

The Meaning of Michigan County Names

By Mark R. Putnam

<http://ipoetry.us/>

This anthology is a compilation of poems.

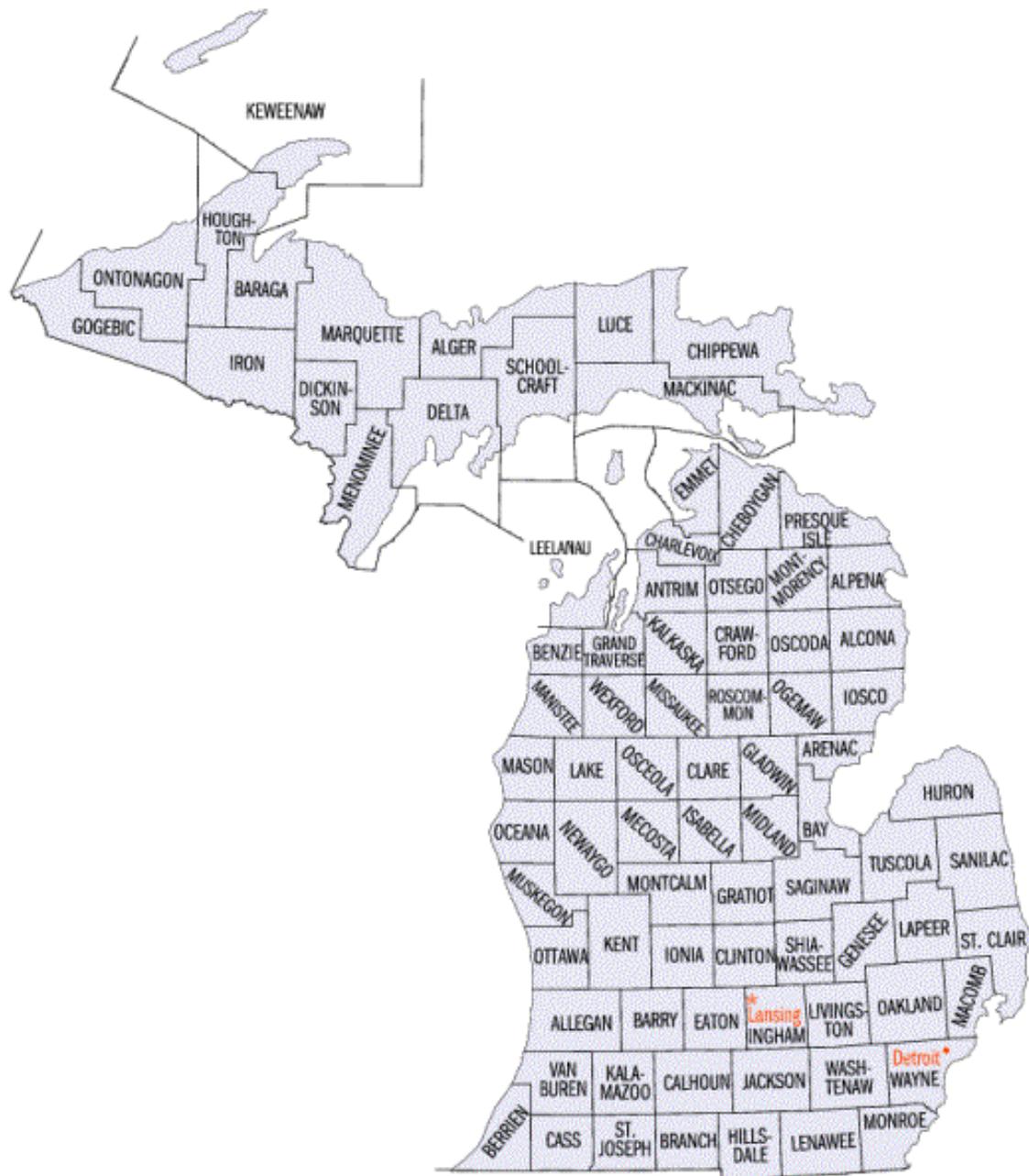
It is filled with historical gems.

The counties of Michigan are listed below in alphabetical order—

In total there are eighty-three.

I invite you to become an enthusiastic reader.

You will learn the origin and meaning of the name of each Michigan County.



The Counties of Michigan

Alcona

“The Woodland Opening”

Alcona means the place where there is a clearing.

Alcona comes from the Chippewa/Ottawa word “mkoda”.

“Mkoda” means a plain or meadow.

A major road in Alcona County is "Mikode Road" that passes through a grassy meadow.

The county seat of Alcona is the City of Harrisville.

In Latin a sandy place is called a “harea”—a sandy beach or sandy hill.

Harrisville is on Lake Huron's western shore.

For a retreat one would not desire to have more.

Alcona is located in the northeastern part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Alcona and Harrisville mean the place of the sandy meadow.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1869.

County Seat: Harrisville.

This county name was believed to be a Henry Schoolcraft creation said to mean "Excellent Plain". Schoolcraft was a mediator between Michigan's Native Americans and the United States.

Alger

“The Great Isle”

Alger is a personal name that likely means islander.

In Arabic Algeria means the place of the isle.

The county seat of Alger is the City of Munising.

In Chippewa/Ottawa islander is the word “minissing”.

In the middle of Munising Bay lies Grand Island.

It is Lake Superior’s second largest isle.

Today in Arabic an island is called "il-gezir".

In Latin "insula" means a land surrounded by water.

From insula we get peninsula meaning a land nearly enclosed by water.

Munising and Alger mean the land of the great isle.

Formed in 1885,

It became a county in 1885.

County Seat: Munising.

This county was named for Governor Russell A. Alger (1885-1961).

Allegan

“The Elegant Lake”

The county name Allegan means the place spectacular.

“Gwanatch” in the Chippewa/Ottawa lexicon means fine or elegant.

In Latin "elegans" also means to be choice neat, or fair.

Allegan is the place of a splendid lake.

On Lake Allegan a remarkable day is spent.

Lake Allegan is formed near the mouth of Kalamazoo River.

In Latin "allego" also means one selected or elected.

The area that is beautiful and unspoiled is the meaning of Allegan.

Formed in 1831,

It became a county in 1835.

County Seat: Allegan.

This county name was a Henry Schoolcraft invention.

Alpena

“The Thunder Bird or Partridge”

Alpena means where there is the woodland bird.

In Chippewa "bine" means ruffed grouse the bird that flies along a ridge.

In Latin a feather is a “penna”.

The Ojibwe people were the early inhabitants of region called Alpena.

They lived near Michigan's great Thunder Bay.

The City of Alpena lies at the west end of this large cove today.

In Chippewa/Ojibwe "binesi" means the eagle or thunder bird.

Alpena certainly indicates the place of the great bird.

In Chippewa/Ojibwe "binesi" means hen.

In Greek “Pena” means hen.

Alpena means the land of the partridge or perhaps the eagle or thunder bird.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1857.

County Seat: Alpena.

This county name was a Henry Schoolcraft creation whose best interpretation is "partridge" or "bird".

Antrim

"The Beautiful Flame"

The embers that burn brightly is the meaning of the Irish word Antrim.

The root of Antrim is Irish "crann truim" meaning the tree the elder.

The tree with the red-hue like fire is the meaning of elder.

The root of "truim" is "ruithiun" meaning to be red-hot or blazing.

In Latin "rutilus" means a red, auburn, or colored like a flame.

The county seat of Antrim is the City of Bellaire.

Bellaire means where the sky is beautiful and fair.

Torch Lake is the major attraction in the County of Antrim.

