

PLACE-NAMES OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK: LANGUAGE, HISTORY, POLITICS, CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN ROCHESTER’S NEIGHBORHOODS

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Abstract

Place-names, or toponyms, are “born in the interaction between people, the linguistic community, and the environment” (Ainiala 2016: 371). They are an apparatus for connecting with the world around us. This paper analyzes the place-names of the neighborhoods of Rochester, New York. Place-names are a unique set of data that expose multiple layers of a language and its speakers. Formal linguistic data intersects with historical linguistics and sociolinguistics to reveal cultural patterns of a geographic region. Modern Rochester place-names originate as early as the eighteenth century with colonial settlement and as recently as this past decade in the twenty-first century. We can assume these names reflect an important component to Rochester society and identity, since “people give names to referents they consider worth naming.” (Ainiala 2016: 371) Rochester’s place-names are indicative of the historical, cultural, or political prominence given to these neighborhoods.

1 Introduction

The study of names has existed for centuries, taken up by linguists and non-linguists alike. Centuries of corpora document accounts of names. The Old Babylonian *eduba*, the earliest documented “institution of learning,” had in its curriculum Sumerian vocabulary lists that included “(the names of) the animals living in the steppe” and “(the names of) artisans” (Sjöberg 1976:159,163). Modern name databases tend to be concentrated in Anglophone countries. The most comprehensive name collection is the English Place-Name Society, which began in 1923 as a county-by-county survey and is today housed digitally by the University of Nottingham. Similar

practices are found in Scotland (Scottish Place Name Survey, 1951: University of Edinburgh), Australia (Australian National Placenames Survey, 1970: Placenames Australia (Inc.)), and Ireland (Placenames Database of Ireland, 2007: Fiontar & Scoil na Gaelige).

1.1 Toponymy as an Emerging Discipline

Modern linguistics has a lackluster relationship with the study of names. *Name: A Journal of Onomastics* began circulation in 1953. Vol.1:1 declares the purpose of the journal be devoted to “research in the etymology, origin, meaning, and application of all classes of names” (Nuessel 2013:5). German linguist Hans Walther linked names with society as “socio-onomastics” in 1971. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, a Scottish-German linguist, suggested the term “onomasticon” in 1978 as a way to distinguish the part of an individual’s lexicon where names reside.

In the twenty-first century we see attempts at correcting this academic lapse. Recent linguists have criticized the early relegation of names to “taxonomies and etymologies” that only filled a “small corner of linguistics” (Madden 2018:1601). Name research can be categorized as “salvage-focused” like that found in the UK and Australia, “cognitively directed ethnophysiography” that has little to do with the rest of the linguistic domain, or “empiricisation of landscape terminology” for the benefit of governments (Nash 2015:230). Tent (2016) laments that “few papers concentrate on pattern-analysis of groups of toponyms.”

Several linguistic pockets now recognize names as beneficial to “the basics of language analysis,” suggesting that an entire scientific study of language can be accomplished “solely through name data” (Mackenzie 2018:295). *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (2016) is the first compendium of articles and essays demonstrating the new roles that names can play in linguistic research. It explores the intra-disciplinary contribution that names make to the linguistic domain, including socio-onomastics (Tehri 2016), name and identity (Aldrin 2016), historical linguistics (Coates 2016; Fellow-Jensen 2016), and toponymy (Hough 2016). It also makes preliminary attempts to formalize a methodology in both collecting and archiving place-name data.

1.2 Approaching Rochester Place-Names

The surge of toponymic interest over the past two decades is not isolated to linguistics. Place-names are suited to belong to a multitude of disciplines due to the nature of their referent: places, which exist in and interact with multiple layers of the physical and social world. Taylor (2016) identifies “the fundamental challenge to the toponymist,” which is to satisfy the needs of onomastics, archaeology, linguistics, lexicography, history, geography, national history, and realms of social, judicial, agricultural, industrial, and genealogical interest. Toponymy also has the privilege of mass appeal, enhancing “enterprises, both academic and lay” (Taylor 2016:69).

It is the goal of this paper to satisfy many, though not all, of those cross-disciplinary needs. The overall approach is linguistic, starting with raw data and slowly introducing other disciplines as we progress. Section 3 explores grammatical patterns and trends. Section 4 includes history, geography, and genealogy as the semantic domain is explored. Section 5 opens the doors to the social, judicial, and industrial realms, and explores the relationship between name and identity in Rochester.

2 Methodology

There is currently no single agreed-upon formal approach to the collection and analysis of toponyms. There is a general consensus that texts should be used for historical data and in-person interviews should be recorded and documented for how the data is used in natural speech. This project adopted a four-pronged approach to data collection and documentation.

2.1 Name Collection

The first step was to define the data set. This study is focused on Rochester neighborhoods, and so the data set must be a comprehensive list of neighborhood names. Sources were both formal to informal. Formal sources include the City of Rochester website (www.cityofrochester.gov), several local real estate and rental companies, local newspapers such as the *Democrat & Chronicle*, and Google Maps. These sources leaned prescriptive, claiming some social or political authority over the toponym's (name) existence and usage, as well as an authority over the referent's (neighborhood) description and boundaries.

Informal sources include the crowd-sourced RocWiki website (rocwiki.org); the Rochester, New York subReddit, where users choose a 'flair' to declare their neighborhood of residence or association (reddit.com/r/Rochester/); and Twitter, where one can search by a word or phrase, such as #RochesterNeighborhoods, to see 'threads' of discussion (www.twitter.com/explore). These sources were highly descriptive and demonstrated nuanced uses of the place-names.

Consultants also provided insight for the data set. Some consultants were given a list of all the potential place-names used by online sources and asked to identify those they were familiar with. Other consultants were given a blank map of the City of Rochester with neighborhood boundaries and asked to label each boundary with the name they would use for that area. All regularly used place-names in their natural text data when asked open-ended questions about their experiences in Rochester. More information on consultant data can be found in Section 2.3.

The toponyms acquired from each source were cross-referenced. Toponyms that only appeared in one source were eliminated. Nickname toponyms used interchangeably with the formal name were included. In all, a total of 61 unique toponyms were found for this study.

2.2 Historical Analysis

Historical information was almost exclusively found in texts. Formal histories written on varying aspects of Rochester life regularly include references to places within the city. The Rochester Historical Society, founded in 1860, produces regular publications with snippets of local history (Monroe County Library System: libraryweb.org). The City Historian also publishes the biannual *Rochester History* to offer in-depth essays on a cultural or political moment in Rochester's past (Monroe County Library System: libraryweb.org).

Newspapers were also examined for historical name usage. The *Democrat & Chronicle* is completely digitally accessible. With a paid account one can search every print back to the paper's origin in 1833 (democratandchronicle.newspapers.com).

Additionally, the Library of Congress was consulted for historical land maps (www.loc.gov). Maps were generally produced by land surveyors for government and commercial purposes. They offer an account of regional names for a given moment in time.

2.3 Consultant Documentation

Consultants were solicited through established neighborhood associations. These were approached via email and Facebook messages, depending on the contact information provided for each association.

In all, seven consultants provided ten hours of video recorded data. Each consultant was met with individually, for a minimum of one hour. These interviews were mainly open-ended conversations about their neighborhood of reference, including their knowledge of historical information and their personal perceptions about the name. They were also asked to provide short, personal descriptions of other Rochester neighborhoods.

There were additional consultants who did not wish to be formally recorded, but were willing to provide information via email and phone call. This information was not included in the formal analysis for this project.

2.4 Archive Formation

A map is the most evident way to display place-name data; since place-names are geographically rooted, it is advantageous to show their geographic spread. This medium also allows for an easy user interface that both researchers and the public (including consultants) can readily interact with.

The data for this project is displayed using ArcGIS. This program allows a new layer to be created over the base map, allowing for neighborhood boundaries to be visible. It also has access to hundreds of other relevant map. This allows users to compare the present-day map with historical plat maps, demonstrating both name change and neighborhood geographic change. The map is currently housed by the University of Rochester (<https://urochester.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=46f649ffed7e4d879d5bc090e8b88cd9>).

