

The Spread of Arlington as a Community Name Across the United States

BY JOHN C. O'CONNOR

Over the span of nineteen decades, Arlington as a community name spread through 39 of the 50 states. The origin in name for many of these locales may be traced to the former Arlington plantation in present-day Arlington County, Virginia. That plantation, in turn, took its name from the 17th century Arlington plantation of John Custis II in Northampton County on Virginia's Eastern Shore. That original plantation appears to have been the first use of Arlington as a place name in the United States.

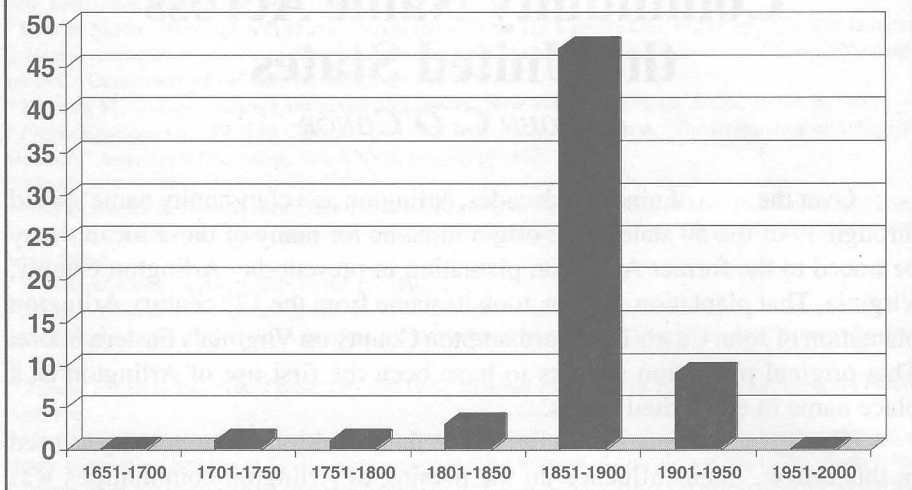
Though neither plantation fits within the definition of community as used in this article,¹ their influence on the naming of Arlington communities was significant, with the Arlington County plantation providing the most prolific basis for the naming of American communities. The Northampton plantation, named between 1670 and 1676,² was home to the largest of the five brick structures erected in seventeenth century Virginia³ and one of the more notable figures of that era. When the colonial capitol at Jamestown was taken and burned during Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, Custis provided Royal Governor William Berkeley with refuge at Arlington, raised forces for his defense, and aided in holding the Eastern Shore and surrounding waters, thus ensuring Berkeley's control of the colony.⁴

The land that became the northern Virginia Arlington Plantation was purchased in 1778 by John Parke Custis, great-great-grandson of John Custis II. During the following century, the estate became noted for its mansion's architectural grandeur, for family ties to the Nation's first President, strong Civil War emotions associated with General Robert E. Lee's decision to abandon Arlington and join the Confederacy, the establishment of the Arlington National Cemetery, and an eighteen-year, highly-publicized dispute over ownership of the plantation.

Beginning in 1733 with an aspiring colonial pioneer settlement and extending through a 1925 effort to strengthen several small schools in rural Mississippi, the name Arlington has been used by 61 individual communities. Many of those communities exist today and most still use the Arlington name.

As shown in Figure 1, only five communities had adopted Arlington as their name by 1850. A sharp spike occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth

**Figure 1. Selection of Arlington as Name: 1651-2000
(61 Communities)**



century, with 47 communities being named Arlington. Adoption of the name then declined, with only nine occurrences in the twentieth century, and all of those in the first half.

The spike in name use coincides with the most prolific period of U.S. railroad construction, the American Civil War and its aftermath, and the various influences noted above. These events and influences occurred during an era when the establishment of American communities was at a peak.

Communities Named before the Civil War

Ten communities had been named Arlington before the Civil War. This figure includes the five that had received their name by 1850 and an additional five that adopted the name by 1860. The basis on which three of these ten received their name is presently unknown. Of the remaining seven, the only discernible pattern in their naming is that five had a direct, or indirect, connection to England. In fact, the first two that were called Arlington honored members of the British aristocracy.

The first Arlington community, established in 1733, was named by Jonathan Belcher, colonial governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This community was located in New Hampshire, then under the control of Massachusetts. As a means of securing support for their position and their policies, colonial governors of the day often named towns after influential aristocrats or political figures, their estates, their titles, or their children. Belcher is believed to have named the New

Hampshire community after one of the several titles held by Charles Fitzroy,⁵ whose titles included that of being the second Duke of Grafton and the third Lord Arlington. The Arlington name remained in effect until 1739 when the community was awarded full town status and renamed Winchester.⁶

The second Arlington community, established in 1761, is believed to have been named in honor of Augustus Henry Fitzroy,⁷ the third Duke of Grafton and fourth Lord Arlington. The early history of this community was marked by competing claims of ownership by the colonies of New Hampshire, which had since become an independent colony and had granted the town, and New York. Though settled in New York's favor, the New Hampshire settlers gave armed resistance when New York ordered them to pay substantial fees for land and refused to guarantee the settlers retention of parcels they had already cleared. Several notable skirmishes between New York and the settlers ensued before those hostilities were overshadowed by the American Revolution and the subsequent establishment of the disputed territory as the State of Vermont.

Two other Arlington communities, both established prior to the Civil War, are reported to have taken their name in commemoration of Arlington, Vermont and, thus, though perhaps not clearly in the public eye at that time, had the indirect effect of carrying forward the commemoration of Augustus Henry Fitzroy. These are Arlington, Michigan,⁸ named in 1842, and Arlington, Minnesota,⁹ named in 1858. It is presently unknown whether there may be additional Arlington communities for which the name may be traced to the Vermont community.

The remaining three communities that were named Arlington before the Civil War owe their name to many reported rationales. One, in Hancock County, Ohio, has two different explanations for its name, both of which trace a connection to England—being named for Arlington, Virginia¹⁰ or a town in Virginia¹¹ or, alternatively, for a piece that appeared in an old hymn book.¹² The latter explanation refers to *Arlington*, written by Englishman Isaac Watts in 1721. The score was composed by another Englishman, Thomas A. Arne, in 1762 and, over time, there appear to have been at least two sets of lyrics titled *Arlington*,¹³ either of which may have been the hymn associated with this explanation.¹⁴ The account reports Robert Hurd, the community's founder, as having been very fond of the hymn¹⁵ and, apparently, to have used the occasion of the naming of the town to see that the hymn would be remembered.

