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WILSON COUNTY 2010

Celebration



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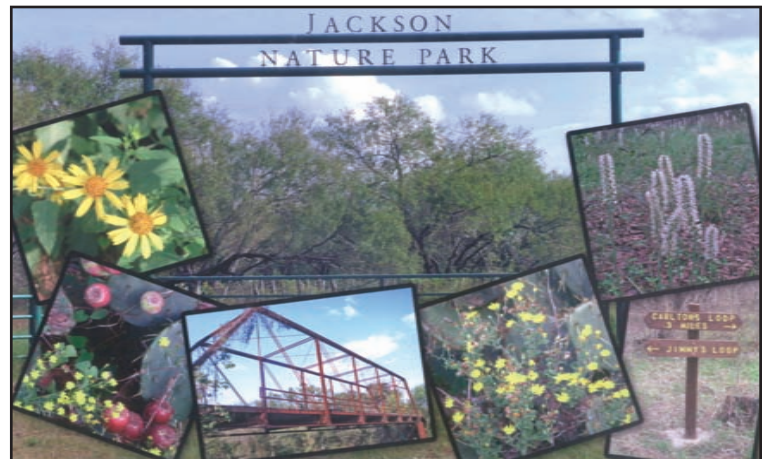
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John McDaniel House - Floresville



Brahan Masonic Lodge - 1871



*Jackson Nature Park - CR 401 on the Cibola
Land donated by Cloma Jackson in memory of her sons, Jimmy and Carlton.*

Introduction



Wilson County Sesquicentennial Proclamation

Elaine Kolodziej, Maurine Liles, Alene Quinney, Judge Marvin Quinney, Gene Maeckel, Shirley Grammer, John Grammer, LaJuana Newnam-Leus

Wilson County Sesquicentennial Committee Members & Volunteers

Front row: Dottie Bowden, John Grammer, Aurelia Deuvall, LaJuana Leus, Genne Maeckel. Second row: Maurine Liles, Viola Henke, Louise Thurman, Suzanne Deuvall, Julia Castro, Sara Canady, Elaine Mazurek Stevens. Third row: Shirley Grammer, Elaine Kolodziej, Tambria Read, Nancy Clark, Elsie Hayden, Melissa Koepp-Beck, Lois Wauson, Susan Duelm Richter, Taryn Smith-Morales. Back row: Carl Ray, Bennie Roemer, Norman Leus, Judge Marvin and Alene Quinney, Frank Hayden, Evelyn Grimes, Monica Flores, Harry Grove, Otto Henke Jr.

We, the Wilson County Sesquicentennial Committee, are extremely grateful to the wonderful people of Wilson County who have so generously supported us with the development of the Wilson County Sesquicentennial History Book.

This souvenir book provides a brief written and pictorial history of our county's interesting communities as well as colorful and accomplished people. Remarkable citizens, residents of Wilson County and outside the county, have come forward to write about their communities and about notable people of Wilson County. Some wrote about their pioneer ancestors, and others wrote about the community they lived in. The sesquicentennial committee is made up of established historians, but we are humbled and awed by the people's knowledge of Wilson County history and are grateful that they chose to share this valuable history with the rest of the county. We, the sesquicentennial committee, knew of 37 communities in Wilson County – some by name only. We know that there are more waiting to be discovered. We asked for help in compiling this outstanding history to commemorate our county's sesquicentennial. Our friends and neighbors rose to the occasion and wrote compelling



stories for us. What we received was a history-based article on 37 communities, 17 articles on notable people in the county, and many beautiful pictures. In addition, Wilson County took a step further to support this quest for history. The people provided their own family histories and business histories in the form of ads and thus financially helped to support the publication of the book.

The book will be placed in the sesquicentennial capsule and will be opened in 50 years. Another generation of historians will celebrate Wilson County's 200 years of existence and they will read this book depicting our present knowledge of the county's history.

Contact the Wilson County Historical Society or the individual authors for permission to reproduce any part of this book.

Book Cover & Poster Artist

Harry Grove



(From left) Harry Grove, Maurine Liles, LaJuana Newnam-Leus, Shirley Grammer, and John Grammer during a sesquicentennial meeting.



Harry Grove



2010 Official Wilson County Sesquicentennial Poster drawing by Harry Grove

By Pat Kopecki
Wilson County News

Harry Grove, recently named as Stockdale city manager, has worked in public service in two Wilson County cities.

Floresville residents might remember Grove when he served as administrator of the Floresville Main Street Program for four years. Stockdale residents know him as the economic development corporation's executive director for the past 3-1/2 years. But few people know of Grove's early years and why he made the choice to move to Texas.

At the young age of 11, Grove, a native of Tulsa, Okla., visited Killeen with his family and "fell in love with Texas." That love of Texas remained in him for years, leading Grove to live in Texas not once, but twice.

Grove first joined the U.S. Army, serving two tours in Korea. Afterward, he was sent to Fort

Sam Houston in San Antonio.

He remembers the different type of South Texas winter in November in the early 1960s, when he saw green grass and palm trees versus the cold, white winters where he grew up. That's when he decided, "I want to stay here a while."

After serving his country, Grove began his career in the commercial-art field, in the silk-screen business. In 1967, Grove was hired by Lionel Sosa, designing small signs for HemisFair '68.

In the 1970s, Grove continued working in commercial art, freelancing and conducting jobs such as building sculptures for Aquarena Springs in San Marcos and designing the logo for Alcor Aviation in 1975.

In the 1990s, Grove found himself back up north, this time in Pennsylvania, working in the exhibit business with a friend. After two years in Bangor, Maine, he

returned to Texas and San Antonio, where he freelanced with the HallMark Cabinet shop for 4-1/2 years.

He soon found property in downtown Floresville that he purchased, and built the shop where he works today.

Grove's first experience in public service, as he remembers, was when he was invited to attend a Floresville Chamber of Commerce meeting by Floresville attorney Howard Berger. It was there he first met Elaine Kolodziej, publisher of the Wilson County News, and Pat Brown of Pat Brown Realtors.

Then-Councilman Debbie Bolf recommended the city for recognition as a Main Street City under the Texas Historical Commission Main Street Program. After being selected as administrator of the program, Grove, with the assistance of Bolf and certified public accountant Verna Gorzell, applied for the city to be considered as a

Main Street City under the Texas Historical Commission Main Street Program.

In 2001, Floresville was selected, being the first town designated by the first lady of Texas, Anita Perry, on April 24.

The Floresville City Council terminated the program four years later.

Sharing in Wilson County's
history for 150 years.



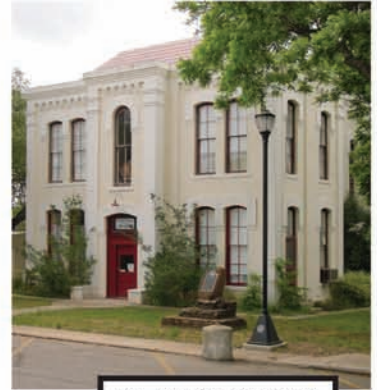
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These two maps (next page also), RANCHOS OF THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER VALLEY – 1780 and RANCHES OF EL RINCON – 1776-1836 are from two books written by Robert Thonhoff, *The Texas Connection with the American Revolution* and *El Fuerte Del Cibolo: Sentinel of the Bexar-La Bahia Ranches*.

Native Americans of Pre-Wilson County

Nestled in the valleys of the San Antonio River and the Cibolo Creek, in the area which became Wilson County, Texas, Neo-Americans, now known as Native Americans, lived and raised their families. The subtropical – subhumid climate offered an abundance of native plants to eat, which in turn attracted wild animals for the these early Texans who were able to adapt to the local environment.

Four main groups of Native Americans have been documented to be the early inhabitants of the area. The Tonkawa and the Coahuiltecans are documented as the earliest human settlers of the area. Some scholars suggest that these two hunter-gatherer groups were connected by a common language, Coahuilteco. Spanish explorers brought horses to North America, which changed the lives of the aboriginal peoples in Texas forever. Then the Lipan Apaches and the Comanches came to the area on horseback, in search of buffalo and other large migratory mammals.

Tonkawas settled in temporary camps... their houses were small, conical huts covered with brush and, occasionally, buffalo skin. This area was not, in the heart of the buffalo country... yet this animal provided their principal food source as well as much of the raw material for clothing and other equipment. Deer, rabbit, skunks, rattlesnakes, rats, turtles, dogs, wild hogs, fish, and fresh water mussels were also a source of food for the Tonkawas. These nomadic people even did some gardening in the latter part of the eighteenth century, but they were never successful in this radical departure from their hunting and gathering traditions. The large assortment of plant foods, including herbs, roots, fruit, tunas (the prickly pear fruit), acorns, mesquite beans, and pecans, were all gathered in season. By the nineteenth century the importance of pecans was enhanced, for they too had become an item of barter with the settlers. Europeans first learned of the Tonkawas from Alonso de Leon's expedition in 1690. In time, the Tonkawas became



*Arrowheads belong to Edward Uhlig of Sutherland Springs.
All were found on the Watershed of the Cibolo in Wilson County.*

hostile to the Spanish, but their friendship with the Anglos never wavered. By the early 1820s the Tonkawa men were working as guides for the settlers and the women were performing domestic services yet many of them resorted to begging and thieving. What happened to the Tonkawa people? In 1855 they were placed on the Brazos Reservation, then removed to a location near present Anadarko, Oklahoma. Many married into the Karankawa and Lipan Apache tribes, others married into Mexican families living in Texas, and others migrated into Mexico and assimilated into their culture.

The Coahuiltecans were a collection of small scattered bands who happened to speak a related language called Coahuilteco. Though Cabeza de Vaca marveled at their adaptability to the harsh environment and at their remarkable stamina, this whole race was unable to survive the leap from the Stone Age to the nineteenth century. The bands of Coahuiltecans

known as the Payayas and the Aranamas inhabited the territory which is now Wilson County. Archeological findings prove that the Coahuiltecans used very basic and primitive tools and farming practices and seemed to be satisfied with their primitive technology. The diet of these hunter-gatherer people mainly consisted of small mammals, reptiles, ant eggs, worms, rotten wood, dirt (used to extend the food portions), wild plants and some cultivated crops. They lived in low circular huts made by placing reed mats over bent saplings. As per historian Bruce Shackelford, the docile Coahuiltecans willing assimilated into the Spanish Mission culture to seek protection from the hostile Apaches and Comanches. By 1800 most of the survivors of this South Texas tribe had been absorbed into the Mexican population.

Plains Indian tribes, including the Lipan Apaches and Comanches, came into Texas as they followed the buffalo.

In the mid-1540's Coronado noted the Lipan Apaches were living in what is now the Texas Panhandle, they planted gardens and hunted buffalo afoot. When they acquired horses from the Spanish settlements, they became roving hunters following the great herds. The Lipan Apaches were pushed down into South Central Texas and even into Mexico by the fierce Comanches, who migrated to Texas from the Rocky Mountains. Both the Lipan Apache and Comanche tribes lived in tents known as tepees which could be easily loaded and moved. Their main food source was buffalo, which they supplemented with wild food they gathered. The Comanches, however, did not eat fish, wild fowl, dogs, or coyotes unless sorely pressed by hunger.

During the annual livestock roundups of the various mission ranchos, the vaqueros had to be alert to the nearness of the Apaches and Comanches. Spanish colonial rancher Anna Maria del Carmen Calvillo did know how to protect her herd from these tribes. She would instruct her vaqueros to give the nomadic people a head of beef and direct them to camp in a certain location. This appeased the Indians while keeping the Spaniards and their property safe. In the 1700s Lipan Apaches took refuge in the Texas Hill Country as the Comanches roamed deeper into Texas. For a century, the Comanches' goal was to rid the rich bison-filled plains of the Lipan Apaches and raid the Spanish Colonists; yet they were no match for the tactics of the Anglo Texas settlers who used negotiations to achieve their goals. Early in the 1800s, ...when the Anglo-Americans began to move into the state the Lipan Apache was looking for a friend. Sam Houston and Noah Smithwick, an early Texas pioneer, hired two Lipan Apache statesmen as scouts. Remnants of these two proud tribes were eventually banished to reservations in New Mexico and some even filtered down into Mexico.

*Research by the Floresville High School
Jr. Historian Organization: Sponsored by
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Longhorns & Sabers

By Maurine Liles

Spain claimed Texas for some three hundred years. Columbus discovered the New World in 1492, and set out to claim much of the land in this New World. In 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was written, Spain claimed all of the land on the North American continent west of the Mississippi River. She also had the New Orleans portion of Louisiana. This land, known as New Spain, was divided into five provinces. Texas was New Spain's fifth province. This great sprawling landscape extended from the Nueces River on the south and west to the Red River on the north and east. It stretched from the Gulf Coast on the south to the "Arctic Snows" on the north. Texas, long known as "Big," was even bigger in the 1700s.

Other countries heard about the New World and sent explorers. England, France, Holland and other countries sailed toward American shores. The Spaniards wanted to hold the large stretch of land they had discovered. They feared that other countries would put settlers on the land and take it from them. They had reason to be concerned.

In 1682, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, led an expedition down the Mississippi River and reached the Gulf of Mexico. He claimed for France all of the land drained by the Mississippi and named the territory Louisiana in honor of King Louis XIV of France. He returned to France and received permission to settle a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi. La Salle and some French settlers started out for the mouth of the Mississippi River. They were caught up in storms at sea and forced off their course. They lost some of their fleet. In 1685, they landed at Matagorda Bay on the coast of Texas. They moved inland from the coastline and established Fort Saint Louis in Texas. The few settlers left eventually met with disaster. Although the French colony ended in failure, it caused Spain to realize that she would have to settle Texas in order to hold the land. Spain began to work toward that goal.

Spanish explorers were sent to Texas and missionaries went with them. They wanted to establish missions, teach the Indians Christianity, and teach them a trade so that they could live a productive

life in a Spanish settlement. The Teran Expedition stopped in the area known today as San Antonio in 1691 and named the river after Saint Anthony (San Antonio). Father Olivares came in 1709 and attempted to get a mission there. Indians were already living on the land. There were several tribes of Indians in the area. Many of the Indians were scattered bands of hunter-gatherer Indians and were called Coahuiltecan. When missions were established, the missionaries took them into the missions to live. The Plains Indians, Lipan Apaches and Comanche Indians were also in the area and made settlement difficult.

The Spanish explorers and missionaries went to East Texas and established missions and presidios. Spanish settlements were established around the missions and presidios. Los Adaes, near present day Robeline, Louisiana, was the capital of Spanish Texas from 1721 until 1773. In 1763 as a result of a war in Europe, France gave Louisiana to Spain. The French threat lessened. San Antonio became the capital of Texas in 1772. In 1773 the East Texas settlers were ordered to abandon their homes and move to San Antonio. Presidio soldiers and some government officials were living in San Antonio at this time. The fort in San Antonio was called San Antonio de Bexar and the area was also called Bexar. Later it was referred to as San Antonio.

The Alamo or Mission San Antonio de Valero was established in 1718. Missions San Jose, Concepcion and San Francisco de la Espada were abandoned in East Texas and reestablished on the San Antonio River near San Antonio de Bexar in 1731. Mission San Juan was also established on the San Antonio River in 1731. Missions were also established in La Bahia, which was named Goliad in 1829.

The missions were granted large blocks of land and large herds of cattle near San Antonio to support the inhabitants of their missions. Each of the five missions in San Antonio had large mission ranches that stretched out a good distance from San Antonio. Las Cabras, the mission ranch of Mission Espada, was situated on the west side of the San Antonio River near present-day Floresville. Some living structures appeared at the compound, of Rancho de las Cabras in the 1740's. Permanent

structures, including the walls around the compound appeared around 1745. El Paistle (The Moss Ranch), the mission ranch of Mission Concepcion, was located on the Cibolo Creek near present-day Sutherland Springs.

The Spanish government had presidios at San Antonio and at La Bahia. A road known as the Bexar or San Antonio and La Bahia Road ran a course along the west and east sides of the San Antonio River and connected the missions and presidios of these two settlements. The road is part of El Camino Real de las Tejas. The road was used by the military, missionaries, Spanish dignitaries, the Spanish Vaquero and others. This road played a pivotal part in developing communities between San Antonio and Goliad. It was along this road and the San Antonio River that some of the very large Texas ranches were established.

The Texas frontier was far away from Spain's center of government in Mexico and in Spain. Few people wanted to settle on this frontier. Spain needed settlers and offered some incentives to people who would settle in Texas. These settlers would be given land and livestock. Soon, the call to become citizens of Texas was answered. Sixteen families from the Canary Islands heeded the call and became pioneers on the Spanish frontier, Texas. In 1731 they settled in San Antonio and established the Villa of San Fernando de Bexar.

Texas was a land of Spanish citizens, missionaries, Spanish soldiers, Indians and the vaquero. The land we know as Wilson County was once the home to great herds of Longhorn cattle. Cattle, mustang horses, sheep, goats, mules, donkeys and hogs broke loose from the early Spanish expeditions into Texas and attempts at colonization. They began to reproduce and populate the land. Cattle and horses roamed freely on the beautiful land along the San Antonio River. The land was well-suited to cattle raising. The grass was tall and thick. It may have resembled strands of green silk blowing in the breeze. Large oak trees grew in clusters. A few mesquite trees could also be seen on the landscape. The rivers and creeks were clear and the water was sweet.

Spain planted missions on the land and large land grants were given to the missions for ranches. Grants were also given to some

soldiers and to descendants of the Canary Islanders. Stock raising was tried in the East Texas settlements of Nacogdoches and Los Adaes, but it was in the area between San Antonio and Goliad in the San Antonio River valley that ranches were established and flourished. Jack Jackson, in his book, *Los Mestenos*, called the grazing lands between San Antonio and the Guadalupe "the cradle of Texas Ranching."

Robed priests, who came from ranches in Spain, taught some of the Indians to rope, ride horses and manage the Longhorn cattle. These men became skilled at handling horses and cattle and were called vaqueros. At the ranch compounds, they gathered cattle and herded them to the missions to feed the Indians being trained in the missions.

The vaquero taught the American cowboys how to rope, ride and manage cattle. He taught him a language that is still used by people who work cattle. Some of these terms are mustang, lasso, lariat, jerky, sombrero, corral, and rodeo.

After 1750, private ranchers established large ranches in the San Antonio River valley beside the mission ranches. The land we know as Wilson County was not a safe place to live due to the presence of marauding Indians. Many of the ranchers and their families lived in San Antonio. Some of the ranches had vaqueros and other workers living in jacals or stick huts in the ranch compounds. The jacals were built near each other in a compound for mutual protection. A strong fence such as the one at Las Cabras surrounded the compound. Some of the workers lived in jacals near the fields where they worked. The people on the ranches were, for the most part, self-sufficient and grew the food they needed. Some ranch compounds resembled small villas. Cattle were valued for hide and tallow and some cattle were sold for local consumption. Due to government regulations, cattle were not to be exported to other provinces. However, some ranchers did sell or trade cattle at the annual fairs in Saltillo.

Andres Hernandez' ranch, San Bartolome, and Luis Menchaca's ranch, San Francisco, in a compromise agreement in 1758, became two of the first private ranches in Texas. Hernandez' ranch was near

Longhorns & Sabers

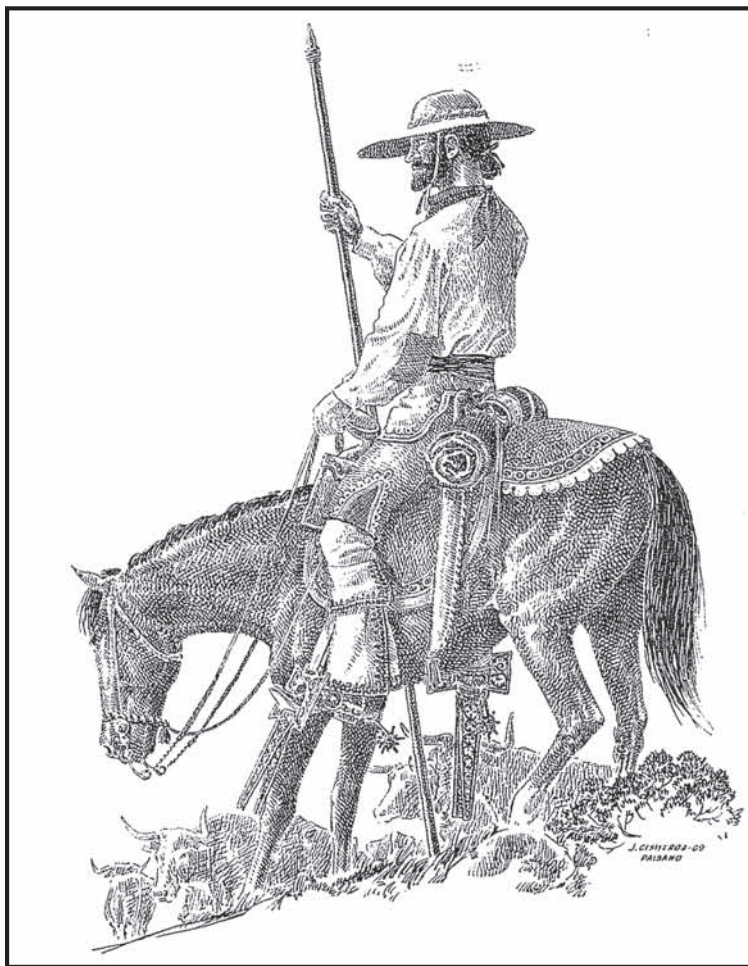
Panna Maria. Luis Menchaca's ranch was located on the east side of the San Antonio River between Floresville and Falls City.

The mission ranches and private ranches had large herds of cattle running free and unmarked on the land. A few of the ranchers had special brands for their cattle. Juan Jose Flores had a brand which was registered July 1, 1762. This was one of the first registered brands in Texas which was actually used. A Spanish official, Teodoro de Croix, visited Bexar in January 1778. He wished to bring order to the livestock industry and make sure the crown profited from it, by declaring all wild and unbranded stock to be the property of the king. Croix declared that the ranchers must brand their cattle. If they were not branded, they belonged to the king. A tax was imposed on the cattle and horses that were branded. Spain had much to gain from taxing cattle and horses. Thus owners of the cattle and horses had to round them up and brand them. This created a hardship on the private ranchos as well the Mission ranchos. It was no small task to round up the wild, rangy Longhorns with their expansive horn spans and brand them.

Texas ranchers had for many years been left alone with their cattle and horses. They lived in Texas, the frontier of New Spain. These men were independent-minded individuals who had learned to function with little help from the government. Now the Spanish government wanted to tax their cattle. They did not like the idea! Some ranchers began to round up cattle and trail herds of cattle, branded or unbranded, toward the Rio Grande where they could sell the beef. Some ranchers trailed cattle to markets outside Texas. This did not please the Spanish authorities. The Spanish government could not collect taxes on the cattle and was most unhappy. Some of the ranchers were placed in confinement in San Antonio.

Trade with Louisiana had been prohibited, but was opened again in 1779. Texas Longhorns were herded along the Old San Antonio Road through Natchitoches and toward the Opelousas region. However, this policy was revoked during the rule of Governor Domingo Cabello y Robles (1778-1786).

In 1779, during the time of the American Revolution, Spain aided the Americans in their fight against



Great Britain. General Bernardo Galvez, a Spanish general, was fighting the British along the Gulf Coast. General Galvez realized that if he had beef to feed his men, they could fight better and walk farther. He knew where to find beef. He had been to Texas and knew of the cattle-rich area between San Antonio and La Bahia. He talked to authorities in this region and a cattle drive was organized. Local ranchers and vaqueros rounded up cattle from ranches in this area. A herd of 970 head of Longhorn cattle were driven to Opelousas, Louisiana, and turned over to General Galvez's army. Texas, without a doubt, had a connection to the American Revolution.

The San Antonio Missions and their ranches were subject to secularization in 1790. Indians remaining at the missions were supplied with tools, livestock and some land to farm. Some of the private ranches were allowed to acquire vast acreages of land previously claimed by the missions. Ignacio Calvillo claimed the ranch compound and some of the ranchland of Las Cabras. Manuel Barerra

also acquired some of the lands of Rancho de las Cabras.

By the time of secularization, the ranching families had begun to live on the ranches that were located outside San Antonio. However, when the Indians were raiding, many of the families stayed in San Antonio. If they were on the ranches at the time of Indian trouble, they may be able to obtain help from the soldiers at Fuerte Del Cibolo, located halfway between San Antonio and La Bahia. Some of the early settlers would find security behind the rock walls of Rancho de las Cabras and the thick walls of Casa Blanca, which belonged to Erasmo Seguin. The Arocha family, Calvillo, Delgados, Barreras, Floreses, Traviesos, Menchacas, Seguins, Sambranos, Traviesos, Carvajals and De la Zerdas were some of the ranch families living in the area we know today as Wilson County.

Texas was a long way from Spain, but it felt the effects of happenings in Spain. Napoleon Bonaparte's French troops invaded Spain and took Madrid in 1808. King Charles IV and his son Ferdi-

nand VII were placed under house arrest. King Charles IV wanted to abdicate his throne in favor of his son, Ferdinand VII. However, Napoleon gave the throne to his brother, Joseph Bonaparte. The Spanish people did not want Joseph as their king. Councils were drawn up in Seville, Spain, by bureaucrats to govern Spain in the name of Ferdinand VII. Some of these bureaucrats, it was believed, favored French rule.

New Spain was cut off from the peninsula of Spain, the motherland. Citizens and some of the members of government of New Spain rejected Napoleon. There was disagreement in Mexico on who should rule New Spain. The people were not sure who was passing the orders down that they must live by. There was confusion among the people of New Spain and that included Texas.

September 16, 1810, Father Hidalgo, a parish priest, rang his liberty bell at the parish church in the villa of Dolores, Mexico. The priest called on his people to defend their country for King Ferdinand VII and the holy religion. Father Hidalgo felt that the present Spanish government would surrender New Spain to France. A revolution had started. News of the events traveled to Texas. Texas became caught up in it.

In 1810, men began to have secret meetings in San Antonio. They had news of happenings in Spain, and they knew that a Frenchman was on the throne in Madrid. They had also heard of Father Hidalgo's movement. This movement swept over Mexico and moved closer to Texas. Governor Salcedo did his best to keep revolution out of Texas. Many rumors spread in the villa and people were confused. Governor Salcedo was a Royalist and supported the Spanish crown. However he knew that Texas citizens were dissatisfied with French rule in Spain.

Hidalgo's movement continued in. In San Antonio some of the men moved to their ranches where they could talk to each other freely. The talk of a government takeover grew intense. Gavino Delgado, the husband of Maria Calvillo, went to the Calvillo ranch, Paso de las Mujeres, on the west side of the San Antonio River, near present-day Floresville. Manuel Sambrano was at Laguna de Las Animas, near present-day Poth. The Arochas were at their ranch, San Ra-

fael, on the east side of the San Antonio River. Eramos Seguin and others were near.

There were different views among the men. Some were royalists and did not want to go against the Spanish crown. Some wanted to follow Hidalgo and hold Texas for Ferdinand VII and the holy religion. Some just wanted to make Texas independent. Finally they met and developed plans for a government takeover. They needed a leader.

Juan Bautista de las Casas, a former officer of the Nuevo Santander Militia, was visiting in San Antonio and heard that there was talk of a revolt. He was interested in leading a revolt. Word was sent to the men at their ranches and some of them returned to San Antonio. Some remained quiet and stayed on their ranches. Notable among these was Manuel Sambrano. He was a royalist and made it clear that he was. He was the sub-deacon of San Fernando Church and was a colorful character. He had long golden hair, and wore a long military sword buckled to his waist. He was known to gamble and he liked to pick fights. The governor would talk to him about his behavior and often expelled him from the capital. Sambrano would go to his rancho, Laguna de Las Animas, until the governor cooled off, then he would return to the villa. Rumors were spreading that Governor Salcedo and Lt. Col. Herrera would leave San Antonio defenseless against Indian attacks. Many, including some of the Spanish troops, believed it.

On January 26, 1811, Las Casas and some followers went to the military barracks and the troops captured their royalist commanders. They went to the government building. There they arrested Governor Salcedo and Lt. Col. Herrera, the governor of Nuevo Leon. They were placed in the governor's house under guard with the royalist soldiers. They would be taken to Mexico. Men were sent to other settlements in Texas. Trinidad de Salcedo and Nacogdoches were taken. Soon, the entire province of Texas was free of royalist rule.

Las Casas was their leader, but he was not what the people had believed him to be, and they became dissatisfied with him. It was said that he took livestock from the royalists living in the area. The ranchers felt strongly about

ranchers keeping their livestock – even the royalists. Las Casas did not appear to recognize the participants in the revolt and gave them no credit for their part in it. He was ungrateful.

