

Illinois County Name Origin

The Making of Illinois by Irwin F Mather, 1900, pages 263-268

Of the one hundred and two counties into which the state of Illinois is divided, six were named in honor of presidents of the United States. These are **Washington**, **Jefferson**, **Madison**, **Monroe**, **Adams** (named for John Quincy Adams, not for his father), and **Jackson**.

Bond County was named for Shadrack Bond, who later became the first Governor of Illinois; while **Coles** (Edward Coles, second Governor of the State) **Edwards** (Ninian Edwards, 3rd Governor of the State) and **Ford** (Thomas Ford—8th Governor of the State) also took their names from chief executives of the state.

Of those who have figured in the history of Illinois, or who were, for one reason or another, prominent in the early days, the following men have given their names to counties:

William M. **Alexander**, a state senator in the second and third general assemblies.

Daniel P. **Cook**, first attorney general of the state and a representative in Congress from 1819 to 1827.

Stephen A. **Douglas**, whose name will ever be associated with that of Lincoln; orator, political leader, representative in Congress, United States senator, and Democratic candidate for the presidency.

John **Edgar**, pioneer merchant, politician and land speculator.

Elias Kent **Kane**, Democratic leader, pro-slavery advocate, member of the first constitutional convention, judge of the territory, first Secretary of State and second United States senator.

John **Logan**, M.D., father of General John A. Logan.

William **McHenry**, who served in both the War of 1812 and the Black Hawk War; member of the first, fourth, fifth and ninth general assemblies.

John **McLean**, lawyer, territorial judge and first representative in Congress in 1818 and senator in 1824.

Pierre **Menard**, a French Indian trader, a colonel of militia and first Lieutenant Governor of Illinois.

Joseph **Ogle**, politician and lieutenant of militia in the territorial days.

Benjamin **Piatt**, attorney general of the territory from 1810 to 1813.

Nathaniel **Pope**, first territorial Secretary of State and last territorial delegate in Congress. But for his efforts the north tier of counties of Illinois would be in Wisconsin and Chicago a city of that state.

Benjamin **Stephenson**, Adjutant general of the territory in 1813.

Leonard **White**, a gallant soldier; major of militia, member of constitutional convention, state senator in the second and third general assemblies; killed in the battle of Tippecanoe.

Samuel **Whiteside**, colonel of territorial militia, representative in the first general assembly and brigadier general of militia during the Black Hawk War.

Conrad **Will**, territorial recorder of Jackson County, member of the constitutional convention of 1818, and member of the general assemblies from the first to the ninth, inclusive.

Among the brave soldiers whose names are perpetuated in those of our counties are:

Jacob **Brown**, major general in 1812

George Rogers **Clark**, who as colonel of Virginia militia established control in the Illinois country by capturing Kaskaskia and Fort Vincennes

Baron Jonathan **DeKalb**, the German nobleman who served the colonies and was killed at Camden, S.C. in 1780

Major General Nathaniel **Greene** of revolutionary fame

William **Jasper**, the famous sergeant of the revolution who replaced the flag shot away at Fort Moultrie and was later killed at Savannah

Joseph Hamilton **Daviess**, the Kentucky lawyer who gave his name to Jo Daviess County, United States district attorney and major of militia

Richard M. **Johnson**, colonel of Kentucky militia, veteran of the War of 1812, representative in congress, United States senator from Kentucky and Vice President of the United states from 1837 to 1841

Henry **Knox**, major general and Secretary of War under Washington

Francis **Marion**, soldier of the revolution

Hugh **Mercer**, American officer killed at the battle of Princeton

Richard **Montgomery**, revolutionary general, killed before Quebec in 1775

Daniel **Morgan**, commander of the "rifle brigade" during the revolution

William **Moultrie**, who built and defended the fort bearing his name

Zebulon **Pike**, soldier and explorer

Count Casimir **Pulaski**, a Polish exile who espoused the cause of the colonies during the revolution and was killed at Savannah in 1779

Major General Israel **Putnam** was an American army general who fought with distinction at the Battle of Bunker Hill

Major General Philip **Schuyler**, member of the continental congress and United States senator from New York

Major General John **Stark** of revolutionary fame

Major General Arthur **St. Clair**, commander in chief of the army after the revolution and governor of the territory of the United States northwest of the Ohio

Joseph **Warren**, major general, killed at the battle of Bunker Hill

Anthony **Wayne**, major general during the revolution, commander in chief of the army after St. Clair

Three counties bear the name of naval officers:

McDonough, named for Commodore Thomas McDonough, who commanded the fleet on Lake Champlain in a successful engagement with the British near Plattsburg in 1814

Lawrence, for Captain James Lawrence, commander of the Chesapeake, who was mortally wounded in an engagement between that vessel and the British ship Shannon, in the War of 1812

Perry, for Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, hero of the battle of Lake Erie in 1813.

