THE POST OFFICES OF LEWIS COUNTY, KENTUCKY

By Robert M. Rennick

Lewis was taken wholly from Mason County. On December 2, 1806 Kentucky's forty-eighth county was established by the legislature and named for Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809), the co-leader of the recently completed Lewis and Clark expedition. Lewis County's territorial boundaries remained relatively unchanged during the nineteenth century, but for eighty days in early 1904 it yielded 154 of its 484 square miles to the formation of the short lived Beckham County.1

Except for its western section which may loosely be considered a part of the Outer Bluegrass, Lewis is situated on a highly dissected plateau characteristic of the Appalachian foothills (or knobs). It is nearly altogether drained by the Ohio, its northern boundary, and that river's main Lewis County tributaries - Kinniconick, Salt Lick, Quicks Run, Crooked, and Cabin Creeks. A narrow section around the Fleming and Rowan county lines to the southwest and south is drained by the Licking River's north fork. Kinniconick - locally called simply Kinney is the county's principal interior stream. It and its main branches - Montgomery, Spy Run, McDowell, Trace, Town Branch, Rock Run, Laurel, Straight Fork, and Indian Creeks - figure significantly in the county's history, and at least half of the post offices are located with reference to them. Lewis' 1995 Census revision counted some 13,300 residents.

Each of the county's seventy post offices, described below, will be located by road miles from the present courthouse in downtown Vanceburg.

The first Lewis County Court met at the home of Oke Hendrickson in what later became Poplar Flat. A committee appointed in January 1809 to locate a permanent seat first considered a site in the Ohio bottom, just above the mouth of Quicks Run, a place to be called Mount Vernon. It chose instead some land offered by Rowland T. Parker, on the north side of Salt Lick Creek. This was shortly named Clarksburg for William Clark, the other half of the famed exploration team.

At Clarksburg, just east of where Ky 10 leaves the new Double A Highway (now Ky 9) on its way to Vanceburg, and 3 1/2 miles west of the latter, the county's first post office was established at least by January 7, 1811. It was called Lewis County Court House and Parker was its first postmaster. 1820 the office was renamed Clarksburg. It closed in early February 1864, shortly after the Kentucky legislature authorized the transfer of the county seat to Vanceburg. Little else remained of the community after it lost the seat. By the end of the century, though, it had become a residential suburb of Vanceburg, which it still is, and another Clarksburg post office was located there on October 10, 1900 with Townley T. Bellomy as postmaster. After an intermittent existence, the office closed for good in mid-October, 1932.

The aptly named Poplar Flat was the site of the county's second known post office, though at the time it was established, on December 12, 1814, the office was known as Everett's house for its location in the home of its first postmaster, John D. Everett. By the end of 1836, however, a new postmaster, Thomas Henderson, had the name changed to Poplar Flat. By this name it continued to serve the small mill and trade village on the north side of Indian Run (of Cabin Creek), thirteen miles west of Vanceburg, until May 1930. Nothing but the local church and some homes remain.

Vanceburg, the county's present seat, is a fourth class city with a 1990 population of slightly over 1,700. It lies on the Ohio, just above the mouth of Salt Lick Creek, some thirty miles up the river from Maysville and ninety miles northeast of downtown Lexington. It was founded in 1797 by Moses Baird and Joseph Calvin Vance on fifty-five acres acquired that year from Alexander Keith Marshall, son of Col. Thomas Marshall of Washington, Kentucky, and named for Vance.

The town was slow to develop, owing in large part to Marshall's lack of a valid title to his property, and possibly to its somewhat precarious position in the Ohio's flood prone bottom. These conditions undoubtedly led to its being overlooked as the site of the new county's seat. It was not until the 1840's that it even began to resemble a town. For most of this time it was little more than a landing for nearby Clarksburg and a shipping point for the area salt works whose springs had given the local stream its name.2 It did have a post office, though, that was officially established on July 3, 1815, with George Swingle, Jr., postmaster.3 The town was not chartered until January 27, 1827 and did not achieve city status until 1865 after the legislature had authorized, in December 1863, the transfer of the county's seat. By then the land titles issue had been resolved and the town's Ohio River location had become a definite asset. It remained for the rest of the century the major point of debarkation for river travelers to the county's interior and of outshipments of county-wide produce.

Like most American towns with names ending in burg, the Lewis County seat had a terminal "h" in its name until the mid 1890's. Then, following the Post Office Department's new policy of name simplification, the "h" was dropped. In the early nineteenth century the place was often referred to by travelers, and even the Ohio River mapmaker Zadock Cramer, as Vancenville. Vanceburg still bears the nickname Alum City for one of its main landmarks, a large rock surrounded by deposits...
of alum on the hill overlooking the downtown district from the south.

The very meandering Kinniconick Creek [kihn/ee/kahn/ik] heads just short of the Fleming County line, near the site of the old Tharp post office, and joins the Ohio River just above Garrison. It is not known when the name was first applied to the ninety plus mile long stream. It was shown on Filson’s 1874 map as Twelve Mile Creek probably for its mouth being twelve river miles below that of the Scioto River at the present Portsmouth.

The Kinniconick name may be traced to a Shawnee term referring to “willow bark”, aptly applied since the area still abounds in Willow trees. However, the late George R. Stewart, in his American Place Names (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, P. 240) traced the name to an ersatz tobacco plant used by various Algonquin-speaking Indians and early frontiersmen. The name Kinniconick was applied, most likely by French and English-speaking travelers, to places and features in different sections of the continent where that plant was found.

