

Reviews

Thesaurus Linguae Gallicae. By Pierre-Henri Billy. Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms-Weidmann, 1993. Pp. xxv + 229. 148 DM.

Atlas Linguae Gallicae. By Pierre-Henri Billy. Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms-Weidmann, 1995. Pp. iii + 254. 138 DM.

Many earlier languages were superseded, over a period of several centuries, as established populations gradually adopted Latin for everyday communication through a very large part of the Roman Empire. Of these substratum languages, the ones that have left most traces are Etruscan and Gaulish. Etruscan still eludes our understanding. But there are modern languages to help us with Gaulish, the Celtic tongue once widely used throughout almost the whole of present-day France and in many neighboring regions. Most authorities now agree that, at least in remote areas, Gaulish survived until about the 6th century A.D. Brittonic, the ancestor of Welsh, Cornish, and Breton, was very closely related, if not virtually identical.

A considerable corpus of Gaulish inscriptions—recorded in either Latin or Greek alphabets, and collected in a five-volume work (Duval et al. 1985-) in course of publication—is known and, like Latin epigraphy of the same period, this material includes very many personal names; as archaeological research advances, still more inscriptions are being unearthed and, at least in part, interpreted. Several Latin authors mention some Gaulish elements in their writings. At least 150 words of this language are recognized as having left derivatives in standard French, and still more survive in dialects. Of even more direct interest to ongoing onomastic research is the fact that the names of many of the most important places in France (*Lyon, Le Mans, Nîmes, Rouen*, etc., etc.) and contiguous countries (*Milan* in Italy, *Trier* in Germany, *Dinant* in Belgium, etc.), as well as hundreds of smaller ones, are Gaulish formations. Information about this Celtic substratum remains fragmentary at best; nevertheless, its interest and its importance for the study of French toponymy is obvious.

A comprehensive glossary based on the Gaulish material has long been lacking. Much new evidence has been discovered since the

publication of Dottin (1920), excellent in its own day. The 3-volume compilation of Holder (1897-1907), uncritical in its comprehensiveness, has been out of date for still longer. The best recent guide, Lambert 1994, makes no claim to be exhaustive and its glossary is highly selective. So Pierre-Henri Billy's objective of providing name scholars and dialectologists alike with two conveniently organized and up-to-date reference tools is opportune and welcome.

The main body of Billy's *Thesaurus*, following Latin alphabetical order and with a separate entry for each spelling variant, includes a total of around 6000 entries. Of these approximately 30% are personal names, and there are some 20% each of geographical names and ethnics (or similar forms), as well as a good many theonyms (names of divinities).

The entire onomastic component is culled directly from sources of the classical period—works of Latin authors, itineraries, inscriptions, and monetary legends. The index of Billy's sources is found on pp. xiii-xxv, after the "short" bibliography of secondary material, pp. iii-xi. The lexical items noted are restricted to those to which specific meanings can be assigned with reasonable assurance.

Some of these words and roots are reconstructions (based on Romance-language material) and remain hypothetical: following the usual linguistic convention, these items are asterisked, as are meanings that are not directly evidenced. In general, however, Billy has sought to exclude all that is dubious in form or significance. He does not, for instance, mention *bodina/budina*, the etymon of the French noun *borne* 'limit, boundary marker', tentatively regarded as Gaulish by Lambert (1994, 189). Although *Remicus* is here (124), we do not find the personal name *Remigius*, considered to be Gaulish by Billy's mentor Raymond Sindou (Sindou 1958, 15-26).

Three indices are provided: one is semantically classified, and two (one each for elements recorded in Roman and Greek scripts) are arranged in inverse alphabetical order: these last will be especially invaluable for research related to suffixal types and other morphological formants.