Manuel Sambrano was waiting at his ranch, Laguna de Las Animas. Friends and relatives in San Antonio kept him informed about happenings there. He thought it was time to return to San Antonio. Some members of important families – Perez, Seguin, Ruiz, Arocha, Travieso, Leal, Menchaca, Delgado and others – were at meetings. These leaders finally decided to free Texas of Las Casas.

They would hold Texas until Governor Salcedo returned to San Antonio. A council of 12 men was elected to rule Texas until Governor Salcedo returned. Some men were not happy with this decision and went to Mexico to join the revolution in Mexico. Later, some of these men became a part of the Republican Army of the North. The council elected to rule Texas was: Manuel Sambrano was the president. Gavino Delgado, Erasmo Seguin and Captain Antonio Saenz were among the leaders. Sambrano, Delgado and Seguin lived in the area that is today Wilson County.

The English Colonies in America declared their independence from England on July 4, 1776. They became a new nation, the United States of America. In 1800 France obtained the Louisiana Territory from Spain and she sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States in 1803.

The United States recognized Spain's claim to Texas, but a dispute arose over the boundary. The United States felt that the Sabine River was the boundary. Spain claimed that the boundary was farther east where she had established a presidio and a mission. There was an agreement by both nations that this disputed land would be neutral territory.

The Texans had made an attempt toward independence with the Las Casas uprising. This venture failed but the smell of revolt was still in the air. Some American adventurers wanted to be a part of a revolt. Some men had fled Texas when the Las Casas uprising ended. They still wanted Texas to be independent and many of these men were gathering in the Neutral Territory.

Gutierrez was a Mexican Re-

publican who fled Texas in 1811. He wanted to form an army and march in to Texas. Augustus Magee was a young, American military officer stationed in Natchitoches. He wanted to set up an independent government in Texas. He joined forces with Gutierrez. The young officer whipped these men into shape and they formed an army known as "The Republican Army of the North." The Republican Army of the North, which was some 200 strong, crossed the Sabine River in 1812 and captured Nacogdoches. They were carrying a green flag. Then they started south toward San Antonio. Governor Salcedo and an attachment of Spanish troops knew of the invasion and were waiting for them in San Antonio. There were still men in San Antonio who wanted independence from Spain. They met the Republican Army of the North at San Marcus and warned them that the Spanish Army was waiting for them. They rode to La Bahia and captured members of the Spanish Army at the fort.

In La Bahia, Lt. Magee died and another American, Samuel Kemper replaced him. Governor Salcedo and his Spanish troops marched along the San Antonio and La Bahia Road toward La Bahia. Once there, they attacked the fort where the Republican Army of the North was quartered. This army was under siege in the fort from December into February.

The Spanish Army was low on supplies. It was winter and the men were not suitably dressed for cold weather. They started marching back toward San Antonio along the San Antonio and La Bahia Road. The Republican Army of the North followed them. There was some fighting along the way, and the Republican Army of the North was winning. The Spanish army retreated to San Antonio.

April 1, 1813, the Republican Army of the North marched to the gates of Bexar, captured the Spanish Army and raised the green flag. They had taken Texas. A declaration of independence was written, and a constitution drawn up. San Antonio would be the capital of a new republic – The Texas Republic.

From April until August 1813, Texas was independent of Spanish rule. In Mexico, the Spanish Army was getting ready to end this newly gained independence. In 1813, Spanish General Arre-

dondo started marching his troops toward San Antonio. The Republican Army of the North knew he was coming and chose to meet him outside of San Antonio. They met in a sandy valley, about ten to twelve miles below the Medina River. There they engaged in a battle known today as the Battle of Medina. A few men from this area joined Arrendondo's army. One of the men from this area to ride with the Spanish Army was Manuel Sambrano. Many fell in with the Republican Army of the North. The names of Delgado, Arocha, Menchaca, and others owned ranch land that is today, Wilson County. As the battle started, a young lieutenant called Santa Anna led men into battle. Texans were to know of him at a later date and another revolt – the Texas Revolution. The battle was bloody and intense. Lives were lost on both sides.

The Spanish Army outnumbered the Republican Army of the North. Many of the Texans were killed. Some of the Americans and the Texans escaped and headed toward the Sabine River and Louisiana. The Spanish followed them – capturing some and killing others.

The area we know today as Wilson County realized a great change. Many of the ranchers who fought for independence were gone. Some died on the battlefield and some were killed attempting to reach and cross the Sabine River. Some of the wives and daughters of the rebels were confined to La Quinta, a Spanish prison for women in San Antonio. Terrorized residents and Indians fled to the Neutral Ground and into Louisiana. Ranches were abandoned, crops neglected and herds untended. In some cases, property of the rebels was taken. Bodies of the fallen rebels lay on the battle field for nine years. Families were not allowed to bury them. It was as if a whole way of life had passed in the period of a few days. Those who survived were once again under the rule of Spain. But there had been a taste of independence and men would not forget it.

Mexico gained freedom from Spain and took over Texas 1821. In 1836, in another revolution, Texas declared her independence from Mexico. She became a Republic and finally became a part of the United States.

Rancho de las Cabras

Mission San Francisco de la Espada, which rests on the west side of the San Antonio River in San Antonio, Texas, was moved to that location in 1731. Each of the five San Antonio missions was granted permission to use tracts of land beyond those on which the missions were located. Mission Espada's extensive grazing lands became known as Rancho de las Cabras, the Goat Ranch. The compound of Rancho de las Cabras is located on the west side of the San Antonio River about 30 miles from Mission Espada. Approximately 300 head of cattle a year supplied Mission Espada's Indian inhabitants with beef.



Rancho de las Cabras brand

In 1762, Rancho de las Cabras had many cattle, sheep and goats, as well as horses and burros. A mission's goal of becoming self-sufficient depended on the success of its farm and ranch. Ranching along the San Antonio River proved to be profitable. Structures at the ranch compound were probably built between 1758 and 1762 to house the Indian vaqueros and their families who maintained the herds.

The ruins of the Rancho de las Cabras compound are thought to be the last known intact ranch complex associated with a colonial mission in Texas. The 15-foot sandstone walls enclosed the ranch compound. Inside the walls were living quarters for the vaqueros. A chapel was also located at the compound.



Walter and Edna Guenter at Rancho de las Cabras.

El Rancho De San Francisco

By Maurine Liles and Gene Maeckel

El Rancho de San Francisco was part of the first land grant issued in Texas for a private ranch. It is one of the oldest and largest on record in the Spanish Archives of the general land office in Austin, Texas. The ranch was located in El Rincon, a fertile, grassy, wedge of land between the San Antonio River and the Cibolo Creek. It was situated in present-day Wilson and Karnes counties. El Rancho de San Francisco consisted of eleven leagues and two labores of which one-fourth (12,730 acres) was in Karnes County and three-fourths (36,377 acres) were in Wilson County. This large ranch belonged to Luis Menchaca, once captain of the Presidio San Antonio de B  xar.

El Rancho de Francisco was part of a compromise grant issued to Andr  s Hern  ndez and Lu  s Menchaca on April 12, 1758. This old grant consisted of fifteen leagues and seven labores located in El Rinc  n. A land grant located in the fork of Cibolo Creek and the San Antonio River called San Bartolom   was first issued to Francisco Hern  ndez, father of Andr  s Hern  ndez by the Provincial Governor, Don Carlos de Franquis, about March 26, 1737. Francisco Hern  ndez had been a soldier in the Alarcon expedition. This grant consisted



A modern ranch: This is a Wilson County Ranch which belongs to Commissioner Larry Wiley and his wife, Dorothy.

of four leagues and eight caballer  as (league: 2.6 miles, and caballer  as: 105.7 acres).

Lu  s Menchaca's father had also been in the Alarcon expedition and had land in the same area. He brought suit to have San Bartolom  's lands included in his fifteen leagues, 12 caballer  as.

The court proceedings were taken to Mexico City and a special judge ruled against Hern  ndez. There was a "compromise agreement" on April, 12 1758. Andr  s Hern  ndez would hold legitimate the final sale of 15 leagues and 8 caballer  as made to Lu  s Menchaca. Lu  s

Menchaca transferred 4 leagues and 8 caballer  as to Andr  s Hern  ndez, including his place, San Bartolom  . Hern  ndez's land would lie along the west bank of Cibolo Creek and would consist of almost 20,000 acres partly in present-day Wilson County and partly in Karnes County. Menchaca's land consisted of eleven leagues and two labores (about 50,000 acres). 12,730 acres was located in present-day Karnes County and 36,777 acres was resting in present-day Wilson County.

This grant is the oldest on record and also one of the largest land grants in the General Land

Office for a private ranch. Thus, Karnes County and Wilson County have the site of the oldest private land grant on record in Texas. Legally, through this compromise agreement, El Rancho San Bartolom   and El Rancho San Francisco became two of the first private ranches in Texas. El Rancho San Francisco was the largest ranch.

Historian Walter Prescott Webb described a diamond-shaped area (Laredo, Brownsville, Indianola and San Antonio) as the cradle of the cattle industry. The ranches along the San Antonio River were situated well within the diamond-shaped area.

Erasmus Seguin

1782-1857

Erasmus Seguin was born May 26, 1782 (Juan José María Erasmo De Jesus Seguin), the third of seven children blessed in the marriage of Santiago Seguin and María Guadalupe Fuentes. Guillaume Seguin, Erasmo's ancestor, traveled from Gevauden Paris, France, in 1654, and sailed to New Spain. He settled in Aguascalientes, New Spain (present day Mexico). Jose Santiago de Seguin, a descendant of Guillaume, was born in the mission village of Mission San Antonio de Valero on the frontier of New Spain, Tejas.

Erasmus had for the most part been very active in Tejas politics. He was postmaster for the Department of Bexar (San Antonio) from 1807 until the latter part of 1835. He was not only a leading political figure but a prominent business man as well.

He opposed a Revolt against the Spanish, which broke out January 1811 in San Antonio, led the counter revolt, and served on the local governing council and later turned the office over to the returning Spanish royalist officers. Accused of collaborating with revolutionaries during the 1812 Gutiérrez-Magee expedition, his property was confiscated, and he was removed from office as postmaster. Unwilling to accept a pardon, he was later exonerated and his property returned and regained his position as postmaster. He was elected Alcalde, "Mayor" of San Antonio. His honesty and loyalty to Tejas were rewarded by being voted or appointed to several political positions during the Spanish, then Mexican and early Republic of Texas periods. Erasmo also received and accepted from the federal government an appointment as quartermaster for the San Antonio garrison.

The Seguin family had always believed in education and in 1812 Erasmo donated money and a small building that he owned to help establish the first public school in San Antonio.

On various occasions Erasmo had traveled in the United States and admired the freedom and growing prosperity of America. He befriended Moses Austin and at a crucial moment in history later met his son Stephen. Moses Austin had first petitioned Spain to bring American Settlers to colonize the lands in the lower Brazos, lands which were mostly uninhabited.

In 1821 Spain's Governor Antonio Martinez appointed Seguin to inform Moses Austin that his petition to bring settlers to Tejas had been approved. Erasmo and fellow travelers including 15-year-old Juan Seguin traveled to Nacogdoches to deliver the good news to Moses Austin that an American Colony in Tejas had

been approved. Moses had died and the project was left to his son, Stephen F. Austin. Erasmo Seguin and Stephen Austin from that day forward formed a friendship that would continue for the rest of their lives. Seguin assisted Austin in selecting land for the first colony of American settlers to immigrate to Texas.

Stephen F. Austin stayed with Seguin and his family on several occasions. Other visitors to Casa Blanca included Davy Crockett, Sam Houston and other notable Americans.

Following Texas independence he was elected magistrate. Judge Seguin proved to be impartial in conducting formal hearings of both minor and more serious charges regardless of the plaintiff or defendant's race, color or national origin.

He served as the deputy to Mexico after Mexico achieved independence from Spain. Seguin was named the sole representative from Texas to the Constitutional National Convention in Mexico. He helped to draft the constitution of 1824 and was a major influence in the addition of a general colonization provision for Tejas. This appointment was one of Erasmo Seguin's most important positions. Seguin worked to promote the interest of both his home, San Antonio, as well as the interest of the new settlers.

As a member of the colonization committee he worked on the liberal National Colonization Law of 1824, which left most issues of immigration and land distribution in the hands of state government.

He also worked for the inclusion of a provision allowing Tejas in the future to petition for separate statehood. Seguin worked for the loose interpretation of the requirement that settlers be Catholic. Then came Santa Anna. President and Mexico's military General, Santa Anna rose to power and quickly became a dictator. Seguin and a group of citizens sent him their objections and displeasures in the form of the "San Antonio Remonstrances" in protest. Seguin also organized the opposition convention in 1834. For what was considered his revolutionary actions, Santa Anna's brother-in-law, General Martin Perfecto de Cos, entered San Antonio with a small detail of men and removed Seguin from his role as postmaster. Cos denied Seguin transportation and forced him to leave on foot from San Antonio. During his 30-mile march, Seguin took his removal and expulsion from office and San Antonio to recruit men to go to his ranch, Casa Blanca. Those recruited helped win the Siege



Col. Juan Seguin, son of Erasmo.

of Bexar.

Like his forefather before him who sent cattle, grain and honey to General Bernardo de Galvez of Spain who aided the American colonists in the American Revolution for independence, Seguin sent provisions to the Alamo before the final siege.

Casa Blanca as his ranch was widely known became a source of supplies, which included beef cattle, horses, mules, corn and various other needed staples for the Texas army.

Don Erasmo Seguin was a very important contributor and key member of the Texas Revolution. His efforts were tireless in the continual development of Texas. He was named a Chief Justice of Bexar County December of 1837. He held that position until 1840 and retired to his beloved ranch "Casa Blanca" near present-day Floresville where he dedicated himself to his family and friends.

He was a man who loved God, his family, friends and Texas. He knew in his heart and mind that Texas was destined to become "The Great State of Texas."

Juan José María Erasmo De Jesus Seguin, the Texan, died on October 30, 1857, at his home, Casa Blanca.

Albert Seguin Carvajal Gonzales
Sources: María Seguin Carvajal Ramirez; Jesús F. de la Teja; Handbook of Texas

Making of Wilson County

By Maurine Liles

Most counties begin with a county seat that remains in the same location. Wilson County had difficulty deciding on a county seat and it moved several times before it settled into a permanent position. The area we know today as Wilson County was a part of Bexar County and the county seat was in San Antonio, Texas. In 1855 Dr. John Sutherland of Sutherland Springs and a veteran of the Texas Revolution sent petitions to the Texas Legislature asking this body to form a new county from portions of Bexar and Karnes counties. The act to create said county was approved by the Texas State Legislature on February 13, 1860. It was named Wilson County after James Wilson, an Englishman who came to Texas in the 1830s. He survived the ill-fated Mier Expedition and became a state senator. The Texas Legislature defined the boundaries of the county in the Laws of Texas, Section 1: "Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas, That all the territory comprised within, the following limits shall be created into a new county to be called Wilson – beginning on the west bank of the Cibolo, at the mouth of the Martinez Creek; thence on a straight line to the north east corner of Atascosa county line, hence south 39 degrees east with Atascosa line to the northwest corner of Karnes County; thence same course continued four and three quarter miles along the said Karnes County line; thence north 51 degrees east to the south-west boundary line, of Gonzales County; thence north 39 degrees west with Gonzales County line to the south-east boundary line of Guadalupe County; thence south with said line to the Cibolo; thence up the Cibolo with its meanders to the place of beginning."

The Texas State Legislature appointed Dr. G.J. Houston of Sutherland Springs to act as commissioner. He was instructed to organize the new county. It was his duty to order an election to elect county officers. The date of this election was to be published in the county. William Sutherland was elected Chief Justice. The county commissioners and other county officers were elected, and Dr. Houston administered the oath of office to them. The Wilson County Commissioners Court met

in Creed Taylor's concrete house in Sutherland Springs. Rent for this courthouse was set at \$8.50 per month. The commissioners were instructed to establish a jail, a school and provide grounds for a cemetery.

The Texas Legislature had clearly stipulated in The Laws of Texas, Section 4: "It shall be the duty of the court of Wilson County to ascertain by means of a plat and certificate from the General Land Office, under the seal of the same duly authenticated, the center of said new county, and select two or more sites nearest the center of said new county, having respect for any donation of land, that may be made for that purpose, as well as convenience of water, and when so selected the Chief Justice of said county shall order an election to fix said county seat."

Sutherland Springs was not in the center and therefore served as temporary county seat until a permanent county seat could be obtained. In this time frame, the mode of travel was horseback, wagon or buggy. The county seat needed to be in a central location so that the lawmakers could travel to it in a timely manner. Floresville was not in existence at that time but Lodi, located on the San Antonio and La Bahia Road, was a thriving, dynamic trade community on the San Antonio River. It was a larger community and nearer to the center of the county than Sutherland Springs. The court was petitioned to establish the Lodi and Sutherland Springs Road in 1860. It was established in 1861. The well-traveled road was a link between these two important communities. The distance traveled from one community to the other was lengthy and several campsites developed along this road. One such campsite was located on the Coldeway Ranch. It had the space for people in wagons to stop and the necessary water for people and their draft animals. People in wagons, buggies or horseback could camp for lunch or for the night, and ride on the next morning. The county seat also traveled back and forth between Sutherland Springs and Lodi several times.

Wilson County was very new when the American Civil War began. Texas flew the Confederate flag and many able-bodied men in the county fought under this banner. The Wilson County Commissioners Court met in Sutherland Springs and the business of the county was carried

out. Roads were designated, taxes were paid and court cases were tried. The business of finding a permanent county seat was put on hold.

The American Civil War came to an end in 1865 and the men who survived it returned to their families, to a weakened economy and a changed governmental structure in Wilson County. Following the American Civil War, Texas was under a "provisional government." Some people called it "carpet-bag government." Actually, the county was under northern rule, and the Wilson County Commissioners Court met under special orders of the Fifth Military District in New Orleans. The chief justice, now called "county judge," was appointed. The minutes of the Wilson County Commissioners Court, referred to the court as "the police court." William Longworth was appointed county judge. The issue of a permanent county seat was back on the table.

The commissioners court had been meeting in Creed Taylor's concrete house in Sutherland Springs until a county seat nearer the center of the county could be established. The court met on March 10, 1866. A certified map had been received from the General Land Office. Nominations of several likely sites were presented to the "Police Court." The site would be decided on by an election. Samuel W. Barker presented for nomination a tract of 200 acres lying near the San Antonio River in the name of his wife, Josefa A. Flores de Barker. John Sutherland offered a tract of old Sutherland Springs. T. J. Peacock offered 100 acres lying near Cibolo Creek. Josefa A. Flores de Barker's land carried the highest vote of 136. In December of 1867, Wilson County decided on the location of a county seat. The new, permanent county seat would be called Floresville after ancestors of Josefa A. Flores de Barker.

Lodi was named the county seat pro tem until the site could be made ready with a new survey and buildings. The records of the Wilson County Court were packed up and hauled by wagon to Lodi. The court met first in Juan Seguin's house. He was paid \$8.50 per month. Finally, the court moved to Pedro de la Zeda's building on Goliad Road. De la Zeda was paid \$8.00 per month for the courthouse rent. A jail was established in Lodi.

Floresville was surveyed and laid out in blocks and lots. Lots would be sold to raise needed money for the establishment of the new county seat. Things looked good, but the county seat was not ready to settle down.

The Wilson County Court records

were packed up and transported by wagon back to Sutherland Springs. Facilities at Lodi were deemed inadequate for the approaching spring term of the District Court. However, the court again packed up the records, and they were returned to Lodi by October of 1871. It is not known where the court met during this time.

The Wilson County boundary lines were changed several times. On January 19, 1869, the Texas legislators passed an act causing parts of Guadalupe County to be attached to Wilson County. They also declared and passed an act that the name of Wilson County would be changed to "Cibolo County." The name "Cibolo" was never applied and was soon changed back to Wilson. On March 13, 1874, another act was approved by the Legislature to enlarge the boundaries of Wilson County.

The courthouse was built on block 11, where the district judge's office is housed today. The process of building a three-room, frame courthouse on block 11 began. Finally, on May 28, 1872, Wilson County had a finished courthouse, and Floresville was established as the permanent county seat of Wilson County.

The court invested in a strong, fireproof safe to store the Wilson County records. A jail, built of red stone, was completed in 1875, on the corner of Second and "C" Streets. The court met in the three-room frame courthouse. As time went on, the courthouse became too small for all of the court's business and it needed many repairs. In 1883 it burned, but the records, stored in the fireproof safe, remain with us today.

The county was already planning to build a new courthouse when the old courthouse burned. Hearing of the plans to build a new courthouse, some 200 citizens presented a petition to the commissioners to move the county seat to Sutherland Springs. An election was held, but Floresville had the high vote. The county seat remained in Floresville.

Famed architect Alfred Giles started designing this prestigious building in 1883. Colonel Sidney Mead won the contract to build the structure. The foundation was laid by Serafin Lepori, a noted stone mason from Lodi. A cornerstone showing the names of the architect and builder was laid by the Masonic fraternity on George Washington's birthday, February 22, 1884. The new courthouse was built of red brick. Today, the bricks are covered with stucco and painted a cream color.

The Wilson County Courthouse is the only courthouse designed by Alfred Giles which is still being used for its original function.



James Charles Wilson

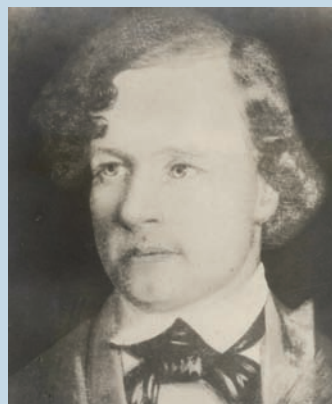
1818-1861

By Melissa Koepp Beck

James Charles Wilson was a Methodist minister and senator of Texas. Born in Yorkshire, England on August 24, 1818, he was the oldest son of John Kenilworth and Elizabeth Sterling Wilson. He was educated at Eaton and Oxford College and graduated with full honors at the age of 16 years. He worked as a public surveyor for the commons of England and had membership with the Queen's Guards. Spring 1836, his father informed James he arranged a marriage with their neighbor's daughter. When James explained he could not marry someone he had no affection for, his dad became enraged and struck James on the head with his cane. James left and went to London.

James Wilson first arrived in New York with his brother Oscar. They traveled to Galveston, Texas in 1837, shortly after the battle of San Jacinto. His brother became ill and passed away. James found himself penniless and alone in a strange land. Work-

ing to load and unload cargo in Galveston, he was able to raise enough money to carry himself into the interior, where he arrived in Bailey's Prairie in Brazoria County. James taught school in the community for two sessions and studied law. Recognizing his ability to think and write, he was employed to edit a newspaper in Columbia. In 1842, Mr. Wilson joined Charles K. Reese's company for the Somervell Expedition. He became a private in Company E on the Mier Expedition under William S. Fisher. He was captured in Mier, Mexico, on December 26, 1842, and imprisoned in Castle Perote near the City of Mexico. As a prisoner of war, he was chained to a comrade and forced to break stone. He refused to claim British protection even to secure his release from prison. Mr. Wilson claimed he owed allegiance only to the Republic of Texas. Imprisoned for about a year, Mr. Wilson and several other prisoners escaped and headed for Texas. At Matamoros he boarded a ship for Galveston and went back to work at the pa-



James Wilson

per in Columbia.

Mr. Wilson was a gifted orator and gave a speech in favor of Texas annexation. In 1844 he was elected to the office of Clerk of the District Court of Brazoria County which held for one term and was reelected for the second term but did not fulfill the entire term. He was licensed to practice law some time in 1845 by the District Court of Brazoria County. He married Miss Amelia Weakley on February

4th 1846. They had nine children; six preceded him in death. He moved to Wharton to practice law with his partner, Judge George Quinan. He was elected to the Third Legislature of Texas and was a member of the Fourth Legislature. In 1856, he was appointed by the governor to the Office of Commissioner of the Court of Claims to adjust and quiet old claims for grants to land under the colonization laws of Spain and Mexico.

James Wilson lived and worked in Austin until spring of 1857 when he was compelled to resign from his duties due to an illness. The climate in Austin not agreeing with his health, he moved to Gonzales about five miles southwest from the town. In 1858 he entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and preached until his death on February 7th, 1861. Wilson County was established in 1860 and named after James Charles Wilson himself. Credit should also be given to *James Charles Wilson A Sketch of His Life*.

These families support

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Sutherland Springs

By Dr. Richard E. McCaslin, Professor
Department of History, UNT

Sutherland Springs straddles State Highway 87 twenty-five miles east of San Antonio, close by Cibolo Creek in Wilson County. The community today appears unremarkable to most travelers driving through it. But if one looks closer, one can find vestiges of a past that was much more, and a history that reveals much about Texas and the South.

Sutherland Springs' history falls within two cycles, each centering on the efforts of entrepreneurs to turn the natural features of the site to their financial advantage. The first settlement was primarily a farming community. It expanded with the fortunes of the families that originally came to the area, and then collapsed during the Civil War and Reconstruction era, when the political and economic center of Wilson County shifted from Sutherland Springs to Floresville. The arrival of the railroad in San Antonio in 1877 provided for a rebirth. A tourist trade centering on the springs boomed with the completion of a spur line and depot. Floods, social changes, and the Great Depression ended this resort cycle, driving the remaining businesses back to the original town site. There Highway 87 had come through in 1925, slightly to the west of where people settled during the nineteenth century. Today the land surrounding Sutherland Springs is again devoted to farming and the rail lines are gone, although a few oil wells stand alongside cattle in the fields.

The first cycle of Sutherland Springs' history begins with the arrival of Joseph H. Polley and John Sutherland on the Cibolo. Polley, who grew up on a New York dairy farm, had established himself as a prosperous slaveholder, cotton farmer and rancher in Texas. He moved west from Austin's Colony in 1847 with his wife Mary Bailey Polley and their extended family, which included eight children. Two more would be born on the Cibolo, where Polley bought more slaves, expanded his cattle herds, and planted cotton and other crops, as did many of his neighbors. Among the latter by the fall of 1849 was Sutherland, a Virginia native who had survived the Alamo by serving as

a courier. Sutherland speculated in land, which led him to move west where there were more open tracts, and he was a self-trained doctor, with an appreciation for the potential health benefits, and profits, of the springs along the Cibolo. With a few slaves, and his third wife, Sutherland arrived with diverse plans to develop commerce.

Polley and Sutherland cooperated with others in developing the community their respective efforts required. Sutherland had a town site platted on the main road from San Antonio to the coast and opened a stage stop and post office, named Sutherland Springs in his honor. Polley's oldest son, Joseph B. Polley, recalled that the community by the mid-1850s had "half a dozen residences, one hotel, and two or three stores." By 1860, there were about four dozen households, including four merchants, three carpenters, two brothers who worked as drivers for Sutherland, a blacksmith, and a gunsmith. There were also three doctors, including Sutherland himself. The community needed a school, so Sutherland constructed a rock building, and Polley paid for books and teachers. The little school did well and moved into a larger concrete building before the Civil War. Sutherland was also a "zealous" Methodist, and he and Polley had the rock schoolhouse, so they sponsored the Sutherland Springs circuit of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. A. A. Smithwick, the first pastor, died in September 1860, but his place was filled by John S. Gillett, who in 1861 ministered to 86 white and 21 black members. To cap it all, when Sutherland succeeded in having Wilson County carved from Bexar County in 1860, his town became the county seat.

The Civil War began a period of decline for the little farming community. Many young men, including Joseph B. Polley and Sutherland's son Jack, joined the Mustang Grays, which became Company F of the 4th Texas Infantry in Hood's Texas Brigade. They suffered heavy losses with the Army of Northern Virginia, and those who came home were often crippled. Other youths enlisted in units closer to home as they matured, while males who were too old, young, or infirm to join the Army organized into militia companies. Families struggled

as state taxes increased fourfold and county taxes swelled tenfold, in addition to Confederate taxes. Polley served as the local treasurer of the state-chartered San Antonio Mutual Aid Association, created to provide assistance to families of Confederate soldiers. Sutherland Springs by March 1864 was the seat of a county with 57 indigent soldiers and 157 dependents, and these numbers increased during the last year of the war.

The Civil War left social as well as economic scars. The rock building regularly hosted Methodist meetings, and the community triumphantly hosted the convention of the Western Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, during November 1863. Unfortunately, though, the number of congregants declined. When the community school in the concrete building closed, local Methodists asked the Western Conference in 1864 to allow the trustees to use the rock building for a school. This request was granted by a committee whose members declared that they did so "in view of the obligations we are under to further the education of the children of our absent soldiers." They lamented that they could make no better arrangement, which continued for several years.

