

## THE POST OFFICES OF ROCKCASTLE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Kentucky's fifty second county was created by the legislature on January 8, 1810 from parts of Lincoln, Pulaski, Madison, and Knox Counties. To its original 360 square miles was added ten from Madison County in 1821, but it lost thirty in 1826 toward the formation of Laurel County and another thirty in 1858 toward Jackson County. It later took back ten from Jackson and lost small areas to Laurel and Jackson in the 1860s, 70s, and 80s, reaching its present 318 square mile area by the mid 1880s.

The county, situated in the south edge of the Bluegrass and the western edge of the so-called "Knobs" or Cumberland Mountain foothills, was named for the river bordering it on the southeast. The river was first named Lawless by Dr. Walker in 1750 for a member of his exploration party. It was renamed in 1767 by a hunter Isaac Lindsey for a large rock with an overhang that could provide shelter for many persons. These natural formations were often called "rock castles". Historians still can't agree on the rock's precise location.

Much of the county's terrain is rugged with narrow and winding stream valleys and steep hillsides which long impeded movement and made sections of it quite inaccessible till the late nineteenth century. Like its neighbors it also had its share of sinkholes and disappearing streams (what might be called "streamless valleys"). Till the 1950s some seventy per cent of the county was forested, with fully one fourth in the Daniel Boone National Forest.

Most of the county is watered by its name source and its principal branches--Roundstone (with its Brush, Crooked, Clear, and Renfro Creeks), Skeggs, and Horse Lick Creeks. The northwest section, though, is in the Kentucky River watershed, drained by the headwaters and several

branches of Dix (Dicks) River.

Among the county's pioneer families were Colliers, Elkins, Fish(es), Hiatts, Hendersons, Kincaids, Lairs, Langfords, McCalls, McClures, Millers, Mullinses, Newcombs, Owens(es), Renfros, and Smiths.

For most of its history the county's economy has centered on agriculture, with some coal mining and the production of building stone and tannin bark in the south and southeast. Industrial development in the larger towns has been moderate, while tourism, which began with the antebellum Rockcastle Springs Hotel on the river, is now primarily focused on the country music activities of Renfro Valley and the aquatic doings on nearby Lake Linville. Rockcastle County's population in 2003 was estimated at 16,000, a thirty five per cent increase over 1970.

Rockcastle's centrally located seat Mount Vernon is fifty four road miles south of downtown Lexington (via I-75 and US 25). Post offices will be described below by their sites in the county's major stream valleys or on its highways. Each office will be located by road miles from the court house in downtown Mount Vernon or from some other office in its respective area.

The fifth class city of Mount Vernon, with a 2000 population of some 2,600, centers at the junction of US 25 and 150, two miles west of I-75. According to county historian, the late John Lair, William Henderson, a Virginia-born surveyor, may have built the vicinity's first home in the early 1790s. This log structure, at what was then called Spout Springs (and later may also have been called White Rock for a large boulder) was then sold to Stephen Langford who opened there a travelers rest stop or inn. Either Henderson or Langford is said to have named the building for its "fancied resemblance" to George Washington's Virginia home. The town that grew up around it as the new county's seat and was chartered

on February 3, 1818 took this name as did its post office, established by James A. McClure on September 26, 1811.<sup>1</sup> Like most early towns in this part of the state, Mount Vernon developed slowly, with its first business, the Rev. James McCall's tanyard near the springs, but it remained the county's only town till the arrival of the railroad in 1868. Modern industrial development came only with the completion of nearby I-75 in the late 1960s.

The county's second post office was Scaffle Cain (sic) established by George Houke on July 27, 1837 somewhere near the head of the 3½ mile long Scaffold Cane [skaef/əl kǎn] Branch of Clear Creek. The stream and a ridge of the same name between the Little and main Clear Creeks (branches of Roundstone Creek) were very early settled (probably by 1784). They were named, according to one long held tradition, for the scaffold on which men stood to cut the cane growing there in abundance, or, more likely, the scaffolds made of cane stalks on which early hunters, on their way to Virginia markets, placed their furs to protect them from wild animals. One of the region's earliest churches (said to have been built in 1792) bore this name as did a nearby school. Somewhere on the branch's banks may have been Reed's antebellum tanyard (see below).

In any event Houke was succeeded in mid September 1837 by John Todd. The office closed on September 8, 1842 but was re-established, on August 23, 1852, as Doddville (for a local family) with storekeeper Richard L. Myers, postmaster. It became Scaffold Cane on July 21, 1853 but, on July 25, 1861, after an intermittent operation, was renamed Dunlap (for another family), with Myers again as postmaster. It closed in August 1865 but was re-established, again as Scaffold Cane, on August 17, 1874, with William David Hudson, postmaster, at a site about a mile south of the Madison County line, seven miles south of Berea, where it closed in late January 1875.

