Owsley, Kentucky's ninety sixth county in order of formation, was established by legislative act on January 23, 1843. Taken from sections of Clay, Estill, and Breathitt Counties, its original 480 square mile territory yielded parts of three other counties--Jackson in 1858, Wolfe in 1860, and Lee in 1870. By February 1890 it had assumed its present 198 square miles. It was named for William Owsley (1782-1862), a Justice of the Kentucky Court of Appeals and, from 1844 to 1848, the sixteenth governor of the state.

Owsley County is drained by the main stream and branches of the South Fork of the Kentucky River and by Sturgeon Creek, another tributary of the Kentucky, and its branches. Three fourths of the county's settlements and post offices are actually on these branches rather than the main streams.

The first settlers in what was to become Owsley County are believed to have been John Abner, a land speculator, and John "Renty" Baker who arrived in the upper Buffalo Creek valley in the 1780s. They were followed by James Moore and his family and John Bowman (and possibly his father Cornelius) at the site of Booneville, the county seat. By the time the county was established these pioneers had been joined by Neals, Gabbards, Wilsons, Woods, Flan(n)erys, Hamptons, Minters, and Botners.

For most of the nineteenth century subsistence farming and, later, timbering and some low grade coal mining were the county's economic foundation. Any significant development from either the outside or within the county was hindered by poor roads. Even now the only through highways are the twisty-turny two laners Ky 11 and 30. The only railroads to penetrate the county were the narrow gauge K&P between Tallega
(in Lee County) and Lerose and the Kentucky Rockcastle and Cumberland along Wild Dog Creek that were built to ship lumber from area mills to the main rail line on the Kentucky River; but with timber depletion they were gone by the 1930s. The few non-farm jobs available for stay-at-homers were, and still are, in the school system, local government, and retail and service businesses. Until recently burley tobacco was the chief source of farm income.

From Owsley's peak of some 8,000 residents in 1910, a steady decline, due mostly to outmigration, brought its population down to 4,858 recorded in the 2000 Census (making it Kentucky's second smallest county in population to Robertson.) With no industry to speak of, it continues to be one of the state's poorest counties and the most rural in eastern Kentucky.

This essay will deal with the thirty six post offices contained within Owsley's present boundaries. Some will be located by road miles from downtown Booneville (on the South Fork, eighty six road miles southeast of downtown Lexington, via the Mountain Parkway and Ky 11) or from other offices in their respective valleys.

**SOUTH FORK VALLEY POST OFFICES**

The South Fork of the Kentucky River heads at the confluence of Goose Creek and Red Bird River, just above Oneida, in Clay County. It extends for 42 miles to join the North Fork (by then including the Middle Fork) opposite Beattyville in Lee County. Yet, in its earliest days, this stream and its Goose Creek headwaters were all one stream, identified as Goose Creek. The story goes that when Daniel Boone was surveying in that area in the early 1780s he spotted a large rock that had separated from the adjacent hillside, fallen, and landed in mid-
stream, at or near the mouth of Sextons Creek. On that rock, Boone is said to have later remarked, a goose had built her nest, and this suggested the name he supplied to the stream on his survey. In 1836-37, however, a federal survey gave the South Fork name to that section of the stream below its Red Bird confluence. This seemingly was to provide an onomastic balance with the North (and Middle) Fork coming down from eastern Kentucky.

Sixteen post offices served Owsley County's South Fork watershed.

The first Owsley County post office was actually called South Fork. This was established on June 7, 1843 by Abijah B. Gilbert (who was later to serve this area in the state legislature) on the South Fork opposite the mouth of Lower Wolf Creek. By the late nineteenth century it was serving several vicinity stores and mills, and when it closed in 1957 was on Ky 11, 5½ miles above (south of) Booneville.

The county's only seat, the sixth class city of Booneville squares centers at the junction of the present Ky 11, 30, and 28, some 11½ miles up the South Fork. Booneville's first permanent settlers were James Moore and his family in the 1790s, and thus, for years, the vicinity was called Moore's Station. Elias Moore donated an acre for the new county's seat there in 1843, and his brother James Jr. established the Owsley Court House post office on May 20, 1844 on the west side of the South Fork just above the mouth of Buck Creek. The post office was officially renamed Booneville on December 8, 1846 (with Absalom R. Dickson, postmaster) because Daniel Boone, while on a surveying trip for some land companies in the early 1780s is said to have camped by a spring near the site of the present court house. The town was incorporated as Booneville on March 1, 1847.

