

The history in a short form

Where Did the Hintermeister Family Originate?
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Since the second half of the 15th century, the Hintermeister Family can be encountered on the Bänikon farm in the community of Kloten, at that time still belonging to the parish of Embrach. It is here where the family out-grew the capacity of the farm and several children moved to other communities. In 1530 Konrad Hintermeister lived in Kloten, and in 1540 the brothers Hans and Heini Hintermeister were living on the inherited tenet farm², which was held by their father, Ueli, of the All Saints (Allerheiligen) Monastery at Rieden. In 1554 Heinrich Hintermeister, a leather tanner from Rieden, became a citizen (German word Burger)³ of Zurich. Likewise, Felix became a citizen in 1556 and also a member of the Clergyman (Prediger) Monastery Chorus in Zurich. In the 17th century, two lines of the Bänikon Family moved to the Parish of Elsau; Konrad Hintermeister-Huber moved to Fulau, a nearby village, and Josias moved to the village of Elsau. Two of Konrad's sons later lived in Unter-Schnasberg. In this way the Hintermeister name became typical of the Elsau area.

Still before 1800 representatives of the family can also be found in Dietlikon, Neftenbach, Niederhasli, and Würenlos (Canton of Aargau). In the 19th century Hintermeisters had become citizens of Bülach, Elgg, Illnau, Küsnacht, Lindau, and Winterthur, moving from Elsau.

The Historical Biographical Dictionary of Switzerland states that the first Hintermeister residence was a farm called Grafsbühl near Embrach in the year 1370. This statement, however, seems somewhat doubtful, because the family was definitely in Geerlisberg (Municipality of Kloten) about 60 years later.

Meaning of the name

If 70 years later the family name changed to Hintermeister, it would not have been extraordinary. Probably the name Hintermeister also referred to the occupation. It is well known that tradesmen were called "Master" (German word "Meister") and addressed as such. They probably called one of the rope makers of Geerlisberg Hintermeister to distinguish him from a colleague or a near relative. Maybe he lived at the end of the village. In these hilly regions the prefixes "Hinter" (behind) and "Vorder" (front) were used to determine location, as is shown in the family names Hinter and Vordermarchlen and later Hinter and Vorderbänikon.

Since during the Middle ages only respected people could be witnesses, it can be seen that the rope maker trade was important, because H. (Heinrich?) called Rope maker was a witness in Winterthur in the year 1249 (Zürich Records Book II, 234). It will probably be impossible to determine if he was related to the rope maker of Geerlisberg, or if he was a citizen of Winterthur, not related to the Geerlisberg, family.

¹ "Woher stammt das Geschlecht Hintermeister", translated by Edward A. Hintermeister (Muscatine, Iowa), from the Swiss newspaper Wocheblatt von Pfäffikon, September 8, 1951, edition.

² During the Middle Ages the church would own the farms, but a family line could reside on their tenet farm as long as they had sons to inherit it. Also, once a family was living on a farm, the church could not reclaim it.

³ A Burger during the Middle Ages was a man, who was allowed to live within the protection of the city walls, and only respected people could be Burgers.



Heraldic Description

Arms (Shield): Shield basically red with inverted silver "Y", located in the upper two-thirds of shield. The inverted "Y" has a hook bent to the right, and at either end of the legs, a small upward bend. Placed on both sides of the inverted "Y" are two items of silver shaped as bayonets going through a small golden ball. Everything is accompanied by a small green hill with three rounded tops, located at bottom of shield. Crest: Two arms, with silver armor and red elbows and arm protection sleeves, and silver hands.

About the Hintermeister family (My ancestors)

First secured ancestor is Kaspar Hintermeister, born 1759, Seiler in Schwamendingen (at that time still an independent community, only incorporated by Zurich in 1934). To assume a relationship with the extinct family of the city of Zurich. A family tree is available.

The name Hintermeister, which contains the word "master", could refer to a craft. Does the first part of the name come from the fact that the rope maker walks "behind him" in his work?

The name was first mentioned in a document in 1370 in the serf's sleigh of the canon monastery Embrach on Geerlisberg (today municipality of Kloten). It says: "Ltem Counrat Hindermeister de Gerlasperg et frater suus Rodolfus et sorores et pueri" (also Konrad Hintermeister von Geerlisberg and his brother Rudolf and the sisters and the children).

Since 6 January 1904, the family has also been a citizen of the city of Basel. Therefore we are also citizens of Basel City and Zurich Schwammendingen.

Literatur: Hans Kläui, Hintermeister von Kloten (Bänikon), Zürich Schwamendingen), Elsau, Winterthur usw. 19.12.1968