The first application of the stream’s name to a Lewis County post office was in 1824 when Matthew Thompson established the Kinniconick post office at the mouth of the creek, on or near the site earlier acquired and then still occupied by Aaron Stratton (died 1831), one of the county’s first justices and sheriffs. This office closed in late October 1867, but was re-established, as we shall see below, in 1900 at its more familiar location at the mouth of Grassy Branch, some twenty-five miles up the creek, where the office served the village of Kinniconick until 1955.

Somewhere in the area below the mouth of Kinniconick may have been the short-lived (if it actually operated at all) post office of Allodial [ahl/oh/dee/all]. This is suggested by the fact that its only postmaster (from May 18 to July 23, 1877) was Thomas J. Beavis (or Beavis) who, according to the 1880 Census, was a close neighbor of Stephen Garrison, the first postmaster of Garrison. Whence the name can only be guessed at. My guess is that, for some reason, it refers to the legal concept of free and unrestricted ownership of land with no obligation to provide a service to its previous owner.

It was not until the Maysville and Big Sandy (later the Chesapeake and Ohio) Railroad was completed through in the mid 1880’s that the area around the mouth of Kinney, 9 1/2 miles east of Vancburg, finally began to develop. By the early 1880’s the small community there was called Stone City for the several area quarries that furnished freestone for shipment down the river from the local landing. The new station may for a time have been called Freestone. The post office was re-established on February 26, 1886 by Stephen R. Garrison, a local storekeeper, and given his family’s name. In 1891 Garrison, still locally called Stone City, became the terminus of the Kinniconick and Freestone Railroad which, that June, made its first run to Tannery, seven rail miles up the creek. The line then followed the Trace Fork of Kinney into Carter County, reaching Carter City by June, 1893. The line became a branch of the C&O in 1907. It was extended to Gesling in Carter County in 1927, and ceased operation in early 1941.

One of northeastern Kentucky’s oldest known place names was applied to a fifteen mile long stream with a very irregular course. Heading just north of Epworth in Lewis County, Cabin Creek joins the Ohio River at the site of the later Springdale post office in Mason County, a mile and a half below the Lewis County line. It was named by its earliest settlers for several cabins on or near its banks that may have been built by members of William Thompson’s 1773 survey party.

The early Lewis County community of Cabin Creek, nearly five miles upstream from the river, got its post office, also Cabin Creek, at least by July 25, 1828. George Rea, the precinct constable, was its first postmaster. By the 1870’s the community was also known as Glenville, and an attempt was made to adopt this as the post office’s new name. But Cabin Creek it remained until, in 1886, postmaster/storekeeper Thomas J. Tully had the office renamed Cottageville. By this name it continued to operate until mid-April, 1913.

Rock Port and Rock Creek were two unrecalled antebellum post offices on or near the Ohio River. The first, operated by Pleasant Savage between January 2, 1833 and mid-September 1837, served an equally short lived sawmill that Savage had started with Richard Deering and Alfred G. Carter. According to the Burr (1839) and Lloyd (1863) maps, the office was seven miles above Vancburg and four miles below the mouth of Kinniconick. It’s name origin is unknown, though it may have referred to its being across the river and a short distance above the then Ohio River town of Rockville.

This is not to be confused with the Rock Creek post office, unlocated on any published map but believed to have been somewhere on Rock Creek, an Ohio River tributary, a mile and a half above Quincy. The office, maintained by Willis and Jesse L. Bagby, among others, operated from July 25, 1838 through June, 1839.

Concord, with only sixty-five residents counted in the 1990 Census, is one of Kentucky’s smallest sixth class cities. Its significance as an Ohio River port, some thirteen miles below Vancburg, can be traced back to 1808 when a Mr. Stephenson (or Stevenson) furnished two acres for an inspection station for hemp, flour, and tobacco. By January 1833 when a town was formally established here, still on Stephenson-owned land, it had
a flatboat building operation, soon to be joined by a tannery, at least four stores, a couple of taverns, and a number of shops and other businesses. Within ten years it had become an Ohio River shipping point for area tanbark and timber, and had several wood yards for the fueling of stopping steamboats. Its post office, established on January 3, 1834 by local storekeeper Samuel Stevenson (sic), closed in June, 1993. The still viable village is centered at the junction of Ky 10 and 57. Its name derivation is not known.

The recently disincorporated city of Tollesboro ([tələsˌbɔrə] extends for nearly two miles along Ky 10, but centers at the junction of Ky 10 and 57, just east of its active post office, and 17 1/2 miles west of Vanceburg. Its early history is not known though it was served by a post office called White House somewhere in the area. This office, established on August 17, 1839, with James Linley, postmaster, was renamed, or moved to what became, Tollesboro (sic) on October 23, 1845, with Herman Ebersole, postmaster. By the 1850's the name was spelled Tollesborough. It was not until December, 1916 that the current spelling was formally adopted by the Post Office Department. The town, named for the Tolle family which as lived in that area since 1809, was incorporated as Tollesboro in 1860, as Tollesboro in 1871, and again as Tollesboro in 1877.

Within a mile of each other were two of the Ohio Valley's most popular antebellum resorts. Esculapia Springs [ehs/ka/ləpyə] and Glen Springs were spas founded on white sulfur and chalybeate springs considered, by the 1840's and 1850's standards, of undisputed medicinal value. The first of these resorts may be traced to 1822 when an Englishman, John Powling, was granted a license for a tavern at the site then called White Sulphur Springs. Around 1846, Marcus Gould, Abner Hitchcock, and William C. Halbert began formal operations of the springs which they renamed for the classical god of healing. Shortly thereafter the Glen Springs resort was opened a mile down the creek and named for its setting in an attractive glen.

