

NEWSLETTER

Namur, Belgium

Overlooking Namur from the Citadel



The town of Namur began as an important trading settlement in Celtic times, straddling east-west and north-south trade routes across the Ardennes. The Romans, too, established a presence after Julius Caesar defeated the cal Aduatuci tribe. Namur came to prominence

during the early Middle Ages when the Merovingians built a castle or citadel on the rocky spur overlooking the town at the confluence of the two rivers. The town developed somewhat unevenly, as the counts of Namur could only build on the north bank of

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FONTAINE FAMILY “LETTER BACK HOME”

Green Bay 24 december 1855

Dear friend,[1]

Once again I take my pencil to write you, and hope to get an answer this time. It's the fourth time since April 7th, the last day I received a letter from you. I have also written a letter to Mulders, an employee at "Grote Barrier"[2], but I didn't get an answer either from him. Why, only God knows and I have to accept it according His will.

Don't think I doubt if it's your fault. No, dear judge, because the deliverance of letters in America is very hard. I have heard that many people here are having the same problems. It doesn't goes like in Belgium. We don't have mailmen. If you expect a letter, you have to go to the post office the

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by Rick Fontaine

The “Letter Back Home” was sent to me by Henry Naus of the Overplelt/Lindel Belgium Historical Society and was translated by him.

Henry Fontaine was with the Flying Brigade and traveled all over Belgium but the family is from Etalle. His wife Elizabeth died on the way over in 1854 and a brother Juste settled in Louisiana. Henry remarried to Josephine Coppens and he formed the Town of Humboldt near Green Bay, WI,

holding the first meetings in his home. Henry farmed his entire life in America.

This will help clarify some of the things he talks about in the letter. He also states that he will go back when he has enough money but never did, probably due to his new wife and family. In addition to all birth records and marriage records, I do have documents from Belgium on the auction at Henry Fontaines home selling all the furniture, land and belongings not taken with them. That is all in French or Belgian. I also have the address of the original home, and ship manifests for Henry and Juste.

NAMUR, WISCONSIN



Near "Chadoir's Dock"

Photos by Kim Davis

NAMUR, BELGIUM

the Meuse - the south bank was owned by the bishops of Liège and developed more slowly into the town of Jambes (now effectively a suburb of Namur). In 1262, Namur fell into the hands of the Count of Flanders, and was purchased by Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy in 1421.

After Namur became part of the Spanish Netherlands in the 1640s, its citadel was considerably strengthened. The King Louis XIV of France invaded in 1692, capturing the town and annexing it to France. His renowned military engineer Vauban rebuilt the citadel. French control was short-lived, as William III of Orange-Nassau captured Namur only three years later in 1695 during the War of the Grand Alliance. Under the Barrier Treaty of 1709, the Dutch gained the right to garrison Namur, although the subsequent Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 gave control of the formerly Spanish Netherlands to the Austrian House of Habsburg. Thus, although the Austrians ruled the town, the citadel was controlled by the Dutch. It was rebuilt again under their tenure.

France invaded the region again in 1794, during the French Revolutionary Wars, and again annexed Namur, imposing a repressive regime. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the Congress of Vienna incorporated what is now Belgium into the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Belgium broke away from the Netherlands in 1830 following the Belgian Revolution, and Namur continued to be a major garrison town under the new government. The citadel was rebuilt yet again in 1887.

Namur was a major target of the German invasion of Belgium in 1914, which sought to use the Meuse valley as a route into France. Despite being billed as virtually impregnable, the citadel fell after only three days' fighting and the town was occupied by the Germans for the rest of the war. Namur fared little better in World War II; it was in the front lines of both the Battle of the Ardennes in 1940 and the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. The town suffered heavy damage in both wars.

Namur continued to host the Belgian Army's paratroopers until their departure in 1977.

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TOTAL \$210.00

LETTER BACK HOME

letter is addressed to, and ask if there is a letter for you. There is a post office in every town, but you know that in America there is very much of distance between the towns. Every month, the newspapers publish the names of them who didn't collect their letters, but one of twenty doesn't read the papers. And often people who have read their names in the paper, goes to the post office, but then their letter isn't there anymore. The postmaster tells them that someone picked it up. Crooks goes at hunt for those letters, hope to find some money in it. It's easy because anyone can ask for a letter under a specific name as he pays the fee.

