

Dave's Excellent Adventure in Noord Holland

I spent considerable time in early 2006 researching my ancestors and the van Twuyver family history. That April cousin Dennis Brown and I traveled to Noord Holland to "find our roots" and we couldn't have been more successful! This is my journal of our five days there; feel free to contact me with any questions or corrections.

When reading this, please refer to the satellite view of Noord Holland below, and remember that the total distance from top to bottom is only 80 kilometers!



We were met by cousins Daan and Ari Christiani at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport at 8am on a Thursday morning after overnight flights from North America. Den was nine hours out of whack and I was six; neither of us had slept much but we couldn't resist

the warm and excited welcome from our new cousins. We went to Daan's home in Zaandijk for a couple of hours until we could get into our hotel rooms.



His wife Geri filled us with strong Dutch coffee, sandwiches and amazing pastries. They live in the same house that Daan, Ari, and their brother Cees grew up in, which is how I found them in the first place, based on the return address on a postcard sent to my aunt after WWII. Daan had done a lot of work on the family tree, filling in all of the descendants of grandpa's brother Cornelis.

Ari and Daan piloted us to the Amrath hotel in Alkmaar in the middle of the province of Noord Holland. After a nap, we took a walk around Alkmaar, a very old Dutch city with lots of interesting history and architecture, and found something to eat (and drink).

That evening we visited cousin Dora and her husband Piet de Jong, their son Ronald and their daughter Ilse and her son, Ewout. Dora and Piet live in Alkmaar about a kilometer from the hotel and have a beautiful apartment overlooking the Noord Holland canal (it stretches all the way to Den Helder). We had a very interesting visit, including hearing the story of Ronald's bicycle journey across America! Dora fed us more strong coffee and some wine, more amazing pastries and smoked eel - a local delicacy.

Friday in Alkmaar is market day and market day in Alkmaar means CHEESE. Our walk on Thursday afternoon had been peaceful and quiet, but on Friday morning there was a crush of tourists from all over Europe and Asia to witness the weekly re-enactment of the historic cheese market. I bought some cheese and then we decided to go exploring.



Our next stop was [De Twuyver windmill](#) just north of Alkmaar near Sint Pancras. Although this 1663 windmill is named after a different branch of the family, we thought it would be fun to visit (see below for the "real" van Twuijver windmill). The miller wasn't home so we just took some photos.



We went on to Schagen for lunch and to find the house where aunt Steph was born. But at that address was now a street of new townhouses.

So we went to try and solve the mystery of the white house called Westeinde on the Noord Holland Canal between Julianadorp and Anna Paulowna. I had an old picture of the house from cousin Fern's collection. On the back it said "the house of our grandparents" and we thought that referred to Cornelis van Twuijver and Trijntje Oom.

