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DANVILLE WAS THE FIRST POST OFFICE ESTABLISHED IN KENTUCKY AND IN THE TERRITORY BEYOND THE ALLEGHENIES

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The thrift and homely wisdom of "Poor Richard" contributed in a marked degree to the establishment upon a sure foundation of the American postal service. Benjamin Franklin is listed as the first Postmaster General. The revenues of this department of the Government for one year, 1939, reached a total in round numbers of three quarters of a billion dollars.

Beyond any material sense of achievement, however, one is led to contemplate with admiration the beneficences of this instrumentality eloquently described as follows in the carving above the architrave of the handsome and costly building in the Nation's Capital, from which its far-flung activities radiate:

"The Post Office Department, in its ceaseless labors, pervades every channel of commerce and theater of human enterprise, and, while visiting as it does kindly every fireside, mingles with the throbbings of almost every human heart in the land. In the amplitude of its beneficence, it ministers to all climes and creeds and pursuits with the same eager readiness and with equal fullness of fidelity. It is the delicate ear trump through which alike nations and families and isolated individuals whisper their joys and their sorrows, their convictions and their sympathies to all who listen for their coming."

It is deemed safe to assume that the selection of the community for the establishment of the first post office of this governmental agency in the vast territory west of the Alleghenies constitutes an event of historic interest and gives official recognition to the importance of that particular place. It has been so proven. The significance of the selection becomes more marked

when proper consideration is accorded the aptness of Emerson's postulate: "Europe stretches to the Alleghenies; America lies beyond." Now a battle of facts and dates has ensued with reference to priority among claimants to this selection, to bring to a final end of which this recital has been launched.

Swift, in 1607, cleverly depicted what he called the "Battle of Books." In imagination Descartes, Aristotle, Plato and Hobbs, Virgil and Dryden "had been 'clapped together' in the King's Library at St. James." It was a satire upon a sanguinary contest for the truth between the Ancients and Moderns.

In October last year (1939) there came from the press a book styled: *Kentucky, A Guide to the Bluegrass State*. It was compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Kentucky. There has been incorporated in this volume the statement that the first Post Office in Kentucky was located other than at Danville. On page 367 appears the statement, under a narrative devoted to the town of Washington in Mason County, that:

"On Main St. is the clapboarded log building that was the FIRST KENTUCKY POST OFFICE, the distributing point for mail for Kentucky and the Northwest Territory (now the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.)"

The nearest approaches to this contention, it would seem, that have appeared in print were in a local history of Mason County and in a printed address of Judge Charles Kerr. Both bore the modern date of 1936. In G. Glenn Clift's *History of Maysville and Mason County*, Volume 1, page 126, appears this vagrant statement in his treatment of the town of Washington: "Already was its infant post office (the first west of the Alleghenies) serving five States." Judge Kerr delivered a finished oration upon the occasion of the Sesqui-Centennial of the Founding of the Town of Washington. If there was any exuberance of fancy possessing him in his recital of the glories of the place of his nativity, the accuracy in the choice of words that marks a good lawyer and historian (both of which he is) evidently restrained him to the following statement: "As the mail-distributing center for the Northwest, Washington was one of the first towns of importance in Kentucky."

The town of Washington, though several miles back from the Ohio River from Limestone (now Maysville), became eventually what might be called an important port of that river in the migration of the pioneers from Pennsylvania and Virginia. What

was known, however, as the Northwest and the Northwest Territory was across the Ohio River from what was and is known as Kentucky and the Southwest Territory. It is to be noted that Judge Kerr was careful not to state, as the Federal Writers' Project did, that Washington was either the first Kentucky Post Office or a distributing center for mail for Kentucky.

The travel route for the overwhelming number of the immigrants into Kentucky from beyond the Alleghenies, including those from Pennsylvania and Maryland, as well as from Virginia, had been The Wilderness Trail or Road.

