



West Virginia Archives & History News



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NAME KNOW-HOW

From the Editor:

Names are tricky things. They refuse to stay the same over the years, mutating as they move from continent to continent, from the coast across the mountains, from one dominant language to another, and from generation to generation. The farther back a genealogist traces a line, the greater the number of variations he may find in a surname. We forget that language itself changes over time, both in spelling and pronunciation, and that names are simply a part of our language. Whenever you hit a generational wall and cannot find the next connection, take a long hard look at the surname you are researching, and consider all the different ways that name could be spelled, lengthened, pronounced, shortened or translated. *If you have questions or comments regarding the newsletter, please direct them to Susan Scouras, Archives and History. Please contact Joe Geiger, Archives and History regarding our Web site.*

NAME KNOW-HOW

By Susan Scouras

My family's surnames have remained pretty much the same over the years, but their given names present challenges. Several branches of my family have always been very fond of **nicknames**. My paternal grandfather was named William Randall

Preston, Jr. by his father, over the objections of his equally strong-willed mother, who had wanted to name the baby John. In spite of the name under which his birth was legally registered by his father, his mother proceeded to call him "Johnny" and to tell everyone else to use that name also. He was known as Johnny his entire life, to the point that many people never knew his real name. My great-grandfather, William Elsworth Daniels, was known his whole life as "Bunk," even becoming "Grandbunk" to his grandchildren. His children all had equally elegant given names, but had nicknames such as "Iddie" (Lillian), "Tudu" (Charlotte), "Hut" (Hershel) and "Noonie" (Mona). Other nicknames made a little more sense and were passed on to subsequent generations as given names. Great-granddad Shadrick's nickname of "Shade" became the name of a grandson, Shade Kenneth, nicknamed "Shady." (This tells me that Shadrick was pronounced with a long "a" because Great-uncle Shady's name was pronounced with a long "a," even though Shadrick is derived from Shadrach, pronounced with a short "a.")

One of Shadrick's sons was named Albert Sidney, after Queen Victoria's Prince Albert, but was nicknamed "Bird" and never called anything else. (I've always wondered if an older sibling tried to say "Bert," said "Bird" instead and the name stuck.) Bird named his own son "Byrd." **Foreign language nicknames** may bear no resemblance in the English language to the given names from which they are derived. Example: The Greek

“Achillefs” (Achilles) is nicknamed “Achillaki,” which is shortened to “Laki” and then Anglicized to “Lucky.” The Dutch “Valentine,” a masculine name, has the nickname “Felty.” (The “V” of Valentine is pronounced as “F” in Dutch.) Such differences in pronunciation led to differences in spelling and therefore to seemingly “made-up” names with no recognizable connection to given names. Even in English we have such examples as “Polly” for Mary, “Sally” for Sarah and “Bobby” for Robert. Coupled with truly unconnected nicknames (Shorty, Curly, Tiny, or the nonsensical names of my relatives), this reinforces the reasons for a researcher to consider *all* the information in a document before discounting a connection. Although my grandfather “Johnny” always used his legal name on documents, others in the family used their nicknames almost exclusively as adults. Situations such as this are one reason beginning genealogists are always told to talk to all the older family members first before researching documents. Have any stories such as mine cropped up in your family to give you headaches as you research?

As if nicknames didn’t cause enough trouble, **gender** cannot always be predicted by name, especially as trends in naming evolve over the years. Evelyn, Shirley, Vivian and Beverly are also masculine names, although less commonly used for males than for females. Sometimes disappointed parents gave masculine names to their female offspring. My great-grandmother was named Joseph Blanche, called Blanche, but her granddaughter was named Ruby Gilbert and called Gilbert. I have seen several other examples of this in the records here in the Archives. For the future, the modern trend of giving to girls previously masculine-only names or names more commonly used as surnames, such as Taylor, Cameron, Whitney, and McKenzie may cause confusion. I have found, though, that many times these first names are coupled with very traditional feminine middle names, such as Marie and Anne.