Native People once fished here at night with a flame.

With a spear and torch, they would take fish.

Native People came here to put food on a dish.

Antrim and Bellaire mean the land of that is glowing or glittering.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1863.

County Seat: Bellaire.

This county was named for County Antrim, Ireland.

Arenac

“The Land of Sand”

Arenac means the place of grit and gravel.

In Latin “arena” means the place of sand.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, Arenac was called “Negaw-aki”.

Arenac lies along the northwest shore of Saginaw Bay.

In French, Arenac was called Au Gres.

Here the ground is white and sandy.

The county seat of Arenac is the City of Standish.

Here Rifle River runs to Lake Huron and Saginaw Bay.

It is a great place in which to fish.

Arenac means the land that is sandy.

Formed in 1831,

It became a county in 1883.

County Seat: Standish.

This county name was a Schoolcraft creation using Latin and Native American words.

Baraga

"The Barricade or Dam"

The personal name Baraga may mean the person who lived by the dam.

Baraga County was named for Bishop Frederick Baraga.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, "gbaakhigan" means a dam, gate, or lock.

Here the Bay of L'Anse is an excellent place in which moor or dock.

L'Anse is French and means the nook or cove.

The Bay of L'Anse is obstructed by two bars of sand.

L'Anse is Lake Superior's treasure trove—

Baraga and L'Anse mean the bay with barriers of sand.

Formed in 1875,

It became a county in 1875.

County Seat: L'Anse.

This county was named for missionary Bishop Frederick Baraga (1797-1868). He worked with Native Americans and wrote a Chippewa grammar dictionary.

Barry

"The Long Pointed Spear"

Old Irish "barry" means the javelin or spear thrower.

Greek "bar" means to strike quickly.

A "barry" was once one who fought with a long pointed spear.

The county seat of Barry is the City of Hastings.

"Hasta" in Latin means spear.

To act with hast is to act quickly.

Thorn Apple River passes through the City of Hastings.

Place names in Barry County have piquant meanings.

Barry and Hastings mean the place of the pointed bar or spear.

Formed in 1829,

It became a county in 1839.

County Seat: Hastings.

This county was named for William T. Barry (1785-1835) of Kentucky, Postmaster General in the Cabinet of President Jackson.

Bay

"The Warm Cove"

Bay County was named for the adjacent Saginaw Bay.

Bay County is the place of bathing.

Bay means the alcove.

Along Saginaw Bay are great places to bask.

Bay City was the ancient home of Native Chief Nabobask.

Here lived his Native clan or group.

His name meant "Warm Soup".

The Saginaw Bay is a large alcove in Lake Huron.

During summer, its water is warm.

Saginaw Bay is a haven from the Great Lake storm.

Bay County and Bay City are a haven from the gales of Lake Huron.

Formed in 1857,

It became a county in 1857.

County Seat: Bay.

This county received its name from the idea that it partly encircles the Saginaw Bay.

Benzie

"The Merganser"

Benzie means the geese called the saw bill or merganser.

In French, they are called "le bec scie".

Benzie was home to these submerging geese with the serrated bill.

Crystal, Platte, and Benzie Lakes they would an occasion fill.

They would dip deep into the water to dive and eat.

They would splash about with their webbed feet.

The City of Beulah is Benzie's county seat.

Greek "Bulla" means to plunge like a duck or goose.

Benzie and Beulah mean to dip like geese or to dive foot-loose.

Formed in 1863,

It became a county in 1869.

County Seat: Beulah.

This county name comes from the French phrase "au bec scies" meaning where there are mergansers. The name was first applied to the river and changed to Benzie.

Berrien

"The Great Bulge or Bend"

Berrien County includes the curved St. Joseph River.

Berrien means the place of the wend.

Berrien means looped, crooked, or curved.

The French word "berrien" comes from "barius" meaning bowed.

French "ber" means cradled.

The City of St. Joseph is the county seat of Berrien.

Other cities include Buchanan and Benton Harbor.

Greek "kypho" means buckled or bowed.

Kypho seems to be the root of St. Joseph.

Berrien and St. Joseph mean where there is a [river's] bend.

Organized in 1831,

It became a county in 1831.

County Seat: St. Joseph.

This county was named for John M. Berrien of Georgia, Attorney General under President Jackson (1829-1831)

Branch

"The Cool Brook"

A large river starts with a small stream or brook.

German "brunnen" means wells or springs.

The water is often cool or chilly in a stream's upper branch.

The highlands of Branch County have many chilly springs.

The City of Coldwater is the count seat of Branch.

In Dutch a stream is called a "beeck".

Branch and Coldwater mean the place of the coldwater creek.

Formed in 1829,

It became a county in 1833.

County Seat: Coldwater.

This county was named for John Branch of North Carolina, Secretary of the Navy under President Jackson (1829-11831).

Calhoun

"The Place of Mares, Geldings, and Stallions"

Calhoun means one who is part of the cavalry.

Calhoun means he or she who works with the galloping animal.

Old Irish "calhouns" means handler of geldings and stallions.

Latin "equus" means equine or horse.

The City of Marshall is the county seat of Calhoun County.

Anciently, the handler of mares or stallions was called a marshal.

Calhoun and Marshall mean the keepers of the horse.

Formed in 1829,

It became a county in 1833.

County Seat: Marschall.

This county was named for the Vice President of the United States John C. Calhoun (1824-1832) under President Jackson.

Cass

"The Place of Stone"

The county name Cass seems to mean the place of rock.

Cass County is the place of the flinty or gravelly pass.

"Cailloux" in French means pebble or small stone.

Latin, "saxon" means rock.

Cass County's seat is the City of Cassopolis and is located on Stone Lake.

Nearby is Diamond Lake.

The Early Native chief of Cass County was Chief Pokagon.

His name meant rib bone.

Cass and Cassopolis mean the place of rock or stone.

Organized in 1829,

It became a county in 1829.

County Seat: Cassopolis.

This county was named for Lewis Cass (1782-1866), second Governor of the Michigan Territory and Secretary of War under President Jackson (1831-1836).

Charlevoix

"The Ferryman"

Charlevoix may mean sailor or charter.

Charlevoix's main through fare is Ferry Road.

Charlevoix's major city is Boyne City.

Charlevoix is the place of the ferryman.

Buoy means something that will float.

Latin Charon means the ferryboat.

Charlevioix seems to mean the ferry.

Organized in 1869,

It became a county in 1869.

County Seat: Charlevoix.

This county was named for Pierre F. X. de Charlevoix (1682-1761), a Jesuit missionary explorer and historian who traveled the Great Lakes in 1721.

Cheboygan

“The Inland Passageway”

Cheboygan means the through way.

Chippewa/Ottawa "jiba" means there is a gap or hole.

In Cheboygan County the Cheboygan River serves as an inland passageway.

Through upper tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, flows the river Cheboygan.

It acts as a door, window, or hole.

The short cut its another meaning of Cheboygan.

Cheboygan means the great inland passageway.

Organized in 1840,

It became a county in 1853.

County Seat: Cheboygan.

This county name is a Native American place name said to mean “he goes through”, “needle”, or the “pipe”, which are the same meanings used for the County of Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Chippewa

"The Buckle"

A remarkable shoe or moccasin was made by the Native People the Chippewa.

Chippewa means the people with the shoe that has a buckle.

Native Chippewa finished a moccasin by heating it so that it would crimp.

The seat of Chippewa County is the City of Sault St. Marie also known as The Soo.

The French word "sault" means rapids where the river somersaults or swells.

Sault means to well, roll, or brew.