The first post office to serve that area was Abner Hitchcock's Esculapia Springs from October 7, 1847 through October 1851. It was reestablished on November 23, 1857 by William H. Jones as Marine, but was again called Esculapia Springs in September 1879, and closed in June, 1895.

On April 22, 1890 the Glen Springs post office was established with Isaac Lee Walker, postmaster. On October 5, 1895, shortly after the closing of the Esculapia Springs post office, the Glen Springs office was moved to the Esculapia Springs site by William L. Sutherland and renamed Esculapia. By 1901 this had again become Esculapia Springs, and closed for good in late April, 1910.

Meanwhile, at the Glen Springs site, Montford G. Jones opened another post office on March 17, 1900, that he called Glenmont. This became Glen Springs in May of the following year and served, through April 1958, a small community at the head of what's now called the Big Branch of Salt Lick, thirteen miles west south-west of Vanceburg.

A third resort at the head of Salt Lick Creek but of apparently lesser note than the others also had a post office. Between April 23, 1852 and mid-January 1856 McCormick's Springs served James McCormick's hotel with McCormick and Edwin Falls its only postmasters. Nothing else seems to be known of this place, including its precise location.

At the mouth of Martin's Fork, some six miles up Quicks Run, James D. Secrest and others operated the Martin's Fork post office from December 31, 1851 through October, 1860. The fork had been named for pioneer land owner and settler James Martin. In 1891, to serve a mill or two, a store, and some other businesses, another post office at or near the first office site was established by George Queen. This was to be called Martinsville, but for some reason the "ville" on the petition was crossed out and, on March 25, 1891, the office opened as, simply, Martin. On March 16, 1926, probably to avoid confusion with the new Floyd County post office of Martin, which officially received that name on that very day, the Lewis County office was renamed Queens. By then Forrest Queen, the local storekeeper, had become postmaster. The office, nine miles west north-west of Vanceburg, closed in October, 1951.

The village and still active post office of Quincy is on Ky 8 and the C&O Railroad, just south of the Ohio, near the mouth of Briery Branch, and three miles above (northeast of) Garrison. It was near the site of Hampshire Landing which briefly served the Hampshire furnace that operated over the hill on Greenup County's Brush Creek from 1847 to 1854. On August 29 of the latter year, Truman Greenfield Waring (or Warring) established the local post office which he may have named for the late president John Quincy Adams. (At least that is what area people think, though there is no solid evidence for it). The town of Quincy was chartered by the legislature on March 30, 1861.

Three very short-lived 1850's post offices must at least be identified for the record. The first two - White Oak Plains and Orange Valley - have not been located and their names have not been derived. The first was operated between March 21, 1856 and January 1859 by James T. Williams and William E. Turner. The second, with Thompson Irwin (Irvin?) as postmaster, operated between May 13, 1856 and June, 1858.

The third post office, Wilson's Bottom, which lasted only thirty-two days from its inception on June 15, 1857...
(with Granville N. Nye, postmaster), was named for its location on that Ohio River stretch below the Manchester Islands; and between the river and Crooked Creek. The Bottom was settled as a military grant by John Wilson and his family around 1795.

The locations of two later Wilson Bottom post offices are known. The first, Sand Hill, named for that area's sandy soil, operated at a site midway between the river and Crooked Creek from September 14, 1864 to September, 1875. The second was established on May 6, 1897, about half a mile northeast, and just west of the creek. It was given the name Trinity by its first postmaster Don McElroy, and operated at several area sites until 1975.

Trinity referred to the C&O station one mile north and just across the river from the city of Manchester, 18-3/4 rail miles west of Vanceburg. The station, in turn, was named for the three landmark Ohio islands by the upper end of Manchester, so known since the late eighteenth century and since identified as the Manchester Islands. In the late nineteenth century one of the islands fell victim to longtime dredging and dam building. The others were purchased by the Federal Government in 1993 and, the following year, became a part of the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

As mentioned above, a post office called Kinniconick was the first established at the mouth of that stream, in the vicinity of the present Garrison. On February 6, 1900 Thomas B. Harrison opened another Kinniconick post office at the mouth of Grassy Branch, some twenty-five stream miles from the Ohio, though only 6 1/2 miles south of Vanceburg on the present Ky 59. This, however, was the last of the post offices to serve this vicinity. The first, probably also at the mouth of Grassy, was the short-lived (June 17, 1864 through November 1865) Kinny Mills (sic) maintained by Jacob W. Rand.

On October 8, 1884 at the mouth of Holly Branch, 2 1/4 miles above Grassy, Laurent A. Muller established another post office. Instead of his preferred Kinney, he called it Randville for Jacob (ne ca. 1799) or Col. William S. Rand. By the turn of the century this office was serving a community of three stores and two lumber dealers. It closed in mid-September, 1914.

In 1900 Harrison, who had been running a hotel, steam-powered tannery, and store just above the mouth of Grassy, apparently decided that this place again needed its own post office. His new Kinniconick post office, however, closed after only six years and its papers were sent to Randville. It was re-established, probably at the same place, by William T. Barrett on May 19, 1916. In 1923 a new postmaster, Bertha Harris, moved it a mile upstream, to the mouth of Miller Branch. Four years later, William Thomas Knapp moved it to his store just above the junction of the present Ky 59 and 344, where it remained through August, 1955 when it closed for good.

