OUR NAME'S THE GAME

Monthly Newsletter of the South Central
Pennsylvania Genealogical Society, Inc.

Vol. 13 No. 2 September, 1987

LOOKING AHEAD

OCTOBER 4, 1987 - Henry Z (Hank) Jones of Universal City, CA, speaking on "The Palatine Families of New York - Or How to Trace 847 German Families Here and Abroad Via Documented Sources (and Still Stay Relatively Sane)". Business portion of the meeting will begin at 2:15 p.m.and the program at about 2:30 p.m.

The meeting site is Asbury United Methodist Church at 340 E. Market Street, York, PA. This church is about one block east of The Historical Society of York County. The doors of the church will be opened about 1:45 p.m. for our meeting. Parking can be done in the lot on the west side of the church. This lot is entered from Market Street. If this lot is full, pass through it, cross over Reinecke Place, and park on that lot. Enter the church from Market Street, using the door nearest the parking lot west of the church. There also may be some parking available along Market Street.

Hank Jones has published numerous books and articles on history and genealogy. The most significant is the monumental two volume work, The Palatine Families of New York. Mr Jones spent sixteen years of research on the 847 German families who arrived in 1710, with an emphasis on finding the home villages of these immigrants. This work won the "Donald Lines Jacobus Prize" as the best genealogical work of 1986. Hank Jones has been elected a Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists. In his "other life", Mr. Jones has been a film and TV actor for 25 years.

RESEARCH TRIP TO ANNAPOLIS, MD -- MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1987

The SCPGS will sponsor a research trip to the Maryland State Archives (Hall of Records) at Annapolis, Maryland, on Monday, November 30, 1987. A 39-passenger coach with restroom facilities has been contracted for the day. The bus will leave the Queensgate Shopping Center (York) parking lot at 6:45 a.m. To return to York, the bus will leave the Archives at 4:30 p.m., which is the closing time. Those making the trip will be responsible for any meals while in Annapolis. No eating stops are planned going or returning. The transportation fee for each person is $10. Those who register will receive more detailed information within a week of the trip. Registration should be done as soon as possible but no later than November 9. Payments should be made no later than November 16. To register for the trip send a letter to the society or call Pat Gross at (717) 843-6169. Also if you have any questions about the trip call Pat. People who register do not need to be SCPGS members. Persons wishing to sightsee in Annapolis rather than research at the archives are welcome to travel with us. We will probably begin the day at the Archives with a brief orientation meeting and tour of the facilities.

DECEASED MEMBERS

7 October 1986 - Mrs. Hazel R. Merrill, 554 Ashlawn Dr., Harahan, New Orleans, LA 70123.

14 July 1987 - Miss R. Maude Bradley, Mt. Vernon Gardens, Apt. 7-A-1, 885 Easton Rd., Glenside, PA 19038.

RESOURCE PERSONS

The following person is willing to help other members needing research assistance in designated area:

TEXAS - Tarranto Co., Saginaw & Ft. Worth, Elmer H. English, 253 Hialeah Pk., Saginaw, TX 76179.

HIVELY'S GENEALOGICAL NOTES

An "Archives Workshop for Beginning Genealogists" sponsored by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Friends of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has been scheduled for Saturday, November 14, 1987. This workshop willbe held in the PA State Archives and the State Museum buildings. Among the session topics are "Introduction to Genealogical Research and Methodology"; "Sources for Genealogical Research at the Pennsylvania State Archives"; "Introduction to State Land Records and Hidden Sources in the Division of Land Records"; "Overview of County Records"; "Introduction to State Military Records"; "Use of Estate Records, Deeds and Tax Records"; and "Unusual Sources for Genealogical Research at the State Archives". Also some participants will be able to do research in the Archives Search Room and there will be tours of the State Archives. The registration fee before October 30 is $20. After that date the fee is $25. An optional box lunch can be reserved for an additional $6. To request an informational brochure and registration form contact Jonathan R. Stayer, reference archivist, at (717) 787-2701.

