

Upstate, Downstate, and Outstate Across the United States

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Upstate, downstate, and outstate are informal place names, informal in that they do not have locational coordinates or defined dimensions. They are, however, useful designators for the peripheral areas of US American states with dominant urban population cores. Beginning with *upstate*, this study focuses on the earliest known printed uses of each peripheral term in connection with the 50 states. It looks at how core area newspapers and other critics have deprecated the rural aspect of these peripherals, leading rural residents in some states to argue against further use of the informal name. The study also reports on the results of promotional efforts to capitalize on *upstate, downstate, or outstate* in naming of enterprises.

KEYWORDS United States, *upstate, downstate, outstate*, place names, toponyms

Introduction

Frank Sinatra opened his “Songs of Sinatra” CBS radio program on 2 January 1946 by vocalizing a few lines from “Night and Day”. Then he had this to say: “From Portland, M-E to Portland, O-R-E, from Key West to the Golden Gate and from *downstate* California to *upstate* New York, a very happy new year to you” (Sinatra 1946). Although he may have been reading from a prepared script, Sinatra, a Hoboken, New Jersey, native, would have grown up hearing from across the Hudson River about the differences between *upstate* New York and New York City. *Downstate* California would not have been nearly so common an expression.

George Stewart referred to place names like *upstate, downstate, and outstate* as “informal names”. They designate places that “have no strict limits” (Stewart [1945] 2008, 377, 385). Yet *upstate, downstate, and outstate* have served for more than a century to help those living in metropolitan cores distinguish themselves from those who inhabit the hinterlands, and vice versa.

The purpose of this paper is not to examine what constitutes the core and periphery of any state, as Phillips (1983) did for New York. Instead, the focus here is on (1) the earliest known printed use of the three terms for the states; (2) how they have carried negative implications for rural *upstaters*, *downstaters*, and *outstaters*; and (3) how businesses and organizations have appropriated these names to brand their enterprises—thus turning a peripheral put down into an areal asset.

Methodology

Finding early print dates of *upstate*, *downstate*, and *outstate* (UDO) was a key aspect of this project. To compile such a list, I used the commonly available free resources of Google Scholar, Google Advanced Search, and Internet Archive. I mined also library subscription databases. Among those are Academic Search Complete, African American Newspapers, America: History & Life, American Periodicals Series Online 1741–1900, Article Search (Advanced), Chicago Tribune (1985–Present), HeinOnline Academic, Newspaper Source, Nexis Uni, Nineteenth Century US Newspapers, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, and Westlaw. For all the databases, I looked at the 50 states three times, once each for *upstate*, *downstate*, and *outstate*.

Many of the earliest known UDO print uses come from Newspapers.com searches I conducted using a personal subscription. While this online source is impressive, it is not perfect. Most frustrating is the fact that some newspapers, even some major metropolitan dailies, are not currently part of the Newspapers.com database. Furthermore, the technology, especially when one is searching in the nineteenth century, returns many false positives, like *upstairs* instead of *upstate*, *downstream* instead of *downstate*, or *out-of-state* versus *outstate*.

Enterprise names are from the online Super Pages, Yellow Pages, and White Pages. Compiling enterprise names, I tried, mainly by checking enterprise websites, to ascertain if they were still in operation. *Upstate Pizza* is a good example of one I had to omit. It had been active in the restaurant scene of Pineville, North Carolina, in 2011; but, by late summer 2018, this one-shop business claiming a Syracuse, New York, heritage had ceased to exist. I also avoided assigning to any state an enterprise for which the name is really a spillover from another state. Therefore, even though there is a Pennsylvania affiliate of the *Upstate Niagara Cooperative*, this *upstate* counts only for New York not for the *Keystone State*.

Results and Discussion

Earliest Known Printed Uses

Table 1 provides dates of the earliest known printed uses of UDO for each state, but I have no doubt that many entered conversations earlier than these print

