

The Honorable John Haila, Mayor  
City of Ames  
[MayorCouncil@cityofames.org](mailto:MayorCouncil@cityofames.org)

Issue: request for the City of Ames Mayor and Council's opinion about a proposal to change the name of **Squaw Creek** flowing through the City of Ames, Story County, Boone County, and Hamilton

County Dear Mayor Haila:

As you may know, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) is responsible by law for standardizing geographic names for use by the Federal Government. One of the functions of the BGN is to accept and process proposals to name unnamed geographic features or to change existing names.

A proposal can be submitted by any interested individual or organization, or local, State, Federal, or Tribal agency. Provided the proposal meets the criteria of the BGN's principles and policies, the BGN staff will accept it for consideration.

Because the BGN places importance on local opinion, the staff will ask for input from local governments who are elected to represent its citizens who might have an interest.

A resident of Ames submitted a proposal to the BGN to change the name of **Squaw Creek**, a tributary of the South Skunk River, to **Story Creek**. The proponent states that

"Individuals of Native American descent have protested the name of this stream beginning at least in the 1990s, and it is known that the current name has an offensive connotation."

The proponent proposed the name Story Creek because

"Story County is the county of (by far) the highest population through which this stream flows."

We would like to know whether your office supports or opposes the change from Squaw Creek to Story **Creek**. We also ask that you share this request with other offices or organizations that might have an interest, such as a local historical society. We are also asking for input from the Story County Board of Supervisors, the Boone County Board of Supervisors, and the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors. We will ask each County Board to ask the Trustees of the townships located in each county.

In order for the BGN to consider all aspects of this request, we would welcome any additional historical details you might have about the existing name, including any other name(s) used locally for the feature.

If you support a change to the existing name but believe a different replacement name would be more appropriate, you are welcome to initiate a counterproposal or solicit suggestions from other interested parties. If you wish to propose another name, please let us know and we can provide further instructions.

This proposal is listed on the BGN's Quarterly Review List 437, which is posted at [https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=geonames\\_web:review\\_lists](https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=geonames_web:review_lists) . The case summary is also attached for your review, along with the original proposal, a map showing the location of the stream, and a Geographic Name Proposal Recommendation form to facilitate a response from your office. Once we receive your response, we will ask the Iowa State Names Authority for its recommendation.

The BGN's Name Changes Policy and Derogatory and Offensive Names Policy are also attached for your review as you consider the request. These policies state (in part):

"Existing names, especially personal commemorative names, which honor an individual, and those names in longstanding public usage, should not be changed unless the proponent presents a compelling reason to do so. Even when the historical basis for an existing name is unknown, the BGN will still treat it with deference."

"The BGN's guiding principle for the names of places, features, and areas in the United States and its territories is to approve for official Federal use the names found in present-day local usage...An exception to this principle may occur when a name is derogatory or is shown to be offensive to a particular racial or ethnic group, gender, or religious group..."

Any individual or agency may submit to the BGN a proposal to change an existing name that they consider offensive. Such proposals should include reasons why the proponent believes the existing name is offensive. The proponent must offer an alternative name as part of the proposal, following BGN guidelines for name proposal submittals. In proposing an alternate name, a conscientious effort

should be made to offer an alternative name that does not eliminate or obscure the original intent of the geographic name as a historical record on the cultural landscape, taking into account the historical, cultural, or ethnic significance of the original name."

Thank you for your consideration of this request and we look forward to hearing from you. Meanwhile, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We may be contacted by mail at the address below; by telephone at (703) 648-4553; or by e-mail at [BGNEEXEC@usgs.gov](mailto:BGNEEXEC@usgs.gov)

Sincerely,

Matt O'Donnell, research assistant  
For Jennifer Runyon, research staff  
U.S. Board on Geographic Names  
U.S. Geological Survey  
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive

**MS523**

Reston VA 20192-0523

Matt O'Donnell | Xcellent Technology Solutions, Inc.

