THE POST OFFICES OF ANDERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Anderson County's 204 square miles are located in the western bluegrass section of central Kentucky. Its seat, Lawrenceburg, lies 20 air miles due west of downtown Lexington and half that distance south of the state capitol in Frankfort. The 82nd of Kentucky's 120 counties, it was created in 1827 from sections of Franklin, Mercer, and Washington Counties and named for Richard Clough Anderson, Jr. (1788-1826), a Kentucky legislator and Congressman. Shortly before his untimely death, Anderson achieved some degree of national prominence when, as the first U.S. Minister to Colombia, he negotiated its first treaty with a South American country.

Of the county's 35 post offices, only one, Lawrenceburg's, survives. This fourth class city, the largest community in the county, with an estimated 5,500 residents, is also the oldest. The site was settled in the early 1780s by a German immigrant named Jacob Kaufman and was first called Kaufman's (or Coffman's) Station. Sufficient settlement justified the establishment, on January 22, 1817, of a post office that was named Lawrenceburgh, not for Capt. James Lawrence of the USS Chesapeake, as stated in Collins' History of Kentucky, but for William Lawrence, a local tavern owner and the community's leading citizen. This office, whose first postmaster was Jeremiah A. Matthews, may also, early and briefly, have gone by the name of Lawrence's Hotel. In 1820 the
community was incorporated as Lawrence by the Court of Franklin County of which it was then a part, but was renamed Lawrenceburg by the legislative act of January 16, 1827 that established the county. On March 30th the town was officially designated the county seat. In 1893 the "h" was dropped from the post office's name in the Post Office Department's then comprehensive efforts at name simplification.

The second post office established in Anderson Co., at least by March 19, 1830, was named Beaver Creek for its location near the head of a branch of the Chaplin River. It is said to have been in a tavern run by the Wash family, probably where US 62 now crosses the creek, just south of the recently created Beaver Lake, and David and John Wash are known to have been its first two postmasters. The office was discontinued in 1842. The creek is presumed to have been named for the many such animals found there in pioneer times.

Salt River, the county's third post office, was established on July 5, 1839 with James S. Davis, postmaster, and named for its site on this major central Kentucky stream, some eight miles west of Lawrenceburg. Discontinued 15 months later, it was re-established on February 7, 1848 as Camdenville, for reasons unknown, in postmaster Elijah Orr's store. The town that developed around it was laid out in 1860 by W.E. Bell and incorporated that year as Camdenville. The post office closed
in 1864 and was re-established in 1881 as Orr, probably for Elijah, and the community was officially renamed this in 1886. A final name-change for both post office and community came in 1904. According to William H. Townsend, a Kentucky historian who grew up there, townsfolk felt embarrassed to tell others they came from Orr for they were so often met with the wisecrack "or what?" An attempt by Democratic supporters of Alton B. Parker, who was then running for president against Theodore Roosevelt, to rename the post office Parkersburg or Parkersville was unsuccessful as these names were already in use in Kentucky. Glensboro was suggested for the town's location in a narrow, secluded spot between two hills. Though the post office closed for good in 1913, the community has been Glensboro to this day.

Four post offices were established in the 1850s. Rough and Ready, named for Zachary Taylor, was organized on February 6, 1850 with Elisha D. Hawkins, postmaster, and the town that grew up around it was incorporated in that name in 1854. In 1876 both were renamed Alton possibly for the town's altitude, somewhat higher than the surrounding countryside. The town's prosperity as a trading center for the area along the highway between Lawrenceburg and the Franklin County line declined after the Southern Railway built Alton Station, one mile southwest, and a post office by this name was established on
April 22, 1890. Much of Alton's business was drawn to the new site, sometimes called New Alton. While Alton's post office closed in 1910, its neighbor's remained in operation until 1963. They continue as separate, viable communities.

