



Gerlach Brothers

Road Ranch & Store George Gerlach, son of Franz Joseph and Mary (Gilmartin) Gerlach, was born on February 8, 1863, at Virden, Illinois. Although he learned the stonemason's trade from his father, he felt no attraction to it and earned his first wages by hoeing corn for fifty cents a day. In February 1885 he joined his brother, John J. Gerlach, at his dugout on Horse Creek, seven miles north of the site of Canadian, Texas.



A 1910 replica of the 1887 Gerlach Brothers Road Ranch & Store They established Gerlach Brothers Road Ranch and Store, on a location near the military route from Fort Elliott, and stocked it with equipment George had brought in from Larned, Kansas. They built corrals for freighters who drove their teams along the road, cooked meals for them, sold them merchandise, and often put them up for the night.

In the spring of 1887 the brothers moved their store, the first in Hemphill County, to the Panhandle and Santa Fe Railway construction camp of Clear Creek, or Hogtown. As the rails moved on, the town of Canadian was platted, and by the fall of 1887 the store had been moved there. A 1910 replica of this first store is shown here. A year later George turned the store over to John and opened a lumberyard, at which he specialized in coffins. It was said that the Gerlach brothers could "marry a man, build his home, furnish it, supply him with groceries, dry goods, implements, and other necessities of life, and when he no longer had need for them...bury him."

Gerlach married Dora E. Knollenberg of Jackson, Illinois, in 1890. They had four children and lived in Canadian, where George and his partners took over the mercantile business after John moved to Oklahoma to open a branch store. The original store burned in 1916, and the Gerlachs established the Canadian Hardware Company and Everybody's Dry Goods and Clothing Store, which operated until 1925. Their home, located on the present site of the First Baptist Church in Canadian, was the town's first two-story house. Gerlach died on December 29, 1937, and was buried in the Canadian.