The Spanish Placenames of California: Proposition 1994

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Coming in solemn beauty like slow old tunes of Spain.
John Masefield, "Beauty"

A number of errors appear in current California placenames, in those given by both Spanish and English speakers. Reasons for the errors are offered, as well as suggestions for their correction. An extensive list of affected names is presented, along with a survey of decisions on names made by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names over the last century. The article is supplemented by an extensive bibliography of California placenames. Spanish placenames are part of the heritage of California and residents may wish to consider protecting that heritage by correcting and restoring placenames derived from the Spanish and Mexican history of the area.

California, its name taken from a Spanish romance, is a state that has a population, an area, an economy larger than some Spanish-speaking nations. It boasts a wealth of Spanish placenames, with cities such as *San Diego*, *Sacramento*, *San Francisco*, *Carmenita*, *Sausalito* 'Little Willow Grove', and *Los Angeles*. It has counties named *Alameda*, *Amador*, *Calaveras*, *Contra Costa*, *Del Norte* (which was almost named *Del Merritt*), more colorful in name than the California counties of (say) *King*, *Lake*, and *Orange*. It has plain names (*Mountain Top* and *Turn* and *Corte Madera* for a place to 'cut wood'). It has embarrassing names (*Pecho Rock*, *Two Tits*, *Raggedyass Gulch*), charming names (*Will Thrall* and *Wimp*), foolish names (*Dirty Sock*). *Mariposa* 'butterfly' for a county name is nice, *Poso* 'sediment' or *Bloody Canyon* not so nice. *LaBrea Tar Pits* displays ignorance of what *la brea* means. It's the same as the Amerind word that gave us *Pismo*; it's 'tar'. An informative

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article could be devoted entirely to wrongheaded California placenames which often derive from mere ignorance of languages, both Amerind (in Wintu *buli* is 'peak', so *Bally Peak* is completely wrong and *Buli Mountain* somewhat silly) and European (especially Spanish). *La Cumbre Peak* is 'Peak Peak.' So is *Pachaco Peak*; *Cerro Gordo Peak* is 'Big Peak Peak.' *Lomita Mountain* is 'Little Hill Mountain', *Laguna Lake* 'Lake Lake', *Lagunita Lake* 'Little Lake Lake'. Officially there's a valley named *Vallecitos* 'Little Valleys' but colloquially it is often *Vallecitos Valley* 'Little Valleys Valley'. Can California's placenames of Spanish origin be put into better Spanish? Can these names be improved? In the words of one California placename from pioneer times, *You Bet*.

California is now regarded less as Wild West than as part of the Pacific Rim. Times have changed it. It is now more than half non-white and is not only historically Hispanic but (because of births and immigration both legal and illegal) it is becoming more Hispanic every day. The placenames of Spanish origin, then, in this context, gain in importance.

When I say "placenames of Spanish origin" I put the stress on names first given by speakers of Spanish (or Mexican). Some apparently Spanish placenames in California are merely Anglo attempts at local color. A few examples will suffice. *La Crescenta* 'The Crescent' was invented by Dr. Benjamin B. Briggs in 1888 for some odd geological formations. *Covelo* looks Spanish but was an error. Charles H. Eberle intended "a fortress in Switzerland" and most probably was thinking of a Tyrolian fort (rather near Switzerland) actually called *Covolo* by the Venetians. *Mount Lola* commemorates an adventuress who was notorious on two continents as the fabulous courtesan Lola Montez, an Irish girl who took that name in order to pass herself off as a Spanish dancer. She was the mistress of a king of Bavaria and later sold her favors at lesser rates in The Wild West. She is buried in Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery, but is still a California legend.

Although the placenames of California recall many an Anglo (there are, for instance, features for a *Yankee John*), still there are a *Spanish Bay*, a *Spanish Camp*, several examples of *Spanish Canyon*, more of *Spanish Creek* and *Spanish Flat* and *Spanish Ranch*, *Ridge* and *Spring*, and so on. Some mines have names such as *Madre de Oro* (what today we might call the mother of all mines) and there is a *Gobernador Creek*,

a *Manuel Peak*, a *Maria Ygnacio Creek*, a *Guadalupe y Llanitos de los Correos*, and the historical *La Casa Primera de Rancho San Jose*.

Obviously Spanish (though it is not unknown for *el* to be tacked onto non-Spanish names) are *El Adobe de los Robles*, *El Arco*, *El Bulto*, *El Caballete*, *El Cajon*, *El Camino*, *El Campo*, *El Caonejo*, *El Dorado* and so on, as well as *La Arena*, *La Bajada*, *La Ballona*, *La Bolsa Chica*, *La Canada*, *La Casita del Arroyo*, *La Cienaga*, *La Clavija*, *Laguna*, and *Las Junta*, *Las Lomas*, *Las Palmas* and *Los Altos*, *Los Angeles*, *Los Lobos*, *Los Plutos*, *Los Serranos*, and *Los Tablas* (or *Las Tablas*).

Grenada does look like a frontier spelling of the name of a great Spanish city but it was actually transferred from a Mississippi county as an improvement over the pioneers' pessimistic *Starve Out*.

Spanish names in California go back to the sixteenth century. Early patterns were established by the likes of *San Martin* (1542) and *San Francisco* (1595), by Cabo de Fortunas (1543) and *Bahia de los Fumos* (or perhaps *Fuegos* (1542), now *San Pedro Bay*, by *Carmel* (1603) and other names associated with The Blessed Virgin about the time that they named the likes of *Santa Catalina*, *San Nicolas*, and *San Diego*. Gaspar de Portolá's expedition in January 1770 named three islands: *Falsa Vela* 'False Sail', (one resembled a ship) and two *Las Mestisas* 'small table hills'. These were renamed *Islotes de Santo Tomas* by Juan Perez only four years later and then *Eneeapah* (from the aboriginal *Anyapah*) by Capt. Vancouver in 1792. A great deal of renaming has taken place over time in California, in some part to reduce the Spanish presence, but that is basically another subject than the one addressed here, as is the transfer to and from California of placenames seen elsewhere. Well before United States placenames came, in the late eighteenth century California placenames included *Santa Cruz* (1769), *San Luis Obispo* (1772), *Palo Alto* and *Santa Rosa* (1774), *Paso Robles* and *Escondido* (1776), *San Luis Rey* (1789), and *Contra Costa* (1800). Spanish names continued through the nineteenth century. One thinks of *San Bernadino* and *San Simeon* (1819), *Marin* (1834), *Las Cruces* (1836), *Chico* (1850), *Fresno* (1851), *Modesto* (1870), and *Pasadena* (1875), as well as such strange hybrids as *Altadena* (for the heights above Pasadena) and *Vacaville*. *Vacaville* (known widely because of its prison) is half-Spanish, half-French, if the suffix *-ville* cannot be seen as typically American. The French suffix represented the rejection, after the

American Revolution, of such British suffixes as *-ton*. We hardly ever notice today that a name Walt Disney has made nationally known, *Anaheim*, is from Spanish *Santa Ana* and the German suffix meaning 'home'. In fact many early California names were more inventive than erudite, rough and ready. (*Rough and Ready* itself is gone; it is now *Etna* and ought to be *Aetna*.) Some were not very well constructed or have suffered with non-Spanish-speakers. Some errors brought to the attention of the U.S. Post Office or the U.S. Board on Geographic Names have officially been corrected: *El Jarro* 'Jar' was once *El Yarro*. *Belota* has been corrected to *Bellota* 'Acorn' and *La Pansa* to *La Panza* ('Paunch', remember fat Sancho Panza?). Some non-Spanish placenames have been replaced by Spanish ones: *Alta Loma* used to be the weird *Iowamosa* (from *Iowa* and *hermosa*, 'beautiful'). Even when people struggle with the Spanish placenames they like them, but that doesn't prevent them from getting the names wrong. In San Diego people say 'DESH-ah' for *Dehesa* 'Pasture Land' and the common pronunciation of Los Angeles has changed in my lifetime from *Angeles* with [j] to *Angeles* with [g]. Californians may mangle Spanish names but they even fake them sometimes or choose them just for the sound: *Ortigalito* 'Little Nettle', just as in another tongue they essay *Vidette* (when they needed *vedette*) or name *Livingston* for African explorer David Livingstone. Names have sounds, though philologists tend to forget that fact, dealing as they do more with historic documents than living people. The spoken aspect of names is too neglected by onomasticians, a deficiency that demands correction.

