

CHAPTER V

CITIES, TOWNS, AND COMMUNITIES

Through its history Montgomery County has had its share of towns and communities. Some are now ghost towns, while others live only in the minds of the old timers who remember something once said about them. And too, a few have been sawmill towns which lived as long as the timber which made them lasted. Some failed to survive because a railroad or highway by-passed them, or because an industrial change occurred. But for these reasons, for every community that became extinct, another seemed to spring up in its place.

Within the original bounds Montgomery County had such historical towns as, Cincinnati, Huntsville, Waverly, Robbin's, Old Trinidad (Spanish Bluff), Groce's, Fanthrop's, Navasota, Cold-spring, Swartout, Point Blank, and many others. These towns were separated from Montgomery County when the new counties in which they were located were formed from Montgomery, but even after Montgomery was divided she had many communities left. Some of these communities, many of which are extinct today, are as follows: Boggy, McRae, Dobbin, Bobbin, Hartley, Peach Creek, Lake Creek, Bethel, Mink, Pleasant Grove, Caney Station, Newleaney, Morrisville,

Bear bend, Longstreet, Oklahoma, Lost Cane Brake, Hunters Retreat, Deckers Prairie, Goodson Prairie, Mount Pleasant, Panther Branch, Brantley, Presswood, Danville, Waukegan, Honea, Ada, Esperanza, Union Grove, Tamina, Rose Hill, Clinesburg, Beach, Willis, Timber, Montgomery, Conroe, Magnolia, Tharp, Youens, Butlersburgh, Pools, Dacus, Fostoria, Cut 'n Shoot, Pinehurst, Karen, Jackson, Bobville, Rayford, Porters, Security, Midline, Splendora, Boy, Four Corners, Granger, Wigginsville, New Caney, Cowl Spur, Bunn, Leonidas, Keenan, Bays Chapel, and Venturea. Only a few of these communities will be considered in this study, though it is with regret that the author can not give an account of each. Several are treated including the important towns of today, an early town, a ghost town, a sawmill town and some communities of unusual interest.

The town of Montgomery is the oldest in the county. It has already been stated in this study how it was thought the town of Montgomery got its name. Prior to 1837, Montgomery had been a trading post established by Owen and Margaret Shannon, and located north of Town Creek. The new part of the town was plotted by W. W. Shepperd, a land agent, who bought the land from John Corner to establish the new part of the town. The first mention of the new part of the town appeared in the Telegraph and Texas Register, July 8, 1837. The article that was in the paper was written by W. W. Shepperd on the

fourth of July, 1837, and gave the location of the town and advertised the sale of town lots. The sale of the lots was to be held in auction at Montgomery the first day of September, and the auction was to continue for three days. However, a plat of the new town was not drawn by Shepperd until January 1, 1838.¹ Two months later, Shepperd through his agent and son-in-law, C. B. Stewart, gave to the county thirteen town lots and a site for a courthouse. At the same time a more definite procedure was given as to how the sale of the town lots was to be carried out. These facts are explained in the following article:

The president placed before the court the written act of donation of William W. Shepperd to the county of Montgomery of an equal undivided half interest in the town of Montgomery and sixty acres of pine land adjoining donated for county purposes. And it being put to the question whether said donations should be accepted. It was unanimously received and the question being also, whether the place of the town presented by C. B. Stewart as agent for W. W. Shepperd should be received. The same was also unanimously received and adopted.

Motioned that a sale of town lots of the town of Montgomery be made on 4th Monday in April next for the purpose of raising funds to defray in part county expenses. It was ordered unanimously that a sale should be made on that date. Three previous advertisements being made in the Telegraph etc. etc. Question being made upon what terms and the time of credit given or to be given purchasers of town lots, It was ordered that sales be made for

¹ W. W. Shepperd, Map of the Town of Montgomery, January 1, 1838, Addison Collection.

one fourth cash, one fourth payable in three months, one fourth within six months, and the remainder fourth 12 months. Purchasers giving liens upon lots until final payment receiving certificates at the time of purchase and giving the notes for respective amounts and on respective time.

W. W. Shepperd having made certain improvements in the town of Montgomery by his agent C. B. Stewart, claimed the selection of thirteen lots giving an equal selection of thirteen lots to the County Commissioners and registered the action of the Court in relation to the instruction of the donation to Wit, of an equal undivided interest in the town proposing that when the county or its agent should have sold thirteen lots to counter balance the thirteen selected by W. W. Shepperd. All sales of other lots the proceeds thereof should be equally divided between the county and the said W. W. Shepperd after each and every sale.²

On October 21, 1839, W. W. Shepperd sold his interest in the town of Montgomery to James McCown for eight thousand dollars.³ James McCown influenced the development of the new part of the town and through his inducement it became one of the most progressive towns in the Republic. Montgomery prospered from the start, because it was the county seat and main trading town of the county. As conditions improved Montgomery received a generous share of the tide of immigrants. Places of business were established, professional men located their practices there, and soon Montgomery became one of the most im-

² Extract from the minutes of the Commissioners Court, March 1, 1838, Addison Collection.

³ Montgomery County Courthouse Records, Deeds, Book E, p. 184.

portant towns in Texas.

Two of the first professional men to arrive in Montgomery to contribute to the advancement of the town were Dr. E. J. Arnold and Dr. J. H. Price.

In 1836, Dr. E. J. Arnold came to Texas and in 1837 formed a partnership with Dr. James H. Price of Houston. These doctors practiced both in Washington and Montgomery, going from Washington to Montgomery in about the year 1839. Dr. Arnold was joined by his wife sometime during his earliest years in Texas, and in the early 1840's they bought land and built a small home. In the early 1850's this first home was replaced by a handsome one in which one of his grandsons, R. O. Simonton, lives today.⁴

Dr. Arnold was very popular in Montgomery and took part in almost every movement for civic improvement. He and C. E. Clepper donated land for the Montgomery Academy, and later, Dr. Arnold offered a site for the construction of a female college, but this dream was never realized. When he died in 1860, he was buried in Montgomery, but in 1880 his body was disinterred to be buried beside that of his wife in Willis, Texas.⁵

⁴ W. N. Martin, "A History of Montgomery," (Unpublished Master's thesis, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville, Texas, 1950), p. 19.

⁵ Ibid., p. 20

The other physician, Dr. James Howe Price, arrived in Galveston in May 1837 on a steamer sailing from New Orleans. He continued his journey to Houston, where he arrived on May 25, and in his diary he recorded the following:

Found myself in what they call a Cut-throat town that afforded me not a single friend and scarcely an acquaintance -- without a particle of experience in my half acquired profession -- no medicine, no instruments -- nor no office or books.

In Houston Dr. Price formed a partnership with a Dr. Matthews who had had some experience and had been practicing there. Dr. Price set up practice after the necessary equipment was obtained on credit, and for several months he found Houston a very good place for a doctor's business.

