Special Reports

Several meetings of interest to members of the American Name Society were held in the last few months. Summarized below are four of these meetings. Hosts and sponsors are encouraged to send a summary or at least a program so that members unable to attend will have an idea of the range of topics covered.

Conference on Literary Onomastics

The 17th Annual Conference on Literary Onomastics, sponsored by ANS and the University of Georgia Department of English, was held in Athens, Georgia, on November 2–3, 1990, hosted by Professor Betty J. Irwin. The conference began with a banquet on Friday evening with Allen Walker Read speaking on "The Personality Traits that Characterize a True-Blue Onomastician."

The eight papers given on Saturday were made even more meaningful by Grace Alvarez-Altman's "Highlights of the First Eighteen Years of the Conference on Literary Onomastics," an overview of the conference especially interesting to those to whom the conference was new. Other papers included "Nominal Jesting in the English Renaissance," by Dorothy E. Litt; "Shakespeare's Saints," by Susan Wright (a University of Georgia graduate student); "The Religious Symbolism in *Con el viento Solano*," by Drosoula Lytra; "Character Naming in Carlos Fuentes' *Constancia y otras novelas para virgenes*," by Wayne H. Finke; "Names among the Ruins: The Onomastics of Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*" by Leonard R. N. Ashley; "Names as Characterization, Structuring, Tone, and Theme in Beverly Lowry's Fiction," by Jack D. Wages; and "Names and Namelessness in *The Color Purple*," by Charles Clay Doyle.

The 18th Annual Conference will be held in Athens, Georgia, on November 2, 1991.

Annual Meeting of the American Name Society

The American Name Society held its Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on December 27–30, 1990. At the annual dinner at the Midland Hotel, 1990 ANS President Edward Callary delivered the presidential address, "Some Comments on Alternate Naming Systems" (published in *Names* 39.1 [March 1991]: 70–74).

Five separate sessions featured scholarly papers. Two of these were in conjunction with the Modern Language Association and included the following papers: "Shakespeare's Emilias: Possible Linkage among *Othello, Winter's Tale*, and *Two Kinsmen*," by Grant Smith; "Personal Names in Spanish Romantic Poetry," by Wayne H. Finke; "Place Names and Spacelessness in Shakespeare's Plays," by Kelsie B. Harder; "Inn Signs: A Neglected Source of European Surnames," by Leonard R. N. Ashley; and "Virginia County Names," by Sarah Jackson.

Three other sessions included "The Word *Squaw* in Place Names," by Virgil Vogel; "The Names of Queens: With Particular Reference to the Matrimonial Entanglements of Alphonso VI of Castile," by Edmund Miller; "Meeting Room Names: Cloning the Mundane,"

American Names," by André Lapierre; "Variant Names for God in Old English: Tension and Resolution," by Charles M. Kovich; "The Naming of the Confederacy," by Allen Walker Read; and "Onomastic Journals: How Many and Where," by Edwin D. Lawson.

Two additional meetings allowed open discussion of placename research methods and the progress of the Placename Survey of the United States (PLANSUS). The conference closed with a meeting of the ANS Board of Managers, which discussed revisions to the constitution and by-laws.

Blue Ridge Onomastic Symposium

The 6th Blue Ridge Onomastic Symposium, sponsored by ANS and Greensboro College, Greensboro, North Carolina, was held on the campus of Greensboro College on April 6, 1991, with Paul L. Leslie and James K. Skipper, Jr., serving as hosts.

The conference opened with an address by Thomas Gasque on the "Present State of Onomastics," followed by nine papers on a variety of topics: "How the Early Usage of 'Continental' Forms a Background for Our Present-Day 'American,'" by Allen Walker Read; "Internal Colonialism and Placenames on the Contemporary Amazon Frontier," by J. Timmons Roberts (read by Professor Leslie); "The Post Offices of Madison County, Kentucky," by Robert M. Rennick; "Name, Memory and Time in Racine's Trojan War Plays," by Nancy McElveen; "Principal Character Naming in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*," by Modene G. Schramm; "De Nominibus Dei," by Philip Rolnick; "Looking Back to Beaver and the Head: College Nicknames in the 1950s," by Thomas J. Gasque; "The Chi Names among the Igbos of Nigeria," by Victor Archibong; and "Nicknames of Incarcerated Female Felons," by James K. Skipper, Jr.

