



What's in a Name?

How Louisiana's Coastal Parishes Got Their Names

- **Calcasieu** Parish honors a chief of the Atakapas, Native Americans who lived in the area. His name, Quelqueshue, means “crying eagle” and was first given to the Calcasieu River, then to the parish through which the river runs.
- **Cameron** Parish is named for Simon Cameron, a Pennsylvanian who served as Abraham Lincoln’s first secretary of war.
- **Iberia** Parish’s name is derived from an ancient name for Spain. The parish seat, New Iberia, is the only existing Louisiana town to be founded by Spaniards during the colonial era. Its settlers named it in honor of their homeland.
- **Jefferson** Parish pays tribute to Thomas Jefferson, commemorating his role in purchasing the Louisiana territory from France in 1803.
- The name for **Lafourche** Parish is derived from the French phrase *la fourche*, which translates to “the fork.” The parish’s Bayou Lafourche is the western-most fork of the Mississippi River. The 110-mile bayou was the main thoroughfare for transportation and trade in this region during the 18th and 19th centuries, earning it the nickname “the longest main street in the world.”
- **Plaquemines** Parish is named for *piakimin*, a Native American word meaning “persimmon,” a fruit that grows in the area.
- **St. Bernard** Parish is named in honor of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the patron saint of Bernardo de Gálvez y Madrid, a Spanish military leader who helped the American colonies in their quest for independence from Great Britain. Galvez later served as the fifth colonial governor of Louisiana.
- **St. Mary** Parish is named to honor St. Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- **St. Tammany** Parish pays homage to Tamanend, a chief who led the Lenni-Lenape nation and promoted peaceful relations among Native Americans and English settlers in Pennsylvania. His efforts to keep things affable led to his being known as the “patron saint of America,” though he is not a saint as recognized by the Catholic church.
- French settlers in **Terrebonne** Parish christened their new home “good earth” because of the abundance of wildlife, seafood and fertile land.
- **Vermilion** Parish is named for the Vermilion River and the Vermilion Bay. It’s believed that the Atakapas, who lived along the river, gave it this name because of its reddish color.