FROM ZERO TO INFINITY

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The names of many American cities, towns, and villages include the names of numbers. Three examples, all of communities with populations in the range between 10,000 and 40,000, are THOUSAND OAKS, California, TWO RIVERS, Wisconsin, and SEVEN HILLS, Ohio.

Much less common are community names that consist exclusively of number names. In the February 1971 issue of Word Ways, Darryl H. Francis presented a list of "pure" number names that are also town names. Ignoring minor variations in orthography, such as the inclusion or omission of a hyphen in a compound number name, his list conquered 24 different numbers, ranging from zero to one million.

It has always seemed to me that this initial effort could be improved upon considerably, and I have recently made my own survey of the problem. The results are set forth in this article.

For obvious reasons, I chose to concern myself with names of towns that are also names of numbers in the English language. However, anyone pursuing this kind of investigation is bound to notice town names that happen to be number names in a variety of foreign languages. A representative sampling of foreign number names that double as the names of towns in the United States is given in the first list. Since such names are not the focus of this article, and almost all of them can be found in current atlases, only the state location is given, as compared with the precise county location included in subsequent lists. The year shown is the publication year of the atlas from which the name was extracted, fully identified in the list of sources consulted at the end of this article.

Number	Name	State	Language(s)	Year
1	UNUS	West Virginia	Latin	1972
5	PUMP	Pennsylvania	Welsh	1930
5	CINCO	West Virginia	Spanish, Portuguese	1972
8	OTTO	Wyoming	Italian	1972
10	TI	Oklahoma	Danish, Norwegian	1972
10	DIX	Nebraska	French	1972
16	SEXTON	Indiana	Swedish	1972

Undoubtedly, there are many other foreign number names lurking on the map of the United States, but it was beyond the scope of the current study to look for them.

Turning to English number names, my first project was to locate as many "pure" number names as possible, defining a pure number name as one consisting either of the number name itself, or of that name preceded by the word "number", whether spelled out in full or abbreviated. A list of town names conquering 51 numbers ranging from zero to a million is given in the exhibit below. An interesting observation to be made about these names is that exactly two thirds of them are found in 13 Southern or border states. Someone might be tempted to infer that Southerners are not as imaginative as people in the rest of the country when it comes to thinking up names for their communities.

Number	Name	State (County)	Year
0	Zero	Mississippi (Lauderdale)	1972
1	Number One	Tennessee (Sumner)	1972
2	Number Two	Florida (Marion)	1854
3	Number Three	Maine (Aroostook)	1854
4	Number Four	Maine (Oxford)	1972
5	Five	Tennessee (Dyer)	1934
6	Six	West Virginia (McDowell)	1964
7	Seven	Tennessee (Lawrence)	1911
8	Eight	West Virginia (McDowell)	1930
9	Nine	Texas (McCulloch)	1911
10	Number Ten	Vermont (Washington)	1893
11	Eleven	Arkansas (Randolph)	1893
13	Thirteen	Kentucky (Lee)	1911
14	Fourteen	West Virginia (Lincoln)	1972
15	Fifteen	Ohio (Washington)	1934
16	Sixteen	Montana (Meagher)	1972
17	Seventeen	Ohio (Tuscarawas)	1972
18	Number 18	Kansas (Cherokee)	1930
19	Nineteen	Kentucky (Ohio)	1972
23	Twentythree	Arkansas (White)	1972
26	Twentysix	Kentucky (Morgan)	1972
30	Thirty	Iowa (Appanoose)	1972
31	No. 31	Maine (Washington)	1893
34	Thirty-Four	California (Fresno)	1930
37	Number 37	Pennsylvania (Cambria)	1972
39	Thirtynine	Alabama (De Kalb)	1911
40	Forty	West Virginia (Braxton)	1911
43	Forty-three	West Virginia (Marion)	1930
44	Forty Four	Arkansas (Izard)	1972
45	Forty-Five	Tennessee (Fayette)	1934
48	Forty Eight	Tennessee (Wayne)	1911
53	Fifty-three	Georgia (Warren)	1911
56	Fifty-Six	Arkansas (Stone)	1972
58	Fifty-Eight	South Carolina (Orangeburg)	1930
60	Sixty	Maryland (Frederick)	1933
63	Sixty-three	West Virginia (Marion)	1930

64	Sixty-Four	Tennessee (Hardeman)	1893
65	Sixty-Five	North Carolina (Durham)	1911
66	Sixty-Six	South Carolina (Orangeburg)	1930
76	Seventy-Six	Missouri (Perry)	1972
77	Seventy-Seven	Kentucky (Metcalfe)	1893
78	Seventy Eight	Iowa (Johnson)	1893
79	Seventy-nine	Montana (Yellowstone)	1911
84	Eighty-four	Pennsylvania (Washington)	1972
88	Eighty Eight	Kentucky (Barren)	1972
91	Ninety One	Oregon (Clackamas)	1972
96	Ninety-Six	South Carolina (Greenwood)	1972
100	Hundred	West Virginia (Wetzel)	1972
146	One Forty Six	Indiana (Miami)	1893
161	One Sixty One	Indiana (Cass)	1893
million	Million	Kentucky (Madison)	1972

Only one example of each name was listed in this exhibit. For instance, there are probably towns named ZERO in a dozen different states, but the existence of just one of them is sufficient to conquer that particular number name: listing of the rest would be superfluous.