Thomas Speed in *The Wilderness Road* (published by The Filson Club in 1886), page 11, refers to a book of personal observations, published in 1792 by Captain Gilbert Imlay, an officer in the Revolutionary War, gained from visits to Kentucky. Speed quotes Imlay as saying:

"Even then (1792) the way from Pittsburg by river was so tedious and dangerous that those who did not carry much baggage found the way 'through the great wilderness' preferable."

Speed said further: "Even as late as 1792, when Imlay wrote, there was no such convenience as a regular business of carrying passengers and their luggage down the Ohio, but at Pittsburg or Old Fort a flat-boat or passenger boat might be obtained, according to the good luck of the traveler."

Speed, on page 27, referring to "The Wilderness Road," again said: "It especially became known as 'the road leading through the great wilderness.' It led directly to Danville, which was the center of the first efforts of State establishment, and the place where the early conventions were all held."

From Kerr's *History of Kentucky* (1922), Volume I, page 286, may be cited the following:

"The settlement of Kentucky began in 1775; statehood was granted in 1792. The number of population requisite for admission as a state set down in the Northwest Ordinance for the territories North of the Ohio had here been exceeded by over 13,000."

From the same source, page 297:

"Many immigrants from Maryland and even as far north as Philadelphia, rather than travel 300 miles to Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh) to brave the dangers of the Ohio, came southward through the Shenandoah Valley to pick up the Wilderness Trail. (Thomas Speed, *The Wilderness Road*, pages 1-47; Speed, *The Political Club, Danville*, pages 21, 22.)" [The Filson Club Publications No. 2 (1886) and No. 9 (1894).] "Virtually all travel back eastward went over this road. During this period, 1775-1792, Danville was the most important road center in Kentucky. The

Wilderness Trail leading directly to this place poured out its stream of settlers to be scattered over the country."

From the foregoing references, it is logical to conclude that Danville would be the natural selection for the first Post Office to be established in Kentucky when the time arrived for such action to be taken. The method of mail communication, prior to that, is vividly described by Kerr in Volume 1, page 298, as follows:

"There were no post roads in Kentucky at this time. Letters from the East were carried by responsible settlers moving westward; letters from Kentucky were often carried across the mountains by the groups that frequently gathered at Crab Orchard in order to make the trip over the Wilderness Trail in greater safety. Notices of the date of departure of these parties were regularly put in the *Kentucky Gazette* (established in 1787) for the purpose of collecting their members as well as for announcing their willingness to carry letters back East. There was always a certain amount of travel back and forth of responsible people on business, as, for example, the Kentucky representatives in the Virginia General Assembly. They offered a safe and convenient way of carrying letters."

It is true that the Federal Writers' Project in its *Guide* gives Danville the credit for being Central Kentucky's first Post Office. The following are excerpts from its recitals about Danville, pages 284-286:

"DANVILLE . . . was founded in 1775. Ten years later the Supreme Court of Virginia made it the seat of government west of the Alleghanys and ordered court buildings erected here. At Danville were held the nine Conventions preceding the admission of the State into the Union. . . . The old Danville Court Square (R) on Main Street, between First and Second Streets, was once Virginia's Western capitol. . . .

"Central Kentucky's FIRST POST OFFICE, established in 1798, occupied the corner of a room in the old house at 310 W. Walnut St. This building, now used as a dwelling, has been weather-boarded and has an addition of a one-story wing. Originally built of hewn logs, the structure was rectangular in plan and a story and a half high. The dormers seem to be part of the original plan. Gen. Thomas Barbee was the first postmaster."

Other dates in said recital may have consideration later, but an official record of the United States Government will now be cited in contradiction of the statement above made that 1798 was the date of the establishment of the Post Office of Danville and in refutation of its preceding statement limiting it as a First Post Office to Central Kentucky.

In 1935 recourse was had to the Post Office Department of the Federal Government at Washington, D. C., for a determination

of the question as to which was the "First Post Office" established in Kentucky. The following letter from the then First Assistant Postmaster General makes it clear that the first Post Office was established at Danville on August 20, 1792, with Thomas Barbee as Postmaster; that it was nearly two years before the Post Office at Harrodsburg was established; and it was more than two years before the Post Offices at the following places were established: Washington, Lexington, Bairdstown (later Bardstown), Bourbontown (later Paris), Frankfort and Louisville.

