

Place-Names of the Northern Neck of Virginia: a Proposal for a Theory of Place-Naming¹

MARY R. MILLER

THE NORTHERN NECK is a narrow strip of northeastern Virginia beginning at the fall line on the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers and extending eastward between those rivers to the Chesapeake Bay. In general, this neck varies in width from ten to 20 miles, and is in itself composed of a series of smaller pieces of land similarly divided by coves, bays, inlets, and streams into smaller necks. Its historic roots are deep and predominantly English in origin. It has cradled such great families as the Lees, the Washingtons, the Monroes, and the Madisons. Many of the family names attached to the earliest land grants are still flourishing in the Northern Neck today, and the area remains singularly free of huge urban developments, industrialization, and other forms of dubious modern progress. The unspoiled terrain is matched by the traditional bent of the citizenry, and the serenity of a countryside dotted with historic dwellings and churches still in use.

The Northern Neck is a particularly apt location for a place-name study, as the researcher has access to naming practices which have been in operation since the early years of the seventeenth century, and which continue to this day, although on a much reduced scale. The extended span of time permits us to examine names which have been applied at various times during the course of four centuries. During these 350 years the sources of the names, the places named, those responsible for making the selection, and even the types of names have changed considerably from one era to the next. An examination of the place-name evidence from pre-English times down to the present will permit us to note in detail how names have been applied during that time.

The place-names in this study were collected from tracts of local history, maps, legislative decrees, deeds, land grants, letters, and local informants. From this collection of more than 2,500 names it gradually became clear that a number of generalizations could be made about place-naming. For example, one could generalize concerning the large number of early settlers who are commemorated in the names of

¹ This research was supported in part by a grant from the American Philosophical Society and by a University of Maryland Faculty Research Award.

streams, branches, and coves, while at the same time one could not fail to note a substantial number of names transported from the British Isles. However, if streams and other small physical features were named for early settlers, it was equally obvious that few post offices, villages, or crossroads stores commemorated that group. Instead, they tended to commemorate nineteenth century postmasters and storekeepers. In addition, there was a small and persistent residue of American Indian names, some of which had suffered early competition with imported English names before the English names faded into oblivion. While these larger conclusions were almost thrust upon the researcher as he proceeded with his work, there also were many other lesser generalizations which could be made about place-naming in the Northern Neck. Such clearly drawn categories proved so intriguing that further research was attempted to establish some sort of overall theory of place-naming. The result was a set of guidelines categorizing the naming periods of the Northern Neck, a theory which unmistakably applies to the Northern Neck since it was well substantiated by the data, but also a theory which might be tested against naming in the other parts of the United States.

There were a number of factors which contributed to the pattern of place-naming as it developed. As we know from historical accounts, there were names already attached to the large bodies of water and the larger stretches of land when John Smith and other early visitors first arrived. Like everything else in this fantastic new world, the names appeared to intrigue them, and they served as important sources of identification at that time. The renaming later of some of these same places honored distant rulers, relatives, and grantees, whose claim to the Virginia shore was a tenuous one at best, and the new names had to compete with already established Indian names. For that reason, many failed to endure. This failure did not extend to names of smaller physical features because the owner of the tract usually established residence there, giving credence to the name as identification. Moreover, the naming of such small streams and coves on property lines or within property facilitated legal descriptions, property transfer, and reference points for neighbors and travelers. These were names needed for survival in a newly found wilderness. In subsequent periods, there was a paucity of streams, branches, and coves left for naming, so naming turned to other types of places, other criteria of appropriateness, and other sources. Not surprisingly, one of these criteria was the desire to impose the ideal of the English countryside in the New World, although in due time the American Revolution did much to dampen the ardor of transplanting English names to the Northern Neck. Along with the failing enthusiasm for English names came a decreasing interest in all naming, a situation which permitted the keeper of store and post office com-

binations to name the place for himself rather than have this honor reserved for more powerful citizens. The decline in naming interest continued until even rural storekeepers failed to care how places were named, and late naming shows some of this indifference. This indifference in the public sector, however, never extended to private dwellings, and recent increased travel, education, and interest in our English heritage have tended to renew the well-established English custom of naming dwellings. Moreover, the reason for naming English dwellings was equally valid in the Northern Neck; there are few street numbers. These and other factors make naming in the Northern Neck a reflection of changing circumstances of history and culture. On the pages which follow, each period of naming will be discussed separately in chronological order, with appropriate examples sustaining the hypothesis.

For purposes of discussion, the intervening centuries between the earliest English contacts with the Northern Neck and the present time have been divided into five naming periods. The first period is called the Age of the Red Man, and represents the situation at the time of the earliest settlements. As an era in naming, it probably extended far back in history, and covered such places as trails, villages, markets, and various bodies of water. Compared with the periods which follow, it was a period of linguistic exclusivity, with all names from the period being of Indian origin. No other period has shown such linguistic purity, as each subsequent era has built on previous ones. Presumably, many Indian place-names have been lost through the intervening centuries, and those remaining have shown considerable variation before ultimate standardization. Due to inconsistent adaptation of Indian names to the English language by early English settlers, no dependable English translation appears possible nowadays, and scholars are often in sharp disagreement regarding their origin and meaning.² At any rate, remaining Indian place-names now identify physical features almost

² Philip L. Barbour, "The Earliest Reconnaissance of Chesapeake Bay Area: Captain John Smith's Map and Indian Vocabulary," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 79, no. 3 (July, 1971), 280-283. Most of the place-names which we consider to be of Indian origin are from the Powhatan language, a language of the Algonkian family. The meanings we give these names today are far from reliable, because they were jotted down by Englishmen who had no training in linguistics or phonetics, and neither their interpretation of Indian speech nor their phonetic spelling of it can be considered dependable. Furthermore, the sources of the Powhatan language are limited and fragmentary.