Session moderators were Donald J. Orth, William A. Withington, and Paul Leslie; Discussants were Marion Harris, Wendy Greene, and Whitney Vanderwerff. André Lapierre, 1991 ANS president, offered the closing remarks.

The 7th Blue Ridge Onomastic Symposium is scheduled for April 11–12, 1992, at Greensboro College.

Annual Names Institute

The 30th Annual Names Institute was held in New York on May 4, 1991, under the sponsorship of ANS and Baruch College (CUNY), hosted by Wayne H. Finke.

Scheduled papers included: "Differential Changes in Frequency of Homonyms among Personal Names in Pennsylvania 1977–1988," by Herbert Barry III; "The Pregnancy Obsession: What to Name the Baby," by Gigi Berman; "Names of Peoples: Given, Inflicted, Taken, Misapplied," by Robert A. Fowkes; "How Do Surnames Vary? Computers Count the Ways," by Marion Harris; "Humanism and Onomastics in the English Renaissance," by Dorothy E. Litt; "Afro-Atlantic Naming Traditions in Aerosol Arts," by Ivor Miller; "Black Pseudo Ethnic Phonetic Onomastics," by L. Damon Williams, Jr.; "Onomastics in the Thriller Genre: Thomas Harris' *The Silence of the Lambs*," by Leonard R. N. Ashley; "Rose and Lily: From *Prénom de femmes* to *Nom de fleurs*. A Journey through *The Secret Garden*," by Jenny H. Batlay; "The Name in Proust's *Swann's Way*," by John Robinson; "The Terminology of Derivatives from Place Names, with a Synopsis of New York State Derivatives," by Allen Walker Read; "American Phraseological Place Nicknames," by Maria Tarasevitch; and "The Navy in Newport and New London: An Onomastic Survey," by Lionel Wyld.

Session chairs included Dean A. Reilein, Leonard R. N. Ashley, Marcia Yarmus, and E. Wallace McMullen.

The 31st Annual Names Institute will be at Baruch College on May 2, 1992.

Names 39.2 (June 1991)

News from PLANSUS

Editor's Note: Grant Smith, Commission Chair, Placename Survey of the United States, delivered the keynote address to the Western States Conference on Geographic Names at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., on September 5, 1990. The use of Native American placenames is a matter that will become of greater and greater concern in the the next few years, especially in the western states and provinces. In fact, the 1991 Western States Conference in Santa Fe, N.M., on September 4–7, will focus on this subject. In light of this concern, I have asked Dr. Smith for permission to print an abridged version of that address.

****

Oral and Written Uses of Native American Placenames

Indian names are everywhere on our maps of North America. At least twenty-six states and three Canadian provinces have names derived from indigenous languages—not to mention the hundreds of smaller features with names such as *Potomac, Anacostia, Tacoma, Patuxent, Appomattox, Chesapeake, Manassas*, and *Spokane*. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such names were adopted by our forebears as they gauged the New World with the calipers of the Old.