Regarding **middle names**, throughout their lifetimes people of both sexes may have used their

middle names more often than their first names, but were not consistent in which name was used on legal documents. At other times, a person who didn’t like his/her own name gave himself/herself a new one. Some may have adopted the religious confirmation name they had chosen for themselves as youngsters, or assumed their nicknames for full-time use. My above-mentioned aunt, Gilbert, was introduced to a young man who misunderstood her nickname of “Gil” and called her “Gail” all evening. She has been Gail ever since—and has been married to the young man for almost 50 years.

Nicknames can make their way into the permanent record in other ways, also. For the census, one never knows who may have provided the information for a household. A neighbor will have recited the name by which he or she knew each person, while someone in the household may have been more careful to give each person’s full name. However, in the 19th century even a householder would not have felt the necessity we would feel today to list everyone by their full and accurate names. Likewise, adult children or other younger relatives who supply information for death records may have never known the older adult’s correct name as it appears on the person’s birth record.

Perhaps one thing worse than not being sure you have the correct birth record because the name is not exactly the same as expected is finding *no* name given to the baby at all. In the census, **unnamed infants** and toddlers as old as two are not uncommon. Two articles in *Goldenseal* magazine’s Spring 1995 issue, as well as subsequent letters to the editor, demonstrate that the delayed naming of children was not unusual well into the 20th century. In some cases, the parents simply couldn’t decide on a name, or were expecting the opposite sex for some reason and didn’t have a name chosen for the sex that arrived. I am sure some, like my great-grandparents, disagreed over names and registered the child without a name rather than waiting until the argument was resolved. Particularly in larger families, baby was just “Baby” for awhile.

Cultural or family practices also may have been involved. The parents may have a name in mind, but did not actually identify the child by that name until the youngster was formally christened or baptized by a minister. If the circuit preacher didn't come around very often, the child could go a long time unnamed.

According to Phyllis Hamrick of St. Albans, as quoted in "Looking Back on a Busy Life," by Helen Carper (*Goldenseal*, Spring 1995), her parents were disappointed by a third daughter, and called her "Baby" for almost a year until chastised by others for not naming the child. They stuck a pencil into a baby name book, and chose the name "Phyllis" because that line is where the pencil point landed. In the same issue, Pearl Faulkner tells how her six-month old brother was named by the beloved minister who came unexpectedly to baptize all the children in the family. When the father couldn't come up with a name for his youngest child, the minister named the boy after himself! Another woman wrote that her parents disagreed over names and called her "Tootsie" until she named herself "Mary Ellen" on her eighth birthday. (*Goldenseal*, Fall 1995)

Because the initial focus of a search is by necessity for surnames, we must understand **naming practices and problems** relevant to our own ancestors. African-American surnames present a number of puzzles. According to RootsWeb's *Guide to Tracing Family Trees*, Lesson 25, Ethnic Roots, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~rwguide/lesson25.htm>, freed African-Americans chose surnames in several different ways. "Some slaves chose a surname which represented or identified the first slave owner of the earliest born-in-Africa enslaved ancestor who came to North America. The surname, often kept secret from the slave owners, was handed down over the generations to help track relations and lineages. After the end of slavery, those who already possessed surnames revealed them, while others chose a surname for the first time." Whether former slaves adopted the surname of their last master varied widely from region to region. A

study of South Carolina former slaves found that 17% chose their last master's surname, while another study of Alabama and Louisiana freedmen showed that 71% took the name of their most recent owner. Other research of freed slaves overall reported that less than 15% adopted a master's name. (RootsWeb Lesson 25)

