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How New Naming Systems Emerge: The Prototypical Case of Columbus and Washington

Lawrence M. Baldwin and Michel Grimaud

Abstract

A new, generalized commemorative use of personal names as toponyms began and spread at about the time of the French and American Revolutions as a consequence of the personalities involved and of the events themselves. Three of the most important names—*Washington, Columbus*, and *Columbia*—are frequently and significantly used for counties, towns, and streets in the United States. Also, the American Revolution may have been instrumental in enabling the birth of several anthroponymic naming systems.

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Both Columbus and Washington are in different senses onomastic founding fathers. Christopher Columbus is strongly associated with the birth of American states: New Granada won its independence in 1819 and took the name *Colombia*. Later, the name *British Columbia* was adopted for a Canadian province, showing that the name of Columbus was still a significant symbol in the mid-nineteenth century. The United States became independent in 1776 and, in their search for roots, saw Columbus as a kind of precursor, a visionary. The poet Joel Barlow's 1787 *The Vision of Columbus*, expanded into *The Columbiad* in 1807, was intended as a national epic.

In that sense, *Columbus* and *Columbia* are children of the revolution against the British and the fate of their names is linked directly in the United States to that of George Washington. Symbolically, this alliance is embodied in Washington Irving, a writer whose name includes the surname of the country's liberator from the British and whose works include a masterful biography, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1848). Washington and Columbus are even more closely linked on September 9, 1791, when, under the direction of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington himself, the capital's Commissioners officially agreed that the new federal district would be called the "Territory of *Columbia*" and the capital proper the "City of *Washington*." Shortly thereafter, in 1792, *The Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette* began publication. Finally, as George Stewart points out in *Names on the Land* (286–87), the State of

Washington, almost got named "Territory of Columbia" in 1853, but the nation's first president won the day.

Indeed, Washington usually does win. Wilbur Zelinsky offers a striking picture of the relative present-day fame of Washington, Columbus, and other American patriots (126). Table 1, merging Zelinsky's tally of county names with the names used by the Census Bureau for minor civil divisions, shows the ranks, with numbers in parentheses.

Table 1. Most frequent county and civil division names.

1. Washington (301)	6. Grant (150)	11. Clay (80)
2. Jackson (250)	7. Madison (111)	12. Wayne (79)
3. Lincoln (190)	8. Harrison (104)	13. Perry (73)
4. Jefferson (179)	9. Monroe (99)	14. Lafayette (68)
5. Franklin (159)	10. Marion (91)	15. Columbus (67)

Clearly both *Washington* and *Columbus* are significant features on the American toponymic landscape. To further analyze the kind of data provided by Zelinksy, we use three street directories: the first *Street Directory of the Principal Cities of the United States*, published in 1881; the 1908 *Street Directory*; and the carrier route computer tapes of the Postal Service for 1988.[1]

Our goal using data concerning mostly but not exclusively the names of streets, towns, and counties is to show in a preliminary manner not so much how societies honor their heroes but *how the very notion of honoring one's heroes became widespread at the time of the American Revolution and took several forms, including the creation of new anthroponymic and toponymic systems.* We also hope to show in the process how and why the cycle of fame functions as it does.

Counties Named After Washington and Columbus

Columbus and its variants are linked to the birth if not of the nation proper, at least to the birth of its new capital. Again, the association of Columbus and Washington is an unequal one. *Washington* appears as the name of 31 counties currently. Table 2 shows county names appearing most frequently.

Union is the only county name in the top twelve which is not the name of a politically important person. But, like the other names, it is meant to honor a significant political value—the once-again united nation. *Colum-*

Table 2. Most frequent county names.

