New England Town Names
Derived from Personal Names

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THIS ESSAY HAS GROWN OUT of curiosity concerning the use of unmodified personal names as names of inhabited places in the English-speaking parts of North America. The giving of names such as Anderson, Fisher, and Williams to places represents a conspicuous departure from European tradition. That tradition requires some modification of the name of a person to be commemorated in a place-name, in most European languages by the addition of a suffix, to give it a form appropriate to a place-name. Place-names have been formed thus from centuries before recorded history through the Graeco-Roman period with its Alexandrias, its Caesareas and its Constantinopolis to the more recent times that provide such examples as Theresienstadt, Frederikshavn, and Kaliningrad. Our stock of place-names includes compounds of personal names with habitational suffixes, too, so that I have had to consider them in addition to unmodified personal names.

My inquiry is limited to the naming of the New England towns. The list of town names in the present New England states has qualities, however, that make it a representative and generous sample of place-names in the parts of North America in which English is the common language. At the beginning of settlement in New England, towns, as objects to be named, were identified by their founders with named inhabited places – incorporated boroughs, villages, or parishes – in the home country, and regarded as deserving equivalent names. The town was the primary civil division of the province, so that except on rare occasions, and then apparently by inadvertence, names were not duplicated within any one province. Hence more different names were given, in relation to the number of civil divisions named, than in parts of the country where the county was the primary division of the province or state, and township names were often duplicated among counties. Though

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town names were transferred freely among the provinces in the colonial period and among the states after independence, the union of Vermont with New Hampshire until 1764 and of Maine with Massachusetts until 1820 long prevented duplication of town names within these formerly united territories. Finally, the process of naming the New England towns extends over a period that includes most of our national history: from 1620, when Plymouth, Massachusetts, was named, into the present century. Here I shall not consider names given after 1860. Only a small fraction of the total number of town names in New England has been given, and no change in naming practice can be observed since that date.

Material and Organization

I have attempted to collect information on all the namings of incorporated towns in the six New England states from 1620 to 1860. My list includes 1,553 namings, of which 1,399 were in effect at the end of 1860. The remaining 154 had been cancelled by changes in the names or disincorporation of the towns. The distribution of namings among the states is given in the following list; the number immediately following the name of a state is the total number of namings within its present bounds from 1620 to 1860, and the one in parentheses the number still effective at the end of 1860: Massachusetts, 356 (336); Rhode Island, 32 (31); Connecticut, 165 (165); Maine, 427 (395); New Hampshire, 278 (229); and Vermont, 295 (243). When disused names are cited here they are followed by an asterisk (*).

In the 1,553 namings only 1,002 distinct names were used; two names thus sufficed, in the average, for slightly more than three namings. At times the decision as to what constitutes a distinct name requires arbitrary judgment. I have exercised this judgment rather strictly, and as a result have counted fewer distinct names than another might count. To take as an example a name with numerous duplications and compounds in New England, I have reckoned as one name both the uncompounded Windsor (Conn., 1637; Vt., 1761; Mass., 1778; N. H., 1796; Me., 1822) and its compounds East Windsor (Conn., 1768), Windsor Locks (Conn., 1786), West Windsor (Vt., 1814), and South Windsor (Conn., 1845). I have treated Hampton in the same way, even though it appears in bound compounds – Northampton (1656), Southampton

(1753), and Westhampton (1778), all in Massachusetts – as well as uncompounded and in four unbound compounds in New Hampshire. But I have counted the compounds of Haven, the original of which is New Haven (Conn., 1640) as distinct names, since "Haven" does not occur in New England by itself as a place-name. Many of the compounds arose from uncompounded names by division of towns bearing the original names, as did the Haven towns in Connecticut; other compounds were devised for new towns to perpetuate the names of towns from which settlers of the new towns came. I have paid no attention to variations in spelling of the same name among the several states.

In referring to the towns I have for convenient identification attributed them to the states in which they are included at present. For the same reason I have used current spellings, with only occasional reference to variant spellings used when the names were given. Some names now ending in *-ton* were originally written with *-town*, *-boro* was in most instances written as *-borough*, and *-burg* was sometimes *-bourg* or *-burgh*. Names that went out of use before their spelling was standardized are cited as they were written at the time when they were given.

The dates cited here are the earliest ones I have found documented in my sources of information.[1] In the great majority of namings these are the dates of incorporation. Dates of incorporation of a very few towns are unknown. I have assigned these to what appear to be the most probable decades of naming, and in the one instance