The individual articles in the *Thesaurus* are strictly limited to the essentials: (i) form, (ii) gloss, category (e.g., *nomen*), or identification, (iii) source reference(s), including provenance in the case of inscrip-

tional attestations. One may regret that no space is given to commentary, discussion, legitimate alternative glosses, or cross-references to variant spellings. Thus *uero-* [sic], almost certainly the first element of numerous placenames of the *Verdun* type, is glossed (156) as “vrai” ‘true’, on the authority of Schmidt (1957, 296-7), while *uiro-* is glossed, admittedly with an asterisk, as “homme” ‘man’ (159) and supplied merely with the reference Evans (1967, 286-8); the reader is not made aware that it is virtually impossible to disentangle occurrences of these two elements. In fact, as Evans (1967, 286-8) cogently pointed out, they apparently differ only in the etymological length of the initial vowel and, while both almost certainly have a role in Gaulish nomenclature, spelling alternations such as *Veromandi/Viromandi* (cited by Billy in separate articles), *Verodunenses/Virdoninsium* (cited together under the first of these forms) cloud the issue. Similar complexities are overlooked in the case of *mandu-* (Evans 1967, 222-23; Billy 1993, 103). Billy (1993, 143) offers only the (asterisked) meaning “faible” ‘weak’ for *taxi-*, which Evans (1967, 116) considers “quite arbitrary” and Lambert (1994, s.v. *taisson*) does not even mention.

Such minor reservations as I have suggested are trivial by comparison with the merits of Billy’s *Thesaurus*. For name scholars, the greatest of these may well prove to be that they now have ready access not only to an index of Gaulish personal and place names from primary sources but also to the additional evidence provided by extensive dialectological research, much of it hitherto available in only a few libraries.

The same range of sources underlies the maps presented in the *Atlas Linguae Gallicae*, which is conceived as the logical counterpart of the *Thesaurus*. The first map, indicating the geographical distribution of all elements taken together, can be considered as a summary of the 251 that follow. All of them are invaluable in that they show where traces of each lexical item have been recognized to date. However, the actual sources of the data presented on each specific map are not indicated. Rather less than half of the maps appear to incorporate onomastic material. Realistically, they present no more than a provisional, work-in-progress survey: exploration remains incomplete. Moreover, the area covered is rigidly limited to that within the present-day political boundaries of France itself, although the actual use of Gaulish extended considerably beyond them in several directions.

I have to admit to misgivings about how much that first map really tells us. It indicates, by graduated types of shading, the total number of occurrences of Gaulish lexical items and placenames that Billy's research has revealed within each department of France. But, like the rest of the *Atlas*, it includes nothing found outside France. Further, the claim that these raw totals correspond to density is misleading: no compensation is made for the differing sizes of the country's departments and no variation in shading is used across the area of each one of them; indeed, the various regions of France are not yet equally covered in terms of either toponymic or dialect research.

In short, the *Thesaurus* strikes me as a much more practical aid for further research than the *Atlas*. Perhaps the whole concept of the latter is premature. But Billy has ventured where other scholars have for many years feared to tread, and provided at least one new reference work that will be of considerable help to the new, rising generation of onomastic specialists.

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Colorado Place Names. By William Bright. Johnson Books, 1880 South 57th Court, Boulder, CO 80301. 1993. xii + 162 pages. \$11.95.

1001 Colorado Place Names. By Maxine Benson. Illustrated by Robin Richards. U of Kansas P, 2501 West 15th Street, Lawrence, KS 66049-3904. 1994. xvii + 237 pages. \$25.00 cloth, \$11.95 paperback.

I love placename books; I buy them whenever I see them, old ones and new ones, especially when I travel in the United States; they help me understand the culture and history of the places I visit. Since I will shortly be driving through Colorado, what better books for me to review than these two on Colorado placenames.

William Bright's *Colorado Place Names* is an expansion and revision of George Eichler's 1977 book. Bright has taken Eichler's work, grouped all the names alphabetically and placed more emphasis than Eichler on pronunciation and on Spanish and Native American names. Bright calls this book a placename dictionary, a work distinct from a gazetteer, since this dictionary "seeks to give information not so much on the *places* as on the *names*: how they are pronounced, how they came to be, when they were assigned" [italics in original]. What geographical information he does give, he says is "for orientation and for background." He leaves out much of Eichler's original historical information but includes entries for many topographic features. He also leaves out many placenames for recently developed communities, claiming that their names would fall into Eichler's "generic names" category. In the same paragraph, he laments the fact that many ghost towns in Colorado have no information as to the origins of their names.