1. Washington	7. Clay (18)
2. Jefferson (26)	Montgomery
3. Franklin (25)	Union
4. Jackson (24)	10. Fayette/Lafayette (17)
Lincoln	11. Marion
6. Madison (20)	12. Monroe

bus does appear once as a county name and, with its combined variants *Columbia* (8) and *Columbiana* (1), it finds itself ranked thirtieth. The fact that *Columbus* is only once a county name and that *Columbia* is the dominant variant suggests that counties are not named after Columbus directly but after the derivative "Columbia." In other words, a first hypothesis is that county names commemorate those persons involved in the *political* birth of the nation (and its rebirth with *Lincoln* and *Union*) and that this social value is what leads namers to the choice of *Columbia*: it is a poetic toponym for America rather than the name of the European explorer of uncharted lands. Similarly, the Columbia River is so named and one of the space shuttles was named *Columbia*, not *Columbus*.

Paradoxically, then, *Columbia* rather than *Columbus* may be seen, from the first, as the major American name. Aside from the influence of the name of the Federal District itself, the popularity of Latinate names may have encouraged namers to use the Latin form. Moreover, *Columbia* had the toponymic *and* feminine ending *-ia* so that, as in Philip Freneau's 1775 poem "American Liberty," it fell nicely within the paradigm of women, like Britannia, who personify a nation. Indeed Freneau elsewhere referred to France as "Gallia" and to the Indian isles of the Carribean as "Carribiana."

In short, *Columbia* had several advantages over *Columbus*: it was suffixed in a standard toponymic fashion, it fit nicely within the poetic paradigm for nations, and, as a consequence, it was an acknowledgment of one's roots but not an overly direct one, particularly after 1792, when the name *Columbia* had been bestowed on the nation's capital.

Towns Named After Washington and Columbus?

Do town names form a set comparable to names of counties? In 1786, before the District was so named, the city of Columbia, in South Carolina, had already been established. The first major city directly named after the explorer's name as translated into English was Columbus, Ohio, which was established in 1812 opposite *Franklin*ton (1797).

Each toponymic class, *qua* class, tends to have a set of defining features, suffixes being an obvious case for town names (*-ton, -ville, -burg, -boro*, etc.). "Washing*ton*" being a personal name with its origin in a town

name, it was a particularly apposite name for the nation's capital. Indeed the two most frequent town names, *Clinton* and *Washington* both end in *-ton*. The top forty current town names are listed in Table 3.

Because one major constraint is that a name not be repeated within a state, there are relatively few repeated names overall. However, certain names, like *Columbus*, have variants. If we add all the variants for *Clinton* (25 + 6 = 31), *Washington* (24 + 19 = 43), and *Columbus* (17 + 17 + 15 = 49), Christopher Columbus' name becomes the most frequently used name for towns in the United States. Yet this is *not* due to the fact that there are two equally usable variants. In fact, *Columbus* is used for only three town name variants, *Columbus City, Columbus Grove,* and *Columbus Junction,* the other twelve compounds being combinations of *Columbia* with a prepositioned or postpositioned word such as *West Columbia* or *Columbia Falls.* In other words, the apparently balanced naming is not: with its variants, *Columbus* appears twenty times but *Columbia* is attested twenty-nine times.

Table 3. Most frequent US town names.

1. Clinton (25)	17. Ashland (19)	31. Burlington (17)
2. Chester (24)	Clayton	Canton
Franklin	Hillsboro	Columbia
Greenville	Milton	Columbus
Madison	Newport	Danville
Washington	Princeton	Jamestown
7. Marion (22)	23. Auburn (18)	Jefferson
Salem	Cleveland	Kingston
9. Monroe (21)	Fairfield	Lexington
10. Arlington (20)	Farmington	Lincoln
Georgetown	Lebanon	
Hamilton	Manchester	
Jackson	Oxford	
Milford	Plymouth	
Springfield		
Troy		

Considering the small number of cases involved out of a database of 27,810 towns and considering the number of name changes occurring over the last two hundred years, one should not put too much stock in the significance of these numbers. Nevertheless the *direction* of the difference corresponds, both for *Washington* and for *Columbia* (as opposed to *Columbus*) to what we had found in the case of counties. It is perhaps not an overstatement to conclude that *Washington* and *Columbus* or its

naturalized version *Columbia* were and remain two essential elements of the American toponymic landscape. Yet the very notion of persons other than kings and saints being honored in such a way is historically striking. *Columbus* and *Washington*, therefore, are not merely instances of a new naming system; they are also, partly, the immediate cause of this new naming system.