The oldest information consists of *copies* of original documents. These are Gabriel Archer's *Relation*, John Smith's *True Relation*, and Hole's engravings of Smith's map. Apparently the sole original sources extant are the manuscript map sent to Spain by Pedro de Zúñiga and Robert Tindall's sketch. The Alonzo de Velasco map is a derivative of Smith's map. In addition, many of the words in these oldest (and therefore most important) sources are illegible, and even a paleographer cannot decide on missing letters when he is not familiar with the word.

exclusively, and most apply to bodies of water. Furthermore, Indian names appear to be entirely descriptive, according to available information. Thus *Chesapeake* supposedly means “mother of waters,”³ *Chotank* means “it flows in the opposite direction,”⁴ and *Corotoman* means “meeting of the waters.”⁵ All of these names show an Indian

³ Charles Massie Long, *Virginia County Names* (New York, 1908), p. 164. The meaning given is “mother of waters.”

Moncure Daniel Conway, *Barons of the Potomak and the Rappahannock* (New York: The Groulier Club, 1892), p. 114, says that Chesapeake means “mother of waters.”

Hamill Kenny, *The Origin and Meaning of Indian Place Names of Maryland* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1961), p. 56. Citing Bozman, *History of Maryland* (Baltimore, 1837), Kenny says that Bozman’s “mother of waters” was suggested by the unavoidable translation of *che* (*k’tsi*, *t’chi*) as “great.”

Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 56, 57. The opening syllable means “great,” (cf. Fox *kehtci*). It is less clear that the second syllable means “river” (*sipi*, *sipōwi*). There is no justification for “salt,” and the Proto-Algonquian may be **kehtc-ās-āpyāki* “great shell-fish bay.”

Raus McDill Hanson, *Virginia Place Names* (Verona, Virginia: McClure Printing Company, 1969), p. 4. The name means “great salt bay,” and comes from *tschiswakepi* or *k’tschischwapeki*, with *kitschi* “highly salted,” and *peki* “standing water.”

George R. Stewart, *Names on the Land: A Historical Account of Place Naming in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1945), p. 23. This is plain Algonquian: *che* “big” and *sep* “river” + *at*.

Barbour, *op. cit.*, p. 287. King’s house and Bay, “country or people on the great river.”

William W. Tooker, “The Origin of the name ‘Chesapeake,’” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 3 (July, 1895), p. 87. The name designates a locality where Indians lived and not the bay, and turbulent waters of the Chesapeake Bay would never have been described with *peek* “standing water,” or “water at rest, a pond.” It does not contain any morpheme for salt either. The name means *che* “great,” *sepu* or *seip* “river,” *ack* “land or country,” i.e., *K’che-sepi-ack* “country on a great river.”

Clifford C. Presnall, “Names of Waters Bordering the Northern Neck,” *Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Magazine*, 21, no. 1 (1971), 2234. Chesapeake Bay takes its name from an Indian village near the south side of the Bay entrance and close to Lynnhaven Bay.

Henry Gannett, *American Names: A Guide to the Origin of Place Names in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1947), p. 78. This name is variously explained, but it seems to be a contraction of Delaware *kitshishwapeak* “great salty bay.”

⁴ Edwin W. Beitzell, *Life on the Potomac River* (Abell, Maryland, 1968), p. 193. From an Indian village Acowehtank “it flows in the opposite direction.”

Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 62. Chotank (today Jotank), a tidal creek in Virginia, which may be from Proto-Algonquian *acowehtank*: “it flows in the opposite direction.”

“Introduction and Index to Speed: a portion of Notes to Accompany a Facsimile of John Speed’s A Map of Virginia and Maryland, 1676,” *Virginia Place Name Society Occasional Papers*, no. 2, September 20, 1961. Speed calls the name Checktanck.

Nell M. Nugent, compiler, *Cavaliers and Pioneers: A Calendar of Virginia Land Grants 1623-1800* (Richmond, Virginia: Press of the Dietz Printing Company), vol. 1, 11 and 176. Spellings occur here as Chotanck and Chetanck.

⁵ Early spellings appear to favor a single *r*; present spelling has been standardized with double *r*. *Official Souvenir of the Tricentennial Celebration*; Lancaster County, Virginia, 1652-1952. The name is said to mean “the meeting of waters.”

Nugent, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, 72 and 167. The spellings are Corritoman and Corritonmon.

