

EVADALE, TEXAS. Evadale is at the junction of U.S. Highway 96 and Farm roads 105, 1131, and 2246, twenty-five miles northeast of Beaumont in southwestern Jasper County. During the 1830s and 1840s the site was called Richardson (Richardson's) Bluff, for early settler Benjamin Richardson, who operated a ferry on the Neches River and who also served as postmaster in 1839. Town lots for the area were listed in county tax rolls as early as 1859. After Richardson's death in 1849, the land was sold to John A., Philip U., and Charles T. Ford. At this time the site was often referred to as Ford's Bluff. Hoping to establish a sawmill, Philip Ford went to New Orleans to buy machinery but contracted yellow fever there and died shortly after returning to Jasper County. Nonetheless, Ford's Bluff became an important collection point for logs, which were floated down the river to Beaumont mills. In 1893 John Henry Kirby chartered the Gulf, Beaumont and Kansas City Railway and rebuilt a tram line that already ran from Ford's Bluff to Buna as part of his larger common carrier project. Kirby renamed the site for Miss Eva Dale, a teacher at Jasper's Southeast Texas Male and Female College, and constructed a mill there by 1904, when the post office was established. By 1914 the Evadale plant, known as Mill U, included kilns, a circular sawmill, and a planing mill with a daily capacity of up to 70,000 board feet. Evadale had a population of 300 by 1920. The Kirby mill closed during the Great Depression, and by the late 1940s the town's population had fallen to 100. Economic revitalization began in 1948, when the Champion Paper and Fiber Company acquired riverfront acreage for a pulp mill. By the 1970s the giant Temple-Eastex pulpwood and paper mill dominated the local economy. With the new activity, the population in Evadale reached 700 by the early 1960s. In 1984 the town had twenty-two businesses and an estimated 715 residents. In 1990 its population was 1,422 and in 2000 it was 1,430.