Bergh Castle

The Most Distinguished Surname
Rittmeyer

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Ancient History

From marsh dwellers to merchant princes, the history of the Netherlands is fraught with incredible deeds by a remarkable people like the Rittmeyer family. Approximately forty percent of the land in The Netherlands is below sea level. In ancient times, these inhospitable regions became havens, with homes well hidden by forest or on hillocks of reeds and clay. Tribes from the north occupied most of these wetlands. The isolation created by the hostile environment and the lack of passable roads made conquest by normal land-based armies impossible, and laid the foundation for a separate Dutch culture and language. Much of this land was recovered through the construction of vast networks of canals and dikes. The Southern regions of the Netherlands were, in comparison, high and dry. (The name Holland means wooded land.) There were sandy hills or dunes with broad fields between the major rivers, the Rhine and the Maas. In around 57 BC, the Romans under Julius Caesar subjugated all the peoples of the Netherlands (except for the Frisians) and maintained control until the 5th century when Rome itself fell to the Goths. Many road-structures built by the Romans are still in common use. After the decline of the Roman Empire the Netherlands became part of the Frankish Kingdom, whose greatest leader was Charlemagne (768-814). During this time Frankish and Saxon people occupied the main part of the country, while the Frisians were driven to the Northern part. Christianity came to the Netherlands in the 7th century; brought by missionary monks such as St. Willebrord and St. Boniface. In the 12th century, the Netherlands came into the hands of a succession of Burgundian and Hapsburg nobility. The Hapsburgs gained control of the Netherlands from the Dukes of Burgundy in 1482, by marrying into the Spanish royal family. The Spanish nobility and army occupied the Netherlands until 1567. At the end of the 80-year-war against the Spanish king Philip II, the northern provinces formed the Union of Utrecht (1579). During this turbulent period the surname Rittmeyer was first recorded in Holland, where the name became noted for its many branches in the region, each house acquiring a status and influence which was envied by the princes of the region. The name was first recorded in Amsterdam, an ancient 13th century town held by the Lords of Amstel. Giesebrecht II built a castle there. Geisbrecht III built the dam to keep out the sea. It is first mentioned in charters of 1275 when Floris IV, the count of Holland granted its charter. It became a city of great mercantile wealth. It hold great treasures of art. In their later history the surname became a power unto themselves and were elevated to the ranks of nobility as they grew into a most influential family.

Spelling Variations

Many spelling variations exist for most Dutch names, and Rittmeyer is no exception. In the Middle Ages, levels of literacy were extremely low; the only people who could read or write were church officials and scribes. Even members of the nobility were illiterate. Because of this, when names were recorded, the scribes often recorded names as they sounded. Variations found of the name include: Reitmeier, Retemeyer, Reitter, Reitstein, Reitmohr, Reitzenmeyer, Reitmann, Rietmier, Rietmyer, Reitmyer, Reitman, Rietmeyr, Rittmayer and Rittmeyer, to name a few examples.

Early History

This struggle for religious freedom and independence, led by William of Orange lasted from 1568-1648, and resulted finally in the Republic of the United Netherlands. But during this turmoil, feudalism emerged and with it the need for careful documentation of lands, land owners, policies and titles. By this time, the surname Rittmeyer had become established in Holland where they emerged as a notable family early in the Middle Ages in Amsterdam. During these turbulent times there were many changing religious and political allegiances. Branches of the family emerged as family members relocated and established themselves in new locations as they were enlisted into military, political and religious service. They branched into Germany, Austria, and Holland where they held titles and estates. The German branch of the family was confirmed in the titles of Baron in 1759 while the Austrian branch was raised to the nobility in 1869 when they became Knights, and again in 1883 when they became Barons.

Early Notables

During the Renaissance, the Netherlands experienced its "Golden Age." Amsterdam became the trading and manufacturing center of Europe. Commerce required an excellent transportation system and here the location of the cities on waterways directly linking them to the sea made the New Republic the mightiest naval power of its time. Trading companies such as the Dutch East India Company created settlements around the world (including Japan, Indonesia, the West Indies, the Dutch Antilles, Surinam, and South Africa). In this era of colonial expansion many wars were fought with the other major colonial powers such as Spain and England.

