

Neighborhood text: indexes and narrative fun for the obsessed researcher in Philadelphia place name origins

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Imagined locus

South Philadelphia Memory, through physical and digital collections, as well as through user-contributed digital content, tells the story of the people who have made up the neighborhood from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the present. We support research in local history and genealogy, as well as scholarship in American domesticity and the immigrant experience. *Place names* will introduce the interested reader to the sussurrating text on the city's surface, will provide invaluable benchmarks for dedicated genealogists and historians, and will serve to settle bets.

Intended community

The likeliest users of the pathfinder are dedicated amateur genealogists and library staff identifying images and composing descriptions of digital objects. For these groups, the pathfinder includes the drier resources, the paragon of which is Jefferson Moak's *Philadelphia Street Name Changes*. Onomastics – as the great George R. Stewart reminds us – is a discipline of what youthful gamers would call Easter Eggs: unanticipated, though much-rumored surprises locked inside a quotidian matrix, unearthed with only a little help. Patrons acting with their own edification in mind – only slightly more studious than the average fan of *Haunted New Jersey* – are the deeper target of the pathfinder. Narrative and slightly more garish resources have been pulled in for their benefit. As the city drew its names from the regional cultures, resources describing onomastics in the mid-atlantic region have also been included.

Resources held in Columbus libraries

Thompson Library, The Ohio State University

Alotta, R. I. (1992). *Signposts and settlers: The history of place names in the middle Atlantic states*. Chicago: Bonus Books.

F106 .A463 1992

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/signposts-and-settlers-the-history-of-place-names-in-the-middle-atlantic-states/oclc/27155653>

The prolific Robert Alotta graces us with a narrative account of place names both extraordinary and common in *Signposts and Settlers*. No city exists in a vacuum, and just as Penn's naming system for the city seeded the nation with Highs, Broads and Chestnuts, the city absorbed names from the region.

Paxton, J. A. (1810). *The stranger's guide: An alphabetical list of all the wards, streets, roads, lanes, alleys, avenues, courts, wharves, ship yards, public buildings, &c. in the city and suburbs of Philadelphia, with references for finding their situations on an alphabetical plan.* Philadelphia: To be had of E. Parker. [microopaque]

MIC Remote Depository AC1 .E22 Microprint no.23586-no.23705(microprint)

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/strangers-guide-an-alphabetical-list-of-all-the-wards-streets-roads-lanes-alleys-avenues-courts-wharves-ship-yards-public-buildings-c-in-the-city-and-suburbs-of-philadelphia-with-references-for-finding-their-situations-on-an-alphabetical-plan/oclc/25133295>

A typical early index of the 19th century city, with significant advantages over Moak, namely, cross-references locating place names. An intellectual forebear to University of Pennsylvania's Philadelphia Neighborhoods, and to PAB. Carrier is difficult to navigate.

Also available in OSU's Special Collections & Rare Books Stacks: F158.44 .P37

Also available online in *Early American Imprints, Series II, Shaw-Shoemaker (1801-1819)* [New Canaan, CT] : Readex, [2004], via NewsBank:

<http://www.newsbank.com/readex/product.cfm?product=5> [\$].

Columbus Metropolitan Library, History & Genealogy Dept.

Moak, Jefferson M. Philadelphia street name changes. Chestnut Hill Almanac Genealogical Series, pubn. 2. Rev. ed. Philadelphia, PA. The Almanac, 2001.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/philadelphia-street-name-changes/oclc/34833897> 170 p.

R 929.309748 P544, M687p, 2001

NARA Archivist Jefferson Moak's print-on-demand Excel file of 4300 name changes over the course of roughly 150 years is dry, but rich with data. Our only desire would be for access to the original file, or for some means to sort by attributes other than "old name" and "new name." As ready-reference, pretty much unparalleled.

Frey, C., & Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company. (1926). *The Independence square neighborhood: Historical notes on Independence and Washington squares, lower Chestnut street, and the insurance district along Walnut street, in Philadelphia, together with some account of the buildings, events, and personages of State house row.* Philadelphia: Penn mutual life insurance Co.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/independence-square-neighborhood-historical-notes-on-independence-and-washington-squares-lower-chestnut-street-and-the-insurance-district-along-walnut-street-in-philadelphia-together-with-some-account-of-the-buildings-events-and-personages-of-state-house-row/oclc/5791668>

R 929.309748 P544, I38

Of tangential interest to researchers is Carroll Frey's survey of the neighborhood surrounding Penn Mutual's headquarters on Walnut between 5th and 6th, done in preparation for the addition of a tower, still extant, at the corner of 6th and Walnut. A manifestation of urban history at cross-purposes.

Skaler, R. M. (2002). *West Philadelphia, University City to 52nd Street*. Images of America. Charleston, SC: Arcadia.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/west-philadelphia-university-city-to-52nd-street/oclc/50009152>

974.811 S626w

Robert Skaler adds a title to the Arcadia picture-book series; useful as an overview of major sections of the city; casual readers or those unfamiliar with the city appreciate his anecdotal descriptions, judging from the book's Amazon reviews. For SPM metadata librarians, all the Arcadia volumes serve as quick checks to confirm an identification.