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The next attempt at an area post office came on February 24, 1898 with Isaac Todd's aptly named Rockford just south of the Madison line, probably near the site of the Macedonia Church. In 1901 it was moved three fourths of a mile south~~west~~ to Scaffold Cane's last site, probably on the present Rte. 1617, at the head of Todd Branch of Clear, and midway between Disputanta and Boone (Gap Station). Here it closed in 1935.<sup>2</sup>

#### POST OFFICES IN THE ROCKCASTLE RIVER'S MAIN CHANNEL VALLEY

The Rockcastle River heads at the confluence of its Middle and South Forks in Jackson County and extends for some seventy five miles to join the Cumberland River at the Pulaski-Laurel-McCreary Counties' convergence.

At a point some four miles above one of the purported sites of its name source was the first site of what became Livingston. This sixth class city with an active post office now centers at the junction of US 25 and Ky 490, just north of the river and west of its Roundstone Creek, 10½ miles southeast of Mount Vernon. The vicinity was settled early, probably by John French, and a post office called Fish Point (for reasons unknown)<sup>3</sup> was opened there on May 13, 1840, with Thomas W. Pope, postmaster. It closed on January 26, 1846, but was re-established on February 12, 1867 by Benedict Swope at the mouth of Roundstone.

The extension of the L&N Railroad's Lebanon Branch to the Livingston site in 1870 and the establishment of its Livingston Station ushered in the growth of the community as a major shipping point for area resources. The station's name source remains in dispute. Some say it was named for a railroad official; others for James Livingston, a Mount Vernon hotel keeper. It was more likely, according to John Lair, to have honored a popular area preacher. In the summer of 1879 the post office, now half a

mile up Roundstone, and with George D. Brownlie, postmaster, was renamed Livingston station and became simply Livingston on May 1, 1882, by which name the town had been incorporated on April 1, 1880.

By the 1890s Livingston had become the largest and most prosperous town in the county, rivaling Mount Vernon as its business center. Within a two mile radius of the town, by 1930, when its population had peaked at 900, were a number of retail and other businesses. Thereafter it suffered a steady decline, to a population of 400 in 1965 and only 228 in 2000. Now only one grocery remains to serve local and area residents.<sup>4</sup>

On June 21, 1895 John G. Rogers established the Evansville post office to serve the Evans Ferry at the southeast end of the county, where<sup>the</sup> Ky 80 (now Rte. 1956) bridge crosses the river, eighteen miles south of Mount Vernon. Four months later Rogers had the name changed to the unexplained Shirley, but the office closed in April 1898.

To serve the Finley locality on Pulaski County's Line Creek, two miles west of the river,<sup>5</sup> James H. Cooper, on February 23, 1901, established the Ward post office. In April 1903 John L. Cooper had it moved half a mile into Rockcastle County (probably to the site of the terminated Shirley where, in December 1909, he had it renamed Billows. None of these names have been derived. The office closed on June 30, 1913, but was re-established on June 11, 1934 with Lelia M. Cooper, postmaster. Instead of her proposed Cooperville (in use, as Coopersville, in Wayne County) it was again called Billows. But it closed for good on Mrs. Cooper's retirement on July 31, 1949.

In the early 1920s Pennsylvanians Clarence and Charlotte (Lottie) Lamoreaux settled at the site of another early Rockcastle River ferry (later replaced by the Ky 490 bridge) at the mouth of Parkers Branch on the Laurel County side of the river. Here they opened a small store and restaurant and, in

September 1925, were granted a post office they would call Dixie. But it was officially established as Lamero, a Post Office Department simplification of their name [laem/ə/roh, laem/roh]. In July 1938 the office was moved a short distance down the river. On May 1, 1942, when then postmaster White Frost was drafted, the store he was operating was sold to William and Ida Grady. When they failed to qualify as postmasters the office was moved across the river, to a bend three fourths of a mile below Parkers. In May 1958 it was moved one third of a mile up Trace Branch and Ky 490 to Claud Gilliam's Rockcastle County grocery (3.4 road miles east of Livingston), with Myrtle Gilliam and her daughter Elsie Jones as postmasters till its suspension on July 31, 1992.

Maggie Bradley's 1935 to 1937 post office would serve the Rocky Bend neighborhood on the river, just south of the future I-75 and eight miles below Livingston. Her preferred name Rocky Bend gave way to the unexplained Elem [ee/ləm].

#### OTHER POST OFFICES ON THE L&N'S LEBANON (LATER KNOXVILLE) BRANCH

In addition to Livingston, five Rockcastle County post offices served stations on the Lebanon Branch.

In anticipation of the railroad the following year and its establishment, at a site five miles southeast of Mount Vernon, of a lumber, building store, tannin bark, and coal shipping facility, Reese B. Ward was authorized on April 16, 1867 to open the aptly named Pine Hill post office. Within five years the Pine Hill Coal and Iron Company was operating there Kentucky's largest coal mine, and by the 1880s had four steam-powered sawmills, several stores, and a three mile long narrow-gauge line. By 1900 the company and its town were in decline. This was assured by the rerouting of through traffic from US 25 (which paralleled the railroad from Mount

Vernon to the river near Livingston) two miles west to the new I-75. From 1963 to 1974 the post office was a Mount Vernon rural branch serving scattered homes, trailer parks, several churches, and a small grocery.

