

Belgian Laces



BELGIAN LACES

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Official Quarterly Bulletin of
THE BELGIAN RESEARCHERS
Belgian American Heritage Association
Founded in 1976

Our principal objective is:

Keep the Belgian Heritage alive in our hearts and in the hearts of our posterity

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Bend, August 1996

*Dear Fellow Countrymen,
 The celebration of National Day on July 21 is for my staff
 and mee an occasion to send greetings to the many Belgians
 who live in the United States. By your presence and your
 professional and social activities, each one of you contributes to the
 radiance of our country on the American continent.
 HRH Prince Philippe will observe National Day in
 Atlanta with the Belgians participating in and attending the
 Olympic Games and I shall welcome hom on your behalf.
 My staff and I extend to you our very best wishes for success
 and happiness.
 Long live the King! Long live Belgium!
 (signed) André Adam - Ambassador.*

Dear Members,

To start my Summer-that I share with you a message from the Ambassador of Belgium Mr. André Adam (Washington DC.) at the occasion of Belgian National Day 1996.

We too, have something to celebrate: 1996 marks the twentieth anniversary of The Belgian Researchers, with the first newsletter being published at the end of that year. So, our next issue of Laces will be a jubilee-issue! Read Micheline's account of the first decade on pages 43 and 44 of this issue!

Yes, we moved ... our home, our office and ... our garage, which was the second real challenge, the first one being the office. We have had to ask several of you to be patient and to give us some slack in the rope around our neck to get everything settled before we could respond to your questions

or orders. We encountered quite of bit of delay in the closing of the sale of our home in La Grande, which resulted in delays in gething settled in Bend. But, on July 16th our belongings and office materials finally anived at destination. Since that time we are working hard to get The Belgian Researchers organized again, Laces put together and Pierre has started to work down the pile of correspondence. Believe me, there are still over 100 boxes to be unpacked ... which are waiting for space in the new home.

To top it all off, the postmaster has decided to change the regulations for bulk mailing and we are encountering all kind of problems updating our database. If you read these lines, I suppose it means that we got it all straightened out dunnng the time that the bulletin was at the printers. In case this issue comes later than usual, you will know why! Thank you for being patient and understanding.

A few days after the arrival of our truck, we went to Boring to attend the second annual Northwest Belgian picnic held again at the ranch of **Don & Pearl Van den Heede**. It was a huge success. You will find Hans Michael's report elsewhere in this issue. We want to thank the Van den Heedes and all the other members that worked so hard on the success of this festivity. I also want to mention the donation of two flags by our member **Jacques Van Praet** from Brussels, Belgium, which he mailed to our new address in Bend, well before we were there ! Thank you, Jacques, they got here right on time and are beautiful. We now have the Belgian fri-color, the Flemish Lion, the Walloon Rooster, the Brussels Iris and the flag of the European Union. All of these were flying at the picnic of the Northwest Belgians contributing to the festive mood of the day. The display of flags became an ideal background for group pictures.

We have not yet received reports from the other happenings around the country, celebrating the Belgian National Day July 21. But when they arrive, we will publish them in the next issue. We also went to Seattle, WA on June 5-6 for the visit of **Georges** and **Erna Picavet** You will read two reports about that very successful gathering in this issue, but in addition I have to comment on the fantastic organizational talents of our member **Regina Marckx Whitehill**, who single-handedly set up facilities for lodging for the Picavets and for us, the Inghels as well as places for meetings in Seattle. Congratulations are in store for you, Regina! (Can you tell us the secret of bringing up such energy at age 91???)

Another update on the Sacred Encounters exhibit featuring the Belgian Jesuit Missionary Father DeSmet. This exhibit will open in SeattJe at the end of August. For more information, please contact our member Joseph Wachowski, president of the Belgian club Le Brabançon in Tacoma, WA :260 South 5th Street #0 Tel. 206 572 9983 - Fax 206 627 7948. We had the great pleasure to meet him and his delightful family, as well as many members of the Brabançon at the picnic in Boring, OR. They also paid us a visit in Bend, our very first visitors in the new home.

We hope that by the time the next issue of Laces goes to the printers, we will be all settled, all unpacked and that we will have had some time to relax before getting back to business! In the mean time, we wish you all some good late-summer days, a successful "back to-school" for the "young-ens" and especially good health to "y'all" (that's what rubbed off from the Olympic Games in Atlanta!)



Leen

THERE IS AN EXTRA PAGE IN THIS REFORMATTED ISSUE (P50).
 IF YOU USED THE INDEX TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING, ADD 1 TO THE PAGE AFTER 50

FROM & TO...

To Mary Verslype, Mishawaka, IN: We just learned about the death on July 17, 1996 of your dear husband Henry. We know that words cannot soften nor erase the sorrow that this loss causes you. But maybe the knowledge that Henry's work lives on in the endeavors of our researchers, helping members tracing their roots will be of a certain solace to you. Henry was one of our first members and a strong contributor to the organization. In name of the staff and all the members of The Belgian Researchers please accept the expression of our deepest sympathy.

To Pearl and Don Van den Heede, Boring Or. Thank you are coming your way again for hosting the Northwest BAHA picnic. It was a fantastic success, with over 100 participants, great food, drinks and fellowship. We couldn't have done it without you!

To Jacques Van Praet, Brussels Belgium: Thank you for the flags, which arrived here right in time for the picnic! They were first unfurled at the picnic held on Belgium's National Day in Boring Oregon on July 21. Thanks to you we now have four Belgian flags : the National Tricolor : black-yellow-red; the Flemish Lion: a climbing black lion on a golden field; the Walloon Rooster a proudly marching red rooster on a golden field; and the Brussels Iris: a beautiful yellow Iris on a royal blue field. This last one was a real and beautiful surprise. We had never seen this emblem. Does anyone know the origin and the story of the flag of the Brussels region?

From L.E. Staumont, Yorba Linda, CA: Thank you for the documents sent. I found information on my husband's family in the St. Albans District Border Crossing microfilm at the LOS Family History Center here. These records give a vast amount of information!

From John Mertens, Kewaunee, WI: I found the passenger list of the Buena Vista which sailed from Antwerp and arrived in Boston 17 April 1856. This list was not available through the National Archives in Washington, DC . I was able to purchase a microfilm from the Massachusetts State Archives. This list originated from tax records, charged to each emigrant landing in Boston in 1856! If possible, please print the list in your next issue of Laces. I hope this info will be enjoyed by the readers. Thank you, John. You will find the list (in alphabetical order) in the back of this issue.

From Micheline Gaudette, Holioko, MA: The last issue of Belgian Laces and the request for the "Brabançonne" brought back some memories: when vacationing in France once, my grandmother and I went to the movies. Before the main feature, we watched a documentary about King Albert I of Belgium. It ended with the Brabançonne, (the Belgian National Anthem). Of course my grandmother stood up and I had to stand up too (I was 11 at the time!) When the Brabançonne ended the rest of the people in the movie house were standing up as well. The article about the Belgian Draughthorses reminded me of my grandmother bragging about her taking care of Charmant II, a fabulous horse which won a coveted prize at the Paris expo 1892? 1894? I ignore to what extend she cared for him!

From Joan Loete, Moline, IL: Hi from your friends in Moline! I noticed in the last issue of Laces that you were

looking for the words and the music of some Belgian songs. I looked through the files of the Center for Belgian Culture and found some things that might help. I do the newsletter for the Center and often mention articles in your publication. We are all striving to keep our culture alive!

To Joan Loete: Thank you for coning to our rescue! We copied the words of the Brabançonne and some of the other songs you sent us for the Northwest picnic in Boring, Oregon, held on July 21! Thank you again!

To August Inghels, Mishawaka, IN: so sorry to hear that Betty has encountered many health problems this year. It must have been a rough year for both of you. We hope she is feeling better now. We wish her a complete recovery and you the strength and courage to fake care of her. We are also sony to learn that you did miss Georges Pica vet's visit to your area. We understand that you were not the only one who somehow did not find out about his visit plans on time. Please, write to him as he is certainly interested in anyone descending from emigrants from the Waasland/Belgium.

To Regina Whitehill, Seattle, WA: Congratulations are in store for you ! What a fantastic job you did at the occasion of Georges Picavet's visit to Sea We in June. You managed all on your own to plan, organize and implement, including making all the reservations for lodgings, food and meeting places as well as all other details needed to assemble a good sized group of people to come and listen to Georges and enjoy the explanations he gave about his research. You are quite a lady and we are glad you invited us to the event This gave us the chance to meet you AND the Picavets! - (See Virginia's related article elsewhere in this issue)

From Ann Beattie, Chetwynd BC, Canada: Please print my maiden name: DeMeulemeester in the next issue of Belgian Laces. This may help me in my research. Other family names of interest are Hallaert and Delefortrie.

From Antone Lambert, Livonia, MI : Thank you for placing my first query and the map of Belgium in the last issue of Laces. The map has been a great help for us to better understand Belgium's regions and languages. We also received a first answer to our query from Belgium! Thanks abound!

From Virginia L. DeNolf Basford, Ft Pierce, FL.: very much enjoy receiving Belgian Laces and keeping in touch with others interested in our Belgian" heritage. I look forward to each issue and always find something new to learn about It makes one feel hke being part of a large family. Thanks for a wonderful publication!

From Don Van Watermeulen (Broomfield, CO) :What a "treasure" your magazine-newsletter is - and exactly what I had hoped it would be !! The best of success to you as you enjoy your position on the writing/editing staff of the Belgian Laces. We will look forward to your columns. Celebrating our wonderful Belgian Heritage with you!

To Fred Halkett (Asheville, NC) : Thank you for the material you sent us for our reference library, as well as for your blank authorization to use this meterial in any way it maybe of service to our members.

Twenty years ago The Belgian Researchers organization was born, I can't pinpoint an exact date because in 1975 I was already toying with the idea of forming an organization for people doing Belgian genealogical research. My own genealogical research had started a few years before that.

My first contacts with other Belgian researchers came about because of the IGI (International Genealogical Index) published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. I would notice someone had submitted names from the area I was doing research in and would contact the submitters. One such person was Ardiena Stegen from Utah, she had ancestors from Saive (community in Liege province) where many of my maternal ancestors came from. I was ignorant enough to think I knew a lot about Belgian research and that perhaps I could help others...Ha! Ardiena is the one who helped me a lot with one of my lines, what is more, she was in tune with my idea (dream)? to form a genealogical organization for people of Belgian descent finally we were going somewhere! We agreed the name of the organization should be THE BELGIAN RESEARCHERS. We sent flyers advertising The Belgian Researchers to most of the LDS genealogical libraries in the US. Mailing our flyers cost \$9.00 donated by Ardiena. And members started trickling in. The first 10 members were: **Ardiena Stegen** from Utah, **Rita Cousins** from Connecticut, **Micheline Gaudette** from Massachusetts, **Maria Murphy** from Connecticut, **Dorothy Reed** from California, **Denise Thirion** from Connecticut, **Gordon DeBeir** from California, **Richard LeDosquet** from Idaho, **Josephine Eshelman** from Idaho, **Carol Freebourn** from Massachusetts.

Ardiena provided a model of objectives for organizations. They were modified and published in our first issue of our mimeographed newsletter of December 1976 (dated December 1977!!)

These objectives read:

- 1) *Keep alive in our hearts and in the hearts of our posterity our Belgian heritage.*
- 2) *Foster genealogical research and temple activity. (The first 10 members of The Belgian Researchers were LDS, but everyone of Belgian descent were strongly encouraged to join The Belgian Researchers).*
- 3) *Prevent duplication of effort by combining research talent and financial resources.*
- 4) *Disseminate genealogical data to all members who have an interest in the same lines.*
- 5) *Maintain unity by publishing a newsletter, listing names of members and their area of interest in their research in Belgium, plus any information of value to members of The Belgian Researchers.*
- 6) *Provide, if possible, translation when needed (through volunteers) from Latin, French, Flemish, German.*
- 7) *The organization shall be composed of people of Belgian descent. (One ancestor will qualify)*

Our membership was restricted to people of Belgian descent not because of ethnocentrism but to concentrate our efforts strictly on Belgian research.

We looked like this: Ardiena was the vice-president, historian, Maria Murphy the treasurer, Denise Thirion, the secretary, and I was the president. The board of directors was composed of Rita Cousins, Micheline Gaudette and George Gaudette. The membership fee was \$6.00.

