Laurel, the eightieth Kentucky county in order of formation, was authorized by the Kentucky legislature on December 21, 1825. Its original 520 square miles were taken from Clay, Knox, Rockcastle, and Whitley counties. Having gained ten more square miles from Knox in 1834, Laurel lost 130 toward the organization of Jackson County in 1858 and gained another forty from Knox in 1876. After several almost indiscernible adjustments between 1884 and 1904, its final boundaries were fixed on March 22, 1904.¹

The county, at the northwestern edge of the Southeastern Kentucky Coal Field is drained by streams in the Cumberland valley system. Two of the Cumberland's main branches--the Rockcastle and the Laurel Rivers (the latter was the county's name source)--join its main channel 3½ miles apart, in the southwest corner of the county.

The seventy five mile long Rockcastle River, which heads at the confluence of its Middle and South Forks in Jackson County, serves as Laurel County's western and northern boundaries. It was first called Lawless River for a member of Dr. Walker's 1750 exploring party but was renamed in 1767 by Long Hunter Isaac Lindsey for a huge shelter-providing overhang some four miles south of Livingston (in Rockcastle County), one of a number of natural formations pioneers referred to as "rock castles". Its main Laurel County tributaries are Cane and Sinking Creeks, Little Rockcastle River (with its Hazel Patch and Wood Creeks), Parker Creek (now Branch), and South Fork (with its Raccoon and Little Raccoon Creeks).

The sixty mile long Laurel (or Big Laurel) River, heading about a mile from the Clay County line, and joining the Cumberland at the Whitley,
McCreary, and Laurel Counties convergence, serves as part of the county’s southern boundary with Whitley and Knox. Laurel River branches, including Craig, Lynn Camp, Robinson, Rough, Blackwater, and Johns Creeks, and the Little Laurel River, also figure significantly in the county's settlement history. In 1977 the Laurel River Lake was created by the impoundment of the river, 2.3 miles above its Cumberland confluence. With a 205 mile long shoreline and a seasonal pool of 5,600 acres (900 of which are managed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers) it has become the focus of one of the region's best known and most often visited recreational areas.

Laurel County is located on a dissected plateau of many flat topped ridges, and thus settlement was not as limited to stream valleys as it was in the other upper Cumberland and Eastern Coal Field counties. Pioneer Laurel families included McHargues, Jacksons, Far(r)ises, Pitmans, Pearls, Chesnuts, Taylors, Browns, Mershons, Moores, Weavers, and Brocks.

Till the arrival of the L&N Railroad in the 1880s, the county's economic base was primarily subsistence agriculture and timbering. The line's Knoxville branch gave rise to coal development in several sections of the county. However, by the First World War, resource depletion and better marketing and distribution systems elsewhere led to coal's decline. Yet, main roads extending through the county since earliest settlement times gave the county a strategic importance of another kind that many other eastern Kentucky counties lacked. At several sites along the Wilderness Road and other routes through the county, rest stops and stores catering to travelers sprang up during the late eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries giving rise to permanent settlements and the post offices that served them. The end of the twentieth century saw the north-south placement of I-75, the east-west placement of the Daniel Boone Parkway, and plans for L-66 crossing the county, the relocation of US 25 and the improvement of Ky 80 and other
main roads. Moreover, by the late twentieth century, factories, mostly in the London-Pittsburg-East Bernstadt area, and tourism had given the county an unparalleled economic diversification. With its Levi Jackson-Wilderness Road State Park (southeast of London, the county seat), the Laurel River Lake, and the smaller (672 acre) Wood Creek Lake in the north (created in 1969), the county has been attracting visitors from all over the state and region.

Laurel's 436 square mile area is home to an estimated 54,300 persons, a twenty per cent increase in 2002 over the 43,000 counted in the 1990 Census. London, its centrally located seat, is seventy five miles sse of downtown Lexington (via I-75). The ninety three operating post offices will be located below by road miles from the courthouse in downtown London or from earlier or larger offices in their respective areas.

The fourth class city of London grew from a pioneer settlement called Riceton (for William Rice's apple orchard), strategically situated on the Wilderness Road, halfway between the Cumberland Gap and Lexington. According to the most accepted account, the act creating the county in 1825 provided for a popular vote on the choice of the county seat. John and Jarvis Jackson's offer of the Riceton site was accepted along with their suggested name London, probably for their English ancestry and the hope that the new town would develop like its name source. London, Kentucky was officially founded in 1826 on thirty one acres platted by James McNeill, and its post office was established on February 4, 1831, with Branham Hill (who had earlier maintained the Hazel Patch post office) as its first postmaster. It was incorporated as a city on February 16, 1866.

Like most Cumberland valley and eastern Kentucky coal field towns, London's early development was slow. It didn't really come into its own till the arrival of the L&N Railroad in 1882, and soon became its area's
principal trading center. By the end of the twentieth century it had become an important industrial center with a number of plants including a bakery and pie maker, a spinning and yarn factory, makers of church pews, fertilizers, and thermostats, as well as the site of one of Kentucky's largest food wholesalers, tobacco warehouses, a dairy, and the Appalachian Computer Services.

By annexation, London's 2000 population of some 5,700 increased by thirty one per cent within two years to 7,500, making it almost a contender with Corbin, only fourteen miles south.

POST OFFICES IN THE ROCKCASTLE RIVER WATERSHED: MAIN CHANNEL

In 1853, after selling their Graham Springs resort in Mercer County, Christopher Columbus Graham and his son Montrose acquired 1,500 acres on both sides of the Rockcastle River, some seven miles above its Cumberland confluence. By the Bee Rock on the Pulaski County side, at what was probably already known as Sublimity Springs for its sublime scenery, they soon opened a resort hotel. Across the river, in Laurel County, they opened a flour and saw mill. On February 22, 1860 the town of Sublimity was chartered and, on October 22, Flavius Josephus ("Seph") Campbell, who had succeeded Montrose as the resort operator, established, also on the Pulaski side, the Sublimity post office.

The Sublimity Springs resort, however, could not compete with another chalybeate springs resort, Rockcastle Springs, 2 1/2 miles down the river, that had opened by 1835, also on the Pulaski County side. To this point, on September 5, 1878, the Sublimity post office was moved, with Elcana Goodin, postmaster, and renamed Rockcastle Springs. By now, apparently, Seph Campbell had also moved for he became postmaster in 1880. On December 24, 1900 the office, now with Delpha Wells as post-
master, moved across the river to a Laurel County site half a mile above the mouth of No Business Branch, twenty one miles southwest of London, where it closed in 1936.⁵

Some twenty two river miles above (north of) Bee Rock-Sublimity were the two sites of Andrews. This office was established on August 24, 1887 300 yards west of the river, in Rockcastle County, one mile north of Eagle Creek. Its first postmaster and probable name source Andrew Jackson Norton had first proposed the names Norton and Little Ivy. On November 19, 1888 James H. Bustle had the office moved across the river to a Laurel County site half a mile up the Laurel Branch of Rockcastle River, and fourteen miles northwest of London, where it closed in February 1911.

Still further up the river, twenty three miles above the sites of Andrews, at the mouth of Horse Lick Creek (at the convergence of Rockcastle, Jackson, and Laurel Counties) was the pioneer Cruises Ferry and tavern. This was by a major crossing for the Wilderness Road, and may first have been maintained by John Farris.⁶ It's not clear which Cruise (or Cruises) had the ferry after Farris' move to a site south of London, or even if Farris had actually operated a ferry there.⁷ Some say it was Tom; others James (who's known to have acquired land on the river in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s) and/or Edward. In any event, the ferry-tavern site did not get its post office till 1899 when Welcom ("Welk") Mullins, a later tavern operator, petitioned for what he'd call Welcom only to learn that an office of that name (actually Welcome) had just opened in Butler County. From June 21 till August 1919 he was its only postmaster. The office was re-established in August 1925 by John Lear after whose death in 1937 it was moved to Della Gabbard's store on (the present) Ky 1228, less than a mile east of the convergence. Here, some sixteen miles northwest of London, it remained till, on Mrs. Gabbard's retirement in October 1964, it closed.
The inexplicably named and not precisely located sites of the Yaho post office served the Rockcastle valley between Andrews and Sublimity for thirty years from June 25, 1905. According to first postmaster John W. Whiteaker's Site Location Report, it was half a mile east of the river, two miles below the Rockcastle branch of Pine Creek, six miles west of Bernstadt, and four miles south of Ward (which later became the Billows post office in Rockcastle County). In the spring of 1924 it was moved 0.8 miles northwest to a public road one mile south of Pine Creek, and one fourth mile from the river.