Contractor in support of U.S. Board on Geographic Names | Domestic Names Committee

Phone: 703.648.4553

## DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAME PROPOSAL SUMMARY

## PROPOSE NEW OR CHANGE NAME

## Name Proposal ID:

9691

## Date Created:

27-JUL-19

## Date Submitted:

27-JUL-19

## Proposed Name:

Story Creek

## Action Requested:

Change an existing name

## Existing Name:

Squaw Creek

## Unnamed Evidence:

-

## Locally Used:

No

## Locally Used Years:

-

## Local Conflict:

No

## Local Conflict Detail:

-

## Additional Details:

-

## FEATURE INFORMATION

## GNIS Feature ID:

461933

## Feature class:

STREAM

## Descriptive information:

The watershed of this stream spans Boone, Hamilton, Story, and Webster counties. The stream itself is part of the larger South Skunk River Watershed (HUC 8) which, after combining with the North Skunk River, becomes the Skunk River. The Skunk River flows into the Mississippi River which ultimately

drains into the Gulf of Mexico.

**Meaning or significance:**

Story County is the county of (by far) the highest population through which this stream flows. The county was named in 1853, after Joseph Story. Individuals of Native American descent have protested the name of this stream beginning at least in the 1990's, and it is known that the current name has an offensive connotation.

**Commemorative:**

Yes

**Biographical information:**

Joseph Story (1779 – 1845) was an American lawyer and jurist who served on the Supreme Court of the United States from 1812 to 1845. He is most noted for his opinion in 1840 in United States v. The Amistad, which has been described by historians as the most important court case involving slavery before the case of Dred Scott in 1857.

**Supporting materials:**

No

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

No information entered.

**STATES AND COUNTIES**

State Name	County Name
Iowa	Hamilton
Iowa	Story
Iowa	Boone

**GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES**

Obtained From	Describe Other	Lat Deg	Min	Sec	Long Deg	Min	Sec	Decimal Lat	Decimal Long	Details
Geographic Information System	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42.034626	-93.635054	Feature runs through Boone, Hamilton, and Story counties.

**ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS**

Administrative Area Type	Administrative Area Name	Details
Other State-managed Land	-	Iowa

**MAPS AND DOCUMENTS WITH NAME**

No information entered.

**OTHER (VARIANT) NAMES AND THEIR SOURCE**

No information entered.

**AUTHORITIES**

Last Name	First Name	Phone	Email Address	Physical Address	City	State	Zip	Occupation	Years
Stevenson	Mary Beth	3193258593	MaryBeth.Stevenson@dnr.iowa.gov	323 Stanley Hydraulics Laboratory	Iowa City	Iowa	52242	Eastern Basin Coordinator	-
Ament	Kyle	5157258389	Kyle.Ament@dnr.iowa.gov	502 E. Ninth St.	Des Moines	Iowa	50319	Western Basin Coordinator	-

**SUBMITTERS AND PREPARERS**

Role	Last Name	First Name	Phone	Email Address	Physical Address	City	State	Zip	Company	Title
BOTH	Martin	Jasmine	6052021695	miss.martin@gmail.com	2346 Edenburn Dr., #47A	Ames	IA	50010	-	-

DGNP Guest

Approved

Promulgation authorized  
Executive Secretary  
Domestic Geographic Names

UNITED STATES  
BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

CASE BRIEF (Domestic)

**Story Creek:** stream; 42 mi. long; heads in Webster Township 3.4 mi. NW of Stanhope at 42°18'25"N, 93°51'26"W, flows generally SE through into the South Skunk River in the City of Ames; named in relation to Story County where the stream's mouth is located; Tps83-87N, Rgs24-26W, Fifth Principal Meridian; Story County, Boone County, and Hamilton County, Iowa; 42°00'38"N, 93°35'45"W; USGS map – Ames East 1:24,000 (mouth); Not: Montgomery Creek, Squaw Creek, Squaw Fork, Squaw Fork Skunk River  
[https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/gazvector.getesrimap?p\\_lat=42.0105422&p\\_longi=-93.5957729&fid=461933](https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/gazvector.getesrimap?p_lat=42.0105422&p_longi=-93.5957729&fid=461933)

Proposal: to change a name considered offensive

Map: USGS Ames East 1:24,000 (mouth)