The sixth class city of Brodhead, now the county's second largest town (with a 2000 population of about 1,200 and an active post office) centers at the confluence of Boones Fork and Negro Creek, the head forks of Oicks (Dix) River. Until the railroad reached this point (six miles northwest of Mount Vernon, via the present Rte 1326) in February 1868, it was the site of a drover's stable and stagecoach stop called Stigall's Stand. The station and the post office, established on May 14, 1868 (with Elsworth O. Farris, postmaster) were named either for the contractor responsible for building the line to this point or for Richard Brodhead (1811-1863), a U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania (1851-1857). The post office name was first mistakenly spelled Broadhead but this was corrected by 1890 and a decision by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in 1897 guaranteed that it would thenceforth be Brodhead. The town was incorporated on April 22, 1880 and had become an important rail shipping point by the turn of the twentieth century.

Three miles northwest of Brodhead was the station and post office of Gum Sulphur. They were at the mouth of Gum Sulphur Creek (shown on contemporary maps as the 2½ mile long Slaty Branch of Dicks River which heads in Bowling Ridge in Lincoln County). The creek was named for one or more local artesian wells of medicinal value. The post office, established on February 8, 1870, with Archibald Alexander, postmaster, was soon serving several stores, a flour mill, sawmills, a wagonworks, furniture factory, hotel, and railroad station. It closed in mid June 1919, and now only a store on US 150, half a mile west of the tracks, survives.

An L&N station some 2½ miles west of Mount Vernon began as Mount Guthrie for James Guthrie, the L&N's third president. It soon became Guthrie Station and by 1880 was serving a village of 150 residents. On March 27, 1884, with Benjamin Fermin Sutton, postmaster, the local post office was established as Maretburgh for James Maret (1855-1936), then the agent and telegraph operator at the Mount Vernon station who had earlier prevented the collision of two freight trains at this point.<sup>6</sup> The post office, which became Maretburg in April 1892, operated till 1955.

Midway between Mount Vernon and Pine Hill was Owens Station serving a thickly populated area that's now just east of the I-75-US 25 interchange. Its post office was established on November 14, 1905 by William M. Owens as Burr (derivation unknown) though his name preferences were Owens and Sparks (for another area family).<sup>7</sup> It was discontinued in 1957.

(CAPS) ~  
POST OFFICES ON THE L&N's Kentucky Central Line

This line, which began as the chartered (in 1849) Covington and Lexington Railroad, became the Kentucky Central Railroad in 1856 and the Kentucky Central Railway in 1887. In 1883 the line following (at least in Rockcastle County) Roundstone Creek, reached the so-called Sinks of Roundstone where it joined the L&N's Lebanon Branch line. In September 1891 it was acquired by the L&N.

The first of the ten Rockcastle County post offices serving stations and communities on this line was Round Stone named for the twenty nine mile long Rockcastle River branch heading just south of the Madison-Garrard-Rockcastle Counties convergence. This, the county's largest creek, which joins the Rockcastle River just south of Livingston, was



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known by name to late eighteenth century travelers and was so identified in the county's enabling act of January 8, 1810. It was named for the round (actually eliptically shaped) stones in its bed. According to Lair, it may early also have been called Rouny Stone Lick Creek for several salt licks just south of Boone's Gap. At the Sinks the stream proceeds underground where it's called "The Boils".

The Round Stone post office operated between March 18, 1856 (with James Sayers, its first postmaster) and May 2, 1861, and from April 18, 1878 (with Alfred Owens, postmaster) through May 1893 about where (the present) Rtes. 1617 and 1786 meet, by US 25, six miles north of Mount Vernon.

The name of a surveyor and land patent owner are given to Conway Station and a newly founded town just west of the creek and 9¼ miles north of Mount Vernon. To serve them William Hart established the Conwayton post office on February 29, 1884, which became simply Conway the following October. The office, on US 25, just east of I-75, was suspended on December 14, 1990.

Three miles north of Conway and a little under a mile south of the Madison County line was Viola Station. When, on August 11, 1884, Andrew T. Todd established its post office he learned that Viola was then in use in Graves County so he named it Mobley, probably for the family of James Thompson Mobley, area residents. It closed on March 3, 1886.

By 1889 the local station had become Gap Station, named for Boona Gap through which the rail line ran at the Madison County border. On February 27, 1901 John re-established the post office as Boone which operated on US 25 till 1974.

To serve two stores and the Snider (Switch) Station two miles north of Conway J.W. Snyder established the Snider post office on January 17, 1889.

Austin H. Finck was its first postmaster. It lasted only till mid October 1893 though the Snider Station survived at least until the 1920s.