Because of distance separating our members, we never met, all the Belgian Researchers' business had to be done through correspondence. So the bulk of my work as president of The Belgian Researchers was answering the mail (I still have boxes of correspondence), helping members with their research, coordinating research, translating genealogical records for our members (or volunteering the multilingual Pierre Inghels, Maria Murphy, Rita Cousins to translate Flemish and German documents, Maria also took care of our checking account), and producing Belgian Laces quarterly. As membership in The Belgian Researchers grew, so did the work in maintaining the organization, but it was never a drudgery, on the contrary it was fun - our members were terrific, they were always willing to go the extra mile in helping each other. We should mention also the excellent relationship we had with genealogical/historical societies in Belgium and with the Belgian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

When I say we never met, I mean officially, actually Maria and Rita have been friends for almost 40 years, I have known Denise Thirion, Carol Freebourn for many years, and I have met Jacques Detro, Jean Ducat, Sylvere VanDaele, MaryAnn Defnet, Norma Meier, and Charlotte Rogers and enjoyed their friendship too.

The Belgian Researchers were never numerous, but what they lacked in numbers they made up in spirit of good will. That's why I am listing all the "old" pre-1986 members of The Belgian Researchers here, they were the pioneers, they deserve a place of honor in the history of our organization, without them The Belgian Researchers wouldn't be celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Soon other people joined our ranks, **Margot Hykes** from Pennsylvania, **Lezlie Bruneel** from Idaho, **Allan Tascher** from Maryland, **Pierre and Leen Inghels** from Oregon, **Charlotte Rogers** from Pennsylvania, **Madeleine Hanson** and her mother **Suzanne Thomas** from Washington, **Peter Vout** from Alaska, **Joan Heylen Foote** from California, **Marguerite Christopherson** from Wyoming, **Audrey Dupuis** from Missouri. **Austin Allard** came next, he would be the first of many Wisconsin people to enrich our organization.

We were on our way! **Joan Siegert** from Texas, **Mary Barry** from Alaska, **Denise Thibault** from California, **George Jansen** from Washington, **Gail Bice** from California, **John and Mary Ann Defnet** from Wisconsin also became members of The Belgian Researchers. **Luana Bauer** came next, and here I have to pause: Do you know that Luana is the person who proposed to name our newsletter BELGIAN LACES? Margot Hykes liked the name because it so well reflected the intricacies and ties that genealogical research just like lace making requires. And so Belgian Laces it was (#7, August 1978) and Belgian Laces it remains.

Belgian Laces's appearance wasn't very sophisticated, but its genealogical/historical information was second to none. Take Belgian Laces #8 (November 1978) for example, it had 14 typewritten pages (with typos, misspellings - I was never the best typist), it contained information about our members and the lines they were working on, it had articles of various lengths contributed by Henry Verslype, Clement DeRoo, MaryAnn Defnet, Sarah Ledosquet, Loretta Demant, my own contributions to that newsletter were "Geographically Speaking", + one article about Hainaut Province, and a list of passengers from the Henry Reed. A cartoon: "The cost of tracing your ancestry comes to \$500. Keeping the information quiet will cost you \$1,000" graced page 1. Over the years, Belgian Laces progressed from mimeographed pages to photocopies of typewritten pages (reduced in size so that 2 pages would fit on an 8x11 sheet of paper) to photocopies of computer printed pages.

By November 1978, **Loretta Webber** from Oklahoma, **John and Donna Jauquet** from New York, **James Desreumaux** from Wisconsin, **Martha Theis** from California, **Raymond Kokkelenberg** from California, **Clifford Emmerling** from Illinois, **Ted Cook** from California, **Karen Davis** from Idaho, **Henry Verslype** from Indiana, **Clement DeRoo** from Florida, **Robert and Lois DeMeuse** from Wisconsin, **Loretta Demant** from Wisconsin brought the membership to 40.

I view 1979 as a good year because I went back to Belgium that year, but in fact, it was also the year that because of health problems, Ardiena Stegen withdrew from active participation in The Belgian Researchers. I will always be thankful for all the help she gave us. Also our good friend Stuart Waite died that year. As an attorney he had done the paperwork to register The Belgian Researchers as a non-profit organization, later after his long illness and death, it was found that the papers had not been filed at the federal level.

Thomas Huelskamp from Ohio joined our group, followed over the months by the Brown Co. Library from Wisconsin, **Ione McClellan Geens** from Massachusetts, **Billie Smitley** from Virginia, **Marjorie Peters** from Illinois, **Helen Mailer** from Washington, **Flora Dunn** from British Columbia - our first Canadian member -, **Robert Ballas** from Pennsylvania, **Margarita Villa** from California. **Dorothy Lutomski** from Wisconsin was the last person to join in 1980. **Irene Hanson** from Wisconsin, **Nathalie Gardner** from California, **Frank Hinnant** from North Carolina, **Margaret Wente** from Minnesota, **Robert and Cindy French** from Washington, **Lois Harvey** from Kansas, **Julie Hendricks** from Washington, **Baudouin Dierckx de Casterle** from Belgium, **Jacques Detro** from Belgium, **Lorraine Bero** from Wisconsin, **James Lannoo** from Illinois, **Barbara Vandepete** from Montana, **Craig Truax** from Pennsylvania, **Charles Schaut** from Wisconsin, **Earl Tenpound** from Illinois, **Robert and Margaret Kirkpatrick** from Minnesota, **Francis and Claudine Belva** from Quebec, **The Genealogy Society of Flemish Americans** from Michigan, **Diane Komp** from Connecticut, **Adrian Rogers** - a centenarian- from Pennsylvania, **Lawrence de Leurere** from Indiana, **Dorothy Lee** from California, **Pearl Hruska** from Wisconsin, **James Albert Hannon** from Illinois, **Marilyn Schulz Mallin** from

Illinois, **Gretchen Leisen** from Minnesota, **Randee Walshe** from California, **Elizabeth DeBrouwer** from California, **Howard Wood** from Illinois, all joined in 1981.

Vince Beaumariage from Alaska, **Ruth Schieltz** from Ohio, **Helen Kaverman** from Ohio, **Vivian Krueger** from Indiana, **Victor Delwiche** from Wisconsin, **Allan and Judy Baird** from Michigan, **Sandra Dobbie** from Ontario, **Rene Baland** from Belgium, **Arnold Preneel** from Belgium, **Tillie Riley** from Connecticut, **Jeanne Preux-Quin** from Belgium, **Mary Knoblack** from Minnesota, **Michael Dudney** from Belgium, **Aurore Schaffer** from Pennsylvania, **Yves Hellebaut** from Belgium joined in 1982. **Richard Raymond** from Idaho, **Sarah Emilson** from Minnesota, **Robert Higgins** from Texas, **Audrey Ellis** from Maryland, **Gilbert Burms** from Michigan, **Lucy Vanvoorde Miller** from Colorado, **Mary Freer** from Michigan, **Arthur Detrie** from Louisiana, **Anita Becker** from Wisconsin, **Denise Corke** from Illinois, **Evelyn Santilli** from Colorado, **Irene Vernier** from Michigan, **John Theisen** from New Jersey, **Mary Renier Calvert** from Maine, **Dorothy Helmer** from Indiana, **Berniece Andrews** from Alaska, **Mary Clabots** from Wisconsin joined in 1983.

Mark and Jean Doebereimer from Wisconsin, **Sylvere van Daele** from Belgium, **Raymond Gilsoul** from Belgium, **Nancy Wybo Cooper** from Michigan, **John Mertens** from Wisconsin, **Pat Pettit** from Alberta, **Marianne Lefebvre Fink** from Wisconsin, **Daniel A. Rentmeesters** from Indiana, **Marie Moore** from Florida, **Yolanda Norton** from Michigan, **Charlene Falconer** from New Jersey, **Betty Baudoux Fudge** from Kentucky, **Marion Whitehair** from Pennsylvania, **Mary Judith Holman Howe** from Indiana, **Janet Lemaire** from Indiana, **Anne Keller** from Wisconsin, **Jennie Thresher** from Massachusetts joined in 1984.

Jeanne and Lee Rentmeester from Florida, **Charles Lunkley** from California, **Glen Naze** from Minnesota, **Raymond Hector Brogniez** from Texas, **Patricia Delain** from New York, **Howard Thomas** from D.C., **Vernal DeRoost** from Wisconsin, **Dorothy Mayou Hartley** from Ohio, **Phyllis Ducat Stewart** from Illinois, **Katherine Laverne Picard** from Michigan, **Kenneth and Elsie Coburn** from British Columbia, **David Killen** from Missouri, **Roger Paeps** from Belgium, **Donald Rogier** from Ohio, **Bill Wolford** from Pennsylvania, **Norman and Edith Lahure** from Alberta, **Irene Cailteux** from Illinois, **Ida Flavion** from Wisconsin, **Bernice Barrett** from Wisconsin, **Helen LeFevre** from Wisconsin, **Emile Delestienne** from Pennsylvania, **Nancy Robbins** from Minnesota, **Annette Dechesne** from Pennsylvania, **Vivian Burns** from Maryland, **Jean Ducat** from Belgium, **Manoel de la Serna** from Belgium, **Norma Meier** from Virginia, **Sharon Karow** from Wisconsin, **Germaine Thibaut** from Illinois, **Norman and Joan Roskom** from Wisconsin were the last people to join in 1985. The stories our members had to tell! The discoveries they made while searching for their ancestors! It's all chronicled in Belgian Laces.

Those were the days my friends, we thought they'd never end...But sadly, those days had to come to an end. I had to face reality, my husband was still working on his doctorate,

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our oldest son was preparing for college, and it became necessary for me to go back to work.

I am no super woman and couldn't juggle work, home, church, and The Belgian Researchers which consumed a lot of my time. With much regrets and sadness, I decided to end The Belgian Researchers, needless to say it was a most difficult decision to make.

In the last issue of Belgian Laces for the first decade (February 1986) I said: "I have been overwhelmed by your kind and generous remarks about The Belgian Researchers, Belgian Laces and myself.

So we were great? Of course, WE were! - THE BELGIAN RESEARCHERS has always been all of us, together. No other

organization has members who shared and who helped each other as much as you did. We formed friendships, we renewed our pride in our origins, we shared in the excitement of new discoveries.. I meant it, I still do. Those people were the best.

As no one could take the organization over, The Belgian Researchers was supposed to come to a close.

Fortunately, at the last minute a knight came to the rescue! ...

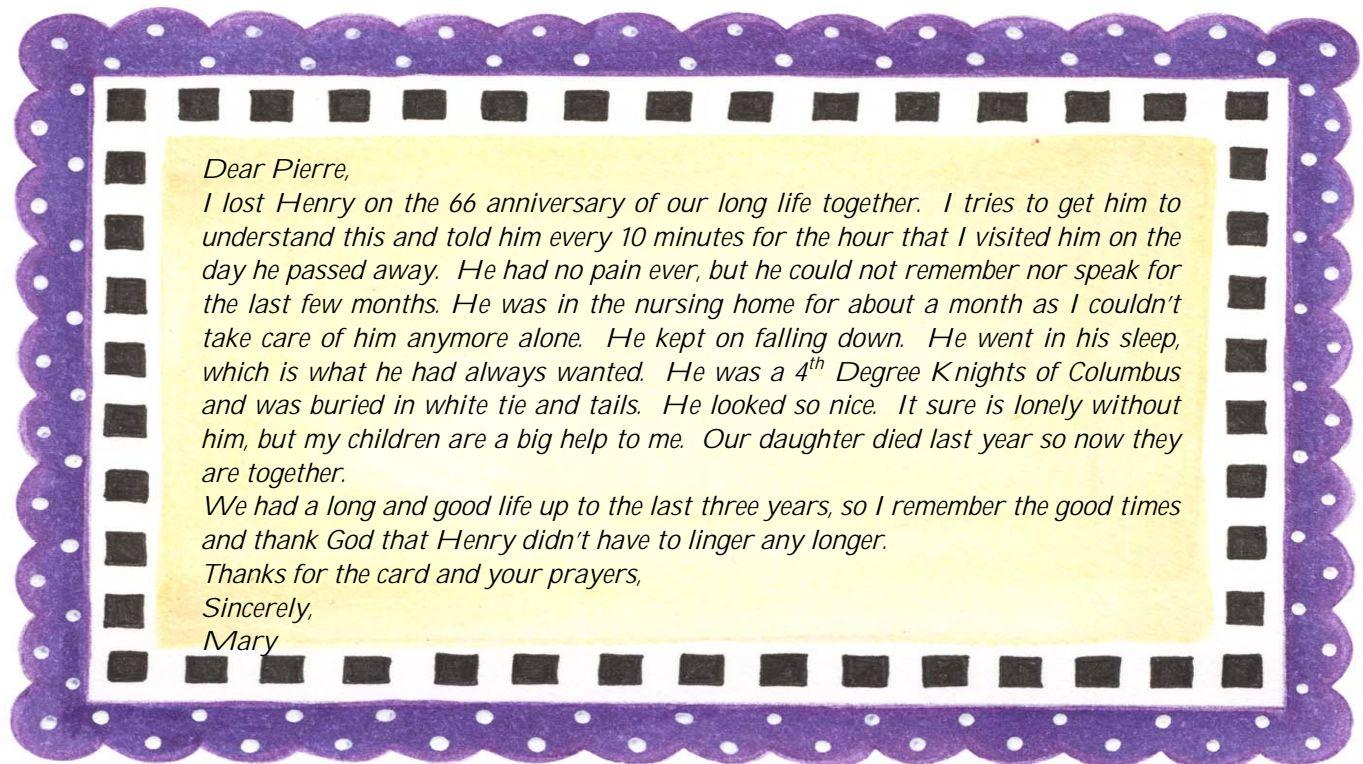
But that's another story, one that Pierre Inghels will have to tell.