Barbour, *op. cit.*, pp. 288, 289. John Smith’s term for Corotoman was Cuttatawomen, “King’s

fascination with water movement. Still another name showing interest in tidal ebb and flow is *Rappahannock*, or “quick-rising water.”⁶

Not all remaining Indian names, however, named waters. *Yeocomico* means “tossed to and fro on the floating water,” and apparently identified an Indian village.⁷ *Wicomico* means “place where they are building houses.”⁸ Although there is some disagreement as to the true

house.” There were two: one was near Irvington; the other was near Popcastle Turn.

“Introduction and Index to Speed.” The form here is Corotomen.

Kenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 28n, 48n, 89. There is no meaning given for Cuttatawomen beyond some speculation that it might mean ‘cut at a woman.’ (p. 27).

⁶ Gannett, *op. cit.*, p. 258. The meaning is “stream with an ebb and flow,” or “river of quick-rising water.”

T. Benton Gayle and Esther Gayle Winston, “The Contributions of the Northern Neck of Virginia to the Development of the Nation,” *Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Magazine*, 11, no. 1 (1959), 772. “The word *Rappahannock* is Indian for ‘Quick Rising Water,’ the word *Potomac* Indian for ‘River of Swans.’”

Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 39 “I see in it (with little doubt) the Algonquian stem (-*aha(n)*), Ojibwa, Fox, Algonkin ‘alternate motion,’ ‘lapping,’ that appears as -*hanna* in . . . *Rappahannock*,” etc. Also *ibid.* p. 120. “Beauchamp (*Indian Names in New York*, 1893, p. 105) defines *Rappahannock* as ‘current returning and flowing again.’” Kenny himself (p. 121) favors this meaning as amplified by the Rev. James A. Geary in D.B. Quinn, ed., *The Roanoke Voyages 1584-1590*, II, 879.

William Broadus Cridlin, *A History of Colonial Virginia* (Richmond, 1923), p. 161. The *Rappahannock* River was named in honor of an Indian tribe of the Powhatan Confederacy, with the meaning “people of the alternative stream,” referring to the ebb and flow of the tide in the river.

Presnall, *op. cit.*, p. 2233. He cites Arber, Edward, ed., *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith*, Book III, “the river of Rapahanock, by many called Tappahanock.”

Hugo Allard, “New and Exact Map of All New Netherland,” 1673, reproduced in *A History of Cartography*, by Ronald Vere Tooley and Charles Bricker (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968 and 1969), p. 225. The river is shown as Toppahanok Flu.

William R. Gerard, “Some Virginia Indian Words,” *American Anthropologist*, 7, no. 2 (April-June, 1905). Tooker said that *Toppahanough* means “encampment people,” but now says that it means “land with more than plenty.” Gerard, however, thinks that it means *tapantäm* “deer” and *rapantäm* “he chews again.”

⁷ Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 182. The river is named for the Indian village *Aiagomoago* “he that is floating on water, tossed to and fro.”

Mrs. Robert Y. Barkley, compiler, “A Brief Journal of a Voyage in the Barque ‘Virginia’ to Virginia and Other Parts of the Continent of America, by Captain Henry Fleet,” *Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Magazine*, 6, no. 1 (1956), 479. “The 4th of July, 1631, we weighed anchor from the Downs, and sailed for New England . . . From thence we set sail for the river Potomack, where we arrived the 26th day of October at an Indian town called Yowacomoco . . .”

Stewart, *Names on the Land*, p. 545. Stewart gives the meaning as “four houses.”

Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 147. The form *yowacomoco* seems to contain Powhatan *yowgh* “four,” “Powhatan land, dwelling site, earth,” and the copula -*a*-. The meaning would be “There are four dwelling sites.”

⁸ Gannett, *op. cit.*, p. 324: “where houses are building.”

Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 142n. He cites Heckewelder, *Names which the Leni Lenape or Delaware Indians gave to Rivers, Streams and Localities within Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia, with their Significations*, ed. William C. Reichel, 1872, p. 54: “where houses are building.” Kenny, p. 143, states that *Wicomico* is a shortened form of **Wighcocomoco* with the latter part of the word meaning “house, village, dwelling, enclosure,” *wik* might mean “pleasant,”

meaning of *Potomac*, one meaning often given is that of “place where something is bought,” which would identify a trading station or trail crossing.⁹ Indian names, to the extent that translations are dependable, are practical names in that they identify places, and seem to result from a popular labeling process which aided recognition by the local traveler. Note, for example, that they did not commemorate or exalt any human being, recall any great deed, glorify any battle, or proclaim any past disaster. First and foremost, the name described the place, and as the description became more and more standardized in Indian use, it finally became a proper name. It may also have become an opaque proper noun without any meaning other than as a point of reference, such as many of our own proper names in English. This type of naming is an expression of identification needs.

It is also a naming process which contrasts sharply with the following period. That period, the second to be described, is a period which emerged with the first English naming in the Northern Neck. It began in the early seventeenth century and extended into the early eighteenth century. Of 57 such names randomly examined, most of which are creeks, points, necks, and coves, naming or attestations for 51 of them fall within the period 1608-1737 insofar as we can determine, while the

and *accomico* (-*ahkamikw*) “dwelling, village” for a total meaning of “pleasant dwelling or village.”

Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 181. It was the name of an Indian village, *Wicocomoco* “where houses are building.”

Barbour, *op. cit.*, p. 312. *Wighcocomoco*, King’s house; “Pleasantville.”

Thomas Hoskins Warner, *History of Old Rappahannock County, Virginia, 1656-1692* (Tappahannock, Virginia: Pauline Pearce Warner, 1965), p. 4. The name is spelled *Wighcomoco* in *Purchas’ Pilgrims*.

“Introduction and Index to Speed.” The name is given as *Wicocomoco*.

John E. Manahan, “The Old Families of Northumberland and Their Politics,” *The Bulletin of the Northumberland County Historical Society*, 6, no. 1 (1969), 15. The name was originally *Werococomoco*, which was then shortened to *Wighcomico*, *Wiccocomoco*, and *Wicomico*. The source was *Wirowantesuwocomoco* “the town where he who is rich (i.e., the chief) lives.”

Gerard, *op. cit.*, p. 229. *Wirowokamäko*. Tooker, following Strachey, says “king’s house.” This term applied to a tract of land on salt water, not to Powhatan’s house, and means “fertile land”: *wirä, wilä* “to be rich, fecund, prolific, productive.”

⁹ Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 116. The meaning is “where goods are brought in,” i.e., landing place for goods, or even “emporium.”

Barbour, *op. cit.*, p. 296. *Patawomeck*. King’s house, “trading center.”

Presnall, *op. cit.*, p. 2233. *Potomac* means “to bring again” or “those who come and go,” i.e., literally “traders,” according to Tooker. The name comes from an Indian village and sub-tribe, *Patawomeke*, located in Stafford County near Marlboro Point. There was (and is) a persistent legend that the name meant “river of swans”; but “swan” in Algonkian is *woonagusso* or *wapusone*, and “river” is *hanna* or *hummock*.

Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 3. *Patawomecke* is the spelling in *Purchas’ Pilgrims*, account of the Smith voyage by Nathaniel Powell and Anas Todkill, in the 1625 edition, Book 4, pp. 1715, 1716.

H. Ragland Eubank, *Touring Historyland: The Authentic Guide Book of Historic Northern Neck of Virginia* (Colonial Beach, Virginia: The Northern Neck Association, 1934), p. 5: *Potomac* means “river of swans.”

other six are unsubstantiated by suitable dates. At present there appears to be some overlap between the dying years of the second period and the tender young years of the third period, but perhaps further research will clarify that. Although the characteristics of the second period were clear, the appropriate term depended on individual choice. The period was finally called the Age of Autocracy. In this period the naming always commemorated a person. This was done at two levels. On the first level, persons of power and stature used naming as a means of glorifying and immortalizing themselves and those closely connected with them. Examples of this type of naming are *Smith Island*, which John Smith named for himself,¹⁰ or *Stingray Ile*,¹¹ named to commemorate an incident in Smith's exploration of the Rappahannock River. It is similarly reported that Captain Fleet himself named *Fleet's Point*.¹²

As we have seen, the Age of Autocracy embraced a period in the history of the Northern Neck in which monarchs and explorers, as well as grantees, showed an intense interest in naming matters. It was also indicative of the age that their vanity permitted them to name places for themselves, and that their power gave them the opportunity to do so. The relative power of the individual can be determined by the size of the place named. While John Smith could immortalize himself with an island, only a monarch could claim the name of an entire colony such as *Virginia* or *Maryland*.¹³ An interesting sidelight is the fact that the will of the people (and custom) sometimes prevailed over that of the mighty, even in an age when all decisions, even those regarding place-names, were the special province of royalty. Indian names for large bodies of water, such as rivers and bays, were particularly resistant to change, and most have retained their Indian names. For example, by 1612 the

¹⁰ P. Burwell Rogers, "The First Names of Virginia," *Virginia Place Name Society Occasional Paper* no. 12 (New Series: no. 2) February 10, 1967, p. 6. "That Captain John Smith named the first land he saw as he approached Eastern Shore for himself is typical, and he tells us later with a certain air of mixed egoism and modesty that they were called 'by the name of the discover[er].'"

¹¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Captain John Smith and his party were spearing fish with their swords when a fish with a poisoned sting pierced Smith's arm. The wound swelled rapidly, and (quoting Arber, I, 114) "we . . . prepared his graue in an Ile hard by (as himselfe appointed); which then wee called Stingray Ile, after the name of the fish."

¹² Eubank, *op. cit.*, p. 76. It was named for Captain Fleet who landed here in 1608 and called it Fleet's Point.

¹³ George R. Stewart, *American Place-Names: A Concise and Selective Dictionary of the Continental United States of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 282. Maryland was named for Henrietta Maria, Queen of Charles I, who is supposed to have bestowed the name himself.

Collier's Encyclopedia (New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1954) vol. 19, 263. Virginia was named by Sir Walter Raleigh in honor of Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, and the name originally applied to the entire Atlantic coast.

