# INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the Preface, I have chosen here to quote at length from Gudde's 1949 Introduction, since the general orientation that he provided for his readers seems to me still of the greatest value. As in the Preface, ellipsis ( . . . ) indicates points where I have deleted some material that is no longer relevant, and brackets mark my interpolations.

THE PROBLEM. Names belong to the oldest elements of human speech. According to some authorities, they even antedate the verbs for eat, drink, sleep, or the nouns for hand, night, or child. Even in most primitive known societies people bore names—usually descriptive of their looks or their characteristics: "the redhead," "the bear killer," "the hunchback." Primitive people also gave names to places. Identifying locations by description was equally as important when humans were merely foragers and hunters as later when they settled down to agricultural pursuits. "Where the strawberries grow," "where the river can be crossed," "where the waters meet"—such primitive place naming we can easily associate with the earliest stages of culture. Descriptive names probably still outnumber all others in geographical nomenclature, although a diversification has been brought about by names arising from incidents, superstitious beliefs, the forming of landed estates, the desire to honor persons, and other causes.

In European countries the investigation into the origin and meaning of geographical names forms a recognized and assiduously studied branch of etymology. In this as in other fields of philology the Germans have been the pioneers and the teachers, although the classical treatise on geographical names, *Words and Places*, was written by an English scholar, Isaac Taylor. The study of place names has proved of greatest importance for the investigation of the primeval periods, which are thoughtlessly called "prehistoric" because their history cannot be studied on the basis of written documents. In 1821 Wilhelm von Humboldt, brother of the better-known Alexander (for whom our Humboldt Bay is named), succeeded in outlining the demarcations, which otherwise have completely disappeared, of an early stage of the settlement of Spain and Portugal solely on the basis of the place names. In many European geographical names we find apparent remnants of languages and dialects otherwise unrecorded, living witnesses of the onetime presence of people of whose language or culture no trace remains. Teutonic and Romanic languages have long since replaced most of the Celtic dialects once spoken in all western Europe, but the names of the Rhine and the Garonne and the Thames still demonstrate what languages were once spoken on their shores. The name Olympus designated a number of high peaks in Greece and Asia Minor, and simply meant "mountain" in whatever

language was spoken in that part of the world before the invading Greeks swept down from the north.

Place-name study in the United States presents a slightly different aspect. The vast majority of our names have been bestowed upon the land within the last few hundred years by explorers, settlers, surveyors, officers of the government, railroad officials. Many of them are descriptive, many are transfer names, or honor our great, or preserve the names of the early settlers; still others owe their origin to an incident or to a misunderstanding, to their pleasant sound, or to artificial coining. With the exception of the names of Indian origin they generally offer few problems to the philologist. The origin, meaning, and application of most of them can be traced. This does not mean that they are less interesting. Our names are an essential part of our living presence, and in their stories are reflected all phases of the nature of the country and of the history of the people. This has been graphically shown in George Stewart's account, *Names on the Land*.

California is especially fortunate in having a rich and diversified nomenclature. Indians who lived here before the coming of the whites, Spanish navigators from aboard their ships, European cosmographers from the narrow confines of their studies, uncouth soldiers and preaching missionaries, Russians and Chinese, French Canadians and Pennsylvania Germans, bawdy miners and hard-working surveyors, postmasters and location engineers, settlers from all states of the Union and from every European country—all have contributed to the names on the California map.

NAMING THE LAND. To include in this Dictionary a full historical account of place naming in California was deemed impractical, but the following sketch will tell briefly how and when our map became dotted with names.

. . . A great many Indian place names, although actually Indian, were not bestowed upon features by the natives but by the white conquerors. Many others arose doubtless when Spanish or Americans misinterpreted Indian words as names of places, and these were then often accepted by the Indians. The first period of European place naming extends from 1542, when Cabrillo sailed as the first navigator along the coast of what is now our state, until 1769, when the Spanish finally settled the country. In this period some of our coastal features were named by explorers and by European map makers, who used the vagueness of California as a geographic conception to indulge in fanciful nomenclature.

In 1769 the land route from Sonora and Lower California was opened up, and the Portolá and Anza expeditions named numerous places along their routes. The padres who accompanied these expeditions had a rather tedious way of applying the name of the saint on or near whose day a certain place was reached. Fortunately the soldiers often applied a name of their own, and many of these names, usually prompted by some incident, were preserved: El Trabuco because they lost a *trabuco* (blunderbuss); Carpinteria because they saw the natives build a boat; El Oso Flaco because they killed a 'lean bear.' In the colonization period which followed, most of the important physical features in Spanish-occupied territory were given names. The names of many of our cities and towns go back to missions, pueblos, and other localities named by civil or ecclesiastical authorities. The monoto-

nous application of saints' names continued, but at the same time many of the Indian names, especially those of rancherias, were preserved. Of the greatest importance in this period were the Spanish and Mexican private land grants through whose *expedientes* and *diseños* hundreds of old names have survived to our day.

