

# A History of the Bauke Westerterp Family

By W. T. Block

The arrival of Bauke Uiltje Westerterp and his wife, Sjoerdjie Willem Westerterp in Nederland, Texas, soon after Christmas of 1898 was the story of a typical Dutch immigrant family arriving during the infancy year of the Dutch colony's existence. The father, Bauke U. (1856-1920), was the son of Uiltje Baukes Westerterp and Antje Willem Koekoek of Oldeboorn, Uttingradeel, Friesland, and the mother, Sjoerdjie Willem (1853-1945), was the daughter of Willem Sietzes Nijdam and Elizabeth Lefferts Annema, also of Oldeboorn. Rev. Ralph Koelema of Plover, Wisconsin, believes that his grandfather was a cheese maker in Holland, and one record gives his occupation in Dutch as "verhandelaar," which apparently is translated as "business man" rather than as an occupation.

The principal historical document of that family is the immigration or exit certificate, issued by the burgomaster (mayor) of Oldeboorn, of November 25, 1898. The Westerterp family sailed on December 6, 1898, aboard the *Ellen Rickmers*, according to granddaughter Dorothy Callon of Ledbetter, Texas, and a check by the author of the daily maritime columns of (microfilm) Galveston *Daily News* for December, 1898, leaves no doubt but that the Westerterps arrived on the North German-Lloyd liner *Ellen Rickmers*, which sailed from Bremen on December 6<sup>th</sup>. The steamer arrived at Galveston on December 27, 1898, confirming several family members' recollections that they arrived in Texas at Christmas time. Anna Westerterp (later Koelema) celebrated her thirteenth birthday aboard the ship on December 12<sup>th</sup> as the guest of the captain. The *Ellen Rickmers* carried 110 steerage passengers, as well as five cabin passengers which included Willem Beukers (on his second voyage to Nederland), a Dutch journalist who made three voyages to Texas while keeping tab and publishing his stories about the infant Dutch colony in Nederland. According to Koelema, such steerage passengers were allowed to leave Holland with no more than their clothes, and one sheep, one goat, some chickens and a cow. The milk cow was fed and milked twice daily to provide fresh milk for the children, and then was slaughtered only during the last 24 hours of the voyage to be used for food. Bauke also carried \$1,600 in cash for beginning his new life in America.

Upon arrival in Nederland, the seven Westerterp children, namely, Elizabeth, Anna, Fokje (Lena), W. Bauke (Julius), Hantje, Pietje (Nell), and Willem (William), ranged in age from three to fifteen. The eighth child, Nickolas Ralph, was born only six weeks later (on February 10, 1899), to become the first Dutch child born in the infant community of Nederland.

Only four days after Nick's birth, the worst cold spell in the recorded history of Southeast Texas arrived, and temperature quickly dropped to four degrees (that's 4 DEGREES) in Nederland. The Sabine Pass froze over solid from shore to shore, and some of the Dutch in

Nederland used their ice skates for the first and perhaps only time in Texas. At the Sabine Pass beaches, speckled trout, stunned and benumbed by the frigid water temperatures, washed up on the beaches by the tons, and people from Sabine Pass shoveled them into wagons to be carried to town and sold (*Sabine Pass News*, February 16, 1899). Two schooners in Sabine Lake sunk when ice flows punctured their sides. The infant Nick, so the family story has been perpetuated, had to be kept warm by his older sisters taking turns at holding him for brief periods in the oven of the wood stove.

The three older sisters finished the common schools of Holland, where they also studied and became reasonably conversant in English. In 1899, Dutch girls in Nederland were in great demand to work as house maids in the homes of Beaumont's well-to-do lumber barons. Almost immediately Elizabeth and Anna found such employment in the Beaumont homes, to be followed two years later by sister Lena as well. The girls contributed all of their earnings to the family larder except for token amounts withheld for train or trolley fare.

Around 1904, when Nickolas was about five years old, the Westerterp family moved to Roswell, New Mexico, where they remained for about five years. At this time, nothing is known about what they did during their period of residence there, except that they moved back to Nederland about 1910. Bauke Westerterp died on October 27, 1920, only ten years after his return from New Mexico. His widow, Sjoerdjtje, survived him by 25 years, and broke all of her family's age records before her death at age 87 on August 26, 1945. The couple is buried in Greenlawn in Port Arthur. The writer has been unable to locate the Westerterps in either the 1900 or 1910 census enumerations, as well as the 1918 Nederland city directory, but the family was probably still in New Mexico when the 1910 census was made.

Most of the Westerterp sons and sons-in-law, with the exception of two, were refinery workers. Elizabeth married Robert Gerbens, also a native of Holland and a lifelong Texaco supervisor, by whom she had four children. Her son Harry (deceased) was a school teacher and also scout master of one of the most prestigious Port Arthur troops. Her three daughters were Helena (Mrs. S.D.) Leffingwell, of 3228 Willing, Fort Worth; Roberta (Mrs. B.A.) Daigle of Port Arthur (also deceased); and Anna Dora (Mrs. J.C.) D'Abade, who still lives (1991) at 4525 Alamosa, in Port Arthur.

