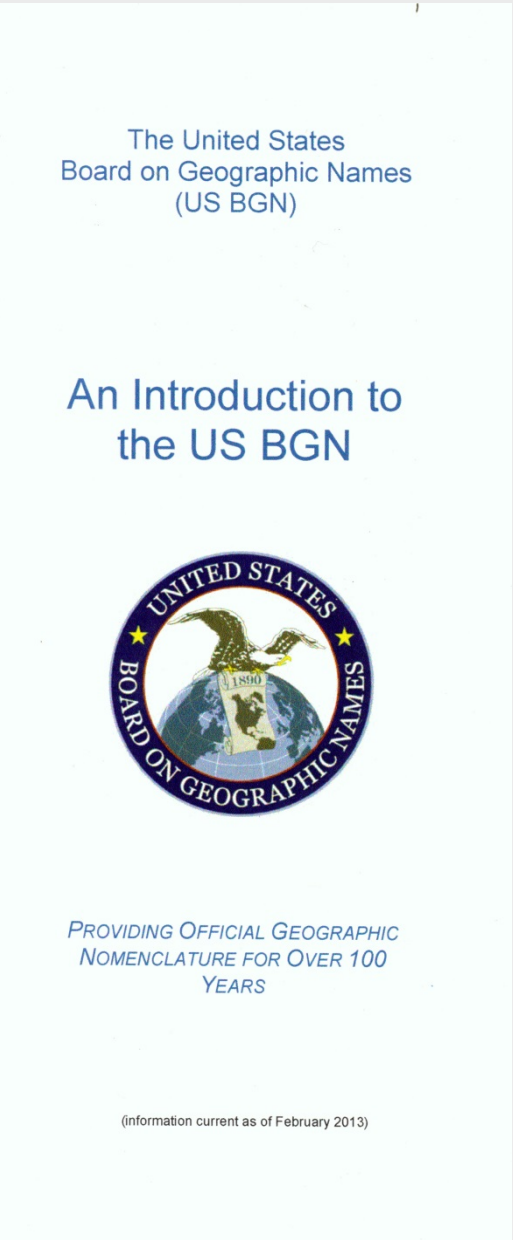
The Origin(s) of the United States Board on Geographic Names

Captain Albert Théberge NOAA Corps (ret.)
NOAA Central Library



The United States
Board on Geographic Names
(US BGN)

An Introduction to
the US BGN

PROVIDING OFFICIAL GEOGRAPHIC
NOMENCLATURE FOR OVER 100
YEARS

(information current as of February 2013)

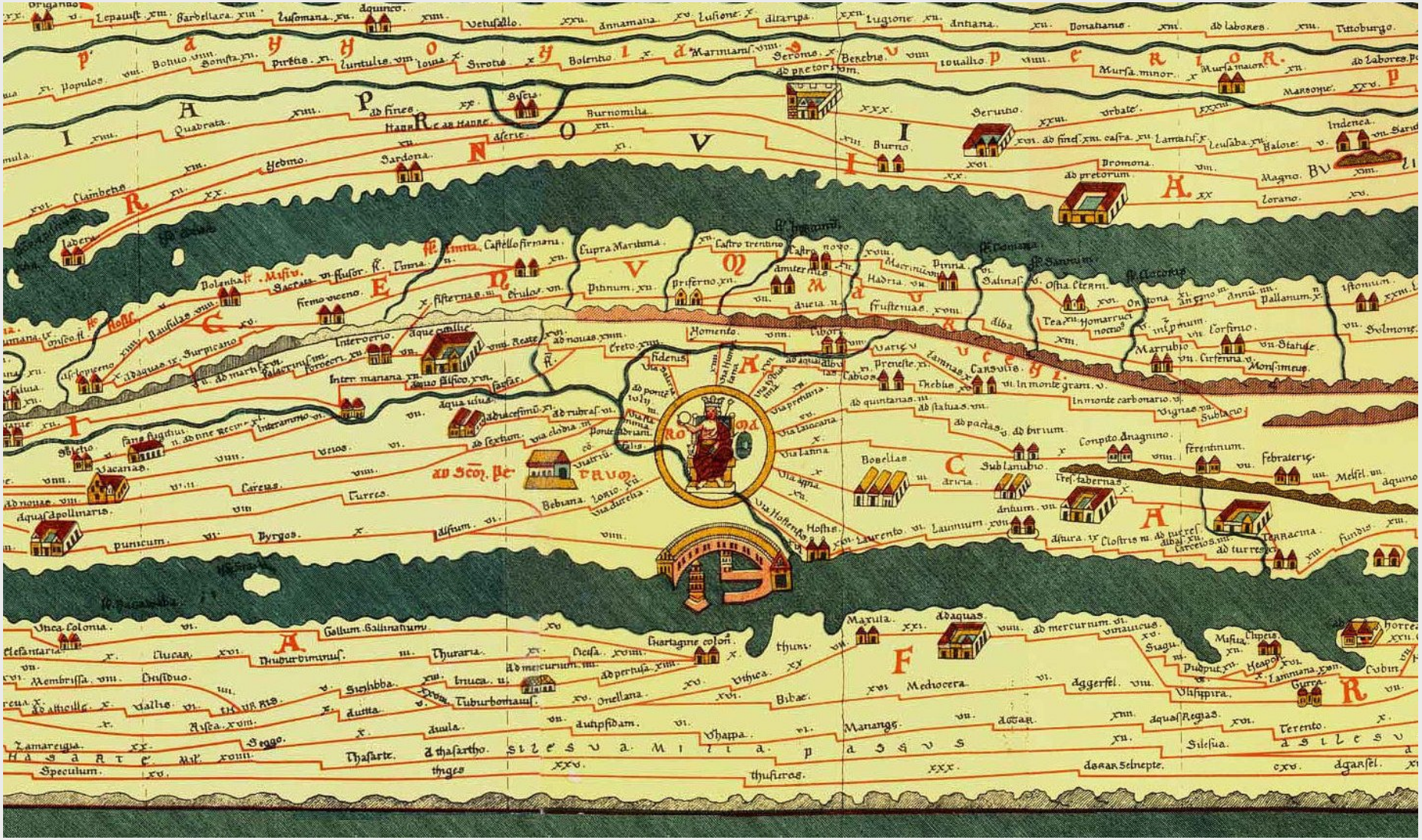
Brochure explaining origins and functions of BGN and its relationship to the United States Geological Survey.

Domestic Names

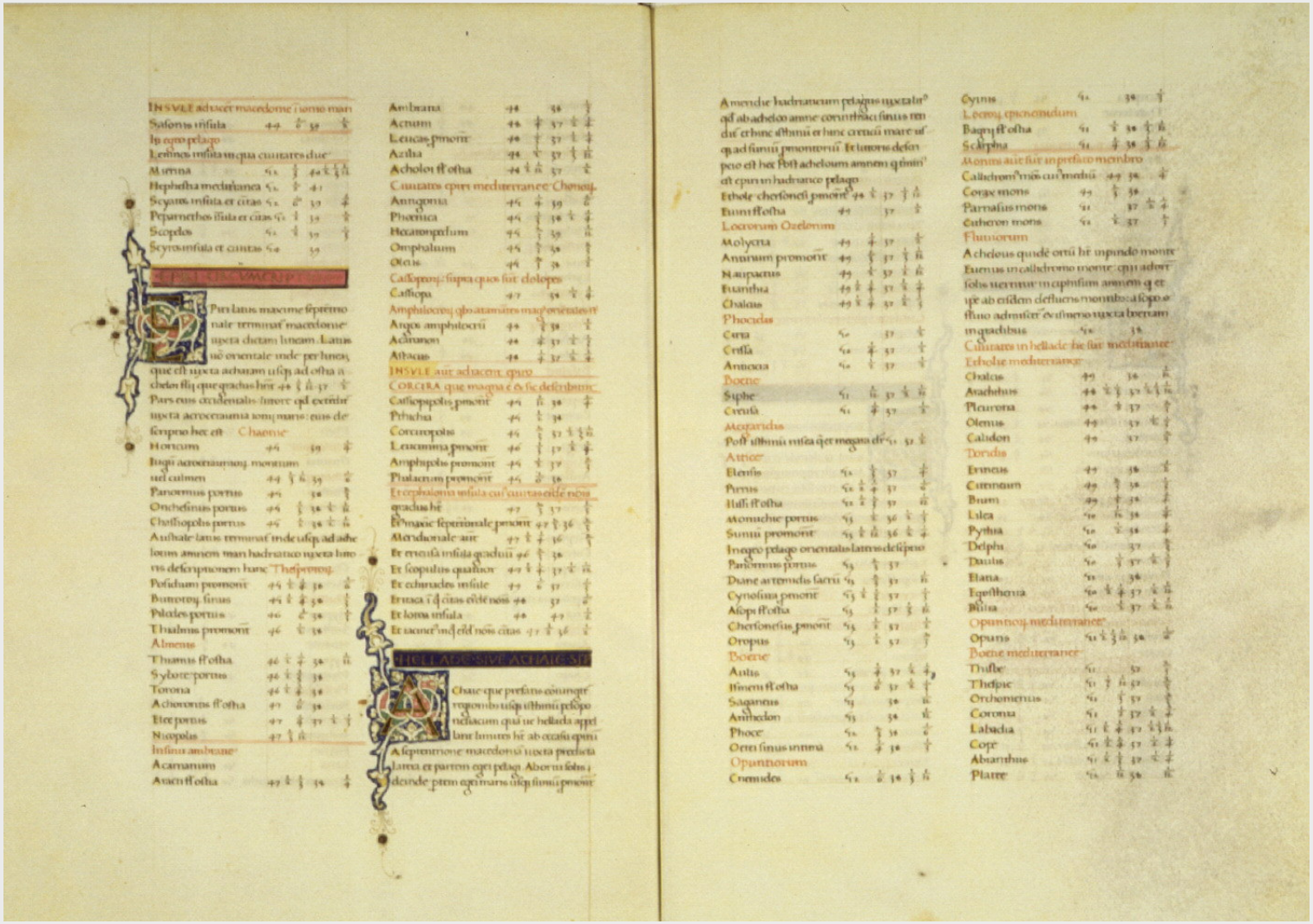
The origins of the US BGN can be traced to the surge of exploration, settlement, and economic exploitation of the American West after the Civil War. Contradictions and inconsistencies concerning names of geographic features were a serious problem for surveyors, mapmakers, government officials, and scientists who required uniform and unambiguous geographic nomenclature. In 1890 President Benjamin Harrison created the Board and gave it the authority to resolve unsettled geographic names questions.

The End – Just Kidding!

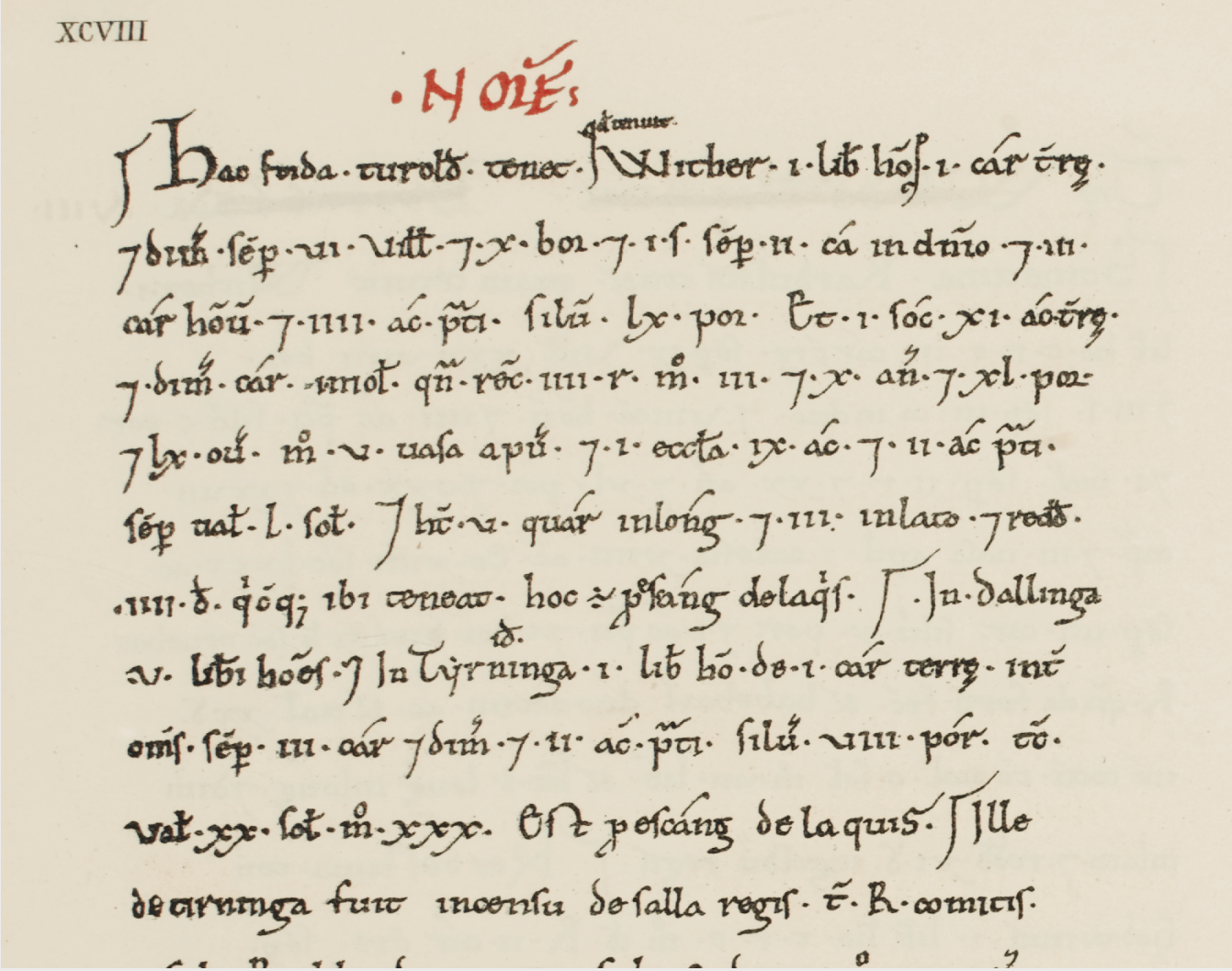
The BGN has its intellectual roots in the earliest map-making efforts. As societies became more complex, the necessity to name and define geographic entities assumed increasingly greater importance. These names were incorporated in maps, charts, gazetteers, peripli (portolani, routiers, rutters, coast pilots, etc.), census listings, and related documents.



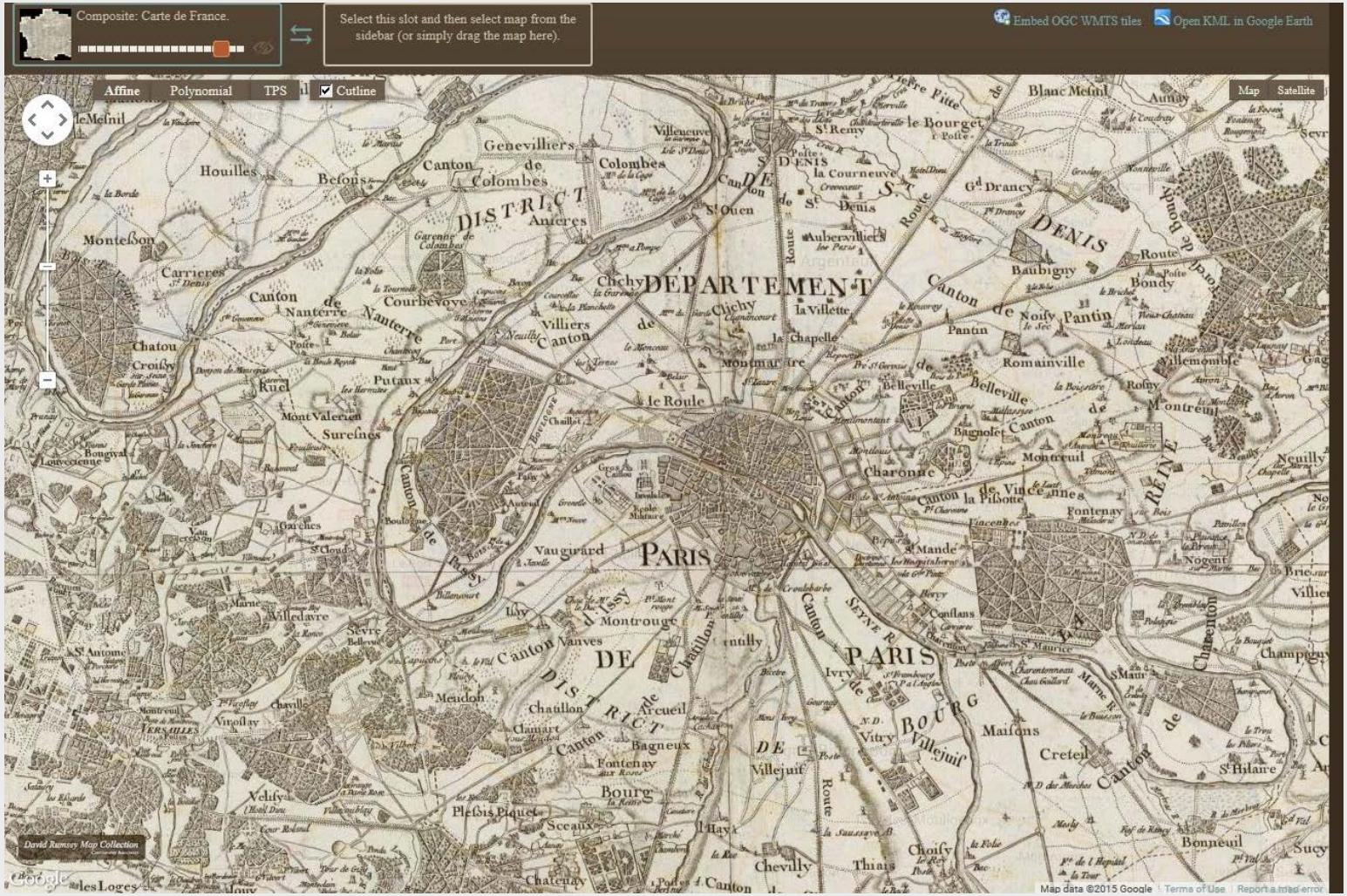
The Tabula Peutingeriana – dates to Emperor Augustus. 555 cities, 3500 place names. Approximately 15 B.C.E. produced under direction of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa.



