

Edward M. Golson

An Early Merchant in Floresville, Texas

Edward M. Golson, a single man from New York, arrived in Floresville in August of 1885. His initial impression of the town was dismal. However, since he lacked sufficient funds to leave town, he proceeded to develop a mercantile business near the courthouse. He found the local people were very friendly and hospitable. He discovered that the single girls were very attractive and married one of the young ladies at a later time. Apparently, he was able to develop a good relationship with the local community, and was able to secure funding to build a new store and open a new mercantile business.

The site he selected for his new store was the northwest corner lot at the crossing of "C" and 3rd. streets. Today, this site is the location of the U.S. Post Office. Prior to this, it was also the location of the First City National Bank. Mr. Golson bought the lot for \$500.00. At this time, many of the local population felt that the property was greatly overpriced. Mr. Golson had a two-story, brick building erected on the lot. The lower level was dedicated to the merchandise store and the upper level served as his living quarters. The building bricks were locally made by hand at a brickyard near the community of Lodi on the west bank of the San Antonio River.

Uriah Lott, the builder of the railroad from San Antonio to the Gulf Coast chose a route closely paralleling the Alamo – La Bahia Road, which brought it right through Lodi. Initially, Mr. Lott only had sufficient funds to construct a railroad to the Lodi – Floresville area. For the period of time before he obtained additional funds, the ending of the railroad here proved to be a boom to the local community. It created a profitable business environment for Mr. Golson's new enterprise. In addition to operating a general merchandise store, he also became a prominent, local cotton buyer. He shipped locally ginned cotton by rail to the markets elsewhere. The bidding for cotton bales became very competitive because of the local shipping advantage. Golson lost \$5.00 on the first bale he bought. However, he continued buying and selling bales, and developed a very fair knowledge of the product. Cotton was coming into the area from adjacent counties and in one season about 18,000 bales were brought to the railroad creating a prosperous business for him.

Mr. Golson also brought the first carload of Glidden fence wire to the area. He sold most of the wire on the first day of its arrival. Windmills, brought in by rail, was another major product he brought to the area and sold to local ranchers. The windmills helped to provide water to cattle in grazing areas located some distance from the rivers and flowing creeks. Droughts were also occurring at that time and many cattle died from lack of water. The bones of dead cattle were collected and these provided another local enterprise. At one time during a dry spell Mr. Golson shipped 25 carloads of bones by rail to market within a period of three months.

One notable event occurring in this period involving Mr. Golson and his store was the capture of a train robber by the name of Whitney. One morning the local sheriff, Jim Wyatt came to the

store and informed Mr. Golson that Whitney, who had just committed one of the most daring train robberies at Harwood, was on his way to Floresville to rob his store. The Sheriff, who was elected in 1886 and served the county for two years, advised Mr. Golson to obtain guns and ammunition for his protection. Golson wired by telegraph to San Antonio and asked that guns and ammunition be sent to him by rail. His sleeping quarters were in a room above the store and this space became occupied by the sheriff and five deputies. These deputies included Jim and Tom McDaniel and Manuel Ximenez. The bedroom took on the appearance of an arsenal. The officers spent two nights there waiting for the robber without action. On the third night, continuous gunfire was heard from the southeast part of town. The shooting was taking place in the Mayes home. When the sheriff arrived at the site, Whitney was found lying dead on a bed with a smoking pistol still in his hand. The U.S Marshal and two of his deputies who were trailing the robber caught him in the home before he could carry out his intended robbery.

Mr. Golson's cotton buying activity also spread to the La Vernia area after the second railroad in Wilson County was constructed through that area. The railway was built by San Antonio investors and run by the Fry brothers who were the sole operators. They served as the engineers, conductors, ticket agents and even the president. This was a small operation and the train would often delay leaving La Vernia at the request of Mr. Golson so he could complete his business with his customers.

Abstracted from an article in the July 24, 1936 Floresville Chronicle Journal entitled "Recalling Good Old Days" in Floresville and Wilson County.

Written by Gene Maeckel, Wilson County Historical Society, P.O. Box 190, Poth, Texas 78148 1/2007