



## General Membership Meeting: Announcement and Reminder

Sat. Oct. 21, 2006 from 9AM to 3 PM

This meeting will be held at the **Holiday Inn and Conference Center** (Tel.: 201-843-0600) at 50 Kenney Place in Saddle Brook, NJ. If you stay here, mention the Van Voorhees Assn. for a special rate.

There will be No Reunion Program and No Guest Speaker. This is strictly a business meeting with elec-

tions or appointments. Those interested in contributing time, effort, or advice, please contact Scott Voorhees or anyone on the Executive Committee. All members are invited. **If you plan to attend, please notify someone on the Executive Committee, so there will be seating for all.**

### Annual DUES: Still Only \$10.00!! (Life Members and other options on Dues Form, p. 18)

If you check, you will find that many organizations similar to ours have dues of \$25.00 or more. We have kept ours to a minimum to encourage maximum family membership. Your dues support continuing genealogical research, storage and handling of our books, and possibility of future CDs and books. Our bills come in every month. The 2006 dues were due on Jan. 1, 2006. To determine your dues status, please check the 1<sup>st</sup> line

of your mailing label. If the *mailing label* does not say 2006 or Life, we have made a mistake or your dues for 2006 have not been paid. Your dues are deductible for Federal Income Tax purposes. Please make **checks payable to The Van Voorhees Association**. Please send your dues to:

**Tom Van Voorhies**

## VanVoorhees Web Site, [www.vanvoorhees.org](http://www.vanvoorhees.org)

by **Bob Voorhees**

Judith Van Voorhis and her son Jared have served as webmaster over the last several years. Jared is heading back to school and no longer has time to be our webmaster. We want to thank Jared and Judith for all their hard work on our behalf.

Until we find a more permanent situation I will serve as interim webmaster, and my son Kenneth Robert Voorhees and his fiancée Heather Wong will serve as interim technical advisors. Kenny and Heather certainly have the expertise to do this job but they may not have the time to do it. So we are hoping that one of our members would be interested in the webmaster job. Please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ if interested.

We have made several changes to our web site. One is we have been forced to disable the guestbook feature. We were getting more than 150 spam messages per day, mostly from overseas. You the user did not see these messages because the webmaster screens the messages before they get put up to be seen by the public. When I started looking at the messages I was supposed to screen, there were 12,000 of them. No way am I going to screen 12,000 messages. So we are obviously going to have a new system which we are thinking about now.

Also we have added color pictures of our books on our publications page. A picture is worth a thousand words, etc.

### Feature Articles

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**VICE-PRESIDENT:** Judith K. Van Voorhis

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June Wick

## *De Uilebord*

by Marilyn Van Voorhis Voshall

To cover this subject properly, we must ask and answer several questions in detail. What is a *uilebord*?

What is the exact translation of the word? What is its origin (both the word and its usage)? Where was it placed? What was its original purpose? How was it used? Scholars are still debating the answers, most of

which involve prehistoric times. In modern times, there are those who reject as superstitious all religious symbols. Precise answers to all these questions are, therefore, only educated guesses; yet we can still present the facts. Since the scholars are still guessing, I might as well add my theories.

### **What is a uilebord? Where was it originally placed?**

*Uil(e)* means owl and *bord* means plate or board. Other than this, there is no exact translation of the term. Physically the *uilebord* is a thick board placed vertically at the gable-end roof peak with part of it extending above the peak and part below. These are precise facts.

Originally, in prehistoric times, the dwelling was a house-barn combination. In later (historic) times there was a hole for owls just below the board. Inside the barn

the farmers even built a nest box. The owls were welcomed as 'mouse traps.' A straight stick might have been there to convince the owl that the hole beneath was in a tree trunk, their common nesting choice. From personal experience (when we lived on a farm) I know that owls are indeed a big help in getting rid of mice (even though we also had barn cats, a family of possums and an occasional black snake -- all living in our barn).

### **What is the origin of the *uilebord* (both the word and its usage)?**

Several scholars have defined *uilebord* exclusively by analyzing the origins of the word itself. In 1936 Dr. G.A. Wumkes stated that the *uilebord* represented the Norseman's *tree of life* or *world tree* (in Viking myths), called *Yggdrasyl*. The *Yggdrasyl* is an ash tree linking the 9 worlds. This ash tree existed long before the earth was created. It had 3 roots with the lowest one chewed by the dragon, Nidhogg. Among the branches were an eagle, a falcon, a goat, a squirrel and 4 stags. In

various versions, other animals might appear. Each animal is connected, in one way or another, to a Germanic (includes Norse and Celtic) god or goddess. The *Yggdrasyl*, nourished by the Well of Knowledge (guarded by Mimir, a wise giant), was often considered a symbol of life itself. Furthermore, from the carvings, which show a maze of curling, interwoven 'vines,' it is hard to figure out what is the trunk of this *tree*.

### **Is there a connection between the *Yggdrasyl* and *Uilebord*?**

From only the pictures and Nordic mythology, I don't think so. On the other hand, both have a prehistoric beginning and the earliest examples are extremely simple. Here again, scholars debate the issue and which precise group used it first. In every case there is the element of its use for some type of good luck; but how this came about is pure conjecture. When we compare the most primitive (prehistoric) Nordic ones with the plain Drenthe ones and add the common purpose as a talisman, I think there is a definite link.

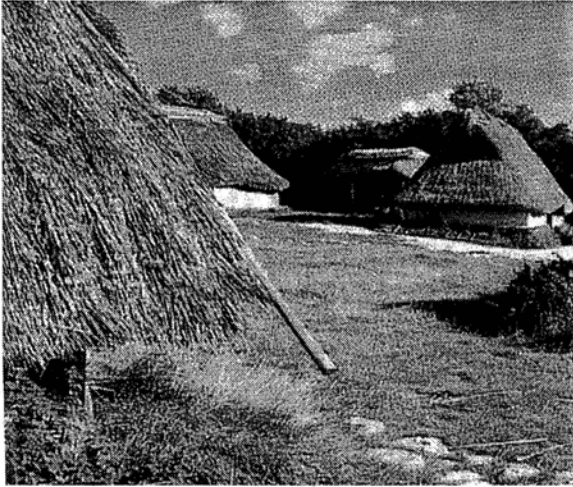
This *tree* or *board* has been found all over northern European lands (Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, etc), as far as, and including, Russia. (The

tall, blue-eyed and red-haired Nordic people were called *Rus*, which is how Russia got its name.) From prehistoric excavations and crude records, there is evidence of their dwellings with this *tree* or *board* placed vertically at the gable peak with part of it extending above the peak and part below. I have visited Lejre, an outdoor reconstruction site at an archeological dig near the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark. Naturally, the older the dwelling, the simpler the design is. Sometimes the ends of the roof poles were curved (to look like cattle horns or the horns of Thor's hammer) or carved into either horse or dragon heads. Your choice is as good as mine here.

### **House Examples from Denmark, Germany and Lithuania**

The following dwellings in Lejre, Hedeby and Trelleborg are basically no different from Dutch homes in the same time periods. Netherlands archeology and

Open-Air Museums in Arnhem, Orvelt, and other sites confirm this. This was a common type of architecture with small variations here and there.



**Lejre, Denmark: Iron Age Village**

During specific times, volunteers actually stay in these Iron Age dwellings at Lejre and demonstrate to visitors how life was lived then. This village has only single-family dwellings. If my memory is correct, the sizes are between 10 feet by 30 feet and 12 feet by 36 feet. The house section was only 1/3 of the structure. Open fencing was the only partition between the cattle stalls (about 4 of them) and living quarters. There were no windows and the door was merely a heavy skin or piece of cloth. Cooking was done over an open fire outside except in extremely bad weather. The interior hearth, surrounded by stones, was on a dirt floor. Smoke exited either through holes in the upper gable ends or a small hole in the roof over the hearth. The smoke, while bad for their lungs, kept the thatch dry and free of vermin. Platform beds (wide enough for 2 adults) were on the 3 exterior walls of the house side of the structure.

