

Number one  
December 1976

Dear Members of The Belgian Researchers,

In this first newsletter we will attempt to explain in greater details the goals of The Belgian Researchers, which is incorporated as a non-profit organization, making your membership fee tax deductible.

The objectives of The Belgian Researchers are as follow:

- 1) Keep alive in our hearts and in the hearts of our posterity our Belgian heritage.
- 2) Foster genealogical research and, temple activity\*
- 3) Prevent duplication of effort by combining research talent and financial resources.
- 4) Disseminate genealogical data to all members who have an interest in the same lines.
- 5) Maintain unity by publishing a newsletter, listing names of members and their area of interest in their research in Belgium, plus any information of value to members of The Belgian Researchers.
- 6) Provide, if possible, translation when needed (thru volunteer)--'from, Latin, French, Flemish, German.
- 7) The organization shall be composed of people of Belgian descent. (one ancestor will qualify)

The fee is \$6.00 per year.

The officers for 1977 shall be:

President, Micheline Gaudette - 8 Wyckoff Ave. 1-Holyoke, Mass.  
Vice-President/Historian, Ardiena Stegen - 2959 Monroe Ave. Ogden, UT  
Treasurer, Maria Murphy, Cherry Heights Terrace, Sandy Hooks, Conn.  
Secretary, Denise Thirion, 18 Farms Drive, Manchester, Conn 06040

The board of Directors is composed of the following,  
Rita Cousins, Winfield Drive, Huntington, Conn.  
Micheline Gaudette  
George Gaudette

\* So far many members of The Belgian Researchers are L.D.S. but the organization is open to everyone of Belgian descent who are strongly encouraged to join The Belgian Researchers.

Belgium is a small country about the size of Maryland, the northern half of Belgium speaks Flemish ( Dutch), the southern part speaks French and Walloon, along the German border, there is a small German-speaking area with 60,000 inhabitants.

Like with the other countries of Europe, before you cross back the Atlantic in search of your Belgian ancestors, you must know the place where they came from.

It is suggested that you acquire a good map of Belgium; if you belong to the AAA, you can have a free map of Central Europe that will include Belgium; also the Belgian Consulate, Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y. has an excellent package on Belgium, including a map of the country. If you want a more detailed map of one of the provinces of Belgium, you can ask for a *Carte Routière de la Province de ...* (name of the province, see attached map) to R. de Rouck,

7 rue de la Rueche 33  
1030 Bruxelles, Belgium

\$2.3 should get you one (depending on the value of the dollar).

The borders of Belgium and of its provinces have changed many times. That's why it is very important to study the history of Belgium for the time period that you are interested in doing your research some very good books on the subject can be obtain through your local libraries. .

Some very important book for a researcher are the *Dictionnaires Géographiques de la Province de .....* (one of the 9 provinces), compiled in 1832 these topographical dictionaries are very detailed; the smallest divisions in the smallest villages are listed, but because they were written in 1832, you will find that some villages are no longer in the provinces that they were in 1832.

Most important to the researcher is the answer to this question:  
Where can I find the records ?

Even though Belgium was the sight of numerous battles and wars, it seems that a special effort was always made to preserve the records, and they are plentiful and readily available to the public.

Vital records started as early as 1797 and even earlier, they were kept by the town clerks , they are usually very accurate, the clerks who would make a duplicate of the town records to be sent to the *Tribunal de Première Instance* of the department to which the town, village did belong; because of lack of Space, the *Tribunal de Première Instance* , after a number of years would forward these records to the State Archives Center located in the province, so 2 sets of records (vital records) were and are still kept, one in the towns, one either in the *Tribunal de Première Instance*(the most recent records) and the rest in the archives center in the province; for the province of Liege, the Archives Center has the vital records. up to 1920.

Towns and villages are called communes (in French), *gemeente* (Flemish)  
They usually answer request for information, they may charge \$ 4.5 for a birth certificate, most often the information provided is free of charge, but because we cannot expect them to pay for the postage, it is advisable to include \$1.00 with the request for more information.

The State Archives Center is open to the public, but because of a shortage of staff, some do not answer request of information. Many records are on microfilms and can be obtained through the Genealogical Society.

The State Archives center in each province is also the depository for the Roman Catholic church records from the beginning of christening, marriages and death records keeping up to ..... the dates vary according to each parish.

It is interesting to note that even though a village could have had a church built a very long time ago, it does not mean that that church was authorized to administer the rites of the catholic church. Most records of the Catholic church are written in Latin - that is why we have enclosed a list of the most common Latin words used in the records, and their translation in English, this list was provided by Rita COUSINS.

It is grand time also to acknowledge the great help that Ardiena STEGEN provided us in starting The Belgian Researchers, also the sheet with the old Belgian handwriting is hers; many thanks also to Attorney Stuart WAITE of the Springfield Ward for incorporating The Belgian Researchers free of charge, many thanks to Denise THIRION for the beautiful design she made and that hopefully will adorn our stationary one day.

Also it is with great sadness that we report the passing away of our first treasurer, Anna KELLENS, those of us who knew her miss her very much; her charity, compassion and love touched many lives, mine included, (her daughter, Maria Murphy, is taking her place as the treasurer).

This first newsletter is just a brief introduction to the Belgian Researchers and to the first two primary sources of information for Belgium, there are other sources of information like population registers, pleas wills, census, that will, be discussed in subsequent newsletters; we hope also to develop the awareness -of the members of The Belgian Researchers to Belgium's rich past.

Please don't forget to send your pedigree charts, also your comments on your experience in doing research in Belgium,  
DON'T FORGET WHEN YOU NEED HELP, WE ARE HERE.

Perhaps we should close our newsletter with the comments given by Charles DIDIER (-a Belgian and the first General Authority from Europe) in answer to our letter announcing The Belgian Researchers,

“ I was greatly interested in reading about your organization and I want to encourage you all in searching for your ancestors; we know that we cannot be saved without our ancestors, the importance of this work is constantly being taught by the church.

I am very happy to see the people of Belgian descent doing their genealogical research, I wish them the very best. I am sure that the members of the Church in Belgium would be most happy to help too. I pray that our Father in Heaven bless your efforts.”

*Micheline*

I am very sorry for the poor copy.

