PLACE NAME STORIES ABOUT WEST KENTUCKY TOWNS
Edited by
Violetta Maloney Halpert

Here are fifteen traditional stories which explain how some West Kentucky towns and villages got their names. They can be grouped according to the categories described in the introduction to Herbert Halpert's article on waterways place names, in this issue (page 85), and his remarks on the function of place name legends apply here with equal force.

A place name tale, even when it is taken down verbatim, is seldom a remarkable example of the story-teller's art. This type of explanatory story seems to be essentially an anecdotal form. Collectors' reports have indicated that it is often told quite incidentally in the middle of a general discussion of old times, the early settlers, town history, etc. The prosaic, somewhat choppy style of most of the following items is not, then, to be held against either collector or editor; it is a more or less accurate reflection of the traditional way of telling these stories. Most of the student reporters were conscientiously transcribing the words of their informants as accurately as possible, and had been cautioned against any literary embroidery or "improvement".

The editor has, in most cases, let the stories stand as written, in spite of a great temptation to prune; the rambling quality is never as attractive in print as it is to the ear. A few minor obscurities have been clarified as unobtrusively as possible.

The first five stories are examples of the brief incident which sounds historic but may or may not be so. Some are more logical than others. Eddyville's name story has the sober aspect of probability, whereas going from Skillet to Bandana in an effort to escape ridicule seems a jump from the frying pan into the fire. George Stewart has suggested in Names on the Land that most animal place names mark a spot "where someone encountered or killed or hunted that animal in such a way as to be worth remembering."
This may well be as true for Bucksnort, Kentucky as it is for Bucksnort, Texas (see note 3) but it's not what they tell in this Caldwell County story.

The stories about Fancy Farm are a fascinating pair because they give exactly opposite reasons for the naming. Naming a place ironically, as in 6B, seems to be fairly rare. The four Feliciana stories demonstrate nicely the variations of detail and selection in several versions of the same story, which purports to be a real incident. In the first story the Negro women are fighting "for some reason that no one remembers"; in version B and C the important motivation for the fight—their love for the same man—is a crucial point. The differences in the fate of the two women in the four versions are especially striking. Story A does not tell what happened to them; B indicates only that their fight was broken up; D says that Flissy killed Anna; and C states that they fought with knives till both of them died.

The Fredonia and Manitou tales are interesting attempts to explain unusual names in terms of something familiar. Indian names, of which Manitou is a simple example, are particularly subject to this treatment. The stories about Pembroke, Sheridan and Tiline are alike in that one inhabitant (the keeper of the general store in two of the three stories) must arbitrarily choose a name. These tales have a more historical air than some of the others, possibly because many places were named in similar fashion, according to the whim of an individual.

Pilot Oak and Lone Oak represent the many place names derived from landmark trees. This naming pattern is common enough, but the stories explaining the names are far from uniform, as the three versions of the Pilot Oak tale demonstrate.

1. Bandana

(A) Bandana, a small town in the northern part of Ballard County, was first a settlement with one store and a blacksmith shop. It was called Skillet. The only approach, since there were no roads at that time, was from the Ohio River.
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There was a peddler who used to come at various intervals to the little settlement, and by the time he had walked the five miles from the river he would be tired. He would sit under a certain tree and rest. He would put his head on his wares, which were tied up in a big red bandana handkerchief.

Since the name Skillet was ridiculed, some of the inhabitants began calling the town Bandana, after the peddler.

(B) At first the settlement was called Skillet. One day some hunters came through and were very much amused at the name of the little town. They made some wisecracks about it and went on their way. After they left, someone found they had dropped a huge bandana handkerchief. He picked it up and suggested to his contemporaries that they call the place Bandana, which they did.

(Both versions of this story were written by Mrs. Jessie Henderson, Summer 1956. They were told to her by Mrs. Hamon Titsworth of Bandana, Kentucky, in June of the same year.)