However, although I'm sad since that fatal day my beloved en sweet wife Elisabeth gave her soul to God and for whom I still pray every day although I'm convinced that she's in heaven, because she was a good Christian and she has hoped until the last breath. And those who have hope and believe in Jesus Christ, shall, according to the gospel of Saint-Paul[3] be saved and receive the Eternal Life. However it's, my dear judge, in every way a great disaster to lose my dear and tender wife. My love for her hasn't left my heart for a minute. I even believe my love has increased since she's no longer with me. Sometimes I believe she isn't dead and still alive, but unfortunately, after such considerations I feel myself betrayed. But still, I love to speak to her like she was still with me. But after those moments I fall into days of sadness. I hope this will stop and hope that God will call me once to unite me with the one that fulfilled my heart, my soul, my everything.

I thank God my three daughters are growing up in good health. The two eldest will have to leave me next Easter to go to school in the city. I had placed them all three of them, but I couldn't live without them around me. Afterwards I placed Mina in Green Bay with some friends, so she could go to school there. But she wasn't happy there alone, and one day she came, accompanied of a coachman, back to me. However, they have to leave me in the spring to go to school. Only the youngest, Francisca, I will keep with me.

By working day and night I succeeded to pay the ground I bought from the State on credit. People can buy from the State until 320 acres on credit for a year at the

price of 10 shilling an acre. That's approximately 6.65 (Belgium) franks. I bought 160 acres, 1000 square meters (?) or about four kilometers around. The soil brings in every day more and more. I could have sold it with 100% profit, but that's not enough for me. I hope to get within two years to get 400% for it.

And when I can sell at the price I like, so I can buy me a farm in Belgium, I won't hesitate to cross the ocean and cover the 3000 miles that separates us.

Wisconsin, Brown County, lies about 1700 miles from New-York. It's the most healthy state of the United States. Last summer I travelled trough the states Ohio, Michigan and Illinois, but it's to hot in those states and there the Cholera never seems to stop to destroy lives, especially at the border of the Mississippi in Saint-Louis, New-Orleans, Cincinnati, Chicago and Detroit. The seasons in Wisconsin are similarly as the one in Belgium, but the heat and the cold are bigger and especially there is snow for about four months. The soil is good and it brings in much. People can harvest everything they could in Belgium. The food is good, good bread, much meat, mostly pigs-meat, and I don't like that. I do like to eat wild animals, which there is plenty of here. The liquor is bad here, but it's better in the other states.[4]

Hunting isn't as pleasant as in Belgium, while the forest are to huge and people can get lost in them easily. Men should always carry a loaded gun as they leave their farms. And it's very dangerous to hunt bears alone. They are very difficult to kill. A few weeks ago, I met two Indians, Indians lives only from hunting and farming, who had shot a bear. The bear had already 8 bullets in his body and still he attacked one of their dogs. A bear can weigh approximately 800 pound. There are no lions here, only in Mexico there are many. In summer, but not in winter, there are buffalos here. I don't like their meat; I much more prefer the meat of deer's that lives here in great numbers. On my own property I have shot 7 of them in two months. One of them weighed 200 pounds. There are also many little wild animals such as raccoons, hare's and pheasants.

I noticed in your last letter some doubt about the things I wrote about white hare's and skunks. I ask you to

believe me, because we are separated to far from each other and letters are too rare to write you nonsense. I hope to convince you once I'm so lucky we can see each other again. I shot many animals I don't know the name of. When I show you their fur, you will be surprised to know that such animals exist.

There are many snakes in summer, but not in winter. I don't know where they stay in winter, or it must be they live underground then. They aren't dangerous. I'm so used of them so I won't make a step so I wouldn't step on them. Pigs hunt for snakes. A snake of 6, 7 or 8 foot is a good breakfast for the pigs.

The soil is laboured with oxen. People can harvest wheat, rye, corn, potatoes, etc. As in the good countries of Europe, everything is expensive, compared to the value of the money in Belgium. Potatoes these days costs 6 shilling 6 pence/ bushel, approximately 25 kilos for \$4.35. But a dollar has only the value of 2 (Belgian) franks, but it's notated for 5.33 franks a dollar.

The United States are big, I don't know the measures. Every state has his Governor, elected every four years by the people. And the 21 states together have a President, also elected by the people. But every state has his own laws, written by the representatives of the people. All officials, as public as governmental, are elected and renewed every year by the people and every man, older than 21 has active and passive voting-rights.

Mostly Germans, Dutchmen, Irish, Canadian and Belgians live in Wisconsin. But I live about 4 to 5 miles from them. The Indians lives separated.

