The Historical Marker Database
HMdb Geographic Location Style Sheet

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The Historical Marker Database has five separate fields for geographic location information, and this document describes the style for what those fields should hold. The word style, in this document, refers to what should be typed into each of these five Political Location fields when adding entries to the database. In the database’s internal schema, these fields are labeled Country, State, County, Town, and Zip.

The database also stores street, road and highway number information including an optional street address, but these are not the subject of this paper.

To assist you in correctly entering names into these fields of the database, our input form has a button labeled “Verify” near these fields that opens a sub-form that is auto-populated with current Google Maps API information for these fields. This information is derived from the map coordinates you entered in the previous section of the input form.

In this document indicates when the Google Maps information is for the most part correct and complete and when it should be used as a starting point and overridden with the correct information. However, Google Maps can and does shuffle this information around periodically, and this can cause our automated system to start displaying wrong or incorrectly styled names, or show nothing at all, on the Verify subform. If you notice this occurring, please notify an editor.

**Country** is the top-order geographic division for an entry’s location, and the next three fields are for the administrative divisions of each country in descending order. In the database, countries are divided into states, states into counties, but counties are not divided into towns. Instead counties have towns in them. On our input form, this field is labeled “Country”.

**State** is the second-order division. This division is not always called a state. The U.S. and Mexico have states, but Canada has provinces. The United Kingdom is made up of four countries. Japan is divided into prefectures. There are more variations. On our input form, this field is labeled “State, Province, Territory”.

**County** is the third-order division. Some countries do not have a third-order division. Those that do style them every which way. The U.S. styles them “counties” in 48 states, “parishes” in Louisiana, “boroughs” or “Census Areas” in Alaska, “municipalities” in Puerto Rico, “districts” in American Samoa, “villages” in Guam, and nothing at all any more in the District of Columbia. On our input form, this field is labeled “County, Parish, Borough”.

**Town** is the fourth-order division. It could be city, town, village, hamlet, or simply a place name. On our input form, this field is labeled “City, Town, Place”. The entry’s location is indicated to be IN the town or NEAR the town.

**Zip** is not considered a geographic division in the database, instead it is an overlay. It indicates the postal delivery area the entry is in, and can and does change at the whim of the country’s postal service. Postal
delivery areas can straddle multiple geographic divisions such as counties and contain or split multiple towns and places. On our input form, this field is labeled “Zip or Postal Code”.

In general,
1. All five fields are to exclusively use the Roman alphabet and Arabic numerals.
2. The Country field is to use English names exclusively, so no diacritical marks.
3. The State, County, and Town field are to use local language names, so diacritical marks are allowed.

Specifically,

Country

1. Use the short-form English name. This is our reference: https://www.state.gov/independent-states-in-the-world/
2. Because we use English names for countries, diacritical marks (accents and the like) ARE NOT to be used in this field. For example, use “Mexico” instead of “México”.
3. Exceptions to Rule No. 1:
   a. “United States of America” is spelled out in full and capitalized as shown
   b. Enter “Micronesia” instead of “Micronesia, Federated States of”
   c. British Crown Dependencies is a separate country for database purposes. They are three island territories: the Bailiwicks of Guernsey and Jersey, and the Isle of Man. The three territories are States for database purposes.
   d. British Overseas Territories is a separate country for database purposes. They are 14 territories and include: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Antarctica, British Virgin Islands, Caiman Islands, Diego Garcia, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands. The 14 territories are States for database purposes.
   e. Dutch Caribbean is a separate country for database purposes. It is these 6 territories: Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba. The six territories are States for database purposes.
   f. French Overseas Regions is a separate country for database purposes. They are 6 territories: Corsica, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, and Réunion.
   g. Palestinian Territories is a separate country for database purposes
   h. Taiwan is a separate country for database purposes

State, Province, Territory

They are also known by many other terms: Canton, Department, Emirate, Länder, Prefecture, Region. Google Maps internally typically stores this name under “administrative_area_level_1”.

1. We use the local language name each country uses for their top-level administrative units.
   a. When these administrative units are commonly known by English speakers with an English name that differs from the local language name, the local language name must still be used in this field. However, the database has the capability to also display the English name in small type immediately following the local language name. Some of these common English language alternatives have been pre-loaded into the database. If
the English name you are expecting does not automatically appear on your entry’s formatted page, petition an editor to add it.

2. Names must be in the Roman alphabet. If they are in a different alphabet the common Roman alphabet transliteration should be used.

3. We use the name only. Examples: “New York”, not “New York State”. “Tokyo”, not “Tokyo Prefecture”. “Île-de-France”, not “Île-de-France Region”.
   a. But there are a few exceptions to this rule. For a number of countries, the Verify input subform has been adjusted to reflect our style for each particular country.

