

Benito Lopez

Early notable business man of the Floresville area

Benito Lopez arrived in San Antonio after the Texas Revolution in about 1841. One of his earliest activities was to lead a group of Polish immigrants through San Antonio to Panna Maria. It was through his association with this Polish group that he met his wife, Karolina Opiela, and together they had six children.

In the early 1860's, prior to the Civil War area, Benito Lopez was associated with a French nobleman, Count Antonio Superviele de Nerf. Antonio Superviele had come to Texas after the Texas War of Independence to invest in the Republic and had acquired various properties some of which included a large ranch in southern Wilson County and two merchandise stores in San Antonio. One store operated as a wholesale distributor and the other as a retail outlet on Alamo Plaza. During the Civil War the count returned to France because of the uncertainties of the outcome of the conflict. To manage these properties in his absence he gave Benito Lopez the power of attorney to manage or sell these properties. Lopez was able to find a buyer for this real estate in another Frenchman named August Morisette who purchased the properties for \$30,000.00 in gold.

In 1875 Lopez purchased 800 acres of land of the Menchaca Grant south of the Pajarito Creek and adjacent to the east bank of the San Antonio River. On 200 acres of this property he built a home and a cotton gin.

In 1886, Benito Lopez brought the Serafino Lepori residence in Lodi on the west side of the Alamo-LaBahia (Goliad) road which was just a short distance from a store he operated with his son-in-law, Manuel Ximenez. This store was also utilized as one of the early school houses in Wilson County in 1885 and was taught by R.S. Trevino for \$30 a month.

Benito also owned the first two story brick building in Floresville. It was built in 1885 on a lot purchased from Judge A.G. Pickett for \$1600 located at the corner of 3rd and C Streets where the former J.C. Merchant store stood. It is said the bricks of this structure were made somewhere near the river. This general store offered merchandise for sale which ranged from a can of sardines to ladies boots from Italy. The upper level was rented for entertainment such as dances, lectures, and plays. On a lot next to this building, where the Eschenburg store now stands, he owned and operated a pawn shop

Benito Lopez died at the age of 75 in his home in 1888 and was buried in the De la Zerda Cemetery near the river.

Compiled by Gene Maeckel from the historical files of the Wilson County Historical Society Archives