

## *Tivoli*: a Place-Name of Special Connotation

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CERTAIN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES in the western world have acquired a measure of importance out of all proportion to the original significance of the place. A tiny Dutch village, for example, has given its name to a particular type of high-quality cheese, and if you ask a friend what the name Edam means to him, he will almost surely reply "cheese," rather than refer to a small town on the central western dike of the Ijsselmeer ten miles northeast of Amsterdam. The English community of Cheddar with its caverns in Somerset, 15 miles southwest of Bristol, also is known widely for its special type of cheese. Some other place-names with food and drink associations include Jerez and its sherry, Cornish hens, Devonshire cream, Scotch whiskey, Jamaica rum, Darjeeling tea, champagne, port wine, and Roquefort cheese. Jersey and Guernsey cattle, Shetland ponies, and Arabian horses represent certain standards of quality in the animal world, and among the fibers whose names are tied to geography are Paisley shawls, Madras, Sea Island cotton, tweed, Irish linen, and China silk. Metal wares are represented by Sheffield and Toledo; glass and ceramics by Waterford, Corning, Limoges, Belleek, and Murano. Moroccan leather usually suggests the best of its type, and cologne is a common as well as a proper noun. In passing, it is to be noted that many of those associative names relate to luxury products.

A large grouping of geographical names connotes entertainment in some form: Hollywood, Stratford, Las Vegas, Ascot or Wimbledon have their own special significance, and it is a name in this last category that is the concern of this paper — the name *Tivoli*, derived from the ancient form of the river-name *Tevere*, better known to the English-speaking world as the Tiber. The origins of prehistoric Tivoli as a settlement are explained by the presence of a waterfall on the Aniene, a tributary of the Tiber. Where the Aniene leaves the Latium hills to plunge 354 feet to the plain of the Campania 17 miles east-northeast of Rome at an altitude of 760 feet, the cataract set in an attractively rugged landscape provided a popular and convenient summer resort for Roman rulers and aristocrats. There, above the damp and fevers of the malarial plain, they established some of their finest palaces and gardens for residence and pleasure. Horace and Catullus were among them, but the greatest pleasure palace was that built by the Emperor Hadrian, A. D. 117–138. Its ruins

still form a major attraction for tourists who visit the modern Tivoli. Among other advantages of the site was its proximity to Rome with which it was connected by highway, the Via Tiburtina. The Aniene also was tapped for its water supply, which reached Rome by aqueduct.

With the decline of the Roman Empire and the sack of Rome itself, the fortunes of Italy's Tivoli declined as well, and the imposing buildings decayed or were destroyed. Then came a revival of interest in the place, when in 1460 Pope Pius II used the ruins of the Roman amphitheater as the foundation for a new citadel, and in the sixteenth century Cardinal Ippolito d'Este ordered the construction of a "terrace house with a view," and the architect was required to "restore the glory of Tivoli in the Augustan Age." Among the Cardinal's protégés was the poet Torquato Tasso, who wrote of Tivoli in his narrative poem *Jerusalem Delivered* that<sup>1</sup>

The sculptur'd stories to his sight reveal'd.  
There, in a narrow space, the master's mind,  
with wondrous art, a thousand forms design'd:  
There shone great Este's race, whose noble blood  
From Roman source in streams unsully'd flow'd.

A summer resort which is popular with one generation may be rejected by the next, and by 1815 Tivoli was described as "wretchedly poor," and in 1844 the principal interest was that of the antiquarian, who found the town itself "dirty and disagreeable, with narrow, steep, and ill-paved streets and inferior houses," deriving its importance from the classical associations "connected with its ancient name, its scenery, and its remains of antiquity." Today the "terrace house" of Cardinal d'Este lacks the attractions of most Italian *palazzi*, but the gardens adorning it provide a sight whose magnificence cannot be duplicated elsewhere. Certainly to the ancient Romans and to some extent in modern times the name of Tivoli connotes a pleasurable place and a type of entertainment not usually found in suburban localities.<sup>2</sup>

The hills surrounding Tivoli derive from a dissected limestone upland on which the poor and thin soils originally supported little more than a chaparral cover with some stunted oaks; this natural vegetation has been replaced by extensive olive groves clinging to the steep hillsides. The modern town, thanks to the power generated by its waterfall, is in part dependent upon industry for the livelihood of its 21,000 people. Local industries include paper milling, ironworking, the manufacture of hardware, shoes, soap, glass, and copper wares, and the processing of foods:

<sup>1</sup> Canto XVII, lines 459-464.

<sup>2</sup> A second Tivoli appears on the Italian map, southwest of Torino, Lat. 44° 41' N., Long. 7° 10' E., but there is little reason to confuse the two places.

wine, olives and wheat. Nearby travertine quarries provide some income. Though the town experienced severe wartime damage, its attractions lure thousands of tourists during the year, and much of the living of its people depends upon this steady source of wealth.

