Ghost Towns of Southern Illinois

JACKSON COUNTY

Cora (Cora City)

The St. Louis and Southeastern Railroad built a station at a point where the railroad crossed Degognia Creek and plans for Cora City were laid out in 1902. At one time the town had two general stores, an ice cream parlor, a drug store, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a barbershop, a hardware store, a doctor's office and a boarding house. A Quonset-type building showed movies on weekends and was a dancehall for other events. During the week the building served as an auto repair shop. A Methodist Church and a school were built before the town was formally laid out. The original school burned in 1901 but was rebuilt. As of the mid-1970s the church was still in use as a Presbyterian Church. The post office was established in 1903 and closed in 1955. A large grain elevator burned in 1917 and was never rebuilt. Today, you can still see the church and school buildings as well as remnants of the Quonset building. A few families still live in the community. The train depot was moved to Jones Ridge and, reportedly, still stands east of the grain elevator.

Directions: Drive west of the Rt. 149 and Rt. 3 intersection approximately 12 miles. As you approach the Jackson-Randolph county line there is an old levee gateway that Rt. 3 passes through. As you approach the levee you will see a sign for Cora. Take the road up onto the levee and over the railroad tracks to see Cora.

Crain

The Crain family settled in Jackson County in the 1840s. Two members of the family, including a teen-age daughter died in the mid 1840s and were buried on a hillside behind the family home. This area is now the site of the Crain cemetery. A store opened in 1893 and a post office operated from 1894 until 1907. A Baptist church was built in 1912 west of and adjacent to the cemetery and is still active. A school building that was located on the southeast corner of the village still stands and is visible in a cornfield about 100 yards south of Rt. 3.

Directions: Drive west of the junction of Rt. 149 and Rt. 3 approximately 3 miles. As you approach Crain you will see a sign for the Crain Baptist Church (which is to the north of Rt. 3) and you will also see the schoolhouse in a cornfield on the south side of Rt. 3.

Etherton

South of Murphysboro on Rt. 149 there is a road sign for Etherton. Rt. 127 was built through the middle of the village. Etherton was established along the route of the St. Louis and Cairo narrow gauge railroad. At one time the town had a depot, general store, church, post office, grist mill, cream station, apple house and stock pens. The post office was established in 1892 and closed in 1923. With the highway came better access to shopping in Carbondale and Murphysboro and the town of Etherton declined. Today, only the apple house remains [although we believe it is on the west side of Rt. 127, we cannot confirm that]. The town cemetery lies at the top of the hill to the east of what was the town. The cemetery can be accessed via the road that goes to Kite Hill Winery and to the McNitt Greenhouse (signage is on Rt. 127). The cemetery lies just beyond McNitt's on the right side of the road at the big dog-leg turn. It is an old picturesque cemetery.

Directions: Drive south of Murphysboro on Rt. 127 a few miles and watch for signs. Originally the community spanned both sides of Rt. 127.

Fountain Bluff

The first homestead in the area that became Fountain Bluff was established in 1815 by Matthew Duncan. The town was located at the site where a spring flows through the bluffs. The Illinois Central Railroad laid tracks at the base of the bluffs and established a signal station. A post office was established under the name "Brownville" in 1868 but closed early in 1869. A new post office opened later in 1869 under the name "Fountain Bluff" and operated until 1908. The town boasted a dance hall and a swimming pool that was created at the base of the springs where the water flowed in one end and out the other. While no buildings remain today, the spring still flows through the bluffs and the grade for the railroad tracks is apparent.

Directions:
Take Rt. 3 to the turnoff for Gorham (north side of Fountain Bluff) and drive west to the town. At 2nd Street, turn left (south). Follow the road as it curves along the bluffs. Keep an eye out for the springs along the bluff. There is a pull-in that is prominent. Note: There are some hiking trails along the bluff and reportedly some ancient Indian pictographs and petroglyphs as well.