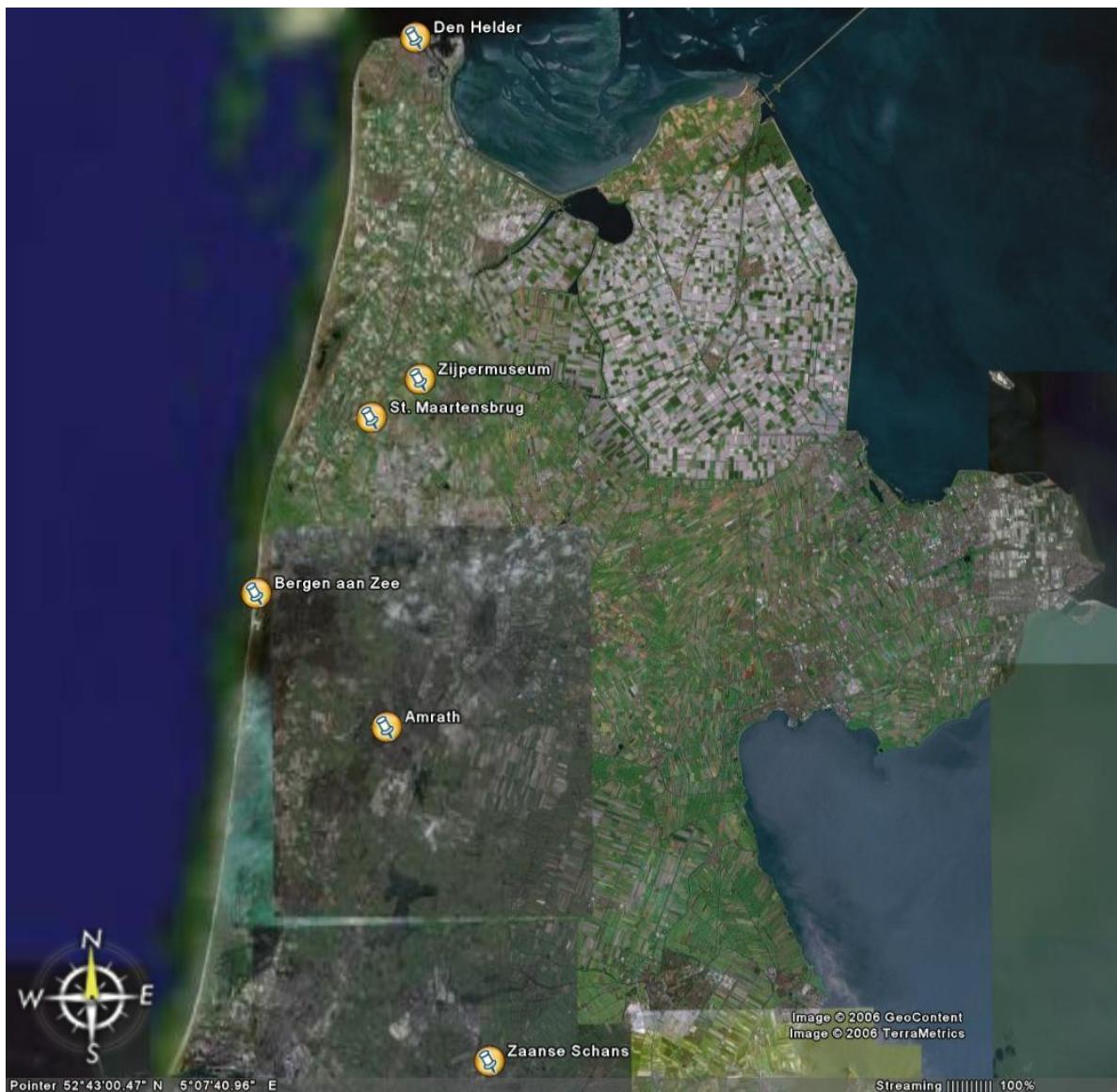


Our new Dutch cousin Marianne had told me how to find the white house near a small ferry, but no one seemed to know where in the family it fit. We were too shy to knock on the door and ask the current occupants, but we took a photo of how it now appears. A couple of weeks after we returned home, Daan wrote to tell us that he had gone to the house and found out that it actually had been the Vermoet family home of grandma Charlotte's parents.

Driving back south we stopped in Zijpe where our ancestors spent the 18th and 19th centuries. I had a location for the farm of Cornelis Klaasz van Twuijver about 1810 and we set out to find it. It was described as being on Balkmerweg with the Egalement sloot (ditch) to the northwest, Heereweg to the southeast and farmer Lammert Brom to the southwest. As best as we could tell, this was the place:



A great Italian meal next to the old church in Alkmaar ended our second day. We turned in early to try catch up on our jet lag.



Through the mental fog of our first morning in Holland, we remembered that Daan and Geri Christiani had recommended we visit Zaanse Schans near their home in Zaandijk, so that's where we headed next.

The windmill museum there harkens back two hundred years to when there were about 9000 windmills in the country. They were used for many purposes including grinding corn and grain into flour, making cooking oil, making paper, sawing lumber and, especially, pumping water to drain the marshes and create "polders" or farm fields. Steam, combustion and then electrical engines obsoleted the windmills. Wars and gales and lightning destroyed most of them, until some were rescued by the Dutch government and volunteer societies in the mid-1900s. Now about 1000 windmills all over the country are being restored as historic sites and many are actually again turning.



Only thirteen windmills remain in the Zaan area, out of more than 1000 that originally powered this historic industrial centre. We toured "De Kat Molen" which grinds coloured minerals and tropical dye woods into pigment powder used for colouring fabrics, decorating buildings and painting pictures. Den bought a supply of pigments for his artistic pursuits!

