



# CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

1608 Seventh Street, Moline, Illinois 61265

(309) 762-0167

www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



April, 2017

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 1st	Waffle Breakfast	8:00 to 11:00 a.m.
April 1st	Belgian Lacemakers	1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
April 10th	Board Meeting	5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Visit the Center for more information and to stay updated on current events.

## Schedule for Volunteers

The April schedule is as follows:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Gift Counter</i>	<i>Host/Hostess</i>
Sat., April 1st	Barb Michalek (am)	Grace Fisher (pm)
Wed., April 5th	Alan Hoyt	Alan Hoyt
Fri., April 7th	Rosemarie VanAcker	Joan DeClerck
Sat., April 8th	Mary Gardner-Karcher	Mary Gardner-Karcher
Wed., April 12th	Bonnie Newman	Mary Lou Andrae
Fri., April 14th	Millie Kale	Millie Kale
Sat., April 15th	Diana Slininger	Diana Slininger
Wed., April 19th	Barb Coppens	Linda Polich
Fri., April 21st	Georgia Slininger	Bev Fulmer
Sat., April 22nd	Diana Slininger	Diana Slininger
Wed., April 26th	tbd	tbd
Fri., April 28th	Bob Francione	Bob Francione
Sat., April 29th	tbd	tbd

*Contact Diana Slininger at (309) 792-2790  
as soon as possible if there is a schedule conflict.*

## Once Again . . . Help!

Once again we make a plea for your help in occasionally volunteering at the CBC. The work is not hard, the hours are not long, and you might meet some interesting people. Waffle breakfasts always need help and we especially need volunteers to step forward for the open days at the Center. If you can help, if you will help at the Center, please contact Diana Slininger at (309) 792-2790. She will make arrangements for you.

As always, we appreciate and thank our current group of volunteers! Like we've noted in prior newsletters, we couldn't do it without your continued help!!

**OPEN Wednesday, Friday & Saturday 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.  
Waffle Breakfast 1st Sat. of each month**

## Let's Learn Something

(The information for this article was taken directly from a Masters thesis submitted by Kristine A.J. Smets, to Kent State University in 1994. Only slight paraphrasing by this newsletter was done for brevity, and all research and narrative is that of Ms Smets. The title of her work is *The Gazette van Moline and the Belgian-American Community, 1907-1921.*)

Many ethnic immigrant groups in the United States created and maintained their own ethnic press. The foremost function of the press was informational. The ethnic papers also expressed a group's values, traditions, customs, religion, and its changing sense of identity. Perhaps a more important role of the ethnic press was that of socializing its readers to the United States, as it educated them and became a tool for their adjustment.

During the first two decade of the twentieth century, Moline, more than any other place in the U.S., was a center for the Belgian immigrants. Not only did the area receive a large portion of the new arrivals, the city hosted the first Flemish newspaper, the *Gazette van Moline*.

The *Gazette* was initiated by Rev. J.B. Culemans after encountering two Belgian typesetters from the parish: Josef Van Lancker and Alfons Van Den Heede. Rev. Culemans rallied support from the Belgian community for a Flemish weekly that would contribute to "the religious, moral, and material well-being of the Belgian population.

The Moline Gazette Publishing Co. was founded and shareholders included Charles and Edward Coryn, Louis Sonnevill, Arthur and Julius Vander Vennet, Maurits Bockaert, Arthur De Loof, along with Van Lancker and Van Den Heede. Frank Spriet became the first editor. On November 15, 1907, the first issue hit the presses. Within its first year, the *Gazette* had more than 1,000 subscribers. Correspondents were located in Ghent, MN, Mishawaka, IN, Detroit, Kansas City, and Rochester, NY.

Modern equipment, including a linotype, was acquired and in 1920, the company took over an existing printing company, the Model Printing Company, where the paper was now printed. The company managers included Gaston Veys, Alphons Bruynooghe, Gunnar Swan, Georges Dick and Gustaaf De Keyser. Serving the longest as manager was Joseph Van Lancker. He served two periods; 1913-17 and 1921-1940. Editors, in addition to Frank Spriet, were Gaston Veys, Josef Nys and Gustaaf De Keyser.

While circulation of the Moline paper rose steadily during in the pre-war years, the German invasion of Belgium increased interest in the paper and circulation reached 3,500 households. By December 1919, the *Gazette van Moline* claimed more than 10,000 subscribers.

Though the paper flourished in the 1920s, it became less profitable during the 1930s. The reasons were clear: the "old timers" in Moline who could still read Dutch were dying and were not replaced by new immigration to the U.S. Also, the children born of Flemish immigrants could speak Dutch, but were unable to read it. Outside of Moline, the paper had much competition from the *Gazette van Detroit* which still had strong appeal, partly because of the larger Belgian population and partly because of its location near Canada, where Belgian immigration continued. Lastly, some advertising was lost from a new form of media, radio. In 1940, the *Gazette van Moline* merged with the *Gazette van Detroit*.

