



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

...the state of Texas has been fighting virtually alone against the odds for five long years. Thousands of square miles of their territory have been occupied. Hundreds of thousands of their people have been killed. Millions of dollars of their property have been destroyed or confiscated. But still the common people of China fight on, with handicaps weapons and with handicaps food and medical supplies.

Even now we Americans are not sending them the things they need, in sufficient quantities, to carry on the battle. To do so is not merely a humanitarian duty, it is a matter of clear self preservation, because on goes the war in China we open the whole battle for the Pacific.

If China falls, most experts believe, we will have little chance to fight our way back to the doorsteps of the Eastern member of the Pacific. Such a condition would be our worst enemy could ever be imagined. South America is a continent and our Pacific will be shattered.

This is the kind of war in which we could do nothing but help by doing our own share, and China is our most vulnerable spot.

The American flag in China was flying a magnificent job, and the A. S. Sun Club during the same time the people of China were fighting a desperate battle for their survival.

If it is hoped that this war will run its course many, but not quickly.

The people of China and the people of America have a common cause against the aggressors.



GENERAL STILWELL, U. S. ARMY



CHANG KAI-SHEK, U. S. ARMY

A SALUTE TO CHINA AND THREE GREAT LEADERS

A Country That Believes In Democracy!

S. A. Hub of Air Activities For Years

...the state of Texas has been fighting virtually alone against the odds for five long years. Thousands of square miles of their territory have been occupied. Hundreds of thousands of their people have been killed. Millions of dollars of their property have been destroyed or confiscated. But still the common people of China fight on, with handicaps weapons and with handicaps food and medical supplies.

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

Sunnyside Food Stores 280 Van Ness St. P-5149	Quong Tong Co. 124 S. Santa Rosa G-4812	King Fong Co. 720 Nueces G-4812	Hong Kong Grocery 1281 South Presa G-5159	Lee On Food Store 440 North Flores G-4712	Liberty Food Store 2403 South Flores P-4811	Hoy Sun Co. 1810 West Pagar P-4815	Quong Fung Co. 204 Santa Rosa P-4812
Alamo Grocery & Market 217 South Flores G-5151	Wing Sam Co. 124 South Santa Rosa G-4812	Wo Sam Cafe 621 East Commerce G-1712	Great China Food Store 2402 Nueces L-514	Song Toy Food Store 1911 South Flores G-4811	Nanking Grocery Co. 110 North Laredo P-1712	Wong Grocery Co. 1802 South Flores G-5144	New China Food Market 216 Nueces G-4712
Yee On Food Store 1307 S. Flores G-1443	Hop Lee Co. 3802 West Main P-5151	N. G. Toy Laundry 228 East Flores G-5012	Man Lee Food Store 2008 Broadway G-5012	Wah Young Groc. Co. 2803 South Flores G-5173	Suey Sang Co. 188 Nueces Road P-4811	Good Home Food Store 2002 North Flores P-5151	Wah Sing Grocery & Market 182 McCullough P-5140
Wah Lim Co. 1577 Goodridge G-5142	Sam & Lung Co. 230 South Flores G-5151	Hong Kee Laundry 1412 West Commerce P-5151	Quong Sun Co. 801 South Flores G-5012	Soon Lee Grocery & Mkt 2122 South Flores G-5154	Monticello Market 1722 Fredericksburg Road P-4811	Sun Shing Groc. & Mkt. 201 East Main P-5151	Mon Fung Co. 185 East Commerce G-5152
Hong Fat Co. 109 Fredericksburg Road P-5151	Yick Lee Co. 1127 West Commerce G-5152	Sam On Grocery 1412 West Commerce P-5151	Lai Hing Food Store 2110 Nueces G-5012	Gin Lee Grocery 303 South Santa Rosa G-5171	Pekin Food Store 812 East Commerce G-1801	Quong Chew Grocery & Market 501 East Main P-5151	On Young Co. 103 East Main G-5171
Bow Lim Co. 793 S. Laredo P-5151	Quong Sam Co. 126 Fredericksburg G-5151	Yee Lee Food Store 1202 Nueces G-5151	Hoy Fung Grocery 427 East City Road P-5151	Sing Lee Co. 303 South Flores G-5171	Wah Hing Food Mkt. 328 Aransas G-5151	Wing Lung Food Shop 700 Goodridge G-4811	Mong Chong Food Store 1302 N. New Braunfels G-5151
Wing On Grocery Store 1308 S. Laredo G-5152	Quong Chew Co. 115 South Santa Rosa G-5152	Sun Food Store 4301 South Presa G-5151	Yick Sam Co. 1101 West Commerce G-5012	On Leong Merchants Assn. 700 Goodridge G-4811			

THIS SPACE IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE IN THEIR INTEREST AND DEVOTION TO THE CAUSE, THE

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.

Kong 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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