

In Memoriam

ASSAR GÖTRIK JANZÉN

1904–1971

Assar G. Janzén a scholar prominent in the study of place-names and personal names and a member of our society since its founding, died suddenly on December 27, 1971. He will be remembered by readers of *Names* principally for a series of seven articles on "Scandinavian Place-Names in England," published in the journal from 1957 to 1964; he also contributed "The Provenance of Proto-Norse Personal Names" (*Names*, 2:81–100), as well as several reviews.

Professor Janzén was a native of Sweden, a country with a long and distinguished onomastic tradition. Born in Gothenburg, he received his doctorate there in 1936, and taught there and at the University of Lund before coming to the United States in 1946 to play a prominent part in the founding at Berkeley of the first department of Scandinavian studies in this country. He was its chairman for some eight years in the '50's, and under his guidance it came to occupy one of the most prominent places in this discipline in the United States. As an academic representative here of the language, culture, and literature of his Scandinavian homeland he did not limit his professional activities to his scholarly specialties of Swedish lexicography, Swedish and general North-Germanic historical grammar, and the study of Scandinavian place- and personal names: he also taught courses on Swedish and Norwegian literature, and at the time of his death had ready for publication a book on Ibsen.

He was peculiarly well-qualified to undertake the series of studies on "Scandinavian Place-Names in England" mentioned above. Before coming to California he had written a series of studies on the place-names of his native Swedish province, in the course of which he learned thoroughly the onomastic trade, acquiring a detailed familiarity with the bibliography.¹ Janzén's interest and competence in the study of personal names was manifested in his contributions to the distinguished series "Scandinavian Culture,"² likewise dealing with Scandinavian data and likewise written before coming to America. His horizons widened as a result of his migration, and in a few years he began to publish in English (while still resident in Sweden he had written several articles, on traditional themes, in German).

¹ *Ortnamnen i Göteborgs och Bohus Län*, 5. (1939); 9. (1940); 10. (1942); 16. (1945).

² *Nordisk Kultur*, vol. 7 (1947): (a) *De fornvästnordiska personnamnen* [Old West-Norse Personal Names]; (b) *De fornsvenska personnamnen* [Old Swedish Personal Names].

The writer of the present note was particularly pleased by Professor Janzén's readiness to undertake the series on English place-names of Scandinavian origin, which began to appear in the first of the three years (1957–1960) during which he was the editor of *Names*. The scholarly credentials of Janzén were impeccable, and the subject was of more general appeal to Americans than if he had continued his concern with Swedish names. A comparison of the last (fourth) edition of Eilert Ekwall's standard dictionary of the place-names of England³ with its predecessors will show that, in some instances at least, Ekwall was prepared to alter long held opinions as a result of Janzén's work.

In the late '60's Janzén had suffered a mild heart attack; from this, however, he had fully recovered, was looking forward to retirement from active teaching in June, 1972, and hoped for a long and productive period of work on the many projects he had under way. Quite unexpectedly he succumbed to a fatal heart seizure, six months before scheduled retirement. The loss to onomastic studies cannot be calculated.

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³ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 3rd ed. (1947), 4th ed. (1960).

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Leitner, Helmut. *Zoologische Terminologie beim Älteren Plinius*. A new publication: Hildesheim, 1972. 274 pages, paperback. DM 66.

Zunz, Leopold. *Namen der Juden. Geschichtliche Untersuchung*. Reprinted from the Leipzig edition of 1837. 126 pages, paperback. DM 24.

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