The order contained in the Postmaster's letter of June 11, 1794, referred to in the letter hereinafter copied, was an order to the Postmaster at Danville to communicate with and deliver the paraphernalia of office to the First Postmasters in the towns therein designated—these offices, as stated, being "established in Kentucky, by order of the Postmaster General's letter of June 11, 1794." The date of this letter, as is evident, is nearly two years subsequent to the establishment of the Post Office of Danville on August 20, 1792.

The archives of the United States Post Office Department show that the Postmasters at the towns listed below rendered their first accounts to the United States Post Office Department on the following respective dates, after having been established in their offices by General Thomas Barbee pursuant to the order to him so to do of the date of June 11, 1794, above mentioned:

Washington, October 1, 1794.

Bourbontown, January 1, 1795.

Lexington, October 1, 1794.

Frankfort, October 1, 1794.

Bairdstown, October 1, 1794.

Louisville, October 1, 1795.

The letter of the then First Assistant Postmaster General, under date of December 2, 1935, cited above, is complete in words and figures, as follows:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

FIRST ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL

Washington, December 2, 1935.

Hon. William J. Price, Danville, Kentucky.

My dear Mr. Price:

In accordance with your request there is enclosed herewith a complete list of postmasters and the dates of their appointments

for the post offices of Danville and Harrodsburg, Kentucky, as shown by the official files of the Department.

The records also show the following offices established in Kentucky, by order of the Postmaster General's letter of June 11, 1794, and the first postmasters.

Washington, Thomas Stoo [or Sloe].

Bourbontown, Thomas Eades.

Lexington, Innes B. Brent.

Frankfort, Daniel Weisiger.

Bairdstown, Benjamin Grayson.

Louisville, Michael Lacassagne.

Sincerely yours,

W. W. HOWES,

First Assistant Postmaster General.

DANVILLE, BOYLE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

[Mercer County was formed in 1785 out of a part of Lincoln County. Boyle County was formed in 1842 out of parts of Mercer and Lincoln counties.] This office was established in Mercer County, August 20, 1792, with Thomas Barbee as postmaster.

Walter E. Strong, July 1, 1795 (1st Returns).

Thomas Barbee, January 1, 1796 (1st Returns).

Ephraim McDowell, July 1, 1799 (1st Returns).

Joseph Hentrick, October 1, 1801 (1st Returns).

John Y. Hiter, July 1, 1805 (1st Returns).

James Birney, April 1, 1808 (1st Returns).

B. H. Perkins, April 1, 1812 (1st Returns).

Daniel Barbee, May 7, 1813 (Appointed).

Charles McIlvoy, April 28, 1829.

David G. Cowan, October 1, 1832.

William S. Williams, July 30, 1833.

James P. Johnson, September 9, 1835.

The office is shown in "Boyle County" July 1, 1842.

Amanda F. Greenwood, March 27, 1844.

Wesley R. Orear, May 29, 1849.

This office was advanced to the "Presidential Grade" Jan. 1, 1856.

Samuel P. Barbee, April 17, 1869.

Joseph S. Linney, March 26, 1873.

James R. Marrs, June 15, 1885.

Sanford D. Van Pelt, January 9, 1890.

George D. Mahan, January 31, 1894.

Edwin B. Linney, January 19, 1898.

W. Logan Wood, March 2, 1914.

Louis E. Rue (Acting), July 1, 1921.

Louis E. Rue, December 22, 1921.

Ben D. Herndon, March 18, 1930.

Henry H. Price (Acting), July 1, 1934.

HARRODSBURG, MERCER COUNTY, KENTUCKY

This office was established under the name "Harrodsburgh" June 11, 1794, with Philip Bush as postmaster.

Henry Palmer, October 1, 1797 (1st Returns).

William Timberlake, January 1, 1799 (1st Returns).

