

Ghost Town on

BY CHESTER ROGERS
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THERE isn't much security in Security today.

That's the name of a place in Montgomery County that became a boom town, and faded into oblivion almost as fast.

On the old Highway 105, 14 miles east of Conroe, there is little left of a thriving town that for a few years boasted a population of hundreds.

Today Security lives only in the memory of a few natives still residing in the vicinity.

There isn't even a road sign on the new State Highway 105, which is two miles away. Traffic now travels the new highway, leaving the old ghost town in its quiet peace.

Only one frame building is left to mark the site.

All evidence of a half mile long boardwalk, with the post office at one end and a dance hall at the other, has long since been absorbed into the thick vegetation of a wild woods and prairie land.

Gone by the wayside, too, is the once busy railroad station, where rafters rang with the happiness and business of a population at work.

Faded into the past, too, is



GARLAND McSHANE

the sawmill that spawned the community in the first place.

Security is still a switch stop on the Santa Fe railroad. And there is a newly painted sign to tell trainmen the identification of the switch. Only one side track is left there on the main line. The other switch track, used at the height of the boom town, was taken up years ago.

Missing, too, from the scene is a two-story hotel, a saloon, cotton gin, and ice cream parlor.

A one-story frame building is all that remains in the once thriving city.

Garland Bunyon McShane, a native rancher who now lives down the road, is one of the few who remembers. McShane and his brother peddled watermelons to the boardwalk customers when the boom town was at its peak about 1912.

McShane and his brother pulled the melons to market with a horse drawn sled. They spent the money in nearby Cleveland or Conroe.

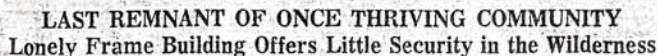
McShane remembers a gambling hall in one of the buildings. The operator had a spinning wheel where the sporting gentlemen made their wagers on the number where the clicking came to rest on the wheel.

But that's all gone now. Unfriendly north winds can be



SECURITY

NEWLY PAINTED SIGN
Identifies Santa Fe Switch, Not the Former Town



LAST REMNANT OF ONCE THRIVING COMMUNITY
Lonely Frame Building Offers Little Security in the Wilderness

heard whispering among the pine trees, flourishing now where the town once thrived. An old sycamore tree that shaded the townspeople when they went to the post office in their buggies and wagons still stands.

At its heyday Security had street lights, smelly, coal-oil burning lanterns, elevated on stout saplings. The street light tender was Frank Jahos, who will be 83 on March 6.

Jahos was the town barber during the day and at the twilight went down the street putting a torch to the street lamps.

Today Jahos raises hogs, nice big ones, too. He has several at his nearby farm. In spite of his age, Jahos has only a hearing impairment to remind him of the decades he has lived in the woods near the ghost town.

Prior to 1910, the town that was to become Security, was named Bennette, since J.O.H. Bennette owned the big saw mill in operation there. In 1910 Security Land Co. bought Bennette's holdings and changed the name.

The new owners also decided to develop the land into a thriving metropolis and sent land agents, three of them, as far as Chicago rounding up homesteaders. They signed up land buyers in Nebraska, Iowa and other Northern states.

Ambitious homesteaders heard stories of wild cabbages two feet across the top, wild oats shoulder high, trees full of wild fruit, free for the picking, grapes, figs, apples and oranges.

Unresponsive women were told of opportunities to earn \$10 a day just peeling big, delicious apples.

The agents showed the homesteaders pictures from magazines and drew them maps of the "lush" areas.

The agents also warned the homesteaders not to associate with the natives, said they were unfit neighbors, sitting on their porches most of the time, only stepping out in the woods now and then for the deer and bear meat supply.

In the winter of 1912, a long trainload of homesteaders ar-



Photos by Chester Rogers, Chronicle Correspondent

FRANK JAHOS RAISES HOGS NEAR GHOST TOWN He Was the Town Barber, As Well As Street Lamp Lighter

rived at Security amid great fanfare. Household goods were loaded in freight cars.

All of the old settlers gathered at the depot to welcome their new friends, but to them the "yankees" seemed a little haughty. The newcomers, armed with their bright magazine pictures and maps, got off the train and started looking for their promised Garden of Eden but all they could find was a button willow thicket.

One of the settlers brought a herd of 50 fine milk cows, planned to have them feed on the shoulder high wild oats. But a grass fire had roared through the wooded lands the year before and there wasn't even enough grass for them to feed on, let alone visioned wild oats.

So dismayed were many of

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

NEWS-LIFE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 1973 N.W

the homesteaders they wanted to turn the train around and head back home. It might have been well if they had. After a year of hardships and sufferings from the weather most of the homesteaders did catch a train back home the next year.

Many families were broken up at the departure mother and daughters going back home, while father decided to fully test the countryside they challenged.

But even the hardest work-

ers drifted away when the timber was all cut and the saw mill itself closed down.

In the 1920s Security began to fall prey to the ever pressing forests surrounding it.

Trees, brush, brambles and grass today have wiped out nearly all traces of Security, once a thriving community, but today only a faint ghost of its once thriving business activity.

Come to think of it, maybe there never was much security in Security!