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FIELD GEOGRAPHIC NAMES REPORTS - SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONS*

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FIELD GEOGRAPHIC NAMES REPORTS

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONS

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Based on the cumulative experience of the many field men who have engaged in the investigation of geographic names over a period of years, the procedure for making geographic names reports outlined here has been found to be effective. A procedure for making the field investigation itself is contained in an accompanying article, "Field Work in the U.S.C. & G.S.," reprinted from NAMES, September, 1954.

Format and General Content of Report (Title Page, Table of Contents, etc.)

The report should be typewritten, and should contain all the pertinent information about geographic names in the project area, as gleaned from the field investigation. A title page should be included and should contain the project number, general table of contents, etc. This page should be signed by the person who compiled the report and the chief of the field party.

Kind and General Layout of Name Sheets in Report

The report should be accompanied by maps showing the location and extent of application of each and every geographic name found to be in local usage. A quadrangle or grid layout should be marked on the sheets, and these minor divisions should be identified by separate numbers. If at all practicable, the maps should be bound in with the report.

It is preferable that a uniform set covering the entire project area be used for submitting the names. In some places this presents no problem, as there may be earlier topographic quadrangles covering the area. In many cases, however, this kind of earlier map coverage may be entirely lacking or only partial. In this event, the person preparing the report should use what he deems the best map set or combination of maps. In some areas combinations of nautical charts and County Highway maps are used, the former for coastal quadrangles and the latter for those inland. Sometimes, certain features have to be drawn on the maps (e.g. on County Highway maps) from field photographs so that the location of the features named may be properly shown.

List of Name Sheets

A list of the name sheet bound in with the report should be included. Sometimes these sheets are given letter identification (A,B,etc.), which is indicated in the list.

Auxilliary Use of Field Photographs

The investigator should compare the maps he uses for his
investigation and for the report with aerial photographs, if
they are available. It is recognized that often such photos
are in use by other types of parties at the time of the invest-
igation or preparation of the report. However, the investigator
should make some sort of arrangement with these parties for the
borrowing of these photographs for the brief time he needs them.

Inking Names on Maps

Inking the names on the maps to be submitted in the
report should be done in red and black ink, black for base-
map names and red for new or disputing names (disputing names
should be in parenthesis near the names they dispute.)

Contents of Main Body of Report

The main part of the report should contain sections indi-
cated: Undisputed Base-map Names, Disputed Base-map Names,
Undisputed New Names, and Disputed New Names. Base-map Names
are those taken from some published source, and New Names are
those picked up by the field investigation. The names in each
section should be arranged alphabetically, and altogether they
should include the entirety of geographic names investigated
in the area.

Undisputed Base-Map Names

The first list should contain all names taken from other
published sources (Principally Federal maps), which were
found to be undisputed in local usage. The local sources
verifying it should follow the listing of each and every name.

Disputed Base-Map Names

The second list should include all other published names
which were found to be disputed in local use. The published
name should be listed first, with the disputing names thereunder,
and the verifyers for each should follow each respective name.
The investigator should indicate which name he recommends.

Undisputed New Names

The third list should contain all previously unpublished
names found in local usage, and captioned "Undisputed New
Names." Verifications should follow each name.

Disputed New Names

The fourth and last list should comprize new names which

were found in dispute locally, and labeled "Disputed New Names." The evidence supporting each name should be shown with the name in the report. This is done by a single code system which will be explained.

Correlation of Data in Report and on Name Sheets

Only the names should be shown on the map sheets submitted in the report. As mentioned before, whether a name is shown in black or red will indicate whether it is a base-map name or a new name respectively. Underlining and the presence of disputing names in parenthesis will indicate if a name is disputed. The report will show the supporting evidence for each name as it is listed under the respective headings above. The quad or sub-area number should accompany every name in the report, for purposes of identification.

Street Names in Towns

If there are towns with street names in the project area, a map showing the major street names should be obtained for each town, if possible. It is well to check the authenticity of these maps with town officials. These maps should be bound in the report also, but the street names should not be listed.

Road and Bridge Names

Local road names and names of bridges should be shown on the maps and listed along with the other geographic names in the report.

Schools, Churches, and Cemeteries

Names of churches, schools, and cemeteries, however, should not be treated in the report or on the maps. They are ephemeral by nature and should be named on the field-inspection photographs, and will be accepted in this manner. Accordingly, the party doing the field inspection should be careful to get the correct names for these places insofar as possible.