Reconstruction accelerated the decline of the community. Sutherland and then Polley died, as well as other pioneering leaders, and new office holders such as William Longworth secured state support for moving the seat of Wilson County to Floresville, in compliance with legislation requiring seats to be near the geographical center of counties. Cattle drives only partly replaced the economic losses due to wartime disruptions and emancipation, which were also enhanced by the demands of federal agents for internal revenue taxes, which were in arrears. Local blacks had few resources and either settled on small farms or made sharecropping arrangements. Polleys, Sutherlands, and other members of the original



**Dr. John Sutherland
(1792-1867)**

*Photo courtesy of Sutherland Springs
Museum*

white families moved to Floresville and elsewhere in search of economic and political opportunities that Sutherland Springs could no longer offer. In 1870, Sutherland Springs had 329 residents; ten years later, there were less than half that number. Most telling, the Sutherland Springs circuit of the Methodist Church had been dropped in favor of a new one headquartered in Floresville.

A second cycle of growth came with the completion of the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway into San Antonio in 1877. The rails passed north of Sutherland Springs, but the editor of the first newspaper in Wilson County, the Western Chronicle, begun in Sutherland Springs in January 1877, rejoiced that his community was "taking another start up hill." Six months before, hardly one wagon traveled the old stage road to San Antonio. Now convoys of mule-drawn wagons came through several times daily, and regular stage service began again. While most residents farmed, plans revived for expanding the tourist trade at the springs, which had never quite died. Sutherland's stage stop of course was gone, but Polley's widow still boarded visitors at Whitehall, her home. D. B. Messinger expanded his hotel, the Hygeia House, while P. S. Warren opened the Sutherland Springs Hotel nearby. Two schools operated in town, and itinerant ministers held both regular services

and revivals.

Several events allowed the expansion of resort efforts. The Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway merged into the Sunset Route of the Southern Pacific in 1883. Twelve years later, the San Antonio and Gulf Shore Railroad was completed as a spur line to the Cibolo. The new tracks lay across land once owned by Gideon Lee, who had built some of the first bathing facilities at the springs in the 1840s but during the 1880s resisted the efforts of developers to buy his property. Lee died in 1894, and promoters, while settling legal problems concerning rail linkages, built a depot and platted a new town site. In 1909, the Sutherland Springs Development Corporation sold several hundred lots in its first few months of sales.

New Sutherland Springs, as the resort community was called, became a success. Along Lee Avenue, named for Gideon Lee, a bank, movie theater, stores and homes were built. The residents had water and sewage lines, and telephones. The centerpiece was the Hotel Sutherland, a fifty-two room establishment that opened on Lee Avenue in June of 1909. Although most residences and businesses depended on kerosene lanterns and coal oil stoves for light and heat, electricity for the hotel and theater came from a barn full of batteries recharged with a gasoline-burning generator. Nearby were two bathing pools, a small one completely of concrete and a larger basin lined with masonry but with a dirt bottom. The large pool, nearly twelve feet in depth, spilled into the smaller one, creating a continuous system fed by fifteen springs. Developers claimed that it was the "largest concrete swimming pool in the South"; at 275 feet in length and nearly 100 feet in width, it might have been. At its edge stood a large bath house and dancing pavilion. A pump house covered the sour well, bottling the water for local sale, but visitors could drink free of charge from the chalybeate springs. Hot springs were available to help with arthritis and other such ailments.

Because Sutherland Springs stood on the Southern Pacific's Sunset Route, guests arrived from all over the world. Promoters claimed that 20,000 visitors came during the first year of operation,



Polley Mansion

and Sutherland Springs was compared favorably with venerable resorts such as Saratoga Springs in the United States and Carlsbad in Europe. Such bold assertions do stretch the limits of credibility, but the ledgers of the Hotel Sutherland for 1910 contain names from almost every state in the Union, along with some from Mexico, Canada, and England. San Antonio remained the best source of customers, and a bus line was established by the Southern Pacific to carry patrons to New Sutherland Springs and thus undermine discount fares offered by its subsidiary, the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad, for short day trips by rail to the Cibolo. By 1910 trains ran six or eight times on Sundays to New Sutherland Springs to handle crowds, but it remained a favorite place for locals as well. The developers erected an iron bridge across the Cibolo at the foot of County Avenue to accommodate a steady stream of road-borne travelers. After all, "Since there was no other entertainment in the area, this was the place to be."

Prosperity changed the face of Sutherland Springs, which included the old and new town sites. The population increased more than 200 percent from 1896 to 1910, when there were about 500 residents, more than three times what there had been thirty years earlier. The people remained primarily Texas-born whites, but there were changes. While the

black population had fallen to eight, the community had more northern- and foreign-born residents than ever before. There were more than two dozen from northern states, a dozen from Europe, and another dozen from Mexico. The presence of the latter was a particularly interesting shift for a town that had originally been an Anglo-American enclave in a region with a substantial Tejano population. Europeans added to the sense of internationalism. At the Hotel Sutherland, the manager was Dutch, the desk clerk was Irish, and one of the two resident cooks came from Italy. An Englishman ran the bank, and one of two restaurateurs was a German.

Economic development brought commercial diversity as well. Sutherland Springs in 1910 had three real estate brokers, 21 carpenters, seven laborers for "concrete work," two painters, and two electricians. A sign painter was kept busy working for a variety of businesses: a photographer, two barbers, four druggists, three blacksmiths, two draymen, ten merchants, a butcher, a baker, a liveryman, a laundryman, a cabinetmaker, and an iceman, as well as a rival to the Hotel Sutherland. Public improvements were evident in the presence of a civil engineer, two "poolmen," four workers who maintained streets, and three telephone operators. The discovery of the Mission oil field in Bexar County in 1907, just six years after the spectacular success of

Spindletop, sparked much interest in adjacent Wilson County. The census taker in 1910 found an oil prospector with a crew of three drillers in Sutherland Springs.

Some signs of the past remained. The town had four doctors, including 75-year-old John M. Weston. Thirteen farmers, a stock raiser, and a beekeeper lived in town, and one cotton gin continued to operate despite problems with boll weevils. The community still had a post office, of course. Four teachers lived in town, and 123 children, all white, attended a school that was segregated in accordance with the 1876 Texas constitution. In January 1899 local leaders had asked the legislature for \$5,000 to construct a high school at Sutherland Springs for the black children of Wilson County. Sadly, nothing came of the proposal. Mexicans attended the school for whites, but blacks went to a one-room primary facility outside of town.

Sutherland Springs had lost its newspaper by 1910 as the *Western Chronicle* had moved to become the *Floresville Chronicle Journal*. Newsman Thomas C. Richardson provided a solution when he established the New Sutherland Springs Health Resort. He later recalled the community fondly as a place of "sub-tropical beauty, with giant pecan trees and moss-draped live oaks in a fertile valley of the Cibolo River." The Sutherland Springs Development Corporation promised to support him

Sutherland Springs

by buying advertising and having him do all of their commercial printing, which he did. He bought his equipment from the “defunct San Antonio Gazette,” while his press and small office got electricity from a gasoline engine. Success allowed him to buy a bigger press and print a larger format newspaper, while he bought three town lots and built a “handsome home.”

New Sutherland Springs remained a family resort despite pretensions of becoming an “Atlantic City” in Texas. An Apostolic minister, James W. Scott, arrived by 1910, but Baptists had become the most numerous denomination in Texas, and they dominated the community. They built a Chatauqua meeting ground by the springs that later included a permanent shed to house revival meetings and summer encampments. The Southwest Texas Baptist Worker's Conference selected the site for their annual encampment and Bible school in 1909, and in 1910, 2,500 people attended a Baptist revival in Sutherland Springs. Not to be outdone, Masons opened a temple for the first time in the community and supported local bans on saloons, racetracks, and gambling. New Sutherland Springs thus became a fashionable place not only to try “taking the waters,” but to be seen with the “right people.”

The euphoria of success ended with a disastrous flood on October 8, 1913. The Cibolo rose rapidly, filling the pools with mud and flattening the dancing pavilion and other improvements. The Sutherland Springs Development Corporation, unable to afford necessary repairs, bankrupted. H. A. Speer sold the Corporation's property--the hotel, pools and facilities, and empty lots--to M. H. Townsend for \$47,000 on November 4, 1913. The demise of the Corporation ended their national advertising campaign, and New Sutherland Springs appeared to be doomed to oblivion.

Thomas J. Williams rescued the resort. At the request of his wife, the former Jimmie E. Smith, he purchased everything from Townsend in 1914. Williams was a successful East Texas sawmill operator who had founded T. J. Williams Mfg. Mill in Houston, a producer of prefabricated homes. He and his wife had moved to

San Antonio in 1912, where he owned and operated yet another lumber company. He came to Wilson County looking for oil, but spent the next ten years as the proprietor of New Sutherland Springs. Using materials from his operation in San Antonio, he built a simpler dancing pavilion and bath house on stilts by the pools, which he re-excavated. Nearby, he erected a large sanitarium with rooms for fifteen guests at a cost of \$10,000. New gravel streets were laid, and sidewalks and culverts were added along main avenues. A narrow-gauge spur line for a trolley ran from the pools to the railroad depot, where trains arrived daily from San Antonio.

The Health Resort congratulated Williams in July 1914, declaring that “the time has arrived when Sutherland Springs is due to take a long step forward in her destined career as a health resort.” A new Civic League cleaned up empty lots along Lee Avenue and hosted a Fourth of July celebration. Thousands participated in a rodeo, foot races, swimming contests, a baseball game, and a barbecue. Advertisements appeared for the Neuchatel Bakery as well as a barbershop, drugstore, garage, lumberyard, and several grocery and millinery stores. Two churches, Baptist and Presbyterian, had resident ministers, and the former conducted baptisms in the pools. Newcomers moved into homes fabricated by Williams, including a bungalow model known as the “Sutherland,” and Perdie Busby operated a boarding house for those who could not afford the Hotel Sutherland.

Williams maintained the family orientation but explored some new business ideas. W. H. Lillie as early as 1877 sold bottled water from Sutherland Springs in San Antonio, and the Sutherland Springs Hygeia Water Company incorporated in 1911, but only one proprietor of the latter, Judson Hume, endured. The Hume Sour Water Company opened a bottling plant at Sutherland Springs in 1912, and Hume became a frequent guest at the Hotel Sutherland, overseeing the packaging of mineral water for sale. His “Hume Sour Water” was allegedly praised by chemists at Texas universities for its “blood-making power,” which reportedly made it

effective for the treatment of “all catarrhal diseases of the stomach, liver and intestines.” Texas water sales plummeted by 1920, but medicinal water continued to sell, and World War I proved to be a boon for Williams when he won a contract to treat soldiers at his sanitarium.

Williams' wife died in 1920, and so he closed the Hotel Sutherland in 1923 and sold his trolley to Brackenridge Park in San Antonio. He lost interest, largely because of a decline in visitors. He had been content with small crowds, but by the 1920's tourists began to bypass his resort. Travel was no longer restricted to the railroad: Automobiles allowed people to explore new options. Too, experts in medical science rejected natural healing, including mineral water treatment, in a rush to embrace more modern chemistry, while the federal government pushed for greater truth in advertising health products of all varieties. The clientele of the Hotel Sutherland thus declined, and Williams closed the doors and moved alone into the old sanitarium. He kept the dancing pavilion and pools open, charging admission for locals who still came.

New Sutherland Springs survived the decline of the tourist trade by relying on farming. It had always drawn revenue from small truck farms and ranches, and stock pens and a cotton gin stood by the railroad tracks on one end of town. Some of the new settlers had come for the five- and ten-acre plots offered by the Development Corporation as farms, relying on San Antonio for a ready market. More land for crops near the heart of town had become available for planting because the Corporation never sold all of its lots, and farmers simply plowed through them. New Sutherland Springs in the 1920s still provided farmers with services such as shops, a bank, the movie theater, which improved with the installation of electric lines in 1926, and a post office.

The changing face of New Sutherland Springs was revealed in the 1930 census. The population remained between 300 and 400 people, and laborers were the largest category of worker, but farmers had increased in number. Among all groups were more

Hispanics and blacks. The biggest employers were dairies, who had two dozen laborers, farmers, and drivers on their payroll. The town had two blacksmiths, two carpenters, a garage, and a cotton gin, as well as a druggist, two grocers, two dry goods merchants, and a shoe store. Other residents were salesmen and teachers, and there was even a lawyer and a county commissioner. The railroad depot employed two people, and seventy-year-old Sue H. McAlister served as the postmaster. The census taker found no physicians to tend visitors, nor were there any hotels or restaurants. Almost everyone was a Texas native; of those who were not, most came from Southern states. Only twelve residents said they had been born outside the United States: five in Germany and seven in Mexico.

A run of bad luck finished New Sutherland Springs. Farm prices remained low through the 1920s. In 1927, a tremendous fire from an exploding coal oil stove burned several blocks. The bank folded once, then recovered in time to collapse entirely after the stock market crash of 1929. Many other businesses closed as well when the Great Depression hit Texas farmers hard. After Williams died in 1928, the dancing pavilion closed permanently. His son, Brown C. Williams, moved his large family into the hotel, which had been repeatedly vandalized, in 1930. He and his wife supported their seven children by renting rooms and hosting dances in the hotel, and operating a grocery store in the old bank building.

The Depression, which crushed Texas farmers and businessmen alike, proved to be the end for Sutherland Springs as a resort. Thomas J. Williams had remarried, and his second wife kept the pools open after he died, apparently charging a small admission fee. But there was no one to clean the pools after the periodic floods, and they reached a sad state of repair. Few came except on July 4, when a rodeo and other events highlighted a tremendous annual celebration. A doctor rented the sanitarium and treated patients until the late 1930s. He used Messinger's Hygeia House for offices and examination rooms, but may have been ruined by the railroad company's

decision in 1935 to demolish the depot. It was replaced with a shack for receiving mail for the post office, which had earlier moved to the original town site. After Williams' second wife died in 1943, the pools also closed. Brown C. Williams had moved his family out of the hotel three years earlier, though a Baptist minister still used it as a parsonage.

A writer for the Works Progress Administration visited New Sutherland Springs during the late 1930s. He found "a large hotel, encircled by verandas, with hundreds of rooms and great gloomy

halls" that "now stands abandoned under the funereal oaks." He described how "Cracked sidewalks wander off into the hogweeds, the whole reminiscent of an attraction that no longer appeals." Brown C. Williams died in 1944 after selling the Hotel Sutherland to Patillo Higgins Jr. The namesake of a pioneer in the Spindletop oil field and an oilman himself who had tried to herd cattle, Higgins began raising Buffle Grass, which he had developed. He filled the pools with dirt and purchased many town lots in New Sutherland Springs and bulldozed houses and the hotel to expand

his grass production. The remaining commercial buildings of New Sutherland Springs became empty ruins in his fields, which expanded again after renovation of Farm Market Road 539 in the late 1950s and early 1960s led the county to sell lots owned by long-absent landlords. Thomas C. Richardson remarked in his autobiography, "Pat Higgins is now irrigating grass where my proud handiwork once stood."

Old Sutherland Springs survived the resort, but just barely. In 1900, before the new development, the original town site boasted three or four stores, the post

office, a telephone office, one hotel, a lumberyard, a school, and a church. Thirty years later the tract was almost deserted. Completion of State Highway 87 followed by the closing of the railroad depot sparked a new commercial migration. Businesses settled along the highway, almost a mile west of the old town site and three miles from New Sutherland Springs. The focus was no longer the springs or railroad, but the road from San Antonio to the coast, like that which originally attracted John Sutherland. Five stores and a grist mill were joined by two service stations and a garage

Joseph H. Polley 1795-1869

By Dr. Richard E. McCaslin, Professor
Department of History, UNT

Joseph H. Polley was born in 1795 at Whitehall, New York. His father, Jonathan Polley, was a Connecticut native who fought in the American Revolution. The elder Polley raised dairy cattle, and several of his seven children settled close to their birthplace and stayed in that business. But Joseph left home as a teamster for a militia company during the War of 1812, and then traveled west with, according to family lore, fifty cents and a horse.

Somehow Polley found Moses Austin and accompanied him on his 1820 journey to San Antonio. Austin secured an empresario grant, but he died at New Orleans and his son Stephen F. Austin took charge of the colony. The younger Austin recalled that Polley joined him as he traveled to San Antonio in the summer of 1821. After confirming his grant, Austin returned to Louisiana to recruit while Polley remained in Texas.

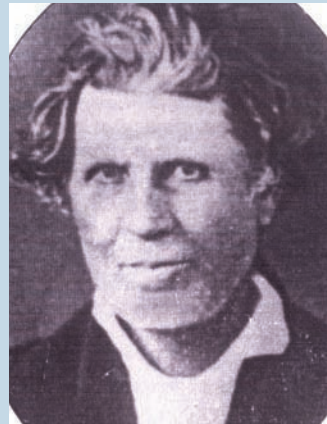
Polley prospered in Austin's Colony, where he got two leagues: one in Brazoria County as a partner of Samuel Chance and another in Fort Bend County for his own. He settled on his headright, but then moved to Columbia and later San Felipe. To secure his property under Mexican law, which required landowners to be Catholic, he had Father Michael Muldoon bless his 1826 marriage to Mary B. Bailey, the daughter of James B. Bailey. With her help, Polley raised crops and livestock, and he worked for other settlers. The couple also opened their home as a public house. After a few years in San Felipe, the Polleys moved to Brazoria County, settling on land inherited from Mary's father. By this time, Mary had three children. She had six more before they moved west, where two more sons brought the total number of children to eleven.

Polley diversified his economic efforts, and selling some of his land generated cash

that he used to buy more property. By 1837, he had nearly 10,000 acres scattered across southwest Texas. Encouraged by the success of his neighbors, and by Austin who awarded silver cups for the best cotton crops, Polley bought slaves and grew cotton. He sold four bales in 1843 for nearly six hundred dollars. Prices fluctuated wildly, however, and when two bales in 1844 brought less than seventy dollars, Polley abandoned cotton but not slavery. His enduring interest became cattle, which brought him the most profit. He registered his first brand, a linked JHP, in 1837. When he moved west a decade later, he was reputed to be one of the richest Texans, paying taxes on 600 cattle as well as nine slaves, twenty horses, and 4,478 acres outside of his new home site.

Polley's economic success led to politics. In 1826, he became the first sheriff of Austin's Colony. Later, meetings of the Congress of the Texas Republic were held in his home. Family members claimed that Gov. Henry Smith first used a star on his button as a seal for the fledgling government at Polley's house, thus establishing the Lone Star, and that the Lone Star flag was created there. Polley also served on steering committees for meetings at Brazoria that endorsed the annexation of Texas by the United States.

Polley appeared to be settled in the Austin Colony, yet he moved. His crops had begun to suffer from poor soil, and he needed room for cattle. Open-range grazing was a standard practice in Austin's Colony, and much unclaimed land would be more accessible from a home near San Antonio. His daughter



Joseph Polley



Mary Polley

Emeline in 1847 married John James, chief surveyor of Bexar County. James wrote to Polley about the market potential of Mexico. Joseph and Mary walked over a tract on Cibolo Creek with James, and they bought the land from him.

Another factor pushing Polley from Brazoria was disease, particularly cholera. An 1832 outbreak killed about eighty people, including Polley's father-in-law. Medical care was expensive and uncertain: Polley spent \$125 on doctor's visits and still lost a son at the age of four. It was generally known that the chances of avoiding cholera improved away from the stagnant waters of the coast. Further evidence of Polley's concern can be seen in his settling two miles from the marshy lands on the Cibolo, and his construction of a cistern to catch rainwater for drinking. The nearby springs were expected to help cure any maladies.

Fear of Indians kept some settlers away from the Cibolo, but raids east of San Antonio lessened following removal efforts during the Republic and early statehood. Life was not

Polley continued on next page

Sutherland Springs

to tend a stream of automobiles. The two-room schoolhouse in New Sutherland Springs closed, merging with the larger, two-story school near the old town in 1938.39

Sutherland Springs did not have much to celebrate in 1947, the centennial of Joseph H. Polley's arrival on Cibolo Creek. Sutherland had prospered in the stage trade, but travel was different in the twentieth century. Sutherland Springs, like many

Texas crossroads communities, was not needed, so it declined. The school in Old Sutherland Springs, an earlier source of rivalry with the newer resort development, burned in 1947, leaving few focal points for local identity. The gymnasium survived and was rebuilt as a community center, which still stands, by the new Sutherland Springs Civic Club in 1950, but the school district consolidated with Floresville. The nine businesses operating in 1947

dwindled to two by 1959, the railroad closed in 1971, and by 1980 the population was 114.

Yet Sutherland Springs still endures, and has grown to almost 400 residents. The First Baptist Church, organized in 1926, outlasted four others as the congregation met in the school, a private home, and an old store before they built a sanctuary in 1949. As a sign of changing times, the bell in their steeple came from the Methodists, who in turn got it

from the Presbyterians. The post office also endured, occupying two new buildings since 1947. A volunteer fire station stands next to the community center, and a museum opened as well as a handful of businesses. Visitors can still see Polley's Whitehall and a well where Sutherland's home stood. The ruins of New Sutherland Springs are crumbling fast, but a few of Williams' homes remain, stubborn signs of one small town's history.

Polley continued

entirely peaceful: Indians stole horses from the Polleys in 1848 and 1849, others in 1854 abducted one of Polley's slaves, and a band in 1855 killed a boy and a slave woman. Such raids were common in many parts of Texas, however, and did not dissuade Polley from moving.

Polley worked hard on the Cibolo. He built a picket house, slave cabins, and brush pens for livestock, and then expanded his operations. His daughter Emeline died a year after marrying James, but he remained Polley's broker for selling cattle to Mexico and California. Polley and his widowed daughter Mary A. Polley registered their brands, and James hired men to reopen the road from San Antonio to the Rio Grande. In 1854, James trailed cattle to California, but the trip proved costly, and the experiment was not repeated. Mary A. Polley in 1852 married Walker K. Baylor, who became Polley's chief lieutenant. By 1859, Ed Tewes, who worked for Polley, estimated his herds numbered about 150,000. Tewes said that he helped to brand 3,500 calves in Guadalupe County that year for Polley, and at least that many the previous year in Bexar County. Baylor recorded the branding of about one-sixth the number of cattle claimed by Tewes each year, but it still appears that Polley had done well.

Polley reinvested a lot of his profits. His estate on Cibolo Creek grew to more than 2,400 acres in 1860. Meanwhile, his total holdings increased to over 13,500 acres. These tracts were scattered from Fort Bend and Brazoria counties in the east to Uvalde and Medina counties in the west, and as far north as Burnet and Llano counties. Each parcel included frontage on a perennial stream, guaranteeing access to water. Polley in 1860 also paid taxes on nineteen slaves, 120 horses, 1,800 cattle, and 25 sheep. He told the census taker that he was worth over \$135,000, which made him a wealthy Texan.

Polley's economic expansion led him back to cotton. His annual pork production increased to nearly 23,000 pounds by 1856, and he sold hay and horses. He acquired a contract from the Army in 1851 to provide corn for soldiers traveling on the Chihuahua Road between San Antonio and the coast, but by 1857 his herds were so large that he had to buy corn himself. He tried raising sheep, selling the wool in New York City through his

brother Jonathan. The high price of cotton in the late 1850s tempted Polley to have slaves plant it again despite his failure to have a railroad built to transport the staple. He contracted with James to sell bales through a Mexican factor in San Antonio in 1860.

Polley's prosperity naturally led to a desire for a proper home. Jonathan visited from New York and drew blueprints for Whitehall. It took two years to finish the shell, and Joseph spent five years completing and furnishing the rooms. A log kitchen, cotton gin, and slave cabins stood close to other outbuildings. Elegant furnishings from New York, a large porch with white columns, and a sodded yard with flowering shrubs and citrus trees completed the Polleys' home.

Polley not only prospered on the Cibolo, he also became involved in developing a community. An associate from the Austin Colony, John Sutherland, platted a site and opened a post office, named Sutherland Springs in his honor. The community needed a school. Polley had sent several children to New York schools before helping to establish a high school in Seguin. For younger offspring, he briefly had Sarah A. L. B. Hardinge teach classes at Whitehall. When Sutherland built a rock building in Sutherland Springs, Polley provided the funds for books and teachers. Although the school did well, Polley still sent his son, Joseph B. Polley, to college at Florence Wesleyan Institute in Alabama. Polley was also concerned about religion and sponsored a Sunday school in the Austin Colony and at Whitehall. It is not clear what denomination he favored, but his wife was Presbyterian and he met Hardinge at a Southern Methodist revival. He and Sutherland had the schoolhouse, so they founded the Sutherland Springs circuit of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Polley's prominence again drew him into politics. He sponsored voting stations at his home in 1852 and 1857. Polley generally voted for Democrats, but he abhorred extremists and supported the Know-Nothings when Texas Democrats grew shrill about slavery. When Texas left the Union, however, he accepted the majority decision and thus parted with his New York relatives as well as James and Sutherland, both of whom were Unionists. Joseph B. Polley joined the Mustang Grays, which became Company F of the 4th Texas Infantry, in Hood's Texas Brigade. Joseph's

brother Abner H. Polley and their nephew Joseph E. Polley joined Company G of the 33rd Texas Cavalry.

The war financially ruined Polley. He contracted to sell cotton in New Orleans, but the Federal capture of that city ended this venture. A drought plagued Polley and his neighbors, and when he sold cotton in Mexico, he profited little because duties had to be paid in specie. If he avoided duties by selling in San Antonio, agents there often paid with Confederate money, which fell to two percent of its original buying power by 1864. State taxes increased fourfold and county taxes tenfold, in addition to Confederate taxes. State and county taxes fell after the war, but the federal government demanded internal revenue taxes, which were in arrears. Despite his troubles, Polley served as the treasurer in Sutherland Springs for the San Antonio Mutual Aid Association, one of many such organizations created to support soldiers' families.

After the war, Polley struggled to secure a pardon and support his family. Under President Andrew Johnson's proclamation of May 29, 1865, some Confederates had to ask for executive pardons. Upon James' advice, Polley wrote to Johnson in September 1865 and again in April 1866. He got an endorsement from Gov. Andrew J. Hamilton, but his pardon did not come until 1867, after he signed a second loyalty oath. The end of the war also brought emancipation, and wartime losses further cut potential manpower. Joseph B. Polley had lost his right foot in the war, while his brother-in-law, Connally F. Henderson, had been killed as a Mustang Gray. Polley hired some former slaves, planted cotton, sold land, and contracted with Walker Baylor and others to oversee his herds, but when he died in 1869 he left little to his wife Mary and their children except Whitehall, a lot of hungry livestock, and tracts scattered across South Texas. Mary boarded visitors at Whitehall until she died in 1888, but most of her grown children left Sutherland Springs, especially after the house was sold in accordance with her will.

NOTE: Children of Joseph and Mary Bailey Polley were: Mary Augusta (Baylor), James Bailey, Emeline Elizabeth (James), Susan Rebecca (Henderson-Brooks), Sarah Adel, Catherine Sayre, Joseph Benjamin, Harriet Roxanna (Houston), Abner Hubbard, Jonathan James and Walter Webster.

Sutherland Springs, Texas



"The Community with a romantic past and a mindful eye on its future"

Dr. Harry Lee Walker 1990

Cemetery Association Est. 1860

- Annual Meeting: Last Sat. April @ 2 p.m.
- Memorial Day Ceremony: @ 9:30 a.m.
- Clean – Up Day: 3rd Sat. Oct. 8:30 a.m.

(830-947-4293)

Volunteer Fire Dept. Est. 1972

- Auxiliary Meetings: Monthly
1st Mon. @ 7 p.m.
- Training & Business Meeting:
Weekly – Tues. @ 7 p.m.
- Picnic Fundraiser: 1st Sat. of May

(210-844-4994)



Community Parks Association Est. 1949

- Music Jamboree: 2nd Sat. of
Jan., Feb., March, & April
- Chili Cook Off: 2nd Sat. of March
- Community Rummage Sale: 1st Sat. of Aug.
- Old Town Day Celebration: Last Sat. of Oct.
- Community Holiday Covered Dish Dinner:
2nd Sat. of Dec.

(830-947-3891)



Historical Museum Est. 1992

- Open 1st Sat. Monthly
- Holiday Dinner Fundraiser:
2nd Monday of Dec.