3 Grammatical Patterns in Rochester Place-Names

All names function as a subset of a larger grammar. This is true for an individual's internal grammar (Nicolaisen's "onomasticon," referred to Section 1.1), as well as for a collective speaker group's shared grammar (such as the residents of Rochester, New York). Names are a part of language, and thus, "like language, have structure." The names in a language unconsciously abide by the generative system of that language and "conform to rules and patterns," despite speakers "never having been explicitly taught [the rules and patterns]." This means that names are candidates to be "analyzed scientifically" (Mackenzie 2018:296).

Place-names demonstrate more diversity in their grammatical structures and patterns than personal names. Personal names are highly uniform; apart from differing cultural origins and phonetic distinction, personal names are limited in their constituency and phrase structure. The

place-names of one geographic area are highly unique and demonstrate a wide breadth of grammatical structures. This section explores the diverse patterns in Rochester place-names.

3.1 Elements, Morphemes and Inflection

Names function on a slightly elevated semantic plane from the rest of a language, due to their novel creation from pre-existing words along with their semiotic function. Hough (2016) presents the term ‘elements’ to distinguish the grammatical components of a place-name. There are three types of elements, per Hough’s definition: ‘generic’ elements, which are the initial element in all place-names; ‘specific’ elements, which modify the generic element; and ‘affix’ elements, which are used to distinguish between otherwise homonymic place-names or fulfill an exclusively grammatical function (the former is not found in Rochester neighborhood place-names, and all affixal elements are exclusively grammatical in nature) (Hough 2016:87-88). Single-element place-names contain a generic element, dual-element place-names contain a generic and specific element, and multi-element place-names contain a generic and specific element with one or more affix elements as permitted by the language system.

Elements reflect the lowest level of semantic meaning contained within a place-name. Rochester place-names are found with a minimum of one element (also called “headwords” – Hough 2016:88) and a maximum of four elements. Affix elements fulfill grammatical functions of inflection, possession, and comparative structures.

3.1.1 Single-Element Place-Names

Single-element place-names appear as numerical forms, eponymous names, acronyms, and ellipsis. The place-name *14621* is the only purely numeric form and represents the postal code for the geographic area it encompasses. The name is pronounced as a series of individual numbers—*one-four-six-two-one*—which aligns with how postal codes are spoken in the United States.

Both postal codes and place-names, of which *14621* is both, are part of “human spatial language” that is “considered as a sign” (Javidaneh et al. 2020:20). A semantic and pragmatic assessment of global addressing systems rightfully points out that “prior knowledge...about the addressing structure is essential” to successfully understanding a given address; a speaker “cannot understand components...unless they know the structure” (Javidaneh et al. 2020:21). The American structure for postal codes is a specific series of five numerals, and this is understood by citizens from a young age. Therefore the series *14621* is the basic (and only) level of semantic meaning. Deconstructing it into the individual numbers breaks the connection between the sign and the referent.

Four single-element place-names are borrowed eponymous names. *Charlotte* and *Edgerton* are the respective first and surname of historical Rochester residents. *Charlotte* as a personal name is already a bound morpheme, and this is transferred to *Charlotte* as a place-name. *Edgerton* as a personal name contains the suffix *-ton*; does this make *-ton* a generic element modified by the specific element *Edger* when the name is transferred to a place-name?

Hough 2016 addresses this when analyzing the many affixes that appear in place-names with “the common settlement *Newton* in England (Old English *nīwe* ‘new’ + *tūn* ‘village’)” (Hough 2016:88). Of the affixal varieties are “manorial” affixes *Newton Blossomville* and *Newton Ferrers*,

“referring to possession by the *de Blossenville* and *de Ferrers* families respectively in the thirteenth century” (Hough 2016:88). Hough’s elemental description of both affixes in the place-name form does not break down *Blossom+ville* or *Ferrer+s*, as could be done in the personal name form. This implies a supra-grammatical change that a name undergoes when it transfers from a personal name to a place-name. It seems that when the form transfers from being a sign for a person referent to a sign for a place referent the full form becomes the base level for semantic meaning.

Susan B. Anthony is also a single-element place-name, despite the three ethnographically separated names. While the personal name Susan B. Anthony contains three parts (first name, surname, and middle initial representing ‘Brownell’), the place-name is a single element (Hayward 2018). This aligns with Hough’s implication of a supra-grammatical change when personal names are transferred to place-names. As a place-name, *Susan B. Anthony* represents the base level of semantic meaning and is therefore a single element, or headword.

Azalea is borrowed from the name of the central street in that neighborhood. This single-element place-name is also an ellipsized form, taken from (*The Azalea Neighborhood*).

The majority of single-element place-names are acronyms – *JOSANA*, *UNIT*, *COTS*, *PLEX*, *CUE*, *EMMA*, *NOTA*, *PACE* (1). The derivations for these place-names are not uniform. Some are “typical acronym[s]” which “[take] the first sound from each of several words and [make] a new word from those initial sounds,” such as *COTS* – Changing of the ScenCes and *EMMA* – East Main, Mustard & Atlantic (Stockwell & Minkova 2001:7). Acronyms can also take the first series of sounds “to make [the] acronym more pronounceable,” which is the case with *PLEX* – Plymouth-Exchange (Stockwell & Minkova 2001:7). All Rochester place-name acronyms are considered “true acronyms,” which occur when “the resulting word is pronounced like any other word,” as shown below in (1) (Stockwell & Minkova 2001:7).

- (1)
 - a. *CUE* as the white ball in billiards, *cue*
 - b. *JOSANA* and *EMMA* as feminine names *Josana*, *Emma*
 - c. *UNIT* as the single component *unit*
 - d. *COTS* as the plural bed *cots*
 - e. *PACE* as the speed measurement *pace*
 - f. *PLEX* as the suffix *-plex*, as in *complex*
 - g. *NOTA* as the first two syllables of the words *notary* and *notable*

Place-name acronyms are single-element words because they contain a base level of semantic meaning. In some cases, these acronymic place-names are used interchangeably with their full noun phrase of origin. Consultants unanimously recognized *NOTA* and *Neighborhood of the Arts* on a list of possible neighborhood names; both names appear on the City of Rochester website and RocWiki page; and, the Celebrate City Living website begins its description of this neighborhood with “The Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA) is an exciting...” (cityofrochester.gov; rocwiki.org; celebratecityliving.com). Other acronymic place-names have shed their noun phrase of origin and are the exclusive place-name for their neighborhood. *JOSANA* – Jay-Orchard Street Area Neighborhood Association, which began as the title for the neighborhood association, now refers to the neighborhood as a whole. This original meaning can be found on the City of Rochester website and RocWiki, but this is merely informative as the full phrase is not used by speakers (cityofrochester.gov; rocwiki.org). The r/Rochester Reddit page contains multiple conversations about the pros and cons of living in various neighborhoods in the city, and only *JOSANA* is used (reddit.com/Rochester). When given a blank map of Rochester and asked to draw neighborhood

boundaries and fill in their names, Evan Lowenstein, a resident of *NOTA*, labeled *JOSANA* in the corresponding box he drew.

Ultimately these acronyms exist as single-element place-names regardless of the survival of their original noun phrase. All have been accepted into the spoken vernacular and are a part of the collective Rochester onomasticon. The original nouns contribute to the meaning of the place-name, but the individual letters do not; the entire string *J-O-S-A-N-A* is required to act as a full sign for the neighborhood referent. *The Structure of Language* (2010) defines an acronym as a neologism, or new word (Pavey 2010: 35). As new words, these place-names possess a new semantic meaning and exist as a single element.

3.1.2 Dual-Element Place-Names

Dual-element place-names appear as compounds, hyphenated words, and two separate words. Compound place-names join two free morphemes, with the first morpheme functioning as a qualifier to the second. These can be noun-noun constructions: *Dutchtown*, *Maplewood*, *Beechwood*, *Bensonhurst*, *Browncroft*, *Swillburg*; or adjective-noun constructions: *Midtown*, *Downtown*. (The *Brown* in *Browncroft* is an eponymous personal name.) The suffixes *-wood*, *-hurst*, *-croft*, and *-burg* are only found in compound place-names, and do not appear with place-names of two separate words. The suffix *-town* appears with both compound names and dual word names.

