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A Dictionary of Topographic Forms

Author(s): Herbert M. Wilson

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A DICTIONARY OF TOPOGRAPHIC FORMS.

BY

HERBERT M. WILSON,
U. S. Geological Survey.

The following list of definitions is intended to include all those terms employed popularly or technically in the United States to designate the component parts of the surface of the earth. So far as practicable, the endeavor has been to refrain from defining such words or using such definitions as refer merely to the origin of the various topographic forms. At the same time it has been found necessary in a few instances to define forms according to their variety of origin, as those resulting from volcanic or glacial action. In the case of names which are locally peculiar to a limited portion of the country, the effort has been to indicate the regions in which they were employed. The language whence derived is denoted by Sp. for Spanish, Fr. for French, etc.; the word "origin" following indicates that it has been generally adopted in American nomenclature.

The manner of spelling *canyon*, *amphitheater*, etc., herein adopted, accords with the usage of official government publications. The writer has not hesitated to extend or restrict the meaning of some words where the result is in accord with even only occasional usage, when by so doing he has added a distinctive meaning to them, and has thus aided ever so little in enriching topographic nomenclature.

ACCLIVITY : An ascending slope, as opposed to declivity.

ALKALI FLAT : A playa; the bed of a dried up saline lake, the soil of which is heavily impregnated with alkaline salts.

ALPINE : Pertaining to high, rugged mountains containing glaciers; resembling the Alps of Southern Europe.

AMPHITHEATER : A cove or angle of glacial origin near the summit of a high mountain and nearly surrounded by the highest summits. A small flat valley or gulch-like depression at the head of an alpine mountain drainage. Local in far West.

ARETE : A sharp, rocky crest; a comb-like secondary crest of rock which projects to a sharp angle from the side of a mountain. (Fr. origin.)

ARROYO : The channel of an intermittent stream steep cut in loose earth; a coulee. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)

ARTESIAN WELL : A well which has been excavated or drilled through impervious strata to a subterranean water supply which has its source at a higher level. The resulting hydrostatic pressure causes the water to rise in the bore to a sufficient height to overflow at the mouth of the well.

- ATOLL** : A ring-shaped coral island nearly or quite encircling a lagoon.
- BADLANDS** : Waste or desert land deeply eroded into fantastic forms. Local in arid Northwest.
- BALD** : A high rounded knob or mountain top, bare of forest. Local in Southern States.
- BANK** : A low bluff margin of a small body of water ; a mound-like mass of earth.
- BAR** : An elevated mass of sand, gravel or alluvium deposited on the bed of a stream or sea or lake, or at the mouth of a stream.
- BARRANCA** : A rock-walled and impassable canyon. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- BARRIER BEACH** : A beach separated from the mainland by a lagoon or marsh.
- BARRIER ISLAND** : A detached portion of a barrier beach between two inlets.
- BASE-LEVEL PLAIN** : A flat, comparatively featureless surface or lowland resulting from the nearly completed erosion of any geographic area.
- BASIN** : An amphitheater or cirque. Local in Rocky Mountains.
An extensive, depressed area into which the adjacent land drains, and having no surface outlet ; the drainage or catchment area of a stream or lake. Use confined almost wholly to the arid West.
- BAY** : An indentation in the coast line of a sea or lake ; a gulf.
- BAYGALL** : A swamp covered with growth of bushes. Local on south Atlantic coast.
- BAYOU** : A lake or intermittent stream formed in an abandoned channel of a river ; one of the half-closed channels of a river delta. Local on Gulf Coast. (Fr. origin.)
- BEACH** : The gently sloping shore of a body of water ; a sandy or pebbly margin of land washed by waves or tides.
- BED** : The floor or bottom on which any body of water rests.
- BENCH** : A strip of plain along a valley slope.
A small terrace or comparatively level platform on any declivity.
- BIGHT** : A small bay.
- BLUFF** : A bold, steep headland or promontory.
A high, steep bank or low cliff.
- BOCA** : A mouth ; the point at which a streamway or drainage channel emerges from a barranca, canyon or other gorge, and debouches on a plain. (Sp.)
- BOG** : A small open marsh.
- BOLSON** : A basin ; a depression or valley having no outlet. Local in Southwest. (Sp., meaning "purse.")
- BOX CANYON** : A canyon having practically vertical rock walls.
- BOTTOM** : The bed of a body of still or running water.
- BOTTOM LAND** : The lowest land in a stream bed or lake basin ; a flood plain.
- BOULDER** : A rounded rock of considerable size, separated from the mass in which it originally occurred.
- BRANCH** : A creek or brook, as used locally in Southern States. Also used to designate one of the bifurcations of a stream as a fork.
- BREAKS** : An area in rolling land eroded by small ravines and gullies. Local in Northwest.
- BRIDALVEIL-FALL** : A cataract of great height and such small volume that the falling water is dissipated in spray before reaching the lower stream bed.
- BROOK** : A stream of less length and volume than a creek, as used locally in the Northeast.
- BROW** : The edge of the top of a hill or mountain ; the point at which a gentle slope changes to an abrupt one ; the top of a bluff or cliff.