If Booneville's Census 2000 population of only 111 is correct it is certainly Kentucky's smallest county seat. But this has been questioned.
According to Fred Gabbard, the county historian and ex school superintendent, the town's original articles of incorporation merely specified the one acre donated by Elias Moore for the seat and these boundaries never changed. But the town is now mostly on the east side of the South Fork, just above (south of) the mouth of Meadow Creek, and is not restricted to its original limits. At least by the mid 1970s some 1,500 persons were calling this town their home.3

The 7½ mile long Buck Creek, which heads a little over a mile east of Vincent, was probably named for the animal Booneville's first proprietor James Moore is said to have killed at its mouth. But there's a local tradition that Boone, in his area survey, may first have called it Sneaking Creek because, as he's said to have put it, "it runs in every direction."4

The first of the three post offices in the Buck Creek watershed was also named for its stream. Just below its head, storekeeper William B. Brandenburgh established the Buck Creek post office on May 8, 1876. In 1912 his successor Henry Isaacs had it moved three fourths of a mile downstream to a site two miles above Levi where it closed in June 1925.

Levi [lee/veye] was, and still is, a crossroads settlement, at the junction of Ky 11, 30, and 847 (though Ky 11 was recently rerouted around it) three miles due west of Booneville, but five miles by way of the creek. It's said to have grown up around Levi Ross' (ne 1816) antebellum saloon which sold the products of a nearby government licensed distillery. But its post office was not established till June 20, 1902, with Mary C. Treadway, its first postmaster. It closed in 1963.5

A mile and a quarter up an unidentified branch of Buck Creek (and two road miles south of Levi, via Ky 847, and 3½ miles southwest of Booneville, via Rt. 1938) was the Scoville [skoh/va]1 settlement and post office. The latter began, on October 6, 1909, as Posey, with Polly Mainous,
postmaster, and may have been named for a local woman of whom nothing is known. On June 7, 1915 Mrs. Mainous' successor Cynthia E. Flanery had the name changed to Scoville for Elizabeth G. (Lizzie) Scoville, a thirty five year old spinster who had come from London, Kentucky before 1910 to start a mission school. The office was discontinued in 1957.

The hamlet, with still active post office, of Lerose [lee/rohz], was located at the head forks of Meadow Creek, a little short of four miles east of Booneville by Ky 30. The office, established by William Napier on July 1, 1905, was named for a local landowner Leander Crawford (called Lee) Rose, son of Robert and Frances Rose.6

FOUR COW CREEK POST OFFICES

The eight mile long Cow Creek, including its Right Fork, joins the South Fork 6½ stream, but only three road, miles above (south of) Booneville. According to local accounts, it was named for the buffalo cow killed on its banks by pioneer Richard Reynolds.

The first of the Cow Creek post offices, Eversole, was established on August 27, 1877 by Abel C. Gabbard whose wife Lucy was the daughter of William and Barbara Eversole. William was a descendant of Jacob Eversole, a Revolutionary War veteran, who brought his sons Abraham and Woolery and their families from North Carolina to eastern Kentucky in 1810. The first site of this office is not known but, according to an 1884 postal route map, it was on a road at least halfway between Booneville and Crockettsville (in Breathitt County). Several moves between the turn of the twentieth century and the mid 1930s (including one in 1916 to a site just north of Indian Creek) brought it within a few hundred yards of the South Fork. It's known to have been at the mouth of Bear Run, Cow Creek's lowest branch, by 1927, and by 1938 it was at
The Cow Creek post office, established by Alfred Eversole on August 10, 1900, occupied several sites on Right Fork including at least three at the mouth of Beech Fork, and most recently, till it closed, also in 1957, at the forks, three stream miles from the South Fork and five road miles southeast of Booneville.

A shortlived (March 21, 1908 to July 15, 1909) and almost unheard of post office called Ash by its only postmaster H.C. (Hyrcanus) Jett was probably 1½ miles up Cow Creek's Left Fork. Neither Ash nor Jett's first name preference Center have been named derived.

Nor has the Arnett post office at the mouth of Smith Fork of Cow Creek's Right Fork, 3½ miles above the forks. While Arnett families have been widely distributed through eastern Kentucky, none are known to have lived in Owsley County. Neither can postmaster-designate Mose Sandlin's first name preference Dale be accounted for. Arnett, established on August 30, 1927, was another Cow Creek office that closed in 1957.

INDIAN CREEK POST OFFICES

Ostensibly named for its being a part of a north-south route followed by pre-settlement Indians, the three mile long Indian Creek joins the South Fork from the southeast 1½ miles below (north of) the South Fork post office site. Its residents were served by three post offices—Gabbard, till it was re-established on Buffalo Creek in 1910, Eversole from 1916 to 1923, and the active Ricetown.

