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Offspring Rivers of The United States

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Streams are significant landmarks in the landscape, often acquiring their specific names before other surface features. In English, rivers stand at the apex of the stream hierarchy. This study looks at those rivers in the United States that have their headwaters, their origin points, at the places where two other rivers, of names different from the resulting river, end, like the Allegheny and Monongahela ceasing to exist downstream of the place where they unite to form the Ohio. An adapted term, offspring, was necessary to designate this special circumstance of what turned out to be 71 rivers in the United States.

KEYWORDS United States, place names, rivers, offspring

"He who descends the Ohio for the first time, then realizes a fair dream of his youth" wrote Z [pseud.] in a letter to a magazine editor. "Pittsburg [*sic*] too is like an old friend for was it not a problem of our school days, to be solved and mastered only by much hard study?" The problem was "What two rivers meet at Pittsburg and form the Ohio." Their pedagogue might vary the question and require them to explain, "At what place do the Alleghany and Monongahela meet, and what river do they form?" Z wondered, "how it came to pass that such was the origin of the mighty Ohio" (1838, 273).

Only a few rivers in the United States begin fully formed where the waters of two rivers commingle. In one of Stewart's earliest place-based publications, an article about naming streams on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, he said, "When two streams join, the possibilities of nomenclature" seemed to him three in number. He used drawings to illustrate the possibilities. His first drawing depicts River B meeting River C with River A as the outcome – such as "the union of the Allegheny and Monongahela to form the Ohio." Of that possibility, Stewart noted, "The first method of naming is rare in the English-speaking countries" (1939, 191).

This essay is about an effort to discover which American rivers, besides the Ohio, fulfill the requirement of having two rivers lose their identity in the formation of a third river and to reveal certain circumstances associated with these points of origin. Walker, referring to the Merrimack River in New Hampshire, noted that this offspring river was the progeny of two unrelated streams. Mother Winnipesaukee was "the daughter of the magnificent Lake [Winnipesaukee], which the great Spirit had adorned with wood shores and green islands and its own smile." Father Pemigewasset was "the stalwart

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son of the Old Man of the Mountain" (1863, 419). Roberts, writing about the junction of Madison and Jefferson in what is now Montana, said, because of the amount of water he measured flowing past the confluence, there could "be but little doubt that the Jefferson is the father of the Missouri" (1876, 237). Reynolds observed that the Coosa "is born of the union of two other streams … the Etowah and Oostanaula" (1944, 15). Niles said Jackson and Cowpasture "sweep about a green islet, and unite: and there, more than three hundred miles [nearly 500 km] from the sea, James River is born" (1945, 5). Burmeister also suggested the parent-child relationship, saying, "Nolichucky River begins its course as a wild and magnificent mountain child, plunging temperamentally through the very backbone of the Appalachian Mountains … below Huntdale bridge, where the North Toe and Cane Rivers meet" (1962, 2, 165).

The literature contains no generic name for such resulting rivers. Reading accounts like those above, it occurred to me that the birth scenario provides a hint. Therefore, I have borrowed a common English synonym for children in order to fulfill the need I have for a useful term that captures the essence of what is happening when two rivers produce something new at their union: an offspring.

Finding America's offspring rivers

The project started with a Google Advanced Search using the keyword "tri-rivers." Tri-Rivers Career Center, in Marion, Ohio, topped the first results. The Center does take its name from three rivers in the vicinity, but theirs is not a parent-child relationship. Tri-Rivers Surgical Associates, with seven offices near Pittsburgh, also landed toward the top of the results list and validated the search strategy. Then came Tri-Rivers Federal Credit Union, in Montgomery, Alabama; and, finally, here was an offspring to expand the list. Just north of Alabama's capital, the Coosa River and Tallapoosa River form the Alabama River. Page after page of hits for "tri-rivers" produced several new offspring but also many false positives, and eventually diminishing returns.