We then visited the nearby wooden shoe factory for a lesson on the history of "klompen" and watched while a young man made a pair of shoes out of poplar in about two minutes. I bought a pair for myself and a pair for grandson Jake and we headed North to Den Helder again.

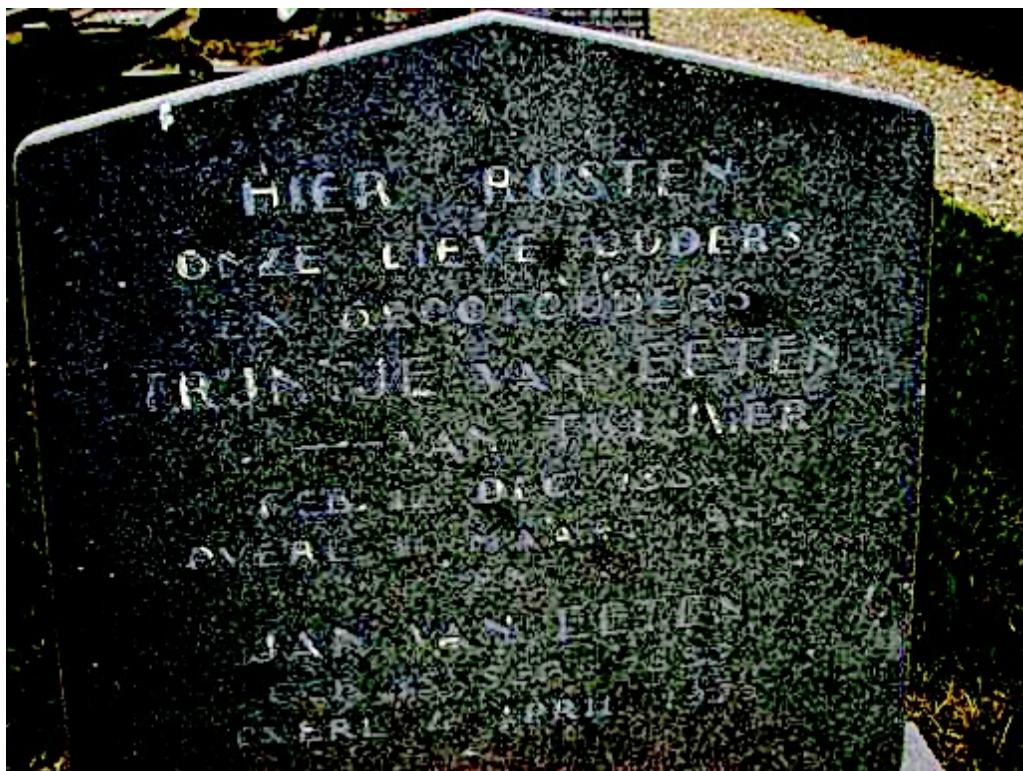
Our destination today was the home of cousin Willem van Eijsden and his wife Agaath. He is the grandson of our great-aunt Marijtje. Although 81 years old, Willem still rides his motorized bicycle around town and Agaath gardens actively at their townhouse in southern Den Helder. We had a wonderful visit, with more strong Dutch coffee and pastries. I was able to give them old photos of their grandparents Marijtje and Willem, as they had none. And a copy of the van Twuijver genealogy going back to 1600. They shared old documents of their family and photos of parents, children and especially grandchildren



That evening, we stopped by the house at 69 Joubertstraat, where Jacob's brother Cornelis lived most of his life, and took this contrasting photo.



Sunday morning was a visit to the old church at St. Maartensbrug in Zijpe where some of our ancestors were christened and buried. We found the grave marker of grandpa's second cousin Trijntje who was born in 1884 and died in 1975, almost the same years as Jacob.