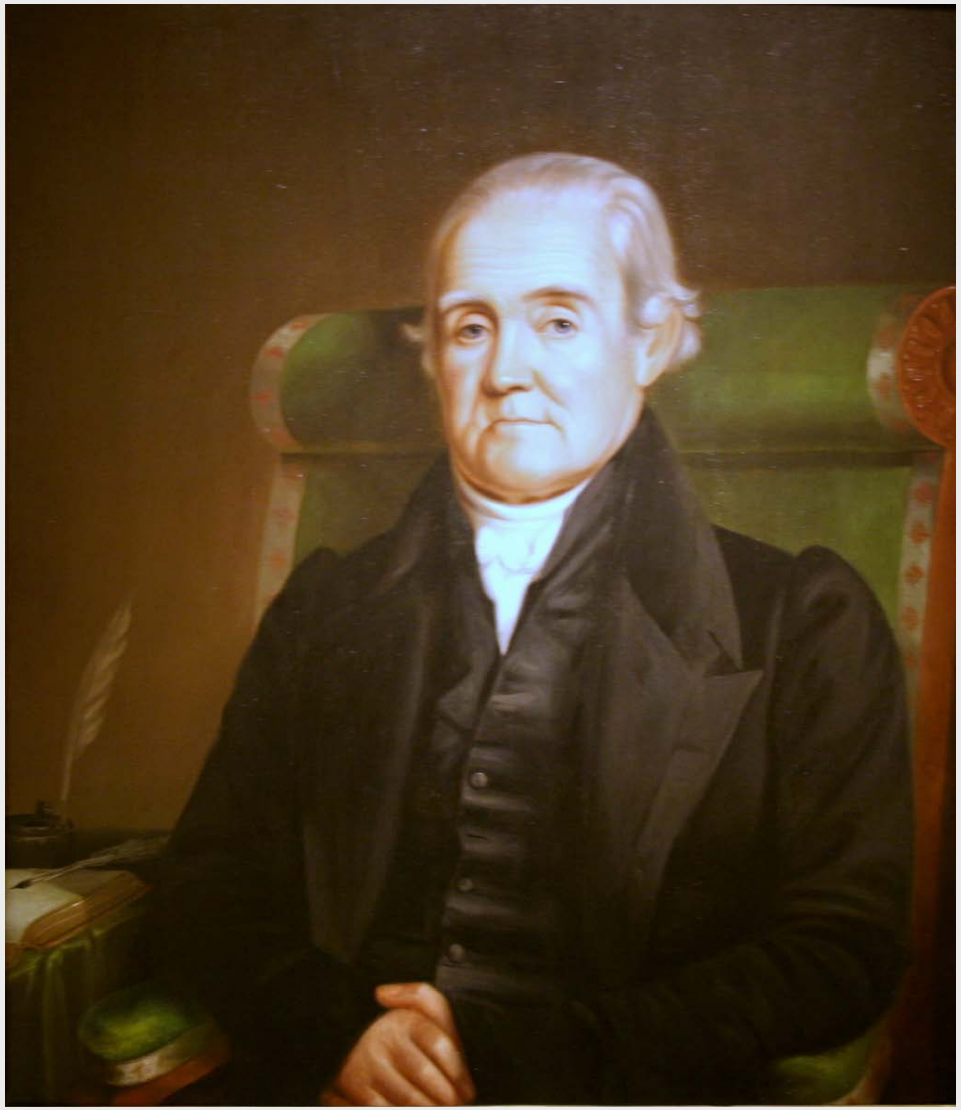
Listing of place names and geographic coordinates produced by Claudius Ptolemy AD 150. Approximately 8000 place names with latitude/longitude coordinates were recorded.

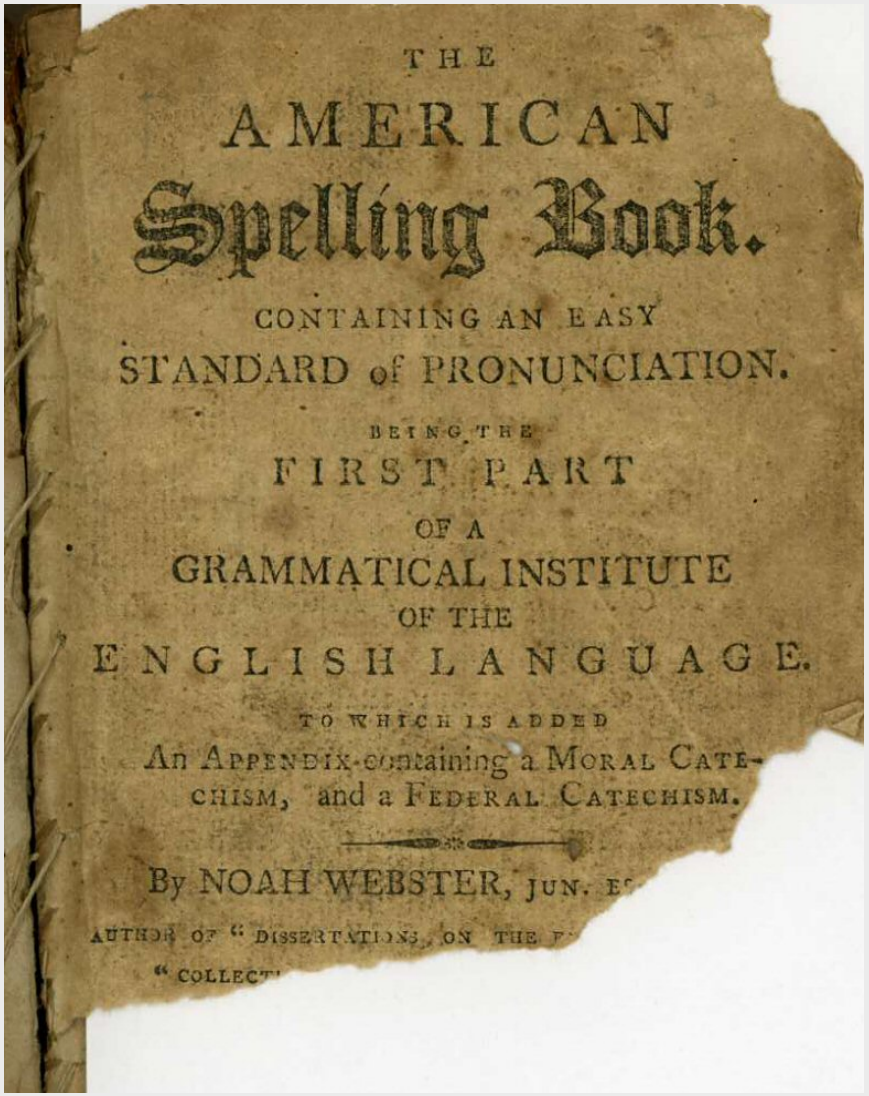


Domesday Book - 1086. Over 13,000 place names ordered by county and then hierarchy of ownership. Primarily for taxation.



The Cassini map-1815 completion. 62,000 place names. First national map based on geodetic principles.





THE
AMERICAN
Spelling Book.
CONTAINING AN EASY
STANDARD of PRONUNCIATION.
BEING THE
FIRST PART
OF A
GRAMMATICAL INSTITUTE
OF THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE.
TO WHICH IS ADDED
An APPENDIX containing a MORAL CATECHISM, and a FEDERAL CATECHISM.
By NOAH WEBSTER, JUN. E
AUTHOR OF "DISSERTATIONS ON THE
"COLLECT

Noah Webster, the first great American Orthographer.
1802 (?) American Spelling Book

CONNECTICUT.

Counties.	*Capital Towns.*
Hart-ford	Hart-ford
New Ha-ven	New Ha-ven
New Lon-don	New Lon-don
Wind-ham	Wind-ham
Fair-field	Fair-field
Litch-field	Litch-field
Mid-dle-ſex	Mid-dle-town
Tol-and	Tol-and

NEW-YORK.

Counties.	*Capital Towns.*
New-York	The City
Rich-mond	Rich-mond
King's-coun-ty	Flat-buſh
Queen's-coun-ty	Ja-mai-ca
Suf-folk	South-hold
Al-ba-ny	Al-ba-ny
Weſt Cheſ-ter	Weſt Cheſ-ter
Or-ange	Go-ſhen
Ul-ſter	King-ſton
Duch-eſs	Pough-keep-ſie*
Mont-go-me-ry	John-ſtown
Waſh-ing-ton	Sa-lem
Co lum-bi-a	Clav-er-ak
Clin-ton	Plattſ-burg
Scho-ha-ry	Scho-ha-ry
Ot-ſe-go	Coop-er's Town
Her-ke-mer	Whiteſ-town
On-ta-rio	Can-an-dar-qua
Renſ-ſe-laer	Troy
Ti-o-ga	New-town
Steu-ben	Bath
On-on-da-go	Cip-i-o

* *Pronounced Pokepſe.*

NEW-JERSEY.

Counties.	*Capital Towns.*
Ber-gen	Ber-gen
Mid-dle-ſex	Am-boy
Eſ-ſex	New-ark
Som-er-ſet	Prince-ton
Mon-mouth	Free-hold
Mor-ris	Mor-riſ-town
Cum-ber-land	Bridge-town

Coun-ties	*Chief Towns.*
Suſ-ſex	New-ton
Bur-ling-ton	Bur-ling-ton
Glouce-ſter	Had-don-field
Sa-lem	Sa-lem
Hun-ter-don	Tren-ton
Cape May	

PENNSYLVANIA.

Counties.	*Capital Towns.*
Phi-la-del-phi-a	Phi-la-del-phia
Cheſ-ter	Weſt Cheſ-ter
Bucks	New-town
Lan-caſ-ter	Lan-caſ-ter
York	York
Cum-ber-land	Car-liſle
Berks	Read-ing
North-amp-ton	Eaſ-ton
Bed-ford	Bed-ford
North-um-ber-land	Sun-bu-ry
Weſt-more-land	Greenſ-burg
Waſh-ing-ton	Waſh-ing-ton
Frank-lin	Cham-berſ-ton
Dau-phin	Har-riſ-burg*h*
Fay-ette	Un-ion
Lu-zerne	Wilkſ-barre
Mont-go-me-ry	Nor-riſ-town
Del-a-ware	Cheſ-ter
Miſſ-lin	Lew-iſ-burg*h*
Hunt-ing-don	Hunt-ing-don
Al-le-ga-ny	Pittſ-burg*h*

DELAWARE.

Counties.	*Capital Towns.*
New Caſ-tle	New Caſ-tle
Kent	Do-ver
Suſ-ſex	Lew-il-town

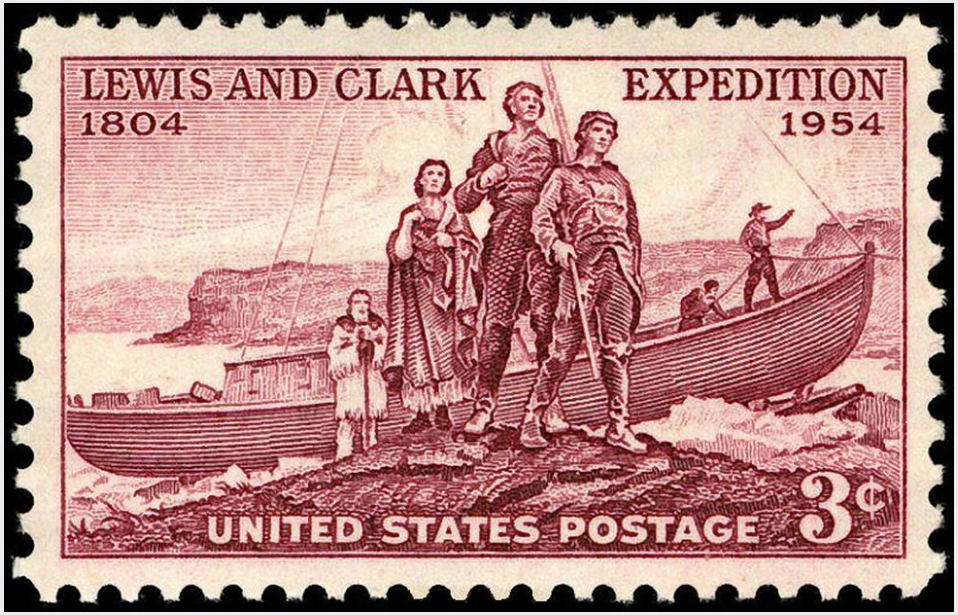
MARYLAND.

Counties. Worceſter, Somerſet, Dorcheſter, Talbot, Queen Ann's, Kent, Caroline, Cecil, Waſhington, St. Mary's, Charles, Prince George, Montgomery, Frederick, Anne Arundle, Baltimore, Hartford, Calvert, Allegany.

VIRGINIA.

Counties.—Amherſt, Henrico, Richmond, Ohio, Prince William, Charlotte, Pendleton, James City, Northumberland, Nanſemond, Buckingham, King and Queen, Stafford, Mecklenburg*h*,

Webster's spelling and pronunciation of selected place names in the United States.



November 7, 1805 – "Ocian in view! O! the joy." "Great joy in camp we are in view of the Ocian, this great Pacific Octean which we been So long anxious to See." William Clark.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LIST

OF

POST-OFFICES

IN THE

UNITED STATES,

WITH THE

NAMES OF THE POST-MASTERS,

OF THE

COUNTIES AND STATES, TO WHICH THEY BELONG; THE DISTANCES FROM THE CITY OF WASHINGTON, AND THE SEATS OF STATE GOVERNMENTS, RESPECTIVELY;

Exhibiting the State of Post-Offices, on the 1st of June, 1828.

BY DIRECTION OF THE

POST-MASTER GENERAL.

Washington:

WAY & GIDEON, PRINTERS.

1828.

