

Origins of County Names

- Adams** — President John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State under President James Monroe, U.S. Representative and leading defender of free speech.
- Alexander** — William M. Alexander, early settler of the district and state Representative in the second and third General Assemblies.
- Bond** — Shadrach Bond, first Governor of the State of Illinois.
- Boone** — Daniel Boone, pioneer hunter and explorer.
- Brown** — General Jacob Brown, soldier in the War of 1812 and later commanding general of the U.S. Army.
- Bureau** — Pierre de Bureo, French trader with Native Americans.
- Calhoun** — John C. Calhoun, Southern statesman and U.S. Vice President under Presidents Adams and Jackson.
- Carroll** — Charles Carroll of Carrollton, signer of the Declaration of Independence.
- Cass** — General Lewis Cass, presidential candidate, U.S. Senator, Secretary of War under President Jackson and Secretary of State under President Buchanan.
- Champaign** — County in Ohio.
- Christian** — County in Kentucky.
- Clark** — George Rogers Clark, Revolutionary War soldier and captor of Fort Vincennes and Kaskaskia.
- Clay** — Henry Clay, U.S. Representative and Senator, author of the “Missouri Compromise” and three-time presidential candidate.
- Clinton** — DeWitt Clinton, Mayor of New York City and Governor of the State of New York; promoter of the Erie Canal.
- Coles** — Edward Coles, second Governor of Illinois.
- Cook** — Daniel P. Cook, pioneer lawyer, first Attorney General of Illinois and member of Congress (1819-27).
- Crawford** — William H. Crawford, U.S. Senator from Georgia and presidential candidate in 1824.
- Cumberland** — The Cumberland or National Road was a 19th-century highway extending 800 miles from Cumberland, Maryland, to Vandalia, Illinois.
- DeKalb** — Johann DeKalb, German soldier who served in the Revolutionary War; killed in 1780.
- DeWitt** — DeWitt Clinton (see Clinton).
- Douglas** — Stephen A. Douglas, U.S. Senator (1847-61); ran against Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860.
- DuPage** — DuPage River.
- Edgar** — John Edgar, pioneer merchant and politician.
- Edwards** — Ninian Edwards, Illinois Territory Governor (1809-18) and Illinois’ third Governor.
- Effingham** — Lord Edward Effingham, resigned his post in the British Army rather than fight the colonies in 1775.
- Fayette** — Marquis de La Fayette, French nobleman who served in the Revolutionary War, commanding French troops at the battle of Yorktown.
- Ford** — Thomas Ford, Illinois’ eighth Governor.
- Franklin** — Benjamin Franklin, Founding Father, inventor, scientist, famed statesman and U.S. ambassador to France during the Revolutionary War.
- Fulton** — Robert Fulton, first successful builder of steamboats on American waters.
- Gallatin** — Albert Gallatin, financier and member of Congress from Pennsylvania.
- Greene** — General Nathaniel Greene, commander in the Southern colonies during the Revolutionary War.
- Grundy** — Felix Grundy, U.S. Senator from Tennessee and U.S. Attorney General.
- Hamilton** — Alexander Hamilton, Founding Father, Revolutionary War soldier and first Secretary of the Treasury (1789-95).
- Hancock** — John Hancock, Revolutionary War soldier and first signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Hardin — County in Kentucky.

Henderson — Henderson River.

Henry — Patrick Henry, famed orator, Revolutionary War soldier and Governor of Virginia.

Iroquois — Native American tribe.

Jackson — President Andrew Jackson; national hero known as “Old Hickory” during the War of 1812.

Jasper — Sergeant William Jasper, Revolutionary War hero at Charleston and Savannah.

Jefferson — President Thomas Jefferson, Revolutionary War leader and author of the Declaration of Independence.

Jersey — State of New Jersey.

Jo Daviess — Joseph Hamilton Daviess, Kentucky lawyer and soldier; slain at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811.

Johnson — Colonel Richard M. Johnson and U.S. Vice President (1837-41).

Kane — Sen. Elias K. Kane, first Secretary of State of Illinois.

Kankakee — Native American tribe.

Kendall — Amos Kendall, postmaster general under President Jackson and partner of S.B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph.

Knox — General Henry Knox, Revolutionary War hero and President George Washington’s Secretary of War.

Lake — Lake Michigan.

