

CLASSICAL TOWN NAMES IN THE UNITED STATES*

THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF AN AMERICAN IDEA

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THE Classic Revival—in essence the notion (sometimes articulate, more often subliminal) that the United States is the latter-day embodiment of the virtues and ideals of ancient Greece and Rome—has been one of several pervasive elements in American mythology that have helped make our cultural history and geography distinctively American. The important legacy of the Classical World has been bestowed on all the countries comprising the Greater European community in a variety of ways, principally as a direct hereditary residue or as sets of traits dispatched outward through the normal diffusional processes, most notably in law, religion, science, education, the fine arts, language, and literature. In addition, there has been the deliberate resurrection and pursuit of things classical that began in the Renaissance and has not fully subsided even now.

It is a working hypothesis of this paper that nowhere else within the broad spatial and temporal range of this prolonged, far-flung revival, with the possible exception of Revolutionary France, was there such an intense, self-revelatory florescence of this movement as occurred during the early decades of our national existence. Although American culture shares with others a good many Neoclassical elements—for example, architectural styles, city planning, personal names, scholarly vocabulary, military terminology, ceremonial language (as in official mottoes, inscriptions on public buildings, and academic diplomas), the iconography of currency and seals, and divers aspects of politics, education, journalism, oratory, and literature—Americans have cultivated these with special earnestness and vigor. This is most obviously the case with the one item that has been accorded appreciable attention, the architecture of homes, churches, colleges, cemeteries, commercial structures, and public buildings.¹ Then there is the profusion of classical forenames for both males and females that, at least in the masculine department,

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¹ Talbot F. Hamlin's "Greek Revival Architecture in America" (New York, 1944) is a comprehensive survey of high merit, but its attention is confined almost exclusively to "specimen" buildings and little notice is given to the Greek Revival element in American vernacular construction.

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far exceeds anything found in contemporary Europe or elsewhere. Thus we have had the widespread use of Homer, Claud(ius), Virgil, Lucius, Marcus, Julius, Augustus, Horace, Ulysses, Cassius, Alexander, and Hector, among many others. I also suspect that something deep-seated in the American character comes to the surface in our insistence on the use of classical terms for many naval vessels and for the majority of our rocket missile systems and spacecraft, which, besides whatever military, economic, scientific, or entertainment value they may have, are quite blatantly proclaimed to be national status symbols.²

But perhaps the most persuasive evidence pleading the American's image of himself as the reincarnated Athenian or Roman is the number, range, and persistence of classical place-names. Indeed, no other territory colonized by Europeans has anything in its toponymy even faintly resembling the United States situation, with the marginal exception of a few score Brazilian names of classical coloration³ and a curious small cluster of classical (and Biblical) names in Colombia's Cauca Valley.⁴ Neoclassical place-names are conspicuous by their near absence in Australia,⁵ New Zealand, South Africa,⁶

² Other practices that may be peculiarly American are the application of classical terms to political parties and to legislative bodies and edifices, and the use of Greek letters to designate fraternal and honorary organizations on campuses (this last term itself a uniquely American borrowing from the classical vocabulary). See Howard Mumford Jones: *O Strange New World: American Culture: The Formative Years* (New York, 1964), pp. 227-272; reference on pp. 228-229.

³ According to the most comprehensive listings of Brazilian place-names currently available ("*Divisão Territorial do Brasil*") [Brasil, Conselho Nacional de Estatística; Rio de Janeiro, 1960]; "*Brazil: Official Standard Names Approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names*," *United States Board on Geographic Names Gazetteer No. 71*, Washington, D. C., 1963), some 113 political and settlement units bear classical names, using the definition developed for this study. The majority of them are in those sections of the states of Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Paraná, and Goiás occupied during the latter half of the nineteenth century and this century. The phenomenon has not yet been studied in Brazil, but according to Professor Carlos Delgado de Carvalho of the Universidade do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro (personal communication, March 9, 1966), a definite propensity existed on the part of the republican regime to revive the Hellenistic vocabulary of antiquity in coining new place-names, quite apart from any direct inheritance of classical terms by way of the Roman lineage of the Portuguese language or of Catholicism. On the other hand, Brazil failed to develop anything resembling Greek Revival architecture.

⁴ There is no satisfactory explanation of the names Angelópolis, Antioquia, Cartago, Corinto, Filadélfia, and Heliconia, according to James J. Parsons (personal communication, September 11, 1966). Parsons also notes the equally puzzling Belén, Betania, Betulia, Jericó, Líbano, and Palestina of scriptural provenance in the same region (*Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia*, *Ibero-Americana No. 32*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949, pp. 8-9).

⁵ The only Australian place-name meeting the criteria set forth here is Eureka Stockade, Ballarat, Victoria, possibly an onomastic transplant carried by miners from California. The history and migrations of the term Eureka merit monographic treatment: the word appears to have been first used as a place-name in Humboldt County, California, shortly before 1850 and then to have spread eastward and overseas with spectacular rapidity.

⁶ The only South African classical town name I have encountered is Bechuanaland's early nineteenth century Phillippolis, for which I am indebted to David L. Niddrie (personal communication, February 27, 1965). For South Africa, as for other "Neo-European" countries, the place-name indexes of the standard atlases were searched, but with scant result.

temperate South America, Siberia, and Canada, even in those Canadian areas cheek by jowl with the American zones of climactic "classicity."⁷ Although a lively curiosity concerning this American eccentricity is apparent,⁸ students of place-names have so far failed to produce any satisfactory study of the phenomenon, just as scholars cultivating the larger domain of American Studies have neglected to treat the classical theme in national thought and behavior in depth or in cognizance of its many dimensions.⁹

In view of all this, there is ample motive to plot and interpret the spatial and temporal patterning of this peculiarly American practice of memorializing the ancient world of Greece and Rome in the place-names of the United States and to search out its possible relevance to the structure of our history and human geography.¹⁰ Happily, as is often the case with such forays into

⁷ Only twenty-eight past and current classical names for political and settlement entities in Canada were encountered after a thorough search of the standard work on the subject (George Henry Armstrong: *The Origin and Meaning of Place Names in Canada* [Toronto, 1930]), the detailed 1961 census tabulations, the "Gazetteer of Canada: Ontario" (Ottawa, 1962), and materials from the files of the Toponymy Division of the Geographical Branch, kindly supplied by its Chief, J. Keith Fraser. If the Canadian incidence of such names were to approximate that in the United States, some three hundred such names would exist. The clustering of classical names in such border states as New York, Ohio, and Michigan makes the international contrast all the more striking. That there was some slight seepage of American classicity across the frontier is established by the location of all Canadian classical names (except for the early Annapolis, Nova Scotia) in the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, where contagious diffusion and migration from the United States would have been maximal. Coincident with this abrupt place-name discontinuity is that in the domestic architecture of the two nations. The failure of the Greek Revival house to cross the boundary and other striking distinctions in house types are noted by Allen Gowans (*Looking at Architecture in Canada* [Toronto, 1958], pp. 79–85 and 103–110; see also his review of Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson: *The Ancestral Roof—Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada, 1783–1867* [Toronto, 1963] in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 23, 1964, pp. 49–50). In both instances, we must adduce the strength of antirepublican feelings in loyalist Canada as barring ingress to such ideologically tainted names and building styles.

⁸ George R. Stewart writes concerning the "Classical Belt" that "This group of names is probably of more interest to more people (to judge from my correspondence) than any other in the country" (*Names on the Land: A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the United States* [rev. edit.; Boston, 1958], p. 466).

⁹ It is possible to list here only the most significant items that discuss the role of Neoclassical elements in American life: "Our Classical Belt," *The Nation*, Vol. 84, Sept. 5, 1907, pp. 203–204; Lewis Mumford: *The Classic Myth*, in *Sticks and Stones: A Study of American Architecture and Civilization* (New York, 1924), pp. 53–71; Evan T. Sage: *Classical Place-Names in America*, *American Speech*, Vol. 5, 1929, pp. 261–271; Ernest Hatch Wilkins: *Arcadia in America*, *Proceedings Amer. Phil. Soc.*, Vol. 101, 1957, pp. 4–30; George R. Stewart: *Of Ancient Glory Renewed*, in *Names on the Land* [see footnote 8 above], pp. 181–188; Howard Mumford Jones: *Roman Virtue*, in *O Strange New World* [see footnote 2 above], pp. 227–272; and James Marston Fitch, Jr.: *American Building: Vol. 1, The Historical Forces That Shaped It* (2nd rev. edit.; Boston, 1966), pp. 60–98. The reader who wishes to see a fuller, annotated list of these and other relevant items, or who would like to examine the bibliography of place-name literature consulted in the quest for basic data or statistical tables omitted from this article for lack of space, may obtain copies of these materials by writing to the author.

¹⁰ Quite apart from the scientific booty to be won in such a quest, I must shamelessly confess to a hedonistic motive. Like Stephen Vincent Benet, "I have fallen in love with American names," and it has been the pleasantest sort of drudgery to wallow in the delights of onomatomania with each taking of the long roll call of American names. They are catnip to the geographic imagination.

terra quasi-incognita, the serendipity factor comes into play. Four major findings or themes have been developed, three of which were unanticipated, and all of which seem more important than the simple curiosity value of a strange American foible.

(1) As already noted, the frequent, deliberate adoption of classical names for places in an area lacking a direct historical link with the world of Mediterranean antiquity is an idiosyncrasy peculiar to citizens of the United States and almost certainly derives from a central trait of the national character. Although full exploration of this concept lies beyond the bounds of this paper, the way in which toponymic classicity correlates spatially with certain other areal patterns strongly supports the plausibility of this statement.

(2) The historical geography of classical town names reinforces the notion of the primacy of "New England Extended,"¹¹ in the cultural, social, and economic evolution of the nation, despite the paucity of classical terms in nuclear New England. It also strengthens the suspicion that this region may have been the source of most of the characteristics that make the United States peculiarly American. A practice originating and flourishing along the growing edge of the culture area that was clearly the intellectual pacemaker of the young Republic spread vigorously outward to the farther reaches of the expanding region. Eventually, like many another idea and innovation of similar nativity, only a few of which have been studied, it diffused throughout the country and became continental in scope.

(3) The chronicling of the spatial career of classical place-naming suggests the operation of not one, but three, different mechanisms whereby this innovation diffused outward, in order of increasing velocity: the process of short-distance contagious diffusion among juxtaposed communities and persons (that is, the Hägerstrandian diffusion model¹² that has captured so much scholarly attention in recent years); the carrying of the idea over considerable distances as part of the mental baggage of pioneer settlers from the "culture hearth" or from zones strongly affected by it; and the nearly instantaneous,

¹¹ This convenient term, for which I am indebted to my colleague Peirce F. Lewis, is somewhat elastic territorially, the extent of New England Extended depending on the date and the specific cultural features under scrutiny. In addition to the six New England states, it embraces New York (with the possible exception of the zones of early Dutch and British settlement in the Hudson Valley and on Long Island) and the northern segments of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In less distinct, but still meaningful, fashion it takes in much of the Upper Middle West and parts of the Maritime Provinces.

¹² For concise descriptions of the theory and operation of this model, see Torsten Hägerstrand: *The Propagation of Innovation Waves*, *Lund Studies in Geography*, Ser. B, Human Geography, No. 4, 1952; *idem*: *Quantitative Techniques for Analysis of the Spread of Information and Technology in Education and Economic Development* (edited by C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Jean Bowman; Chicago, 1965), pp. 244-280.

but scattered, adoption of the new idea over a wide range of territory through the use of rapid channels of communication among the social elite.

(4) The existence of a "hollow frontier"¹³ in the space-time behavior of this specific idea is clearly documented, and creates the presumption that similar hollow frontiers may have developed for other cultural innovations of sufficient spatial and temporal range.

A CLASSICAL PLACE-NAME DEFINED

The peculiarities of the subject matter and the data demand close attention to several technical problems. Precisely which classes of named features are to be studied? What is or is not a "classical place-name" in a modern North American context? How does one find complete and reliable information on the incidence of such names in the full range of time and space under observation?

