

# Take peek at Texas Street in 1800s

Dear Trish: Can tell me what businesses were located along the 200 block of Texas Street back in the late 1800s? Thank you for your help in this matter.

— Liz Munoz



## TALES FROM THE MORGUE

By Trish Long

### Have a question?

▶ If you want to know about El Paso's history, send Trish an email at [tlong@elpasotimes.com](mailto:tlong@elpasotimes.com) or comment at her blog by visiting [elpasotimes.com/blogs](http://elpasotimes.com/blogs)

Liz, the earliest city directory I have is 1916. The businesses I found in the 200 block of Texas for that year are:

- ▶ 200 Silberberg Bros.
- ▶ 202 El Paso Phonograph Co.
- ▶ 204 Remington Typewriter Co.
- ▶ 206 New Hotel Britton.
- ▶ 208 El Paso Piano Co.
- ▶ 214 Buerger Bros Supply Co; Hotel Hollenbeck.
- ▶ 215-219 Everybody's Department Store.
- ▶ 216 Elite Hair Dressing Parlors.

I contacted the public library to ask about the oldest directory it had and found that the library's date to 1885. However, the pre-1900 directories don't have the listings by street. The library has the directories on microfilm, which is available to the public during regular business hours.

I did a search of our Blumenthal Photo Collection to see which photos we had of Texas Street. Here are some of the businesses found in the photos: Trinity Methodist Church on the southwest corner Stanton and Texas streets, Bryan Brothers, Palace Saloon, Segall Optical, Two Republics Life Insurance, Swain Haberdashery and Elite Confectionary on the northwest corner of Mesa and Texas streets.



After last week's column on famous El Pasoans, several people wrote in with additional names. One name most e-mails had in common was actor Gilbert Roland.

Luis Antonio Damaso Alonso was born in Chihuahua, Mexico. He was the second son of Francisco and Consuelo Alonso who migrated to Mexico from Spain.

A Nov. 7, 1965, article about the actor says, "His father and paternal grandfather were widely known bullfighters, and he was determined to follow in their footsteps. When the family moved to Juarez, the youth spent

all of his spare time at the bull ring.

"History, however, altered the course of events. When Pancho Villa and his band attacked Juárez, Roland's family fled to El Paso.

"Here, he saw his first motion picture, and was determined to make a career for himself as an actor. The influence of motion pictures was so profound that he chose surnames of his two movie favorites, Jack Gilbert and Ruth Roland, to form the name Gilbert Roland as more suitable to an aspiring actor."

In 1981 Jeannie Keever wrote about Roland, "Gilbert Roland is the only local boy to make it big in Hollywood and continue coming back to El Paso. He worked as a delivery boy for the Times after the turn of the century and later recalled being threatened with jail for shouting headlines in a residential area before dawn one morning. The impressionable 13-year-old took that encouragement and hopped a freight train for California and the silent movies. His first big break came in 'Camille.' A string of swashbuckling, adventurous roles followed. Some of his most popular movies included 'Bad and the Beautiful,' 'Cheyenne Autumn' 'Last Train to Madrid' and 'Around the World in 80 days.'"

Roland also starred in 11 "Cisco Kid" movies in the 1940s.

In 1988, Art Leibson wrote about Roland's love for his sixth-grade teacher, Alma Bartlett:

"One of El Paso's most delightful love affairs was the romantic attachment of Hollywood star Gilbert Roland to his sixth grade teacher at the old Sunset School. Year after year when he had finally reached his goal of film

stardom, he came back to the border to visit with Alma Bartlett and shower her with gifts and flowers. Sometimes, when the press learned of his visits, there were private meetings to talk over the joys and sorrows of his early school days. Whenever he was asked to do so, he would produce from a wallet his report card signed by Bartlett promoting him to seventh grade, as far as his formal education went. She had promoted him even though he had a great many absences from school. Mostly, he was playing hooky to sneak into his favorite hangout, the Wigwam Theater, or sometimes the Grecian Theater, and revel in what he was seeing on the screen.

"Roland was 13 years old and big for his age when he decided his future was in Hollywood. He hopped freight and headed west. He supported himself at odd jobs and, at long last, he got work as a film extra, for which he was paid \$3 a day and lunch. He worked with others who would make their mark in films: Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell. All this time, he was maintaining a correspondence with Bartlett. It was the late film great Donald Crisp who spotted him in the crowd and gave him the chance he had been longing for. From then on, Roland's climb was a steady one. His first big part was playing second lead in a film with Clara Bow, and his first leading role was with Norma Talmadge in 'Camille.' The runaway from El Paso was making good in Hollywood.

"Roland often refers to El Paso as mi casa. Time after time, he returned to look up his old teacher, usually bringing a load of books and other gifts and giving her a big welcoming hug. He enjoyed especially the time he took her to the Wigwam Theater, to see his latest Cisco Kid film. He paid his way in for the first time."

Roland died in May 1994, at the age of 88, of cancer in his Beverly Hills home.

*Trish Long is the El Paso Times' archivist and spends her time in the morgue, where the newspaper keeps its old clippings and photos. She shares some of this history in her blog, Tales From The Morgue.*