Native Americans sometimes appear on federal lists with their own tribal names, and at other times under an English name. Any ethnic or religious group persecuted in their native country may have adopted less ethnically identifiable names in that country and retained the new name in America. Non-English names, particularly easily translated ones, may have been converted to English, such as Zimmerman to Carpenter, and Aspras to White. Polish, Greek, Asian, etc., names which were difficult to spell and pronounce in English may have been shortened, patterned after a similar English name, or changed to something completely different. Pickleseimer often was abbreviated as P'simer or Psimer, with some branches using that spelling permanently. If you find a Greek named Papas or Demos, you can almost be certain that the name was once something with many more syllables! The problem is in discovering which of the many possible variations belongs to your ancestor. A Greek family I am acquainted with uses the surname Wilson, rather than their obscure Greek name, because great-grandpa so admired his American best friend, Tom Wilson, that he adopted the same surname upon naturalization. In most cases, the original surname is remembered within the family for a few generations, but may not be passed on to all branches of the family as it grows and separates through the years.

Unfortunately, a few people have been ashamed of or felt so threatened by their heritage, they changed the family name, lied about their native country, hid their racial designation and/or converted to a new religion in hopes of escaping the negative connotations associated with their past. (I am not implying that there is anything wrong with this practice, especially when deemed necessary for

sheer survival. I am just acknowledging that it has and does occur.) These people seldom told their descendants the true family name and background. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's family is a prime example. She would not have known to research records of Jews to trace her family history, since she was brought up as a non-Jewish-origin Catholic and did not discover until she was middle-aged that she was of Jewish descent.

Well, we haven't even touched upon the matter of handwriting styles causing misinterpretations, that the Soundex is not infallible, nor the difficulty in determining the maiden names of married women. I think I'll stop now before I completely discourage you! Remember that we are always here to help in the Archives and History Library.

WEB SITE REVIEW

www.rootsweb.com/~rwguide/lesson8: **Why U Can't Find Your Ancestors: Misspeld Knames—A Commun Problem for Reeserchors.** RootsWeb's Guide to Tracing Family Trees, Lesson 8.

Studying this on-line genealogy lesson will give your **Name Know-How** an immediate boost. Common misconceptions about names and name changes are corrected, such as the incorrect assertion that names were changed at Ellis Island. Explanations are given for how differences in modern and past surname usage and spelling have occurred. Tips for using indexes more effectively, including the census Soundex, are invaluable. Regarding spelling, RootsWeb recommends that you "Toss out everything Miss Jones taught you in elementary school about surname spelling. It doesn't matter in genealogy. In addition to the fact that earlier generations, prior to the late 19th century, really didn't worry as much about spelling, transcribers did not always read a record accurately. Whenever you are working with indexes, it is important to look up any possible variant spelling that you can think of." For those

surnames beginning with a vowel sound, or consonants such as "H," searching *all* the vowels as possible beginning letters is recommended. Links are provided from the site to related helpful articles by Myra Vanderpool Gormley, CG: *What's in a Name? Now You Can Know*, *Funny Names May Adorn Your Family Tree*, and *Where Did They Get Those Names?*

RESEARCHING GENEALOGY ON THE INTERNET

The Sept./Oct. *Family Chronicle* is a special "Doing Your Research on the Internet" issue. Articles include: "The Real Cyndi Howells" (author and webmaster of "Cyndi's List"), "Shaping up Your Internet Searching Skills," "The Very Best Websites," and "The Internet's Best Tool." The Archives and History Library subscribes to *Family Chronicle*. You may read this and other genealogy or history periodicals in the Library Reading Room.

MEET OUR STAFF:

NIKKI WITT

Nicole Marie Witt is a West Virginia State Junior majoring in History. Her hometown is Charleston, WV. Nikki has worked with us in Archives and History off and on for two years. She has assisted with the John Brown project, worked as a library assistant in the Archives Library, and is currently gathering biographical information on the veterans listed on the West Virginia Veterans Memorial (The long-term goal is creation of a searchable on-line data base.) Although Nikki will be leaving us after her December graduation, her hard work will continue to benefit West Virginia researchers through the John Brown and the Veterans data bases.

