

## "KANSAS PLACE-NAME SCHOLARSHIP"

by

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Kansas, because of its centrality in our nation, is and always has been a crisscross state from the time of the early explorers and mountain-men to the present era of train, car, truck and air travel. Our Indian aborigines plus the French, Spanish, English-American, and European immigrants are all interwoven in the naming process to such a degree that a more full understanding for the onomastician is a schedule hopefully to be completed in the future.

The mere fact that Kansas was named after an Indian tribe living here on the eastern border during the exploratory period has not lessened problems for any onomastic researcher. Most dramatic, it appears, was how Kansas should officially be spelled. The French, Spanish and English versions confused everyone, but with the opening of the territory and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, the official spelling of the name finally was determined K - A - N - S - A - S. Previously there had been a variety of over forty different ways to spell this tribe and/or this place, influenced by a myriad of reasons. Here are a few examples of the spellings for a place-name so prominent in American history: Cansez, Canzas, Canzon, Canza, Canses, Canceas, Kanzas, Karsea, Kanzan, Kasas, Kanees, Kantha, Kanza, Kausau. Today, to attract attention, many of these variations in spelling are being utilized not only by motel, resort and store owners but by the state government itself for some of its reserve and conservation areas.

Through the years many people have been interested in and reported on Kansas names; this fact is revealed by references in official and non-official documents, in newspapers and in publications of a wide variety, housed mostly in the State Historical Library. The professional historians and geographers as well as many non-academic people added their knowledge. But these materials are scattered. Not until recently has it been possible to gain some reasonable perspective. Therefore, it is important to review briefly here certain published works and studies which have added considerably to the knowledge of Kansas onomastics. Some authors worked without knowledge of others' efforts or findings; thus there has been some duplication of effort.

Town place-names have been of major interest. For those towns or "homes" which had an officially designated name certified by the U.S. Postal Department vital information is available. But organization of this information in a convenient working format by the government has never been the case. A well organized record of its post office history, fortunately for Kansas, is available in Robert W. Baughman's Kansas Post Offices published in 1961. Baughman, a noted philatelist from Liberal, was looking for cancelled stamps from discontinued post offices when he decided that a complete state listing should be published with certain vital

information including names of the first postmasters. For six years Baughman, with the aid of the Kansas Historical Society's staff and others, struggled to put together the facts of Kansas' postal history. He notes, "Before 1905 all federal postal records were written by hand and kept in journals by clerks in the Post Office Department. The history of a state's post offices is of basic importance in illustrating its political growth and development." Baughman includes separate listings for each of the 105 counties and a dozen or so maps showing the establishment of new counties as they were organized during the settlement period. This has aided the onomastician - so, it is a philatelist who has furnished us important and necessary data to assist in the study of Kansas place-names.

Baughman reports that the total number of post offices officially established in Kansas is the amazing number of 4,281. About 2,000 of these names have been studied in various publications. A breakdown of these official 4,281 names as reported in 1961 is quite informative: (1) number of offices now in operation, 777 (author's note: in 1978 there were 690); (2) year in which most post offices were established: 254 in 1879; (3) total number of offices discontinued: 3,504; (4) year in which most offices were discontinued: 225 in 1887; (5) first office to be established: Cantonment Leavenworth, 1828; (6) first office established after organization of Kansas territory: Marysville, 1854; (7) first office after statehood: Indian Valley, February 28, 1861 (Kansas was admitted to the Union January 29, 1861).

County and Community Names in Kansas by Wayne E. Corley was published in mimeographed form in 1962. Corley did not have the advantage of utilizing Baughman, and restricted himself to existing towns and communities. He used both printed and oral sources, contacting early settlers or their descendants. I noted that of the 1,126 total listings in Corley, 1,036 are included in Baughman which indicates that he (Corley) was primarily concerned with places that have or had post offices.

This work packed with information on over one thousand places was Kansas' first place-name study of any breadth. It is reasonably accurate and was used as the standard reference for a time. There is no documentation, probably because of extra printing costs. Corley like other investigators on this subject realized the complexity and scope of being definitive and says "... not fully complete."

As far as published books with definitiveness on our subject is concerned, two recent ones by Professor John Rydjord of Wichita rank high, and I include them among the best state surveys in the United States. Rydjord, a long time onomastician-historian, has been honored for his contributions which involved years of indefatigable work. His Indian Place-Names Collected in Kansas was published in 1963 and his Kansas Place-Names came out in 1972. I will comment only on the latter, although there is a chapter on Indian names in Kansas Place-Names. (According to Rydjord there are approximately two thousand Indian names in Kansas and its area.)