George Marr, October 1, 1799 (1st Returns).

Thomas Essex, April 1, 1802 (1st Returns).

Jacob Eccles, October 1, 1804 (1st Returns).

William McBride, October 1, 1806 (1st Returns).

Joseph McMurtry, March 26, 1813 (Appointed).

Jacob Keller, April 25, 1817.

Andrew Kyle, February 2, 1821.

John G. Doneghy, July 14, 1835.

George T. Whitney, September 7, 1841.

Walter Wheatley, January 4, 1845.

Samuel Wingfield, May 3, 1861.

Mrs. Mollie Carter, March 26, 1866.

This office was advanced to the "Presidential Grade" July 1, 1869.

Edward B. Head, July 6, 1869.

Thomas M. Cardwell, March 31, 1882.

Jamesetta H. Dixon, April 14, 1886.

Orie Smedley, March 20, 1890.

The name of the office was changed to "Harrodsburg" June 16, 1894.

Thomas R. Phelps, June 16, 1894.

James A. Tomlinson, June 14, 1898.

James P. Spilman, February 7, 1907.

John H. Grimes, May 22, 1913.

Mrs. Sue C. Beardsley (Acting), August 16, 1921.

Mrs. Sue C. Beardsley, April 7, 1922.

Willard Gabhart, June 20, 1932.

Since the preparation, on December 2, 1935, of the two foregoing lists of Danville and Harrodsburg postmasters, each town, as is well known, has had another postmaster: Mr. Henry Herbert Price, of Danville, was succeeded by Mr. James H. Bean, and Mr. Willard Gabhart, of Harrodsburg, by Mr. John Hal Grimes.

Recourse again was had in late weeks to the Post Office Department in Washington for additional and more detailed information relative to the first postal service to and in Kentucky. These communications have elicited the following from the Chief Post Office Inspector of the Department, Division of Library, Information and Research, in letters of the dates of July 20, August 3 and August 23, 1940:

"An Act of the United States, approved February 20, 1792, directed that from and after the first day of June, 1792, a post

road be established 'from Richmond, by Columbia, Charlottesville, Staunton, Lexington, Fincastle, Montgomery Court House, Wythe Court House, Abingdon, and Hawkin's Court House, in the territory South of the river Ohio, to Danville in Kentucky.' That Act is the earliest available record of contemplated postal service to Kentucky. . . .

"The records show that under date of August 20, 1792, the Postmaster General forwarded to Thomas Barbee a commission as postmaster at Danville, Kentucky, advising that 'from the information I have received I conclude it will be agreeable to you to accept the office of Postmaster.' Subsequent records show that Thomas Barbee accepted the appointment, but the exact date of the opening of the office is not now available. There is no indication in Post Office Department records of an earlier establishment of a post office in Kentucky.

"An Act of May 8, 1794, established a post road 'from Pittsburg, by Washington in Pennsylvania, West Liberty in Virginia, and Wheeling, on the Ohio, to Limestone and Fort Washington.' Under date of May 19, 1794, the Postmaster General advised William Alexander, postmaster at Lexington, Virginia, that 'pursuant to the new law for the regulation of post roads, I am preparing for the carriage of the mails from Pittsburg down the Ohio to Kentucky and Fort Washington.' He added that as soon as the arrangement was put into operation, the mail would go no farther than Abingdon, where it would turn off to Knoxville.

"Under date of June 11, 1794, the Postmaster General advised Thomas Barbee that the plan to carry a mail 'by the Ohio, from Pittsburg (or rather Wheeling) to Limestone' was nearly ready for execution. The Postmaster General asked Mr. Barbee to hire suitable persons to carry the mail 'from Limestone, by Washington, Bourbon, Lexington, Frankfort, and Harrodsburg, to Danville, and back by the same route, once in two weeks. The service and pay to commence with the arrival of the first mail at Limestone.'

