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GAZETTEERS: NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

The National Gazetteer of the United States of America**

Paper presented by the United States of America

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** Prepared by Donald J. Orth, Executive Secretary for Domestic Names, United States Board on Geographic Names.

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SUMMARY

The U.S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names is publishing a series of State, territory, and other listings of geographic names collectively titled "The National Gazetteer of the United States of America." Original page copy of each gazetteer is computer generated. Separate volumes of the National Gazetteer are identified by principal geographic area or topic and year. Each volume will be revised periodically and information in the National Gazetteer may be kept up-to-date between revisions by noting appropriate changes and new entries published in the reports of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Gazeteeres for the States of New Jersey and Delaware will be published in 1982. The program also includes an abridged gazetteer for the entire United States listing about 40,000 major population areas, physical features, and civil divisions.

This paper provides background information on the history of the gazetteer program along with information on the format and substance of the work. A list of feature designators and their definitions is also provided.
Places, features, and areas on the Earth's surface are identified by name and position. If one knows the position of a place and not its name, a map is a good document to use to learn more about it. However, a map may be inconvenient to use if only a name is known but not a location. It is much more convenient to look for a place in an alphabetical list of names. Such lists exist in a variety of sources such as indexes to atlases or postal guides. The best kind of list to use, however, is a relatively complete gazetteer or geographical dictionary of a particular natural or political area.

A distinction is made between a gazetteer and geographical dictionary in accordance with the definitions established by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Both are normally alphabetical listings of geographical names in an area, but the former focuses on location and feature identification, while the latter places emphasis on name origin and meaning and possibly history of the place, feature, or area.

Gazetteers and maps are corollary to each other, a relationship that has endured since early times. Five of the seven books of Ptolemy's "Geography" were devoted to the listing of about 8,000 place names with corresponding latitude and longitude of each place. The remaining two books provide instruction on map construction. Both gazetteers and maps can exist separately, but together they form an unparalleled geographical reference system.
During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, gazetteers and geographical dictionaries were privately published in the United States of America to meet the needs of an expanding nation. In 1892, with the support of the newly organized U.S. Board on Geographic Names and as part of its mapping program, the United States Geological Survey began cataloging geographical names and planned to produce a series of State gazetteers "designed as an aid in finding any geographic feature upon the atlas sheets published by the Geological Survey." One of the Survey's responsibilities was the preparation and maintenance of the base map series of the Nation's lands and waters. Compilation of the gazetteers was initially done by Henry Gannett, the first Chief Geographer of the Survey. Gannett was also Chairman of the Board on Geographic Names from 1894 until his death in 1914. Gazetteers for 12 States, Puerto Rico, Territory of Alaska, and Indian Territory (Oklahoma) were published between 1894 and 1906. Large-scale topographic mapping, from which the name information for the gazetteers was derived, however, is a slow process and inadequate map coverage led to the discontinuation of the program.

Although the Board on Geographic Names published lists of its decisions throughout the years, the United States Government did not again get involved with gazetteer work until the 1940s when lists of foreign places and their locations were compiled. Since 1949, the Board has published 175 volumes of geographic names for areas outside the United States. During the last 20 years, however, there has been increasing demand from the public for a relatively complete listing of our own Nation's places, features, and areas. A standard geographical-name reference is needed by all levels of government; educational institutions such as libraries; industry, transportation, and communications;
publishing houses; and by scientists and other researchers. The Board on Geographic Names was also aware over the years that a gazetteer series listing official geographical names would provide an excellent tool to meet its mandate to standardize names for use throughout the Federal Government. From about 1955 to 1970, over 135 known attempts, costing several million dollars, were made by various Federal and State agencies and business organizations to develop geographical-name files to meet particular needs. Such files were limited in completeness and application. Many persons expressed their opinion that a single, complete, unbiased file was needed as a geographical base for a variety of users and looked to the Federal Government for help in developing and maintaining a master file of about three to five million domestic geographical names. Since the Board on Geographic Names is not funded, the Geological Survey considered and agreed to undertake such a program. The Survey is responsible for providing staff support for the domestic names activities of the Board on Geographic Names and such a program would be compatible with its mapping missions. After publication of "Delaware Place Names" in 1966 and the "Dictionary of Alaska Place Names" for the Alaska Centennial in 1967, the Survey looked into the possibility of compiling and publishing a gazetteer series. A special study was made by the Survey to evaluate the need, use, content, and method for producing a national gazetteer. The study strongly recommended not only a gazetteer program but also the need for a total geographic names information system to meet a variety of user requirements. The study recommended that:

1. A multipurpose file should contain all known geographic names, including present day, historical, obsolete, and minor feature names, used for a place, feature, or area of the United States.

