

---

**Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec****CZECH SURNAMENES-Part 2 of 2**

This article is part two of a two part series on Czech surnames.

**e) Surnames Derived from Localities, Regions, Foreign Countries**

There is another sort of Czech surname, derived from local names. They are mostly formed by a suffix -ky, or -sky. Here are some examples: **PRAZSKY** from Praha, **MOHELNICKY** from Mohelnice, **KOLINSKY** from Kolin, **PALACKY** from Palacov or **BILOVSKY** from Bilov or Bilovec. The surnames derived from villages or towns, may be also in second grammar case (genitive): **SKOUNIC**, or **SKAUNITZ**, **KLECAN** (i.e. from Klecany), or may describe simply an inhabitant from a town: **PRAZAN**, **PRAZAK** (inhabitant of Prague). Here can be included the surnames, indicating a citizen from foreign country or region: **NEMEC** (came from Germany), **SLEZAK** (from Silesia), **MORAVEC** (from Moravia) or **HANAK** (a Moravian fertile region around Olomouc), **SLOVAK** (from the south of Moravia or from Slovakia).

**f) Trade and Occupation.**

Another big group of surnames is formed by those, derived from the names of occupation, or of social status (see above as well). Thus there is a surname of **KOVAR** (smith), **KOLAR** (cart-wright), **KADLEC** (weaver), **RYBAR** (fisherman), but also in German form **FISCHER** or **FISER**, **MLYNAR** or in German **MUELLER** resp. **MILER** or **TESAR** (carpenter). Adding a prefix or suffix or its diminutive form has already certain expressive meaning: **NEKOVAR** (a smith who is better to keep out of the way), **TESARIK** (a carpenter, rather small by the skill or height).

The social/class status has reflected in the family names **MESTAN** (burgher), **SEDLAK** or **LANIK** (a farmer), **CTVRTNIK** (a farmer who owned a quarter of a "lan"), **CHALUPNIK** (cottager), **SVOBODNIK** (a freeman), **HRABE** (count), **BISKUP** (bishop), or **STAROSTA** (a mayor), **RYCHTAR** (judge or sheriff), **SAFAR** (administrator of a landlord's yard). There are plenty of surnames based on the military rank and file: **VOJAK**, **VOJACEK** - soldier, but there is also a Czech name **SOLDAN** or **SOLDAT** as well, **DRAGOUN**, **KAPRALEK** (corporal), **JENERAL** (general).

The artisans received the nicknames, from which the surnames developed later, also according to their tools. Thus we can find a tailor named **JEHLICKA** (a needle), or a baker **ROHLICEK** (a roll), or a butcher **JITRNICKA** (something like a white pudding). The examples of other surnames are for instance **KLADIVO** (hammer), **PALICKA** (pounder), **KNEDLIK** (dumpling), **MOUCKA** (flour), **BUCHTA** (cake) etc.

**g) Nature (Animals and Plants).**

Nature provided a lot of inspiration for the creation of the family names. A large group of surnames developed from the names of various animals, that either resembled the physical or character feature of a man: **MYSKA** (mouse), **ZABA** (frog), **JELINEK** (stag), **JEZEK** (hedgehog), **VRABEC** (sparrow), **VRANA** (crow), or **BROUCEK** (a diminutive form of a beetle), plants - **FIALA** (viola), **CHMELA** (hops), **ZITO** (rye), **REPA** (beet), **MAKOVICKA** (poppyhead), **JAHODA** (strawberry), **SMRCKA** (spruce), **JEDLICKA** (fir), or **DOUBEK** (oak).

**h) Surnames describing the activity or status.**

Very interesting and unusual group of surnames is that formed from present tense or past participle of verbs or even derived from full sentences. The example of perfectum: **HRABAL** (raked) , **KOUPIL**, **SOUKUP** is a surname developed from the trade of its bearer - a dealer, buyer, **NAVRATIL** (returned) or **VRZALA** (chirped, scraped). Sometimes if a thing was bought too expensively, the buyer was called **DRAHOKOUPIL** . Similar names (nicknames or even jeers) are **PRECECHTEL** (And-he-wanted-it-after-all), **STOJESPAL** (He-slept-standing), **ZLAMAJELITO** (He-broke-the-black-pudding). **SNEDLDITETIKASI** (yes, this surname really exists: He-ate-the-squash-to-the-child) or even **NASRALVHRNEC** (to make a 'hovno' in a pot!).