Hedeby, a town originally in Denmark, is now in



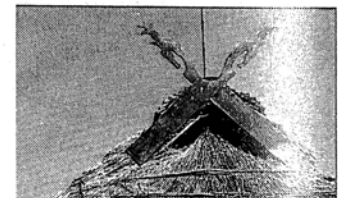
**Viking Trading Town of Hedeby**

Germany. The buildings here have been reconstructed, but the log street (repaired, of course) is believed to have been built in Viking times. Originally it was a large Viking trading center and sea port, surrounded by an earthen wall topped by a wooden fence. Ships could anchor or dock there too. Just inside the large gate were soldiers' tents. There were houses, many types of shops and artisans, slave dwellings, storage sheds, the village well, etc. Since rain could create muddy streets, they 'paved' them with split logs. Some homes had stone walls and some were built of split logs. A few even had sleeping lofts – like the ones used in the log cabins of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Mass. Both men and women wore exquisite jewelry and were well dressed. By the standards of that day and area (northern Europe), it was a fortified town. Because it was a seaport, horses on the house are appropriate, since ships were regarded as horses of the sea.



**Trelleborg, Denmark: Viking House 1000-1050 A.D.**

The Long House is not limited to woodland Indians in North America. In fact, it has been found world wide. This one, reconstructed just outside an archeological site of a Viking settlement in Trelleborg, Denmark, is about 97 ft. long. The several families who lived in it



**Lithuanian House Roof**

were probably related. There were 16 of these in the village which was surrounded by a rampart and then a moat. In the center of the roof is a smoke hole. At both ends the roof poles are curved upwards to resemble either cattle horns or one end of Thor's hammer.



This Lithuanian house with a thatched roof demonstrates the continued use of the *yggdrasyl* into the present. It is only one example of the pair of horned stags

used in ancient times. There are still houses in the Baltic States, Scandinavia, and parts of what was the USSR with the *yggdrasyl* symbol at one or both gable peaks.

### The Dutch Uilebord

We, however, are primarily concerned with the *uileborden* (plural of *uilebord*) found in the Netherlands and, in particular, Drenthe. Interestingly, it is the Dutch who, more often than any of the above peoples, still use the symbols. Other than those in Friesland, the old Drenthe *uileborden* tend to be simple upright sticks or boards (like the ancient ones of the Danish Vikings). Dutchmen (almost exclusively in the north), who wish to build a very traditional house or farm compound, continue to use the *uilebord*, even though they create their own set of symbols for it and probably are not

superstitious. Figs. 1-24 are from Drenthe and are shown with a thatched roof; but many buildings using *uileborden* have tile roofs. Every dwelling in the town or area named may not use exactly the same style of *uilebord*. These were hand carved, so no two would be identical. Also, each person had his own variation of the central theme. This is still true today. Over many years any or all of Figs. 1-24 could have been on the homes of our very early ancestors. Look carefully at those from Ruinen and Ruinerwold, because the geographic location is closest to Hees and, in a sense, includes Hees.



Fig. 1 Havelte Horn

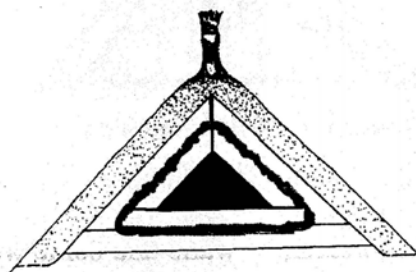


Fig. 2 Smilde Horn

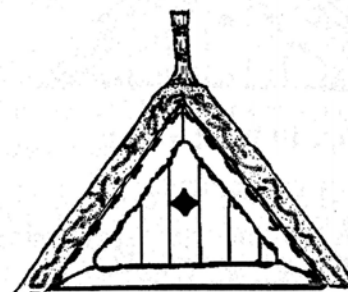


Fig. 3 Orvelte (Westerbork)

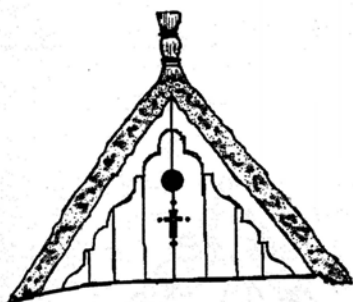


Fig. 4 Zwiggelte (Westerbork)

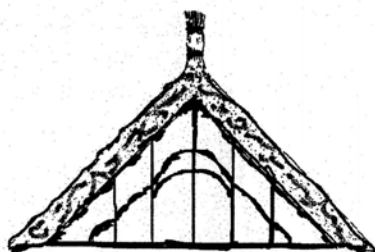


Fig. 5 Kale Klufft (Ruinerwold)

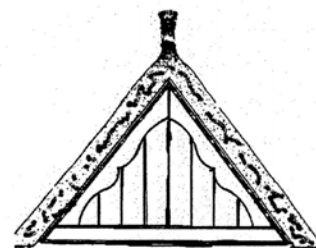


Fig. 6 Dijkhuizen (Ruinerwold)

While this particular tuft-style 'horn' over an owl hole (Fig. 1) was found in Drenthe in the vicinity of Havelte, it was common everywhere in northern Europe in prehistoric times. The thatch ends are simply tied together. It is, no doubt, a precursor of the wooden *uilebord*.

Figs. 2-6, all thatch horns, are simply variations of Fig. 1. The last 2 (Figs. 5 and 6), however, are of great interest to us, because Ruinerwold covers the entire area around Ruinen which includes Hees.

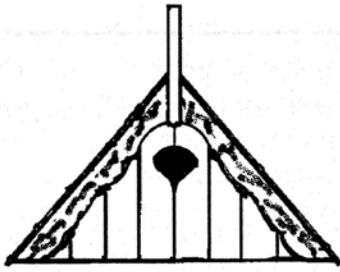


Fig. 7 Donderen (Vries)

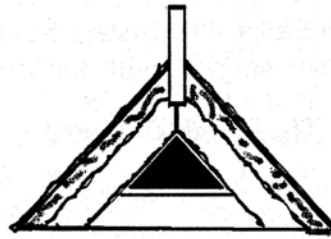


Fig. 8 Norg

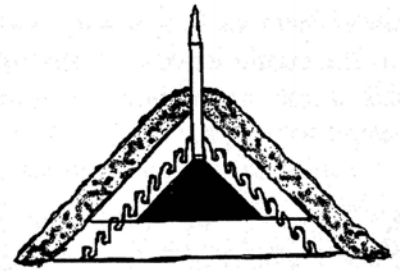


Fig. 9 Veeningen Zuidwolde)

Figs. 7 and 8 are the next steps from the tuft-style 'horn' (of thatch) to a board. The height and width vary from house to house. Fig. 9 goes another step farther by

making the top pointed. Is it an arrow or a spear? Later we will find that the idea that some type of point is on top seems to prevail down to present times.

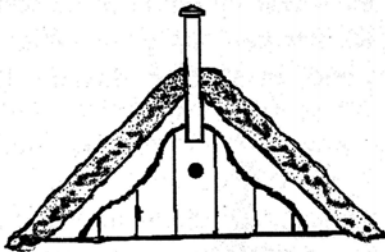


Fig. 10 Westerbork

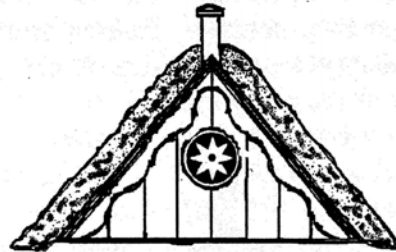


Fig. 11 Veenhof (Gieten)

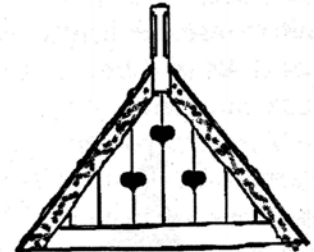


Fig. 12 Wezup (Zweeloo)

Figs. 10-12 have a 'cap' on top. This apparently corresponds to the flat appearance in the thatched versions of Figs. 2-6. When we get to Fig. 12, there is a carved indentation of several inches below the tiny 'cap,' which creates a base. Is it the first *donderbezem* (thunder broom)?

Another noticeable feature is the 'owl hole,' which now can be seen in many different shapes or even be non-existent. *Uileborden* are becoming more decorative with some possible subtle meanings. In the following Figures, you see a progression of time as well as time for artistry.

