



*BOMMEL* Licht in Gelderlandt, op de sincke syde vande *WAAL* is een sterke staet  
 hoof des gansche landts, het welke den *RYN* ende *MARS* beslyptra toot 'een  
 Eylandt maeken, heeft in voortyden een Fort gewers't ende daer na vernackt  
 tot een staet is gewonnen door *Prins Maurits* int Jaer 1600 den 12 may  
 ende nu ouer gegeuen aen den Coninck van *Vranckeryck* *ERNSTUS XIV* 1672.

*BOMMEL* en *Gueldras* au costé gauche du *WAAL* est une forte ville et Chef de tout  
 ce pays, que le *RYN* et la *MERSE* enfermans forment en ISLE; autrefois elle a esté  
 une forteresse et apres une Ville, gagné par le prince *Maurice* le 12 du may de l'  
 an 1600 mais a present vendue à le *Roy de France* *LOUIS XIV*. l'An 1672.

*Johannes* *van* *der* *Waal* *1672* *van* *der* *Waal* *1672* *van* *der* *Waal* *1672*

**Zaltbommel under Louis XIV.** In 1672, a French army forced the surrender of Zaltbommel, occupied the town for one year, then left. Here we see the stone walls of the city, which functioned as both ramparts and dikes, the spires of St. Maarten's church and the *Gasthuis* (hospital). The wide variety of river traffic is clearly evident in this view from the north bank of the Waal. [J.Peeters, in *Theatre des villes et fortresses*, 1684]

## Chapter 10

### The Family Recovers 1672~1796

While George Washington's army struggled to survive the Revolution, a battle for American independence was also being fought on the diplomatic front in Europe, where Yankee ambassadors like Benjamin Franklin in France and John Adams in Holland carefully coaxed these enemies of England into the fray. France's role was, of course, pivotal. But the Dutch role was important too, as evidenced by Adams' presence in Holland on September 15, 1780. He wrote home to Abigail, his wife:<sup>1</sup>

*The country where I am is the greatest curiosity in the world...I am very much pleased with Holland...Their industry and economy ought to be examples in the world. The Dutch Language is spoken by none but themselves. Therefore They converse with nobody and nobody converses with them. The English...despize the Dutch because they are smaller...But I doubt much whether there is any Nation of Europe more estimable than the Dutch, in Proportion.*

While it was rivalry with the British and furtherance of their own trade interests that motivated the Dutch to help the Americans, it must also be noted that they were, after all, successful revolutionaries themselves, having cast off their Spanish masters in 1648 to found their *Dutch Republic*. But their nation could never unify itself well enough during the 150 years of its independence to repel foreign invaders. Finally, and ironically, the Netherlands were conquered by *Republican* France in 1795, putting an end to the first *Dutch Republic*. But more than a century earlier, it was *Imperial* France that, though failing to take Holland, overran Gelderland, condemning the people of the Bommelerwaard to a long period of poverty and misery.

The Van Tuyl family, as we have seen, had been in America for some 120 years by the time the American Revolution drew to a close. The descendants of Jan Otten Van Tuyl were then in their 5th generation, and were spread from New York City to the frontier. But what had become of their Dutch cousins, the sons and daughters of Geerlof Otten van Tuyl, the brother who stayed behind?

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<sup>1</sup> Adams, J., *Letters to Abigail Adams*, 14-15 Sept., 1780, as cited in: T. Van Leeuwen, et al., "The Dutch Republic in the days of John Adams," 1976, pg. 19, and B. Tuchman, "The First Salute," 1988, pp. 23-4.

### ***The French Fury***

We can be quite certain that Geerlof van Tuyl joined his neighbors at the village meeting in May of 1672 to hear Gameren's village clerk issue a proclamation from the *Ambtman*.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the regional authorities - the *Kwartier van Nijmegen* - needed 500 volunteers for militia duty, and they needed them fast. The soldiers of Louis XIV of France were moving north, and Gelderland was in their path. Gameren provided 16 volunteers and a fraction of the 300 guilders requested by the authorities, but their defensive efforts had little effect.<sup>3</sup> They were to become victims of yet another international conflict steeped in European politics and treachery.

After the Peace of Breda ended the second Anglo-Dutch War in 1667, Charles II of England decided that he must have his revenge on the Dutch. Although he did for a time enter into a Protestant alliance with the Dutch and Swedes, Charles was resolved to become an ally of the French monarchy.<sup>4</sup> For his part, Louis XIV of France was determined to buy off one of the two maritime powers - England or the Dutch Republic - before resuming war, so in 1670 he started secret negotiations with Charles II of England.<sup>5</sup> "*Our business is to break with them and yet to lay the breach at their door,*" wrote an English envoy to The Hague.<sup>6</sup> A secret treaty between Charles and Louis was signed at Dover in May of 1670, and two years later the war began: the English Parliament had never been consulted in the matter.<sup>7</sup> Almost immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, the Dutch won a decisive sea battle, thanks in large part to the genius of Admiral Michiel Adriaensz de Ruyter. In this *Battle of Solebay* on 28 May, 1672, he surprised the English and the French as they lay at anchor off the coast of southern England.<sup>8</sup> The British lost the *Royal Prince* and the *Royal James*, along with 2000 men and their commander, the Earl of Sandwich.<sup>9</sup>

But the land war in The Netherlands saw nothing but Dutch defeat, as Louis XIV struck terrible blows against Holland. In desperation, the Dutch turned once again to the House of Orange - this time to William III, the great-grandson of William the Silent. Attempting to rally his countrymen with the somewhat demoralizing slogan, "*We can die in the last ditch,*" he was probably

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<sup>2</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren 884. Also: SAB, OAG, Archief Ambtsbestuur 240, 16-05-1672. In 1707 the office of village clerk was combined with that of the *Schout*.

