NAMES ON THE BORDER

EDWARD R. WOLPOW
Brookline, Massachusetts

In H. L. Mencken's The American Language (Knopf, 1977), a reissue of the 1936 fourth edition and the 1945 and 1948 supplements, there is a brief discussion of United States towns whose names reflect their location on state or national borders. These names are often compounded from the names of the two or three bordering states. This article is a new look at these old names, and a review of more recent atlases for newer ones.

As is well known, there is only one point in the United States where four states meet—Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah—and the Four Corners Highway leads to within a few hundred yards of it. A small access road takes one to the actual intersection, around which local Indian tribes sell their wares, but it is not an inhabited place.

Three states meet at a common border 59 times. This results in the name of the Delmarva Peninsula which contains parts of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, but only three town names:

AR LA TX Texarkana AR-TX KY OH WV North Kenova OH
KY OH WV Kenova WV

Two states meet at a common border 107 times, and many more border towns are to be found. These town names are divided into three lists: generic names, simply indicating a border; names making use of the bordering state name(s); towns on the border with Mexico or Canada. When there is a town on only one side of the border, the state is listed; when there is a town on both sides of the border, both states are listed; when there is no information, no state is listed.

Generic Names

AR LA State Line LA
AR MO Gateway AR
AZ CA Stateline NV
CA NV Stateline NV
CT MA State Line CT
ID WY Border ID
IN OH Union City IN-OH
IA MO Lineville 1A

Specific Names

AL FL Florala AL
AL FL Florala AL
There are two different towns named State Line PA, as well as two Uvada NV. Wyodak is not actually on the SD-WY border; the name may be meant to indicate the Dakota Indians instead. Mardenela appears only in Mencken's book. Towns marked with an asterisk appear only in the article by F. J. Kelly, "Towns on State Borders Go By Interesting Names," appearing in the Austin (Texas) Statesman of August 27, 1953. The remainder appear in Rand McNally Commerical Atlas and Marketing Guide (13th edition, 1982) or other contemporary atlases.