

Early Calloway County Roads, Towns, and Postoffices¹

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Before discussing some of the early towns and postoffices in the county perhaps it would be helpful to understand how and why they were so named. These names usually derive from either a genealogical, historical, or topographical pattern.

If a town or postoffice name is derived genealogically, it may be named for some generation connected with the postmaster's family. Examples of local postoffices that have been established, although some are no longer active, are Stella, Daisey, Ada, Welona, and Hazel, named for female members of the family. Wetzel, a location on the waters of Rockhouse Creek, was named for the middle name of the postmaster, Louis Wetzel Ross. Colon may be an aberration of the first name of the postmaster's wife, Colonia Miller, or a son Colon, or a daughter Colony. Also, Wadesboro was named for the Wade family.

Historically, area locales such as New Concord, Shiloh, Van Buren, and Itry were named for some historical place, saying, or event.

Some county examples of topographical naming are Pine Bluff, Linn's Grove, Cook's Valley, Clarks River, and Cedar Grove. The location or landscape provided the incentive for the town or postoffice name.

Land deeds of the postmaster, tax lists, marriage records, and census rolls are sources to search for clues of names of early postoffices and towns.

In the Jackson Purchase, the first road of record (see Court Records of Hickman County) was begun in 1820. Beginning at a point (south of the current Kenlake Hotel) on the Tennessee River and running westward to Wadesboro, then Mayfield, this road terminated at Columbus on the Mississippi. Other roads entered the county from Tennessee. An early road ran southwest from Wadesboro through Feliciana in Graves County, and terminated at Mills Point. Known also as the Wadesboro to Dresden, Tennessee, route, this route avoided lowlands as much as possible, which was an advantage to early residents. Most other routes to the Mississippi were hazardous during bad weather.

The road extending southeast from Wadesboro via Bellegrade and Humility (New Concord) reached Mouth of Sandy, Henry County, Tennessee, a junction on the four-horse stage coach route that ran from Memphis to Louisville. As early as 1834 mail traversed the route by horseback or one-two horse sulkies. A weekly service was provided. Humility postoffice was established March 1, 1833.

In 1834 a contract was awarded for a mail route which began at Wadesboro and extended west via Brema (Brewers), Mayfield, Rush Creek, Clinton, and Columbus, but also was extended to Benton, Missouri, for a total distance of ninety-six miles. Since the contractor

was not required to maintain an hourly rate of speed the mode of transportation was not designated. This was once-a-week service but the Invitation for Bids contained a requirement for daily service to Columbus if the Ohio River was frozen over. Another requirement the contract contained was that it was understood by the contractor that if the schedule could not be maintained, the postmaster concerned could exercise his own judgment in seeing that the mail reached its destination. The contractor was penalized for non-compliance.

Other mail routes were controlled along the same rules until the advent of the four-horse stagecoach. The four-horse route contracts contained more stringent specifications. Roads being suitable for travel, the four-horse coaches were required to maintain a speed of five miles per hour eight months of the year, four miles per hour the remaining months of the year. This compensated the contractor for unfavorable weather. Contractors were often penalized for failure to maintain required schedules. Passengers were inconvenienced by these failures.

Records searched by this writer do not verify the date four-horse stagecoaches began traveling the roads of Calloway County. However, postmasters at Paducah and Paris, Tennessee, certified that tri-weekly service over that route started April 17, 1840. The contract was awarded to the low bidder, a Mr. Cobb, for one year at a price of \$8,800.00. The route had stops at McGowan, Chittenden, Williston, and Wadesboro.

Competition soon entered the scene and the postoffice department awarded a second contract for the transportation of mail by four-horse coach. This route was a spur of the Reynoldsburg, Dickson County, Tennessee, to Mills Point line which began at Paris, continued via McGowan to Humility with alternate stops at Locust Grove — Cherry Corner, Calloway County, and terminated at Aurora.

This also was a tri-weekly service which was certified as being in operation July 6, 1841. Four-horse coaches also carried passengers and mail on these routes but according to information contained in the Invitations for Bid mail was not carried by four-horse coach until the Paris-Paducah route was established. No attempt to cover stage coach lines after 1841 is made at this time.²

1. This is a continuation and summation of the latter portion of Mr. Tucker's article, "Sounds of Callowayland," in Vol. I (June 1973) of this *Journal*. —Editor.

2. Routes as mentioned in this article may be traced on the accompanying map. Although it is not accurately scaled, it is drawn from information contained in Invitation to Bid Postal Routes, Calloway County, 1834-1844. Also it is adapted from maps of Calloway County dated 1831 and 1846, an old map at the University of Kentucky, and the Burr Atlas of 1839.