The remaining two communities named before the Civil War demonstrate no evident connection with England. One, in Citrus County, Florida, was named after the Jacksonville area family homestead of the community's founder.¹⁶ The second, in Bureau County, Illinois, was, according to recent newspaper accounts, named by influential early settler Michael Kennedy in commemora-

tion of his New York hometown.¹⁷ This explanation for the name might be viewed skeptically, however, because no New York communities appear to have taken the Arlington name for another half century, nor does the Vermont Arlington appear to be a viable candidate as namesake,¹⁸ and, thirdly, the explanation contradicts an 1877 account reporting the name to have been given by early resident James Waugh.¹⁹ The confusion over various details regarding the origins of the naming may extend from contradictory accounts on whether Kennedy²⁰ or Waugh²¹ laid out the community.

Communities Named After the Civil War

The dates of naming the Arlington communities may be seen as falling into two periods: pre-Civil War (1735-1860) and post-Civil War (1867-1925). This fortuitous break facilitates examination of the impact of the war and the influence of the Arlington Plantation in northern Virginia, and encapsulates a time when many of the names were given in connection with the construction of railroads.

Review of the available records suggests that slightly more than forty percent of the Arlington communities named after the Civil War trace their origins to the northern Virginia plantation—regardless of whether the sympathies were northern or southern in intent and regardless of whether the available records indicate the commemoration to have been the only, or as one of two, explanations for selection of the name.

The naming of the northern Virginia plantation, in turn, began with George Washington Parke Custis, grandson of Martha Washington and adopted grandson of George, her second husband. G.W.P. Custis inherited the property from his father, John Parke Custis, and, in 1802, following the death of Martha Washington, he relocated to the largely undeveloped 1,100-acre estate. Custis initially named this estate Mount Washington, with the intent of honoring the first President. However, amid an era of proliferating properties with that same name, he apparently found decreasing distinction in the title and renamed his estate Arlington Plantation. The new name commemorated his great-great-great grandfather's long-since abandoned Northampton plantation, which he had inherited as well. John Custis II, in turn, is believed to have named his plantation in honor of either the first Lord Arlington,²² born Richard Bennet, or the Custis ancestral home in Gloucestershire, England²³ or, possibly as a pragmatic matter, in commemoration of both²⁴ — with each explanation supported by intriguing rationale.²⁵ For example, one of the arguments advanced in favor of the English ancestral home was Custis' need to impress Governor Berkeley with his familial connections to Gloucestershire, since Berkeley hailed from Gloucester and showed favor to those with similar roots.²⁶

As a result of the different possibilities for the namesake of the Northampton plantation, there may, or may not, exist different etymological

roots among the various American Arlington communities. Should it ultimately be discovered that John Custis II had named his plantation solely for the family's ancestral home, then any communities that have, or can establish, a link to the northern Virginia plantation would extend their namesake to the hamlet of Arlington in Gloucestershire. The etymology for the hamlet, which has been traced back to 1004, derives from references to an estate, farm, or manor of a man who was known as *Ælfredincgtune*.²⁷ This derivation differs somewhat from the Old English roots associated with Lord Arlington.

Conversely, should commemoration of Lord Arlington someday prove to have been the rationale for naming the Northampton plantation, then all the Arlington communities with roots to New Hampshire, Vermont, or the Virginia plantation would have identical etymological origins. In connection with Henry Bennet, the etymology of *Arlington* extends from Harlington, a parish approximately 15 miles southwest of London, where Bennet's father and grandfather had maintained a residence. On being raised to the peerage, Bennet's choice of title was altered from Harlington to Arlington. Harlington, as with the Gloucestershire Arlington, evolved from Old English but differs somewhat in meaning. Though both refer to an estate, farm or manor, Harlington traces its etymological association to a man known as *Hygerçd*.²⁸

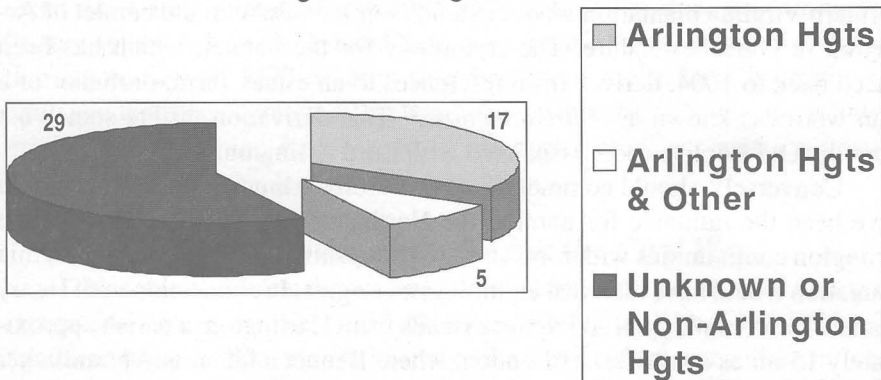
Arlington Plantation became a Washington landmark from virtually the time Custis settled on the estate. The property included extensive frontage along the Potomac River, virgin woodland, and prominent hills. Atop one of these, Custis erected a mansion described as a "Greek temple"²⁹ and considered "an architectural masterpiece."³⁰

Built in stages over a decade and a half, Arlington House included a monumental portico that overlooked "almost every house in the Federal City"³¹ and was seen "to admirable advantage from Washington."³² Originally within the boundaries of Washington, until the retrocession of 1846, the property has been variously referred to as *Arlington heights*,³³ the *heights of Arlington*,³⁴ and the *heights of Washington*³⁵ — references that were carried forward in accounts explaining the rationale for the naming of several Arlington communities around the country. In the city of Washington with a population of only 4,352 in 1803,³⁶ when or shortly after construction began, and 11,299 in 1817³⁷ when exterior work neared completion, the mansion projected a dominant presence.

Augmented by the lifestyle of its proprietor, the heights of Arlington enjoyed recurrent public recognition. Though Custis died in 1857, public attention surrounding the property soon escalated, beginning with Union army occupation in 1861, lawsuits over ownership, and various federal uses made of the land extending well into the early decades of the 20th century.

With such extensive publicity, even notoriety—and a division in views among Union and Confederate sympathizers over the treatment of Lee and the

**Figure 2. Basis for Post-Civil War
Naming of 51 Arlington Communities**



estate—Arlington became a frequent source for the naming of communities, as well as businesses, churches, and other entities. Of the 51 communities that were named Arlington after the Civil War, 22 (43 percent) attribute their name to the former plantation in northern Virginia. For seventeen of these communities, commemoration of either General Lee or the national cemetery appears to have been the sole rationale for the choice of name.

