

Exploration of the Meaning of Power as it relates to American County Characteristics

Episode 3: Counties Named after European Americans and Native Americans

Thanks for joining me again on another episode of Research on American Counties! This is the third episode of the series and on today's episode I will be going over my findings on some counties in the US named after European Americans and Native Americans. As I mentioned in my opening episode, what really drew me to this specific topic of counties in the US was their names, so I am really quite excited to begin sharing what I was able to find. It is important to note that the idea of counties was invented in England and this connection can be seen in the US with the naming of Essex County in New York and there also being an Essex County in England (Healy; Wright 1A 23:53-24:02). I also think it key for me to affirm the importance of naming for this episode with a quote I found in an article I read for this episode that says quote, "Naming also represents a means of claiming or taking ownership of places, both materially and symbolically. (Webster/Alderman "Commemorative Custer" 2)". From the same interview I used last episode with Commissioner Kefalas he adds to this by saying (Wright 1B 28:00-28:05). From another article, I also learned another purpose of counties which is that they are a way to study and look at places, a way to understand them, which could be seen in Webster's study of the bible belt through counties (Webster et al. 1439-1464). In terms of how I conducted my research on finding names, I simply googled maps of states that had their county names on them.

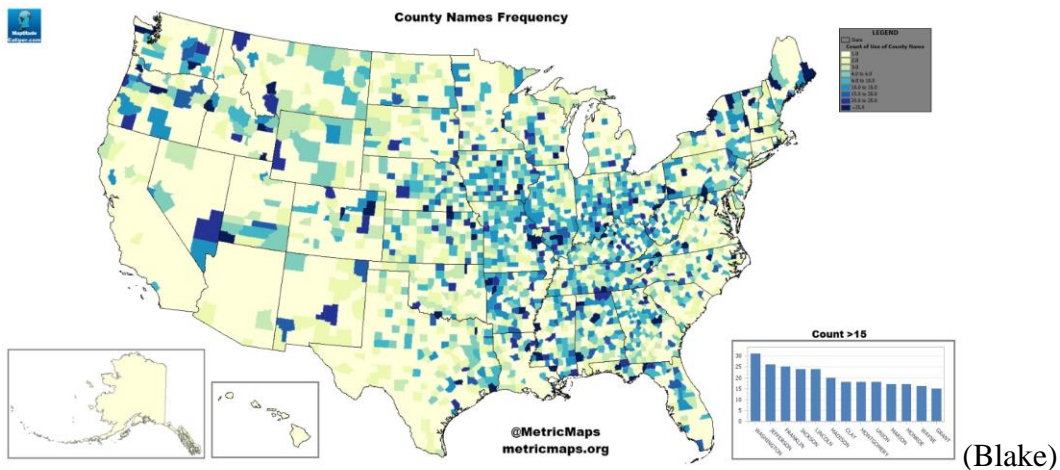
From there I began to notice a trend that broke the county names up into five major categories, four of which I will be covering in this podcast. The categories or rather themes of the names were, European Americans, Native Americans, Natural references, religious references, and counties named after other places ("Alabama", "Alaska", "California", "Colorado", "Wisconsin", "Georgia", "Idaho", "Illinois", "Indiana", "Kansas", "Massachusetts", "Minnesota", "New Mexico", "New York", "Ohio", "Pennsylvania", "Virginia"; "Texas

Counties Map”; geology.com; “Iowa”; “Michigan”; “Delaware”; waterproofpaper.com; “Map of Wyoming”; “Kentucky”; Cactus). My honors mentor and I decided that I should record on the first four of these because these categories had greater historical relevance and were key in Americas land growth into administrative units. What I did from there was I went state by state, logging what names I recognized into one of the five categories on a word document.

In terms of how I selected the states I did, I originally just started compiling as much data as I could and then once I had a solid amount of data, with the help of my honors mentor, I selected states from the regions as organized by the 2010 US Census Bureau so that there would be a fairly equal and diverse amount of data from across the country (US Census Bureau). The 29 states that I decided to conduct research on were California, Alaska, Hawaii, Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Idaho, Utah, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia, Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Maine, and Massachusetts.

