THE POST OFFICES OF BELL COUNTY, KENTUCKY

This 361 square mile county, Kentucky’s 112th, was established by legislative act on February 28, 1867. A suggestion that it be named Montano for its mountainous terrain was rejected in favor of Josh Bell for Joshua Fry Bell (1811-1870), a Danville lawyer and one term U.S. Congressman (1845-1847).\(^1\) As a Kentucky legislator (1864-1867) he had pushed for the formation of this new county from parts of Harlan and Knox which he considered too large. In January 1873 another legislative act shortened the name to simply Bell. In January 1871 a ten square mile area called South America was added to the county from Whitley County. The county is home to some 30,000 residents counted in the 2000 Census.

Bell is one of Kentucky’s hilliest counties. Nearly all of its settlement has been in the few areas of level land in the narrow bottoms of the Cumberland River and its several branches and the broader “allu­viated valley of the Yellow Creek at Middlesboro,” its largest town.\(^2\) The 125 mile long Pine Mountain crosses northern Bell and is by far the county’s most distinguishing geographic feature. Paralleling it to the south is the equally formidable Cumberland Mountain along whose crest extends the Virginia state line.

Among the county’s pioneer families were the Calloways, Colsons, Greens, Hendersons, Howards, Miracles, Partins, Pursifulls, Renfros, and Slushers who figured prominently in early settlement and post office history.

Since the uneven terrain and unfertile soils have always hindered agricultural development, its economy, like those of its Appalachian neighbors, was mostly dependent on its timber and coal resources. But it was not until the arrival of the Cumberland Valley Division of the L&N in the late 1880s and the building of spur lines up the several creek
valleys to reach coal and timber deposits that any real development occurred. By 1900 several dozen coal companies—some locally owned and others from outside the county and region—had begun the systematic exploitation of Bell's coal resources. Exploitation is an apt word since in the 1920s a coal slump based on overproduction for a declining national market led to the closing of most of the county's mines and the dislocation of its workforce. Recovery came only with the increased demands of World War II when again coal dominated the county's economy along with some industry-resource processing and the manufacturing of leather and steel goods, clothing, and plastics. With the opening of the Pine Mountain State Park, Kentucky's first, in 1926, the development of other scenic attractions such as the 20,000 plus acre Cumberland Gap National Historical Park and the annual Mountain Laurel Festival, Bell also became a tourist mecca.

This chapter will deal with the seventy-eight post offices that operated within the county's present limits. For our purposes Bell will be divided into several geographic areas. Beginning with those established before the county's creation, the offices will be grouped by major stream valleys—the Cumberland River's main channel (which extends for some twenty-eight miles across Bell County in a southwestern, then western direction), its principal branches—Puckett, Brownies, Yellow, Clear, Straight, Four Mill, and Greasy Creeks, and the Clear Fork River (which joins the Cumberland near Williamsburg in Whitley County); and then the Red River, one of the head forks of the Kentucky River's South Fork which drains the northeast corner of the county. Within each valley the offices will be considered chronologically and located by road, stream, or rail miles from other offices in their respective valleys or by road miles from the courthouse in downtown Pineville, the county seat. Pineville is 120 road miles sse of downtown Lexington (via I 75 and US 25E) and thirteen miles north of Middlesboro, Bell's largest town.
Three post offices were established in Knox County and then included in Bell on its creation. A fourth, Cumberland Gap, began in Claiborne County, Tennessee in 1803, moved a short distance to then Knox County in September 1846, but in March 1851 was returned to Tennessee, and thus was never actually a Bell County office.

Pineville, a fourth class city with a 2000 population of about 2,100, is located at one of the few breaks in the all but impenetrable Pine Mountain, where the Wilderness Road (part of the present US 25E) crosses the Cumberland River. Here, at the mouth of Straight Creek and just west of what was to be the Knox-Harlan County line, on land acquired by Isaac Shelby from Abraham Buford's Virginia patent, a settlement was started and aptly called Cumberland Ford. On March 31, 1818 the future county's first post office was opened here in this name, with Moses Oorton, its first postmaster.

A mile above the Ford, just below the mouth of Clear Creek, the river flows through a 200 foot wide gorge between 1300 foot high cliffs. At this site, long known as The Narrows, the new Bell County seat was established and the town of Pineville, for the local trees, was laid out. On April 15, 1870 the Cumberland Ford post office which had closed a month before, was re-opened here as Pineville, with Peter Hinkle, a hotel owner and storekeeper, as postmaster.

In anticipation of the arrival of the L&N in April 1888 and with plans to exploit the mineral resources of the upper Cumberland region, two land development companies--the Pine Mountain Iron and Coal Company and the Pineville Land and Lumber Company--purchased tracts in the Cumberland Ford vicinity from its then proprietors J.J. Gibson and Judge Henry Pursifull.
To their land, before the end of the 1880s, the county's seat, homes, and businesses were removed from The Narrows. In 1889 the new site was incorporated as Pineville, with The Narrows becoming, in effect, Old Pineville. Over time, the town has included both sites and, most recently, West Pineville (Wallsend). Insufficient level land for expansion and its great flood susceptibility has long inhibited Pineville's growth and development. It never really recovered from its 1977 disastrous flood. Its economic base continues to be coal and some manufacturing, including explosives and oxygen products. The late county historian Henry H. Fuson once called Pineville "the queen city of the hills for its nice homes and clean and carefully maintained streets."4

The second Bell post office that began in Knox County was Yellow Creek, established on February 11, 1839 by Robert George somewhere near the upper end of this fifteen mile long stream. The creek, which heads at the confluence of its Stony and Bennett Forks, just west of Middlesboro, flows through that town, then extends roughly northeast to the Cumberland 5 3/4 river miles above (southeast of) Pineville. It was first noted by Dr. Thomas Walker (in 1750) as Flat Creek, referring to the large alluvial plain on which Middlesboro lies. By 1782, when it was first settled by John Turner's Lee County, Virginians, it was identified as Yellow Creek for the perceived color of the water when the sun shown on it. Sometime before 1780s Turner’s people had erected a blockhouse on Little Yellow Creek (now covered by Fern Lake.)5 Little is known of the Yellow Creek post office before the 1880s when Site Location Reports of its two sites then placed it five to 5½ miles northwest of Cumberland Gap and eleven miles southeast of Pineville. It then served at least two local stores run by the Colsons, a pioneer family of the Yellow Creek valley. It closed in January 1890.
Then there was the Clear Creek post office which J.A. and Anderson Partin operated intermittently somewhere on this fourteen mile long stream from July 6, 1855 to November 1867. The creek, which heads in Log Mountain in southwestern Bell and parallels Pine Mountain two miles north, joins the Cumberland just above the Narrows. Dr. Walker called it Clover Creek for the wild clover on its banks, but it was probably renamed for the clear perennial spring at its confluence with the four mile long Little Clear Creek. The spring, four miles southwest of Pineville, was a famed summer resort and medicinal spa, developed shortly after the Civil War by J.M.C. Davis, that by the late 1920s had become the Clear Springs Camp, a recreational and assembly center operated by several Pineville Baptist churches. I don't know, though, if the old post office was at this site.6