It was decided at the outset to restrict the inquiry to names of political and settlement entities within the conterminous United States, more specifically to counties, minor civil divisions of every description, all agglomerations of dwellings from the smallest hamlet to the major metropolis, and post offices (excluding substations).¹⁴ Stated in somewhat more austere terms, our universe of discourse is that set of decisions concerning names of governmental and settlement units (loosely designated as "towns" in the title) made by the administrators or residents therein—though not without occasional broad hints from the Post Office Department in Washington. Thereby excluded, for reasons of scarcity of data, of the nonlocal nature of the naming process, or of the meager incidence of classical names, are all natural features, streets, highways, railways, city neighborhoods and subdivisions, uninhabited railroad stations, schools, mills, mines, plantations, and other miscellaneous cultural items. It is regrettable that no agency or scholar has ever collected the names of the hundreds or thousands of phantom paper towns—places platted and usually registered and advertised, but never built—for they too would have been grist for our mill. The heavy reliance placed on post-office names is

¹³ This term, first applied to advancing zones of land settlement, also describes a variety of spatial behavior on the part of culture traits, a concept that seems implicit in much of the literature of anthropology and historical geography but one that, to the best of my knowledge, has never been explicitly enunciated. The phenomenon (which seems to work best for religious ideas or institutions and esthetic styles, *vide* Buddhism or last year's Parisian coiffure in Central America) may indeed be more universal than has yet been recognized.

¹⁴ State names have been excluded because they are few in number and the designated areas gross in size. As it happens, only one, Pennsylvania, fully qualifies for inclusion here, but several others (Vermont, Rhode Island, the Carolinas, the Virginias, and the District of Columbia) are at least marginal cases.

in large part a matter of convenience, since the lists are complete, reliable, and accessible; but it is also based on the high degree of coincidence, during much of recent American history, between clustered settlements of all sizes and the existence of post offices. Although many of the more ephemeral post offices were, in fact, identified with open-country neighborhoods rather than with genuine hamlets or villages, and often had no fixed location,¹⁵ there is no way of winnowing these from the rest.

It was decided to regard as "classical" (1) all those names that are directly derived from the world of ancient Greece and Rome, that is, the place-names, names of historical or mythological personages, and other elements in the classical vocabulary, and (2) those names that are historically derived from the first group, such as New Philadelphia, Indiana; New Cincinnati, Kansas; or Syracuse, Ohio. A good many early American settlements, of nonclassical as well as classical nomenclature, generated chains or clusters of such derivatives through the migration of their natives and by the general spread of their fame and the adoption of their names into the standard stockpile of attractive, dignified titles for places.¹⁶ Eventually, the process of naturalization and dilution of original meaning went quite far—for example, with such names as Homer, Troy, Virgil, or Arcadia—but the line of descent is unmistakable.

It is immediately clear to anyone who pursues the question that such neoclassical names are a subspecies of a populous tribe of names to which the designation "exotica" might fittingly be given, and which have flourished more abundantly in the United States than elsewhere. In most places and eras, place-names spring spontaneously from local history and from past or present geography and personages, or are transplanted localisms imported by migrants as part of their personal histories. Such "normal" place-names, of course, predominate in the United States in all their aboriginal, British, Dutch, French, and Spanish multiplicity, but in addition there is that profusion of names plucked from distant corners of the globe without direct historical association (for example, Angola, Peking, Valparaiso, Odessa, or Cairo); from travel accounts, published history, and imaginative literature (including the Greek and Roman classics; the Hebrew, Christian, and Mormon Bibles;

¹⁵ On this question and other difficulties in coping with post-office names, see George H. Shirk: *Oklahoma Place Names* (Norman, 1965), pp. xi–xiv.

¹⁶ As an example of what can be accomplished in such geo-genealogy, see the map in Stewart's "Names on the Land" [see footnote 8 above] depicting the approximate locations and dates of some thirty-two Winchesters in twenty-five states—most of them towns, but some natural features—embracing a total of four generations, beginning with the original British city. (This map, an unnumbered plate between pp. 256 and 257, is based on an unpublished study by Fritz L. Kramer and on supplementary data.)

Norse mythology; and modern fiction and verse); and those that are simply coined on the spot. One can plead the extenuating circumstance that never before in human history have there been so many places to label so quickly and that the many improbable names are the offspring of desperation.¹⁷ But I prefer to believe that these exotica document the extroverted buoyancy and expansiveness of spirit that many observers identify as American. In any event, it is a matter of no little interest that the same district in west-central New York in which the neoclassical place-name idea first took coherent form is probably the earliest major testing ground for other classes of exotica as well.¹⁸

EXCLUSIONS AND IDENTITIES

In practice, it proved difficult to apply the given definition for classical place-names without further qualifications and without firm knowledge of the history of the names and the intentions of the namers, information that more often than not is missing. It is also clear, even where the naming process is fully documented, that the namers were not always fully aware of their own motives, that subconscious or inarticulate feelings were at work. Certain classes of words of ultimately classical origin were automatically excluded: scientific, technical, or other terms now considered to be standard English (for example, zenith, delta [in the landform sense], zephyr, lithium, campus, zodiac); botanical names of classical coinage now in common use; names derived from European place-names whose Latin or Greek origin is commonly recognized only by scholars (for example, Vienna, Chester, or Lancaster); names alluding to contemporary or relatively recent individuals (for example, Alexandria, Augusta, Eugene, or Ulysses), even when the name would otherwise be eligible; most recent Latinate forms (for example, Atlanta, Carolina, or Columbia); and modern Romance and Greek names, whether conferred by early French and Spanish settlers or more recent groups (for example, Acadia, Cartagena, Marseilles, Ypsilanti, or Naples).

¹⁷ Countering this argument is the fact that the strain on the onomastic resources of Canadians must have been equally great, but the choices were almost consistently aboriginal, British, and French in origin and, with the exception of Newfoundland, sedate.

¹⁸ One of the interesting by-products of this investigation has been the realization that there are distinct regional compages of classes of specific geographic names as well as of generic terms. (On the significance of the latter, see Wilbur Zelinsky: *Some Problems in the Distribution of Generic Terms in the Place-Names of the Northeastern United States*, *Annals Assn. of Amer. Geogrs.*, Vol. 45, 1955, pp. 319-349; Meredith F. Burrill: *Toponymic Generics*, *Names*, Vol. 4, 1956, pp. 129-137 and 226-240.) Any random handful of town names in Kentucky will look or feel different from one taken in New Hampshire, and there is an equally sharp distinction between the flavors of names in Florida and those in Minnesota, for example.

Another important group of exclusions consists of local filiations in which derivative settlements have been named after the nearby mother town, as happened, for example, in Orange County, Vermont, where in addition to the original Corinth we have Corinth Center, Corinth Corners, East Corinth, West Corinth, and South Corinth. In such cases, only the oldest occurrence is accepted, since there is a minimum of decision-making involved in the later ones. In those instances where a settlement has been given the same name as the township or county in which it is situated (as in Ionia County, Michigan, which also has the city and township of Ionia), each local duplication is assigned an arbitrary value of 0.5 for statistical purposes, since some freedom of choice is apparent. Many agonizing decisions had to be reached on an individual basis, such as the many names that are both Biblical (or Egyptian or Mesopotamian) and classical in character and might derive from either source. Thus, even with the available data on etymology and settlement history, a good many arbitrary judgments were made. I am confident, however, that no systematic bias in selection was in operation and that, though another investigator would arrive at a somewhat different roster of names, the resulting spatial-temporal array and the analysis thereof would not yield significantly different results.

The identity of the names recorded, as set forth, in part, in Table I, is of only incidental importance to our purpose but is certainly of major interest to the general student of American toponymy. Ignoring minor variants in spelling, a total of 424 individual names was noted, including these ending the three suffixes *-polis* (or- *ople*),¹⁹ *-adelphia*, and *-sylvania*. Names that refer to historic personages, mythological beings, major cities, and historic sites are in the majority; but in addition there are various numerals, letters of the alphabet, common phrases (Quid Nunc, Sub Rosa, Vox Populi, Rara Avis), common nouns, and a few verbs. Not all the namers' choices were arbitrary or the result of historic happenstance. A significant minority reflect local conditions or aspirations. Thus Agricola, Ceres, Bovina, and Pomona proudly proclaim an agrarian bias, and Dendron, Lignum, Quercus, and Salix may tell us something of the biota, as Akron and Altus advertise the elevation of the site. More than one college town bravely christened itself Athens. Not unexpectedly, Washington has its Pluvius, and there are Neptunes in coastal New Jersey and Florida. But the largest group of referential names deal with mineral or metallurgical activity: Argentum, Aurum, Cuprum, Eureka,

¹⁹ I cannot refrain from passing along such cacophonous miscegenations as Jacksonopolis, Pinopolis, Copperopolis, or Layopolis, or just plain Opolis.

TABLE I—OCCURRENCES OF INDIVIDUAL CLASSICAL PLACE-NAMES AND SUFFIXES*

NAME	NO. OF		FIRST OCCURRENCE		NAME	NO. OF		FIRST OCCURRENCE	
	OCCURRENCES	State	Date			OCCURRENCES	State	Date	
Troy	97	N.Y.	1789		Fabius	11.5	N.Y.	1798	
Eureka	83.5	Calif.	1850		Utopia	11.5	Ohio	1847	
-polis, -ople	68.5	Md.	1702		Berea	11	Ohio, Ky.	1859	
Annapolis	9.5	Md.	1702		Ceres	11	Pa.	1810	
Minneapolis	7	Minn.	1852		Crete	11	Ill.	1846	
Etna	57	Maine	1820		Hibernia	11	Iowa	1837	
Antioch	56	Ga.	1837		Neptune	10.5	Ohio	1842	
Athens	54.5	Pa.	1786		Scio	10.5	N.Y.	1828	
Rome	54.5	N.Y.	1796		Aeolia, Eolia	10	Ga.	1837	
Albion	51	Maine	1804		Corydon	10	Ind.	1811	
Arcadia	50	N.Y.	1825		Juno	10	Ky.	1851	
Palmyra	49	N.Y.	1789		Jupiter	10	Ark.	1842	
Sparta	48.5	S.C.	1785		Ithaca	9.5	N.Y.	1811	
Seneca	45.5	N.Y.	1800		Ulysses	9.5	N.Y.	1799	
Phoenix	39.5	S.C.	1837		Argenta, Argentum	9	Ark.	1879	
Alpha	39	Ohio	1851		Helvetia	9	Calif.	1839	
Homer	37.5	N.Y.	1794		Rhodes	9	Tex.	1883	
Caledonia	36.5	Vt.	1792		Tully	9	N.Y.	1803	
Carthage	36.5	N.C.	1803		-sylvania	9	Va.	1720	
Macedonia	35	N.C.	1823		Elysian, Elysium	8.5	Mo.	1819	
Utica	33	N.Y.	1798		Rubicon	8.5	Wis.	1846	
Corinth	31	Vt.	1811		Agricola	8	Kans.	1876	
Milo	30	N.Y.	1818		Ajax	8	Va.	1803	
Omega	29	Ohio	1842		Delta	8	Mich.	1843	
Smyrna	27.5	N.Y.	1808		Marcellus	8	N.Y.	1794	
Argo	25.5	Mo.	1837		Pella	8	Ill., Ind.	1870	
Adrian	25	Mich.	1828		Americus	7.5	Ga.	1832	
Olympia, Olympus	24.5	Ky.	1811		Argus	7.5	Ala.	1837	
Akron	23.5	Ohio	1828		Aurelia, Aurelius	7.5	N.Y.	1789	
Clio	23	S.C.	1828		Bucyrus	7.5	Ohio	1828	
Venus	22	Va.	1883		Castor	7.5	Mo.	1859	
Delphi, Delphos	21.5	N.Y.	1819		Laconia	7.5	Ind.	1828	
Altamont	21	Tenn.	1846		Castalia	7	Ohio	1836	
Cambria	21	Pa.	1800		Manlius	7	N.Y.	1794	
Cato	20.5	N.Y.	1802		Mentor	7	Ohio	1820	
Ionia	20.5	N.Y.	1828		Mount Ida	7	Wis.	1870	
Ovid	20.5	N.Y.	1800		Bono	6.5	D.C.	1819	
Pomona	20.5	Tenn.	1859		Bovina	6.5	N.Y.	1820	
Minerva	19.5	N.Y.	1817		Corona	6.5	Miss.	1859	
Hector	19	N.Y.	1802		Dido	6.5	Ala.	1859	
Orion	18.5	Mich.	1837		Elyria	6.5	Ohio	1817	
-adelpbia	18.5	Pa.	1682		Hesperia, Hesperus	6.5	Mich.	1883	
Mars	18	Maine	1790		Pactolus	6.5	N.C.	1828	
Urbana	18	Ohio	1805		Romulus	6.5	N.Y.	1794	
Alta, Alto, Altus	17.5	Ark.	1879		Hercules	6	Tenn.	1890	
Sardis	17.5	Ga.	1837		Ilion, Ilium	6	N.Y.	1846	
Solon	17.5	N.Y.	1798		Lithia	6	Va.	1883	
Attica	17	N.Y.	1811		Petra, Petros	6	Ark.	1859	
Cincinnati,					Stix, Styx	6	Ohio	1837	
Cincinnati	17	Ohio	1790		Vulcan	6	W. Va.	1840	
Euclid	17	Ohio	1810		Galatea, Galatia	5.5	Tex.	1859	
Plato	16.5	N.Y.	1837		Galen	5.5	N.Y.	1812	
Virgil	16.5	N.Y.	1804		Hannibal	5.5	N.Y.	1820	
Atlas	15.5	Ill.	1837		Media	5.5	Pa.	1850	
Scipio	15.5	N.Y.	1794		Athens, Athenia	5	Pa.	1830	
Syracuse	14	N.Y.	1825		Brutus	5	N.Y.	1828	
Cicero	13.5	N.Y.	1807		Cadmus	5	Kans.	1877	
Vesta	13.5	N.Y.	1823		Caesar	5	Ohio	1810	
Nero	13	Tenn.	1851		Ephesus	5	Ga.	1883	
Sylvania	12.5	Pa.	1828		Nestor	5	Ill.	1851	
Alba, Albia	12	Pa.	1851		Pandora	5	Tenn.	1851	
Ceresco, Cresco	12	Wis.	1850		Parnassus	5	S.C.	1842	
Marathon	12	N.Y.	1827		Patmos	5	Ohio	1859	
Xenia	12	Ohio	1810		Theta	5	Tenn.	1883	

