THE POST OFFICES OF ELLIOTT COUNTY

The establishment of Elliott, Kentucky's 113th county, was authorized by the legislature on January 26, 1869. Taken from sections of Morgan, Lawrence, and Carter Conties, it assumed its present boundaries in May 1880 with a slight loss of territory to accommodate Carter County property owners. In the spring of 1904, With Lewis and neighboring Carter Counties, it temporarily yielded a small area and two post offices (Gimlet and Winkler) to the shortlived (eighty days) Beckham County.

It is now pretty much accepted that the county was named for John Milton Elliott (1820-1879) rather than his father John Lisle Elliott (1799-1855), both active Democrats in a strongly Democratic area. The act creating the county doesn't mention in whose honor it was named. This, I was told, may have been a deliberate effort to defy the radical Republicans in Washington who would not have been pleased that a county established in pro-Union eastern Kentucky, had been named for a very active Confederate supporter.[1] In addition to his pre-war service in both houses of the Kentucky legislature and in the U.S. Congress from 1853-1861, John Milton was a member of the state's Southern Rights party, participated in the Russellville convention that organized Kentucky's Confederate government, and represented it in the Confederate Congress in Richmond. He was later to serve as a circuit judge for a large area centered in Owingsville, and from 1875 till his assassination was a member of the Kentucky Court of Appeals. His father, John Lisle, however, may not have been overlooked, for an authorized, though never operating, post office Lisle is said to have been named for him.

Elliott's 234 square mile area in a well dissected plateau in northeastern Kentucky's coal field is drained nearly altogether by the main stream and tributaries of the Little Sandy River. This stream heads just north of the Morgan County line and joins the Ohio River just below the city of Greenup. It was so named to distinguish it from the Big Sandy River at the eastern end of the state. The 1512 acre Grayson Lake, an impoundment of the Little Sandy. and a state park created in 1970 extend into the northern end of Elliott County.

While subsistence farming has always been the county's main means of sustenance, logging and to a more limited extent coal mining continue to contribute to its economy. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries timber was shipped to sawmills on the lower Little Sandy and ultimately to the Ohio Valley markets. Opportunities for economic and population growth in recent decades have been impeded by a lack of adequate transportation. The railroad never entered the county, and its roads (including Kentucky 7 and 32, the main intercounty thoroughfares) are still only secondary at best. Any point in the county is at least a half hour drive from an interstate. The county's estimated 1996 population of some 6,600, a four per cent drop from 1990, continues the downward trend from a high of 10,400 in 1900.

Most of Elliott's fifty one post offices will be located by road miles from the court house in Sandy Hook, the county's seat. Two other offices, <u>Access</u> and <u>Blevins</u>, though established in Elliott County, were later tranferred to adjacent counties--Carter and Lawrence, respectively--and are described in accounts of those counties' offices.

Four Elliott post offices were established before the formation of the county. The first, on January 21, 1847, was called <u>Little Sandy</u> for its location somewhere on or near the upper end of this stream. Daniel Horton and William B. Wheeler ran the office till it closed in early January 1864.

The next was <u>Bruin</u>, named for the creek on which it was located at several sites since its establishment in Carter County by Thomas T. Thompson on April 1, 1850. When it closed in May 1996 the office was at Dickerson's garage and store at the junction of Ky 7 and 409, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles up the creek, and ten miles northeast of Sandy Hook.

Bruin Creek heads just east of Locust Knob and extends nearly six miles north to the river at the Carter County line. Its valley is roughly divided into the <u>Lower Bruin Community</u>, served by the <u>Bruin</u> post office, and the <u>Upper Bruin Community</u>, centering on the <u>Trench</u> post office (see below). The origin of the creek's name is not known for sure but local traditions refer to a pioneer bear hunt in which a wounded bear slid down an old beech tree and bit in two the stock of a muzzle loader that one of the hunters was trying to use as a club,[2] or to Johnny Mullins' dog Bruin who treed the only bear ever seen on that stream.[3]

<u>Woodlawn</u> was another office in that section of Morgan County that became Elliott County, but its location is also not known. For part or all of its existence, from March 3, 1854 to February 1867, it may have been in the Sandy Hook area and thus was a forerunner of that post office. Jesse P. Meek was its first postmaster and Frank Hunter, of a pioneer Sandy Hook family, was its last postmaster and Sandy Hook's second.