### i) Foreign Surnames.

Czech surnames also include the surnames of foreign origin. They can be found everywhere, where two Bohemian nations have lived peacefully together for ages. A numerous German surname in our countries is the surname **MUELLER** or **MILLER**. Czech people adopted German names by mixed intermarriages or when settled in German speaking region. These are mainly the surnames, describing their origin (**PRAGER**, **POLITZER**) or simply **BOEHM** (Czech). Some German names appeared in a prevailing Czech milieu with a German administrations, clergy or landlords. Former **NOVAK** was simply translated to **NEUMANN** and later again Czechinized to **NAJMAN**. **SEDLAK** thus became **BAUER** and later **BAJER**, **KOVAR** was changed to **SCHMIED** and later to **SMID**. Besides the German influence also another nationalities contributed to the surname creation in Bohemia and Moravia. **VLACH** (Italian) became later a synonym for any mason. Original Italian names are preserved in Czech artist families **CHITTUSI** and **STRETTI**. We can find a few French family names as **LE BREUX**, **ROHAN**, **BUTEAU**. Their ancestors came here mostly after the French Revolution or as soldiers with the Napoleonic Army in the beginning of the 19th century. Common are Polish and some Hungarian names. Difference between Czech and Slovak names is not notable in all cases.

Source: Naše Příjmení (Our Surnames) by Dobroslava Moldanová, Prague 1983, and in the article *Jak vznikala naše příjmení* (How did our surnames come into being) and the personal research of Karel Kysilka of Napajedla, Czech Republic ([www.zlimpkk.tripod.com](http://www.zlimpkk.tripod.com)).

### A Sample of Czech Surnames from the Silver Lake Area

**Bednář** : a craftsman who makes or repairs wooden barrels or tubs; **Čermák**: nickname meaning 'redstart', the name of a common European songbird (robin). The Czech word was also used as a euphemism for the devil, and this no doubt affected its use as a nickname; **Dostál**: nickname for a reliable, trustworthy person, from Czech *dostát(slovu)*; **Jerábek**: nickname for a tall, gangling person, from a pet form of *jeráb* 'crane'; **Kadlec**: occupational name for a weaver, (*t*)*Kadlec*; **Koktan**: a stutterer, from Czech verb *Koktat*, 'to stutter'; **Kopecký**: topographic name for someone living by a hill, from *kopec* 'hill'; **Kouba**: from a pet form of the personal name *Jakub*; **Lhotka**: habitational name from any of various places called Lhotka, Lhota, or Lhotek; **Makovský**: habitational name for someone from a place called Makov, named with *mak* 'poppy'; **Maresh** - Americanized form of Czech and Slovak name Mareš; **Mička**: from a pet form of the personal names Mikuláš (see Nicholas) or Michal; **Miska** Czech word for bowl; **Mužík**: affectionate nickname for a man of short stature, from a derivative from *muž* 'man'; **Ondráček**: from a pet form of the personal name *Ondrej* (*Andrew*); **Pekař**: occupational name from *pekař* 'baker'; **Pěšina**: Czech word for path; **Picha**: nickname for a haughty person, from Czech *pýcha* 'pride' & from a pet form of the personal name *Petr*; **Pokorný**-

humble, meek; **Pulkrábek**: dissimilated derivative of the medieval status name *purkrabí* ‘burgrave’ or nobleman; **Zajiček**: from a diminutive of *zajíc*, the Czech word for hare (wild rabbit); **Zelený** – green.

### **Mluvíte Český? Do You Speak Czech?**

*Příjmení ('PZSHEE-men-ee') – surname*

As a rule, you should always stress the first syllable of a Czech word!

#### **Letter of the Week: Ř (the ‘r with the haček’)**

Only the Czech language features the consonant ř, a phoneme that is only used in the Czech language. To a foreign ear, it sounds very similar to *zh*, though a better approximation could be rolled (trilled) *r* combined with *zh*

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: [tkadlec@gmail.com](mailto:tkadlec@gmail.com) or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. Thanks! Tony Kadlec