GOOD GRIEF!

MERLIN X. HOUDINI, IV

Greetings from glamorous Guam

With a truly miraculous sense of detachment and aloofness possible only from the vantage point of this Pacific island paradise, I have been viewing the series of articles appearing in Word Ways under the name of "An Onomastic Study".

The author of the series has put together a remarkable concoction of oddities by resorting to the use of the most obscure geographic names taken from a bizarre assortment of reference books. His articles are studded with names of towns that have no population at all: presumably, either ghost towns or railroad stops. He has dragged out into the light of day names that appeared briefly in the 18th and 19th centuries, only to vanish forever. He has even culled names of doubtful authenticity from our Amerind predecessors on the North American continent, and has ranged far afield, to places like American Samoa and the Philippines.

How amateurish, how stupid, how contemptible! Any bumbling idiot could produce results of a comparable nature, given unlimited license. Is the author totally unaware of the Fundamental Axiom of Logology: "All words and all names tantalize with their interest, if you but perceive them correctly!" True, it takes a real logologist, not a mere dilettante, to perceive that interest. In my capacity as the greatest expert in the field of logology the world has ever seen or is likely to see, I shall now demonstrate the eternal, overriding truth of the Fundamental Axiom, by examining the names of today's 16 largest cities in the United States, each in its proper turn, bringing into view those attributes of the names that invest each one with the mantle of logological immortality.

Not all that follows is being unveiled here for the first time. A number of the details have appeared in past issues of Word Ways. However, such items are being repeated in order to give the esteemed readers of Word Ways the total picture, illustrating the utter folly of a resort to the obscure names with which "An Onomastic Study" largely concerns itself.

1. NEW YORK. Since this is the kingpin of them all, the name NEW YORK merits the most intensive scrutiny. It is the largest city with a two-word name, the largest city identical with the name of the state in which it is located, and the largest city with a nonpattern name, no
letter in it occurring more than once. It combines within itself phonetic opposites: a silent W and an invisible U. Combined with the name of its state, it becomes a 14-letter tautonym: NEW YORK, NEW YORK. If we limit the name of the city to its most important (?) borough, Manhattan, and insert the county name, it becomes a three-part, 21-letter tautonym: NEW YORK, NEW YORK, NEW YORK. The name is a transposition of YWROKEN ("avenged, punished"), a vintage word used as recently as 1835 by William Motherwell, the Scottish poet, editor, and antiquary. The name is also a substitute-letter transposition of YONKERS, fourth largest city in the same state and next to it as representing a square number (New York = \( 1 \times 1 \); Yonkers = \( 2 \times 2 \)). New York is, furthermore, the largest American city named for a Briton (the Duke of York), and the largest city originally bearing a Dutch name (New Amsterdam). It is also the largest city with a "lucky" name, spelled with 7 letters. The first city in population, it cradles at its precise center an abbreviation, WYO, for the alphabetically last state name, Wyoming. It works nicely into a palindromic sentence: "Not NEW YORK!" Roy went on.

2. CHICAGO. The runner-up, also a "lucky" name, is the No. 1 name of Amerind origin, variously interpreted as meaning "garlic", "wild onion" or "skunk". We are, therefore, treated to the paradox of a metropolis known both as "The Garden City" and "Skunktown".

A second paradox lies in the fact that CHICAGO is thought of as a unique name, not borne by any other community, past or present. Not so! A Rand McNally atlas published just before the turn of the century lists towns named CHICAGO in (1) Antelope County, Nebraska. (2) Brown County, Texas, (3) Cortland County, New York, (4) Dawson County, Texas, (5) Douglas County, Nebraska, (6) Huron County, Ohio, (7) Marion County, Kentucky, (8) Ringgold County, Iowa, and (9) Sheridan County, Kansas. If this many Chicagos can be found in just one atlas, how many more must there be in other atlases?

