

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

# The Census Taker Knows

## Collecting Information for Portland's City Directory Is Large Excursion That Takes One Into Foreign Lands and Among Strange People—Incidentally Name Hunting Becomes a Fascinating Pursuit Followed With Frenzied Enthusiasm and Zeal

By Charles E. Sawyer.

If one wishes to properly study human nature, let one enlist his services in a city directory campaign. For a recruit, it's a hard experience, but it's worth the effort. He must use tact, exercise patience, willingly suffer heat, cold, rain, hunger and thirst if necessity demands, and practice all the human virtues. He must learn to "speak softly," but never to "carry a big stick," because he can't do it, you know. He must accept all the snubs given and still remain a gentleman. Like Will Carleton's "Country Editor," he must combine the wisdom "of Moses and Solomon both," and yet despite all affronts, on all occasions "learn to strangle a natural oath."

One must be as tireless as an electron. Judging by personal experience, it might be well to use roller skates so as to become a sort of modern Mercury, for name-hunting is a job generally of "magnificent distances." It combines headwork and footwork in large chunks.

While a knowledge of modern languages is most valuable, it can be dispensed with, but lack of this knowledge makes for less efficiency. Speaking from actual knowledge, I should recommend German especially, then Italian, some French and a smattering at least of Russian, Polish and the Scandinavian languages. In a cosmopolitan city, the reasons for this are obvious. It is not the purpose of the writer to "talk shop," but rather to set down real experiences, to give the reader some genuine human interest stories.

Solomon tells us "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." Shakespeare inquires:

"What's in a name? that which we call a rose,  
By any other name would smell as sweet."

Schiller and Goethe, Moliere and La Rochefoucauld, Greek, Roman, Persian and Arabian writers have punged out very excellent puns on human names. Really names nowadays don't mean anything. Goethe hits the idea when he says, "Name ist Schall und Rauch"—the name is sound and smoke.

Once one gets enthused in name-hunting, the desire becomes as insatiate as head-hunting or scalp-taking, and it's much less bloody. In the Portland City Directory for the coming year there will appear names that are famous in history, literature, science, oratory, etc. Here are a few of them: Adams, Alexander, Austen, Bruce, Byron, Browning, Burns (Robert), Burke, Bacon, Christ, Calhoun, Clay, Cromwell, Dickens (Charles), Douglas, Dumas, Eliot, Franklin (Ben), Fielding, Grant, Goethe, Harte, Hawthorne, Holmes (Oliver W.), Hugo, Homer, Irving, Jackson, Jefferson, Kingsley (Charles), Keats, Lee (Robert E.), Lamb, Lincoln, Milton, McKinley, O'Connell, O'Connor, Perry, Poe, Pope, Reade, Shelley, Selkirk, Stevenson, Sterne, Shakespeare, Scott (Walter), Tennyson, Webster, Whitman, Whittier, Washington (George), and so on, ad infinitum.

### A Few Experiences.

At a workingman's rooming-house, conducted by a Japanese woman, there was an interesting experience. Her voice seemed incomprehensible. With that rare politeness for which the people of Nippon are famed, she requested my pencil. Her English was perfect, with just enough of accent to make it charming. As she wrote her name in beautifully regular characters, I frankly complimented her on her use of our language. She modestly admitted four years of study in Nagasaki supplemented by other studious years in a London school from which she was graduated.

Less than two years ago she became a widow, with a baby. Nothing daunted, this brave little woman from the land of the chrysanthemum and cherry blossom had launched forth in a strange land in the rooming-house business. May the kindly gods protect and prosper her! In her helpfulness she even went so far as to write polite little notes leaving them in the rooms of her absent lodgers, requesting full information. Next day when I returned, she was genuinely distressed in being unable to give a full report, two having rudely refused. She felt sorry that I should have called again in vain, never thinking for a moment of the extra trouble she had undertaken, in a place where all the work in 20 rooms fell upon her frail shoulders.

In another place, also conducted by a Japanese woman, unversed in English, it was not easy sailing. She was very wary and timorous, but I finally won out. One of her lodgers, a young mulatto woman, explained to me that the landlady, because my suit was blue, thought I must be some sort of an officer. It is strange what a dread is stirred in the minds of the masses by a blue-coat.

The fear of possible military conscription hangs, like the sword of Damocles suspended by a single hair, over the heads of some. For instance, one day a door was opened by a husky young fellow from British Columbia. The cast of countenance and the delightful "burr" on the tongue bespoke the "canny Scot." With Gaelic astuteness he parried my questions, till finally the reason of his secretiveness came out. When he learned that long as is the strong arm of Great Britain, it cannot con-

script a man in Uncle Sam's domain, he grew communicative.