*Names occurring five times or more. Local duplications have each been assigned a value of 0.5.

TABLE II—ADOPTION OF CLASSICAL PLACE-NAMES
BY POLITICAL AND SETTLEMENT UNITS, BY STATE AND PERIOD*

	BEFORE 1820	1820-1860	1860-1890	AFTER 1890	TOTAL
New York	82	51.5	13.5	3	150
Vermont	5.5	1.5	0	0	7
New Hampshire	2	.5	.5	1	4
Massachusetts	1	0	1	0	2
Delaware	1	0	0	0	1
District of Columbia	1	0	0	0	1
Ohio	36	92	22	8.5	158.5
Illinois	1	77	38	15	131
Iowa	0	77	49.5	4	130.5
Michigan	0	63.5	28.5	10	102
Indiana	4	57	20	7	88
Wisconsin	0	50	17	15	82
Pennsylvania	9.5	44.5	29.5	14.5	98
Tennessee	3	26	24	11	64
Mississippi	0	19	17.5	15	51.5
Maine	11.5	14	0	0	25.5
Kansas	0	15	92.5	7.5	115
Missouri	4	45	48	27	124
Nebraska	0	1.5	47	6	54.5
North Carolina	2	13.5	42	27.5	85
South Dakota	0	0	39.5	8.5	48
Alabama	1	18	33.5	25	77.5
Minnesota	0	18.5	33	13	64.5
Kentucky	3	18	32.5	29	82.5
Georgia	2	23	30.5	30.5	86
West Virginia	0	7.5	25	24.5	57
Colorado	0	0	18	11	29
Louisiana	0	9	13.5	11	33.5
Nevada	0	0	8	6.5	14.5
Maryland	3	4.5	6	4	17.5
Rhode Island	0	0	3	0	3
Connecticut	0	0	1	0	1
Oklahoma	0	0	5	55.5	60.5
Texas	0	14	32.5	47.5	94
Virginia	3	13.5	25.5	44	86
Arkansas	0	16.5	32.5	36	85
Florida	0	3	26	32	61
Washington	0	2	8	32	42
North Dakota	0	0	16	27.5	43.5
South Carolina	1.5	13.5	16	27	58
California	0	11.6	18.5	21.5	51.5
Oregon	0	6	14	19.5	39.5
Montana	0	0	5.5	17.5	23
Utah	0	0	6	10	16
New Mexico	0	0	2.5	8	10.5
Idaho	0	0	6.5	7.5	14
Wyoming	0	0	2	6.5	8.5
Arizona	0	0	3	5	8
New Jersey	2	2.5	4	4.5	13
TOTAL	179	829.5	957.5	736.5	2,702.5

*States are arrayed by period of maximum number of occurrences. This table lists only names that can be dated, Table IV includes certain undated names as well; hence the totals of the two tables do not agree.

Ferrum, Lithopolis, Petroliopolis, and Vulcan, among others. In a few instances, we find such predictable pairings of names as Alpha and Omega or Romulus and Remus. It hardly needs to be said that, just as in the case of the American Greek Revival dwelling, which is a caricature (however lovely a one) of the original temple model and bears not the slightest resemblance to the homes of the Hellenes, so too with these neoclassical names. They do not realistically replicate the place-name cover of the world of Pericles or Augustus Caesar; but if they tell us little about the Mediterranean realm two millennia ago, they do bear witness to the peculiar values and visions of their American patrons.

FINDING, DATING, AND COUNTING NAMES

Students of American toponymy are unfortunate in having no truly comprehensive, accurate catalogue of the place-names of physical and cultural features for either past or present. So far as contemporary settlements are concerned, the closest approach to complete coverage is that in the carefully edited Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide,²⁰ the 1965 edition of which lists approximately 114,000 places, including many that fall outside the definition of inhabited settlements given above. For the historical period, two sources of data on agglomerated settlements were invaluable, though not nearly as comprehensive as might be desired: the publications of the decennial Census of Population; and the post-office lists published (with various titles) for the United States Post Office Department on an irregular basis from 1800 to 1873 and quarterly or more frequently from 1874 to the present.²¹ All relevant Census tables from 1790 to 1960 were scanned, and the complete listings of minor civil divisions from 1870 on were carefully noted.²²

²⁰ "Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide" (96th edit.; Chicago, New York, San Francisco, 1965). The entries in this publication contain no historical or etymological information. The most comprehensive list that does is still Henry Gannett: *American Names: A Guide to the Origin of Place Names in the United States* (Washington, 1947) [reprint of *U. S. Geological Survey Bull.* 258, 1905], in which some eight thousand names are briefly discussed.

²¹ For a complete citation of the earlier lists, which, oddly, were issued by commercial publishers up to 1874, see "Checklist of United States Public Documents 1789-1909, Vol. 1, Lists of Congressional and Departmental Publications" (3rd edit.; Washington, 1911), pp. 848-852. From 1874 to 1954 the relevant publication was entitled "United States Official Postal Guide"; since 1954 county lists of post offices have appeared in a variety of series.

²² Before the 1870 enumeration, the listing of minor civil divisions in census publications can best be described as whimsical. At that time Francis A. Walker, Superintendent of the Census, arranged the compilation of complete contemporary lists and, so far as possible, of retrospective tables going back to 1850. For an eloquent account of the difficulties encountered, see *Ninth Census, Vol. 1, The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (U. S. Census Office, Washington, D. C., 1872), pp. xlvi-xlvii. For the names and dates of counties, I have relied heavily on Joseph Nathan Kane: *The American Counties* (New

Nineteen post-office lists, from 1803 through 1950, were scrutinized and the classical names extracted from them. In addition, a modest library of gazetteers, place-name dictionaries, and the like, of widely varying quality and reliability, exists for individual states and a few counties;²³ all available examples were scanned for information on names and their origins. For each occurrence of a classical name, the location by state and county, the date of the naming or the earliest noted citation, and any relevant historical data were recorded. Unfortunately, the cartographic record is such that the precise intracounty location of many places, or even the earlier location of some county boundaries, cannot be determined, hence the placement of symbols on the accompanying maps is somewhat generalized. Similarly, many dates for name adoptions can only be approximated from the available materials, and some may have been postdated from one year to as many as six years. But these defects are random, and do not significantly affect the analysis of temporal or regional differences.

In all, 2405 classical names were recorded for agglomerated settlements or post offices and 690 for counties and minor civil divisions, for a total of 3095. Since 449 of these are local duplications, the weighted total comes to 2870.5. Through indirect evidence, it seems almost certain that at least 70 percent—and possibly more than 80 percent—of all eligible items have been found²⁴ and that the missing items were either ephemeral or were used for very small places; their omission does not materially skew the subsequent analysis. No precise statement can be offered as to the proportion of classical

York, 1960). Wherever possible, the principle of the intercensal decade, beginning on April 1 instead of on January 1, was used in placing names in temporal categories. Thus, for example, a name known to have been adopted in February, 1880, would be assigned to the 1870–1880 decade rather than to the 1880–1890 decade.

²³ Limitations of space make it impossible to cite here all items in the literature that were used in collecting classical town names. For a full list of these documents, the reader is invited to apply to the author.

²⁴ The uniquely comprehensive list of post offices for Kansas in Robert W. Baughman: *Kansas Post Offices, May 29, 1828 to August 3, 1961* (Topeka, 1961), provided a check on the thoroughness of other sources. Some 69 of the 99 Kansas post offices bearing classical names listed in Baughman (70 percent) were also detected in other publications. But the vital statistics for Kansas post offices are not necessarily representative of the national situation; there is reason to suspect that the turnover of post offices in Kansas, and in several other states in the West and South, was much greater, their longevity less, and hence their detection more difficult than in most of the Northeastern states. I am confident, for example, that I have tracked down 100 percent of Maine's classical town names. In balance, it seems reasonable to suggest that some 80 percent of the quarry have been captured. Among the badly needed items in the further exploration of American historical geography are detailed analyses of the evolution and mutations in the settlement network (not just for the period of pioneer settlement, but through all the critical periods in the settlement history) for representative districts in various parts of the nation. At the moment the picture is reasonably clear only for New England, but we do not have, for instance, the dimmest notion of the morphology, functions, and dynamics of the settlement fabric of Alabama for any date or period.

names to total names, since there is no wholly comprehensive and reliable count of the total number of agglomerated settlements at any given moment in American history. More frustrating still, it is not possible currently even to estimate the total name population (that is, those that existed at the end of a given period, plus those that expired during that same period) either for the entirety of American history or for any specific epoch in any area.²⁵

In any event, the 1510 classical names now extant are equivalent to 2 percent of the combined count of post offices (35,238), counties (3067), and minor civil divisions (37,867)²⁶ in 1960; but if the several thousand smaller settlements lacking post offices were to be included, the value would fall below 2 percent. In 1910, when the national total of post offices was near its all-time peak and many still extant places had not yet lost these facilities, some 1010 agglomerated settlements bore classical names, the equivalent of 1.7 percent of the total number of post offices (59,344). It seems likely, then, that for the past hundred years the incidence of classical names among political and settlement units has ranged between 1.5 and 2.0 percent, a small, but hardly negligible, value.

PECULIARITIES OF TOPONYMY AS AN INNOVATION PROCESS

In contrast with the innovations that have been the subject of most diffusional analyses, we are dealing here with a process of obscure psychological character, and with items the precise taxonomy of which may give honest scholars scope for endless argument. These items, moreover, are derived from a distant archaic world, whose margins in time, space, and cultural affiliation are hard to chart, and information concerning them is either incomplete or imprecise. To complicate things still further, place-name preference does not involve clear-cut decisions among alternatives of differential functional value, as is usually the case in considering innovations in the fields of technology or social organization, as with the celebrated better mouse-trap. Beyond their primary function of unequivocally identifying places (for which any arbitrary arrangement of symbols will do), place-names have only

²⁵ As a wild guess I would hazard a total count of between 150,000 and 200,000 for all the political and settlement entities that have ever existed within the conterminous United States.

²⁶ This figure should be reduced by an as yet uncounted number of minor civil divisions, possibly as many as 6000, that bear nonverbal designations (that is, letters, numbers, or coordinates in the land survey system). If this were done, then the incidence of classical names in the universe of named "towns" would approximate 2.2 percent. During the period 1940-1960, all MCD's in Arizona and Texas lacked proper names. In Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Wyoming, the majority of MCD's were nameless, and unnamed units accounted for between 10 percent and 50 percent of the territory in California, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In the remaining states nameless MCD's were either entirely missing or of minor importance.