2. All name information should be stored in a computer.

3. A flexible system should be developed for easy use. One that will allow geographical name information to be retrieved, manipulated, and arranged to meet a variety of user requirements.

4. The system should be able to provide a variety of listings in the form of computer printouts, magnetic tapes, and microfiche to meet both informational and standardization needs.

5. A primary product should be a standard gazetteer series. Once the data base and system are operational, gazetteer production becomes an easy and relatively inexpensive task.

6. Each name record should contain the following minimum information:

   a. Name.
   b. Designator (kind of feature).
   c. State and county in which feature is located.
   d. Geographical coordinates to nearest second for locating and defining feature.
   e. Official status of name and its application.
   f. Variant names used for feature.
   g. Location of feature in reference to a standard map series.
   h. Board on Geographic Names decision with date.
In the early 1970s, the Geographic Names Information System was developed by the Survey in accordance with these recommendations.

Storage, maintenance, and retrieval of information in the data base are handled by a data base management system called GIPSY (General Information Processing System). The Survey began preliminary work on the data base in 1976, a time when published large-scale topographic maps were available covering more than 70 percent of the country. In a pilot project, the University of Oklahoma collected and recorded in machine-readable form the names published on the Survey's maps covering the States of Kansas and Colorado. In the fall of 1978, Automated Datatron, Incorporated (ADI) of Washington, D.C. was awarded a contract to collect and record corresponding information for the remainder of the States in the United States. Eventhough initial work was slow during the development of methodology, the contract was competed in January 1981. The work was closely monitored for completeness and accuracy by the United States Geological Survey. The major steps used in building the data base are as follows:

1. **Map Acquisition and Numbering**

   Complete coverage of U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps was acquired on a State-by-State basis. Each map of a State set was given a unique sequential number beginning with "1" in the northwest corner of the State and with the numbering going latitudinally from west to east.
2. **Map Annotation**

After delivery of the maps to the contractor, each named place and feature was identified and each given a unique number within the topographic map. The extent of certain features such as streams were also annotated. Each named feature was identified with all maps on which it appears.

3. **Data Entry**

The four corners of the map were digitized for registry by a digitizer/operator and the location of each feature was digitized onto magnetic tape in order, by feature number, along with other required data, such as name and designator. The digitized x-y coordinates were then converted directly into geographic coordinates.

4. **Process and Editing**

A series of programs checked the accuracy of data and sorted information into a required record format.

5. **GIPSY Conversion**

Tapes produced by the contractor were delivered to the U.S. Geological Survey and the data was entered into the Geographic Names Information System storage and retrieval system.

6. **Data Monitoring**

Names data from a random sampling of 10 percent of the 1:24,000-scale maps were retrieved from the system in printout form. The names and feature positions on these maps were plotted on transparent overlays for direct visual comparison with the source maps.
7. **Editing Update**

Data was checked against the Board on Geographic Names files and updated to include changes, additions, and corrections that may have occurred since the topographic maps were published. The Board's decision dates as well as any variant names were added.

8. **Final Edit**

A large number of maps, documents, and other publications were now reviewed in order to collect names and other data not shown on current topographic maps. This edit phase adds about 20 to 25 percent more names to the file.

9. **Final Formatting**

Information was formatted into a one-line 132-character entry that displays information from each data element (except variant). Space requirements for gazetteer publication necessitated limiting the extent of the information printed in some data elements. A full printing of all information in every data element may be obtained by a special search at a somewhat higher cost. In addition, special searches are available and are limited only by the data in the system.

In 1979, the Survey approved publication of a series of State, territory, and other special listings of geographic names collectively titled "The National Gazetteer of the United States of America" and published as U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1200. The series is prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Original page copy of each gazetteer is computer generated at minimal cost. Separate volumes of the National Gazetteer are identified by principal geographic area or topic and year. Each volume will be revised
periodically with the year of revision as part of the title. The
information in the National Gazetteer may be kept up-to-date between
revisions by noting appropriate changes and new entries published in the
reports of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. These reports are
presently distributed free to a variety of users and may be found in many
libraries across the country. Gazetteers for the States of New Jersey and
Delaware are being published in 1982. The program also includes an
abridged gazetteer for the entire United States listing about 40,000 major
population areas, physical features, and civil divisions. Users are urged
to report errors, omissions, and any other information that may improve
the usefulness of this publication.