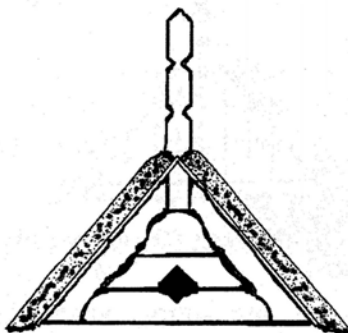


Fig. 13 Coevorden

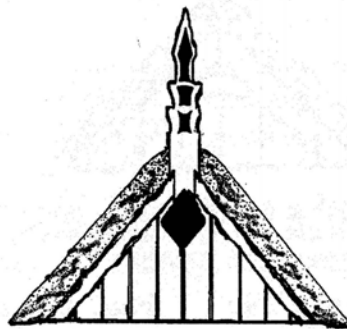


Fig. 14 Fluitenberg (Ruinen)

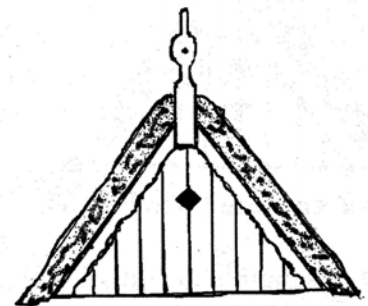


Fig. 15 Oldenhave (Ruinen)

Fig. 13 has several indentations and is actually inserted just behind the gable point. Fig. 14 is quite elaborate and resembles a barbed spear point. Fig. 15 has graceful

curves and a small hole in the center of the oval near the top. Both Figs. 14 and 15 are near Ruinen and thus also near Hees.

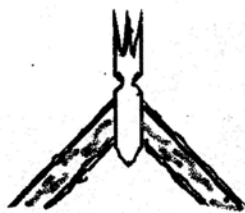


Fig. 16 Havelte

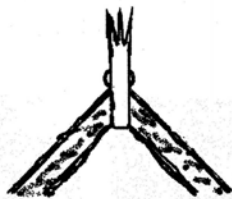


Fig. 17 Havelte



Fig. 18 Hooghalen (Beilen)

Figs. 16-18 look like fishing spears or crowns. Your guess is as good as mine about the exact meaning.

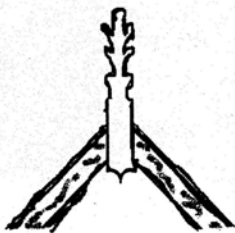


Fig. 19 Havelte

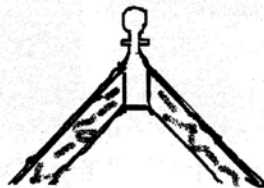


Fig. 20 Hooghalen (Beilen)



Fig. 21 Achterma (Ruinen)

Fig. 19 is a sheaf of wheat symbolizing fertility with possibly a *donderbezem* (thunder broom) to sweep away evil. Fig. 20 could be a woman or the sun (as itself or as the earth mother). This would make the lower section a *donderbezem*. The cross bar is a mystery. Of course, the

whole thing could be the earth mother with her skirt as the *donderbezem*. Fig. 21 contains a heart for love and at the bottom is a *donderbezem*. The rest is whatever you wish or perhaps you can find symbols that I haven't located.

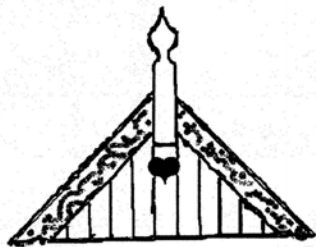


Fig. 22 Zuidvelde (Norg)

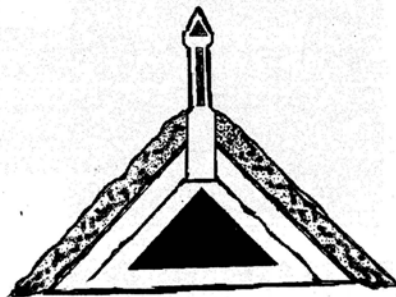


Fig. 23 Ruinen

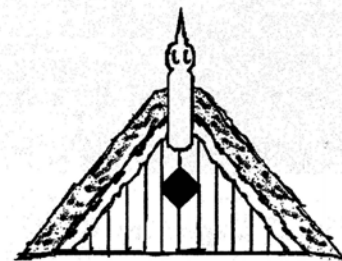


Fig. 24 Meppel

In Figs. 22 and 24 the top is like an urn or serving dish with lids. Figs. 23 and 24 are of particular interest because they are from places where Steven Coerts Van Voorhees lived for a few years. Fig. 23 introduces a simplistic inverted heart. This shaft with the upside-down heart can have multiple interpretations – from a

simple arrow or spear pointing toward the sky (heaven) to fertility connotations. It could even represent a single thunderbolt and perhaps have been thought to protect one from lightning. Scholars still debate a wide range of possible meanings. Of course, the inverted heart could be there simply for artistic reasons.

### De Uilebord in Nieuw Nederlands

Many Drenthe *uileborden* can still be found all over the original Nieuw Nederlands area, which comprised New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and even sections

along the banks of the Delaware and Susquehanna rivers in Pennsylvania. Cape May, NJ has many examples.

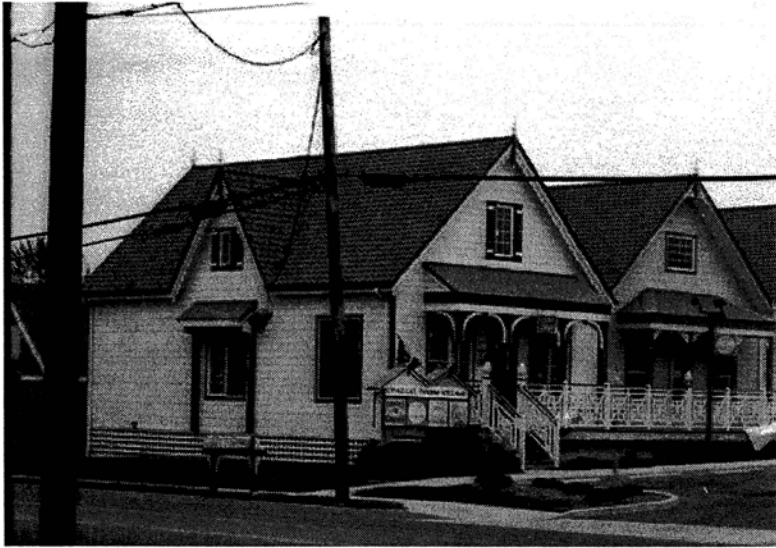


Fig. 25 Cape May Cottages



Fig. 26 Cape May House

Fig. 25 appears to be a combination of Fig. 24 from Meppel on the top with Fig. 23 from Ruinen just below it, and it appears on all 3 gables. This is a very interest-

ing combination, since Steven Coerts Van Voorhees lived in both towns for awhile. Fig. 26 is similar to Fig. 7 from Donderen (Vries Area) in Drenthe.



Fig. 27 Cape May Home

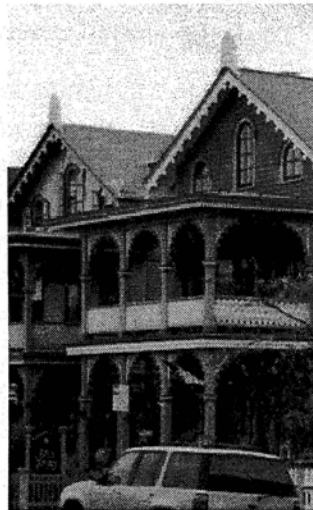


Fig. 28 Cape May Home

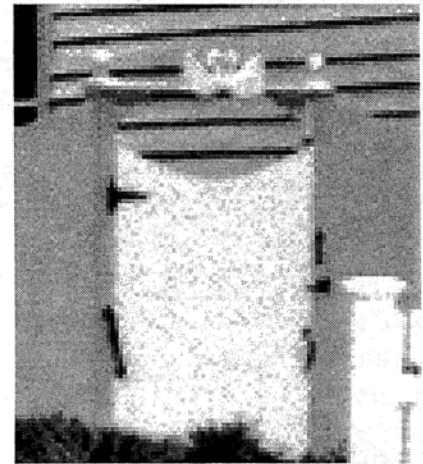


Fig. 29 Cape May Swan Gate

Fig. 27 looks like a row of houses with Frisian *uileborden* (several pairs of swans in diminishing sizes and back to back with a very stylized tulip on the top) similar to those from Hennaarderadeel. The house on the left has the very unusual feature of 2 additional swans on the roof – 1 on each eave. An old Friesian house-barn dwelling from Grouw (c.1838) has 4 *uileborden* on the square building with a hip roof – 1 on each of the 4 corners.

