Book Review

Texas Place Names. By Edward Callary and Jean K. Callary. Austin: University of Texas Press. 2020. Pp. 411. ISBN 1-4773-2064-8. $35.00.

In the Introduction (ix–xviii) to this oversized book, the authors discuss a myriad of Texas sites that have names: towns, stores, ghost towns, schools, parks, streets, churches, tunnels—and one crater. Looking at the authors' examples, however, one begins to suspect that the book concentrates on city, towns, and counties. The dust jacket confirms that suspicion: "Texas Place Names provides the colorful stories behind more than three thousand county, city, and community names."

The format of the book follows a predictable introductory section followed by 360 pages of well-organized data. A unique addition, however, features 40 pages of a study guide tailored for individual study: alphabetized by county, scholars will find pertinent references followed by a list of cities and towns the authors have included in their research. So impressive is this layout, that I have organized my review around their outline: introduction, data, references, and county index. Large, bold, italic headings divide the Introduction itself into four topics: (1) the data; (2) organization of the entries; (3) sources of the names; and (4) pronunciation guide.

The Data. The derivation of the *Texas Place Names* (TPN) data appears not only impressive but intimidating: National Geographic Names Information System (GNIS); the names of the 254 counties; the Texas Almanac; county and state histories and archives; academic theses and dissertations; historical society publications; church histories; personal diaries; local interviews; *The Handbook of Texas Online*; Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin; Fred Tarpley collection at Texas A&M University–Commerce; and websites beyond number.

Organization of the Entries. Once one reads an entry or two, the organization makes for easy reading and quick comprehension. The authors do indeed limit "place" to city names and county names. When a city and county share a name, as in the case of *Dallas*, the county entry comes first. Using the city name *Cuevitas* as an example, Callary and Callary begin their entries with a city's name, then the pronunciation, if called for [kwuh VEET uhs]; then the county (Jim Hogg County); helpful background information about the city's name, for example, noting that the Spanish word *Cuevitas* means 'Caverns'; post office information, such as "PO 8 Aug 1892 as Old San Antonio; changed to Cuevitas 26 July 1894, PM Encarnacion Salinas" (81). No, I cannot find a TPN definition for "PM." For those of us that work with such data, though, we know that "PM" means "Postmaster."

Sources of the Names. These four pages contain, in my opinion, the best summation of linguistic word formation that I have ever encountered. [1] Their data reveal ten processes: (1.) Borrowing from the Spanish language (*Amarillo*), (2.) Post Office (*Jamestown*), (3.) Native Americans (*Navasota*), (4.) Transfers from other countries (*Dresden*), (5.) Commemorative names (*Crockett*), (6.) Compression (*Tomball*) and Blending (*Hargill*), (7.) Suffixing (*Fredericksburg*), (8.) Mistakes (*Arthur* became *Aurthon*), (9.) Wordplay and creative naming (*Lucas*, backwards, became *Sacul*), and (10.) Popular etymology (*Oatmeal*).
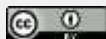
An aside: In the book, number (7) Suffixing, is written in large italics—suggesting that it is a new topic. That seems to make numbers (8), (9), and (10) subparts of suffixing. Common sense, however, suggests that suffixing is just another means of creating new words—and the use of italics is nothing more than a publishing error.

Pronunciation Guide. TPN prints its guide briefly on page xi, explaining that it uses the guide only when the spelling is not sufficient, and it then prints a detailed chart on pages xvii and xviii.[2] In explaining "Cuevitas [kwuh VEET uhs]," for example, the guide indicates that the final [uh] is like the vowel in "cut," not the vowel in "cute." It does not clarify that "s" sounds like the "s" in "cats"— not like the "s" in "dogs." The capitalized VEET indicates emphasis. The authors' claim—that local pronunciation can be determined by spelling—has problems. Who makes this decision, using what criteria? Callary and Callary, for example, give no pronunciation for *San Antonio,* assuming that the pronunciation is obvious. Yet among local English speakers, the city has three distinct social dialects, none of which pronounces the "An-" in "Antonio." The city has the prevailing regular dialect [san TON], the educated dialect [san TON eeo], and the elite dialect [san TON yuh] (Baird 1985).

Texas Place Names (no page number)

A single page, written in cursive, with only "Texas Place Names" centered in the middle, follows the introduction. This artistic use of cursive writing occurs on twenty-five other pages. These pages also have a letter of the alphabet featured in the center. (No place names begin with the letter "X.")