For one of these seventeen, an alternative rationale has been reported but, on investigation, the explanation does not appear to be supported by available records. In this instance, Arlington, Oregon is reported as having taken its name from the middle name of a prominent resident attorney and banker whom nearly all records identify only as N. A. Cornish. Contrastingly, the name also is reported as having been proposed by Cornish in honor of the home of Robert E. Lee,³⁸ with the choice apparently reflecting the wishes of former southerners living in the town. The first-noted explanation was given in later years by Cornish's daughter, Nellie, and speaks of the community as having been named for her father's middle name, Arlington.³⁹ In 1889, Cornish left town for Seattle⁴⁰ and ultimately moved to Alturas⁴¹ in Modoc County, California. He died in Alturas on August 15, 1916 and the death certificate reports his full name as Nathan Anthony Cornish.⁴² As no other documents revealing the meaning of his initials have come to light, the record would appear to lean away from Cornish's middle name being the namesake for Arlington, Oregon.

There exist five other communities that were named Arlington after the Civil War and for which there are dual explanations for the source of the name. In each of these instances, one of the explanations is associated with the Arlington heights of Virginia, while an alternative provides a different rationale

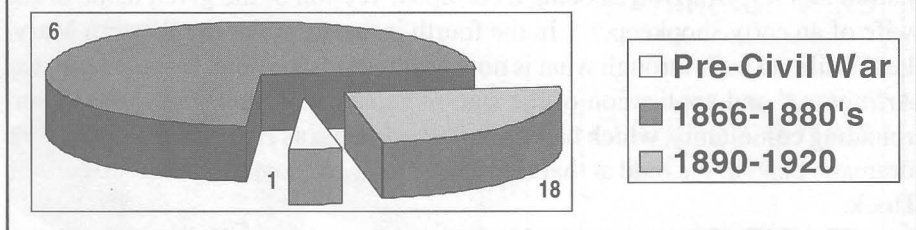
for the selection of the name. Among these five instances are two cases in which the community was named for Arlington, Massachusetts—thus indirectly linking to the national cemetery. For the third community, the alternate explanation reports Arlington as being a corrupted version of the given name of the wife of an early shopkeeper.⁴³ In the fourth instance, when the Western Maryland Railroad built through what is now northwest Baltimore, it named the stop *Arlington*,⁴⁴ and application of the station name eventually spread to the surrounding community, which had earlier been known as Hookstown, either for a dramatic bend in the road at that location or after resident farmer Jacob or John Hook.

The fifth circumstance highlights an interesting possibility of linkages among the communities in their naming. This case concerns Arlington, Oklahoma, founded in 1892. Ella Wilson, wife of one of the founders, is said to have selected the town's name after seeing the word *Arlington* on a bolt of calico cloth.⁴⁵ Intriguingly, four years earlier, a textile mill in Spartanburg County, South Carolina had renamed itself Arlington Cotton Mill⁴⁶ and there was a similarly named concern, the Arlington Mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts, which had been operating since 1865.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the origins of the bolt seen by Mrs. Wilson were not recorded, leaving no evidence of which mill, if either, may have borne any connection to Mrs. Wilson's choice of name.

With regard to the other 29 communities named after the Civil War, the available records provide little rationale for the selection of Arlington. At least four received their names from railroads, as the lines built through. The coincidental, or near coincidental, timing of railroad construction and selection of name, hints that this number might easily be doubled, but defensible evidence to increase the number has yet to surface. In other instances, plausible possibilities can be raised, such as a small community in rural Mississippi being named for the local Arlington Baptist Church, but neither documentation nor local recollection offers any grounds to establish the links.

In a foreshadowing of the Oregon circumstance, Fidler's Mill of Upshur County, West Virginia was renamed Arlington after the community's first postmaster, Alpheus (or Alfious⁴⁸) Arlington Fidler.⁴⁹ Postal records, revealing the first postmaster to have been named William J. Fiedler,⁵⁰ undercut at least part of this explanation. The records of later postmasters also fail to show any persons whose name would support the explanation for calling the community Arlington. However, late nineteenth Century Business Gazetteers do identify Arlington resident Alpheus A. Fidler as a carpenter and cabinet-maker⁵¹ and as having interests as a jeweler, in lumber manufacturing, grain, and shingle.⁵² While this individual appears to have played a role that might have been deemed worthy of local remembrance, documentation of his middle name has been elusive.

**Figure 3. Change of Name to Arlington
1858-1920 (25 Communities)**



Changes in Name

Twenty-five (41 percent) of the 61 communities held one or more names before being renamed Arlington.⁵³ Twelve of the 25 had carried the surname of the founder or of a prominent early settler. Nine others (36 percent) had carried a name reflecting a prominent natural feature. The adoption of Arlington as a new name for the 25 communities occurred between 1858 and 1920. As shown in Figure 3, only one made the change before the Civil War, in 1858. Eighteen made the change in name between 1866 and 1889 (a period of frequent publicity concerning the Arlington heights of Virginia), while six changed between 1890 and 1920.

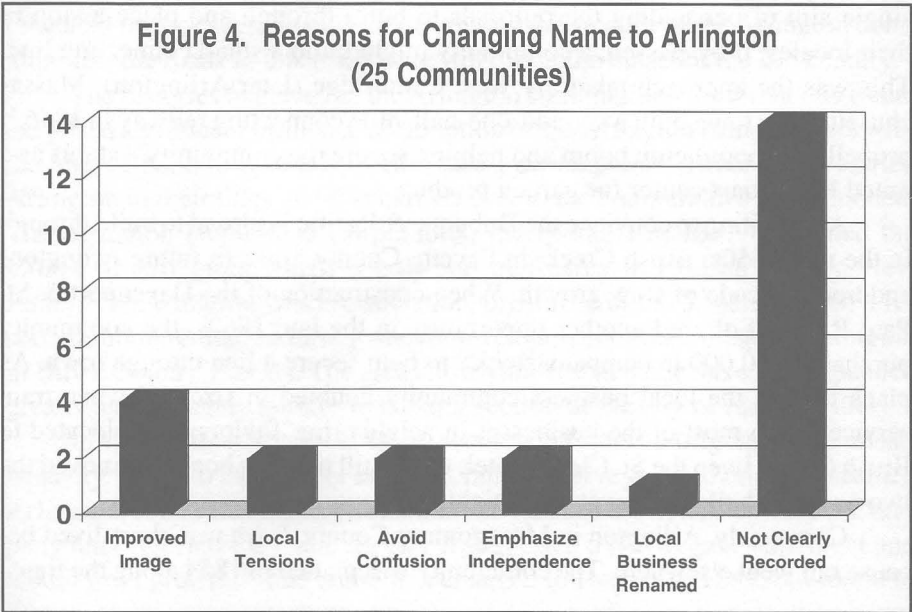
As indicated in Figure 4, documentation for making the change appears not to have surfaced in fourteen instances. For the remaining eleven, the stated reasons varied—from desiring a more refined name to easing local tensions and from avoiding confusion with communities having the same name to seeking to emphasize the community's independence. Regardless of the reported motivation, most carried as a common undercurrent the fostering or improving of the community's economy. The perceived inelegance of early names, adopted without consideration to the image they might project as the Nation became industrialized, would appear to have been the catalyst for some of the changes. Such motivation may have been cause for some local disagreement and, consequently, not always publicly acknowledged.