Each State's gazetteer lists geographical names found on various
maps, charts, and other published documents; the names of streets and
roads are not included. The names are listed as one-line entries in
alphabetical order followed by seven categories of information (see annex
A). Each category of information is in a separate column on the gazetteer
pages; the categories contain the following information, in order from
left to right:

_NAME (1st column)_ - The proper name of a feature, place or area is
listed in alphabetical order, letter-by-letter, from beginning to end
ignoring spaces and printing marks. Exceptions to this rule occur in
those cases where the generic part of the name of a _physical feature_
precedes the specific part as in Mount Adams, Lake Ann, Bay Saint Louis,
and Lake of the Woods. In such cases, the specific or substantive part is
listed first, followed by a comma and the remaining part or parts of the
names:
Adams, Mount
Ann, Lake
Saint Louis, Bay
Woods, Lake of the

A definite article name; e.g., The Crossing, La Mesa, and The
Racetrack, is also listed with the specific part of the name first.

Crossing, The
Mesa, La
Racetrack, The

However, a populated place, locality, or civil division, such as
city, village, county, township, crossroad, or railroad siding, named for
a physical feature is always listed in normal order even though the
generic part of the name may precede the specific part. A village or
locality called "Mount Calvary" is listed in that order, while a physical
feature with the same name is shown with the specific part of the first;
i.e. "Calvary, Mount."

A few names listed in the first column in the gazetteer are followed
by descriptive words in parentheses. These words or phrases give special
information about name usage or about the specific place or feature. This
information is generally self-explanatory, e.g.: (ruins), (historic
site), and (abandoned) refers to the present state of the place; (old
channel), (submerged), (foot bridge), and (siding) provides further
description; and (reduced name use) and (historical) refers to the name
and not the place.

**FEATURE CLASS (2nd column)** - The terms listed in this category
identify the kinds of features or places to which the names apply. The
meaning of the terms are very broad so that similar kinds of landscape
features can be grouped into general classes. For example, the term "stream" includes all kinds of flowing water which may locally be called a creek, run, river, branch, bayou, or fork. Annex B contains a list of these terms and their definitions.

**STATUS (3rd column)** - Geographic names can be classified according to their use of official status as determined by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. This category of information gives the status of each name in the gazetteer as determined by the Board. The designators and their meanings shown in this column are:

**BGN (date):** This designator indicates that the written form of the name and its application, as given in the entry, has been determined by the Board on Geographic Names (BGN) to be official for use throughout the Federal Government. If a year date follows the "BGN" designation, the name and its application were subject to special research and decision by the Board and the decision was published during the year shown. Some names in this category were also made official by some form of administrative action.

**US (date):** A geographic name and its application listed with this designator was established by an Act of Congress and is official by law. The date is the year the law was passed.

**ADMIN:** The names of certain kinds of geographical entities, such as counties, parks, forests, and townships, logically fall within the administrative jurisdictions of Federal, State, and local governmental organizations. The authority for establishing these names is based on recognized organic, inherent, or constitutional rights. The names listed with this designator are official for Federal usage.
UNOFF: The Board on Geographic Names has not established these names as official. They are included in the gazetteer for reference purposes.

VARIANT: In each case, a name with this designator is a written variant of an official name for the same place, feature or area. A "See" reference to the official name is given on the line below the entry along with information about the location of the named entity.

COUNTY (4th column): This is the name of the county in which the listed entity is located. If the place, feature, or area lies in more than one county, the county listed is the one in which the center of the feature is found; or, in the case of a stream or valley, the county listed is the one in which the mouth of the feature is located. Figure 1 outlines the counties of New Jersey.

GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES (5th column) - Latitude and longitude are given for the mouths of streams and valleys; centers of bays, islands, lakes, and populated places; the extremities of points of land; the summits of mountains and hills; and the dams of reservoirs. The first two numbers are degrees, followed by two numbers for minutes and the last two for seconds N (north) latitude. This sequence is followed by three, two, and two numbers respectively representing degrees, minutes, and seconds W (west) longitude. For example: 421540N0725732W reads 42 degrees, 15 minutes, 40 seconds north latitude and 072 degrees 57 minutes, 32 seconds west longitude.