<sup>3</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren, Archief Ambtsbestuur 215, 30-04-1672. The men were promised that they would not be incorporated into the regular army or navy. They earned 2 1/2 guilders for each eight days of service. The request for money came a few weeks earlier. From the 85 heads of families only three were able to contribute: the minister Wimmerus Wiselius, Hendrick Jansz van Lent and Jan Salomons. At Nieuwaal only Hermen Timmer contributed.

<sup>4</sup> Fraser, A., "The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England," 1977, pg. 235.

<sup>5</sup> Churchill, W., "A history of the English Speaking Peoples," 1971, vol. II, pg. 280.

<sup>6</sup> Churchill, pg. 281.

<sup>7</sup> Fraser, pg. 235.

<sup>8</sup> Churchill, pg. 281.

<sup>9</sup> Boxer, C., "The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the 17th Century," [Dutch edition], 1976, pp. 80-82.

disappointed when he saw them run, rather than fight and die, in the early phases of the war.<sup>10</sup> On June 12, the French army crossed the Rhine near Elten. On the 14th they took Arnhem and on July 3 Utrecht fell. Soon the French had penetrated the country to its core, and riots swept the land. In desperation, the Dutch turned once again to their age-old ploy: they breached the dikes. They created a north-south fortified *Waterline* which saved the powerful coastal provinces of Holland and Zeeland. But Gelderland and the eastern provinces were sacrificed to the French.<sup>11</sup>

After the fall of Arnhem, part of the French army marched west through the Tielervaard, sending before them a stream of refugees.<sup>12</sup> At the same time another French army, under the Comte d' Turenne approached from the south, while a smaller force under the Marquis d'Aspremont took the fortresses *De Voorn* and *Sint Andries* east of Zaltbommel without a fight. Aspremont demanded the surrender of Zaltbommel, but when it was denied, he decided to wait for the main army under Turenne.<sup>13</sup> Turenne bypassed 's Hertogenbosch, crossing the Maas on July 12 *en route* through Hedel, Ammerzoden, Kerkwijk, and Bruchem toward Gameren.<sup>14</sup> Although the Bommelerwaard was partly flooded, Turenne's army quickly reached Gameren, making camp in the *uiterwaard*.<sup>15</sup> Turenne moved into the house of the village minister.<sup>16</sup>

Soon, Geerlof van Tuyl and his fellow farmers of Gameren found themselves sitting right in the middle of a shooting war. From a ship on the Waal the Dutch fired a few shots at the French camp in Gameren, killing the French governor-to-be and nearly hitting General Turenne. Unfortunately for their counterattack, their ship caught fire and exploded.<sup>17</sup> Seeing that resistance was futile, on 20 July, several officials of Zaltbommel accompanied Turenne's emissaries by coach from that city, along the dike road, weaving their way through the besieging troops to the church rectory in Gameren.<sup>18</sup> After an all-night negotiating session, surrender terms were finally agreed to by four o'clock the next morning, and the official document was signed later that day in the church rectory at Gameren. Thus Zaltbommel became the last city in Gelderland to capitulate to the armies of

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<sup>10</sup> Churchill, pg. 282, and Kossmann-Putto, J., et al., "The Low Countries," 1993, pg. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Boxer, pg. 80.

<sup>12</sup> Valkenier, P. "t Verwerd Europa," Amsterdam, 1675, pg. 460.

<sup>13</sup> De Groot, J., "Zaltbommel, stad en waard door de eeuwen heen," Zaltbommel, 1979, pp. 264-269.

<sup>14</sup> De Groot, pg. 269; Valkenier, pg. 461.

<sup>15</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren, Archief Ambtsbestuur 264.

The dikes were breached at Zuilichem, at Aalst (Meidijk), near Zaltbommel and between Gameren and Nieuwaal.