An elderly Russian Jewess proved very guarded. She feared that some minion of the czar would drag her boy into the carnage of war should he find his name in the directory. When it was made clear to her that this could never be, there was no further difficulty.

"Say, what you-all want?" was the greeting at one doorway from a low-browed and villainous looking negro. When duly informed, he continued:

"No sah, Ah don't want mah name in no directory. Ah's had plenty of trouble dataway befo'. Folkses finds we-all too easy. You-all white man git out hyar."

"I got," but not before I had made it clear that the directory was no place for "no-count" whelps like him, among respectable people. Most colored persons are sensible in the matter and readily and courteously give their names. It is perfectly clear that persons who refuse information have reasons. Perhaps they are dodging collectors; maybe they are guilty of some crime, and thus seek to lose their identity. Others are merely conceited, puffed-up with their own personal importance, possessed of contrariness and all-around general cussedness.

### A Belgian Woman

The doorway was dark and the light uncertain. The woman was a foreigner—of what nationality I did not know—but I was soon to be enlightened. I hazarded a query in German. She stiffened, and her eyes flashed unutterable scorn.

"Me onderstan' wat you weesh. Me onderstan', but me will no speak him. Me a Belgian," and she said it proudly, as she defiantly tossed her head. The world only dimly realizes the bitterness which the Belgians all feel toward the ruthless, crushing losses who wear the spiked helmet. The memories of Louvain and Liege—of desecrated Rheims—will rankle for generations yet unborn. Perhaps the Teuton scars in Flanders may never heal, and—"The mills of God grind slowly."

The word "postoffice" is about the same in all languages. The utterance of this magical word generally overcomes all difficulties. By some sort of mysterious cerebration, most foreigners seem to comprehend that accuracy in their name and address is essential, all of which "postoffice" suggests.

Apartment house janitors almost always lent willing aid, and were courteous, for which they are gratefully remembered.

In the day's work experiences were varied. They were often pathetic, sometimes droll, generally surprising, seldom commonplace.

Among the Italians and Jews there are many types of physical beauty. The former remind one of the old Romans and their wondrous history. Then taking great leaps from that glorious past, the mind harkens reviews the history of Italy. It is filled with splendid names, but there are dark pages, too. Hazy pictures of the Borgias, the Doges of Venice, flit past; of Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel; of the hosts of brilliant artists, poets and musicians. Then, again to the present.

This people—these Italians—not Eytaliani—are gracious, warm-hearted and polite. As Edgar Saltus says, they are the Orientals of the Occident. The savory odors of many an Italian dinner—albeit, too savory sometimes of garlic—still linger in memory. And so do the strains of music and song and laughter one hears from nearly every abode. A proverb of the race typifying its passionate love for melody, says:

"La musica e il lamento dell'amore o la preghiera a gli Dei"—Music is the lament of love, or a prayer to the Gods.

Isn't it true?

Many a little fellow from the "shores of Italy" has looked into my face through wondrous eyes whose dark beauty might well have adorned the canvas of a Michael Angelo or a Raphael. One such, on a golden September morn acted as my interpreter for his mother. Dear little chap! He misunderstood me when I asked the name of his father, giving me his own instead. When he said it was "Dante," I marveled not. Perhaps some day he, too, like his illustrious namesake, may become a great poet. Chi lo sa?

One Italian proved most versatile. He spoke good English. He was a barber, a purveyor of wines, a notary public, a conveyancer and had studied law. He had considerable influence among his countrymen. Where any difficulty was encountered among the denizens of his district, his name proved an open sesame, and the information poured forth readily.

By considerable practice I soon learned to write without hesitation such names as Luigi, Gaetano, Giuseppe, Congetta, Lucrezia and, of course, hundreds of Rosas. This seemed immensely to amuse one old grandmother. Alongside stood her granddaughter of 18 summers, an interested spectator. She was a sort of combination of both Hebe and Juno. Her eyes were as dark and languishing as an houri's. Quoth the old dame:

"Me no spika da inglesa."  
But it didn't matter so long as Congetta did. My mental faculties proved too slow with one name. Congetta, disclosing a perfect dental formula in a very pretty mouth, volunteered with a radiant smile:

"You no understand? Geeva me da pena," and she wrote the name.

And the litt' bambino all around, basking in the sun, rolled in the dirt and wore glad of life.

