

**LETTERS FROM THE PAST**  
Compiled and Edited  
by  
Frank Verbrugge

Most of the letters in the collection were written by our emigrants from Holland, who sought a better living in new lands: South Africa, the United States, and Canada. These letters cover a period of about sixty years. The four individuals were Jacobus Verbrugge, Maria Verbrugge - Van Der Vliet, Cornelis Van Der Vliet and Jantje Van Der Vliet - Enserink. The letters exhibit a remarkable variety of style and content. Jacobus is a philosopher-logician, who does not often allow his emotions to be shown. Cornelis is optimistic and practical, a man of action. Jantje is introspective, probably a reflection of the fact that most of her letters were written during her year of tragedy. Maria is outgoing and sympathetic, always attempting to share in the life of others. It is remarkable that so many letters were saved in Wilnis and that they were found and made available. Many individuals were involved in making the collection, but special appreciation must be expressed for the many activities of Ali Verbrugge-Vander Vliet, a niece of Maria and Cornelis from Utrecht. In contrast, there are almost no letters still in existence which were sent from Wilnis to the four immigrants. The letter tell their own story. Wherever it is helpful to serve as back-ground for the collection or for individual letters, explanatory notes and documentation are included.

## Introduction

The Dutch grammar has undergone many changes during the hundred years or so since Jacobus, Maria, Cornelis and Jantje went to school. In the main, the letters are reproduced as they were written. The omission of a portion is indicated by the symbol.....

Many of the letters were not separated into sentences and paragraphs. To make it easier for the reader these separations have been added. Parenthesis ( ) and brackets [ ] are also used. Parenthesis were used by the writers of the letters. Brackets enclose sentences which the editor has added.

August, 1981

Frank Verbrugge

Jan Van Der Louw and Grietje Van Der Louw-Koozenboom moved in 1870 from Harmelen to Wilnis with their daughter, nine months of age. They moved to a farm east of Wilnis and south of the Oudhuyzermolen and called it Op de Laan. Jan died on January 3, 1875. The following year, on September 21, 1876, Grietje married Klaas Van Der Vliet. Between 1877 and 1887 they had six children who all grew up into adulthood at Op de Laan. Their eldest daughter Maria and their eldest son Cornelis are important participants in letters from the Past. The entire family would be involved in the events surrounding Maria and Cornelis.

Jan Coert Rylaarsdam and his wife Grietje Rylaarsdam-Ram moved to the Veengyde, in Wilnis, in April 1876 from Sevenhoven, a few kilometers in the south-westerly direction from Wilnis. They came with the five children of

the first marriage of Jan Coert, and two of their own children, Cornelis, a year and a half old, and Janna, a month old. Three more children were born in Wilnis. Of these ten children, three emigrated to America. Cornelis was the first to leave Wilnis.

A very important person involved in letters from the Past was Jantje Enserink. She grew up in Eelde near Zutphen in one of the most beautiful and peaceful areas in Holland. She never lived in Wilnis, but for a few years she was to be the object of deep interest and attention of the part of the inhabitants of Wilnis and in the letters which were exchanged between Holland and America.

When the decision had been made, preparations had to be made. South Africa was on the whole an agricultural country. Cornelis had had experience only in a dairy. The people agreed that he should have experience in an area in Holland, where farming was somewhat similar to what he would encounter in South Africa. Now, there was a young man in Wilnis, by the name of Martinus Bast, who was from Zutphen, in Gelderland, who worked in Oudhuyzermolen. An agreement was made, through Martinus, that Cornelis would spend a few months on the farm of Egbert Enserink in Eelde.

Enserink was a widower with nine children. The oldest was a daughter, by the name of Jantje, the other eight were sons of which the youngest was probably 11 or 12 years old. Jantje was an affectionate young woman who felt obliged to stay with the family until the youngest boys were independent. So there was probably little discussion between Cornelis and

Janje regarding the possibility of a romantic relationship which would lead to a decision to accompany him to South Africa.

