It is an undisputed fact that Stamp-collecting is receiving more and more that recognition of its interesting and instructive features which it deserves.

It is understood, that in the knowledge of stamps there lies hidden a true incentive to the broadening and animating of geographical, historical and especially philological instruction.

To many collectors there it will not be unwelcome if the “Illustrirtes Briefmarken Journal” reveals in its columns the derivation of the names of certain countries.

In the first place we look at

**EUROPE**

Who does not know the tradition of the Phoenician King’s daughter Europa, who was stolen by the enamored Jupiter disguised in the shape of a bull, and carried to that part of the earth which has taken her name?

Cadmus, her brother, had to search for her and was not allowed to return home without her. As is (typo it) was impossible for him to accomplish his mission, he founded the city of Thebes. It is a tradition, which on one side is intended to show, that Europe was populated from Asia, and on the other hand it illustrates to us the Phoenician influence upon Greece. The more modern etymologists (Kiepert) take into consideration the Shemitic ereb dark; therefore Europe was the “evening land,” and was contrasted with Asia, namely the “morning land.”

**Alsace.** This name originated in the time of the Frankish Kings. Some declare the land of “Elisassen” as the land of alien settlers; others as the country of the “inhabitants on the Ill” (the name of a tributary of the Rhine in Alsace).

**Bavaria.** At the time of migration, the Celtish people of Boioaria, i.e. the inhabitants of the land of Boii, stationed guards who came from their former dwelling-places to the above mentioned land of Boii, the present Bavaria (Bayern) and transferred their name to their new dwelling place. Latinized the name is Bavaria.

**Belgium,** the new kingdom which separated from Holland in 1831, was named after its old inhabitants, the Celtic Belgae, as the land of the Belgins (sic) had already been called Belgica (Caesar, de Bello Gallico) in the time of the Romans.

**Bosnia** was named after Bosna, a western tributary of the Save.
Brunswick. The city was named Brunswick by its founder Bruno of Saxony. As the old “wick” signified city, its name is in effect Bruno City.” From the city the surrounding country derived its name.

Bremen. “Border City” from bram, bräm, the shore upon which the place was originally built by mariners and fishers.

Bulgaria, derived from the Finnish Bolgarians or Volgarians, named after Bolgar their capital which was situated in middle Volga. When a part of the Bolgarians first appeared on the Danube in 587, they soon conquered the Slavs of that region; both tribes then intermingled, and thus the name has been applied to all the inhabitants of that land.

Denmark. “The mark (i.e., boundary land) of the Danes,” a Gothic tribe which wandered into the archipelago about the fifth century.”

England. Land of the Angles, those Germans from the district of the present Schleswig-Holstein, who came to England together with the Saxons under their leaders, Hengist and Horsa, a short time after the downfall of the Roman Empire.

Finland. “Land of the Finns.” The name of the Finns is the Gothic translation of their peculiar name soumalaiset, swamps, from souma swamp, moor.

France. Empire of the Franks — the free.

Germany (Deutschland). The old high-German diutisc, thiudisks, “related to the tribe, to the people (diot and thiuda).” At one time our ancestors called themselves thus in contradistinction to the inhabitants of the Roman Empire whom they called Welsh (Wale, Galen and Gauls), as foreign to themselves. Hence Germany (Deutschland) the “the land of the Germans” (Deutsche).

Gibraltar, named from the Arabic Gebel al Tarik “Mountain of Tarik,” after the Arabian general who landed in Europe in 711.

Great Britain, possibly from the Phoenician Baratanak meaning “Land of Fin.”

Hamburg signifies “forestcastle” (the old-Saxon form hamme still exists.) It was built in the year 811 by Charles the Great (Charlemagne) against the Slavonians.

Hannover, in former times Hanover denoting “high bank” because the city proper lay upon the elevated right bank of the Leine

Holland. This name was formed from the original “Holtland,” on account of the thick copse-wood of the islands at the mouth of the Mass. (Holt is the low-German form for the high-German Holz (wood), such changes are common as for example the low-German dat for the high-German das, and the low-German water for the high-German wasser.
**Iceland.** The second discoverer Floeke named this polar island “Iceland” on account of the great amount of floating ice off the north coast; it was as correctly christened Snjoland (snow land) by the Norwegian Noddod.

**Ionian Islands.** They received their names from the Ionians, who settled on them. This people derived its origin from the traditional Ion (the son of Apollo and Creusa), who was king of Ægialea. From that time the inhabitants of that city were called Ionians.

