PLACE NAMES OF FAYETTE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

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ABSTRACT: Place name studies and gazetteers, comparatively numerous at national and state levels, are rare for smaller areas such as U.S. counties. This place name study focusing on Fayette County in east-central Kentucky is intended as an addition to these small area studies. The purpose is to identify place names of sufficient prominence for inclusion in a county gazetteer. Fayette County place names, their numbers, classifications, and sources of their names are reviewed. Onomastic questions of name sources and questions of inclusion or exclusion of historic but now vanished elements or of detailed features are examined, indicating several possible approaches to place name studies in localized areas such as Fayette County in Kentucky.

Introduction

In recent decades an increasing flow of place name analyses and inventories have appeared, of value to a wide range of interests including geographers and students of onomastics. Among the notable studies is George Stewart's 1945 classic Names on the Land for the United States. (Stewart 1945, 1968) The State of New Jersey 1982 is the first of the states published for the projected The National Gazetteer of the United States of America, a joint effort of the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. (USGS, 1982) The same USGS source has prepared and published Kentucky Name List, as well as lists for other states, using all place names appearing on the detailed 1/24,000 scale USGS topographic maps. (USGS, 1980)

Students of Kentucky's place names have been fortunate in having several major source works. Outstanding among these are Field's 1961 A Guide to Kentucky Place Names; the 1977 Atlas of Kentucky edited by Karan and Mather; the brief, earlier work by Plummer in 1949 Guide To The Pronunciation of Kentucky Towns and Cities; and most recently Rennick's 1984 Kentucky Place Names. (Field, 1961; Karan & Mather, 1977; Plummer, 1949; Rennick, 1984) Field's guide includes nearly 40,000 Kentucky place
names; the atlas provides a broad background as well as many place names; Plummer's study supplies suggested pronunciations for Kentucky's 120 counties and a sizeable number of its incorporated communities; and Rennick's work focused on almost 3,000 current or historically important settlements. As yet, a fully annotated gazetteer of Kentucky's diversity of physical and cultural place names has not been published.

This study—along guidelines suggested by Bob Rennick, State Coordinator of Kentucky Place Names, Don Orth Geographic Names Division of USGS at Reston, VA, Alan Rayburn, Secretary of the Canadian Secretariat of Place Names in Ottawa, and Kelsie Harder, editor of Names, the American Name Society journal—is a county-level study of Fayette County, Kentucky (Fig. 1). (Personal communications, letters) The study is a refinement of a survey presented at the Blue Ridge Onomastic Symposium in Roanoke, VA in May, 1986. (Withington, 1986a) Three previous county place name studies known to be published are those for Dane County, Wisconsin; Columbia County, Pennsylvania; and Riverside County, California. (Cassidy, 1947, 1968; Brasch, 1982; Gunther, 1984) Other county place name studies almost certainly exist in published or manuscript form. An example of the latter is Bob Rennick's draft list of Fayette County place names sent to me in September, 1986, only one of his 120 county place name lists in draft form. (Rennick letter, 1986)

The Place Names of Fayette County, Kentucky

Each of the 377 place names included in this study is of significance within Fayette County in east-central Kentucky (Table 1, Appendix A). Fayette County's present dimensions, both in size and shape, date from 1798. In that year Jessamine County on the south became the sixth and final abutting county. (Withington, 1986b) The place names of Fayette County are a selection from a much larger set of available place names. These encompass prominent buildings; historic stations—places of initial settlement; early as well as present mills and factories; early schools; hotels, taverns and similar hostелries; the many named horse farms on which tourist attention for Fayette County and the Inner Blue Grass is focused; a far lengthier list of past and present church or other religious facilities; and a very large number of streets and highways in the county, which since 1971 has become the merged Lexington Fayette Urban County. (Lyons, 1973) A comprehensive set of place names for
(PLACE NAMES OF FAYETTE COUNTY, KENTUCKY)

