

THE POST OFFICES OF CARROLL COUNTY

Carroll County, Kentucky's eighty seventh, was organized by legislative act on February 9, 1838. It was taken mainly from the western part of Gallatin County and smaller sections of Trimble and Henry Counties. It achieved its present 130 square mile area upon gaining another small section of Gallatin, the so-called "Sanders Cut-Off", on February 5, 1872.

The county was named for Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland (1737-1832), the last surviving signer of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The story is told that Carroll, in signing this document, gave his Maryland address so that if caught by the British he would not be confused with another Charles Carroll of Massachusetts and would thus save the British the trouble of hanging both of them for his patriotism. Actually, according to the Dictionary of American Biography, he had added "of Carrollton" to his signature at least ten years earlier to distinguish himself from other members of his own family.

Carroll County is drained by the Ohio River, its twenty mile long northern border, and several key tributaries, including the Kentucky and Little Kentucky Rivers. Other Ohio branches--McCools Creek and Locust Creek--and the Kentucky River branches of Mill Creek and Eagle Creek figured significantly in Carroll County history and gave their names to several of her communities and post offices.

Though Carroll's economy, like its neighbors', has been primarily agricultural, it has begun to industrialize. Some current industries include North American Stainless, Kentucky Ladder, Dow Corning, Teledyne, and Atochem. The 1990 Census counted some 9,300 residents.

Nine of the county's twenty post offices were established while Carroll was still a part of Gallatin. These include the six that were in the "Sanders Cut-Off."

Carrollton, the seat and the county's largest town, with a 1990 population of 3,700, is a fourth class city on the Ohio River, just above the mouth of the Kentucky. It is midway between downtown Louisville and Covington, via US 42. By road miles from its post office most of the other county post offices discussed below will be located.

The town was laid off in 1792 by Benjamin Craig and James Hawkins on part of 613 acres they had acquired from Col William Peachy's 2,000 acre French and Indian War grant. It was chartered on December 13, 1794 as Port William, but historians cannot agree on its name source. It has traditionally been attributed to William Porter who is supposed to have arrived in this vicinity in the 1790s from Somerset County, Maryland with his parents, John and Elizabeth. He is said to have bought up considerable local land and become prominent in the community's early affairs. Mary Ann Gentry, among others, has questioned this¹, finding no records of William or his family having lived here before 1818. Several other Williams were early associated with this area (including Col. Peachy), and one (or more) of them could have been the name source.²

In any event, Port William was aptly named for within a short time its strategic location had led to its becoming an important transfer point for Kentucky River trade. It became Gallatin County's first seat in 1798 and the site of its first post office in late 1806, with Robert Plummer, one of its early port inspectors, as its first postmaster. When Carroll County was formed in 1838 Port William

became its seat, and both town and post office were renamed Carrollton for the Maryland home of Charles Carroll, the county's name source.³ By the end of the nineteenth century, Carrollton had also begun to distinguish itself as an industrial city with distilleries, woolen mills, a furniture factory, and one of the state's leading looseleaf tobacco markets.

Shortly after 1800 Nathaniel Sanders of Spottsylvania County, Virginia (1741-1827) bought his family to a site at or near the mouth of Lick Creek, a branch of Eagle Creek, some ten miles east of the Kentucky River. Here he built a grist mill which he and members of his family operated for many years. The settlement that grew up around it was first served by the Sanders Mill post office which Sanders (more likely his son, Nathaniel, Jr.) operated for awhile after September 30, 1816.

From July 9, 1832 through December 1835 this area, by then called Sanders Old Mill, was served by the Eagle Creek post office whose only postmaster, George Washington Sanders, was another son of Nathaniel's. Yet another Sanders, Robert, then operated the post office as Big Lick from April 21, 1836 till December 1837. This referred to a salt lick on the buffalo trace, extending from the mouth of the Licking River to Drennon's Springs, that had undoubtedly influenced the Sanders' settlement there.

Some years later this vicinity came to be called Rislerville for John (or William) Risler, the local storekeeper. In January 1867 the Louisville Cincinnati and Lexington (Shortline, and later L&N) Railroad was built through the Eagle Creek valley and established a station at Rislerville that local people may have called Dixie.⁴

However, as it would be the shipping point for the farmers and stockmen of the area around New Liberty, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles south (in Owen County), it would become known as Liberty Station.