Kansas Place-Names is fully documented with nine maps, thirty-two pages of bibliography, an index listing of over 2,500 names and place-names, separate sections for chapter notes (some 2,750 notes) for the forty-two chapters, and an appendix. This study is truly a monument in onomastics for Kansas. But the format and approach, interestingly, deviate from the usual dictionary-like approach of most place names books. After twelve years of study and work Rydjord decided on a topical and historical sequence, saying that the index would make the work useful as a dictionary type. So this study is actually presented narratively with careful consideration for the geographical, the etymological and the folkloristic.

To give a general idea of Rydjord's "topical" approach I must list a few of the titles of the forty-two chapters: "Hills, Highlands, and Lowlands," "Prairies and Prairie Flowers," "Natural Resources," "French and Indian River Names," "Bible Names in Kansas," "Names from the Old Northwest," "Kansas State Officials," "Presidents and Their Associates," "Political Nomenclature," "The Soldier State," "Names from the Santa Fe," and "Cherchez La Femme." Also there are chapters on ethnic and national groups.

The names seem to be all there, from Grasshopper Falls to Paradise, from Pig Creek to Paw Paw, from Pissgalis Heights to Plato, from Pliny to Plow Boy, from Rabbit Creek to Rattlebone Flats, from Saint Fidelis to Saint Jacob's Well, from Tampa to Tertiary, from Uphill Creek to Utopia, from Valencia to Valhalla, from Wea to Way, from Xavier to Xenia, from Yocemento to Yuma, and from Zion to Zyba.

In 1960 the quarterly, Heritage of Kansas, published Anniejane Cover's "Some Place Names of Kansas." Although Mrs. Cover concerned herself with only 300 entries, mostly towns, she garnered good information which was later recognized and utilized by Rydjord and others. Her classification arrangement is in the categories of towns named for people, towns named for other towns, towns named for natural environment, names based on foreign or Indian words and chance names. Several years later in the same periodical Karl Rosen published his "Classical Place-Names in Kansas." Baughman's Post Office History formed the initial impetus for Professor Rosen's article.

The first in depth study showing the influence of Kansas' large German and German-Russian immigrant population on place names was done by Professor Richard C. Clark, titled "Place Names of German Origin in Kansas." It appeared in a University of Heidelberg periodical in 1970.

Of the 225 place names researched 138 had or previously had a post office. Clark found five types of place names of German origin in Kansas. Considered in order of their frequency his study revealed: first, those involving a personal name of an early settler, usually the surname and sometimes compounded with a suffix such as Walsburg and Kuhnbrook; second, types involving earlier settlement in Europe or Russia such as Stuttgart and Schoenchen; third, types descriptive of topographical and agricultural features

such as Ackerland and Hockfeld; fourth, those involving German history such as Luther and Bismarck (World War I saw the demise of many names which were regarded as too German); and finally those involving earlier settlements in other states in the U.S., such as the towns of Oberlin, Westphalia and Herkimer. Especially interesting historically are Catherinenstadt (after Catherine of Russia), Gnadenu, Gnadenu, Gnadenu, Hoffnungsfeld, Hoffnungsthal, Johannesthal, Liebensthal, Lieblichdorp, Scheuerman, Stolzenbach, Weidenfeld and certainly many others as shown in Clark's study of German place-names in Kansas.

This report would not be complete without including Daniel Fitzgerald's three volume work called Ghost Towns of Kansas. Although some of the 285 towns treated are not, strictly speaking, "ghost towns," they are "ailing," as Mr. Fitzgerald puts it. The work is fully documented, indexed, and each volume has eight chapters under the following titles: "Boom Towns," "Agriculture Towns," "Mining Towns," "Trail and Railroads," "Annexations and Paper Towns," "County Seat Towns," "Free State/Pro-Slavery Towns," "Miscellaneous Towns." As a rule Mr. Fitzgerald includes the circumstances under which the town received the name that it has or had. But it is the historical and ethnographical information especially that is so satisfying to the reader.

Further studies are currently in progress indicating that onomastic research is alive and well. Such subjects as family patterns in the naming of children, place-names and local legend, cattle economy as revealed in names are being pursued.

#### Kansas Place Name Studies

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- Corley, Wayne E. County and Community Names in Kansas, copyright 1962. Mimographed.
- Diller, Aubrey. "Origins of Names of Tributaries of the Kansas River." Kansas Historical Quarterly 21 (1955): 401-406.
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Rosen, Karl. "Classical Place-Names in Kansas." Heritage of Kansas 8 No. 3 (1975): 31-55.

Rydjord, John. Indian Peace-Names, collected in Kansas from Siouan, Algonquian, Shoshonian, Caddoan, Iroquoian and other tongues. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.

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#### Addendum

Fitzgerald, Daniel. Ghost Towns of Kansas, Volume I (1976), II (1979), III (1982). Printed by Bell Graphics, Molton, Kansas. [Note: The set, for \$39.00, may be ordered directly from Mr. Fitzgerald, 2912 Evenside Drive, Topeka, Kansas 66614.]