

have a boiling point of 107 to 110° C. and the drops will form in one or two minutes. If boiled to about 115° or 116° C., the drops will form very slowly, *i.e.*, requiring several hours, and will persist for hours or even days, for very small drops, before floating out to the surface of the syrup. Intermediate rates of formation of the drops may be obtained from syrup having boiling points at intermediate temperatures.

L. L. NETTLETON

GULF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CO.  
PITTSBURGH, PA.

### BOTANY IN STATE NAMES

ANYTHING written by Dr. C. Stuart Gager, the versatile and distinguished director of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, is worth reading, and the lead article in *SCIENCE* for April 23, "Botanic Gardens in Science and Education," is no exception. Erudite, thought-provoking, yet withal witty, entertaining and charming, it holds one's attention, from the opening tribute to Swarthmore to the concluding reference to 1st Corinthians. The inaccurate second sentence can only be explained as another illustration of the old adage, "et Jupiter nuat." Pennsylvania is definitely *not* "the only state of our union that has any reference to plant life in its name." How about Florida?, or Vermont? or Quoneektacut, river of pines? Moreover, some authorities say that Alabama is a corruption of Choctaw "alba aya mule," meaning, "I clear the thicket," and one of the etymologies of Oregon is from *Origanum*, referring to a native plant with a marjoram-like scent.

W. A. DAYTON

FOREST SERVICE

### THE MEANING OF STATE NAMES

I BELIEVE it was Will Rogers who said, "All I know is what I read in the papers." My knowledge of the origins of the names of the states in our union is of similar derivation. It seems to me the question hinges partly on the obviousness of the meaning and partly on the reliability and certainty of the authority consulted. The statement quoted from my Swarthmore address was that Pennsylvania "is the only state of our union that has any reference to plant life in its name." As supporting authorities I consulted: Gannett, Henry, "The Origin of Certain Place Names in the U. S.," *U. S. Geol. Survey Bull.* No. 197, 1902; Century Dictionary; Encyclopaedia Britannica. Mr. Dayton cites what he considers to be five exceptions to that statement:

*Florida*: Gannett says: "Named by Ponce de Leon 'the florid or flower land.' He chose this name for two reasons: First because the country presented a pleasant aspect [no definite reference to plants]; and, second, because he landed on the festival which the

Spaniards call Pascua de flores, or Pascua Florida, 'feast of flowers,' which corresponds to Palm Sunday. The second reason is generally considered to have more weight." That is, the reference in the state's name is to a feast of the Catholic Church—only indirectly, if at all, to plant life. In view of the important part played by institutional religion in the lives of the Spanish explorers this second reason seems to me also more logical.

*Vermont*: I had always supposed the reference in this name was to mountains, not to plant life. It is the greenness of mountains that is referred to. What makes them green is not referred to in the state's name. Perhaps your correspondent would consider Red Sea to be also a reference to plant life, since the redness is due to the presence of one of the blue-green algae in the plankton. Does the name Blue Ridge also refer to plant life? If so, why not Red River?

*Connecticut*: Gannett says: "River and state. An Indian name, derived from Quonoktacut (Century Dictionary gives it Quonoktacet), meaning, according to some authorities, 'a river whose water is driven in waves by tides or winds.' Haines says, 'land on the long tidal river.' Other interpretations are, 'on long river,' 'long river,' and 'the long or without end river.'" So also the Century Dictionary. The World Almanac gives "river of pines," but cites no authority.

*Alabama*: Gannett says: "Named from an Indian tribe. There are several explanations of the meaning of the word. Gatchet gives 'burnt clearing' [reference to the absence of plants!]. Others say it means 'here we rest.' Haines, in his "American Indian," gives 'thicket clearers'" [reference to men who remove plants!]. Century Dictionary says, under Alibamu, "In the form Alibama . . . the name is first mentioned as that of a chief met by De Soto." Question: Was the chief already named when De Soto met him, or did the Spaniards give him his name?

*Oregon*: Century Dictionary says: "Jonathan Carver, in his 'Travels' (1763) named the River 'Oregon.' Possibly from Spanish *Orejon*. See *Orejones*." Under *Orejones* we read that the early Spanish explorers applied that name to an Indian tribe who artificially distended the lobes of their ears. In the Spanish Dictionary the English meaning of *Oreja* is given as *auricle of the ear*. As to the state being named, as Dayton notes, "from *Origanum*, referring to a native plant with a marjoram-like scent," one would wish to know what that plant was. It must still be growing there if it was there during the years of Spanish exploration in sufficient quantity to suggest a name for the vast region that constituted the territory of Oregon (much greater than the area of the present state of that name). The genus *Origanum* is European, and is found in America only as an introduced plant. Question: Were the early explorers likely to have been