Potomac River had been renamed *Elizabeth's River*,¹⁴ but the new English name failed to catch on, and it remained the Potomac River. Also prior to 1612 the Rappahannock River was renamed *Queen's River* in honor of Queen Ann Stuart, wife of James I of England.¹⁵ This name never gained any popularity with the settlers of the Northern Neck nor the Middle Neck, and within a year was competing with a third name. By that time it had been named the *Pembroke River* in honor of the Earl of Pembroke, who patented 30,000 acres of land on the river.¹⁶

If a king could name a colony and an earl a river, then smaller physical features of the Neck could be used to immortalize land owners. Streams wholly or mostly within the property of an early land grantee were especially susceptible to the family names of landowners. For example, the creek within Samuel Bonum's property was named *Bonums Creek* for the patentee of 1650.¹⁷ *Bridges Creek* was named for Hercules Bridges who patented the land where the creek flowed in 1647.¹⁸ *Codd Creek* was named for Colonel Saint Leger Codd, a cavalier

¹⁴ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 8. The Potomac was called Elizabeth's River by William Strachey in *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* (1612) edited by Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund (London, 1953), pp. 41, 43, 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8. William Strachey calls it Queens River.

Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 11. Prior to 1612, the Rappahannock was sometimes called Queen River in honor of Queen Ann Stuart, daughter of Frederick the Second, King of Denmark, wife of James I of England.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9ff. He quotes from a letter from Sir Samuell Argall to Master Nicholas Hawes, June 1613: "and so set sayle from Point Comfort the first of December (1612) and being entered into Pembroke river, I met with the King of Pastancies a hunting," and "On the 19th of March I returned with ship into Pembroke River." The second attempted settlement associated with the Rappahannock River was apparently made by the Earl of Pembroke, who patented 30,000 acres of land in 1612. After it was assigned to Pembroke, the name was changed to Pembroke River (from Rappahannock).

¹⁷ Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 183. Bonums Creek was named for Samuel Bonum, who patented land there in 1650.

Westmoreland County Tercentenary Committee, Westmoreland County, 1653-1953: *Official Souvenir Program*, May 16—October 9, 1953, p. 6. The name is from Samuel Bonum, an early settler.

Lucy Brown Beale, "Colonel George Eskridge," *Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Magazine*, 3, no. 1 (1953), 233. This family name is perpetuated in Bonum's Creek, on which Samuel Bonum was an early settler.

David Wolfe Eaton, *Historical Atlas of Westmoreland County* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1942) p. 62, sheet 4, shows 300 acres patented by Samuel Bonum on July 4, 1653. See sheet 15 for 99 acres patented by Samuel Bonum on October 13, 1665, and 288 acres patented by Joan Powell in 1650, which was inherited or purchased by Samuel Bonum. Bonum's Creek separates the land of Bonum from the landowner to the west.

¹⁸ Eubank, *op. cit.*, p. 39. The creek is named for Hercules Bridges.

Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 62, sheet 4, shows 200 acres patented by Hercules Bridges on 3 September 1651.

Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 190. The creek is named for Hercules Bridges who settled here (Westmoreland County) in 1647.

turned settler in 1670.¹⁹ *Coles Point* was named for an eccentric landowner named Dick Cole, who patented his land in 1661.²⁰ *Gambo Creek* was named for a landowner of 1691, Alexander Gamble, either through cartographic error or erroneous transmission by word of mouth.²¹ This creek had earlier been named *Dodson Creek* for the first landowner, Gervais Dodson, in 1658.²² Thus patentees imitated their monarchs in their desire for immortality, and neighbors cooperated because it identified a creek or other physical feature with the domain of the person named. Two other characteristics are evident. First, there was a tremendous desire to acquire land in these early years, and naming after the owner was evidence of the prestige and privilege that went with ownership. Self-naming was the natural result. Secondly, as with monarchs and the great, this naming was limited almost exclusively to streams and coastal features.

Still a further result—that this naming of creeks and other physical features did not continue much beyond the beginning of the eighteenth century—was partially due to the fact that most land had been claimed by that time, and much of it had passed through the hands of one or more owners. There were few creeks left to name by 1700, but there were also other forces at work in the Northern Neck which changed the popular outlook on naming.

The early settlers were confronted with a battle for survival—against the Indians, disease, cold winters, and even against the enveloping verdure which characterizes the Northern Neck today as then. Survival was not the only instinct alive in those days, however. Most had a lively longing for home, and some sources suggest that almost all Englishmen who came to Virginia planned to return to the English shore. Still, circumstances have a way of catching up with life, and many settlers, whatever their motives for coming, or their desires to make their stay temporary, lived out the remainder of their lives in Virginia. With the arrival of shiploads of women and families, they all began to think of the Northern Neck more and more as home. They began to copy, to whatever extent they could, the English way of life they had left behind. They sought, sometimes in joy and sometimes in anxiety, to make the Northern Neck one more English shire. Or perhaps it would be more

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 181. The creek is named for local landowner Colonel Saint Leger Codd, living in 1670.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 186. The point is named for Richard Cole who patented here in 1661.

Westmoreland County Tercentenary, 1953. This place perpetuates the name of Dick Cole.

Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 71, sheet 13. Richard Cole patented 1350 acres at Coles Point on August 20, 1661.