For tourists, the two main interests at the modern Italian Tivoli are the ruins of Hadrian's villa, which have served through a thousand years or more as a source of building material for other structures and for the enrichment of museum collections, and the gardens of the Cardinal's palace, which have been partly restored to their original beauty. The gardens are situated on a slope below the structure, and their principal interest is the variety and force of the water display – a grouping of fountains which in many ways surpasses the famous display at Versailles. Thousands of visitors have enjoyed the fern-filled grottoes, the long alleyway of sprays, the torrential cascades, and the thrusting jets which rival the ancient cypresses in height.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when George Carstensen, the originator of the pleasure gardens on the remains of the old fortifications of the city of Copenhagen in 1843 was seeking an appropriate name for his creation, the name of an Italian town should have been transferred to the project in Denmark's capital city. Pleasure and entertainment were principal considerations in both places, and water displays were prominent features of both localities – fountains and cascades in Italy, and fountains and lakes in Denmark. Thus among those who have traveled widely, the name Tivoli usually connotes the type of entertainment to be found at the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen rather than the decayed glories of a Roman summer resort or the palace gardens of a prince of the church.<sup>3</sup>

The entertainment at Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens became so well known that it is unnecessary to describe it at this point, but its attractions were so many and so fine that imitation was inevitable, and with imitation came place-name repetition and diffusion to a notable degree. It would be pointless to attempt a complete listing of the use of this one name, but a sampling of more than a hundred of its applications will indicate the strong bond which ties the single word *Tivoli* to the entertainment world.

The most common use of the name, as most people might have guessed, is for theaters, cafes and restaurants, without doubt because of the strong concentration of these enterprises in the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen's city center. Theaters bearing the name of Tivoli which were operating in the United States within the last five years include those in the District

<sup>3</sup> The history of Tivoli Gardens has been investigated and published by John Lyle; see "The Relevance of Tivoli," in *Landscape*, vol. 18, no. 2, for spring and summer, 1969, pp. 5–22.

of Columbia; Frederick, Md.; University City, Mo.; Laredo, Texas; New Orleans, La., and Ardmore, Okla. At least three Canadian cities also list Tivoli Theaters: Hamilton, Windsor, and Saskatoon. Among those places in which a Tivoli Theater formerly operated are Miami, Fla.; Danville and Aurora, Ill.; Richmond, Ind.; Calumet, Mich.; Gary, Ind., and two in Chicago.<sup>4</sup>

The history of Tivoli theaters in New York City amounts to a book-length document. Here the name was applied not only to theaters, but to open-air beer gardens in some numbers. Possibly the first use of the name was some time after June 29, 1840, when the Richmond Hill Theatre, unsuccessful in attracting the public, turned to vaudeville and became the Tivoli Gardens.<sup>5</sup> A German beer hall at 175 The Bowery was named Tivoli as early as 1858. Another Tivoli Garden at 141 Avenue A apparently was a center of German theatrical and beer-hall entertainment, and it was operating in 1860. A Tivoli Garden in Astoria on Long Island opened in the spring of 1870, and Paul Falk's Tivoli at 18-20 St. Mark's Place in New York opened May 20, 1872 with a grand concert and free admission. It became customary to offer sacred concerts on Sundays. Falk's Tivoli on 8th St. between Second and Third Avenues opened as a variety house in 1873-1874, offering ballet, acrobats, gymnasts, and pantomimes - a performance pattern which duplicated that of the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen. In New York this may have been the beginning of vaudeville performances. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the name apparently had come to represent the best in theatrical entertainment, judging by the proliferation of Tivolis in the city: Tivoli Hall on 8th St. was showing "Married for Money" in November, 1891; Schen's Tivoli on 8th St. between Third and Fourth Avenues scheduled a masked ball for the Scandinavian Singing Society in 1892; Feltman's Tivoli at Fifth Ave. and Second St. was giving concerts, and Tivoli Garden was showing variety.<sup>6</sup>

Tivoli is used less commonly in England as the name for theaters, but directories do include Tivoli Theaters in the cities of London, Middlesbrough, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cardiff, Swansea, Bournemouth, Preston, Exeter, Brighton, and Bristol. Is it accidental that each of these cities is coastal or estuarine in location, and that two of them are famous resorts? A Tivoli Theater even appears fictionally in Delderfield's story, *Cheap Day Return*.

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<sup>4</sup> *International Motion Picture Almanac*, Charles S. Aaronson, ed. (New York, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph N. Ireland, *Records of the New York State Theater from 1750 to 1860*, 2 vols. (New York, 1867).

<sup>6</sup> Different volumes of George C. Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* were used as sources of information on New York's different Tivolis.

