

# Appendix II

## THE CLASSIFICATION OF WOOD COUNTY PLACE NAMES

For two reasons it is desirable that the classifications into which Wood County place names fall be presented and analyzed. First, the pattern established in Frederic Cassidy's *Dane County Place-Names* deserves to be continued in order to provide a basis for generalizing about place naming in Wisconsin. Also, such classification and analysis is interesting and informative in its own right.

The names listed in this book have been classified for the type of feature named—natural or artificial—and for the nature of the specific part of the name. Although the information is presented statistically in the charts on the following pages, some explanation of terms is necessary here.

### Terms for Natural Features

#### *Water-courses*

Wood County generic terms for water-courses are river, creek, brook, run, branch, fork, rapids, chute, falls, channel, ditch, drain. Of the first four, "creek" is the most often encountered. In the nineteenth century "creek" won out over "river," "brook," and "run" as terms for relatively narrow water-courses. Thus, "Wee Peet River" gives way before "Mill Creek," "Hemlock River" before "Hemlock Creek," and "Hayden Brook" before "Hayden Creek." "Rocky Run" becomes "Rocky Run Creek" as the meaning of "run" is forgotten and a former generic term becomes absorbed into the specific part of the name. ("Rocky Run," however, still appears on USGS maps and may yet retain some currency.) "Branch" and "fork" denote tributaries of larger streams, "branch" being used for those of the Yellow River and (with the exception of the expression "East branch of Black River") "fork" being used for those of the Black River. "Falls" appears only in Yellow River names for former rapid places in the stream, "rapids" being reserved for similar spots in the more powerful Wisconsin River.

### *Bodies of still water*

Lake, pond, slough, eddy are the Wood County terms, "pond" appearing only three times among Grand Rapids city names. "Lake" is applied to natural widenings in streams (Elm Lake), to man-made bodies of water (Lake Dexter) as well as to a marsh pond (Ross Lake). "Boles Creek" is the name of a Wisconsin River slough which formerly was the mouth of a now dried-up creek.

### *Coastal features*

Island, bay, point. With the exception of "Hog Island," a generic term used as an early place name in the marshy southwestern area, all named islands are in the Wisconsin River. Among these "The Island" is unique in having been separated from the bank by a mere slough. The origin of the pretentious "Two Mile Bay" is connected with the platting of Nepco Lake's shoreline for real estate development. "Point" occurs in three names, two of which—"Pointe Basse" of French origin and "Point Bluff"—clearly name riverbank places at a bend in the Wisconsin River just south of Nekoosa.

### *Wet lands*

Marsh, swamp. The contrast between "Big Marsh," once used for an area immediately west of Wisconsin Rapids, and "Big Swamp," used for the marshes of Clark, Jackson, and Wood counties, suggests that a swamp is felt to be more extensive than a marsh. Despite the importance of cranberry culture in Wood County, "bog" does not appear in any place name.

### *Relatively flat lands*

Flat, valley, hollow. Since only "Hungry Hollow" can be located, Wood County does not yield good evidence of the meaning of these terms. However, given the Wood County topography, "valley" can only have referred to a relatively flat, open area. It is interesting that flat areas were not considered as worthy of being named as were elevations. In contrast to twenty-six names for elevations there are only three for flat areas, two of which are former names for areas in cities.

### *Relatively high areas*

Hill, ridge, bluff, mound, heights, moraine. "Hill" is the most common term. Thus, "Blueberry Hill" is dominant over "Blueberry Ridge" (though under the influence of "Powers Bluff County Park" the name "Skunk Hill" is losing out to "Powers Bluff"). "Skunk Hill" is high enough for skiing; Kipp's Hill, once a gentle rise, now is hardly noticeable to one driving in an auto on state highway 73. With the exception of "Point Bluff" which may be another name for "Swallow Rock" and which is on the Wisconsin River, "bluff" denotes sandstone

or quartzite outcroppings which rise above adjacent flat land (Powers Bluff) or above surrounding marshes (Birch Bluff, North Bluff, and South Bluff). "Mound" is encountered as an alternative to "bluff" only in "South Mound." Swallow Rock is a sandstone outcropping which forms part of the east bank of the Wisconsin River. Apparently, "rock" is used instead of "bluff" because the rocky face of the elevation is exposed to view. "Heights" is strictly limited to older real estate names (Blodgett Heights and Overlook Heights); it is included in the specific part of "Wisconsin Heights Addition."