The post office that came to serve the new Liberty Station and its community was Bramlette which William T. Carlisle established on November 9, 1865 at a site two miles up Lick Creek from the station. However, by the end of 1869, this post office, still as Bramlette, may have been moved to the station by John T. Ralston who had just become postmaster. In his Site Location Report of January 14, 1870, he mentions that his post office was serving Liberty Station in the village of that name and (most curiously) that it was only twenty steps west of another post office called Dudley that was also serving that village.

According to other postal records, there indeed was a Dudley post office at this location that was established on October 21, 1869, half a mile north of Eagle Creek and two miles south of the Bramlette post office. It closed in August 1870 with George W. Rosell, its only postmaster.

Bramlett may have been named for Kentucky's popular Civil War governor, Thomas Elliott Bramlette (1817-1875). But the source of Dudley is not known. No such families are reported in county censuses, death or marriage records.⁵

It must be borne in mind that until February 1872 the area at the mouth of Lick Creek, as well as the first site of the Bramlette post office, were in Gallatin County. Their becoming a part of Carroll County is attributed to a Gallatin County judge's decision to not help pay the cost of a bridge over Eagle Creek here. Carroll County

assumed the entire cost of its construction on condition that Gallatin cede to them the area around Liberty Station. This they did.

On August 5, 1879 Ralston's Bramlette officially became Liberty Station. But for at least five years the local community had also been called Sanders for George Washington Sanders (ne 1798), the local miller. In April 1864 the post office too became Sanders.

By 1900 this community had not only become an important shipping point but also a summer resort tapping the nearby Blue Lick and Lithia Springs. Today, the station, stockyards, warehouses, and two resort hotels are gone. But the sixth class city of Sanders, centering at the junction of Ky 36 and 47, sixteen miles ese of Carrollton, still has its post office, and several stores continue to serve 230 residents and a number of farm families in two counties.

By the spring of 1894 the original Bramlette post office site, where Lick Creek crosses the present Gallatin County line, and just south of I-71, had a couple of stores, a sawmill, and a carriage shop. Another post office to be called Shaler was applied for. (Bramblett [sic] was then in use in Nicholas County.) However, from June 23 1894 through June 1903, it operated as carson. Storekeeper Dale Owen Williams and Benjamin F. Smith were its only postmasters. Its name source is not known.

The sixth class city of Ghent [djuhnt] lies in the Ohio bottom, directly across the river from Vevay, Indiana, and 7½ miles above Carrollton. This site was first settled just before the turn of the eighteenth century by some members of the Rev. Lewis Craig's Traveling Church. Among these was a man named McCool whose name was given to nearby McCool's Creek, and the community was first known as the McCool's Creek Settlement.

Another early settler was John Sanders, brother to Nathaniel (above). John's son, Samuel (ne 1755), opened a tavern in the bottom and, on his father's death in 1805, inherited his land. Shortly thereafter he laid out the town from Preacher John Scott's survey. Seeking a more appropriate name for his town, Samuel, by then also the local magistrate, sought help from his friend Henry Clay who is said to have suggested the name of the Belgian city in which he had recently participated in the negotiation of the treaty ending the War of 1812.⁷ Ghent was applied to the local post office established on June 7, 1816, with Luke Oboussier, postmaster, and to the town when it was chartered in January 1824. The office's independent status ended in 1976 and the city's 365 residents (1990 Census) have since been served by a community post office.

Another son of John Sanders was Lewis (1781-1861) who, after an undistinguished career in business and stockbreeding near Lexington, moved to the future Carroll County in 1817. On some 750 acres of the land heired by his wife, the daughter of George Nicholas, some six miles south of Ghent, he built a home which soon became the centerpiece of an estate called the Grass Hills Plantation. Like several other large Kentucky stock farms it had its own post office. Grass Hills was established on January 24, 1837 with Lewis' son, George Nicholas Sanders, postmaster. George was succeeded in February 1841 by his father who maintained the office till it closed in late September 1858. Grass Hills, just north of the rest area on I-71, 11¼ miles east of Carrollton, is now (1993) a 386 acre farm owned by Evelyn (Mrs. Clyde) Sanders, on 280 acres of which cattle and tobacco are still raised.

Nearly as old as Port William-Carrollton was Prestonville, just across the Kentucky River. On December 21, 1795 the Kentucky legislature approved the establishment of the Ohio River town of Preston on 200 acres in an area between the Kentucky and Little Kentucky Rivers that, in 1774, had been surveyed for Francis Preston and John Smith. By 1806 the town had begun to be called Prestonville, the name it has borne since.