Anglos of the YMCA concocted *Asilomar* 'Refuge by the Sea'. Others confected pseudo-Spanish words such as *Avisadero* or created *Calpine* with *alpine* in mind or chose words such as *Escalon* 'Stair Step' or *Armada* 'Armed Force' with no reference to anything Spanish just because they sounded pleasant. Some Californians who know no Spanish still think they see Spanish in toponyms that have completely different explanations: *Absco* (from the *A*merican *B*eet *S*ugar *Co.*), *Biola* (*B*ible *I*nstitute *o*f *L*os *A*ngeles), *Copco* (*C*alifornia/*O*regon *P*ower *Co.*), *Esmerelda* (she's the heroine of Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*), *Herpeco* (*Her*cules *P*ower *Co.*), *Irmulco* (*Irv*ing & *Mu*ir *L*umber *Co.*), Mopeco (*Mo*hawk *Pe*troleum *Co*rp.), *Tumco* (*T*he *U*nited *M*ines *Co*mpany). Even *Azusa* (which also has been attributed to "A to Z in the U.S.A.)." I find these amusing folk etymologies as engaging as any

learned word origins. They show namers at work, too. Did you know *Nurse Slough* goes back to a doctor surnamed Nurse? Did you ever stop to wonder why there are so many California places in memory of San Francisco and Santa Clara? Surely you see why *Dog Town* wanted to become *Magalia* 'Cottages' with the distinction lent by Latin and why the rough prospectors were more straightforward and even bawdy in name choice, even less prone to attach *City* to a boomtown than were other Americans in what at least they hoped to be more permanent locations. In names we see the mind of the people at work. There is much to learn about human nature and the particular American Experiment in the lore and folklore of names. That's another good reason for getting names correct, in any language.

Among folklore aspects of the placenames of California I like the likely or unlikely stories connected with *Likely* and *Jenny Lind*. (The singer never went to the state but was known there and Dr. J. T. Lind's braying jackass was ironically nicknamed Jenny Lind.) I see that to the usual *Lovers Leap* the last century they added *Maidens Grave* (one maiden, Rachel Melton, who arrived from Ohio but didn't last long). I like old mining names such as *Angels Roost* and wonder what the explanation was for *Jelly Camp*. I don't believe the folktale of *Igo* and *Ono* in San Bernadino Co. It seems as phony as the story I tell in *What's in a Name*? about *Oronogo* in another state. I am entertained by *Garrote* (someone was hanged there, another *Hangtown*). It became *First Garrote* when a *Second Garrote* inexplicably turned up. Now *First Garrote* is respectably *Groveland*. I'd like to believe that *Modesto* comes from William C. Ralston being too modest to have the place named for him, but I doubt the explanation. I am rather sad that *Copperopolis* railroad has gone and that *Coalinga* seems to be a mere whistle-stop name: *Coaling A*. The folklore aspect of toponymy is too neglected, worth more research. What about the likes of *Shirttale Creek*, *Tantrum Glade*, *Tin Cup Gulch*? There's a story in each one, and in *Timbuctoo* (a black miner's nickname), *Tie Canyon* (railroad ties), *Traer Agua* 'Drag Water' *Canyon* and *Thing Valley* (Mr. Damon Thing, of course). California promises many rewards to the folklore scholar of names and even the easy 'colorful names' approach still is not exhausted. There is always J. A. Tinker's nose (remembered in *Tinkers Knob*) or an old prospector nicknamed *Texas* (source of *Texas Springs*) or *Taralin Doty* (named out of *Gone with the Wind*, as if *Tara* weren't enough) for whom her doting

father (relenting?) named *Tara Brook*. There's gold in folklore (though not in the shape of melon seeds, which folklore says created the name *Cerros de los Melones*. Modern folklorists should pan for that gold.

Also neglected and significant is the fact that early California was by no means at the center of the Spanish vice-regency in the New World, nor did it attract as early explorers or settlers the people who spoke Spanish or even Mexican the best. Inevitably that resulted in dialectal or simply incorrect Spanish placenames in a considerable number of cases, and I don't mean just naming *Blanco* after Thomas White or *Moreno* after F. E. Brown. (*Largo* was for a Mr. Long.) After the teaching of Spanish in California improved (it was introduced into the public school system in 1915), there was an interest in correcting some of these mangled Spanish placenames as well as in improving the standards of spoken Spanish in California.

Here are some of the Spanish placenames of California. I omit the Spanish versions of indigenous placenames and I leave off, with regret, the Spanish accents that seem to me to be useful indeed, especially on the likes of *cañada*, *cañon*, *peñon* and on surname derivatives such as Vizcaino, Zuniga, etc., which U.S. officialdom seems to reject out of hand even though it permits accents on some placenames of French origin. The following roughly 150 selected Spanish placename problems might very well be reconsidered for correction at this time (unless, of course, you think a patina of age excuses defects in linguistics and that tradition outweighs accuracy):

Arroyo de Matadero 'Slaughter Gulch' should replace its replacement, *Madero* 'Lumber' *Creek*.

Batiguitos should be *Batiquitos* 'Trenches'.

Bean in at least some uses should return to *Frijole*.

Berryessa is the wrong way to honor the *Berryesa* family.

Puerto de Bodega on at least one old map is for a Capitan Vodega.

Borego should be *Borrego* 'Lamb'.

Burro appears in some names where *Buro* 'Mule Deer' is right.

Cabazon should be the nickname of an Amerind, *Cabezon* 'Big Head'.

Calabasas should be *Calabazas* 'Gourds, Pumpkins'.

Calaboose Creek should be *Calabozo* 'Jail' *Creek*.

Calero Reservoir should be *Calera* 'Lime Kiln'.

Camphora is what the Mexicans made of Monterey's *Camp Four.*

Campito Peak, intended for 'Little Camp Peak,' is fake Spanish.

Camuesa should be *Camueza* 'Chamois'.

Canada Verde 'Green Canyon' should be *Canada Verruga* 'Wart Canyon' in honor of an Amerind chief with a Spanish nickname.

Carnandero Creek should be *Carneadero* 'Abbatoir' *Creek.*

Carquinez hides the fact the Karquin Indians are the name's source.

Casa Loma is ungrammatical and should be *Casa de la Loma.*

The Castro (District) by dropping *District* has become a famous hybrid, but if we can say *Sierra Mountains* such hybrids must be allowed, or are some such bilingual combinations acceptable and others not? If that is the case, what are the criteria?

Cavallo Point should be *Caballos Point* or even *Punta de los Caballos.*

Cazadero used for 'hunter' or 'hunting place' is not really Spanish.

Chaparral might better be *Chamisal* in some cases.

Chilao ought to be *Chileo* 'Hot Stuff', bandit José Gonzales' nickname.

Chowchilla should be *Chauchiles.*

Chupadero 'Water Hole' What dialect words are permissible.

Coches 'Hogs' is Mexican, not Spanish. Surely Mexican words are apt.

Cordero Canyon, for brothers on the Portolá Expedition, was renamed *McGonigle Canyon* for a settler. Which such names to prefer?

Corona del Mar used to be *Balboa Palisades.* Should it be left as is?

