Genealogy Notes from Emily January 2017

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Ever wondered what your family name means, and where it originated? Then do your own one name study! There is definitely a connection between name and place! Often this aspect of family research becomes most evident with DNA results.

There are several types of names to consider. For example, locative: Massey (person from Massey, northern France), and other “froms”: Crosby, Barlow, Houston (not necessarily Texas), Rochester and Salisbury. Another type is topographical: Hill, Lake, Lamontagne (mountain), Cross (crossroads), Knott (lives by a hillock), Flood (lives by a small stream), Then there is occupational: Dyer, Fuller, Taylor, Baker, Carpenter, Weaver, Carver, Brewer, Fletcher (arrowmaker), Meade (brewer or seller of mead). We continue with patronymic or matronymic: the given name plus “son” or “s”, Matthews (son of Matthew), Donaldson (son of Donald), Sanders (son of Sander) - you get the drift.

There are the “Mc” and the “Mac” folks that fall in this category, the Irish and Scots. Another type is more descriptive and pinpoints a person’s /family’s dominant characteristic or physical appearance, i.e. Heller is actually a medieval German nickname for a small person. Foot or Foote indicated a deformed foot, Donner: again German, for a loud or bad-tempered individual; Crump, cripple or markable forearms; Buck, resembling a male goat; Sherlock, fair-haired. The last category here uses the forename and makes it diminutive: the given name is changed so that it can be used as a surname. My maiden name, Herrick, comes from the Old Norse personal name Eirikr or Eric. Other examples: Sorin (Yiddish, Sarah plus “in”; Hammond (Norman Hamo(n) plus “d”; and, Ulrich (German, Odal-prosperity, plus “ric”, power. Obviously, this is a very interesting part of genealogy and deserves much more study! You can do that online through the Guild of One Name Studies, at: http://onename.org; the Name Meanings Database http://ancestrynames.com; The Internet Surname Database, found at www.surnamedb.com; CyndisList’s category for surnames, at www.cyndislist.com/surnames, plus The Surname Society, http://surname-society.org. Maine State Library has a number of books on the subject as well, and I’d be happy to specify what I used here!!