The Role of Foodways in the NC Gazetteer

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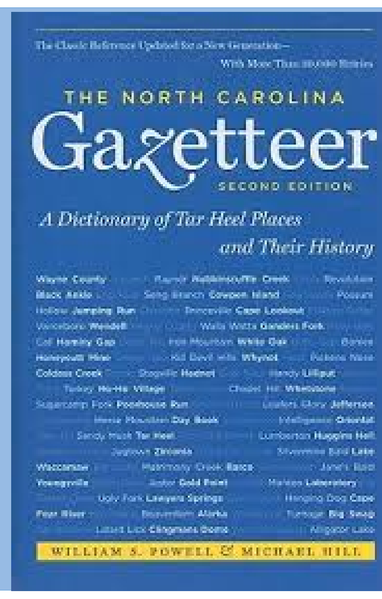

Abstract

This semester, our class was introduced to North Carolina's digital gazetteer. A gazetteer is described as a geographical dictionary, listing notable landmarks with its description. Using the digital gazetteer, we were tasked with modifying its content. Few of my classmates and I decided to supplement the gazetteer's historical sites, specifically its historical eateries.

In the NC Gazetteer, we see landmarks listed such as creeks and bridges as well as municipal terms such as cities and towns; however, there is a notable lack of entries related to establishments, particularly restaurants. The gazetteer seeks to note North Carolina's various features and landmarks, natural and man-made, and how they changed and developed over time. The dishes we eat today are the result of the development of cuisine over the past centuries via the interaction and adoption of cooking practices from different cultures. Therefore, eateries should be recorded in the gazetteer as well, since they are key to understanding how we prepare our food. To address this, our group decided to help create gazetteer entries related to the establishments in the past that have helped influence the cuisine we see in our restaurants and in our homes. We conducted research from encyclopedias, class websites, and Wikidata queries to select relevant establishments, created a metadata set to organize the data for entry into the gazetteer. However, in the end, the task of grouping establishments with their foodway proved to be more difficult than previously assumed due to the ambiguity of tracking food production.

Introduction

A gazetteer is a geographical dictionary. It is often formed like an index where geographic features are listed and described. In 1968, William Powell created the first gazetteer for North Carolina, *The North Carolina Gazetteer*.

For our project, my group decided to focus on creating entries relevant to historical eateries and the foodways they represent. Foodways often refer to the intersection of food in culture, traditions, and history.

Methods

- Determined scope of the project
- Researched sources for entries
  - *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*
  - AMST 276 website
- Created a metadata set
- Entering the data both manually and through text mining.

Conclusion

As of now, we haven't completed polishing every entry in our data spreadsheet, but we're working to polish every query we have.

As for the problems we've encountered, one of the prominent was the ambiguity of our Cuisine and Foodway attributes. As we polished our entries, we found that for most of them, there was great difficulty in determining the type of cuisine the eatery offered and especially the foodway it's related to.

For the future, we'll continue searching and polishing entries as well was documenting the sources we used so that others can be able to pick up where we've left off.

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