Ok so now for the juicy stuff! In regard to what I was able to find for names of county's named after European Americans or Europeans, I found that the people the counties were named after were famous people that either were politicians, in the military, or had some other occupational significance and Professor Shelley adds to this with his response (Wright 1A 12:44-13:35; “Alabama”, “Alaska”, “California”, “Colorado”, “Wisconsin”, “Georgia”, “Idaho”, “Illinois”, “Indiana”, “Kansas”, “Massachusetts”, “Minnesota”, “New Mexico”, “New York”, “Ohio”, “Pennsylvania”, “Virginia”; “Texas Counties Map”; geology.com; “Iowa”; “Michigan”; waterproofpaper.com; “Delaware”; “Map of Wyoming”; “Kentucky”; Cactus). For example, I noticed that in the states of New York, Colorado, Indiana, Alabama, Texas, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Wisconsin, there is a county named after Thomas Jefferson (“Alabama”, “Colorado”, “Wisconsin”, “Georgia”, “Idaho”, “Indiana”,

“Kansas”, “New York”, “Pennsylvania”; “Texas Counties Map”; “Iowa”; “Kentucky”; “Arkansas”). The same could be said of counties bearing the names of Lincoln, Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Polk, Madison, Adams, Hancock, Monroe, and several others (“Alabama”, “Alaska”, “California”, “Colorado”, “Wisconsin”, “Georgia”, “Idaho”, “Illinois”, “Indiana”, “Kansas”, “Massachusetts”, “Minnesota”, “New Mexico”, “New York”, “Ohio”, “Pennsylvania”, “Virginia”; “Texas Counties Map”; geology.com; “Iowa”; “Michigan”; waterproofpaper.com; “Delaware”; “Map of Wyoming”; “Kentucky”; Cactus; Blake). Speaking of common county names, I was fortunate enough to stumble across a map that highlights what and where the most common county names are which include Clay, Montgomery (more on that one later), Lincoln, Marion, and Wayne (Blake; Long and Searle; Jennings; “Montgomery Count’s History”; “Montgomery County”; “County Overview.”; “Origins of Tennessee” 535-536; Blake). In terms of why counties with less famous names are renamed, Professor Shelley shares his insights with this response (Wright 1A 13:52-14:10). He also adds why the majority of counties in the US are named after European-Americans (Wright 1A 15:51-16:07). Commissioner Kefalas and Mr. Knierim add to this with their responses as well (Wright 1A 29:45-30:22; 1C 12:00-13:37, 14:25-15:28, 16:10-16:23).



Other names that I observed were those of Newton, Guadalupe, Lauderdale, Morgan, Sumpter, Pike, Rousseau, Hidalgo, Columbia, Wales-Hyder, King George, Knox, Raegen, Kennedy, Crockett, Grant, Dukes, and several others (“Alabama”, “Alaska”, “California”, “Colorado”, “Wisconsin”, “Georgia”, “Idaho”, “Illinois”, “Indiana”, “Kansas”, “Massachusetts”, “Minnesota”, “New Mexico”, “New York”, “Ohio”, “Pennsylvania”, “Virginia”; “Texas Counties Map”; geology.com; “Iowa”; “Michigan”; waterproofpaper.com; “Delaware”; “Map of Wyoming”; “Kentucky”; Cactus).

There were also other counties with names inspired by the names of famous European Americans that I specifically took a more in-depth look into. One of the names that I did this with was that of Lafayette or also known as simply Fayette (Auricchio). Here, the inspiration was an American Revolutionary war hero, Lafayette from France (Auricchio). His name was also spread through tours he went on in the original 24 states of the union as the “Nations Guest” where droves of people would come to celebrate him and manufacturers would also make things bearing his name or face on the item (Auricchio). What this led to was states naming pieces of land in his honor and as such now there are 17 states with a county named after him (Auricchio).

