

Historical Nicknames & Diminutives in Genealogy – A Short List

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Names can, at times, be a bit of a problem when doing genealogical research. This is especially so if the researcher has to deal with the presence of hypocorism (using a shorter form of a person's given name; for example, when used in more intimate situations as a nickname or as a term of endearment).

It is natural to expect that a person will be known by their full given (i.e., “first”) name, especially when it comes to “official documents” such as census pages, passenger lists, vital certificates, and so forth. But, this may not be the case. A person may have been known by a nickname or a diminutive name either through their own personal preference and usage, or through the common use of that diminutive in their family or within their own local community. Thus, an Elizabeth may have been known as a Beth (or a Liz, or a Liza or a Betsey or a Bess or a Libby or a Betty).

Searching for information about a person via a common diminutive or nickname of their given name (after having come to a 'dead end' when searching under their full given name) may well reveal genealogical riches untold.

This brief document lists some of the more commonly encountered diminutives of historic given names. In order to keep it within a reasonable length, a number of the better-known or more widely known diminutives, e.g. –

Andy/Andrew,
Larry/Lawrence,
Pete/Peter,
Dick/Richard,
Bill/William,
Tony/Anthony,
Kate/Catherine,
Chuck/Charles,
Jim/James,
Art/Arthur,
Bea/Beatrice,
Chet/Chester,
Gene/Eugene,
Gertie/Gertrude,
Gus/Augustus,
Jake/Jacob,
Joe/Joseph,
Bob/Robert,
Val/Valerie,
Rosie/Rosemary,
Mandy/Amanda,
Cindy/Cynthia,
Lucy/Lucille, are not listed below.

To complicate the whole naming situation even further, it should be noted that a number “nicknames” or “diminutives” such as 'Amy' (for Amanda or for Amelia), or 'Molly' (for Martha or for Margaret), also can be legitimate full given names in and of themselves.

Nickname – Name(s)

Abbie – Abigail
Addie – Adelaide
Aggie – Agatha, Agnes
Agnes – Agatha, Nancy
Amy – Amanda, Amelia
Ann(e)– Hanna(h), Susanna(h), Nancy
Annie– Hanna(h), Susanna(h)
Bell(e) – Isabell(a/le), Mabel, Sybil, Annabel(le/la)
Bella – Belinda
Ben – Ebenezer
Bess – Elizabeth
Betsey – Elizabeth
Betty – Elizabeth
Biddy – Bridget
Bridie – Bridget
Cindy – Cynthia, Lucinda
Daisy – Margaret
Delia – Bridget, Delilah, Fidelia
Dewey – Duane
Dodie – Delores
Dolly – Delores, Dorothy
Dora – Dorothy, Eudora, Isadora, Theodora
Dot(tie) – Dorothy
Effie – Euphemia
Ella – Eleanor, Gabriella, Luella
Ellie – Eleanor, Emily, Danielle, Gabriella, Luella
Elsie – Elizabeth, Alice
Etta – Loretta
Fanny – Francis, Veronica
Fay – Faith
Fern – Margaret
Floss/Flossie – Florence
Greta – Margaret
Hal – Henry
Hank – Henry
Harry – Henry, Horace
Heidi – Adelaide
Hester – Esther
Hett(y/ie) – Mehitabel
Jack – John

Jan – Jennifer
Jane – Virginia, Jennifer
Jennifer – Winifred
Jenny – Virginia, Jane
Lena – Magdalena, Paulina, Pauline
Lenora – Eleanor
Lettie – Letitia
Libby – Elizabeth
Lily – Elizabeth
Liza/Liz/Lizzie – Elizabeth
Lois – Eloise, Louise
Lola – Delores
Lottie – Charlotte
Mabel – Mehitabel
Madge/Midge – Margaret
Mamie – Margaret, Mary
Marge/Margie – Margaret
Maud(e) – Matilda
Mayme – Margaret
Meg – Margaret
Molly – Martha, Mary
Myra – Almira
Nan – Ann
Nancy – Ann, Frances, Agnes
Ned – Edward
Nell(y) – Cornelia, Eleanore, Ellen, Helen
Noll – Oliver
Noni – Nora, Eleanor
Peg/Peggy – Margaret
Polly – Molly, Mary
Rita – Margaret
Sadie – Sally, Sarah
Sally – Sarah
Stac(e)y – Eustace
Stella – Estella, Estelle, Esther
Ted – Edward
Tess – Elizabeth, Theresa/Teresa
Winnie – Winifred

Need Even More Information?

For additional information and a myriad of details and examples, the following online information resources are recommended:

English Diminutives of Female Given Names –

https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Category:English_diminutives_of_female_given_names

English Diminutives of Male Given Names –

https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Category:English_diminutives_of_male_given_names

Definition and Examples of Hypocoristic Names – <https://www.thoughtco.com/hypocorism-names-term-1690846>

Hypocoristics of English Given Names –

https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:English_given_names

List of Traditional Nicknames in Historical Documents –

https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Traditional_Nicknames_in_Old_Documents_-_A_Wiki_List

Behind the Name: The Etymology and History of First Names – <https://www.behindthename.com/>

First Name Abbreviations – <http://www.genealogyintime.com/dictionaries/list-of-first-name-abbreviations.html>

Common Nicknames – <http://www.familiesunearthed.com/nicknames.htm>

List of Some 18th and 19th Century American Nicknames –

<https://www.raogk.org/encyclopedia/nicknames/>

Common Nicknames – http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kyperry3/nicknames_common.html

Your Female Ancestors' Nicknames – <http://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/Your-Female-Ancestors-Nicknames>

Nicknames – <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~pacumber/nick.htm>

Matching Up Nicknames With Given Names – <https://www.thoughtco.com/matching-up-nicknames-with-given-names-1421939>