Chippewa and Sault St. Marie mean it has a buckle or chiffon like crimp.

Organized in 1826,

It became a county in 1826.

County Seat: Sault St. Marie.

This county was named for the Native American Tribe the Chippewa or Ojibwa.

Clare

"One Who Harries"

Irish "clare" means level land, field, or champlain.

Old Irish "chlair" means a field that is open.

The county seat of Clare is the City of Harris.

Anciently, people battle on level field in the open.

Each other they would harass or harry.

Latin "haren" means to fight in the open.

The Duke of Clare, England, was charged with weaponry.

German "heer" means army.

In Latin, Mars was the God of War, and in Greek he was called Aries.

Clare and Harris mean one who harries.

Organized in 1840,

It became a county in 1871.

County Seat: Harris.

This county was named for County Clare in Ireland, which is in the western part of Ireland.

Clinton

"It Downward Flows"

Clinton means where the hill gently rolls down.

"Clint" means to decline while "ton" means hill or town.

In Clinton County north, south, east, and west downward the water gradually flows.

The county seat of Clinton County is the City of St. John.

In Greek "ion" means to go yonder or on.

Clinton County is the mid-point and highpoint of Southern Lower Michigan.

Streams here quietly flow north, south, east and west.

Clinton and St. John mean to go yonder to a hill then down.

Organized in 1831,

It became a county in 1839.

County Seat: St. John's.

This county was named for New York Governor Dewitt Clinton (1769-1828) under whose administration the Erie Canal was built.

Crawford

"The Ford for Fishing"

Crawford County is Michigan's home for brook, brown, and rainbow trout and grayling.

Michigan's best inland fishing is in Crawford County.

Crawford is the town where there is ford or crossing over the Au Sable River.

Eastward to Lake Huron flows the Au Sable River.

"Crayfish-Ford" is likely the meaning of Crawford.

Crawford County's seat is the City of Grayling.

Crawford and Grayling mean the ford that is exceptional for crayfish and fishing.

Organized in 1843,

It became a county in 1879.

County Seat: Grayling.

This county was named for Colonel William Crawford a Michigan settler.

Delta

"The River Flats"

Delta means the flat area at mouth of a larger river.

Greek "deltos" means to be flat and triangular.

Delta County's original shape had three sides.

The county's seat is the City of Escanaba.

Escanaba was named for the Escanaba River.

Near the mouth of Escanaba River, there is large flat rock that resides.

Chippewa/Ottawa "assin-nabaga" means the stone that is level.

Escanaba means the place in the river that is horizontal.

Delta and Escanaba mean the river flats.

Organized in 1843,

It became a county in 1861.

County Seat: Escanaba.

This county was named from the Greek word "delta ", which was said to refer to the triangular shape of the original county that included segments of Menominee, Dickenson, Iron, and Marquette Counties.

Dickenson

"Hard as Iron"

German "dicken" means it is hard and heavy like a brick.

Dickenson County's seat is the City of Iron Mountain.

"Dicken" means heavy and thick.

Iron is a mineral that is weighty.

When digging through ground that is hard as iron, one may become ire or angry.

Dickenson and Iron Mountain mean it is hard as iron.

Formed in 1891,

It became a county in 1891.

County Seat: Iron Mountain.

This county was named for Don M. Dickenson of Michigan, Postmaster General under President Grover Cleveland.

Eaton

"Island in the Swamp"

Eaton means the dune or hill surrounded by wetlands.

"Ea" means water, river, or lowlands.

"Tun" means a dune or hill, most assuredly

Eaton County's seat is the City of Charlotte.

The main roads of Charlotte included Carlisle and Island.

Carlisle means Carl's Island.

Charlotte means strong and free.

Armada or flotilla is another possible meaning of Charlotte.

Eaton and Charlotte mean the island in the swamp.

Formed in 1829,

It became a county in 1837.

County Seat: Charlotte.

This county was named for John H. Eaton (1790-1856) of Tennessee, Secretary of War under President Jackson (1829-1831).

Emmet

“Immeasurable”

Irish “emmet” means the entirety.

Latin "immensus" and “immetatus” mean vast, boundless, and immeasurable.

The root seems to be not able to mete or measure.

“Emma” means universal.

German "himmel" means sky and heaven.

Emmet County's seat is the City of Petosky.

In Chippewa/Ottawa "bidaas-gisiss" [Petosky] means "the sun breaks through".

In Chippewa/Ottawa "bidass" means through.

“Gisiss" means sun.

Emmet and Petosky mean that which is universal and without measure.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1853.

County Seat: Petosky.

This county was named for Irish Patriot Robert Emmet (1778-1803).

Genesee

"Stylish and Beautiful"

In the Chippewa/Ottawa language, it is fine or good is "gwanatchiwan".

"Gwanatchiw" is the root of Genesee and means I am beautiful.

Genesee's seat is the City of Flint.

That later name means to splint.

To shave it in Chippewa/Ottawa is "gashkibadan".

To split or cleave it is to "tashkinan".

To cut it to the point is "patchishkigan"

The roots to these meanings are the words "atchi" and "ashki".

They both mean to spill, split or splint.

Genesee Valley is the place of great beauty.

Creating good looks is part of the inherent local knowledge.

Genesee and Flint mean I am trendy and on the cutting edge.

Formed in 1835,

It became a county in 1836.

County Seat: Flint.

This county was name for Genesee County, New York, from which many Flint area settlers came.

Gladwin

“Woodland Valley”

The gentle open valley is the meaning of Gladwin.

A glade is an opening in a woods or marshland.

Near the center of Michigan, Gladwin contains many places of natural beauty.

Towns in Gladwin are Beaverton and Wooden Shoe Village.

They are places of a by-gone age.

Everything here is light-hearted and open in towns like All Bright Shore.

Everything is right in this small wayside fen that is filled with folk lore.

Gladwin means the opening in the woodland.

Formed in 1831,

It became a county in 1875.

County Seat: Gladwin

This county was named for Major Henry Gladwin, British Commander of Detroit. He was commander of Fort Detroit during the Siege of Pontiac 1763-1764.

Gogebic

"Diving Rock"

The Chippewa/Ottawa word "bik" means rock.

"Gogi" means I slip, dip, or dive into water.

Gogebic County's seat is the City of Bessemer.

Bessemer may come from Old English "besom".

Besom means to whisk, broom, or sweep something away.

Gogebic and Bessemer mean to be swept away or dive over the rock.

Formed in 1887,

It became a county in 1887.

County Seat: Bessemer.

This county has an obscure name. Most references interpret the root to be "rock" from the Native word "bik". Another interpretation is "diving rock".

Grand Traverse

"Long Journey"

Grand Traverse means the grand excursion.

The Grand Traverse peninsula and bay make for time travel that is consuming.

In the center of Grand Traverse Bay, is a peninsula or projection of land.

You must go around this peninsula when sailing.

By land or by sea, it's a long journey to go from Elk Rapids to Leland.

The seat of the county is Traverse City.

In Grand Traverse traveling is quite an expedition.

The long journey is the meaning of Grand Traverse.

Formed in 1851,

It became a county in 1851.

County Seat: Traverse City.

Second Thought: This county name is a French phrase "grand traverse". It was first given to the bay by the early French voyageurs.

Gratiot

“Treasury”

Gratuitous is the meaning of Gratiot.

Gratiot County’s seat is the City of Ithaca.

In Greek a treasury, storehouse, or apothecary was called an "apotheka".

“Island treasury” may be the meaning of Ithaca.

Traditionally, the Greek City of Ithaca was a house full of baskets and crates.