The Kittochtinny Historical Society is presenting a genealogical and historical seminar with the theme, "We the People of Cumberland Valley", on Saturday, October 17, 1987. The meeting location is the King Street United Brethren Church in Chambersburg, PA. Session topics are "Arrival of the Scotch-Irish", "The German Migration"; "Present Day Franklin County"; "Genealogical Sources in Franklin County"; and "The Story of the Old Jail". The seminar fee is $15, which includes lunch. Checks should be made payable to Kittochtinny Historical Society and mailed to Kittochtinny Library (175 E. King St., Chambersburg, PA 17201) by October 3 if possible.

"The Pennsylvania Immigrant Origins Project" and "Documents and Sources for Locating Villages of Origin" will be the topics of the Mid-Atlantic Germanic Society's Fall Meeting on October 24, 1987. The meeting site is the New Windsor Service Center in Carroll County, MD. Annette Burgert, whose work on German origins is significant, will present the program. To register for the day-long meeting send a check for $17.50 (nonmembers, $20) to Col. Robert L. Hull (8308 Kay Court, Annandale, VA 22003). Brochures with program details and a map will be available from Doris Suresch (317 Johnson Farm Lane, Glen Burnie, MD 21061). Overnight accommodations are available at the meeting site for $30.25 per day, including three meals.

Gettysburg (PA) Bicentennial Album is a volume of 136 pages, 107 illustrations and 23,000 words of text which was prepared by William A. Frassanito for the Gettysburg Bicentennial Committee. This book can be purchased by mail from The Adams County Historical Society (Drawer "A", Gettysburg, PA 17325) for $14.75.

The 1982 Reprint volumes of The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg remain available for purchase. The three volumes were originally published between 1942 and 1958 and total 2200 pages of interesting reading. The volumes are indexed. Rev. Muhlenberg was the patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America, being founder and organizer of congregations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and New York. His journals provide "an indispensable source concerning the

religious, social and political history of our forbears in colonial times in North America". Muhlenberg "reports contacts and conferences with leaders and members of every religious persuasion. He discusses the character of clergy and people, the financing and construction of churches, the salaries and fees received by ministers, clerical vestments, liturgical appointments and practices, preaching and church music, catechization and education, the administration of sacraments, marriage and funeral customs, pastoral visitation, missionary labors among Negroes and Indians, congregational and synodical organization, and a host of other things". Reading the journals makes clear how difficult the founding of churches in America was. The journals cover the period 1742 to 1787. Any genealogist who has an ancestor whose character or death-bed confession is described by Muhlenberg should not miss this information. The cost of the three volume set of journals is $100. They can only be bought by the set. Make check payable to The Lutheran Historical Society of Eastern Pennsylvania and mail to Mr. G. Herbert Shaffer, Treasurer (330 Holland St., Shillington, PA 19607).

The Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Civil War Museum and Library is located in the Ruan House at 4278 Griscom St., Philadelphia, PA 19124. The Ruan House is a Georgian mansion built in 1796 by Dr. John Ruan, son of a plantation owner from the West Indies. The museum has a large collection of artifacts and personal memorabilia collected by the participants of the Civil War. Over 1300 books in the library provide information on the events and participants of the Civil War and the history of the Grand Army of the Republic, most of the books coming from the old GAR posts of Philadelphia. Included are manuscript, anecdotal, and original military records for many individuals with major emphasis on PA soldiers and units. The G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) was the fraternal organization founded after the Civil War for all Union veterans. It provided a forum for social and political activities and a focus for historical debate and reminiscences of their service. Membership is open to both male and female descendants of Civil War Veterans as well as interested persons without lineal descendancy. Visitors are welcome the first Sunday of each month from noon to 5:00 p.m. Also on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. there are Civil War Roundtable meetings. Tours by appointment at mutual convenience are available. All persons associated with the museum and library are volunteers. For membership application and an informational brochure write to the museum at the above address. Include a SASE. Membership in the Friends of the G.A.R. is $12 per year.

