

# What's in a Name: Toponyms

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES	GRADES
<p>Many students have little understanding of how the place names they know have been influenced by various cultures. The goal of this activity is to introduce students to toponyms (place names) and the influence cultural diffusion can have upon place names. Additionally, students will gain a better understanding of the role of immigration in shaping the cultural landscape of a region.</p> <p><i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine historical maps of immigration patterns</li> <li>• Investigate toponyms in Minnesota</li> <li>• Connect immigration patterns to local toponyms.</li> </ul>	8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup>
	<b>TIME</b>
	1-2 days
	<b>REQUIRED MATERIALS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Computer Internet access with projector</li> <li>✓ Computer Internet access for students</li> <li>✓ Handouts: "Migration to Minnesota in the Past" and "Placing Place Names"</li> </ul>
MINNESOTA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS	
<p>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</p> <p><b>Standard 1.</b> People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.</p> <p><b>8.3.1.1.1</b> Obtain and analyze geographic information from a variety of print and electronic sources to investigate places or answer specific geographic questions; provide rationale for its use.</p> <p><b>Standard 3.</b> Places have physical characteristics (such as climate, topography and vegetation) and human characteristics (such as culture, population, political and economic systems).</p> <p><b>8.3.2.3.1</b> Use appropriate geographic tools to analyze and explain the distribution of physical and human characteristics of places.</p> <p>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</p> <p><b>Standard 1.</b> People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process, and report information within a spatial context.</p> <p><b>9.3.1.1.2</b> Apply geographic information from a variety of print and electronic sources to interpret the past and present and plan for the future; provide rationale for using specific technologies for each application</p> <p><b>Standard 3.</b> Places have physical characteristics (such as climate, topography and vegetation) and human characteristics (such as culture, population, political and economic systems).</p> <p><b>9.3.2.3.1</b> Make inferences and draw conclusions about the physical and human characteristics of places based on a comparison of maps and other geographic representations and geospatial technologies.</p>	

## SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

### **Preparation:**

You should complete the activity before students begin by identifying local place names and investigating the origin of the names. Choose a variety of toponyms—some named after landmarks or people, some named because of immigrant groups or because of American Indian groups—but focus on ones named because of immigration to the area.

### **Opening:**

As a warm-up activity the teacher provides the students with a few toponyms and has them hypothesize how the places were named. Some students may know why places have the names they do—even better they may be way off—but it will be fun to explore where they heard the stories of the origin of place names. Introduce the term, “toponym”, and explain that the class will explore the meaning and origin of place names. Usually a simple definition suffices and the examples you discuss with students in the warm-up help to reinforce the term.

### **Development:**

The goal of the activity is for students to connect toponyms or place names to the concepts of culture and immigration. Tell students that they will be completing two items for the lesson: 1) identify what groups were immigrating to Minnesota as it grew in the late 19th century; 2) investigate the influence these immigrant groups had upon toponyms in Minnesota.

Begin by assigning students a county in Minnesota. (The activity tends to be easier if students select counties in northern and western Minnesota as they tend to have later immigrants and, as a result, immigrant-based toponyms.) Students will work individually or in small groups of 2-3 to complete the handout, “Migration to Minnesota in the Past”. Students will use the Historical Statistical Atlas of the United States located at <http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701gm.gct00010> to complete the handout. Explain the Statistical Atlas and why it is used by geographers to understand migration and population patterns of the past. Show students the bar graph on page 29 that shows the number of foreign born by state in 1890. Next, show students the pie graphs on page 32 (plate 39) that illustrate the influx of immigrants from 1850 to 1890 to the U.S. and explain that these groups immigrated to Minnesota as well. Go to pages 34-35 (plates 42-48) to show the bar graphs of the 5 immigrant groups by states. You may want to demonstrate how to zoom in and read the graphs and choropleth maps. Also, make sure students understand the difference between population density and aggregate population as used on the maps. You should direct the students to start on page 36 and use the maps up to page 47 to complete the handout, “Migration to Minnesota in the Past”.

