



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Statement of Significance

Property Address: 3403 South Flores Street

1. Application Details

Applicant: Adrián Nájera
Type: Landmark Designation Request
Date Received: 12 April 2023

2. Findings

The structure at 3403 South Flores Street is a two-story Art Deco style two-part commercial building built c. 1941 and operated as the Liberty Food Store by Pon T. Wong beginning in 1942. Adrián Nájera currently owns the property. It is located in the Lone Star neighborhood of City Council District 5. The property first appears in the 1942-43 city directory as both the Liberty Food Store and residence of Pon Tong Wong (1896-1967) and his wife Lee Shee Wong.

The Office of Historic Preservation has undertaken a survey of Chinese Grocery Stores in San Antonio. San Antonio's older neighborhoods are littered with small corner stores. The early twentieth century was a period of intense growth in the city, and open air markets were still in use. With the introduction of streetcar lines, groceries moved into the early suburbs. These new residential areas began to sprout all around downtown with small grocery stores, first as additions to homes and later in more permanent structures. The neighborhood corner grocery store played a significant role in early suburban development and remained an integral part of the neighborhood fabric through the 1950s.

Between 1907 and 1949 there were a total of 120 Chinese groceries listed in the City directories. The number of abandoned corner stores is unknown, however, this survey identified 42 corner stores that were once owned and operated by a Chinese American. Due to the previously mentioned facts about the grocery store the Period of Significance for Chinese Grocery Stores in San Antonio's original city limits is 1900 to 1950. The property at 3403 South Flores was not included in the survey.

Born in California, Pon T. Wong was the cousin of another prominent Chinese grocer in San Antonio, Don Wong (1502 South Flores). Pon, who also went by Paul, was one of the first Chinese Americans to be inducted into the American military. After training at Kelly in 1918, he served with the 51st Balloon Company. Pon T. Wong died in San Antonio in 1967, and his residence at the time of his death was listed as 1840 West Laurel. Lee Shee Wong died in 1995, and their son Franklin Wong inherited the property in 1998.

The subject property is located in the Lone Star neighborhood just west of Mission Concepcion, the Mission Historic District, and the World Heritage Buffer Zone. Situated at the intersection with Glenn Street, the property is part of the South Flores commercial corridor near the confluence of San Pedro Creek and the San Antonio River. The 3400 block of South Flores is a mixture of residential and commercial uses, with businesses located on street corners and homes tucked in between. Most structures are single story, built between 1900 and 1940. Architectural styles of the homes include

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vernacular, Folk Victorian, and Craftsman. Styles of the commercial structures show influences including Spanish Eclectic and Art Deco.

3. Architectural Description

The structure is an Art Deco concrete block building with a distinctive smooth-faced stone finish and mosaic tile patterns. As a movement, Art Deco symbolized modernism, new wealth, and sophistication, and the style gained traction from the early 1920s and remained popular until the beginning of the Second World War.

The primary façade features low-relief decorative panels that can be found at entrances, around windows, along roof edges or as string courses. The front entrance doorway is surrounded by two rectangular apron panels with a concave quarter-circle bevel on the top corners and an aquamarine glaze. The same bright color is applied to the decorative terracotta frieze moldings below the roof edge and the second story windows.

The most distinguishing features of the building include tile work in a high-contrast checkered motif of bold black and vibrant aquamarine pieces. This pattern appears on the base of the front façade below the windows, and wraps around to the first quarter of the right façade. A cantilevered corrugated metal canopy covers the front entrance and walkway, projecting out from the building above the large display windows on the lower floor, and extends around the right façade to cover the lower windows and tile work.

The shopfront windows appear as punctured openings, with recessed casements. To maintain a streamlined appearance for the building, the clerestory windows above the canopy are glass blocks arranged in groups of horizontal bands aligned with the doors and windows below. The second floor features three picture windows on the front façade and one above the canopy on the right façade. Between the lower clerestory windows and upper picture windows are string courses of the checkered tiles; the tile pattern above the entrance is a rectangular frame. One over one wood windows in singles and pairs are located on the second floor on both side elevations.

