

= Origin of the name " Empire State " =

The U.S. State of New York has been known by many nicknames , most notably as the Empire State , adopted as late as the 19th century . This nickname has been incorporated into the names of several state buildings and events , and is commonly believed to refer to the state 's wealth and resources . However , the origin of the term remains unclear .

There are several theories on the origin of the name . Two of them involve George Washington , one credits aggressive trade routes , and another associates the nickname with New York exceeding Virginia in population . None has been proven . One commonly accepted tale says that , when Washington was given a full map of New York prior to the Battle of New York , he remarked on New York 's natural geographic advantages , proclaiming New York the " Seat of an Empire " .

The origin of the term has puzzled many historians ; as American writer Paul Eldridge put it , " Who was the merry wag who crowned the State ... [as the Empire State] ? New York would certainly raise a monument to his memory , but he made his grandiose gesture and vanished forever . "

= = History = =

The source of the term " Empire State " is uncertain . It has been attributed to the state 's wealth and resources , but there is some doubt regarding that . Two possible stories involve America 's first president George Washington .

The first refers to an April 10 , 1785 letter to New York City Mayor James Duane in which Washington called New York " the Seat of the Empire " . Washington is also said to have used the phrase " Pathway to Empire " once when referring to the state in conversation with Governor George Clinton in the 1790s ; no documentation exists for this exchange , however .

Alexander Flick 's History of New York State claims that the title was used as early as 1819 , coinciding with New York surpassing Virginia in population . He does not provide any source for this claim . Further , Flick adds that the term was " universally acknowledged and accepted " by the time that the Erie Canal was completed in 1825 . In a later work , Flick and coauthor John Jacob Anderson claim that " New York is well called the Empire State ... not only because of the vastness of its resources , but because it so conspicuously illustrates the imperial power of law @-@ abiding liberty among the people . "

Milton Klein proposes in The Empire State : A History of New York that the name may have accompanied the success of the Black Ball Line in 1818 " because of the signal advantage the regularity of shipping gave to New York 's merchants over those in other coastal cities . " He claims that , by 1820 , it was clear that " Empire State " was in wide use , though he is doubtful that a clear origin of the term will ever be determined . The 1940 Guide to the Empire State included the following quotation : " ... it would gratify the people of New York if they could discover who first dared that spacious adjective . "

= = Namesakes = =

New York is widely known by the nickname " Empire State " , and its effects can be seen throughout the state . Manhattan 's Empire State Building opened in 1931 and was the world 's tallest building until the completion of the north tower of the World Trade Center in 1970 . Following the September 11 attacks , the Empire State Building once again became the tallest building in Manhattan until One World Trade Center claimed the title in April 2012 . The main offices of state government are located at the Empire State Plaza (ESP) in Albany , the state capital . Its most iconic structure is the Erastus Corning Tower , the tallest building in New York outside of New York City .

The nickname has also been used for train routes . The Empire State Express of the New York Central Railroad was established in 1891 , and Amtrak currently offers its Empire Service from New York City to Buffalo via Albany . SUNY Empire State College was established in 1971 in Saratoga Springs and makes use of the name . The Empire State Games were established in 1978 as an

Olympic @-@ style competition for amateur athletes from New York . Additionally , the term " Empire State " has been included on New York State license plates since 2001 . In 2009 , Jay @-@ Z and Alicia Keys released the 5x @-@ platinum single " Empire State of Mind . "