Another Kentucky Central station, seven miles nne of Mount Vernon, was Wildie [wihl/dee] named, it's said, by D.N. Williams for his two grandsons Will and Dee (sons of a local farmer Uriah Albright). Its post office, which still operates on Rte. 1768, just above the mouth of Roundstone's Clear Creek branch, was established on October 20, 1884 with Andrew Jackson Henderson, postmaster. According to Lair, Will moved to Colorado while Dee practiced medicine in Barbourville, Ky.

The Langford Station, three miles south of Wildie, had its own post office, Langford, from November 13, 1884 through February 1914. It was first operated by Moses N. Langford and his wife Ella Fabra.

Half a mile east of Langford Station a town was built up around a freestone quarry and mill acquired in 1896 by German-born David Hummel's Cincinnati-based Hummel Building Company (later Hummel Industries, Inc.) for which it was named. The Hummel post office, in the company's commissary, was established on June 11, 1923 with James A. Franklin, postmaster.<sup>8</sup> The replacement of freestone, an even-textured, easily worked, and inexpensive building material, by the more accessible Indiana limestone led to the closing of the quarry and mill in 1927 and the disposition of the company's property and equipment by the end of the decade. The post office, however, survived, having moved in 1938 one fourth of a mile southwest, where it served some isolated homesteads till it closed in 1954. The vicinity is now better known as Langford Station.

To serve the Brush Creek Station just south of the mouth of Roundstone's Brush Creek and 1½ miles south of Langford (five miles ene of Mount Vernon), William M. Owens established the Orlando post office on February 9, 1885. Though the station is long gone the post office survived till its suspension in January 1988 and continues as a CPO for Livingston, serving only a few homes and the local grocery. Its name

source is also unknown.

The Dudley Station, 1½ miles south of Orlando, was served by Tebbs Dudley's Dudley post office from December 14, 1904 through 1927.

The local Mullins family gave its name to a station four miles south of Orlando and less than a mile north of the Sinks Junction. Its post office, however, was Withers, probably named for the family of Benjamin Franklin Withers, a Roundstone landowner. Mary Alice Withers opened it on June 18, 1886.<sup>9</sup> When the office closed in 1951 it was half a mile below (south of) Roundstone's Crooked Creek. Though the station is gone the vicinity is still referred to as Mullins.

#### OTHER POST OFFICES IN THE ROUNDSTONE CREEK VALLEYS: CROOKED CREEK

The aptly named Crooked Creek heads just south of Threelinks, on the Jackson County line, and extends for about 12½ miles to Roundstone just above Mullins Station.

The earliest of the Crooked Creek post offices was Goochland. It was first established by Chriswell D. Gooch on April 1, 1856 at an unknown site in Madison County. It closed on July 3, 1863, but was re-establish on January 5, 1864 by James D. Ballard (an earlier postmaster) in Rockcastle County, one mile north of the mouth of Crooked Creek's Dry Fork and one fourth of a mile west of the Jackson County line. For the next thirty seven years it served several area mills and McGuire's store, some fifteen miles northeast of Mount Vernon. In March 1900 it was moved half a mile east into Jackson County, but returned to Rockcastle County five years later. When it closed in 1934 the office was just east of Crooked Creek and three fourths of a mile from the county line.

On February 7, 1887 Jephtha Mullins established the Cookburgh post office, honoring another prominent Rockcastle County family, at a site one mile west of Horselick Creek and ten miles south of Goochland. It lasted but seven months but was re-established as Cooksburg on May 7, 1890 with Schuler C. Forbus, postmaster, 4½ miles south of Goochland. For two years (from July 1895 through July 1897) it was just over the Jackson County line. By 1907 and until it closed in 1933 it was on the east side of Crooked Creek, 5½ miles south of Goochland, and a mile from Jackson County.

From July 3, 1900 to July 14, 1910 Isaac R. McCracken operated the McCracken post office on Crooked Creek, perhaps on its Dry Fork, some 4½ miles northwest of Cooksburg.

Three miles west of McCracken, in the Brush Creek valley, William Preston Gilkeson, on February 1, 1904, established the Johnetta post office to serve a village of some 300 residents. It's said to have been named for John and Etta someone or for a Johnetta someone else, but it's not known whom. By 1931 it was on (the present) Brushy Ridge Road, one mile east of Brush Creek. In December 1933 it may have been moved two miles north, and in 1936 it was moved two miles east to Crooked Creek, just above its Dry Fork confluence. When it closed in 1984 it was on Rte. 1797, half a mile up Dry Fork, and twelve miles northeast of Mount Vernon.

#### OTHER POST OFFICES IN ROUNDSTONE'S BRUSH CREEK VALLEY

The aptly named Brush Creek heads one mile north of Climax and extends for less than nine miles to Roundstone at the Brush Creek Station (Orlando). It's followed by Rte. 1912.

