

INTRODUCTION

* WHERE OUR ROOTS WERE TRANSPLANTED *

In 1972 I had the opportunity to travel abroad and one of the places I wanted to visit was a stop over for awhile in the Netherlands. At that time, I only wished to walk on the streets where my father walked and hopefully see his name in records either in the church of his baptism or in the Gemeentehuis, where I'd find the record of his birth. I found both, plus many marvelous families related to my father. This was followed with a great surge of interest in background and lineage. Tracing my roots to the low lands across the sea was made easier by learning of and meeting a man that has researched and classified the Van Laarhoven family back to it's beginning in the 1300, and the beginning of Van Laarhoven.

I have searched and asked family members to feed me information of the family of Cornelius Van Laarhoven and his wife Jacoba Wouters, who immigrated to America in year 1911. Ellis Island in New York Harbor was the entry of my family to America. They were nine Van Laarhoven's, among some 12 million immigrants to first set foot on American soil. On Liberty Island nearby, under the Statue of Liberty must have been an impressive site to these new Americans, to be.

As Americans we are all immigrants, a fact we often forget. (Even the Indians whom we call, "native" Americans probably emigrated from Asia in a much earlier time.) Perhaps nowhere in the United States can one learn best of the feelings of our forbears than on Ellis Island. Just the sound of the name of the Island brings to many, echoes of the confusion, joy, hope, and fear that millions of immigrants who landed there felt in their hearts. Through its doors passed an average of more than 2,000 immigrants a day for a period of thirty years. In the peak years of 1903 to 1914 sometimes as many as 7,000 were processed in a 24 hour period on this little 27 acre of land. Many of the immigrants dreaded to set foot on Ellis Island for they had heard some of the stories of this place which had come to be known as the "Island of Tears" for many reasons. For some it had meant rejections, for they were found to have a communicable disease and were shipped back to the land from which they came. Sometimes families were split this way. If a child under 10 was rejected, one of the parents was required to return to the native land with that child. My Father had a rash on his body (no doubt "hives" from a case of nerves) and was kept on Ellis Island for 24 hour observation before the family could bring him on the main land.

Others ran into difficulties on Ellis Island because at every turn someone tried to take advantage of these "green horns". Not knowing the language, weary and tired after weeks spent in steerage, hungry, confused, they were an easy prey for the shysters who wanted to do them out of the little money they carried on their persons, or even their luggage in which they carried all their earthly possessions. No wonder they refused to check their luggage and instead carried it through the long lines all day.

Finally, after passing the several examinations, the immigrants who received the coveted "landing cards" reached the end of the long passageway where there is the welcome sign, "New York" with an arrow pointing toward the ferry that would take them to the mainland and then to purchase railroad tickets to their destinations.

A hope I have, is to travel one day to visit Ellis Island, Liberty Island and get a close look at the Statue of Liberty who since 1884 has greeted everyone including the family Van Laarhoven, coming into New York Harbor. I should like to see the records of my family, a special interest. Also I should like to read the

words of Emma Lazarus, written in 1883 to honour this statue given to us by the people of France.

"Give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free.
The wretched refuse of your teeming
shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost,
to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

After leaving New York the Van Laarhoven's ventured to the Fox River Valley, most surely to join other Dutch friends and families from Noord-Brabant. Soon they traveled to Malta, Montana to homestead the land and immediately took out papers with the intent to become citizens of the United States of America.

This new family came to America and became farmers, cowboys, soldiers, musicians, laborers and business people. They married, raised families and were among the many helping to build America.

My father instilled in me a pride in our name and our heritage. I am grateful for the experience of searching family records, meeting the family here and across the sea, for it has given me a sense of identity. I would like to dedicate these records, findings and my thoughts to my wonderful father, Crijfogonus Ambrosius Martinus Van Laarhoven.

Crijfogonus, meaning Christopher.

Ambrosius, from the word ambrosia, something pleasing to the taste and smell.

Martinus, whom we know as Martin.

Signed and compiled by:

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