

Corpus Christi's City Bakery

One baking business in Corpus Christi has been a legacy operation for four generations. Antonio and Juanita Gomez operated the Mexico City Bakery on Ayers St. Their daughter Emma and her husband Santiago M. Rivera would continue the baking tradition with City Bakery. According to City Directories from the City of Corpus Christi Library, City Bakery was listed at 521 S. 19th St. from 1958-1961, citing Santiago Revera (sic.) as manager (Figure 1). In 1962, the City Directory listed City Bakery at 808 S 19th Street and as owned by Santiago and Mrs. Emma Rivera (Figure 2).



Figure 1 521 S. 19th St., Google Earth, 2021

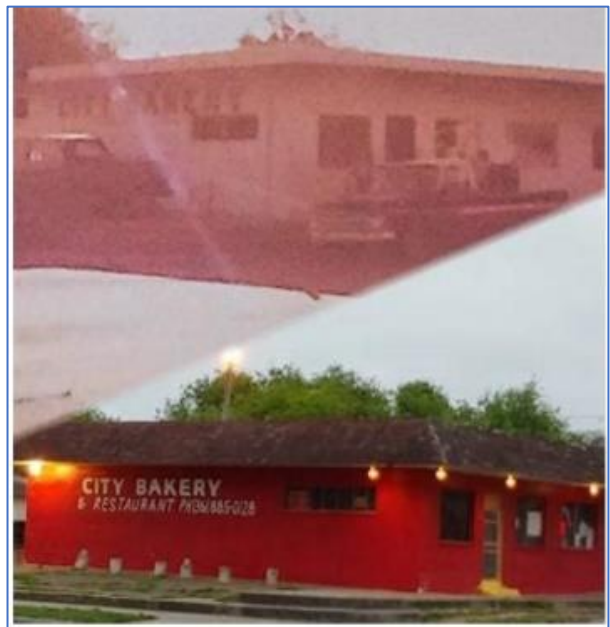


Figure 2 810 S. 19th St. (Facebook page)

City Bakery was an important family business in the neighborhood that developed around St. Joseph's Church. The original Hispanic settlement in Corpus Christi was located in an area called "The Hill" south of Leopard St. and west of the bluff. As the Hispanic population grew in the early 20th century, neighborhoods extended west and southwest. The Wiess Addition at 18th and 19th St. at Coleman Avenue was platted in 1927 (Vol. 4, Pg. 40, Nueces County Records). Completed in 1950 on S. 19th Street, St. Joseph's Church replaced the original chapel of San Jose on 17th Street. The City Bakery property (Lot 12A, Block 1, Wiess ADD) was platted in 1967 by Emma and Santiago Rivera Sr. (Vol. 35, Pg. 17, Nueces County Records).

Mr. and Mrs. Santiago Rivera, Sr. had the right ingredients to establish Corpus Christi's City Bakery. Emma had a bakery and Santiago worked at Butterkrust Bakery. When they joined forces, they were determined to make it work, even if it took



Figure 1 Emma and Santiago Rivera, Sr. (Facebook page)

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moving their location. From the 1960s to 1990s, City Bakery hosted a variety of customers because it was the hub of the neighborhood; thus, establishing itself as a culturally and socially important place, serving breakfast, hosting celebrations, and even holding LULAC meetings there. The bakery was supported by local residents along with those attending St. Joseph Church. The Rivera's children also learned and helped with the family business. The business thrived as long as the neighborhood thrived, but economic downturns that affected neighboring residents also affected the bakery's business with people moving away along with the closures of other neighboring businesses in the 21st century.

The deed history of City Bakery registered at 810 S. 19th Street, shows the conveyance from Emma G. Rivera to Santiago M. Rivera in May 1986, Santiago M. Rivera to Juan Rivera (son) in May 1986, and from Juan Rivera to Santiago M. Rivera in May 1988. In May 2003, Santiago M. Rivera conveyed the property to Rosita De La Paz (daughter) and in November 2004, Rosita De La Paz conveyed the property to Barbara Handy (Santiago Rivera, Sr.'s granddaughter).

The bakery building at 810 S 19th St. is a one story building, mid-20th century commercial block style, constructed circa 1962 of cement block with a masonry brick façade. It has a flat roof, with a slight parapet. A mansard style shingle canopy was added on the storefront. The entrance on 19th St. has a double door which is flanked by metal frame glass windows. The storefront also has a secondary single door entrance. A cement block addition is on the east side of the main building.



Figure 2 810 S. 19th St. with St. Joseph's Church in background, Google Earth, 2021

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Figure 3 810 S. 19th St. Google Earth, 2021

Barbara Handy, granddaughter of Emma and Santiago Rivera Sr., is the current owner. The family has witnessed renewed interest, from several generations along with new residents. With the help of technology, City Bakery has been able to reestablish their calling by reaching 20,000 shares on Facebook with the help of Eli Castillo, the Rivera's great-grandson. They are now seeing generational customers that have moved away, stopping by again. The efforts to keep City Bakery alive in Corpus Christi is based on determination in regenerating the "hub of the neighborhood" again.



Figure 4 810 S. 19th St. at Coleman Ave., Google Earth, 2021



Figure 5 Advertisement on Facebook page