phonetischen Namenkarte (pNK) / Phonetic variants of German surnames and village names

Name as found in present day _____ (Source(s):_____)

Goal: De-evolve a surname or village name from the present to its original forms & variants

Step-by-step

- Review phonetic hints and samples below

- Create the "Master Variant Diagram"

- Write out the list of spelling variants

"Master variant" diagram

Listing of variants (use back of sheet for more):

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Phonetic hints and samples

Initial letters

- H may have dropped
- Y names may originally have been with J
- V names may have originally been with a W
- See consonant interchanges and vowel shifts for other ideas.

Vowel shifts

Many German "short" vowels are interchangeably re-spelled. "Long" vowels include shifts such as:

- ei or ey or ai or ay
- e or ee or ä
- ü or y
- ie or i or ü
- äu or eu

Notes: Any umlauted (two dots) vowel can shift into just about any other vowel in English records! The 2nd letter in German vowel combinations is usually the one that "speaks" – e.g., ie = long e; ei = long i; eu = "oy"

Consonant Interchanges

Letters than can interchange are:

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- b or v or f
- d or t or th
- f or pf or ff
- k or c or g
- s or z

Combinations / Syllables

(e.g., now = orig.)

- S or Sh = Sch
- -back or baugh = bach
- -man = mann
- -tz or -z or -ts
- -berk or berck = -berg, -burg
- -ly or -ley = -le

Translations

Look up the name (or its syllables) to see if it's a translation of a German word (e.g. English = German)

- Examples: Little = Klein; Baker = Bäcker, Shoemaker = Schuhmacher

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Surname example: Snyder

- "Master Variant" diagram**: (Sn or Shn or Schn) (y or ei or i) (d or t or th) (-er or-ur)**   • List of variants: Snider, Sniter, Snytur, Sneider, Sneiter, Sneither, Schnyder, Schnyter, Schnyther, Schneiter, Schneither, Shniter, Shneider, Shneiter

Village name example: Zeifenbeck

- "Master Variant" diagram**: (Z or S) (ei or ie or e or i or ü) (f or pf or ff) (en or in) (-beck or baugh or –bach)**
- List of variants: Ziefenbach, Zeifenbaugh, Sieffenbach, Sieffenbaugh, Siephenbeck, Züffenbach, Süphenbach, Seifenbeck

Books with more details: **Roger P. Minert,** *Spelling Variations in German Name* (GRT Publications, third printing, 2008) and **Kenneth L. Smith,** *German Names: A Practical Guide* (Masthof Press, 2007)