

## BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT...



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.

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★ AMERICAN TRIVIA ★

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

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PART 1

# Origins

## 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 why anyone could 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

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! ★

