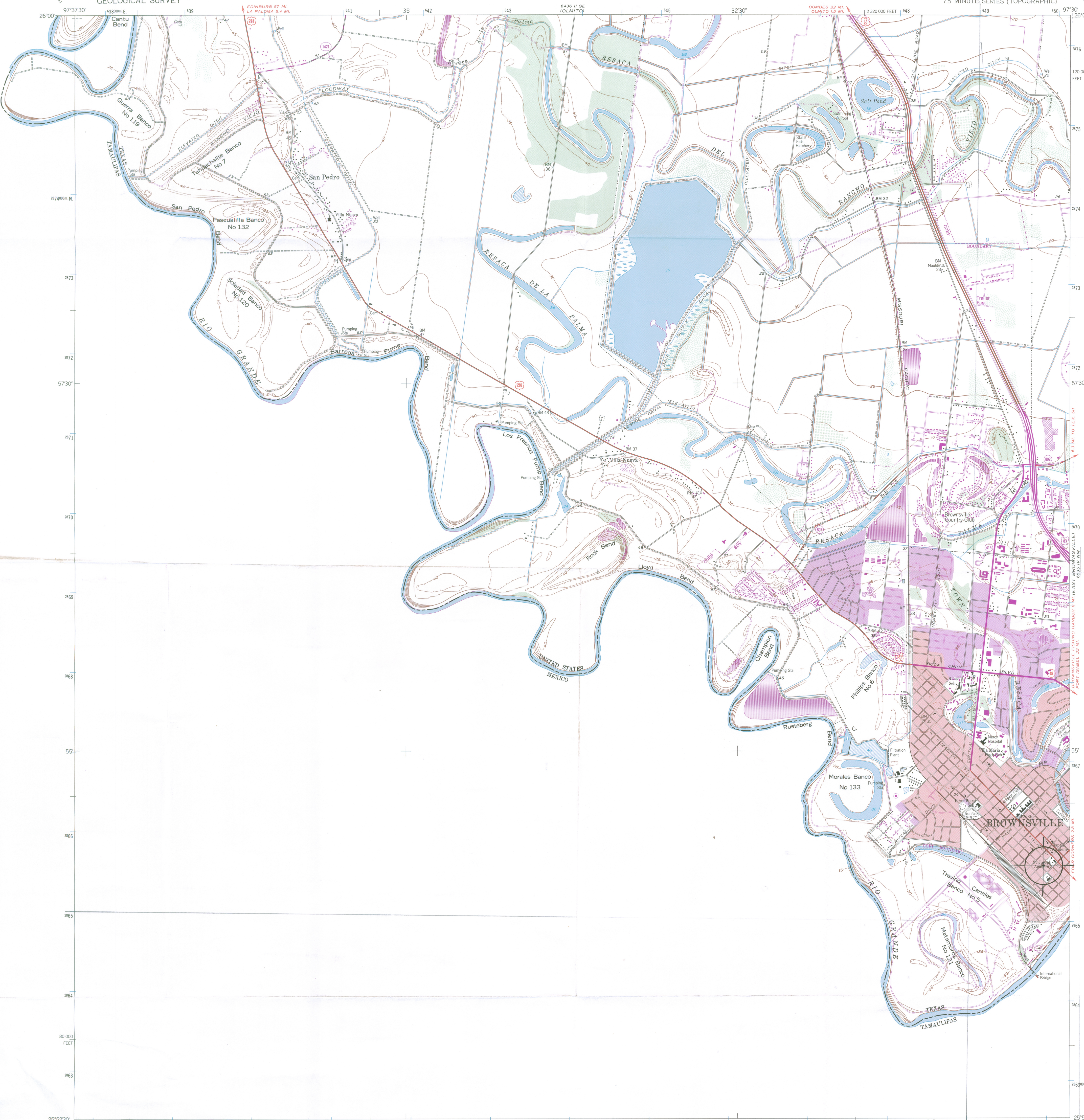
Photo by Mark Lund, January, 1988;
negative on file with Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

