Notes

Weihnacht and Its Variants
as Personal and Place Names[1]

The name of *Wynot* for a town in Cedar County, Nebraska (just southeast of Yankton, North Dakota), may have a much more mundane origin than that ascribed in *Interesting Missouri Place Names*, Vol. 1.[2]

Wynot is one of at least twenty-five variants of the German *Weihnacht* 'Christmas' which occur in the counties contiguous to Lunenburg and Queens Counties, Nova Scotia. Interestingly, the original form is not found in the 1978 telephone directories for the area. The "family" are creations of German mercenaries who fought for the British during the American revolution.

The general migratory trend to the northern midwest frequently involved either crossing Canada via Lake Superior, to the area which is now Manitoba and Sasketchewan, and then later moving south; or proceeding up the Mississippi and into the Red River to what is now the Winnipeg area. My own Scottish-Canadian ancestors were typical of many who ended up in Northern Michigan and the Dakotas. The town of Wynot's location on the edge of the Missouri River (a logical route from the Canadian Prairies) is consistent with this interpretation.

Ninety percent of the Nova Scotia telephone directory "Whynot" entries occur within an area of perhaps fifty miles in diameter. The most

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[1] This material originally appeared in a slightly different form in the series of working papers *Comments on Etymology*, G. Cohen, ed., University of Missouri-Rolla, Vol. XII, 13-14, pp. 6-8, April 1-15 (1983).

[2] Cohen comments on page 31 that *Wynot* derives from "Why Not?" His source is Lilian L. Fitzpatrick's *Nebraska Place Names* (1960, pp. 34-35), which reads: "The name *Wynot* is an amalgamation of *why not*, which was the reply given to the person who suggested the name when he asked 'Why not name it 'Wynot'.' It is said, according to a local tradition, that there was an elderly German in this vicinity whose answer to all questions was 'W'y Not?' The boys and girls imitated him and later the older citizens caught their habit and answered

"Frenchified" appear in communities near Acadian settlements. We doubt that any of these represent corruptions of the French *veineux* 'venose, veiny.'

In Nova Scotia, uses of the name for geographical purposes involve no major towns, but include Whynot's Settlement (Lunenburg County), islands, bays and, of course, roads. Pronunciation is similar to the spellings; either "why not" or "vee-no." However, in the community of Danesville, Queens County, bordering on Lunenburg County, one Whynot family pronounces its name as expected, whereas a second family (first cousins) uses a pronunciation somewhere between "veenot" and "wenot." Thus, the transition to the *Vienot* spelling is not particularly surprising.

Weihnacht Variants

Pronounced "Why Not"		Pronounced "Vee No"	
Spelling	No. of Entries	Spelling	No. of Entries
Whynot	315	Veinot	229
Whynacht	43	Veinotte	113
Whynott	41	Veinott	72
Winott	5	Veno	11
Wynacht	2	Vienneau	11
Wynot	2	Vigneault	9
Winaut	1	Venoit	8
Whynaught*	1	Veino	6
		Vigneau	5
*1982 entry		Veinneau	4
		Veniot	2
		Venotte	2
		Vienotte	2
		Veinote	1
		Vienot	1
		Vienote	1

Source: 1978 telephone directories, covering Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis, Kings, and Halifax Counties, Nova Scotia (Western Nova Scotia and Halifax-Dartmouth Metropolitan Area), Maritime Telephone & Telegraph Co. Ltd.

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Notes

How Not to Etymologize
a Jewish Family Name:
The Case of *Themal*

The Association for the Study of Jewish Languages often receives inquiries from people around the world about the origin and meaning of specific Jewish family names. Sometimes accompanying these requests are the inquirers' own suggestions, explanations handed down in the bearers' families, or an indication of what the bearers "have been told" [by whom?] about these names. Thousands of such queries have been published in the Association's *Jewish Language Review*, along with several hundred replies from the journal's readers, so that today the *JLR* is the chief forum for the discussion of Jewish family names, to the extent that all of the Jewish entries in Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges' *Dictionary of Surnames* (to be published by the Oxford University Press) are taken exclusively from the Association's files.

