THE POST OFFICES OF GRANT COUNTY

In 1819 William Littell was elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives on the promise to some of his Pendleton County neighbors that he would help get them a new county. Thus, on the first day of the 1820 legislative session he introduced a bill to that effect, lobbied to see it through, and, on February 12, 1820, won the hearts of his constituents when Grant became Kentucky's sixty seventh county. But that was not the end of it. In 1827 ten square miles of Harrison and Scott Counties were added to Grant; Campbell yielded some territory in 1831; Harrison County donated another twelve square miles in 1833; and Boone County added ten more square miles in 1820. Finally, in February 1876, Grant assumed its present 260 square mile territory with the addition of ten more square miles from Owen County.

Historians have never been sure for whom the new county was named. It could have been for Col. John Grant (1754-1826), pioneer Licking Valley saltmaker; his brother Samuel (1762-1794), a surveyor killed by the Indians in Indiana, probably in 1794; or another brother, Squire (1764-1833), a large Campbell County landowner and close personal friend of Rep. Littell. Or, perhaps, for all three. Quite unlikely was the name derived from any facetious response by fellow legislators to Littell's tenacious efforts to get them to grant him his new county.[1]

The county's eastern section is drained by several Licking River branches, notably Grassy, Fork Lick, and Crooked Creeks. Its western area is watered by part of the eighty mile long Eagle Creek, joining the Kentucky River in Carroll County, and major tributaries--Ten

Mile, Clarks, Stevens, Rattlesnake, and Three Forks Creeks. The aptly named Dry Ridge divides the two watersheds.

Williamstown, the county's seat and the largest of its four cities, lies on the Dry Ridge, some forty seven miles north of downtown Lexington and thirty seven miles south of downtown Covington (via US 25). The 1990 Census counted nearly 16,000 Grant County residents.

Most of the post office discussed below will be located by road miles from the junction of US 25 and Ky 22 in downtown Williamstown.

The fifth class city of Williamstown, with a 1990 population of some 3,000, may be at or near the site of James Littell's Station, established in the 1790s. Soon after his arrival in 1795, William Arnold, a New Jersey-born Revolutionary and Indian Wars veteran, acquired much of this land and initiated its settlement. By July 1809 it is said to have had its first post office, called Arnold's, with Thomas Wilson, postmaster. This was still in operation by 1813 but may have closed shortly thereafter.

On June 12, 1820, after considering several sites, a commission accepted Arnold's generous offer of twenty five acres for the new county's seat. The town established here was to be called Philladelphia, possibly at the suggestion of William Woodyard, a resident, and one of the county's first magistrates. But as this name was already in use in Kentucky, the new town was called Williamstown instead. Arnold, who had helped lay off the town and was one of its first trustees, as well as the new county's first sheriff, was most likely its name source. But one cannot entirely rule out the possibility that the town had two name sources—Arnold

and his friend and neighbor, Mr. Woodyard. Meanwhile, the post office was re-established, also as <u>Arnold</u>, on March 9, 1820, with William Hegan, postmaster, but closed before the end of the year. It opened again, on February 2, 1822, as <u>Williamstown Court House</u> with Arnold's son-in-law Wesley Tully as the new postmaster. But soon it became simply <u>Williamstown</u>.

<u>Dry Ridge</u> is the name applied to both the north-south divide between the Licking and Eagle Creek drainage systems and Grant's second largest community. This fifth class city, with a 1990 population of 1,600, extends for 3½ miles along Ky 22 from Williamstown's northern limits to a point 1½ miles west of I-75. The county's first settlement (1791) was at <u>Campbell's Block House</u>, just within Dry Ridge's southern city limits.

The ridge is said to have been named by early drovers who followed its crest, an old buffalo route and later Indian trail between the Bluegrass and the Ohio River. They found that the absence of floodable streams facilitated transit but also made it difficult to find sufficient water for their stock. At one of several overnight stops on the ridge where stock could be accommodated, the area's first post office was established. On July 1, 1815, G.P. Koulat (or Koolat) was appointed the first postmaster of <u>Dry Ridge</u>. The town that grew up around this office, however, awaited the arrival of the Cincinnati Southern Railway in 1876 to develop into an important mill town, rail shipping point, and retail trade center.[2].