There are several dual-element place-names that are joined together with a hyphen. These names are created from street names that act as the main or prominent thoroughfares in the respective neighborhood: *Dewey-Bernice*, *Lyell-Otis*, *Genesee-Jefferson*, *Plymouth-Exchange*, *Northland-Lyceum*, *Culver-Merchants*. The constituent orders appear to be arbitrary; there is no written record as to why, for example, *Genesee-Jefferson* was not named **Jefferson-Genesee*. These names are not compounds; each unit is an individual noun, and the first constituent does not function as a qualifier to the second. While a local speaker would identify **Jefferson-Genesee* as morphologically incorrect, there is no syntactic difference from *Genesee-Jefferson*.

The majority of Rochester place-names are formed with two independent elements. These can appear as a noun-noun construction with common nouns: *College Town*, *Corn Hill*, *Pocket Neighborhood*, *Grove Place*; with street names: *Thurston Village*, *Cascade District*, *Park Ave*, *Highland Park*; and with eponymous names: *Brown Square*, *Wadsworth Square*, *Washington Square*, *Manhattan Square*. Acronyms can also appear in the first constituent: *ABC Streets*.

Dual-element place-names can appear as adjective-noun constructions with cardinal directions: *North Winton*, *South Wedge*, *East End*; with placement: *High Falls*; and, with sequential and other numeral adjectives: *19th Ward*, *Four Corners*. Comparatives are found in the first constituent of noun-noun constructions: *Upper Monroe*, *Upper Falls*. There is one noun numeral construction: *Lock 66*, named after the corresponding Erie Canal lock before the canal was re-routed to its present course (all Erie Canal locks are named with the noun-numeral construction: Lock 1, Lock 2, etc.; eriecanal.org/locks). There is one determiner-noun construction found in a non-English place-name: *La Avenida*, Spanish ‘the avenue.’ This construction aligns with Spanish syntactic requirements. These constructions allow for both singular and plural names. Pluralization is found in noun-noun constructions: *ABC Streets*; and in adjective-noun constructions: *Four Corners*. There are also two constructions with *pluralia tantum*, which are

“nouns which have only a plural” (Corbett 2019). These place-names cover the east and west banks of the waterfall in downtown Rochester: *High Falls*, *Upper Falls*.

Street names can appear in both the first constituent: *Thurston Village*, *Cascade District*; and in the second constituent: *North Winton*, *Upper Monroe*. One constituent, *Park*, appears in the first and second position. These are different lexical iterations of the form—*Highland Park* refers to a park in its neighborhood, and *Park Ave* refers to a street in its neighborhood.

Two dual-element place-names contain compound nouns: *Homestead Heights*, *Marketview Heights*. While both *Homestead* and *Marketview* are grammatically compound words with two separate nouns, they function in a place-name as one singular element. In both names *Heights* is the generic element and *Marketview* and *Homestead* are the qualifying specific elements.

Dual-elements place-names can also contain eponymous names with multiple grammatical constituents. *Upper Mt. Hope* is a locative adjective modifying a street name. Here, the street name Mt. Hope is transferred to the place-name as the generic element *Mt. Hope* which is then modified with the specific element *Upper*. In the place-name *St. Paul Quarter*, the eponymous name is the specific element. The street name St. Paul Boulevard is transferred in ellipsized form *St. Paul* as a specific element to modify the generic element *Quarter*.

3.1.3 Multi-Element Place-Names

Place-names with three elements include hyphenated forms and two-part eponymous names. Joining the two-street hyphenated names is *Pearl-Meigs-Monroe*. This name represents one border street (Monroe Ave) and two internal streets (Pearl Street, Meigs Street). It is unclear why these streets were chosen for the name; it is also unclear why three were chosen. Further research is needed on both fronts.

Possessive constructions create place-names with three elements: *Bull’s Head*, *Cobb’s Hill*, *St. Joseph’s Park*. In each of these place-names the final word is the generic element—*Head*, *Hill*, *Park*—and the first word is the specific element—*Bull*, *Cobb*, *St. Joseph*. These specific elements are then affixed with clitic -’s to form a possessive construction. (Note that *St. Joseph* is considered one element as an eponymously derived name; see other examples above.)

The place-name *Neighborhood of the Arts* is also a three-element possessive construction, here formed with a prepositional phrase. *Neighborhood* is the generic element modified by the specific element *Arts*. The prepositional phrase *of the* is an affix element.

3.1.4 Acronymic Place-Names

Eight Rochester place-names appear as acronyms, making them worthy of additional note. Three of these names occur with the same frequency as their longer forms—online resources use both interchangeably, and consultants refer to both in the same conversation. *NOTA* is an acronymic form of *Neighborhood of the Arts*. *COTS* is an acronymic form of *Changing of the Scenes*, meant to reflect the spirit of the neighborhood. *PLEX* is an acronymic form of *Plymouth-Exchange*. (*PLEX* is the only noun-noun construction of street names that has a shortened form.) While length (and the convenience of four pronounceable letters in the words and phrases) is most likely the factor behind these shortened forms, it has not stopped their longer forms from continuing to flourish in speech.

Every other place-name acronym is the result of a formal neighborhood name that exceeds the four-constituent (or six-syllable) maximum that is found in Rochester place-names. *CUE*, *EMMA*, and *PACE* represent street names: *CUE*—Culver Road, University Ave, East Ave; *EMMA*—East Main, Mustard Street, Atlantic Ave; *PACE*—Prince Street, Alexander Street, College Street, Erion Crescent. Why were these neighborhoods not named **Culver-University-East*, **East-Main-Mustard-Atlantic*, and **Prince-Alexander-College-Erion*? We know that at least three constituents can be connected via hyphen in a place name (see *Pearl-Meigs-Monroe*). Two answers appear likely. The first is the sheer length of the names – there may be an underlying grammatical limit to the number of syllables Rochester speakers accept in their place names, or perhaps probability suggests that longer names in general are more likely to be abbreviated. The second is that these acronyms were artfully created by community members, the corresponding neighborhood association, or the City itself. There is no historical documentation to corroborate these suspicions.

The remaining acronymic place-names represent phrases. *JOSANA* reflects the neighborhood association: Jay Orchard Street Area Neighborhood Association. *UNIT* reflects the spirit of the neighborhood: United Neighbors Involved Together. These long forms are fifteen and ten syllables respectively, furthering the evidence that there is a maximum length that is permitted for place-names. Regardless of why this is so, these neighborhoods are only used in natural text by their acronymic names. Online, the longer forms of the names are only used in explaining the meaning of the acronymic form; otherwise the acronym is used.

3.1.5 Descriptive Morphemes

Rochester place-names demonstrate a great diversity of descriptive morphemes. These generally appear as the second element (generic), with the first element functioning as a qualifier (specific). (The exceptions to this are the street-final *North Winton* and *Upper Monroe*.)

Descriptive nouns can be grouped as either "built environment" or "natural environment." Built environment morphemes include *Town*, *Neighborhood*, *Place*, *Village*, *Streets*, *District*, *Ave*, *Park*, *Wedge*, *End*, *City*, *Ward*, *Corners*, and *Square*. *Square* appears in four place-names, all of which are eponymously named. The natural environment morpheme *Falls* appears twice, referring to the western and eastern shores of the same waterfalls. *Town* appears once independently (and once as a morpheme with *Dutchtown*—see above). All other descriptive nouns appear once.

Not every place-name requires a descriptive constituent. Some formal names can appear a place-names in their exact form: *Susan B. Anthony*, *Charlotte*, *Edgerton*. Others are joined with a suffix or descriptive morpheme: *Browncroft*, *Cobb's Hill*

3.2 Definite Articles and other Grammatical Categories

Five place-names must appear with a determiner—the *19th Ward*, *the Pocket Neighborhood*, *the South Wedge*, *the Cascade District*, and *the East End*. Within the greater Rochester onomasticon, these place-names do not appear written or spoken without the determiner—consultants verify that this would sound "off." Every online account of these neighborhoods includes the determiner, including the City of Rochester, the RochesterWiki, neighborhood association websites, realtor websites, and local media outlets. Consultants consistently including the determiner when speaking of these neighborhoods (if they were familiar with the neighborhood), as shown in (2).