Office.	*County.*	*State.*	*Postmasters.*	*Dist. from* Washington.	*Dist. from* State Cap.
Shelburn	Franklin	Ms	Walter Wells	405	100
Shelby	Genesee	N Y	Andrew A. Ellicott	406	246
Shelby	Macomb	Mic T	William Smith	569	38
Shelby Basin	Orleans	N Y	Christian Groff, jr.	410	266
Shelbyville	Shelby	Al	Jack Shackleford	820	56
Shelbyville (*c. h.*)	Bedford	Te	Thomas Davis	705	50
Shelbyville (*c. h.*)	Shelby	K	Robert Brenham	562	24
Shelbyville (*c. h.*)	Shelby	In	William O. Little	569	25
Shelbyville (*c. h.*)	Shelby	Il	Joseph Oliver	799	35
Sheldon	Franklin	Vt	Joshua W. Sheldon	532	62
Sheldon	Genesee	N Y	Fitch Chipman	385	264
Shepherdstown	Cumberland	Pa	David Sheffer	108	4
Shepherdstown	Jefferson	Va	John T. Cookers	74	191
Shepherdsville (*c. h.*)	Bullet	K	Abraham Field	607	69
Sherburne	Rutland	Vt	Cephas Wood	466	67
Sherburne	Middlesex	Ms	Calvin Sanger	418	18
Sherburne	Chenango	N Y	Silvester P. Scoville	352	102
Sherburne	Beaufort	S C	David Fitts	647	158
Sherburne Mills	Fleming	K	John Andrews	450	82
Sheridan	Chautauque	N Y	Titus Roberts	385	370
Sherman	Fairfield	Ct	Isaac Sherwood	319	57
Sherman	Huron	O	Rufus S. Price	408	99
Sherrard's Store	Hampshire	Va	A. D. Alexander	98	184
Sherril's Ford	Lincoln	N C	Michael Sherrill	415	160
Sherwood's Corner	Cayuga	N Y	Allen Thomas	389	164
Sheshequin	Bradford	Pa	Joseph Kingsbury	292	182
Shieldsboro (*c. h.*)	Hancock	Mi	John B. Joulme	1189	168
Shiloah	Camden	N C	Peter Elliott	282	234
Shiner's Mills	Lycoming	Pa	Andrew Shiner	234	124
Shingle Creek	St. Lawrence	N Y	James Bailey	487	189
Shirnston	Harrison	Va	Asa J. Shinn	235	251
Shippen	M'Kean	Pa	Elisha Chadwick	285	185
Shippensburgh	Cumberland	Pa	David M'Clure	104	38
Shippensville	Venango	Pa	Richard Shippen	295	195
Shippingport	Jefferson	K	Nicholas Berthoud	593	55
Shirley	Middlesex	Ms	Thomas Whitney	474	38
Shirleysburgh	Huntingdon	Pa	James M'Donald	139	82
Shivers' Mills	Warren	Ga	James Shivers	629	34
Shoals of Ogechee	Hancock	Ga	Thomas Cheely	638	38
Shober's Mills	Jefferson	O	John Shober	307	132
Shoreham	Addison	Vt	Moses Seymour	457	85
Short Mountain	Crawford	Ar T	Gilbert Marshall	1146	35
Short Pump	Henrico	Va	R. H. Saunders	114	9
Short Tract	Alleghany	N Y	Elias Smith	345	275
Shown's Cross Roads	Centre	Te	Greene Moore	443	276
Shrewsbury	Rutland	Vt	Stephen Gleason	451	81
Shrewsbury	Worcester	Ms	Calvin R. Stone	407	38
Shrewsbury	Monmouth	N J	Benjamin White	202	35
Shrewsbury	York	Pa	Philip Folckemmer	70	40
Shrewsbury	Kenhawa	Va	William Shrewsbury	338	277
Shutsbury	Franklin	Ms	Joseph Smallidge, jr.	392	77
Sibylsville	Frederick	Md	William M. Flautt	83	56
Sidney	Kennebeck	Me	Crosby Barton	621	68
Sidney	Delaware	N Y	George Thatcher	343	104
Sidney	Shelby	O	James Wells	481	82
Sidney Plains	Delaware	N Y	Nathan Edgerton	347	101

TABLE OF THE

POST-OFFICE ESTABLISHMENT,

FROM 1789 TO 1827, INCLUSIVE

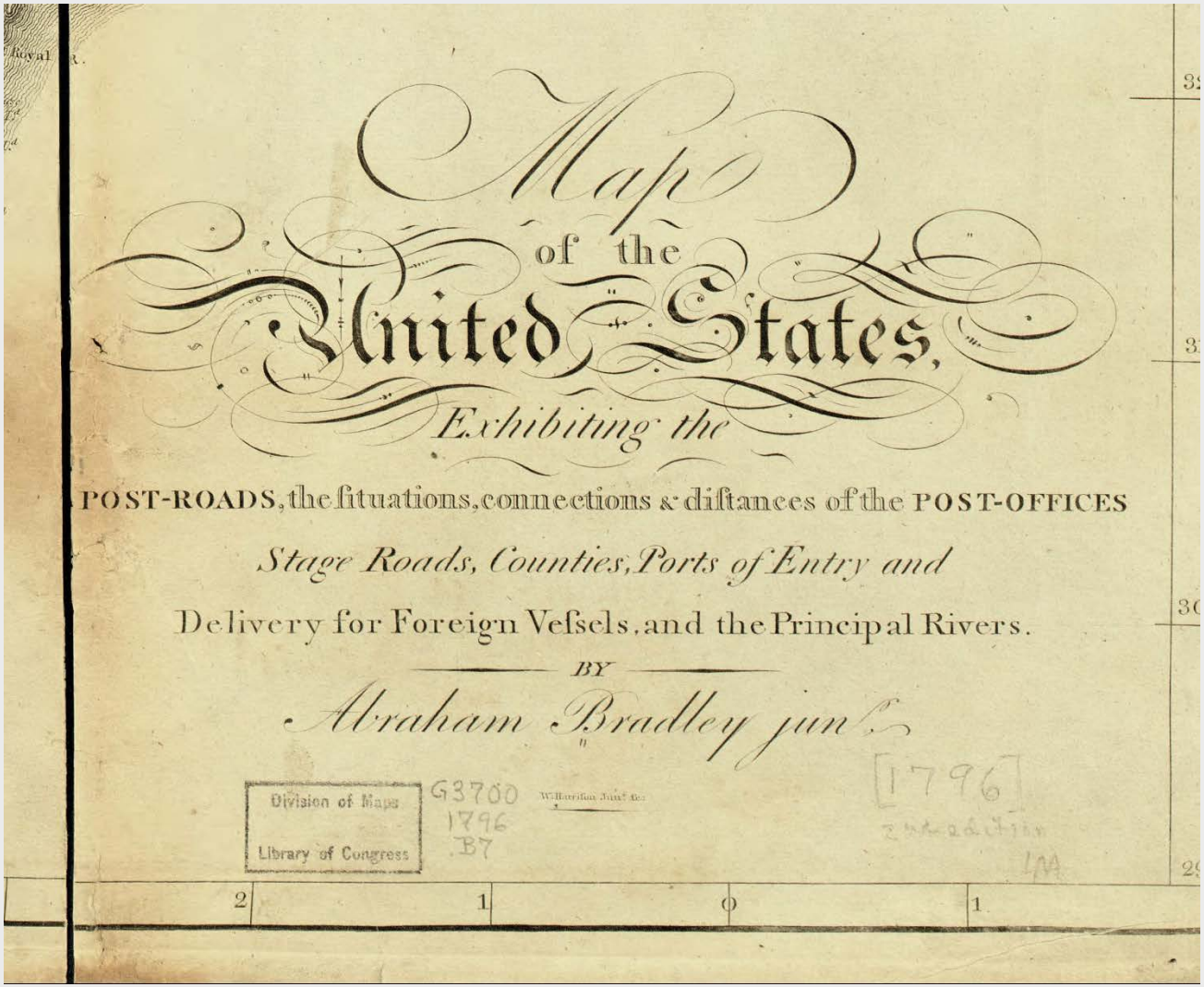
Years.	No. of Post Offices	Amount of postage. Dollars.	Compensation to post masters. Dollars.	Incidental expenses. Dollars.	Transportation of the Mail. Dollars.	Nett Revenue. Dollars.	Extent in Miles of Post-roads.
1789	75						
1790	75	37,935	8,198	1,861	22,081	5,795	1,875
1791	89	46,294	10,312	3,092	23,293	9,597	1,905
1792	195	67,444	16,518	5,282	32,731	12,913	5,642
1793	209	104,747	21,646	5,660	44,734	32,707	5,642
1794	450	128,947	27,156	9,812	53,005	38,974	11,984
1795	453	160,620	30,272	12,262	75,359	42,727	13,207
1796	468	195,067	35,730	14,353	81,489	63,495	13,207
1797	554	213,998	47,109	13,623	89,382	63,884	16,180
1798	639	232,977	56,035	16,035	107,014	53,893	16,180
1799	677	264,846	63,958	14,605	109,475	76,808	16,180
1800	903	280,804	69,243	16,107	128,644	66,810	20,817
1801	1025	320,443	79,338	23,363	152,450	65,292	22,309
1802	1114	327,045	85,587	21,658	174,671	45,129	25,315
1803	1258	351,823	93,170	24,084	205,110	29,459	25,315
1804	1405	389,450	107,716	24,231	205,555	51,948	29,556
1805	1558	421,373	111,552	26,180	239,635	44,006	31,076
1806	1710	446,106	119,785	25,895	267,893	32,533	33,431
1807	1848	478,763	129,041	32,093	292,751	24,878	33,755
1808	1944	460,564	128,653	28,676	305,499	——	34,035
1809	2012	506,634	141,579	23,516	332,917	8,622	34,035
1810	2300	551,684	149,438	18,365	327,966	55,715	36,406
1811	2403	587,247	159,244	20,689	319,166	88,148	36,406
1812	2610	649,208	177,422	22,117	340,626	109,043	39,378
1813		703,155	221,848	20,605	438,559	22,143	39,540
1814		730,370	234,354	17,170	475,602	3,244	41,736
1815	3000	1,043,065	241,901	18,441	487,779	294,944	43,748
1816	3260	961,782	265,944	16,508	521,970	157,360	48,673
1817	3459	1,002,973	303,916	23,410	589,189	86,458	52,089
1818	3618	1,130,235	346,429	24,792	664,611	94,403	59,473
1819	4000	1,204,737	375,828	24,152	717,881	86,876	67,586
1820	4500	1,111,927	352,295	26,206	782,425	——	72,492
1821	4650	1,059,087	337,599	31,003	815,681	——	78,808
1822	4799	1,117,490	355,299	23,655	788,618	——	82,763
1823	5043	1,130,115	360,462	29,069	767,464	——	84,860
1824	5182	1,197,758	383,804	35,276	768,939	9,739	84,860
1825	5677	1,306,525	411,183	32,214	785,646	77,482	94,052
1826	6150	1,447,703	447,727	33,885	885,100	80,991	94,052
1827	7003	1,524,633	486,411	40,203	94[illegible],345	55,574	105,336

JOHN M'LEAN

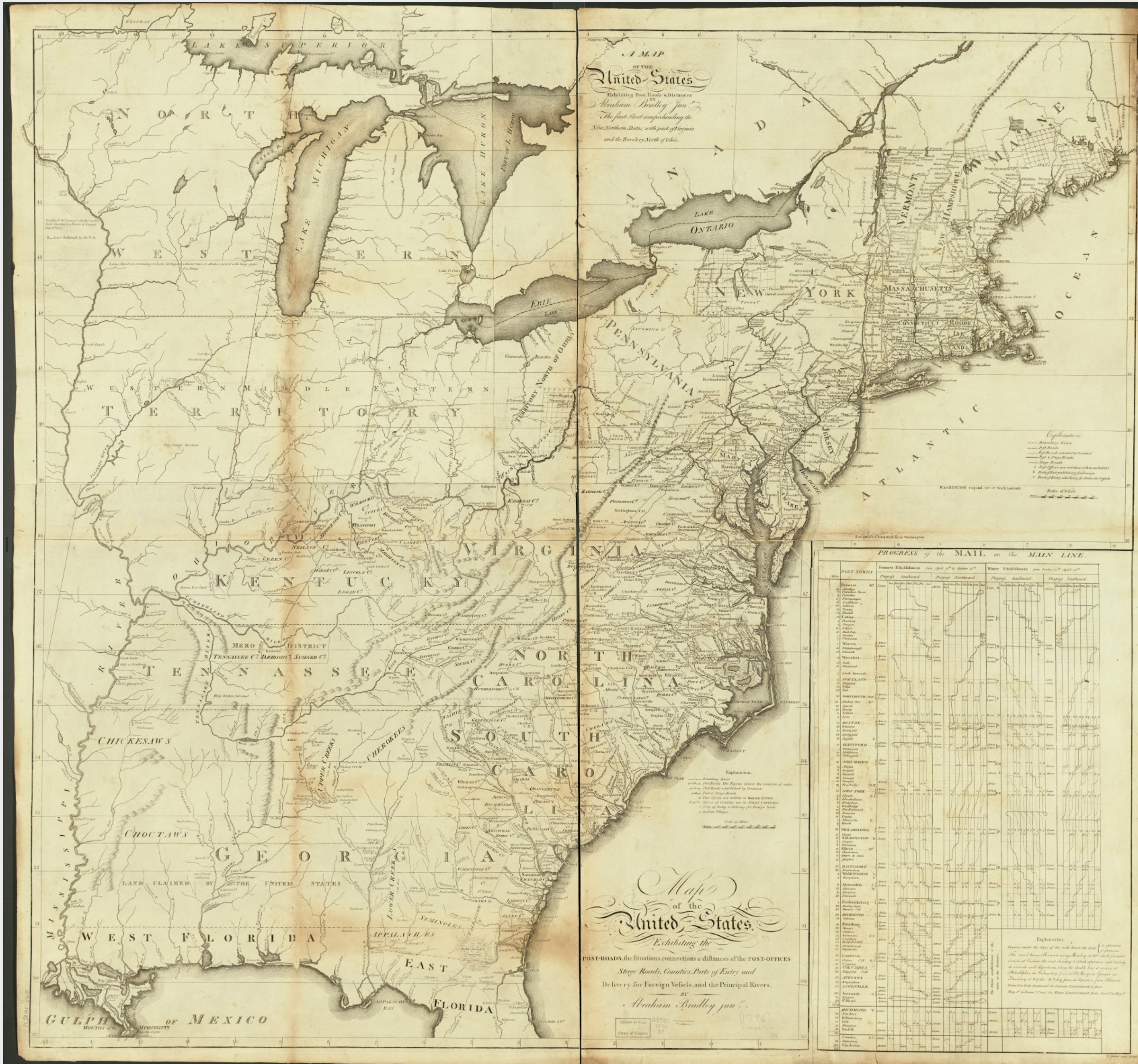
Post-Master General

POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
1st June, 1828.

Post Offices grew from 75 in 1789 to 7,003 by 1827. Thence 18,417 by 1850 and 62,401 by 1890. Besides naming new post offices, many were either stricken from the listing over time, or renamed. The Post Office kept track of all these changes through time.



Post Office cartography - Legend of the First United States Post Route Map - 1796


A MAP
OF THE
United States
Exhibiting Post Roads & Distances
BY
Abraham Bradley Jun.r
The first Sheet comprehending the
Nine Northern States, with part of Virginia
and the Territory North of Ohio.
Map
of the
United States,
Exhibiting the
POST-ROADS, the situations, connections & distances of the POST-OFFICES
Stage Roads, Counties, Ports of Entry and
Delivery for Foreign Vessels, and the Principal Rivers.
BY
Abraham Bradley jun.r
LAKE SUPERIOR
LAKE MICHIGAN
LAKE HURON
PART OF L. HURON
LAKE ONTARIO
ERIE LAKE
NORTH WESTERN TERRITORY
WESTERN MIDDLE EASTERN
TERRITORY NORTH OF OHIO
CANADA
NEW YORK
VERMONT
NEW HAMPSHIRE
MAINE
MASSACHUSETTS
CONNECTICUT
RHODE ISLAND
PENNSYLVANIA
JERSEY
MARYLAND
DELAWARE
VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY
MERO DISTRICT
TENNASSEE C.o DAVIDSON C.o SUMNER C.o
TENNASSEE
NORTH CAROLINA
SOUTH CAROLINA
GEORGIA
CHICKESAWS
CHOCTAWS
CHEROKEES
UPPER CREEKS
LOWER CREEKS
SEMINOLES
APPALACHES
LAND CLAIMED BY THE UNITED STATES
WEST FLORIDA
EAST FLORIDA
APPALACHEE BAY
MISSISSIPPI
OHIO RIVER
TENNASSEE RIVER
ILLINOIS RIVER
GULPH OF MEXICO
MOUTHS of the MISSISSIPPI
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Explanation.
Boundary Lines
Post Roads
Post Roads extended by Contract
Post & Stage Roads
Stage Roads
Post Offices are written in Roman Letters
Ports of Entry & Delivery for Foreign
Ports of Entry & Delivery for Domestic Vessels
WASHINGTON Capitol 38° 53' North Latitude
Scale of Miles
Longitude Computed from Washington
PROGRESS of the MAIL on the MAIN LINE.
POST TOWNS
Summer Establishment from April 15th to October 15th
Winter Establishment from October 15th April 15th
Progress Southward
Progress Northward
Miles
BREWERS
PORTLAND
PORTSMOUTH N.H.
BOSTON
HARTFORD
NEW HAVEN
NEW YORK
PHILADELPHIA
WILMINGTON
BALTIMORE
WASHINGTON
Alexandria
Fredericksburg
RICHMOND
Petersburg
RALEIGH
COLUMBIA
AUGUSTA
LOUISVILLE
Savannah
RICHMOND
Norfolk
Camden
Charleston
Explanation.