Sandy Hook may have been settled in the 1820s at what was then the Little Sandy's head of navigation. It was chartered as a town by the legislature on March 4, 1850 and named for its site in a sharp bend in the river that resembled an oldfashioned fishhook. On April 5, 1869, on proprietor James K. Hunter's offer of an acre of land for the public buildings, the small village was chosen the new county's seat. The local post office (which may first have been Woodlawn) was established (or re-established) as Sandy Hook on January 16, 1867 with J.R. Hunter, postmaster. On February 2, 1872 the town was re-incorporated as Martinsburg to honor John P. Martin (1811-1862), U.S. Congressman (1846-1850) and State Senator from Floyd County (1857-1861). The post office, though, remained Sandy Hook since Kentucky already had a Martinsburg post office (in Monroe County). But the act authorizing Martinsburg was repealed on April 13, 1888 and the town was again Sandy Hook.[4]

The town centers on the court house and local post office, just up Ky 7 from that road's junction with Ky 32. It is twenty four miles ssw of Grayson (via Ky 7) and ninety road miles east of downtown Lexington (via Ky I-64 and Ky 32). According to the latest Census estimates, the town has some 557 residents, many of whom live in the area that, until recently, was the separate community of Bell City. This section, extending for half a mile or so on both sides of Ky 7/32 below the main business district of town, was once owned by Judge Matthew M. Redwine who named it for his wife Sarah Isabelle (called "Belle") (1860-1952), a daughter of William Wellington Green, Jr. Its original spelling Belle has since been corrupted to Bell on published maps.

The first post office established after the organization of the county was Newfoundland [nyū/fown/lən(d)], to serve another early nineteenth century settlement, Sandy Hook's main rival for the county's seat. The community is traditionally believed to have been called by its earliest residents "a new found land" or one that had only recently been settled. Extending for over a mile along Ky 7 in each direction from its junction with Ky 32, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Sandy Hook, it has sometimes been called Crackers Neck, allegedly referring to the instructions given by spectators at a local squabble for one of the participants to "crack the neck" of his adversary. In 1900 this name was given to the area's voting precinct.[5] The local post office, established on July 15, 1869, with John A. Davis, postmaster, closed in the summer of 1989. Lakeside, one of the county's three extant public elementary schools, is located in Newfoundland.

Little Sandy, the name of the first post office established within Elliott's present limits, was later given to another office on the same stream. With Mrs. Lettie Weddington, its first postmaster, followed by a succession of other Weddingtons, the second Little Sandy operated from May 4, 1876 through June 1976. Its most recent site was at the mouth of Neal Howard's Creek (at the junction of Ky 7 and 702), $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles southwest of Sandy Hook. From the early 1890s through February 1930, the name was spelled as one word.[6]

On the Little Fork of the Little Sandy and the present Ky 486, one mile below (northeast of) Stephens, and sixteen miles northeast of Sandy Hook, was the Backbone post office. It was established as Back Bone on December 24, 1877 by John C. Porter just above the

mouth of Brier Branch and named for its site west of a rock projection called Backbone Hill. From 1894 till the office closed in September 1913 its name was also spelled as one word.

Two Elliott County post offices were set up on the same day. On February 11, 1878 Alfred G. Rice established Newcombe [nyū/kəm] on the creek of this name, at some site below Fraley Chapel. In 1942 it was moved up the creek to Ky 706, at a site just below Boggs Branch (6 3/4 miles east of Sandy Hook) where it closed in November 1965. Its name source, heading at the confluence of its two main forks at Isonville, extends for 6½ miles north to the Little Sandy, six stream miles below Sandy Hook. Whence Newcombe is not known. There's no record of anyone of that name having lived or been buried in its valley.