On August 1, 1903, Cornelis left Holland to begin his new life. He

also left many worries for his parents. The Hollanders in South Africa were busily occupied repairing the damage done by the Boer War. There were also bad feelings among the Africaner. They felt that Holland found it to be more important to keep the peace with England than to help them in their struggle against the English. Finally, although Cornelis sought to establish himself with a family (who he called Uncle and Aunt in his letters to Wilnis) he would be alone as a bachelor attempting to settle as a farmer in South Africa.

Within a few weeks after Cornelis left Wilnis his sister Maria gave her parents the news that Jacobus Verbrugge was leaving Wilnis to go to America at the beginning of the next year, and that she wished to go with him as his wife. This was the first time that there has been mention of a marriage between Jacobus and Maria. Their friendship had covered several years. A former request by Jacobus to permit the marriage had not been approved, undoubtedly because his economic prospects in Wilnis were so poor. Now the situation had changed. Cornelis Rylaarsdam had rented a farm in Minnesota and Jacobus had agreed that they would begin farming together in the spring of 1904. From what Cornelis had told him, he was sure that he could assure them a better life than life on Op de Laan.

Cornelis Vander Vliet left Wilnis for South Africa on August 15, 1903. He remained there for about four years. The problem of settling there were much greater than he had anticipated. His experience at Eelde was of little benefit. The farms were large, and the area where he first arrived was used largely for the grazing of cattle. He began living with an elderly couple (he called them uncle and aunt) living at Brandolei east of Middelburg. He did not work for them, but worked at other places. He left Brandolei for Thebus, and from there went to Rooiport. All of these places were in the Cape Province and within 100 kilometers from where he began. In 1906 he crossed the Orange River to Bethull in Vrijstaat. He still planned to establish a dairy, but he wrote that he probably would begin in Paris in Vrededorst. These cities were in the northern part of Vrijstaat, approximately 500 kilometers north of Bethull. In 1907 he left South Africa. He went to London and from there to Canada. He did not visit Wilnis (When three years later when he travelled through Western Canada (near Edmonton) with his friend Harmen Van Der Lee he said that maybe he had rushed too much going to South Africa alone. In Canada he worked for the Canadian Northern Railroad, which at the time was building a rail-line, about 2000 kilometers in length, between Quebec and Winnipeg. Between Quebec and Sudburg, in Ontario, the building of the railroad was under way, but between Sudburg and Winnipeg only preparatory work was being done: draining water from the swamps, cutting down trees, installing the railroad bed, etc. It is not known where

The Roamer.

In the beginning of 1909 Cornelis Van Der Vliet returned to Holland, as he had told his parents. He married Jantje Enserink in Eefde on May 7, 1909. The Enserink family was present, also some of the Van Der Vliet family. The marriage certificate lists the following witnesses: Egbert (Jantje's father), K Van Der Vliet (Cornelis' father), Hendrikus Ensering (a brother of Jantje), a minister (who probably also conducted the church ceremony) and Jacobus Van Der Vliet (a brother of Cornelis).

JANTJE

Cornelis Van Der Vliet and Jantje Enserink  
The Netherlands, May 7, 1909

PHOTOGRAPH

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Cornelis worked during 1907 and 1908. During 1907 he wrote to Jantje Enserink asking her to marry him. In early 1909 he travelled back to Holland. He had then already signed a contract to work at the preparatory work for the railroad to Campbell Lake, about 800 kilometers east from Winnipeg. There was another railroad, the Canadian Pacific Railroad, which ran from Montreal to Winnipeg and from there through Western Canada. This railroad ran through the eastern part of Canada, south of the Canadian Northern. There were short lines between the railways. So it was possible to travel from Fort William to Campbell by the Canadian by the railway of the Canadian Pacific.

Cornelis van der Vliet and Jantje Ensink.  
The Netherlands, 7 May 1909.





While he was in Holland, Cornelis convinced six of his friends that Canada would provide a favorable future for them, and that they should go back with him and Jantje. Among the six were: Jan, a brother of Jantje, Groot Enserink, probably not from Eefde nor a member of the Eefde Enserink family, Harmen Van Der Lee, a brother-in-law of Jacobus Van Der Vliet, that is to say, a brother of his wife Johanna. Jacobus and Johana were married on May 7, 1908. They lived at the time in the summer-house of Op de Laau. There were still three others, among them Looy, and Dirk Ackooy.