The Zijpermuseum is run by volunteers and only opens Wednesdays and Sundays from one to five pm. We had to be in Den Helder by 2pm, so we hoped to squeeze in a few minutes learning more about Zijpe, the area where our ancestors lived for 150 years. We met the director, Gerard van Nes, and it became clear that 15 minutes was not going to be enough! He was very gracious and offered to re-open the museum especially for us the following day

The main event of our whole trip was meeting most of our new Dutch family at their reunion in Den Helder. It was held in the party room of the complex where Cees van Twuijver and his wife Joke live. Cees had organized the party to coincide with our visit. Den and I brought a few bottles of champagne to help celebrate. Eighteen of the 21 grandchildren of my great-uncle Cornelis van Twuijver attended, many with their families. In some cases they had not seen each other for 30 or 40 years since they were all growing up together in Den Helder. Here are some of the photos that we took. On the left are Dora and Piet de Jong; on the right Dirk Schotman, Marianne Raeijmaeckers and Ina van Twuijver.



Below, left to right, is Daan Christiani's wife Geri, Ari Christiani with his wife Gerda hidden behind Geri, and Cees van Twuijver. At the back of the image below right are Willem and Monica van Twuijver with ten year old son Merijn, the only male van Twuijver of the next generation of our branch of the family to carry on the name in Holland. In the front are Mieke van Twuijver and her husband Johan Blankwater.



Below are eighteen of our achterneven (second cousins) with Dave and Den: from top to bottom, left to right: Daan and Cees Christiani; Elizabeth Kuipers - Prinsen and Cees Schotman; Dora Meijer - de Jong and Ari Christiani; Gerrit van Twuijver, Liza Schotman - Smit and Mieke van Twuijver - Blankwater; Cees Pruiksma and Ina van Twuijver; Marianne Raeijmaeckers, Ans Pruiksma - Feijen, Margriet van Twuijver and Aagje van Twuijver - Klerks; Willem van Twuijver and Dirk Schotman; and Cees van Twuijver on Dave's right.



They brought their husbands, wives, children and some grandchildren! In the photo below, sitting behind and between Dave and Dennis is Grietje Bakker, widow of Willem van Twuijver and the same generation as my mother Lydia and aunts Frances and Hilda.



After a delicious Dutch version of a Chinese buffet, Dennis and I headed back to the Amrath in Alkmaar for a nightcap or two.

Our first stop on Monday was the Zijpermuseum in Schagerbrug, which had graciously opened its doors on a Monday morning especially for us. Director Gerard van Nes brought in Frank van Loo, an expert on Zijpe history and genealogy. Gerard had relayed our brief conversation from Sunday afternoon to Frank and he had managed to already find a reference to one of our direct ancestors, Klaas Pieterszn van Twuijver, born in Zijpe about 1720. This was as exciting to Frank as it was to us, since Klaas Pieterszn, his brother Jan Pieterszn van Twuijver, and their children had operated the Ooster N windmill in Zijpe (<https://www.molendatabase.nl/molens/ten-bruggencate-nr-01633>) for almost 100 years from the time it was built in 1740!



Frank had literally written the book on Zijpe windmills, *Fier in de Wind: De Zijper Molens* ("Majestic in the Wind: the mills of Zijpe"). He showed us the pictures and description of the Ooster N mill in his book. We eagerly bought a copy each (which he signed) even though it was all in Dutch.

We deposited at the museum all of the van Twuijver genealogy documents that I had collected, including the family tree of Cornelis and Aagje van Twuijver that Daan Christiani had produced. Gerard added the "van Twuijver" name to the museum's file index and to its website (<http://www.zijpermuseum.nl>) so that any other van Twuijvers would have a head start in tracing their family. After thanking Gerard and Frank profusely and making a donation to the museum, we set off to find "our" windmill.

It turns out that we had driven past it several times in the past four days. The Zijpe Ooster N Molen is clearly visible from the main N9 highway that runs between Alkmaar and Den Helder. It is located halfway between St. Maartensvlotbrug and Stolpenvlotbrug, a couple hundred meters east of the Noord Holland Canal. It can only be accessed from Ruigeweg, through a cheese farm and campground (named after the nearby ancient Ananas Woods that remain some of the only trees for miles around). We followed a dirt road (actually sand!) through the fields and were greeted by JR Rumping who now lives in the old miller's house next to the windmill. The mill itself has been restored by and is cared for by the Zijpe Mill Foundation.



Next we went back to the Zijpe streets named Belkmerweg and Bosweg, just west of the Ooster N mill, where Cornelis (1758) had farmed in the early 1800s, and we took photos of more 200 year-old houses that might have been his.