In April of 1837, Dr. Price decided to visit his home in Tennessee; so he left his practice in the hands of a friend and departed on a steamer for New Orleans. In the fall of that same year he decided to come back to Texas, and on the way overland he was joined by two more men who were also riding through the country on horseback. They were several weeks on the road, traveling through swamps, forests, and over almost impassable trails. They came through Arkansas, Louisiana, and into Texas, entering by the way of Natchitoches, Louisiana. They came on to Houston by way of old Cincinatti on the Trinity River, and

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 Diary, Dr. James H. Price, Sam Houston Memorial Museum, p. 1.

then to Montgomery, where Dr. Price spent several days with the Worsham family. The account of this in his diary is as follows:

July 3, 1838.

. . . The Trinity at Cincinatti is the most beautiful stream I have seen in Texas. Got this evening to Hadleys. No corn or oats had to hopple out. Wed. 4th. Left this morning after breakfast. Stopped at McDonalds, no person at home, gave our horses a feed of corn. . . Came this evening to Lindleys and stayed all night. The people were celebrating the 4th of July all over the country at Crockett, Montgomery, etc. etc. July 5. Stayed at Johnsons--came on to Mr. Worshams. . . . Fri. 6. Concluded this morning to stay all day, we are much pleased with the family, fine lady, etc. Sat. 7. This is my sick day (had a chill) we have concluded to stay all day again. I have been well all day, went to Montgomery today. Returned this evening to Mr. Worsham. Sun. 8. Left this morn after breakfast for Houston, got this evening to Wynns. 30 mi. and horses are out.⁷

Upon his arrival in Houston, Dr. Price found that the doctor he had left to take charge of his practice while he was gone had taken his business. It was on account of this incident that he decided to come back to Montgomery.

In Montgomery he met Dr. E. J. Arnold, and formed a partnership with him. Dr. Price was not only a successful physician, but also he was a successful farmer. He owned much land and many slaves, and was very prosperous both as a farmer and a trader.⁸

⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

⁸ Martin, op. cit., p. 23.

In addition to the professional men, the town of Montgomery drew men of a business nature. They established mercantile houses which caused Montgomery to advance commercially. Two of these early business men were the Willis brothers, Peter J. and Richard S.

In 1836 Peter J. Willis landed in Nacogdoches, where he stayed about one year and then went to old Washington-on-the-Brazos, where he stayed another year before coming to Montgomery. He married Caroline Womack of Montgomery, and they had two sons and four daughters, the youngest daughter dying at Montgomery when a child. Peter Willis built a small log house when he first arrived; soon, however, he was able to build a fine new home furnished with the best furniture that he could buy. He bought his furniture in Galveston and had it shipped to Montgomery on ox-drawn wagons. He had the grounds about his home landscaped, and the whole place, when completed, was one of the very finest homes in Montgomery. The home, with the furniture, still stands today and is owned by Mr. Raymond Weisinger.

Peter Willis was a personal friend of Sam Houston, and it is said that Houston spent many visiting hours in Montgomery in the Willis home.⁹

When Mrs. Willis dies in 1863, Mr. Willis closed his store and his house and left two old Negro servants as caretakers. After a few

⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

years, however, he sold his home and moved to Galveston. The last surviving child of Peter Willis was Mrs. George Sealy of Galveston, who died only recently. Her name was Magnolia, and it was from her that the Magnolia Petroleum Company took its name, since she was one of its largest stock holders.¹⁰

Richard S. Willis, a younger brother of Peter J., and a boy of sixteen, came to Montgomery in 1837, a year later than his brother. He joined partnership with his brother, and, after getting started in the mercantile business, the two brothers established the Willis Brothers General Mercandise Company.¹¹

Business prospered and so did the town as more people moved into Montgomery. In the early 1840's Dr. J. H. Price established a grist mill at Montgomery; and, some years later, he built a gin on his property about three miles west of the town. Another industry that started was a pottery which was located on a farm south of the town. It was established in the late 1840's and the remains of the old kiln and a few broken pieces of pottery still mark the location where it stood. It was short-lived, but to this day, the stream that furnished water for the pottery is called Juggery Creek. Most of the pottery was sold to a nearby whiskey still for whiskey jugs and to local house wives for bowls

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 27

and churns. Many crudely molded jars from the pottery are in the hands of several citizens today.¹²

Another industry which made Montgomery progress was a tannery started by Antony Martin in 1843. He purchased a bark mill from P. J. Willis and installed a tannery on Martin's Creek about three miles east of Montgomery. He operated the tannery until the Civil War, when it was abandoned. Hides were purchased from local settlers and tanned into leather which was usually sold to the local shops in Montgomery.¹³

By 1845 Montgomery had grown large enough to have a newspaper, a Masonic lodge, a telegraph station. The newspaper published by John Marshall Wade was the Montgomery Patriot, and the first regular issue appeared on April 26, 1845.¹⁴ The Montgomery Patriot of July 2, 1845, advertised the places of business of M. O. Dimon, General Merchandise; B. F. Duncan, Fashionable Tailor; M. Shaben and Bros, Merchandise; Lem. Smith, Cabinet Manufacturer and Upholsterer; and P. J. Willis and Brothers, General Merchandise. In one of the advertisements James McCown advertised: ". . . Will sell cheap, and on accommodating terms, a pair of first rate STILLs,

¹² Ibid., p. 43

¹³ Ibid., p. 42

¹⁴ Montgomery Patriot, July 2, 1845, Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

together with all the apparatus to carry on a distillery." Also in the same issue James McCown advertised the sale of town lots, and in the advertisement he gave a good description of the prosperity of the town, which is as follows:

. . . The lands surrounding Montgomery, known as the Lake Creek Settlement, being of such a rich and fertile character, and having a rich and industrious population, it is destined to be, in a short time, a town of considerable importance.

Montgomery is the county site of the most flourishing, populous and intelligent county in the Republic. It is situated on an elevated ridge, which divides the waters of the San Jacinto River and Lake Creek--In point of health, Montgomery is not inferior to any place in the world, lying in the same latitude.¹⁵

The Masonic Lodge Number 25 was organized April 25, 1845 in Montgomery. The minutes show that some of the people who helped organize the lodge were W. H. Grand Master B. Gillespie, John Gillespie, L. G. Clepper, Sam Houston, Buford Oliphant, and others.¹⁶

The first telegraph line was built through Montgomery in 1845 and it added to the prestige of the town. The line extended from Houston to Huntsville by way of Montgomery. The line traveled the old Stage Road, and even today old insulators can be found on the trees along the old road.

¹⁵ Loc. cit.

¹⁶ Martin, op. cit., p. 68.

Besides being the center of government and industry, Montgomery was the center of school and church activities for the county. The Methodist as early as 1838 held meetings in the town, and in 1842 the first Methodist parsonage of Texas was erected there. The Baptists in the town organized a church in 1850.¹⁷

Montgomery was one of the leading town in the state for the advancement of education. An academy was organized in 1848 for the purpose of educating its youth. The school was called the Montgomery Academy.¹⁸

Montgomery advanced so rapidly that by 1848 an act was passed by the Legislature to incorporate it as a town. The act in part is as follows:

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas, That the citizens of the town of Montgomery in Montgomery county, be, and they are hereby, declared a body politic and corporate, under the name and style of the Corporation of the Town of Montgomery, who shall have the power of suing and being sued, pleading, and being impleaded, and to hold property real and personal within the limits of said corporation, and at their pleasure to dispose of the same.