Much misinformation has unfortunately been circulating about the origin and meaning of Jewish family names, even among people who have set themselves up as experts (see, for example, the devastating review of B. C. Kaganoff's *A Dictionary of Jewish Names and Their History* in *Onoma* 23, 1 (1979), pp. 96-113: the review itself has been reviewed in the *Jewish Language Review* 5 (1985), pp. 363-76). A column on Jewish names has been running in the *Jewish Post and Opinion* since September 7, 1945, about which a perceptive non-onomastician has charitably written: "some of the interpretations are perhaps fanciful and overly simplistic," though a Jewish onomastician would have harsher words for it (the quotation is from p. x of Robert Singerman's Jewish and Hebrew *Onomastics: A Bibliography*, reviewed in *Onoma* 23, 1 (1979), pp. 215-9; a review of the review appeared in *Jewish Language Review* 5 (1985), pp. 376-7).

As an example of how not to etymologize a Jewish family name, let us take the rare Ashkenazic name *Themal*, a bearer of which recently turned to the Association for help in discovering its etymology. He "had been told that it originates in Hebrew *m'lameth* 'teacher' spelled backwards."

Why would anyone want to spell a word backwards? An American drug company had good reason to call one of its products *Serutan* because then

Notes

it could advertise that "*Serutan* spells *nature's* backwards" and thereby allude to the product's supposedly "natural" ingredients. That, however, was merely a gimmick, and I can think of no reason why anyone would spell a word backwards in order to obtain a family name. Nor do I know of any Jewish family name which is definitely attested as a backward spelling. To allow for that possibility in the absence of proven cases would be to open the door to all sorts of outlandish proposals, for example the transparent Ashkenazic family name *Berg* (from German *Berg* 'mountain; hill') could be from Yiddish *greb* 'thickness,' and the transparent Dutch Ashkenazic family name *Pool* (from Dutch *pool* 'Pole', i.e. 'Eastern Ashkenazic Jew' in this context) could be from English *loop*.

M'lameth, furthermore, is a self-serving romanization. Yiddish and Hebrew *melamed* [sic recte] 'teacher [in a traditional Jewish elementary school]' should give *demalem*, not *Themal*. Or, if we reverse the Jewish-letter spelling of this noun, *mlmd*, we should get *dmlm*, which would not vocalize as *Themal*.

When working with a rare Jewish family name whose origin is not transparent, one should consider the possibility that the form at hand is not the original one. This is especially true in English-speaking countries (where most Jews now live) because in earlier times immigration officials and bearers often anglicized names or, at least, gave them a less "foreign" form. Obviously, Jews with family names like *Jones*, *Harris*, *Allen*, or *Ford* cannot be helped even by the best onomasticians until they dig deeper into their genealogies. *Themal*, though not immediately recognizable as English, is at least more English than, say, *Szewczyk*.

Let us suppose, however, that *Themal* was the Latin-letter form of the name even before emigration to an anglophone country. There being no evidence (and it being most unlikely) that this Ashkenazic family name goes back to Greek, we can eliminate Greek *theta* as the etymon of *Th-*. This leaves us with German and French as the two other European languages having word-initial *th*. A very few Ashkenazic family names can be traced to French; many can be traced to German. *Th-* thus points to German, yet this language offers no obvious etymon either. At most, therefore, we could say that whoever chose the spelling *Themal* (remember, we are assuming it arose before emigration to an anglophone country) was under German orthographic influence. Since German word-initial *Th-* is merely an etymological spelling (reflecting Greek *theta*) and is identical in pronunciation to *T-*, the form of the name could just have easily been **Temal*. This, however, yields no obvious etymology either.

Notes

We can now go in three directions. First, uncommon or rare Jewish family names are sometimes based on minor events that may or may not now be recoverable. For example, an Ashkenazic family in the Ukraine received the name *Un* when the Russian government official going from house to house recording family names asked the head of one household, in Russian, what his name was. The man understood little or no Russian and thought the official was asking him what he had in his hand. It happened to be a chicken, which in the local variety of Yiddish is pronounced /ən/ (Standard Yiddish *hon*). "Un, un!," answered the Jew. The official, knowing no Yiddish, took this to be the reply to his question. Many anecdotal explanations can be heard today among Jews. Whether they are correct or merely a posteriori folk etymologies may or may not now be determinable. Letting one's imagination run wild, one could think of an anecdotal explanation: a teetotaler with a slight knowledge of German combined *Tee* 'tea' and *Mahl* 'meal' to form *Themal*. But imagination and etymology are worlds apart.

