

Notes on the Pronunciation of *Ohio*¹

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ALTHOUGH NOT HIMSELF A LINGUISTIC GEOGRAPHER by profession, Francis Lee Utley deserves to be remembered among those who have contributed to our deeper understanding of variety in American English. He was a personal friend of Kurath and Marckwardt and others; he was an advisor and sometimes Dutch uncle to those of us struggling in the field in the decade following World War II; he took the initiative in finding funds for the field work in Ohio and Kentucky;² and in the last years of his life he was trying to assemble an archive of materials on the speech of Ohio. Always receptive to new ideas, but never bamboozled by passing fads, he could be counted on to provide a note of sanity in the most heated discussions. In editing the *Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States*, my colleagues and I have continually missed both his trenchant criticism and his cheerful encouragement. It is out of recognition of this professional and personal indebtedness that this paper discusses the pronunciation of *Ohio*—the state with which Fran Utley was associated during the greater part of a remarkably productive career.

Along the Atlantic seaboard, the pronunciation of *Ohio* was systematically investigated only in the Middle Atlantic area—New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and border communities in Ontario and Ohio.³ It was also investigated throughout the North-Central States—Wisconsin, Michigan, southwestern Ontario, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and the rest of Ohio, and in several other regional surveys.⁴ This paper treats of the evidence from the Atlantic Seaboard and the North-Central States.⁵

¹ I acknowledge my indebtedness to the American Council of Learned Societies, original sponsors of the plan for a Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada (of which the Middle and South Atlantic States and the North-Central States are two parts), to Hans Kurath, director of LAUSC, and to Albert H. Marckwardt, director of the Atlas of the North-Central States.

² Because of his interest, Ohio State University supported the field work of Alva L. Davis in Ohio, and mine in Ohio and eastern Kentucky.

³ It was included in Lowman's preliminary investigation of the South Atlantic States, but (except for occasional examples from free conversation) dropped from the systematic survey, including the SAS records in southern New Jersey and eastern West Virginia.

⁴ *Ohio* was included in Harold Allen's *Atlas of the Upper Midwest* (Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and border points in Canada); its vowels will be discussed in the third volume (now in press) which treats of pronunciation.

⁵ Although 15 field workers participated in making the 1,600 field records in these two regional surveys, serious discrepancies in transcription are few; in any event, 90 percent of the records were made by two investigators, Lowman and me.

Although *Ohio* has only four segmental phonemes,⁶ it provides evidence on six major pronunciation variables, none of which, by the way, seems to have any social significance, since each is found in all levels of speech. The variables are as follows:

1. Secondary stress on the initial syllable.
2. Secondary stress on the final syllable.⁷
3. The vowel of the first syllable.
4. The quality of the /h/.
5. The vowel of the second syllable.
6. The vowel of the final syllable.

Each of these variables has several possible variants. Without prejudice to the significance of other features, six variants are here discussed:

1. Centralized beginning of /o/ ([əʊ]) in the initial syllable.
2. Replacement of /o/ by /ə/ in the initial syllable.
3. Centralized beginning of /o/ ([əʊ, əʊ]) in the final syllable.
4. Replacement of /o/ by /ə/ in the final syllable.
5. Centralized beginning of /ai/ ([ɛɪ]) in the second syllable.
6. Monophthong or short offglide of /ai/ ([aː, aː^ə, aː^ɪ]) in the second syllable.

In the first syllable, /o/ with a centered beginning ([əʊ]) is most common in Metropolitan New York, central New Jersey, and the Pittsburgh area, with sporadic occurrences in West Virginia and along the Ohio River as far south as the Marietta area. In the North-Central States there is only one example.

The replacement of /o/ by /ə/ is heavily predominant in West Virginia and in adjacent communities in southern Ohio. There are scattered examples in Ontario, New Jersey, northern Pennsylvania, and northeastern Ohio. In the North-Central States it is commonest in Ohio and southeastern Kentucky, but examples are found in every state but Wisconsin.

For the final syllable, the centralized beginning of /o/ is even more frequent in Metropolitan New York than it is for the initial syllable, but far less common in the Pittsburgh area. Conversely, it is fairly common in western New York. There are four scattered examples in the North-Central States.

Final /ə/ is predominant in most of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, but is rare in West Virginia, where /ə/ is predominant in the initial syllable. It is fairly common in Lowman's preliminary records from the South Atlantic States, especially in the Chesapeake Bay area. In the North-

⁶ Here I follow the analysis in Kurath-McDavid 1961, by which /ai/ is treated as a unit phoneme. For this and other matters associated with this paper, see Hans Kurath and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

⁷ Primary stress almost always occurs on the second syllable.

Central States it is predominant south of the area of Yankee settlement, and is found in many communities in Wisconsin, Michigan, and southwestern Ontario.⁸

For the middle syllable, the centralized beginning of /ai/ ([*v*ɪ]) shows a characteristic Yankee pattern—New York State, Ontario, Michigan, and the northern communities of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois (it does not appear in Wisconsin).⁹ Outside this area there are but three occurrences, all in the South Carolina Low-Country.¹⁰

A monophthongal /ai/ or one with a weak offglide [*a*·, *a*·*ə*, *a*·*i*] is clearly a Southern feature, even on the basis of the limited evidence from the South Atlantic States. It is very common in eastern Virginia, North Carolina, the South Carolina Low-Country, and most of Georgia. There is but one example in southwestern Virginia and none in West Virginia. In the North-Central States it is found throughout Kentucky, in the southwestern corner of Ohio, in southern Illinois, and in southwestern Indiana, with single examples in Chicago and in central Michigan.

The vowels in question have been discussed in Kurath-McDavid 1961. The present investigation adds a few details:

1. The areas of concentration of [ɜʊ] and /ə/ are predictable. But the distributions differ from those in other words—and the distribution in the first syllable is not that in the last.

2. Pronunciations characteristic of the North—[ɜʊ, *v*ɪ]¹—are recessive in the North-Central States.

3. Southern influence in South Midland areas is evident in the spread both of final /ə/ and of monophthongization and weakened diphthongization of /ai/, since these features are not common in West Virginia. As Kurath has said for nearly three decades, the relationship between Southern and South Midland is extremely complicated. Before we can make any sure statements we must work through the whole body of evidence—and even then be ready to revise our conclusions.

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⁸ I perhaps undertranscribed, since I often recorded rounded [ɜ], in both initial and final syllables. In this paper, such transcriptions are disregarded.

⁹ The transcription of F.G. Cassidy, who investigated Wisconsin and part of Ohio, is somewhat broader than that, e.g., of Lowman.

¹⁰ In the Low-Country /ai/ often has a centralized beginning finally and before voiced consonants, though much less frequently than before voiceless.