**Italy** from the Latin vitulus meaning calf, the secondary form is italus, therefore Italy denotes “calfland.” This etymology has been borne out by inscriptions on coins. (Inscription Viteliu for Italy).

**Lombardy,** Italian Lombardia, was named after the immigrant German people of the Longo bards.

**Lübeck** was named after the Slavonian king Lieuby, who erected an alarm post south of the modern Kaltenhof against the Obotrites. This was destroyed by the Rugians in 1139, and arose again in its present location in 1143, and the few inhabitants of Olden-Lubecke (Old Lubeck) now transferred the name to the new place.

**Luxemburg, Lucelinburg,** “small castle” at first the name of the castle, then that of the city and surrounding country.

**San Marino** was named after the hermit Marinus, who settled in this place in the fourth century, and lived upon the top of the mountain where the capital is also situated.

**Modena,** from the Latin “Mutina,” the old Roman colony.

**Montenegro** is the Italian for “black mountains.” Its Slavonic name has the same meaning, Črnagora, (črna == black, gora == mountain).

**Neapel,** the Greek for “new city.”

**Norway,** properly, Norweg, meaning “Northern-way,” the so-called by the Norman mariners after the Northern water-ways in contrast to “Vesterveg” and “Austurveg.”

**Austria** is an adaptation of the form for “Eastern Empire.”

**Poland,** from the Slavonic pole meaning “plain.”

**Portugal** was named after the city Porto, meaning “harbor,” (Roman Portuscale,) the most important city of this country, about the middle of the 11th century.

**Prussia,** from Borussen, and this from Russen, Reussen; one of the geographical names which in consequence of the political formation, has gradually attained a much wider extent.

**Saxony,** an old German name for a people, and their country, which spread with the tribes that bore it. From sahs, their peculiar short weapon.
Sardinia is not to be traced from the well-known fish – the Sardine, but from the Iberian race of people, the Sardi.

Schleswig, the name of the city signified “place (old-German wick) on the Schlei;” later on it was applied to the surrounding country.

Sweden, in the vernacular language Sverige, is constructed from Svea-Rike, which signifies “Svenen Empire,” (written even in the 16th century in the chronicle of Olaos Petri Sverike).

Switzerland is a modification of the name Schwyz, the chief place of the well known old-Swiss canton of the name. Its name was derived from Switer, a guide of the traditional northern immigrants.

Spain is the Phoenician for “cony-land.”

Tuscany was named after the Tuscans.

Turkey. The Turks were designated by the Arabs as “turker,” robbers.

Würtemberg official style of writing for “Württemberg,” from “Wirtemberg” or “Wirtineberg” – a castle not far from Stuttgart, on the red mountains. The latter at present, is the Greek vault church of Queen Catharine. (Wirt am Berg.)

ASIA

It is accepted according to the newer etymologists, that the word Asia has been derived from Semitic words with the significations “Intermediate-land,” “Shining-land,” but mostly “Land of the Rising Sun.” In this last signification, Asia might be contrasted with, Europe – the Evening land, as the Morning-land (Natolia, Orient, Levante, Japan and Niphon).


Tan is “land,” which we find again in Turkestan, Beloochistan and others.

Bhophal or Bhupalpur == “Kings-town” from bhupal, a land-regent.

Borneo named after the Malayan sultanate, Burni or Bruni, adapted to Portuguese pronunciation.

Ceylon. Abridged from Sinhala dwipa, “the Sanscrit for lions island;” therefore the inhabitants are Singhalese.

China. The name is probably formed from the name of the old dynasty Thsin (255-209 B.C.,) which has been adopted with us after the example of the Portuguese. The Chinese themselves also call their country Tschung Kue i.e., the “Central Empire.”
Haidarabad. “Haidar’s City,” from the proper noun Haidar, meaning “lion.”

Hong-Kong, is the Chinese for “sweet-scented water.”

Faridkot. “Farid’s castle.”

Holkar. Family name of the house of princes.

Japan is a modification of the name Niphon, which means “Land of the Rising Sun” from the Japanese “ni” meaning fire, or in a more liberal signification meaning sun, and “pon” meaning terra firma or land.

Cashmere, is from the Sanscrit Kasyapa-mar signifying “Home of Kasyapa,” the saint who brought about the drainage of a lake situated in the valley.