Texas Towns and Counties (pages 3–368)

Here we find the core of the book. And the core makes the book exciting—well written and informative, displaying excellent scholarship. I have read entries for cities or counties that I knew personally—and I was impressed with the consistent scholarship: *Aransas Pass*, *Bandera, Cayuga*, *Dallas*, *Elgin* (I thought [eljin]—TPN found [elgin]), *Fredericksburg*, *Gruene* (Similar to most Texas Central German names, some Texans use the Americanized [GROON] while others use TPN's German [GREEN]), *Helotes*, *Irving*, *Jim Hogg* (Yes, he had a daughter named Ima. No, she did not have a sister named Ura.), *Kerrville*, *Laredo*, *Marfa* (Russian for 'Martha'), *Nueces*, *Ochoa*, *Palestine*, *Quihi* ([KWEE HEE] with both syllables receiving equal emphasis, Spanish language style, although I have often heard the Spanish [KEE HEE]), *Round Rock*, *Startzville*, *Terlingua*, *Uvalde*, *Victoria*, *Waco*, *Yoakum* (city, not county), and *Zapata* (county, not city.)

References and County Indexes (pages 369–411)

General References (pages 36–370)

This resource section consists of three overview bibliographies relevant to place names: references that specialize in the Continental United States, in United States Native American, and the *Handbook of Texas*. These references are followed by three bibliographies that focus on specific topics: folk etymology, a false origin of the name *Texas*, and Spanish names in northwest America. Finally, these topical references lead to five specific bibliographies that focus on Texas place names: Small towns in Texas, little towns in Texas, northeast Texas, and Big Bend Texas.

Counties (pages 370–411)

In this "Texas Towns and Counties" section, the authors of TPN provide a helpful compilation of their entries. Researchers can select a county of interest and immediately have a list of pertinent references. The authors list the counties in alphabetical order—*Anderson* through *Zapata*. Within each county's entry, they provide complete bibliographies for those references that pertain to that county. A list of communities inside that county, whose naming TPN authors have investigated, follows that Reference list.

The authors have added specific bibliographies at the introduction to each county's discussion. *Bexar County*, for instance, repeats both the small-town reference and the little-town reference (see above) plus a reference to place names in San Antonio (372). *Dallas County* repeats the Northeast Texas reference (see above) and adds four new references: "A Memorial and Biographical History of Dallas County," a Mesquite Historical Committee publication, a website citation, and a master's thesis (379). *Harris County* is introduced by a heritage of north Harris county and a history of the city in Texas (387). *Tarrant County* is introduced by a historical guide to Ft. Worth and Tarrant county, a master's thesis, and a history of the Grapevine area (405). A final example, *Travis County*, is introduced by a history of the county and the city of Austin, and by a master's thesis (406).

Even with all of these references, however, Callary and Callary missed the existence of several towns and cities in the five counties. I live in Leon Valley, one of thirty-some incorporated cities in San Antonio—part of Bexar County. I wanted to see, of course, what I could discover about my hometown in TPN. I was surprised and disappointed; Leon Valley was not listed. I tried Alamo Heights— another, albeit higher profile, city inside San Antonio. Not listed. I had opened Pandora's box.

Even with all TPN's data resources, readers will need additional websites to locate significant communities nestled in Texas' larger cities. TX HomeTownLocator lists in order the five largest of these mega cities, including Houston (population 2,419,240), San Antonio (1,458,346), Dallas (1,379,343), Austin (985,370), and Ft. Worth (920,349). Houston occupies most, but not all, of Harris County. The TPN entry for *Harris County* contains bibliographies for two references, followed by a list of forty cities in Harris County. The Harris County website, however, lists only nineteen (https://harriscountytx.gov).[3] Of those nineteen, just ten—*Baytown*, *Bellaire*, *Houston*, *Katy*, *Missouri City*, *Pasadena*, *Seabrook*, *Tomball*, *Waller*, and *Webster*—also appear on TPN's list; *Deer Park*, *Friendswood*, *La Porte*, *Morgan's Point*, *Nassau Bay*, *Seabrook*, *South Houston*, *Southside Place*, and *Spring Valley* have no name history in TPN. TPN, on the other hand, lists thirty communities that are not recognized on the Harris County website: *Addicks*, *Alief*, *Almeda*, *Bammel*, *Barker*, *Barrett*, *Bordersville*, *Cinco Ranch*, *Crosby*, *Fairbanks*, *Galena Park*, *Geneo*, *Harrisburg*, *Hedwig Village*, *Hilshire Village*, *Huffman*, *Hufsmith*, *Humble*, *Jacinto City*, *Jersey Village*, *Kohrville*, *Lynchburg*, *Mykawa*, *Rose Hill*, *Satsuma*, *Settegast*, *Sheldon*, *Sienna Plantation*, *Todville*, and *Westfield*.

