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## In Memoriam

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### John B. Leighly (1895-1986)

John Leighly, who died in Berkeley, California, on July 9, 1986, during his ninety-first year, was the last survivor of a small band of scholars who, from the year 1923 onward, have helped the University of California at Berkeley evolve into one of the most creative centers of geographic teaching and thinking to be found anywhere in the world.

A native of Locust Grove, Ohio, Leighly endured an impoverished and migratory childhood and adolescence before a high school diploma enabled him to teach in Illinois country schools for a few years. After service in the American army in France during World War I, he studied geology and physical geography, first at Michigan Normal School, Mount Pleasant, then at the University of Michigan, where he encountered Carl Sauer, the towering figure who was to be so influential in his career for the next half-century. Following Sauer to Berkeley in the 1920s, Leighly combined graduate work with full-time teaching before setting off for Scandinavia to gather materials for a doctoral dissertation that resulted in the publication in 1928 of the greatly respected *A Study in Urban Morphology: the Towns of Malardalen in Sweden*. Subsequent field and archival work in Europe produced his classic monograph on *The Towns of Medieval Livonia* in 1929.

Over a span of more than six decades, John Leighly remained a fixture on Berkeley's academic scene, aside from a World War II stint with the Weather Service in Washington, and maintained an active professional life long after formal retirement. It is worth noting that he was well acquainted with George R. Stewart, an association that quite possibly may have kindled a late-blooming fascination with toponymy and other phases of name study. He regularly taught courses in climatology, meteorology, and cartography throughout his teaching years, in addition to occasional offerings in the history of geographic thought and the geography of Europe and Scandinavia. Although the author of ap-

proximately seventy books and articles, and numerous incisive critical reviews and notes, and editor and translator of several notable works, Leighly will be remembered more for fine, careful scholarship and insightful thought than for the quantity of his output.

John Leighly was an uncommon man, a physical scientist who was also a man of letters (and occasional practitioner of the art of light verse) and a noble specimen of that endangered species, the gentleman-scholar. Those who knew him, as I did, as mentor and then confidante, and who benefited from his gentle but trenchant counsel, will agree that, although he did not unbend readily, being by nature reserved and quite formal, he was a kind and generous colleague, uncompromising, direct, soft-spoken, and wise.

The readers of this journal will be most interested in Leighly's onomastic exploits. As a scholar whose interests ranged widely over the vastly varied subject matter of physical and human geography, and as a writer renowned as much for his command and love of the English language (and thus, alas, a rarity among his disciplinary brethren) as for his meticulous scholarship, he devoted much time during the final three decades of his career to exploring the geography of personal names and placenames in the United States. Incidentally, if one were to count on the fingers of one hand all the geographers anywhere in the world who have ever studied personal names, there would be a couple of digits to spare. Most, but not all, of the works in this genre appeared in *Names*. Coming out of the closet, so to speak, with a bit of versification, "What *Is* in a Name?" in 1954, Leighly went on to enlighten us concerning "New England Town Names Derived from Personal Names" (1970), neatly combining the two forms of naming; "Gallic Place-Names for Vermont" (1973); "Biblical Place-Names in the United States" (1979); and a monograph entitled *German Family Names in Kentucky Place Names* (1984). At the time of his demise, Leighly was well along with a monograph on German names in Tennessee that would have supplemented his remarkably meticulous and exhaustive Kentucky research.

The ultimate judgment for all of us is whether we live our lives so as to make this earthly world a wiser, happier place. John Leighly passed the test with flying colors.

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