Be it further enacted, That the corporate limits of said town shall extend one half mile in every direction from the center of the public square.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 66.

¹⁸ H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas 1822-1897 (Austin: The Gammerl Book Company, 1898), Vol. III, p. 379.

¹⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 361.

The act also designated the duties of the town officials, their term of office, and the days of election. The first mayor after the act was passed was Nat Hart Davis. His first duty was to clean out the town well.

Nat Hart Davis was one of the most prominent lawyers and distinguished citizens of Montgomery. In the spring of 1840 he came to Montgomery from Madison County, Alabama and applied for his Texas citizenship.²⁰ He set up a law office in the town and when his business was established he went to Mississippi and married Sarah Elizabeth White. He brought his bride back to Montgomery, where the two lived until their deaths. During his lifetime Nat Davis not only had the honor of being the first mayor Montgomery, but also he had the honor of holding many other positions. He held the position of Justice of the Peace and District Judge for many years, and it is said by the old timers that no one in the county since his death has excelled Nat Davis in the art of handling the procedure of civil law.²¹ Today, a portrait of Nat Hart Davis hangs in an honored position in the District Courtroom of the Courthouse.

Montgomery prospered, and it became one of the most im-

²⁰ Deeds, Book A, p. 26.

²¹ Personal interview of author with Hart Addison, Conroe, Texas, April 10, 1952.

portant trading centers in Texas. Long teams of oxen from up country around Crockett passed through the town drawing loads of cotton, lumber, and other products. They plodded their way slowly to Houston and Galveston, the nearest markets. These wagons on their return trips brought back all kinds of merchandise shipped from New Orleans, New York, and other places.²²

Montgomery was on the main stage line from Houston to Huntsville and from Washington to Bevil's on the Trinity River. The stage coaches brought both passengers and mail, and the arrival of the stage coach was the most exciting event of the day. As it came up the stage road, the driver blew his musical horn so that it might be heard by the citizens in town long before the stage drew up before the Price Hotel.

The stages usually met at the Price Hotel, which was erected in 1858 by Dr. J. H. Price, and as they arrived from different directions the passengers exchanged news. Then they rested or ate while the horses rested or fresh ones were hitched to the coach.²³

In 1854 one of the local citizens who had been away from Montgomery on a visit wrote a letter in which he said, ". . . The town is greatly improved in buildings but not in morals--liquor is

²² Martin, op. cit., p. 39.

²³ Ibid., p. 73

still retailed by Gay and Hooker, and Gafford--and gambling is going on. Our town and county are quite healthy. . . ." ²⁴

The town continued to grow until the opening of the Civil War. Around 1857 a new school was started to replace the Montgomery Academy which had been discontinued. This new academy was established by Charles L. S. Jones and it was called Jones Academy. It was a very popular institution and lasted until Mr. Jones' son and many of the larger boys of the community enlisted in the Confederate army. ²⁵ In the Texas Almanac of 1857 Montgomery is described as ". . . a village of considerable size occupying an elevated situation and containing many tasty residences, and other evidences of refinement. . . ." ²⁶

By 1860 Montgomery had reached its peak of development, when the Civil War broke out it drained the town of its able bodied citizens and wealth. In 1864 a Confederate soldier who was passing through Montgomery on patrol duty described the place in his diary as follows:

. . . Thence through a country of timber to Montgomery, in the suburbs of which we camp. This is my first visit to the Montgomery of Texas. It is a very small town.

²⁴ Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, December 16, 1845, in Addison Collection.

²⁵ Martin, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁶ Texas Almanac for 1857 (Galveston: Richardson and Company, 1856), p. 77.

Public buildings, an academy, church, Court house and jail; and these of very ordinary qualities. The war has dried the little place up--not a door open in it.²⁷

Montgomery never recuperated from the Civil War. The war had sapped its life blood and before it could regain its strength the reconstruction era came and brought it back to its knees. Then too, the coming of the railroads caused an industrial change and many of its businessmen and other citizens moved to the new railroad town of Willis.

Montgomery's population had diminished so much by 1873 that Montgomery had a feud with the town of Willis over the site of the county seat. Willis claimed she had a larger population and that she was nearer the center of the county; but Montgomery kept the honor of being the capitol city until 1889, when by popular vote the county seat was moved to the new railroad-sawmill town of Conroe.

The maneuver of Willis awakened Montgomery to the fact that she needed a railroad or an industry to keep her citizens from leaving; so in 1877 the citizens of the town decided to build their own railroad. Substantial contributions were made by the people in the form of land, money, labor, and materials. The right-of-way was donated and a

²⁷ H. C. Medford, "Diary", Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume XXXIV (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1930) p. 138

charter was granted to the Central and Montgomery Railroad on December 31, 1877. In return for the aid given by the people of the town, the railroad company agreed to maintain a depot for passengers and freight service in the town within a distance of not more than a thousand yards from the courthouse.²⁸ The railroad was built and only recently it was abandoned.

Montgomery has not changed much since the courthouse was moved to Conroe. Today (1952) it has a population of five hundred and twenty people.²⁹ A citizen of the town in 1950 wrote:

. . . The character of the town has not changed greatly; that whenever possible, the old families have kept the lands of their forefathers in family hands; that new industries will continue to be discouraged because the citizens dislike the stepped-up tempo and often undesirable population shift that come with certain industries. It is the desire of the present inhabitants that the population in general will continue to have a high regard for culture; that the town will not grow greatly but will strive to keep its churches and lodges among the most highly respected and its schools as progressive as the scholastic census will permit.

It is noted that all those who have once been of Montgomery continue to love and respect the old town and at every opportunity return and visit with the friends of their fathers and mothers.³⁰

²⁸ Martin, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

²⁹ Texas Almanac 1949-1950 (Dallas: A. H. Belo Corporation, 1949), p. 568.

³⁰ Martin, op. cit., p. 84

Danville is one of the extinct town of Montgomery County. It was located about five miles northwest of the present-day town of Willis. Not much is known about the old town today, because it has been gone for over eighty years. It had its beginning not long after the town of Montgomery, because in the Telegraph and Texas Register of April 8, 1846, it was listed as one of the towns of Montgomery County for election returns of that year.³¹ During the 1850's, Danville, like Montgomery, had a building boom. Many plantation owners with their slaves from the Old South moved to the vicinity, cleared land, and built their mansions. One of these plantation owners was Judge Goldthwait, who came to Danville in 1854 and brought with him about two hundred slaves. In a letter to his wife, Nat Davis wrote:

. . . Judge Goldthwait of Alabama bought the H. G. Johnson place at little over \$5.00 per acre and has some 100 Negroes on it, and about as many over on the San Jacinto. . . .³²

Then in the next year, 1855, Nat Davis wrote to his wife and said, "I saw some fine cotton when I went over to Danville on the 3rd at Goldthwait's plantation on the San Jacinto."³³

Another plantation owner was General A. J. Lewis from

³¹ Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register (Houston), April 8, 1846

³² Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, December 16, 1854, in Addison Collection.

