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Searching for Jewish Ancestors before They Had a Fixed Family Name—Three Case Studies from Bohemia, Southern Germany, and Prague

Thomas Fürth [1,2]

1 Department of History, Stockholm University, SE-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden; fuerth.thomas@gmail.com
2 International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacoby Center, Jerusalem 39151, Israel

Abstract: Anyone who traces their Jewish ancestors back to the 18th century and even further back in history encounters the challenge of looking for ancestry without the clue that a fixed family name provides. Before the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, when Jews were forced by law to adopt a fixed family name, Ashkenazim Jewish families used patronymic names as last names. A patronymic name changes every generation. Sometimes, in larger cities, various types of nicknames were used as last names. Such a nickname could change within a generation and often indicated the place a person came from, his occupation, or personal characteristics. In this article, I will show, using three case studies, how I have faced the challenge of determining which patronymic names and nicknames my ancestors used as last names before they were forced to adopt a fixed family name. The three case studies are the ancestors of Josef Stern, who lived in the late 18th and early 19th century in Neu Bistritz in southern Bohemia, today Nova Bystrice in Czechia; Julius Strauss, 1883–1939, who lived in the late 18th, 19th, and early 20th century in Frücht and Giessen in Nassau/Hesse, today in southern Germany; and Simon Reiniger, who lived in Prague in the 18th and early 19th century.

Keywords: Jewish family names; patronymics; nicknames; Bohemia; Nassau/Hesse; Prague

1. Introduction

Mandatory legislation from the sovereign who ruled Christian countries where Jews lived forced Jews to adopt a fixed family name. The first to legislate such a law was Austrian Emperor Joseph II, who issued the Jewish name law *Das Judenpatent* in 1787 (Beider 1995). All the other European sovereigns followed with corresponding laws: the Tsar of Russia in 1804, Napoleon in 1808, and then the various German states (Jarvits et al. 2019). Often, a long time passed, however, before the laws were implemented (Kaganoff 1977). Among the last European sovereigns to legislate that Jews must adopt fixed family names was the German Grand Duke of Nassau. The year was 1841.

2. Results

In the following, I will show, using three case studies, how I have faced the challenge of determining which patronymic names and nicknames my ancestors used as last names before they were forced to adopt fixed family names.

2.1. Joel Pinkas, Who Became Josef Stern: Brandy Producer and Tobacconist in the Late 18th Century, Bohemia

My first example is Josef Stern, a brandy producer and tobacconist who lived in 1793 in Neu Bistritz in southeastern Bohemia. Today, the town is named Nova Bystrice and is located in Czechia. A census of Jews in Bohemia from 1793 shows that Joseph was married to Barberdl, and they had four sons and four daughters (Marek et al. 2003). All children were unmarried and are mentioned in the census with their given names. The oldest son was Wolf. The given name of a first-born son is often important when looking for what

patronymic names the ancestors of Josef Stern may have used before the law of fixed family names was introduced in 1787.

The information about Josef Stern and his family is sparse, as there are no vital records of Neu Bistritz for the period before the mid-19th century. In addition to the 1793 census, I use another source, a Familiant book. A Familiant book is a record kept of all male Jews in Bohemia between 1811 and 1848. In the Tabor district Familiant book, I found that Josef Stern, son of Elias Stern and Fransiska Herschmann, married Barbara Wottitz in 1775. Four sons were born to Josef and Barbara between 1781 and 1798. Löbl, one of the sons recorded in the 1793 census, is absent from the 1811 Familiant book; we assume that he probably died before that year. Another son was born after the 1793 census was conducted. The oldest son, Wolf, born in 1781, is included in the 1811 Familiant book.

With so little information about Josef Stern, it would seem difficult to trace the last name he used before the 1787 law was enacted. Fortunately, the Familiant book from the Tabor district has additional information about Josef Stern, most significantly, his previous name. It was Joel Pinkas. With this information, I can search for Joel Pinkas in the 1783 census of the Jews of Bohemia (Ebelová and Kolektiv 2010). By 1783, he already lived in Neu Bistritz, was married, had four children, and made a living manufacturing liquor. The information in the 1783 census is more sparse than that in the 1793 census. The 1783 census does not record the given names of the wife of Joel Pinkas, nor those of his children.

Knowing Joel/Josef Stern's patronymic name, I assumed that Pinkas was his father's given name. To my surprise, however, in the Familiant book from the Tabor district, Joel/Josef's father is recorded as Elias Stern.