Costa Mesa 'Coast, Tableland' consists of two Spanish words, but the combination is not Spanish. What to do in such cases? Call it Anglo?

Cuate 'Twin' is Aztec, from Mexico, but not Spanish.

Del Rosa is ungrammatical.

El Capinero is not Spanish, but *El Sapinero* 'Juniper Plain' would be.

El Granada is impossible in Spanish.

El Mirage is a hybrid, but so are *Buena Park*, *Loma Point*, and *Mount Diablo.*

Encina may be an error in place of *Encino* 'Live Oak'.

Esperanza 'Hope' became *Esparto* 'Feather Grass'. Which is right?

Famoso 'Famous' used to be *Poso*, but leave it.

Gabilan should be *Gavilan* 'Sparrowhawk'.

Gardena is just English *Garden* tarted up.

Garapatos should be *Garrapata* 'Wood Tick'.

Guadalasca looks Hispanic (with the prefix for 'water' in Arabic) but is not.

Guejito y Canada de Palomea 'Little Pebble Place and Valley of the Dove' misspells *Paloma*.

Hi Vista in Los Angeles Co. is an illiterate combination.

Hornitos 'Little Oven-Shapes' used to be *Hornitas*, better now?

Huerhuero isn't Spanish but may be 'Stinking of Sulphur' in Mexican.

Indio 'Indian' used to be *Indian Wells*. Better?

Jacalitos 'Little Huts' is Mexican, not Spanish.

Javon intended *Jabon* 'Soap'.

La Jolla, La Joya, La Hoya, should all these variants exist?

Jovista is from Joseph DiGiorgio and vista 'view'. Allowable?

La Laguna should not have become *The Lagoon* because it isn't one (in English).

La Habra 'Gorge' is antique Spanish spelling (and might be altered as *Coxo* became *Cojo*, etc.)

La Puente started as *Puente* (1884). Should be straighten out articles?

Las Choyas should be *Las Chollas*. Should spelling be changed to indicate pronunciations?

Las Yuegas 'Mares' Canyon perhaps should be *Las Llagas* 'Stigmata' Canyon.

Lavigia is properly *El Cerro de la Viglia* 'Lookout Hill'.

Lechusa should be *Lechuza* 'Owl'.

Lerdo may mean the surname Ledro.

Liebre Twins is just one peak that ought to be *Cueba de la Liebre* 'Hare's Burrow'.

Lindo Lake looks as if it might be *Laguna Linda*.

El Lobo is not 'Wolf' but 'Sea Lion'. Its name now, *Lion Rock*, may be an improvement.

Llagos River should be *Llagas* 'Stigmata' *River*.

Lomita de las Linares 'Linares' Little Hill' should be *Lomita de Linares* 'she was a little girl named Linares'.

Los Banos are *Los Banos del Padre Arroyo [de la Cuesta]*. Surely full names are not necessary always (as with *Los Angeles*, *Marin*, etc.)

Los Buellis Hills should be *Los Bueyes* 'Oxen Hills'.

Los Felis are for a José Felix or Feliz.

Madrone should be *Madrono* 'Arbutus'.

Mallo Pass Creek should be *Arroyo de Mal Paso* 'Tough Crossing Gulch'.

Manzana Creek probably should be *Apple Creek*.

Marina is a Spanish word 'seashore' but was not a placename in Spanish California.

Mar Vista is ludicrous and *Vista del Mar* seems to be necessary.

Medanos 'Dunes' **Point** is good Spanish (in part) but locally pronounced ignorantly. (I do not say wrong, for all local pronunciations are right even if ignorant. In my view the locals are the authorities).

Mesa Peak, Mount Mesa, and **The Mesa** are hybrids — but why not?

Mindego Creek and **Hill** should be corrected to the surname *Mendico*.

Miramonte (Fresno Co.) and **Mira Monte** (Ventura Co.) might be standardized though **Miramontes Point** (San Mateo Co.) is for a family of that surname.

Molate, point and reef, should be *Moleta* 'Color Grinding-stone'.

Mono 'Monkey'? 'Cute'? may be Spanish or refer to the Mono Monache Indians (a tribe of the Shoshone). **Monserrate Mountain** should be *Montserrat* if named for the Spanish holy place.

Montara is a misspelling of some Spanish word such as *montaraz*.

Monte Arido 'Arid' mistakes Spanish 'woods' as meaning 'mountain'.

Montezuma in several names ought to be *Moctezuma* ('Speaker' of the Aztecs) and the error was probably first made in Spanish, although Anglos sing of 'the halls of Montezuma' in the U.S. Marines hymn.

Mortmar is a French-Spanish atrocity, originally French-English (*Mortmere*).

Muniz perhaps should be *Maniz*. The meaning remains obscure anyway.

Nevada City is neither snowy nor in Nevada, but I do not think this "city" is likely to go back to its original name: *Deer Creek Dry Diggings* of The Gold Rush.

Oroville is Spanish-French and was first called, for hoped-for wealth, *Ophir*.

Palomas Canyon was an attempt to improve *Pelones* 'Bald Hills' *Canyon*.

Palowalla is carpentered from *Palo* 'Tree' and *Chuck(a)walla*, a local lizard.

Piedra Gorda is intended as 'Big Rock' but technically *piedra* is 'stone', not 'rock'.

Pinecate is from Mexican (Aztec) *pinacatl* (a kind of black beetle) but can be regarded as Californian Spanish.

Point Pinos might be more sensible as *Pine(y) Point*.

Pitas Point should be *Los Pitos* 'Whistles'.

Polita Canyon misrepresents the surname *Poleta*.

Polvadero should be *Polverdera* 'Cloud of Dust'.

Portola needs the accent marked on the last syllable to counteract the American tendency to mispronounce it with stress on the middle syllable.

Positas 'Water Holes' is Mexican, not Spanish.

Portero Meadow is a tautology.

Posa 'Puddle' and **Pozo** 'Water Hole' or 'Well' are used interchangeably in California.

Quesesosi just possibly is from *que se soli* 'on the left'.

Quito may be for an Amerind named Tito.

Rancheria is properly used in California only in connection with Amerind villages.

Rancho Mirage is Mexican-French.

Reliz 'Landslide' **Creek** should never be *Release Creek*.

Rionido should be *Rio Nido* 'Nest River'.

Robla should be *Roble* 'Oak' or maybe *Roblar* 'Place of Oaks'.

Sacate 'Hay' is Mexican, not Spanish.

Salsipuedes 'Get Out if You Can' doesn't fit a creek as well as a canyon.

San Ardo is a truncated *San Bernardo*.

San Domingo should be *Santo Domingo*.

San Elijo should be **San Alejo** 'St. Alexius'.

San Emigdio should be *San Emidio* 'St. Emidius'.

San Luis Gonzaga is named for St. Aloysius Gonzaga of The Society of Jesus.

San Sevaine Flats is not for a saint but for Pierre Sansevaine.

Santa Anita is simply a diminutive of *Santa Ana* (compare San Francisquito, San Miguelito, etc.).

Sierraville is Spanish-French.

Sierra Nevada Mountains is a tautology (but is not official).

Silverado was based on *El Dorado*.

Solromar was made from *sol* 'sun', *oro* 'gold' and *mar* 'sea' by dim residents.

Sunol. If they would restore the accent to the *n* in this surname it would silence the story that it's for Sun Oil, one of those ugly California names such as *Stoil* (*St*andard *Oil*), *Oleum* (Petr*olium*), *Petrolia*, *Oildale*, etc.

False Point Sur, even *Big Sur*, are mixtures in which South need not be Spanish.

Tambo is local Spanish dialect for *posada* 'inn'.

Tassajara is local Spanish dialect for a place to hang up meat strips to dry out but the U.S. Board on Geographic Names seems to prefer *Tassajaro* although they choose *Trembladera* instead of Spanish *Trembladero* 'Quagmire'.

