

REMODELLING THE FAMILY NAME IN TWENTIETH CENTURY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: IDENTITY, CONTEST AND HUMOUR¹

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Summary

In the 20th century, thousands of Newfoundlanders engaged in a kind of identity management through the phonic re-construction of their surnames, in an attempt to bring their family name in line with their contemporary desires for controlled connotations. This article examines cases of this surname re-modelling.

IN 1977, E.R. SEARY'S *Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland* was published by Memorial University. It quickly became a classic text for enthusiasts of Newfoundland history. That was especially so for enthusiasts of the history of particular families and local communities where only a small number of names might be found. Ray Guy likened Seary's book to the family Bible in its place of importance in many people's homes.² The book functioned as a kind of index to many of the public records, extending back more than two centuries, sometimes further, through the period of European occupation of Newfoundland.

It also was a good index to family traditions, since one of the bodies of information Seary's research assistants (including Dr. Sheila Lynch) went through was the corpus of big questionnaires distributed by the English and later the Folklore Departments at Memorial University in the mid-1960s. Those questionnaires asked specific questions about family history and community

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²Originally part of the book's review in the St. John's *Evening Telegram*, when the book was published in 1977, this comment is used by McGill-Queen's University Press, the current publisher, as the first part of a blurb on the 2nd edition's back cover.

settlement, thus bringing together a tremendous body of oral history and folk history.³

Seary's book could also show the various spellings a particular name had in its several and various reports, sometimes indicating clearly the division of families into separately spelt names and, to that extent, new, seemingly "unrelated," families.

Sometimes this "division" was conscious construction of walls of apparent difference between families whose names were pronounced the same, but who went to different churches: Browns and Brownes, Greens and Greenes, Hannems and Hannams, Puddisters and Puddesters, and so on. The Caravans and Kerrivans are only slightly different (D. Caravan, 8 Nov 2012).⁴ In this essay, I look at something else, something that Seary's *Family Names* (1977) is unable to deal with in a systematic way.

I've been interested for some years in how, often within living memory, people became aware of alternate pronunciations of their own surnames, and made efforts to change that sound, both as made by themselves, and as heard within the public at large. At the same time, others, looking on, generated folklore about the change; as a change seemed to imply a reason for change, the reasons sometimes produced folkloric material. I have collected these stories about just why people had changed the aural shape of their name.

In the 20th century, the only century I have any real record of this happening in, though I've no doubt it happened in other times, this was not a particularly rare thing. It still happens, as people become, for instance, fed up with the pronunciation of, or the connotations surrounding, or the jokes made about, their names, and they remodel the sonic personality of their family. And thus of themselves as individuals. It's identity management, as I indicate below.

Folklore often follows social and cultural changes and is thus often an agent of conservatism, or conservation. It's often a lag, or a weight on the leg of cultural change.

³These questionnaire responses are in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) under the accession numbers Q64 through Q68, a total of about 2000 responses, all individually numbered. I refer to those sources with such numbers. Some other sources of information for this paper are interviews I made over the past 35 years. Some information was taken as notes by me and collected in my own research file, Name Changes in the 20th Century. Some are thus paraphrases of what I heard without recourse to an audio recorder and exact transcription. I refer to them here by name and date.

⁴Family folklore has it they stem from Caroway, a change that may have had nothing to do with religion.

The folklore about family names, that conservative folklore, often illustrates and is fueled by the disdain that people have had of those who would change their name's pronunciation. I will start with one example.

This story is actually told in Newfoundland about at least three different families that changed their names, or tried to change the widespread pronunciation by others, of their names. The version I heard first is about the Perlin family, whose name is commonly pronounced perLINN today. At the beginning of the 20th century, many local people pronounced it PURL-in.

I've also heard the story, with appropriate changes, about the Cahills (or kuh-HILLS). And the CarNELLS.

One Saturday morning, a delivery man arrived with a load of fresh manure for this up-scale family's garden. [Often this is Patty Shea, well-known 100 years ago for living on an up-river flat of the South River, which flows through Bowring Park.] The manure had been ordered by the man of the house. Pat knocked on the front door, which was opened by the butler. "Is Mr. PURLin home?" Pat asked.

The butler said "It's not Mr. PURLin. It's Mr. perLINN. Who shall I say is calling?"