A post office called Kinney actually did operate in Lewis County, in fact, two of them did, though short-lived and at two different sites.

Charles H. Godfrey's Kinney post office (between June 30 and September 10, 1891) was on Trace Creek, six hundred feet southeast of the yet to be completed Kinniconick and Freestone Railroad tracks, and four miles from Kinniconick Creek.

The second Kinney post office was on Spurgeon Creek, not otherwise identified (but possibly Toller Branch), and roughly halfway (3 1/2 miles each) between Esculapia and Noah post offices.

In each case, however, Kinney was not the postmasters' first choice. Godfrey had proposed the names Thomas (for George M. Thomas) and Emma, but found them already in use. Louis J. Meyer, the other Kinney's only postmaster (from April 13, 1899 through January, 1910) had proposed Spurgeon but this was too similar to Owlsley County's Sturgeon. Thus, the two post office became Kinney, most curious since neither one was on or even near Kinniconick Creek.

From June 17, 1864 until the early summer of 1935, at various sites in the vicinity of the mouth of Laurel Fork of Kinniconick, was the post office aptly called Mouth of Laurel. William H. Stone was its first postmaster. On July 1, 1935 Harvey Howard arranged for its move some two miles up Kinney to serve Dick Howard's fishing camp, and it took the name Camp Dix. It continued to serve this popular vacation area from its site on Ky 59, 11 1/2 miles south-southeast of Vanceburg, until it closed in late November, 1995.

Families of Stout and Cox, and probably some others, had a pioneer station and later a landing on the Ohio River bottoms some eight miles below (northwest of) Vanceburg. This soon became known as Stout's Landing. But for some reason when Ritcherson M. Stout established the local post office on June 4, 1867 he called it Station Landing. On March 10, 1868 the local storekeeper, Frederick M. Carr, who had just become postmaster, had the name changed to Carrs. But for two brief interruptions, he continued to run the office until 1907 when it closed. By then it was serving a station on the C&O Railroad, some five hundred yards from the river. The office reopened in 1909, again as Carrs, and continued until it closed for good in November, 1953. Only the local church and some homes remain.

On November 13, 1871, just below the junction of the present Double A Highway and Ky 989, seven miles west of Vanceburg, Charles G. Heaverin established the Salt Lick Valley post office. It was renamed simply Valley in September, 1875 and was soon serving a small village with three general stores and other businesses. In
February 1915, to avoid confusion with Valley Station in Jefferson County, then postmaster Charles L. Graham gave it the name Charters for Anna Charters Redden (later Mrs. Hendricks), who lived nearby. Thenceforth the community was called both Charters and Valley and extended for nearly two miles down the creek to the site of the old Valley School. The post office closed in late January, 1952 and nothing survives.

Dudley Calvert (1808-1881), then the local magistrate, established the Dudley post office on March 22, 1872 somewhere on the new road between Concord and Tollesboro, 3 1/2 miles northwest of Poplar Flat and 4 1/2 miles south of the Ohio. It closed in mid-October, 1874. Its precise location or anything else about it is unrecalled.

The hamlet of Burtonville, at the junction of the present Rts. 989 and 1237, located 18 1/2 miles southwest of Vanceburg, was said by the early twentieth century Lewis County newspaperman John S. Mavity to have been called Equalization before it got its first post office. He said this name had been applied “because four citizens had built their homes exactly alike along the roadside. They claimed that the Declaration said that all men were born free and equal, and that it was their endeavor to keep the citizens of their town in that condition. Not many years after this building of the original houses their owners moved away and the other oldest inhabitant, Mr. Burton, added ‘ville’ to his name and christened the town anew."

Perhaps, but nothing is known of any Burton family in that neighborhood. Others claim it was named for a Burton Price, but nothing seems to be known of him, either. The first post office to serve that vicinity was simply Burton. It operated about a mile east of the Licking River’s North Fork and one quarter of a mile south of the Buck Lick Fork of Powderlick, from November 15, 1873 until June 1874, with I.H. Price and William Burris, postmasters. Burris re-established the office as Burtonville on February 18, 1878 where it served a fairly thriving community until it closed in March, 1958.

Another short-lived (June 23, 1874 to mid-December 1877) post office was McKinnies. Basil Lewis, its only postmaster, probably named it for the family of Clark McKinney, an early settler of the area between Rock Run and Town Branch, west side tributaries of Kinniconick. According to Lewis’ Site Location Report, the office would be one quarter of a mile northwest of the creek and six miles southeast of the Vanceburg post office.

On February 2, 1889 this post office was re-established by Conrad M. Kammer, one of the four local storekeepers, and named Tannery for an antebellum tannery operated there by A. W. Fryer and the Greenslate family. Over the course of its sixty-nine year history this office, always as Tannery, had more locations than most Kentucky post offices. In early 1896 Owen Osborne had it moved one mile down Kinney to access the new Kinniconick and Freestone Railroad. In 1918 it was moved half a mile north. Sometime in the 1920’s it was moved one mile southeast to a site on the south side of Wolf Branch (of Trace Creek), nine hundred feet east of the K&F’s Tannery Station. Later it was moved half a mile west, and in 1946 it was moved once more, half a mile east, to its final site just above the mouth of Wolf Creek, just east of Rt. 1149, which follows the abandoned railroad tracks. Here it closed at the end of 1957.