### In the Jewish Quarter.

For a people whom the fates have so remorselessly pursued, one can hardly believe that the Jews have any sense of humor left, but they have. They have developed, too, a dialect—the Yiddish. It is quaint and expressive. They love good cheer, and to them the family life is a sacred thing. They are loyal in friendship even to a Goy (Gentile). The young speak of the old when they pass in reverence, olav hasholem—he has gone to his rest. They enjoy a kaffee klatsch—a social function with coffee and gossip; they feel rachmonous (pity) for the erring; they denounce a rosher (scamp); enjoy their frimseel kugel (pudding), gefultte hechte (a fish delicacy), or bortsch (beet soup). A crazy person is a meshuganeh, a drunkard is a shikker, one who "works" others is a schnorrer, small talk is schmooses, a thief is a ganef, a kiss is a koosh.

The janitor of one apartment house said to me:

"Wir sind alles Jehudim hier—We are all Jews here," and he was right. He was a very accommodating man, and proved quite a philosopher as he dropped pearls of wisdom between puffs of cigarette smoke. Though he often received gifts of wines and liquors, he used but little of them, he said; unless he had a schlag (pain) in his stomach. He derided too much schencking (drinking). He frankly told me that when any of the children of the tenants "got fresh," he would like to give them a potch (slap). Some of the tenants wanted this, or that, or the other thing, "Und Gott weiss was nach—and God knows what next," he said.

One man thus spelled his name: "W-o-i-f-f, Wolff. I spell it with two 'fs' so as to make it sound human," he explained with a smile.

A certain woman with dark hair said her name was "Blond," and that her fair-haired daughter was also named "Blond—Blond by name and blonde by nature," she added.

One day I approached a fat-outlying house with neatly kept grounds. In the backyard was a diminutive old woman in a sunbonnet hanging up a washing. She invited me into the house.

"You must be awfully tired," she volunteered, but I declined her invitation. Her form was spare and her hands hardened with toil. The wrinkled features had a motherly expression, with a touch of wistfulness. The eyes were gentle and kindly. Her heart opened to me. Here is the simple, homely story:

"Me and pa farmed it for many years near \_\_\_\_\_, Oregon. We raised a family, but most on 'em died. Two girls lived and married good husbands and are happy, so me and pa are glad. But, say, Mister—and the tired eyes filled with longing—"I'm so lonesome 'way out here. Me and pa got a good price for the old farm. We bought some city property and we haint got nothin' to worry over, 'cause, you see, we always got plenty of money to live on and plenty to eat. Now, we've talked it over, and I was thinkin' if I could find some pore young widdler with a little baby, that didn't know how to git along, or maybe some pore girl with a baby whose man had up and left her, we could give 'em a good home. We'd feed and clothe 'em jest for company's sake, and give 'em money to spend besides. I'd jest be happy to have such people around. I guess we'd all be glad, and I'd jest love to have a sweet little baby in the house. So'd pa. We're both gittin' old. We can't live forever nor take any of our money away with us. We'd leave the woman and baby some money and property and educate the baby. Do you know where we could find someone deservin', Mister?"

The knotted fingers were clasped in an agony of entreaty. I saw how easily this confiding woman could be imposed upon.

## On the Sunny Side of Life Hard Lines Scared Them Off

The preacher was a young man and nervous, but interesting. He was making an eloquent plea for the home life, and was discarding eloquently on the evils of the club, telling his congregation that married men in particular should spend their evenings at home with their wives and children.

"Think, my hearers," said he, "of a poor, neglected wife, all alone in the great, dreary house, rocking the cradle of her sleeping babe with one foot and wiping away the tears with the other."

### Selecting a Vest

"Haven't you any larger checks?"  
"No," said the tailor. "These are the largest I have."  
"I fear you have not a very extensive line of cloth."  
"These are about as large as checks come in cloth. I might possibly make you up a vest out of linoleum."

### The Woman of It

Mrs. Sharp—Those two women don't speak any more. Each said that she had the smartest child in town.  
Mrs. Carp—Which was right?  
Mrs. Sharp—Neither. I have.



"Blond by Name and Blonde by Nature," She Added

and I gave her the address of several public officials, who ought to be able to answer her prayer. True-hearted, noble old soul! From such as you come God's truest saints!

### Sorrow Is Encountered.

While ascending the steps at another house, a woman at the door placed her finger on her lips in token of silence. She whispered:

"Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is dying from lung hemorrhages."

An another humble home the stork had just departed. In the one instance I had nearly intruded into the presence of the angel of death and the mystery of the passing of a soul into the unknown; in the other case I had stumbled upon another equally great mystery—the advent of a new soul to earth life.

