



# CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

1608 Seventh Street, Moline, Illinois 61265

(309) 762-0167

www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



October, 2020

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## Center Closed for Safety

Again for October, the Center will be closed and there will be no waffle breakfast or meeting at the Center for the Belgian lace makers. A waffle breakfast in November might be possible, but that will depend upon logistics and the State rules for virus distancing.

## President's Message

It is a pleasure and an honor to serve as your new Center for Belgian Culture president. I certainly want to thank Kevin DeRoo for his outstanding leadership and his continued friendship and support. Kevin will continue on as a board member of the CBC.

Like so many organizations, the CBC has been hit hard financially by the Covid-19 pandemic. Mainly, we have been unable to host our monthly waffle breakfasts, which is our main source of income that keeps us afloat. We also had to cancel our annual Belgian Fest, which has been a great source of revenue in the past. And our total membership has dropped to approximately 140 members.

In an effort to attack both issues – needed income and low membership numbers – I am asking all of you to consider signing up and paying for four new members to our organization. Together, we all need to work on building up the membership. We all have friends and family members; brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, who should be members of our organization.

I don't know about you, but I'm not getting any younger! And if it's not time to get our kids involved in the CBC... WHEN? It is their heritage that we are trying to preserve and treasure.

I know times are tough, but I ask for your support, as this would be a win-win for the Center. And your donation is tax deductible. If you wish to sign up more than four, I won't mind! Feel free to make copies of the membership form found on page 4.

I thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely, Bill Cornelis - (309)781-0040

## Scholarship

Our second CBC scholar this year was Evan Timmer, who attended Moline High School. He was an honor student in English, Math, Science, and Psychology. He was a four-year member of the varsity tennis team and four-year member of the marching band as a section leader. Evan is a freshman at Loyola University and is majoring in physics and computer science.

### Heritage Essay by Evan Timmer



As far back as my memory goes, I have always understood that I was adopted. My parents never tried to hide or deny anything from my sister or me about where we were born; in Tomsk, Russia. This has always left a burning question however, of whether my genetic or adopted ancestry was my “real” heritage. Despite being born in Siberia and a DNA test showing I have over 80% Slavic ancestry, all of my family and relatives are Dutch, English, and German. Seemingly though, as I grew up I understood that it is not DNA or blood relations that really define one’s heritage. Instead I discovered by looking back on my family traditions and talking with my relatives, that one’s heritage is rather a group of ideas and traditions that define how we look at and participate in the world.

On my father’s side, there is half Dutch from my grandfather and a quarter of English and German from my grandmother. Going through old family albums and letters, my grandfather can still read and pronounce most of the written Dutch he heard and spoke in the house as a kid. His father came to the United States from Holland in 1907 on the ocean liner Rotterdam through Ellis Island, as countless Americans did. My grandmother’s lineage traces to English and German

settlers immigrating to the Dakota Territories from Canada. While she grew up in Iowa and only speaks English, it does not stop her from baking the tastiest German and English pastries, or buying artwork of British men and women to put in their home.

On my mother’s side, there is only German. Her father, like my sister and I, was adopted. He married another full-blooded German, my maternal grandmother, who was one out of eleven children. Big families, I discovered, was a part of my Catholic heritage. When my family and I visit my mother’s side in a small German Catholic town downstate, it is common to find families of around a dozen or sometimes more. The greater numbers only add to the joy of everyone gathered together for Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, or anytime there was a chance to visit, it was guaranteed to bring the family around. Together we would attend Mass, play cards, swim, host cookouts, and enjoy each other’s company.

This brings to me what I discovered heritage to be. I learned that it was not so much that I was Slavic, or that my family was German, English, or Dutch. Rather, I found heritage was everything that my family taught and brought up in me. Every bit of their culture, tradition, religion, and food combined to give me a unique way to experience the world. Heritage is a link to a living past. Learning about ancestry and lineage, tradition and culture, is rather dry if it cannot be lived and rooted in others still today. Because of this link, I understand the importance of passing down the customs and traditions I experienced with my family. I know that when I am older and have children of my own, I can teach them the joy of experiencing the heritage that was passed to me, which they will continue to live and share for many years to come.

## It’s Official . . . Again

Flanders is smaller than it was several weeks ago. Sort of. To bring the border between Belgium and the Netherlands in line with historical agreements, some 1000 square feet that had been taken over by Flanders has been relinquished back to the Netherlands. Paving work began in the street in Essen marking the new border.