Another U.S. president was honored in the establishment of the Van Buren post office on May 23, 1850 with Jacob W. Lindle, postmaster. Now completely submerged by the new Taylorsville Lake, the village of Van Buren was on the Salt River, on the Spencer County line, some 14 miles wsw of Lawrenceburg. It was laid out in 1835 by Edward Harris and incorporated as a town in 1886. With several interruptions the office operated until it closed for good in 1922.

One of the three Anderson County post offices named for local stores was Chesher's Store which was established on May 20, 1851 with Wilfred G. Chesher as the first postmaster. In 1861 it became Buckner's Store and was discontinued in 1865. Since it is imprecisely located just north of Fox Creek, a southside branch of Salt River, some four miles southwest of Lawrenceburg, it is believed to have been at or near the site, on the present US 62, of the later Fox Creek post office. This office, which served a community long referred to as Fox Creek, had been established by Ezekiel Rice as Horace on March 23, 1886, renamed Hawkins the following month for a local family.
and officially assumed the Fox Creek name some three weeks later. It closed in 1913. The creek, incidentally, had been named for the many foxes (animals) still found in the vicinity.

Another antebellum post office was Johnsonville, on the present US 62, in the southwestern part of the county. In operation from 1854 to January, 1863, it was named for pioneer settler, David J. Johnson, who built a log cabin there in 1835. From 1883 to 1913 the vicinity was served by the Stinnett post office named for another local family.

The other two post offices named for local stores were Caldwell's Store and Leathers' Store. The first, located somewhere near Ballard and in operation from 1866 to 1883, was named for Benjamin F. Caldwell, the storekeeper and first postmaster. The other, just west of Beaver Creek and about two miles north of the present Blue Grass Parkway, did business in a Mr. Leathers' store from 1876 to 1913.

In 1855 John Ripy ["Rih pee"] who, some twenty years before, had come to the US from Ireland's County Tyrone, opened a store at a site about four miles south of Lawrenceburg. Three years later the town that had grown up around it was incorporated as Ripyville and a post office of this name was established there on May 31, 1867. It closed in 1905.
Ripy's ancestral home was the source of another Anderson County post office name. In 1868, in the vicinity of a Kentucky River wharfhouse and landing called Streamville, John Ripy's brother, James opened a distillery which he named Tyrone. This name was also given to the nearby town when it incorporated in 1879 and, on August 9, 1893, to the local post office of Coke which postmaster John T. Coke had established the year before. Tyrone flourished as a major distilling and trade center until Prohibition. Little remains.

Eighteen of Anderson County's thirty five post offices were named for local or county persons or their families. Five of these we have already discussed.

Vandyke (sic), a post office that served a Salt River mill village from 1887 to 1906, was named for Dick Van Dyke, the miller. Nothing remains of the community, somewhere between the present Ky. 44 and Van Buren, and some fifteen miles west of Lawrenceburg.

The Ballard post office in the south central part of the county, 7½ miles southwest of Lawrenceburg, was established on August 8, 1893 in Austin Caldwell's store and named for either Thomas Ballard, then Lawrenceburg's postmaster who helped to secure it, or William Ballard, a nearby farmer. It closed in 1904.

The name of another Lawrenceburg postmaster, George W. Hutchison, was given to the Hutch post office, the last to be established in the county, on December 4, 1908 near the
junction of Washington, Anderson, and Mercer Counties, 17 miles southwest of Lawrenceburg.

A community now called simply "down by Huffman's Distillery", centering on the junction of Ky. 44 and 395, six miles west of Lawrenceburg, was served by the Gudgel post office from 1895 to 1907. It was named for Edward E. Gudgel, its first postmaster, or his prominent pioneer family.

The Nevins post office, four miles south of Lawrenceburg, served the area around the Nevins Station on the Southern Railway between the present Blue Grass Parkway and the Mercer County line. It was established in Mercer County on February 17, 1890 and named for its first postmaster, John T. Nevins. Shortly thereafter, it moved to its present site in Anderson County, and closed in 1910.