2. Bardwell

During the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad, the Company had commissaries, or places where they fed their men. They had a big commissary near the middle of what is now the town of Bardwell. These food stores and the men they fed there had to have water, so the company usually, if it was practical, dug temporary wells for the men. This they did at Bardwell. Perhaps they would have dug the same kind of well at Bardwell as they did at other places had the soil been the same, but this wasn't a fact; the truth of the matter was, before they could get the well down to any depth, water and gumbo soil would rush into the well so fast the men couldn't work. The well-diggers' boss was in a quandary, so he finally decided to board the well up to hold the mud back. He did such a good job, and they got such a bountiful supply of water, that his well became a show place for the Illinois Central Railroad men and for the local residents. They called it the "Boarded
The Superintendent said everyone was talking about the Bearded Well, so he would name the town for it. But the name Bearded Well was hard to pronounce and hard to spell, so the Railroad Company shortened it and changed it to Bardwell.

(This story was written down for Mrs. Jessie Henderson on July 4, 1956 by Mr. Ran Graves, "around seventy years of age", a native of Bardwell. "Mr. Graves...knows much of the folklore of Carlisle County," the collector wrote. "He has always enjoyed telling stories and is a good entertainer." Minor editing.)

3. Bucksnort

Bucksnort received its name in a very interesting manner. Buck Littlefield was running against a man from Scottsburg for magistrate. An old man from Scottsburg came to the polls. When he got there he asked who was ahead and who was going to win the election. The reply was, "Buck, of course! Can't you hear the buck snort?"

(Written down by Dorothy Asher, Winter 1948. Bucksnort is in Caldwell County.)

4. Crutchfield

Years ago, a man named Crutchfield was on the train wanting to go to Moscow, Ky. The train slowed down at what is now Crutchfield. Someone, thinking it was Moscow, said, "Hop off, Crutchfield, Moscow station." From that the place got the name Crutchfield.

(Collected by Capitola McNeely, Spring 1954. The story comes from Mr. Mark Cooley, age 91, a native of Hickman County, Ky.)

5. Eddyville

(The origin of the name of this town was reported first in a simple statement made to Mrs. Merrie Virginia McIntosh, Spring 1954, by Mrs. Mary Milton, age 86, of Mayfield, Kentucky, who had lived as a child in Lyon County. According to Mrs. Milton, "Eddyville got its name from the eddies that are al-
most whirlpools in the Cumberland River." The same reason for the name was given to another collector in story form a year later.)

Some men were going up the Cumberland River one night years ago. They heard the sounds of music, dancing, and singing. For a long time they seemed to be staying in the same place, yet moving at the same rate of speed in the boat. The sounds of the merry-makers were just the same distance from them. This continued for a long time until one of the men said, "This must be an eddy." These boatmen later told of the incident as they stepped at places along the river, and called the place Eddyville.

(Written by Mary Jane Adair, Summer 1955. It was told to her by Mr. Leon Grogan, Murray Kentucky, who heard it from Mr. Bodine Henslee, postmaster at Newberg, Kentucky.)

6. Fancy Farm

(A) Many years ago Mr. Willett, great-great grandfather of the present generation of Willets, was in this part of the country. While traveling around he saw this lovely tract of farm land and bought it. On his return home he was asked by a neighbor why he bought this tract of land. His answer was, "I don't know; to me it will be just a fancy farm." From this statement he named his farm and later the town.

(From Mrs. Merrie Virginia McIntosh, Spring 1954. The story was told to her by Mrs. Molly Carrico, age 86, of Fancy Farm.)

(B) Fancy Farm, the only all-Catholic village in Graves County (about ten miles west of Mayfield), was so named because of the desolate appearance of an early settler's farm, located in that neighborhood. This was in the late 1830's or early 1840's. According to the legend, this farmer permitted his land and buildings to become very dilapidated, and passers-by developed the habit of referring to this farm as an example of a "fancy" farm. This term, originally applied in derision and ridicule, became a stock expression in that neighborhood, and the name of the community was later taken from it.
7. Feliciana

(A) Felicianna was named after two Negro slaves. For some reason that no one remembers, two Negro wenches had a fight at a crossroad. Their names were Felice and Anna. A settlement had either already started, or started there soon after this fight. This settlement was called Felicianna after the two Negro wenches. Later it became the county seat of Graves County.

