

IT'S SPELLED THE WAY IT'S PRONOUNCED

Rhembrant (1633/4), *Rheinbrand* (1635), *Reijnbrand* (1637/7), *haerbrant* (1640/6), *Rimbrantt* (1640/16), *Rembrand* (1640/1), *Remblant* (1642/6), *Reijnbrant* (1644/2), *Rembrando* (Latin, 1645/3), *Rheimbrand* (1646/3), *Rijnbrandt* (1648/4), *Rimbrandt* (1649/2), *Rem Brant* (1649/5), *Reijmbrant* (1654/5), *Renbrant* (1656/3), *Reynbrant* (1656/21), *Rymbrandt* (1658/31), *Rheinbrandt* (1659/5), *Rhijnbrandt* (1659/20), *Reimbrant* (1660/7), *Rhinbrant* (1660/27), *Rinebrant* (1660/29), *Rynbrant/Rijnbrant* (1661/17), *Reinbrand* (1662/12), *Rimbram* (1663/6), *Rhinbrand* (1666/7), *Reynbrant* (1667/2), *Rhimbrant* (1666/8)

The above is a list of the various (mis)spellings of Rembrandt's first name *during his lifetime* found in [The Rembrandt Documents](#) (1979, reference nos. in parentheses). Mention of his family name "van Rijn" (spelled with equal fancy) was sometimes included, but I have omitted it here for the sake of clarity. In a sense, this is an object lesson in the propagation of fame by word-of-mouth. The posthumous list would probably be twice as long, for the fanciful variations on this theme (like the *Warmbrant* reported by Gary Schwartz, 1984, pp. 134 sq.) continued well into the 19th century. The sources in the [Rembrandt Documents](#) consist to a large extent of post-mortem inventories, legal and notarial instruments directly involving Rembrandt, as well as some odd texts, letters, poems and notations.

The majority of documents citing Rembrandt's name during his lifetime used the original "Rembrant" spelling, regardless of the fact that, from 1633 on (with few exceptions), Rembrandt used the enhanced form of his first name to sign both his works and legal documents, usually completing it with the patronymic "van Rijn." The consistency in the "Rembrant" spelling by other parties indicates that it was meaningful as a *written* change primarily to Rembrandt. The well-informed, but inattentive perpetrators of the strange Rembrandt documents hoax, art historians Cornelis Hofstede de Groot and Willem Martin, made the opposite mistake, spelling his name "Rembrandt" in a document supposedly dated 1627 ([Die Urkunden über Rembrandt: erstes Supplement](#), 1906; see also [entry16](#)).

This presents us with the paradoxical situation of a large number of misspellings in inventories mentioning works by an artist who was not only well known, but who also tended to sign more often than not—at least his etchings (see entry 6). One gets the impression that either the notaries did not care much and took the owner's word for who painted what, or that many more paintings were in fact originally unsigned.