The following statesmen and soldiers who were not citizens of Illinois are represented in the names of counties:

John C. **Calhoun** of South Carolina, representative, senator, Secretary of War, Vice President and "father of nullification"

Charles **Carroll** of Carrollton, signer of the Declaration of Independence

Lewis **Cass**, soldier, statesman, minister to France, senator from Michigan, Secretary of War under Jackson, Secretary of State under Buchanan and candidate for the presidency

Henry **Clay**, senator and representative from Kentucky

William H. **Crawford**, senator from Georgia, minister to France, Secretary of War and of the Treasury and a candidate for the presidency

Benjamin **Franklin**, American Statesman, scientist and inventor

Albert **Gallatin**, Secretary of the Treasury

Felix **Grundy**, senator from Tennessee and Attorney General of the U.S.

Alexander **Hamilton**, American Statesman, financier, first Secretary of the Treasury, creator of National Bank

John **Hancock**, first signer of the Declaration of Independence

Patrick **Henry**, American Statesman and Virginia Governor

Amos **Kendall**, Postmaster General under Jackson

Richard Henry **Lee**, member of the continental Congress and senator from Virginia

Edward **Livingston**, Mayor of New York, representative in Congress from that state, afterward representative and senator from Louisiana, Secretary of State under Jackson and minister to France

Nathaniel **Macon**, colonel in the revolution, representative and senator from North Carolina

John **Marshall**, chief justice of the Supreme Court

Edmund **Randolph**, soldier of the revolution, member of the Continental Congress, Attorney General and Governor of Virginia, Secretary of State of the U.S. and Attorney General under Washington

Isaac **Shelby**, Governor of Kentucky

Lyttleton W. **Tazewell**, lawyer, governor, representative and senator from Virginia

From **DeWitt Clinton** of New York, mayor, governor, senator, lawyer, financier and chief promoter of the Erie Canal, two counties - DeWitt and Clinton - have taken their names.

Through the influence of immigrants from three other states, nine of our counties are named after counties in those states:

Champaign and **Richland** from Ohio;

Christian (Originally Dane County (for Nathan Dane of Massachusetts who had been a member of Congress and as the author of Northwestern Ordinance) (changed in 1840) named after William Christian, Revolutionary War Veteran killed in Southern Indiana), **Hardin**, (named for John Hardin, an officer in the Revolutionary War), **Henderson**, (named for Richard Henderson, founder of the Transylvania Company, an early attempt to organize what later became Kentucky), **Mason** (The County is named in honor of George Mason, a member of the Virginia legislature), **Scott** (named after a local family named Scott) and **Woodford** (for General William Woodford—with Washington at Valley Forge) from Kentucky.

Williamson (Hugh Williamson, a physician in the Revolutionary War and North Carolina delegate to the United States Constitutional Convention) from Tennessee

Iroquois, Kankakee, Macoupin, Peoria, Sangamon, Wabash and **Winnebago** counties recall the red men (*sic*), the original owners of the land now comprised in the State of Illinois

Boone County is named for Daniel Boone

Bureau for Pierre Buero, a French trader

Cumberland takes its name from Cumberland in Maryland

Du Page from a small river.

Effingham is named for Lord Effingham, who resigned his commission in the British army, refusing to serve in a war against the colonies

Fayette is named for the French General La Fayette

Fulton, for Robert Fulton, inventor of the steamboat

Jersey, for the state of New Jersey

Lake for Lake Michigan

LaSalle for the celebrated French explorer

Massac, from Fort Massac

Rock Island, from an island in the Mississippi River

Saline from the salt springs of the vicinity

Union for the federal Union

Vermilion from the river which flows through the county.