



The Council of Geographic Names Authorities

Newsletter

Winter 2010



Hotel atrium at center of building. If you are a light sleeper, bring earplugs, it can get noisy.

2010 Conference - Oct 5-9 in Springfield, MO

The Missouri Board on Geographic Names will be hosting the 2010 Geographic Names Conference at the University Plaza Hotel & Convention Center. You can see traveler photos of the hotel from other travelers at tripadvisor

http://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g44926-d90999-University_Plaza_Hotel_Convention_Center-Springfield_Missouri.html#23371957.

For more details about the upcoming conference see below.

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Your opinion matters

Do you think COGNA should join a professional online network group like Google groups or LinkedIn for greater exposure?

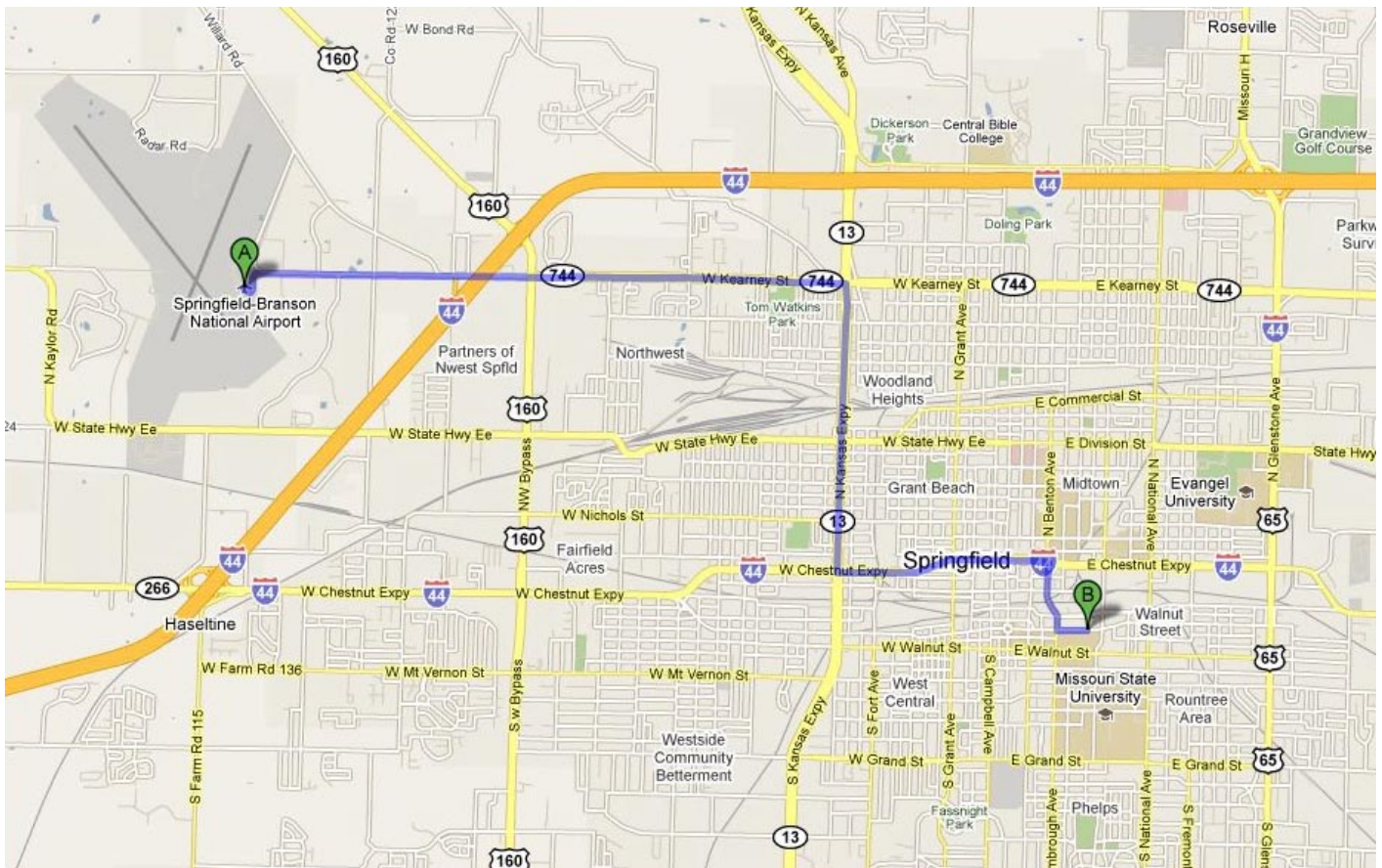
Send comments to Renee at mapdr@earthlink.net