The Emergence of Anthroponymic Commemoratives

If you lived in Philadelphia shortly after 1692, your town's street names referred to trees and numbers. In Boston around 1708, the only personal names present in the 110 streets of that large city were those of property owners whose names were used to refer to their buildings rather than to them. Essentially, commemorative naming had no place in the world's streetscape until the French Revolution. In a famous pamphlet published in 1794, the abbé Grégoire advocated that France's past be honored with street names commemorating the great dates and the great men of its past, including the great men of the 1789 French Revolution. On the already solidly settled continent of Europe, because of the intellectual impact of France and of the French Revolution (including the occupation of various European countries), it may safely be said that European commemorative naming has its roots in France.

But naming actually followed a somewhat different pattern in the age of discovery and colonization. While the streets in British towns bore only functional names, including references to royalty or to saints—the size of the territories being explored, the number of towns being created, and the significance of the individuals involved in establishing new colonies inevitably led to the emergence and spread of other kinds of naming: naming after oneself or naming after significant people (usually landowners). Thus *Penn*sylvania and Pittsburgh's *Penn* Street in 1795 for Penn, the major landholder. Such naming patterns had already emerged in the past, but they had not spread. The combination of the American Revolution and of significant expansion in the ensuing years ensured that the reemergence of honorific naming—whether of self, of persons still alive, or of persons dead (commemorative naming proper)—would spread and become the norm.

Despite the close links between France and the United States, America's own revolution suffices to explain the use of commemorative naming at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, Lexington in Virginia is probably the first town in America, if not the world, to have been laid out with a systematic pattern of honorific street

names. The town itself was the result of a 1777 bill of the Virginia legislature establishing three new towns in the new Rockbridge County. The town's name *Lexington* commemorated the recent Battle of Lexington (April 19, 1775) and, itself, is a significant innovation in naming.[2]

The second striking feature is the action of county surveyor James McDowell who named the first six streets of Lexington in 1778. The names are *Main Street, Washington Street, Jefferson Street, Nelson Street* (for Thomas Nelson), *Henry Street* (for Patrick Henry), and *Randolph Street* (for Peyton Randolph). Interestingly, although two other neighboring towns, Harrisonburg and Lewisburg, illustrate to an extent the same principles (there is a *Fayette Street* in Lewisburg), Lexington's systematic use of local and national patriotic figures for streets surrounding Main is both unique and significant.

Until 1776, America was a stable world where street and town naming was directly functional and was made mostly in terms of landmarks. The only people to be commemorated were kings and, in Roman Catholic areas such as New Orleans or Detroit, saints. But saints' names were usually functional, referring not to the person but to the church bearing the same name. Kings and queens and some higher noblemen were not so much commemorated as celebrated *qua* royalty with their titles alone as in *Queen Street* – although honorific naming, as in *Charles Street*, was by no means uncommon. But when America then Europe entered the era of revolutions and battles for national independence, revolutionaries became the new kings and saints and, like them, were in some sense embodiments of the state. It is as a consequence of this change that street names around the world have become commemorative, honoring both the new keys to the new kingdom – liberty, independence, the Constitution, the Republic – and the men who were responsible for the creation of the new State.[3]

The consequences of this evolution, over two centuries, are best proved by citing contemporary street name data. In 1988, 470 towns (out of 27,810) had at least one *Independence* street and 1,537 towns a *Union* street. Not surprisingly dependencies of the United States like Puerto Rico and Hawaii are exceptions: Puerto Rico does not have a single *Independence* street, although Hawaii does have one. In order to put those numbers in perspective, one need only note the number of towns with at least one street commemorating some of the main founders of the country, summarized in Table 4. Obviously, people are more significant for people than are concepts. Indeed there are only 279 towns with a *Constitution* street. In this context, Christopher Columbus fares rather well, with a combined total of 1,675 towns where at least one variant of his name is present in a street name: *Colombia* (4, referring to the country in South

Table 4. Number of towns with streets named for founders.