Once students have finished the questions associated with the maps, ask them what influence they think the different populations have upon the toponyms in their communities. Pass out the handout entitled “Placing Place Names.” Students investigate the toponyms of their assigned county by going to the Minnesota Historical Society’s “Minnesota Place Names: A Geographical Encyclopedia” at <http://mnplaces.mnhs.org/upham/index.cfm>. Demonstrate how to navigate the site by looking up the county in which your school is located.

### **Closing:**

Students explain on an exit card the unique toponyms they found in their county and the influence immigrant groups had upon the place names.

## Extension

Students explore Minnesota's current immigrant groups and predict what influence, if any, they might have upon Minnesota's future toponyms.

Students begin by reading the brief historical explanation, "They Came to Minnesota" to identify the impact of immigration located at:

[http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/199905/03\\_gundersond\\_refugees-m/?refid=0](http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/199905/03_gundersond_refugees-m/?refid=0)

Students then research the nations of origin for current immigrants to Minnesota. Students go to "America's Immigrants: County-level Data on the Foreign-born" at <http://maps.gcir.org/> and click on Minnesota and then their county to identify current immigration data. Next, they use the interactive map published by Minnpost at <http://www.minnpost.com/data/2010/02/mapping-immigrant-journey-minnesota>, as well as resources found at the State Demographic Center at <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/immigration.htm>. This can lead to a larger discussion of what influence, if any, recent immigrants have upon place names. Some probing questions include:

1) Should a community be permitted to rename streets or parks to better represent the current community? Why or why not? (For reference students may read and discuss the issue about renaming Lake Calhoun, "A Lake by any other Name", from the Star Tribune, June 14, 2011 at <http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/123883469.html> or about the push to rename areas of Frogtown to Little Mekong, "Rebranding Frogtown in St. Paul", from Daily Planet, April 12, 2010 at <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2010/04/12/rebranding-frogtown-st-paul>

2) Who decides which place names are acceptable and which are not? What is "acceptable" and "not acceptable"?

3) Why are people strongly connected to place names? How are names representative of a culture?

4) Why do place names change? (You may want to discuss the renaming of New Germany, Minnesota during WWI using the brief section in the article, "How Did New Germany Get Its Name" from the Herald Journal at <http://www.newgermanyheraldjournal.com/name-ng.html>

Also, the primary document, "To Strike Germany from Maps of U.S." from The New York Times, archived, June 2, 1918 at <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A06E2DA163EE433A25751C0A9609C946996D6CF>

could be used to enrich the discussion. "The WWI Home Front: War Hysteria & the Persecution of German-Americans" from Authentic History Center, July 1, 2012 may be helpful.

## Extension

Students navigate further into the "Historical Statistical Atlas of the United States, 1890" at <http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701gm.gct00010> to understand the physical and human characteristics of the place. Students may go to information on education (beginning on page 62), religions (beginning on page 65 and page 67 for Minnesota) crops and livestock (beginning on page 98), and manufacturing (beginning on page 111). Students may also access information on disease (beginning page 77) and transportation networks (beginning page 117).

## Assessment

- Class participation
- "Migration to Minnesota in the Past" handout
- "Placing Place Names" handout

## Website Resources:

"Historical Statistical Atlas of the United States, 1890" from the Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701gm.gct00010>

Alternative site to access “Historical Statistical Atlas of the United States, 1890” from Handsome Atlas

<http://www.handsomeatlas.com/us-census-statistical-atlas-1890>

“Minnesota Place Names: A Geographical Encyclopedia” from the Minnesota Historical Society

<http://mnplaces.mnhs.org/>

### **Extension Website Resources:**

“They Came to Minnesota” from Minnesota Public Radio, May 3, 1999

[http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/199905/03\\_gundersond\\_refugees-m/?refid=0](http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/199905/03_gundersond_refugees-m/?refid=0)

“America’s Immigrants: County-level Data on the Foreign-born” from Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees

<http://maps.gcir.org/>

“Mapping the Immigrant Journey to Minnesota”, 02/05/10 from MINNPOST

<http://www.minnpost.com/data/2010/02/mapping-immigrant-journey-minnesota>.