The initial impulse of the earliest visitors to this land, especially the trappers and traders, was to learn and borrow from the indigenous peoples. But in borrowing pieces of the languages it was impossible not to mangle both the pronunciations and meanings in fitting these names to the English or French language patterns. The word *Spokane*, for example, originally had three syllables and meant "refracted sunlight," referring to the water spray in sunlight from the river falls, and also used in an associative sense to refer to the people who lived by the falls. However, the placename comes to us not as a description of a phenomenon, the name of a tribe, or the designation of a place, but as a commemoration, a naming pattern typical of the European settlers. The leader of this small group of Indians introduced himself as *Illim Spukani*, meaning "son of the refracted sunlight." He called his own son *Ilu- am-hu Spukani*, meaning "*little* son of the refracted sunlight." The little son was later dubbed *Garry* by white teachers, and as a grown man he then referred to himself as *Spokane Garry*, suggesting the descriptive or attributive nature of the term *Spokane*. However, the first traders assumed that *Spukani* was a family name—which it certainly was in the sense that many family names show place of origin—and they named their trading post *The Spokane House* in honor of the local chief. At first the name was spelled *Spokani* or *Spokanee*; the pronunciation of this inflectional ending was soon dropped, and now we have forgotten why we say "spo-can" rather than "spo-cane."

This little story illustrates an important aspect of the majority of Indian placenames that now dot our maps: they are products of European culture. They show us what the earliest settlers saw and experienced. They were chosen by map makers for use in a technological and literate society. Their sounds were transliterated into English phonemes, and their meanings follow European naming patterns. They were used to construct a written record of a new land and to guide traders, settlers, and armies whom the map makers would never know.

In two recent papers, I argue for a relatively restrictive definition of Indian placenames: they should be those names derived from languages that are indigenous to each locality; terms such as *squaw* or *tepee* imported by whites from other areas should be considered part of the white vocabulary. Most terms derived from the indigenous languages are, in fact, borrowings that have become a part of the white language and culture. They may have Indian ancestry, but they have been thoroughly assimilated.

Thus, for the purposes of this meeting, we must ask if the European, and primarily

English, perspectives are all that we want. The answer, I believe, is No. Most of us believe in pluralism and have come to understand that differences between people often lead to greater inventiveness, flexibility, and prosperity for all. As toponymists, we have a new challenge in this era of expanding civil rights, freedoms, toleration, *Glasnost*, and *Peristroika*, and that is the recording of terms which were, or are, used by Indians themselves as placenames—and by all indigenous peoples worldwide.

This is a tricky challenge for at least two reasons: (1) naming is a much different kind of thing in the oral use of language from what it is in the written use; (2) the needs of map makers and map users differ from the needs of oral societies. For the remainder of these remarks I wish to elaborate on these interrelated problems and show how recent governmental actions are moving in a positive direction.

Oral traditions are a part of every culture. When I was a child, I was not dependent on nature, but I felt a closeness to nature that I have seldom felt since. When I visited my grandmother, I went "down to the creek" to go fishing, and, if asked "whereabouts," I would say "by the bridge" or "down by the eddy." To this day, I do not know the official name of that creek or bridge. At home, I went "up the hill" to find mushrooms or other scattered edibles, but I went to "the huckleberry patch" because the ones I knew about were bunched together in one location. I rode my horse "up the trail," unless I had some particular place to go, and went "out to the lake" or "up to the big hole" or "to the whirlpool" to go swimming. When I took my horse swimming, I went "to the beach," and by that I meant the shallow lake beach, not the salt water bay.

As I grew older and my wanderings became more extensive, I used formal names rather than simple appellatives to draw clear distinctions between similar features. I would tell Mother that I was going up to "Toad Lake" rather than just the regular lake. I would catch lots of frogs and snakes and polywogs up there, and the official name of the lake really was *Toad Lake*, until some developers bought it and renamed it *Emerald Lake*, a name which certainly looks better on a brochure but doesn't quite capture the images of my childhood experiences. It is designed to elicit an idea which is abstract and idyllic; it is not descriptive of raw, untrammeled nature.

What I have tried to illustrate in these last two paragraphs is the descriptive and appellative nature of oral communication. In ordinary conversation we do not use specific designators unless it is necessary. We say we are going "into town" or "to the lake" or "to the country" or "to the store," unless there is more than one store that might be understood; then we would say "to the IGA," or whatever is appropriate.