Sandridge

Sandridge is the oldest existing hamlet in Jackson County. The first white settler in Jackson County was Captain William Boone, the brother of Daniel Boone. He settled in what later became Sandridge in 1809. By the early 1820s the area had developed into a small settlement and boasted a cotton gin, a general store and a tavern. A post office opened in 1874 but closed in 1876. The post office reopened in 1891 and operated until 1917. The Missouri Pacific Railroad laid tracks through the town in 1905 which brought more prosperity and commercial growth to the town. One of the major industries was logging. Eventually the area became "logged out" and the sawmill closed. When a slump in the railroad business hit, the Missouri Pacific relocated their station and depot and tore down most of their buildings. Businesses closed one by one. Today, the community has a population of approximately 45. The Baptist Church, built in 1890, is the oldest remaining structure in the town and is a private residence today. While Captain William Boone died and was buried in an unmarked grave near Grand Tower, the Boone family cemetery is located on the northeast slope of Fountain Bluff. A steep trail that begins approximately 100 yards south of the turnoff to Gorham leads to the cemetery. The Boone family members are buried together in a central area with a large obelisk headstone for William Boone's son, as the centerpiece of the family plot.

Directions:
Sandridge is located near the Big Muddy River southeast of the intersection of Rts. 149 and 3. There is signage on both Rt. 149 and Rt. 3 identifying the turnoffs to Sandridge.

Bostick Settlement

While all that remains of the Bostick Settlement is a cemetery, the community has an interesting history. The Bostick settlement was established in the late 1860s by three former African-American slaves who became friends after joining the Union Navy on Emancipation Day, January 1, 1863. The three former slaves, Dudley Bostick, Hardin Bostick and Isaac Morgan met while serving on Marine Brigade gunboats that patrolled the Mississippi River. After the war, the three friends and other African-American war veterans settled in this area. In time the community had its own church and school. Eventually descendants of the families relocated to other areas and the settlement ceased to exist.

Directions: Take Rt. 127 south of Murphysboro to Orchard Hill Rd. Turn right on Orchard Hill Road and follow it through several turns and convergences. Eventually you will see the Bostick Cemetery on the south side of the road. There is space to park if you wish to walk around the cemetery. Several of the old headstones have the notation "G.A.R" for Grand Army of the Republic.

Other "ghost towns" in Jackson County that you might want to check out are Glenn, Raddle, Jones Ridge and Neunert. Ask for directions, look for signs along Rt. 3 west of the intersection with Rt. 149, or do a little checking on the internet for exact locations.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY

Bainbridge

A trail that George Rogers Clark and his men followed in the 1700's between Fort Massac and Fort Kaskaskia intersected with a second trail that connected Frankfort and Jonesboro. These "trails" were created originally from paths created by bison in the area. This intersection was also the site of an Indian village until about 1813. The first white settler built a home at this location in 1818—others followed and by 1819 a store opened. In 1837, Allen Bainbridge opened a post office in his store and became the first postmaster. In 1839 the Frankfort-Jonesboro trail became a Post Road and people traveled through the town daily on the stage route. In 1837 Franklin County was divided into a north section (Franklin County) and a southern section which became Williamson County. Bainbridge was made the county seat for Williamson County. However, in 1839 the county seat was relocated to the newly laid out village of Marion. The first school opened in 1840. In 1871 the Carbondale and Shawneetown Railroad was built through the town of Bainbridge. Over time, as community leaders and promoters died, the community began to decline. All that remains today of Bainbridge are some headstones in a cemetery just south and west of the spot where the railroad tracks cross Bainbridge Road. At one time, more headstones filled the cemetery, but over time they broke and were removed.

Directions: Take Rt. 13 west from Marion to Bainbridge Road and turn south. Heartland Regional Medical Center is on Bainbridge Road. When you cross the railroad tracks you are in the immediate vicinity of Bainbridge.

Blairsville

The site of Blairsville, along the banks of the Big Muddy River, was originally an Indian encampment. It is believed that Spanish explorers visited the site in the late 1600s and early 1700s. The location was also the site of a fur trading post. In 1823, the first permanent setter, Steven Blair, settled in the area and established a grist mill. The remains of the foundation of that grist mill are still there. The community grew and officially took the name of Blairsville in 1850 with the opening of a post office. When the railroads bypassed Blairsville the village started to decline. Then, in 1908, the Madison Coal Company sank #12 mine south of the town and land values soared. Blairsville entered a new period of growth that extended until the mine closed under the weight of the Great Depression in 1932. Again, the village went into decline. The current state highway bridge that traverses the Big Muddy River was built in 1938 at the site of the town. What was the original Southern Methodist Church still sits along the state highway by the bridge. Several older buildings, some formerly businesses, still sit on the one lane road that was the original state highway route.