Other places of entertainment have used this connotative place-name extensively, with special emphasis on its selection by owners of cafes and restaurants – again emphasizing the Copenhagen pattern where some 20 eating places provide refreshment within the Gardens. In the United States and Canada, Tivoli Restaurants operate in Calumet, Mich.; Gary, Ind.; New Haven, Conn.; Toronto, Chicago Heights, and San Francisco. There are two in New York – one in the Bronx and one in Nassau. The name is equally popular for English restaurants in Cheltenham, Ilkley, Blackburn, London, Brighton, Glasgow, Lancaster, Grimsby, and Morecambe, and there is a Tivoli Restaurant in Zürich.

Not only is this connotative place-name in use for commercial enterprises on a wide scale, but its use as an accepted name for a settled place is also widespread, and this fact raises an interesting question: as a place-name outside of Italy, was *Tivoli* selected for its appropriateness as the name of a place, stemming from the name of the Italian town, or was it applied because of an association with some local theater or restaurant? Or, like the name of Ravenna, Ohio, was it applied outside of Italy simply because some local resident had visited the Italian Tivoli and had recalled the place with pleasure? The matter becomes a sort of hen-and-egg dilemma for which there is no ready answer.

Settlements bearing the name of Tivoli are listed for Duchess County, N.Y. in 1845, Dubuque County, Iowa in 1865, and Lycoming County, Pa. In Texas, they appear in Refugio County in 1893; in Blue Earth County, Minn. in 1860, and in S. Major County in Oklahoma. Abroad, Belgium claims a Tivoli, and Colombia lists one in the Department of Cundinamarca. Denmark uses the name for an area as well as for a settlement, and Eire uses the name for a district a mile and a half east of the city of Cork. England has two: one in Gloucestershire, and the name of a postal station in Canterbury. A few geographic features, other than the Tiber itself, also bear the name. A hollow in Albany County, N.Y. was named Tivoli as early as 1860, and an island in Ozette Lake in the State of Washington carries the name. Chicago has a "Tivoli Gardens" and Weston-Super-Mare in England has a Tivoli Street. The map for Apia, Samoa, refers to some feature abbreviated "Tm" by the name of Tivoli.

Tivoli appears as a family name in Miami, Fla.; Brooklyn, Westchester, and Queens, N.Y., and Winnipeg, Manitoba. Whether the families so named migrated at some time from the Italian town is not known, but such a move may explain the use of the name as a patronym. Also, Tivoli has become attached to pieces of property – described as farms – in parts of West Germany (Nordrhein-Westfalia, Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein) and in East Germany (Neubrandenburg). In Ireland the name is used for at least one estate, and for a farm in the Grenadines of the British West Indies.

Obviously the primary use of the name Tivoli is for settlements; in a secondary sense it is applied widely to places of entertainment. But a wide range of other activities also bears the designation as a kind of tertiary application. In many cases, this usage may have come from mere propinquity. For example, barber shops in New York, Miami, and Washington, D.C. may have taken the name *Tivoli* from adjoining theaters or cafes which were well-established enterprises, or Tivoli bowling alleys in Chicago may have operated near the Tivoli Ballroom, which is no longer in existence. It is more difficult to account for Tivoli dairies in New York, Queens, and two in Brooklyn, or Tivoli laundries in Chicago and Newark. Other uses for the name appear on the advertising for beauty salons in Chicago and Miami, beverage sales in Los Angeles, an import house in Phoenix, a brewery in Denver, shoe sales in Toronto, radio and TV shops in New York, stationery and furniture in Queens, and a record shop in Washington. In England, Tivoli Garages are found in Brighton, Hastings, and Cardiff; butchers in Hastings and Tunbridge Wells, druggists in Blackburn and Northampton; furnishings in Guildford, a service station in Portsmouth, and printing in Cheltenham.

It seems clear from the foregoing discussion that the place-name *Tivoli*, of Italian origin, has found wide appeal and wide dispersal, mainly through northern Europe and North America, and that this has occurred largely among English-speaking people for whom the name has had a marked meaning or significance associated with pleasure and entertainment. This dispersal – or place-name diffusion if you will – has taken place in modern times even though the name itself is of great antiquity. In the United States, the use of the name may reflect the popularity of classical names as described in the writing of Wilbur Zelinsky,<sup>7</sup> although its use never became as common as the names of the larger cities of classical antiquity. Apparently Tivoli did not become a transfer name in other Mediterranean locations such as Spain, and it certainly has not reached Africa or the oriental countries as far as I can discover. Neither can I find that it has been transferred to Australia or New Zealand, despite the English origins of settlements in those nations. Thus there are some questions about the spread and the application of the place-name *Tivoli*, but there is no question about its standing as a prime example of a connotative place-name, particularly associated with pleasure and entertainment.

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<sup>7</sup> Wilbur Zelinsky, "Classical Town Names in the United States: The Historical Geography of an American Idea," *Geographical Review*, vol. 57 (October, 1967), pp. 463–495.