Lewisburg
Northumberland
Sunbury
Easton
Bethlehem
Reading
Harrisburg
Lancaster
Carlisle
Shippinsburg
Chambersburg
York
Gettysburg
Hanover
Petersburg
Bedford
Hancock
Cumberland
Oldtown
Williamsport
Hagers to
Martinsburg
Sharpsburg
Fredericktown
Romney
Winchester
Moorfields
Stevensburg
Strasburg
Leesburg
Woodstock
Pittsburg
Greensburg
Washington
Brownsville
Union
Morgantown
Legionville
Liberty
Clarksburg
Portage
Berlin
Wells Tav.
Franks T.
Huntington
Lewistown
Mifflin C.
Cumberland C.
Lancaster C.
Dauphine C.
Berks C.
Bucks C.
Philadelphia
Chester
Newcastle
Salem
Elkton
Charlestown
Baltimore
Annapolis
Bladensburg
Upper Marlboro
Nottingham
Piscataway
Colchester
Dumfries
Port Tobacco
Benedict
Newport
Vienna
Easton
Centreville
Chester T.
Dover
Milford
Broadkill
Dagsborough
Bel-Air
Harford
Black Horse
Tancytown
Frederick C.
Washington C.
Hardy C.
Shenando C.
Loudoun C.
Randolph C.
Pendleton C.
Fauquier C.
Culpeper C.
Rockingham C.H.
Pr. William C.
Charles C.
Alexandria
Maryland
Delaware
Pennsylvania
Virginia
Allegany C.
Allegany
Pine C.
Kiskemanetas R.
Monongahela R.
Youghiogany R.
Cheat R.
Susquehanna Riv.
Mahantango
Lehigh R.
Wind Gap
Schuylkill R.
Delaware R.
Chesapeake Bay
Potomac River
Shenando R.
Sheperds to
Hamp. Branch
Bedford C.
Franklin C.
Somerset C.
Huntingdon C.
Mifflin C.
Northumberland C.
Lancaster C.
Philadelphia C.
Chester C.
Newcastle C.
Kent C.
Queen Anns C.
Talbot C.
Caroline C.
Dorchester C.
Sussex C.
Wicomico R.
Choptank R.
Patuxent R.
Potomac R.
Rappahannock R.
Hamburg
Bedminster
Plumstead
Pottsgrove
Morrisville
Bristol
Lebanon
Canal
Wrights Ferry
Mayen
Elizabeth Ct.
Greencastle
Millers T.
Hagers to
Bath
Berkeley C.
Frederick C.
Hardie C.
Hampshire C.
Allegany C.
Monongalia C.
Harrison C.
Montgomery C.
Anne Arundel C.
Prince Georges C.
Washington C.
Cecil C.
Harford C.
Baltimore C.
Kent C.
Queen Anns C.
Talbot C.
Caroline C.
Dorchester C.
Somerset C.
Worcester C.
Sussex C.
Kent C.
Newcastle C.
Salem C.
Chester C.
Philadelphia C.
Lancaster C.
Berks C.
Bucks C.
Northumberland C.
Mifflin C.
Huntingdon C.
Franklin C.
Bedford C.
Somerset C.
Washington C.
Fayette C.
Greene C.
Allegany C.
Randolph C.
Pendleton C.
Hardy C.
Shenando C.
Loudoun C.
Fauquier C.
Culpeper C.
Rockingham C.H.
Pr. William C.
Charles C.
Alexandria
Dumfries
Colchester
Port Tobacco
Benedict
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Centreville
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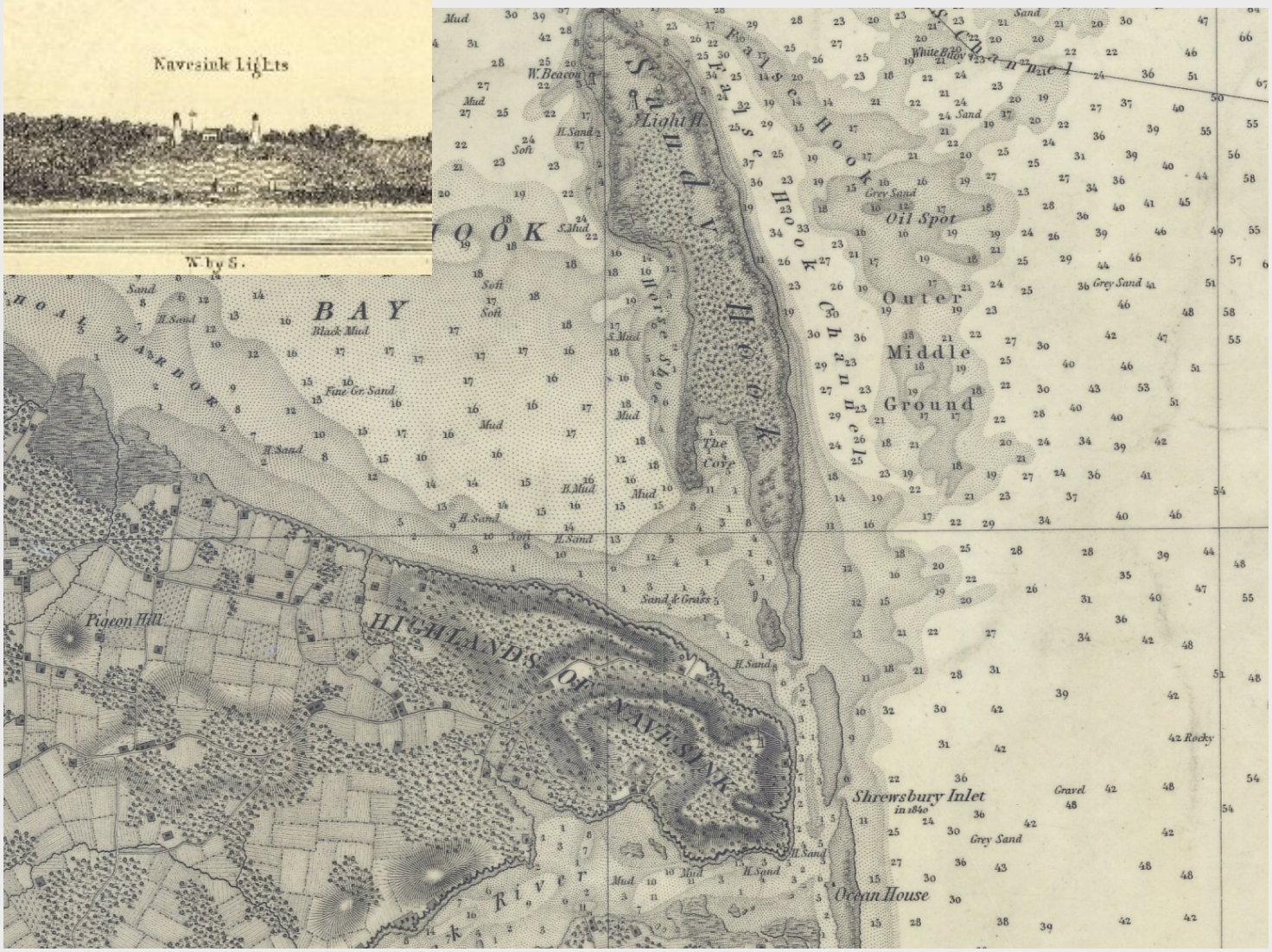
Dover
Milford
Broadkill
Dagsborough
Bel-Air
Harford
Black Horse
Tancytown
Frederick C.
Washington C.
Hardy C.
Shenando C.
Loudoun C.
Randolph C.
Pendleton

Ferdinand Rudolph Hassler, first Superintendent of the United States Coast Survey. The Coast Survey was among the earliest mapping agencies concerned with orthography.

FERDINAND RUDOLPH HASSLER (1770–1843).

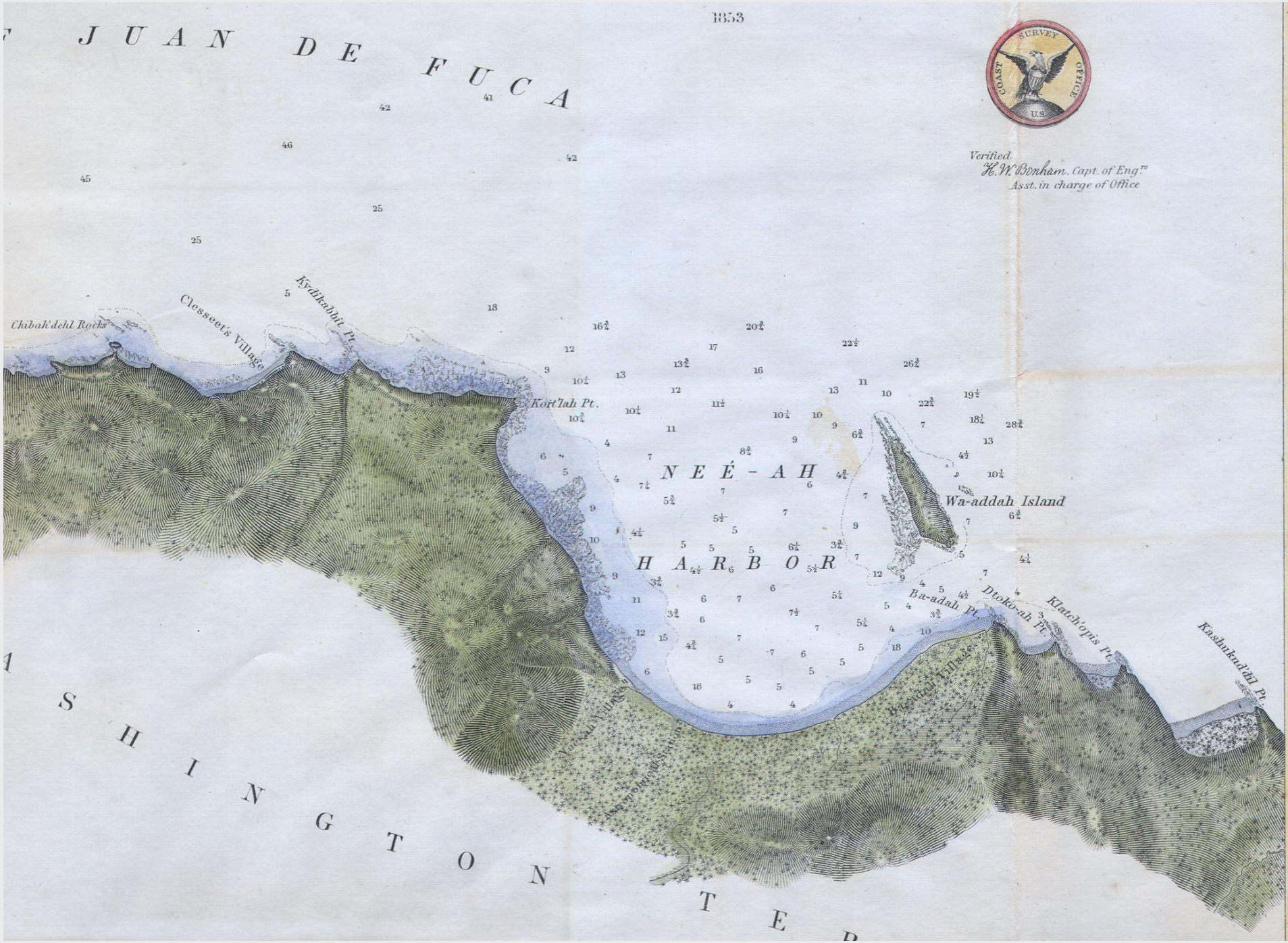
“He was quaint in his language, particularly in his orthography, cautioning his assistants always to inquire closely into the derivation and spelling of the names of localities in our surveys. He would never accept the spelling of ‘Neversink’, one of the prominent points near Sandy Hook, but insisted upon ‘Navesink’ as the correct orthography; and upon every name put down by us on the charts he would make his comments.”

RADM Benjamin Sands, 1899. <u>From Reefer to Rear-Admiral</u>. Pp. 90-91. Commenting upon Ferdinand Rudolph Hassler (1770-1843), First Superintendent of the United States Coast Survey.



“Neversunk” “Neversink” - “Navesink” and so it is today.

Alexander Dallas Bache, great-grandson of Benjamin Franklin, Second Superintendent of the Coast Survey (1806-1867). Issued instructions concerning correct orthography of place names. Also, commissioned first study of Native-American place names.


1853
COAST SURVEY OFFICE U.S.
Verified
H. W. Benham. Capt. of Engrs
Asst. in charge of Office
JUAN DE FUCA
SHINGTON TER
Chibah'dehl Rocks
Clesseet's Village
Kydikabbit Pt.
Kott'lah Pt.
NEÉ-AH
HARBOR
Wa-addah Island
Ba-adah Pt.
Dtoko-ah Pt.
Klatch'opis Pt.
Kashukud'dil Pt.
Neeah Village
Ba-adah Village

Coast Survey Office
Nov. 24th. 1856.

Dear Sir.

I have the honor to forward herewith a letter from Lieut. Whiting, submitting a list of Bays, Harbors and anchorages on the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific Coasts of the United States, as directed in your letter of the 1st instant.

Very respectfully,
Your Obt. servant,
(signed) A. P. Hill,
1st Lieut 1st Artly
Actg. Assist. in charge C. S. Office

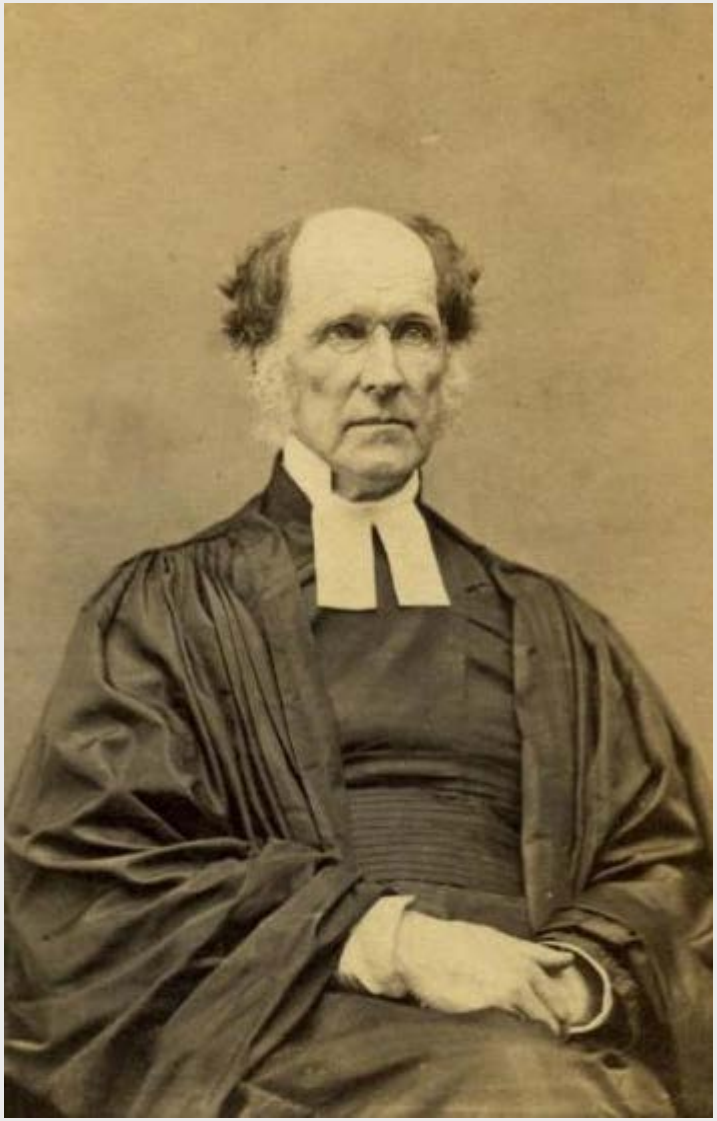
Prof. A. D. Bache,
Supt. Coast Survey.

474	Oregon	Umpquah	River	C. Survey.
475		Alsea	"	"
476		Nekas	"	"
477		Nestuggah	"	"
478		Nanuggah	"	"
479		Tillamuk	"	"
480		Nehalem	"	"
481		Columbia	"	"
482	Washington Territory	Shealwater	Bay	"
483		Gray's	Harbor	"
484		Grenville	Anchorage	"
485		Neeah	Harbor	"
486		Callam	Bay	"
487		Freshwater	"	"
488		False Dungeness	"	"
489		New "	"	"
490		Washington	Harbor	"
491		Port Discovery		"
492		" Townshend		"
493		Long	Harbor	"
494		Admiralty	Inlet	"
495		Oak	Bay	"
496		Port Ludlow		"
497		" Gamble		"

List of Bays, Harbors, and Anchorages in U.S. waters as of 1856 compiled under direction of Bache. Note signature: A. P. Hill, a future Confederate General.

