

Cooperstown, New York as a site of new-dialect formation

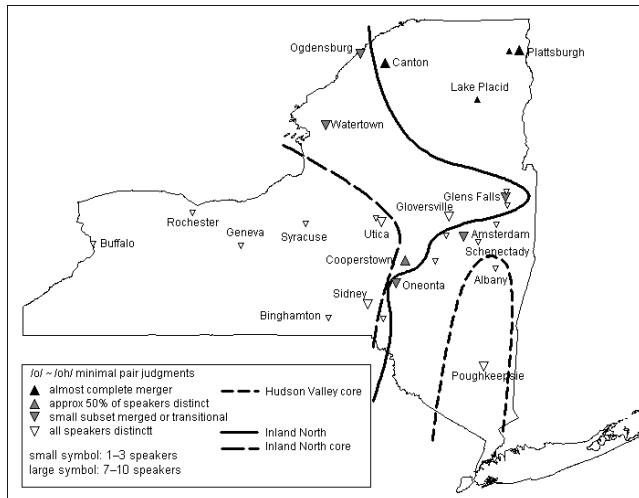
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Basis of discussion: survey of dialectology of **upstate New York** (Dinkin 2009):
 7–10 interviews conducted in each of 12 communities (total 98)—
 Amsterdam, Canton, Cooperstown, Glens Falls, Gloversville, Ogdensburg, Oneonta,
 Poughkeepsie, Plattsburgh, Sidney, Utica, Watertown
 1–3 interviews in an additional 16 communities for a total of 119.
 Speakers recruited chiefly by **Short Sociolinguistic Event** approach (Ash 2002)
 or by dialing random telephone numbers (cf. *ANAE*: Labov et al. 2006).

Focusing on **Cooperstown**: 9 speakers interviewed in 2008.

- 1 **older** man: Buck (born 1926)
- 4 **middle-aged** women: Janet (1950), Peg (1957), Sally (1957), Nellie (1963)
- 4 **young** women: Sarah (1983), Emily (1987), Zara (1990), Kelly (1991)

Village of **Cooperstown** is **atypical of its region** in several linguistic features:
caught-cot merger, Northern Cities Shift, and /æ/ systems.



Distribution of *caught-cot* merger by minimal-pair judgments; boundaries of main dialect regions

Feature 1: *caught-cot* merger

Caught-cot merger **very rare** in 119-speaker Upstate sample, **except** in “North Country” region in northeastern NY (Canton, Plattsburgh), where merger is nearing completion. **All 4 young speakers in Cooperstown** are merged or transitional in perception—the **only community outside North Country** with more than 1 fully merged speaker. All of Upstate NY shows **slight** trend toward merger in apparent time (Dinkin 2011); but it’s going to completion in Cooperstown **much faster** than other nearby towns.

Feature 2: Northern Cities Shift

Score speakers on 0–5 scale for NCS participation (cf. Labov 2007 for details).

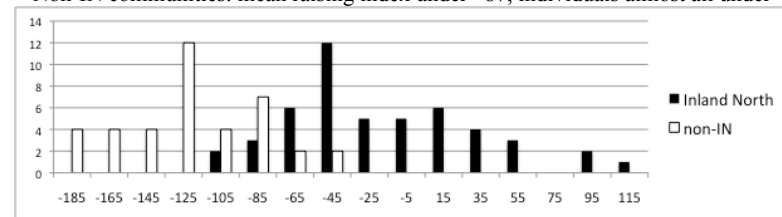
Dialect regions in NY can be defined in terms of NCS score (Dinkin 2009):

- **Inland North core:** most speakers score 4–5; west of large dashed line on map
 - **Inland North fringe:** most speakers score 2–4; west of solid line on map, east of core
 - **Hudson Valley:** most speakers score 1–2; southeast of Inland North fringe
 - **North Country:** most speakers score 0–1; northeast of Inland North fringe
- Inland North cities (core & fringe) all **originally settled from southwest New England**.

The **single** NCS feature that **most sharply differentiates** regions is raising of /æ/ vs /e/:
 define speaker’s **raising index** as meanF1(e)–meanF1(æ).

In sample of 12 communities (Dinkin 2009):

- Inland North cities have mean raising index over –26, individuals almost all over –63
- Non-IN communities: mean raising index under –87, individuals almost all under –63



Histogram of speakers’ /æ/-raising indices in 11 communities (excluding Cooperstown).
 High outlier of +280 from Utica (Inland North core) omitted for compactness.

What about Cooperstown?