Gabbard [gbaeb/ard] was another Owsley post office named for one of its pioneer and still prominent families. Its progenitor Henry (ne ca. 1768 in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and a descendant of Gebhardts,
Palatinates from Bavaria who arrived in America in 1731) had settled with his seven prolific sons shortly after the establishment of Clay County. On September 24, 1883 the Gabbard post office was established at the mouth of Gabbard Branch, three miles up Indian Creek, with Lucy (Mrs. Abel C.) Gabbard, its first postmaster.\(^7\) The office closed in August 1909, but was re-established, also as Gabbard, on June 10, 1910 by William P. and Matilda Gabbard at (or near) the forks of Buffalo Creek, some 5½ miles south of its Indian Creek site, where it closed again in mid June 1924.\(^8\)

Ricetown, now where it began at the mouth of Stringtown Branch, five miles up Indian Creek, and less than two miles above Gabbard’s first site, alone serves the Indian Creek Neighborhood. When the name Indian Creek was disallowed by the Post Office Department, Joseph Baker, the first postmaster, began the office on September 13, 1901 as Floyd, which he named for his ten year old son. In 1905 local storekeeper and blacksmith Harvey H. Rice (ne 1868, son of Richard and Catherine Rice) renamed the office for himself and had his wife Mary appointed postmaster. For awhile after 1944 the office was 0.6 miles below the mouth of Stringtown, at the Indian Creek end of the old road up Lower Wolf Creek from the South Fork.

**THE THREE ISLAND CREEK POST OFFICES**

Island Creek is really two streams, the six mile long Lower (or Right) Island Creek and the 7½ mile long Left Fork (or Upper) Island Creek that come together 0.6 mile above the (main) Island Creek-South Fork confluence at Conkling. Tradition has it that early surveyors (perhaps Boone himself) had named the streams for an island at the confluence. But something must have happened to that island over the years for it's no longer discernible.
The first Island Creek post office was, and (after a few short
distance moves) still is, on the Left Fork, six miles above the South
Fork confluence. This office was established on February 15, 1867
by the Rev. Thomas Bowman to serve what has since been called Island
City. It was obviously named for its being on an Island Creek, but
the "City" part probably suggests its founders' wishful thinking for
it's never been that, and the likely confusion with the Island post
office in McLean County has justified its two word name.

The Conkling post office at the mouth of Island Creek, eight road
miles south of Booneville, was established on April 19, 1881 with
Robert Wilson, a miller, its first postmaster. Since Owsley County
had no one of that name, historian Fred Gabbard assumed that the office
was named for a prominent national figure and proposed (and he admitted
this was purely a guess) that it was Roscoe Conklin who was to resign
as a U.S. senator from New York in May of that year. When it closed in
1974 Conkling was 0.2 miles up Island Creek from the South Fork.

Serving the Lower (or Right) Fork between August 3, 1904 and 1957
was the Blake post office. Its first postmaster William B. Roberts
named it for one of several area William Blakes, either a local wagon-
maker and the son of another William Blake, or William J. Blake (ne 1873),
a local blacksmith. Or both. It occupied several sites 2½ to 3 miles
above the Island Creek forks, most recently half a mile above the mouth
of McGuire Fork.

OWSLEY'S SEXTON CREEK POST OFFICES

Three and a half miles of Clay County's twenty four mile long Sexton
Creek (see above) flow through Owsley County to join the South Fork ten
miles above (south of) Booneville. Its three Owsley post offices all
served its lower end.
The inexplicably named Joshua was maintained by Elijah H. Begley between June 6, 1889 and July 11, 1895 at the mouth of Sexton. Begley's first name preference was Goose Rock (by then still a significant landmark).  

It's merely assumed that the future U.S. Secretary of War, President, and Supreme Court Justice, but then Territorial Governor of the Philippines, was the name source of the Taft post office. There were no Owsley or Clay County residents of this name. The office was established on August 20, 1903, with Lucy Couch, its first postmaster, just above the mouth of Sexton's Anglin Branch, about a half air mile from Clay County. In 1908, or shortly thereafter, it moved 1 1/2 miles into Clay County, but in 1913 it was again moved three miles down Sexton to an Owsley County site one mile from the South Fork.

From February 24, 1905 through April 1906 Maxie York had a post office called Trust, serving a locality called Etta, about one fourth of a mile up Sexton. Nothing else is known about it and neither name has been explained. But by 1953 the Taft post office was occupying this site, where it closed in 1969.

