

# The Origin and Meaning of the Enderlin Family Name

(*Der Ursprung und die Bedeutung des Familiennamen Enderlin*)

(*L'origine et la traduction du nom de famille d'Enderlin*)

by

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(updated July 2001, May 2002, June 2003)

Research into the origin and meaning of the *Enderlin* surname is a continuing process, and a fascinating one. This essay should be considered an evolving document, which will be modified as new information is revealed. It is an attempt to build a collection of facts and hypotheses regarding the etymology of this name. Because our surname is quite old, its beginnings may never be fully ascertained.

## What is known...

The *Enderlin* surname is a patronymic (derived from the name of the male progenitor of the family line). It is Germanic in origin, and literally means "The line of Ender." The name can be broken into two parts: The root "*Ender*" and the diminutive suffix (*Diminutivsuffixe*), "*-lin*." The *Ender* root is itself a diminutive, which is discussed below. The diminutive forms of both the root and suffix offer valuable clues to the origin of the family name, because these characteristics are closely associated with localized linguistic traditions in the region of our family's origin. Diminutives are "pet" forms of original names, giving a sense of smallness, familiarity or endearment. The closest similarities in American culture are seen in the substitution of Bobby for Robert, Betty for Elizabeth, Ricky for Richard, etc. Note that in each of the above cases, two changes take place. The name is first shortened to a more familiar form (i.e., Bob for Robert), and then a "y" suffix is added to add further diminution. Of course, the above examples are for given names, but they are a good example of a comparable tradition in America.

Prior to about 1100 AD, surnames were not typically used. Individuals were identified by a single given name. Later, as populations rose, surnames were added to distinguish individuals with the same name within the same community. Many Germanic surnames have their roots in the Middle Ages, with meanings inspired by various aspects of the original bearer. Surnames were assumed based on the family place or region of the original dwelling, a craft or vocation of the first bearer, a physical trait of the first bearer, or (as in the case of *Enderlin*) the name of the progenitor of the line. In our case, the progenitor was a man named *Ender*. Similar patronym usage may be found in the surnames Höfflin, Zimmerlin, Möcklin, Oberlin, and so on.

*Ender* is a "pet" form of *Andreas*. The French variants to this root name are *André* and *Endres*. The name is of Latin origin, meaning "virile" or "manly." In Hans Bahlow's book, *Mittelhochdeutsches Namenbuch nach schlesischen Quellen*, some of the earliest accounts of the *Enderlin* name are noted in the early medieval records of Silesia (*Schlesien*), in what is now part of Poland. In these instances, the name is used as a given name, rather than as a surname in records dated 1343, 1352, 1379 and 1390. Silesia lies on the Polish-German border, in a region that bears a strong Slavic influence. Some researchers ascribe the "pet" form usage of names such as *Ender* and its variants to the Slavonic tribes, which inhabited the region up to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. A spelling variant, *Enderlyn*, is found in the Silesian records as early as 1272. It is

unclear why the patronym was used as a given name at that time. These are very early records, and it may be that further research into the customs of that region will reveal the answer.

My branch of the *Enderlin* family emigrated to America from the village of Bötzingen (Boetzingen) in southwestern Germany in 1885. Many families in that part of Germany bear patronymic surnames that are similar to ours with the "*-lin*" suffix. To understand why this is so, and why the suffix varies in other regions, it is necessary to understand the Germanic culture and the strong influence of local customs and dialects. Bötzingen is situated in a volcanic mountain range called the Kaiserstuhl, which rises from the plain of the Breisgau. To the east is the southern tip of the Black Forest (the *Schwarzwald*) and to the west, the Rhine (*Rhein*) River. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the name of *Enderlin* appeared throughout this region, from Karlsruhe (in the north) to Lörrach on the Swiss border. The name also extended southward across the Rhine to Zürich, and westward throughout the Haut-Rhin region of what is now France.

Although this region embraces portions of three countries, its cultural heritage is bound together by a common history. Because of this close cultural bond, the region is known today as *der Regio* (a colloquial term for the region) or *das Dreiländereck* (the three-countries-corner of France, Germany and Switzerland). In ancient times, this region was occupied by Germanic tribes called the *Alemanni* and the *Suebi*. Although defeated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD, their influence is still present in the regional dialect, called Alemannic (*Alemannisch*), which includes the subdialects of *Schwäbisch*, *Niederalemannisch* and *Hochalemannisch*. The Alemannic dialect is called *Schwyzerdütsch* in Switzerland and *Alsatian* in southeastern France. Although little is written on the subject, the colloquial linguistics also seem to apply to naming practices, and there appears to be little doubt that the *Enderlin* name is closely tied to the geographic region embraced by the Lower Alemannic (*Niederalemannisch*) subdialect. One finds that the name more commonly appears as *Enderle* in the region of Swabian (*Schwäbisch*) linguistic influence. Still further abroad, the name appears with other suffix forms. The general rules for the provenance of typical suffixes are as follows:

"*-gen*" and "*-ken*" are from northern Germany.

