



# Newsletter

of

## The Van Voorhees Association

ORGANIZED 1982

MAY 1985

### From the President

Isn't it a great feeling to be part of a growing organization? That's how I hope all of our members feel as we approach our 53rd Annual Meeting, to be held in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on Saturday 12 October. Our growth shows up in numbers of members, in numbers attending the Annual Meetings, in materials coming to the Newsletter, in business coming before the Executive Committee, and in so many different ways.

Growth is the reason your Executive Committee embarked on a revision of the Association Bylaws. While the old ones had served well enough for the first half-century

of Association life, they did not seem adequate for the kind of broad-encompassing, active national organization we are becoming.

I mention the Bylaws now in order to prepare you for voting on proposed new Bylaws at the 53rd Annual Meeting. They will be printed in the August Newsletter so that you will have opportunity to give a thoughtful vote at the 53rd Meeting (or by mail in advance of the Meeting).

I hope to see a large number of you at the Annual Meeting. We feel it should have special meaning as we listen to a Voorhees speak to us in the Jane Voorhees Zimmerle Art Museum on Voorhees Campus of Rutgers University.

April 1985

Don Vorhis  
President

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### GENEALOGY

Genealogy Committee chairman David A. Voorhees sent the following report:

The Genealogy Committee has received in excess of sixty Family Group Record Sheets, and Pedigree Charts that are to make up the volume of genealogical information of the current members of the Van Voorhees Association.

My original plan was to have each current member of the Van Voorhees Association complete a Family Group Record Sheet with information about themselves, spouse, and children;

on the back is a Pedigree Chart of sufficient room for four generations of the member's family.

For the purpose of this project only the Family Group Record Sheets of current members of the Van Voorhees Association will be included in the volume for display.

Since quite a few members sent along additional pages of information, (one lady sent a total of 28 pages), I would like to report on the disposition of all information that has been received by the Genealogy Committee.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

Please be assured that all the Family Group Record Sheets have been photocopied, and the copies have been forwarded to Mr. Albert Stokes for inclusion in the permanent genealogical files of the association.

If you sent in additional pages of family information with your group record sheet, all of this valuable information has also been forwarded to Mr. Stokes for inclusion in the permanent files.

I want to thank all the members that responded to this project, and especially those members who sent additional information.

All of the Family Group Record Sheets will now be compiled into a loose leaf binder and will be on display at the fall meeting.

David regrets that his busy schedule will keep him from continuing to serve as chairman of the Genealogy Committee. Rev. William J.F. Lydecker has agreed to take over the leadership of the committee and was confirmed by the Executive Committee to be the new chairman. We extend the Association's thanks to David for his fine work during his chairmanship of this important committee, and hope he will continue to help with the work underway.

### MEMBERSHIP

Membership chairman Arthur Voorhees reported that he had been very busy in January and February, responding to over 150 inquiries generated by the mailing sent out by the San Francisco Convention and Tour Agency. People have been responding to his replies slowly, but he is pleased to report 44 new members to date, including 2 life members and 1 junior member.

Any member who knows of someone interested in becoming a member should contact Arthur Voorhees for

a brochure and memberhis application at 65 Hiawatha Blvd.  
Oakland, NJ 07436

### PUBLICITY

The Publicity Committee, headed by June V. Wick, continues to establish a working relationship with other groups which have some common interests with our Van Voorhees Association, including the following:

The Van Kouwenhoven-Conover  
Family Association

Mrs. Helen C. Roberts  
Box 626

New Monmouth, NJ 07748

For descendants of Wolfert Gerritse Van Couwenhoven (includes all Van Voorhees in Coert line: Coert m. Wolfert's granddaughter Marretje Gerretse Van Couwenhoven; and many other lines).

Organized in 1896 in Hunterdon County, NJ, its annual publication is "Tidings".

Anneke Jans and Everardus  
Bogardus Descendants Assn.

William Brower Bogardus  
1313 Granada Way

Modesto, CA 95355

Mr. Bogardus is also collecting data on the Brouwer/Brower families.