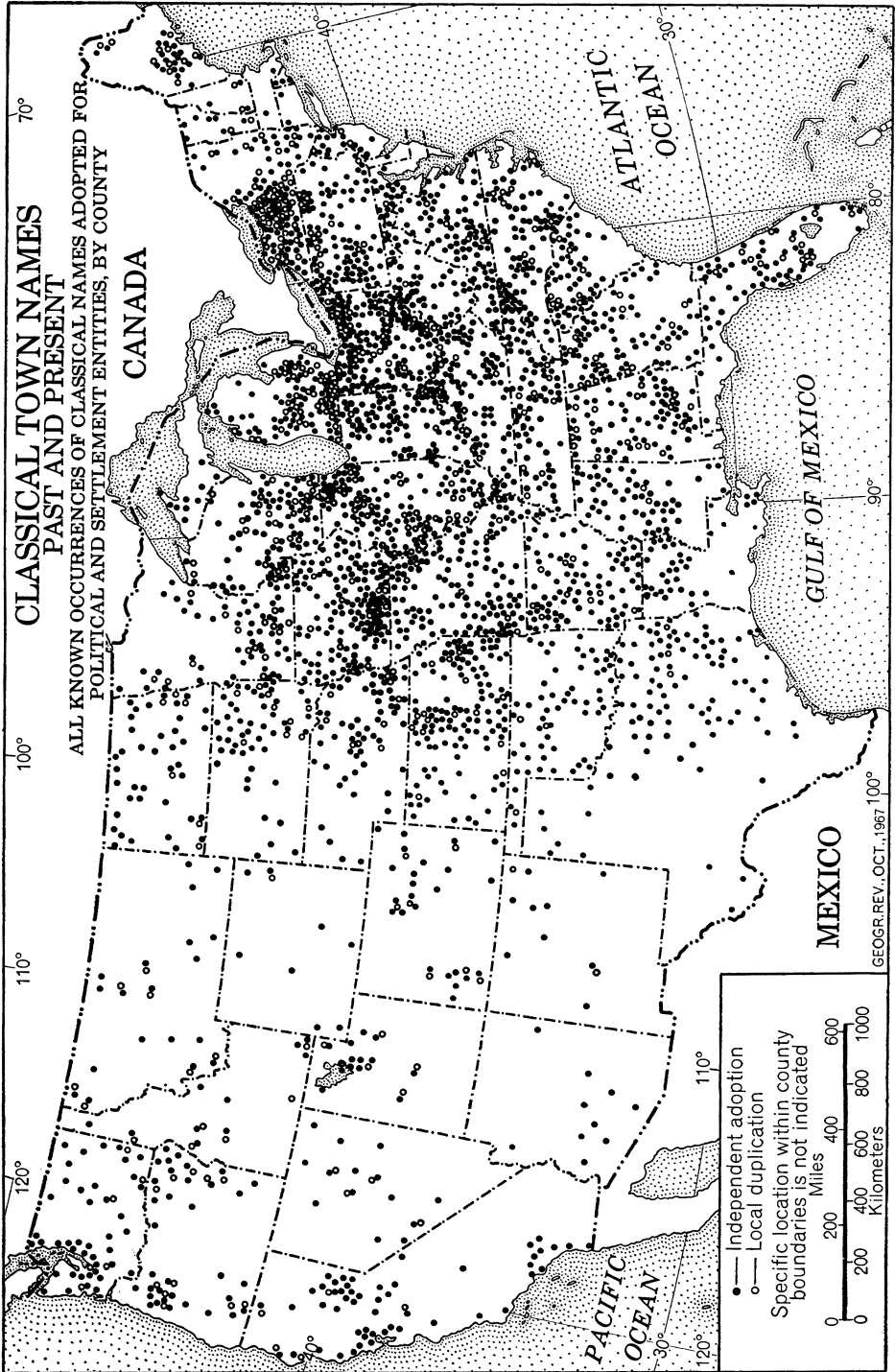


FIG. 1

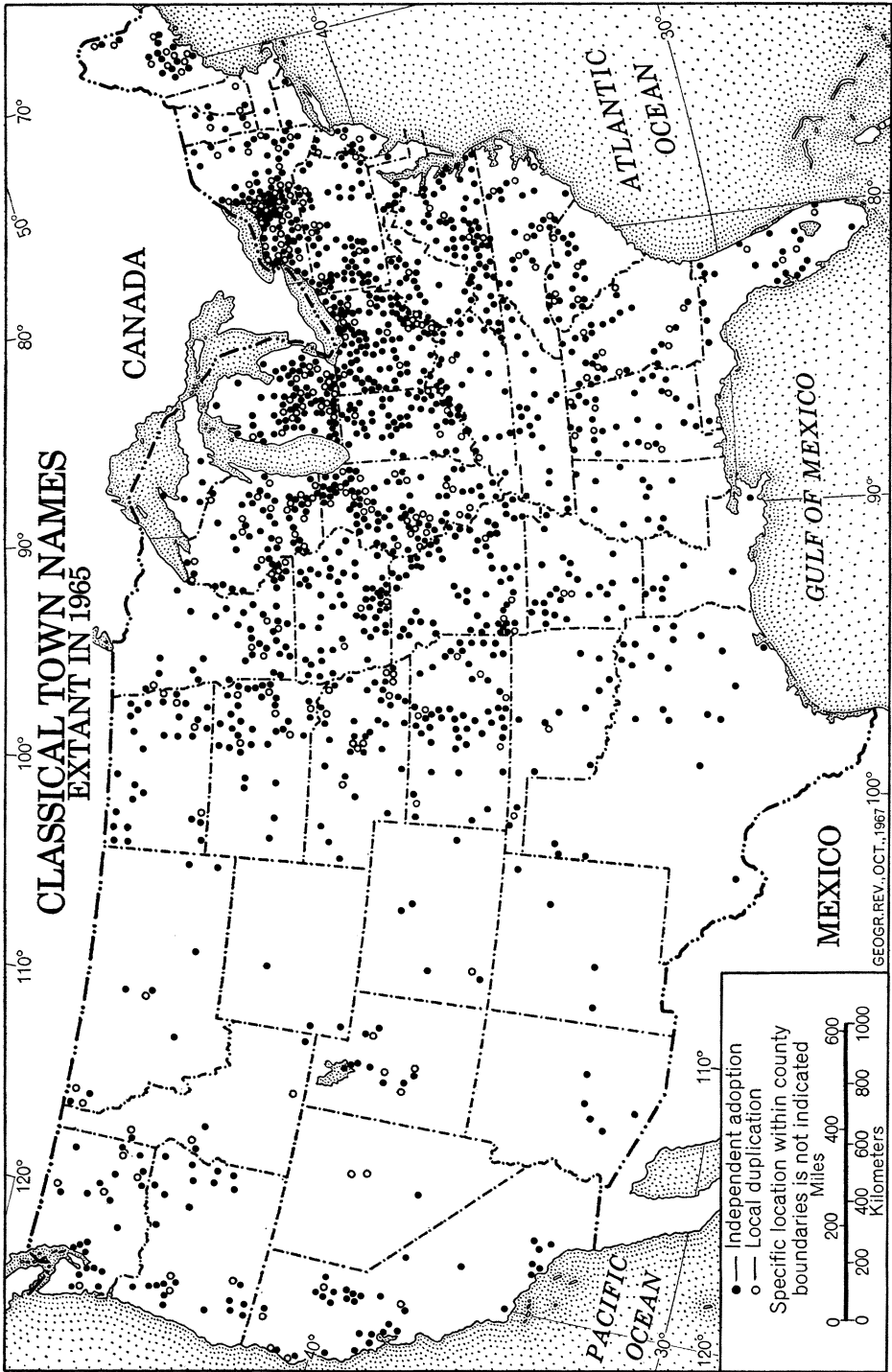


FIG. 2

two minor uses: they advertise a place, plying the not so ancient art of image-mongering; and they feed certain vague subterranean appetites, as do personal names, costumes, cosmetics, or jewelry. In the face of such low-key functional competition, names tend to persist indefinitely once they are imprinted on places. It is difficult or even impossible to change them, and revisions are exceptional, though fairly numerous in the aggregate. In essence, then, we are dealing with the naming process during the periods of pioneer settlement and subsequent expansion of the settlement network, and, consequently, within a rather limited time range for the propagation of innovation waves.

COMPOSITE SPATIAL ARRAY OF CLASSICAL NAMES

After this necessarily lengthy exposition of the criteria and methods used in data collection, it is heartening to report that highly interesting and provocative results emerge when these data are plotted in the aggregate, and by decade and county. Taking first the distribution of all known occurrences of classical town names (Fig. 1), it is plain that there is only the weakest sort of association with the distribution of total population or with number of settlements²⁷—merely the familiar contrast between a solidly populated East and a thinly settled West. After brief study, however, a “Classical Belt,” occupying parts of the Northeastern and North Central states and extending west-southwest from central New York to central Kansas, becomes visible, though the dot map technique is not ideal for its depiction.²⁸ Most conspicuous is the thick swarm of classical names in west-central New York, notably in Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga, Oswego, Seneca, and Wayne Counties. This is probably the only section of the country where there is much public awareness of a classical tradition. Elsewhere within the Classical Belt several other definite, if less concentrated, groups of names stand out, as in the upper Ohio Valley, southern Michigan, south-central Iowa, and the western Ozarks. Farther afield, still others appear: in central Maine, in the

²⁷ No satisfactory map showing the distribution and density of all agglomerated settlements in the United States has been published. This statement is based on an examination of three maps by Glenn T. Trewartha showing the distribution of hamlets (defined as having 0 to 150 inhabitants) around 1938 (*The Unincorporated Hamlet: One Element of the American Settlement Fabric, Annals Assn. of Amer. Geogr.*, Vol. 33, 1943, pp. 32–81, reference on pp. 76–78), and of manuscript maps showing settlements of all sizes prepared by this writer twenty years ago from data in the Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide for the period 1938–1940.

²⁸ This belt is obvious in the advanced stage of development shown in Figure 15. More refined cartographic methods for representing the areal density of such relatively small numbers of punctiform events should perhaps have been attempted; suffice it to say that there are sharp contrasts in the gross density of ever-existing classical town names (for example, between Ohio, with an average of 272 square miles per occurrence, and Mississippi, with 882 square miles).

northern Sierras, and in various tracts in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Alabama. Equally striking are several near-hiatuses on the map (ignoring certain areas almost devoid of settlement): most of New England; the coastal plain from Maryland to Georgia; east-central Illinois and northwestern Indiana; southern Louisiana and Mississippi; and the far Southwest in general. The first two may be attributed to early occupation and preemption of naming decisions during the preclassical period, the third has no obvious explanation, and the last two may result from cultural barriers among early settlers of French and Spanish-Mexican origin, together with a distance-decay effect.

Although no rigorous tests have been applied, simple inspection of Figure 1 leads to a strong assumption that the distribution pattern is not a random one. Rather it resembles, in its irregular scattering of open blotches, an advanced stage of a bacterial culture in a uniform nutrient medium in which the various daughter colonies have spread outward some distance and have begun to lose coherence. It calls emphatically to mind the Hägerstrandian model of the propagation of innovations by contagious diffusion.²⁹

ORIGINS AND ENTRENCHMENT IN THE NORTHEAST

The geography of classical town names becomes much more comprehensible when the data are disaggregated on a temporal basis. When the names extant in 1965 are plotted (Fig. 2), the pattern closely resembles that in the first map, though less than half the dots are present. The most striking difference is the thinning out of symbols in the Southeast and a much sharper delineation of the Classical Belt in the shape of a somewhat bent isosceles triangle with its apex slightly east of Syracuse, New York, and the corners set in south-central Kansas and northeastern North Dakota. The geometry of this fan-shaped belt further bolsters the notion of a gradually widening, westward sweep of the idea from an initial New York focus.

A more complete story can be read by examining the time-series of maps that portray the adoption of classical town names by county and decade (Figs. 3-14).³⁰ Five distinct periods can be detected. The first, longest, and

²⁹ Hägerstrand, *op. cit.* [see footnote 12 above].

