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TOponYMY RESEARCH AT THE FEDERAL
LEVEL IN CANADA*

Paper presented by Canada

* Paper prepared by Mr. Yeo, Head of the Toponymy Research Section, Toponymy Division, Geographical Services Directorate, Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

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FUNCTION

The Toponymy Research Section is responsible for the acquisition of geographic name information as required by the Toponymy Division, Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. This information is gathered from documentary sources, such as maps, other archival records, and the files of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN); and from field research. Work in the field is conducted in co-operation with the province concerned, and is usually undertaken at a province's request as part of a complete toponymic review programme.

Another related function is the maintenance of reference materials and of origin details on file, in order to provide information on the origin and application of names to inquirers from other government agencies, private industry, and the general public. Since the Toponymy Division acts as the secretariat of the CPCGN, specialists in the Research Section inevitably become involved in processing the submission of names in their areas of expertise.

PROJECTS

Since 1972 work has been performed on the following projects:

Geographical Names of Prince Edward Island

Office research was completed and a published volume on the origin and usage of Island names was produced in time to mark the centennial of this province's entry into Canadian Confederation.

Geographical Names of New Brunswick

Although research had been completed earlier on this project, publication of the resulting toponymy study was delayed until 1975 in favour of the prior appearance of the Prince Edward Island work, and to accompany it with a map reflecting the latest decisions of the Committee.

Geographical Names of Nova Scotia

Field work for this project began in 1972 and was completed in 1974. The processing of the resulting name changes and new name recommendations was finished

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in 1976. In the meantime research has continued in documentary sources and a draft manuscript of a toponymy study should be completed in 1978.

Geographical Names of Northwest Territories

Office research for this project was suspended for some months following the retirement in 1974 of the specialist who had worked on it for many years. Work has since resumed, however, and considerable progress has been made in exploiting new sources of northern name information, particularly with respect to native toponyms. This toponymy study is being prepared without a preliminary over-all field study, an undertaking that would require extensive resources and many man-years to complete. The last major published work on northern toponyms appeared in 1910. The new work should be in draft manuscript form in the early 1980s. It may be necessary to seriously reconsider the scope of this project in light of the intended function to be performed by the resulting publication.

Manitoba Field Research

In 1975 work began on a comprehensive on-the-ground survey of geographical names in Manitoba, in co-operation with the provincial government. The following year the project was stepped up with the addition of another field researcher, under contract, who operated in the northern areas of the province and gained access to remote areas by flying his own aircraft. This work is continuing, and it is expected that the 1977 field season will see this phase of the project completed. Initial steps are being taken to undertake documentary research to complement the field information. It is intended to produce a publication titled Geographical Names of Manitoba in 1981.

A previous publication, issued by the old Geographic Board of Canada, appeared in 1933 under the title Place Names of Manitoba. Since that date another toponymy study was published privately in 1970, and a third is now in the hands of the publisher. However, it is felt that a publication based on the results of field work and the resources of the CPCGN will be a much more definitive work than its predecessors, and will, in addition, fulfil the terms of the original agreement with Manitoba under which the programme was undertaken.

As was expected, field research in the northern areas of Manitoba has resulted in the recording of a large number of Amerindian names for natural features. The problems arising from dialect differences among a number of native languages, none of which has a standard Roman orthography, have led to the formation of operating guidelines for the submission of these names in a suitable form. This form should both provide names for map use and reflect the native toponymy. The additional complexity of this process has been accepted as a necessary part of a field programme in this area.

Other projects

Due to pressures of work the anticipated completion of the Annotated Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names has not been realized. The process of updating the now obsolete Selected Bibliography on Canadian Toponymy (1964) is proceeding slowly, although a proposed plan of using automated text processing methods might produce preliminary results before the end of 1977.

FUTURE PLANS

If field research is to continue as an integral part of our programme it will be necessary to look to new areas. Both British Columbia and Newfoundland have requested information on the requirements and benefits of such work, but as yet no commitment has been made, although both provinces are long overdue for such a programme.

Alternative areas under consideration include national parks, with the intention of producing local toponymy guides similar in scope to those studies produced under the supervision of the Geological Survey of Canada. It may also prove worth while to direct field studies in areas of concentrated new mapping, especially where this activity is to cover a remote region likely to undergo massive development.