Directions: Blairsville is not a complete ghost town. Several houses still occupy the site. Blairsville is located on the state highway that runs between Cambria and Hurst, just south of and along the banks of the Big Muddy River.

Prosperity

Prosperity was a mining community located approximately ½ mile south of Johnston City. Although the community never had any businesses there were several mines within a 4-5 mile walking distance of the hamlet. The community grew around a lean-to depot at the spot where the Illinois Central Railroad crossed Herrin St. Because much of the area was low-land some of the mines flooded and eventually closed. With the closing of the mines, the community disappeared. One noteworthy building, perhaps a former school (now a residence), is located on Prosperity Road about a ¼ mile north of Stotlar Rd.

Directions: Prosperity Road can be accessed by turning west off of Rt 37 (about 4-5 miles north of Marion) onto Stotlar Rd., and then turning north on Prosperity Rd, the last road before the I-57 overpass bridge. It can also be accessed from Johnston City. It is the first street east of the I-57 interchange.

UNION COUNTY

ALDRIDGE

When the Illinois Railroad built a line from Murphysboro to Thebes, The town of Aldridge was born. Located on the south bank of the Big Muddy River where the railroad crossed the river, the station was named for T.L. Aldridge, who owned the land. Mr. Aldridge set up a large sawmill to harvest his timber. Mr. Aldridge built twenty-five houses around the mill that housed a hundred people. Mr. Aldridge also built and operated a general store near his home. The telephone exchange was in the Aldridge home and a maid was the operator. There were stock pens and loading shoots beside the railroad siding. Aldridge shipped cattle by the carload on a freight train that ran through town twice a day. Also, a daily passenger train ran between Murphysboro and Thebes. Conductor Billy Bryan was in charge of the train—there are many Southern Illinois legends about him. Within twenty-five years the timber was depleted and the mill closed. The Great Depression settled on Southern Illinois. Work was scarce and wages were low. Then the most devastating blow fell upon the village. Mr. T.L. Aldridge was crossing the railroad--his mind preoccupied. He did not see an oncoming train and was struck and killed. His two sons, James and Thomas inherited the river bottom empire. As the depression worsened the railroad discontinued the trains. When state Highway 3 was built through Aldridge it displaced some of the houses. People left the village. The remaining houses fell into ruin and were torn down. Today one can drive down Highway 3, cross the Big Muddy River Bridge and enter the area that was once the thriving community of Aldridge. Nothing remains today of the town.

Directions: From the junction of Rt. 149 and Rt. 3, drive south on Rt. 3 until you cross the Big Muddy River (approximately 13-14 miles).

BALCOM

Four Miles south of Anna, on the Illinois Central Railroad, eleven lots were plotted and recorded June 25, 1886. Here Elmer Adams built a two-story frame business building. He kept a general store on the lower floor and lived upstairs. Garden vegetables were hauled over four miles of rough road to Anna and shipped to St. Louis and Chicago by rail, but hauling produce over rocky roads damaged the crops. Eventually a train station was set up at Balcom, the name given the village. A warehouse was soon built and cucumbers, melons, squash, green beans, tomatoes and sweet potatoes were shipped from Balcom to city markets. In the 1920s Balcom was the number one fruit and vegetable shipping point in the state of Illinois, outstripping Anna, Cobden and Makanda. Elmer Adams opened a post office in his store on February 21, 1888. The post office closed in the 1930s. Prices of farm produce dropped in 1928. The depression hit the farms a year before it hit the stock market. Baskets of fruit did not bring in enough money to pay for the shipping. Banks refused to loan money to farmers because farm markets were risks. Because farmers could not pay their help they turned to raising corn that they could tend without help. Shipping was drastically reduced. Eventually, the railroad tore down the depot and freight house. Because the new state highway made shopping in Anna and Dongola more convenient, the stores in Balcom closed. As of the mid-1970s there were eleven houses and a mobile home in Balcom. The concrete foundation of the old sweet potato house and factory still remained. The railroad still had a telephone booth with the name Balcom painted across it.

Directions: Drive south from Anna on US 51, and watch for Balcom Road on the right, which follows the railroad track for a mile or so to the location of the town.

