

Chapter 1

The Surname Issue

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Updated 2018



One of the major sources of confusion encountered while researching the Pinter family was the number of different surname spellings that were found. As you will see in this chapter, at least eight spellings were found in the various sources of information. These sources include census data, Bureau County resources, and Swiss church records.

In addition, you will encounter a number of people named Heinrich and Henry and Jacob in this family. The name Heinrich will refer to the man who was born in Switzerland and came to America to raise a family. The names Henry and Jacob will refer to his sons. Other people with the name Henry and Jacob will be clearly distinguished from their fathers.

It is important that you familiarize yourself with this chronology of surnames before reading the rest of the story.

The various surname spellings that appear in the documentation for the Pinter family between about 1800 and 1880 are:

Pünter	Pinder
Puenter	Bender
Bainter	Binder
Painter	Pinter

The origin of these various spellings is uncertain. One possibility is that, since the family spoke German, perhaps the various officials recording census data and performing other recording processes did not completely understand the names being told to them and thus recorded what they thought they heard. In addition, it has been suggested that Heinrich might have had a speech impediment...perhaps a stutter. This, coupled with the German language barrier, could explain many of the surname spellings.

The reader should assume that the writer has double-checked the accuracy of the transcription of name spellings from the sources to this document and that there are no accidental misspellings.

Here is more detail for the various spellings.

Pünter (with the umlauted “u”) – this spelling is predominant in the church records of Stäfa, Switzerland, as you will read later. It was and is a common name in Switzerland then and now.

Puenter – This name appears on Elizabeth Hohenbrunner’s head stone at the Church on the Hill (COH) and thus in the COH records. “ue” appears to be a spelling and printing alternative to the umlauted u (ü).

Bainter – This name is found in the 1850 census data. The spelling could be either P or B, but the census transcribers read it as Bainter and so you get Henry Bainter, born in Switzerland in 1810 when you search for Bainter. The 1850 census shows a Henry Bainter, in Bureau County, married to Elizabeth, with no children. This appears to be our Heinrich and Elizabeth.

Painter – The census of 1860 lists Henry and Elizabeth Painter in Bureau County. It also lists that they have two sons, Henry and Jacob. At least for the 1860 census, this family appears to be our Heinrich and Elizabeth.

There was also an H.H. Painter living in Putnam County in 1840, but so far that entry is not traceable to us and conflicts with the general consensus of when they both came to America from Germany, which is 1848. Also, this individual had a wife and multiple children.

Bender – This spelling appears on various documents during the mid 1800s. For example, Heinrich’s certificate of naturalization lists his name as Henry Bender. Ruth May has indicated that this is our Heinrich. This name is also common in Switzerland.

Binder - This name was used when Heinrich purchased land in Bureau County upon his return from Livingston County in 1874. This spelling also appears in 1866 on Heinrich’s passport paperwork. This is also a common name in Switzerland.

Pinter – The first time this spelling appears in census data is 1880.

One might worry that, with all these various spellings, we have misidentified this family. However, various crosschecks with the resources and further investigation with the census data seems to point to these spelling as being merely spelling variations for one family, the Heinrich Pinter family. This should be evident as you read the remaining chapters of this book.

Here is a timeline of the family surnames, in table format:

Event, Book, or other Documentation	Surname spelling in the documentation	Context
In Switzerland	Pünter	Per church records
Arrival in the US	Bender? or Binder?	Arrival date unknown. There are various Henry Binders and Benders in the ship manifests online.
1840 census	N/A	No family reference in census except for a H.H. Painter in Putnam Co.
1850 census	Painter	Henry (but the name is written such that the transcriber read it as Henry Bainter)
1857 Naturalization papers	Bender	Henry Bender
1858-9 Directory of Bureau County, Selby Tsp	Bender	Henry Bender, farmer
1860 Census	Painter	Henry Painter
1864	Pinder	Heinrich Pinder purchased land from Chauncey
1865 Elizabeth's death record at COH	Puenter	Heinrich's name as spelled on her headstone – is spelled Pünter in the church death records
1865	Pinder	Heinrich Pinder sold land to Halte
1866	Pinter	Heinrich Pinter sold his farm
1866	Pünter/Binder	Heinrich Pünter passport referring to sons Henry and Jacob Binder
1870 Census	None found	No identifiable family reference in this census
1874	Binder	Heinrich Binder purchased land from L. Schriener
1877 Voter and Taxpayer list for Berlin Tsp	Bender	Henry, Henry Jr, and Jacob Bender
1880 Census	Pinter	Henry and Jacob Pinter and families
1882	Pinter	Heinrich Pinter sells land to Henry Jr.
1888	Pinter	Heinrich Pinter sold coal rights
1897-8 Directory of Bureau County Westfield Tsp	Pinder	Jacob (sect 30) and Henry (sect 31) Pinder
1900 COH Death record	Pinter	Heinrich Pinter
1916-1921 Prairie Farmers Farm Directory	Pinter	(Henry and Julianna, Henry and Anna M., Jacob and Justina, and J.P and Phillipina)

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