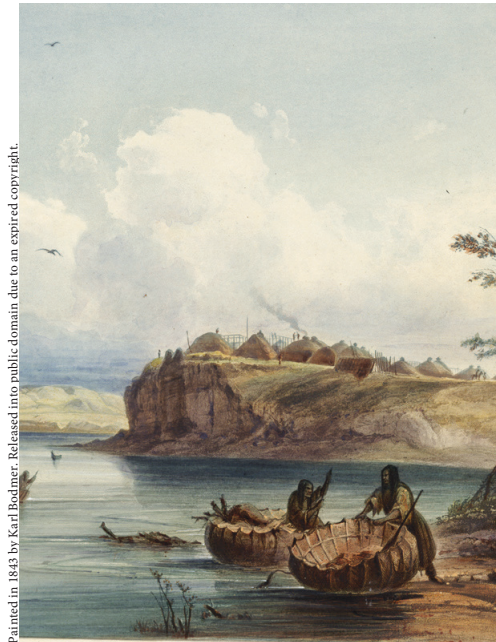


# The Hidden Meanings of Names

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What is the name of your state? What does the name mean? Place names often tell about the history of a place. They may also honor important people.

Many states in the United States have names that come from the language of the native people who lived in the area. Missouri may mean “people of the big canoes,” and Kentucky may mean “meadow” in

Native American languages.

Even though the United States has never had a king or queen, seven of the 50 states are named for kings or queens. These states were named by the European explorers who claimed them. Georgia was founded in 1733 as a British colony. The colony’s founders named it for the king of England—King George II. Georgia kept the name even after the American Revolution, when England no longer ruled the United States.

Two states are named after another English king, Charles I. In 1629, long before the American Revolution,

Charles I gave land to colonists who went to live there. To honor him, they named the colony Carolina. In 1729, it was divided into North and South Carolina.

Another state was named after Charles I’s wife: Queen Henrietta Maria. The colonists used the queen’s second name—Maria—for the colony’s name, Maryland.

Two states are also named after Queen Elizabeth I of England. She was known as the Virgin Queen because she never married. These states are called Virginia and West Virginia.

Finally, one state is named for a French king. French settlers named their colony after their king—Louis XIV. That land was later bought by the United States, but the state of Louisiana kept the name of the French king.

Some places were also named for places in another country. New York and New Jersey, for example, were named for York and Jersey, places in England.

Every state’s name has a history. What does your state’s name mean?



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