

The History and Development of English Surnames

by David Flint

Part 4 -- Surnames of Occupation and Office

History

Jutes, Angles and Saxons invaded Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Norman Conquest 1066 by William, Duke of Normandy.

Development of hereditary surnames in England complete by about 1450.

Middle Ages (500-1500)

Middle English (1100-1500)

Categories of Surnames

- local place-names
- relationships
- **occupation or office**
- nicknames

Names from occupations became another way to distinguish between two men in a village with the same given name, e.g. John the baker – John the miller. Such names began as bynames and may later have become surnames.

To **download** PDF copy of A Dictionary of Old Trades, Titles and Occupations by Colin Waters:

<https://vdoc.pub/download/a-dictionary-of-old-trades-titles-and-occupations-3kk6p4v9p8a0>.

Occupations such as **potter** included many subspecialties such as procuring raw materials, type of container or pottery item made, finishes used such as staining or glazing, resulting in a wide variation of surnames arising from that occupation. Some examples: Beaker, Boller, Bowler, Chalmers, Chambers, Clay, Claybrook, Claypool, Claysmith, Crocker, Croker, Cupman, Cupperman, Muggs, Potkins, Potter, Potts, Stainer, Staines, Turner.

Smith - "One who smites" from 'smite' to strike, as with a hammer

Blacksmith, shosmith, swordsmith, goldsmith, silversmith, tinsmith

Surnames: Bellows, Marshall, Cole, Collier, Colman, Steel, Nailer, Naylor, Shearman, Sherman, Lockyer

- Smiths who made weapons: Blades, Cutler, Daggett, Naismith, Claymore, Bill, Billman, Pike, Spears, Cleaver, Mace
- Smiths who made armor: Buckler, Shields, Helm, Helms, Platner, Platter, Greaves, Greeves, Graves, Frobisher

Surnames associated with Building trades

- Occupations: masons, plasterers, carpenters, roofers, glassworkers
- Surnames: Mason, Meacham, Stone, Stoner, Tiler, Tyler; Dawber, Dober, Doberman; Carpenter, Joiner, Sawyer, Timmerman; Painter, Stainer; Thatcher,, Leadbetter, Plumber, Reader; Glassman, Glazer.

Surnames associated with Wool industry

- Wool occupations: shepherds, shearers, washers, carders, combers, spinners, weavers, fullers, dyers, bleachers, cloth finishers, makers of loom equipment, and wool merchants
- Surnames: Pastor, Shepard; Sharer, Sharman, Shearman, Sherman; Landers, Landry; Card, Carder, Cardon; Comber, Kempster; Bower, Bowyer, Boyer; Spinner; Burrell, Draper, Weaver, Webb, Webber, Webster; Fuller, Tucker, Walker; Dresser, Dryer; Deyer, Dyer, Lister, Rocker, Rucker; Sligh, Sliman, Slyman, Spindler; Draper, Packard, Wolman, Woolman, Wooler.

Surnames associated with the Household

- Household occupations: cook, panter, cater, spence, wardrobe, ewer, chamberlain, chalmer, bower, naper, usher, messenger, page, herald, jester, minstrel.
- Surnames: Cook, Cooke; Butler, Caterer, Hall, Spence, Spencer, Spenser; Chalmers, Chamberlain, Chambers, Ewer, Lower, Lurie, Herald, Usher Page, Paget, Paige, Chaplain, Chaplin, Kaplan.

Surnames associated with Office, Rank & Status

- Nobility: king/queen/prince, duke, marquess, earl, viscount, baron
- Gentry – landowners and armigers but not peerage
- Deputies – operated the estate
- ‘bail’ > Bailly, Bailey > ‘bailiff’; surname variants: Bail, Baile, Bailey, Bailiss. Bailly, Bailor, Bailly, Bayles, Bayley, Baylis, Baylor

Surnames associated with Office, Rank & Status

- Gentry: bachelor, child, squire, knight, rider, page

Surnames associated with Office, Rank & Status

- granger from Anglo-French ‘*grounger*’, farm bailiff > Grainge, Grainger, Grange, Granger.
- ‘reeve’ - a trusted servant > Reaves, Reeve, Reeves.
- hayward from OE word meaning “guardian of the fence or hedge” > Hayward.
- steward from OE ‘*stiuwerd*’ keeper of the house > Steward, Stewart, Stuart

Clerk - Clark

- Clerk –pronounced clark
- two percent literacy in medieval times
- ‘clericus’, priest > cleric > clerk > clark: ‘Richerius –clericus’ (1086)
- graff for a public scribe, from ‘grafer’, “to write”
- Latimer, the ability to read or speak Latin
- Marker, from OE ‘*mearcraere*’ for “notary” or “writer”
- Nutter from OE ‘*nutere*’ for “scribe” or “secretary”
- Norman names Escriueyn and Scriueyn from the Old French ‘*escrivain*’ meaning “a copier of manuscripts”.

Reference Material for Surnames from Occupations

England Surnames Derived from Occupations, Ranks -International Institute:

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Surnames_Derived_from_Occupations,_Ranks_-_International_Institute

FamilySearch Article – Business and Occupations:

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Business_and_Occupations OR-- on England genealogy page: https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Genealogy > click on England Online Genealogy Records button > scroll down to Occupations for access to more records

Category: England Surnames: (FamilySearch-Surnames)

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Category:England_Surnames

GENUKI: <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng#Occupations>

Oxford English Dictionary: <https://www.oed.com>

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For Dropbox Cloud link to English Surnames by Bardsley, use:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/unry3xvk1k6nlbx7upfhz/Bardsley-English-Surnames-ebook-Project-Gutenberg.txt?rlkey=tpn978vlg4bhbimljig2mo897&st=sdo2jaj5&dl=0> for the .txt file format and <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/dtri5hm4z9xc7xe02hgz/Bardsley-English-Surnames-ebook-Project-Gutenberg.pdf?rlkey=s3dz4ljcv3ed2bad3lyw9okyt&st=gcwqv39&dl=0> for the **PDF** version.

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(To download PDF copy of *A Dictionary of Old Trades, Titles and Occupations* by Colin Waters:
<https://vdoc.pub/download/a-dictionary-of-old-trades-titles-and-occupations-3kk6p4v9p8a0>.)

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