The discovery of sulphur springs in 1908 led to a tourist boom for the town, attracting people from all over the region to its healing waters. One of the hotels built to accommodate the visitors

was the Carlsbad which was probably named for the famed Czech resort town now known as Karlovy Vary. A change in the city's name to Carlsbad in 1811 was shortlived when it was learned that the post office would not be allowed to use this name. In 1925 the hotel burned, and by the late 1930s the springs had all but dried up.

The pioneer Stewart family gave its name to a shortlived Stewartsville post office whose location is as yet unknown. Their descents later named a longer lived post office on the present Ky 36, nearly six miles west of Williamstown. The first office was established in January 1817 by Robert D. Stewart but did not last the year. The second Stewartsville operated from February 20, 1867 through September 1906 with William R. Wolf the first of its four postmasters. Daniel Stewart was the last.

On September 19, 1820 Williams Sanders, one of three brothers who settled on the ridge in the northern part of the county before 1800, established there the Sanders post office. Within a few years it had been joined by Charles Sechrist's tavern, a carding mill, and a church. Meanwhile, about a mile south (along the present US 25, between Ky 491 and the Mt. Zion Road), another settlement called The Wells, with a tanyard, a sawmill, and several more taverns, had grown up around two large wells. In 1829 John W. Fenley, who owned the sawmill, acquired some 400 acres of Sanders' land and, in 1831, assumed the operation of the Sanders post office. In 1834, when storekeeper Samuel F. Singleton became postmaster, the office was renamed Crittenden at the suggestion of Fenley's wife Mary Ann (nee Robinson) for the popular Kentucky politician John J. Crittenden (1786-1863) who was later to serve as the state's fifteenth governor.

By this time a town had been laid out and it was incorporated in January 1839 as <u>Crittenden</u>. Today the fifth class city of <u>Crittenden</u> extends for about a mile along US 25 (Ky 491), less than a mile from the Kenton County line and ten miles north of Williamstown. Its post office still serves some 730 residents and their rural neighbors.[3]

Grant County may have had a post office called <u>Cherokee Creek</u> whose location is unknown and whose very existence is only evidenced by its entry in an old POst Office Register. As stated therein, it was established on December 11, 1830 with Jesse Coulson, postmaster, closed in less than a month, but re-opened on January 13, 1831 with Sol C. Perrin, postmaster. There is no more mention of it in postal records. Nor is there any known stream for which it might have been named. Coulson has been identified in Grant County's 1830 Census, and Perrin then lived in the Licking Precinct of Harrison County.

Almost as elusive was another shortlived post office called <u>Foot of the Ridge</u>. Probably referring to the Dry Ridge, this is known to have been established in Scott County on March 18, 1840 with John Jones, postmaster. He was succeeded in early February 1841 by Lewis C. Baker who had the office moved to somewhere in Grant County where it operated only through July.

<u>Downingsville</u> was a small nineteenth century community centered at John Downing's store where the present Ky 36 crosses Eagle Creek, 11¼ miles west of Williamstown. A month after it was established as a town on January 12, 1844, <u>Downingtown</u>'s post office opened with Lewis Hopper as postmaster. It closed after only six months but was re-established on January 20, 1846 with Chapman S. Coleman, post-

master, and operated only through that year. When George Rennacker re-established it again, on March 8, 1847, he called it Johnson's, probably for James A. Johnson, a resident. In mid December 1848 storekeeper Presley F. Hansbrough, who had by then become postmaster, had the office renamed Downingsville. It continued, albeit intermittently, till it was closed for good at the end of June 1909. Nothing marks the site today.

