

## Children Names

This has been taken from an article published by Michael John Neill.

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This is just one of several guidelines on children's names from the 1800's.

### Males

- First-born son: named after the father's father
- Second-born son: named after the mother's father
- Third-born son: named after the father
- Fourth-born son: named after the father's eldest brother
- Fifth-born son: named after the father's second oldest brother or mother's oldest brother

### Females

- First-born daughter: named after the mother's mother
- Second-born daughter: named after the father's mother
- Third-born daughter: named after the mother
- Fourth-born daughter: named after the mother's eldest sister
- Fifth-born daughter: named after the mother's second oldest sister or father's oldest sister

The death of a child, both grandmothers having the same first name, family dynamics (translation: "I absolutely am not naming a child after your father!"), and host of situations can alter how close a given family sticks to any trend in naming children. The degree with which a family follows any naming pattern tendency can also vary greatly given the time period and the culture. Naming patterns that are ethnically based may also be less used after the family has immigrated to another country and begin the assimilation process. I decided to test the naming theory with some of my own families.

### Three Wives, Fourteen Children, and Twelve Names

Focke Tammen (1803-72) from Buhren, Ostfriesland, Germany, had three wives with whom he had a total of fourteen children. He was married to his first wife, Altje, from 1821 until her death in 1835; his second wife, Maria, from 1836 until her

death in 1840; and his third wife, Tjede, from 1841 until his death in 1872. He was the father of the following children:

- Johann (1822-before 1834), named for the mother's father
- Tjode Anna (1824-82), named for the father's mother
- Reenste (1826-92), named for the mother's mother
- Tutter (abt. 1831-33), named for the father's grandmother
- Johann (1834-35), named for the mother's father
- Altje (1837-93), named for the father's first wife
- Marie (1840-40), named for her mother, Marie, who died the day after she was born
- Willm (1841-41), named for her mother's father
- Unnamed (1843-43)
- Willm (1844- ), named for her mother's father
- Focke (1846-1938), named for her father
- Marie (1849- ), named for her father's second wife
- Foolke (1852- ), uncertain
- Tamme (1856- ), named for her father's oldest brother

An analysis of several other families from this same area and time period revealed a similar pattern. The naming order was not consistent, but virtually every child was named for another family member. There were times where the names of extended family members were used, especially in families that had a high number of children of the same gender.

There were two naming conventions noted in families from this geographic area. Naming a child after the mother who died in childbirth was a common practice as was naming a later child after a previously deceased wife. Re-using the name of a deceased child was another relatively common occurrence. (I've seen families "re-use" names three or four times, although this is somewhat unusual.) The re-use of names was not a universal practice, and the researcher should determine if it were used in the area and time period under study. Consult appropriate genealogy how-to guides such as the research outlines of the Family History Library ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)) or search archives of the various mailing lists at RootsWeb (<http://lists.rootsweb.com>).

## **It Was Only Europeans**

Families from other areas also followed similar naming practices. Thomas Johnson Rampley and Christianna DeMoss were married in Baltimore County, Maryland, in 1800. Their six children were all named for other family members as well:

- Mary (born 1800) named for the mother's mother.
- James (born 1803) named for the father's father.
- Sarah (born 1810) named for father's mother.
- Jemima (born 1813) named for father's sister and mother's sister.
- Elizabeth named for father's sister.
- John (born ca. 1820) named for mother's father.

## **Names May Come from More Than Just Family**

Family members are not the only places from which names of children could be obtained. Some families confuse genealogists even more by naming all children except one for family members (leaving it to us to determine which child is the red herring). Names from outside the family could come from popular culture, regional or national leaders, Biblical or church references, or neighbors. Popular references can confuse genealogists when the popular reference fades from common knowledge.

A search of Ancestry's 1850 census index indicates that there were:

- 34 individuals with the first and middle name Lorenzo Dow
- 69 individuals with the first and middle name Thomas Jefferson
- 34 individuals with the first and middle name Benjamin Franklin

The last two are well-known, but not everyone knows that Lorenzo Dow was a well-known preacher in early United States history. If your ancestor appears to have been named for someone, perform a Google search ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) for his or her first and middle name and see what results are obtained. Similar searches of appropriate local, regional, and state histories may also reveal a figure with the same first and last name as your ancestor's first and middle name.

## **A Clue to a Surname?**

First names that are also last names can be clues as to maiden names. Remember though that these names are clues, not guarantees.

Riley Rampley was born in Coshocton County, Ohio, in 1835 the son of James and Elizabeth (Chaney) Rampley. Is Riley a surname in his background? I am not certain. His paternal lines are well-documented as far back as his parents likely

would have known. His maternal grandfather was a Thomas Chaney, whose wife (and Riley's grandmother) was a native of Ireland. Does Riley's first name indicate her maiden name was Riley? Not necessarily. His first name may be a clue as to this grandmother's maiden name or it may absolutely no connection to his heritage at all.

### **What to Do?**

Use names of children as potential leads to earlier generations of the family. Keep in mind that these names are only circumstantial clues. The name of a couple's first male child is not proof that one of the child's grandfathers had that same first name. A child having a certain name is proof that the child had that name and that perhaps another family member had that name. Unusual first names passed down in a family can indicate a potential relationship, but actual records must be used in order to substantiate that connection.

**First and middle names may be clues to your ancestor's past, but treating them like facts may cause you to waste valuable time and resources.**

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