



The Morphology of Store Names

Author(s): Mark Aronoff

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Nonetheless, they follow a common pattern of English modifiers and nouns, exemplified by *bake shop*, *scene painter*, *swim suit*, and *jog suit*.

BETTY J. IRWIN
University of Georgia

THE MORPHOLOGY OF STORE NAMES

Store names in English can be conveniently divided into three groups: those based on native or naturalized personal names (*Macy's*, *Sears*, *Jordan Marsh*), those based on personal names that are perceived as foreign (*Courrèges*, *Lanvin*, *Gucci*), and those that are lexically or toponymically based (*Design Research*, *Piccadilly Circus*, *Latifundia*). The morphology of the first kind is surprisingly regular, judging from my observations in the northeastern United States, eastern Canada, and the San Francisco Bay area.

Store names consisting of a single proper name, given or family, are in the genitive, unless they already end in [s] or [z]. Examples are *Macy's*, *Filene's*, and *Joe's*, and with final dental sibilants *Sears* and *Gertz*. Some names are difficult to classify, because of an orthographic practice peculiar to large stores, especially in the New York area, namely, the deletion of the apostrophe before the genitive *s*. It is clear that the deletion has taken place in a word like *Korvettes* because the store is also known as *E. J. Korvette*. Store names like *Sachs* or *Gimbels*, however, require external evidence to resolve the morphological ambiguity.

Other store names based on native proper names are in the genitive much less commonly. They fall into two main categories: (1) A coordination of names with or without *and*: *Abraham and Strauss*, *Lord and Taylor*, *Abercrombie and Fitch*, *Bonwit Teller*, *Sears Roebuck*, *Jordan Marsh*; and (2) a sequence of first name or initials and last name: *Joseph Magnin*, *Henri Bendel*, *I. Magnin*, *B. Altman*, *E. J. Korvette*. For none of these is the genitive form usual: **Abercrombie and Fitch's*, **Bonwit Teller's*, **Joseph Magnin's*.

The morphological rule for English store names is therefore as follows: a store name is in the genitive just in case it consists of a single proper name not ending in a dental sibilant. There are several pieces of evidence that support this rule. First is the reduction of complex names to simple names, a reduction usually considered chic, inasmuch as it smacks of familiarity. The reduced name invariably appears in the genitive, as predicted by the rule: *Abercrombie's*, *Bonwit's*, *Altman's*, *Jordan's*, *Nieman's*. There is also some regularity to the reduction. The coordina-

tions without *and* reduce more readily: *Sears* (examples of the less common type are *Abercrombie's* and *Shreve's*, the latter from *Shreve, Crump, and Lowe*). Moreover, reduction is always to the first term in a coordination: *Abercrombie's*, *Bonwit's*, not **Fitch's*, **Teller's*.

Other evidence comes from ungrammatical store names. First, there are stores whose official names resist the store name rule, for example, the chains *Rickel* and *Zayre*. Native speakers of English almost invariably ignore the official name and instead say *Rickel's* and *Zayre's*, as predicted by the rule. Second, some store names are based on personal names that are not easily recognized as such. One is *Pergament*, the name of a paint store chain in the New York area. Because many speakers are unaware that it is a personal name, they do not use the genitive for it.

Finally, there are the names of several large Anglo-Canadian stores that operate in the Montreal area, such as *Simpson's*, *Eaton's*, and *Steinberg's*. Recently, a great deal of pressure has been exerted on these stores in the direction of bilingualism. One small result of the pressure has been the deletion of the tell-tale English genitive marker from the store names as they appear in advertisements. The result is: *Simpson*, *Eaton*, *Steinberg*. To the native speaker of English, however, these names appear French in morphology, not bilingually neutral as intended. They appear foreign because they do not follow the store name rule, which is a minor but intriguing demonstration of the persistent regularity of linguistic behavior.

MARK ARONOFF
SUNY at Stony Brook

AN EPICENE SUGGESTION

It is often observed that English lacks pronouns meaning 'his or her,' 'himself or herself,' and 'him or her' to use after *each*, *every*, *anyone*, *no one*, and the like. There are three "makeshifts," as H. W. Fowler refers to them in his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1965, p. 404):

As anybody can see for *himself or herself*.

As anybody can see for *themselves*.

As anybody can see for *himself*.

No one who can help it, says Fowler, chooses the first. Though it is correct, it is clumsy. The second is the popular solution, but it sets the grammarian's teeth on edge. Therefore, Fowler recommends the third. And the third it has been for centuries in this sexist society.