Conference Highlights

COGNA 2010 Conference Jump Start

COGNA 2010 is shaping up to be quite an event. Organizers, Chris Barnett and Jane Messenger have diligently worked to ensure another successful gathering. While the program is still a work in progress as final details get hammered out, they have allowed me to share a few details in hope it will inspire you to attend. They have secured excellent room rates that are not likely to increase much (\$78/night, the prevailing government CONUS per diem rate for Springfield) at the University Plaza Hotel & Convention Center located at 333 S John Q. Hammons Parkway, Springfield, Missouri 65806. If you want more information about the hotel, please visit their webpage, <http://www.upspringfield.com/home.aspx>.

The local airport, Springfield Branson National Airport (SGF) is about 8 miles west of the conference hotel; a mere 20 minute drive, as shown in the Google map below.



For those attendees opting to drive to the conference hotel, you can find a proximity map with driving directions at the following webpage,

http://www.springfieldmo.org/transport_proximity_maps.asp. The hotel does not provide a shuttle, but there are alternative transportation options from the airport listed at the airport website, <http://www.sgf-branson-airport.com/taxi.htm>.

As the name suggests, the hotel is conveniently located between Missouri State University and Drury University in downtown Springfield. College towns tend to be artistically vibrant with numerous eateries, lounges, and dance clubs. For you baseball fans, Hammons Field, home of the AA Springfield Cardinals is just a block away; and outdoor enthusiasts may not want to miss the nearby Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World megastore. Others may want to drive down to Branson, it is only 35-45 minutes south of Springfield, known as the “Live Music Show Capital of the World.” With more than 150 shows to select from, the conference organizers won’t be making any choices for you but do plan to allow interested attendees an opportunity to go down and choose for themselves.

Lastly, while the Saturday toponymic tour route and final destinations are still being planned, here is a sneak peek at a few destination we will visit: Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield, Inspiration Tower just outside Branson with a 360° view of the Ozarks, Lunch at Murder Rocks golf course (wouldn’t you like to know the origin of that name), a sink that may be a spring depending on the water level, Table Rock Dam and Table Rock Lake. Jane was kind enough to allow us to publish the following pictures she took showing off a few of these areas.



Branson from the Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area



Table Rock Dam



Lake Taneycomo looking at Table Rock Dam from Table Rock



Table Rock



Views from Murder Rocks Golf Course Club House (our lunch site)

COGNA 2009 Conference Wrap-up

COGNA 2009 was held Sep 9-12 in the Frances Marion Hotel, Charleston, SC.

The conference kicked off with a keynote address by Rodger Stroup, Director Emeritus of South Carolina Department of Archives and History and Chair of the South Carolina Committee on Geographic names. He provided a brief look of the state's history, geography, and demography with an economic focus.

Nine members of the USBGN Domestic Names Committee (DNC) participated in their October meeting providing attendees an opportunity to witness what goes on in a DNC meeting. The outgoing chair, Curtis Loy, gave attendees an opportunity to participate in the discussion portion of the geographic names cases portion of the docket allowing the DNC to hear testimony prior to a final vote. Do you know who the new DNC Board Chair is?

The next day each State Names Authority (SNA) representative in attendance gave a brief report on their activities during the previous year. This was followed by the most important session of the conference, the State/Federal roundtable discussion. This year there were 20 broad questions several of which were unresolved even after a lengthy discussion. For example, a great deal was made about Board decisions opposing SNA recommendations. It occurs in about 10% of the decisions. A request was made to have the Board defer a decision if it appears their discussion is leaning toward an opposing view. Also, confusion about the Roman alphabet and acceptable diacritical markings led to a clear definition of what constitutes the Roman alphabet, but did not clearly define what would be acceptable markings especially where pronunciation would be difficult for the general public. This led to the DNC staff admitting a need to revisit their Policy on Native American place names.