Jeremiah Morgan is said to have settled on Crooked Creek around 1820 where he soon opened a store. By the late 1840s, William Webb had a tavern there on what was then, as now, the main road to Cynthiana. Samuel W. Moore established the local post office as Cordova [kȧhr/doh/və]. Two theories of its name origin have been offered. It may have been named by Jane Webb for a Mexican town she had heard about from returning Mexican War veterans. Less likely was it named by a visiting Mexican for his home town. In the late nineteenth century this small village had at least three stores, a sawmill, creamery, leather shop, church, and school. The post office closed in April 1906, but the local store on Ky 36 still serves a number of homes in the southeast corner of the county.

The post office called Stateley's Run is still an enigma to Grant Countians. It is known to have been established on January 21, 1854 with storekeeper, William P. Parrish, its first postmaster. In May 1868, three years before it closed, then postmaster William A. Ashcraft, in his Site Location Report, located it one mile west of Arnolds Creek, a branch of Ten Mile, 3½ road miles east of the Eagle Hill post office in Owen County, and five road miles north of Downingsville. Could the stream to which it undoubtedly refers have

been what is shown on recent maps as Statlers Run? If so, could the post office have been on the present Fords Mill Road? Could Stateley have been a corruption of Statler? Or vice versa? No families of either name are mentioned in nineteenth century county records. Stately Run (sic) was also an early name for the Flat Creek Precinct, organized in 1864 in the northwestern part of the county.

The village now called Mason extends along US 25 and the Norfolk Southern Railway tracks for 1½ miles from Rt. 1933 to a point 4½ miles south of Williamstown. The vicinity was settled around 1800 by James Gouge and his brother who, at least by 1814, were running a tavern and stage stop called Gouge's [ghow/dja̯z] at the southern end of the present community. This name was also given to the local post office established on July 26, 1855, probably in John A. Turner's store, with Henry L. Brown, postmaster. Turner himself took over the office four months later and ran it till September 1861. He reassumed this position in 1868. In 1876 the Cincinnati Southern Railway built a station there, also calling it Gouge's or Turner's Station. In October of the following year Turner's successor, John Daugherty, renamed the station and post office Mason possibly for one of the railroad's contractors or for William Beverly Mason, the county surveyor (or both, or neither). By the end of the century, like other stations on this route, Mason had become an important milltown and shipping point for area tobacco, livestock, and timber, and as many as 500 families were being served by its post office. Though the office recently closed, Mason still has several businesses, a couple of churches, and one of the county's consolidated elementary schools.

Another of Kentucky's two-county communities, <u>Jonesville</u>, was earlier called <u>Macedonia</u> and, possibly, <u>Nonsuch</u> (sic). On Ky 36, at the Owen County line, the community developed around the Macedonia Church, organized in 1843. Its first post office, as <u>Macedonia</u>, was established in Grant County on August 5, 1858 with Nathan Stewart, postmaster. It closed in mid August 1866. Shortly thereafter the community became <u>Jonesville</u>, allegedly for the seven Jones families who had recently moved into the Owen County part of the area. The post office too took this name when it was re-established on August 7, 1877, with William L. Mefford, postmaster. Till now, when it is barely within the Grant County side of the line, the office has occupied sites in both counties. The Grant County section was briefly incorporated in the early twentieth century, and remains the commercial center of town.

<u>Hard Scrabble</u>, considered as unlikely a name for a community or post office as you can find, was actually applied to two shortlived Kentucky post offices. One was in Daviess County (1852-1854) and the other was in Grant. The latter was operated from June 20, 1860 through 1861, by George Mozee in his store on the old Covington-Lexington Road, just east of the junction of the present US 25 and Ky 36, three miles south of downtown Wiliamstown. The aptly applied name is said to have testified to the difficulty in making a living in those early days of the Civil War. Shortly after the close of the post office, George W. Hill acquired the store he called <u>Cherry Grove</u> for the local trees. But it wasn't until some years after the railroad arrived in 1876 that James L. Atkinson re-opened the post offices as <u>Cherry Grove</u> in a building 150 yards east of the tracks

where it served a store, grist mill, distillery, and tavern from April 16, 1891 till mid October 1906.