Elaborating on the reasons for making each of these changes lies beyond the scope of this discussion, but inclusion of a few examples offers some flavor for issues of the day. Arlington, Massachusetts, originally known as Menotomy and later as West Cambridge, dropped the latter name to demonstrate the community's municipal and political distinction from the more conservative and pro-British Cambridge.⁵⁴ The community selected a name whose initial letter was at the start of the alphabet, so as to maximize the town's influence in

the state's electoral process, which, at that time, used an alphabetical roll call to report votes. Arlington, honoring the cemetery,⁵⁵ was selected over another early-alphabet contender, Appleton, in 1867.

Alkali, Oregon was named for a nearby river flat. The town became temporary seat of the newly formed Gilliam County that was split off from Wasco County in 1885. Hoping to become the permanent seat, and believing that the name Alkali was not suitable for a growing community,⁵⁶ the citizenry renamed their town Arlington.

Conversely, six of the 61 communities deliberately changed their names from Arlington, including two that were among the 25 that had changed an even earlier name to Arlington. Arlington, South Carolina, discussed above in connection with Mrs. Wilson's observation of a bolt of cloth, became known as Apalache no later than 1921, following further renaming of the local textile mill. Three others changed their names in connection with railroad activity. One of these three was the former Arlington of Mesa County, Colorado. Named Jones for 53 days,⁵⁷ the community was then known as Arlington for 14½ months, and subsequently called Bridgeport,⁵⁸ with that change apparently associated with the build-through of the Gunnison Division of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad in 1884. This last change provided an opportunity for Arlington to become the name of another Colorado community, this one in Kiowa County, in 1887. In the fifth instance, a community in Franklin



County, Ohio named itself Arlington Heights in 1905, when it detached itself from the hamlet of Marble Cliff.⁵⁹ The hamlet dissolved in 1908, whereupon Arlington Heights successfully petitioned to take the Marble Cliff name, citing as its reason confusion in the delivery of mail.⁶⁰ The sixth community that changed from Arlington was in Kidder County, North Dakota. Reversing the more usual pattern of replacing the names of founders or natural features with Arlington, the township displaced Arlington in favor of Atwood to honor the township's first settler.⁶¹

Railroad, Highway and Land Promotion Influences

The construction of rail appears to have had no effect on six of the 61 communities. Those six exceptions occurred either because the communities had ceased to exist or because rail was never built close to those areas. From 1846 through 1913, railroads built through or near the other 55 communities, or, in a few instances, by-passed them entirely.

The consequences of success or failure in securing a rail line generally meant the difference between a robust or dispirited, or even a failed, economy—and was cause for the survival or loss of several Arlington communities. Many of them competed to attract rail and secure lower prices on incoming goods and expanded markets for their produce, livestock and manufactures. Most offered arrangements—such as the sale or gift of land and rights-of-way, the purchase of bonds, controlling ownership in specially tailored corporations, or the occasional unpublicized inducement—all with the single aim of persuading the railroads to build through and place a stop in their locales. If by-passed, a community might build a small connecting line. This was the approach taken by West Cambridge (later Arlington), Massachusetts. The town built a six-and-one-half-mile connecting railway in 1846,⁶² propelling a population boom and helping secure the community's status as a noted East Coast center for garden produce.

After failing to convince the Dubuque & Pacific Railroad to build through in the mid-1850s, Brush Creek, in Fayette County, Iowa (a future Arlington) endured a decade of slow growth. When construction of the Davenport & St. Paul Railroad offered another opportunity in the late 1860s, the community purchased \$10,000 in company stock⁶³ to help secure a line through town. As plans firmed, the local business community doubled in size and when train service began most of the businesses in neighboring Taylorsville relocated to Brush Creek. Even the St. Cloud Hotel, while still housing boarders, moved the two-and-one-half miles over a fortnight.⁶⁴

Conversely, Arlington in Montgomery County, Iowa was short-lived because rail went elsewhere. The community was platted in 1854 along the trans-

state rail route surveyed in 1853 by the respected Colonel Hebard. When the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy built through, in 1869, the line made its only significant detour in the state to pass south of Arlington.⁶⁵ The change increased both the length of the line and construction costs without any topographic benefit. The re-routing, however, brought rail through land owned by the Burlington Town Lot Company, thereby ensuring the brisk and profitable sale of company lots. Arlington, in contrast, became a cornfield.

The economic benefits brought by rail were not always enduring, as might be seen in the circumstance of Little Piney, Missouri. In the mid-1860s, the town renamed itself Arlington and enjoyed brisk commerce while being the terminus for the insolvent South West Pacific Railroad. Dreams of becoming a major city⁶⁶ crumbled when rail resumed westward construction. The 1920s and 1930s brought a temporary reprieve when Arlington became "an outfitting point for fishermen"⁶⁷ and captured travel business along the newly built Route 66.⁶⁸ The local economy was undercut by conversion of the highway to Interstate 44 when Arlington was left without convenient egress.⁶⁹ The town was offered for sale in the 1970s and again in the 1980s and, by 2002, had become little more than a house, a couple of storefronts, and a campground.⁷⁰

A similar experience befell Arlington, Oklahoma. On being by-passed in 1902 by the Fort Smith and Western Railroad, many of the community's commercial and professional businesses moved five miles south to Prague. A second blow came several decades later when construction of State Highway 99 relocated traffic one mile to the east. Among the smaller of the Arlington communities, the roads in this town were still dirt at the outset of the 21st century.⁷¹

The histories of eleven of the Arlington communities show that real estate exercised significant influence on adoption of the Arlington name, always with the aim of benefiting sales. In two cases, development corporations carried Arlington in their titles and that carried over to the communities they founded. The Arlington Homestead Corporation, incorporated in 1867,⁷² founded the village of Arlington, which is now part of Kearny in Hudson County, New Jersey. The Arlington Bluff Association, organized in 1873,⁷³ established a resort community that, in turn, fostered development of the village of Arlington in Duval County, Florida. The area known under that name has since expanded greatly and presently applies to a major section of the city of Jacksonville.