Two post offices were named for local women. Cora, on US 62, 14 miles southwest of Lawrenceburg, was established on January 22, 1890 and named by its first postmaster, Nimrod Utterback for a popular local girl named Cora Bond. The office closed in 1912.

Hettie, between Sinai and Ballard, 7½ miles southwest of Lawrenceburg, was named for its only postmaster, Hettie M. Etherington. It operated from 1890 to 1904.

Where Ky. 513 crosses the Southern Railway, a half mile east of the US 127 interchange of the Blue Grass Parkway, three miles south of Lawrenceburg, was the
distillery and trade center of McBrayer. The town developed around the depot called McBrayer Station for the family that had owned that section of the county since pioneer times. The Sidney post office, established on the nearby Salt River on July 17, 1888, was shortly thereafter moved to the station and given its name. It closed in 1917.

Some five miles northeast of Lawrenceburg, on the Kentucky River, was a post office first called Dowling, when it was established on May 19, 1890, and then, a few months later, renamed Murphy, for two local families then engaged in a successful distillery operation. The office closed in 1904.

Less than a half mile from the Nelson County line, in the extreme western section of the county, was the post office of Sparrow. It was established on January 15, 1883 with James B. Barnett, postmaster, to serve a community then and, to some extent, still known as Wardsville. Both names honor local families. The Sparrows, in fact, have been so numerous and so closely connected with this community that it has long been called The Sparrows Nest.

The Petty post office, some two miles east of Glensboro, in operation from 1889 to 1906, was named for the family of Rhodman Petty, a Virginia-born Revolutionary War veteran who settled there before 1800.
From 1902 to 1905 the Odell post office, named for a local family, served the Hammond Creek area, four miles west of Lawrenceburg.

In 1898 a local family gave its name to the Gee post office serving the area nearest the Shelby County line in the northwest section of the county.

Three Anderson County post office names have probable Scriptural derivations. Ninevah, 3½ miles north of Lawrenceburg, near the Franklin County line, served a community that may have been called Providence, for a nearby church, until the post office was established on February 21, 1895 and given the name of the ancient city mentioned in several books of the Old Testament. The office closed in 1904.

A post office established on June 14, 1860 just south of Sulphur Creek, which forms the Washington-Anderson County line, was named Antioch, probably also for a nearby church. In 1899 the office moved a short distance over the county line to a site somewhere in the vicinity of the present Blue Grass Parkway in the southwest corner of Anderson County. It closed in 1918. Current maps still show a tiny settlement called Antioch back over the line in Washington County, and about a mile northwest of the Antioch Church.

The last post office in the county to close, in 1973, was Sinai on Ky. 53, a mile south of Beaver Lake and 8½ miles southwest of Lawrenceburg. Established on October 24,
1876 by James M. Wash, it served a community known both as Sinai and Shiloh. The latter name was derived from the local Christian Church (organized in 1870) and possibly also from the Civil War battle. Sinai is pronounced, curiously, ["Sah nee eye"].

On Ky. 53, two miles southwest of Sinai, was the post office of Ashbrook. The community it served from 1890 to 1913 is said to have been given this name in 1878 by a local storekeeper, Capt. John McBrayer, who was much taken by the ash trees growing in profusion along nearby Beaver Creek.

On the Blue Grass Parkway, two miles east of the Ky. 53 Interchange, is the site of a post office called Hooppole, in operation from 1881 to 1902. It was named for the hickory poles harvested there in the late nineteenth century for use in making barrel hoops. The name survives in that of a road extending south of the highway to Sulphur Creek where Anderson County joins Washington County.

The derivations of three Anderson County post office names—Avenstoke, Birdie, and Grafton—remain unexplained.

Avenstoke, which served a railroad station and community in the north central part of the county, some eight miles northwest of Lawrenceburg, was established on July 2, 1898 with Edgar E. Wigns, postmaster, and probably named by a railroad official for it seems to have had no local significance.
The Birdie post office, established on April 24, 1888 with Edward D. Brown as postmaster, was on Ky. 395, eight miles west of Lawrenceburg. It closed in 1903.