(Told to James H. Taylor, September 1954, by Dorothy Crass, postmistress at Wingo, Kentucky. "She was reared in the southern part of Graves County...where this legend has been told and retold since the time of the Civil War.

(B) Many years ago a man who owned many acres of land and several Negro slaves lived in Graves County, Kentucky. He also had a store he had never named. One of the Negro women was named Felicia, and the other Anna. They fell in love with the same Negro man and became very jealous of him and each other. One day they met in the road in front of the store. A few words were exchanged. They decided to fight, the winner to have the man. The storekeeper, hearing them fighting, came out and separated them. He decided to use both their names for his store. This place has been called Felicianna ever since the fight, and the community has that name.

(Collected by Mrs. Dessie W. Coltharp, Summer 1953, from Mr. Rufus Lowry of Graves County, who heard it from his father. Minor editing.)

(C) They say Feliciana got its name from two nigger girls who fell in love with the same nigger man. One night they decided to meet at the crossroads and have it out over this man. They did, with knives, and they fought till both of them died. One of the girls was Felicia and the other one Anna. So the town was named Feliciana.

(Mildred Herring wrote this down word for word as
told by Mr. Oley Henley, 76, of Feliciana in the summer of 1955. Mr. Henley, who has lived in the community all his life, heard the story from his father, who in turn had heard it from his father.

(D) Down in Graves County on the old Fancy Farm road is a "town" called "Flissy Ann" (Feliciana). Once, before the spot became a town, the field was used as a cotton patch. Negroes were hired to pick the cotton. Two of the women pickers got into an argument. As their tempers grew shorter, a fight was started. Flissa (as one woman was called) killed Anna. People passing the spot would say, "Here's where Flissy killed Anna." Soon the remark became so common that it was slurred together into Flissy Ann. When the town grew around the spot, it kept the name. (This was told to Thelma Lankin in June 1956 by Mrs. Ford of Sedalia, Graves County. Mrs. Ford had learned the story from Mrs. Simpson, also of Sedalia, whose uncle lived in "Flissy Ann" and could trace its history back to the beginning.)

8. Fredonia

In 1836 the town of Fredonia was laid out and a committee met to give it a name. Several names were mentioned. Finally a Negro slave entered. He had a new baby at his house named Denia, and said that some day she'd be a "free Denia." So the town was given that name. At the end of the Civil War Denia was freed, and continued living in the town named for her, until her death. (Contributed by Dorothy Asher, Winter 1948. Minor editing. Fredonia is in Caldwell County.)

9. Lone Oak

(A) Well, down yonder about Smithson's store where the "V" in the road is, there used to be a great big oak tree. It grew down there all by itself and it was the prettiest tree around. Where is it now? Why, they cut it down years ago, whenever Mr. Smithson built his store. It was sort of a landmark. Everybody always referred to it as the "lonesome oak" or "lone oak", so soon the little settlement
was just called Lone Oak.
(This version is from Ruth D. Thomas, who wrote it as accurately as she could remember it in the fall of 1954. It was "told to half a dozen seven-year-old boys and girls. We were at a croquet court in the central part of Lone Oak (McCracken County) Kentucky. Men who were too old to work played croquet at the courts every day while we children watched, with our dirty fists poked in our jeans. One old man who stayed at a boarding house in Lone Oak captured our interest one day by asking if we would like to know how Lone Oak was named. All of us sat at his feet and listened to his story. This was twelve years ago.")

(B) Our community, Lone Oak, Kentucky, was named because a huge lone, oak tree stood in a huge corn field in which the present high school building now stands. It was the largest and tallest tree in the area. When the school was built in the late eighteen hundreds, they wanted a name appropriate for it. The community was at this time called Pattsville, after a doctor who lived and practiced in a two-room log cabin. But the people didn't feel this was sufficient for the new school building. A committee was selected to seek a name.