POST OFFICES ON BUFFALO CREEK

Like many streams in the Kentucky River watershed, Buffalo Creek consists primarily of its two main forks which come together only 1.7 miles from the creek's South Fork confluence at the Clay County line. The Left Fork (or Lower Buffalo Creek) extends for 7 1/2 miles from the head of its Lucky Fork branch or 8 1/2 miles from the head of its Laurel Fork branch, and was an important timber producer till the end of the Second World War. The thirteen mile long Right (or Upper) Fork heads just north of the Owsley-Perry-Clay Counties convergence. Pioneers William Neal and John Abner, on a hunting trip up the South Fork, are
said to have named the creek after they'd killed several buffalo at its mouth.  

The earliest post office in the Buffalo watershed was Sebastian. This was established by William E. Rice on August 8, 1890 to serve his store and several area flour mills probably 1½ miles up Buffalo's Left Fork. It's generally assumed to have been named for Owsley County judge James M. Sebastian (1838-1907) who had come to Kentucky as a young boy with his father Wesley from Claiborne County, Tennessee. In 1895 Rice was succeeded by his brother Harvey Rice who was later to establish the Ricetown post office (see above). In 1904 Daniel B. Gabbard moved the office two miles up the Left Fork to a site probably just below the Laurel-Lucky Fork confluence where it closed in February 1914. It was re-established by Arthur Johnson on July 23, 1920 on what's now the Lucky Fork, just above the Middle Allen Branch.  

It was moved over a mile down the Left Fork in 1935 and another mile down in 1939 to a site just above the mouth of Big Twin Creek where, the following year, Henry Clay Gabbard succeeded in having it renamed Gabbard, and here it closed for good in October 1943. For some time the two names were used interchangeably to the confusion of outsiders but the U.S. Board on Geographic Names refused to offer an official decision on either name. Since the Second World War neither name has been of much significance to the few remaining residents who simply say they live "up on Buffalo."  

One of the two Kentucky post offices closely identified with the Christmas season was, since 1930, at the mouth of the Rockhouse Branch of Buffalo Creek's Right Fork, 14½ miles sse of Booneville. Mistletoe, never more than a post office and store, was named for the mistletoe and holly still growing along that stream and that for years were marketed by missionaries during the holiday season. For even longer the local post
office, established on November 15, 1900 by Jeremiah Burns, a mile below its present site and closed in December 1999, received volumes of mail for seasonal cancellations and distribution to all parts of the world.

At the very head of Buffalo's Right Fork, in the extreme southeast corner of the county, were two virtually unknown and shortlived early twentieth century post offices and the transfer of a third office. Couch was established by A(bijah) B. Couch on July 18, 1902 with Andrew J. Couch, the first of its two postmasters. It closed at the end of July 1905. On July 29, 1907 Jesse G. Barger re-established the vicinity's office as Burley, named for his son Burrell (ne 1895 and called Burley). But this office extended only through June 1914.¹⁴

In 1910 this area was again served by a post office, Doorway, which had been moved nearly three miles up the Fork from its first location at or near the mouth of Schoolhouse Branch. But in 1918 it was again moved to a site on Perry County's Squabble Creek where it closed in 1959 and is thus acknowledged, in retrospect, as a Perry County post office.

Then there's Kentucky's strangest and most provocatively named place Whoopflarea, some three miles below the head of Right Fork. The name, variously pronounced [hu]p/ /fɔ/ /lɛ/ /ee/ /a , [hu]p/ /fɔ/ /lɛ/ /ee/ /a , [wh]p/ /fɔ/ /lɛ/ /ee/ /a , and [wh]p/ /lɛ/ /ree, was first applied to a range of hills between the Right Fork and the Clay County line, then to a pioneer settlement, and then to the local post office, operating between 1932 and 1954, that served one of the most inaccessible areas of eastern Kentucky. The name was derived most likely from the whoop of owls but has since inspired a host of explanatory accounts, most to be taken with caution: Over the years the hoot of an owl heard by early hunters became some wilder animal making bone-chilling screaming noises, or even a hant. One account describes a man named Larry or Larrie who wandered off from a hunters' camp one
night. His friends spent several days searching for him, literally "whooping for Larry." Or Larry was a moonshiner whose customers would announce their needs by whooping for Larry. Another Larry, seeking his way home in the dark, would shout his name and be guided by the echo of his voice against the hills. He never made it, and his ghost may still be heard "a-whooping for Larry." Then there was little Laura, or Laurie, who liked to wander around the countryside. To get her home for meals her father would send one of his other children to whoop for Laurie. The spellings of this name have been as varied as its pronunciations and the explanatory accounts: Whoopiarea, Whoopflaeria, Whoopflara, Whoopfalurry, Whoopferlarrie, Whoopferlorrie, etc.

