

What's in a Name? West Limestone communities named for families and gypsies

Note: This article is the fourth in a series highlighting the history of Limestone County place names.

By Rebekah Davis

Limestone County Archivist

Some of the earliest settlements in Limestone County were “across the river,” northwest of the Elk River, where settlers drifted south from Giles County, Tenn., to settle in the hills and hollows.

Today, many of those settlements are nothing more than empty homes – and at least one empty hospital – but their names still grace the maps of Limestone County.

West Limestone community names include:

- **Scarce Grease:** More than one native West Limestoneian responded to a query on the Limestone County Archives Facebook page by saying that the history of this community includes butchered hogs and nomadic groups. Mike Owen, who has many family members in the area, said the creek there was the location where several families came together each fall to butcher hogs and render the grease.
“My grandfather Waddell Jackson would tell that it was named because of the gypsies that used to camp along the branch there,” said Emily Woodall. “They would go around to the nearby homes and ask for grease for cooking and people would tell them they were scarce of grease. I don't know if it's true because Granddaddy could tell some doozies!”
Donna Burrow, however, verified Waddell Jackson's story with a call to her father, who said that indeed, when gypsies camped in the area, they went around the community begging for lard to cook with.
Scarce Grease is located along Scarce Grease Branch, close to the Tennessee state line.
- **Lester:** Just west of Scarce Grease, also on the state line, is the tiny incorporated town of Lester, population 111. The town was named for the post office established there in the late 1930s, which was named for the Lester family in the community. By 1965, the town population was about 250, thanks in large part to the rural hospital that Dr. David Eldridge Jackson established in July, 1940. Today that hospital is used seasonally as the “Lester Haunted Hospital.”
- **Leggtown:** Named for the Legg family, Leggtown had a post office from 1894 to 1905, with Robert Shelton serving as postmaster.
- **Lentzville:** Like Leggtown, Lentzville was named for a local family, the Lentzes. Its post office lasted longer, though: Established in 1854, it served the community until 1908, under the direction of postmaster James B. Lentz.
- **Mt. Rozell:** Also spelled Mt. Roszell on an 1889 map and elsewhere, this community named for a local family, the Rozells, had a post office that served the community from 1857 to 1924. Joseph Harmond was the postmaster. Mt. Rozell once boasted the Mt. Rozell-Salem School, and the Mt. Rozell General Store, and also has the distinction of being the location of “The Woman in the Iron Casket” who was accidentally unearthed in the 1950s.

Note: Information for this article came from A Tentative Survey of Limestone County Place Names by Deborah Ashford.

About the Archives:

Limestone County Department of History and Archives

Established: 1980

Staff: Archivist Rebekah Davis and Assistant Archivist April Davis

Location: 102 W. Washington St., in the 1905 L&N Passenger Depot

Hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

Phone: 256-233-6404

E-mail: archives@limestonecounty-al.gov

Web: www.limestonearchives.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/limestonecountyarchives