On the Little Fork of the Little Sandy, a short distance below the mouth of Whites Creek, storekeeper William L. Pennington established the Fielden post office on February 11, 1878. He named it for descendants of North Carolina-born (ca. early 1790s) Jason Fields who had acquired land there in the 1850s. After several moves on Little Fork, the office ended its days, in early June 1963, half a mile up the Little Fork tributary of Hurricane Creek (at the mouth of Gillium Branch), fourteen miles east of Sandy Hook. This was at or near the site of the Halcom post office (see below). How Fielden was derived from Fields is not known.

The Ridge was one of Kentucky's few post offices whose name always included the definite article. It was established on April 18, 1878 by Andrew J. Landreth at some unknown location above the head of Fulton Fork of Devils Fork. By 1917 it was on the upper

end of South Ruin Creek and the present Rt. 755, and when it closed in October 1955 it was 5½ miles west of Sandy Hook and one and a half miles from where the Lytten post office was to be moved to four years later.

Hancock, Corn Hill, and Powder Falls were among the several names proposed by Martin Wood Green for a post office on the Powder Mill Branch of the Little Sandy at the lower end of the county. But on August 19, 1880 the office opened as Ibex [a:/bɘx], the name of the wild mountain goat that inhabits much of Alpine Europe. Whence its significance to Mr. Green or anyone else in Elliott County is not known. In the winter of 1934-5 its new postmaster Sue Whitt had the office moved 1½ miles southeast to a site just north of Skaggs Branch, two miles below the mouth of Caney Creek, one fourth of a mile west of the river, and ten miles nne of Sandy Hook, where she closed it on her retirement in September 1963.

The hamlet and post office of Gimlet, 13½ miles north of Sandy Hook, were named for their site at the head of Big Gimlet Creek which joins the Little Sandy at the Carter County line. Though the community now centering at Oscar Cox's store on the present Ky 504 was settled before the Civil War by the family of surveyor Peter Mauk (for whom the nearby Mauk Ridge was named), the post office was not established until August 10, 1880 by John Sparks, and was then a mile or so west. It had several locations till it closed in July 1961. The creek and nearby Little Gimlet are narrow streams that wind around in a way suggesting the tool for which they are believed to have been named. The Gimblet spelling in some old deeds is regarded by area historians as an error. This vicinity and much of the northwestern

section of Elliott County is now on an Olive Hill (Carter County) postal route.

At the head of Little Caney Creek, two miles west of Stark and $16\frac{1}{2}$ miles nnw of Sandy Hook, is the rural settlement of Beartown. It was named for the descendants of Maryland-born Henry (1785-1865) and Devina Bear (also spelled Bair, Bare, and Beare) of Big Caney. Though the first names proposed for the vicinity's post office were Bear Hill and Fall Rock, it operated, from December 2, 1881 through October 1919, as Leadingham, which was named for the family of its first postmaster Reece D. Leadingham (1854-1904).

A post office called Riddle occupied at least three sites on the Left (now called Lick) Fork of Newcombe Creek from August 15, 1882 through February 1916. This was established by Beverly R. Dickerson some two to two and a half miles above (southeast) of Isonville and eight miles ese of Sandy Hook, probably at the mouth of what was then known as Burnt Cabin Branch (and is now that section of Lick Fork south of Ky 32.) It was named for John Riddle, a North Carolina-born (1825) resident.

Ordinary, a post office on Brown Ridge and Ky 32, eleven miles northwest of Sandy Hook, was to have been called Antic for reasons unknown, unless it was corrupted from Antioch. According to local tradition, when the office was established on August 11, 1884 by George W. Carter, the community it would serve was considered such an ordinary place that any other name for it would actually seem inappropriate. Maybe so, but it seems more likely to have referred to someone's home where, for a modest fee, a traveler could obtain a room and meal for the night. In America's early days roadside

accommodations were known as ordinaries, a term dating back to the late seventeenth century.[7] In September 1932 Huston J. Johnson moved the office to his nearby store, a mile and a half from the Rowan County line, where it operated till it closed in July 1953.

No one in Elliott County knows of a post office called Percal which, according to postal records, operated between September 29, 1884 and July 1888, probably on Fraley Ridge, about a mile east of Devils Fork and the Morgan County line. At least no one can account for its name, or for Viola, the first name proposed for it by its first postmaster Eliza Wilson. I wonder if Percal could have combined two family names, say Perry (a local family) and another.