Fig. 28 is not a typical Frisian *uilebord*, even though it has surrealistic swans back to back (the curves at the base). The shaft ('tree trunk' part) is like Fig. 9 of Veeningen in the Zuidwolde area of Drenthe. This makes the whole *uilebord* a piece with hybrid origins.

Notice also that this *uilebord* is on both gable ends of the roof – 1 in the front and 1 in the rear of the house.

Fig. 29 is unique, because normally Friesian swans are back to back – not facing each other. There is, however, a greeting card of 1664, which may have been taken from an earlier drawing of 1400 AD, with 2 mute swans sort of facing one. This all leads me to believe that these swans are connected to an area other than Friesland – quite possibly Drenthe. Are these *uileborden* of Cape May, NJ connected in some way to our family? This is an interesting question for you to answer. Johannes Coert Van Voorhees did live in southern NJ until 1736 when he moved to Fishkill, NY. Other family members may also have lived in southern NJ.



When you see *uileborden* like any of these Drenthe examples on old homes, you can be certain that the original owner was either from, or a descendant of one from, Drenthe. If seen on more recent houses, there is

also some connection to Drenthe. Once you start looking, you will be amazed at how many of them you can find ... all over the United States and even in Canada.

### Uilebord Symbolism – Then and Now

Regardless of the symbol or its basic meaning, there is always the idea of good luck involved with them. After the advent of Christianity, Christian symbols were added to the older ones -- a 3-leaf clover for the Trinity, an anchor for faith, the cross for hope, the heart for love or faith, the Chalice, et al. In general, the purpose of all these symbols is similar to that of German Hex signs or an Irish 4-leaf clover or a lucky rabbit's foot, etc. You have them for good luck and choose the symbols carefully for that purpose. If you don't believe in lucky symbols, you can have them for the sake of tradition and artistic value.

In recent times, you find elaborate *uileborden* all over the northern Netherlands -- mostly in the small villages and farms of Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen. The most common main symbol is a pair of white swans. The origin of the swan as a symbol might have been because they were abundant and a good source of meat for holiday meals -- much like our turkey at Thanksgiving and Christmas. The swan is often pictured as food in hunting and still-life scenes by Dutch painters. Today, however, the meaning is much different and yet it may have been the original meaning as well -- a life-long marriage with mutual fidelity. Swans do mate for life and truly mourn the loss of their mate. If they lose their mate, they will not pair up and breed again until the next season. In other words, they have a 'year of mourning.' I saw this happen in Erie a few years ago: instead of proceeding north to the breeding grounds, a cob (male swan) remained here for the entire summer. It was indeed sad to see him swimming alone in a pond just off of Presque Isle Bay. Perhaps this explains our tradition of a year of mourning for a dead spouse.

The entire *uilebord* represents the *tree of life*. Other items are added to this *tree*, or rather *tree trunk*, which is actually the central stem. Some, but not all, of the other symbols are added in pairs. Others are split so that in the finished product both sides of the central *trunk* are equal. An orb, representing the sun, and a heart for love would be centered somewhere on the 'trunk.' The top is capped by a single symbol.

A solid circle could represent either a full moon or the earth (or earth mother) or even the sun; although a

circle with 7 holes represents the sun and the 7 days of the week. A pair of quarter moons (with points curved outward) is sometimes found. All over Europe a stalk of wheat symbolizes fertility. The tulip became one of the main symbols of Holland only after the Dutch made tulip farming into a major business enterprise. It is usually found as a single item on the top. You can even find the *donderbezem* (*donder* meaning thunder and *bezem* meaning broom), which is supposed to sweep away all forms of evil.

Not all *uileborden* have swans. There are multitudes of other symbols. Animals are in pairs and often facing each other with the exception of Frisian swans, that are normally back to back. With a few exceptions, all of these things on older traditional *uileborden* are portrayed in a primitive stylistic form, which is often surrealistic and may not always be easily recognizable. Animals on modern *uileborden* are more realistic. Paired domestic animals could also indicate a breeder lives there. A horse, such as the *Twentse Ros*, paired with another is used mainly in Twente; but it might also be included elsewhere in a *uilebord* over a stable door. Likewise, a pair of dogs, boars (pigs), or cows could indicate a breeder of these animals. Two rabbits or 2 stags could mean the owner likes to hunt these animals or, in the case of the rabbits, a breeder. This same duality can apply to doves (once used for eggs and meat), which may have the connotation of peace and tranquility or simply imply that the owner is a breeder.

Every exterior *uilebord* is created by a woodcarver for his client, who specifies the size and sometimes the shapes (animal designs) of the finished product. Many symbols have multiple meanings, depending on the person for whom it is made. The choice of symbols and the meaning of each is for each buyer to decide, based on his/her knowledge of symbolism. In any case, these *uileborden* are quite expensive.

The following are 2 examples that I created from the basic list of symbols. Today they are just as valid as earlier ones created in the same manner by individuals. None of the ones I have purchased over a period of years was a commissioned work of art. I simply took what was available for sale.



Fig. 30

You can create your *uilebord* as I did. The problem is where to get it carved. Only a very few of these woodcarvers are left, and they do not advertise except by word of mouth. They usually live in remote places, so outsiders have no idea where to find them. Even if you do succeed in locating one (on unmarked roads in the northern countryside), he undoubtedly has orders for a minimum of 6 months (if you're lucky) to 18 months or more. Also, he might refuse to carve one for a non-Dutchman and especially a non-resident of De Nederlands. This could be for several reasons: his need to maintain local clientele, the problems of shipping overseas, or simply because he feels outsiders could never appreciate the real significance of *uileborden*.

In more recent times, many *uileborden* have been made smaller for indoor use. For this purpose, the proper placement is inside and above any door leading to the outside. Most of these were 18-24 inches high and, for good quality, 1/2-5/8 inches thick. However, since ceilings now are lower than when this tradition began, they

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To minimize the cost, the parents or friends of the bride and groom might get together and commission a *uilebord* (Fig. 30) to give the newlyweds good luck in a long-lasting marriage for life (2 swans), lots of children (wheat sheaf), and love (heart). The top might be a Christian cross or Dutch tulip. This could be hung on the living room wall until the couple purchase a house and place it outside in the traditional spot. It also might be kept inside as a work of art.

Fig. 31 is another possible combination with a cross (Christian) and circle with 7 holes (the sun and 7 days of the week) plus 2 quarter moons and *donderbezem* (thunder broom: to sweep away all evil spirits). On the bottom is a circle which can be the sun, full moon, or earth mother.

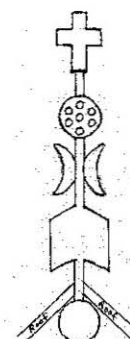


Fig. 31

can be placed beside, rather than above, these doors. Also, some much smaller ones (about 8 inches high by 1/4 inch thick) would be placed just above a light switch to be seen properly.

In 1980 at the VV (Tourist) office in Hengelo, I saw them for the first time – hanging on a wall and for sale. The VV personnel seemed rather embarrassed to admit that the Dutch were superstitious enough to use such things. Fortunately, I could read some Dutch and, after mentioning my ancestry, they told me much more about them. About 1994 we visited the home of friends outside of Arnhem. Hildegaarde (originally from Friesland) showed me that she had placed a small one at every door in her house. She even bought them for inside the bedrooms of all her grandchildren. At this time you could still find *uileborden* for sale in some VV offices. By 1997 I trekked from place to place before finding any of decent quality. Some of the ones I bought were 'antique' (i.e., not recently carved). Sadly, it is a dying art with very few woodcarvers who still make them.

