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## Comments and Brief History of ZIP 35754, Lacey's Spring, Alabama

by Bill Russell

Lacey's Spring was settled by three brothers Hopkins, John and Theophilus Lacy, born in Rockingham County, Virginia in the years 1763, 1766 and 1769 respectively. John was a veteran of the Revolution. Hopkins had a career behind him in the Politics of the "State of Franklin" and Theophilus became connected with banking interests in Madison County, Alabama.

The area now known as Lacey's Spring was doubtless an Indian Campsite before John Lacy and his brothers moved to Alabama in 1823. Please note the spelling. Lacy and Lacey's. This story was related to me by my dear friend Miss Georgia L. Dunn. When the request and necessary paper work was sent to Washington asking for the establishment of a Post Office here (naturally it was approved) the stamp came back as LACEY'S Spring and, of course, remains today. Henceforth our community is Lacey's Spring Alabama. After all, these people (Lacy's) did what was very common in those days. That is, settle near water. After all, it is a necessity and the rich fertile soil and the nearby river provided transportation and a food source. There was one Spring which incidentally is located on the East side of Highway 231, but a little bit north of the Wavaho property which is now known as Bud's Subway. So, in my opinion, the area was rightfully named because there were three brothers and one spring, unlike the adjoining community where I was born and raised, Valhermosa Springs. That name signified many beautiful springs. This was also an early Indian campsite because of the springs. There are many caves and near the river.

Now back to Lacey's Spring. Mr. Joe Steele is the owner of said property. He has told me about the beauty of the spring. However, at my request Mr. Pete Fields and his nephew, Everett Stidger, accompanied me a couple of years ago to what was identified as the spring. It appeared to me that the spring had been partially covered over during the construction of the north bound lane of Highway 231. Now I am totally confused. But it is my desire and wish that the State of Alabama Historical Department erect a bronze plaque near the original site on Highway 231 in recognition of our community that carries the name of those famous brothers (who fought in the Revolutionary War. By the way, take a guess as to whom was appointed the first postmaster. Theophilus Lacy, Jr. After his death on August 31, 1831 who would be appointed? Another Lacy, Thomas H. Lacy. Members of the Lacy family are buried in the Bartee Cemetery on the NW corner. I have pictures of the gravestones and the bronze marker. DAR reconstructed and re-erected one headstone that had been damaged from age and vandalism several years ago. Miss Georgia Dunn who is a history buff, a collector of Indian artifacts, who has a wealth of information on this community and its people along with Mr. Joe Black and Miss Gussie Winfrey who was a lifelong resident of this community and a reporter for the Decatur Daily, helped the DAR in this endeavor. Incidentally, Miss Georgia has been a member of the DAR for over 50 years.

During my study in the Heritage Room, Huntsville City Library, it was determined that there was once a post office here called Walling, founded October 10, 1890. William T. Walling was the postmaster. It was discontinued in January 1908 and the mail was routed to Valhermosa Springs. One may wonder why I have always been interested in the Post Office Department. My grandfather on my mother's side was Mr. R. A. Gamble. He was a true pioneer and is listed as such

in history books. He taught school and was a church worker who began work for the Post Office as a rural mail carrier. He started on horseback - then horse & buggy - then to Model "T" Ford after improvements were made to the roadway. The first mile of concrete highway was poured outside Detroit, Michigan in 1909. They were called "better days" when he graduated to a vehicle that had a good heater. Mr. Gamble also served as a notary and Justice of the Peace.

Back in those days, the Postmaster normally operated a general country store in the same building as the Post Office for obvious reasons - to supplement their income, and the patrons/customers could do their business at one site. It worked well for all. How many former post office buildings exist today in our community? Answer later. It might surprise you.

My mother, Ethel Davis Gamble was her father's substitute carrier for a long time before she went to work for a German Scientist by the name of Dr. Werner Von Braun. After Mr. Gamble retired around 1959 his oldest son, Jack, served as his replacement.

My grandfather on my dad's side was Dr. Thomas J. Russell my brother Tommy Jack was named after him, also his son Jackie Russell was named after him, Dr. Russell also rode horses and used a horse and buggy for transportation in his profession as a country doctor. He died in the 30's but even to this day I still hear stories about him. The babies he delivered were often named after him and members of his immediate family. When he purchased a new car which was the first one in his community, the factory sent a man to live with them for one week to teach about the operation and maintenance of that car.

The first school was in Dry Creek Cove (off Highway 36). It was named Providence and it, too, was near a spring, and naturally it was a log cabin. Last year a friend of mine who owns the property took my son, Russ, and I to the school site and we marvelled at the chimney that still exists.

The first church was organized 1827 - 1832 and was called the "Meeting House." It was located at the Dry Creek area also. Stagecoach road ran by the old Wilson House near the school.

Prior to the erection of Whitesburg bridge which is the north bound bridge over the Tennessee River here at Lacey's Spring, people had to use a ferry boat to cross the river. James Ditto came here in 1804 and lived among the Indians. He established a ferry in 1807 near the bridge site. The White's incorporated Whitesburg as a town December 23, 1824. It remained a cotton shipping center throughout the 19th century. The town disappeared with the coming of the railroad and it was a final blow in 1905 when the post office closed. (The White family settled here after arriving from Kentucky.) Whitesburg Bridge opened and operated as a toll bridge for a long time. A local citizen, Mr. "Nat" Hough was the toll keeper. I personally knew him. He was a man with vision. In 1960 he advocated the need for a doctor's office to be established in this community. We still need that along with a new and expanded Community Center that would include and serve as a tornado shelter, a fire station, a branch office of the Morgan County Court House, and the Sheriff's Deputy east district station which would eliminate RENT payment. This would be a cost savings to us taxpayers. This center CAN be built. If we are going to continue to occupy this area, why can't we make it a better place to live and work and raise a family. Why should any county in these United States pay rent for a police station?? Absurd. As a business man, I truly understand the term cost savings.