Primitive personal names doubtless originated soon after the invention of spoken language, although the date of their first use is lost in the darkness of ages preceding recorded history. For thousands of years thereafter, first or given names were the only designations that men and women bore; and in the dawn of historic times, when the world was less crowded than it is today and every man knew his neighbor, one title of address was sufficient. Only gradually, with the passing centuries and the increasing complexity of civilized society, did a need arise for more specific designations. While the roots of our system of family names may be traced back to early civilized times, actually the hereditary surname as we know it today dates from a time scarcely earlier than nine hundred years ago.

A surname is a name added to a baptismal or Christian name for the purposes of making it more specific and of indicating family relationship or descent. Classified according to origin, most surnames fall into four general categories: (1) those formed from the given name of the sire; (2) those arising from bodily or personal characteristics; (3) those derived from locality or place of residence; and (4) those derived from occupation. It is easier to understand the story of the development of our institution of surnames if these classifications are borne in mind.

As early as biblical times certain distinguishing appellations were occasionally employed in addition to the given name, as for instance, Joshua the son of Nun, Simon the son of Jonas, Judas of Galilee, and Simon the Zealot. In ancient Greece daughters were named after their fathers, as Chryseis, the daughter of Chryses; and sons' names were usually an enlarged form of the father's, as Hieronymus, son of Hiero. The Romans, with the rise of their civilization, met the need for hereditary designations by inventing a complex system whereby every patrician traced his descent by taking several names. None of them, however, exactly corresponded to surnames, as we know them, for the "clan name", although hereditary, was given also to slaves and other dependents. This system proved to be but a temporary innovation; the overthrow of the Western Empire by barbarian invaders brought about its end and a reversion to the primitive custom of a single name.

The ancient Scandinavians and for the most part the Germans had only individual names, and there were no family names, strictly speaking, among the Celts. But as family and tribal groups grew in size, individual names became inadequate and the need for supplementary appellations began to be felt. Among the first employed were such terms as "the Strong", the "Hardy", the "Stern", the "Dreadful—in—battle"; and the nations of northern Europe soon adopted the practice of adding the father's name to the son's, as Oscar son of Carnuth and Dermid son of Duthno.

True surnames, in the sense of hereditary designations date in England from about the year 1000. Largely they were introduced from Normandy, although there are records of Saxon surnames prior to the Norman Conquest. Perhaps the oldest known surname in England is that of Hwita Hatte, a keeper of bees, whose daughter was Tate Hatte.

During the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042—1066) there were Saxon tenants in Suffolk bearing such names as Suert Magno, Stigand Soror, Siuward. Rufus, and Leuric Hobbesune (Hobson); and the Domesday record of 1085—1086, which exhibits some curious combinations of Saxon forenames with family Norman names, shows surnames in still more general use.

By the end of the twelfth century hereditary names had become common in England. But even by 1465 they were not universal. During the reign of Edward V a law was passed to compel certain Irish outlaws to adopt surnames; "They shall take unto them a Surname, either of some Town, or some Colour, as Black, or Brown, or some Art or Science, as Smyth or Carpenter, or some Office, as Cooke or Butler." And as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century a similar decree compelled Jews in Germany and Austria to add a German surname to the single names which they had previously used.

As stated above, family names may be divided into four general classes according to their origin. One of the largest of these classes is that comprising surnames derived from the given name of the father. Such names were formed by means of an added prefix or suffix denoting either "son of" or a diminutive. English names terminating in <u>son</u>, <u>ing</u>, and <u>kin</u> are of this type, as are also the innumerable names prefixed with the Gaelic <u>Mac</u>, the Norman <u>Fitz</u>, the Welsh <u>ap</u>, and the Irish <u>0'</u>. Thus John's sons became Jobnsons; William' sons, Williamsons or Wilsons; Richard's sons, Richardsons or Richardses (the final "s" of "Richards" being a contarction of "son"); Neill's sons, MacNeills; Herbert's sons, Fitz Herberts; Thomas's sons ap Thomases (ap has been dropped from many names of which it was formerly a part): and Reilly's sons, O'Reillys.