POST OFFICES ESTABLISHED IN THE AREA THAT WAS A PART OF HARLAN COUNTY

The first of the two Harlan County post offices that became a part of Bell on its inception was established on January 14, 1831 as Letcher. Lewis Green was its first postmaster. It was named for then U.S. Congressman (and later Governor) Robert P. Letcher (1788-1861). On March 7, 1855 its name was changed to Calloway for the family of Charles J. Calloway (ne 1810) who served as postmaster from 1838 to 1875.7 Until the late 1880s the office was serving a settlement with one or more stores, a couple of mills, and some other businesses on the Cumberland, a mile above the mouth of Puckett's Creek (across the river from future Blackmont-Hulen). By the 1890s the office may have been just above the mouth of Schoolhouse Branch (of Cumberland). In the spring of 1918 it was moved three fourths of a mile down the river to the mouth of Meetinghouse Branch to serve the L&N's Luce Station just across the river. Later that year it was moved another mile downstream to serve another station called Mathel and the Mathel and Tanyard Hill coal companies' camps in the area.
between the river and Pine Mountain. At this site, on the present US 119, twelve miles above (east of) Pineville, it remained till it closed on Dec. 27, 1983.

The inexplicably named LaFontaine, the other Harlan post office in Bell County, was on the north side of the river, half a mile above the mouth of Yellow Creek and six miles above (ese of) Pineville. It was on land first settled by Mount Pursifull (1794-1890) and was established on June 30, 1846 with Mount's son John Mat Pursifull, postmaster, but closed in September 1861. It was reopened on February 21, 1866 by Mat's brother Mount (Jr.) and closed for good in April 1874.

**POST OFFICES ON THE CUMBERLAND RIVER'S MAIN CHANNEL**

The first Cumberland River post office established after the creation of Bell County was Conant. James M. Conant (ne January 1856), the first of its two postmasters, and its probable name source, established it on July 15, 1881 on the north side of the river, a mile above the mouth of Four Mile Creek and 2½ miles below (northwest of) Pineville. By 1888 the office is said to have been just south of the mouth of Four Mile and was thus the forerunner of the Fourmile post office (see below). It closed in July 1895.

Across the river from the mouth of Four Mile, on the present US 25, was the Whitsett post office. Named for its only postmaster David B. Whitsett, it served a coal mine and densely populated neighborhood for exactly one year from April 4, 1898.

Thomas Jefferson (called T.J.) Asher, son of Jackson Davis and Margaret Asher, was born on May 21, 1848 on the Red Bird River in Clay County. In 1870 he moved to the mouth of Pucketts Creek in Bell County where he farmed and logged, and married Varilla, the daughter of the
area's leading settler Robert Howard. In 1881 he moved his new family to a site on the north side of the river, just above the mouth of Clear Creek (that had been first settled by W.M. Howard of North Carolina) where he continued to log. Here, in 1889, he acquired the Rennebaum and Slawson circular sawmill to which logs were being shipped down the river, started the T.J. Asher and Sons Lumber Company, and, on April 4, 1889 opened the Wasioto post office to which he gave the old Cherokee name for the break in Pine Mountain through which the river passes. By 1890 the railroad had arrived for product shipment to distant markets and Asher's mill was soon converted to a bandsaw operation.

By the early 1890s Asher's company had acquired some 25,000 acres of timber land, but after an evaluation of the coal resources on this land it decided to downplay its lumber operations and devote itself primarily to coal mining. As the new Asher Coal Mining Company, T.J. and his sons discovered or acquired and developed several mines further up the river and several of its branches. Unable, at the outset, to convince the L&N which, by 1907, had extended its line two miles above Wasioto to Harbel, to proceed any further, T.J. built his own railroad, which he called the Wasioto and Black Mountain, first to a station he named Tejay, thirteen (rail) miles above Harbell, and then two miles up Toms Creek to his Balkan mine and farther up the river to Burchfield. The line was acquired by the L&N in 1915 as its Kentucky and Virginia Railroad and was later extended into Harlan County. As merchant, entrepreneur, and, for a time, Bell County judge, Asher continued to live in Wasioto where his company, later converted from coal and lumber productions to land holding and leasing, continued to maintain its offices. Asher died in 1935 and the Wasioto post office was discontinued in 1951.
The county's first commercial coal mine was opened just below Cumberland Ford-Pineville in 1889 by an English-financed Kentucky firm calling itself the Wallsend Coal and Coke Company. To serve the firm's offices along with a village of nearly 400 residents and the newly opened West Pineville railroad station, 1½ miles below Pineville, a post office was established on May 10, 1890 also called West Pineville, with Wilkerson P. Durham, postmaster. This office closed in late October 1891 but was re-established on January 18, 1898, with Edmund A. Starling, postmaster, as Wallsend [wähənd] for the company. The latter had taken its name from the English town, four miles east of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, from which the Newcastle coals were shipped. The English name, in turn, referred to its site at the eastern end of the famed Hadrian's Wall. By 1947 Bell County's Wallsend had become a part of Pineville and, in 1950, its post office was closed.

At the mouth of the 2.3 mile long Toms Creek (name derivation unknown), and just below (south of) Tejay, was the Tomscreek post office. This operated from March 31, 1898 through June 1907 with Martha E. and James A. Campbell, its first postmasters.

Nearly two miles up Toms Creek the Ashers, in 1912, developed their Balkan mine which for years was operated by the Southern Mining Company (a subsidiary of the Southern Coal and Coke Company). To serve this operation and the model company town, whose population peaked at over a thousand between the World Wars, the Balkan post office was established on December 20, 1912, with Edwin R. Roberts, its first postmaster. Its name is said to have honored some of the early miners of southern European descent. It closed in 1982.

The post office of Hances, at the mouth of the creek of this name, seven miles above (northeast of) Pineville, was established on January 16,
1908 with Dr. Ewing W. Miracle, its only postmaster. The first name proposed for it was Needmore for it would serve a village of that name with a population then of some 150. But it was given the name of the nearly five mile long creek that heads in a ridge with the same inexplicable name. The Ashers also had coal interests on this ridge by 1912. By the end of May 1913, though, the post office had closed.

On April 3, 1908, just weeks after the establishment of the Hances post office, J.A. Pursifull opened a post office on the north side of the river, half a mile below and across from the mouth of Hances Creek. This was just above the site of the old LaFontaine post office (see above). J.A.'s wife Belle (nee Creech) was its first postmaster. It was named Calvin for the local magistrate, the Rev. Henry Calvin Miracle (ca. 1865-1923), who lived on Hances Creek. In early 1917 it was moved across the river to serve the Kentucky and Virginia (L&N)'s new Page Station, very near to the site of the then recently closed Hances post office. Until 1966, when the U.S. Board on Geographic Names decided in favor of Calvin for the still active post office, the vicinity had been identified on federal maps as Page. Page was probably named for one or more area persons (perhaps for Joe who worked for the railroad, Joe N. (ne ca. 1870), a coal operator, or Robert E. (ne ca. 1876).