LA RUE

If you drive 1 mile south of the Big Muddy River Bridge on Illinois Rt. 3 and then drive ½ mile east on Pine Hills Road (or possibly La Rue Rd) you will arrive at a point where the road crosses the Missouri Pacific Railroad. In 1900 this was the site of the village of La Rue which took its name from the La Rue Swamp, a wild wasteland full of water fowl, rare birds, rattlesnakes and various other critters. The village, which consisted of twelve houses, was built around a large sawmill and a general store. All in all, this was a typical sawmill camp—a very rough town. At its peak the population of La Rue was about 100. Mr. Al Trigg was the sole owner of the mill, store and town. Arthur

Vinson was head sawyer in charge of the mill. Over a million feet of lumber was sawn and shipped to markets. The vast wild woodland that was cleared was then used for farming. The village reached its height of prosperity between 1905 and 1910. Just east of the village was the slough and lake that comprised the La Rue Swamp. By 1912 the timber was depleted and Mr. Trigg dismantled the mill. Most of the people moved away, some to nearby Aldridge. A few residents bought the houses they had rented; other houses were torn down. Residents who bought their houses added weather-board and painted them. Today all the original houses are gone *except* the home of Arthur Vinson, the son of the head sawyer. The house, which is empty, rests on the north side of the road, east of the tracks. La Rue is but a ghost of the once thriving lumber towns in the virgin forest of the Mississippi River Bottoms.

Directions: Pine Hills Rd (or LaRue Rd) is located on Rt 3, 15 miles south of the junction of Rt. 149 and Rt. 3.
Note: This area has been visited on SIPS outings in the past. Further east of the railroad tracks is the south entry to the infamous "Snake Road." This road is closed semiannually for the snake migration between the bluffs and the swamp. Note: Even when it is open this road is a challenge—it is narrow and often has water over the road in places.

KAOLIN

The Illinois Central Railroad was completed to Cairo in 1856. The station for Jonesboro was named Anna. About three miles north and a mile west of Anna was a fine deposit of white kaolin clay. In the early years of Anna the Kirkpatrick Brothers came to the new village and set up a pottery business. Churns, jars, jugs, milk crocks, wash basins and pitchers were shipped over the railroad. Many of these ceramic articles were pieces of art and are highly valued today. The Kirkpatricks were masters of their trade. A better grade of kaolin clay was found in a hillside about five miles west of Anna, just west of Clear Creek. The clay was of such superior grade that it soon became in demand by potters throughout the entire nation. The clay was hauled to Anna by oxcart and loaded on the train there. This clay pit was a mile and a half from Mountain Glen. A track was laid from Mountain Glen to the pit and a drying shed was erected. About a hundred houses were built at the kaolin pit. Stores were erected. Kaolin Post Office was opened January l6, 1900. Kaolin was a mining town and when the mining of clay declined the village declined with it. Kaolin clay was a strategic material during World War I. When the United States entered the war the village and industry experienced a revival. Several hundred men worked in the pit and the population of the village grew to over a thousand by the close of the war in late 1918. After the war, the demand for kaolin clay dropped and the price dropped along with the demand. It soon became unprofitable to mine. The miners were laid off and they moved away. The post Office was closed and the railroad was taken up. The drying sheds rotted down. The open pit covering over an acre and over a hundred feet deep was all that remained. Silt and gravel have washed down from the hills. Legend says that the huge tractors and the steam cranes are still in the pit covered with gravel and water. It is now a clear lake attracting a few fishermen.

Directions: From Old Rt. 51, take Kaolin Rd. west a few miles to Kaolin Pit Ln. on the left. Take Kaolin Pit Ln. on the left to the old gravel pit. Or, from Route 127 heading south, look for Mountain Glen Road on the left. Follow to Kaolin Rd, on the right, followed by Kaolin Pit Lane on the right.

MILLCREEK

On January 28, 1840 a post office opened on the west bank of Mill Creek in the northeastern part of Alexander County and was named for the stream. The Mill Creek Post Office was moved east of the stream into Pulaski County in l850. A third move was made in 1855 into John Brown's general store in the southeast quarter of section 3l, township l3, range l west. In 1894 the town name was changed to Millcreek. The move into Union County was a good one for the St. Louis and Cairo Narrow Gauge Railroad built tracks along Mill Creek in 1876 that ran right by the post office. Also in 1876 Edward Moury built a grist mill and John Brown became station agent. John Brown also bought timber for a wagon factory. John Morris opened a drugstore and Thomas Douglas had a blacksmith shop. Millcreek was a busy trading and shipping point. Today the town has a few houses some of which are in decay. The old school lies abandoned and the First Lutheran Church stands in ruins. The Baptist Church once

located in Millcreek still exists in a building just south of town on State Highway 127. As of the mid-1970s there were two store buildings that remained, empty and deteriorating. The 1960 population was l02.

