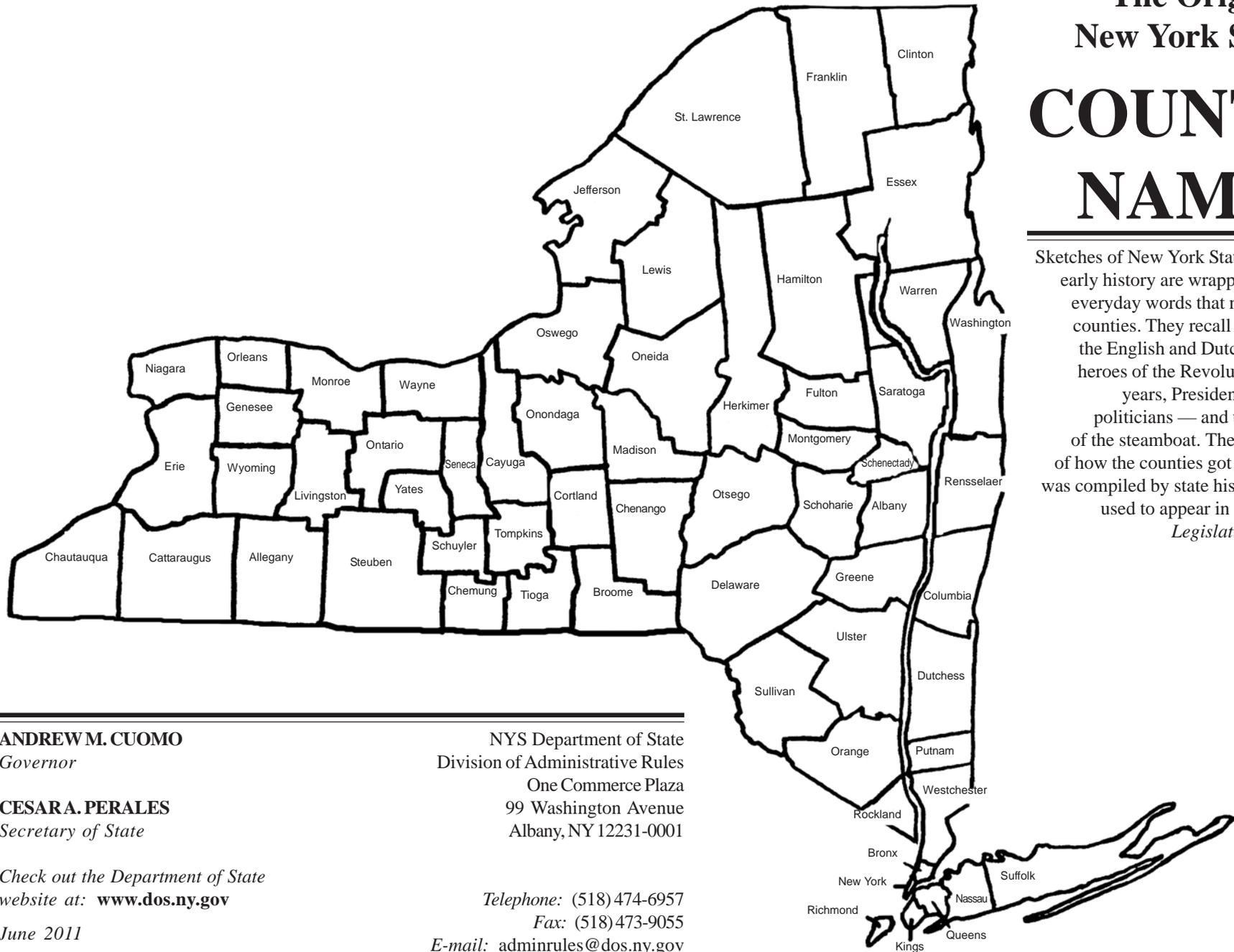# The Origins of New York State's

COUNTY NAMES

Sketches of New York State's colorful early history are wrapped up in the everyday words that name our 62 counties. They recall the Indians, the English and Dutch colonists, heroes of the Revolutionary War years, Presidents and early politicians — and the inventor of the steamboat. The derivations of how the counties got their names was compiled by state historians, and used to appear in New York's *Legislative Manual.*