In addition to this there are also several counties with the name of Union County (“Georgia”; “Ohio”; Cactus) In Georgia, the county was given the name of Union County by a state representative of the area John Thomas while in Tennessee and Ohio, these counties were consolidated from a few different counties until they were one (“Union County”; Cooksey; “Origins of Tennessee” 538). Speaking of Tennessee, I was fortunate enough to stumble across a website that had explanations for every county name in the state, many of which were Euro-Americans who had either been politicians or war heroes that I have already mentioned for other states (“Origins of Tennessee” 533-538). However, I was able to find some names that I have yet to mention starting with Houston County which was named after Senator Houston who was also

a governor of the state and a US congressman (“Origins of Tennessee” 535). Another name that is of note is that of Benjamin Lincoln who was an officer in the Revolutionary war as well as a US secretary of war (“Origins of Tennessee” 536). A third name that stuck out to me was Coffee, not like the energy drink but more akin to the cavalry commander in the War of 1812 and Creek War (“Origins of Tennessee” 534).

You might also be surprised to learn that there are Clinton counties in the states of Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois (“Illinois”, “Indiana”, “Ohio”, “Virginia”; “Iowa”; “Michigan”; “Kentucky”). However, these counties are not named after Bill or Hillary Clinton but rather there was DeWitt Clinton, a Vice President from New York who was key in making the Erie Canal (“Clinton”; “Clinton County, Iowa”, ExploreKYHistory Team 2023; “Clinton County (Indiana)”; Illinois State Archives; Logan). Specifically with Kentucky, this county was made from parts of Wayne and Cumberland Counties in 1835 (ExploreKYHistory Team). Also, with Michigan the county was named after George Clinton, another American politician (“Clinton County”).

However, there are some counties with the same name but named after different individuals (Long and Searle; Jennings; “Montgomery Count’s History”; “Montgomery County”; “County Overview.”; “Origins of Tennessee” 535-536). The counties and city of Montgomery are excellent examples of this (Long and Searle; Jennings; “Montgomery Count’s History”; “Montgomery County”; “County Overview.”, “Origins of Tennessee” 537). For example, in the city in Alabama and the states of Georgia, Texas, Maryland, New York, and Ohio, Montgomery County is named after Richard Montgomery (Long and Searle; Jennings; “Montgomery Count’s History”; “Montgomery County”; “County Overview.”). He was an immigrant from Ireland, who was a major general in the American Revolution who tried but failed to take Quebec (“Montgomery Count’s History”; “Montgomery County”). Montgomery county in Alabama

however is named after Lemuel P Montgomery who was an attorney and leader of an infantry division in the War of 1812 (Jennings). In addition to this, in Tennessee the county is named after John Montgomery who was an officer in the Revolutionary War, founded Clarksville, and was one of the individuals who signed the Cumberland Compact (“Origins of Tennessee” 537).

Another repeated name I looked into was that of Dallas which is a county in both Arkansas and of course Texas (“Counties”; Maxwell). In both states this county was named after George Dallas who was a vice president under President Polk (“Counties”; Maxwell). Speaking of Texas specifically, it consists of a whopping 254 counties with 66 of them in reference to the Texas Revolution against Mexico, 58 for the politicians who served the republic of Texas, 54 who served for the State of Texas, and 66 others referring to rangers in Texas, Presidents of the US, people from Spain or Mexico, confederate soldiers, landowners, and businessmen (Carson). Going back to the idea of counties with the same name from a different person, during my research I came across an article that talked about how there was an effort to rename Lee County in Florida which occurred in 2021, originally named after Confederate military leader Robert E Lee to Lee County named after Bruce Lee (Runell). This effort has not yet materialized, but Professor Shelley does share a more successful example of other people using the same tactic (Runells; Wright 1A 19:02-19:31). Returning to Floridian counties Dade County, home of Miami, is named after an army major (Winsa).