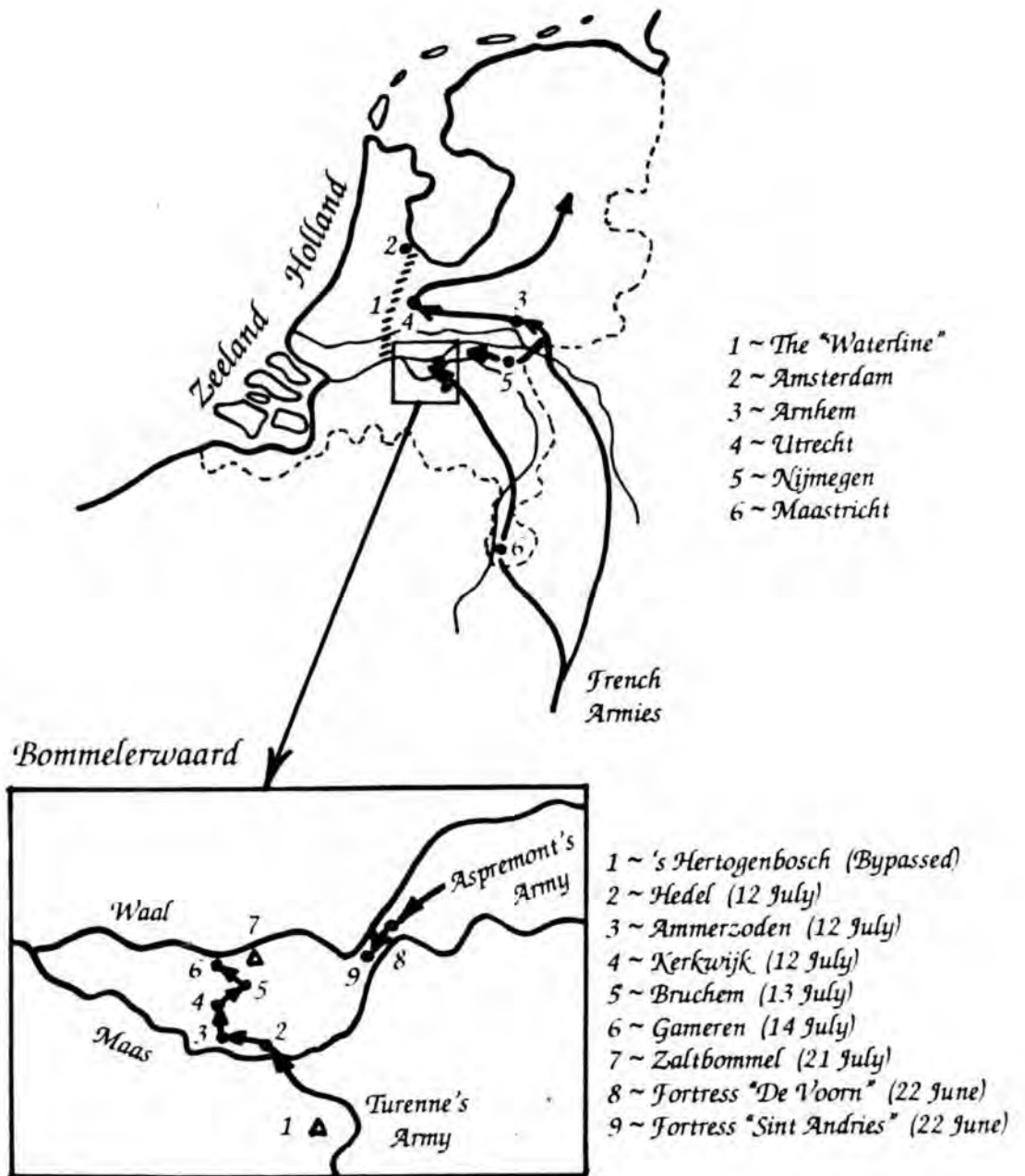
<sup>16</sup> Valkenier, pg. 461.

<sup>17</sup> De Groot, pg. 271. Also: Beckering Vinckers, H. "Zaltbommel, voor, tijdens en na de bezetting door de Franschen in 1672," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Galre*, Arnhem, 1935, pg. 241. This counterattack must have been quite damaging, because 9 houses were burned or destroyed; 5 near the Leut and the Cluyt and 1 opposite the castle, which was also destroyed by the French. Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren 756 [1675].

<sup>18</sup> Beckering Vinckers, pg. 237-238.



# The French Invasion of 1672



Louis the Fourteenth's armies overran the eastern provinces of the Dutch Republic in 1672, while Holland and Zeeland lay safe behind a system of breached dikes and fortifications called the *Waterline*. Caught in a pincer movement between two French armies, Zaltbommel signed papers of surrender on 21 July, 1672 in the enemy camp at Gameren. Bommelerwaard farmers - including Geerlof van Tuyl - were left with crushing taxes, war ransoms, and ruined dikes.

King Louis XIV of France.<sup>19</sup> In the surrender terms, Turenne had granted freedom of religion and civil rights and privileges for the burghers of Zaltbommel: in return, the city swore allegiance to the French King.<sup>20</sup> While a few companies of French soldiers and Swiss mercenaries occupied Zaltbommel, the main army departed to continue their conquest of The Netherlands - an aim they never completely achieved.<sup>21</sup>

### ***“Complete and Total Ruin”***

The Bommelerwaard farmers suffered mightily in the aftermath of the 1672 war. When the French occupation forces retired just one year after conquering Zaltbommel, they not only destroyed the city's gates, but also pierced the dikes!<sup>22</sup> The region was devastated. Not only were the people unable to repair their dikes, but the series of wars and natural disasters had left them poor and disorganized to such a degree that in 1680 there were not even enough farmers available to take responsibility for normal dike maintenance.<sup>23</sup> The villagers of Gameren were forced to borrow money to pay their taxes and to pay for dike repair.<sup>24</sup> In February 1674, the villagers - among them Geerlof van Tuyl and Aelbert van 's Gravenweert - assembled in the church to discuss *“the terrible troubles caused by the war ... in anticipation of a total disaster for the village and its inhabitants”*. They established a mutual-defense pact and authorized the *schout* and *buurmeesters* to borrow more money.<sup>25</sup> Not only was the village forced into debt as a result of the war, but they were faced with war-related regional taxes as well. The *Kwartier van Nijmegen* levied special *Fransche Taxen* to pay for repairs, and the City of Zaltbommel was forced to pay a huge 36,000 guilder ransom to the French, who had kidnapped some of the town's leading citizens to ensure its payment. A special tax, called the *Ostagiers Penningen* was collected throughout the Bommelerwaard to raise the ransom.<sup>26</sup>