³³ Ibid., July 10, 1855.

Virginia, who built a grand three story home with a ballroom on the third story. The brick used in the house were shipped from Holland and the wooden beams were fastened together with wooden pegs whittled out by his slaves. He called this grand house Elmwood, and it stood until 1940 when it was torn down and the lumber used for a new and modern home.³⁴

By 1856 Danville had reached a population numberinf about three hundred inhabitants,³⁵ and in the next year the Texas Almanac described the place as ". . . a small village some fifteen miles north of Montgomery, its trade being from the surrounding country, which is rich and productive."³⁶

In January 1860 Danville had grown large enough to seek incorporation; therefore, by an act passed by the Texas Legislature it was incorporated as a town.³⁷

Danville, at its peak of prosperity, supported about fourteen business houses; however, they were short lived, because like Montgomery, the Civil War and the coming of the railroads caused Danville and its business houses to decline.³⁸

³⁴ Martin, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁵ T. C. Richardson, East Texas: Its History and Its Makers (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940) Vol. III, p. 1126.

³⁶ Texas Almanac 1857, op. cit., p. 77.

³⁷ Gammel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 82.

When the Houston and Great Northern Railroad was clearing its right-of-way toward Houston, the railroad officials asked the Danville citizens for permission to run the railroad line through the town. The majority of the citizens did not want the railroad because they were afraid that the type of people that a railroad would bring into their town would be undesirable; therefore, the railroad passed about five miles east of the town, and it was not long until the citizens of Danville saw their mistake. All of the business houses moved to the railroad at the newly established town of Willis, and today all that remains of Danville is a few broken bricks in an open field.³⁹

Willis came into being as one of the towns of Montgomery County in 1870. It was named Willis by the Houston and Great Northern Railroad, the predecessor of the International and Great Northern. The town was called Willis in honor of the Willis brothers, Peter J. and Richard S., who had been citizens of Montgomery and were at that time owners of the P. J. Willis and Brothers firm in Galveston. The Willis brothers had rather large land holdings and timber interests near the townsite; therefore, they decided to the Houston and Great

³⁸ Martin, op. cit., p. 7

³⁹ Personal interview of author with Lula Dukes, Willis, Texas, May 12, 1952.

Northern Railroad a place for a townsite along the railroad.⁴⁰

Construction for Montgomery County's first railroad was completed in 1872. When the trains began to move on the new railroad, Willis began to prosper. Most of the business houses from Danville and many residents moved to the new town near the railroad. Others from Montgomery and Old Waverly also located in the new town.⁴¹

By 1873 the population of the town had grown so much that an agitation to move the county seat to Willis was begun; then on September 7, 1874 a called election was held and Willis by a majority of one hundred and forty-two votes was chosen as the county seat.⁴²

In 1875 the Willis Observer, a newspaper in the town, gave an account of the town's merchangs and the newly organized Grange.

The article explained as follows:

. . . The merchants of this place have good stocks on hand, and are selling more goods than we thought could be sold these hard times. They sell principally for the cash--though some little "trusting business."

The "Grangers" are doing very well here, and are increasing in number every meeting. They have opened in this place a Grange store, upon a small scale, which

⁴⁰ Conroe Courier, April 8, 1932.

⁴¹ Anna Davis Weisinger, "History of Montgomery County," Historicade Program, October 25, 1949, p. 15.

⁴² Montgomery County Commissioners Court Minutes, Book A., p. 56

is destined to become of great benefit to the farmers; we are told that its effect is being felt already. The Store is under the management of Col. Israel Worsham, kept in the building occupied by F. J. Williams. . . .⁴³

In the same paper an advertisement gave the tuition rates for the newly organized Willis Male and Female College. The advertisement stated that Willis was instituted for males and females and that the exercises for the institution were resumed August 1, 1875 and that they would continue for ten months. Tuition rates were two dollars and five dollars a month; a student taking music was charged five dollars extra. The expense of the student, including board, need not exceed one hundred seventy-five dollars for the entire season.⁴⁴

The Willis Male and Female College plant consisted of three buildings, the main building, dining room and kitchen, and one other building. The third floor of the main building was used for laboratories and rooms for boarding students, and at one time housed the dining room and kitchen. At one time there were about two hundred fifty students who boarded in the college and in several houses located on the street to the west of the grounds and in nearby homes or boarding houses. The curriculum of the college provided for the study of

⁴³ The Willis Observer, April 20, 1875.

⁴⁴ Loc. cit.

ancient languages, history, mathematics, literature, science, vocal and instrumental music, art, and physical culture. The administrators of the college were Reverend S. N. Barker and wife, George W. Stovall, F. P. Crowe, J. A. Kookan, John W. Hoke, M. A. Kline, and Cyril M. Jansky.⁴⁵

A practice at one time of the college was that at a certain hour each week day evening the janitor of the main building would ring a bell which was in a cupola atop the building. The ringing of the college bell was the signal for all boarding students to retire to the study hall of the college for supervised study of two or three hours and those in the homes and the out-in-town boarding houses were supposed to go to their respective study tables and study for a like period of time.⁴⁶

By 1886 Willis had the requisite number of inhabitants to incorporate as a town. Upon a petition of forty-nine resident citizens asking for an election to be held to incorporate the town, the County Judge declared an election to be held in the town of Willis at the Market House of R. B. Roach on March 16, 1886. The election was held and by a majority vote of fourteen, the

⁴⁵ Personal interview of author with Hulon N. Anderson, Conroe, Texas, July 22, 1951.

⁴⁶ Loc. cit.

citizens voted against incorporation.⁴⁷

Willis continued to grow rapidly, because in the 1890 census it had almost as many people as its rival town, Montgomery--832 and 921 respectively.⁴⁸

In the 1890's Willis had a building boom. Many new stores and residents were constructed. Some of the places of business there at the time were T. W. Smith's General Merchandise, Carson and McKibbin General Store, Sandel's Store, Powell and Walker's Drug, Leslie's Erick Yard, First and Last Chance Saloon, and Pearl Saloon. An opera house was constructed by T. W. Smith in 1893. The local newspaper wrote the following about its construction:

Through the courtesy of its owner, Capt. T. W. Smith, an Index representative, was shown through the neat and attractive public hall and Thespian temple, which he has recently had fitted up in the second story of the Caldwell building, at the end of Stewart street. The interior is handsomely painted and comfortably seated with benches of an improved pattern, thereby insuring the unstinted praise of all who may patronize it. The stage is of modern design, and a handsome drop curtain and scenic appurtenances of a suitable character will soon arrive and be put in place. The room on the south side of the building answers most admirably as a dressing boudior, without encroaching upon the space of the main hall, and an additional seating capacity is the result. Some kind of an entertainment will probably be given upon its completion, in order that the citizens of Willis may be formally introduced to what they have long sadly missed--

⁴⁷ Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 235.