³⁰ After much hesitation, it was decided not to add to these maps the widely used successive isochronic frontier lines for the period 1790-1890 first worked out for the reports of the 1890 Census of Population and collected into a single drawing by F. J. Marschner (Land Use and Its Patterns in the United States, U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Agriculture Handbook No. 153*, Washington, D. C., 1959, p. 29). These lines, which essentially separate zones with an average of two or more persons per square mile from those with fewer, seriously understate the extent of effectively occupied territory. Thus, many of my symbols would have been set incongruously in land purported to be beyond the frontier. The isochrones need to be reworked, based on the more realistic concept of earliest effective settlement.

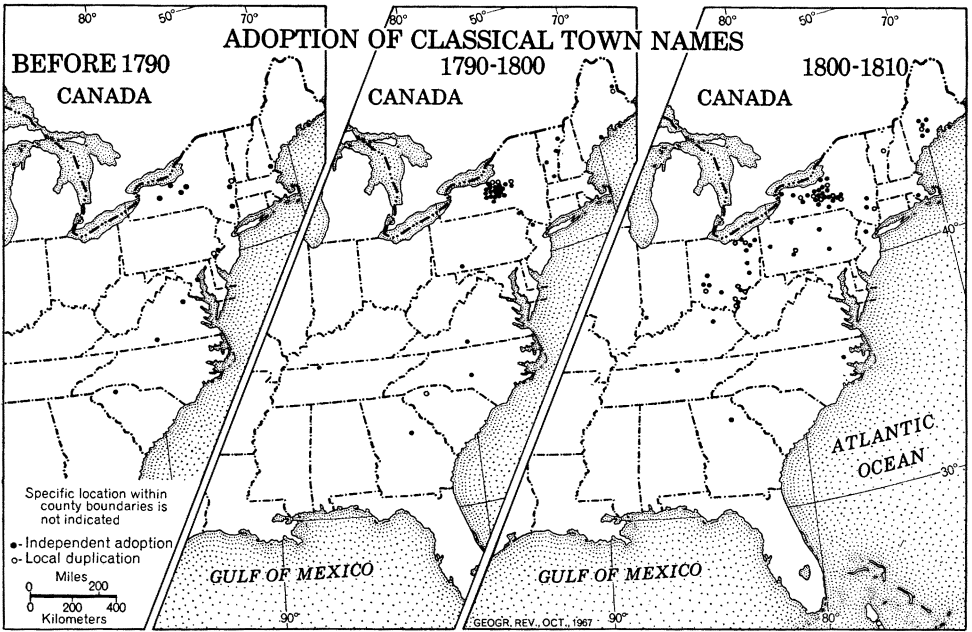


FIG. 3

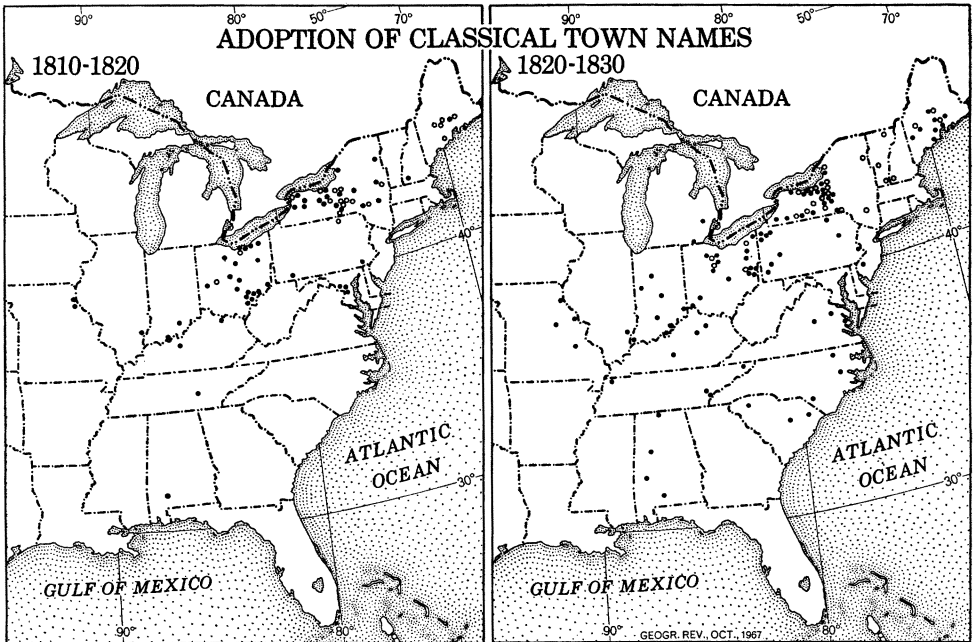


FIG. 4



FIG. 5

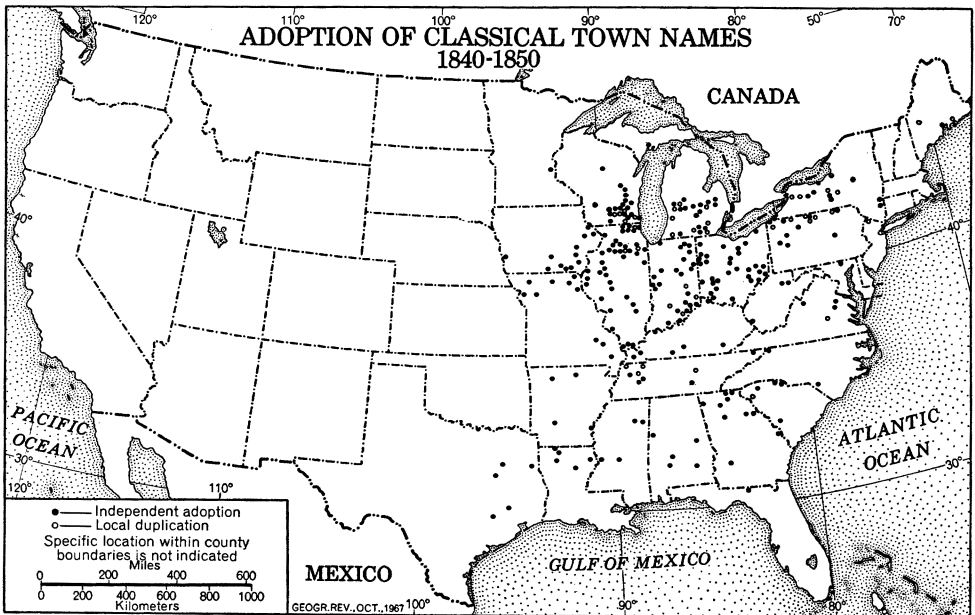


FIG. 6

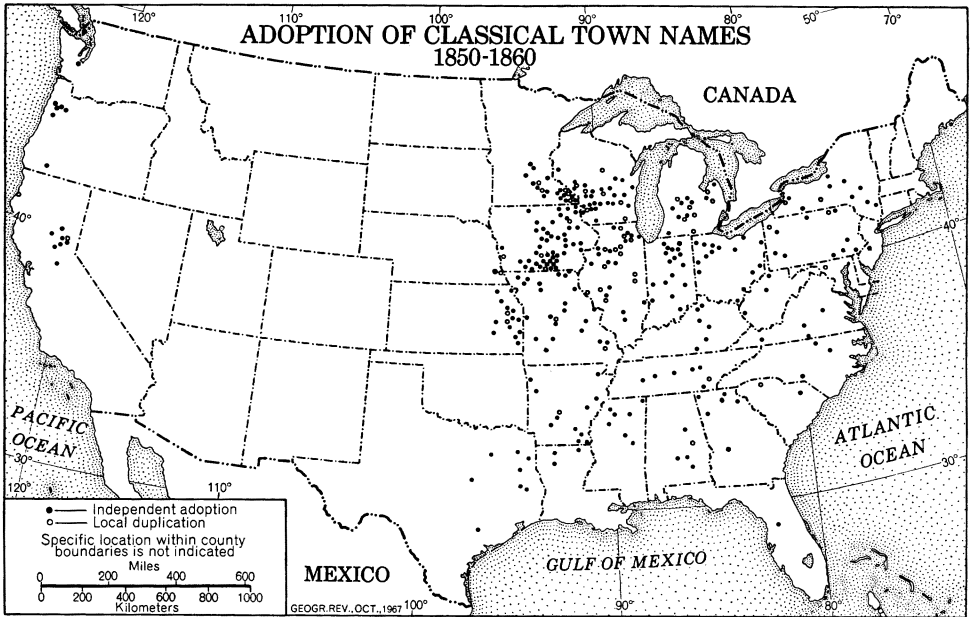


FIG. 7

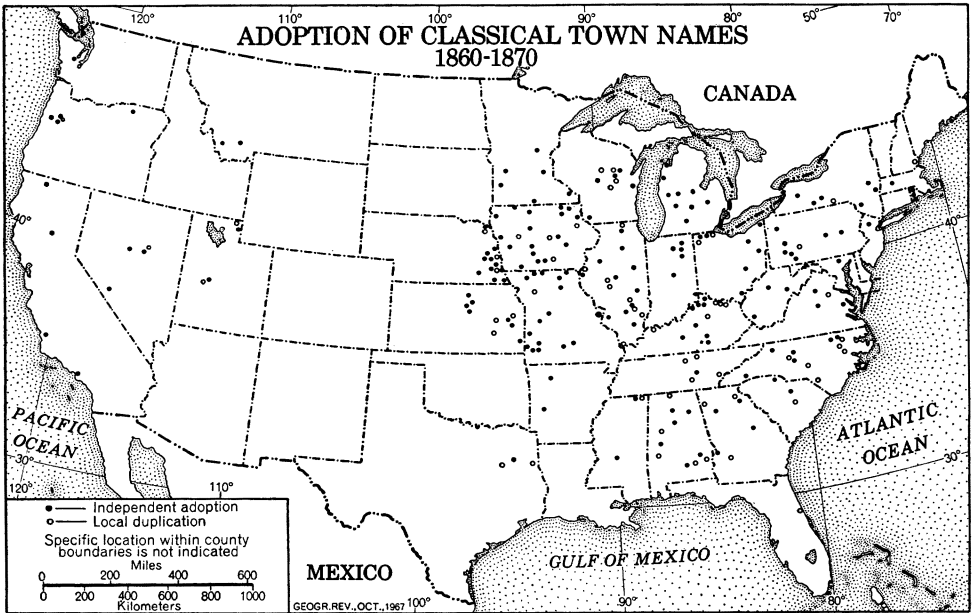


FIG. 8

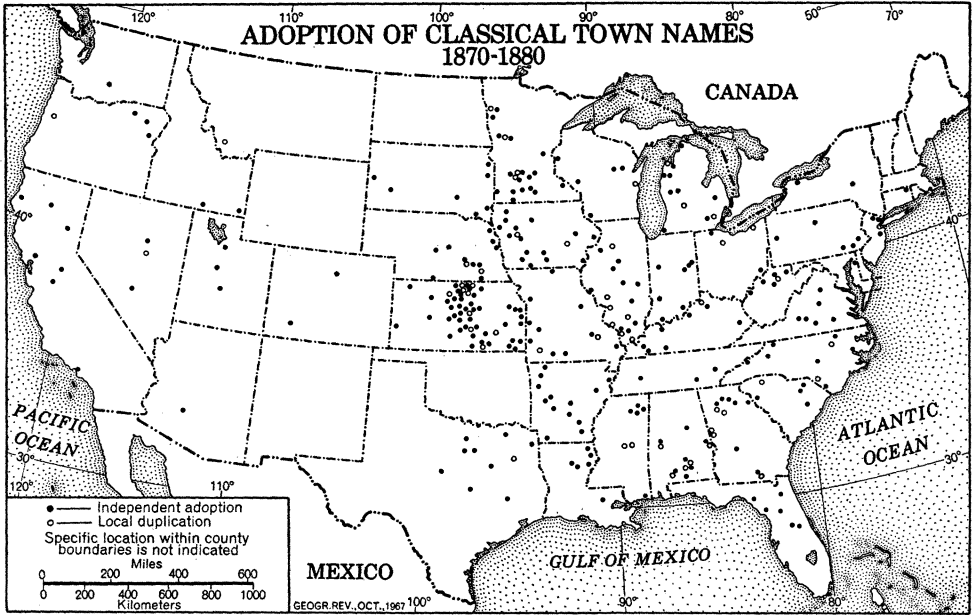


FIG. 9

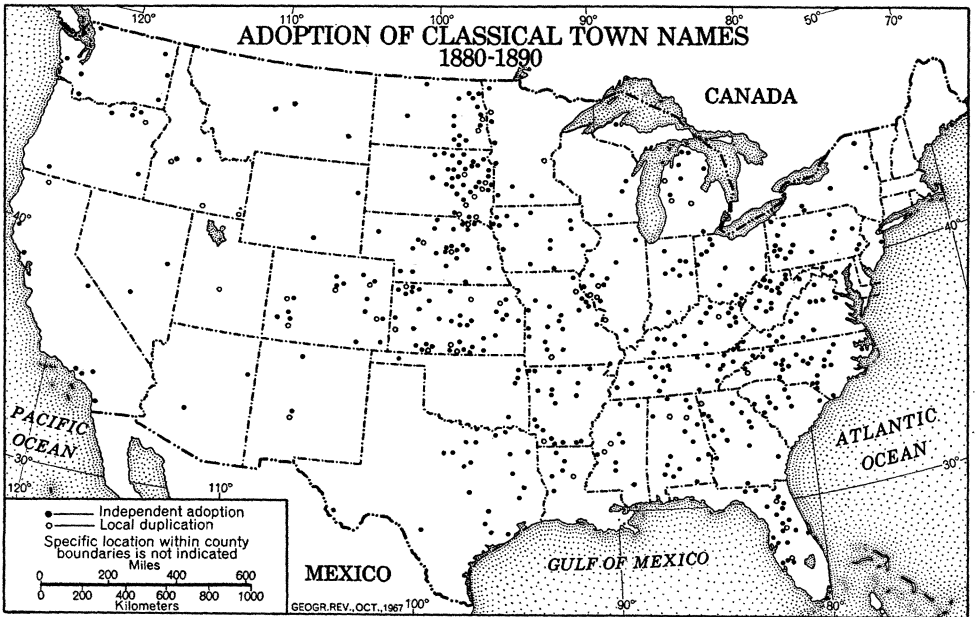


FIG. 10

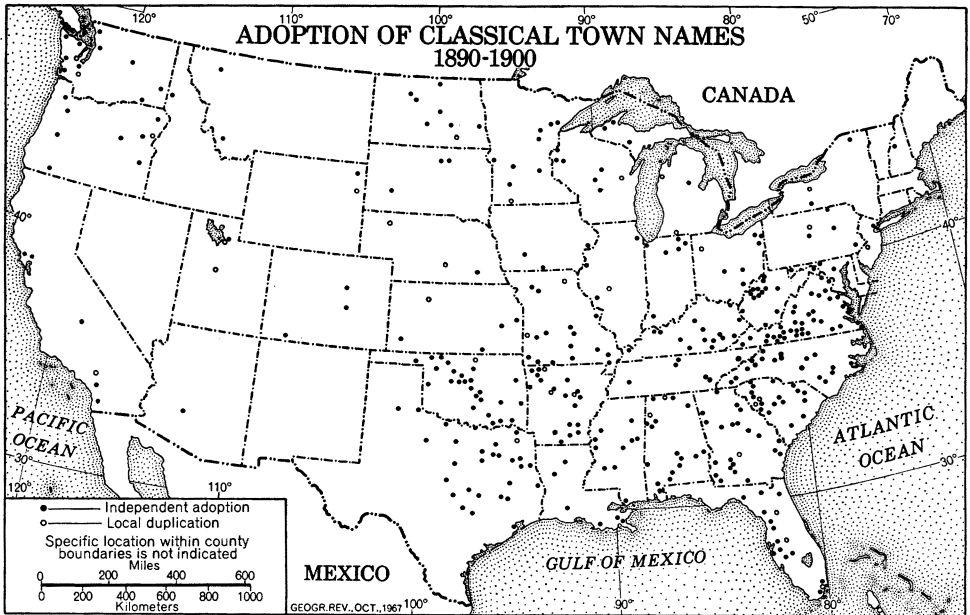


FIG. 11

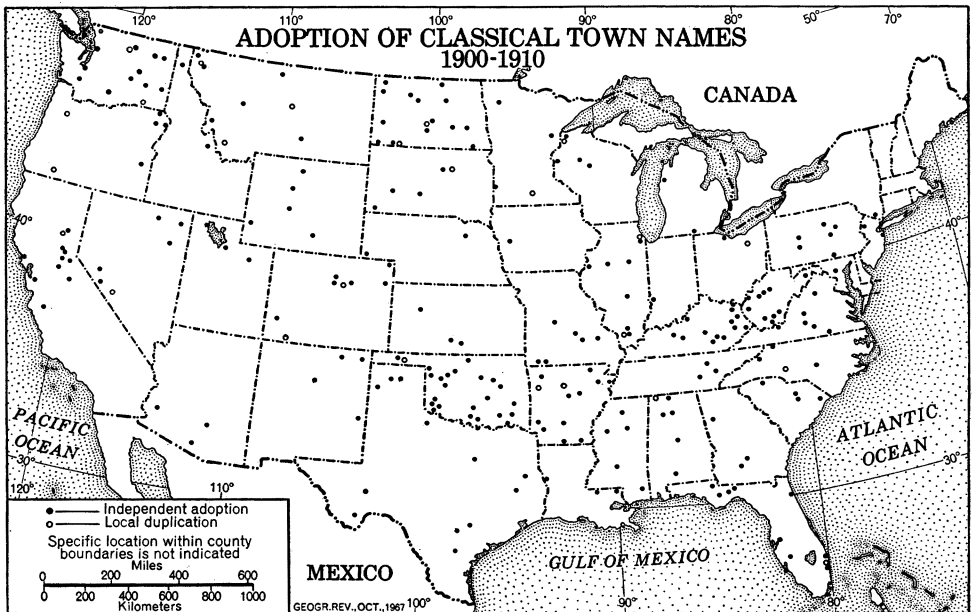


FIG. 12

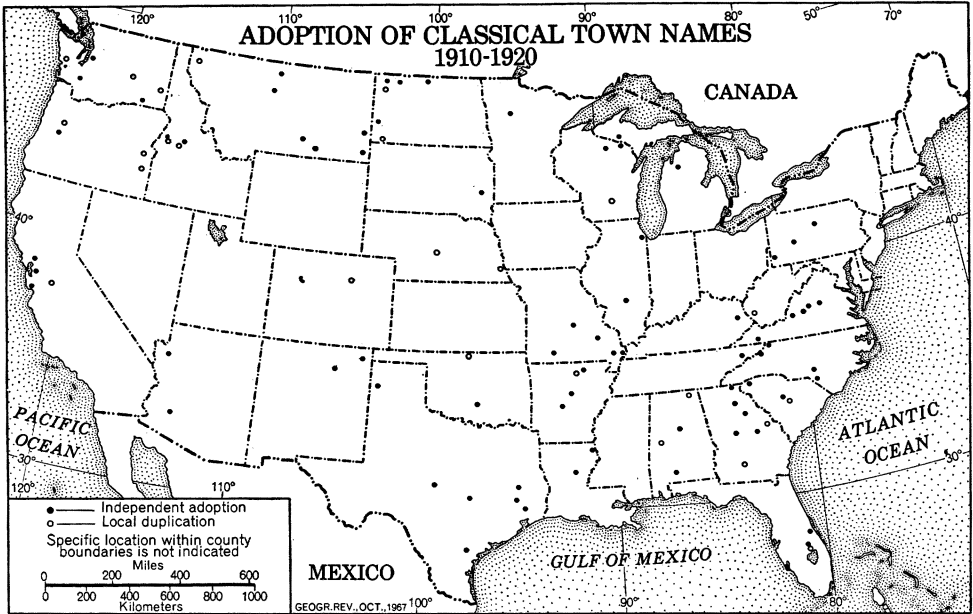


FIG. 13



FIG. 14

least important comprises the entire Colonial era, during which the classical element in toponymy was nearly absent, and classicism in other phases of American life was still at a rudimentary level. Indeed, the only surviving names of importance are Annapolis and Philadelphia. The history of the phenomenon really begins in the immediate post-Revolutionary period. During the late 1780's, and especially the 1790's, there was an abrupt crystallization of the classical idea in the young Republic's newer settlements and the notion of a New Athens or a New Rome was becoming a lively one, supplementing the long immanent doctrine of a New Zion. The concurrent French Revolution, linking as it did the image of the classical world with republican principles, probably gave the new fad added impetus. Scattered occurrences of classical place-names over the length and breadth of the land attest to a widely receptive mood. But it is in west-central New York, particularly in the Military Tract and adjacent areas, that we find a truly formidable cluster.³¹ This area may, in fact, be fairly characterized as the culture hearth for classical place-naming.³² There is more than mere chance in its early focality. West-central New York also appears to be the zone of maximum intensity for the early development of Greek Revival architecture and for the penetration of this style into vernacular domestic building. It was the staging area in which certain classically oriented house-types were standardized before being launched on their westward journeys. And the suspicion is strong that when the cultural geography of this area receives the attention it deserves, it will be found to have spawned a number of other significant American innovations.

NATIONWIDE DIFFUSION: PATTERNS AND PROCESSES

This period of the birth and consolidation of classical names in New York gives way about 1810 to a third phase, lasting until the Civil War (Fig. 4-7), during which the practice spread outward over a large part of the eastern

