SPOOKY SURNAMES!

TIP :   ***Don't be afraid to look for ghastly, snatched, dismembered, and phantom last names in book indexes, records, and databases.***

QUIRK no. 1: What is the most important identifier of people? Their last names. And one of the most frustrating things about genealogical research is *not finding* a name in a published index or database. We want the treats, not the tricks when a surname is messed up or missing. Sloppy writing, typos, name changes—things like these can freak us out. To wit:

1857—Peter Steinenberg and buddies on emigration list, shown as Peter Sleindirg on ship manifest:

250	Der Tagelöhner Johann Becker, alleinstehend, nach N.A. 16.3.1857, mit Paß, "ohne Consens" abger. am 26.3.57.
251	Der Tagelöhner Peter Steinenberg, alleinstehend, nach N.A. Paß v. 16.3.1857, abger. am 26.3.57 "ohne Consens"
252	Der Tagelöhner Johann Adam Neis, alleinstehend, nach N.A. Paß v. 16.3.1857, abger. 26.3.57, "ohne Consens"

438	Peter Sleindirg	26	Male	James
439	Johann Baiken	25	"	"
440	Johann Neis	26	"	"

Ship *Palestine*, departed from London, arrived in New York on 12 May 1857.

1881—Franz Klinkhammer arrived on ship City of Chester *from Liverpool to New York on April 2; Ancestry.com index had "Hinkhouse."*

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1884—Theodor Handwerk arrived on ship Rhynland *from Antwerp to New York on February 25. Ancestry.com indexed his surname as "Hendrick" ;* Germans to America, *volume 48, page 225, listed it as" Hendserik."*

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1892–Stephan THELEN, typoed as HTELEN on a published ship list, fortunately shown close to a family with the same surname:

THELEN, SERVAZ	70	M	LABR
MICHEL	36	M	LABR
ANNA	33	F	LABR
SERVAZ	1	M	CHILD
CATHARINE	21	F	LABR
HENNER, MARIA ANNA	14	F	LABR
HTELEN, STEPHAN	23	M	LABR

1897—The name of Edith Godin was added to original birth registration that had an illegible surname (note asterisk at the bottom):

Return of a Birth — Dec. 14, 1897. Must be made to the Commissioner of Health of the City of Minneapolis within ten days from date of birth, under penalty of $25. Fill out legibly in plain English.

1. Date of Birth. *Dec 4, 1897*
2. Name of Child *Edith Godin*
3. Sex *Girl*   Twins
4. Color *White*
5. Place of Birth, No. *Minneapolis MN 2900 - 28 av, S.*
Full Christian Name of Each Parent. *(Godin)*
6. Father *John Goeppi*
7. Age *25 years*
8. Mother *Mary Godin (Godin)*
9. Age *25 years*
Birth Place of Each Parent.
10. Father *Sweden*
11. Mother *Sweden*
12. Occupation of Father *Carpenter*
13. Medical Attd. *Hilda Johnson*
14. Returned by
N. B. If child is Still-born, a Death Certificate to Health Officer is also necessary.
Altered 11-30-48 Father's Affidavit

QUIRK no. 2: While tales of wicked stepmothers may spook us (Cinderella and Snow White, for example), genealogists have to watch out for stepfathers. Well, not the guys themselves, but the fact that **children are frequently listed under the last names of their stepdads**. This surname snatching happened often on the 1870 census, as many Civil War widows with children remarried, but it may turn up on other censuses and in vital records, even if the kids were not adopted and kept their father's surname. Sometimes the scary evidence appears in broad daylight:

EXPLANATION: *Clarence E. Brown, Jr., died in 1918, and his wife, Edith, remarried Homer Long.*

SOURCE: Brown and Long households, 1930 United States Census, Arapahoe County, Colorado, enumeration district 3-2, supervisor's district 4, sheet 1A, dwellings 8 and 9, families 9 and 10, lines 31-37. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, microfilm series T626, roll 230.

QUIRK no. 3: Like horror stories? Well, what can be more gruesome to a genealogist than names slashed in half, then put back together with the guts removed? Once you see them, you may forever remember the dismembering that happens in records about our ancestors. Such as:

- *1728 passenger manifest showed Peiter Tonckelberg, while the next-day Oath of Allegiance listed him as Peter Denk Bergh. Co-passenger Jacob Kegenhower's oath, signed with an X, appeared as Jacob Coger (the descendants now generally spell the name Gochenour).*
- *1833 marriage record of Solomon Dickerson and Rachel Pickelheimer showed Rachel P. Himer.*
- *1840 marriage record of Agnes Freymuth and Adam Stahlschmidt listed him as Adam S. Smith.*
- *1850 mortality schedule of Anton Willwerscheid showed his name as A. Wilber Scha.*
- *1884 passenger manifest index of Theodor Kilnkhammer listed him as Hamer, Th. Klenk.*

QUIRK no. 4: Sometimes an original record is so damaged or unreadable, only a fragment of legible information remains. One memorable ship list had names so faded that I was only able to verify a family match based on their Norwegian emigration list, which said they were going to a town in Wisconsin—the name of which *was* legible on the passenger manifest as their destination—and other people listed on both records. Here are other phantom names in a published book:

NAME OF SHIP PASSENGERS	STATUS	SEX	AGE	OCC	DEST	ORIGIN	SHIP	DATE	EMBARK	PORT	SPEC	SOURCE	AC
ILLEGIBLE ABRAHAM	01	1	40	054	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3
ILLEGIBLE JACOMINA	02	2	41	149	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3
ILLEGIBLE JACOB	10	1	11	500	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3
ILLEGIBLE PIETER	10	1	09	500	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3
ILLEGIBLE JANNIS	10	1	09	500	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3
ILLEGIBLE CORNELIS	10	1	04	500	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3
ILLEGIBLE CORNELIA	20	2	00	500	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3
ILLEGIBLE PIETER	60	1	59	054	0001	12999	0218	041580	142	5	0	237424	3

SOURCE: Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Emigrants in U.S. Passenger Manifests 1820-1880* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1980).

So, what to do? Search by first name along with birth or death year, age range, place of birth and/or year of immigration, then scan or scroll through the lists for a semblance of the person's data.

Next Month: **EXCEPTIONAL QUIRKS**