A switch to "three rivers" captured Three Rivers Manufacturing, which introduced Ware River and Quaboag River, parents at Three Rivers, Massachusetts, to the Chicopee. West Virginia's Three Rivers Festival, in Fairmont, revealed that not only is the Monongahela River a parent; but the Monongahela is itself the offspring of Tygart Valley River and West Fork River. Three Rivers Kayaking Expedition added the Neuse River, bringing along its parents, the Eno and the Flat, in northeastern North Carolina. At about 30 offspring, however, diminishing returns set in again.

Clearly, a more systematic searching methodology was necessary, perhaps something state-by-state. "Rivers of Alabama" went into the search box, and Wikipedia's "List of Rivers of Alabama" appeared. Organized by major watercourse destination, like "Gulf Coast (east)" and "Mobile Bay," are dozens of Alabama streams, one watershed at a time. Similar state-specific queries worked also for Alaska, Arizona, etc. Wikipedia, therefore, emerged unexpectedly as the best way to track in each state, by watershed and sub-watershed, the flowing waters of the entire United States. Some combination of Google Earth/Maps, Bing Maps, the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), and United States Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps provided confirmation of all Wikipedia discoveries.

Results

The United States has 71 offspring that fit the project criteria (Table 1). In all, there are almost 200 rivers in the table, with several appearing as both offspring and parent. Most origin points occur in a single state; but for the seven that occur on a state line, the table names both states. Spanish "Rio" is the equivalent of English "River," so on the list appears the Rio Hondo, in south-central New Mexico, along with parents Rio Ruidoso and the Rio Bonito.

Figure 1 shows the origin points for the 71, a distribution that involves 35 states. All but 16 of the confluences are east of the Mississippi River; and many of the eastern 55 form two clusters, one stretching from northwest Georgia to Washington, D.C., and a second in southern New England. Most eastern states have at least one offspring, and several of them have multiple birthplaces. Virginia has the most of any state with seven whole and one shared. Georgia at six and half origins and North Carolina at five and half are close behind.

Although no offspring origins occur today in Utah, that state once had the Colorado River's origin near its eastern border. Colorado's parents were the Green, rising in Wyoming, and the Grand, rising in Colorado. Just after World War I, however, from residents of Colorado came pressure to revise the Grand's name because Colorado had none of the Colorado per se. In March 1921, the Colorado legislature complied, changing the name of that state's portion of the Grand to Colorado, leaving unchanged the remaining 130 km of the Grand in Utah. Congress got involved; and, when Utah did not object, by law in July 1921, Congress renamed the whole Grand River, leaving the Green as a right-bank tributary (looking downstream) of the Colorado (*Ogden* 1921, 3; Pearce 1955, 202).

Case studies

Every offspring has a story, but space precludes a full inventory. Instead, case studies (six in number) illustrate particular characteristics of the offspring, its parents, other upstream ancestors, or the birthplace.

Confluence terminology

Cape Fear River originates on the North Carolina Piedmont at Mermaid Point, where the Deep River joins the Haw River, roughly 320 km from the sea. There, said Gerard, "lies a small wedge of beach called Mermaid Point … In the 1700s … travelers reported hearing beautiful, ghostly singing emanating from this beach." A legend emerged about mermaids swimming up the Cape Fear to its origin point, a place where they could find clarified and salt-free mountain-stream water with which to wash their hair. They would lounge about "washing and combing one another's long hair, all the while keening their siren song in a lovely, mesmerizing language no human ear could comprehend" (2013, 7).