NEW TITLES

TITLE: AUTHOR, PUBLICATION DATE.

Literary St. Louis: a guide: Lorin Cuoci, editor, 2000. (Note: Includes portraits of Kate Field, who was prominent in the effort to save John Brown historical sites, provided by WV Archives and History.)

Finding Your People: an African-American Guide to Discovering Your Roots: Sandra Lee Jamison, 1999.

Cherokee Connections: An Introduction to Genealogical Sources Pertaining to Cherokee Ancestors: Myra Vanderpool Gormley, [1998].

The Dawes Commission and the Allotment of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1893-1914: Kent Carter, 1999.

West Virginia in the 1990s: Opportunities for Economic Progress: Robert Jay Dilger and Tom Stuart Witt, editors, 1994.

George Alkire: Bearing the Testimony Faithfully: Erma Jean Loveland, 2000. (Pamphlet)

Recollections: "the Old Duck Run Swinging Bridge" 1911-1997: 75th Anniversary: Betty Langford Woofter, [no date].

Pocahontas County, West Virginia Cemetery Headstone Listings: Allegheny Regional Family History Society, [2000].

A Graveyard Preservation Primer: Lynette Strangstad, 1995.

Melungeons: Examining an Appalachian Legend: Pat Spurlock Elder, 1999.

The Nutters of Nutter's Fort: The Y2K Edition: Jeanne Bridges Forney, [2000]. (Revised edition by Tim Easton and Jeff Hatfield of 1994 work of same title by Ms. Forney. Added material is underlined throughout.)

1900 U.S. Census Cabell County, West Virginia: Vol. I: KYOWVA Genealogical Society, 1999.

The Johns Connection: Descendants of Moses Wheeler Jones: Ernestine Kelly Jones Hammond, [no date]. (Note: Includes Volume One 1986 Collections and Volume Two 1998.)

Ward W.Va. Annual Reunion: 1999: "Returning to Ward in Memory": Patsy Ruth (Hudson) Tucker, [no date].

Genealogy of the Rogers and Linzy Families: Florence Linzy Littlejohn, [no date].

History of Fayette County, West Virginia: J. T. Peters and H. B. Carden, copyright 1926. (Thomas In-Prints reproduction edition [no date] of the 1972 reprint by McClain for Charles H. Keenan and Juanita P. Thomas. Includes the index compiled by Fayette County Historical Society.)

DONATIONS

Although we can not acknowledge all donations through the *Archives and History Newsletter*, we will continue to highlight a few donations in most issues, in hopes that those of you who are involved in similar projects will be encouraged to donate to the Archives collection. As always, the Archives and History Library appreciates all donations of materials.

Thank you to **Kenneth Agee** and the **Ward Reunion Committee** for their donation of the reunion book for their **1999 Annual Reunion**. The Ward Reunion books are full of photographs, memoirs, and genealogical information about the community of Ward, WV, and its residents. We wish all reunion groups were as dedicated in producing a permanent record of their history and in donating copies to the West Virginia Archives Library for preservation. The Library has frequent requests for information about specific small towns, coal towns in particular.

Like Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants, **KYOWVA Genealogical Society** is a regular contributor to the Archives collection. Their most recent donation by way of current President **Sheri Pettit** is the *1900 Federal Census of Cabell County West Virginia* in two volumes. This accomplishment will be most appreciated by our patrons who do not like to use the microfilmed Soundex and full census.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

C H E C K O U R W E B S I T E
(<http://www.wvculture.org/history/events.html>) FOR
GENEALOGICAL and HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND FOR MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES LISTED BELOW:

"SLAVERY IN THE KANAWHA SALINES," OCT. 12. John Stealey, Grace Bible Church, Charleston.