### PUBLICATIONS

Bob Voris, editor of the forthcoming Van Voorhees family history, informs us that all of it is now in type, with about half of the page proofs in his hands and others coming regularly from the printer. Arrangements are being made for the indexing, a fairly complicated process because of the many repeated names and other peculiarities of Dutch genealogy. The present publication, compiled by Albert L. Stokes, covers the first four generations, in which there were some twelve hundred heads of families, most of whom had substantial batches of children. It is planned to deal with the later generations in subsequent volumes.

## TIDBITS

"Until 1777 all the records of the Sleepy Hollow Church were kept in Dutch. In September of that year, a little child, Lovine Hauws, was baptised in English by the new minister, Rev. Stephen Van Voorhees. This raised a small Dutch tempest, and the new domine soon left that parish." Quoted from "Colonial Days in Old New York" by Alice Morse Earle, 1896.

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## FOR SALE - New Item

The Van Voorhees Association has added a new item to the list of items available for sale. We are indebted to Elizabeth "Cousin Libby" Van Voorhis McCandless of Gibsonia, PA, who graciously sent a diagram of our Family Crest, which can be used as instructions for needlepoint, counted cross stitch, or for a hooked rug. To cover Xeroxing and mailing, the cost is one dollar, and can be ordered from: Mrs. Elizabeth Edgar  
423 Harrison Ave.  
Highland Park, NJ 08904

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## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submitting material for the August Newsletter is July 1, 1985.

## Genealogical Query

GQ-4 Need information of George Voorhees (my gr.-grandfather) b. Dec. 1799, NY State. Married Mary b. June/July 1803, NY State. Oldest son, John b. 1824, NY State. Family moved to Lyon Township, Oakland Co. MI between 1824 & 1838. Children Mary b. 1838, MI & George (my grandfather) b. Sept. 1843, MI, d. April 11, 1878. Voorhees farm was in Lyon Township on land now bordered by 12 Mile Rd. & Milford Rd. Both Georges & elder Mary (2nd husband John Landers) buried New Hudson, MI cemetery. Younger George's name misspelled "Voorheis" on tombstone. Who were the elder George's parents? When & where did the younger George marry Lydia Ann Gorham (my grandmother)? Mrs. John W. Collins, Jr., 228 Yam Gandy Rd., Savannah, GA 31411. (Virginia Voorhees Collins)

## ??Question Corner??

"Next to myself, I like \_\_\_\_\_ best".

Can you fill in the blank to complete a popular advertising slogan? (Clue: only three letters, the middle one stands for Voorhis!) Answer on page 5.

## Regional Meetings

MISSOURI-IOWA-ILLINOIS: This year's reunion of the Missouri-Iowa-Illinois group is planned for Sunday August 11, 1985. The reunion will be held at Glennon's Restaurant, 4301 South Broadway, St. Louis, MO (off Broadway Exit of I-55).

Anyone planning to attend should contact Robert T. Voorhees, 3904-C Illinois Ave., St. Louis, MO, 63118 for information and reservations.

CALIFORNIA: The third reunion of the Van Voorhis Clan in Southern California will be held on Sunday, June 9, 1985, at Reseda Park (near Conaga Park). The group is hoping to make the second Sunday of June the annual date for their reunion.

Those interested in attending should write or phone Milton & Margaret Van Voorhis, 12472 Reche Cyn Rd. #36, Colton, CA 92324.

PENNSYLVANIA: Virginia Sprague of Davis, CA, reports that her branch of the family held a reunion Sept. 23, 1984 at the home of Marguerite Barrows in Hadley, PA.

# Steven Coerten: New Netherland Colonist, 1660: I.

by Daniel Voorhis Grinnell, Phillips Exeter Academy '65, Amherst College '69.

