



[Minnesota Geographic Board.  
Records.](#)

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# Geography Onion Skin

## GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

### Contents:

1. Instructions and Summary of Work
2. County Lists for 52 Counties
3. Morainic Toponymy of Minnesota (extra)

E. Pleva

## SET-UP

The ideal set-up for research in geographic place names consists of the following units:

1. Card index file; data entered from recognized sources on card specially designed for geographic board's use.
2. County index lists.
3. Series of base maps, such as the 1936 Highway WPA Atlas, on which data is carefully entered with fine pen.
4. Card index bibliography dealing with sources, techniques, etc..

## DISPOSITION

## 1. Card Index File

- a. The card upon which geographic name data is entered has been devised and printed in quantity. This card was worked out by Messrs. Elegen, Larson, Babcock of the Historical Society and Fleva of the Conservation Department.
- b. The county index lists for 52 counties have been prepared by E. Fleva, Conservation Department. These lists, explained later, must be expanded and completed, and must become part of the records of the Board.
- c. The 1936 Atlas (WPA) prepared under supervision by the Highway Department should be used as the cartographic base. An attempt by E. Fleva to acquire a set of these maps for the Geographic Board proved fruitless, details later.
- d. All bibliographical information should be systematically catalogued. The items below merely suggest sources which should be investigated.
  - 1.) Upham and Sources suggested by Upham
  - 2.) Stennett
  - 3.) Gannett
  - 4.) Willard's Gazetteer of Lakes
  - 5.) Ralph's Gazetteer of Streams
  - 6.) Barber's Gazetteer of Root R. Valley
  - 7.) Gulkin
  - 8.) U. S. Geog. Board
  - 9.) Canadian Geog. Board
  - 10.) Natural History Survey & Sources Suggested
  - 11.) Brower
  - 12.) Glazier

- 13.) Verwyst
- 14.) Gilfillan
- 15.) Williamson
- 16.) Plat Books including Hixson
- 17.) County Maps
- 18.) WPA Atlas
- 19.) Mine Directories
- 20.) Boundary Survey
- 21.) U.S.G.S. maps and folios
- 22.) MGS Reports
- 23.) plus newspapers, county histories, magazine files
- 24.) Place name notations in
  - a.) New York Times Index
  - b.) Reader's Guide to Per. Lit.
  - c.) International Guide
  - d.) Educ. Index
  - e.) Soc. Science Abstracts

#### PROGRESS REPORT and SUGGESTIONS

1. Card Index File: A WPA project is now working at the Foote-Schultz on this phase of the problem. The sponsor of this project is the Historical Society.
2. County index lists should be organized under the following headings:
  - Townships
  - Incorporated places
  - Other places (civil)
  - Streams
  - Lakes
  - Railways

Farms

Streets and Roads

Natural Features such as hills, regions, valleys, mounds, caves, etc.

Artificial Features such as cemeteries, additions, buildings, parks, monuments, etc.

Geological formations

Mines, quarries, and wells.

Note: A given name may be perpetuated in several ways.

(Example: Burns Creek, Burns Valley, Burns Park, and Burns Lake, may all be referents to a certain

Farmer Burns. Care must be exercised in listing each toponymical expression under its several categories.

In this case, Burns Creek will be listed under Streams, Burns Valley under Natural Features, Burns Parks under Artificial Features, and Burns Lake under Lakes. In case of doubt, enter under all possibilities.

The lists prepared by Mr. Pleva serve as suggestive outlines.

Whoever continues this work should study these lists before continuing. Upon perusal, the objective of preparing these lists becomes obvious. In final form all entries should be entered alphabetically within the individual categories.

The Abbreviations used in preparing these lists are as follows:

1930 - Minor Civil Divisions of the U.S. Map Census Bureau - herewith submitted.

1937H- Minnesota Highway Department maps

1884G)

1888G) Minnesota Natural History Survey Vols. I & II

1928W- Willard's Gazetteer of Meandered Lakes

1900P)

1907P) Refer to plat books with date of publication -

1880P) Minnesota Hist. Libr.

etc. )

1936 At - WPA Atlas

1924B- Surber's Gazetteer of streams in Root River Valley

1912R- Ralph's Gazetteer of streams and rivers

(Numbers after code letter indicates page.)