In 1911 T.J. Asher's railroad reached a site 1½ miles above (northeast of) the mouth of Hances Creek where he established a coal town he named Varilla for his wife (1848-1935). By April 2, 1912, when the Varilla post office was established (with James Thomas Morgan, postmaster), the town had reached a population of 350. For several years the local rail station was the inexplicable Dorothy, but by 1917 it too had taken Varilla's name. Here also was, for a number of years, the main generating plant for Kentucky Utilities. Little survived the closing of the post office in mid April 1930.
By 1911 the Wasioto and Black Mountain Railroad had also reached the mouth of Pieds Branch, 1½ miles above (northeast of) the mouth of Puckett Creek and half a mile below the Harlan County line. Here a station was built to serve a Black Mountain Coal Company town of some 200 residents with the name of mine owner William Burchfield. On February 24, 1912, with Harry E. Bullock, postmaster, the Burchfield post office opened. In 1918-19 the company was acquired by the J. Campbell Straus family and renamed the Kentucky Cardinal Coal Company. By 1920 the camp, station, and post office had become Cardinal. For years the post office was in the company-owned commissary. The company disbanded in 1960 and the post office closed four years later.

The residential hamlet of East Pineville on US 119 and the north side of the river, 2½ miles above (southeast of) Pineville, was served, from December 3, 1925 to 1934, by the post office of Jayem [dʒæ/ˈʃɔrn]. It was named for J(ohn) M(arshall) Robsion (1873-1948) of Barbourville who represented Kentucky's Ninth District in the U.S. Congress from 1919 to 1930 and 1935 to 1948. Millard F. Broughton was the first postmaster. By the mid 1920s the Kentucky and Virginia (L&N) Railroad's Harbel Station (ostensibly named for the two counties) had been opened across the river.

POST OFFICES ON PUCKETT CREEK

The 10½ mile long Puckett Creek heads in the Little Black Mountain in Harlan County, is paralleled by Ky 72, and joins the river just below Hulen (Blackmont), about seventeen miles above Pineville. To serve the new rail station of Hulen some 300 yards below the mouth of Puckett, on the south side of the river, Joseph H. Saylor established the Hulen post office [ˈhyʊ/ˈlʌn] on July 17, 1913. By the early 1920s the station had become Felder. In 1937 the office was moved half a mile
up the river (and directly across from the old Letcher-Calloway post office site) to serve the new coal town and station of Blackmont. This name derived from the nearly Black Mountain or from the Black Mountain coal area that has extended from here into Harlan County, two miles away. In 1974 the U.S. Board on Geographic Names approved Blackmont for the community and its local school and church while limiting the still underived Hulen to the extant post office.

Some 2½ miles up Puckett and its Black Mountain railroad spur, at the mouth of Halfway Branch (given erroneously as McFarland Branch on current maps) and across from the 2½ mile long Blacksnake Branch was the Blacksnake Station and storekeeper William Nelse Taylor's Blacksnake post office. The office, established on June 20, 1923, was soon serving a small Southern Mining Company camp and mine. By 1932, when the office closed and its papers were sent to Harlan County's Insull post office, a mile east, the vicinity was called Tuggle (later Tuggleville) for a local man Ralph Tuggle.

POST OFFICES ON BROWNIES CREEK

Brownies Creek heads in Brush Mountain and extends for about fifteen miles to the river at Miracle, twelve miles above Pineville. Fuson, the county historian, spelled the name Browneys, attributing it to brown buffalo (called browneys) that roamed its banks in early settlement times. Ky 987 parallels the stream's entire course.

The still active Miracle [mah/ra/kal] post office has occupied several sites on both sides of Brownies' river confluence since its establishment on May 16, 1912, with Willie A. Hoskins, its first postmaster. For many years it served the Miracle station on the Wasioto and Black Mountain (later the Kentucky and Virginia) Railroad. Most recently it's where Ky 987 crosses the river just above the confluence. The Miracles are still a large Cumberland valley family. On the creek itself were three nineteenth century-established post offices--Horsemill, Cubage, and Oaks.
All that's known of Horsemill is that, from December 30, 1878 till
mid November 1879, with Robert A. Miracle, its only postmaster, it served
the Brownies Creek locality five miles north of Cubage's first site. A
horse-powered mill can only be assumed.

The first site of the Cubage \([\text{kuhb/adj, kuhb/adj}]\) post office, however,
has not been precisely located. It was most likely on the 3.7 mile long
creek of this name that joins Brownies seven miles from the latter's river
confluence. According to tradition, the first settlers found the words
"cub bear killed here" carved on a beech tree on the creek, and thus Cubage
may have been a corruption of Cub Beech, a possible early name for that
stream. Historian Fuson also reported, but discounted, the contention
that it was named for a Mr. Cubage (or Cubbage), one of a party of pioneer
hunters, who remained on the creek until he could overcome a case of frost-
bitten feet. The office was established on May 17, 1879, with Andrew
Wilder, a dealer in patent medicines, its first postmaster. Until it
closed at the end of 1981, it occupied several sites on Brownies, including
the mouth of Cubage; the mouth of Cowans Branch, a mile above; just below
Sugarcamp Branch, another mile above; and, most recently, the mouth of Mill
Branch (between Cowans and Sugarcamp).

The Oaks post office, likely named for the local trees, was established
on May 26, 1897, probably at the mouth of Oaks Branch of Brownies or at the
mouth of Jennies Branch, a short distance above, in the vicinity of the
Oakdale Church. Ewing W. and Levi Miracle were its first postmasters. In
1902 it was moved one mile down Brownies, and in 1907 it was moved half a
mile back up Brownies, probably to the mouth of Hen Wilder Branch. In 1923
it was moved another mile up the creek to the mouth of Blacklick Branch,
about four miles above the Miracle post office, where it closed in 1963.
Seventeen post offices served the Yellow Creek watershed, including its two head forks, Stony and Bennett.

Bell's largest city, the third class Middlesborough, centers just southeast of the Yellow Creek's head forks confluence, thirteen miles south of Pineville and a mile northwest of the Cumberland Gap and the Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky convergence. A pioneer Yellow Creek settlement, made around 1810 by John Turner, et al. of Virginia, had become by the 1880s the scattered homesteads of Colsons, Partins, Marsees, Davises, Sowders, Wilsons, and other families.

About this time, Alexander Alan Arthur, a Scottish-born Canadian mining engineer and resource developer, envisioning the establishment of a great industrial city on the exploitation of what he thought were the area's extensive iron and limestone deposits, acquired tens of thousands of acres of Yellow Creek land. He organized the American Association, Ltd. and attracted investment capital from a number of English businessmen. By the late 1880s he had begun to build his city. Either from a list of names allegedly offered by his investors, or at the suggestion of a Mr. Watts, who had come from the English city of Middlesbrough (sic), he selected the name Middlesborough. The Middlesborough post office, three miles south of the earlier Yellow Creek post office, was established on September 14, 1888, with George C. Whitlock, postmaster. The L&N and Southern Railway arrived the following year, and by 1890 the new town had over 5,000 residents.