Corea is called Corey by Kämpfer in his description of Japan (Beschreibung von Japan I Seite 77).

Philippines, named by the Spaniards in honor of their king, Philip the Second.

Siam, abridged from Schan or Schyan.

Straits Settlements. “Colony on the strait.”

Timor is the Malayan for “Orient” or “East.”

AFRICA

This name was first applied by the Romans to the ancient Lybia, who next designated the surrounding country of Carthage, inhabited by the Afri, as Africa i.e., “Afriland,” and then gradually gave a larger compass to the name. Besides, in the time of Cæsar, Africa was not yet generally acknowledged as a third part of the earth. (Sallustus, bellum Jugurthinum Cap. 17. In divisione orbis terrarium plurique in poarte tertia Africam posuere, pauci tantum modo Asiam et Europam esse, sed Africam in Europam. – loose translation of the Latin basically says that Africa has been considered being “in” Europe)

Azores, port os Açores meaning “hawks-islands”, so named by the Portuguese on account of the many açores, “hawks” or, properly speaking “hen-harriers.”

Cape Verde Islands, named after Cape Verde meaning “green cape.”

Egypt. The name is of Greek origin, but of doubtful meaning; according to Brugsch, the Greek Aegyptos was a corruption of Ha-ka-ptah i.e. “house of worship of the Ptah.” The native name was Chemi, signifying “black land;” yet that does not allude to the dark complexion of the inhabitants, for
these were reddish brown, but to the alluvia black soil of the Nile, which has a remarkable distinction from the adjacent Ta Tesch i.e., “the redness,” of the desert.

*Fernando Po* was discovered in 1469 or 1471 by Fernao do Po and named after him.

*Griqualand* takes its name after the Griquas, a mixed race from the Hottentots and Dutch.

*St. Helena* was discovered by João da Nova on St. Helen’s day, May 22d, 1502.

*Liberia*, from the Latin liber meaning “free,” “not slavish,” was the acquired land named by the noble-minded North Americans in 1824, in which the freed and emancipated negroes should find a safe refuge and a well-ordered home.

*Madeira.* “Wood or forest island.”

*Mauritius.* “Maurice-island in honor of Maurice of Orange.

*Natal.* Abridgement of *dies natalis*, meaning “Christmas,” because the coast was discovered on Christmas-day in 1498 by Vasco de Gama.

*Orange State* named after the Orange river. The latter was called Orange river by the Hollanders, in honor of their ruling-house, Orange.

*Sierra Leone* signifies “lion-mountains.”

*São Thomé.* The old town Meliapore was christened by the Portuguese as “St. Thomas” in remembrance of the apostle of this name who, according to the statements of the natives, is said to have lived here and performed miracles.

*Transvaal.* “The land across the Vaal,” an affluent of the Orange river, called also Gai Gariep. Martin Waltze-müller, the college teacher in St. Dié, Lorraine, proposed the name.

**AMERICA**

In his Cosmographie Introductio in 1507 for the new South American countries, said to have been discovered by Amerigo Vespucci. (It is noticed indeed, that a much greater expanse was given to the name later on.) In the Spanish peninsula they for a long time called the new world Indias Occidentales (West Indias) or simply Indias. In England they called the North American coast Newfoundland and the like.

On the other hand in Germany and other countries the first named proposition immediately met with accord, assisted by the spreading of the writings of Vespucci, and the similarity of the names of other continents. The name America was first found geographically used upon Apian’s map of the world in 1522.
We add to our account about the origin of the name America, that accord – to others the originator of the name was called Waldseemüller, and was a bookseller and Professor of St. Dié. He translated the journeys of Amerigo Vespucci from the French under the name Hylacomylus and then published them.

Argentina, meaning “silver land,” is from the Latin argentums which signifies “silver,” whilst the river has received its name Rio de la Plata, (Plata – silver) from the Spanish.

Barbados, named from the fiscus barbata, a kind of fig tree, which was met with abundantly in that place.

Bermudas (islands) received their names by their discoverer, the Spaniard – Juan Bermudas in 1515. The islands were also called Sommers-Islands, after Sir George Sommers, who was stranded here in 1612 and took possession of them in the name of the English.

Brazil, which was at first considered an island, received the name Ilha da vera cruz i.e., “islands of the true cross,” after a great wooden cross which was erected on May 1st, 1500.

Later on it received also the name Paapagalli terra, signifying “parrot land,” and in time of the French possession it took the name le France antarctique i.e., “the Antarctic France.”