So while Holland gloried in its political, cultural, and commercial *Golden Age*, the people between the *Waal* and *Maas* suffered war and deprivation, excessive taxes, and outright thievery at the hands of the French. Not only that, but the war had left them open to future natural disasters - and nature, as we will see, would be none too kind.

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<sup>19</sup> Beckering Vinckers, pp. 239-240. De Groot, pg. 271.

<sup>20</sup> Beckering Vinckers, pg. 239-241.

<sup>21</sup> De Groot, pg. 273. William of Orange drove the French from the Netherlands in 1673, through a series of brilliant military maneuvers and an alliance with Brandenburg and Spain. He got his revenge on the treacherous Charles II of England (his father-in-law), replacing him as King of England in 1688.

<sup>22</sup> De Groot, pg. 273. Also: O. Moorman van Kappen, et al., “Tieler- en Bommelerwaarden 1327-1977,” Tiel/Zaltbommel, 1977, pp. 87-88.

<sup>23</sup> Moorman van Kappen, pp. 88, 94-95.

<sup>24</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 677, fol. 185, 05-08-1672; fol. 205, 01-09-1674.

<sup>25</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 677, fol. 219v, 04-06-1675. Based on this resolution, more than a year later the village borrowed 600 guilders from Herman van Lith.

<sup>26</sup> De Groot, pg. 273.

### **Geerlof Otten van Tuyl**

While Jan Otten Van Tuyl was establishing a new life for himself plying the boatman's trade in and around New York City, Geerlof - the older brother who had accompanied him to Hellouw on that fateful night in 1662 - was struggling to make ends meet. Geerlof had little land with which to generate income, and what with the war taxes and debts arising from his father's financial ruin, it is hard to see how he remained solvent.<sup>27</sup> Geerlof's lands were but a small fraction of his father's, though he did retain his parent's home as his residence. He owned only 3 hont - compared to his father's 8 1/2 morgen [51 hont] - of hop-field and orchard around the Burgersteegh house, and 10 hont of low-value wetlands elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Since Geerlof was too poor to buy much property, and had little to sell, we see little mention of him in the local records.<sup>29</sup> But we do know that he was a respected citizen, serving as deacon of the Gameren church and administrator of its properties.<sup>30</sup> In 1689 he served on the church council, taking responsibility for managing the construction of a new bell tower.<sup>31</sup>

Geerlof van Tuyl married into the local family Van de Werken sometime before 1663. His younger sister Geertien also married a Van de Werken.<sup>32</sup> In fact, a number of Geerlof's descendants also married Van de Werken. Many of Geerlof's descendants stayed in and around Gameren - even to the present day - marrying mostly with local families. Some of these Van Tuyls still live on the Burgersteegh. Geerlof van Tuyl died sometime between 1690 and 1696, about the same time as his New York brother, Jan Otten.<sup>33</sup> In 1700, Geerlof's children sold the family home for 282 guilders to Cornelis Jansz de Geus, and took up residence in nearby Nieuwaal.<sup>34</sup> Although they didn't go very far away, it would be some 30 years before van Tuyls would return to the Burgersteegh of Gameren.

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<sup>27</sup> His father - Ott van Tuyl - had owed money to the local church, and in 1673 Geerlof was obliged to pay 49 guilders 17 stivers against this debt. [Gameren Church Archives (uncatalogued)].

<sup>28</sup> His yearly property tax was only 6 guilders 4 stivers 8 pennies [Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren, 756 (1675, 1680, 1687)]. The wetlands were: 8 hont near the duck decoy his father had run, and 2 hont in the *Cuypercampen*, north of the decoy. Between 1680 and 1687, Geerlof was able to repurchase 2 more hont of his father's former farm, and by 1696 either he or his children were able to purchase the remaining hont, thereby reconstituting the original 1 morgen of their father.

<sup>29</sup> The records do mention a strange affair from Geerlof's youth: one Anthony Anthonisz Brent of Gameren got his maid pregnant and tried to blame Geerlof. But another girl testified on Geerlof's behalf, and two other boys testified that Anthony Brent unsuccessfully tried to get them to make love to the maid, but that they did not do so. [Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 9, fol. 389, 16-08-1655 and fol. 410, 11-01-1656].

<sup>30</sup> He managed to keep the church solvent: in 1690 the income of the deacony was 263 guilders 16 stivers, the expenses were 128 guilders 16 stivers [Gameren church archives, 24-03-1691].

<sup>31</sup> Gameren church archives (uncatalogued).