Then its bubble burst. The 1890 failure of London's Baring Bank (Arthur's principal English financier), the incipient U.S. depression, but mostly the underestimation of the area's iron deposits (its main attraction),
coupled with the discovery of richer and cheaper deposits in Minnesota, led to the extensive pullout of capital, the closing of furnaces, stores, and other businesses, and the large scale exodus of its population. Recovery began slowly, some twenty years later, with the newly developed area coal mines as its resource base. Its economy was booming again by the First World War when its population reached some 15,000. By 2000, with some 10,400 residents, the city had become the trade center for the tri-state area, a manufacturing city (work clothes, meat processing, and tanning), and, with its proximity to the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, dedicated in 1959, a tourist mecca.

In 1960 the U.S. Board on Geographic Names ruled in favor of what was then the preferred local spelling of Middlesboro which the post office had assumed on March 14, 1894 and the railroad and a number of local businesses had used for years. Yet it was Middlesborough in the city's act of incorporation of March 14, 1890 and this remains its official spelling.

To serve the Excelsior Coal Company's mine on Yellow Creek, some four miles north of downtown Middlesboro, was the Excelsior station on the Cumberland Valley Division (L&N) and the Excelsior post office near the site of the present St. Mary Church (formerly the Yellow Hill Church), one mile south of the mine. The office operated from April 27, 1900 through March 1908 with William Pritchard, its first postmaster.

Two miles north of the Excelsior post office was the once coal town and rail station (now residential community) of Meldrum whose post office, established by Hiram H. Duncan, operated from December 27, 1912 through February 1926. Its name source is unknown.

One of the three post offices serving coal towns and stations on the eight mile long Yellow Creek branch of the L&N's Cumberland Valley line paralleling, since 1913, the lower 5½ miles of Yellow Creek, was Oleika
From August 27, 1921, with Charles H. Jones, the first postmaster, to 1934 it served the Crane Creek Coal Company (and later the Wallins Creek Collieries) camp of Cross, four miles up from the river. Cross and Jones' first proposed name LaCross were named for a Bell County family but Oleika has not been name derived.15

Another station on the Yellow Creek line, Calvin (not to be confused with the Calvin post office) was one mile up from the river and served the Morgan Mining Company. It was, in turn, served by the also inexplicably named Iverdale post office (with Garrett Rice, its first postmaster) from April 21, 1922 through February 1930.

POST OFFICES ON CANNON CREEK (OF YELLOW CREEK)

The six mile long Cannon Creek, whose name is said to have been corrupted from Canyon,16 heads in Logan Mountain and extends east, north, and east to Yellow Creek at what was once called Happy Valley, 1½ miles below Ferndale. For two miles it's been flanked by the L&N's Cumberland Valley line. The two mile long Cannon Lake impoundment is a source of Pineville's drinking water.

Somewhere on the lower section of Cannon Creek, perhaps at the future site of the Roost-Ferndale post office, or at or just above the mouth of the creek, in the Happy Valley Neighborhood, was the Cannon post office. Established on November 17, 1871 by James A. Green, it was discontinued in November 1875, re-established on March 2, 1877, with Miss Syntha A. King, postmaster, and closed for good in November 1880. By then it was serving several stores, two wagonmakers, and some other businesses.

Among the names proposed for Cobb T. Berry's post office at the mouth of Little Cannon, 1½ miles above the Cannon-Yellow Creek confluence, was Eagle Roost. According to his Site Location Report, it would serve
the Cannon locality, five miles south of Pineville, but as, simply, Roost. The office opened on February 2, 1883, but on February 29, 1904 then postmaster James A. Green (of the earlier Cannon post office) had its name changed to Ferndale, the name applied to the local L&N station by 1895. When the office closed in mid November 1926 it was half a mile south of its earlier site.

**OTHER YELLOW CREEK POST OFFICES**

Two post offices served the eight mile long Clear Fork valley. This stream, not to be confused with the Clear Fork River, extends west and north to Yellow Creek, ten miles south of Pineville.

The Clear Fork post office, established by James Johnson, first operated somewhere on the Fork between March 27, 1879 and mid January 1892. It was re-established on November 16, 1910 by William E. Turner one eighth of a mile up the stream, and closed there at the end of October 1913.

The Hutch post office was established on July 3, 1925, with John D. Hurst, postmaster, 3½ miles up the Fork. Could it have been named for a Bell County Hutchison family (e.g. Roy B. Hutcheson, a Middlesboro postmaster, ca. 1918)? When it closed in 1934, it was one fourth of a mile above the mouth of Yellow Branch, in the vicinity of the old Piney Grove School and the Piney Grove-Campbells Chapel-Hutch Baptist Church, three fourths of a mile east of its earlier site.

The third coal town on the Yellow Creek Spur was Colmar [kahl/mər] extending for over a mile up the three mile long Cranes Creek of Yellow Creek and serving one of southeastern Kentucky's largest coal operations. Could the name have come from the factory town now in northeastern France, or could it have been a combination of Colson and another personal name
like Marsee, both of pioneer Yellow Creek families? About the time the railroad opened its Colmar Station, six rail miles up from the river, Julius E. Adair established the Colmar post office (on June 14, 1913, with Odin W. Adair, its first postmaster). The office was discontinued in 1953 about when the Southern Mining Company ended its local operation. The area has since been stripped.

FIVE STONY FORK POST OFFICES

This eight mile long head fork of Yellow Creek itself heads in the Log Mountains and extends between this range and Fork Ridge to join Bennetts Fork (now the Yellow Creek Bypass or diversion channel) just west of the Middlesboro-Bell County Airport and the western end of town. Another of the region's major coal producing valleys, it's not to be confused with the Stoney Fork of Straight Creek in the northern end of the county (see below). Five post offices served its mining operations.

In 1902 the Stony Fork Branch of the L&N's Cumberland Valley Division was built to the stream's head to bring out the coal. The first station, six miles up from the Stony Fork Junction, was opened that year as Sagamore for the local Sagamore Coal Company. This name was suggested for the local post office which, however, opened on January 23, 1903, with Albert Munson Chamberlain, postmaster, as Logmont, referring to the area's early logging operations or to the nearby Log Mountains which extend southwest to northeast through the western half of the county. In 1928 the office, which had been serving the Luke and Orummond (later the Crystal) Coal Company, was moved a short distance east to serve what had been the Lower Hignite Coal Company, co-owned by William Edward Gunn, A.H. Rennebaum, and Craig Ralston. When Gunn bought out his partners he renamed the firm the Gunn Mining Company. In the early 1940s the company was acquired by the Garmeada Coal Company, Inc. of Middlesboro, and the small mining town, lacking its post office, which had closed in 1933, took the Garmeada name. After the Logmont
Station closed, also in the 1930s, area coal was shipped from (the) Murtea (Station), two miles above.

