

What's in a name? A travel through history, culture, and ethnicity through New Bedford's surnames: Beaulieu

If you want to get right to the meat and potatoes and are familiar with the series, skip the intro.

Intro

People are fascinated by their family's background and asking someone what they "are" will uncover a lot about a person's identity, family history, and their sense of identity – or lack of it. America being a melting pot more than any country on earth, a person's surname, ethnicity, or heritage is a popular topic of discussion.

When you tell someone you are Irish, German, Kenyan, Wampanoag, Mexican, Brazilian, et al you are sharing a quick symbol that describes a lot about you. Even if it's not accurate, or you call yourself "a mutt," are "half" this, a little "this, that, and this" you still say a lot about who you are. Often you will hear two sets of identity: "On my mother's side, I am 'x' and on my father's side, I am 'x.'" "



It may come as a surprise to many Americans, but this is something very...well, American. The rest of the world thinks it's odd or even make us a butt of their jokes. The American fascination with heritage and ethnicity goes even further than that – we love to spend money on DNA kits, to debate and argue over race and/or skin color, and no political discussion is without it.

It's hard for most Americans to not filter everything through these things. A surname is more than just a person ethnicity and identity: it's also a connection to the "Old World," the history of those nations, and the cuisines. Those things make surnames an interesting topic of discussion!

Meat and Potatoes

If you inferred by its appearance that Beaulieu is French, you would be half correct. While its origins are indeed French, it is an Anglo-Irish surname and you will come across variations like Bewlie, Bealey, Bewly, and Beuly, all spellings that are phonetically based.

The key to what type of surname Beaulieu is is right there within its etymology. The word itself is a compound word – the putting together of two or more words to create a new one, e.g. skylight, sunshine, windshield, et al. The first half of the word *Beau* is derived from the Old French “*beu, bel*” which means ‘fair’ or ‘lovely’ and where English has “beauty” or “bella.” The second half, *Lieu* means ‘place’, ‘location’ and in English “lieu” means “place” as well, as in “In lieu of...” It is also where our word *Milieu*, meaning “the physical or social setting.”

So, it goes without saying that it is a habitational surname – one derived from a locale or specific location.



Now, how in the heck is a French name now considered an Anglo-Irish one? Normandy is the northwesternmost region in France and that region was settled by Danish and Norwegian Vikings in

the 9th century and the word Normandy itself means "Northmen." For you geography buffs, you know that the only thing separating France from England is the English Channel which can be as close as 20 miles away.

The Normans invaded England by crossing the English Channel in the 11th century and conquered it bringing their customs, food, culture, and surnames. This is why the surname is a habitational one – you will find the name and its variations in hamlets, towns, and villages from Normandy all the way through England. In Southern France, you have Beaulieu-sur-Mer on the Cote d'Azur, in England you have Beaulieu Abbey and village, Hampshire which is literally directly across the English Channel from the shores of Normandy and is the seat of Noble House of Montagu. There is also Bewdley in Worcestershire, Bewerley village in North Yorkshire, and many others.

Once the New World opened up, France and England sent explorers and settlers and the name Beaulieu arrived here. Over time the French and French-Canadians would begin to gravitate to Louisiana and by the 1840s and would form one of the largest French communities in the New World for the following decades.

Eventually, masses of French Canadians would head to Maine – where it is now the state with the most Beaulieus – between 1840 and 1930 because of the mills which sprung up in New England during whaling and textile booms. Of course, they had to pass through Massachusetts to get there and since New Bedford was considered the richest city in America in 1856 due to whaling, many felt no need to continue on to Maine.

Some notable Beaulieus are Elvis Presley's ex-wife Priscilla Beaulieu Presley, Trace Beaulieu, television writer and performer, the lead guitarist of the band Trivium Corey Beaulieu, Johann Peter Beaulieu, an Austrian general (1725-1819), professional athletes Jean-Christophe Beaulieu

(football) and Nathan Beaulieu (hockey).