Anna Westerterp married Piet Koelemay on December 30, 1909, but that marriage ended in divorce. For some time around World War I days, Anna supported herself by delivering milk door to door in Beaumont for the John Koelemay Dairy. Later she married Martin Koelemay on January 29, 1925, and became the mother of Rev. Ralph Koelemay, a retired United Methodist minister of 702 Opportunity Lane, in Plover, Wisconsin, as well as a United States Navy veteran of World War II. Martin Koelemay dairied at LaBelle and managed the Koelemay Grain Companies of Port Neches and Nederland for sixteen years until he sold out in 1943. He then worked for B.F. Goodrich Rubber Company of Port Neches until he was 65, or about 1952. Martin died on July 31, 1965, and he is buried in Oak Bluff Cemetery in Port Neches. Anna lived on to become the one of the last survivors of Nederland's original Dutch colony, and died on October 13, 1977. She is buried beside

her husband in Port Neches. The original M. Koelemay residence still stands at Avenue E and Merriman Streets in Port Neches.

Lena Westerterp married Cleve Pemberton, also a Texaco employee, and lived in Port Arthur a number of years before building her home in the 2900 block of Merriman in Port Neches. She became the mother of three sons, namely, Rev. Cecil Pemberton, of Route 2 Box 225-A, Kirbyville, Texas, where he is a Baptist pastor at Roganville, Texas; Charles Pemberton, whose last known address was Box 414, Mammoth Lake, Colorado; and James Pemberton {see also W.T. Block, *Sapphire City of the Nечес: A History of Port Neches, Texas* (Austin: 1987) pp. 347, 352}, a Marine private first class, who was killed during the bloody invasion of Iwo Jima Island in the Pacific in April, 1945. Lena Pemberton died on February 2, 1972.

Uiltje Bauke Westerterp, Jr., known as Julius, married (1) Lula Decuir, who was a sister of Nick's first wife, and (2), Hattie --. Ralph Koelemay recalled only one child of those marriages, Jack Westerterp of 2740 Village Green Drive, Miami, Florida 33165.

Willem Westerterp, known as William, married Minnie Mae Will and became the father of three children, a son Julius Ben Westerterp of 2234 Tenth Street in Port Neches; daughter Mrs. Jean Harvey of 6235 Chisholm Trail in Beaumont; and daughter Margaret Burnham Murray, formerly of California, but now of 94-451 Keaoopua, C-139, Milioani, Hawaii 96789. In their youthful days, Willem and Anna Westerterp were regarded as accomplished singers, Anna singing principally in her church choir. Will was also a prominent Mason, a member of Tolerance Lodge 1165, El Mina Shrine Patrol, Cashar Grotto, and Scottish Rite Masonry. He retired from Mobil refinery in Beaumont following more than forty years of service, and he died on May 1, 1963.

Pietje Westerterp, known as Nell, married Cornelius MacDonald Robinson on December 2 1922, and she lived her later years in Houston. There were two children of her marriage, a son Donald, of whom the writer has no known address; and daughter Dorothy (Mrs Gerald) Callon, of Route 1, Box 49, Ledbetter, Texas 78946. Mrs. Callon formerly lived on Ahrens Street in Houston, but moved to her farm after she and her husband retired. Nel Robinson was the last surviving Westerterp family member, and she died on March 23 1982.

Almost no information is recalled about daughter Hantje Westerterp, except that she died very young, at about age 34, on March 16, 1926. She married Cleve Pemberton on February 13, 1921, and was the mother of the three sons that Lena Pemberton raised.

Nickolas Ralph Westerterp, Nederland's first baby, lived out his life in the community where he was born and died on January 26, 1981. In an interview with a reporter in 1980 he reported that his father had been a cattleman in Holland, and upon his arrival in Nederland, he found only seven houses in his new home of Nederland, Texas. Nick also married twice, first (1) to Ollie Decuir, whose sister Lula had been married to Julius, and (2) his widow, Dickie M. Lee Westerterp, who still resides in the Nick Westerterp home on Beauxart Gardens Road. His only child Ben A. Westerterp, of 3995 Reed in Beaumont, is

the child of his first marriage. Nick also noted that he attended Nederland's first three-room school and by age seven, was already holding down a part-time job. Nick's first full-time job was with Texaco asphalt plant in Port Neches. Nick Westerterp also noted that he had been turned down by the navy during World War I, but still he served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He finally retired in 1965 as a pipe fitter with the old Pure Oil Company.

---

Copyright © 1998-2012 by W. T. Block. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, the material published on this site is copyrighted by William T. Block.

00240547

*Powered By...*