

Two G's or not two G's - That is the Question

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AS THE MOTORIST LEAVES LONG ISLAND he can use the Throgs Neck Bridge¹ to gain the mainland, and once there he will find himself on a peninsula locked in a name-calling contest. A branch of the Public Library system is clearly designated "Throg's Neck branch"² but the nearby Post Office and a Federal housing projekt are called the Throgg's Neck Station³ and Throgg's Neck Houses.⁴ Local business firms and social clubs using the name for geographic reasons are listed in the telephone book and the present score is 13 with the double-G spelling and only 3 using the single G.⁵ Even newspapers⁶ use both spellings democratically, depending on the headline space, the insistence of the person interviewed or (more frequently) the way the typesetter misspells it. And it has happened that two newspaper articles on the *same* page will use both spellings of the name!

Even tombstones⁷ in the ancient graveyards do not agree, so that the argument clearly has been carried on down thru the centuries, cutting across family ties, religions and social standings.

Ironically enough, neither spelling is correct, for both are corruptions of the name Throckmorton. There was a Lord John Throckmorton mentioned in the year 1130, and the John Throckmorton who came to America from England in the 1600's was eighth in

¹ The Tri-Boro Bridge and Tunnel Authority Report.

² *N. Y. C. Telephone Book*, Bronx edition.

³ *U. S. Postal Zone Guide*.

⁴ *N. Y. C. Housing Authority Annual Report*.

⁵ *N. Y. C. Telephone Book*, Bronx edition.

⁶ NEW YORK POST, NEW YORK TIMES, BRONX PRESS-REVIEW, RIVERDALE PRESS.

⁷ St. Peter's P. E. Churchyard, Westchester Square. Ferris family burial plot.

descent⁸. He was the first English settler to receive permission from the Dutch of Nieuw Amsterdam to establish a colony on the peninsula. In the original Dutch grant,⁹ dated 1642, he is called Jan Trockmorten!

The village of Throckmorton lies some ten miles southwest of Worcester in the County of Worcestershire,¹⁰ England. Two moated areas there point to an ancient drainage system perpetuated in the Old English *procmere-tun* (town by the drained pool.)¹¹ "Thurrock" is the dialect form for "drain."¹² The Old English "trog" (drain, conduit) has its modern counterpart in the Dutch "droog"¹³ and High German "Trocken."¹⁴ All this would lead prosaically to a settlement near a pond (mere) that has long since been drained.

Variants of the name are legion, as it occurred regularly from 1175 onward in the Assize Rolls, Pipe Rolls, Lay Subsidy Rolls, Registers and Charter Rolls of Oswaldslo Hundred, mentioned in the Domesday Book.¹⁵

Trotemertona	1175	Trokemertun	1240
Trochemerton	1176	Trokemarton	1255
Trokemerton	1208, 1254	Throkemarton	1325
Trocmaretona	1227	Throgmerton	1436 ¹⁷
Throkemerton	1227 ¹⁶	Throkmorton	1451
Trokemareton	1229	Throgmarton	1577
Trochmarton	1233	and Frogmorton	1696 ¹⁸

In the New World there was record of Throckmorton's Neck in 1956,¹⁹ and is followed by a 1666 abstract²⁰ also using the original spelling —

⁸ "History of the County of Westchester," Reverend Robert Bolton; "History of Westchester County," Shonnard and Spooner; "History of Westchester," J. Thomas Scharf.

⁹ *Albany Records* (photostatic copy).

¹⁰ *National Geographic Map of the British Isles*.

¹¹ "English Place Names," Kenneth Cameron.

¹² E. P. N. S., Henry Bradley.

¹³ *Elsevier's Dutch-English Dictionary*.

¹⁴ *Cassels's German-English Dictionary*.

¹⁵ E. P. N. S.

¹⁶ Bracton's Notebook of 1887.

¹⁷ Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1436–1451.

¹⁸ Marriages. Worcester Parish Register.

¹⁹ *Albany Records*, Court of Assize, Vol. 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

to be followed in 1667 by yet another grant²¹ reading “lying and being on ye back side of Throckmorton’s Neck.” Frockes Necke²² appears briefly in 1668, but is not repeated. The full name – Throckmorton’s Neck – occurs for the last time in a Patent²³ of 1688. After that, in both folkstongue and legal designation, the name disappeared – altho historians of Westchester County, notably one Reverend Robert Bolton, always referred to Throckmorton’s Neck and never took sides in the subsequent differences of “one G” or “two G’s.”

“Lying and being upon Frogs Neck²⁴ [so called] in ye general field belonging to ye aforesaid Westchester.” was the first appearance – 1677 – in the New World of this spelling, altho the name Frogmorton was briefly used in England in the same decade. This excursion into the animal kingdom may be ascribed to two factors:

- 1) the later colonists knew nothing of John Throckmorton; and
- 2) they were beginning to name adjoining natural features “Ox Meadow Point” “Turtle Cove” “Hart Island” “Coney Island” and “Crow Hill.”

All these names were in common currency before the Revolutionary War, as was Frog Point by the time the British Army cartographers appeared on the scene. Frogge Point²⁵ it was in 1776. Frogs Neck²⁶ is found on maps, dated 1781 and 1792 but then, unaccountably, it dies out in later charts.

Throg’s Point appeared in 1823²⁷ and Throgs Point²⁸ (no apostrophe) in 1833. Throgsneck occurs in 1827, and Throg’s Neck on subsequent deeds of 1851 and 1868.²⁹ Yet, tombstones³⁰ engraved in

²¹ “Governor’s nicoll’s grant to Roger Townsend.” *Albany Records*.

²² “Bill of Sale from John Archer.” *Records, Town of Westchester*.

²³ Original in possession of the family of Charlton Ferris.

²⁴ *Westchester Records*, White Plains, N. Y.

²⁵ Col. Blaskowitz map of 1777. Original in University of Michigan.

²⁶ General Clinton papers.

²⁷ Map of Lands Belonging to Abijah Hammond, Esq.

²⁸ U. S. Army Engineer Departement. Original in War Dept. Washington, D. C.

²⁹ *Westchester Records*. Originals in White Plains; copies in Bronx County Courth House.

³⁰ Gravestone of Catherine Hammond; gravestone of Amelia Livingston both in possession of the Bronx County Historical Society.

1806 defiantly ascribe two G's to the land. Since the Civil War the two G's have gained considerable ground (if the telephone book is an indication) but the new bridge has given that form a slight setback.

Lending an ear to no one and cutting the Gordian Knot in its own fashion, the Tri-Boro Bridge and Tunnel Authority named the span "The Throgs Neck Bridge" omitting the apostrophe, and paying no heed to history or accuracy. And the battle of names goes on.