Even less certain are we of the Stone Hill post office which Sherman W. Owsley alone maintained from August 31, 1874 through October 1878. It may have been in the vicinity of, or west of, Mt. Moriah Church, at the head of the Rockcastle River's Hawk Creek, and seven miles northwest of London.

POST OFFICES ON THE ROCKCASTLE RIVER'S CANE CREEK

Somewhere near the head of the twelve mile long Cane Creek, which joins the river one mile above Bee Rock-Sublimity, were the several sites of the Add post office. The first was ten miles southwest of London, on the road (now roughly Ky 192) between the county seat and Bald Rock, serving a locality that may have been called Reid (possibly for one Reid Parman, ne ca. 1843). Neither first postmaster Sterling R. Parman's first proposed names Mt. Ebo and Mt. Nebo, nor Add itself, have been derived. The office opened on February 6, 1882 but closed in mid August 1887. It was re-established on July 10, 1888 by James W. Bishop some 4½ miles from the river and eleven miles from London, but in February 1891 it was moved 1½ miles east to a site at the junction of (the present) Ky 192 and 312, half a mile northwest of the Bethel (now Hightop) Church to serve a store,
mill, and shop. It may have moved two miles west in 1905, but contemporary maps show it, when it closed in March 1912, at the junction of Ky 192 and 552, near the Pine Hill Church. A former postmaster, Sidney Grant Hale's attempt to re-establish the office as Adz in September 1922 was unsuccessful.

Equally inexplicable was Skate, the name applied to Nancy Johnson's post office on August 31, 1905. This replaced her proposed name Dorr (which may have been too similar to Dory, the name of a Clay County office). It served a stage stopover on (the present) Ky 192 near the Pine Hill Church but, on January 1, 1916, was moved one mile east and, in 1920, was again moved to a site near the junction of the Rush and Maple Grove Roads, on the west side of (upper) Craigs Creek, three fourths of a mile east of 192. Here Jim and Betty Steward ran it in their grocery till it closed in 1935.

POST OFFICES ON SINKING CREEK OF THE ROCKCASTLE RIVER

Sinking Creek heads just short of I-75 at London's western city limits and extends for about 17½ miles to the Rockcastle River some nine miles above Bee Rock-Sublimity and 12 3/4 miles below the Laurel Branch sites of Andrews. One of the stream's several possible name sources was the complaint of the driver of an overloaded ox-driven wagon that he'd gotten bogged down in the "sandlined creek" bottom. Four post offices served the Sinking Creek valley.

At some unknown site one mile from Sinking and 3½ miles west of London, Margaret L. (Mrs. James W.) Mitchell opened a post office on January 18, 1899. Since her first name choice Manilla (sic) for the battle five months earlier had already been taken by a Johnson County office, she named hers Platt, but it's not known why. It lasted only through July 1905.
Just six days after the establishment of Platt, Abel Bryant (ne September 1853) opened an office under a rock overhang half a mile east of the creek and ten miles west of London (via the present Rte. 1535). Since his preferred name Elrod for the family of Indiana-born James W. Elrod (ne January 1844), a London machinist, was then in use in Pulaski County, he named his office Abel.\(^8\) In 1907 the office was moved one mile west, but it returned to the vicinity of its original location in 1914 where it remained till it closed in mid October 1933.

To serve one of the Swiss settlements in "the Upper Colony", Swiss-born Flora Probst opened the Abington post office on July 3, 1900 and with her brother Emil operated it for twelve years, two miles east of Sinking Creek, three miles due west of London, and five miles southeast of Bernstadt, the main colony (see below).\(^9\) In 1912 Henry V. Tanner had the office moved 400 yards south to a point he located, in his Site Location Report, half a mile west of Sinking Creek, and four miles from the London post office. Here it closed in mid August 1916. Whence Abington, the name of towns in old and New England and Pennsylvania, is not known.

The Bunches, an old Laurel County family descended from a Rockcastle valley widow mentioned in the 1825 county enabling act, gave its name to a post office established on December 11, 1905 half a mile northwest of Sinking Creek and four miles below (west of) Abel. In November 1913 Milton W. Bunch, who had succeeded first postmaster John Y. McFadden, moved the Bunch post office half a mile south to serve the locality still called Dog Branch for that 2 3/4 mile long Sinking Creek tributary. After several vicinity moves the office closed on November 15, 1959, half a mile west of Sinking and fourteen miles west of London, where it was serving the New Hope Church.
The 2½ mile long Little Rockcastle River heads at its two head forks--Hazel Patch and Wood Creeks--and joins the main Rockcastle channel at or near the site of the Dillion post office (see below), just above US 25's river crossing. The 10½ mile long Hazel Patch Creek heads just northeast of East Bernstadt and extends north, then west to join Wood Creek just west of the final Hazel Patch post office site.

The settlement of Hazel Patch, with its extinct post office, is on the creek of this name, just above the forks, half a mile east of US 25, and eight miles northwest of London. It's 7½ miles down the creek from the original Hazel Patch, historically referred to as "The Hazel Patch", half a mile east of (the present) Ky 490 (old US 25), in the vicinity of the later Oakley (see below). "The Hazel Patch", named for the large number of hazel bushes in the vicinity, was the junction of two pioneer routes, one to Boonesborough and the other to Crab Orchard and Danville, where the pioneers Benjamin Logan and Richard Henderson parted company. It was the site of John Woods' blockhouse, a tavern built in 1793, that became a major stop on the Wilderness Road for the earliest Kentucky visitors. Here a post office was established in December 1804 with Woods as postmaster. On July 1, 1805 Woods was succeeded as the Hazlepatch (sic) postmaster by James Rice, and for awhile the office was also known as Rice's. It closed in 1831.10

On February 1, 1867 John Hay re-established the Hazle Patch post office at its downstream location, eleven miles northwest of London, but it wasn't for five more years that the name was permanently transferred to this site, then but a settlement of railroad builders. In 1961 the U.S. Board on Geographic Names changed the spelling of the post office-community's name from Hazle Patch to Hazel Patch to reverse an 1897 decision. After several vicinity moves the office closed for good in April 1974.
The Oakley post office, at several sites on (the present) Ky 490, between half and one mile north of Hazel Patch Creek, in the vicinity of the Mount Carmel Church, was established by Jackson C. Mullins on April 1, 1891. It was named for the descendants of Virginia-born Leonard (ne October 1840) and Charlotte Oakley. This office served the store and sawmill of Balm, Mullins' first name choice. It closed in February 1955.

The county's first commercial coal mine was opened near the head of the sixteen mile long Wood Creek in 1872. But it was not till the arrival of the L&N ten years later that coal would become a major industry in the county. Within a short time several area mining operations were developed and a community grew up to serve them.

The Peacock Coal Company was organized by Henry C. Thompson, a native North Carolinian, on a farm long owned by the descendants of Jonathan McNeill, on the 1½ mile long Peacock Branch of Wood Creek (which heads half a mile south of the present Ky 30). According to the county's coal historian Samuel Mory, this mine's coal is said to have, like the bird, "reflected (nearly) all the colors of the spectrum".

McNeill's neighbors were Lot and Holland Pitman, sons of a Scotsman Richard Pitman who may have settled on nearby Raccoon Creek around 1801. The Pitman descendants gave the land for the L&N's new station which took their name. On June 13, 1882 Michael Hope, a Pitman Coal Company employee (ne June 1829), established the local post office, not as Hope, his first preference, but as Peacock. It was renamed Pittsburgh on March 16, 1883 probably to honor both the family and the Pennsylvania city. In 1894 the "h" was dropped from its name and the post office has been Pittsburg ever since. By the First World War, area coal mines had been all but abandoned. The town's charter was dissolved in 1907; Peacock ended its operation in 1899 and the Pitman Coal Company's operation had been abandoned by 1910. Another company, Laurel Coal, closed down two years later.
Today the village of Pittsburg, with its post office, extends for over a mile along US 25 and the L & N (just east of I-75), from a point about one mile north of London's city limits. London lately has sought to incorporate this area but as yet has failed to do so.