Local people still refer to their home by this name and it's still shown on published maps. Anyway, the post office was first located above the Twin Branches and just below the first Doorway site, with Clark Hacker, its first postmaster, and was then moved one mile down the Fork to the mouth of Evans Trace Branch.

In addition to Sebastian, Buffalo's Left Fork had two other post offices, one on each of its feeder forks. Actually, these were one office with two names—Cortland and Lucky Fork.

Just before the turn of the twentieth century, at a site near a falls early settled by Bakers and Abners, a mission school and church were established by Samuel Cort, a Presbyterian minister. According to tradition, this area had earlier been called Constantinople for reasons that remain unknown. Soon the vicinity, probably at the head of Cortland Fork (earlier called Meadow Branch), and maybe Powder Springs Fork, less than half a mile from the Breathitt County line, that joins Laurel Fork of Left Buffalo, 2½ miles from the latter, was being called The Falls of Buffalo. However, the post office, established on November
21, 1900, with Daniel B. Baker, postmaster, was named Cortland for Sam or, more likely, Miss Margaret J. Cort, the new teacher. In the early years of the twentieth century the community was also served by several stores and grist mills. In 1935 the office was moved 1½ miles down the branch to its Laurel Fork confluence.

On September 1, 1937 the Cortland post office was moved again, some three miles north to a site just up the Lucky Fork of Buffalo where another Presbyterian minister Chester Ranck from Philadelphia, Pa. also had a mission. It's assumed that, by then, a new missionary program, including a church, school, and small hospital, had claimed a greater need for a post office, and the Cortland postmaster Myrtle B. McIntosh moved with it. As Lucky Fork it continued to operate at two sites on that stream through June 1972 when it closed, though in 1942 it was moved 1½ miles up the Fork to a site at the mouth of Steel Trap Branch.

It's not known when this four mile long head branch of Buffalo's Left Fork was first called Lucky Fork. It can be traced at least to the early twentieth century since a local school was so identified in 1911 and the stream bore this name on the 1927 Kentucky Geological Survey map of Owsley County. As yet unconfirmed reports have it named for the good hunting there in earlier times. Like so many other feature names in the South Fork country it's even been attributed to Daniel Boone, and some say it may have been named by the Philadelphia missionaries for the good luck they had in achieving their evangelical goals.

**TWO POST OFFICES ON OWSELY'S LOWER BUFFALO CREEK**

The 3½ mile long Lower Buffalo Creek joins the South Fork in Lee County, some twenty seven stream miles below the mouth of the Buffalo Creek we've just considered. Two post offices served its Owsley County
From October 5, 1904 till mid August 1905 Sherman Cooper operated a post office inexplicably called Hawk probably at the mouth of Jerushia Branch, two miles up the creek and 4½ miles nne of Booneville.

At the mouth of Sulphur Springs Fork, one of the three head feeders of Lower Buffalo, and less than a mile above the site of Hawk, Thurman Brandenburg would establish the Sulphur Springs post office. But instead it opened, on September 3, 1925, as the equally enigmatic Stay, with Joel C. Brandenburg, Thurman's brother, its first postmaster, and closed in 1974.20

TWO MORE SOUTH FORK VALLEY POST OFFICES

About two miles up the five mile long White Oak Creek, which joins the South Fork from the west, just above the site of the South Fork post office was Major. This office was established on September 29, 1900 by William M. Mainous whose first name choice was Hobart, probably for a two year old nephew. But Major it became for reasons unknown. After several vicinity moves it closed in 1957.

To serve a community that may first have been called Don and later South Booneville and Milltown (for a nearby South Fork branch), Isaac Anderson Moyers established the Turin [tûr/ihn] post office. Neither Don, his first preference, nor Turin has been explained. Nor can it even be assumed to have been named for the Italian "shroud" city. The office began July 11, 1905 on the present Ky 11, just west of the South Fork, and 1½ miles south of Booneville. Within a few years it had been moved half a mile south to the junction of the present Ky 11 and the road (Rt. 1938) to Scoville, where it closed in 1941.
POST OFFICES IN THE STURGEON AND LITTLE STURGEON VALLEYS

Sturgeon Creek meanders through eastern Jackson and western Owsley Counties for thirty five miles to join the Kentucky River opposite Heidelberg in Lee County, six miles below (west of) the South-North Forks confluence at Beattyville. Its name was applied to the creek before 1784 as it appears on Filson's Kentucky map, and may be traced to the fish said to have then inhabited that stream. Some fourteen miles up Sturgeon from its Kentucky River confluence, the main stream is joined by the eight mile long Little Sturgeon Creek. Four post offices served the Little Sturgeon watershed and three served the residents of the Owsley County stretch of main Sturgeon.