Six creative ideas to deal with potholes

To say that Massachusetts roads have potholes is akin to saying “Water is wet.” It is a part of everyday life in the Commonwealth and we have all mastered the art of adeptly maneuvering around them ... or having a tire blown, axle snapped, or alignment ruined.

We complain about them as much as we complain about the weather in all seasons. We notify officials and often the pothole is filled in on Massachusetts time, but often it is ignored. Massachusetts time is different than time in other states. It highlights the mountain of red tape that bogs down every process from small to large in Massachusetts. Throw in that our politicians and officials are mostly feckless and ineffective, you are likely to see a particular pothole left as is for weeks, even months and in some cases, even longer.

While that is all a bit of hyperbole and creative license, there are so many potholes in the state there will never be a point that the city or state will have filled them in. They are like the proverbial whack-a-mole.

Having said that, there are some potholes that I have learned to dodge because they have been there for well over a year in spite of reporting it.

In cases like that, people throughout the country have learned to let go of their annoyance with potholes and waiting for officials to do something about them and alternatively decided

to inject a bit of humor.

Here are 5 ways that people who have gotten fed up with potholes have done exactly that and by doing so got the city and/or state to take note and fix it almost immediately. Some of these are “do and walk away” there are ones whereby you don’t want to create a distraction for a driver so you simply take a quick photo and then either send it to the city or make it public on social media and hope it goes viral.



1. Go fishing

Some potholes are so large that they have turned into a small pond and they’ve been there for so long that surely life began to settle in. Can’t get to a pond, lake or ocean to do some fishing? Set up a chair and cast a line in hopes of catching the “big one”: an official’s attention. Snap a shot and send to local news outlets and post on social media and maybe something will get done about it!



2. Lego scene

We all have Legos kicking around the house somewhere. Create a scene from your favorite movie using one of the many kinds of Legos, perhaps Star Wars, Harry Potter, Indiana Jones, etc.



3. Embarrassing officials with a Penis

While a bit crude, this is one that would definitely get the city or states attention. Relax prudes and Puritans, it's not actually a penis, it's just a drawing. Officials will definitely get multiple calls and emails about this one.



4. Garden or flower bed

If the pothole is off to the side of the road, here is one that you could actually do and leave. Brighten up the ugly road canker with a something bright and cheery like. Be sure to visit it daily and give it a little water/ Maybe chat with it since they seem to like that.



5. Celebrate its birthday

Know a pothole that has been ignored for a long time? Celebrate its birthday with some cake, maybe have some friends join you and you can sing "Happy Birthday to you!" and put it on Facebook live.



5. Put a marijuana plant in it

This is one that takes the term “pothole” literally. While marijuana was legalized in the state some 2 years ago, it seems that New Bedford officials are like the aforementioned ones who need multiple inspections, permits, endless talking and pondering, and creating a mountain of red tape before they follow the will of the people. While no one would leave a pot plant in a pothole, it makes for a great photo op. The officials don’t need to know you didn’t actually leave it there.

Other ideas include a miniature tennis court, taking a bath in one, using CGI to make creative, often hilarious scenes, put some plaster in it and treating it like a handprint like stars do on Hollywood Boulevard, and too many others to mention.

Enjoy seeing creative ways of addressing potholes? One photographer used some models and in some cases CGI to bring

attention to potholes. You can see his work here.

Have a good idea or something to share? Send us your essays, photos or videos at info@newbedfordguide.com.

Foodie's Guide to Regional Gastronomy: Kale Soup or Caldo Verde or Caldo Gallego or Minestra Maritata

Series Introduction (Move down if you're familiar with the thread or don't care)

In this series, we hope to highlight and showcase in as interesting a way as possible, the stories behind our favorite, mouth-watering local dishes. While we'll focus on greater New Bedford and the South Coast, we will occasionally "travel" to places like Plymouth, Providence or even Boston. I will attempt to keep it light-hearted, fun and easy to read. While I can't promise to keep you compelled and pull you along with prose – that would take a professional writer – I will promise to be liberal with the drool-inducing images of these dishes.

As always, feedback is encouraged. Anecdotes are wanted. Discussion is paramount. **Please** join in!