Second, the fairly frequent Yiddish female given name *teme* is derived from the Yiddish female given name *tomer*, which is from Hebrew *tamar* (Genesis 38:6, 2 Samuel 14:27, and 1 Chronicles 3:9),. *Teme* has two pet forms (*temele* and *temke*) and at least two of these three forms are the stems of Ashkenazic metronymic family names: *Temes/Temis* (*teme* plus Yiddish possessive -*s*) and *Temkin* (*temke* + Slavic -*in*). A metronymic family name based on *temele* would most likely be *Temeles* [does it occur?], which is not far from *Themal* or *Temal*. Yet "not far" is not close enough, since no rule of phonological change would account for the loss of -*es*. Shortening by an official or bearer is possible, but that would have to be proven. Again we are no closer to a solution, since all of the preceding is mere supposition.

Our only conclusion at this time is the third choice: "etymology unknown." It is this one which the laity finds hardest to accept. No one has put it more eloquently than Frederic G. Cassidy: "Amateur etymologists are people whose imaginations tend to wag the dog. They are fictioneers manqués. It goes against their grain to admit that an etymology could be not merely uncertain but totally unknown. They believe the vacuum *can* be filled, if one sets about it uninhibitedly. The two essentials of a good etymology, that the form of the word or phrase, and its meaning, should be fully and accurately derivable from the claimed source, and that the historical and logical circumstances should be truly plausible, are too much for them to accept. Such rules clip the wings of imagination. Far better to invent a whole-cloth story, or to defend a bad

Notes

but titillating guess, than dully to admit ignorance" (from pp. 55-6 of William Safire, *On Language*, New York: Times Books, 1980).

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Nearly everyone knows the sight and taste of these familiar little candy-coated tidbits. In fact, it is probable that most viewers of early television still have a clear memory of those two friendly, smiling dots, diving into a pool of candy coating and emerging to state, "Melts in your mouth, not in your hand!" All in all, M&M's seem to have been around forever, and actually have become a recognizable part of our culture in several ways.

For years the generic anecdotal expression, "What are the M&M's?" has been heard in various mental health settings. With allowance for specific phrasing differences from one location to another, the question still has meant, "What reinforcers are available for a given behavior or set of behaviors being sought?" Although no definitive origin of use can be traced in the available literature, the reference does derive from the fact that some psychiatric patients in given institutional settings occasionally have been rewarded or reinforced for staff-desired behavior through the use of real M&M candies.

Such patients probably have been informed that the M&M's truly were M&M's and that they could strive for and obtain these or other rewards through the production of requested behavior. At the same time, it also is true that these candies at first glance are indistinguishable from

Notes

genuine medication tablets. Inasmuch as many people in general do not closely examine their medication, it is quite possible that in a mental health milieu some patients have believed that they were being given M&M's when in fact they received real medication. Although the actual incidence of such interexchanging truly *has* been low, it has occurred (author's personal knowledge obtained through consultation with peer professionals).

It is beyond mere coincidence and indeed is quite striking that popular candies have become literally and symbolically intermixed with prescriptive medication and prescriptive (behavior modification) therapy. The deeper and eminently serious implications of these ironic and, at times, intentional alignments ultimately need to be explored further by theorists, practitioners, and legalists alike.

In any event, with all of this history and controversy as backdrop, and since most people now and then have enjoyed the pleasure of M&M's, it might be of interest to learn more about these particular goodies that clearly have affected our general and psychiatric cultures. The question emerges, then, as to what exactly *are* M&M's and what *do* we know about them?