On page 247 of Beyond Language, I made the statement that the United States has no town named THIRTEEN, attributing the omission to triskaidekaphobia. The above exhibit has proved me wrong.

For the connoisseur of number names, there are too many gaps in this list. Besides that, the title of this article promised a sweep from zero all the way to infinity. While a million is a large number, it is infinitely distant from infinity. Accordingly, the logic of the situation required me to make further efforts. The solution to the problem lay in seeking number names involving a variety of ingenious expedients: the use of number modifiers, exact synonyms, number generalizations, pluralized names, name reversals, and near-miss spellings. By resorting to such expedients, I was able to construct the exhibit below, listing another 19 interesting names, and reaching out all the way to infinity. Suitable explanations are included after each entry.

Number	Name	State (County)	Year
number	Number (this name represents the generalized concept of NUMBER)	South Carolina (Lexington)	1911
0	Enon (Enon is a reversal of NONE, which is a synonym for ZERO)	Ohio (Clark)	1972
1	Eno (Eno is a reversal of ONE)	Ohio (Gallia)	1972
1	Unity (UNITY is a synonym for ONE)	New Hampshire (Sullivan)	1972
1's	Ones	Tennessee (Greene)	1866
4	Big Four	West Virginia (McDowell)	1972
5	Figure Five	Arkansas (Crawford)	1972

5	Big Five	Colorado (Boulder)	1911
6	Big Six	Washington (King)	1930
6's	Sixes	Oregon (Curry)	1972
9's	Nines	Maryland (Garrett)	1933
10	Net	North Carolina (Iredell)	1911
	(Net is a reversal of TEN)		
14	Onefour	Alberta, Canada	1974
	(Although not in the United States, this community is only some 20 miles from Simpson, Montana)		
48	Foureight	North Carolina (Rowan)	1930
51	Fiftone	Florida (Duval)	1930
	(This is a near-miss spelling of FIFTY ONE)		
144	Gross	Kansas (Crawford)	1972
	(Gross is a synonym for 144)		
milliard	Millard	Nebraska (Douglas)	1964
	(A near-miss spelling of MILLIARD)		
million	Mill Iron	Montana (Carter)	1972
	(A near-miss spelling of MILLION)		
infinity	Malo	Washington (Ferry)	1972
	(Malo is a reversal of OLAM, defined as "spatial or temporal infinity" by Webster's Second Edition)		

Most of the communities listed in the two preceding exhibits are quite small, with populations in the range between 0 and 200. The largest one, far and away, is MILLARD, Nebraska, with a population in 1970 of 7,460. Regrettably, the example is a tainted one. In 1967, Millard was annexed by Omaha, but fought back, and litigation continued until 1971, when the annexation became final. In the previous census of 1960, Millard had a population of only 1,014. The second largest community listed in these exhibits is NINETY-SIX, South Carolina, with a population in 1970 of 2,166.

It seems exceedingly strange that there is no town in the country named INFINITY. It would certainly be the ultimate name in the way of glorifying the town possessing it.

Mere infinity need not be the end of the quest: consider, for example, the transfinite cardinals, each of which has a name of its own. Extending the final exhibit beyond infinity is left as an exercise for the reader.

REFERENCES

1854: A New and Complete Gazetteer of the United States, by Thomas Baldwin and J. Thomas (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854)

1866: Johnson's New Illustrated Family Atlas of the World, text by Richard Swainson Fisher (New York: A. J. Johnson, 1866)

1893: Rand, McNally & Co.'s Enlarged Business Atlas and Shippers' Guide (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, 1893)

1911 thru: 1972 1974: Rand McNally & Co.'s Commercial Atlas of America or Commercial Atlas & Marketing Guide (Chicago, New York, and San Francisco: Rand McNally & Company, year specified) Rand McNally Road Atlas -- United States/Canada/Mexico (Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, 1974)

THE LITERARY WORDPLAY OF HARRY MATHEWS

In the May 1976 Word Ways, Harry Mathews described the activities of OuLiPo, a group of French mathematicians and writers devoted to the "study and invention of novel constrictive literary forms". As most of these literary forms were in French, the English-language logologist had to settle for brief descriptions of OuLiPian techniques. Now, however, he can see how these work out in English in two new books by Harry Mathews: Trial Impressions (Burning Deck, 71 Elmgrove, Providence RI 02906, 1977, $3.50) and Selected Declarations of Dependence (Z Press, Calais VT 05648, 1977, $3.50). The first book contains 29 variations of a love poem by John Dowland (an English contemporary of Shakespeare), several of which exhibit wordplay: 5 (definitional literature - OuLiPo p. 71), 7 and 29 (homosyntaxism - OuLiPo p. 72), 12 (S + 7 - OuLiPo p. 69), 13 (tale of your choice - OuLiPo p. 73-4), 15 (equivoque), 24 (palindrome), 25 (word meaning reversal), 30 (final words of each line can be arranged in a Latin square). The second book is based entirely on a group of 46 proverbs. Its first part contains a story written solely out of the words in the proverbs (a form of lipogrammetry) its second part supplies 106 brief anecdotes illustrating perverbs (respliced halves of proverbs, as "the early bird gathers no moss"). As the perverbs and their anecdotes are randomly scrambled, the reader can have the fun of matching them up. The book concludes with a clever parody of "This is the House That Jack Built" based on the words in the proverbs.