Oh, the ways we love you kale soup. You warm our bones on a cold day, bring us back to our childhood and fond memories

with our *avós*, and feed our souls. I don't know about you but just seeing or hearing the words evokes the aroma!

My landlady is from the "old country" and when I come home and walk into my apartment and get whiff of kale soup that was evidently simmering on her stove for hours it shifts my assemblage point. It pushes the worries and stresses of the day away from my mind, the tension in my shoulders loosen, and I get happy.



Of course, I'm hoping that she will hear me come home and soon I will hear a knock on the door and she'll offer me a generous bowl of soup. One thing you can rely on with those from the "old country" is that when it comes to homecooked food they are always generous, so that knock always comes – but just in case she doesn't hear me I'll be extra heavy with my footfalls, maybe "accidentally" bump my elbow into the stairwell's wall.

While I didn't grow up with the aroma of kale soup cooking in the house, I had many friends that were Portuguese and the idea of their generosity came from the fact that those Portuguese friends consistently brought me batches of it when their *avó* or *mãe* made some. Why didn't the *avô* or *papai* ever

make some?

While considered to be Portugal's national dish, Kale Soup, *Caldo Verde* (meaning "green broth") or Portuguese Sausage Kale Soup for you non-Portagees, there is little history about its origins. When this is the case for something historical – whether an invention, discovery or creation of a dish – it typically means the origins are from another nation and that would ruin any claims. For example, ask someone where Baklava or Falafel came from and a half dozen nations will raise their hands, all claiming to be the originator and all claiming to make the best, most delectable version.

First of the problems is that the soup, or at least most of its primary ingredients coming together in one place, are also found in Italy and Spain. I'd imagine that Brazil has a version, but I know very little about Brazilian cuisine. This is because the core of the soup is linked to farmers and the ingredients were readily available or inexpensive. One could say it's a quintessential "poor man's soup" comprised of ingredients that cost little but filled the belly for a day's work and for most of that day. In my book, "poor man's" anything is a code word for mouth-watering and delicious.

Italy has many regional variations from the "old country" all the way to Italian-American neighborhood: *Minestra Maritata* or Italian Wedding Soup. The "married" bit is a reference to the mingling together of greens – *torzella* or kale, escarole, broccoli rabe, endives, chicory or even lettuce – with meat, which can be Italian sausage, *guanciale*, pork ribs, ham hocks or meatballs. Of course, these are accompanied with pasta (*ditali* or any of the *pastina* is best) or potatoes for starch, cannellini (white) or kidney beans, carrots, and red pepper flakes swimming in a rich broth.



Forget the bread to sop up and get hurt, buddy.

Spain has its version in *Caldo Gallego*. This version is different in that they are heavy on the amount of beans, in this case, white beans. The last difference is a slight one in that is the selection of meat: *chorizo* as opposed to *linguiça* or *chouriço*. Otherwise, *caldo gallego* is the same as kale soup, and does not have the astounding variety that you'll find in the Italian version. Don't believe me about these two "imposters" or "wannabe" kale soups? Only one image in this article is of kale soup and the other two are of *Minestra Maritata* and *Caldo Gallego*.

The Portuguese standard has room for variety, at least here on the SouthCoast. The only wiggle room that I have encountered is whether there is pasta or not and the pasta is inevitably elbow macaroni. Now, I haven't the faintest idea if this ties into differences among the island, e.g. Azores, St. Michael, Madeira, just a variety from household to household, or is specific to the Portugues here in the New World. You would know better than me.

One thing I do know is that there is quite the debate about

whether the elbow macaroni belongs and whether *linguiça*, *chourico*, ham hock, or even *paio* should be used for the meat. In fact, I can picture the *avós* fistfighting about what real kale soup is and what the ingredients are supposed to be. The only thing I can think everyone agrees on is that it must be served with some Portuguese bread, preferably a *Papo Secos* or *pao* or as the *gringoosh* say, a “pop.”

