

Preface

It was a pleasure and honor for me to be invited to act as guest editor for a special issue of *Names* on the topic of American Indian placenames. It was agreed that the range of articles should be broad, including toponyms used in the Native American languages themselves as well as names borrowed by English (or other European languages) from Native sources. Geographically, papers on both North and South America were welcome.

The result consists of the five papers which follow, four on North American topics, and one on South America. Three of the papers are primarily on indigenous placenames, one is on names in Chinook Jargon—the trade language which developed between Natives and Europeans in the Pacific Northwest—and one is on names borrowed by English. The papers are by authors with backgrounds in linguistics, anthropology, geography, and onomastics.

If I may add a personal note, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Madison Beeler of Berkeley, who was the second Editor of *Names*, and who was my teacher and friend from the 1940s onward. A specialist in Indo-European and specifically Germanic linguistics, as well as onomastics, Beeler took up the study of California Indian languages in the middle of his career; and as many of his linguistics students at Berkeley were doing research on the languages of Native California, he encouraged us to undertake research on naming practices in those languages. My own involvement in onomastics from that time to the present is a direct result of the inspiration that I owe to Beeler.

Interest of the general public in Native American language and culture, and work by scholars in these fields, has grown immensely in recent decades. The heritage which modern American society has received from the American Indian is immense; it includes not only foods such as maize, squash, persimmons, pecans, tomatoes, chilies,

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and chocolate, but also the names of those foods. In the area of geography, it has not been adequately recognized that Indian trails were the original courses for our modern highways, and American Indian villages were the sites on which most of our major modern cities were built. Again on the linguistic side, the Indian names of those villages—along with the Native names of rivers, lakes, and mountains—are historic and distinctive features of the modern American map, and part of the general American consciousness. The study of American Indian placenames, both as elements of Native life and as contributions to the modern geographical lexicon, is a field which will reward much further study.

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