Green Bay lies between Fox-River and Devils-river at the point of the Lake Michigan. By that lake, people can travel trough all the United States with steamships. The most important industry in Wisconsin is the trade of wood in all kinds, wheat and pigs, that are plenty of and cheap. They are sold at 3,5 cent a pound.

I don't know yet where my brother is. I believe he's dead or has returned to us (Belgium or Luxemburg). I tried many times by all possible ways to get some information about him, but it's impossible to find him. It's not like in Belgium here.

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LETTER BACK HOME

When someone dies, they bury him according to his religion and that's it. No registers like in Belgium. People don't need an identification card to travel through the states. Everything here is free, and all there is is an oath. The only thing they registries is the naturalization as American. And after the oath, man gets a little paper that confirms that oath and that tells the possessor where to go to when he has to do military service.

So, I think my brother is dead, while I don't get news of him, and I can't find him. I know he knows I wrote my last letter to him from Green Bay and got his last letter from him there. But now, after 16 months, I haven't heard of him. I'll have to write home to find out.

I would have travelled back to Europe perhaps, if I didn't had fear not to have any meanings of living there, where I found the place to have the best off all women. To what, my dear friend, does richness leads when it is not accompanied with happiness. After deep consideration and many prayers I told myself: "You are going to spend the rest of your days where she's born and there you shall pray daily for the soul of her, you deeply loved, and your children will walk there where their poor mother walked when she was carrying them into her womb" And I won't give up those feelings.

So, my dear friend, let's hope, its Gods will, we'll see each other some day back again. At that time we can tell each other our adventures and tragedies of life. And then, you'll feel sorry for me.

By the way, you told me to believe that Josephine Coppens will be my wife some day. I seriously thought about it, my dear friend, but there is a problem. She would have to give up her religion. She is evangelic. I would do it for the children, not for myself, because no one in the world can feel the love I felt for my beloved Elisabeth, although she dead. But Josephine Coppens has taken care for my children for over a year. Because when I had to do that, I couldn't do the things necessary for our living.

In the first year I harvested for about 1000 franks potatoes. And they are almost sold. In the middle of the wood I have build a house. O my dear friend, what should I be happy when Elisabeth would be with us here. But it was the will of God.

We have three Catholic priests here; French, a German and a Flemish priest. That last one is father Dams from Diest. There are almost 2360 Belgians arrived in Brown county this year.

If you know a young man, willing to come to America, you can tell him that he can come to me (to work). I'll give him 600 franks a year including meals. But first a demand a written agreement, that has to be confirmed here under oath. It has to be someone I can fully trust. It's not necessary he can read or write, but he have to be willing to work. I want to keep him until August or September 1857, while I'm planning to return to Europe about that time. But he can't come only on this letter. I want to know him before everything and want to see written confirmed how I see the agreement.

If you know the address of employee Mulders, please be so kind to write him and ask him if he hasn't got a letter from me. Tell him he can come here and will be able to make a good living, if he wants to come in service with me. I will take him on the same conditions as the young man I spoke of here before. And even if I leave America, I'll make sure that whoever will come, can have a job where he can earn at least 600 franks a year, and even more. And at my place he can earn more money, if he's a good worker, and when he knows the job properly I'll raise his wage with 200 franks a year. But no one may leave Belgium before he has got a message from me.

Greetings to the family and my friends in Lindel. My best regards to my brothers and sisters in law, to Mr's. Moons, Laenen, Poelmans, Missotten, Van Lindt, Corthouts, Maes, doctor Van Lindt, Wolfs and to widower .. (Unreadable), Poorters and especially to F. Clercx[5] Tell the last one I would love to give a dollar for a litre of his "jenever". Further my regards to all who ask for me, to Mr's. L. Clercx, and Mr. Van Loo and his people. To butcher Vandenberg etc. etc.etc. & everyone who has still a debt to me for delivered bread. I'll give it to them. So let them pray a Holy Father and a Hail Mary for the soul of my beloved Elisabeth. Amen

My best hunting friend and judge, I don't know what to write anymore. Sometimes I think I'll write a big letter, but when I write, I don't go anymore.

Then my heart is so filled with memories I can't write no more. But I hope I can tell it to you personally very soon. Until then, I'm going to sleep now and dream that I'm still in Lindel in the companion of my dear Elisabeth and you. It's now 11 o'clock in the evening and tomorrow I'll go to the city to mass and then I'll post this letter. I have to get up early to do the trip of 8 miles. Tomorrow it's Christmas.