Another drovers' stop on the Dry Ridge was Louis Myers' tavern sometimes called "The Old Drover's House." By the early 1850s W.L. Collins had a store here which soon became the focus of a small community. Its post office, established on May 18, 1865 with Hayden Kendall, postmaster, was named <u>Sherman</u> but no one knows why. Since most of the area's people had been sympathetic to the Confederate cause it is doubtful that it was named for William T. A possible alternative was Gen'l. Sidney Sherman (1805-1873), one of the heroes of the Texas War for Independence, who later served the Confederate cause in that state, but who earlier had been a northern Kentucky resident. As with its neighbors, Crittenden, three miles north, and Dry Ridge, four miles south, its economic development, with stores, mills, tobacco warehouses, and a hotel, followed the arrival of the railroad in 1876. After an intermittent existence its post office closed in October 1969.

The sixth class city of <u>Corinth</u> is one of only two in Kentucky whose corporate boundaries extend into three counties. However, nearly all of its 1̶9̶7̶ residents (1̶9̶9̶0̶ Census) and most of its institutions are in Grant County. Until 1876, when the railroad came through, this site was part of the ten square miles of southwest Grant County that were taken from Owen.

<u>Corinth</u> is now centered at the junction of US 25 and Ky 330, a mile and a half east of I-75, and $10\frac{1}{4}$ miles south of Williamstown. Like most of the other towns on the Ridge it had been an early stage stop between the Bluegrass and Covington that did not really develop

until the railroad came. It is not known when the Corinth name was first applied to the community, but its post office was established on October 22, 1868 as Corinth with David W. Williams, postmaster. And by Corinth it was incorporated in March 1878. It was undoubtedly named for the local Corinth Christian Church, one of many in this country that had been named for the ancient Greek city to whose early Christians St. Paul wrote two memorable letters. The railroad station at Grant County's Corinth may first have been called Mullinixville for William L. Mullinix, the postmaster when the railroad arrived and its first resident agent.

Clarks Creek, an Eagle Creek branch, was named for a pioneer settler. It gave its name, in turn, to a post office where the creek is now crossed by Clark's Road, 10 3/4 miles wnw of Williamstown. Here it served a country store and church between December 1, 1868 and August 1898. Abraham W. Stone was its first postmaster. Only the church remains.

In 1827, on land provided by John Franks, a Michigan-born fur trader, the Mount Zion Baptist Church was organized. Growing up around it was the small rural village of Mt. Zion. Its post office was first operated by Benjamin F. Tomlin between July 5, 1869 and March 1871. It was re-established by Daniel A. Franks on August 24, 1889 and continued, with him and Edward Green as postmasters, till mid December 1913. Today Mt. Zion, centering at the juntion of Rts. 1942 and 2942, 11½ miles nnw of Williamstown, still has a couple of businesses and its church.

One of the many nineteenth century mills on Eagle Creek was the one that gave rise to the New Eagle Mills post office at the mouth

of Clarks Creek, eleven miles west of Williamstown. This may have been at or near the site of John Weather's mill dating from the early 1810s that, in 1868, was acquired by John A. Collins. Collins and his sons rebuilt the mill (hence it was new), opened a nearby store, and started the post office. Robert A. Blackburn was listed as its first postmaster when the office opened on May 27, 1870. Later the mill was run by the family of Thomas Pettit who also ran the post office till it closed in mid February 1905. Nothing there now.

However, the first Eagle Mills, as such, may have been at the mouth of Arnolds Creek, which joins Ten Mile Creek (an Eagle Creek tributary) just above the future Elliston. This mill was established before 1820 and may also have been called Down's Mill just before the Civil War.

Elliston, one of Grant's two stations on the old Louisville Cincinnati and Lexington (later L&N) Railroad, was 16½ miles northwest of Williamstown. It was established as Elliston Station in 1868 and named for the local descendants of Benjamin Elliston (1770-1846), the Virginia-born son of Robert Elliston, who settled on Ten Mile in 1813. William P. Elliston is known to have run the local store and tavern just before the Civil War. The post office was established as Elliston on May 31, 1870 with Robert Southward, postmaster, and operated till June 1976.

