

Oil boom days....

MAYHEM ON THE BOARDWALK

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A stick-up on the Boardwalk

The boardwalk was three foot wide with a handrailing along both sides. The walk, built by the oil companies in the early 1900's, extended for almost two miles; from Hull on the north end – south, across the marsh, to high ground called “The Hill”.

The oil companies had started extensive drilling around the Hill. Businesses were starting up there and the Boardwalk provided a means of getting there without wading the marsh. The Hill was eventually named Daisetta after a couple of lovelies named Daisey and Etta who worked in the recently established Post Office there.

When the Hull field boomed, it completed the circle, which had started with Spindletop in 1902. The booms exploded on east Texas in rapid succession – starting at Spindletop, in rapid-fire fashion Sour Lake opened then Saratoga, Batson and Hull. By the early 1920's black gold was gushing from this small section of east Texas in a torrent – and along with the boom came an unending stream of men. Both man killers and Bible thumpers were among the host – and both have left their

impact. Some descendants, even today, have skeletons in the closet that are so bad the door has to remain nailed closed.

In our area with so many boomtowns so close together – the old legends of the boomdays are thick as fleas. We have all heard of the Rangers being called into Batson, of the ghostlight that still haunts Saratoga and of the Hot Springs hotel in Sour Lake. But the story I was most interested in concerned the celebrated Boardwalk of Hull-Daisetta.

The most famous story about the Boardwalk is the one about Thad Flowers who was the notorious “Bull of the Boardwalk”. But let’s leave that story for another day and concentrate on the story of the only man who was ever stuck-up on the infamous walk.

J.P. (Jake) Richardson came to Hull as a young man in 1919 with a young wife and son. He rented a house in Hull and started looking for employment. He soon found a job clerking in a grocer store in Daisetta, however, living in Hull he had to cross the Boardwalk twice a day – going to and coming from work.

As time went by the proprietor of the store gained trust and respect for the hard working Richardson. He began leaving Jake in charge of the operation so he could turn his attention to other activities.

At this time the boom was in full swing and the area was full of unsavory characters that were forever looking for the easy buck. Since there was no safe in the store – the general practice was for Jake to put the day’s receipts in his pocket and take them home with him at night.

This practice must have been noticed – because one night as he was walking home Jake was met at the halfway point of the Boardwalk. Two characters stuck a pistol in his belly and relieved him not only of the store receipts but 20 dollars of his own money. After taking the money the men ran south along the walk into Daisetta. By the time Jake could find help and go after the culprits – they were long gone.

Later Jake took a job running the Hull Hardware for old Dr. Bevel. The Doc had come from Beaumont in 1917 and had brought the hardware building in by mule train. This old building is the same one that is serving the public today. (Not counting the add-ons).

Jake eventually bought the Doc out and the Hull Hardware has continued to give dedicated service through 3 generations of Richardson’s.

Jake passed away in 1987. He had been successful in business, a plank-holder in many service organizations for the community and an upstanding citizen – but the thing he talked most about till the day he died, was the fact that he had added yet another legend to her memory – by being the only man to ever be stuck up on The Boardwalk...