List of Local Residents Consulted

A list of local residents consulted in the field investigation of geographic names should be included in the report. The address, occupation, and years of local knowledge with respect to place names should be included with the name of each person consulted. The list should be numbered (with Arabic numbers), and the number assigned each person should appear in the body of the report behind each name he verifies.

Personal Verifications in Report

The listing of three of the Arabic numbers behind each undisputed base-map or new name in the body of the report is usually considered sufficient. In the case of disputes more verifications should appear and the verification numbers should appear,and the verification numbers should appear behind each disputing name.

Published Verifications in Report

If local published sources (purely local maps, official records of countries, etc.) are used, the report should include a list of them, identified by Roman numerals. Just one numeral should identify all the preliminary sheets sent from the Washington office, and just one for all road signs. Like the Arabic numbers, these numerals should appear in the report behind each name they verify.

Symbols and Symbol List

A list of other symbols used in the report should be included. This would include the use of "R" for the recommended name in cases of conflict, "Y" to indicate "years" following the number of years a name has been in local use, "W" to indicate that a name is widespread in local use, and "N" for narrow, limited usage. "D" is often used to indicate a name is descriptive, and "F" is used if the name is of family origin. These symbols should be used in the body of the report behind the names to which they apply. Samples of how all these listings should appear in the report are included in the accompanying article "Field Work in the U.S.C. & G.S.," p. 157 to p. 160, reprinted from NAMES, Vol. II, No. 3, September, 1954.

Limits of Project and Instructions

A small sketch showing the limits of the project and the quad layout should be included, and a note at the beginning of the report as to the instructions authorizing the investigation is advisable.

Outline of Report

The parts of the report just discussed should appear roughly in the order below:

1. Title page (with table of contents).
2. Sketch or description depicting limits and quad layout of project.
3. List of name sheets and town maps.

4. Key to symbols in report.
5. List of local residents consulted.
6. List of published sources consulted.
7. Undisputed base-map names.
8. Disputed base-map names
9. Undisputed new names.
10. Disputed new names.
11. Name sheets - maps bound in report if possible.

Short Reports

In the case of very short reports for small areas some of the above may be condensed. It has been found that this type of format is flexible, and can be adjusted to the many different kinds of projects which are likely to be encountered.

tion. It is recognized that names are dynamic, subject to possible change with the passing of time. It logically follows that field checking in some areas where there is substantial agreement among published sources may uncover startling changes in the nomenclature.

In spite of the need for field investigation of names, systematic work actually accomplished to the present has been short of the desired amount, and has been spotty. The Coast and Geodetic Survey is one of the map-making agencies which has given the most serious attention to this very important phase of names investigation. This Bureau effects its field work on names in the following manner.

When an area is scheduled for shoreline, planimetric, or topographic mapping by the Coast and Geodetic Survey, the regular procedure provides for a geographic names investigation. In the Washington office, where an abundance of published source material is available, preliminary name sheets are prepared to be sent to the field for the investigation. These sheets are maps on which are registered the results of the comparison of names on all available published source material for the area. This includes the various charts, maps, coast pilots, etc., published by the Coast and Geodetic Survey (including its own original surveys), all other maps and publications by other Federal agencies, such as topographic quadrangles, soils maps, post route maps, forest and reservation maps, postal guides, light lists, etc., state and county highway maps, railway guides, state guides, atlases, etc. Conflicts found to exist are shown on these preliminary sheets, as well as all names from the entirety of the sources. Record of these names and their sources is kept on special forms in Washington, and the preliminary sheets are sent to the party working in the area as a guide for the names investigation in the field. These sheets usually comprise the best set of previously published maps for the area. They are generally adequate enough to show with reasonable clarity the location of each name, as well as roads and other detail.

A man trained in the techniques of names investigation uses these sheets in his field work. His is the problem of checking with residents of the area each and every name for its correctness in application and form. All cases of conflict are his to resolve as far as local authority is concerned, including those which arise

during the process of the investigation. It is his duty, also, to obtain all previously unpublished names which he finds to be well established in local usage. To accomplish these charges with a maximum of thoroughness and efficiency requires careful planning, good judgment, experience in the art of interview, and a familiarity with problems peculiar to domestic place names.

His first task is to plan his work to obtain the maximum of efficiency. A vehicle is placed at his disposal, so he tentatively plans a course to follow which he decides will net the best results. He endeavors to route himself so that he will reach key points as close as possible to all names in the area. Such points as wharves, landings, villages, and residences located near prominent natural features are usually among those selected. He does not forget to include the various county and state offices in or near the area, as well as resident offices of public reservations.