Tecate (a kind of gourd) is Mexican, not Spanish.

Tecolote (Aztec *teutli* 'bill' and *colotl* 'twisted') is Mexican for a kind of owl.

Temettati Creek is Mexican *temetate* 'maize mortar' (from Aztec).

Tenaja is from Spanish *tinaja* and means 'large jar', not 'water hole'.

Tepusquet 'Copper' is Mexican (from Aztec) and misspelled (as are even such simple Californian names as *Terminous*).

Tequesquite 'Efflorescent Rock' is Mexican (from Aztec).

Terra Bella is Latin-Spanish.

Thermalito is Greek-Spanish.

Tiburon 'Shark' **Point** is a mixture but better than *Tiburn Point*.

Trancos should be feminine (Spanish 'bars') in *Los Trancos Creek*.

Tulare is properly *tular* 'where the tule cattail grows', from Aztec.

Urbita Latin-Spanish, the 'little town' off and on called *Urbita Springs*.

Valyermo might well be *Val Yermo* 'valley desert' or well forgotten.

Vasco (The), a ranch name, short for *Canada de los Vaqueros* 'Cowboys' Canyon', or 'Buckaroos' Canyon' (if you like).

Vasquez Canyon has the notorious outlaw's surname, locally pronounced [væskɛz].

Venada should be *Venado* 'Deer'.

Ventucopa is an idiotic parody (by 'Dinty' Parady) of *Ventura*, (truncated *San Buenaventura*) with *Maricopa* (an Amerind name from Arizona).

Viejas 'Old Women' **Indian Reservation**, a mixture of Spanish and English.

Ximeno is for the same Manuel Jimeno Casarin of *Jimeno* and ought to be spelled the same as that.

Yorba Linda is from the Spanish surname *Yorba* and the Portuguese *Orlinda*.

Zapato 'shoe' may in some cases be *sapote* (a kind of tree, originally Aztec).

In this list I believe it is sensible to alter immediately all the incorrect spellings of the names of saints and other people; otherwise those honored are obscured. I also think that in the case of geographical features there is no excuse for retaining errors in Spanish articles, grammar, or spelling, though with inhabited places I can see that expense is involved on the part of the locals, if only in reprinting their stationery, and that they may prefer to look stupid rather than spend money. I have no real objection to retaining many of the combinations of Spanish with other languages (the *Point* of English, the *-ville* from French). It seems to me that that is a feature of American placenames as it is of American personal relationships; we often mix ethnicities. To retain obvious errors in Spanish, however, is ever more ludicrous in a country where so many know the language. The reason we have not regularized these placenames lies with the policies of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (USBGN), policies which usually work adequately but in this case may need some improvement.

Dr. Roger L. Payne, secretary of the USBGN, has kindly provided me a report on USBGN decisions regarding items in the above list, the USBGN as a matter of policy being to establish "the local use and

acceptance of a name." In private correspondence (25 January 1995) Payne stresses that the Board finds that names are often corrupted and altered by users from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds but that often these corrupted forms are preferred and the Board usually strives to record local preference. Thus it is not to be expected that misspelled or otherwise incorrect placenames will be corrected unless those who live in or near the area named can be moved to apply for change. The Board frequently finds that there is no movement to make a geographical name grammatically correct. Of course demographic changes may in time result in local pressures for correction. More knowledge of a language other than English in any area of this fundamentally (though not officially) English-speaking nation can throw incorrect foreign-language placenames into high relief.

Among relevant USBGN decisions (with dates) regarding Spanish placenames of California are the following samples. I give more than 40 decision results from the activities of more than a century of the USBGN.

Arroyo Burro (1961): Adopting local usage (variants *Arroyo Burro Creek*, *Barger Canyon*, *San Roque Creek* also in use locally).

Arroyo Calabasas (1902): Adopting the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, and Post Office official spelling, variations having been *Calabazas* and *Calabaces*.

Bodega Bay (1950): From *Bay* to agree with local usage.

Berryessa (1897): To select the spelling (not *Berreyesa* or *Beryessa*) used in the Postal Guide, etc.

Burro Spring (1959): To reflect local use (though *The Troughs* was also used locally).

Cabezon Indian Reservation (1903): Made official the spelling used by the U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology, U.S. Census Bureau, and General Land Office, variations: *Cabazon Indian Reservation*, *Cabezone Indian Reservation*, and *Cabezons Indian Reservation*.

Calabasas Peak (1902): Consonant with *Arroyo Calabasas* decision.

Calabazes Creek (1901): Adopting the spelling used by Sonoma Co. officially and on the grant of the Rancho Agua Caliente, variants elsewhere being *Calabezas Creek* and *Calevezas Creek*.

Carquines Bay (1905): Making official the local spelling, variants being *Carquinas Bay*, *Karquenas Bay*, *Karquines Bay*, at the same time adopting for the same reason *Point Carquinez* and *Carquinez Strait* (variants similar to the bay name).

Point Cavallo (1895): To make official the name used locally (variants are *Caballo Point*, *Plaza de los Caballos*, *Punta de los Caballos*, *Punto Cavallos*).

Canada de los Coches (1961): A decision defined its use for federal purposes (variant *Canada Arena*).

Coches Prietos Anchorage (1935): The USBGN accepted the Coast and Geodetic Survey information on the correct Spanish for 'dark barges' or 'black barges' (variants *Cochies Prietos Anchorage*, *Coche Prietos Anchorage*).

Gabilan Range (1904): USBGN made official the local name and in 1972 definied its federal application (variant *Gavilan Range*).

Garrapata Creek (1961): USBGN defined its application for federal use under this name.

El Lobo (1932): A name chosen by the USBGN for a previously unnamed feature.

La Jolla Peak (1961): The local name was made official (variant *La Joya Peak*).

Jacalitos Creek (1908): Adopted officially the name used by the Land Office and a Mineralogy Map of California.

Jacalitos Hills (1908): A decision related to *Jacalitos Creek* and on the same bases.

Huerhuero (1897): A land grant name was taken from the Land Office Map and a California Mining Bureau Map (variant *Huero Huero*).

Huerhuero Creek (1897): Decision related to *Huerhuero* on the same bases. (The Huerhuero grant used *Huero Huero* for the name of the creek).

Los Trancos Creek (1897): Making the local name official (variants *Los Stancos Creek*, *Los Traneos Creek*, *Stancos Creek*).

Tassajara (1957): USBGN adopted the local use though an 1897 decision opted for *Tassajaro*, then used by the County, the Geological Survey of California, and the State Development Commission.

Tassajara Creek (1967): USBGN adopted the local usage despite the 1897 decision related to *Tassajara*.

San Emigdio Creek (1903): USBGN adopted the land grant form also used in a California Mining Bureau report and by the County Clerk (variants *San Emedio Creek*, *San Emidio Creek*, *San Emidion Creek*).

San Emigdio Mountain (1903): USBGN adopted the land grant name as with *San Emigdio Creek* (variants same as with the creek).

San Emigdio Mountains (1973): USBGN adopted the local name (variant *San Emidio Mountains*).

Salsipuedes Spring Number One (1968): Two decisions, one to adopt the name in local use and another to define its application for federal use (variants include *Number One Salsipuede Springs*).

Salsipudes Canyon (1978): A spelling conflict between the name on U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Forest Service maps was settled with the California State Board's agreement (variant *Salce pudes Canyon*).

Sacate Creek (1978): Officially recognizing the local usage, recom mended by the California State Board, decision reconfirmed 1988 (variants *Sacata Creek*, *Secata Creek*).

Sacate Ridge (1978): A decision related to the *Sacate Creek* one and on the same bases.

Polvdero Gap (1908): USBGN adopting officially the name on U.S. Geological Survey maps (variant *Poliverda Gap*).

