

COVER PAGE

Applicant:

Michael F. Quiroz; MA Public Anthropology '21
126 Cravens Ave, San Antonio, TX 78223
michael.f.quiroz@gmail.com
(202) 510-0831

Property Historic Name:

J.G. Garza Home/Sepulveda Gro. & Dry Goods/Lee Brothers Washateria

Current Address:

918-922 Clark Avenue (Formerly Conception Ave)
San Antonio, Texas 78210
[All structures unoccupied]

Legal Description:

Lots 13 and 14, Block 8, New City Block 1566

Current Property Owner:

Oralia Solís

Legal Guardian & Contact Information:

Sandra Solís Quiroz
126 Cravens Ave, San Antonio, TX, 78223
Email: missque57@gmail.com
Telephone: (210) 473-2225

Prepared for:

City of San Antonio, Office of Historic Preservation

Date:

August 31, 2026

I. PROPERTY HISTORY

A. Summary

The properties now addressed as **920 and 922 Clark Avenue** occupy **Lots 13 & 14 , Block 8, New City Block 1566**, within the historic Grand View Addition of San Antonio, Texas.

The property's documented history begins in **1906**, when **J. G. Garza** acquired Lot 13 of Block 8 from D. Sullivan. The property subsequently became part of a larger assemblage of property controlled by Garza when he acquired Lot 14 in 1908.

The documentary record provides particularly strong evidence for construction of the structure at 922 Clark ave in **1907**. A contemporary San Antonio newspaper reported the issuance of a building permit for the construction of a one-room stone dwelling on the east side of Concepción Avenue (currently Clark Ave) for J. G. Garza, with a reported construction value of \$500. Various building permits from 1908 and 1909 provide additional evidence of improvements to the compound including an awning, a tank support, and a shed.

An additional listing from May 16th, 1909 suggests that by then Garza had also constructed structures suitable for a “saloon, grocery store, and meat market”, which may be the structures currently standing at 918 and 920 Clark Ave. A wood-frame structure in this location is depicted on the 1930 Sanborn map and documentation supports their use as a drugstore and grocery as far back as the 1950s.

The properties subsequently underwent changes in ownership, improvements, and use. Garza continued to own and manage the property through the 1910s, eventually selling Lots 13 and 14 together in 1915. The later history documented through my own archival and oral-history research indicates continued use of the property for neighborhood commercial and family enterprises during the twentieth century.

Although 922 Clark Avenue is the principal historic resource, the application encompasses Lots 13 and 14 and the associated structures addressed 918–922 Clark Avenue, which together document the property's evolution as a mixed residential and neighborhood-commercial compound.

B. Local Landmark Designation Criteria

The property at 918–922 Clark Avenue, encompassing Lots 13 and 14, Block 8, NCB 1566, meets multiple criteria for local historic landmark designation under City of San Antonio UDC §35-607(b). Although the 1907 stone building at 922 Clark Avenue is the principal historic resource, the associated structures and lots together illustrate the property's development as a mixed residential and neighborhood-commercial compound.

Criterion 1 — Cultural Heritage.

The property is a surviving physical record of the cultural history of San Antonio's East Side. Its documented development and use connect it to successive generations of Mexican American and Chinese American residents, property owners, and entrepreneurs. From Juan and Josefa Garza's early twentieth-century ownership and development of the site, through the Lee family's grocery and washateria, and later the Solís family's food-production and neighborhood commercial enterprises, the property preserves tangible evidence of communities whose histories are central to the development of the surrounding neighborhood.

Criterion 3 — Association with a Significant Person.

The property is directly associated with Juan G. Garza, an early twentieth-century property owner, developer, and civic leader on San Antonio's East Side. Garza acquired Lot 13 in 1906, commissioned the documented one-room stone dwelling at 922 Clark Avenue in 1907, acquired adjoining Lot 14 in 1908, and continued improving and managing the property during the following years. His documented civic activities included service as marshal of the Comité Patriótico de las Sociedades Unidas in 1908 and election as president of the East End Club in 1911. The surviving stone building therefore provides a direct physical connection to Garza's economic and civic activity during the formative development of the Grand View Addition.