(830-947-4053)

Lodi

By Maurine Liles and Gene Maeckel

Lodi is located on the San Antonio River approximately one mile west of Floresville and 30 miles southeast of San Antonio, Texas. The San Antonio and La Bahia Road, an old Spanish Road, stretched its way along the east and west sides of the San Antonio River. This road is part of "El Camino Real de los Tejas," now managed by the National Park Service. The community of Lodi was established on the east side of the San Antonio River along this very old and historic road. Today, Lodi is a small residential area within the city limits of Floresville, Texas. It was once a dynamic, progressive and productive community. In its vibrant years, the 1860s -1890, it was generously populated. Although most of the people who lived in Lodi were of Spanish or Mexican descent, it was also a community with an international flavor. Immigrants from other states and countries came to live and work in Lodi. There were Germans, Polish, Scottish, Swedish, French, British, Irish and people of other nationalities inhabiting this quaint villa. Each brought their own special uniqueness to the area. Lodi was diverse and could boast of important business establishments. It served as the early county seat of Wilson County, and the Lodi Ferry made it a crossroads community. Lodi was also home to some bold and extraordinary people: They went by the names of Flores, Cook, Trial, Lepori, Staud, Fischer, Munoz, Mungia, Ximenes, De la Zerda, Lopez, Gray, Roxo, Seguin, Cantu, Garza, Delgado, Buquor, Carvajal, the Curvier brothers and others. The names ring out like a soldier's roster for they came ready to charge forward and carve their names on the recorded history of the area.

Lodi was once a dynamic, progressive and productive community with an international flavor.

Lodi is an area rich in Spanish culture and influence. Texas was under Spain's flag long before the flags of Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederacy or the United States flew over her.



Wagon Trail taking a noon rest enroute to Indianola on San Antonio Goliad Road, 1870.

It was a land where longhorn cattle grazed on tall green grass and Spanish vaqueros managed them from horseback. The area in and around Lodi was important ranching country, and Lodi is part of an early Spanish land grant. The Spanish government granted Juan and Simon Arocha, descendants of Canary Islanders, 8 leagues of land on the east side of the San Antonio River in 1782. This large tract of land extended from Calavaras Creek, near San Antonio, to Pajarito Creek just below present-day

Floresville. The Arocha family ran cattle on this land and claimed it for their Rancho, San Rafael. It was land they had run cattle on since 1766. As time went on, Juan and Simon Arocha died and their heirs divided the land into eight tracts. Erasmo Seguin, father of Juan Seguin, bought tract six of the Arocha Land Grant in 1834. Nemencio de la Zerda, Sr. bought ¼ of tract seven below Erasmo Seguin's property in 1839. Jose Maria Flores, who was married to Erasmo Seguin's daughter, Leonides Seguin, bought ¾ of tract seven just below De la Zerda in 1841. When Jose Maria Flores and his wife died, their daughter, Josefa Flores Barker, inherited some of their land and donated a portion of it for the site

of Floresville, the present county seat of Wilson County. Lodi was situated on the former lands of Nemencio de la Zerda, Sr. and Jose Maria Flores.

During the late 1700s and middle 1800s people were living on the San Antonio River in the general area of present-day Lodi. There is a report of jacals, a type of stick or picket huts, on the San Antonio River in 1837. Hostile Indian raids continued to plague these people. Sometimes, it was necessary for the people of Lodi to take shelter in Erasmo Seguin's hacienda, Casa Blanca, which was located a few miles to the north. They could also cross the San Antonio River to the west side and find shelter behind the thick rock wall at the mission compound of Rancho de las Cabras, which had belonged to Mission Espada before secularization of the missions. The de la Zerda Family, the Flores, Calvillo, Barrera families, and other large ranchers were located near.

The San Antonio and La Bahia Road was very important to the development of Texas. During the Spanish era, presidios, missions, and large ranches were established along the river, and the road provided an artery for transportation between the presidios and missions of San Antonio and La Bahia. La Bahia was renamed Goliad, February 4, 1829. The military traveled the road, as did the missionaries, business men, families, the ranchers and the proud Spanish

vaqueros. Lodi developed along this old road and it became a Mecca to business enterprises.

In the early years, the 1850s and before, the people who came to the area saw a beautiful, picturesque and serene community. While it is not known how Lodi looked, it is probable that small picket dwellings, some made of mud and sticks, stood beside adobe and wood frame houses. These structures dotted the San Antonio and La Bahia Road in the Lodi area. Chiver Creek and Lodi Creek, which fed into the San Antonio River, ran through Lodi. Pataguilla Laguna, where the Pataguilla Indians once pastured sheep, was located on the east side of the road between the San Antonio and La Bahia Road and present-day First Street. Earlier, before it was called Lodi, the area was referred to as Pataguilla on deed records.

The area in and around Lodi was endowed with good water, fertile soil and a pleasant climate. Shady trees dotted the countryside. The San Antonio River meandered through the area and fish swam in its clear waters. Wild game ran across the land. One may have seen flowers growing in the yards of the little huts. Chickens clucked and scratched the dirt while milk cows grazed on rich, green grass. Children laughed and played along the old Spanish road.

Businesses attached themselves to the San Antonio and La Bahia Road, and the road brought customers to Lodi. Merchants

prospered there. By 1858, Steven Cook had established a mercantile store on the San Antonio and La Bahia Road. A Federal Post Office operated inside his store. By 1858, the community was referred to as "Lodi."

Lodi was a well-established trade center by 1860. The 1860 U.S. Census shows Lodi to be populated with merchants, a stage agent, clerks, carpenters, saddlers, blacksmiths, shoemakers and lawyers. Stockmen, farmers and laborers also inhabited this community. It was one of the largest communities in the area. The big ranchers in and around Lodi were closely aligned with San Antonio. They owned property in San Antonio and some lived there. There was talk of forming a county separate from Bexar, but many of the ranchers did not see the need for a separate county. However, people in Sutherland Springs wanted to be separate from Bexar County and especially San Antonio. They wanted their own county and they worked toward that goal. Lodi joined them and became part of a newly formed county called Wilson.

The development of Wilson County had hardly started when the American Civil War began. Texas flew the Confederate flag and many of her able-bodied men went off to fight for the Confederacy. Men living in Lodi were no exception. Nemencio de la Zerda II served in the Confederate Calvary and was a Lieutenant in Benevitus' Regiment. Juan de la Garza, Sixto Martinez and others joined the Confederate forces.

The war came to an end in 1865 and the men who survived it returned to their families, to a weakened economy and a changed governmental structure in Wilson County. The Confederacy was no more, and there were new challenges ahead for Texas. Following the American Civil War, Texas was under provisional government. Some people called it "carpetbag government." The years from 1865 through 1874 proved to be difficult and uncertain years for Texas counties and their leaders. The Wilson County Commissioners Court met under special orders of the Fifth Military District in New Orleans. The Chief Justice, now called "County Judge" was appointed. The minutes of the Wilson County

Commissioners Court referred to the court as "the police court."

The Wilson County Commissioners Court met on March 10, 1866. A certified map had been received from the General Land Office. Several sites were presented to be chosen by election in 1866 for possible county seats. Samuel W. Barker presented for nomination a tract of 200 acres lying near the San Antonio River in the name of his wife, Josefa A. Flores de Barker. John Sutherland offered a tract of land at old Sutherland Springs. T. J. Peacock offered 100 acres lying near Cibolo Creek. The election for these nominations was to be held the first Monday of January, 1867. Josefa A. Flores de Barker's property obtained the high vote at 136. On December 9, 1867, the court met and after seven long years Wilson County had a county seat. The new county seat would be called Floresville after Josefa A. Flores de Barker's ancestors. Lodi was named the county seat pro tem until the site could be made ready with a new survey and buildings. Finally, in 1872, Floresville became the permanent county seat of Wilson County.

An important event of history-making proportions was about to occur in Lodi. This happening was so significant that it would affect the entire area. As the 1870s moved up on the calendar, Lodi was still the temporary county seat of Wilson County. The overall economy was sagging. Something needed to be done about it. Trade needed to roll over dirt roads and cross rivers and streams. The Commissioners Court met and Wilson County expressed its need for a ferry boat on the San Antonio River. The challenge to establish a ferry on the San Antonio River was answered by a prominent resident of Lodi, Nemencio de la Zerda II. He owned land on the San Antonio River near the mouth of Chiver Creek. In 1872, he started a ferry operation on the east bank of the San Antonio River at Lodi, Texas, in Wilson County. It made a crossroad community of Lodi.

A problem menacing Lodi and Floresville was reported in *The Sutherland Springs Western Chronicle* on June 21, 1878, "The mud hole or lake between Floresville and Lodi is to be abolished by ditching and grading. It is bad for Floresville and Lodi." The article was probably referring

Benito Lopez Early notable businessman of the Floresville area

By Gene Maeckel

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 1860s, prior to the Civil War, 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 Morissette, who purchased the properties for \$30,000 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 bought 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 schoolhouses 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.

to Pataguilla Laguna. After heavy rains, water and muddy puddles remained on the ground. Some people called these wet areas "Canta Rana" because of the numerous frogs emerging from them. Mosquitoes were numerous at times. In later years, a better drainage system was provided.

1870 was a decade that saw several men with ambition and influence step forward and contribute to the growing economy in Lodi. Among the remarkable men who inhabited Lodi was

James Gray. He established a blacksmith and tin shop on a lot at the corner of Goliad Road and Peach Street. Gray, founder of Graytown and veteran of the Texas Revolution, was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1815 and immigrated to America. Pascal L. Buquor, former mayor of San Antonio and former Texas Ranger, was a translator in Lodi.

Jose Maria Roxo was one of the first county commissioners in Wilson County. In 1879, he developed the Roxo Addition

The Trial Brothers

By Gene Maeckel

The Trial brothers, Joseph and Pierre, were born in Alais, France, near the Gard River in the Cevennes Mountains. In 1860, they left France for the United States, arriving in New York. In 1861, they moved to the St. Louis, Missouri, area. With the ending of the Civil War, the Trial brothers and their families left St. Louis to relocate to Texas. They traveled by steamboat down the Mississippi River to New Orleans and then went by sailboat to Indianola. From here they traveled inland to San Antonio by wagon. Sometime after their arrival in August 1868 Pierre Trial purchased 654 acres of land from the Jose Maria Flores estate in Lodi. The Trial families then moved to this Lodi property from San Antonio.

From 1868 to 1870, parts of this property were subdivided into smaller parcels, resulting in numerous sales, trades, and purchases as documented in the courthouse deed records. This was during a period of emerging growth in Lodi and Floresville. Also during this period, Joseph Trial became engaged in the freight-handling business between San Antonio and Indianola and Pierre Trial developed a mercantile business at the corner of 3rd and C streets in Floresville.

In 1870, the Trial families went to Denison, Texas, where the brothers became engaged in the cattle business. But in 1872 the Trials disposed of their cattle interests and returned to Floresville to re-enter the mercantile business. In 1874, Joseph traded all his property which he had accumulated at various places for a tract of land near Riddleville, today called Gillette, in Karnes County. Here he went into farming and stock raising. In 1895, after the death of his brother Pierre, Joseph sold his home property in Riddleville and moved back to Floresville to operate the mercantile business of his deceased brother.

At about this same time, Joseph learned the Catholic Church was selling some land between Falls City and Karnes City along the San Antonio River. This parcel of land, 10,000 acres in size, had been willed to the Archdiocese of San Antonio by John Twohig, a prominent land owner and businessman of San Antonio. Joseph purchased two thousand acres of this tract and in 1896 moved his family to this place and developed it into a model farm. Joseph Trial died in Hobson, Texas, at his home in April 1921 and is buried in the Hobson Catholic Cemetery #2.

Pierre, on his return to Floresville from Denison, became a community-oriented citizen, trading land and being actively involved in the mercantile business. He built his home on a large lot at the corner of 2nd and Trial streets. (Note: Trial Street is currently being misspelled today as Trail Street.) The house was built on a rise of land near the front of the lot and built of brick, including a basement. In 1956, the home was demolished to provide a building site for the current El Mesias United Methodist Church. At the back corner of the lot under an oak tree, a family burial plot was established. Records indicate four family members are buried in this area.

Soon after returning to Lodi, Pierre was appointed as sheriff of Wilson County by Judge William Longworth and he served in this position until May 1870. In December 1870, he was appointed as Justice of Peace, Precinct 1, Wilson County from which he resigned in March 1871. The county also utilized his real-estate abilities by contracting him for six months at a fee of \$600 to sell Floresville town lots. These were lots the county had acquired from the Flores family when they gave the town site to the county for a courthouse.

In May 1895, Pierre died at the age of 57 years and was buried in the family plot behind his home on Trial Street.

In September 1899, Celestine Trial, wife of the deceased Pierre Trial, deeded 2 acres of land at the corner of 3rd and Trial Streets from Pierre's estate for a Catholic Church in Floresville where the Sacred Heart Catholic Church now stands. The deed stipulated that one acre of the land was being donated only on condition that the Catholic Church contribute to the estate \$100 for the 2nd acre.

in the community of Lodi. Included in this addition was a public meeting place known as Washington Plaza. This addition was located on the San Antonio and La Bahia Road and Ferry Road, also called Calle Shalan.

Adam C. Staud operated a gin house on Goliad Road. He was treasurer of Wilson County in 1878. He was a postmaster in the Floresville Post office in 1882. He was born in 1838 and Prussia was listed on the 1870 U. S. Census as his homeland. Rosalee Staud, his wife, was born in 1846 and was from Alsace Lorraine, France. The 1870 census lists two sons and one daughter living with them. The ethnic diversity in Lodi during the 1870s is revealed in Adam C. Staud's household as listed in the 1870 census. In the same household is Charles Fischer, Adam C. Staud's brother-in-law. He was also from France. In addition to the family members, Sarafan Lepori, a stone mason, was a boarder in Adam C. Staud's household and Switzerland is listed as his homeland.

Lepori was a stone mason in the Floresville area during the late 1800s. One of the unusual construction techniques he developed was the design and construction of building foundations. In 1883 he was the stone mason for the Wilson County Courthouse, and an example of his technique can be found in the foundation of this structure.

Benito Lopez, an early, prominent businessman in Wilson County, lived and operated a mercantile store in Lodi. He was a prominent businessman and landowner in the area. In Lodi, he had a store on Goliad Road and one of the early schools in the area was in his store. He came to Texas from Mexico about 1840. Benito Lopez led a group of Polish immigrants through San Antonio to Panna Maria about 1856. He met a Polish girl, Karolina Opiela. She was the daughter of Mikolej and Jozefy Opiela, immigrants from Poland.

Manuel Jesus Ximenes was born in Graytown, Texas, on December 25, 1857. He moved to Lodi at an early age and began his public career in 1880. He served as tax assessor and collector, county clerk, deputy sheriff and United States Marshal in Wilson County. In 1890, 1892 and 1898, he was elected sheriff of Wilson

County. He worked toward obtaining a new Jail in Wilson County. As Sheriff, he worked toward abolishing lynching.

Manuel Ximenes married Josefina Lopez in November of 1893. She was the daughter of Benito Lopez, and was one of the early Mexican American teachers in Wilson County. After her husband's death, she was a teacher and a farmer. She graduated from Floresville Academy and taught school there. Manuel Ximenes died 1/1/1911 and is buried at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Floresville, Texas. Josefina Lopez Ximenes died on March 1, 1961, and is buried at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Floresville, Texas.

The people of Lodi knew God, for the priest from OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CATHOLIC CHURCH in Graytown sent a priest to Lodi to minister to the people of Catholic faith. Later, priests came from San Antonio. Although the earliest recorded burial in the De la Zerda Cemetery, situated on the San Antonio River in Lodi, is 1877, it probably was used for burials at a much earlier date. There are some other early cemeteries in the general Lodi area. These are the De la Zerda, Garza Valadez, the Canary Island, the Trial Cemeteries and City Cemetery Number Two.

On November 29, 1882, Juan Jose de la Zerda donated two acres of land located in Wilson County near Floresville, to the Catholic Diocese of San Antonio, Texas. He requested that at the earliest practicable time the Reverend Bishop should cause to be built a permanent Catholic Church. The Bishop should have other buildings and improvements as he should deem proper for the benefit and use of the residents of Lodi and Floresville. A little box-like church was erected on the donated land. The site is located on the corner of First and Plum Street. The church was used by the Catholic population of Lodi and Floresville until a new church was erected on Trial Street.

Among the very interesting and very generous people to make up Lodi was Rev. Father P.P. Zarb. The Reverend P.P. Zarb was ordained as a priest in April 1886 and for the next 12 years he served the Catholic Church on the Island of Gibraltar. He relocated to the San Antonio area

and was assigned to the parish in Floresville in 1898. He repaired the Old Catholic Chapel and conducted his church worship there. In 1901, he built a modern frame church in Floresville. He established a parochial school, the Sacred Heart School, which was erected in 1933. He served as rector of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Floresville for 41 years.

The Trial family donated land for a Catholic Church. Two years later, parishioners erected the present brick church which stands on Trial Street today. With his own funds, Father Zarb purchased nine acres of adjacent land. He transformed it into an outstanding park comprised of ponds, fruit trees, pecan trees, evergreens, shrubs, vines and palms.

Juan Jose de la Zerda and his wife, for and in consideration of the sum of fifty dollars, paid by the trustees of Public School No. 1 in School district No. 3, conveyed to W. L. Worsham, county judge and his successors in office of the county of Wilson and State of Texas, two acres of land in the area of Lodi near where the old Catholic Church of Lodi stood. This transaction took place in November of 1886.

The *Floresville Chronicle - Journal*, reported on November 28, 1919, "A new frame school building of the Lodi Independent School District was dedicated at Lodi. Since the land for the Lodi School was purchased in 1886, one would assume that the new building replaced a previous building. The new building was constructed at a cost of about \$3,500. At the dedication exercises, appropriate addresses were made by County Superintendent J. E. Swift, District Clerk N. R. de la Zerda and Rev. Geo. D. Pickins."

Some of the teachers in the Lodi School were Mrs. J. E. Swift, Mrs. L. B. Wiseman and Mrs. John de la Zerda. The Lodi School P.T.A. was organized in October of 1931. Mrs. John de la Zerda served as chairman. By September of 1933, the Lodi School had an enrollment of 100 students. In 1935, the Lodi School had added another classroom, giving it six modern classrooms, with an enrollment of 130 students. On the Lodi School's Board of Trustees were: Secundino Munoz, president; Vicente Garza, secretary; and Graviel Trevino, treasurer. In

September of that same year, the Lodi School opening was largely attended. A large crowd of patrons and friends gathered at the Lodi Amusement Hall for the opening exercises of the school. Lodi School had steadily grown from a one-teacher school to a school of six teachers. In 1944, the Lodi School had a faculty of seven teachers with an enrollment of 330 children. The Lodi School was consolidated with Floresville on September 1, 1955. It closed in 1962.

Lodi and Floresville were about to face a major change. The San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad, affectionately remembered as "SAAP," started laying track outside of San Antonio in 1885. Uriah Lott was the driving force behind the SAAP, and it was chartered on 8/28/1884. It was an independent railroad company until 1890. It started in San Antonio, Texas, and Floresville was the first town the SAAP reached.

January 7, 1886, residents of Floresville and Lodi heard the whistle of a locomotive. The SAAP Railroad had come to town and it was met by happy people and a big celebration. The trains were given interesting names. One of the trains serving Floresville and Lodi was called the "Davy Crockett." The Davy Crockett was a night train from Corpus Christi to San Antonio. Local residents set their clocks by the Davy Crockett.

The depot was built of lumber and had three loading platforms. It was established in the Lodi area. Floresville was growing and changing. Lodi was also facing a change. There was less focus on the road traffic and more on the railroad. Lodi's industry, its stores, restaurants, saloons and its workers moved closer to the Railroad Depot. Businesses around the depot were dedicated to the swift processing and packaging of fruit and vegetables. These items were delivered to the train by ox-drawn carts or wagons directly from the farms. Wilson County honey and bees were sent by rail. Cattle pens were established to hold cattle until they were shipped out. There were storage houses, such as the Railroad Beer Warehouse, now located on South Second Street. The Floresville Creamery was located near the Railroad Depot

in 1908.

A map of the depot area in 1952 shows Seager Gin Company, which was situated between First Street and Goliad Road. The map shows covered platforms for cotton and other products. Stock pens were built for livestock. There were saloons, merchandise stores, cold drink stands, and other small businesses. J. N. Flores and brothers had a store there.

People were employed to keep freight moving. In an interview with Colonel Jesse Perez on March 11, 2008, he stated, "A hub of activity and work surrounded the railroad depot." The work involved the processing and preparation of Wilson County agricultural products. Cotton and corn were transported to the loading docks. Fields containing watermelons and peanuts were harvested and transported to the depot loading docks. Fields of onions, tomatoes, potatoes and green vegetables were picked and hauled to the depot and processed for the box cars. In the early days of SAAP's history, these products were hauled to the Railroad Depot by carts or wagons pulled by oxen or mules. With the advent of the automobile, produce was hauled in trucks. Loading docks still exist near the depot today. In the early 1900s, as many as six passenger trains per day were on the tracks.

During WW II, the line was less active. Passenger service was discontinued in 1952. The automobile was readily available. The last train to roll over the tracks was in 1993. January 29, 1998, the *Floresville Chronicle - Journal* reported that the railroad track was being removed.

Colonel Jesse Perez, a former resident of Lodi, stated his thoughts on the passing of the railroad in Texas Transportation Museum on Line, "Gone is the music and the lively community. This was a part of Lodi."

Several family grocery stores, a molina store and several dance halls were located in Lodi. Near the Lodi School was a building which housed the Agrupaciones. Colonel Jesse Perez explained that "most Mexican American towns had a social association that served an important function among the Mexican American population. The Agrupacion National hosted festivals and parades. The building served as an amusement hall and Mexican

Americans celebrated holidays there. The Agrupaciones also helped people fill out forms and understand documents."

What may be considered the third phase of Lodi's history involves the automobile. The automobile made a difference in the lives of the people in the area. Lodi gradually declined as a business area. After 1970 the area of Lodi was more residential and a part of Floresville. It reflects a change in the economical and educational level of the people. Citizens could drive away and work elsewhere.

Today, the original depot, through the efforts of the FEDC, and under the guidance of Colonel Jesse Perez, has been purchased and returned to a place very, very near the original site. It has been restored to its original appearance. A piece of history has returned to Lodi and it will help generations to remember a rich heritage.

Many changes have taken place in Lodi since its beginning. To many people, it was a good place to live, raise their families and to operate businesses. Life went on in Lodi after the advent of the railroad, automobile, and airplane. Prominent people and the lesser known people of Lodi kept the flames of industry burning in the later decades of the 19th century. They carried on trade, built a community, raised their families, and worshiped their God. They built churches, educated their children in nearby schools, and established several cemeteries. They actively participated in the forming of Wilson County.

Lodi eventually became a part of Floresville. Today, a part of the San Antonio and La Bahia Road in Lodi is a paved street, and known as Goliad Road. A hike and bike trail stretches out along the former railroad tracks and runs beside this road. If we stand still and quiet on Goliad Road, we may imagine that we hear the whisper of the many languages once spoken there; hear the ghostly echo of horses, carts, wagons and buggies as people traveled and traded on this old Spanish Road. We may hear the bell ring to summon the ferryman of the Lodi Ferry. The whistle of the Davy Crockett is still lingering somewhere in the distant past. Lodi and its history are worth remembering.

Load Ferry

By Gene Maeckel and Maurine Liles

Nemencio de la Zerda II established a ferry business on the east side of the San Antonio River about 1872. The ferryboat business was located in Lodi, Texas, just one mile above Floresville, Texas, the present county seat of Wilson County and 32 miles southeast of San Antonio, Texas.

The San Antonio and La Bahia Road ran through Lodi. There was a procession of ox-carts, wagons, as well as people on horseback and on foot traveling on this old road. S. T. Cook started a mercantile store in Lodi. In 1858 a post office was located inside the store. James Gray established a blacksmith and tin shop in 1873.

Lodi was a place to trade and people moved to Lodi. It was a community with an international flavor. While the people were predominantly Spanish, some of the settlers were descended from

French, Polish, German, Scottish
and other nationalities.

On the west side of the San Antonio River were the communities of Fairview, Pleasanton, Graytown, Canada Verde, and Oakville. On the east side of the San Antonio River there was Calaveras, Lodi and Floresville. Connecting to the San Antonio and La Bahia Road was the Lodi and Sutherland Springs Road. The San Antonio and La Bahia Road led to Carvajal Crossing, Helena and Goliad. One could travel to Indianola.

Prior to the launching of the Lodi Ferry on the San Antonio River, people could cross the river at natural fords when the water was low. However, they could not take wagons and carts from one side of the river to the other. The San Antonio River was a barrier to trade between communities. The Lodi Ferry removed the trade barrier the river had created. Roads were linked up between the east and

west sides of the river and a spark of economic growth followed. Lodi became a crossroads community.

Benito Lopez established a store and a school on the San Antonio and La Bahia Road in 1887. Charles Fischer had a cotton gin there in 1886, and a brick business was established.

Other businesses followed.

The Lodi Ferry business was sold several times, and in 1878 the state of Texas issued a charter of incorporation for the Lodi Ferry and Bridge Company. Vicente Carvajal purchased the ferry business in 1882. He lived in a house at the edge of the river. The house is gone. However, the rock chimney of Carvajal's house is still standing and attached to another house. An old map of

Lodi shows the area on the San Antonio River near the ferry crossing as “Carvajal Crossing.” The pass is also known as Paso de

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Floresville began to grow and trade was diverted away from Lodi.

Goliad Road, the old San Antonio and La Bahia Road, is still in the Lodi area. A hike and bike trail is routed along the area where the railroad tracks once ran through Lodi and Floresville. The Lodi Ferry is no longer in existence, but it once played a pivotal part in river crossing and the economy of the area.

The Lodi Ferry is no longer in existence, but it once played a pivotal part in river crossing and the economy of the area.



Maurine Liles

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Wilson County on your
Sesquicentennial!*

Floresville

County Seat of Wilson County

By Maurine Liles

Floresville is the county seat of Wilson County and is located near the center of the county on the east side of the San Antonio River. It is a short distance from the old community of Lodi, and the San Antonio and La Bahia Road runs through it. Floresville is steeped in the history of a proud Spanish heritage, longhorn cattle, the Spanish vaquero, the American cowboy, king cotton and the fantastic peanut. It has a glorious history rich in ethnic diversity. The charming picturesque town can boast of friendly people, historic downtown buildings, and a beautiful courthouse designed by famed architect, Alfred Giles. It has beautiful parks, exciting shopping adventures, the Jailhouse Museum, the Arcadia Theatre, the White House Café, and the Peanut Patch featuring Mrs. Annie's delicious peanut brittle. It is home to the renowned annual Peanut Festival, Christmas on the Corridor, Market Days and other entertaining festivities. It has been the setting of several movies and it is a neighbor to Rancho de las Cabras.

Floresville sits on part of a large Spanish land grant. This grant, consisting of eight leagues of land, was granted to Juan and Simon Arocha in 1782. After they died their heirs divided the land into eight tracts. Nemencio de la Zerda purchased ¼ of tract seven and Jose Maria Flores purchased ¾ of tract seven, just below the land of de la Zerda. Floresville was established on some of the land that once belonged to Jose Maria Flores.

Wilson County was created February 13, 1860. The Commissioners

Court first met in Creed Taylor's concrete storehouse in Sutherland Springs, temporary county seat of Wilson County. A county seat site near the center of the county was decided on. The new county seat was called Floresville after Josefa A. Flores de Barker's ancestors. Lodi was named the county seat pro tem until the site could be made ready with a new survey and buildings.

Floresville was surveyed and laid out in blocks and lots, and several people were instructed to sell lots. Manuel C. Herrera and Stephen Cook were appointed to sell fifty lots for cash. Later, A. G. Pickett and several other men sold lots. Mr. Gazley was to construct a school and arrange for a courthouse. The school was built on block 12. Mr. Tatum was paid \$72.00 to dig a well. The courthouse was built on block 11, where the District Judge's office is housed today. On May 28, 1872, Wilson County had a fine, single-story, three-room, frame courthouse and the court met there.

The first jailhouse in Floresville was built of red stone and was established on lot 2, block 11. The jailhouse was built facing "C" Street near where the old firehouse was later located. A new jail, now serving as the Jailhouse Museum, was built in 1887. The Post Office changed from Lodi to Floresville on May 8, 1872 and Adam C. Staud was the postmaster.

Floresville was incorporated by the Wilson County Commissioners Court April 13, 1874. This was done under an act of the Texas Legislature approved January 27, 1858 relative to the incorporation of towns and cities. At this time Floresville



Early scene - Downtown Floresville

had fewer than one thousand inhabitants. However, in 1894 Floresville had a population of greater than 1000 residents. It was incorporated again in December 5, 1894 and the town of Floresville shall be known and designated as the "City of Floresville."