One day while walking over the community, one of the members of the committee saw this lone oak tree as a symbol. He is supposed to have said to the other committee members, "That tree holds the life, strength and courage that the school should possess. Let's name it after the oak tree and call it 'Lone Oak'." The committee agreed, and the name has stuck. Though the tree has long been dead, the story is told to the youngsters who ask, "Why is Lone Oak called Lone Oak?"

(Barbara Jean Puckett, who submitted this story in Summer, 1955, wrote: "My mother, Mrs. Elsie Puckett, McCracken County, Kentucky, told me this story fifteen years ago. I am recalling it from memory.")

10. Manitou

(A) It seems the people in this particular area
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were wanting a railroad to be put through there. So
the railroad officials sent a brakeman down to inves-
tigate the possibilities. It was a very small commu-
nity, with maybe one general store, and did not have
a town name. When the brakeman went back, the offi-
cials asked him what he had seen. He answered, "a
man or two." Ever since that day, this little commu-
nity has been known as Manitou, Kentucky. It is lo-
cated about six miles from Madisonville.
(Reported by Onie E. Mabry, Spring 1954. About her
informant she wrote, "Dot Bohan, 20 years old, was
enrolled in Murray State College when she dictated
this story to me in March, 1954. She lived in Madison-
ville, Hopkins County, when she first heard the tale
from a high school student.")

(B) Manitou used to be called Satchcatchowan
(I spell it as it sounds). This was before Manitou
got its thriving tobacco market. It was a health re-
sort because of its sulfur springs. The one rail-
road that connected Providence, Kentucky with Madison-
ville ran through this dead little burg.

A tobacco company thought this would perhaps be
a good place in which to locate a tobacco market, but
before spending their money they sent an employee out
to look the situation over. When he returned to his
employers, they asked what he had seen. He replied
that he had seen a man or two. Ever since, the town
has been called Manitou.
(Mary Reta Daniels, who submitted this in Fall, 1954,
 wrote: "The name of this town has amazed many people.
About ten years ago as we were driving through the
town, my mother told me this story of how it got its
name. She heard it about 35 years ago from her fa-
ther B. F. Harkins." Minor editing.)

II. Pembroke
Pembroke was named by the man who operated the
only store there many years ago. He read a book called
Thaddeus of Warsaw, in which a famous character was
Lord Pembroke. He like the character and the sound
of his name, so the little town became Pembroke.
(This story was told to Margaret M. Baker by her fa-
12. Pilot Oak

(A) Early settlers would go to a certain oak tree to take directions due north to go to Paducah. They called the tree "The Pilot." This community took the name Pilot Oak from the tree that now stands on the Morris farm.

(Mrs. Merrie Virginia McIntosh, who got this story from Mr. Earl Adair of Farmington, Kentucky, in March 1954, also noted that "an Indian tribe gave the tree the name of Pilot Oak." Mrs. Duke Mayfield, who said the tree was still standing on her grandmother's farm in Graves County, Kentucky, told her, "The Indians would come to this lovely oak tree to get the directions to the different rivers in this section—the Ohio and the Tennessee.").

(B) When the pioneers came through this country, they were always looking for something unusual to mark the trails. On the way west, in what is now Graves County, was a huge oak tree that had been marked many times, showing that many travelers had passed that way. The tree was on the "Old State Road." One day a group of people in covered wagons came along the trail, found the tree, and camped there for the night. They found water in a spring at the foot of the hill. Next morning while they were breaking camp, a man made a sign and carved these words on it: "Pilot Oak." He tacked the board on the tree so that it pointed westward.

There were three families that decided to stay and make their homes there. They began a village and named it Pilot Oak.