“International Immigration and Foreign-Born Population” from Minnesota State Demographic Center

<http://www.demography.state.mn.us/immigration.htm>

“A Lake by any other Name” from Star Tribune, June 14, 2011

<http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/123883469.html>

“Rebranding Frogtown in St. Paul” from TC Daily Planet, April 12, 2010

<http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2010/04/12/rebranding-frogtown-st-paul>

“How Did New Germany Get Its Name” from Herald Journal

<http://www.newgermanyheraldjournal.com/name-ng.html>

“To Strike Germany from Maps of U.S.” from The New York Times, archived, June 2, 1918

<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A06E2DA163EE433A25751C0A9609C946996D6CF>

“The WWI Home Front: War Hysteria & the Persecution of German-Americans” from Authentic History Center, July 1, 2012

[http://www.authentichistory.com/1914-1920/2-homefront/4-hysteria/19180602\\_Bill\\_to\\_Strike\\_Germany\\_From\\_the\\_US\\_Map.jpg](http://www.authentichistory.com/1914-1920/2-homefront/4-hysteria/19180602_Bill_to_Strike_Germany_From_the_US_Map.jpg)

### **Additional Website Resources on Minnesota’s Recent Immigration**

“Immigration Trends in Minnesota” power point from the Minnesota State Demographic Center

<http://www.demography.state.mn.us/DownloadFiles/immig72103.ppt>

“New Americans in Minnesota” from the Immigration Policy Center

<http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-minnesota>

“A New Age of Immigrants: Making Immigration Work for Minnesota” from the Minneapolis Foundation

<http://www.minneapolisfoundation.org/Uploads/CuteEditor/Publications/Community/Immigrationsummary2010.pdf>

“Just the Facts on Immigration in Minnesota: Joe Friday Comes to St. Paul” from Twin Cities Daily Planet, August 30, 2010

<http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2010/08/30/just-facts-immigration-minnesota-joe-friday-comes-st-paul>

“Becoming Minnesotan” from Minnesota Historical Society

<http://education.mnhs.org/immigration/>

## Placing Place Names

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

For the following Activity navigate to the following website <http://mnplaces.mnhs.org/upham/index.cfm> and select your county in the top left corner of the site.

1. Summarize the history of your county, what role did immigrants play in its development.

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2. Go to section titled “Names From Other Languages or Places” and choose 5 different toponyms that have their origins in the immigrant groups that migrated to the region. What are the names and explain the origins.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are some names that are not based on Immigrant groups but based upon American Indian names?

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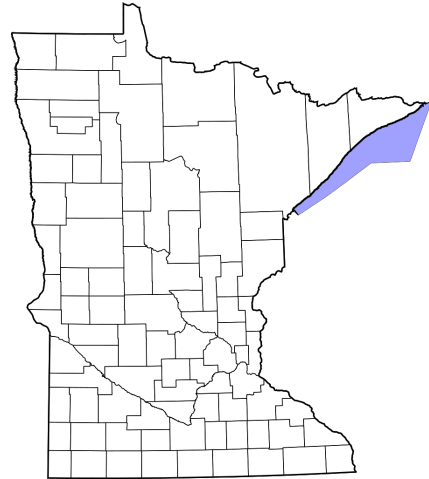
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## Migration to Minnesota in the Past

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_



1. Shade in your county on the Map of Minnesota to the right:

Navigate to the website

<http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701gm.gct00010/#seq-41>  
and once there go to page [plate] 36 to start your research.

2. Which immigrant groups make up the 5 largest groups coming to Minnesota at the end of the 19th century?

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3. Use the next 5 maps to answer, which immigrant groups were the dominant immigrant group in your county during the late 19th century?

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4. Using the other maps from the atlas (avoid using the charts) what are 5 other things you can say about your county during the late 19th century? (avoid using all the same types of map--like listing 5 types crops grown in the region.)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_