Indian designations of place exhibit many similarities to our own oral uses of language. My residence is in a town called *Cheney*, named after Benjamin P. Cheney, part owner of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which made a switching stop at that location. Extra engines would unhook in Cheney after helping trains come up the long, steep grade from Spokane. Indians had similar difficulty coming through this area and called it *Yts'piyiust'p*, which means "worn out, worn out," with a progressive sense of the verb indicated by the final [p] sound—i.e., going to Cheney is the same as "getting worn out." Northwest of Cheney is a town called *Davenport* in honor of J.D. Davenport, a local store owner. Indians often went to the area in May to camp and gather bitterroots, and they referred to the place as *Epsp'it'em*, which means, simply, "it has bitterroots," kind of like my Huckleberry Patch.

Similarly, the falls in the Spokane River were referred to as *Stseqhwlkwe'*, meaning "foaming water"; the rock outcroppings of Mica Peak as *Sgwargwart*, meaning "scraped, scraped"; the Garden Springs area as *Pok-pok-coe-sose* because there were quite literally "boulders lying on bluffs"; the Waverly area as *Eplt'is*, meaning "it has sugar" because of the camus roots harvested there; and a little lake just north of Cheney as *Sile'*, meaning "maternal grandfather."[1]

Oral language is less formal than written. It will omit formal designations unless the feature being referred to is one of several similar items that might be confused. When it is necessary to chart many mountains and streams, a map maker needs formal designations, and when towns are to be platted and streets laid out, the need for formality and abstractions increases greatly. In the natural environment, however, there is no standardization, and simple, sometimes graphic, descriptions are more useful than formal names.

Does this mean that Indian designations of place are not names in a technical sense? Let us recognize that they are not names in written form, but at the same time let us recognize that all of our names have an oral base. *Stratford-upon-Avon* was originally just *Stratford*, meaning a fording place on a road across a stream; as trade and the number of references to other towns increased, *upon-Avon* was added to distinguish this one from the other *Stratfords*. The name *Marathon* comes from the Greek word for fennel, which grew in abundance near the small town about twenty-five miles east from Athens—another appellative like my Huckleberry Patch.

The general conclusion is a simple one: descriptions become formal names when they are written onto maps. *Connecticut* is a translation of the Indian phrase "long river at." Mt. *Shuksan* means "sharp, jagged, or rugged." We do not really need to know the meanings of names in order to use them in our travels, recreation, development, land management, or search and rescue operations. But the recording of names is a way of preserving our history, our cultures, and our oral traditions.

It is important that we record these names because our culture is changing rapidly. Our new names often reflect the formalities of our modern culture and our distance from nature and its wild diversity. I can still refer to my own house as "the house" much as the Indian might refer to "the lodge," but our communities have so many houses that they must be numbered so that guests and the letter carrier can find which one is which.

I am happy to say that relatively new policy initiatives by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names strongly encourage the recording and use of Native American names, and thereby will help to preserve the native histories and languages. The Canadian policy is actually pro-active, urging the earliest possible recording of names from oral cultures and suggesting duplicate map names if those cultures exist in areas that already have English or French names. The preamble to the 1986 draft resolution reads, in part:

> The geographical names of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are an important and integral part of Canada's cultural heritage. The aboriginal peoples have inalienable rights regarding the perpetuation and use of their geographical names, which are preserved mainly in the oral tradition of the elders, the wise bearers of cultural knowledge and customs of their respective communities.
>
> The collection of native geographical names should be accelerated throughout Canada and systematic and spatial coverage of cultural and linguistic areas of the indigenous peoples should be ensured. Indeed, there is an expressed need to record native geographical names and associated information efficiently and accurately as soon as possible.

The U.S. Policy is less aggressive. The 1989 draft resolution begins:

> Geographic names derived from the languages of Native Americans are an important and integral part of the cultural heritage of the United States. The U.S. Board on Geographical Names supports the official use of names recorded from languages spoken by Indian, Inuit (Eskimo), Hawaiian, and other indigenous people.