If at all possible he starts his work at a county seat. Here he checks with various county officers names throughout the county. Usually only the widely-known names are checked here, such as those of the larger villages, rivers, etc., as these people may not know the names of small features in remote parts of the county. Some, however, often show a surprisingly detailed knowledge of certain parts of the area. The County Surveyor or Engineer is one who is sure to be contacted. In addition to a good knowledge of the county gained from his work, this officer is likely to have authentic local maps of parts of the area, which may contain valuable names information. The County Clerk, County Agent, County Assessor, and Registrar of Deeds are usually interviewed. Their duties tend to afford them a good knowledge of the county. Records in these offices, such as plat books, official and legal documents, etc., are checked, and usually supply valuable information. The immediate vicinity around the county seat is covered in detail with these people, and recommendations as to well-informed residents throughout the entire area are sought. Local libraries and archives are visited, where old maps and books showing early application and forms of certain names are sometimes found. Often these are the only copies in existence of such sources. They serve frequently to establish the persistence of certain names, and are valuable in cases of conflict.

As he proceeds with these interviews and local research, the

investigator records the information gathered. This is effected directly on the preliminary sheets insofar as possible. In a small notebook he lists the name of and pertinent information about each person interviewed. This includes, in addition to his name and address, his occupation and the length of his local experience in relation to place names. Such information may serve later to give weight to the interviewee's testimony. The listings are numbered consecutively, and the number assigned to each person is used to identify on the map each name he verifies. Any new names supplied, or conflicting names offered, are placed on the map, followed by numbers identifying the verifiers. Conflicting names are usually placed in parenthesis directly under the names they challenge. Local maps, as well as official and legal documents and court records, are often assigned Roman numerals to separate them from personal consultees. These, too, are placed after the names they verify.

Although the purpose of the field investigation is to ascertain the correctness of names as to application and form, an attempt is made to determine the origin of the names, where this does not interfere with the efficiency of the investigation. Very often the interviewee will volunteer such information. Notes are made concerning this phase in the notebook, but often it is included after the name on the sheet. If the name is ascertained as being descriptive of the feature, a "D," indicating "descriptive," is placed after it. If it comes from a local family name, an "F" is marked, indicating "family." Various other symbolization is used from time to time for rapid and convenient recording of this information. This knowledge proves itself valuable at times in later answering inquiries about names or in cases of conflict. For example, an earthen mound in eastern North Carolina was named after a Stone family. The field man discovered this and indicated it on his sheet. Later, when the question arose as to the application of the final "s," this bit of information figured in solving the matter. The "s" was retained in honor of the family name and to differentiate it from the purely descriptive "Stone Hill." The omission of the apostrophe is a matter of strict policy.

The investigator does his best to gather as much information as he can about names without undue use of time. Often he goes to the extent of trying to find out roughly how long some names

have been in local use. This information, too, can be of help in cases of conflict or subsequent inquiry. He records this after the name merely by showing the number of years followed by a "Y." He may even give a general indication as to how widely the name is known. For example, if a peculiar feature in a remote part of the area is known well by people in the distant county seat, it indicates that the name is widely known. He shows this with a "W." Conversely, limited knowledge of a name is indicated by "N."

This information is gathered in surprisingly rapid time by the field man. He states his problem to the interviewee, and, with the map in front of him, proceeds name by name. He endeavors to glean from the interview the exact spelling and placement of each name, as well as its extent of application. He asks about various features which he thinks may have local identification, in an effort to collect all heretofore unpublished names. He makes sure that each name is verified by at least three local residents. In cases of conflict, of course, he goes further. As he proceeds with interviews he records the data. A typical entry of an undisputed name on his sheet would look something like the following:

MURKY CREEK – II – 1–4–5– D – 45Y – W.

The II indicates that the name was found on an official boundary description at the county courthouse, which source is so marked in his notebook. The remainder shows that the name is verified by three local people, that it is descriptive of the feature, that it has been in local usage at least 45 years, and that it is widely known. The information is recorded as the interview proceeds. It takes very little time, yet it shows a great deal about the name.

After he has gathered all possible information at the county seat, the investigator starts work along a route previously planned. He has a list of local people recommended to him at the county seat, and plans to visit them as he proceeds along his route. However, he does not lose sight of his basic intention of interviewing residents as close as possible to all potentially named features.