<sup>32</sup> Gameren church archives (uncatalogued). Geertien married before 04-07-1684 Jan Joosten van de Wercken, but she died around 1686. We do not know the name of Geerlof's wife.

<sup>33</sup> See: *Dutch Genealogy*.

<sup>34</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 678, fol. 309, 13-05-1700.

## *The Sons of Geerlof*

In the early 18th century, a man's success in life depended not only on his ambition and ability, but on how much property he inherited or could accumulate through marriage. When Otto and Jan - the sons of Geerlof van Tuyl - divided their father's meager estate with their sister, they were each left with probably less than 100 guilders. But what they made of their lives could not have been more different.

Jan Geerlofs van Tuyl - the younger of the two brothers - moved to nearby Nieuwaal, married a woman apparently without property, and evidently never acquired any himself. He probably supported himself as a day laborer, since as far as we know, he had no trade. This would have been a dangerously marginal existence in those days of no work, no pay. In fact, one of Jan Geerlof's sons was reduced to accepting the charity of the church of Nieuwaal, living in a house owned by the deaconry, and being supported by it.<sup>35</sup>

Otto Geerlofs van Tuyl was quite a different person. Like his first cousin and contemporary - Otto Van Tuyl the New York pirate - Otto Geerlofs must have been ambitious and aggressive.<sup>36</sup> Unlike his namesake cousin, he was a pillar of the community, serving as *Buurmeester* of Nieuwaal many times between 1703 and 1733.<sup>37</sup> After the sale of the family home on the *Burgersteegh*, Otto arranged to keep title to the land adjoining the house.<sup>38</sup> He moved to *Het Onderlangs*, a farm situated along the bottom of the dike at Nieuwaal, which he either built himself, or inherited from his father-in-law.<sup>39</sup> At first, things could not have gone smoothly for Otto, given the spate of natural disasters near the turn of the century. There was snow up to the rooftops in 1692, crop-killing frosts in 1697, and heavy rains in that same year.<sup>40</sup> So severe were the storms that both the *Nieuwedijk* at Brakel and the interior, often poorly-maintained, *Meidijk* broke in 1697 with the result that the entire Bommelerwaard was inundated "right up to the gates of *Zaltbommel*".<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Nieuwaal 1050. The son, Assueris, had a daughter who was also supported on church charity (SAB, OAG 773).

<sup>36</sup> And like Otto the pirate, he had some experience at arms: he served in the army in 1702 [Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 16, fol. 115].

<sup>37</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Nieuwaal.

<sup>38</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 678, fol. 309, 13-05-1700.

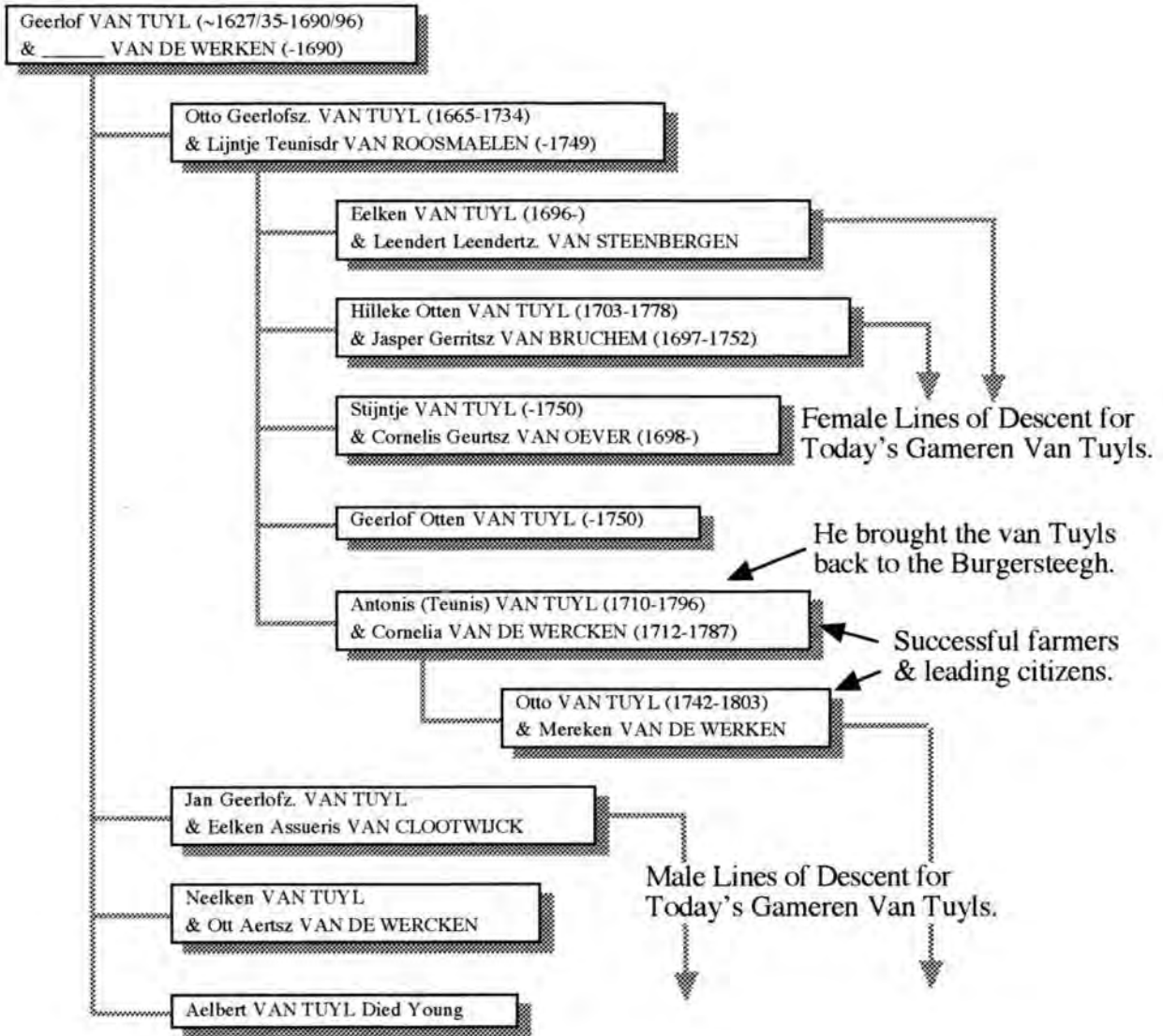
<sup>39</sup> "Onderlangs" means - quite literally - "along the bottom". Otto's father-in-law was Teunis van Roosmaelen [See: *Dutch Genealogy*].