Grant's other LCL station was Zion Station, three miles wnw of Mt. Zion, which it served and to which its name referred. It was 14½ miles northwest of Williamstown. This name was retained by the railroad between 1868 and 1930 when the station closed, and by the local post office from May 21, 1871, when it was established, with

William P. Conyers, postmaster, through May 1852. Though local people had always called it simply <u>Zion</u>, the Post Office Department insisted on <u>Zion Station</u> to avoid the misdirection of mail to the <u>Zion</u> post office in Henderson County. The area has always been the <u>Zion Voting Precinct</u> and the local school was <u>Zion</u>. In 1962 the U.S Board on Geographic Names authorized the continuation of <u>Zion Station</u> for what remained of the small rural community.

On May 15, 1876 Allen Holbrook established the <u>Holbrook</u> post office on the present Ky 22, half a mile from the Owen County line and 12½ miles wsw of Williamstown. Though the office closed in November 1906 the store continues to serve the Bethany Church and half a dozen local homes and the surrounding rural neighborhood.

Before the post office of <u>Flingsville</u> was established on June 2, 1876, this small community on the present Ky 491, twelve miles north of Williamstown, may have been called <u>Newtown</u>. Several families descended from Grant County pioneer settler Jacob New of Virginia may have been its name source. The Flings were another local family, one of whom, George W. (1854-1932), was the local storekeeper and the first and last of the several postmasters. The office closed in mid June 1907.

At least one of the county's several Lawrence families undoubtedly gave its name to the <u>Lawrenceville</u> post office when the community found its earlier name <u>Cross Roads</u> already in use for a Jefferson County post office. A Mr. Mozee started the post office on June 7, 1876 to serve a couple of stores at the intersection of the present Rts 1993 and 1995, 8½ miles southwest of Williamstown. The office closed in September 1906.

Another of Grant County's enigmas is <u>Leniton</u>. This post office served Rolla A. Hightower's country store between February 6, 1884 and October 1888. It was probably on the old Cynthiana Road, five miles southeast of Williamstown and half a mile west of Fork Lick Creek, just short of the Pendleton County line. Hightower was its only postmaster. Local historians have never heard of the place though it does appear on some late nineteenth century postal and railroad maps. Its name origin and precise location remain unknown.

Daniel Moody Hall had a store at the junction of the present Rts. 1995 and 2937, at the east end of Chipman Ridge, and 4 3/4 miles southwest of Williamstown. The local settlement which also had a sawmill and, later, two tobacco warehouses and several other businesses, may have been called <u>Hallsville</u>. On November 1, 1887 Hall opened a post office, but unable to call it <u>Hallsville</u> he named it <u>Heekin</u> for a company in Cincinnati that is said to have supplied his store. Hall and Henry H. Stith ran the office till it closed in June 1903. Only the Mt. Olivet Church and some nearby homes now mark the site.

The small village of <u>Keefer</u> and the area around it were, like Corinth, in the ten square miles transferred from Owen to Grant County in 1876. The vicinity, settled before 1820 around a salt spring, was first called <u>Priceburg</u> for John Price the first local storekeeper. This name continued to identify the community till its post office was established on May 15, 1889 by then local storekeeper Dr.Jasper Newton Alexander. Alexander's preferred name <u>Alma</u> was not approved by the postal authorities and <u>Keefer</u> was given to the office instead. Some say this was derived from <u>Kieffer</u>, the name of a variety

of pears that still grows there. Others recall a local Kiefer family and note that the original spelling of the place's name was <u>Kiefer</u>. What remains of the community is on the present Rt. 2936, 11½ miles ssw of Williamstown.

Where Ky 22 crosses Clarks Creek, nine miles wnw of Williamstown, John W. Johnson, the local sawmill operator, established a post office and named it <u>Delia</u> for his wife, the former Miss Williams. The office wss in operation from April 8, 1890 through June 1903, serving a store and mill. Only homes are there now.