The third paradox again concerns the uniqueness of the name. There is probably no other city in America the name of which has been spelled in a greater variety of ways, over the years. Here are 40 variant spellings of Chicago recorded in reputable reference works:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Chicago</th>
<th>Chicagou</th>
<th>Chikagoia</th>
<th>Shakkoko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apkaw</td>
<td>Chicagu</td>
<td>Chikagu</td>
<td>Shcagao</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checago</td>
<td>Chicagyv</td>
<td>Chikagyv</td>
<td>Shecaggo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checagou</td>
<td>Chicag8</td>
<td>Chikag8</td>
<td>Shercago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheegago</td>
<td>Chicqw</td>
<td>Chikagw</td>
<td>Skchango</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chegakou</td>
<td>Chiccago</td>
<td>Pacscchago</td>
<td>Stkschagko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheggago</td>
<td>Chikagou</td>
<td>Quadago</td>
<td>Tschakko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chekakou</td>
<td>Chikago</td>
<td>Quadoghe</td>
<td>Tzschagko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicagou</td>
<td>Chikagon</td>
<td>Schenkakko</td>
<td>Zheekako</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicags</td>
<td>Chikagou</td>
<td>Schuerkaigo</td>
<td>Ztschaggo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observe, please: names beginning with the letters A, P, Q, S, T and Z; names beginning with 5, 6 and even 7 consecutive consonants; names...
ending in a double V; a name ending with QW; a name ending with a numeral; an accented name; an umlauted name.

If you still think that the name CHICAGO stands alone, consider it as a deltagram or 4th-letter change, converted either into CHIDAGO (Mono County, California), or into CHSAGO City (CHISAGO County, Minnesota). Furthermore, a substitute-letter change (G to R) produces CHICORA, Pennsylvania, while another one (G to T) produces CHICOTA, Texas. Yet a third one, most interesting of all (A to N, a vowel-to-consonant switch), produces GNOCCHI (pasta dumplings). Just as the original "A" is the first letter of the first half of the alphabet, so is the substituted "N" the first letter of the last half of the alphabet. Perfect harmony!

Finally, we subject CHICAGO to the charade process, dividing it into CHIC + AGO, two common words most unlike it in sound. If we reconstitute the name, first adding a letter to the end of each half, we have transformed it into CHICHAGOF, an island in southeastern Alaska.

3. LOS ANGELES. The largest city with a name matching in length the base of our decimal system, this is also the No. 1 name of Spanish origin ("the angels"). It is of further interest in displaying a symmetrical or palindromic vowel-consonant pattern (CVCCVCVCVC). A mutation turns it into the phrase LONG LEASES, desirable in a time of rising rents, and a transdeletion converts it into GASOLENES, another spelling of "gasolines". This transdeletion may be continued all the way down to a one-letter word: ANGOLESE, NOGALES, CLEANS, ANGLE, LEAN, ALE, LA, A.

Endowed with one of the shortest city names in common parlance -- L.A. -- the city boasts one of the longest names historically. Webster's Geographical Dictionary starts us off with a 30-letter version of that name: Nuestra Senora Reina De Los Angeles. The Encyclopaedia Americana adds four words to the name to give it 42-letter stature: El Pueblo De Nuestra Senora La Reina De Los Angeles. The Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer of the World drops one word but adds two others to bring the name to a 53-letter plateau: El Pueblo Nuestra Senora La Reina De Los Angeles De Porciuncula. The New Century Cyclopedia of Names reinstates the deleted word to increase overall length to 55 letters: EL PUEBLO DE NUESTRA SENORA LA REINA DE LOS ANGELES DE PORCIUNCULA ("The Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels of Porciuncula").

4. PHILADELPHIA. Here is a city named by mistake. It is the No. 1 name of Greek origin, signifying "brotherly love" in that language, and suggested to its founder, William Penn, by the little Lydian city of PHILADELPHIA mentioned five times in the New Testament. What Penn evidently did not know was that the name of the town in Asia Minor had to be interpreted as "the city of Philadelphia", since it had been founded and named by Attalus II, known in history as Attalus Philadelphus, King of Pergamus from 159 B.C. to 138 B.C.

