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Ski-Trail Names: A New Toponymic Category

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So intensively has mankind settled the habitable portions of the earth that the opportunities for assigning new toponymics on a massive scale have become rare. Hence onomatologists gifted with foresight might well have viewed the burgeoning of the ski industry after World War II with anticipatory glee. Whenever a slope had more than one track for skiers to follow, these tracks would have to be distinguished from each other, and naming was the only sensible way to distinguish them. Here was an entirely new field for naming, a field whose rapid growth was to necessitate the giving of thousands of names within a short period. Further, because these names were normally on private property, the usual governmental and other cultural constraints on length, frivolity, vulgarity, duplication, or truth in labeling would not apply. What would the flood of new names be like?

Our firsthand experience with ski-trail names being limited to those of a few ski areas in one small section of the United States, we were curious as to whether the names we had seen were typical of the country as a whole or even of those beyond the borders of the United States. In an attempt to satisfy our curiosity, we wrote to 440 ski areas in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.[1] We requested from these areas a map of their ski trails and any information they would care to provide about the origins of the trail names. We received responses from 204 U.S. Alpine ski areas in thirty-one states, including 26 from Pacific states, 53 from Rocky Mountain states, 43 from Atlantic seaboard states, 40 from the Midwest, and 42 from New England. In addition, we had replies from 1 Australian, 1 New Zealand, and 18 Canadian ski areas. The areas represented ranged in size from a few with only one (sometimes unnamed) trail to several with a hundred or more named trails. The overwhelming majority of the ski areas represented in the sample are commercial, public areas. A few are private clubs, and a few are federally or state-owned.

About 10 percent of the respondents included at least some information about the origin of their trail names.[2] In all, we collected approximately five thousand trail names, most of them assigned to trails graded for difficulty along a conventional three-point scale of Easiest/More Difficult/Most Difficult (or Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced).

A separate index card was made up for each ski area, and all the trail names for that area were listed on the card, together with the difficulty rating for each trail. To facilitate analysis, all the data were then placed in a computer, and various concordance programs were written to sort the data according to desired categories.

The Language of Trail Names

In general, the names of most ski trails look like what they are: names. The vast majority are brief, consisting of (a) a specific + a generic, (b) a specific alone, or (c) a generic alone, often preceded by *The*.[3]

Specific + Generic	*Specific Alone*	*(The) + Generic*
Alpine Run	Eureka	Meadows
Brennan's Trail	Hornblower	The Alley
Engeldive Cutoff	Penobscot	The Glades
Knob Hill	Sundance	The Ridge
West Bowl	Zonker	The Traverse

Nonetheless, naming a ski trail does not seem to be such a soberly significant act as naming a more public entity like a river or a town, and many ski-trail names break away from the rigid formulas exemplified above. Entire phrases and even clauses are fairly common:

Go for Gold	Do Drop In	Stay Away Joe
All the Way	Know You Don't	Streetcar Named Desire
And Tyler Too	Lost in the Woods	E.Z. Does It
Bill the Lizard	O-Be Joyful	Up 'N Over
Comin' Thru	Pick 'n Shovel	Walk-A-Lot
Cool It	Sixteen to One	Why Not

Like many street names, ski-trail names often consist of numbers or letters of the alphabet. Small areas frequently designate their trails only by single letters or numbers. For example, Bluewood (WA) names its eight trails A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H. Or, as our informant for Starlite (IN) said of their trails, "We refer to them fondly as Numbers 1–11." In larger areas, the letters or numbers normally do not have an ordinal function; e.g., *875* below does not imply other trails named *874* or *876*. For these larger areas, other symbols may also appear; the letters may be acronyms, and the numbers or letters are used without a following generic.

$100 Saddle	KT-22	1876
91	M.B.A.	6 Bells
A-B-C	PDF	7-Up
C.O.D.	Q	360
D & RG	R2 D2	875

Even interjections are not uncommon as trail names; these often involve mild profanity:

Heck No	O-God	Peek-a-Boo
Hells Bells	Omigosh	Ugh
My Oh My	Oops (3 occurrences)	What the Hell
Oh No	Our Father	Yoo Hoo

The lightheartedness – if not downright levity – of many trail-namers is reflected in the use of literary devices that would usually be carefully shunned in the naming of, say, the streets of a new subdivision. Included among these devices are alliteration, rhyme, reduplication, and punning. But, however untrammeled by tradition the namers may feel, they cannot avoid the restrictions imposed by the very nature – in some cases, one might even say, "spirit" – of the English language. For example, from the very beginnings of the language itself, English speakers have had an irrepressible urge to alliterate. Hence it is perhaps not surprising that at least 7 percent of our roughly five thousand trail names alliterate. Subtracting the approximately 25 percent of the names that consist of only one word and thus cannot alliterate would make the figure even higher. A few representative examples are

Jolly Jamboree	Rappahannock Ramble	Moose Mound
Copper Cutoff	Bunny Buster	Giggle Gulch
Bear Boogie	Bitterroot Basin	Chalet Chute
Double Diamond	Mogul Mania	Fisher's Fluke
Galloping Goose	Parmalee's Paradise	Triple Trouble
Meteor Mile	Sa's Psyche	Bark Biter

A few of the alliterating names are preexisting names, clichés, or idioms (e.g., *Candy Cane, Black Beauty, Dipsy Doodle, Lover's Lane*), but most seem to be original formations. For example, Peek'n Peak (NY) has trails named *Little John's Jaunt, Friar Tuck's Trek, Willie Wynkin Woodlands, Robin Hood's Retreat, Nottingham Notch,* etc., perhaps *ad nauseum.*

Alliteration comes naturally to the native speaker of English; rhyming is much more difficult. In fact, while many of us have to learn *not* to alliterate in our more sober literary efforts, most of us have to learn how to rhyme, and most of us never become especially clever at it. This difference in ease of production is clearly reflected in the names of ski trails: there are about 350 alliterating names in our sample, but we identified only 49 rhyming names. And of these 49, over half were either set phrases or imperfect rhymes (often involving a possessive).

Set Phrases	*Imperfect Rhymes*	*Other*
Hells Bells	Nervous Traverse	Hully Gully
Hari Kari	Callie's Alley	Hope Slope
Fleet Street	Swiss Twist	Main Vein
Hot Spot	Bim's Whim	Marie's Trees
Pow Wow	Paige's Rage	Mellow Yellow
Hokey Pokey	Nona's Balogna	Feffie Weffie

Rhyming is difficult in English, but perfect reduplication is almost anathema to the tongue. The majority of common reduplicating words in English today are loans from other languages (e.g., *tutu, bonbon, chi-chi, go-go, chow-chow, tse-tse, beri-beri, cha-cha,* etc.). The few apparently native formations are so connotatively loaded as to be as much verbal gestures as words (*boo-boo, goody-goody, so-so, hush-hush, no-no, pooh-pooh, rah-rah,* etc.). Not surprisingly, then, reduplication is rarely employed in naming ski trails. We identified only nine reduplicating names:

Koo Koo	Beep Beep	Youppe-Youppe
Lip Lip	Boo-Boo	Wah Wah Bowl
Wa-Wa	Bon-bon	Bye Bye Bowl

Of these nine, four are from Canadian ski areas: *Bon-bon* and *Youppe-Youppe* are at Mont Habitant (Que.), and *Wah Wah Bowl* and *Bye Bye Bowl* are at Sunshine Village (Alb.). *Lip Lip* and *Wa-Wa* are both at Mission Ridge (Wash.), an area that includes a number of Indian names. The remaining three names (*Koo Koo, Beep Beep, Boo-Boo*) are all pre-existing words in English.

