

# ГРАМАТИКА ТА ІСТОРІЯ МОВИ

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## STRUCTURAL MODELS OF MULTI-COMPONENT NICKNAMES OF AMERICAN CITIES AND TOWNS

**Зосімова О.В.** Структурні моделі полікомпонентних прізвиськ американських міст. Топоніми-прізвиська належать до особливо цікавих феноменів у сфері неофіційних найменувань. Популярність цього різновиду власних назв в англomовній традиції, високий ступінь інформативності, зокрема їхня етнокультурна значущість, зумовлює потребу ретельного дослідження цієї групи пропріальної лексики. За кількістю складників (повнозначних слів) відповідні оніми поділяються на два основні структурні типи: однокомпонентні (без урахування артиклів) та полікомпонентні. Метою цієї статті є визначення особливостей будови полікомпонентних прізвиськ міст США. До найбільш поширених структурних моделей розглянутих топонімів належать: 'прикметник + іменник', 'іменник + іменник' та '(означення) іменник + of + іменник'. Інші прийменникові конструкції, сполучення іменників із дієприкметниками та присвійними займенниками представлені значно меншою кількістю прізвиськ американських міст. Найбільш продуктивними складниками досліджуваних онімів є лексеми 'city' та 'capital'. Сполучення цих слів із різними типами означень характеризують міста як центри певної промисловості, бізнесу чи іншої діяльності, а також акцентують увагу на їхній історії, культурі, географії, кліматі, архітектурі тощо. Перспективи дослідження неофіційної топонімії США вбачаємо в розгляді мотивації прізвиськ американських міст та штатів, що поглибить наші уявлення про особливості фізичної та економічної географії країни, її історію, культуру, спосіб життя, традиції та звичаї американців і своєрідність національного світобачення.

**Ключові слова:** неофіційний топонім, прізвисько, структурна модель, полікомпонентний, означення.

**Зосімова О.В.** Структурные модели поликомпонентных прозвищ американских городов. В статье рассмотрены особенности строения неофициальных топонимов США. К основным структурным моделям поликомпонентных прозвищ американских городов можно отнести: 'прилагательное + существительное', 'существительное + существительное' и '(определение) существительное + of + существительное'. Наиболее продуктивными составляющими исследуемых онимов являются лексемы 'city' и 'capital'. Сочетания этих слов с разными типами определений характеризуют города США как центры какой-либо промышленности, бизнеса или другой деятельности, а также акцентируют внимание на их культурных особенностях, истории, географии, климате, архитектуре и т.п.

**Ключевые слова:** неофициальный топоним, прозвище, структурная модель, поликомпонентный, определение.

**Zosimova O.V.** Structural Models of Multi-Component Nicknames of American Cities and Towns. The article deals with the structure of informal place names in the USA. The main structural models of multi-component nicknames of American cities and towns include: 'Adjective + Noun', 'Noun + Noun' and '(Attribute) Noun + of + Noun'. The most productive constituent elements of the multi-component nicknames are the words 'city' and 'capital'. Their combinations

with different types of modifiers characterize the US cities and towns as centres of a particular industry, business or another activity as well as highlight their distinguishing cultural features, historical events, geography and climate, architecture, etc.

**Keywords:** informal place name, nickname, structural model, multi-component, attribute (modifier).

Nicknames are names substituted “for the proper name of a person, place, etc., as in affection, ridicule, or familiarity” [9]. According to George Earle Shankle, Americans use more nicknames than any other peoples today. They give them to their wives, husbands, children, friends, enemies, and to almost every object they see or use. No name is “too sacred or too base for them to shorten or modify into an affectionate, humorous, or abusive sobriquet” [10: III]. Nicknames for geographical objects, towns and cities in particular, give an insight into their “historical development, into humorous civic and personal struggles, or into the commercial and social development of these places” [10: III].

Although alternative place names have long been of interest to culturologists, sociologists, historians and many other scholars, their linguistic features still need a comprehensive study from the point of view of the nickname structure, semantics, motivation and functions.

It should be noted that, in comparison with informal anthroponymy, the place names in question are often just mentioned or briefly characterized within the surveys of nicknames of a particular country or language community (see, e.g., works of O. Leonovich [2: 11-12], O. Tytarenko [3: 9], G. Tomakhin [4: 212], etc.). V. Kanna analyzes some US state and city nicknames in the context of the research of “connotative toponyms” (place names) as a special type of proper names [1: 12].

The aim of this study is to identify and describe the main structural models of multi-component nicknames of the US cities and towns.