Clinton
Franklin
St. Lawrence
Jefferson
Essex
Lewis
Hamilton
Warren
Washington
Oswego
Oneida
Saratoga
Niagara
Orleans
Monroe
Wayne
Herkimer
Fulton
Montgomery
Genesee
Onondaga
Schenectady
Ontario
Rensselaer
Erie
Wyoming
Seneca
Cayuga
Madison
Otsego
Schoharie
Albany
Livingston
Yates
Cortland
Chenango
Chautauqua
Cattaraugus
Allegany
Steuben
Schuyler
Tompkins
Greene
Columbia
Chemung
Tioga
Broome
Delaware
Ulster
Dutchess
Sullivan
Orange
Putnam
Westchester
Rockland
Bronx
New York
Suffolk
Nassau
Richmond
Queens
Kings

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

CESAR A. PERALES
Secretary of State

Check out the Department of State website at: **www.dos.ny.gov**
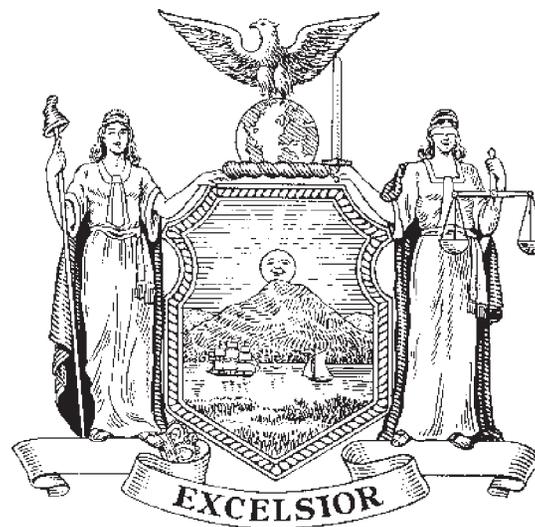
June 2011

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ALBANY, in honor of the Duke of York and Albany, who later became James II of England ✧ **ALLEGANY**, derived from a Delaware Indian word, applied by settlers of Western New York to a trail that followed the Allegany River ✧ **BRONX**, in honor of Joseph Bronck, first settler of the region north of the Harlem River (a peace treaty with the Indians was signed at his home in 1642) ✧ **BROOME**, in honor of John Broome, the lieutenant governor when the county was established in 1806 ✧ **CATTARAUGUS**, from a Seneca Indian word meaning "bad smelling banks," referring to the odor of natural gas leaking from rock seams ✧ **CAYUGA**, in honor of an indian tribe of the Iroquois League ✧ **CHAUTAUQUA**, a contraction of a Seneca Indian word meaning "where the fish was taken out" ✧ **CHEMUNG**, derived from the name of the Delaware Indian village signifying "big horn" ✧ **CHENANGO**, from the Onondaga Indian word meaning "large bull-thistle" ✧ **CLINTON**, in honor of George Clinton, first governor of the state ✧ **COLUMBIA**, the Latin feminine form of Columbus, the name was popular at the time as a proposed name for the United States of America ✧ **CORTLAND**, in honor of Pierre Van Cortlandt, who was the first lieutenant governor of the state (in 1777 he was president of the convention at Kingston that framed the state's first constitution) ✧ **DELAWARE**, in honor of Lord Delaware, who was appointed governor of Virginia in 1609, and in recognition of his services to the early colonists ✧ **DUTCHESS**, in honor of the Duchess of York, wife of James II ✧ **ERIE**, derived from a tribe of Indians living in Western New York prior to 1654 ✧ **ESSEX**, named for Essex County, England ✧ **FRANKLIN**, in honor of Benjamin Franklin ✧ **FULTON**, in honor of Robert Fulton, engineer, inventor and builder of the steamboat "Clermont" in 1807, the first steam vessel and the first to sail the Hudson ✧ **GENESEE**, from a Seneca Indian word meaning "good valley" ✧ **GREENE**, in honor of General Nathaniel Greene, considered by many as the greatest soldier of the Revolutionary War, next to George Washington ✧ **HAMILTON**, in honor of Alexander Hamilton, the only member of the New York delegation who signed the original federal Constitution ✧ **HERKIMER**, in honor of General Nicholas Herkimer, who died of wounds received at the battle of Oriskany in 1777 ✧ **JEFFERSON**, in honor of Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States ✧ **KINGS**, named after King Charles II of England ✧ **LEWIS**, in honor of Morgan Lewis, governor of New York from 1804 to 1807 ✧ **LIVINGSTON**, in honor of Robert R. Livingston, a delegate to the 1775 Continental Congress and a member of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence ✧ **MADISON**, named after James Madison, fourth President of the United States ✧ **MONROE**, in honor of James Monroe, fifth President of the United States ✧ **MONTGOMERY**, in honor of Major General