Josef Stern's Father, Elias, and an Older Brother, Abraham

Next, I searched for Elias Stern in the 1793 census, where I found considerable information about him and his family. Elias Stern was recently deceased in the town of Neuhaus. Today, Neuhaus is Jindrichuv Hradek in Czechia and is located about 15 km northeast of Neu Bistritz, where Josef Stern lived. Another important fact in the 1793 census was that Elias Stern's widow, Fransiska, was his second wife and the owner of a distillery and a potash mill in Neuhaus.

The 1793 census also lists Josef Stern as the third son of Elias Stern's first marriage. Josef Stern had an older brother, Abraham, who, like his father, was dead by 1793. He had owned a distillery in the town of Wittingau (today, Trebon), 23 km southwest of Neuhaus. In addition, the census notes that Elias Stern's widow owned a house in the town of Schwihau in southwestern Bohemia, today Svihov in Czechia.

I now had several facts that proved important for my continued search for the patronymic names of the Stern family as well as for the ancestors of Josef and Elias Stern. My search for additional information about Josef Stern's older brother, Abraham, yielded additional clues. There are several sources about him, but according to the 1793 census, not only was he deceased, but so was his wife, Rebecka (Matusikova 1994–1995). They were survived by several minor children, of whom the oldest son was named Wolf. In other words, he had the same given name as his cousin, Josef Stern's oldest son. Was Wolf also a given name in the previous generations? If this was the case, it could also have been used as a patronymic name.

My next step was to look for Josef Stern, alias Joel Pinkas, in the voluminous marriage records of all Jews in Bohemia who married between 1717 and 1783. I found him in the town of Neuhaus as Joel Pinkas, who was married to Brenndl on 17 December 1775. The same record also lists Josef's oldest brother Abraham, but now with the patronymic name Pinkas. Abraham married Rikl on 4 April 1766, also in Neuhaus.

Another groom married in Neuhaus was a man called Pinkas Wolf, who married Vögele on 17 May 1778. Was this Elias Stern's wedding to his second wife, Franziska? It may be because Vögele (Feigele in Yiddish) could be Franziska in German.

I returned to the 1783 census, looking for Pinkas Wolf and Abraham Pinkas. According to this census, taken before the 1787 imperial name law, Pinkas Wolf was the owner of a

distillery in Neuhaus. In the same census, his son Abraham Pinkas lived in Kardasch Recice, 12 km northwest of Neuhaus, where he had a distillery and ran a yarn and wool trade.

A local history of the Jews in Neuhaus published in *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Cechoslovakischen Republik 1930–1932* (*Yearbook of the Jewish Historical Society of Czechoslovakia*) and available online provided further clues that Elias Stern and Pinkas Wolf must have been one and the same person. Pinkas Wolf is mentioned in the local history of the Jews in Neuhaus as the owner of the distillery in Neuhaus from 1766 to 1785, and Elias Stern is mentioned as the owner of the same distillery from 1785 to 1793 when Elias Stern died, and his widow Franzl took over the distillery (Rachmuth 1930–1932). Franzl is short for Franziska.

In another local history, one of the Jews in Schwihau, also published in *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Cechoslovakischen Republik* 1932 and available online, I found some important data that helped me, at last, determine which patronymic names the Stern family had used before 1787 (Teply and Blanska 1930). It also revealed previously unknown ancestors of Josef and Elias Stern. The information in the Schwihau paper comes from individual real estate purchase agreements from 1674 up to 1709 and on local censuses of the Jews in Schwihau 1734, 1739, and 1747.

Here, I read about Wolf Pinkas, whose family had lived in Schwihau as early as 1674 and that Wolf Pinkas owned a house there in 1729. The house was taken over in 1745 by the son of Wolf Pinkas, whose name was Pinkas Wolf. He kept the house in Schwihau but moved himself to Neuhaus to open a distillery there. This Pinkas Wolf's first-born son was named Abraham and was born about 1740 in Schwihau.

All the different pieces fell into place. Abraham, born 1740 in Schwihau, must have been Abraham Pinkas, who married in 1766 in Neuhaus as Abraham Pinkas according to the marriage records of Jews in Bohemia (1717–1783) and died in 1791 as Abraham Stern in Wittingau according to Catholic Jindřichův Hradec and Třeboň (Neuhaus and Wittingau) burial records of 1781–1795, where the small group of Jews in Wittingau is listed on the last pages of the Catholic burial book.

The information in the 1793 census, showing which patronymic names the Stern family had used before 1787 and that the widow of Josef Stern's father, while living in Neuhaus, also owned a house in Schwihau, was crucial to my search for ancestors of Josef Stern. Without these data, I probably would not have searched for ancestors of Josef Stern in the town of Schwihau, 160 km east of Neu Bistritz. In addition, I learned that it was no coincidence that both Josef and Abraham Stern named their first-born sons Wolf. Both were named after their grandfather, Wolf Pinkas.