"MILITARY CLAIMS AND PENSIONS," OCT. 17. John Lavery, KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Huntington. **CANCELLED:** "FEMALE SLAVE RESISTANCE IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH," OCT. 19. Charleston.

JAMES McPHERSON, 2000 BETSY K. McCREIGHT LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES, OCT. 19. Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. West Virginia Humanities Council. Auditorium, University of Charleston.

WEST VIRGINIA GLASS GATHERING 2000, OCT. 20-21. Regional glass history conference. West Virginia Museum of American Glass, Weston.

"BELOVED," OCT. 20. Showing of the movie, Kanawha County Public Library, Charleston.

"THE MARGARET GARNER CASE AND MORRISON'S 'BELOVED,' FACT AND FICTION," OCT. 21. Steven Weisenburger, AND **"BELOVED TRUTHS IN HISTORICAL FICTION,"** Delores Johnson. Both at Grace Bible Church, Charleston.

"DISCOVERING YOUR WEST VIRGINIA ROOTS AND BRANCHES," OCT. 28. Sponsored by Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants, Mining Your History Foundation and West Virginia Historical Society. For more information on this **major genealogy conference**, use the link through the Upcoming Events portion of our Web site, or go to <http://www.rootsweb.com/~hpcpd/fair.htm> **SYMPOSIUM: "FAMILY STORIES: GRASSROOTS HISTORY,"** NOV. 4. Grace Bible Church.

"1910 CABELL COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA CENSUS," NOV. 21. Sheri Pettit, KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Huntington.

GENERAL ELECTION DAY*, NOV. 7. Archives Library will be **open** regular hours.

VETERANS DAY*, NOV. 10. Archives Library will be **open** regular hours.

THANKSGIVING DAY, NOV. 23. Archives Library will be **closed**.

FRIDAY AFTER THANKSGIVING*, NOV. 24. Archives Library will be **open** regular hours.

SATURDAY AFTER THANKSGIVING*, NOV. 25. Archives Library will be **open** 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

HOLIDAY HOURS ARE AS POSTED. *Only the Archives Library will be staffed—all other Archives offices will be closed. The State Museum will be open any time the Archives Library is open. The West Virginia Library Commission Library in the Cultural Center is closed weekends and all holidays.

ARCHIVES LIBRARY HOURS ARE 9:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, AND 1:00 P.M. TO 5:00 P.M. ON SATURDAYS.

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY STAFF

Fredrick Armstrong: Director

Debra Basham: Archivist (photographs, special collections)

Greg Carroll: Historian (Civil War, Native American history)

Dick Fauss: Archivist (microfilm and moving images)

Elaine Gates: Part-time Library Assistant (microfilming and microfilm repairs)

Joe Geiger: Historian (Web page, publications)

Ed Hicks: Photographer (archival photography, darkroom)

Mary Johnson: Historian (John Brown)

Jaime Lynch: Library Assistant (Records of the 1700's and early 1800's, Pennsylvania)

Cathy Miller: Library Assistant (WV State documents, periodicals)

Sharon Newhouse: Secretary to the Director.

Harold Newman: Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)

Pat Pleska: Part-time Library Assistant (Clipping File)

Susan Scouras: Librarian (cataloging, Kentucky, library collection, newsletter editor)

Bobby Taylor: Library Manager

Nancy Waggoner: Office Assistant

Contract employees working on special projects: **Constance Baston, Allen Fowler, Em mitt Furner and Nikki Witt.**

COPY PRICES AND POLICIES

The Archives Library now offers 11" x 17" microfilm copies from the laser printer at \$1.00 per copy. Coin-operated microfilm reader/printer copies are \$.25, while staff-produced 8 ½" x 11" microfilm copies are \$.50. Standard photocopies of 8 ½" x 11" or 8" x 14" are \$.25 per page. An 11" x 17" photocopy is \$.50. If a copying project requires more than 30 minutes of staff time, an additional charge of \$15.00 per hour applies after the first ½ hour.

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