

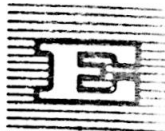
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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

FIELD COLLECTION OF NAMES

Paper submitted by the Government of Canada*

The collection and recording of geographical names by inquiry on the ground is in a much earlier stage of development in Canada than in countries of the Old World. It is also governed by conditions which differ greatly from those in smaller and more densely populated countries, where names have become stabilized over centuries, and municipal authorities know all the geographic names within their boundaries, and are, in effect, field survey agencies, reporting changes to central administrations. In Canada, even in more settled areas, long distances extend between communities, and vast hinterlands lie beyond main transport routes. Municipal authorities have little knowledge of the toponyms of the extensive, sparsely settled reaches beyond their communities.

Maps reflect similar differences. In Canada, a map at a scale of 1:50,000 is considered to be a large scale map; in Europe, a large scale map is more apt to be considered one at 1:10,000 or 1:5,000. A significant difference occurs in the degree of ground examination lavished on a map at 1:5,000 scale and one at 1:50,000 scale, and the examination of toponyms in each case is likely to be proportionate.

The collection of geographic names is closely related to the development of map coverage. Basic mapping in Canada is still far from complete even at a scale such as 1:50,000, which would be a medium scale in Europe. Revision of such maps in Canada has taken second place to the effort to extend the initial coverage of areas still unmapped at this scale. Consequently, the original collection of map names exhibited on a map produced thirty years previously may not have been rechecked since.

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A review of the way in which geographic names have been accumulated in association with field survey work for geologic and topographic map-making is necessary to understand the reasons why Canadian toponymists feel that under the conditions obtaining in Canada the field collection of geographic names should now be conducted as intensive studies by specially qualified workers.

I. THE COLLECTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN CANADA AS A FUNCTION OF MAP MAKING

Maps were centralizers and exhibitors of geographic names before gazetteers were conceived. The systematic mapping of any country has invariably been paralleled by an increasing accumulation of toponyms.

In Canada, officially sponsored geologic survey work began in 1842, and the Geological Survey of Canada produced its first report and an accompanying map in 1863. Until the formation of the Topographical Survey Branch in 1906, the field geologists were important collectors of geographical names in the course of their work. Hydrographic surveys of earlier date also contributed to the store. Subsequently, government topographers expanded mapping programmes, until today the entire country from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the American border to the north pole is mapped at a scale of 1:250,000. Each of the 917 maps making up this coverage carries its quota of geographic names collected by explorers, hydrographers, geologists and topographers.

Most of the names so accumulated were obtained by simple, uncritical inquiry. Field officers were preoccupied by the tasks relating to their specific disciplines. Some demonstrated a real interest in geographic names, and annotated this phase of their reports with background material. Generally, and this is true up to the present day, field engineers doing field survey have little time or inclination to do more than a minimum of checking on toponyms. This becomes evident when the results of reports on the geographic names of a given area by survey officers, primarily concerned with topography, geology or hydrography, are compared with those by trained toponymists. Amplification of this conclusion will be found later on in this paper.

It should be noted that this statement is not intended to disparage or minimize the contribution which the field survey officers have made to the collection of Canadian names. Our maps exhibit several hundred thousand which, under the circumstances of Canada's development, could have been assembled in no other way. It has become evident to students of toponymy, however, that the collection and evaluation of geographic names need more intensive investigation, more refined techniques and more informed knowledge than can be expected in field officers primarily responsible for other duties. This is not only true when it concerns names in a language with which the investigator is thoroughly at home, but much more true when names to be recorded are derived from languages with which he has little or no familiarity.

II. THE COLLECTION OF GEOGRAPHIC NAMES IN CANADA AS A FUNCTION OF TOPONYMY

A. Governmental

The interest of the government of Canada in collecting geographic names as indicated by the work of field surveyors in various disciplines has already been mentioned. The survey officers of provincial governments have also contributed in the same way.

Canada established a Geographic Board in 1897, charged with responsibility for all matters relating to geographic names. While this Board, now called the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, has been active during the past seventy-five years in the investigating, recording and publishing of names, it has only recently become directly involved in true field collection operations.

It has published many extensive reports on various aspects of toponymy, and is responsible for the Gazetteer of Canada Series, but while many of the names in these publications originated from reports by a wide variety of persons, official and private, representing data gathered in situ, no publication was fully supported by anything representing a systematic field survey prior to 1964. In this year a study entitled "The Geographical Names of Renfrew County" was issued which fulfilled the requisites of a complete field examination, complemented by adequate documentary research. This study was carried out by a geographer, Alan Rayburn, who has specialized in toponymic work for the past decade. Mr. Rayburn did this work as a member of the secretariat of the Canadian Committee. 1/

The Renfrew study

This study covered an area of approximately 3,000 square miles, located in the eastern part of the province of Ontario. One hundred and fifty interviews were necessary to cover the 2,800 names dealt with. The information obtained from the people interviewed was recorded for further reference. The author wrote a report of this study which was published as Geographical Paper No. 40 entitled "Geographical names of Renfrew County".

1/ The Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, composed of federal and provincial members, has derived staff support from various departments during its history. At the present time, this supporting agency is the Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. As relationships are rather involved, for convenience, this paper refers to the Permanent Committee only as the responsible toponymic authority. The executive secretary of the Committee functions also as the chief of the Division of Toponymy of the Surveys and Mapping Branch.