SOURCE (6th column) - The geographic coordinates are given for the source or heads of streams and valleys.
ELEVATION (7th column) - The specific or average elevation is given in feet above the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (approximately sea level) for tops of peaks, mountains, ridges, and hills, the surfaces of lakes and reservoirs, the low points of passes and basins, and the approximate centers of populated places.

MAP (8th column) - Each State is subdivided into quadrangle areas of 7 1/2-minutes of latitude and longitude, corresponding to the standard 1:24,000-scale topographic maps produced by the Geological Survey. This column indicates the name of the map on which all or part of the named feature can be located. Some named water and underwater features appear only on National Ocean Survey charts. In these cases, the chart reference number is listed preceded by "NOS Chart."
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The following is a glossary of common language terms used to categorize each place, feature, or area identified by a geographic name. The terms assigned to each entry forms the second column of information on the gazetteer page. The terms and their definitions as used herein should be considered only a general guide and not a dictionary of balanced, exclusive, or precise terminology for the identification of cultural and natural features. Commonly used generic names are listed at the end of each definition to assist in understanding the range of meaning represented by the feature term. A geographic name in plural form is identified by a term in singular form; a name like "Relic Islands" is identified as "island." The term "populated place" is abbreviated "ppl."

**airport:** a manmade facility maintained for the use of aircraft (airfield, airstrip, landing field, landing strip).

**arch:** a natural archlike opening in a rock mass (bridge, natural bridge, sea arch).

**area:** any one of several areally extensive natural features not included in other categories (fan, badlands, barren, delta, garden).

**arroyo:** a watercourse or channel through which water may occasionally flow (wash, gulley, coulee, draw).

**bar:** a natural accumulation of sand, gravel, or alluvium, or ledge of rock or coral forming an underwater or exposed embankment (sandbar, spit, reef, ledge, shoal).

**basin:** a natural depression or relatively low area enclosed by higher land (sink, pit, amphitheater, cirque).

**bay:** an indentation of a coast or shoreline enclosing a part of a body of water; a body of water partly surrounded by land (arm, bight, cove, estuary, gulf, inlet, sound).

**beach:** the sloping shore along a body of water that is periodically washed by waves or tides and is usually covered by sand or gravel (shore, strand, coast).

**bench:** an area of relatively level land on the side of an elevation such as a hill, ridge, or mountain where the slope of the land rises on one side and descends on the opposite side (level).

**bend:** a curve in the course of a stream and/or the land within the curve; a curve in a linear body of water (loop, meander).

**building:** a manmade structure with walls and a roof for protection of people and/or materials; churches, hospitals, and schools are special types of buildings and are assigned individual categories.

**bridge:** a manmade structure carrying a trail, road, or other transportation system across a body of water or depression (overpass, trestle, causeway).

**canal:** a manmade waterway used by watercraft or for drainage, irrigation, mining, or water power (ditch, lateral).

**cape:** a projection of land extending into a body of water (læ, point, peninsula, neck).

**cave:** a natural underground passageway or chamber, or a hollowed out cavity in the side of a cliff (cavern, grotto, keana).
cemetery: a place or area for burying the dead (burial, grave, burying ground, memorial garden).

channel: a linear deep part of a body of water through which the main volume of water flows and is frequently used as a route for water craft (passage, thoroughfare, thorofare, strait, reach).

church: a building used for religious worship (chapel, synagogue, mosque, tabernacle, temple).

civil: designates a political division formed for administrative purposes (county, borough, town, township).

cliff: a very steep or vertical slope (bluff, crag, precipice, head, headland, nose, overhang, pali, palisade, promontory, rim, rimrock).

crater: a circular depression at the summit of a volcanic cone or one on the surface of the land caused by either volcanism, meteoritic impact, or underground subsidence; a manmade depression caused by an explosion (caldron, lua).

dam: a water barrier or embankment built across the course of a stream or into or within a body of water to control and/or impound the flow of water (breakwater, dike, jetty).

fall: a perpendicular or very steep descent of water in the course of a stream (waterfall, cataract, cascade).