“The transliteration of Indian names has everywhere been a fruitful source of differences in spelling, inasmuch as no two persons understand alike or render into the same English characters the obscure sounds of Indian names.”

Second Report of BGN.



The Reverend Edward Ballard

"I have the honor to present to you the following attempt at an examination of the geographical nomenclature of the coast of Maine, for the purpose of furnishing a list of the names of Indian origin, with their proper orthography, as far as it now can be ascertained, and their interpretation…."

Reverend Edward Ballard, 1868 Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Coast Survey, Appendix No. 14. Geographical Names on the Coast of Maine.

527.51
:83
:945

U. S. COAST SURVEY.

COAST PILOT OF ALASKA.

PART FIRST.

E. F. Dickins
U. S. Coast Survey

UNITED STATES COAST SURVEY.

BENJAMIN PEIRCE, Superintendent.

Rarebook
VK
943
.N3
1st
1869
c.3

PACIFIC COAST.

COAST PILOT OF ALASKA,

(FIRST PART,)

FROM

SOUTHERN BOUNDARY TO COOK'S INLET.

BY

GEORGE DAVIDSON,
ASSISTANT COAST SURVEY.

1869.

U. S. COAST & GEODETIC SURVEY
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
OCT 14 1954
ACC. No.

527.51
:83
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WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1869.

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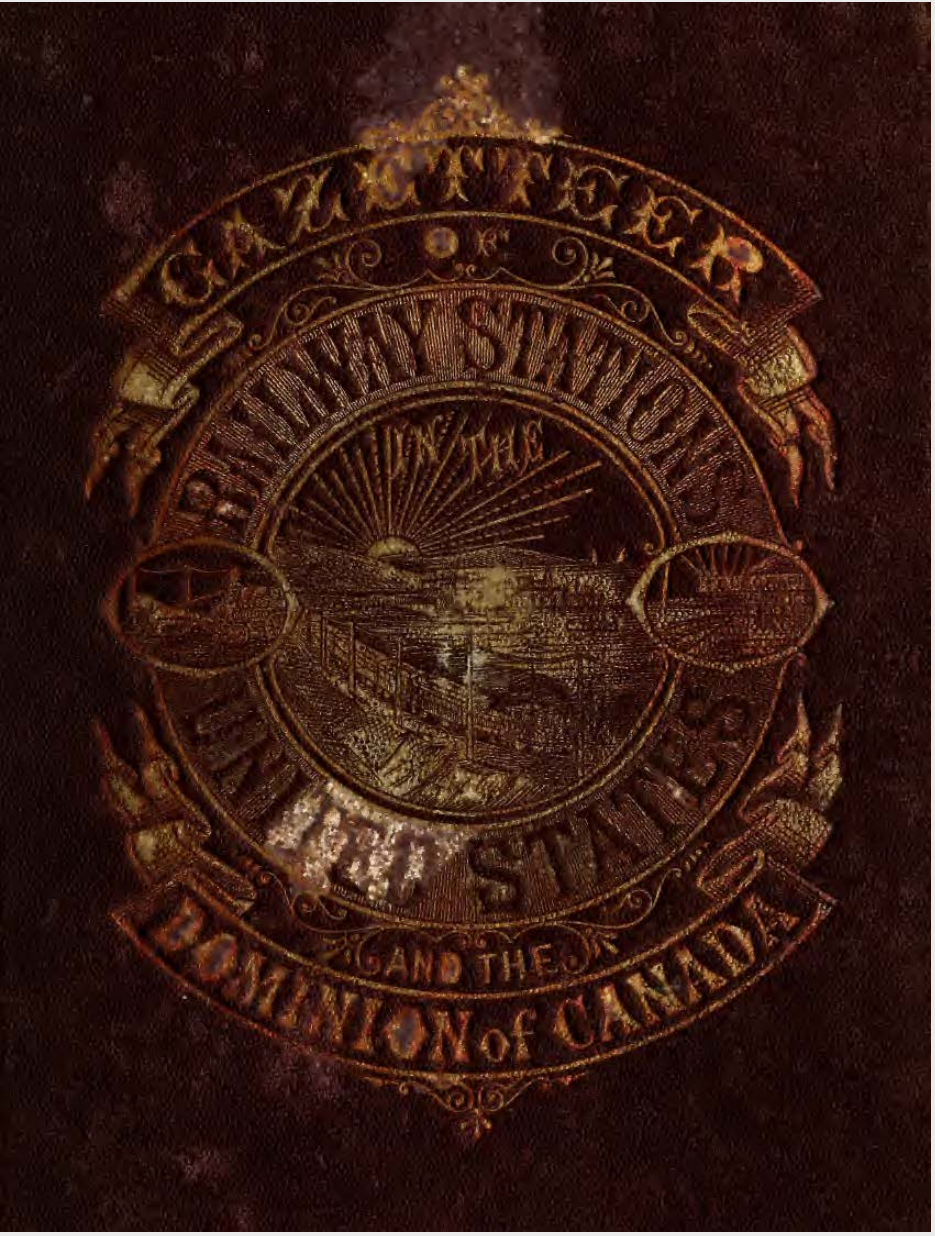
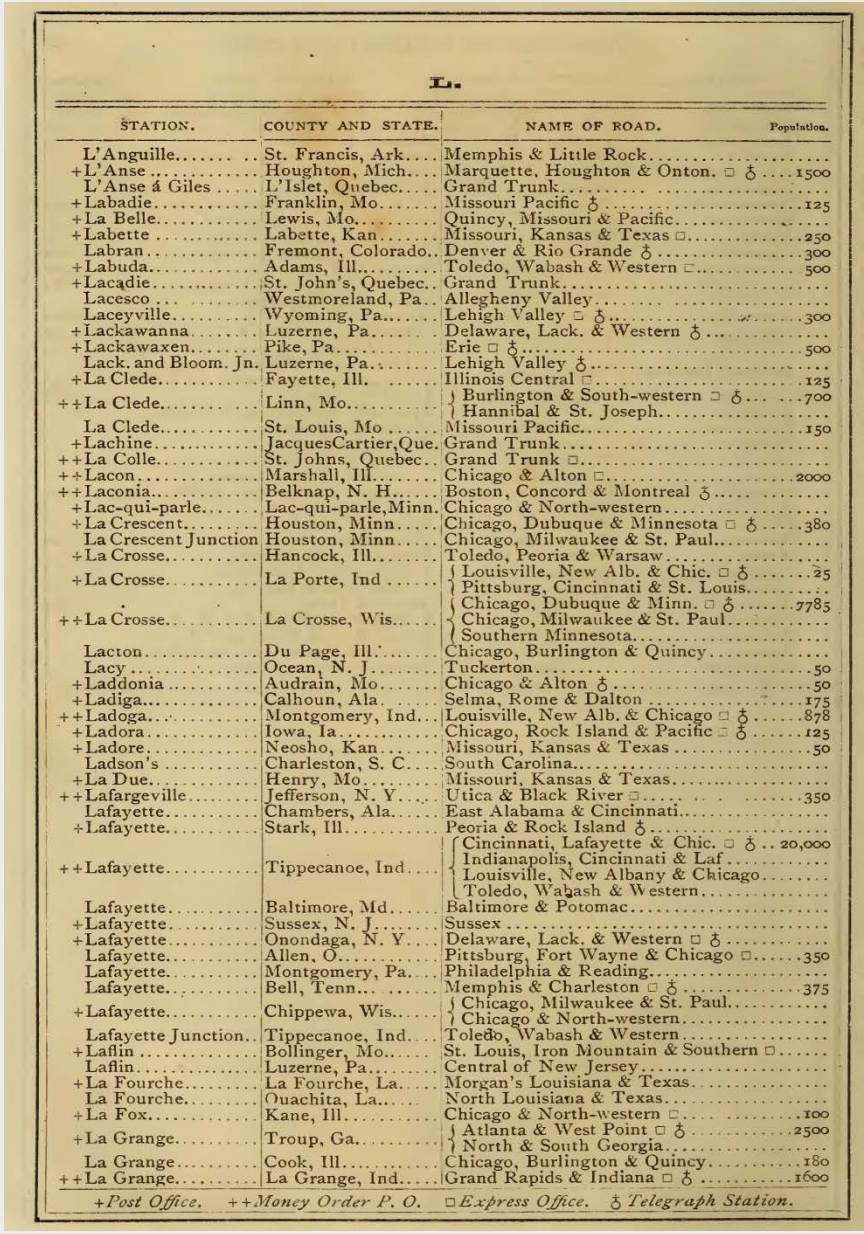


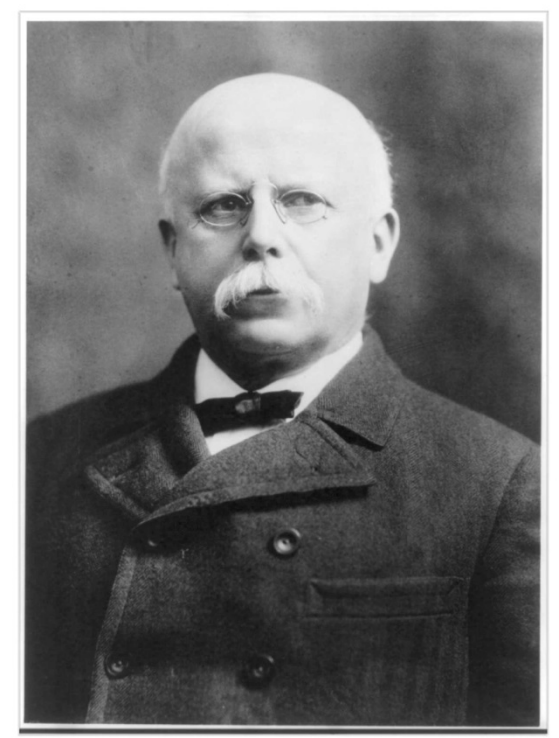


L.

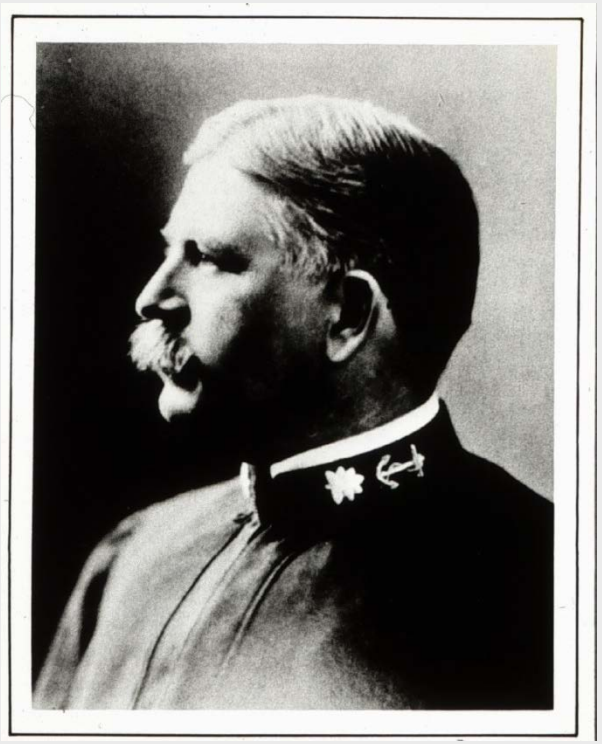
STATION.	COUNTY AND STATE.	NAME OF ROAD.	Population.
L'Anguille	St. Francis, Ark	Memphis & Little Rock	
+L'Anse	Houghton, Mich	Marquette, Houghton & Onton. □ ♁	1500
L'Anse á Giles	L'Islet, Quebec	Grand Trunk	
+Labadie	Franklin, Mo	Missouri Pacific ♁	125
+La Belle	Lewis, Mo	Quincy, Missouri & Pacific	
+Labette	Labette, Kan	Missouri, Kansas & Texas □	250
Labran	Fremont, Colorado	Denver & Rio Grande ♁	300
+Labuda	Adams, Ill	Toledo, Wabash & Western □	500
+Lacadie	St. John's, Quebec	Grand Trunk	
Lacesco	Westmoreland, Pa	Allegheny Valley	
Laceyville	Wyoming, Pa	Lehigh Valley □ ♁	300
+Lackawanna	Luzerne, Pa	Delaware, Lack. & Western ♁	
+Lackawaxen	Pike, Pa	Erie □ ♁	500
Lack. and Bloom. Jn.	Luzerne, Pa	Lehigh Valley ♁	
+La Clede	Fayette, Ill.	Illinois Central □	125
++La Clede	Linn, Mo	Burlington & South-western □ ♁ Hannibal & St. Joseph	700
La Clede	St. Louis, Mo	Missouri Pacific	150
+Lachine	JacquesCartier,Que.	Grand Trunk	
++La Colle	St. Johns, Quebec	Grand Trunk □	
++Lacon	Marshall, Ill	Chicago & Alton □	2000
++Laconia	Belknap, N. H	Boston, Concord & Montreal ♁	
+Lac-qui-parle	Lac-qui-parle,Minn.	Chicago & North-western	
+La Crescent	Houston, Minn	Chicago, Dubuque & Minnesota □ ♁	380
La Crescent Junction	Houston, Minn	Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul	
+La Crosse	Hancock, Ill	Toledo, Peoria & Warsaw	
+La Crosse	La Porte, Ind	Louisville, New Alb. & Chic. □ ♁ Pittsburg, Cincinnati & St. Louis	25
++La Crosse	La Crosse, Wis	Chicago, Dubuque & Minn. □ ♁ Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Southern Minnesota	7785
Lacton	Du Page, Ill	Chicago, Burlington & Quincy	
Lacy	Ocean, N. J	Tuckerton	50
+Laddonia	Audrain, Mo	Chicago & Alton ♁	50
+Ladiga	Calhoun, Ala	Selma, Rome & Dalton	175
++Ladoga	Montgomery, Ind	Louisville, New Alb. & Chicago □ ♁	878
+Ladora	Iowa, Ia	Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific □ ♁	125
+Ladore	Neosho, Kan	Missouri, Kansas & Texas	50
Ladson's	Charleston, S. C	South Carolina	
+La Due	Henry, Mo	Missouri, Kansas & Texas	
++Lafargeville	Jefferson, N. Y	Utica & Black River □	350
Lafayette	Chambers, Ala	East Alabama & Cincinnati	
+Lafayette	Stark, Ill	Peoria & Rock Island ♁	
++Lafayette	Tippecanoe, Ind	Cincinnati, Lafayette & Chic. □ ♁ Indianapolis, Cincinnati & Laf Louisville, New Albany & Chicago Toledo, Wabash & Western	20,000
Lafayette	Baltimore, Md	Baltimore & Potomac	
+Lafayette	Sussex, N. J	Sussex	
+Lafayette	Onondaga, N. Y	Delaware, Lack. & Western □ ♁	
Lafayette	Allen, O	Pittsburg, Fort Wayne & Chicago □	350
Lafayette	Montgomery, Pa	Philadelphia & Reading	
Lafayette	Bell, Tenn	Memphis & Charleston □ ♁	375
+Lafayette	Chippewa, Wis	Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Chicago & North-western	
Lafayette Junction	Tippecanoe, Ind	Toledo, Wabash & Western	
+Laflin	Bollinger, Mo	St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern □	
Laflin	Luzerne, Pa	Central of New Jersey	
+La Fourche	La Fourche, La	Morgan's Louisiana & Texas	
La Fourche	Ouachita, La	North Louisiana & Texas	
+La Fox	Kane, Ill	Chicago & North-western □	100
+La Grange	Troup, Ga	Atlanta & West Point □ ♁ North & South Georgia	2500
La Grange	Cook, Ill	Chicago, Burlington & Quincy	180
++La Grange	La Grange, Ind	Grand Rapids & Indiana □ ♁	1600

+Post Office. ++Money Order P. O. □ Express Office. ♁ Telegraph Station.

Gazetteer of Railway Stations in the United States and the Dominion of Canada 1874



Thomas C. Mendenhall

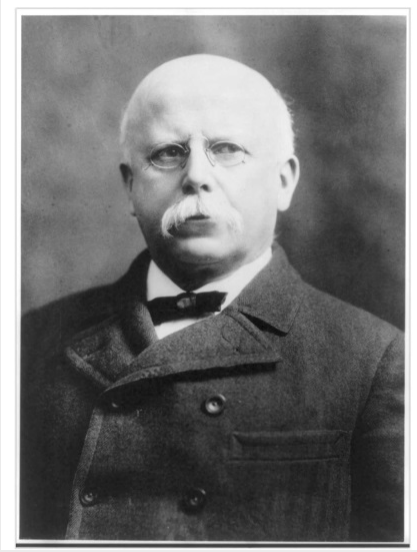


LCDR Richardson Clover,

These two men met in the first week of 1890 to discuss problems with Alaska place names. Mendenhall expanded the concept to include all government agencies concerned with nation-wide orthography. Mendenhall wrote to other agencies suggesting formation of a board to discuss names issues.