The shortlived Dillion post office (March 4, 1890 to 1893), with Edwin R. Davis, postmaster, served an L & N station of this name 200 yards east of the Rockcastle River, halfway between Livingston and Hazle Patch. Nothing else is known of it.13

**TWO PARKER BRANCH POST OFFICES**

The four mile long Parker Branch, named for an area family, heads less than half a mile south of the River Hill Church and joins the Rockcastle River near Lamero. Two post offices served its valley.

Near the head of Parker Branch, at the junction of the Wilderness Road and the road leading to the Clay County salt works, one William Titus Mershon settled in 1812.14 Here Mershon's Tavern became an important stage coach stop. Sometime before the mid 1830s the vicinity came to be known as Mershons Cross Roads. With this name and presumably at this site Cornelius Mershon established a post office on April 1, 1837. It was discontinued in June 1839. On May 23 of the following year another Mershons Cross Roads was established in that vicinity but was renamed Bethel Cross Roads on May 14, 1860 and closed in February 1861. Yet another Mershons Cross Roads post office was established on September 13, 1861. Within twenty-five years it was serving a trade center and another important Laurel County coal community. According to several late nineteenth century Site Location Reports, this office was moved several times within the area between Parker Branch, White Oak Creek (another Rockcastle River tributary), and the head of Hazel Patch Creek. In December 1895 it became simply Mershons.
When it closed for good in 1967 it was on Ky 490 (old US 25, roughly the route of the Wilderness Road, paralleling Parker Branch), some 2½ miles above the river and twelve miles north of London.15

To serve the Nelson and Sons store, half a mile south of Parker, Orville Perry Nelson (son of Jasper) applied for a post office he would probably call Glen. But it opened on March 26, 1906 as Templer, possibly honoring the area landowning descendants of pioneer settler Jerah Templin (or Tamplin). In the fall of 1923 the office was moved half a mile north to John and Lydia Dees' store on (the present) Ky 1228, with Lydia as postmaster till it closed in August 1933.

FIFTEEN POST OFFICES IN THE ROCKCASTLE RIVER'S SOUTH FORK WATERSHED

Rockcastle's South Fork, which joins the Middle Fork to form the river's main channel, heads near Deer Lick in Jackson County, and for much of its thirty two mile run forms the Jackson-Laurel County line. It was first identified as the Tomilson River (sic) in Or. Walker's 1750 journal. Six post offices served the South Fork's main valley.

Green Mount, the earliest of the South Fork offices, was established on December 12, 1877 by Jesse Bowling to serve a thickly settled area centering at what was then called Bowling Cross Roads, just below the mouth of Little Raccoon Creek. It was named for a nearby grass-covered natural mound just east of (the present) Ky 30. By 1887 it was serving a couple of area coal mines. By 1895 the name was being spelled as one word. After a couple of moves between 1893 and 1907 it closed in September 1909. It was re-established by Isabel Bowling on July 23, 1915 to serve the yet-to-be built Bowling Station on the new Rockcastle River rail line just across the Fork. Her preferred name Bowling was replaced by Greenmount. From 1961 to 1973 the office was but a rural branch. Contemporary maps show Greenmount and Bowling as two separate sites on either side of the Fork.
Another former coal town McWhorter [mæk/whɪər/ʃər] centered at the junction of (the present) Ky 578 and 638, one mile above the mouth of Raccoon Creek, two miles above (southeast of) Greenmount, and ten miles northeast of London. Storekeeper and first postmaster Elijah McWhorter (ne November 1857), whose family of area timber and stock raisers was its name source, first proposed calling it Charlotte (to serve a locality of that name) and, possibly, Savyville (derivation unknown). It operated from February 8, 1884 to early December 1975.

One of the several Kentucky post offices that were or, in this case, would have been, named for a Spanish-American War victory was on the South Fork, one fourth of a mile from the mouth of Mill Creek, and some 4½ miles above (southeast of) McWhorter. But since Menifee County's Havana post office had gotten there first, Joseph Smith Fouts' Laurel County office opened on February 23, 1900 as the inexplicable Chester. It lasted through July 1922.

The one time mining village of Langnau [læŋ/nə] was one of the several "colonies" settled in the early 1880s by Swiss immigrants attracted to the county by the Kentucky Bureau of Immigration. It's said to have been named for a Swiss village fifteen miles east of Bern, that country's capital, whence some of the colonists had come. The Laurel County village and its post office, established on March 24, 1884, with William McCarty, postmaster, were located somewhere in the later Salem Church and School Neighborhood, one fourth of a mile north of the Little Laurel Fork, and five miles northeast of London. In early 1892 it was moved some distance north to a site just west of (Big) Raccoon Creek, then known as George's Store, with Martha J. Lincks as postmaster. It closed in September with that vicinity later to be served by the Titus post office (see below). On November 17, 1893 Robert P. Hodges re-estab-
lished the office one mile east, at a site four miles west of the South Fork. Several more moves, closer to the South Fork, brought it ultimately to its final location, on Ky 472, just yards from the Fork, near Wyatts Chapel and 8½ miles northeast of London, where it closed in the summer of 1972.

The Zacata post office, established on June 22, 1905 by Thomas J. Sullivan (whose name preference was Rose), has been imprecisely located, but is believed to have been on the 2½ mile long Nineva Creek, a branch of the (upper) South Fork, roughly midway between London, Langnau, Grit, and Brock. Though its name also has not been derived, one may wonder if, in some way, it could be associated with zacatl, the Nahuatl-Spanish word for hay or desert grass, which was given to several places in California and Arizona. This Laurel post office closed in mid April 1912.

Somewhere in the South Fork valley was Shaggy, a post office operated by Rosa N. (Mrs. Thomas W.) Crook between February 5 and December 15, 1915. According to her Site Location Report her name preference may have been Job Davis and the office would serve a locality called Salem. None of these names have been derived.

A local preacher’s name may have been given to the Cornette post office established by David Gabbard on April 26, 1924. His first proposed name Mount Zion was probably taken from the local church just south of the Fork and half a mile below (northwest of) the mouth of White Oak Creek. Mrs. Nora Carter (nee Cornelius) was the first of several family members to run that office which served several families and McCollum’s store till it closed in February 1955.

* Or on nearby Little Laurel Ch.
LITTLE RACCOON CREEK POST OFFICES

The nine mile long Little Raccoon Creek joins the Fork just above Greenmount.

Its first post office was Raccoon Bend, established on March 15, 1875 by storekeeper James M. Faris to serve a thickly settled and prosperous area with several stores and mills some four miles up the creek. In 1895, after a disastrous flood may have destroyed any evidence of a stream or road bend that might have given it its name, the Bend was dropped. As simply Raccoon the office, at the junction of (the present Ky 30 and 1394), eight miles from London, closed in March 1907.

Another important coal town and rail shipping point that, typically, failed to survive coal depletion and railroad abandonment was on (the present) Ky 30, less than two miles up the creek from Raccoon (Bend). Here, at a site that may once have been called Wild Cat, Jasper Newton Pearl established, on January 15, 1900, the post office of Viva [və/va or vih/va] which honored the nine year old daughter of James Thompson, a North Carolina-born coal operator, and his wife Sallie, then living in East Bernstadt, three miles west. Little survived the closing of the office in late June 1933.

When Denison for the descendants of early landowner John Denison was found in use by a Hart County post office, Bettie L. (Mrs. James) Watkins opened her Little Raccoon post office, two miles below (northeast of) the Raccoon post office, as Atlanta. At several vicinity sites between June 23, 1905 and November 1934 it served only area farm families and John D. Moren's store on (the present) Ky 30. Whence such a pretentious name is not known.
THREE POST OFFICES IN THE (BIG) RACCOON CREEK VALLEY

One question I've no answer for is why Little Raccoon Creek is nearly two miles longer than Raccoon (aka Big Raccoon) Creek. There may be an historic or geographic reason for this but I don't know what it is. Nevertheless, Raccoon Creek extends for only 7.2 miles to join the South Fork one mile below McWhorter and 1½ miles above the mouth of Little Raccoon. At least one of the Raccoon Creeks may have been so identified by James Nourse, Jr. in 1780. And Col. William Fleming, in a journal entry for that year, identified two Raccoon Creeks, but one was a branch of Robinson Creek near the Raccoon Springs (in the Laurel River watershed); the other was later known as Slate Lick Branch, a Big Raccoon tributary.