²¹ Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 191. The creek was named for Alexander Gamble, a Scottish merchant from Dumfries, a landowner of 1691.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 191. Gambo Creek was originally named Dodson Creek for landowner Gervais Dodson in 1658.

precise to say that they carefully divided it into a number of English shires: *Northumberland*,²³ *Lancaster*,²⁴ and *Westmoreland*,²⁵ names of shires which still exist in England today. *Richmond County* was named for Richmond, Surrey according to some;²⁶ others say it was named for the Duke of Richmond.²⁷ The names were no accident, for many had come from northern England, and from those very shires for which they named their new ones in the New World. They sought in every way possible to make the Northern Neck a carbon copy of life at home. One way to do this was to name places for familiar localities back home in England. This was done not only because such names were considered appropriate but also partially in fantasy to ease the loneliness. Thus *Westmoreland* in the Northern Neck might hopefully resemble *Westmorland* in Northern England, and some say that it does. For this reason the third period of naming in the Northern Neck has been called the Age of Nostalgia.²⁸

This period began in the middle seventeenth century and co-existed with the second period until the early eighteenth century. It came to an abrupt halt at the end of the eighteenth century because of the American Revolution. Unlike the second period, when men commemorated themselves and their neighbors in the physical features of their land grants, and noblemen and kings remembered themselves in the same way but on a larger scale, most of this naming was applied to patents, hundreds, tracts, seats, and dwellings, although this was not exclusively true. There were probably as many as 200 English place-names which were brought to the five counties of the Northern Neck, and which still exist in the United Kingdom and Ireland today. Most of these names are still extant in the Northern Neck as well, or they would not have been collectible. Some of these names came from family seats and estates in England; some came from names of towns and villages. A few were names of physical features of the land, such as rivers and mountains.

One such name is *Epping Forest*, a dwelling built in Lancaster County about 1690.²⁹ It was the birthplace of Mary Ball Washington, the mother

²³ Gannett, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

²⁴ Long, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

²⁶ Gannett, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

²⁷ Long, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

²⁸ John E. Manahan, "British Origins of some old Virginia Homes," *Virginia Place Name Society Occasional Paper* no. 11 (New Series: no. 1), January 25, 1966. See this article for additional Virginia place-names of English origin not included in this paper.

²⁹ Pamphlet given visitors to Epping Forest by the owners. This folder states that Epping Forest was named after a Ball family home in England.

Eubank, *op. cit.*, p. 89, also makes this statement.

Gazeteer of the British Isles, Ninth Edition (Edinburgh: John Bartholomew & Son Ltd., 1970) p. 247, identifies *Epping* as an urban district, market-town, and parish, in Epping Forest, 17 miles NE

of George Washington. This is also the name of a great forest of 6,000 acres lying beyond the northeastern edge of London.

Another important name of English origin is *Stratford Hall*. The Lee family had a number of residences with names in the Northern Neck, among them this one in Westmoreland County. It was built about 1727 by Thomas Lee on 1450 acres of land called the *Clifts Plantation*.³⁰ It was the birthplace of Richard Henry Lee and Francis Lightfoot Lee, both signers of the Declaration of Independence, and of Robert E. Lee, one of the most outstanding men of the Confederacy. Stratford Hall in Westmoreland County may have been named for a single place in England, or it may have struck the namer as an appropriate remembrance of the English homeland since there are several Stratfords in England. First of all, there is an area of Essex, which is just outside London, known as Stratford. Moreover, it is situated on the River Lea. There is another Stratford in Bedfordshire, and one in County Wicklow, Ireland. There are another half dozen Stratfords used in combination with other words, including the famous Stratford-on-Avon.³¹

Still another English name transported to the Virginia countryside is that of *Mount Airy* in Richmond County. It names a house and tract, and one might imagine that it is a fanciful way of saying "an airy mount," i.e., a place where there are delightful breezes in summer and raw winds in winter. The intrigue was multiplied by the discovery of a second Mount Airy further west in Virginia, and by the realization that this was the name of a town in New York State as well as one in Maryland. *Airy* in the British Isles turns out to be a mountain in the East Riding of Yorkshire,³² and although William Tayloe of Mount Airy is said to have come to this country from London in 1670, there must have been some connection with Yorkshire, which populated so much of the Northern Neck. It should be born in mind though that there was a tendency for people from rural areas to seek their fortunes in urban centers in that day as well as in ours, and this migration to metropolitan centers may explain a number of transported English place-names.

It would not be fair to leave the impression that all the names which

of London. The unenclosed portion of Epping Forest consists of 6,000 acres and is public property. This does not disprove the two footnotes above, but does exclude it from the remaining great manor houses, as British homes, both modest and splendid, have long been named. However, the great manor houses are included in the gazeteer.

³⁰ There is no convincing evidence that this is a transplanted English place-name, although Clift Sound and Clift Hills exists in the British Isles. See *Gazeteer of the British Isles*, p. 156. It is more likely a descriptive name.

³¹ William Henry Tappey Squires, *The Days of Yester-year in Colony and Commonwealth; A Sketch Book of Virginia* (Portsmouth, Virginia: Printcraft Press, 1928), p. 118.

Gazeteer of the British Isles, p. 649, lists numerous Stratfords in England, as well as one in Scotland and one in Ireland.