A spur of the Stony Fork railroad that went up Rockhouse Branch, two miles below Logmont-Garmeada, served the local Stony Fork coal operation. About a mile up the branch, on February 14, 1906, Charles D. Shipley opened the Ralston post office which was named for Scottish-born John Ralston, a pioneer area coal operator, and the organizer and CEO of the local Ralston and Stony Fork Coal Companies. By 1917 the Ralston Station at the mouth of Rockhouse had become Stony Fork and to this site the post office was moved the following year, and closed in December 1926.

In 1921, however, the station serving this vicinity was called Capito [kaegih/toh] for one of its earlier mines and camps. Its local post office, from 1944 to 1956, also took this name.

The Shamrock Coal and Coke Company of Middlesboro was the probable name source of the Shamrock post office and station some three to four miles east of Ralston-Capito. The post office, with John William Dean, its first postmaster, served several other vicinity coal operations (Edgewood Consolidated [or Climax Coal] Company, Hignite Coal Mining Company, and Monarch Coal and Coke Company) from September 25, 1906 through July 1925.

Hollingsworth, midway between Shamrock and Ralston, and eight miles west of the Middlesboro post office, may have been named for William M. Hollingsworth (ne August 1846), a respected county circuit court clerk, and/or his sons John and William W., who lived in Pineville. From June 30, 1916 through September 1931 it served the Monarch Coal and Coke Company and the Wilmont (rail) Station, just west of the mouth of Hignite Creek. James Brown and James Ralston were its only postmasters.17
Bennetts Fork heads in Tennessee and enters Bell County at the first site of Bosworth, one of its two Bell post offices. It extends for five more miles to Yellow Creek at the west end of Middlesboro. From the Tennessee line to the Stony Fork Junction it's paralleled by another L&N spur.

To serve a rail station and coal town of 200 residents a hundred yards from the Tennessee line and five miles southwest of the then site of the Middlesboro post office, Adolph H. Rennebaum, on May 5, 1903, established the Bosworth post office. In 1907, certainly by 1909, it had moved one fourth of a mile down the Fork to serve the Yellow Creek coal operations at Yellow Creek. It closed in September 1928. Joseph F. Bosworth, its name source, arrived in the Yellow Creek valley in 1889 and soon became a partner in the Yellow Creek Coal Company. He was an early Middlesboro police judge and was on that city's first council (1890). He is best known to Kentucky historians as "the father of good roads" in the state for, while representing his district in the legislature in the early 1900s, he was instrumental in getting bonds issued to build and maintain public roads. In 1909 he started the Kentucky Good Roads Association and became its first president. His efforts led to the establishment of a state Good Roads Department in 1912. In 1917 his son Joseph Jr. became the Bosworth postmaster. The office closed in late September 1928.

From September 25, 1906 through July 1919 the inexplicably named Gravity post office served the Winona Coal and Coke Company and its Winona Station and the nearby Columbia (later Bennetts Fork) Coal Company operation two miles northeast of Bosworth. Charles H. Townsend was its first postmaster. On current federal maps this site is shown as Premier for another area coal company.
POST OFFICES ON THE CLEAR CREEKS OF THE CUMBERLAND RIVER

John Warwick Partin operated the Clear Creek valley's first post office between August 4, 1888 and mid May of the following year near its head, sixteen miles southwest of Pineville. Clear Creek, his first name preference, gave way to Vance, perhaps for a local Baptist preacher.

One of Bell's earliest coal developments centered at the mouth of Clear Creek's two mile long Bear Creek branch, some fifteen miles southwest of Pineville. This vicinity, settled by John Partin in 1866, and named for a wild bear, was deeded in 1888 to Thomas S. Cairnes and the Wymon and Hull Land Company. To this site then came one W.A. Chenoe who opened a cannel coal mine and founded a village which, in October 1893, with over 200 residents, was reached by Cairnes' thirteen mile long Cumberland River and Tennessee Railroad (acquired in 1901 by the L&N as its Chenoa Branch). Chenoe established a post office half a mile up Bear Creek which he would call Cannel but, with Samuel Bastin, its first postmaster, it opened, on March 13, 1894, as Chenoe /ʃəˈnoʊ.ə/, /ʃəˈnoʊ.ə/ee/. By 1910 several other coal companies had mining operations in this vicinity. But these and Chenoe's camp have long been abandoned. Chenoe's is now under Chenoa Lake, a Clear Creek impoundment created in 1950 and now a part of the 11,363 acre Kentucky Ridge State Forest. The office existed in 1934.

To serve three coal operations in the Clear Creek watershed, 1½ miles east of Chenoa, the two mile long Major Spur of the L&N's Chenoa Branch was built up Major Branch and Caney Creek between Olcott Station on Clear Creek and Evanston. One mile up Caney was the mining camp of Davisburg and its post office. With David R. Morgan, its first postmaster, the office operated between January 26, 1907 and 1934. Its Davis source is not known.

Less than a mile north of Davisburg was Clyde Miller and Alexander R. Tinley's Cairnes post office. This shortlived (March 26, 1907 through July
1912) office was named for Thomas S. Cairnes, the Canadian-born (ca. 1845) Secretary-Treasurer of the Log Mountain Coal Coke and Timber Company of Pineville, and owner of 30,000 acres of Bell County coal and timber land.

On July 31, 1912 Alexander R. Tinley "closed" the Cairnes post office and moved to a site one mile up Bear Creek from Chenoa (2½ miles southwest of Cairnes) where he operated the Harrison post office to serve another of the Log Mountain Coal Company operations. One or more of the several Bell County Harrison families was the likely name source. The office closed in late November 1923.

At two unlocated (but 1½ miles apart) sites on Little Clear Creek, William Henry Mason established the Ivy post office on March 9, 1898. It may have been named for one of the county's Ivy (or Ivey) families. When it closed on January 31, 1914 its papers were sent to Pineville, 10½ miles northeast.

POST OFFICES ON THE STRAIGHT CREEK OF THE CUMBERLAND RIVER

The aptly named Straight Creek heads in the Kentucky Ridge in Harlan County and extends for about twenty two miles (fourteen in Bell County) to the river at Pineville. It's often shown on historic maps as Right Fork to distinguish it from the Left Fork which joins it two miles above its Cumberland River confluence. Straight Creek, paralleled by Ky 221, was served by nine post offices, while its Left Fork was served by eight offices.

The famed Kettle Island mines and camp were on Kettle Island Branch which joins Straight Creek six miles northeast of Pineville. Here, in 1845, Virginia-born Abraham Lock (1777-1852) patented some land and settled his family. This land was heired by his sons Alexander, a millwright (1827-1873), and Thomas M. Alexander's son Abraham II (1853-1921) lived on Apple Blossom, a branch of Kettle Island, half a mile up from Straight Creek. On
March 15, 1888, to serve this locality, the Lock post office was established, with Giles H. Hodges, postmaster. In 1901 Abraham II sold his Kettle Island property to the predecessor of the Pioneer Coal Company of Louisville which opened the Kettle Island mine and built the local camp. In January 1908 the Lock post office was moved two miles up Straight Creek to the mouth of Mill Creek where it closed in mid November 1912.