- (2) Place-Names with Obligatory Determiners (emphasis added throughout)
- a. 19th Ward
 - “**The 19th Ward** Neighborhood’s motto - “Urban by Choice” - says it all.”
(cityofrochester.gov)
 - “With around 22,000 residents, **the 19th Ward** is the largest neighborhood of the city.” (rocwiki.org)
 - “I like going to **the 19th Ward**, they’ve got good history...” (Daniel McCabe, consultant)
 - “...they decided on **the 19th Ward** on the west side of the city.” (Democrat & Chronicle, 10/16/19)
 - b. South Wedge
 - “... statesman Frederick Douglass lived in **the South Wedge**...”
(cityofrochester.gov)
 - “**The South Wedge** is a city neighborhood comprised of...” (rocwiki.org)
 - “...at the corner of Alexander Street and South Avenue in **the South Wedge**...”
(Democrat & Chronicle, 6/19/2020)
 - “Yes, next to **the South Wedge**...” (Daniel McCabe, consultant)
 - c. Cascade District
 - “...Maplewood, Browncroft and **the Cascade District**.” (cityofrochester.gov)
 - “**The Cascade District** was a manufacturing area...” (rocwiki.org)
 - “...E3 Technologies, also located in **the Cascade District**.” (Democrat & Chronicle, 11/4/13)
 - “The “loft lifestyle” is the key to the emergence of **the Cascade District**...”
(rochesterdowntown.com)
 - d. East End
 - “...Jazz Festival will affect traffic in **the East End** and Main Street...”
(cityofrochester.gov)
 - “...**the East End** within the (former) Inner Loop is a very beautiful area...”
(rocwiki.org)
 - “Steadfast in **the East End** announces it’s closing.” (Democrat & Chronicle, 11/19/18)
 - “...what defines **the East End** depends on whom you ask.” (Rochester Business Journal, 3/12/10)
 - e. Pocket Neighborhood
 - “**The Pocket Neighborhood** is a microneighborhood enclosed within...”
(rocwiki.org)
 - “**The Pocket** is a small neighborhood on the East side of the City of Rochester...”
(roc-pocket.com)
 - “Darling classic colonial in **The Pocket Neighborhood**...” (realtor.com, 64 Kansas Street)

If placed in a phrase without a determiner, these place-names would be deemed incorrect by a local speaker. The only resolution for these incorrect phrases is the inclusion of the determiner.

- (3) a. Where is *(the) South Wedge?
 b. *(The) 19th Ward is big.
 c. I rent in *(the) East End.

The large number of remaining place-names do not require a determiner. If placed in a phrase with a determiner it would be deemed incorrect by a speaker. These phrases can be resolved by the removal of the determiner.

- (4) a. Where is (*the) Browncroft?
 b. That's (*the) Corn Hill.
 c. I rent in (*the) Park Ave.

Three place-names are acceptable both with and without a determiner: *(the) St. Paul Quarter*, *(the) ABC Streets*, *(the) Neighborhood of the Arts*.

- (5) a. She rents in (the) ABC Streets.
 b. (The) Neighborhood of the Arts has a great café.
 c. Have you driven through (the) St. Paul Quarter?

We have established that place-names can be formed with compound nouns (*Browncroft*, *Lyell-Otis*, *Marketview Heights*). Place-names regularly form new compound nouns with an accompanying common noun. Like English compounds in general, compounds of place-names and common nouns are head-final, with the place-name becoming an attributive noun that modifies the head. This is seen in both online and spoken accounts.

- (6) Compounds with Place-Names (emphasis added throughout)
- a. “The City of Rochester identified **the Marketview Heights neighborhood** as...”
 (cityofrochester.gov)
- b. “...**the Browncroft area** I always referred to as **the Browncroft area**...”
 (EugeneOberst, consultant)
- c. “**The Cobb’s Hill tragedy** of an “invisible man” ten years later...” (Democrat & Chronicle, 8/25/15)
- d. “**The EMMA Neighborhood Association** was formed in 2013.” (rocwiki.org)
- e. “This year's tour will highlight **the High Falls area** and...” (Rochester Business Journal, 10/4/18)

Like other count nouns in English, singular place-name compounds require a determiner when the common noun is countable. This can be a definite article, an indefinite article, demonstratives, possessive determiners, quantifiers, and numbers and ordinals. An indefinite article can appear before any place-name compound. Place-names with required definite articles will drop them in this construction.

- (7) a. A 14621 storefront
 b. A (*the) Pocket Neighborhood playground
 c. An (*the) East End bar crawl

This is compatible with online sources. (Emphasis added)

- (8) Place-Names and Article Usage (emphasis added throughout)
- a. "...One Restaurant and Lounge, **an East End bistro**..." (Rochester Business Journal, 8/23/13)
- b. "Get in touch with **a Maplewood real estate agent**..." (www.century21.com)
- c. "Rochester police say a stabbing in **a Charlotte neighborhood** Tuesday..." (WROC, 7/23/19)
- d. "...one of the things I want to do is find **a Park Ave type of area**..." (r/Rochester, reddit.com)
- e. "...himself **a Beechwood resident** who can list the initiatives..." (Democrat & Chronicle, 8/12/18)

Compounds appear with all English demonstrative determiners: the proximal *this*, *these*, and the distal *that*, *those*. Again, a required definite article is dropped (though not in the Spanish place-name *La Avenida*, with the Spanish definite article *La* (9)).

- (9) a. *This/That* La Avenida bakery.
These/Those La Avenida bakeries
- b. *This/That* St. Paul Quarter high-rise
These/Those St. Paul Quarter high-rises

Place-names appear in both English possessive structures, with the clitic - 's or 'Saxon genitive' and with preposition *of*. Two toponyms have the clitic possessive structure as part of their name. While permissible, the clitic is awkward. The prepositional structure is preferred

- (10) a. ?Cobb's Hill's many baseball fields
 The many baseball fields of Cobb's Hill
- b. ?St. Joseph's Park's peaceful grounds
 The peaceful grounds of St. Joseph's Park

One toponym has the prepositional possessive structure as part of its name. Both possessive constructions are fine.

- (11) a. The Neighborhood of the Arts' famous ARTWalk
 b. The famous ARTWalk of the Neighborhood of the Arts

Since place-names reflect a location, they regularly appear with prepositions of place and movement. Possible prepositions of place include *in*, *near*, *between*, *above/below*, and *over/under*. Place-names cannot appear with the preposition of place *on* and *at* to indicate spatial relations.

- (12) a. That restaurant is *in* La Avenida.
 b. My office is *near* Upper Mt. Hope.
 c. Lyell-Otis is *between* UNIT and Maplewood.
 d. The South Wedge is *above* Highland Park.
 e. **I live on Bull's Head.*
 f. **I spend my weekends at the East End*

4 Meaning in Rochester Toponyms

“One of the most appealing aspects of studying language...is what Chage (1994:38) calls ‘the experience of becoming conscious of previously unconscious phenomena’” (Mackenzie 2018:293). The meaning of a place name is an obvious area where speakers prove their consciousness of ‘previously unconscious phenomena’. A speaker may not consider the meaning of a place-name organically. But prompting a speaker with the question, ‘*What does this place name mean?*’ reveals her or his underlying ability to identify its meaning.

4.1 Semantic Categories in Rochester Toponyms

Words are signals for a corresponding referent; therefore, these place-names are a signal for Rochester neighborhoods. The physical categorization of this particular set of referents is complicated. Some are clearly independent neighborhoods, like *14621*, which contains all the houses and businesses in the 14621 postal code. Some are smaller “microneighborhoods” contained inside another neighborhood, like the *Pocket Neighborhood* inside *North Winton*. (rocwiki.org/pocket_neighborhood).

Even the status of a microneighborhood is sometimes inconsistent. In the case of *ABC Streets*, both RocWiki and the City of Rochester website consider it an independent neighborhood while *Park Ave* residents Mark and Libby Todd consider it “part of Park Ave.” Categorization for micro- or sub-neighborhoods is difficult—in many cases the neighborhood status is upheld and promoted by its residents, while non-residents apply the sub-neighborhood status or are completely unaware of its existence.