Then we had lunch in nearby Callantsoog on the North Sea. Trijntje Oom, our grandfather Jacob's mother, was born in Callantsoog and so we examined the 300 year-old church and cemetery. We didn't find any Ooms but we did find several van Twijvers that were distant relatives.



Cornelis van Twijver 1854-1933. / Trijntje Oom 1851-1923



Our next mission was to trace our family name from its presumed origins near the ancient Zuider Zee. The name means from "the Wuijver" and has been spelled in various ways over the past 500 years: 't Weijver, 't Wuijver, 't Wuiver, Twijver, Twuijver, De Weijver, and De Wuijver. So we headed east 40km to Venuizen where there is a section of town known as Twijver. We marched into the local library on Twijver street (next to the Villa Twijvernest day care centre!) and asked the librarian what she knew about the name. Turns out that she was born 5 kilometers away and was therefore "not local" and didn't know much. She found us a couple of local history books in Dutch but was unable to find any references to Twijver. I had previously found an old photo of a 't Weijver train station in Venuizen so we went to look for that, but nothing was where the station should have been except new townhouses and a farm.



There was a very old reference to a place a few kilometers south of Venhuizen near Wijdenes that was originally called "het Weijver" (the Weijver), then called "het Wuijver" and is now called 't Wuiver, so we headed there next. We took a spectacular drive along a narrow road atop the Zuiderdijk which separates the polders of Noord Holland from the Markermeer and IJsselmeer (the huge lakes that once were the Zuider Zee).



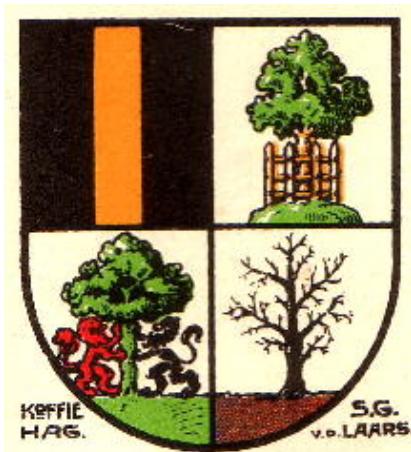
Suddenly both behind us and in front of us were road signs that said 't Wuiver. And below us was a large modern farm at the end of the 't Wuiver road. We decided that this could be the place where our family name originated 500 years ago. Too bashful to knock on the door (next time!) we took some photos and drove on along 't Wuiver road all the way (a kilometer!) into Wijdenes.

We went into the local Wijdenes grocery store, in the midst of very old houses and an ancient church, and asked the cashier if she knew the history of the name 't Wuiver and she did not. A local lady checking out behind us said that it was a very old name and that there was a man named Piet Ham down the street who was 92 and knew everything. So we went down the street and knocked on his door. He didn't speak much English and was unable to tell us about the origin of the name. We poked around the old church and cemetery, but of course there wouldn't have been any graves of people named van Twuijver (from the Wuijver) if they lived IN the Wuijver!