TABLE 1
DATE OF EARLIEST KNOWN PRINTED USE OF UPSTATE, DOWNSTATE, AND OUTSTATE, BY STATE

State	Upstate	Downstate	Outstate
Alabama	9 September 1902	27 October 1906	23 February 1926
Alaska	7 February 1966	1 December 1959	1997
Arizona	10 March 1915	28 January 1915	8 September 1945
Arkansas	12 April 1906	7 October 1909	18 November 1930
California	30 April 1901	17 March 1910	8 April 1927
Colorado	19 November 1903	8 November 1926	27 March 1912
Connecticut	14 April 1899	10 April 1901	25 January 1945
Delaware	18 August 1892	25 July 1881	10 October 1960
Florida	21 July 1900	16 March 1909	4 February 1950
Georgia	16 June 1909	8 September 1912	16 August 1925
Hawaii	12 April 1943	3 August 1959	8 February 1970
Idaho	17 February 1922	12 July 1912	2 October 1961
Illinois	5 June 1903	3 December 1899	21 May 1911
Indiana	8 January 1904	2 November 1905	25 February 1909
Iowa	25 July 1900	7 November 1904	4 November 1914
Kansas	13 September 1904	7 June 1906	28 January 1909
Kentucky	18 June 1901	28 September 1902	15 February 1907
Louisiana	7 April 1900	23 May 1902	29 October 1927
Maine	29 November 1911	1934	No apparent use
Maryland	6 July 1907	17 December 1905	1 November 1911
Massachusetts	5 December 1903	26 March 1917	8 November 1910
Michigan	22 September 1900	12 September 1907	31 July 1902
Minnesota	25 January 1902	9 March 1908	1 November 1914
Mississippi	17 July 1904	29 November 1910	2 March 1965
Missouri	10 December 1895	14 December 1901	9 November 1900
Montana	30 September 1906	9 June 1919	4 November 1908
Nebraska	4 March 1902	6 October 1907	17 March 1904
Nevada	7 November 1906	22 January 1930	27 February 1932
New Hampshire	20 June 1906	4 May 1923	No apparent use
New Jersey	5 November 1892	24 May 1906	30 October 1928
New Mexico	6 February 1913	15 May 1920	3 August 1919
New York	16 January 1875	12 November 1891	13 May 1928
North Carolina	24 May 1905	14 June 1910	1 October 2015
North Dakota	19 April 1911	24 June 1904	5 April 1917
Ohio	5 April 1862	8 September 1902	4 August 1927
Oklahoma	16 April 1909	5 January 1910	23 April 1939
Oregon	24 January 1907	23 November 1902	5 January 1910
Pennsylvania	24 November 1899	15 May 1896	3 November 1926
Rhode Island	25 August 1906	1963	22 August 1935
South Carolina	12 July 1901	22 April 1908	11 August 1946
South Dakota	24 June 1902	18 May 1910	3 May 1939
Tennessee	29 November 1899	29 November 1899	24 August 1932
Texas	15 July 1900	24 October 1905	26 October 1921
Utah	7 January 1939	6 April 1908	29 November 1908
Vermont	30 December 1896	24 July 1889	8 November 1988
Virginia	25 April 1902	24 December 1920	25 January 1935
Washington	28 September 1910	1 October 1919	24 August 1941
West Virginia	15 July 1904	27 October 1908	1 October 2015
Wisconsin	1 November 1900	28 October 1905	6 August 1903
Wyoming	20 February 1913	7 February 1920	22 August 1928

dates. “A term will exist in spoken language before it is written”, said Remlinger in her study of dialect in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (Remlinger 2017, 57). Mencken, tracing the use of “*upstate*”, as it referred to “New York

State north and west of Albany”, cited a printed instance from 1901 as the earliest he could find, but noted the name “is probably older” (Mencken 1977, 299). The *Oxford English Dictionary* pushes back the dates for its defined words as far as possible but features “the date of first printing” except for handwritten items like journals, and explains that some dictionaries go back farther than is comfortable for this source (OED 1989, 1:xxx).

Ohio, Delaware, and Missouri account for the earliest known print dates for *upstate*, *downstate*, and *outstate*, respectively (Table 1). *Upstate Ohio* and *downstate Delaware* count among the 15 dates (out of 148) that occurred in the nineteenth century, 9 *upstate* and 6 *downstate*. The first print date for any *outstate*, Missouri, is one of 131 dates from the twentieth century. *Outstate North Carolina* and *outstate West Virginia* are the two twenty-first-century laggards. I am unable to provide dates for outstate Maine or outstate New Hampshire. For more than half the states, 28 of them, the date sequence of earliest printed items is first the *upstate* reference, next *downstate*, and then *outstate*. Massachusetts is among eight states that have an *upstate* item first but for which *outstate* then comes before *downstate*. Utah is the only state with a *downstate-outstate-upstate* sequence: April 1908 (a “down-State contemporary [minister]”) (*Salt Lake Tribune* 1908a), November 1908 (“out-state teachers”) (*Salt Lake Tribune* 1908b), and January 1939 (“*upstate* Utah Aggies”) (*Ogden (Utah) Standard-Examiner* 1939).

Somewhat surprising is the fact that so many states present a full complement of UDO, even tiny Rhode Island, a state that is smaller than a host of American counties. In 1906, a Rhode Island newspaper reported on plans for a training cruise by the USS *Columbia* that would necessitate sending a tender “to Providence to bring the up-State division [of the Rhode Island Naval Reserve] down the bay” where they would board the ship (*Newport (Rhode Island) Mercury* 1906). Three decades later, a Missouri newspaper carried an editorial piece about Rhode Island politics that said, “What beat Mr. Prince was first, the terrific party split, and, second, the racial intolerance of the villagers of outstate Rhode Island” (*Albany (Missouri) Ledger* 1935). Last, in 1963, the US Army Corps of Engineers reported on their work in the Ocean State, noting, “A plan of tidal-flood protections for Narragansett and Mount Hope Bays calling for tidal barriers across East and West Passages in *downstate* Rhode Island... was completed...” (US Army. Corps of Engineers 1963, 50).