In several instances, real estate promoters found an original name unsatisfactory. In South Dakota, for example, railroad surveyors had originally named Arlington, South Dakota as Nordlund. The railroad's Western Town Lot Company later rejected the name for fear it suggested a Norwegian settlement and would limit growth.⁷⁴ The name was changed to Denver in 1884, but found to

be potentially confusing for postal purposes with the Colorado city,⁷⁵ thus it was changed again, to Arlington, in 1885. The name changes occurred so rapidly that for a time all three were in use—Nordlund for the town, Denver for the railroad, and Arlington for the post office.⁷⁶

An effort to overcome a negative reputation is reflected in the history of the former village of Arlington, now a section of Riverside, California. Originally named Sayward, after a co-principal in the Riverside Land and Irrigating Company, the village lay at the south end of the company's holdings. Over the course of several years, sales in the north section proceeded satisfactorily, while the lower end stagnated. Sayward's character—described as “conceited, ignorant and lecherous ... slippery ... careless of the truth and uncertain generally”⁷⁷—was apparently the cause. Sayward sold out and, without delay, the name of both village and that portion of the tract were changed to Arlington and announced in a local paper by the remaining partner.⁷⁸

Post Office Influence

As a result of a long-standing policy that post offices have a unique name within their respective states, the Post Office Department exercised an influence on the spread of Arlington as a community name. The impact of this policy cannot be fully ascertained. In practice, however, the policy has led both to decreases and increases in the use of Arlington as a community name.

To illustrate, Arlington in Citrus County, Florida is reported to have changed its name in 1871 to Eau Gallie because there was already an Arlington post office in the state.⁷⁹ Employing a different solution to the same problem, two communities (in Cook County, Illinois⁸⁰ and Hamilton County, Ohio⁸¹) merely appended the word *Heights* to their intended names to provide requisite differentiation from pre-existing Arlington post offices within those states.

The histories of the Arlington communities in Rush County, Indiana and Wayne County, Pennsylvania illustrate that the policy also resulted in increased use of the name. Both communities had sought to establish post offices under names that were already in use as post offices within their states. Both, consequently, opted to take Arlington as their name. For the Wayne County Arlington, which had originally been known as Rollinsville or Rollinstown,⁸² the first choice had been East Salem, but that name was already in use in Pennsylvania's Juniata County.⁸³

The Rush County instance reveals that the policy could generate an initial effect and, after the passage of nearly four decades, produce secondary results. The community, which was laid out in 1832, originally had been called Burlington. Six years later, the community renamed itself Beech Grove because there was a Burlington post office elsewhere in the state.⁸⁴ That change appears to have been made solely for postal purposes, since, approximately

three decades afterwards, the town had continued to report on postal forms that the post office was Beech Grove but the community's local name was Burlington.⁸⁵ Eventually the town appeared to have tired of the duality for it took the name Arlington in 1875.⁸⁶

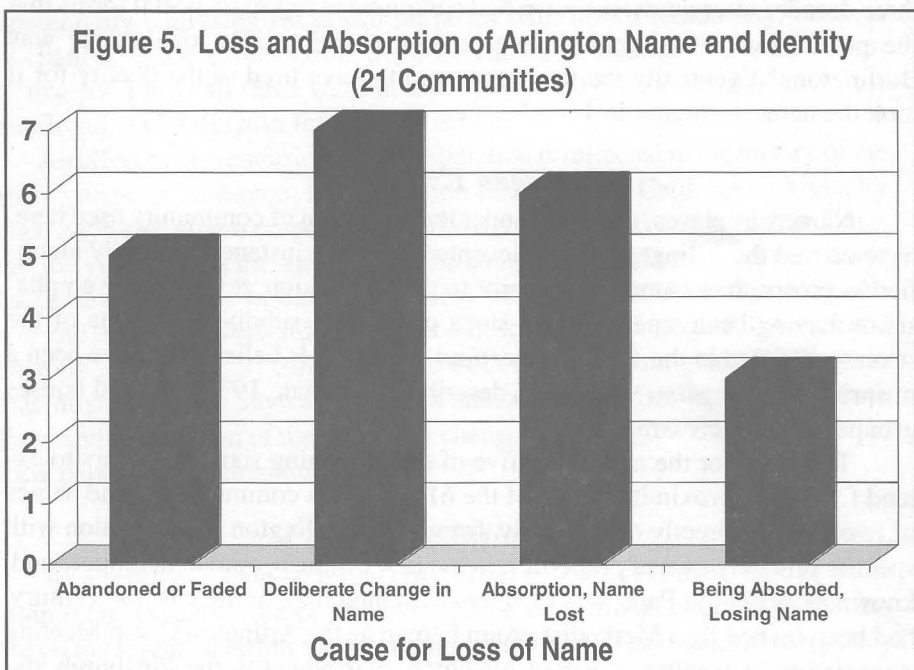
Seventeen Exclusions

Numerous places, excluded under the definition of community used here, have carried the Arlington name. Seventeen of these instances, initially identified as prospective communities prior to their exclusion, reveal heavy emphasis on having been small railway stops or housing subdivisions. One of the seventeen, listed in the 1892 *Connecticut Manual*,⁸⁷ is believed to have been a misprint for *Abingdon*, which was described in the late 1930s, as "old houses grouped about a crossroad."⁸⁸

The basis for the naming of five of the remaining sixteen appears to extend from their proximity to one of the 61 Arlington communities. The names of two extend, directly or indirectly, from use of Arlington in connection with specific privately owned properties. In the first instance, a small neighborhood, known as Arlington Park, was developed on land that, in the late 19th century, had been owned by a Methodist group known as the Arlington Camp Meeting Association. A local stop, called Arlington, was added to the Pittsburgh and Southern Railroad to serve the association. Eventually, both the association and the railroad closed, but not before a small collection of homes assumed the name. The Arlington Park neighborhood, in Mt. Lebanon Township, survives at the outset of the 21st century as, at most, a few dozen residents,⁸⁹ comprising primarily carpenter Gothic homes⁹⁰ and some Victorian summer cottages.⁹¹

A second instance of adoption from local application began with a small farm that occupied land now in the City of Hopewell in east central Virginia. The farm, owned by the Gilliam family from 1664 to 1917-18, had been called Arlington by at least 1814.⁹² The source for the naming is unknown,⁹³ though there may be an English connection as the earliest Virginia generation of the Gilliam family had made a practice of naming local features after well-known places in London.⁹⁴

Though appropriated by the Army in 1917 or 1918, the farm gave rise to the name of a major northwest-to-southeasterly municipal thoroughfare known as Arlington Road. Redevelopment since caused the disappearance of the northwest portion of that road, which had run by the farm. Much of the southeastern section remains in use and became the basis for the naming of Arlington Heights, a mid-twentieth century public housing development that has since been demolished. The Arlington Heights name remains, encompassing approximately three acres with three houses and a church.⁹⁵ Arlington has also become a generic reference to an approximate two-square mile residential area in southeast Hopewell.