Several other offspring feature special terms for their birthplaces. For instance, travelers called Ohio's origin The Forks or Forks of the Ohio; George Washington referred to it as "the Point" in a 1753 diary entry, perhaps the first time with a capitalized Point (Alberts 1980, 12). Sudbury and Assabet flow around Egg Rock and deliver, near the former home of Henry David Thoreau, the Concord River. Fork of the River, where the

TABLE 1
NUMBERED LIST OF OFFSPRING RIVERS IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH PARENTS AND AFFECTED STATES

	Offspring River	Right-Bank Parent	Left-Bank Parent	Affected States
1	Alabama	Coosa	Tallapoosa	Alabama
2	Altamaha	Ocmulgee	Oconee	Georgia
3	Apalachicola	Chattahoochee	Flint	Florida, Georgia
4	Beaver	Mahoning	Shenango	Pennsylvania
5	Big	Congdon	Nooseneck	Rhode Island
6	Bill Williams	Big Sandy	Santa Maria	Arizona
7	Black	Ouachita	Tensas	Louisiana
8	Branch	Chepachet	Clear	Rhode Island
9	Cape Fear	Deep	Haw	North Carolina
10	Chemung	Tioga	Cohocton	New York
11	Chicopee	Ware	Quaboag	Massachusetts
12	Chowan	Nottaway	Blackwater	North Carolina, Virginia
13	Concord	Sudbury	Assabet	Massachusetts
14	Congaree	Saluda	Broad	South Carolina
15	Coosa	Oostanaula	Etowah	Georgia
16	Coosawattee	Ellijay	Cartecay	Georgia
17	Gunnison	East	Taylor	Colorado
18	Hondo	Ruidoso	Bonito	New Mexico
19	Illinois	Des Plaines	Kankakee	Illinois
20	James	Jackson	Cowpasture	Virginia
21	Jefferson	Beaverhead	Big Hole	Montana
22	Kanawha	Gauley	New	West Virginia
23	Kansas	Smoky Hill	Republican	Kansas
24	Keowee	Whitewater	Toxaway	South Carolina
25	Kuk	Avalik	Kaolak	Alaska
26	Little	Lampasas	Leon	Texas
27	Madison	Gibbon	Firehole	Wyoming
28	Matta	Mat	Ta	Virginia
29	Mattaponi	Matta	Poni	Virginia
30	Maumee	St. Marys	St. Joseph	Indiana
31	Maury	Calfpasture	Little Calfpasture	Virginia
32	Menominee	Brule	Michigamme	Michigan, Wisconsin
33	Merrimack	Pemigewasset	Winnipesaukee	New Hampshire
34	Missouri	Madison	Jefferson	Montana
35	Mobile	Tombigbee	Alabama	Alabama
36	Monongahela	Tygart Valley	West Fork	West Virginia
37	Muskingum	Walhonding	Tuscarawas	Ohio
38	Neuse	Eno	Flat	North Carolina
39	Nolichucky	North Toe	Cane	North Carolina
40	Ocmulgee	South	Alcovy	Georgia
41	Ohio	Allegheny	Monongahela	Pennsylvania
42	Oostanaula	Conasauga	Coosawattee	Georgia
43	Oswego	Oneida	Seneca	New York
44	Pamunkey	South Anna	North Anna	Virginia
45	Pascagoula	Leaf	Chickasawhay	Mississippi
46	Pee Dee	Yadkin	Uwharrie	North Carolina
47	Piscataqua	Cocheco	Salmon Falls	Maine, New Hampshire
48	Pomperaug	Weekeepeemee	Nonnewaug	Connecticut
49	Pompton	Pequannock	Ramapo	New Jersey
50	Poni	Po	Ni	Virginia
51	Providence	Woonasquatucket	Moshassuck	Rhode Island
52	Quillayute	Sol Duc	Bogachiel	Washington
53	Red of the North	Otter Tail	Bois de Sioux	Minnesota, North Dakota
54	Saginaw	Shiawassee	Tittabawassee	Michigan
55	Salmon	Blackledge	Jeremy	Connecticut
56	Salt	White	Black	Arizona
57	Santa Maria	Cuyama	Sisquoc	California

(*Continued*)

TABLE 1 (*CONTINUED*).