3. An attempt was made by Pleva to secure a set of maps commonly referred to as the WPA Atlas. Of the three departments responsible (by legislative act) for the welfare of the Geographic Board (i.e. Historical Society, Conservation Department, and Highway Department) the Conservation Department and the Historical Society alone have borne the responsibility of the Board's activities. This situation is acute upon realization that the Board as such has no funds for operation. The Historical Society is sponsoring a WPA project for part of the work while the Conservation Department employed E. Pleva part of the summer of 1938 to line up another phase of the work. It was assumed that the Highway Department would donate a copy of the Atlas, since the Atlas was published through WPA auspices by that department. Despite letters and phone calls by Mr. Guy Cravens, Deputy Conservation Commissioner, and a personal visit by Mr. E. Pleva, the donation of the Atlas to the Geographic Board was not forthcoming.

As soon as an acceptable series of base maps is available, write E. Pleva, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada, for instructions concerning this vital phase of the work.

4. It is suggested the card index bibliographical files be set up as follows:
- a. Library usage acceptable for lay-out of cards
  - b. Size 3" x 8" preferred
  - c. Use white cards for items dealing with general technique, theory, or popular discussion.
  - d. Use salmon cards for gazetteers, dictionaries, cartographic sources.
  - e. Use light blue for anything relative to Minnesota place names.

- f. Light blue takes precedence over white and salmon. Salmon takes precedence over white. When in doubt always use the preferred color.
- e. The bibliographical index should cover the field of toponymy (Ortsnamen), not merely place names in Minnesota.

FINAL WORDS

1. WITH THE FOUR LOGICAL WAYS SUGGESTED OF CATALOGUING DATA, ANY PROBLEM DEALING WITH MINNESOTA PLACE NAMES CAN BE CUT INTO FROM ANY ANGLE.

PROCEDURE FOR OFFICIALLY CHANGING NAMES OF LAKES AND STREAMS

1. Any 15 or more legal voters of a county may petition the County Board to change the name of any body of water within that county.
2. The petition must contain the following:
  - (a) Location of lake, stream or other body of water by section, township, range.
  - (b) Name or names by which body of water is now known. (If unnamed, such fact shall be stated).
  - (c) The proposed name.
  - (d) Reason for considering the proposed name necessary or advisable.
  - (e) Each person signing the petition must set out his place of residence after his signature.
3. The petition must be filed with the auditor of the county.
4. The auditor shall present the petition to the County Board.
5. The County Board shall by order fix the day (more than 30 days hence) and the place of hearing. (The place of hearing may be held at any convenient place within the county.)
6. The County Board must serve notice of the time and place of hearing by the following manner:
  - (a) At least three weeks notice of the time and place of the hearing in the official newspaper.
  - (b) Notification of hearing to the State Geographic Board.
  - (c) Personal notification of chairman of any village board or mayor of any city within or adjoining the limits of which political sub-division any such body of water involved in the hearing may be located. (Such official on whom notice is served shall notify his respective Board or Council, which will take such action as is deemed to be for the public interest).
7. (On the day of the hearing, any legal voters in the county may file an answer to the petition, setting out in concise language why the prayer of the petition should not be granted).
8. Petitioners shall give a bond, approved by the County attorney, conditioned upon the full payment of all reasonable expenses which the county or counties shall incur in such proceeding.
9. (If the lake or stream lies partly in another county or counties, joint action shall be taken by the counties involved).
10. The County clerk shall forward a certified copy of the County Board resolution of approval or disapproval, to the State Geographic Board.

(Form 1)

Form 2

Form  
3

11. The State Geographic Board will approve or disapprove the County Board resolution, and will forward a copy of the resolution to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.
12. Approval by the State Geographic Board and notification of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names will assure the use of the proposed name or names on all future maps on which the place and feature names have official standing.

PROCEDURE

Send petition and procedure forms to person or persons desiring to initiate action.

After action by County Board, present resolution to State Board.

If State Board endorses resolution:

Notify USBGN

Notify County Auditor of USBGN action

Return endorsed resolution of County Board to County Auditor for filing in the office of the Register of Deeds

Advise state departments, local units of government, and map-making agencies what the name henceforth is to be.

Policy--from Minutes, December 2, 1940

1. Names recommended by the U. S. Forest Service shall be reviewed by the State Geographic Board, and those accepted by the board shall be submitted to the boards of county commissioners in the counties concerned for local approval. The names approved by the local authorities shall then be submitted by the State Geographic Board to the U. S. Board on Geographic Names.

2. Name changes that originate locally shall be submitted to the State Geographic Board for consideration after local approval has been obtained through hearings conducted by the boards of county commissioners. The State Geographic Board shall then submit approved names to the U. S. Board on Geographic Names.

3. The State Geographic Board may initiate action by submitting to the county boards for their consideration names upon which it desires to determine local opinion.

