

**MOUNTAINS OF ALLEGHENIES: A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT THE NON
EDUCATIONAL USAGE OF THE ALLEGHENY BRAND**

from research conducted for the dissertation

**SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST? THE REBRANDING
OF WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION**

this section was eliminated from the final version of Chapter 9

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MOUNTAINS OF ALLEGHENIES

Stretching from New York to North Carolina, the name Allegheny and its variant spellings pepper the United States map. For example, Pennsylvania is home to Allegheny County. Maryland and New York have counties named Allegany. Farther south, Virginia and North Carolina each sport an Alleghany County. As with the varied spelling, the exact origin and the original meaning of “Allegheny” were unknown. Although a Native American derivation is most certain, the original word identified as “Oolikhanna” has been variously credited to the Delaware, Algonquin, Cherokee, Seneca, and Proto-Iroquoian languages and dialects. Of its definition, some have suggested the following: “best river,” “fine river,” “cold river,” “swift river,” “beautiful river,” “endless or boundless mountains,” “the great warpath,” and simply a name derived from the homeland of the Allegwi (a supposed northern branch of the Cherokee tribe). Whatever the source, the name was adopted first by the French and later by the English who applied it to the mountains and the river that now bear the name (Errett, 1885; “Maryland Local Governments,” 2002; Mooney, 1975; Stephens, 1921; Taylor, 1898).

Because of its geographical connection, the Allegheny appellation is extremely well known and its usage is widespread. The name has been applied to numerous locations far beyond the extent of its original usage. Additionally, Allegheny and its variants are in use in Eastern Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Michigan, Colorado, Oregon, and California. In the early history of the United States, Americans measured westward expansion based on being the first in some category or another located west of the Alleghenies.

A western arm of the Appalachian Range, the Allegheny Mountains' eastern slope begins with an escarpment known as the Allegheny Front. To its west, the chain culminates as it merges into the Allegheny Plateau. Although some of the individual names have changed over time, the Allegheny range has contained five summits that have shared a similar name: Great Allegheny Mountain and Little Allegheny Mountain (PA & MD), Allegheny Heights (MD), Back Allegheny Mountain (WV), and Allegheny Mountain (WV & VA)(Cramer, 2007; U.S. Board on Geographic Names, 2006). At the southern edge of the Allegheny Mountains in Virginia, there is a region called the Alleghany Highlands that encompasses the Virginia counties of Alleghany and Bath, and the independent cities of Covington and Clifton Forge ("Welcome to the Alleghany Highlands," 2007).

There are numerous trails named for the mountains. The Allegheny Trail traverses West Virginia and Virginia, an Alleghany Trail is located in North Carolina, and even California has an Alleghany Trail ("Alleghany Trail," 2007; "Alleghany Trail," n.d.; "Allegheny Trail," n.d.). Other trails using the name include the Lake Erie-Alleghany Trail (McDonnell, n.d.) in New York, the Great Allegheny Passage (2006) connecting Cumberland, MD to Pittsburgh, PA, and the Allegheny Highlands Trail (2005) between Cumberland and Washington, DC. Additionally, there is a residential community in Illinois named "Alleghany Trail at Village Station" (Residential Homes of America, 2006). Although more active than a hiking or biking trail, the Pennsylvania Turnpike (2006) has two references to the name: The Allegheny Mountain Tunnel and the Allegheny Valley exit along the Allegheny River.

With headwaters in the Allegheny Mountains, the Allegheny River provides drainage for a large portion of the Allegheny Plateau. The Allegheny's watershed is home to the Allegheny Reservoir, Allegheny National Forest, Allegany State Park, Allegheny Islands State Park, and the Allegany Reservation. Municipalities within the river's basin include the following: the Town of Allegany, NY; the Village of Allegany, NY; Allegany Township, PA; and Port Allegany, PA. Pennsylvania is home to six townships named Allegheny; three are in the Allegheny River basin and three are located within the Allegheny Mountains (U.S. Board on Geographic Names, 2006). Until its annexation in 1907, Pittsburgh's North Side was a separate municipality named Allegheny City.