"*-lein*" is from various portions of southern Germany.

"*-erl*" is from Austria/Bavaria.

"*-le*" is from the Swabian region (northern Baden and Württemberg).

"*-li*" and "*-lin*" are from the Lower Alemannic region (Switzerland, Alsace and southern Baden), with "*-li*" being more commonly used by the Swiss. It may be that the "*-li*" suffix is influenced by the High Alemannic (*Hochalemannisch*) subdialect, but further research is needed to confirm this.

An evolution of my own family name seems to have taken place when my ancestors moved from northern Baden (Staffort, near Karlsruhe) to southern Baden (Bötzingen) between 1741 and 1770. In Staffort, the family name was recorded as both *Enderlin* and *Enderle*. Although this may seem odd, the transition is understandable when one considers that northern Baden (around Karlsruhe) is influenced by the Swabian (*Schwäbisch*) subdialect, wherein "*-le*" is the preferred suffix. Still earlier, prior to about 1700, my Enderlin ancestors lived in Köndringen (now part of Teningen), where the name was recorded as *Enderlin* and (rarely) as *Endterlin*. Köndringen lies in the Breisgau region between the Black Forest and the Kaiserstuhl, where the

Alemmanic subdialect dominates. The family name is said to be one of the oldest in that part of Germany.

The diminutive suffix in our name is an artifact of the old German language. Diminutives can be applied to nouns in German speech as they are to names. A familiar German phrase is "*mein Liebchen*," meaning "my little love," wherein "**-chen**" is the diminutive. In the earlier popular speech of southern Germany, the "**-l(e)in**" diminutive was the only form used until about 1400. After that, it gradually fell out of favor, and totally vanished from usage around 1650. The modern diminutive "**-chen**" has now replaced it. It remains unclear as to whether diminutive suffixes originated with family names, and were later used more freely for nouns in common speech, or whether the reverse is true. There is also some debate over the origin of the earlier suffix. Anton Polzin, in 1907, theorized that the "**-l?n**" suffix was of Latin origin, comparing it to the "**-lino**" suffix of Italy. Others dispute this theory. Regardless of these controversies, we can see from the above comparison that our name contains a classic suffix that relates closely to medieval German linguistics.

In spite of the close association of the **Enderlin** name with the Alemannic region in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries, there is reason to believe that the early bearers of the name (or a variant) may have originally migrated from the east. The name appears in Saxony (*Sachsen*) at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, with a record for Ilg Enderlin, b. abt. 1505 (son of Hans Enderlein, b. 1460). At least one commercial name researcher (The Hall of Names, Inc.) also attributes the origin of the **Enderlin** name to Saxony. A review of records in the IGI reveals that the name is more frequently spelled **Enderlein** in Saxony, with the oldest documented family line living in Zwickau. Saxony and Silesia at one time overlapped, so it is possible that the previously mentioned **Enderlyn** and **Enderlin** references in Silesia are somehow related. Silesia became a part of Austria in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and during that time of "Germanization" of the region, it is possible that the **Enderl(e)in** family migrated. The Reformation and its associated religious conflicts may also have contributed to the move. Of course, we can only speculate on these possibilities at this time. It may well be that the families are unrelated.

Because of the regional aspect to applying the diminutive suffix, any of a number of variants of the name could correspond to our family. The name, as the family in Bötzingen near Freiburg used it, was **Enderlin**. Farther north (near Karlsruhe), in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century, at least one of our ancestors was recorded with the name **Enderle**, reflecting the Swabian influence in northern Baden. Other variants, such as **Enderli**, **Enderlein** and **Enderl** may also be related, depending of the migration patterns of the family.

In terms of the geographic distribution of our surname as we now spell it, we find that its extent is generally limited in early records. Parish records (which became common in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century, provide us with a glimpse of the distribution of the name at that time. By far, the greatest concentration of Enderlin family in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries is found in the Alemannic region, spanning Alsace (especially Haut-Rhin), southern Baden and northern Switzerland. In the Haut-Rhin region of what is now France, a Martin Enderlin appears as early as 1487. A large population of **Enderlins** appears in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in the Haut-Rhin region, especially in the villages of Dürllinsdorf and Grentzingen. In Baden, the **Enderlins** rarely appear in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, but become very common in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Early records for Baden indicate that a

few *Enderlin* family members were living in the region in the late 1500's. These early Baden residents include a Hans Enderlin, b. 1593, at Freiburg; and an Apollonia Enderlin, b. 1577, at Lörrach. In Switzerland, an *Enderlin* appears in Zürich in 1611. Later, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Swiss *Enderlins* become more common.

The author wishes to remind the readers of this document that there is still a great deal of information to be uncovered for our surname. Any additional information is welcomed! By pooling our knowledge, we will undoubtedly learn much more about our family lines.

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