When the West Virginia Pineville and Tennessee Railroad (which became the Straight Creek Branch of the L&N) reached the Kettle Island valley in 1911, coal development here really took off. The Kettle Island post office was established on March 15, 1912 with Thomas B. Hail, postmaster, one fourth of a mile up the branch. Though only sporadic mining continues in the area and most of its residents are retired persons, the post office continues at the mouth of Apple Blossom.

Now, how did Kettle Island get its name? According to one tradition, local women used to do the family wash on a small island in Straight Creek, at the mouth of the branch, where water and bushwood were plentiful. A more likely explanation is that some early hunters used an old iron kettle found buried on the island as a landmark to guide their friends to good places to hunt or settle. In either case the name was applied in early settlement times, long before the coal lands were developed.

Two post offices, Ray and Pass, whose names have not been derived, served Bell County's upper Straight Creek valley. Ray operated between March 15, 1888 and September 17, 1889 with John R. and Joshua Howard, postmasters, probably at the mouth of Cox Branch, three fourths of a mile from the Harlan County line and eight miles from Kettle Island Branch. On March 3, 1893 Andrew D. Johnson reopened the office but called it Pass since by then Ray was in use in Logan County. In the winter of 1898-99 William M. Durham had the office moved 2½ miles down the creek to the
mouth of Stoney Fork, 5½ miles from the mouth of Kettle Island, where it closed in October 1913. In May 1945 the W.M. Ritter Lumber Company opened a sawmill and machine shop at the mouth of Stoney and soon established a camp there with store, boarding house, school, church, and thirty homes. Early the following year the company's superintendent A.A. Kopp established the Stoney Fork post office which is still in operation. In 1960 the Ritter Company and its mill were acquired by the Georgia-Pacific Company, the Atlanta-based paper and wood products firm, but closed shop in 1965. Sometime in the 1960s the L&N's Straight Creek branch was extended from Kettle Island past this point and up the creek to its head in Harlan County.

The Pennsylvania-based Taylor and Crate Lumber Company owned thousands of timberland acres on the 5½ mile long Stoney Fork. John Brock and Nathan J. Saylor, employees of the company, operated a large store at the mouth of Stoney. On September 21, 1929 Lewis Brock established the Crate post office, 2½ miles up Stoney near the mouth of Wolf Pen Branch. It was discontinued in 1937.

The creek's name was given to a post office at several sites just above its forks to serve the National Coal and Iron Company's Straight Creek mining camp of 1,500 residents and its West Virginia Pineville and Tennessee (L&N) Railroad station of that name, 2-2½ miles above (northeast of) Pineville. The Straight Creek post office operated from March 8, 1900, with William R. Wood, its first postmaster, till 1983.

Another station on the Straight Creek (L&N) line was Stilson, at the mouth of the 2½ mile long Dorton Branch which joins the creek one mile above Pineville. It and the Dorton Branch community were served by the Stilson post office between July 21, 1921 and mid April 1922, with Jasper N. Elliott, its only postmaster. While the Mose Dorton family probably gave its name to the branch, the Stilson name remains underived.
When the Straight Creek line was extended to Kettle Island in 1911 a station was established just above the mouth of the 1½ mile long Elliotts Branch (midway between the forks and Kettle Island Branch) and named for James Jenson, a highly respected construction foreman (ne September 1878). The Jenson post office operated here between January 20, 1927 and 1975 with William Woolum, its first postmaster.

POST OFFICES ON STRAIGHT CREEK'S LEFT FORK

The Left Fork, paralleled by Ky 66, also heads in the Kentucky Ridge and extends for twelve miles to the main Straight Creek just below the Straight Creek station and post office.

The pioneer Slusher family had a mill some eleven miles up the Left Fork which gave its name to Wilkerson Slusher's post office established on October 24, 1876. In early 1894 Mill was dropped from its name and the office became simply Slusher. But it closed that December. It was re-established on May 12, 1899, also as Slusher, by William P. Slusher, but closed again in late May 1908. It was re-established again on March 4, 1911. After successive moves over two miles up the Fork it arrived in 1936 at the mouth of Buffalo Creek where it was to serve this locality and its Buffalo Creek Station (on the L&N’s Left Fork Branch), three miles below Field, till it closed for good in 1951.

Another major Bell County family, the Bingham’s, sired by Virginia-born William in the early nineteenth century, gave its name to a post office serving several mills and a distillery on the Left Fork, just below the mouth of its Long Branch and six miles northeast of Pineville. Elias B. Bingham (ne March 1856) was its only postmaster from July 24, 1883 to mid November 1915.

The shortlived Heyburn post office (January 29 to September 30, 1925) served two coal camps, including the Heyburn Coal Company's, and the Heyburn rail station just below the site of Bingham. William M. and
Millard F. Slusher were its only postmasters.19

The Cary-Glendon Coal Company camp at the mouth of Howard Branch and the vicinity operations of the Straight Creek Coal and Coke Company, the Central Coal Company, and the Left Fork Coal Company were served by the Cary post office and the Left Fork's Cary Station, 3¼ miles northeast of Pineville. William Burchfield, a mine owner, established the office on December 2, 1905. It closed in 1966.

In the vicinity of the forks of Caney Creek, which joins the Left Fork less than a mile below (south of) Bingham, the Coleman Mine was being developed in 1906. To serve this and other vicinity coal operations that would come, William P. Gilkeson opened the inexplicably named Blanche post office on February 14, 1906. The office had several locations on Caney till it closed in 1965.

In 1908 the brothers Bryan W. and August F. Whitfield bought some land on Left Fork just below the mouth of Caney and established there the Left Fork Coal Company. The two mines developed there were called Arjay and Glendon. To serve them and the newly established Arjay camp, the Arjay post office was opened on February 23, 1911 with George W. Hairston, postmaster. It's said to have been named for a local mine operator, but who that was is uncertain. It was long held to have been T.J. Asher's son Robert but his middle initial was A., not J. So could it have been named for Robert J. Fulkerson who became postmaster in August 1911? The active post office, a large consolidated elementary school, and several stores and churches now serve this residential community extending along Ky 66 and the Left Fork for nearly a mile between the Cary site and the mouth of Caney.

Two Left Fork post offices opened in the spring of 1932. The first, Rella (whose name has not been derived) was established by Walter York to
serve another Left Fork (rail) station and a community of some 250 residents at or just above the mouth of Sims Fork, 2½ miles north of Arjay. It closed in 1954.

The Field post office, established in June 1932 by James Lewellen served at least two Left Fork (rail) stations at the head of this stream. The first site was at the newly established Crockett Station at the mouth of what was then Big Camp Branch (but is shown on contemporary maps as Little Camp) of Left Fork. The Left Fork tracks had just been extended to this site to ship coal from the Kentucky Ridge Coal Company, Little Creek, and C.C. (Guthries)' mines, and lumber from Bringardner's timber operations on nearby Redbird. This station came to be known as Harber, named perhaps for one M.S. Harber, a section foreman for the Wasioto and Black Mountain Railroad (ca. 1912). On July 20, 1939 the office was moved about one mile down the creek (and the tracks) to Britts Station, two miles above Slusher's Buffalo Creek site, where it closed in 1984. Field and Crockett were area families. Could Britts Station have been named for Brit (sic) Slusher, ne ca. 1873?

