

For Lily and Sally
A historical look at the old town of Lillydale

By Darren Shell

For most of us lake lovers that flock to Dale Hollow, the name Lillydale is most recognized as one of the lake's beloved campgrounds. The flat land occupying this rich peninsula is ideally suited for the many tents and campers that reside here during summer. Being situated perfectly at the juncture of the old Obey and Wolf Rivers, Lillydale Campground has fantastic panoramic views and wonderful sunsets to dazzle its temporary residents. It's a place loved by many. But where did the name Lillydale come from? To find the answer to that question, let's take a step back in time and see what we can see at this special location.

In the late 1800s, the juncture of these two rivers was a place of much commerce. Of course, at that time, this lake had not yet been built and the rivers wound gently through the farmed valleys and homesteads. Although much of the surrounding valley was a rough and tumble place, many still made this place their home, here along the winding banks of the Obey and the Wolf. In fact, the place was known as *Mouth of Wolf*, because of its juncture with the Obey, here where the mouth of the Wolf began.

About that same time, the logging trade had grown into a huge business. Logging men floated massive log rafts down these shores from way up each river back down to Celina, Tennessee, where it dumped into the Cumberland River. Mouth of Wolf was a welcome stop for nearly all of the river's logging men, and each looked forward to restocking their wares here at the busy little river port. It eventually became a port for riverboats, as well. Colonel Armstrong ran a pier at this spot for the riverboat captains that navigated this shallow stretch of river. They would bring the many necessities wanted by the residents of Mouth of Wolf in trade for furs, game, and numerous other items to be sold downstream. This place was equally loved then, too.

But where does *Lillydale* come into play? Well, as the story goes, there were two young ladies that attended school at the Church of Christ building. The large, two-story building housed many local functions such as church, meeting hall, and school. It was a well known building recognizable by most that traveled the rivers and wagon trails near this little town. Its white clapboard siding welcomed many students and families for years.

But back to our little ladies. These two lasses were apparently the pride and joy of Mouth of Wolf. They had an inseparable friendship, and one was rarely seen without the other. Where Miss Lily Gilliam roamed, so did Miss Sally Dale. They were friends...through and through. And Mouth of Wolf liked it that way. That's what this story is about.

Aside from melting the hearts of this community's townsfolk, these ladies made a strong impression on their school teacher. He often commented to his friends and family about his affection for these girls and their always-playful and spirited mannerisms. And of course, they all agreed...he was preaching to the choir!

After some time, the school teacher began jokingly referring to the lasses by one combined name. After all, they were always together! Their name might as well be as inseparable as the girls themselves. He started calling the two *Lily Dale*...a simple combination of their two names. By and by, everyone else began doing the same. And soon, the one name Lily Dale became synonymous with the two gals the town had grown to love.

Then, our kind professor had yet another idea. Why not rename our town? Who likes the sound of *Mouth of Wolf*? Wouldn't Lily Dale sound much better? After all, what does Lily Dale mean? A lily is a beautiful flower. A dale is a placid valley with water. What could better describe this wonderful valley town better than a valley of flowers? *Lily Dale*.

Our friendly teacher's words hit home. The people of Mouth of Wolf agreed to change their name. They would become Lily Dale. After a number of different spellings over the years, *Lillydale* hit the maps. And the rest is history.

As most of our lake lovers know, the lake came along in 1942. The families of Lillydale were forced to move like those of Willow Grove, Fox Springs and many other little communities here on these shores. These closely-knit families moved from the homes they loved and gave part of themselves so many more families could enjoy this special reservoir. They gave us their home...their Lillydale.

But there is one more sweet point of interest in this story I'd like to share with the lake lovers of Dale Hollow. The Miss Sally Dale in our story was a descendant of one Mr. William Dale...*the* William Dale for which this lake is named. So, not only is this special lake named in his honor, but also by some strange twist of fate, he also played a part in the naming of this wonderful spot in the middle of his lake.

But now, old Lillydale is gone with only a few traces left behind of what was once a thriving little town. And although a campground now occupies the farm fields of old Lillydale, I still hear the occasional toot of an old steamboat whistle. I picture logging men along the old river calling to families on shore. But most of all, I hear the harmonizing chuckles of two little girls who's friendship changed the name of an entire town...the friendship *and name* that has stood the test of time. And I bet old William is still smiling about it.~