

THE MAGIC WORLD OF NAMES

Words from Names

Estimates indicate that at least 50,000 words in our language are derived from names. Words like sandwich, cardigan, and boycott come quickly to mind. Many are so firmly entrenched that many people do not even realize they are derived from names. Many have a colorful history. Here are a few:

lynch to execute without due process of law, specifically, to hang. Derived from Charles Lynch (1736-1796), Virginia planter and justice of the peace who used illegal methods against Tories.



pants Derived from pantaloen which comes from the French pantalon which in turns comes from the Italian pantaloni. Pantaloni is derived from a masked character in Italian comedy which comes from Pantaleone, the patron saint of Venice who apparently wore tight-fitting trousers. Ultimately, the name goes back to the Greek name Pantaleon, meaning all lion. In modern Italian Pantalone can also mean a taxpayer.

shrapnel Now refers to fragments from a high-explosive shell. Originally developed by General Henry Shrapnel (1761-1842) of the British army.