The trip to Canada was eventful due largely to the trouble they encountered. It was storming during the entire trip and the passengers were seasick almost all of the time. Cornelis said that it was the worst trip <sup>he</sup> had ever experienced on the ocean. Jantje probably often compared this trip with peaceful Eefde.

The group reached Canada in late May. They then took a train westward to Fort William. The house at Campbell Lake was not yet finished, so it was decided that Jantje would stay in Fort William. The men would go to Lake Campbell to finish building the house. For three lonely weeks Jantje was alone in Fort William in a home where there were no other Hollanders. On June 19, she walked to the station to meet Cornelis, but he was not there. He came a week later, the house was not yet finished the previous week. There were still more disappointments Jantje made the discovery that their house was in a camp of workers, and that she was the only woman in the entire camp. Nor was the house intended to be for her and Cornelis only. The men who had come with them would also live in the house, and she would be responsible to be the house-keeper for all of them. So it was no wonder

that she became ill as a result of discouragement. She lost weight and could not eat. In despair, Cornelis and Jantje decided that the only solution would be to have Jantje go to Minnesota, where Jacobus and Maria lived. Jan would take her there.

Many years later, on a picture post-card which she sent from Belde to a little niece in Minnesota, Jantje made the statement that she had formerly, in all of her life not realized how beautiful Belde was. Probably she compared it with the troubles on the trip across the ocean, with the somber three weeks in Fort William, with the winter storms and the summer heat in Minnesota, and the winds in Zealand where she lived for a few years with the second husband.

Jantje to the Van Der Vliet family in Wilnis

Fort Williams

June 19, 1909

Dear Family!

Still here. Very likely Cornelis will come to get me today. I at least hope I will not be disappointed; the station where the trains arrive is three quarters from here, I will walk over there. The train can be there at 6:30, but one cannot depend upon that; it is a train which runs two times a week. According to a letter received from C. yesterday everyone was doing well and working zealously to finish the house. On June 12 the house was so far along that the walls were standing, but then they had to wait for materials. What the reason was I do not know, and nothing was known about the house.

Up to this time I have worked busily, have completed my skirt as far as I could. I have made translations every day from my cook book, walked and helped a little in the work. The time does not seem to be too long, although I am so eager to leave here and long to be in my own home. I am doing well here, the people are so friendly, but I do not feel at home at all. They do not go to church, most of Sunday's are spent sleeping, and the Mrs. bakes different kinds of cake.

On my walks I passed a Presbyterian church and went inside; naturally I enjoyed nothing except the singing, that sounded beautiful. At first the choir sang consisting of young men and young women, and later the entire congregation sang, all standing. The choir women were all dressed in long black robes, broad sleeves, like a kind of toga, white tirs around their necks, and the crown of the head covered by a kind of sailor hats, but very small. The young men wore regular clothes.

There are at least 5 large churches here: Presbyterian, Lutheran and Catholic. I have seen all of them. The stores were all closed on Sunday; there is no postal delivery on Sunday. Formerly it was all forest. The woods have all been cut down, and now the stumps are still in the ground. No thought seems to be given to moving, and there is no possibility of doing it. Here and there is a cow. But that does not amount to much in such a large area; the cows are free to go anywhere. They could very well get on the highway, where the electric train runs, as well as on the grass. But I have not yet seen this, they seem to be more intelligent than in Holland; our cows might well do that. Some of the cows have a bell on them. I see few bicycles, young women also ride with a horse and buggy. Vehicles never

seem to be washed here. All institutions here have negroes. As far as I have noticed they look neat.

There is a great demand for carpenters here, for a wage of .35 an hour. Houses are being built everywhere. House rent is high, here people pay \$14 a month. I cannot understand people here; it bothers me that so much time is wasted. This Mrs. is better qualified for conversation than to be a housewife.

