
Names Forum

For a number of years ANS member Brenna E. Lorenz (Box 1135, Yigo, Guam 96929) has studied unusual personal names, with some interesting results (see *Names* 37.3 [September 1989]: 201–30), but occasionally she runs up against names for which she can find little or no information. She thinks that other readers of this journal may know something about some of these names and has suggested that we use this space for the exchange of information. I wrote to Cleveland Kent Evans (Psychology, Bellevue College, Bellevue, NE 68005), whose book is reviewed in this issue, for his reaction, and he responded with a tentative answer to one of her questions and a couple of questions of his own.

Anyone with ideas about the questions which Brenna Lorenz and Cleveland Evans pose below is encouraged to write either to them or to me. Appropriate responses will be printed in subsequent issues. Questions on any aspect of names and naming are also welcome. — Editor.

From Brenna Lorenz:

1. According to Sabine Baring-Gould in *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, St. Ursula's name is a corruption of the name of the "Swabian goddess Ursel or Hörsel (Hürsel) ... who became the Venus ... of Hürselberg, who entranced the debauched Tannhäuser." Who was this goddess and what was the origin of her name? Was she the same as the Anglo-Saxon earth goddess?

2. *Paralee* was a relatively common girl's name in the nineteenth-century South, and it continues to be used today. The earliest occurrence I have found is 1824. Does anyone know of a possible literary source for this name? Has anyone found an earlier occurrence?

3. According to some American sources, the Russian first name *Galina* (in Polish *Halina*) is equivalent to *Helen*. This is denied by all Russians and Poles I have consulted. According to N. A. Petrovskiy, the name is derived from the Greek name *Galen*, and according to W. F. H. Nicolaisen, the name means "chicken." If either of the latter two derivations is accurate, is it likely for /g/ to go to /h/ in Polish, considering that Polish has a /g/ sound? My Polish friend, Halina Romanek (who is not a linguist), does not think so. If not, what is the original form of the name: *Galina*, *Halina*, or something else?

From Cleveland Kent Evans:

1. Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges (*A Dictionary of First Names*, Oxford, 1990), agree that *Galina* is probably from Greek *galene* 'calm.' They say the Polish *Halina* is of uncertain derivation, but is a form of either *Galina* or *Helen*. I don't see why it couldn't be a blend of *Helena* and *Galina*. In modern times blend names are always being created, either deliberately or accidentally. For instance, *Chassidy*, which is probably a blend of *Cassidy* and *Chastity*, regularly turns up on my computer printouts as a girl's name, and just the other day in the Omaha zoo I overheard a mother distinctly call her son *Trevis* several times; that must be a blend of *Trevor* and *Travis*. This blending doesn't even have to be conscious, but could be the result of misremembering or confusion. There's no reason why Poles couldn't be just as subject to that sort of confusion as Americans are.

2. *Brittany* is now the commonest name for girls born in the United States, just surpassing *Ashley* in 1989. However, the original source of its popularity is still a bit mysterious to me. The only public figure who seems to bear this name is the actress Morgan Brittany. It would be unusual for an actress' surname to be taken up as a first name for girls so strongly and suddenly, though it is true that *Charisse* as a first name seems to have been spawned by the fame of Cyd Charisse. More importantly, the actress cannot be the sole source of the name because there were three girls named *Brittany* born in Detroit in 1971, before Morgan had any fame at all (and probably before she had changed her name to *Morgan Brittany* from *Suzanne Cupito*!), Does anyone know who it was who first thought of naming daughters after this French province? Was there an obscure character on a soap opera or in a romance novel around 1970?

3. For a more historical question, in my research in the 1850 census of Washtenaw County, Michigan, I ran across a twenty-three-year-old woman, born in New York state, named *Lodusca Rolins* (wife of Jeremiah), living in a rural area. The same census lists an eight-year-old girl, *Lodorski Showerman*, living in Ypsilanti, and a three-year-old girl, *Loduski Hurd*, living in Ann Arbor. There is no obvious relationship between the three families, except that all three families had come from New York state and the three seem to share a common difficult name that census takers had trouble spelling, though it's striking that two different census takers in 1850 would spell the children's names with an *i* rather than a *y* at the end, as would be normal for pet forms at the time. Can anyone tell me where *Lodusca/Loduski* comes from? Would there have been some obscure character in a novel or perhaps a legend of an Iroquois maiden in New York to account for this name?