*History of Van Voorhees family traced in Drenthe from time of Saxon migration to year when family was founded in America.*

**I**N the year 1660 a Dutchman named Steven Coerten left his native province of Drenthe in the Netherlands and emigrated to the New World with his wife and seven children. This man, of some distinction in his own time and locality, as we shall see, was destined to be a progenitor of the two thousand or so people living in the United States today who bear the name of Van Voorhees or one of its many variations,<sup>1\*</sup> and of several hundred thousand more who have Van Voorhees blood in their veins.<sup>2</sup>

Although I am a direct descendant of Steven Coerten in the eleventh generation (Voorhis is my mother's maiden name), this paper was conceived less for the glorification of an ancestor than for the exposition of a story which gives us insights into the origins, lives, and characters of a great many of the 17th century pioneers in the Dutch colony of New Netherland. I shall attempt herein to determine Steven Coerten's heritage, his social, economic, political, and religious standing, the course of events in his life, and his character from the few pieces of evidence, both specific and general, which have survived the past three hundred or more years and which are available for our perusal.

The life of Steven Coerten (1600-1684) divides naturally into three periods: his life in the Netherlands, his migration to America, and his new life on the western end of what is today called Long Island. In the following essay I shall treat in separate parts the three periods of this man's life, and then try to unify and re-evaluate the whole in a brief conclusion.

**T**he Saxon ancestors of Steven Coerten probably arrived in the area which was to include the province of Drenthe sometime before the end of the seventh century A.D.<sup>3</sup> Coming from Thuringia, a region in East Germany, they pushed aside the less-powerful tribes of Germanic Friesians already living in the northern lowlands. These tribes, after having dwelt further to the south since as early as 1200 B.C., had been driven northward by an influx of Belgae and Franks during Caesar's Gallic campaigns of 57 to 52 B.C.<sup>4</sup>

As the Middle Ages wore on, Coerten's forebears gained proprietary control of a large tract of land centering on the district of Hees (see map) and located about ten kilometers (six miles) from the much larger town of Meppel.<sup>5</sup> A feudal estate was established upon this land, which, if it fits a general description of the rest of Drenthe, was "rather barren country," having "few fertile valleys" and only "some brooks and good grazing areas."<sup>6</sup>

By the 15th century the estate had been subdivided into three manors called Voorhees (meaning before or near the town of Ruinen in the district of Hees, and hence the post-migratory surname), Middelhees, and Achterhees, which were each inhabited by a different branch of a family known as *thoe Hees* ("at Hees").<sup>7</sup> Only the aristocracy in the Netherlands used the preposition *thoe*, with those of the commonalty using *van*, meaning "from." After 1574, in accordance with the



Reduced from illus. in Van Voorhees Genealogy.

*Map of a part of Drenthe Province showing location of the district of Hees. Taken from the Atlas le Theatre du Monde, by Guillaume and Jean Blaeu, published at Amsterdam in 1638.*

rising spirit of Dutch nationalism, the "at Hees" family dropped "thoe" in favor of the more democratic "van."<sup>8</sup>

Due to the high-handed expropriation policies of the Bishop of Drenthe, who was also Lord of Drenthe, the *thoe Hees* family lost their land to the "double cloister" (both monks and nuns) of nearby Dickninge, or Dickinge, sometime during the 15th century.<sup>9</sup> The heads of the family remained in actual control of the three manors, however, being appointed *meyers* (stewards) of their estates and paying, in accordance with feudal practice, a nominal rent to the cloister.

Following the Reformation and the spread of Calvinism among the Dutch people, the northern provinces threw off the harsh rule of Philip II, the Catholic king of Spain, and established the Dutch Republic in a process which began with the Union of Utrecht in 1579. Secularization of church properties in Drenthe was begun in 1598 by order of William Louis, Count of Nassau and stadholder (chief executive) of the three northernmost provinces of Drenthe, Groningen, and Friesland.<sup>10</sup> The "convent maidens" of Dickninge, which had gradually come to be more of a nunnery than a monastery, were subsequently placed "on alimentation" (maintenance or support).<sup>11</sup> Dickninge, how-

**GUEST AUTHOR.**—This essay by Mr. Grinnell won the silver medal and cash prize last Spring for the best paper on a phase of American history prior to 1800, in the annual competition sponsored at Exeter by the New Hampshire chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati. We are glad to publish his essay for the excellence it exhibits in composition and use of source materials on a subject of special interest to Holland Society members. Mr. Grinnell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Carroll C. Grinnell of New York and Port Jefferson, L. I., is the eldest grandson of Dr. Harold O. Voorhis, a past President of the Society and retired Vice President of New York University.