In other words, a comparison of the two lists—TPN's and the Harris County website's—raises major questions: (1) What caused TPN to overlook the existence of nine communities? (2) Why does TPN report the existence of thirty communities unrecognized on the Harris County website?

These two questions, unfortunately, reappear in Texas's other major counties: *Bexar*, *Dallas*, *Tarrant*, and *Travis*. TPN recognizes the second largest city in Texas—San Antonio—on its Bexar County list of twenty-six communities. The Bexar County website includes links to seven municipalities (http://www.bexar.org/2489/municipality_links). Only two appear on the TPN list; five do not. This raises the same two questions: (1) Why has TPN overlooked five active communities? (2) Why does TPN report the existence of twenty-one communities not listed on the Bexar County website?

The same anomalies exist in the other urban centers. The Dallas County website lists ten towns, none of which exist on the TPN list (http://www.dallascounty.org/aboutus.cities). TPN also lists ten towns, none of which exist on the Dallas County website. The Travis County website lists ten municipalities (https://www.traviscountytx.gov/other-counties-municipalities).[4] Four also appear on TPN's list; six do not. TPN's list, on the other hand, includes sixteen communities not recognized by the Travis County website. The city of Ft. Worth provides research complexities not found when researching Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, or Austin. While Ft. Worth serves as the Tarrant County seat, parts of Ft. Worth are found in Denton, Parker, and Wise Counties (http://www.Tarrantcounty.com/ourcommunity/cities,towns,municipalities). All municipalities listed in TPN and on the Ft. Worth website exist in Tarrant County—with one exception: Reno which is listed in both the website and TPN and spreads into Parker County. The Ft. Worth website lists sixteen cities which are missing from the TPN list. Seven cities on the TPN list are missing from the Ft. Worth website. The two lists agree on twenty-four cities. As near as I can ascertain, only these five cities have other towns embedded within their domain. A check of the websites of TX HometownLocator's list of largest cities—#6 El Paso, #7 Arlington, #8 Corpus Christi, #10 Laredo, #14 Amarillo, and #17 McKinney—reveals no towns inside cities.

So what? Who will be affected by these forty-three missing place names? After all, 43 out of 3,700 entries (my estimate) certainly would constitute a statistically insignificant number. Callary and Callary, to their credit, clearly anticipated such minor problems:

> This bibliography is organized into statewide and county-specific resources. It is worth noting that all should be used with caution: Our experience was that new or updated print and digital sources appeared almost daily, especially for statewide references, and some county-specific resources dating from the 1920s can be found only in special collections of university libraries. However, each will provide a starting point for anyone wishing to pursue the history of Texas towns or counties. (369)

Their disclaimer, however, does not cover the missing forty-three towns (combined) in Texas' five largest counties.

The potential readership, to me, appears enormous. On the jacket to TPN, the designer, Lauren Michelle Smith, writes: "A great resource for road trippers and historians alike…" To that duo, I would add residents, former residents, potential residents, families and friends of such residents, Ed Callary's fellow linguists, members of the American Name Society, and anyone living in the Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, and Ft. Worth metropolitan areas.

My own answers to my questions? Question (1) What caused TPN to overlook the existence of these forty-three communities? The answer is blowing in the wind. I assume that both Callarys know the Austin area and would, therefore, be familiar with the existence of at least some of the city's ten incorporated towns. If not, then surely someone on the staff of University of Texas Press would know. Question (2) Why does TPN report the existence of eighty-four communities unrecognized on five megacity websites? That answer lies in one word: Expertise. Website writers depend upon their expertise in computers, in both hardware and software. They rely on other people for data. Obviously, the scholarship in TPN greatly overshadows the data supplied to city and town website writers.

Bottom Line? *Texas Place Names* has a place of honor on my bookshelf.

Notes

[1] When I wrote "Names of Registered Cattle Breeds in Texas," I became knowledgeable about word formation but would find difficulty explaining the linguistic processes to non-linguists.

[2] Publishers vary in their placement of pronunciation guides. Richard Spears' American Slang Dictionary, for example, has only an introductory guide. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, and New Oxford American Dictionary, Third Edition, have their pronunciation guides on all odd-numbered pages.

[3] On that link, use Search. That will lead to "Search Harris County." Use the left-hand arrow at the bottom, which will lead to "County Related Link." Scroll down to the entry "Municipalities in Harris County."

[4] The website list inaccurately includes Round Rock, which TPN correctly assigns to Williamson County (285).

References

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