⁴⁸ Richardson, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 1128.

a pleasant and an attractive public hall.⁴⁹

Willis attracted much attention around 1895 because of the tobacco industry started there. In the latter 1890's Willis had developed this industry so well that it became a very much advertized little town. Fine grades of tobacco were grown in the vicinity and T. W. Smith and son, Cwen Smith, encouraged the industry by building a large brick cigar factory and employed more than one hundred men and women to roll the tobacco into cigars. At its peak Willis boasted of seven cigar factories. A large number of big tobacco buyers from the various eastern points would come to Willis each season to buy their tobacco. They claimed that the Willis tobacco had a flavor that could not be found elsewhere. The farmers grew the celebrated "Vuelta Abago" variety of Cuban tobacco and they sent to Cuba each year for fresh seed.⁵⁰

The tobacco industry was very successful at Willis until the United States Congress lifted the tariff on Cuban tobacco, which had a very devastating effect on the industry at Willis, due to the fact that Cuba, with cheaper labor, could raise tobacco more cheaply than Willis.

Owen Smith, owner of one of the cigar factories, told a local

⁴⁹ The Willis Index, October 20, 1893.

⁵⁰ Conroe Courier, June 30, 1933.

citizen that the reason the cigar factories closed was because the Cuban employees who worked them wanted to form a union. The union activities were squelched by the employers and thus making the Cubans angry they rolled up gun powder and asafetida in the next shipment of cigars. When the reports came in from the buyers the tobacco industry ceased to exist in Willis.⁵¹

After the tobacco industry faded away the lumber industry appeared in Willis to keep it alive. Today, it has several sawmills and planers that employs much of its population and is the main source of its wealth. It is a quite respectable little village with about nine hundred people who go about their daily tasks while they think of the days when someone styled their town as the "Athens of Montgomery County." ⁵²

The city of Conroe is the infant municipality of Montgomery County. Although it was not named until sometime later, it had its beginning January 1, 1881 when Isaac Conroe purchased the Joshua G. Smith tract of land. Previous to the year 1881 Isaac Conroe operated a sawmill at Haltom south of Conroe on the International and Great Northern Railroad, and after purchasing the timber land

⁵¹ Personal interview of author with Ilanon Moon, Willis, Texas, June 10, 1952.

⁵² Personal interview of author with Hulon N. Anderson, Conroe, Texas, July 22, 1951.

from J. G. Smith, in October he moved his sawmill to the center of the Smith survey. This location was about two and a half miles east of the railroad, at which is the site of present-day Beach. After the mill was constructed a tram was built from the mill to the International and Great Northern Railroad track. The tram was made with wooden rails and spiked with wooden spikes, upon which tram cars were drawn by three mules harnessed in single file. The mules were driven without lines, the leader being trained to keep in the middle of the road and all that was necessary for the driver to do was to sit upon the load of lumber with his foot on the brake and use an eight foot whip which was attached to a stock about six feet long. Some of the drivers became so expert with the whip that with little effort they could knock a horse fly off a mule at one crack.⁵³

The opening of Isaac Conroe's mill brought new people to the vicinity who were employed by the mill. They settled around the mill and along the tram and at its junction with the main railroad. About 1885 J. K. Ayres built a sawmill near where the Santa Fe section house now stands.⁵⁴ This mill also brought to the vicinity more people who settled at the junction of the tram and railroad.

⁵³ Conroe Courier, July 28, 1922.

⁵⁴ Conroe Courier, June 30, 1933.

On June 15, 1882 the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe purchased a right-of-way through Montgomery County, and in the latter part of the 1880's the railroad was finished. This line connected with Conroe's tram and crossed the International and Great Northern at that point; therefore the point of the crossing of the two railroads became an important prospect for future industrial expansion.⁵⁵

It was after the completion of the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe, that is about the year 1886, that Conroe acquired its name. Before that time, the local area was unnamed and the vicinity was just a number of houses about the mills and along the railroad tracks. In an article written by W. M. Conroe, son of Isaac Conroe, the following was related concerning the naming of Conroe:

Our home was in Houston and Father made trips to Houston every Saturday or Sunday, and to catch the train it was necessary to flag it at night with a lantern and in the day time with a white handkerchief. It was on one of his return trips from Houston that a Mr. Hoxey, an official of the road at that time, happened to be a passenger and sat with my father. Father approached him on the matter of making a regular stop and Mr. Hoxey was favorably impressed with the idea, and arranged with my father to sell or have tickets sold for short trips over the I. & G. N. Mr. Hoxey asked father if he had named the place, and the reply was that he had not.

Mr. Hoxey then said why not call it Conroe's switch? Which of course was satisfactory.

⁵⁵ Martin, op. cit., p. 16.

Mr. Hoxey is really the man who named the town.

Soon after the above incident, tickets arrived and on these tickets was printed, "From Conroe's To _____."

The post office department a little later established a post office, Father being the post master, and the place was named Conroe's. All maps and postmarks prior to 1889 carried the name Conroe's. Soon after 1889 the 's was dropped by the post office department and the name Conroe appeared. I wrote the railroad company myself, as they were carrying the name Conroe's which was on the sign at the depot was changed to Conroe, hence this is the way Conroe got its name.⁵⁶

In another article written by W. M. Conroe it was declared that the town site of Conroe, at the beginning of its history, was a dense forest so thick that one might get lost if not familiar with the lay of the land. The area was thickly inhabited by wolves, bear, deer, wild cats, and nearly all manner of wild life. In the article Mr. Conroe claimed he subsisted on venison meat rather than beef.⁵⁷

By 1889 Conroe had grown to be a town of probably two hundred fifty or three hundred people.⁵⁸ While most of the population of the county was west of the San Jacinto River, the citizens petitioned the court to hold an election for moving the county seat to Conroe. On April 27, 1889 the election was held and with the combined vote of Conroe, Willis, and the mill population of Leonidas

⁵⁶ Conroe Courier, July 28, 1922.

⁵⁷ Ibid., April 8, 1932.

⁵⁸ Weisinger, op. cit., p. 16.

near Conroe, Conroe with a majority of sixty-two votes won the election.⁵⁹

Conroe profited from Willis' mistake, because she did not waste any time obtaining temporary buildings for the county offices. On May 14, 1889 the Commissioners Court met and passed on the following in regard to a temporary courthouse and having the county records moved from Montgomery:

A contract for temporary public buildings was made with Capt. Isaac Conroe, and his residence on lot 8, in block 4, was secured for county offices. A large district court room, forty feet square, is to be erected on the north end of the lot, as well as a commodious room for the accommodation of the county's safes and records, and the upstairs of the residence is to be fitted up as a grand jury room. For the rent of all this property the county is to pay \$25 for the first month, and \$50 per month so long as it occupies it thereafter.