Situated at the mouth of the Allegheny River, Allegheny City was Pennsylvania's third largest city up to the time it was absorbed by Pittsburgh (Evening Record, 1897; Writers Program of the WPA, 1941). By annexing Allegheny City, Pittsburgh jumped from the 12th largest to the seventh largest city in the United States at the time (Brown, 2006). In honor of Allegheny City, Dr. Max Wolfe and Dr. F. K. Arnold Schwassmann of the University of Heidelberg, Germany named a main belt asteroid they discovered in 1900 as "457 Alleghenia." They chose the name as it was the first new asteroid they identified using a state-of-the-art 16-inch doublet lens system developed by John A. Brashear of the Allegheny Observatory in Allegheny City. The number signified that it was the 457th asteroid to be tracked (Brashear, 1924; NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, 2007).

Astronomy was not the only science that has adopted the Allegheny name. It was used also in geology, ecology, and the natural sciences as well. In studying the formation

of the Appalachian Mountains in the Mid Atlantic Region, geologists have estimated that the last major geologic event to occur in this region was the Alleghenian Orogeny. Also called the Alleghenian Age, the Alleghenian Orogeny occurred when the proto North American continent named Laurentia collided with the northwest section of what is now Africa and then a part of the super continent named as Gondwana. Estimated by geologists to have occurred between 250 and 320 million years ago, the Alleghenian Orogeny was credited to creating much of the geology of the region including the formation of the Allegheny Mountains and the Valley and Ridge Province of Appalachia (Fichter & Baedke, 1999). Related to this event was the formation of coal seams in the region known as the “Allegheny formation.” The Allegheny formation contains at least six coal beds that are deep and thick enough to be of good quality, yet are still accessible to be able to be worked (Campbell, 1907). The formation also contains a repeating mixture of shale, sandstone, and limestone adjacent to the coal beds (McNees, McCreath, & Rice, 1908).

Related to the geologic formations, naturalist C. Hart Merriam defined a number of biomes of North America that he termed as “life zones.” One of these, a transitional zone, was called the Alleghenian (occasionally spelled Alleghanian) Life Zone. Based upon humidity and altitude, the Alleghenian Life Zone contains conditions where southern and northern plant and animal species coexist. This life zone extends far beyond the Allegheny range stretching south into Georgia, north into New England and Canada, and west to the Dakotas (Merriam, 1894 & 1898).

In addition to the life zone, the Allegheny name has also been applied to flora and fauna as well. These include the following plants: Allegheny blackberry (*Rubus*

allegheniensis Porter), Allegheny chinkapin (*Castanea pumila*), Allegheny foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), Allegheny monkey flower (*Mimulus ringens*), Allegheny pachysandra also known as Allegheny spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*), the Allegheny serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis* Wieg.), and a hybrid shrub simply known as Alleghany (*Viburnum x rhytidophylloides*) (Burrell, 1999; Dirr & Alexander, 1979; National Resources Conservation Service, 2007a & b; North Carolina Botanical Garden, n.d.; U.S. National Arboretum, 2003, Winkles, 2006). In addition, numerous species of animals have Allegheny designations as well. The list includes the following: the Allegheny cave amphipod (*Stygobromus allegheniensis*), Allegheny mound ant (*Formica exsectoides*), Allegheny Mountain dusky salamander (*Desmognathus ochrophaeus* Forel.), Allegheny woodrat (*Neotoma magister*), Alleghenian varying hare (*Americanus virginianus*), and the Alleghenian wood hare (*Sylvaticus transitionalis* Bangs.) (Enature, 2005; Nolan, 1898; Ohio State University, n.d.; & Wildlife Management Service, 2001).

One of the more interesting creatures with the Allegheny name was a large aquatic salamander found in the creeks and rivers of Mississippi watershed, which includes the Allegheny River and its tributaries. Although the species actual name is the Eastern hellbender, a common name for the amphibian is the Allegheny alligator (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*). As North America's largest salamander, an adult of the species can grow to up to nearly 29 inches in length and weigh as much as five pounds. The Allegheny name was applied when French naturalists Sonninni and Latreille first identified the critter in 1801 as *la salamandre des monts Alleganis* or Allegheny Mountain Salamander (Blumer, 2006; Lamey, 2005).