Of all the self-consciously "literary" names, the most entertaining are the puns, many of them very clever or outrageous. Some of them appear in several different areas. The favorite seems to be *Fanny Hill* (6 occurrences), but *Psychopath* (3), *Powderkeg* (4) and *Racer's Edge* (4) are also popular. The first three should be self explanatory; for the nonskier, the name *Racer's Edge* refers to the fact that one controls downhill skis primarily through "setting an edge," that is, using the metal reinforcement along the side of the ski to dig into the surface of the snow and force the ski to turn. Many of the punning names refer to falling, especially on one's buttocks: *Fanny Hill, The Spillway, Down Fall, Wipe Out, Assay Hill, Bottoms Up, Bear Bottom, Free Fall, Bassackwards, Bummer Flats, Many Falls.*

On many mountains, the generic term *out* is used for an alternative trail that provides either a fast exit from the mountain or an easier trail down the mountain. A number of punning names are made with this generic term: *Chicken Out, Far Out, Inside Out, Wipe Out, Cop Out, Psyched Out, Drop Out, Look Out, White Out.*

Other punning names involve "inside" jokes; that is, one needs to know the name of the mountain or the name(s) of other trails to understand the joke. Examples include Gunstock's (NH) *Out of Sight;* Sun Valley's (ID) *Exhibition* and *Inhibition;* Louise's (Alb.) *Pika* and *Pikaboo;* Snowbird's (UT) *Carbonate* and *Bicarbonate;* and Sunday River's (ME) *Monday Mourning.* Ski trails in former mining areas may have such names as *Vein Glory* or *Over Lode.*

A sampling of the many other miscellaneous puns is

Tucker Doubt	Slidewinder	Mistree Slope
Ski Daddler	Pasture Ability	Road Island
Mogul Mania	Heavenly Daze	Treble Cliff
Stemtation	Para-Chute	Nutter Root

Specifics in Trail Names

Most of the specific terms used in ski-trail names fall into categories similar to those used with other kinds of place names. The names may be purely and dispassionately descriptive of the trail, its position vis-à-vis the mountain or other trails, or of the terrain in which the trail is located. The following are typical of scores and scores of trail names; indeed, many of these names appear over and over again in our sample.

Back Trail	Face	Rope Tow #2
Beginner's Slope	Glade I	Short Cut
Bowl	Green Valley	Ski School Run
Canyon	Hayfield	Slalom Slope
Center Bowl	Headwall	Sunnyside
Chute	Hidden Gully	Switchback
Cliff Run	Mountain Marsh	The Chute
Competition Hill	Old Road	The Traverse
Crossover	Practice Area	Timberline
Cutoff	Race Course	Village Road
Downhill	Ridge Run	White Way

As with many other kinds of place names, the directional words *East, West, North,* and *South* are common as parts of specific ski-trail names. In our data, names with *South* comprised only about 10 percent (instead of 25 percent) of the total compass-point names, probably because, given a choice, ski-area developers will try to avoid building south-facing slopes since the extra exposure to direct sunlight will hasten melting of the snow. In the White Mountains, the south sides of peaks are often too steep for skiing.

East Bowl	West Basin	North Bowl	South Bowl
East Face	West Fork	North Face	South Canyon
East Ridge	West Meadow	North Glade	South Face
East Rim	West Slope	North Road	South Slope

The points of the compass have absolute reference, and "up" and "down" almost always do too, for the simple reason that people are erect animals and rarely stand on their heads. However, "rightness" and "leftness" depend on one's horizontal orientation, which constantly changes. Hence place names with the descriptive terms *Right* and *Left* almost never occur. Our sample has only *Left Bank* and *Right Angle;* clearly, neither refers to the location of the trail on the mountain. On the other hand, all downhill ski areas have — literally by definition — an up-

down orientation, so it is not surprising that we found 113 names including the word *Upper* and 133 names with the word *Lower.* (The inequality in the numbers is not unexpected because use of *Upper* does not necessarily imply a corresponding *Lower,* or vice versa.)

Upper Applejack	Lower Charisma
Upper Columbia	Lower Domingo
Upper Hardscrabble	Lower Hibernation
Upper Snowbird	Lower Zachary

A ski trail is essentially only a two-dimensional snow path with a more or less vertical orientation. In one sense, a trail is the *absence* of anything else – of large rocks, brush, trees, or other impedimenta to the skier. Therefore, there is little need for specific terms to describe the trails themselves. True, some trails may frequently be slushy, icy, muddy, swept bare by winds, or full of roots or rocks. But these are, one hopes, temporary conditions, and, in any case, the operators of a ski area would certainly not want to advertise such conditions by naming a trail *Root Trap* or *Gravel Alley.* Trails do differ in length, width, straightness, and steepness, so one might expect a fair number of specific terms referring to these features. Perhaps surprisingly, they are relatively uncommon. For example, for *Long,* our data have only *Long Chute* and *Long Hollow;* for *Crooked,* only *Crooked Mile;* for *Wide,* only *Wide Connection.* Because every decent ski trail is white, color terms are normally not used to describe ski trails. In sum, the specific terms used as descriptives in naming ski trails are neither numerous nor frequently employed.

Another common type of specific terms in toponymics is the general category of animal, vegetable, and mineral products associated with the entity. All of these are found in ski-trail names. Animals are the most popular; our sample has hundreds of animal names, and over eighty different kinds of animals are represented. The most popular are *Bear* (30), *Deer* (19), *Beaver* (11), *Eagle* (11), *Fox* (11), *Grizzly* (11), and *Ptarmigan* (11), all of them at least possibly associated with skiing terrain. (We omit from our count the 25 occurrences of *Bunny* because these refer to "ski bunnies," a formerly popular term for attractive, young, unskilled female skiers; we have only 8 *Rabbits* in our menagerie). Among the less frequent animal specifics are some whose appearance on or near a ski slope would create a certain amount of consternation: *Chamois, Cheetah, Cobra, Dinosaurus, Dragon, Dromedary, Gator, Kangaroo, Monkey, Mussel, Reindeer, Stingray, Phoenix, Thunderbird,* and *Tiger.*

To construct a ski area, one normally must remove a great deal of

vegetation. Further, smaller plants such as flowers and shrubs are not visible in the winter. For these reasons, plant names are not as common as specifics as are animal names. Still, we identified over seventy different varieties of plants; with the exception, perhaps, of *Cinnamon, Peanut, Pumpkin,*and *Rubarb* [sic], all of them might reasonably be expected to be associated with ski-area terrain. The most frequent specifics are *Pine* (20), *Spruce* (14), *Birch* (11), *Juniper* (6), *Aspen* (5), and *Tamarack* (4). The only relatively common specific that is not the name of a tree is *Columbine* (5 occurrences), again reasonable because the columbine flourishes at the higher altitudes at which ski areas are located.

Of the three kingdoms, the mineral kingdom is by far the least well represented in ski-trail names — rocks of any sort are very unpopular with skiers. Of the sixty-odd mineral names (twelve different minerals) we recorded, all but two, *Limestone* and *Granite,* are better classified as "prior-use" descriptives (see below).

Another common specific term in place names is personal names. This type is so frequent in ski-trail names that we did not even attempt an exact count; the names range from *Agee's Run* to *Zekes Peak.* However, personal ski-trail names differ from other kinds of personal place names in several significant ways. First, given names are much more often used than surnames. This reflects the more casual atmosphere of skiing as leisure activity, but perhaps it is also a manifestation of an unconscious but nonetheless real view of skiing as a cozy "in-group" activity, a sport for the élite. A second characteristic of possessive ski-trail names is the strong tendency for namers to use or create an accompanying generic that either alliterates or, less often, rhymes with the person's name. A few of the many examples are

Betty's Buzz	Houli's Haunt	Jane's Lane
Deborah's Delight	James' Joy	Marie's Trees
Ethan's Alley	Pat's Peril	Mum's Run
Fitz's Folly	Rhoda's Revenge	Paige's Rage
Gretchen's Gold	Shark's Shute	Paulie's Folly[4]
Hal's Hollow	Tony's Twist	Tink's Link

A third way in which personal names as ski-trail names differ from other kinds of personal place names concerns their status as commemorative names. Few ski-trail names commemorate figures outside the world of skiing. Of those that do, more names refer to characters in nursery rhymes and fairy tales, television series, cartoons, novels, etc., than to real people; we found at least twenty such trails named after fictional characters.