The hamlet of Isonville with its active post office, a couple of stores, and one of the county's public schools, centers at the forks of Newcombe Creek and the junction of Ky 36 and 706, $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles ese of Sandy Hook. The office was established on May 13, 1886 by Arch Ison and, with the community, was most likely named for his grandfather Archibald (ca. 1780-1871), the county's Virginia-born Ison progenitor.

James M. Stephens proposed the name Trace for a post office on Blaine Trace, which joins Little Fork a mile below Backbone Hill. But when it was established, on September 13, 1888, it was given his family name Stephens instead. Sometime before 1910 the office was moved to Little Fork, at the mouth of Ison Creek. After at least half a dozen more moves over the next thirty years, it returned to the mouth of Ison, $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles ene of Sandy Hook, where it closed in the early-mid 1990s.

The Wyett post office on the present Ky 713, one mile from the Rowan County line and 8 3/4 miles west of Sandy Hook, was named by its first postmaster William H.H. Lewis, for Wyett Adkins, a resident, and operated from August 16, 1889 through August 1941.

During the Civil War, it's said, Rebel soldiers were prospecting for iron ore in the hills along both sides of Bruin Creek. The trenches they dug for this purpose were still to be seen by August 17, 1889 when a post office was opened on the creek's Left Fork to serve the Upper Bruin neighborhood. The office was named Trench when Thomas W. Hudgins' first preference Hudginsburg was declared unacceptable by postal authorities. After several site changes along the Fork, the office wound up at a site two miles above Dickerson's store (Bruin's last post office site) where, in June 1942, it closed.

The community of Stark extends for over two miles along Ky 649 on a ridge between Big and Little Caney Creeks. At one extreme is Binion's store; at the other is the local Methodist church. In the middle were the buildings of what was once one of the most active community centers in Kentucky, a multi-funded grassroots operation which, for over a dozen years, attracted national attention. It closed on the death of its administrator in July 1981 when no one of her calibre could be found to keep it going. Though the Stark post office was established on June 30, 1890 in postmaster James M. Porter's store across the road from the Methodist church (and 11½ miles north of Sandy Hook), the neighborhood it served is one of the county's oldest. It is said to have been named by Thomas Thompson, an early settler on the east end of the ridge, for the Revolutionary War general John Stark with whom his father had served. The first

name proposed for the office, Elliott Home, refers to the large white house, once called Highland Forest, built in 1823 for the John Lisle Elliott family, across the road from the office and just east of the Methodist church. In 1959 the office was moved to Binion's store where it closed in the summer of 1989. Part or all of the neighborhood may also have been called Egypt in its early years for area residents would come to the local store for their grain.

From March 28, 1892 to July 1895 David M. Miller operated the Mink post office at an unknown site near Clay Fork of Big Sinking. It could have been named for "Mink" Porter, a late nineteenth century trapper of the animal that gave him his nickname, or for the animals still found in the county. Or for both.

A mile and a half up Hurricane Creek from Little Fork, Nancy Jane Wells, on March 30, 1893, established the Halcom post office. She named it for her neighbors Lindsey and Sarah Halcom (or Halcum, Halcam, Holcom, Holcum, or Holcomb) who came from Letcher County. In 1931, after a longish stay on Gillum Branch, southwest of its original site, the office was moved to David N. Ross' store, one and a half miles up Wallow Creek (and twelve miles east of Sandy Hook), where it remained till it closed in December 1958. The neighborhood it served in its later years is now known as Wallowhole for the creek which heads some 300 yards from the Lawrence County line and extends for $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles to Little Fork below Culver. According to local tradition, bears used to come in here to wallow in the sand to rid themselves of bothersome insects. In 1935 the Fielden post office (above) was moved to Halcom's Gillum Branch location where it served Hurricane Creek homes till 1963.

