

Oraibi, a Hopi Indian settlement in Arizona, is at least five hundred years older than New York City.

Clarence Birdseye developed a process for flash freezing food after watching Inuits in Labrador freeze fish and caribou meat.

Idaho and Hawaii are the only states that have never been owned by a foreign nation.

Benjamin Franklin wanted the wild turkey to be the national bird, complaining that the bald eagle was "a bird of bad moral character."



AMERICAN TRIVIA is chock-full of engaging facts, riddles, and quizzes about the people, places, and events that make this nation great, including the origins of its national anthem; national treasures such as the Liberty Bell and Statue of Liberty; baseball, the national pastime; and many heroes and inventors who have added to the country's legacy.



Reference/Trivia

AMERICAN WHAT WE ALL SHOULD KNOW ABOUT U.S. HISTORY. CULTURE & GEOGRAPHY RICHARD LEDERER

CAROLINE McCULLAGH









Contents

INTRODUCTION

PART I: ORIGINS

How America Got Its Name It's a Grand Old Flag Our Nation's Birthday 14 The Supreme Law of Our Land A Capital Idea 19 National Symbols America Singing

24

PART 2: HAIL TO THE CHIEFS

A Procession of Presidents 30 Ten Fascinating Facts About Our Presidents 33 The Presidential Origin of OK Abe Lincoln's Humor TR and the Bear Facts

PART 3: IMMORTAL MORTALS 50

The Home of the Brave The Land of the Free The Name Is the Game America: The Mother of Invention 61 Homegrown Authors

PART 4: THIS AMERICAN LANGUAGE

A Declaration of Language Independence Talking Turkey 85 All-American Dialects 90

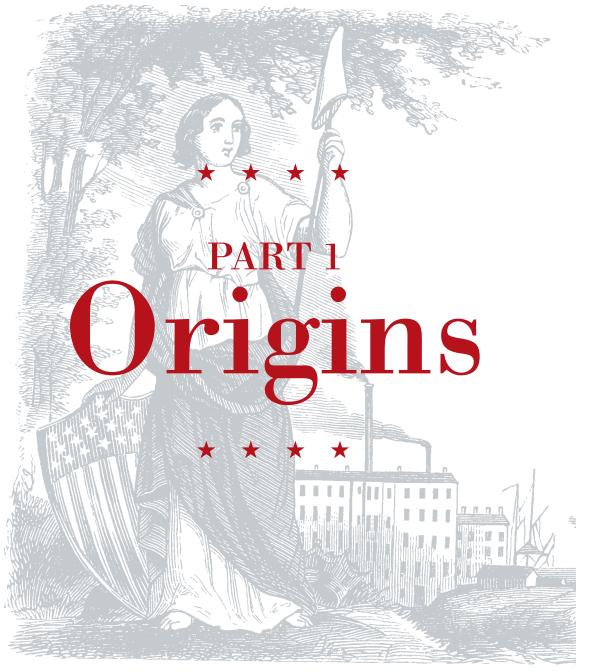
PART 5: THIS LAND IS OUR LAND 96

America the Beautiful 100 States of the Union 105 A Letter-Perfect Quiz Pride of Place 110 America Grows Up 114

PART 6: TIES THAT BIND 116

Food for Thought 120 We All Speak Movie Lines 126 A Baseball Doubleheader 135

PART 7: RIDDLES FOR AMERICANS 140



HOW AMERICA GOT ITS NAME

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS (1451–1506) is generally given credit for finding America. In grade school most of us learned this ditty:

In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

And he did. On his first voyage, he sighted the Bahamas and made land on Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic). On three subsequent voyages, he also explored the coast of South America. But Columbus never realized that he had sailed to the New World. He died in 1506, blissfully certain that he had reached Asia.

An Italian, **AMERIGO VESPUCCI** (1454–1512), working in Spain for the Medici family, helped outfit the ships for Columbus's first voyage. He in turn made three voyages to the New

World, but never to North America. When he returned to Spain, he wrote about the wonders he had seen.

His account was widely read, even in the Duchy of Lorraine, where Swiss cartographer MARTIN WALDSEEMÜLLER (1470?–1520) was drawing a new map of the world. Waldseemüller decided to write the name *America* across the face of the new continent on his world map. He wished to honor Vespucci because, apparently not having read Columbus's best-selling report of his voyage, he



AMERIGO IS THE ITALIAN FORM OF THE MEDIEVAL LATIN NAME EMERICUS, WHICH WAS, IN TURN, DERIVED FROM THE GERMAN HEIMIRICH—HENRY IN ENGLISH. THIS MAY MEAN THAT WE ALL ACTUALLY LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES OF HENRIETTA.

believed Vespucci to be the first man to have set foot in the New World: "Amerigo Vespucci has found another, fourth part, for which I see no reason

properly disapprove of a name derived from that of Amerigo, the discoverer, a man of sagacious genius." Waldseemüller published a thousand copies of his map in 1507. As far as we

why anyone could

know, only one survives, now housed in the Library of Congress.

By the way, *Amerigo* is the Italian form of the Medieval Latin name *Emericus*, which was, in turn, derived

from the German

Heimirich—Henry
in English. This may
mean that we all
actually live in the
United States of
Henrietta. Could
have been worse:
Our nation could
have been dubbed
Vespuccia! ★