According to the number of components (notional words) the onyms under discussion are divided into two basic structural types: single-component (excluding articles) and multi-component ones [12: 137-138]. Most American city and town nicknames are multi-component constructions. The structural model “Adjective + Noun” is quite popular among them, e.g.: *The Windy City (Chicago)*, *The Tall City (Midland)*, *The International City (Long Beach)*, *The Magic City (Birmingham, Alabama)*, *The Smoky City (Pittsburgh)*, etc. As we can see, the main component of this structure is the word *City* modified (preceded) by an adjective that describes some distinguishing features of a certain geographical object. These structural models can also comprise a place name (often the official name of another town or city) and an adjective-modifier, e.g.: *Little Chicago (Sioux City)* – because of its reputation during the Prohibition years for being a purveyor of alcoholic beverages or because many gangsters from Chicago used to come here “to escape the heat” [6; 11]; *New Amsterdam (New York)* – due to the original name of the Dutch colony prior to the English capture and renaming in 1665 [11]; *The Modern Gomorrah (New York)* – referring to the sinfulness and organized crime of Manhattan, first popularized by Reverend Thomas De Witt Talmage in 1875 at the Brooklyn Tabernacle [11]; *The Black Mecca (Atlanta)* – Atlanta has long been known as a centre of black wealth, political power and culture and a cradle of the Civil Rights Movement [11].

The most productive components of the construction “Adjective + Noun” are probably names of different fruits modified by the adjective *big*. By analogy with *Big Apple* (*New York*) a wide range of similar nicknames were coined in the US. They are *The Big Orange* (*Los Angeles*), *The Big Pineapple* (*Honolulu*), *Big Strawberry* (*Garden Grove*), *Big Tomato* (*Sacramento*), etc. The name of the once-traditional Philadelphia dish, consisting of bacon chopped up and mixed with cornmeal, and fried in cakes, forms a part of the city nickname *The Big Scrapple* [8; 11]. The component *little* is much less frequent in the construction “Adjective + Noun”, e.g. in the nickname for Manhattan, Kansas – *The Little Apple*. The component *apple* also ‘inspired’ the appearance of *The Mini Apple* – the nickname for *Minneapolis* that is based on its similarity to the phonetic form of the official city name.

Sometimes the noun phrase can contain two adjectives, like in the nickname *Great Commercial Tree* (*Chicago*). Two attributes in the moniker for *Ault* are the result of interpreting the official name of the town as an ‘abbreviation’: *A Unique Little Town*. It should be noted that this technique of forming a nickname is not characteristic of American informal place names. In most cases abbreviating takes place (see, e.g., O. Zosimova [12: 139-140]).

Quite rarely inversion occurs in the informal place names of this group, e.g. *The City Beautiful* (*Chicago, Coral Gables, etc.*), *The City Different* (*Santa Fe*).

Participles of different types (in combination with determiners) can also be parts of the nickname noun phrases, e.g.: *The Melting Pot* (*New York*), *Rumbling Waters* (*Wetumpka, Alabama*), *The Preferred City* (*Prattville, Alabama*); *That Toddlng Town* (*Chicago*).

One of the most productive constructions among the city and town multi-component nicknames is the structure “Noun + Noun”. The combinations of the noun *city* (*town, capital*) as a head word with some attributive noun constitute the bulk of the place names of this type. The attributive noun usually characterizes a particular city or town in some aspect: it points out the distinguishing features of its industry and business (*Bristol – Clock City, Naugatuck – Rubber City, Willimantic – Thread City, New Castle – Fireworks Capital, Hershey – Chocolate Town, Green Forest – Tomato Capital, Nashville – Peach Capital, Hartford – Insurance City*), climate (*Seattle – Rain City, San Francisco – Fog City, Superior – Soup Town*), geography, nature and cityscape (*Richmond – The River City, Spokane – The Lilac City, Campbell – The Orchard City, Bridgeport – The Park City, Indianapolis – Circle City, Baltimore – Monument City*), its history, culture and education (*Findlay – Flag City, Albuquerque – The Duke City, Philadelphia – Quaker City, Salem – The Witch City, New York – The Empire City, Bloomington – University City, Fall River – Scholarship City*). The attributive noun can be connected with the meaning of the official name of a city, e.g.: *The Discovery City* – the nickname for *Columbus, Ohio* named after the famous Italian explorer Christopher Columbus whose voyages led to the first lasting European contact with the Americas.