Pitas Point (1961): Adopting the local usage (variants *Point Las Petes*, *Point Las Pitas*, *Point Los Pitas*).

Monte Arido (1938): Naming a previously unnamed feature at the request of U.S. Forest Service (variant *Montecito Peak*, the triangulation station at the summit being named *Montecito*).

Montara Mountain (1895): Adopting the name used by the Coast and Geodetic Survey charts (variant *Montora Mountain*).

Point Montara (1895): To go with *Montara Mountain* (variant *Point Montoro*).

Mono Meadow (1932): Making this local usage official at the request of the National Park Service.

Mono Pass (1932): Related to the *Mono Meadow* decision.

Mono Jim Peak (1987): On the recommendation of a former naturalist at Inyo National Forest (an Amerind was nicknamed Mono Jim in the tradition of Paiute Pete and Curley the Crow, who contrived to be 'the sole survivor of Custer's Last Stand' by not being at the battle at all, etc.)

Los Banos Creek (1962): Local usage (though locally pronounced as if bearing the Spanish accent) (variants *Arroyo de los Padres*, *Garzas Creek*, *Las Garzas Creek*).

Lion Rock (1960) at the request of the National Park Service commemorating the killing nearby of a mountain lion by a sheepman named Brooks.

Zapato Chino Canyon (1964) making official local usage (variants *Zapato Canyon*, *Zapatos Canyon*).

Zapato Chino Creek (1964) with similar reason (and variants) to *Zapato Chino Canyon*.

It will be noted that the sources of information of the USBGN include in addition to reports of local usage the evidence of usage in official bureaus of the national and state and county governments (such as the census, post office, Indian Affairs, geodetic and costal survey, mining bureau, park services, development commissions, county clerks' offices, and other departments) and documentation of names and variants from land grants, old maps both official and unofficial, plus submissions from individuals. Bill Stone, a former naturalist at Inyon National Forest, for instance, submitted the information about a Paiute guide, killed in 1871 while attempting to recapture six escaped convicts, that led to the designation of Mono Jim Peak.

Considerable thought goes into making the official decisions of the Board. If Californians involved would approach the Board with well-founded requests for toponymic change based on local usage and also the Spanish language's rules, we might expect some improvement in the correctness of California placenames of Spanish origin. If there is no local pressure for such changes, however, then names on the map, however incorrect they may be, will remain, from the official point of view, the correct and sole recognized toponyms. As Spanish (or Mexican) is more and more widely spoken in California the usefulness of placenames that are correct in that language, or even the translation of some Anglo placenames into a language other than English, may

possibly be of increased importance. The USBGN policy of respecting local use may make the correction of Spanish (and other) placenames in individual states easier than might be the case in (say) some European countries with more centralized authority and more tradition of language control. In this way the changes in our increasingly multicultural society will be balanced against the usefulness of the retention of names with a history of their own. Onomastic entities tend to change more slowly than most linguistic entities (and sometimes turn out to be the sole legacy of dead languages) but all languages are in a state of flux at all times and even the geographer's and the historian's natural preference for one single and permanent name for each toponymic entity cannot always prevail. In this country people will continue to name places after people who are dead (without sometimes sufficient time passing to be certain the naming is a good idea) and even after the living (if they can get away with it), and they will drop names or corrupt them if they wish; any severe government policy cannot ensure that the 'best' historical individuals are appropriately honored or that minorities are adequately represented, and so on.

A glance at the map of California shows surname placenames such as *Martinez* and *Mulligan Hill* (for an Irish sailor named *Milligan*). Near San Diego is *Perez Cove*, elsewhere a couple of *Lopez Creeks*, *Lopez Dams*, *Lopez Valleys*. Among the A's we see surnames such as *Alvarado*, *Alviso*, *Amador*, *Andrade*, *Anza*, *Arana (Gulch)*, and *Arguello*. *Aumentos Bay* may come from the surname *Armenta*. *Avila* can be either a placename from Spain or a surname. *Navalencia* has sometimes been imagined (when it could not be found in a Spanish atlas) to be a Spanish surname, but it comes from two kinds of oranges: *Navel* and *Valencia*. Some surname placenames are likely to be misinterpreted. *Flores Peak* preserves the surname of a Mexican bandit and *Murieta* was a pseudonym used by several Mexican bandits. Families are noted in *Las Nietos* and *Las Aguilas*. Some Spanish surnames have been wiped away, just as *Willmore City* is now *Long Beach*. Some have been bent right out of shape, just as Morris Goldbaum of a century ago is now hidden under *Goldtree*. There's history there, as well.

In the toponyms of California many of its historical figures are recalled, including some Amerinds, such as the indios baptized *Nicasío* and *Novato* and the one nicknamed *Barber* of *Barber Springs* and the Panamint recalled in Death Valley at *Hungry Bills Ranch*. You will

recall that Spaniards tended to give Amerinds Spanish names or nicknames (think of Geronimo) and this led to some commemorative placenames in Spanish. No person would never have had a place named for him or her in aboriginal culture. Some history is a little easier to trace than in (say) Kansas. In Kansas pioneer post offices often bore the forenames (not surnames) of the first office holders there. Frontier anonymity or informality created many a creek named simply for *Jim* or *Bill* or such. Those people are usually impossible to identify now. Add a nickname and the task is harder. James 'Cussin' Jim' Smith was ironically remembered with *Holy Jim Canyon*. 'Lee' Harl (a fervent admirer of Gen. Robert E. Lee) gave us *Leesville* but it does not include any part of his official name. California has its *Elsie Caves* and named *Sister Elsie* (for a nun) and *Mount Emma* and *Polly Dome*. It has several places called *Jack Canyon* or *Jack Spring*. There is *Jacks Valley* in Lassen Co. for John 'Coyote Jack' Wright and *Nigger Jack Peak* for 'Nigger Jack' Wade in Tuolumne. *McGill Creek* has been corrected now to *Miguel Creek* (for Miguel D. Errera) but there may be others who are buried under misleading tombstones, as it were. Forenamed places tend to commemorate Anglos: *Angelo Creek* for a hotelkeeper, *Kingdon* for Kingdon Gould. For Anglos there are *Fort Dick*, *Fredericksburg*, and *Gustine* (for a girl called *Augustine*). Spanish forenames are much rarer. Still we see *Jose Basin*, *Jose Creek*, *Jose Opening* and *Juan Flat*, *Juan Spring*, and *Juan y Lolita Ranch* in Santa Barbara Co., *Ignacio*, etc. We find ourselves dealing on a first-name basis with people we do not even know.

The overwhelming use of Spanish forenames is in saint's names. The British writer Saki says in "Reginald at The Carleton" that in England in 1904 saints' names were "associated nowadays chiefly with racehorses and the cheaper clarets," but the Spaniards bestowed them on places, often because the place was named on the feast day of that saint in the church calendar, just as religious dates explain the likes of *Assuncion*, *Animas* ('souls', Feast of All Souls), and *Natividad* and *Nacimiento* (when it doesn't happen to mean 'source'). In a sense, saints' names sometimes function like streetnames such as *Cinquo de Mayo*. Errors in Spanish forenames and saints' names are rare, but errors in Spanish surnames and other hard words creep in more frequently, despite the straightforwardness of Spanish spelling compared to that of English. Dialect accounts for oddities in Spanish just as in

English (where *Savayed Pond* in Maine is simply 'surveyed' and the DeKalb subway stop in Brooklyn, NY, is sometimes ignorantly 'Dee-KLAB'). So does foreign language challenge: *Picketwire* in Texas (as has often been remarked) was once French explorers' bitter *Purgatoire*. Should we preserve the colorful errors of the past? Correct them? Which conduces more to ethnic pride and Californian dignity, is more ethnically sensitive in these ticklish times? We've done away with the accents. Could we do away with the accidents? What about the placenames that cry out for fuller explanation, such as *Lemoore* (for Dr. Lovern Lee Moore), *Gulling* (for Charles Gulling, he of the Grizzly Creek Ice Co.), and *J. O. Pass*? S. L. N. Ellis named the latter for John W. Warren, who got there but managed to carve only the first two letters of his name on a convenient tree. There's even a California place derived not from a forename or a surname but a middle name: *Benali* recalls a San Francisco lawyer named James ben Ali Haggin. The oddest Californian placename, one that some people think is Spanish but is just a Spoonerism, is *Calistoga*. The story is worth telling: In 1859 Sam Brannan wanted to turn the hot springs of Agua Caliente into a popular spa, the "Saratoga of California." But he fell over the sentence and came up with the "Calistoga of Sarafornia," or so they say.