In fact, this durable treat first appeared on the commercial market in 1941 in Newark, New Jersey. The letters "M" and "M" derive from the last names of Forrest E. Mars, Sr., and his associate Bruce Murrie. Mars was the son of the founder (Frank C. Mars) of the MAR-O-Bar Company, the first name for what ultimately became M&M/MARS, current maker of Snickers, Milky Way, 3 Musketeers, and other well-known candy bars.[1]

Originally the candies were manufactured in six different colors: red, orange, yellow, green, brown, and tan. After thirty-five years, on March 10, 1976, the red M&M's were discontinued. The popular belief has been that the red item was eliminated because it too closely resembled actual medication tablets or certain kinds of street drugs; this is an interesting finding, given the earlier-mentioned mental health ironies. The truth is that the company voluntarily chose to stop manufacturing red M&M's because of the then-active public controversy concerning red food dyes. Despite the fact that the dye being used has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, the decision was made, still is in force, and will remain so until a generally-accepted red coloring is developed.[1]

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[1] Personal communication to the author by the M&M/MARS Company, November 30, 1984, and February 8, 1985.

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Nonetheless, the loss of the red M&M did give rise to another evidence of the candy's place of prominence n our culture: In 1982, the 135-member Society for Restoration and Preservation of Red M&M's was founded.[2]

Although the M&M/MARS Company has not published detailed information about the specific composition of M&M's, it has disclosed that the current M&M's are packaged in the following proportions: brown, 40; yellow, 20; orange, 20; green, 10; and tan, 10.[1] The average number of M&M's per [plain] package is slightly over fifty-five.

The purpose of this writing has been to take a brief, novel look at one of our culture's more recognizable foods, particularly since no other popular candy has such a colorful history and such a meaningful role in our psychological language.

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The Tenada-Denali-Mount McKinley Controversy

The tallest mountains in the Alaska Range are literally in the center of traditional Alaskan Athabaskan territory. The Athabaskans surrounding the Alaska Range have two names for the tallest mountain, one that is found in the languages north or west of the range, and one in the languages to the south. These are listed here in the practical writing systems of these languages.

North or west of the Alaska Range: 'The High One'

Deenaalee (Koyukon)
Denaze (Upper Kuskokwim)
Denadhe (Tanana)
Denadhe (Holikachuk)
Dengadh, Dengadhiy (Ingalik)

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[2] L. and S. Teacher. *The Teacher Brothers Modern-Day Almanac.* Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 1984, p. 42.

<div style="text-align:right">Notes</div>

South of the Alaska Range: 'Big Mountain'

Dghelay Ka'a (Upper Inlet Dena'ina)
Dghili Ka'a (Lower Inlet Dena'ina)
Dghelaay Ce'e (Ahtna)

The name *Denali* is from the Koyukon name. It does not translate as 'The Great One,' but is instead based on the verb theme meaning 'high' or 'tall.' William Dickey's statement (p. 325), "The Indians of Cook Inlet have always called this the Bulshaia (great) mountain," is not correct. This is the Russian name 'big' that Dickey happened to record.

There is considerable confusion in the literature about Athabaskan names for Denali-McKinley. In particular, Dickey, who first proposed the name *Mount McKinley*, and geologist Alfred H. Brooks, who argued intensely to retain the name in his 1911 monograph *The Mount McKinley Region* overlooked the fact that an Athabaskan name for the mountain did in fact appear on the 1839 Wrangell map. The first documented sighting of the mountain was in February of 1834, when an Alaskan Native, Andrei Glazunov, saw a high mountain from the mouth of the Stony River in the middle Kuskokwim area whose Native name he recorded as *Tenada* (Van-Stone). This is clearly the Ingalik name *Dengadh.* Glazunov is said to have been a speaker of Kodiak Alutiiq and a Russian creole. He was literate in Russian, and he was formally documenting previously unexplored areas of the Kuskokwim and Yukon at the direction of Admiral Wrangell. Extracts from Glazunov's journal were published in 1836, 1839, and 1841. *Tenada* and other names from Glazunov's journal appear on the 1839 Wrangell map, which was considered to be the best map of the southcentral Alaska area of its day (Wrangell; also printed in Moore, pp. 4-5). Dickey, who was quite euphoric about being the first white man on the middle Susitna River in 1896, thought that his sketch map of the Susitna (Moore, p. 16) was the first to place a name on the tallest mountain.