Now, I had the lineage of the family back to the late 17th century. Wolf Stern, born 1781 in Neu Bistritz, was the son of Josef Stern, who was born Joel Pinkas. His father, Pinkas Wolf, was born about 1720 in Schwihau and died in 1793 in Neuhaus as Elias Stern. He was the son of Wolf Pinkas. This Wolf Pinkas was born about 1690 in Schwihau, where the family had lived since 1674.

2.2. The Merchant Louis Strauss and His Ancestors in Early 19th Century Nassau and Hesse in Southern Germany

Another example of how to find patronymic names comes from Frücht, a village in southern Germany which, in the middle of the 19th century, belonged to the Grand Duchy of Nassau. Today, it is a municipality in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Jews here were not forced to abandon their patronymic names and adopt fixed family names until 1841.

In this example, we start with the merchant Louis Strauss. He was the father of a married uncle of my father, Julius Strauss, who died in 1939 in Stockholm, Sweden, but was born in Giessen in Hessen in Germany.

In the 1849–1930 civil marriage records of Giessen in the state of Hesse in Germany, I found the information that Louis Strauss, now with the given name Löw, married Johanette Beyfuss in 1879 in the town of Giessen and that Löw Strauss was born in 1851 in the village

of Frücht. The marriage record also shows that Löw Strauss was the son of Isaac Strauss from Frücht. Johanette Beyfuss was from Giessen, and the Strauss family settled in Giessen, where their two children, Bertha and Julius, were born in 1879 and 1883. Giessen is located 100 km east of Frücht.

Louis Strauss died in 1917, according to a card index of Jews who lived in Giessen between 1903 and 1937. The card index was kept by the City of Giessen. This death record listed the widow of Louis Strauss as Johanette Beyfuss, thus confirming that I have found the right marriage couple in the marriage records of Giessen, despite the given name of the groom being Löw Strauss instead of Louis Strauss. Changing a given name from a typical Jewish name such as Löw to the common name Louis was not uncommon among Jews in this part of Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century. The given name Löw, however, was crucial in the further investigation into which patronymic names the Strauss family had used before 1841.

The father of Löw Strauss, Isaac Strauss, died in 1881 in Giessen and was from Frücht. This information came from a list in the Hesse state archives of people buried at the Jewish cemetery of Giessen compiled by Josef Marx, a cantor and teacher in Giessen between 1836 and 1908.

Löw/Louis, son of Isaac Strauss, was born in 1851. Isaac himself must, therefore, have been born before 1841 when the family was forced to take the fixed family name Strauss. What was his patronymic name? I know that Isaac Straus was from Frücht, but was he, like his son Löw, born in Frücht?

To find the patronymic name the family used before 1841, I continued to search for documents from the Hesse state archives, where I found three tax lists. The oldest of these three tax lists was from 1811; the other two were for the period 1820–1840 and the period 1844–1865. Now, I had sources with information about Jewish families in Frücht both before and after 1841 and should be able to find the patronymic names the family had used before they had been forced to take a fixed surname and selected the family name Strauss.

Twelve Jews were recorded on the tax list for 1844–1865, among them a widow Strauss and her adult son Israel Strauss. No Isaac Strauss was on this tax list. He may already have moved from Frücht.

Six Jews were on the 1820–1840 tax list. One had the given name Löw and the patronymic name Isaac, i.e., Löw Isaac. This could be the grandfather of Löw Strauss. The oldest tax list, from 1811, had more information. Here, we read that Löw Isaac was 44 years old in 1811, was a cattle and fruit dealer, and his wife was Ceila, who was 43 years old. This could be the widow Strauss from the 1844–1865 tax list. Also listed are all the names and ages of their two daughters and three sons. A note in the 1811 tax list showed that in 1798, Löw Isaac had become a protected Jew (Schutzjude) in Frücht. This might indicate that he was not born in Frücht but had moved there in 1798 or that he had inherited the position from his father, who had passed away in 1798. All children of Löw Isaac were born after 1798 and seem to have been born in Frücht. The oldest son was named Israel, age eight in 1811, i.e., born about 1803. The second oldest son was named Isaac, age five, i.e., born about 1806.

This Isaac is likely the same person as Isaac Strauss, who was from Frücht and died in 1881 in Giessen. Why? The fact that the Jewish population in 1811 in Frücht consisted of only three families and only one of these families had a son named Isaac, born about 1806 in Frücht.