Little Sturgeon's earliest post office served the nineteenth century village of Travellers Rest, 3½ miles up the creek and 8½ miles wsw of Booneville. The village was probably named for a local tavern referred to, in the early nineteenth century, as "travelers resting places" or simply "travelers rests" and may also have been suggestive of Isaac Shelby's pioneer Lincoln County home of the same name. The area may have been settled before 1830 by Jake Gabbard, Sr. and one or more Botner families from Harlan County, and was noted for its race track in the late 1830s and 40s. The local post office, however, was not established till November 5, 1853 with James E. Gibson, postmaster. It closed in September 1861 and was re-established on June 23, 1864 by Elias Botner, storekeeper and flour mill operator. By the 1890s this village of some 600 residents had two hotels catering to drummers and drovers traveling up the creeks from the river to Owsley, Clay, and Jackson County stores. In 1964 the office became a Booneville branch and closed for good in 1970. Local residents now refer to their homes as simply "on Sturgeon".
On March 4, 1902 Henry Clay Smith established the Endee post office up a branch of Rowlette which joins the Little Sturgeon at Travellers Rest, 2 and 3/4 miles northwest. Its name remains underived.\textsuperscript{22} It closed in 1957.

The Sturgeon post office was established on June 6, 1888 by storekeeper John T. Brewer on Little Sturgeon, 2½ miles above Travellers Rest. After several vicinity moves before the Second World War, it closed in 1966.\textsuperscript{23}

Owsley County has one of Kentucky’s ubiquitous Needmores, settlements (with or without post offices) that are traditionally thought to have been lacking in something essential. When storekeeper John C. Botner sought to establish the local office, Needmore was in use in Mason County. So he called his Vincent, probably for Vincent S. Boreing (1839-1903), a Jonesboro, Tennessee native; who had moved as a child to London, Kentucky where he became a Union Army officer, banker, newspaperman, large landowner, and Laurel County judge till he was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1898.\textsuperscript{24} Since December 23, 1899 the Vincent office has been where the present Ky 30 crosses the Little Sturgeon’s Spruce Fork, 1½ miles northeast of Travellers Rest.

The first of main Sturgeon’s three post offices was Green Hall, another office that occupied sites in two counties. It was established on January 2, 1855 probably 1½ miles up Mill Branch of Sturgeon, on the Owsley side of the Owsley-Jackson County line, and is believed to have been named for the green painted open hallway of postmaster James Foster’s home, its first location. By 1858 it had moved across the county line where, with one or two brief exceptions, it stayed till the mid 1920s when it was returned to Owsley County and closed in October 1993.
Yet another post office began in one county and shortly moved to another. On September 13, 1887, on the Lee County side of the line that crosses Elk Lick Creek (1.7 miles from Sturgeon's Duck Fork), storekeeper John W. Handy opened the Pebworth post office, named for the family of Stephen Pebworth, a local machinist (he ca. 1816). On November 14, 1895 Stephen H. Handy had it moved three-fifths of a mile up Elk Lick, into Owsley County where, till it recently closed, it was on the present Ky 11, four miles northwest of Booneville.

The prominent Botner family, associated with several Owsley post offices, gave its name to one, two miles up Sturgeon's other Brushy Creek, less than one fourth of a mile from the Jackson County line. Its first postmaster William Taylor had first proposed the name Hiram for Hiram Botner (1873-1928) but it operated, from June 9, 1915 through January 1929, as simply Botner. No sign of it remains since its site has long been in the south end of the depopulated Daniel Boone National Forest.

Five of Owsley's thirty six post offices—Booneville, Island City, Lerose, Ricetown, and Vincent—are active. (Eight of the discontinued offices all closed in one year, 1957). Eleven offices were centered in what could be considered villages with concentrated populations, including the incorporated Booneville. The others were merely rural offices serving a store or two, a school, and one or more vicinity churches.

Thirteen offices honored local/area persons or families while two were named for well known non-local persons. One had a descriptive name. Six names were transferred from nearby streams. One office was
named for a local activity. Another reflected several local folk traditions. One recalled a local paint job. Nine names are still unexplained.