(Mrs. Dessie W. Coltharp wrote this down in the summer of 1953, and commented: "This was told to me by my husband's father, Orville Coltharp, who lived about a half mile from this place. He was 79 years old when he died six years ago. He or his father saw the tree. His ancestors were one of the families that stayed to make their homes. The tree, which was a landmark for a long time but is no longer standing, was on his
great-grandfather Adam's farm.

(C) Did you ever hear about Pilot Oak? Well, one time, years and years ago, long before any of y'all were born, when the first airplanes was bein' used, a certain feller was flying in that area in a cub plane. Do you know what happened? The propeller came off and he landed in a big oak tree, and he burned clean up in the airplane. Nobody ever did identify his body. Ever' year around the fall of the year there's a haze in the field where he landed, when the moon is full. If you're real quiet, you can hear him a-hollering for help. Them folks named the place Pilot Oak.

(This story, written down by Ruth D. Thomas in the fall of 1954, was told by the same old man who was her informant for 9A, and is remembered from the same storytelling session described in the note to that tale.)

13. Sheridan

For many years a line of houses has stood at the place where Sheridan, Kentucky, is now located. It was always a convenient resting place, half way between the ferry at Elizabethtown, Illinois, and Marion, the county seat of Crittenden County, Kentucky. In the early days it was referred to as "Dog Trot", because the log houses were almost all built in the old familiar pattern of two large rooms connected by a roofed passage or a "dog trot." The town was then described by a contemporary as being "three miles long and thirty feet wide."

As time passed, the Post Office Department wished to establish a post office there and give it an official name. At that time the leading citizen was one Richard Bebout, known to everyone far and wide as Cousin Dick. He owned the largest house in town and the only general store, and had established the local Masonic Lodge. He took most pride, however, in his record as a Civil War veteran. As the post office was to be located in his general store, they left the selection of a name up to him. He mulled over the question for days, asking everyone who came in the store for suggestions. No one came up with anything
he liked, so he finally gave it up and fell to reminiscing about his army experiences. "And so one day General Sheridan said to me---" he began. Then, "I've got it! We'll call the town Sheridan in honor of my favorite general, Philip H. Sheridan." So it was done. The town is still three miles long and thirty feet wide.

(Written by Mrs. Dorothy Clark Spence, Fall, 1953. She heard the story from Mr. Ather McMaster of Sheridan, Kentucky, and the description of Sheridan from Mr. Gene Guess, both in November 1953.)

14. **Tiline**

There was a man living in the little unnamed settlement now known as Tiline, in Livingston County, Kentucky, who wanted a post office located there. He was told in order to have one he must have a name for it. He decided the thing to do was to give a name to the settlement and call his post office by that name.

What to name the settlement, he had to decide.

He thought since he had three daughters he could name it after one of them. This was a problem, for each of the three daughters wanted the place named for her. To solve the problem he let the three girls draw straws; the girl who drew the short straw was to be the one for whom the place would be named. The daughter Tiline drew the short straw, so the settlement and post office were named after her. This daughter, Tiline, is still living today.

(Submitted by Elizabeth Carr, Spring 1954. Concerning her informant she wrote: "Hazel Maupin, whose home is at Tiline, told me this story, and I have tried to write it as she told it to me. Her grandfather told her the story when she was a little girl." Edited.)

15. **Water Valley**

When the railroad came through this section of the country, a little village grew up by it. Two brothers named Morse had a saloon. One day they had a fight, and one brother ran the other away with his gun. People had called the place Morse Station, but
they thought they might have a bad name from this incident, and they wanted to change it. A creek ran through this little valley, and it didn't drain too well, so after a rain there was lots of water. So Water Valley got its name. Many people talk of the old days and say "Moss" Station, but they are wrong; it was "Morse" Station.

(Told to Mrs. C. M. Wilson on July 1, 1955, by a neighbor, Mrs. Cora Farmer, of Water Valley, Kentucky. Mrs. Farmer, who was around 75 years old at the time, had heard her father, Mr. Hubbard, tell it.)