Criterion 5 — Distinctive Construction and Materials.

The 1907 building at 922 Clark Avenue embodies a distinctive local building tradition through its caliche-limestone masonry construction. An 1891 German-language advertisement promoting the Grand View Addition specifically emphasized the availability of local building stone, describing it as an economical and desirable construction material. The surviving masonry walls at 922 Clark Avenue therefore preserve physical evidence of a locally specific construction practice associated with the early development of the subdivision.

Criterion 11 — Cultural, Economic, Social, and Ethnic Heritage.

The property strongly exemplifies the cultural and economic history of San Antonio's East Side through its long association with neighborhood-scale family enterprise. Over the course of the twentieth century, the site evolved from the Garza family's residential and property-development activities into a mixed commercial compound that included a drug store, grocery, washateria, food-production businesses, and other neighborhood-serving enterprises. Its successive associations with the Garza, Lee, and Solís families illustrate how immigrant and Mexican American families used modest residential and commercial properties to establish businesses, build economic stability, and serve surrounding communities. The surviving compound therefore represents a significant physical record of the ethnic, commercial, and social development of the neighborhood.

II. HISTORIC CONTEXT

A. Grand View Addition

The property lies within the historic Grand View Addition, which was platted in 1891. The property's development therefore occurred during the subsequent transformation of the subdivision from a newly platted area into an established residential and commercial neighborhood.

The Clark Ave corridor on San Antonio's East Side represents the unique history of marginalized peoples who settled into and built a thriving economy of shops and businesses that contributed to San Antonio's identity. After nearly a century of revolution, civil war, and horrific flooding, the near east side of San Antonio experienced an explosive population growth from the 1890s onward fueled by new railway lines and the establishment of the Alamo Iron Works company. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, individuals and families who were excluded from Anglo-American areas transformed what was once the very limits of the city from a scattering of garden plots and hunting grounds into a thriving community. At its height in the 1960s and 70s, the corridor along Clark Ave from current day Martin Luther King Dr to Westfall Ave included bakeries, cantinas, churches, dress shops, drug stores, grocery stores, lumber yards, meat markets, molinos, and gas stations. Though heavily advertised to the German population after its original platting, the Grand View Addition increasingly attracted ethnic diversity around the turn of the 20th century, reflecting the linked histories of colonial settlers, native peoples, slave labor, and Chinese immigrant labor in the Americas that come to a point of inflection in San Antonio.

The stone dwelling and associated compound of shops, as well as the families who came to possess it, in particular illustrate this history. Their seemingly unconnected histories have deep roots in the colonial process of dispossession, displacement and erasure that pushed people into South Texas. It begins with the intersection of Asian, Black, and Chicano history in the early 20th century, in which these groups were subject to exclusionary race based laws, and brings us to the present day residents of this area of Denver Heights.

We begin by following two families in their journey to San Antonio; my grandparents, Jose Ligardo and Oralia Solis, and the family that sold their businesses to them, Boi Yee and Yep Shui Chun Lee. The Lees married in China before immigrating to the US. Mrs. Lee was born in 1929 in Toi Shan, Kwangtung (Guangdong), China. During her lifetime she would have witnessed much instability in the Guangdong province including brutal Japanese military incursions that resulted in localized violence, displacement, food shortages as well as the ongoing Chinese Civil War which led to violent land reform and economic ruin in the 1950s. Yep Shui-Chun Lee was born in 1929 in Toi Shan, Guangdong Province, China, where she married Boi Yee Lee in 1948. The couple immigrated to the United States and settled in San Antonio in 1955. Boi Yee Lee's mother, Shui Har Ng, subsequently entered the United States through Seattle on December 22, 1958 and also settled in San Antonio; later records list her residence as 920 Clark Avenue. Although the reasons for their departure are yet unknown, their migration occurred amid broader conditions that prompted many Chinese to leave the country, including fears of political persecution, the violent disruptions of Communist land reform, and severe economic isolation.