Some neighborhoods are larger supra-neighborhoods that cross over the boundaries of multiple neighborhoods, like the *South Wedge*, which is sometimes considered to encompass the northern half of *Highland Park* (rockwik.org) and an eastern slice of the *Lilac Neighborhood* (cityofrochester.gov). (Note: *Lilac Neighborhood* is only found on the City of Rochester website, and was therefore not considered in this data set.)

Some neighborhoods are exclusively residential, like *Cobb's Hill* and *Bensonhurst*, while others are exclusively commercial, like *CUE*. Consultants considered *Downtown/Center City* to

be its own neighborhood, while the City of Rochester and RocWiki websites identify smaller, block-long neighborhoods within. *La Avenida* and *Thurston Village* are single streets, which disqualifies them as neighborhoods to some—consultant Daniel McCabe identified Thurston Avenue as a commercial hub within the 19th Ward but not as an actual neighborhood. In all this confusion over physical categories and boundaries, who is correct? Well, everyone.

It is far more productive to attempt to categorize the place-names/signs rather than the neighborhoods/referents. Linguists studying place-names in other cities and countries have done so by breaking toponyms into “types,” although these types do not have a consistent typology. Hough (2016) begins by separating place-names of the British Isles into either “descriptive” and “non-descriptive.” Radding & Western (2010) classify place-names in New Orleans by the sociopolitical message that was intended by the name-giver. Ainiala (2016) classifies names through the perspective of the name-user and the reason for which a name is known by current users.

The novelty of toponymic typology allows a bit of freedom in classifying Rochester place-names. It proves worthwhile to view these names in isolation and figure out naturally occurring categories and patterns. These are then refined by comparing them to the classification work that other linguists have done. In the end, three “types” are revealed in classifying Rochester place-names: commemorative, built environment, and natural environment. These categories are by no means elegant; there are exceptions to every category, and there are multiple place-names that could fit easily into more than one category. Neither do these categories speak for any toponymic classification outside of the Rochester data set.

4.1.1 Commemorative Place-Names

Commemorative place-names is a category used by Hough (2016) and is defined as identity “by means of an association, often with a legendary or historical event, or with a person.” This analysis expands that meaning to also include names offering a description of the inhabitants. Commemorative names are “particularly common among the settlements founded or renamed by European settlers in the African, American, and Australian continents during the Age of Exploration,” so we expect to find these in Rochester (Hough 2016:87). It also makes sense that the majority of commemorative toponyms in Rochester were bestowed on the earliest formed neighborhoods, in the wake of Colonial settlement.

Commemorative personal names are chosen by the name-giver as a description of the name-giver rather than of the named referent. It declares that this person was very important to the culture of the name-giver, and worthy of being remembered in perpetuity via a place-name. “The motivations for such names range from nostalgic to territorial,” intending either to honor a person who was important to a culture or to communicate to newcomers the status or type of person that is most celebrated in this culture (Hough 2016:97).

Rochester neighborhoods, streets, parks, and buildings are peppered with the names of historical figures. The first neighborhood named in this way is *Charlotte*, founded in 1792 and named for the daughter of land agent Colonel Robert Troup. Originally called *Charlottesburg*, the municipal affix fell out of use within its first decade (Barnes 1975:1). *Charlotte* was founded as an independent settlement and was named the official *Port of the Genesee at Charlotte* by Congress in 1805. In 1869, it was incorporated as the *Village of Charlotte* into the Town of Greece, and later annexed to the City in 1915 (Barnes 1975:2). Upon annexation, it formally became the

23rd Ward of the City, although it was still called *Charlotte* socially (Barnes 1975:23). While this paper has not found when the City disbanded the use of wards as formal voting districts, this neighborhood has formally been called *Charlotte* since that time.

Another commemorative name that arose during Rochester's founding is *Brown Square*, originally the *Brown Brothers Tract* purchased and managed by brothers Matthew and Francis Brown (Rosenberg-Naparsteck 1988:4-5). The Brown brothers were important financiers in developing the milling industry that gave rise to Rochester's growth as a settlement. They named the tract after themselves, a choice which communicated ownership. This choice also implied the status that came with being wealthy enough to own a tract of land. The brothers purchased the land in 1810 with the main purpose of operating a grist mill on the lot. (Rosenberg-Naparsteck 1988:4) Within a few years "Brown's Race," as the area was called, "dominated village life." The Brown brothers developed a square among the parceled lots, and Brown Square (on Brown Street) spent a brief time as the social center of Rochester (Rosenberg-Naparsteck 1988:10). This original square (present-day Brown Square Park) and its surrounding streets sit within the *Brown Square* neighborhood today.

Cobb's Hill was self-named by Gideon Cobb, whose brother William was brought to the region to work for his friend Matthew Brown (McKelvey 1967:17). In 1812, Gideon bought a knoll overlooking the city, followed by a brickyard, along the only thoroughfare that connected Rochester to the Village of Pittsford (present-day Monroe Ave; Loudon 2004; Gillette, 1858). As he sold off parcels of land next to his family home, the *Cobb's Hill* neighborhood was established. Eventually the knoll was sold to the City of Rochester for use as a public park and water reservoir, both of which still carry the *Cobb's Hill* name.

Wadsworth Square reflects James Wadsworth, a landowner from Geneseo who bought his own tract of land in the 1830s (Daniel McCabe, consultant). The long, narrow tract crossed the Genesee River so that he owned the waterfront on both sides (cityofrochester.gov). On the east side, he designed a square in the English fashion, with houses surrounding the square and facing each other. This design was also chosen for its connection to prestigious English society, and so the municipal affix *Square* was added to the toponym (Daniel McCabe, consultant).

Browncroft is named for Charles J. Brown, the final wealthy landowner to bestow his name upon a neighborhood. Brown bought a large parcel in northeast Rochester in 1894, and by the first decade of the 1900s, residences were being built in *Browncroft* (Browncroft Neighborhood Association). It is unclear why *-croft* was affixed to *Brown*: *croft* is a Scottish word meaning 'hill' and the neighborhood does indeed encompass a large rise in altitude. One can posit that Brown had a familial connection or a personal affinity to Scottish culture, or perhaps he liked the suffix.

Edgerton commemorates Hiram Edgerton, the 49th Mayor of Rochester. It also commemorates actions he took during his tenure to develop that area of the City and build community programs for area children and families. The name was bestowed after his death, in gratitude for the work he did to rehabilitate the area (Ludwig 2018). *Corn Hill* is an eponymous name, transferred from the fashionable London neighborhood *Cornhill*. Historians have noted that Rochester's wealthiest and most prominent first society members lived in *Corn Hill* (Corn Hill Neighbors). It seems clear that these residents transferred the name *Cornhill* to evoke the reputation and status in their new settlement.

Commemorative-inhabitant toponyms communicate a general statement about the people who do or once did inhabit a place. While this generally applies to a place's ethnic or racial makeup, Rochester place-names include another type of inhabitant description. This is best summarized as "inhabitant spirit," or the general goal, mission, or vision of the people who live there.

Despite Rochester's incredibly diverse population, only one neighborhood toponym is named in reflection of an ethnic group. *Dutchtown* arose in the 1840s as a large German community settled in that area. These men worked the mills in *Brown Square* but congregated in the streets on the western edge of the Brown Brothers Tract. *Dutchtown* is a mispronunciation of *Deuschtown*, or "German Town."

Two toponyms reflect the spirit of the inhabitants. *U.N.I.T.* is an acronym for "United Neighbors Involved Together." Though its origin has not been found by this paper, the name clearly communicates that this neighborhood prides itself on a sense of camaraderie. *Neighborhood of the Arts* communicates the lifestyles of the inhabitants and the overall "vibe" of the neighborhood. This name was applied strategically. For many years, this area of Rochester was known as *Atlantic-University*, named after the two main roadways in the neighborhood. The area was known for crime and had few visitors. In the late 1990s, residents joined together and intentionally rebranded their neighborhood as *Neighborhood of the Arts* and began an active campaign to increase art-focused activities and beautify the streets through the ARTWalk initiative. In changing the name from the street names (a type of built-environment toponym) to a commemorative-inhabitant name, the message of the toponym changed and began to communicate a self-fulfilling message about the referent.