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[1] The following works are my principal sources of dates of naming and other information: Massachusetts: William H. Whitmore, "On the Origin of the Names of Towns in Massachusetts," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1871–1873, pp. 393–419; Work Projects Administration in Massachusetts, Writers' Project, *The Origin of Massachusetts Place Names of the State, Counties, Cities, and Towns* (New York, 1941). Rhode Island: Charles W. Parsons, "Town-Names in Rhode Island," *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, 1886–87, pp. 42–51. Connecticut: Franklin B. Dexter, "The History of Connecticut, as Illustrated by the Names of Her Towns," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n. s., vol. 3, 1885, pp. 421–448. Maine: Ava Harriet Chadbourne, *Maine Place Names and the Peopling of Its Towns* (Portland, Maine, 1955); Geo. J. Varney, *A Gazetteer of the State of Maine* (Boston, 1881). New Hampshire: Albert Stillman Batchellor (ed.), *Town Charters*, vols. 1–6 (*New Hampshire State Papers*, vols. 24–29, Concord, 1894–1896). Vermont: Hiram A. Huse, "Notes Historical and Descriptive" [relative to the towns in Vermont], *in* A. S. Batchellor (ed.), *Town Charters*, vol. 3, pp. 611–739; Hiram A. Huse (comp.), *Charters Granted by the State of Vermont (State Papers of Vermont*, vol. 2, Bellows Falls, 1922).

in which I have mentioned an undated name I have substituted an interrogation point (?) for the date. Some towns bore the names by which they were incorporated while they were still unincorporated townships, plantations, or parishes; when I have been able to assign a documented date to their naming before their incorporation I have used it. I have ignored many names by which towns were known before their incorporation, since many such names cannot be dated; and district names that had no juridical status were subject to arbitrary change. There is thus a penumbra of names about my list that I have not considered.

The rate at which names were given to towns in New England depended on the rate of settlement, actual or prospective, of new land. The first spurt was in the decade 1631–1640, when 32 names were given, 20 of them in Massachusetts. The rate of naming new towns then declined slowly through the remainder of the century; only 13 names were given in each of the decades 1681–1690 and 1691–1700. From the turn of the eighteenth century the number per decade increased steadily, except for a decline in the 1740's, to 72 in 1751–1760. The decade 1761–1770 saw by far the greatest increase in number of town names in any decade of the history of New England; no fewer than 266 were added in those ten years. This phenomenal increase reflects the expansion of actual and expected settlement in New Hampshire-Vermont after the pacification of the frontier that followed the defeat of France in the Seven Years' War. Eighty-four towns were created in New Hampshire-Vermont in the single year 1761, and 53 in 1763. The founding of new towns did not wholly cease during the war for independence, though only three were named in 1775 and five in 1776. At the end of the revolutionary decade, newly-independent Vermont chartered 65 in 1780, so that the decade ended with 114 new town names in all of New England, in only third place after the preceding and the following decades, the latter of which saw 166 namings. After 1790 the number of namings declined asymtotically toward zero. In the last decade considered here, 1851–1860, 55 names were given. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the number given per decade was about 20, and in the present century ten or fewer. Very nearly half of all the New England town names given between 1620 and 1860 were bestowed before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in 1775.

Classification of the Names

In arranging my material for discussion I have had to sort the names into classes. My classification is not satisfactory; probably no such intellectual model can do justice to the variety found in a long list of unselected place-names. It does, however, make possible a distinction, not always with certainty but to a sufficient degree of dependability, between almost all names derived from personal names and others. In New England these "others" are overwhelmingly transferred British place-names, which, with their compounds and duplications, account for 54 per cent of the total number of namings. Names derived from personal names comprise 28 per cent of the total. The largest class other than these two consists of place-names borrowed from places outside Britain and New England; it includes only five per cent of the total. I have divided the town names derived from personal names into two sub-classes: (1) those in which personal names have been modified in some way, usually by the addition of a habitational suffix; and (2) those in which the personal name retains its original form. For brief reference I call the former sub-class "inflected" and the latter "uninflected."

To the local and regional historian the identity of persons in whose honor places are named is of primary concern, but in an inquiry into the naming process this identification is of subordinate importance. I have duly noted the identifications made of persons for whom New England towns have been named, but primarily in order to distinguish the names so derived from names having a different origin. The great uncertainty in classifying the names arises from the fact that many family names are also place-names. I have based my judgment on the fact that uninflected personal names were not used in naming New England towns until the third decade of the eighteenth century and on information gleaned from the historical sources I have consulted.

The extant literature on New England town names seems to have emphasized unduly the importance, during the colonial period, of the naming of towns in honor of politically prominent Englishmen. F. B. Dexter, a Connecticut man, wrote in the article cited that

> of the names of towns given in Massachusetts in just the half-century before the Revolution, at least forty per cent are distinctly derived from the names or titles or residences

of members of the royal family or courtiers or placemen. So that this portion of the roll of Massachusetts townships reads somewhat like a leaf out of the peerage with its Hanover, Lunenburg, Shrewsbury, Bedford, Halifax, Pelham, Hardwick, Granville, Chesterfield, Shelburne, and so on . . . .[2]

Yet with the exception of Hanover, Lunenburg, and Granville these names are simply additions to the stock of transferred British place-names; without reference to the contemporary British political scene they cannot be distinguished from older British place-names in Massachusetts, from Plymouth onward, which were undoubtedly also bestowed because of personal associations. Without such reference, indeed, they cannot be distinguished from town names given within Dexter's own state in the same period, such as Wilton (1726), Winchester (1733), Salisbury (1736), and Oxford (1741).

