Lozano Plaza Plaque Dedication

Norman Rozeff
Harlingen Historical Preservation Society

On May 5, 2007 more than thirty-five descendents of Santos Lozano and his son Guillermo, together with other dignitaries, gathered at the offices of Harlingen's Downtown for a dedication ceremony. Among the luminaries were Sam Lozano, former mayor of the City of Harlingen and Juliet V. Garcia, current president of the University of Texas at Brownsville and the first Hispanic woman to become a university president (and a Lozano descendent) together with current mayor Rick Rodriguez and Harlingen Historical Preservation Society president Mary Torres.

Among the speakers was Norman Rozeff, researcher for the historic society. He made the following remarks:

Thank you for inviting me here today to share in this historic occasion. Would those here that have the surname Lozano or are related in any manner to the Lozano family please raise your hands. Thank you.

I have known two Lozanos for over three decades. One is Sam, for all three of my children attended Coakley Junior High School where he served as principal. The other Lozano that I have known for many years is Olga. She and I have served on the board of directors of the Harlingen Concert Association for more years than we wish to reveal.

The reason I asked you to raise your hands is to make a point. There are no members of the Lon C. Hill family nor the Weller family, nor many of the pioneer Harlingen families still residing in Harlingen. There are Anglin and Myrick family descendents still here and a few of other pioneer families, but it is the Lozano family that remains a force. A quick scan of the Harlingen telephone directory listings has 50 Lozanos noted. While all may not be related to the Lozano patriarch, Santos, a good many are. In short, the Lozanos like Harlingen and continue to call it home.

On this occasion I wish to say a few words about Santos Lozano. It was during the Mexican French War that his parents came to Texas from Eijidos San Nicolas de los Garzas, now part Monterrey, when he was two years old. From Collins, Texas Santos would eventually end up in Alice where he would come to operate a mercantile store for 14 years. To gain an appreciation of Santos I characterize him with four words beginning with "A".

It was 1905 when he first visited Harlingen, a year after the coming of the railroad and the community's very start. In 1906 he purchased lots on Main Street from the Lon C. Hill Town and Improvement Company. He was Adventurous in this regard. At age 42 or 43 with a wife, Micaela Beasley Lozano, and nine children (Juan B. who would enter the business with him, Guillermo, Santos V., Fivela, Porfirio, Otilia, Alfredo, Micaela, and Sophia), he had to be adventurous to leave an established town and business for a frontier
town with unknown prospects. On the other hand he may have read or known of the small fortunes made by first-comers in gold rush and other settlements. He may have considered and taken to heart that old axiom "Get in on the ground floor."

Secondly he was Aggressive. Without knowing whom and how many competitors he might face he constructed a two-story frame building, the bottom floor for a dry goods store and the second story to accommodate his family. [In April 1911 a panoramic 360 degree photograph was taken of the town from atop the Lon C. Hill Building. This photo edited from the whole shows the rear side of the Lozano store and residence. Another portion of the panorama pictures Guillermo's meat market across the railroad tracks on Van Buren Avenue.] Santos must have promoted well and given his customers what they needed, for he prospered in the years 1906 through 1914. In fact his financial success allowed him to move forward with an even more ambitious undertaking.

Ambition is the third A. Not resting on his laurels he possessed a larger vision, and it took shape in the form of the Lozano and Son-1915 Building. This structure designed by capable Brownsville architect Baltazar Torres was impressive indeed. Constructed of brick transported all the way from Monterrey, it occupied nearly every square inch of the triple (75' by 140') commercial lot on which it was situated. It rivaled its only competitor in size, the Lon C. Hill Building a short distance away. That Santos allowed for a large hall on the second floor was truly visionary, for the young town needed a place other than church halls and schools where families could gather for social activities and citizens could assemble for civic affairs. Lozano Hall was to serve the community for many decades.

My last A is for Able. Santos was an able businessman, so much so that he was capable of opening satellite stores in La Feria, Donna, and Raymondville. He was also an able generator of children. If my calculations are correct he fathered nine children by his first wife and two (Edme and another Santos) by his second wife, Tomasa Cantu Lozano. Upon his death at age 90, he left his family a legacy as substantial as the contributions and love that he provided them during his lifetime.

We are gathered here today to recognize the accomplishments of Santos, his wife Micaela who sacrificed her life in the aid and nursing of others, and the Lozano family. It is sad to think that the loss of the Lozano/Pioneer's Building to the ravages of flames was no accident but was likely due to the actions of a demented individual. So it is with somewhat bittersweet emotions that we join together to dedicate a marker for Lozano Plaza. The attractive green swath will now continue to be a key congregational place for the citizens of our community. In closing, we recall those who laid the foundation for the fine community we have become today and cherish the memories of them.

The plaque which was installed at the northwestern corner of A and Jackson Streets has the following wording:
Lozano Plaza

Southeast corner of Jackson and "A" Street

Lozano Plaza was once the site of one of Harlingen's most significant buildings. In 1906 Santos Lozano came to the city and purchased the second commercial lot on Jackson Street. On it he erected a small frame structure to house his general store. In 1915 he employed architect Baltazar Torres of Brownsville to design and construct a large two-story building. *S. Lozano and Son* was inscribed on its façade.

In the decades to follow the building's first floor housed the family mercantile store, the town's post office, a drug store, *C. E. Stone* (a Texas dry goods chain), *Kattan's Western Wear* and other enterprises.

The large hall upstairs first served as a schoolroom and a venue for meetings and social gatherings. Later it was converted to office space, used as a business school, and as a budget hotel. During one of its numerous refurbishments the façade came to bear the name *Pioneer's Building*.

In February 1980 the building was honored as a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark and a Texas Historical Commission medallion affixed to it. Upon the building's total destruction by fire in 2004, the City purchased the property and cleared it, creating Lozano Plaza. The corner of Jackson and "A" continues to serve as a key gathering place for the community.

Sponsored by the Lozano Family and Harlingen's Downtown, 2007

Norman Rozeff submitted to Downtown Harlingen some possible wording for a marker. It read:

The Lozano Plaza

The Lozano Plaza was once the site of one of Harlingen's most significant buildings. In 1906 Santos Lozano came to the city where he purchased the second commercial lot on Main Street. On it he erected a small frame structure to house his general store. In 1915 he employed architect Baltazar Torres of Brownsville to design and construct a large two-story building with the name *S. Lozano and Son* inscribed on its façade.

In the decades to follow the first floor would house the family mercantile store, the town's post office, a drug store, *C. E. Stone* (a Texas chain dry goods store), *Kattan's Western Wear* and other enterprises.

The large hall on its second floor would serve as a schoolroom and an important venue for meeting and social gatherings. Later it would be converted for office space, used as a business school, and then as a budget hotel. During one of its numerous refurbishments its façade came to bear the name "Pioneer's Building."

In February 1980 the building was honored as a Historic Texas Recorded Landmark and a Texas Historical Commission medallion was affixed to it. Upon the building's total destruction by fire in 2004, the City purchased the property and cleared it to transform it into the Lozano Plaza, a green space that continues to serve as a key gathering place for the community.