This same process is currently in process with the *Pearl-Meigs-Monroe* neighborhood. There has been a push in recent years by residents and business-owners to rebrand the area as *The Garden District*, to represent the "green ethos" of its residents and renters who actively participate in creating whimsical and thriving front yard gardens (City of Rochester). There is a large graffiti drawing on the side of a building in the center of the neighborhood, declaring it *The Garden District*, and the City has recently begun to use the preferred name. Time will tell how this new toponym will communicate to others the meaning of this neighborhood.

4.1.2 Built Environment Place-Names

The vast majority of Rochester neighborhood toponyms can be categorized as built environment. Built environment toponyms communicate a location in reference to man-made constructs. These can be streets, references to "upper" and "lower" areas, and cardinal directions. Built environment also includes toponyms that communicate "use of place" and "work at place" (Ainiala 2016:375). Built environment toponyms can also refer to features found in or near the referent, such as places of business, parks, or other constructed areas. Many built environment toponyms incorporate municipal affixes such as 'ward', 'town', 'village', and 'street'.

An important note to keep in mind with built environment names is that the toponym is based on the feature or landmark exclusively. Many of the following toponyms refer to a street, or a business, or a park; and, each of these names in themselves are not built environment names. Consider the neighborhood *Upper Monroe* as an example. The place-name *Upper Monroe* is a built environment name, based on Monroe Ave. Monroe Ave, however, is a commemorative name—it is named after President James Monroe. The commemorative aspect of Monroe Ave does not carry into the naming of the neighborhood; *Upper Monroe* is not named after President Monroe, but it is named after Monroe Ave, a physical feature built into the landscape.

Neighborhood toponyms with street names can include one, two, or three streets. Street-exclusive toponyms include *Azalea*, *Dewey-Bernice*, *Lyell-Otis*, *Genesee-Jefferson*, *Plymouth-Exchange*, *Northland-Lyceum*, *Culver-Merchants*, *CUE*, *EMMA*, *North Winton*, *Park Ave*, and

Pearl-Meigs-Monroe. These place-names reflect the main road or roadways that pass through those neighborhoods. The majority of residents live on smaller cross-streets that connect to these main roadways. These names also tend to be where the businesses and attractions can be found within those neighborhoods.

Some toponyms are a combination of a street name and a direction. *Upper Monroe* is a neighborhood that dissects the portion of Monroe Ave that is just about to leave the city limits. As Monroe Ave travels from the City to the border, it begins to gradually ascend. Thus, *Upper Monroe* is at the geographically highest point of Monroe Ave with the city. The same applies to *Upper Mt. Hope*, which rests around the most elevated portion of Mt. Hope Ave. The *East End* refers to the social and nightlife district on the eastern border of the downtown area; it is the eastern “end” of downtown. East Ave is also the main road that goes through the *East End*.

Other street-focused toponyms include the acronym *JOSANA*, which stands for ‘Jay-Orchard Streets Area Neighborhood Association’. Jay Street and Orchard Street are two main roads within the neighborhood; the rest of the name establishes that the neighborhood has an intentional sense of community. *ABC Streets* refers to the unique street names found in the neighborhood; it is a series of eight parallel streets, alphabetized from A-H, each named after a famous inventor or scientist. The *Cascade District* is a small series of buildings along Cascade Street. This small neighborhood was originally part of *Corn Hill* until I-490 was built in the 1960s, cutting the northern tip off from the rest of the neighborhood. It is not known why the second constituent *District* was chosen.

The *St. Paul Quarter* refers to the portion of St. Paul Street in the downtown limits where many bars and restaurants exist. *Thurston Village*, or *Thurston*, refers to a street in the *19th Ward* where businesses wanted to distinguish themselves as a commercial center and draw attention to that section of the neighborhood. The word *Village* evokes images of quaint storefronts and a small-town atmosphere. Thurston Road is neither of those things, but using *Village* in the place-name attempts to communicate that image to visitors and draw them into the area.

Toponyms communicating location are not always as specific as street names. *14621*, the largest geographic neighborhood in Rochester, represents the postal code of the entire area. *Midtown* is a business district located in the center of downtown. *Four Corners* is also downtown, and refers to the County office buildings that reside on the corner of West Main Street and State Street. The *19th Ward* retains its name from when the city used wards as voting districts.

Built environment names can also communicate the shape of the referent neighborhood. *Pocket Neighborhood* is a small sub-neighborhood in *North Winton*. In viewing a map, it becomes clear that its location in the northeast corner of *North Winton* gives the appearance of a small pocket of space where a few streets sit closely together. These residents felt the need to distinguish themselves from the greater neighborhood and self-identify as *Pocket Neighborhood*. The *South Wedge* was named for its shape and location. Again, in viewing a map one sees that the *South Wedge* forms a triangular neighborhood with downtown at its apex, the Genesee River as its left side, and I-490 as its right side. It is also directly south of the downtown area.

Built environment names of landmarks or features orient the neighborhood not toward a cardinal or directional location but toward a promoted location in or around the neighborhood. In Rochester place-names, these names are bestowed by both residents and non-residents. In the first case, residents choose a feature or landmark that they wish to be associated with, due to an impression that it promotes. In the second, non-residents are so familiar with a certain landmark or feature that they begin to refer to the surrounding areas by that same name. For Rochester toponyms, it is sometimes but not often clear who bestowed these landmark or feature names.

Maplewood, Highland Park, St. Joseph's Park, Washington Square, and Manhattan Square all refer to parks that are found in or near these residential areas. In all cases, the park preceded the neighborhood. Both Maplewood Park and Highland Park were two of the original swaths of land set aside in early Rochester development to be preserved for their beauty and flora. As residents encroached and houses were built along their borders, those houses were named by association with the established parks. It is interesting that *Maplewood* as a neighborhood differentiates itself from Maplewood Park; or, perhaps, it is more interesting that the neighborhood *Highland Park* does not simply go by Highland.

The latter—*St. Joseph's Park, Washington Square, Manhattan Square*—were not developed as neighborhoods until the late twentieth century when the City began a concerted effort to promote downtown living. *St. Joseph's Park, Washington Square Park, and Manhattan Square Park* were already existing block-sized parks downtown. The high-rises and converted condominiums that surround these parks were given their name in identifying the neighborhood. Again, it is unclear why *St. Joseph's Park* did not become St. Joseph's Square, as with the other two.

The remaining feature names are in reference to businesses associated with that area. *Marketview Heights* is home to the Rochester Public Market. *Lock 66* gets its name from the Lock 66, a literal lock on the Erie Canal. The Canal has since been filled by I-490, but the name for this small neighborhood remained. *Swillburg* was the home to a large pig farm in the 1800s, and its owner George Goebel collected swill washed up along the Erie Canal to feed his pigs. *Beechwood* once housed the lucrative Beech-Nut baby food factory. Workers at the factory began purchasing small homes on the surrounding streets, populating the area and forming a neighborhood. And, *Bull's Head* was the name of a popular tavern for farmers and traders in the early 1800s, set on the western outskirts of Rochester. The tavern has been out of existence for over one hundred years, yet the neighborhood has retained the name of its original notable business.

4.1.3 Natural Environment Place-Names

Very few Rochester place-names incorporate the natural environment. As mentioned in Section 5.1, many of the surrounding waterways have retained their original Seneca names. Early founders were quick to name geographical features after themselves (*Cobb's Hill*). But three do exist among Rochester's neighborhoods.

High Falls and *Upper Falls* both refer to the same waterfall, though from opposite sides of the river: *High Falls* is on the west side of the river and *Upper Falls* is on the east side of the river. *Grove Place* is a very small residential neighborhood in the downtown area, named by the original settler who commented on building "a home on a lovely small hill crested by a grove of trees" (GrovePlace.org). This grove lasted for many years until the downtown area was established and swallowed all internal nature.

4.1.4 Type Anomalies

There are a few Rochester toponyms that straddle two types. This is to be expected, as "there are ambiguities between descriptive and non-descriptive names" (Hough 2016:93). The first is *Susan B. Anthony*. This neighborhood is home to the original Anthony house, where she lived with her family and operated her suffragist movement in her later years. It also contains Susan B. Anthony

Park. It is unclear when this neighborhood came to be known as *Susan B. Anthony*. It could be a commemorative name, chosen to honor the woman who lived there. It could also be a built environment name; since the Susan B. Anthony House and the Susan B. Anthony Park are long-standing features of the neighborhood, perhaps the toponym was given in association with those. Most likely it is both, and residents would not register a distinction.