Bugs Bunny	Gretel	Rob Roy
Cassidy[5]	Hansel	Robin Hood
Donald Duck	Humpty Dumpty	Sleeping Beauty
Gentle Ben	Jack Spratt [sic]	Snow White
Goldilocks	Pied Piper	Tiny Tim

We have identified only three trails that seem clearly to be named for nationally known figures who were neither Indians nor skiers: *Daniel Webster* (Stratton Mt., VT), *Kit Carson* (Red River, NH), and *Roosevelt* (Pleasant Mt., ME). *JFK* is probably named for John Kennedy, but its location on Jay Peak (VT) makes this less than certain. *John Hancock* also represents a national figure, but its location on Hancock Peak (MA) makes the name almost unavoidable. *Eisenhower Drive* and *Kennedy Drive* are the names of highways, not of presidents; they appear on Hunter Mountain (NY), an area with "thematic" trail names (see below). Similarly, *Marc Antony* and *Cleopatra* are on Camelback Mt. (PA), which follows an Egyptian theme for many of its trails. The same is true for *Pocahontas* on Shawnee Mt. (PA). *Lowell Thomas* is best known as a news commentator to nonskiers, but the trail named for him on Mont Tremblant (Que.) commemorates him as an early ski enthusiast who did much to popularize skiing in the United States and Canada. Finally, *Lincoln Traverse* and *Vanderbilt* on Sugar Bowl (CA) and *Sherman's March* on Burke Mountain (VT) may be named for Abraham Lincoln, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and William Tecumseh Sherman, respectively, but all of these surnames are sufficiently common as to leave the attribution in doubt.

On the other hand, a number of our informants gave us detailed information about trail names commemorating skiers. Typical examples include *Don Warden Schuss* at Dartmouth Skiway (NH), named for a former member of the Dartmouth ski team killed in World War II; *Duskey Bowl* at Rib Mountain (WI), named for Joe Duskey, Jr., 10th Mtn. Div., killed in Italy in World War II; and *Gretchen's Gold* at Sun Valley (ID), named for Gretchen Fraser, the first U.S. woman to win a gold medal in the Winter Olympics. Surely many other trails are named for memorable skiers, though we have verification of this for only a small number. All in all, the striking paucity of references to figures outside the world of skiing seems to support our assumption that trail names reflect the attitude that downhill skiing is a closed world, a sport for the initiated few.

A relatively common type of specific in American place names in general is the shift name, the name transferred from some other already-named entity. We found many shift names among ski-trail names, and probably there are many others that we did not recognize as such. Because

a ski trail is a kind of highway, many of the shift names are those of streets, trails, highways, etc. Typical examples include

Angel St.	Champs Elysees	Jenner Pass
Appalachian Trail	Chisholm Trail	Kancamagus Highway
Broadway	Fifth Avenue	Madison Avenue
Burma Road	Highway One	Santa Fe Trail

But shift names are also occasionally from rivers (e.g., *Allagash, Saco, Salmon River*), cities (e.g., *Bakersfield, Laramie, Newport*), or miscellaneous entities (e.g., *Central Park, Death Valley, Jackson's Hole, Telegraph Hill*). Except for the New York City street names like *Madison Avenue,* most shift names are drawn from relatively nearby areas. For example, Loon Mountain's (NH) *Angel St.* is almost surely a (misspelled) transfer from Angell Street in Providence, RI; some of the developers were from Providence.

Despite what the *Burma Road* and *Champs Elysees* listed above might imply, shift names of ski trails are only rarely from outside the continental United States. This is somewhat surprising because one might expect at least names borrowed from the famous ski areas in the Swiss and Austrian Alps. But of the names originating from foreign mountains or ski areas, *Innsbruck, Grindelwald, Kilimanjaro, Matterhorn,* and *Zermatt* are all at Whitecap (WI), nearly all of whose trail names are thematic (see below). Snowmass' (CO) *Zugspitze* got its name when Aspen and Garmisch, Germany, became sister cities and exchanged trail names. Aside from these, Hunter's (NY) *Annapurna* stands virtually alone as a shift name from a mountain outside the United States. To the cynic, the conspicuous absence of any trails named *Jungfrau, Eiger,* or *Dom* might suggest that American ski-area operators consider it prudent not to remind their clientele of the competition.

Another possible source of shift names is other ski trails. Many skiers are highly mobile and may carry information about trail names from one area of the country to another. Further, most ski-area developers are themselves skiers or former skiers and may draw on their memories of trails they have skied elsewhere when they come to name the trails in their own areas. However, without detailed knowledge of the history and dates of ski areas, this source is impossible to demonstrate. Although we have hundreds of duplicate names in our sample, many of them are such obvious names that they likely have been created independently over and over again. Examples would include *Alpine* (10 occurrences), *Bonanza* (10), *Broadway* (15), *Ridge Run* (16), *Roller Coaster* (9), *Sidewinder* (7), and *Twister* (6). Even as seemingly unlikely a name as *Dipsy Doodle* (8

occurrences) and its variants *Timber Doodle* and *Dixie Doodle* is not necessarily borrowed, because Dipsy Doodle is the name of a technique invented by cinematographer Dick Durrance for skiing in powder.[6]

Totally independent invention is less likely for some of the punning names like *Fanny Hill* (6 occurrences) or for specialized terms relating to activities other than skiing, such as *Gandy Dancer* (6 occurrences). In the latter instance, the name perhaps originated in an area where railroad traditions were strong and then was borrowed by other areas because it has what one informant called "a nice ring."

Incidents as sources of place names are notoriously elusive, and the tales of incidents frequently bear more embroidery than fabric. Conversely, what may appear to be a straightforward descriptive or possessive name may actually refer to an incident. We guessed correctly that *Dead Horse Park* was an incidental name: our informant from Snowmass (CO) said, "An old skeleton of a dead horse was found in the park. The head of the horse sits in the ski corporation planning office." But, had we not been told otherwise, we would have assumed that Mission Ridge's (WA) *Bomber Bowl* was simply another hyperbolic name like *Blitz, Boomerang,* or *White Lightning*. However, our informant told us that it is so named because a B-24 crashed in the area in 1943 and parts of the plane are still there. Similarly, of Snowmass' (CO) *Banzai Ridge,* our informant said, "There is a beautiful, gnarled, twisted old tree on it which looks like a giant *bonsai* tree. This was quickly misunderstood and corrupted to *banzai* tree, and thence *Banzai Ridge* to all the tour skiers." Sunshine Village's (Alb.) *Hill 205* received its name when "a 205 helicopter didn't quite make it to the top and crashed there during lift construction." Perhaps slightly less convincing but more entertaining is the explanation for Snowmass' *Naked Lady:* "Hal Hartman was in charge of the trail crew at the time. He had Sheriff Herwick's son working for him, and Herwick brought one of the early *Playboy* magazines to work and taped the centerfold onto one of the trees. This shocked Hal a bit. Hence the name Naked Lady trail."

In addition to the various familiar types of place-name specifics already discussed, two other broad categories of specific terms emerged as we examined our data. Both are very common indeed. For want of established terms to label these categories, we have called them "nostalgic" names and "fantasy" names. The two types are not totally unrelated.

Nostalgic names are those recalling earlier days and prior uses or inhabitants of the area. Any mountain steep enough to provide a challenge to skiers is also so rugged that its prior uses to man are limited. Thus the types of prior-use categories that we have identified are restricted to

logging, mining, and railroading; sometimes more than one is commemorated in a single area, e.g., Breckenridge's (CO) *Sawmill* and *Mine Shaft,* or Vail's (CO) *Tin Pants* and *Gandy Dancer.*[7] Predictably, most mining names appear in ski areas west of the 100th meridian; railroading and logging names appear all over the United States and Canada. A typical sample of mining-related specific names is

Claim Jumper	Lost Prospector	Over Lode
Clementine	Lucky Strike	Pay Dirt
Copper Cutoff	Miner's Delight	Platinum
Fool's Gold	Motherlode	Prospector's Lane

Among the railroad-related names are

Dead Spike	Loose Caboose	Scissorbill[8]
Derailer	Narrow Gauge	Stoker
Golden Spike	Round House	Trestle
Great Northern	Sleeper	Tiehack[8]

Some of the logging-related names are

Ball Hooter[9]	Gearjammer[9]	Lumber Jack
Blue Ox	Gig Trail[9]	Sawmill
Cat Skinner[9]	Log Jam	Timber Trail
Chainsaw	Logger's Loop	Whistle Punk[9]

Another category of nostalgic names relates to the concept of the Wild West and frontier days as portrayed in movie westerns and on television programs. Again, a few representative examples:

Bandido	Desperado	Rustler's Revenge
Calamity Jane	Gunsmoke	Stage Coach
Calf Roper	Maverick	Stampede
Cowpoke's Cruise	Packsaddle Bowl	Wrangler

The romance of the semi-mythological Wild West belongs to the entire nation – even to the entire world – and not just to the western areas of the United States. Therefore, while logging, mining, and railroading names are generally confined to areas in which these activities actually occurred, Wild West names appear all over the map. For just the names listed above, examples are found in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Minnesota, British Columbia, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Montana, New Mexico, and Nevada.

