

Frog Level's Origins

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Was the town of **Fayette** ever named **Frog Level**? No. The area around the Fayette Depot was once all swampland and covered in water each winter and spring. When the heavy rains came in the spring the bullfrogs croaked loudly and incessantly. A man in jest called this area *Frog Level* and the name stuck although there was no town at this location. A history of Fayette's official names follows.

Alabama became the 22nd state in December of 1819. One year later in January, 1821, by an act of the Alabama General Assembly, (later to become the Alabama Legislature), "Old Town" was established and was located at the top of the hill above 5-points. A courthouse was located in the town although Fayette County was not established until 1824.

When the town leaders traveled to the State Capitol in Cahaba to incorporate the town they intended to name the town **LaFayette** after the French General Marquis de Lafayette who was a great assistance to the United States during the Revolutionary War. General Lafayette was on his second visit to the United States at the time. However, upon arriving in Cahaba our founding fathers discovered there were already 4 towns in Alabama named *LaFayette* and 81 towns in the U.S. named *LaFayette*. At the time, the United States only went as far as the Mississippi River.

The town was incorporated under the name of **Fayette Court House Town**. The town remained Fayette C.H. Town until January 15, 1831 the town was reincorporated by an act of the Alabama General Assembly when it was renamed **Fayetteville**. Many letterheads, receipts, ect., of businesses located in the town continue to list their address using Fayette County House Town (perhaps the post office name was not changed or residents simply continued to use the old familiar name). Another act of the Alabama General Assembly dated in December of 1880 again shows a reincorporation changing the town name to **Fayetteville**.

In 1883 the Georgia –Pacific Railroad was being built through this area to connect Birmingham, AL to Columbus, MS. Mr. S.G. James the engineer/surveyor for the project came to the town leaders in Fayetteville and offered to bring the railroad through the town if they would pay him \$1,000. Otherwise, he would run the railroad about a mile away through the swampland. Thinking he would choose to run the railroad through town instead of the swamp anyway, they refused to pay.

James an entrepreneurial shyster built the railroad through the swamp and offered to survey off lots around the tracks if he was given one-half the lots. Once this agreement was reached, his lawyer then sold his lots for him to the people of Fayetteville.

When the railroad was completed in 1887, a shanty-like shack was erected near the Fayette depot to serve as a post office for the train to drop off the mail. Mr. Joe Mason, the first postmaster, named the post office “Frog Level”. He served for two years and the second postmaster, Dr. Kilby Newton, changed the name of the post office to “Alfreda” in honor of his wife. Two years later, the third postmaster, A.J. Renfroe again changed the name to the “Icy” post office, named for his daughter.

As businesses and residences began relocating closer to the railroad, the town of Fayetteville began to die. By 1891, very little was left of “Old Town” and the citizens decided to incorporate their new town at Fayette’s existing location. The new town was incorporated under the name *Latona*. The city limits were ½ mile in all directions from a post erected in the center of the street at the existing train depot.

Fayetteville remained a separate community until it was dissolved by a legislative act in 1898.

In October of 1898, a required number of registered voters signed a petition to change the name of the town from *Latona* to *Fayette*. Probate Judge G. B. Morton declared an election be held at the Mayor’s office on November 8, 1898. Forty-seven votes were cast - forty-three white men and four black men. (Women were not allowed to vote at the time.)

Three-quarters of a century after the settlement was established the town finally had a permanent name. **Fayette**.

Most of the information for this article was taken from the “Sesquicentennial” book published by the “Fayette County Broadcaster” in 1969.