

# THE NAME MONSTER

by Kelly Buehler  
from a history 1001  
project  
in St. John's

The name Monster is very unusual. Most people, apart from the family itself have never heard of the name. It seems to be located exclusively in Fortune, except for the Monsters of the fifth generation, who have moved. I know that there are other 'Monsters' but I am not sure where they fit in.

It has been hard to pinpoint the origins of this name. One possibility is that it is from the German surname *Monster*<sup>2</sup> or perhaps *Münster*, which is derived from the Latin *monasterium* for monastery.<sup>2</sup> However, it seems unlikely that the Monsters are originally from Germany, because there would probably be some recollection of the fact.

So far, I find it most likely that the Monsters originated in Ireland. A MUN folklore questionnaire filled out by George Monster says that the Monsters are originally from Ireland, and that the name is also spelled *Monster* or *Moister*.<sup>3</sup> *Maclysaght*

1. I have heard of George Monster and Barbara Monster, and they must stem from III 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, or 12.

2. Hans Bahlow, *Deutsches Namenlexikon* (München: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1967), p. 350.

3. E.R. Seery, *Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1976), p. 336.

Questionnaire (MUN Folklore), filled out by George Monster.

says that Munster is a surname changed from Moynihan, originally Ó Muimhneacháin (Muimhneach - Munsterman). The Munsters are from south-west Munster in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Elsdon C. Smith includes Moynihan, from Munster, in one book,<sup>2</sup> and in a later book also includes the name Munster itself.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly it is quite possible that the Munsters were originally Munster, but there are problems with this. If they were from Ireland, the Munsters should have been Catholic,<sup>4</sup> yet they were Methodist (there was a Catholic parish in Berlin in 1833, but I am not sure how far back this goes<sup>5</sup>). Also, their Christian names were English and not at all Irish.<sup>4</sup>

Good

1. MacLysaght, Edward, A Guide to Irish Surnames (Baltimore: Genealogical Book Company, 1964), p. 157.

MacLysaght, Edward, Irish Families (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1972), pp. 31, 314.

MacLysaght, Edward, More Irish Families (Galway: O'Gorman Ltd., 1960), p. 182.

MacLysaght, Edward, The Surnames of Ireland, (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), pp. 167, 171.

2. Smith, Elsdon C., American Surnames (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1969), p. 253.

3. Smith, Elsdon C., New Dictionary of American Family Names (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 364.

4. Interview with John Mannion, St. John's, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1982.

5. Parish Registers, Roman Catholic marriages, Berlin, 1833-1904, Newfoundland Provincial Archives.

Perhaps the Monsters were in Fortune longer than the earliest instance I have found, and were anglicized by that time. Another possibility is that the Munsters moved to England, were anglicized, and moved to Newfoundland later.

There is a possibility that the Monsters originate from the Ministers of England. Minister is an English name, usually found in Kent or Oxfordshire, and meaning monastery; minister,<sup>2</sup> much the same as the German name Minister.

Wherever the Monsters come from originally, they certainly have a unique name. I have never seen the name before, although I looked in the MUN library index, many books on surnames, and even two biographical encyclopedias.<sup>3</sup> ✓

1. See Family Tree II 8.

2. Bardsley, Charles Wareing, A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1968), p. 535.

Cotter, Basil, The Penguin Dictionary of Surnames (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 257.

Ewen, C. L'Esrange, A History of Surnames of the British Isles (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1931), p. 229.

Smith, Elsdon C., American Surnames (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1969), p. 214.

Smith, Elsdon C., New Dictionary of American Family Names (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 354.

3. International Who's Who 1975, The (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1975).

Stephen, Leslie, and Sidney Lee (eds.), The Dictionary of National Biography, vol. XIII (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 1210.