<sup>40</sup> De Groot, page 275. Also: Laman Trip, H., "Aanteekeningen betreffende Zaltbommel in de 17e en de 18e eeuw," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Gelre*, Arnhem, 1914, page 299 ff. Also: Van der Zalm, J.A. en P. "Familiekroniek Van der Zalm," *Zaltbommel*, 1982, pp. 281-2.

<sup>41</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren, Archief Ambtsbestuur 281. Also: Van der Zalm, pg. 281, and Laman Trip, pg. 299 ff.



# Descendants of Geerlof van Tuyl



But none of these disasters seem to have deterred Otto Geerlofs van Tuyl. He made a success out of his farming endeavors, renting church lands to farm when necessary, and purchasing new lands between 1716 and 1729, when finances permitted.<sup>42, 43</sup> Otto and his wife Lijntje Teunisdr van Roosmaelen produced 5 children: two of the three daughters married prosperous local farmers, but eldest son Geerlof did not marry.<sup>44</sup> At the time of his death in 1734, Otto van Tuyl of Gameren had rebuilt the family finances and social position to the level of his grandfather's and great-grandfather's time. He must have died a contented old man, knowing what he had accomplished, and knowing that the family name would be carried forward by his younger son - the clearly quite capable Antonis van Tuyl.

### ***The Peaceful But Difficult Century***

Antonis van Tuyl, ancestor of most of today's Gameren area van Tuyls, lived for 86 of the 18th century's 100 years, and though he had plenty of natural disasters to deal with in his lifetime, he had one remarkable advantage over his ancestors and even over his American cousins: during his lifetime there was no war in Gameren! This unprecedented period of peace obviously helped Antonis prosper, but he and his contemporaries still had their struggles with disease, the weather, and, of course, the water.

The Gameren farmers were cattlemen too, and the spectrum of disasters they faced were legion. Besides freezing and flooding, there was in the terrible year of 1697, when, during the icy spring, a pack of wolves travelled up from Brabant and killed their cattle.<sup>45</sup> Three times during the 18th century, farmers were visited by a cattle plague: 1713-1719, 1744-1759 and 1768-1786. At Gameren the plague peaked in 1745 when, in the first three months of the year, some 323 animals died.<sup>46, 47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The church land rentals are documented in: Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Nieuwaal 1265, and Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Gameren 816, 817, 828, 829, 830, 831, 834, 838 and 839.

<sup>43</sup> The land purchases of Otto Geerlofsz van Tuyl [Rijksarchief Gelderland (RAG), Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem (RAZ): RAG, RAZ 679, 25-02-1716 - 7 hont Oude Wey at Nieuwaal for 200 guilders from Cornelis van Steenberghe of Driel; RAG, RAZ 679, 13-05-1717 - 11 hont meadows Beriscamp at Gameren for 60 guilders (at public auction); RAG, RAZ 679, 30-08-1718 - 2 morgen farmland Oude Wey at Nieuwaal for 290 guilders from Jan Tijssen Valkenburg; RAG, RAZ 680, 17-02-1722 - 1 1/2 hont orchard at Nieuwaal for 197 guilders from the children of Jan Bayense; RAG, RAZ 680, 23-03-1723 - 1 morgen meadows Broekheuvel at Nieuwaal for 9 guilders 9 stiver from the children of Jan Jansz van Bruchem; RAG, RAZ 681, 20-04-1729 - 5 hont De Kendert at Zuilichem and 1 1/2 morgen Jongbloetenhof at Nieuwaal from Arien Jansz van Bruchem.

<sup>44</sup> See: *Dutch Genealogy*.

<sup>45</sup> Laman Trip, pg. 299 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Manning, A.F., "58 miljoen Nederlanders," Amsterdam, 1977, pg. 325.

<sup>47</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren, Archief Ambtsbestuur 275.