Directions: Millcreek lies on Route 127, just at the southern edge of Union County.

MOUNT PLEASANT

Thomas Boswell built a general store on his farm and opened the Mount Pleasant Post Office in his store on September 5, 1825. The village of Mount Pleasant was plotted around the store in 1858. A man named Black opened a second store which he sold to Misters Levenworth and Little in 1877. Black's store was in a two story brick building with the store on the ground floor and the Mount Pleasant School on the second floor.   The town cemetery was laid out in 1854 on land belonging to George Hilman. Mr. Hilman had buried a son and a daughter there in 1836. The cemetery was laid out around the Hilman family plot. At the height of its prosperity Mount Pleasant had a hotel, three stores, a grist mill, a blacksmith shop and a telephone exchange. The town even had its own resident physician. Today the brick building that was John Stokes' store still stands (unconfirmed). Bill Casey and Rodney Goddard opened a restaurant in the building in 1970 where they also sold some groceries.   There are several houses scattered around the former village and down the nearby road (also unconfirmed). The village has not completely vanished but it is only a ghost of the once busy trading center.

Directions: From I-57, take exit 30 onto Route 146. Drive east about 4 miles to Mt. Pleasant Rd (or Old Mt. Pleasant Rd.), on the left. The town of Mount Pleasant is roughly at the intersection of Mt. Pleasant Rd. and Woods Rd.

JOHNSON COUNTY

Bloomfield

The first post office was established in Bloomfield in 1819 in a general store operated by S. J. Chapman. Bloomfield was on the Lusk Creek (Golconda) to Jonesboro Trail and was a stagecoach stop. In 1824 Daniel Simpson built and operated a tavern that had a reputation as a good place to stay overnight (in the day most people felt safer sleeping in the woods than in a tavern). The area grew with no platting. The railroad came through in the early 1870's and the town was finally platted in 1872. With the coming of the railroad, the town grew quickly. As railroading declined so did the town. The post office closed for its final time in 1927. Today a few houses are nestled in a glen just east of Rt. 45. One of the original stores was put on skids and relocated by mules to a location on the highway. The building was eventually torn down and rebuilt as Vinson's grocery. We believe that the building still exists today as a convenience store.

Directions: Bloomfield lies north of Vienna just off Rt. 45. Houses remaining are just east of Rt. 45.

Cedar Bluff

The Cedar Bluff post office was opened in David Mead's home in 1856. The Mead home was on the old Marion to Metropolis Mail Road. During the Civil War people congregated on David Mead's front lawn to wait for the mail wagon to arrive with news of their loved ones. During the summer the mail wagon arrived once or twice a week but in the winter mail deliveries occurred only about once a month because of the condition of the roads. The post office closed in 1872 but was reopened in the home of Frank Royster in 1887 near Tunnel Hill. The post office closed for good in 1905. In 1976 descendents of David Mead and Frank Royster still lived in the original homes which were over 100 years old at the time. David Mead died and was buried in the Carson Cemetery.

Directions: Cedar Bluff is located near Tunnel Hill. Turn west at the old hotel in Tunnel Hill (on the west side of the highway across from the bike trail). Cedar Bluff is near the Carson Cemetery and the old Coal Belt Council Boy Scouts of America Camp (no longer in operation).

Elvira

Elvira was the first county seat of Johnson County. The first settler arrived in 1806. The area was chosen as the county seat by the Illinois Territorial Legislature in 1813. A log courthouse was erected that same year. In 1814 a box courthouse was built followed shortly after by a jail. At the time, Johnson County consisted of what is now Alexander, Pulaski, Massac and Johnson Counties as well as parts of Williamson, Jackson, Hardin, Polk and Saline counties. It is believed that the town got its name from the name of the wife of the Illinois Territorial Governor at the time, Elvira Edwards. Elvira reached the height of its prosperity in 1817 and 1818 when it boasted of 2 general stores, a blacksmith shop, doctors' offices, lawyers' offices and the public buildings. There were approximately 25 houses with over 100 residents. In 1818 Union County was carved out of Johnson County and the geographical center of the new county was in the wilderness. A new courthouse was built in the geographical center of the new county and the town of Vienna was platted around the courthouse. Lawyers, doctors and the commerce moved to Vienna and the town of Elvira went into decline. In 1823 the courthouse was torn down and replaced with a barn. The post office closed in 1904 and the last town physician quit practice in 1908. Nothing remains today of this important pioneer town but an empty field. A sign by the highway, erected by the Boy Scouts, identifies the location of the town.