The first of the three post offices serving the Raccoon valley was simply Raccoon, established on December 24, 1841 by Jesse Moore, which operated intermittently at several unknown sites till April 1878. On an 1880 postal route map it's shown six miles southwest of House's Store (near Clay County's Fogertown), and eight miles northeast of London.

Raccoon's inexplicably named Titus post office was about a mile above the mouth of Slate Lick Creek. Established by Joseph H. Williams it operated from March 31, 1898 to mid January 1913, and from February 18 to mid September 1917.

Equally inexplicable was the name given to the Congo post office established on April 13, 1898 (two weeks after Titus) by William J. Taylor. His first preferred name Evans for a local family and perhaps the nearby George Evans store on Twin Branch, was then in use in Letcher County. According to Taylor's Site Location Report, the office was on Raccoon, four miles south of the South Fork and McWhorter. In 1902 it was moved one mile east to a site two miles from the Clay County line, probably on or near the 2½ mile long Long Branch of South Fork. It was moved one mile north in 1916,
and 1½ miles east in 1929 to serve the new Bethel Church neighborhood, twelve miles northeast of London, where it closed its doors in April 1944.

**THE LAUREL RIVER WATERSHED**

Thirty-one post offices served communities or rural neighborhoods in the Laurel River watershed. One, Lily, serves a large area on the river's main channel from nearly the same site on which it was first established on September 6, 1855 by Samuel L. Benjey (sic). Its first name White Lilly long suggested a derivation in a popular brand of flour processed by the J. Allen Smith Company of Knoxville, Tennessee. Hardly so since that firm didn't begin milling flour till 1883. The office was more likely to have been named for the wild lilies that grew in abundance there and seemed so attractive to early settlers. Perhaps the name reminded the more religious of the settlers of the Biblical "lilies of the field". Why the post office name was spelled with two "l"s, though "Lily" was the customary spelling of the name of the community it served, is not known. In any event the office closed on September 21, 1880. It was re-established on June 15, 1881 by Fleming T. Hodge, but as simply Lily, to serve the Daniels and Melvin Company's bandsaw mill and the newly arrived railroad which began to ship the mill's products from a station one mile south of the post office. By the end of the decade coal was also being shipped from mines operated by the Lily Mining and Manufacturing Company (chartered in 1889). No longer dependent on coal, the community is still an area trade center on (the present) Ky 552, just west of US 25, and eight miles south of London; and wild lilies still grow along the railroad tracks.

About a mile up the Laurel River's Lick Creek tributary (and 5½ miles south of London) was the intermittently operating Laurel Bridge post office. From July 20, 1854 through January 1883 it served an important pioneer land-
mark and later village just south and east of (the present) Levi Jackson State Park. Its first postmaster Isaac J. Black was succeeded by several members of the Jackson family, including Levi.

POST OFFICES ON THE LAUREL RIVER’S CRAIG CREEK

The first office to serve the thirteen mile long Craig Creek\(^{18}\), which joins the Laurel River 3 3/4 miles above the latter’s Cumberland confluence, was Chestnut Ridge. Established on August 10, 1877 with Wiley C. Barrett, its only postmaster, it was nine to ten miles southwest of London, and may have been named for the large Chesnut (or Chestnut) family of Laurel valley landowners. (One of them, Evan, represented the county in the Kentucky legislature in the 1840s). The office closed in July 1879 but Barrett’s attempt to reopen it, as Barrett, in 1886 was not successful.

On May 15, 1888 William F. Bray, who later became County Surveyor, opened a post office on Craig Creek, 1 ½ miles northwest of the river and twelve miles southwest of London (probably now in the Craig Creek section of the Laurel River Lake). Instead of Bray, his first name choice, he called it Vox. In 1897 it was moved about one third of a mile up the creek where it closed in mid April 1916. It was re-established in 1919 by Arthur Tuggle at his local store in the Auger Springs neighborhood, 2 ½ miles southwest of Keavy, where it closed in February 1955. Whence Vox is unknown; it’s been suggested, with no evidence, that the name had been corrupted from Box, that of a family descended from Barzillia Box, a Laurel valley landowner in the 1860s and 70s.

A post office lasting only 7 ½ months (from April 2 to November 15, 1901), with James Carroll Eagle, its only postmaster, Hopwood was half a mile north of Craig Creek, two miles southeast of Add, and 2 3/4 miles northwest of Vox (before the latter’s Auger Springs move). Its name source is also unknown.
POST OFFICES ON HORSE CREEK OF LYNN CAMP CREEK (OF THE LAUREL RIVER)

The fifteen mile long Lynn Camp Creek joins the Laurel River 1½ miles northwest of Corbin (see the Whitley County chapter). Horse Creek heads just short of the Knox County line and extends for about 4½ miles to join Lynn Camp just west of North Corbin in Laurel County, 2½ miles above Lynn Camp's Laurel confluence. Three post offices served its residents.

In 1805 William McHargue (1745-1836), a Lancaster County, Pennsylvania Revolutionary War veteran, brought his family from North Carolina to Lynn Camp Creek, at or near the site of the future Corbin. The area he settled may early have been called Whippoorwill. From May 29, 1839 through 1842 William's son Samuel had a post office somewhere on Horse Creek which he called Mill Port for one of the early area McHargue Mills. On May 9, 1855 Samuel re-established the office as Whippoorwill and maintained it in his Lynn Camp home till he was succeeded in February 1878 by his son-in-law Ira Stansberry. By 1883 the office was on Horse Creek, 2½ miles from the L&N's new Lynn Camp Station (Corbin). In mid November 1884 it closed. An unsuccessful attempt was made by James T. Martin to re-establish it in July 1908.

Little is known of a post office called Carroll for one or more area families, maintained from June 19, 1902 to mid July 1903 by Franklin Hubbard. His Site Location Report placed it on the west side of Horse Creek and the L&N, 2½ miles north of Corbin and 2 3/4 miles south of Lily.

POST OFFICES IN THE LITTLE LAUREL WATERSHED

The Little Laurel River, identified as Flemings Creek in the earliest surveys (probably for Col. William Fleming) and later as Fraziers Creek, heads south of Raccoon Mountain and extends for about twenty five miles to join "Big" Laurel just west of I-75 and about one mile below the Dorthee Dam.
One of four Farris brothers (who apparently spelled his name with only one "r") settled in family-acquired land just east of the Little Laurel, and five miles south of London. A descendant, Esom (or Isham), sold some of this land to the newly arrived L&N Railroad for a right-of-way and station that was called Faris. To serve this and the small community growing up around it, he established a post office he would have named Farisville but was inexplicably instructed by postal authorities to find another name. He selected his own, and the Esomton [ees/am/ton] post office opened on September 24, 1883. On December 5, 1887 the office was renamed Feriston [faer/as/ton]. The community soon became a mining town, and for a longer period of time a trade center on US 25. The station closed in 1949 and the office was discontinued in mid May 1955.

According to first postmaster Lizzie (Mrs. William H.) Jones' Site Location Report the Bonham post office was first located one fourth of a mile north of the Little Laurel and four miles south of London. It opened on May 4, 1905. After her move one fourth of a mile north in 1909 the office served, through February 1916, the aptly named Pine Grove Neighborhood on (the present) Ky 363, just north of the Maple Grove Road. Bonham's name source is not known; its identification on current state maps as Benham is in error.

Since his complete name was too long for a post office, postmaster-designate Andrew Jackson was allowed to name it Jackandy instead and it served an area somewhere near the head of Little Laurel from May 28, 1909 through September 1911. His Site Location Report placed it three fourths of a mile west of the river and 4½ miles east of London.

The Maplesville post office occupied at least three sites in the area between the head of Slate Lick Creek, Raccoon Creek, and the Little Laurel River valley. It was established on May 14, 1890 by, and named for the family of, its postmaster William R. Maples (no January 1863), son of
Edmond and Mahala Maples. It was first in the vicinity of the Macedonia Church (on or near the present Ky 638), four miles northeast of London, but sometime later (probably by 1895) it was moved one mile east to a site one mile north of Little Laurel. In 1936 it was moved 1/4 miles southeast to a site on (the present) Ky 586, less than a fourth of a mile north of the latter's junction with 472, still four miles northeast of London. Here it closed on December 31, 1954.