Again the scene changed, when a French woman insisted in replying to me with "Yes ma'am" and "No ma'am," at the same time "crooking the pregnant hinges of the knee" with old country politeness.

Brief names of not more than two letters are occasionally encountered, to be succeeded by a Greek name containing perhaps 30 or more letters—quite long enough to use as a necktie. These are a few of the oddities of human nomenclature one meets with in name-hunting.

There are many queer things about names. I have met a veritable jungle full of Bears, Bulls, Camelles, Colts, Deere, Does, Foxes, Hogs, Hares, Lambs, Lyons, Ochs, Rabbits, Steers and Staggs. Of the feathered tribes one meets just plain Birds, Cox, Chicks, Cranes, Eagles, Falcons, Hawks, Nightingales, Peacocks, Swallows, Swans and Thrushes. There are Fish, as well as such varieties as Crabb, Herring, Pickerell, Pike, Salmon and Trout—and some odd Finns and Gills.

Quite a riot of color is shown in the Blacks, Blues, Browns, Grays, Greens and Whites. A varied landscape is presented in the Parks, Fields, Hills, Marshes, Valleys and Mountains, with some Brooks and Rivers (not omitting Bridges to cross them), Harbors, Lakes and Waters. And there are plenty of Wells.

One could build up a number of Frankenstein's with the Ankeles, Arms, Elbows,

Blood, Thumms, Cheeks, Chins, Cobons, Fingers, Hair, Hands, Feet, Shins, Heads, Hearts, Hydes, Legges, Tongues—and I know of Skinners in plenty, but no Skins. We discover Boys, Ladds, Manns and Maidens. To clothe these there are Belts, Bloomers, Bonnets, Boots, Coats, Dresses, Mantles, Shurts, Vails, Waistes and Stockings. Then there are Woollie and Cotton and even a Sheet or two. For all the Cooks there are necessarily Potts and Kettels.

### Food and Drink Represented.

For articles of food and drink, there are Bacon, Chicken, Duck, Goos, Ham, Meat, Mutton, Pork, Pye, Rice, Veal, Waffles, Beer, Brandes, Bourbon, Ginn, Rum, Sour-beer, Wine, a Drinker and a Drinkwater, a Boose and Boozier. In the line of fruit we find Fruitt, Apples, Berrys, Cherrys, Melons, etc. Even Butters happen along occasionally, but no Cheeses, though there are Cheesemans and Cheeswrights, Gloves, Peppers, Salts, Sweets and Sours give a distinctive flavor.

Metals furnish many names in Copper, Gold, Irons, Silver, Steel and Zinc. One finds Carpenters and Masons to erect the Barns, Castles, Churches, Spires, Halls, Houses and Temples. For material they have at hand Beams and Planks, Brick, Gravel, Sand, Stone and Nails. They could do their work with the Tooles provided, including Axes, Augers, Files, Hammers, Tongs and Forges. Incidentally there would readily result Walls, Shutters, Curtains, Windows, Glass, Glaziers, Stepps, Stairs, Roofs, Piazzas—for all these are every-day names.

There are a number of Farmers along with Ploughs and Harrows, together with such products as Beans, Clover, Hay, Pease and Wheat.

There are evidently no treeless wastes either, as witness, Ash, Birch, Beechwoods, Chestnuts, Cedar, Forest, Oakes and Woods. Monetary terms crop out in Pounds, Schillings, Farthings, Pence, Penny, Halpenny, Nickel, Quarter and Dollar, not forgetting the Sterlings (pounds sterling?). Associated with these are Bonds, Banks, Bankers with Millions and Billions.

A melodious assortment of names comprises Musick, Drums, Pipes and Pipers, Fifes and Fifers, Fluters, Horns, Cornets, Organs and Viols. There occur Whistlers and Carrolls and Singers, with a Bass among them. There are also Medleys and Toons and even, a Chinamen named Song Low. Talls there are, Tallboys and Tallmans, Shorts, Leans, Stouts, Biggs and Smalls, Olds and Youngs, Amblers and Walkers, Strongs and Weakleys.

Countries and their inhabitants find representation also in Canada, England, English, Ireland, Irish, France, French, Scott, Wales, Welsh, Spain, German, Russ, Tuerck, Roman and Grecos. Even cities do not escape, for we find Limerick, Livingston, Paris, Boston, Alameda, Copenhagen and London. We encounter even Days and Weeks, Monday, Sunday, Noon, March and May.