QUERIES

Seek relationship on George & William LEDIG/LEIDIG/LETTICH/LEYDE/LETIC/etc. George (1791-1869) mar. Elizabeth PAUL near Elizabethville, Dauphin Co., PA, ca. 1826. Ch.: Sarah; Jacob; George; & Elias. Fam. moved to Ringgold, Jefferson Co., PA in 1839. William (1794-1871) mar. Magdalena BECHTEL in 1816 near Elizabethville. Ch.: Elizabeth; Peter; John; Sarah; Magdalena; & Jacob. Wm. & wf. bur. near Elizabethville. Searching for par. of George & Wm.

Samuel Lettie, 2885 Inniswood Cir., Arlington, TX 76015

Seek corresp./info/anc./desc. of Alexander WALLACE of Shrewsbury Twp., York Co., PA, where & when b., d. 1767, wf. Agnes -?-. Ch.: Elizabeth mar. John ORR; Margaret THOMPSON, Jean ALLISON(2) mar. Samuel MARTIN; Sarah mar. Andrew PROUDFOOT; Christianna mar. Wm. WILSON; James mar. (1) Jennet HAMILTON, (2) Mary HEPBURN; & William of Fawn Twp. d. 1810, mar. Marjery ? . Their ch.: Jenny mar. TARBERT; Margaret mar. William ANDERSON of Fawn Twp.; Elenor mar. KINCAID; Mary mar. (which ANDERSON?); John mar. Margaret ANDERSON; & Thomas mar. Sarah Jane ? .

Ms. Bertha A. Daniels, P.O. Box 144, Altmar, NY 13302-0144

Need any info regarding Andrew & Sara LITTLE of Gettysburgh 1799-1850. Ch.: George O. mar. Martha HANAWAY; Louisa Ann mar. John MEYERS; Isaiah; Delia mar. Christian STOVER; Martin V.B.; Sara J. mar. ? RODGERS; & Henrietta mar. ? SHOLDS. Andrew poss. s. of David & Rachael LITTLE of Littlestown, PA -- need proof.

Mrs. Ruth Minnery, 2751 Welsford Rd., Columbus, OH 43221.

Believe to be a direct descendant of Isaac BOLLINGER/BOLINGER, who was a shoemaker & died 1771 in Codorus Twp., York Co., PA leaving a wf. Catharina & 3 orphan children. Oldest s., Frederick was only named in will. His wf. is thought to be a direct descendant of Johann GUTENBURG, who invented the first movable print & printed the Guteburg Bibles. After his death, wf. remarried a Mr. AUSEMUS/AUSIMUS/OZMUS, & moved to Washington Co., TN. If this is my ancestors father, as I am persuaded to think, then the 3 orphan ch. were: Mary b. 1764, mar. Samuel WEAVER & lived in Washington Co., TN & Laurel or Knox Co., KY; Frederick b. 1766, mar. Elizabeth (Betsy) WEAVER & lived in Claiborne Co., TN & Madison Co., AR; & Barbara b. 1768/9, mar Henry HUNTER & lived in Claiborne Co., TN. Some of Barbara's fam. came to AR. Most fam. records say Frederick was b. in PA. Goodspeeds acct. says, he was a native of PA, but one of his sons has said that he was b. in MD (in a Census Record). Any info. about this fam. would be greatly appreciated. Have data to share.

Mrs. Claud M. Edwards, HCR 65, Box 223, Kingston, AR 72742

Would like to corresp. with someone knowledgeable of the SHOVER/SHAFER/etc. fam. of early Washington Co., MD area. Especially with the following ch.: Nicholas SHOVER; Margaret b. ca. 1724, d. 1804 mar. Joseph RENSCH; Elizabeth, b. 1728, d. 1805 mar. Dr. Henry SCHNEBLY; & Susanna mar. David JONES.

Also, who were the ch. of Detrick (c. 1707 - ?) & Anna (c. 1714 - ?) MUMMERT? Especially interested in their dau. Margaret who mar. David ERHARDT & lived in Reading Twp., York Co., PA (now Adams Co.)

Joseph H. Bosserman, P. O. Box 14, Covington, OH 45318.

Searching for info. on John Nicolaus FERTIG who mar. Maria Elisabetha NEU on 30 Mar 1779 by Rev. John Casper Stoever. Need to know where they were mar., lived, etc. Wf. must have d. before 1810, when the PA Census shows him single with 4 ch. Where is she bur. in Cumberland Co., PA? The 1811 Tax Records shows Nicholas owned 150 A. in Middleton Twp. The FERTIG/FARTICK/FERTIGH/FARDIG's were mar. into the THUMMA, MINNICK, & WAGGONER fam. of that area. Lorentz ALBERT/ ALBRECHT was a cousin of the FERTIGs, would like to hear from those working on his genealogy.

Mr. Charles H. Fattig, 32 Larson Rd., McCleary, WA 98557.

Abraham SELL of Germany Twp, Adams Co., PA mar. 1st Louisa Charlotte FORNEY on 10 Mar 1742. She died abt. 1743/1757, & Abraham mar. 2nd Maria Johanna ?. Abraham & Maria sponsored 4 ch. of Henry & Maria SCHNEIDER from 1760 to 1767 at Christ Ref. Ch. Also a Maria Johanna ZIMMERMAN sponsored a SCHNEIDER child in 1757. Is Abraham's wf. this Maria, & what is his relationship to the SCHNEIDERs?

Also, Henry SELLEN & Margaret, his wf. came from Germantown to Germany Twp., Adams Co., PA in 1735 with s. Abraham (1715-1786) & Anthony (C. 1720-1792). Other members of the fam. may have included Catherine who mar. Johann George ULRICH on 14 Dec 1741 & d. 1753 & Henry SELL of Frederick Co., MD (c. 1725-1797). Will exchange data.

Richard H. Sell, 24404 - 137th Ave., SE, Kent, WA 98042-5173

Would like to correspond with anyone who is a descendant of Henry WEISER, b. 24 Feb 1775, s. of Martin WEISER of York, PA & is bur. in Lockman's Cem.

Elizabeth Ann Gluckert, 434 Atlantis Dr., Satellite Beach, FL 32937.

Seeking info on Margareta HEAGY who mar. Joseph MARSHALL, ca. 1773 & had s. Jacob b. 1786, Littlestown, PA & mar. Margaret DELLONE. Need date & place of birth, death date & parents name.

Also, seeking info on parents of Anna Marie CRISMER/KRISMER, b. 26 Nov. 1804, mar. John MARTIN on 19 Nov. 1823.

Mary J. Norton, R.R. 2, Box 255, Cornish, NH 03745.

Seeking info on Philip RIGGS of Lower Smithfield Twp., Northampton Co., PA in 1785/1790. He d. 1813/14, Mason Co., VA. Where did he come from before residing 1785, Northampton Co., PA?

Verona Hosack, 2120 Orleans, Detroit, MI 48207.

Seeking parentage & birth location (prob. Lanc. or Berks Co., PA) of David DUNKEL/DUNKLE, b. 6 Jul 1803; mar. 12 Jan 1832 to Anna FRALICH, dau. of Jacob & Mary (HARTMAN) FRALICH; d. 4 Jun 1881, Versaille, OH. He was a butcher. In 1838 they united with Weinbenarian Ch., PA. PA (1850) Census lists them as resident of Allegheny Twp., Blair Co., PA.

Robert E. Dunkel, 6590 Charles Rd., Westerville, OH 43081.

Johan Theobald DUERRWACHTER/DERWACTER of Manheim Twp., York Co., PA in 1764, coming from Freckenfeld, Ger. in 1752 with wf. Maria Catharina GEIGER & these 7 ch.: John Ludwig b. 1728 mar. Maria WAHL; Maria Margaret b. 1732; Maria Susanna b. 1735; John Jacob b. 1737 mar. Christina Elizabeth; Johannes b. 1742 mar. Catherine BAUMAN, d. 1812, Muskingum Co., OH; Eva Margaret b. 1744; & Catherine Margaret b. 1747. Would appreciate any further info on any of these ch. & their par.

Leona Betteridge, 2709 Soundview Dr., Tacoma, WA 98466.

Jacob DELLINGER, b. 6 Jul 1751, d. 6 Apr 1824, York Co., PA & wf. Christina SHAFER b. 1 Jan 1760, d. 2 Apr 1824. They were associated with Canadochly Luth. Ch., Lower Windsor Twp., York Co., PA. Out of 8 ch., my ancestor, Daniel DELLINGER b. 1 Jan 1793. Need last name for Daniel's wf., Christiana.

John HARTLEY b. 13 Jul 1812, Lanc. Co., PA, d. 20 Mar 1874, husband of Cassie SPANGLER.

Barbara, wf. of Emanuel SPANGLER, d. 1846, Wrightsville, PA. This may be the Barbara WOHLHEIM, who mar. an Emanuel SPANGLER at 1st (Trinity) Ref. Ch., York Co., PA on 22 Aug 1813.

Anna Margaretha BRAUNS, wf. of Bernhard SPENGLER, b. 3 Sep 1719, Ger., d. 1804, York Co., PA.

Seeking info & parents of all of the above people.

Rev. Stephen Aram, 607 Kirkwood Ave., Winthrop Harbor, IL 60096.

Would like to contact anyone researching the fam. of Clarence C. CRALEY, s. of Amos Peter (s. of George) for whom the town of Craley, PA was named. Have enough info for 107 male branches of the fam. tree, but still need any info for further verification or additional input.

Laurence A. Craley, 10219 Kilburn Rd., Phila., PA 19114.

Seeking date & place of birth of Richard LEECH. He was poss. b. in England ca. 1639 & mar. Sara COX in 1712, poss. York Co., PA.

Also, seeking info on Adam DEFLIN/DEFFLIN b. 1825 in Lorraine, France or Ger., mar. Eves/Eva Ann FRAZIER/FRASER on 16 Oct 1849, & d. in Libby prison as a prisoner of the Confederate Army on 16 Nov. 1863. Where was Adam born? Did he have any siblings & who were his parents? When & where was his wf. born?

Mrs. Jane D. Weller, 135 W. Holly Trail, Kitty Hawk, NC 27949.

Seeking parents of Charles WAGNER/WAGGONER b. 10 Jan 1800, PA, prob. Pottsville, Schylkill Co., PA, & wf. Catharine GRIDLEY, b. 19 May 1805, PA, mar. PA & moved to IN ca. 1850's. Ch. born in PA were: Isaiah James b. 1843; Charles b. 1846; & Catherine b. 1849.

Louise S. Witt, 4324 W. 70th Terr., Prairie Village, KS 66208.

Who are the parents of Abraham KNISLEY of Washington Twp., York Co., PA, who on 7 May 1813 bought 58 A. in Monaghan Twp. from William Ness. Could his fath. be John KNEISLY, 9-14 in Harry Loren Kneislys "Kneisly Gen." John had a s. Abraham b. 21 Mar 1759. This birth date is from photocopies of info in the John KNEISLY Bible (1739) found in Willoughby Hist. Museum in Welland Co., Ontario, Canada. I have copies of this listing of Johns ch. births & the births of his s., Christians ch. who obviously took the Bible to Canada in 1790. I will give copies to any KNISLEY desc. sending me info on fam.connected to this 9-14 John KNEISLY.

Also would like info on George BRUNER & wf. Anna Marie listed as sponsors of George WELTKAM, bapt. 2 Aug 1812, Quickel's Ch., Conewago Twp., York Co., PA, as per query in June 1987 issue. Info. on any BRUNERs would be welcome.

Mrs. Virgil C. Goold, Rt. 2, Box 76, Marionsville, MO 65705.

Seeking the parents of Joseph GINGERICH b. 11 Jul 1813, d. 14 Aug 1868, Londonderry Twp., Dauphin Co., PA, mar. Margaret METZGER, abt. 1835. Resided Londonderry Twp. until 1849, then moved to Conoy Twp., Lanc. Co., PA & back to Londonderry Twp. (Middletown) in 1861. Ch. were: Margaret b. 1846; Joseph b. 1849; Martha b. 1851 mar. Jacob UPDEGRAFF; & David ? b. 1841.

Ronald Hollinger, 287 N. 9th, Wheeling, IL 60090.

Can anyone tell me, where is Center Square? I have a letter from 1840, & that is the name of the town on the heading. Presumably from the contents of the letter, it was in the York Co., PA area.

Mrs. Carol N. Carbone, P.O. Box 338, Sheridan, WY 82801.

Seeking info on Catherine Susan BAKER (1775-1848 PA), par. were prob. Andrew BAKER, & Mary OHLER, mar. Johan George STAHL (1771-1844 PA).

Also, seeking info on Louisa Catherine OTZ, wf. of John George STAHL, 1747 PA, fath. of Johan George (1771-1844 PA).

Mr. James Burnett, 155 Hickory Hill Rd., West Chester, PA 19382.

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Rosalie Nasti

Rosalie Nasti

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What's in a Surname? Genealogists Fear Family-Tree Trouble

* * *

They Rue Trend of Giving Children New Last Names; Parents Say 'It's Very '80s'

By Rifka Rosenwein
Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac. . . .

—Genesis 25:19

In the beginning, there was patrilineage, and it was good enough for countless generations.

But in recent years, strange things have come to pass. Women have given their own family names to their children, and some couples have bequeathed hyphenated surnames to their offspring.

Now this: Parents are making use of little-known laws that allow them to bestow upon their children the surname of their choice. Short of a curse word or a series of numerals, the choice in most states is unlimited.

A Boy Named 'Sue'

And so, in Pennsylvania, one set of parents gave their boy the surname "Sue." A couple in North Carolina dignified their baby with a nine-page last name, although only what fits on one line appears on the birth certificate along with a note directing interested parties to the state's permanent records.

Some parents even pick different surnames for different children. For instance, Pierce Barker and Carol Frost, who moved recently from New Hampshire to Maryland, gave their firstborn the last name "Roth-Tubman," in honor of author Philip Roth and abolitionist Harriet Tubman; their second child, the name "Smith-Cook," after maternal and paternal ancestors; and their youngest, the name "Woods," after the child's maternal great-great-grandmother.

This sort of newfangled family doesn't sit well with some folks. Laurie Thompson, a genealogist who is often retained in inheritance disputes, says the thought of making up such a family tree makes her "absolutely ill."

Lesley DuVall, a former Indiana state senator who sponsored legislation that now limits name choices in his state, worries about the impact on society. Free-form naming will result in everyone having "different names at family reunions," he warns. "What's that going to do for family cohesiveness, or doesn't that matter anymore?"

Live Free or Die?

But New Hampshire State Rep. Roger Stewart, who sponsored a laissez-faire names bill in behalf of Mr. Barker and Ms. Frost, sees the issue as one of freedom of choice. Although he admits his law "louses up genealogy and schoolteachers and everything else," he says he sponsored the bill because "this is New Hampshire, you know. 'Live Free or Die' is our motto."

For his part, Mr. Barker, a teacher himself, explains that he "didn't particularly care" for his last name. When their eldest son was born in 1974, he and his wife decided that Mr. Roth and Ms. Tubman were "people we both admired and the names [together] sounded euphonious."

"I know," he adds wryly, "All right-thinking Americans give their kids the father's last name, right?"

Only out of habit, insists Priscilla Ruth MacDougall, a labor attorney for the Wisconsin Education Council who has been involved in names cases for the past 15 years.

American common law, she explains, allows for complete freedom of choice when it comes to surnames. By 1968, she adds, only one state—Hawaii—had a statute limiting that choice.

"Custom just operated so much that no one questioned" what the law was, she says. But state laws and regulations came under closer scrutiny in the 1970s, as more and more women began keeping their own names after marriage and tried passing these or hyphenated surnames to their children.

Forced to confront the naming-rights issue for the first time, many states balked. North Carolina, Florida, Louisiana and New Hampshire passed laws specifying that a child born in wedlock bear the father's surname and one born out of wedlock bear the mother's, unless paternity was established and both parents requested in writing that the father's name be used.

Other states permitted more flexibility for children of married couples, allowing the mother's surname or a hyphenated surname as alternative choices. (In one case in Nebraska, though, the State Supreme Court ruled that the father's name had to come first.)

Where parents disagree over a surname, however, as is often the case with unmarried or divorcing couples, many states give the father veto power over the name choice, according to Ms. MacDougall.

Isabelle Penzler, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, acknowledges that while these restrictions have never touched off a public outcry, they become for people who covet the right to choose "a burning issue. These people get real angry," she says.

Alena Jech and Adolf Befurt, a Hawaii couple, were among the first parents in America to get angry enough to take their case to court. They tried to register their son's last name as "Jebef" (a fusion of Jech and Befurt), but state health-department officials crossed it out on the child's birth certificate and replaced it with the father's name. After two years of unsuccessfully seeking a change, Ms. Jech and Mr. Befurt brought suit in 1979, claiming they had a constitutional right to name their child as they saw fit.

Federal courts in separate cases in Hawaii, North Carolina and Florida agreed. The existing state law "impinges upon decisions affecting family life, procreation, and child rearing; areas of human experience which the Supreme Court has long held must be accorded special protection," ruled Federal Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. in the North Carolina case in 1981.

The judge also dismissed the state's claim that an anything-goes naming policy would mess up its indexing system. As long as birth certificates bear the names chosen by parents, the judge wrote, parents don't care whether state registrars "call their children A-1, A-2, and A-3, or Huey, Duey and Louey (sic)."

New Jersey is the latest state to rewrite its regulations rather than risk being challenged in court. The change, effective next month, was prompted by a Mr. Greenberg and his wife, Ms. McBride, who wanted to name their baby "Greenbride."

Indeed, the fused surname is the most popular alternative to passing along a family name, according to several state registrars. It best "illustrates our relationship," says Christine Ledbetter, who, along with her husband, Dean Skylar, took the state of Florida to court to gain the right to name their son Sydney Anthony Skybetter.

"We considered a hyphenated name, but the middle name always gets lost," she explains. Besides, she adds, "the name is sort of neat. It's very '80s."

In another age, parents looking for unusual last names chose words like "Sunshine" or "Peace," says John Reith, assistant director of the Department of Vital Records in New York state, recalling the late 1960s.

"When we had the hippie culture—that was a strong era for strange names," says David Mitchell, the California state registrar.

Ms. Ledbetter, who gave birth several weeks ago to her second child, Rachel Amelia Skybetter, isn't concerned about how her children will adapt to their name. Sydney, now 4½, "is doing wonderfully with it. He has his own telephone listing. And we wrote a little book to explain his name for him," she says.

She admits she is sometimes called "Mrs. Skybetter," but says most people have gotten used to the situation. "It's not unusual for kids from one-parent households to have last names different from their parents," she says.

But Teddy Roth-Tubman, now 12 years old, isn't so sure. Asked whether he likes having a last name that doesn't match his parents', he says, "I guess so. It sure is a lot different than other kids."

Would he do the same with his children? "I don't think so," he responds, after some thought. "It's kind of peculiar."

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Now this: Parents are making use of little-known laws that allow them to bestow upon their children the surname of their choice. Short of a curse word or a series of numerals, the choice in most states is unlimited.

A Boy Named 'Sue'

And so, in Pennsylvania, one set of parents gave their boy the surname "Sue." A couple in North Carolina dignified their baby with a nine-page last name, although only what fits on one line appears on the birth certificate along with a note directing interested parties to the state's permanent records.

Some parents even pick different surnames for different children. For instance, Pierce Barker and Carol Frost, who moved recently from New Hampshire to Maryland, gave their firstborn the last name "Roth-Tubman," in honor of author Philip Roth and abolitionist Harriet Tubman; their second child, the name "Smith-Cook," after maternal and paternal ancestors; and their youngest, the name "Woods," after the child's maternal great-great-grandmother.

This sort of newfangled family doesn't sit well with some folks. Laurie Thompson, a genealogist who is often retained in inheritance disputes, says the thought of making up such a family tree makes her "absolutely ill."

Lesley DuVall, a former Indiana state senator who sponsored legislation that now limits name choices in his state, worries about the impact on society. Free-form naming will result in everyone having "different names at family reunions," he warns. "What's that going to do for family cohesiveness, or doesn't that matter anymore?"

Live Free or Die?

But New Hampshire State Rep. Roger Stewart, who sponsored a laissez-faire names bill in behalf of Mr. Barker and Ms. Frost, sees the issue as one of freedom of choice. Although he admits his law "louses up genealogy and schoolteachers and everything else," he says he sponsored the bill because "this is New Hampshire, you know. 'Live Free or Die' is our motto."

For his part, Mr. Barker, a teacher himself, explains that he "didn't particularly care" for his last name. When their eldest son was born in 1974, he and his wife decided that Mr. Roth and Ms. Tubman were "people we both admired and the names [together] sounded euphonious."

"I know," he adds wryly. "All right-thinking Americans give their kids the father's last name, right?"

Only out of habit, insists Priscilla Ruth MacDougall, a labor attorney for the Wisconsin Education Council who has been involved in names cases for the past 15 years.

American common law, she explains, allows for complete freedom of choice when it comes to surnames. By 1968, she adds, only one state—Hawaii—had a statute limiting that choice.

"Custom just operated so much that no one questioned" what the law was, she says. But state laws and regulations came under closer scrutiny in the 1970s, as more and more women began keeping their own names after marriage and tried passing these or hyphenated surnames to their children.

Forced to confront the naming-rights issue for the first time, many states balked. North Carolina, Florida, Louisiana and New Hampshire passed laws specifying that a child born in wedlock bear the father's surname and one born out of wedlock bear the mother's, unless paternity was established and both parents requested in writing that the father's name be used.

Other states permitted more flexibility for children of married couples, allowing the mother's surname or a hyphenated surname as alternative choices. (In one case in Nebraska, though, the State Supreme Court ruled that the father's name had to come first.)

Where parents disagree over a surname, however, as is often the case with unmarried or divorcing couples, many states give the father veto power over the name choice, according to Ms. MacDougall.

Isabelle Penzler, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, acknowledges that while these restrictions have never touched off a public outcry, they become for people who covet the right to choose "a burning issue. These people get real angry," she says.

Alena Jech and Adolf Befurt, a Hawaii couple, were among the first parents in America to get angry enough to take their case to court. They tried to register their son's last name as "Jebef" (a fusion of Jech and Befurt), but state health-department officials crossed it out on the child's birth certificate and replaced it with the father's name. After two years of unsuccessfully seeking a change, Ms. Jech and Mr. Befurt brought suit in 1979, claiming they had a constitutional right to name their child as they saw fit.

Federal courts in separate cases in Hawaii, North Carolina and Florida agreed. The existing state law "impinges upon decisions affecting family life, procreation, and child rearing; areas of human experience which the Supreme Court has long held must be accorded special protection," ruled Federal Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. in the North Carolina case in 1981.

The judge also dismissed the state's claim that an anything-goes naming policy would mess up its indexing system. As long as birth certificates bear the names chosen by parents, the judge wrote, parents don't care whether state registrars "call their children A-1, A-2, and A-3, or Huey, Duey and Louey."

New Jersey is the latest state to rewrite its regulations rather than risk being challenged in court. The change, effective next month, was prompted by a Mr. Greenberg and his wife, Ms. McBride, who wanted to name their baby "Greenbride."

Indeed, the fused surname is the most popular alternative to passing along a family name, according to several state registrars. It best "illustrates our relationship," says Christine Ledbetter, who, along with her husband, Dean Skylar, took the state of Florida to court to gain the right to name their son Sydney Anthony Skybetter.

"We considered a hyphenated name, but the middle name always gets lost," she explains. Besides, she adds, "the name is sort of neat. It's very '80s."

In another age, parents looking for unusual last names chose words like "Sunshine" or "Peace," says John Reith, assistant director of the Department of Vital Records in New York state, recalling the late 1960s.

"When we had the hippie culture—that was a strong era for strange names," says David Mitchell, the California state registrar.

Ms. Ledbetter, who gave birth several weeks ago to her second child, Rachel Amelia Skybetter, isn't concerned about how her children will adapt to their name. Sydney, now 4½, "is doing wonderfully with it. He has his own telephone listing. And we wrote a little book to explain his name for him," she says.