	Offspring River	Right-Bank Parent	Left-Bank Parent	Affected States
58	Santee	Congaree	Wateree	South Carolina
59	Savannah	Tugaloo	Seneca	Georgia, South Carolina
60	Shetucket	Willimantic	Natchaug	Connecticut
61	Snohomish	Skykomish	Snoqualmie	Washington
62	Tanana	Chisana	Nabesna	Alaska
63	Taunton	Town	Matfield	Massachusetts
64	Tennessee	Holston	French Broad	Tennessee
65	Thames	Yantic	Shetucket	Connecticut
66	Threemile	Wading	Rumford	Massachusetts
67	Tugaloo	Tallulah	Chatooga	Georgia, South Carolina
68	Walhonding	Kokosing	Mohican	Ohio
69	West Twin	Devils	Neshota	Wisconsin
70	Yazoo	Tallahatchie	Yalobusha	Mississippi
71	York	Pamunkey	Mattaponi	Virginia

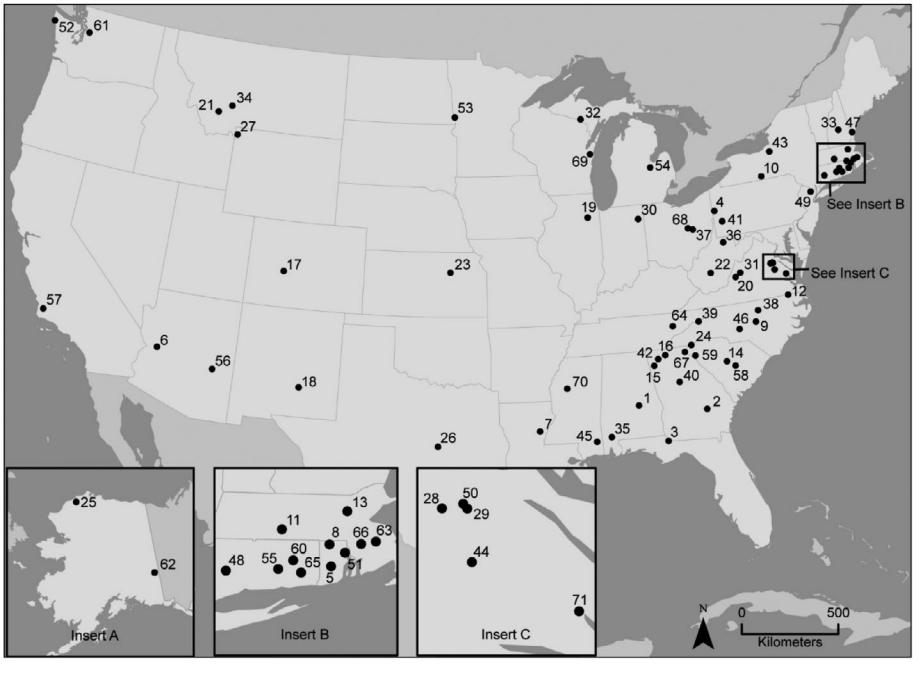

FIGURE 1 Offspring river origin points in the United States
Note: Numbers on the map match numbers in left column of Table 1.

Holston and French Broad meet and the Tennessee River emerges, is what Presbyterians called the first church in the Knoxville area (First Presbyterian Church 2017). Dutch Fork is a designation for the area immediately west of Columbia, South Carolina, where a colony of Bavarian immigrants settled between the Saluda River and Broad River, above the spot where they form the Congaree River (Shuler 1995, 36). About the place where the Kansas River begins, at the confluence of the Smoky Hill and Republican rivers, Parks noted, "white people called this place – known as Junction City, Kansas – Grand Point. The Kanza Indians knew it as Minghoci Oizkanka, or 'The Fork Where the Ducks

Dwell'" (2014, 9). About Three River Point, in western New York, Adieu [pseud.] wrote, "The Seneca and Oneida rivers meet … and from thence hurry down, in one stream, broken by rifts and falls, to Oswego, which gives its name to this third river, in fact only a junction of the two former" (1811, 41). Green Point separates the Shiawassee and Tittabawassee, where, in eastern Michigan, they produce the Saginaw (Miller 1889, 501). Coshocton, Ohio, now stands at The Forks of the Muskingum (Hunt 1885), where the Walhonding comes in from the west and meets the Tuscarawas from the east.