Rhode Island’s three references (Table 1) illustrate one finding of this study: the authors of such items do not necessarily speak for the permanent residents in the affected areas. The author of the Corps piece worked out of the New England Division’s Public Affairs Office, and might have been from a state where *downstate* is a common term. The 1935 item about outstate Rhode Island appeared in a state where outstate had by the 1930s long been part of the political vocabulary. Even the Newport newspaper item about *upstate* Rhode Island might have reflected the fact that wealthy New Yorkers often summered at Newport and would have found an *upstate* designation familiar as they perused their Newport newspaper.

Diffusion of UDO terminology also could have occurred as big city news stories came to the attention of small town journalists. Across the United States, local papers often repeated news items from the New York and Chicago press, items that contained UDO references to New York, Illinois, or other states. Reading items from elsewhere, local writers could ingest what to them might have been novel and appropriate descriptive locational terms, and might have gone on to repeat them in their own writings. The Associated Press and other wire services eventually dispersed UDO terminology.

Upstate

Upstate areas typically lie north of the core areas for their states, or up the map, because we are so familiar with printed maps oriented such that north appears at the top. Actually, the top of a map can point in any direction.

Sullivan D. Harris published the first reference to an *upstate* area, on 5 April 1862, in an agriculturally oriented journal, *Field Notes*. His was also the first reference to any UDO, in this case *upstate Ohio*. “The Cleveland and Mahoning rail-road, as our up-state readers know”, wrote Harris, “is a bully little concern, of which our worthy Governor is President and Charles Rhodes Superintendent...” (Harris 1862). He did not sign the railroad item, but the *Urbana Union* copied it a few days later and credited him (*Urbana (Ohio) Union* 1862). Born in Middlebury, Vermont, in 1812, Harris migrated to Ohio in 1836, where he farmed, painted, published poetry, taught school, and wrote for farming publications. Harris did live in the northeastern corner of *upstate Ohio*; but he could have picked up the term in travels across *upstate New York*, as he was once a correspondent for *Moore’s Rural New-Yorker (Ravenna (Ohio) Democratic Press* 1877; Harris 1911, 166).

The United States’ *upstate* behemoth, New York, therefore, was not the first state for which a printed use of the name occurred. The earliest evidence I have found of an *upstate New York* item is in the 16 January 1875 issue of the *New York Daily Herald* wherein the writer dealt mainly with capital punishment in Queens County, which is part of New York City. “It is said that since the [1853] execution a man was hanged in one of the up-State counties who claimed to have done the deed” (*New York Daily Herald* 1875). A decade later, *The New York Times* began using *up-State* (or similar spelling) as did the majority of New York City papers very soon thereafter, often to contrast politics of New York City with politics everywhere else in the Empire State (*The New York Times* 1885).

One seldom sees *upstate Ohio* in print nowadays; but *upstate New York* is commonplace, appearing often in New York City papers, *upstate New York* papers, and elsewhere. *Upstate* provides New Yorkers an easy way to include, generally speaking, everything north of the primate city and its suburbs.

As a distinct area, *upstate New York* resonates with its residents and with outsiders. Thomas (1935) began in *American Speech* what became a seven-part series on pronunciation there. De Camp followed a few years later with

“Pronunciation of *Upstate* New York Place-Names” (de Camp 1944). Then came McDavid’s “Midland and Canadian Words in *Upstate* New York” (McDavid 1951). There is a recognizable *upstate* literary tradition, which O’Donnell (1957) examined in his dissertation, “The Regional Fiction of *Upstate* New York”, and in subsequent writing (Bergmann 1985). The area stands up as a productive entity, as in reports like *The Economic Status of Upstate New York at Mid-Century* (Sufrin et al. 1960). Carmer went so far as to claim “*Upstate* is a Country” (Carmer 1966). *Upstate New York* surfaces in titles of nonfiction, like essayist Edmund Wilson’s *Upstate: Records and Recollections of Northern New York*, where he discussed the pleasant summers he spent at his family homestead north of Rome, on the western edge of the Adirondacks (Wilson 1971).

Upstate sometimes takes on a darker dimension. Buckhanon called her New York novel *Upstate*. In it, the incarcerated protagonist, Antonio, said, “I wonder what would have happened if I would have never been sent *upstate*” (Buckhanon 2005). Attica, Sing Sing, and other notable New York prisons are up the map from New York City. The slang use of *upstate* as a surrogate for prison has traveled at least as far as neighboring Massachusetts. In the case of *Commonwealth v. Carlos Vazquez*, according to a police officer, Vazquez would not reveal the name of an acquaintance, stating instead, “I’m not going to say. I’ll go *upstate* before I give his name” (*Commonwealth v. Carlos Vazquez* 2009).

