

Mormons, do you have nine 1st cousins, all of whom are named Brigham? Non-Mormons, are you considering Kayden, Jayden, Rayden and iPod as names for your next child? STOP THE MADNESS! Follow your family history piper and I will lead you to consider some better sources for baby names. Well, one better source: your own family history. Genealogy can help you to get to know your ancestors in so many ways, but none is more satisfying than naming a child for an ancestor, and then telling that ancestor's story when you tuck in your child at night. After all, genealogy may be about precision and research, but to what end? To have a family to discuss, and roots from which to grow. Listen in and we'll talk about some scary current naming trends, and how using your ancestral naming forms, not to mention place names where your family once lived, can provide rich resources for ancestral appreciation in current and future generations.



Welcome to the 50th episode of From Paper To People, also known as Episode 212 because this second season has been a bit slow. My name is Carolynn ni Lochlainn, and I am your hostess with the mostest in this, the most fascinating and awesome field of all: genealogy. Happy Autumn to the northern hemisphere - the apple cider donuts are out for all to enjoy - and I hope that Spring is springing all over our southern hemisphere. I trust that the jacarandas are blooming.

I want to start with a few announcements: from now on, show notes will be available in the blog post containing each new episode, usually within moments of that new episode being published. This means that, if you know anyone who would like to read the episode due to deafness, learning style, or speaking English as a second language, all episodes either are (or in the case of interviews, WILL BE) available. The interviews are harder to transcribe, and I'm backtracking on last season with those too. So please have patience as I get it all together, but know that you can read this transcript immediately at [ancestorsalivegenealogy.com](http://ancestorsalivegenealogy.com).

Second, I have added a PDF download function. Every episode is copyrighted and registered, so don't get cute with me, but if you do better with reading and marking up a hard copy, you can now do that with all show notes. Again, I'm going for maximum accessibility here. Pass it on.

And you can now hear the podcast on TuneIn and Deezer, if you want to use either platform to listen. And for yet more written content from a variety of sources, be sure to follow me at [Patreon.com](https://www.patreon.com) and subscribe to [The Ancestors Alive! Daily](#) (you can find the links to both sites in the show notes).

Oh, and did you know that I have a swag shop? Yep, I do. It's at [zazzle.com/store/fppppodcast](https://www.zazzle.com/store/fppppodcast). It's not just logo swag. You can find all sorts of items that bear weird or fun vintage art and photography. There are daily site-wide sales, but if you're looking for a pint glass or a deck of cards, a ball cap or a sweatshirt, even some sassy leggings, my shop is definitely the place to go. I'm constantly creating fun new items to make your life festive. Magnets, mugs, notebooks...the list is just too long. Stop on by, and follow the shop to get updates on new products and sales.

Now, to the business: Today is all about me flogging you about baby names. I hope that you laugh, but also, I hope that you get some genuinely creative ideas about sourcing names for children in your own family's roots.

Generally, I think off-beat names for humans and animals are the best. Created names, fusion names, unusual names, names that have never been known to humankind until now, these are all great. But today I'm taking up an issue that I have most particularly with Mormons, and that I feel compelled to share with all others as an alternative to name books and other, generic sources: seek names from your ancestors and from their homeplaces.

This is primarily for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Though everybody can get ideas here for naming babies from ancestors, you know I like to go off on

my people every now and then. And this, being an LDS Conference weekend, has made me a bit sharper than usual in my genealogical snark.

Understand: I don't have kids. That wasn't to be my path, apparently. But for decades, I had a baby-naming book because I wanted more than anything to have children. I've thought about this a lot. And now, not having named any children of my own, I sit in judgment of you. I have to say that one thing that really chaps my hide is seeing generation after generation of innocent children being named for a figure in the Book of Mormon, or one of the past prophets of the church. It's nice to honor those we admire in public or religious life, but doesn't it strike anyone other than myself that it shows a bit of untoward hero worship or cult of personality, while simultaneously disrespecting our genetic and experiential forbears? To me, it smacks of obsessing on an external culture. Is that really what we want our families to be?