Historic convergence

From a small airplane, Zwinger and Teale (1984, 2) saw the Sudbury and Assabet as "an immense pair of calipers, Egg Rock forming the base and hinge." Thoreau never had the advantage of viewing his home area from altitude, but he did explore rivers Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord on an almost daily basis for much of the adult portion of his life. His 47 journal volumes show his affection for and great interest in what Thoreau called his "three highways" (as quoted in Thorson 2017, 9). Thoreau the naturalist and essayist became a land surveyor and laid out numerous local properties. As a result, even better than when just an amateur observer, he came to understand, in Howarth's words, "his three-river town as an ecosystem, something [then] quite new in Western thought" (2017, 47). Thoreau was not alone among American literary figures who embraced these three small rivers. Thorson called them "Thoreau's and Hawthorne's and Emerson's and history's rivers" (*ix*). Nathanial Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson were Thoreau's Concord neighbors; and an oft-reconstructed North Bridge and the *Minute Man* statue stand but a half mile downstream from Egg Rock. The placid Sudbury, said Zwinger and Teale (1984, 9), "is Emerson and Thoreau, afternoon tea, the Concord Social Circle and erudite conversation, canoeing on a summer evening. The [rambunctious] Assabet is industrial towns …"

Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord almost certainly constitute the first offspring family unit in what became the United States, though at the outset all had different names. To the Puritan settlers of the Concord township land grant in 1636, they were, respectively, South River, North River, and Great River. Concord quickly replaced Great, but South and North persisted well into the nineteenth century (Walcott 1884, *xviii*). In fact, on an 1859 Thoreau map, he referred to Assabet as "North River" (Thorson 2017, 209).

Ancestry problems

President Benjamin Harrison established the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in 1890 to settle disputes between federal agencies. By 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt had expanded the scope to include "determining, changing, and fixing" names across the country (as quoted in Mencken 1977, 655). BGN has a long tradition of involving numerous parties in reaching decisions about geographic features. That willingness to listen to other opinions was helpful in deciding the name of Gunnison River's right-bank parent.

An inventory of BGN decisions, about places like the Gunnison River, is available in the GNIS. Therein, a 1931 BGN decision card says the Gunnison begins at "the junction of the Slate and Taylor Rivers, flowing thence south …" No corroborating

documentation accompanies the 1931 decision card, except a note that "the Chairman" submitted the suggestion. The Gunnison file does include considerable correspondence relevant to the 1940 Gunnison decision card, which reversed the 1931 decision, replacing Slate River as the right-bank parent with East River (Geographic Names Information System. Feature Detail Report for: Gunnison River).

In the spring of 1940, E.E. Carter, Acting Chief, of the United States Forest Service, told George C. Martin, the BGN's Executive Secretary, "the definition of Gunnison River … is incorrect. It is not formed by the junction of Slate & Taylor Rivers but by the junction of East & Taylor Rivers – Slate River is a tributary of East River." Martin indicated agreement with Carter. "The decision of 1931 on Gunnison River is one of the many decisions … which were prepared by Mr. [Frank] Bond … and there is no evidence that it ever was specifically approved by anyone other than Mr. Bond."

Carter believed the controversy hinged on a cartographer's misplacement of a word on the *Crested Butte* topographic quadrangle of 1893. The last letter of "Slate River" slipped below the confluence of the Slate with the East, "thereby indicating an intent to carry the name Slate River down the stream toward the junction with Taylor River." Carter went on to reference Forest Service map products that backed the notion of the Slate losing its identity upon merging with the East. In 1940, the BGN concurred, its decision card now saying "Gunnison River [is] a river that is formed by the confluence of Taylor River with East River …"

The Gunnison confusion is not the only genealogical problem that the BGN has resolved for an offspring. According to a 1944 BGN case study, eastern Alaska's Tanana River had no named parents; but, by 1950, there was an effort to define its sources more precisely. USGS geologists favored "the application of the name Tanana River downstream from the confluence of the Chisana River and Mirror Creek." In 1952, the BGN rendered a decision affirming the geologists' preference. BGN decided in 1960, however, to shift the head of the Tanana about 50 km downstream to the spot where the Nabesna River joins the Chisana. The BGN case brief noted, the "former decision [1952] was primarily based on the most logical description rather than on local usage" (Geographic Names Information System. Feature Detail Report for: Tanana River).

Just two parents

There are no three-parent offspring rivers in the United States; but repeatedly, in the literature, one encounters those who make that claim. Most commonly misidentified, as having three parents, is the Missouri River.

Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and the Corps of Discovery reached what is now Three Forks, Montana, in 1805. There they found three rivers flowing into the Missouri and chose river names to honor three prominent men of their era, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Albert Gallatin, all of whom helped them make their journey. Even then, however, in different diaries, Corps members observed the Gallatin was not truly part of a three-way union at the head of the Missouri. Captain Clark wrote that the "middle fork [Madison] is quit [*sic*] as large [as Jefferson] about 90 yds. [82 meters] wide. The South fork [Gallatin] is about 70 yds [64 meters] wide & falls in about 400 yards [366 meters] below the midle [*sic*] fork" (as quoted in Moulton (1983) 2001, 4: 428). Regarding the same area, Sergeant Patrick Gass said, "a branch of the Missouri

comes in on the south side, about 60 yards [55 meters] wide … having proceeded on a mile, [they] came to another branch of the same size [Madison]" (as quoted in Moulton (1983) 2001, 10: 118). Thus, the Gallatin was clearly a right-bank tributary of what was already offspring Missouri.

A GNIS finding in 1980 confirmed that the Missouri "heads in Montana at the junction of the Jefferson River and the Madison River." No longer valid thereafter was a 1931 decision card of the BGN saying, the Missouri is a "river formed in Montana, by the union of Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin Rivers" (Geographic Names Information System. Feature Detail Report for: Missouri River). Yet the three-parent Missouri myth continues in sources such as a collection of river reports (Hoover 1984, 211), a novel about Montana (Doig 1990, 63), a book on American rivers (Palmer 1996, 169), an article about naming Missouri and the Missouri River (Lance 1999, 287), and a compendium of Montana place names (Aarstad et al. 2009, 178). Other offspring sometimes landing inappropriately in the three-parent category are the Black in Louisiana, Ocmulgee in Georgia, Saginaw in Michigan, and Thames in Connecticut.

Offspring overkill

Missouri's Madison and Jefferson are themselves also offspring; but no offspring has a longer direct line of offspring ascendants than the Mobile River. Two of its great-great-grandparents, the Ellijay and Cartecay rivers, meet at the edge of tiny Ellijay, Georgia, in what was once Cherokee country, and there lose their identity to offspring Coosawattee River, which was the model for James Dickey's fictional Cahulawassee River in *Deliverance*. Coosawattee soon meets the Conasauga, just east of Damascus, Georgia, to form offspring Oostanaula, which, in turn, in Rome, Georgia, meets the Etowah River, where offspring Coosa River begins its journey into Alabama. The Coosa flows through what was once Creek territory to link up with the Tallapoosa to create offspring Alabama. Nearly five hundred km to the southwest, the Alabama meets the Tombigbee River; and their melded waters become offspring Mobile, which in just 70 km reaches Mobile Bay, carrying the runoff of more than a hundred thousand square km, said Sledge, making it the sixth largest watershed in the United States (2015, 8).

