

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **EARLY HIGHWAYS AND POST OFFICES**

The first highway in the county, of course, was the Gasconade River, but owing to its swift current it is doubtful if it was used much as a north-south passway by the Indians except for short distances. Two main north-and-south Indian trails crossed the county. The first crossed the Missouri River near Hermann and united with the Illinois Trace in the east end of this county. The other crossed between the mouths of the Gasconade and Osage rivers and followed the divide between those streams through present Vienna and by or near Dixon to the heads of the Piney. Some maps name this Rinquelin's Trail to the mouth of the Osage. But the Indians seem to have been like their white successors in one respect, in that most of their travel was east and

west. The Missouri River was a bar to all but large parties from the north, a small party having about the same effect on the natives as a few town boys showing up at a present day country dance.

Even from the beginning emigration from Tennessee, North Carolina, and most of Kentucky followed certain paths. Probably most of it from the first two states converged at Cumberland Gap, and, once through it, divided into two main streams. One moved almost north through the easterly part of the Blue Grass, striking the Ohio at Limestone, now Maysville, crossing it there and resuming the westward journey north of that stream. The other skirted the westerly section of the Blue Grass section, striking the Ohio at or near The Falls, now Louisville. Still another followed the general course of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers to the Ohio, something like a hundred miles below The Falls.

The first two trails converged again at St. Louis; the one down the Tennessee and Cumberland divided after crossing the Ohio, branches reaching the Mississippi at St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve, and Cape Girardeau. Indian trails led from all these points into the Ozarks, that from St. Louis being the predecessor of the Old Springfield Road which was first mainly used as a route to the Kickapoo village near the present site of Springfield. It was also the Overland route from St. Louis to Chouteau's trading posts in southeast Kansas and northeast Oklahoma. Built as a state road in the forties, it was for the next twenty years the main artery of this part of the state, carrying emigrants from St. Louis and bringing their cattle and produce back to the market after they had settled. Taverns, blacksmith shops, and stores sprang up along it until by the middle fifties houses devoted to supplying the needs of travelers were seldom more than a few miles apart. Many of these were operated mainly for the opportunities they afforded their owners to rob careless or drunken travelers, and many mysterious disappearances of that time were laid at the

doors of such places. They were not as numerous or as bold, however, as such places east of the Mississippi, especially in Tennessee.

Forty years before there were any settlements in Kentucky or Tennessee the lead deposits at Mine la Motte had been discovered, and Ste. Genevieve had been settled some fifteen years later by emigrants from Kaskaskia. Both places were French, but in the course of time a fair sprinkling of explorers from the east of the river had settled among them. Some of these had been with General Clark when he captured the east bank of the river during the American Revolution.

Seventy years or so after these places were settled the Boone's Lick country in Howard and Cooper counties began to attract attention, and among the emigrants were a number from these French villages. They struck as straight a line for their destination as was possible, and soon had a well-defined trace between the old and new settlements, which was practically a continuation of the Tennessee Trace east of the river. Passing by Potosi, striking the Meramec River at or near present Steelville, it entered this county near the present St. James Road and took a general northwesterly direction across Spanish Needle and Lanes prairies, crossing the Illinois Trace on the latter, to the Gasconade River at present Lanes Ford. Crossing that stream, the northwesterly course was continued past the forks of the Maries and on to the Osage about Castle Rock. Traces of the old road can still be seen in the Vaughn Cemetery on the land now owned by Stephen Schwartze. Some of our early settlers, among whom were the Vaughn, Ramsey, and Woods families, came here by that road after living awhile on the Meramec, as did the Imboden and Stockton families of Dry Fork.

The 'trace' known as Boone's Lick Road was the site of the first three post offices to be established in this county. The very first, named Kinderhook, established

December 5, 1839, was on the farm of Lunsford L. Lane at Lanes Ford on this road, and Mr. Lane was the first postmaster. In fact he was likely the only one, for the post office was discontinued March 15, 1842. (A stone from the chimney of the old Lane houses where the office was kept was donated by Henry Gillispie and built into the wall of the new stone church at Little Flock). Such mail as came to the office was delivered by the carrier of the mail route from Potosi to Jefferson City. The carrier took dinner and fed his horse at Thomas Anderson's. He carried a horn and on reaching the high open ground west of the river he blew three blasts on his horn to advertise his coming. By the time he reached the house his dinner was ready and feed for his horse was in the manger. The round trip was first made every two weeks, and was later speeded up to weekly.

The second post office in the county, also on the Boone's Lick Road, was Spanish Prairie, established July 16, 1842, with William E. Hawkins as postmaster. The office was located in Hawkins' Store on the Spanish Needle Prairie and lasted until June 30, 1864.

