

Names in Brief

A NOTE ON PLACE NAMES IN NEW ENGLAND

When is a "Street" not a Street?

The answer, suggested by Edward Everett Hale, is that in New England it may be a hamlet or settlement, usually isolated in a rural area, and designating a group of houses around a store, school or perhaps a church.

Following up this thought, in connection with a study of road names in rural Wilton, Connecticut, I found that the Beers Atlas of 1867¹ in fact designates one of the ten school districts in that town by the name "Hurlbutt Street". The principal settlement in the district then as now meets the above description. Since at least 1909² however the name has been applied to the town road that runs through the settlement.

A similar group of houses grouped around a store was located, before 1900 on or near a road disused and almost abandoned for many years, but now known as "Chicken Street." A search of 18th century land records however developed references to houses "at a place known by the name of Chicken Street" (1798)³ and "at a place called Chicken Street" (1797)⁴, and finally (1800)⁵ a reference to "Chicken Street road, so called." When this road was opened up again in the 1930s the people who moved in sometimes objected to the name, not were they placated by the antiquarians who pointed out that the name was derived from Wilton's last Indian Chief, one Chi-ken, said to have lived in those parts.⁶ Curiously enough, residents on another old road have never objected to the name "Skunk Lane"; perhaps because this name appears still earlier (1730)⁷ as "Skunk Hole."

Other references are perhaps inconclusive. There is no evidence that until after 1940 there was ever in Wilton a row of houses with party walls, or even separated by alleys. In short, there was never

¹ Atlas of New York & Vicinity... by F. W. Beers. N.Y. 1867.

² Map of the Town of Wilton prepared by C. N. Wood. 1909. (Wilton Historical Society collection.) ³ 19 Norwalk Land Records 37; 20 N.L.R. 282.

⁴ 18 N.L.R. 313. ⁵ 19 N.L.R. 171.

⁶ But see J. W. DeForest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut* ... p. 357 ff. Hartford, 1853 (who says he lived further North in Redding). ⁷ 7 N.L.R. 45.

a citified area with paved streets. However, in an isolated area we find a "Mather Street", now a country road with a group of workers' houses on it, and in nearby even-more-rural Weston we find a "Godfrey Street." However, in some of the old Wilton Deeds (1753, 1761)⁸ we find a mention of land "on the Town Street, near the Meeting House." It would be interesting to know what this old conveyancer had in mind.

At least one other New England State had the same usage. In Walling's Atlas of New Hampshire (1877)⁹ "Conway Street" apparently designates the name of a place consisting of two rows of houses, one on either side of a country road. The lettering is the same as that used for nearby "Conway Centre." I find no mention of the place in the Century and later Atlases; in fact, in the automobile maps the area is blank.

Stowell Rounds

⁸ 10 N.L.R. 411; 11 N.L.R. 532.

⁹ H. F. Walling. Atlas of the State of New Hampshire . . . New York, Comstock & Cline. 1877.

FAUBUS

In *Names*, vol. 5, no. 4, p. 225 an explanation of *Faubus* is mentioned, and confused with a Jewish family name. *Faubus* is no Jewish name, but a peasant name; and it seems to belong to such names as *Piso* "vetch-man," *Porcius* "pig-breeder," *Cicero* "pea-man," and last but not least *Fabius* "bean-man." Cf. Brechenmacher, *Deutsches Namenbuch*, p. 217.

Max Markrich

TORMENTER HARSLETT

Years ago in South Australia there was a leading steeplechase jockey who rejoiced in the name of Candy Harslett. He had won every hurdle and steeplechase race of note in South Australia and Victoria, some more than once, but the famous Oakbank Steeplechase consistently eluded him. So eager was this famous jockey to capture this event that he swore that if ever the honor would be his he would call his firstborn child after his successful mount. After many attempts Harslett eventually succeeded on "Tormenter." True to his word he subsequently named his firstborn, a girl, Tormenter Harslett. Surely this a most unusual name for a girl.

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