A similar problem exists for the recent *College Town*. After the founding of Strong Memorial Hospital in 1926, the area, which was once considered part of *Highland Park*, became populated by doctors and students associated with the hospital and university. This became known as *Strong Neighborhood*. A development project in the early 2000s built a new commercial area to the neighborhood, which included a rebrand as *College Town*. This name is simultaneously built environment and commemorative. It refers to the most common feature of the neighborhood - the University of Rochester and teaching hospital—and the type of person that most frequents the neighborhood’s businesses, streets, and houses—college students.

La Avenida also carries two classifications simultaneously. On the one hand, it is a built environment toponym: ‘*la avenida*’ is Spanish for ‘the avenue’. However, the fact that it is a Spanish word in an otherwise English-named city communicates another message about its inhabitants. *La Avenida* is one street in the 14621 neighborhood that has a high concentration of Rochester’s Latino community and Latino/a-owned and -inspired businesses. The toponym *La Avenida* communicates that this neighborhood is not just any avenue—it is an avenue that exudes all of one’s images and notions about Spanish and Latino culture.

Finally, two neighborhoods in Rochester do not have a clear account of their origin. *Bensonhurst* and *Homestead Heights* are northeast neighborhoods that saw their first homes developed in the late 1800s. *Bensonhurst* is most likely a commemorative name, though no account of a Benson family has yet been found. *Homestead Heights* most likely refers to a sort of prominent homestead that first appeared in that area.

4.2 Opacity and Transparency in Rochester Place-Names

What does x name mean? is generally the first question that comes to mind when one is asked to think critically about a specific name. At their bestowal, all names are purposefully transparent. They are “given intentionally, to impart a certain meaning” (Radding & Western 2010:395). They are “the converse of arbitrary” (Radding & Western 2010:395). Yet, in modern-day Rochester many of the neighborhood toponyms are arbitrary to everyday users. Indeed, “over time, people can fail to remember the original, specifically intended meaning.” Sometimes this causes the name to become fully opaque. Other times speakers “attribute other [meanings]” to the name (Radding & Western 2010:395). As discussed above, the commemorative names bestowed in early Rochester were given intentionally to impart a meaning about who this society deemed as valuable and important. But unless one is interested in local history, that message is generally lost. The relationship between transparency and opacity is a scale, especially when applied to toponyms. A toponym’s ability to explain itself must be measured against all the people who interact with it.

Most built environment place-names are transparent. Since street toponyms are taken from the main roadways in that neighborhood, the names are familiar even to people who do not regularly drive those roads. The *Genesee-Jefferson* neighborhood does not explicitly state that those are road names, but an adult driver who has lived in Rochester for at least a few years is aware that Genesee Street and Jefferson Ave are well-trafficked roads. Streets with directions are also transparent.

Even without knowing that Monroe Ave inclines, *Upper Monroe* clearly communicates that it was named for a specific portion of Monroe Ave.

Even non-specific location names are transparent. *Four Corners* and *the 19th Ward* do not provide a street name or a cardinal location, but the names clearly refer to specific municipal areas. Landmark and feature names based on parks tend to be transparent. *Highland Park* is near Highland Park. *Washington Square* is near Washington Square Park. Commemorative toponyms based on inhabitants are generally transparent. Even though *Dutchtown* is not now known for a large German population, one assumes that it once was. *Neighborhood of the Arts* is fully transparent. Natural environment words in Rochester are also mostly transparent. *High Falls* and *Upper Falls* are quite obvious to anyone who lives in Rochester, where the waterway is well-known. *Grove Place* is now opaque since the grove of trees is no longer in existence.

Most commemorative names based on individuals are now opaque. *Browncroft* has lost all association with the Brown family, as has *Cobb's Hill* with its mason namesake. If one were to consider *Wadsworth Square* and *Brown Square*, they could assume that those are named after people—but who those people are, and why they were honored with a toponym will be completely unknown. These people no longer matter to the modern culture. Therefore, these toponyms are opaque.

Landmark and feature names tend to be the most opaque names in Rochester toponyms, because they are historically-based. Bull's Head Tavern has long left the local lexicon. Lock 66 was torn out in the 1960's. The idea of a pig farm in the middle of the city is laughable now amongst the traffic and buildings.

Acronymic toponyms are, by nature, opaque. Unless one takes the time to learn what the acronym stands for, the letters give no indication about the origin of the toponym. And, naturally, average speakers do not take the time to learn what an acronym stands for, simply because they do not need to. It does not matter what *JOSANA* stands for once you know where it is and how to get there. While it would be nice to understand the meaning of *U.N.I.T.*, one does not need to understand it to interact with the location or use the name in speech.

5 The Practice of Place-Naming in Rochester, New York

Neighborhoods provide an interesting linguistic analysis because of the uniqueness of their referent. Neighborhoods are not municipally prescribed. They do not constitute voting or taxing districts. They do not even cover the same postal code, at least not intentionally. They appear organically, at the whim of a certain collective.

Cresswell points out that a “space” becomes a “place” when “people have made it meaningful” (2004:7). This aligns with the idea that “people give names to referents they consider worth naming” (Ainiala 2016:371). Rochester neighborhoods are what they are today because, at certain times in history, someone decided that these spaces were important enough to deserve a name.

A single neighborhood cannot, by nature, exist without an accompanying neighborhood. It is true that “identity contains both an aspect of ‘sameness’ and an aspect of ‘distinction’” (Aldrin 2016:85). There is no need to establish a particular set of streets and homes if not to distinguish it from a different set of streets and homes. And there is no need to include a particular set of streets and homes if they do not share a common feature.

This final section explores the relationship between place and identity in Rochester history. Naming is a highly intentional linguistic act, as “from the perspective of name-giver, naming can be seen as ‘a communicative act that serves an identity function’” (Aldrin 2016:385; Laskowski 2010:84). At various points in Rochester’s history, different naming patterns have been followed. What did the name-givers intend in these various patterns, and what did they mean to communicate? This section explores those patterns and discusses the communicative acts involved.

5.1 The Birth of Rochester Place-Naming Practices

The first European presence in the Genesee Country were colonial settlers and traders who moved through the area trading among the Seneca nation (Arnot 1921). The area encompassed by modern-day Rochester was primarily “a camp site—a temporary lodging place for the night.” It was referred to by its Seneca name, *Ga-sko-sa-go*, meaning ‘at the Falls’ (Olds 1905). Feeling energized by the American Revolution, state governments began to commercially develop their inland territories. Soon businessmen and wealthy landowners were purchasing large tracts of land with the intention to develop and resell in parcels. The Phelps and Gorham Purchase of 1788 ceded most of western New York to the State, paying the Seneca Nation for rights to the land.

Of this large settlement, one hundred acres just west of the Genesee River were granted to Ebenezer Allan under the condition that he would use the land to develop a mill. The land was named the 100 Acre Tract, and was sold to three men commissioned with building the mill: Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, William Fitzhugh, and Charles Carroll (Arnot 1921).

That same year, Phelps and Gorham granted the Mill Yard Tract to the Pulteney Association. This tract stretched from the opening of the Genesee on Lake Ontario and twelve miles inland. The first permanent European-American inhabitants arrived in 1792, and the bustling port town was dubbed *Charlottesburg* after the daughter of Colonel Robert Troup, agent to the Pulteney Association. By the end of the decade *Charlottesburg* had become *Charlotte*. Thus, the first Rochester toponym was born (Barnes 1975).

Thirty years later Colonel Rochester was the sole proprietor of the One Hundred Acre Tract. By 1811, the mill was developed and the tract became available for sale. An area on the edge of the river was sold to Henry Skinner; two plots directly west of the waterfall were given to the Brown brothers; and Rochester continued to sell out small parts of the remaining tract to homeowners, while plotting streets and homes. The Brown brothers’ portions were named *Brown Square* and *Brown’s Race*, and together with Rochester and Skinner’s portions, the village of *Rochesterville* was dubbed in 1812 (Arnot 1921). Two more Rochester toponyms were developed.