Twelve offices had names that were not the first proposed for them. Five served communities or neighborhoods with other names. Four had name-changes.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Booneville* is also thirty three miles north of Manchester (via Ky 11).
2. Booneville’s selection as the new county’s seat was confirmed in April 1844 after an unsuccessful challenge by Proctor, a settlement just below the South-North Fork confluence. According to Dennis L. Brewer in *The Land of Lee* (The Formation and County Officials of Lee County, 1870-1983), ca. 1987?, Pp. 8-9, another attempt to move the seat to Proctor was contained in a bill introduced in the legislature in 1851 that was tabled and never re-introduced.
4. Ibid.
5. The first name proposed for the Levi post office was the underived Junius.
6. Napier’s Site Location Report gives the inexplicable Nogi as the first proposed name for this office.
7. According to Mrs. Gabbard’s Site Location Report, the first name proposed for her post office was Arthur, and it would be serving a locality called Hogg.
8. Yet this wasn’t the last of a Gabbard post office for, as we’ll see below, the Sebastian post office on Buffalo’s Left Fork bore the Gabbard name from 1940 to 1943.
9. From April 2 to November 15, 1901 Idaclaze Wilson had another Joshua post office up the South Fork in Clay County, probably at the site of the future Trixie, but nothing else is known of this.

10. On an 1886 Kentucky Geological Survey map and the Manchester 30 minute topographic map of 1891, Buffalo Creek extends along the route of the present Right Fork, and the other branch isn't labeled at all. A 1927 KGS map shows the Right Branch as Upper Buffalo, but only the Laurel and Lucky Forks of the other stream are so labeled.

11. Another naming claimant was William Cradlebaugh who, in a deposition, declared that he had killed five buffalo on this stream in 1779. (According to Jess Wilson of Possum Trot, Clay County, interviewed by the author on July 9, 1977.


14. Couch is not to be confused with Couchtown, an early twentieth century nickname for the Mistletoe neighborhood of Rockhouse Fork because every home in that valley was occupied by a Couch. (According to Fred Gabbard, op. cit. and A.B. Couch, the Mistletoe postmaster, in a letter to the author, November 26, 1985.

15. The Cortland postmaster, in an October 16, 1923 letter to William Gladstone Steel of Medford, Oregon, claims it had been named for Miss M.J. Cort, "a missionary". As "Margaret" she is known to have been the local school teacher from 1900 to 1905. (Fred Gabbard, op.cit.) She is listed in the 1900 Census as Margaret J. Court, nee July 1847. But no Sam Cort or Court is listed and no one of either spelling is listed in any other census.

16. In 1942 the Lucky Fork post office was moved up the Fork to a site at the mouth of Steel Trap Branch.
17. In a notice in the Berea, Ky. Citizen, July 27, 1911

18. The head streams of Left Buffalo—the Laurel and Lucky Forks—join some five miles from the South Fork. The five mile long Laurel was aptly named. At one time or another Kentucky had well over one hundred streams named Laurel something.

19. The name Lower Buffalo for this stream may be a comparatively recent one for on late nineteenth and early twentieth century maps it's identified simply as Buffalo.

20. As late as the 1920s, maps showed Lower Buffalo extending beyond the mouth of Sulphur Springs Fork which joins it from the southwest and Caney Fork which joins it from the east. On recent federal and state maps the Lower Buffalo extension is shown as Straight Fork.


22. Perhaps Endee was named for a set of initials. At least one other Endee, as settlement, rail stop, and post office (1886-1955) in Quay County, New Mexico, had this derivation, from the nearby ND Ranch.

23. An earlier but shortlived and unrecalled Sturgeon post office, operated by pioneer Jacob Gabbard, Sr. (spelled Gabbert in postal records) between July 16 1842 and June 1843 was listed as a Clay County office for Owsey was not established till early 1843. But it's not known on which side of the new county line it was located.

24. A Laurel County post office was also named for Vincent Boreing.
REFERENCES


2. Crace, Allington, Owsley County Extension Agent, in a WPA manuscript on points of interest in Owsley County, ca. late 1930s

3. Gabbard, Fred of Booneville, Ky., interviewed by the author on July 8, 1977


7. Shackelford, Nevyle, feature articles in the Lexington Leader, August 24, 1963 and March 26, 1968

8. Ibid., interviewed by the author on July 8, 1978

9. U.S. Post Office Department: Site Location Reports—Owsley County, Kentucky Post Offices, National Archives (Washington, D.C.)