During the Napoleonic occupation, (1795-1813) civil registration was introduced to the country. Because of this census everyone had to register their surnames. This has greatly facilitated genealogical searches. From this source and others, we found: the Reitmeier family of Amsterdam.

The Great Migration

Beginning in the early 18th century, the Netherlands again became a battleground. They were weakened first by the Dutch Wars, the War of the Grand Alliance, and then the War of Spanish succession. Finally, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Netherlands was invaded by the French, under Napoleon. Napoleon established the Batavia Republic(1795-1806), and the Kingdom of Holland(1806-1810), during which time the Dutch remained under French occupation.

Settlers

- August Rittmeyer, aged 26, who landed in Missouri in 1847 [1]
- George Rittmeyer, who arrived in Allegany (Allegheny) County, Pennsylvania in 1876 [1]
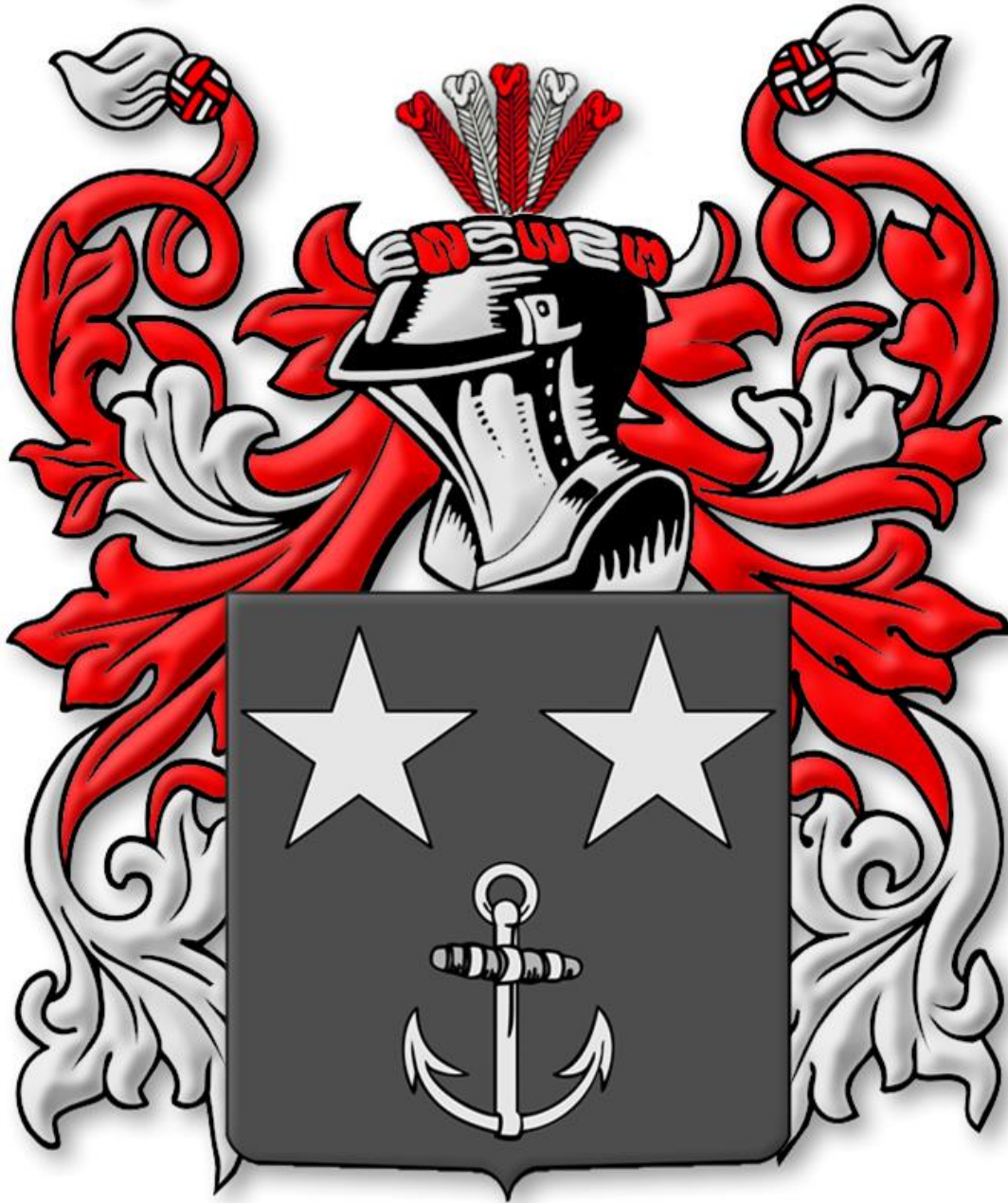
As well as 22 more in the Appendix.