Farmers and their animals scramble for safety from the icy cold flood waters streaming over the dike. Pressure had built up in the river ice, forming frozen hillocks, visible behind the trees. Finally, when the earthen dike could stand the pressure no more, it gave way, with this terrible result. Typically, the gushing flood waters would erode an even bigger opening, allowing the river free reign over the *polderland*. The Bommelerwaard was repeatedly flooded in this manner prior to the 20th century. Dirk Langendijk (1748-1805). [Teylers Museum, Haarlem; *Used by permission*]

In 1709, it started to freeze on January 5th and a week later the Waal was frozen so hard that horses could cross it.<sup>48</sup> By the end of February local men - including Antonis' uncle, Jan Geerlofsz van Tuyl - were watching the dikes 'round the clock.<sup>49</sup> But there was little they could do but watch and wait. Around the 20th of March the dikes broke near Zuilichem and near Nieuwaaal. The villages were engulfed.<sup>50</sup> In the second half of the 18th century, the Bommelerwaard was again flooded several times. After a long, harsh winter in 1756-57, with rivers frozen for more than nine weeks straight, the ice began to melt at the end of January. But the

<sup>48</sup> Van der Zalm, pg. 282.

<sup>49</sup> Gameren church archives (uncatalogued), 1709.

<sup>50</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren, Archief Ambtsbestuur 281. Also: Van der Zalm, pg. 282.

water could not flow away because of ice-dams in the Maas. The first weeks of February the farmers were busy, working on the dikes; at the same time their wives, children and cattle took refuge in higher places. But the battle against the rising waters failed, and during a terrible snow, hail, thunder and lightning storm the dike near Hedel on the Maas breached, resulting in a hole 88 rods [484 yards=400 meters] long. The next day one could see only the roofs of the farm houses rising above the water.<sup>51</sup> Aernout van de Werken of Gameren noted that the water was almost 6 feet [2 meters] high in his house.<sup>52</sup> Repairs started immediately, but heavy rains in March caused new problems. On April 8th, the temporary dike at Hedel broke again and the land - nearly dry - was inundated for a second time. During that terrible winter, the dikes along the Maas between the German border and Hedel counted 24 breaches; the inland dikes in the Bommelerwaard broke 25 times.<sup>53</sup> Seven years later, it was the dike along the Waal east of Zaltbommel that broke - this time not due to ice, just heavy rain. The effect was the same: total inundation.<sup>54</sup> In 1760, 1781 and 1784 the villages east of the Meidijk were spared from flooding when the dike broke at Brakel. This was because, being spared from war, the eastern villages mounted a major repair and maintenance program for the Meidijk during the latter part of the century. In 1784, some 338 laborers in all - 51 of them from Gameren - turned out to repair this crucial dike.<sup>55</sup>

Though a flood is disastrous for people, the land actually benefits from the process. What made the Bommelerwaard such rich farmland in the first place was, after all, millennia of flooding. But if the land stays wet too long, there can be ecological and agricultural disaster. Since the Middle Ages, the villages of the Bommelerwaard used a system of east-west canals and water-pumping windmills - *watermolens* - to dry out their land after flood and rain. In 1714 the village of Gameren built a new water mill.<sup>56</sup> In 1740, the city of Zaltbommel and the villages decided to build six *watermolens*. One of these mills was in Nieuwaal and the other in Gameren. The Gameren mill, built on the site of the mill the villagers had erected in 1714, cost an enormous sum: 9000 guilders.<sup>57</sup> All this public works effort was costly and complicated. It undoubtedly took capable village leadership to make it all happen, leadership provided by men like Antonis van Tuyl of Gameren.

### ***Back to Gameren***

Antonis van Tuyl was contemporary in both time and generation to two of the more important of his American cousins: Abraham Van Tuyl who pioneered the Second Watchung Mountain of New

<sup>51</sup> Pierlinck, J., "De verschrikkelijke watersnood," Amsterdam, 1757-Maasbree, 1980, pp. 26-27.

<sup>52</sup> Family bible, private collection.

<sup>53</sup> Pierlinck, pp. 4,5,56.

<sup>54</sup> Driessen, A., "Watersnood tussen Maas en Waal; overstromingsrampen in het rivierengebied tussen 1780 en 1810," Zutphen, 1994, pg. 28.

<sup>55</sup> Driessen, pp. 114, 135, 136, 287 and 288.

<sup>56</sup> Gameren church archives (uncatalogued), 1714.

<sup>57</sup> Gameren church archives (uncatalogued), 1740.



## Chapter 10

Jersey, and Otto Van Tuyl who pioneered the Staten Island Ferry. Like his cousins, Antonis was, in a way, a pioneer too: it was he who brought the family back to the Burgersteegh of Gameren. Already successful at farming on his own by the time he came of age in 1731, Antonis was able to purchase his own farm just two years later.<sup>58</sup> It was the farm called *Hooge Scheylweg*, the very place that had been owned by his ancestor Jan Sandersz van Tuyl - the man who brought the Van Tuyls to Gameren in the first place.<sup>59</sup> Well-positioned in the community, Antonis was able to marry well just 1 1/2 years later. His bride was Cornelia van de Werken, daughter of one of the area's most important families.<sup>60</sup> Because Cornelia had only one brother (he died unmarried) and because Antonis' brother predeceased his father, Antonis and Cornelia between them inherited a lot of property. But Antonis also went about acquiring land on his own during the peaceful century.<sup>61</sup>

With his combination of arable lands and pasturable meadows, Antonis raised livestock as well as crops. A measure of his success was that, by 1768 he owned 8 horses and 2 foals. Only the village *Schout* owned more horses.<sup>62</sup> Just about this time an agricultural revolution hit the country. More than two hundred years after Europeans learned of the potato in South America, they started cultivating it on The Continent. After 1770, production of this new food exploded so that by 1800 it was the most important part of the common man's diet.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> He rented church land in 1731: Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren 844.