Meredith P. Skaggs, the local storekeeper, gave the name of his five years old son Roscoe to a post office established on July 11, 1895 at the head of the Left Fork of the Little Sandy's Middle Fork, about a mile from the Morgan County line, and seven miles sse of Sandy Hook. In 1899 Meredith succeeded the first postmaster, Charles G. Oliver. In 1948 the office was moved down to the mouth of Beech (or Branham) Branch, and Roscoe himself served as postmaster from November 1953 till his death in February 1960. The office closed in August 1964.

The Lytten [liht/ə n] post office was established on June 17, 1898 in John W. Wells' store at the head of Fulton's Fork of Devils Fork to serve the community long known as Devils Fork. Wells, the first postmaster, named it for the family of his Virginia-born neighbor Franklin Lytten (or Litton, Litten. Lytton). Following the death of postmaster Mary Click in 1959, the office was moved $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles north to Ky 173, $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of Sandy Hook. It closed with the closing of Watson's store there in 1987.

The name applied to a post office at several sites on Newcombe Creek's Rocky Branch has two possible sources. Burke, established by William Ison on November 18, 1898, may have been named for the popular nineteenth century song The Glendy Burk (composed by Stephen Foster and published in 1860) about a Mississippi River steamboat built in 1851.[8] Or it could have been named for Burke County, North Carolina whence some Elliott Countians came (though none had settled in this vicinity.) When the office closed in late May 1984, on postmaster Delphia Gillum's retirement, it was on Ky 706, nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles up Rocky Branch, and $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles ene of Sandy Hook.

The post office of Dewdrop operated at several sites on Brown Ridge and Ky 32, between January 29, 1899 and December 1963. William Irvine Conn was its first postmaster. According to Lucy White, the name was suggested by May Goodman (who became postmaster in 1903) on noticing one morning that the dew was dripping off the roof outside her window. The office's last site was 1.3 miles east of the old Concord School and 3 3/4 miles west of Newfoundland.

On February 11, 1899 the Green post office was established in James R. Dickerson's store a mile or so up Hog Camp Creek from the Little Dandy. It was most likely named for the family of Virginia-born Robert Kilgore Green (1811-1875) or his son David Crockett Green (1843-1928). David's son Elijah O. Green moved the office, in June 1919, to what has since been known as White's Store, at the junction of Ky 7 and 504, 350 yards southwest of the river, and six miles nne of Sandy Hook. Here it continued operation through 1958. The area served by this office at its several sites may earlier have been called Cliffside, a name still applied to a schoolhouse and a section of nearby Ky. 706.

David Davis had a store at the forks of Wells Creek, three miles above the river. Here, he opened a post office on September 9, 1899, but instead of his preferred name Ward for his father-in-law Electious Bascom Ward (1856-1904), a prominent Sandy Hook merchant and postmaster, the office took the name Bascom. In 1916 Emma Wells moved it three-fourths of a mile down the creek to her store at the mouth of Wells Branch, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles ssw of Sandy Hook, where it remained till it closed in February 1944.

Near the head of Wallow Hole Creek, less than a mile from the Lawrence County line, and thirteen miles east of Sandy Hook, was the Sarah post office. This was established on December 22, 1899 and named for its first postmaster Sarah Emily (nee Holbrook) (Mrs. Henry Harrison) Evans (1862-1953). Except for a short time (1909-1913) when Nelson T. Ross had the office one mile downstream, it remained with the Evans family at or near its original site. Sarah's son Roscoe kept it in his store from February 1940 till it closed in November 1962.

Robert Fulton established the Culver post office on December 23, 1899 on Little Fork (and the present Ky 486), about half a mile above Wallow Hole Creek, and ten miles east of Sandy Hook. Neither this name nor Cutler, the first name proposed for this office, has been derived. The county has had no families of either name. It's possible that Culver was corrupted from Cutler, for errors of this kind were not uncommon in the late nineteenth century and seldom corrected.

Bryant B. Fannin (1865-1927) gave his family's name to the Fannin post office he established in his store on Middle Fork Creek on January 27, 1900. It was at the junction of Ky 32 and 719, three miles southeast of Sandy Hook, when it closed at the end of December 1958.

From October 31, 1901 through mid September 1903 Lucy (Mrs. Joseph) Duvall maintained the Guss post office on Doctors Branch, a mile and a half from the Little Sandy, and four miles west of Sandy Hook. She named it for her twelve year old son Guss.

