

Book Reviews

The Dictionary of California Land Names. Compiled by PHIL TOWNSEND HANNA. (Los Angeles: The Automobile Club of Southern California, 1951. Revised and Enlarged.)

Phil Townsend Hanna's *Dictionary of California Land Names* abundantly bears out his statement in the Introduction that whereas there are "very few areas in our land sufficiently promising to attract the student seeking the lore and the stories that are in names" the place names of the Far West are another matter. His thirty years of research have enabled him to become familiar with the three hundred books and pamphlets listed as sources. They include Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of California* in 7 volumes, published in 1884 and Erwin G. Gudde's *California Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary*, published in 1949.

His sources include various issues of more than fifty newspapers and periodicals going back to *The Name of California* by Edward Everett Hale in the *Proceedings* of the American-Antiquarian Society, Boston, Mass., 1862. He was especially fortunate in having fifteen manuscripts at his disposal, much of this material not consulted by other California place-name students, notably the monumental *Concordance of Words and Names Appearing in Spanish-American Incunabula*, compiled by Charles Fletcher Lummis. Among the twenty-five maps available were *Map of the Gold Region, California, 1851* and *Map of the State of California, 1853*.

The reader profits from Mr. Hanna's long experience in editing books easy to read. Good quality of paper, type not too small, binding that permits opening of the book flat, repetition at the beginning of each alphabetic division of the brief note which explains the designation of names as obsolete, fictional, and those still to be found on maps of California commonly consulted—all these show attention to the reader's convenience.

The frequent indication of pronunciation is appreciated, and the reader may wish that the pronunciation of more terms had been given. The author listed many Spanish, Mexican, French, and English dictionaries, dating from 1599, among his sources, and he

could have supplied from them and from his own acquaintance with the language the pronunciations for most of the terms, had he recognized the need of his readers.

Mr. Hanna is the author of *California Through Four Centuries: A Handbook of Memorable Historical Dates; Libros Californianos or Five Feet of California Books; Spanish Conquerors of the Pacific West; California Under Twelve Flags*; and in manuscript, *Dictionary of Spanish Land Grants*. As editor for more than twenty years of *Touring Topics* and *Westways*, official publications of the Automobile Club of Southern California, he has been able to publish serially much of the material in his *Dictionary* and thus benefit from the criticism of his readers.

Mr. Hanna's lists of references reveal that local organizations have encouraged research in California name lore. Among the publishers are the American Trust Company of San Francisco; Title Insurance and Trust Company of Los Angeles; Security Trust and Savings Bank of Los Angeles; Title Guarantee and Trust Company of Los Angeles; and the San Jose Chamber of Commerce. "The pursuit of place-name data," the author comments, "has extended far beyond the radius of professional scholarship and become a semi-public pastime."

Mr. Hanna's objective was "to make understandable California's living names and to provide all available information on names so that the literature of the State, covering more than four centuries, may be more readily comprehended." He classified the place-names in four divisions:

1) "The great mass of names applied to places because of some natural phenomenon, such as Whitewater, Coyote Wells, Arch Rock, Long Beach, etc."

2) "Names which commemorate individuals or events and these are the most exciting of all for almost invariably they yield stories of greater or lesser theater."

3) Hybrid names such as Calipatria, Calexico, Calneva, Mexicali, etc.

4) Names appropriated from other regions, such as Ontario, Venice, Mecca, Cadiz, Waterloo, etc.

Surprisingly, there is no place in California named for Abraham Lincoln, though Washington has been honored thus. *Twenty-nine Palms* in 1906 had only eleven trees but it now has more than its

quota. *Rodeo* is the site of oil-refining, not cattle operations. *Taft*, in Kern County, narrowly escaped being forever known as *Moron*.

The "Big Four" who made railroad history—Crocker, Huntington, Hopkins and Stanford—are commemorated.

Fictional characters are honored in *Ivanhoe*, *Verona*, *Ramona*, and Edgar Rice Burrough's *Tarzana*.

Authors gave names to *Hawthorne*, *Whittier*, *Muir*, and *Twain-Harte*.

Folk etymology appears in *Igo* and *Ono*, *Panamint*, and *Strawberry*.

The nomenclature of mining towns was "interesting and lusty," Mr. Hanna observes. Regretfully, he omits about five hundred names of such sites because research failed to reveal data concerning the *when*, *where* and *why*. The names he does include, such as *Hungry Hollow*, *Murderer's Bar*, *Bacchis*, *Slug Canyon*, and *Rawhide* whet our appetite for more.

MAMIE MEREDITH

The Story of New Zealand Place Names. By A. W. REED. (Wellington, New Zealand. Published by A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1952, pp. 141.)

Those of us who are interested in place names are always highly pleased when a new book in the field appears. When the present small volume came out last December there was a hope that perhaps New Zealand could be added to the list of countries whose place names have been treated in a fairly adequate manner.

After an introduction of just two pages, the names in this book are listed in alphabetical order in dictionary arrangement. Catch words are placed at the upper and outer edges of the pages, and page numbers are placed near the top inner binding. Many black and white line illustrations and drawings scattered through the book make the volume very attractive to the eye. The explanations of the names are not only informative but are also so interestingly written that one feels like reading through the book page by page—a feeling one usually does not have when consulting a dictionary.