Probably because of its subject matter, a placename dictionary becomes a gazetteer, for to gain a deeper understanding of the name of a place, its location is often important. Most of Bright's placename definitions provide geographic information about the place as well as its pronunciation and origin. It is unfortunate that Bright decided to omit much of Eichler's historical information (done to keep the book "within practical limits") because one would think that this historical information would be interesting and useful in understanding a placename's origin.

Omitting recently named communities because their names might be "generic" ones seems a bit short-sighted. Fifty or a hundred years from now, researchers might be in the same position that we are now in the

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case of the ghost towns that Bright mentions for which we have no clues as to why they were named or by whom. If we know today that these community names are indeed generic, then that fact should be noted now. Future readers should know that no particular mountain was involved in the naming of *Mountain View*.

These caveats aside, this is a nice little book on Colorado placenames. It is nicely organized and clearly written, and it includes a map of Colorado counties, a large acknowledgement list of helpful people and institutions, and a reference section listing many other works on Colorado placenames. The map is useful since entries refer to particular Colorado counties.

Maxine Benson's *1001 Colorado Place Names* covers much the same ground as Bright, although her rationale for choosing entries is based on "their historical, geographical, or geological significance, or...because the stories associated with their naming seemed worth telling," although she gives no criteria for what makes a placename "significant" or a story worth telling. Of all the available placenames, what makes these 1001 more interesting than those that were not chosen? (This work is a companion volume to Benson's 1989 *1001 Kansas Place Names*, which accounts for the number of entries). The entries include post office and population information when available, but they do not include the county in which a feature is located. There is a separate section, with a map, of the counties and their names, but this does not help in locating the other placenames.

The introduction is a nice summary of Colorado placename scholarship, although Benson writes that placename scholars are "onomasticians"; I would have thought "toponymists" would have been more appropriate, if she is going to be naming types of scholars. There is a bibliographic essay that contains quite a great deal of good information on other placename work on Colorado, but it could have been supplemented with an alphabetical listing of the works for ease of reference. Many of the references listed here are those found in Bright.

Benson's is also a nice little book on Colorado placenames; it is well-organized, clearly written and nicely presented, with places listed in alphabetical order and illustrated with cute ink drawings.

Along with traveling around the United States, I do research on why places are named what they are and I often need information about

obscure places that might no longer exist or that were ephemeral in the first place; they might have existed conceptually or only for a few years or had their names changed many times, with the original names now lost. For this kind of research, often the placename books found on bookstore shelves, such as those reviewed here, just do not provide enough information. However, these are interesting and useful as quick first references.

Having reviewed these two recent and serious contributions to toponymic literature, and having read their reference lists and seen how much information there is on many, if not all, Colorado placenames, I wonder why we keep having "nice little books on Colorado placenames" hit the bookshelves, when one really good, comprehensive work containing all the information available about Colorado placenames would be a truly great addition to toponymic scholarship.

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Place Names of the White Mountains. By Robert and Mary Julyan. UP of New England, 23 South Main Street, Hanover, NH, revised edition, 1993. Pp. xx + 178. \$13.95, paper.

Robert and Mary Julyan have written a very readable and informative study on the placenames of the White Mountains, which cover roughly the northern half of New Hampshire and a small portion of Maine. The book contains about 650 names, listed alphabetically by their specifics; inclusion of shift names raises the total to over 750 placenames. The emphasis is on explaining the names of important features in the natural landscape. Not surprisingly, the largest category of these features is mountains. The approximately two hundred mountain names are almost evenly divided between those beginning with mount, e.g., *Mount Adams*, named in 1820 for the second U.S. president, John Adams, and those ending in mountain, e.g., *Adams Mountain*, named for

a family who farmed near that mountain. A smaller number of other upland features whose names include such generics as cliff, hill, ledge, notch, range, and ridge are also represented. Among the names of water features the most common generic is brook but there are also place-names that include cascade, fall(s), flume, lake, pond, and river.