Somewhere at or near the head of Arabs Fork of Big Sinking Creek, between Jacobs and the future Ault, Doctor M. Foster and his wife Mary operated the Winkler post office between September 26, 1902 and mid November 1913. Neither the office nor its name derivation seem to be known to county historians.

Lucile was the name given to a post office established on February 28, 1905 by James H. Lewis to serve the Right Fork of Middle Fork Creek. Neither this name (the one l spelling appears on all postal records) nor the originally intended Lowell have been explained. Until it closed at the end of August 1960 the office occupied several sites on Right Fork, most recently at the junction of Ky 719 and the Howards Creek Road, 5 3/4 miles south of Sandy Hook.

Though Barnett and Lewis were the names first proposed for Enoch Lewis' post office at the head of Newcombe's Right Fork, it opened on July 31, 1905 as Eldridge, named for another local family (perhaps Will Eldridge's). In 1925 James R. Branham had the office moved a mile and a half down the creek (and Ky 706) to his store, some $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Isonville, and nine miles southeast of Sandy Hook, where it closed in October 1953.

The Charity post office was established on September 27, 1905 by Joshua C. Cassall some two to $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles up Ison Creek which joins the Little Sandy's Little Fork at Stephens. Unable to call it Joshua, his first preference, Cassall named it instead for his wife, the former Charity Stephens (ne August 1877). After several moves up the creek and Ky 409, the office ended in Griffey Hollow, some $10\frac{1}{2}$ miles northeast of Sandy Hook, where it closed in February 1933.

Elihu Barker and his wife Clercy operated the <u>Klein</u> post office on Open Fork of Big Gimlet Creek, probably at or just above its mouth and later in the vicinity of the Open Fork School, a mile up that stream. The latter site, fourteen miles nne of Sandy Hook, was that of the first location of the future <u>Access</u> post office which later moved to Carter County. Barker's office was probably named for one or more of the area's Cline families, and the use of the original German spelling of their name may have reflected the prior adoption of <u>Cline</u> for an office in Floyd County. <u>Klein</u> closed in July 1918.

Some two miles up North Ruin Creek was the <u>Bigstone</u> post office whose name was derived from the big flat rock that was partially destroyed in 1949 in the building of Ky 556. The first name proposed for it was <u>Click</u> for the family of its first postmaster Eliza Jane (Mrs. Greenville Lackey) Click. The office opened on May 27, 1903. By late May 1953, when it closed, it was in Frank Gillum's store, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles northwest of Sandy Hook.

To serve the Devils Fork area of southwest Elliott County, Santford Adkins established a post office on June 4, 1907. Since his first preference <u>Adams,</u> for one or more local families, was already in use in Lawrence County, he called it <u>Spanglin</u> for reasons still unknown. His office closed in July 1914, but Willie Adams re-established it in November 1930, half a mile up a branch of Fulton Fork and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the present Ky 7, seven miles wsw of Sandy Hook. It closed for good in July 1955.

John F. Skaggs established the <u>Clayton</u> post office on October 12, 1907. It was on the north bank of Laurel Creek, just north of Mabry Ridge, near the Rowan County line, and served the area known

as <u>Fannin Valley</u>. The latter, in turn, was likely named for mid nine-
teenth century residents. George and Catherine Fannin. But <u>Clayton</u>'s
derivation is not known. It could have honored a little crippled
boy of that name, of whom nothing more has been learned, but this
is conjecture. The office closed in August 1932.

When <u>Parker</u>, probably for Adam Parker, an area resident, was
found unacceptable by postal authorities, storekeeper Charles
McMillion named his new post office <u>Conn</u> for seventy five year old
Andrew Jackson Conn, anther resident. The office was about where
Arabs and Clay Forks meet to form the Big Sinking Creek, less than
$1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Ky. 504 at Gimlet, and some fourteen miles north of
Sandy Hook. It extended from December 16, 1907 through 1915.

