

Toponymy



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"Toponymy" is the study of place names. For American Indians and early European visitors, rivers and coastlines were the roads and highways of the Chesapeake Bay. One of the ways that American Indians found their way through the maze of water was to use detailed, descriptive names for their towns. For example, Paspahegh (PAAS-puh-hay) was a town located along the James River. Its name in Virginia Algonquian meant "at the mouth," telling anyone who heard the name where on the river the town was located.