Moving northward I found a map of the New England sub-region that shows not only the county names but also the most common ancestry in each of them, which I think is a link to the past and why these counties are named what they are. For example, Dukes County in Massachusetts has a considerable amount of English heritage and of course Dukes were a part of the British social construct historically (“Massachusetts”). Speaking of dukes, Albany County in New York is named after James II, the former Duke of both Albany and York (Healy). I

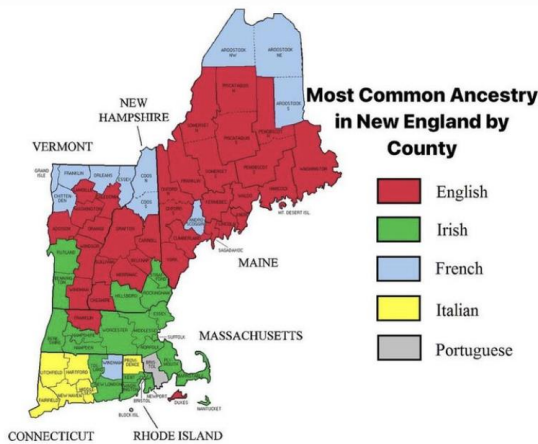
remember from my Wyoming Constitution class that some of the people who wrote the Wyoming constitution were from New York and have seemed to have made an impact on the names on the landscape (King). For example, there is obviously Albany County which is home to Laramie the city I am residing in, and I do remember that when I was going on a backpacking trip with my dad this last summer that there is a Brooklyn Lake out in Medicine Bow National Forrest. Speaking of people in high society positions, again in New York, Orange County (sound familiar?) is named after William of Orange who was the king of England when county lines were drawn (Healy). In the same state Orleans County (again sound familiar?) was named after the French royal house of Orleans (Healy).

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New England



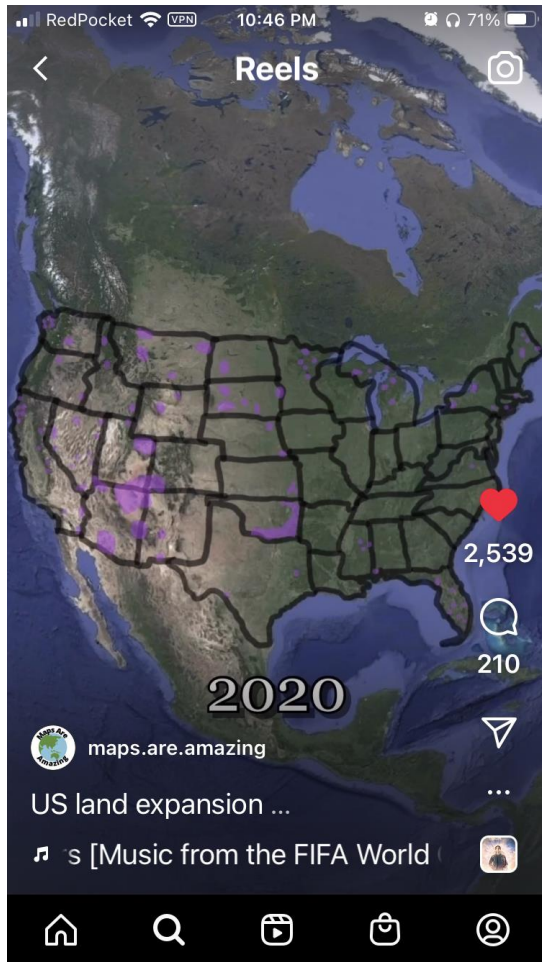
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global_map_posts Most Common Ancestry in New England by County.