POST OFFICES ON THE LAUREL RIVER'S ROBINSON CREEK

Robinson Creek heads 500 yards from the Knox County line and extends for some 15½ miles to the (Big) Laurel River, 1½ miles above the Dorthae Dam and a little under two miles below Lily. Early called Station Camp Creek (for the Long Hunters' temporary encampment [ca. 1770s] somewhere on its banks), Robinson Creek was so identified at least by 1794 in Needham Parry's journal. According to a McHargue family tradition, a Mr. Robinson, one of Daniel Boone's surveying partners, arrived at Raccoon Springs and engaged in a contest to decide whose name would be given to the stream. It was that whoever brought in the most game would give his name.²¹

In 1804 pioneer William McHargue [mə/kaˈhɑrgə] (1745-1836) brought his family to Knox County's Lynn Camp Creek valley where he built his home and a water-powered grist and saw mill.²² In 1812 William's son John built another grist mill on Robinson Creek, several miles north, which, in 1827, he deeded to his brother William II. This mill, just north of (the present) Rte. 1223 and the McClure Bridge Road, just south of the Echo Valley Road, continued to operate till about 1920. In 1939 it was reconstructed in the nearby Levi Jackson State Park (10½ miles nno of the mill's Robinson Creek site) and is the park's main tourist attraction. The post office of
McHargues Mill was established in Knox County on January 21, 1851, with another William McHargue as postmaster, but some five weeks later it was moved to the mill site where it closed in November 1853.

Between Robinson Creek and the river is the extant Camp Ground Neighborhood and school, named for the nineteenth century religious meetings there. To serve this area Daniel C. Vinsant established a post office at or near the junction of (the present) Slate Ridge Road and the main road (now Ky 229) between London (7½ miles northwest) and Barbourville. Instead of his first proposed name Camp Ground he opened it, on April 8, 1884, as Boreing. This honored Vincent Boreing (1839-1903), the Tennessee-born Laurel County businessman, newspaperman, county school superintendent (1868-1872), county judge (1886), and U.S. Congressman (1899-1903). After several short distance moves the office closed in 1971.

From June 13, 1884 till it was suspended on October 1, 1982 the Tuttle post office, named for an area family, occupied several sites just east of Robinson Creek, off the Wilderness Road (now Ky 229), on both sides of the Knox-Laurel County line. James K. Burnett was its first postmaster. By 1915 it was serving the two county Mount Olivet Neighborhood. When it closed on October 1, 1982 it was in Laurel County, within yards of Knox County and 12½ miles southeast of London.

The Fletcher post office, named for another area family (the Tennessee-born brothers Samuel and William H.), occupied several sites on Robinson Creek from its establishment on June 30, 1890 by Jesse J. Lewis. It served several area mills, Robert Jones' store, and the Merrimac Church and school near the junction of (the present) Ky 830 and 1023, 11½ miles southeast of London. Only the church survived the office's closing in July 1958.
THE LYNN CAMP POST OFFICE ON LITTLE ROBINSON CREEK

The 4½ mile long Little Robinson Creek heads three fourths of a mile from the Knox County line, two miles north of Tuttle, and joins the main Robinson channel midway between Boreing and Fletcher.

The area's first Lynn Camp post office was established on February 10, 1826 by Leighton Ewell somewhere on its name source creek in Knox County. Early hunters, said to have camped on the stream's banks, would protect the meat from their kills by placing it in a pen made of cut linn poles. The office closed in August 1875. It was re-established on December 2, 1875 with James Lovill (sic), postmaster, who was succeeded by Miss Maggie B. Craig on June 26, 1876 when it moved to Little Robinson Creek, and within a few years was serving several flour mills, a distillery, and D.W. Lovell's general store. In the winter of 1884-85 it was moved a short distance into Laurel County. After several more short distance moves it closed in November 1937 at the junction of (the present) Ky 830 and 233, one fourth of a mile from the Knox County line and three miles wsw of Fletcher.

FOUR POST OFFICES IN THE LAUREL RIVER'S ROUGH CREEK VALLEY

Chapman Watkins settled in 1807 at the head of the 5½ mile long Rough Creek which joins the Laurel River just west of the Laurel River Church. He is said to have named it for the clogged water passage when its bed would fill with brush and tree limbs following a heavy rain.

Its first post office, the shortlived (April 28 to September 12, 1870) Rough Creek, was maintained by Ragan Brock probably at the junction of the Manchester Road (now Ky 80) and (the present) Ky 521, 5½ miles ese of London.
The Glades post office, probably named for its site near the low lying stream, was first operated from July 14, 1876 to September 1878 by Daniel B. Brock on the road midway between London and Bush's Store. It was re-established on March 18, 1887 by blacksmith and mill operator Scott Hibbard just west of the head of Rough Creek. After one or more moves, till it closed in 1905, it may have been somewhere north of (the present) Daniel Boone Parkway, several miles east of Brock, perhaps serving the area later served by the Bert post office (see below) in the Little Sandy Creek watershed.

Another large area family, descendants of Revolutionary War veteran Jesse Brock, gave its name to the Brock post office, established on December 28, 1900, with Mrs. Lizzie Brock, its first postmaster. From its first site, one mile west of Rough Creek and four miles east of London, it was moved in 1904 to the west bank of the creek. Several area moves later it wound up (in 1944) in the George Watkins grocery on Tom Cat Trail (Ky 1305), between Ky 80 and (the present) Daniel Boone Parkway (five miles ese of London) where it was served by Watkins' daughter Rose (Mrs. Henry) Jones till her retirement in the fall of 1962.

On June 1, 1903 Nathaniel "Nay" Watkins established the Lesbas post office [lez/bas] just north and west of the mouth of Rough Creek, probably on the road that became Ky 1189. In 1905 it was moved half a mile east, probably onto (the present) Ky 830. In 1942 Henry Sherman became postmaster, and a few months later had the office moved over a mile up 830 to his grocery. Since its closing there in 1952 the neighborhood it served has been called Rough Creek. Whence its curious name? Could it, like that of the county's Ionia post office (see below), have had a classical origin? Could it have been named for the Aegean island off the northwest coast of Turkey? But why?
OTHER LAUREL RIVER TRIBUTARIES AS POST OFFICE SITES

Three post offices served the 5½ mile long Blackwater Creek which heads just west of the Knox, Clay, and Laurel convergence and joins the Laurel River half a mile south of Lida. Its valley was first settled by James Hale and Isaac Taylor and is still occupied by their descendants. It's said to have been named either for the fallen leaves that gave its water a darkish appearance or for some place in Virginia. Or both.

At or slightly above the head of Blackwater, on the old London-Manchester Road, was the Diana post office. According to postal records, it was maintained by Abram Hunter and William W. Weaver from January 23, 1836 to April 25, 1839. But no one now recalls it nor knows for whom it was named.

On May 7, 1891 James G. Hoskins opened the Cane Creek post office on the 3½ mile long Laurel tributary for which it was named. In 1946, after several moves on the creek, Milford Hale had the office moved again, nearly two miles southeast to a site on Blackwater, more precisely to (the present) Ky 1189, just west of 1803, 2½ miles below the Blackwater post office and twelve miles southeast of London. Here it closed in March 1965 on Hale's retirement.

From its inception on November 1, 1893, with John S. Gilbert, the first postmaster, twelve miles east of London, the Blackwater post office occupied several store sites on the creek till it closed in 1972, half a mile east of Rte. 1803 and about a mile west of the counties' convergence.

George A. Bush, who owned a store and tavern on another road between London and the Manchester area salt works, established the Bush's Store post office there on February 18, 1840. It's not sure where "there" was, whether it was where Melville Phelps, in his March 1870 Site Location Report located it, at the junction of (the present) Ky 80 and 1803, one
mile north of the river, half a mile east of Johns Creek, and twelve miles east of London. On April 2, 1894 the office became simply Bush and by then was one fourth of a mile west of Johns Creek. Within a year it was serving a community of some 500 residents, nine miles southeast of London. In 1938, after several more short distance moves along Ky 80, within the area between Lake and Lida, it was again moved, by Bryan Brown, 2½ miles east to a site on 80, half a mile from the Clay County line, now fifteen miles ese of London. Here it still serves the eastern section of the county.

To serve his store above the head of Johns Creek, and 3½ miles northeast of Bush's Store, Newton M. Gregory established a post office on July 25, 1884. Since his first proposed name Gregory was in use in Wayne County, he called his office Marydell, for Mary (1881-1953), the daughter of his brother (and later postmaster) Marshall Gregory, and her boyfriend Dell Nicholson. The office still operates on Ky. 1803, one fourth of a mile from the Clay County line and eleven miles east of London.