It was a home full of things laid down from many estates.

Gratiot County also includes the City of Alma.

Alms are given freely and are a gratuity.

Latin"almus" means to support or feed.

Alms are privileges given to those in need.

Gratiot and Ithaca mean the place of the treasury.

Formed in 1831,

It became a county in 1855.

County Seat: Ithaca.

Second Thought: This county was named for Captain Charles Gratiot (1788-1855), who supervised the building of Fort Gratiot at the modern site of Port Huron.

Hillsdale

"Highland Valley"

Hillsdale in Southern Michigan is a hill top valley.

A valley also called a dale.

Baw Bese Lake lies near the county's highlands or top.

The Chippewa/Ottawa "word Shpaag bsa" means high valley.

Baw Besse is a lake at which you may enjoy a pleasant pause or stop.

Hillsdale means the hill top valley.

Organized in 1829,

It became a county in 1835.

County Seat: Hillsdale.

Second Thought: The rolling surface of the area served as the basis for this county name.

Houghton

"Hilltop Town"

Houghton means the highland town.

"Hoch" in German means high while "ton" in Old English often means town.

Houghton County contains the Portage River.

The river is a quick crossing through the Keweenaw Peninsula in Lower Lake Superior.

Houghton County has many beautiful creeks and falls.

At times, the hills tower as great vertical walls.

Houghton means the hilltop town.

Formed in 1845,

It became a county in 1848.

County Seat: Houghton.

Second Thought: This county was named for Michigan geological professor Douglass Houghton (1809-1845).

Huron

“Amazing Haircuts”

Huron means the people with the extraordinary hair.

French called them "Quel les Hures" that meant what heads of hair.

Wyandotte was a later name for the Huron.

Huron County's seat is the City of Bad Axe.

The city was named for an early relic located at its site—a broken axe.

Huron means the amazing bristled haircuts.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1859.

County Seat: Bad Axe.

Second Thought: This county was named for a Native American tribe the Huron. The name comes from the French word “hure” meaning peasant or big (ugly) head. The tribe referred to itself as “Wendat” (Wyandotte) meaning dwellers on a peninsula.

Ingham

"Thin Meadow"

Ingham means the land that is narrow.

German "eng" means long thin piece of land.

In Old English an enclosed piece of land was called a "ham".

Early Native Americans had a name for Ingham County.

They called it "ak-mon-shee".

In Chippewa/Ottawa "gookmigaag" means along stretch of land.

Ingham County's seat is the City of Mason.

French "macon" means mason.

In Latin to be thin is "macer".

Ingham and Mason mean narrow piece of land.

Form in 1829,

It became a county in 1838.

County Seat: Mason.

Second Thought: This county was named for Samuel D. Ingham of Pennsylvania, Secretary of the Treasury under President Andrew Jackson.

Ionia

"Passageway"

The way through is the meaning of Ionia.

"Io" in Greek and Latin means to go beyond or yonder.

Ionia County is situated at a watershed near the center of Lower Michigan.

Ionia County's City Portland is on Grand River.

Grand River runs west into Lake Michigan.

Another stream nearby the Looking Glass River runs east to Lake Huron.

Ionia was near the ancient portage between the Lake Michigan and Saginaw Bay.

Ionia means the water portage that goes yonder or the passage way.

Organized in 1831,

It became a county in 1837.

County Seat: Ionia.

Second Thought: This county was named for a province of Greece.

losco

"Bright and Shiny"

losco means shining water.

In Chippewa/Ottawaa, brilliant light is the word "waasko".

The Au Sable, Tittibawassee, Shiawassee, and Cass were rivers with glittering water.

losco County's seat Tawas City was named for Native Chief O-tawas.

"Little Trader" or little Ottawa was said to be the meaning of O-tawas.

However, in the end his name may mean the glimmer.

Tawas may reflect the meaning of losco meaning bright as light.

losco and Tawas City mean shiny.

Organized in 1840,

It became a county in 1857.

County Seat: Tawas City.

Second Thought: This county name was a Henry Schoolcraft invention. His favorite name for Native American boys and men in writing, losco was interpreted to mean "water of light".

Iron

"Metallic and Crystalline"

Iron County's seat is the City of Crystal Falls.

German "eisen" means both iron and icy.

Bewabic State Park lies west of Crystal Falls

The Chiippewa/Ottawa word "biiwabic" means iron.

Iron County's beautiful lakes include Lakes Ice and Iron.

Iron and Crystal Falls mean both metallic and crystalline.

Organized in 1885,

It became a county in 1885.

County Seat: Crystal Falls.

Second Thought: This county was named for the many iron deposits and mines in the county.

Isabella

“Beautiful”

Isabella County’s major river is the Chippewa.

Isabella County is the land of enchantment.

All your expectations for a charming environment this county will fulfill.

Isabella County’s seat is the City of Mount Pleasant.

Mount Pleasant is located on a small amiable hill.

The town is captivating and enjoyable.

Isabella and Mount Pleasant mean delightful.

Organized in 1831,

It became a county in 1859.

County Seat: Mount Pleasant.

Second Thought: Henry Schoolcraft suggested naming this county for Queen Isabella (1451-1504) of Spain under whose patronage Columbus undertook his voyages in 1492.

Jackson

"Torch Hunter"

Jackson may mean hunter.

German and Dutch "jacht" means to hunt and "jager" means shooter or chaser.

To hunt by fire or torchlight is to jack-light.

To jack-light is to hunt with a torch at night.

Jackson County was named for President Andrew Jackson.

Jackson may mean the hunter.

Organized in 1829,

It became a county in 1832.

County Seat: Jackson.

Second Thought: This county was named for President Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), 7th President of the United States (1829-1837).

Kalamazoo

"Churning Water"

Kalamazoo was likely named for the Kalamazoo River.

The river's name was originally "kikalamezo".

It was said to mean the pot that boils on the fire.

In Chippewa, "akik" means pot or kettle while in Chippewa "ashkote" means fire.

However, Kalamazoo may better refer to the kettle or swirling pot-holes in the river.

A whirlpool in Chippewa/Ottawa is "akikodjiwan".

"abamodijwan" means the water turns round at the foot of the rapids.

"kijdjiwan" means cascade or rapids.

Kalamzoo may be translated "akik-abamodjiwan."

Kalamazoo seems to mean where the water pots turn round at the foot of the rapids.

Formed in 1829,

It became a county in 1830.

County Seat: Kalamazoo.

Second Thought: This county has a Native American place name with widely accepted translations of "boiling water", "beautiful water", and "stones like an otter's tail." Other versions are "reflecting river" and "it smokes".

Kalkaska

"Fire Pot"

Kalkaska was traditionally said to mean it is consumed by fire.

The Chippewa/Ottawa word "tchagakisa" means to burn with fire.

In Latin "caleo" means to inflame.

From "caleo" we get the word caldron.

Kettle, pot, or caldron is "akik" in Chippewa/Ottawa.

Kalkaska contains a body of water called Kettle Lake.

Lake Skegomog is also found here.

Kettle Lake may be the meaning of the later name.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, "akik-gami" means Kettle Lake.

Kalkaska may mean the land of the fire pot.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1871.

County Seat: Kalkaska

Second Thought: This county name is a Henry Schoolcraft creation.

Kent

"Turbulent Water"

Kent means rapids, cascade, or falling water.

The name Kent comes from the Old Welsh word "cant" that means water the tumbles or is violent.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, "bkijiwang" means rapids.

It means where the water is in a descent.

The county seat is the City of Grand Rapids.

Kent and Grand Rapids mean the water is turbulent.

