

Editor's Note

Placenames have long been the primary focus of onomastic research, and the study of placenames, as Don Orth has often commented, is in many ways founded in local history. This issue of *Names* brings special recognition to these relationships in its commemoration of four state centennials—those of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington.

Each of these four states were admitted to the union in a frenzy of political logrolling in November of 1889. The Dakotas were split, even though the North was generally opposed, and both were admitted on November 2, with the North being recognized as the thirty-ninth state in consolation to their opposition to the split, while the South was recognized as the fortieth. Montana (a Spanish word picked out of a Latin dictionary meaning “mountainous region”) was recognized as the forty-first state on November 8, and statehood for Washington quickly followed on the eleventh, a date which has since been made into a convenient day of double remembrance. Because the dates are so closely grouped, we hope this issue will reach you in time that it might share in the celebrations which will undoubtedly be planned in these states.

The four primary articles chosen for this issue all concern the names of the centennial states, but each study is distinctly different in focus and in methodology. Ms. Cheney's is a traditional, anecdotal account of placenames in the local history of Montana. At another end of some methodological spectrum is the study by Messrs. Baldwin and Grimaud, a statistical analysis of all street names in the four centennial states plus Massachusetts. Baldwin and Grimaud are dealing with large quantities data drawn from computer tapes of the U.S. Postal Service, and in the opinion of this guest editor, their study illustrates a type of onomastic research that we shall likely see more frequently as the Geographic Names Information System includes more fields of information and Phase II is completed in more states. Because it is an example of a developing methodology, it is offered here as the lead article in a retrospective issue.

Personally, I have felt it an honor and, above all, an education to help bring this issue to press while our regular editor was pursuing research in Europe. I wish to thank him for asking me to serve in this capacity, and to beg for your indulgence of any errors you might find herein.

Please notify Professor Gasque as you think appropriate so that he can include corrections in the next earliest issue.

Grant Smith

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