George Fearis settled early in the northwest corner of what became Lewis County. He was among the county’s first magistrates and, in 1808, was appointed sheriff. On June 23, 1875 his grandson, John W. Fearis (1849-1934), a blacksmith and livestock dealer, established a post office on the East Fork of Cabin Creek, at or in the vicinity of the junction of the present Rts. 984 and 3309, nineteen miles west of Vanceburg, and called it Fearisville. It closed in November 1878 but was re-established in January 1880 as Fearis. However, the small community it served until April, 1916 continued to be called Fearisville, and, with store and church, it still is.

The hamlet of Petersville, at the mouth of Dunaway Branch of Kinney, and the junction of Ky 344 and 559, located 18 1/4 miles southwest of Vanceburg, was named for its founder Peter D. Lykins (1820-1895). The son of Morgan County’s first judge, William Lykins, he had been forced by his unionist sympathies to flee his home on Morgan’s Casey Creek during the Civil War. The Petersville post office was established on April 17, 1878 with storekeeper James M. Lawlyes, postmaster. By the end of the century, his store was joined by at least two more and some other businesses. The office operated through August, 1955.

According to William A. Large, in the Site Location Report accompanying his petition, his post office would serve a community of some four hundred residents at the head of Grassy Fork of Laurel. Instead of Large’s preference Primrose, it was named Head of Grassy, and he assumed charge on November 19, 1878. Sometime within the next ten years, his successor George Stamper moved the office several miles down the fork to his new farm at the mouth of Old Trace Creek. Curiously, until it closed in 1954, this office, on Ky 59, located 20 1/4 miles south of Vanceburg, continued to be called Head of Grassy.

It is not known how the settlement of Crum on Ky 344, at the mouth of Lee Branch of Kinney, and 15 3/4 miles southwest of Vanceburg, got its name. Though this is a family name in northeastern Kentucky, there are no
known Crum families in this area. John S. Mavity once offered this folk etymological explanation: “The country store in that section had grabbed up everything worth grabbing and then came a cyclone along and blew the store away. Several years after that E.G. Clark … discovered that calves and chickens had again taken root in that vicinity and he thought there might be a crum of comfort there, so he started another store and got a post office established called Crum.” The office in Clark’s store opened on May 2, 1882 with Thomas B. Clark, postmaster, and closed at the end of December, 1924.

The Heselton [hehs/al/tan] post office served a store on Salt Lick Creek and the present Ky 989, eleven miles southwest of Vanceburg, from February 21, 1883 until April, 1920. It was named for George W. Heselton who, with Daniel Austin, had applied for the office on land they owned. Charles C. Goodwin was the first postmaster.

Covedale, a post office on the present Ky 57, which is 2 1/2 miles southwest of Concord, also had an underived name. The office, established as Cove Dale on March 3, 1884 with Alexander M. Lang, postmaster, became Covedale ten years later and closed in May 1930.

Somewhere in the vicinity of the old Richland School, probably on or near the present Ky 57, located 3 1/2 miles southwest of Tollesboro and one mile east of the Licking River’s North Fork, was the Walkersville post office. This was operated by W.H. Georgia and Monroe Walker between August 26, 1884 and mid-June 1886, and was probably named for Walker’s family.

Yet another underived name was applied to the Hilda post office run by John Shaw May between August 16, 1887 and early March 1895. This office may have been at or near the junction of the present Ky 344 and 3310, which is 2 1/2 miles northwest of Petersville. May’s first name choice was Apple and his office would serve an area called Fruit Hill.

Descendants of pioneer Alexander McKenzie (who died before 1808) gave their name to the McKenzie [ma/kehn/zee] post office that was established on April 6, 1887, probably in the vicinity of the East Fork (of Cabin Creek) Church on the present Rt. 3309. James H. Crawford was its first postmaster. It closed in November 1896, but was re-established in July 1902, with Joseph W. Hampton, postmaster, probably at the junction of 3309 and Ky 984, sixteen miles west of Vanceburg. It closed for good in August, 1921.

A rare example of two Kentucky post offices with the same name in two different parts of the same county are the two Pughs. Both were probably named for Samuel Johnson Pugh (1850-1922), a Vanceburg attorney and politician. The first, with Benjamin Franklin Bradford, postmaster, served the community of Rome on the present Ky 8, five miles northwest of Vanceburg, from February 18, 1889 through May, 1891. At this time its name source was the county judge, who would soon be representing Lewis and nearby counties in the Kentucky Senate.

The second Pugh was somewhere on the upper end of the Indian Fork of Kinney, and would have been called either Ambler or Hardy. But Andrew Jackson Hardy and Zach N. Thacker operated it as Pugh, serving a local store from November 1, 1897 through January, 1905. Between 1895 and 1901, Samuel Johnson Pugh was representing this Kentucky district in the U.S. Congress.

Noah L. Payne (1840-1917), an attorney, was the first postmaster and name source of the Noah post office. This served a school, church, and two stores in the Oak Ridge neighborhood between Kinney and the headwaters of Salt Lick Creek, some 16 1/2 miles southwest of Vanceburg, from April 22, 1890 through July, 1917.

The short-lived (May 27, 1890 to mid-October, 1891) Lloyd post office has been confused with Lloyd Station on the C&O, only a mile above Garrison. But, according to postmaster-designate Marshall Bertram’s Site Location Report, his office was to be six miles south of Garrison, six miles east of Tannery, and two miles east of Kinney Creek. If one considers that these are road miles, they suggest an office somewhere in the area between McDowell and Montgomery Creeks, west of the future Rexton. The preferred name With doesn’t help in pinpointing the location. Even the derivation of the Lloyd name is problematic. A William Lloyd was mentioned in an 1830 court record.