Brooks claimed to have researched the Russian sources on the Alaska Range, and that "not one has yet been found which refers to the high mountain whose snowy summit is visible from tidewater on Cook Inlet" (Brooks 1911, p. 24). Later, in his *Blazing Alaska's Trails*, Brooks (1953, p. 230) cited the Glazunov material but somehow managed to analyze the name *Tenada* on the Wrangell map as being at the head of the Stone River. This conclusion is quite curious, since Brooks knew the area as well as anyone; and he recognized that the name for the Stony River is on the map as *Tchalchuk* (its Yupik name). Anyone can see that the name

Notes

Tenada is located to the north in the Mount McKinley-Denali area.

I have noted that Brooks on numerous occasions made biased and inaccurate statements about Athabaskan geographic knowledge, a subject he was not competent to address. This often-quoted statement from *The Mount McKinley Region* contains several factual errors: "Much of the range formed an almost impassable barrier between the hunting ground of the Cook Inlet natives and that of the Kuskokwim Indians. It does not seem to have been named, for the Alaska Indian has no fixed geographic nomenclature for the larger geographic features. A river will have a half dozen names, depending on the direction from which it is approached. The cartographers who cover Alaskan maps with unpronounceable names, imagining that these are based on local usage, are often misled ... The tribes on the east side [the Dena'ina and Ahtna], who seldom, if ever, approached it, termed it Traleyka, probably signifying big mountain. Those on the northwest side, who hunted the caribou up to the very base of the mountain, called it Tenally" (Brooks 1911, p. 22).

The Alaska Range was in fact traversed by an extensive system of native trails, and travel through here was more frequent in the early nineteenth century than it is today (Kari and Kari, p. 55-57). Athabaskan place names are fixed and stable, and there are Native names for many large features and physiographic provinces. Of the sixty or so Dena'ina names recorded before 1842, all but three or four are known and used by today's oldest speakers. Brooks felt Native names were "unpronounceable," an anglo and colonialistic bias that is reflected in the proliferation of English-origin place names on Alaska's maps (cf. Kari 1985). The Upper Inlet Dena'ina did in fact "approach" the mountain they call Dghelay Ka'a, as we have found that the upper Kahiltna River, the Peters Hills, Tokositna River, and Chulitna River areas were used as hunting areas (Kari, forthcoming). Thus Brooks seems to have manipulated these two academic questions, the prior naming and mapping of the mountain and the nature of Athabaskan geographic names, apparently to enhance the case for the name Mount McKinley.

Donald Orth, Secretary of the U.S. Board of Geographic Names, has recently summarized the Denali-McKinley name change controversy (Orth 1980, 1985). In 1975 the Alaska legislature officially adopted the name *Denali* for the mountain and endorsed that name to the U.S. Board. However, the U.S. Board will not issue a ruling, since in 1977 a bill was introduced to Congress by the Ohio delegation, President McKinley's home state, to retain in perpetuity the name Mount McKinley. This bill has never come up for a vote, and is apparently still pending, a fact that

Notes

many people in Alaska do not realize. Of special significance is that as of 1980 the Board had received 20,000 letters and signatures from throughout the United States, with about 68 of the persons favoring the name *Denali*. Apparently the renaming of the national park as Denali National Park had no direct connection to the decision about naming the mountain.

The proposed name change to *Denali* should not be construed as a dishonor to former President McKinley. This name controversy reflects a basic difference in cultural values. Athabaskans, in marked contrast to Euro-American cultures, never name places after people, and it is absolutely unthinkable to them that the tallest mountain in their traditional territory should be named for a mortal.

Most Alaskans recognize the vulnerability of Alaska's Athabaskan languages, most of which will become extinct as spoken languages early in the next century. It seems to me that if Congress votes to officially change the name of the mountain to Denali, which is the clear mandate of the majority of people who have voiced their opinions, this will create more public awareness of the importance of preserving Alaska's heritage of aboriginal place names.

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Notes

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Richard Pierce. Kingston: the Limestone Press.

How Did Biblical Personal Names Come to Designate Wine Bottles in English?