#maps #map #mapping #geography

To round out the European American side of things I had an email correspondence with a Professor Emeritus, Dr. Gerald Webster for Geography at the University of Wyoming, who currently though is retired. Anyway, he wrote a few papers that he shared with me via email which I was able to find some valuable information in. For example, the case study of Custer (Webster 2). Webster makes a tally of several types of places that are named after Lieutenant Custer, who was alive in the mid/late 1800s, but in terms of counties he has counties named after him in the states of South Dakota, Colorado, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Montana, and Idaho (Webster 2, 11). Custer was also responsible for the murder of many native people (Webster 2).

Transitioning from the Euro-American County influenced names, I will now fix my attention on counties influenced by Native American County names (Wright 1C 16:30-16:37; 1A 16:09-16:36). Similar to what I've been saying before, I was able to find a couple of intriguing maps linked to native populations in the US. One of was a map of the development of US owned land across time which went from the original 13 colonies in the 1700s to the continental US with the exception of some splotches that belong to native American nations which are largest in eastern Oklahoma, the Dakotas, Northern Montana, and the southern states in the Mountain West (US Census Bureau). Interestingly, I was only able to find Native influenced names for the states I studied in Colorado and Utah and of these counties, with the exception of Montezuma County in southwestern Colorado, none of them were in the allotted territory ("Colorado"; waterproofpaper.com). This may have something to do with how Native Americans experiences have been dismissed in several instances by the US in how there has been a single faceted version of history that has produced this dismissal (Webster "Custer" 15).



I was fortunate enough to come across the webpage of newyorkupstate.com that explained what each county in New York was named after, which was incredibly helpful to me in learning about which counties had native inspired names (Healy). One of these is Cattaraugus County which is a native American word for bad smelling banks (Healy). There is also Cayuga County, named after the tribe, Chautauqua County, which is the Iroquois word for bag tied in the middle or two moccasins tied together (Healy). Further, Chemung County, which is big horn in Algonquin, Chenango County which is the Onondaga word meaning large bull-thistle, and Erie County named after the tribe (Healy). I also found that there is a Genesee County which means good valley in Seneca, Niagara County which comes from the Iroquois word Onguiaahra meaning straight or thunder of waters, Oneida county named after the Iroquois tribe from the area during

European exploration, Onondaga County named after the tribe meaning people of the hills and were also from the area during European exploration (Healy). Moreover, there is Ontario County, which is the Iroquois word for beautiful lake, Oswego County another Iroquois word, Otsego County which is the Oneida and Mohawk word for place of the rock, Saratoga County which is from the native American word for of the hill beside the river which in this case is referring to the Hudson River (Healy). Another interesting thing about this county name is that it is shared by a town in Southern Wyoming (Healy). I also noticed the names of Schenectady County which was named by the Mohawk people in the area from a word meaning over the pine planes, Seneca County referring to the tribe, Tioga County coming from the Iroquois word meaning at the fork referring to the juncture of Susquehanna and Chemung rivers, and finally Wyoming County (Healy).

With this miniature case study, I couldn't help but notice how I divided native and nature in terms of the names, but in terms of many of the names influenced by native peoples they are strongly connected with nature (Healy). I was also surprised to learn about how many of the famous names across the North American landscape came from native Americans ie the great lakes and Canadian Provinces (Healy).

Moving on to some other states that I was able to do a more in-depth study on the native American influenced names of I found that in California, Colusa County is named after the name of a Native American tribe who lived west of the Sacramento River ("58 Counties"). There is also Marin County named after the indigenous chief, Modoc County named after the tribe, Shasta County also named after a tribe, Sonoma County which is a Chocuyen word, Inyo County which is a word for dwelling place of the great spirit, and Napa County which also comes from an indigenous word ("58 Counties"). In this state I also noticed Tuolumne County which is an indigenous word and Yolo County which is not to be confused with the Drake song as it actually

comes from a native American word (“58 Counties”). With this webpage and others, some of the native words had disputed or uncertain meanings so there were a lot of guesses put up under each word and so, since there was a lack of certainty, I decided to just stick with what was agreed with (“58 Counties”; Healy).