Figure 1 summarizes, by decade, the earliest known *upstate* references in print for the 50 states. After Ohio in the 1860s and New York in the 1870s, came Pennsylvania in the 1880s and six more states in the 1890s, mainly also in the

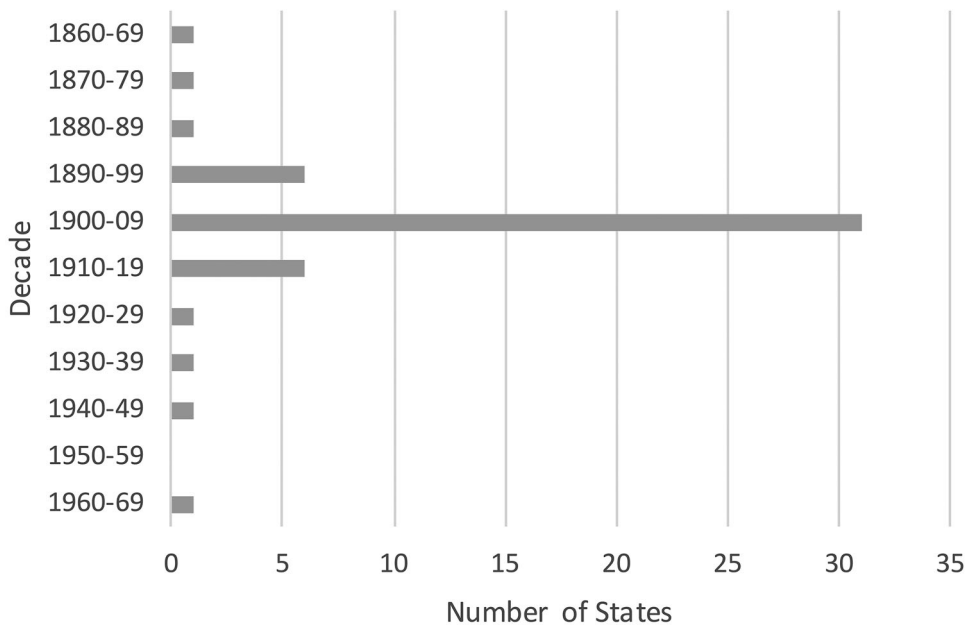


FIGURE 1. *Upstate*: Earliest known printed use of the name to designate a portion of a particular state, by decade. Note: Median year for *upstate* is 1903; modal year is 1900.

Northeast, perhaps because of a copy-cat influence that *upstate New York* was having on nearby New Jersey, Connecticut, Vermont, and Delaware. Missouri and Tennessee also joined the *upstate* roster before the turn of the century; and the term went nationwide in the decade 1900–1909, bringing 31 more states into the fold. Three states, Oklahoma in 1909 (statehood in 1907), New Mexico in 1913 (in 1912), and Arizona in 1915 (in 1912), each generated a printed *upstate* reference soon after gaining statehood. Hawaii, however, jumped the statehood gun by 16 years. In 1943, the *Honolulu Advertiser* carried a story about US American soldiers playing baseball in Hawaii while stationed there during World War II. The writer, also a warrior and very likely from somewhere other than Hawaii, said the Infantry Appleknockers, “the Up-State boys”, held off a rally by the Engineer Marauders to win 3-2 (Vandergrift 1943). Hawaii did not become a state until 1959. Print reference to *upstate* Alaska, also a state since 1959, did not begin until 1966 (Seibel 1966).

No state has a bigger *upstate* reputation than New York, but *upstate South Carolina* is not that far behind. South Carolina was among the first 20 states to have a print reference to an *upstate* area and today can claim more *upstate*-branded enterprises than New York. South Carolina divides nicely into three rather equal areas: low country, midlands, and upcountry or *upstate*. The state’s *upstate* is up the map, north and west of Charleston and Columbia (the capital); and it lies in the highest part of the Palmetto State, along the Piedmont edge of the Appalachian Highlands. At Spartanburg, in the middle of the upcountry, is the *University of South Carolina Upstate*. Early on references to South Carolina’s *upstate* included the definitive article as did the first known printed item, on 12 July 1901: Gaffney “is one of the most prosperous and progressive towns in the up-State country” (*Gaffney (South Carolina) Ledger* 1901). Eventually, the country portion dropped out, as in this 7 July 1911 item: “The Governor left for the Up-State at 8 o’clock, where he will make an address tomorrow” (*Newberry (South Carolina) Weekly Herald* 1911). Now South Carolina references are not uncommonly to just *the* (or *The*) *Upstate*. Hess found definite articles common in Spanish toponyms, perhaps because of the Arabic influence, but “rare in English toponyms” (Hess 1987, 18). Among the many contemporary South Carolina enterprises using the definite article are *Awnings of the upstate* and *Pediatric Massage of the Upstate*. The *upstate* for New York enterprises, however, is a rarity.