- BUTTE** : A lone hill which rises with precipitous cliffs or steep slopes above the surrounding surface; a small isolated mesa. Local throughout far West. (Fr. origin.)
- CAJON** : A box canyon. Local in Southwest. (Sp., meaning "box.")
- CALA** : A creek. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CAMA** : A small upland prairie; a glade; a small park; a small, gently sloping prairie, partly wooded and surrounded by high mountain slopes. Local in Pacific Northwest. (Sp. meaning "bed.")
- CAÑADA** : A very small canyon. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CANAL** : A sluggish coastal stream.
- CANDELAS** : A group of candle-like rocky pinnacles. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CANYON** : A gorge or ravine of considerable dimensions; a channel cut by running water in the surface of the earth, the sides of which are composed of cliffs or series of cliffs rising from its bed. Local throughout the far West. (Sp. origin.)
- CAPE** : A point of land extending into a body of water; a salient of a coast.
- CASCADE** : A short, rocky declivity in a stream-bed over which water flows with greater rapidity and higher fall than over a rapid; a shortened rapid, the result of the shortening being to accentuate the amount of fall.
- CATARACT** : A waterfall, usually of great volume; a cascade in which the vertical fall has been concentrated in one sheer drop or overflow.
- CAVE** : A hollow space or cavity under the surface of the earth.
A depression in the ground; by abbreviation from a "cave in," as used colloquially.
- CAVERN** : A large, natural, underground cave or series of caves.
- CAY** : A key; a comparatively small and low coastal island of sand or coral. Local in Gulf of Mexico. (Sp. origin.)
- CEJA** : The cliff of a mesa edge; an escarpment. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CERRO** : A single eminence intermediate between hill and mountain. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CERRITO or CERRILLO** : A small hill. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CHANNEL** : A large strait, as the British Channel; the deepest portion of a small stream, bay or strait through which the main volume or current of water flows.
- CHASM** : A canyon having precipitous rock walls.
- CIENAGA** : An elevated or hillside marsh containing streams. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CONE** : A low, conical hill, built up from the fragmental material ejected from a volcano.
- CIRQUE** : A glacial amphitheater or basin. (Fr. origin.)
- CLIFF** : A high and very steep declivity.
- CLOVE** : A gorge or ravine. Local in Middle States. (Dutch origin.)
- COAST** : The land or the shore next to the sea.
- COASTAL MARSH** : One which borders a seacoast and is usually formed under the projection of a barrier beach.
- COASTAL PLAIN** : Any plain which has its margin on the shore of a large body of water.
- CONTINENTAL SHELF** : A comparatively shallow marginal ocean bed or floor bordering a continent; a submerged terrace bordering a continent.
- CORDILLERA** : A group of mountain ranges, including valleys, plains, rivers, lakes, etc.; its component ranges may have various trends, but the cordillera will have one general direction. (Sp. origin.)