FAYETTE COUNTY AND ABUTTING COUNTIES
-LOCATION ASSOCIATIONS OF THE INNER BLUEGRASS REGION COUNTIES-

Fig. 1
### TABLE 1. FAYETTE COUNTY PLACE NAMES BY CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Subdivision</th>
<th>Category Name</th>
<th>Number of Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE NAMES:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CAVE-TERRAIN</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. FALLS-WATER</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. GORGE-TERRAIN</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. HILL-TERRAIN</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. REGION-TERRAIN</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. SPRING-WATER</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. STREAM-WATER</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. HUMAN/CULTURAL LANDSCAPE NAMES:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. AIRPORT</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. BUILDING (EXAMPLES)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. BRIDGE</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. CEMETERY</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. CENTER-NEIGHBORHOOD</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. CHURCH (MAINLY RURAL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. COUNTY (FAY, ABUTTING)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. DETENTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. FERRY (INTERCOUNTRY)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. HEALTH (MEDICAL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. HIGHWAY (MAIN ROUTES)</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. HORSE (CEMETERY/STATUE, (FARM, HEALTH, SALES, (TRAINING-EXAMPLES)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. HOUSING (Continued-upper right)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>339</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL-ALL PLACE NAMES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>377</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL-ALL FAYETTE COUNTY PLACE NAMES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>377</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author's research based on Bibliography references and author's classification assignments*
the 377 place names of significance together with the larger set of place names associated with detailed or localized features would undoubtedly extend to more than 1,000 named places (Appendix A and B).

Time constraints necessary in the wide-ranging program of this year's Geography Section, Kentucky Academy of Science Annual Meeting of 1986, mean that this discussion presents a brief sampling of the diversity of place names of Fayette County, classifications of these, plus comments on known or probable sources for the names used, and a summary.

Four principal questions are posed in this study:

1. What place names are prominent within Fayette County?
2. What classifications are appropriate for these place names within broad physical or human/cultural landscape element groups or more specific categories of each?
3. What are the sources or origins of each place's name? and
4. What place names in historic or current use refer to such a detailed level of landscape element differentiation that, except for a few examples, most are excluded from any gazetteer of "prominent" place names? (Appendix B).

Historical Background.—Fayette County was established in 1780 along with Jefferson and Lincoln counties, subdividing the earlier Kentucky County of Virginia of 1776, itself created from the earlier Fincastle County, Virginia. (Withington, 1986b; Kinkead, 1909) Kentucky County, taking its name from the American Indian Iroquois word "Kentake" for meadow or prairie lands, descriptive of the treeless stretches of landscape between the Green and Salt Rivers called "barrens" by early explorers and settlers, encompassed all of the trans-Appalachian lands of westernmost Virginia. Fayette County was named in 1780 for the strong French supporter of the American Revolution General and Marquis de Lafayette. (Withington, 1986b).

Lexington as a settlement and later city was named for the Town and Battle of Lexington, the conflict occurring in April, 1776. Settlers camped at McConnell's Spring a short distance west of the present center of Lexington heard the news of this opening battle of the American Revolution and decided it was an appropriate name for the settlement. (Wright,
1982) Town Branch, a tributary of South Elkhorn Creek and now in an underground conduit in central Lexington, by its northwestward flow strongly influenced initial platting of streets. Main, Vine and High (earlier Hill) streets are approximately parallel to Town Branch; Limestone (earlier Mulberry), Mill, Upper streets and Broadway are at right angles to that stream's flow and the streets named (Wright, 1982).

Among major streets, Limestone is distinctive in continuing the early name for Maysville on the Ohio River to the northeast. This street name usage is evident for all of the major radiating arteries connecting Lexington to important communities, such as Georgetown, Winchester, Harrodsburg, Richmond, Versailles, Nicholasville, Old Frankfort Pike, and Leestown Road, named for an early community at Frankfort's site. (Wright, 1982; Bluegrass Automobile Club, 1986)

A Brief Overview of Fayette County Place Names

The 377 Fayette County place names in this study identify a broad range of landscape elements (Table 1, Appendix A). It was surprising to the author—as it may be to others—that only 10 percent (38 place names) are those for physical features of the landscape (Fig. 2). Among these are a region (Inner Bluegrass); one hill (Cave Hill) or two if account is taken of High Street's original name of Hill Street; one small waterfall (Elk Lick Falls); several caves (notably Russell Cave) and springs (Maxwell Springs now enclosed under the University of Kentucky's Fine Arts building facing Rose Street); and 27 streams, two of which (Jack Creek, Tate Creek) are in Madison County to the south but their names are in two major Fayette County highways (Table 1). (Wright, 1982; Russell, 1794) The Kentucky River Gorge is also listed, though the gorge is far more dramatically distinctive in downstream stretches of the Kentucky River. (McGrain and Currens, 1978)

The 339 human or cultural feature place names fit within 31 categories compared with the 7 for physical landscape element names (Table 1). Eight to ten of the categories listed are represented by example place names—buildings, churches, highways and streets, horse farms and other horse-associated facilities, manufacturing plants, tobacco markets, enclosed or covered shopping malls, pillars or monuments, urban neighborhoods, and tanks or reservoirs as artificial waterbodies. Early settlement stations have been included, though each is a relict feature now
identified it all by names of streets, parks or memorial plaques. (Field, 1966) Among human/cultural place name features, most numerous are schools of all types and levels (63); public parks (52); "major" highways (48); and hamlets, all unincorporated and many more names than functioning entities today (39). (Raitz, 1980). Other place name categories with more than 11 features each are churches (18); sports areas (14); and health service facilities (12).

