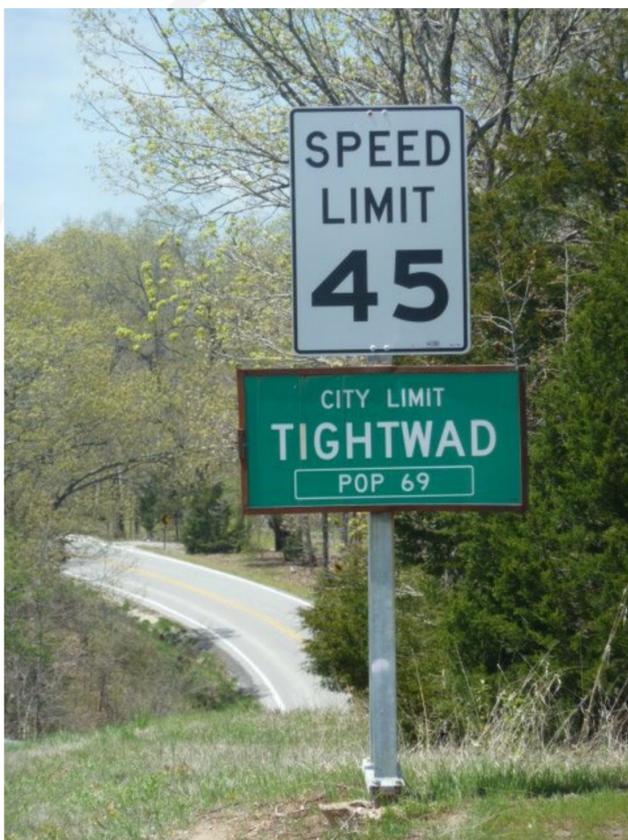


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Snapshot: Greetings from Tightwad

By [Michelle Nijhuis](#) on August 5, 2014 | [Leave a response](#)

“Really? That’s the name of the town?” I asked.
 “I bet you think that’s funny,” he said.
 I hesitated. “Well ...”
 “Yeah,” he said solemnly. He grinned. “That’s because it *is* funny.”

My guide to [Tightwad](#) and its environs was Rob Farr, a longtime Missouri game warden. I was interviewing Farr for [a story about caviar poaching in the Ozarks](#), but I’ve found that no matter my reporting mission, unusual place names are always worth asking about. There’s always a story—or stories—behind them, and even apocryphal versions can tell you a lot about how residents see the place they live.

Tightwad is reportedly named after a local store owner who overcharged a customer for a watermelon—or, in some versions, a rooster. (There is a [Tightwad Bank](#), which holds deposits from cornball-inclined customers all over the country.) Tightwad is next door to Racket, which, again according to legend, was named for a quarreling couple that lived near the post office. Down the road is the even more deliciously named [Peculiar](#), the onetime stomping ground of SciLancer [Stephen Ornes](#). There are several stories about the town’s christening, but one is that the first postmaster, annoyed by his superiors’ rejection of several suggested names, wrote to the Postmaster General and said, “We don’t care what name you give us so long as it is sort of ‘peculiar.’”

So be careful what you ask for. But always, always ask about the name.

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Michelle Nijhuis

Michelle Nijhuis’ award-winning reporting on science and the environment appears in *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, and many other publications. A longtime contributing editor of *High Country News*, ... [MORE »](#)

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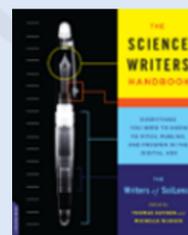
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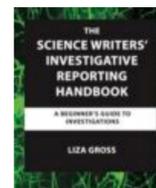
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