Character-defining features of 3403 South Flores Street include:

- Mosaic tile work and decorative panels
- Frieze moldings below the roof edge and upper windows
- Large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows
- Sidewalk canopy

4. Landmark Criteria

The property meets six criteria under UDC 35-607(b):

- **5: Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;** as an Art Deco style two-part block commercial building with character-defining features including the mosaic tile work and decorative panels, frieze moldings, large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows, and a sidewalk canopy;

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- **11: It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States;** as an Art Deco style two-part block commercial building with character-defining features including the mosaic tile work and decorative panels, frieze moldings, large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows, and a sidewalk canopy;
- **13: It bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites, or areas, either as an important collection of properties or architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to the plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif;** as one of a collection of neighborhood Chinese Grocery stores that operated in the early twentieth century in San Antonio.

5. Staff Recommendation

A property must meet at least three of the 16 criteria used to evaluate eligibility for landmark designation, and this assessment determines that 3403 South Flores Street meets this threshold. Further research may reveal additional significance associated with this property.



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Texas U. Leads Schools in War Work

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A SALUTE TO CHINA AND THREE GREAT LEADERS

A Country That Believes In Democracy!

WE URGE MORE HELP TO CHINA IN THE FIGHT FOR THEM TO LIVE AS A FREE PEOPLE

... (text) ...

S. A. Hub of Air Activities For Years

... (text) ...

Royce Well Known Here

... (text) ...

Sunnyside Food Stores 285 Van Ness St. P-1141	Quong Tong Co. 124 S. Santa Rosa G-2812	King Fong Co. 732 Nagle G-2812	Hong Kong Grocery 1281 South Press L-2141	Lee On Food Store 442 North Flores G-2712	Liberty Food Store 2403 South Flores G-2712	Hoy Sun Co. 1838 West Pagar P-2141	Quong Fung Co. 514 South Lamar P-2141
Alamo Grocery & Market 217 South Flores G-2712	Wing Sam Co. 124 South Santa Rosa G-2812	Wo Sam Cafe 821 East Commerce G-1712	Great China Food Store 2422 Nagle L-2141	Song Toy Food Store 3971 South Flores G-2712	Nanking Grocery Co. 1124 North Lamar G-2712	Wong Grocery Co. 1822 South Flores G-2712	New China Food Market 216 Broadway G-2712
Yee On Food Store 5207 S. Flores G-1443	Hop Lee Co. 3822 West Marilla P-2712	N. G. Toy Laundry 228 East Flores G-2612	Man Lee Food Store 2008 Broadway L-2141	Wah Young Groc. Co. 2841 South Flores G-2712	Suey Sang Co. 189 South Flores P-2141	Good Home Food Store 2825 North Flores P-2141	Wah Sing Grocery & Market 922 McCullough P-2141
Wah Lim Co. 1217 Goodridge G-2812	Sam & Lung Co. 238 South Castro G-2812	Hong Kee Laundry 821 South Flores L-2141	Quong Sun Co. 821 South Flores L-2141	Soon Lee Grocery & Mkt 2123 South Flores G-2712	Monticello Market 1922 Fredericksburg Road P-2141	Sun Shing Groc. & Mkt. 821 East Commerce P-2141	Mon Fung Co. 485 East Commerce G-2712
Hong Fat Co. 587 Fredericksburg Road P-2141	Yick Lee Co. 1127 West Commerce G-2812	Sam On Grocery 1412 West Commerce P-2812	Lai Hing Food Store 2119 Nagle L-2141	Gin Lee Grocery 393 South Santa Rosa G-2712	Pekin Food Store 812 East Commerce G-2712	Quong Chew Grocery & Market 588 North Zimmerman G-2812	On Young Co. 512 West 141 G-2712
Bow Lim Co. 723 S. Lamar G-1923	Quong Sam Co. 126 Prudon Road G-2712	Yee Lee Food Store 1232 Nagle G-2712	Hoy Hing Grocery 427 Pine City Road G-2712	Sing Lee Co. 812 Austin G-2712	Wah Hing Food Mkt. 226 Aransas G-2712	Wing Lung Food Shop 730 Goodridge G-2812	Eastern Food Store 137 Montecito G-2712
Wing On Grocery Store 1232 S. Lamar G-2712	Quong Chew Co. 115 South Santa Rosa G-2812	Sun Food Store 4301 South Press G-2812	Yick Sam Co. 1131 West Commerce G-2712	On Leong Merchants Assn. 130 Goodridge G-2712	Wah Hing Food Mkt. 226 Aransas G-2712	Mong Chong Food Store 1101 South Mackayberry G-2812	Sunlight Grocery 1802 N. New Braunfels G-2712