What are these places named and what are the sources of their names? Fayette County's name, as noted above, honors a distinguished foreigner actively supporting the American Revolution; the Bluegrass Region uses the name of an important grass and crop on the area's phosphatic limestone; Lexington honors the Revolutionary battle and Massachusetts town, now a city. (Wright, 1982) Many place names came from people important in the county's early settlement. The radiating highways take their names from communities large and small connected to Lexington. Other names are descriptive names such as Broadway, Main, High, Upper, Mill or Rose; or in the case of Loudon Avenue and Lane Allen Road, have names of a prominent mansion and of a distinguished native son and writer (Wright, 1982). Other names, specific to the particular street or locale, are Cave Hill (a street); Cheapside (the west side of the courthouse square where inexpensive items—and at one time, slaves—were sold or traded); Clays Ferry (crossing and now twin Interstate 75 bridge spans); and Elkhorn Creek or Raven Run or Cane Run (Appendix A).

Many of the smaller settlement clusters in Fayette County are identified by names of a person who provided the land for subdivision and occupancy (Utterington, Mattoxtown also known as Maddoxtown, Coletown) or who were associated with early occupancy (Jimtown). (Rennick, 1984) Other hamlet names describe associations (Little Georgetown); perceived position (Centerville); or local forested terrain (Walnut Hill, also a highway and a church). The name Athens, originally Cross Plains, may derive from Lexington's late 18th and early 19th century reputation as the "Athens of the West", though the pronunciation accented on the first syllable probably is a locally derived usage. (Rennick, 1984) Henry Clay's estate, Ashland, and Spindletop Hall with its estate lands are names from remembered English country houses and from a Texas oil-field's rich initial discovery well.
Fayette County Place Names

Other place names in Fayette County reflect religious associations (Good Samaritan, Saint Joseph, Central Baptist hospitals); various government entities (two federal Veterans hospitals, Eastern State Hospital, a Kentucky institution for persons with mental problems); or business corporations (Humana Hospital, International Business Machine Factory). Absent are any names directly from pre-1776 Indian occupancy. Adena Mound is descriptive of an Indian people, culture and resultant feature. Other apparent "Indian" names identify such features as a University of Kentucky housing complex (Shawneetown) and several streets (Cherokee Park) rather than places of known and named Indian use (Wright, 1982).

The more detailed the feature, the more likely it is that its name must derive from a perception or interest of the namer--developer, horse farm owner, manufacturer, or others. Several churches and sometimes an associated settlement or locale have Biblical names (Pisgah, at Fayette County's western edge if not in Woodford County beyond; Berea church and "pike: Mt. Horeb "pike"). Many residential neighborhoods, originally developments, either used a name from a previous use (Gainesway, a former horse farm and its owner's family name; Kirklevington, an apartment complex formerly a horse farm); or used names inspired by such sources as the Ivy League colleges (Harvard, Yale, Brown streets); English authors (Scott, Thackery); or Scottish landscape (Edinburg, Glasgow), particularly for street names. (Blue Grass Automobile Club, 1986; Rand McNally, 1983)

Summary

This presentation is a brief skimming of a complex subject deserving far more exhaustive research and discussion in printed text, maps, tables, appendices and bibliography. The diversity of Fayette County, Kentucky, place names, both of present and of historic relevance is striking, even with a limited examination of name sources. (Wright, 1982; Rennick, 1984) The principal problem in identifying and analyzing place names at the county level is the one of establishing limits for inclusion or exclusion of named landscape features. Often unnamed landscape elements of earlier eras, such as very small stream rills, may come to need names when political districts for newly established governmental districts at the county level require minor landscape features names to properly record boundary lines (Field, personal comments circa 1973-1975). My more onomastically-oriented colleagues may prefer to include many of the historically impor-
Fayette County Place Names

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tant but now relict feature names, such as those for early settlement stations or camps, bygone post offices, railway depots and hamlets.

In annotated form, with a more systematic introductory statement, a county level place name study such as this one on "The Place Names of Fayette County, Kentucky" should serve as an informative local source and also as a goad to others in Kentucky or elsewhere attempting to identify "names on the land" (in George Stewart's gracious phrase) at similar localized administrative area levels.

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