The fact that Löw Isaac died before 1841 made it possible for the son of Löw Isaac, Isaac Löw/Isaac Strauss, to name his son Löw since Ashkenazik Jews named their children after deceased relatives only. The way the first names were inherited from one generation to another provides the following lineage of the Strauss family both before and after they adopted their fixed family name. Julius Strauss, who was born in 1883 in Giessen and died in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1939, was the son of Louis Strauss. Louis Strauss was born in 1851 in Frücht as Löw Strauss and died in Giessen as Louis Strauss in 1917. Louis/Löw Strauss was the son of Isaac Löw, born about 1806 in Frücht, and died in 1881 in Giessen

as Isaac Strauss. He was the son of Löw Isaac, born about 1767 and dead before 1841 in Frücht. His father was Isaac, and he lived in the mid-18th century and could have died in 1798 when his son became a Schutzjude in Frücht.

With the help of the three tax lists and knowing how given names are inherited among Ashenazic Jews, I was able to find the birth year, the birthplace, and the birth patronymic name of the father of Louis Strauss, as well as the given name, patronymic name, birth year, and family of the grandfather of Louis Strauss and the patronymic name of his father before he had a fixed family name. The fact that the Jewish population in 1811 in Frücht consisted of only three families helped considerably[1].

2.3. The Reiniger Family: An Example of the Use of Nicknames as Surnames in 18th Century Prague

In the early 16th century, Prague experienced a large increase in the Jewish population. At the same time, many Jews, together with their patronymic names, started to use nicknames as surnames (Muneles 1966).

My example from Prague concerns a group of siblings who, when they had to take a fixed family name, called themselves Reiniger, a last name that they had already used before 1787 as one of several nicknames used as last names. I start with an ancestor who I know lived in Prague before the name law was introduced in 1787. His name was Simon Reiniger, and according to the Prague Jewish vital death record, he died on 27 December 1831 in Prague at the age of 80, i.e., he was born about 1751. Simon Reiniger was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Wolschan, today Olsany in Prague.

The Wolschan cemetery was destroyed in the 1960s when the communist regime closed it and built a park, and later, in the late 1980s, built a TV tower in the former cemetery. Only a few tombstones were preserved, but not that of Simon Reiniger.

Fortunately, a burial registry, a Chevra Kadisha book, still exists. Here, I found Simon Reiniger as Simche Menaker, son of Koppl, who died, according to the Hebrew calendar, on Tewet 27, 5592, which was 31 December 1831. In the Familiant book of Prague from 1811, I read that the previous given name of Simon Reiniger was Simche and that he was the son of Koppl Reiniger and his wife, Estrl.

I searched without success for Koppl Reiniger in the Prague Jewish death records, but I did find the wife of Koppl Reiniger and the mother of Simon Reiniger in the death records. Her name was Estrl, and she died on 21 September 1787 in Prague. Two books of Jewish death records exist for 1787, her year of death. In one book, she is recorded as the wife of Koppl Reiniger, and in the other, as the wife of Koppl Schlosser. Schlosser is the German word for a locksmith. The oldest son of Koppl and Estrl was Markus, who was born about 1750. He was a locksmith and later, in 1792, an iron dealer (Ebelova 2006). He called himself Markus Schlosser in 1779 in the Prague Fassions, but later he was recorded as Markus Reiniger in the 1792/1794 census and in the Familiant book 1811, as Markus Ederer in the vital death records 1825, and as Mordche Menaker in the burial registry.

Now, I had four nicknames used as last names: Menaker, Reiniger, Ederer, and Schlosser. Menaker in Hebrew means a butcher who removed veins for koshering meat. Reiniger in German means a purifier and, in this case, a purifier of meat. The surname Ederer is also connected to the butcher's profession. Ederer or Äderer comes from the German word Äder, which in English means vein. Three nicknames used as surnames indicate that the men in the family were or could have been butchers.

Koppl Reiniger, the husband of Estrl and father of Simon/Simche, is included in a list of property owners in Prague whose houses burnt down in the great fire of 1754 (Zdeck 1934). From this, we know that he had lived in Prague in the middle of the 18th century. Koppel Reiniger is not recorded on the list of Prague Jews who took fixed family names in 1788. The list is a printed compilation made by the rabbi and archivist Simon Adler (1884–1944) (Adler n.d.) and is transcribed from a report book, *Berichtenbuch*, prepared by the city authorities in Prague (1786–1789). However, on that list, we find a Majer Reiniger, who, according to the list, changed his last name in 1788 from Menaker to Reiniger.

Majer Reiniger died on 2 May 1790 in Prague, according to the Prague Jewish death record. He was buried the same day at the Wolschan Jewish cemetery in Prague, but in the Chewra Kadisha book, he is recorded as Mayer Menaker, i.e., with the last name he, according to the Berichenbuch of the Prague Magistrate, had before 1788. The Prague Jewish death record, however, uses his new fixed family name, Reiniger. Had this difference something to do with the fact that the Prague Jewish vital records were kept on behalf of the imperial authorities, and the Chewra Kadisha books were something the Prague Jewish community kept voluntarily? Perhaps, but I need more evidence for such a conclusion.