The other states I found similar webpages for were Texas, Ohio, and Tennessee (Paige; “Origins of Tennessee” 533-535; Carson). Starting with the first of these, Texas, I observed that there was a Nacogdoches County which got its name from the Nacodoche Tribe and Wichita County which was also a tribe (Carson). In Ohio there is Ashtabula County, which is an indigenous word for fish, Coshocton County which is from the Delaware people word of black bear town (Paige). Speaking of Delaware, there is a Delaware County in Ohio, but it is named after Thomas West who was a Baron of De La Warr and was a colonial leader in Virginia (Paige). Anyway, Cuyahoga County is the word for crooked river, there is an Erie County named after the tribe, Geauga County, which is the word for raccoon, Huron County named after the tribe, Ottawa County which was the local's interpretation of the native word for trader, Scioto County, which is the word for deer, and Tuscarawas County which is the word for open mouth (Paige). In Tennessee there is Unicoi County which is likely from the word u'nika meaning fog draped (“Origins of Tennessee” 538).

I would also like to talk more about the Cherokee name, but before I do so I would like to mention that Chesapeake and Potomac Counties are of native American origin which I thought was intriguing because I personally never expected them to be of that origin (“How the Counties”). Anyway, in terms of Cherokee County in Kansas, there was a tribe there that signed a treaty in 1835 that granted them that land but then this land was given back to the US (Kansas Historical Society). Regarding the name in Georgia, it is there because that area was where that people group originally lived (Johnson). Moving eastward in Alabama the name comes from a

group of Cherokees that gave up the land to the US in the Treaty of New Echota also in 1835 on December 19th (“Cherokee..Alabama”).

Overall, my research has told me that with native influenced names in general, including Cherokee, are spread about, partially because of the forced relocation of native peoples in the US (“Maryland”). Here, there can also be a discrepancy of naming of places like counties because of a lack of self-determination which Commissioner Kefalas comments on by saying (Wright 1B 30:25-31:13; 31:26-31:43). What I mean in is that while there are plenty of counties that are inspired by Native Americans, at least from what I could observe, this pales in comparison to the number of counties in the US named after European Americans who were the ones forcing them onto reservations even though a great number of the natives had no desire to do this (“Commemorative Custer” 15).

I also observed other indigenous influenced county names in other places as well. For instance, Washakie County in Wyoming is named after a local chief whose name is also on the dining center at the University of Wyoming (“Map of Wyoming”). The rest of these are named after tribes, so in Indiana there is Miami County, the same is true in Ohio where there is also Seneca County (“Indiana”; “Ohio”). Speaking of Miami County, ironically not the host of the major Floridian city, this county also resides in Kansas where there are also the counties of Comanche and Cheyene (“Kansas”). There is Chippewa County in Wisconsin, Nez Pierce County is present in Idaho while there is Dakota County in Minnesota, and Comanche County in Texas (“Wisconsin”; “Idaho”; “Minnesota”; “Texas Counties Map”). I also saw that there is Choctaw County in Alabama, Counties of Arapahoe and Cheyene in Colorado, and counties of Cherokee and Sioux in Iowa (“Alabama”; “Colorado”; “Iowa”). Furthermore, Illinois is home to the counties of Iroquois, Pocahontas, Chickasaw, and Black Hawk (“Illinois”). Also, I would like to mention Knierim's response on how county names can be amended (Wright 1C 17:28-18:41,

18:53-19:24). In addition to this Knierim adds some information about county governmental structure as well by saying that (Wright 1C 20:36-21:06).

Special thanks go out to the staff, I just learned the other day that it's just staff, at Studio Coe who helped me with the technological aspect of producing this podcast. I'd also like to thank my classmate Taylor Meyers, Adobe Audition, those who made the voice box at Studio Coe, Professor Vercoe, the computer lab assistants at Coe library, and everyone else who has assisted me with the making of this podcast. Thanks for listening, and I hope you listen to and enjoy the next episode where I will talk about natural and religious influenced county names as well as an overview and reflection on the series.

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