- COTEAU** : An elevated, pitted plain of rough surface. Local in Missouri and neighboring States. (Fr. origin.)
- COULEE** : A cooled and hardened stream of lava. Coulees occur as ridges of greater or less length and dimensions, but rarely of great height. Local in Northwest.
A wash or arroyo through which water flows intermittently. Local in Northwest. (Fr. origin.)
- COVE** : A small bay.
An amphitheater or indentation in a cliff. It may be the abrupt heading of a valley in a mountain.
- CRAG** : A rough, steep or broken rock standing out or rising into prominence from the surface of an eminence; a rocky projection on a cliff or ledge.
- CRATER** : The cup-shaped depression marking the position of a volcanic vent; its margin is usually the summit of the volcano.
- CREEK** : A stream of less volume than a river.
A small tidal channel through a coastal marsh.
- CREST** : The summit land of any eminence; the highest natural projection which crowns a hill or mountain.
- CUESTA** : An ascending slope; a tilted plain or mesa top. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- CURRENT** : A continuous movement or flow, in one direction, of a body of water; a stream in or portion of an ocean which has continuous motion or flows in one direction.
- DALLE** : A rapid. (Fr. origin.)
- DECLIVITY** : A descending slope, as opposed to acclivity.
- DEFILE** : A deep and narrow mountain pass.
- DELTA** : The mouth of a river which is divided down stream into several distributaries.
- DEPRESSION** : A low place of any dimensions on a plain surface; the negative or correlative of elevation or relief.
- DESERT** : An arid region of any dimensions, barren of water other than in occasional flood streams or springs; frequently covered with considerable growths of cacti, coarse bunch grass, mesquite and other shrubs. A desert is not necessarily a plain surface, as most deserts are broken by the sharp escarpments and buttes which are common to the arid regions; by sand dunes or volcanic ejecta. A desert may include canyons and mountains of considerable differences of elevation.
- DIKE** : A ridge having for its core a vertical wall of igneous rock.
- DIVIDE** : The line of separation between drainage systems; the summit of an interfluve.
The highest summit of a pass or gap.
- DOME** : A smoothly rounded rock-capped mountain summit. Local in the Sierra Nevada.
- DRAFT** : A draw.
- DRAW** : A very shallow and small gorge, gulch or ravine; the eroded channel through which a small stream flows.
- DRIFT** : A slow, great ocean current.
- DRUMLIN** : A smooth, oval or elongated hill or ridge composed chiefly of glacial detritus.
- DRY WASH** : A wash, arroyo or coulee, in the bed of which is no water.
- DUNE** : A hill or ridge of sand formed by the winds near a sea or lake shore, along a river-bed or on a sandy plain.

