

#316 LaBorde House, 601 E. Main St., Rio Grande City, 1917.

In 1899, French immigrant and merchant Francois LaBorde (La Borde) built a majestic Parisian-style home for his family, one block from the Rio Grande River. It was designed by French architects in 1893. Plans were refined by one or more San Antonio architects onsite, and it was finished in 1899. The LaBorde family never lived in the home full-time. Deciding to transform it into a hotel, LaBorde employed San Antonio architect Leo M. J. Dielmann, who added a second story to the front buildings.

The hotel opened about 1917. Many features, including courtyards and flat roofs, reflected Spanish-Mexican influences in layout and architecture. The house is surrounded by a detailed baroque cast-iron gate. Extended front-gabled parapets of the projecting wings are comprised of intricately corbelled brickwork, a feature reflected throughout the building. The hotel has a wooden gallery and an open courtyard. A second interior courtyard features a fountain with a hand-carved lion gargoyle that spews water into a stone basin. In 1939, the LaBorde family sold the hotel. It was remodeled to include a restaurant and private baths. A special feature of the hotel is a tunnel that begins at the patio. Originally, the tunnel went to the banks of the Rio Grande River.