



CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

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www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



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Due to COVID and the State's rulings, the CBC continues to be closed. Waffle breakfasts are still discontinued, as are the meetings of the lace-makers at the Center. We do thank you for your continued support during these past months, and hope we can all be back to our normal lives in the near future.

News of the Membership

Thank You to **Jim and Rosalie Van Speybroeck** for their monetary donation to the Center's scholarship fund.

Sympathy is offered to the family of Catherine Viren, 70, of Rock Island, who died on November 23rd at home. Catherine was the daughter of Wilbur Lievens, one of the founders and first president of the Center.

Tradition Continues

This newsletter has written about pigeon auctions before, but this one rates special mention. Back in November, Belgian breeders were totally stunned when a Chinese buyer paid \$1.9 million for a two-year old female pigeon named New Kim.

According to news reports, New Kim was bred and owned by Gaston Van de Wouwer, an acclaimed pigeon breeder who had decided to retire. Van de Wouwer's son wasn't interested in taking over the coop, so his entire flock of 445 birds went up for auction. The sale had netted over \$7 million before New Kim entered the bidding.

The record price for New Kim was somewhat unbelievable, since the bird was a female. Males are usually worth more, since they can produce more offspring.

Belgians have long been considered the best breeders of pigeons because of generations of experience and a large network of organized races. However, pigeon racing has become less popular in Belgium. According to the Belgian pigeon federation, there are only 18,000 members today, versus more than 250,000 registered members following WWII. Pigeon breeding is not easy, and it demands constant attention every day of the year.

Clearfield Remembered

Looking back at the early to mid-20th Century in the area, one would find many Belgian names connected with farms, groceries, butcher shops, woodworking and dairies, among others. One name that recently popped up in an article I was perusing was Van Hecke. That name has long been associated with the CBC, so I did a little more digging. Here is the result.

At one time in the area, there were nearly 50 local dairies. The name Clearfield was one of them. That dairy was founded by Octave Van Hecke, a native of Pouke, Belgium. Van Hecke came to America in 1903 and lived in New York and Detroit before returning to Belgium. While back in Belgium, Van Hecke married Alice D'Hooge. He returned to New York with his bride, and shortly after, the two moved to Moline.

Alice wanted to farm and although Octave wasn't that thrilled with the idea, he started the first local farm along the Rock River. Later, Clearfield Farm relocated to a site along old Routes 2 and 92 just outside of Silvis. Today, that site is the former Quad City Downs. With 50 cows to milk, it was only natural that the selling of that milk would take place.

Clearfield Dairy was founded in 1928. Milk routes were established and product was also available at local grocery stores. As the dairy outgrew its space on the farm, Octave purchased an old hatchery in Silvis. After much remodeling and equipping, Clearfield Dairy opened in September of 1940 at

802 First Avenue and housed a complete line of modern dairy and ice cream-making machinery.

In the manufacturing side of the building, 800 gallons of bottled milk and 1000 gallons of ice cream could be stored in coolers and freezers. The retail portion of the business was equipped with refrigerated display cases and counters where milk, cream, cheese, butter and ice cream were offered. Clearfield's new site became a busy one, especially with students from the junior high school just up the hill on 7th Street.

Clearfield Dairy was successful, but like so many of the other smaller dairies, it faced plenty of competition. One by one, the smaller operations either folded, or were bought out by the likes of Downing, Sturtevant, Peerless, Baker's, and Borden. Clearfield sold its milk routes to Downing in 1962, but continued its retail store until 1965. Today, the building that housed the dairy is the Silvis Public Library.

Octave Van Hecke, the dairy's founder, had retired from farming in 1941 and from the dairy business in 1953. He passed away in 1956.

How well is Clearfield Dairy remembered? In a recent auction on eBay, a one-quart Clearfield milk bottle sold for nearly \$70.00. I would say it is clearly remembered!



**COME OUT
AND SEE US
SUNDAY**

This cordial invitation is extended to you by the management and employees of the Clearfield Dairy.

ALBERT VAN HECKE
Manager

-- DRIVERS --

Arthur McMullin Lawrence Safe
Ray VanLanduit

-- PLANT EMPLOYEES --

George Van Hecke Henry Badtke
Cyril Dieterich

-- SALES GIRLS --

Mrs. Clara Van Hecke
Mrs. Margaret McMullin
Mrs. Lucile Van Hecke

**SEE 2 FOR 1 SPECIALS
LISTED BELOW!**



PLANT AND PERSONNEL

The new Clearfield Dairy, its personnel and the fleet of our trucks which serve over 800 families daily.

—Photos by Polaris.

GRAND OPENING
Of the New Modern
Clearfield Dairy
And Ice Cream Plant
Established in 1928 *VanHecke and Sons, Owners*

Learning Every Day

We think we know quite a lot, but then stumble onto something entirely new to us. That's what happened to me recently. This story revolves around three names: Philander Cable, Chippiannock, and Paul de Vigne.

Philander Cable came to Rock Island with close friend Philemon Mitchell in 1856. They brought lots of money with them and wanted to purchase a bank. Purchase a bank, they did. But in 1860, Cable decided he no longer wanted to be a banker and sold his interest to Cornelius Lynde. With that money, he began investing in the coal mining industry.