10. Wilson, Jess and Vernon, interviewed by the author on July 9, 1977

11. Wilson, Joyce, This Was Yesterday, Privately printed, 1977
Owsley Co. communities

1. South Fork (or Southfork) (dpo) (com)
2. Booneville (co. seat) had been Owsley C.H. 
3. Travellers Rest (dpo) (com)
4. Spruce Grove (dpo) (Lee Co.)
5. Island City (dpo) (com)
6. Buck Creek (dpo)
7. Eversole (dpo) (com)
8. Conkling (po and com)
9. Gabbard (aka Sebastian) (com. & dpo) Also Sebastian (P.O.) (dpo)
10. Sturgeon (dpo) (com)
11. Joshua (dpo)
12. Earnestville (dpo) Wld. Dog (com) (Lee Co.)
13. Island Pebworth (po and com)
14. Vincent (po and com) Needmore (com) or Needmore Ngbr.
15. Cowcreek (dpo) (com)
16. Major (dpo) (com)
17. Mistletoe (po and com)
18. Cortland (dpo)
19. Stay (po and com)
20. Ricetown (po) (com) had been Floyd aka Indian Creek (com)
21. Endee (dpo) (com)
22. Levi (dpo) (com)
23. Couch (dpo)
24. Taft (dpo) (com)
25. Blake (dpo) (com)
26. Hawk (dpo)
27. Trust (dpo)
28. Lerose (com. & po)
29. Turin (dpo) (com)
30. Burley (dpo)
31. Ash (dpo)
32. Scoville (dpo) had been Posey (com)
33. Botner (dpo) (com)
34. Arnett (dpo) (com)
35. Lucky Fork (com) (po)
36. Whoopflarea (com) (dpo)
37. Big Springs Ngbr.
38. Moors (or Moore) Ngbr.
40. Pleasant Grove Ngbr.
41. Sugar Camp Ngbr.
42. Hall Ngbr.
43. Bethlehem Ngbr.
44. Anglin Ngbr.
45. Troster (popr)
46. Tupps (popr)
47. Brewer (com)
48. Wild Dog (com)
49. Chestnut Gap (com)
50. Spence Ngbr.
51. Green Hall (dpo)

o = sample
x = presumed

ngbr = 9
(popr = 2)
NT = 39
Points of Interest Spotted on Owsley county Map.

Mr. Allington Grace
County Agent, Owsley co.
Boonesville, Kentucky
Volunteer Associate

1. Boonesville, so called because Daniel Boone camped upon the small
knob just S. of Boonesville, which is now a small cemetery.

1-A. Boones Spring—While camping at Boonesville, Daniel Boone got his water
from a spring between Main and Mulberry streets, where the old tannery
stood. This information was gotten from John Breeding, who is a
Civil War Union Soldier now living in Lee County.

2. Buckcreek, so named because Colonel James Moore killed a buck at the
mouth of the creek, with an old flint-lock gun, which was later made
into a more modern gun with a hammer and cap. The gun today is in
the possession of Lester Eversole, a citizen of Boonesville. The
gun also has a powder pouch which is said to have been made from the skin
of the buck that Colonel James Moore killed at the mouth of Buckcreek.

3. Bascom Caywood, a southern sympathizer, was mobbed at this little
drain near the foot of the hill on the S. side of Boonesville,
going S. toward Cow Creek. Bascom Caywood was mobbed in 1863
by Union soldiers. The old man Caywood was a slave holder and a large
farmer, and lived just across the river on what is now known as the
Caywood farm.

4. Indian Creek, so named because it was said to have been the trail
for Indians traveling North and South.
OWSLEY, William (Gov. 1844-1848. W.); b. Va., 1782; d. near Danville, Ky., 1862; Co. s. of William and Catherine (Bolin) O., who migrated to Lincoln/near Crab Orchard in 1783; ed. sufficient to teach school; because dep. sheriff; while so employed studied law under John Boyle, later chief justice of Ky., appt. in 1812, at age of 31, to Ky. court of appeals; which office resigned in 1828, and retired to his farm in Garrard Co.; later resumed practice of law. Later, gave up farming, settled in Frankfort, lived there until 1843; when he abandoned law, and resumed farming in Boyle Co.; elected gov. in 1844; at expiration of term retired to his home near Danville.

In 1803 m. Elizabeth Gill, one of his school pupils; five children.
Owlsley, William - During 1809-11 served as representative in the state legislature.

In 1810 Gov. Scott apptd. him judge of the court of appeals.

In 1812 - apptd - to the supreme bench as colleague of Judge Boyle, but was obliged to resign in consequence of a law reducing the number of judges.

Reappointed in 1813.

Resigned the office of judge of the court of appeals Dec. 5, 1830, was reappointed by the governor, but was not confirmed. He then retired to his farm, meanwhile representing his county in the state house of representatives in 1830, and in the state senate during 1832-34. In 1833 he was presidential elector for Henry Clay against Andrew Jackson. Dividing his farm among his five children, he removed to Frankfort and remained there until 1843, when he bought a farm in Boyle County and gave up practice. He was secretary of state to Gov. James T. Morehead, and in 1844 elected governor on the Whig ticket, by a majority vote of 4,624 over Col. William O. Butler. Owlsley County, established in 1843, before he became governor, was named in his honor. After the expiration of his term of office he again retired to private life on his farm near Danville, and died there Dec. 9, 1862.