"County Names Deep-Rooted in Both Fame and Infamy"
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Clues to the history of an area are frequently found in the names succeeding generations of residents have used for specific locations or features.

That is certainly true locally where a study of names on the Franklin County map yields a wealth of local legend and lore.

Most of the towns, townships, and many of the creeks in the county have been named after people—both the famous and not so famous.

More specifically, these places have been named for people who were white and male. White males traditionally have done the christening, and consequently, chauvinistically, have named places after themselves and other white males.

To this writer's knowledge, not a single location in this county has been named for a woman.

The list of Franklin County namesakes begins appropriately enough with Dr. Benjamin Franklin. Ours is just one of 25 counties in the United States named for this founding father and inventive wizard.

The township and town of Richmond honors early founder John C. Richmond, while Cutler township remembers pioneer settler C.C. Cutler. Although never a resident here, Alfred B. Greenwood also has a township named in his honor. As the Commissioner of Indian Affairs between 1859 and 1861, he had the Sac-Fox Indian agency in the western part of the county named for him first.

President Lincoln is remembered with Lincoln Township, which would suggest Harrison and Hayes townships were named for presidents Benjamin Harrison and Rutherford B. Hayes.

Well, maybe. Actually those two townships acquired their names before either man became president. But both were Civil War generals and may have been honored in that regard anyway.

Little is known about Mr. Wells and Mr. Richter from whom we get the place names of Wellsville and Richter. But both were connected with the railroads that put those two communities on the map, illustrating the important role railroads have played in the county's history.

Tiny Imes was also a rail stop and named for the town's station agent, postmaster and its storekeeper. Harmon Imes wore all three hats.

Since James Harvey Ransom was the founder of Ransomville, it would stand to reason that a Mr. Williams would have been the father of Williamsburg.

Not so. For some reason, William Schofield preferred using his first name for his town.

Two other Franklin County towns named for people reflect the politics of the early settlers. Lane was named for General James Lane, who was one of the leaders of the fight to make Kansas a free state, while Rantoul honors an early Massachusetts legislator, Robert Rantoul, who also was an anti-slavery leader.

A few creeks in the region preserve the names of some of Franklin County's earliest settlers. Perhaps the most interesting is a branch of Middle Creek known as Brown's Run, along which several sons of notorious John Brown settled in 1855.

The names of various Indian tribes that have lived in this area also appear prominently on the county map. The towns, townships and creeks named Ottawa, Peoria and Pottawatomie

immediately come to mind. There is also a Sac Creek in the western part of the county and the beautiful Chippewa Hills were once part of the reserve of that tribe.

A few Indian chiefs also have been remembered. Chief Appanoose of the Sac-Fox tribe is reportedly buried along Appanoose Creek in Appanoose Township. Likewise, Chief Hardfish, also a Sac-Fox, is buried near Hardfish Creek.

Then there is also that good old Indian name of Wilson. That's right, Wilson. Chief John Wilson of the Ottawa tribe is remembered by Wilson Creek and Wilson Street in North Ottawa.

Many of the creeks in the county are simply named after features in nature such as trees, soil composition, or living things. Hickory, Walnut, Sand, Mud, Rock, Turkey, Wolf, and Mosquito Creeks are examples.

For a little bit of style, we also have the town of "The Wolf," given in French as LeLoup, and an ancient legend says French trappers named the Marais des Cygnes says French tappers named the Marais des Cygnes River. The latter's actual translation is "Marsh of the Swans."

A few places in the county are named after places elsewhere. Princeton was named by one fellow after his hometown of Princeton, Ill., while Ohio Township obviously is named after the state. The community of Emerald in the far southwest corner of the county commemorates the "Emerald Isle" of the area's Irish pioneer families.

Other places of notable origins include Silkville and Centropolis. The former community was, of course, named for the silk-producing commune that existed there between 1869 and the mid 1880s. Centropolis' promoters hoped to make their town a "central metropolis," hence, the name.

And Pomona, named in honor of the Greek goddess of fruit because of the vast orchards established with the founding of the town and township. The county fathers finally honored a woman—but chose a mythical one.

In response to the old question, "What's in a name?" study a map of Franklin County and you may find a new answer—a lot of history.