The rationale for the naming of the remaining nine excluded places is not evident from the record. Two patterns emerge, however, in the overall application of names to the full group of exceptions. First, each of the four places named directly by, or in connection with a railroad, was called *Arlington*, without any modifier. In contrast, those places associated with the development of sub-divisions carried names with either preceding or following modifiers, such as *Heights*, *East*, or *Park*. As a second pattern, the majority of names with modifiers were adopted in the early years of the 20th century, while most, though not all, of the railway Arlington names were given by the close of the 19th century.

At the Outset of the 21st Century

The pattern of decreased use of Arlington as a community name appears to reflect two general trends. The first trend has been the growth of cities and the consequent expansion in their boundaries. The second has been decreases in the populations in many rural areas.

Loss of the Arlington name has occurred among eighteen of the 61 communities. As may be seen in Figure 5, five of the Arlington communities were abandoned (three in the 19th century and two in the 20th) and seven others made a deliberate change in name (one in the 18th century, three in the 19th century

and three in the 20th). Six additional communities lost their Arlington identity through absorption (one in the 19th century and five in the 20th). Also at the outset of the 21st century, three other communities were far along in the process of being absorbed as sections of the larger cities in which they are located—with likely loss of their names in future years, as dynamic demographic, political, and structural patterns shift within those cities.

With regard to the 40 Arlington communities not discussed in the context of Figure 5, sixteen are small and in rural locations. At the outset of the 21st century, seven have populations of less than 100 and the other nine have less than 1,000 residents. Four or five of the seven smallest seem likely to disappear as communities within the next several decades as the numbers of residents have been decreasing and there is little sign of local economic impetus. Retention of the Arlington name among the nine somewhat larger communities appears more favorable. Several of those communities have experienced recent increases in population and, for the most part, are located in areas with greater economic activity. With respect to the remaining 24 Arlington communities, there is no apparent prospect for loss of name and identity.

© 2003 John O'Conor

Printed by permission

This article, which extends from the author's research into whether there was an Arlington community in every State, owes a considerable debt to numerous librarians, historical society volunteers, academicians and authors, as well as residents living in or near many of the Arlington communities. With special thanks to Lynn Kristianson and James Chang of the Interlibrary Loan Staff of the Arlington County Library for their extraordinary resourcefulness in securing materials whose existence sometimes appeared to be mythical.

Endnotes

¹ As used here, community refers to an independent aggregation of unrelated persons having an intent, whether realized or not, of becoming a village, or larger entity, with a mercantile establishment. This definition excludes three general applications of the name: (i) The Arlington plantations of the American South, (ii) railway stops that never matured beyond a platform, water tank, and possibly, a post office, and (iii) innumerable subdivisions called Arlington, often with a modifier, such as Heights. The discussion treats multiple, interdependent applications of the name within a township as a single unit—such that, for example, the villages of Arlington, East Arlington, and West Arlington in Vermont are considered one community. The discussion encompasses 54 communities named simply Arlington, as well as seven with associated descriptors: North, Mount, Upper, Heights, and Station. Excluded from the discussion are

those communities: (a) with a name, such as Darlington or Harlington, in which the spelling partially envelops the word Arlington and (b) known as Erlington or other early English versions of Arlington.

² Nicholas M. Lucchetti, with Edward A. Chappell and Beverly A. Straube, *Archaeology At Arlington: Excavations at the Ancestral Custis Plantation, Northampton County, Virginia* (Virginia Company Foundation and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, on the Web at <http://www.apva.org/resource/other/arlington.pdf>, 1999), p. 10.

³ "Project Casts Light On House Lost To Past," *The Sun*, Baltimore, September 8, 2001, pp. 1B and 2B; "History Lovers Preserve A Piece Of America's Past," *The Virginia Pilot*, Tuesday, July 21, 1998, p. B-2.

⁴ Warren Clardy, "The Arlington Connection," *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 9, No. 1, October 1989, p. 40; Warren Clardy, "The Arlington Connection-2001," *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 12, No. 1, October 2001, p. 18.

⁵ Elmer Munson Hunt, *New Hampshire Town Names and Whence They Came* (Peterborough: William L. Bauhan, Publisher, 1970), p. 159.

⁶ 1739, *Acts and Resolves of the Massachusetts Bay*, Chapter 4.

⁷ Esther Munroe Swift, *Vermont Place-Names, Footprints of History* (Brattleboro: The Stephen Green Press, 1977), p. 78.

⁸ *Van Buren County Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Decatur: Hill & Leavens, 1869), p. 179; *History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan* (Philadelphia: D. W. Ensign & Co., 1880), p. 394; Captain O.W. Rowland, *A History of Van Buren County, Michigan: A Narrative Account of its Historical Progress, its People, and its Principal Interest* (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), Vol. I, p. 432; Walter Romig, *Michigan Place Names: The History of the Founding and the Naming of More than Five Thousand Past and Present Michigan Communities* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), p. 29; Theodore G. Foster and the Writings of Mr. Foster compiled by Gladyce M. Landy, *A Dictionary of Michigan Place Names* (Lansing: unpublished, 1968), unpaginated.

⁹ Rev. Edward D. Neill, *History of the Minnesota Valley, Including the Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Company, 1882), p. 441; "Village of Arlington Founded in 1856," *Arlington Enterprise*, August 6, 1925, p. 1; W.C. Schueler, *Historical Facts of Sibley County, Minnesota* (Henderson: Sibley County Centennial Committee, 1949), p. 6.

¹⁰ Larry L. Miller, *Ohio Place Names* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 10.

¹¹ William D. Overman, *Ohio Town Names* (Akron: Atlantic Press, 1958), p. 5.

¹² Don Steinman, Eagle Creek Historical Organization, Arlington, Ohio, letter to author, December 3, 2001.

¹³ These are: *Arlington. C. M.*, Dr. Thomas Arne (Steele) and *Arlington. C. M.*, Arr. from Thomas A. Arne (Dobell's Selec.).

¹⁴ Don Steinman, letter to the author, December 7, 2002.

¹⁵ Steinman, December 3, 2001.

¹⁶ Elaine Murray Stone, Brevard County, *From Cape of the Canes to Space Coast* (Northridge: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1988), p. 28.

¹⁷ "Westfield's 'Lost Grove,'" *The Spring Valley Gazette*, September 15, 1988, p. 4; "Focus on Arlington," *Bureau County Republican*, March 14, 1989, p. 8A; "Arlington A Thriving Village At The Turn Of The Century," *Bureau County Republican*, July 1, 1999, p. 5C.

¹⁸ No written records have surfaced that refer to Arlington, Vermont as Arlington, New York. As a remote possibility, such reference may have appeared on writs of attachment issued by New York and carried by the Sheriff of Albany during New York's dispute with New Hampshire Colonial Governor Benning Wentworth. However, the Bureau County town was named more than half a century after Vermont's admission to the Union and nearly seven decades after forays by the Sheriff of Albany—a long time to carry what, at most, would have been a tenuous reference.