Dexter did not examine the town names of New Hampshire, of which the present Vermont was a part until 1764, when an Order in Council assigned it to the jurisdiction of New York. Two later authors have rendered a judgment similar to his on the town names of these two states:

When a town name is not that of a popular hero . . . or a member of the Governor's family, . . . it is almost sure to be that of an eminent politician . . . . There is hardly a noble title whose holder played an active role in politics, or the surname of an eminent commoner of political distinction, which is not to be found on the map of the two states.[3]

Hunt and Smith support their argument by citing all the titles and names of prominent contemporary political and military figures that recur in the town names bestowed in New Hampshire-Vermont during the administrations of Governors Benning Wentworth (1741–1767) and John Wentworth (1767–1775), though in many cases they do not establish any connection between the persons bearing the names or titles and the naming of the towns. Some of these connections are evident; others rest on conjecture.

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[2] Dexter, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

[3] Elmer Munson Hunt and Robert A. Smith, "The English Background of Some of the Wentworth Town Grants," *Historical New Hampshire*, vol. 6, 1950, pp. 1–52; quotation from p. 4. I have omitted the examples given in the passage quoted because they include both inflected and uninflected names.

Governor Benning Wentworth ranks among the great place-namers of our history. In the 25 years of his governorship he gave 233 town names, 15 per cent of the names given to New England towns in the period 1620–1860. A closer examination of these than Hunt and Smith make shows that 92 (39 per cent) are names already used in the other New England provinces. Exactly the same number and percentage are British place-names not previously used in New England; these include place-names that are also titles and family names. Forty (17 per cent) are derived from personal names that are not also place-names. Of these, 11 have habitational suffixes; three examples compounded from the family names of New Englanders are Brattleboro (Vt., 1753), Goffstown (N.H., 1761), and Hubbardton (Vt., 1764). Twenty-nine are uninflected personal names; for example, Keene (N.H., 1753), Lyman (N.H., 1761) and Whiting (Vt., 1763). Although Governor Benning Wentworth's administration falls within a period in which personal names were used freely in naming New England towns, his principal contributions to the toponymy of New Hampshire and Vermont are in accord with the tradition dominant earlier: the borrowing of place-names from Britain or at second hand from other New England provinces.

Governor John Wentworth's administration was brief in comparison with that of his predecessor (and uncle), and in it he gave only 45 town names. They differ notably from those in Benning Wentworth's charters. Among the town names given by Governor John Wentworth, only six (13 per cent) are borrowed from other parts of New England, but 16 are newly-introduced British place-names, of which four, Cardigan* (N.H., 1769), Raby* (N.H.,1769), Northumberland (N.H., 1771), and Loudon (N.H., 1773) are apparently from titles of nobility. Six of his names are inflected, and 16 uninflected, personal names. If the most conspicuous broadening of the vocabulary of potential place-names in New England consists in the admission of personal names with or without inflection, then Governor John Wentworth is the most conspicuous bearer of the new fashion in naming. Forty-nine per cent of the town names he gave are inflected or uninflected personal names. This is a higher percentage than appears in any decade when all of New England is considered. The highest decadal percentage in the whole of New England is 45.6 per cent in 1771–1780, in

which decade 114 towns were named, 24 by Governor John Went-
worth. Only one later decade, 1811–1820, in which 97 towns were
named, shows a percentage in excess of 40. As naming customs
became standardized in the Federal period, town names derived
from personal names fluctuated between about 30 and 40 per cent
of the total number given.

In the decades in which the largest number of towns were named
– 266 in 1761–1770, 114 in 1771–1780, and 166 in 1781–1790 –
the percentages of inflected and uninflected personal names given
in New England were nearly equal. From the decade 1791–1800
onward, the relative number of uninflected personal names exceeds
that of the inflected ones, the excess attaining a maximum in the
last decade considered here, in which nine per cent are inflected and
31 per cent uninflected personal names. Transferred British place-
names, almost all used earlier in New England, comprise 35 per cent
of the total. Taken together, the sum of inflected and uninflected
personal names exceeds the number of transferred British place-
names in 1771–1780 and from 1811–1820 onward.

Town Names from Personal Names

The perceptions of appropriate names for inhabited places
brought to the present Massachusetts by the first immigrants were
acquired in England, where almost all such names are of great
antiquity. While the town names they gave were nearly all English
place-names, they soon added a biblical name, Salem (1630); names
borrowed from the Indians, Saugus* (1631, revived 1815) and
Scituate (1633); and a neologism having a form appropriate to the
name of a physical feature, Marblehead (1633). They also added the
first inflected personal name, Charlestown (1630), formed according
to the ancient tradition of naming towns in honor of kings.
Charlesto(w)n became a stock name to be borrowed long after the
source of its first element was forgotten: within New England it was
bestowed in Rhode Island in 1738, in New Hampshire in 1753, in
Maine in 1811, and in Vermont as late as 1825. The same tradition
provided Edgartown (Mass., 1671), Jamestown (R.I., 1678),
Georgetown (Me., 1716), and Georgia (Vt., 1763); the last example
may well have been taken from the name of the southernmost
English colony on the Atlantic coast.