POST OFFICES ON THE CUMBERLAND RIVER'S FOUR MILE CREEK

The five mile long Four Mile Creek joins the river four miles below (northwest of) the Cumberland Ford, and that accounts for its name. The L&N's Cumberland Valley line arrived at this site in 1899 and, by 1904, was joined by the two mile long Fourmile Branch built ultimately to ship coal from the creek's eighteen mines, including the Tuckahoe Coal Company of Dayton, Ohio (later Campbell and Lewis) operations and those of Black Raven, Black Bear, Highland Rim, and the Straight Creek Coal companies.

The Fourmile coal town and rail stations were early, and still are, just below the mouth of Four Mile Creek. Here too was established the Fourmile post office on December 16, 1899 with Edward L. Shell, postmaster. In 1920 the office was moved to a site some 700 yards above the Four Mile
confluence, about where the Conant post office was in 1888, and directly across the river from the site of the Whitsett post office. Later, the Fourmile office returned to its original location and survives.

Serving the Highland Rim and Continental Coal Company mines and camps two miles up Four Mile was the Rim post office. With William M. Huff, its first postmaster, it operated between July 22, 1905 and mid April 1919 just above the mouth of Four Mile's Right Fork.

Four miles up Four Mile is the Ivy Grove Baptist Church and the small residential community of Upper Four Mile that, for eleven years, from July 15, 1926, was served by Dink Miller, Jr's. post office. His first proposed name Corey, probably for W.C. Corey, the Fourmile postmaster, was replaced by Ivy Grove for the church organized there in 1915.

POST OFFICES ON GREASY CREEK (OF THE CUMBERLAND RIVER)

The ten mile long Greasy Creek, most likely named for the Greasy-appearing "skim" on its water, heads just northeast of the Bell-Knox-Whitley Counties convergence and joins the river one mile below the mouth of Four Mile. It's flanked on the south by Pine Mountain and paralleled by Ky 92. Seven post offices served its residents.

The Greasy valley's oldest post office Ingram is still in operation some five miles up from the river, at the mouth of Ingram Branch and across from the mouth of Centers Branch. It was established on July 15, 1881 by Thomas J. Ingram, perhaps a mile further up the creek on land settled in the early nineteenth century by his grandfather North Carolina-born Bill Ingram. In 1896 Thomas J. was succeeded by his wife Dora Elizabeth (nee Mason). In 1935 the office was moved one mile down the creek to its present location.

Dempsey K. Carter (ne June 1852) offered the names Dempus (for himself?) and Dewey (for a brother) for a post office he was establishing at the
mouth of Carter Branch, four miles below Ingram, but it operated from November 4, 1889 through September 1891 as Carter's.

The Tinsley post office, named for local descendants of pioneer and Revolutionary War veteran William Tinsley, was established on April 9, 1900 by Charles C. Smith, probably below (north of) the Carter post office site. By 1908 the office had been moved nearly a mile down the creek to serve the East Jellico coal operations on what was then McGaffey Branch. Several years before, these mines had been reached by the L&N's Pine Mountain East Spur extending up Greasy from its Yingling Station on the river. By 1920 the office was serving the Surran (rail) Station, named for W.L. Surran, a local trainmaster, a mile up Greasy. After several short distance moves the office reached the mouth of Bell Jellico (or Dean) Branch and was suspended in September 1983.

The Pineville-based Bell Jellico Coal Company had a mine near the head of the one mile long Dean Branch. To serve it Marvin G. Yingling, a company official, established the Belljellico post office on May 20, 1905. Shortly thereafter the Bell Jellico Company's (rail) spur was extended up the branch from its connection at what become the L&N's Surran Station. By 1916 the Bell Jellico Station had become Blowers, for A.C. Blowers, the coal company's general manager, and eventually Dean Branch was renamed Bell Jellico. The P.O. closed in Sept. 1925.

The first rail station up Greasy Creek was Hosman, one rail mile from Yingling on the L&N's main line, on the north side of the river. At or near this site, 300 yards south of the river, Jesse C. Hoskins established the Deanton post office on November 19, 1915. On July 7, 1916 he had the name changed to Hosman. In May 1922 the office was moved half a mile up the creek to the mouth of Dean Branch to serve the J.B. Blue Diamond Coal Company, and after several more short distance
moves it closed in 1932. Dean Branch and Deanton were named for the descendants of Thomas Dean (before 1800 to 1875), an early settler at Greasy's mouth. We can only guess that Hosman someway referred to the Hoskins family whose area progenitors were Ezekiel and Elizabeth of Russell County, Virginia through a son John Knox Hoskins (ne ca. 1811).

In 1931 Smith Fuson re-established on Greasy, some four miles above the then site of Ingram, the old Ark post office that had been on the Clear Fork River (see below). But for some reason he called it Genoa instead. It closed in 1933. On December 16, 1936 he re-established the office to serve the Fuson Store but succeeded this time in having it named Ark, and it survived till mid July 1944.

POST OFFICES ON THE CLEAR FORK RIVER AND ITS LAUREL FORK

The twenty mile long Clear Fork River heads near Fonde, extends through Claiborne and Campbell Counties in Tennessee, and Whitley County to the Cumberland River, one mile above Williamsburg.

The Southern Railway spur up the Clear Fork valley from Jellico, Tennessee was completed in 1905 to a vicinity called Morison, half a mile north of the Tennessee state line. That year the Clear Fork Coal and Coke Company opened a mine and camp here and called it Fonde [fahn/dee], allegedly for a man who helped build some of the company's homes. To this site in (or before) August 1906 the Ibex post office was moved from Claiborne County, Tennessee, and George P. Morison became postmaster.21 Until the road that became Ky 74 from Fonde and down Stony Fork to Middlesboro was built in the late 1920s, this place was functionally tied to Tennessee. Though the area mines closed in the late 1940s, the post office lingered till 1984 to serve a residential village just east of the junction of Ky 74 and 535.
Somewhere on the Laurel Fork of the Clear Fork River, near what later became Frakes, were the several sites of the first Ark post office. As John W. Davis's proposed name Roscoe for this office was also in use in Elliott County, he named his office (located in his Site Location Report on Laurel Fork, seven miles west of Chenoa) Ark, and it operated from April 19, 1898 through April 1910. In 1936 the name was given to the re-established Genyare post office on Greasy Creek (see above). Neither Ark nor Roscoe have been name derived.