Attention is given to the kind of local resident sought for interview. Boatsmen and fishermen familiar with local waters are excellent sources for information about names of features along watercourses or the coast, whereas hunters, trappers, woodsmen, and real estate dealers usually prove good informants about in-

land areas. Often such people are found at local wharves or country stores. If interviews are conducted at these places, care is taken to talk to each person separately. Interviewing several informants at once carries the danger of really getting the knowledge of only one man, as invariably one becomes the leader, and the others become assentors.

During the course of the interview the informant himself is checked as to the value of the information he is giving. The same feature may be asked about at several different times. If he gives a different name for this place each time, there is obviously some doubt as to the value of his local knowledge. Often a resident appears to know a great deal more than he actually does. If his knowledge is found to be undependable, the total of his contribution is later erased from the map and notes. Care is taken, of course, not to do this in his presence. At all times courtesy is practiced to the utmost.

Wild tales about the origin of some names are often taken with the proverbial "grain of salt." Many of them are interesting and colorful, but do not contain much of the element of truth. Certain names invite the use of the imagination. The name Sheps End, for example, for a feature on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, carries with it a number of interesting stories. One is that a man by the name of Shep opened a tavern there and drank himself to death. Another is that Mr. Shep met his end there in a duel defending a lady's honor. The only truth in the stories is that the name came from that of Mr. Shep, an early settler in the vicinity. The term "End" was found to have arisen specifically from the location and morphology of the feature. Actually Mr. Shep was a total abstainer, and died a natural death at the ripe old age of 93. However, local people are serious when they relate these stories, so they are heard with patience. Care is practiced to accept only those which are authentic.

The interview is always kept under control by the field man. He orients his map at the outset, so that places visible from where he is can be identified easily. Whenever possible he actually points toward features while inquiring about them. He is careful when an informant points to places on the map, as many are not skilled in map reading, and may misidentify features. Occasionally he may even take certain residents with him in his vehicle to visit questionable features. What he cannot see from the place of inter-

view or visit with the informant, he inquires about through an imaginary journey. This technique has proven itself very effective. For example, if he talks with a fisherman at a river landing, and there are a number of points along the stream which they cannot see nor visit, he asks the man to assume that they are moving upstream from the landing in a boat. The investigator likely asks what the name is for the first creek seen entering from the left. It is probably identified as Jones Creek. He may then ask what the name is for the point just above the mouth of this creek. It may be Pine Tree Point. The name and location of features are thus rapidly and accurately checked by this technique. Such imaginary journeys can be taken along trails through woodlands and through other remote areas. The interview is thus always under the investigator's control, and identification of features and proper placement of names are assured.

Care is taken in ascertaining the spelling of names. Usually local residents can supply names for features, but at times they are not certain about the spelling. Occasionally they are asked to write out certain names, but often spelling/is checked against legal and official records. Tax records, public laws, plat books, and legal boundary descriptions prove valuable in this respect, as well as local (noncommercial) signs, local histories, and historical markers. The spelling of Pollocksville, North Carolina, was eventually settled when a special law, passed specifically to establish the "style and form" of the name, was uncovered. This ended a long-standing controversy.

In extreme cases, where the spelling of a family name is in doubt and is no longer found in county records, local graveyards are visited and the spelling on headstones is examined. One such case was that of a prominent point on Pamlico River in North Carolina, where the spelling of the name had long been in a state of confusion among various sources. It appeared in print, or was given by local residents, as Archibald, Archbald, Archball, or Archbell Point. That the name referred back to an early settler at the point was well established. The discrepancy rose out of how his name was spelled. Headstones in an old local graveyard at the point finally established the spelling with clear definition as Archbell.

The possibility of improperly recording apparently simple names is recognized. Accordingly, attention is given to peculiarities in local pronunciation. Errors, such as the one made in the case of

Paukie Island, south of Charleston, S.C., are thus avoided. The name of this island was obtained from local residents, and the pronunciation sounded like "Porky." It seemed simple and clear enough to the original recorder, so, without further check, he showed it as "Porky Island." It appeared as such on maps for a number of years, until a later more thorough investigation revealed the spelling as "Paukie."

When the pronunciation of a name is markedly different from the spelling, the field man makes a note of it. For example, the name "Horry" in South Carolina had an unusual pronunciation. The investigator indicated this in brackets after the name in the following manner: [pron: ō-REE]. Other such valuable bits of information are included on the sheets when deemed advisable. The sheets are not cluttered up by such notes if the investigator is reasonably neat in his work.

Record of such sources as road signs, alluded to above, is made on the sheets in the same manner as for official and legal documents, with Roman numerals. Often the investigator tacks his sheets on a board, to facilitate the making of notations. Invariably he prints, and usually in clear characters. Possibilities of misinterpretation are kept at a minimum.