The Reconstruction era had come to an end by 1876 and Wilson County was ready to swing forward. W. L. Worsham was elected Wilson County Judge and Nemencio De la Zerda was the sheriff. There were several lawyers in Floresville. J. B. Polley, an attorney in the Lodi and Floresville area, talked about Floresville and the "Old District Court days" in an article in the *San Antonio Light*, June 23, 1907. "The court house referred to was a large, single story frame building. It and perhaps a dozen other widely separated houses constituted the habitations and places of business of the town of Floresville." He went on to say that the Grand Juries met in a schoolhouse a block or two distant from the courthouse, while the petty juries took to the brush, or to the shade of a tree.

W. C. Agee had erected the second dwelling house of the town and he kept the only hotel in the place. People who failed to find quarters in his hotel camped out under the stars. There were numerous court cases and out-of-town lawyers traveled to Floresville to try these cases. Spectators also came to watch the court proceedings.

Several business enterprises and social organizations had been established in Floresville by 1876. J. C. Wallace had a business house on the north side of the public square. The Floresville Literary Society began as well as the Floresville Masonic Lodge U. D. #515, which was established and began holding meetings

during this time.

The Floresville Academy with both male and female students was operating in 1876. The school year was comprised of two five-month sessions. The principal for the academy was John Washburn.

By 1879 A. G. Thomas became the proprietor of the Plaza Hotel and one of the specialties he served his dinner guests at his hotel was quail.

Churches were beginning to emerge in the mid 1870's. The organizational meeting of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the South was held at the home of W. C. Agee on October 25, 1875. In the early years members met in homes, the courthouse and the Floresville Academy. The first sanctuary was built on the present site in 1885.

The First Baptist Church was organized in 1878. The congregation met in the courthouse until 1889 and at that time a simple church measuring 40x60 feet was constructed at the present site.

A Congregation of the Lutheran faith was organized in 1898. In 1907, the Christian Church building in Floresville was purchased and the Lutheran Congregation met there until 1942, where the present church building was erected. The Church of Christ of Floresville started in the late 1890s. The present church building is located on 3rd and A Street.

The Sacred Heart Catholic Church was located on Trial Street. It was erected October 31, 1901 and later remodeled in 1935.

El Mesias Methodist Church was organized in 1920. Rev. S. H. Zook worked as a missionary in Floresville and was instrumental in organizing El Mesias Methodist Church.

Greater Bethel Baptist Church is located on Hwy. 97 North. The cur-



I. D. Flores Drug Store



Early Wilson County Officials - Front row, left to right: John Erskine Wiseman and Judge E. D. Mayes. Others pictured: John McDaniel, Clem McDaniel, Albert McDaniel, Frank Henson, L. B. Mosley, Otho Irvin, Mr. Price, Nemencio de la Zerda.

rent building was built about 1998, replacing an older building. The first congregation was organized about 100 years ago. There were several churches offering services to African Americans in Floresville. Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church purchased land for a church in Floresville in October 30, 1890. Today, Floresville has a number of churches, and ten cemeteries.

The year 1880 moved forward on the calendar. Floresville had a population of 275 residents. A few more businesses came into focus in Floresville. C. B. Stevenson and A. R. Stevenson were lawyers. Mr. Oscar Rhodes was a merchant and Mr. Edds was a blacksmith. T. K. Bailey was a physician. Floresville now had various businesses established such as saddlers, teamsters and carpenters all operating in Floresville.

The Wilson County Courthouse, located on Third Street, burned in May of 1883. Wisely, the county had purchased a strong safe and the county records were saved. The new courthouse was already being planned when the old one burned. Alfred Giles, a noteworthy architect from San Antonio, drew up plans for a two-story brick courthouse. It was to be located near the public square. Sidney Mead was the builder. Mead built the judge's stand, jury boxes, and railings in the court room and privies. James Gray, a tin smith in Lodi, made the cuspidors. Two rain cisterns, 300 barrels each, were established. The courthouse was completed in February 22, 1884 and it faced Third Street. Brick for the courthouse was considered to be soft and inclined to weather badly.

The elegant, red brick courthouse became the focal point of Floresville. It was much used as a meeting place. A grand ball was held in

the courthouse Friday, February 22, 1884 to celebrate the completion of this beautiful building. It was attended by many notable people. There is a report that Big Foot Wallace, famed frontiersmen and Texas Ranger, attended the grand ball.

The tower of the courthouse housed a bronze alarm bell, which was cast in 1886. During the 1900's, time of the world wars, the courthouse was used for civil defense and an air-raid siren was placed in the tower for defense purposes.

There was a wooden veranda over which columns supported a railed balcony. Since this balcony was located around the courtroom, it was often filled with spectators watching the District and County Court proceedings. The windows would be raised, so that they could see and hear the court proceedings. These proceedings were popular events in those days and widely attended.

The Belknap Rifles were organized about 1883 in Floresville. These young reserves won fame for proficiency in military drill and were the social center of interest. Their duty was to capture outlaws in the state. By 1885, the San Antonio Belknaps and Floresville Belknaps were connected by telegraph.

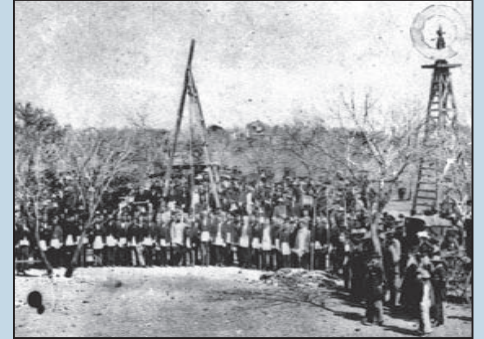
In 1885 a mail and passenger hack pulled by mules formed the mode of transportation between San Antonio and Helena, and it was operated by a Mr. Taylor. This hack could be seen traveling up and down the San Antonio and La Bahia Road. Mr. Edward M. Golson, who traveled on the hack, described Floresville as it looked to him in 1885. "On my first trip to Floresville, about half a mile from the town, which I did not see, I asked Mr. Taylor, the hack driver, when we would arrive in Floresville. He answered. "Don't you see

Alfred Giles 1853-1920

By Mary Caroline George

Alfred Giles, son of Thomas and Sophie (Brown) Giles, was born at Hillingdon, Middlesex, England, on May 23, 1853. He attended the Proprietary School at Gravesend, Kent, for four years, beginning in January 1864. A member of the Church of England, he had a boyhood ambition to enter the ministry. Upon finishing school at seventeen, Giles chose

his life's work and was apprenticed to an architectural firm in London. As part of his training, he attended classes in the arts of construction at King's College, University of London. Upon completion of the two-year term of apprenticeship, Giles was employed by the firm for a brief period. In 1873, the young architect immigrated to the United States and, for health reasons, settled in Texas in 1875. He worked for three years in the office of John Kampmann, a successful San Antonio contractor from whom he acquired skill in the use of locally available building materials, especially stone. When Giles established his own firm in 1876, the dreary period of Reconstruction was coming to an end. Ranchers and farmers became prosperous and San Antonio was a focal point of commerce and amusement for a vast area. The advent of the railroad in 1877 greatly expanded the choices of building materials, and returning travelers brought with them newly awakened tastes for novelty. Indeed, the Victorian period (ca. 1840-ca. 1900) was characterized by rapid changes of style, and Giles' work reflected a great variety of styles derived from architectural forms of the past, usually in more or less new combinations. Giles' own means of expression, however, always took precedence and he adapted and combined stylistic elements with restraint, sobriety, and simplicity. Giles produced designs for unpretentious domestic residences and showy mansions, county courthouses, and commercial and institutional structures all over Texas. Of the dozen courthouses designed by Giles, the Wilson County Courthouse (1884-85) in Floresville, Texas, is the only 19th century example serving its original function today. As a response to decreasing commissions in Texas, Giles maintained a branch office in Monterrey, Mexico, during the first decade of the twentieth century. Buildings in Monterrey, Saltillo, Durango, Puebla, and Chihuahua attest to the firm's success south of the border. After 1885, the architect began purchasing land near Comfort, Texas. The ranch, named Hillingdon after the family seat in England, soon comprised 13,000 acres and is today designated as a Heritage Ranch. Giles died at the ranch on August 13, 1920.



Laying of the cornerstone of the Wilson County Courthouse - 1884. Photo courtesy of Institute of Texas Cultures.

the tower of the new courthouse?" At that time there were few stores in Floresville. The Pickett house, established by A. G. Pickett and his wife, was in town and the Thomas Hotel was open for business.

There were few businesses in Floresville in 1885, but things were about to change. As the Lodi Ferry had made a crossroads community of Lodi, the coming of the railroad caused significant changes in Lodi and Floresville. The San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad, affectionately remembered as "SAAP,"

started laying track outside of San Antonio in 1885. The railroad tracks were laid alongside the San Antonio and the La Bahia Road. The trains had special names. The Davy Crockett was one of the trains. The people of Lodi and Floresville set their clocks by the whistle of the Davy Crockett.

SAAP had a large impact on the development of Floresville. Farmers could haul cotton and perishable produce to the SAAP Depot and transport it to other areas. Ranchers could herd their cattle to hold-

Floresville



Sam Fore Jr., Lady Bird Johnson, Elma Fore, Evelyn Fore Spruce and Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson on Air Force One.

Sam Fore Jr. 1891-1966

By Sam F. Keach and Jimmy Fietsam

Sam Fore Jr., newspaperman and the son of Samuel Lane and Leticia (Chenault) Fore, was born May 3, 1891 in Cuero, Texas.

The family moved to Stockdale, Texas and at age 12 young Sam prevailed upon the Stockdale newspaper editor to let him set type by hand and operate an old-fashioned printing press. After the family moved to Floresville, Sam was soon employed by the *Chronicle*, then owned by Dr. John V. Blake, a local physician.

At the age of 20, Fore became editor of the *Floresville Chronicle* and the *Wilson County Journal*. Sam Fore married Elma Teas. Together they purchased the two publications, merged the papers and changed the name to the *Floresville Chronicle-Journal*. The couple devoted the remainder of their lives to the publication in Floresville. They also owned the *Robstown Record*; and it remained in the family until 2006.

At 29 years of age in 1920, he was the youngest president (and still is) to serve as president of the Texas Press Association. Fore was instrumental in organizing the South Texas Press Association in the 1920s. Four generations of the family have served as STPA president.

In 1929 Gov. Dan Moody appointed Mr. Fore regent at the Texas College of Arts and Industries (now Texas A&M University-Kingsville). He served two six-year terms. Sam Fore Jr. Hall on the TAMUK campus bears his name, as does the county library in Floresville.

In the early political career of Lyndon B. Johnson, a close relationship developed between the two men. Johnson visited with Sam and Elma Fore at their home in Floresville in the 1930s at the request of Congressman Richard M. Kleberg. After that visit Sam told Elma, "That boy is going to be president of the United States, and I'm going to be at his inauguration. Sam and Elma and daughter Evelyn Spruce accompanied President and Lady Bird Johnson on Air Force One for Johnson's 1965 inauguration in Washington, D.C.

He carried the title of "Mr. Democrat of South Texas."

Sam and Elma Fore had two daughters, Marion Keach, married to Carroll Keach, and Evelyn Spruce, married to Robert Spruce. Lyndon Johnson was best man at the 1939 Keach wedding in Floresville. Fore died Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 1966 at his Floresville home. President and Mrs. Johnson were among those in attendance at Fore's funeral services at the Floresville Methodist Church.

ing pens near the SAAP Depot and send their cattle to market by rail. New businesses were established and workers were hired. In 1880 the population of Floresville was 275. In 1890 the businesses and the population of Floresville had greatly increased.

In 1885, Edward M. Golson opened a General Merchandise Store in Floresville. He erected a two-story brick building which still stands today located at the corner of Third and "C" Streets in Floresville. It was later occupied by the First City National Bank and in recent times was occupied by the United States Post Office. The bricks were made in Lodi on the San Antonio River.

Benito Lopez established a brick building opposite Golson's store

started by Father Zarb in 1933 and is located next to the Sacred Heart Church.

The *Western Chronicle* newspaper was established and published at Sutherland Springs starting in 1877. E. B. Tarver was the editor of the first newspaper. The paper was later moved to Floresville. J. W. Anderson, The Dickey Family, Jos. O. Boehmer, Mr. H. C. Thompson and Dr. John V. Blake were connected with the old *Chronicle* through the years. The *Wilson County Journal* was organized in 1903 by a stock company.

Sam Fore became editor of *The Chronicle* in 1910, at age 20. Sam and his wife, Elma Teas Fore, became owner of both papers. Fore joined the two papers in 1913 and named the paper the *Chronicle-*



Antonio A. Rodriguez and his wife, Juanita Luna Rodriguez, started Hotel Necessity. In 1907, the couple established the Texas Hotel, which was located on "D" and 3rd Streets.



where the Turner Building is today. It was also built of bricks that were made on the San Antonio River in Lodi. W. C. Agee's drug store was located next to Lopez's building. O. D. Rhodes' Mercantile store was established on "C" and Third Street across from Golson's store.

There were schools in the Floresville area from the 1870s. The Floresville School was established in 1885 and the Lodi School was established about 1886. The Lodi School was consolidated with Floresville ISD in 1955. The Dunbar School was an African American school in Floresville which educated African American students until the schools were integrated in the 1960s. Sacred Heart School was

Journal. He was a newsman of some note and made a success of the paper. Mr. and Mrs. Sam Fore, Jr. owned and operated the *Floresville Chronicle-Journal* until September 1, 1963. Mr. and Mrs. Joe H. Fietsam purchased the paper September 1, 1963. The paper remained in the Fietsam Family until April 1, 2005 with the deaths of Joe and Marjorie Fietsam. It was sold several times and is no longer in business.

The *Wilson County News* began as a shopper in 1974, changing names and formats several times along the way. Elaine Kolodziej began publishing it as a serious newspaper in 1984. It has grown in circulation to be the sixth-largest weekly community newspaper in Texas. The *Wilson County News*



Literary Lovely – Floresville Academy, 1884

Top left: Green Gillett. Back row: Zella Dickey, Annie Hassay, Kate Iviss, Jennie Bayles, Lola Gillette, Eugene Dickey, and Bob Seale. Middle row: Julia Agee, Morra Garrison, Osie Lawhon, Mary Houston, Carrie Evans, Maria Agee, Nannie Houston, Garrison. Front row: Alonzo Franks, unknown, Ernest Le Livingston, Prof. Lopas, Allie Murrar, Ebbie Agee, Claude Thomas.

occupies several historic downtown buildings.

Wilson County celebrated the turn of the century in 1900 and could look back on 40 years of existence. Floresville was growing and a variety of new businesses and social organizations were in town. Wilson County Abstract Company was organized by the Wiseman Brothers in 1899. The Masons met on Saturday night on or before the full moon in each month. The Woodmen met on Saturday night, while the Odd Fellows met every Tuesday night.

In 1901 the *Floresville Chronicle-Journal* published ads for the following businesses operating in Floresville. Whitsett and Teas had a Livery, Feed and Sale Stable. Griffith and Franklin had a hardware store which sold stoves, tin ware, builders' hardware, wagons, farm equipment, tinning and other items. A.W. Murray had furniture and coffins for sale. Dr. A. D. Evans, who was a Wilson County Judge, had a pharmacy in Floresville. R. B. Myers carried dry goods such as hats, shoes and notions. A. B. Bledsoe was a banker. H. W. Wiseman and Company was in the banking business. O. E. Stevenson sold saddles, harnesses, collars, buggies and surreys. Arbuckles Coffee and Lion Coffee were sold and Castoria was the subject of several ads in the newspaper. Tutts Liver Pills were also sold and some men preferred to chew M. C. Wetmore Tobacco. The Hyde Bee Lumber Company was operating and there was a blacksmith shop in Floresville.

The Pickett Hotel, the Palace

Drug Store, several saloons, a carriage house, a furniture store and the Oil Mfg. Business were in Floresville. The Camp Yard provided ample space for horses and wagons and space for those who wanted to sleep there for the night.

Since Floresville was the seat of Wilson County government, it attracted farmers, ranchers and businessmen. One could visit and do business with the First National Bank or have their pictures taken by P. B. Barnes, an early photographer. There were other businesses to make shoppers happy. In 1905, Floresville had a baseball park west of town. In 1904, Hotel Necessity was established by Antonio A. and Juanita Rodriguez. In 1907 they established the Texas House. I. D. Flores established a drug store on "C" Street in 1906. In 1910 Boy Scout Troop #2 was organized. Floresville had a City Hall and Fire Department in 1907. These were located on "C" Street.

Some of the more prominent people built large, elegant houses in Floresville. Some of these will be mentioned here: the Pickett house, the Canfield house, the Rhodes House, the Sam Fore House, the Manning-Eschenburg house, the Mitchell-Johns house, the Houston house, the Wiseman House, the Oxford House and the Wiseman-Bump house. Mr. John McDaniel, Sr. was said to have built one of the largest houses in Floresville. J. E. Swift and T. J. Short also had fine houses in Floresville.

Floresville was doing well until King Cotton was brought to its knees by the lowly boll weevil shortly after 1900. Cotton was a cash crop and

farmers lost money. People in Floresville owned farm land and they had also profited from cotton. Trade in Floresville suffered for a time, while the farmers looked for another cash crop. They tried peanuts and this became a cash crop. J. T. Sheehy became known as the Peanut King of Southwest Texas. Local people began to call Floresville the "Peanut Capital of Texas."

The City of Floresville Water Works was operating by 1904. The water had a bad taste and the City of Floresville decided to drill for artesian water. They wanted water but discovered oil. That was a problem because they owed for drilling the well. A. G. Pickett agreed to take the oil well off their hands by paying the expenses.

The *Floresville Chronicle* reported that Floresville had two telephone companies in 1909. A telephone switchboard was operated on the second floor of a building near the fire department on "C" Street. Mrs. Iva Keaster Talley started operating the switchboard in 1926. This was the time of "party lines" where several households were connected

Prior to 1929, backyard wood piles were a common sight in Floresville. The wood fueled wood-guzzling cook stoves and fireplaces for cooking and heating. On September 11, 1929 Southwest Distributing Company introduced natural gas to the Floresville area. Cooking and heating became more convenient.

In 1920, more citizens were calling Floresville home. J. E. Canfield was the Wilson County Judge in 1921. A. B. Carnes was sheriff of Wilson County in 1921 and S.V. Houston was the Mayor of Floresville. The jail house was housing the sheriff and his family. Prisoners were housed in cells.

More automobiles were emerging in the area. Farmers could drive to town and trade. The Pershing Theater was housed in a building on "C" Street near the *Wilson County News* and in early years showed silent films. The Arcadia Theatre opened its doors in 1928 to a sell-out crowd and remained open until 1979. Carl Johnson, who owned The Arcadia, also owned the Gem Theater. He purchased it March 2, 1951. The Arcadia sat idle for twenty years until



J. A. Varnon & Sons Blacksmith Shop - 1902

to the same telephone line. The telephone was the magneto system where people called the switchboard operator and she responded with, "Number please?" Then she would plug the number in and people could talk. The "dial-up system" started about 1959. The phone company was once called the Floresville Rural Telephone Company.

In 1915, electric lights were turned on in Floresville. The Floresville Light and Power Company supplied electricity to Floresville. Mayor S. V. Houston pressed the button to turn the lights on in the city of Floresville on June 19, 1915. Homes and businesses were soon wired and street lights were installed.

1999 when Galen Jansky reopened it to another sell-out crowd. It now offers three screens and all the nostalgic atmosphere of an old-fashioned movie theater.

Frank Vela, a master saddlemaker moved, to Floresville and purchased a building for saddlemaking and sales at 1016 "C" Street in Floresville in 1922. Vela was recognized for his masterfully crafted saddles throughout the United States and in foreign countries. He made saddles for the working cowboy, as well as for movie stars and other notable people. Gene Autry was one of his customers. Today, the *Wilson County News* is housed in this building.

The Wilson County Fair started

Floresville

Colonel Charles Sidney Mead 1832-1887

Colonel Charles Sidney Mead, a Civil War veteran, husband, father, and building contractor, "was widely known and esteemed in this section." The Meads lived in the Floresville area on their ranch which was also once the homestead of Erasmo Seguin and known as "Casa Blanca" from 1871 through Col. Mead's death on January 11, 1887.

Col. Sidney Mead was born in 1832 in Cayuga County, New York. On July 19th, 1862, Gen. Jesse Segoine, as Colonel, received authority to recruit this regiment (111th Infantry) in the counties of Cayuga and Wayne. It was organized at Auburn and then mustered in the service of the United States for three years August 20, 1862.

After the war, Col. Mead married Dolphia Slade in 1869. They lived in Auburn, New York and then moved to Texas in 1871 with their daughter, Grace, and infant (adopted) son, Charles Sidney.

In October of 1883, Col. Sidney Mead, "a Yankee" and contractor, submitted the bid of \$27,000 to build the present-day Wilson County Courthouse of brick. The bid was accepted by the Commissioners Court. Mead also built several houses in the city of Floresville and owned numerous city lots and his 342-acre homestead at Casa Blanca as well as 30 acres near San Antonio. After his death, his family moved to Moravia, New York and his Texas holdings were sold. In 1919, Sidney Mead's wife and son passed away. In the same year, his remains were disinterred from the Floresville Cemetery and shipped back to Moravia, New York, where they were buried beside his wife and son.

Organization Sponsor: Tambria L. H. Read

"Colonel Charles Sidney Mead: Wilson County Court House Contractor"

in 1920. That year a fair was scheduled for three days in September. The opening event featured a parade through the downtown streets of Floresville on the morning of the fair. The fairgrounds were located approximately where the Floresville High School is located on Hwy. 181. The fair complex included a horse racetrack with a grandstand, exhibit buildings, show buildings and other related structures. The purpose of the fair was to create a countywide effort to encourage diversification and development. The Wilson County Fair lasted until 1931 when the Great Depression caused it to shut down.

Each year during the second weekend in October, thousands of people arrive in Floresville to help celebrate the famous Peanut Festival. They line the streets and watch the fabulous array of floats and marching bands move happily down the main streets of Floresville. The festival started in 1938. The first Queen Tunaep (peanut spelled backward) was Elizabeth Sheehy. King Reboog was none other than John



W. W. Rhodes - One Price Cash Store

Connally, the former governor of Texas, the former U. S. Secretary of Treasury and former Secretary of Navy.

In the 1930s and 1940s, there were a number of good businesses in Floresville. Some will be mentioned here: The White House Café, the Ellinghausen-Teltschik Dry Goods Company, R. L. Eschenburg's store, the Ford Motor Company, the Franklin - Sheehy Chevrolet Company, the First National Bank, the Houston - Lichnovsky Gin Company, the Allerkamp Gin company, The Ullmann Auto Supply business, R. J. Schroller's Grocery Store, the Red and White Grocery. A. Flieller sold seed, feed and poultry supplies and



Floresville Depot

Edwin T. Johnson was the Sinclair Agent. An ice plant, a bakery, and Klasek bottling works operated in Floresville. The J. C. Merchant grocery store and Baumann's Grocery Store were open. The Post Office was on Third Street

Farm and ranch families drove into town on Saturdays, and this was a great social occasion for them. They shopped for groceries, dry goods and other items. Men got haircuts and the women got perms and hairdos. They bought feed and seed, and went to the grist mill and had sacks of corn ground. They ate in the local restaurants. The teenagers went to Smith's Drug Store with their friends and had sodas at the soda fountain. They usually went to the Arcadia Theatre on Saturday afternoon.

Floresville has had several notable doctors who treated the sick, brought babies into the world and saw many good friends and neighbors pass away. John V. Blake and Dr. Jerry Oxford practiced medicine in Floresville for many years. Dr. C. W. Archer, Dr. Boykin and Dr. Sam Nixon and other dedicated doctors also practiced medicine in Floresville. Dr. Blake's son followed in his footsteps. Floresville has also had a number of fine dentists through the years.

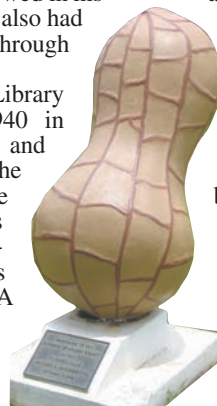
The Wilson County Library began in September 1940 in the courthouse basement and Mrs. Inez Jackson was the librarian. A bookmobile which held 600 books was purchased and Mrs. Jackson drove it to schools throughout the county. A library was dedicated October 4, 1946. It was located on "C" and Fourth Streets where the Parole

Office is today. Mrs. Inez Jackson was the librarian for many years. The present library building was constructed and dedicated in 1968.

Floresville saw some of its young men go off to foreign lands to fight during times of war. WWI occurred in 1917. Some years later in 1941, WWII occurred. Young men in the United States were drafted into the military service and Floresville's youths went away to fight for our country. Sadly, some did not return. At home in Floresville, the people did what they could to help the war effort. During World War II people were issued ration tickets to purchase gas and some food items needed. There were other conflicts, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and others.

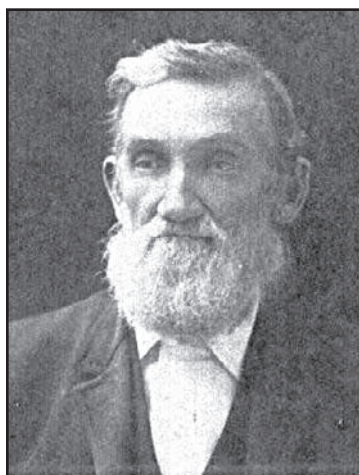
After WWII, the automobile was readily available. Some of the younger people left Floresville to work in San Antonio and in other places. People could also go away to shop and there were fewer businesses in Floresville. The railroad stopped passenger service in the area in 1952, and the railroad tracks were removed in the area in 1998.

The Main Street project came about in 2000. The intent of this state-sponsored project was to help revitalize the Floresville downtown area. Signs were painted and beautification occurred and other projects were promoted to bring business to Floresville. The Floresville Economic Development Corp. was organized in 1996. In 2001 Col. Jesse Perez became director of this organization. In keeping with the Texas State Historical Commission's recom-



Flores De Abrego Family

By Aurelia Flores Deuvall, Peggy Rodriguez
& Monica K. Flores



Peter Barnes

mendation, the FEDC has worked on several projects with help from state grants and local taxes. A Hike and Bike Trail had been established. The Labatt Bridge has been moved from its original site in Labatt to the Hike and Bike Trail. The Railroad Depot has been moved back to Floresville and restored. A Web site has been developed to promote the city of Floresville. Lighting the downtown buildings and the courthouse at Christmas time has been a successful project. The FEDC works with members of the Wilson County Historical Society to help uncover the area history and to place Texas Historical markers, thus saving the area's history.

Floresville has seen growth in businesses and in population. Several large chain stores now occupy Floresville. HEB, a large grocery store, is located in Floresville on Hwy 181. Near it is Bealls clothing store, and across Standish Street is Bill Miller Bar-B-Q restaurant. Highway 181 is a four-lane highway and traveling to work in San Antonio is not difficult.

The Wilson County Jail House ceased to function as a jail in the 1970s. The sheriff's offices are now located in the Criminal Justice Center on Highway 181. The Wilson County Historical Society showcases local history and provides tours of the jailhouse. A Floresville Police Station is now located on "C" Street.

Today the Wilson County Courthouse is the only courthouse in Texas designed by Alfred Giles which still functions as a courthouse. It stands proud and graceful on the town square where it was established in 1884. The Wilson County Judge, Marvin Quinney, presides there. The District Judge's office is located downtown. The Sheriff is Joe Tackitt, Jr., and Daniel Tejada is the mayor of Floresville.

The Flores de Abrego family, like those from the Canary Islands, was integral in the colonization of Texas during the 18th century. Members of their family brought their cattle northward into Texas and established ranches along the San Antonio River during a time when the land was crude and untamed." "The Flores de Abrego family was one of the prominent pioneer families who helped colonize San Antonio de Bexar in the early 1700's. The family played a leading role in the early development of San Antonio and a member of the family was one of the early *alcaldes* (mayors) of San Antonio." "Fighting the elements along with Indian invasions, they earned a proud heritage as brave Texans and Americans. This pride has been sustained by the historical records and has been kept alive by a rich tradition of oral history and family legends passed down through many generations."

"Much of the land southeast of San Antonio in Wilson County was first settled by Don Francisco Flores de Abrego. Don Francisco bore the title of *Hidalgo* from the King of Spain and was given a Spanish land grant. It was on this land grant that Don Francisco established a large hacienda and ranch headquarters about six miles from the present town of Floresville in the 1700's."

Through thirteen generations, land has been handed down and is still owned by many. One of the families, the descendants of Antonio Serapio Flores and his wife Ursula Ximenez de Flores, continue to enjoy family reunions at Yndo Park Ranch in Cañada Verde, reaching attendance typically of more than 300 persons.