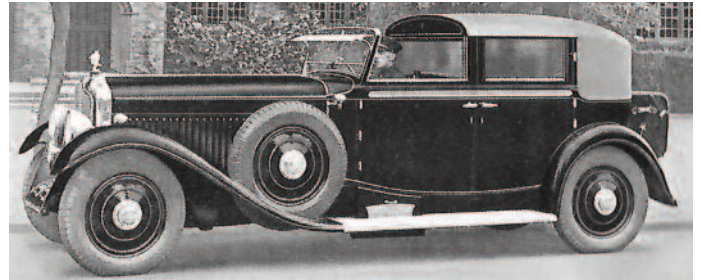
Mining coal was one thing. Getting it to a market was another. Cable began investing in railroads, the largest being the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad (later known as the Rock Island Line). Now quite wealthy, but afflicted with disability from a fall, Cable moved to San Antonio, Texas, where the climate was somewhat better. He died there in 1886. His body was returned to Rock Island to be buried in Chippiannock Cemetery.

Chippiannock Cemetery is familiar to most residents of the Quad Cities. The name is a Sauk and Fox Indian word meaning "village of the dead." The cemetery was established in 1855 on Manitou Ridge, a slope near the midpoint between the Mississippi and Rock Rivers. The site was wooded and hilly, but offered many commanding views. More than 25,000 people are buried there, including Philander Cable. To memorialize his father, Ben Cable had a cast bronze monument sculpted and placed on the Cable family plot. And that brings us to the third name and what this has to do with Belgium.

The sculptor of the Cable monument was Paul de Vigne. De Vigne was born in Ghent in 1843. He created many public monuments for display in Belgium and France (and one in Rock Island, Illinois). He had several statues displayed in Antwerp, Ghent, Kortrijk, and Brussels, and was hired by the Belgian government to create caryatides (carvings of draped female figures used as pillars) for the facade of the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. He created the Cable monument in 1891.



Minerva was Popular



In case you're wondering, we're talking about a car. Minerva was Belgium's leading builder of luxury automobiles. Minerva Motors was based in Antwerp and was founded by Sylvain de Jong. He started building bicycles in 1897, then motorcycles. From 1902 to 1938, Minerva concentrated on the production of automobiles. Minervas were considered equal to the Rolls-Royce in terms of quality, but were produced at a slightly lower cost and in far fewer quantities.

Wealthy Americans who had traveled abroad viewed European luxury autos different – even superior – to what was offered in the U.S.

Following WWI, European automobiles were offered for sale in the U.S. However, the tariff imposed on an imported car was much higher for a complete car than it was for a bodyless, running chassis. That chassis would be equipped with a firewall, hood, lights, and fenders. The majority of imported European cars were luxury cars, and once here were then fitted with coachwork designed and build by American custom body builders.

Because of Minerva's quality, American film stars, politicians, and industrialists began ordering chasses to have sent to one of several high-end custom body builders for completion. Even Henry Ford had one. Where there was money, Minerva had a sales office; New York, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. They were featured in numerous custom body style salons.

The stock market collapse in 1929 took its toll on the luxury automobile, especially those imported from Europe. Minerva ceased auto production for the U.S. in 1934 and all production just prior to WWII.

Letter for the Future
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Many of us cannot imagine what it must have been like to have the homeland taken over twice by enemy troops, and what the citizens must have endured.

(Thanks to *FlandersToday*)

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First You See It, Then You Don't

You may have read about the silver monolith that eerily appeared in the Utah desert. Others appeared in California, The Netherlands, England, and Romania. Some thought it was the work of extra-terrestrials, but it most likely is some sort of art initiative.

Belgium received its monolith early in December in a potato field in Bassrode, East Flanders. It didn't stay long, though, as it was gone in less than 24 hours.

In this case, it wasn't a work of art, but a practical joke executed by a local carnival group. Tom Pletinck of the carnival group revealed it started as a silly idea. "We noticed the monoliths in the news and thought it would be great to have one in Bassrode, too."

The carnival group said it just wanted to have some fun since carnival had been cancelled. Their action generated far more interest than they expected, and they removed it earlier than planned. The group was worried that it could get damaged or stolen. Where is the monolith now? It's in the back of Tom Pletinck's van.

(Thanks to flandersnews.be)

Letter for the Future

A message for the future was left by four workers repainting the ceiling of Sint-Jacobs' Church during the German occupation in 1941. The message was written on the back of two timesheets and was dated July 21, 1941, more than a year after Antwerp was occupied by German forces.

The men put their message into a matchbox and tucked it into the lattice of an ornamental keystone, high near the church ceiling. The matchbox was discovered during recent restoration work on the church. Here's what they wrote.

"When it's time for this ceiling to be repainted, we will no longer belong to this earth. We must tell our successors that we have not lived easy lives. We've experienced two wars, one in 1914 and one in 1940, that has quite an impact, eh? We stand here working, dead with hunger, while they squeeze the last cent out of us for a little food. If ever another war should break out, take this advice: Make sure you stock your houses well, with rice, coffee, flour, tobacco, wheat, and grain, so you can feed yourself! Enjoy life while you can. Don't wait to find another woman, and for those who are married, take care of your home! Cheers, lads!"

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