4. Diacritical marks (accents and the like) are to be used when present on the name.

5. Exceptions:
   a. The names of the countries that make up the United Kingdom should be entered in this field: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales.
   b. Irish historical provinces are entered here: Connacht, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster.
   c. Swedish historical provinces are entered here. There are 25.
   d. See also Country.3.c, d, e, and f.

**County, Parish, Borough**

They are also known by many other terms: district, independent city, municipality, region, unitary authority. Google Maps internally typically stores this name under “administrative_area_level_2” and occasionally under “administrative_area_level_3” or elsewhere.

1. **United States of America**
   a. Counties are entered by their name followed by the word “County”. “Arlington County”, not “Arlington”. “Albemarle County”, not “County of Albemarle”.
   b. The parishes of Louisiana are entered by their name followed by the word “Parish”.
   c. Independent cities that are the equivalent of a county are entered by their name only. “Fairfax”, not “Fairfax City”. “Alexandria”, not “City of Alexandria”.
   d. For District of Columbia, always put “Washington” here.

2. **Canada:**
   a. Alberta: *blank County, blank District, blank National Park, blank Park, or blank.* See Wikipedia Reference
      • For the most part, you can trust the Google Maps suggestion on the Verify Postal Address form.
      • Special municipalities are independent towns or cities so they have no suffix.
   b. British Columbia: *blank Regional District,* see Wikipedia Reference
   c. Manitoba: *blank Municipality or blank.* see Wikipedia Reference
      • For the most part, you can trust the Google Maps suggestion on the Verify Postal Address form.
      • Special municipalities are independent towns or cities so they have no suffix.
   d. New Brunswick: *blank County,* see Wikipedia Reference
      • For the most part, you can trust the Google Maps suggestion on the Verify Postal Address form.
      • All locations are in a county
e. Newfoundland and Labrador:
   • At this writing, Google Maps is not indicating a second tier administrative name
   • You should manually enter one of the geographic sub-regions: See Wikipedia Reference
   1. Labrador
   2. Western Labrador
   3. Nunatsiavut, Labrador
   4. Nunatukavut, Labrador
   5. Avalon Peninsula, Newfoundland
   6. Bay of Islands, Newfoundland
   7. Bay St. George, Newfoundland
   8. Bay St. George South, Newfoundland
   9. Burin Peninsula, Newfoundland
   10. Bonavista Peninsula, Newfoundland
   11. Great Northern Peninsula, Newfoundland
   12. Port au Port Peninsula, Newfoundland

f. Nova Scotia: blank County or blank Region. See Wikipedia Reference
   • For the most part, you can trust the Google Maps suggestion on the Verify Postal Address form.

g. Ontario: blank County, blank United Counties, blank Region, blank District, or blank.
   • Enter one of the 51 first-level administrative divisions. See Wikipedia Entry
   • For the 7 independent cities, enter just the city name
     Chatham-Kent, Greater Sudbury, Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton, Kawartha Lakes, Ottawa, Toronto
   • Regional Municipality of blank is entered as blank Region
   • County of blank is entered as blank County
   • United Counties of blank is entered as blank United Counties
   • Districts are entered as blank District.

h. Quebec: Enter the regional county municipality name. See Wikipedia Entry
   • For the most part, you can trust the Google Maps suggestion on the Verify Postal Address form.
   • Enter only its name. “Acton”, not “Acton MRC”

i. Saskatchewan: This field is left blank

j. Yukon: This field is left blank.

3. Mexico, Spanish America, Spanish Caribbean:
   a. Omit “Municipio de”, “Municipalidad de”. Enter just the name.
   b. In the former federal district that is Ciudad de México, this field is left blank.

4. United Kingdom:
   a. For the most part, you can trust the Google Maps suggestion on the Verify Postal Address form.
   b. The exception is Greater London:
      • Do not use suggested place for locations in Greater London, use suggested postal delivery name because the name shown there is the name we want: the borough or city name.
• If the postal delivery area says “City of blank” go ahead and use it as shown.
5. Other database top 20 countries:
   a. For the most part, you can trust the Google Maps suggestion on the Verify Postal Address form

   City, Town, Place

1. Omit “City of”, “Town of”, “Village of”, etc. except when disambiguation is required.
2. Refer to Frequently Asked Question No. 25.
3. For the District of Columbia in the U.S., enter the neighborhood name
4. For the former federal district that is Ciudad de México, enter the Colonia name here like this
   a. Colonia blank
      • The city’s Historic Center is not a Colonia and is entered simply as “Centro Histórico”.

   Zip or Postal Code

1. If the postal code has a space or dash as part of its nomenclature, we follow suit.
2. For the U.S., we do not use ZIP+4 postal codes. If you encounter one, enter only the first five digits.