"The 'Flores de Abrego' name originated in the Asturias highlands of northern Spain." After entering Mexico, Francisco Flores de Abrego and his wife, Maria Saucedo, settled initially in Saltillo before migrating to Texas." "There their son Francisco Antonio Flores de Abrego II was born. He was a soldier and married Rosa Hermenegilda Hernandez after coming to Texas. She was the daughter of another soldier, Francisco Hernandez, and his wife, Ana Garcia. Hernandez owned one of the oldest ranches in Texas, having received a grant of land in 1736-37. It was called Rancho de San Antonio Bartholome, or San Bartolo, and was located in El Rincon, the 'corner' of land formed by the confluence of the Cibolo Creek with the San Antonio River, in present day Karnes County.

Francisco Antonio Flores de Abrego II and his wife Rosa Hermenegilda had a son named Jose Joaquin. He grew up on his grandfather's "San Bartolo" ranch and was a prominent figure in many of the difficulties that resulted in the 1780's when all the provinces' unbranded cattle were declared to be the King's property. Thanks to ranchers protests like Jose Joaquin Flores de Abrego, this unfair ruling (and it tax) got overturned in 1795.

Jose Joaquin Flores married Ana Theodora Montes de Oca, the daughter of another prominent ranching clan. Their son Jose Antonio married Maria Antonia Rodriguez (herself a direct descendant of Salvador Rodriguez, one of the original Canary Island settlers). Jose Antonio's sons played important roles during the Texas Revolution. His sons

Manuel, Salvador, Nepomuceno, and Jose Maria Flores all fought on the side of the Texans and distinguished themselves in the conflict. Afterwards they returned to the profession of ranching and many of their brands are the earliest to be seen in registry books kept at San Antonio and Floresville, Texas.

When one of the patriotic brothers, Jose Maria died, his estate was divided between his widow and daughters; one of them was Josefa Augustina. She married Samuel William Barker in San Antonio, Texas, on April 17, 1854. He became Wilson County's first sheriff when the county was formed in 1860. It was Josefa Agustina Flores de Barker who donated 200 acres of land for the township of Floresville, the county seat, which she wished named for her ancestor, Francisco Flores de Abrego.

Other members of this distinguished family have served Floresville and Wilson County. One of Jose Maria's brothers was Juan Carlos Nepomuceno Flores, born November 7, 1813, at the Villa de San Fernando. He was a soldier in Juan Sequin's company during the days of the Republic of Texas. Nepomuceno Flores and his wife Margarita Josefa Valdes had a son, Antonio Serapio Flores (November 14, 1845-May 28, 1911). He married Ursula Ximenez on April 28, 1868. This couple raised their 11 children to adulthood in Floresville. Antonio served as Wilson County sheriff and tax collector in 1884. His and Dona Ursula's many descendants have continued these public spirited traditions to the present day."

More Recent Flores Family Tree

"Antonio Serapio Flores, November 14, 1845 to May 28, 1911 and Ursula Ximenez, 1849 to February 13, 1925, their children and their spouses follow:

Jose Ygnacio Flores... and Elena Montes.

Children: Josefa, Jose Antonio, John Zachary and Alejo Montes.

Antonio Flores... and Concepcion Rodriguez...

Children: Enriquetta, Leonides, and Antonio.

Josefa Flores... and Amador Rodriguez...

Children: Eloy, Amado G. and Concinita.

Guadalupe Flores ...and Salvador T. Rodriguez...

Children: Ursula, Arturo Salvador, Justus Castulo, Hita, Zulie and Benjamin Rufus.

Ana Flores ...and Jose Ximenez...

Children: Esther, Francisco and Ursula.

Juan N. Flores... and Clara Edds...

Children: Clara Gertrude, John Nepomuceno, Marguerite Guadalupe, Mary Madalene, Theresa Virginia, Benedict Anthony, Leo Peter Paul, William Henry, Ernest Edward, Cecilia Rosema, Evelyn Gloria, Thomas Fay, Francis Kelly, and Joan Violet.

Mariano E. Flores... and Aurora Rodriguez...

Children: Prudence Marie, Reynaldo Jose, Aurora, Bernice, Rosalinda Theresa, Mary Emily and Maria Lusa.

Ignacio Deciderio (I. D.) Flores Sr. and Herminia (Minnie) Yndo...

Children: (I. D.) Flores Jr.

Carlos A. Flores... and Lucinda Tarin...

Children: Aurelia and John Charles

Miguel C. Flores... and Elisa Caravajal...

Children: Michael Gilbert and Eugene Arthur

Adeliada Flores... and Elias J. Sequin...

Children: Mary Agnes, Beatrice, Madeline and Josephine"

Congratulations Wilson County

On our Sesquicentennial, from your County Seat

FLORESVILLE

- ♦ Deep Historical Roots growing to the future
- ♦ Area economically viable since 1790

...Positioned for Success

Mayor

Daniel M. Tejada

Council Members

Jesse Christopher Flores
Mario Morones
Johnny Ray Nieto
John W. Guerrero
Gloria Estrada Martinez

City Manager

Gary Pelech



1120 D Street
Floresville, TX, 78114
830-393-3105
cityoffloresville.org



Lauro G. DeLeon Civic Center – Frank Villarreal, executive director for the civic center

John Bowden Connally

A Texas Legend

By Amy Pawelek

John Bowden Connally Jr. was born on February 27, 1917, in Floresville, Texas. He was born to Lela Wright and John Bowden Connally. He had 5 brothers: Wyatt, Stanford, Golfrey, Merrill, and Wayne. He also had two sisters, Carmen and Blanche. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. He was elected president of the student body, dean of his legal fraternity and president of his law class. He was also president of the Curtain Club for 3 years and the chairman of the board of student publications. John met the love of his life at the University of Texas. She was Idanell (Nellie) Brill of Austin, Texas. She and John were married on December 21, 1940. They had four children, Kathleen Connally (deceased), John Connally III and wife Diane, daughter Sharon and husband Robert Ammann, and Mark Connally and wife Anne. They had 8 grandchildren: Amy Ammann, Tracy Ammann, Robert Ammann IV, Charles (Charlie) Ammann, John Connally IV, Nell Frances Connally, Kathleen (Katie) Connally, and Mark Connally Jr., and 10 great-grandchildren. John Connally was a farm boy, naval officer, lawyer, rancher, Secretary of the Navy under President Kennedy and Secretary of the Treasury under President Nixon, three-time Governor of the state of Texas and presidential candidate in 1980. John and Nellie Connally were also in the car with President and Mrs. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, on that fateful day in Dallas when the President was assassinated. Connally was also struck by a bullet that went through his back and chest, collapsing his right lung and emerging to fracture his right wrist. The bullet also creased his right thigh. They always believed that on November 22, 1963, there were 3 gunshots, all from behind.

John Connally served as our 38th governor of Texas.

As governor, he overhauled the educational system. He also spent a lot of time developing Texas resources, protecting wilderness areas, and expanding parks and recreational facilities. He was also instrumental in developing the Main Street Program in Texas and the HemisFair tower in San Antonio.

John Connally was many things to many people; for me and my family, he was "Guggy." When I was born, he was governor of Texas and they were trying to get me to say "Govy," for Governor, but it came out Guggy and it stuck. For all of the grandchildren and family, John and Nellie Connally were forever Noni and Guggy. They would take us on rides around the ranch, spend all the holidays with us, and be there for us like anyone else's grandparents. For two people who had traveled the world and met with kings and presidents, when it came to their grandchildren...politics was never touched on. It was always all about us. Whatever we were into, that is what they always wanted to talk about. I do remember that it was important to them that we studied hard and that we knew what was going on in the world. They definitely taught us the importance of hard work, dedication, devotion and love of family. My grandparents also taught us that it's not what you have in your life—it's who you have in your life. John Connally played a very important role in Texas and the United States, but his most important role was the one he played for his family. John Connally loved nothing more than spending his off-time in Floresville, Texas, at his home, the Picoso Ranch,



Merrill, Golfrey, Wayne, John, Blanche, Carmen, and (front) Lela Connally

with Nellie and his family. The Picoso was where his heart was. He would slip into his khakis or jeans, boots and hat, saddle up, and spend happy hours helping with the cattle-branding and doing honest ranch work. He loved swimming with the grandchildren, long walks with Nellie and sitting under the huge live oaks talking with his children. He loved driving into Conoly-Herry Drug and having coffee with friends and old-timers. He loved eating lunch at Wright's Café and keeping up with everyone in Wilson County. He loved spending time with his brothers and all his many, many cousins in the county. He would take the children into town and they would go see Uncle Merrill Connally (who was Judge at the time). They loved to play on the courthouse steps while they visited. He really didn't get to the ranch as much as he would have liked. He would have loved to spend more time in Floresville. Most of his fondest memories were spent in this community. He

was Floresville's first Peanut Festival king and he was so proud of that. He couldn't wait to get together with family and continue to pass on the tradition of making homemade peach ice cream from the fresh peaches on the trees. He loved spending time on the tractor and really working the land. He loved the feel of fresh-plowed dirt. For a man that had traveled the world and seen so many places...Wilson County was home to him. I know he would feel so honored to know that the community wanted him to be a part of this Sesquicentennial book.

I have to say that our family truly feels blessed to have had John and Nellie Connally in our lives. And we are all grateful for those many special years with them. As we grow older, we realize how important it is to let our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren know what wonderful things John Connally did for our state and country, but most importantly, what he did for us!

La Vernia

By Allen and Regina Kosub

La Vernia is located at the junction of U.S. Highway 87 and FM 775 in northwest Wilson County. It is 24 miles southeast of San Antonio. La Vernia's neighboring communities are Sutherland Springs seven miles to the southeast, St. Hedwig seven miles to the northwest, and Kicaster eight miles to the southwest.

La Vernia, Wilson County's fastest growing city, was incorporated on May 21, 1966. From 1990 to 2000, within its two-square-mile corporate limits, the population increased by 62% from 576 to 931 residents. However, the community serves a large number of rural subdivisions adjacent to its corporate boundaries. Within a five-mile radius of the city, the population has grown from 3,483 in 1990 to 7,712 in 2006, an increase of 104%. Historically, this is the largest population to reside in this area.

Community Life

Community life in La Vernia celebrates the family, schools, and churches. The first school in La Vernia was organized in the 1850s by its earliest settlers; its first teacher was Robert McCoy. The Lavernia Male and Female Academy, organized in 1871, occupied the first floor of the historic Brahan Masonic Lodge. La Vernia's pioneers of education include V. L. Grubbs, Charles E. Wright, Miss W. Allensworth, Deed L. Vest, and A. N. McCallum. La Vernia High School, home of the La Vernia Bears, established in 1890, is a source of community pride and spirit. Today, La Vernia Independent School District serves over 3000 students from the greater La Vernia area.

During the earliest days, circuit-riding preachers and missionary priests attended to the spiritual needs of the settlers on the Cibolo. Congregations that formed in 19th century exist to this day. First Baptist Church of La Vernia, Immanuel Lutheran Church, La Vernia United Methodist Church, La Vernia Primitive Baptist Church, St. Ann's Catholic Church, and Zion Fair Baptist Church are legacies from the 19th century. Rector Chapel Presbyterian Church, one of the oldest, disbanded in the late 1800s. Its chapel building was moved to downtown La Vernia in 1891 where it is now used by the La Vernia Primitive Baptist Church. Today the greater La Vernia area is served by over a dozen churches.

La Vernia's Blue Bonnet Festival and HammerFest bicycle rally are popular regional events. The La Vernia Historical Association,

The La Vernia Heritage Museum, and its Veterans Memorial Park (currently under construction) attest to the community's understanding of its place in history. Fraternal organizations such as the Masons, Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, La Vernia Garden Club, and Hermann Sons are an important part of community life. La Vernia's active Chamber of Commerce promotes a robust business environment.

Texas Revolution

By the late 1820s, Spain and Mexico had governed the area along the Cibolo for over two hundred years. San Antonio de Bexar, the seat of government for the state of Coahuila, recognized the need to open a road to the DeWitt Colony in Gonzales. It authorized the creation of the San Antonio to Gonzales Road, which crossed the Cibolo twenty-three miles east of San Antonio.

Along this road, on October 2, 1835 near Gonzales, the first shots of the Texas Revolution were fired. In 1836, the last reinforcements for the beleaguered Alamo traveled this route from Gonzales. A few weeks later, the victorious army of General Antonio López de Santa Anna, marched along this route to find Gonzales burned to the ground by Sam Houston and his retreating army in the legendary "Runaway Scrape."

Early Settlers

As hostilities with Mexico concluded in the new state of Texas, settlers used the Gonzales Road to establish farms and ranches in the Cibolo valley. The earliest settlers came from other parts of Texas and the United States. After 1848, they were joined by immigrants from the Prussian states including Germany and Poland.

J. B. Polley, the son of J. H. Polley, one of Austin's original 300, was a witness to the settling of the Cibolo valley. He chronicled the arrival of the first settlers in the La Vernia area. According to his chronology, the first to arrive were the Bristers who came in July of 1847. Claiborne Rector, who had performed valuable services in the revolution of 1836, came to the area in the fall of 1848. In the fall of 1849, bachelor brothers from Nova



Residence of William M. Wiseman III and wife, Mary

Scotia, Dick and Henry James, established themselves on a farm and ranch in the immediate location of the community. In 1851 what Polley described as a deluge, began and continued until 1857. Among those arriving in 1851 were G. H. McDaniel, D. C. Robinson, J. J. Hankinson, Ross Houston, J. M. McAlister, T. D. James, W. K. Baylor, W. R. Wiseman, W. D. Scull, J. T. Montgomery, J. F. Tiner, Levi Humphreys, James Ripley, J. A. Burnside, and E. F. Potts. Of those coming later than 1851 were Maj. James L. Dial, Henry Yelvington, Lem Perkins, Dorsett Harmon, Maj. R. W. Brahan, Colonel Frazier, Rev. R. M. Currie, Edmund Barker, the Elams, the Floyds, the Gordons, S. W. McClain, James Newton, T. T. Collier, C. F. Henderson, Henry Morgan, Thomas Applewhite, Jesse Applewhite, Dr. William Sutherland, Rudolph Helman and a brother, Colonel Saunders, R. T. Spivey, James T. McKee, Dr. R. Stevenson, W. F. Hughes, Rev. Robert McCoy, Owen and Asa Murray, Dr. Owens, J. R. Plummer, J. G. Kilgore, the Barclays, Thomas G. and Levi Maddox, and Tignal Jones. Census and other records confirm the arrival of these settlers and add the names of others such as Thomas Camp.

Many of these settlers were planters from the Old South who brought with them African slaves. These Africans were enumerated as a part of the population in the Federal Census of 1860. According to this census, near Post Oak, the population of white settlers numbered about 475; the African slaves numbered about 416.

European immigrants from the Prussian states are usually associ-

ated with the German and Polish-Silesian communities in the area. However, as early as the 1850s many families moved out of those communities, bought land along the Cibolo, and became associated with the community of La Vernia. Immigrants from Prussia, who were in the area, are the Bauers, the Sellingslohs, the Gelvins, the Tewes, the Nauraths, the Dornstins, and the Maughs.

Gulf of Mexico to California

The region east of San Antonio along the Gonzales Road was widely known as the "post oaks," the common name for the species of oak tree (*quercus stellata*) that covered the landscape. Small communities that provided the elements of civilization developed among the scattered farms and ranches in the valley; Post Oak, on the Gonzales Road, was one such community.

In 1846, as Texas came into the Union, Washington was keen to protect its newly acquired western route through San Antonio to Chihuahua, Mexico and San Diego, California. The U.S. Army established a massive depot in San Antonio to supply its forts west of San Antonio.

In 1848, Bexar County Commissioners supported this effort by authorizing a network of roads to connect with roads from the port of Indianola on the Texas coast. It ordered that the Gonzales Road traveling east from San Antonio be improved to the western bank of the Cibolo to Claiborne Rector's house. From Rector's house, a new road would be created coursing south, following old Indian trails and cow paths along the western bank of the Cibolo to a point below the Sulphur Springs (Sutherland Springs) where

it crossed the Cibolo and continued to Yorktown and Indianola.

When the Western and Salt-marsh Stage lines established routes through the area in the early 1850s, two communities were beginning to form on the banks of the Cibolo: Bethesda on the east side of the Cibolo in Guadalupe County and Post Oak on the west side in Bexar County. Regular stage service allowed a post office to open at the junction of the Old Gonzales Road and the Cibolo. In 1853, Post Oak, on the western bank, was chosen for its location. Joseph Brown was the first postmaster. The community of Bethesda gradually receded in importance.

Post Oak becomes Lavernia

The name "Post Oak" was used for the community until 1859 when confusion with other communities named Post Oak caused the Post Office Department to recommend a change. The community postmaster at that time, Connally F. Henderson, submitted an application for the name "Lavernia." The choice was deliberate and well-documented in governmental records, correspondence, and newspapers of the day. The name has been a unique choice; no other community named Lavernia has ever existed in the United States. Unfortunately, within three years after choosing the name "Lavernia," Connally F. Henderson, its postmaster, was buried with other Civil War casualties of the Battle of Gaines Mill in Virginia, taking with him the secret of the name "Lavernia."

The origin of the name La Vernia is elusive. Its association with the community comes from two separate legends; the most popular is the speculation that the original "Lavernia" was derived from "La Verde" Spanish for the "the green." This understanding led to the community changing the original spelling of its name from "Lavernia" to "La Vernia" in 1937. The second legend attributes the origin to the original founders of the community who were university-educated men, readers of the classics, who chose the name "Lavernia" for its spiritual inspiration. Lavernia was the village in the Italian Apennines where on September 14, 1224 tradition has it that St. Francis of Assisi received the stigmata, the marks of Christ's wounds, an event described by Dante in the "Divine Comedy."

The Plantation

The earliest settlers were planters from the southern states who brought with them the plantation model for growing cotton using African slaves. For the first few years the settlers experienced good



*Lay Hotel
Picture courtesy of Clayton Heathcock*

rainfall and harvested large yields. However, the drought of 1857 emphasized the erratic and sparse average rainfall that made farming unpredictable. The unpredictability of the climate coupled with the high cost of slaves in Texas and the ease with which slaves could escape to freedom in Mexico caused many planters to abandon the plantation model and explore other opportunities.

Rounding up and branding the wild cattle in the area became the focus of many in the community, as evidenced by the registration of brands and marks with the Bexar County Clerk. Some families, like the Bristers and Bealls, moved west, establishing vast cattle ranches in what would become Live Oak and Atascosa counties.

Indians

The early settlers endured the hardships of the frontier: droughts that withered crops, floods that inundated the Cibolo Valley, washing away homes, livestock, and dreams. The most terrifying hardship for the settlers was the return of Indian tribes to their traditional hunting grounds along the Cibolo. Indian incursions were reported in 1848, 1849, and 1850.

Not until 1855, and after the valley was settled, was there another raid. Lucy, an African slave girl for the Elam plantation, was attacked and killed by a mounted party of Indians as she carried water to field hands. About a mile above Post Oak on Dry Hollow Creek a boy, Jewett McGee, the son of a local pastor, and Pendleton Rector were caught

in the open by the same group. Rector escaped, but young McGee was killed. Men from the community chased the raiders deep into the post oaks with no success.

Civil War

The Civil War came to Texas at daybreak on Feb. 16, 1861, when Ben McCulloch with about 1,000 Texan militiamen demanded the surrender of U.S. Troops stationed in San Antonio. This would become a watershed event in the history of La Vernia. The American Civil War, although fought on faraway battlefields, changed the course of La Vernia's history.

The leaders of La Vernia were active and influential in Texas State politics and supporters of secession. Claiborne Rector and R. W. Brahan were delegates to the Secessionist Convention of 1861. The community rallied to the cause and men immediately volunteered for service with the Confederate States of America. The men of this community joined the ranks of units mustered all over Texas. They may be found in Terry's Texas Rangers, Parson's Texas Cavalry, Luckett's Brigade, Walkers Division, Irelands Company, and the Cibolo Guards.

However, Company F, 4th Texas Infantry, called the "Mustang Grays," was formed and led by Captain Edward H. Cunningham. Under the command of General John Bell Hood's Texas Brigade, it stands as a singular legend of the Civil War. Cunningham and his men reported to Richmond, Virginia, in late September 1861. Hood's Brigade participated in every major engage-

ment of General Lee's army except Chancellorsville. It was present at thirty-eight engagements from Eltham's Landing May 7, 1862 to Appomattox Court House May 7, 1865.

Captain Cunningham served on the headquarters staff of General John Bell Hood. The casualties suffered by this heroic unit were devastating to the community of La Vernia. At Gaines Mill, Virginia John F. Brooks, Charles McAlister, T. J. McCann, and Augustus Dial were wounded; L. P. Lyons, Daniel McAlister, Thomas Cunningham, C. F. Henderson, and M. Pickett were killed. At Sharpsburg, Maryland, L. P. Hughes and R. H. Skinner were wounded; B. G. Henderson was killed. At the Wilderness Campaign, Virginia R. W. Murray was wounded; Charles Brown and A. T. Cohea were killed. Haywood Brahan was wounded at Appomattox, Virginia. Eli Park was killed at New Market Heights, Virginia. Jack Sutherland was wounded at Darbytown, Virginia. W. F. Floyd and J.C. Murray were killed at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. John D. Murray was wounded at several engagements. J. B. Currie was wounded at Chickamauga, Tennessee/Georgia. Recorded with no injuries were W. A. Bennett, E. T. Kindred, T. P. Camp, Calvin and William Goodloe, William Morris, James O. Wiseman, John Maddox and M. Crenshaw.

Reconstruction

After the war, the presence of an occupying United States Army created tensions throughout Texas and the Cibolo Valley was no exception. A wave of violence threatened the community when in early June of 1867 members of the Taylor family from DeWitt County murdered a freed slave in La Vernia. Federal troops were dispatched to investigate the incident and suppress the violence. Slave patrols, established by the planters before the War, were re-organized as minutemen militias that began policing the surrounding area.

Confrontation with outlaw bands persisted throughout the 1870s and culminated on July 2, 1880 when Dr. James McMahon was murdered at his home. The local surgeon and postmaster was mortally wounded by Richard Newsom, a member of an outlaw gang operating from Cottage Hill, a community across the Bexar County line, about six miles west of La Vernia.

Within days after the murder, Guadalupe, Bexar, and Wilson County officials met at Midway School near La Vernia to end the activity of these outlaws. A petition

La Vernia

was gathered and sent to Governor Oran M. Roberts seeking his help. This request brought the attention of state and federal authorities to the area. The gang was brought to justice by the end of 1881, allowing the law-abiding citizens of La Vernia to live without the constant threat of organized violence.

Economic and Social Change

After the War, the population of La Vernia declined. The community changed as it sought economic opportunities without the plantation model. With the loss of slaves, some plantation operators moved from the area; A.G. Goodloe moved back to Alabama, R. W. Floyd moved to Los Angeles, California, and John S. McGee moved back to Kentucky.

Those that remained sought opportunities in cattle raising; the names Morgan, Newton, Humphries, Tiner, Beall, Wiseman, and McAlister were known from Texas to Kansas for the large herds they sent up the trails.

Haywood Brahan and his brother-in-law Captain Ed Cunningham created and organized the prisoner leasing system for the state of Texas and used convicts to operate Cunningham's sugar operation in Sugarland, Texas and his ranch on the Cibolo.

Family farms delivered cotton to the gins in La Vernia. Large herds of cattle were organized for drives up the trails to Kansas and beyond. Hotels and liveries serviced the ever-present wagon convoys that passed through on their way to the U.S. Army Depot in San Antonio, and mines of Chihuahua in Mexico. Chihuahua Street, La Vernia's main street, is a reminder of that time.

Freedmen

With emancipation, the large population of African freedmen dispersed throughout the area creating small communities in Wilson and adjacent counties. The Doisedo community was formed in the sandy hills, immediately west of La Vernia. In the 1870 Federal Census the families of African descent in the La Vernia area included the surnames Applewhite, Brahan, Brown, Brooks, Buffert, Bulger, Crews, Curtis, Davis, Doisedo, Dudley, Floyd, Fields, Fortune, Gibson, Green, Griffin, Graves, Hartfield, Jackson, James, Johns, Johnson, Kendrick, Lotte, McAlister, Miller, Minus, Mitchell, McSimmons, Morgan, Reece, Roach, Robertson, Stevenson, Walker, Williams, and Wilson.

The Family Farm

Many of the vast tracts of land owned by the planters were purchased and divided by German and Polish set-

tlers and operated as family farms. The surnames Achterberg, Beyer, Brietzke, Frederick, Gutz, Kosub, Koepf, Linne, Mattke, Sacherer, Pierdolla, Ploch, Stanush, Sczech, Schuwirth, Schievelbein, Suhre, Stoltz, Strey, Vorpahl, Wolfe, Winkler, Witte, Wostal, and Wunderlich are associated with these families. The influx of these industrious settlers brought a modest prosperity to La Vernia.

Commerce and Industry

The 1870 Federal Census enumerated individuals in occupations other than farming that revealed a vibrant community. Enumerated were one physician, three merchants, one dry goods clerk, two carpenters, two blacksmiths, several wagoners, teamsters, and wagon makers, a cook, a washerwoman, a nurse, and an innkeeper.

Ten years later, the 1880 census revealed dramatic growth; those claiming an occupation other than farming included three physicians, four carpenters, five merchants, two magistrates, five ministers, three teachers, two saddlers, a well borer, seven potters, a miller, two broom manufacturers, one blacksmith, one bookkeeper, a law student, a butcher, and two shoemakers.

Cotton gins were important to the farmers of the area. H. J. Suhre, J. T. Wolfe, William Wiseman, Hugo Kott, W. E. Tewes, T. H. Abbott, and Henry Linne operated the earliest and most successful cotton gins in La Vernia.

The rich alluvial soils of the Cibolo Valley attracted the farmers to the area, the deposits of clay attracted potters and brick makers. Brothers and Union Civil War veterans Isaac and George Washington Suttles found the clay was ideal for manufacturing superior pottery and bricks in La Vernia. While their presses created bricks for local use, their artisans created salt-glazed pottery that was shipped to customers as far away as Denver, Colorado. La Vernia's Suttles pottery is now treasured by pottery collectors.

Innkeepers were an important feature of this community. The first mention of a stage stop and livery was at the house of Claiborne Rector in the early 1850s. Thomas Applewhite operated a stage stop from his homestead for a brief period. Henry and wife Georgiana Morgan were farmers during the 1850s. After Henry's death in 1867, Georgiana maintained an inn that was considered a reliable place for room and board. Another notable La Vernia inn was the Lay Hotel operated by Judge Francis Marion Lay from 1899 to the early 1900s.

Remembered by residents of the

early 20th century as the "Racket Store," Samuel Pressley Wiseman operated one of the earliest dry goods stores in La Vernia. Mr. Wiseman, as early as 1877, demonstrated his wares for the Sutherland Springs newspaper the Western Chronicle. Herman Suhre was a well-known merchant and postmaster during the 1870s and 1880s. Brahan and Erskine, Gersdorff and Company operated stores during the 1870s; Kott and Linne, Tewes and Abbott operated stores and Emil Lenz and Emil Koepf operated the popular Two Emils Saloon when Wilson County celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1909.

The Innovators

Agriculture was the main preoccupation of the community. Patents registered with the U. S. Patent Office reveal the inventive nature of La Vernia's farmers. In 1859, T. T. Collier registered a patent for an attachment that increased the efficiency of a cultivator. In 1892, John F. Tiner registered a patent for a Spring Draft Attachment to replace the doubletree used to attach draft animals to wagons. In 1908, Otto H. Marx registered a patent for Improvements to the Sulky Plow. In 1917, C. W. Neblett registered a patent for a Supporting Structure used to suspend a scale for weighing cotton in the field.

In the 1870s, Major John Montgomery recognized the need for improved grasses for pasture. He imported and sold a new grass from Africa, Sorghum halapense, commonly known as "Johnson grass," a legacy that grows in Wilson County to this day.

150 Years of Freemasonry

Freemasonry has been an important part of La Vernia's history. Brahan Lodge No. 226, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons was first established in Bethesda across the Cibolo in 1859 by John Rhodes King. The Lodge was named after Robert Weakley Brahan, a local physician and planter. After the original building burned, the lodge was moved to La Vernia in 1867. Brahan Lodge, a red sandstone structure constructed in 1871, is still a meeting place for Masons. At times, this registered Historic Texas Landmark has served as a school for the community.

Road and Bridges

After the Civil War, through the 1870s, the business of the community slowly expanded. Roads connecting La Vernia with outlying communities and farms were laid out and their rights-of-way formalized by the Commissioners of Wilson County. Built on the Cibolo, the community's access to reliable

crossings was essential to commerce and travel.