It was not until November 1844 that it was given its own post office, as Prestonville, with G.W. Lee, the first postmaster. This operated intermittently through July 1869. An attempt was made in the summer of 1876 by storekeeper Joseph Louis Collyer to re-establish it. This apparently failed, and in June 1880 Collyer tried again. However, his proposed names, Preston and Ringo (the latter for one or more area families) were disallowed, and the office opened, on August 12, 1880, as the inexplicable Wide-Awake.⁸ It finally was allowed to take the Prestonville name again in April 1893 (with Elias H. Smith, postmaster) and operated at several locations, all within three-fourths of a mile of the Carrollton post office, till 1957 when it closed for good.

The town was chartered in February 1867. By 1990 it had some 200 residents, about half its peak population in 1880. Though technically it is still incorporated, this status has long been inactive.

Lock Number One, four miles up the Kentucky River, had its own post office, in this name, between February 3, 1845 and mid April of the following year. Alexander H. Lothrop alone served as postmaster. The lock and dam, still visible at the southern tip of the General Butler State Park, was built in 1838/9 by the Darling Brothers Construction Company.

Just north of Eagle Creek, a mile above the Kentucky River, the present sixth class city of Worthville was a busy late nineteenth century trade and railroad town. The site had been settled at least by the 1840s and may early have been called Coonskin, for one or more local storekeepers are said to have willingly accepted skins in place of scarce money as payment for merchandise. On November 18, 1847 the local post office was established by Lewis V. Fleming, postmaster, and named Worthville for New York-born General William Jenkins Worth (1794-1849), a career army officer who had achieved some fame in the Mexican War.

The Worthville post office closed in October 1861 but reopened in July 1867 with the coming of the LC&L Railway that year. The town was incorporated in March 1878. By the end of the century it had become the principal watering place for all trains of the L&N line between Louisville and Covington and a major shipping point for area farmers. From the beginning till the station closed in the 1960s it was Carrollton's main rail link. In 1905 a nine mile long spur line called the Carrollton and Worthville (or C&W) Railroad was built between the two towns giving Carrollton's commerce easier rail access. Worthville's post office still serves several businesses and its ²⁰⁰⁷ (1990) population of 190.

Somewhere on Mill Creek, probably just above the future Carrollton Station-English, Thomas Piles (or Miles?) maintained the Mill Creek post office between September 27, 1847 and June 1851. It was on the creek for which it was named and on the road paralleling it which linked New Castle and Carrollton. The creek whose East and West Forks head in Henry County may have been named for William Hord's

mill, and was identified by name on Mordicai Hord's 600 acre tract surveyed in 1784.

On June 9, 1851 storekeeper James F. Sandefer established the Sandefer's Store post office probably on the road that became a part of the present Ky 55 between New Castle and Carrollton, eight miles from the latter, and about a mile and ^ahalf from the Trimble County line. After an intermittent operation it closed in June 1873.

Another station on the LC&L was given the name of the creek along which the rail line extended for much of its route through southern Carroll and Gallatin counties. The settlement around Johnson's Mill may be traced to the mid 1840s but received its name Eagle Station only with the coming of the railroad in 1867. The post office, with John McDarment, its first postmaster, operated between August 29, 1870 and 1964, The station closed just before the Second World War, and only a store and the Jordan Baptist Church in the vicinity of the junction of Ky 36 and 467, twelve miles southeast of Carrollton, remain.

English, the fourth station on the LC&L to have its own post office, was established as Carrollton Station. A mile and a half up Mill Creek from the Kentucky River and $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles sse of Carrollton, this was renamed when the post office was established on August 2, 1876 (with William L. Miles, postmaster) for Capt. James Whorton English (1794-1861), an early owner of the site. By the early 1880s the station and village around it had assumed the post office name. The office closed in 1975.

Named for its site at the forks of Locust Creek and six miles wnw of Carrollton (via Ky 36 and 1492) was the Locust post office.

This office, established in postmaster James G. Mosgrove's store, operated from March 17, 1879 through September 1903, serving a school, a church, a couple of mills, and some other businesses. Two churches survive. According to a 1797 survey, Locust Creek, so named by that time for the local trees, was first called Battle Creek.⁹

On McCools Creek, some three miles sse of Ghent, was the Tandy post office. According to postmaster-designate Thomas J. Penn's Site Location Report of June 24, 1882, it would serve a community called Rockville, though then-contemporary maps identified the site, with one store, as Shoofly. The office, operating from July 7, 1882 through June 1903, was named for Penn's wife's family, descendants of John or Roger Tandy, who had settled near the head of Whites Run, a short distance south. Nothing remains at the Tandy-Shoofly site, and current state maps mistakenly place it 1½ miles east of where it actually was.