- EMINENCE** : A mass of high land.
- ESCARPMENT** : An extended line of cliffs or bluffs.
- ESKER** : A long, winding ridge of sand or gravel; the deposit from a stream flowing beneath a glacier.
- EVERGLADE** : A tract of swampy land covered mostly with tall grass. Local in South.
- FALL** : A waterfall or cataract; the flow or descent of one body of water into another.
- FAN** : A mountain delta; a conical talus of detrital material.
- FIORD** : A narrow inlet with high, rocky walls. A glacial gorge filled by an arm of the sea.
- FLAT** : A small plain usually situated in the bottom of a stream gorge; often applied to a small area of tillable land in the bend of a bluff-walled stream.
- FLOODPLAIN** : Any plain which borders a stream and is covered by its waters in time of flood.
- FLOOR** : The bed or bottom of the ocean; a comparatively level valley bottom.
- FLY** : Corrupted from Vly; local in Adirondacks of New York.
- FOOT** : The bottom of a slope, grade or declivity.
- FOOTHILL** : One of the lower subsidiary hills at the base of a mountain.
- FORK** : One of the major bifurcations of a stream; a branch.
- FOUNTAIN** : A flow of water rising in a jet above the surrounding surface. Artesian wells, geysers and springs may be fountains.
- FUMAROLE** : A spring or geyser which emits steam or gaseous vapor; found only in volcanic areas. (Ital.)
- GAP** : Any deep notch, ravine or opening between hills or in ridge or mountain chain.
- GEYSER** : A hot spring, the water of which is expelled with steam in an accumulated volume in paroxysmal bursts.
- GLACIER** : A permanent body or stream of ice having motion.
- GLACIAL GORGE** : A deeply cut valley of V-shaped cross-section, the result of glacial erosion.
- GLACIAL LAKE** : One, the basin of which has been carved by glacial action; a lake dammed on one side by glacial detritus.
- GLADE** : A grassy opening or natural meadow in the woods; a small park. In western Maryland, applied to a brushy, grassy, or swampy opening in the woods.
- GORGE** : A canyon; a rugged and deep ravine or gulch.
- GRADE** : A slope of uniform inclination.
- GROTTO** : A small, picturesque cave.
- GULCH** : A small ravine; a small, shallow canyon with smoothly inclined slopes. Local in far West.
- GULF** : A gorge or deep ravine; a short canyon. Local in Southern mountains and New York.
A bay, usually of great dimensions.
- GULLY** : A channel cut by running water; less than a gulch or ravine.
- GUT** : A narrow passage or contracted strait connecting two bodies of water.
- HANGING VALLEY** : A high glacial valley, tributary to a more deeply eroded glacial gorge or fiord.
- HEADLAND** : A promontory.
- HEIGHT OF LAND** : The highest part of a plain or plateau; or, on a highway, a pass or divide. Local in Northeast and British America.
- HIGHLAND** : A relative term denoting the higher land of a region; it may include mountains, valleys, and plains.

- HILL** : An eminence less than a mountain, rising above the surrounding land.
- HOGBACK** : A steep-sided ridge or long hill ; used to describe a group of sharply eroded low hills.
In the far West a steep foothill, having parallel trend to the associated mountain range.
- HOLE** : A small bay, as Wood's Hole, Mass. Local in New England.
- HOLLOW** : A small ravine ; a low tract of land encompassed by hills or mountains.
- HOOK** : A low, sandy peninsula terminating in curved or hook-shaped end forming a bay.
- HOT SPRING** : A spring, the water of which has a temperature considerably above that of its surroundings.
- HUERFANO** : A solitary hill or cerro. Local in Southwest. (Sp., meaning "Orphan.")
- INLET** : A small narrow bay or creek ; a small body of water leading into a larger.
- INTERFLUVE** : The upland separating two streams having approximately parallel course.
- ISLAND** : An area of land entirely surrounded by water. In dimensions islands range from a point of rock rising above the surface of the water to an area of land of continental dimensions, as Australia.
- ISTHMUS** : A narrow strip of land connecting two considerable bodies of land.
- KAME** : A small hill of gravel and sand made by a glacier.
- KETTLE HOLE** : A steep-sided hole or depression in sand or gravel ; a hole in the bottom of a stream or pond.
- KEY** : A cay, as the Florida Keys.
- KILL** : A creek. Local in Middle States. (Dutch origin.)
- KNOB** : A prominent peak with rounded summit. Local in Southern States.
- KNOLL** : A low hill.
- LAGOON** : A shallow bay cut off from a sea or lake by a barrier ; often stagnant with ooze bottom and rank vegetation. It may be of salt or fresh water. Local in South and Southwest. (Sp. origin.)
- LAKE** : Any considerable body of inland water.
- LANDSLIDE** : Earth and rock which has been loosened from a hillside by moisture or snow, and has slid or fallen down the slope.
- LANDSLIP** : A landslide of small dimensions.
- LATERAL MORaine** : A moraine formed at the side of a glacier ; usually ridge-like in shape.
- LEDGE** : A shelf-like projection from a steep declivity ; a rocky outcrop or reef.
- LENTICULAR HILL** : A short drumline.
- LITTORAL** : That portion of a shore washed by, or between high and low water.
- MALPAIS** : A badland. Local in Northwest. (Fr.)
- MARSH** : A tract of low, wet ground, usually miry and covered with rank vegetation.
It may at times be sufficiently dry to permit of tillage or of having hay cut from it. It may be very small and high on a mountain, or of great extent and adjacent to the sea.
- MEADOW** : A bit of natural grassland in wooded mountains ; a glade or small park. Local in far West.
- MESA** : A tableland ; a flat-topped mountain bounded on at least one side by a steep cliff ; a plateau terminating on one or both sides in a steep cliff. Local in Southwest. (Sp. origin.)
- MESITA** : A small mesa. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- MIRE** : A small, muddy marsh or bog.