At times crossings were moved due to flood damage and maintenance requirements. Scull's Crossing, Wiseman's Crossing, McAlister's Crossing, Montgomery's Crossing, and Rector's Crossing were the names and locations of crossings. Until the installation of steel bridges after 1900, the steep banks of the Cibolo made maintenance difficult and crossing treacherous. In 1915, the Mueller steel bridge was constructed at McAlister's crossing and today stands as a Historic Texas Landmark.

Railroad Comes To La Vernia

The settlers of the Cibolo Valley understood and embraced the need for connecting their community to centers of commerce. In 1853, landowners like James McAlister and Claiborne Rector in La Vernia donated land for a railroad connecting the community to shipping on the Texas coast.

The Texas legislature chartered the San Antonio River Navigation Company in 1856 that would allow navigation up the San Antonio River to Goliad and points beyond. A navigable San Antonio River has been a dream of South Texas ever since. Members of the Canfield family of La Vernia and the Cibolo valley were named as charter members in the legislation.

The Civil War ended the efforts to realize these dreams. However, the railroad finally did arrive in 1895 when the San Antonio and Gulf Shore Railroad was built from San Antonio to Victoria with a stop in La Vernia. The railroad served the community as its connection to the greater world until 1957 when service was discontinued and the tracks removed.

Historic Notables

La Vernia is proud of Jane Yelvington McCallum (1877-1957), suffragist leader and Texas secretary of state (1927 - 1933), born to Alvaro Leonard and Mary Fullerton (LeGette) Yelvington in La Vernia, Texas, on December 30, 1877.

La Vernia's growing list of historical markers includes: Thomas Applewhite Homestead, Brahan Masonic Lodge, Chihuahua Road, The City of La Vernia, Concrete Cemetery, Beall Cemetery, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery, La Vernia United Methodist Church, Rector Chapel Cemetery, Suttles Pottery, Mueller Bridge, Grave of Claiborne Rector, and the Deaf Smith Oak Tree.

The legacy of the founders of Wilson County thrives in La Vernia, where the Old South met the Wild West.

CITY of LAO VERNIA

Est. 1847 on the Old Chihuahua Rd. • Population 1,218



Richard Fryer, Janet Thelen, Paula Burgess, Harold Schott, Patricia Hamm, Bobby Hyatt

Harold Schott, Mayor
Robert W. Richter, Mayor Pro Tem
Randy Leonard, Councilman
Roger Miller, Councilman
Jeffrey Smith, Councilman
Eloi Cormier, Councilman
Bobby Hyatt, Chief of Police
Patricia Hamm, Secretary/Treasurer
Richard Fryer, Director of Public Works
Janet Thelen, Code Enforcement
Paula Burgess, City Clerk

Barker-Huebinger Rock House



Barker-Huebinger House

By Shirley Grammer

The historic Barker-Huebinger Rock House was recorded as a Texas Historic Landmark in 2008.

Alabama natives Emory Crawford Barker (1839-1914) and Leah Humphreys (1842-1931) came to this area of Texas in the early 1850's. Emory was the son of Edmond Asa and Talitha Humphreys Barker. Leah was the daughter of James and Leah Harriet Maddox Humphreys.

During the Civil War Emory was mustered into Terry's Texas Rangers, CO G, September 16, 1861. He was discharged in December of that year due to illness. He rejoined his regiment in July 1862 and was discharged again in January 1863. He was a farmer and rancher. Leah Humphreys and Emory C. Barker were united in marriage October 4, 1866 by the Rev. Robert Morrison Currie, minister of the La Vernia Baptist Church. Seven children were born to this union: Elizabeth Anne (Cureton), Harriet (Handley), Emma (Shahan), Edmond Asa, James Humphreys, Cedonia May (Morgan) and Sara Jane (Tunnell).

Talitha Humphreys Barker and Leah Humphreys Barker were cousins. Talitha was the daughter of Joseph Humphreys, who settled in Caldwell County, while his brother, James Humphreys, settled in the southwestern section of Guadalupe County near La Vernia.

In 1869 Emory and Leah purchased a 260-acre tract of land in Guadalupe County (present-

day Wilson County) from Dr. Gray Jones Houston, Attorney in fact for Pugh and Lucinda Houston of Alabama, for a total sum of \$1,042.

Emory and Leah built their rock house in 1871, located on a hill overlooking the Cibolo Creek

the Cibolo Valley. The historic homestead includes a main house, adjacent building and well. The rough-cut sandstone is laid in both regular and irregular courses and craftsmanship is evident in features such as corner quoins. Notable interior features



South side of house - Photo by Stephanie Huebinger

approximately five and one-half miles north of Sutherland Springs. The date was established through a deed dated November 10, 1871, when Leah donated one & one-third acre of land for a school in her neighborhood. The recipients of the donation were school trustees: Samuel McClain, W. F. Gardner and Asa Murray. These men lived adjacent to the Barker family in the area we presently call "Pleasant Hill." In Leah's deed to the school she states, "I am in the process of building my rock house." It is one of the few remaining rock houses in

include incorporated fireplaces and hearths that exhibit quality stone masonry. The stone used in the construction of the house is the same stone used in the construction of the Historic Brahan Masonic Lodge, which was also built in 1871.

The stone outbuilding includes a fireplace and stone Nicho, a special place built for religious icons or statues. The deep hand-dug circular well is lined with stones similar to those used in the main house.

Emory and Leah sold the home in 1878 to F.M. Butler for \$2,900



A Nicho inside home

and moved to Blanco County. The home changed ownership a number of times until 1916 when Rudolph and Adelia Huebinger of Marion acquired the homestead. Ralph Huebinger of La Vernia inherited the homestead after the death of his father in 1952. Michael and Shirley Huebinger of New Braunfels, present owners of the house, acquired the home in 2000. The home has remained in the Huebinger family for approximately 83 years.

In 2008, the house was designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark and has received a Texas State Historical Marker. Preservation Texas selected the home in 2008 as one of 13 sites across the State of Texas to place on Texas' Most Endangered Places list. The purpose of Preservation Texas is to save historic structures by creating public awareness of their importance to a community.

Talitha, Emory and Leah are buried in the Miller Creek Cemetery in Blanco County. It is possible that Edmond Asa Barker (d. 1869), husband of Talitha, is buried in the Barker Section of Concrete Cemetery in an unmarked grave. Rudolph and Adelia Huebinger are interred in the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Cemetery of St. Hedwig. Ralph and Lucille Huebinger are buried in the Concrete Cemetery near La Vernia.

"We Serve"

Community-based organization committed to make a difference in the lives of people everywhere.

Floresville Lions Club



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1st Vice President

Lion LaJuana Newnam-Leus

2nd Vice President

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Lion Nancy Hosek

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Tail Twister

Lion Ted Barber

Lion Tamer

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Back: George You, Levi Campos, Thalia Hernandez, Zeke Wiatrek. Front: Daniela Aguilon, Jessica Ortiz



Meetings: 1st, 2nd, & 4th Thursdays at Noon at Jack's Café in Floresville



La Vernia Lions Club

OFFICERS

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You are welcome to join us anytime; you can accomplish much more when working together with others than alone. For detailed information just log onto www.LaVerniaLions.org.

We support the Texas Lions Camp in Kerrville

Stockdale

By Charles R. Byrd®

During the late 1840's, early settlers selected the area along the Cibolo River and Ecletto (Clayto) streams to settle and build their homes near an area what is known today as Stockdale. It was said that Billy Mayes was the first settler east of the Cibolo to settle in this area which was first known as High Prairie. Daniel Bird along with Solomon Jackson, Creed Taylor, Martin West, James Peacock and others began to settle in the area. They built permanent homes along the Ecletto, (Clayto) and Cibolo streams in the outlying area of High Prairie. The land was a rich green oasis with pure spring water. It was said to have an abundance of fish and game as well as bear in the creek bottoms. Oak timber was found scattered in this sandy area that was covered with tall grass and was considered an ideal stock range for cattle and horses. It was still a wilderness and Indians were feared during this period, but these settlers helped drive the Indians out.

By the 1850's additional settlers such as Dr. Thomas Batte, Ancil and Nathan Jackson, John R. King, John and Royal Wheeler settled and built cabins in the High Prairie area. James Peacock, Wade Hampton West and his father James West arrived in the mid-1850's. James West was buried at nearby Steele Branch Cemetery and his grave is one of the oldest in the area, bearing a death date of September 1855. John R. King moved to Cibolo Creek near the High Prairie area after purchasing 500 acres in 1859. King was a member of the Texas Legislature and was successful in passing a bill for creating Wilson County in 1860.

Indians were a major problem for the early settlers. One such account in 1855 was cited by Creed Taylor in one of his memoirs. Creed said that a party of Indians killed a ranch hand at James Peacock's place nearby. Creed, James Peacock and Daniel Bird went after the Indians and one Indian took aim at Daniel Bird and Creed killed the Indian. They took all of the Indian's horses and returned back to the settlement. Creed Taylor was a leader in organizing parties to go after the Indian raiders.

During another Indian raid, a number of horses were stolen including one of Creed Taylor's finest racing horses. Creed organized some men to go after the Indians with the horses. After

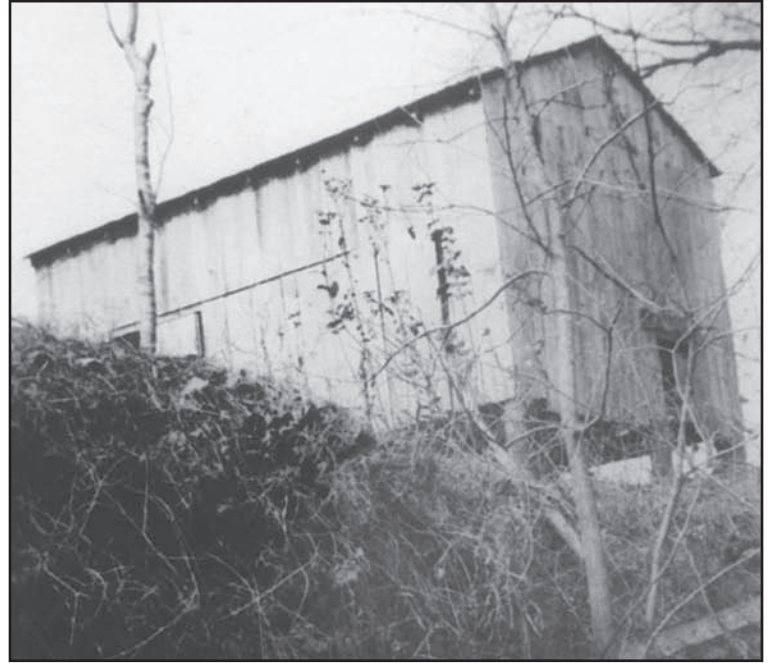
traveling ten miles, all the men but Creed and Sutherland, who was the son-in-law of John R. King, continued the pursuit. It was said that they waited till night and sneaked into the Indian camp. Creed untied the horses and mounted his racing horse. He started yelling and shooting and raced out of there and all the horses followed. The Indians were so surprised that they did not try to fight or follow them. It was some years later that the Indian raids subsided, but was many years before they completely stopped in the area.

Some land near the present-day town of Stockdale was owned by Allison Green, a soldier, who served under John R. King. Green was apparently killed by the Indians sometime during the 1850's. Locals allowed timber to be taken from his land without charge and the area became known as Free Timbers. Eventually this settlement would become Stockdale. Another name given to the area besides High Prairie and Free Timbers was Bunker's Store.

These early settlers were able to live off the land for most of their needs. Items such as molasses, spices, coffee, tea, and salt were obtained from distant settlements. A probate record filed in Gonzales County contained the account list of the old Murray Store in Rancho. This account list included early settlers from Free Timbers during the early 1850's who traveled there to buy supplies. The list contained names of settlers such as Creed Taylor, Daniel Bird, Phillip Goodbread, Martin West and others from the Free Timbers settlement.

One of the first local stores in Free Timbers was opened by John Heathcock. His wife, Mary Elizabeth Goodbread, was the daughter of Phillip Goodbread's son Thomas. John later sold the store to Jethro Bunker, who moved the grocery store inventory to a different location and it became a general merchandise store.

There was an issue of where to locate the county seat around the 1867 time period. The county judge, William Longworth, tried to get the people of Sutherland Springs to pay to become the county seat, but the people refused. Longworth then offered to move it to John R. King's ranch location, which was just west of the current location for Stockdale. King refused the offer because he did not want a town on his land. Other accounts indicate the land in question was the site of some hog pens that he did not want



Wheeler's Mill - Cibolo River, near Stockdale

to move and declined the offer.

Eventually Free Timbers was large enough that it needed a post office, and the government back in Washington requested an official name for this settlement. Jethro Bunker, who owned the local store in Free Timbers, was also the postmaster. He could have easily named the town after his own name, but decided to form a committee to decide on the name of the town. The committee that Jethro Bunker selected was composed of T.M. Batte, Dr. Chew, William Palm, Ancil Jackson, Bunker, and John R. King. John R. King was a past member of the Texas House of Representatives and had also been instrumental in the creation of Wilson County. He most likely knew Lt. Gov. Fletcher Stockdale, who had served as governor at the end of the Civil War. By 1871, he had become an attorney for the railroad. He was also known for promoting the development of a refrigerator car for shipping beef. It was thought that one reason Stockdale was chosen for the name of the town was that it might help encourage the railroad to be built to go through its town. During this time period railroad routes were highly sought after by small towns. The name of the town was decided and by October 1871, Bunker was successful in establishing a post office in his store for the newly named town of Stockdale. It was said that Ancil Jackson was the first person to send a registered letter from Stockdale's post office.

The town was laid out on land owned by King, Palm, and John Wheeler. John R. King owned 500 acres, which he purchased in 1859, and part of this land included an area south of what now is Main Street. On or about 1863 John Wheeler bought land in the area and part of this land is north of Main Street. In October, 1877, the year when King was county commissioner, a plat of the physical layout was recorded in Wilson County, which was organized in 1860.

A Railroad Connects the Town

Land owners from the Stockdale area attended a meeting in a nearby local community called Rancho in March of 1852. Men from the San Antonio Mexican Gulf Railroad Company presented plans for the new railroad to be built from San Antonio to the Gulf Coast. Daniel Bird must have believed this would be of great significance for the Stockdale area and in July 1852 granted a thirty-three yard right of way to the San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad Company through his league of land and any other land that he owned. The Civil War delayed the project and after many years the railroad was finally built from San Antonio to Stockdale.

The San Antonio Light documented the first train departure to Stockdale. The Gulf Shore Railroad departed from San Antonio to Stockdale on August 30th, 1896, at 2:45 p.m. Over seventy-five passengers

who were offered a free ride including twenty-five officials of the Gulf Shore Railroad traveled from San Antonio to Stockdale in about 3 hours for the initial trip. A more formal ceremony was held on August 18, 1897, as 300 passengers traveled from San Antonio to Stockdale for the event. The train arrived blowing its steam whistle and the event united the two cities. The town's leading citizens provided the barbecue and held the reception in Stockdale's large and spacious schoolhouse where they celebrated the occasion.

The line was then extended to Pandora, Nixon, Cuero, Victoria, and finally reaching the Gulf at Port Lavaca. From 1896 to 1906 Stockdale was at the end of the line for the railroad. The train used a turntable, later a "Y", to turn the engine around and flipped the seats for the return trip to San Antonio. The train provided two trips per day and provided Stockdale with the mail. Since the post office was several blocks from the train depot, the government contracted a local person to take the mail from the depot to the post office. One person that performed this service was Will Hester. Hester also provided transportation for passengers as well. The railroad was a great service to the area for many years and was eventually discontinued to Stockdale in the 1960s.

Ranching and Farming Industry is Established

The Stockdale and surrounding area was open range and some land owners became cattle ranchers. Since there were no fences everyone's stock ran at large. A system of cattle brand registration in each county by the ranchers identified their cattle. Among the earliest brands registered in Wilson County in 1861 are those belonging to J. H. Polley, Creed Taylor, Daniel Bird, and John Sutherland.

After the Civil War and into the early 1880's, smaller cattlemen known as landless cattlemen started using the range as their own even though they did not own the land. Houston and Dilworth purchased over 40,000 acres of land in the eastern part of Wilson County close to Stockdale and were the



Stockdale Jail

first ranchers to start fencing their land to keep the landless cattlemen out. They began to fence their land with newly patented fencing wire called barbed wire. This county became a battleground between the small cowmen and the large ranchers as well as in other parts of Texas. This conflict became known as the Fence Cutting War and in 1884 the Texas Legislature passed a fence-cutting law making it a felony to cut these fences.

After the settlers had cleared their land, they began farming with intent to raising cash crops such as cotton and corn. John Wheeler and John R. King, who were brothers-in-law, decided to purchase a steam saw, grist mill and cotton gin on the Cibolo Creek. This mill was located about four miles south of Stockdale. Most of the corn meal used by the settlers was ground at Wheeler's mill. This mill operated for over thirty years despite the dam being washed out many times. Several years later the Wheelers built a second mill in Stockdale and eventually the old mill was abandoned.

Cotton was an important crop in the Stockdale area and for over forty years cotton ginning was the important industry in Stockdale. The Lorenz family was credited with building and operating the first gin in Stockdale. During the cotton-raising era, some five or more gins operated in the area. The Chappell's Farmer's Gin and the Lorenz gin were in business until the 1930s. The boll weevil and depletion of the soil by cotton farming gave way to the production of watermelons. Watermelons are one of the best crops for sandy soil. They did not take long to grow or injure the soil. Initially the melons were grown for local



Palace Meat Market and Restaurant. Men on horseback are (left) John Edwin Wheeler, Sr. and (right) his father, John Henry Wheeler in the 1910s or 1920s. The boards on which "Palace Meat Market" was painted were most likely a false front and were later removed. There was a row of narrow windows behind the boards or windows were put in after it was removed.

consumption, but once the railroad provided transportation, a wider market became available. Around 1915 watermelons became a cash commodity in the area but were only hauled in wagons. T.F. Maffetty shipped the first carload of melons from Stockdale. During this time all melons were shipped by rail and as many as forty cars left Stockdale in a single day. In the early 1930's eight hundred carloads were shipped by rail. Its importance gave rise to an annual celebration being changed from the Autumn Fair to the Watermelon Jubilee in 1937. This celebration lasted for a week and included a carnival, rodeo, and a parade. Over the next years volume reached over 1,300 railroad cars of melons and became the "Watermelon Capital." It was said that estimates of 9,000 to 10,000 acres were planted in watermelons. Watermelons are still grown in Stockdale, but lost their cash-crop value due to competition. Most melons today are grown either in Mexico or in the South Texas Valley area.

Another agricultural crop for the Stockdale area was the peanut. Peanuts were well-suited to the sandy soil area and were the best food and feed crops with the most value. Peanuts were being produced as a cash crop in the 1930s. In 1935, Henry Lorenz put in a peanut-shelling plant and later grading system and peanut dryers were added. The choice peanuts were sold to the candy makers.

Small Industries Were Started

In 1874 Millet Smith opened the first blacksmith shop. Sometime after 1878 J. H. Holland and B. F. Johnson became community doctors. Before that time settlers relied on individuals who had become known for helping their neighbors in case of broken legs, arrow or gunshot wounds. One such individual was Daniel Bird who was known as Doc. Bird to some and was noted for helping his neighbors. One such story was documented where a Texas Ranger was wounded while apprehending cattle rustlers. Doc. Bird was summoned to come treat the Ranger who had a bullet wound through his shoulder. It was said that Doc. Bird asked for a silk handkerchief and with a probe ran the handkerchief thru the wound and out the other side of his shoulder. The wounded Ranger fully recovered and lived for over eighteen years after the incident.

In 1882 John R. King and Will Stevenson started a merchandise store in Stockdale and was a landmark for over sixty years. The first actual grocery store was opened by a man named Stevenson in 1894. Later in the 1920's it consolidated into a combination grocery store and feed store. In 1907 C. H. Woods, Wheeler and Lorenz established a retail grocery and dry goods store. Later in 1910 Woods bought Wheeler's interest and built a new brick building in

Stockdale

1932. Later I.G.A. bought the grocery store and Jarret Woods, son of C. H. Woods, supervised the store. About the same time a second grocery was opened by Fatheree and Goodwin as well as other smaller groceries in town which all did well in the community.

The first bank in Stockdale was established in 1876 and was owned by Sam Houlsten and Joe Sutton. In 1932 the Security State Bank was established during the Depression and had only \$45,000 in deposits. Later in 1944 the bank had over \$5 million in deposits. By 1885 the town had 300 residents with the help of German and Polish immigration. Stockdale had a school, four churches, two blacksmith shops, two mills, two general stores, a grocery, a drugstore and a bank.

The first telephone service was established in 1889 where one phone was established in the Palm Drug Store in Stockdale. This line ran from Gonzales to the Palm Drug Store and then to Floresville. The first resident to have a phone installed was Dr. J. T. Burrows, in 1899. This company was called The King Phone Company and was owned by Will King.

Cemeteries in the Area

There are several cemeteries in the Stockdale vicinity. One of the earliest cemeteries in the area was called the Steele Branch Cemetery, named after Henry Steele who owned the land until 1875 and had set aside several acres for a cemetery. James West was the first to be buried there in approximately 1855 and it became the family plot for the West family. The cemetery is known for its dense reddish rock sandstone outcroppings there. The old Bird Cemetery, which is on Daniel Bird land, is close by but was not accessible during heavy rains when the Ecletto (Clayto) flooded. The Pleasant Valley Cemetery was established on land purchased by Ancil Jackson in 1853 and named for the local community called Pleasant Valley. It is one mile from the Steele Branch Cemetery near the Ecletto (Clayto) Creek.

John R. King, H.B. Brown, D.P. Kane, W. S. Palm, and John Wheeler purchased two and a half acres of land to be used as a public burying ground for the City of Stockdale in 1881. The first person to be buried in the Stockdale Cemetery was a man who was killed when his horse ran under the limb of a tree. He was buried without a tombstone and there is no record of his name. Many improvements have been made to the cemetery over the



King Lorenz House

years and the Stockdale Memorial Cemetery Association provides upkeep and care for the cemetery today. A historical marker was erected there to honor those who have created and maintained such a beautiful cemetery over the years.

Churches in the Area

Early marriage certificates back in the 1860's and 1870's revealed that a number of the marriages were made by men of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The first church that was formally organized in the early settlement of Stockdale was the Methodist Church in 1871 under Reverend R. M. Leaton. John R. King purchased and donated to the church one acre of land in 1876 located on the west side of Block 5 in Stockdale for twelve dollars and fifty cents. A small frame church was built but later destroyed by a storm in 1886. In 1889 additional land was purchased and a new larger church was built and completed by 1891.

The second religious organization to be established was the First Baptist Church in 1874 under Reverend L. S. Cox. Land was purchased in 1883 and the church building was completed by 1885, but was also destroyed by the storm of 1886. Repairs were made as well as expansion of the building. This church building was replaced with a larger building in 1912 and served the congregation until 1952. A new building was constructed and completed in 1953 and is currently in use today.

The Catholic Church was established in 1877 when Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Palm deeded ten acres

of land to the Roman Catholic Church which was just outside Stockdale proper. The name of the church was called St. Mary's Catholic Church and the first priest to serve St. Mary's was Reverend Michael De Stefano.

In the 1870's and 1880's early members of the Christian Church came to the area and a church was formally organized in the early 1890's under the name of the Christian Church. By 1906, there was a division in the church among the members and one group became the Church of Christ.

The First Assembly of God Church and the First Baptist Mission were established in the 1930's. The Iglesia de Christo was formed in 1969.

Schools in the Area

The first evidence of schools present in the area was set up by the local settlers. Evidence of these initial schools was found as early as 1860 where the Taylor School was a polling place for precinct 7 for the Ecletto area. In 1877 one of the settlements listed in the area was the Bird School house. The first school that old timers can remember was credited to Martin S. West as the first schoolmaster in the surrounding area of Free Timbers and said to have been established in the 1860s. Martin was the brother of Seletia Ann Jackson and married to Sarah Goodbread, making him brother-in-law to Creed Taylor and Daniel Bird. The story was told that a man from Austin came to the settlement and asked, "What man here is best qualified to teach school?" Martin

West was recommended because he could read, write and cipher. The man found Martin and gave him an oral examination. A few weeks later Martin West received a Fourth Grade Certificate from Austin and he began teaching. One of the first schools in Stockdale was a picket house on Block 2, lot 1, according to an early map of the town around 1877. The teacher at that time was named Mr. Ferguson.

Mrs. Lilley Haggy McIntire began teaching in 1882 and was the first teacher who had a degree. Later school sessions were held in the Methodist Church by a teacher named Mr. Hurley until the church building was destroyed by the storm of 1886. After the storm the building that served as the school called the Blue House was located on lot 3, Block II. There have been three buildings on the present school grounds. The first was an L-shaped building that was destroyed by a storm in 1906. The next school building was a two-story building. Eventually the building became too small and was torn down and a new building built in 1935 which stands today.

Newspapers Established

The first newspaper published in Stockdale was in 1897 by C. H. Hanson and was called the Stockdale Enterprise. It operated until around 1917. It was not until 1927 that J. R. Kidwell started a paper called the Stockdale Progress. By 1937 it was established as the second top newspaper in the county. The newspaper was closed when Kidwell joined the service during World War II. The newspaper was re-opened in 1944 by Dr. and Mrs. Woods as the Stockdale Weekly News. The paper was sold to Mr. Rankin but one year later sold it to Walter Richter after accepting a staff position with the school. Richter named the newspaper the Stockdale Star. In 1952 the paper was sold to Mr. Carpenter along with his son who unfortunately burned the old editions before 1944. The Stockdale Star is no longer in operation and the newspaper for the area today is the Wilson County News.

City Government

Since the settlement became Stockdale there was no public service such as electricity, natural gas, water, sewage systems, firefighting equipment or road improvement. Local merchants hired their own night watchman and fires were fought by the local men who brought their own buckets when a fire broke out.

By 1914 the population reached

900 inhabitants. Stockdale's city government was incorporated in 1919, and a franchise for a telephone company was granted to Will King called the Citizens Telephone Company. However, other public services took time before becoming available. Electricity was first established by Lone Star Power Company in the 1920s. In 1925 a planing mill was established that manufactured furniture and cabinets. An early ice plant was established in Stockdale and later a bottling plant operated and produced soda water in different flavors and a drink called "iron brew." The population reached 1,000 by 1929. By the 1930s a new provider, San Antonio Public Service, became the second service provider. Eventually Floresville Public Service filled the town's needs. In the 1928 time frame, a chemical fire engine and fire siren were purchased and the office of Fire Marshall was established. A water system was established in the 1930s and seven fire plugs were installed in the city. Sewage service was introduced by the 1940s. Both the water and sewage facilities were enhanced in the 1980s. Natural gas service was established in the early 1960s. By the year 2000 the population reached 1,398.

Its People Remember

One Stockdale resident, Susie Perez, remarked about living in Stockdale: "There is so much closeness and truly caring in a small town, we have time, or the time is made for showing sincere concern." Ms. Perez also quoted Arthur Cliff Knoble's words and feelings:

"Hau' Ya, Friend
Sorta does a feller good
To set an' talk a spell,
An' learn how things are gettin' on,
And if folk well
Seems like 'wouldn't be much fun
Without a friend like you
T' enjoy m'self with, now and then,
Just a-talkin' to."

Craig Smith summarized his remembrances of growing up in Stockdale:

"I had the happy privilege of being a boy growing up in Stockdale in the glorious twenties. I have many happy memories of those days.

I remember the city square. In the twenties the City Square was the scene of many exciting events in Stockdale. Once a year the circus came to town, pitched tents on the square, and gave us a week of glory and excitement.

By Nancy Clarke

John Rhodes King was born in Stewart County, Tennessee, on March 24, 1816, to William King and Rachel (Petty) King. He was the eldest of three sons, who all immigrated to Texas. His brothers were Henry Brazil King, who accompanied John R. to Texas in 1837, and William King, who followed later with his mother, stepfather, and two little stepsisters. King's father was a prominent attorney, influencing the path he would take in life. John R. and Henry could not find land to buy in Gonzales when they arrived there because of prejudice in selling lots to new immigrants.

In 1839, he was involved in the formation of a joint-stock company to purchase and lay out the town of Seguin, named in honor of Juan N. Seguin on February 25, 1839. In 1849, King served as deputy county clerk for Guadalupe County. He opened a grocery store and married Ruth Eliza Wheeler, daughter of John Wheeler and Martha (Milner) Wheeler, in 1851. After Seguin was incorporated in 1853, King served as its first mayor. He founded several Masonic Lodges dedicated to encouraging education and regulating the use of liquor.

