



# Names On The Land: America's Toponyms

*Irvin Magin*

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The principal reason for my doing this project was simply because I wanted to do it! I've long been interested in toponomy - the science of placenames - and until now, with the privilege of retirement, was afforded the time to do it. It was mentally laborious, time consuming, ( a guesstimated 10,000 hours over a 6-year period), highly educational and greatly rewarding. I have always had an interest in dissecting things, analyzing them and then restructuring the information gathered into a new form with the hope of producing a pleasant result. In order to do this, I had some help. My best helpmates in gathering the information I sought were things seen on paper, not things seen on a screen. I feel good about the fact that I, coming from another era, did not employ any electronic means to accomplish the task. And it was all formed out with the use of an antiquated device known as a typewriter! My principal information "buddies" were the 2-volume U.S. Postal Service Zip Code and Post Office Directory, the 50-state Rand McNally road map inventory, and each state's official road map. The indices to each of these individual road maps followed by a thorough hand-and-eye scanning of their surface provided the means to lift the names of these entries - nearly 22,000 of them! The names are a smattering of old names and new names, common names, usual names and unusual names but basically this is a study involving physical geography, with placenames formed from lots of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and a few conjunctions. It's physical! Many of the placenames chosen for inclusion in this piece were chosen because they involved things essential to the early settlement and survival of this country.

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