This is apparently a “thing” in greater New Bedford. We all have our favorite restaurant or two, bet if you **ever** say your restaurant is best or *gasp* authentic be prepared for flushed faces, loud voices and declarations like “That place doesn’t serve genuine Portuguese food, just fake dishes for Americans!” Is there a Portuguese equivalent for *gringo*? Pronounced “gringoosh” I’d imagine? If so, I’d imagine that is bantered about too.

The reality is that I haven’t come across a bad Portuguese restaurant and maybe I am disqualified to judge because I’m a *gringoosh*, I don’t know. Does *authentic* or closest to the “real thing” really matter? What is the real thing? Can anyone say “I have this recipe I found from 1452 that states ‘My name is Manuel Gomes Fernandes Pereira Ferreira Da Silva Silva and I invented kale soup! Here’s the recipe.’”?



Again, does it really matter? Would you turn down anyone's kale soup, *Minestra Maritata* or *Caldo Gallego*. "This aroma has my belly growling, my mouth watering and looks sensational but sir, I am affronted by your use of Italian and Spanish words so I must refuse!!!" said no one ever.

When I hear the words Kale Soup it conjures up childhood memories of curling around a hot bowl on a winter day after snow fights, sledding, and building snowmen. My Portuguese friends will mention the history and family members that trace back to Portugal for generations and the various family members that make a "mean" bowl.

At the end of the day, it's about what the bowl of soup does for you, what it means, how it makes you feel, the memories involved and how it brings together family and friends and unites people regardless of their gender, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, political affiliation or any other petty nonsense. That's what food does. I believe it was Samuel Clemens that said: "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts."

Maybe that's the key to world peace and the end of all this toxic political disagreement that now characterizes America today? What if we had some 80-year old *avó* from a tenement in Fall River or New Bedford who has been making kale soup for 65 years, force everyone to sit down a hot, fresh bowl of "happy" from the "old country" before they got to talking?

I bet you it would put a smile on all the *gringoosh's* faces and they would all lighten up.

Who makes the best kale soup in your house? Do you know of a restaurant that is as good as your avó makes it? Have a recipe to share?

If you enjoyed this type of article and are foodie who wants more you can read the other ones in the series here.

Foodie's Guide to Regional Gastronomy: Dominican Republic's Mofongo, Chimichurri and Pastelitos

Series Introduction (Move down if you're familiar with the thread or don't care)

In this series, we hope to highlight and showcase in as interesting a way as possible, the stories behind our favorite, mouth-watering local dishes. While we'll focus on greater New Bedford and the South Coast, we will occasionally

“travel” to places like Plymouth, Providence or even Boston. I will attempt to keep it light-hearted, fun and easy to read. While I can’t promise to keep you compelled and pull you along with prose – that would take a professional writer – I will promise to be liberal with the drool-inducing images of these dishes.

I grew up in a Sicilian household where everyone – man, woman, child – was participating in preparing meals. It was a “trick” to get everyone together, talking, laughing and of course, the occasional heated debate. Food was a huge part of our identity, where we came from, who we were. There was something special about the atmosphere that revolved around a meal that we prepared.



This is certainly not unique to an Italian or Sicilian household. Every ethnic group in the country has a proud culinary tradition that they grew up around. You can easily replace “Sicilian” with Irish, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Ethiopian, Greek or anything else. This is why food as a topic is always so popular. We humans love our food and that passion goes beyond the gustatory or taste – we crave the aromas, delight in the presentation, are fueled by the atmosphere, and

relish – pardon the pun – discussion about our favorite dishes, restaurants or cuisines.

One thing that is often not discussed – is glossed over, or barely touched upon – is the history or background of these dishes. Now, to some, this conjures up the voice of the guy from the “dry eyes” commercial. The terms, for many, are synonymous with “boring,” “dull,” or “It’s time to go.” However, the background can be interesting, fun, or funny and it can be so without being facetious, dumbed-down or popular. I will make every attempt to maintain a fresh balance with those elements in this series.

As always, feedback is encouraged. Anecdotes are wanted. Discussion is paramount. **Please** join in!