Let me put it this way: I love and admire Mary, the mother of Jesus. I love and admire Roselynn Carter, the former First Lady, who still builds houses for the poor at age 92. I love and admire Dorothy Day, a founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. And heaven knows I admire Connie Boswell and Patsy Cline, two of my favorite singers. But when I was hoping to have a child (back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth), and I was DEFINITELY hoping to be graced with a daughter, I didn't choose any of those first names for my theoretical daughter. I looked to both sides of my tree and to my paternal ethnicity for answers. That book I had? It was a book of Irish names. It showed how to render English-language names into Irish, and vice-versa, complete with meanings.

My mother's name was Kathryn Lucile, and she was my best friend in the world. Her mother's name was Lucile Margaret, and she taught me a great deal about cooking and baking. She also loved baseball and created crossword puzzles, one of which was published in the New York Times. And my father's great-grandmother was Margaret Agnes Ruan. She volunteered as a nurse in a military hospital in Philadelphia during the Civil War, which is how she met my 2nd great-grandfather, Charles McLaughlin. I think that must have taken some guts, trying to

help all of those poor wounded men and boys to deal with pain, fear, PTSD, permanent physical damage, and even oncoming death. Her surname has carried down as a first or middle name in my family to this day.

Those women meant, and mean, something dear to me. And, of course, I have always been captivated by my Irish lineage. I put all of that together in Irish and I came up with a name I loved: Mairead Catriona, or Margaret Kathryn. In this way, I honored women in my family whom I had known or whose stories were important to my family's history. Or at least I would have done, if my ex-husband hadn't decided he never wanted kids, thus blowing up the marriage. I hope he's not listening.

But sorry-not-sorry and shoot me for speaking the baldest truth, nothing gripes me more than LDS people naming their kids Helaman, or Dallin, or Moroni, or Nephi. Seriously, folks, stop it. It's the Mormon equivalent of Jennifer when I was a kid. There were so many Jennifers that we had to go to Jennifer S and Jennifer D, and then to Tall Jennifer S, as opposed to Short Jennifer S to differentiate them all. Well, not quite, but you see what I'm saying.

How about the early two-thousandsies and the name Bella? Let's have a show of hands for how tiresome preschools got when the Twilight series was all the rage. No, y'all. Just NO. Please, honor your ancestors. Names have power, and naming a child for an ancestor or ancestral place can help to induct your child into wondering about your family's background and feeling a spirit of connection to what came before. After all, you're going to tell that child all about his or her name and its derivation. You might as well make it something more interesting than "well, that's what everybody ELSE was doing."

If you want to say "I'm a Utah Mormon" with your kid's name, using scriptures isn't the only way to roll. In fact, it's kinda trite. Using your own family's more ancient traditions, languages, and home places actually shows a commitment to family history, which is the work of Elijah, and that's pretty much more Mormon than anything else.

An article from [momjunction.com](https://momjunction.com) that was published in July 2019 (link provided in the show notes) gave lists of top boys' and girls' names. Stop me if you've got one of these on your kid's softball team: Alma, Ammon, Brigham, Layton, or any name of any Prophet or Apostle of the Church, past or present. I know, you want to go for Woodruff or Uchtdorf, but don't. For girls, sticking the letter Y randomly in either boys' or girls' names is apparently a thing: Ashtyn, Jossilyn, Payslee – but seriously, stop it now.

There's a deliberately hilarious 2015 article on [bycommonconsent.com](https://bycommonconsent.com) (link provided in the show notes) that has a table for Utah Mormons trying to create names for their kids – column one contains these prefixes: May-, Ky-, Tay-, Bryn-, Jae-, Kyn-, and Kam-. The second column has these suffixes: -lee, -see, -lyn, -ler, -dyn, -son, and -bree. The idea is that you combine one from column A and one from column B, at random, to make a sort of Chinese menu name. Now, this could yield Kylee. It could also yield Brynbree. That's a pretty bad idea, isn't it? So don't do it! But honestly, if you want a laugh, devour the entire article. It includes suggestions for naming your children after furniture. It's a must-read.