Despite all of the aforementioned public domain uses of the Allegheny name, there are numerous applications of the name in business and commerce. Some of the miscellaneous instances include the 1939 John Wayne movie “Allegheny Uprising,” the 1956 Patti Page hit record “Allegheny Moon,” and the Allegheny Class of locomotive (“Allegheny Uprising,” 2007; Hoffman & Manning, 1956). Built by the Lima Locomotive Works, the Chesapeake and Ohio Rail Road had 60 Allegheny class steam engines in service in the 1940s and 1950s. C & O used this powerful engine to haul coal over the Allegheny Mountains for the railroad’s Allegheny Division (“The Allegheny Type,” 2007).

To determine the number of businesses, schools, and agencies that bear the name, a search of business phone numbers using the Switchboard Digital Directory produced many examples. By conducting a search of entities that have Allegheny anywhere in their name, Switchboard returned 1,657 examples of businesses, schools, and governmental agencies that used Allegheny in some form or fashion. The search, which was conducted on June 26, 2007, used Pittsburgh as the geographical center. Pittsburgh was selected for the following reasons: a) it is the seat of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania; b) the Allegheny River’s terminus is at Pittsburgh; and c) many businesses on the city’s North Side continue to use Allegheny in their name because it was the former Allegheny City. In addition, search parameters were set to the highest mileage radius permitted: 100 miles.

While Switchboard only allowed for 100 miles as the highest mileage radius, altering the search coding in the URL permitted the researcher to search beyond this limitation. Two hundred miles produced 1,835 examples, 300 returned 1,917, and 400

miles produced only a handful of additional entries with a number of 1,930. The majority of examples occurred within 100 miles of Pittsburgh. While this search only queried the more common variation of Allegheny, the other variations of Allegany and Alleghany were not included.

To determine a total number of usages with the alternate spellings of Allegheny, the other variations were also searched via Switchboard. In most cases, the 100 mile radius was employed and all searches were conducted on June 26, 2007. Using Allegany County, Maryland's seat of Cumberland as the geographic center, the search of Allegany returned 472 businesses and agencies. A similar search of Allegany using the Allegany County, New York seat of Belmont as the geographic center produced 303 results. The mileage area was large enough to cover both the Town and Village of Allegany in Cattaraugus County, NY; Allegany County, NY, and Port Allegany in McKean County, PA.

Two searches were conducted of the Alleghany name by using Covington, Virginia and Sparta, North Carolina as geographic centers. Both cities are the county seats of their respective state's Alleghany Counties. Since Covington and Sparta are 158 miles distant, the mileage parameter was adjusted to 75 miles to prevent any overlap. The Virginia search produced 84 businesses and agencies, while the North Carolina search returned 113 examples.

With business searches of the three variations of Allegheny, Switchboard produced at least 2,911 entities using the name. This does not take into consideration of the spurious usage of the name outside the aforementioned five counties' spheres of influence, nor does it account for entities in the past that used the name. In the litigation

with Allegheny College, Allegheny University of Health Sciences pointed to the large number of businesses using the Allegheny name as a defense of its right to the Allegheny brand. One Allegheny College administrator recalled,

This was used against us in the Allegheny University case. Their lawyers, and I think they might have taken out the phone book, said, “Look at this – there are dozens of things called Allegheny.” I simply said “yes, and that’s fine. We don’t have any problems with those; because, in the higher education realm, if you have a client that says my child goes to Allegheny, there’s only one thing that should refer to and that’s the difference.” I think that was a powerful issue and I think that caused them to stop and think that maybe their case wasn’t as strong as they thought.

With the Allegheny name having been applied to nearly 3,000 businesses and agencies; as well as to, animals; plants; an ecological system; a geological event and its formations; several municipalities; five counties; a river; individual mountains; the mountain range; and even an asteroid; one must conclude that the Allegheny identification is indeed broad and extensive. It is of little wonder that Washington Irving suggested in 1829 that the country be renamed as the “United States of Alleghenia” (Biggers, 2006; Marcou, 1893).

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