

THE TRIAL BROTHERS

Early real estate developers and merchants in Lodi and Floresville

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 was 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 reenter 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 \$600.00 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 \$100.00 for the 2nd acre

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