June 23, Saturday I left a little space for Cornelis but he did not come. I received a letter yesterday; D.R. he hopes to come next Saturday now. They were all well. C. asked especially that greeting be sent to Wilnis. He was too busy and hopes to write later. The house will soon be finished, the men are working well; Harmen Van der Lee is one of the best. Naturally. I was disappointed again Saturday. Fortunately he sent me money yesterday; I still had 1 cent.

Your loving children,

Cornelis and Jantje.

Cornelis and Jantje

Cornelis

begin July 1909

(The first part of the letter has been lost)

Our house has four rooms. One room is for the boys, one for dining and sitting room, and one room for the two of us. The walls are logs, an asphalt roof, papered inside, a carpet on the floor, etc., etc. There is

In addition to what G. wrote I will tell you about one thing and another from our recent days. Thursday morning at about 10 o'clock we arrived here. No one was at home, the boys had all gone to work. In the afternoon at 3 o'clock all of our things were here and we could get to work. We had purchased a carpet in Fort William, it is much too small for this room, but we have white boards for the rest. A piece of sail for the kitchen, wall paper for the kitchen and dining-room. The rooms are quite pleasantly arranged. In the dining-room a long table with red-sail, our clock at the end by the window, then for decorations, pictures and wall-texts. We bought some of our kitchen utensils in Fort William and some here. But some things are still lacking, such as, for example, we have no water kettles yet. Our stove heats well, and we have plenty of wood around

Jantje

Your loving C and J

With love,

assured of your prayers.

Receive the greetings from both of us, and God be with you, being have not written a letter either. soon, up to this time no news from Wilnis, although I must admit, that I birthday, or possible you will bring it to her yourself. Do write back I will enclose a letter for Aaltje for you to send to her on her farther along in our work. in the woods before we began to build the house, but every day brings us still a mess around the house, for which we had to clear a large open space

to send you some news. Unfortunately I can not say: "All is well," since  
It has been some time since we have written to you. So it is high time

Dear Parents, brothers and sisters!

August 1, 1909

via Fort William West.

Superior Junction #5

c/o/ A. McGougan, Esq.

Cornelis to his parents

Jantje

I will add to Aaltje's letter so you can read both of them.

work.

too. I find all the many courses which are in vogue here to be too much  
This afternoon we boiled the Wilnis Sunday-pot, and a little pudding,  
work to wash up and then hurried to the camp to eat.  
us for the first time this morning. Before this they came here from their  
Yesterday we bought a supply of living necessities. The boys ate with  
hang things. I will store my bed-spread temporarily.  
storing them is difficult. We did pound in nails everywhere on which to  
protect my face. I have packed the clothes which I will not need, because  
such a swollen face. If I ever walk in the woods I will tie a veil to  
a little better now, but Thursday the boys were a sorry sight. Harmen had  
Nature is beautiful here but the mosquitoes are a terrible pest. It is  
things all arrived in good condition, one cup was broken but that was all.  
the house. A clearing had to be cut out, everything is woods here. Our

Janje has not been well for the last week. Unable to eat, and when she eats she vomits, very tired and an exhausted feeling, so we have decided that if it does not improve soon, she will leave here, as it is difficult to take care of a sick person properly, so far from everything. And it is also difficult because I cannot get away because of my work. So, probably Jan Enserick will be going to bring his wife to sister M. If it is not convenient in view of sister's approaching delivery, she will have to arrange to stay with one of our acquaintances for the time being.

It is hard, for me, but especially for Janje, but if she were to become seriously ill, we would be sorry later.

Jan Enserick does wish to go to the Boers, so he might just as well go to farm in a western state, as to one of the western provinces. It seems my pathway is sown with thorns, because now that everything is going well, the work is succeeding, God lays a cross on our shoulders.

But I will not complain, but will carry what is laid upon me like a man.

I almost forgot to tell you that we received your letter of June 23, with the letter from father Enserink enclosed.

The weather is fine here most of the time, a bit warm now and then, but favorable the rest of the time. At first we were bothered by mosquitoes, but not a great deal anymore.

The following about the boys: Harman Van Der Lee is the hardest work of all, he enjoys America, adjusts himself to everything and is always happy.