Proponent: Jasmine Martin; Ames, IA

Administrative area: None

Previous BGN Action: None

Names associated with feature:

GNIS: Squaw Creek (FID 461933)

Local Usage: Squaw Creek (City of Ames, Story County, Boone County, Hamilton County)

Published: Montgomery Creek (*Karte von Iowa* 1852; *Colton's Iowa* 1869; General Land Office 1878); Squaw Creek (USGS 1912, 1914, 1916, 1965, 1975, 1978, 1985, 1993, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2018; AMS 1954, 1955; FEMA 2005, 2008; Iowa Department of Transportation; *Map of Story County* 1875; Rand McNally maps 1879, 1897; Story County map 1883; *Plat Book of Boone County* 1896, 1939; *Souvenir Atlas of Story County* 1910; *Standard Atlas of Hamilton County* 1918; City of Ames documents; Story County documents; Boone County documents; Hamilton County documents); Squaw Fork (*Sectional Map of Iowa* 1875); Squaw Fork Skunk River (*Atlas of Story County* 1902; *Souvenir Atlas of Story County* 1910; Story County atlas 1919)

Case Summary: This proposal is to change the name of Squaw Creek, a 42-mile-long tributary of the South Skunk River, to Story Creek. The stream flows through Hamilton County, Boone County, Story County, and the City of Ames.

The proponent states "Individuals of Native American descent have protested the name of this stream beginning at least in the 1990s, and it is known that the current name has an offensive connotation." She believes the proposed name is fitting because "Story County is the county of (by far) the highest population through which this stream flows."

Story County was named for Joseph Story (1779-1845), a native of Massachusetts who was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States from 1812 to 1845. He is best remembered for his majority opinion in the 1841 case *United States v. Schooner Amistad*, in which the Southern-dominated court ruled 8-1 that kidnapped Africans enslaved by the Spanish were not regarded as enslaved under the 1807 law that forbade the international slave trade. Although he was against slavery, Story also wrote the majority opinion in the 1842 case *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, in which he argued that the Federal Fugitive Slave Act (1793) precluded a