New York State's Coat of Arms

Richard Montgomery, who was killed in the attack on Quebec in 1775 ✧ **NASSAU**, in honor of William of Nassau, Prince of Orange ✧ **NEW YORK**, in honor of the Duke of York ✧ **NIAGARA**, from an Indian word meaning "bisected bottom lands" ✧ **ONEIDA**, in honor of an indian tribe of the Iroquois League ✧ **ONONDAGA**, in honor of an indian tribe of the Iroquois League ✧ **ONTARIO**, corruption of the Iroquois word meaning "beautiful lake" ✧ **ORANGE**, in honor of William, Prince of Orange, held in high esteem by the first settlers of the region ✧ **ORLEANS**, named after the French Royal House of Orleans ✧ **OSWEGO**, from the Iroquois word meaning "the out-pouring," referring to the mouth of the Oswego ✧ **OTSEGO**, from an Indian word for "place of the rock" ✧ **PUTNAM**, in honor of General Israel Putnam, a hero of the French and Indian War and the Revolution ✧ **QUEENS**, in honor of Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II ✧ **RENSSELAER**, in honor of the family of Killiaen Van Rensselaer, the original Dutch patroon ✧ **RICHMOND**, in honor of the Duke of Richmond, son of Charles II ✧ **ROCKLAND**, named from "rocky land," an early general term applied to the region by settlers ✧ **ST. LAWRENCE**, after the river, named by Cartier in honor of Saint Laurent, on whose birthday the river was discovered ✧ **SARATOGA**, a corruption of the Indian word "sah-rah-ka," said to mean "the side hill" ✧ **SCHENECTADY**, from a Mohawk Indian word meaning "on the other side of the pine lands" ✧ **SCHOHARIE**, from the Mohawk Indian word meaning "floating driftwood" ✧ **SCHUYLER**, in honor of General Philip Schuyler, one of the four major generals of the Continental Army ✧ **SENECA**, in honor of an indian tribe of the Iroquois League ✧ **STEUBEN**, in honor of Baron Steuben, a major general in the Revolution ✧ **SUFFOLK**, after Suffolk County, England, home of many early settlers ✧ **SULLIVAN**, in honor of Major General John Sullivan, Revolutionary hero and commander of an expedition against the Six Nations of Indians ✧ **TIOGA**, from the Indian word meaning "at the forks," referring originally to a famous Indian meeting place ✧ **TOMPKINS**, in honor of Daniel D. Tompkins, a vice president of the United States and governor of New York ✧ **ULSTER**, named for the Duke of York's earldom in Ireland ✧ **WARREN**, in honor of Gen. Joseph Warren, killed at the battle of Bunker Hill ✧ **WASHINGTON**, in honor of George Washington, first President of the United States ✧ **WAYNE**, in honor of General Anthony Wayne, whose victory over the confederated Indian tribes made possible the 1794 treaty that assured Western New York to the United States ✧ **WESTCHESTER**, for Chester, England ✧ **WYOMING**, from a modified Delaware Indian word meaning "broad bottom lands" ✧ **YATES**, in honor of Governor Joseph C. Yates, who approved the act establishing the county ✦