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TORREY, JOHN FRINK (1817-1893). John Frink **Torrey**, trader and manufacturer, was born in Ashford, Connecticut, on April 14, 1817, the son of Jacob N. and Laura (Kilburn) **Torrey**. He moved to Texas, probably in 1838, established himself in Houston, and, along with his **brothers**, David Kilburn and Thomas Stebbins **Torrey**,^{qv} started a merchandising firm called John F. **Torrey** and **Brothers**, which dealt extensively in the Indian trade from 1838 to 1848. In Houston John met and became closely associated with Sam Houston,^{qv} and the **Torrey** Indian trade became vital to the success of Houston's Indian policy. **Torrey** also started the John **Torrey** Jewelry and Fancy Goods Store, which remained open from 1840 to 1844. Another venture, **Torrey's** Tavern, stood on the site of the present town of San Marcos. There hotel guests were served crackers, sardines, and whiskey, while **Torrey's** goats protected them from snakes during the night. In 1843 **Torrey** went with an Indian commission deep into Indian country to ask the hostile Comanches to come to a peace council. In 1844 he contracted with John O. Meusebach^{qv} to transport German immigrants from Indianola to New Braunfels. After their arrival in 1845 he sold his teams and wagons to the Adelsverein^{qv} and established a trading house and general merchandise store in New Braunfels, as well as a horse-powered mill. Later he and his partner, Willis E. Parks, built a mill at the juncture of the Comal River and Comal Creek; they completed a dam on the river in the spring of 1848, below which they installed turbine waterwheels. George Stebbins later replaced Parks as **Torrey's** partner. **Torrey** and a man named Nugent, a correspondent for the New York *Herald*, left Texas in September 1849 to observe a peace talk between Texas Ranger captain John Coffee Hays^{qv} and a group of Indians some distance west of El Paso. **Torrey** continued on to California, but he was back in New Braunfels by October 1850, when he began what may have been the first factory in the state by adding a door, sash, and blind factory to the already existing mill.

On December 10, 1851, **Torrey** wed nineteen-year-old Laura Dittmar, with whom he had eleven children, seven of whom grew to maturity. A fire destroyed **Torrey's** mill on November 14, 1861, but he rebuilt it at once. The new stone facility, completed in 1862, included a sawmill, a wheat mill, two gristmills, a malt mill, and two cotton gins. When the Civil War^{qv} came, **Torrey**

was commissioned in 1862 as commissary of subsistence in the Thirty-first Brigade and was given the rank of major. His duties did not take him away from New Braunfels, however, for he continued and even expanded his Comal River industries during the war. He and two partners, Hermann A. H. and Henry Runge,^{qv} formed the Comal Manufacturing Company, and **Torrey** converted the upper floors of the mill to a cotton cloth factory, which began operation in October 1865. This manufacturing project was so important to the state that the legislature issued a charter that authorized it to import machinery from Europe through Mexico, duty free. Calamity struck again on July 4, 1869, when a flood destroyed part of **Torrey's** mill, and on September 12 of that same year, a tornado demolished the cotton factory. **Torrey** repaired the mill building and eventually replaced the factory. The final disaster occurred when cloudbursts on June 8 and 9, 1872, caused the Comal River to overflow and wash the **Torrey** mill building from its foundation. **Torrey** later left New Braunfels and went to Hood County, where he had a public land grant that he had located in 1843 at Comanche Peak. There he took up farming. He died in December 1893 at the home of his son Edward in San Antonio.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Henry C. Armbruster, *The **Torreys** of Texas* (Buda, Texas: Citizen Press, 1968).

Henry C. Armbruster

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Last Updated: February 15, 1999

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