Mendenhall and the informal board brought the names issue to the attention of President Harrison. He concurred and issued an Executive Order dated September 4, 1890, that stated:

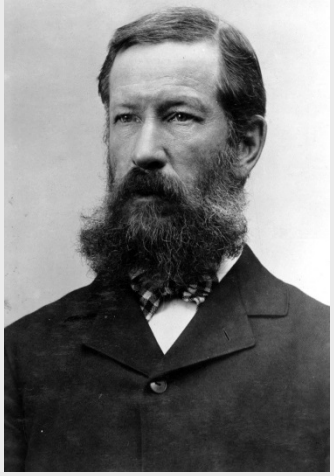
"As it is desirable that uniform usage in regard to geographic nomenclature and orthography obtain throughout the Executive Departments of the Government, and particularly upon the maps and charts issued by the various Departments and Bureaus, I hereby constitute a Board on Geographic Names…."



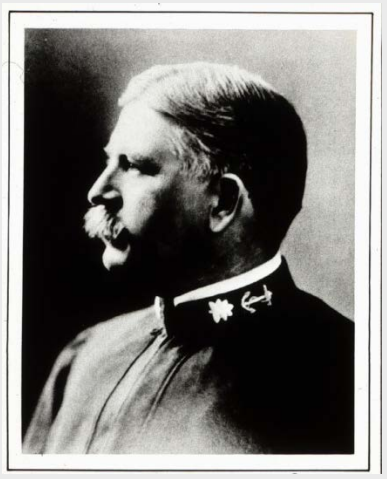
Thomas Corwin Mendenhall, USC&GS. First Chairman of the BGN

The Executive Committee – Prepares material for full board to review

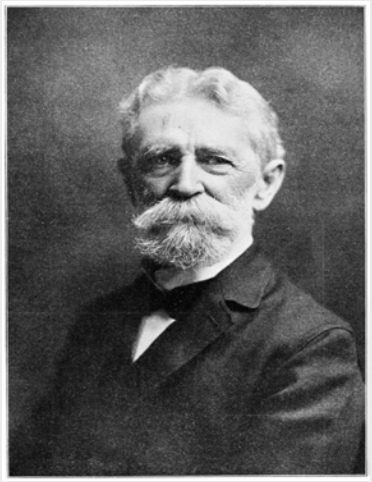
Herbert Gouverneur Ogden, USC&GS, VP National Geographic Society for Geography of the Land



Henry Gannett, Chief Geographer, USGS, Secretary NGS



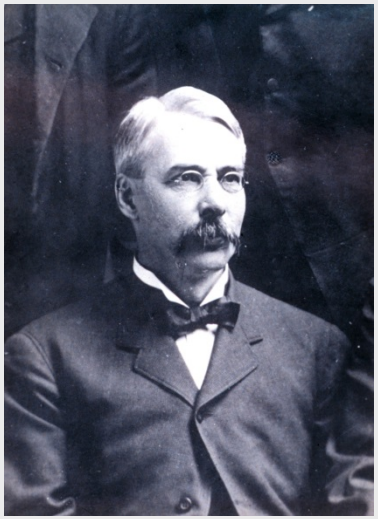
LCDR Richardson Clover, Hydrographer of the Navy And Secretary of the Board



Otis T. Mason
Smithsonian
Ethnologist

Captain H. L. Howison
Lighthouse Board

Andrew H. Allen
State Department



Marcus Baker, USGS
And Manager NGS

Pierson Bristow,
Post Office

Maj. Thomas Turtle
US Army C of E

“After the American Civil War there was a surge of mapping and scientific reporting associated with the exploration, mining, and settlement of the western territories. Inconsistencies and contradictions among the many names, their spellings, and applications….

<u>Domestic Geographic Names: Principles, Policies, and Procedures</u>. 1987, online 2003. This quote was paraphrased in BGN brochure.

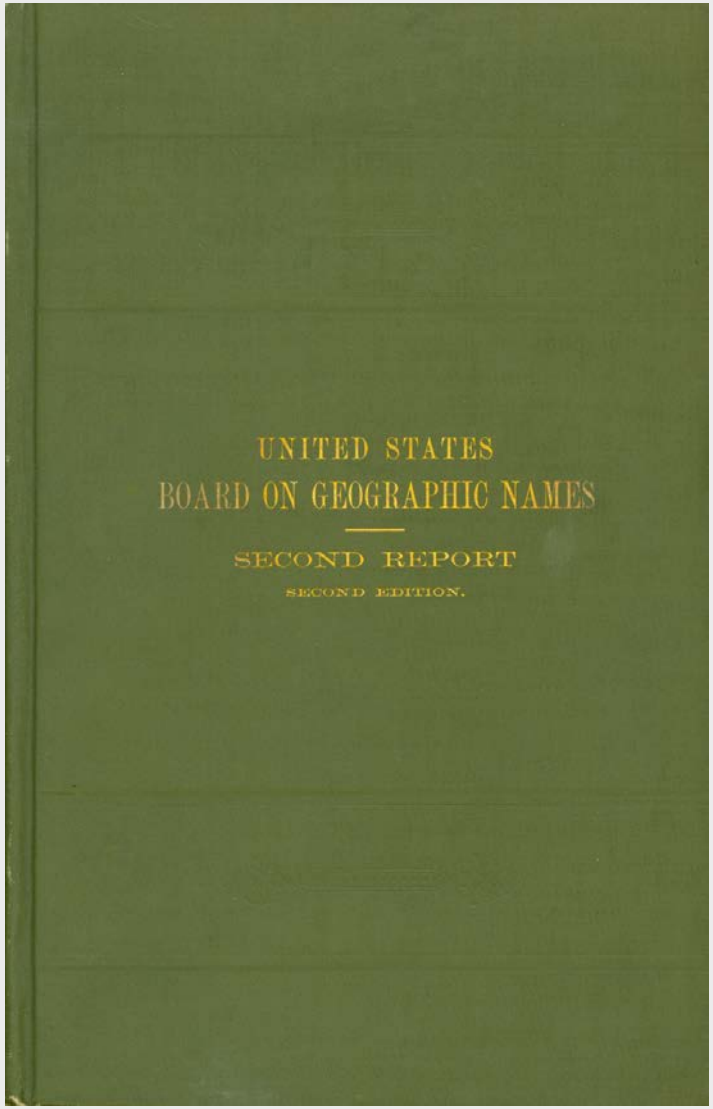
To ascertain whether the BGN was formed in response to the "surge of exploration, settlement, and economic exploitation of the American West" after the Civil War, an analysis of both Bulletin 1 of the BGN and the first ten years of names decisions of the Board was made. It would seem that if the above statement is correct, decisions concerning western states place names, particularly those of the intermontane west, should dominate the early activities of the BGN. Alaska also, perhaps because of the initial meeting between Mendenhall and Clover, has also been invoked as a prime mover for the formation of the BGN.

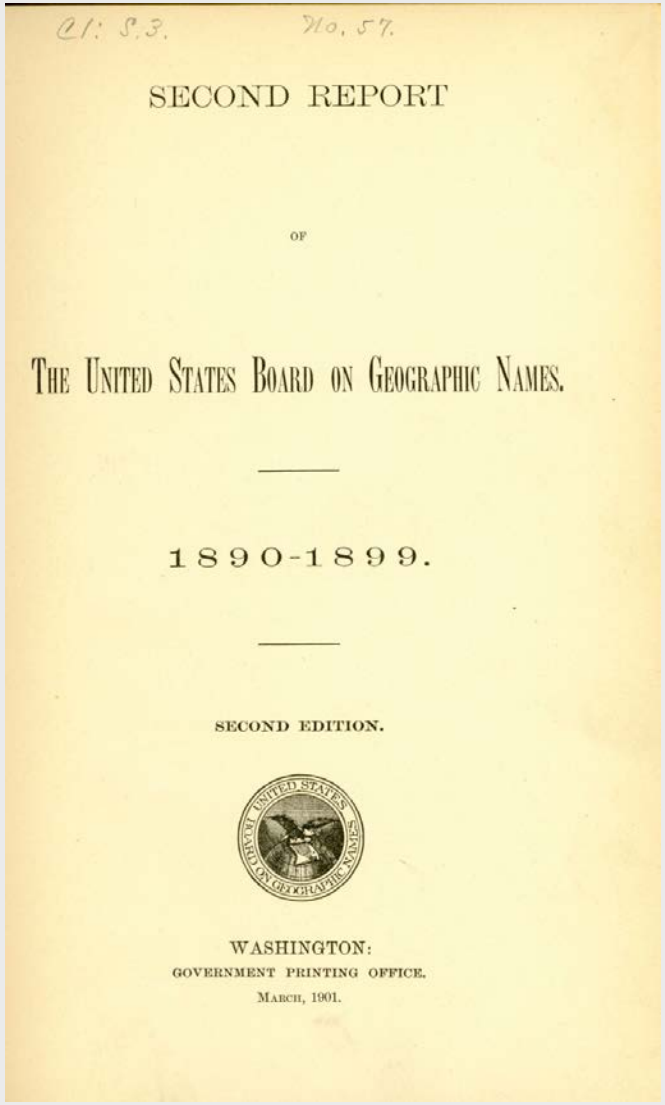
Decisions of BGN Bulletin No. 1, December 31, 1890

ALASKA (155)

Maine (15) California(4) New York (3) Massachusetts (2)
Washington (2) Colorado (1) Oregon (1) Connecticut (1)
North Carolina (1) Florida(1) District of Columbia (1) Maryland (1)

Arizona + New Mexico + Utah + Nevada + Idaho + Montana + Wyoming = 0





SECOND REPORT

OF

THE UNITED STATES BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES.

1890-1899.

SECOND EDITION.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
MARCH, 1901.

Second Report of BGN 1890-1899.

Generic Terms by Type

Civil Terms	2132
Nautical Terms	1496
Terrestrial Physiographic Terms	172

Post Office (1045)

Township (436) **Island (358)** **RR Station (330)**

Points (231) **Cities (194)** **Mountains (165)** **Towns (140)**

Bays (127) **Post Lights (108)** **Landings (106)**

Generic Features with over 100 occurences in 2nd Report . There are over forty additional generic terms found in the first 10 years of decisions, most of which are nautical in nature.

Regional Decisions by BGN 1890-1899.

Decisions east of Mississippi River	2319
Decisions west of Mississippi River	1297
Foreign	503

258	New York
228	Alaska
178	Massachusetts
167	Pennsylvania
163	Maryland
148	California
141	New Jersey

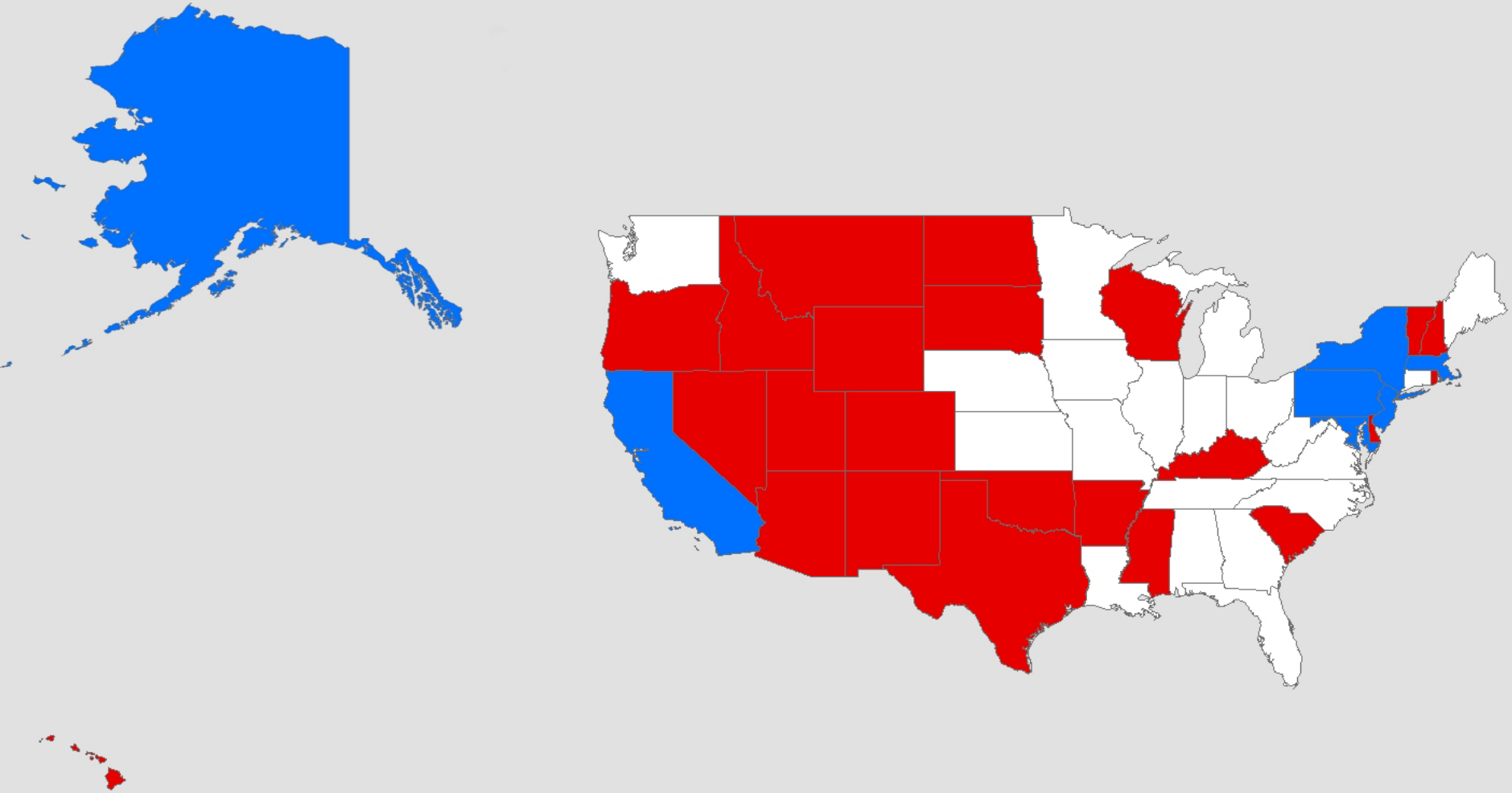
Highest number of names decisions per state in first ten years of BGN activity. 1283 total.