The 12-letter word with the long "e" sound (Philadelphia) among the 24 with an "e" sound is the 24th such change (a vowel-to-consonant switch), one of the longest names put to use. Interestingly, a Pennsylvania City of Bradford: BRADFORD; one letter repeated in the name.

Among the longest names by historic longevity:

5. DETROIT. No. 1 name of Greek origin, the original name is a chartrain of 5 letters, and of TRIDENTINE Mutation II unusable; be transposed to DOT, TO, and alphabet, a transaddition: BOWED ("bow")

6. HOUSTON. No. 1 name of Spanish origin, named for a ratification of the president's 1836-38 address: SOUTH ( "spurious one-letter"

7. BALTIMORE. No. 1 name of Greek origin, from the last Greek city name to be transposed: MORTAB. Two capable names: ORBITAL
The 12-letter name ties for the longest name written as one solid word with only three others (Independence, Indianapolis, and Jacksonville) among the 156 largest cities in the United States and its possessions (those with a 1970 population of 100,000 or over), and is the largest such city name. Phonetically, it displays not merely one but two invisible F's. Webster tells us that -ADE is a form of the suffix -AD, one of the functions of which is to build nouns indicating epic celebrations the places to the names of which the suffix is attached. Accordingly, a PHILADELPHIADE becomes an epic poem in honor of the City of Brotherly Love, and we have created a perfect 14-letter isogram: one in which the 7 letters in the first half of the word are repeated in the last half!

Among the various nicknames bestowed on PHILADELPHIA is one of singular appropriateness in the present context: it is "The City of Firsts".

5. DETROIT. Not to repeat a language, we note that DETROIT is the No. 1 name of French origin, and a considerably shortened version of the original name, FORT PONCHARTRAIN DU DETROIT ("Fort Ponchartrain of the Straits"). The name is a transposal both of DOTTIER and of TRIED TO, a term given in Webster's Third Edition in a quotation illustrating a use of the verb "try". The name can successively be transdeleted down to a one-letter word: ROTTED, ORTED, TROD, DOT, TO, O. If we shift the name forward progressively along the alphabet, from 9 to 15 letters, we arrive at MOE DB WI, an obvious transposal of IMBOWED, an early Modern English variant of EMBOWED ("formed into an arch")

6. HOUSTON. Continuing our parade of languages, this is the largest name of Scottish origin ("Hugh's town"). It is also the largest city named for an American, Sam Houston (born in Virginia in 1793, after ratification of the Constitution), and the largest city named after a president: Sam Houston was the first President of the Republic of Texas, 1836-38 and 1841-44. Located in the South and its largest city, its name becomes an anagram of encouragement for the entire region: ON, SOUTH! Conversely, it also turns into an antigram of absolute rejection: SOUTH? NO! It is a transposal of the literary word NOTHOUS ("spurious, illegitimate"). It may also be transdeleted down to a one-letter word: TO SHUN, SNOUT, OUST, SOT, TO, O.

7. BALTIMORE. The largest "Independent" city in the United States, its name continues our language festival, being ultimately derived from the town of Baltimore in County Cork, Ireland. It is the largest city named not for one individual but for several: the Barons of Baltimore who obtained a patent for Maryland and colonized it. By way of transaddition, we arrive at a variety of English words, including IMMORTABLE, IMPORTABLE, and BITEMPORAL, either of the last two capable of escalation one step further, to PROBLEMATIC. We can also transdelete the name down to a one-letter word: LABORITE, ORBITAL, TAILOR, TRIAL, LAIR, AIL, LA, A.
8. DALLAS. This is the largest city named for a vice president of the United States: George Mifflin Dallas, who served from 1845 to 1849. Although the vice president is virtually unremembered, the city named for him is larger than any named for a president of the United States. Etymologically, the name is uniquely appropriate: DALLAS is a name of Scottish origin meaning "place on the plain", and the city of DALLAS is situated on the Trinity River, on the rolling prairie of the north central plain of Texas.

