

What's in a Name? HANDOUT Andrea Patterson, RVGS Volunteer.

GOAL: To analyze and think. Don't trust all generalizations; Know the record you're viewing. Is it a legal document, census or original Bible entry? Learn the Cultural naming patterns of your country of interest.

SPELLING: Listen to the pronunciation and search for different sounding surnames as well as different spellings in indexes. **RULE:** "Get over how you think it should be spelled."

BOOKS: Look how a book was compiled; there may be more than one index!

HANDWRITING: Search other pages in a census record to learn how the Enumerator formed capital letters, or used abbreviations. Be cautious of the use of double ss's, often mistaken for f's.

NAMING PATTERNS: Some of the most common, but no hard fast rules apply.

BRITISH ISLES [includes Ireland; Wales]

- + The first son was named after the father's father
- + The second son was named after the mother's father
- + The third son was named after the father
- + The fourth son was named after the father's eldest brother
- + The first daughter after the mother's mother
- + The second daughter after the father's mother
- + The third daughter after the mother
- + The fourth daughter after the mother's eldest sister

IRISH: followed this same scheme with:

- + The fifth son typically named after the father's second-eldest brother or mother's eldest brother.
- + A fifth daughter might be christened after the mother's second-eldest sister or the father's eldest sister.

SCOTTISH: followed this same pattern, with the parents' names skipped for the third son or daughter going right to the grandparents.

FRENCH & FRENCH CANADIAN

- + Similar naming pattern to the British
- + Deceased grandparents got precedence
- + Most children were given hyphenated first names in honor of patron saints
Google: Patron saints for French Catholics
- + Boys: Pierre-Marie (a female saint)
- + Girls: Marie-Catherine in honor of the Holy Family.

SPANISH & MEXICAN

- + In Hispanic families, many of these naming traditions combine.
- + At baptism a child might be given one or two extra names, a saint's name associated with the baptismal day and the priest often added to the name.
- + Google: List of Mexican Saints at Wikipedia

CZECH: <http://usgenweb.org/research/czech-names.shtml>

GERMAN & DUTCH

<http://usgenweb.org/research/names.shtml#german>

<http://usgenweb.org/research/dutch-names.shtml>

Often the area dictated the naming of children, but researchers concur that most Germans did NOT adhere to any naming traditions. Consider these generalizations:

- ✚ Given the prevalence of infant mortality, names generally recycled. A large family that has two children of the same name could tell you that the first child died before the 2nd child was born or that the name has great significance to the family.
- ✚ The Dutch generally named offspring for the grandparents
- ✚ In a family of all daughters, feminized versions of a grandfather's name was common: Wilhemina or Hendrika
- ✚ Other groups such as the Palatines who migrated to New York State in the early 1700's (they mingled with the Dutch) and those from NW Germany focused on grandparents
- ✚ "German's tended to name their children after themselves" [Arta F. Johnson]
Pennsylvania German settlements: 3 naming patterns identified
 - British scheme for the first three sons and daughters
A switch to great-grandparents or 4-7th of each gender
 - Second pattern is same as above for boys, but switches precedence for daughters naming #4 after the mother's paternal grandmother.
 - A Third pattern inserts the parents' eldest siblings in position three BEFORE the parents.
- ✚ Both Dutch and German families typically gave children two Christian names, a first name and a calling name. The first name (& full name) given at baptism would be on church records, deeds. Typically named in honor of a favorite saint. The middle or second name for anything else. Johann Georg, Johann Jacob and Johann Michael might be the first three sons. Look for a nickname combination: Hans is nickname for Johann, thus Hans Jacob!
- ✚ ***CENSUS? Probably the familiar name to the family or nickname.
Wilhelm Conrad Miller. Maria Wilhelmina or Mina, Minnie or Wilma . Adding "in" or "en" to the end of a name often denoted an unmarried female. {i.e., Hetzelin}
- ✚ Dutch parents frequently choose a third name for everyday!
- ✚ MENONITES
 - First two sons named after the Grandfathers; girls: Grandmothers

CHINESE

- ✚ Names are almost always one-syllable words often taken after the name of an old ruling family.

JAPANESE: More recently names are created out of two unrelated, but often poetic words.

ITALIAN

- ✚ The first son was named after the father's father
- ✚ The second son was named after the mother's father
- ✚ The third son was named after the father
- ✚ The first daughter after the father's mother
- ✚ The second daughter after the mother's mother
- ✚ The third daughter after the mother

Again, patron saints played a major role in naming patterns. If you know of a celebration of a saint in your ancestral family, consider it a promising mention and research the saint to locate your ancestral village. For example, Neapolitans honor St. Gennaro; Sicilians from Palermo laud St. Rossilia and in Torino, John the Baptist rules. www.catholicforum.com/saints/patronnf.htm
Necronymics: Also used by Italians to honor a deceased sibling.

POLISH

- ✚ Catholic parents typically named their children after the saint whose feast day fell close to the child's birth or baptismal date. i.e., a boy born in early August might be named for Saint Dominic whose feast day is traditionally celebrated Aug. 4th. For a list of common Polish first names and their associated saints' days see:
<rootsweb.ancestry.com/~polwgg/namelist.html#polish>

RUSSIAN and UKRAINIAN

- ✚ Similar naming pattern to the Polish, but named for saints on the Byzantine calendar which differed from the Roman Catholic feast days. See websites:
<rootsweb.ancestry.com/~polwgg/namelist.html#ukrainian> Ukraine
www.behindthename.com/namedays/lists/rus.php Russian

HUNGARIAN

- ✚ Immigrants often changed their names....spelling was difficult
- ✚ Hungarians usually have just one given name
- ✚ BEWARE: their family name usually comes before the given name
Szabó Mihály is Michael Taylor. Szabó is Hungarian for tailor. Mihály is Michael

JEWISH

- ✚ In Eastern Europe, Jewish naming traditions differed from their Christian neighbors.
- ✚ Birth names were assigned on the 8th day after birth.
- ✚ Named for ancestors, but with no hard fast rule. Ashkenazic Jewish children were never named for a living ancestor.

SCANDINAVIAN

- ✚ Patronymic surname system lasted late into the 19th & 20th centuries.
- ✚ Lovisa Marie **Johannesdottar**.....Father is **Johannes** Bengtsson
- ✚ Lars **Hansson**.....Father is **Hans** Pederson
- ✚ Swedish: Look for “on”. Danish: Look for “en”.
- ✚ The first son was named after the father’s father
- ✚ The second son was named after the mother’s father
- ✚ The third son was named after the father
- ✚ The first daughter after the mother’s mother
- ✚ The second daughter after the father’s mother
- ✚ The third daughter after the mother

BIBLICAL NAMES: Very common. May hold significance of the family’s faith.

NAME CHANGES: Not at Ellis Island! There were many reasons for an immigrant to change their own name.

WESTERN NAMES: Most come from 4 categories.

1. Place Names. i.e., Southerners used Jefferson Davis; Andrew Jackson. Name of the farm from a distant land
2. Patronymics. The father’s given name with “son” or “s” or “dotter” added
3. Occupation: What a person did for a living. Often began in medieval times.
4. Nicknames: Based on a person’s characteristics, personality or appearance.

NATIVE AMERICAN:

- ✚ Few surnames until early frontier times. Learn the tribe first.

<http://names.mongabay.com/data/indians.html> [Native surnames]

SOURCES & REFERENCES:

The USGENWEB Project <http://usgenweb.org/research/names.shtml> Information on Names

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