Goodbye my friend, I embrace you with all my heart and soul.

Your devoted friend.

I'm sure that only few people have pity on me and that others are pleased over my misfortune. I could mention names, but it's better to say nothing.

Without telling, I expect in the mean while some news from you. Read this letter to my brother in law and sister if you see each other.

[1] The letter was send to Karel Clercx, judge, who lived in an estate called "Hobos" in Lindel, Overpelt.

[2] Grote Barrier was the custom station at the frontier between The Netherlands and Belgium in Lommel. Henri Fontaine was a custom officer until 1845-1846. Although he was a member of the "flying Brigade" at Lindel-Overpelt., he had of course much contact with the custom station at Grote Barrier.

[3] Strange that he mentions the Gospel of Saint-Paul, because there is no such gospel. Probably he refers to the Letters of St.-Paul.

[4] He probably mentioned this, because judge Clercx had a distillery of "jenever", some kind of gin.

[5] These names are all of them the most famous citizens of the village. Mayor, secretary, notary, doctor, etc. F. Clercx is the brother of Karel Clercx, the addressee of the letter. He was, together with Karel, a manufacturer of "Jenever".

by Rick Fontaine
RickFont@earthlink.net

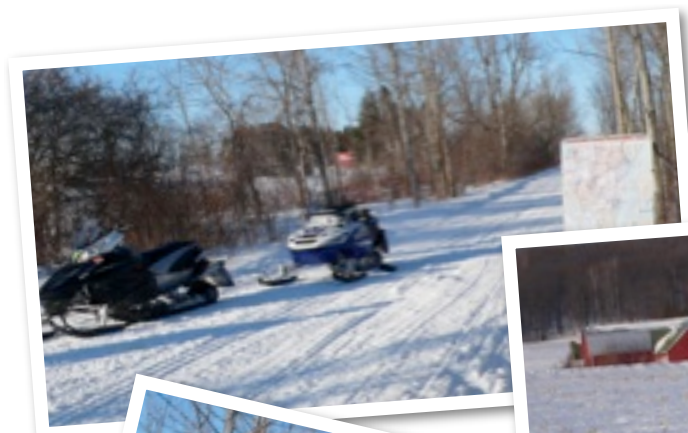
SNOWMOBILING IN NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

The State of Wisconsin has an extensive snowmobile trail system that links every corner of the state. Four state snowmobile corridors span the area providing unlimited choices to access bordering counties.

Door County alone has 250 miles of public and privately maintained snowmobile trails throughout the Peninsula. The trails from Door County will take you into Kewaunee and Brown county, and beyond.

Other outdoor activities throughout the area are cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, and ice fishing.

Our local Belgian community can be enjoyed Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall!



Door County snowmobile podcast is available for viewing at <http://www.doorcounty.com/outdoor/winter.aspx>

Photos were taken in Brussels, Wisconsin by Kim Potier Davis

TRAVELING BACK 100 YEARS - - DOOR COUNTY ADVOCATE

FEBRUARY 29, 1909

The monthly horse sale held on the premises of “**Joseph ALBERTS**” last Saturday afternoon was unusually well-attended. These periodical sales are a source of considerable interest as well as pleasure to a large number of people living in the country, many of whom would rather attend one of these affairs than do most anything else, unless it is an invitation to “take something” at a neighborhood bar.



BELGIAN LACE



Top: Renaissance Lace
Bottom: Princess Lace

The origin of lace is difficult to locate in both time and place. Some authors assume that the manufacturing of lace started during Ancient Rome, based on the discovery of small bone cylinders in the shape of bobbins.

During the fifteenth century, Charles the Fifth decreed that lace making was to be taught in the schools and convents of the Belgian provinces. It was designed to replace embroidery. Unlike embroidery, lace could be unsewn from one material to be replaced on another.

The art of lacemaking flourished in the Southern Low Countries between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. During this period, a certain rivalry developed among the important lacemaking towns such as Brussels, Bruges, Binche and the surrounding regions. It was in this era of competition but

also of mutual influence that the various types of lace reached maturity.