At or near the junction of (the present) Ky 80 and 1305, ten miles east of London, and about one third of a mile north of the mouth of Johns Creek, Ellen Russell's Lida [lida] post office was established on May 24, 1905. It was named for locally-born Lida Hodge Edwards (1881-1967), daughter of Woodson Hodge and wife of U.S. Congressman (1905-1911) Don Calvin Edwards. After several vicinity moves it ended, in June 1976, almost where it began. According to a family tradition, local people wished to name the office for the Congressman, an Iowa-born London manufacturer (of staves), banker, and sometime circuit court clerk, but for an unknown reason chose his wife's name instead.

Another inexplicably named post office Vose operated at two locations near the mouth of Laurel's Rocky Branch, half a mile east of (the present) Ky 830 and eight miles southeast of London, from September 1, 1899 to mid
June 1916. Alice (Mrs. James M.) Wyatt and Beverly Smith were its postmasters.

A large pond on storekeeper George Petree's farm was the source of Lake, the name his daughter Sallie (later Mrs. Deaton) submitted for his post office on Ky 80 and the Camp Branch of Laurel. It was operated by Petree and others at at least two sites on Ky 80 between April 27, 1900 and February 1969.

Bardin (or Bardon) Sasser (ne ca. 1820) came with his family to Laurel County and settled on Puncheon Camp (now Bennetts) Branch of Laurel River. On April 14, 1902 his daughter Malinda C. (by then Mrs. William N. Gilbert) opened a post office on the creek, three miles southeast of Bush, and named it Sasser. Several vicinity moves later, to a site one mile up (by then) Bennett Branch, and twelve miles ese of London, the office was suspended on April 15, 1933.

The Shinea post office, operated by Lettie and Maggie R. Jones between July 14 and October 15, 1917, was somewhere on Muddy Run (now Muddy Gut Creek), another Laurel River branch. According to Lettie's Site Location Report, the first names proposed for it were Craig and Eugene, and it was four miles west of Marydell and three miles north of Lida. None of these names, nor the office's precise location, are known.

Somewhere between the Little Sandy and Muddy Gut Creeks, less than two miles north of the river, probably on Tom Cat Trail (Rte. 1305) and nine miles northeast of London, Estill C. Honchell established the Bert post office on January 6, 1931. Through March 1942, with Honchell and Ethel Jones as postmasters, it served the area earlier served by The Glades and Shinea offices. But who was Bert?
OTHER CUMBERLAND VALLEY POST OFFICES

The little recalled post office of Huxley was established on May 4, 1877 by John A. Bales across the Cumberland from the mouth of Morgans Mill Creek (now merely Mill Creek) in McCreary County, about where (the present) Clarks Bottom Road comes down to the river, and two miles above the mouth of the Rockcastle River. It closed in January 1880 but was re-established that November by David Bales one fourth of a mile up the Cumberland where it closed again in 1899.

Another post office serving the southwest corner of Laurel County between March 22, 1909 and mid January 1915 was Lois. Opened by Bettie Strunk it was three miles up the river from the mouth of Rockcastle. Lois' identity has not been learned.

A POSSIBLE KENTUCKY RIVER SYSTEM POST OFFICE

Another of the eastern Laurel County Gregorys, Pleasant Riley, had a store and post office from July 14, 1915 through September 1918 serving a locality that may have been called Brindle Town. This was 250 yards from the Clay County line, just south of (the present) Ky 80, on a creek he called Laurel, that may have been a branch (as yet unidentified) of Horse Creek, one of the head forks of the Kentucky River's South Fork. Since Riley was then in use in Marion County, he named his office Ribbon. The Brindle Town and Ribbon names have not been derived.

OTHER POST OFFICES ON THE L&N RAILROAD'S RIGHT-OF-WAY

In the early 1880s, just prior to the arrival of the L&N, coal was being developed in an area 4½ miles north of London. The railroad soon acquired a right-of-way through this land with plans for a station. In anticipation, a post office to be called Coal Hill was established but opened, on June 15, 1881 (with David R. Dishon, postmaster), as Mullins, perhaps for the family of John Mullins, a carpenter. On June 21 of the
following year Dishun had the office renamed East Bernstadt for its being four miles northeast of the center of the Swiss settlement then being developed (see below). Shortly thereafter, a contingent of Swiss settlers arrived in the area centering at the junction of (the present) Ky 30 and 490 (old US 25) which, by 1890, had become a sizeable community. The East Bernstadt post office continues to serve this vicinity, six miles nwnw of London, listed in the 2000 Census as a CDP (Census Designated Place) with a population of 774.

Just after the arrival of the L&N in 1882, Cassius (Cash) Crooke of Richmond and Charles S. Neild of Harrodsburg moved their coal operation from the Livingston (Rockcastle County) area to a 3,500 acre spread at the head of the Hazel Patch and Little Raccoon Creeks they had recently acquired from the Jonathan McNeill heirs. As the Altamont Coal Company they opened a mine on Hazel Patch and laid off the town of Altamont, half a mile away and one rail mile north of East Bernstadt. On December 19, 1884 Neild established the local post office, but instead of his proposed Altamont it opened as Nield (a spelling error by the Post Office Department). A mere twenty five days later, though, it became Altamont. In January 1888 Crooke became postmaster, and by the mid 1890s his office was serving a town of 500 and several rival coal companies. The office failed to survive the end of the local coal operation and closed in 1918.27

To serve another station Dortha, on the L&N's Knoxville line, eleven rail miles south of London, three miles north of Corbin, and three fourths of a mile east of the Laurel River, local storekeeper Jeremiah (Jerry) Young opened the Dorthae post office [dawr/thee] on August 30, 1909. Both station and office were named for Young's daughter, though I've not been able to account for the spelling difference. The office closed on June 30, 1914 but was reopened on August 23, 1919, with Lucy Ann Vaughn, postmaster, and closed for good in mid October 1939. Half a mile southeast of
the site, where (the present) Ky 1223 crosses the railroad tracks, is an
American Greetings Corporation plant.

OTHER LAUREL COUNTY POST OFFICES

Nothing is known of the Rose Hill post office that John and Stephen
Wood operated between April 15, 1852 and mid July 1863 on the road west of
London and north of White Oak Creek.

Probably referring to an aptly named landmark on the elevation between
the Rockcastle River's White Oak (now Cane) Creek and the Laurel River's
Craig Creek, some thirteen miles southwest of London and three miles from
Rockcastle Springs, was the Bald Rock post office. Established on November
21, 1876, with Miss Julia Ann Steele, its first postmaster, it was soon
serving the rural Independence Neighborhood, a couple of mills, a store,
a cooperage, and a wagon works. By 1891 the office was on (the present)
Ky 192, half a mile east of the head of Pounder Branch, and by 1895 its
name was being spelled one word. By the late 1930s it was serving a large
lumber camp, sawmill, and store several miles down the road (later Rte.
1193 and now 3497) toward the mouth of Rockcastle River, from a site on
1193, three fourths of a mile south of 192, and at the head of No Business
Branch.28

In 1880 a company run by a Swiss-born hustler Paul Schenck acquired
39,000 rural acres west and northwest of London, and from 1881 to 1886 it
sold 4,000 acres of it to 106 German-speaking Swiss families seeking land
unavailable to them in the old country. Though the Kentucky land was
presented to its new owners as good farming land, they didn't learn till
they actually arrived that most of it was heavily timbered with a soil
poorly endowed for growing what they were familiar with back home. Dis-
illusioned, many left for jobs in nearby mines or on the newly arrived
Among those who remained to work the land, some cleared the trees and planted unfamiliar crops while others harvested the trees or planted fruit trees for an evolving viniculture. Bad investments and the diversion of company funds added to the settlers' problems and by the turn of the century those who were not suited to rural hardships moved to trade and craft positions in London.29

The largest concentration of Swiss families settled in an area on (the later) Ky 80, some seven miles west of London. Since most came from the Canton Bern, they named their new home Die Kolonie Bernstadt or, popularly, The Swiss Colony. A post office was established for them on October 6, 1881, with Louis Muralt, its first postmaster, as Bernstadt. On April 30, 1964 it became a rural branch of London, but closed altogether in 1973.30

According to local tradition, Add Karr is said to have spotted the name Keavy on a box of shoes on a shelf of a local store. He suggested it to a postmaster designate Isaac Reece Storm who submitted it, along with Storm and Dora (a local girl) for his new post office. Since July 17, 1888 the Keavy [kee/vee] post office has operated at several vicinity sites on Ky 312, just south of its junction with Ky 363, some eleven miles ssw of London.