Both policies recognize a basic problem in translating the oral forms of one language into the written forms of another. Many Native American languages include sounds which do not exist in English or French, and if sounds are omitted or distorted, meaning can be changed radically. Even when the procedures are standardized, transliteration cannot capture contextual meaning. Thus the meanings of thousands of Indian names have been lost or obscured in the relatively short history of North America.

On the other hand, map users have needs of their own. If the map maker remains perfectly true to the pronunciation of the native population, special phonetic markings will fill areas of the map and thereby reduce the use of the map for general English and French speakers. Even if standardized transliterations are used, the human eye and brain cannot easily distinguish long words from a non-cognate language. For whom, then, are the maps to be made, the oral society or the literate society? Are not the oral societies becoming literate? Is it not important to record their cultural histories — simply for the sake of human knowledge as well as for a lot of other reasons?

This is a delicate issue. I agree with the draft policy of the U.S. Board that

> the final selection, spelling, and application of the names for official use on Federal maps and other publications are [should be] based on policies and orthographic guidelines established by the Board.

However, I would like to suggest that more attention ought to be given to records that are in addition to maps. For example, more kinds of information, i.e., computer fields, might be added to the Geographic Names Information System to store essential linguistic data. Maps need what linguists call "practical transcriptions," but the accurate preservation of names and histories requires that three basic kinds of linguistic data that can come on name application forms or other records: (1) phonemic transcriptions, (2) morphological divisions of each word, and (3) morphological glosses in English.

These are the three types of data that anthropologists already use when gathering Indian placenames, and it would be useful to enlist their aid and to compile their data centrally.

Of course, the state boards, who are the principal representatives at this meeting, are partners with the U.S. Board in reviewing, approving, and recording geographic names. From my experience on the Washington Board, I would say that state authorities make strong efforts to encourage the use of Native American names when appropriate. State boards also have the singular advantage of being closer to all of their constituencies — businesses, local government, service clubs, professional organizations, the local mountaineers, the general public, and the expertise at the universities. In controversial cases, the state boards have ready access to the testimony of these constituencies to judge which names have significantly wider use or more natural associations with particular features.

One final kind of problem has to do with the participation of Native American representatives. Not all tribal groups are the same. Thus, in considering names we must take care to include all groups. For example, there was a recent proposal to name the inland waters in the Puget Sound area the *Salish Sea*, but not all the tribes in this area are of Salish background (linguistically or culturally). Also, some groups are interested in recording their names and some are not. For some the bureaucratic hassle is not worth the trouble. For others, names are sacred or taboo. Obviously, a great variety of concerns need to be addressed.

In short, recording and preserving the placenames of minority cultures, especially of the Native Americans, is a great challenge, and the more of us who work together the better.

Grant Smith
Eastern Washington University, Cheney

Note

1. I am indebted to Gary Palmer, an anthropologist working out of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, for all of these Indian derivatives, but even he is unable to explain this last association.

Works Cited

Smith, Grant. "Density Variations of Indian Names: A Comparison between British Columbia and the State of Washington," *Onomastica Canadiana* 71 (1989): 67–82.

___. "Density Variations of Indian Placenames: Spokane County and the State of Washington." *Names* 37 (1989): 139–54.

*****

In 1992
***Names* will mark the quincentennial of Columbus' arrival in the New World with a special issue (September 1992) devoted to the impact of Columbus on the placename cover of the Western Hemisphere.**

We invite papers on any of the following topics:

- American Indian names recorded by Columbus and other early explorers
- Names given by Columbus
- Cities, counties, institutions, streets named for Columbus
- Literary uses of Columbus' name.
- Any other topic relating to Columbus and the naming process

Deadline: February 29, 1992

Send papers to Prof. Thomas J. Gasque, Editor, *Names*, Department of English, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD 57069. Inquiries are welcome.