I found Mayer Reiniger in the marriage records of Jews in Bohemia (1717–1783), showing that he married Riffka Buml on 28 February 1760. This indicates that the last name Mayer Reiniger, chosen in 1788 as his new fixed family name, had been used earlier, but then as a nickname used as a last name, then alternating with other nicknames used as last names, such as, for example, Menaker. The next record where I found Mayer Reiniger was in the 1751 census of the Jews of Prague. This is a special census called sworn declarations (Petrusova and Putnik 2012). Jews who wanted to return to Prague when Empress Maria Theresa was forced to recall them after all Jews had been expelled from the city in 1748 were required to file a sworn declaration that they had lived in Prague before 1748. Otherwise, they were not allowed to resettle.

In this census, Mayer Reiniger is mentioned as an orphan of the deceased Simche Reiniger and had lived with Simmel Salomon Pohl, a trouser tailor, and his wife Cheye in a house on Hanpass Street in Prague. From this, I moved another generation back in the lineage of Mayer Reiniger, also known as Mayer Menaker. I learned that he was the son of Simche Reiniger.

2.3.1. New Insights Provided by Searching for a Group of Siblings

Who were the trouser tailor Simmel Salomon Pohl and his wife Cheye? Now, I had to expand my investigation and search for information about two people hitherto unknown to me, Simmel Salomon Pohl and his wife Cheye. I wanted to know their relationship with the orphan Mayer, son of Simche Reiniger.

Consulting the marriage records of Jews in Bohemia, 1717–1783, I learned that on 28 June 1737, Simmel Salomon and Cheye Äderer obtained their permission to marry. She used the same nickname as last name as the first-born son of Koppl Reiniger, Markus Ederer, also known as Markus Schlosser or Markus Reiniger.

In the online collections on the website of the Jewish Museum in Prague is a handwritten index of surnames from tombstones in the old Jewish cemetery in Prague. The index is in German and Hebrew and was compiled by the historian Leopold M. Popper (1826–1885). This index was used by another historian, Simon Hock (1815–1887). For several decades, Hock gathered material for a history of Prague's Jews, collecting information primarily from the headstones at the old Jewish cemetery. This material was edited posthumously by David Kaufmann and published in 1892 under the title *Die Familien Prags*.

The old Jewish cemetery ceased to be used in 1787, i.e., the same year the imperial law of fixed family names was introduced (Polakovic 2007–2008). Thus, the handwritten index of the tombstone inscriptions is especially useful when searching for last names used by Jews in Prague before they adopted fixed family names. I was also able to use a transcribed version of the index interpreted and compiled by genealogist Nancy High, which made the research easier (High 2018).

With the help of this index, I found another clue as to why the orphan Mayer Reiniger lived with the trouser tailor Pohl and his wife, Cheye Äderer. Cheye died in about 1753, according to the index, and was buried in the old Jewish Cemetery in Prague. The index reported that Cheye was the daughter of Simche Menaker. The sworn declarations of 1751 told me that the father of the orphan Mayer Reiniger, also known as Mayer Menaker, was the deceased Simche Reiniger. Was the orphan Mayer's father Simche Reiniger and Cheye Äderer's father, Simche Menaker, one and the same person? In that case, the orphan Mayer

Reiniger, also known as Mayer Menaker, lived in 1751 in Prague with his older sister Cheye and her husband, the trouser tailor Simmel Salomon Pohl.

Another clue I followed was the given name of Simon Reiniger, second-born son of Koppl Reiniger, who died 80 years old in 1831 and was buried as Simche Menaker. The given name Simche indicates that he could have been a grandson of Cheye's father, Simche Menaker, and a nephew of Mayer Reiniger/Menaker. Simon/Simche, son of Koppl, was born around 1751, and Mayer's father Simche had died before 1748 because Mayer was an orphan when living with his sister Cheye in 1751. If Simche, father of Mayer, and Simche, father of Cheye, were one and the same person and this Simche died before about 1751, Koppl Reiniger had the possibility (because of the Ashkenazi naming tradition) to name his second-born son Simche in 1751 after his father, Simche. In other words, Cheye Äderer, Mayer Menaker/Reiniger, and Koppl Reiniger/Schlosser may all have been siblings. My next step was to learn if this was true.

In my research about Simon Reiniger, who died in 1831 in Prague and was the second-born son of Koppl Reiniger, I found another Simon/Simche Reiniger, born about 1755 and dead in 1817 in Prague, in the Prague Jewish marriage and death records. This Simon Reiniger was the son of Enoch Reiniger, who, according to the Prague Jewish death record, died in 1813 at the age of 90 years, i.e., born about 1723.