Current Notables

Settlers began to increasingly look westward, as opportunities arose. In America, the Homestead Act (1862) offered 160 acres of land for a minimal fee; while in Canada, the Dominion Lands Act (1872) offered 160 acres to any male over the age of 21 for a ten-dollar registration fee.

There are 1 notables with similar origins in the Appendix.

The Ancient Arms of

Rittmeyer

Symbolism

Introduction

In the low countries of the Netherlands, nobles were formally identified and distinguished by the coat of arms that they bore. In the merchant society that developed during the late Middle Ages, coats of arms also had an important role as the equivalent of a signature; arms were stamped into wax seals on documents, validating the transaction and allowing illiterate people to do business.

Achievement of Arms of Rittmeyer

An Achievement of Arms such as the Rittmeyer arms depicted on the left typically consists of these parts: the Escrolls, displaying the family motto and name, the family crest (if any) seen above the helmet, the actual Coat of arms (also known as 'arms,' or 'the shield'), the Helmet depicted below the crest, the Torse on top of the helmet, and the Mantle draped from the helmet. Each of these elements will be described below. Supporters were a later addition to the Achievement; they are somewhat rare, and are usually personal to the grantee.

Mantle of Rittmeyer

The mantle was spread over and draped from the helmet and served as a protection, 'to repel the extremities of wet, cold, and heat, and to preserve the armour from rust.' The numerous cuts and slits suggest that it had been torn and hacked on the field of battle. The style or design of the mantling is up to the individual heraldic artist, and it is usually depicted in the main color and metal from the shield. The helmet (or Helm) varied in shape in different ages and countries, often depicting rank. The Esquire's Helm, as depicted here, is generally shown silver, with a closed visor and facing to the dexter (its right). On top of the helmet is a Torse or wreath which was formed by two pieces of silk twisted together. Its purpose was to hold the crest and mantle on the Helm.

Motto

The motto was originally a war cry or slogan. Mottoes first began to be shown with arms in the 14th and 15th centuries, but were not in general use until the 17th century. Thus the oldest coats of arms generally do not include a motto. Mottoes seldom form part of the grant of arms: Under most heraldic authorities, a motto is an optional component of the coat of arms, and can be added to or changed at will; many families have chosen not to display a motto.

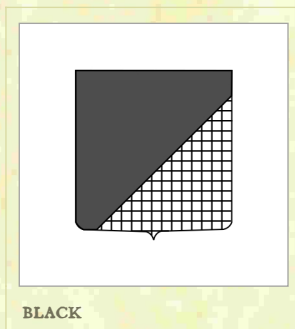The coat of arms displayed here for the surname Rittmeyer did not include a motto.

Shield

Shields (or Escutcheons) at first were painted simply with one or more bands of color or 'ordinaries'. Later, the ordinaries were used in conjunction with other figures or symbols. The Coat of Arms for the surname Rittmeyer can be described as follows:
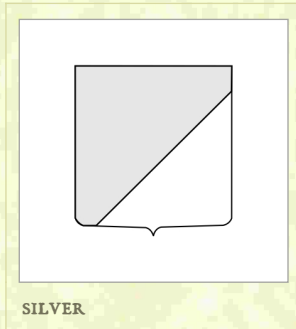

The Rittmeyer Shield

RITTMEYER ARMS

Black with two silver six pointed stars in chief and a silver anchor underneath the stars.

BLACK

BLACK

Sable (Archaic or literary English for black) or black, the coldest of the colors, corresponds to lead. Black, or "sable," is symbolic of sadness. It also corresponds with winter and is a humble color, suitable for the deeply religious. It denotes the qualities of knowledge, piety, serenity and work. Engravers represent it with numerous horizontal and vertical lines crossing each other.

SILVER

Argent (from the French for silver), or Silver is one of the two metals used in heraldry. It is usually represented on a shield by the colors gray or white.