Lanes Prairie, the third office, near the crossing of the Boone's Lick and Springfield roads, came into existence February 19, 1851, with William L. Pinnell as postmaster. The office was at his home, then known as Double Chimneys, something like a mile south of its present location. But during its existence it has been located practically all over the neighborhood. It was discontinued during the Civil War and was not re-established until May 18, 1882. Since that time it has been in continuous service.

It should be understood that the name 'road' as applied to any of the old-time passways was only a courtesy, compared to those of the present day. They were only a continuation of the old Indian traces from one place to another. About the only difference was that they were a little wider to admit the passage of wheeled vehicles,

of which the Indians had none. This condition continued up to about 1845, when a system of state roads was inaugurated, of which the Old Springfield Road roughly following the Illinois Trace was the first in this county. The road from Potosi to Boone's Lick had been more or less improved by James and Massey to get pig iron down to the flatboats at Bloom Landing, but these were the only two exceptions in the way of improvements, the other passways remained as they had always been, except for the wheel tracks. This road officially came into being at the Mayterm, 1836, of the Crawford County Court, when it received a petition for a road from Steelville 'past the iron works to William E. Hawkins' store on Spanish Needle Prairie, and thence in the direction of D. B. Wherry's mill on the Gasconade River.' As this was exactly the route over which Massey and James needed a road they were no doubt the moving spirits in filing the petition. Robert L. Ramsey was one of the commissioners appointed to view the new route. Steelville was just then being laid out as the county seat of Crawford County, court having previously been held at Liberty Hill, the location of which is no longer known.

From 1845 to the beginning of the war, however, we had something like a road boom, at least on paper. The Missouri legislature laid out and approved state roads here, there, and everywhere, mostly in the latter part of the interval.

In 1850 a state road was authorized to run from Lanes Prairie to Erie, then the county seat of Camden County, which was to run past Iberia and 'the lower big spring' (HaHaTonka) on the Niangua. This road is the present Lanes Prairie and Vienna road, and its continuation west is our farm-to-market Highway A. As an afterthought the legislature provided that it should be extended on to Osceola. A road from Spanish Prairie to Iberia was authorized at the same session, and William E. Hawkins of Crawford County, William Crismon of Osage County, and Samuel Farley of Miller County

were appointed to lay it out. It was later consolidated with the Lanes Prairie and Erie road.

David James of Osage County, John McGhee of Pulaski County, and John Hutchison of Crawford County were appointed commissioners at the same session to layout and locate the Bolivar and St. Louis road, which was to leave the Springfield Road 'about one mile east of Spring Creek and run to David Miller's.' If this road ever opened, it cannot now be identified.

These roads evidently served the population sufficiently for years, because it was not until 1859 that the county had another set of state roads. The session of 1858-59 appointed James W. Moore of Cole County, John Price of Osage County, and Thomas Anderson of Maries County to locate a road from Vienna to Jefferson City by way of Castle Rock on the Osage (this is our Old Jefferson City Road). The same session appointed John Holt of Dent County, John Weber of Phelps County, and Thomas Anderson of Maries County to locate a road 'from Salem to Rolla and from Rolla to Vienna' (this is the Rolla road crossing the river at Old Bloomgarden and passing by Cadmus post office and into Phelps County at the Davis place). The two roads constituted a new 'road system' of about one hundred miles, and for a great many years was the main-traveled road from as far south as the Arkansas line to the capital of Missouri.

One other important road was authorized at the same session, wherein David James of Maries County, John Craig of Phelps County, and J. K. Kidd of Osage County were appointed to lay out a road 'beginning at Chamois; thence to Stoner's, on Bayley's Creek; thence by Leach's Steam Mill, crossing Third Creek near said mill; thence to Dr. Cooper's; thence on the ridge by the nearest and best route to 'Gallanago Prairie;' thence by the best route to Jamestown, on the Southwest Branch Pacific Railroad. 'There was no doubt a passway between

the terminals of this road long before it was made a state road, but thereafter and today it is the St. James and Chamois road. Jamestown, formerly Scioto, is now St. James, and Gallanago Prairie is now Belle.

As in the case of the Boone's Lick Road, a new crop of roads brought a new crop of post offices. By the outbreak of the Civil War ten post offices, including the three named above, were flourishing in the present county. They were, in the order of their establishment

(1) Lacon at Rowden's Store on the Little Tavern, April 1, 1856, with Robert Rowden as the first postmaster. The settlement had been called 'Boone' for many years prior to that time, but no post office had been established. Lacon was discontinued toward the close of the war and re-established January 4, 1866, and lasted until April 2, 1867, when the business was transferred to Manton, at the Roberd's place.

(2) Vienna, elsewhere treated, was established May 1, 1856, about a year after the town was laid out. Irvine J. Jones was the first postmaster. With the exception of Lanes Prairie this is the only post office established before the Civil War now in existence.

