

EARLY COMMUNITIES OF WILSON COUNTY

Within the time frame of 1821-1837, considered by many to be the Texas Revolutionary Period, three communities came into existence within the current boundaries of Wilson County. Prior to this time only ranching was conducted in this area.

The first community to be established was Graytown. This town site is located on the west side of the San Antonio River close to a river crossing called "Sheep's Crossing". It was developed by James Gray in 1830 being settled primarily by Spanish families who all claimed direct ancestry from Spain. Graytown was a center of activity in trade and the social life for the surrounding ranches. The river crossing was also an important point interconnecting the LaBahia Road with the travel routes on the western side of the river going to Matamoras, Mexico.

A second community, Sutherland Springs, was started in 1831. At that time it was an area of more than 100 springs flowing into the Cibolo Creek. These springs were known to Indians for years and they often camped near here to drink and bathe in the warm sulphur waters in hope of being cured of the maladies affecting them. Dr. John Sutherland, for which this settlement was named, was with the defenders of the Alamo performing the duties of a medical doctor. But because of an injury to his knee he was unable to stand for any period of time. This, however, did not inhibit his ability to ride a horse. Therefore, Colonel Travis asked him to serve as a messenger and deliver his message addressed to the "Inhabitants of Texas" to the Texas forces in Gonzales and Goliad. His knee injury thus saved him from martyrdom at the Alamo. After the revolution, he returned to Sutherland Springs to establish a medical practice. This included using the different chemical properties of the various springs as curative aids.

A third community, Lodi, was established in 1832. It was situated on the east side of the San Antonio River on the LaBahia Road, south of the Erasmus Seguin and Flores ranches. It was a community of families whose livelihood was linked to working on the area ranches as herdsmen and vaqueros. This site on the San Antonio River, also, served as a ferry crossing interconnecting the travel routes on the east and west sides of the San Antonio River.

Written by Gene Maeckel, September 2002