The contract for removing the county safes, records, courthouse furniture, etc. was awarded to W. H. Jones for \$172.59; and that for building a temporary jail and moving the cages from Montgomery to Conroe and placing them in it was taken by A. L. Austin for \$269.⁶⁰

The records were moved by W. H. Jones from Montgomery to the new location in Conroe on May 17, 1889.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 17

⁶⁰ Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 473

⁶¹ Note of Nat Hart Davis, May 17, 1889, in Addison Collection.

The question of the permanent location of the courthouse and jail was settled by accepting the proposition of Captain J. K. Ayres of his donation of block eight for the courthouse site and block ten for the jail site.⁶² This location was in the Ayres Addition of Conroe, which was laid off on the west side of the International and Great Northern track, and north of the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe track. The main business and residential part of the town was on the east side of the tracks and the citizens on May 14, 1889 protested to the court against the location; they claiming that the site chosen was too much of a thicket and undeveloped. To the dismay of the people, the court ignored the protest and on the same day accepted Mr. Ayres' offer. The court ordered advertisements to be placed in the newspaper to architects for plans and specifications for the necessary buildings.⁶³

The advertisement appeared in the newspaper soon after and it read as follows:

NOTICE TO ARCHITECTS

Notice is hereby given to all parties concerned that the county commissioner's court of Montgomery county, Texas, will receive plans and specifications for the erection at Conroe, Texas, of a brick court house not to exceed an estimated cost of Ten thousand dollars.

⁶² Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 480.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 503

Said plans and specifications should be filed with the clerk of the county court of Montgomery county, at his office in the town of Conroe on or about 10 o'clock A. M., of the second Monday and 10th day of June, A. D. 1889, at which time they will be opened and considered by the court.⁶⁴

On August 6, 1889, the court gave a contract to Moodie and Ellis of Greenville, Texas to build a brick and steel courthouse and jail for the amount of twenty-five thousand two hundred ninety-five dollars.⁶⁵

The brick for Conroe's first courthouse were made from clay which was dug close to the Santa Fe railroad tracks. While the building was under construction W. M. Conroe related the following situation:

. . . While the present court house was built a deer was shot on the corner of the square by one of the men then engaged in work on the structure. He also says that in those early days of the city of Conroe one could not blow a hunting horn in the city limits without having hounds come a yelping from every direction. Packs of wolves howled so loud and vociferously at night that the citizens could hardly sleep. Hunting for all kinds of game was the sport of sports in that day and Mr. Conroe states that he kept primed for the trail and enjoyed it to his heart's content.⁶⁶

Due to the ideal industrial set-up of Conroe, with the location

⁶⁴Scrapbook, Newspser clipping, in Addison Collection.

⁶⁵Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 503.

⁶⁶Conroe Courier, April 8, 1932.

of the county seat, two railroads, and numerous sawmills, it is no wonder that it became the leading city in Montgomery County. By 1898 Conroe boasted twenty-four business houses--three of which were saloons, and three hotels, all doing a good business.⁶⁷ By 1900 Conroe led all other towns in the county with a population of 1009 people.⁶⁸

Like all fast growing towns, Conroe has had its share of epidemics and disasters. In October, 1897 Conroe had a yellow fever epidemic. The fever became so alarming that the state health department quarantined the whole county. So many people were sick and dying that there were hardly enough well people to bury the dead and attend the sick. When the quarantine was lifted an article appeared in the local paper expressing the following sentiments of the local citizens:

All hands and the cook were made to feel extremely glad Sunday, when the bulletin board announced that the quarantine was raised to all Texas. It had been on for a week, and our people had been hemmed in without mail, freight or communication of any kind, neighbors being almost afraid to visit each other. Business had grown so tame, that there was hardly anything for sale. Another week of quarantine would have sent all to the country and the town would have become depopulated. If Dr. Guiteras had been in town the boys could have

⁶⁷ Ibid., December 9, 1898.

⁶⁸ Richardson, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 1128.

had fun furnishing a coat of tar and feathers.⁶⁹

On November 15, 1904 J. T. Rucks, County Judge, issued a declaration for an election to be held in the Seller's Building in the town of Conroe on the 10th day of December, 1904, to determine whether or not the inhabitants of the town of Conroe wanted to be incorporated as a municipal corporation.⁷⁰ In December the election was held and the result was as follows:

. . . The returns of an election held on the 10th day of December 1904, to determine whether or not the inhabitants of the territory herein after mentioned and escribed, should be incorporated for municipal purposes in accordance with the general laws of the State of Texas in reference to towns and cities of more than one thousand inhabitants and examination thereof, and otherwise that said election was in all things held and conducted in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas, in reference thereto, and it further appearing from said returns that there were cast at said election in all 105 votes of which 87 were cast in favor of incorporation and 18 against giving a majority of 69 in favor of incorporation.

It is therefore rendered, adjudged, decreed and declared that the inhabitants of the hereinafter described and designated territory are incorporated as a municipal corporation and for municipal purposes the name of which said corporation shall be "The City of Conroe" . . .⁷¹

On January 25, 1905 an election was held to determine the election of the city officials. Those that were elected were Doctor

⁶⁹ Conroe Courier, October 22, 1897.

⁷⁰ Commissioners Minutes, Book 1902-1907, p. 384.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 349.

J. F. Collier, Mayor, R. C. Herbert, City Marshal, W. N. Urquhart, D. C. Tharp, Pete West, John Wahrenberger, and J. Llewellyn, Aldermen.⁷²

In June 1901 a fire swept through Conroe and practically all of the business portion of the town was destroyed. The town had hardly been rebuilt when another fire visited it on February 22, 1911. Sixty-five places of business were destroyed.⁷³ It has been stated by those who remember the fire that about four buildings were all that remained of the business section of town. They claimed that while it seemed quite a hardship then, it has proven to be one of the best things that ever happened to Conroe, for out of the ashes of the calamity the determined citizens built a new city of brick business houses, concrete walks, and a perfect water supply.⁷⁴

The people of Conroe had voted bonds in 1910 to erect a new school building for twenty thousand dollars. The contract had been let before the fire had destroyed the town, and on the morning after the fire the contractor of the new school got off the train at the depot and to his dismay looked across the smoldering ashes where Conroe had been. It is stated by one of the citizens that the contractor asked

⁷² Ibid., p. 350.

⁷³ Conroe Courier, June 26, 1913.

⁷⁴ Loc. cit.

if they still intended to build the school building. He was told by the citizens that they did; therefore a new brick school went up right along with the new business houses.⁷⁵

This building was the first brick school built in Conroe. It was named the J. O. H. Bennette Building in honor of J. O. H. Bennette who had served the school district as president of the Board of Trustees for seventeen years. During his long tenure he contributed thousands of dollars of his own money to help equip and finance the school system of Conroe.⁷⁶ This building stood at the site where the present day community center is now located.

