

## Notes and Queries

A bounty of clippings and bibliographical notes have come to the attention of the N & Q editor during the past few months; many of them are from thoughtful *ANS* members with sharp eyes and scissors. They come from varied sources — the *New York Times* to the Fairbanks, Alaska *Daily News-Miner*; from time to time notes and excerpts from these may appear in this column; some items are filed for future use in a possible general discussion of a specific theme in naming. Many thanks to those who have sent such items; in the final issue of each year, a list of readers who have contributed to the *ANS* archives will appear in these pages.

A recurring phrase, sometimes in the most interesting printed items, is — lamentably — “What’s in a name?” This automatic, all-purpose, all-occasion title has been used so often since first it was filched from *Romeo and Juliet* that it might be a lark for some scholar on a busman’s holiday to trace its downhill progress into the realm of the cliché. One is tempted to ask for a voluntary pledge of abstinence from *ANS* members, and to hope that from a small beginning may come an increase in freshness and originality in the presentation of popular material on onomastics. “What’s in a name?” like “In this atomic age...” and “Commencement is not the end but the beginning” should be filed in a dormant folder, tagged: “How long, oh Lord, how long?”

Dan Foley is a well-known New England horticulturist whose program “Garden Time” is broadcast weekly by the New England Educational FM network; in a recent broadcast, Mr. Foley made some observations on the apparent effect of names on the popularity of flower varieties. Citing instances from tea rose names, he noted that a number of handsome European varieties had failed to catch on in America when introduced under their original names. An exquisite Dutch rose, for instance, did not become popular with American gardeners until its name had been altered; the “Meevrouw” in its original name had been too much for the average American tongue.

Euphemism in names is a well-documented phenomenon; the efforts of the real-estate developer are hard to match among place-

names; wishful thinking and hero-worship may both enter into grandiose names given to babies; but the emergence of lily-gilders among the lily-guilders opens up a whole new field for investigation.

A horticulturist who is interested in names or a flower-raising onomatologist could probably produce some further and more specific information on the subject; dialectologists have done considerable work on vernacular plant names, and botanical taxonomists have produced a monumental international guide to botanical nomenclature which covers the technical niceties; it would seem to be our turn next.

John Chadwick, who, with the late Michael Ventris, accomplished the interpretation and decipherment of the Mycenaean Linear B tablets, has published a well-illustrated, non-technical account of this task in the March and April (1961) issues of *Natural History* magazine. Based on Mr. Chadwick's book *The Decipherment of Linear B*, these two articles afford a lively introduction to both the linguistic and the archaeological aspects of the Mycenaean finds.

The text of the Linear B tablets is no great national epic; the inscriptions are largely part of an inventory. Of particular interest to *Names* readers is this statement on page 66 of the April installment: "It is fascinating to see the names given to a yoke of oxen: Dapple and Darkie, Whitefoot and Winey; Blondie and Bawler are rough equivalents." Shades of Buck and Bright, Turk and Star, and Jack and Jerry! The American Frontier and ancient Greece have found a meeting ground, and the ox-names of the ages await a chronicler. Equally interesting would be a study of all the names in the Mycenaean inscriptions; if such a study is being planned, *Names* would be glad indeed to know of it.

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The Notes and Queries column is not intended to serve as a place for suggesting all sorts of work for *other* people to do for the delectation of its compiler, but the pervasive alliteration in ox-names brings to mind one further possibility for some research: a study of the names given to paired people, objects, animals, or phenomena

of any sort. How great is the compulsion to rhyme and alliteration in the names given to twins, for instance? Some parents conscientiously avoid giving twins similar names in the hopes of emphasizing individuality, but many follow the pattern of Tweedledum and Tweedledee or of Penrod's friends Herman and Vermin. Certainly there is some influence exerted on the name-giver by the similarity of a group of objects to be named; generations of boys who have named identical marbles "Pete and Re-Pete" or "Kate and Dupli-Kate" over the past fifty years exhibit the same urge toward symmetry as parents who name their twins Jean and Dean. Running counter to this is a need to break the rhyme where three names are involved: Wynken, Blynken, and Nod; Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail. The underlying psychology involved in this paradoxical pair of drives to construct symmetry and to shatter it ought to be an interesting avenue for research.

*ANS* member Dr. George H. Pollock has suggested a panel discussion at a future meeting to take up the psychology of name selection in American society. Drs. Robert Plank and Myron Brender, the latter a new member, have also expressed an interest in this subject. Raymond Wilson, a member of the editorial staff of the G. and C. Merriam Company is an after-hours collector of unusual first names and has also become interested in the motivations behind name-giving. Doubtless there are many other *ANS* members with similar curiosities and collections; a panel such as Dr. Pollock suggests might make a fine contribution to a future *ANS* program and eventually perhaps to the printed pages of *Names*. Now is the time for the people with the data, the ideas, and the questions to get together.