³¹ There have been many brief, offhand references to the strange pattern and imputed pomposity of names in the Military Tract and its environs, from the 1790's to the present. In fact, these classical names have been the perennial butt of some ponderous journalistic humor. Serious scholarly inquiries have been few, and have been strongly preoccupied with identifying the person(s) behind the name decisions. Among the more useful studies are: Victor Hugo Paltsits: *The Classical Nomenclature of Western New York*, *Magazine of History*, Vol. 13, 1911, pp. 246-249; Charles Marr: *Origin of the Classical Place-Names of Central New York*, *Quart. Journ. New York State Historical Assn.*, Vol. 7, 1926, pp. 155-168; Alexander C. Flick: *New York Place Names, in History of the State of New York*, Vol. 10 (New York 1937), pp. 291-332; and Stewart, *op. cit.* [see footnote 8 above], pp. 181-186.

³² It must be stressed that this culture hearth was responsible for the *idea* of classical place-naming rather than for specific names. True, a number of these names did make their American debut in this locality, but some of the early usages, such as Aurelius, Pompey, Sempronius, or Lysander, died aborning in New York, while some quite important ones were first adopted much farther west or south (Table I).

United States.³³ It is reasonable to speculate that diffusion may have taken place by means of all three processes mentioned earlier. The idea was obviously borne westward into successive zones of pioneer settlement in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and then across the Mississippi to Iowa and Missouri by migrants from New York (and perhaps also by New Englanders of similar proclivities). The small, but by no means trifling, scatter of classical names in the South, some hundreds of miles from their nearest neighbors and in areas well outside the normal range of New York and New England out-migration, opens up the possibility that a more or less spontaneous broadcasting of the idea may have developed, through visits, books, periodicals, and correspondence circulating among decision-makers, though the possibility of the odd migrant is not ruled out. Particularly noteworthy is the thin but definite arc of classical names reaching from central North Carolina to central Mississippi (Fig. 5) that would appear to correlate spatially with a principal belt of plantation agriculture.

Another process, the outward movement of the idea qua idea among neighboring communities, as distinct from the movement of people, seems on the evidence of the maps a plausible notion, though again a difficult one to test given the nature of the phenomenon and the data. Accepting its existence for the sake of argument, the persistence of a quite noticeable "innovation front," thick with fresh adoptions of classical place-names, that first appears in Michigan in the 1830's and finally dissipates in the central Great Plains around 1890, can be explained largely as the combined product of two waves nearly coincident in date and velocity—the westward-wending settler and the idea radiating generally outward from its natal New York. Statistical evidence of the existence of a nondemographic innovation wave is cited below. One rather elegant batch of evidence convincingly demonstrates that either contagious diffusion or a rapid communication network among the elite, or both, were in operation: this was the appearance, from 1790 to 1840, of a moderate number of classical names in northern New England, then still a frontier zone that shared the general *Zeitgeist* of western New York, but certainly received few, if any, migrants from that source.³⁴

Before 1860, the most noteworthy regional hiatus in classical nomen-

³³ Quite fortuitously, the acceptability of Greek names may have been enhanced by the War for Greek Independence (1821–1827), a conflict that enlisted much American sympathy (see, for example, James M. Miller: *Genesis of Western Culture: The Upper Ohio Valley, 1800–1825* [Columbus, 1938], pp. 42–43).