A few more historical notes should be accounted for at this point, though not relevant to neighborhood names. Roadways were also developed during this time. Main thoroughfares were built over pre-existing Seneca trails and trading pathways; smaller, residential streets were forming in more concentrated areas, forming the first neighborhoods. We have established that *Charlotte* received its name from Robert Troup’s daughter; Troup Street is today a residential street in *Corn Hill*, where Colonel Rochester and other prominent early Rochesterians lived among each other. Another street in *Corn Hill* is Child Street, named for Rochester’s first mayor Jonathan Child. Also in *Corn Hill* appears Sophia Street, which Rochester named after his wife; Fitzhugh Street, named after his business partner; Field Street, named after one of his neighbors; and Plymouth Ave, which

acknowledges the Plymouth Trading Company that deposited the first English traders in the Genesee Country two hundred years prior.

Many of Rochester's wealthy neighbors appear as street namesakes in other modern parts of the City of Rochester: Mrs. Marshall was honored with Marshall Street in today's *Wadsworth Square*; Samuel Andrews was a prominent merchant and early Rochesterian, and the namesake of downtown Andrews Street; DeWitt Clinton was instrumental in lobbying for the Erie Canal to be built through Rochester, cutting through the trailway that was named Clinton Ave. Mill Street in *Brown's Race* was the street on which the original mill was built. Exchange Street was built over a Seneca trading route, where the white settlers 'exchanged' goods with the indigenous tribes (Pond 1985; Olds 1905; Arnot 1921). Merchants Road of *Culver-Merchants* was the path travelled by merchants bringing goods from the ships in Irondequoit Bay into Rochester for trade.

The scope of this section is not to account for the history of each name found on the streets and neighborhoods in Rochester, however interesting the subject is. Rather, this brief account of the founding of *Rochester* (as it was called, dropping the built environment morpheme *-ville* about five years after its original naming) is meant to highlight the consistent thematic name choices on the part of early name-givers. Names were immediately given for commemorative purposes, to honor people who either lived in the area, performed an act of service for the area, or were otherwise deemed socially important by people who lived in the area. And the few place-names that were not named after people were named to commemorate an event or achievement that these new European-Americans had performed: Mill Street commemorates the first milling company of the upper Genesee Valley, and Exchange Street commemorates the large trading structure between the new Americans and indigenous Senecas.

The original Rochester names were chosen in celebration of the upper-class Americans who purported to have 'discovered' and 'tamed' the area. No names used by the Seneca peoples were retained, unless applicable to waterways—*Genesee River*, *Lake Ontario*, *Irondequoit Bay*. No names cared to describe the natural environment or geographic features. In the wake of the American Revolution, naming in the village of Rochester was singularly focused on establishing this settlement as an American enterprise.

5.2 City Wards

The City of Rochester was incorporated in 1834 and immediately organized into five wards. This was customary for purposes of the U.S. Census: "before the development of the current census geography, the Census Bureau used city voting wards as census divisions." (Cornell University Library) These wards were population-based—each area was geographically different, but contained an equal number of residents. Each ward elected a representative to the city Common Council; this representative was titled an alderman until the mid-20th century, when they were billed as 'constable' (Rochester City Directory). Neighborhood names that were already in use continued to be used socially once the wards were established—*Cornhill* and *Brown Square* appear in nineteenth-century prints of the *Democrat & Chronicle*. But other than those existing places, no new neighborhoods were established—there were only wards.

Over the next 150 years the racial, ethnic, and economic makeup of the city changed immensely. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw huge increases in immigrant populations, expanding both the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the city population.

Unfortunately, many of these newcomers usually found unskilled jobs for low pay and congregated in slum-like neighborhoods that the city cobbled together.

The twentieth century brought large populations of black Americans escaping the southern states. Unfortunately again, Rochester's redlining practices kept these communities relegated to the same poor and blighted areas. Many of these areas that were poor and blighted 50-100 years ago are still that way today. This awareness covers residents all over the city. "It's a self-perpetuating downward spiral. And that necessarily causes resentment, and I understand that," says *Wadsworth Square* resident Daniel McCabe. "Let's put it this way: to a Rochesterian, someone who lives, I don't know, up by *Thurston Avenue* maybe, or up by the Public Market, *Upper Market Heights* or something, or *Upper Falls*. When they hear *Park Avenue*, *Pearl-Meigs*, *Wadsworth*, they think of people who aren't really here to live, they're passing through because they're young people who love the excitement of living close to the cultural aspects of Rochester...and a disparate allocation of monies that go to [those areas]. And that can cause resentment, and I understand why. That can be very difficult."

This attitude began even before these neighborhoods had their current names. While communities in these blighted areas did often find each other and form small pockets—e.g., a Ukrainian area or a Jewish area—these were usually only the size of a few streets, and the city did not recognize them as distinguished. An entire ward was usually a conglomerate of several cultures and languages. These smaller pockets reflected socially non-dominant communities, and so, if the residents had any name for their community, these were never recorded by the city.

5.3 Post-Ward Naming Practices

In the 1960s, the Ward system was abolished by the city, who favored splitting the city instead into four distinct quadrants. Now, the already conglomerate wards that already lacked a central identity were joined with four or five other wards in one large quadrant. This created even less of a central identity.

This is the time when the vast majority of street-name neighborhoods originated. Now that quadrants covered such a wide area, anyone talking about an area of the city had no reference name to use. Newspapers and residents alike began describing locations by the streets they use to get there, or the main intersections that were nearby. The *19th Ward* retained its name, but suddenly every quadrant had areas being identified by their geographic locations, and these did not necessarily align with its previous ward assignment.

5.4 Emergence of Community Branding

Only in recent decades have these pre-determined neighborhoods come to take control of their own narrative through the power of naming. "I can say that a name is brand, for one thing," shared *Neighborhood of the Arts* resident Evan Lowenstein. "A successful brand is something that piques your passion and your emotion about something. It's descriptive. It can be a rallying cry. It's important on many levels. And I know names... vary dramatically, certainly place-names across places, but I would say that a name of a place is... not superficial at all, it's an essential piece of a neighborhood's identity."

In the late 1990s, the *Atlantic-University* neighborhood, deemed a ‘bad’ neighborhood and ridden with crime, began self-referring as the *Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA)*. The neighbors utilized the presence of the nearby Memorial Art Gallery, Eastman Museum, and School of the Arts, along with a consistent residential presence of local artists, to create a new name that offered a new image of their community. Soon artists were congregating in apartments to be closer to like-minded people.

This process was of course not immediate; it takes time to change a reputation and disperse a new signal for people to willingly use. But twenty-five years later, *NOTA* is one of the city’s most vibrant neighborhoods and is celebrated as an upper middle-class neighborhood complete with coffee shops, craft stores, and a visible LGBTQ+ community. The idea of this area as dangerous and avoided is ridiculous, and only remembered by residents who lived there at the time.

In the wake of *NOTA*’s success, other neighborhoods are currently attempting their own re-brand. *Pearl-Meigs-Monroe* has begun referring to itself as *The Garden District*. Their neighborhood association page reflects this change, along with a large piece of graffiti art on the side of a brick building in the center of the neighborhood. They feel that this name describes the spirit of the residents, who are focused on sustainability and ‘green’ living. An unnamed strip along the city’s border with the Town of Gates has surfaced as *UNIT*, or ‘United Neighbors Involved Together’. This area has never been regarded by outsiders as a central location, but its residents clearly see otherwise. And *Mayor’s Heights*, a name that still appears in Google Maps, now prefers to be referred to as *COTS*, or ‘Changing of the Scenes’. The progressive verb in its name alludes to action and fluidity, a constant sense of reinvention and evolution.

6 Conclusion

It is important to document and analyze Rochester place-names during this time of change. The data set of names may look very different in another 50 years, and recording these changes as they occur—and residents’ response to these changes—will be important knowledge for future generations. Names have a unique power connected to many facets of study. It is impossible to consider a name without taking into account its linguistic structure, such as grammatical function; its historical content, and the intent of its communicative act; the social perception, and how it affects individual and group identity; and the political forces acting on these names, influencing the people using them in the past, present, and future. Additional name studies, especially in New World countries, should be vigilant in taking account of all these forces, as these names have undergone high amounts of sociopolitical pressure in relatively short amounts of time.

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