Washington (3,657 towns)	Madison (1,980)
Jackson (2,273)	Monroe (1,673)
Jefferson (2,446)	Fayette/Lafayette (980)

America), *Columbia* (1,063, referring to towns, a university, or a Latin name), *Columbiana* (6, referring to a town in the United States), *Columbus* (602, referring to towns or to the explorer).

In fact, compared to other explorers, Columbus does very well: a total of only four towns have a street bearing Verraz(z)ano's or Vespucci's name. Columbus also does rather well as compared to the greatest English-language writer, Shakespeare, who is mentioned in only 62 towns across the nation.

Strikingly, however, with few exceptions, *Columbia* continues to be about twice as common in all states. Table 5 compares those states which have towns with streets named *Columbia* and *Columbus*.

Table 5. Number of towns with streets named Columbia compared to towns with streets named Columbus.

	Columbia	Columbus		Columbia	Columbus
New Jersey	87	4	Louisiana	8	10
New York	77	45	Ohio	61	73
Pennsylvania	68	31	Wisconsin	24	23
Texas	51	25	North Dakota	2	2
California	75	31	South Dakota	2	2
Oregon	28	2	Wyoming	1	1
Washington	37	8	New Mexico	0	3
Connecticut	17	19	Arizona	5	6

In the case of Ohio, the reason for the slight but still unusual dominance of *Columbus* over *Columbia* is the presence of the large city of Columbus. Otherwise, the numbers are too small to reach significance but suggest that western States are less Columbophilic than eastern ones probably because they were settled late (see below). As for the dominance of *Columbia*, it seems directly related to a specific feature of street naming: the long-standing existence of a college and university theme. For example, 739 towns have *Harvard* streets, 729 have *Princeton*, and 614 have *Yale*. *Columbia* appears in 1,063. Since Columbia University is clearly not as noted as Harvard or Yale, we may assume that even if 563 names refer

to the school, there remain at least 500 others referring more or less directly to *Columbia* as a geographic name. Viewed in this fashion, the two forms of the name are very roughly equivalent, a result not incompatible with our data on towns and counties.

In 1908, streets named *Columbia* were about twice as frequent as those named *Columbus*. In 1881, with data taking into account only the 110 major towns in the United States, *Columbia* (with 44 towns) is three times as frequent as *Columbus* (with 15 towns). But since there are only a dozen *Harvard*s, a half-dozen *Princeton*s, and eight *Yale*s in 1881, and a college theme in only three of those cities, the college naming theme does not explain the dominance of *Columbia*. We are thus led to conclude that, probably for the reasons discussed for counties and towns, *Columbia* was the more popular variant of *Columbus* in the nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries. Yet the present-day dominance of names like *Washington* and *Columbia* is partly misleading.

The Nature of the Cycle of Fame

As sociologists in particular have shown, ordinarily a person's fame is in inverse relation to her or his chronological distance from us. Thus, Columbus, born in 1451, would be forgotten by now were it not for the fact that his exploration of the New World was a momentous event. However, it only *became* momentous rather than *was*. As Stewart points out, the British preferred to remember the Cabots rather than the Genoan explorer who had sailed for their colonial rival Spain. When Americans became independent, the usual search for roots *and* the irrelevance of Spain as a political danger made Columbus an appropriate symbol (169–74).