Sources: Bauer Luana, Correspondence April 8 1978. Belgian Laces #8 November 1978. Belgian Laces Vol. 10 #1/37, February 1986 Inghels Pierre, Correspondence 1986 Koncurat Germaine Ista, Correspondence Dec. 22, 1975. Newsletter # 1, December 1977 (sic). Stegen Ardiena, Correspondence 1978-1979.

HENRY A. VERSLYPE

born in Westende, Belgium 7 may 1910 - died in Mishawaka, IN 17 July 1996

We received the following letter from MaryVerslype:



OBITUARY

Henry A. Verslype was born in Westende, Belgium, the son of **Arthur Verslype** and **Sophie Van Landtschoote**. He was three years old when his parents emigrated to Rock Island, IL. They moved to Mishawaka in 1923. On July 17, 1930 he married **Mary Van Poppel**, daughter of **Edmond Van Poppel** and **Nathalia Verstraeten** at St. Bavo's Catholic Church in Mishawaka. Mary survives her husband with three sons: **John** of El Paso, TX; **Philip** of Mishawaka, IN and **Paul** of Centerville, OH. Their daughter **Rosemary Scheuer** passed away on 28 June 1995. They have 11 grand children and four great grand children.

Henry A. Verslype was a well known Belgian historian, author of *The Belgians in Indiana* as well as of many articles on Belgium, Belgians and their history. He also made several presentation on these subjects. Mr. and Mrs. Verslype were also active in Square, Ballroom and Round dancing, attending many State, National and International conventions as well as numerous workshops in the Midwest.

Henry A. Verslype was a member of the American Heritage Roundtable, Northern Indiana Historical Society, The Broederenkring, The Belgian Researchers, The Genealogical Society of Flemish Americans, Remings in the World, Belgian Cultural Center of Western Illinois and the Uniroyal Men's Club.

(see also Belgian Laces Vol. 17 #65 1995.4 – H. Verslype : A Member's Portrait")

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HOW WE BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH GEORGES AND ERNA PICAVET FROM KRUIBEKE, BELGIUM

By Regina Marckx Whitehill, Seattle, WA

In Belgian Laces Vol.17 # 62 1995-1 was a query (95.268) that drew my immediate attention. It was placed by somebody in Belgium being interested in emigrants from Verrebroek, Belgium. Answer please to J.A.G. Picavet! In the query I recognized three of our family names: DeMaere, DeMan and Picavet. I replied and this started a wonderful long-distance relationship and correspondence enhanced by numerous telephone conversations. I told him all I could about our families.

Our father, **Vitalis Merckx**, son of **Augustus Merckx** and **Agatha Roeyhaert**, came to America from Beveren, Belgium with his family in 1880 when he was 13 years old. Originally the name was Merckx, but in the States because of pronunciation or other reasons it was changed to Marckx . They settled in Republic, Michigan. (Republic is in the very northern part of Michigan. We have a cousin who has her summer home near Republic. It is on Bat Lake. Today Republic is almost a ghost town.)

I understand that the foreman in the iron mine there was a Belgian. Unfortunately I don't know his name, I don't think I ever knew. But through him many other Belgian families from the Waasland came to Republic, among whom the DeMans from Kallo, Belgium, my mother's family, who was eight years old at the time. These Belgian people all became very good friends and many of the younger members later inter-mated : my parents mated in 1891 when my mother, **Clotilda DeMan** was eighteen years old. They were to have thirteen children, three of whom died in infancy. My mother's sister, **Johanna DeMan** married our father's step-brother **Frank Venne**. Our father's two younger sisters, **Hortense** and **Marie-Antoinette Merckx** married two brothers **Phil** and **Adolph DeMaere**. Our father's older brother **Joannes** married **Joanna Picavet**, and that was the link to **Georges and Erna**. But back to my family story:

Times were hard in Michigan in 1898 and our parents went up to Alaska, Dad sailing on the "Topeka" steamship. Mom went up the following spring with her little family. In the early 1900's homesteading opened up in Alberta, Canada. Many of our families, the DeMaeres, the DeMans and the Vennes took up homesteads there so we have many Canadian relatives. Our folks came to Washington in 1907. Several other Belgian families from Republic had come to Washington before, so they had several Belgian relatives and friends there, and that fact brought Georges and Erna here, hoping to find more of "his emigrants" on the west coast.

When the **Picavets** were able to come to Seattle this last June, we had one wonderful day with them. I had been busy gathering as many Belgian people that I could to meet with them. Pierre and Leen Inghels from Oregon (The Belgian Researchers) were here also and what a day we had. We met in the morning for breakfast, after which we took them all on a short sightseeing trip along the locks and the salmon ladders in Seattle and then we had a great two hour visit at our apartment before we went to dinner.

Our evening meeting started at 6 PM. with the Belgo-American folks. Besides the Marckx's there were representatives from the following families: **DuLong** (before: **Douterloigne**); **DeVos**; **Verschueren**; **Bell**; **Mans**; **DeBele**; **DeWinter**. All these people had a chance to speak with Georges and to have him give them recommendations for their research. It was a very fruitful meeting.

The evening had to be kept rather short because the Picavets had to leave early the next morning to catch their plane east. By 10 PM. we separated with regret, but thankful that we finally had the chance to meet in person. It was as if we had known each other all our lives! Thank you Georges and Erna for including the West Coast on your trip to the US. this time!

The day after they left, I received a package of write-ups of the Genealogical Society of Flemish Americans from Roseville, Michigan (not far from Detroit). I sent information about the Belgo-American folks here and became well acquainted with Margaret Roets by phone and correspondence. I am now a member of their organization as well. I sent her our family history book, **Marckx-DeMan** of Flanders also other material including a story I had written about our mother. This is what pleased Margaret. She was amazed at her strength and character and asked my permission to publish it in the book she puts out twice a year "Flemish American Heritage" . It will be published in August.

How pleased our parents would be to know what we have done about their history. I thank my brother August and his wife **Dolores Marckx** for inspiring and helping us with the research in our family roots. Unfortunately my brother August did not live to enjoy the results of these efforts. He died of cancer in 1978.

N.B. Family names in our immediate family: **DeMan**, **DeMaere**, **Donckers**, **Iverson**, **Marckx**, **Merckx Terrière** and **Venne**.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

653. Frank J. Blommaert - Gresham, OR
654. Sharon J. Marckx-Adams - Oregon City,
655. Velvet Withers - Woodville, WA
656. Jacques Van Paet - Brussels, Belgium
657. Frank A. Brimelow - Big Stone Gap, VA
658. Sylvia Strapps Coon - Plymouth, MI
659. M.J Buscot Christian -Steilacoom, WA
660. Richard De Clerck - West Lynn, OR
661. R. M. McQuiggin - Milwaukee, OR
662. Remi Coussens - Hillsboro, OR
663. Germaine Frey - Hillsboro, OR
664. Charles DuChateau - Fort Collins, CO
665. Rita Knight - Chicago, IL
666. Dolores De Young Fallon Portland, OR
667. Bart Hendrickx, Attache VI. Gem.- Belgian Embassy, - Washington, DC



"The finest of all the Americans are the Belgians"
Julius Ceasar could have said it if he had lived later....

Our second genealogical tour in the Unites States was again an experience which for most people would be a once in a lifetime event. Erna and I are grateful to the Lord for His generosity.

Because of the heavy workload, we didn't plan this year's trip as thoroughly as last year, but we still did manage to travel from coast to coast without any mishaps. It is interesting to dig in our memories to see how the scant planning which we did, came about. It is obvious that our itinerary was mainly dictated by the areas of settlement of our Waaslanders. Most of them, or their descendants, we living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Wisconsin, greater Chicago, northern Indiana, and the Detroit area. Some of them also settled in Massachusetts, Texas, California. From these first areas of settlement they scattered all over the Unites States. It is obvious that a visit to all the paces of settlement is impracticable, but we try to make it in five years. This year was our second visit.

The Queen of the Northern Land of the King

Top on our list was a visit to the most charming lady of the Unites States: the 91 year young Queen of the northern land of the King: **Regina Marckx Whitehill**, born from Belgian immigrants in January 1905 and now living in Seattle, King County in the good state of Washington.

Regina is not only most charming, she also has the energy most of us younger guys cannot but envy.

She has the courage of a lioness, putting the Inghels out of their bed one evening to tell them that I had planned to come to the United States.

She has the smile of a sweet teenager, and she uses that smile to convince people to do things the way she wants them to happen. She has the stature of a queen, befitting her first name, commanding respect from everyone who meets her. She is as kind as a mother can be. Mother, the highest of all honorary titles.

Regina is a Belgian.

Belgian gatherings

Anyway, in between San Francisco and New York, it was predominantly "my" time, and I do love Erna for the fact that very often she had to do things she didn't like.

Clearly, on these trips, I must try to meet with as many people as possible, and the best way to achieve that is with gatherings of Belgian immigrants and their descendants. Five Belgian gatherings had been organized on this trip: in Seattle, Superior, Norway, Mishawaka, and Detroit.

Apparently, I am getting rather popular. In Seattle, people had driven seven hours to meet with me. Thank you, the Inghels! My dear friend Regina had done everything to make the meeting as comfortable as possible, and she must have been on the telephone for hours to reach all these people!

Also in Superior the ladies are doing most of the work. My best friends there are again ladies: The Golden Girls, namely **Virginia Kern** (descendant from the **Van den Branden** family, Verrebroek), **Barbara van Holbeck** (husband's family from Brugge, but we just found out that his mother was from the Waasland), and **Lois Van Driessche** (the famous Van Dreissche's from Sinaai). This year the meeting was organized in the Belgian Club, and my cousin (n tunes removed) came especially from Winnipeg, Ontario to meet with us - a nine hour drive. **Leon van den Berghe** was also there. He was born in Doel in 1908 and came to America with his parents as a small boy. For the occasion, Leon had put on his "blokken" (his wooden shoes).

In Norway, Dickinson County, Michigan the meeting had been organized by - again- two ladies:

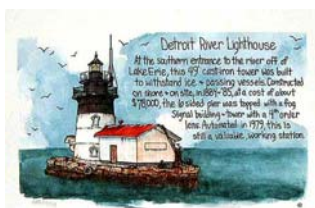
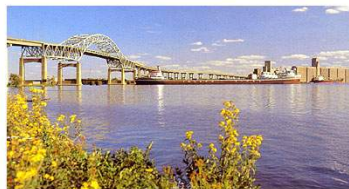
Joan Oberthaler and **Hazel Dault**. They even aren't related to a Belgian family, but this shows how charming the people from the Upper Peninsula are.

The meeting in Norway also attracted people from other parts of the Upper peninsula, and from Wisconsin. Jack Possi from Milwaukee had presumably traveled the longest distance.

