

Review

Americanization of German Surnames and the Related Process of Changes in Europe

Changes in Europe. By Frederick Walter Hilbig. ([University of Utah Master's Thesis] Salt Lake City, 1958. Pp. 83).

The book is a mimeograph-reproduction of the author's M. A. thesis. Its intentions are: 1. to encourage the compilation of a dictionary of Americanized German surnames; 2. to acquaint the genealogists in Germany with this American surname problem; 3. "to enable bearers of Americanized German surnames to learn the etymology of their names and the equivalent modern High-German (or Low-German) spelling of the same, and to make people aware of their true national antecedents." It is not exactly clear to me how these aims are thought to be fulfilled by the present work.

In spite of the author's statements concerning methodology, most of which are, it seems to me, quite well taken, methodology is cast to the four winds in the actual gathering and interpretation of data. On page 1 it is pointed out that many people are not aware of the origin of their surnames, and that statements by informants as to such origin are not to be trusted. Nevertheless, he is later willing to accept informants' statements (in the guise of biographies in post office directories) concerning the origin of their names. Although he makes the statement (p. 14) that "no authentic etymology of a given surname can be attempted without a thorough investigation of its history on genealogical principles," no such investigation, as the author admits, is attempted for the names he discusses. Thus, German origin is assumed for names which may actually be Dutch or English, for example. The data was collected by going through city directories, telephone directories, etc. and extracting those names which seemed to the author to be of German origin. No statement of methodology concerning the manner of etymologizing is given, but it seems obvious that names were connected with each other whenever it seemed plausible to the author that they were of the same origin. Thus, *O'Meyer* and *Obermeyer*, *Abendschein* and *Ovenshire*, *Argenbright* and *Erkenbrack* are connected without any discussion as to the reason for such a connection.

The book contains an interesting chapter on "Changes of Surnames within the German Languages," taken for the most part from the usual reference works, and an appendix in which the names are arranged according to their alleged derivation and are etymologized. In spite of the objections raised in this review, the book may be of use as a collection of materials, and, with a thorough reworking in accordance with proper methodological requirements, requirements recognized by the author, it could represent a sound contribution to German-American onomastics.

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TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 1958

Income:

Dues collected in 1958	\$ 3182.00
Sale of copies of NAMES	432.00
Sale of Pulgram pamphlet	52.76
Sale of Gudde, "Significance of Names . . ."	1.50
Income from advertisement	35.00
Contributions	85.00
	<u>\$ 3788.26</u>
Balance carried forward from 1957	1212.59
	<u>\$ 5000.85</u>

Expenditures:

Printing of NAMES	\$ 2000.00
Mailing and supplies, Editorial Office	255.46
Mailing and supplies, Executive Secretary-Treasurer's Office	118.84
Bank charges and corporation fee	8.00
Promotion expenses, Membership Committee	184.97
Ballot expenses, Nominating Committee	50.00
Refunds on overpayments	4.00
	<u>\$ 2621.27</u>
Cash on hand, December 31, 1958	\$ 2379.58
	<u>\$ 5000.85</u>

Respectfully submitted

Fritz L. Kramer

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