



CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

1608 Seventh Street, Moline, Illinois 61265

(309) 762-0167

www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



March, 2019

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

| | | |
|------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| March 2nd | Waffle Breakfast | 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. |
| March 2nd | Open House | 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. |
| March 2nd | Belgian Lacemakers | 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. |
| March 11th | 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 March schedule is as follows:

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Gift Counter</i> | <i>Host/Hostess</i> |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Sat., March 2nd | Closed (a.m.) | Barb Michalek (p.m.) |
| Wed., March 6th | tbd | tbd |
| Sat., March 9th | Mary Gardner-Karcher | Mary Gardner-Karcher |
| Wed., March 13th | Bonnie Newman | Mary Lou Andrae |
| Sat., March 16th | Millie Kale | Millie Kale |
| Wed., March 20th | Barb Coppens | Linda Polich |
| Sat., March 23rd | Diana Slininger | Diana Slininger |
| Wed., March 27th | Bob Francione | Bob Francione |
| Sat., March 30th | Steve Slininger | Steve Slininger |

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

Please Check Ahead

During these winter months, please check ahead before visiting the CBC. We want everyone – visitors and volunteers – to be safe.



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

Boomer's Belgian Farmhouse Ale

by Craig Hewitt

After decades of living out west (first Phoenix and now Denver), I don't get back to the old stomping ground as often as I'd like. When I do return home to the Quad Cities, I immediately get a craving for all those culinary favorites from my childhood: Whitey's Ice Cream, Harris' taco pizza and, of course, a VandeReuben from the Belgian Inn. So, you can imagine my disappointment when I learned they closed their 17th Ave. location several years ago and that my beloved VandeReuben was now an endangered species.

Time has taught me that traditions grow richer and more precious as you get older, maybe because you learn how fragile they truly are. When you're young you take traditions for granted, thinking that they somehow withstand the test of time as if their fate is pre-determined by some invisible yet invincible force. Only through the lens of experience do you begin to fully appreciate what it takes for a tradition to endure.

This sobering revelation started me down the path of rediscovering my Belgian heritage nearly a decade ago. In 2010, my brother Scott and I began researching our family ancestry. Growing up, we knew our mother, Joyce, whose maiden name is Claeys, was as Flemish as they come, and that our Belgian ancestors had lived in the Quad Cities since the 19th century. My mother was a bookkeeper for the family business, Claeys' Auto Supply, which persevered at its 16th Street location for over 40 years.

Unfortunately, this tradition didn't manage to survive, and Claeys' Auto Supply officially closed its doors in 2008. At the time, its demise was heart-wrenching for the Claeys family, but if you know anything about Belgian history, you know we're no strangers to adversity. In the end, the family did what Belgians have always done: pick up the pieces and keep moving forward. Regardless, the end of a tradition is never the death of history. In fact, often it's the catalyst that begins a new tradition, one that venerates the old.

That's when my brother and I came up with a rather novel idea to honor the Claeys name and to keep our Belgian traditions alive. I decided to tap into my love of homebrewing and brew a beer dedicated to the man who started it all: my great grandfather, Raymond "Boomer" Claeys. Born in Somergem, East Flanders on October 25, 1889, Boomer migrated to America in February 1910. His long journey across the Atlantic began aboard the famed ocean liner, S.S. Mauretania, which took him to Ellis Island, New York, where so many of our Belgian ancestors were processed.

From there, Boomer made his way to Moline where a thriving Belgian community had already been established, and he soon met my great grandmother, Emma Versluis. On May 26, 1913, they welcomed their first child, my grandfather, August "Augie" Claeys. Like many Quad City residents, Boomer found work with Deere & Co. where he worked as a driller for over 40 years. Even after his career had wound down, he still continued to work well into the twilight of his life, keeping busy at his only son's budding auto parts business.

After Boomer passed in March 1971, Augie continued to follow in his father's industrious footsteps, turning Claeys Auto Supply into a business that he would eventually pass down to his sons, Greg and Jerry. Throughout his life, he taught us the value of hard work, the importance of family and a fierce appreciation of our Flemish roots. Yet Augie's greatest legacy was his colorful sense of humor and zeal for life, something I'm told he inherited from Boomer.

As a proper tribute to my great grandfather, I chose to brew a Belgian farmhouse ale, a beer that embodies not only the traditions of the "Old Country" but also the agrarian spirit of his adopted Midwestern home. As the name suggests, this rustic, Belgian-style beer originated on Flemish farms that historically brewed farmhouse ales to quench the thirst of hard-working field hands during harvest. Often referred to as a saison, every farmhouse is brewed with locally grown ingredients, employing a unique blend of grains, fruits, spices and hops.