The origin of each placename is either explained or inferred from associated history. These explanations, which often include the identity of the namer and/or the circumstances of the naming usually consist of a brief paragraph or two but can range in length from a single sentence to more than a page. The discussion relating to *Pinkhams Grant* and *Pinkham Notch* extends over three pages. An interesting component of some of these entries is the date of the earliest use of a name either on a map or in a written account. For example, the Julyans point out that the earliest known use of the name *Mount Washington* is in a report written by Dr. Manasseh Cutler describing an exploration of that mountain in 1784. The placename first appeared in print in 1792 in the *History of New Hampshire* by Dr. Jeremy Belknap, and its first known use on a map was four years later by the German cartographer D. F. Sotzmann.

A comparatively small number of placenames reflecting human activity in the White Mountains is also found in the book. There are entries for the names of about sixty trails and paths plus a few campgrounds, state parks, and a handful of artifacts, including the *Cog Railway* on Mount Washington. The Julyans also include explanations of the names of towns in the White Mountains since New England towns are areal entities whose names were often transferred to other features within their boundaries. For example, *Mount Randolph* is a shift name from the town of Randolph. The town was named by New Hampshire's Governor Levi Woodbury in 1824 to honor his friend Congressman John Randolph.

In a book which otherwise appears to be very well done, there are some surprising errors relating to locations and elevations. Two especially egregious examples concern *Notchland* and *Mount Waumbek*. *Notchland* (109), south of Crawford Notch, is described as being "on the west side of U.S. Route 3" when in reality it is on U.S. Route 302. And *Mount Waumbek* (161) is given an elevation of 3,020 feet when it is actually 4,005 feet as had already been stated in the entry for the *Pliny Range* (123). However, these problems are relatively minor when

viewed against the main purpose of the book: to contribute to an understanding of placenames of the White Mountains.

Place Names of the White Mountains is the most comprehensive reference to New Hampshire placenames to appear since Elmer M. Hunt's classic *New Hampshire Town Names and Whence They Came* was published in 1970. In fact, because of the contrast in the types of names they focus on, the two books are strongly complementary.

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Paris, Tightwad, and Peculiar: Missouri Place Names. By Margot Ford McMillen. Columbia: U Press of Missouri, 1994. Pp. xxii-95. Paper. \$7.95.

Among the many books dealing with the settlement of Missouri, this one is certainly unique since the author traces the states of Missouri history through the names of communities founded during the different stages of its development.

This book is the third in the series "Missouri Heritage Readers." The introduction by the general editor points out that each book in the series "explores a particular aspect of the state's cultural heritage" and is for "readers of all ages." The author of this volume, Margot Ford McMillen, is a college teacher who has lived in central Missouri for more than 20 years. The book is aimed at the general rather than the academic reader and while a range of readers will enjoy the book and find it interesting and rewarding, academic readers may wish for more detailed information and less casual methodology.

The book contains 14 chapters, a bibliography and a comprehensive index. The first and last chapters are friendly and chatty elementary discussions of Missouri placenames in general; the basic ideas are common knowledge to most adults whether they have lived in Missouri or not. The other 12 chapters, arranged in chronological order, have such titles as "Native American Place Names," "Trails and New

Settlements,” and “Statehood,” and they tell about names given to towns founded during these periods.

Each chapter begins with an appropriate and memorable quotation, taken from such diverse sources as Mark Twain and the *Missouri Travel Guide*. Perhaps the most significant is from Robert L. Ramsey’s *Our Storehouse of Missouri Place Names*: “If all other textbooks were lost entirely, we could recover most...recorded history by studying our place names—and also a good deal of...history that has never been recorded.”

The book includes nearly forty illustrations, some are cartoons, but most are photographs. Together, they are a miscellany that a non-academic reader looking into names and state history might encounter and find interesting. They are not necessarily significant, but they do make the book more enjoyable, and they will bring back memories to older readers.

