

## **WILSON COUNTY AREA UNDER THE RULE OF MEXICO AND TEXAS**

Wilson County did not exist in the time period of 1821 -1837. The majority of the area of the county as it exists today was, at that time, a part of Bexar County. Almost all of the area land was devoted to ranching controlled and owned by persons of Spanish heritage, many of whom were descendants of the original 16 Canary Island families who came from Spain and established Villa de Bexar.

One ranch which was very important to the Texas War of Independence in this time period was owned by Erasmo Seguin, father of Juan Seguin. Juan Seguin played an important role in the war. He was one of the last persons to leave the Alamo before its fall and then assisted Sam Houston in capturing Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. During this period of conflict, his father's ranch site was used as a supply point for horses, cattle, food, and other necessities to aide the Texas army. The ranch headquarters, called Casa Blanca, was also used as a meeting place to discuss strategy related to the war effort. Today, there is an historical marker located near the site of Casa Blanca. All that remains of the ranch site today, is the house foundation of Juan Seguin's home and a nearby, hand dug, water well.

An important transportation route traversed Wilson County during this period called the San Antonio - La Bahia Road. This road is designated as part of the national trail, El Camino Real de las Tejas. The road passed near Erasmo Seguin's home, Casa Blanca. This hacienda served as a refuge from Indians along the roadway or as a place for travelers to rest. The San Antonio - La Bahia Road served as the main route of travel between the missions and presidios of San Antonio and of La Bahia, which was renamed Goliad. It also served as an alternate route to the East Texas Missions. Many of the men involved in the Texas Revolution, both Texian and Mexican traveled this road between San Antonio and Goliad during the revolutionary period. Parts of this road still exist today in Wilson County as thoroughfares.

Some of the ranching families and their herdsmen, or vaqueros began to form communities in the Wilson County area. Americans from the United States and citizens from other countries migrated to the area. As time moved on, the communities grew and acquired the names we recognize today.

One of these communities was Sutherland Springs. At that time it was an area of more than 100 springs feeding into the Cibolo Creek. These springs were known to Indians for years and they often camped near them to drink the sulphur water and to bathe in warm springs in hope of being cured of the maladies affecting them. This community was named for Dr. John Sutherland, who was with the defenders of the Alamo performing the duties of a medical doctor. He sustained a knee injury and could not stand. However, he was able to ride a horse, and Colonel Travis used him as a messenger to deliver the message addressed to the "inhabitants of Texas", which he delivered to the Texas forces at Gonzales and

Goliad. His knee injury saved him from martyrdom at the Alamo and after the revolution he returned to Sutherland Springs to establish a medical practice. His practice included using the water of the different springs for their curative aids. Sutherland Springs had a post office in 1851. It was Wilson County's first county seat.

Graytown was established by James Gray, an immigrant from Scotland. It was settled 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. St. James, a Catholic church named for James Gray, was completed in Graytown in 1854. It was later renamed, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. It became the religious center for all Catholics within a thirty-mile radius.

Lodi, located near Floresville, was the second county seat in Wilson County. It was situated on the San Antonio - La Bahia Road next to the San Antonio River. It was south of the Seguin ranch and the Francisco Flores ranch, called Los Chayopines. A post office was located in Cook's store in Lodi in 1858. Lodi was a community of families whose livelihood was linked to working on the area ranches as herdsmen and vaqueros, but Lodi was also a community with an international flavor. People of different nationalities lived and worked in Lodi as craftsmen and tradesmen.

Compiled by Gene Maeckel and Maurine Liles from the archives of the Wilson County Historical Society,  
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