There are many cultures that have contributed their cuisine to greater New Bedford. While the most known are Portuguese and French-Canadian, the various Latin American cuisines from the Hispanic world when combined is one of the greatest contributors in the region and the nation, for that matter.

While the language may be shared (though some native Spanish speakers may accuse other nations of not actually speaking Spanish!) the cuisines can have some astounding, stark differences. Having said that, nations near each other geographically can often have variations of one particular dish – often claiming to be the originators.



The Dominican Republic has a relatively large presence in greater New Bedford and has brought a number of mouth-watering dishes. The Caribbean island nation shares the island with Haiti and is east of Cuba and Jamaica. That will give you a sense of the influences on their cuisine which comes primarily from Spain, but also has strong influences from the indigenous Taino, the Congo in West Africa and Levantine Middle East.

While nothing is ever better than home cooking, there are restaurants in the region that either specialize or offer a few dishes: La Candela, Celia's, El Caribe and Panchi's here in New Bedford and the aptly named Dominican Restaurant and Latino in Fall River. I have eaten quite a bit at the first three places, never at the others. I've also eaten at restaurants around the country and been privileged enough to have eaten home-cooked Dominican food from co-workers while working throughout New Bedford.

Mofongo and Mofongo Relleno

I will state from the get-go that **Mofongo** is one of the greatest dishes ever created on this planet. While Mofongo is

considered by the majority of the Spanish speaking world to be Puerto Rican, it is, in fact, a dish that has its roots in West Africa's Fufu, and when combined with Spanish influences became common throughout the Carribean.

So, what is the *manna*, this food dropped from heaven, this dish so good every bite is life-changing? Its base is mashed and fried plantains seasoned with garlic, salt and oil, and throughout the Carribean that is about the only thing they agree on. Plantains are native to Asia but made their way to West Africa before the Carribean where they are a staple to both.



Now, when it comes to things we foodies love, the word “juicy” is quintessential and pretty much describes everything that has ever been delicious. We need “juicy.” I will go into a cry-closet and not come out if something is dry. I will have temporary PTSD. The founding father Patrick Henry actually said “Give me juicy, or give me death.” and only through Chinese Whispers has his original historic statement been lost.

The plantains' purpose is to absorb all the mouth-watering

juiciness that comes from the meat and sauce that is poured over the top so we can enter foodie Nirvāṇa. An upside down bell is formed with the mashed plantains and then flipped onto a plate before being smothered with sauce and your choice of meat. The sauce is typically a chicken-based broth, garlic, olive oil, and the standard meat is chicken, shrimp or beef but can also be octopus, bacon, or chicharrón (pork cracklings).

In my opinion, the only thing better than that is the *mofongo relleno* or stuffed mofongo. Before flipping the shell you load it with sauce and filling, cap it off with more mashed plantain, flip it over and smother it with sauce and meat.

I have seen variations – mostly food stalls and food trucks – that leave the upside down bell in a plastic bowl and then they pour everything inside the “bell” and served.

Since we live in a melting pot of a community, I would love to see a fusion with Portuguese cuisine – a mofongo stuffed with shrimp Mozambique, pork Alentejana, or linguica, anyone?



Pastelitos and Pasteles en Hojas

Pastelitos or Savory Turnovers are common not only throughout the Latin world but all over the world. You'd be hard pressed to find a culture that didn't have some version, whether savory or sweet. Each culture has a different preference for the filling and even the name – pastelitos, pastelillo, pasteles, empanada, empanaditas, pastie, croquettes, dumpling, calzone, et al are used synonymously. Often the difference in a word is just the size or which preference a region or country has settled on.

Whatever you call them, planet earth and earthlings have a love affair with them. While they can be baked, they are typically fried to get the dough to be crispy and flaky and then stuffed with a delectable sauce and diced, chopped or ground beef, chicken or shrimp. Some can even have some melty, gooey cheese. My first foray into the Dominican version was simple ground beef and spices cooked by someone's grandmother. If you have had one, you know that you really don't need anything more than perfectly, lightly seasoned fresh ingredients and a crust that was fried until it was golden crisp. Simple ingredients, culinary works of art.

