

ORIGIN OF THE NAMES OF THE STATES OF THE UNION

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Origin of the Names of the States of the Union by Hamilton B. Staples

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HAMILTON B. STAPLES

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BY
HAMILTON B. STAPLES.

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ORIGIN OF THE NAMES OF THE STATES OF THE UNION.

I HAVE the honor to lay before the Society a series of notes, the result of a limited research, upon the origin of the names of the States of the Union. I was led to suppose the subject might prove interesting from the circumstance that, some time ago, it had attracted the attention of the Society as a fit subject of investigation, but for some reason no definite inquiry has been prosecuted. I regret that in respect to the origin of the names of several States, my paper will simply present an array of conflicting authorities. I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to the acting-librarian of the Society, and to Mr. Green, the accomplished librarian of the Free Public Library of Worcester, for the means to prosecute these inquiries.

In considering the subject, it will be convenient to divide the States into groups, starting with the original thirteen States, as the first group, and in respect to this group, to refer to the States in the order of the coast line from North to South.

The origin of the name of New Hampshire is very simple. The original territory conveyed by patent of the Plymouth Company to John Mason in 1629, was named by him after Hampshire County in England.

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the Roadstead or harbor island), because the real and authentic origin and beginning of the name appears to be so uncertain. I also find that in the early history of the State, persons of the family name Rhodes are also mentioned. Could not one Mr. Rhodes have been among the first English settlers?" Mr. Schoolcraft in his history of the Indian Tribes, adopts the Dutch origin of the name. Mr. Arnold in a note to his valuable History of Rhode Island says, "The derivation of this name has given rise to much discussion; by what strange fancy this Island was ever supposed to resemble that of Rhodes on the coast of Asia Minor, is difficult to imagine, and it is equally strange that the tradition that it was named from such resemblance should be transmitted or be believed unless indeed because it is easier to adopt a geographical absurdity than to investigate an historical point." Mr. Arnold then goes on to say that the celebrated Dutch navigator, Adrian Block, who gave his name to Block Island, sailed into Narragansett Bay "where he commemorated the fiery aspect of the place, caused by the red clay in some portion of its shores, by giving it the name of Roode Eylandt, the Red Island, and by easy transposition, Rhode Island." In support of the theory that the State *was* named after the island in the Mediterranean Sea, we have the authority of Peterson's History of Rhode Island. We have also the commanding authority of the public act by which the name was given. From Vol. I., p. 127, of the Rhode Island Colonial Records we make this extract: "At the General Court of Election held at Nuport 13. Jan. 1644. It is ordered by this Court that the ysland commonly called Aquethneck shall be from henceforth called the Isle of Rhodes or Rhode Island." The

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form of this vote introducing the Isle of Rhodes first is opposed to all the theories of the origin of the name except that which refers it to the island in the Mediterranean. It is stated by Mr. Hildreth that the name as given to the island by the purchasers was the Isle of Rhodes and that it was afterwards called Rhode Island. When we consider that Sir Henry Vane was instrumental in the purchase of the island from the Indians, we are at no loss to account for a name which displays an historical imagination.

The name Connecticut spelled *Quin-neh-tukqut* signifies "land on a long tidal river." The name is so spelled in Cotton's Vocabulary, and in the Cambridge Records it appears as *Quinetuckquet*. This explanation rests upon the authority of Dr. Trumbull.

The territory of the imperial State of New York was comprised in the royal grant to the Duke of York in 1664, of all the land "from the west side of the Connecticut river to the east side of the Delaware Bay." In 1664, the Duke fitted out an expedition which took possession of New Amsterdam, and the place was thereafter called New York, in honor of the Duke. The same name was applied to the State. By a strange caprice of history the greatest State in the Union bears the name of the last and the most tyrannical of the Stuarts.

The State of New Jersey, granted by the Duke of York to Sir George Carteret and Lord Berkeley in 1664, received its name in the grant in commemoration of the brave defence of the Isle of Jersey by Carteret, its Governor, against the Parliamentary forces in the great Civil War.

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Pennsylvania owes its name to its founder, William Penn. The name given by Penn himself was Sylvania, but King Charles II. insisted that the name of Penn should be prefixed. It is the only State in the Union named after its founder.

The counties of Newcastle, Kent and Sussex "upon Delaware," granted by the Duke of York to Penn in 1682, were known as the territories of Pennsylvania. In 1701, Penn granted them a certain autonomy. The State was named after the bay of that name, and the bay after Lord De-la-war who explored it. It has been claimed that the bay and the river were named after the Delaware Indians, who in 1600 dwelt upon their shores. This claim is unfounded. The Delaware name for the river was Lenapehittuk, meaning Lenape river.

Maryland was settled under a charter granted in 1632 by King Charles I. to Lord Baltimore. The State was named after Queen Henrietta Maria. In the charter the country is called "*Terra Maria, Anglice, Maryland.*"

The first step in the colonization of America by England was the charter granted in 1584 by Queen Elizabeth to Sir Walter Raleigh. Under this charter Raleigh took possession of the country west of the Roanoke, and called it Virginia in honor of the Virgin Queen. This is the only State in the Union whose name appears in literature, associated with the royal title. Spenser dedicated the Faerie Queene to "Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, Queene of England, France and Ireland and of Virginia." The nearest approach to this in a public act is the order of the English Privy Council to the Virginia Colony after the Revolu-