California, more than 700 miles north to south, seems like a logical locale for a vigorous *upstate-downstate* scenario. Such is not the case; but in 2001, the northernmost 20 California counties launched an *Upstate California* marketing campaign to differentiate themselves from the San Francisco area and the nearby Napa-Sonoma wine country. The idea, said Robert Berry, the campaign’s president, was “to bring the cachet of *upstate* New York” (Brown 2001). Both the *Upstate California Economic Development Council* and a similar campaign, *Upstate Colorado Economic Development*, serving Greeley and Weld County (Dunn 2006), are still active today.

Having lunch one day at the Zenith Athletic Club with fellow business types, George Babbitt, in the words of novelist Sinclair Lewis, was listening to Sydney Finkelstein pontificate about how the most expensive product one can afford is always the best option. Finkelstein's forebears would never agree, said Finkelstein, because "they live in one of these hick towns up-state and they simply can't get onto the way a city fellow's mind works..." (Lewis 1922, 57). *Babbitt* appeared several years after New York City newspapers and others began making fun of *upstate New Yorkers*, sometimes referring to their areas as "hayseed districts" (Adam 1908). According to a piece that a Kansas editor reprinted, the *New York Post*, in 1902, claimed a recently married woman "from *upstate*" asked her neighbor how to kill the crabs that her husband sent home for dinner; she had been trying to drown them to no avail (*St. Paul (Kansas) Journal* 1902). A "New Yorker" joshed an "up-state friend", telling him that the things sticking out the sides of a partially complete skyscraper in the city were "the mile posts" (*Chicago Daily Herald* 1908). Many years after the New York City press quit mocking their *upstate* neighbors, Ellis opined that the "growth of suburbia leads one to believe that the typical and most influential New Yorker of the future will be neither a 'hick' nor a 'city slicker'. Rather it will be a suburbanite" (Ellis 1959, 219). Such an ending to negativity has not been the case, however. Robin Lakoff, a native of New York City and then a linguistics professor, told *The New York Times* in 2001 that *upstate New York* was "the sticks" to her. "It's the place you had to study in eighth grade" (Brown).

Denizens of the nation's *upstates* eventually realized an advantage might accrue to them if they countered the negativity by naming businesses and organizations after these peripheral areas. A recent review of that practice revealed more than a thousand *upstate* enterprises, in 21 different states (Table 2). More than half of the states in the *upstate* column have only one *upstate* enterprise, like Arizona's *Upstate Detailing*, Connecticut's *Upstate Family Dental Health*, and Tennessee's *Upstate Towing and Trucking*. A handful of states present numbers that range from the two of New Jersey to California's 10 (which includes the previously mentioned *Upstate Development Council*). In a different league for the *upstate* column, however, are New York, with 520 enterprises (from *Ace Home Inspections of Upstate New York* to *Zimmer Upstate New York*), and South Carolina, with 536 (from 360 *Painting upstate South Carolina* to *Window World of the Upstate*).

Downstate

We know not the name of the writer who first used *downstate* in a reference to Delaware in 1881 (Table 1). The item containing it was a catchall for tidbits of information: the apple crop in Kent County, the pier at Lewes, smallpox in Little Creek Landing, and an observation that it was "wonderful how the Western correspondents of some of the down-State papers pick up gall enough to sign their effusions 'Dom Pedro' (*Wilmington (Delaware) Morning News*

TABLE 2
 ENTERPRISES USING *UPSTATE*, *DOWNSTATE*, OR *OUTSTATE* IN THEIR NAMES, IN THE SUPER PAGES,
 YELLOW PAGES, OR WHITE PAGES, AUGUST–SEPTEMBER 2018

State	Upstate	Downstate	Outstate
Alabama	1		
California	10	1	
Colorado	1		
Connecticut	1		
Delaware	1		
Florida	6	3	
Georgia	5		
Illinois		10	
Indiana	3		
Maine	1		
Maryland	1		
Michigan	1		
Minnesota	1		1
New Jersey	2		
New York	520	18	
North Carolina	5		
Pennsylvania	5		
Rhode Island	1		
South Carolina	536		
Tennessee	1		
Texas	3		
Washington	1		

1881). The Dom Pedro reference has lost relevance over time, but the *downstate* aspect is clear. *Downstate Delaware* still resonates today in, among others, the *downstate* Delaware Striders and Riders, a fitness association headquartered in Dover.