I now had four people who could be siblings: Koppl Reiniger, also known as Koppl Schlosser, who lived in Prague in 1754 and whose second oldest son was named Simon/Simche, born about 1751; Enoch Reiniger, born about 1723 and died in Prague in 1813 and whose oldest son also was named Simon/Simche, born about 1755; Mayer Reiniger, also known as Menaker, born about 1732, who was the son of Simche Reiniger and was an orphan in Prague 1751 and seems have been living with his older sister Cheye Äderer, who was the daughter of Simche Menaker and married to the tailor Pohl. All these nicknames used as last names, Ederer, Äderer, and Reininger, are German words that have to do with slaughter and the profession of a butcher. Menaker is a Hebrew word with the same meaning.

The next step was to go through the index of the Prague Jewish death records and look for individuals with the last name Reininger, whose age at death showed that they were born early in the 18th century, all with the aim of finding additional people who might be siblings of Enoch, Koppl, Mayer Reiniger, and Cheye Äderer.

Doing this, I found Moses Reiniger, who died on 20 September 1785 in Prague at the age of 70. That is, he was born about 1715. Moses Reiniger was buried in the old Jewish cemetery in Prague, and in the index of the inscriptions of the tombstones at the old Jewish cemetery in Prague, he is listed as Moshe ben Simche Menaker. I also found him in the 1751 census in Prague, the sworn declarations. Here, Moses Reiniger was listed as Moysses Simches, and his profession is *ausäderer*, i.e., a butcher. Ausäderer is an archaic German word for a person who worked to remove inedible and forbidden parts in meat, such as veins.

2.3.2. A Family of Butchers

The German word for the occupation of Moses Reiniger, also known as Moyses Simche in the 1751 census/sworn declarations, *ausäderer*, provided another clue. Could Ausäderer also have been a nickname used as a last name? It is not listed in the book *Jewish Surnames in Prague from 15th–18th Centuries* written by Alexander Beider (Beider 1995). However, Ausäderer was a nickname used as a last name. In both the 1751 census/sworn declarations and in the marriage records of the Jews in Bohemia (1717–1783), Koppl Reiniger used Ausäderer as his last name instead of his later-used last names Reiniger or Schlosser. He married Estrl Piesek on 12 February 1742 in Prague as Koppl Ausäderer. In 1751, according to the census/sworn declarations, he lived in Prague as Koppl Ausäderer with his wife Estrl and their two daughters, Ressel and Bella. The address of the family was Zigeuner, i.e., at the Zigeuner synagogue in Prague Judenstadt. Opposite the synagogue was situated the so-called Fleischbänke. The German word Fleischbänke in English is meat shop or

(verbatim) "meat bank". I found the information about the location of the Fleischbänke in Prague Judenstadt in a book about the Jewish township of Prague, which is available online (Herrmann et al. 1903, p. 67).

According to the 1751 census, an orphan boy by the name of Enoch lived in the household of Koppl Ausäderer. This must have been Koppl Ausäderer's younger brother, i.e., the above-mentioned Enoch Reiniger, who died in 1813 in Prague and was born about 1723.

It was my friend and genealogist colleague, Randy Schoenberg, who helped me finish things off. He had carefully gone through the 1729 census of the Jews in Prague. This census is presented in an article in the *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Cechoslovakischen Republik 1932* (Prokes 1932). In the 1729 census on page 97, household no. 8, the butcher Simche Enoch Buntzl is recorded with his wife Breindl and their three sons Koppl, Moses, and Enoch and their two daughters Cheye and Peyerle. The son Mayer is not recorded in the 1729 census because he was born about 1732. What happened to the youngest daughter, Peyerle, remains to be explored.

With the help of the patronymic name of Simche Enoch Bunzl, I also succeeded in going back by another generation in the lineage of the family. Enoch was the given name of the father of Simche Enoch Bunzl. One of Simche Enoch Bunzl's sons, Enoch, had thus been named after his grandfather. In addition, two grandsons of Simche Enoch Bunzl, Koppl's son Simon/Simche and his cousin Enoch's son Simon/Simche, were also named after their grandfather. Buntzl was Simche Enoch's nickname used as a last name, which suggests that he or his family was from the town of Jungbrunzlau in northeastern Bohemia, today's Mlada Boleslav in the Czech Republic (Beider 1995).

Today, both the 1729 census of Jews in Prague as well as several other of the above-mentioned sources are indexed and available on the Austria-Czech database at JewishGen. On the website geni.com and in the project Jewish Families from Prague on the Geni site, there is considerable information about some of the sources I have used. Articles and documents can be uploaded.