I have also been pleased 100% with Looy. Naturally, I thought when he

wished to come along, that he had better stay. Now I am glad that he did

come. Dirk Ackooy is also doing well, but he is planning to go to Fort

William to do carpenter work. He also works well but is somewhat rude in

his conduct around the house and in his speech.

And now, greetings from me and my wife.

Your loving children

C and J

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Jantje to Friends

Chander, October 1, 1909

Dear Girls and Friends,

Now I will answer your letter of August 2. Much has happened since the

time we last met. Disappointments were also our lot.

First of all, when we arrived in Canada our house had not been

finished, and I had to remain in Fort William alone for three weeks, a city

which was a day's train trip from where my husband was working. Boarding

with English-speaking people, I felt very lonesome; very little diversion,

so I found it very difficult, so soon after that hard separation.

When the house was completed, C came after me. Our little home was

pleasantly situated beside a small lake in the woods.

But there is little contact with people, only the men who work on the

railroad. There were no women in the vicinity. But that was not the worst.

We had a large household ourselves, 6 young fellows, who had come with us



from Holland, as boarders. But when I had been there only two weeks I became ill, could not eat at all, and became weaker and thinner by the day. there was no help to be had, so we knew of no better solution than to come here, Chandler, with a sister of my husband, where I have been for more than six weeks.

It was very difficult to part again so soon, but we were at our wits end. It was remarkable that traveling seemed to be good for me; by the end of the second day I already felt much better; the trip took 5 days. My brother was with me. He really did prefer to do farm work.

Now, by God's grace, I can enjoy good health, and would so much like to go back to my husband; if the expenses were not so great, and the distance is too great to go alone. Therefore I will just wait for Cornelis to come to get me. C hopes to finish his accepted job before winter; by spring we hope, God permitting to begin farming.

The Lord's ways are often wonderful. We often ask, why this and why that. At first we were discouraged by it all. It is often so difficult to believe that that way is just right and necessary for us. But, the Lord makes all things right once more. This is a Dutch community. On Sunday I can again attend the preaching of the Word, an hour's ride from here.

I have progressed to the point where I dare to drive an old horse by myself, which I have never done at home, but here it is necessary, all women and girls can drive, the girls also plow, I do not see bicycles here at all, (there are autos). It is all up-hill and down-hill here and no hard roads as in Holland, but all sandy-roads.

One has to get along without many of Holland's conveniences, and it is not easy to get used to it, but one soon becomes accustomed, and people comfort me by telling me that, and I hope I will soon be.

I probably think of Holland too often. There is almost no fruit here. One can buy them in the city, but they are expensive. There are a few farmers who have orchards. They do not do well here, they say, but they do not take care of them either. In most cases, little is done to the houses, but on the other hand, women spend a great deal of time sewing clothes. The women do their own baking, and some of them can bake fine cakes.

Living supplies are cheap, meat costs 8 cents to 10 cents, eggs 20 cents a dozen, sugar 6 cents, coffee 20 cents, etc. Raisins and similar items are much cheaper than in Holland, butter costs .25 a pound. I have met several people from Holland who at first would like to have gone back, but not by no means now.

Corn (we would have called it maize) is raised a great deal here, and is very good this year.

The weather is still fine, nice sunny weather, at times the wind blows hard here. Fortunately I have enough diversion here and can spend my time pleasantly.

Marie has 5 children. The youngest will be five years old in February, the youngest is three weeks old. Now I have told you this and that, and still have a friendly request, and that is to send this letter after you have read it to cousin Mulder, where we have spent many sociable hours and have promised to write some time. To send two similar letters to Utrecht

well, but still not as much as I had expected, especially since my wife had  
in Alberta this spring and begin farming. My work this summer has paid  
As soon as circumstances make it possible, I will, D.V., acquire land  
well, so we face what lies before us with joy.  
Everything is very fine with us. Jantje is looking fine and feels very  
May God bless the means which are being employed to that end.  
prayer is that mother may still be spared for us.

that Mother's condition is alarming. I need not add that our hope and  
So, no longer delay, the more so since to our sorrow we were informed  
and so am happily re-united with my wife again, I have neglected to write.  
Although I have been here with sister Maria for three weeks already,  
Dear Parents, brothers and sister!