Some three miles northeast of Keavy, on the road to London, John N. Covington opened a post office on May 28, 1890 he called Topton. No one is sure of its name source but, according to the 1880 county census, twenty-nine year old John Topton and his wife Sarah lived somewhere in that part of the county near sixty-seven year old North Carolina-born Simpson Topton and his wife Pauline. From April 18, 1894 David M. Covington ran the office till, in May 1914, Amos Cox, Jr. took it over and moved it 700 yards further up the road (now Ky 363) to serve his store and grist mill. On
Cox's retirement in November 1939 it may have been moved again, but it closed in mid December 1943. In more recent years the vicinity, at the junction of 363 and the Topton Road (toward Lily and the Laurel River, 4½ miles east), has been called Cox Hill. 31

Another post office to be called Brock to serve another Brock locality was established by Beverly W. Hubbard, but it opened on April 20, 1899 as Grit (name derivation unknown). According to Hubbard's Site Location Report it was one fourth of a mile west of the Clay County line, half a mile west of Little Goose Creek, and three miles west of Marydell. Though it closed in August 1933 current maps show it to have been on the Brock Road by the Pine Hill Church, at the head of Muddy Gut Creek.

Somewhere in the area between the Cane Creek post office (1½ miles northeast), Vose, (three miles northwest), and Boreing (three miles wsw), and 1¼ miles north of Little Robinson Creek, were the two sites of the Rola post office. This was established by A.A. Tuttle and served by Nannie Tuttle and James Boggs from March 9, 1908 through January 1914. Its name also remains underived.

The Hart post office, said to have been named for the local deer, served a store, school, and a couple of churches on (the present) McGill-Wyan Road, just east of (the present) Ky 192, and 4½ miles southwest of London, from December 12, 1908 through February 1916. James E. Mitchell was its first postmaster.

From May 20, 1910 through March 1925 Landon Haines Ray ran the Frogpond post office in his store across (the present) Ky 1535 from a croaking frog-inhabited pond. 32 The pond and store are gone but they can be located just south of the Roy Dugger Road, at the site of the now Sun-Ray Subdivision, 3½ miles south of Ky 80.
The family of Robert and Onna Bruce may have given its name to a post office established on February 28, 1911 by James G. Back. Less than a month later Back had the name changed to Wren, probably for another Laurel family, that of the widow Mary (nee May 1840) and her sons Samuel, George A., and James P. of London. It closed at the end of September 1912. According to Back’s Site Location Report it was somewhere in the area 1½ miles west of the railroad, midway between London and Fariston, and 3½ miles northeast of Bonham. Thus it was probably in the area of the future Sublimity City.33

Another inexplicably named post office was Mattie Doan's Hare which served the Johnson Ridge locality from December 9, 1929 through January 1953. The office was next to a store and near the Johnson Ridge School on the old Hare (earlier the Johnson Ridge) Road, just east of (the present) I-75 and 7½ miles northwest of London.

POST OFFICES IN THE NORTH CENTRAL PART OF THE COUNTY

When, for some reason, he couldn't (or wouldn't) name his proposed post office Casteel, Charles Adams Casteel succeeded in getting it established, on January 15, 1898, as Weaver. It either honored his father David Weaver Casteel, a local landowner (ca. 1870s); the Rev. David Weaver, the Baptist preacher son of pioneer Samuel, who helped set up the new county in 1826; or James I. Weaver, a county judge and later (1889-1896) London postmaster. In any case, the office was located 1½ miles up the Little Hazel Patch Creek on what's now the Radford Road. Charles was succeeded in November 1898 by a sister-in-law Alice Casteel and, in October 1904, by his wife Cora. On February 2, 1917, after Charles had moved his family and their store to East Bernstadt, Alice Quinland became postmaster and shortly moved the office to her home at the junction of the Allen School and Radford Roads, eleven miles nnnw of London, where she operated it till it closed in October 1936.
Another post office established to serve a relatively shortlived coal camp, three fourths of a mile east of White Oak Creek and 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) miles from the Rockcastle River's South Fork, was Ionia [ioh/na]. Margaret Elvessa Pate opened the office on June 23, 1900. Its name source is also not known, but one wonders if, like Lesbas (see above), it could have had a classical origin, a Greek district in Asia Minor, or could have come from one of the several classically-named communities in upstate New York. But why, much less if, these names were applied to Laurel County post offices is unknown. In August 1903 the Rev. Moses Carter became postmaster and moved the office a short distance to (the present) Victory Road near its junction with the Mt. Zion Road, twelve miles north of London, where he closed it at the end of 1937.

An area settled in the 1860s by Orville Perry (O.P.) Nelson and his son William Russell centered on the old Richmond Road (later US 25 and now Ky 490) at a place that may have been called Holly. William Russell's son Calvin Calfax (C.C.) Nelson established there a post office he would call Don but opened it, on October 24, 1902, as the inexplicable Victory. Soon it was serving Calvin's store and later, at several vicinity locations, a school, restaurant, church, distillery, and travelers inn. The office continued to be served by Nelson family members until it closed in 1984 at the junction of 490 and 578 (the Victory-Greenmount Road), 1.7 miles southwest of Ionia.

What's incomprehensively shown on current state maps as Green Mountain has been locally known as Andes Hill for as long as local folks can remember. The Andes family, descendants of Absolom Andes (ne April 1827), even had their own post office at or near the junction of the Arthur Ridge and Radford (formerly Andes) Roads, one mile south of Hazel Patch Creek, and 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) miles north of Altamont. Andes was operated from August 5, 1903 to mid November 1913 by Fred Andes, a local carpenter, and Thomas T. Andes.
The post office of Symbol was established on March 26, 1929 with the
Rev. Elijah T. Cornett, its first postmaster, on the Winding Blade Road,
less than a mile west of old US 25 (now Ky 490). Its name too is underived.
In May 1951 it was moved by Dora Helen Hodge a mile west to her home about
300 yards beyond the Laurel Branch-Winding Blade junction where it closed
on her retirement in January 1986.

FOUR UNLOCATED LAUREL COUNTY POST OFFICES

From February 29, 1848 to March 27, 1849 John R. Henderson operated
the Holly Bush post office, and that's all we know of it.

Then there was Hector's Cross Roads somewhere between Mershons and
London which William Nelson and Fielding Pittman (sic) operated from June
22, 1861 through February 1863. Could it have been named for Hector
Scoville (1817-1866), a Mershons Cross Roads postmaster from 1849 to 1853
who married Sarah Jane Martin in 1845 and captained a Union company during
the Civil War?

All we know from Robert Johnson's Site Location Report of the Chestnut
Hill post office (one of three such named in Kentucky), was that it would
be nine miles west of London. He alone operated it between April 17, 1872
and July 27, 1874. Was it aptly named or, like the Chestnut Ridge post
office, could it have honored the descendants of pioneer William Chesnutt
who settled in the Laurel River valley in 1804 and lived there for the rest
of his life? Some members of this family had the medial "t" in their name,
while most did not. They lived all over the county.

Finally, there was Comfort, operated by Mollie Patton from March 15
through September 1912, which served a locality long called (the) Burnt
Chimneys, vaguely located four miles west of East Bernstadt, four miles
southeast of Hazel Patch, and 1½ miles north of the L&N. According to
J.J. Dickey (in the Mountain Echo, September 4, 1896) near this site, where-
ever it actually was, pioneer John Freeman had settled in or by 1803. The
The source of neither of these names has been learned.

Only seven (London, Pittsburg, East Bernstadt, Bush, Keavy, Lily, and Marydell) of Laurel County's ninety-three post offices are still in operation. London alone serves an incorporated city. Another, East Bernstadt, is officially considered a CDP (or Census Designated Place). At least seventeen other offices, including twelve that no longer operate, were also the foci of settlements with definable boundaries and more or less concentrated populations. The others served only a store or two, perhaps a mill, a school, one or more churches, and the rural or mining families dependent upon them.

