O'OU ETES-VOUS?

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There are only a few possibilities for naming the inhabitants of places in the United States: New Yorker, Chicagoan, Philadelphian, Bostonian, Scrantonite. There may be more exotic forms for those from towns with French or Spanish names, but the possibilities fall far short of even Britain, where Oxonians come from Oxford, Cantabrigians from Cambridge, Liverpoolians from Liverpool, and Mancunians from Manchester. In my home town of Newcastle in New South Wales, we used to pride ourselves on our knowledge of Latin, calling ourselves Novocastrians.

But this is nothing to the complexity of French inhabitant-naming. Every French town of any size or antiquity, and every identifiable region, has a particular form for designating someone who comes from there, and knowledge of such forms provides the basis for French cocktail-party conversation. I have discovered approximately 750 names for cities, towns, villages and regions in the Petit Larousse (Paris, 1960). Such a list makes for rather dull reading; instead, I present an analysis of the logical patterns of inhabitant-naming (provided by the editor of Word Ways), and a bestiary of strange specimens.

The French pride themselves on their fierce individuality. Inhabitant-naming is no exception; although general rules can be discerned, these are riddled with exceptions. In the following, the name of the resident is usually formed by adding an ending to the town name (for names ending in C,D,G,H,L,M,N,T,R,X,Z) or to a slightly curtailed version of the name (for names ending in E,S,Y).

If the town name ends in -AN or -ON, add (N)AIS; if the town name ends in -IN or -UN, add OIS. If the town name ends in -EN, however, there is no discernible rule: Sainte-Julien-En-Genevois to Julienois and Gien to Glennois, but Caen to Caennais and Rouen to Rouennais. Residents of Agen have it both ways, Agenais or Agenois. Exceptions to the -IN rule are Haubourdin and Josselin, both of which add AIS; for -UN, Melun adds AIS and Dun-Sur-Meuse is inhabited by Duniens. Residents of Dinan are not only Dinannais but also Dinandois and Dinandiens; similarly, those living in Morvan term themselves Morvandais, Morvandiaux, Morvandiots and Morvandiaux.

Towns ending in -ONNE drop the E and add AIS, except for Aucanne to Auconnais. Towns ending in -ENNE drop the E and add OIS, except for Mayenne to Mayennais and La Brenne to Brennous.
Towns ending in -FORT add AIS, except for Belfort to Belfortins and Belfortains, or Beaufort-En-Vallée to Beaufortins. Towns ending in -MONT add OIS, except for Remiremont to Romarimontins. Other towns ending in T spread their favors about equally among AIS, OIS and INS. Occasionally, C or D is substituted for T before appending the suffix: Argentat to Argentacois, Sélestat to Sélestadiens, Le Dorat to Dorachons, La Ciotat to Ciotadens, Comtat Venaissin to Comtadins, Sarlat to Sarladais, Royat to Royadères.

Towns ending in -L usually add (L)OIS, but occasionally IENS (Cantal to Cantaliens, Epinal to Spinaliens, Vesoul to Vésuliens). Sospel becomes Sospellitains, but the oddest -L towns are Argenteuil and add OIS (Belleville, Joinville, Trouville-Sur-Mer) or IENS (Decazeville).

Towns ending in -R are especially unruly, using AIS (Capcir, Forcalquier), OIS (Honfleur, Saumur), EENS (Lavaur to Vauréens), AINS (Saint-Flour, Montpellier) or IENS (Colmar, Lammeur). Harfleur adds a T before the ending (Harfleurta is, Harfleurtois), and Bar-le-Duc expands to Barisiens.

Towns ending in -C are twice as likely to add OIS as AIS, but IENS (Languedoc, Lourdes) or INS (Saint-Amand-Mont-Rond, Périgord), IENS (Sainte-Menehould) or even AIS (Montbéliard). -X is also an unruly ending, with Aix-Les-Bains to Aixois, Ax-Les-Thermes to Axéens, and Limoux to Limouxins. Carmaux, Morlaix and Roubaix substitute S for X before adding I(E)NS: Carmausins, Morlaisiens, Roubaisiens. Other substitutions include CQ as found in Dax to Dacquois.

In contrast, towns ending in -H (Auch), -K (Sarrebruck) and -M (Riom, Ham, Condom) all end in OIS. In fact, the association between -M and OIS is so pronounced that towns ending in -MES or -MS take this ending after dropping one or more letters: Baumé-Les-Dames to Baumois, Domme to Dommois, Vendôme to Vendômois, Nîmes to Nîmois, Exmes to Exmois, Fismes to Fismois, Reims to Remois. -EZ or -UZ is likewise well-behaved, adding IENS with Saint-Tropez to Tropéziens, Senez to Senéziens, Morez to Moréziens, Lombez to Lombezians, and Luz-Saint-Sauveur to Luziens. Alas, Carluz becomes Carluciens; even worse, the inhabitants of Metz are Mèsois and those of Biarritz, Biarrots.