At the time they arrived in San Antonio they represented a small but close-knit community of between 650 and 1000 Chinese Americans living in Bexar County. A sizable Chinese community, itself made up of a majority of Cantonese from Toi Shan, preceded the arrival of the Lees with strong footholds in El Paso and Northern Mexico. In Houston, where communities of color overlapped in the intersections of a segregated society, the Chinese had carved out a place for themselves as grocers serving the Black populace. The Lee family followed this trend, opening their grocery store and washateria in 1962. Indeed industries such as laundry and restaurants had been the key to the early success and survival of earlier Chinese communities and in postwar San Antonio when the Lees would find an opportunity to thrive after leaving behind the turmoil they had lived through.

Similarly, the Solis family would be traveling to San Antonio in search of the same opportunities, arriving around the same time as the Lees, in 1959. In these post war years, when the Texas economy shifted from an agricultural economy to a more competitive urban market economy, Mexicans would experience rapid growth in population and occupational attainment in San Antonio. For my grandparents, settling in San Antonio meant settling into relative stability. For the past three generations (1845-1929) their families had migrated across the South Texas and Northern Mexico region, crossing the border several times while enduring intense social change and learning to survive in two different worlds.

My grandmother, Oralia Reyes, was born in 1930 in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas and it was there that she met my grandfather, José Ligardo Solís. José Ligardo was born in Mexico but derived U.S. citizenship through his Texas-born father. After their marriage, José Ligardo and Oralia migrated to San Antonio, joining members of Oralia's family who had already established themselves there. Oralia's sister moved from Nuevo Laredo in 1937 at the age of 13 to become a field laborer and her brother joined the armed services in 1946. Both settled on the outskirts of the Denver Heights neighborhoods where various investment companies sold empty lots on which owners could construct their own homes. Following the migration of her brother and sister, José Ligardo and Oralia purchased a lot in Denver Heights in 1959 across the street from her sister and just one block away from her brother where they built the house currently at 146 F st.

From about 1963 to about 1990, my grandparents operated their own food supply company -D'Joy's Food Co. – producing handmade snacks such as fried peanuts, corn chips, and beef jerky and packaging popular snacks directly from China whose flavors were widely enjoyed in San Antonio – salted plums, dried shrimp, shrimp flavored chips, and chamoy. Moving from a home-based operation to the small storefront at 910 Clark Ave, they ventured into other foods and in 1974 they pivoted from supplying snacks to operating a molino that sold handmade barbacoa, tortillas, salsas, menudo, chorizo, chicharrones and other foods. By 1978, they were able to purchase the washateria and grocery store from their neighbors, the Lees, and continued those businesses in various forms until about 1992 when they were no longer able to keep up with the physical demands of running such a large operation.

Urban barbacoa vendors in San Antonio during the 60s and 70s represented a large industry worth millions of dollars. In one news article dated 1977, the author noted that city health inspectors watched over 1.3 million pounds of barbacoa each year. D'Joy's was able to carve out its niche in the barbacoa market by catering to Black populace, and indeed all ethnicities, as well as the Mexican clientele. Even decades before, the voice of Black San Antonians, the *San Antonio Register*, had embraced Mexican

culture, making space in its 4th semi-annual Cooking School and Witness Style Show (1934) for a “unique Mexican dish contest”. The article lauds “two charming Mexican señoritas who sang in their native tongue just prior to the contest judging”.

In 2019 the US Census Bureau released a report on poverty in American communities that placed San Antonio as the city with the largest percentage of people in poverty in the 25 most populous metropolitan areas and it continues to be one of the nation’s most economically segregated cities. The survival of the Clark Avenue compound preserves a physical record of the neighborhood’s evolution across generations of Mexican American, Chinese American, and other working-class residents and entrepreneurs. Its history demonstrates how modest residential and commercial properties became sites of family enterprise, neighborhood commerce, and community formation on San Antonio’s East Side. The continued presence of these buildings makes visible a commercial and social landscape that has otherwise been substantially altered or lost.

III. CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CHRONOLOGY

1891

Grand View Addition platted. This land was granted in 1845 by the State of Texas to Rev. W. Paschal, in 1847 he sold it to Gideon Lee, who in turn sold it in 1890 to J.V. Dignowity, General Manager of the real estate venture. The aforementioned lots were acquired by D. Sullivan and Co.; year unknown

1906

J. G. Garza and wife Josefa Garza acquire Lots 1 and 13, Block 8, NCB 1566, from D. Sullivan.

The 1906 transaction establishes Garza's ownership of the property that subsequently became the subject of the 1907 construction documentation.

1907

February

Stone dwelling (922 Clark Ave) constructed for J. G. Garza.

A contemporary newspaper building permit notice states: “*J. G. Garza, one-room stone dwelling, east side Concepcion Avenue; \$500.*”

This is presently the earliest documented construction date for the building.

July

Request for permit to sell liquor listed in The Daily Express for “J.G. Garza, Concepcion Avenue, East End” indicating possible other business interests in the area or on the same lot.

1908

Garza acquires Lot 14, adjoining the property. Garza therefore controlled Lots 13 and 14 during the period immediately following construction of the stone dwelling.

A separate 1908 transaction also documents the transfer of an interest in Lot 13 among members of the Garza family.

1909

May and September 1909 newspaper notices provide additional documentation of building permits for “J.G. Garza, awning on east side of Concepcion avenue; \$50.” and “J.G. Garza, tank support on the east side of Concepcion avenue; \$20.” respectively. This provides evidence that the property continued to be actively improved after its original construction.

1910

Juan G. Garza is listed in the 1910 Census as head of household residing at X Concepcion Ave with wife Josefa and their 12 children born between 1892 and 1909.

1914

Interests in Lot 13 were transferred back to J. G. Garza by members of the Garza family. This demonstrates continued Garza-family involvement in the property.

1915

J. G. Garza and Josefa V. Garza “Bargain, Sell and Convey” Lots 13 and 14 to Aristeo Gonzales and Antonia T. de Gonzales for \$1,000. From this point on Lots 13 and 14 are considered and sold as a single property.

1917

Aristeo and Antonia Gonzales conveyed Lots 13 and 14 to Ed. C. Biesenbach for \$700. From 1917 onward the use of this lot continually changes and is sold many times over until 1962 when it is acquired by Boi Yee Lee and wife Yep Shui Chun Lee.

1930

Sanborn map indicates a stone structure at the corner of Clark Ave and J st. along with two adjacent wood frame structures.

A structure is also depicted on the South 50 feet of Lot 1.

1948

922 Clark Ave is listed for rent as a well established drug store for \$40 per month.

1959

A Christmas ad lists 920 Clark Ave as Sepulveda Gro. & Dry Goods.

1962

Boi Yee Lee and wife Yep Shui Chun Lee acquire Lots 13 and 14.

1964

Jose L. Solis and wife Oralia Solis acquire the South 50 feet of Lot 1, which is now sold separately from the rest of the lot.

1978

Jose L. Solis and wife Oralia Solis acquire Lots 13 and 14. Historic photographs document the property during sale from Lee to Solis.

2012

Jose L. Solis passes away. All properties fall into disrepair.

2022

Received a \$25,000 grant from the San Antonio Conservation Society to stabilize the caliche limestone.

2023

Curtis Hunt Restorations, Inc. performs stone stabilization.

IV. SIGNIFICANT PERSON: J. G. GARZA and Josefa V. Garza



Preliminary biography

Juan G. Garza; principal historically significant individual currently associated with the property's early development.

Summary Biography

Juan Gutierrez Garza (b. 1862–1865, possibly as late as 1871–d. 1944) was an early twentieth-century San Antonio property owner whose documented real-estate activities included the acquisition, improvement, consolidation, and disposition of multiple properties in and around the Grand View Addition. Additionally, he was a community leader active during the first decades of the twentieth century. His documented property activities extend from at least 1892 through 1927 and encompass multiple properties in San Antonio and Wilson County.