"The records show that under date of June 11, 1794, also, the Postmaster General forwarded circular letters appointing the following postmasters at the places named, in Kentucky: Thomas Sloe, Washington; Thomas Reeder, Bourbon Court House; Daniel Weisiger, Frankfort; Philip Bush (also shown Brush), Harrodsburg; Benjamin Grayson, Bardstown; Michael Lacassagne, Louisville. Under the same date the Postmaster General forwarded a copy of the circular to Thomas Barbee with the request that the name of a person suitable for appointment to the postmastership at Lexington be inserted therein, and that the circular be delivered to the person selected. Records of the First Assistant's office show that Innes B. Brent was the first postmaster at Lexington, and that his first account was as of October 1, 1794. . . .

"Under date of June 20, 1794, the Postmaster General advised Thomas Barbee that 'the mail boats are now ready and the first mails for Kentucky and Fort Washington go hence tomorrow.' The records do not show, however, whether or not the service was commenced on June 21, 1794, as scheduled."

"As you were advised previously, the Postmaster General forwarded a commission as postmaster at Danville, Kentucky, to Thomas Barbee under date of August 20, 1792. The appointment records, on file in the office of the First Assistant Postmaster General, show that Thomas Barbee was the first postmaster at Danville, and that he submitted his first account under date of March 20, 1793.

"The appointment records also show that Benjamin Grayson was the first postmaster at Bardstown, and submitted his first account under date of October 1, 1794; that Daniel Weisiger was the first postmaster at Frankfort, and submitted his first account under date of October 1, 1794; that Philip Bush was the first postmaster at Harrodsburg, and submitted his first account under date of January 1, 1795; that Michael Lacassagne was the first postmaster at Louisville, and submitted his first account under date of January 1, 1795, and that Thomas Sloe was the first postmaster at Washington, and submitted his first account under date of October 1, 1794.

"The appointment records show that Thomas Eades was the first postmaster at Bourbontown, or Paris, and that he submitted his first account under date of January 1, 1795. Other records show that an appointment as postmaster at Bourbon Court House was tendered to Thomas Reeder under date of June 11, 1794. These matters will be given further attention, and you will be advised later. . . .

"You will probably be interested to know that the Act of May 8, 1794, to which reference was made in the letter of July 20, 1940, contains the following paragraph:

"'Provided, That until the Postmaster-General shall have made provision for the regular transportation of the mail from Wheeling to Limestone, the present post-road from Abington to Danville in Kentuckey, shall be continued: and if such provision cannot be made within a reasonable time, then the post-road shall be extended from Danville, to Frankfort and Lexington, and thence to Washington.' "

"Under date of June 11, 1794, the Postmaster General advised Thomas Barbee, at Danville, that he was sending 'the necessary papers for the establishment of post offices at the towns in Kentucky.' The Postmaster General requested Mr. Barbee to forward the papers 'as opportunities shall present.' He also stated that, in case any of the gentlemen named for postmasters should decline, he wished Mr. Barbee to place the office 'in such other hands as you think fit.'

"In the records there appears an entry under date of June 11, 1794, entitled 'Circular.' It is stated in the circular that there are transmitted therewith the papers for the establishment of a post office. The name of the post office is left blank in the copy of the circular; immediately below the circular, however, are entered the names of the men and the places listed in the second full paragraph on page 2 of the letter of this office dated July 20, 1940. Lexington is also listed, but the name of a person for postmaster is not included. A note at the bottom of the circular stated that the letters, and papers for Frankfort, Harrodsburg, Bardstown and Louisville, were sent to Mr. Barbee. The records show that papers were sent on June 14, 1794, to Thomas Sloe of Washington, Thomas Reeder of Bourbon Court House, and _____ of Lexington. The records do not show whether the papers sent on June 14, 1794, were transmitted through Mr. Barbee.

"With reference to the first postmaster at Bourbon Court House, it might be assumed that Thomas Reeder declined to serve, and that the office was placed in the hands of Thomas Eades by Mr. Barbee, since the appointment records show that Thomas Eades was the first postmaster at Bourbontown, or Paris, and that he submitted his first account under date of January 1, 1795."