Among the New England provinces Connecticut displays more originality in naming towns than do the larger ones. As early as 1639 its settlers combined the names of two of their noble patrons, Lord Say and Sele and Lord Brooke, to form Saybrook, an original name having a form frequently found in English place-names, and perhaps influenced by the English Seabrook, which was brought to New Hampshire in 1768. Many years passed before a second name was coined from two personal names: Gilsum (N. H., 1763), formed from the initial syllables of the family names of two grantees, Gilbert and Sumner respectively. Its termination is pronounced like that of English place-names ending in -*sham*, one of which, Topsham, was given to a town now in Vermont incorporated a month later than Gilsum. After the early years in which royal names were inflected to form the names of towns, there was a long period in which no names derived from personal names were given. When the practice was resumed in the eighteenth century it was applied almost exclusively to family names. Of the 166 inflected personal names given to New England towns from 1620 to 1860, 146 are family names; they account for 9.4 per cent of the total number of namings. Chronologically, the list begins with Hopkinton (Mass., 1715), one of the few such names found in more than one New England state; it recurs in Rhode Island (1757) and New Hampshire (1765). It was followed in a few years by Allenstown (N. H., 1721). Then came Holliston (Mass., 1724), Sanbornton (N. H., 1727), and Somersworth (N. H., 1729). After 1730 the number of uninflected personal names given per decade increased; nearly three times as many uninflected names as inflected ones (17 as compared with six) were given in 1751–1760. Inflected personal names declined both absolutely and relatively after 1790.

Uninflected personal names are more difficult to distinguish than inflected ones because of the identity of many of them with British place-names. Whitmore, in his article on Massachusetts town names, suggests that a few of the transferred British place-names given in the early eighteenth century were taken from the titles of contemporary British noblemen; he cites Leicester (Mass., 1714; Vt., 1761) and Sunderland (Mass., 1718; Vt., 1761) as early examples. The giving of names taken from the titles of influential members of the nobility in England, and later of the family names of both noblemen and prominent commoners, was an accompaniment of the

imposition of royal governors on Massachusetts and New Hampshire. These governors depended more on the favor of powerful men in England than did the chief magistrates of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Personal influence was an essential feature of government in Georgian England, and the provincial governors in New England freely used the flattery implied by the honorific naming of towns in seeking favor in London. But once commemorationby use of a place-name associated with the person to be honored, such as was practised in early colonial days, was extended to the titular designation of an individual as in Leicester or Sunderland, the step to use of a family name was short. Walpole (Mass., 1724) is a place-name, but a less obvious one than Leicester or Sunderland, and no one could doubt its reference, at the time, to Sir Robert Walpole. The naming of Methuen (Mass., 1725) in honor of an influential member of the Privy Council represented a further remove from place-names, since probably few if any associated this family name with the village, parish, and castle Methven in Perthshire from which it is derived. In the same years some locally prominent men of the preceding century were honored by giving their names to towns; not only was Edward Hopkins (1600–1657) commemorated in Hopkinton, but also Richard Bellingham (1592–1672), governor of Massachusetts in the middle of the seventeenth century, in Bellingham (Mass., 1719) and William Stoughton (1631–1701), lieutenant-governor at the end of the seventeenth century, in Stoughton (Mass., 1726). These names have the form of English place-names, as do the inflected Hopkinton, Holliston, and Allenstown. But in the third decade of the eighteenth century, when these names were given, the class of potential place-names was clearly being expanded toward uninflected personal names that are not also recognizable place-names. This expansion may be considered confirmed by the naming of Thompson (Conn., 1730), bearing as commonplace a family name as readily comes to mind.[4]

The decade 1731–1740 added two, Harvard (Mass., 1732) and Somers (Conn., 1734), to the list of uninflected personal names, and 1741–1750 four: Douglas (Mass., 1746); Holles (later Hollis),

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[4] There is a parish Thompson in Norfolk, the name of which represents an assimilation to the patronymic Thompson of a former Tomestun or Tumeston. I think it may be left out of consideration here, in spite of the abundance of names of obscure English villages and parishes in the New England toponymy.

Monson* (both N.H., 1746); and Warren (R.I., 1747). One can detect in these no preference over purely personal names for family names that are also English place-names. In 1751–1760, 17 out of 72 names given, nearly one-fourth, were uninflected family names, more belonging to Englishmen than to Americans. In the great decade of naming, 1761–1770, dominated by the names bestowed by Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire, the fraction of uninflected personal names declined to 11 per cent, since Governor Wentworth favored place-names borrowed either from other New England provinces or from Britain; these made up 80 per cent of the 174 names he gave in the years 1761–1767. His successor, Governor John Wentworth, gave only 21 names from 1767 to 1770; and although 14 of these were uninflected personal names they did not weigh heavily in the large number given during the whole decade.

