

The Custom of Naming Children Old Sasieni Family Traditions. ©

INTRODUCTION

For centuries naming children after family members has been a common practice. If a name cuts across several generations, including cousins, it usually indicates a family connection. Long before children's names were chosen for their beauty or popularity, parents had other criteria for selecting names. Names were chosen not for their originality but often to honour relatives, either dead or living. Consequently the same names tended to be repeated through successive generations in European countries, Christian as well as in Jewish tradition.

TRADITIONAL NAMING PROTOCOLS

Traditionally, Jewish children were named after one of their ancestors. For religious reasons, Ashkenazi Jewish children were never named after a living ancestor. Sephardic Jews followed their own tradition of naming their children after both living and deceased ancestors.

The tradition of giving Biblical names began in the 1100s. The custom of giving two names began in the 1200s. A religious name was given to be used in the synagogue, and a non-Jewish name was given to be used on secular occasions.

Until the 1800s, Jews in northern and Eastern Europe did not use a surname. They used only their personal name and father's name. In the 1800s Jews were forced to adopt a surname by law, and these surnames could change with each generation.

With the tradition of reversing or varying names through different generations, family relationships become easier to spot in the record books. It gets confusing, however, when the desire to bestow an honoured name upon someone results in cousins who were born in the same town being given the same name--especially when they both marry women named Sarah two years apart. In such a situation genealogists are forced to depend on other records to determine Sarah's correct surname. Children named after maternal relatives can also help to distinguish the two lines.

CONTINUATION OF ORIGINAL FAMILY NAMES

The desire to perpetuate names was so strong that parents in the late 1700s and during the 1800s took steps to ensure that a name did not die out even if the child did. Mid-nineteenth century English records contain listings of a child being given the same name as a sibling who

had died previously. The result is the appearance of a "Dinah Sasiene" who appears in birth records for 1874, named after her sister by the same name who was born in 1865 but died prematurely. Dinah was their maternal grandmother's forename.

Repetition of names is helpful to the modern-day genealogist intent on determining family relationships. On occasion a child will be given the complete name of a family elder, as in the case of Morris Sassienie, born in 1922, when his father named him after his own father who was born 60 years earlier in 1862. Such a custom is evidence of considerable respect or affection within families.

ORIGINS OF NAMES

Surnames arose in the Middle Ages out of necessity to differentiate individuals with the same first name. They were also a way to acknowledge the occupation of the person—e.g. Dightmaker, Dutch for cabinetmaker, for example.

Both first and last names often became anglicised once a family came to America or England. A name that originated as Botje in Holland was changed to Betsy two generations later when her namesake was born in England.

Daughters were named after their mothers just as sons were for their fathers. The Sasieni's can find among their ancestors sixteen family members over twenty seven decades who were given some combination of the names Dinah, Henrietta, Rachel, Rose and Sarah to honour the family matriarch and her daughters, who were born between 1720 and the late nineteenth century.

SURNAME VARIANTS – EVIDENCE OF MISINTERPRETATION

Over the last 200 years there appears many variants to the surname of Sasieni. The names Lassienie, Sasine, Sasiene, Sasienie, sass, Sassiene, Sassieni, Sassienie and even Steel are on record. Many of these variants are often found even within immediate family groups. An example of this is a Morris (Moses) Sassienie, born in England 1862. Morris was the father of ten children. Their names are recorded as: Betsy Sasiene, Hannah (Annie) Sasiene, Meyer Sasiene, Dinah Sassiene, Jacob (Jack) Sassienie, Martha Sassienie, Florence Sassiene, Nathaniel (Nat) Norman Sassieni, Abram (Alfred) Sasiene, Solomon (Sidney) Sassiene.

Some of these surname variations can be attributed to errors by administrative officials in Holland & England during the early part of the nineteenth century and classic examples of errors were caused by them not knowing of the naming traditions of Jewish and some other European families. Evidence of these errors are shown with the Sassienie families recorded in the Spitalfields, East London 1861 census who were listed as Lassener. Woolf Sasiene born 1854 in

Whitechapel, London, England, was mistakenly called Woolf Lassienie during his registration of birth and listed as Lassienie in local council records. It took Woolf nearly 40 years to eventually revert back to his correct surname as Sasiene.

INDIVIDUALISM, ASSIMILATION & PATRIOTISM

A Simon Sassienie who appears in English birth records from 1871 reflects three things:

an anglicised forename to show assimilation and patriotism for his country of birth and a distinctive first name giving emphasis to the most common surname. After 1871 there was not to be another Simon Sassienie for the next 95 years until a birth in 1966. This Simon Sassienie was also born in England and is the first cousin three times removed of the Simon born in 1871.

ORTHODOXY TO DIVERSITY

Matje Koekoek (Hebrew) born abt 1750, in Holland. The name Matje was later to be known as Marie, pronounced Mar-re, in America and Britain. Matje Koekoek is the Great, Great, Great, Great, Great, Great, Great, Grandmother of Lauren Jones and Samuel Jones, twins born 2001 in England, David Greenfield born 1980 in England & Nicholas Greenfield born 1984 in England. These children were born into the protestant faith.

In today's society parents register their children at birth with names of their own choosing rather than duplicating names from long dead ancestors, and plus as the Sassienie Worldwide Family Tree becomes more diverse as different faiths and cultures are introduced into the family through marriage, the old style family names will gradually diminish, especially after the deaths of elderly relatives who are the last links to past family traditions.

VISIONS

The vision of family and its role changes as the entire discipline of sociology progresses from century to century. The notion "traditional family" can be flexible. A pre-historic tribe was a big family itself, for example. If what is questioned here is the classic Victorian family, it has certainly changed, but it is not dead. Simply, the obligations of each member toward the family are not taken as seriously, as society becomes more liberal.

CONCLUSION

All over the world, family life is changing shape as we alter the way we live and work.

The family has been changing throughout history and will no doubt continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

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