There's a similar message here for non-Mormons. Earthlings, dig it: in the United States in 2018, the top 10 boys' names were Liam, Noah, William, James, Oliver, Benjamin, Elijah, Lucas, Mason, and Logan. The top 10 girls' names were Emma, Olivia, Ava, Isabella, Sophia, Charlotte, Mia, Amelia, Harper, and Evelyn. And in and of themselves, those are some groovy names. I'm not slamming these names, but if you aren't descended of people who bore these names, why are you over-using them?

And why, why name children for food items? I'm talking to you, Gwyneth Paltrow – Apple, really? How about naming a kid for bedding? Yes, Michael Jackson, hear me from the beyond. Naming a kid "Blanket" is just not a family-commemorative choice. PILOT INSPEKTOR? With a K? Seriously, Jason Lee. Your kid may be inspired to achieve true, independent selfhood by that, but that moniker might also do some permanent damage.

I've had cats called Gyoza, Lox, Bagels, and a female cat named Mr. Toast, but dude,

THEY'RE CATS. Feed them and they don't care WHAT you call them, as long as it's not late for dinner. Cats don't get teased at school; human beings are another story.

Now, I get it. Some of you might have truly tense relationships with family. You might have been fostered or adopted and might not love your ties with those people, and of course, you might not know the names of your genetic ancestors. You might simply disagree with me and think I'm being majoritarian in my view of honoring ancestors in an Anglo-European way. And if that's so, that's cool. I'm not here to judge you or to pick a fight. I AM here to say that, when you're considering names, there are a lot of ways to go about it. Commemoration is one of them, and it has a lot of avenues that can yield some pretty interesting fruit. But again, not Apple.

How do you solve the problem of simultaneous originality and honoring your ancestors? GET MORE INVOLVED IN FAMILY HISTORY. The larger Latter-Day Saint population is the LEAST involved population when it comes to family history because 1) it's always taught as something obligatory and dull, and 2) it's very hard to find time to work with a knowledgeable consultant to teach what needs to be taught in a way that sticks. But that's why you're listening here, right? Right. And I say that the easiest (though not best) way to do this, O Latter-Day Saints who think that all of your family history is already done, is to wander your FamilySearch tree.

Log in to FamilySearch and take a look at your tree. Start looking at your parents' & grandparents' generations. What were the names of their siblings? Of the towns where they were born, married, and died? You can't hurt FamilySearch if you're just looking, so tumble about a bit and see what's there. Then, look at the original scans of the census records in particular. They show the profession or occupation of every person in your family. They also show, at the top of the page, where each census was taken. This allows you to consider and understand more about who your ancestors were and where they came from. Sooner or later, as you continue to go backward, you will find data you didn't know.

To go deeper and follow a tradition that is used in the north of England a lot, pursue the maternal lines – mom’s mom’s mom, all the way on back. Look at surnames. Do any of them give you a little tingle when you look at them? If so, maybe there’s ancestor on the other side saying “hey, look at me!” I may sound like I’m joking, but this happens to me all the time.

Another version is the Celtic and Scandinavian version – look at surnames on both sides. You’ll have to look at the show notes on my blog to see these spellings, because they’re a bit steep. The surname “Gunnarsdottir,” for instance, literally means “daughter of Gunnar.” You can follow Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic and some Celtic lines that way. The Wikipedia article entitled “[Icelandic name](#)” (see the show notes for the link) gives a lot of good, basic information about this.

In Welsh, “ap Dafydd” means “son of David” and “verch Owain” means “daughter of Owain.” In Irish, “ni Dhomnaill” (don’t ask about the pronunciation – it’s way too complex) means “daughter of Donnell.” “McLaughlin,” or “MacLochlainn,” my original surname, means “son of the Northman,” where Northman often is assumed to mean Viking.

And in Scottish, “nic Aonghais” means “daughter of Angus or Innes.” If you look at the entry entitled “[Scottish Gaelic name](#)” in Wikipedia (check the show notes for the link), you’ll see a lot about all of the many Celtic forms. And if you have a name that isn’t in the original Celtic dialect, but you know that it is Irish, Scottish, Manx, Welsh, Cornish or Breton, do some googling.

By the way, there’s a cute mnemonic for recalling the names of the six Celtic nations. It’s a little ditty I’ll sing for you now:

The flower of the free, the heather, the heather,  
The Bretons and Scots and Irish together,  
The Manx and the Welsh and Cornish forever,  
Six nations are we, proud Celtic and free.