What may have been called Mingo was settled before the Civil War by one John Wesley Baker. To serve some fifty village residents Ulysses J. Baker, on April 13, 1888, established there the Mingo post office which,

on August 30, was renamed Climax allegedly for its being at the end of the road. Within a few years it was serving several area mills and other businesses, and by its suspension on June 1, 1988 was at the junction of Rte. 1912 and (the present) Blue Sexton Road, two miles west of Jackson County, and twelve miles northeast of Mount Vernon.

Little is recalled of the post office of Bummer, near the junction of (the present) Rtes. 1912 and 1797, 3¼ miles down Brush Creek from Climax. It was established on September 18, 1925 by Clay Miller and Dave Clark to serve local coal mines. Their first proposed name Powers was replaced by what may have been that of a non local coal family. William Drew was its longtime postmaster. It closed in 1950.

#### POST OFFICES IN OTHER ROUNDSTONE BRANCH VALLEYS

Three post offices served the Clear Creek valley. This stream heads half a mile southwest of the Madison-Jackson-Rockcastle Counties convergence near Morrill, and extends for some twelve miles to join Roundstone about a mile south of Wildie.

In 1855 a Lexington family of Reids acquired Travis Todd's tannery at the mouth of Clear Creek's Todd Branch, 4½ miles up the creek. Here they developed a company town and what may have been the county's biggest business till it folded in the 1880s. To serve the business, its tannery, several area mills, a store, and some 225 residents the post office of Reidsville was established on June 18, 1878 with Thomas Scott its first postmaster.<sup>10</sup> It ceased operation with the company's end in December 1884.

On June 25, 1886 Henry H. Wood re-established the area's post office just north of the mouth of Clear Creek's Loman Branch, half a mile below (southeast of) the old Reidsville site, to serve a sawmill and J.C. Wood's

general store. When two local factions could not agree on what to name it, it's said that D.N. Williams (or perhaps Jim Maret) suggested it be called Disputanta. In 1912 the office was moved three fourths of a mile up the creek, and in 1927 it was moved another 300 yards to the mouth of Davis Branch, fourteen miles nne of Mount Vernon. Here, till December 1977, it served the larger community known locally as simply Clear Creek.

Another virtually unrecalled, shortlived (October 4, 1893 through February 1899) and name underived post office was lumberman John W. Hoskins' Ino. In his Site Location Reports he placed it on the Madison County line, one mila north of Clear Creek and five miles northeast of Disputanta (that is, either south of Millstone Ridge or on the present US 421.)

Rockcastle County's major claim to national fame is Renfro Valley on US 25, just east of I-75 and Lake Linville, and 2½ miles north of downtown Mount Vernon. This is the site of the Renfro Valley Barndance and Pioneer Museum, a "traditional country music entertainment complex" with homes, stores, a hotel, other tourist attractions, the county's only radio station, and Kentucky's largest log structure housing many handmade artifacts of pioneer life. The complex was established in the late 1930s by a consortium led by John Lair who was reared on the banks of Renfro Creek.

The 13½ mile long Renfro Creek heads in Brindle Ridge and joins Roundstone one mile south of Hummel. It was probably named for James Renfro, the owner of much area land that was settled around 1790 by his nephew John Renfro and John's wife Lula. Still serving the complex, 2½ miles up the creek, is the Renfro Valley post office established in 1940 with Virginia Francis Lair, its first postmaster.<sup>11</sup>

## POST OFFICES IN THE VALLEYS OF SKEGGS CREEK AND ITS BRANCHES

The 31½ mile long Skeggs Creek (its most frequent spelling) heads in Chestnut Ridge and joins the Rockcastle River at Beech Grove. Its main channel is part of the routeway of the famed Skaggs Trace, named for the pioneer brothers Richard and Henry Skaggs (or Scaggs), among the Cumberland valley's earliest visitors (ca. 1761). The creek's name is spelled Skegg on current topographic maps but has also appeared as Scags, Skages, Scages, Skagges, Skagses, Skegges, and several other spellings on older maps and other historic documents.

The first of three post offices in the main Skeggs valley was Culpeper. It may have been in the vicinity of the Walnut Grove Church, at the mouth of Sinking Branch, five miles up the creek, where it served two steam-powered stave mills. Samuel McClure, its first postmaster, first proposed calling it Double Spring but why it operated, between July 19, 1880 and March 13, 1885, in the name of the Virginia county is not known. Milton H. Doan was unsuccessful in his March 14, 1891 attempt to reopen it as Culpepper.

But on October 27, 1921 Valinchia C. (Mrs. Joe William) Cromer (nee Pitman) re-opened the office as Luner.<sup>12</sup> The office may have been moved at least twice in the 1930s, and in 1940 was moved again, three miles east, to a point just below the mouth of Skeggs' Little Trace Branch, about one mile from the river, where it closed in 1972.

The third Skeggs Creek post office Raspberry, probably named for the plant, was operated by George W. Pitman between March 9, 1891 and mid November 1905 at some site below the Dry-West Fork confluence, eight miles south of Mount Vernon.

