

NOMENCLATURE RESEARCH IN THE

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES.

by

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Supplying information about place names is a minor, although sometimes necessarily protracted, part of the reference service provided by the S.A. Archives. It is a legitimate function, even for an institution concerned only with government records, where, indeed, it might be an official responsibility to authenticate and suggest place names. In the S.A. Archives, which houses both official and private material, there are these official responsibilities, together with considerable demands from the public generally. Writers of local histories, ethnologists, speechmakers, school-children and columnists all clamour to know the basic facts of nomenclature - why, who, and when.

Since the S.A. Archives has always given particular emphasis to reference work, some special attention has been paid to the matter of nomenclature and a good deal has been done to index information already found and a careful and intensive search has been in progress for many years. Sometimes, of course, a search must be undertaken for a name where no reference has yet been found, or where authenticity is questioned, and sometimes, unfortunately, these 'custom built' searches accomplish absolutely nothing. But over some forty-two years of experience of work in this field of nomenclature we are in a fairly strong position today, and though much remains to be done, we are able to satisfy most general requests and a good many official and academic ones at a more serious level.

Interest in South Australian nomenclature began many years before the S.A. Archives was established. As long ago as 1893 C. Hope Harris delivered a paper to the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science (meeting in Adelaide) and this was published in the Proceedings of the conference and as an offprint. The paper contains a rather critical introduction, some notes on Adelaide Street names and on aboriginal place names, and a rough alphabetical arrangement of several hundred place names. The work is not free from error, and lacks documentation, but considering the small amount of original source material available to Harris at the time, it represents quite an achievement.

In 1908, Rodney Cockburn, a journalist and Hansard reporter in the State Parliament, published a collection of letters and his own research notes on South Australian place names. The letters had earlier been printed in the S.A. Register, Evening Journal, and Adelaide Observer where, it appears, Cockburn had encouraged their contribution. The letters are often in a vein of personal recollection,

and while this is often accurate and at least a useful starting point for research, yet it is hardly sufficient on which to base an authentic nomenclature. However, the work - Nomenclature of South Australia (Adelaide, Thomas & Co., 1908) - enjoyed some small success in its day and is now something of a collector's item. Its form of presentation has necessitated an index to places, and this has been provided at the end of the volume.

Cockburn's interest in nomenclature was a serious one and he pursued it throughout his life. Indeed, he served on Government nomenclature committees and advised the Government on the choice of place names. He was a particular advocate of aboriginal names. After 1920 he had the resources of the Archives at his disposal, and by the time of his death in 1932 he had considerably revised his 1908 work. When he died his notes were still in draft form and they were purchased by the Mitchell Library. A typescript was prepared from the draft notes arranged in alphabetical sequence, and a copy of this is held in the S.A. Archives (Accession 1209), together with a microfilm of Cockburn's notes and essays on the subject of nomenclature. *

Cockburn's revised typescript is a major contribution to the subject and contains some thousands of names. It is a great advance upon his 1908 work, and upon Harris' papers. But like both these works, the revised typescript also lacks documentation - although Cockburn may possibly have supplied this if he had lived to edit the work. This lack is a serious drawback to the authority of the work even when it is realised that many of the entries can hardly be challenged. The work, too, has certain limitations and is confined to what might be termed the more popular place names, and it is by no means exhaustive. Despite these drawbacks, the work has received a great deal of reference use, and over the years a considerable number of corrections, references, additions and notes have been interpolated where appropriate, thus adding to its value and authenticity.

Mention should also be made of a third published work on South Australian nomenclature, issued before the establishment of the S.A. Archives. This is Names of South Australian railway stations compiled by Alfred N. Day (Adelaide, Govt. Printer, 1915). Although obviously limited in scope, this small work has some merit in listing little known sidings, but it is as much used for its gazetteer qualities of distance and altitude of railway stations as for nomenclature. One other general work on South Australian nomenclature might also be noted here. This is Twelve hundred and more place names in South Australia, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory, compiled by A. E. Martin (Sydney, N.S.W. Bookstall Co. Pty. Ltd., 1943). It is rather a slight work, quite undocumented, but of some interest if only for the fact that such a book could find a publisher in the height of the 1939-45 War.

* The originals of these notes and essays are also held in the Mitchell Library.

From the inception of the S.A. Archives the possibility of authenticating and documenting nomenclature was realised and as references were found entries were made in the general catalogue under the heading PLACE NAMES subdivided by the place or feature, with a reference from the place or feature itself. The work continues today, and some hundreds of entries have been made, and specific references given, to printed and manuscript sources in both official and private records. Just here it might be a good thing to throw a healthy dash of cynicism on these original documentary sources: the existence of such references, of course, does not always put the issue of nomenclature beyond doubt, for original documents often contain errors or are misleading. But if the enquirer has the references pointed out to him, he can at least assess the situation for himself. Under the heading PLACE NAMES in the catalogue are also entered articles, essays and research notes which elucidate - or attempt to elucidate - place names at some length.

