

## **EL CAMINO DEL CIBOLO**

(A trail not forgotten)

Historians look back in time and wonder what past events took place to bring us to where we are today. They attempt to solve the historic mysteries that link the past to the present. El Camino del Cibolo is greatly abundant in historic treasures such as to demand discovery and is interesting enough to capture the attention of anyone. El Camino del Cibolo (the road to the Cibolo) proudly cuts a path in Wilson County, Texas. Its fabulously rich and deep-rooted history is found in abundance. It links to the road to Rancho de Las Cabras and the San Patricio Trail on the west side of the San Antonio River. It moves away from the former site of Cook's Store on the San Antonio -La Bahia Road, and sites of The Lodi Ferry, the Lopez Cellar, Gray's Black Smith shop, then stretches on toward the Cibolo Creek on FM 539. It passes Grass Pond and approaches the former site of the "Springs" at Sutherland Springs. It then passes the Polley Mansion and historic Barker- Hubinger House and Mueller Bridge, before it moves on to the Guadalupe County line. As yet, historians, John and Shirley Grammer, Gene Maeckel and Maurine Liles have decided it covers a time frame from the 1700s, during the Spanish era, until the present time. It has seen and endured the history of our time and old records show it could be a link between two mission rancho headquarters. Rancho de Pataguilla, which belonged to Mission San Juan Capistrano, was located in Lodi. Rancho de Paistle (The Moss Ranch), which belonged to Mission Concepcion, was located in Sutherland Springs. It is also a link between two former Wilson County seats, Lodi and Sutherland Springs. Floresville became the permanent county seat of Wilson County in 1872.

It appears that El Camino del Cibolo was an early trail that existed before Wilson County became a county in 1860. Clearly it was an important road, for in 1861 it was one of the first roads the newly seated Wilson County Commissioners ordered to be established. There were dwellings in Lodi as early as 1837. Lodi, near present day Floresville, was a community on the San Antonio- LaBahia Road comprised predominately of people of Spanish and Mexican descent. There was also a mixture of other nationalities that gave Lodi an international flavor. It was near Lodi that many vaqueros (cowboys) could be found on large ranches. In 1872, the Lodi Ferry was established on the San Antonio River and this made Lodi a crossroads community. On the west side of the San Antonio River, the road linked up to roads leading to Mexico.

Sutherland Springs was made up of people from the southern states and they were predominately planters and plantation owners. Some brought slaves to Texas with them and after the Civil War, some of these former slaves settled along the Cibolo Creek and near Grass Pond on El Camino del Cibolo. There were settlers in Sutherland Springs as early as 1848.

During the mid 1800s and early 1900s the trail bore the name, Lodi and Sutherland

Springs Road. Its dusty ruts have blossomed into modern FM 539. It has seen historic development by its wayside that would thrill any avid reader of history or lore. It has touched upon the ancient and well-worn San Antonio – LaBahia Road. It led the way to river crossings, bridges on the San Antonio River and Cibolo Creek as well as the historic San Antonio - Gonzales Road. It has seen the emergence along its path of rail roads, cemeteries, schools, churches, camp grounds, jacals, rock houses, mansions, resorts, communities, large ponds and oil fields. Pat Higgins world famous grass farms sprang up on it. Ox-carts, wagons and men of both high and low character rode along it on horse back. Fine families such as the De la Zerdas, Polleys, Flores, Lepori, McDaniels, Tiners, Grays, Trials, Lopez, Cook, Houstons, Sutherlands, Barkers, Wyatts, Mayes, Wiseman and a host of others have left a lasting historic mark on the trail.

Wilson County Historians, mentioned above, have grand plans for this old trail in the form of Historical Markers. By stretching a number of historic markers along this trail, the treasured history and the stories of people, sites and events will be told and preserved. Many markers have already been established and the plan is to place more in the immediate future. Below is a listing of 50 sites for both established and potential historic markers.

#### HISTORIC SITES ALONG EL CAMINO DEL CIBOLO

1. Historic San Antonio-Gonzales Road (1832)
2. Mueller Bridge 1915 (RTHL & NR Markers)
3. Barker School 1871 (Pleasant Hill)
4. Barker-Huebinger Rock House 1871 (RTHL Marker)
5. Potash Hills
6. Pleasant Hill School Site (Deeded 1906)
7. Linne Oil Field 1955 (Historical Marker)
8. Polley Cemetery 1848 (Historical Marker)
9. Polley Mansion (Whitehall) 1850 (RTHL & NR Markers)
10. Rancho del Paistle (Moss Ranch)
11. Higgins Grass Farms 1939 (Historical Marker)
12. New Town Sutherland Springs
  - a. Hotel Sutherland Site ( ca. 1909)
  - b. Motion Picture Show (ca. 1909)
  - c. First State Bank of Sutherland Springs (ca. 1909)
  - d. Duncker's Lumber Yard (ca. 1909)
  - e. Sunset Train Depot
13. The Springs and Resort
14. Sutherland Springs Museum
15. Wyatt Cemetery
16. John Sutherland Well
17. Sutherland Springs - Old Town (Est. 1849) Historical Marker
18. Site where 1st Wilson County Government met (1860) Sutherland Springs
19. Sutherland Springs School Site

20. Tiner-Hendricks Home (1880's)
21. Sutherland Springs Cemetery (1860) Historical Marker
22. Kaye Oil Field (Discovered 1956)
23. Grass Pond
24. Shiloh Cemetery (1884) Historic Designation & Marker
25. Camp Ground & Well
26. Canary Islander Cemetery (Historical Marker)
27. Pataguilla Laguna (Site)
28. City Cemetery #2 (African American) Designation Pending
29. SAAP Train Depot (1886)
30. Railroad Beer Warehouse
31. Lodi (Historical Marker)
32. Lodi School Site (1886)
33. Site of Lodi Catholic Church (1882)
34. Washington Plaza (1879)
35. Site of Cook's Store/Post Office (1858)
36. Canta Rana Park
37. Lopez-Lepori Cellar (1886)
38. Site of Sheriff Ximenes House
39. Site of Gray's Blacksmith Shop (1873)
40. Pedro de la Zerda House-Courthouse Site (1867)
41. The Lodi Ferry (1872) Historical Marker
42. De la Zerda Cemetery (Historical Marker)
43. Site of Benito Lopez Store & School (1887)
44. Site of Staud, Johnson & Fischer Gin (1877)
45. Trial Cemetery
46. Former Route of SAAP Rail Road Tracks-Present Hike & Bike Trail
47. Garza-Valadez Cemetery (Historical Marker)
48. Goliad Road-The Old San Antonio La Bahia Road - ca. 1600s
49. Old Marcelina Bridge (Red Bridge)
50. Labatt Bridge – Plaque

Compiled by historians, Maurine Liles, Gene Maeckel, Shirley Grammer and John Grammer.  
Wilson County Historical Society, P.O. Box 101, Floresville, Texas 78114