## PDST OFFICES ON SKEGGS' WEST FORK

Wabd [waeb] was established on June 17, 1886 by its name source William A.8. Davis<sup>13</sup> to serve the Green Yard locality just east of the West Fork. When it closed in 1955, after an intermittent existence, it was serving a small hamlet on (the present) Ky 461, between the West Fork and its Jones Creek branch, 4½ miles southwest of Mount Vernon.

At the head of West Fork was Spiro [spah:/roh], established on December 22, 1905 by William H. Owens, and said to have been named for a person about whom nothing is known. When it closed, also in 1955, it was at the junction of (the present) Rtes. 1250 and 2108, 1½ miles south of US 150 at Maretburg.

Nearly a mile up the West Fork's Dry Fork, and seven miles south of Mount Vernon, was the Blue Springs locality. On August 7, 1891, its post office was established by Will Frank Hansford, not as Blue Springs but as Hansford. Several vicinity moves brought it (by 1919) onto (the present) Rte. 1152, between the Dry and West Forks, where it closed in 1955.

Sandspring was an aptly named post office nearly three miles up Dry Fork from Blue Springs. It was operated between July 25, 1904 and November 15, 1905 by Marion L. Denham and Mary Dewhouse. It was re-established on September 18, 1925 as Sand Springs with Rome and Louisa Graves, its first postmasters, and was on (the present) Rte. 1249, 4½ miles south of Mount Vernon, when it closed in 1963.

At the head of the 3¼ mile long Browne Fork of Skeggs' West Fork, about four miles southwest of Maretburg and US 150, was the unexplained Bromo. This office was established on December 22, 1905 with Balzora W. (Mrs. Peter H.) Shutts, its first postmaster, and closed in 1939.



## POST OFFICES ON SKEGGS' EAST FORK

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East Fork joins Skeggs just above the Whitaker School site, 1½ miles above (west of) Luner's last site.

From December 12, 1827 to February 11, 1831 Henry W. Anderson operated the Hopewell post office at a large spring serving for years as the local water source. The locality, some five miles south of Mount Vernon, retained its Hopewell name well into the twentieth century, serving a store and shop and Henry Cox's wagon works. But it had no post office again till Eugene Stokes re-opened it as Stokes on January 15, 1914. However, that office closed after only 4½ months. It was re-established on October 27, 1921 by Eugene, not as Stokes, nor Hopewell (then in use in Greenup County), but as Wellhope. In December 1928 it was moved 1½ miles up the Fork, and closed in 1957.

The Rulo post office, one mile down the Fork from the Hopewell site, was established by Thomas Jefferson Cress and operated only from January 7, 1888 through May 1890. John W. Marler's re-establishment authorization of August 6, 1892 was rescinded in May 1894. Its name source is unknown.

## POST OFFICES IN OTHER ROCKCASTLE RIVER BRANCH VALLEYS

In the two mile long Rockcastle County section of Line Creek (see Pulaski County) were the several sites of Bloss <sup>A</sup>[blahs]. This post office, whose name is also unexplained, was established by storekeeper Harvey Chaney on June 22, 1891. From 1923 till it became a rural branch in 1963 and closed for good in 1970, it was on the creek, one fourth of a mile from Pulaski County and fifteen miles south of Mount Vernon.

The Horse Lick post office was established by Dora Robinson on October 8, 1927, probably at the mouth of White Oak Branch of the stream whose name

it bears. The seventeen mile long Horse Lick Creek heads in Jackson County, serves as the Jackson-Rockcastle County line for six miles, and joins the Rockcastle River at the Jackson-Laurel-Rockcastle Counties convergence. It may have been Dr. Walker's Hughes Creek, named for John Hughes, a member of his party, but was renamed for its horse-attracted salt licks. After at least two moves the office closed in 1951 about one mile up White Oak.

#### OTHER ROCKCASTLE COUNTY POST OFFICES

The aptly named Level Green, about a mile from Pulaski County, was settled in the middle 1850s, and by the time its post office was established, by Milton Denney, on August 15, 1866, it was serving a village of saw and grist mills, tanneries, stores, and other businesses seven miles ssw of Mount Vernon. Several vicinity moves brought it back to about where it began, at the junction of (the present) Ky 461 and 3273, and here it closed in 1955.

On January 20, 1888 George W. Nichols established the Pongo post office just above the head of the Elkhorn and Buffalo branches of Line Creek, some thirteen miles south of Mount Vernon. Within a few years it was serving a store, two flour mills, a wagon works, and other area businesses. It closed on April 30, 1913. Its name remains unexplained.