The most pervasive by far of nostalgic names, however, involve Indians. In addition to accounting for nearly a fifth of the themes for ski areas which follow a thematic naming procedure (see below), at least one or two specific terms relating to Indians appear in the majority of ski trails not using thematic names. At least 24 different American Indian tribal names appear in ski-trail names, including *Abnaki, Algonquin, Apache, Assiniboine, Iroquois, Kootenay, Lenape, Mohawk, Mohican, Nahanni,*

Oneida, Penobscot, Seneca, Shawnee, Sioux, Sitka, Ute. Even more names are shift names from more or less local Indian place names: *Allagash, Alleghany, Ammonoosuc, Androscoggin, Appalachian, Arkansas, Connecticut, Kancamagus, Katsuk, Kennebec, Kinnikinick, Kiwa, Lackawanna, Mississippi, Missouri, Monadnock, Moosic, Pepacton, Piscataquis, Pocono, Pukaswa, Rappahannock, Sacandaga, Saco, Seboomook, Skookum, Susquehanna, Tobyhanna, Toiyabe, Umbagog, Williwaw.*[10]

With a few notable exceptions (e.g., *Aztec* in Colorado), the Indian tribal and place names of ski trails are reasonable for the regions in which they appear. That is, *Abnaki* appears as a trail name in New Hampshire and Maine, *Blackfoot* in Wyoming, *Gros Ventre* in Montana, *Sioux* in Minnesota, *Ute* in Colorado, etc. The *Mohawk Trail* does seem a bit misplaced in California, but, as we will explain, California is anomalous with respect to Indian names.

Individual Indians are commemorated in *Chief Joseph Bowl, Geronimo, Montezuma, Tecumseh, Pocahontas, Sacajewea* [sic], and *Sitting Bull.* The widespread distribution of Indian names is exemplified by the fact that, of these seven personal names, only two are from the same ski area – *Chief Joseph Bowl* and *Sitting Bull* are at Grand Targhee (WY). The rest are from Illinois, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Montana.

Apart from Indian place names and personal names, scores and scores of trails have specific terms referring to Indians in one way or another:

Arrowhead	Kachina Run	Sachem
Big Brave	Papoose	Thunderbird
Broken Arrow	Peace Pipe	Tomahawk
Firewater	Pow Wow	Warpath

And then there are large numbers of what could be called pseudo-Indian names, names like *Good Medicine, Heep Steep, Little Crow,* and *Plenty Coups.*

As we were examining our long list of Indian ski-trail names, we were surprised to see how few of them appeared in California. We had a total of 482 trail names from sixteen different ski areas in California – nearly 10 percent of all trail names recorded. It is difficult to state an exact figure for the total number of Indian names because we were unsure of the etymology of some names and doubtful as to whether other names (e.g., *The Scout*) should be classified as Indian. However, we did have 160 names that we considered unambiguously Indian or relating to Indians. Of these, only 3, or less than 2 percent, appeared in California. One of these is the anachoristic *Mohawk Trail* at Alpine Meadows, Tahoe City. The second

is *Super Squaw,* a name that was almost inevitable because the trail is located at Squaw Valley. The third is *Mokelumne* at Kirkwood; Mokelumne is the name of a nearby river and mountain peak. It seems strange that California, whose Hollywood has done so much to create the image that most Americans have of the American Indian, should be so parsimonious in its assignment of Indian names to ski trails – particularly since California's Amerindian population was very dense in prehistoric times. But these were the Yokuts, the Maidu, the Wintun, the Pomo Indians, sedentary food-gatherers who ate, among other delicacies, caterpillars, grasshoppers, and maggots. Or they were the Gabrieleño Indians, with their jimson-weed cult. Perhaps their habits were so inharmonious with the image of the Indian that Hollywood has perpetrated and perpetuated that ski-trail namers have found it more convenient to ignore Indians completely.

In addition to the nostalgic names, we mentioned earlier the category of fantasy names. We use this term as a catchall for names, metaphorical and usually hyperbolic, relating to such things as danger, speed, derring-do, egotism, pleasure, guns, violent weather, devils and hell, and heaven and the heavens. (Some of these more or less arbitrary divisions overlap.) For all of these categories, examples are so numerous that we can list only a few.

- Danger: Choker, Dynamite, Explosion, Fireball, Flame Out, Formidable, Gore-E-Gully, Jaws of Death, Kamikaze, Muerte, Plummet, Sayonara, Shinbreaker, Shock, Suicide, Tightrope, Vertigo, Widowmaker
- Speed: Air Mail, Blue Streak, Clipper, Comet, Freewheeler, Go Devil, Javelin, Mach 5, Minute Mile, Outer Orbit, Rocket, Roller Coaster, Slingshot, The Flash, The Whip, Wildfire
- Derring-Do: Committed, Confidence, Courageous, Defiance, Hotshot, Insane, Perseverance, Playboy, Rebel, Sanguinary, Triumph, True Grit, Utter Abandon
- Egotism: Alter Ego, Catharsis, Ego Alley, Extrovert, Inspiration, Paranoid Flats, Pipe Dream, Psyched Out, Spotlight, Superstar, The Showoff, Watch Me
- Pleasure: Cloud 9, Delight, Ecstasy, Fantastic, Frolic, Holiday, Jubilee, Magnifico, Matchless, Nirvana, Rhapsody, Serenity, Sheer Bliss, Spectacular, Tranquility
- Guns: Derringer, Fast Draw, Lucky Shot, Pistol, Powder Keg, Quick Draw, Recoil, Ricochet, Rifleshot Notch, Shotgun Gulch, Six Shooter, Trigger

• Violent Weather: Blizzard, Cyclone, Lightning, Northeaster, Stormy, Tempest, Thunderbolt, Twister, Typhoon

• Devils and Hell: Demon, Devil's Alley (Crotch, Delight, Drop, Elbow, Playground, etc.), Diablo, Hell's Crossing, Hellroaring, Inferno, Lucifers Leap, Satan's Revenge

• Heaven and the Heavens: Angel's Tread, Angel's Wiggle, Divinity, Galaxy 3200, Hallelujah, Heavenly, Kingdom Come, Nova Special, Paradise, Southern Cross, The Galaxy, the Milky Way

As we have mentioned, many ski areas have thematic names; that is, some or all of their trail names relate to the same general (or even highly specific) semantic field. The decision as to whether or not to call the ski area thematic was not particularly easy to make: clearly, we did not want to say that the namers had followed a theme just because two trails out of twenty were named *Hiz* and *Herz,* or *Peregrine* and *Goshawk.* On the other hand, we felt that an area should be called thematic even if a number of its trails did not reflect the theme. Finally, we decided to classify the area as thematic if four or more of its trail names shared one theme. With this as our criterion, we discovered that 56 out of our 224 areas, or exactly 25 percent, were thematic. These ranged from a low of four names on the same theme to a high of all names on the same theme.

For the most part, the fewer the number of trails, the more likely that every trail name follows the theme. This is understandable; the more trails there are to be named, the more difficult it is for the namers to come up with related ideas. Of course, the difficulty of being consistent in the thematic names also depends partly on the theme itself. For example, if one's theme is Indian names or animal life, the possibilities are, practically speaking, limitless. But if, like Haystack (VT), one chooses the theme of hay, one quickly runs out of reasonable names. Hence Haystack has *Pitchfork, Hayseed, Last Straw, Haywire,* and *Needle* – but also *Skid Row, Upper Dutchman, 007, Outcast,* etc.

