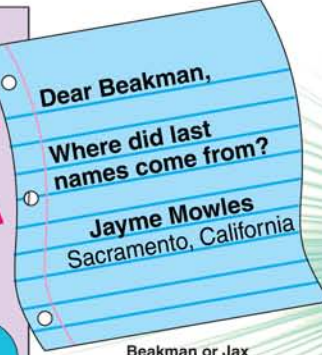


by jok church



Dear Beakman,
 Where did last names come from?
 Jayme Mowles
 Sacramento, California

Beakman or Jax
 P.O. Box 30177
 Kansas City, MO 64112
 Questions, name & address

Dear Jayme,
 Last names are really old things. They are like a bridge into our own personal histories – into the past. They are handed down over the generations, and sometimes their meanings change or get lost. The idea of a last name was to *give distinction*; to make it easier to tell which Jayme we're talking about. In our culture you usually have your father's last name. But not always. And in other cultures, in other times people had their mother's last names.

Beakman

Beakman Place

Mowles

Mowles is a word from when the English language was still a mixture of languages from nearby countries, getting mashed together and mixed up. Mowles is a Middle English or Norman word for *mule*, an animal of labor on farms. How your family got that name might be that your ancestors raised mules. Or perhaps one of them was seen as stubborn, one way mules can behave.



As Time Goes By...

Over the years, names can change as times change, as languages change and even as fashions change. Your first name, Jayme, is a form of the name James, which is based on the old Greek name *lakobus*, or Jacob. Naming changes with things that are popular. For a while in the US, children were named after soap opera characters – like Alexis, Crystal, Ridge, or even Beyoncé. The same kinds of things can happen to your last name. They're subject to changes over the years because of local language, local custom or local fads.

PS. from Jax: Lots of names are just invented, like Beakman's name. If you want, ask your family if it's OK to make up your own name. In another 300 years, people will wonder where that name came from.

WHERE LAST NAMES BEGAN...

Fong
 The oldest last names are Chinese. In 2852 b.c.e. the Chinese emperor said everyone needed a family name. All 438 names came from the words in the poem *Po-Chia-Hsing*.

TAYLOR
 What your ancestors did for a living: Cooper is a barrel maker. Other names like this are Baker, Gardener, Smith, Carpenter, Ferraro and Cook.

Johnson
 Who your ancestors were related to: This name is *Son of John*. Others are: O'Connor (O' means son of) Gargovich (-ovich means son of) Glazunov (-nov means son of) Ciesielski (-ski means son of)

Gaynes
 What your ancestors were known for: This name means *ingenious* or *crafty* or having *native wit*. This family may have brokered different deals in town, or were seen as peacemakers.

WEINBERG
 Where your ancestors were from: This name means wine mountain. -thal means valley -worth means a home -chester means camp