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Review of the book Encyclopedia of American Family Names

John A. Drobnicki
CUNY York College

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Robb, H. Amanda. **Encyclopedia of American family names**, by H. Amanda Robb and Andrew Chesler. HarperCollins, 1995. 710p bibl ISBN 0-06-270075-8, \$40.00

The authors have selected the 5,000 most common surnames in the US, based on 1984 data from the Social Security Administration (the SSA has not released an update). For each name, Robb and Chesler provide its rank in the SSA file, the total number of people with that name in the SSA database as of 1980, the name's origin and meaning, famous persons with that surname in American history, and genealogies written on that family. Since Robb and Chesler have chosen to include only deceased individuals (except for living presidents), very few "Famous Bearers" are listed for non-Anglo surnames, and none for Asian names. Despite the authors' claim to the contrary, those genealogies listed are hardly exhaustive—the "Mills" entry includes only two genealogies, while a quick search of LOCIS identified more than 30 Mills genealogies held by the Library of Congress. Far from the "definitive guide" its dust jacket proclaims, this volume is nevertheless a convenient source for information that would ordinarily be culled from several different tools. General readers.—*J. A. Drobnicki, formerly, St. John's University*