Dovetailing with the data furnished by these letters is the item in the old *Kentucky Gazette* that the first mail received by this first post office was on November 3, 1792.

The *Gazette* November, 1792, further recites that Thomas Barbee had given notice that the first mail for Kentucky would arrive on said date, the carrier returning East with mail on the following Monday, and that thereafter the service would be on a two-weeks basis. "The records indicate," it was stated in the letter of July 20, 1940, from the Chief Inspector of the Post Office Department, "that the first mail from Staunton for Kentucky was scheduled for October 18, 1792. . . ."

A brief summary of the official letters copied hereinbefore shows that the first Act of Congress establishing a post road to Kentucky bore the date of February 20, 1792, and directed that the mail be routed over the road better known as the "Wilderness Trail" to "Danville in Kentucky"; that not until more than two years had elapsed, namely, May 8, 1794, was there enacted a Bill authorizing a post route by the Ohio River. This was to run from Pittsburgh to Limestone and "Fort Washington" (not Washington, Kentucky); that Thomas Barbee was commissioned as postmaster at Danville under date of August 20, 1792; that the post office at Washington, Kentucky, was not established until

after June 11, 1794, approximately two years following the establishment of the first post office at Danville; that Thomas Sloe, as the first postmaster at Washington, Kentucky, was not commissioned until nearly two years after Thomas Barbee had been commissioned; that Barbee was advised by the Postmaster General, under date of June 11, 1794, that he was sending "the necessary papers for the establishment of post offices at the towns in Kentucky," which towns included Washington; that Barbee was authorized in the letter to forward the papers establishing said offices and appointing said postmasters and was invested with the authority to place the office "in such other hands as you think fit," in the event any of the gentlemen named (including Mr. Sloe) should decline the appointment.

Furthermore, the Act of Congress of May 8, 1794, which authorized the mail route down the Ohio River, contained the additional provision that if the transportation of mail down the Ohio River could not be consummated "within a reasonable time," then "the present post road from Abington to Danville in Kentucky shall be continued: and . . . the post road shall be extended from Danville, to Frankfort and Lexington, and thence to Washington."

Later: "Under date of June 11, 1794, the Postmaster General advised Thomas Barbee that the plan to carry a mail 'by the Ohio, from Pittsburg (or rather Wheeling) to Limestone' was nearly ready for execution. The Postmaster General asked Mr. Barbee to hire suitable persons to carry the mail 'from Limestone, by Washington, Bourbon, Lexington, Frankfort and Harrodsburg, to Danville, and back' by the same route, once in two weeks: The service and pay to commence with the arrival of the first mail at Limestone."

It is evident, therefore, that Washington was not the "First Kentucky Post Office" nor "the distributing point for mail for Kentucky," nor was "its infant post office the first west of the Alleghenies."

It is significant that the Act of Congress of May 8, 1794, providing for mail service by the Ohio route did not mention Washington, Kentucky. It established a post road "on the Ohio, to Limestone and Fort Washington." Limestone was then the name for what later was denominated Maysville. "Washington, sometimes called Fox's Station," says Collins in his *History of Kentucky* (Volume 2, pages 555, 556), "3½ miles S. W. of Maysville . . . the oldest town in [then Bourbon—now] Mason

County, and the county seat until 1847, was established as a town by Act of the Virginia legislature in 1786" Though Lewis Collins published his one-volume *History of Kentucky* in 1847 and his son, in 1874, issued a subsequent two-volume edition, "Revised, Enlarged Four-fold, and Brought Down to the Year 1874," and though both historians were long-time residents of Mason County, the former having been the first Presiding Judge of the Mason County Court, it is significant again that neither of them ever made the claim in their history that at Washington was established the first post office in Kentucky, nor that it was the mail distributing center for Kentucky or the Northwest Territory, though, in a long treatment of Limestone, Washington, and Mason County, they set out a series of "first" events for which Washington was noted. This becomes more significant when note is taken of the fact that reference is made to Limestone having become a post town, and that a Thomas Sloo (thus spelled instead of Stoo or Sloe) is mentioned as in 1790 one of the trustees of the town of Washington (Collins, 1874, Volume 2, page 556). "By Joseph Scott's Geographical Dictionary of the United States, 1805," says Collins (Volume 2, page 558), "it appears that Limestone then contained but few houses, but had arrived to the dignity of a post-town."