<u>Albert</u> was another post office on Ky 706 and the Right Fork of
Newcombe Creek, perhaps at the mouth of Jim Oliver Branch. It was
established on May 25, 1909 with William H. Adkins, postmaster, and
may have been named for the two year old son of Bill and Martha
Oliver. After a move one-fourth of a mile down the Fork to a site
1 3/4 miles above Isonville and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Eldridge, it closed
in November 1932.

On July 9, 1912 John C.McDavid established the <u>Dobbins</u> post office
on the Little Fork of the Little Sandy, near the Little Fork Church.
He named it for a family that had moved there from Lawrence County
in the late nineteenth century. In 1945 Thelma Gladys Booth had the
office moved one-third of a mile downstream to a point just below
Booth Branch, $17\frac{1}{2}$ miles northeast of Sandy Hook. On her retirement
in April 1970 the office closed.

The Sideway post office was established on September 12, 1912 in John Wesley Mabry's store, about a mile south of Ky 504 and a little over one mile east of the junction of Carter, Rowan, and Elliott Counties. In 1917 Mabry was succeeded by his son Andrew Jackson (Jack) Mabry who maintained the office till it closed in October 1958. According to Kathleen Cole of New Carlisle, Ohio, a Mabry relative, Sideway was but the reversal of Wayside, one of the names first proposed for this office. The name given to the shortlived (1916-1917) Longway post office, a mile away in Rowan County, may have been suggested by this name.

A post office on Mauk Ridge and Ky 504, fifteen miles northwest of Sandy Hook, was established on December 23, 1914 by John Martin Catron and named for John Ault, a respected Grayson grocery salesman. Actually his name was suggested after four other names had been rejected by postal authorities as already in use in Kentucky. Ault closed in July 1975.

The enigmatic Jake post office (not the shortlived [1888-1889] Pike County office of this name), was established by John M. Hillman on December 14, 1915. Though he never actually served as postmaster (Nerva Lewis assumed this position on April 17, 1916), Hillman's home on Rose Creek, east of the Green post office, suggests that the Elliott County Jake was located in that vicinity. But there's no local memory of this office, nor any record of its closure. So it may not have actually operated. Nor is its name source known.

Faye, on Ky 7, just below Doctors Branch of the Little Sandy, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles southwest of Sandy Hook, was established on November 23, 1922 and named for its first postmaster Faye (Mrs. Talmage)

Redwine, the twenty seven year old daughter of the Sandy Hook merchant John Will Green.   It lasted through November 1947.

Serving the Brushy Creek area in the northeast corner of the county from May 9, 1923 through January 1939 was Sansilk. This was one mile up Brushy which joins the Little Sandy's Little Fork at the Carter County line. Miss Bertha Porter was its only postmaster. According to area resident Gomez Porter, Sansilk was one of three similar sounding names submitted to the Post Office Department by his father Allen Porter. The others--Sandlick and Sandcliff--were already in use, in Letcher and Wayne Counties, respectively. The significance of Sansilk was not known to him, nor to others.

At the head of Blaine Trace, about a mile from the Lawrence County line and just below the first site of the Blevins post office, was the office called Edsel. Blevins had been established on March 14, 1899 and named for its first postmaster Thomas W. Blevins. On his retirement in 1929, the office was moved three miles south to the Right Fork of Cains Creek (in Lawrence County) where it closed in 1956. Its Elliott County replacement (twenty one miles east of Sandy Hook) was to have been named for postmaster-designate Wade Blevins' daughter Jewell, but since this sounded too much like Jeriel, the name of a Carter County office, he had to find another name. He chose Edsel for the son of his cousin Daniel Blevins. In 1957 an attempt was made to trade on the identity of this name with that of the newly produced but soon to be ill-fated Edsel motor car. Plans by the Ford people to initiate an extensive campaign for this car from the post office failed when bad road conditions prevented one of these vehicles from being driven there. The Edsel post office

closed with Wade's retirement in November 1960. Its vicinity is now generally known as Blaines Trace.

Not to be confused with Bruin was the Ruin post office which was established in the summer of 1933 in postmaster Roscoe C. Pennington's store on North Ruin Creek for which it was named. In 1948 Gladys Pennington moved it half a mile east to a site just below the Carter School, 1 3/4 miles east of Ky 173, and 4 3/4 miles wnw of Sandy Hook, where it remained until it closed in 1953.