Gustave Bouscaren supervised the construction of the Cincinnati Southern Railroad through the county. Some two miles north of Corinth, near his own home, he located a station he named <u>Blanchett</u> for Hyacinth L.D. Blanchett. Around 1847 the latter, a New Jersey native of French descent, had settled on some 2,500 acres including the site of the station he later deeded to the railroad. The <u>Blanchett</u> post office served the station and little else between November 28, 1891 and April 1907. Albert S. Black was the first postmaster, and Blanchett himself served in this capacity from January 1898 till April 1906.

A hamlet at the junction of the present Ky 467 and 1132, fourteen miles northwest of Williamstown, was first called <u>Lawrenceburg</u> for a large family that lived there before the Civil War. On November 15, 1893 L. Charles Bradley established the local post office. Unable to call it <u>Ruth</u>, his preference, he named it <u>Folsom</u> for Frances Folsom (1864-1947), the wife of then U.S. President Grover Cleveland. Until the office closed at the end of February 1916, the community it served had a couple of stores, a mill, a school, and

the Vine Run Baptist Church. Some homes and the church on Ky 467 survive.

The <u>Hanks</u> post office on Ky 467, 12¼ miles northwest of Williamstown, was undoubtedly named for a family, but it is not known whose. No such families are listed in nineteenth century county records. Actually, its only postmaster, Charles L. Alexander, who ran the office in his store from November 3, 1898 through February 1916, had first proposed the name <u>Blackburn</u> for one or more area families or, possibly, for W.T.S. Blackburn, then postmaster of Dry Ridge. Only a communications tower on the west side of the road now marks the site.

<u>Goldvalley</u>, the name applied to the last of Grant County's post offices, may or may not have been derived from any shortlived and unsuccessful gold mining activity in that vicinity. This traditional belief has been discounted by contemporary area historians. The local road, Golds Valley, suggests a family name, but no such families have been found in county records. Anyway, the office was operated by Nathan W. Stewart (only) from May 18, 1903 through March 1912, and served three groceries, a grist mill, a school, and the Concord Baptist Chucrh, some 15½ miles west of Williamstown. The church alone remains.

Only five (Williamstown, Dry Ridge, Crittenden, Corinth, and Jonesville) of Grant County's thirty three post offices still operate. The first four serve incorporated places. Only twelve offices ever served villages of any significance while the rest were the foci of rural neighborhoods with only a store or two and a church.

Twelve offices were named for local or area people. Famous non-locals accounted for two more. Two office names had geographic or descriptive significance. One office was named for a distant place, while to five others were transferred the names of nearby features (three churches, a creek, and a community). A local industry and an out-of-state business gave their names to two more offices. A sense of humor in a time of adversity accounted for Hardscrabble. Two possible origins (a local family or a variety of fruit) may have been the derivation of Keefer. Six names are as yet unexplained. Four offices have not been precisely located.

The names of four post offices were not those first proposed for them. Four served communities with other names. Four had name-changes.

FOOTNOTES

1. Grant County's first historian, Robert H. Elliston, who in 1876 recalled the story of the facetious response didn't really accept it at face value. He was partial to Squire Grant as the county's name source on the basis of Littell's personal friendship with him.

2. From January to November 1855, John A. Collins maintained the post office in his store calling both Collins Store.

3. For a time in the 1830s Crittenden had one or more tobacco houses that are said to have given rise to its nickname Pinhook. According to local tradition, a carpenter named Grooms had a special grievance against tobacco speculators, calling them "pinhookers". If this is so, as suggested by Lloyd W. Franks,

in his essay on Crittenden in the 1992 Grant County history (P. 214), the term "pinhook" and the several place names derived from it may be older than has generally been assumed. According to Mr. Franks, Grooms had complained that local tobacco speculators "were so greedy and dishonest they would 'hook a pin'" (that is, steal). Robert Elliston, the nineteenth century county historian, also recalled Mr. Grooms and the Pinhook name. (See my article "Pinhook as a Place Name in Indiana and Kentucky" in Midwestern Journal of Language and Folklore, Vol. XII (1), Spring 1986, Pp. 38-42).

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