In the next decade, 1771–1780, nearly 24 per cent of all the names given were uninflected personal names. Beginning in 1776 with Hancock (Mass.), Warren (Me.), and Washington (N.H.), the names of Revolutionary worthies became favored town names. Thenceforward the uninflected family names of persons prominent either locally or nationally were freely used as town names, constituting more than 20 per cent of those given in every decade except 1781–1790 (17.5 per cent) and 1841–1850 (16 per cent); and exceeding 30 per cent in 1821–1830 (34 per cent) and 1851–1860 (31 per cent). Names of men prominent in Britain did not disappear completely from the list of new town names after the attainment of independence by the United States. Wellington appeared briefly in Massachusetts from 1814 to 1826, and permanently in Maine in 1825. Nelson (N.H., 1814) commemorates the British naval hero of the period. Both the forename and the family name of Lord Ashburton, British ambassador to the United States and later negotiator of the treaty that fixed the boundary between New England and Canada, became town names in Maine: Alexander and Baring, both 1825.

Forenames occur sparingly. Two from the British royal family, Ferdinand (Vt., 1761) and Charlotte (Vt., 1762, as Charlotta), were given in the colonial period. Ira (Vt., 1780) commemorates the redoubtable Ira Allen, younger brother of Ethan Allen. The origin of Alfred (Me., 1794) is obscure. Augusta (Me., 1797) was the name

of a daughter of General Henry Deatborn, but as a place-name it had been used in Maine early in the eighteenth century, and so may also be a revived name, long disused but not wholly forgotten, as are Lygonia* (Me., 1804) and Laconia (N.H., 1855). Solon (1809), Hiram (1814), and Milo (1823), all in Maine, may belong in this brief list.

Suffixes Used in Inflected Personal Names

A few of the New England town names derived by inflection of personal names are formed otherwise than by the addition of a habitational suffix. The special cases of Saybrook (Conn., 1639) and Gilsum (N.H., 1763) have been mentioned. The classical termination -*ia* barely appears. Georgia (Vt., 1763) is probably not original in New England. Lygonia, a vague designation applied to a part of Maine in the early eighteenth century and said to be derived from the family name of Sir Ferdinando Gorges' mother, made a brief reappearance a hundred years later as the name of what is now Albion (Me., 1824). Only Columbia (Me., 1796; Conn., 1804; N.H., 1811) won general acceptance. Starks (Me., 1795), commemorative of General John Stark, who also gave his name to Starksboro (Vt., 1780) and Stark (N.H., 1832), seems to have a genitive -*s* as a suffix, if the -*s* is not a scribal error. One name containing an unbound prefix, Port Watson* (Me., 1849), was promptly changed to Brooklin.

No fewer than 16 habitational suffixes are found in the town names derived from personal names. Names formed with them were given 154 times, and account for nearly ten per cent of the total number of namings of towns in New England from 1620 to 1860. The following list of these suffixes is arranged in decreasing order of their frequency; the number of names containing the suffix combined with a personal name is given after each: -*to(w)n*, 52; -*boro(ugh)*, 24; -*burg(h)*, 20; -*field* and -*ville*, 19 each; -*bury*, -*ham*, and -*port*, three each; -*ford*, -*mont*, and -*vale*, two each; -*haven*, -*ington*, -*mead*, -*park*, and -*worth*, one each. The oldest and most continuously used suffix, -*to(w)n*, was productive throughout the period considered here. In 1729 the second suffix, -*worth*, appeared in Somersworth (N.H.); that is the only inflected personal name formed with it among the New England town names. The third, -*boro(ugh)*, was first used in 1749 in Hillsboro (N.H.), a

compound with the family name Hill, but in its original spelling, Hillsborough, also an English place-name. All the compounds of -*boro(ugh)* with personal names were given between 1749 and 1789 except a straggling Jonesboro (Me.) in 1809. The decades that contributed the largest number of town names, 1761–1790, saw also the greatest variety of suffixes: -*burg(h)*, -*field*, -*bury*, -*ford*, and -*ham* were added to the earlier -*to(w)n*, -*worth*, and -*boro(ugh)* in 1761–1770; -*ville*, -*ington*, -*haven*, -*mead*, and -*park* in 1781–1790; -*vale* in 1791; -*mont* and -*port* are the latest ones, first combined with personal names in 1807 and 1817, respectively.