## Voorhies Castle

by Bob Voorhees

In mid-July this year I made a genealogy trip to central Illinois. My mother, Catherine Adeline Fait, was born and raised in Illiopolis, Sangamon Co., IL. Illiopolis is a farm town of about 900 people about half way between Springfield (Sangamon Co) on the west and Decatur (Macon Co) on the east. My grandfather, John Calvin Fait (married Frances Adeline Turner) and great grandfather, William Henry Fait (married Mary Catherine Leonard) are buried in Illiopolis in Riverview Cemetery (overlooking the Sangamon River).

I made the usual rounds of libraries and historical societies and almost without exception people would ask me about Voorhies Castle and whether I had been out to see it. So I decided to investigate. There are two parts to this story—first the Town of Voorhies and how it got its name and second, the castle.

The town of Voorhies is located about 20 miles east of Decatur. Voorhies is in south-central Piatt Co. (the county immediately to the east of Macon Co.). Voorhies is in Cerro Gordo Township, 1 of 8 Townships in Piatt Co., named for James A. Piatt, Sr., and was established January 27, 1841, from territory taken from Macon County. The County is 34 miles long (north to south), containing 279,680 acres. Approximately 91% of this area is cropland, 3% pasture, 1% woodland and 5% other (municipalities, waterways, highways). Elevations vary from 650 to 800 feet above sea level. The County Seat is Monticello (north-central part of the county). The Sangamon River flows through the county near Monticello, and probably attracted the early settlers who began to arrive about 1822 when George Hayworth came with a group of Quakers. On July 1, 1837, James A. Piatt filed a plat of Monticello in the old Courthouse in Decatur. On July 4, 1837, a barbecue was held and lots were sold in the city named for the Virginia home

### Breezeland

William P. Voorhies, Jr. attended Georgetown College in Georgetown, Scott Co., KY (Georgetown College, founded 1829, was the first Baptist college founded west of the Allegheny mountains). In 1861, at the age of 20, William P. Voorhies, Jr. left home for Heidelberg, Germany where he studied medicine. Giving up medicine and the good life in Lexington in 1865, he purchased 3 tracts of farm land totaling 3,200 acres in Piatt Co., IL. The land was rich and productive. Eventually a fine, new home was built, called "Breezeland" (Fig. 1). This home had a real southern flavor with verandas around 3 sides of the house and two stories high. This was a practical application of southland construction, for the high verandas provided some protection to the interior from the prairie summer sun. William and Ellen had 6 children, including 3 daughters that grew to maturity and married. Two of their children died in infancy and a third at age 19.

of Thomas Jefferson.

Cerro Gordo Township was named for the mountain pass in eastern Mexico, on the road between Veracruz and Xalapa, site of a decisive battle (April 17-18, 1847) of the Mexican War. General Santa Anna, with more than 12,000 troops blocked General Winfield Scott's march toward Mexico City at Cerro Gordo. General Scott, with a smaller force (8,500 troops), was able to flank the Mexicans who were caught off guard by the Fourth Regiment of the Illinois Volunteer Infantry. The Americans won the day and General Santa Anna was forced to ride off without his artificial leg, which was captured and still displayed in Illinois. (I don't know where.) Captain Robert E. Lee and Lieutenant U.S. Grant took part in the battle.

Voorhies, Illinois is named after William P. Voorhies, Jr. (TMG #47427). He was born 29 June 1841 in Woodford Co., KY (west of Lexington) and died 23 March 1916 in a railroad station in New Orleans, LA. His father was William P. Voorhies, Sr. born 19 Nov 1800 in Woodford Co., KY and died 13 April 1893 at the home of his son William P. Voorhies, Jr. William P. Voorhies, Jr. married Ellen Duncan in Lexington, Fayette Co., KY on 22 June 1865. She was born 28 Jan 1842 in Fayette Co., KY and died 15 July 1933 in Decatur, Macon Co., IL.

Note that William P. Voorhies, Jr. died in New Orleans. In his later years he would spend the winter months with his daughter Elizabeth in New Orleans. A great number of Voorhies from this line left Kentucky and migrated to New Orleans. Today we have thousands of Voorhies in LA due primarily to this migration. Ann Nunn on our Genealogy Committee has done a marvelous job of tracking these LA Voorhies down.

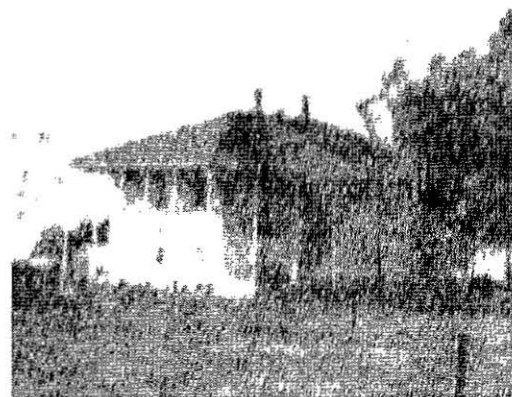


Fig. 1 Breezeland



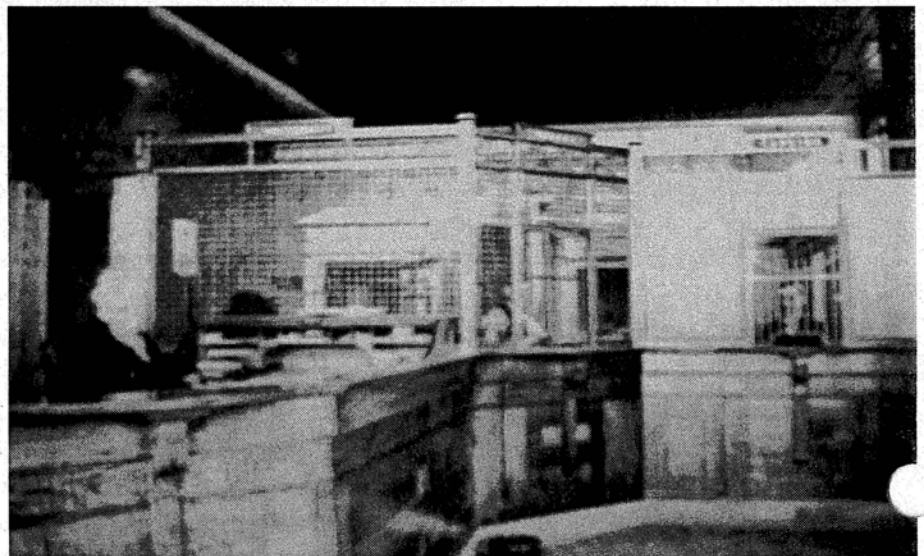
## Voorhies Castle by Bob Voorhees continued

William P. Voorhies, Jr. was joined in Piatt Co for a few years by one of his brothers, Charles Howard Voorhies, born 2 April 1839 in Woodford Co., KY and died 1903 in Lexington, Fayette Co., KY. Charles lived on one of his brother's tracts of land and tried to create a horse farm similar to those in Lexington. Charles was a graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point, NY. He served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, entering service as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and discharged as an aide-de-camp to Confederate Brigadier General Abraham Buford. Charles was a banker in Chicago and Lexington most of his career. Charles was known around Piatt Co as "Jack" which I guess was his nickname, or General Voorhies.

William and Charles had three brothers. Gordon F. Voorhies served in the Confederate Army and was killed at the Battle of Bull's Gap on 13 Nov 1864 at the age of 20. Bull's Gap was on the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad between Knoxville, TN and Bristol, TN. Confederate Major General John C. Breckinridge undertook an expedition into East Tennessee to try and push the Federals out of this area. A second brother, Alfred Shelby Voorhies, died in infancy. The third brother, John Hart Pemberton Voorhies, an engineer, moved to Chicago then to Silverton, San Juan Co., CO where he profited from silver mining. He lived and died (1913) in Denver and left his entire estate of over \$100,000 to the City of Denver for construction of the Voorhies Colonnade on the state house mall in downtown Denver. He had no children and one or more of his brother's sued to void the will but they were not successful and the colonnade was completed in 1920. It is well worth a look if you are ever in Denver. John and his wife are buried in Fairmont Cemetery, Denver, CO.

By 1900 Nels Larson had an estate that included 540 acres of farm land and he owned the entire town of Voorhies: the Wabash train station, a church, six houses, a general store, a post office (Fig. 2), elevator, corn crib and three barns.