The Easterday family gave its name to the post office and cross-roads community on the present Ky 36, 6½ miles east of Carrollton. Here, at what became the Lower Whites Run Baptist Church, Lewis Easterday lived until his death in 1826. The Easterday [ees/tər/dee] post office opened on April 22, 1890, with Silas L. Craig, postmaster, to serve a mill, store, school, and the church. Craig was succeeded two years later by storekeeper James W. Easterday. The office closed in mid June 1903.

The post office of Adcock may have been on or near the present Ky 55, a mile or so north of the older Sandefer's Store. According to the March 12, 1894 Site Location Report of its first postmaster, George Woodson Adcock (1832-1907), this was then known as Jackson's

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Spring, for a local family. Sometime earlier, Otis Dunaway had applied for a post office here to be called Dunaway or, possibly, Jackson Spring, but he soon abandoned this effort and moved away. Adcock's first choice of Jackson's Spring (by 1894 too long and cumbersome a name for a U.S. post office) was replaced by his own family's name. The Adcock post office operated from May 10, 1894 through February 1903.

Of Carroll's twenty post offices, only three are active. These--Carrollton, Sanders, and Worthville--serve three of the county's four currently incorporated towns. The fourth, Ghent, has a community post office. A fifth town, Prestonville, may technically still be incorporated but this has long been inactive. Seven Carroll County offices served viable villages at one time or other. The immediate vicinity of Sanders had five post offices before Liberty Station gave way to its present name, but we have arbitrarily considered these separate post offices.

Five offices were named for local people, and four others honored non-locals. Local geography accounted for one name. A distant place was the name source for another while to six Carroll County offices were transferred the names of nearby features (four streams, an estate, and a lock and dam). One office was named for a local mill. Two name origins are not known.

Three offices had names that were not those first chosen for them. Three served places with other names. Three had name changes.

1. Mary Ann Gentry, History of Carroll County, Ky. 1984, P. 5
2. No Porters are listed among the early town trustees nor in any deeds for the first twenty years of the town's existence. In fact, no Porters are listed among Kentucky's landholders between 1787 and 1811.
3. Kentucky is one of at least eight states with a Carroll County and a town named Carrollton, both attributed to Maryland's Charles Carroll. Others are Georgia, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, Mississippi, Maryland, and Arkansas. Illinois' Carrollton, however, is not in its Carroll County. New Hampshire and Virginia have Carroll Counties but no Carrolltons. Iowa's Carroll County seat is simply Carroll..
4. Covington Journal, February 4, 1871, P. 2:4
5. One might ask if Benjamin Winslow Dudley (1785-1870), the famed Lexington surgeon, who, like the Sanders family, came from Spottsylvania County, Virginia, could have been the Dudley post office name source. He was well regarded throughout the Commonwealth for his pioneering efforts in antiseptic surgery.
6. Some say Carson was suggested by then Congressman Albert Barry's secretary. (One Hundredth Anniversary edition of the News-Democrat, October 12, 1967, P. 20:5)
7. I do not have an explanation for the soft g in the pronunciation of the Carroll County town's name when the Belgian Ghent has always been pronounced with the hard g.
8. As far as we know, the name Wide-awake was only applied to the post office.

REFERENCES

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2. Carrollton News-Democrat, Bicentennial Issue, February 21, 1974 (passim)
3. Gentry, Aileen Pierce, Old Port William--Founders and Foundations, 1961, manuscript in the Carroll County vertical files of the Kentucky Historical Society Library.
4. Gentry, Mary Ann, History of Carroll County, Madison, Ind., 1984
5. Gray, Gypsy M. History of Gallatin County, Ky, Covington, 1968
6. Masterson, Mary, comp. Historic Carroll County, Carrollton: Carroll County Chamber of Commerce, n.d. (ca. 1975/6)
7. Masterson, Mary, Carrollton, Ky. interviewed by the writer on May 20, 1978
8. Kentucky's Historic Farms, Paducah: Turner Pub. Co. 1994, P. 243
9. News-Democrat of Carrollton, 100th Anniversary Edition, October 12, 1967 (passim)
10. Parker, Anna V. "A Short History of Carroll County" Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, Vol.57, January 1959, Pp. 35-48
11. Ibid., The Sanders Family of Grass Hills, Madison, Ind., 1966
12. Rennick, Robert M. Kentucky Place Names, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984
13. United States Post Office Dep't. Site Location Reports--Carroll County, Ky. Post Offices, National Archives (Washington, DC)