Thanks to **Georgette Van Goey Harding**, a meeting had also been organized in the Belgian Club in Mishawaka. Unfortunately the article in the South Bend Tribune about my project has only been published after I had left, but Georgette still managed to bring together quite a few of the Waasland families there! I was most impressed with the presence of **André Verstraete**.

Finally, Detroit. Detroit is known to be the Flemish capital of the United States, and there sure are some Waaslanders as well, but I didn't find there as many as in the little town of

Norway. **Margaret Roets** and **Father Denys** had done what they could to attract as many of them as possible to the library of the Genealogical Society of Flemish



Americans. The best part was however that Margaret had made copies of the deathcards from their collection which could be of use to me. Father Denys, Margaret, and the librarian **Mr. Defauw**, helped me quite a bit with guiding me through the impressive material they have.

The gatherings are undoubtedly very useful, but I am afraid that many people leave them with some kind of frustration. Indeed, they all want to talk to that strange fellow who comes especially from Belgium to meet with them, but then doesn't have time to talk to all of them. Indeed, considering the fact that a meeting can last anything from two to four hours, meaning 120 to 240 minutes, and ten to forty people are present, you can perfectly imagine that some people will leave without having talked to the guy in front I always feel guilty when I have the impression that some people leave unsatisfied.

Individual visits

In between, I also try to make individual visits. There are my relatives in Chicago (from mother's side), and in the Detroit area and New York (from father's side).

The other visits were mainly with people living in areas where no gatherings had been organized, or with people who couldn't make it to the meetings. I love to meet with people! I love to hear all the small, and great individual stories: A **Van Puymbroeck** who changed his name to Smith, another Smith who didn't know that he was really a Belgian descendant until he wanted to get married. These stories are sometimes not for publication, and were at one time very difficult for the people to live with, but at a certain age one learns to cope with them. Didn't **Stijn Streuvels** write: 'Ouderdom is als een zest, die alleen de gouden zonnenstralen doorlaat'? (Old age is like seeve, which only lets the sun rays through)

I am so grateful that people are willing to share these stories with me. There are of course also the fantastic family lores: my forebear was actually the son of the last king of France, but more realistic are the stories about bootlegging, mining accidents, the depression, the golden years. Successes and failures, the son of immigrants who became a big shot at NASA, and the boy that got on drugs. I will apply Stijn Streuvel's words to my book, and although this is not scientific: I will only let through the golden rays. This will not be too difficult, since most of the Belgians and their descendants did do very well indeed.

Libraries, archives, and bookstores

Research of this type is not possible without visits to libraries, archives, and bookstores.

I don't know if the Americans do realize how friendly their libraries and archives are. Even though some of them are understaffed, the staff will go at long lengths to help even the most occasional of visitors.

Research in the United States is made extremely easy, even though some will try to prove the contrary. The only problem I have seen so far are the distances. Indeed, when your family originally lived in Marquette, Michigan, and your parents decided to move to Los Angeles, California, access to the most interesting sources is not always easy.

It is amazing to see what has already been published on genealogy, and on local history! I am quite sure Pierre and Leen would be jealous to see all the books I already have at home. On this trip I bought again thirty-two books, mainly about local history in northern Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula, and even two books about Mishawaka.

Unfortunately, relatively little has been published on the Belgian settlements. I am only aware of two areas which have been described: Detroit, and Mishawaka (Dear reader, you may help me here!)

Time, fun, and Help!

All the material which I accumulated on this trip will keep me quiet for a couple of months. I do have to organize all that in my genealogical database. Right now I must have information on some 1,200 to 1,500 emigrants in my database, and I can only make a rough estimate about how many are still to be added from the material which is lying on my desk: some three hundred?

Time is lacking now to write to all the people to thank them for everything they have done for us when we were traveling in the United States.

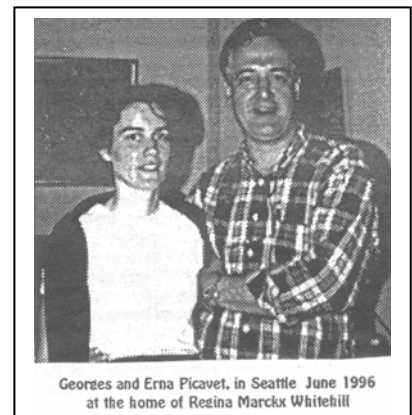
It is also most unfortunate that I do have little time to write to the people I have met for the first time and didn't send me the material yet which they promised to share with me. It is most gratifying however to see that I can find more and more people together on basis of small pieces of information which I get from all over the United States. Could **Pharailde Middag**, who married **Leopold van Mete** in Mishawaka, really be **Pharailde van Driessche**, the widow of **Benjamin Middag** from Superior, originally from Eksaarde? I have dozens of these cases, which make research so much fun.

One of the descendants told me that he was so glad that I made him aware of the fact that his grandparents were not just an isolated case of immigration, but that they were part of a larger movement. It is exactly that what I am trying to do: describe the individual people within that larger movement.

This project is manned by one person only, and it cannot succeed if I can rely on the collaboration from as many immigrants and their descendants as possible.

Thanks!

Let me, also on behalf of Erna, express our deepest feelings of gratitude to all the Americans, Belgian and others, who make us feel at home in the United States.



Georges and Erna Picavet, in Seattle June 1996 at the home of Regina Marckx Whitehill

NB: The list with new emigrant names gathered at this trip will have to be published in the next issue of *Laces*, because of lack of space. – the editor

Belgian Laces Vol 18 #68

The Belgian National Anthem and Belgium's Coat-of-Arms

by Margaret Whitemore



Animals and birds in symbolic form have always had important place in national emblems. The lion, typifying power and sovereignty, is the most popular of heraldic charges. It seems to have its appearance in the heraldry of Western Europe at the time of the Crusades (11th - 13th Cent.), and was introduced into the Low Countries about the twelfth Century by Philip, Duke of Flanders. The oldest armorial seal of a sovereign prince, that of Flanders, bears a lion rampant shields of the provinces, which compose the Kingdom of Belgium. Each of these provinces preserves the crest and coat of arms borne by its feudal owners.

The several positions in which lions are represented are denoted by special words of French origin. When the claws are of a different tincture, the lion is armed when the tongue shows, it is langued and when it has neither claws nor tongue, it is disarmed. Like other heraldic charges, the lion is usually represented looking towards the dexter (right) side of the shield.

On the Belgian coat-of-arms is found one of the most familiar positions, the lion rampant -- reared up on his hind legs, with his weight on the left; the two fore legs elevated, the right above the left. The handsome beast with claws and tongue tinctured red, is emblazoned in gold against a black escutcheon.

Surmounting the shield is the Royal Crown and surrounding the shield is a gold collar of the Royal Order of Leopold the First, from which is suspended the golden, four-armed cross of the Order. There are two golden scepters placed crosswise, one bearing the Hand of Justice and the other a miniature of the lion shown on the shield. Underneath is a red ribbon inscribed with the national motto, in French: "L'Union fait la Force"; in Flemish "Eendracht maakt Macht" (Unity Makes Strength).

The Belgian arms are sometimes displayed in a more elaborate manner with two lions supporting the shield, each holding a flag of the national colors against a mantle of red, ermine and gold. This mantle is often surmounted by the flags of each of the Provinces.

It was in 1831 that the present flag and coat-of-arms of Belgium were adopted. The black, yellow and red, forming the vertical bars of the flag, were taken from the colors in the arms. These were the official colors of the Duchy of Brabant, the ancient duchy which formed the center of the new kingdom. They were the colors which the Brabançons raised when they gained their freedom from Austria in 1787. The Duchy of Brabant dates from the Ninth Century, and its dukes were long regarded as the mirror of western chivalry.

"La Brabançonne", one of the most celebrated of Europe's old State hymns, originated during the revolution of 1830, when the provinces revolted from the Netherlands and became an independent country, setting up a separate constitutional and representative government. Following the establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1814, Belgium had been amalgamated with Holland in an unequal partnership. The struggle of 1830 was for equality and nationality. All Belgium asked was an independent state, and that it won.

The tide of intense national enthusiasm culminated August 25, 1830, when Auber's opera, "La Muette de Portici", was being presented in the Brussels Opera House. The theater was crowded and a general feeling of tenseness pervaded the audience. The performance got no further than the singing of "Amour sacré de la Patrie" for with that the people sprang to their feet and surged into the street. They tore down the royal insignia of the ruling House of Nassau and hoisted into its place on public buildings the ancient black, yellow and red of the Duchy of Brabant.

It was during this revolution that JennevaJ, an officer in bivouac with his Belgian regiment, produced the words of the song, "La Brabançonne," fitted to the needs of the hour and fervent in its appeal for justice for his people. A few weeks later, on October 18, 1830, less than two months after the outbreak of the struggle, he died in action while defending the town of Lier near Antwerp.

Addendum: Following you will find the first verse of the original National Anthem in French and in Flemish. What is interesting is that one is not a translation of the other, but an autonomous version of the anthem for each linguistic group in Belgium. Below each version is a free translation in English for your information. Someone told us there is a new version for both languages. We don't have it. Does anyone know if there is a German¹ version as well? Please, let us know!



¹ (2006 note: see picture)

DIE BELGISCHE NATIONALHYMNE

Die Brabançonne

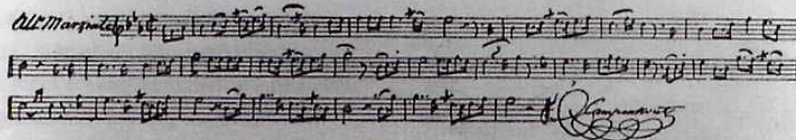
Nach fremder Knechtschaft dumpfen Zeiten
 entstieg der Belgier dem Grab,
 durch seinen Mut sich zu erstreiten,
 was Banner, Namen, Recht ihm gab.
 Und Deine Hand, die stolze, kehre.
 O Volk, das einst an Ketten zog,
 grub in den Schild der alten Ehre:
 "Gesetz und König und die Freiheit hoch!"

Nun schreite Deine festen Bahnen.
 Von Glück zu Glück, von Nacht zu Nacht,
 Gott, der beschützt Belgiens Namen,
 auf Deine Wehlfahrt hat Bedacht.
 Zur Arbeit auf! Uns winkt zum Lehne
 in Feldern reiche Ernte noch;
 im Glanz der Künste strahlt die Krone
 Gesetz und König und die Freiheit hoch!

O liebes Land, o Belgiens Erde,
 Dir unser Herz, Dir unsere Hand,
 Dir unser Blut, dem Heimaltherde,
 wir schwören's Dir, o Vaterland!
 So blühe froh in voller Schöne,
 zu der die Freiheit Dich erzog,
 und fortan singen Deine Söhne:
 "Gesetz und König und die Freiheit hoch!"

O Belgien, o teure Mutter, Dir gehören
 unsere Herzen, unsere Arme!
 Dir gehört unser Blut, Vaterland!
 Alle schwören wir Dir: Du wirst leben!
 Groß und schön wirst Du immer leben
 und der Wahlspruch Deiner
 unverbrüchlichen Einheit wird heißen:
 Für König, Recht und Freiheit!

La Brabançonne.



qui t'aurait eue! de l'arbitraire
 Con sacrant les afcurs projets,
 Sur nous de l'airain malfaire,
 un Peine a lancé les boulets
 C'en est fait! qui Dolge, tout change
 avec l'assau plus indigne traité
 Le misérable a brisé l'orange
 Sur l'arbre de la liberté.

Grand généreux en sa colere,
 La Belgique, rageant sur droite.
 D'un Roi, qu'elle appelle son père,
 n'emploierait que de justes loix;
 mais lui, dans la fureur étrange,
 Par le Canon qu'on fils a pointé,
 Au sang belge a noyé l'orange
 Sous l'arbre de la liberté!

Deux Brabançons, peuple de braves,
 qu'on voit combattre sans fléchir,
 Du fortin, contre des batares,
 tes balles sauront t'affaiblir.
 Sur Brusaë, aux pieds de l'orange,
 ton saint drapeau pour jamais planté
 et, fier de tenir sous l'orange,
 cède l'arbre de la liberté.

Et vous, objets de nos larmes,
 Braves, morts au feu des canons,
 Brant qui la patrie en armes
 ait pu connaître au moins vos noms,
 sous l'humble terre ou lin vers d'orange,
 Dormez, martyrs, bataillon indompté,
 dans le pays, l'om de l'orange
 sous l'arbre de la liberté.