Garza and his wife, Josefa Garza (b. 1876/79–d. 1927), owned several properties in Wilson County, including Lots 5, 6, and 7 of the Quintanilla Addition, which they sold to J. G. Youngblood on September 6, 1909. In San Antonio, Garza acquired multiple properties in the

Grand View Addition, including Lots 1 and 13 of Block 8, NCB 1566, in 1906 and Lot 14 in 1908. In 1907, he developed a one-room stone dwelling on Concepción Avenue, the building now identified with 922 Clark Avenue. He subsequently continued to improve and manage the property before selling Lots 13 and 14 in 1915.

Garza's property interests extended well beyond 922 Clark. Public records document his involvement with properties in NCB 2937 and other San Antonio locations, while additional records identify possible property development on Vargas (Bargas) Street and ownership of a 34-acre farm in the Floresville area. His real-estate transactions continued through at least 1927, demonstrating a sustained pattern of property acquisition, development, improvement, and disposition over more than three decades.

Garza was also an active civic and political leader on San Antonio's East Side. In 1908, he served as marshal of the *Comité Patriótico de las Sociedades Unidas*, according to a September 1908 report in *The San Antonio Light*. In April 1911, the newspaper reported that the East End Club had been organized at the Amigos de Pueblo hall on Vargas Street to support the Citizen's Ticket, a reform-oriented municipal political movement. Garza was elected president of the East End Club and was one of the principal speakers at its organizational meeting.

The surviving record therefore establishes Juan G. Garza as a property developer and investor with a substantial and geographically diverse portfolio, as well as an organized civic and political leader within San Antonio's East Side community. His development of the stone building at 922 Clark Avenue formed part of this broader pattern of economic and civic activity during the formative years of the neighborhood.

Garza's documented civic leadership and development of the property support eligibility under City of San Antonio UDC §35-607(b)(3), which recognizes properties identified with persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community.

V. ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In addition to being historically significant, the structure at 922 Clark Ave is considered to be architecturally significant, being one of the few remaining buildings in the area constructed from locally quarried Caliche Limestone. A March 16, 1891 advertisement in the German language *Freie Presse Für Texas*, entices potential buyers for lots in the Grand View Addition by stating:

Borthteile: Aus vielen Hügel tritt Baustein hervor (derselbe der zu den Mauern der Missionen und der Alamo gebraucht wurde), der mit Bicken in beliebiger Größe zum Bau losgelöst werden kann. Dieser Stein wird hart, sobald er der Atmosphäre ausgesetzt wird und kann in die Mauern der Häuser gelegt werden für weniger als einen Zehntel der Rosten von Ziegelsteinen und ist nebenbei ein viel besseres Baumaterial. Die Steinbrüche besinden sich nur auf gewissen hülgen, das Erdreich auf den anderen kann nirgendwo im County übertroffen werden, es ist ein chokoladenfabiger sandiger humus, der während des

Regenwetters niemals schmutzig wird; desßhalb haben wir auch während des anhaltendsten schlechten Wetters in der Grand View Addition feinen harten Grund.

[TRANSLATION] *Advantages: From many hills, building stone emerges (the same that was used for the walls of the missions and the Alamo), which can be detached with picks in any desired size for construction. This stone becomes hard as soon as it is exposed to the atmosphere and can be laid into the walls of houses for less than one-tenth of the cost of bricks, and is besides a much better building material. The quarries are located only on certain hills; the soil on the others cannot be surpassed anywhere in the county, it is a chocolate-colored sandy humus that never becomes muddy during rainy weather; therefore, even during the most persistent bad weather, we have a fine, hard ground in the Grand View Addition.*

VI. HISTORIC PHOTOS



View of 922 Clark Ave from the South. Photo taken from the corner of Clark Ave and J St. September 10, 1978. Source: Michael Quiroz, family/research archive.



View of 920 and 922 Clark Ave from the Northwest. Photo taken from Clark Ave. August 10, 1978. Source: Michael Quiroz family/research archive.



The Gand View Addition, 1891. Source: Bexar County Public Records

VII. Sources

Bibliography

The Daily Express (San Antonio, Tex.). "Building Permits." Vol. 42, no. 124, ed. 1, May 4, 1907, 12.