Formed in 1831,

It became a county in 1836.

County Seat: Kent.

Second Thought: This county was named for Chancellor James Kent (1763-1817) the celebrated New York jurist.

Keweenaw

"Crossing a Peninsula"

In Chippewa/Ottawa, "Kakiweonan" means where they traverse or cross a point.

The place of portage was said to be the meaning of Keweenaw.

However, "onigam" actually means portage in Chippewa/Ottawa.

The county seat of Keweenaw is the City of Eagle Harbor.

Keweenaw is a headland the lays above the Portage River.

Keweenaw means to traverse a cape or point.

Formed in 1861,

It became a county in 1861.

County Seat: Eagle Harbor.

Second Thought: This county has a Native American place name that means the portage or the place where portage is made.

Lake

"Water Filled Hollow"

Lake means the hollow.

In Latin "lacona" means a hollow, cavity, pond, or pool.

Many swimming birds into lakes dip, plunge, or dive.

The county seat of Lake is the City of Baldwin.

Baldwin may mean the place in which to dip or dive.

"Baleum" in Latin means the bathing or cleansing pool.

In Lake County, water-fowl plunge into the water with a tailspin.

Birds called balds are water fowl.

They include cormorants, [loons], bitterns, and coots.

Near the edge of a lake may perch the woodland owl.

They all near Lakes put down their roots.

Lake County is where you will enjoy and water adventure.

Lake and Baldwin mean the place of pools of water.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1871.

County Seat: Lake.

Second Thought: This county has many small lakes.

Lapeer

"Flinty Highland"

Lapeer is a highland that is made of grit, gravel, sand.

The French word "la pierre" means the stone.

The major stream here is the river called the Flint.

It is filled with small stones that sparkle with glint.

Lapeer is located on a stony glacial ridge.

It is a highland in the landscape.

Its rolling hills are filled with many a pond, stream, and bridge.

Lapeer is the place of the grand week-end escape.

The French woods runner Jean Baptiste Brillant dit La pierre wintered in Saginaw.

He married Francoise Sauteus the Ojibwa.

At Fort Detroit Jean Baptist Brillant dit Le Pierre died in 1781.

Lapeer means the land of the stone.

Formed in 1822,

It became a county in 1835.

County Seat: Lapeer.

Second Thought: This county name is a derivation of the French word "la pierre" meaning stone or flint.

Leelanau

"Life's Joy"

Leelanau is said to mean the delight of life.

In historic writings, Leelanau often referred to a Indian Maiden.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, "minawas" means delight, happiness, or joy.

Leelanau is located in the northwest part of Lower Michigan.

"The county seat is Leland.

A leyland is fallow, uncultivated, or unseeded land.

Leelanau and Leland mean the joy or delight of life.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1863.

County Seat: Leelanaw.

Second Thought: This county name was a Henry Schoolcraft invention meaning "delight of life". Schoolcraft gave the name "Leelanau" to Native American women in his stories.

Lenawee

"The Place of the Native Woman and Man"

Lenawee means man, woman, or human.

The Chippewa/Ottawa word "anishinabe" and "anini denote man.

The English word man has roots in the Latin word "animus".

In Latin, the master of the house was called the "dominus".

The county seat of Lenawee is the City of Adrian.

Adrian means black as does the Latin word "ater".

Other Latin words that have same ending are "mater" meaning mother and "pater" meaning father.

Lenawee means the place of native society or humanity.

Formed in 1822,

It became a county in 1826.

County Seat: Adrian.

Second Thought: This county has a Native American name that means "man", generically, or "people".

Livingston

“Beloved Hill”

Livingston Country was named for Edward Livingston.

Edward Livingston was the Secretary of State under President Jackson.

The name Livingston, anciently Leofwine's Dun, means beloved friend's hill.

The county seat of Livingston is the City of Howell whose name means high or exalted hill.

The City of Howell is located on a high ridge that runs along Highland Road.

Livingston County has many a beautiful lake and abode.

The ending of Livingston means a hill, dun, or a town.

Livingston and Howell mean the beloved hill top town.

Formed in 1833,

It became a county in 1836.

County Seat: Howell.

Second Thought: This county was named for Edward Livingston, Secretary of State under President Andrew Jackson.

Luce

"Voracious Fish"

Luce means lucent of having light and also the fish we call the pike.

Late Latin "lucius" means the voracious fish.

The county seat of Luce is the City of New Berry.

In Chippewa and Ottawa, "gnoozhe" means pike.

The Old Irish spear pole or pike was called a "barry".

Luce is filled with many a crystalline clear Lake.

You will find here Muskellunge, Pike, and Perch Lake.

It's a beautiful place fit for your favorite fishing lure.

The water here is crystalline clear, pristine, and pure.

If you're an inland fisherman, the County of Luce will make you very happy.

Luce and New Berry mean the place of perch, pike, and musky.

Formed in 1887,

It became a county in 1887.

County Seat: New Berry.

Second Thought: This county was named for Governor Cyrus Luce (1887-1890).

Mackinaw

"Great Wounded Man--Or Great Turtle"

Mackinaw was said to have been named after an ancient people.

The Mish-ini-makinago are said to be the original people of Mackinaw.

Their name meant the great man wounded.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, the name would be "mitcha anini makia".

"Mitchi" means great; "anini" means man; and makia" means wounded.

The City of St. Ignace is the county seat of Mackinaw.

The latin word "ignis" means to fire or kindle.

Mackinaw is also said to mean "Great Turtle".

In Chippewa/Ottawa, the word "mitchi makikinak" means great turtle.

Mackinaw means great wounded man or turtle.

Formed in 1818,

It became a county in 1818.

County Seat: St. Ignace.

Second Thought: This county was named after the Native American tribe called the Michilimackinac meaning "the big wounded man". It was also said to represent the "turtle".

Macomb

"Narrow Hollow"

The surname Macomb is Irish and means "Sons of Comb".

Old Gaulish "combe" and "cumbe" mean a hollow that is very narrow.

At the top and bottom of Macomb County's Lake St. Claire run two great river valleys.

They comprise St. Claire and Detroit river valleys.

The City of Mount Clements is the county seat of Macomb.

In German, "Klemmen" means a constriction or limitation.

Macomb and Mount Clements mean the place that is tight and narrow.

Formed in 1818,

It became a county in 1818.

County Seat: Mount Clements.

Second Thought: This county was named for General Alexander Macomb (1782-1841) an officer in the War of 1812.

Manistee

"The Vermillion or Red-clay River"

Michigan's county name Manistee seems to mean the ochre river.

It has also been said to mean where there are islands in the stream.

The later meaning may have roots in the Chippewa/Ottawa phrase "mni mtig ziibii".

"Mni" means island while "mtig" means tree.

The Manistee River with its many types of trout is a fisherman's dream.

The Manistee River was said once to have had at its mouth many large islands with trees.

Along the length of the stream, other wooded islands also that seemed to drift with the breeze.

Manistee may even mean "where spirits are blowing through the trees".

In Chippewa/Ottawa, spirit is "manito" while stream is "siibii".

Manistee however actually seems to derive from "onaman" that refers to ochre of vermilion.

Early names for the Manistee and Manistique rivers included "d'Oula Manitee" and "Monetee".

Vermillion was used for the ceremonial decoration of the Indian face and body.

Manistee perhaps like Manistique seems to mean where there is the red-clay or ochre river.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1855.

County Seat: Manistee.

Second Thought: This county has a Native American place name meaning "the island stream" or "the island all wooded stream". Another name suggested is "crooked river".

