Christian County Athenaeum Society

"What's in a Name?"

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January 4, 2018

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The places we go; the people we meet. The places we don't

experience and the people that seem to pass us by going unnoticed nor

introduced. The origin of their personality is either instantly and/or

through thorough observation, dissected and judged or dismissed as an

immediate afterthought. What seems to catch our eye in relation to

the two is merely up to our psyche that peeks our interest. For

instance, are you immediately drawn to a Podunk town full of country

roads, very traditionalist in nature, and the simple forms of life erring

on the side of caution? Or, does your taste buds yearn for exotic

places, Caribbean beaches, and cultures that take you far from Podunk?

Are you drawn to people with Type A personalities, extrovert to the

max, or do you pair mostly with Type B personalities who are perfectly

content with taking a back seat approach to living? Regardless of the

nature of your personality in terms of your traveling or people pairing

preferences, how often do you judge a book by its cover? Is it appearance? Is in the nature of the relationship? Or, is it simply a name? Can you judge a person or place simply on what you've heard about that place or person? Sure, you can – it's merely human nature. We try not to as respectful and dignified members of the human race and more importantly, members of the Christian County Athenaeum Society. But, we do, indeed, tend to judge on what we merely hear and what we seem to perceive on the surface.

Christopher – Obviously, the name that was chosen for me over 40 years ago to carry with me for the rest of my days. Unless, of course, I operate off of the premise, "New Year, New Me," start my rap career, and, thus, change my name to Snoopy C at the Christian County Court House to start 2018 off with a bang. Our parents certainly have either a single or a multitude of reasons as to why they chose your birth name. My middle name, for example, Neal – I've always hated it for a number of reasons but mainly for the fact that karaoke is just not the same when "Sweet Caroline" is being played. Yes, indeed, my mother

named me for Neil Diamond. Where Christopher (meaning "bearing Christ") came from is a mystery to me – I guess the two names sounded great together. I tend to disagree, but that will have to be reserved for another paper at a later date. So, tonight gentlemen, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, fellow presenter, and honorable members of the Athenaeum society, I present to you a paper and program entitled – "What's in a name?"

William, Edward, Charles, and James are just four that come to mind within members of our Athenaeum Society. I'm sure it's obvious that those four names are synonymous with prominent men of our generation – William Jefferson Clinton, Edward Van Halen, Prince Charles, and James Dean – I'm almost positive is where your mind was driven – Again, another paper, for another time indeed. Or, throughout the annuls of history, those four names mean something different for you based on their personalities, accomplishments, or whom you've personally known by name. Regardless, somehow they received their namesake and will/or have carried it with them until the end of time

rears its head. What's in a name is simple; yet can be complex. People and places are named for a multitude of reasons as suggested earlier. How we perceive them on the surface is most certainly up to us.

With that said, let's take a journey together – William, Edward, Charles, and James and others that are willing to take the ride – across the state of Kentucky. Here we sit or stand for that matter in the "Dimple of the Pennyroyal or Pennyrile," pronounced either way or whatever way sounds best to you rolled off of your tongue. Good old, Christian County, Kentucky. Hopkinsville, the County Seat, or otherwise known by locals and those throughout the region as "Hoptown." As many of you may or may not know the origin behind "Hoptown," let me either refresh your memory or introduce you to what's in the name. Hopkinsville was originally named Elizabeth in 1798 for the wife of the first settler, Bartholomew T. Wood. To avoid confusion with Elizabethtown, the new name was changed to Hopkinsville in 1804 to honor Gen. Samuel Hopkins, a Revolutionary War officer who, in 1799, became the first judge of the first Henderson Co. Court and later served

in the Kentucky legislature and US Congress. "Hoptown" – what's in the name, besides Edgar Cayce, Ferrell's burgers, old Bird Dog, the Rotary Auction, or a quaint downtown that has been recently revitalized just to name a few? Back in the 1890s, Hopkinsville and Christian County were the only legally voted wet city and county on the L&N Railroad between Evansville and Nashville. Tradition has it as the railway coaches would approach Hopkinsville, the passengers would encounter of the conductor "How soon would we be to Hopkinsville? I want to hop of and get a drink." Those of you that like the finer spirits would probably agree that a late night Ferrell's burger creates a one-two punch after partaking such. So, where are you from, "Hoptown!" You've said it; I've said it...proudly. Hoptown.