January 20, 1910

Chandler, Rt 1. Minn. USA

Cornelis to his parents

Heartly greetings also from Verbrugge and his wife to the Mulder family.  
The address is on the enclosed note.  
Hoping to hear from you all soon.

C and J van Der Vliet

Your affectionate,

in Uive.

Now, hearty greetings to everyone, also to cousin Mulder and his wife  
times.

seems superfluous to me. Writing letters to the Fatherland is necessary at

to leave. However, we will hope that we will be spared from further difficulties of that nature in the future.

A few days ago I sent you a picture of our house, via Beide, and also a couple of snapshots, taken as we sat beside the lake. On the stoop as we would say Wilnis fashion.

The person with the gun is a sort of clerk<sup>1</sup> for Mc Gougan, who has that kind of connection, like I had last winter with Mc Gougan.

The house was taken from a great distance in order to show all of it clearly, where we naturally also wished to be seen, and therefore sat half-way.

The windows are not visible, because they are on only three sides, which are not shown on the picture.

Only part of a picture, that of the kitchen is visible.

It is a reminder of Campbell Lake (pronounced Leek) which means "meer."

<sup>2</sup>Although we have nice weather today it has still been cold this winter.....

(Incomplete letter)

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Letter from Maria to Aaltje and Wijhand Oussoreu

Chandler, January 31, 1910

Dear brother and sister Aaltje!

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1. Cornelis refers to himself  
2. "meer" has two meanings. Probably Cornelis wishes to say that he knows that he must give up the new house at Campbell Lake

We recently received your letter in reasonable health, and noted the same of you except for mother, and although it is not dangerous, still there are many inconveniences connected with it. I often think of this when we enjoy something special, and also in ordinary situations, how much mother must forego. Fortunately, we know that Mother belongs to the Lord, and then death will be her gain. May the Lord spare her for us for awhile.

We have experienced a great deal with Jantje last week. As you will have heard from home by this time, Jantje delivered a dead baby girl prematurely. We have had quite an experience. She is quite well now, has a good appetite, and looks healthy and refreshed again, but at first I feared the worst, at the time I thought, Cornelis will have to bury her also, but now the danger is past, well not without worry, but there is every hope that she will be able to go in and out with us again. It is quite a disappointment but she is thankful that she is so well again.

Oh, sister, I felt so rich in the possession of the little treasures which the Lord gave to us. The Lord grants us such great blessing through them, and I myself am always so well. The little Jan is growing fast, he is Jantjes little pet, Hadewij also sometimes. He is walking now. Yesterday, for the first time she said a little naughty something. Klaas is such a Goudief I have to be after him all day, and at times he is so cute. Grietje is crying because of an ear-ache today, yesterday it was Jacobus. All three of them know "Open Uiven Mond" ("Open thy mouth") and "Ik ben een kindje Klein and Teer" ("I am a small and tender child"). Kobus is usually somewhat shy, but Klaas not at all. You asked me to write something about them...

Thank you for all the news in your letter. Receive the loving greetings from all of us.

Jacob and M. Verbrugge  
also C and Jantje.

C has also taught them to count in English.  
Jantje is beginning to talk about sitting up.

Letter from Maria to her parents

Dear Parents and other family members!

By God's grace we are all in good health, a privilege which is appreciated properly when we see others lying in distress. Jantje is also improving, which is more than I had expected. When I think of those first moments when she became so uncomfortable I thought, Mother, Cornelius will have to bury her also but, fortunately, the Lord vanquished fear and answered prayer. And although it was a disappointment, when the anticipation of having a little darling was not realized, still it would have been a severe blow if we had lost Jantje also, as I had expected, and it was my plea "Oh Lord still spare her life!" Under and amid all of this, dear parents, I considered myself to be so rich and fortunate to have our darlings. What a rich blessing the Lord grants us, when we see so close at hand how soon life can be taken away again.

Jantje is reasonably well again now, and today for the first time she

3. The house had only four rooms at first and the kitchen was also the living-room. In 1911 the house was enlarged.

and the little fidgety ones.