131	Virginia	79	N. Carolina
125	Washington	78	Florida
122	Tennessee	77	Georgia
106	Minnesota	76	Michigan
106	Ohio	74	W. Virginia
104	Maine	67	Iowa
103	Kansas	66	Connecticut
91	Illinois	62	Louisiana
85	Missouri	61	Alabama
81	Indiana	60	Nebraska

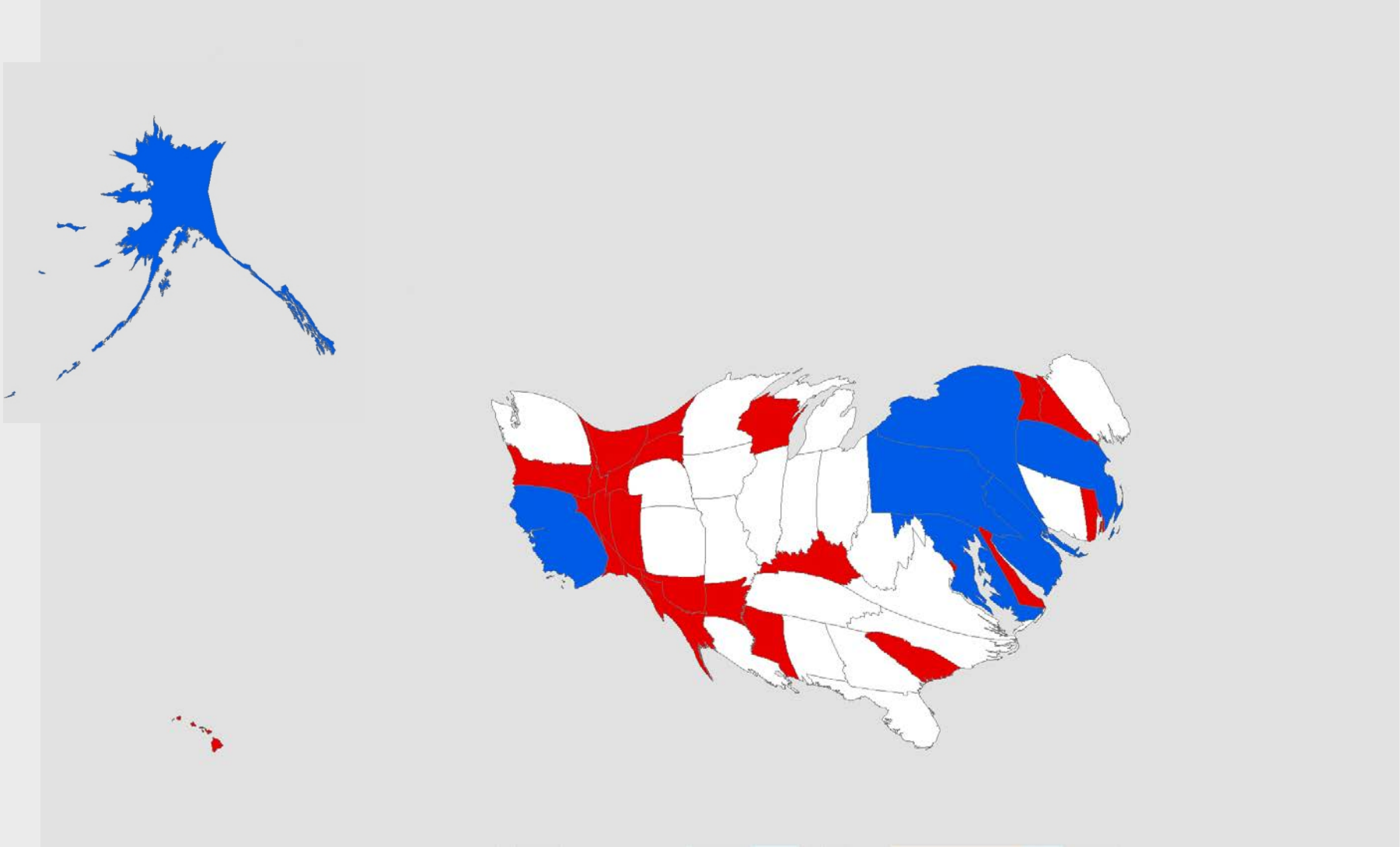
Middle third of data as per Cartogram algorithm. 1754 name decisions.

55	Wisconsin	18	NH
47	Colorado	17	Utah
46	Oregon	16	Rhode Island
46	South Carolina	15	Vermont
45	Kentucky	10	N. Dakota
39	Montana	10	Wyoming
39	Mississippi	9	Idaho
31	Texas	8	Arizona
29	Arkansas	8	Dist. of Col.
27	Indian Terr./OK	7	Nevada
24	Delaware	4	Hawaii
22	South Dakota	3	New Mexico

Bottom 24 states and territories have 593 decisions.



Cumulative blue states are top 1/3 of names decisions; white represents middle 1/3 of names decisions; and red bottom 1/3



Cartogram of number of names per state. Relative size a function of area and number of names.

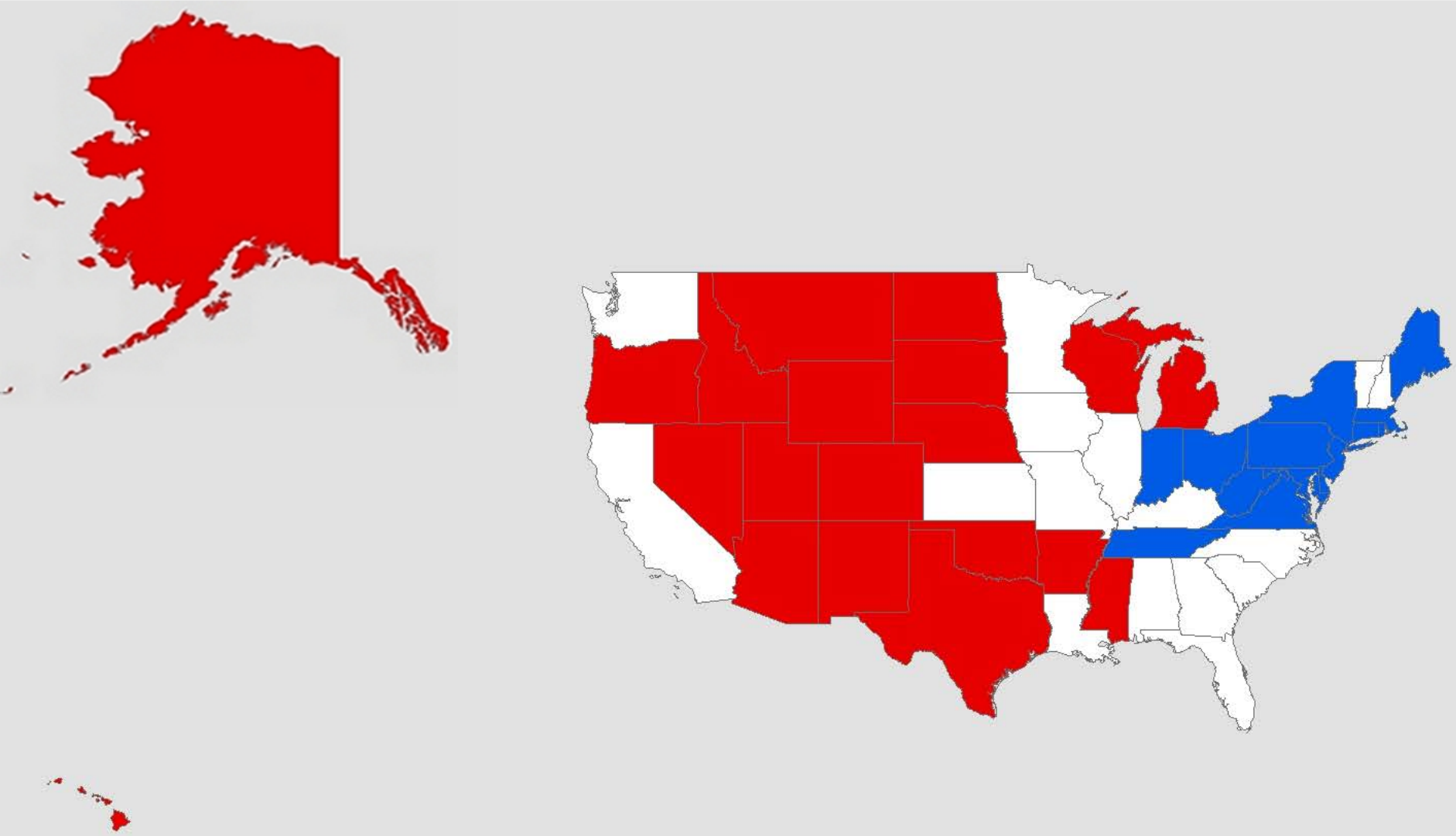
Washington, D.C	114.3
Massachusetts	17.0
New Jersey	16.2
Rhode Island	13.3
Maryland	13.1
Connecticut	12.0
Delaware	9.6
New York	4.7
Pennsylvania	3.6
Virginia	3.1

10 highest intensity states

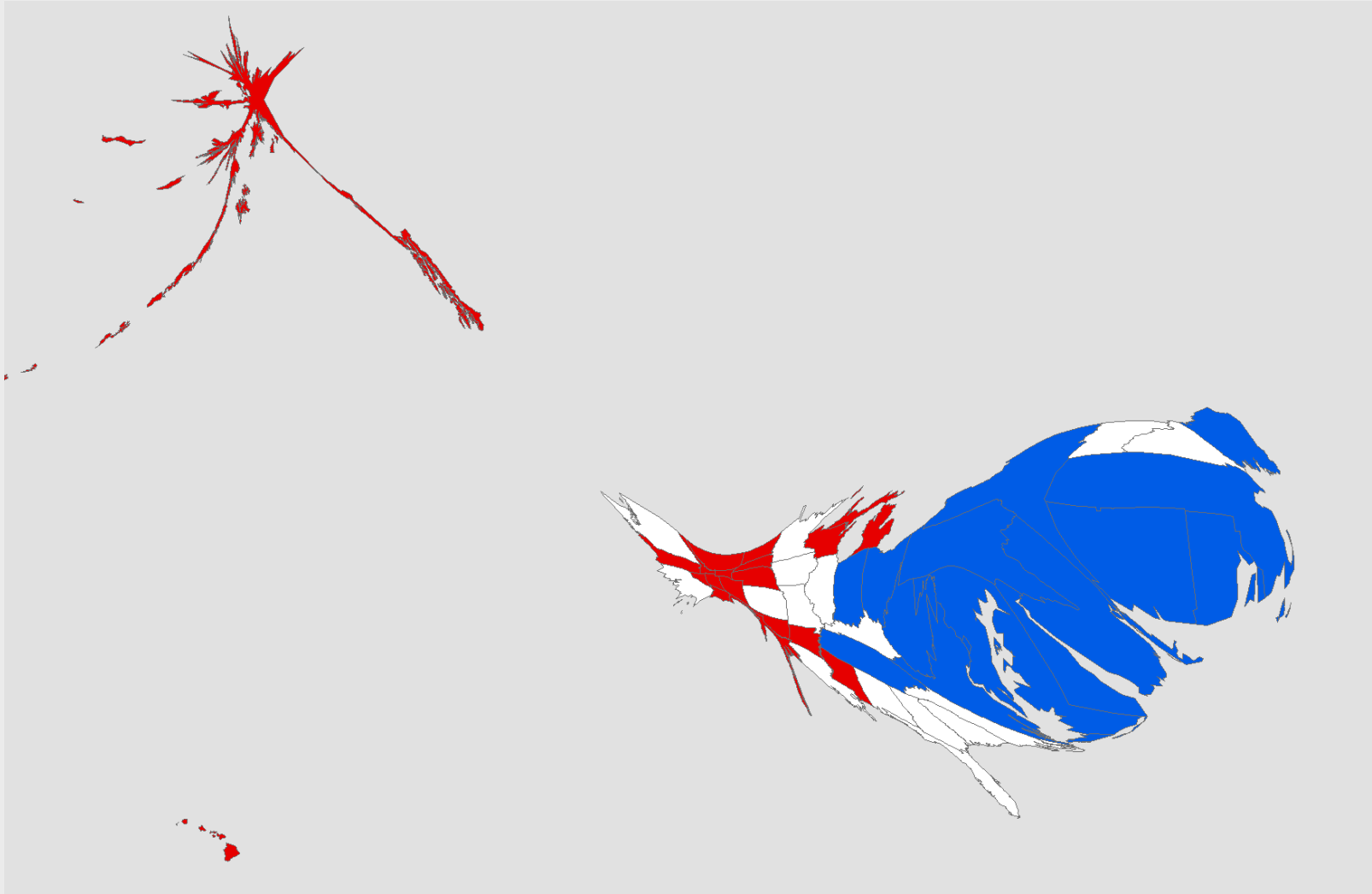
Montana	0.3
South Dakota	0.3
Utah	0.2
Wyoming	0.1
Texas	0.1
North Dakota	0.1
Nevada	0.1
Idaho	0.1
Arizona	0.1
New Mexico	0.02

10 lowest intensity states

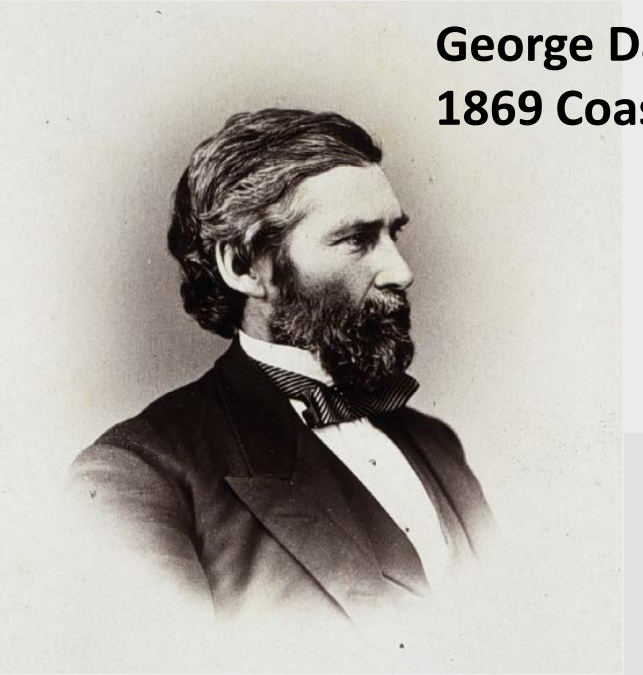
Names Decisions per 1,000 square miles per state – a measure of BGN decision intensity.



Names decisions per 1,000 square miles per state – Measure of BGN decision intensity



Cartogram of BGN name decision intensity. Name decisions per thousand square miles per state.



George Davidson,
1869 Coast Pilot

William Healy Dall
Pacific Coast Pilot:
Coast and Islands of
Alaska 1879

Marcus Baker: Dall's
assistant and 1890-93 BGN

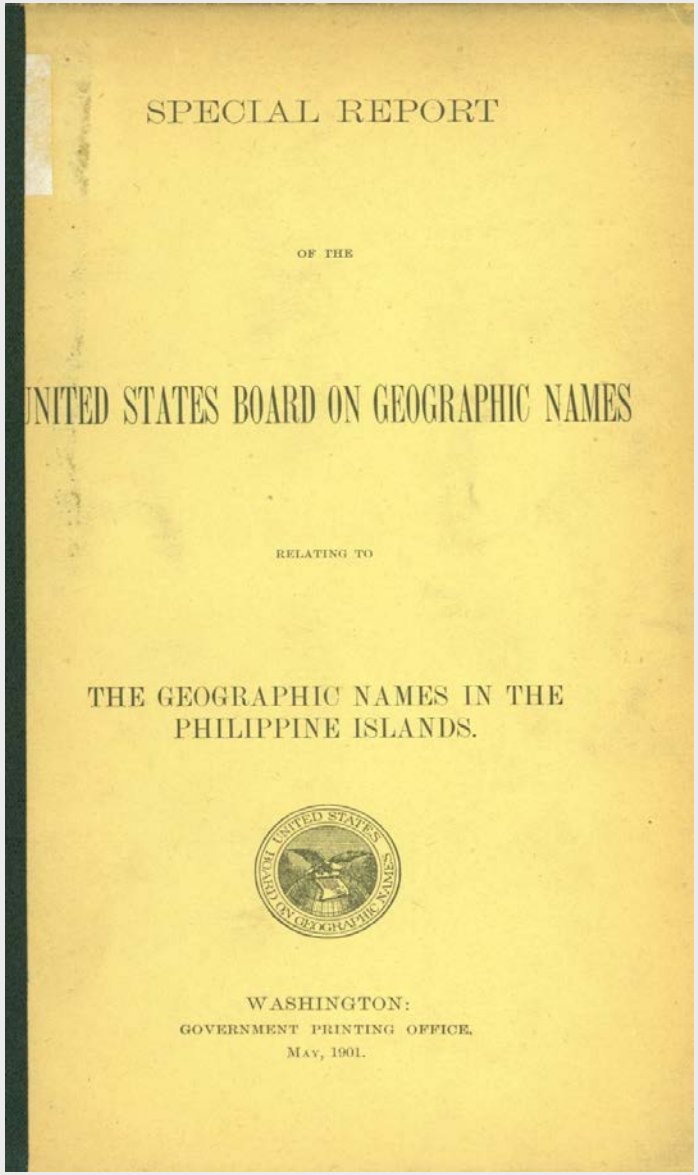
Herbert Gouverneur
Ogden 1890-1893 BGN

Alaska and the BGN

Two or three hundred Alaska names presented to board early on for consideration. First Bulletin of BGN reported 155 Alaska decisions and 241 names superceded. The majority of which were coastal. Magnitude of Alaska names decisions issues became apparent so Board appointed Marcus Baker of USGS and Herbert Gouverneur Ogden of C&GS as a committee to research Alaska names. By 1893 Ogden had compiled 2400 names in Southeast Alaska, Baker 1900 names for the rest of Alaska.

Work stopped for eight years.

Thence first great territorial compilation of names was published by the BGN. A year later the Alaska compilation was published by the USGS.



