

Ghost Town Tales

Cincinnati, Texas was once a large active town. It had churches, restaurants, a pharmacy, a bowling alley, a college, several doctor's offices, and stores that sold furniture, saddles, and other items people used in the late 1800s. It had a post office and a cotton gin. The town was located on the Trinity River, and steamboats came everyday bringing people and trade goods to Cincinnati. Everyone believed that this important town would grow and last forever.

But serious problems developed for the town. A disease called yellow fever took the lives of many of the people who lived in Cincinnati. Some of the leading citizens of the town died, and there were not enough people left to replace them. Mosquitoes caused the illness, and the people of the town could not control the insects. The most serious problem for Cincinnati was that the railroads replaced the steamboats for transportation. A railroad did not come close enough to the town for the people to send their goods away to sell in other places. People moved to other towns, and by 1900, Cincinnati was a ghost town.

New Birmingham, Texas became famous for the area's great iron deposits and its natural mineral water spas. The Southern hotel was so grand that it drew visitors from all over word. Famous people such as President Grover Cleveland stayed there. Wealthy people held their society balls and banquets there every week. The people who mined the iron ore near New Birmingham became rich. A railroad ran through the town to carry the iron and products made from iron all over the United States. New Birmingham became one of the first towns in Texas to have an electric light system.

But hard times came for the people of New Birmingham. During an economic problem called the Panic of 1893, many people lost their wealth and were unable to buy the iron company's products. A Texas law kept the company's owners from borrowing money in a foreign country. They could not borrow money from Englishmen who wanted to loan them money. An explosion burned up one of the company's power plants, and the owners had no money to rebuild it. Many people left town because they could no longer work at the mining company, and the company went out of business. In 1893, the town died.

Aldridge, Texas was a sawmill settlement located deep into the Angelina National Forest. About 300 families lived there. The men worked in the sawmill, cut trees from the forest, and transported the trees from the forest to the mill. A nearby railroad hauled the lumber they made to markets all over the United States. The trees in the forest were large and were good quality for making wooden products. Like other thriving towns, Aldridge had churches, schools, and shops.

Then a fire swept through the town destroying the sawmill and many of the homes. The owners decided not to rebuild because most of the nearby trees were gone by then. The United States Forest Service bought the land to grow more trees and replace the ones that various lumber companies had cut down. But no one replaced the town of Aldridge.

Plenitude, Texas was an active town with a large factory that made gigantic equipment for cotton gins, gristmills and sawmills. In 1850, Plenitude had a post office, a Baptist academy, a newspaper, and several stores. People had secure jobs, and the business of the town progressed very well.

Then the Civil War broke out, and Texas went with the Confederate States of America. That government wanted the factory to make guns for the war. The Confederates lost the war, and the factory lost a lot of money. To try to keep the factory going, the owner moved it to a town that had a railroad running through it. Plenitude faded away.

Burning Bush, Texas had an unusual beginning. A group of people belonging to the Free Methodist Church started the town when they separated from their old church in Illinois. The people of Burning Bush did not agree with the way the Illinois church conducted their services. To make a living, the citizens grew vegetables and kept pecan and fruit orchards. They also built a cannery to process fruits from the orchards. But even with these businesses, the people did not make enough money to support their families, so some of them worked in other towns and sent their earnings back to Burning Bush.

However, these contributions were not enough, so the people of Burning Bush charged the groceries they purchased at a nearby store. They could not pay their debt, and the owner of the store sued them for the money they owed him. The storeowner won, but the people of Burning Bush still could not pay. They had to leave their town and move to other places. Only a few pecan trees remain.