The eye is gladdened with Violette, Rose, Panzie, Flowers and Garlands. For adornment there are Jewels, Diamonds and Rubys. There happen to be Norths, Souths, Easts and Wests, Nears and Farrs, Slows and Fasts, Stiffs and Livelys. There is Work for Workmans, some Doolittles and Idlemans, who are just as industrious as the others. There are Goodss and Goodmans, Bests, Pooors and Poormans and quite properly not a few that are Rich—in name anyway.

### Names That Are Military.

Something of a military corps exists with the Sergeants, Majors, Camps and Compani. Oddly enough there aren't any Soldiers, but there are Flags. There are Duellis, too, Armour, Garrisons and a Fort. Without

arms or ammunition any military organization could accomplish little, so Spears, Shields and Shells, Bowes and an Arrow, Cannon, Guns and Schott are provided, and eventually a Battle results, where there are Shoots, with a Shotsky, succeeded by Smoke and Slaughter.

But one cannot pass by these names, suggestive of sorrow: Boo, Woo, or Tears or Greves, or Coffins, Graves and Toombs.

Continuing to make a play upon names—for it were an easy enough thing to do, for nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions all contribute to human nomenclature—one can form quite a number of clever stories. There are Courts, Judges, to give Justice; Laws to be administered; Juries to try Cases; Clerks (clerks) to keep records; Lawyers, Officers, Sheriffs, Constables, Marshalls and Bailies (bailiffs) to assist the Judges, not forgetting Sinners to try.

There are Merchants, Buyers and Sellers. Prinz' with Kings and a Queene, Dukes, Earls and a Countess present a Royal aspect.

There is a Heater and a Coale. One finds Carrs and Trains, Rhodes to run them on, and Sleds to slide over Trails. Even the emotions are not neglected, for we have Moody, Joy, Anger, Bliss and Glad. There are Tickle and Smileys and Laughlands. It is quite affecting to discern Boyles, Bunyans and Corns, with the natural sequence of Akers and Paines. We find Speakers, with Words to fill their mouths. Sometimes Doctors appear, and Vails and Stoppers. There is a maritime suggestion in Shippis, Skiffs, Crafts and a Crusser. Such names as Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter are not at all unusual. There appeared one Darton, but never a Pythias.

The vocations of men furnish their quota of family names. All are familiar with Baker, Butcher, Butler, Cook, Cooper, Coppersmith, Carter, Fisher, Gardener, Goldsmith, Hunter, Miller, Porter, Silversmith, Shepherd, Sailor, Sawyer, Shoemaker, Taylor, Wagoner, Weaver, etc.

Peculiar names are these: Gay, Incognito, Inches, Jump, Iams, Feathers, Winch, Wheatstone, Prettymann, Pounstone, Fate, Tango, Yett, Apt, Daring, Still, On, Ek, Cowherd and Cowgills.

Since all the "Nicks" and the "O's" are popularly supposed to be descendants of Celtic kings and chieftains, there will be found enough of them to furnish Ireland and Scotland with rulers for a thousand years. Nearly all the saints in the calendar supply names for Portlanders. For example, there are St. Clair, St. Denis, St. George, St. German, St. Helen, St. John, St. Marie, St. Onge, St. Payne and many more. The tribes of Smiths, Schmidts, Schmid and Smythes; the clans of Andersons and Andersens; of Petersons and Petersens; of Olsons and Olsens—their names are legion. Frequently it has been explained that all Scandinavian names ending in "sen" are of Danish derivation, while those ending in "son" are of Norwegian or Swedish origin. However, names do not always signify, for there are Andersons from England and Scotland. There are even Jewish families named Collins—as Irish a name as Donegal or Killenny.

Such names as Papas, Cousins and Childs afford a family feeling. One unearths an Easter and a Christmas sometimes, as well as Heaven, Angell, Hell, Sky, Moon and Stars, congregating with Savages and Wylde.

One lady confessed to the name of Shakespeare. She was a widow, and her husband's name had been William. Furthermore, that he hailed from Stratford-on-Avon, and was probably a blood relative of the famous bard. Had this lady told me her name was Judith, I shouldn't have been much surprised.

But what does the reader think of such names as the Darlings, Dears, Dearloves, Turtledoves and Loves? Would it cause any astonishment to learn that there are Parsons, a Marry, a Wedding and Husband?

Little by little, the hyphenated American will cease to be. Here, side by side, all nations are gradually merging in the crucible. Israel Zangwill's "Melting Pot" is not a myth, but a fact. In this broad land of America all elements are fusing, and by degrees the "Coming Race" is being evolved.

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