Directions: Elvira is located about 5 miles east of Lick Creek between Lick Creek and Buncombe. The easiest access to this remote site is via a road that exits Buncombe to the west. Watch closely for the sign on the north side of the road a few miles to the west of Buncombe.

Forman

The first house built in the area was constructed of cypress logs in 1818. The town developed as a result of good available timber and trapping (furs). The original name of the community was Collensburg, but when residents applied for a post office, the name was denied because of possible confusion with the town of Collinsville in St. Claire County. Residents then applied for the name Ridenhower—the name of the gentleman who owned the local store. The name was approved and the post office was established in 1895 in his store. The name was not changed to Forman until 1911. Forman became a real center of commerce when the CB and Q Railroad built tracks between Herrin and Metropolis through Forman. The Penn Central Railroad built tracks through the town that intersected those of the CB & Q Railroad. As a result passengers waiting to change trains often stayed overnight in the hotel. The town hit its zenith in 1918. It boasted of 3 general stores, a hotel with a restaurant, a freight house, a depot, 2 section houses, a church and a school. There were 30 houses in the village. Ironically, 1918 was also the beginning of the decline of the community. Governor Len Small signed a $60 million highway bill that lead to the creation of Rt. 45 several miles from the village. With the introduction of the automobile, the use of passenger trains declined. Eventually no passenger lines ran through Forman— the railroads closed the stations and the town went into decline. The post office closed for good in 1930. Today, the brick church building (at one time it was the town school) still stands at the turnoff to Heron Pond. The old hotel is still standing but is now a residence.

Directions: Drive south of Vienna on Rt. 45 about 5 miles to the turnoff to Heron Pond (west). Take that road toward Belknap and watch for the signs to Heron Pond. Forman was located where the railroad crosses this road. The Forman Community Church is just east of the railroad. (NOTE: it is fairly photogenic).

Reynoldsburg

At the location where the Massac to Kaskaskia Trail crossed the Shawnee, Jonesboro, Grand Tower Trail the village of Reynoldsburg developed. These old trails were originally buffalo paths. It was on the Massac to Kaskaskia Trail that George Rogers Clark marched with his group to "conquer the west." The trail later became known as the George Rogers Clark Trail. This intersection was also the location where traders bargained with hunters and Indians for fur and goods. Eventually the paths were widened to accommodate oxcarts and wagons. The area was known as Crossroads. Wesley Reynolds owned a farm near Crossroads as well as a store. In 1851 the Crossroads Post Office was opened in Reynolds' store. The town was laid out in 1859 and the name was changed to Reynoldsburg in 1860. The post office operated until 1879. In the early 1860s there was a school, a Methodist Church, a Masonic Lodge, 2 taverns, a grist mill and 2 general stores. The town catered to the stagecoaches and wagon trains that came through the community. During the Civil War many area men volunteered for the northern army. The cemetery has the

graves of 7 civil war soldiers. In 1874 the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad missed Reynoldsburg and in 1900 the Illinois Central also missed the town. Residents relocated to the rail centers and the town died. All that remains of Reynoldsburg are a few old houses, the cemetery and the church.

Directions: Turn south off of Rt. 45 between Tunnel Hill and New Burnside at the radio tower onto County Road 1400 east.

SALINE COUNTY

Harco

Harco was an original mining town that dates to the sinking of the mine in 1916. The town itself was plotted in 1919. In 1950 the Peabody Coal Company discontinued mining. Houses owned by the company were either sold to the renters or were torn down or burned, In its heyday the town boasted 2 grocery stores, a meat market, a 2-chair barbershop, a movie theater, a dry goods store, a shoe store, a poolroom, 2 drug stores, a 40-room hotel, and a doctor's office. With the closing of the mine residents left in droves. In 1960 the census of the town was 7. Some of the original commercial buildings still stand (empty). More recently, another mine (Sahara) both opened and closed in the Harco area. Currently, American Coal is operating yet another mine in and around the original town.