The structural model with the attribute expressed by a noun in the Possessive Case is less frequently used. The noun in question is usually, but not necessarily, a proper name, e.g.: *Plymouth – America’s Hometown, Atlantic City – America’s Playground, Burlington Township – The Falcon’s Nest*. Possessive forms of nouns are

more often used in the three-component constructions which also contain adjectives or other attributive elements, e.g.: *Deltona – Florida’s Bright Spot*, *Phoenix – Arizona’s Urban Heart*, *New Orleans – America’s European Masterpiece*, *Reedley – The World’s Fruit Basket*, *San Francisco – Everybody’s Favorite City*, *Rehoboth Beach – The Nation’s Summer Capital*, *Kanab – Utah’s Little Hollywood*.

The adjectives in question are often used in their superlative forms expressing the highest degree of a particular quality attributed to a city or town: *San Diego – America’s Finest City*, *New Orleans – America’s Most Interesting City*, *West Haven – Connecticut’s Friendliest City*, and *Hilo – America’s Wettest City* etc. It should be noted that even absolute (non-gradable) adjectives, that are generally not capable of being intensified or compared, in the nicknames under discussion can be used in the superlative form, e.g.: *Jerome – America’s Most Vertical City*, *New Orleans – America’s Most European City*. The model “Numeral (both cardinal and ordinal) + Noun” is represented by very few examples among the US city and town nicknames, e.g.: *New York – The Five Boroughs*, *Chicago – Second City*.

It seems that *The Big Easy (New Orleans)* is the only nickname formed by combining two adjectives. It was possibly a reference by musicians in the early 20th century to the relative ease of finding work there. It also may have originated in the Prohibition era, when the city was considered one big speak-easy due to the inability of the federal government to control alcohol sales. The term was used by local columnist Betty Gillaud in the 1970s to contrast life in the city to that of New York. The name also refers to New Orleans’ status as a major city, at one time “one of the cheapest places in America to live.” [11].

One of the most productive types of American city and town nicknames is an *of*-phrase model represented by a great number of variations. Quite often these structures consist of two notional components, e.g.: *Jonesboro – The City of Churches*. The most frequent core word in such models is the lexeme *city*, e.g.: *Pasadena – City of Roses*, *Los Angeles – City of Angels*, *New York – The City of the Universe*, *New Orleans – City of Mystery*; sometimes it is combined with the component *queen* (*Denver – Queen City of the Plains*, *Queen City of the West*).

Less productive components in *of*-phrase models are the words like: **queen** (*New Orleans – The Queen of the Mississippi*); **birthplace** (*New Orleans Birthplace of Jazz*, *Reynoldsburg – Birthplace of the Tomato*); **heart** (*Chicago – Heart of America*); **home** (*Pueblo – Home of Heroes*); **jewel** or **gem** (*Chicago – The Jewel of the Midwest*, *Jacksonville, AL – Gem of the Hills*); **cradle** (*Boston – The Cradle of Liberty*); **pride** (*Glendora – The Pride of the Foothills*); **land** (*Liberal – The Land of Oz*); **crossroads** (*Indianapolis – Crossroads of America*, *Liberal – The Crossroads of Commerce*); **cream** (*Plymouth – The Cream of Wisconsin*).

Proper names are often employed in these nickname models. They can be either well-known foreign place names (*Berkeley – Athens of the West*, *Boston – The Athens of America*, *Pittsburgh – Birmingham of America*) or American toponyms (*Denver – The L.A. of the Mountain West*, *Denver – Wall Street of the West*).

The model under discussion can be extended in different ways. For example, there can be two *of*-modifiers, e.g.: *Richmond – City of Pride and Purpose*, *Riverside – City of Arts and Innovation*. Both the core word and the dependent elements

can be modified by adjectives or other parts of speech, e.g.: *Monroeville – Literary Capital of the World*, *Mentone – Camping Capital of the World*, *Castroville – Artichoke Center of the World*, *Chicago – City of the Big Shoulders (City of Broad Shoulders)*.

The component *capital* predominates in the nicknames of this type. Numerous cities and towns are called ‘world capitals’ as centers of different industries, businesses and other activities, e.g.: *Tulsa – Oil Capital of the World*, *Wilmington – Chemical Capital of the World*, *Hartford – Insurance Capital of the World*, *Mountain View – Folk Music Capital of the World*, *Peru – Circus Capital of the World*, *Oakdale – Cowboy Capital of the World*.