Spanish expeditions by sea after 1769, especially those of Bodega and Hezeta, also added to our geographical nomenclature, but these explorations practically ceased with the end of the eighteenth century. A number of exploring expeditions into the interior valley bestowed such important names as Sacramento and San Joaquin, Merced and Mariposa. Of the European and American expeditions, by land and sea, those of Vancouver (1792–94), Beechey (1826–27), and Frémont (1843–47) were of considerable importance for place names. The reports and maps of La Pérouse, Humboldt, the two Kotzebue expeditions, Belcher, Jedediah Smith, Wilkes, and Duflot de Mofras were instrumental in fixing and transmitting many names.

After the American occupation no attempt was made to change the Spanish and Indian names. Some were translated, some were garbled, but on the whole the U.S. Coast Survey, the U.S. Land Office, and other mapping agencies conscientiously kept the names which were current or which were found on maps and in documents. In the meantime the discovery of gold and the rapid infiltration of prospectors into regions of the state outside the old Spanish domain resulted in an entirely new class of names. Many of the Eastern states' names appeared on the map: Mississippi Bar, Virginia Creek, Michigan Bluff; the cosmopolitan composition was attested by the Yankee Hills, the Dutch Flats, the Chinese Camps, the Negro Bars. Colorful, unique, often bawdy names abounded: Henpeck City, Louseville, Petticoat Slide, Pinchemtight, Bloody Gulch, Raggedass Creek. As the settlement of the regions not frozen by the land grants progressed, there appeared the usual array of personal names for first settlers, descriptive names, and transfer names, especially those dear to the American heart like Washington, Lexington, Bunker Hill, Mohawk Valley, Arlington.

Greatly enriched was California geographical nomenclature by the Pacific Railroad Survey (1853–54), the State Geological Survey (1861–73), and the U.S. Geographical Explorations and Surveys West of the 100th Meridian (1875–79). Many of the names of physical features owe their origin or their fixation to the men of these surveys.

Place naming in the subsequent decades followed the common pattern: new communities and subdivisions were named for a promoter, after a town "back East," after a physical feature if it seemed to have some publicity value, or were given a Spanish or supposedly Spanish name, or a manufactured name without any meaning but with a pleasant sound. The coming of the railroad brought new names into existence, often fantastic and farfetched names because the location engineers were not bound by any tradition when they established and named construction camps. The post office usually left the choice with the petitioners, provided they could find a name that would not be confused with one already in use. Our government agencies—Geological Survey, Park Service, Forest Service—in mapping the state depended (and still depend) mainly on local information, and in this manner

placed many interesting names on the map; often they applied a descriptive name or created a cluster name by naming various features after one original place name.

To show when, how, and by whom these names were applied, to tell their meaning, their origin and their evolution, their connection with our national history, their relation to the California landscape and the California people—this is the purpose of the book.

SCOPE AND COMPASS. This book is not a gazetteer. It does not contain all the names in the state, nor does it give the latitude and longitude, or the statistics of the places. The book is also no Baedeker which gives information to the tourist concerning our towns and physical features, our historical monuments and our spots of interest. It is restricted to information pertaining to the names and their application.

The term "place name" should be construed to mean the name of a geographic entity: a city or a railroad station, a lake or a river, a mountain range or a hill, a cape or an island. It has been used in this sense by most writers on geographical nomenclature and may be considered as definitely established. "Place name" is more convenient than "geographical name."

The names in this Dictionary have been drawn chiefly from a composite map of the State comprised of the following: the sheets of the topographical atlas of the U.S. Geological Survey as far as they were published and available on January 1, 1947; the atlas sheets made by the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, of quadrangles not covered by the Geological Survey, the charts of the Coast Survey, the maps of the Forest Service, and the best available county maps for other areas. [The present revised edition adds material from the *Geographical Names Index System* of the U.S. Geological Survey and from the excellent local maps published by the California State Automobile Association and the Automobile Club of Southern California.]