DALLAS is, of course, a reversal of SALLAD, a spelling of "salad" used by Jonathan Swift in Gulliver's Travels and still current in the 19th century. An epistologram or fifth-letter change converts the name into (The) DALLES, Oregon, a city almost identical in age with it: DALLAS was incorporated in 1856, The DALLES was chartered in 1857. The name has a symmetrical vowel-consonant pattern (CVCCVC), and is the ultimate in the way of a "lucky" name: the numerical positions in our alphabet of the six letters comprising the name add up to 49, or $7 \times 7$. If we shift the name backward regressively along the alphabet, from 10 to 5 letters, we arrive at TRDEUN, a transposal both of TURNED and of RUNTED.

9. WASHINGTON. This is the largest American city not in any of the 50 States of the United States, and the largest one named for an American President. Among the curious nicknames bestowed on the nation's capital are "The City of Magnificent Distances", "The City of Streets Without Houses", and "The Great Dismal".

The name is the only one of a large American city that can be connected directly with sex: it was previously noted as the name of a parish in County SUSSEX, England, ten miles from Shoreham. Going back to the ultimate origin of the name, we come upon an Angle named WASSA who called his farmstead WASSINGTON, the name later being altered to WASHINGTON. Despite this classic English origin, it is estimated that 80% of all Americans bearing the surname WASHINGTON are blacks.

The name has been the most widely copied of all American place names. According to H. L. Mencken, every State in the Union except Delaware has had a community named WASHINGTON at some time or other. The name is a transposial of the dictionary word NOWANIGHTS, correlative of "nowadays", as well as of various derived terms such as SNOW-HATING, GIANT-SHOWN, SHAW-NOTING, and ANT-SHOWING.

10. CLEVELAND. What you see here is a spelling error. The city was named for General Moses CLEAVELAND, the surveyor who platted it in 1796. Legend has it that the spelling was subsequently changed to please a newspaper that considered it too long. The name coincides with that of the only American president to serve two nonconsecutive terms in office: Stephen Grover CLEVELAND.

The name exhibits a symmetrical or palindromic vowel-consonant pattern (CBeen indrome, t: EVE + L). Anally, in keep- CELEVELAN interpreted.

The name has 9 letters, the alphabet is 1 to 12.

11. INDIANAPOLIS. 4 names tied American cities with the name or include the name pres­ sess of the word for " fine land" as "there ".

An alph­ ZILWAUKJ change dis­ of the alphabet, the first let­ MILWAUKI.

MILWAUKI.

12. MILWAUKEE, spellings s, ZILWAUKJ, MILLICKI, and MINEW "fine land" as "ther(I.

13. SAN FRANCISCO, original Sp by the pres­ is: LA MI­ ASIS A LA Father Sal. Note that th intersting.
pattern (CCVCVCVCC). It also includes within itself a pleasant palindrome, the word LEVEL, defined as a woman in her fifties (L + EVE + L). The woman in question, EVE, is the first woman, naturally, in keeping with the tenor of this inquiry. If we take the word "LEVEL" in the sense of "flat" or "flattened", the name CLEVELAND can be represented as a one-symbol rebus, interpreted as SEE (= C) ! LEVEL "AND"!

The name is a number paradox. Although it is spelled with only 9 letters, the sum of the numerical positions of those 9 letters in our alphabet is 78, which happens also to be the sum of the numbers from 1 to 12.

11. INDIANAPOLIS. We have already observed that this is one of only 4 names tied for the lead of longest solid name among the 156 largest American cities. It is spelled with 12 letters, a number coinciding with the number of hours in the day. It is the largest city to contain the name of its state as part only of the city name, and the largest to include the name of an ancient goddess, DIANA. It is here that the name presents us with a classic paradox: DIANA was the Roman goddess of the moon and the hunt, but she is joined with POLIS, the Greek word for "city". Read the name in reverse, and you see a charade: SILO + PAN + AID + NI (chemical symbol for the element nickel).

12. MILWAUKEE. An American place name has known many different spellings such as MELEKE, MELIWAR, MELLEKI, MELLEOKI, MELIL, MELWAR, MELWACKE, MELWACKY, MELWACK, MILIL, MILWACKY, MILWAR, and MINEWAGI. The name is usually translated as "good land" or "fine land", but can also be given more colorful interpretations such as "there is a point where huckleberries grow".