Delaware was not the only state to achieve *downstate* print mention in the 1880s (Figure 2). Another north-south state, Vermont, joined the *downstate* roster in 1889, in a piece about summer fairs (*Montpelier Vermont Watchman* 1889). By 1900, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Illinois were onboard. *Downstate New York* popped up very early, as an *upstate* Buffalo paper reported on a crime in the White Plains area, which is a suburb of New York City (*Buffalo Evening News* 1891). During the decade 1900–1909, 23 more states saw their first *downstate* print use. Again, Hawaii got a head start on statehood, this time by a matter of days (3 August versus 21 August 1959). An editor in *downstate Illinois*, knowing that locals there would understand what it meant to be part of the periphery, thought it timely to say, “The veteran political writers are scratching their chins over the problem of what constitutes *downstate* Hawaii” (*Decatur Herald* 1959). To my knowledge, *downstate Hawaii* has never warranted a locational definition nor has the designation ever surfaced again.

While “being sent *upstate*” carries a negative meaning, “playing *downstate*” at season’s end resonates among Illinois high school athletes and their followers in a positive way, because the state tournaments in most sports are south and

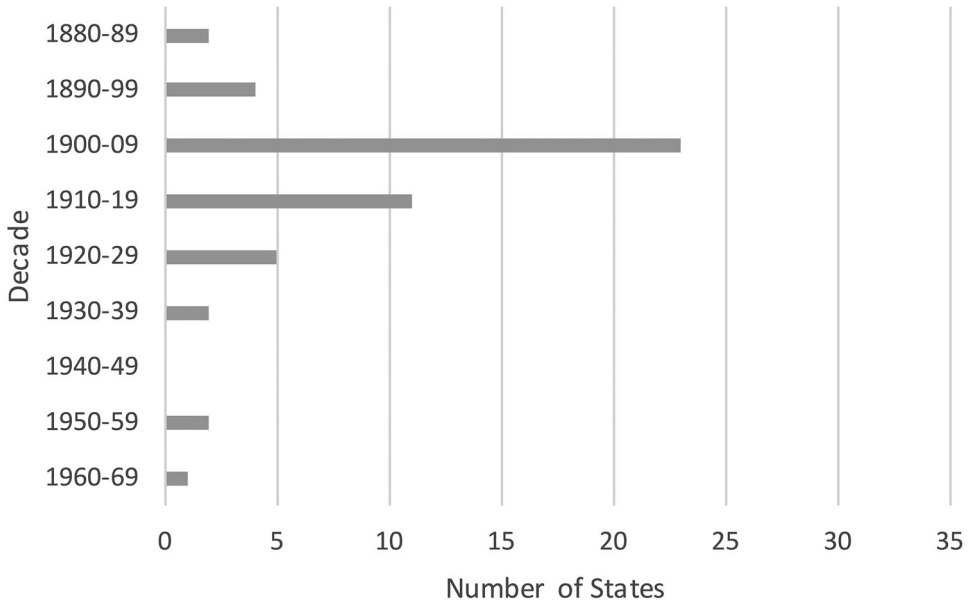


FIGURE 2. *Downstate*: Earliest known printed use of the name to designate a portion of a particular state, by decade. Note: Median year for *downstate* is 1908; modal year is 1910.

west of Illinois’s northeastern core, at places like Peoria and Charleston. Coaches, players, and fans in Chicagoland talk about going *downstate* as if it were the ultimate outcome of a successful season, which it most likely will be (Sublett 2016, 300). At Northridge Preparatory School in the northern Chicago suburb of Niles, for example, Forest Moses qualified for state in the high jump. “Although he wasn’t able to make it to the finals...his ability just to get down state has people at his school amazed”, said a *Chicago Tribune* reporter (Vorva 2013).

Downstaters have not escaped negativity at their expense. There was the future governor of Connecticut belittling a “down-state veterinary surgeon” for grossly underestimating the actual number of known germs (*Hartford Courant* 1901). Later that year a northern Missouri paper reprinted a notice from “A certain down-state paper” that had explained an omission as follows: “Owing to lack of space a number of births and deaths had to be postponed until the next issue” (*Macon Republican* 1901). In 1909, a Mrs. Dexter, “from somewhere ‘down-state’ was enjoying her first ride in a crowded street car in Chicago”. When a police officer explained to her that the health department official onboard was sampling air quality, she declared the next thing would be a scheme to “can the air and sell it” (*Yorkville Enquirer* 1909). Pupil John “came from *downstate* to the city schools” of Indianapolis. His mother objected to classes in physical education and music as a waste of time. “He inherits whittling [sic] from his father”, she wrote the school, “and his brains from me. I’m paying to educate him, so educate his brains” (*Newport (Rhode Island) Mercury* 1921).

Downstate shows up in Table 2, as the online phonebooks revealed 32 *downstate* enterprises in four states. Among them are *downstate* Insurance Company (California), *Downstate Discount Brokerage* (Florida), and *downstate* Illinois Spine Center. The 18 *downstate* enterprises in New York, several of which are medically related (like *SUNY Downstate Medical Center* and the *Downstate Mental Hygiene Association*, illustrate an effort to play off of the dominant *upstate* usage.

Outstate

American Speech noted that university students from Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, and Wyoming were reporting “out-state” use among their acquaintances, with reference to “out in the state away from the main city, and out in the state away from the speaker’s home” and cited its frequent appearance in the *Denver Post* (C. B. A. 1931, 310-11). *Outstate* still stands tallest in the heartland of the USA, places like Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Michigan. It has appeared, however, at least once in print with reference to all but two of the 50 states (Table 1).

Graphs of the first known uses for *upstate* (Figure 1) and *downstate* (Figure 2) resemble classic bell curves: a few early states, a few laggards, and many toward the middle of the pack. The *outstate* distribution (Figure 3), on the other hand, skews strongly to the earliest years, with nine instances in each of the first two decades of the twentieth century and 10 in the third decade, which includes both the median year, 1927, and the modal years, 1927 and 1928. The list then tails off toward the present, with North Carolina and West Virginia finally appearing in 2015. Hawaii’s first *outstate* reference came 11 years after statehood in an advertisement for an opportunity to own a vehicle rustproofing franchise. “Only eight areas available in Honolulu market. A few selected areas [are] still available outstate” (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1970).

Missouri recorded the initial print usage of *outstate*, in a 1900 post-election editorial that said in part, “out state Republicans” should be sore about some aspects of St. Louis politics but not about others (*Marshall* (Missouri) *Republican* 1900). *Outstate* is a good word choice for Missouri political conversations because there has long been a divide between the rural-dominated interior and the twin cores of St. Louis and Kansas City, one centrally located on the eastern boundary and the other on the western. The author of a syndicated piece out of Los Angeles put it this way: “Outside the big cities, the political climate shifts. This is what locals call ‘outstate’ Missouri: a landscape of cattle pastures, soy fields, wineries and one-block towns” (Simon 2004).

Michigan was the second state with a print reference to *outstate*. The *Detroit Free Press* said, as a gubernatorial possibility, Thomas J. Cavanaugh, from rural Paw Paw, was not doing much to promote his candidacy, though “his out-state admirers” were saying he would be formidable “should the lightning strike him” (*Detroit Free Press* 1902). Detroit and its Wayne County lie in the extreme southeastern corner of Michigan, so *upstate* could easily be the preferred

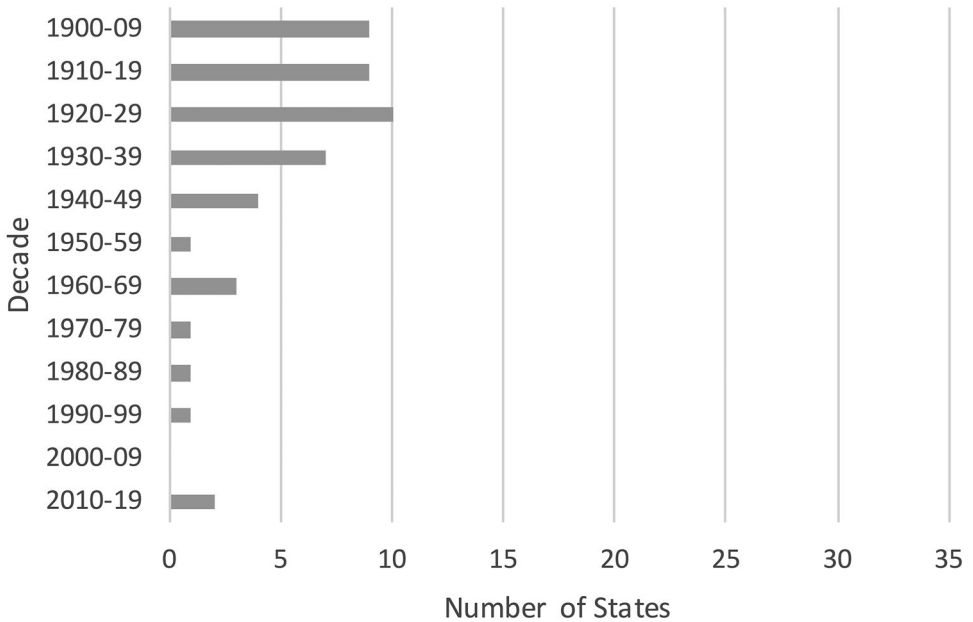


FIGURE 3. *Outstate*: Earliest known printed use of the name to designate a portion of a particular state, by decade. Note: Median year for *outstate* is 1927; modal years are 1927 and 1928. Maine and New Hampshire present no known printed uses of *outstate*.

peripheral. It is not. A quick search in Newspapers.com for “upstate Michigan” and “outstate Michigan” showed that the *Free Press* between 1837 and 2019 published nearly four times as many *outstate* references to Michigan as it did for *upstate* (33,430 versus 8,889).