The author is very modest about his work, saying that he is merely a compiler who can lay no claim to originality. In the introduction he mentions his sources and laments the fact that more information is not available. He does not bring in all kinds of wild

and unfounded suggestions concerning origins of names, but selects wisely. The fascination of the book leads a reader to believe that there is much more originality in the work than compiler Reed admits.

The book is obviously written for home consumption. The author seems to assume that readers know something about the places listed. It is a pity that no maps are included. Had some of the illustrations been replaced by a few maps, the value of the book would have been greatly enhanced. In giving the location of some of the places, the compiler says that a place is so many miles from such and such a place. Such a statement means nothing at all to readers not familiar with New Zealand. In some cases the author does not make clear to what the name applies. For example, after *Ngaroto* he says: "South of Auckland. There were many shallow lakes in the swampy land here, hence the name, which means 'the lakes.'" But what is *Ngaroto*? To be sure, in his introduction he says that his listing includes "the majority of well-known towns, cities and settlements as distinct (except in a few well-known instances) from natural features." Often, however, a reader would like to know more about the place being discussed without having to consult a geography or book of reference. After many of the Maori names all the author gives is an English translation of what the name means. In all fairness, it must be stated that he says he is sorry that he cannot give more.

Another instance of the author's purpose in writing primarily for New Zealanders is his statement in fine print under the title on the title page that the book contains the meaning of fifteen hundred well-known Maori and Pakeha place names. The former are not difficult to discover but the unsuspecting reader outside New Zealand might be puzzled about where the Pakeha names are found in the book. The joke is that *Pakeha* in Maori means *foreign*, and this term is used to refer to the English names in the text, of which there are many.

Finally, the fragmentary nature of the book (which the author frankly admits) leads the student of place names to regret that more names and more information about names could not have been included. The book certainly is not large. The author's stated purpose to entertain as well as to inform reminds an American reader of the efforts of W.P.A. workers who during the depres-

sion days of the thirties put out a number of place name pamphlets in this country. Mr. Reed has done a better job than these American workers did, but he would be the first to admit that he has merely scratched the surface. Let us hope that his rather pessimistic statement that he fears he will be able to repair omissions only "at a very distant date" will prove to be wrong.

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Orkney Farm-Names. By HUGH MARWICK, D.Litt. (W. R. Mackintosh, Kirkwall, 1952, vi + 267 pages, 21/-.)

Most students of place-names, whether interested or not in the Orkneys or in the British Isles, will probably have something to learn of painstaking and thorough method from this very fine study.

The body of the work consists of a catalog of all the present-day names of Orkney farms which are or are thought to be of Norse origin, and which appear in the old rentals dating from 1402 to 1739. The names are listed alphabetically by parishes, and after each such list are added "other farm names" which, though also Norse, do not happen to appear in the early records. Thus the names are grouped both geographically and according to the source of the evidence. A unified alphabetical index (pp. 253-61) nevertheless makes it easy to find any single name.

Individual treatments of names normally include the present-day pronunciation, the variant forms (dated) in which the name has been found, a classification of the land according to its historical tax-value, and the derivation of the name, frequently with plentiful discussion of the historical and topographic evidence. Pronunciation is given for a number of names—for those, apparently, which the author considered unrepresented by the spelling. But this number is decidedly less than half of the total, and still leaves some uncertainties; it might have been worth the extra expense to have given pronunciations for all names.

Pronunciations are given in symbols mostly of the International Phonetic Alphabet; deviations will cause no trouble. One doubt is raised, however, when the author states (page vi) that "a is used for both back and front a." What is the reason for this? Is there a single /a/ phoneme with back and front allophones? Is there free

variation within this range? In one name at least (Ancum) the unlisted symbol α is used, in contradiction of the usual practice.

The identification of the farm with the name, and the explanation of the name itself, have very often depended upon an understanding of the very complex matter of Orkney taxation. The author's task, therefore, has been not merely to deal with the 1059 names (Part I) but to investigate the whole background of acquisition and transfer of lands in the islands. And because this subject has required original study, he has appended (Part II) some very necessary explanation of "skats" (scats) and rents, of the nature and origin of Orkney scats, and of the Orkney "tunship." An indication of the contribution made in this part of the study is the fact that fully twenty of the terms or senses dealt with are not to be found at all in the Oxford Dictionary, and that many others add sharper definitions or earlier evidence. (Some, it is true, are almost more Norse than English.) Part III uses the evidence discussed in Part II as the basis for establishing a chronology of the names. A list is given of the chief sources consulted (pp. 265-6).

As to the matter of derivations, the author remarks in his preface that to the specialist he will probably appear too bold, and to the casual reader not bold enough. But he has in fact managed to steer a safely cautious course between these two dangers.

It seems unfortunate that so fine a piece of work should be printed in a type-face so small, and with such inequalities of impression, as to make the reading rather a strain on the eyes. However, the typography is generally correct; errors are few and insignificant; errata and addenda are minor.

Mr. Marwick, as his name indicates, is an Orkney man himself. It is evident that the driving force behind this study has been that love of homeland which so often leads to the best in place-name investigation. For some twenty-five years and more this author has been working at one or another of the many problems raised by Orkney names. This volume, therefore, is in a true sense the crowning of a life work. One can fairly say, with Milton, that it preserves the "extraction of that living intellect" that bred it. And it should be a satisfaction to all students of place-names that the author's life has been so well spent.

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