A good many indexing projects have been undertaken in the S.A. Archives for various purposes, and during these a watch was kept for references to place names; other references to place names may have been found incidentally to other research work; and in some instances specific searches were conducted: so that the entries in the catalogue under PLACE NAMES cover a wide variety of material. It was never possible, however, to devote official time to the sole pursuit of nomenclature - the rewards are so slow in coming compared with the many more urgent archival tasks that must be done.

Some time after the end of the 1939-45 War a sub-committee of the State Nomenclature Committee was formed with the then Archivist (Mr. J. McLellan) as a member. This sub-committee was to consider the task of documenting as much nomenclature as possible, and also (in a rather remote way) the publication of its findings. The S.A. Archives was clearly in a special position to deal with place names of European origin and it undertook to do what it could to carry out research in this field. Other members of the sub-committee were to carry out searches in more specialised fields (e.g. aboriginal names), so in order to standardise findings, a printed index entry form was agreed upon. It was a slip of paper 5" x 8" which included the following headings -

1. Derivation
2. Discoverer *
3. Nomenclator*
4. Date discovered
5. Reference
6. Position (to show latitude and longitude where
7. Native nomenclature possible.)
8. Other notes.

* These are not necessarily synonymous.

Some initial research work was done by Archives officers, but pressure of other work prevented this being much more than a token effort. However, the Archives was fortunate in having the help of an honorary research worker (Miss L.L. Ayers) who has generously devoted several afternoons a week to the work over many years. She is still patiently continuing the work despite many extremely long and unrewarding periods of reading difficult writing on badly deteriorated records.

The method of search was not to try to document individual given names, but to examine all likely records and note whatever was found. Many basic printed works like Flinders's Voyage to Terra Australis (London, 1814), Ernest Giles's Geographic travels in Central Australia from 1872 to 1874 (Melbourne, 1875), and Gwenneth Williams's South Australian exploration to 1856 (Adelaide, 1919) were examined, as well as journals and reports of explorers, surveyors and others in Parliamentary Papers and Government Gazettes. From these the search has extended into official and private manuscript journals, diaries, log books and correspondence, and now to departmental record groups like those of the Surveyor-General and the Commissioner of Crown Lands. There is virtually no end to the material which can be examined, although by now most of the pioneering essays in nomenclature have been well searched and indexed. So far, newspapers have been searched in detail only up to 1849. The task of searching later issues can hardly be contemplated, although it is likely that such a search would be worth-while.

The result of this intensive searching has been the compilation of many thousands of entries, not only authentically documenting well known place names, but as well, solving many puzzles and bringing to light hundreds of hitherto unsuspected names. Some entries have also been made for places outside South Australia, particularly for the Northern Territory which was administered from South Australia up to 1910, and rather fewer for Western Australia and Queensland - a special alphabetical section being devoted to each state. At present the index is referred to simply as the Manuscript Nomenclature Index. It still reveals some sad gaps, of course, as well as some unsolved problems of documentation, but there is no doubt of its considerable value to research workers who have no time to follow up side issues, and in Archives reference work. It should not be assumed, however, that the index is in anything like a polished state for publication - it is both a research tool and a piece of research itself, continually coming toward, but never actually reaching, completion and perfection.

As a kind of supplement to the Manuscript Nomenclature Index, and using the same type of entry slip, the State Lands Department has compiled three indexes to the naming and proclaiming of government towns, hundreds, and counties, and copies of these entries are also held in the Archives. Many of the references in these entries are to Government Gazettes.

Despite all that has, and is, being done, many questions still have to be solved (if possible) as they arise, by the Archives staff. If a name is not to be found in any of the available printed or manuscript indexes, or if documentation is either doubted or wanted, one must simply devote as much time in searching for the answer as is economically justified by the pressures of other work. Experience has not suggested any easy way of going about these searches, except that all material readily available relating to the area should be examined, and that the significance of persons associated with an area must not be overlooked. It is often of some use - and on occasions, indeed, all that can be done - to determine how early the name can be documented by maps, almanacks and directories, gazetteers, lists of postal towns, lists of pastoral properties and leases, and unpublished local histories. This kind of 'travelling hopefully' is quite likely to be annoyingly frustrating and often never progresses beyond a rather inconclusive statement that the name can be documented only as occurring within a given - and perhaps very wide - period of years. *

The results of these 'custom searches' are, of course, noted for the catalogue or the Manuscript Nomenclature Index. But the high degree of failures of these searches demonstrates the great need to have an overall search programme in nomenclature which, while it may mean waiting longer for the answer, will in fact be more likely to produce the answer, and will at least avoid wasted effort of going over the same ground more than once.

Aboriginal place names present a special problem inasmuch as they can only - if at all - be partly elucidated by research on original records. The enquiry quickly enters the fields of ethnology and philology and the untrained searcher may perpetrate some quite startling misconceptions. An alphabetical list of aboriginal place names has been maintained concurrently with the Manuscript Nomenclature Index, but the meanings of the words have not been investigated. Cockburn, Harris, Day and Martin have all dabbled in this field, but trained ethnologists question some of their references from the point of view of meaning and spelling. We are fortunate to be able to obtain help from the Ethnologist and his Associate at the S.A. Museum, and in return for this pass on to them any lists of native words found in our searching.