Fig. 2 Post Office



The Voorhies Colonnade story is described on pages 109-111 of *Historical Handbook of the VanVoorhees Family* published by the VanVoorhees Association in 1935.

It is not known exactly when Voorhies became a town but it probably was in the mid 1870's when the Chicago & Paducah Railroad was built in a north south direction thru the Voorhies property. Early maps show a Voorhies stop on the railroad. The Chicago & Paducah Railroad was sold to Jay Gould and his Wabash Railroad on 5 April 1880. The Wabash line thru Voorhies was abandoned in 1936. In the mid 1880's Voorhies had a barber, a blacksmith, a jeweler, and a postmaster, (who was also the store keeper).

Now we turn our attention to Voorhies Castle which was built by an immigrant from Christianstadt, Sweden named Nels Larson. Life was difficult in Sweden in the 1860's. Nels Larson, a young man, decided to leave and he arrived in Galesburg, Knox Co., IL with little more than pocket money and not knowing a word of English. He made his way to Piatt Co and worked for \$23 a month on the Burgess farm. In this period Nels sent for his Swedish sweetheart, Johannah Nelson, and she landed a job in Piatt Co as a housekeeper at \$3 per month including room and board. Soon Nels left the Burgess farm and went to work for William P. Voorhies, Jr. \$30 per month in summer and \$40 per month in fall and winter. He had to pay his own room and board of \$9 per month. Johannah Nelson also worked for William P. Voorhees, as a housekeeper. On 16 March 1872 Nels Larson and Johannah Nelson were married in Piatt Co. Nels Larson worked hard and became a very successful farmer and businessman.



## Voorhies Castle by Bob Voorhees continued

He had worked off and on (and rented land and purchased land) for William Voorhees for 20 years, and he was ready to build his dream house: the mansion at



Fig. 3 Voorhies Castle

Stained glass windows in the front bedroom and dining room were made by Tiffany. The front door was an extra wide one, commonly known as a "casket door," because it was wide enough to allow the easy passage of both the casket and the bearers in a day when funerals were held in the home of the deceased. Three oak fireplaces (Fig. 5) were carved by a Swede imported by Nels.

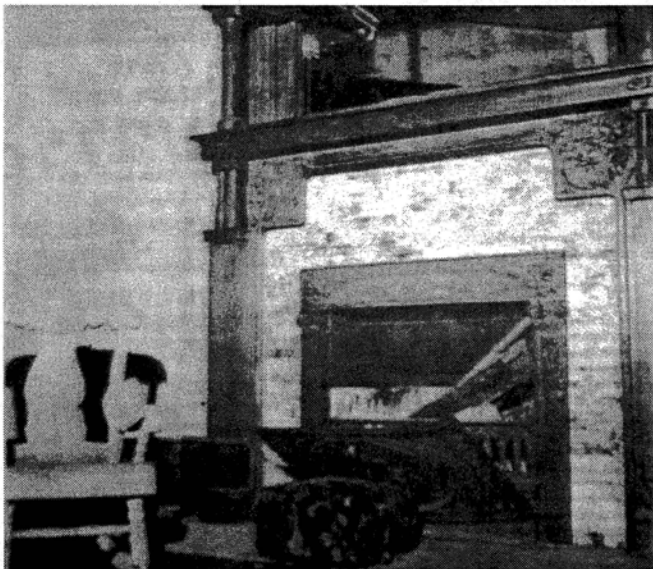


Fig. 5 Oak Fireplace

Nels had a penchant for clocks and there was a clock in every room. Seth Thomas Co. was commissioned to build the elaborate lavender clock in the barn tower. The clock tower was initiated in 1910 and not fully operational until 1915. The tower rose 68

Voorhies. The home was patterned after a manor house (Fig. 3) in Sweden and included 14 rooms (Fig. 4).

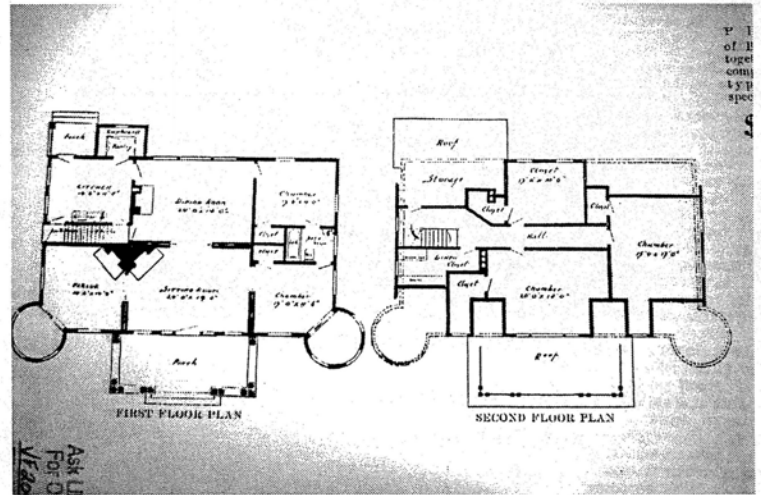


Fig. 4 Floor Plan of Voorhies Castle

feet in the air and each clock face was 5 feet in diameter. (The barn/clock tower, Fig. 6, was destroyed by a tornado in 1976.) The total cost of the gabled Victorian mansion, completed in 1904, was \$9,000. Nels Larson was widely known throughout the area as the "Squire of Voorhies".

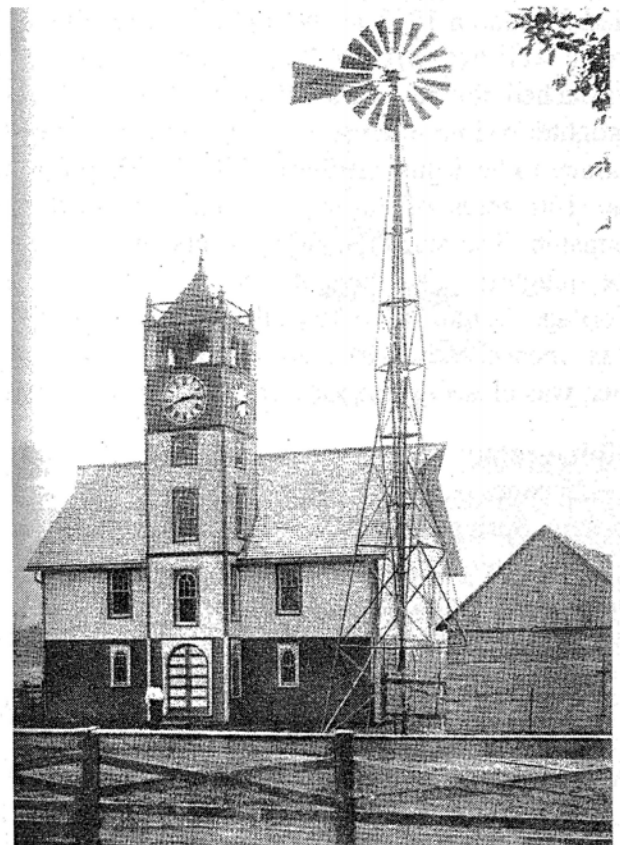


Fig. 6 Barn/Clock Tower

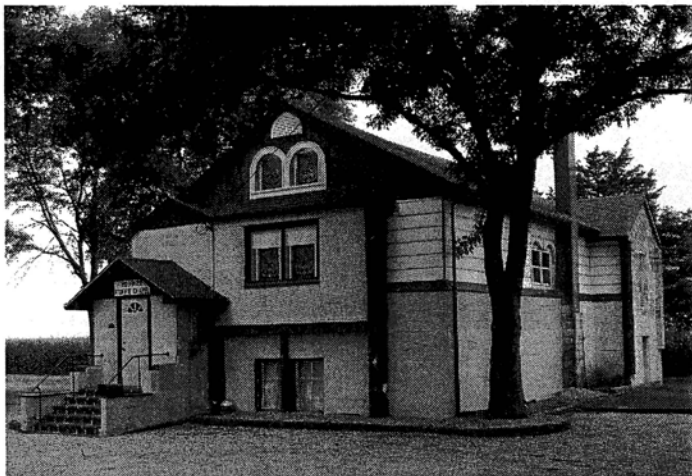


Fig. 7 Voorhies Prairie Chapel

Five weeks before Nels Larson died he deeded the present church site, 200 yards from the mansion, to the Voorhies Prairie Chapel congregation. Members of the church razed the old chapel and rebuilt the present structure using materials from the original. The Prairie Chapel (Fig. 7) at Voorhies was dedicated 25 Nov, 1923.