³² *Gazeteer of the British Isles*, p. 9.

migrated with the settlers to the New World came from England. Both Scotland and Ireland are well represented. The prosperous town of *Kilmarnock* in Lancaster County was named for the city of Kilmarnock in Scotland, which is 25 miles southwest of Glasgow.³³ In Ireland there are Kinsale and Kinsale Harbour, one of which gave its name to *Kinsale*, Virginia.³⁴ Samuel Bonum, for whom *Bonums Creek* is named, and who was mentioned earlier, is said to have come from Kinsale, Ireland.³⁵ Another possible place-name migration from Ireland is the case of *Lara*. There are a number of Larahs and Laraghs in Ireland.³⁶

As the result of a trip to Cobham village, Kent, in 1971, *Cobham Park* in the Northern Neck has been identified with Cobham village, Cobham Court, and Cobham Park. Warner supports Cobham Park, Kent, as the source of the name,³⁷ but Manahan disagrees as to the Williamson family connection, thereby putting the transfer of this name from one family estate to another somewhat in doubt.³⁸ Further research into a very similar name, *Cobb's Hall*, produced two similar names abroad. There is a Cobhall in Herefordshire near the Welsh border, and there is also a Cobh in County Cork, Ireland,³⁹ which interestingly enough is in the same Irish county as Kinsale, for which a town was named. Secondly, the evidence abroad for Cobb's Hall does not seem strong enough entirely to exclude the possibility that it may have been named for someone with the family name of Cobb.⁴⁰

The next age in naming is called the Romantic Age. This does not mean that it was a rose-tinted era, for it began about 1800 and continued through the Civil War until the end of the nineteenth century. It is called the Romantic Age because it glorified the individual and the common man. Postmasters and postmistresses were often honored when a post office was established, and the name might be changed later to commemorate still another popular postal worker. Thus *Foxwells* was named for Susie E. Foxwell, postmistress in 1919, although it had earlier been called Fisherman.⁴¹ *Burgess* was the name of the first three postmasters at the town of that name, although the place was known as *Burgess Store*

³³ Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³⁴ Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

³⁵ Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

³⁶ *Gazeteer of the British Isles*, p. 411. There are a total of nine Laraghs in Eire and Northern Ireland and a single Larah. The pronunciation is the same as that of the place in Virginia.

³⁷ Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 121, 171-172.

³⁸ Manahan, "British Origin of some Old Virginia Homes," p. 3.

³⁹ *Gazeteer of the British Isles*, p. 161.

⁴⁰ George Cabell Greer, *Early Virginia Immigrants 1623-1666* (Richmond: W.C. Hill Printing Company, 1912). According to Greer, John Cobb immigrated to the Northern Neck in 1654 under the auspices of John Phillips and John Batts of Lancaster County. Cobb's Hall is in that area, near Ditchley, still another transplanted English place-name.

⁴¹ *Rappahannock Record*, Thursday June 26, 1969, p. 1.

until 1950.⁴² *Downings*, in Richmond County, was first named *Ivanhoe*, but was changed to *Downings* in honor of Jerome T. Downing, postmaster, about 1889.⁴³ *Alfonso* was named for Alfonso Barrack by Clarence E. Barrack, the first postmaster after its reopening in September, 1899.⁴⁴

New names often dipped into the past, and now that the populace was secure from the Red Man, he became a romantic figure. Thus, *Kingcopsico Point* retains an Indian name,⁴⁵ and *Harryhogan* was named for the last Indian family to live at that place.⁴⁶ Places were also named for English figures of the past, particularly if their claim to fame was local and relatively modest. For example, *Irvington* became that in 1891 after having been *Carter's Creek* earlier. The Irvings were an early family in the area.⁴⁷ *Heathsville* was named for John Heath, founder of Phi Beta Kappa. It had first been *Hughlet's Tavern*, and then *Heath's Store*.⁴⁸ The change to *Heathsville* occurred when the craze to name places with *ville* swept across the country in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ *Edwardsville* was named for Paget Edwards, and the Edwards family still has a store there.⁵⁰ In fact, the less prestigious name of *Edward's Store* may have antedated *Edwardsville*. *Haynesville* was named about 1890 for an early planter, Corbin Haynes, who lived in *Haynesville House*.⁵¹ *Bundicks Landing*, or simply *Bundick*, was named for Richard

⁴² National Archives, Washington, D.C., U.S. Postal manuscript records, Northumberland County. The first three postmasters were Benedict Burgess (1830); Gamaliel Burgess (1849), and Ethelbert Burgess (1855). The post office was discontinued in 1866 and re-established in 1872.

⁴³ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

National Archives, Washington, D.C., U.S. Postal manuscript records, Richmond County. The name was changed to *Downings* on March 31, 1890.

⁴⁴ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

National Archives, Washington, D.C., U.S. Postal manuscript records, Lancaster County. Alfonso Barrack was named postmaster of *Alfonso* in 1893, and according to the Postal records, it was called *Alfonso* from the beginning.

⁴⁵ Westmoreland County Tercentenary, 1953, p. 6. According to this source, the name goes back as far as 1679 at least.

Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 186. This name was first shown on charts in 1864, and remembers a local Indian chieftan, King Copsico.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁴⁷ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

National Archives, Washington, D.C., U.S. Postal manuscript records, Lancaster County.