Pat Shea responded, "Well. You tell Mr. perLINN that Patty Sha-HEY is here with his load of sha-HITT."⁵

I'll include another version of this story below. The folklorist in me is interested in alternate versions, folklore in variation, since it often shows the evolution of stories like these in changing contexts. But I'm just as interested in the fact that they stay similar enough to be "about" the same stuff. Here we see

⁵This is a paraphrase and collation of several versions. Its prime source is a version told me by Bert Riggs of Grand Bank, 17 Sept 1981. A similar text can be found in M. I. Brenton's MUNFLA collection 80-158/C5809 with a transcription on p. 9. The story is an international tale most often told as an animal tale (Mr. TurTOOL and Mr. RabBIT). Gershon Legman's (1968: 683) *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor* includes a version from the United States in 1949 which closely follows the animal tale tradition. Roger D. Abrahams likewise has a version in his *Deep Down in the Jungle* (1964: 247-248). A Newfoundland version of the animal tale was reported by John Dawson in the mid-1960s from Jackson's Cove, Green Bay: MUNFLA FSC 66-5/141.

that disdain, or perhaps just dismissal, of the uppity airs of people who would change what seems to anyone else immutable – their God-given surname.

There are several categories of changes, or "reasons for change," though they overlap a great deal. Some changed names are said to be "older" name-pronunciations by the people who change them: older, and thus in some sense, "truer." This can be an overt reason when there may be rather more covert reasons; I'll get to that soon. Some people avoid informal names that do not reflect spelling or, rather, they go for spelling pronunciations. For social simplicity, of not having to spell out their names as often, they change their pronunciation. For a time, they have two pronunciations, and then one slips away altogether. But the memory of the older pronunciation can remain.

In late October 2012, I heard John Furlong of the CBC's *Fisheries Broadcast*⁶ expand a little on an interview he'd just aired with Mayor Charles Penwell of Fortune. Mr. Penwell, he said, had told him (off-tape) that his family came from the "Pennels" who had come out from England: the memory of the name change.

Furlong did not mention whether Mr. Penwell ever called himself "Pennel," but I know from archival evidence that the older people, the generation born say before 1930, did so. There is some tantalizing evidence for just when the spelling PENWELL started up: Seary shows the 18th-century reports of the family spelt as Pennel, while sometime in the 19th century the spelling PENWELL became apparent, at least in the Fortune Bay area (Seary 1998: 408-409).

The occurrence of a spelling in the documentary record does not necessarily mean there was widespread pronunciation like that (or, more precisely, like our current reading of that spelling). One recurrent story in the family folklores of Newfoundland is that a well-meaning, but pushy and perhaps wrong, priest, minister, or other scribe, wrote down what *he* thought a name should be upon hearing a local and informal name, that is, what he thought was a sloppy and wrong pronunciation. PENWELL, the spelling, might very well be such a name. However, an informal name can live on for generations before, if ever, the owners of the name start using the "formal" name, the spelling pronunciation.

⁶*Fisheries Broadcast* Tuesday 30 Oct 2012. The recording is at <<http://www.cbc.ca/video/watch/AudioMobile/FisheriesBroadcast/ID=2298705086>>; Furlong's comment starts at 8:42.

There are several other names in that "final -well" class:

Guzzle > Guzzwell (K. Guzzwell 29 May 1997; F. Davis 5 May 1981),
 Suthel > Southwell (C. Southwell, 23 Oct 1997),
 Thorn-le (or Turnel) > Thornhill (F. Green, MUNFLA 84-107).

And so on.

In the last five or ten years of his life, I knew the poet and politician, Abel C. Wornell (pronounced worNELL). He came by his poetry honestly – his father Thomas was known in their community, Greenspond, as an amusing versifier before him.

Thomas was also a Justice of the Peace, and the Commissioner of Roads for Greenspond. In the 1920s, someone wrote an anonymous letter of complaint about his attention to the roads and it was published in the *Fishermen's Advocate* under the pseudonym "Long Boots." Such footwear was what he needed to get over muddy roads.

Thomas answered the complaint with another short verse in the *Advocate*. Its last verse went:

Long Boots, or short, 'tis all the same
 to the man who wrote this letter.
 If I don't serve my master well,
 I'm sure he'll get my better.
 Some day I shall give up accounts
 unto the Great Eternal.
 So now, Long Boots, give up disputes.
 My name is Thomas Wornell.
 (Interview, 12 Nov 1997)

And, of course, he would have had to pronounce it WERNel.

His son, Abe, got a better education than his father, went into politics, moved to St. John's, published books of poetry, and moved in higher social circles. He changed the pronunciation to worNELL, which he felt was reflective of an earlier pronunciation, based on the spelling. More literary. Or perhaps more literate is the point.

"Based on the spelling." Once again, I raise the question of whether our current reading of a spelling convention is the same as a previous generation's reading.

One other thing, a gendered aspect of this. Abe Wornell told me *he* did not mind hearing the older pronunciation of his name, WERNel. After all, he grew up with it. But his wife always rankled a little when she heard the "*mispronunciation*" of her (comparatively new, being her married) name.

It seems the wife's protection of the newer forms is a common motif in the stories. My own father-in-law was the instigator of a change in his name. His father was Tom HORRin, or so it was pronounced; it was spelt Horan. But when Pat, my father-in-law, left Newfoundland in the early 1940s to study at a Canadian university he hated the constant joke about the Newfoundlander "out whorin' around." So, he said the "correct," and "truly Irish" way to say it was hoRAN. He used to say this was upon consultation with an Irish scholar at his university.

He went home to St. John's on a school break and announced to his family that this, now, was the correct way to say the name and all fell in line: his dozen-and-a-half younger siblings (he was the oldest) and, especially, he said, his mother. He and she, he told me, made the change "in concert" (P. J. Horan, Feb 1981). But not his father. Tom's gravestone, with its constant spelling of Horan, cannot tell you how he pronounced it. Tom died, still Tom HORRin, 50 years after his family's change around him.

I mentioned the Carnell name, now pronounced carNELL. St. John's Mayor (in the 1930s) Andrew Carnell was almost always known as Andy CARNal.⁷ St. John's people often said in the middle of the 20th century that when his family's business moved from the carpentry and mechanics of building wheels and carts, to the rather more fleshy business of taking dead bodies for make-up and display at a funeral home, they became uncomfortable with the older pronunciation, CARNal ("of the flesh"). So they became carNELLS. And thus they remain.

Although it's hard to hear or pronounce a difference, likewise "when the Winsors got uppity, they put a -d- in the middle to be like the Royal Family" (jocularly put by Naboth Winsor, 8 March 1983; my Bonavista-born dentist for many years, Ray Winsor, spoke similarly about his cousins).

"When the Fards got money," said some people, "they became Forwards" (reported by B. Riggs, 17 June 1981).

⁷As examples of the public pronunciation of this name in the middle of the 20th century, see Joe Smallwood's pronunciation CARNal while the Barrelman, on one of the few recordings of him in that role, MUNFLA 79-007 NAC59A, recorded October 1941. The director of the radio station VONF, William F. Galgay, always a careful and articulate speaker, likewise used CARNal during his coverage of the King's visit in June 1939: 79-007 NAC61C.

That folklore about name-changing works both ways and there is often contest in the tradition about what is "older" or "more correct." In the 1970s, I had a friend named Spurrell who, when we were talking about other final -ELL names that had moved the stress to the final syllable and de-schwa-ified the vowel, scoffed, "Pfah! Can you imagine me being called SpuRELL?!" For her, retaining the informal, fully-schwa-ed, and older in her mind, pronunciation was a matter of pride.

Barbara Doran, the film-maker (who says DORRin) referred to her own "reverse snobbery" with regard to her own holding out against people calling her duh-RAN (B. Doran, 16 April 1982). I expect she got even more of that in the later 1980s with the popularity of the musical group Duran Duran.

I could list a lot more such names: The YOudles (spelt Udell) who became known as you-DELLs (E. Udell, 22 Sept 1993; J. Udell 12 Nov 1981); the BUNNels who became BonNELLS (N. Bonnell, 24 Sept 1993); and others.

I should mention the noted Master of Dance (and buffoonery!) Professor Charles Henry Danielle (Lehr 1981). Today, more than a hundred years after his death, almost without exception his name is read in history books with a French-like pronunciation of the vowels and the stress on the first syllable: DAN-yell. But his neighbours in Paradise and Conception Bay seem to have known him as Professor duh-KNEEL and that name remained in oral use at least until the 1980s. (I have a pet theory that Neil's Pond, which is closer to the site of the Octagon Castle, which he built, than Octagon Pond actually is, was named for him: Duh-KNEEL's Pond, later The Neals pond, and finally its present name. But I have no evidence for that and the 21st-century local folklore is that, although there are no Neils resident there now, the pond is named for a family from the Kelligrews area, about 15 km south.)

My own surname remained intact through the 20th century, though it is fairly clear to me that, 250 years ago, my Hiscock relatives called themselves as frequently Hitchcock as Hiscock. Hitchcock is the earlier form, and thus the -s-sound today, rather than the more suggestive -z- sound in the first syllable. Despite the pronunciation, it's a name that gets its share of jokes, and my own name, taken from the St. John's telephone directory, even made it onto a website in the United States devoted to awful names that people have.⁸ And some

⁸The website called "What were they thinking!?" has, sadly, disappeared in 2013. It showed actual pages from various telephone directories, and it includes the St. John's directory with my name and address circled. There are remnants; see, for example, the blog entry called "Parents please don't name your baby when you're drunk": <<http://bryanscafe.blogspot.ca/2007/04/parents-please-dont-name-your-baby-when.html>>.

Newfoundland Hiscocks have indeed changed their surname when moving to communities where the name is not as well-known; one Hiscock family is said to have taken the name Forsey upon moving to Britain (P. Kirby, 8 Feb 1985).

Historically, final -cock is simply a diminutive, much like -ie in Robbie or Willie and so on. "Hitch" is one of the diminutives or nicknames for "Richard" so Hiscock has a kind of etymological meaning like "Little Rick" or "Our Rick." I have several ancestors whose names were Richard Hitchcock, a name that was a little redundant, like Donnie MacDonald. Despite jokes about it, none of my seven siblings, nor I, have ever been tempted to change our name.

Every person interested in Canadian music of the late 20th century knows of at least one person whose family (or who himself) changed his name's pronunciation from COCKburn to COburn. And there are several cases of -cock names changing in Newfoundland in the past several decades. So there are people whose names are (or were) spelt Alcock and Battcock, who have made it known they would be known as Alcoe (Seary 1998: 5) and Battick (D. Meades, 17 Jan 2000). These of course are examples of image management.

Some family names in Newfoundland have acquired a formal pronunciation, especially outside their home region, but retain their informal and often older pronunciation locally. In St. Mary's Bay, the name spelt Moriarity, is often pronounced MerRATTy (E. Moriarity, 25 July 1989). I've always said O'FLAR-i-ty, and I think most people still do, but more and more, in St. John's, I hear O'FLAH-herty.⁹ And, I suspect people who say that feel they are being more "authentic" in their Irish pronunciation. Perhaps they are. Certainly they are giving value to the H that I do not.

The letter H in English is troublesome. Leaving post-vocalic placements to "flatten" vowel (in words like, *ahh*, *blah* and *meh*), it normally appears only at the beginning of morphemes: *ahead*, *subhuman*, etc. and then it usually gets pronounced. When the letter appears in surnames, it sometimes fights for recognition.

The name Lahey has so many pronunciations informally that it is difficult to say what is the current informal, or indeed formal, pronunciation: LAH-hee, LAW-hee, LAY-hee, LAY-ee, Lay, LADDy, LODDy, and perhaps others. In a radio interview in 1991, about something altogether different, the host asked Ms. Dawn Lahey how she pronounced her name. Three different pronunciations were said to be okay.¹⁰ My impression is that, at least in some

⁹I first heard this as a public pronunciation in the mid-1980s when both Patrick O'Flaherty and his then-wife Frankie O'Flaherty were frequent local radio commentators. Each was heard to use that pronunciation.

¹⁰Peter Miller (host), St. John's CBN Morning Show, 1 April 1991.

places (like Bell Island), the widespread pronunciation at the middle of the 20th century was LADDy (D. Downey, 28 Feb 1984). You can imagine people being unnerved by the jokes suggesting they were "a bit of a laddy."

At least phonetically similar are some other names, like Dready, and Trahey (J. Trahey, 24 Sept 1990). Dohey, too, is similar. Today, we most often hear DOUGH-y, at least here in St. John's. I first heard the name when I visited the St. Bride's area about 35 years ago, as DUH-hi though younger people were saying DUDDy (like LADDy). Through the past 30 years, most younger and middle-aged people seem to be saying DOUGH-y (C. Manning, 13 Aug 1982).

As I said, some of these names vary now by place and family line: Picco (PICKo) versus PEAcO¹¹, TURRafil versus TORRaville (MUNFLA FSC 70-15/138), CURRyall versus CULLihall (J. Forward, MUNFLA ms 80-233: 11), Walsh versus Welch, HOOLin versus HOOLihan, COSSlo versus CoSTELLo (J. H. Costello, 13 Aug 1982), and CaREW versus CAREy. My bank contact calls herself GRENNum, but many of her cousins are known as GREENham (R. Greenham, 19 Nov 1992).

Some other surnames had informal pronunciations early in the 20th century but moved towards spelling pronunciations later. Among them were the SANDys of the Fogo District who became SAUNders (J. Widdowson, MUNFLA FSC 67-22/143). Likewise the SANcros of the St. John's area who became Saint CROYs (spelt as "Croix" and I expect the temptation must be there to pronounce it in a modern French way).¹² And of course the SINjins of Conception Bay, many of whom have moved to a spelling pronunciation of Saint John. Some Oliphants, susceptible to being called Elephant, became Olivers (Q. Maloney, 19 April 1988).

From a language point of view, the processes are mostly fairly simple. I won't go through long list, but I've mentioned spelling pronunciation: some people with the spelling Bellburn were pronounced BELLbin (Seary 2000: 50; also personal correspondence with E. R. Seary, 8 Feb 1983); but as R-less-ness reduced in Newfoundland dialects (in the 20th century), there came a sensitivity to what seemed to be "dropped R's" and the family name became (or reverted, if you will) to BELLburn, with a full R sound.

¹¹Karen Picco, 27 Jan 1986, told me most of her American relatives were using PEAcO.

¹²My father and his sister lived on Kenmount Road in the 1930s near a family by that name with those pronunciations (E. Hiscock and G. Hiscock, 25 Dec 1982).

With similar attention to the prevailing spelling, the THORNills (or TARN'ills) became clearly THORNhills (F. Green, MUNFLA 84-107). And the ANTys became, strangely to my mind, the Endicotts.¹³

Revocalization of schwa is another process, a sub-group of spelling pronunciation, but important enough to point out separately. Thus LIDsten > LidSTONE or LIDstone, and Horrin > HoRAN. In the example of Horan, we can also see the shifting of stress, another simple procedure for the renovation of a name. English, as it borrows foreign words, has been a known stress-shifter for hundreds of years but names do tend to be protected from some sound changes. In his history of the English language, *The Mother Tongue*, Bill Bryson mentions forward stress shift in two-syllable names as a widespread phenomenon in the United States in the 19th century (Bryson 1990: 204).

And metathesis happens, the switching of two sounds, a process which often occurs with Rs, with evidence as old as the English language. PERCHit > PRITCHett, or vice-versa, depending on how you look at it (P. Pritchett, 1 Feb 1982). If, instead of metathesis, you add an extra R (for *vowel harmony*), you get another variant of that name: PERCH-erd.

I won't spend any time with the Anglicization of French (and other) names except to list a few¹⁴: Duphenais > Duffney (MUNFLA Q64B-71); Ballett > Barrett (K. Barrett, 7 May 2007); LeBlanc > White; Aucoin > oCOIN, oQUINN (both often spelt in English to reflect those re-analyses: O'Coyné and O'Quinn), LeMessurier > Le-MEAZH-er-rer, though exactly what that Channel Island name sounded like 150 or 160 years ago when it arrived here, I don't know (but see Flynn 1980).

There are a few intriguing legends of people arriving in a community with names that were close to some local names and the owners changing to fit that local name. A person named Raines, being the only such person in Pouch Cove in the nineteenth century, apparently restyled himself and his family as Ryan, a common name there.¹⁵ As mentioned above, some Barretts of Fleur de Lys tell a similar story of their forebear arriving there, named Ballett.

My late colleague, Peter Narváez used to joke that many of his family members – Hispanics – had preceded him to Newfoundland. They settled, he said, in Spaniard's Bay but changed their name from Narváez to Noseworthy

¹³E. Greenleaf letter to her parents, 2 July 1920, p.3 verso, in MUNFLA 82-189, Greenleaf collection. See also Robert Madison, p. xxv, quoted below.

¹⁴Gerald Thomas treats this context for the generation of new surnames fully in his 1999 book *French Family Names of Newfoundland and Labrador*.

¹⁵Letter to the editor, *Daily News* 24 April 1919, p. 5.

(Hiscock 2012). This was just a joke, but the joke worked because it paralleled the experience of many families.

One of the most common folkloric explanations of a name change, especially when it involves spelling differences, is as I mentioned above, that a recordist of a marriage, birth, baptism, or death felt "There was no such name" as what was being said.¹⁶ Or they made a simple mistake in spelling themselves. Thus we get the Curryall > Cullihall change I mentioned above. Such a story explains how the Organs became O'Regans (via a Mr. O'Regan introduced to me by E. R. Seary, 12 Aug 1982). And Glazzby > Gilespie (J. Widdowson, MUNFLA FSC 67-22/144). I expect there is historic evidence for both sides of at least some of these stories. I don't know it; I'm only recounting the folklore.

But there is no doubt that visitors often assume the current spelling is historically correct while the current pronunciation is the result of oral change, or deterioration. Elisabeth Greenleaf, in writing about people on the West Coast (Sally's Cove area) in the early 1920s, said:

Many of their names showed the effect of generations of oral rather than written usage. Uncle Dan Endacott was commonly called "Dan Anty," and Charles Maynard was "Char-les Miner." A woman in Bonne Bay who spelled her name Cullihell [prob. Cullihall] was always spoken of as Mrs. Curryall. (Madison 1982: xxv; my interpolation.)

I should mention that older names are often crystallized in local placenames (although, they too, are susceptible to restyling). In a discussion of what is known as initial fricative voicing in West Country-derived dialects in Newfoundland, William Kirwin and Bob Hollett mentioned Vizzard or Vizzard's Hill (in the Bay Bulls area) and suggested it is the earlier, informal form of the family name Fizzard (Kirwin & Hollett 1986: 236).

Another example of a placename holding an older pronunciation is between Tor's Cove and Mobile: Shannon's Hill, though the younger residents and the town council itself now refer to it as Shannahan's Hill (V. Dillon, 12 Dec 2002). In Renewals, apparently there is a Merrigan's Garden, while the family there now goes by the name Berrigan (B. Stacey, 6 Jan 1998). Poor's Gully in Branch is still so-named, though (I think) all the Poores are now Powers (A.

¹⁶That ministers took that liberty is certainly true. The Rev. Julian Moreton tells a story of preventing a child being named Brazilian. "There's no such name," he cried, and found the name Barzillai in the Bible as an alternative (Moreton 1863: 47).

Roche, 19 Jan 1983). A joke is made that, when they got money, or when they resettled from the islands of Placentia Bay, all the Poors/Poe-ers became Powers: "No longer poor." A proverbial reference back in time to a certain shipwreck is made in the Fortune Harbour area of NDB: "when the Po-ers was lost" (J. Widdowson, MUNFLA FSC 67-22/144).

Similarly, a kind of jacky-the-lantern light in the Wesleyville/Greenspond area is still called Paddy Poor's Light, referring to the death of a local man, Paddy Power (J. Ford, MUNFLA FSC 83-247/1).

Above, I mentioned identity management and I should conclude with some clear examples of that. One is the story that those people now called Chaytor had been CHEATER in earlier generations. According to the story given in 1967 by a student with that name, the name CHEATER was no problem at home in Newfoundland, but when her grandfather went to Mount Alison University in the early 1900s, he found it very embarrassing, so he led the change when he went home again (Q67-185). The telephone directory in St. John's today has about eight times as many Chaytors as Cheaters. (Notwithstanding the story, the name Cheator may indeed have been pronounced Chaytor before the 20th century; other names, like Neale, with -e spellings have had that lower vowel.)

My father-in-law's experience in Canada certainly falls into the category of identity management: he didn't appreciate jokes from his new Canadian friends about his suggested sexual predation.

The Traceys of Pinware are said locally to come from a Jersey family Trachi, pronounced TRASHy. They changed when that word was used as an insult (W. Tracey, interviewed by B. Fowler and E. MacDonald, MUNFLA C6141B/76-344).

The Lidstens of South River were afraid of being seen as German sympathizers in World War One, so they reanalyzed their name as Lidstone (Q67-1197, p. 4). For what reason the original name might have been seen as German, I don't know and it is not clear in the questionnaire from which I take this information.

All of these are examples of de-referentializing the name. Perhaps a better term would be RE-referentializing since in many cases it's couched as getting back to the ethnic roots, or simply making the name a human name instead of an epithet.

As I said, as a folklorist I'm always interested in textual variation in folklore. I heard this last story of name remodelling, and the folkloric reaction to it, from a child of the Kearney family of St. John's about her maternal grandmother Smythe's family. It's a little like the one I started with, but different enough that you may appreciate it:

Mrs. Smythe was an outspoken and competent businesswoman who guarded her (husband's) family's image well. She made a point of correcting any mis-pronunciations of the family name. One day a load of coal was being delivered to her house and the coalman asked her, "Mrs. Smith, where do you want your coal?" "Young man!" she answered somewhat haughtily. "My name is not Smith. It's Smythe." Like a whip he retorted, "Smit or Smite. Shit or shyte. Where do you want your coal?"¹⁷

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¹⁷Anna Kearney Guigné, 19 Dec 1995; paraphrased a little.

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