#### *Rocky features*

Rock, rift. Besides "rock" for "bluff," the term is applied to large rocks in the Wisconsin River which presented special hazards to logging rafts. Thus, "Pilot Rock," "Sherman Rock," and the "Sugar Bowl." "Rift" in "Crooked Rift Rapids" quickly gives way to "reef."

#### *Vegetational features*

Pinery. A term applied to the great pine forest once covering the northern part of the state.

### Terms for Artificial Features

#### *Settled areas*

County; township; city; village; division of city, village; subdivision or addition; paper town; rural community (neighborhood, belt, and district); settlement. Except in official documents only the specific part of these names is generally used. Thus, except for official uses "city" appears only in "Forest City," an early settlement whose name was derived from "Forest City Postoffice." "Village" refers to communities incorporated under this title as well as unincorporated communities which were chiefly or largely residential. In contrast, places serving mainly as commercial and industrial centers (primarily lumbering mill sites) have been counted as "settlements." "Division of city, village," though not a generic term, denotes names after the pattern "the East Side." In "East Side Addition," railroad tracks form the dividing line; in "the East Side" and "the West Side" of Wisconsin Rapids, the river does; "the South Side" (only applicable to an area on the west side of the river) was formerly the separate settlement called "Hurleyville." Although the nonce form "Wrightstown" was used for the village of Babcock, names ending in "-town" otherwise denote now defunct settlements. "Town" appears only in "Martin's Town," the former site of a cheese factory, store, and saloon. "-ville" appears in a city name (Pittsville), former settlement names (Doudville, Dexterville, Bakerville, and Nasonville), and names of rural communities (Dawesville

and Morrisville). "Address Neighborhood," "Curtis District," and "Dairy Belt" (in Dairy Belt School) are unusual for their inclusion of generic terms in rural community names; Wood County rural communities more typically take the name of a nearby place or landmark as in "Klondike" and "Aldorf."

Subdivision names are generally derived from the names of people taking out the plat or from their place in a series (e.g., Fourth Addition). Some plats—those for Lindsey, for example—never became realities; the unrealized plats of Nekoosa (2) and Bearss Marsh (2) are the Wood County "paper towns."

#### *Artificial features serving as landmarks*

Postoffice, school or academy, mill, tavern or stopping place, lumbering camp, Indian camp, corner(s), dam. Wood County rural postoffices were kept at lumbering mill sites, general stores, a tavern, farmhouses, and cranberry-growing establishments. "School" denotes the former one-room schoolhouses, the prestigious "academy" being reserved for the Seventh-Day Adventist-sponsored Bethel Industrial Academy. Early mills used water power, later ones, steam. Early dams functioned to create mill races or reservoirs where logs were kept before being shipped to market; made of wood, they usually extended only part way across streams, creating hazards, nevertheless, for loggers riding rafts from Biron to Pointe Basse. Unlike the hydroelectric dams now spanning the Wisconsin River, which are named for nearby communities, early dams were named for their owners.

#### *Transportation features*

Railroad (also line and road), station, sidetrack, spur, junction, switch, crossing, road, airport. "Railroad" denotes anything from a narrow-gauge logging line a few miles long to standard-width tracks passing through Wood County incidentally in their course across Wisconsin. Most lines were named for terminus points (Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railway), for point of origin and general direction (Chicago and North Western Railroad and Lisbon, Necedah, and Lake Superior Railway), or for area served (Wisconsin Valley Railroad and Wood County Railroad). The "Marshfield and Texas Railroad" and the "Pecan" are humorous names. Many Wood County stations on these lines were merely loading platforms.

#### *Miscellaneous features*

Park, country club, ranch. The referents of "park" range from a large track of land containing a man-made lake and intended for swimming, boating, and picnicing, to an area with only a few trees which is so ill-defined that few realize it is a park (Gaynor Park). "Park" appears in the names of six subdivisions platted between 1891 and 1925. Although in "Mac-

Kinnon Park" (1924) it seems to denote "subdivision containing trees and grass," "MacFarlane Park Subdivision" (1925) indicates the continuing need for a separate generic term, at least for official uses. "Lyon Park Addition" and "River Park Addition" are named for their proximity to Lyons Park. "Balch's Ranch" appears to have been a pig farm.