In 1914 the Delta Land and Timber Company built a mill in Conroe which was the second largest lumber manufacturing plant in the South, and it was the most modern sawmill plant in Texas.⁷⁷ Another industry of Conroe along about this time was a box factory organized by O. L. Alexander. Conroe also had several cross-tie mills, and when these mills were operating in full blast and the cross-ties were piled high at the intersection of both railroads a

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⁷⁵ Personal interview of author with Hart Addison, Conroe, Texas, May 11, 1952.

⁷⁶ H. N. Anderson, "History of the Conroe High School" (unpublished paper, Hulon N. Anderson Collection), p. 2.

⁷⁷ Conroe Courier, June 30, 1933.

view from the air revealed in Conroe a huge cross.⁷⁸ These local mills kept Conroe alive until oil was discovered in 1931.

Conroe's industry stayed much the same from after the first World War up to December 13, 1931 when George Strake, a young oil operator from St. Louis, struck oil on the Theodore Slade survey about three and half miles southeast of the town.⁷⁹ A report of the discovery was written in the local paper as follows:

Oil excitement hit Conroe full force last week following movements at Strake well east of Conroe that have been interpreted by oil men as opening a new oil field, size and extent of which is to be determined.

Mr. Strake has drilled a hole about 5,100 feet deep on the Theodore Slade survey and has set casing, assembled tools and he says he is preparing to try the test by Saturday or Sunday.

Oil men from Houston swarmed into Conroe and they broadcast information that oil sand of at least 35 feet had been struck, that a gas well of several million feet capacity is practically sure and a new oil field is a strong probability.⁸⁰

Strake's well did more for Conroe than anything that had happened in the history of the town. Overnight it became a thriving metropolis of wealth, resembling more a busy scene on the Stock Exchange floor, than a village supported chiefly by the farming and

⁷⁸ Ibid., April 8, 1932

⁷⁹ Loc. cit.

⁸⁰ Loc. cit.

lumbering industries. Literally thousands of oil men came to Conroe from all parts of the country, all eager to get a slice of the rich find that Strake had made. In a short time the population of Conroe had grown from 2500 to a number estimated variously from five to fifteen thousand people.⁸¹ Every facility of the town was taxed far beyond capacity. Tent cities and mushroom additions were built over night. Hotels were crowded and hundreds were turned away to seek shelter in Houston and other places.

The streets of the town were thronged, parking space was not to be had in the down town area, and at times it was very difficult to walk along the sidewalks in the business section. "Lease hounds" by the hundreds plied their trade and did a lucrative business. Representatives of major oil companies came, saw, and bought an interest in Conroe's field. Farmers who did not, under normal circumstances, come to town over twice each month, were seen from early morning until sunset in town, shopping. Money had been placed in their hands by the leasers so suddenly and unexpectedly, that many of them were at a loss to know what to do with it. So many oil men were searching out old deeds, land tracts, titles, and surveys that the courthouse was swamped and people looking through records had to stand in line and wait their turn. Hoarding in Conroe

⁸¹ Loc. cit.

was a thing of the past, for all those who had anything to hoard took it and bought some royalty or a lease. Within a short time it was hard to find a tract of land within ten miles of the Strake discovery well that had not changed hands at least three times.⁸²

Conroe, unlike many of the other oil towns, did not let the taxable oil property and newly acquired wealth slip through her fingers. Immediately her civic-minded citizens took the opportunity to better their community. New business houses, schools, post office, courthouse, community center, and streets were built. Today Conroe boasts of having more paved streets than any other city of its size in the United States. It has a population of seven thousand three hundred thirteen, and unlike some of the other towns of the county, Conroe seems destined to be here to stay.⁸³

Security, Texas, was a sawmill town, and about all that remains today is the name. It is a community that has suffered untold difficulties. Prior to 1910 Security was called Bennette's in honor of J. O.H. Bennette who owned a sawmill along the Santa Fe railroad track. In 1910 the Security Land Company bought Bennette's holdings and the community was renamed Security in honor of this

⁸² Conroe Courier, loc. cit.

⁸³ Texas Almanac 1950, op. cit., p. 568.

company.⁸⁴

The Security Land Company desired to develop the vicinity, so the company sent land agents up North to sell to prospective immigrants, sight unseen, land in the new community. The agents, John Booth, W. E. Wrenn, and J. G. Hannagen traveled through the northern states and parts of Canada, selling the land to almost a hundred families. The agents had a patented sales talk, for they described the Security area as a Garden of Eden or a Hanging Garden of Babylon. The agents stated to the Northerners that about Security wild oats grew shoulder high, wild cabbage two feet across, and a profusion of luscious citrus fruits, grapes, and wild figs could be picked the year around. These agents produced pictures which had been cut from magazines and enlarged, to give evidence to their stories. Each prospective immigrant, upon purchasing land, was given a map and a picture of his tract.⁸⁵

The land agents also described to the immigrants what to expect of the old settlers at Security. The agents pictured them as being unfit neighbors and advised the immigrants not to associate with them. They stated that the men were so lazy that they sat on

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 84 Personal interview of author with Lawrence Mann, Security, Texas, June 12, 1952.

85 Personal interview of author with Dora Powers, Security, Texas, June 13, 1952.

their front porches most of the time; and, occasionally, went out and killed a deer or bear for meat. Thus the immigrants formed the opinion that the Texans were quire rugged people.⁸⁶

In the winter of 1912 the new comers arrived at Security on a long train with all their household belongings loaded in box cars. All the old settlers were gathered around the depot with the intention of welcoming their new friends to be, but to their surprise the crowd that got off the train seemed to be in a very haughty mood. With their maps and pictures of their land in hand, they scattered about the country side searching for their "Garden of Eden," but to their disappointment all they found was a low, grassy swamp in a button willow thicket.⁸⁷

One man had brought his dairy of fifty fine milk cows with the intention of grazing them on the wild oats, but he found no oats to graze. The woods had burned off the previous fall and his cows almost starved that winter for lack of green foliage. Dora Powers, a citizen of Security who came as one of the immigrants, stated that many thought of turning the train around and going back North that very first day.⁸⁸

It might have been well if they had departed immediately,

⁸⁶ Loc. cit.

⁸⁷ Mann, loc. cit.

⁸⁸ Powers, loc. cit.

because at the end of the next year and after suffering untold hardships, due to their lack of familiarity with the new environment, they pooled their money and caught the train back North.

The local citizens say that there was much contention between them and the "Yankees". Both sides were as insulting to each other as they could possibly be. The citizens laugh today in telling how they played a trick on the Yankees, by harvesting a part of their sweet potato crop early and causing the Northerners to lose all of theirs. The Yankees watched the settlers closely, because they did not know the farming methods of the area. Having followed the example of the local farmers by digging their potatoes, that winter the newcomers saw their crop destroyed by rotting.⁸⁹

Security at its zenith had one hotel, several business houses, a barber shop, ice cream parlor, post office, school, depot, and a population of several hundred people.⁹⁰ After the timber in the area was exhausted the sawmills shut down, and when state highway 105 was constructed through the county, it by-passed Security about two miles, causing most of the residents to move, and today only a very few of the citizens are left.