The suffixes -*burg(h)* and -*field*, which contributed nearly equal numbers of combinations with personal names, went through contemporaneous cycles of use in New England. The one now spelled -*burg* first appeared in combination with personal names in charters signed by Benning Wentworth on June 24, 1762, incorporating two towns now in Vermont called in the charters Ferrissburg (Farrisbourg in the accompanying plat) and Hinesbourg. The names are now written Ferrisburg and Hinesburg. The grantees of both towns included persons bearing the family names Ferriss and Hine. The only earlier names with this suffix in New England were Lunenburg (Mass., 1725) and a township Hiddleburg* (N.H., 1753, evidently a poor aim at Heidelberg; incorporated as New London, 1779). Both are clearly of German origin, though when Lunenburg, Vermont, was incorporated in 1763 the name was spelled "Luningbourg" in its charter. From the spelling in these charters I suspect that the source of -*burg* in Ferrisburg and Hinesburg is not the Scottish -*burgh* but the Gallicized -*bourg* familiar to all New Englanders from the French Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island, against which numerous attacks were launched from New England by British and colonial forces during the colonial wars. Later spellings, as in Caldersburgh* (Vt., 1780), Turnersburgh*, and Wildersburgh* (both Vt., 1781), display the Scottish form. The two first examples in Vermont were soon followed by Fitchburg (Mass., 1764).

Use of -*field* as a suffix attached to personal names was a Massachusetts innovation: Pittsfield (1761), Sandisfield (1762), Murrayfield* (1765), and Partridgefield* (1771) all appeared in that province before the suffix was applied in the others, first in Packersfield* (N.H., 1774). In transferred British place-names it was long

familiar in New England: Wethersfield (Conn., 1637), Springfield (Mass., 1641), Marshfield (Mass., 1642), and Fairfield (Conn.,1646) are early examples. Both *-burg(h)* and *-field* attained the peak of their popularity in the decades 1771–1790, and then declined, *-burg(h)* more precipitately than *-field*. Both yielded their last combinations in 1840: Pittsburg (N.H.) and Smithfield (Me.), which may well be borrowings of names already in use in other states.

The suffix *-ville* is of particular interest, since, with the exception of the questionable *-bourg* and *-mont* with its two stray compounds, it is the only one that is not a traditional British place-name element. The first appearance of *-ville* as a suffix added to a personal name is in Hopkinsville* (Vt., 1790), and its second in Lincolnville (Me., 1802). It then maintained itself among the diminishing number of town names until 1860; it is the only suffix other than *-ton* represented in the four inflected personal names given in the decade 1851–1860.

The town names ending in *-ville* given in New England in the colonial period were Norman-English titles or family names derived from French place-names: Grenville* (N.H., 1753), Granville (Mass., 1754), and Saville* (N.H., 1768). Thus New Englanders were familiar with some town names having the suffix, though their initial elements did not convey any meaning when separated from it. For this reason, apparently, *-ville* was not recognized as something to be separated and added to other initial elements.[5]

The willing adoption in New England of *-ville* as a place-name suffix of general utility would seem, rather, to be derived from the example of the town name Danville (Vt., 1786; Me., 1819; N.H., 1836). Danville is one of the names proposed for new Vermont towns in letters to Ethan Allen written in 1785 by Michel-Guillaume

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[5] I would raise the question here, however, whether Grenville may not have at times been read as Greenville, and so have become the source of some examples of this popular American place-name. The plat of Grenville*, N. H., accompanying the charter of the town issued January 1, 1753, bears the name "Greenville," presumably so written by the surveyor; and the endorsement of record of the charter by Theodore Atkinson, provincial secretary, apparently made from the plat rather than from the text of the charter, also has the spelling Greenville (Batchellor, *N. H. State Papers*, vol. 25, p. 376). Grenville*, N. H., was regranted and incorporated as Newport in 1761. In 1872, later than the period with which this article is concerned, a town Greenville was incorporated in Hillsboro Co., N. H.

Jean de Crèvecœur, French consul in New York 1783–1790, who called himself Hector St. John during his residence in America before the Revolution and on the title page of his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782).[6] These names were intended to commemorate "french Characters" who deserved "national gratitude" for their assistance to the Americans during their revolutionary struggle. Danville is of course not a French name, but St. John-Crèvecœur evidently expected Allen to recognize the person to whom it alluded. Two attempts have been made to identify the French personal name it represents. The editor of the Vermont *Records* suggested in a footnote (p. 388) that it is "possibly" derived from the name of Nicolas de la Rochefoucauld, duc d'Anville, who was the commander of the ill-fated French fleet sent in 1745 to retake Annapolis, the former French Port Royal, in Nova Scotia. His suggestion has later been repeated less cautiously.[7] It is most improbable; even the enthusiasm for France aroused by French assistance during the Revolution did not prompt New Englanders to name towns in honor of their late enemies in the colonial wars. St. John-Crèvecœur, who had lived in America from 1754 to 1780, would not have been so discourteous as to suggest such a commemoration. George Stewart has proposed that Danville was intended to commemorate Jean-Baptiste Bourgignon d'Anville (1697–1782), the celebrated French geographer.[8] Stewart's suggestion is slightly more persuasive than the earlier one, but Bourgignon d'Anville scarcely deserves a place in St. John-Crèvecœur's list along with Turgot, Condorcet, and Fayette. One who does is Louis-Aléxandre, duc de la Rochefoucauld-d'Enville, whose distinguishing title among the numerous la Rochefoucaulds is sometimes written d'Anville. One of the liberal French noblemen who participated actively in the Revolution of 1789 and suffered martyrdom under the Terror, he was a friend of Franklin and La Fayette as well as of St. John-Crèvecœur, and translator of the constitutions of the 13 American states into French (1783). During his consulship

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[6] The letters to Allen are published in E. P. Walton (ed.), *Records of the Governor and Council of the State of Vermont*, vol. 3 (Montpelier, 1875), pp. 386–390.