From Minutes, June 18, 1942

The question was raised whether agencies of the state might not be called upon to perform for areas outside of United States forests a function comparable to that rendered by the forest service within the limits of the national forests of Minnesota. It was suggested by Dr. Strunk that the game wardens of Minnesota and other employees of the Department of Conservation could very easily undertake this work within the areas assigned to them and that action so initiated would go far toward eliminating unnecessary duplication of names and toward giving satisfactory names to hitherto unnamed features.

MINNESOTA STATE GEOGRAPHIC BOARD  
St. Paul, Minnesota

Procedure for naming or changing names of lakes and streams in accordance with the provisions of chapters 35 and 63. Session Laws of 1937.

1. Prepare a petition to the Board of County Commissioners of the county in which the body of water is located and in which you reside. The petition must contain:
  - (a) The location of the lake or stream by section, township and range.
  - (b) The name, if it has one, by which the body of water is now known.
  - (c) The name which it is desired to give the body of water.
  - (d) The reasons why the change is desired, and why the new name is appropriate.
  - (e) The signatures of 15 legal voters residing in the county. Signers must also give their addresses.
2. Present the petition to the County Auditor. He will require you to post a bond to cover the cost of proceedings before action can be taken by the Board of County Commissioners.
3. The County Auditor will present the petition to the Board of County Commissioners who will set a date for a public hearing on the petition.
4. The Board of County Commissioners, after hearing the petition, will adopt a resolution approving or disapproving the name, and forward certified copies of the resolution, petition, and proceedings in connection therewith to the State Geographic Board. No name which has been in use for forty years or more can be changed in this manner, however.
5. The State Geographic Board will review the proceedings. If the Board approves the name it will endorse the resolution of the Board of County Commissioners, and notify the United States Board on Geographical Names whose acceptance of the name will make it official nationally.
6. The State Geographic Board will notify the County Auditor of the action of the United States Board of Geographic Names, and return the resolution of the Board of County Commissioners to him for filing in the office of the Register of Deeds. The State Geographic Board will issue a proclamation to advise the departments of the state and the local units of government what the name of the feature henceforth is to be.

MINNESOTA STATE GEOGRAPHIC BOARD  
Office of the Secretary

HISTORICAL BUILDING - CAPITOL SQUARE  
St. Paul, Minnesota

Procedure for naming or changing names of lakes and streams, in accordance with provisions of Chapters 35 and 63, Minnesota Session Laws of 1937.

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1. Address petition to Board of County Commissioners of county in which body of water is located. Petition should be signed only by residents or voters of county named. No name which has been in use forty years or more may be changed. Petition must contain:
  - (a) Location of lake or stream by section, township and range.
  - (b) Present name or names, if any.
  - (c) New name desired.
  - (d) Reason why change is desired, and why suggested name is appropriate.
  - (e) Signatures and addresses of 15 legal voters residing in county.
2. Present petition to County Auditor. He will require you to post bond to cover cost of proceedings before action can be taken by County Commissioners.
3. County Auditor will present petition to Board of County Commissioners, who will set a date for public hearing on petition.
4. Board of County Commissioners, after hearing petition, will adopt a resolution approving or disapproving of same, and will forward certified copies of resolution, petition and proceedings in connection therewith to the State Geographic Board, above address.
5. State Geographic Board will review proceedings. If name is approved, this board will endorse the resolution of the Board of County Commissioners and notify the United States Board on Geographical Names, whose acceptance of the name will make it official nationally.
6. The State Geographic Board will notify the County Auditor of the action of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, and will return the resolution of the Board of County Commissioners to him for filing in the office of the Register of Deeds. The State Geographic Board will issue a proclamation advising state and local units of government as to the adopted name of lake or stream.

MINNESOTA STATE GEOGRAPHIC BOARD

St. Paul, Minnesota

February 4, 1938

To the Chairman of the  
Board of County Commissioners:

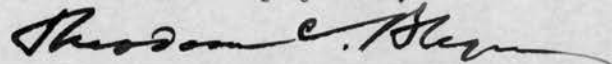
The 1937 legislature, as you probably know, created a State Geographic Board, which is to act as the agent of the state of Minnesota in all matters relating to the names of lakes, streams, places, and other geographic features of the state. The board is composed of the Commissioner of Conservation, the Commissioner of Highways, and the Superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society. It has been organized and is ready to carry out the duties prescribed for it in the law.

Within your county, there may be geographic features which have no generally accepted names, or which bear the same names as other similar features in the state. You undoubtedly are interested in correcting this situation so far as it seems possible to do so, and the state board will be very glad to have your co-operation in an effort to improve matters.