E. Meigh writes that "wine bottlers ransacked the Old Testament for
names of kings and captains to name the bottles in which their valuable
liquids were confined" (*Story Glass Bottle* 1972, p. 73). As far as I can
tell, no one has ever tried to explain why all of them were chosen (though
an adequate explanation has been offered for *jorum* and a partly adequate
one for *jeroboam*). A comprehensive explanation, for all of the names, is
possible only if we look at them in their order of appearance, that is, with
the help of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and its *Supplement.* We will
proceed on the assumption that the earliest citation in the *OED(S)* for
each of the names gives us its relative, though not necessarily absolute,
age. Almost full confirmation of this assumption is the fact that if we
arrange the names according to the size of the bottle they designate (from
smallest to largest), the order is, with one exception, the same as the
presumed relative age of the words. That there should be such a correla-
tion between age and size is based on the further assumption that it
stands to reason that names would be coined for the smaller bottles first
and only later (when bigger bottles began to be used) for the bigger ones.
It is also assumed below that these names were coined in English, because
in no other language which I have been able to check does such a termi-
nology exist (except for French *jeroboam*).

Various dictionaries suggest that English *jug* 'container for liquids,' which
the *OED* dates to 1538, may be derived from *Jug* (a pet form of *Judith,
Joan,* and *Joanna*). Whether or not this etymology is correct, *jug* does not
seem to have anything to do with the emergence of the names for wine

Notes

bottle which we will now discuss. The earliest of them is *jorum* 'a large drinking bowl', dated to 1730, which is said to be based on *Joram*, a name appearing in 2 Samuel 8:10, where it is borne by someone who brought silver, gold, and brass vessels. The reference to vessels presumably led to the selection of this name. *Does the fact that Joram and jorum are not spelled identically cast doubt on this explanation?*

If *Joram* is not the correct etymon of *jorum*, we may at least assume that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the latter word was being folk-etymologized in this way, hence an identification was established between the name of the bottle and the Biblical personal name (thus leading to the emergence of the next name), in the same way that the folk etymology of *bikini* (as if containing Latin-origin *bi-* 'two') led to the emergence of *monokini.*

The next largest bottle is the *jeroboam* (1816). Aware of the (folk?) etymology of *jorum*, someone in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century presumably looked for a semantically appropriate name in the Bible and came up with *Jeroboam*. In I Kings 11:28 we read that Jeroboam was "a mighty man of valor," hence presumably the mention of his might made this name appropriate for a larger bottle (small from today's viewpoint, but large then). The phonological similarity of *Joram* and *Jeroboam* may have also played a role in the selection of the latter name.

Next we have the *rehoboam* (1895). Since the Bible says nothing about Rehoboam that would incline anyone to name a bottle after him, we assume that the name was chosen only because it rhymes with *jeroboam* (the name of the bottle immediately preceding in order of size). This semantically arbitrary selection now paved the way for more. And because *jeroboam* and *rehoboam* are long, resounding names, later ones would be too.

Next in size is the *methusaleh* (1935), followed by the *salmanazar* (1935), then the *balthazar* (1935), and, the largest of all, the *nebuchadnezzar* (1913). The names are indeed long and resounding, but we would expect either the first three to be dated before 1913 or *nebuchadnezzar* to have been coined after 1935. I assume, however, either that *OED(S)* missed earlier citations for the three which it dates to 1935, or (because all three are found in the same work published in that year and there is nothing in this book to suggest that these names were being used there for the first time) that they did not get into print until 1935. If either of these assumptions is correct, we can continue to suppose that age of the name and size of the bottle are correlated.

Notes

It has been suggested that *nebuchadnezzar* was chosen because this was the name of the all-powerful ruler of his day. This may be a correct suggestion. On the other hand, by the time this bottle name emerged, there was no longer any need to find semantically appropriate names, i.e. a fanciful pattern had already been established with *rehoboam*. Similarly, one might suppose that *methusaleh* was chosen because it was the name of the Biblical personage who lived the longest (hence longevity = large size), but, again, no semantic motivation need be sought after *rehoboam*.

OED(S) has two citations for *rehoboam* 'shovel hat' (1849 and 1850). Nothing in I Kings 11:43-14:31 or 2 Chronicles 9:31-12:16 explains this choice. Any suggestions?

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NECROLOGY

<div style="text-align:center">

Wilbur G. Gaffner   1907 - 1986

John Leighly   1895 - 1986

Gerhard Rohlfs   1892 - 1986

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<div style="text-align:right">Notes</div>