\* Footnotes begin on p. 7.

# MILESTONES

TERRY L. and DENISE F. MOREHEAD, of Rohnert Park, CA, are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter JENNIFER KRISTINE on Nov. 12, 1984.

VERNE ALBERT ("ABE:") and JOANN VORHIES became grandparents three times in less than three months: HEATHER JO ANNE VORHIES (dau. of Kirby and Theresa Vorhies of Santa Maria, CA) was born March 6, 1984; DANIELLE LEIGH VORHIES (dau. of Jerry and Yvonne Vorhies of Fairfield, IA) was a premie, weighing in at 4 pounds 4½ ounces on May 15, 1984; and ADAMS SCHAFER (son of Leo and Nancy Vorhies Schafer of Fairfield, IA) was born May 29, 1984.

SAMUEL and MARIE VORHIES of Mount Pleasant, IA, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 27, 1985 at a party hosted by their six children and 14 grandchildren at Germanville, IA.

KEN VOORHEES serves aboard the nuclear-powered fast-attack submarine USS New York City, which has its home port in Pearl Harbor, as the nuclear reactor controls assistant, monitoring instrumentation for the entire plant and supervising 16 nuclear trained electronics technicians. Lt. Voorhees graduated from the US Naval Academy at Annapolis with a degree in management and attended nuclear power schools in Florida, Idaho and Connecticut before reporting to the NYC, his first submarine in 1983. The 25-year-old Navy lieutenant is the son of Charles and Maxine Voorhees of Milltown, NJ.



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QUESTION CORNER ANSWER  
Founded in New York City in 1876, this company's "initial" name is the answer. One early claim for their ladies' spiral bustle was "The Only Bustle Not to Break Down". The company also produced a heavy, knitted men's underwear (one piece, long sleeves and legs, very uncomfortable) before being sold in 1908 by its founders, Messrs. Bradley, Voorhis and Dey.  
For those of you who haven't figured it out yet, the answer is B.V.D. (still a leader in the underwear field!)  
Now for the real question: Can anyone provide any information (other than that given above, which comes from the "1985 Trivial Pursuit Calendar", and the B.V.D. Leasing Corp.) about Mr. Voorhis, or for that matter, Messrs. Bradley and Dey?  
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## 1985 DUES

Have you paid your 1985 dues yet? If not, please don't let this be your last Newsletter! Send your check (made out to the Van Voorhees Assoc.) to: G. Harold Buttler, Treasurer  
72 Upland Ave.  
Metuchen, NJ 08840

Active member	\$5.00
Junior member	\$2.00
(under age 21, in same household with active member)	
Sustaining member	\$10.00
Contributing member	\$25.00
Life member	\$150.00

Enclosed with this Newsletter are membership cards for those who have paid their dues. Life membership cards have been sent under separate cover.

# In Memoriam

CARROLL VORHIES OF Lockridge, Iowa, passed away unexpectedly on December 7, 1984. He and his wife Esther had celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in September. (see Nov. 84 newsletter)

CAROLYN RUNYON BOYLAN, wife of William H. Boylan Jr. of New Haven, CT, and mother of Col. Steven V. and Parker R. Boylan, died January 28, 1985. Mrs. Boylan was a native of Stelton, NJ, and had been very active in civic affairs in Connecticut.

GEORGE F. VOORHIES of Elgin, NE, died in Elgin on October 31, 1984, aged 70. A life long newspaper man, he worked at a number of newspapers before serving in the Army during World War II. In 1947, he purchased The Elgin Review, and was its editor and publisher until retiring in 1978. He had served the Nebraska Press Association in a number of official capacities, as well as several public agencies, including 12 years on the Elgin Board of Education. He is survived by his wife Leona, a daughter, two grandchildren and his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Voorhies.

HORACE JEREMIAH (JERRY) VORHIS of Claremont, CA, a former five term member of the US House of Representatives, died Sept. 11, 1984 in Claremont, at the age of 83.