From Hoptown, let's venture out to ten uniquely named places across the state. Some of which, of course, have more or less to offer than a delicious Ferrell's burger and a warm bowl of chili. Although, it's hard to imagine a match more perfect than that. From here we will travel to the far west to Ballard County to an area named Monkey's

Eyebrow. This hamlet was on Sand Ridge fifteen and a half miles of Wickliffe. It was settled before the turn of the century by brothers John and Dodge Ray, but never had its own post office. The most plausible story refers to the crescent-shaped elevation called Beeler Hill behind Ray's store, the tall grass growing from which seemed to resemble someone's imagination, the eyebrows of a monkey. Another account suggests there is a traditional rivalry between Monkey's Eyebrow and nearby Needmore. Between them lay a brush covered directly under which was Ray's store. From the Needmore side, the store and Ray's home, directly across the road, seemed to resemble eyes and the brush looked like eyebrows. It is said that a man by the name of Luther Childress, from the vicinity of Ray's store, used to shop at Needmore instead and when asked why he didn't patronize the neighbor's place reported, "I ain't buyin' no grub at no place that looks like a Monkey's eyebrow." A WPA researcher was always finding fault with the place and its other residents and seemed fond of reviling both with such gratuitous remarks as "this place is only fit for a bunch of monkeys" or

"this place is populated with monkeys and their eyebrows look exactly like the brows of monkeys and they belong to such class." For some odd reason, people embraced it, and, thus, the Monkey's Eyebrow community adopted its official name. I suppose it's the same premise as, "If you can't beat em, join em."

From the experience of Monkey's Eyebrow, let's head back east; through Christian County into a neighboring county we are no strangers to, Todd. The home of the L&R Soda Shop. And, according to most residents, the Jefferson Davis Monument. Tyewhoppety – interesting name to say the least. However, as Monkey's Eyebrow, the name was coined due to the "judging a book by its cover" method as suggested in the opening of this paper. This rural settlement is on KY 181, 14 ½ miles north of Elkton. It has been suggested that the name refers to an unkempt, ill-appearing person, but some people believe it to be Shawnee for "place of no return" transferred from a nearby stream, and implying a "place from which it is easy to go forward as to return."

Nevertheless, I think we put it on our map for curiosity sake and at least stop by the Soda Shop on the way for a chocolate malt and a chilidog.

Traveling a bit further on our journey, we will stumble upon a town in Grayson County. This settlement and post office is now located at the junction of KY 88 and 479, 12 miles southeast of Leitchfield. This place came to be known as Wax. The name Wax was not applied until the establishment of the post office on Jan. 15, 1891. According to locals, a postal inspector gave the name after he observed the local storekeeper, in whose establishment the post office was to be located, weighing beeswax. An account by the practice of a postal carrier who announced the delivery of cartons of chewing gum to the local store by calling out "one for Wax Town." Residents, frustrated by the Post Office Department's rejection of a number of suggested names finally took the advice of a postal inspector to "give us a name that will stick." Well, it stuck, and Wax was submitted and approved.

As we continue our trek east, we arrive in a once thriving 19th century village located in Barren County, on the present KY 839, 10 ½

miles southeast of Glasgow. Nobob. And, it sound's and was derived as if you might imagine. The name was first applied on the creek on which it was located, a branch of Skaggs Creek. The creek was named for Robert (Bob) Todd, a hunter for a party of Virginia military land grant surveyors that made a camp near the site of the future settlement. According to tradition, Todd failed to return to camp one night, and for days, his companions searched for him only to return each night to report, "No Bob!" The stream was often called Flathead Creek, allegedly for "a man who had his head flattened when he was thrown into the creek" by a power mill explosion. The Nobob post office was established on April 28, 1854, but is no longer in operation. Even if there's nothing there left to prove its existence, the creek, the rock, and the story have me a bit intrigued to visit.

Continuing eastward bound, we will stop in Pulaski County to delve into some of the finer spirits. Ironically, most of Pulaski County is known for being a dry county but it recent years have adopted a "moist" label. However, if you are thirsty, we could possibly stop by

Somerset. But around the turn of the 1900s, producing and selling moonshine was the staple of a community called Jugornot. They would charge one price if customers brought their own containers but a little more if they did not. So, when someone came to buy he would be asked, "Jug OR not?" Another tradition of Jugornot, refers to the common practice of rewarding voters with whiskey. You would be asked if you wanted a jug or not, and it you voted the "right" way you'd get your just or not otherwise. Over time, of course, it became known as Jugornot. Legend has it that a problem arose during one election when no one thought to bring the whiskey to the local voting place. When someone stated that the election could not be held since there was no jug, the sheriff ruled, "we'll have the election, jug or not." Apparently, they were pretty sold on the idea of jugs so bring one along in the event you do indeed visit.