Minnesota has a centrally positioned eastside core, the Twin Cities, so *upstate* and *downstate* do not capture the layout of the Minnesota rural periphery as well as *outstate*. In fact, when the Minnesota legislature codified the metro area in 1967 by naming seven core counties to constitute the Metropolitan Council, it became even more logical for writers to label the other 80 counties as *outstate*, which they regularly do. The first known *outstate Minnesota* print item did not appear until 1 November 1914, after 14 states had preceded it. That initial item concerned the Minneapolis post office clearing out hundreds of thousands of “pieces of political mail” with some going to “sub stations for city delivery” and the rest going “to afternoon trains for out-state delivery” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune* 1914). Minnesota records today the only *outstate*-branded enterprise in the country, *Outstate Data*, an agricultural equipment business in Elbow Lake, near the North Dakota line (Table 2).

Outstate areas never generated much in the way of so-called “hicksville humor”. They did, however, generate serious efforts by some *outstaters* themselves to eliminate *outstate* as an expression.

In Nebraska, a debate started when Doug Bernard, the manager of the McCook Elks Club, picked up an award for having created the best restaurant

promotional advertising literature in “Outstate Nebraska”. Bernard complained to the *McCook Daily Gazette* about the *outstate* labeling. Editor Allen Strunk agreed and wrote an editorial that said, “‘Outstate Nebraska’ sounds like a section of the state that was sawed off and is out there floating around. It could easily be interpreted as denoting a second rate part of the state”. Maybe “Greater Nebraska” was a better choice (*Beatrice (Nebraska) Daily Sun* 1978). Then the Outstate Nebraska Bureau chief at the *Lincoln Journal Star*, Dick Ulmer, got into the discussion. “Strunk isn’t alone”, Ulmer wrote, “in objecting to a term that makes a good 95 percent of Nebraska sound as if it’s located somewhere in the trackless wilds of Wyoming”. He mentioned how state Senator Sam Cullan would correct any witness that used *outstate* while appearing before his legislative committee. If *Greater Nebraska* took hold, what should they then call the Omaha-Lincoln core? Maybe *Lesser Nebraska* would gain favor (Ulmer 1978). The Nebraska legislature eventually passed a resolution to impose a fine of \$50 on any state official caught using the words *outstate*, *greater*, or *lesser* in reference to their state (McGinnis 1990).

Minnesota talked about dumping the *outstate* nomenclature in the 1980s, but the editorial staff at the outstate *St. Cloud Times* thought the controversy was unnecessary: “Pardon us if we’re slow to comprehend an insult . . .” They noted that *outstate* had “come into common use, especially in governmental circles” but that “no disparagement seems intended”. Anyone thinking such an appellation “derogatory and exclusionary” only needed to see how well “*Upstate* New York” and “*Downstate* Illinois” were serving. Some in Minnesota were then suggesting “Greater Minnesota” as a replacement, but the *Times* editors were thinking “Lesser Minnesota” was not the right way to think of the Twin Cities and suburbs. In the “spirit of fraternal fun”, the *Times* went on to suggest “Higher” (outstate) and “Lower”, “Natural” and “Unnatural”, “Congenial” and “Congested”, or “Bigger” (outstate) and “Smaller” as possible descriptors (*St. Cloud Times* 1987). Citizenry and press still prefer outstate, as a sports columnist argued recently: “You have to get outstate (don’t give me that ‘Greater Minnesota’ nonsense, OK?) to find true devotees for the football Gophers” (Reusse 2016).

Conclusion

Despite efforts by core residents to put down their peripheral neighbors with negative humor and efforts by the peripherals in some states to do away with the terminology, *upstate*, *downstate*, and *outstate* have served well since at least 1862, 1881, and 1900, respectively. These place names convey place baseness in more than a thousand enterprises bearing their imprint. They are the perfect designation for areas not part of a state’s core when a commentator wants something less constricting and more inclusive than, say, *southern Indiana*, *northern Florida*, or *central* and *western Massachusetts*. Exact boundaries of what constitute an *upstate*, *downstate*, or *outstate* segment are unnecessary, and probably unknowable. Of course, as the metropolitan cores of states grow in population

and territory, the peripheral areas must shrink in size. My feeling, however, is that the words *upstate*, *downstate*, and *outstate* will continue to serve a useful purpose in helping us deal with each state's peripheral other.

Sinatra closed his first broadcast of 1946 by asking listeners to start the year with “a big cup of happiness”, “memories of the guys who gave us victory”, and the biggest “box of tolerance” they could get. Tolerance seems like a good way to push away from the longstanding conflict between rural and urban USA, between the periphery and the core.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Alec Foster, Mark C. Jones, Bill Kemp, John Kostelnick, Megan Maher, and the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.


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