Contemporary Lewis Countians hardly recall the old post office of Alpena-Dyer that Chester S. Dyer operated somewhere on Tar Fork of Laurel between July 17, 1890 and March, 1892. He established it as Alpena, derivation unknown, but renamed it Dyer only 2 1/2 months before it closed. It may have been a predecessor of the Harris post office, known to have operated at several sites on Tar Fork from December 12, 1898 through October, 1955. Joseph Harris, the latter’s name source, was the local storekeeper and first postmaster at the mouth of Tar Fork.

The Tharp post office may have been in the vicinity of the extant Tharp Cemetery, (shown as Thorp on modern maps) north of Ky 559, and 3 1/2 miles southwest of Petersville. The office was operated from October 3, 1890 through 1906 by Eli Oliver and James E. Rigdon, both of whom are buried in the local cemetery. It’s been told (but not confirmed) that the local church once had a preacher named Tharp.

Trotter was another post office whose location can only be approximated and whose name derivation can only be guessed at. John V. Thomas alone served this office, which he would have called Thomas, from December 29, 1890 through May 1907. According to then
Another post office that moved a number of times during its course of operation was Rugless [rugh/ez]. It was established on July 17, 1891, with William H. Crump, postmaster, at the mouth of Stone Branch of Trace Creek to serve the Stone Branch Station on the newly completed Kinnikonick and Freestone Railroad. In 1917 it was moved 1 1/4 miles up the creek to serve the Trace Station at the mouth of Polly Moore Branch, taking the post office name with it. By then, the station at its new location was also called Rugless. The office made several more moves before it closed in late March, 1948. Yet, before that time the station had apparently returned to its earlier site. Timetables for 1930 and 1940 show two separate stations, Ruggles and Trace, about 1 1/2 miles apart.

The curious spelling of this post office and station name has bothered Lewis Countians and others for a long time. The prominent Lewis County family it honored spelled their name Ruggles. While the railroad spelled the name, variously, Ruggles, Rugless, and even, on occasion, Rugless, the Post Office Department consistently but curiously spelled the name of the office with one g and two s’s.

In addition to Tannery and Rugless, two other post offices served Lewis County stations on the Kinnikonick and Freestone Railroad. The post office inexplicably called Records served Sullivan’s Station, some three miles east of the Tannery Station and five rail miles south/southwest of Garrison. Henry F. Sullivan, the first postmaster, proposed the name Beulah (or Bula) for this office, and then Records, by which it operated between August 6, 1897 and mid-November, 1923. Records has been a family name elsewhere in the Ohio Valley, but apparently not in Lewis County.

One and a half rail miles below (northeast of) Sullivan’s Station was Upper Bruce. This station was served by the Upper Bruce post office, at the mouth of McDowell Creek, from April 10, 1903 through May, 1914. William E. Christy was its only postmaster. The station’s name distinguished it from the Bruce Station, two miles down Kinney, below the mouth of Spy Run. The Brucis were named for the influential Bruce family, the nineteenth century owners of much land and several mills in the lower Kinney valley and its several tributaries.

Three Lewis County stations on the main C&O line above Garrison also had post offices. Quincy we have already discussed. The other two were St. Paul and Firebrick.

Firebrick’s post office was established three-quarters of a mile up Indian Run (an Ohio River tributary) by William Beyerly, on April 19, 1892. It served the Glen and, later, the Firebrick Station, half a mile north, and 8 1/4 miles above (northeast of) Garrison. The Firebrick station and post office also served a company town built up around the local firebrick plant that is no longer in operation. After several moves, the Firebrick post office still serves the northeast corner of the county.

In 1885 the C&O named a flag stop, 2 1/2 miles below its Firebrick Station, for the Saint Paul Methodist Church, built in 1874 just across the tracks. Until then the community growing up there was a part of Quincy, whose post office was some four miles below. When Charles T. Botten established the local post office, he too called it Saint Paul. It closed in September, 1994.

Until July 1994, the Emerson post office served the southeast corner of Lewis County. It is now a community post office out of Vanceburg, twenty-three miles north. This office actually began on January 15, 1894 as Bellvue in Carter County, with Albert Wilson, postmaster. On June 6th of that year it was renamed Emerson, presumably for the famed writer and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, though this has not been confirmed. In May 1900 the office was moved to a site half a mile within Lewis County, near the head of Grassy Fork (of Laurel), at or near the site of the original Head of Grassy post office. After a number of pre-World War Two moves, it ended up on Ky 59 near the mouth of Rose Creek (of Grassy), 2 1/2 miles south of the last Head of Grassy post office site.

The Halberts were another distinguished Lewis County family for whom a post office was named. Prominent descendants of Scottish-born pioneer Isaac Halbert, who had settled on Salt Lick Creek, near the present Charters, included William C. Halbert, Sr. (1817-1877), who had donated the land for Vanceburg’s county buildings and represented the county in the Kentucky Senate. His son, William C., Jr. (1856-1931) was a later Kentucky representative and Circuit Court judge.

When postmaster-designate Cary W. Kimble found his own family name already in use by a Russell County post office, he chose Halbert and ran this office between July 2, 1895 and early March, 1898. It was located at the junction of the present Ky 984 and the C&O tracks, one quarter of a mile west of Quicks run, and four miles northwest of Vanceburg. An effort to re-establish the office in the fall of 1902 was unsuccessful.