- MONADNOCK** : An isolated hill or mountain rising above a peneplain, after the removal by erosion of its surrounding features.
- MONUMENT** : A column or pillar of rock. Local in Rocky Mountain region.
- MORaine** : Any accumulation of loose material deposited by a glacier.
- MORASS** : A swamp, marsh or bog having rank vegetation and muddy or offensive appearance.
- MOUND** : A low hill of earth.
- MOUNTAIN CHAIN** : A series or group of connected mountains having a well defined trend or direction.
- MOUNTAIN** : An elevation of the surface of the earth greater than a hill and rising high above the surrounding country.
- MOUNTAIN RANGE** : A short mountain chain ; a mountain much longer than broad.
- MOUNTAIN SYSTEM** : A cordillera.
- MOUTH** : The exit or point of discharge of a stream into another stream or a lake or sea.
- MUSKEG** : A bog or marsh. Local in Northwest and British America.
- NECK** : The narrow strip of land which connects a peninsula with the mainland.
- NÉVÉ** : The consolidated granular snow on a mountain summit in which glaciers have their source.
- NOTCH** : A short defile through a hill, ridge or mountain.
- NUNATAK** : A rock island in a glacier.
- OCEAN** : The great body of water which occupies two-thirds of the surface of the earth. The sea as opposed to the land.
- OCEANIC PLATEAU** : An irregularly elevated portion of the ocean bed, of considerable extent and perhaps rising in places above the water surface.
- OUTLET** : The lower end of a lake or pond; the point at which a lake or pond discharges into the stream which drains it.
- PAHA** : A long ridge of fine, loamy material deposited from a stream which has cut a channel in a melting glacier. Local in Iowa and vicinity. (Indian.)
- PALISADE** : A picturesque, extended rock cliff rising precipitately from the margin of a stream or lake, and of columnar structure.
- PARK** : A grassy, wide, and comparatively level open valley in wooded mountains. Local in Rocky Mountains.
- PASS** : A gap or other depression in a mountain range through which a road or trail may pass; an opening in a ridge forming a passageway. A narrow, connecting channel between two bodies of water.
- PEAK** : A pointed mountain summit; a compact mountain mass with single conspicuous summit.
- PENEPLAIN** : A land surface which has been reduced to a condition of low relief by the erosive action of running water.
- PENINSULA** : A body of land nearly surrounded by water.
- PICACHO** : A peaked butte. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- PINNACLE** : Any high tower or spire-shaped pillar of rock, alone or cresting a summit.
- PITTED PLAIN** : A plain of gravel or sand with kettle holes.
- PLAIN** : A region of general uniform slope, comparatively level, of considerable extent and not broken by marked elevations and depressions; it may be an extensive valley floor or a plateau summit.
- PLATEAU** : An elevated plain. Its surface is often deeply cut by stream channels, but the summits remain at a general level. The same topographic form may be called a plain and a plateau, and be both. An elevated tract of considerable size and diversified surface. (Fr.)

