

Part ONE

YES.....we're all DUTCH!! I've lots to show and tell today. This will be PART 1.....My son Marten Jay had a business trip to Amsterdam last week with a little time to be a tourist. Just for fun.....he checked in as Marten Reijersz!!! AH, you're Dutch they said!!!! We call him Jay Ryerse when he's in Atlanta! haha..... Not sure how these pictures are going to fly.....let's try a few and see how it goes!



PART 2.....our ancestors, Reyer and Marritje lived about 2 blocks aparton Bloemstraat and Rozenstraat. The streets in that neighborhood all had flower names....Bloom Street and Rose Street! Oh LOOK...somebody has planted Roses on Rozenstraat!



Part 3....(hope it doesn't cut anything off....this is where the story gets really interesting!!)

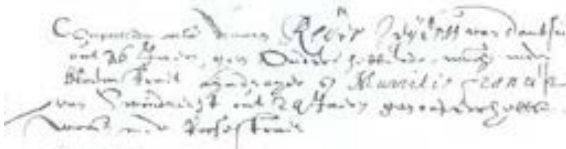
Leaving His Mark

On the 26th of December in the year 1630, Reijer Reijers and Marritie Francken von Swindrecht made their way to the church on Amsterdam's Dam Square. There, they made known their intention to be married and were asked to sign their names in the marriage registry book. It was cold in the old church on that winter's day and Marritie's fingers were stiff as she made her mark - a simple X. She handed the pen to Reijer and watched as he carefully made several little lines on the page. The mark he made there has puzzled us for a long time. Was it a cross? A pitch fork? A little man? Why didn't he just make an X like Marritie?



Time to call in the experts! We checked encyclopedias and hand writing experts and finally did an exhaustive search on the internet. At long last we located a historian who lives near Oslo, NORWAY!

"There is no doubt," he wrote. "His signature is a *bumerke*!"



Handwritten text below the signature, likely a transcription or commentary on the mark.



Geir Kamsvaag Berntsen

is in the group life insurance business in Norway. His wife is a member of a historical society and they are both interested in things "historical." We contacted after I placed a question on a Norwegian bulletin board. "This is very interesting," said Geir. "Reier Reijers as we would write his name today is Norwegian, was a common name in the villages of Moss and Zosen (risky Scots) in Ostfold in southeast Norway. Zosen was founded mainly because of the trade with the Dutch. Again it also a possibility and from these places sometimes the traders ended up living in Amsterdam!"

"I have spoken with several history specialists at the University of Oslo and also the vice president of the Norwegian Genealogy Society and they tell me that *bumerke* were personal logos, used as signatures, to brand cattle, to identify their farms and even to mark their tools. There are thousands and unpublished

Not to be discouraged, I checked out the subject on my last trip to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. They have only 2 books containing "a list of owner marks or brands (*bumerke*) used to mark property, as signatures by those who could not write and those who used them in a seal." One book had 440 pages of marks but no index! There were 50 *bumerke* on each page! You see at the top and bottom of this page, just a few of the hundreds of marks that I copied from those books. None resembled the one made by our Reijer.

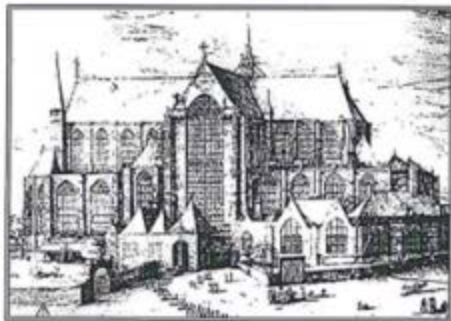
So we end up with the lingering tradition that our early family history is found in Norway. We have a Norwegian *bumerke* on a marriage intention record and we have the advice of experts who tell us it is very difficult to trace a Norwegian family much before the second half of the 17th century. Few consecutive records were kept before that time.

PART 4.....they were married in the Nieuw Kirk (new church) on Amsterdam's Dam Square....about a 10-12 minute walk from where they lived. The Nieuw Kirk hasn't held services for many many years but the day Jay was there, they were having an art exhibit! The church is shaped like a cross. He had a great opportunity to stroll in and around and soak up the atmosphere of where Reyer and Marritje were married.



AMSTERDAM'S Nieuwe Kerk

Because of the rapid growth of medieval Amsterdam at the end of the 14th century, St. Nicholas Church, better known as the Oude Kerk (the Old Church) could no longer cope with the size of its congregation and so a second church was built. It soon became known as the Nieuwe Kerk or the New Church. In 1578 the church passed into the hands of the Protestants and a large number of altars and saints' images were removed. It was not until after the great fire of 1645 (and after our ancestors had left for New York) that a magnificent pulpit, stately pews, a large main organ and a brass choir screen were installed in the building. These remain today. Located on Dam Square along side City Hall, the great cross-shaped roof of the New Church is easily spotted on the Amsterdam skyline. It was here that our early Reijersz ancestors were married and their children, Marten and Geertruid, were baptized.