The shortlived Grafton post office (from 1900 to 1905) had only one postmaster, Alvin H. Hawkins. It was on the present Ky. 44, over four miles west of Lawrenceburg. This vicinity, centering on Fox Creek, may also have been called Pinchem, but this name, too, defies derivation.

Most of Anderson County's post offices served rural settlements or isolated farmsteads, were usually in a store whose owner was also the postmaster-of-record, and failed to survive the improvement of county roads which facilitated travel to larger communities for better services. The advent of rural free delivery in 1896 which led to the closing of some 40,000 small post offices nationwide over the next two decades, condemned over half of Anderson's offices by the First World War. Four (Murphy, Hettie, Ballard, and Ninevah) closed on one day, January 14, 1904, while six (Glensboro, Leathers Store, Stinnett, Fox Creek, Ashbrook, and Hutch) were terminated on January 31, 1913. Nine others closed in the first decade of the twentieth century. Only six offices (Avenstoke, Tyrone, Gee, Alton Station, Sinai, and Lawrenceburg, which alone survives) made it past the great depression.
The names of only seven post offices (Tyrone, Alton, McBrayer, Glensboro, Fox Creek, Avenstoke, and Lawrenceburg) identify existing communities though all but Lawrenceburg are hamlets providing only one or two basic rural services. The other names, referring to once viable communities and their post offices or, in a few cases, to isolated post offices, are now merely local memories.

Notes: The distances given in the text, unless otherwise indicated, are road miles from Lawrenceburg's city limits. Lawrenceburg's point-of-location on the accompanying map is its business district, centering on the court house.

References cited in this article were:

1. Philip Spencer, Lawrenceburg, Ky., interviewed on August 4, 1978
2. Wyatt Shely, Lawrenceburg, Ky., personal correspondence, Fall 1971, and several columns on Anderson Co. place names in the Anderson News, Fall 1971
3. Anderson News, Souvenir Supplement, June 1906, passim
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1. LAWRENCEBURGH- 1/22/1817, Jeremiah A. Matthews (then may also have been called Lawrence's Hotel); 4/18/1818, Wm. McClane... 2/11/1831, Delaney Egbert... 11/16/1889, Thomas J. Ballard; name changed to Lawrenceburg, 12/21/1893, Wm. P. Walker; 1/10/1898, Thomas N. Edwards...

2. BEAVER CREEK-
2/16/1831, John Wash; 3/1/1833, Fuel Murphy; Disc.
12/26/1835; Re-est. 3/2/1838, Allen Wash, Jr.; Disc.
3/29/1842;

3. SALT RIVER-
7/5/1839, James S. Davis; Disc. 10/8/1840;

4. CAMDENVILLE- 2/7/1848, Elijah Orr; 2/24/1851, Isaac (?)
C. Oliver.... 9/12/1854, Granison Utterback; Disc.
1/25/1862; Re-est. 3/11/1862, Thomas J. Moseley; Disc.
3/29/1864; Re-est. 2/24/1881 as Orr, Thomas D. Brown;
8/1/1881, Joseph Searcy.... 11/13/1901, Wood Blakeman;
name changed to Glensboro, 9/12/1904, Wood Blakeman;
4/28/1905, George S. House; 4/11/1911, James D.
Franklin; Disc. 1/31/1913 (mail to Lawrenceburg);

5. ROUGH AND READY- 2/6/1850, Elisha D. Hawkins; 4/1/1851, Robert D. Collins.... 10/13/1864, Squire P. Willis;
in Warren Co. on or before 1/31/1865 with A.D. Ragan as postmaster; Disc. 2/21/1865; Re-est. but still in Warren Co. 4/8/1865, W.H. Tracy; back to Anderson Co. by, on, or before 4/8/1865 with Wm. H. Tracy as postmaster); 6/18/1869, Joseph Rothschild; 10/7/1873, Richard Parent; name changed to Alton, 5/22/1876,
Richard Parent; 9/10/1879, John W. McClure.... 2/6/1890,
James C. Gudgell; 3/21/1892, George T. Searce....
12/27/1907, Martha Gudgel; Disc. 11/15/1910 (mail to Lawrenceburg);