L. Rodenbach, P. Jeannot.

Faksimile eines Originalmanuskripts von "La Brabançonne" (aufbewahrt in die Königliche Bibliothek)

LA BRABANCONNE

French:

Après des siècles d'esclavage,
Le Belge sortant du tombeau
A reconquis par son courage
Son nom, ses droits et son drapeau.
Et ta main souveraine et fière,
Désormais, peuple indompté,
Grava sur ta vieille bannière :
Le Roi, la Loi, la Liberté !
Grava sur ta vieille bannière :
Le Roi, la Loi, la Liberté ! (3X)



Flemish:

O dierbaar België,
O heilig land der vaderen,
Onze ziel en ons hard zijn U gewijd.
Aanvaard ons kracht en het bloed van onze ad'ren,
wees ons doel in arbeid en in strijd.
Bloei o land, in eendracht niet te breken,
wees immer Uzelf en ongeknecht.
Het woord getrouw dat ge onbevreesd moogt spreken,
voor vorst, voor vrijheid en voor recht.
Het woord getrouw dat ge onbevreesd moogt spreken,
Voor vorst voor vrijheid en voor recht! (3X)

Translation:

O treasured Belgium,
O holy land of the Fathers,
Our soul and heart are dedicated to you.
Accept our strength and the blood of our veins,
Be our goal in work and in struggle.
Blossom, o land, in an indivisible union,
Be forever yourself and free:
true to the word which you may fearlessly express
For King, for Freedom and for Rights!

English translation:

After centuries in slavery,
The Belgian coming out of the tomb
Reconquered through his courage
His name, his rights and his flag.
And your sovereign and proud hand,
Now, undaunted people,
Engraved on your old banner:
The King, the Law, the Freedom!
Engraved on your old banner:
The King, the Law, the Freedom!(3X)

THE FLAG

The Belgian Flag is a tricolor, composed of vertical stripes on black, yellow and red with the black lining the pole. Black, yellow and red were the colors of the ancient Duchy of Brabant. They were raised in the Brabant Revolution in which the Belgian provinces gained a short-lived period of independence from the Austrians in 1789. When Belgium became independent in 1830 these colors were adopted for the national flag and the coat-of-arms.

THE REGIONS

Now that Belgium has become a Federation there are at least two regional anthems. We here at The Belgian Researchers, are only familiar with the Flemish National Anthem, De Vlaamse Leeuw (The Flemish Lion), an old battle song of the Flemish people which was officially decreed the official Flemish National Anthem on 11 July in the year 1985. The Flemish flag is a dimbing black lion on a golden field. The lion has white stripes on its sides, a red tongue and red claws.

DE VLAAMSE LEEUW

Zij zullen hem niet temmen, de fiere Vlaamse Leeuw,
Al dreigen zij zijn vrijheid met kluisters en geschreeuw.
Zij zullen hem niet temmen, zolang een Vlaming leeft,
Zolang de Leeuw kan klauwen, zolang hij tanden heeft.

Chorus:

Zij zullen hem niet temmen, zolang een Vlaming leeft,
Zolang de Leeuw kan klauwen, zolang hij tanden heeft.
De tijd verslindt de steden, geen tronen blijven staan:
De legerbenden sneven, een volk zal nooit vergaan.
De vijand trekt te velde, omringd van doodsgevaar.
Wij lachen met zijn woede, de Vlaamse Leeuw is daar.

Translation:

They will never tame him, the proud Flemish Lion,
Even if they threaten his freedom with fetters and with shouts.
They will never tame him, as long as a Fleming lives.
As long as the Lion can claw, as long as he has teeth.

Chorus:

They will never tame him, as long as a Fleming lives.
As long as the Lion can claw, as long as he has teeth.
Time devours cities, no thrones will ever last,
Armies may go under, but a people never dies.
The enemy comes marching in; surrounded by mortal danger
We laugh at his anger: the Flemish Lion is here!

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Belgium is at once a very old and a relatively young country. Its name was first mentioned about 2000 years ago by Caesar in his book on Gaelic Wars, but for centuries Belgium only existed as a separate entity of larger empires... Only in 1830 did the country become independent. This event is remembered each year on Belgium's Independence Day, July 21st This is the day on which the first Belgian monarch, Leopold I, took the constitutional oath in 1831.

Note From the Editor: I want to thank Ms. Loete, from the Belgian Cultural Center in Moline, IL. for sending us most of the material used in this article. Leen.

My Trip to Belgium

by Mary A. Brown (Conclusion)



We continued on our own walking tour. There is nowhere in Brugge that the traveler looks that doesn't remind you of something you have already seen - in a work of art? in a previous life? One does not need to go to the **Memling Museum** or even to stand face to face with the Michelangelo "**Madonna and Child**" to see a work of art. It is all around you in this "Venice of the North" and even more so in the low country-side

surrounding the city. The absolutely level fields, broken by rows of pruned knot willows under the douds really were the essence of Flanders. I grew up in the flat-lands of Indiana, but there is something quite unique about those flatlands of Belgium. Is it that the trees are so equally spaced and neatly manicured, is it the opalescent quality of the clouds? Any way, it's not quite like anything I have seen anywhere else. Once again, the goose bumps.

Would you believe this day was not over yet? A memorable beer in Damme, a quick look at the cathedral, an introduction to **Jacob Van Maerlandt** and we were off for a fantastic supper with niece Katinka and her cats in the Brabant country side. This is a place I would love to see in day light.

On another morning Alain's uncle drove us out to Mechelen. Leen had scheduled a meeting with **Guido Dutry**, director of "Vlamingen in de Wereld". While she chatted, we walked those windy streets and recaptured that Belgian mystique that I first felt in fourth grade. This cathedral, like so many others, was shrouded in scaffolding as pollution stains were being swept away from old stone. As it



was lunch time, we were able to admire Van Dyck's "**Crucifixion**" for only a couple of minutes. It is much more exciting to see a painting or a statue in the place for which it was created rather than in a museum, perhaps on display in a conquering country, a trophy of war. Our trip back to Brussels took us through various small villages, following the "Druiven route"

(Grapes-route), each with its rooster-topped Romanesque church, and countryside dotted with greenhouses where the farmers used to grow really gigantic grapes, grapes that would dwarf the huge grapes we had enjoyed chez Vleminckx, Leen assured me. Unbelievable!

And on to a fabulous meal prepared by Pierrot at the home of Tonton and "La Tante" Dina, my very favorite Belgian meal - - chicons wrapped in excellent ham, swimming in cheese sauce, after shrimp stuffed tomato, a delicious tomato at this time of year! But on to art history!

Saturday we joined the **Vleminckx** family for their customary walk through the beech forest. Now this was something straight out of my childhood, shuffling through fallen leaves, snow flurries spinning in the air around us as we tried to keep

up with little Jerome. This is one of my favorite memories, for our exercise was followed up by one of the most delicious and certainly the most extravagant meal I have ever enjoyed.

Guests of Alain and Hannelore, we consumed eight courses of beautifully prepared food during four hours of good conversation at *Les Foudres*, one of Brussels exquisite restaurants. Thank you, Vleminckx!



One last shower in Tervuren, and I had finally mastered getting myself wet without dousing the bathroom. Looking out the window, I remarked on the wildness of the backyards of these compact row houses, and I mentally complimented once more the wise use to which these city people have put their space.

This was our last; festive breakfast with the family Vleminckx. The table was ablaze with egg candles in egg cups and all of Hannelore's little Easter figurines. My last croissants and pistolets in this house. Sarah gave me a charming yam spider she had made.

Nephew Carl joined us at breakfast to drive us to his house in the Limburg region to the east. Clearly this is the orchard area of Belgium, so different, but still so beautiful. To my North American eye, these fruit trees have been pruned too severely ever to bear fruit, but Cart assured me that this very summer they would be heavy laden.

After driving through these orchards and vineyards in Carl's new Korean car which runs on either natural gas or gasobne, we arrived at his three-story home in Wellen, a place he and Christel had spent months of searching and kilometers of driving to find, a place with lots of promise, lots of space for their horticultural and decorating know-how.

Our first breakfast presented me with the problem of how to eat asoft boiled egg in an egg cup. Carl rescued me as I commenced to get bits of shell all over; and good teacher that he is, he gave me a second lesson on my second egg. After the initial cut, one must use the straight of the blade, not the tip, to get a good, clean cut.

Our first excursion was to the supermarket in Genk for basic groceries, but what a selection! White and green asparagus, loads of witloof at the same price as lettuce, ten different varieties of potatoes. I loaded up on chocolate bars.

But on with art history.

The big excursion of the day was to the living museum, Bokrijk. This was the best way imaginable to sample different living places and styles of the region. Peopled by old-timers who literally stepped



into the wooden shoes of their ancestors, this place could transport you in a few minutes from one century to the next, one area to another, from a farmer's to a craftsman's to an upper class home. Even the poultry seemed to step from a lavishly illustrated child's book, and the swine were out of

this world. What hams! We finally found the house which Leen had remembered from a trip many years before, where a wooden beam, at least six meters in length, swung from fireplace, through the living room wall, and out to troughs in the barn to feed the livestock a hot meal on a cold night. What amazing ingenuity! What consideration!

We bought a loaf of crusty whole grain bread fresh out of the oven after having climbed to the top of the windmill where grain used to be ground and we enjoyed some fresh “pets de nonne” (small cream puffs) out there in the nippy wind. The bread we saved for breakfast the next morning with the best bacon I have ever tasted.



Once again on the trail of art history, Christel got behind the wheel to take us to Tongeren, the oldest city in Belgium. Here a statue of **Ambiorix**, leader of the Eburones, the warrior who turned back the Roman legions in 54 B.C., looks over the city square. We toured the Gallo-Roman museum, the basement of which is an amazing multimedia experience featuring the mysterious dodecahedrons

which have been found throughout the area. Upstairs I felt those goose bumps again as I looked up at a map showing the Roman divisions of Europe at the beginning of the Christian Era *Omnia Gallia divisa est in tres patres*, I had struggled through this in second year Latin. One thing I was learning: Europeans are living with ancient history all around them. What a wonderful thing for their school children!



This day was far from over. On to **Alden Biesen**, a large fortified complex, established by the Teutonic Order in 1190 as a retirement for Crusaders who had lost their health and/or their home when away on their mission. Christel

whipped up our flagging energies to go to a display of the etchings of **James Ensor**, early 20th century Belgian painter and graphic artist. We then went on to become quite engrossed in small studies depicting the beauties of nature at Oostende and criticizing in scathing detail the corruption in government of the Belgium of his time.

On our way home we were amused to see the ladies of Brustem advertising their own art from atop stools in their picture windows lining the highway.

At home, Carl prepared for us a huge amount of my favorite of Belgian foods, those wonderful chicons in cheese sauce. Surprisingly we all still had the energy to go over Carl's scrapbooks which he has assembled covering the life and death of his now dead King Baudouin. Carl's affection and reverence for this man and his queen was very touching.

As always happens in travel, suddenly it was time to move on, no time for sentiment, just pressure to make sure nothing

was left behind, pressure to make sure we made our departing train for the last stepping stone before coming home. No time to recollect as we hurtled toward Cologne.

As we rolled along the Rhine, though, I tried to come up with some explanations for the greatness that is Belgium. It can't just be the quality of the colors in the clouds, surely not the flatness of the flatlands, the thrift of the farmers nor the craft of the orchardists. It surely can't be the violence which has leveled the cathedrals and houses of state more than once. It may have something to do with the energy of the ordinary Belgian, the love of beauty, adoration of children, the ability to see the possibilities that a “little” work can bring out. It surely reflects a natural tendency to share what you have with others and to build forever. I saw so much of that in each place I stayed. It may have something to do with the quality of the food.... I appreciate and love it all!