- It was settled from SW New England—“principally from Connecticut” (Cooper 1838).
 - Mean raising index is **–96**: the **only SWNE-settled community** so low. But:
 - **Peg’s** index is +75: the **only positive index** in any community with low mean index.
 - NCS **scores** show very clear and sharp decrease in apparent time:
 - **older** speaker scores 4, **middle-aged** score 2–3, and **young** score 0–1.
- So apparently Cooperstown **was originally** an Inland North community, but **abandoned NCS rapidly** over the course of the 20th century.

Sidney is also seemingly retreating from NCS, but **not as completely**:
 Five older speakers score 4–5, three younger score 2–3.
 Sidney and Cooperstown are both within regional sphere of influence of **Oneonta**;
 majority NCS score in Oneonta is 2, so Sidney’s movement toward 2 may be result of
 Oneonta influence, but Cooperstown’s movement to 0 probably isn’t.

Feature 3: Diffused /æ/ system

Younger Cooperstown speakers all have **nasal /æ/ system**—
 /æ/ has discrete higher front allophone before nasals.
 Majority of older/middle-aged speakers have **continuous** gradient from higher prenasal
 /æ/ to lower elsewhere—characteristic of the Inland North.

Nellie (middle-aged) has raised /æ/ before **nasals, voiced stops, voiceless fricatives**—
 identified by Labov (2007) as the result of **diffusion** of the New York City /æ/ system.
 This is the **only attestation in New York State outside the Hudson Valley core** (small
 dashed line on map) of the diffused /æ/ system.
 Although Nellie’s parents are from Hudson Valley core, many speakers from other
 communities have HV core parents without displaying diffused /æ/ themselves.

Summing up:

Cooperstown is atypical of its region in rapid **attainment of caught-cot merger**, rapid
abandonment of NCS, and **attestation of diffused /æ/ system**.

Cooperstown is also atypical of its region **demographically**, based on US census data:
 high proportion of residents employed in **management or professional occupations**,
 and high proportion of residents **born out of state**.

% management/professional	1980	1990	2000	2010
Cooperstown	42.0	45.6	55.5	61.6
mean HV fringe / Inland North	21.5	24.4	28.7	29.3
max HV fringe / Inland North	26.9	31.8	37.2	37.5

% born outside NY state	1980	1990	2000	2010
Cooperstown	27.0	30.9	36.9	42.6
mean HV fringe / Inland North	15.8	17.7	19.1	21.1
max HV fringe / Inland North	20.6	23.4	26.7	27.7

(“HV fringe / Inland North” here includes Amsterdam, Glens Falls, Gloversville, Ogdensburg,
 Oneonta, Sidney, Utica, Watertown.)

High rate of **non-local origin** is reflected in sample. Compare Cooperstown to Sidney:

interviewees' parents' origins	local	within 25 mi	other NY	other US	non-US
Cooperstown (out of 18)	4	1	6	5	2
Sidney (out of 16)	6	6	1	3	0

None of the four **young** Cooperstown speakers have a parent from Cooperstown.

Changes in Cooperstown **resemble phases of new-dialect formation** described by
 Trudgill et al. (2000) on formation of New Zealand English:

- **First generation** growing up in dialect-contact situation is **heterogeneous**;
 with no coherent local dialect to acquire, role of parents more significant than usual.
 Middle-aged Cooperstown speakers seem to meet this description:
 - **Peg** has **high /æ/-raising index**; her father is from (then–NCS) Cooperstown.
 - **Nellie** has **diffused /æ/ system**; her parents are from Hudson Valley core.
 - This is the **only known cooccurrence** of these two features in one community.
- **Later generations** focus the dialect on unmarked and majority forms from inputs:
 - **Caught-cot merger** is unmarked in terms of number of categories to be learned.
 - **No NCS** is probably majority pattern, with bulk of population from other regions.
 - **Nasal /æ/ system** described as “default... in many areas” (*ANAE*).

The historical and social setting of Cooperstown is **not very similar** to New Zealand—
 or even to Milton Keynes, England (Kerswill & Williams 2000)—
 suggesting new-dialect formation **follows the same stages** despite different contexts,
 in this case small town with many **newcomers** but **no overall population growth**.
Heavily upper-middle-class nature of Cooperstown’s population may play a role here,
 with NCS possibly **discounted** as a sociolinguistic **marker** (cf. Labov 2001:196),
 thus simulating NZ-like situation with **no** pre-existing local speech community?
 Obviously **further research** will be needed to confirm these apparent patterns.

Features in which Cooperstown **does resemble** surrounding area, needing explanation:

- **Penultimate-stress *élémentary*** is a feature of Upstate NY (Dinkin & Evanini 2010);
 Cooperstown’s 75% *-mentary* is totally congruent with other nearby towns.
- **/ay/ fronter than /aw/** is a feature of the North vs. the Midland & South (*ANAE*);
young Cooperstown speakers have /ay/ fronter, but **middle-aged** have /aw/ fronter.

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