

# Proud as a peacock

## Is the surname connected to a contract, a farm or a distant ancestor?

*Back in time.*

We are talking about the period from 1610 to 1784, and from 1785 to the present. Life in 1610 was primitive, a harsh existence. Much, a great deal of land, 1200 Rhineland Morgen. That amounts to 1000 hectares. However, it was wild land. Marsh and forest, hard to make a living from. One could easily get lost and sink (suffocate) in the marsh. Poverty was the hallmark of the region where the family lived. Poor living conditions gave epidemics free rein, and Johann Gerhard Langemeyer (29-5-1755 - †10-2-1784) was no exception. He died at the age of 28, leaving a wife with four small children and a great deal of worries for their future.

In 1781, Emperor Joseph II abolished serfdom in the Holy Roman Empire. This allowed the serfs the opportunity to 'buy their freedom'. This was preceded by a development of money as a legal tender. Previously, the population was primarily self-sufficient, and what they lacked they exchanged for self-produced (agricultural) products. The rise of cities changed this. Coins with a value became increasingly common. The value they represent opens up many possibilities for use. Society is increasingly moving away from bartering goods to using 'value coins': in other words, money. Money is taking on an increasingly important role, leading to the decline of bartering in agricultural goods. Money becomes a universal medium of exchange applicable to all goods and services. An additional advantage is that it could be saved to get through financially difficult times; he who saves has something! With bartering in agricultural products, this was not possible.

*The death of Johann Gerhard (1784).*

The loss of Johann Gerhard in the prime of his life came unexpectedly. He left behind a wife with four small children and an agricultural business with staff. A solution was sought by the entire small community in Mettingen. Find a new partner and set aside the worries. And so it happened, Anna Catherina Maria Elisabeth ten Brink (1754 - †1828) remarried on 8-5-1785 to Johann Heinrich Schulte-Laggenbeck (1762-1818) and he moved into the farm De Langenhof. The newlywed husband adopted the family name Langemeyer in all official documents. This name change was indicated with the mention 'genannt' and the addition behind the name with: 'Gt.' As a result, the children from the second marriage had the same rights as the children from the first marriage. This was important, as according to Westphalian inheritance law, the youngest son inherited the farm and in return had to provide for his parents' living expenses if they were no longer able to do so. But did everything go as expected?

*Langemeyer becomes the owner of the leased land.*

The farm De Langenhof was the main farm of the Lordship De Langenhof. The Lordship was part of the County of Lingen. This county is located about 25 km across the border near Oldenzaal. The area belonged to the Count of Lingen. This was also the time when coins (money) took over bartering for goods. The County of Lingen was a possession that generated goods and money in the form of rent. For the count, it was a source of income and worries. Around 1855, serfdom was gradually abolished. Serfdom was a remnant of the hierarchical society from the late Middle Ages. The serfs were legally allowed to 'buy their freedom'. This also abolished other associated obligations: such as military assistance, a portion of the harvest, and other 'chores'. The land of De Langenhof was purchased by the (inheritable) tenant farmer. His status as a serf was thereby ended. His status as a serf was thus terminated. Langemeyer becomes the owner of the land.

*Distribution of the inheritance, according to which law?*

The second spouse Johann Heinrich Langemeyer (Gt) passed away in 1818, and the widow is now 64 years old. She is then assisted for ten years by her youngest daughter Henriëtte and her youngest son Christian, who managed the agricultural business. All this according to the local Westphalian law. Most of her (14) children have moved away, fleeing poverty and the increasing (military) influence of Prussia. The cultural gap between Westphalia, the Catholic Rhinelanders (loosely) and the Reformed Prussians (formally) was enormous. Many left for the prosperous Friesland. As peddlers/merchants (or partners) they tried their luck in the trade of linen and other fabrics. They called themselves: Tjötten, and went door to door.

*Extinction of the count's family, forced sale of the county to Prussia.*

The count of Lingen has no heirs, the family is dying out. After various complications and controversial decisions, the county comes to Prussia, which the Westphalians do not want at all. The legal system of Westphalia is replaced by Prussian law. That system determined that the eldest son obtains all rights and not the youngest. The change in the legal system coincided with the succession of De Langenhof. Conclusion: the dream of the youngest son Christian – farm De Langenhof with the associated land – fades away, and thus his intended marriage is at risk of not happening. The future bride, they were already engaged, withdraws due to a lack of prospects.

*Alarm in the chicken coop.*

The two oldest sons from the first marriage have become linen merchants in Leeuwarden and recently founded a company. The second oldest son claims the Langenhof as the rightful heir based on the newly introduced Prussian law and returns to Mettingen after years. After a legal tug-of-war, he becomes the heir and acquires the farm along with the associated land. Christian's intended

marriage (23-10-1797 - †13-2-1856) to Maria Anna Carolina Brenninkmeyer (7-3-1806 - †23-1-1880) threatens to fizzle out like a night candle: no farm, no wedding. But... everything will be alright.

The father of the future bride, Gerard Brenninkmeyer (1764-1843), father of Clemens and August, intervenes. Christian and his sister Henriette receive a financial compensation for the ten years they cared for and supported their mother 'for nothing.' The intended marriage to Maria Anna Carolina Brenninkmeyer can proceed (February 24, 1829). Henriette uses her 300 Thaler for a future dowry. Christian and Maria Anna invest the amount (1000 Thaler) in establishing their inn/horse exchange station: Zum Schwarzen Ross. They run the inn themselves for ten years. They then lease the inn and switch to selling textiles and clothing. In this way, they separate from the agricultural business with their sheep, cows, and transport with ox carts.

*The transition: how innovative entrepreneurship.*

Learned from this unexpected negative experience –having to give up cherished family property– led to the realization that knowledge is the most important source for building an independent existence. They have successfully put this vision into practice. Their four sons: Gerard, Martin, Leo, and Clemens, as well as their daughters, received education so that they could provide independently for themselves. Gerard took over his father's clothing and textile trade in Germany/Schwedt. The three younger brothers, along with Georg Stöcker, a close friend of Martin since elementary school, moved to prosperous Amsterdam and started a flourishing textile/clothing company there on January 1, 1874: Langemeyer & Stöcker. It is the time of the rise of shops and department stores. Their enterprise consisted of 29 shops, workshops, and a wholesale in tailoring supplies. They used the rise of the railways (1860) to expand their sales area to all of the Netherlands.

## Coat of arms



In our registered family coat of arms (CBG), all these comments can be found:

Helm sign : the signboard of the inn 'Zum Schwarzen Ross', the black horse.

Colors of the shield : the 'inverted' colors of Mettingen, the place of origin.

Drawing on the shield : the three clover leaves refer to the coat of arms of Mettingen.

the tailor's scissors refer to clothing and textiles.

the 'X sign' refers to Amsterdam.

The motto  
(English-speaking) : a change of course after being forced to leave De Langenhof and the international orientation of the family, poverty. (Netherlands, USA, Canada, and Brazil.