There are no known written explanations for the reasons behind the choice of "District of *Columbia*," so that one must surmise the general popularity of the name and, perhaps—almost exactly one year before the tricentennial of Columbus' landing—a wish to adopt as a symbol of the new nation's capital, the most important name in "American" prehistory. As was the case with Lexington, symbolic capital is particularly significant in that toponyms were formally preferentially related to royalty—*Virginia* and *Louisiana* being well-known examples.

Nonetheless, aside from this possible commemoration of 1492, the year 1791–92 was hardly a celebration of Columbus' discovery, for at least two reasons. There were other far more important and recent heroes to honor: Washington and the other Founding Fathers of the freshly established Republic. But, also, Columbus was not (from an American point of view) a politician. In other words, he, of course, never was in a position

to actually create a political entity. He was merely an explorer—and explorers, poets, and scientists are not dominant figures when people name towns, counties, and streets.[4]

Indeed, when a poet like Dante or Victor Hugo is frequent or dominant in the toponymic landscape, one can surmise that the reason is that his presence is due to his political relevance as a symbol for a group's values. This was clearly the case for Hugo in the nineteenth century after the publication of *Les Misérables*, his defense of John Brown, and his general condemnation of the death penalty. Thus one town in the United States was even named *Hugoton* after Victor. In France, Hugo's popularity was immense and, standing as he did against Napoleon III's Empire and in defense of Republicanism, he became its symbol when the Third Republic came into being. Almost every major town in France has a major street named after Victor Hugo. But in 1985, when the centennial of Hugo's death was celebrated, there was little popular interest, and no new street names, since what he had stood for could now be taken for granted.

In 1892, a century later, the United States did celebrate with relative enthusiasm the 400th anniversary of Columbus's landing in the Americas. A "Columbian Exposition" was belatedly held in 1893 and some streets were named after Columbus around that period. One example was Columbus Avenue in New York City. *Columbus* was a good name, with social prestige and a fine replacement for the section of 9th Avenue beyond 59th Street. America at the time and at least until World War II was still looking for its roots, its heritage, and for opportunities to symbolically affirm its collective identity. In 1892, Columbus served that purpose well.

In 1992, Columbus serves that purpose less well. As a prototypical colonialist who renamed the islands he discovered and seized them in the name of Spain, he is not a particularly good model for our post-colonial world. The extent to which he is present in America's consciousness may perhaps best be gauged by the fact that new streets are not being named after him.

This is quite natural. After a person's death, or even not infrequently while alive, important politicians become immortalized as toponyms, or in the case of streets as multiple microtoponyms. Both Washington and Lafayette (particularly during the latter's 1821 trip along the Eastern seaboard), were honored with street names. In Washington's case, the name continued to be used on a regular basis for over a century after his death for major thoroughfares in major and minor cities. It is also likely that the ubiquitous presence of his name and the need to name whole sets of newly platted streets were reasons for the not infrequent theme of presidents on downtown grids.

Washington also presided over one of the most startling of all naming acts – not a new "naming system" but certainly a new strategy, and one which has continued (with variants) ever since, as new nations achieve independence through revolution: the naming of the country or of the capital of a new country with the name of its first living and presiding president. Only thirteen years after he had been first memorialized in one of the street names of Lexington, George Washington had essentially memorialized himself by naming the capital city of Washington. The conditions were right: an immensely popular president and the need for a capital with a strong, striking name. An early comparable case is that of Bolivia, named after Simon Bolívar while he was still alive. Clearly Columbus could not compete.

Yet, as street names, both *Washington* and *Columbus* (like *avenue Victor Hugo* in France), are today part of a dead naming system. *Washington* remains highly visible in our toponymic landscape because names of towns and counties are rarely changed and because *major* streets rarely change their names – and it was a rare occasion when *Washington* was not used for a major thoroughfare.

