

This is a recreated version of a significant document describing Ryderwood's dual histories.

TIME

REAL ESTATE: Old Folks at Home MAY 4, 1953

Ryderwood, in the foothills of Washington's Cascade Range, was a model town when it was built in 1923 by the Long-Bell Lumber Co. Founder Robert Alexander Long, whose motto was "Be of service, even if it is necessary to go out of your way," wanted his lumberjacks to be able to live with their families the year around. He spent \$1,500,000 to build 400 sturdy, cellarless frame houses (all painted grey), three stores, a school, a church, a modern sewage-disposal plant, a community heating plant and a water system.

But as the great stands of timber around Ryderwood were cut down, it became almost a ghost town. The population, once 2,000, dwindled to less than 100 families. Last July, when the 130,000-acre cut-over area was set aside as a tree farm, Long-Bell put the town up for sale, refused all efforts to sell it for salvage. Last fall, a Los Angeles real-estate man named Harry Kem* turned up with a different idea. He had become interested in the problem of people past 65 who were having a hard time finding decent places to live within their means. Why not turn Ryderwood into a model city for old folks?

Kem, 55, who had grown wealthy developing housing subdivisions and downtown property, knew just how to swing the deal. He persuaded 20 friends to put up \$5,000 apiece and set up a company, Senior Estates, Inc. to buy Ryderwood from Long-Bell for \$90,000. Last week a crew of painters, carpenters and plumbers began fixing up 205 of the town's 400 houses (the rest, too dilapidated for repair, will be

torn down), for sale on easy terms to pensioners. The 150 two-bedroom houses will be sold for \$2,500 each (\$200 down and \$20 a month), and 55 three-bedroom houses for \$3,500 (\$300 down, \$30 a month). Only retired folk with pensions of not less than \$135 or more than \$250 a month are eligible to buy. Kem wants "spry, imaginative folks, who don't feel they are about to die, but rather are keen about the pioneering prospects of this deal."

He has set aside ten acres as a communal vegetable garden, and is refurbishing the town recreation hall. Each resident will get medical care (at \$2 a month) and free treatment at the eight-bed hospital. Kem hopes that, by guaranteeing \$10,000-a-year income and a rent-free house, he can lure a full-time doctor to Ryderwood. Kem has no fears that the oldtimers' lives will be dull: he is leaving the

interiors alone, so that the buyers can fix them up to their own taste. He also hopes to lease a factory building to some business to provide part-time employment for those who want it.

While Kem hopes to give oldsters good housing at prices they can afford, he

admits that he is not entirely altruistic. If all the houses are sold, Senior Estates will gross a thumping \$567,500 on a \$170,000 investment. It will also lease out (on a profit-sharing business) the town's stores, restaurant and movie house. Says Kem: "It's a pretty good deal all the way around. We might make a million bucks being philanthropists."

* Brother of Missouri's ex-Senator James Preston Kem