A. P. Hernandez Reported Killed

... (text) ...

Lieut. Negley Dies in Action

... (text) ...

1. San Antonio Light (July 26, 1942), pp. 73-74



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2. *San Antonio Express (January 01, 1952), p. 12*

Miss Mildred Fong Becomes Bride Of Franklin J. Wong in Rites Here

Laurel Heights Methodist Church was the scene Sunday afternoon for the marriage of Miss Mildred Fong, daughter of Mrs. Way Thyn Fong of Shreveport, La., and Franklin J. Wong, son of Mr. and Mrs. Pon T. Wong of this city.

The bridal gown was of satin and lace and with it she wore a lace cap attached to a fingertip veil of French silk illusion. She carried two white orchids with

stephanotis sprigs. Joseph Eng gave the bride in marriage.

Miss Mable Wong served as maid of honor, and bridesmaids were Misses Mildred Wu, Lai Beet Woo and Marie Fong. Flower girl was Miss Evelyn Ng, and Joseph Edwin Eng was ringbearer.

Howard Wong attended the bridegroom as best man, and groomsmen were Texas Wong, Nann Lew and Albert Lew. Serving as ushers were Bill Ng and Howle Wong.

Following the reception in the church parlor, the couple left for a wedding trip to the Northwest Pacific. The bride is a graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School and the bridegroom was graduated from San Antonio Tech High School.

Teen-Agers Make Plans For Tea

3. *San Antonio Express (August 22, 1950), p. 9.*

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Mable Wong Becomes Bride of Nann W. Lew

Miss Mable Wong, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pon T. Wong, was married to Nann Wing Lew, son of Mr. and Mrs. T. Dack Lew, Sunday afternoon in the First Baptist Church.

Nuptial music for the double-ring ceremony was presented by Robert Caruer, soloist.

The bride wore a white satin gown and a fingertip veil was of illusion.

Miss Mildred Wu was maid of honor and bridesmaids were Misses Landon Wong, Frances Gee and Lily Lee. Flower girls were the bride's nieces, Cheryl Christene Leung, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Leung, and Evelyn Valerie Ng, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sing Ng.

Long Ng was best man and groomsmen were Steven Lew, Albert Lew and Howard M. Wong. Bingo Ng and Howard Wong ushered.

The reception after the wedding was in the Manor Tea Room. Assisting in serving were Mesdames Sam Ng and Sing Ng, sister of the bride, and Miss Mary Jo Eng. Mrs. John Leung, sister of the bride, presided at the bride's book.

After a trip to Oregon and California, the newlyweds will be at home at 323 Aransas St.

Murray's English Toffee Ice Cream—a true Candy flavor. Murray's, 1812 Fred. Rd.—(Adv.)

4. *San Antonio Express* (September 04, 1950), p. 10

Pon T. Wong

Pon T. Wong, 70, of 3403 S. Flores, died in a local hospital Monday. A native of Fort Jones, Calif., he was a member of the Chinese Free Masons and the American Legion Post No. 420.

Services will be at 2:30 p.m. Thursday in Porter Loring Chapel with burial in Mission Burial Park.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Lee Shee Wong; son, Franklin James; daughters, Mrs. John Leung, Mrs. Sing Gum Ng, Mrs. Nann W. Lew, all of San Antonio; brothers, James T., Jack T., both of Vallejo, Calif.; sister, Mrs. Wing Tom, Sacramento, Calif.; 13 grandchildren.

5. *San Antonio Express* (February 15, 1967), p. 36

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