Canada de Rodrigues (with *s*) is in Ventura Co., but in San Diego Co. the valley, the mountain, and the trail are all *Rodriguez* (with *z*). It has become commonplace to refer to the famous explorer surnamed Rodriguez Cabrillo as Cabrillo (which is correct). Personal-name variations are a matter where other aspects of linguistics have to come to the aid of toponymy, just as in explaining that the generic *arroyo* is wet in Spain (a stream, a brook) and dry (often with added *seco)* in the U.S. (where it designates a wash or a gulch). Moreover, Spanish dialectal words occasionally crop up. In New Mexico, for instance, a place 25 miles SE of Las Vegas (by the way, often pronounced as if *vega* were masculine: 'Los Vegas') is called *Chapalito*. In archaic Spanish there was a word *chapalito* 'little hat', comparable to French *chapeau* (still 'hat'). The main way in which old-fashioned or odd Spanish dialects affected the placenames of California, however, is in the way the earliest Spanish explorers heard and phonetically wrote down the aboriginal names. Those were filtered through their dialects (as was the case with the Dutch in New York or the English in Connecticut or the French along The Mississippi. As Spanish developed,

some words slightly shifted even in the educated language: *atarque* started as 'division dam' and gradually, we might say, accumulated mud until it was any earthen dam that collected silt. The linguistic evidence in toponyms has been too much neglected and could benefit dialect studies as well as contribute something to sociological research into languages and cultures in contact and the settlement patterns that are involved.

As the population of California changed from predominantly Hispanic to predominantly Anglo, some Spanish placenames were altered or replaced. (We may expect a reversal of this as the current demographics continue, though placename change is more resisted now than previously). For example, the Guardian Angel has disappeared who once was honored in *Punta de Angel Custodio*; now the place is *Pedro Point*. *Rio de las Animas* is now *Mojave River*. *Nuevo San Francisco* is *Solano*. One *Agua Caliente* is *Palm Springs*. *Agua Dulce* is translated into *Sweetwater River*. The naming and renaming by early explorers, mostly for convenience (though personal and political motivations have been insufficiently taken into account by scholars) has been followed by naming more for business or other boosterish purposes. The same romantic trend that revived or even forged Amerind placenames (once the aborigines had been safely pretty much annihilated) obtains. A number of Spanish names have replaced non-Spanish ones: *Modena* is now *El Modena*, *Marion* is *Reseda*, *Mud Springs* is *El Dorado*, *Apex* is *Escondido* (which the Spanish tended to reserve not for heights but for hidden water sources). Today Amerind *Auxumne* is Spanish *Merced* and Amerind *Tixinli* (or perhaps *Tiximli*) is *San Luis Obispo*, but an English placename gave way to *Palo Alto*. There is a distinctive pseudo-Spanish coloration to many Californian things from architecture to the massive furniture of Hollywood palazzi in the great days of The Stars to contemporary suburban developments and tacky trailer parks. Even non-hispanics have often thought things Spanish especially apt for California. Standard Oil called its second refinery in the state *El Segundo*. In 1931, *La Quinta* 'Country Estate' was named for a hotel. *Lamanda Park* was made 'more Spanish' as *La Manda* in 1905. That was the year of a big push in that direction that altered *Lomalinda* to *Loma Linda*, *Lahonda* to *La Honda*, *Elrio* to *El Rio*, *Elmonte* to *El Monte*, etc. Some time later it was noticed that *Lamanda* was confected

by Leonard J. Rose out of his own first initial and the forename of his wife, Amanda, so in 1920 it went back to *Lamanda Park*.

Placenaming has become more self-conscious and the psychological impact of names more considered. That explains why many a *Nigger Creek* has had a name change and why *Incinerator Road* has become *Birnham Road*. Ignorance of what nicknames such as *Puke* and *Sucker* meant in Gold Rush days has led to names like that being thought of as rude, or worse. So the United States Board on Geographic Names (who ought to know better, but tries to please the locals) changed *Sucker* to *Succor*. That's part of the movement, as I wrote somewhere decades ago, in which "every Billy Goat Hill wants to be Angora Heights" and the raw frontier is being civilized posthumously with the elimination of racial epithets such as *Chink*, *Nigger*, etc. Our history, whatever its faults, should not (I think) be rewritten by altering placenames, any more than historic old buildings of surpassing ugliness ought to be torn down on aesthetic grounds. Nonetheless, prettification and papering over prejudices of the past continues in the present.

Inevitably Californians have selected many Hispanic names to suggest the past (as New England has had its Classical Revival followed by a Colonial American fashion) and renamed other things to clean up the act: *Curious Butte* is now *Striped Mountain*, *Paps* became *Twin Peaks*. Some Spanish designations such as *Atascadero*, 'mire,' might have been altered had the language been better understood by the Anglos, but the name is lexically opaque to most American speakers, just like French *Grand Tetons*. Clearly the straightforwardness of early Californian placenamers, seen in the likes of mining and lumber camp names on occasion (though most of these have disappeared), has given way to gentrification, which sweeps away "ugly" names (especially in foreign languages, deemed "unpronounceable," though Spanish pronunciation is easier for most Anglos than some odder aspects of English) and also rejects *Solomon's Hole*. It cancels color as it undertakes to "improve" *One-Horse Town* by changing it to *Mule*—actually it may have been *One-Mule Town*—and *Drunken Indian* to *Indian*. They even changed *Sweet Pizzlewig Creek*. *Sweet Pizzlewig Creek* is now *Pizzlewig Creek*.

Not enough has yet been done to look into the mind-set of early Americans in terms of the names they scattered over the landscape. We need to identify principles by which they chose to keep this or that

aboriginal name or early-explorer name while rejecting others from the same sources. For example, in looking at the toponyms of Connecticut I found that only one town still has an Amerind name (and lots of residents still believe that *Norwalk* has something to do with a 'northern walk'). In California, where the name has been transferred, you might find the same explanation. In connection with Connecticut I noted how the early white settlers were determined to create a New England and a New London on what was for them a new continent. They strove to wipe out as many traces of the Amerinds as they could while they took their lands. But they could not in the same way 'steal' the rivers, and so we have not *Crooked River* but *Connecticut* (which the original locals regarded as a designation, to be used for any winding river, not really our idea of a placename). In California various immigrants put names on the map such as *Isla de Alcatraces* 'Penguin Island' and then *Alcatraz* and *Yerba Buena* 'a good herb'. The early frontier's *Canada de la Hambre* 'Hunger Valley' became *Alhambra Valley*. Names are found elsewhere like *Loafer Creek*, *Newcastle*, *If I Can Mine*, *Italian Swiss Colony*, *Swedes Creek* (once disguised as *Sweede Creek*), *Norwegian Gulch*, *Portuguese Sheep Camp*, *Palermo* and *Berlin* (later patriotically changed, like the Ontarian city now known as *Kitchener*). To match the Spanish toponyms that refer to trees (pleasant to find in some arid landscapes), such as *alameda* 'poplars', *alamitos* 'small poplars', *alamo* (the Texan one is most famous), *aliso* 'alder', and so on, English-speakers created a long list of *Cottonwood* places, *Oak* places, *Walnut* places, and a few *Poplar* places. There is one *Poplar-Cotton Center*. To match Spanish *acampo* (pasture) there is a *Pasture Gulch*. To match *algoso* 'weedy' we have *Weed* (but that's from a surname) but also *Weed Patch* (in Kern Co.). For *aromas* 'smells' (of sulphur in this case) we have many a *Sulphur Creek* or *Sulphur Spring* and both *Stink Creek* and *Stinking Creek*. I have been selecting Spanish words in this paragraph from the first letter of the alphabet only, otherwise this would be a book, not an article. But let me conclude this paragraph with a Spanish A word most Anglos could not translate but (through wine) know: *almadén*. It is both an obsolete placename in California and the basis of half a dozen *Almaden* combinations in Santa Clara Co. It occurs also in San Luís Obispo Co. as, among other names, the redundant *Almaden Mine*. It means 'mine' or 'mineral'. *Amargosa* the Spaniards used for 'bitter water', an important matter in the wilds. The *Amargosa River* is