Fayetteville, Arkansas

NOTES

1. The stories were contributed in writing by members of Herbert Halpert's classes in Mythology, Folklore, and English at Murray State College, Kentucky, during the years 1947-1956, and are a part of the Halpert Folklore Archive.


3. Frank Dobie in "Stories in Texas Place Names," in Straight Texas, Publications of the Texas Folklore Society XIII (1937), p. 52, records that "there has been more than one Bucksnort in Texas."

A Texas tale he quotes throws a little light on this brief Kentucky story, for those who are unfamiliar with the habits of wild animals. "Father had a tussle with a wounded deer—a very large buck—one morning, and the deer gave a peculiar whistle or snort, so common to them. The little hollow on which the tussle took place was, and is until this day, called Buck Snort."

I am grateful to my husband, Herbert Halpert, for calling my attention to the Dobie article and to the pertinent reference from Barkley's book which follows in note 4.

4. The late Alben W. Barkley's version of the naming of Fancy Farm is given in his That Reminds Me (Garden City, N.Y., 1954, pp. 24-25). "The un-
usual name," he claimed, "was derived from the well-kept country place of an early settler, John Peebles. A post-office inspector had stopped at the Peebles place in 1845, while investigating whether a post office was needed in the growing settlement, and he was so impressed with its trim, neat appearance that he proposed the name of "Fancy Farm" for the new post office."

5. An account of this version of the story, with both women using "sharp razors" and dying "on the spot from loss of blood," is printed in Ouida Jewell's *From My Scrapbook*, 1956-1957 (n.p., n.d.). According to George Stewart in *Names on the Land* (op. cit., p. 173), Fredonia, "a gross coupling of the English freedom with a Latin ending", was once advocated as a possible name for the newly United States of America, but was not a popular contender. "Fredonia survives as the name of a dozen towns. Its origin, however, has been so completely forgotten that in Arizona it is locally said to come from free and the Spanish dona, and thus to mean "free women"..." The Kentucky story is, of course, based on a similar concept.

7. The word "pilot" applied to any geographical feature used as a landmark was popular all through the period of westward expansion. J. Frank Dobie (op. cit., p. 50) refers to a Texas community that "changed its name from Lick Skillet to Pilot Grove, for the grove of trees that marked the place was a landmark, like Pilot Knobs, by which travelers steered their course." Stewart (op. cit., p. 253) points out that Pilot Butte and Pilot Peak were pioneer names for mountains standing high as landmarks.
"WHO'D A THOUGHT IT" AND OTHER PADUCAH PLACE NAMES
by Lucie Swift
Edited by Herbert Halpert

Miss Swift's amusing discussion of community names in or near the city of Paducah, in western Kentucky, was contributed to the Halpert Folklore Archive at Murray State College in the summer of 1948. My editing consists of alphabetizing the items, revising a few sentences for clearer structure, and adding a footnote.--H.H._

There seem to be many sections in and near Paducah, Kentucky, with very meaningful names. Some need no explanation; others baffle the outsider. Here are some notes either on how they got their names or why they are of interest.

Arcadia was a pre-Civil War settlement of professional men who moved west of Paducah and built houses surrounded by a pretty substantial acreage. It was an ideal spot to live, and here they hoped to find perfect happiness. It is still decidedly one of the better residential sections of Paducah.

Avendale got its name because of the nice sound of the word. The section was laid out with the hopes, not altogether unfulfilled, of becoming one of the best to be had.

Canaan was a land of many promises and few realizations.

Death's Valley lies west of Paducah, and got its sobriquet because of the unsolved mystery of two bodies found there. Even the car license was missing.

Dog Town was beneath the hills, or rather in the hollows surrounding Paducah. It got its name because of the large number of dogs its residents owned. The "residences" are old tents, or are built of scrap tin, refuse lumber, and what not. The chief occupation for many of the inhabitants is picking the dumps. Dog Town was mostly filled to construct Barkley Park.