Johannah Nelson died in May 1914 at the age of 72. After his wife's death, Nels Larson did not spend much time at the mansion. He divided his time between his son and his daughter who lived in the area. Nels Larson died 29 March 1923 at the age of 83, leaving an estate worth well over \$100,000. The mansion stood virtually untouched for 58 years (1914 to 1972). The son and daughter had no interest in living there, and they had the money to let it just sit there (Fig. 8). They did rent out the 160 acres of farm land that remained with the mansion. The son died in 1966 and in the late 1960's the daughter gave the mansion to the Illinois Pioneer Heritage Center in Monticello, Piatt Co. The mansion was opened as a tourist attraction for a short time but then was closed again for non payment of mortgage and

interest. In 1970 a bank in Monticello was given deed to the mansion. Again the mansion sat empty. In 1972 the bank sold the mansion into private hands. There have been several owners since then.

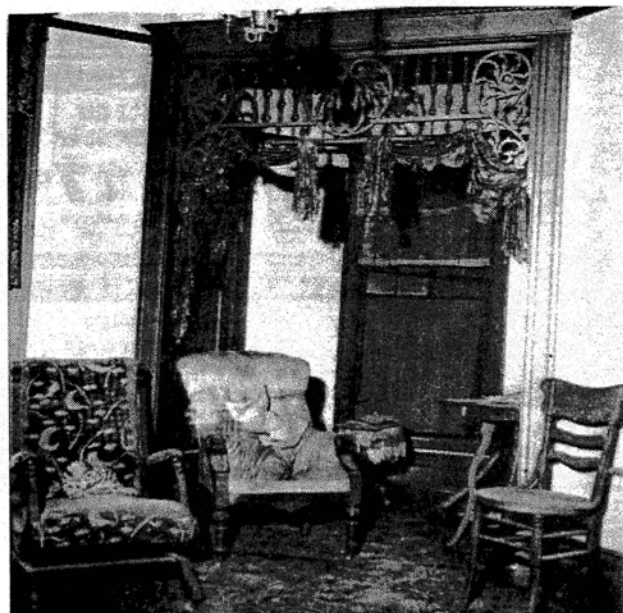


Fig. 8 Voorhies Castle Parlor after 50 years

I stopped by to take pictures and no one was at home. There is a big sign in the front yard that says, "Sorry, the Voorhies Castle and grounds are closed during renovations," signed [www.voorhiescastle.com](http://www.voorhiescastle.com). This website has some color pictures of the house and the clock tower barn. They have some pictures of renovations started in 1999. They have a few items for sale including a 2004 calendar. When you drive in Voorhies Court drive you see, on what looks to be about 6 acres of well kept yard, the church, the mansion, and a gazebo. Behind the house some distance is a cooperative grain elevator. That's about all there is in the middle of miles and miles of soy bean and corn fields. The incongruity is striking.

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- The Squire of Voorhies, the saga of Nels Larson, a Swede*. A book by Dorothea Russell, Illinois Pioneer Heritage Center Publishers, 1967
- History of Pratt County by Emma C. Pratt, page 31 and 32



The Van Voorhees Association  
*Dues are Still Only \$10.00 !*  
(See Page 18 for Dues Order Form)



# SATELLITE PHOTO OF THE HEES FARMS INCLUDING VOORHEES

by Manning Voorhees

Steven Coerts and his family sailed from Amsterdam on 15 April 1660 and subsequently disembarked at Nieuw Amsterdam after approximately three months of bouncing across the Atlantic in a tiny ship. Three months! Three hundred and forty-six years later his grandchildren can visit the farms of his birth and youth at Hees within a few minutes and in the comfort of their 21<sup>st</sup> Century homes. A few minutes!

This is facilitated by Google Earth. All one needs is a reasonably new computer and an intuitive approach to computer mysteries. Google Earth is not the well known search facility but is a new member of the Google family. It specializes in providing satellite photography of our earthly playground — you might have fun looking at your home from the satellite. According to Google, the satellite service may not work with desktop computers that are older than four years or notebook computers that are older than two years. Sorry, but Old Faithful might not qualify.

To start, on your web browser home page, enter **www.google.com** in the address box. Click **go** or press the **Enter Key**. Then, under the Google logo click **more** and then click **Earth** in the left hand list. In the horizontal group under several illustrations click **Get Google Earth (free version)**. This will yield the down-load page. Under **Current Stable (Version 3)** click the horizontal box **Download Google Earth** after clicking on the appropriate radio button indicating your particular operating system. The program will be put on your hard drive with a round green earth icon on your desk-top. I suggest that you do not download the beta version, or the new software that is currently being user tested. Beta software can be unstable, or crash-lock up easily, and could result in an unhappy computing session.

Return to your desktop and click on the green earth icon. You will get the satellite Internet site. Way up in the left top corner will be an address box or place to type the location that you want to view. Type **PRECISELY** the following latitude and longitude for the three Hees farms, copying carefully the spaces, capitals and punctuation — copy them **EXACTLY**.

**52 44'49.83 N 6 22'27.75 E**

There are spaces after 52, 83, N, 6 and 75. Click the bluish square next to the search address box and sit back to watch the world move to our farms.

Hover your mouse pointer over the many operative icons to read what they do. The picture can be enlarged (note the satellite altitude of the particular view in the lower right corner, which will change with enlargement

or reduction), printed and the scene moved around. The topographical elevation is shown at the left bottom corner. Be sure to activate road names in the several optional selections at the bottom of the image. The viewing screen can be made larger by hovering your mouse pointer over the double line underneath these selections until a double pointed arrow appears, then hold the click button and move your mouse downward.

You might consult the description of the three farms in *Through a Dutch Door*. If you do not have a copy of this research book, fire off your order to Marilyn Brack on the order form in this *Nieuwsbrief*. Looking down on the farms in the satellite image, Voorhees is on the far right, Middlehees is in the middle and Achterhees is on the far left. The three entities continue to be working farms today. Voorhees and Achterhees are somewhat larger than Middlehees, so the area in the satellite photo is not divided evenly. Steven Coerts was probably born on the Farm of Voorhees just after his family moved there from Middlehees. Each farm had so-called “meadowland” elsewhere.

Voorhees runs along the Echtenseweg (*weg* translates to road or roadway). The south east corner of Voorhees is at the intersection of Echtenseweg and Highway 375. The three farms border on the Heeserweg on the southerly boundaries. The green section on the satellite image on the northerly border of the farms is built-up; the various structures are on the road named Hees. The oft-viewed road sign, **Hees**, in our visitor photographs is at the intersection of Hees and Echtenseweg.

Moving northward along the Echtenseweg you will come to Ruinen -- not too far away from the farms. Ruinen was an important settlement in the days of Steven Coerts and is today. The Echtenseweg goes into Oosterstraat and thence into Ruinen proper. Mariakerk (St. Mary's Church) is on the Munnekenweg (Monk or Friar street) near the intersection with the Anserweg near the “**R**” of the word **Ruinen** on the satellite image. Mariakerk was founded sometime around 1211 as a Benedictine monastery and nunnery. Steven Coerts was baptized in Mariakerk in 1599 or 1600. His final rented farm prior to emigrating to Nieuw Netherland was pols Erve (land around Pols' farm) and was located just south of the now center of Ruinen, in the direction of Hees. The present address is 20 Armstraat, which is not identified on the satellite photo but is located in the region just to the left of the word “Oosterstraat” on the photo.