on the U.S. Geological Survey map named *Badwater*. *Bitterwater* turns up on a number of other U.S. maps. And in the invaluable California section of the *Omni Gazetteer of the United States of America* (Abate, 1991), to which I contributed a little and which I have much used since, right after *Badlands* and *Bad Name Spring* come *Badwater* and *Badwater Springs*. As elsewhere in the U.S. (*Redding*, *Wooster*, *Cheesequake*), California has spelled some names (including Spanish ones) according to pronunciation and pronounces some in odd local ways: *Jesus Maria Creek* has not only lost its Spanish accents but also the Spanish accent and locally is [susmaria]. If residents of the Vieux Carré in New Orleans cannot pronounce streetnames such as *Burgundy* and *Chartres* correctly or Chicagoans cannot cope with *Goethe*, why should we be surprised to hear that Californians of whatever background struggle with the pronunciation of *Alameda*, *Bolinas*, *Lagunitas*, *Los Angeles*, *San Joaquin*, *San Jose*, *San Rafael*, *Sonoma*, *Suisun*, and *Yuba*? They may not pronounce them as Spaniards might, but (I repeat) the way the locals pronounce placenames must be regarded as the correct way. In California Spanish names on the land are treated like all "foreign" names. The French surname *Beausore* yielded *Beasore*, German *Fierbaugh* came out as *Firebaugh*, and a celebrated Danish name there (*Lassen*) occurs in records as *Lassin*, *Lasson*, even *Lawson*. Now the maps have it right, but lesser-known Peter Lebeck is recalled as *Lebec* and used to be mentioned as *LeBeck*, *Lebeque*, etc. Some Spanish placenames in California may be hiding under distorted names even now. I believe that unless the locals strongly object we should identify those Spanish names and 'spell them out.' I can well understand why some names might be cherished because of history and remain uncorrected and why the combination of Spanish and English in such examples as *Zapato Chino Creek* and *Point Loma* are perfectly natural in the U.S. context and need not be entirely Spanish. I see as well why some placenames now familiar in English translation need not be restored to the original Spanish; however, on the whole, the increasing Hispanicization of California does seem to suggest that California placenames in Spanish in whole or in part might best be in correct Spanish insofar as possible. For one thing, it looks more literate. In a climate in which the politically correct has affected placenames, why not the linguistically correct?

Badwater Springs (above) is on the Pat Keyes Canyon map, which reminds us that Anglo commemorative names are often full (signaling usually that the person was recognized as rather obscure even as he or, less frequently, she was honored) or involve titles (such as *Judge Davis Canyon* in California or *Major Deegan Parkway* in New York or *Gov. Harvey Canyon* in Kansas). California has *Dan Hunt Mountain* (*Hunt Mountain* would be ambiguous), *Davy Brown Creek* (likewise capable of being misunderstood as *Brown Creek*) but also *Franklin K. Lane Grove*, *Mount Ida Coolbrith*, *Mount Mary Austin*, *Mary Blaine Mountain*, and *Jack London Historic State Park* (historic?). Spanish commemorative names are very infrequently like *Jose Serrano Adobe* or *Father Garces Monument*. Vancouver called one feature simply *Lassen Point*, and elsewhere the famous mission padre is honored by a forename: *Fermin Point*. Spanish also avoids the problems of eliminating or not the apostrophe so that we cannot tell whether *Owens Lake* is for one Owen (the way *Davids Island*, NY, is for one Thaddeus Davids) or more, or someone surnamed Owens (the way that *Johnsville*, CA, honors William Johns). *Janes Creek* in California is for H. F. Janes but Janesville is for an obscure blacksmith's wife named Jane Bankhead (or perhaps one Jane Hill). Spanish works better in this respect. The only Spanish confusion of personal names might involve (say) which of a number of persons called San Vicente is intended in an individual case or (a minor point, perhaps) whether a place bearing a saint's name was named for the saint, for the day, or someone who was baptised with the saint's name (a common practice in such Roman Catholic places as Quebec). Part of the *Sierras* 'Saws' was named for Santa Lucia by Vizcaíno around 13 December 1602. That date tells us St. Lucy of Syracuse was intended. That saint's-day naming is probably the most common use of a saint's name in the Christianizing of the New World. With a saint's name the namers could honor a person whose patron saint was involved, date a discovery, show piety, gain heavenly intercession, and mark the place as Christian. In substituting a Christian name for a pagan one they built a church (as it were) on the foundations of a ruined pagan temple, a common practice.

The conquistadores in what they liked to regard as *Nueva España* proceeded with Christianizing very often by using the building blocks of the aboriginal societies they found in the Americas: stones from the ancient Aztec temple at what is now the *zócalo* of Mexico City were

used to construct the cathedral on the site. In the same way, they sometimes used the old names, more or less putting their stamp on them: a saint's name combined with a pagan name, for instance, often startles visitors in Mexico.

Some of the Spanish names once or still on the map of California derive from aboriginal languages filtered through Spanish. The Costanoan tribe, for instance, is involved in names such as *Aptos Creek* (which we adapted from the 1807 land grant named *Rancho de Aptos*), which may even be from an aboriginal personal name. *Ausaymas* is a placename directly from a Castanoan village. *Algodones* looks at first as if it might be from *algodón* 'cotton' but was in a slightly different form the name of a Yuman tribe. Our *Aguanga Mountain* is from Picha *Awanga* and seems to be a Shononean Luiseno placename. Amerind names have survived better on geographical features than on inhabited places and often have a certain antique feel, as in *Sequoia* and *Yosemite* parks. The full discussion of Amerind names as altered by Spanish speakers is well beyond my competence. Amerind names are, in fact, the weakest aspect of all the books on county names, city names, street names, etc., of the state. This is true though some very dedicated and distinguished scholars and also some industrious amateurs have labored over California toponyms for almost a century. The history of California before the white man is the least documented and least understood aspect of the area's unusually turbulent and extremely colorful story. Much early history is forever obscured by the mists of time. However, as in archeology, we ought to be excavating ruins for treasures.

The early Spanish presence incontrovertibly can and should be better remembered. California has sadly neglected to honor adequately or at all such big Spanish names of its history as Hernando de Alarcón or Nicolás Guiterrez. Manuel Micheltorena's only claim to fame now is a street in Los Angeles and a school named after it, and sprawling LA has so many streets to name that it is glad to notice anybody or anything. It is unclear whether any of the Jones places are in memory of the extraordinarily named Thomas ap Catesby Jones, whom Californians may possibly recall raised for a single day the U.S. flag (by mistake) over Monterey on 19 October 1842, so not only Spanish but also Anglo early history is neglected. Unappreciated and unnoted are the likes of C. C. Nahl (artist), but *Richard Nixon Birthplace* comes in the placename list right after *Nitwit Camp*.

