

Whenever visitors arrive for the first time in the port of Ville D'Or they are struck by two things, the incredible turquoise blue waters and the Immense colorful trading houses rising up from the sea clinging to Mont Rocerre in neatly ordered terraces. Each ring outdoing the other in their opulence as they rise until finally your eyes behold the pinnacle of the Nine Premiere Houses. The homes and businesses of the Circle of Nine, the richest merchants in all of Hiraeth and the ruling council of Misahn. The climb to the top is hard work they will tell you, staying there is harder, the fall is fast and brutal for those who cannot keep their mercantile wits about them. Commercial killers all.

When one of the Nine Premiere Houses familial line fails or their fortune falls prey to the whims of the market, or the winds of the air, there is always another House below pushing, politicking and purchasing votes to take their place literally. A failed business is the greatest public shame in all Misahn and few are the Houses that can regain the Circle when once shamed by failure. They are physically evicted from their homes and a new House takes residence. Most failed families throw themselves from the leap of the lost, fearing the final death below less than the ridicule and humiliation from those they stepped on to ascend. This ritual is the only way a House's honor can be redeemed and allow even a chance for relative Houses to ascend.

The wharves and warehouses once the busiest in all the land move at a steadier slower pace now. The great Airship Port known as the Windyard now handles the vast bulk of the trade from Misahn and has been tucked away to the interior of the island to keep away prying eyes and agents of the myriad enemies both foreign and domestic of the Nine. Occasionally one can catch sight of the flamboyant personal air yachts ferrying the Nine to and from the Windyard. Or a great airship rising off the headland to set off to ports unknown.

Only the Nine chairs have access to the map-room containing the secret maps of the air and to share them is a death sentence. Most airship captains and all Cartographers are members of the families of the Nine and only the nine may raise an airship in Misahn. Their knowledge of the currents and dangers in the air is a well-guarded trade secret kept and perfected for decades.

#### The Current Circle of Nine families

- Pandora Summervale, (Hobling) female head of the First of Nine and First Chair of the Council of Nine.
- Odo Stoutheart (Hobling) male head of the Second of Nine.
- Melodie Dubuisson (Elf) Female head of the Third of Nine.
- Idaalyn Fastpocket (Hobling) Female head of the Fourth of Nine.
- Baerinda Kelmaris (Stone Elf) Female head of the Fifth of Nine.
- Vangrat Goldenblade (Dwarf) Male head of the Sixth of Nine.
- Hagen Valneiros (Stone Elf) male head of the Seventh of Nine.
- Calwyse Whispership (Hobling) Female head of the Eighth of Nine.
- T.B.-Demaret (Human) male head of the Least of Nine.