Just east of Buck Creek's Brushy Creek branch was (Willis G.) Proctor's Store, aka Macon. Here, Proctor, also a local mill operator, established a post office he would call Macon but it opened, on February 16, 1888, as Quail. Its name source, more often referred to as bob whites, were long abundant in that area and early hunted as food. By the turn of the twentieth century this vicinity had become the trade center for much of southwestern Rockcastle County with several flour mills, a wagon works, stores, and a distillery. In 1917 the office was moved several hundred yards east to the

junction of (the present) Ky 70 and 618, eight miles wsw of Mount Vernon. After it closed in 1955 this crossroads was served by Sherman Mink's store, a local church, and a community park.

Then there was Ottawa, a post office established by Simeon Logan Cummins on December 18, 1902, just east of one of Brushy Creek's head forks and three miles north of Quail. As his first choice Clay was in use in Webster County, Cummins named his office for the Indian tribe or for some other place named for these Algonquian Indians who originally came from Ontario. In 1913 the office was moved half a mile to the head of the Caroline Branch of Little Indian Creek, nine miles west of Mount Vernon. It also closed in 1955.<sup>14</sup>

One of Kentucky's oddest named post offices was Willalla [wihl/äl/ə]. According to one county tradition, it was named for its first postmaster, William Jasper Brown who was always ailing. Others think the "ailing" man was his successor William H. Owens. Still others suggest that it was named for Will Owens and his wife Ailla (but Owens' two wives were Lucy [nee Hurst] and Sophia.) Nor is there any record of an Ailla marrying Mr. Brown or anyone else in that neighborhood. In any case, Brown's first name choice was Brownsville then, as yet, in use in Edmonson County. The office opened on February 24, 1916 one mile from Brushy Creek and three fourths of a mile from the Pulaski County line. Several vicinity moves brought it to (the present) Ky 70, just north of the Poplar Grove Road, half a mile from Pulaski County, and 1½ miles south of Quail, when it closed in 1972.

The Cedarville post office, named for the trees, was established on June 20, 1890 with John G. Rogers, its first postmaster. From its original Skeggs Creek location, two miles from the Rockcastle River, it was moved four years later to Eagle Creek, another Rockcastle branch, where it

served several area mills, a store, and a tanbark business. From 1921 till it closed in 1945 it was on the ridge between Eagle and Buffalo Creeks on or near (the present) Rte. 1249.

Andrew Conrad Hiatt, a descendant of a Renfro Valley pioneer William P. Hiatt (1794-1865), opened the Hiatt post office on October 15, 1901, a mile west of Renfro Creek, probably at the junction of (the present) Rte. 1505 and the Mount Zion Road, 6½ miles north of Mount Vernon. ~~It closed in 1933.~~

The Gauley post office, established by Hardin Sams on July 30, 1901, and in operation till 1933, is said to have been half a mile east of Gauley Branch and three miles northeast of the Livingston post office.<sup>15</sup> But which Gauley Branch did Sams refer to in his Site Location Report? One branch joins Roundstone Creek just north of Livingston and another joins Trace Branch of Rockcastle River at the Pleasant Run Church and School site just north of Lamero's most recent location.

Jones L. Allen established a post office on the Jackson side of the county line on May 12, 1906 and named it Robinet for his wife Garnett's Robinette family. By April 1907 he had it moved some two miles north, but on the Rockcastle County side of the line where it closed in October 1914. It was re-established by James M. Griffin on December 22, 1930, back near its original site but still on the Rockcastle County side. It closed again in 1934. In 1949 an unsuccessful attempt by Mrs. Belle Phillips was made to re-establish it again, one mile north of Griffin's site. And a Mrs. Stella M. Johnson's order of March 3, 1950 for another go at Robinet was rescinded on April 6.

Another post office on the Jackson line was Threelinks, so named probably for its having been at the convergence of three roads--to Livingston, Climax, and Big Hill (in Madison County). On its establish-

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ment on November 8, 1915 by William A. Phillips (whose first proposed name was Sycamore) it was serving a large store, a Masonic lodge, and a church (all gone). Little, in fact, survived the office's closing in 1957.<sup>16</sup>

The Jephill post office was established on September 5, 1924 with postmaster, Benjamin J. Ponder/on (the present) Rte. 1995, 1½ miles east of Crooked Creek and six miles nne of Livingston. In 1929 Ponder had the name spelled two words. In neither case does this give us a derivation. It ceased operation in 1952.

#### ROCKCASTLE COUNTY POST OFFICES NOT PRECISELY LOCATED

Randall, probably named for a family, was operated between February 9, 1864 and August 25, 1865 by Moses Easley. He had been a Scaffold Cane postmaster from July 21, 1853 to March 16, 1858. So was this office on Scaffold Cane?

Not to be confused with Andrews, a Laurel County post office (1887-1911), was Andrew Jackson Henderson's <sup>from 1880,</sup> Andrew which served a small village with stores and mills two miles south of Copper Creek in the Dicks River system, and seven miles north of Mount Vernon. Henderson (1820-1900), a local drygoods merchant and descendant of Col. Richard Henderson of Transylvania fame, proposed first that his office be called Hendersonburgh or Hickory Grove (in use in Graves County). This suggests a site in the vicinity of the Hickory Grove School and Church (now Union Chapel) on the west flank of Brindle Ridge on (the present) Rte. 1505. On July 30, 1884 Henderson left to establish the post office of Wildie (see above) and was succeeded by John A. Potts. But the office closed in mid December.