(3) Bloomgarden was established October 2, 1856, with John M. Johnson as the first postmaster. Standing as it did at the point where the Springfield Road crossed the Gasconade, it was likely the busiest post office of them all the first five years of its existence. The postmaster having promptly entered the southern army at the outbreak of the war, the office was discontinued October 8, 1861, and not re-established until July 18, 1863, at which time it was re-opened with John M. Johnson's union brother, Abraham, as postmaster. The name was made Clifty Dale February 6, 1885, and moved to about the mouth of Dry Creek on the Gasconade at the place now owned by Alex Hayes, where it was conducted by Abraham Johnson and his son, Monroe, until April 29, 1887, when it was finally closed. Towards the latter

part of that time it was supplied with mail from Vienna, John Coats was likely the last mail contractor, but before this it was on the mail route from Jefferson City to Little Piney, now Newburg. It was also supplied from this route while it was called Bloomgarden.

(4) High Grove was established in then Crawford County October 27, 1856, with Anthony K. Coppedge as postmaster.

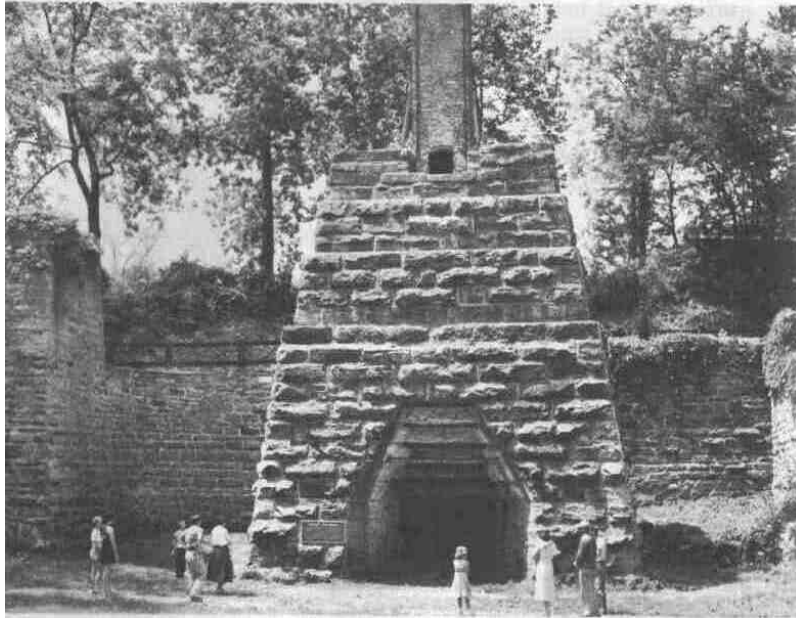
(5) Pay Down was established October 28, 1856, with George H. Coppedge as postmaster. Both this one and High Grove were suspended during the war, the former on December 20, 1860, and the latter on December 9, 1862. Both were re-established and for a great many of the last years of its existence the High Grove post office was at the N. P. Martin's near the first site. It was finally closed December 31, 1909. Pay Down lasted until August 15, 1932, the final location being on the west side of the river opposite the first establishment at old Pay Down store and mill.

(6) Steens Prairie, named after the prairie of that name of the north side of Dry Fork at the side of the St. James and Chamois road came into being July 20, 1860, soon after the route was established as a state road. Henry Given was the first postmaster, but both the post office and the mail route connecting it passed into the hands of the Travis family, various members of which conducted the office until it was finally discontinued December 31, 1912. In the middle seventies, when things were 'going good' this mail route served fifteen stores and post offices between St. James and Chamois beside the mail for terminal points. Yet the whole load was easily carried by a mule who also carried the contractor.

(7) Manton, the last office before the war, was established November 13, 1860, with William J. Meedrer as postmaster. Amos Roberds took over the office soon and conducted it until November 28, 1894, at which time

it was finally closed. Mail for this office, which was in the northwestern part of the county, was carried on the mail route from Jefferson City to Rolla byway of Castle Rock and Vienna on the southbound trip, returning by way of Vienna, Manton, and Castle Rock to Jefferson City.

The remainder of the older settlements had no post offices until long after the Civil War; some of them never had one. Bloomington, for an instance, a flourishing trading point before 1850 and the site of the only engagement fought in the county during the war, was at first and frequently still is known as The Hill, because it was built on a slight roll in the prairie. Bloomington seems to have been adopted as its name about 1858 when Oliver put up a store there. But the only post office of that name in the state was in Macon County. Between forty and fifty years ago a post office was finally established at The Hill, known as Lois, but it lasted only a short time.



FURNACE OF MERAMEC IRON WORKS