

CURIOSLY CONCEALED CITIES

DMITRI A. BORGMANN
Dayton, Washington

Interested examination discloses that many well-known English words and phrases contain the names of equally well-known cities, either American or foreign. Embedded in the word DRAINAGE, for example, is READING (Pennsylvania), its letters rearranged and an A added. In the same way, the phrase AN OBLONG disguises BOLOGNA (Italy), the single letter added here being an N.

Concealing the names of cities as skillfully as possible with a minimum of extraneous letters is an aesthetic objective. This means adding only one new letter while striving to mix the letters of a given city name as much as possible; to move its first letter elsewhere; to separate doubled letters; to bring separated like letters together; to alter the sounds of both vowels and consonants; and to change the number of syllables.

To illustrate the difference between a poor concealment and an excellent one, let's experiment with CARDIFF, the capital of Wales. Our first effort produces DIFFRACT, certainly an unexceptionable word. However, its first half simply duplicates the last part of CARDIFF, with its last half featuring the first part of that name, merely reversing letter order. The result is so unimpressive that a second try is in order.

Believing with Joyce Kilmer that trees are of transcendent loveliness, we may decide to call a girl friend FIR-FACED (never mind the possible association with FUR-FACED). This time, the seven letters of CARDIFF have been transposed thoroughly; its first letter has been moved into the interior; the two F's have been split up; the sound of the A has become long; and the sound of the C has changed from K to S. In addition, a hyphen has (necessarily) been introduced, altering the psychological impact of the word even further. In short, no one could, purely by accident, notice that FIR-FACED includes CARDIFF. Perfect!

Not always is such excellence possible in the search for a word disguising a particular city name. That perfection is, however, the ideal for which we shall be aiming in what follows.

In general, the shroud veiling a city name may be a single word (GOBLINS for LISBON, Portugal), a hyphenated word (OPEN-AIR for PEORIA, Illinois), or a two-word phrase (NEW PARTS for ANTWERP, Belgium). Similarly, the additional letter mixed into the brew may be placed first (CIGAR for RIGA, Latvia), last (ANIMALS for MANILA), or somewhere in the middle (TEARLETS for SEATTLE). The added letter may be one already in the city name (UN-

BUILD for DUBLIN) or a new one (OUTSAILS for ST. LOUIS).

Any persistent search for word disguises turns up some unusual specimens. For instance, some city names can be buried in other city names, real or fancied. Short specimens include PISA, Italy found in PARIS, and TUNIS, the capital of Tunisia, found in AUSTIN, Texas. These two examples happen to be singularly distinguished: the disguising name can, in each case, be concealed in the name of a nation - PARIS in PERSIA, AUSTIN in TUNISIA. Longer specimens include MONTREAL, found in CLAREMONT, California (but disguised more effectively by the apparently hypothetical name CARMELTON); LIVERPOOL, England, found both in TROOPVILLE and in POORSVILLE (both probably fictitious, even though some of us feel that we're heading toward the latter), and BARCELONA, Spain (in CARBONDALE, Illinois).

Some cities can be worked into family relationships - if we waive our usual high acceptance standards for a moment. Examples include BOMBAY, India, easily detected in MOM + BABY; DOANS, Indiana, found in DAD + SON; and DALLAS, a reduction product of LAD + LASS.

The quest for concealing words has remarkable spinoff benefits for the searcher. For one thing, it sharpens our powers of analogical reasoning, enabling us to place BOSTON in SUN BOOT and PEKING in PINKLEG. A SUN BOOT obviously has the same relationship to a conventional rain boot that a parasol has to an umbrella. As for PINKLEG, the word clearly designates a diseased condition corresponding to the more widely known pinkeye.

Even more beneficially, the search exercises our powers of unrestrained imagination. Thus, we find SPRINGFIELD in FRINGED PILLS, a pharmaceutical concept of the future whose time is almost here. For EDINBURGH, Scotland, we envision great wealth, using RUBY-HINGED doors in our homes. The Dutch ROTTERDAM is most aptly concealed in the adjective MARTYR-TOED ("having toes characteristic of a martyr"). Think about that last example for a while: it'll grow on you, lifting you into new dimensions of reality!

By now, you're so thoroughly into it all that you must be itching to try your hand at decoding some well-concealed city names. Accordingly, a list of 40 words and phrases harboring such names follows. If you will but apply the principles exemplified above in reverse, you shouldn't have too much of a problem in coming up with 40 concealed city names.

Well, there is this one little detail. You see, at least eight of the 40 terms have two or even three different city names buried in them, each of the names just one letter shorter than the term including it. Therefore, never rest on your laurels just because you've found one city name in a given term: there may well be one or two others lurking in the bushes!

We apologize (half-heartedly) for including the word ENORM, an archaic form of ENORMOUS, in our list: in meaning, the word fitted nicely with the term preceding it and with the five terms

immediately following it. However, if the word bothers you, just replace it with the standard English MORNE ("the head of a lance blunted for tilting"): a word you've always wanted but didn't quite know where to put your finger on it.

Suggested scoring: 28, good; 34, excellent; 40 or more, you're a grand master! Answers are found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. AN OGRE | 21. MAD MASTERS |
| 2. ENORM | 22. MASTERING |
| 3. LONG TRAINS | 23. ANNOTATIONS |
| 4. GIANT OARS | 24. GRAINED |
| 5. LARGE BEDS | 25. PRECHEWING |
| 6. GIANT ROPES | 26. CAPTIONS |
| 7. LONG EARS | 27. SNOW-THAWING |
| 8. INSULATIONS | 28. ANTI-ROMANS |
| 9. TEMPORAL | 29. ROMANCED |
| 10. NUMBER LORE | 30. MEN TEACHERS |
| 11. GALLEONLESS | 31. ANY LOBBY |
| 12. ANGLOS | 32. ANY ROCKS |
| 13. LINE HALVES | 33. CHANGE-PRONE |
| 14. GRANDIOSE | 34. TO YOKE |
| 15. SUBCHAPTER | 35. IMPORTABLE |
| 16. SIGNALER | 36. ANGRIEST |
| 17. UNISPATIAL | 37. SHINELIKE |
| 18. A MAPMAN | 38. MIRACLELESS |
| 19. SLANDERING | 39. RETINAL WEBS |
| 20. UNITABLES | 40. PORCUPINE RATS |

A PREFIX DICTIONARY

*A large number of English words are formed by adding a prefix to a root word, modifying its meaning accordingly. Laurence Urdang's Prefixes and Other Word-Initial Elements of English, published by Gale in 1984 for \$55, lists and defines nearly 3000 prefixes, giving examples of usage and cross-referencing cognates. Because Urdang includes only prefixes with five or more dictionary examples, he failed to include my specialized favorite, **quasqui-**, the $1\frac{1}{4}$ analogue to the $1\frac{1}{2}$ **sesqui-** (in Webster's *Third*, **quasiquicentennial**, a 125th anniversary). Still, this does not vitiate the usefulness of this comprehensive reference to philologists and logologists; I am confident that interesting **Word Ways** articles can be mined from its pages.*