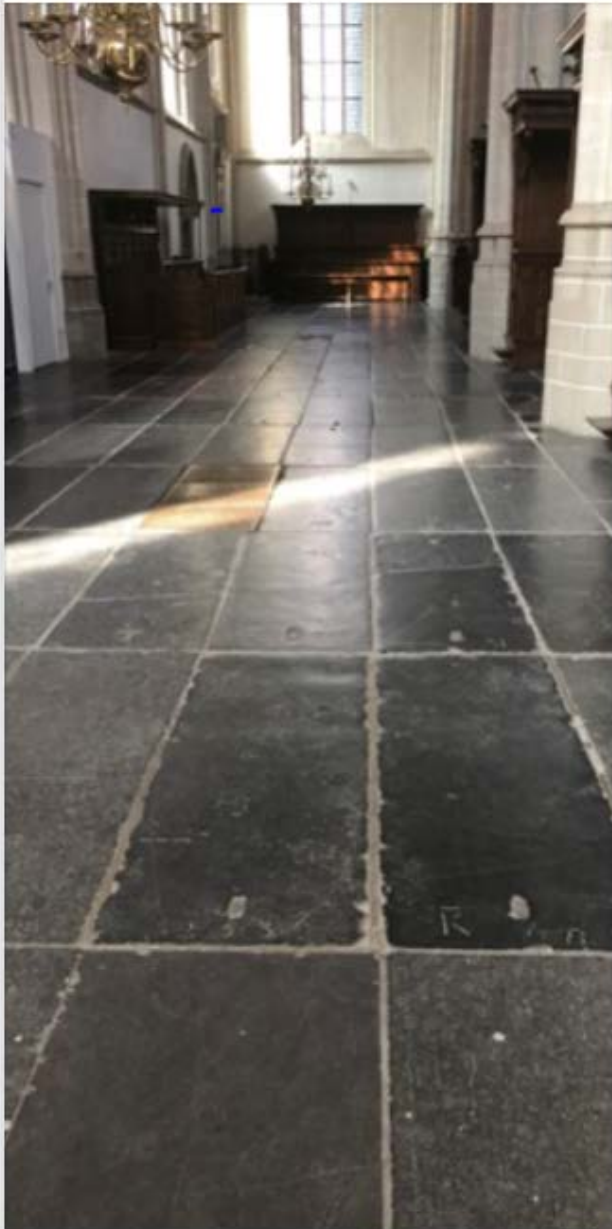
A very early view of the New Church

A contemporary look at Dam Square, Amsterdam, Holland showing the New Church where our ancestors attended.

Early baptismal records of this church show those for the children of the Reijersz family as well as the children of the famous Dutch painter, Rembrandt (Van Rijn).



Part 6In earlier times, burials often took place right in the floor of the church.....under the tiles as you can see. Both Reyer and Marritje lived during the great plague. This little paragraph tells about Marritje. Reyer died during that time also.....but there is no record. There were hundreds of deaths every day during that terrible summer and burial of many bodies in one grave was not unusual.....and record keeping was a failure.



The Earliest Death on record belongs to our 'grandmother' Marritje (pronounced Mah-reeck-juh) Francen, the wife of Reijer Reijersz. She died on April 28, 1643 in Amsterdam, Holland and was buried in the yard of the Nieuw Kirk, a location which to the best of our reckoning lies today beneath the pavement of Dam Square. (See *Port Ryerse Journal-March 1996*.) Marritje was probably a victim of the great plague that devastated the European population in that year. Her death is recorded in the Burial Register kept by the grave diggers and gives her name, where she lived and the amount charged for the rental of a shroud, burial, and the tolling of the great church bell out over the rooftops of Amsterdam. The amount of 10.13 Dutch currency was marked paid in full on the old record.

Marritje Francen
28 April 1643
10 13

Part 7.....A look at Dam Square where many, maybe thousands of plague victims were buried.....including our great great.....grandparents Marritje and Reyer. You can see the church in the background.....in front is the current Public Hall. A nice place to ride your bike!



Part 8..... I like to think of the ringing of that great bell tolling out over the rooftops of Amsterdam for our g-g-g grandparents. And two more pictures (from the 50 or more Jay took!!) to get a taste of your Dutch roots. A canal ride and a visit to a clompen factory is must next time you go to the Netherlands!! Hope you enjoyed this trip! 😊

