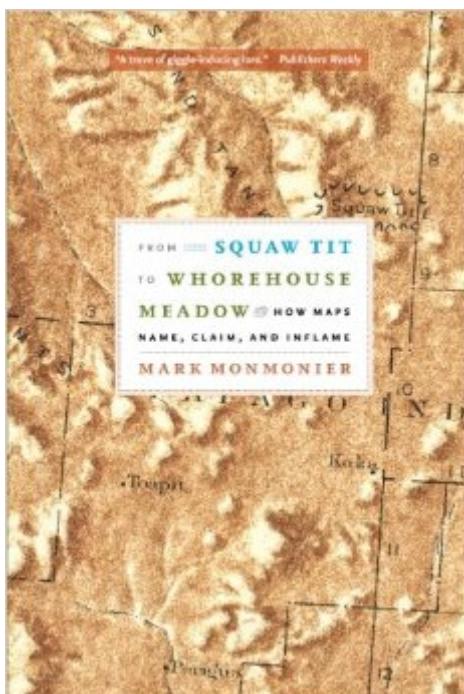


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From Squaw Tit To Whorehouse Meadow: How Maps Name, Claim, And Inflame



Synopsis

Brassiere Hills, Alaska. Mollys Nipple, Utah. Outhouse Draw, Nevada. In the early twentieth century, it was common for towns and geographical features to have salacious, bawdy, and even derogatory names. In the age before political correctness, mapmakers readily accepted any local preference for place names, prizing accurate representation over standards of decorum. But later, when sanctions prohibited local use of racially, ethnically, and scatalogically offensive toponyms, names like Jap Valley, California, were erased from the national and cultural map forever. From Squaw Tit to Whorehouse Meadow probes this little-known chapter in American cartographic history by considering the intersecting efforts to computerize mapmaking, standardize geographic names, and respond to public concern over ethnically offensive appellations. Unlike other books that consider place names, this is the first to reflect on both the real cartographic and political imbroglios they engender. From Squaw Tit to Whorehouse Meadow is Mark Monmonier at his finest: a learned analysis of a timely and controversial subject rendered accessible and even entertaining to the general reader. Engaging . . . a trove of giggle-inducing lore. "Publishers Weekly" [An] excellent book. . . . [Mark Monmonier] is an able populariser of academic geography, and an expert guide to the bureaucratic, legal and political hierarchies that determine how places acquire, change and lose their names. "The Economist" Fascinating. . . . The book will interest anyone who has ever wondered how place names have come to be established by locals, and then come to endure on maps at least until the advance of political correctness. "Susan Gole, Times Higher Education Supplement

Book Information

Paperback: 230 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press (September 15, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226534669

ISBN-13: 978-0226534664

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #452,469 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 in Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Cartography #254 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Geography #330 in Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geography > Regional

Customer Reviews

The best thing about this book seems to be its amusing title. It stars out very technical with 'map terms' and things that would only interest serious cartographers- which I am not. It is very unfortunate, because this book could have been a really interesting narrative on American history and its conscience. Though there are a few interesting examples of words used to describe places or geographic anomalies, the story is quite flat. One read-through of the back cover is all that is needed to know that once in the US there were many places that took the name of 'nipple', 'jap', 'nigger' and 'squaw' which he says is translated loosely to mean 'whore' in many Indian languages. But the background information on these is lacking and the reasons for change are boring. The author obviously knows his subject, and likes to use numbers and facts to support his case, but do we really need to know what number of 'japs' were on a certain State Dept map? The answer is obviously no. It suffices to say that there were any at all, that is is unacceptable. The most interesting parts of the book were the sections discussing naming places in space (like on the moon) and on the sea floor. But this too was thin and just didn't tell much. Much of the book is very repetitive and keeps brining up the few shocking examples of place names as mentioned above. But these spares examples quickly became tiresome and are not enough to base an entire book on! I was really looking forward to finding out new information, but was thoroughly bored and sorry I bought the book. This subject- as this author has attacked it- should have been a journal article and not a book. This is all really unfortunate, because this book could have been so much more.

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