- PLAYA** : An alkali flat; the dried bottom of a temporary lake, without outlet. Local in Southwest. (Sp. origin.)
A small area of land at the mouth of a stream and on the shore of a bay; an alluvial flat coast land as distinguished from a beach. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- PLAYA LAKE** : A shallow, storm-water lake. When dried it forms a playa. Local in Southwest. (Sp. origin.)
- PLAZA** : An open valley floor; the flat bottom of a shallow canyon. (Sp.)
- POCOSON** : A swamp. Local on South Atlantic coast. (Indian.)
- POINT** : A small cape; a sharp projection from the shore of a lake, river, or sea.
- POND** : A small, fresh-water lake.
- POOL** : A water-hole or small pond.
- POTHOLE** : A basin-shaped or cylindrical cavity in rock, formed by stone or gravel gyrated by eddies in a stream.
- PRAIRIE** : A treeless and grassy plain.
- PROMONTORY** : A high cape with bold terminations; a headland.
- PUERTA** : A pass or defile through an escarpment or sierra. Local in Southwest. (Sp. meaning "gate.")
- QUAGMIRE** : Any mire or bog.
- QUEBRADA** : A canyon of rugged aspect; a fissure-like ravine or canyon. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)
- RAPID** : Any short reach of steep slope between two relatively quiet reaches in a stream-bed. The water over a rapid flows with greater velocity than in adjacent portions of a stream.
- RAVINE** : A gulch ; a small gorge or canyon, the sides of which have comparatively uniform slopes.
- REEF** : A ridge of slightly submerged rocks.
A ledge of rock.
- RELIEF** : Elevation as opposed to depression; the elevated portions of the land surface.
- RIDGE** : The narrow, elongated crest of a hill or mountain. An elongated hill.
- RIFFLE** : The shallow water at the head of a rapid; a rapid of comparatively little fall.
- RIFT** : A narrow cleft or fissure in rock.
- RILL** : A very small trickling stream of water, less than a brook.
- RINCON** : Corner or cove; the angular indentation in a mesa edge or escarpment in which a canyon heads. Local in Southwest. (Sp. origin.)
- RIO** : A river. Local in Southwest. (Sp. origin.)
- RIVER** : A large stream of running water. A stream of such size as to be called a river in one locality may be called a creek or brook in another.
- ROCK CAVE** : A shelter cave.
- ROLLING LAND** : Any undulating land surface ; a succession of low hills giving a wave effect to the surface.
- RUN** : A brook or small creek. Local in South.
- SALIENT** : An angle or spur projecting from the side of the main body of any land feature.
- SAND DUNE** : Any dune.
- SANDIA** : An oblong, rounded mountain mass. Local in Southwest. (Sp., meaning "watermelon.")
- SCARP** : An escarpment.
- SEA** : A large body of salt water.
- SEEP** : A small, trickling stream. Local in Southwest.
- SERRATE** : The rocky summit of a mountain having a sawtooth profile ; a small sierra-shaped ridge. Local in Southwest. (Sp.)