### Types of Names

The specific parts of Wood County names break down into sixteen classifications, most of which correspond to those in *Dane County Place-Names*.

#### *In honor of or in recognition of a person, local or non-local*

All names in this classification refer to artificial features except for "Powers Bluff" and the names of several Wisconsin River islands which have been named after former owners who donated them to the city of Wisconsin Rapids. Local people are honored for outstanding community service (Upham PO), for being first in the area (Rudolph Township), or for having been important in the economic development of the area (Cameron Township).

#### *By association with a local person through land ownership, etc.*

In this category are included mills named for their owners, postoffices named for the first (and often the only) postmaster, subdivisions named for people (or companies) taking out the plats, and other artificial and natural features named for people owning land or a business establishment nearby. Many communities bear or bore the names of businessmen who owned mills there. Where it cannot be determined whether or not the original settlement was named for the man before the granting of a postoffice, both the postoffice and the community name have been listed in this category. "Pearl School" is unusual among school names in this group since it was named for a teacher rather than for the person owning the land or a business establishment on which or near which the school stood.

#### *For a distant place*

As might be expected, all of the names in this category denote artificial features. Actually, five names listed under "Uncertain and Unknown"—Centralia, Richfield Township, Saranac, Saratoga PO, and Seneca—probably are named for places in the eastern part of the United States or in the older Midwest of Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois. However, no information is available to determine which of several places might have been the original name in each case.

#### *For a nearby place, establishment, or topographical feature*

Included here are townships named for communities at least

originally within their borders, communities bearing original postoffice names, postoffices named for communities, schools named for nearby topographical features, etc.

#### *Descriptive and locational*

These names involve some objective description or a directional term, as in "North Bluff."

#### *Subjectively descriptive*

These names involve some personal observation or judgment which every observer might not agree with. Thus, "Belle Island," "Pleasant View School," "The Hub City," and even "Pumpkin Hill" are subjectively descriptive of the places denoted.

#### *Inspirational and symbolic*

These names have a patriotic aspect (Columbia School), or express an emotion such as pride (Cameron's Pride School), hope for the future (Progress Postoffice), or a vague happiness (Golden Glow School and Good Cheer School).

#### *Humorous, ironic, anecdotic*

Humorous railroad names have already been mentioned. Several of the other humorous or ironic names (Hungry Hill, Poverty Flat) jest of grim realities, while "Aristocracy Hill," "Quality Row," and "Society Corners" express disdain for the pretentiousness of early settlers who "struck it rich," or arise from a good-natured ribbing of friends. "Vesper PO" is the one anecdotic name.

#### *Series*

Here are included names of townships beginning with "New" and names of subdivisions containing a number word as in "Fourth Addition."

#### *Shortening, affixing, acronyms*

The two acronymic names are "Nepco Lake" and "Pecan," the one product of affixing, "Cranmoor." Officially recognized shortenings of names are "Soo Line" and "Milwaukee Road," but throughout the county the common name for Wisconsin Rapids is "the Rapids." Cary Bluffs are also called "the Bluffs."

#### *Generic*

Names included here are composed of generic terms. For example, "the Eddies" and "Point Bluff."

#### *Pseudo-Indian*

These names represent misunderstandings and garblings of Indian names (Nekoosa and Wee Peet River) or the white man's application of Indian words to lakes formed within this century by the damming of streams (Lake Kau-ne-win-ne).

#### *Indian*

All Indian names refer to natural features; none are still

used as place names. However, some of the creeks named for animals may be translations of former Indian names. This may also explain "Eagle Point" and "Moccasin Creek."

*French and German*

*Achtundzwanzig* is the single German name. However, there are several names denoting water-courses and one denoting a place along the Wisconsin River (Pointe Basse) which reflect the influence of French Canadians dwelling in the area during early frontier times.

*Animal*

Only creeks and bluffs (Swallow Rock and Skunk Hill) are named for animals. "Eagle Point," a Portage County township from pre-Wood County days, was probably named for a place within its boundaries which bore the bird's name.

*Uncertain and Unknown*

Names have been included in this category for which no firm evidence of origin has been found.