This composite map is the best available and the most official, but it does not present a perfect geographical picture of the state. A large number of names on the atlas sheets are "map names" created by the whim of surveyors or local enthusiasts. The oilmen of the Kettleman Hills would stare in amazement if they were asked what and where is El Hocico or La Cañada Simada or El Arroyo Degollado. A large number of obsolete names are carried on these atlas sheets: the widely known Orinda crossroads in Contra Costa County are designated on the Concord atlas sheet, issued in 1942, as Bryant—a name that disappeared from common speech a generation ago. On the other hand, many locally current names were not recorded by the mapping agencies and many features were left nameless because no generally accepted local name was obtainable at the time the map was made. In spite of my attempt to make this a book of names which are alive and current, it will contain a number of names which are perhaps known only to the man who put them on a map or into a gazetteer. It will also contain a number of names which cannot be found on any map or which differ in location or in spelling. It was not always possible to be entirely consistent in deciding for one spelling or another. In general I followed the principle that misspellings on maps which have become time-honored and locally accepted, like Coleman instead of Kolmer Valley, should not be corrected.

On the other hand, there was no reason to perpetuate obvious mistakes made by editors of topographical atlas sheets, like Hennerville instead of Hunewill. Wherever reliable local information was available, local usage took precedence over "official standing." Here, too, regional research could do much for California place names.

There are probably more than 150,000 place names in California, not counting street names in our cities. From these the most interesting and important names have been selected for individual treatment, and most of the frequently recurring names have been treated in a summary way. Since there is no absolute standard by which to judge the importance or interest of a name, the decision had to be left to the author and his advisers. As "important" are considered the names of all territorial units, such as counties and national domains; inhabited places of a sizable population, especially when connected with a post office or railroad station; the high peaks of our mountain ranges; other elevations which are landmarks or otherwise prominent; all rivers and the larger bays, creeks, and lakes; generally known valleys, canyons, islands, meadows, and gulches; prominent capes and promontories along the coast. In addition to these the book contains the names of numerous minor places and features interesting from the historical or philological point of view, or because their names hide a story of human interest. As important and interesting among folk names have been considered those of frequent recurrence, like Bear, Red, French, or names typically Californian, like Chinese, Fork, Bally. Here too a selection had to be made. Some common descriptive terms, like 'deep' or 'dark', and some derivatives from fauna and flora, like 'frog' or 'poppy', were not treated because no special significance is attached to them.

Since the book is primarily a dictionary of living names, it could not be burdened with the names of thousands of vanished mining camps, names of peaks and rivers and capes once well known, now lost or supplanted. A study of the obsolete and vanished names of the state would be extremely fascinating, but will have to be left for separate publication. Names no longer in use have been listed only if they are of historical, geographical, political, or anthropological interest, or if they honor a pioneer otherwise forgotten. The former name of many a place is mentioned under the entry of the present name.

Excluded are also the names of all streets and features within the areas of our cities, unless they are of more than local importance; also the names of railroads and highways, schools and churches, seamounts and submarine basins, except for a few which have some special geographical significance or could be listed in connection with a more important feature of the same name. A few new subdivisions are listed because they have unique names.

Included, on the other hand, are the names of Spanish and Mexican land grants. Strictly speaking, these are not "place names," but they have played so important a role in our political, legal, and economic history and have so much enriched the nomenclature of California that their inclusion seems justified. The majority of land-grant names will be found under group or folk names, or under the modern name preserving the land-grant name; a smaller number, unique or rare names, have been listed individually; some have been omitted

because they are purely descriptive. There is considerable confusion in these land-grant names because they passed through a number of legal processes. They are given in this book as they are listed in Bowman's Index, that is, as he copied them from the *expedientes;* these sometimes differ from the names as they appear in the cases before the United States courts. Names of unclaimed and unconfirmed grants have been omitted.

STYLE AND METHOD OF PRESENTATION. The order of the entries is alphabetical as determined by the initial letters of the specific part: Pit River, see under Pit, but Point Arena, see Arena, Point; Mount Hilgard, see Hilgard, Mount; The Nipple, see Nipple, The. Descriptive adjectives are naturally considered a part of the specific term: North Bloomfield, see under N. For some places, especially towns, the generic term has become part of the specific name: Fort Bragg, see under F. In Spanish names, the preceding generic term, article, or other modifying particle has been treated as a part of the name: La Panza is listed under L, Santa Barbara under S. For frequently occurring Spanish names, however, all items are grouped together under the specific name: Los Coyotes will be found under C, Arroyo las Pozas under P. In names of land grants which are listed individually the Spanish definite article is entirely omitted, and the name is listed under the initial letter of the first noun, ordinarily the specific term. Cross-references have been given when necessary.

