

Words and Their Stories: State Nicknames, Part 2

Now, the VOA Special English program WORDS AND THEIR STORIES.

As we told you last week, every American state has a nickname. Here are some more of them.

Idaho is known as the **Gem State**. This is not because it has diamonds but because it believes it is the jewel of the western Rocky Mountains. Illinois is the **Land of Lincoln**. It is named for Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president who led the nation through the Civil War in the eighteen sixties.

The Midwestern state of Indiana is called the **Hoosier State**, but nobody is quite sure why.

One story is that the word was used to mean poor farmers or uneducated people. No wonder the state legislature instead calls Indiana the **Crossroads of America**. Iowa's nickname, the **Hawkeye State**, is in honor of Black Hawk, an Indian chief who spent most of his life in neighboring Illinois!

Kansas also has a "hawkish" nickname: the **Jayhawk State**. Jayhawkers were free-state guerrilla fighters opposed to the pro-slavery fighters in the years before the Civil War.

Kentucky is the **Bluegrass State**. Bluegrass is really bright green but looks bluish from a distance. Louisiana is the **Bayou State**. A bayou is a slow-moving stream. Hundreds of them flow through this southern state, and many are full of alligators!

Maine, in the nation's northeast, is the **Pine Tree State** because it is covered in evergreen woods. And directly across the country, on the Pacific Coast, is the state of Washington. It also has lots of evergreen trees so, not surprisingly, it is the **Evergreen State**.

The eastern state of Massachusetts is the **Bay State**. This body of water separates most of the state from famous Cape Cod.

Six state nicknames are taken from native animals. Michigan is the **Wolverine State**. A wolverine is a small, fierce mammal. The badger is a similar and equally fierce creature and Wisconsin is the **Badger State**.

Neighboring Minnesota, the **Gopher State**, is named for a much nicer animal that builds hills and tunnels. However, the **Land of Ten Thousand Lakes** is written on Minnesota's vehicle license plates.

North Dakota gets its nickname, the **Flickertail State** not from some bird, but from a little squirrel. South Dakota takes its nickname, the **Coyote State**, from an animal that thinks flickertails are good to eat!

And Oregon, the **Beaver State**, borrows its nickname from the large, flat-tailed rodent that uses trees to build dams.

Next week, we will tell you about more state nicknames, including one that is about people's feet!