An alphagram or first-letter change converts MILWAUKEE into ZILWAUKEE, a town near Saginaw, Michigan. On the one hand, this change displays perfect harmony, for the last letter of the first half of the alphabet has been replaced with the last letter of the last half of the alphabet. On the other hand, the result is a paradox, in which the first letter (of the name) has become the last letter (of the alphabet). A thetagram or eighth-letter change converts the name into MILWAUKIE, a town near Portland, Oregon.

MILWAUKEE is cryptographically interesting: none of its consonants is among the ten most common letters in English.

13. SAN FRANCISCO. The present name is the shortened form of the original Spanish name of one of three antecessor settlements absorbed by the present metropolis. That original name, in its 69-letter glory, is: LA MISION DE NUESTRO SERAFICO PADRE SAN FRANCISCO DE ASIS A LA LAGUNA DE LOS DOLORES ("The Mission of Our Seraphic Father Saint Francis of Assisi at the Lake of Our Lady of the Sorrows"). Note that the English translation is even longer -- 79 letters. The many interesting sobriquets conferred on SAN FRANCISCO include "Bagdad
by the Bay"; "The Market of Three Barbarian Tribes"; and "The Port O' Missing Men".

The city is the largest one with a "saint" name, sharing a numerical coincidence with the third largest such name, SAN ANTONIO: the sum of the numerical positions in the alphabet of the letters comprising each name is 122. The name is a marsupial or kangaroo word, harboring within itself a popular synonym, spelled in proper order: FRISCO.

14. SAN DIEGO. Here is another Spanish name, again a considerably shortened version of the original one, LA MISION DE SAN DIEGO DE ALCALA -- 26 letters, matching the extent of the alphabet itself. SAN DIEGO lends itself to "E Pluribus Unum" transpositions that turn plurality into unity: DIAGNOSE and AGONISED. Add an "R", and a series of transadditions emerges: ORGANISED, ORGANDIES, GRANDIOSE, ORANGISED, and SARGONIDE, among others. The name may be transdeleted all the way down to a one-letter word: AGONISE, AGONIS, ISAGON, GAINS, SANG, NAG, AN, A.

15. SAN ANTONIO. Founded in 1718 as "The Mission of San Antonio de Valero and the Presidio of San Antonio de Béjar (or Bexar)" -- 70 letters! -- the metropolis is likened to the city-states of ancient Greece if we are to believe the nicknames bestowed on it: "The City of Flaming Adventure" is also "The Free State of Bexar". It has already been observed that SAN ANTONIO shares a numerical coincidence with SAN FRANCISCO. Add the letter "T", and you have both the simple addition SAN ANTONITO (a town near Albuquerque, New Mexico), and the more artistic transaddiction ANNOTATIONS.

16. BOSTON. The present name is a staid replacement for the more descriptive earlier name, TRIMOUNTAIN. Its sobriquets paint it as a paradox: "The Puritan City" is also "The Bitches' Heaven". The name displays a symmetrical vowel-consonant pattern (CVCCVC). It is a transposition of TO SNOB ("to look down upon"). It can be transdeleted down to a one-letter word: BOOTS, STOBT, SOT, TO, O. It works beautifully into a palindromic sentence: BOSTON did not sob. If we shift the name backward regressively along the alphabet, from 7 to 2 letters, we arrive at UNPLL, a transposal of PULL-IN ("a roadside eating place").

I have proved my point. I leave it to the readers of Word Ways to perform the same service for the names of the 16 next largest cities of the United States. In order, they are:

Memphis  Columbus  Denver  Cincinnati
St. Louis  Seattle  Kansas City  Nashville
New Orleans  Jacksonville  Atlanta  San Jose
Phoenix  Pittsburgh  Buffalo  Minneapolis

I have proved my point. I leave it to the readers of Word Ways to perform the same service for the names of the 16 next largest cities of the United States. In order, they are: