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A Genealogist's View of Czech Family Names

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Family names constitute an important part of our heritage. Handed down by generations for centuries, the name symbolizes the family, identifies each of its members and his or her relationship to other members of the kin. It is a phenomenon that is of interest to any person engaged in genealogy.

And yet, family names have not been accompanying our society for the whole history, they are a relatively young aspect of human lives. People originally had just one name, the one we today call forename (given, first name). For a long time that was a sufficient way to determine a person. And if someone needed to be more precise, they added the father's name. References such as "Simon son of Jonah" are known already from the Bible. With growing population during the Middle Ages, however, the range of given names was becoming less and less satisfactory. At first nobility started using various kinds of epithets (such as Richard the Lionheart, Charles the Great, Procopius the Bald). The attribute used most often was the name of the place the family had originated from – either actually or just by a legend – or where they had the main seat (Rudolph of Habsburg, George of Poděbrady).

As for common people, not belonging among nobility, the process of adding a surname started in bigger cities. A large number of people living in a small closed up area, with dozens and hundreds of men named Jan, Martin or Václav and women named Marie, Anna or Kateřina, those were the reasons calling for a more particular way of referring to individuals. And then, step by step, the use of these "additional" names was spreading out into the country, among lower classes as well. In the Czech Lands it was a matter of the 1300's thru 1700's. Originally there were no strict rules to use surnames at that period, people simply followed traditions – and they were different in various areas, as we will see below – or a person may have been called with a personal nickname, completely different from the surname of his or her father.

A breaking point in the process of constitution of family names was an edict issued by Emperor Joseph II on November 1, 1786. It established that surnames were hereditary and unchangeable, every child was supposed to get the names after father and a wife after her husband. Like everything in that period, it took years and in some areas even decades till these rules became commonly used by every clerk or priest – and every common person – in everyday life. Anyway, because the edict bound a person's surnames to the family (rather than the house,

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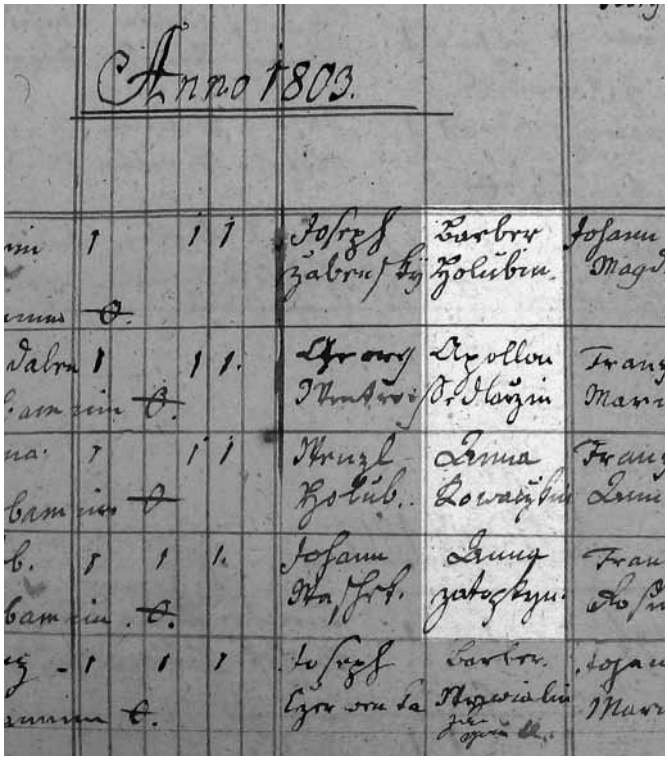
the estate or a nickname), we can say that since then we can speak about actual family names.

The number of family names used in a country is certainly not fixed, especially in the recent period it has been growing because of migration. But it is quite interesting that the basic range of family names constituted both in Czech and English was quite similar – around 40,000. It will be interesting, I believe, to take a look at the way surnames in the Czech Lands were created, in other words, what their sources were and what their semantic interpretation can be.

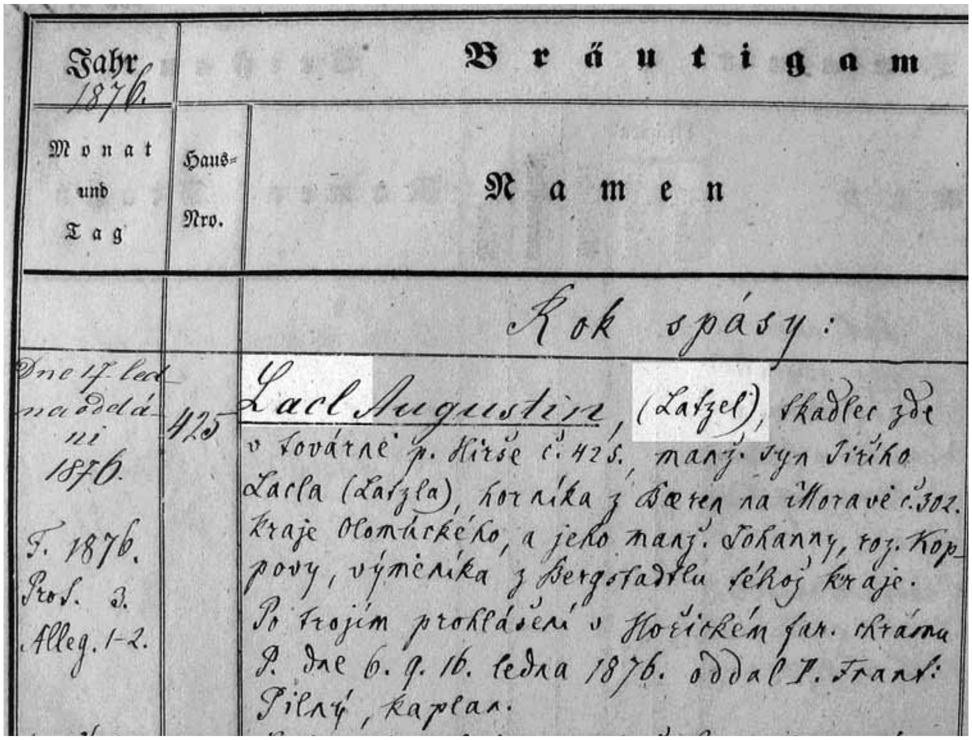
Before we start, let me underline that "can be". We have a number of surnames in Czech the origin of which is obvious, but on the other hand, in many a case there are more possible explanations of a name's source and its meaning. So, the original meaning of the most frequent Czech family name, Novák (derived from the adjective nový/new) is unambiguous – it referred to a newcomer and had the same meaning as Newman in English. But for example, as for my family name, Koudelka, the source is quite obvious too – the word stem, koudel means oakum or tow, and koudelka, literally translated, is tow yarn. But if the ancestor of mine who first got that surname was a tow yarn maker or dealer, or if, let us say, the grayish light brown color of his hair resembled the color of oakum, that will remain in the mist, I am afraid. And if we go on and take the name Klíma, there even the source is not certain: It may have been derived from the given name Klement, or from the verb klímat (to be drowsing, lazy). Besides, in some cases the names may have actually been ironic: A person known as Šikula (the skillful one) could have been a local jack-of-all-trades, as well as a local fumbler (aka klutz).

Father's Given Name

The first source of surnames has already been foreshadowed above – the father's given name. This way was widely used in other languages too – compare, for example, names like Peterson or Johansen in Nordic languages where the relation between the suffix -son/-sen and the meaning "son of Peter" or "son of Johan" is obvious. In the Czech society it had a somewhat different form. Our language – unlike English, let me add – offers a large range of suffixes to make diminutives. And this way of word formation was used very often to create surnames. If there was a need to refer to a son of Jan, he was taken as the small/young Jan and got a surname with one of diminutive suffixes. Most productive were suffixes -ek, -ec, -eček, -ka, -ík, -íček. So, the surname with the meaning "the young Jan" could be



Examples of combined ancient Czech-German spelling of family names. Notice the feminine forms (with the German suffix -in/-yn added to purely Czech names) Holubin, Sedlaržin, Kowaczkin, Zatopkyn, etc. - column with the white background. (Provincial Archive in Opava, Collection of Vital Registers, Roman-Catholic Parish Office in Kozlovice, vol. P-VI-5, birth section p. 14.)



Double spelling (Czech and German) of a family name in the 1876 marriage record for Augustin Lacl/Latzel. (State Regional Archive in Zámrsk, Collection of Vital Registers, Roman-Catholic Parish Office in Hořice, vol. 47-3324, fol. 280.)

Janek, Janeček, Janečka, Janík, Janíček, Janka. And surnames derived the same way from other frequent given names are, for example, Martinec, Martínek, Martinka, Martiník, as well as Pavelec, Pavlík, Pavlíček, Pavelka, and the like. A similar sort of surnames of this kind are those that originally had the form of possessives. They adopted the possessive suffix -ův or -ových, sometimes preserved it (Janův, Janových) but often dropped off the last -v and have been preserved as Janů, Martinů, Pavlů, etc.

Multiple Variations of a Common Name

The derivation of surnames from given names could have gone another way, however. Sometimes they used various forms of the same name – as for the varieties of Jan (and their diminutives), it could have been Janda, Jandáček, Jandačka, Jandoušek, Jandák, Jandas, Jandásek, Jandera, Janderka, Jandát, Jandourek, Janďourek, Jandovský, Janák, Janáček, Janačík, Janko, Janouch, Janoušek, Jansa, Janza, Jašek, Jansta, Janata, Janota, Janžura, Jeník, Jeníček, Jeništa, and so on. When speaking about the name Jan, in Latin and German it is Johannes. And there are a large number of Czech family names derived from this foreign form of that given name, particularly from its middle part -han-: Hanuš, Hanus, Hanousek, Hanoušek, Haniš, Hansal, Hanýsek, Hanele… This way the number of Czech surnames derived just from the given name Jan goes well beyond a hundred.

Christian Saints

If we take into account the period when surnames were constituted in our country (as mentioned above, approximately 14th to 17th centuries), it is obvious that a vast majority of these surnames were derived from the names of Christian saints – in addition to Jan, Martin and Pavel mentioned above they were biblical names, namely Petr (Petřík, Petráš, Peterka…), Tomáš (Tomášek, Tomek, Tomeček, Tůma…), Jakub (Jakubec, Jakoubek, Jakubů, Jakubčík, Kubeš, Kubíček…), Marek (Marek itself, Mareček, Mareš, Marko…), Lukáš (Lukeš, Lukšík…), Matěj/Matouš (Matějka, Matějů, Matějovský, Matoušek, Matocha…), Šimon (Šimek, Šimůnek, Šíma…), and then the names of Czech saints Václav (Václavík, Vašíček, Vacek…), Prokop (Prokopec, Prokeš, Průša…) and Vojtěch (Vojta, Vojtek, Vojtíšek…). Fairly productive was the name of a saint from the 6th century, Benedikt: Beneš, Benda, Bendl, Beneda, Benák, Baňačka, Beniak, Benko, Benšík, Bína, and the like.

Out of all Czech family names, those derived from given names make the biggest group. Linguists dealing with this phenomenon write that up to one third of Czech surnames were constituted that way.

Professions/Position

An important characteristic of a person was his profession or the position in the local society. That was why this feature often became the source of a person's surname too. And it was a very productive source too, the social characteristic must have played a role more important in the past than today: In the general index to

the 1654 "Berní rula" (Tax Roll) – which can be taken, among other, as the oldest survey of surnames in Bohemia – we can learn that seven out of ten most frequent surnames were derived from professional/social statuses. Most frequent was Kovář (blacksmith), second was Krejčí (tailor), fifth was Švec (shoemaker), sixth was Svoboda (free man, i.e. not a serf), seventh was Kolář (wheeler), eighth was Tkadlec (weaver) and tenth was Dvořák (free owner of a larger farm, or a man working at a bigger estate or even at a noble's court). And let me add that in eleventh position was Rychtář (village Justice of the Peace). The role of professions as a source of family names must have been decreasing over time, because today just the names Svoboda and Dvořák remain among the top ten (see the chart on page 13).

A subdivision of surnames based on professions is made by those referring to tools used by particular craftsmen or their typical products. These would be names such as Jehlička (needle – a tailor), Sekyra (axe – carpenter), Bič (whip – a coachman), Žemlička (bun – baker), Pivec (derived from pivo = beer – barkeeper), and so on.

Geographical Phenomena

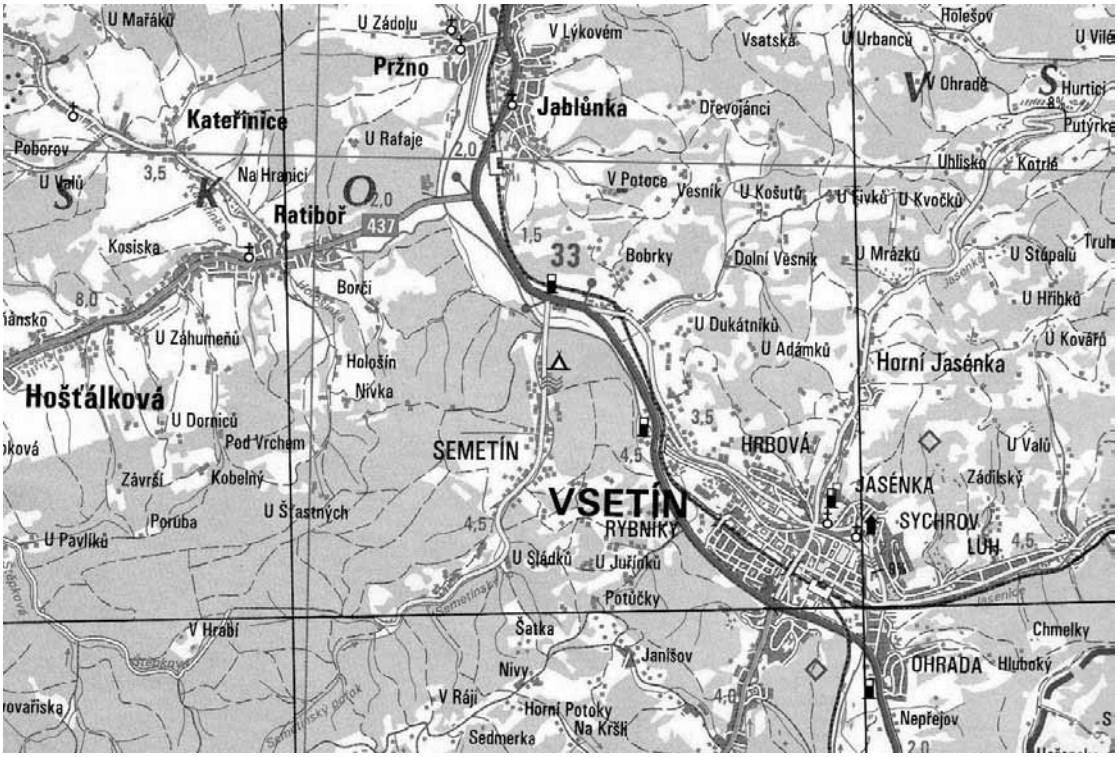
Another big group of surnames are those referring to geographical phenomena. First of all they referred to the person's place of origin. A man who had moved into a town from a village of Lhota started to be called Lhoták, a man from Prague was called Pražák, a man from Makov became Makovský, a man from Palačov was known as Palacký. In these cases, a city/town/village name became the source for the surname. And similarly, it could have been the country, province or region the person was coming from as well: Němec was a person coming from Germany (in Czech, Německo), Polák from Poland, Bavor from Bavaria, Moravec from Moravia, Hanák from the lowlands named Haná. In some other cases, the reference to a country may have had another connotation – for example, a person named Tureček (little Turk) may have been a child of a Turkish soldier who had taken part in one of the invasions and assaults of Central Europe rather than a "civil" man of shorter stature having come from Turkey. To be fair, we should add that it may have been a person somehow looking like a Turk, too…

One more section of surnames has a geographical aspect – those referring to the person's location in a community. Kopecký (kopec = hill) was a man living on/under a hill, Zápotocký (za = across, potok = creek) was someone living on the other side of a stream running down the village, Dolejší (dole = down) in the lower section of the town. A special subset are nouns derived from house signs. Located usually just above the front door or in the gable, house signs were the way to mark houses before the 1771 introduction of house numbers. So the name of a Mr. Anděl may have originated from the place he was living at, generally known as the house "at the angel" (or he may have been a man very nice to others – like an angel).

Examples of family names in tombstone inscriptions in a country cemetery (Rozseč, Jihlava County, Moravia): Rodina Ježkova, Rodina Grünwaldova, Rodina Rodova. Photo by Hana Koudelková.

Personal Characteristics

Many surnames were derived from personal characteristics. The most striking feature of a person was if a man or a whole family moved in from another



The place named "U Šťastných" (west of Vsetín, south of Ratiboř). Notice the number of names of that same kind in the whole area: U Pavlíků, U Dorniců, U Záhumeňů, U Košutů, U Adámků, U Dukátníků, U Mrázků, U Kvočků… (Autoatlas Česká republika 1:100,000. Česká Lípa, Brno : Geodézie ČS, a.s. a Geodezie Brno, a.s., 1997, ISBN 80-7206-045-7, p. 136.

place, if they were new to local people. That is why Novák has been for a long time the most frequent family name in our country and its variation, Novotný belongs among the top three too. Names with similar meaning are frequent in other languages as well – compare the names Newman and Neumann in English or German respectively. The reasons for this name in our country were multiplied by the disaster of the 1618-1648 Thirty Year's War when plenty of farms were found abandoned and had to be re-settled by newcomers from other areas.

A big number of surnames were created by the shape of the person's body or a distinguishing feature. They most often have the form of adjective with the masculine/feminine endings -ý/-á: Malý (short), Dlouhý (tall), Černý (black-haired), Hlavatý (big-headed), Holý (bare/bald), Hrbatý (humpbacked), Tlustý (fat/big), and so on. Or it could have been the person's nature, temperament, way of behavior that became the base for his surname: Šťastný (happy), Pokorný (humble), Veselý (merry), Tichý (silent), Hrubý (rude), Moudrý (wise), Neruda (surly), Hlas (voice), Doležal (having a nap: lazy), Otčenášek (paternoster: pious), and many other.

Names from Nature

Another group of surnames refers to natural world. Most of them originally had a metaphorical meaning. Some of them were derived from animals, birds, insects, etc: Křeček (hamster: a person furious like a hamster? or a furrier?), Srnec (roebuck: shapely?), Liška (fox: cunning?), Vrabec (sparrow: short and lively?), Bejček (bull: strong? or a farmer raising cattle?), Motejl (butterfly: handsome?), and the like. Trees, plants or their parts gave birth to surnames as well, for example: Dub (oak: magnificent stature?), Lípa (linden tree), Růžička (rose: handsome? or pink-cheeked?), Fiala (violet), Petržela (parsley: a gardener?), Jahoda (strawberry: small and rounded?), Ječmínek (barley: a farmer?) Kořínek (root: thin?), Větvička (branchlet). Inanimate objects and phenomena became sources for surnames too: Skála (rock: high-principled? or ruthless?), Hora (mountain: big?), Křemen (flint), Potůček (creek), Mráz (frost: heartless? or sturdy?), Větr (wind: fast moving?), Mráček (cloud: glum?), Voda (water), and the like.

Names from Verbs or Entire Sentences

An interesting category of Czech surnames are those that actually represent verbs or even whole sentences. Most of them end with – "l" which indicates a verb in past tense. They occur in Bohemia but more frequent they are especially in Moravia: Pospíšil (he hurried), Navrátil (he returned), Smékal (he dragged), Musil (he had to), Chladil (he cooled), Běhal (he ran), and also, Drahokoupil (he paid a high price), Přecechtěl (he still

wanted), Potměšil (he sewed in the dark), Skočdopole (Jump into a field!), and many more.

Names derived from Foreign Languages

A special group of surnames in every country are those adopted from foreign languages. Most of them in the Czech society come from German because contacts between the Czech Lands on one side and the neighboring German and Austrian Lands on the other side have always been very close and because a considerable number of German speaking people lived right in the territory of this country for centuries. Some of these surnames have preserved their original (foreign) spelling, others have been more or less Czechicized. And we can say that their sources are the same or very similar to those of Czech origin – given names, professions, geographical or natural phenomena, personal characteristics, and the like: Franzel/Francl (Frankie), Hansel/Hanzl (one of diminutive forms of given name Johannes), Müller/Miler (miller), Schmidt/Šmíd (smith), Schuster/Šustr (shoemaker), Bayer/Pajer (Bavarian), Böhm/Bém (Bohemian), Treutnar/Trajtner (from the city of Trautenau/Trutnov, North Bohemia), Vieweg/Fibich (grazing ground), Hübel/Hýbl (hillock), Strauss/Štraus (ostrich), Knoblauch/Knobloch (garlic), Schwarz/Švarc (black), Zehrmann/Cerman (spending much for food and drinks), Lustig (merry), Habenicht (I don't have), and thousands of other names.

Jewish Surnames

A special sort of surnames were those belonging to Jewish people. There was a Jewish minority in our country and they had just one name each for quite a long time. A common way to make the name more specific was bounding it to the father's name: David, son of Samuel. Another edict issued by Emperor Joseph II in July 1787 ordered Jews to adopt permanent surnames. They had a selection of around 1,500 names (about 10% of them

This restaurant at one of the best known pilgrimage places in Moravia, Svatý Kopeček near Olomouc is named after the Macek family: U Macků. Photo by Miroslav Koudelka.

were highlighted as especially suitable), and because German was the official language in the then Empire, they had a German form. Even a couple of those that had been of Czech origin got German spelling (Benesch, Libusch). That way the names of a majority of Jewish society in our country were Germanized. We have mentioned a selection, but of course, it very much depended on the willfulness of the recording clerk. If he was in good mood (and/or a richer man was able to bribe him), he assigned the applicant a fragrant name such as Rosenfeld (rose field), while on the other hand, if the clerk was disgusted, the poor Jewish man could have got, for example, the name Kanalgeruch (sewage odor).

But of course, German was not the only foreign language surnames have been adopted from. The neighborhood of Slovakia resulted in a number of Slovak names to our country (Kováč – smith, Kramár – merchant, Trnavský – from the city of Trnava), and because Slovakia belonged to Hungary in the past, a number of Hungarian names too (Farkaš – wolf, Nagy/Naď – big, Fazekaš – potter). Italians were known as excellent craftsmen and artists who were frequently coming to Central Europe namely in the sixteenth thru eighteenth centuries and bringing names of Italian origin (Sorbi, Chittussi, Gambetta). The expansion of the Turkish Empire to the Balkan in the late Middle Ages pushed many Slavic people from there (namely Croatian but also Serbian and Slovenian) to Central Europe in the sixteenth century. Some of them ended up in Southern Moravia and brought their surnames to the Czech neighborhood as well. Most of these surnames have a suffix -ič: Drobilič, Malinkovič, Lukačovič, Ožanič (or its Czechicized form, Ošanec), and the like. There are surnames of French (Le Breux, Davignon), Spanish (Dekastello) or Scandinavian (Jensen) origins occurring in our country too. Most of them originally belonged to noblemen who got properties and settled here especially after the 1620 Battle of the White Mountain, their courtiers and servants, or soldiers of foreign armies who stayed behind here because of some reasons (love, injury).

Things in this field have been changing faster particularly in recent period as one of the results of globalization. A growing Vietnamese minority in our country, workers from the Ukraine or Mongolia, students from African countries, businessmen from Russia and other ethnic groups enrich Czech society with their surnames too. That is why the present statistics of the Ministry of Interior listing all the surnames occurring in the Czech Republic (including foreigners living in this country) already contains more than 60,000 entries – see http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/cetnost-jmen-a-prijmeni.aspx?q=Y2hudW09Mg%3d%3d (scroll down the left side and find the "příjmení ČR + cizinci").

On the other hand, mobility was not a typical aspect of life in the past. Virtually up until the 1848 abolition of mandatory labor and other remainders of the feudal system, farmers were subject to their feudal lords, bound to the ground and the dominion to perform their feudal duties there and therefore they could not freely move. Thanks to that, **some surnames were typical** more or less just **for a certain area** or even **a certain town**, namely those that were rather rare.

One of my friends from Nebraska is Gary Zabokrtsky and his family came from Slemeno, Eastern Bohemia. The concentration of that surname had been so high in that little town that I found records where a man named Žabokrtský married a young lady named Žabokrtská in the presence of two witnesses named Žabokrtský, the priest marrying them was Žabokrtský, and when they gave birth to a child, the midwife's name was, of course, Žabokrtská. Anyway, in the whole Czech society it does not belong among very frequent family names, the ministerial statistics lists 53 men presently bearing it. During the years we have been working on Gary's genealogy we have not talked to all of them, however, the ancestors of those we managed to contact had come from that same little town and the preserved documents indicate that they all are most likely descended from one man living there in the 1590's, Jan Pavlíků of Zabokrky. Another example is the name Orság (and its spelling variations Orsák, Ország, Országh). When a community presently named Nový Hrozenkov, Eastern Moravia was founded in 1649, it was then created by six colonists one of which was named Orság. He must have had a number of male descendants because in the 19th century the name was as frequent in Nový Hrozenkov as Žabokrtský in Slemeno. Similar cases are the name Dušák, occurring especially in the area around the town of Třeboň, South Bohemia, or the names ending with -le (Heckele, Bieberle, Pimperle…) referring us to the island of German speaking population (descended from medieval colonists coming from Swabia, South Germany) on the Bohemian/Moravian frontier between the towns of Svitavy and Moravská Třebová.

Knowledge of this "surname geography" can be helpful if someone is unsure about the place his or her ancestors came from. Certainly, only if we are so lucky that the researched family name is not a Novák

or Svoboda, so it does not occur in every other village or town like Smith in English. Anyway, if all the documents referring to your ancestors you found on your side of the Big Pond only say Bohemia/Moravia or even Austria as their place of origin, in other words – if you have no idea where in the Czech Lands your ancestors came from, it does not hurt to consult some tools that are available. You can start with the current telephone directory (see http://en.zlatestranky.cz or hard copies of telephone directories at the CGSI library) to see where the family name appears today. And in the next stage you can take it from the opposite side – to research the above mentioned general index to the 1654 Berní rula (available at the CGSI library as well) – there you can learn where in Bohemia particular surnames occurred around the middle of the seventeenth century (i.e. which towns/villages and dominions). It may be a useful hint as for where to start your search.

All right, we have made a survey of the main sources of family names occurring in Czech society. All the examples included so far have been presented in their basic form (nominative singular). But everyone engaged in Czech genealogy comes across family names written down in many more forms. They are nouns from a grammatical point of view, and Czech as an inflective language provides nouns with a number of suffixes and endings. Some of them even change the word stem spelling. A foreigner not mastering Czech language may have problems with them.

The most frequent variation of a family name is its change according to gender. Most of the Czech family names create their **feminine forms** by adding the suffix -ová: Nováková, Dvořáková, Prokopová, Hanáková, Větrová, Doležalová, Schwarzová, Sorbiová, and the like. The adoption of that suffix in some cases causes a change of word stem: Names ending with -a or -e drop off that final vocal (Koudelka – Koudelková, Svoboda – Svobodová, Skočdopole – Skočdopolová), in some other cases a middle -e- is dropped off (Janíček – Janíčková, Marek – Marková, Vrabec - Vrabcová, Ošanec – Ošancová).

The history of that suffix is quite interesting. Like in other Christian countries in the Middle Ages, a woman in the Czech Lands was actually not considered a full-fledged individual, she was "just" someone's daughter or someone's wife. The form of her surname simply referred to that fact, it was the possessive case (because she was his) which was expressed by the suffix -ova. Later on, to be "politically correct" instead of male chauvinist, we added a diacritical mark (little slash) over the last vocal (-ová instead of -ova) – and it is not any more the possessive but the feminine form. Very simple, isn't it?

Another way to turn a Czech family name to its feminine form refers to the names having the form of adjectives ending with -ý (Novotný, Černý…) – they turn the ending to -á (Novotná, Černá…). And finally, there is a small group of names that remain unchanged – those ending with -í (Krejčí, Hořejší) or -ů (Martinů, Pavlů).

One more note regarding feminine forms. A similar suffix expressing the change according to gender exists in German too – there it is -in. Today we can find it in feminine appellatives (e.g. Lehrer/Lehrerin – man/woman teacher). In the past, that suffix was added to family names too – Mrs. Bayerin, Straussin, Lustigin, etc. And in the period when German was declared as the official language in the whole Austrian Empire (including the Czech Lands) and all records had to be conducted just in German (approximately late 18th and early 19th centuries), that suffix was used for Czech family names too. Then a ggg-grandmother of yours may have been recorded as Mrs. Nowakin/Swobodin/Skočdopolin… (instead of Mrs. Nováková/Svobodová/Skočdopolová…).

To conclude the passage about feminine forms of Czech family names, let me add that the amendment of Vital Statistics Registers Act passed in 2004 somewhat loosened the rules. Especially foreign names do not have to absolutely necessarily change their form according to gender. So, for example, the Czech wife of a Mr. Nguyen Van does not have to spell her last name Nguyen Vanová, she can simply be Mrs. Nguyen Van. Needless to say, she can preserve her maiden name or her husband can turn to that maiden name of hers, too.

Location of ancestral graves and collection of data from the tombstones belong among regular parts of genealogical projects. And there we come across another form of family names. Let me say in advance that **cemetery research** is harder in the Czech Republic compared to the United States because our cemeteries are somewhat different. We do not have so much vacant space to bury every body individually, in our country we have family plots in some of which there are several generation buried at one place. That is also why not everyone can be listed on the tombstone. Sometimes we can find there only the names of last one buried or two generations, in some cases the tombstone only says the family name: Rodina Novákova, Rodina Svobodova, Rodina Markova, Rodina Novotných, Rodina Martinů, etc. Readers of this quarterly know, I guess, that the Czech

noun rodina means family. But not everyone is such a good student of Czech. Once I brought a client of mine to the cemetery in his ancestral town, he looked around, and seeing the number of inscriptions Rodina so-and-so, he said: That "Rodina" must be a very frequent given name here. (smile).

But back to these forms of family names. We can see that on the tombstones they have actually preserved the possessive form, i.e. in most cases with the suffix -ova without any more diacritical marks. The names having the form of adjectives adopt the ending -ch (Rodina Novotných, Rodina Krejčích) or remain unchanged (Rodina Martinů, Rodina Pavlů,).

That same formula is also used in regular mail address. So, if you want to send a letter to your relatives in the Old Fatherland and want to address it to a whole family rather than just an individual, on the envelope there should be "Rodina Novákova/Novotných/Martinů…" But of course, our postal clerks understand "Novák Family" as well.

Let me repeat that children were supposed to "inherit" their family names after fathers (except illegitimate children inheriting the mother's maiden name) and wives after their husbands. But sometimes we can come across family names not following the rules of their preserving and handing down.

Cottage or House Names

A phenomenon that every researcher can get fairly flummox about are the so-called **"names after cottage"**. Here and there they appeared in many areas but most frequent and long surviving they were (and have been) especially in South Bohemia. People in a village knew that a certain family lives at a particular house. And if another man took over the property (by marriage or purchase), along with the property he took over the surname – in other words, he lost the surname after his father, and instead, inherited the surname after the farm/house/cottage. For example, we may in our research find a man who was born as Mr. Kubeš and got married (to Miss Kalátová) as Mr. Kubeš, but having taken over the Kalát family property, he gave birth to children as Mr. Kalát. This mess was supposed to be removed by the 1786 edict, but as a matter of fact, it took not years but decades until the edict's principles of family names (rather than cottage names) prevailed in official documents. Some priests started using correct (family) names in vital statistics records as late as the middle of the 19th century. So, if we return to our example of the man who turned from Kubeš to Kalát upon his marriage and movement into the Kalát's place, we can add that when he died, he was recorded as – yes, Mr. Kubeš again. And of course, the children of his, born with the name Kalát, were in marriage registers recorded under the name Kubeš too… That way the appearance of cottage names and then their "correcting" actually cause a double obstacle in genealogical search. If we are lucky, we may come across a record (e.g. for one of the man's children) where both the names – after cottage and after father – are used. Or we may be able to figure out the name change from the land register record – if an owner is recorded as the previous owner's son-in-law, it is obvious that his original family name was most likely different. Then, when looking for his actual family name, we know that in marriage register we have to locate the record not by the groom's family name (Mr. Kalát) but by the bride's one (Miss Kalátová).

And yet, people in some villages have been using those cottage names so far in colloquial speech. If you are looking for the house where the above mentioned Mr. Kubeš once lived in that village, you may hear: "Go to the house just across the street – they are the Kalát family but they sign as *(it means, in official contact they use the name)* Kubeš." Genealogy can be pretty colorful, do you agree?

We already know that the names after cottage were not just a matter of village lore, they are reflected in official documents too, namely in land registers. Records in them were bound to particular properties – if we say it in a simplified way, one by one they always listed the owners of a farm and their duties. And before houses were numbered in 1771, each of the properties was specified according to the name of the founder or oldest recorded owner – Statek Jana Nováka (Farm of Jan Novák) or Novákův statek (Novák's Farm) or simply U Nováků (At Novák's). And then everyone living "at Novák's" was called Novák. One of these forms of cottage names can still be found in detailed maps to date. Many of the farms in South Bohemia and Eastern Moravia (by the way, both areas where emigration for America was very frequent in the late 1800's and early 1900's) standing isolated, far from town centers remain bearing names of that kind: U Nováků, U Dušáků, U Březovských, and the like. A good friend of mine from Austin, Texas, John Stasny has ancestors coming from Rokytnice, Moravia. But when I researched his ancestry down to the mid-1700's, it lead me to a little town of Ratiboř, particularly to one of those isolated farms belonging to that town but standing some three miles apart

and named so far – yes, U Šťastných! When the next year I brought John to that place on the slope of a hill dominating the whole neighborhood, he was proud to return to the nest of his family after some two and a half centuries.

And there is another chance for us to come across the use of family names that same or very similar way in the Czech Republic – in the names of hotels, restaurants and taverns. We can compare it to the names such as Murphy's Tavern/Bar/Steakhouse or even McDonald's in the United States. So, for example, if you want to visit the oldest beer bar in Pilsen, go to U Salzmannů, in Prague you can taste good beer at U Pinkasů, in Prostějov you can stay at a B&B place named Penzion Kubíček, and so on. The family name in the name of the business is supposed to imply to a potential client the idea of family atmosphere.

Official Name Changes

Marriage and converting to the name after a cottage have not been the only cases when someone's surname got changed. In the "modern" period it has become possible for an individual to have their name changed on request. Most often these changes were performed if the person had been bearing a name he felt as inconvenient or even offensive – such as the one meaning "sewage odor", mentioned above, or a name referring, for example, to a less decent part of human body. No wonder that they have almost completely disappeared from the present repertory of Czech family names.

Ethnic Relation Name Changes

Another kind of change in family names refers to ethnic relations in the history of our country. In the late 18th century, when the Czech Lands belonged to the Austrian Empire, the ruling circles wanted to enforce the unification of the whole empire by language. Czech actually disappeared from official documents, they all were conducted in German, and because there are differences between the spelling in Czech and German (we have diacritical marks, in German they do not exist) many a Czech surname was fairly crooked: Ošťádal was recorded as Oschtiadal, Hlaváček as Hlawatzek, Coufal as Zaufall, and the like. And of course, there was an opposite trend from the Czech side too – some Czech patriots Czechicized their German-looking names. Many readers of this quarterly are familiar with the Sokol gymnastics organization, founded in 1862. But not everyone knows that its founder was baptized as Friedrich Emanuel Tirsch, but later on, to demonstrate his Czech patriotism, he turned to Miroslav Tyrš. Another wave of Czechicizing family names took place after World War II. Some Czech people no longer wanted to have their names look German and they transformed the spelling (Šmíd instead of Schmidt, Macek instead of Matzek) or in some case they even "translated" the name – from Schmidt to Kovář, from Schwarz to Černý, and so on.

Variations in Name Spellings

The spelling of names often varied, it many times depended on the particular person writing down a record, his education, mother tongue, age, and the like. Many common persons were practically illiterate, could not check what the priest had recorded, and if he was new to that place and did not know his parishioners very well yet, he simply wrote down what he heard. Besides, we have to realize that grammar principles both of Czech and German as modern languages were still developing at that time. That was why we can find the name Jílek spelled as Gjlek, Václavek as Wacslawek and Bouček as Bauczek. In addition, there were a number of surname forms influenced by local dialects in the past and some of them have been preserved: Mlynář, Mynář, Minář, Mlnář. Or an example from my own family. The maternal root of mine leads to Eastern Bohemia and they were named Treutnar there. One of my ancestors moved to the Moravian city of Prostějov and the name got changed to Truetner and then Treitner. And when my great-grandfather married into the Czech speaking village of Přemyslovice, the spelling of the family name was Czechicized to Trajtner. From Treutnar to Trajtner, and yet the same family.

Americanization of Surnames

Researchers from the United States have to take into account one more kind of surname change that might have taken place in their families – "Americanization" upon arrival to the New World. Omission of diacritical marks was a matter of course in the English speaking (and writing) country but some of the names were rather butchered by immigration officers or other clerks – usually simplified or made look more "American". Besides, some more changes were performed by (or upon request of) the immigrants themselves. Most of them tried to continue with the written form of their family name (and put up with its crooked pronunciation, different from what they had been used to in the old country), but if they wanted to preserve the name's original sound,

they had to conform its spelling to the rules of pronunciation in English. This way the family name Šandera became Shandera, Krejča turned to Kracha, and the like.

Ending Changes by Declension

I have already indicated that Czech as an inflective language has prepared another trap to foreigners dealing with our family names – their endings used in declension. They are very useful, they express the function of a noun or adjective in a sentence. Compared to four possible forms of nouns in English (nominative and possessive, both in singular and plural), in Czech we have seven declension cases both in singular and plural, and as for names, if we add their possessives and multiply it by two because of feminine forms, we are facing dozens of possible forms. It does not mean that each of our names has dozens of ending – some of them repeat, used for more than just one case. But it makes the whole matter even more complicated to a foreigner. Let me give you a couple of examples of family names in various cases a researcher may find in main documents for genealogy (birth/marriage/death records, land registers and census sheets).

(Father/mother:) Havel/Havlová;

(widowed after) Havlovi/Havlové;

(son of) Havla/Havlové;

(with) Havlem/Havlovou;

Havlův/Havlova/Havlovo/Havlové (=Havel's/Havlová's, e.g. cottage, garden, field);

(to Mr. and Mrs.) Havlovým;

(to stay at the house of Mr. and Mrs.) Havlových, etc.

And we could go on, showing names of different declension with different endings (son of Svobody, Němce, Černého…), or those recorded in German with the feminine suffix -in/-yn (Sedlaržin, Zatopkyn, Svobodin…).

Already this brief survey shows that a foreigner not speaking Czech (and German) who comes across one or two of these forms of the name may have a hard time to determine what the basic form should actually be. And to present one's Czech grandfather's family name as Havlové would be rather odd, wouldn't it? It is definitely better to turn to someone mastering Czech and possibly even acquainted with genealogy.

To conclude our excursion to the world of Czech family names, let me add a curiosity. You may know that we have given-name days in our calendar. (**Editor's Note**: See named day calendar elsewhere in this issue). For example, Josef is celebrated on March 19, Anna on July 26, Václav on September 28, as Miroslav I celebrate on March 6. And recently someone came up with an idea of family-name days. They published a calendar where the most common Czech family names are attached to particular dates. The authors tried to add explanations, if possible, why just that day is determined for a certain name. For example, they suggest that Kostka (cube) is celebrated on January 23 – the date when sugar cube was patented in 1843, Láska (love) on February 14 – Valentine's Day, Boháč (rich man) on April 4 when Bill Gates established Microsoft in 1975, Holub (pigeon) on October 9 – International Postal Day, or Černý (black) on October 24 – the anniversary of the 1929 "Black Friday". It is a matter of course that 365 days of year are not enough for the whole range of family names occurring in our society. So, by that special calendar, all of those who do not find their family name attached to a particular date can celebrate on April 30. There always is a reason to party…

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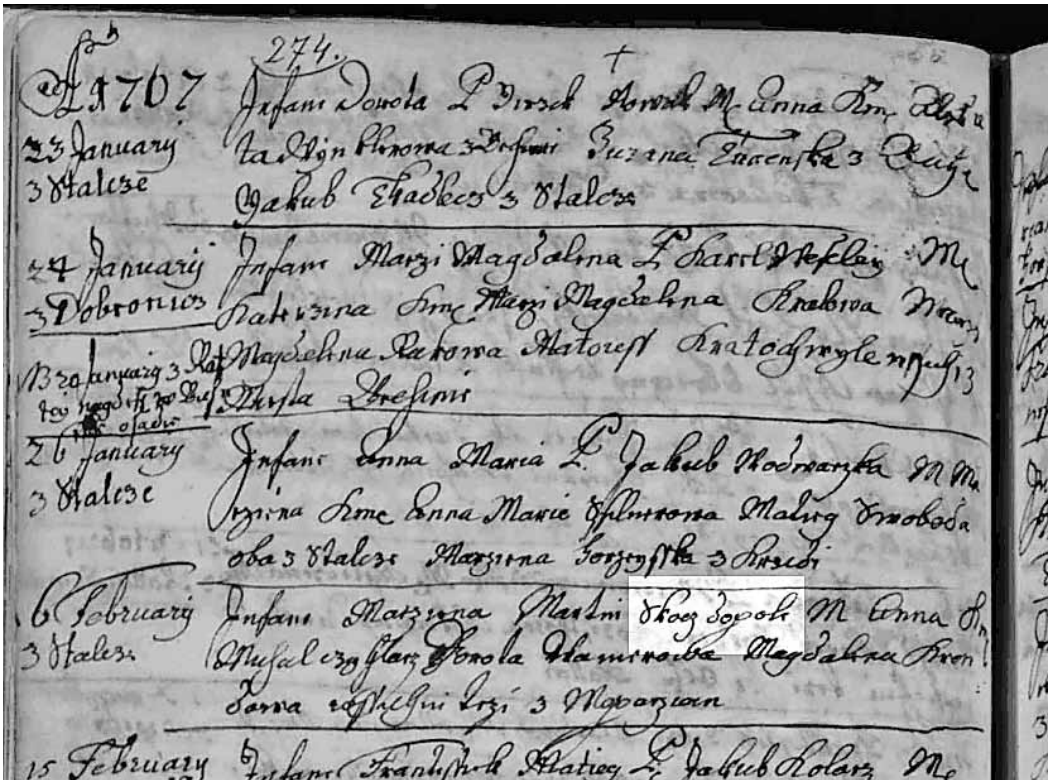

A family name with an interesting "meaning": Skočdopole (Jump into field!) in the 1707 birth record (4th from the top) for "Maržena, daughter of Martin Skoczdopole…" (State Regional Archive in Třeboň, Collection of Vital Registers, Roman-Catholic Parish Office in Bechyně, vol. 1, p. 274.)

A survey of the most frequent family names in the Czech Republic in July 2009

Feminine forms:

http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/zenska-prijmeni-20-nejcetnejsich.aspx

Name, number of persons bearing it (the "meanings" are at right):

1.	Nováková	35,558
2.	Svobodová	26,569
3.	Novotná	25,328
4.	Dvořáková	23,445
5.	Černá	18,504
6.	Procházková	16,817
7.	Kučerová	15,689
8.	Veselá	13,494
9.	Horáková	12,796
10.	Marková	11,718
11.	Němcová	11,563
12.	Pospíšilová	11,249
13.	Pokorná	11,206
14.	Hájková	10,812
15.	Jelínková	10,515
16.	Králová	10,493
17.	Růžičková	10,082
18.	Benešová	9,898
19.	Fialová	9,622
20.	Sedláčková	9,298

Masculine forms:

http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/muzska-prijmeni-obcane-cr-a-cizi-statni-prislusnici-20-nejcetnejsich-ke-dni-15-7-2009.aspx

Name, its "meaning", number of persons bearing it:

1.	Novák (newman)	34,168
2.	Svoboda (liberty)	25,292
3.	Novotný (newmann)	24,320
4.	Dvořák (free farmer)	22,299
5.	Černý (black)	17,813
6.	Procházka (walk)	16,074
7.	Kučera (curly)	15,187
8.	Veselý (merry)	12,882
9.	Horák (from upper section of town)	12,165
10.	Němec (German)	11,192
11.	Marek (Mark)	10,819
12.	Pokorný (humble)	10,770
13.	Pospíšil (he hurried)	10,742
14.	Hájek (broadleaved forest)	10,280
15.	Král (king)	9,913
16.	Jelínek (little stag)	9,893
17.	Růžička (little rose)	9,647
18.	Beneš (derived from Benedikt)	9,461
19.	Fiala (violet)	9,270
20.	Sedláček (little farmer)	8,926