Your loving Maria

Our greetings to all of you.

another. I am very well myself, but am very busy.

without a maid. Bertha could not come and so we had not yet advertised for cakes, and canned peaches and some strawberries. We have been getting along

Jantje still showed some interest. She made a couple of delicious

snow on the ground.

present we are not having very heavy frost, but there is a great deal of

so fast. They are all doing well and went out-of-doors again this week. At

We hope to celebrate the birthdays this week. Our Grietje is growing

forward to some news and you look for news from here, that I can imagine.

heart at all times and a joyful eye directed east heavenward. We look

same medicine, and suffer a good deal? May the Lord grant you a submissive

How are all of you, especially Mother, always necessitated to take the

ailed her, only that she was unconscious.

ate at the table in the living-room. <sup>3</sup> She herself does not know what

Dear Parents, etc.

We have looked in vain for a long time for a letter from you in answer to our letter of December. But since duty does not allow for further delay, we will wait no longer. We hereby inform you that we will enclose the interest which is due, amounting to 44 florin, payable at the office of Vlaer and Kol, in Utrecht. Hoping that you will receive this in good order, and that we will receive the information when it is convenient.

During the week which lies ahead of us you will undoubtedly receive the news about what we have experienced. Fortunately, there is hope for the complete recovery of Cornelis' wife. We ourselves do not wish to judge the reasons why God has led them in the paths which they must go in their married life. But, surely, what they experience has meaning, and it to me it seems very hazardous for them to go west soon, and to pitch their tent among Swedes, Norwegians, Russians and what-not. For Cornelius, who thinks more of his newspaper as he does of the worship of the Word, that is safe, but for his wife has not reached that point. But be that as it may, western Canada is for him the land of the future, where he hopes to make his fortune in a few years. There is no need of trying to convince him, and he is really responsible for his own actions.

Chandler, Minnesota  
February 7, 1910

Letter from Jacobus to the Van Der Vliets



Except for the colds of the children we enjoy good health, although the winter has made us much busier with less pleasant activities.

With hearty greetings

Jas. Verbrugge<sup>4</sup>

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The departure and death of Cornelis

There were severe snowstorms in the winter of 1910, but there was an early spring. Work in the field began three weeks earlier than usual. On March 25, there was a bouquet of crocuses on the table, probably picked by Jantje and the children. Maria also wrote that the cows were milked out-of-doors.

Before he left Cornelis had planted lettuce and radishes. These were eaten in May. He had also planted a small flower garden. He had planted some bushes, berries and lilacs, and also some small trees. Undoubtedly one of those same small trees was planted on the grave of his small daughter. That he and Jantje would have done that together. Her small grave was located on the crest of a hill north of the barns on the farm, from which the valley below was visible. The original tree stood there for many years, but gradually it became old and weather-beaten. In 1980(?) Cornelis Verbrugge planted another tree near the location of the grave.

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4. Notice that Jacobus now at times signs his name as Jas: an abbreviation of his American name James, Maria uses various names: Jacobus, Jac, and Kobus.

Cornelius Van Der Vliet was a skilled workman. He had done carpenter work on the farm, and had also made a small cheese barrel for Maria during the winter months.

Letter from Cornelis Vander Vliet (the last)

Chandler, Minn, USA  
March 27, 1910.

Dear Parents, Brothers and Sisters!

Your letter of March 1 was received in good health. We were pleased to learn that Mother is so well lately. All is well here, too. Since the latter part of February we have had fine warm weather. On one day we did have considerable wind but except for that it is just as one would wish for in the spring. The activities in the field have begun, and I am also ready to go to Canada this week.

I hope to meet Harmen and Looy in Winnipeg and then to go farther West to take up land. I will also acquire some for my brother-in-law Jan who will come later with my wife.

He will presumably come back to this area after a couple of months, and then, as soon as I have finished the house, with my sister following me. When you receive this letter, I will, D.V., be in the vicinity of Edmonton, Alberta.

Best wishes to all for the commemorations on April 7 and 22, but especially Father and Mother. May the Lord grant His indwelling strength in body and in spirit as the years increase, and that it may long be a blessing for us not only but for the entire community.

When I am on my trip I will let you hear from me from time to time.