The second day ended with the COGNA business meeting where it was decided that the 2011 conference would be in Hawaii and the 2012 conference would be in Minnesota. Also discussed was the state of the COGNA newsletter and website upkeep. The Executive Secretary, T. Wayne Furr, indicated the high speed internet access problem will be solved by the end of this calendar year allowing for faster, timelier updates of the webpage. He also indicated that he would not have a problem turning over that responsibility to someone else more familiar with webpage editing. He confirmed the COGNA webpage was designed with Microsoft FrontPage and is no longer available. Volunteers...we need volunteers.

The third day was reserved for geographic names presentations. Mark Demulder of the USGS summarized 125 years of topographic maps and informed us about the current state of the USGS engagement with digital technologies. If you have not yet engaged with the USGS National Map product, you will be amazed at what you can do with it. Doug Vandegraft, chief cartographer of USFWS, showed us the pros and cons of virtual globes like Google Earth and ArcGIS Explorer. He was really just a big kid sharing his excitement of the new technology. Greg Allord, USGS cartographer, described the process the USGS is undertaking to digitize (make into digital files) the complete collection of paper files. The tedious process will not only preserve the information in original collections but also provides access via the web. Craig Johnson, Director of Louisiana Geographic Information Center (LAGIC), with the help of

Louisiana USGS liaison, Chris Cretini, summarized the GNIS workshops they have been hosting throughout their state. This is something every state should do as Roger stated. I totally agree and encouraged my USGS liaison, Henry Wolter, to check into this for Hawaii.

After a brief lunch break, Thomas J. Gasque, a South Carolina native and emeritus professor at the University of South Dakota, presented an overview of South Carolina place names studies without revealing too much of what we were going to encounter on the toponymic tour on Saturday. Christopher Judge and Stephen Criswell from the University of South Carolina Native American Studies Program presented on the Native origins of many place names across several counties. But by far, the day was stolen by the next presenter, Veronica Gerald of the Coastal Carolina University who spoke on the Gullah people and their influence on place names in the state of South Carolina. Not to be outdone, André Lapierre, Chair of the Ontario Geographic Names Board, closed the day with his effortless presentation on the Huguenot toponymic legacy. Don't know what a Huguenot is? Neither did I until I saw this presentation.

The day ended with the annual banquet with guest speaker Robert Rosen entertaining us with historical insights and humorous anecdotes. The official end of the Charleston conference set a high standard for the folks at Missouri to strive toward. But it would be wrong to skip over the optional toponymic tour led by Roger Stroup. I misplaced my tour agenda, but two highlights included a stop at a civil war museum with historical information about physical remnants on the grounds including a ship we could access and talk to a performing museum staff. The other highlight was stopping at a plantation home currently being maintained, as opposed to restored. It allowed for all the character of the ages to be presented according to historical evidence. Simply put, it was amazing. If you have never been on a toponymic tour, it is so worth the extra day and fee. I've been on three and enjoyed every one.

Feature Story - Names on the Land by Bob Julyan

George R. Stewart titled his seminal book about American toponymy *Names on the Land*. (*Names on the Globe* was the title of his book about international toponymy.) It was a good title, but as most of us know it wasn't completely accurate, because names, as artifacts of language and culture, aren't really on the land. When we're in an airplane we don't look down and see names. They exist in our minds, not on the land. That's what makes them so malleable—and so fascinating. They can be created, changed, applied on top of one another, transferred, forgotten—all without affecting the physical landscape at all. Without this property, we'd be geomorphologists, not linguists, historians, English professors, or state or federal names authorities. And yet...

There exists a very small subset of names that are on the land, that can be seen from an airplane. In southern New Mexico is a small mountain on whose slopes students at the local agricultural college have used white rocks to create a giant A with white rocks, for "Aggies," and locally it's known as A Mountain. In Albuquerque, University of New Mexico students have done the same thing with another mountain; it's U Mountain, for the U on its side, while a small volcano

west of Albuquerque is known as J Mountain, because a white J commemorates St. Joseph's academy. Similar examples surely could be found throughout the world.

But sometimes geology does the naming. In Colorado, in Hinsdale County, is a peak named 71 Mountain, because snow-filled gullies form the numerals 71. Its name, too, would be visible from the air. Similarly, the 14,000-foot Mount of the Holy Cross in Colorado displays a cruciform image when certain gullies are snow-filled.

In New Mexico, the so-called High Road to Taos is so torturous that one hill is called US Hill because the road's winding curves and hairpins spell out US, as would be seen from above.