The results of the Renfrew study are summarized as follows in the conclusion of the report:

Previously unrecorded local names: 770

Unrecorded local names differing from formerly approved names: 89

Names still used and reinstated for which substitutes had been formerly approved: 37

Spelling errors: 28

Names misapplied on maps: 19

Features with approved names unknown locally, and without alternatives: 12

This study was followed by one of much greater magnitude, the field examination of the geographical names of an entire province.

The New Brunswick study

This second toponymic study, which examined all geographic names in an area of 28,000 square miles, began in 1966 and was completed in 1969.

It was conducted by the same field officer who carried out the Renfrew study. Techniques employed were similar, but refinements were introduced as a result of lessons learned.

The objectives were:

(a) To confirm the correctness of the names shown on existing maps and marine charts of the province. A complete topographic coverage at the 1:50,000 scale was available;

(b) To discover names not known to the Committee which might be in local use;

(c) To accumulate such data on origins, history and language aspects as might be disclosed in the course of completing (a) and (b).

Results obtained

This comprehensive study proved to be a major contribution to the standardization of the geographic names of New Brunswick. The map coverage at the initiation of the study displayed about 7,000 names. The field examination produced 14,000. Twenty per cent of the names shown on the maps proved inaccurate in respect to spelling, application or conformity to local usage.

Substantial name revisions have resulted in maps produced since completion of the survey and more remain to be incorporated on later maps.

Background information suitable for an annotated gazetteer was collected respecting 4,000 names. This will shortly be published.

The Gazetteer of New Brunswick will be issued in a revised edition with a 100 per cent increase in name volume provided by the survey.

A third field study was initiated in the summer of 1970 and completed in the summer of 1971. This encompassed the province of Prince Edward Island, an area of 2,184 square miles.

The office analysis of this work is still in progress, but there is reason to believe that the results will be proportionately comparable to that of New Brunswick in respect to new names found, amendments to existing map names, corrections to spellings and to feature identifications.

Projected studies

A field examination of the geographic names of the province of Nova Scotia is planned to begin in the latter part of 1972.

B. Studies conducted by non-federal organizations

Besides studies conducted at the Federal Government level, other organizations have shown great interest in similar projects.

Field investigations by the Quebec Geographical Commission

The province of Quebec, through its official body which deals with all questions concerning geographical names within the province, has undertaken field studies in different areas of Quebec.

In 1968, the results of a toponymic study of Metropolitan Montreal were published in a 225 page report entitled Toponymie de la région métropolitaine de Montréal in which the spelling, the historical background, the correct application and the local usage of the names are given. The introduction of this report states the objectives of the study: "L'enquête sur le terrain vise à deux objectifs. Elle permet d'abord de vérifier l'usage des toponymes sur les cartes topographiques et de recueillir des renseignements. L'enquête sur le terrain reste aussi le seul moyen de recueillir les toponymes nouveaux et de détecter les toponymes oubliés sur les cartes."

Other regional studies were conducted by the Quebec Geographical Commission; one in the Sherbrooke area and another in northern Quebec. These two regional studies resulted in the correction of the names on the maps of the Sherbrooke area and added 500 Eskimo names to the nomenclature of Quebec.

C. Non-governmental investigations conducted at Laval University -
Quebec City

Toponymic research is well organized at Laval University. A "Groupe d'étude de choronymie et de terminologie géographique" has been established and there exists a marked interest in toponymic research. A master thesis based on field investigation of names was accepted by Laval University in 1961.

In 1965, Les noms de lieux de la Beauce was published by l'Institut de géographie de l'Université Laval. This 100 page publication contains approximately 800 names which were confirmed on survey plans, old maps and by local interviews.

In 1967, les Presses de l'université Laval published Les noms de lieux montagnais des environs de Mingan. In this publication, 137 ameridian names of the Mingan area are listed with their pronounciation and meaning. This information was obtained in the field. Similar studies are projected by linguists and geographers of that university and eventually all geographic names of the province of Quebec will be investigated.

III. FIELD STUDY PLANNING AND TECHNIQUES

Based on Canadian experience, it may be stated that the conduct of effective field collections of geographic names requires the following:

1. The employment of personnel qualified in the science of toponymy
2. The existence of a suitable cartographic coverage of the area to be examined
3. A preliminary study of the names on the existing maps, and of available documentation respecting them
4. An examination of contemporary material, such as newspapers, magazines, travel guides and tourist literature
5. The actual inspection of all physical features
6. The extensive use of local interviews
7. Record accumulation using map notation and tape-recorders
8. Adequate transport
9. Establishment of a base of operations convenient to the chief local governmental administration where co-operation in access to records of all kinds affecting the geographic names to be examined may be obtained

10. Interviews directed towards:
 - (a) verifying local use
 - (b) checking local agreement with map names
 - (c) verifying feature identification
 - (d) checking accuracy of spellings
 - (e) checking pronunciations
 - (f) ascertaining previously unrecorded names
 - (g) determining the existence of conflicting usages
 - (h) conducting enough interviews in any area to preclude bias
11. Check results of field survey against local administrative and archival records.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the work done in the field collection of geographic names in Canada, it may be concluded:

1. That no substitute exists for a comprehensive field examination of toponyms
 2. That such work requires personnel trained in the science of toponymy and geography and capable of planning and executing the surveys
 3. That geographic names on maps, derived as a by-product of the work of the land surveyor, the geologist or others, is likely to be incomplete and inaccurate in many respects
 4. That the examination of large geographic areas may be accomplished within a practical economic framework in a relatively brief time, if well planned and conducted by qualified personnel.
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