Resources held in Philadelphia libraries

Free Library of Philadelphia

Alotta, R. I. (1990). *Mermaids, monasteries, Cherokees, and Custer: The stories behind Philadelphia street names*. Chicago, Ill: Bonus Books.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/mermaids-monasteries-cherokees-and-custer-the-stories-behind-philadelphia-street-names/oclc/22863215>

917.4811 AL73m

Alotta, R. I. (1981). *Popularity: The street names of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia, Pa: History Dept., Temple University.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/popularity-the-street-names-of-philadelphia/oclc/11298341>

R 917.4811 AL73P

Alotta is a true obsessive. This is a revision of his 1975 *Street Names of Philadelphia*, and a cousin to his Temple study of popular Philadelphia street names (the latter kept in Ready Reference at FLP); accessible, entertaining, and strongly recommended by the University of Pennsylvania's reference department:

<http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/philadelphia/philahist.html#Geog>

Biagi, E. L. (1970). *Italian name-places in the United States: With historical & descriptive annotations and information*. Philadelphia: Biagi.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/italian-name-places-in-the-united-states-with-historical-descriptive-annotations-and-information/oclc/2788105>

929.4 B47i

Eminently satisfying to a core patron group of SPM, Biagi offers a broad treatment of Italian-American names and naming, reaching beyond the city at hand to demonstrate the influence of Italians on the rest of the land.

Milano, K. W. (2008). *Remembering Kensington & Fishtown: Philadelphia's riverward neighborhoods*. Charleston: History Press.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/remembering-kensington-fishtown-philadelphias-riverward-neighborhoods/oclc/191882022>

974.811 M589r

Iatarola, L.-C. T., Historical Society of Tacony., & Iatarola, L. M. (2005). *Lower Northeast Philadelphia*. Images of America. Charleston, SC: Arcadia.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/lower-northeast-philadelphia/oclc/61155289>

974.811 Ia8L

Holmes, G. J. (2003). *Philadelphia's river wards*. Images of America. Charleston, SC: Arcadia.

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/philadelphias-river-wards/oclc/53192359>

974.811 H735p

Three other entries in competing series of historical picture books, bearing sound reviews by ordinary users; professional guidance by researchers at the Tacony Historical Society lends the *Lower Northeast* relevant background on place names. Holmes, of the third title, was a reporter for Philadelphia's *Public Record*.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Taylor, Laura A. "An Introduction to Germantown Street Names." Parts 1 & 2. *Germantown Crier*: Vol. 26, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 113-20; and Vol. 27, no. 1 (Winter 1975): 19-27.

(UPA/Ph F 159 .G3 T3 1975)

Daly, John. *Genealogy of Philadelphia County Subdivisions*.

(REF G 1264 .P5 D3)

Campbell, William Bucke. *Old Towns and Districts of Philadelphia*.

(UPA/Ph F 158.1 .C58, vol. 4 no. 5)

Three indexes, some with narrative histories and anecdotes of the progress of Philadelphia streets' and neighborhoods' names over time. Part of HSP's directories collection, must be used onsite.

American Philosophical Society

Heckewelder, J.G.E. (1822) Names which the Lenni Lenape...had given to rivers, streams, places, etc.,

<http://www.amphilsoc.org/mole/view?docId=ead/Mss.497.3.H35n-ead.xml;query=;brand=default>

Mss.497.3.H35n

An early secondary source on the pre-contact, aboriginal names of Philadelphia and the Delaware valley and bay. Available by special request. Reprinted in the 1834 *APS Transactions*.

Internet resources

Philadelphia neighborhoods and place names. (1990). Philadelphia, Pa: City of Philadelphia.

<http://www.phila.gov/PHILS/Docs/otherinfo/placname.htm>

A City Archives revision of the Library Company of Philadelphia's 1994 *Philadelphia Almanac and Citizens' Manual*, this is a gazeteer of 395 neighborhood names, tracking their progress from the time of Swedish settlement to present-day real-estate redevelopment. Includes comprehensive bibliography.

Temple University. Multimedia Urban Reporting Lab. (2010). *Philadelphia neighborhoods*.

<http://sct.temple.edu/blogs/murl/>

An ongoing MURL project documenting the city "street by street." Of interest to staff and researchers as a source for contemporary colloquial place-name usage, background in contemporary issues, and as a collaboratively-organized online archive.

Philadelphia institutions

Temple University Urban Archives

<http://library.temple.edu/collections/urbana/overview.jsp?bhcp=1>

The definitive location for topical searches in Philadelphia neighborhood history; a frequent SPM reference for our patrons seeking to broaden or illustrate their research in neighborhood history. Particularly deep photograph and moving image collections, presented via CONTENTdm.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania > Directories

<http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=126>

HSP's city directories of Philadelphia run from 1785 to 1935; the Society also collects directories of similar and neighboring cities – Camden, Baltimore, Boston. The ur-text for every Philadelphia GIS database.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania > Philadelphia Neighborhoods
<http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=127>

For more general research into neighborhood history, HSP directs the researcher to maps, print and other collections.

City of Philadelphia. Archives.
<http://www.phila.gov/PHILS/carchtxt.htm>

Essentially city government's attic, holding materials no longer germane to present city activities. Difficult to navigate in person; as above, presents excellent compiled resources on the web. For completists only.

LCSH headings

Philadelphia (Pa.) -- History

Philadelphia (Pa.) -- Description and travel

Street names -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia

Streets -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia

Street names -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia -- History

Street names -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia -- Directories

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