

A NEW TRANSPOSAL OF TEXAS

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Previous issues of *Word Ways* have presented transposals of the 50 US statenames, ranging from the legitimate (MINNESOTA to NOMINATES) to the fabricated (NEW MEXICO to X ICEWOMEN).

Previously-known transposals of TEXAS are the everyday word TAXES and the contrived AXEST (the supposed archaic second person singular indicative of 'to axe', as in 'thou axest').

However, a new transposal of TEXAS has been discovered. The word is XESTA, defined as a liquid measure of 20 ounces. When I say 'new' I mean that it has not previously been known to logologists: the word appears in a dictionary more than a century old! XESTA occurs in my undated copy of Routledge's *Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language*, by Austin Nuttall, published by Routledge in London. A later edition of this dictionary published in 1890 dropped XESTA from its pages.

The word XESTA appears in no other dictionary: not in the OED or its Supplement; not in any edition of Merriam-Webster's *New International*; not in Funk & Wagnalls *Standard* or *New Standard*; not in Chambers *Twentieth Century*; not in the *Century Dictionary* or its Supplement; and not in the *Imperial Dictionary of the English Language* by Ogilvie and Annandale.

The nearest that any dictionaries come to showing the word are Funk & Wagnalls *Standard* and *New Standard*. Though neither lists the word at the letter X, they both contain the word XESTES in the tables of measures. XESTES is shown as an ancient Greek measure of capacity, equivalent to 2 hemins, 0.96 of a British pint, or 0.55 litres. As a British pint is equivalent to 20 fluid ounces, 0.96 pints is equivalent to 19.2 fluid ounces, slightly different from the 20 ounces given in Routledge. I suspect that Routledge's 20 ounces is only meant to be an approximation.

So, a XESTA and a XESTES are probably one and the same thing; but I have no other authority for the word XESTA. Can *Word Ways* readers help?