

Floresville

Floresville, the county seat of Wilson County, is at the junction of U.S. Highway 181 and State Highway 97, thirty miles southeast of San Antonio in the central portion of the county. The area was settled by Canary Island immigrant Don Francisco Flores de Abrego, who established a ranch headquarters six miles northwest of the site of present Floresville in the eighteenth century. Floresville is located on part of the Juan and Simon Arocha Spanish land grant which was granted in 1782.

When these gentlemen died their heirs broke the land up into 8 tracts. Jose Maria Flores bought 3/4 of tract 7 located on the east side of the San Antonio River. Nemencio de la Zerda purchased 1/3 of this land and community of Lodi was established on his land. In 1833 the nucleus of the town included the Flores home, a chapel, and a graveyard. After Jose Maria Flores' death his daughter, Josefa Flores Barker donated some of the land to Wilson County for a county seat.

A town site was surveyed and laid out. In 1867, Floresville, the county seat was named for this family (Jose Maria Flores). Floresville became the permanent county seat in 1872. A one-story courthouse was built on present day third street where the District Judge's office is today. Lodi served as the Wilson County seat from 1867 to March 1871, and again from July 1871 to 1873.

In the early 1870s a prominent citizen, Andrew G. Pickett, who owned a ranch with an irrigation system, started raising peanuts.

A Floresville post office was established in 1872.

In the 1870s Floresville Academy offered several levels of education.

Development accelerated in 1883, when the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway announced plans to construct a line through the town. By 1885 Floresville had two hotels, several stores, a weekly newspaper named the *Chronicle*, two steam cotton gin-gristmills, and a population of 400. The town was incorporated in 1890, when the reported population was 1,500. A five-teacher school was in operation by 1896, when it had an enrollment of 206.

The town continued to grow during the early years of the twentieth century, supported by both the cotton and livestock industry, and by 1910 it had two banks and a population of 1,800.

Peanuts were developed as a cash crop in the surrounding region around 1915 and in later years residents nicknamed Floresville the "Peanut Capital of Texas."

Between 1930 and 2000 the town grew steadily, from 1,581 residents in 1931 to 1,935 in 1952; 2,980 in 1965; 5,414 in 1990; and 5,868 in 2000. There were 342 rated businesses in 2000.

The town serves a market center for area peanut, small grain, and cattle producers. Many residents now commute to work in San Antonio. Floresville is best known for its annual Peanut Festival, started in 1938, which attracts 10,000 to 15,000 visitors each year

Louise Stadler, ed., *Wilson County History* (Dallas: Taylor, 1990).