

## “Your Name”

### COFER

The surname *Cofer* and *Coffer* (Middle and Modern English forms), *Cofre* (Old French), *Kofer* (German), and even *Cophinus* (Latin) and *Κοφινος* (Greek) are derived from the same occupational source or idea, which is keeper of the treasure or treasure box. The English forms go back to the Old English name, *Coferer* or *Cofferer*, which was a common name in the thirteenth century. This occupation of keeper of the treasure box or treasurer functioned before the days of checkbooks, banks, paper money, and safety deposit boxes. In those days of a half dozen centuries ago, this trusted servant or handler of the lord's valuables, such as gold, silver, and jewels, on every expedition, whether warlike or peaceful, had to be present for business reasons, and it was he who had to superintend the transit from place to place of the chest or coffer (cofer, Middle English) of solid coinage or jewels under his care. In old literature such names as William le Coferer, Godfrey le Cofferers, John le Cofferer, and Ralph le Cofferer, functioning thus appear. Later periods show the shortening of these names through the elimination of the final *er*.

One interesting activity found in David Brooks Cofer's family is the circumstance that so many of its members have served in that occupational capacity of treasurer. His own grandfather was treasurer for years of a county in Kentucky; his father served as treasurer in various capacities; his own son has served as treasurer of a fraternal organization; David Brooks himself had various types of experience as holder and keeper of the purse strings—in religious organizations, in a business enterprise, in social projects, and even in an athletic club. So long after the origin of names the bearers have a penchant and predilection to carry out the meaning and application of that source and beginning of the name!

### CORCORAN

Corcoran is an Irish name meaning 'purple'; in Gaelic O'Corcraín, 'descendant of Corcair (purple)'; a cognate of the Latin *purpura*, with the usual Gaelic substitution of the guttural for the labial. Its forms vary from O'Corcrane, O'Corkerane, O'Corkran, Corcoran, Corkeran, Corkran, to Cochrane, etc. While widely diffused in Ireland it is not among the most frequent surnames. Black in *The Surnames of Scotland* derives the Scottish Cochrane from a place name, supporting it by rather conclusive evidence, but does not give the etymology of the place name. There is an earlier record of the name in Scotland than

his first instance in 1262 A.D. In Ireland, Cochrane, etc. is used interchangeably with Corcoran, though it actually comes from a different root. The use of the name may arise from a ruddy complexion, a tuath color, or with a little imagination, may even have been applied to a person entitled to wear the purple.

### DEMETRIUS JOHN GEORGACAS

Demetrius [*də'mi·triəs*] is the English form of Latin *Demetrius* [*dē·mētrius*] which in turn is adapted from ancient Greek *Dēmētrios* [*dē·mē·trios*], being originally an adjective meaning belonging to Demeter, Demeter's (*Dēmētēr* is the name of the ancient Greek goddess of agriculture and harvest, equivalent to the Roman goddess *Cerēs*). The ancient *Dēmētrios* became in late Koine *Di'mitris* and in mediaeval and modern Greek was pronounced *ði'mitris* (*d* changed to *ð*, *ε* became *i*, and the pitch accent was lost in favor of stress accent in postclassical Greek) side by side with the form *ði'mitrios* of the puristic (written) language in mediaeval and modern times. The name became common among the Christian Greeks after the name of the great Saint Demetrius of Salonica and spread to the Slavic peoples. Hence many forms in spoken modern Greek: *ði'mitris*, *ðimi'tros*, *'mitros*, *'mitsos*, *'mimis*, *ðimi'trakis* (with the diminutive suffix *-akis* "little").

John is a false middle name which is due to the immigration authorities and the general practice of second given names in the United States. The second name of any Greek person (except married women) is the father's name and has the form of the possessive case. *John* is in modern Greek *Ioánnis* (puristic, pronounced *io'añis*) and *'Yañis* (in the spoken language), so the possessive case was *Ioánnou* pronounced *io'anu* "of John, John's."

Georgacas [*dʒɔrgəkəs*] in English is the form for the modern Greek *Georgakás* [pronounced *ɣorɣa'kas* in the spoken language, accurately *yeorɣa'kas* in the puristic]; this was the closest Anglicization for me, whereas my brother changed it to *Georgans* [*dʒɔrdʒəns*] but now prefers and often writes *Georgakas*. Many, however, pronounce the name differently (*dʒɔrdʒəkəs*, *dʒɔrdʒakas*, etc.). The Christian name *Geōrgios* (a derivative of *geōrgós* [*gē* land, soil, *-ergós* tilling] husbandman, farmer) meant pertaining to farmers and became one of the most common given names after St. George (*'ayios Ye'oryios*, *Sanctus Georgius* in Latin, *Saint Georges* in French, *Saint George* in English). The genuine late Koine form was *Ge'orgis*, mediaeval and modern *'Yoryis*, *'Yorɣos*, etc., but in the puristic again *Ye'oryios*. From *'Yorɣos* a hypocoristic form *Yor'ɣakis* Little George, Georgie was derived (cf. *ðimi'trakis* above), which has been in use for centuries. It seems that the name *Yorɣa'kas* is an augmentative form of *Yor'ɣakis* probably a nickname originally meaning "fat *Yorɣákis*", for the suffix *-ás* is augmentative, so also *Yorɣa'ras*, *Yorɣa'las*, *Ando'nas*, etc.

### PUGH

The name means son of Hugh and is almost identical with the Scots MacHugh, the original Welsh name having been MapHugh, the Map being the Welsh Gaelic equivalent of the Scots Gaelic Mac, both meaning 'son of.' The first step in the evolution of the name to its present form was the dropping of the M to make apHugh; the second step was the dropping of the a to make pHugh; and the third step was the dropping of the H and the capitalizing of the p to take its place with the resultant present form of the name, Pugh. Other Welsh names with similar histories are Price, Preece, son of Rice, Reece, Rhys, etc.; Probert, son of Robert; and Pritchard, Prichard, son of Richard, the first spelling with the t inserted being the more usual today.

### VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON

The name of our vice president is a typical example of a Scandinavian name becoming Americanized. In Iceland only the given name is used, to which sometimes, for instance in the telephone directory, is added the information about his father's name, e.g. Stefansson. Quite automatically, the father's name with the suffix -son becomes the family name when necessary. Old Norse *Vilhjalmur* occurs in Norway for the first time in the beginning of the 12th century. The first Icelander we know with this name died in 1238. During the late Middle Ages it became a rather common name, both in Iceland and Norway. It is originally a continental name, OHG *Willahelm*, *Willihelm* which came rather early to England. It was borrowed into Scandinavia both from the Continent and the British Isles, but to Iceland it probably came mainly from England.

### WESLAGER

Onomatologists who wish to trace this family name are bound to disappointment. It is nothing but one of the many renderings of a non-English name into a spelling which approximates the sounds of it. The original family name of our member and contributor was Wollschläger, i.e. a man who prepares wool for manufacture. The most common German name derived from this profession is probably Wöllner. When Weslager's paternal grandfather came to America, he used the German form. He continued to use it until his eldest son enrolled in grade school in a suburb of Pittsburgh known then as Beltzhoover. The teacher first recorded the boy's name as Wellslager; later teachers put it down as Weslager, then pronounced with a long *ä*. When the other four sons and three daughters entered the same school they became known as Weslägers, although their father continued to use the German name.