[7] John P. Clement, "Vermont Town Names and Their Derivation, III: The General Historical Background of Vermont Town Names," *Vermont Quarterly*, n. s., vol. 21, 1953, pp. 101–117; ref. to p. 107.

[8] George Stewart, *Names on the Land*, rev. ed. (Boston, 1958), p. 195.

in New York St. John-Crèvecœur used him as a link with the French government supplementary to his official chain of authority.[9] Wishing to include the name of his friend in the list of names he submitted to Allen, St. John-Crèvecœur evidently rejected "Rochefoucauld" as incompatible with American customs of naming places, with which he was thoroughly familiar. He took instead the last of the Duke's titles and gave it a spelling that on English-speaking tongues would best approximate the French pronunciation whether the name was written as d'Enville or d'Anville. How acceptable Danville was to Americans he could not have foreseen.[10]

It is noteworthy that the list of names St. John-Crèvecœur submitted to Ethan Allen contains no compounds of personal names with *-ville*. Most of them end in *-burg* and *-field*, suffixes that were popular in New England at the time of his writing. The others are *-bury*, *Grove* (written separately), and *-polis*. The single compound with *-bury* is St. Johnsbury. It appears from St. John-Crèvecœur's letters that in conversation Allen had proposed giving the name St. John to a new town in Vermont. St. John-Crèvecœur diffidently suggested St. Johnsbury instead, "the name St. John being already given to many places in this country." St. Johnsbury, Vermont, was incorporated in the same year as Danville, 1786, and adjoins it on the east. Whether or not St. John-Crèvecœur knew in 1785 of Louisville, Kentucky, the name he suggested in honor of Louis XVI was wholly different: Ludovico Polis, probably to be read Ludovicopolis. His sense of the acceptability of town names to American ears failed him badly in this instance.

Danville contains an initial element that is comprehensible when separated from its suffix, however the name might be misconstrued by Americans ignorant of its origin, and thus differs from the earlier town names in New England ending in *-ville*. It is undoubtedly coincidental that the first compound of a personal name with *-ville* given in New England, Hopkinsville* (Vt., 1790), is based on the same family name as the first town name composed of a family name with *-ton*, Hopkinton (Mass., 1715). But it is not astonishing

[9] St. John-Crèvecœur's letters to him, often written in English, are cited copiously in Julia Post Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York, 1916), *passim*.

[10] Danville has a second source, in Danville, Kentucky, founded in 1781. Its model was evidently Louisville, named in the preceding year. Stewart, *loc. cit.*, discusses Danville in a broader context than is appropriate here.

that a suffix different from that in Hopkinton, a town name used already three times in New England, was sought for the tract granted to Roswell Hopkins in 1787. Hopkinsville*, now Kirby, is separated from Danville only by St. Johnsbury, so that a connection between the namings of the two towns may be reasonably assumed.

Lincolnville (Me., 1802) was the next town name formed with -*ville* and a personal name, though Cornville (Me., 1798) had preceded it. Two other names in -*ville* were given in Maine in 1802. One is Chesterville, adopted as the name of Chester plantation on its incorporation. Was Chester no longer perceived as a place-name ? The other, Waterville, containing an initial element found in many New England town names, was subsequently borrowed by Vermont (1824) and New Hampshire (1829). Rhode Island gave the last town it incorporated before 1860, Burrillville (1806), a compound of -*ville* with a family name. Massachusetts acquired two new -*ville* names, Somerville (1841, from the family name Somers) and Lakeville (1853). The suffix remained productive in Maine, in which state most of the town names were given after 1800. Here it was usually combined with family names: Kingsville* (1812), Sangerville (1814), Dennysville (1816), Brooksville (1817), Swanville (1819), and so on to Maysville (1859); but with a feminine forename in Mariaville (1836). Combinations with other elements were few: besides Cornville and Waterville one finds Montville (1807) and Greenville (1836). The origin of the initial element in this Greenville is obscure; it may of course be a family name.

Of the suffixes that yielded only a few compounds, -*bury*, -*ford*, and -*ham* were first used with personal names in Shutesbury (Mass., 1761), Pittsford (Vt., 1761), Bowdoinham (Me., 1762), and Whitingham (Vt., ?). Use of -*bury* and -*ham* came to an end in the next two decades with Stoughtonham (Mass., 1775), St. Johnsbury (Vt., 1786) and Craftsbury (Vt., 1790); in Craftsbury one may suspect a rhyming analogy with Shaftsbury (Vt., 1671). Rollinsford (N.H., 1849) is a late straggler; -*port* appears late, in Bucksport (Me., 1817, changed from Buckstown*, 1792), Jonesport (Me., 1832), and Searsport (Me., 1845). The two compounds of -*vale*, Kellyvale* (Vt., 1791) and Bradleyvale* (Vt., 1803) had no precedents and inspired no imitations among the New England town names. The

two with -*mont*, Dixmont (Me., 1807) and Searsmont (Me., 1814) evidently reflect the need for an alternative to the suffixes used in existing compounds of Dix and Sears, Dixfield (Me., 1803) and Searsburg (Vt., 1781). Several -*mont* names, most of them titles derived from seats in England – Egremont (Mass., 1760), Claremont (N.H., 1764), Piermont (N.H., 1764), and Richmont* (Mass., 1765) – were available as models.