NORTHWEST CORNER

by Hans Michael Vermeersch

The good Lord must have been smiting down upon the second annual Northwest Belgian-American Get-together last July 21. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, but there was a special buzz in the air. Perhaps it was that that day Belgium celebrated its National Holiday. Maybe it was thoughts of Belgium's Fred Deburghgraevewho had just set a world record in Atlanta in the 100m breaststroke and then went on to win Belgium's first Olympic Gold at the 1996 games. Whatever it was, the stage, err... the table was set for another successful gathering of les Wallons and de Vlamingen from the Pacific Northwest

Don and Pearl Van Den Heede again lent their W 3 Ranch in Boring, Oregon with its backyard having Mt. Hood as a backdrop for this year's Bar-B-Que. **Marleen Looyens** outdid herself by securing donations of paper goods from **Fred Meyer's** and soda pop from Albertson's and Safeway. **Dennis Paye** again came with a keg of beer. And despite the reputation of some Belgians, it had yet to be emptied, at least by the time this beertover had to leave the festivities. There were also floating around a few bottles of some domestic “witbier /bierre blanche,” Blue Moon Belgian White from Denver, Colorado and available at local Safeway supermarkets. I'm sure many other members should be recognized, but my involvement this year consisted mostly of simply showing up and having a wonderful time. I especially want to thank all those who brought the delicious desserts. It brought back memories of shopping through “les Patisseries” of Brugge. (To heck with the diet!)

Over 125 people made it to this year's fast. Regrettably, we again missed the presence of Mr. **John Herman**, the Honorary Consul of Belgium in Portland. An invitation was also extended to the Belgian Consul from Seattle, **Mr. Maznik**, but he too was also unable to attend. Nonetheless, some 30 members of Le Brabançon, a Belgian club based out of Tacoma, WA made the trip south. It was good to have the chance to make new acquaintances, as well as renew contacts from last year. First generation Belgians (some “fresh off the boat”) mixed with the children and grandchildren of Belgian immigrants. All celebrated the fact that “Being Belgian is Beautiful!”

Belgian Laces Vol 18 #68
FELIX DESIRE BOOGAERTS
Brabant 1860 - Louisiana 1937

by John Joseph Boogaerts, Jr.

My grandfather, Felix Désiré Boogaerts, died when I was 3 years old. My only memory of him is that of a tall old man in bed reaching with his hand to greet me. Many hours in my 61 years have been spent researching him, his ancestors and descendants. He was God-fearing, honest; and faithful. Also, he was witty, lively, and handsome. These latter traits may explain measures of immaturity and self-indulgence. A portrait may be drawn from the attributes of his six children who reached maturity: devoutly Roman Catholic versus alternative life-style; materially successful and financially reckless; cautious and carefree.

Boogaerts is an occupational name derived from the Flemish words boom, gaard (free, garden) i.e. orchard; the “s” on the surname is apparently a Saxon genitive. Matthew 12:33 is especially meaningful: “... a tree is recognized by its fruit.”

Desire Felix Boogaerts (Felix Desire in America) was the 6th of 6 children, and the 3rd of 3 sons of **Peeter Josef Franz Boogaerts** (1816-1887) and his wife, **Joanna Theresa Raeijmaekers** (1820-1901), called “Melanie.” He was born in Linden immediately north-east of Leuven, Brabant; Belgium, February 28, 1860. He was baptized in the village’s old Sint Quentin Roman Catholic Church (1622-1875) which was adjacent to the Kasteel van Linden (1784); sponsors: **Hendrick van Asbroeck** and **Anna Catharina Limboes** of Linden.

Herbergiers & Landbouwers

The father of **Desire Felix Boogaerts** was a landbouwer, a fanner. **Peeter Josef Franz Boogaerts** was the 7th of 9 children and the 3rd of 5 sons of **Peeter Boogaerts** (1781-1824) and his wife **Anna Catharina Lonthie** (Holsbeek, 1802 - Linden, 1860). Peeter Boogaerts was an herbergier, i.e. an innkeeper and the burgemeester of Linden, 1813-1819. Peeter Boogaerts was the 3rd of 9 children and the 1st of 2 sons of **Willem Boogaerts** (1747-1808) and his wife **Joanna Schols** (1751-1830). Willem Boogaerts was a farmer and an inn-keeper; he lived in the De Grote Roose house in 1782 and the Kasteelhoeve van Linden, 1797 (both still stand).

Felix Désiré’s maternal grandparents were **Willem Raeijmaekers** (1777-1831) and **Anna Maria Pulinckx** (1785-1847) of adjacent Bierbeek. **Joanna Theresa Raeijmaekers** was the 6th of 7 children and the 4th of 5 daughters of **Willem Raeijmaekers** (1777-1831) and **Joanna de Waersegger** (1785-1847).

Brabander

As the only brother with three older sisters and parents who were older when he was born, maybe **Desire Felix Boogaerts** was an indulged child. He was their only son to survive as two sons had died as infants. Perhaps that was why his parents chose the name meaning desirable and beautiful. His sisters had conventional Biblical names.

When he was 11-years old, his parents moved to the adjacent village of Kessel-Lo on July 5, 1871. His next sixteen years are un-recorded. He apparently attended school, as his signatures indicate that he was well trained in penmanship. He told of ice skating and jumping over barrels. Probably, he

worked as a farm laborer with his father. He was 6’-2” tall and handsome, “the young man with fair hair.”

When he was 27-years old in 1887 his father died. He and his mother moved to nearby Vertijk in July 1888, to the home of her youngest daughter, **Anna Catharina Hortense Boogaerts** (1857-1890), wife for **Willem Goons** (1856).

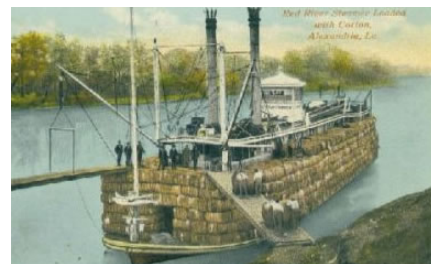
The oldest sister, **Philomène Catharina** (1847-1887) was married first to **Josse Huybens** (1835-1847) and second to **Peeter Franz Goons**. **Maria Julianna** (1853-1911), the middle sister was married to **Antoon Jacqmotte** (1845).

Immigration to America

In 1888, **Désire Felix Boogaerts** immigrated to the U.S.A. His possessions were brought in a wooden trunk painted black, the traditional Flemish *kist*. Aboard the French steam ship Nantes whose home port was Le Havre, as **Desire Boogaerts**, fanner, he departed from Antwerp for New Orleans. He arrived there on May 16, 1888, destination “Alexandria.” Apparently, he never returned to Belgium.

Per the 1900 US Census of Rapides Parish, Louisiana, he became a naturalized citizen before June 1900. No record of naturalization has been found by the Rapides Parish Clerk of Court.

He went directly to Alexandria in Rapides Parish, Louisiana where there had been a Belgian Flemish community since 1834 when the families of



Peeter Buvens, the widow of **Peeter van Meldert**, **Frans van Scarbroucks**, and **Johan Frans van den Wijngaert** (1770-c. 1845) arrived at Galveston, Texas and came to Rapides Parish.

His first job was at the lumber mill of **Julius Levin** (1833-1910) & Co., on the north side of Alexandria on Bayou Rapides where it joined the Red River.



There he worked using hand sign language, as he was learning to speak English. He worked at the lumber mill about three years.

Alexandria Compress

In 1890, he began to work at the Alexandria Compress & Warehouse, Co. and became the Weight Manager. Bales of ginned cotton were “compressed” to reduce the size of the bale for ease of handling, shipment; and storage. At the Compress, he weighed the reduced bales of cotton and was responsible for the issue of the government-bonded receipt. These receipts were the basis for the sale and shipment of the cotton. For about six months of the year, he worked at the Compress which was

owned by **William David Hans**, M.D. (1867-1940). He went to the Compress on horseback or in foul weather by horse and buggy. As a fanner during the balance of the year, he raised cotton, potatoes, and sugar cane.

With a steady job for a locally prominent concern, he married for the first of two times. Curiously, neither of his two wives was a Belgian-American. **Elizabeth Melady** was born on Bayou Rapides, Rapides Parish, LA, February 1, 1864, the 5th of 11 children, and the 2nd of 4 daughters of immigrant Irish Catholic parents, **Thomas Melady** (1830-1894) and his wife, **Mary Donlon** (1836-1926), both born in County Longford. They immigrated to America in 1840 and 1844 respectively.

Marriage

He was married to **Elizabeth Melady** in Alexandria, LA, January 22, 1891 at the "old" St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church, built in 1834, by **Reverend Léonard Menard** (1864-1930). Security of \$200 was provided by **John J. Peeterman** (1837-1892); witnesses: **Denis Kelly** (1832-1908), **Joseph Thomas Melady** (1859-1892), and **Archibald Gordon Melady** (1870-1952). The groom signed his name "Désire Boogaerts" and the bride signed "Lizzie Melady."

Four children were born to this marriage. All were born at a farm at Brown's Bend on Bayou Rapides: **John Joseph**, May 25, 1892 (1976); **Thomas Francis**, July 7, 1895 (1878); **William Gordon**, November 28, 1898 (1986); and **Alice Hortense**, December 3, 1901 (1914 obit sine proles).

Bayou Rapides

The farm of 50 acres, was three miles west of Alexandria. He rented the farm from 1890 to 1908 from **Henry David van der Lick** (1841-1934) and his son **William Joseph** (1869-1960) both born in Linden. Many of the Belgian community had farms on "the Bayou." His father-in-law, **Thomas Melady** owned a farm (1871, 1880) on Bayou Rapides not far from Brown's Bend on the "south side, right bank." Atypically, despite his regular employment and stable marriages, Felix Boogaerts never owned real property, either a house or a farm. He scorned his fellow Belgians as tight-fisted with their money.

The three boys attended St. Francis Xavier Commercial College on Second and Ogden Streets which opened in 1893. They rode into Alexandria with their father in a buggy.

On the Brown's Bend farm, Elizabeth Melady Boogaerts died in childbirth on September 15, 1903. Her brother, Archibald Gordon Melady (1870-1952) vainly urged the widower to marry his younger sister, Henriette Melady (1875-1960).

Second Marriage

His second wife, **Ella Livonia Pilkinton** was 27-years of age when she married the 44-year old widower with four young children: 2, 9, 11, and 12. Actually the 9 year old, William Gordon, who was lame in his left foot, was taken after his mother's death to be raised by his childless maternal uncle **Archibald Melady** and his wife née **Louise Theresa Prattini** (1874-1940) called "Missie."

Archibald Melady was then overseer of Clio Plantation owned by Weil Brothers and Bauer it was adjacent to the farm of his father, **Thomas Melady**.

Ella Pilkinton was born near Marksville, LA, November 29, 1877, the 1st of 4 children, and the 1st of 2 daughters of an Anglo-Saxon protestant father and a Louisiana Acadia Catholic mother. **Frank H. Pilkinton** (1855-c.1880) and his wife, **Sephora Couvillon** (1864-c. 1905). She had been a teaching nun, entering the convent of the Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas on July 9, 1895. Due to take Vows, she withdrew October 25, 1901, as she "realized that She loved children and wanted to have her own family."

She was at the convent with one of **Elizabeth Melady's** sisters, **Martha Jane Melady** (1880-1965), who became Sister Mary Thomasine, C.D.P. on August 22, 1901.

St. Francis Xavier Church

They were married by Father Menard in Alexandria, on April 18, 1904 at the "new" St. Francis Xavier Church which opened on November 27, 1899. The old

church burned in 1895. The church was made a cathedral in 1910. The groom signed as "**F. D. Boogaerts**" and recorded by the Clerk of Rapides Parish as "**Felix D. Boogaerts**." Security was provided by Edmond van der Hoeven, who was also a witness as were **Mathais Andries** (1849) and Louis van Rillaer (1864-1930).

He and his family attended mass at St Francis every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. Pews were rented (until January 1929). The Boogaerts family pew was on the nave's (south) left aisle near the transept and his place was always next to the aisle.

Beauré

His new wife gave him the nickname "Beauré." This was a play on his surname, on beauregard, i.e. the French word for good looking, and the name of Louisiana's popular Confederate general, **Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard** (1818-1893). Also, he said that his initials, "F.D.B." stood for "French, Dutch and Belgian" though he was neither French nor Dutch.

He had three children by his second marriage, the first two born at Brown's Bend: **Mary Philomène**, August 31, 1909; **Felix Peter**, December 31, 1909; **Frank Pilkinton**, May 5, 1912 (1975 o.s.p.) born at a farm nearer Alexandria, LA, on Hynson Bayou and the north side of Clements now Jackson Street The Hynson Bayou farm, of 20 acres was about a mile from Alexandria. It was also owned by Henry David van den Lick. His first daughter, **Alice Hortense** died there of typhoid fever, July 8, 1914.

Pachter

When his friends: **William Joseph van der Lick**, **Philimont van Langendonck** (1883-1964), **Joseph Thiels** (1882-1938) called "Jeff," and **Louis J. Peterman** (1884-1965) visited him, they would converse in Flemish and drink. During Prohibition (1919-1933) they drank only



home-brewed beer. They greeted one another with a hearty "Pachter!" which is the Flemish word for farmer.

From 1919 to 1927, he rented from **Allen B. Pendleton** (1866-1946), the overseer's house with some acres at Richland Plantation, about three miles south of Alexandria, today called Willow Glen. His son **John Joseph** had been discharged in 1919 from the Army and started working at the Alexandria Compress, where he became its Superintendent in 1920. John Joseph purchased a Model "1" Ford automobile, and his father rode with him to the Compress. His daughter Mazy Philomène finished Providence Academy in 1922 and went to Shreveport to study nursing at Schumpert Hospital. Felix Peter was captain of the football team in 1927 when he finished Menard Memorial High School. It opened in 1926 at 1900 Elliot Street between 19th and 20th Streets. Archibald Melady and the husband of **Henriette Melady**, **James Joseph Murtagh** (1889-1970) served on the school dedication committees. Menard High School (1926-1965) was the successor to St. Francis Xavier Commercial College which had burned in 1923.

Belgian-Americans

The five of his six children, who reached maturity, married and had children. Two of the spouses were principally Belgian-American, one Acadian, two white Anglo-Saxon protestant. He knew thirteen of his sixteen grandchildren. He had ten grandsons to bear his name.

His first child to marry was **Thomas Francis**, who while stationed near Alexandria at Camp Beauregard during World War I, met his future wife, a pretty Red Cross nurse. Thomas Francis was married to **Mary Adele Babin** (1892-1939), called "Della," in White Castle, LA., February 2, 1919 at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church. She was the daughter of **Paul Ostere Babin** (1854-1936) and **Malvina Ezida Le Blanc** (1856-1941). They had three children: **Harold Thomas** (1920), **Edith Marie** (1921), and **Donald Edward** (1926).

William Gordon was married to **Eleanor Eugene Mathews** (1898-1965), called "Dude," at St. Francis, October 22, 1919. She was the daughter of **Felix Mathews né Tutenel** (1860-1930) and **Mary Elizabeth Josephine Smith** (1866-1921). They had three sons: **William Gordon, Jr.** (1920-1928), **Charles Gibbons** (1922-1968), and **James Albert** (1925-1988). The next marriage resulted after Eleanor introduced her new brother-in-law John to her double cousin **Eunice Loenie Muse** (1903-1988); both were descended from Flemish immigrants: **Paul Mues** (1791-c.1862) and **Johan Frans van den Wijngaert** (1770-c.1840).

John Joseph was married to **Eunice Muse** at the Rectory of St. Francis, July 21, 1921. She was the daughter of **Frank Muse né Mues** (1869-1931) and **Emma Ophelia Lard** (1872-1960). They had three children: **Alice Marie** (1922), **Philip Joseph** (1926), and **John Joseph, Jr.** (1934).

Mary Philomène, while a student nurse met her future husband as he was doing his internship. Mary Philomène was given in marriage by her father to **Williams Coghlan Holmes** (1901-1961), M.D., at St Francis, September 5, 1925. He was born in Finchburg, Alabama, the son of **Sibley Holmes** (1873-1933), M.D. and **Irene Williams** (c.1875-1901). They had three sons: **Williams Coghlan Jr.** (1929), **Broox Garrett** (1932), and **James Sibley** (1933).

From **James Flint Seip** (1886-1974), he rented a place at the present England Drive, 1928-1930. **Frank Pilkinton** moved to Shreveport on finishing Menard School in 1930.

To be nearer the Compress, they moved to an old school house owned by **Alfred G. Hudson** (1870-1954) on lower Third Street 1930 to 1933. There **Felix Peter** met the Bailey brothers, **Reginald Frederick** (1911-1959) and **John Franklin** (1914-1983), who lived nearby. Through them, **Felix Peter** met his future wife, **Claudia Lee Bailey** (1915-1987). He was married to her in the Rectory of St Francis, January 5, 1935. She was the daughter of **Clement Frank Bailey** (1881-1950) and **Linnie Elizabeth Rush** (1886-1977). The 1st of their 4 children was the last grandchild to be seen by **Felix Désiré; Bailey Patrick** (1937), **Daniel Felix** (1945), **Frances Faye** (1946), and **David Frank** (1951).

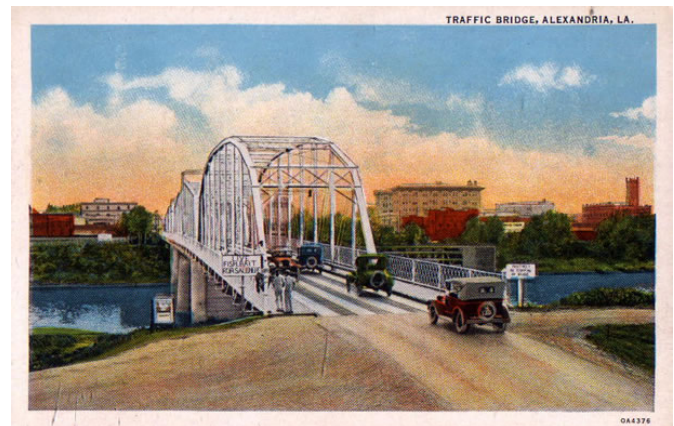
Ironically, he moved to the **Thomas Melady** farm on Bayou Rapides with **Felix Peter** when the latter rented it from his step-uncle, **Archibald Gordon Melady**, from 1934 to 1936.

Retirement

For 44 years, he worked at the Alexandria Compress for half the year and farmed the other half. In 1934 at age 74, he retired from the Compress and "went to bed" still in good health.

Felix Désiré Boogaerts died at 77-years of age in his home on the property of his son, Felix Peter, at Rapides Station, LA. on Red River, six miles north of Alexandria, November 8, 1937. No death certificate was issued. He was buried by Kelly Bros., Undertakers. After his funeral, there was a large gathering of mourners at the home of John Joseph at 2109 Hill Street in Alexandria. Attending was the Mayor, Vincent Vance Lamkin (1881-1950).

Ella Pilkinton Boogaerts died while on a visit to her daughter, **Mary Philomène** in Foley, Alabama, December 31, 1938. Felix Désiré Boogaerts and his two wives were buried in Pineville, LA at Rapides Cemetery.



Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo.

John Joseph Boogaerts, Jr., the 12th of 16 grandchildren, and the 10th of 13 grandsons of Felix Desire Boogaerts, and his wife, née **Florence May Macdonald** have 2 daughters, 2 sons, and 1 granddaughter. They live in Greenwich, Connecticut.

This biographical sketch is in memory of John Joseph Boogaerts, Sr on the anniversary of his birthday, and is offered for the glory of God. 1996.

MAASEIK: twelve centuries of remembered history

By Carol Hazlewood , journalist from Flanders #25 March 1995

No matter what the season, your first impression on entering Maaseik's main square is one of wealth and prosperity. The opulent seventeenth and eighteenth century patrician buildings grouped around the regular-shaped marketplace mostly house commercial enterprises but they have been well maintained. The people of Maaseik are justly proud of their attractive town and even on Wednesday mornings, when simple market stalls rub shoulders with articulated purpose-built refrigerated trailers beneath the double row of lime trees, there is no litter. Look into the antiques dealer's shop window or stroll past the florist's and you will see that life must be good for the inhabitants who earn their living as shopkeepers, by building cars at Ford in Genk, or working in the Dutch state mines just across the street.

Maaseik, population nearly 21,500, is tucked away in the Maasland in the north-east corner of Flanders, almost as far as you can get from the province of Limburg's main city Hasselt, without going into the Netherlands. It is a small bustling town, going quietly about its business without too much obvious bother from the region's capital, Brussels. However, life has not always been so peaceful.

Maaseik, which literally means Maas Oak, owes a lot of its importance to the River Maas (Meuse in French). This major European river rises in France, crosses Belgium and flows into the south of Holland close to Maaseik before emptying in the North Sea - a journey of some 950 Kms (594 miles). An important waterway for centuries, Maaseik was one of the many towns built as a fortified trading post along the river.

There is many a tale worth telling about the town but none so charming as those relating to two the sisters Harlindis and Relindis, who lived in the eighth century. Educated in France, their father built them a chapel and a convent at Aldeneik (old oak).

Legend has it that the Vikings later attacked the convent and the sisters fled. Farmers took over the land and then in 930, the Bishop of Liege sent monks to take back the property and to establish a monastery. It is on this site that the present, partly twelfth century church of Aldeneik still stands. On the outskirts of Aldeneik a tiny bridge over a small stream is still known as the Bridge of the Little White Lies (Leugenbrugweg). The sisters wanted a stone floor for their wooden church and would creep out after dark to gather special white stones to pave it, carrying them back in their skirts. Their father, suspicious of what they were up to, laid in wait one night at the bridge. Afraid to admit to such unfeminine activities they said they had been gathering roses. When challenged, they opened their skirts that were full of red roses.

About one kilometer up river from the sister's village, a new colony grew up. Called Nova Eycke or New Oak, it later became known as Maaseik. A better location, it quickly supplanted Aldeneik. In 1244, Maaseik, which belonged to the principality of the Prince-Bishops of Liege and formed part of the County of Loon, received its freedom and soon became the most important town of the Limburg Maasland. The 750th anniversary of this freedom was much celebrated in 1994.

But back to Maaseik and its glorious past. In the center of the main square, where an oak tree once stood, is a statue of two other famous local children, the Brothers **Jan and Hubert Van Eyck**, artists of the Flemish primitive school. Although a panel states that it was begun by Hubert, Jan is especially known for *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, which can be seen at St. Baafs Cathedral in Ghent. On summer evenings the local men gather in the "Markt" to smoke a pipe and put the world to right! Inquisitive visitors who ask which figure is Jan and which is Hubert, will probably be told to go around the back of the statue and call out "JAN"! He who turns is brother Jan!

Museums

There is another famous building on the square, one that tourists come from far and wide to visit. It is the chemist's shop, the oldest private pharmacy in Belgium. Today, it is incorporated into Museactron, three museums in one whose name is derived from three Dutch words meaning museums (musea), action (actie) and education (onderwijs). The pharmacy, now entered from the herb garden at the back, is undergoing renovations since 1995 but visitors are still able to look inside while work goes on. Started in 1704 by **J. Engelbert Lanckbein**, the last pharmacist to work there was **Guillaume Van Venckenray** who practiced from 1911 to 1959.

Pharmacists had apprentices who had to learn how to take care of the herb garden, which were the medicinal herbs and what parts of them were used to treat a specific illness or complaint.

They had to know when to harvest the herbs and how to store them. The Maaseik pharmacy contains a rich collection of medicinal recipe books, pots and jars from other continents as well as from Europe, pestles and mortars, measuring spoons, and boards for making pills. One book contains recipes for treating animals, for a working animal's life was sometimes rated higher than that of the women and children.

Museactron also houses an archaeological museum containing finds made in the Mans gravel pits as well as a bakery in the cellar where school children can have fun learning how to make bread Middle Ages-style. Bakers' ovens used to be incorporated into the cellars of the wooden town houses because the fire was easier to put out there. Large areas of Maaseik were twice destroyed by fire in 1650 and 1684, after which all buildings had to be made of stone. Just one black and white house remains in Hulstraat giving an idea of how the town used to look.

Gastronomy

One of the specialties of Maaseik is the knap koek, a type of large spice cookie. A statue of the Knapkookmaesje (the knapkoek girl) stands in Museactron's garden. The cookie, whose secret recipe includes cinnamon, was invented by local bakers for the ships that used to call here when this section of the Maas was still navigable. The knapkoek replaced bread which was difficult to keep on board. You can sample it with a cup of coffee in one of the local cafes that have carpets covering their tables, but make sure you break it correctly.

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The trick is to move the cookie slightly off center on its saucer, place your thumb in the middle and push. If it breaks into four pieces you will have good luck. Each year, a 3m diameter knapkoek is baked in the main square on the second Sunday of July but the normal dimension is saucer-sized.

Another local specialty, for which De Posthoom is renowned, is Boekesekoek. Eaten for breakfast it is a large buckwheat pancake with a thick slice of fat pork in the middle which you cover with a dark brown syrup made from pears. Traditionally, it is served on a reed mat made in nearby Stokkem.