For practical purposes several types of entry have been used besides the simple entry with one name only. The individual names of a "cluster name" are listed in chronological order, as far as is determinable, at the beginning of the entry. A cluster name signifies a number of names which were applied to various features in the same locality after one original name (*see* Kaiser). Where a number of features were named for the same reason or after one original feature, but at different times and in different districts, the story of each name is told separately but all are grouped together, again chronologically, in one paragraph. These may be called "group names" (*see* Golden Gate). As for common names of frequent occurrence, the meaning, significance, and frequency of the name are given and added as separate entries, but in the same paragraph are those of special interest (*see* Corral). These are called "folk names" in this book—a term used by George R. Stewart.

The length of the entry naturally does not always correspond to the importance of the place or feature. A small hill with an etymologically interesting name may require many times the space given to the name of a majestic peak. Names applied in the broad daylight of history require less space than names whose origin is lost in the dusk before the coming of the white man.

For names which date back to former centuries, or went through a process of evolution, or were repeatedly changed, I have endeavored to give the first recording or mentioning of the name, variants important to the final version, and former names which lasted for some time or were officially applied.

Every attempt was made to treat uniformly all areas of the state, but a certain unevenness could not be avoided. Regions in which the names have already received special attention and territorial units whose officials supported the undertaking will naturally come closer to

adequate presentation than others. A similar unevenness will be noticeable in the treatment of less important individual names. Big names for which special research was undertaken will be found treated in fairly even proportions. Many a small name, however, was included because information about it was available, whereas an equally important (or unimportant) name was omitted because the obscurity of its origin could not be penetrated.

Each entry was written as an entity. Failure to mention other interpretations or explanations of a name does not mean that I was unaware of them. Where different versions of the meaning and origin of a name seem plausible and logical or are supported by some evidence, they are naturally given, even if they do not sound entirely convincing. But notions of the believers in Indian princesses or products of dictionary etymologists are properly kept out.

The pronunciation given is that of the present day. Our place names are a part of our language, and the spoken idiom is a living thing which undergoes slight variations from generation to generation and changes perceptibly from century to century. Pronunciations, when given, represent actual usage of the present time. In other words, this dictionary records what people say, and does not presume to tell them what they should say. In frontier times the Grizzly Peaks were probably Grizzler Peaks since "grizzler" was the common designation for the animal; the name of the state must often have been pronounced Californy; but such pronunciations are not used today. The name Los Angeles had a fully Spanish pronunciation in Spanish and Mexican times, but it has long since become Americanized. Del Norte is a Spanish name, to be sure, but the people of Del Norte County say del nôrt′. There is often a marked difference in the pronunciation of a name by the older and by the younger generation—Tulare: to͞o lâr′ ē, to͞o lâr′. Names which are found in various sections of the state, like Cañada or Coyote, differ naturally according to locality. Usually, names of Spanish origin will be found less Americanized in the southern counties than elsewhere. Sometimes two pronunciations are given, the first being the one most likely to win out. Where no pronunciation is indicated, it may usually be assumed that the common American way prevails. For some names, especially of out-of-the-way places, no pronunciation could be given because no information was obtainable, or because the information from different sources was too contradictory to permit a conclusion. Extensive field work will be required to establish the definite pronunciation of many California place names. The pronunciation of the names of land grants which have not otherwise survived as place names is not indicated.

In general, the location given in brackets after the name is the county, or a well-defined area such as San Francisco Bay [or a National Park or Monument]. . . .

The spellings of Indian names are given as they are found in documents and on maps. Since the natives had no alphabet and could not spell out their names, the Spaniards and later the Americans wrote each name as it sounded to them. Spelling variants, of which there were often as many as a dozen, are given only where they have some bearing on the final evolution of the name, or where they are of etymological interest.

Older versions of Spanish names are likewise quoted as they appear in sources. Their spelling does not always correspond with present-day standards. Initial *y* was almost invariably used for *I*; *s* was usually used instead of *z*; *v* and *b*, and often *ll* and *y*, were used interchangeably. The accent mark was used sporadically in documents, never on maps; on Costansó's *Carta Reducida*, it was inserted by a later hand. [In this revised edition, accents are written in accordance with modern Spanish orthography, as a guide to modern readers, even though the accents may have been absent in the original documents.]

SUMMARY OF SOURCES. Rich manuscript material was at my disposal and was gratefully used: the compilations of the Northern California Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration; the place-name files of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway System and of the Death Valley National Monument; the files of C. Hart Merriam, of Thomas B. Doyle, of Linnie Marsh Wolfe, of the State Geographic Board; the field copies of Farquhar's and Kroeber's monographs and of the first two editions of Davidson's Coast Pilot; the Bowman Index and the *diseños* of the land grants in the U.S. District Court; the George Davidson papers and correspondence; some of Charles Hoffmann's field notes; the originals or transcripts of numerous manuscripts in the Bancroft Library. These sources are described in the Glossary and Bibliography. At my disposal also were more than one thousand questionnaires containing local information gathered from rangers, surveyors, postmasters, librarians, teachers, county officials, and local historians.