Being one to stand on ceremony, I plan on brewing Boomer's Belgian Farmhouse Ale at Denver's Factotum Brewhouse where it will be released to the public this fall. This will be the fourth beer I have brewed with this popular local brewery, but it's the first to honor my Belgian heritage and the Claeys family name. Fittingly, Boomer's great granddaughter, Jessa Claeys, will design the logo and label for the official release. Eventually I would love to bring this beer home to the Quad Cities where it belongs.

More importantly, I wanted to create a family recipe that could be shared and passed on to my relatives so that we could continue to celebrate our Belgian heritage and toast the man that taught us to never forget where we came from and to always remember to laugh no matter where we go. After all, isn't that how we keep the spirit of our loved ones and our

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Boomer's Belgian Farmhouse Ale

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traditions alive? By remembering them? Besides, I can't think of a way to honor of a man of Flemish descent better than with a beer brewed in his name. I like to think Boomer would appreciate it. I know I will.



1913 photo of Raymond Claeys, wife Emma (Versluis) and baby August.

Lotus to Bake in U.S.

Since I was but a mere child, I have loved "windmill" cookies. Maybe it was my Belgian heritage that created that inner taste desire, or just the fact that they tasted good. I have since learned that windmill cookie taste was somewhat close to speculoos. And nothing beats the taste of real speculoos. I occasionally purchase a package or two at Walgreens.

Lotus Bakeries, who produce those great speculoos biscuits, only produce them at its headquarters in Kaprijke, East Flanders. It will now bake them outside of Belgium for the first time. A company expansion outside of Belgium will include factories in South Africa and the U.S.

In 2016, the U.S. became Lotus Bakeries' biggest market for speculoos biscuits, sold in the U.S. as Biscoff cookies. Now Lotus will begin to bake the biscuits here, with a \$73 million (U.S.) investment in production facilities in North Carolina. Construction of the facility is largely complete.

Lotus does produce other brands of biscuits, as well as waffles and fruit bars. Its new South African factory will produce the company's fruit snack brand. Lotus has nearly 1500 employees worldwide.

(With help from *FlandersToday*)

Belgian-American Club

In April of 1903, a club was founded with the purpose of furnishing occasional entertainment for all Belgians and Hollanders in Moline. Edward Coryn was chosen as the club's first president and from that point on, the group would be known as the "Belgian Club."

The club offered various dramatic presentations and social gatherings. As membership increased, it began to be involved in patriotic and community affairs. It sponsored English-language lessons and citizenship classes. It asked the Bishop of Peoria for a church and even secured the property where the Sacred Heart campus is today.

By 1911, the Belgian Club had become one of the foremost Belgian societies in the U.S., and with ever-increasing membership, changed its name to the "Belgian-American Club."

When World War I began to affect Belgium, the club and the *Gazette Van Moline*, purchased two carloads of flour to be sent to help feed their compatriots. With the U.S. entrance into the war, 42 members of the club joined the American forces to fight.

The Belgian-American Club was at the height of its success in 1920. Its clubrooms were second to none in the area. A steward was always at the service of visiting members. It was debt free and membership continued to grow. It truly was a haven for the people "whom fate had made neighbors in the great land of their choice."

While still in existence in 1950, the group was disbanded by the mid-1950s.

Again, We Need Volunteers

Once again, we are asking for your help. We need volunteers, especially for the monthly waffle breakfasts. Won't some of you help us out once in a while? The work is not that hard, you get to meet really nice people, and you get a free breakfast. We cannot continue to constantly count on the same people over and over. If you would consider helping once a year, that would be great! Please contact Karen VandeKerckhove at (309) 235-4425 if you will consider our plea.

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The Mail Goes Green

With climate change becoming a topic of concern just about everywhere, Belgium's mail company, Bpost, is doing its share to reduce emissions of CO2. Half of its fleet, over 3500 diesel vehicles, will be replaced by electric cars by 2030. At the same time, major investments have been made in solar panels.



The roof of the Antwerp dispatching center has been covered with 10,000 square meters of solar panels. Dispatching centers in Liege, Ghent, and Charleroi have already been outfitted with the panels. The energy thus created can cover the annual energy consumption of 900 families and can reduce CO2 emissions by 1200 tons/year. Antwerp will also get a wind turbine in 2020.

Bpost has been chosen as the world's greenest mail company for six consecutive years. Since 2007, Bpost has reduced CO2 emissions by nearly 40 percent.

MARCH WAFFLE VOLUNTEERS

Our waffle volunteers for March are Deb Schwiebert, Joe DeMeyer, Dave Coopman, Sage Jennes, and Angie Jennes. Mike Kerckhove will mix the batter and get things started, and Tom Slininger will cashier. And we will all help you enjoy Waffle Saturday.



As always, we need volunteers!! Waffle breakfasts can only continue if we have volunteer help. If you can help, please contact Karen VandeKerckhove at (309) 762-6725

Thank you!

The March waffle breakfast is sponsored by
the WESTIN FAMILY
"In Honor of Alice DeWulf,
a great Mother and Grandmother"