

HOW TO NAME THE RESIDENTS

VERNON D. MACLAREN
Augusta, Maine

I read Mary Stewart Craig's article "Do Mamaroneckers Like to Neck?" in the November issue of *Word Ways* with great relish. As an upstanding citizen, I immediately sat down and set down some regional epithets that popped into my head, trying to follow her example. I mailed them to *Word Ways* and returned to my mystery novel. In a few days I received a note from the editor, suggesting that I "elucidate and illustrate those principles that make for clever citizens' names."

In his recent book *Names* (Delacorte, 1986), Paul Dickson reminds us that the rules for forming legitimate citizen names are extremely broad. Even when game-players, with pen in hand and tongue in cheek, take a humorous approach to the task, guidelines are needed. The following are largely based on the editor's suggestions.

When the spellings of the town name (such as Chattanooga) and the overlapping descriptor noun (such as nougat) differ, one probably should favor the spelling of the latter instead of the former in the meld (Chattanougat, not Chattanooga). Since the user is more familiar with the name of the town, the descriptor noun needs to be stressed.

Ordinarily the latter part of the town name overlaps the first part of the descriptor noun. There is no reason why the town cannot be used as a jewel and the descriptor noun as a setting; i.e., the descriptor noun can fully encapsulate the town name. In such a situation, it is probably advisable to suspend the above rule when spellings differ, in order to make the town name clear.

Chaffinches from Chaffin MA
Captivators from Captiva FL
Scramblers from Ambler AL
Flamboyants from Amboy MN
Anagrammers from Agra KS
Labbottomists (Lobotomists) from Abbott AR

The reverse gambit, embedding the descriptor noun in the town name, is also possible. Here, a difference in spelling is essential if the descriptor noun is to be recognized.

Antwerps (twerps from Antwerp NY)
Sharridans (harridans from Sheridan WY)
Alecsanders (sanders from Alexander AR)

The editor considers it highly desirable, though not perhaps essential, that syllabic stresses match in the town name and the

descriptor noun. Failure to observe this rule results in awkwardnesses such as the following.

Holyokels (HOLYokels or holYOKels?)
 New Havengers (new HAVengers or new haVENGers?)
 Wiscassettlers (wisCASsettlers or wiscasSETtlers?)
 Tappanhandlers (TAPpanhandlers or tapPANhandlers?)

It is permissible to change a vowel sound, or even omit a final vowel sound, in the name of the town when constructing the meld.

Centraliens from Centralia IL
 Valdosteopaths from Valdosta GA
 Temperors from Tempe AZ
 Buffellows from Buffalo NY
 Witcheaters from Wichita KS
 Monongahealers from Monongahela PA
 Terre Hooters from Terre Haute IN
 Provers from Provo UT

The editor feels, as I do, that consonant sounds are best left unchanged except when they are very similar in sound, such as D and T.

Alameteorites (meteorites from Alameda CA)
 Bermutants (mutants from Bermuda)

If the town name ends in a short unaccented syllable, it is permissible to drop it.

Scrantelopes from Scranton PA
 Toleaders from Toledo OH

What kinds of descriptor nouns work best? The editor stresses the desirability of using agent nouns (nouns with suffixes like -ER, -OR, -IST, etc.) as descriptors.

Wheelinguists from Wheeling WV
 Champainters from Champaign IL
 Bethlehemmers from Bethlehem PA
 Wilkesbaritones from Wilkes-Barre PA
 Versalesman from Versailles IN
 Niagaragers from Niagara NY
 Spartisans from Sparta NJ
 Decaterers from Decatur IL
 Peorientals from Peoria IL
 Davenporters from Davenport IA
 Norwalkers from Norwalk CT

Animals, birds, or other living creatures can also be used as descriptors.

Armonkeys from Armonk NY
 Walpolecats from Walpole MA
 Bisbeavers from Bisbee AZ
 Antioxen from Antioch AR
 Hersheep from Hershey PA
 Anacondors from Anaconda ID

Descriptor nouns for inanimate objects generally don't work as well, but may be better than nothing.

Belfasteroids from Belfast ME
 Topecans from Topeka KS
 Woodstockings from Woodstock VT
 Lebananas from Lebanon NH

There is little doubt that deprecatory terms are favorites for descriptors.

Chicagorillas from Chicago IL
 Baltimorons from Baltimore MD
 Trumbullies from Trumbull CT
 Baragamuffins from Baraga MI
 Amenials from Amenia NY
 Bamboozlers from Bamboo FL
 Swantons from Swanton OH
 Syraccusers from Syracuse NY
 Saratogres from Saratoga NY
 Aliquipsters from Aliquippa PA
 Anchoragitators from Anchorage AL
 Carsonists from Carson AL
 Moscoundrels from Moscow ID
 Texarcannibals from Texarcana TX
 Palcoholics from Palco KS
 Campobellowers from Campobello SC
 Troisterers from Troy NY
 Brandywhiners from Brandywine MD
 Plechers from Pletcher AL
 Woodruffians from Woodruff AZ
 Waterlooones from Waterloo IA
 Warrenegades from Warren ME
 Molallapaloozas from Molalla OR

I have already noted Holyokers, Antwerps, and Sharridans.

The rules proposed in this article should be equally applicable to county names, state names, country names, and even college and university names.

The two commonest endings for town names are probably -VILLE and -TOWN. As Mary Stewart Craig pointed out in her article, the former can be readily converted to -VILLIANS, but there seems little can be done with the latter (unless it is amputated, a somewhat radical bit of surgery). What do you suggest for Morristown?