89 Loc. cit.

90 Loc. cit.

The community of Cut 'n Shoot, Texas is located in the northeastern-central part of Montgomery County. It had its usual beginning and acquired its peculiar name in July, 1912. Prior to 1912 the Missionary Baptist, Hardshell Baptist, and Methodist citizens of the Cut 'n Shoot community went together and built a combination church and school house. They erected the structure with the understanding that all denominations were privileged to preach there except the Mormons and Apostolics.⁹¹ This building was called the Community House, because it was the place where all the people of the community met for their church and social activities.

In July 1912, it happened that a Preacher Stamps of the Apostolic belief appeared in the community, and some of the local brethren invited him to hold a meeting at the Community House. Preacher Stamps seemed not to have been a very reputable person, since it was claimed by some of the citizens that he occasionally visited saloons and went dancing. When the people heard of Preacher Stamps' intention the community immediately paired off into two sides, those who thought the Community House should be used for all denominations, and those who thought it should be

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 Personal interview of author with Frank Plunk, Cut 'n Shoot, Texas, June 11, 1952.

closed to the Apostolics. The ones who thought the house should be open to all and who wanted to have Preacher Stamps hold his meeting were the families of George A. King, L. J. Powell, Joe Thompson, Malcome Foster, and W. A. Gandy, The ones who were opposed to the meeting were the families of R. B. Mann, R. C. Mann, and A. J. Walker. Each side declared their intentions; one claimed that it was going to have the meeting and the other claimed that the meeting would not be held.⁹²

On July 20, 1912, the day before the meeting was to take place R. B. Mann sent his son, Clark Mann, to the home of Archie Vick, who was one of the school trustees, to get the keys, so that the doors of the building could be locked. When the Apostolic element heard of this move they quickly informed the opposite side that they would break the doors down if necessary, to gain entrance to the building; whereupon R. B. Mann saddled his horse and rode through the community and notified the people to bring their guns to the Community House the next day. The opposite side heard of this gesture and Joe Thompson saddled up and rode through the community to tell the people who were sympathetic to-

⁹² Personal interview of author with Charles Atkinson, Cut 'n Shoot, Texas, June 12, 1952.

ward his side to do the same.⁹³

On the morning of July 21 the group who wanted to hear Preacher Stamp gathered at the Community House. They had come in their wagons and buggies and had brought their lunches with the intention of staying and having an all day preaching and a dinner on the ground. Under their wagon and buggy seats they had their guns and knives rolled up in quilts. On their arrival they found the door of the building locked, and soon after the anti-Apostolic group arrived with their weapons. This faction immediately inspected the door and declared that the lock had been jammed, whereupon all grabbed their guns and a hot argument pursued between the Kings and Manns. While the accusations of both sides flew back and forth, Jack King, an eight year old son of George King, became frightened at the disturbance and said, "I'm scared!" "I'm going to cut around the corner and shoot through the bushes in a minute!"⁹⁴

Thus the name of Cut 'n Shoot was coined.

Actually no cutting or shooting occurred that day. The arguments continued, however, and finally to avoid a shooting scrape the followers of King withdrew to some shade trees and

⁹³ Atkinson, loc. cit.

⁹⁴ Personal interview of author with Jack King, Conroe, Texas, June 12, 1952.

Preacher Stamps delivered his sermon standing on the ground while the citizens sat in their buggies and wagons. After that a brush arbor was built near Joe Thompson's house and Preacher Stamps held a protracted meeting there for the rest of the summer. Thompson's house was near the Mann's residence, and it has been stated that the preaching was loud enough so that the Manns could hear.⁹⁵

The next day after the threatened outbreak of violence at the meeting house, on July 22, both sides appeared in Conroe and indicted each other at the Justice of the Peace Court for disturbing the peace, assault, and the use of obscene language. Both R. C. Mann and George King were tried and fined.⁹⁶ The dispute was carried on between the Kings and Manns for over a year, each indicting the other on the smallest pretense.⁹⁷

In one of the trials Archie Vick was a witness, and upon being asked by Judge C. T. Darby where the fuss had taken place, Mr. Vick, who had not been at the scrape and not knowing what to call the community, since it did not have a name, replied, "I suppose you would call it the place where they had the cutting and

⁹⁵ Plunk, op. cit.

⁹⁶ Montgomery County Courthouse records, Justice of the Peace Criminal Docket 1912, p. 119.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 150.

shooting scrape."⁹⁸ This was the first indication that the new community might be called Cut 'n Shoot. At any rate, the name Cut 'n Shoot stuck to the community, partly through the jests of C. P. Thomas, who always enjoyed telling his friends about the incident that had occurred there.⁹⁹

New Caney, Texas was settled by Captain John Robertson in 1866. He built a grist mill, steam cotton gin, and a general store on the banks of Caney Creek. Robertson's settlement grew and soon he petitioned to the post office department for a post office and sent in the name of Caney for the place. There was already a Caney, Texas; therefore the post office department added the New to Caney and the community took the name of New Caney. Today, New Caney is a sawmill town of considerable size.¹⁰⁰

Fostoria, Texas, formerly known as Clinesburg, is a mill town named for the owner of the Foster Lumber Company. In the late 1800's the Arnold and Perkins Company built a sawmill and soon they were bought out by the Foster Lumber Company. Fostoria

⁹⁸ Personal interview of author with Archie Vick, Cut 'n Shoot, Texas, July 10, 1952.

⁹⁹ Atkinson, op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Vick, op. cit.

is still the site of one of the largest sawmills in the country.¹⁰¹

Splendora, Texas, in the 1880's was known by the name of Section Four. It acquired this name from the narrow gauge Houston, East and West Texas Railroad. The initials for this railroad were H. E. W. T. and the local citizens interpreted them to mean "Hell Either Way You Take It", and the frequency of stations along its track caused the line to be designated the "Cottontail Limited", because it was claimed that the train stopped behind every stump just like a rabbit. The name, Section Four, was changed to Splendora by C. C. Cox, when he petitioned the post office department for a post office.¹⁰²

Magnolia, Texas which is located in the western part of Montgomery County, had a hard time in getting a name that would stick. In the 1850's the town went under the name of Mink, since the particular site of the town was in the early days known as Mink's Prairie. In 1902 the Ft. Worth division of the International and Great Northern was built through the western end of the county and the name Mink was changed to Melton, in honor of Jim Melton, who at that time had rather large land holdings in the western part

101 Loc. cit.

102 Loc. cit.

of Montgomery County. Soon this name was found to be frequently confused with that of Milton, Texas, causing considerable difficulty in routing the mail. Officials of the railroad and the post office department discussed the matter with the residents of Melton, and a decision was reached to call the town Magnolia, due to the fact that a great many magnolia trees grew in that vicinity.¹⁰³

Other active towns and communities of Montgomery County today are Porters, Dobbin, Keenan, Wigginsville, Granger, and Pinehurst.

¹⁰³ Conroe Courier, April 8, 1932.