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The state's name is derived from the Mississippi River, which flows along and defines its western boundary. European-American settlers named it after the Ojibwe word *misi-ziibi* (English: great river).

Descendant Native American tribes of the Mississippian culture in the Southeast include the Chickasaw and Choctaw. Other tribes who inhabited the territory of Mississippi (and whose names were honored by colonists in local towns) include the Natchez, the Yazoo, and the Biloxi.

The first major European expedition into the territory that became Mississippi was that of the Spanish explorer, Hernando de Soto, who passed through the northeast part of the state in 1540, in his second expedition to the New World.

After Great Britain's victory in the French and Indian War (Seven Years' War), the French surrendered the Mississippi area to them under the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1763). They also ceded their areas to the north that were east of the Mississippi River, including the Illinois Country and Quebec. After the Peace of Paris (1763), the lower third of Mississippi came under Spanish rule as part of West Florida. In 1819 the United States completed the purchase of West Florida and all of East Florida in the Adams-Onís Treaty, and in 1822 both were merged into the Florida Territory.

After the American Revolution (1775-83), Britain ceded this area to the new United States of America. The Mississippi Territory was organized on April 7, 1798, from territory ceded by Georgia and South Carolina to the United States. Their original colonial charters theoretically extended west to the Pacific Ocean. The Mississippi Territory was later twice expanded to include disputed territory claimed by both the United States and Spain.

Many slaveholders brought enslaved African Americans with them or purchased them through the domestic slave trade, especially in New Orleans. Through the trade, an estimated nearly one million slaves were forcibly transported to the Deep South, including Mississippi, in an internal migration that broke up many slave families of the Upper South, where planters were selling excess slaves. The Southerners imposed slave laws in the Deep South and restricted the rights of free blacks.

Beginning in 1822, slaves in Mississippi were protected by law from cruel and unusual punishment by their owners. The Southern slave codes made the willful killing of a slave illegal in most cases. For example, the 1860 Mississippi case of *Oliver v. State* charged the defendant with murdering his own slave.

Mississippi became the 20th state on December 10, 1817. David Holmes was the first



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governor. The state was still occupied as ancestral land by several Native American tribes, including Choctaw, Natchez, Houma, Creek, and Chickasaw.

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