Thematic trail-naming appears all over the United States and Canada. By far the most popular theme is Indians, a theme accounting for 10 out of the 56 thematic areas. The next most popular theme is "heaven and hell," with 3 areas.[11] The themes of river names, bootlegging and liquor, cats, the sky and the universe, Scotland, Christmas, mining, and Alice in Wonderland are all used by 2 areas. The remaining 27 themes are so diverse as to defy generalization. They include, for example, Egypt, Canadian national parks, magic, Robin Hood, logging, death, automobile names, New York City streets and landmarks, cattle-raising, Bambi, and pine trees.

Twenty-one of the 56 themes seem to have been inspired by the name of

the mountain itself. In many cases, the mountain name predated the ski area; in other cases, we cannot be sure. One example of a preexisting mountain name that triggered the theme is Jackson's (NH) Wildcat Mountain and its trail names of *Polecat, Bobcat, Snowcat Slope, Tomcat, Lynx, Cougar, Cattrack, Alley Cat, Catapault,* and *Catenary*. Buchanan's (MI) Royal Valley probably antedates its trail names of *Prince, Princess, Jester's Bowl, Queen's Walk,* and *King's Dive*. The same is true for Albion's (ID) Magic Mountain with its *Open Sesame, Pocus, Lucky Piece, Hocus, Wizard, Witch, Tricky, Magic Bowl, Sorcerer,* and *Spell*. On the other hand, Camden's (ME) Snowbowl (on Ragged Mountain) is in no way related to its trail names of *Windjammer, Coaster, Spinnaker, Lookout, Half Hitch, Clipper, Northeaster,* and *Mussel Ridge*.

Provo's (UT) Sundance and Taos' (NM) Taos Ski Valley are special cases. Sundance is owned by the actor Robert Redford, and its names reflect the influence of the movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and of Western culture in general: *Maverick, Outlaw, Diamondback, Roundup, Cassidy, Ramrod, Top Gun, Quickdraw, Badlands,* etc. Taos' head, Ernie Blake, is a professor of German history. Hence, many of Taos' trail names are somewhat esoteric names from German history or culture: *Ruebezahl, Blitz, Oster, Fabian, Staufferberg, Treskow,* and *Lorelei* are some examples.[12]

We have already discussed Indian trail names at some length, but a few more observations are in order here. The ten ski areas that have an Indian theme divide neatly into two groups (with one stubborn exception): those that use real Indian words – usually tribal and place names – and those that use English translations or what we have previously called pseudo-Indian terms. The latter group, however, may include the names of famous individual Indians. Examples will make the point clear; in the lists below, all of the Indian names from each area are given.

- Bellayre Mt. (NY): Mohican, Oneida, Huron, Iroquois, Pepacton, Seneca, Esopus, Winnisook, Tongora, Wanatuska, Mohawk, Onteora, Utsayantha, Algonquin, Peckamoose
- Elk Mt. (PA): Delaware, Tioga, Lenape, Moosic, Seneca, Susquehanna, Lackawanna, Tunkhannock, Wyalusing
- Okemo (VT): Papoose, Sachem, Ugh, Bow, Squaw, Geronimo, Chief, Arrow, Tomahawk, Peacepipe, Brave, Quiver, Wardance
- Sugar Hills (MN): Little Chief, Mad Bear, Crazy Horse, Little Two Kettles, Black Fox, Little No-Heart, Sitting Squaw, Big Moose, Bear Paw, Flying Deer, Hungry Wolf, Blue Dog, Crow King, Big Thunder, Thunder Glade, Thunder Trail, Red Dog, Jumping Badger, Fire Thunder, Red Thunder

Our refractory ski area is Teton Pass (MT), which has trails named *Papoose, Travois Trail, Plenty Coups, Thunderbird, Big Bear, Whoop Up, Warpath, Crazy Horse, Sundance, Little Bighorn, Buffalo Jump, Firewater, Tomahawk, Stay Away Joe, Heep Steep,* and *Yellow Hair* – but also trails named *Cree, Gros Ventre, Piegan,* and *Cherokee.*

A second point concerns the distribution of ski areas with Indian themes. The ten areas are in seven states: Vermont (1), Massachusetts (1), New York (1), Pennsylvania (3), Minnesota (2), Montana (1), Wyoming (1). Noticeably absent are any of the more southern Rocky Mountain states, the Southwest, and California. (Areas in all these regions except California have a liberal sprinkling of Indian names; it is merely that the Indian theme does not appear here.) Our sample of 56 areas is not very large, and this finding could be simply a statistical accident. On the other hand, these are precisely the areas with large Indian populations today. It may be that Indian themes were consciously or unconsciously not considered in order to avoid possible offense to Indians or charges of racism.[13] It may also be that, for skiers who are likely to have day-to-day contact with Indians, the Indian theme is not sufficiently nostalgic.[14]

This skewed distribution of Indian themes suggests another, broader question: are there entire categories of taboo names? By taboo names, we mean names that are not found, subjects which, by their absence, suggest that they are considered inappropriate for use in naming trails. Just because a semantic area is not represented in ski-trail names does not, of course, mean that it is taboo. It may simply be inappropriate for other reasons. That is, the lack of trail names like *Cross-Stitch* and *French Knot* or *Se-Tenant* and *Tete Beche* is explainable by the fact that embroidery and philately are indoor, sedentary activities, about as far from a schuss down a powdery slope in 10° F. weather as one can get.

However, there are many conceivable names or subjects that would fit in nicely, *ceteris paribus,* with the over-all motifs of excitement, violence, daring, difficulty, danger, nostalgia, etc., that we have already discussed. For example, weather names like *Cyclone, Twister,* and *Typhoon* are common, and we counted 35 different names beginning with the word *snow.* Snow is highly desirable on a ski slope; cyclones, twisters, and typhoons, while highly undesirable, are also highly unlikely occurrences on ski slopes. Rain is a common weather phenomenon on ski slopes, so common that in Jackson, New Hampshire, for example, a fine drizzle is sometimes jestingly referred to as "Jackson powder." But rain is most unwelcome to skiers, and not one of our five thousand trail names includes the word *rain.*[15] Ice is similarly common and similarly unwelcome. In some areas, some trails are famous for being icy most of the

time. But the word *ice* is never used in a name – *Iceberg Gulch* and *Iceberg Ridge* are not exceptions because there is no real threat of encountering an iceberg on a downhill run. Other all-too-frequent weather or trail conditions that are carefully sidestepped in trail-naming are mud, slush, roots, bare spots, and thaws.

Danger and accidents provide the theme for many trail names, but the danger must not be real and the accidents cannot be serious. *Broken Arrow* is acceptable, but *Broken Ankle* or *Broken Ski* is not. As we noted earlier, references to falling are quite common in trail names. These are "funny" falls, almost always on one's posterior. The human animal's backside is so well padded by nature that a fall on the buttocks rarely leads to serious injury. But a moment's reflection will reveal, even to the nonskier, that direct falls on one's buttucks are not especially frequent on the ski slopes because the solid fusion of boot and ski forms a ⊥-shaped brace, thus hindering a fall straight back (as often occurs in skating). Much more common is a fall sideways onto one's shoulder and thigh. The most dangerous kind of fall is the "header," in which one falls forward onto one's head; aside from possible head injuries, it may lead to a broken ankle or a broken leg if one's safety release does not separate leg from ski in time. For all the many *Fanny Hills, Bassackwards,* and *Bummer Flats* that we recorded, we found but one *Header*. Perhaps the fact that this trail is located at Killington (VT) is not irrelevant.

The earlier lists of "fantasy" names contained many names referring to violence and even warfare. However, few trail names rehearse the real fears regarding violence and war in our society today. *Bandido, Gunslinger,* and *Ambush* are acceptable; *The Mugger* and *Holdup Hollow* are not. Further, trails are not named *Atomic,*[16] *Nuclear Blast, Radioactive Run,* or *Neutron Bomb*. Among the many punning names involving the generic term *Out*, there is no *Fall Out*.

Mild profanity is acceptable in ski-trail names (e.g., *O-God, What the Hell, JC*), but obscenity is not. Skiers themselves may frequently describe difficult trails or an unpleasant run with obscenities, but *The Pisser* and its four-letter friends do not appear on trail signs or trail maps.