2.3.3. Epilogue

One of the sons of Simche Enoch Bunzl, also known as Simche Reiniger or Simche Menaker, Enoch Reiniger, born circa 1723 and died in Prague in 1813, was not a butcher. He was a scribe. In the 1792 and the 1794 censuses of the Jews in Prague, his occupation is recorded as Zehngebotschreiber, which is German for someone who writes down the Ten Commandments. Scribe in German is Schreiber and in Hebrew Sofer. In a Prague Familiant book, one of the sons of Enoch Reiniger, Joachim Moses Reiniger, is recorded as the son of Enoch Schreiber. In the burial records of the Wolschan Jewish cemetery in Prague, one of the daughters of Enoch Reiniger, Caje-Sara, who died in 1835, is recorded as the daughter of Enoch Sofer.

Can we see any pattern in the use of different surnames in the Reiniger family in Prague, a pattern that can offer some explanation for why they used all these different last names? The last name Menaker was used throughout various burial records, both before and after the introduction of the imperial name law in 1787. The last person with the fixed family name Reiniger, who was buried in Prague with the last name Menaker, was Simon Koppl Reiniger's unmarried daughter Malka, also known as Maria, who died on 6 January 1855 in Prague.

Last names in German, such as Ausäderer, Äderer, Ederer, Reiniger, Schreiber, and Schlosser, were used in the records compiled by the imperial authorities as the Familiant books; the 1729, 1751 (the sworn declarations), and their continuation Prague Fassions; the 1792/1794 censuses; in the large compilation of marriage records of the Jews in Bohemia 1717–1783; and in the vital records kept on commission of the imperial authorities by the Prague Jewish community.

One possible conclusion might be that in the records the Jewish community kept voluntarily without an order from the imperial authorities, such as burial records as well

as the inscriptions on the tombstones, the family Reiniger used the last name Menaker, a Hebrew word for butcher, or Sofer, the Hebrew word for a scribe. In all records compiled by or commissioned to be kept by the imperial authorities, members of the family were recorded with patronymic last names and/or with a nickname used as a last name in German like Ausäderer, Äderer, Ederer, Reiniger, Schreiber, or Schlosser. When the family had to take a fixed family name in 1787, they chose the family name Reiniger, and that became the surname that descendants still bear today.

3. Conclusions

As the previous three case studies illustrate, to find the patronymic names an ancestor used before being forced to adopt a fixed family name, one may have the advantage of comparing censuses or tax lists from the time just before and the time just after the introduction of the name law. Sometimes, you can find special name lists of what family name your ancestors took, but this is just luck because such lists are rare and are often hard to find.

Patronymic names also convey a lineage. A given name in one generation will become a patronymic name in the next generation, and so on, and vice versa: given names in one generation could indicate what patronymic names the previous generations used.

But for those who search for the nicknames that their ancestors used as surnames, the challenge is much greater, which my case study from Prague shows. The function of the nickname used as a surname was to distinguish one person from another when neither a given name nor a patronymic name was sufficient to do that. This is what happened when the Prague Jewish population grew. In addition, many Prague Jews used their patronymic name together with the nickname they used as a surname.

Nicknames used as surnames were often a person's occupation or the place or country a person came from. Sometimes it was a physical description, for example, whether he was short or tall, big or small, or light- or dark-haired.

A patronymic name is replaced with each new generation, but nicknames used as surnames could be changed within a generation, even several times during the lifespan of one and the same individual.

Unfortunately for the genealogist, one can easily confuse a nickname used as a surname with a fixed family name, especially when some of the nicknames used as surnames in 1787 became the new fixed family name.

We must remember that most Ashkenazi Jews did not have fixed family names until the end of the 18th century in the Austrian Empire, not until the first half of the 19th century in the Russian Empire, and in some German states, only from the middle of the 19th century.

Researchers looking for nicknames used as surnames of their ancestry could have great help expanding the scope of their research, not only to examine an individual and trace his or her lineage back in history but to research entire families consisting of all siblings and their spouses in one generation and trace their lineages back in history by using already developed family trees as sources of clues.

For my research, the branches of Jewish families from Prague listed on the Geni World Family Tree have been invaluable. One must, however, not simply accept as fact everything listed. It is imperative to evaluate the sources of the various profiles in the tree and check the data against original sources such as vital records and censuses (Appendix A).

Appendix A. Archives and Online Resources

Archiv Zidovskeho musea v Praze (Jewish Museum Prague, archives)

ZNO Praha, soupisy prazskych Zidu 1748–1838 (sworn declarations, 1748–1749 (1751))
Jmenný rejstřík ke Starému židovskému hřbitovu v Praze, písmeno M P
(Leopold M. Popper's excerpts of those buried in the old Jewish cemetery in Prague with surnames beginning with M and P)
https://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php//Search/Index (accessed on 31 December 2023)
Jewish cemetery Olsany/Wolschan in Prague, list of those buried 1788–1890.