Towns ending in -G are exasperating. Bourg-En-Bresse, Cabourg, Cherbourg, Strasbourg and Phalsbourg all add E0IS, but Bourbourg is inhabited by Bourbouriens, Bourg is inhabited by Bourcais, and Bourg-Saint-Andéol boasts Bourguesans or Bourdaisiens. Towns and regions...
ending in -GNE don’t behave much better, dropping the final letter and adding AIS (Auvergne, Mortagne-Au-Perche), OIS (Compiègne, Digne), IENS (Aubagne to Aubanibis). Even worse, one finds Bretagne with Bretons, Champagne with Champenois, Bourgogne with Bourguignons, and Gascogne with Gascons.

As mentioned previously, towns ending in -E are very likely to drop this letter before taking an ending. But, as usual, there are exceptions: Vitré to Vitriéens or Vitréens, Corse to Corsés, Corte to Cortenais, Taulé to Taulésiens, Segré to Segréens, Neustrie to Neustriens, Mégare to Mégareens, Saintonge to Saintongeais, Maubeuge to Maubeugeois, Collioure to Colliourencs. Several variations of towns ending with -E have already been discussed under -N, -L, -M and -G; beyond these, it is hard to discern underlying rules for deciding which ending to use.

Towns ending in -ES - and France has many - always drop both letters before adding a suitable ending. (Did I say always? The inevitable exceptions occur: Ardres to Ardresiens, Alès to Alésiens, Arles to Arlésiens, and Fourmies to Fourmiesiens.) What ending to use is another matter. The odds are roughly three to two in favor of OIS over AIS (Thénes, Avranches, Chartres, Aigues-Mortes) and a host of other exceptions: Belvès to Belvéziens, Istres to Istrons, Salies-De-Béarn to Salisiens, Sallanches to Sallanchards, Ardes to Ardoisiens (a double ending?), Sabres to Sabrins or Sabrinois, Guîtres to Guîtrains, and Saulxures-Sur-Moselle to Saulxurons.

Towns ending in -NS generally drop the last letter before adding an ending; exceptions to this rule are Lens to Lensois and Nyons to Nyonsais. The ending usually added is (N)AIS or expansions such as Sens to Senoniens and Tonneins to Tonninguais. OIS is instead used by Pons to Pontois, Salins-Les-Bains to Salinois, Moulins to Moulinois, and Saint-Gaudens to Saint-Gaudinois. Residents of Samoëns are different, calling themselves Samoëtainss.

Towns ending in -US, -IS or -AS never drop the S before adding (N)AIS. However, Privadois is inhabited by Privados, and Auzois, by Auzois (no change).

The only other letter preceding -S is R, and here there is a mixed bag: no cancellation of S in Thouars to Thouarsais, Cahors to Cahorsins or Cahorsains, and Cuers to Cuersois, but cancellation of S in Manners to Mamertins, Lillers to Lillearois, Thiers to Thierinois, and Louviers to Lovériens.

It’s very hard to generalize about towns ending in -Y, the third letter that is generally dropped before adding an ending. A type collection: Vaillé-Sur-Aisne to Valliciens, Saint-Rémy-Sur-Durrolle to Saint-Rémois, Recuey-Sur-Ouche to Récéens, Poissy to Poissiais, Orly to Olysians, Nancy to Nancéliens, Montmorency to Montmorenciens, Vouvray to Vouvriens, Savenay to Savennaisiens, Sully-Sur-Loire to Sullinois, Rumilly to Rumiéiens, Saint-Péray to Saint-Péralais, Commercy to Commerciois, Le Faugnay to Faugnierains, Fumay to Fumaciens, Juigny-Le-Tertrre to Juignianiens, and Gavray to Gavriens. Note that many of these are amplifications of the basic AIS, OIS towns which Clamecyssais, Vitry, Foyens, and others.

Thus far, names for places are time to look for the inhabitants of the third the active:

* Aire-Sur-L’Adour
* Antibes
* Besançon
* Charlesville
* Charmes
* Châteaulin
* Longwy
* Lons-Le-Saunier
* Mézières
* Pézenas
* Pont-A-Mousson
* Pont-L’Evêque
* Rive-De-Gier
* Rodez
* Saint-Mihisien
* Saint-omer
* Saint-Rambervillers
* Saint-Yrieix
* Void
* Vouziers

Are residents of:

And, finally:

SPECIAL

Names

Names of Universal

place

chemical

Topics

rhyming

consistency;

Word

offers

for your
There are those towns which do not cancel Y: Gray to Graylois, Bernay to Bernayens, Clamecy to Clamecyois, Toucy to Toucyquois, Vichy to Vichysois, Vitry-le-François to Vitryats, Sainte-Foy-La-Grande to Sainte-Foyens, and Ivry-La-Bataille to Ivryens.

Thus far, this article has discussed reasonably well-behaved names for persons residing in a given town or region. It is now time to look at extraordinary specimens of Gallic illogic. The first column gives the name of the town, the second a "logical" name for the inhabitant based on the rules discussed above, and the third the actual name of the inhabitant.

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<td>Vouziers</td>
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Are residents of Songeons ('let us dream') Songeurs ('dreamers')? And, finally, whoever might come from Woëvre?

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