Nearing the latter part of our journey, we focus our efforts to Whoopflarea, a staple in Owsley County. 14 miles south/southeast of Booneville. I would be remised if I didn't at least ride through with my

90s t-shirt exclaiming, "Whoop There It Is" when we arrive. This curious name was first applied to a range of hills, then to a pioneer settlement, and later to the post office that was established in 1931, that served this inaccessible area. The name "Whoop" was derived from the whoop of owls, and perhaps, of Indians but has since inspired a host of explanatory accounts. Hunters camping there heard the hoot of an owl; frightened, they scattered in all directions. Over the years, the owl became "some animal making screaming noises" or even a "haunt." One account describes a man named Larry who was separated from his companions. They spent several days looking for him and would literally, "whoop for Larry." Larry, by trade, was a moonshiner whose customers "would come to the head of the hollow and "whoop for Larry." Larry's ghost has been rumored to continue to "whoop for Larry" to this day. I'm certainly willing to drive through the area, window cracked – mind you, whoop, and just see what would happen.

Speaking of remote areas of Kentucky, a trip east would not be complete without a backwoods flare. Leslie County (insert Deliverance theme song here) is the home of a post office establishment that was moved to the mouth of a creek around 1924 – Thousand Sticks, Kentucky. Two accounts have been offered for the name, which has identified stream, mountain, post office, school, church, and even a newspaper: A mountaineer from the earliest of times applied the term sticks to the trunks of his great trees. Settlers on this creek, found hundreds of ancient trees that had died of old age. There were so many of them it was called the "Thousand Sticks Creek." Others recall the tale of the early travelers who came upon the remains of a forest fire – the "straight, charred stumps of trees" which resembled nothing less than a thousand sticks. As Paul Harvey would say, "And now you know, the rest of the story."

Keeping within the confines of Leslie County, we must visit another jewel named Cutshin. More than likely, the name merely suggests a stream that is difficult to cross. There are two accounts for

the name suggests similar stories for its origin. Several traditional theories of the name seem to refer to some unidentified traveler or hunter who fell while crossing the turbulent waters of the stream in a flood, cutting his shin on a jagged rock, or to an early settler on the stream who cut his shin with an ax while felling timber for his new home. Nevertheless, as the William Turner theory suggests, never ruin a good story with the truth. The post office closed in 1996 – located 7 ½ miles southeast of Hyden.

Rounding out the end of our eastward journey across Kentucky, our last stop will focus on two communities in Knott County. The first village we shall visit is centered on KY 80 at the mouth of Ball Branch of Jones Fork of Right Beaver Creek, 6 ½ miles northeast of Hindman. The post office was established here on July 31, 1916, some two miles up the fork with Ollie Gibson as postmaster and named for "Mousie" Gibson. The post office was later moved to its present location but retained the name, Mousie, Kentucky. According to Mrs. Gibson, her grandfather W.J. Martin suggested her own name, since she had an

older sister named Kitty. You certainly can't make this stuff up –

remember previous paper about Scrotie? All truth – no bunk. Mousie,

however, is not an uncommon female name given in eastern Kentucky.

We must claim that we found at least one Mousie we met along the

way. Trekking from Mousie, within the area is our last stop along the

intriguing name trail of Kentucky, Pippa Passes. Home of Alice Lloyd

College, it extends northeast along the upper reaches of Caney Creek

for about a mile from a point 4 miles east of Hindman. When Alice

Geddes Lloyd of Boston established Caney Creek Junior College here in

1923, among the groups from whom she solicited funds were the

Robert Browning Societies of New England. They agreed also to build

the local post office and are said to have suggested the name for the

poet heroine, the devout and simple mill girl Pippa, who as she passes

through her town on New Year's Day, innocently touches the lives of

those who hear her songs of joy and fulfillment.

The over 400 mile span from west to east certainly provides an interesting array of established communities, some of which still exist and others where only the terrain remains. This merely scratches the surface in terms of place names that are interesting across the state, let alone spanning the nation and world. I would be interested to hear of some of the places you've been and/or heard of that may produce an interesting story in the comment portion of tonight's program. Or, you can simply share how you obtained the name in which you carry. As interesting as names may be, character and personality most definitely defines the person or place and it's up to us to decide what it beyond the surface. So, who's with me? Ready to take a trip across the state to find out?