Very often these ‘capital’ nicknames are quite amusing: the criteria for giving an informal place name range from names of fruits (*Hope – Watermelon Capital of the World*), vegetables (*Greenfield – Broccoli Capital of the World*, *Collinsville – Horseradish Capital of the World*) and food products (*Hershey – Chocolate Capital of the World*, *Le Mars – Ice Cream Capital of the World*, *Claxton – Fruitcake Capital of the World*, *Van Buren – Popcorn Capital of the World*) manufactured there to quite different things (often rather unexpected) the cities and towns are known for, e.g.: *Scottsboro – The Lost Luggage Capital of the World* (since the town houses the only store in the county that sells unclaimed baggage and the store is the size of a city block) [7] and *Venice, Florida – Shark’s Tooth Capital of the World* (due to the abundance of fossilized shark’s teeth that can be found on its coastal shores [11]). Anthony, Texas is known as the *Leap Year Capital of the World* because every leap year (since 1988), this tiny town hosts the Worldwide Leap Year Festival for those born on February 29. People throughout the USA and overseas travel to this tiny town to take part in parades, birthday dinners, and hot air balloon lifts [5].

Some self-proclaimed titles are less ‘ambitious’: their ‘capital’ status is limited to the territory of the US or its parts, e.g.: *Union City – Embroidery Capital of the United States*, *Attleboro – Jewelry Capital of America*, *Elgin – Sausage Capital of Texas*, *Crawford, NE – Deer Capital of Nebraska*, *Siren – Lilac Capital of Wisconsin*.

Of-phrases sometimes contain numerals, e.g.: *Haleyville – Home of 911*, *Kingman – Heart of Route 66*. Other prepositional phrases serve as models for the nicknames in question but they are much less productive than the above-discussed constructions, e.g.: *Chicago – City in a Garden*, *Elgin – The City in the Suburbs*, *Chicago – City by the Lake*, *Marion – Town Between Two Lakes*, *Boca Raton – A City for All Seasons*, *Hereford – Town Without a Toothache*, *Winfield – City on the Move*, *Alabaster – The City for Families*, *Antioch – Gateway to the Delta*, *New York – The City with Everything*.

Quite a great number of the multi-component nicknames are combinations of the core word *city* with extended post-position attributes (attributive clauses or participial constructions), e.g.: *New York – The City That Never Sleeps*, *Fort Wayne – City That Saved Itself*, *Baltimore – The City That Reads*, *Middlesboro – The City Built Inside a Meteorite Crater*.

The multi-component nicknames of different structural models are often closely connected with the official names of American cities and towns. A nickname

can be a literal translation of the city name from Greek (*Cosmopolis* – *City of the World*, *Demopolis* – *City of the People*, *Philadelphia* – *The City of Brotherly Love*), or an allusion to the meaning of the name in another original language, e.g.: *The Big Onion* (*Chicago*) – a homage to the Native American name for the area (*shikaakwa*, which means “wild onion” in the Miami-Illinois language), in parallel with a popular New York nickname, *The Big Apple* [11]). An official name can provide a basis for its various humorous variations like *Circleville* – *Round Town*, *Madison* – *Mad City*, *Las Vegas* – *Lost Wages*, *Loveland* – *Sweetheart of Ohio*, *Santa Monica* – *Soviet Monica*. Play on letters, rhyming and other phonetic and graphic means are thoroughly employed, e.g.: *Azusa* – *A to Z, USA*; *Redwood City* – *Deadwood City*, *Lafayette* – *Laugh at it*, *Omaha* – *The Big ‘O’*, *Dumont* – *The Dirty D* etc. Dallas is sometimes called *Triple D* in reference to the moniker *Dirty Dirty Dallas* (according to another version, it refers to *The City of Dallas Logo* that is a triple D design) [11].

The results of our research enable us to draw some general conclusions. The main structural models of multi-component nicknames of American cities and towns include: ‘Adjective + Noun’, ‘Noun + Noun’ and ‘(Attribute) Noun + of + Noun’. Other prepositional phrases, nouns modified by participles or possessives nouns, etc. are much less numerous. Adjectives in the nicknames in question are often used in their superlative forms expressing the highest degree of a particular quality attributed to a city or town. The most productive constituent elements of the multi-component nicknames are the words *city* and *capital*. Their combinations with different types of modifiers characterize the US cities and towns as centres of a particular industry, business or another activity as well as highlight their distinguishing cultural features, historical events, geography and climate, architecture and places of interest etc.

The prospects for our further research can be seen in the study of the US informal place name motivation that will broaden our knowledge of the geography of this country, its economy, culture, history, traditions and customs as well as distinctive features of American worldview as a whole.

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