The commission charges with maintaining international border markers found that the border post was around three feet farther into the Netherlands than the official border that had been established in 1849. Seems

there had been a watery ditch where the border was established. Since a marker couldn’t be placed in water, that marker was set about three feet further on the Dutch side. The stream was long gone, but the marker was never moved.

Now the marker has been and a very small amount of land that once belonged to Belgium, is now correctly marked as belonging to the Netherlands.

(Thanks to *Flanders Today*)

## Friends in Trenches

(While researching another subject, I found this article in the January 23, 1918, issue of the *Daily Dispatch*. I thought you would enjoy reading this, slightly edited from the original.)

Two soldiers, clad in uniforms rarely seen in America and wearing boots and puttees of heavy foreign make, walked into the office of Ben DeJaeger, chief of the Moline police yesterday. Chief DeJaeger jumped from his chair as Ed Coryn, Moline postmaster, spoke a few words in Belgian.

And so the chief of the Moline police and later Mayor Martin Carlson welcomed to Moline two heroes of the war for democracy, both of whom have fought in the trenches on the Flanders front since the opening of the war.

One of the soldiers is a former resident of Moline. He is August Babelyn, Company D, 131st regiment, second division. His comrade is August Vandevoorde, first battery, 128th regiment, Belgian army. Vandevoorde's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Vandevoorde live in Annawan, Illinois.

Private Babelyn lived in Moline until the Germans invaded the land of his birth, Belgium. A few days after the invasion there came a call to America: Belgian reservists, your native land needs you.

August Babelyn heard the call and went. He paid his own traveling expenses all the way to the Belgian front. And he has been fighting continuously since that time. Two weeks ago his company commander granted him a furlough of six weeks duration. Today, Private Babelyn is in Atkinson, Illinois, where he is visiting his two sisters.

Babelyn and Vandevoorde fought in all the big battles on the Flanders front. They participated in the heroic stand made for democracy at Liege, when Belgium warded off the attacks of the Huns, saved France and probably England and America. Vandevoorde was a member of King Albert's army when the Germans laid siege to Antwerp, and he was among the last soldiers to retire from that city with his king.

The story of the meeting of Vandevoorde and Babelyn is perhaps one of the strangest they have to tell. The two were boyhood comrades in Belgium. Their homes were only a few miles apart. Later, they met in the army, where each was serving his period of military training.

Then Babelyn, like so many others, came to America. His friend Vandevoorde remained in Belgium. They exchanged a few letters at first, later the letters became fewer, and finally correspondence was dropped.

Then the war came. Vandevoorde's term had just expired. He was recalled to the colors and responded immediately.

His friend in America, Babelyn, also heard the call of his native land and hurried to the front. For three years they fought in the same army, fought the same battles and frequently under the same commanders.

But Vandevoorde did not know that Babelyn was in Belgium, and Babelyn heard not a word of his former comrade. Several months ago, a Moline newspaper, printed in the Belgian language, fell in the hands of Babelyn. He read it almost avariciously. And then he came to the name of August Vandevoorde who, the *Gazette van Moline* said, was a member of the first battery, 128th regiment.

Babelyn did not know where his friend's regiment was, nor was he able to discover that information. But he was told he could write to his friend.

The correspondence was reopened. Later, Babelyn read that his friend was going to receive a furlough and intended visiting his parents in Annawan. Babelyn decided that he too would ask for a furlough and visit his friends and relatives in Moline and Atkinson.

He hoped, with not much belief in the realization of that hope, to meet his friend somewhere in America. He obtained the furlough and was dispatched to port somewhere on the French coast.

On the wharf of that French port, he saw a uniformed man who looked familiar to him. The soldier returned his glance and there was also a hint of recognition in the look he threw toward Babelyn. The two men walked towards each other. The other man was Vandevoorde.

Chance had sent them to the same point of embarkation and at the same time.

And then they learned that for many months they had been fighting within a few miles of each other, unaware that an hour's walk might have brought them face to face.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Vandevoorde of Annawan are welcoming a son today. And at Atkinson, Babelyn and his two sisters are enjoying a long awaited reunion.

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**of Western Illinois, Inc.**  
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**CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE**

*October, 2020*

**Membership Renewal** (Please detach and return)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Recruiting Member's Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/2020

Would you like to volunteer? If yes, please let us know how below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Annual Fees Enclosed (check appropriately):

Single/Family (one per household)                      \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Senior (70+) Single/Family (one per household)      \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_

*Please note that complimentary memberships are automatically renewed.*