flat: a relatively level area within a region of greater relief (playa, clearing, glade).

forest: a bounded area of woods, forest, or grassland under the administration of a political agency (national forest, national grasslands, State forest); see "woods."

gap: a low point or opening between hills or mountains or in a ridge or mountain range (pass, notch, water gap, wind gap, saddle, col).

geyser: an eruptive spring from which hot water, steam, or mud are periodically thrown.

glacier: a body or stream of ice moving outward and downslope from an area of accumulation; an area of relatively permanent snow/ice on the top or side of a mountain (ice patch, snow patch, icefield).

gut: a relatively small coastal waterway connecting larger bodies of water or other waterways (slough, creek, inlet).

harbor: a sheltered area of water where ships or other watercraft can anchor or dock (port, road, roadstead, hono).

hospital: a building where the sick or injured may receive medical or surgical attention (infirmary).

island: an area of dry or relatively dry land surrounded by water or low wetland (isle, isla, rock, archipelago, atoll, key, cay, hammock, hummock, moku).

isthmus: a narrow projection of land in a body of water connecting two larger land areas.

lake: a natural body of inland water (pond, backwater, lagoon, laguna, pool, resaca, lac, waterhole).

lava: a formation or feature resulting from the consolidation of molten rock on the surface of the Earth (lava flow, kipuka).

levee: a natural or manmade embankment flanking a stream (bank, berm).
locale: a place at which there is or was relatively minor human occupation or activity; does not include populated places (ppl), mines, and dams (railroad siding, station, junction, site, camp, landing, battlefield, crossroad, ranch, farm, windmill, tower, ruins, ghost town).

mine: a place or area from which commercial minerals are or were removed from the Earth; does not include oilfield (shaft, quarry, pit).

oilfield: an area where petroleum is or was removed from the Earth.

other: this category is for miscellaneous named manmade entities that cannot readily be placed in the other feature classes listed here.

park: a place or area set aside for recreation or preservation of a cultural or natural resource and under some form of governmental administration; does not include a forest (national park, state park, national historical landmark, wilderness).

pillar: a vertical-standing, often spire-shaped, natural rock formation (pohaku, pinnacle, chimney, monument, rock tower).

plain: a region of general uniform slope, comparatively level and of considerable extent (grassland, highland, kula, upland, plateau).

ppl: populated place: a place or area with clustered or scattered buildings and a permanent human population (city, village, settlement, town).

range: a chain of hills or mountains; a somewhat linear mountainous or hilly area (cordillera, sierra).

rapids: a fast-flowing section of a stream, often shallower than other section and with exposed rocks or boulders (ripple, riffle).

reservoir: an artificially impounded body of water (tank, lake).

ridge: an elevation with a narrow, linear crest; may be part of a hill or mountain (rim, crest, cuesta, escarpment, hogback, lae, spur).

school: a building or group of buildings used as an institution for study, teaching, and learning (academy, high school, college, university).

sea: a large body of salt water (gulf, ocean).

slope: a gently inclined part of the Earth's surface (pitch, grade).

spring: a place where underground water flows naturally to the surface of the Earth (seep).

stream: a linear body of water flowing on the Earth's surface (awawa, creek, river, anabranch, distributary, branch, run, slough, bayou, pup, brook, fork, kill, rio).

summit: a prominent elevation rising about the surrounding level of the Earth's surface; does not include ridges and ranges (ahu, hill, mountain, knob, butte, berg, colina, cone, volcano, cumbre, dome, head, knoll, mauna, mesa, meseta, mesita, mound, mount, peak, puu, rock sugar loaf, table, bald, cerro, horn).

swamp: poorly drained wetland, fresh or salt, wooded or grassy; possibly covered with open water (marsh, bog, cienaga, marais, pocosin).

trail: a route for passage from one point to another; does not include roads or highways, categories of entities presently not included in this gazetteer (ski trail, jeep trail, path).
tunnel: a linear underground passageway open at both ends.

valley: a linear depression in the Earth's surface that generally slopes from one end to the other (canyon, barranca, chasm, cove, draw, glen, gorge, gulch, gulf, hollow, ravine).

well: a manmade shaft or hole in the Earth's surface used to obtain fluid or gaseous materials.

woods: a small area covered with a dense growth of trees; does not include an area of trees under the administration of a political agency; see "forest."