An interesting feature of South Australian nomenclature is the presence of many German place names in concentrations of pioneer German settlement. During the 1914-18 War patriotic sentiment led to the changing of these names** and a useful list giving some of the origins of these names is found in the South Australian Nomenclature Committee's Report on enemy place names 1916 (S.A. Parliamentary Paper No. 66 of 1916). The changes were made under the Nomenclature Act No. 1284 of 1917.

* Some suggested sources for basic searching in South Australian nomenclature are given in an appendix to this paper.

** See the Mail (newspaper) of 27 May 1916, p. 10, and following issues.

But as South Australia approached its Centenary Year of 1936, opinion had mellowed and by another Act of Parliament (No.2231 of 1935) several of the better known names were restored.

The maintenance of an index to nomenclature should not, of course be exclusively concerned with the past, and a watch is kept for the application of new names today - such as Port Stanvac, the name chosen for the harbour at the oil refinery site south of Hallett's Cove. Some attention is given, too, to names that are removed from the map. Government towns, for example, have on occasion been officially removed and the lots sold off as farming land.

Archives or manuscript repositories are in a specially favoured position to assist in documenting nomenclature. They are also in an equally good position to make recommendations as to persons or events which might be suitably honoured in nomenclature. In the latter case a comprehensive and well documented nomenclature index will be of considerable value in avoiding duplication, in determining whether a name has been too widely used, or whether it leads to confusion with similar names. A nomenclature index has a high practical value as well as a reference use.

APPENDIX

In addition to the printed and manuscript items on S.A. nomenclature mentioned in the text, the following will be found useful - Adelaide City Council. Year Book. [Annual issues contain notes on street nomenclature of Adelaide.]

Alphabetical list of names of places in South Australia. (Exclusive of the Northern Territory.) [This work has no imprint or date of publication, but its appearance suggests it could have been issued before 1900. It is an extensive list of European and aboriginal place names and indicated trig. points. It is available in the special South Australian collection of the Reference Library of the Public Library of S.A. Z929.4 cP.]

Australian handbook. 1876, 1885, 1895, 1905.

Cleland, J.B. Medical names in Australian geographical nomenclature Offprint from The Medical journal of Australia, for 28 April 1934.

Cockburn, R. Pastoral pioneers of South Australia. 2 vols.

Adelaide, 1925 and 1927. [Note the index to this work compiled in the S.A. Archives - Accession 1231.]

List of Government towns and townships, counties, hundreds, corporate towns, and district councils in the Colony of South Australia (exclusive of the Northern Territory). Compiled in the Surveyor-General's Dept. Adelaide, 1896. [Rescinded proclamations have been noted in this work, and it contains supplements after 1896.]

Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, S.A. Branch Inc.

Proceedings and Index to Proceedings.

South Australian almanacks and directories from 1839.

South Australian Gazetteer. Compiled by R.P. Whitworth. Melbourne, 1866.

Chief Secretary's Office. Card index compiled in S.A. Archives.
Post Office Index. Compiled in S.A. Archives.
Almanack Index. Compiled in S.A. Archives. [Accession 1382.]
Parliamentary Papers Indexes. Printed index, and card index
compiled in S.A. Archives. [The card index is useful for
references to pastoral properties and leases.]
Somerville collection. [Useful for material on Eyre Peninsula.
Approximately half of the collection has been indexed.
Accession 1041.]
List of German place names changed in 1917. [Accession A720]
Lists of new or altered place names. [Extracts from the S.A.
Government Gazette for 1940 and 1941 only. Accession A1000.]
Streets of Adelaide. A collection of newspaper articles taken
from the Register News-Pictorial for 1929.

S.A. Archives map collection. [Note the several collections of
proprietary and auctioneers' plans of townships and sub-
divisions, and the various atlases - notably that published
in 1876 by E.S. Wigg and Co.]

Note: The above list does not pretend to be any more than a
brief introduction to the subject.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA'S REPORTS ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Due to the receipt of continued requests for copies of all
five of the University of Tasmania's Reports on Historical Manuscripts
of Tasmania, which are now out of print, a revised edition with index
is now being prepared and will be on sale early next year. These
reports describe at the series level notable collections of non-
public records held either privately or by the Library of the Univ-
ersity of Tasmania, and include extracts chosen either for particular
interest or as a guide to students on the type of material within
the series.

A recent acquisition of interest made by the University Library
is the Diary of Alexander Cheyne, in charge of public works in Van
Diemen's Land from 1836 to 1841, and later Director of the Hobart Town
Water Works. The diary covers the years 1848 to 1850 and as such
completes the set of diaries held in the Battye Library, Perth, W.A.
It was presented to the Library by Mr F.C. Wolfhagen together with a
typed copy of the original and notes on persons and events mentioned.

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