There are similar patronymic forms, where the first name is given, the second name means “son of” or “daughter of”, and the last name is the family’s surname, in Russian and Eastern Slavic naming traditions. There’s a great article about it in Wikipedia, as well, called “[Eastern Slavic naming customs](#)” (and that link is also in the show notes).

Spanish names get into both patronymics AND location-related names, as do German and other European traditions. There is a very helpful article on Wikipedia entitled “[Spanish naming customs](#)” (the link is in show notes) that you might want to consult. But of course, for Latin America, the order of matronymics and patronymics reverse from nation to nation and tradition to tradition. These are not my strong suit, but I am sure that you can get some assistance from a variety of resources online.

If you need to get into anything outside of Europe, I’m just NOT your girl – names from the Asian, African, and Middle Eastern continents and traditions are not in my wheelhouse, but there are pros out there who can help you, as well as our friend Google.

Touring FamilySearch is fine, but it’s not really enough. If you really want to know your family well, it means actively shrubbing, and not just perfunctorily tree-ing, your ancestry. The better way to do this is on Ancestry.com first, and then on FamilySearch.

Back to my LDS peeps: as ever, I want you to do more than just wander. I want you to work in Ancestry, according to the rules I laid out in season one of the podcast, for a few reasons: first, you can auto-download your first 4 generations from FamilySearch to Ancestry with your free LDS Church account, and second, because the research that you perform in Ancestry may well turn up more connections to single ancillary ancestors (great-aunts and great-uncles) or to children who died before their 10th birthdays. You will see thousands more records than you would just in FamilySearch (yep, the work is never done because more records come online at both sites daily). You will do the work of Elijah AND you’ll find far more inspiration for your future family from those who came before. Also, using the Magical Mormon icon in Ancestry, you can work from the outside to merge duplicates and connect

fragments of families in FamilySearch, which is a part of our job.

Please remember, FamilySearch is FILLED with errors from well-intentioned yet ill-taught amateurs and, the bane of my existence, the random record extractions of 2012 and 2016. It's best to work on your own family in an enclosed, hermetically-sealed place like Ancestry first because your work will NOT affect an international tree until you have perfected it and made proper transfers of data and citations.

For each generation, starting with your parents, add EVERY sibling by using census records, and BMDDs (also known as birth, marriage, divorce and death certificates). Examine these records as I said to do in FamilySearch – the original record images – and you'll learn a lot. Add them as is appropriate to your tree, and build your tree in Ancestry, then you can transfer your Ancestry research, complete with citations, to FamilySearch when you're finished with any individual's work. For more specifics, listen to this podcast, from the first episode on, to learn how to do what you need to do.

Another beautiful way to pay tribute to your ancestors in your current or new is to combine names that have meaning in your family tree, along the lines of the silly two-column layout in the By Common Consent article, but with true respect to ancestors. If you have a Louise and a Shauna, for instance, you can honor both by creating the name LouShauna for a child. I'm more literal-minded than that, but creativity is the spice of life. Getting to know who's behind you in order to make those kind of creative decisions is the key.

So, in conclusion: don't name your child Egg or Toaster Pastry. Don't use the same name that everybody else is using to honor some cultural or religious figure, because then the name loses its power and the act becomes banal. Use the future family preparation time as a time to get to know your own past. Show your ancestors some love and they'll do the same for you.

Thanks so much for stopping by today. The Skelly Relly episode submissions are rolling in,

but I'd love some more – tell me a story, any kind of story at all, about an ancestor. Record it as an mp4 or mp3 on your phone, attach it to an email marked Skelly Relly, and send it to me at [ancestorsalivegenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:ancestorsalivegenealogy@gmail.com) by October 26th. I'm having fun assembling these tales, but I need yours, too. So send me a Skelly Relly, don't be a Jeffrey, and above all, Expect Surprises!



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If you want to be on the podcast from ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD using the Zoom platform and a good mic and earphones (how about that Family Cookbook series??), you can contact me at <https://bit.ly/2Kxb6rm>.

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