Northeast elevation; camera facing
southwest

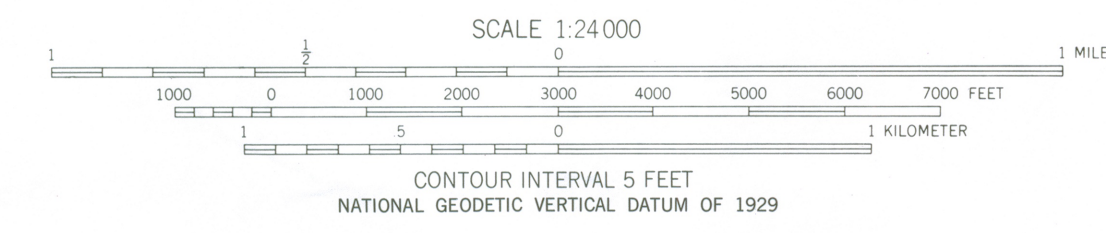
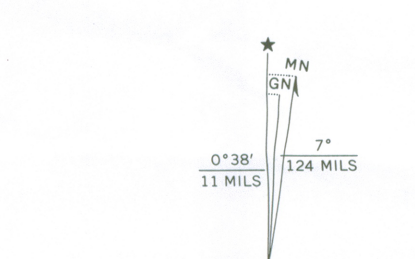
Photo 6 of 6

65° 11' 30" W
105° 05' 00" W

SAMUEL WALLACE BROOKS HOUSE
623 EAST ST. CHARLES STREET
BROWNSVILLE, CAMERON CO., TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14/649460/2865720



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1953. Topography from West Brownsville quadrangle
surveyed 1930, revised by planetable surveys 1956
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 34 meters south and
27 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



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

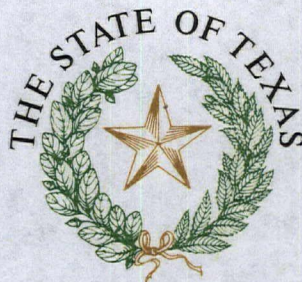
WEST BROWNSVILLE, TEX.
N2552.5-W9730/7.5

1956
PHOTOREVISED 1983
DMA 6435 I NE-SERIES V882

2597-344

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512)463-6100

3 October 1988

Mrs. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013

Dear Carol:

Enclosed is the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Samuel Wallace Brooks House in Brownsville, Camron County.

We believe that the structure retains its architectural and historic integrity in spite of being moved twice; but because of the moves are requesting intensive review of the nomination. The 1951 move changed the context of the structure, while we believe that the 1987 move was to a site which very closely approximated the historic setting of the building. Every effort was made to sympathetically rehabilitate the structure, which had been condemned and was facing certain demolition on its second site. The project attracted considerable favorable comment and publicity locally, and we hope it can be rewarded with listing on the National Register. We are opposed to the casual moving of historic structures, but had to agree that moving was the only alternative in this case.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Peter Flagg Maxson

Peter Flagg Maxson
Senior Architectural Historian

REQUEST
REVIEW

POSTMARKED
10/6/88

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

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EVANGELINE L. WHORTON,
GALVESTON ISLAND

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512)463-6100

5 October 1988

Ms. Carol Shull, Chief
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service / WASO
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Carol,

Enclosed are nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for the Historic Resources of San Angelo, Tom Green County; the Llano County Courthouse Historic District, Llano County; the Asher and Mary Isabelle Richardson House, Dimmit County and the Samuel Wallace Brooks House, Cameron County.

These documents have been completed in our office on the "old" form, and we are asking for your special consideration of these submissions past the established deadline for using this form. Many of our recent submissions in fact were initiated before the "new" form was implemented, and were part of a backlog which unfortunately resulted from a series of funding and staff reductions at the Commission over the past two years.

We have been working diligently through the past year, and particularly in the past month, to complete and submit all outstanding nominations which were begun on the old form. The large number of recent submissions is an obvious--and very pleasing to us--result of these efforts.

I assure you we are well into a program requiring the new National Register nomination form for submissions to our SHPO. As you know, we hosted a public workshop this summer on the form's use, and are making progress with integrating our State Plan and Historic Context statements.

Thank you for your generous consideration, and for the continued assistance and helpful attitude of your fine staff.

Sincerely,

Jim Steely, Director
National Register Programs, DSHPO

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