This metal represents nobility, peace and serenity. It is associated with the qualities of purity and chastity, because the metal withstands the test of fire.

SILVER

SIX

It is rare to see six of any given charge, and a shield, and generally it must be blazoned how they will be distributed on the shield. The number six can of course symbolism many different things: it is the number of sides on a cube; God is said to have created Man on the sixth day; and there are six points on the Star of David

STARS

STARS

In heraldry, the Star, or Mullet, is often considered a symbol of truth, the spirit and of hope.

"Guillim holds that this is a falling or fallen star, not supposed to be fallen from its high estate, but to denote some Divine quality bestowed from above, whereby men shine in virtue, learning, and works of piety like bright stars on the earth."(Wade)

The Star can denote a divine quality and is a symbol of constancy, and celestial goodness. Its meaning can also depend upon the number and sometimes the orientation of its points. A star of some form constitutes part of the insignia of every order of knighthood.

"A gold spur becomes the dignity of knighthood, and a silver spur for that of an esquire." (Guillim)

"From the French word molette, the rowel of a spur." (Grant)

Many cultures throughout antiquity have used the star as a talisman or national insignia. In England, a Mullet has five points unless another number is specified, while an Estoile (a wavy star) will have six.

"There was an ancient English order entitled 'Esquires of the Silver Spur,' which has been slightly revived in the present reign, and such a creation affords a ready means of constituting one as a legal esquire should he hold no office to which such a title is affixed by usage." (Wade)

In Scotland, a Mullet is always pierced (has a whole in the center), while a Star is not. In France, the definition of a Mullet is different yet again, where it has no less than six points.

IN CHIEF

Any charge that is said to be 'in chief' is placed in the upper 1/3 of the shield. A chief itself stands for authority and domination of will.

ANCHOR

The Anchor is the emblem of salvation and hope and an appropriate device for the coat of arms of a family with a seafaring tradition.

"Cosmo de' Medici, Duke of Etruria, bore as a device two anchors, with the motto "Duabus," meaning, it was good to have two holdfasts to trust to." (Wade)

It is a common figure in the English armory. A device steeped in tradition, it was once born by King Richard I. Interestingly, other bearings related to ships including rudders, sails, boats and ship's wheels rarely appear in heraldry.

ANCHOR

THE CREST

The Crest was worn on top of the helmet, and was usually made of wood, metal, or boiled leather. It provided the double advantage of easy identification and the addition of height to the wearer. If a family had no crest, and many chose not to, plumes (feathers) were often displayed instead.

Conclusion

Appendix - Notable List

Surname Variants of Rittmeyer

- Jason Reitman (b.1977) Canadian film director, screenwriter, producer and actor who won a Golden Globe award in 2010

Appendix - Settler List

American Settlers

- August Rittmeyer, aged 26, who landed in Missouri in 1847[1]
- George Rittmeyer, who arrived in Allegany (Allegheny) County, Pennsylvania in 1876[1]

Surname Variants of Rittmeyer

- Caul Reitter, who arrived in Georgia sometime between 1733 and 1783
- Michael Reitter, who arrived in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania in 1749[1]
- David Rittman, who landed in New York, NY in 1755[1]
- Eliz Marie Rittman, who arrived in America in 1755[1]
- David Ritman, who arrived in New York in 1762[1]
- Michael Ritman, who settled in New York in 1763
- Anna Barb Kubler Rittmann, who settled in America in 1766
- Barbara Rittmann, who settled in North America in 1830
- Frederick Ritman, who settled in Indiana sometime between 1833 and 1853
- Anna Maria Rittmann, who settled in North America in 1844
- Peter Rittmayer, who settled in Philadelphia in 1844
- Jacob Reitmeier, who landed in St Vincent, Pennsylvania in 1846[1]
- W Rittmann, who arrived in America in 1846[1]
- John Frederick Rittman, who landed in Allegany (Allegheny) County, Pennsylvania in 1849[1]
- Henry Reitmann, who arrived in Indiana sometime between 1853 and 1855
- C. N. Rittmann, who settled in Baltimore in 1854
- Johann Friedrich Reitmeier, who arrived in America in 1854
- Joseph Reitter, who settled in Philadelphia in 1860
- Carl Rittmann, who arrived in New York, NY in 1868
- August Rittman, who settled in Philadelphia in 1871

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