All told, while *Washington* remains a strong downtown presence, he is not a likely name for new streets. However, *qua* president, he may be found, along with Lincoln and others, as a name on higher class apartment buildings. But the contrast between the nineteenth century and today cannot be overemphasized. Peter Karsten, in *Patriot-Heroes in England and America*, examines a peculiarly American naming pattern, the use of a hero's first name and last name as a first name or even as a first name and *middle* name. Thus, he notes that out of the 896 full names for the period 1760–1920, 237 persons had adopted *Washington* or *George Washington* as their first and middle names. This is to be compared to the 12 persons who used *Christopher Columbus* as a part of their names. Of course, Washington ranks first, and Columbus sixteenth only.

Although there are sampling problems with the data, there is no doubt that, as Karsten says, Washington had almost instantaneously been elevated to "national sainthood." Indeed, out of sixty US Naval Academy students in 1859, there were two George Washingtons – one George Washington Wood and one George Washington Carter. But however small the figures for *Columbus* may be, they are significant in that the competition was stiff and that the Christopher Columbus Smiths and Joneses are more numerous than the Paul Revere Smiths and the William Penn Joneses. Columbus was indeed a significant figure for late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Americans.

Paradoxically, unlike Washington, Christopher Columbus as an explorer can fit readily within *today*'s residential and suburban context which

prefers trees and the arts to numbers and political figures. New towns, nowadays, including their centers, are conceived of as suburbs. Thus there is no Washington Street in the new town of Columbia, Maryland (b. 1967), but the town *is* named *Columbia*, a name appropriate for a town close to the District of Columbia and also one felt to be poetic *and*, to quote a realtor from rich Illinoisan Elmhurst concerning the "Columbia Avenue" he had laid out and named, the word "has no particular reference"!

Commemorative naming is still alive and well today, particularly in the least disruptive and most noticeable case, that of street names. Although the United Nations toponymic commission and most official bodies recommend that a person's name not be given to a place before a person's death, the tradition has often been ignored as in the case of Charles de Gaulle for France and of Ronald Reagan for America. Commemorative naming proper is now a worldwide phenomenon and, in a few recent cases, it has concerned the same person. Honorific naming swept around the world in three cases of assassination: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Salvador Allende. Not Robert Kennedy or John Lennon. But those are special cases.

In most Western countries, the date of independence and the contribution of patriots and revolutionaries is becoming a part of remote history. As a consequence the patriot theme is absent from naming systems. Political naming remains strong and, in fact, has spawned new naming systems (e.g., the superposition of political names onto numbered streets), but those systems tend to be local and parasitic since the network of downtown streets is well established. Outside of downtown areas and even in new downtowns, naming systems continue to reflect the need for roots and prestige: but the roots are cultural rather than political. Occasionally, this converges with old systems: Penn's tree theme remains fundamental as does the descriptive naming of streets (*Curve, Summit* streets), but reasons have changed: those street names are felt first as a return to nature and a symbolic antidote to an increasingly urbanized civilization; and second, the names are seen as prestigious and as a means to further basic social values, in particular a belief in ecology.

However, in African countries, in those Asian countries that do use street names, and in Eastern Europe, the proximity of independence or of significant changes in the nature of government has made the naming of streets after patriots and revolutionaries a living process.

Conclusion

The Roman Catholic Knights of Columbus (founded in 1882) repeatedly lobbied for October 12 to become a legal holiday. In 1909

New York State passed legislation to that effect, but although President Harrison set the day aside in 1892, "Columbus Day" did not become an official holiday until 1968, when President Johnson signed a law making it a federal three-day weekend. By that time, the "Columbus" in "Columbus Day" had lost much of its significance. This is one typical turn of the cycle of fame.