A post office called Thor was located half a mile east of the Scott Branch of Laurel Fork (and the junction of Ky 59 and 474), two miles southeast of Camp Dix. It was established on July 28, 1897 and named by its first postmaster William Thomas Cooper, and County Judge W.T. Stone, whose family lived nearby. Contrary to the claim of Lewis County newspaperman John S. Mavity, the name was not of Biblical origin but, for reasons
unknown, might have referred to the Norse god of war, thunder, and agriculture. The office closed at the end of 1938.

From September 30, 1897 through 1916 the inexplicably named Alburn (aw-burn) post office occupied one or more sites on the north side of Crooked Creek, 2 ½ miles west/northwest of Covedale, and eighteen miles west/northwest of Vanceburg. Thomas H. Bell was its first postmaster. Nothing remains, and it is not identified on current maps.

The crossroads hamlet of Epworth on Rt. 1237, located 21 ½ miles west-southwest of Vanceburg, is one-quarter of a mile north of Ruggles Camp, a meeting ground long owned by the Methodist Church on a site donated for this purpose by William Clancy Ruggles (1814-1903) in 1872. According to tradition, the community was named for the Epworth League, an important Methodist organization. The name Epworth was that of the Lincolnshire, England birthplace of the denomination’s founder, John Wesley. When James R. Hinton planned for the Epworth post office, which he opened on February 10, 1898, he proposed at least three religiously-significant names for it — Look Up, A Lift Up, and Epworth. Postal authorities chose the third. The office closed in late January, 1931.

One of several examples of a Kentucky post office named for the initials of its first postmaster was Awe. This was established on May 20, 1898 by Anthony Wayne Everman, some five miles up Straight Fork of Kinney. In 1902 John F. Stander moved the office one mile further up the Fork, to the mouth of Blue Ridge Fork, 16 ¼ miles south of Vanceburg. This is believed to be in the vicinity of what county historian William M. Talley recalled as the abortive post Civil War settlement of St. Mary’s. Here the office continued to operate through October, 1935. 17

The active hamlet of Ribolt (riye-bohlt) is just off the Double A highway, 3 ½ miles east of Tollesboro, and thirteen miles west of Vanceburg. It may early have been called Needmore, but was renamed when the post office was established on July 14, 1898, for its first postmaster and the storekeeper John C. Ribolt Harrison. After several local moves the office closed in March, 1936.

Hoyt was another short-lived post office whose name has not yet been derived and whose location had not been precisely determined. Lizzie Taylor alone operated it from July 14, 1898 through 1902, probably in the vicinity of Ky 344’s crossing of the Mud Lick Branch of the Licking River’s North Fork. According to her Site Location Report, the office was 3 ½ miles northwest of Petersville, three miles east of Foxport (in Fleming County), and three miles south of Burtonsville.

Local storekeeper Merritt B. Stricklett (1866-1932) was the first postmaster and name source of the Stricklett post office on Kinney, just above the mouth of Indian Creek, and 2 ½ miles southwest of Randville. The office operated from January 7, 1899 through 1957.

Three miles northeast of Harris, on the west side of Laurel Fork, probably at the mouth of what is now known as the Dan Morgan Hollow, was the Libbie post office. It was operated from September 29, 1900 through June, 1913 by its only postmaster, Daniel Boone Morgan, who named it for his daughter. There is nothing at the site now and it remains unidentified on current published maps.

It has been said that J.D. Nash’s country store on or near the present Rt. 989, some sixteen miles southwest of Vanceburg, was the site and name source of the Nashtown post office. This was established on February 6, 1901 with Jacob Eckert its first postmaster. It lasted through February, 1932.

The short-lived (February 11, 1902 - July, 1905) Wadsworth post office served a store, blacksmith, and a nearby church and school, probably on Beechy Creek, between Petersville and the Licking River’s North Fork. It may have been named for the highly regarded Maysville attorney William H. Wadsworth (1821-1893) who, before the Civil War, had represented that area in the Kentucky Senate and later served in the U.S. Congress. George Washington Watkins and Deward M. Carpenter were the postmasters.

Somewhere on Pleasant Ridge were the two sites of the barely recalled Fruit post office. Berry and Frut were the names proposed by postmaster-designate James N. Brown for his office five miles west of Vanceburg and six miles southeast of Martin. In late 1906 his successor, Fairlena Riley, had the office moved one mile west, bringing it about one mile south of Quicks Run. One may guess at the source of the names, but can’t rule out the fact that Lewis County had several families descended from Martin Fruit (ca. 1774 in Pennsylvania or Maryland) who is known to have settled in what was then Mason County by 1794. George and Jubes Fruit lived in the Garrison-Quincy area in the early 1860’s. But to be safe, we will have to say we really don’t know the origin of this office name.

We also do not know the source of Rexton, the name applied to an office at several sites on Montgomery Creek. On May 31, 1907, when Harry M. Lowder found his preferred name Ward in use in Rockcastle County, he opened his new Lewis County office, two miles southeast of Garrison, as Rexton. By the time it closed in November 1951, it was occupying a site two miles further up Montgomery, just below the mouth of Willis Branch.

A post office named Boggs was established on May 9, 1905 by William M. Boggs on the road just north of Cabin Creek and probably just east of the Ebenezer Church, seventeen miles west of Vanceburg. In October
1909, Richard E. Norman may have moved it nearly a mile up the creek where he continued it until September, 1914. It was re-established on December of the following year as the inexplicable Wishbone, with Owen G. Freeman, postmaster, but lasted only eight months before it closed for good.

The Jacktown post office was established by Bert Fry (sic) on Quicks Run, about three miles above (west of) Martin (Queens). Named for local storekeeper Andy Jackson, it operated from July 19, 1909 through August, 1933.