The relatively level, gently rolling plateau between the Pine and Log Mountains, at the head of Clear Creek and along the Pine Creek and Laurel Fork branches of the Clear Fork River, was settled in the 1850s and early called South America for its remoteness and relative inaccessibility. For years this area was considered the roughest, meanest territory in southeastern Kentucky and was home to moonshiners and feuding families. In 1925 Indiana-born Rev. Hiram Milo Frakes (1888-1975), pastor of a small Methodist church in Pineville, arrived there and persuaded its natural leader Bill Henderson to donate land for a school from which grew the famed Henderson Settlement School and Mission.

On April 10, 1908 James H. Hamblin established a post office to serve a locality named for his family on Clear Creek, near the Henderson Grove Church, some three or so miles above Chenoa. He called it Linda (source still unexplained). In 1922 this office was moved two miles southwest to a site on Pine Creek, and when the Rev. Frakes became postmaster in the summer of 1929 he had it moved to the Laurel Fork site of his new settlement school. On June 1, 1936 it was renamed Frakes. Rev. Frakes retired as postmaster in 1949 and as school-mission superintendent in 1950, after twenty five years in this position. By 1967 the mission had twenty four buildings on its 1,600 acre tract. The school was converted to a community center in 1976, and the post office there is still in operation.
THE COUNTY’S RED BIRD RIVER POST OFFICE

Since 1876 one post office has served Bell's Red Bird River valley in its northeast corner, a section separated from the rest of the county by the Kentucky Ridge. Red Bird, which heads in the Ridge, extends north for about forty five miles to join Goose Creek at Oneida in Clay County to form the South Fork of the Kentucky River.

One of Kentucky's few long-tenured post offices operated by a single family opened on October 24, 1876 at the mouth of Red Bird's Cow Fork (then Cow Creek), a mile south of the Clay County line. Established by the Rev. Richard Wilkerson Asher (1813-1884), a Primitive Baptist preacher and storekeeper (and Dillion Asher I's son), it was named Red Bird and was soon serving a small settlement with a corn mill, school, and church. On his death he was succeeded by his daughter Amanda Jane (Mandy, nee 1845) who soon had the name changed to Knuckles for her husband Tennessee-born William R. "Bill" Knuckles, a lawyer and storekeeper. Or at least she thought she had, but in the postal records the office name was spelled Nuckles. On her death in early 1890 Bill became postmaster. On his death in 1910 his son John Beverly Knuckles (ne September 1873) took over and, in August 1911, at the request of the Post Office Department, had the office's name changed to Beverly. On December 22, 1913 John was succeeded by his wife Myrtle.

In 1921 John Beverly and his brother Millard F. offered their Red Bird land and its timber to the Women's Missionary Society of the Evangelical Church of Pennsylvania to build a school and hospital which became the nucleus of the highly acclaimed Red Bird Mission and Settlement School. Iowa-born Rev. John Johnson DeWall was its first director. Over the years it has operated a clinic, hospital, fifteen area churches in five counties,
several schools, manpower training programs, a community store, and a sales outlet for local crafts persons.

Several years ago the active Beverly post office was moved 2½ miles from its longtime Cow Fork site to the mouth of Lawson Branch of Lawson Creek (Ky 66), 1½ miles above the Red Bird Hospital.

AN UNLOCATED POST OFFICE

Since John C. Howard's family name was already in use in Mason County, Conaway was offered and accepted for his post office somewhere in the area between the Cumberland River, Yellow Creek, Middlesboro, and the Cubage post office. He opened it on June 14, 1904, but on September 27 he had the name changed to Institute. By mid October of the following year it had closed. The Conaway and Institute names also remain underived.

Four Bell County post offices were authorized but never operated: Sutty, on August 22, 1888 with John Powers as postmaster-designate. Neither name source nor location is known. Fuson, in his Bell County history, refers to but does not locate a Sutty Hill. Neither has Harry L. Baird's authorized Primo (November 11, 1915) nor John A. Stewart's Keerane (June 15, 1918) been located or name derived. Robert K. Partin's Parton (sic) post office was officially established on May 13, 1907 but its order was officially rescinded on December 10.

Twelve of the county's seventy eight operating post offices survive. Middleboro's and Pineville's serve its only currently incorporated towns. Twenty four served viable communities at some time, while nearly all the others were centered around a rural store, church, and school, and sometimes a rail station or one or more mines.
Local/area persons or families accounted for twenty nine office names. Three offices were named for distant places while fourteen took the names of local or nearby features (twelve streams, one church, and one ford). Four offices had geographic, descriptive, or locational names. Nine were named for local economic or other activities, institutions, or companies. One bore the Indian name for an area feature. Three had more than one (actual or possible) name derivation. Fifteen names have not been derived, and three offices have not been located.

Fifteen names were not those first proposed for their offices. Twenty seven offices served communities, neighborhoods, rail stations, or mining camps with other names. Nine offices had name changes.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kentucky Advocate of Danville, March 1, 1867, according to Calvin M. Fackler, "The Oldest Copy of Advocate Dates March 1, 1867" in the Danville Advocate-Messenger, July 7, 1940, II, P. 1:1


3. There's a possibility that from November 19, 1829 to February 11, 1830 this post office was called Wherretts (or Wherretty) for one Peter Wherrett, postmaster, but postal historians have no record of this.


5. Fern Lake, the two mile long Little Yellow impoundment, was developed in the 1890s as Middlesboro's drinking water source and named for the ferns along its bank.
6. Clear Creek and its post office are not to be confused with the twenty mile long Clear Fork River (which flows through southwestern Bell, Claiborne and Campbell Counties, Tennessee, and Whitley County) and Bell County’s Clear Fork post office (see below).

7. Historian Fuson and some of the nineteenth century censuses spell the place and family name Callaway, but it was Calloway to the Post Office Department.

8. Garrard was Conant’s first name choice.

9. According to early explorer Christopher Gist’s journal, Ouasioto was the name also applied by the Indians to the Cumberland Mountains and meant “land of many deer”. It also appears in this spelling on Evans’ 1775 map and Hutchins’ 1778 map; and in other eighteenth century documents as, variously, Waseoto, Osioto, Osiate, Oseoto, and even Onosiota.

10. Durham’s first name choice was Cumberland.

11. Page is also the name of an area elementary school now at the mouth of Bills Branch, 1½ miles below and across the river from the old Page Station.


13. Fuson, P. 221. All twentieth century maps, though, spell the creek name Brownies.

14. Most the town’s non-numbered streets were named for English towns and shires.

15. Lexington, Ky. has a Mosaic temple of this name.

16. According to a patent signed by Kentucky’s Governor Desha in 1827 for land surveyed for Drury Mayes in 1826 (according to Fuson’s history, P. 261).
17. Wilmont, for the rail station, was the first name proposed for the Hollingsworth post office.


19. The Heyburn name was applied to this Left Fork station at least by 1921, according to the line's timetable.

20. The first name proposed for Smith's Tinsley post office honored another local family the Goodins.

21. Kentucky already had an Ibex post office, in Elliott County.

22. The Nuckles to Beverly name change is said to have been occasioned by the apparent confusion with the McLean County post office of Nichols, established in 1895.

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19. Wilson, (Dr.) Edward S. of Pineville, Ky. interviewed by the author, November 27, 1978