Where heretofore published names and new names are not disputed, three or four local verifications are considered sufficient to establish their authenticity. In cases of dispute, however, the investigation is carried much further. Informants and records are checked until it is certain that local sources have been exploited to the extent that a good picture of the situation is gained. Usually when this is done one name stands out as preferred. A typical entry on the sheet concerning a disputed name may look like the following:

FOUL CREEK – III – 8 – D – ?Y
   (LARSEN CREEK) – I–II–IV – 3–4–5–6–7–9–10 – 60Y – F – W
   (Larsen Ldg. at mouth).

In this case, the name Foul Creek was in unanimous agreement among published sources available in Washington. However, in the field only one recorded source (an old local map found in a library – III) and one local informant (a very old resident – 8) verified the name. Instead, the name Larsen Creek was shown for the feature on three local recorded sources (I–II–IV: Official bound-

ary descriptions, county plat books, and local road signs) and was verified by at least seven local residents. Moreover, it was ascertained that the latter name had been in use for at least 60 years, derived from the name of the family who established a landing at the mouth. Although the name "Foul" was ascertained as being descriptive of the feature, the name "Larsen" appeared as better known and much more widely used. In the matter of wide usage, people many miles distant from the feature verified the name. Even people near the head of the creek were consulted, to make sure that the name applied throughout the entire length of the feature, and not merely to the mouth near the landing of the same name.

Such disputes arise with new names as well as with published ones. Along the Neuse River in North Carolina a group of previously unnamed features in the river were called by different sets of names on opposite sides of the river. The investigation had to be carried to considerable extent, and to widely scattered groups of people, before a clear picture was gained. At length one set of names stood out as preferred. In such cases care is exercised to get a fair and just sampling of local knowledge. The best methods of area sampling are employed.

There is seldom any evidence of lack of local cooperation in these investigations. Residents are usually glad to help, and many go to great lengths to assist the investigator. Well-informed people are not hard to find. Many mention others who are local authorities, so that a substantial list of potential informants is never lacking. Frequently local interest can be aroused about certain controversial names while the investigator is on the spot, and a crystallization of opinion is effected. Such was the case of St. Croix Island in the St. Croix River, Maine. Most published sources showed the name Dochet Island. However, the field investigator working there in 1946 found that local people felt that St. Croix was correct and should be used. With the aid of a local historian and the local newspaper he was able to ascertain the full force of local opinion and effect the proper charting of the name as St. Croix Island.

Local enthusiasts are found quite frequently, and their aid is enlisted by field investigators. Their cooperation is always wholehearted, and what they have to offer is often invaluable. An authority like the late Lewis A. McArthur was always contacted by

Coast and Geodetic Survey field parties working in Oregon, and his consultation was always beneficial. People who have made a hobby of being authorities on local names are sought out in these investigations, and the products of their painstaking work are used.

Even along the Arctic coast of Alaska local cooperation was found to be good, and the procedure outlined here was followed with success. Extremely cooperative and very intelligent Eskimos were found in almost every village, and their information contributed greatly to the charting of the nomenclature. Although the procedure described in this article is designed specifically for domestic areas, it is believed that it could be used in all types of regions.

These investigations usually proceed steadily and rapidly. In any one of them, resident after resident is interviewed, and new names are gathered and disputes resolved in the process. It is continued until the area involved is completely traversed and the investigation is consummated.

After the names have thus been covered thoroughly in any particular project, and the investigator is satisfied that he has gathered and recorded the information adequately, his data is prepared for final submission. He makes the sheets as neat as possible, usually inking in the information, and he works his notes into presentable form as well, sometimes arranging them into a short report. These he sends to the Washington office, where the information shown on the sheets and in the notes is recorded on the special forms for names filed there, and supplements the data from published sources already shown thereon.

Thus field work contributes a great deal to the overall process of names investigation. It completes the information necessary for applying names to new maps and selecting the right ones in cases of conflict. It helps to avoid the loss of respect for a map or chart which inevitably arises when the names information is incomplete or inaccurate. Very often users judge maps largely by the names, since that is the one aspect they know and can check. Field work is the vital phase closest to the soil from which names grow. It is the most fascinating part of names investigation. It seeks and records what is handed down for generations by word of mouth, much like mores are codified into laws. The Coast and Geodetic Survey has long recognized this critical phase, has consistently made field investigations, and has conducted them carefully, in recognition of their distinctive importance.