*Goede reis!*



### Editor's Note regarding the Satellite Photos of the Ruinen Buildings:

Your editor and husband were introduced to people living at 20 Armstraat in the *new* house built c.1810 as well as to the gentleman owning the next-door farm, with buildings much older (but not back to 1660). The Mariakerk sanctuary is an *original* building built in the 1400s or earlier. The first Mission Chapel, a tiny structure built between 600 and 900 AD, has long since dis-

appeared. The transcripts were removed after the members chose to become Protestant c.1500-1550) and the roof, for fire insurance reasons, is no longer thatch. The addition of a *new* pulpit (c.1666) and the present organ are just about the only structural changes since Steven Coerts worshipped there. If you have a chance, attend a Sunday service as we did on 2 separate trips to Ruinen.

## Genealogy Committee Report

by Bob Voorhees

Our Van Voorhees Master Genealogist (TMG) database is now at 84,877 names (both Voorhees and non Voorhees). Flo Christoph, our genealogist, has added 2,239 names since Jan. 2006. Flo continues to do an outstanding job of managing our database. For those not knowing the way we work, Flo is the only person who enters information into the database. The rest of us on the committee feed her information which she screens and then enters. Flo made the decision more than a decade ago to manage our data using *The Master Genealogist* software and this has proven to be the right decision.

The Genealogy Committee has been busily proof reading our planned Generation 9 CD. I want to give special credit to Ann Nunn in Gulfport, MS and Marc Hoover in Southfield, MI for the outstanding work they have been doing on the 9<sup>th</sup> Generation CD. Not only are

they proof reading but they are also adding significantly to our database. As most of us know, there has been an explosion of information available to genealogists on the internet. Just a few weeks ago, *Ancestry.com* completed putting on line and indexing, all available US Census information from 1790 to 1930. The 1930 census is the latest available. World War I draft data and Social Security Death Index data are now available on line. As we update our information on the 9<sup>th</sup> generation (late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century), we are finding far more information available than on previous generations. The bottom line is we are moving more slowly on the 9<sup>th</sup> Generation CD than we anticipated, so we have pushed its publication date into 2007. At the Oct. 21, 2006 Executive Committee meeting, we will discuss publication details of the 9<sup>th</sup> Generation CD and other related topics such as the price.

## Nieuws van Verwanten (News of Cousins)

**Marilyn Van Voorhis Voshall** and her husband, **Dr. Roy E. Voshall**, celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (June 2<sup>nd</sup>) on June 24, 2006 with a reception for family and friends at the First United Methodist Church in Erie, Pa. Family members attending were Ronald G. and Mary Jane Van Voorhis of Fla. (brother and sister-in-law), Robert E. and Paula Voshall (son and daughter-

in-law), Daniel Roy Voshall (grandson), John B. Van Voorhis of Calif. (1<sup>st</sup> cousin), and Earl Bennett of Ohio (cousin). Dr. Andrew Harvey performed a renewal of vows with Rev. Howard Wright. Others attending were Rev. Diane Olsen, Rev. Karl Hull, Father Robt. Levis, Gannon Univ. professors, German Cultural Society members, neighbors and other friends.

**Uit liefde, niet uit geld, trouwen en arbeid is gemakkelijk.**

**Marry for love, not money, and work is easy.**



## In Memoriam

**Earle Voorhies** (Oct. 30, 1912-Aug. 11, 2006), classical concert pianist and teacher, was the former chairman of the Piano Dept. of the Calif. Institute of the Arts. He graduated from USC and Juilliard (NYC) on a 5-year graduate fellowship. He made his debut concert in 1935 with an exceptional review in a the *Los Angeles*

*Times* and continued to give solo recitals and lectures. Early in his career he went on tour as accompanist for Luisa Espinel (Mexican-American performer of traditional folk music). He also wrote articles about piano study for *Clavier* magazine and other music publications. He coordinated over 300 student concerts for the



## In Memoriam continued

Young Artist Guild, which he chaired in the 1970s and 1980s and which is sponsored by the Music Teachers' Assn. of Calif. He prepared hundreds of piano students for competitions and for a professional career in music.

He is survived by 4 children (Lee Fernandez of

**Capt. Roy "Butch" Voris (1919-2005)**, retired from the Navy, died at home in Monterey, Calif. on Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Born in Los Angeles, he graduated from Santa Cruz High School in 1937 and entered Hartnell College in Salinas to become a mortician; however, he left to join the Navy and became a pilot. He was still in flight training when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. During WW II, he flew in the battles of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Santa Cruz, numerous Central Pacific islands, the 1<sup>st</sup> battle of the Philippine Sea, the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot' and 'Mission into Darkness' (a dangerous foray when pilots might run out of fuel before they returned). He managed to shoot down 8 Japanese fighters.

Tall (6' 5") with piercing blue eyes, Capt. Voris became famous for creating the Blue Angels in 1946. He was a modest hero with 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 11 air medals, 3 Presidential Unit Citations and the Purple Heart (for his action in a Guadalcanal battle). In his 33-year career in the Navy he survived several accidents – including a 1952 mid-air collision at Corpus Christi, Texas during a Blue Angels show when he managed to

Redwood City, Calif.; Sarah Voorhies of Sebastopol, Calif.; Daven Voorhies of Houston, Tex.; and Coerte Voorhies of Bowie, Md.) and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. His wife, Irene, died in 2003.

land his badly damaged plane safely with a lack of almost all control and a nearly severed tail. After retiring from the Navy in 1963, he became an executive of Grumman Aircraft Corp. in Bethpage, NY. and helped develop the F-14 Tomcat fighter. At the end of his aviation career, he was a NASA spokesman in the 1970s. He is a member of the Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Fla. At the Jacksonville Naval Air Station is an aircraft bearing his name and the passenger terminal is named for him. In the 1993 'Gathering of Eagles' ceremony, the Air Force honored him as 1 of 20 aviators worldwide who made significant contributions to aviation. The 2004 California International Air Show in Salinas was dedicated in his honor. For many years he was Commodore of the Atlantic Yacht Club in Brooklyn and raced his 3 yachts.

In 1947 he married his high school sweetheart, Thea. They were married for 55 years when she died in 2003 in a close and happy marriage. Capt. Voris is survived by 2 daughters (Randie and Jill), their husbands (Hank and Joe), 3 grandsons (Hank Jr., Ryan and Todd), and 2 brothers (Robert and Richard).

## Voorhees DNA Project—Update by Bob Voorhees

Four Voorhees males, two from the Coert line and two from the Lucas line, have submitted Y-Chromosome DNA samples to [www.familytreedna.com](http://www.familytreedna.com). On 12 markers, these 4 individuals are a perfect 12 out of 12 marker match. There is a 99.9% likelihood that these 4 individuals share a common ancestor within a genealogical time frame. This is pleasing validation of our existing research.

We consider this a very successful but small start to our Voorhees DNA project. Of our family spread across America, the Coert line is roughly 46%, the Lucas line 27%, the Jan line 21%, and the Albert line 6%. We have begun to establish a DNA database for the Coert line and the Lucas line (73% of our family). We would especially urge male Jan and Albert descendents with a Voorhees name to take part. We also would like to urge those in the *unknown* category to submit samples. (Unknowns are those lines we cannot connect to Steven Coerte Van Voorhees, the immigrant ancestor.) A 12

2 marker test is \$101 and it is important to recognize that **there is no blood work involved** – the sample is taken by swabbing the inside of the cheek and mailing it back to [www.familytreedna.com](http://www.familytreedna.com). It's a very simple process. Familytreedna has lots of interesting educational material on their website for those interested in learning more. My Y-Chromosome DNA (Coert line) has been tested at the 37 marker level so this benchmark exists for any-one interested in going beyond the 12 marker test. The 12 marker test is sufficient to determine whether or not two people are genetically related. Familytreedna offers 25, 37, and a brand new 67 marker test. Familytreedna agrees to hold all samples for 25 years so a good approach is to get the 12 marker test and then decide later whether to go for more markers. No additional sample is required. The objective of the upgrade to the 25, or 37, or 67 marker test is to further reduce the time frame of the common ancestor between the matching participants. With the 67

Voorhees DNA Project—Update continued

marker test it may be possible to identify the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) within 2 or 3 generations.

Our goal is to have 40 participants. We have a long way to go. If anyone has trouble signing up for our project, please email me at

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**Picture of the Grain Mill, just outside Ruinen,  
where Steven Coerts Van Voorhees worked.**

**(Photo courtesy of Dr. Roy E. Voshall)**