In comparison with the abundance of unpublished material, the number of printed works dealing with place names is meager. The names in the larger part of the Sierra Nevada have been treated by Farquhar, the etymology of many of our Indian names is given by Kroeber, and Wagner's *Cartography* contains a wealth of information on the existing or obsolete names bestowed upon the coast by explorers before 1800. Nellie van de Grift Sanchez's *Spanish and Indian Place Names* is well known.

The only attempt to cover the entire state in a scholarly manner is Phil Townsend Hanna's *The Dictionary of California Land Names*, a broadly conceived work with much interesting information. There are other books, less comprehensive than Mr. Hanna's, which list the interesting and romantic names of the entire state: Thomas Brown, *Colorful California Names;* Laura McNary, *California Spanish and Indian Place Names;* Harry L. Wells, *California Names*, and others.

It seems strange that very few attempts have been made to investigate the names within the limits of a region. Gertrude A. Steger, however, has done an excellent piece of work with the geographical names of Shasta County, and Roscoe D. Wyatt has rendered a similar service to San Mateo County. William M. Maule has done first-class work on the names of the Carson, Walker, and Mono basins, Terry E. Stephenson on the names of Orange County, Elmer G. Still on those of the Livermore district, and Paul Parker on those of the Monterey district. [Regional studies published since 1969 and used as sources for the fourth edition include works on the Eastern Sierra, the Lake Tahoe region, Yosemite National Park,

and the Sierra Nevada (from Alpine County to Walker Pass), as well as place-name books for the following counties: Alameda, Humboldt, Kern, Marin, Monterey, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Siskiyou, Trinity, and Ventura. Bibliographical references are given in the Glossary and Bibliography at the end of this book.]

Among printed books not directly concerned with place names the most valuable as source material are the reports and diaries of the early explorers, and after the American occupation the reports of the various government agencies. The accounts and journals of travelers and a number of the county histories, particularly the older ones, yielded good material. However, for most of our entries, the information had to be pieced together from manuscripts and maps, local information and county histories, post-office directories and railroad reports, dictionaries and gazetteers.

Maps deserve a special note because they are a most valuable source for historical geography. They do not tell, at least not directly, the meaning and origin of a geographical name, but they are all-important for the application, evolution, and perpetuation of a name. In modern times, to be sure, the names of post offices, railroad stations, and incorporated towns are official and no map maker would undertake to change them. With the publication of the charts of the Coast Survey and the sheets of the topographical atlas by the Geological Survey the name of physical features, too, become fixed, and official if confirmed by decision of the Geographic Board. But as long as the geography of the country was, so to speak, in a liquid state, the fate of a name was more or less determined by the cartographers. No matter how solemnly and ceremoniously a mountain or a cape was christened, the name would not last unless an influential map maker recorded it.

For the earlier periods those maps were quoted which because of their influence and popularity were responsible for the application, fixation, and changing of names along the coast, especially those reproduced or described by Kohl, Nordenskiöld, and Wagner. The many local *planos*, mostly unpublished, which originated after 1769 in California directly, and most of the *diseños* of the land grants, were likewise examined. For the period of transition the most important general maps were those of European or American explorers: Vancouver, La Pérouse, Humboldt, Beechey, Wilkes, Duflot de Mofras, Frémont. After the American occupation the most influential maps in fixing the nomenclature of the state were the charts of the Coast Survey, the maps of the Pacific Railroad Survey, Eddy's official map of the state, the Land Office maps, some private maps like those of Trask and Gibbes, and later those of Goddard and Bancroft. In the 1870s were published the important though uncompleted maps of the State Geological (Whitney) Survey, and later those of the U.S. Survey West of the 100th Meridian (Wheeler). In modern times it is the mapping of the U.S. Geological Survey, the Forest Service, and the War Department, together with the continued activity of the Coast Survey, which is mainly responsible for our geographical nomenclature—if not for its origin, at least for its application.

Californians can take pride in the first three editions of Gudde's *California Place Names*, as one of the most detailed and accurate of the state place-name dictionaries existing in the United States and as a priceless resource for our geographical, historical, and linguistic knowledge of the state's toponymy. I have endeavored to follow in Gudde's footsteps and to make this revised edition a worthy successor to those that preceded it.

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*Boulder, Colorado, November 1996*