Marquette

"Land on the Edge"

Marquette seems to mean marginal border land or land on the edge.

Marquette County was named for missionary Father Jacques Marquette,

Marquette County's major cities are Marquette, Ishpeming, and Negaunee,

The latter two names mean the City on High and the Pioneer City.

This land that Father Marquette once explored was at the time a frontier.

Marquette County's main river is the Dead River.

The French word "marquer" means a writer while "marquer" means to braze a tree or to register.

Father Marquette was associated with Michigan's early written history.

He explored and mapped much of the Upper Great Lakes or the Old Northwest Territory.

Marquette means the writer in the frontier.

Formed in 1843,

It became a county in 1846.

County Seat: Marquette.

Second Thought: This county was named for the Jesuit missionary and explorer, Father Jacques Marquette.

Mason

“Stone and Mud Worker”

Mason means the brick layer or stone cutter.

It means one who worked with squared the stone block.

A mason mortars squares of rock that interlock.

Mason County was named for Michigan's first Governor Steven T. Mason.

The county seat of Mason County is the City of Ludington,

The moniker Ludington likely comes from "lutton" that means mud that may be used by a mason.

In Latin and English one who smears mud or cement is a "luter".

Mason and Ludington mean the stone and cement worker .

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1855.

County Seat: Ludington.

Second Thought: This county was named for Steven T. Mason (1811-1843), first Governor of Michigan (1835-1840).

Mecosta

"Bear Head"

Mecosta is said to mean bear cub or bear head.

In Chippewa/Ottawa "makwans" means bear cub while "makoshtigwan" means bear head.

The county was named for local Native Chief Mecosta.

The county seat of Mecosta is Big Rapids.

Another word for rapids is cascade.

In Latin "magnus gorges" or "magnus cataract" means big cascade.

In Chippewa/Ottawa big is "mitcha" while falls is "kakabika".

In Chippewa/Ottawa then "Mitcha-kakabika" means large rapids.

Mecosta and Big Rapids may both mean great rapids, falls or cascade.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1859.

County Seat: Big Rapids.

Second Thought: This county was named for the Potawatomi chief, Mecosta whose name was said to represent "the bear club".

Menominee

“Wild Rice People”

Menominee means the people who harvest rice.

The word comes from the Chippewa/Ottawa phrase “mnoomin nini”.

“Mnoomin” means wild rice or oats while “nini” means people.

Menominee was a place where early inhabitants gather rice.

It was the wetlands that held birds called bobolinks or the birds that ate rice.

The word Menominee is related to the Chippewa/Ottawa word for good.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, "Mino" means good.

Menominee was the place of enjoyable retreat.

Menominee means the people who gather wild rice and had good meals to eat.

Formed in 1861,

It became a county in 1861.

County Seat: Menominee.

Second Thought: This county was named after the Menominee River, which took its name from the tribe that lived in the county. The name Menominee meant “the rice people”.

Midland

“The Center of the Country”

The name Midland means the middle territory.

It also suggests the land of medicine.

In Chippewa and Ottawa “mide” means medicine.

Midland is the home of the Dow Chemical Company.

Its early livelihood was rooted in the nearby springs of bromide-salt.

Mental anguish or head-ache is called dolor, and early remedies for headaches included bromide seltzer or salt.

Midland seems to mean both middle and medicine land.

Midland is located near the center of Michigan's hand.

Middle and medicine both come from Latin word "mete" meaning to measure or mete.

Midland was once an early spa retreat.

Midland means the medicine or middle land.

Formed in 1831,

It Became a County in 1850.

County Seat: Midland.

Second Thought: This county name was said to come from the idea that the county is at the geographical middle of the Lower Peninsula.

Missaukee

“Great Inland Lake”

Missaukee means large lake.

The Chippewa/Ottawa word mitchi-sagaigan” means great lake.

Missaukee was named for local Native Chief Me-sau-kee.

The county of Missaukee is beautiful region.

Missaukee County’s seat is picturesque Lake City.

Nearby are the large lakes called Higgins and Houghton.

In Missaukee, winter and summer sports are enjoyed by everyone.

Missaukee and Lake City both mean the great inland lake.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1850.

County Seat: Lake City.

Second Thought: This county was named for the prominent Ottawa who lived in the area. He was known as Me-Sau-Kee.

Monroe

“The Wheel and Road Maker”

Monroe means the wheel maker.

Monroe County was named after President James Monroe.

Wayne County just north of Monroe is the region of the car maker.

In Scotland, Monroe was said to mean at the mouth of the wheel makers’ river.

The Native chief of Monroe County was Chief Macon.

Chippewa/Ottawa "miikan" means path, trail, or road.

Wayne and Monroe Counties are the world’s capital or center for transportation.

Monroe County contains many of the early entrance roads into Michigan.

Monroe County has always been the place of the wheel and road.

Latin “rota” means wheel from which we also get the word road.

Monroe means the wheel and road maker.

Formed in 1817,

It became a county in 1822.

County Seat: Monroe.

Second Thought: This county was named for President James Monroe (1758-1831). He visited Detroit in 1817, and in anticipation of his visit the county was named for him.

Montcalm

“It Stands Still”

Montcalm means the composed plateau.

Montcalm was named for French General Marquis Montcalm.

Montcalm lies between Lakes Huron and Michigan.

The county seat is the City of Stanton.

Here the Flat River only slightly flows and nearly stands still.

Montcalm means the flat topped hill.

Montcalm’s rivers and streams flow so very slow.

Montcalm and Stanton mean the mount that is stanch and calm.

Formed in 1831,

It became a county in 1850.

County Seat: Stanton.

Second Thought: This county was named for French General Marquis de Mountcalm. His defeat and death in 1759 marked the end of the French and Indian War in North America.

Montmorency

“Mountain Moor”

Montmorency means the mountain with the marsh.

A large expansive highland, Montmorency is fun to explore.

Montmorency’s county seat is the City of Atlanta.

The ancient City of Atlanta was said to have been swallowed by the sea.

Montmorency contains the City of Hillman and the Thunder Bay River.

It also contains the City of Lewiston and the Au Sable River.

Montmorency and Atlanta both mean the land that is covered with water.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1881.

County Seat: Atlanta.

Second Thought: It is not clear if this county was named for a historical person or place.

Muskegon

“Moorland”

Muskegon means the land that is fusty or musty.

Near Muskegon River’s mouth once laid a large swampland.

Chippewa/Ottawa “mashkig” means marsh.

Muskegon means the land of wet ground, mud, and sand.

Musty means a place that is dank, dark, and mossy.

Muskegon means the moorland or marsh.

Formed in 1859,

It became a County in 1859.

County Seat: Muskegon.

Second Thought: This county has a Native American place named that means swamp or marsh.

Newaygo

“White Cloud”

The Chippewa/Ottawa word “anakwad” means cloud.

Some people say Newaygo means my wing.

Chippewa/Ottawa "ningwigan" means my wing.

Newaygo was also said to mean wet and much water.

Wet in Chippewa/Ottawa is "nibiwan".

The root “nibi” means water.

Newaygo however is likely related to the Latin word for cloud or "nebula".

Almost certainly the root is the French word “nuageux” meaning cloudy.

The county seat of Newaygo is the City of White Cloud.

In Chippewa/Ottawa “Ningwakwad” also means cloudy or hazy.

Newaygo and White Cloud very likely both mean cloudy.

Formed in 1840,

It became a County in 1851.

County Seat: White Cloud.

Second Thought: This county was named for an Ottawa band chief said to mean "wet or much water".

Oakland

“The Nut Thrasher”

The City of Pontiac is the county seat of Oakland.