Hispanics ought to provide California namers of streets and towns and features with Spanish and Mexican names from early California history, and modern California history as well. California can do better than *Brown Material* and *Superconductor* for roads even if there are not now so many more important things to name there. Why not more attention to the area's earliest well-recorded history? Why not more and better Spanish placenames? Those who are proud of the Hispanic heritage should consider names.

That would be in line with the Hispanicization of California I mentioned at the start. Today Hispanicization is an extraordinarily hot topic in California, even more than in other states with complaints about the porous U.S. borders, the staggering costs to taxpayers of millions of illegals (or "undocumented" persons), the budgetary crises precipitated by the pressures of illegals on the hospitals, schools, and other pricey institutions of this society. Only in California, where democracy appears to be giving way to rule by plebiscite, where escalating taxes are taxing liberal patience, do proponents of an anti-illegal immigration policy, Proposition 187, take a very extreme view, perhaps even an unconstitutional one. The media director for Proposition 187 (Linda R. Hayes of San Diego) wrote to the *New York Times* on 15 October 1994: "By flooding the state with 2 million illegal aliens to date, and increasing the figure each of the following 10 years, Mexicans in California would number 15 million to 20 million by 2004," she claims. During those 10 years "about 5 million Californians would have emigrated to other states." If these trends continued Mexico-controlled California could vote to establish Spanish as the sole language of California, 10 million more English-speaking Californians could flee, and there could be a statewide vote to leave the Union and annex California to Mexico."

Well, if enough Cambodians arrive in California maybe California could vote to join Cambodia! But I'm not worried. The English Only movement started there and has not succeeded. Spanish-speakers seem extraordinarily unlikely to "establish Spanish as the sole language of California," or, for that matter, to want to join Mexico (one of the 17 nations of the world that the financial and political experts fear might collapse altogether and which as I write has seen a drastic plunge of the *peso).*

Rather than join Mexico or lend it billions, if the state wants major change, let it spend the money to divide California into two states, as it

was being considered when the Civil War came along and Californians forgot about the idea. One state or two, bilingualism appears to be the only answer. Respect for old Spanish placenames, however, seems sensible, even in a very intolerant Us and Them society. People used to say that, the United States having tilted, everything loose rolled into Southern California. There was indeed a great influx, now reversing, of Anglos into Los Angeles and places in the sun. New Arrivals, especially retirees, may not have had much interest in the Spanish and Mexican background of the place. Today the Mexicans fleeing north, mostly for economic reasons, breaching the border wherever and whenever it is inadequately defended, have given Southern California a more Chicano feel, though whether this will affect Spanish placenames is at least unpredictable. Nonetheless, California is becoming more Hispanic, and whenever one gap in the national fence is closed more or less (such as at San Diego), another breach is discovered, thousands of Mexicans pour through it, not all of whom by any means are rounded up and returned south of the border. Bit by bit the Spanish (or Mexican Spanish) language is reinforced in the state and certain areas come more and more to resemble Miami (no longer perceived by others as Jews in retirement but as Cubans in residence, a spinoff not of New York but of Havana).

In this article I do not tackle problems of national language or languages or immigration and culture (and their geolinguistic impact). Here I address toponymy and rely heavily on the sentimental and inspiring studies of Nellie van de Grift Sanchez and the meticulous and scientific scholarship of Edwin G. Gudde; they can be regarded as the source of all toponymic detail here unless otherwise stated. I use as well a lot of other reference material. I should note that county and other historical societies have collected invaluable information, that individuals have turned a hobby of collecting placename information into works big and small that oblige serious scholars, and that the way in which various concerns from department stores to title companies and banks and other commercial institutions have in California undertaken to bring useful pamphlets to print should not only receive the appreciation of scholars but should inspire both students and civic-minded persons everywhere to rescue and preserve the legacy of names. In this present article I undertake simply to bring to those with a general interest in names something of the story of Spanish placenames in The Golden

State. I also want also to encourage professional onomasticians with the expertise and energy to undertake serious research and cultural politics to polish and curate the toponymic riches in our possession. By standing on the shoulders of earlier scholars I believe I can see farther. I certainly take more delight in these placenames because of their work and I hope that the limited treatment given here may possibly be successful in communicating that pleasure to others. I would like to inspire those who are capable to correct the lexicon, and those who care to appreciate and encourage such labors. There is useful work to be done to preserve and enhance the Hispanic heritage of California and placenames are worthy aspects to be taken into account. Such work can not only bolster ethnic pride and honor history but can also contribute to societal cohesion and the spirit of community.

There is no need to fight the language battles of Florida or to try to rewrite the past or skew the future through radical placename change as in Quebec. However, the *québecois* are right on one point: lose the old placenames and you destroy part of your patrimony. That is undeniable in any language. Conscientious public school teachers such as Lou Stein and Tamara Van Etten were wise in their day to bring California placenames to the classrooms of the young and that should be one of many programs of today. California should guard the precious names Spanish-speakers put on the land. Maybe they should get them right, too. I count myself lucky to have met and been inspired by Erwin Gudde, George R. Stewart, Donald T. Clark, Lou Stein and others who have contributed so importantly to preserving the placename riches of California. I recall them in the bibliography I attach to this article, the most practical and complete one ever on this select topic. I thank Felix Rodriguez Gonzalez for a reference to a Chilean journal (*Aténea*) that I otherwise would have missed and am indebted further to the standard bibliographies of Sealock & Seeley, Sole, and others to suggest the variety of scholarly and popular, official and unofficial pamphlets and articles and books on the Spanish toponyms of California. My booklist hints at the wealth of information to be found in archives and old railroad, city, and mining directories, etc., regarding the principal placenames and even the minor ones (such as street names, which are very colorful and indicative of Californian life) which I do not address here. I omit masters theses and doctoral dissertations and articles in newspapers (such as B. A. Romero in *New York Times* 19 September

1937, sec. 4, p. 9, col. 6), magazines (an early example is Nellie van de Grift Sanchez's "Origin of California," in *Motor Land* 33, 1914, 7, 13), etc. Editorials (such as "Short Names for Long Ones" in the *New York Times*, 4 November 1928, sec. 3, p. 4, col. 6 regarding shortening Spanish placenames) stir public interest. Just as a letter to the editor about "funny names" or a columnist's "item" can spark an interest in onomastics, so a piece in *Sunset* 157 (1976) 54-61 on the strange ways some Californians pronounce local names can bring toponymy to the attention of ordinary people; the author of that frothy piece discussed "The Spanish Confusion" in placenames amusingly. Some interest lies in the folk etymology of *Mendocino* and the Spanish exploration and settlement (cf. *Names* 1, 138-139). Very solidly, George R. Stewart delighted many who otherwise might not have been interested in geographic names, or even in the 49ers who did not play sports, when he wrote of the vivid old names of mining claims and such during the Gold Rush. There are other veins of onomastic gold to be explored by scholars, but there may also be some politicking to be done.

It may be that if the general public can be reached by the amateurs and specialists with regard to the placenames, California, with all her other, more pressing, concerns can fix that problem as well, as a matter of pride and fair play. Already, as the bibliography shows (with a significant number of works published for their authors or by tiny presses and perhaps with their authors' help), California placename matters have been labors of love. It may be that if the general public can be reached by the amateurs and the specialists with regard to the placenames, California can preserve a part of her history and fit herself better for the future. Save the placenames and save them right! Help us to advance that cause. That's my constructive Proposition 1994. You can be part of a small but significant contribution to the intercultural co-operation and sense of the patriotic past that are essential if these United States, with their multicultural diversities, are to survive and prosper and achieve *e pluribus unum,* 'one out of many'.

Note

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A Select Bibliography on California Placenames of Spanish Origin

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