¹⁹ *The Voters and Tax-Payers of Bureau County, Illinois, Containing, also, a Biographical Directory of its Tax-Payers and Voters; A History of the County and State; Map of the County; A Business Directory; an Abstract of Every-Day Laws; Officers of Societies, Lodges, etc., etc.* (Chicago: H.F. Kett & Company, 1877), p. 152.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113; N. Matson, *Map of Bureau County, Illinois, with Sketches of Early Settlement*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: published by the authority, Tribune Company, 1867), p. 90.

²¹ H.C. Bradsby, *History of Bureau County, Illinois* (Chicago: World Publishing Company, 1885), p. 424; George B. Harrington, A.M., *Past and Present of Bureau County, Illinois, Together with Biographical Sketches*

of *Many of Its Prominent and Leading Citizens and Illustrious Dead* (Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Co., 1906), p. 119.

²² Bishop William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1857; facsimile reprint, Bowie: Heritage Books, Inc., 1992), Vol. I, p. 262.

²³ Ralph T. Whitelaw, *Virginia's Eastern Shore, A History of Northampton and Accomack Counties* (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1951; reprint, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968), Vol. I, p. 110.

²⁴ James B. Lynch, Jr., *The Custis Chronicles: The Years of Migration* (Camden: Picton Press, 1992), p. 173.

²⁵ A discussion of the basis on which John Custis II may have selected the Arlington name may be found in two earlier issues of this journal: Warren Clardy, 1989, pp. 39-46 and Warren Clardy, 2001, pp. 13-23.

²⁶ Warren Clardy, 2001, p. 16.

²⁷ A.D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place Names* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁹ Roger Kennedy, "Arlington House, a Mansion that was a Monument," *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 1985, Volume 16, No. 7, p. 163.

³⁰ Calder Loth, editor, *The Virginia Landmarks Register*, 3rd ed. (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1986), p. 36.

³¹ Benson J. Lossing, "Arlington House, the Seat of G.W.P. Custis, Esq.," reprint from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. VII, No. XL, September 1853, p. 436.

³² Geo. Alfred Townsend, *Washington Outside and Inside, A Picture and a Narrative of the Origin, Growth, Excellences, Abuses, Beauties and Personages of Our Governing City* (Cincinnati: James Betts & Co., 1874), p. 618.

³³ John Esten Cooke, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: G.W. Willingham Company, 1871), p. 31.

³⁴ *Centennial History of the City of Washington, D.C.* (Dayton: W.J. Shuey, Publisher, 1892), p. 91.

³⁵ Fitzhugh Lee, *General Lee* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1894), p. 99.

³⁶ Joseph Martin, *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia, and the District of Columbia: to which is added a history of Virginia from its first settlement to the year 1754; with an abstract of the principal events of that period to the independence of Virginia ... by a citizen of Virginia [W. H. Brockenbrough]* (Charlottesville: Mosely & Tompkins, Printers, 1835; reprint, Westminster: Willow Bend Books, 2000), p. 499, (page citation is to the reprint edition).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in the State of Oregon, *Oregon: End of the Trail* (Portland: Binford and Mort, Publishers, 1940), p. 265; Lewis A. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names* (Portland, Oregon Historical Society Press, 1982), p. 26.

³⁹ Ellen Van Voklenburg Browne and Edward Nordhoff Beck, *Miss Aunt Nellie: The Autobiography of Nellie C. Cornish* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p. 28.

⁴⁰ Marion T. Weatherford, *Arlington, Child of the Columbia* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1977), p. 11.

⁴¹ "Well Known Attorney Dead," *Alturas Plaindealer*, August 18, 1916, p. 1; *Modoc County*, 1912 (published by the *Alturas Plaindealer*, 1912), p. 42.

⁴² Certification of Vital Record, County of Modoc, Alturas, California, California State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Local Register No. 6, filed September 1, 1916 (duplicate record issued March 22, 2002).

⁴³ Frank Thomas Ewing Weber, "Place Names of Six South Central Counties of Missouri" (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1938), p. 8.

⁴⁴ Katherine S. Boblitz, "West Arlington: The Suburb of Many Happy Homes," *Sunday Sun*, May 21, 1916, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Lincoln County Historical Society, *Lincoln County Oklahoma History* (Saline, MI: McNaughton & Gunn, 1988), p. 35; Centennial Book Committee of the Prague Historical Society, *Prague, The First 100 Years* (Rich Hill, MO: Bell Books, 2001), p. 8.

⁴⁶ Michael Leonard, *Our Heritage: A Community History of Spartanburg, S.C.* (Spartanburg: The Spartanburg Herald and Journal, Inc., 1986; reprint of articles published in the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* from 1981-1983), p. 77.

⁴⁷ Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937; reprint, 1972), p. 254.