LaSalle — Robert de La Salle, French explorer who navigated the length of the Mississippi River and claimed the Louisiana Territory for France.

Lawrence — Captain James Lawrence, commander of the USS Chesapeake; killed in naval battle in 1812.

Lee — Richard Henry Lee, orator and statesman of the Revolutionary War.

Livingston — Edward Livingston, U.S. Secretary of State under President Andrew Jackson.

Logan — Dr. John Logan, pioneer physician and father of General John A. Logan.

Macon — Nathaniel Macon, Revolutionary War soldier and U.S. Senator.

Macoupin — Native American name, named for Macoupin Creek.

Madison — President James Madison, primary author of the U.S. Constitution and known as “father of the U.S. Constitution.”

Marion — General Francis Marion, known as the “Swamp Fox,” distinguished soldier in the Carolinas during the Revolutionary War.

Marshall — John Marshall, fourth Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mason — County in Kentucky.

Massac — Fort Massac.

McDonough — Commodore Thomas McDonough, defeated the British on Lake Champlain in 1814.

McHenry — General William McHenry, fought in the War of 1812 and the Black Hawk War; served in several early General Assemblies.

McLean — John McLean, first representative in Congress from Illinois in 1818 and U.S. Senator (1824-25).

Menard — Pierre Menard, first Lieutenant Governor of Illinois.

Mercer — General Hugh Mercer, killed at the Battle of Princeton during the Revolutionary War.

Monroe — President James Monroe, Revolutionary War soldier, diplomat; co-negotiator of the Louisiana Purchase and author of the Monroe Doctrine.

Montgomery — General Richard Montgomery, Revolutionary War soldier of Irish birth; killed at Quebec in 1775.

Morgan — General Daniel Morgan, earned distinction during the Revolutionary War at Quebec and Saratoga.

Moultrie — General William Moultrie, successful defender of Fort Moultrie at Charleston, South Carolina, during the Revolutionary War.

Ogle — Lieutenant Joseph Ogle, member of the territorial militia.
Peoria — Native American name.
Perry — Commodore Oliver H. Perry, won distinction in the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813.
Piatt — James A. Piatt, Sr., settled in the area in 1829.
Pike — Zebulon M. Pike, General in the War of 1812 and American explorer for whom Pikes Peak in Colorado was named.
Pope — Nathaniel Pope, first territorial Secretary of State (1809-16).
Pulaski — Count Casimir Pulaski, Polish hero who was killed in the attack on Savannah, Georgia, in 1779.
Putnam — General Israel Putnam, Revolutionary War soldier.
Randolph — Edmund Randolph, Revolutionary War soldier, Secretary of State and U.S. Attorney General under President George Washington.
Richland — County in Ohio.
Rock Island — A rock island in the Mississippi River.
Saline — Saline Creek.
Sangamon — Native American name meaning “the land of plenty to eat.”
Schuyler — General Philip Schuyler, Revolutionary War soldier and U.S. Senator from New York.
Scott — County in Kentucky.
Shelby — Isaac Shelby, soldier of the Revolutionary War, the Indian Wars and the War of 1812; Governor of Kentucky (1792-96).
St. Clair — General Arthur St. Clair, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army after the Revolutionary War and Governor of the U.S. Territory northwest of the Ohio River.
Stark — General John Stark, Revolutionary War soldier; won fame at Bunker Hill, Trenton, Princeton and Bennington.
Stephenson — Colonel Benjamin Stephenson, Adjutant General of the Illinois Territory (1813-14).
Tazewell — Lyttelton W. Tazewell, U.S. Senator from Virginia.
Union — Federal Union of the American states.
Vermilion — Vermilion River.
Wabash — Native American name, named for Wabash River.
Warren — General Joseph Warren, pioneer physician and Revolutionary War soldier killed at Bunker Hill.
Washington — President George Washington, Commander in Chief of the Army during the Revolutionary War.
Wayne — General Anthony Wayne, Revolutionary War commander and soldier.
White — Leonard White, member of the Constitutional Convention of 1818.
Whiteside — Samuel Whiteside, Representative in the first General Assembly and Brigadier General in the Black Hawk War.
Will — Conrad Will, member of the Constitutional Convention of 1818 and member of the first nine Illinois General Assemblies.
Williamson — County in Tennessee.
Winnebago — Native American name, named for Native American tribe.
Woodford — County in Kentucky.

See Map of Illinois Counties on page 438.