I have heard that some blasphemers will dip them in ketchup. If you witness evil in this form, please call your local police department and report it.

Pasteles en hojas is the use of grated plantains, on occasion cassava or potato, seasoned, mashed into a paste, shaped and stuffed with meat. They are then wrapped with a banana leaf and boiled. Sound familiar? Yes, it is akin to the famous Mexican *tamale*.

What makes these varieties of *pasteles* so popular beyond their tastiness are their utility: you can grab one on the go. Or if you are so predisposed, grab 2,3 or 8 on the go.



Chimichurri Dominicano or Chimi Hamburguesa

Like the pasteles, the Chimichurri Dominicano or Chimi Burger, is extremely popular among street vendors, trucks and stalls, perhaps even more so. There are even Chimi Trucks specializing in just this one iconic dish.

This sandwich is symbolic of much of Dominican cuisine – it takes the best of a few cultures and makes it their own. You have one part hamburger, one part Argentinian chimichurri, and one part Puerto Rico's *pan de agua* bread. The meat is ground pork or beef, *chimicurri* is chopped garlic, fresh parsley and oregano, olive oil, vinegar, and a pinch or two of red pepper flakes, and the bread is a sort of baguette which is crispy on the outside and soft inside.

Like red sauce with Italians, each cook makes their own special recipe and hungry foodies all swear their favorite variation is best of all. As you well know, there is an astounding variety in Italian sauce with just tomatoes, salt, pepper and garlic which everyone claims is distinctly

different and superior to everyone else's. So you can imagine the variety and claims to superiority that the Chimi Burger comes with. In fact, just look at how zealous people can get in America when you ask them who makes the best burgers. A few ingredients prepared a particular way to differentiate it.

Honorable Mentions

Chicharrón de pollo (or puerca) Dominicano or chunks of fried chicken which can be eaten alone or used as a filling or topping are incredibly popular. A dish that sounds strange is *Spaghetti a la Dominicana* – spaghetti cooked with...milk, garlic, onions, peppers, olives and oregano covered in a salami based tomato sauce. I've never had it, so can't vouch for it.



Of course, you'd have to live under a rock to have never heard of or tried *tostones* which are sliced plantains fried, removed from the oil, slightly flattened and then fried again. Salt and/or lightly season, serve still warm and you have a delicious snack.

Sopa de mondongo is a diced tripe (cow stomach) slow-cooked

soup with vegetables, celery, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, bell peppers, garlic and cilantro.

When it comes to desserts, the Dominican Republic makes a rice pudding (Arroz Con Leche) and Dulce de leche (with pineapple jam) that rivals anyone's, but probably most popular and know the world over is *Arepa* a dense cornmeal and coconut cake. It is considered a "poor man's" dish because of the common, few and simple ingredients (water, milk, sugar, egg, butter, cinnamon) and it is so easily made that kids often make it. Think of a moist cornbread with coconut and a hint of cinnamon added.

This was not meant to be an exhaustive list, so if I didn't include something it is because I am unfamiliar with it.

Do you have a favorite among these Dominican dishes? Or is your favorite not one that is mentioned? Do you make any of these dishes or know someone that does? Have a recipe? Let us know in the comments!

Who the heck is Martha?

While America isn't as old as most of the world's nations, we've been steaming along for just shy of two and a half centuries now. Long enough to describe many places as "old" and certainly long enough that we've forgotten the who, what and why of place names.

I can't be the only one that hears a place name or comes across it while reading and wonders "Who is that person?" I assume that person was pretty important since a street, hill,

building, et al was named after them. Over the years we just forgot the person, what they did for the community and the reason for dedicating a place name.

My hope with this series is to uncover who these people were and why they were special. Curious about a place? Send us a message at info@newbedfordguide.com and maybe you'll see it in the next one!



A recreation of a Viking home in L'Anse-Aux-Meadows, the oldest known Viking site in North America that reaches back to approximately 1,000 C.E. Photo by D. Gordon E. Robertson.