H. Buckley; 7/19/1853, Jacob C. Buckley; Disc. 4/13/1854; Re-est. 2/5/1858, Peter Dedman; 9/8/1858, Stephen
Halsclaw; Disc. 7/12/1859; Re-est. 3/19/1866, Wm. C.
Ash; 4/16/1868, R.M. Endlows; Disc. 10/19/1868; Re-est.
4/10/1866, Wm. C. Ash; 5/21/1892, Edward E. Gudgell;
3/18/1895, Clayborne Shely.... 10/26/1912, Archie J.
Ashby; Disc. effective 2/15/1922 (mail to Mt. Eden);
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7. CHESTER'S STORE- 5/20/1851, Wilfred G. Chesher; 12/6/1854, Albert G. Mullins; name changed to Buckner's store; 9/24/1861, Andrew Cassidy; 11/12/1861, Benjamin F. Wash; Disc. 3/17/1865;


9. ANTIOCH- (established in Washington Co. on 6/14/1860 with James M. Trent as first postmaster; 9/30/1870, Christopher C. Trent; 8/5/1899, Theodore D. Pulliam; To Anderson Co. probably on 10/18/1899 with Theodore D. Pulliam still as postmaster); 1/7/1903, Herbert R. Eddleman; 12/5/1907, Wm. F. Sweazy; Disc. 5/15/1918 (mail to Sinai);

10. CALDWELL'S STORE- 2/19/1866, Benjamin F. Caldwell; 6/19/1877, John L. Walker; Disc. 4/16/1883 (papers to Sinai);

11. RIPYVILLE- 5/31/1867, Dickson G. McMichael; 10/4/1870, Reuben A. Routt; 8/9/1875, Wm. H. Morton; 9/21/1903, Reuben M. Houchin; Disc. 5/29/1905, effective 6/30/1905 (mail to Lawrenceburg);

12. LEATHERS STORE- 10/24/1876, Daniel M. Yocum; 6/10/1887, Thomas N. Calvert; 2/28/1890, James V. Leathers (the 4th postmaster); 1/14/1892, Daniel M. Yocum; Disc. 1/31/1913 (mail to Sinai);

13. SINAI- 10/24/1876, James M. Wash; 5/26/1882, Malissa E. Wash;

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15. SPARROW- 1/15/1883, James B. Barnett; 1/30/1891, Wm. H. Black, order of appointment rescinded, 3/9/1892; 83/6/1899, Allie Barnett; 9/13/1904, Allie Barnette (sic);  

16. STINNETT- 1/15/1883, Wad€ Morgan; 4/9/1888 (?), John W. Shouse; 12/16/1905, Eda Simpson; Disc. 1/31/1913 (mail to Sinai);  

17. HOOPPOLE- 6/29/1883, Benjamin F. Caldwell; 11/14/1901, Abraham Holt; Disc. 1/23/1902, effective 2/15/1902 (papers to Ballard);  

18. HORACE- 3/23/1886, Ezekiel H. Rice; name changed to Hawkins 4/29/1886, Ezekiel H. Rice; name changed to Fox Creek, 5/18/1886, Ezekiel H. Rice; 2/23/1887, Henry C. Melear; 2/10/1911, Joseph H. Rucker; Disc. 1/31/1913 (mail to Lawrenceburg);  

19. VANDYKE (sic)- 8/6/1887, Ruben (sic) Calvert; Disc. 10/30/1893 (mail to Vanburen); Re-est. 8/23/1894, Loyd (sic) P. Simpson; 1/5/1897, Wm. W. Owens; 5/26/1905, Annis J. Jeffiers (sic); Disc. 2/7/1906, effective 2/14/1906 (mail to Vanburen);  