From Professor Francis Lee Utley comes word of the approaching visit to the United States of a distinguished Swedish onomatologist, Lektor Gösta Langenfelt. He has lectured widely at European universities during the past 35 years, and has also worked on the commission for the naming of the streets of Stockholm which Professor Utley calls "a fascinating task which should please American pragmatists by its beauty and efficiency." Dr. Langenfelt, whose address is Domherrevägen 7, Stockholm (Bromma), Sweden, has at least a dozen possible lectures which might be of interest to American audiences; his titles show his wide range of competence, for they include not only "Observations on West-

European Syntax” but “Fifty English Names for Sweden,” “Shakespeare’s Geographical Knowledge,” “The Naming of Stockholm Streets,” and “Lapland Sorcerers in English Literature.” It is suggested that anyone wishing to make arrangements with Dr. Langenfelt write him directly. (Unfortunately, this information arrived too late for inclusion in the June issue of *Names*.)

Speaking of Sweden, a press release from the Swedish Information Office dated February 23, 1961 states that every year the Name Bureau in Stockholm approves approximately 1500 “new” family names — most of them replacing older patronymics. The problem, of course, is too many people with the same *-son* name; it is estimated that even though the Name Bureau has been at work on the matter since 1920, there are still at least 300,000 people in Sweden using each of the three most popular patronymics: Andersson, Johansson, and Carlsson (or Karlson). The Name Bureau has certain delicate discretionary powers and may reject a name that sounds ridiculous or is in some way felt to be offensive. Thus Blondi and Cactus have been turned down as have Minsting (i.e. ‘littlest’) and Lejonbrus. Christian names may also be changed with the approval of the Bureau, but this is not frequent, though the hardship of a young man named Justus Canutus Germanus was eased by the bureau when he was legally permitted to become Knut Georg.

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*ANS* members, whose number is, happily, growing, are a varied lot; they are engaged in a great number of projects and activities, some of which are connected with onomastics and some of which are most definitely not. It would be impossible and inappropriate to convert these columns into a clearing house for chit-chat about the doings of the membership; but from time to time we will try to note among these pages some of their outstanding achievements, distinctions, and activities that might be of general interest to *Names* readers. Information on such matters is always welcome, though of course space limitations preclude our printing everything we might like to. Once a year, probably in the same issue that carries the archives contributors’ names, we shall print a list of new members and, if the information is available, note briefly the special interest of each.

Former *Names* editor Erwin G. Gudde and his wife Elisabeth have recently published a translation of the journal of Heinrich Lienhard, a rich chronicle of the overland journey of five young men who went from St. Louis to Sutter's Fort in 1846. The Guddes' translation is volume 33 in the University of Oklahoma Press American Exploration and Travel Series, and was published in March, 1961.

The Virginia Place Name Society published the first in a series of Occasional Papers in February, 1961. It is "A Preliminary Bibliography of Virginia Place-Name Literature" and is the work of Professor Gary S. Dunbar of the Department of Geography at the University of Virginia. It incorporates items listed in the Seely-Sealock bibliographies and lists a number of others not noted there. The Society hopes eventually to publish a definite bibliography on Virginia Place Names as well as a volume of place names compiled from early Virginia literature and early maps. Membership is \$2.50 per year; further information is available from Mr. N. Harvey Deal, Reference Librarian, University Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

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Audrey R. Duckert

HUMPHREY, Nebraska. Nancy Leach, who died February 6, 1891, wrote the following letter of December 25, 1871:

"Humphrey, Platte Co., Nebraska

My cousin Daniel: Where art thou? I shall never dare address you by way of letter again; What shall I tell you of Nebraska? Charley (my son-in-law) Roxanna and I own 160 acres a piece joining. It's just as handsome, good land as ever need to have been made. We live on the mail route from Madison to the city of Columbus. I am post-master, also had the privilege of naming the Post office, so I called it Humphrey, after my native town: Here are prairie chickens, badgers, foxes, wolves, deer, elk and any number of antelopes. I never tasted an antelope but Riley shot one when we first came here. They are excellent eating. Riley saw 30 in one drove a short time ago. He has trapped 10 foxes by the hen coop and lost narry a hen. The winters are mild and usually very little snow but now and then a storm of wind and snow that is a storm indeed. Now Daniel please do write if only to answer these questions. If your mother still has her side saddle, will she sell it? If so what is the least money she will take for it, if I send it to her in a letter she can send it as freight. I paying the freightage. I expect Roxanna will teach next summer six miles from here and Charlie or I will let her have a horse to ride each day. From your forgotten cousin. Nancy Leach."

Nancy Leach named the town of Humphrey after her native town of Humphrey, New York. — The above letter was received from (Mrs. A. J.) Sera F. Rasmussen, 320 No. 22 St., Apt. 601, Omaha 2, Nebraska.