One office, Out, was established somewhere in the county on January 8, 1902 by S.R. Tuttle whose authorization was rescinded later that year. Could it have been intended as Oat? Or Ott? (Reinhardt Ott, ne ca. 1860, and his wife Elesa (Geiser) opened a general store in Bernstadt in the early 1880s and he, from 1904 to 1921, served as that community's postmaster.) As stated above, plans for the re-establishment of two offices, as Adz and Barrett, did not materialize.

Local or area persons or families served as the sources of thirty-two post office names. Eleven offices had geographic or descriptive names. Five were named for distant places while eleven were given the names of local or nearby features (five streams, two mills, a bridge, a community, an area, and a resort). Two possible derivations may have accounted for one name. One office bore the name of a local business, and another was named for a product on a local store shelf. Thirty-one office names are still undetermined while twelve offices have not been precisely located.

Thirty four offices bore names not originally intended for them, while twenty-six served communities, neighborhoods, rail stations, or mining camps with other names, and nine had name changes during their existence.
1. In 1880 a bill to create, from sections of Laurel, Knox, and Whitley Counties, a Meriwether County to honor longtime Kentucky legislator David Meriwether was defeated in the state House of Representatives by a fifty two to twenty eight vote.

2. Riceton was so identified on Enoch Gridley's pre 1806 map, according to Neal Owen Hammon, Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, Vol. 68 (2), April 1970, P. 108.

3. Another account offered by John C. McNeil, a native of Pittsburg and descendant of Lot Pitman, the latter's co-founder, claimed that the ancestry of the several site bidders would determine the name of the selected seat. Pitman, of Scottish descent, preferred Edinburgh if his (Pittsburg) site were chosen. John Freeman, offering the site of Laurel Bridge, nominated Dublin for his Irish background. Since the Jacksons won, their site was named London. ("Three Versions of London's Name" in The Diamond Jubilee Edition of the Sentinel Echo, London, 1954, P. 64)

4. At times the bees that infested this overhanging rock, 335 feet above the river, literally blanketed the skies.

5. The Bee Rock site of Sublimity Springs is now the focus of the Bee Rock Recreational Area extending 1½ miles along both sides of the river from the Ky 192 Bridge.

6. It's believed that the ferry replaced the so-called Richmond Ford, just below, a crossing that could not accommodate vehicular traffic except during the dry summer months.

7. Nor can historians agree on how this name was spelled—whether it was Cruse, Crus, Crews, Kruse, or Kruise.
8. This is not to be confused with Knox County's Abel post office which operated between February 18, 1896 and January 27, 1897.

9. According to Miss Probst's Site Location Report. Early twentieth century maps show it on the old road between London and Abel, seven miles west. Thus it was not where it's shown on contemporary maps in the vicinity of the Liberty Baptist Church at the junction of Rte. 1956 (old Ky 80) and the Glenview Road (Rte. 2041).

10. Little is known, but much is assumed, about this John Woods. He's thought to have been a German with a long unpronounceable (to his neighbors) name who had taken the name Woods because he was so much at home in that kind of environment (According to the Rev. J.J. Dickey in an early history of Laurel County cited in the London Mountain Echo, September 18, 1896, and reproduced in the Sentinel Echo's Diamond Jubilee edition of August 12, 1954, Section P, P. 5:4). It was later learned that Woods was a literal translation of his German name.

11. Holland's home, on Wood Creek, built before 1817, was proposed by Lot for the new county's seat which, if he'd been successful, would have been called Edinburgh.

12. A great future was anticipated for this station and town which was chartered on March 8, 1884 and which local folks began referring to as "The Pittsburgh of the South".

13. I'm wondering if it could have been named for the storekeeper W.R. "Bill" Dillion who, on September 15, 1875, is said to have shot and captured Charley McDaniel, an alleged Jesse James gang member and fugitive from a Virginia bank robbery. The shooting is supposed to have occurred near Pine Hill, a rail station between Rockcastle County's Mount Vernon and Livingston (then called Fish Point).
14. William Mershon (1756-1842) who preferred to be called Titus, his mother Sarah's maiden name, was a Lawrenceville, N.J. native and Revolutionary War officer. He first settled in Frankfort, Ky. in the mid 1790s, but business failures there led to his move to the Rockcastle River valley in 1812.

15. While most Laurel County historians today honor Titus as the post office's name source, J.J. Dickey, in his 1896 history, credited his cousin Jackson.

16. The White Lily brand, still the leading brand of "family flour" in much of the south, is still being produced by the White Lily Foods Company, a Memphis-based holding company which, some years ago, had acquired J. Allen. (According to Theodore A. Pedas of the White Lily Foods Company, in a letter to the author, May 29, 1980.)

17. Hodges' proposed name was also White Lilly.

18. Most of this stream's course is now in the Laurel River Lake.

19. Hammon, op. cit., P. 111

20. Mrs. Jones' first proposed name for her Bonham post office was Dow.

21. According to Russell Oyche's "Raccoon Springs on Boone's Trace" in the Sentinel Echo, August 29, 1940. Another story about its naming came from London residents Logan and Barbara Ewell. A Mr. Robinson and an unnamed fellow visitor saw a coon (or a squirrel, take your pick) but neither could agree on what kind. They declared that, on closer examination, whichever was right would name the stream for himself. They hunted down the varmint and killed it. And Robinson was right.

22. This was on Knox County land that was added to Laurel County in 1834.

23. Joining the Laurel River half a mile south of (the present) Ky 80 and one mile below Lida, Cane Creek was probably named for the cane on its banks, though some think it was a corruption of Cain Creek, for an early settler.
24. It's not known why this site was identified as Boush's Store on some twentieth century maps and even on the most recent state highway maps. Johns Creek heads just below Marydell and extends for some 2½ miles to the Laurel River, less than half a mile below the mouth of Blackwater and half a mile south of Lida.

25. Or possibly, for a Marydell Spivey.

26. The Altamont Company was the first and largest mining firm in the region to ship its coal by rail.

27. The Altamont name was also applied to the nearby five mile long stream, known in pioneer times as Laurel Creek, that joined Hazel Patch Creek one mile above (east of) the second Hazel Patch post office and along whose valley the L&N had extended its Knoxville line. On May 24, 1890 Crooke and others chartered the Altamont and Manchester Railroad which would extend from its junction with the L&N at Altamont to Big Stone Gap, Virginia. By 1893, however, it had reached only some three miles to the Little Raccoon Creek's Diamond and Manchester Coal Companies' mines and a site called Lucille for either Crooke's wife or his daughters Lula and Celia. The line was thus also known as the Lucille Road. In 1898 the line was acquired by the L&N which then rerouted it to East Bernstadt and it became exclusively a coal mining branch. It was all but abandoned when the last mine it served closed in 1931. (According to Elmer Sulzer and Ernest L. Andes "Railroads Now Abandoned, Once Vital to Laurel's Economy", one of a series of articles on Kentucky's abandoned railroads in The Kentucky Engineer, 1952, reproduced in the Diamond Jubilee edition of the (London) Sentinel Echo, August 21, 1954.)

28. The story has long been told that the local terrain on this 2.3 mile long Rockcastle River branch was so rough people had no business going up there, especially when the snakes were out.

30. While most of the Swiss families had settled in the vicinity of Bernstadt, others established themselves in nearby Abington, Helvetia, Langnau, Hazel Patch, Lily, and East Bernstadt. By 1950, according to Thomas, only thirty five descendants of the original colonists were still living in the Bernstadt vicinity.


32. Ray's first proposed name Owl probably suggests another kind of local wildlife.

33. As a New Deal experiment, the Sublimity Forest Community (popularly known as Sublimity City) was a planned settlement on both sides of the Old Whitley Road (now Rte. 1006), just northwest of the London-Corbin Airport.) As authorized by the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1935 and financed by the (then) Resettlement Administration (later the Farm Security Administration), 578 acres were acquired by the Federal Government and divided into sixty six homesteads for selected low income farm families to be trained in modern farming practices. When U.S. Government involvement ended in 1945 the homes were acquired by their owners. Most of the well constructed homes are extant though none are now owned or occupied by the original families.

34. Along with Ionia the name Gaston was proposed for Mrs. Pate's post office. Could this have referred to Hugh Gaston, owner of three early county surveys, who co-operated a tavern at the site of the Taylor Mill Bridge in the early 1790s? He early sold out and left the territory.
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12. Reed, Rev. and Mrs. Grant of Lily, Ky., letter to the author, February 13, 1970


15. Smith, Dorothy Edwards, Louisville, Ky, letter to the author, July 9, 1969