There are those who have argued this particular continuous stretch, from mountain trickle to saltwater, should have fewer names, even one name. "It is unfortunate," said Bromberg, "for both the Alabama and Coosa Rivers that they ever had distinctive names. They are in fact one and the same river, and it is impossible to see any physical demarcation at the point where the change of name occurs." He suggested that the "name Alabama" should have prevailed, as then there would have been a "noble water-way of 863 miles [1389 km], from Tennessee to Mobile" (1901, 67). Palmer, writing almost a century later, agreed, saying,

> A historical pattern of changing the names of rivers tends to conceal their great lengths. More than in any other region, rivers of the South are often renamed at the confluences of large tributaries, just as streets are sometimes renamed at intersections (1996, 87).

Virginia's York River is another southern offspring river with a multitude of upstream offspring. York's right-bank parent, Pamunkey, derives from the merger of parents South Anna and North Anna, while the left-bank parent, Mattaponi, flows eastward with the

waters of its offspring parents, Matta and Poni, which carry the waters of the Mat and Ta plus the Po and Ni. Ward, by the way, actually liked the Mat, Ta, Po, and Ni system so well that he felt "this case might furnish a valuable suggestion to geographical explorers who are constantly called upon to give names to unknown water courses" (1885, 322).

Name creep

Not until the middle of the eighteenth century did *Allegheny* (variously spelled) begin to creep southward, pushing farther downstream the origin of the Ohio, to the site of Fort Pitt. The Delaware and Iroquois, coming at the Ohio-Allegheny water corridor from opposite directions, considered them one river. "We know them as two," wrote Errett, "but to them the Ohio was but the continuation of the Allegheny" (1885, 52). Seneca people (Iroquoian) spoke of the whole river as being "*ohi:yo:h* 'good river'" (Bright 2004, 205). The French stretched it from good to beautiful, calling the combination, *La Belle Rivière* or just *O-hi-o* (Errett 1885, 52). Starting a long journey to stake firmer claim to the Ohio Valley for his French king, explorer Pierre Joseph Celeron noted in his journal, on 29 July 1749, that he had just "entered into the Belle Riviere (Ohio)" well north of Pittsburgh (1892, 15). By the time of Celeron's journey down the Allegheny-Ohio, the British were coming to the Ohio Valley and competing with the French. While Englishman Christopher Gist was still referring in 1750 to the Allegheny above the Forks as the "River Ohio" (as quoted in Hulbert 1906, 3), that same year his fellow citizen Lewis Evans was presciently writing, the "Royley Water" of the Monongahela there "joins the Ohio (or Allegeni)" (as quoted in Bissell 1952, 37). Three years later, George Washington was at the confluence and noted in his journal, the "Aligany bearing N.E. and Monongahela S.E." joined there "very near at right angles" (as quoted in Alberts 1980, 12).

The French built Fort Duquesne at the Point in 1754 but lost their hold on the site to the British; a much larger and more substantial facility, Fort Pitt, soon took the place of Fort Duquesne. Fort Pitt's exterior wall had five protrusions, including Monongahela Bastion, overlooking the Monongahela, and Ohio Bastion, overlooking what is now the Allegheny (Alberts 1980, 27, 148). Once occupied, Fort Pitt resisted French and American Indian attempts to overrun it, while a battle of sorts also occurred inside about what to call the river flowing alongside the Ohio Bastion. In the critical year of 1763, the post commander, Captain Simeon Ecuyer, went back and forth between "Allegheny" and "Ohio," even on the same day, in his journal entry of 3 July (1892, 97, 99). Within a few years, however, the British and the Americans decided on Allegheny for that part of the Ohio that lay above the Point. By 1778, Thomas Hutchins could confidently say, "Fort Pitt stands at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers" (1904, 76).