We mentioned earlier the absence of Indian themes for ski-trail names in certain parts of the United States. Aside from Indians, no other minorities or minority cultures are commemorated in ski-trail names, although there are some obvious candidates. For example, *Jumping Bean, Hot Tamale, Big Enchilada, Susie's Siesta,* and *Mexican Hat Dance* would seem to capture nicely the apparently sought-after tone of lightheartedness and excitement. But no such Mexican – or Afro-American, Hispanic, Asian, Portuguese, Italian, etc. – themes or even individual names

appear.[17] One possible explanation for these omissions is the fact that, in most areas, few members of minority groups are to be seen on the slopes; skiing is a sport of the well-to-do upper middle class.

In general, there is little evidence of dialectal differences in the specific terms of ski-trail names from one part of North America to another. One obvious exception is the names from areas in French-speaking Canada: *Sous-Bois IV, Tortue,* and *Beauchemin* represent, not just a different dialect, but an entirely different language. Still, even in these areas, English names tend to creep in. At Mont Saint-Sauveur (Que.), *Blue, Redbird,* and *Nordic* descend the mountain beside *Côte 72, Dévaleuse,* and *Grand Elan.* The trail names from English-speaking Canada are indistinguishable from the names for trails in U.S. ski areas. Of the 12 names recorded for Hidden Valley Highlands (Ont.), only 3 do not appear at least once on some U.S. slope, and these 3 (*Chalet Chute, Wild Cat,* and *Members Dip*) at least sound like typical U.S. names. We have trail names for only one area each in Australia and New Zealand. Aside from Thredbo's (N.S.W.) *Kareela* (possibly a native name), virtually all the trail names would be at home on a U.S. trail map. Examples include Mount Hutt's (N.Z.) *Morning Glory, Broadway, Virgin Mile,* and *The Towers,* and Thredbo's *Bunny Walk, Ridge Traverse, Cat Walk,* and *Cannonball.*

As we noted earlier, regional differences do appear in the Indian names. *Nahannis* and *Blackfeet* are in the Northwest, while *Penobscots* and *Oneidas* are in the East. Spanish words or pseudo-Spanish words (e.g., *El Toro, El Funko*) are confined to the Rocky Mountain states or the Southwest. References to abominable snowmen could conceivably appear anywhere in North America, but the more specific terms *Yeti* and *Bigfoot* predictably occur only in the Pacific Northwest.

A few localisms do appear that probably would not be understood very far outside the areas in which they appear. Three that we identified are all terms for inhabitants of particular states or areas: Whiteface's (NY) *Appleknocker* is a term for a resident of upstate New York, and Stratton's (VT) *Down Easter* is a name for a citizen of Maine. Our informant from Louise (Alb.) told us that the trail name *Prunepicker* commemorates the term used by a local skier-manager "to describe any skier that is slower than you are and is always in your way." However, Wentworth and Flexner's *Dictionary of American Slang*[18] records *prune-picker* as a [presumably pejorative] term for a Californian, current about 1915 in U.S. Navy and tramp slang. The trail-namer may not — or may — have been aware of this earlier meaning.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this article, most ski trails are rated according to difficulty. Standardized symbols on trail markers indicate the level of difficulty: Circles are used for the easiest trails, squares for intermediate trails, and diamonds for the most difficult trails. In addition to this shape differentiation, many areas also add color-coding, with green for the easiest level, blue for intermediate, and black for most difficult. Of course, for many trails, the skiers can see for themselves whether the trail is likely to be beyond their ability. Thus the skier need not rely on the name of a trail for information about its difficulty. Nonetheless, it would be surprising if there were no correlation at all between the names of trails and their difficulty.

Assume that you are a timid, inexperienced skier who last had skis on eight years ago, and that was at a small area in Iowa. You have been persuaded to go skiing at a gigantic Rocky Mountain resort with 5,000 trails. None of the trails are marked with the usual symbols indicating difficulty, so you must be guided by trail names alone. How can you guarantee that you won't end up on the same slope with the ski team and that you will leave the mountain intact? For the majority of the 5,000 trails, the name is not a sure guide, but we can provide a few rules that will give you a choice of about a hundred trails absolutely guaranteed to be rated Easiest.[19]

1. Any trail that includes in its name the words *Papoose, Novice, Practice,* or *Gentle* is a sure bet. So is *Sitzmark.* The odds are heavily in your favor if the trail name includes *Beginner's, School,* or *Snowflake.* Odds are about 2 to 1 that the trail is Easiest if its name includes *Bunny, Open, Sleepy, Sugar, Yellow,* or *Slow.* However, the word *Easy* itself gives you only 4 to 3 odds, and if you lose, you can even end up on a Most Difficult trail.

2. You will almost never go wrong if you pick trails whose names include conventional words, phrases, or idioms with connotations of slowness, easiness, gentleness, or diminutiveness (but *not* necessarily smallness as such). Thus you are safe with *Duck Soup, Minor Matter, No Problem, Pussycat, Rocking Chair, Sesame Street, Cream Puff, Ho Hum, Peanut, Pipsqueak, Snail, Snoozer, Tiny Tim,* or *Play Yard.*

3. A trail with the name of a flower is usually Easiest: *Azalea, Buttercup, Larkspur, Morning Glory, Four O'Clock, Rosebud.* But watch out for *Edelweiss* and *Columbine;* these two flowers are too closely associated with the (difficult) Alps and higher elevations. *Briarroses* have thorns.

4. Trails whose names include terms for baby animals or small, helpless, unthreatening animals are usually Easiest: *Bambi, Bear Cub, Cot-*

tontail, Fawn. However, be prepared for unpleasant surprises: A *Rabbit, Squirrel,* or *Chicken* may turn out to be Most Difficult. With *Deer,* you have a 50-50 chance of finding an Easiest trail.

5. Never take a trail whose name includes the name of a tree (after all, those trees may be *in* the trail). You will never find an Easiest trail named *Aspen, Juniper,* or *Tamarack,* and your chances are less than 1 in 4 (or much worse) with *Birch, Pine,* and *Spruce.*

6. As a general rule, avoid any trail whose name mentions or implies racing, speed, difficulty, steepness, danger, guns, large animals, devils or hell, violent weather, fire, glory, mental instability, or showing off. Avoid any trail whose name begins with the letter *Z.*

If you are an expert skier always seeking new challenges, you can change the affirmatives in the above rules to negatives, and vice versa. If you are a relatively competent skier but not a dare-devil, a skier who wants to avoid the klutzes and the hotshots alike, your problem is more serious. Trails named *Mistletoe, Rolling,* or *Tower* will always be Intermediate, but this gives you a total of only 11 trails to choose from. You will have a slightly better than 50-50 chance of finding yourself on an Intermediate trail if you choose one whose name begins with *Upper* or *Lower.* We can give you 5 to 3 odds for trails named *Bonanza, Boomerang, Canyon, Copper, Gold, King, Maverick, Mogul,* and *Paradise.* Your problem is compounded by the fact that many trails are rated Intermediate on one end and either Easiest or Most Difficult on the other; occasionally, the same trail may include all three ratings. In short, the specific name of a trail is an imperfect guide to its difficulty, especially at the Intermediate level.

Generics in Trail Names

The primary function of a generic term in a place name is to specify what kind of entity is being named; the specific distinguishes it from other entities of the same class, while the generic distinguishes it from entities of other classes. In contexts where the specific term for the entity is both unique and widely familiar, the generic term becomes unnecessary and is often dropped in speech (''I was turning left onto Larch''; ''Superior is a lot bigger than Erie''; ''You can't see Hood from here''). On the slopes of a ski area, there is really little need for generic terms at all because, except for lifts or the occasional structure such as a first-aid station (neither of which is likely to be confused with a trail), the trails are the only thing on the mountain, and they are the only reason people are on the mountain.

Furthermore, there are only two basic kinds of trails: (1) the regular, vertical trails down the mountain, and (2) shorter, more or less horizontal trails that serve to connect two or more vertical trails. If these linking trails are identified as such by a generic term, then the absence of a generic on a regular trail is sufficient to identify it as such. Perhaps because generic terms are normally redundant in ski-trail names, a high proportion of ski trails have no generic at all, and, of those that do, the generics often violate the conventions for generic terms observed in most other kinds of place names.