Arreola, Daniel D. "The Mexican American Cultural Capital." *Geographical Review* 77, no. 1 (1987): 17-34. Accessed April 1, 2021. doi:10.2307/214674.

Bryan, Samuel. "Mexican Immigrants in the United States," *The Survey*, 1912.

Biediger, Shari. "Poverty Is a Storyline Binding Generations and Dividing a City." *San Antonio Report*, February 3, 2020.

Boswell, Harry J. *Representative San Antonians: City Builders*. 1913.

City of San Antonio, Texas. *Status of Poverty in San Antonio*. 2019

Dickens, E. Larry. 1969. *The political role of Mexican-Americans in San Antonio, Texas*.

Fechter, Joshua. "Report: Poverty in San Antonio Disproportionately Hits Hispanic, Black Residents." *San Antonio Express*, July 30, 2019.

Find a Grave. "Yep Shui Chun Lee (1929–2013)." Memorial ID 109946286. Accessed August 31, 2026.

Fox, Anne A.; Renner, Marcie; and Hard, Robert J. (1997) "Archaeology at the Alamodome: Investigations of a San Antonio Neighborhood in Transition, Volume I: Historical, Architectural, and Oral History Research," *Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State*: Vol. 1997, Article 14.

Freie Presse für Texas. (San Antonio, Tex.), Vol. 26, No. 2705, Ed. 1 Monday, March 16, 1891

Martinez, Manuel Luiz. "The Eyes have it: There are Lots of Ways to Become a Man. Mine Involved Working at a Barbacoa Joint in San Antonio." *Texas Monthly*, 01, 2016, <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxyau.wrlc.org/magazines/eyes-have/docview/1753283166/se-2?accountid=8285>.

McLemore, David. "Barbacoa Lovers in Regulatory Gap: Double Standards, Grisly Surprises." *San Antonio Express*, June 26, 1977.

Mora, Marie T. "Changes in Occupational Earnings along the U.S.-Mexico Border between 1900 and 1920." *Journal of Economic Issues* 39, no. 4 (December 2005): 1043–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2005.11506866>.

Quiroz, Michael. Interview with Sylvia Solis. Personal, March 6, 2021.

Quiroz, Michael. Interview with Sandra Solis. Personal, April 17, 2021.

Rhoads, Edward J. M. "The Chinese in Texas." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (1977): 1-36.

Rosales, Rodolfo. *The Illusion of Inclusion: the Untold Political Story of San Antonio*. Austin, TX: Univ. of Texas Press, 2000.

San Antonio Express, August 10, 1948 Pg. 18, San Antonio, Texas, US
<https://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-express-aug-10-1948-p-18/>

San Antonio Light, December 24, 1959 Pg. 32, San Antonio, Texas, US
<https://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-light-dec-24-1959-p-32/>

Sanborn Map Company. *San Antonio, Texas*, March 1930, sheet 636.

Archival

The National Archives and Records Administration; Washington D.C.; Manifests of Statistical and Some Nonstatistical Alien Arrivals at Laredo, Texas, May 1903 - April 1955; NAI: 2843448; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004.; Record Group Number: 85; Microfilm Roll Number: 046

U.S. Census Bureau, "1880 United States Federal Census – San Diego, Duval, TX," *Year: 1880; Census Place: San Diego, Duval, Texas; Roll: 1300; Page: 235C; Enumeration District: 050.* Ancestry.com, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/imageviewer/collections/6742/images/4244720-00622>

Archivo General del Registro del Estado (Civil Registry State Archives), Tamaulipas; Tamaulipas, México. 1918-1920

The National Archives at Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas.

Petitions for Naturalization, 1907–1987. NAI Number 585145. Record Group 21, *Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009.*

The National Archives in Washington, DC; Washington, DC, USA; *Passenger and Crew Manifests of Airplanes Arriving At Seattle, Washington*; NAI Number: 2953588; *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004*; Record Group 85.

Bexar County Clerk. Bexar County Public Records. Deed, plat, and property records, Bexar County, Texas.