Nipp or Rash were the names proposed for a post office about a mile from Cedarville and 1½ miles north of Skeggs' East Fork. John L. Rash and John Baker operated the Nipp post office between February 10, 1892 and

December 9, 1893. Whence this name is not known.

Finally, there's (Mrs.) Rosa Payne's Gap post office, not to be confused with Gap Station or Boone's Gap. Perhaps it refers to the nearby Poplar Gap. It operated from September 1, 1901 through January 1914. According to Mrs. Payne's Site Location Report, the first name she proposed for it was Payne and it would be 2½ miles northeast of Orlando and 3½ miles southwest of Cooksburg.

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Of Rockcastle County's sixty eight operating post offices, six (Mount Vernon, Brodhead, Livingston, Renfro Valley, Wildie, and Orlando [a CPO]) are still active. The first three serve the county's only current incorporated cities. At least sixteen offices were the foci of settlements with definable boundaries and concentrated populations. The others served a store or two, a school, one or more churches, a rail station, and the rural families depending on them.

Three offices were established at unknown locations but never operated. Horace G. Edwards' authorization of Brays, probably honoring the family of Nathan and Mary Bray, on May 17, 1895 was rescinded in July. Two, with un-derived names, were authorized on May 9, 1906, one as Ravenwood (with J.G. Reppert, postmaster-designate) and the other as Labo (with James D. Davis, whose order was rescinded in September.) In addition, as revealed above, attempts to reopen three former operating offices (Culpepper, Rulo, and Robinette) were unsuccessful.

Local or area persons or families were the sources of twenty five post office names, while another office was named for a non-local person. Nine offices had geographic, descriptive, or locational names; two were named for distant places; and twelve were given the names of local or nearby

features (eight streams, two gaps, and two earlier post offices). One office was named for a local business; another for a local dispute; a third for either an Indian tribe or another place with the tribe's name; and a fourth for a railroad contractor or a U.S. senator. Fifteen names are still underived, while four offices have not yet been precisely located.

Nineteen offices bore names not originally intended for them, while eleven served communities, neighborhoods, rail stations, or locales with other names, and six had name changes during their existence.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. It's never been clear whether the post office was first called Mount Vernon, Rock Castle (sic), or Langford (for Stephen or his father Robert) for each name identifies it on some early record. Only Mount Vernon, though, seems to have been its official name.
2. In addition to the stream, ridge, and church, the Scaffold Cane name is presently borne by the road (Rte. 595 and 1617) proceeding south from Berea, and a one room school, recently closed, at the 595/1617 junction.
3. Could Fish Point have been named for the pioneer Fish family, descendants of Col. William Fish, who served with George Rogers Clark?
4. For ten years Livingston remained the Lebanon Branch terminus till, in 1881, the line was extended forty miles south of Corbin. Yet, before the First World War the town was home to coal tipples, water tanks, car repair shops, a roundhouse and wye, hotels, and offices. It failed to survive the transfer of its yards to Corbin after a 1922 strike, and its near demise was assured when it was bypassed by I-75.
5. Probably at one of the Line Creek post office's several sites.

6. Maret, later a Mount Vernon businessman, was to found the county's first newspaper and telephone exchange, but was best known as the promoter of the famed Boone Way, which later became the Dixie Highway or U.S. 25. According to John Lair, there was an earlier attempt to replace Guthrie Station with McCall, for a local family, now honored by a knob north of the station site.
7. By 1915 the local station was Sparks Quarry.
8. Langford was the first name proposed for the Hummel post office.
9. The first name proposed for Withers was Tabler. John Withers represented the new county in the Kentucky legislature (1812).
10. For some reason the family, town, and post office name has also been spelled Reed. I'm not sure which is ~~more~~ correct.
11. Near the site of the Renfro Valley Lodge are the remains of a Shawnee encampment and the site of a bloody encounter between them and early white settlers. This is recalled in the name Shawnee Run applied to what later became the Little Renfro Creek which joins the main stream three fourths of a mile west of the complex. (or at least it did before both streams were impounded in 1968 for the 274 acre Lake Linville.)
12. Mrs. Cromer's first proposed name Cromer's Station was replaced by the enigmatic Luner.
13. Davis (1851-1915) was later a county school superintendent.
14. In 1955 seven Rockcastle County post offices--Hansford, Level Green, Maretburg, Ottawa, Quail, Spiro, and Wabd--closed within months of one another.
15. Sams first proposed the name Brook for his Gauley post office.
16. Less likely, as suggested by several Jackson County informants, was Threelinks named for the symbol of the Odd Fellows Lodge--three links of a chain.



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