The well-known dye-wood transported to Europe for the first time on the first voyage in 1503, which the natives called ibira pitanga i.e., “red wood” and the Portuguese named braza (“fire”) after the fiery-red color, was employed to bestow its enduring name upon the country; in German it has the form Brasilien meaning “land of fiery-wood.”

Buenos Ayres: “Good air.”

Canada, by common usage, is derived from an Indian word Kanata which means “a number of huts.” The discoverer might have taken this word as a name for the country.


Dominica is the Spanish for “Sunday island,” so named by Columbus because he landed here on Sunday, November 3, 1493.

Ecuador is the Spanish for “equator.”

Falkland Islands were taken possession of by the British in 1765 and named after Lord Falkland.

Guadeloupe. Santa Maria de Guadelupe, one of the Antilles, was discovered upon Columbus’ second voyage on the 4th of November 1493, and was named after the cloister “Nuestra Señora de Guadelupe,” according to the promise given to the monks.
Guatemala. The Spaniards of the century of the discovery shortened the Indian name Quauhtemallax which signifies “rotten tree.”

Hayti is an Indian name for “Rough land.”

Honduras means “the deep,” from the Spanish hondo, i.e. “deep.”
When the Spaniards wished to land here, they found no firm land on the coast, and thanked God, that he had delivered them from such depths of the sea.

Jamaica, its name among the Indians was Xiamica, denoting “the island of springs;” at the present time it is no longer a correct indication of its water supply.

Martinique was named after the Indian word Mantinino or Mantigno.

Mexico, the “place of Mexitli,” was named after the temple of Mexitli, the Mars of the Mexicans.

Montserrat from the Spanish Monte Serrato i.e. “carved mountain.” Columbus so named the mountain on account of the strange clefts.

Panama was originally the name of an Indian village. Later on it changed to the city, the province, and the isthmus.

Peru. In the year 1522 a chevalier by the name of Andagoya undertook an expedition from Panama out to the eastern part of South America, up to that time very little known. He went only a very little to the south to that place where the distinguished discoverer (Balboa) of the Pacific Ocean had already advanced. Owing to a misfortune, Andagoya was hindered in the continuation of his journey. He turned back and brought the news from a Cazique (Indian chief) that great riches were treasured up in a land in the far south, by the name of Biru; that it was, but, as proven later, it was the name of a small river of the coast. Since that time the journeys to the south turned to signify the journeys to the riches of Biru and so the name Peru came into vogue for great domains in South America, which so far had been entirely unknown.

Porto Rico, properly Puerto Rico, meaning “rich harbor.”

Prince Edwards Islands were newly named in honor of Duke of Kent, who commanded the British forces to that region in 1799.

San Salvador means “The Holy Savior.”

Tobago, probably a corruption from Trabajo, signifying “island of tribulation.”

Venezuela means “Little Venice.”
Virgin Islands. Islas de las Virgenes i.e. Virgin Islands were discovered by Columbus upon his second voyage, on the day of the Holy Ursula and the 11,000 virgins – the 14th of October, and therefore so named.

AUSTRALIA

In earlier times in the form Terra Australis Incognita i.e., “unknown southern land,” was applied to all those rising tracts of lands in the southern latitude which they too hastily united to the enormous south-polar land surrounding the south pole, and since Tasman’s bold voyage by which he has cut off a great tract of land from the south-polar continent, became limited to the territory of the Australia of the present time.

Fiji Islands were named by the natives Viti Islands.

New Zealand, on the other hand, derived its name from Holland province of Zealand.

New Caledonia was discovered on the 4th of September, 1774, by the English mariner, Cook, and named after the old name of Scotland because he could not learn the correct name of the land.

New South Wales. The entire eastern coast of Australia seen by Cook on the 21st of August, 1770, was named by him after the English province of Wales. Since the secession of the northern half, now known as Queensland, the name New South Wales is restricted to a more limited region.

Queensland was the name given the eastern Australian British colony and was so named in honor of Queen Victoria.

Sandwich Islands were named by Cook after his protector – Sandwich.

Samao or Navigator Islands were discovered by Bougainville on May 3d, 1768, and received their name after the numerous sailing pirogues which surrounded him upon his arrival.

Tasmania derived its name from Abel Tasman, the Dutch mariner who first circumnavigated Australia.

Victoria received its name in 1847 after the Queen of Great Britain.