An old English element, -*ington*, appears with a personal name in Brownington (Vt., 1790); added to the name Brown it forms a more euphonious compound than the later Brownfield (Me., 1802) and Brownsville (Me., 1824). Its most immediate prototypes were Governor Benning Wentworth's Bennington (Vt., 1749), simultaneously a compound with his forename and a transferred English place-name; and Burlington (Vt., 1763), compounded from the family name Burling and also an English place-name. The suffix was long familiar in town names borrowed from England: Farmington (Conn., 1645), Stonington (Conn., 1666; *, N.H., 1761), Lexington (Mass., 1713), and others. New Huntington* (Vt., 1763, Huntington since 1795) was a grant to a group of men several of whom bore the family name Hunt; the compound reproduces a familiar English place-name, and so was hardly original. The suffixes -*haven*, -*mead*, and -*park* made their single appearances in Vinalhaven (Me., 1789), Billymead* (Vt., 1782), and Hydepark (Vt., 1781, originally Hyde's Park). I place Billymead* here with great reluctance; it may be a transferred English place-name, though I can cite no original.[11] The principal grantee of Hydepark was Jedediah Hyde; the name of the town obviously alludes to both his family name and London's Hyde Park.

The single example of -*worth* combined with a personal name is Somersworth (N.H., as parish 1729, incorporated 1754). I find no Somersworth in the lists of English place-names I have access to, but there may be one. The first element is found in many. In transferred English place-names given earlier in New England, -*worth* appears only once: in Killingworth (Conn., 1667). Few examples occur later: Acworth, Tamworth, and Wentworth (N.H.), given in

[11] The initial elements *Bil-* and *Bill-* are not uncommon in English place-names, and *Billy* occurs. The anecdotal explanation of Billymead* cited by Thesba N. Johnston, "Vermont Town Names and Their Derivation," *Vermont Quarterly*, vol. 20, 1952, pp. 260–278, on p. 274, is amusing but wholly unconvincing.

that order by Benning Wentworth in the autumn of 1766; and Ellsworth (N.H., 1802). The apparent invention Protectworth* (N.H., 1769, incorporated as Springfield, 1794) is to me wholly incomprehensible.

The need for a great number of town names in the latter part of the eighteenth century evidently stimulated a desire for variety in suffixes, a desire not perceived in the times before and after this period, when the more limited demand could be supplied by a very small stock of habitational suffixes: *-to(w)n* in the earlier colonial period, *-ton* and *-ville* in the nineteenth century.

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However the New England town names given in the nineteenth century differ from those given two hundred years earlier, change in the practice of naming towns was continuous. The principal constituents of the vocabulary of potential names brought by the earliest immigrants were the place-names of their home country and inflected personal names of royalty. From the beginning it was personal association that determined the choices made from the vast stock of British place-names. This principle of association was expanded in the eighteenth century to embrace, in order, place-names used in titles of nobility, family names that were also place-names, and purely personal names that were the family names of influential men in England. It was finally generalized to include the name of anyone, though the bearer of it might be prominent only within the town named. The use of uninflected personal names was thus an outgrowth of the original principle of commemorative transfer of place-names. The branch eventually overshadowed the trunk from which it sprang, though the borrowing of place-names persisted.

Creation of town names by addition of habitational suffixes to personal names, in the beginning only to names of royalty, was democratized in America along with other English institutions. Hopkinton (Mass., 1715) was named before the new royal name of the eighteenth century, George, was used in Georgetown (Me., 1716). Eventually this practice yielded to the growing use of uninflected personal names, but it did not disappear. At the end of the period with which this essay is concerned the habitational

suffix seems to have been used only to make a monosyllabic or otherwise unimpressive family name more sonorous, as in Clarksville (N. H., 1853), Littleton (Me., 1850), and Maysville (Me., 1859). Less commonplace family names might stand without a suffix: Deblois (Me., 1850), Morrill (Me., 1855), or Morris (Conn., 1859), especially if they were originally English place-names, as were Dayton (Me., 1854) and Danforth (Me., 1860).

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ARMY CAMP RECALLED

No salt is gained from the Salinas River.
The Oaks of Paso Robles have been cut.
Proximity of bodies sparks the shiver
That runs through sweaty bars in Soledad.

If the solidity of words is hollow,
If names can lie so, are we far from doom ?
The emblem shows the sword: "Take it and follow."
Take it to thrust it where ? And follow whom ?

— Robert Plank