Now take note: These names are not descriptive metaphors. Heart Lake isn't in this group, even if it truly does look like a heart from an airplane. The original and still accepted name of A Mountain is Tortuga, Spanish, "turtle," because it bears a vague resemblance to a turtles shell, but that name also doesn't qualify. To be a "name on the land," the word, the name itself, must be visible, though not necessarily from above.

These are just a few examples I've found, but I've wondered just how many of these names exist. If you know of any examples, please share them. It's playing name games such as this that makes many meetings bearable.

Books of note:

Many of us in GOCNA maintain collections of place name dictionaries and gazetteers. Here are two books worthy of being added to our libraries:

Montana Place Names from Alzada to Zortman explores the origins of more than 1,200 place names. Written by Montana Historical Society staff and drawing on the expertise of historians from around the state, this book includes entries describing towns and cities, geographic features, parks and battlefields, properties on the National Register of Historic Places, and more. The full-color maps and extensive index help readers pinpoint every place described, and historic images reveal the Montana of yesteryear.

350 pages, 100+ photographs and maps
paper, ISBN 978-0-9759196-1-3,

Available from the Montana Historical Society Store
1-800-243-9900

or click on this link to order:

<http://mhs.mt.gov/pub/press/reference.asp#PlaceNames>

P.S.: One of the authors, the historian Charlene Lynn Porsild, has recently joined the New Mexico Geographic Names Committee.

Place Names of Canada, second edition, is the essential reference to Canadian toponymy, and author Alan Rayburn, former executive secretary of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographic Names from 1973 to 1987, has completely updated his earlier work. Now included

are the names of newly created places, such as the Province of Nunavut, as well as a revised preface, further reading, a short glossary, and a new introduction. Canada's toponymy is remarkably diverse, reflecting languages such as Cree, Inuit, French, Gaelic, Spanish, Portuguese, Mi'kmaq, and Basque, and Alan's witty and highly readable entries, more than 5,000, explain the origins of these names.

448 pages, ISBN: 9780195431537, paperback.

Order from Oxford University Press
70 Wynford Drive
Don Mills, ON M3C 1J9
1-800-387-8020 or 1-416-441-2941.

--Bob Julyan

State Name Authority Highlights

Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names (HBGN)

The HBGN completed the initial phase of correcting the Hawaiian place names currently on the 1983/1998 series of topographic maps last year. They are now turning their focus to working on the actual GNIS list for each Island to ensure the name corrections are applied to all names in the database that did not appear on the topographic maps. In doing so, they discovered a few discrepancies and will be working closely with their USGS liaison, Henry Wolter, to correct. They have also approved and will be submitting a new name for the island of Hawai'i. Waiting in the wings are a possible 50+ place names for the island of Kaho'olawe and another 100+ for the island of Lāna'i. Good times for the HBGN.

What is happening in your part of the US? Send Renee a short paragraph so we can all know what you are up to.

DNC/BGN Year End Review

In 2009 the DNC met 10 times reviewing a total of 273 names. The following is a brief summary of the number of names reviewed in each category for each state.

1. Staff processed new names and application changes agreed to by all parties
AK(1), CA(2), CT(1), ID/MT(1), KS(2), MI(1), MD(2), TX(1), UT(1), WI(1), WV(1)
2. Disagreement on docketed names
AK(3), AZ(4), CA(2), CO(2), FL(1), GA(3), IA(1), IL(4), MI(4), MT(1), NY(1), PA(1), UT(1), WA(3), WI(1), WV(4), WV/VA(1)

3. Commemorative names and changes agreed to by all parties
AK(1), AZ(2), CA(4), CT(2), GA(2), ID(4), IL(3), MD(2), MN(2), MT(1), NY(2),
OH(1), OR(6), PA(21), RI(2), SD(1), TX(2), UT(1), WA(5)
4. Revised decisions
FL(2), OR(1), PA(1), WA(1)
5. New name proposals agreed to by all parties
CO(7), FL(2), GA(2), ID(3), MI(2), MO(1), NE(106), NY(2), OH(3), OK(1), OR(1),
PA(8), RI(6), TX(1), UT(1)WA(6), WI(2)

For meeting details please see meeting minutes at,
http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/monthly_minutes.htm

Statement of Purpose

This newsletter is an extension of COGNA's purpose as stated in Article Two of its Constitution, see <http://cogna50usa.org/Documents/Constitution%20Amended%202007.PDF>
If there are any errors or discrepancies, please email Renee at mapdr@earthlink.net