De Posthoom is also responsible for an unusual way to serve onion soup that has become Maaseik's answer to fast food. The delicious broth, covered with a thick cap of grilled cheese, is served in a cut-out extra-large brown roll whose crusty top you use as a spoon. Held in a paper napkin, it is very popular with those watching the carnival procession in midwinter.

One of the ingredients of De Posthoom's soup is Bokkereyer beer, brewed not too faraway in Bree. It takes its name from the local peasant gang which terrified the wealthy landowners and the priests, threatening to bum down their property if they didn't hand over money and valuables. Known as the Billy Goats (Bokkerijders) because of their devilish deeds and rejection of Christianity, they succeeded in penetrating the town and dug underground passages to allow them to escape. Eventually, they were caught, tortured and hung. One of the last to be unmasked was Dionysius Van Carlo, a goldsmith who was also the town's mayor. Given a last wish, he asked for some of his wife's soup. She spiked it with poison and the mayor escaped the ignominy of being hung.

The Past lives on

As you walk or cycle around Maaseik you will see that the oldest, patrician buildings, such as the facade of the pharmacy, are constructed with bricks made from clay brought down by the nearby river. Some buildings are decorated with carved limestone and the very rich citizens used blue stone. The more blue stone and the higher the ceilings inside, the wealthier the owner of the building. Over many of the doors there are pictures, for houses had names rather than numbers and pictures enabled the illiterate to identify buildings.

One very rare feature in Maaseik today is the pavement posts outside the pharmacy. These marked the edge of the pavement at the extent of a property. Dating from the period of the Count of Loon, they were either 'male' or 'female' - a diamond design signifying a male post (to the left) and a heart a female post (to the right).

The mud bank at the end of Walstraat is all that remains of the original ramparts. When Louis XIV of France claimed Flanders in the seventeenth century, Maaseik was one of the towns to be fortified by the famous French engineer, Vauban. A model of those elaborate fortifications is in the Franciscans' Church (Minderbroederkerk) in the Boomgaardstraat.

The same building contains an interesting exhibition proving that the Van Eyck's originated in Maaseik and not elsewhere. The exhibition includes a striking modern version of the 'Adoration of the Mystic Lamb' by **Jan Peeters**, a local artist often to be seen on the Grote Markt in summer wearing a black hat and smoking a pipe.

The other side of the square, in Grote Kerkstraat, is St. Catharine's, once a collegiate and now the parish church. A beautifully preserved building containing a magnificent treasury, its most precious possession is an eighth century Codex. The most valuable document in Limburg, the 132 pages are insured for over BEF. 120 million. Given in good faith to a Dusseldorf bookbinder for restoration in the 1950s, it suffered considerable damage. When it was eventually recovered, pages had been mounted on plastic, pieces were cut out and it had been put together in the wrong order. The true restoration took ten years to accomplish and the Codex finally went on display in January 1994.



The Statue of the brothers Jan and Hubert Van Eyck. in the center of the main square

Other attractions

What else does this region have to offer? Neeroeteren and Opoeteren are two villages that now form part of the borough of Maaseik. Predominantly rural and relatively flat, the surrounding countryside is ideal for walking and cycling.

A large number of visitors come for water sports or to camp at the well-equipped 500-hectare Marec center located around two inland waters, "De Spaanjerd" and "Heerenlaak", that were created by flooding gravel pits and connecting them to the Mans. Special areas are designated for wind surfing and for motor boats, as well as for wildlife. There are two modern marinas and a further BEF 70 million investment made in 1994 at Haven 2 in the Heerenlaak permits yachts up to 35 meters.

You don't have to own a boat to camp there; the site has space for 500 tents and caravans. Boats can be rented or you can take a cruise down the river on the 'De Paep

van Meinecom II' pleasure boat.

It is easy to fall in love with Maaseik but if you want to live here there are two requisites: you need to have the local characteristics depicted in the statue in Bosstraat-genteel, lazy, gourmet and haughty; and to be able to break a knapkoek into four!

USEFUL CONTACT:

The Tourist Office, Markt 45, B-3680 Maaseik

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From John Mertens, Kewaunee, WI: I found the passenger list of the Buena Vista which sailed from Antwerp and arrived in Boston 17 April 1856. This list was not available through the National Archives in Washington, DC. I was able to purchase a microfilm from the Massachusetts State Archives. This list originated from tax records, charged to each emigrant landing in Boston in 1856!

S.S. Buena Vista - April 17, 1856 - Antwerp to Boston

Name	Age	Belgium	USA
Joseph J. LIEGEOIS	30	Incourt	Green Bay, WI
Marie Therese Moreau.	25		
Antoine MOREAU	35	Roux-Miroir	
August MOREAU	29	Roux-Miroir	Green Bay, WI
Seraphine	20		
Rose MOREAU	20		
Pierre J. LARDINOIS	42	Incourt	Brussels, WI
Anne J. Gellin	40		
Desiree	13		
Jean Joseph	11		
Jean Baptiste	7		
Isadore	5		
Mane Therese	Infant		
Pierre MANSART	48		
Marie C.	20		
Alexandre	17		
Jean	12		
Jean Baptist NOLET	18	Petit Rosière	Lincoln
Joseph DUCAT	58		
Joseph H.	29		
Joseph	27		
Dan Joseph	18		
Eugene Joseph	13		
Antoine LECOCQUE	56		Red River
Marie	54		
Maximillien	32		
Philomene	17		
Leopold	21		
Marie Josephine	12		
Joseph	11		
Pierre Joseph PETIT	56	Jauchelette	Chebanse, IL
Marie Courtois	49		
Pierre Joseph	28		
Antoine Joseph	25		
Catherine	21		
Adolph	13		
Eugene	12		
P. Joseph	32		
Louis PEUS	25		Appleton
Marie Therese	26		
Guillaume FORVILLE	59	Walhain St.Paul	Brussels, WI
Jean Phillippe	34		
Charles TEBON	31	Walhain St.Paul	Brussels, WI
Adele Forville	25		
Jean Baptiste	3		
Josephine	Infant		
Pierre Joseph DUBOIS	30	Corbais	Red River
Joseph Jacques FABRY	40	Waterloo	Red River
Marie Dubois	40		
Octavie	15		
Eugenie	13		
Appolonie	12		
Marie Antoinette	7		
Caroline	6		
Lena	Infant		
Adrien FLAVION	34	Corbais	Red River
Louis J. FLAVION	31	Corbais	Red River
Marie Rose	27		
Joseph	Infant		
Marie Darbe THILMONT	58	Corbais	Red River
Jean Joseph JACQUES	55	Tourinnes	Red River

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Barbe Masset	54	St. Lambert	
Jean Francois MASSET	49	Red River	
Therese Joachim	54	Tourinnes	
Florien	13	St Lambert	
Ursule	12		
Gabriel	11		
Jean Noel MASSET	22	Tourinnes	Red River
Marie Delfosse	22	St. Lambert	
Louis Joseph	Infant		
Michel DELFOSSE	35	Tourinnes	Casco
Marie Therese Tordoir	34	St. Lambert	
Albert DELFOSSE	27	Tourinnes	Casco
Rose Huskin	27	St. Lambert	
Antoine	Infant		
Charles DECLOUX	50	Tourinnes	
Jeanne Marie Andre	59	St. Lambert	
Dieudonne SAINTELET	41	Tourinnes	Howard
Catharine Baras	40	St. Lambert	
Eugenie	11		
Constant	7		
Jean Joseph DEMOULIN	30	Tourinnes	Red River
Jeanne Louis	37	St. Lambert	
Pierre	6		
Eugene	Infant		
Albertine LOUIS	42		
M.Jean	21		
August DETERVILLE	13		
J.J. DEWEZ	24		
Marc DELFOSSE	56	Tourinnes	Lincoln
Amelia	56	St. Lambert	
Jean Joseph	25		
Clementine	20		
Victoria	23		
Antoinette	22		
Jean Baptiste DEWIT	30	Tourinnes	Brussels, WI
Josephine Delfosse	29	St. Lambert	
Melina	5		
Louise	4		
Fredric	died		
Paes	Infant		
Constant JANDRAIN	31	Walhain	Casco
Paulene Srnits	29	St. Paul	
Julia	Infant		
E. J. LOUIS	55	Orbais	Lincoln
Antoinette Delfosse	34		
Gustave	7		
Augusta	5		
Jean Joseph	2		
Antoine LAMBEAU	28	Glimes	City of G.B.
Noel	38		
Alonia	Infant		
Desire CORBEF	54	Autre Eglise	
Therese Malaise	50		
Eugene	19		
Victoria	17		
Florent	13		
Celesta	7		
Joseph	3		
Charles BASQUINS	30		
Josephine	33		
Victoria	4		
François BODART	38		
Josephine Seraphine	33		
Marie Antoinette	6		
Emil Joseph	3		
Octavie	Infant		
Jean Joseph DUCAT	55	Glimes	Chebanse, IL
Constance Flabat	55		
J. Joseph	58		
François	24		
Anne	24		

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Desiree	12		
Louis	3		
Josephine	Infant		
August DUMONT	42	Taviers	
Marie Therese Houyoul	55		
Barbe	20		
Florient	22		
Jean Joseph LOUIS	26	Tourinnes	Green Bay, WI
Marie Jadot	25	St Lambert	
Eugene	4		
Emil	Infant		
Clementine SMITS	35		
Marie	50		
Maximilien LEVOUR	19		
Anne Joe (died)	Infant		
Dieudonne POSKIN	34	Eghezee	City of Green Bay
Augusta	31		
Ferdinand	2		
Charles HOUSKIN	57		
Felicien LOUIS	28	Orbais	Lincoln
Charles SPINETTE	21	Eghezee	Lincoln

QUERIES QUERIES

Everybody seems to be taken by summer activities, like gardening (?), vacations, garden parties, picnics etc. because we received very few queries this time. This gives me a chance to piint a little reminder: at the office of the Belgian Researchers there is a file for each query submitted. When you respond to a query or when you receive an answer to a query, please send us a copy of the information, so that we know the status of the research. Besides : when someone answers your query, be sure to acknowledge receipt. This is just common courtesy and lets members know that their response was received - and their efforts appreciated! Unfortunately we do hear occasionally that someone does not acknowledge research done or information sent, because it was not the right family line (or for some other reason). Please, remember to thank any efforts made on your behalf.

96.31 6.- STRAPPS - Diligently pursuing the origin of my STRAPPS ancestors. Thomas Strapps is my earliest ancestor in England. He named Mary circa 1592. The family appears in Lincoln shire in the 1550's, but no record of their emigration from Germany is known at the present time. Anyone out there researching this family? - All letters answered. Thank you. Sylvia Strapps-Coon, 1901 Ball, Plymouth, MI 48170.

96.317 - PHILLIPO - Tracking down my Phillippo ancestors from Ontario, Canada, back to Suffolk (?) England, and originally from Belgium. My great-grandfather was Elisha PHILLIPPO, born in Oshawa, ON, 22 Oct 1837, son of James PHILLIPPO, born Oct 1795 in England. All letters answered. Laverne W.Coan, 1901 Ball, Plymouth MI 48170. -

96.318 - VAN DE VOORDE - Albert, b. 13 Oct.1885 in Hansbeke, Belg., d. 11 Aug. 1970 in USA. Albert named Leontine Des Camps, b. 13 May 1892 in the Netherlands; daughter of Peter Des Camps, b. Jan. 1861 in Waterland Oudeman, Belg., d. 12 May 1951 in USA. All buried in South Bend, IN. Any information of these four persons appreciated and will share correspondence. Thank You. Antone Levan Lambert, 31646 Delaware, Livonia, MI 48150-3825. Phone (313) 422-5725.

96.319 - SALMON - LEGRAND. Joseph J. Salmon b. 30 April 1825 and his wife Elisabeth LeGrand, b. 20 July 1823, both in Belgium (?). Their children : Geraldine, b.1852 (place unknown) Pauline Marie,b.16 July 1860, Liege. Joseph J. Jr., b. 1864 (pLace unknown) - Will appreciate any information re. places of birth; residence of the Salmon and LeGrand families before 1870-71. Family spoke both Flemish and French - Mildred T. Robitaille, 9744 Old Warson Rd. St. Louis, MO 63124-1484