Directions: Harco lies approximately 4 miles North of Illinois 13 on the Harco Road, just east of the Saline/Williamson County Line.

Hamburg (Longbranch, Long Branch)

Durham's store was built on the old mail road in the early 1850's. A post office was established in 1854 with the town name of Longbranch (named for a stream that flowed about 1½ miles north. In 1877 the village was plotted around the church and the town name was changed to Hamburg. However, because there was another post office in Illinois with the same town name of Hamburg the post office was renamed Long Branch. The town of 130 boasted 2 stores, a wagon shop, a blacksmith, a grist mill and a school. Eventually, a new school was built to accommodate the growing population. The Long Branch Southern Baptist Church (organized in 1860) is still active on the north Side of Hamburg Road in the original area of the town of Hamburg. Businesses involved with horse-drawn farming declined with the advent of gasoline powered machinery.   The post office closed in 1907 and the depression further decimated the town. The last of the old stores closed in 1972. In 1976 the town had only 12 residents. The Weir Feed store may still be in business today. American Coal is mining in the area near Hamburg/Long Branch. Only traces of the original town and several old cemeteries remain in the area.

Directions: Hamburg lies approximately 3.5 miles north of Galatia on Galatia Road, then east (right) onto Hamburg Road approximately 1 mile.

Texas City

There are different stories about the founding of Texas City, but one that seems to have the most credibility is that a wagon train headed from Indiana to Texas camped in this area of Illinois and found the area rich in soil and filled with game. Some of the members of the wagon train decided to settle there and named the town Texas City. In the summer of 1859 surveyors did a reconnaissance of the area for the Southern Illinois Railroad. Speculators, thinking that the coming of the railroad was imminent, bought land and built a town in that area. The railroad never came to fruition, but in 1872 the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad laid tracks a mile to the east of the town and named it Texas Station. To avoid the problems with hauling goods to the new station, most residents of the original town relocated near the station and renamed the town Texas City. With the decline in railroading the town which thrived off of the railroad went into a period of slow decline. What was the original Texas City is located on farmland 1 mile west of the current "town." While there are no remains left of the first town site, there are some older structures in various stages of ruin and disrepair in the second and current town site (close to Rt. 45).

Directions: Texas City is approximately 5 miles north of Eldorado on US Highway 45. There is a sign for the turnoff into Texas City to the west.

Ledford (Two Patch)

Ledford (Two Patch) was built near railroad tracks in and around the old Ogara mine. The Southern Illinois Electric Railroad went through Ledford. A post office opened in 1880 but closed in 1882. Ledford was a typical mining town. The mine was hit hard by the great depression and closed in the 1930's. Equipment was dismantled, houses were torn down or burned and the town went into decline. Two Patch is nothing more than a few houses on US 45 built around 1906. An explosion in the Saline mine in 1937 was the final death knoll for the town. Ledford is notable as the site of the first "bootlegging joint" run by the infamous Charley Birger. It was also the site where Charley Birger committed his first murder. Charley Birger became the last person legally hanged in the state of Illinois from a gallows on the grounds of the Franklin County Courthouse in Benton.

Directions: Ledford is approximately 3 miles south of Harrisburg on US Highway 45 toward Carrier Mills.
The original town of Ledford was ¼ mile west of the houses on US 45 (labeled with the Ledford sign on US 45).

Old Stonefort

Joseph Robinson built a cabin of cypress logs in the area that later became Old Stonefort in 1831. The family had a village platted around his homestead in 1858 which they named Cornersville. It was in that same year that Robinson established a post office near Cornersville which he called Stone Fort for a nearby stone wall thought by archeologists to date from around 4000 B.C. and which was thought to be part of a fort.   The first store opened in 1859 and a second store opened in 1860. By 1872 the town had 3 stores, a school, a Masonic Lodge, and a Seventh Day Adventist Church. In 1872 the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad built tracks 2 miles west near Bolton. In time Bolton grew and Stonefort diminished. The Bolton town council eventually changed the name of their town to Stonefort. After that, the *original* community was called Old Town. The post office was officially renamed in 1892, but closed shortly afterward. In 1976 some structures in Old Town remained, but were rapidly deteriorating. The Seventh Day Adventist Church is still in good shape and is still active.

Directions: Old Stonefort can be found approximately 2 miles south and east of Stonefort on Oldtown Road.
(Stonefort is approximately 12 miles south of Harrisburg on US Hwy. 45.)