³⁴ As of 1870, according to census statistics, only some 1400 of Maine's residents had been born in all New York State (the majority, no doubt, in eastern New York). This figure equaled 0.25 percent of the state's population, or 5.3 percent of those born outside its borders—a group hardly large enough to exert any appreciable impact on Maine's cultural geography.

clature, aside from some large tracts of nonoccurrence in the South, was in the older settled zone nearest the originating center; classical items were rare or nonexistent in eastern New York, southern New England, New Jersey, Delaware, and most of Pennsylvania. The discontinuity along the Canadian border has already been noted. The weakness of classical naming in those parts of the Northeast that had been fully settled by 1790 is puzzling in view of the exuberant development of Greek Revival architecture throughout New England and eastern New York. However, house-building and renovation is a never-ending process, whereas opportunities for inventive place-namers were few in the former Colonial ecumene during the early nineteenth century.

It is significant that the cultural divide along the Allegheny Front that separates New York and the northern tier of Pennsylvania counties (New England Extended) from the Pennsylvania culture area to the south³⁵ in terms of dialects, architecture, town morphology, and probably other traits³⁶ is also the line (rather less distinct, but still recognizable) separating a zone of high frequency for classical names from one of low incidence during much of the nineteenth century. Also, there appears to be some areal association between classical place-names and Greek Revival house types in southern Michigan and certain other parts of the Midwest³⁷ still awaiting field investigation.

During the later stages of the third phase (*ca.* 1810-1860), the incidence of new names displayed an ever stronger westward vector, and a decided decline is noticeable in such older areas as New York and Ohio. This trend anticipates the dominant pattern of the fourth phase, from the 1860's to about 1920, one of a "hollow frontier." An abundance of classical names begins to crop up in most of the Western and Southeastern states, while progressively fewer are recorded in the Northeast. Thus, in essence, what had initially been a trait strongly coincident with a specific "culture sphere," to use Meinig's

³⁵ The out-migration of specific Pennsylvania names and the suffix *-adelphia* is discussed in William A. Russ: *The Export of Pennsylvania Place Names*, *Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 15, 1948, pp. 194-214.

³⁶ This divide is currently being investigated by Peirce F. Lewis, with special attention to its architectural manifestations. His findings to date strongly reinforce the ideas concerning routes of migrants and of ideas imbedded in this paper. New England Extended and its southern boundary are mapped in Fred Kniffen: *Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion*, *Annals Assn. of Amer. Geogrs.*, Vol. 55, 1965, pp. 549-577, references on pp. 560 and 571, and in Hans Kurath: *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (Ann Arbor, 1949), Fig. 3. No discussion has yet been published describing the striking differences in the morphology of agglomerated settlements between New England Extended and the Pennsylvania Culture Area, but they are obvious to the observant traveler.

³⁷ The classical syndrome as a major ingredient in early Middle Western life is discussed in Walter A. Agard: *Classics on the Midwest Frontier in The Frontier in Perspective* (edited by Walker D. Wyman and Clifton B. Kroeber; Madison, 1957), pp. 165-183.

phrase,³⁸ was escaping its regional confines and becoming a truly nationwide phenomenon. Another New Englandism (taking a liberal view of the bounds of the region) had been absorbed into the national culture.³⁹ Analysis of median points of adoptions of classical town names by decade bears out this contention. From 1790 to 1860, the median point moves generally westward along a track not far from that followed by most New England and New York migrants; but thereafter the point hovers within a zone more or less central to the totality of new settlements.

INNOVATION WAVE ALONG A HOLLOW FRONTIER

For the nation as a whole, maximum incidence of new classical names occurred during the 1880's and 1890's when the creation of new post offices reached its peak. This proliferation of post offices, and, inferentially, of new settlements, is clearly associated with the general advance of the settlement frontier throughout the West and in certain mining districts in the East; but in the Southeast, where no visible frontier zone had existed since the 1850's, we must postulate a partial filling in of the holes in an open, inchoate lattice of central places. The process represented the gradual urbanization, or at least nucleation, of a still predominantly rural settlement pattern.

While all this was going on, I suspect that the namers were decreasingly aware of the pristine import of their choices, the names thus becoming less purely and distinctly classical; but this is a subjective view not easily tested. In any event, the trend was emphatically one of a "wave" or "swell" of classical naming that moved progressively outward⁴⁰ from the older Northeastern zone in which such activity dwindled and nearly disappeared. The near absence of new classical names in the core region cannot be explained by a shortage of opportunities. Hundreds of new settlements were named in the Northeast during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth. In fact, the maximum decades for increment in the number of post-offices for New

³⁸ D. W. Meinig: The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964, *Annals Assn. of Amer. Geogrs.*, Vol. 55, 1965, pp. 191-220; reference on pp. 213-217.

³⁹ There is a remarkable family resemblance between Kniffen's time-series of maps showing the spread of the agricultural fair (Fred Kniffen: The American Agricultural Fair: Time and Place, *Annals Assn. of Amer. Geogrs.*, Vol. 41, 1951, pp. 42-57), also of New England-New York origin, and our Figures 3-14, and also, allowing for the major environmental constraints that help shape the latter, between the spatial progression of classical place-names and Kniffen's isochronic map of the covered bridge (Fred Kniffen: The American Covered Bridge, *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 41, 1951, pp. 114-123; reference on p. 119).

⁴⁰ The same general kind of movement is suggested for a related culture trait, though for an earlier period, in a map showing the antebellum Greek Revival dwellings of Georgia still extant in 1951 (Wilbur Zelinsky: The Greek Revival House in Georgia, *Journ. Soc. of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1954, pp. 9-12; reference on p. 11).

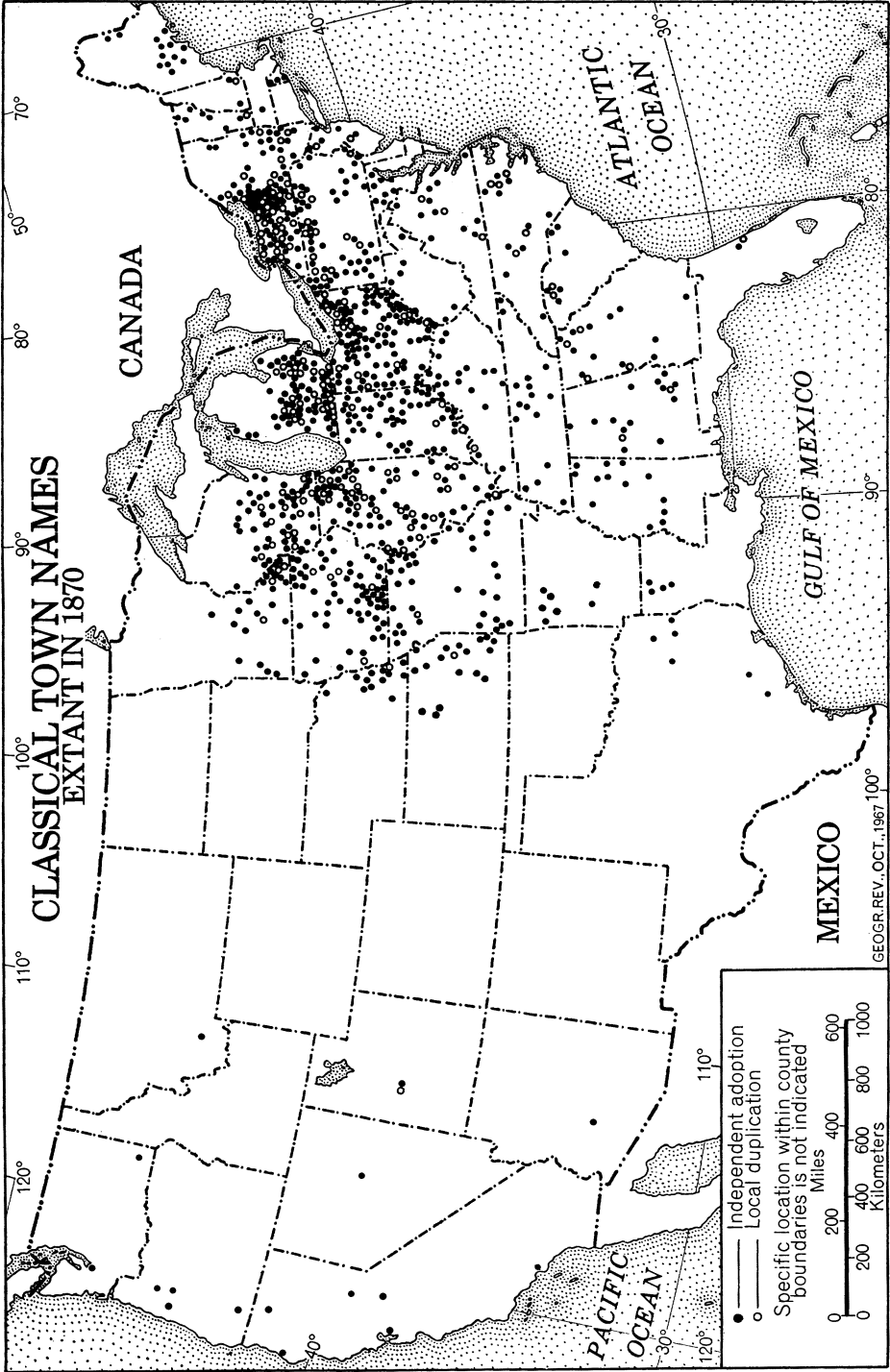


Fig. 15

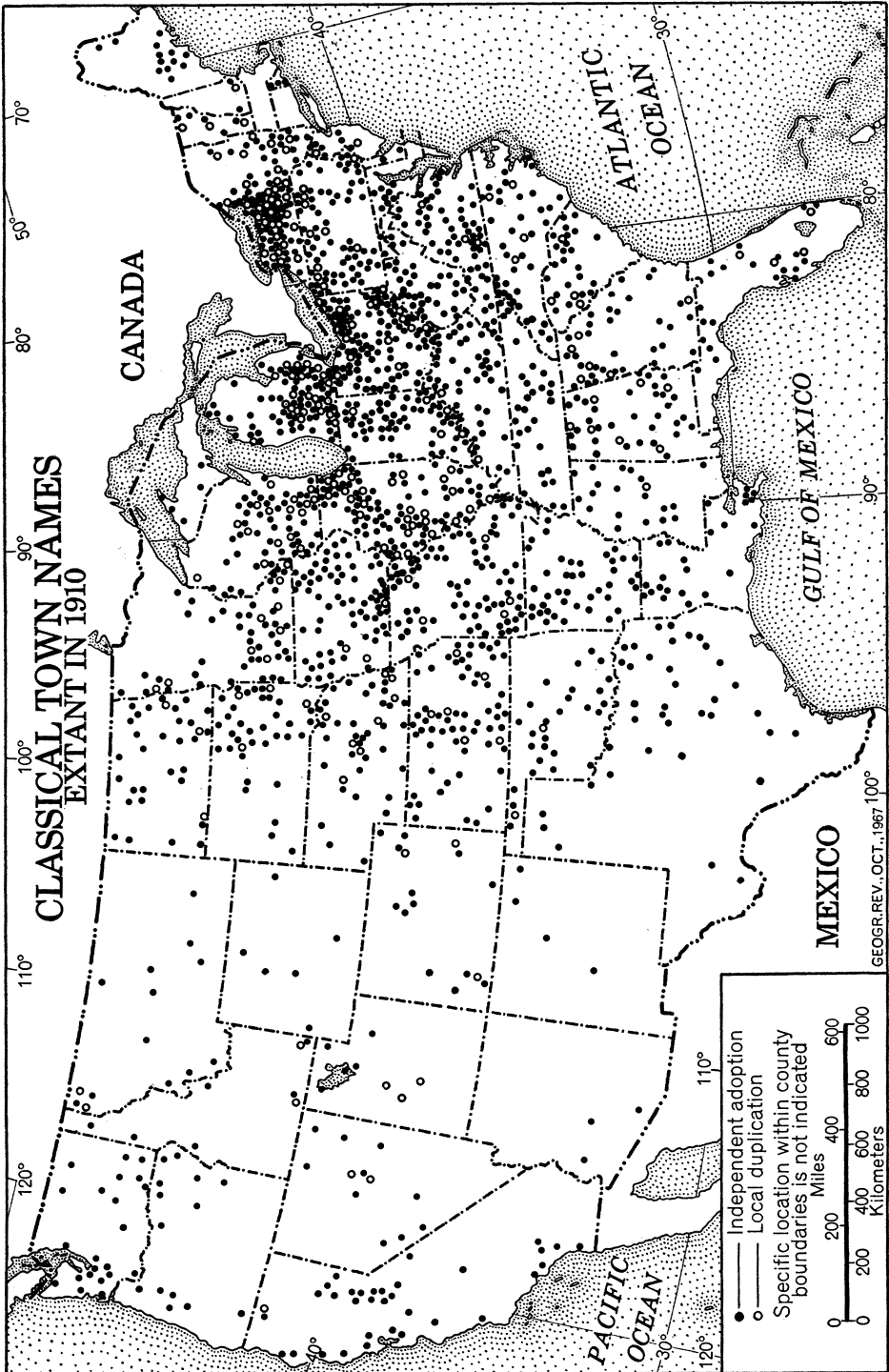


FIG. 16

GEOGR. REV., OCT., 1967, 100°

York and Ohio were 1870–1880 and 1880–1890 respectively. What appears to have happened is either or both of two phenomena: (1) the kinds of settlement that have come into being in the Northeast within the past hundred years—in large part industrial towns, metropolitan suburbs, and resort and recreational centers—were relatively unreceptive to classical designation as compared with earlier types; or (2), a notion not unrelated to the first, the idea of classical names had become *passé*, outwearing its mystique in the relatively older parts of the nation, even while it was still flourishing and spreading vigorously in the younger, less developed regions.