Duck's Nest is the harbor where Mississippi River
vessels, and other northern boats, spend the winter. 1917-1918 was the first winter that ice was known in the Tennessee River; but then, as it was in the Ohio at the same time, the boats were afraid to steam out. Over a million dollars was lost in February, 1918, when the ice broke, and the boats were swept out. One boat even battled the floes as far as Metropolis, Illinois, but all were lost.

Glenwood was so named because it was built in a low-lying wooded region. It is one of the coming sections.

Mechanicsburg is the section south of Island Creek, that at its building was connected with the city only by the Third Street Bridge. The mechanics and mill workers for the many lumber firms lived there. To this day, though these people now enjoy all of the city privileges, they feel more or less isolated.

Peg-stick Row is a row of houses built in the hollow on Elizabeth Street, between Fifth and Sixth. Each house is brought to street level by being built on sticks, and has a bridge from its front porch to the street.

Pistol Alley was so named because of the number of fights and killings that have taken place there.

Wallace Park is built on the Wallace farm, and one of its chief residences is the old Wallace home. It's a very swanky part of town.

Who'd a Thought It? was so called because no one but a northern-financed lumber company would have thought of building shacks for people to live in, in the swampy, low-lying land between the higher ground

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I. T. M. Pearce says: "I have it on authority that a suburb, of surprising growth, near Birmingham, Alabama, is named 'Who'd a Thought It?'" ("The Lighter Side of Place Naming," Western Folklore, XI (1952), 120). Allan M. Trout, in his column, "Greetings," Louisville Courier-Journal, December 5, 1952, published a report that there is a village in Daviess County, Kentucky, named "Who'd a Thought It?" He notes that there is a street with the same name in Shelbyville, Kentucky.---H.H.
Tolu, Kentucky

of South Sixth Street and the company's storage mound near Seventh Street. There are about a dozen little two-room box houses, all inhabited by mill workers. The flood of 1937 all but carried the settlement away, but a few houses remain. The lumber company has closed out its business and left, so today Who'd a Thought It? is occupied only by squatters.

HOW TOLU, KENTUCKY, GOT ITS NAME
by
Dorothy Clark Spence

[Contributed to the Halpert Folklore Archive at Murray State College in 1953. Mrs. Spence noted that she heard these stories in Sheridan, Ky., in November, 1953. Her paper demonstrates in amusing fashion why place-name study is more often a study of legend-making than of actual history.--H.H.]

In the early days a little group of houses sprang up at the place where Hurricane Creek runs into the Ohio River. The early settlers called this settlement the "Mouth of the Creek." For a long time the Post Office Department hesitated to put a post office at the "Mouth of the Creek" because the ground was so low there was danger from flood. Finally, however, a neat little post office was built on stilts which raised it about fifteen feet above the level of the surrounding delta.

"But how did it get the name 'Tolu'?" I inquired. I received the following answers:

"Tolu was the name of a tribe of Indians which once inhabited this part of western Kentucky," one informant told me.

"Tolu? Why, Tolu got its name from a special brand of tobacco which the Indians showed the white men how to cure. This is the account given in the high school annual for the past three years," answered Miss Helen Croft, a current teacher at the school.

"I remember well how Tolu got its name," remi-
Mrs. Beulah MacMaster. "It was when old Uncle Billy Weldon had his store. He sold a kind of gum known as Tolu Chewing Gum. The children used to buy it every afternoon on the way home from school. They named the post office for the chewing gum."

"No, it didn't get its name from chewing gum," denied Uncle John Beard. "Tolu got its name from Tolu Bitters, a type of spring tonic. I used to take it every spring. It was a good tonic, too, better'n sassafras tea."

Mr. Sammy Sullenger had a still different version. "Tolu got its name from a medicine called 'Tolu Rock and Rye' was a cough remedy. It was a very popular medicine. It was made from rock candy and rye whiskey. Back in those days everybody had bad colds."

IN MEMORIAM
Virginia Lee Whipps Herr
1892-1961
Member, Kentucky Folklore Society, 1924-1959
Vice-President, 1932-34