Among the several summer camps on lower Kinney in the early 1900’s was one called Teutonia [te/tohn/ya], established by a fishing club made up of a group of Vanceburg businessmen. Its precise location is not known but it is believed to have been in the vicinity of the Armstrong Church and School, some four miles above Tannery. It was served by the county’s last post office, also called Teutonia, between September 15, 1909 and mid-November 1922. Whence Teutonia or Allison, the first name proposed for the office, is not known. Matthew A. Armstrong and Gladys Goodwin were its only postmasters.

Only five of Lewis County’s seventy post offices (Vanceburg, Tollesboro, Garrison, Quincy, and Firebrick) are yet active. Vanceburg alone still serves an incorporated place since Concord, the county’s only other current city, lost its office in 1993. At least a dozen discontinued offices were the center of one-time villages, while most of the rest served a country store or mill, and a church.

Two offices – Redia and Jamison – were established by the Post Office Department, but never operated. Redia’s authorization was granted to Cyrus Irwin on March 5, 1904, and again to Addie Irwin on June 28 of that year, but both appointments were rescinded in June, 1905. The office’s location and name derivation are not known.

The other non-operating post office, Jamison, was established on October 20, 1905 some 3 1/2 miles north-east of Upper Bruce, and probably named for its postmaster-designate John L. Jamison. His authority, however, was rescinded the following June.

Local or area persons/families accounted for thirty-two post office names. Four offices may have been named for non-local persons of distinction. Five were named for geographic features or locations. Eight offices had their names transferred to them from names of nearby features (five streams, a church, a summer camp, and a railroad station.) Local businesses (a tannery and a firebrick plant) gave their names to two offices. Two offices were named for classical gods. One office was named for a religious group. Fifteen office names have not yet been derived. At least thirteen offices have not been precisely located.

Seventeen post offices bore names not proposed for them, five served places with other names, and eleven had name changes.

**FOOTNOTES**

Beckham County, comprising sections of Carter, Lewis, and Elliott counties, was created by the Kentucky legislature on February 9, 1904. Lasting only eighty days, it was the only county in the state ever abolished by court action. Five Lewis County post offices – Head of Grassy, Emerson, Thor, Harris, and Libbie – were transferred to Beckham on March 11, 1904. Curiously, though, they were not officially returned to Lewis County until October 26 of that year, nearly six months after Beckham was dissolved. For a brief discussion of Beckham County and its post offices, see Robert M. Renwick, “The Post Offices of Beckham County”, *La Posta*, Vol. 19 (3), July 1988, Pp. 39-42.

Salt Lick Creek, which heads near Glen Springs and joins the river just below the Vanceburg site, was identified on earlier Ohio Valley maps as Buffalo Lick. According to another map, it may have become Salt Lick Creek as early as 1776, probably owing to the early French exploitation of the salt springs a mile up the stream. But it was not until 1794 that the salt works at the mouth of Dry Run were developed in earnest. (cf William M. Talley, “Salt Lick Creek and its Salt Works”, *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 64, April 1966, Pp 85-109)

There may have been a Vanceburg post office as early as 1811, according to some postal records, though this is far from certain. If so, it could have been the county’s first office, or at least a close second.


Evidence for this location of the first Kinniconick post office was Burr’s 1839 postal map.

A Bevis Creek is shown on the Federal Government 1916 Ohio River Chart #24 (Pp. 78-79). This is the Bevins Creek of contemporary topographic maps.

This may have been Boone Landing that is said to have been the shipping point for early Montgomery Creek iron furnaces.

According to Rand McNally’s 1889 railroad atlas.

There is some question as to which Garrison, in particular, the post office and town were named for. Some say it was Sam, a pioneer settler; others, like county newspaperman John S. Mavity, thought it was J.H. Garrison, the owner of much area land after the Civil War.
The Stone City name is still recalled by the local Masonic Lodge.

There is no evidence for the Rev. Ragan's contention that the county's first post office was established at the Cabin Creek site in 1798.

In the early 1850's, when the abolitionist John G. Fee was preaching here, the community was known in derision as Feetown.

Pleasant Morton Savage (1798-1863) was one of the twelve children of the Virginia-born Revolutionary War veteran James P. (and Mary) Savage who had settled their family at Poplar Flat. (cf Jacob Cochran Savage, We Are the Savages, 1974, P. 49)

In the early twentieth century, Trinity Station was also referred to as Manchester Station.

John S. Mavity, Lewis County newspaperman, in his May 19, 1922 letter to William Gladstone Steel of Medford, Oregon, in reply to the latter's request for information on Lewis County post offices and communities. The original letter is in the National Archives.

Mavity once described Straight Fork as it "dashes its water against the rocks and crags down a narrow valley probably fifty yards wide from hill to hill. He who has looked upward through the tops of the tall spruce-pine and hemlock endeavoring to see the sun at any time except noonday may feel the solemn awe which probably gave this post office its name." Yet Mavity knew that its first postmaster was Anthony Wayne Everman, though in his letter to Steel, in which his description of Straight Fork appears, he gave the postmaster's name as Edington, that of another area family.

REFERENCES


Lykins, Beulah Faye of Vanceburg, Ky. Interviewed by the writer on June 20, 1977.


Mavity, John S. in his letter of May 19, 1922 to William Gladstone Steel of Medford, Oregon, now in the National Archives.


Rayburn, Helen of Vanceburg, Ky. Interviewed by the writer on June 20, 1977.


United States Post Office Department: Site Location Reports - Lewis County, Kentucky Post Offices, National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