Essentially, then, there are three kinds of names: (1) those with no generic at all, (2) those in which the generic, with or without an accompanying *The* or a following number, constitutes the entire name, and (3) those with both a specific and a generic. For example:

No Generic	*Generic Only*	*Specific and Generic*
Argyle	Glade 3	Jupiter Access
Faro	Loop	Ramble Cutback
Pushover	The Gully	Dallas Freeway
Screwdriver	The Link	Storm Peak
Zulu Queen	The Straits	Sullivan's Trail

Of the trail names consisting of a generic without a specific term, a rather surprisingly high percentage are not accompanied by either a definite article or a following number. For example, of 50 trails with the generic *Chute,* 13 are simply *Chute;* only 2 are *The Chute.* Of 11 with the generic *Headwall,* 8 are simply *Headwall,* and none is *The Headwall.*[20] For those unaccustomed to trail names, this may seem somewhat unsatisfying, like naming one's dog *Dog.*

When a generic is used with a place name, one assumes that it defines the entity; it tells what it is. The definition may be a bit exaggerated, as when a 800-foot elevation is called *Webster Mountain* or a settlement of 600 people is named *Meredith City.* (Shift names like *Fall River* do, of course, violate this principle.) One does not expect the generic to tell where the entity is located, whether someone is pleased with it, or what it looks like. When we examined all the words in ski-trail names that "felt" like generics to us, we discovered that the great majority of them did not meet this criterion. We ultimately – and sometimes arbitrarily – assigned all generics to one of seven categories: (1) true generics, (2) transfer generics, (3) locative generics, (4) shift generics, (5) descriptive generics, (6) functional generics, and (7) affective generics.

True generics are those that state what the trail is: *Crossover, Buckhorn Cutoff, Logger's Loop, Turkey Run, Forest Trail, High Traverse.*

Transfer generics equate the trail to a highway of some kind: *Allais Alley, Red Avenue, Lower Boulevard, Sterner Catwalk, Shady Lane, Coolidge Street, Two Sled Road.*

Locative generics tell where the trail is located, not what it is. This is the largest category of ski-trail generics with respect to number of different terms: *East Bowl, Canyon, The Face, Silver Glade, Greasy Gulch, Strawberry Hill, Foxy Hollow, Sherwood Meadows, Parley's Park, Windy Ridge, Tiger Slope, Thunder Saddle.*

Shift generics differ from transfer generics in that they refer to an entirely different kind of entity. They also differ from many shift names in that the entity may be nowhere near the trail (e.g., *Lake Louise* at Homewood, *CA*: *Bailey's Beach, Cathedral Brook, Pig City, Deer Lake.*

Descriptive generics tell something about the trail – its size, shape, appearance: *Flying Mile, Ophir Loop, Needle's Eye, Bull Nose, Powder Puff.*

Functional generics tell what the trail is used for: *Exhibition, Lenny's Leap, Valley Plunge, Polecat Schuss, Maple Slalom.*

Affective generics are used with possessive words and describe how the trail is related to the person or thing named; many of these generics alliterate with the name of the person or thing: *Cooley's Caper, Mervyn's Choice, Devil's Delight, Kiefers Dream, Fisher's Folly, Teddy's Frolic, Rustler's Revenge, Racer's Ruin.*

Despite this great variety in types and examples of generics, only a few, and all of them falling into the categories of true, locative, or transfer generics, account for the overwhelming majority of generics used in ski-trail names. Only 43 different generics appeared more than ten times each in our 5,000-name sample; only 20 different ones appeared over twenty times each:

Alley (26)	Face (47)	Lane (23)	Slope (81)
Bowl (137)	Glade(s) (49)	Out (22)	Street (39)
Broadway (22)[21]	Gulch (22)	Ridge (57)	Trail (119)
Chute (50)	Hill (53)	Road (56)	Traverse (23)
Cutoff (34)	Hollow (23)	Run (228)	Way (24)

These figures show that *Run* is by far the most popular term, with almost twice as many occurrences as the next two contenders, *Bowl* and *Trail.* Of the three, *Run* and *Trail* are what we have termed true generics, and *Bowl* is what we call a locative generic. All of this brings up the question of skiers' terminology when they are not calling a trail by name.

In general, skiers ski *at* a ski area or resort; the area name may or may not be the name of the mountain. One skis *on* the mountain. (In reality, downhill skiers only ski down a mountain, having to rely on tows or lifts

to take them up the mountain; nevertheless, *on* is the preposition used.) The general term for the path that one follows is either a *trail* or a *run* or both, although many skiers refer to the path itself as a *trail* and to an individual experience on that path as a *run*. That is, one might say, "I had a couple of good runs on that trail this morning, but my later runs were bad because it got too slick." For other skiers, the all-purpose generic is *run*. We could find no clear evidence for regional differences in usage here; the two terms compete all over the country. If *trail* is the preferred generic for whoever makes up the map, then the map is labeled a *trail map* – but the trails on the map may be called either *Trails* or *Runs* or even both. If *run* is the preferred generic for the map-maker, the map is usually called a *mountain guide;* in any case, it is not called a *run guide*. Again, the actual trails may (or may not) include both *Trails* and *Runs*.

Of the generic terms for which we had a sufficiently large number of exemplars to provide a reasonable sample, most show no dialectal differences. A few differences, or at least strong tendencies, did appear, however. All our examples of *Gully* (15), *Park* (17)[22], and *Headwall* (11)[23] were in Western states. A disproportionate number, but not all, of the occurrences of *Bowl* (137), *Canyon* (15), *Face* (47), *Gulch* (22), and *Hollow* (23) were also outside the East. Of these, at least *bowls, canyons,* and *faces* are topographical configurations that are less common in the East than in the West, so the difference is due as much to terrain as to dialect.

The one instance for which we do seem to have clear evidence for a dialectal difference is in the term for a horizontally oriented connecting trail. All our examples of *Link* (9) and *Crossover* (10) are from East Coast states (mostly New England). The corresponding non-Eastern terms seem to be *Traverse* ((23) and *Cutoff* (34). Both these latter terms also appear in the East, but in smaller proportions than would be expected, other things being equal.

With a few exceptions, the generics used in naming trails have little correlation with the difficulty ratings of the trails. Trails whose names include the generics *Area, Hill, Lane, Meadows,* or *Road* are more likely than not to be rated Easiest. Trails called *Gulch, Loop, Meadow, Park,* or *Way* are most likely to be Intermediate trails. Trails called *Face, Glades, Headwall,* or *Lift Line* are most likely to be Most Difficult. Of these Most Difficult generics, *Face* and *Headwall* are self-explanatory. *Glades* are probably Most Difficult because skiers must avoid hitting trees in or near the trail. *Lift Lines* are Most Difficult, first, because lifts usually follow the steepest part of the slope in order to take the shortest route to the top, and, second, because skiers must avoid hitting the supports for the lifts.

(This danger is so real that many areas now pad the bottom of the support posts).

How Do Ski Trails Get Their Names?

Unfortunately, out of the 5,000 ski-trail names that we recorded, we received information on the origins of only about two hundred names. This is a pity because interesting tales may lie behind even such apparently obvious and common names as *Single Cedar* or *Timberline.* For example, had we not been informed otherwise, we would have assumed that the name *Schooner* was simply another metaphorical name like *Clipper, Express,* or *Rocket.* However, our respondent from Wentworth (Nova Scotia) told us that *Schooner* was the name of a local beer and that the trail was so named because it was built by a maritime distiller.

In many cases, the origins of names are lost even to the people currently owning or operating the ski areas. We assume this is true for the respondent who told us that their trails *Thor* and *Ullr* were named for Greek gods.

About a dozen of our respondents did make some kind of general statement, however brief, about their philosophy of trail-naming or about their procedure for assigning names to new trails. These statements express such a wide range of opinions about naming and procedures for naming as to make generalization impossible. Instead, we will quote from a number of them.

