

# Toponyms

Look at any map of the United States and notice the kinds of place names (toponyms) that appear. For example on a map of Texas you will see cities or towns named San Angelo and San Antonio, Houston and Austin, New Braunfels and Fredericksburg, Amarillo, Midland, and El Paso, among many.

Place names can give clues to past cultural landscapes. They can also offer evidence of past migrations (sequent occupance) in an area, even when time has erased other evidence.

Many toponyms have two parts:

- generic (classifying), e.g. John's Town, Pitt's Burgh, Nash ('s) Ville
- specific (given), e.g., Battle Creek (Michigan)
- this is an event (a battle took place) and a landscape feature (the creek).

There are nine categories of toponyms:

Category	Examples
<b>Descriptive toponyms</b>	<b>Rocky Mountains, Chicago (Stinking Onions in the language of the first inhabitants)</b>
<b>Associative Toponyms</b>	<b>Mill River (a mill was on the river), Springfield</b>
<b>Incident Names</b>	<b>Battle Creek, Bloody Ridge, Cut and Shoot</b>
<b>Possessive Names</b>	<b>Castro Valley, Pittsburgh</b>
<b>Commemorative (commemorating someone well-known or in honor of a famous person)</b>	<b>St Louis, San Jacinto, Houston, Seattle (named after Chief Seattle), Austin, Pennsylvania (Penn's Woods), Illinois (after the Illini Indians)</b>
<b>Commendatory (praising)</b>	<b>Pleasant Valley, Greenland</b>
<b>Manufactured (made up names)</b>	<b>Tesnus (Sunset spelled backwards), Reklaw (Walker spelled backwards) Iraan (Ira and Ann name the town after each other)</b>
<b>Mistaken (historic errors in identification or translation)</b>	<b>West Indies (not west of the Indies and not the Indies)</b>
<b>Shift Names (relocated names or names from settler's homeland)</b>	<b>Athens (Greece and Texas), Palestine (Middle East and Texas), New Mexico (settlers from Mexico named their new home after their previous home), New England,</b>

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