

Dancing and dominoes part



Where in Texas could a postcard with nothing on it but a picture of a dime and a box get through our U.S. mail system to its destination?

Where else but the town of Dime Box.

The people of Dime Box say the story of the postcard is a true one. One time a tourist, who passed through the town and was amused by the name, drew a box and put it and a picture of a dime on a postcard, and stuck it in the mail in his home town.

Even with no address, the postcard made it to Dime Box.

Some of the long-time residents say that many travelers on Highway 21 West have been amused by the name of Dime Box and have often asked about its origin.

Alene Cottrell is a resident of Dime Box, and has been postmistress there for 22 years. She said the town was originally named Brown's Mill, which settlers founded on the Old San Antonio highway (now Highway 21).

The settlers set up a community mail box, and wagon freighters passing through would pick up the mail several times a month, charging the settlers a dime, which they left in the box.

When the settlers petitioned for a post office in 1883, the town of Brownsville demanded the name of Brown's Mill be changed because the two sounded so much alike.

The settlers chose the name Dime Box so the old community mail box would not be forgotten.

The application was approved and the Dime Box post office was established May 16, 1884.

In 1913, the Texas and New Orleans railroad missed Dime Box by three miles, so many of the settlers moved closer to the station, taking the post office and the name Dime Box with them. The original

Dime Box was renamed Old Dime Box, and is located on what is now Highway 21.

Dime Box is a farming and cattle-raising community with some 1,100 families living on the Dime Box mail route, Cottrell said.

"There's no set city limits, but about 150 people live in what would be considered the limits," she said. "Most of the people are retired now. But there are some who just like living in the country, so they live in Dime Box and commute to towns like Bryan and Austin."

Cottrell said both towns are unincorporated with no police department or fire department. The Lee County Sheriff patrols the area, and the community is served by a volunteer fire department whose only source of income is an annual barbeque.

Nallen Spacek has lived in Dime Box all her life. She has been the owner of Sonny's, a local bar, for 18 years.

"I've seen Dime Box change since I've been here, especially in the last couple of years with the oil in the area," she said. "Used to be that everyone knew everybody in town. Now we've got a lot of strangers that come to town. But I still have my regular customers like Mr. Joe here."

"Mr. Joe" is another lifetime resident of Dime Box. He's retired and says likes to spend his afternoons at Sonny's.

"I like to look at all the pretty women," Mr. Joe said. "There's lots of widows around here."

Spacek said that every afternoon there are at least two domino games at Sonny's.

"Sometimes all the tables are full with domino games all afternoon," she said.

"And there's never a nickel bet on any of 'em," Albert Marburger added.