- Beaver Mountain (UT): "Each time a new run is established, the name is chosen by what is happening at the time."
- Belleayre Mountain (NY): "Trails are given Indian names because of Indian legends in the area and to blend with the 'forever wild' nature of our Catskill Mountain Park region."
- Camelback (PA): "When naming new trails, we first get ideas from employees, customers, and friends. These are sorted and sent to the Board of Directors, which makes the final decision."
- Mary Jane (CO): "Trail names commemorate the railroad history of the area."
- Mission Ridge (WA): "Since many of the town names in the Northwest are Indian names, it was felt the Indian names for the ski runs would be appropriate. We tried to use a name that was descriptive of the run."
- Nashville Alps (IN): "The manager names the trails himself."[24]
- Sun Valley/Bald Mountain (ID): "Most runs were named by mountain crews that worked on cutting crews."
- Sunday River (ME): "Attempts were made off and on through the

years to tie in the trail names with that of the mountain. [In assigning names] you want to pamper the beginners, hold their hand, tell them it's easy, so you name trails like Broad (not Skinny and Scary) Way and Easy Street, Rocking Chair . . . connotations of meandering, slow, easy. Intermediates want something that sounds slightly challenging but humorous, and with possibilities for showing off, e.g., Spectator, Sunday Punch. An expert does not need the note of kidding: one of the best expert trails around is called Mother-in-Law. Hence, you have Agony and Monday Mourning.''

• Sunlight (CO): ''We try to match the name to the degree of difficulty. The name should have a nice ring. We also try to use names that include points of local interest.''

• White Pass (WA): ''None of our trails or facilities bear personal names. Why? Because personal names have no meaning to future users. Trail names develop because of terrain or use.''

In summary, our survey of ski-trail names has produced few real surprises. There is indeed a higher proportion of frivolous and jocular names than one would find in Rand McNally's Road Atlas, and a number of conventions of place-naming in general are at least stretched, if not violated. But this reflects the fact that skiing is recreation and escape, not (for most people, at least) part of the Serious Business of Life. Further, even though trail-namers do not have the stern eye of governmental authority looking over their shoulders, they for the most part observe the cultural taboos of the clientele they serve, taboos more evident in the names *not* given than in the names that actually appear on trail maps.

Boston University
Brown University

Notes:

[1]We are grateful to Cal Coniff, president of the National Ski Areas Association, for sending us his mailing list and a copy of Robert G. Enzel's *The White Book of Ski Areas* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-Ski Services, Inc., 1980).

[2]Space limitations prevent us from acknowledging publicly the kindness of all the many areas that cooperated with us. We would, however, like to express in print our gratitude to a few who provided us with supplementary information, some of it obviously taking a great deal of time and effort to collect. Particular thanks are due to our respondents from Aspen, Beaver, Belleayre, Blackjack, Bogus Basin, Camelback, Crystal, Dartmouth, Hidden Valley (CO), Homewood, Mary Jane, Mission Ridge, Mount Frontenac, Nashville Alps, Nubs Nob, Peek'n Peak, Powder Ridge, Rib Mountain, Santa Fe, Sterling Forest, Sun Valley, Sundance, Sunday River, Sunlight, Taos, Winter Park, and Wentworth.

[3]Our citations appear in the spellings used on the trail maps. Misspellings frequently occur (e.g., *Shute* for *Chute* or the omission of apostrophes). The spelling on the map may not even agree with that on trail signs. However, some misspellings are clearly deliberate, and in many instances we have no way of deciding whether the deviation is intentional or is simply a spelling or typographical error. The only exception to our rule occurs when we discuss a term that appears in two or more names; in these cases, we let one spelling stand for the entire group. For example, *cutoff* appears on trail maps as *Cutoff, Cut-Off, Cut-off, Cut Off,* and even *Cuttoff.* When we discuss the entire class of generics called [katɔf], we spell it *Cutoff.*

[4]This trail is on Cannon Mountain (NH), and thus we assume it was a legitimate rhyme for its namer.

[5]Our respondent for Sundance (UT) specifically told us that this name refers to Butch Cassidy.

[6]Our thanks to our respondent from Aspen (CO) for this information.

[7]Tin pants are heavy, paraffin-soaked waterproof trousers worn by lumberjacks; a gandy dancer is a track laborer.

[8]A scissorbill is an apprentice railway brakeman, a tiehack is someone who cuts railway ties.

[9]A ballhooter is a logger who rolls logs down steep slopes; a cat skinner operates a bulldozer; a gearjammer is a truck driver; a gig trail is a trail beside a river used for following log drives; a whistle punk is a lumberman who operates the signal wire running to a donkey engine whistle.

[10]Among others. We found a fairly large number of names that looked Indian but whose origins we were unable to verify (e.g., *Avanti, Kanjamuk, Onteora, Shalako,* etc.).

[11]One of these areas, Devil's Head (WI), has trails named *Devil's Playground, Dante's Inferno, The Cauldron, The Serpent, Devil's Alley, Cyclops,* and *Satan's Revenge.* On Sundays, Devil's Head holds mass on skis at the top of the Devil's Playground trail. One can only assume that this is not a black mass.

[12]Our respondent explained to us that Rübezahl was a medieval German Robin Hood figure, and that Oster, Fabian, Staufferberg, and Treskow were German officers who conspired against Hitler.

[13]This is not a totally unrealistic fear. Syracuse University recently came under fire from Indian groups because of its mascot, the Saltine Warrior.

[14]One might also observe that Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and the novels of James Fenimore Cooper were written and enjoyed *after* the Eastern Indians had nearly all disappeared through disease or displacement. The Indians were no longer a threat to the white settlers and hence could be viewed with nostalgic complacency. Similarly for Walter Scott's novels of the Scottish Highlanders.

[15]Not counting the six trails named *Rainbow.* Our data include a *Snowdance,* a *Sundancer,* and seven *Sundances,* but no *Raindance.*

[16]One of the authors, however, does own a pair of Atomic skis.

[17]There are, however, a number of Spanish words. For example, although the word *death* is usually avoided, the Spanish *Muerte* provides a convenient and potentially less disturbing euphemism.

[18](New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1960), p. 409.

[19]Of course, Easiest is a relative term. Bretton Woods' (NH) Most Difficult is likely to be easier than most of the Easiest trails at Aspen (CO). Further, weather and trail conditions affect the actual difficulty of trails dramatically. Ten inches of fresh powder can turn a Most Difficult trail into Easiest; conversely, an ice storm can make an Easiest slope unskiable for anyone without crampons on his skis.

[20]Before we noticed that absence of an article occurred with other generics as well, we had hypothesized that the lack of an article with *Headwall* had a historical explanation: As long ago as the 1930's, long before recreational skiing had become a popular nationwide sport, ski fanatics were skiing off the headwall in Tuckerman's Ravine, New Hampshire, in late spring after scores – even hundreds – of feet of snow had accumulated in the bowl beneath the headwall. To this day, The Headwall means only the headwall at "Tuck's" to many skiers. But, as we note, this hypothesis does not explain *Chute, Gully, Horn, Meadow,* and the like.

[21]Some might prefer to call this a specific.

[22]We exclude Beech Mountain's (NC) *College Park,* partly because of the specific in the name, and partly because Beech Mountain is located less than twenty miles from Appalachian State University. We also exclude Hunter Mountain's (NY) *Central Park* and *Gramercy Park* because Hunter follows a naming theme of New York City streets and landmarks.

[23]As mentioned in footnote 20, the term *headwall* is certainly familiar in the Northeast; even many nonskiers know it because it is also used by hikers and technical climbers. We conclude that, in the Northeast, there can be only one headwall, The Headwall in Tuckerman's Ravine. Of course, the geological configuration is not especially common in the Northeast, either.

[24]This manager is to be commended for his originality and groan-worthy puns. Of the eight trail names in this small area, five are unique (*Gentle Bend, Tower Holler, Nutter Root, Pasture Ability,* and *Bark Biter*). The other three (*Nose Dive, Red Tail,* and *Bunny Buster*) appear in only one or two other areas. The manager also told us that the *Holler* in *Tower Holler* represents the local pronunciation of *hollow* and that *Red Tail* is so named because a red-tailed hawk lives at the top of the trail.