The city was named for Native Ottawa Chief Pontiac.

“Obwandiyag” was one early spelling of Pontiac.

In Chippewa/Ottawa “paganak” and “pagan” mean walnut, hazelnut, or nut.

“Nak” at the end of a word means a stick.

A suggested meaning of Pontiac was “anchor” or “bonakadjigan”.

However, a stick for threshing or flailing is “apagandainak” and “apagandaigan”.

“Bawaiganak” or “bawaigan” also mean flailing stick.

To knock off or harvest something such as wild rice is also called “bawaan”.

The nut was likely the food that came from knocking.

The nut was the food that was brought down and made eatable by hitting or striking.

Oakland and Pontiac likely both mean the place of the nut thresher or harvester.

Formed in 1819,

It became a County in 1820

County Seat: Pontiac.

Second Thought: This county was named for the many oak openings in the county.

Oceana

“The Sea or Great River”

Oceana County is a horn that projects in a sea of freshwater.

The county forms a broad peninsula.

Greek “okeano” means the sea or the world’s great river.

The City of Hart is the county seat of Oceana.

Hart means the stag or male deer.

It means the animal with the horn or antler.

The root horn also describes a cape or peninsula.

Oceana County forms a horn that projects into the freshwater sea Lake Michigan.

Oceana and Hart together mean the horn contained by a great water.

Formed in 1831,

It became a County in 1851.

County Seat: Hart.

Second Thought: This county derives its name because of its proximity to Lake Michigan—the fresh water ocean.

Ogemaw

“Chief or Leader”

The county name Ogemaw is linked to heaven or the sky.

Ogemaw’s county seat the City of West Branch lies with a view of the sky.

In Latin to be of the western or evening sky is “vesperus” or “occasus”.

Chippewa/Ottawa "ogima" means he who is above, the chief, or the leader.

“Ogitchida” means brave or warrior.

"Ogidji" means that which is above or over us.

Chippewa/Ottawa “gijig” that means day, heaven, or sky.

The western sky often predicts the weather.

West is “epangishimog” or where heaven or the sky will fall.

A similar word, “ginos” means upward or tall.

Ogemaw and West Branch both mean that which is above us and leads us.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1875.

County Seat: West Branch.

Second Thought: This county was named for Native Chief Ogema-Kegato (1794-1840) a prominent chief of the Saginaw Valley.

Ontonagon

“Hunt for the Bowl”

Ontonagon means to search or look for the bowl.

Ontonagon County forms a wide valley or basin.

Its river valley is shaped like a great dish or bowl.

A story says that a Native girl once put her deep dish in the Ontonagon River.

Not paying attention, the bowl began to float away down the river.

Realizing it was gone, she said, “Nanda onagan. Nanda onagan”—

In English she was saying "Search for the bowl. Look for the bowl".

In this region the legend is very familiar.

The story is a simile as Ontonagon County forms a grand bowl or basin.

The Native girl’s bowl and the valley basin look similar.

Ontonagon means look or hunt for the bowl.

Formed in 1843,

It became a county in 1846.

County Seat: Ontonagon.

Second Thought: This county name has had various meanings such as “hunting river”, “lost bowl”, and “fishing place”. The name “Nantounagon” was on an early 1670 French map.

Osceola

The Holler or Wailer

Osceola means the black water crier.

The county was named for Seminole Chief Osceola.

Osceola would cry out or howl as his friends drank a form of black coffee.

Osceola comes from the Seminole phrase "asi yaholo".

"Asi" means black water.

"Yaholo" means the lamenter or holler.

Osceola's county seat is Reed City.

In Latin both a reed and flute or shepherd's pipe is a "harundo".

The reed or flute player and one who cries out are types of songsters.

Osceola and Reed City both mean the hollow songsters or melody players.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1869.

County Seat: Reed City.

Second Thought: This county was named for Native American Chief Osceola (1803-1838). The name comes from the Cree word "assiyahola" meaning the black drink singer.

Oscoda

“Stony Meadow”

The field of stones is the meaning of Oscoda.

The Chippewa/Ottawa phrase “assin mashkode” means a stony field.

Oscoda County’s seat is the City of Mio.

Mio was named for Mioe the wife of the founder of Mio.

The Norwegian and Swedish word “moe” and “mo” mean a health land.

To mow means to cut a grassy field.

Oscoda and Mio mean the stony meadow or moorland.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1881.

County Seat: Mio.

Second Thought: This county name was a Schoolcraft invention meaning stone prairie or meadow. The City of Mio was said to be the corruption of the name Maria, or Mary.

Otsego

“Rocky Highland”

Otsego means rock and comes from the Onondaga word “otsenaro”.

German “stein” means rock or stone.

Chippewa/Ottawa “assin” also means stone.

Otsego County’s seat is the City of Gaylord.

One whose spirits are high is the meaning Gaillard or Gaylord.

Otsego County’s town of Vanderbilt means from the hill.

Gothic “hallus” means rock from which we get the word hill.

“*Gàidheal*” denotes the Gaelic identity and the people of the Scottish highland.

The root of the Irish City name Galway is Galliv and means river of rock or stone.

Otsego and Gaylord mean the high spirited people of the rocky highland.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1875.

County Seat: Gaylord.

Second Thought: This county was named for the county in New York called Otsego, which means “place of the rock”. An Iroquoian word, it was also said to mean “the meeting place”.

Ottawa

“Trader”

Ottawa means the people who buy and sell.

Chippewa/Ottawa "atawe" means to offer to sell.

German "tausch" means barter.

French "troquer" also means a goods broker.

Ottawa County's seat is the City of Grand Haven.

The place now called Grand Haven was at first an early storehouse and inn.

The early trader often located at the outlet of a large river.

The word haven means hostelry or shelter.

Ottawa and Grand Haven mean the place of the lodge goods trader.

Formed in 1831,

It became a county in 1837.

County Seat: Grand Haven.

Second Thought: This county was named for the Native American tribe called the Ottawa whose name meant the trading people.

Presque Isle

"The Point"

Almost an island is the meaning of Presque Isle.

A peninsula or promontory in French is the phrase "presque ile".

Presque Isle is a small broad peninsula that projects into Lake Huron.

French "presque" means nearly or roughly.

Presque Isle County's seat is Rogers City.

The given name Roger comes from "rohd ger" meaning famous pointed spear.

Presque Isle and Roger's City mean the land's point.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1871.

County Seat: Presque Isle.

Second Thought: This county uses a French phrase "presque isle" meaning "almost an island or a peninsula".

Roscommon

“Woodland Bend”

The Irish place name Roscommon means “The Woods of St. Caimon”.

Irish "ros" means forest.

Roscommon County contains the lakes Higgins and Houghton.

They are surrounded by a great pine and oak tree forest.

Here woodland adventures are very enjoyable and common.

"St. Caimon" was the founder, abbot, and bishop of the place in Ireland named Roscommon.

He's name means bend.

Roscommon means at the forest bend.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1875.

County Seat: Roscommon.

Second Thought: This county was named for County Roscommon, Ireland, which is in the central part of Ireland.

Saginaw

“Where the River Pours Out”

Saginaw means where there is a water spout.

Saginaw County was once anciently called Sankinon and Saguinon.

The Chippewa/Ottawa word "sagiwan" means river outlet.

Chippewa/Ottawa "siginan" means to pour.

In German "schanken" and Dutch "schenken" mean to pour.

In the Huron language "arenti" means river outlet.

The Saginaw Bay was once "Tek-ariendi-ondi".

Later it was simply "Karegnondi".