Born April 6, 1901, in Ottowa, KS, a 1923 graduate of Yale, he worked for the YMCA in Europe; as a cowboy; an automobile assembler; and a railroad freight handler before becoming a teacher in Illinois in 1924. In 1928, he founded and began a 10 year stint as headmaster and trustee of the Voorhies School for Boys in San Dimas, CA, and from

1930 to 1935 lectured at Pomona College.

After being defeated for the California State Assembly in 1934, he was narrowly elected to Congress from California's old 12th district in 1936. He was reelected four times by ever wider margins. In 1946, after a long, rough and bruising campaign, Mr. Voorhis was defeated by a political newcomer, Richard Nixon.

Mr. Voorhis then spent 20 years as executive director of the Cooperative League of the United States of America, for many years was secretary of the Group Health Association of America, and served as a consultant to many cooperative organizations.

He is survived by his wife, Louise, three children and nine grandchildren.

GRAYDON DAVIS VOORHIES, a life long resident of Piermont, CA, died February 14, 1985 at Tiburon, CA. The son of Cyrus and Winifred Voorhies, he was a member of the Montclair Lions Club, and retired partner of the Mason-McDuffie Co. He is survived by his wife, Jean Tibbitts Voorhies, and sister, Jean Voorhies Bainbridge.

HAROLD VAN BUREN VOORHIS died May 23, 1983 at age 89. Mr. Voorhis was a member of 80 Masonic bodies, 34 lodges, had received 226 degrees, and had written 24 books and 434 articles on history and Masonry, for which he had received many awards and international acclaim as a Masonic scholar.

He was a Navy veteran of World War I, and served as the executive secretary of the Red Bank (NJ) Chamber of Commerce from 1940 to 1945. He was also an early pioneer in radio starting in 1911, and was a member of 17 radio associations.

Mr. Voorhis is survived by his wife Ethel Landau Voorhis.

(Continued from p. 4)

ever, now apparently owned by the government, continued to exist as a land corporation. Rents were still collected, being used to support the former nuns and, under the joint supervision of the stadholder and the tenants, to advance public education.<sup>12</sup>

The ancestry of Steven Coerten can be traced specifically as far back as Coert thoe Hees, who may have been his great-great-grandfather, and who was probably born around the beginning of the 16th century. His name, mentioned in connection with a certain property-law case in 1542, is recorded in the *Ordelen* or *Ordel Boeck* ("Ordeal Book" or "Book of Sentences") of the *Etsstoel* ("Seat of Law"), which, under the long-surviving *Lex Saxonum* of the northern provinces, was Drenthe's supreme court.<sup>13</sup> Because the rather barren province of Drenthe was sparsely populated, this court took up even the most trivial of matters, such as the pasturage of cows.<sup>14</sup>

Up until the end of the Dutch Republic in 1795, the names of many of the descendants of Coert thoe Hees appear, for one reason or another, in the *Ordelen* or in the account books of the rent masters of Dickninge.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, we cannot find the names of Steven Coerten's immediate ancestors and must therefore be content with the fact that his father's first name was Coert ("Steven Coerten" meaning, by immemorial Dutch usage, Steven, son of Coert). We do find, however, in the *Ordelen*, that Albert Coerten, the brother of Steven Coerten, became meyer of the manor of Voorhees in 1619. From a translated entry in the rent master's accounts for 1621, we can learn the size and yearly rent of the manor:

Voorhees contains 21 *mudden* of farmland and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  *dachmaet* of grainland, which again for a period of six years beginning May, 1621, is leased to Albert van Voorhees, for 28 *mudden* yearly, which according to the overseer has been received for the first year.<sup>16</sup>

Since the yearly rent in *mudden* was perhaps one-twentieth of the anticipated crop, we should not expect any hardship to have been involved in its payment. In 1626, however, the rent was suddenly increased, and one Jonker Van Boetzelaer became the lessee of both Voorhees and Middlehees.<sup>17</sup> Since Albert Coerten (or "van Voerhees") is on record as having leased the manor of Voorhees from Van Boetzelaer in 1630, it appears that he had been a sub-tenant of part of the estate for the previous four years.<sup>18</sup> His financial circumstances had apparently improved to the extent that he could now afford to pay the higher rent set in 1626 on the whole estate, plus the added cost of Van Boetzelaer as a middleman.