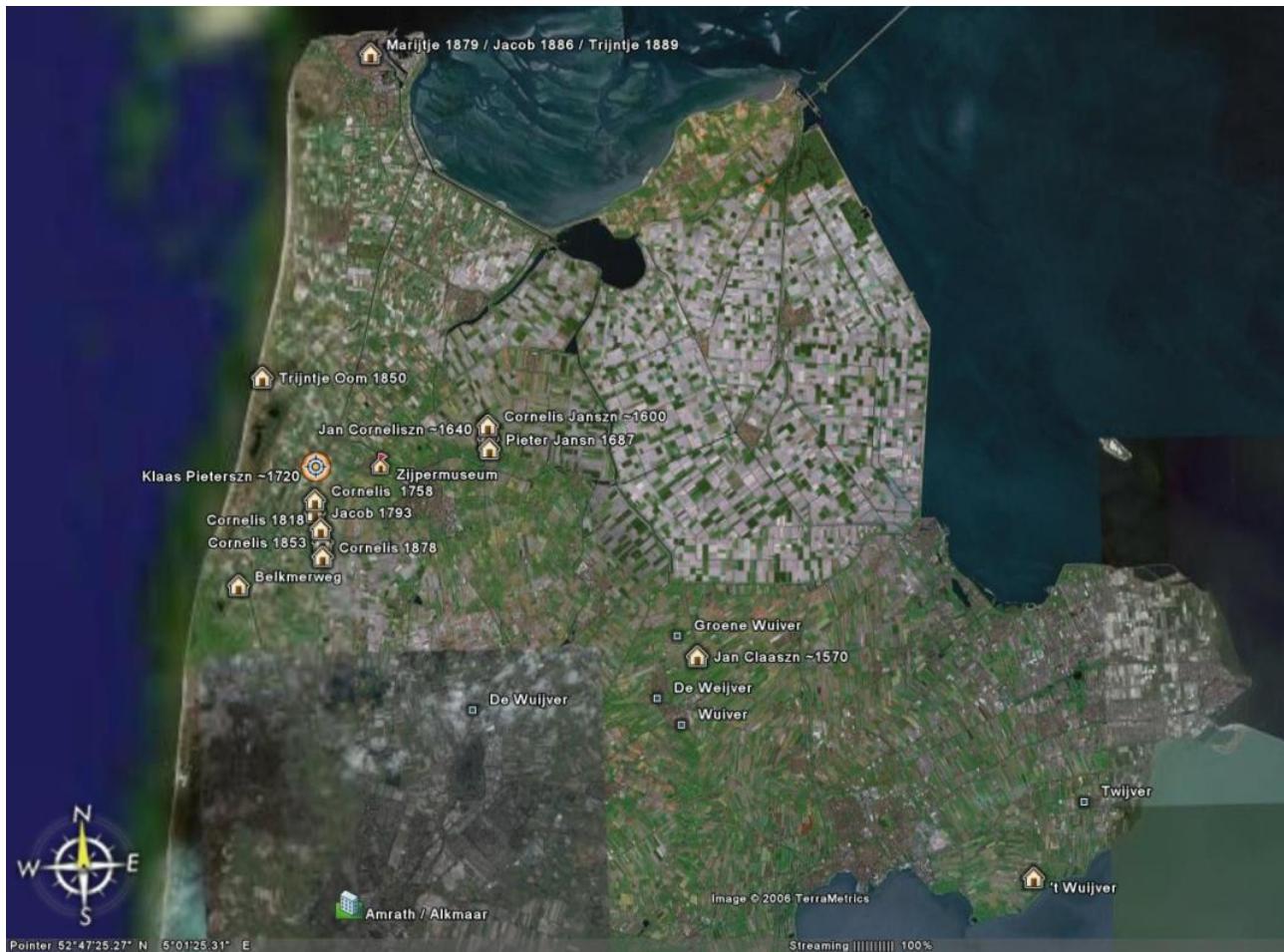
Daan Christiani had shown us photos of "family" street signs from around Noord Holland so we went off to look for some of them. Perhaps they marked the migration path of our family from the Zuider Zee to the North Sea over the course of 200 years and many generations.



We spent some time in Hoogwoud, since our oldest confirmed ancestor, Jan Claaszn van Twuijver had lived there in the late 1500s. We found the old church and looked through the cemetery but didn't find any van Twuijvers. But I did later find the van Twuijver family coat of arms that originated here in the district called Koggenland.



Our family in the 1600's were farmers. It was a time in Noord Holland when the Zuider Zee and the Noord Zee were being pushed back with dikes and when the salt marshes were being pumped out by windmills to form new polders (farm land). It appears that the family followed the creation of new farmland in Noord Holland from Hoogwoud to Wieringerwaard and then to Zijpe, where they also operated the windmills that pumped out the water to maintain the new polders.



Jan Claaszn' son Cornelis Janszn van Twuijver lived a few kilometers north of Hoogwoud in Wieringerwaard in the early 1600s. His son Jan Corneliszn and then his son Pieter Janzn van Twuijver were born and lived in Wieringerwaard. Our branch of the family then moved west to Sint Maartin in Zijpe and started operating windmills. Our grandfather Jacob was born four generations later, after his father, Cornelis (1853) and his mother Trijntje Oom, moved from Zijpe to Den Helder in 1879.

I would like to thank my "new" family in Holland, first for responding so enthusiastically to my original blind letters to Daan Christiani, Cees Schotman and Willem van Eijnsden back in February, 2006 and then for their extremely warm welcome when we visited in April.