WOOD COUNTY PLACE NAMES

Wood County Place Names

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Preface

Place-name study has a linguistic and a historical aspect. On the linguistic side, it is essentially a lexicographical investigation: within an arbitrarily limited geographical area the investigator records and analyzes the creation of new names and the application of old names to new places. He seeks to illuminate true origins obscured by folk etymologies and to gather information previously hidden or known only to a few. In uncovering linguistic facts, he inevitably discovers and records not only major historical facts but even minute details about the settlement and subsequent history of the area. In short, using the tools of disciplined scholarship, he gathers reliable information about the area and its place names.

In the case of this study of the place names of Wood County, Wisconsin, findings are based on copies of maps of the area including real estate maps and plats, and on county histories, editions of local newspapers dating back as early as 1858, state gazetteers listing business enterprises and prominent citizens of the area, railroad records and histories of railroads, notes of the original surveyors, records of early censuses, interviews with elderly citizens and people interested in local history, and personal observation of the sites. The study includes names of railroads, towns, cities, flag stations, spur lines, postoffices, rural schools, corners, additions and subdivisions of villages and cities (through 1928), parks, all streams and bodies of water (including swamps and marshes), all named elevations, roads and streets with historical significance, important dams, lumber mills with historical significance, and a lumbering camp (Wards) whose name was for a time relatively important as a place name. Certain information has been sought about each name: the pronunciation of the name (if not obvious from the spelling); the precise location of the named feature (in terms of quarter sections of surveyor's townships wherever possible); the type of feature (creek, village, flag station, etc.); the several names a feature has had over the years; the approximate date range of the use of the name; spelling variants; the origin of

the name; and, when not obvious from the text itself, the type of name (descriptive, subjectively descriptive, inspirational, humorous, etc.).

Although information about the origin of names is of particular interest, it has not been possible in every case to find firm evidence on which to base conclusions. Especially problematic are such names as the following: Arpin PO, Bakerville, Bakerville PO, Daly, Daly PO, Doudville, Doudville PO, Nasonville, Nasonville PO, Pittsville, Pittsville PO, Sherry, and Sherry PO. In each case it cannot be determined whether or not the name of the postoffice antedated that of the settlement (or railroad station). (In the case of Arpin PO the question of sequence involves the postoffice name and the name of the original settlement.) Bakerville will serve as an example. Given the spontaneous growth of names like Dawesville and Morrisville, it is possible that the name Bakerville developed before the establishment of Bakerville PO. But, since there is no way of proving or disproving this, both names have been described as having the surname Baker as their ultimate source. This at least can be supported by evidence, since the settlement was developed by James H. Baker, who was also the original postmaster. Similar problems for the other names mentioned above have been resolved in the same way, i.e., the place name has been described as having as its ultimate source the surname of the local businessman associated with it.

In other cases where there is a margin of doubt about the origin of the name, this has been indicated by the use of such words as "possibly," "evidently," "apparently," and "probably," or by the use of a question mark after the classificatory label (e.g., Descriptive?). Such a label is used in each entry where the text itself does not indicate into what classification the name is thought to fall.

Throughout the list of place names, documentation of sources is presented in the form of short titles in the text itself. Generally, if the short title includes a date (e.g., Gayn. 1878), the reader should look for bibliographical information in the List of Maps Cited. If the short title has no date, bibliographical information will be found either in the List of Works Cited or in the List of Informants. To simplify documentation, no short titles have been included for certain kinds of information. Thus, unless otherwise noted, locations of present schools, communities, railroads, roads, and topographical features have been taken from the United States Geological Survey Maps (USGS) kept in the Division of Archives and

Manuscripts of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison. The standard source of information about the dates of postoffices and postmasters' names is the Wisconsin State Historical Society File of Wisconsin Post Offices (WPO). School numbers and names of school districts (e.g., Joint Dist. No. 1 for Cameron and Marshfield townships) have been taken from the *Directory of Wood County Schools, 1958–1959*, compiled by Matt Knedle, Superintendent of Schools, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. The dates when plats were surveyed and recorded, and the names of those taking out the plats, come from the official plat books in the Office of Register of Deeds in the Wood County Courthouse, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

A final note to help in using the list, and a word of explanation. Italicized names in the entries are cross references to other entries. The glossarial inconsistency in presenting information about subdivision names sometimes under headings beginning with a first name (e.g., "Phillip Adler's Second, Third, and Fourth Additions") and sometimes under headings beginning with a surname (e.g., "Clarke's Addition") results from considering the name officially recorded in the Wood County Office of Register of Deeds as the most appropriate form for this purpose. Cross references to these names are included for the reader's convenience.

The information included in this place-name study has been gathered from many sources and with the help of many people to whom I would like to extend my thanks: the North and South Wood County Historical Societies for their generous help in obtaining much valuable information; the Wisconsin State Historical Society for the use of its fine library; Miss Josephine Harper of the library's manuscripts division, and her staff; Dr. F. G. Cassidy of the University of Wisconsin, author of *Dane County Place-Names*, for permission to use his format and for encouragement at every stage of the project; the University of Wisconsin for financing my research; the American Name Society for underwriting the publication of the book; my wife for help of every kind.

R. S. R.

Toledo, Ohio
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