

# The Origin and Development of a State Onomastic Periodical

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IN THE SPRING OF 1954, Vol. I, No. 1 of *Names in South Carolina*, the first state onomastic journal in the United States, was published by the English Department of the University of South Carolina. The appearance of this unique periodical was due chiefly to the efforts of Dr. Francis W. Bradley, then Dean of the University's faculty, the late Dr. Havilah Babcock, Head of the University's English Department, and Associate Professor Claude Henry Neuffer, who has served as editor during the 13 years of its publication.

During its first year a second volume (Vol. I, No. 2) was issued and these volumes carried the notation, Published Sporadically. However, since this initial year the magazine has appeared annually. The early issues were small, beginning with five pages for the mimeographed Vol. I, No. 1 and increasing to 65 pages for the off-set printed Vol. XI, Winter, 1964. The number of subscribers also followed a similar pattern: beginning with 100 in 1954 for Vol. I, No. 1 and reaching 600 in 1964 (Vol. XI). The journal was still an off-set produced publication sent out free of charge by the University of South Carolina as a public service. During these early years of its apprenticeship a great deal of encouragement and commendation was received from the American Name Society and the International Center of Onomastics and individually from Elsdon Smith, Margaret Bryant, the late Mamie Meredith, Kelsie Harder, and Professor H. J. Van de Wijer of the International Center of Onomastics.

In November, 1965, with the publication of Vol. XII, *Names in South Carolina* became a standardly printed journal with a subscription rate of \$1.50 for in-state and \$2.00 for out-of-state sub-

scribers. The number of subscribers had now risen to 700. This number increased to 1,127 in 1966 of whom 143 were patrons, who paid \$5.00 for their subscription; 738 were general reader subscribers; and 246 were libraries and scholars from 32 states.

The methods used in the development of this journal have not always followed the strict regimen of academic scholarship, particularly in the beginning years. Since the majority of its first subscribers and some of its contributors were general readers and not academicians, a rigid style sheet was not required and a good deal of digressive local history was allowed in write-ups of place names. It was found to be particularly important to record all family names connected with a place name since South Carolinians have an intense attachment to their family names.

An unusually strong and active interest in the publication was built up in this fashion, resulting in an extremely large subscription list and also in hundreds of readers each year voluntarily sending in brief accounts of origins of particular names of which sometimes they knew more than anyone else. These brief contributions are published in the *Notes on Names* section in each issue. Some of these notes come from an authentic oral tradition which is in danger of being irretrievably lost with the passing of the older generation. Explanations for such names as The Last Tree section (corruption of the French *de Lasteyrie*) and Nine Times (based on a road zig-zagging across a creek nine times) have been secured in this way.

From such reader-contributors valuable documentary data has also been secured from lawyers who have dug out valuable information from deeds and title abstracts; from people who have sent in extracts from family letters, diaries, and other unpublished accounts describing names in their communities; and from custodians of local historical societies. The patrons particularly have taken an active interest in searching out authentic evidence concerning the origins of names difficult to explain. In general, writer-contributors to *Names in South Carolina* have been people of varied talents and backgrounds: preachers, lawyers, farmers, housewives, business men, engineers, librarians, poets, novelists, and college students.

With the publication of Vol. XII (1965) longer, more nearly definitive articles with the standard, scholarly documentation were included; and the periodical became more widely recognized by

scholars beyond the confines of South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> This out-of-state interest plus the continually growing support of South Carolina subscribers resulted in a back-issue book of the first 12 volumes being published in May, 1967. Before publication 500 copies of this book were sold. This now results in all volumes being in full print, with the first 12 fully and accurately indexed. Future plans are to continue to publish an annual volume which will take cognizance both of the tastes and interests of South Carolinians and the scholarly contribution such a journal can make to a systematic place name survey of the entire country.

Such a publication as *Names in South Carolina* serves as a meeting place or common-ground where the academic scholar and the people of all sorts and conditions may communicate with each other for the benefit of both and the preservation of significant onomastic knowledge. Just as British scholars have used place names to determine historical facts concerning the Celtic, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon elements in Great Britain, the American scholar may use the volumes of *Names in South Carolina* to determine which regions of the state were predominantly English Anglican, French Huguenot, Welsh Baptist, Scotch-Irish Presbyterian, or German Lutheran.

Now in its fourteenth year *Names in South Carolina* is virtually self-supporting and for the past two years has been solvent enough to purchase maps and books, and also to make a 50-dollar onomastic award for the best piece of research and writing done by its contributors. The University of South Carolina underwrites its mailing costs and supplies some student clerical assistance, but as with many learned journals an erudite wife gives monumental assistance, editorial and clerical. With its presently over 1,000 subscribers, many of whom are continuing, and its steadily growing appeal to both scholar and layman it appears to be a soundly established journal with a secure and promising future.

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<sup>1</sup> See John Lavelle, "Facts of Journal Publishing, IV," PMLA, LXXXI (November, 1966), p. 11.