

**“Something Savage and Luxuriant”: American Identity and the Indian
Place-Name Literature [Abstract]**

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The treatment of American Indian place-names provides a window into the growth of American nationalism since 1776 and attitudes towards Indians by the new settler society. Originally ignored or erased by European colonists, Indian place-names became a subject of fascination and scholarship from the late-nineteenth century, at the same time that Indians themselves were marginalized to reservations. A large body of literature produced by non-Natives sometimes frames these place names as “romantic,” and other times as distinctly unromantic. In the voluminous literature on this topic, the treatment of Indians and their place-names reflects diverse and shifting attitudes towards American Indians in United States culture, as elaborated by Philip Deloria and Robert Berkhofer. Drawing on approximately 120 texts on Indian place-names, this study uses the lens of *romance*, a polyvalent term with various implications, to examine how non-Native writings on these toponyms reveals attitudes towards Indians themselves and their place in the American nationalist imagination.

Key words: American Indians, place-names, nationalism, romance

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