Geni World Family Tree
https://www.geni.com/home (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Project, Jewish Families from Prague
https://www.geni.com/projects/Jewish-Families-from-Prague/7995 (accessed on 31 December 2023)
Documents for Jewish Families from Prague
https://www.geni.com/projects/Jewish-Families-from-Prague/media/7995 (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Giessen (Hesse) Stadtarchiv (City Archives)

Einwohner Kartei verstorbene jüdische Bürger 1903–1937
https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/68354?availability=Family%20History%20Library (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (State Archives of Hesse)
https://arcinsys.hessen.de/arcinsys/start.action?oldNodeid= (accessed on 31 December 2023)

HHStAW, 205, 381 Verzeichnung der Juden und ihrer Vermögensverhältnisse im Amt Nassau aufgrund einer Umfrage des Regierungsassessors Lange zwecks Ausarbeitung eines Staatsgesetzes zur Stellung der Juden im Staat 1811. Liste der jüdischen Familienvorstände, ihrer Frauen und Kinder mit Angaben zu Alter, Schutzaufnahme, Erwerbszweig, Vermögen, Schatzung u.a
HHStAW, 211, 11447 Kultusverhältnisse der Israeliten im Amt Braubach 1841–1865
HHStAW Bestand 220 Nr. 3589Vermögensaufstellungen der Juden von Frücht 1820–1840
HHStAW Bestand 365 Nr. 370 Gräberverzeichnis des jüdischen Friedhofs am Nahrungsberg in Gießen, zusammengestellt auf Grundlage des Memorbuches und der Sterbeurkunden durch Josef Marx, Kantor und Lehrer in Gießen Laufzeit 1836–1908
HHStAW, 211, 11447 Kultusverhältnisse der Israeliten im amt Braubach
HStAM, 905, 329 Standesamt Gießen Heiratsnebenregister 1879

JewishGen

Austria-Czech Database
https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/AustriaCzech/ (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
https://digitalcollections.jtsa.edu/islandora/object/jts%3A143974#page/1/mode/1up (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Register der Leichsteine v.J 5440 (1680) bis 5618 (1857) (Register of Gravestones 1680–1857) compiled by the Chewra Kaddisha in Prague in 1857 by David J. Podiebrad and David S. Radnitz.)

Kultur-Büro AHB—Name adoption and other lists—Germany

During the first decades of the 19th century, Jews were forced by law to take on full civil names. The following lists will help you to go back into the 18th century to search for your ancestors. https://www.a-h-b.de/en/projects/genealogy/name-adoption-lists (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Narodni Archiv (National Archives of Czechia)
https://vademecum.nacr.cz/ (accessed on 31 December 2023) or
https://zayt.org/ (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Familiantbuch 145 HBF XV/V Taborsky
Familiantbuch 163 HBF XVII Praha, pism. E
Familiantbuch 176 HBF XVII Praha
Familiantbuch 186 HBF XVII Praha, Index
Familiantbuch 187 HBF XVII Praha, Index
Kardasova Recice HBMa 756 Z 1784–1843 (death records)
Kniha svatebních konsensů 1717–1783, (Gubernial marriage register)
Praha HBMa 2661 O 1784–1843 (marriage records)
Praha HBMa 2753 Z 1784–1801 (death records)
Praha HBMa 2754 Z 1787–1822 (death records)
Praha HBMa 2755 Z 1802–1822 (death records)
Praha HBMa 2756 Z 1822–1831 (death records)
Praha HBMa 2757 Z 1831–1841 (death records)
More information about Narodni Archiv sources above at JewishGen Austria-Czech Database
https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/AustriaCzech/ (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Státní oblastní archiv v Třeboňi (State Regional Archive of Trebon)
https://digi.ceskearchivy.cz/8053/45/2682/2379/45/0 (accessed on 31 December 2023)

Czech Republic Church Books, 1552–1963 Catholic Jindřichův Hradec Třeboň Burials (Pohřby) 1781–1795 (v. 39)

Note

[1] Some years after I had deduced the patronymic names of Louis Strauss's ancestors, I found the website Kultur Büro—AHB— where one finds a list of Jews in Germany who adopted permanent family names during the first half of the 19th century. It is a compilation from various German archives. In the list of the Braubach district in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate to which the town of Frücht belongs today, I read that Löw Isaac's widow and Israel Löw in 1841 took the family name Strauss. The widow Strauss from the 1844–1865 tax list was the widow of Löw Isaac in the 1811 tax list.

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