During its period of publication, the *Gazette van Moline* provided Flemish immigrants with current events on the local, national, and global level. More importantly, it contained news about familiar people and places, and brought news from the old country into the homes of the Belgians in America. It was a shaper of public opinion, an agent for cooperation, and a promoter of both group maintenance and assimilation.

## Donations

The Center will always eagerly accept monetary donations. We'd love even more of them.

However, currently we are asking that you NOT donate any artifacts. It's not that we don't want them, but we have a large amount of material to sift through as we try to update and showcase material in the Center that we already have. In some cases, we have duplicate duplicates of duplicates. The winnowing project has begun and we'll let you know when we are accepting artifacts again.

Money we will gladly accept anytime.

## APRIL WAFFLE VOLUNTEERS



Volunteers for the April waffle breakfast will be Angie Jennes, Michael DeBisschop, Kim Kochuyt, Kevin DeRoo, Joe DeMeyer, and Georgia Slininger. Mike Kerckhove will make the mix and start the coffee, and Joan DeCap will cashier. Catherine VanHecke will make sure everyone enjoys their breakfast.

## Would You Believe?



The Belgian racing pigeon “Golden Prince,” from Wevelgem, was bid to 360,000 euros (\$381,600) at an online auction. The auction house Pipa claims this makes Golden Prince the most expensive pigeon ever. The winning bidder was from South Africa.

Belgium enjoys a long tradition of breeding racing pigeons. Many buyers come from abroad, especially from China and South Africa. Golden Prince is part of a collection of 405 birds belonging to a breeder in Wevelgem.

The auction house called it the biggest auction of the season and it involved big money. The lot was sold for over \$1.06 million. The previous milestone for a single bird was set in 2013, when 310 euros (\$328,600) was paid for “Bolt.”

## Labor Camp Follow-up

In February’s newsletter, we noted historian Donald Buyze’s research into Belgian forced labor. Looking into the matter, Buyze concluded that up to 180,000 Belgians served in labor camps during World War I, way more than originally thought. The accompanying photo shows a group of buddies posing for a photo at a church in Dienze prior to their leaving for a labor camp. The sign in front of them indicates they were from Poesele and the year was 1918, so luckily they would not have spent too much time in the camp.

Millie Kale’s father, Baziel Lievens, is seen standing far right. Millie stated that her father told her that he escaped from the camp and returned to Poesele. Once there, he hid in a giant woodpile that was hollowed out. He later returned to the camp to avoid reprisal.



## Homeland Honor

In Belgium recently, honorary consul Patrick Van Nevel received an honor and new title; Prince in the Order of the Nevelese Hувier. Although humbled, Patrick stated that he would not be using his new title.

The historical society of Land of Nevele, the Flemish region where Patrick’s father Joseph was born, honored him for his support and pursuit of the history and heritage of Belgium and the United States. The theme of the award ceremony was emigration from the region. As it turned out, many translations of correspondence that Patrick had done over the years involved members of the society as well as the president of that historical organization. The society felt it only fitting that Patrick should be an honoree.

Patrick grew up in the village of Vinkt which is part of the Land of Nevele and includes some 15 towns. The area comprises many fruit growers, and the word “hувier” in the award is an old pear species; so old it is only known from ancient writings.

As you may or may not know, Patrick first visited in our region in 1974 and, via an exchange student family in Galesburg, had opportunities to come back several times. He decided that the United States was his “land of opportunity.” He immigrated here in 1981 and became a citizen in 2010. In 2003, he was named honorary consul to Belgium.

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*April, 2017*

### **Homeland Honor**

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Patrick is the market president of the Davenport branch of CBI Bank and Trust. As part of his volunteer activities, he makes trips to Belgium to promote business and trade opportunities in Iowa and Western Illinois. And while there, he usually makes time to visit relatives.

Patrick was not only surprised at the honor, but touched for the recognition from his birth region. Making it more special was the fact that his wife Barb was able to share the ceremony with him.

Congratulations are offered to Patrick Van Nevel, from all of us at the Center for Belgian Culture! Thanks to André Bollaert for the newspaper translation from Belgium and John Marx of the *Dispatch/Argus* for his recent newspaper write-up.



Barb and Patrick Van Nevel

Application packets for both the **CBC Scholarship** and the **Ruth Lambrick VanTieghem Scholarship** have been sent to area high schools and colleges. Copies are also available at the Center, have been posted on the CBC Facebook page, and were sent to our members' emails.

The deadline for completing either application is April 15th.