SPECIAL REPORT

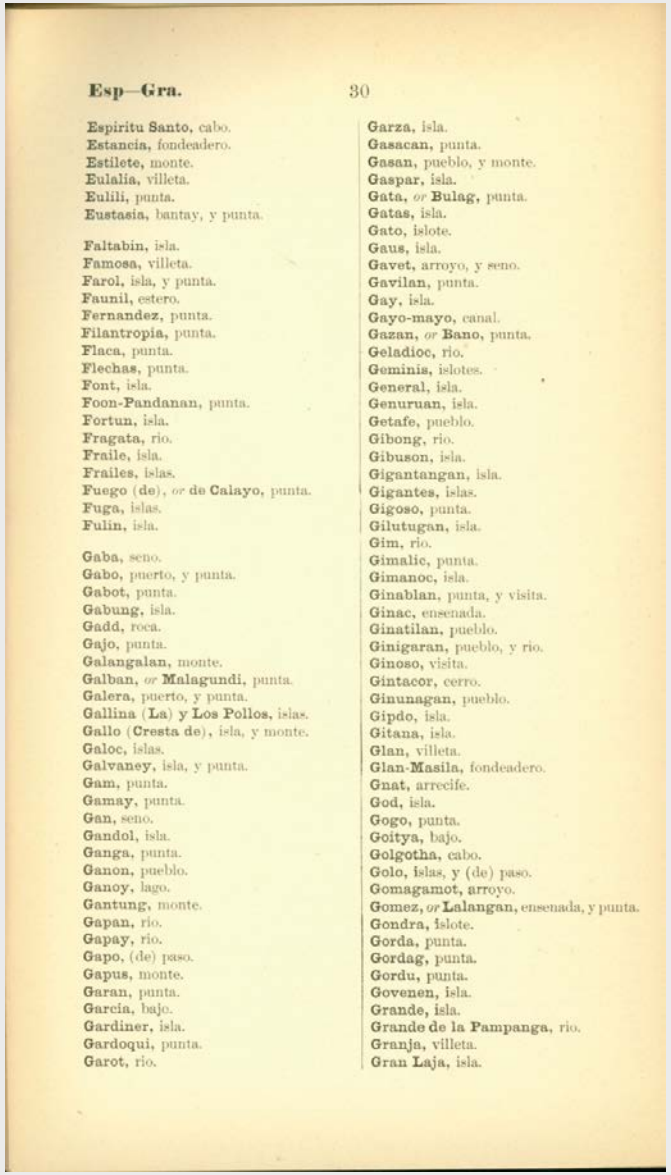
OF THE

UNITED STATES BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

RELATING TO

THE GEOGRAPHIC NAMES IN THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
MAY, 1901.



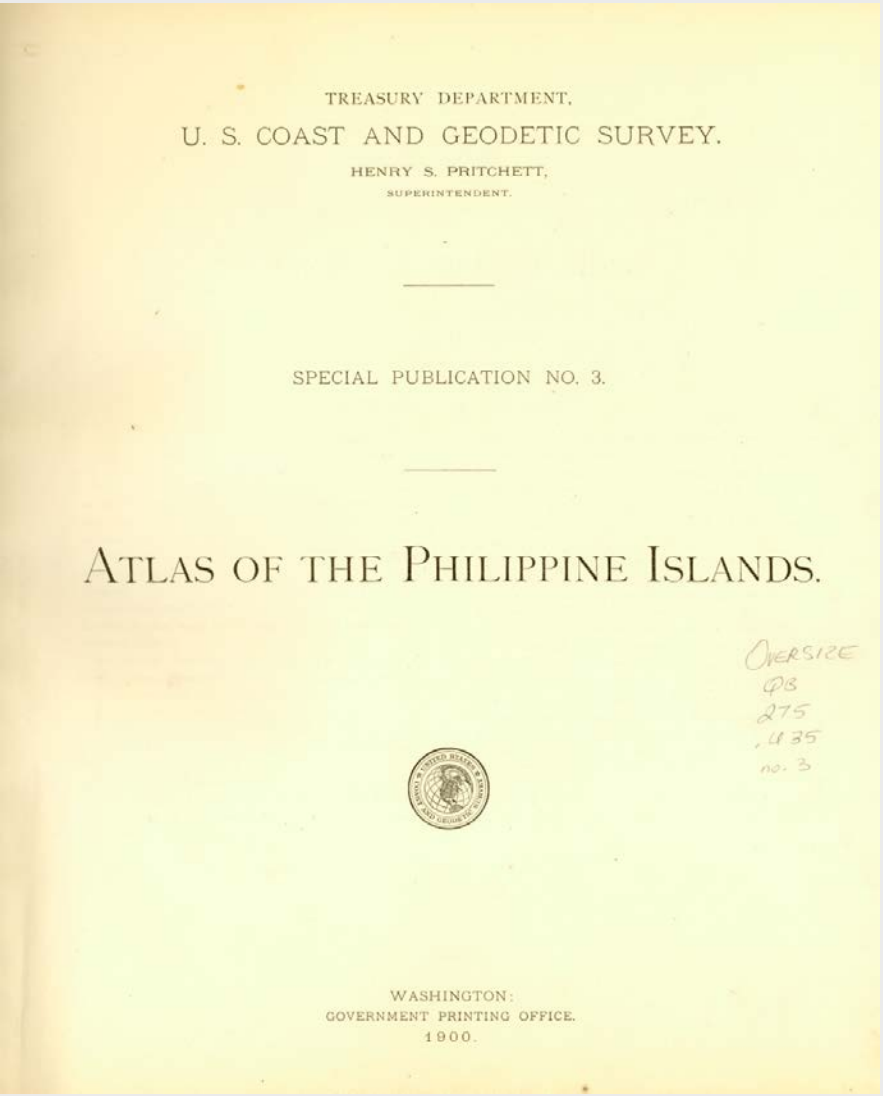
Esp—Gra. 30

Espiritu Santo, cabo.
Estancia, fondeadero.
Estilete, monte.
Eulalia, villeta.
Eulili, punta.
Eustasia, bantay, y punta.

Faltabin, isla.
Famosa, villeta.
Farol, isla, y punta.
Faunil, estero.
Fernandez, punta.
Filantropia, punta.
Flaca, punta.
Flechas, punta.
Font, isla.
Foon-Pandanan, punta.
Fortun, isla.
Fragata, rio.
Fraile, isla.
Frailes, islas.
Fuego (de), *or* **de Calayo**, punta.
Fuga, islas.
Fulin, isla.

Gaba, seno.
Gabo, puerto, y punta.
Gabot, punta.
Gabung, isla.
Gadd, roca.
Gajo, punta.
Galangalan, monte.
Galban, *or* **Malagundi**, punta.
Galera, puerto, y punta.
Gallina (La) y Los Pollos, islas.
Gallo (Cresta de), isla, y monte.
Galoc, islas.
Galvaney, isla, y punta.
Gam, punta.
Gamay, punta.
Gan, seno.
Gandol, isla.
Ganga, punta.
Ganon, pueblo.
Ganoy, lago.
Gantung, monte.
Gapan, rio.
Gapay, rio.
Gapo, (de) paso.
Gapus, monte.
Garan, punta.
García, bajo.
Gardiner, isla.
Gardoqui, punta.
Garot, rio.
Garza, isla.
Gasacan, punta.
Gasan, pueblo, y monte.
Gaspar, isla.
Gata, *or* **Bulag**, punta.
Gatas, isla.
Gato, islote.
Gaus, isla.
Gavet, arroyo, y seno.
Gavilan, punta.
Gay, isla.
Gayo-mayo, canal.
Gazan, *or* **Bano**, punta.
Geladioc, rio.
Geminis, islotes.
General, isla.
Genuruan, isla.
Getafe, pueblo.
Gibong, rio.
Gibuson, isla.
Gigantangan, isla.
Gigantes, islas.
Gigoso, punta.
Gilutugan, isla.
Gim, rio.
Gimalic, punta.
Gimanoc, isla.
Ginablan, punta, y visita.
Ginac, ensenada.
Ginatilan, pueblo.
Ginigaran, pueblo, y rio.
Ginoso, visita.
Gintacor, cerro.
Ginunagan, pueblo.
Gipdo, isla.
Gitana, isla.
Glan, villeta.
Glan-Masila, fondeadero.
Gnat, arrecife.
God, isla.
Gogo, punta.
Goitya, bajo.
Golgotha, cabo.
Golo, islas, y (de) paso.
Gomagamot, arroyo.
Gomez, *or* **Lalangan**, ensenada, y punta.
Gondra, islote.
Gorda, punta.
Gordag, punta.
Gordu, punta.
Govenen, isla.
Grande, isla.
Grande de la Pampanga, rio.
Granja, villeta.
Gran Laja, isla.

Produced by Naval Hydrographic Office, published by BGN.



TREASURY DEPARTMENT,

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY.

HENRY S. PRITCHETT,

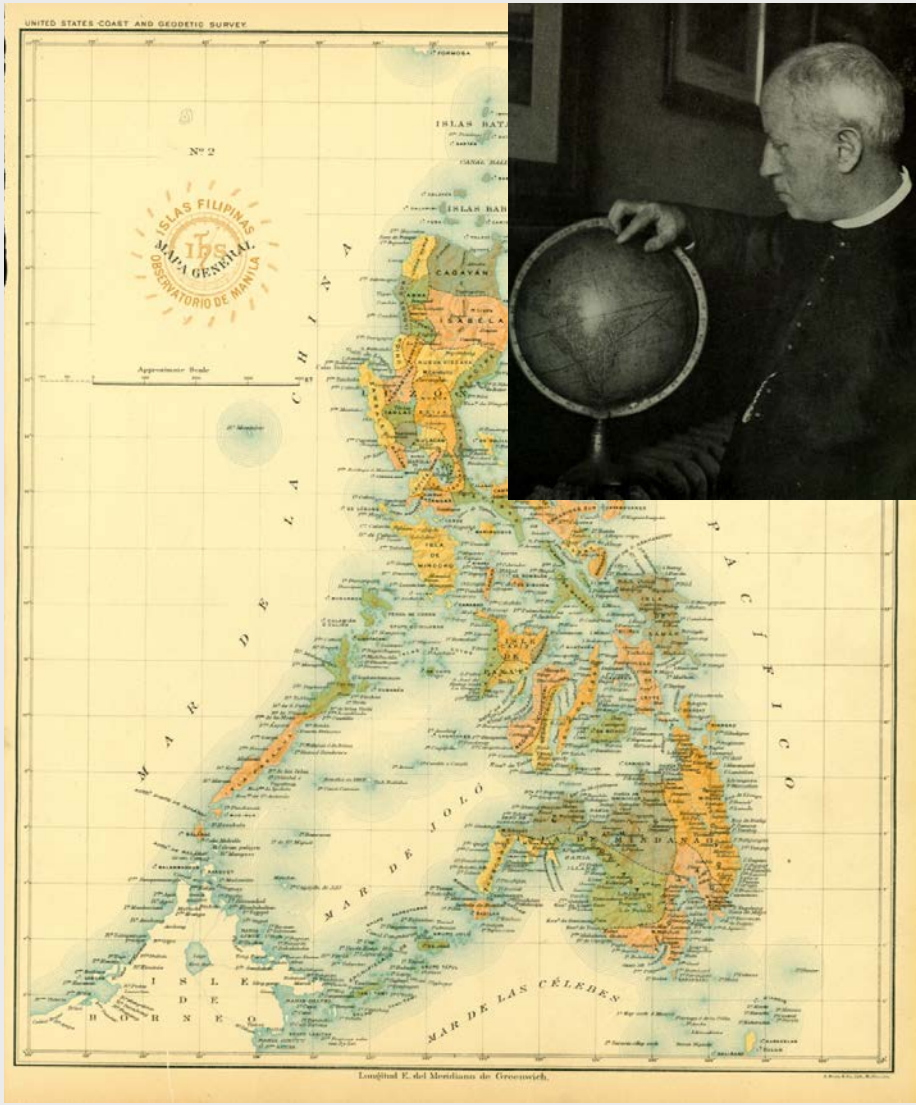
SUPERINTENDENT.

SPECIAL PUBLICATION NO. 3.

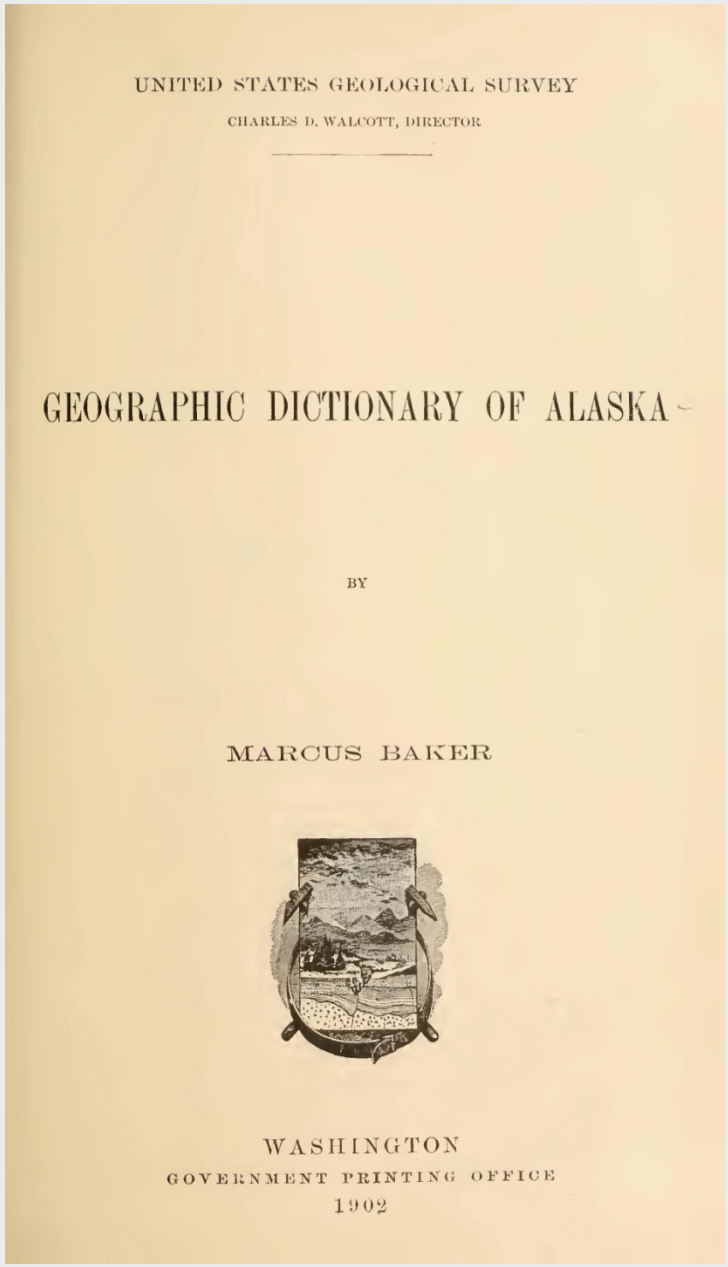
ATLAS OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

OVERSIZE
QB
275
.U35
no. 3

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1900.



Based on atlas produced by Coast and Geodetic Survey in turn based on work of Father Jose Algue, S. J., of the Manila Observatory.



UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

CHARLES D. WALCOTT, DIRECTOR

GEOGRAPHIC DICTIONARY OF ALASKA

BY

MARCUS BAKER

WASHINGTON

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1902

Marcus Baker's Geographic Dictionary of Alaska, published by USGS in 1902. How does this compare to USGS efforts concerning place names during the formative years of the BGN?

Henry Gannett, Chief Geographer of the USGS, published the following Geographic Dictionaries between 1894 and 1906:

Massachusetts 1894
New Jersey 1894
Rhode Island 1894
Connecticut 1894
Kansas 1898

Utah 1900
Texas 1902
Virginia 1904
Maryland 1904
Oklahoma 1905

Puerto Rico 1901
Cuba 1904
West Virginia 1904
Delaware 1904
Colorado 1906

My conclusions based on an analysis of the work accomplished in the BGN early years:

1) **Numerous governmental organizations had been wrestling with problems of orthography for many years prior to formation of the BGN.**

2) Although the Alaska meeting of Mendenhall and Clover was the catalyst for the formation of the BGN, they recognized that it (a BGN) was an idea whose time had been a long time coming.

3) As opposed to names issues with frontier areas, both the BGN and its member organizations, including the USGS, were more concerned with the highly developed, more heavily populated eastern states.

4) Needs of communication, transportation, and commerce followed by diplomacy, defense, and exploration were the driving forces dictating the formation and work of the BGN

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

In 1816, Ferdinand Hassler, founder and first superintendent of the United States Coast Survey, wrote: "The duty of every man is to be honest and to do good."

The United States Board on Geographic Names embodies that spirit and concept. Its work is one of the invisible underpinnings of our civilization and society . Its work has truly done "good", in the best sense of the word, for our Nation and citizens.

THE END

THANK YOU!

albert.e.theberge.jr@noaa.gov