There may be other explanatory factors not yet apparent, but it is reasonable to propose that we may have in the historical geography of classical names in the United States a clear-cut example of the hollow frontier. It is hypothesized that culture traits and complexes experience a “life cycle” and enact their spatial-temporal evolution in accordance with a certain internal logic. This results, during the later stages of the cycle, in a sharp contrast between the nuclear zone in which the trait has become dormant, gone out of style, or even disappeared, and the peripheral zone in which the innovation is advancing, thriving, and even giving off fresh mutations.

Against this point of view it might be argued in the case of classical place-names that, given the obviously close correlation between classical-name adoption and the naming of all places that occurred during the period of active frontier advance (except for the aberrant Civil War and Reconstruction decade), the spread of classical names has been simply a function of total settlement advance and the thickening of the settlement fabric. That such a correlation exists is undeniable, but there is persuasive, though not ironclad, evidence that the two phenomena are independent in causation and process, even if fortuitously somewhat coincident in pattern. After 1890 the correlation between new classical names and net change in number of post offices breaks down almost completely: the settlement frontier has come to a standstill, but the classical-name innovation wave rolls on for another two or three decades. This phenomenon becomes even clearer if the maximum decades for new classical names and for net change in number of post offices are examined for each state. In several Northeastern states, the crest of classical naming precedes the peak of post-office increments by one or more decades. This bloc of states is flanked to the west and south by a broad ring of states in which the two peaks coincide. Finally, in the West and Southeast, the decade of maximum number of new classical place-names follows by some interval the maximum decade for post offices. If both processes can be

visualized as waves, then the classical-name phenomenon began to diffuse earlier (in post-1790 territory), crested at a lower level, advanced more slowly, and terminated later than did total town-name formation.

TABLE III—POST OFFICES AND AGGLOMERATED SETTLEMENTS WITH CLASSICAL NAMES, 1910

STATE	NO. OF POST OFFICES	SETTLEMENTS WITH CLASSICAL NAMES		STATE	NO. OF POST OFFICES	SETTLEMENTS WITH CLASSICAL NAMES	
		Number	% of P.O.'s			Number	% of P.O.'s
Nevada	222	7	3.2	Nebraska	1,030	15	1.5
Ohio	1,970	59	3.0	Colorado	855	13	1.5
Michigan	1,480	41	2.8	Oregon	885	13	1.5
Illinois	1,870	51	2.7	North Carolina	1,935	28	1.5
Kansas	1,268	34	2.7	Pennsylvania	3,675	51	1.4
Indiana	1,295	34	2.6	Minnesota	1,355	19	1.4
Iowa	1,395	35	2.5	Virginia	2,673	38	1.4
Rhode Island	125	3	2.4	Utah	348	5	1.4
South Carolina	795	18	2.3	Kentucky	2,890	39	1.3
New York	2,720	60	2.2	West Virginia	2,060	26	1.3
Missouri	2,215	46	2.1	Montana	755	10	1.3
Arkansas	1,810	38	2.1	Maine	970	12	1.2
Oklahoma	1,320	27	2.0	Idaho	577	7	1.2
Wisconsin	1,240	23	1.9	Alabama	1,435	16	1.1
Tennessee	1,318	25	1.9	Arizona	286	3	1.0
Washington	1,018	18	1.8	Texas	2,682	27	1.0
Louisiana	1,255	21	1.7	Maryland	825	8	1.0
California	1,698	28	1.6	Delaware	117	1	1.0
South Dakota	755	12	1.6	New Jersey	777	7	0.9
North Dakota	860	14	1.6	New Hampshire	462	3	0.7
Mississippi	1,335	22	1.6	New Mexico	601	4	0.7
Wyoming	385	6	1.6	Vermont	440	2	0.5
Georgia	1,445	23	1.6	Massachusetts	727	1	0.1
Florida	1,070	17	1.6	Connecticut	378	0	0
				TOTAL	59,602	1,010	1.7

REGIONAL VARIATION IN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF NAMES

As we examine the fifth and final phase of the spatial evolution of classical place-names, it becomes plain that the broad peripheral zone of strong activity from 1870 to 1920 was of relatively transient importance, and that it did not give rise to a further intensification or elaboration of the phenomenon, as has occurred along some hollow frontiers. Since 1920 there has been a sharp deceleration, and now a virtual cessation, of classical place-naming. In major part, of course, this is one aspect of contraction or stasis in the number of settlements during the present century. Thus, for example, the current number of post offices now is less than half those listed in the peak year of 1901. Even if the question of whether the total number of agglomerated settlements has changed significantly in recent decades is conceded to be moot, there has certainly been little scope for the imagination of place-namers

TABLE IV—CLASSICAL TOWN NAMES,^a PAST AND PRESENT, AND THEIR SURVIVAL RATE, BY STATE

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES RECORDED, INCLUDING NAMES NO LONGER IN USE ^b				NAMES CURRENTLY IN USE				Current Names as % of Total Recorded ^e
	"Independent" Occurrences	Local Dupli- cations ^c	Total	Weighted Total ^d	"Independent" Occurrences	Local Dupli- cations ^c	Total	Weighted Total ^d	
New Hampshire	4	2	6	5	3	2	5	4	80
Maine	18	15	33	25.5	14	10	24	19	75
New York	133	47	180	156.5	87	48	135	111	71
Michigan	89	37	126	107.5	66	20	86	76	70
North Dakota	40	7	47	43.5	28	4	32	30	69
South Dakota	45	8	53	49	31	6	37	34	69
Virginia	94	2	96	95	61	4	65	63	66
Vermont	6	4	10	8	4	2	6	5	63
Wisconsin	75	20	95	85	44	19	63	53.5	63
California	53	5	58	55.5	32	5	37	34.5	62
Illinois	113	39	152	132.5	68	25	93	80.5	61
Pennsylvania	103	16	119	111	63	9	72	67.5	61
Nebraska	56	13	69	62.5	33	10	43	38	60
Oregon	38	10	48	43	24	3	27	25.5	60
Minnesota	61	13	74	67.5	36	8	44	40	59
Utah	16	5	21	18.5	9	4	13	11	59
Ohio	160	21	181	170.5	90	16	106	98	57
New Jersey	16	2	18	17	8	3	11	9.5	56
Indiana	90	6	96	93	48	5	53	50.5	54
Washington	41	10	51	46	22	6	28	25	54
Missouri	122	9	131	126.5	62	4	66	64	51
Arizona	10	0	10	10	5	0	5	5	50
Idaho	11	6	17	14	5	3	8	6.5	46
Kansas	107	22	129	118	48	7	55	51.5	44
Montana	20	7	27	23.5	8	3	11	9.5	40
West Virginia	62	4	66	64	23	1	24	23.5	37
Alabama	71	18	89	80	26	7	33	29.5	37
Iowa	146	10	156	151	53	3	56	54.5	36
New Mexico	11	1	12	11.5	4	0	4	4	35
South Carolina	57	8	65	61	18	5	23	20.5	34
Maryland	17	1	18	17.5	6	0	6	6	34
Florida	62	10	72	67	20	4	24	22	33
Georgia	85	12	97	91	25	9	34	29.5	32
Tennessee	66	9	75	70.5	22	0	22	22	31
North Carolina	82	12	94	88	23	8	31	27	31
Arkansas	83	8	91	87	25	2	27	26	30
Kentucky	89	7	96	92.5	25	3	28	26.5	29
Wyoming	10	2	12	11	3	0	3	3	27
Louisiana	31	0	31	31	8	0	8	8	26
Texas	92	4	96	94	23	0	23	23	24
Mississippi	51	5	56	53.5	12	0	12	12	22
Oklahoma	61	3	64	62.5	12	2	14	13	21
Nevada	13	4	17	15	2	2	4	3	20
Colorado	26	9	35	30.5	5	1	6	5.5	18
Connecticut	2	0	2	2	1	0	1	1	
Massachusetts	2	0	2	2	1	0	1	1	
Delaware	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	
District of Columbia	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Rhode Island	3	0	3	3	1	0	1	1	
TOTAL	2,645	453	3,099	2,871.5	1,238	273	1,512	1,374.5	47.9

^a Including names of counties, minor civil divisions, agglomerated settlements, and other post offices.

^b Including names whose date or period of origin is unknown.

^c As between counties or minor civil divisions and agglomerated settlements or post offices located therein.

^d Assigning a value of 0.5 to each local duplication.

^e Weighted total of names currently in use (column 8) divided by weighted total of all occurrences (column 4).

outside the suburban belts of our cities, an environment evidently hostile to classicism.⁴¹

Along with the decline in officially listed settlement names, the ranks of contemporary classical settlement names have also thinned considerably. The trend has been such as to restore a semblance of the mid-nineteenth century spatial array, so that Figure 2, showing 1965 occurrences, more closely simulates Figure 15, which records the 1870 situation, than it does Figure 16, the map for 1910. But even in 1910, during the heyday of the popularity of classical names in the western and southern peripheral zones, the incidence remained highest in the Northeastern core area, though less obviously so (Fig. 16 and Table III). The survival rate for classical names in the Northeastern and North Central states may have been significantly higher all during their history (Table IV), as it has certainly been since 1910. The obvious explanation is that places receiving classical names during the initial stages of settlement had a greater chance of surviving and maturing into durable towns and cities than did those created during the final phases of settlement. The prospects for small, late settlements poorly situated and/or lacking in historical momentum would be much dimmer than those for the earlier settlements that had preempted strategic niches in a developing system of central places. In any event, differential erosion has etched out in bolder relief the relative importance of classical names in the northeastern quarter of this nation and has lessened their significance almost everywhere else (Fig. 2). One might finally claim that the current incidence of classical place-names provides a reasonably good image of regional variation in intensity of past classical sentiment.

Thus the linguistic relics of ancient Greece and Rome survive in our place-name mantle, however unevenly, as witnesses of a major episode in that prolonged, uniquely American, crisis of identity and quest for an elusive perfection.

⁴¹ The only classically named suburbs I have recorded are Olympia Fields, Illinois (Chicago) and Minerva Park, Ohio (Columbus), and I am not prepared to vouch for the authenticity of the latter. The point is established in the single serious study of commercial real-estate nomenclature that has been produced to date (Arthur Minton: *Names of Real-Estate Developments*, *Names*, Vol. 7, 1959, pp. 129-153 and 233-255, and Vol. 9, 1961, pp. 8-36). Although Minton confined his researches to territory within commuting range of New York City, there is no reason to deny general validity to his results. Several hundred specific names and generic terms are cited and analyzed, but the only one that may be a bona fide classical specimen is Olympia Heights (1912), possibly a topical reference to the Olympic Games of that date. Minton is explicit on the matter: "Certain types of American place names do not evidence themselves in the development names examined, except as development names may repeat—possibly as specific terms—established names of any origin whatever. Among these types are names based on incidents, Biblical names, classical names, and . . . names whose purpose was to get political advantage by flattery" (Vol. 9, 1961, p. 10).