

A STATENAME CHAIN REVISITED

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"Where are you from?"

"Indiana, Pennsylvania."

"Huh? Make up your mind. Are you from Indiana or Pennsylvania?"

"Both. I'm from the town of Indiana in the state of Pennsylvania."

Exchanges like the preceding are common to travellers from Indiana PA as well as those from Delaware OH, Nevada MO, Iowa LA and a number of other places. Many people are not aware that there are places named after other states and few imagine there are very many.

In the November 1970 Word Ways, Darryl Francis was amazed to discover over 200 such places. Rather than tediously listing them, he used his list to compose a statename chain. This chain was of the form community A is in state B, community B is in state C, community C is in state D, and so forth. No name can occur twice as a state or a community. Only places with names exactly the same as a state were allowed; places such as New York Mills MN and Pennsylvaniaburg IN were excluded. Francis managed to construct a chain of 22 links, which he improved to 26 in the February 1971 issue. He thought that other readers could improve on his list, but no one ever did so.

In constructing my chain, I first had to compile my own list of stateplaces, a term I coined to refer to places with the same name as a state. My two primary sources were the Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide (1997) and the Geographic Names Information Service (GNIS) available on the Internet at mapping.usgs.gov/www/gnisform.html. There are about 300 stateplaces in these two references. A few older atlases raised the total to almost 340. This figure doesn't include places named after their own state since those are useless in making a chain.

As Darryl Francis observed, the names are not uniformly distributed over the states. Unsurprisingly, Washington is the leader in my list with 42 states having at least one. Runners up are Texas (20), Virginia (19) and Wyoming (17). Six states, Hawaii, Massachusetts, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina and South Dakota, have no community named for them and there's only one place name for each of Connecticut, Louisiana, New Jersey and West Virginia.

Nor are stateplaces evenly distributed among the states. Those that contain the most are concentrated in the Ohio valley: Illinois (22), Indiana (19), Ohio (18) and Pennsylvania (18). States with the fewest are

Hawaii and Wyoming, which have no stateplaces at all, and Nevada, New Hampshire and North Dakota, which have one each.

With my larger list, I chained together 42 states with 41 links. Despite the use of the present tense, some of these places may not still exist. The counties are those that are shown in the reference work.

Wyoming is in Washington County, Rhode Island
 Rhode Island is in Freestone County, Texas
 Texas is in Essex County, Vermont
 Vermont is in St. Johns County, Florida
 Florida is in Fairfield County, Connecticut
 Connecticut is in Tioga County, New York
 New York is in Cibola County, New Mexico
 New Mexico is in Lumpkin County, Georgia
 Georgia is in Monmouth County, New Jersey
 New Jersey is in St. Joseph County, Michigan
 Michigan is in Sherman County, Oregon
 Oregon is in Clarke County, Indiana
 Indiana is in Marion County, Iowa
 Iowa is in Ness County, Kansas
 Kansas is in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania
 Pennsylvania is in Mobile County, Alabama
 Alabama is in Polk County, Wisconsin
 Wisconsin is in Knott County, Kentucky
 Kentucky is in Saline County, Arkansas
 Arkansas is in Hardy County, West Virginia
 West Virginia is in St. Louis County, Minnesota
 Minnesota is in Shasta County, California
 California is in Aroostook County, Maine
 Maine is in Coconino County, Arizona
 Arizona is in Burt County, Nebraska
 Nebraska is in Appomattox County, Virginia
 Virginia is in Kitsap County, Washington
 Washington is in Washoe County, Nevada
 Nevada is in Idaho County, Idaho
 Idaho is in Pike County, Ohio
 Ohio is in Gunnison County, Colorado
 Colorado is in Salt Lake County, Utah
 Utah is in Decatur County, Tennessee
 Tennessee is in McDonough County, Illinois
 Illinois is in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma
 Oklahoma is in Carroll County, Maryland
 Maryland is in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana
 Louisiana is in Pike County, Missouri
 Missouri is in Gallatin County, Montana
 Montana is in Metanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska
 Alaska is in Walworth County, South Dakota

Some of these are old names or variants for current towns. For example, Nebraska VA is another name for Appomattox; Missouri MT is an old name

for Bozeman; Alaska SD and Iowa KS are generally known as Akaska and Ness City, respectively.

All but five links in the chain are from the two references I mentioned earlier. Alabama WI is in the Century Atlas of the World (1897); Florida CT is from the New International Atlas of the World, published by the Geographic Publishing Company (1944); Nevada ID is in Rand McNally's Pioneer Pioneer Atlas of the American West (1969) which contains reprints of an 1876 atlas; Connecticut NY and Illinois OK are in Rand McNally's Indexed Atlas of the World (1894).

The longest chain possible, at least in theory, is one of 49 links (50 if it doubles back on itself). That two states lack stateplaces and six states have no places named for them is the primary reason the chain above is shorter than the maximum. But what of Delaware, New Hampshire, and Mississippi? Could they not have been squeezed in somewhere?

It turns out that to add any of them would be at best an exchange for a state already in the chain and leave the chain the same length or shorter. Delaware could be substituted for Rhode Island since both have a Wyoming and Texas also has a Delaware. New Hampshire's only stateplace is the same one that Nevada has. However, to replace Nevada with New Hampshire would also cause the loss of Idaho.

Mississippi is limited by the number of places named for it. There are only two, one in Minnesota and one in Illinois. To use Minnesota would sacrifice West Virginia, and to use Illinois would lose either Tennessee or Kentucky.

I have the list of stateplaces in a flat-ASCII file. Anyone who wants a copy can email me at dtilque@pktechnology.com.