Both seem to mean where the river projects out.

The Sauk People were named for this location.

Saginaw means where there is a grand river projection.

Formed in 1822,

It became a county in 1831.

County Seat: Saginaw.

Second Thought: This county was named for the Native American tribe the Sauks. The ending "ong", or "naw", means place.

St. Clair

"It is Bright"

St. Clair means radiant environment.

The French word "claire" means to be bright or clear.

St. Clair County's seat is the City of Port Huron.

It is a large harbor at the south end and outlet to Lake Huron.

St. Clair County contains the Black River.

It also includes the Belle [Chase] River that was once called White River.

The Latin word "portus" means a harbor.

Latin "porta" means a gate, passageway, or door.

St. Clair and Port Huron mean everything is clear and open.

Formed in 1820,

It became a county in 1821.

County Seat: Port Huron.

Second Thought: This county was named for General Arthur St. Clair, the first governor of the Northwest Territory, or it was named in 1679 when La Salle arrived here upon Lake St. Clair on the first day of Saint Claire.

St. Joseph

“Bend or Arch”

St. Joseph likely means hunch, curve, or arch.

Greek "kyphos" or “kypto” means to be gibbous or curved around a center.

It means to be cupped with a curve or bend.

St. Joseph County includes the cities of Benton Harbor and South Bend.

St. Joseph’s seat is the City of Centerville.

At the center of the arch of St. Joseph River lies Centerville.

The latin word “scyphus” means goblet or drinking cup.

St. Joseph and Centerville mean round like a cup.

Formed in 1820,

It became a county in 1829.

County Seat: Centerville.

Second Thought: This county was named for the patron saint of New France.

Sanilac

“Watery”

Sanilac County was named for the Wyandotte Chief Sannilac.

In the wars with the Iroquois, Sannilac was a spirit warrior.

Sanilac County’s seat is the City of Sandusky.

The Onondaga word "ochneca" means water.

"Ochneca-tschi" is the Onondaga word for Sandusky that means watery.

Onondaga “ganiatare” means lake and was once the name for Lake Huron.

Sanilac County at one time included the entire “Thumb of Michigan.

Sanilac County was then almost surrounded by water.

Sanilac and Sandusky mean in essence watery.

Formed in 1822,

It became a county in 1848.

County Seat: Sandusky.

Second Thought: This county was named for the spirit warrior in Henry Whiting’s poem Sannilac, which may have been obtained from General Cass’ manuscripts. In the poem, Sannilac was a spirit warrior.

Schoolcraft

“Woodland Scholar”

Schoolcraft County was named for the Indian agent Henry Schoolcraft.

His name meant the one educated or the scholar.

Henry Schoolcraft was knowledgeable in philosophy and technology.

He was an intellectual craftsman.

The county seat of Schoolcraft is the City of Manistique,

In Native Chippewa/Ottawa, "manito" means spirit and mystic.

Manistee means "spirit of the woods" or "manto mitigwaki".

Schoolcraft and Manistique mean the woodland mystic.

Formed in 1843,

It became a county in 1846.

County Seat: Manistique.

Second Thought: This county was named for Henry R. Schoolcraft, Michigan Native American Agent.

Shiawassee

“Straight Sparkling Stream”

Shiawassee means the river straight ahead with the bright shiny gleam.

In Chippewa/Ottawa, its name was likely “gwaiak-wasshkong-ziibii”.

The name Shiawassee is similar to Tittabawasee.

Tittabawasee means the turned or bent shining river.

Shiawassee County’s seat is the City of Coruna.

A bright shiny crown that rests on one's head is called a corona.

The Shiawassee City of Owasso was named for Native Chief Owasso.

His name meant he is brilliant or bright.

Shiawassee and Coruna mean it shines like light.

Formed in 1822,

It became a county in 1837.

County Seat: Coruna.

Second Thought: This county name was said to mean the rolling river, the straight river, and sparkling water.

Tuscola

“Level Land Used for Agriculture”

In the early 1800's, Otusson was the Native Chief of the region that would be called Tuscola.

The personal name Otusson meant the bench, bed, or platform in the wigwam or lodge.

In the early 1700's the French called the Thumb of Michigan “La Pays Plat”.

This phrase meant the country that was even, level, or flat.

In the late 1700's, the English called the Thumb of Michigan the Flat Country.

The Chippewa/Ottawa word for level or stretched out land is "tessa-akimaga".

The Thumb of Michigan is essentially a low level plateau.

Tuscola is a Native American and Latin language hodge-podge.

The Chippewa/Ottawa word “tessa” means level or flat most certainly.

Latin “colo” means colony, farm land, or the region that is cultivated.

Named for Cairo, Egypt, the county seat of Tuscola is the City of Caro.

In Latin to till, to plough, or cultivate is the word “aro”.

Cairo, Egypt, was named after Aries or Mars the God of War and Agriculture.

Tuscola and Caro mean the flat land that is cultivated.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1850.

County Seat: Caro.

Second Thought: This county name was said to be a Henry Schoolcraft invention meaning either warrior prairie or level land.

Van Buren

"The Arbor Den"

The county name Van Buren means the arboreal shelter.

It means the bower.

The county seat of Van Buren County is the City of Paw Paw.

The Paya Tree is also called the paw paw.

Paw paw was once used as an arbor—a shady woodland cover.

Van Buren and Paw Paw mean the arbor den

Formed in 1829,

It became a county in 1837.

County Seat: Paw Paw.

Second Thought: This county was named for President Van Buren, who was inaugurated in 1837.

Washtenaw

“The Land Beyond”

Washtenaw in Chippewa/Ottawa means where one goes over.

Anciently to go to the far country, one would go through Washtenaw.

The county seat of Washtenaw is the City of Ann Arbor.

German “an” means to go further, over, or yond.

French “a” means to go toward or over.

Washtenaw and Ann Arbor both mean to go on beyond or over.

Formed in 1822,

It became a county in 1829.

County Seat: Ann Arbor.

Second Thought: This county has a Native American name, which was said to mean “on the river” or “the land beyond”.

Wayne

“Agents of the Journey”

Wayne County was named for Revolutionary War General Anthony Wayne.

Wagon maker is the meaning of the surname Wayne.

The County Seat of Wayne is the City of Detroit.

French "d'etroit" means the narrow or strait in a water way.

The Chippewa/Ottawa word "Wawiiatan" meant round and was their name for Detroit.

Wayne County is major land and water passageway.

Here boats and ships go north and south while cars and trucks go east and west on their way.

Wayne County is the home the car and truck makers.

It was named for Waggoner's.

Wayne and Detroit mean the agents of a journey.

Formed in 1796,

It became a county in 1815.

County Seat: Detroit.

Second Thought: This county was named for General Anthony Wayne (1745-1796), who was famous in the Revolutionary War.

Wexford

“Ford at the Bottom of the Ridge”

Irish “Wexford” means the crossing near the bottom of the high rocky ridge.

Wexford is home to a elevated esker that is adjacent to a stream and ford.

Here land descends from a high glacial bridge.

The county seat of Wexford is the City of Cadillac.

The cadence by the lake seems to be the meaning of Cadillac.

A glacial ridge and hills fall deeply toward the City of Cadillac.

Latin "cado" means to fall and "lacus" means lake.

Wexford is the great prominence the hill with the precipitous brake.

Wexford and Cadillac mean the great falling cadence near the ford and lake.

Formed in 1840,

It became a county in 1869.

County Seat: Cadillac.

Second Thought: This county was named for County Wexford, Ireland, which is in the southeastern part of Ireland.