After 1650, according to the *Ordelen*, Albert Coerten presided jointly over the manor with his eldest son, Coert Albertsen (Coert, son of Albert). In 1662, Albert Coerten died, leaving his eldest son as the sole sub-tenant (at this point the word meyer somehow seems inappropriate). As the reader will note, this was two years after Albert Coerten's brother, Steven Coerten, had emigrated to America. In 1676, Coert Albertsen also died, allowing Jan Coerten, the second of six sons, to take over the manor.<sup>19</sup>

So far, we have had several indications, at least, of the position of the Van Voorhees family at the time of Steven Coerten's emigration with his wife and children in 1660. First, we can be fairly certain that the family enjoyed a certain amount of local prominence, having

successively owned, held in stewardship, and leased a substantial amount of land in Drenthe since medieval times. Reinforcing this indication of family status is a second indication: the use of the aristocratic "thoe" in the general family surname before the rebellion of the northern provinces against Spain. Thirdly, there is the evidence provided by the accounts of the rent masters of Dickninge, indicating that certain members of the family, such as Albert Coerten, were prospering comfortably as middle-class farmers.

A fourth "benchmark" of the family's standing is the existence of a family coat-of-arms registered at the St. James College of Heraldry in England.<sup>20</sup> In the design of this insignia is the helmet of an Esquire, a title which is a rank lower than that of Knight.<sup>21</sup>

There is a tradition today in one branch of the Van Voorhees family that the family coat-of-arms was  
(Continued on p. 8)

<sup>12</sup>Ten variations of the name Van Voorhees are: Voorhees, Voorhies, Vories, Voorhes, Voris, Voorhis, Van Voorhis, Vorus, and Vorse. These variations are essentially misspellings of the original name, which was adopted in accordance with English custom toward the end of the 17th century. Elias W. Van Voorhis, *A Condensed Genealogy of the Van Voorhees Family* (New York: The Van Voorhees Association, 1932), pp. 5-30. As the reader may know, the Dutch were notoriously inconsistent name spellers. The patronymic "Coerten," for instance, frequently came out "Koert," "Coerts," and "Coerte."

<sup>13</sup>If we make two assumptions, a) that the Van Voorhees family is, on the average, now in its eleventh generation in America, and b) that each marriage has resulted in one boy and one girl who have grown up to have children of their own, then the theoretical ratio of the approximately two thousand people who bear the family surname to those in the family who do not is 1:200 or 1:1024. Multiplying 2000 by 1024, we have 2,048,000 U.S. citizens who can, in theory, claim Steven Coerten as a direct ancestor. Due to the probability of childless marriages and marriages between distant cousins all along the line, I have reduced this astounding figure to the more likely estimate of several hundred thousand. Although the formula I have constructed may almost never hold up in real life, it gives one quite an appreciation for human fecundity.

<sup>14</sup>Calvin I. Kephart, "Origin of the Van Voorhees Family," *Historical Handbook of the Van Voorhees Family in the Netherlands and America* (New Brunswick, N. J.: The Van Voorhees Association, 1935), p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>Personal letter from Helen M. Voorhees to Harold O. Voorhis, Dec. 12, 1960.

<sup>17</sup>Kephart, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup>H. P. Schaap, "The Four Letters of Hilbert and Albert Coerts," in *The Van Voorhees Letters*, ed. by Donald A. Sinclair and Helen M. Voorhees (New Brunswick, N. J.: The Van Voorhees Association, 1962), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3; Kephart, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup>Kephart, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*; Schaap, pp. 3-5.

<sup>27</sup>Schaap, p. 4, and editors' footnotes indicating that land measurement in Drenthe was related to work units. Thus, a *mudde* meant the amount of land sowed with one *mudde*, and a *schepel* the quantity sowed with one *schepel*. Bear in mind that the basic unit of Dutch dry measure, e.g. of wheat, was then the *schepel* (0.764 bu.), four of which equalled one *mudde*; hence, 21 *mudden* were equivalent to 64.176 bushels. Cf. A. J. F. van Laer, *Van Rensselaer-Bowier Mss.* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1908), p. 849. A *dachmaet* was the quantity of land which could be harvested in one day.