Another class of surnames, those arising from some bodily or personal characteristic of their first bearer apparently grew out of what were in the first instance nicknames. Thus Peter the Strong became Peter Strong, Roger of small stature became Roger Little or Roger Small, and black-haired William or blond Alfred became William Black or Alfred White. From the many names of this type, only a few need be mentioned: Long, Short, Hardy, Wise, Good, Gladman, Lover and Youngman.

A third class of family names, and. perhaps the largest of all, is that comprising local surnames—names derived from and originally designating the place of residence of the bearer. Such names were popular in France at an early date and were introduced into England by the Normans, many of whom were known by the titles of their estates. The surnames adopted by the nobility were mainly of this type, being used with the particles <u>de</u>, <u>de la</u>, or <u>del</u> (meaning "of" or "of the"). The Saxon equivalent was the word <u>atte</u> ("at the"), employed in such names as John atte Brook, Edmund atte Lane, Godwin atte Brigg, and William atte Bourne. A vestige of this usage survives in the names Atwell, Atwood, and Atwater; in other cases the Norman <u>de</u> was sub substituted; and in still others, such as Wood, Briggs, and Lane, the particle was dropped. The surnames of some of the Pilgrim fathers illustrate place designations: for instance, Winthrop means "from the friendly village"; Endicott, "an end cottage"; Bradford, "at the broad ford"; and Standish, "a stony park". The suffixes "ford", "ham,", "ley", and "ton", denoting locality, are of frequent occurrence in such names as Ashford, Bingham, Burley, and Norton.

While England enjoyed a period of comparative peace under Edward the Confessor, a fourth class of surnames arose--names derived from occupation. The earliest of these seem to have been official names, such as Bishop, Mayor, Fawcett (judge), Alderman, Reeve, Sheriff, Chamberlain, Chancellor, Chaplain, Deacon, Latimer (interpreter), Marshall, Sumner (summoner), and Parker (park-keeper).

Trade and craft names, although of the same general type, were of somewhat later origin. Currier was a dresser of skins, Webster a weaver, Wainwright a wagon builder, and Baxter a baker. Such names as Smith, Taylor, Barber, Shepherd, Carter, Mason, and Miller are self—explanatory.

Many surnames of today which seem to defy classification or explanation are corruptions of ancient forms which have become disguised almost beyond recognition. Longfellow, for instance, was originally Longueville, Longshanks was Longchamps, Troublefield was Tuberville, Wrinch was Renshaw, Diggles was Douglas, and Snooks was Sevenoaks. Such corruptions of family names, resulting from ignorance of spelling, variations in pronunciation, or merely from the preference of the bearer, tend to baffle both the genealogist and the etymologist. Shakespeare' s name is found in some twenty-seven different forms, and the majority of English and Anglo—American surnames have, in their history, appeared in four to a dozen or more variant spellings.

In America a greater variety of family names exists than anywhere else in the world. Surnames of every race and nation are represented. While the greater number are of English, Scotch, Irish, or Welsh origin, brought to this country by scions of families which had borne these names for generations prior to emigration, many others, from central and southern Europe and from the Slavic countries, where the use of surnames is generally a more recently established practice, present considerable difficulty to the student of etymology and family history.

Those Americans who possess old and honored names—-who trace the history of their surnames back to sturdy immigrant ancestors, or even beyond, across the seas, and into the dim mists of antiquity--may be rightfully proud of their heritage. While the name, in its origin, may seem ingenious, humble, surprising, or matter—of—fact, its significance today lies not in a literal interpretation of its original meaning but in the many things that have happened to it since it first came into use. In the beginning it was only a word, a convenient label to distinguish one John from his neighbor John who lived across the field. But soon it established itself as a part of the bearer's individuality; and as it passed to his children, his children's children, and their children, it became the symbol not of one man but of a family and all that family stood for. Handed down from generation to generation, it grew inseparably associated with the achievement, the tradition, and the prestige of the family. Like the coat of arms--that vivid symbolization of the name which warrior ancestors bore in battle--the name itself, borne through every event of a man's life and through the lives of scores of his progenitors, became the badge of family honor--the "good name" to be proud of, to protect, and to fight for if need be.
As the worthy deeds of the marching generations have given it dignity and splendor, it has become an institution, a family rallying cry, and the most treasured possession of those who bear it.

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