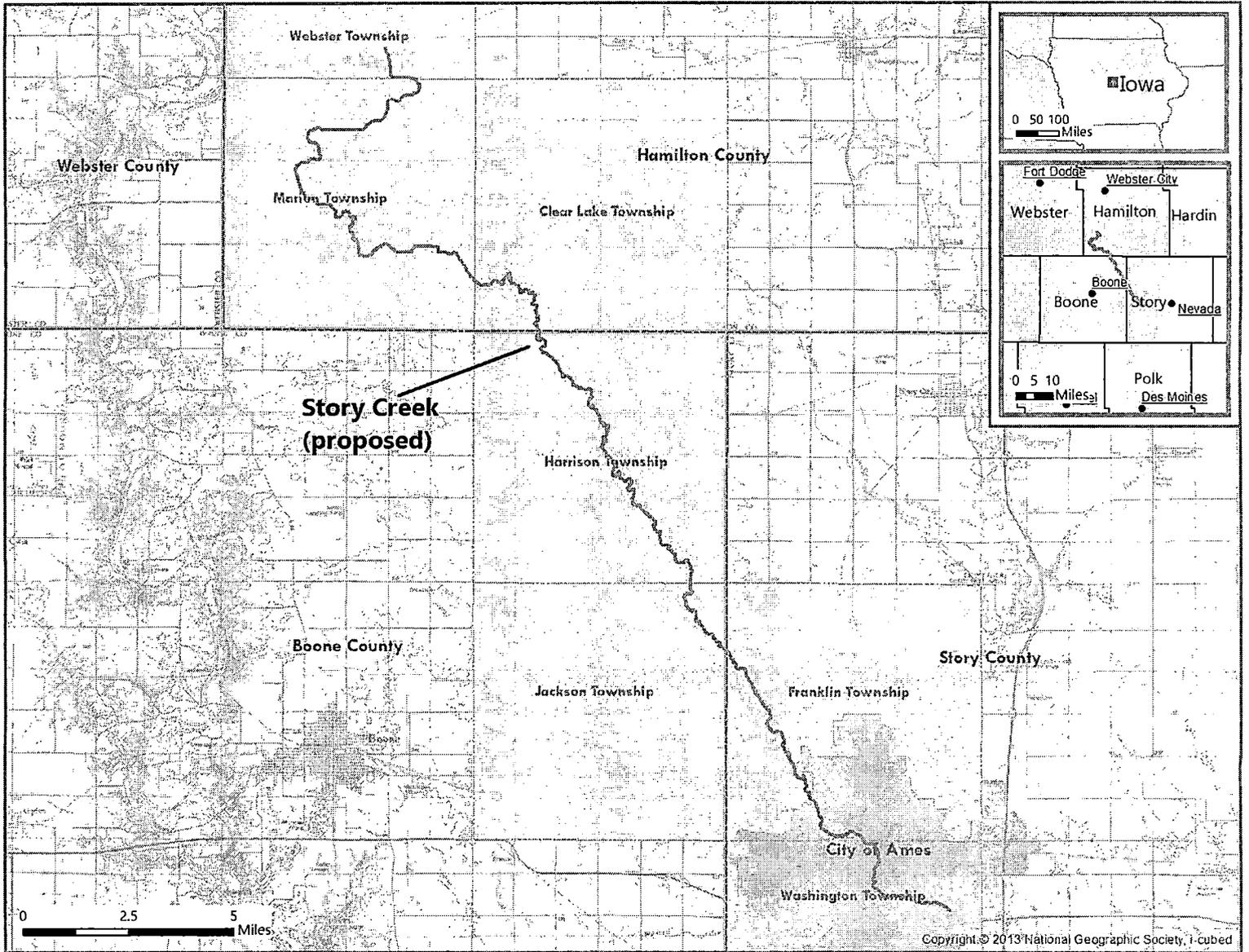
Pennsylvania law prohibiting African-Americans from being taken out of Pennsylvania into slavery in the South.

The name Squaw Creek has appeared on USGS maps since 1912. It is in widespread use by the City of Ames; by Story County, Boone County, and Hamilton County; and by the Iowa Department of Transportation. Other names for the stream have been published: Montgomery Creek in 1852, 1869, and on a General Land Office map in 1878; Squaw Fork in 1875; and Squaw Fork Skunk River in 1902, 1910, and 1919.

The stream is located within the project area of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge but is not on any lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Proposed by: Jasmine Martin; Ames, IA  
Submitted by: same  
Prepared by: M. O'Donnell  
Case ID: 5136  
Reviewed by: J.Runyon

Date: 7/27/19  
Date: same  
Date: 9/25/19  
Quarterly Review List: 437  
Date: 10/2/19



**Story Creek  
(proposed)**

## CHAPTER 3. DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES POLICIES

### Policy II. Name Changes

Geographic names provide important spatial, cultural, and historical references. Each name identifies a particular geographic feature, place, or area, and may be a distinct feature or part of another feature such as individually named peaks on a named mountain. This requires a high degree of stability in the written form of a name and its application. Consequently, changes in existing names should not be made without a compelling reason. Proposed changes must be submitted to the BGN for review and approval before being used in Federal publications.

“Name change” means formally revising the official name of a geographic feature in the United States or its territories and outlying areas. The BGN recognizes two classes of name changes:

- those made to bring official Federal usage into agreement with well-established local usage and/or with present-day local support and
- those made to eliminate particular name problems as in proposals involving names asserted to be offensive, duplicate names, or names originally established on the basis of incorrect information.