- SHELTER CAVE** : A cave only partially underground, which is formed by a protecting roof of overlying rock ; generally open on one or more sides.
- SHOAL** : A shallow place in a stream or lake ; an elevated portion of the bed of a stream, lake, or sea, which rises nearly to the water surface ; a bar.
- SHORE** : The land adjacent to any body of water.
- SIERRA** : A rugged mountain range with serrate outline. Local in Southwest and Pacific States. (Sp. origin.)
- SINK** : The bottom of an undrained basin.
- SLIDE** : The exposed surface left in the trail of a landslide ; the place whence a landslide has departed. Local in Northeast.
- SLOPE** : The inclined surface of a hill, mountain, plateau, or plain or any part of the surface of the earth ; the angle which such surfaces make with the level.
- SOUND** : A relatively shallow body of water separated by an island from the open sea and connected with it at either end so that through it there is clear tidal flow.
- SPIT** : A low, sandy point or cape projecting into the water ; a barrier beach.
- SPRING** : A stream of water issuing from the earth.
- SPUR** : A sharp projection from the side of a hill or mountain ; a radial ridge of subordinate dimensions.
- STILLWATER** : Any reach in a stream of such level inclination as to have scarcely any perceptible velocity of flow ; a sluggish stream, the water of which appears to be quiet or still. Local in Northeast.
- STRAND** : The shore or beach of the ocean or a large lake.
- STRAIT** : A relatively narrow body of water connecting two larger bodies.
- STREAM CHANNEL** : The trench or depression washed in the surface of the earth by running water ; a wash, arroyo, or coulee.
- STREAM** : Any body of flowing water. It may be of small volume, as a rill, great as the Mississippi or mighty as the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic Ocean.
- SUGARLOAF** : A conical hill comparatively bare of timber. Local in far West.
- SUMMIT** : The highest point of any undulating land, as of a rolling plain, a mountain or a pass in a mountain.
- SWALE** : A slight, marshy depression in generally level land.
- SWAMP** : A tract of stillwater abounding in certain species of trees and coarse grass on boggy protuberances.
- TABLE** : An elevated, comparatively level bit of land between two streams. Local in Northwest.
- TABLE LAND** : A mesa.
- TABLE MOUNTAIN** : A mountain having comparatively flat summit and one or more precipitous sides. A mesa.
- TALUS** : A collection of fallen disintegrated material which has formed a slope at the foot of a steeper declivity.
- TANK** : A pool or water-hole in a wash. Local in arid West.
- TERMINAL MORaine** : A moraine formed across the course of a glacier, irregularly ridge-like in shape.
- TERRACE** : A relatively narrow level space or bench on the side of a slope and terminating in a short declivity.
- TERRAIN** : See Terrane.
- TERRANE** : An extent of ground or territory ; a portion of the surface of the earth. (Fr.)
- TERRENE** : Pertaining to the earth.
- TETON** : A rocky mountain-crest of rugged aspect. Local in Northwest. (Fr.)

- THALWEG** : A watercourse ; a valley bottom ; the deepest line or part of a valley sloping in one direction. (Ger.)
- TIDAL MARSH OR FLAT** : Any marsh or flatland which is wetted by a tidal stream or sea.
- TONGUE** : A narrow cape.
- TOWER** : A peak rising with precipitous slopes from an elevated table land. Local in Northwest.
- TUNDRA** : An upland or alpine marsh, the ground beneath which is frozen. There are great areas of tundra in the Arctic. (Russ.)
- UPLAND** : A highland.
- VALLEY** : A depression in the land surface generally elongated and usually containing a stream.
- VLEI** : See Vly.
- VLY** : A small swamp, usually open and containing a pond. Local in Middle Atlantic States. (Dutch origin.)
- VOLCANO** : A mountain which has been built up by the materials forced from the interior of the earth, piling about the hole from which they were ejected. These may be lava, cinders or dust.
- VOLCANIC NECK** : The solid material which has filled the throat or vent of a volcano, and has resisted degradation better than the mass of the mountain. It thus finally stands alone as a column or crag of igneous rock.
- WASH** : The broad, dry bed of a stream ; a dry stream channel. Local in arid West.
- WATERFALL** : Any single cataract, Both the terms, waterfall and cataract, may be applied to falls of like magnitude.
- WATER GAP** : A pass through a mountain occupied by an existing stream.
- WATERSHED** : The ridge of high land or summit separating two drainage basins ; the summit of land from which water divides or flows in two or more directions ; the area drained by a stream.
- WELL** : Any excavation in soil or rock which taps underground water.
- WIND GAP** : An elevated gap not occupied by a watercourse.