⁴⁸ Eubank, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁴⁹ Albert H. Marckwardt, *American English* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) pp. 156, 157.

⁵⁰ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

An informant who grew up near *Edwardsville* states that the place was founded by John Henry Edwards, who kept the store and post office.

National Archives, U.S. Postal manuscript records, Northumberland County. The post office opened in 1902.

⁵¹ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

Bundick, the local warehouse treasurer in 1870.⁵² Thus there was a great tendency to name villages, crossroads, and populated areas for a postmaster or a storekeeper. Sometimes daughters were immortalized, as with *Tibitha*,⁵³ or *Ophelia*,⁵⁴ both named for the daughters of postmasters. Sometimes doctors were honored, as in the case of Dr. Hague whose name was given to *Hague*, Virginia, about 1824.⁵⁵ Folk etymology has changed this to *The Hague*, identifying it with the capital city of the Netherlands. Popular feelings of support for the Polish people resulted in the name *Warsaw* being applied to the county seat of Richmond County in 1846.⁵⁶

The fifth and final stage in the evolution of place-naming in the Northern Neck is called the Age of Public Indifference, and it probably encompasses most of the twentieth century. The people abandoned their interest in names in the public domain, while continuing their interest in names within the private domain. In the public domain, names for new post offices were often provided by outsiders in a way that would have been completely impossible earlier when kings or landowners or the local populace took an active part in carefully weighing what might be considered most fitting. The indifference which eventually overtook naming in the Northern Neck was at least partially produced by efforts at standardization from above. Map makers, in the interests of clarity, now wanted each place to have just one name with a standard spelling. Printers now wanted to eliminate apostrophes, something which was happening anyway in the process from identifying country stores by owners to the actual making of a new place-name. The post office department wanted to eliminate long and confusing names, and most of all it wanted to avoid duplication. Thus a great deal of what happened to names in the public domain in the twentieth century is the result of external rather than internal pressures. People in and around *Callao* wanted to commemorate a family named Calloway; the post office department would not permit this name since it duplicated another post office elsewhere, and the result, dictated from the outside, was *Callao*.⁵⁷ *Remo* likewise was a name more or less imposed by the post office, and no one knows where the name came from.⁵⁸ *Acorn* and *Index* are names

⁵² Beitzell, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁵³ According to a local informant, Tibitha was the name of the daughter of Octavus [sic] M. Williams.

National Archives, U.S. Postal manuscript records, Northumberland County. Octavus [sic] M. Williams was appointed the first postmaster, April 29, 1873.

⁵⁴ Euodias Garrison Swann, "Along Lives Pathway," *The Bulletin of the Northumberland County Historical Society*, 10, no. 1 (1973) 83.

⁵⁵ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

⁵⁶ Eubank, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵⁸ According to a letter from an informant, the Post Office Department furnished a list of suggested names from which to choose a name for the new post office. Remo was chosen because it

showing a high level of frustration. *Acorn* was so named because there were acorns on the ground there, or so the story goes;⁵⁹ and *Index* was given its name after deciding to name the new post office with the first word that appeared on a certain page of a book.⁶⁰

Concurrent with this active withdrawal from public naming was a counter tendency exerted in the private domain. Naming of homes continues unabated in the Northern Neck. In this century, fancy seems to dictate. Some names are delightful and they can be descriptive as well. There is an added advantage in studying the naming habits of the present generation, for one can inquire why a place was named in a particular way. There are three *Fine-a-lees*, or variations thereof, in the Northern Neck. The owners all report that they *finally* made it back to the Northern Neck. Then there is a descriptive name like *Spindrift*, or the house near Ophelia called *Windy Blue Breakers*. One owner reports he named his farm *Blue Water Farm* for the unusually blue water in his creek. Another named his home *77 Sunshine Strip* after the TV show, "77 Sunset Strip." Still another called his 16 acres *Little Papoose* because it had been a part of the original *Indian Town Farm* of one thousand acres. Another beautiful name is *River Wind*, and an intriguing old name is *Frog Hill*.⁶¹ Other places these days are named for trees, views, points, and coves, and some names seek to recreate or preserve the names of the past. Thus it becomes evident that what names are or are not considered appropriate have differed from century to century, as well as who bestows the name. In addition, we note that the original great impetus in naming physical features has gradually yielded to the naming of man-made places. It is also apparent that naming in the public domain by private citizens or by local agreement has gradually yielded to distant committees, commissions, and standardization. As a result, it becomes clear that whereas no one below a king might decide on important public names in the seventeenth century, by the twentieth century people no longer concerned themselves with public names. In all of this there is solid evidence that human values determine not only the participants in the naming process itself, but also the kinds of names that are given. The naming process continues, yet the delightful names created in the private domain today no longer seek to immortalize self, recall the English countryside, or commemorate a neighbor, but to remove one's self to a castle of fantasy and tranquillity.

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was short and easy to pronounce. The date was approximately 1915.

⁵⁹ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 210. A local informant provided the same data. The post office opened in 1907.

⁶⁰ Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁶¹ These names, and all information concerning them, are the result of field work in the Northern Neck by the author of the article.