But in the case of a name like *Columbus*, we can see how and why fame took a different route elsewhere. In Puerto Rico, Spain, and Latin America, in particular, Columbus Days and streets named *Calle Colon* and *Calle 12 di Octubre* were and remain far more important than they were or are in English-speaking America. Cristobal Colon was (almost) a Hispanic and, as a representative of Ferdinand and Isabella, he continues to symbolize one of the most momentous events in modern history: the colonization of the Americas and, in the case of Latin America, their continuing Hispanic identity.[5]

In the United States, Columbus is secondary to Washington and to the American Revolution and its main heroes. Nevertheless, taken together, they seem to have furnished models for the emergence of new naming systems. In particular, we hypothesize that their lives, works, and fame were instrumental in enabling the birth of several anthroponymic subsystems. First, the novel use of patriotic surnames as given names: witness *Washington* Irving; and, later (after the Civil War), the use of Washington's surname (and that of a few other patriots like Jackson and Jefferson) as a new, popular *surname*.

The second trend is exemplified by Lafayette, who named his son *George Washington Lafayette*. Lafayette is thus one of the first to provide a famous instance of a new effort to attach a (patriot's) full name to a surname.[6] This was probably a major reason for the spread of a now typical American system of naming which (according to 1790 Census data hardly existed before then): First Name plus Middle Name plus Last Name. In other words, the "George + Washington + Last Name" model functioned as a popular and specific model but that model (and its patriotic variants) seems to have also been significant in the establishment of the generalized tripartite American structure of "First + Middle + Last Name."

Finally, the Revolution was important for placename research, and especially for the history of street-naming systems. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, George Washington, his older brother Christopher, and their many cousins had contributed to a radical change in toponomastic thinking. Commemorative naming after local or national heroes (rarely heroes of foreign revolutions, but Simon Bolívar is a notable exception) had

become one of the major strategies that would govern the extraordinary growth of the American toponymic landscape over the following centuries.

Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts

Notes

1. The first author, Larry Baldwin, took primary responsibility for the organization and analysis of the computer data. Primary responsibility for writing the paper goes to Michel Grimaud.

2. The information concerning Lexington is taken from what is certainly the most scholarly book written on the streets and street names of an American town, Winifred Hadsel's *The Streets of Lexington, Virginia: A Guide to the Origins and History of Their Names*. Hadsel does not claim, as we do, that this commemorative naming is the first of its kind, but she does emphasize its novelty.

3. Out of the approximately 150 national notables listed by Zelinsky (129–30), only one is a woman, Pocahontas.

4. This is not the case, for instance, of toponyms on the moon and other astronomical entities. But the namers are a radically different social group, as are the circumstances under which those objects are named, as well as the locale itself.

5. Columbus' name is of onomastic interest. Washington Irving notes that Christopher Columbus is called "Colombo" in Italian and that Columbus latinized his name (i.e., used the suffix *us*) "in his letters according to the usage of the time, when Latin was the language of learned correspondence. In subsequent life when in Spain he recurred to what was supposed to be the original Roman name of the family, *Colonus*, which he abbreviated to *Colon*, to adapt to the Castilian tongue. Hence he is known in Spanish history as *Christoval Colon* "(22n).

6. It is possible that the need to avoid the use of "George" as an isolated name was due to the fact that such a given name might seem to honor *King* George, against whom, precisely, the Revolution was occurring. This may have been yet another factor in the creation of the tripartite model of American naming.

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1993 Western States Geographic Names Council

The University of Texas at El Paso will host the next meeting of the Western States Geographic Names Conference. The dates are September 8–10, 1993; the site, the historic Westin Paso del Norte Hotel, in the heart of downtown El Paso. As at previous conferences, the US Board on Geographic Names will hold its monthly meeting, and there will be other sessions on geographic names. But participants won't be working all the time. Optional events include a trip to Juarez, with dinner, and a toponymic tour over the route travelled by Don Juan de Onate, as far as Mesilla, New Mexico. A highlight of the conference will be a tour of the Lurline H. Coltharp Collection of Onomastics at the UTEP library.

To find out more, write to Lurline H. Coltharp at 4263 Ridgecrest, El Paso, TX 79902.

Although plans for conference sites after 1993 are tentative, likely locations are Alaska in 1994, the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1995, and Oklahoma in 1996.

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