His family remained in the Sguin area while John and his wife left to settle along the Cibolo Creek in what was then Bexar County. His land supported a steam sawmill, grist mill, and cotton gin in later years. He was among the men who founded the Masonic Lodge in La Vernia and was its first Grant Master. King was elected to the Texas Legislature in 1855, 1882, and 1884, representing the areas of Seguin and Stockdale. He served on committees as diverse as Public Lands, Indian Affairs, Military Affairs, Claims and Accounts, Stock and Stockraising, State Roads, Bridges and Ferries, and a joint House-Senate committee to report on the condition of the Governor's Mansion. He participated in the creation of the petition that created Wilson County, subsequently carrying it to Austin. He served as a county commissioner in 1876. In 1877, Stockdale was created out of land belonging to him and several others.

Some summers the Baptist and Methodists combined forces and held a revival meeting on the square under a big tent. Great singing and preaching usually lasted for two weeks.

And then there were the medicine shows. My favorite was the Tate-Lax Show. Much

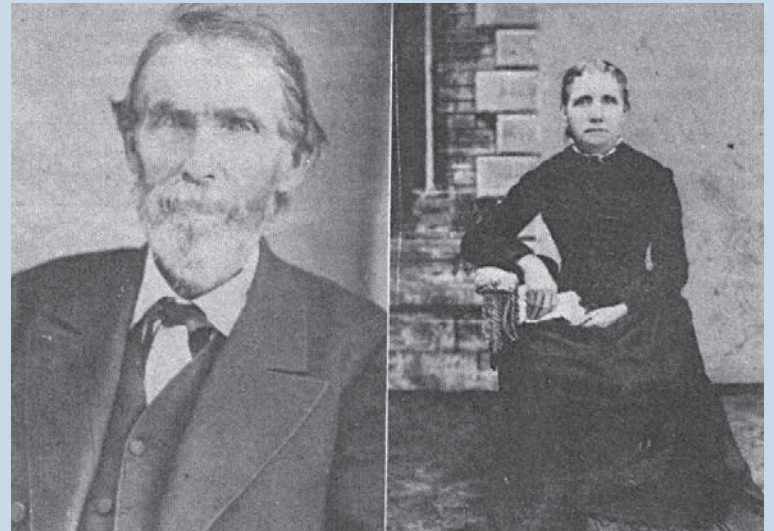
hot buttered popcorn and Tate-Lax were sold. Tate-Lax was guaranteed to cure headaches, toe aches, and every ache in between.

That's the way it was in the glorious twenties. It's all changed now. No circuses, medicine shows, or revivals are held now on City Square. But there are other things

just as good – the Community Building, the memorial to the War Dead, the Fire Station, the fire siren tower, the big saucers for cable TV. I'm sure that children living in Stockdale today will, sixty years from now, be recalling the happy times they had in Stockdale back in the 1980's on City Square."

John Rhodes King

1816-1989



John Rhodes King & Ruth Wheeler King

King joined a newly raised Ranger company as second sergeant to protect settlers from Indian raids in 1839. After discharge, he joined the Texas Auxiliary to help the Federalist forces in the Mexican Civil War. In 1840, he joined a company of minutemen to protect the area from the Indians. In 1842, he served as lieutenant for the Texas forces in San Antonio during the Mexican Invasion. In 1846, after the outbreak of the Mexican War, King joined the First Texas Regiment of Mounted Troops. In 1850, he was named first lieutenant of a company of Texas Rangers formed to protect the state from Indian incursions. Following the Secession Convention in Austin on January 28, 1861, Captain John R. King joined the Texas Mounted Riflemen, C.S.A. and served in Texas and Arkansas.

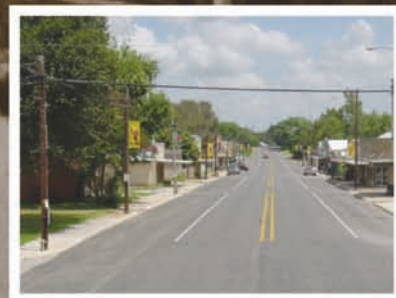
In 1886, after retiring from public life, King and his brother-in-law donated the land where the Christ United Methodist Church now stands, and he chaired the building committee for the church. His religion was important to him, and guided him throughout his long life, second only to his family. His granddaughters often told stories of Sundays at their house, where church service in the morning often was followed by a family dinner. The Bible study was led by John R. King. He died on May 17, 1989, and is buried alongside his wife in the Stockdale Cemetery. His descendants today live all over the state of Texas, with several in the Stockdale, Seguin, and Austin areas.



Stockdale, Texas is located at the junction of U. S. Highway 87 and State Highways 97 and 123. It is thirteen miles northeast of Floresville in eastern Wilson County. The community was previously known as High Prairie and then as Free Timbers. Trees grew in abundance in the area, and anyone could get timber there free of charge. People began to settle around the area and a post office was established there in 1871. The town was named for Fletcher S. Stockdale, lieutenant governor of Texas. Stockdale was organized as a city July 2, 1919. Each year in June, Stockdale celebrates its harvest of watermelons with a yearly "Watermelon Jubilee".



MAIN STREET 1920



CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Annual Events:

Casino Night at New Years
Smokin' Spring B-B-Q - March
Watermelon Jubilee - June

2009 - 2010

Chamber of Commerce
Officers

President - Sherry Lambeck
Vice President - Betty Soto
Secretary - Rick Rutland
Treasurer - Cathy Hilton



Queen Melone - Jacee Wells with
2009 Little Miss Stockdale - Taylor McGrew and
2009 Little Mr. Stockdale - Barson Schmidt



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Poth

By Gene Maeckel

The city of Poth is situated in the south-central part of Wilson County on U. S. Highway 181, approximately 35 miles southeast of San Antonio, Texas. The town site lies within the central portion of what was considered the best ranching area in the world by the early Spanish settlers. Poth is located within the boundaries of one of the early ranches owned by Luis Antonio Menchaca, an early Texas patriot and called Rancho de San Francisco.

The Poth Community itself did not develop until after the railroad route of the San Antonio Aransas Pass Railroad was established. Construction of the railroad started in San Antonio in 1884 and initially paralleled the Alamo – La Bahia Road through Bexar and portions of Wilson County. South of Floresville, the route changed to a more southerly route passing through open ranch areas. The railroad construction passed through the future site of Poth in 1886. In addition to the main line, a switch point on the track was constructed in the Poth area named “Marcelina” by the railroad. Its first use was as a location where the train could be flagged to stop to receive or discharge passengers as it was located near the road crossings of the Stockdale – McCoy and Floresville – Falls City roads. This flag stop began to take on new growth with the construction of cattle loading pens. At times cattle would back up over a mile on the road leading to the pens waiting to be loaded. Cattle from the local ranches could now be transported by rail to northern markets rather than being trailed overland, particularly now since much of the range land was being fenced. As a result the name “Marcelina Switch” was given to this flag stop and the cattle loading pens.

This portion of the railroad and the switch was located on the 2500-acre ranch owned by Dr. J. C. Jones of Gonzales, Texas. He, wishing to take advantage of this switch location, had a town site platted in this area by the county surveyor, W. T. Sutherland. To encourage further development in the area he proposed offering 7 ½ acres to any individual or entity to construct and operate a cotton gin within seven months. In addition, Dr.

Jones placed other conditions with this offer. He required that such a gin be operated and maintained to at least January 1, 1903 and that a residence be constructed on the site as a home for the operator.

A. H. Poth of Hochheim, Texas, the son of a cotton ginner and an expert gin operator, became aware of this offer and decided to take advantage of it. Mr. Poth had recently married. He and his wife loaded all of their possessions into a wagon and a buggy and traveled to Poth with their two dogs.

On their arrival in Poth, there wasn't a house in sight. They pitched a tent under a large oak tree near the local creek for living quarters. Mr. Poth and Dr. Jones agreed on the offer of the free land and its associated conditions. A property deed was transferred on March 18, 1901. The Poths lived in the tent until Mr. Poth completed the construction of a three-room residence. Erection of a gin was immediately started after that and it was completed in time for the 1910 cotton crop. The first bale was ginned on August 10, 1901. A total of 242 bales of cotton were ginned that season.

To encourage further development of the town, Dr. Jones also offered to any individual who would establish a general mercantile store on a block of land adjacent to the central plaza. With this offer was a condition that the store be established and in operation within four months, and remain in business for a minimum of 12 months. July 16, 1901, Dr. J. J. Jones deeded to J. F. Stortz of Karnes County the property on which this enterprise was to be located.

Apparently, J. F. Stortz could not fulfill his obligation to build and operate the store and instead conveyed his property rights to J. V. Marr and Richard Voges for a sum of \$200.00. Simultaneously, Dr. Jones conveyed to Richard Voges and J. V. Marr a lot on the other side of the plaza and his reversion interest in the previous sale to Mr. Stortz.

By 1902, J. V. Marr and Richard Voges had constructed a wood building at the corner of Stortz and Dilworth Plaza and the first general mercantile business became available to the area residents. Two years later, the store was sold to William Eckel who operated this store until 1915 when it was torn down and replaced with a modern



Poth Cotton Gin

brick structure. During this period other businesses developed around the plaza including a drug store, a grocery store, a meat market and a hardware store.

In 1911, a second gin was built in Poth named Farmer's Cotton Gin. Joe Reznicek and J. W. Manak, both natives of Czechoslovakia, were partners in this operation. This gin was powered by a small two-cylinder internal combustion engine. The partnership was dissolved in 1915 and the assets were acquired by H. W. Hillman and Company. They in turn sold the gin to A. D. Warnken and his sons made several improvements to the plant and had everything in running order prior to the beginning of the ginning season.

In 1914, the Poth Gin was replaced by a new and larger gin erected by C. S. Reynolds who moved to Poth from San Benito. This gin was one of the largest in South Texas and capable of ginning two bales simultaneously with the ability of ginning 140 bales in 12 hours. The gin was powered by a 250 hp steam engine and its brick boiler chimney was a local landmark for many years. In the first years of operation, it turned out over 2700 bales of cotton.

In June 1921 a third ginning plant was preparing for the upcoming cotton season in Poth. It was a large and strictly up – to – date gin plant being constructed by the Farmer's Gin Company, a corporation of 67 stockholders who were all farmers. It was being built across the road from the

Reynolds double stand gin and across the railroad tracks from the A. D. Warnken gin. Behind this gin a large cotton storage warehouse was built. This building was available for the storage of cotton bales owned by individual farmers. A practice prevailed at that time for farmers to store their ginned cotton until the price of cotton increased after the peak of the ginning season before it was marketed.

On April 30, 1901, a request was made to the post office department in Washington, D.C., to establish a post office at Kennon City, which was the name suggested for the Marcelina Switch location. Kennon was the maiden name of Dr. Jones' wife. This request was made by R. L. Dilworth, postmaster of Gonzales, in which he also recommended that Arnold H. Poth be named postmaster. New postal regulations at that time required that short names and names of one word be accepted for new post office designations. A copy of the application clearly shows the post office name of Kennon City scratched out and the name of Poth handwritten in its place, thus establishing it as the new name for the post office with A. H. Poth the first assigned postmaster. The location of this new post office was in the front room of the A. H. Poth newly built residence.

August 26, 1901, was a momentous day in the life of Mr. A. H. Poth. On that day a son was born into his family. He was the first child to be born in Poth. On

the same day a Mr. A. J. Moore, of the Eureka Telephone Company of San Antonio, came down from San Antonio in the morning to install the first telephone in the community. It was located in the home of A. H. Poth. On the same afternoon, Mr. G. A. Monkhouse, a prominent Wilson County citizen, brought a letter from Washington stating that the postal department had agreed to the establishment of a post office in town to be called Poth and naming Mr. A. H. Poth as postmaster.

The San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway Company soon realized that the business being generated in the area warranted the need for a depot. A wooden structure was built in 1906 to serve the passenger and freight requirements. As the town began to boom a surprising amount of business was done at the station with it becoming one of the busiest depots on the line. In 1920, the structure was destroyed by a disastrous fire, but the depot was quickly rebuilt. The new one was built of masonry construction and it still exists today.

State legislation required recorded town plats to have a public water supply available for the citizens. In order to satisfy this commitment a water well was dug in the plaza, fitted with a windmill and a large water trough. The quality of the water was so poor that it wasn't suitable for human consumption. The water in the trough did prove to be suitable for horses and mules and served as the watering place for these animals when they were in town. For domestic water, cisterns and gutters were used to capture the rainwater runoff from building roofs. If the rainwater would ever be inadequate during dry times, as happened in the drought of 1917, water would have to be hauled by wagon in barrels filled with water from the San Antonio River west of town.

On January 25, 1904, Dr. Jones died and his will designated his wife, Mary Kennon Jones, as the sole heir. She continued on with the development of Poth. She hired the surveyor W. T. Sutherland to subdivide the town of Poth into blocks and lots and dedicate certain streets and plazas to the public. This plat and dedication of the town of Poth was officially filed in the Wilson County Deed Records in October 1905.



Poth Building - 1914

In 1907, Mary Kennon Jones deeded a portion of Block number 2 to the German Amusement Club conditioned on the following restrictions. First, a hall was to be erected for public gatherings within two years on the site. Second, the operation of the building would be

first schoolteacher whose father Ed Swift was the first Wilson County School Superintendent. She received thirty-five dollars a month for her teaching service, of which seven dollars was used to pay for her room and board at a local residence.

In 1910 a movement to start a Catholic Parish in Poth was initiated. Catholic men in the area of Poth held a meeting for this purpose and asked the individuals to contribute a subscription for a church. As a result \$1400.00 was subscribed. Encouraged by this, several of the men consulted with the Right Reverend Bishop of the Catholic Church in San Antonio concerning the potential of building a Catholic church in Poth. Permission was obtained from the Bishop and land was donated by A. H. Poth for the building of a church and a new church was dedicated in 1912.

In 1913 the first of two banks was established in Poth. The first was organized in February 1913 with a capital stock of \$25,000. The first official statement was made to the government on April 4, 1913, with deposits at that time of \$10,878.85. By September 1915, deposits were up to \$89,903.23. Few banks in towns the size of Poth at this time were able to show better growth.

In 1925 a second bank called the Farmers and Merchants State Bond Bank was established with a capital stock of \$30,000. The bank was dissolved in the 1930's due to the poor economic conditions.

In 1914, A. H. Poth constructed a large two-story brick structure adjacent to the central plaza. This building was a real credit to the town and the largest brick structure at that time in the entire county. The building was occupied by the Poth Mercantile Company. The owners of the enterprise were A. H. Poth and his brothers, E. B. Poth and Charlie Poth. The building



Poth Drug Store

under the control of the German Amusement Club. Third, if a structure was not erected within two years, the property would revert back to Mary Kennon Jones. In 1911 this group of men reorganized the club and became affiliated with the Grand Order of the Hermann Sons of Texas.

In 1907 the first public school was started in Poth in a one-room building located near the corner of Stortz and Westmeyer Streets. Sammie Swift was the

In 1913, the school was relocated to a new and larger facility. This new frame building provided much better lighting and ventilation with additional space to accommodate the growing number of children in the community. It was located on Sutherland Avenue between Titcomb and Dickson Streets. Miss Agnes Striebeck of Floresville was the superintendent when the school opened September 27 with a gratifying number of students.

Poth

had a freight elevator to the second floor which was the storeroom and warehouse for the merchandise. In addition, the building had its own electric power plant and water system. The general manager of the operation was E. B. Poth.

In 1916, the Hermann Sons Lodge relocated to a larger site and constructed a much larger hall better adapted for community functions and dances for the increasing area population's use and entertainment. The new hall was regularly scheduled for public dances, occasional political rallies and festivals. The public dances were family affairs with people coming from miles away to dance, meet friends and discuss current affairs, play cards and dominoes. As the evenings passed on, young children would sleep on pallets placed on the floor outside the dancing area.

In 1921, Lutheran services were first held in the public school by the pastor of the Floresville Lutheran Church. Encouraged by the attendance at these services, a temporary organization was created to consider plans for a separate house of worship. In the plat of the town of Poth, Mary Kennon Jones had directed the surveyor, W. T. Sutherland, to set aside a lot near the center of town to be given to the first Protestant denomination that would erect a church on it. The Lutheran group accepted this offer from Mary Kennon Jones and constructed a small chapel on this site in 1922.

Poth is located in an area where the soil is mainly rich and mellow sandy loam, free from alkali and easily worked. With its mild climate and drought-resisting qualities, it is well-suited for diversified farming. In addition irrigated farming from the San Antonio River and deep wells into the Carrizo Aquifer is practiced to supplement the natural rainfall. In the late 1800's and early 1900's cotton and corn were the leading staple crops. The demise of cotton because of the boll weevil caused farming to change to other crops, such as onions, black-eyed peas, sweet corn, flax, peanuts and grains. These crops were harvested and shipped by rail to different parts of the United States. To accommodate the preparation and packaging of these crops, large shipping sheds were constructed near the depot along the railroad sidings.

The central plaza in Poth was dedicated to the town in 1904 by Mary Kennon Jones for the

development of the community. The deed specified that the plaza be called Dilworth Plaza and be for the use of the public as well as the purchasers of the town lots and blocks.

Initially, the plaza area was only an open space used by local citizens and merchants as a place to leave their horses and wagons while conducting business in town.

In the 1930's during the WPA era the plaza was developed into a city park. The central area was separated from the streets by a rock-lined moat on each side and in the front. Water from the new city water supply system was directed down each side and exited in the front into the local creek. The central area was planted in grass with a border of crape myrtle shrubbery along the edges. In the center was a flagpole for the national flag.

In the 1950's the plaza was reconstructed into a large paved parking area. Commercial activity in the central business area had grown so much since the end of World War II, plus the large growth in the numbers of individual automotive vehicles, that adequate parking space in town was not available. To separate the plaza into two large parking areas, it was divided down the center with a pipe and chain barrier. The flagpole from the earlier plaza was retained and a pipe structure for supporting the city fire alarm was constructed at the east end of the plaza. This pipe support structure was also used for drying fire hoses after each use by the volunteer fire department.

In the 1980's the plaza was again rebuilt. This time a brick walkway was created down the central part of the plaza. The walkway is bordered by landscaping and parking on each side with a gazebo in the center. At the eastern end of the plaza are six different flags which have flown over Texas. The plaza today is a very attractive site resulting in many positive comments from the visitors who pass through the area.

In 1920, three weeks after the depot fire, another large fire destroyed many of the business establishments facing the central plaza. Businesses destroyed by this fire included a grocery store, a drug store, the bank, a hardware store and a meat market. Fire struck again in 1921 when a two-story hotel on the San Antonio



A. H. Poth

roadway was completely destroyed in addition to claiming the life of one individual.

In 1920, after the several disastrous fires in the business area, the young men of the community organized a volunteer fire department. Their first piece of firefighting equipment was a two-wheel cart with a hand pump and hoses, which were handdrawn by the volunteers.

During the early 1930's the town continued to grow and business flourished. The U. S. Government was granting funds to incorporated cities to assist in developing the city infrastructure such as sewer, water and streets. To take advantage of these funds the town had to become incorporated. The citizens began discussing the merits of incorporation and requested an election to be held. The desire to incorporate passed and on October 18, 1933, the town officially became an incorporated city. With the help of the U. S. Government assistance, a number of modern civic improvements were completed. This included a public sewage system, a city waterworks plant, an artesian water well and water distribution system. The water from the new well was of good quality and suitable for human consumption even though it was very warm and had a strong sulfur smell.

In January of 1940, another major fire in Poth destroyed the Hermann Sons Lodge Hall. By November of that year another new

and larger structure was built. It was built to be a multifunctional facility. In cooperation with the public schools it served as a gymnasium for their athletic programs. The large floor area also served as a dance area for regularly scheduled dances. People from miles around would attend to hear and dance to well-known musical groups. It was also the scene each year of all-day church and community picnics and barbecues. These events served noon and evening meals with meats barbecued over large open pits under nearby oak trees. Entertainment such as bingo, auctions, music, children's games and general socializing was provided throughout the day.

The town has continued to grow during the ensuing years adapting to changing economic conditions. With adequate, locally grown grains available for feeding poultry and cattle, a turkey dressing plant and two meat processing plants were established during the years. Today, a large feed plant exists which custom mixes feed for cattle, horses, poultry and other farm animals. In addition it custom mixes specialty feeds for certain wild game animals on private hunting ranges.

The growth in the area today is in the building of new residential housing. This new housing is being built to satisfy the housing needs of the increasing number of individuals living in the Poth area who commute daily to San Antonio for employment.

Poth, Texas

— Population: 2,000 —

*“A great place
to live!”*

In 2010, the population of Poth is near 2,000. There are four churches, two banks, three restaurants, and over 40 businesses in Poth. The city council consists of Rita Serna, Darren Dylla, Steve Martinez, Travis Pruski, Paul Martinez, and Chrystal Eckel as Mayor. Poth City Secretary Rose Huizar and City Clerk Misty Fish handle the daily operations of the city. Chief Lambert Jendrzey heads the four-man Police Department, the city judge is Hilda Tejada, and the four-man Public Works Department has Kenneth Griffin as Supervisor.

For the last several years, aided by grants and conservative monetary policies including a \$2 million bond, city improvements have consisted primarily of infrastructure development and replacement. A new water tower was built in 1996.

Because of the good water supply, church involvement in the community, excellent 2A school, and a close proximity to San Antonio to the north and the Texas coast to the south, Poth offers a great place to live!



Chrystal Eckel, Mayor

City Council Members:

Rita Serna • Darren Dylla • Steve Martinez • Travis Pruski • Paul Martinez

The Hastings Family

1856-2010

Green Hastings and his children, Henry Solomon, Green Berry, and Martha Ann (Patsy) Hastings McCracken, came to settle along the Ecletto Creek and near the area that became Albuquerque.

Henry Solomon and Eliza built their home on the Ecletto Creek. The town of Nockenut formed around their saw and gristmill. 153 years of Hastings families have continued to live on the original homestead property. Presently 9 families represent the fourth and fifth generation of Hastings holding title to the homestead property on Ecletto Creek, Stockdale, Wilson County, Texas.

2010 Descendants of Henry Solomon and Eliza Hastings

+Chester and Jean Hastings, Robinson, Texas

1. Terri Hastings, Eagan, Minnesota
2. Steven Hastings family of Boaz, Alabama
3. Allison Hastings, Davis, California

+Betty Hastings Oliver and husband Billy, Waco, Texas

1. Joe Oliver family, Wills Point, Texas
2. Jamie Oliver family, Austin, Texas
3. Jackie Oliver family, Spicewood, Texas
4. Jeffrey Oliver family, Cedar Park, Texas

+James Hart and Frances Hastings, Stockdale, Texas

1. Kay Hastings Deagan family, Stockdale, Texas
2. Terry Hastings family, Clovis, New Mexico
3. Randall Hastings family, Lockhart, Texas

+Bobby Joe and Jo Hastings, Stockdale, Texas (Ecletto Creek)

1. Connie Hastings McCain and family, Houston, Texas (Ecletto Creek)
2. James Lee (Bubba) Hastings family, Stockdale, Texas (Ecletto Creek)
3. Kathy Hastings Hale family, Alice, Texas
4. Judy Hastings Tiller family, Alice, Texas
5. Rick Hastings family, Stockdale, Texas



+Norris Lee and Dean Hastings, Houston, Texas (Ecletto Creek)

1. Brenda Hastings Tiller family, Midland, Texas
2. Joni Lormand family, White House, Texas, wife of Douglas Hastings (deceased)
3. Jeffrey Hastings family, Houston, Texas

+Ronnie Wayne and wife Margaret Hastings, Stockdale, Texas

1. Allen Hastings family, Stockdale, Texas
2. Gary Hastings family, Ganada, Texas
3. Tim Hastings family, Calallen, Texas
4. David Hastings & Lariann, Rockport, Texas
5. Erick Hastings, Stockdale, Texas

+George King husband (deceased), Patsy Ruth Hastings, Nixon, Texas (Ecletto Creek)

1. Charles King family, Pasadena, Texas
2. Joe King family, Friendswood, Texas



Family list continued on next page.

2010 Descendants of Henry Solomon and Eliza Hastings

+Lonnie Ray and wife Bernice, Stockdale, Texas (Ecletto Creek)

1. Mrs. Aline White Hastings, daughter Dean, Stockdale, Texas (Ecletto Creek)
2. Kevin Hastings family, Stockdale, Texas (Ecletto Creek)
3. Andrew Hastings, Austin, Texas

+Freddie Winston Martin, Stockdale, Texas (Ecletto Creek), son of deceased Inez Hastings Martin

1. Mary May Martin Ohland family, Lone Oak, Texas
2. Michael Miles Martin family, Kirby, Texas
3. Melody Martin family, Stockdale, Texas
4. Mandy Martin Jarzombeck family, Schertz, Texas
5. Freddie Winston Martin Jr., Stockdale, Texas

+Linda Sue Hastings Wilson, husband Don Wilson of New Braunfels, Texas (Ecletto Creek)

1. Bryan Wilson family, San Antonio, Texas
2. Michael Wilson family, The Colony, Texas

+Darlene Culpepper Applewhite and husband Sydney, San Antonio, Texas, daughter of (deceased) Vivian Hastings Culpepper, Refugio, Texas

1. Joanne Nichols family
2. Andy Nichols family

+Sue Culpepper Junker family, Spring, Texas

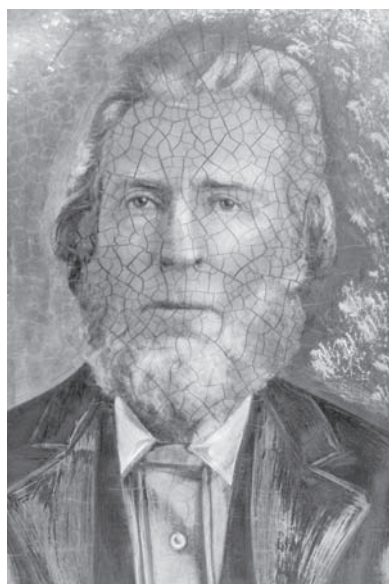
1. Jennifer Junker family
2. Brandon Junker family

+Carol Culpepper Barry, San Antonio, Texas



By Charles Byrd

Daniel Bird, the patriarch of the Wilson County family, was born the 23rd of January 1809 in Telfair County, Georgia. He was the son of Abraham and Sarah Gaines Bird. Daniel and his family moved to Marengo County, Alabama, where he met and married Minerva Goodbread in 1831. The family moved to Texas in 1834 and qualified for a league and labor of land for arriving before 1836. Bird surveyed his league of land in Bexar (now Wilson) County in 1838. In 1849, Daniel Bird established residence on the waters of the Ecletto (Clayto) Creek in what then was a part of Bexar now Wilson County. Daniel Bird participated in the early Texas Militia in 1836, the Somervelle Campaign in 1842 and also served in the Texas Militia, Army of the Confederacy during the Civil War as a sergeant of the 2nd Brigade. Daniel served as



among the first recorded in the cattle brand books in 1861. He served his community well and was a good neighbor. Daniel was a Mason and has a Mason emblem carved at the top of his headstone. It has been said that Daniel had a good knowledge of medicine and was referred to by some as Doc. Bird. Ten children were born to Daniel and Minerva Goodbread. William Gaines was born in 1832 in Alabama, was married to Mary Ann

an election official in the 1852 and 1854 Bexar County election and his home was the polling place for that precinct. Daniel was a county commissioner of Wilson County after it separated from Bexar County in 1860. He was listed many times in the minutes of the commissioner's court until February 1877. Daniel Bird was a cattle rancher where his earliest cattle brand registrations are found in Wilson County and are

Davis and died in 1856. Daniel Houston Bird, known as "Shoat" was born 10 July 1832 in Alabama and married to widow Perlinah Jennie Lewis Clark of Gonzales 13 Nov 1863. Sylvanus Richard, better known as "Pony," born 7 Oct 1834 in Alabama and married Mary Jane West on 17 Jan 1858. Elizabeth, known as "Betty" was born about 1839 in Texas and married John C. West on 7 Dec. 1865. George Washington Bird was born in 1842 Bexar now Wilson County and married Mary Jane Milligan about 1864. Abraham Gaines Bird, known as "Cub," was born 7 April 1846 in Bexar, now Wilson County and married Mary Ann Smith on 16 May 1872. James Marion Bird, known as "Dad," was born abt. 1847 in Bexar now Wilson County and married Rebecca Reynolds on 5 Oct. 1865. Sarah known as "Sally," was born 4 Feb. 1849 and was married to Jeff D. Moore on 26 Dec. 1873. Nancy Minerva known as "Nannie," was born 13 Dec. 1851 and was married to Christopher Malachi Spear on 23 Dec. 1869. John Gilpin Bird known as "Gip," was born 20 Apr. 1854 and married to Camela Fort. There are many related descendants of Daniel Bird still living in the Wilson County area today.

Daniel Bird