**Sec. 1 Existing names, especially personal commemorative names, which honor an individual, and those names in longstanding public usage, should not be changed unless the proponent presents a compelling reason to do so. Even when the historical basis for an existing name is unknown, the BGN will still treat it with deference (see also Policy III. Commemorative Names, Sec. 4).**

**Sec. 2 The BGN prefers to recognize present-day local use or acceptance. The BGN will consider proposals to change official names that the proponent believes are inconsistent with well-established local use.**

**Sec. 3 The BGN prohibits the inclusion of derogatory words in a proposed geographic name (see Policy V. Derogatory and Offensive Names).**

**Sec. 4 Common names are sometimes applied to two or more features in close proximity. Where it can be demonstrated that duplication has led to confusion, the BGN will consider a proposal to change an existing name (see Policy VII. Duplicate and Similar Names). The BGN may disapprove a name change proposal that duplicates another nearby name.**

**Sec. 5 The need to correct a name for historical accuracy may not always be sufficiently compelling to change the existing name. However, proposals to correct a misspelling of a historic or personal commemorative name will generally be given favorable consideration if the proponent presents convincing evidence that the name has been misspelled and should be changed.**

**Sec. 6 The BGN initiates name changes only in rare cases such as those involving certain derogatory names and changes in name applications.**

## **CHAPTER 3. DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES POLICIES**

### **Guidelines**

When a name change proposal is received, the BGN investigates the background of the current name and solicits recommendations from any individual or Federal, Tribal, State or local authority that it determines might have an interest in the feature. The BGN carefully considers all relevant factors when reviewing a name change proposal, including the extent and distribution of usage, historical context, and lexical meanings.

In the event of a name change, the prior form appears in the permanent Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) record as a variant name (see Policy VIII. Variant Names).



U.S. BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

GEOGRAPHIC NAME PROPOSAL RECOMMENDATION

Proposed Geographic Name Story Creek

This is to notify the U.S. Board on Geographic Names that the:

City of Ames Mayor and City Council  
(Name of government entity, organization, or individual)

recommend that the U. S. Board on Geographic Names:

- Approve the Proposed Name**
- Reject the Proposed Name**
- Take Action as Specified Below**
- Render a Decision Without Our Recommendation**

Comments (the following factors contributed to this recommendation; attach supporting documentation if appropriate):

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Title)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Telephone)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(City, State, ZIP Code)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(E-mail)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Return to: U.S. Board on Geographic Names  
U.S. Geological Survey  
523 National Center  
Reston VA 20192-0523  
Telephone: (703) 648-4552  
Fax: (703) 648-4549  
E-mail: [BGNEXEC@usgs.gov](mailto:BGNEXEC@usgs.gov)

## CHAPTER 3. DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES POLICIES

### Policy V. Derogatory and Offensive Names

The BGN's guiding principle for the names of places, features, and areas in the United States and its territories is to approve for official Federal use the names found in present-day local usage (see Principle II. Names in Local Use). An exception to this principle may occur when a name is derogatory or is shown to be offensive to a particular racial or ethnic group, gender, or religious group.

Because geographic names are part of the historical record of the United States, the BGN prefers to proceed cautiously with regard to the use of names in everyday language, as attitudes and perceptions of words considered to be offensive can vary among individuals and communities and can change connotation over time. Accordingly, the BGN will act on a case-by-case basis.

Two words, however, are considered derogatory by the BGN in all occurrences. In 1963, the Secretary of the Interior mandated the word "Nigger" in geographic names on Federal maps and other products be changed to "Negro." In 1974, the BGN mandated the word "Jap" in geographic names on Federal maps and other products be changed to "Japanese."

**Sec. 1 The BGN will not consider a name proposal that includes the derogatory word "Jap" or the derogatory word "Nigger."**

**Sec. 2 The BGN will not make official for Federal use a locally used name that is determined by the BGN to be offensive to a particular racial or ethnic group, gender, or religious group.**

**Sec. 3 Proposals to change names considered to be offensive must meet the same basic criteria required of any other name proposal, and will be processed using the same procedures as any other name change (see Policy II. Name Changes).**

#### Guidelines

Any individual or agency may submit to the BGN a proposal to change an existing name that they consider offensive. Such proposals should include reasons why the proponent believes the existing name is offensive. The proponent must offer an alternative name as part of the proposal, following BGN guidelines for name proposal submittals.

In proposing an alternate name, a conscientious effort should be made to offer an alternative name that does not eliminate or obscure the original intent of the geographic name as a historical record on the cultural landscape, taking into account the historical, cultural, or ethnic significance of the original name.