In tracing Missouri history, McMillen gives many facts about specific places, usually smaller towns and villages, in various parts of the state. The three placenames mentioned in the title suggest the great variety of ways a town might have received its name. However, the explanations for these three, like those of many others in the book, are not very detailed. McMillen mentions that Paris, Missouri, was named for Paris, Kentucky, but she gives no further explanation. The general reader will undoubtedly find this fact interesting, but the more serious reader will wish for additional details, for instance the fact that many settlers in that part of Missouri had emigrated from Kentucky in the 1830s and that a founder of Paris chose the name of his Kentucky home at the request of his wife. Concerning Tightwad, McMillen says “According to legend,” a miserly storekeeper in Edgewood cheated a mailman who was purchasing a watermelon, causing the mailman to yell back “tightwad.” McMillen points out that one explanation of Peculiar is that the postmaster, after having many names rejected by Washington, asked the Post Office Department for help and was told to select a name that was “new” or “peculiar.” Again, the academic reader would like more details and more in-depth comments.

Though the book deals specifically with Missouri history and town names, many of the basic principles apply to places elsewhere. Consequently, these principles are already known to most of those who have studied names previously.

One such principle McMillen mentions is that the explanation of a placename is often based on local folklore. A typical anecdote is that the postmaster named the town of Ink soon after receiving goods spoiled by a broken bottle of ink. And supposedly one postmaster sent the names of each of his daughters, Edith, Ethel, and Alice, to Washington, but each time was told that there was already a town with that name. After receiving the last rejection, he disgustedly wrote *rats* on the application form. The name was accepted but was shortened to *Rat*. McMillen wisely emphasizes that these and similar "explanations" make good stories but are often only bits of local folklore.

The book also contains many interesting and often surprising facts about Missouri that will appeal to the general reader. For example, even though numerous towns were established after the Civil War, and even though the state was a major battlefield and 19 thousand Missourians were killed in the war, no town in the state was named for a Civil War figure or event. Also, many placenames that seem illogical today were appropriate at the time they were chosen. Though there are few wolves or elk roaming Missouri today, places such as Wolf Island and Elkland were named when those animals were plentiful. Furthermore, in keeping with the belief that Missouri has more mules than any other state, McMillen points out that many places in Missouri call themselves the Mule Capital of the World.

Tidbits about Missouri history add greatly to the interest of the book. In the 1800s, many places were named for places or persons in other countries, including Italy and Germany. But when Italy and Germany became our enemies in the world wars, many of these names were changed. Potsdam was changed to Pershing (for the Missouri-born World War I general), but attempts to change Bismarck to Loyal and Kaiser to Success failed. McMillen adds that in the 1940s attempts to change the name of Japan also failed. I grew up in Paris, Missouri during that time and several times I heard that people living near the town of Japan were eager for the change, but residents of the town itself continued to resist the change and they ultimately prevailed.

Since nearly all towns in Missouri were founded before 1900, only part of one chapter, "Resort Towns," deals with the twentieth century. Here McMillen describes the influence of tourists on establishing and naming towns. The formerly obscure town of Branson became famous after many country singers built theaters there and Branson's success

prompted the nearby village of Lakeview (so named because it was located near two lakes) to change its name to Branson West. Also, names for new and developed towns are often chosen for sales appeal; these include such names as Brook Side and Lake Sherwood.

The two-page section "For Further Reading" has only seven entries, but includes Robert L. Ramsey's book and the lesser known works of Arthur Paul Moser, who, as retirement recreation, produced a separate booklet dealing with the placenames of each of Missouri's 114 counties. Containing about twenty pages each, these booklets contain valuable information about many places, especially very small communities, many of which no longer exist.

Good as the book is for casual reading, it is not an academic work or a reference book. It is not intended to be. It mentions only a sampling of the towns, and the names of many of these are discussed only casually, even superficially. And yet the book is fascinating, especially to those with an interest in local history or placenames. People who have never been to Missouri will recognize similarities with naming practices elsewhere, and for me, who grew up in the state, it has great nostalgic value. People of all ages and from all states will find that it provides an evening of great enjoyment.

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