



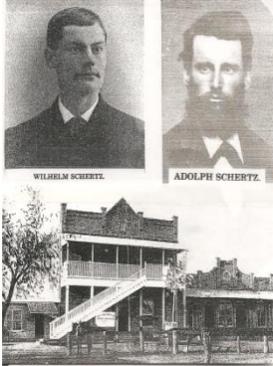
The Schertz Family Legacy

Joseph and Anne Marie Schertz arrived in the Cibolo Valley (Guadalupe County) territory in the mid-1800s with six of their ten children and little personal property. The family's early struggles included a year of harsh living conditions at San Antonio's Alamo mission site and tragic family deaths of the mother and a daughter during the same year's period. Desperation was the family mood when, unexpectedly, fate intervened in the form of an offer to settle among first founders of the town of New Braunfels, Texas. The male family members, including Joseph, as well as sons Sebastian and Joseph Franciscus, received free city lots for family settlement. Joseph's son Johann purchased a five acre town lot. In 1852, Joseph and three of his sons, Joseph Franciscus, Johann and Sebastian are listed as first founders of Saint Peter and Paul Catholic Church in New Braunfels. It was several years after arrival in New Braunfels that the family decided to venture south of New Braunfels for the purpose of establishing a farming operation. In January 1849, Sebastian, his brother John and father Joseph selected a plot of land (600 acres) for settlement alongside the northwest bank of Cibolo Creek in Guadalupe County. Thus, began the evolution of what would become a five-generation Schertz family presence in the area which today bears the family name – Schertz, Texas.



Sebastian & Elisabeth (Rittmann) Schertz
Sebastian, born: 1822, Alsace, France / d. 1890, Texas; Marie Elisabeth, born: Dec. 1 1820, France / died: 1919, Texas.

Joseph and Anna Marie's son Sebastian was the lead proponent of building a life for the family along the Cibolo Creek. In November 1866, Sebastian purchased another 307 acres along the Cibolo Creek, Guadalupe County, after having sold off some of the previously purchased 600 acres. These land acquisitions laid the foundation for what became a large family farming operation. Sebastian and his wife Anna Marie parented six children, five of whom were boys. In 1870, Sebastian built a mule-powered cotton gin operation initially capable of producing only one cotton bale per day. Before long and, with the introduction of a steam-powered engine, the family gin operation was able to turn out 100 bales per day. Eventually, a second gin was built to handle the increased volume of cotton being produced by farmers in the area. A corn-shelling plant was also added to the Schertz business operations. The water wells located on the Schertz property were among the few that produced a clear (non-sulfur infused) water supply. Consequently, Sebastian arranged to supply clean water to many of his neighboring farm families. Thereafter, the Schertz family established the Schertz Water Supply Company which eventually grew to the point that it was the principal supplier of water for both Schertz and Universal City. Sebastian died in 1890 at the age of sixty-seven, leaving the farm operation and an extensive land estate to his sons. Following his father's death, son Adolph assumed primary responsibility for managing the family businesses. Anna Marie lived to age ninety.



William Schertz Mercantile

Sebastian's son Adolph Schertz and his wife Bertha (Dietz) had five children (four boys and a girl). Adolph and his brothers kept the farming and gin operations active. Adolph and Bertha saw the need for a better schoolhouse for the then "Cut Off" (future Schertz) community and decided to donate a two-acre portion of the Schertz farm land for its construction. Thereafter, in 1917, a two story brick school building was constructed which accommodated students from first grade through high school. That school building was eventually closed and Corbett Junior High School put in its place. Adolph was a leader in the formation of the Farmers Rural Telephone Company of Schertz, which enabled farmers to more effectively communicate among themselves and with their business partners outside the region. Adolph died on March 6, 1921 leaving the cotton gin and other farming enterprises to his sons Richard, Arthur and Walter J. Schertz.

Adolph's younger brother was Wilhelm (aka: William), who, at a young age demonstrated a keen business acumen. William owned farm land in various regions surrounding Schertz, but had no interest in the farming life style. His chosen career was as a retail business owner. William placed his future in the ownership and operation of a mercantile store situated on Main Street, Schertz, Texas. His instincts for business proved fruitful and within a short time his single store business expanded with the construction of an adjacent two-story building (see above photo). Both buildings still stand at 507 and 509 Main Street, now housing the Randolph Masonic Lodge and Schertz Bank offices, respectively. William, in memory of his father, donated a few acres of his land to the railroad company for the placement of a railroad depot in what was then called Cutoff, Texas. The railroad, in return, named its depot stop Schertz Depot and thereafter the village became known as Schertz, Texas. As William knew, a depot meant greater mobility for town citizens and improved commercial transport for local businesses. William's mercantile business eventually was the largest and most prosperous in the entire county. William served the town as its postmaster for eleven years during the period from 1895 to 1907.

Adolph's passing left three of his sons in charge of the family businesses. One son, Walter J. Schertz, worked alongside his brothers at the cotton gin as well as maintaining the Schertz Water Supply Company and establishing an electrical distribution company called Schertz City Power Company. The gin operations eventually closed and family land holdings became the focus of Walter J. Schertz' attention. It was expected that the placement of Randolph Field adjacent to Schertz would bring a housing boon to the city. Walter J. and two business partners (C. W.Koch, and H.P. Thulemeyer) formed a land development partnership meant to develop a portion of the Schertz farm into residential housing. The partnership lasted only a short while leaving Walter J. as the sole investor. Upon Walter J. Schertz death, the family's property sales endeavor, water and electric company operations fell upon his wife Alma Ida (Wuest) Schertz who managed the operations as best she could until her son Walter A. Schertz returned home after his U.S. Army enlistment and took charge of the Schertz family business operations. Walter A. Schertz became the fifth-generation manager of the Schertz homestead and business enterprises.



Walter A. was well-educated and possessed a keen business mind. His devotion to the family business and community involvement marked him as a city leader of special note. He understood that a major obstacle to residential development of the Schertz family farm land was the fact that the federal government was not approving Federal Housing Administration (FHA) or Veterans Administration (VA) loans for home buyers in the Schertz area. Walter A. took over management of

the water and electric company operations from his mother and began working to assure that Schertz was listed with the federal government as a community eligible for issuance of FHA and VA loans. He personally went to Washington D.C. and met with FHA/VA representatives and convinced them that the Schertz community could support all requirements for being listed as a FHA/VA loan-eligible community. The latter undertaking opened up development of what was to become the Aviation Heights Development and soon thereafter the Live Oak Development. In 1958, Walter A. was selected to serve the city as one of its first city aldermen. In the mid-1960s, he was selected as the City's Urban Renewal Director and as such led the transformation of the urban landscape of the then small town. He held a position on the board of directors for the Randolph Field Bank, Universal City, Texas. Both he and his wife Lula Mae Schertz were influential real estate sales persons as well as charter members of the volunteer firefighter corps and women's auxiliary, respectively. Lula Mae served the community as a volunteer in several capacities to include as the unofficial city historian. Both Walter A and Lula Mae Schertz were charter members of the Schertz Historical Preservation Committee.

Through the decades, there have been many important individual contributors to the story of Schertz' progress and growth, but, no one family has meant more to its survival than has the Schertz family. The Schertz family's legacy reminds us of the importance of generational commitment to community service as a means of advancing the welfare of future generations.