- ⁴⁸ Jim Comstock, editor, *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia* (Richwood, WV: published by the author, 1976), Vol. I, p. 186.
- ⁴⁹ Hamill Kenny, *West Virginia Place Names, Their Origin and Meaning, Including the Nomenclature of Streams and Mountains* (Piedmont, WV: The Place Name Press, 1945), p. 85; Comstock, *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, p. 186; W. Tenney Noel, *At Every Crossroad: A Study of Upshur County Communities* (Upshur County Historical Society, 1996), unpaginated.
- ⁵⁰ Post Office Department, *Records of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-September 1971* (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, Microfilm Collection M-841, Roll #141, 1973), p. 389. The record reports that the Arlington post office in Upshur County was established on April 2, 1879, with "Wm. J. Fidler" as postmaster.
- ⁵¹ *West Virginia State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1882-83*, p. 48.
- ⁵² *Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1884* (Baltimore: R.L. Polk & Co.), Vol. I, p. 616.
- ⁵³ This excludes the following: (i) informal names, such as Hollister's field, given to specific sites, (ii) names that may have been applied by Native American cultures or by foreign colonial powers (such as Dutch names in northern New Jersey or Spanish ones in the American southeast), and (iii) reported early names for which there is extremely minimal record.
- ⁵⁴ Charles S. Parker, *Town of Arlington, Past and Present* (Arlington: C.S. Parker & Son, 1907), p. 60.
- ⁵⁵ *Arlington or Menotomy* (Town of Arlington: Committee to Study Change of Name of Town, undated), p. 3; *Arlington, Massachusetts: Exploring its History* (Arlington: The Arlington Historical Commission, 1975), unpaginated.
- ⁵⁶ Lewis A. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1982), p. 26; Gilliam County Historical Society, *The History of Gilliam County, Oregon* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1981), p. 15; Marion T. Weatherford, *Arlington, Child of the Columbia*, p. 11.
- ⁵⁷ William H. Bauer, James L. Ozment and John H. Willard, *Colorado Postal History: The Post Offices* (Crete, NE: J-B Publishing Company, c. 1971), p. 75; William H. Bauer, James L. Ozment and John H. Willard, *Colorado Post Offices, 1859-1989: A Comprehensive Listing Of Post Offices, Stations, And Branches* (Golden: The Colorado Railroad Museum, 1990), p. 80.
- ⁵⁸ Emma McCreanor, *Mesa County, Colorado: A 100 Year History (1883-1983)* (Grand Junction: The Museum of Western Colorado Press, 1983), p. 11.
- ⁵⁹ "Marble Cliff Will Have Rival Village," *Columbus Press-Post*, December 28, 1905.
- ⁶⁰ "Arlington Heights Wants A New Name," *Columbus Press-Post*, September 28, 1908; "Want Name Of Village Changed To Marble Cliff," *Columbus-Dispatch*, September 28, 1908.
- ⁶¹ *50th Anniversary, Tuttle, North Dakota: A Small Town with a Big Welcome* (Tuttle, ND: Tuttle Jubilee Board of Directors, 1961), p. 111.
- ⁶² Jon W. Worden, *Arlington's Little Local Railroad - An Illustrated History of the Lexington and West Cambridge Railroad and Its Successors* (Arlington, MA: Arlington Historical Society, 1991), p. 3.
- ⁶³ *The History of Fayette County, Iowa* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1878), p. 547.
- ⁶⁴ *Portrait & Biographical Album of Fayette County, Iowa* (Chicago: Lake City Publishing Company, 1891), p. 415.
- ⁶⁵ W. W. Merritt, Sr., *A History of the County of Montgomery* (Red Oak, IA: Express Publishing Company, 1906), p. 55.
- ⁶⁶ *History of Laclede, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps, and Dent Counties, Missouri* (The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889; reprint, Independence: BNL Library Service, 1974), p. 675, (pagecitation is to the reprint edition).
- ⁶⁷ Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration, *Missouri, A Guide to the 'Show Me' State* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1941), p. 415.
- ⁶⁸ John F. Bradbury, Jr., "The Early Years of Route 66 in Phelps County, Missouri," *Ozarks Watch*, Vol. VII, No. 2, Fall 1993/Winter 1994, p. 47.
- ⁶⁹ "Arlington, Historic River Town For Sale," *Rolla Daily News*, Vol. IC, Number 219, September 1, 1974, p. 1.
- ⁷⁰ R. D. Hohenfeld (reporter, *Rolla Daily News*) telephone conversation with author, July 22, 2002.
- ⁷¹ Centennial Book Committee, p. 8.
- ⁷² Barbara Krassner and the Kearny Museum, *Kearny* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), p. 7.

- ⁷³ Wayne Williamson Wood, *Jacksonville's Architectural Heritage, Landmarks for the Future* (Jacksonville: University of North Florida Press, 1989), p. 244.
- ⁷⁴ Virginia Driving Hawk Snede, editor, *South Dakota Geographic Names* (Sioux Falls: Brevet Press, 1973), p. 4; George A. Hall, *Kingsbury County: A County to Behold in a State to Behold* (Freeman, SD: Pine Hill Press, Inc., 1993), p. 41.
- ⁷⁵ "Arlington: Town with Three Names," *Sioux City Journal*, April 9, 1944.
- ⁷⁶ George A. Hall, *Kingsbury County*, p. 41.
- ⁷⁷ Robert Hornbeck, *Roubidoux's Ranch in the '70's* (Riverside: Press Printing Company, 1913), p. 188.
- ⁷⁸ "Arlington," *Press & Horticulturist, Riverside*, December 18, 1880, p. 3.
- ⁷⁹ *William H. Gleason House* (Nomination for the National Register of Historic Places, December 1996, section 8), p. 1.
- ⁸⁰ Daisy Paddock Daniels, *Prairieville U.S.A. A Story of the Birth and Growth of a Pioneer Village* (Arlington Heights, IL: The Historical Society and Museum, 1971), p. 128.
- ⁸¹ Geoffrey J. Giglierano and Deborah A. Overmyer, *The Bicentennial Guide to Greater Cincinnati: A Portrait of Two Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: The Cincinnati Historical Society, 1988), p. 570.
- ⁸² Thomas J. Ham, *The Nomenclature of Wayne, A History of Wayne County, Pa.* (originally published 1905-1907 in *The Honesdale Citizen*, compiled and reprinted from the files of *The New Eagle* by George J. Flurh, 1995), p. 21.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁴ A.L. Gary and E.B. Thomas, editors, *1921 Centennial History of Rush County, Indiana* (Indianapolis: Historical Publishing Company, 1921; reprint, Knightstown, IN: The Bookmark, 1978), Vol. I, p. 235; Ronald L. Baker and Marvin Carmony, *Indiana Place Names* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c. 1975), p. 5.
- ⁸⁵ Post Office Department, *Reports of Site Locations, 1837-1950* (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, Microfilm Collection M-1126, Roll #168). A Post Office Department form, completed by the local acting deputy postmaster and dated October 30, 1865, reported the post office name as Beech Grove and the local name as Burlington.
- ⁸⁶ Ronald L. Baker and Marvin Carmony, *Indian Place Names* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 5; Ronald L. Baker, *From Needmore to Prosperity: Hoosier Place Names in Folklore and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 53.
- ⁸⁷ The Secretary of State, *Register and Manual of the State of Connecticut, 1892* (Hartford: The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., Printers, 1892), p. 428.
- ⁸⁸ Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, *Connecticut: A Guide to its Roads, Lore and People*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938), p. 436.
- ⁸⁹ Richard Price (Researcher, Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center), letter to author, October 16, 2001.
- ⁹⁰ Merle Jantz, Alison K. Nipar and Susan Fleming, editors, *The Way We Were, A Community History of Mount Lebanon, Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: Geyer Printing, c. 2000 by *Mt. Lebanon Magazine*), pp. 8, 22.
- ⁹¹ Cathryn Coblin and Katherine O'Brien, *The History of Mount Lebanon* (Mount Lebanon: Mount Lebanon Junior High School, 1991), p. 10.
- ⁹² *Personal Reminiscences of William Davenport Gilliam* (compiled by Charles Edgar Gilliam, unpublished, 1938, held by the Appomattox Regional Library, Hopewell, Virginia), p. 26.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁴ "Archéology Finds Shared At Weston Manor," *The Hopewell News*, Vol. 76, No. 213, October 24, 2001.
- ⁹⁵ Marguerite M. Slagle (CAE, Real Estate Assessor, The City of Hopewell), letter to author, November 20, 2001.