<sup>28</sup>Schaap, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>Kephart, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup>Personal letter from Elias W. Van Voorhis to Josephine L. Voorhees, Nov. 18, 1886, quoted in "The Family Coat of Arms," *Historical Handbook of the Van Voorhees Family in the Netherlands and America* (New Brunswick, N. J.: The Van Voorhees Association, 1935), p. 7.

<sup>32</sup>"The Family Coat of Arms," *Historical Handbook of the Van Voorhees Family in the Netherlands and America* (New Brunswick, N. J.: The Van Voorhees Association, 1935), p. 10.

Editor's Note:

This article is reprinted with the permission of The Holland Society of New York, from the April 1966 issue of its quarterly magazine De Halve Maen.

The second installment will appear in a later Newsletter.

### STEVEN COERTEN (VAN VOORHEES)

(Continued from p. 7)

awarded for valor on the field of battle, a possibility for which there was plenty of opportunity, but for which there are no substantiating facts. It may be, also, that the family device was the battle insignia, later adopted for family-wide use, of an ancient Saxon ancestor. The likeliest possibility, in my opinion, is that one of Steven Coerten's immediate forebears, upon being appointed to a city or county magistracy after the founding of the Dutch Republic, adopted a coat-of-arms to use as a seal ring when attesting official papers and deeds. This was common practice among magistrates, or *schepens*, as they were called, in the days of the Republic, when the Herald's College in England and the Burgundian Heralds in Spain no longer controlled the adoption, or use, of a coat-of-arms.<sup>22</sup>

Four letters, three of them brought to light and translated recently (1961), provide us with still another source of insights into the life of the Van Voorhees family in Drenthe. Although the letters were written from twenty-four to thirty-nine years after Steven Coerten's migration, they give us an indication of what the family's life must have been like before 1660. Sent by two grand-nephews of Steven Coerten living in Drenthe, all four letters were addressed to Steven Coerten's eldest son, who had gone along on the trans-Atlantic trip. Particularly informative is this passage from a letter written in 1684 by Hilbert Coert:

... [T]here are still four of us brothers left and we are reasonably prosperous and I, Hilbert Coert built a new house in the *riegijen* [literally, a row of houses] where I now live and which is good and I have there so much business that I can keep three horses and eight cows so I am doing all right and my brother Jan now lives at Voorheys in the old place and he is reasonably prosperous as well . . . and my brother Albert is a carpenter . . . and he is doing all right as well.<sup>23</sup>

This letter, written in old Dutch, of course demonstrates Hilbert Coert's literacy by its very existence. Having had an education, however, was by no means unusual in the Netherlands, where since "before the outbreak of the war with Spain even the peasants could read and write well."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, this passage together with others like it indicates that members of the Van Voorhees family were tied down neither to one place nor to one occupation.

Not only was the family solidly bourgeois, but some

of its members appear to have belonged to the ruling regent class. Jan Alberts, a nephew of Steven Coerten, was an overseer of Dickninge, and Hilbert Coert cites a female cousin as being "among the richest people on the 'Wold'."<sup>25</sup> Thus, there is evidence that the Van Voorhees family occupied a position of both prominence and respect in local Drenthe society.

If it were not for two brief entries in local Drenthian records, we would know next to nothing about the pre-migratory life of Steven Coerten himself. In fact, we would only know the names and ages of most of his immediate family at the time of his emigration. In 1660 he was sixty years of age, was married to Willempie Roeloffse Suebering, his second wife, and had eight children. Three of these — Mergin, Hendrickje, who was married, and Coert, a twenty-two year old son — were by his first wife, whose name and fate are not known.<sup>26</sup> Of only one of his five other children, by his second wife, does the record associate both name and age: Lucas, ten. The others were Jan, Aeltje, Janneltje, and a second daughter Hendrickje, but to whom we may assign the known ages (eight, six, four, and two) has not been determined.<sup>27</sup>

The first of the two vital scraps of information mentioned above appears in the manuscript of a Ground Inventory of 1642 for the manor of Ruinen, which was less than a mile from Hees. This record states the area and value in guilders, stivers and pence of the property farmed by Steven Coerten as follows:

1642—Steven Coerts:		
3 mudden and 2 schepels.....	539-0-0	
House and garden .....	300-0-0	839-0-0 <sup>28</sup>

From this it is evident that instead of settling on the Voorhees place, Steven had moved to Ruinen. He thereby became one of the manor's chief crofters (tenant farmers), who formed a class in Drenthe distinct from that of the landowners.<sup>29</sup>

Our second source is found in the accounts of the rent-master of Dickninge for 1658. This document discloses that Steven Coerten had bettered his position by renting a larger estate called "Pols-Erv at Ruyne," consisting of 17½ mudden of farmland and 7½ *dachwerck*, at a yearly rate of 28 mudden.<sup>30</sup>

Two years after this entry in the records of Dickninge, Steven Coerten, whose family roots in Drenthe went so deep in the past and were so interwoven in local society, would leave his native region and cross the Atlantic to America. The reasons for his decision and his experiences aboard ship and in the New World, are now to be explored.

(To be concluded)

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup>Personal letter from Hilbert Coert to Steven Coerten, Apr. 13, 1684, in *The Van Voorhees Letters*, ed. by Donald A. Sinclair and Helen M. Voorhees (New Brunswick, N. J.: The Van Voorhees Association, 1962), pp. 7-8.

<sup>24</sup>Douglas Campbell, *The Puritan in Holland, England, and America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), Vol. II, p. 340.

<sup>25</sup>Schaap, p. 5; Coert to Coerten, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup>"Stories from Family Records," *The Van Voorhees Association at Its Tenth Anniversary* (New Brunswick, N. J.: The Van Voorhees Association, 1942), p. 63.

<sup>27</sup>The Historical Handbook, *The Van Voorhees Association at Its Tenth Anniversary* (New Brunswick, N. J.: The Van Voorhees Association, 1942), p. 21.

<sup>28</sup>Schaap, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, and editors' footnote which describes *dachwerck* as a measure of land in terms of the amount of work that could be done in a day.



# 53<sup>rd</sup>

# ANNUAL MEETING

Planning is well underway for the 53rd Annual Meeting, to be held on Saturday October 12, 1985 in the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum on the Voorhees Campus of Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.

Following the morning Executive Committee Meeting, the General Meeting will begin with a luncheon of stuffed chicken (with all the fixin's). This will be followed by the Business Meeting and presentation of the guest speaker.

This year's speaker will be Capt. Richard Z. Voorhees of the Bridgewater (NJ) Township Police Dept., who was selected as the 1984 Police Officer of the Year (see Nov. 1984 newsletter).

Due to the requirements of the Rutgers's food services department, and to avoid disappointing anyone who wishes to attend the

luncheon, we must have reservations by Sept. 15, 1985. Please use the following form to reserve your place. The cost of the luncheon is \$12.00. Those members who do not wish to attend the luncheon are still most heartily welcome for the rest of the program.

For those traveling from out-of-town, the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick is holding a limited number of rooms at a rate of \$49.00 per night for Association members. These will be available on a first come, first reserved basis. Anyone wishing to stay at the Hyatt should make their reservations directly to:

Hyatt Regency New Brunswick  
Two Albany Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Indicate on your reservation that you are a member of the Van Voorhees Association to get the reduced rate.

(tear here)

## 53rd ANNUAL MEETING LUNCHEON RESERVATION

I am planning to attend the 53rd Annual Meeting Luncheon on October 12, 1985.

Please reserve a place for the following persons:

\_\_\_\_\_ (myself)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Total places \_\_\_\_\_ at \$12.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form and check or money order (payable to "The Van Voorhees Association") for the total amount above to : Mr. G. Harold Buttler, Treasurer  
72 Upland Ave.  
Metuchen, NJ 08840

## Executive Committee - 1985

President: Donald G. Vorhis 4813 Bradford Dr., Annandale, VA 22003  
Vice President: Donald A. Sinclair 108 North 2nd Ave., Highland Park, NJ 08904  
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Coert Line: Frank J. Van Voorhis 909 Evening St., Worthington, OH 43085  
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