Further attention is directed to the fact that, when the Postmaster General in his letter of June 11, 1794, commissioned someone to hire suitable persons to carry the mail that would come down the Ohio River, the commission was given to Thomas Barbee, postmaster at Danville, Kentucky, who was to carry it "*from Limestone, by Washington, Bourbon, Lexington, Frankfort, and Harrodsburg, to Danville, and back by the same route, once in two weeks*" (italics supplied). Barbee was, also, it is known, commissioned to make contracts for mail carriage from Danville to Louisville. Danville remained the mail distributing center, certainly for the time being.

It would seem likely that the plain error into which the "Moderns" among the writers of Kentucky history have slipped, in contrast to the "Ancients," in the subject matter, is due to a confusion of "Fort Washington" with "Washington," Kentucky. By the Congressional Act of May 8, 1794, the post-road down the Ohio River was to run from Pittsburgh "to Limestone and Fort Washington." Fort Washington was some sixty miles further down the river from Limestone on the northwest bank

of the river—"Fort Washington, in Losantiville or Cincinnati" (Collins, Volume 2, page 435). The settlement first called Losantiville, by John Filson, grew up here and matured into the city of Cincinnati, which name replaced that of Losantiville. Fort Washington, therefore, was in, and a part of, the Northwest Territory.

There is no inclination to detract from the town of Washington, Kentucky, any part of its right to precedence as an important community in Bourbon, now Mason County, and in Northern Kentucky in the old days. However, Danville may well be said to have had a commanding status with reference to all of Kentucky at least equal to that of Washington with respect to Mason County. Danville, the recognized capital of the District of Kentucky, was the western capital of Virginia, while Kentucky remained a part of the Old Dominion. Here the first educational institution was inaugurated. It was here that statehood was wrested from Virginia. Here the Conventions were held, which resulted finally in the achievement of "The first great act of self government," the adoption of the State Constitution of 1792. "The Wilderness Trail, leading directly to this place, poured out its stream of settlers to be scattered over the country" (Kerr's *Kentucky*, page 298). Its claim to have been "The Cradle of the Commonwealth" is meritorious, and it continues to be, as in the early days of Kentucky history, a center of culture, of wealth and of activity in those things upon which only can be built the true greatness of a proud people's government.

From the foregoing official letters from the Post Office Department these excerpts are recopied as, perhaps, the most pertinent to the subject under discussion in this article and to emphasize the complete official record authority for the contention that the first post office in Kentucky and in all of the Western Country "beyond the Alleghenies" was established at "Danville in Kentucky":

"An Act of the United States, approved February 20, 1792, directed that from and after the first day of June, 1792, a post road be established from Richmond (Virginia) . . . to Danville in Kentucky. . . . That Act is the earliest available record of contemplated postal service to Kentucky."

"The records show that under date of August 20, 1792, the Postmaster General forwarded to Thomas Barbee a commission as postmaster at Danville, Kentucky. . . . There is no indication in Post Office Department records of an earlier establishment of a post office in Kentucky."

"An Act of May 8, 1794, established a post road 'from Pittsburg, by Washington in Pennsylvania, West Liberty in Virginia, and Wheeling on the Ohio, to Limestone and Fort Washington.' "

"Under date of June 11, 1794, the Postmaster General advised Thomas Barbee that the plan to carry a mail 'by the Ohio, from Pittsburg (or rather Wheeling) to Limestone' was nearly ready for execution. The Postmaster General asked Mr. Barbee to hire suitable persons to carry the mail 'from Limestone, by Washington, Bourbon, Lexington, Frankfort, and Harrodsburg, to Danville, and back by the same route, once in two weeks. The service and pay to commence with the arrival of the first mail at Limestone.' "