Saying “Martha’s Vineyard” is as normal as saying “stuffed quahog.” There’s nothing to think about, nothing to ponder. If you had a dollar for every time Martha’s Vineyard rolled off your tongue, you’d be retired and sitting with your toes in the sand at a beach in the Azores sipping *caipirinhas*, *Vinho do Douro* or Madeira wine.

But who was Martha – a woman who was so important that an entire island was named after her? Was she someone’s mom, daughter or lover? Did the island earn its name posthumously

or while Martha was alive so she could appreciate the gesture?

Colloquially known as “The Vineyard,” it was originally called “Noepe” which means “land amid the streams,” by the 3,000 Wampanoags that lived there before European settlers arrived. Sadly, within a century that population dwindled to around 300 people due to these settlers and the disease they brought with them. Some simply saw the writing on the wall and got “out of Dodge” because of what was coming.

This 100 sq. mile also includes the infamous Chappaquiddick Island is one of the largest islands in the U.S. – the third largest on the East Coast. The summer destination is a permanent home to approximately 16,000 people – the same as Fairhaven for comparison – but can easily swell to ten times that much (100,000+) in the height of summer season.



The map that Gosnold utilized to help navigate the New World. The island wasn't the first place to be called “Martha's Vineyard,” that name was initially attributed to a smaller

island just south perhaps Nomans Island – by Bartholomew Gosnold when he arrived in 1602. Interestingly, it is the 8th oldest place name in U.S. history. Before the name transfer, Martha's Vineyard was called "Martin's Vineyard" generally thought to refer to Gosnold's John Martin.

It is unknown why the name swap ever happened, but it is likely that when people orally transmitted knowledge of the nearby islands there was more known about the "big" island than the little island next to it. There was possibly some confusion and since more people were visiting the "big" island than the little island (some were likely unaware that the little one existed at all) it was assumed they were one and the same.

Either way, who the heck was Martha? In this case, it refers to "Marthas," plural. In fact, through much of the 19th century, Martha's Vineyard was referred to as Marthas Vineyard without the apostrophe. The grammar police would say "The apostrophe comes *after* the 's.'" Well, the grammar Nazis love drama so this has been a source of much of that over the years, so much so that the United States Board on Geographic Names got involved.

All immaterial. People looooooove to point out the flaws in what everyone else does while ignoring their own as if they don't exist. Almost without fail that person's comment will be something along the lines of "Youse spelled it wrong" with poor grammar and bad punctuation. In fact, it is likely that people will make drama out of this article which in the big scheme of life means very little.



Vinland and Lief Ericksson's routes. Photo by Donald Weidman.
 What is "material" is who the island was named after and Gosnold had a daughter and a mother-in-law both named Martha. He must have thought to himself "I can kill two birds with one stone." Imagine if you are an explorer and tell your family about the amazing places you will see, "discover" and name and the promises you make to them. "Bart, while you are coming up with names for places, if you find a pretty place you better name it after me or you'll be sleeping on the couch!"

Since I can't think of a place Gosnold went to that he named after his wife Mary, I bet he spent some time on the couch when he returned to England. Maybe the place has since been forgotten, maybe he figured by buttering up his mother-in-law was even better.

So, was there in fact ever a vineyard there? Around 1,000 C.E. Leif Eriksson set from Iceland/Greenland to search for three "lands," in North America: Helluland ("Land of Flat Rocks"), Markland ("Forest Land"), and Vinland ("Wineland"). All three referred to places in Canada – Helluland was Newfoundland, Markland the coast and interior, and Vinland referred to several islands likely lands in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence

including Nova Scotia. These places were not far from here – about 1,000 miles as the crow flies.

The “wine” in Vinland refers to the berries and/or currants that grew on the eastern seaboard of New England and Canada and could be utilized to ferment into wine. Sailors love their grog, wine or anything to get drunk from, right? So anything that had grapes to eat and ferment would be on the itinerary.

So when Gosnold encountered these grapes growing on the island, he dubbed it Marthas Vineyard and that is how the island got its name.