The North and South Ruin Creeks head just east of 173, about a mile apart, and more or less parallel each other for about $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles till they join to form the main Ruin Creek, two-thirds of a mile from the Little Sandy, just below Sandy Hook. According to old land records the streams were called Ruin as early as 1832. But later in the nineteenth century North Ruin was locally known as Carter Creek for the family of Scott County, Virginia-born Milton L. Carter who had settled there around 1850 and was to be one of the county's first magistrates. Still later Geological Survey maps showed South Ruin as the Left Fork of Ruin, while North Ruin was known as the Right Fork. Though the name's derivation is not known, it's supposed to have referred to some historic event or geographic condition. Lucy White tells us of the man who was found sitting on a rock by the creek's bank with his head in his hand, crying "I'm ruined, I'm ruined." Perhaps--in the absence of discernible ruins.

Finally, an office, Lisle, probably named for the early settler John Lisle Elliott, was established on March 27, 1894 with William H. Holbrook, postmaster, but it never operated. Curiously, its authorization was not officially rescinded until mid March 1898.

And its location is not known.

Sandy Hook, Elliott's seat and its only incorporated town, and Isonville have the county's only active post offices. None of the discontinued offices in this almost completely rural county ever served anything more than a store or two, a school, or a church. Fifteen office names were not the first preferences of those who established them, while eight offices served neighborhoods with other names.

Local or area people accounted for twenty three post office names, while one name honored a Revolutionary War officer from New England under whom a local man's father had served. Six offices had geographic or descriptive names. To five offices were transferred the names of local features (four streams and an elevation). One office was named for a local activity; another commemorated a condition of early settlement; and a third referred to a European animal. One name may have been a spelling reversal. Two possible explanations (nickname or animal and song or distant place) have been offered for two more names. Six names remain unexplained, and two offices have not been precisely located.

FOOTNOTES

1. Wallace J. Williamson of Ashland, Ky. in a letter to the author, February 23, 1973

2. Harve Mobley, then of Washington, D.C., in a letter to the author, February 20, 1973

3. The long association of Bruin (the Dutch word for brown) with bears derives from the brown bear, a principal character in the medieval epic of Reynard the Fox.

4. Some residents have suggested that <u>Martinsburg</u>'s name may also have been derived from the prevalence of purple martins that once had threatened to take over the little village until some of the local men caught them by the sackful and disposed of them. Several accept the Louisville Courier-Journal's assertion that the town was named for John's son Alexander L. who was also a legislator from Floyd County (1867-1869) when he supported Elliott County's establishment. When the bill creating the new county's seat was introduced in the Kentucky Senate, two other names --<u>Holtsville</u> and <u>Petersburg</u>--were first suggested for it.

5. <u>Crackers Neck</u> has also been applied to that stretch of Ky 7 extending another mile or so east to Ky 504 and the site of the old Green post office. (See Robert M. Rennick "Kentucky's Two Cracker Necks" (sic), <u>Comments on Etymology</u>, Vol. xvii (5-6), December 1987, Pp. 9-10).

6. According to late nineteenth century Kentucky Geological Survey maps and early twentieth century coal maps, that section of the Little Sandy above the mouth of Middle Fork, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles below Sandy Hook, was inexplicably identified as Open Fork, a name also mentioned in land grants dating to the 1830s.

7. According to American lexicographer Allen Walker Read, the first known use of <u>Ordinary</u> to refer to a tavern was in 1663 by John Josselyn, an English traveler in America. Yet, according to E. Cobham Brewer's <u>Dictionary of Phrase and Fable</u> (The Galley Press

Edition, n.d., P. 921), the term referred to a "public dinner where each guest pays his quota (or to) a table d'hote"; and its use was traced to Beaumont and Fletcher's Scornful Lady. (iv 1)

8. According to Stephen Foster biographer Ken Emerson in his Doodah! (Stephen Foster and the Rise of American Popular Culture), New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997, P. 255), the Glendy Burk had been named for a New Orleans banker and legislator Glenn D. Burke, and ceased operation after a wreck in 1855.

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