20. BIRDIE- 4/24/1888, Edward D. Brown; 7/30/1890, John W. Humes; 12/5/1900, James M. Marlowe; Disc. 11/2/1903, effective 11/14/1903 (papers to Odell);  

21. AVENSTOKE- 7/2/1888, Edgar E. Wiggs; 7/9/1888, Robert A. Hancock; 2/6/1897, Lisker E. Tinsley; Disc. 1/31/1912 (mail to Waddy); Re-est. 9/27/1920, Henry O. Cook; 11/7/1924, acting, 12/10/1924, Jerome M. Grey;
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22. SIDNEY- 7/17/1888, Ezekiel H. Rice; name changed to McBrayer, 1/10/1889, Ezekiel H. Rice; 1/14/1892, Edward E. Haughn (or Hahn); 1/28/1892, Edward H. Hahn; 9/16/1899, Paul W. Trent... 9/28/1915, Matt Searcy; Disc. 2/15/1917 (mail to Lawrenceburg);

23. PETTY- 1/23/1889, John W. Gudgel; 6/5/1894, Wm. H. Camish... 3/31/1905, Arabella R. Brown; Disc. 4/2/1906, effective 4/30/1906 (mail to Glensboro);

24. CORA- 1/22/1890, Nimrod Utterback; 12/18/1890, Wm. F. Sutherland... 4/23/1902, Will T. Gash; Disc. 1/31/1912;

25. NEVINS (sic) - (established in Mercer Co. 2/17/1890, John T. Nevins as first postmaster); moved soon afterwards to Anderson Co.; 7/12/1893, Robert H. Nevins; 10/25/1893, John F. Nevins; Disc. 8/31/1910 (mail to McBrayer);


27. DOWLING- 5/19/1890, Lucy Enlow; name changed to Murphy, 9/15/1890, Lucy Enlow; 1/25/1894, Jennie M. Cray.... the 6th postmaster was Edward Murphy, 7/29/1898; Disc. 1/4/1904, effective 1/14/1904 (papers to Lawrenceburg);

28. ASHBRUK- 6/6/1890, Thomas N. Calvert; 6/24/1902, Jasper Bryant... 6/12/1912, Seastus Bryant; Disc. 1/31/1913 (mail to Sinai);

29. HETTIE- 9/24/1890, Kattie M. Etherington; Disc. 1/4/1904, effective 1/14/1904 (papers to Lawrenceburg);

30. BALLARD- 8/8/1893, Austin G. Caldwell; 10/11/1901, Lena R. Caldwell... 4/27/1903, John G. Desponett; Disc. 1/4/1904, effective 1/14/1904 (papers to Lawrenceburg);
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31. NINEVAH- 2/21/1895, Ambrose C. Parker; 10/10/1895, John T. Hart.... 3/7/1903, Nancy J. Sullivan; Disc. 1/4/1904, effective 1/14/1904 (papers to Lawrenceburg);

32. GUDGEL- 9/11/1895, Edward E. Gudgel; 3/3/1899, John S. Griffy; 12/13/1900, Edward O. Dewitt; Disc. 9/23/1901, effective 9/30/1901 (papers to Grafton); Re-est. 4/5/1902, Andrew J. Jelf; Disc. 7/19/1907, effective 8/15/1907 (mail to Lawrenceburg);

33. GEE- 3/17/1898, John C. Murphey (sic); 11/17/1898, Wm. H. Burk....

34. GRAFTON- 4/19/1900, Alvin H. Hawkins; Disc. 7/8/1905, effective 7/31/1905 (mail to Gudgel);

35. ODELL- 5/5/1902, Clarence E. Watts; 9/21/1903, Edgar M. Sea; Disc. 9/8/1905, effective 9/30/1905 (mail to Lawrenceburg);

36. HUTCH- 12/4/1908, Henry J. Taylor; 9/29/1911, Jacob A. Cornish; Disc. 1/31/1913 (mail to Sinai);