Names in Brief

Port Tobacco Again.—F. W. H.'s item on *Port Tobacco* ("Names in Brief," *Names,* III:1) suggests this short resume of some of the other interesting Indian place name folk etymologies and etiological tales that abound in tidal Maryland. Perhaps the most intriguing examples are *Brockatonorton Bay, Rockawalking Creek, Transquaking Creek* and *Vienna.* Messrs. Brock and Norton may seem, at first glance, to have been commemorated by *Brockatonorton.* In truth, however, the name is probably a corruption of the Powhatan word for 'fire' (Strachey *boketawh,* Smith *Pokatawer*) and a suffix (Cf.: Fox *-enāg,* 'country,' 'land,' 'village') meaning 'people.' I conclude that near Brockatonorton Bay, on Boxiron Creek (<*Bog iron*), the Indians mined and smelted bog iron. Rockawalking is where "Mr. Rock" is said to have come one day, "a-walking." Like *Rockaway,* L. I. (which was *Rechouwhacky* in 1639), the name's chief component may really be the local Algonquian word for 'sand,' whose Primitive Algonquian prototype would be **läkaw-* (appearing with initial *r,* in an *r*-dialect). *Transquaking* suggests a watercourse in transit through a quaking region or bog. Actually, the name appears to contain Delaware *talala* (*tarara,* in an *r*-dialect), 'white cedar.' Its meaning, on this supposition, would be, 'There is a white cedar swamp a-growing.' Of all these names, *Vienna* is the most difficult to explain. They who derive it from *Unna*cocassinon, the name of an Emperor of the Nanticoke, seem to have naively spelled out the opening letters of *Vnna*cocassinon (Folk: V-n-a . . .), as it was printed in some seventeenth century records. And they who feel that it comes indirectly from the Austrian city (*Wien*>*Vienna*) can find no local history to support them.

As for *Port Tobacco,* whose earliest historic occurrence was probably as *Potopaco* on Smith's 1608 map of Virginia, the original application of the name was not to a village but to a stream whose upper course is called *Port Tobacco Creek,* and whose lower course is called *Port Tobacco River,* a tributary of the Potomac. The village (100 pop.) is on the creek. Though the guide book, *Maryland,*

A Guide to the Old Line State (1940), states that Port Tobacco was "the most important of the many Maryland ports on the Potomac ruined by the silting up of the creek at its landing," it appears reasonable (as borne out by early map spellings) to agree with F. W. H. that the designation is a folk etymology of Smith's *Potopaco,* an Algonquian name based on the initial stem *pot-* ('into') and signifying, 'An inland jutting of the water.' The last extensive article on the subject, so far as I am aware, was Ethel Roby Hayden's "Port Tobacco, Lost Town of Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* (XL: 4, Dec., 1945, pp. 261–76).

Because the Indian place names of America are from complicated indigenous languages, they require greater study and space than the comparatively obvious place names that have been introduced from abroad. Though today these aboriginal names have become a part of the English language and have taken on English pronunciations, they cannot be explained correctly without close attention to the native tongues they are from. For the past five years I have been engaged in a study of the Indian place names of Maryland, and I hope to complete a book on this subject within the coming year. I have endeavored, in my etymologies, to find meanings that are consistent with the topographical features of the places, and in this light I have examined over one hundred and fifty Maryland place and geographic names. Practically every earlier Maryland Indian place name etymology has been revised in the light of the newer Algonquian linguistic developments. At present I am composing an Introductory Essay which will deal with the ethnological and migratory significance of the names, discuss the folk etymologies that have been made of them, and comprise a short history of Algonquian linguistics from the comparative standpoint.

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Chippoaks and Rohoic.—These names, of apparently no more than local and state-wide interest, warrant consideration by onomatologists at large. Etymologically they belong to a special class, present spellings and pronunciations having resulted from recurrent systematic different successive abbreviations, with result that changes in pronunciation followed changes in spellings.

Chippoaks (a farm and creek name, Surry Co., Va.) derives from

Chawopoweanoc, freely 'Southern point of Weanoc,' the southernmost of the three Weanoc tribal countries, in James river valley, Va. Though Strachey, *c.* 1610–13, spelt name of its tribal chief Chippoxes, Smith, *c.* 1607–8 styles tribe Chawopoweyanocke, and *c.* 1654, a tithe precinct, approximately coterminous with tribal country, was known as Chawopoweyanoke. By dropping one or two letters each year in repetitive copying, public quill scriveners stabilized abbreviations at Chippoaks *c.* 1700, while in title records, written by the best informed, the long original spelling continued for some years. Finally, Chippoaks became the accepted spelling and pronunciation.

Rohoic (name of run, now western limits of Petersburg, Va.) derives, not as so often publicized from an Indian tribal name, but from the Scotch border name Rhodhohowick ('Robert Bolling's Rhodhohowick lands,' which at time he acquired them were on the official boundary between Indian country and the colony proper). In a like manner every five years in Processioners' Reports the long original was systematically abbreviated differently each time until stabilized at Rohoic *c.* 1760, while the few who knew what the abbreviation stood for continued to use Rhodhohowick, until finally the abbreviation was adopted.

One might cite other examples of etymological changes by successive different abbreviations, motivated by economic considerations. It seems evident quill scriveners copying at a pittance per page had no conscious intent to change both spellings and pronunciation, but were concerned with saving time and trouble. In that such etymologies did not result from linguistic laws, they may be classed as artificial, rather than natural. These two examples seem sufficient to alert students to the probability the same phenomena may help explain other names in any of the oldest seated English sections of America.

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