The law prescribes the method by which naming and renaming can be accomplished. For your convenience I am enclosing a copy of Chapter 35 of the session laws of Minnesota for 1937, which gives the rules for local procedure, and a copy of chapter 63 of the same laws, which established the State Geographic Board. I am enclosing also some suggested forms for your guidance in conducting hearings in regard to changing names of places or to naming any which have not heretofore been named. These are of course intended only as suggestions and for your convenience. Perhaps you already have worked out forms of your own for this purpose. You will note that the endorsement of the State Geographic Board is needed before any name changes or new names can be considered final. May I suggest that in submitting names to this board you accompany them with copies of the petitions and other evidence as to the advisability of the action.

You will notice that one of the functions of the State Geographic Board is to prepare and publish an official state dictionary of geographic names, and it is to the interest of the people in your county that the place names in the county should be correctly represented. The board wishes, so far as possible, to have the official names conform to local preferences. For that reason we urge you to act as soon as it is convenient and possible to do so.

Sincerely yours,



Theodore C. Blegen  
Secretary, Minnesota  
State Geographic Board

Larsen to B. F. Pax, Mankato, Jan. 17, 1940

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Chapter 35 of the Session Laws of 1937, which defines the procedure to be followed in changing the name of a lake or stream by petitioning the board of county commissioners in the county wherein the body of water lies, provides that "no name of any lake, river, stream or other body of water, which name has existed for forty (40) years shall be changed under the provision of this act." Lake Washington falls under this provision, for it was named by the government surveyors in the 1850's.

The act establishing the State Geographic Board (chapter 63 of the Session Laws of 1937), however, under section 2, paragraph c, empowers the state board, in co-operation with the county boards and with their approval, to change the names of geographic features in order to eliminate duplication of names within the state. Since Meeker and Mahnomon counties each have a Washington Lake, it would be permissible under this law to change the names.

The procedure for you to follow under the circumstances is to forward to the State Geographic Board a petition containing:

- (a) The location of the lake by section, township, and range.
- (b) The name by which the lake is now known.
- (c) The name which it is desired to give the lake.
- (d) The reasons why the change is desired, and why the new name is appropriate.
- (e) The signatures of 15 legal voters residing in the county. Signers must also give their addresses.

When the petition is received by the State Geographic Board, the county boards of Blue Earth and Le Sueur counties will be asked to hold a joint hearing on the question. After the hearing is held the state board will act upon the matter.

I am enclosing a blank petition which you may wish to use.

#### STEPS IN PROCESSING MINNESOTA GEOGRAPHIC BOARD DECISIONS:

1. When a petition to change the name of a feature comes in, check to see that the steps outlined in the law have been followed -- hearing held, two certified copies of county board's resolution at hand, etc. -- and to see whether the names of signers of the petition live in the IMMEDIATE area of the feature to be changed.
2. Do research in the board's records, the historical society's old map collections, and those in the department of highways and waters to make up a list of all the various names and the various spellings of them by which the lake is or has been called. Be sure the location given is correct.
3. Check the board's records to see whether the new name suggested is duplicated in the state, especially in the immediate area. Consider whether or not the name suggested is suitable to the area. If it is not, be prepared to tell the board why it is not.
4. Check to see if the existing lake name has been used for over 40 years. If it has, the Minnesota board does not legally have the power to change it under the present (1962) law, but it can consider the matter and forward its recommendation to the U. S. Geographic Board.
5. Present the case to the Minnesota Board. If the Board approves, each member signs a certified carbon of the county board's resolution (or the petition, if two copies are available). The signed carbon is then sent to the Auditor of the county concerned, instructing him to file it with the register of deeds.
6. Prepare the minutes of the state board's meeting and send a carbon to each member. File the original in the Board's files.
7. Enter the Minnesota decision in the three sets of card records and notify the other state agencies (notably conservation and highway) concerned.
8. Prepare the case in the form used in U. S. Decision lists and forward it to Mr. J. O. Kilmartin, Domestic Names Secretary, U. S. Board on Geographic Names, Department of the Interior, for action.
9. When the U.S. Board approves the decision, enter it in the appropriate card records.

The Minnesota Board also has the power to initiate action to change the names of geographic features. In such cases, do the research outlined in steps 2-4 above, prepare a petition (samples may be found in the files for Cook and Lake County), and send it to the county board. (See minutes of December 2, 1940, meeting authorizing this procedure.) After the county board approves the state board's petition, the steps are the same as 7-9 above. In such cases, the state board will give tentative approval to the change, subject to the approval of the county board involved.