Since these earlier times, many styles and techniques of lace making have been developed, almost all of them in the Belgian provinces. Today, two main techniques are practiced in the Flemish provinces of Belgium. The first, a **Needle Lace**, is still manufactured in the region of Aalst. It is called **Renaissance** or **Brussels** lace because it is mostly sold in Brussels. The second type, the **Bobbin Lace**, is a specialty of Bruges, located in the west of Belgium. This is a very expensive type of lace to make and is therefore no longer manufactured for commercial purposes.

Lacemaking is an industry which nowadays employs lace workers, aged between fifty and ninety years of age. Do not expect to find lace factories in Brussels or Bruges, they do not exist. There are four different techniques of lacemaking, two of which are no longer practiced today and therefore come under the heading of antique laces. There are important differences between embroidery and lace: the latter is worked on the basis of a paper pattern, on a net (tulle), or on a combination of both.

Lace can be divided into three categories, according to the techniques used:

Handmade Lace:

It is important to distinguish between two kinds of handmade lace: **bobbin lace** and **needlepoint lace**. The combination of these two techniques gave rise to a third technique: **appliqué on tulle**. **Bobbin lace** is worked on a cushion, using pins, bobbins, thread and a pattern. **Needlepoint lace** is produced with needle and thread alone, so there is no need for either a cushion or bobbins! The pattern is held in one's hands. The origin of

needlepoint lace is generally traced to Venice. **Appliqué on tulle** is a hybrid form of lace created from patterns made with bobbins or with a needle, which is then assembled by hand and applied to tulle.

Modern Lace:

The term modern may be deceptive, for some types of lace were created in the middle of the 19th century.

The production of modern lace made use of 'mechanization' at one stage or another. Generally the process was only partially mechanized (e.g. tape lace, Princess lace), but in some cases it might be fully mechanized (so-called mechanical lace).

Although **tape lace** and **Princess lace** are not entirely handmade, they are undoubtedly part of the craft tradition. Their production involves hand assembly or completion with needlework, or application on tulle.

Contemporary Lace:

Since the 1960s lacemaking has become a veritable art form. Drawing on original techniques of lace production as well as on other technical and artistic competencies, contemporary artists have developed original creations – sometimes monumental in scope – in two or even three dimensions!

Listed below is a summary of the most famous Belgian laces:

1. **ROSALINE and DUCHESSE and BRUGES LACES of Brussels** (Bobbin Lace with cut threads)
 - a. Pearled Rosaline - fine Brussels lace, characterized by little round floral motifs, the "pearl roses"

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BELGIAN LACE

- b. Brussels Duchess Lace - fine bobbin flower and leaf.
- c. Brugges Lace - slightly thicker thread.

- a. Other renowned examples: Malines, Valenciennes, Flanders, Point de Paris, chantilly (black lace). These are no longer made.

2. The ROSEPOINT LACE

(Needlepoint Lace is made with a single thread and needle.)

- a. Rose Point - most delicate
- b. Point de Rose
- c. Venice
- d. Alencon

4. APPLIQUE on TULLE (bobbin, needlepoint, or muslin)

- a. Application lace is mixed with a mesh background.

5. PRINCESS LACE

3. TORCHON, CLUNY, LILLES and FAIRY POINT, BINCHE (new name point de Fee) LACES (Continuous Thread requires more bobbins)

6. RENAISSANCE (or BRUSSELS) LACE (needlepoint lace)

- a. Battenberg Lace
- b. Ribbon Lace
- c. Tape Lace

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Belgians Arrive July 9th



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by [unreadable]

Members from the Wallonie Wisconsin Society in Belgium will be arriving in Green Bay, Wisconsin on the evening of July 9th. The names, and number of people traveling with the group is not known at this time. Their members have until March 25th to make their down payment.

Events will be planned for them while they're here including a Welcome Lunch, and Farewell Dinner.

On July 20th, the Belgians will be traveling by motor coach to visit sites in Milwaukee and Chicago. PBAC members are welcome to join them. Detailed tour information will be provided at a later date.

On July 24th, the Belgians will depart from the airport in Chicago and return home to Belgium.

Calendar

April 16, 2009 (7:30m)

PBAC Meeting
Schoolhouse - - Namur, Wisconsin

April 27, 2009 (10-Noon)

Speaker - - Barb Chisholm (Belgian Ancestry)
Learning in Retirement at NWTC
Email: dclir@nwtc.edu Phone: 920-746-4947
<http://www.nwtc.edu/LIR/Default.htm>

July 9-20, 2009

Wallonie Wisconsin Society arrives in WI

July 11-12, 2009

Belgian Days - - Brussels, WI

July 20-24, 2009

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