Name creep also affected offspring Tennessee, James, and Illinois; but, unlike the Ohio, their names pushed upstream. An early gazetteer author claimed the origin point for the Tennessee was where the Holston met the Little Tennessee, at what is now Lenoir City, Tennessee, 74 river km below Knoxville (Morse 1797). Michaux, after an 1802 journey, said that the Tennessee began at the junction of Holston and Clinch rivers, 130 km below Knoxville (1805, 230). Civil War maps seldom showed the Tennessee River as being north of Chattanooga, 296 km below Knoxville (US 1895). Availability of federal money was the main reason for the subsequent migration of the Tennessee's

birthplace upstream to the Knoxville area. Congressional Rivers and Harbors acts specified "Tennessee River" (not Holston River) for funding of improvements, so a longer Tennessee meant more funding. The Knoxville city directory of 1876 said the city's river was the Holston; but by 1882, that part of the Holston had magically changed to Tennessee. In fact, the state's 46th General Assembly passed a law in 1889 to extend the name even farther northward, to Kingsport, almost on the Virginia state line. Congress settled the Tennessee's birthplace, by statute, as the confluence of Holston and French Broad, in 1890 (Montgomery 1956, 54).

Jackson and Cowpasture were not always James's parents, because, through at least the American Revolution, the James began at the Point of Fork just a few km above Richmond, Virginia. There the Fluvanna (now the upper James) met the Rivanna to form the James. Fluvanna and Rivanna honor Queen Anne, just as James River honors King James I, her husband (Woodlief 1985, 10). By the time of the American Civil War, contemporaneous maps no longer recognized the Fluvanna (US 1895); and the James name extended westward to the Iron Gate, beyond the Blue Ridge, as it does today, with Rivanna becoming a left-bank James tributary.

Of all the historic portage routes between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, none is more important in modern times than the Illinois Waterway, which links Lake Michigan at Chicago with the Mississippi just north of St. Louis. Today that connection uses the south branch of the Chicago River and lower Des Plaines River to reach the Illinois River itself. For the French explorers, traders, and missionaries, however, the left-bank Illinois parent, the Kankakee River, became the preferred Great Lakes connection to the Illinois. In fact, according to McCafferty, "the Kankakee and Illinois Rivers were considered *one and the same river,* not two separate waterways as we think of them today." So the Peoria people "actually lived on the 'Kankakee' after all, since this river flowed from extreme north-central Indiana all the way down to the Mississippi" (2004, 289). It was not until the turn of the nineteenth century that the name Illinois pushed the name Kankakee back to the junction of the Des Plaines (McCafferty 2004, 290).

Conclusion

The Kanawha River is a West Virginia offspring. With regard to the Kanawha, Gillespie said, the first use of the name was

> about 1760 for that portion of the stream below where the Greenbrier River joins the present New River. It was several years before the name was restricted to that portion of the stream below where the Gauley and New rivers merge. There are no records indicating why these changes were made. (1984, 126)

Indeed, solid reasons are virtually nonexistent as to why these 71 offspring emerged from the hundreds and hundreds of opportunities in the United States to create a different river at the confluence of two existing rivers. Many rivers derive their designation, perhaps modified, from the names American Indians gave to them, names that reflected place-naming practices that differed from what Europeans knew. Natives might name part of a river for one local characteristic and somewhere else along the same stream give it another name. Different tribes could have different names for the same river. "One people's tributary," wrote McCafferty, "could be another people's main stream, and vice

versa" (2004, 289). Alternatively, Europeans exploring America on foot or horseback, independent of their native predecessors, as Stewart observed, might name streams "by their characteristics at one point, that is, the place where the first trail crossed them" (1954, 2). Motive, continued Stewart, for naming places is often hard to discern (1954, 12). What is clear about the 71 offspring covered here is that the BGN has repeatedly placed, sometimes belatedly, its imprimatur on this unusual offspring circumstance.

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