<sup>59</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 681, 10-03-1733. He bought the farm with 1 morgen land for 526 guilders from Hendrick Cool. Jan Sandersz van Tuyl had sold it in 1607.

<sup>60</sup> For Van de Wercken family history, see: Groenendijk, J., "Het geslacht Van de Werken in Gameren," in *Genealogisch Tijdschrift voor Midden- en West-Noord-Brabant en de Bommelerwaard*, 1994, nr. 2, 3 and 4.

<sup>61</sup> Properties purchased by Antonis van Tuyl: RAG, RAZ 681, 10-05-1735 : 2 morgen Vogelerscamp for 85 guilders from Hendrick Cool; sold again to Gerrit Haye for 60 guilders (RAG, RAZ 682, 12-04-1740). RAG, RAZ 683, 23-03-1742 : 1 morgen wood north of the Burgersteegh for 310 guilders from David van Sittert. RAG, RAZ 683, 18-06-1743 : 3 1/2 morgen wood at Nieuwaal for 720 guilders from Bernardus van Niel. RAG, RAZ 683, 15-11-1745 : 4 hont hoptand Adammenhof for 587 1/2 guilders from Dirck Schaey. RAG, RAZ 683, 02-05-1747 : 5 hont Oude Wey at Nieuwaal for 100 guilders from Frederick van Hauselt. RAG, RAZ 683, 11-04-1752 : 2 1/2 hont hoptand next to the Adammenhof for 220 guilders from Jan Jansz de Swart. RAG, RAZ 684, 14-06-1757 : 3 hont orchard on the Hendricksteeg for 190 guilders from Maria Adriana Schaey. RAG, RAZ 684, 10-04-1759 : 3 morgen farmland and meadows Oude Wey at Nieuwaal for 190 guilders from Dirk van der Nat. RAG, RAZ 684, 09-03-1764 : 3 morgen meadows Oerenburgt at Nieuwaal for 700 guilders from Johan Kempenaer. RAG, RAZ 684, 17-05-1765 : 3 morgen meadows De Sacken at Nieuwaal for 482 guilders from Dirk van IJseren's widow. RAG, RAZ 684, 09-03-1765 : 2 morgen 4 hont meadows at Nieuwaal for 530 guilders from Jan den Otter. RAG, RAZ 684, 03-02-1768 : 2 1/4 hont Bulck at Nieuwaal for 160 guilders from the widow of Ruth Clop. RAG, RAZ 684, 21-12-1768 : 2 morgen meadows for 800 guilders from Nanna van Hoytema.

<sup>62</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren 768.

<sup>63</sup> Groenveld, S. and Schutte, G., "Nederlands verleden in vogelvlucht; de nieuwe tijd 1500 tot 1813," Leiden, 1992, pp. 124-125.



*Het Onderlangs*, the farm beneath the dike where Otto Geerlofsz van Tuyl started the family on the road to recovery. The farmhouse is typical of the Gameren style [see illustration, chapter 1].

[J.N.A. Groenendijk collection]



**Gameren's Burgersteegh** probably looked much the same in the 18th century as it did in this 1910 photo. The family van Tuyl has owned property along the left side of this road [now *Burgerstraat*] for centuries. Antonis van Tuyl built the *Adammenhof* [gray house, center] about 1750. It was built in a "T" shape - unusual for Gameren - with the stables in the back at the base of the "T" and the house at the top of the "T" facing the road. [J.N.A. Groenendijk collection]

## Scandal in Gameren

The hot topic in Gameren during 1781 through 1784 - and certainly the most costly public affair of the time - was a nasty bit of religion-mixed-with-politics that ended up costing the burghers some 1800 guilders in lawyer's fees. The Rev. Mr. Huysinghius, the village's first pastor, would surely have turned over in his grave had he known about it.

It seems that in May, 1781, George van Randwijk, Lord of Gameren nominated Anthony Petrus Abbingh to be the new pastor for the Gameren church. But late in the year this nomination ran into trouble, to say the least. Many of the churchmembers, among them Mrs. Otto van Tuyl (Mereke van de Werken), raised a cry of protest.

The reason?

According to Gijsbert van de Werken, Mrs. Van Tuyl's cousin, he arrived at the village tavern near the Kluit on the evening of July 13th to find the Rev. Mr. Abbingh stone cold drunk. In fact, the postulant was so inebriated that Van de Wercken decided to take him back to his lodgings in Zaltbommel. But Abbingh couldn't walk, even with assistance. He fell again and again, so Van de Wercken finally took him back to the tavern, where he spent the night. This story was backed up by Hermen Timmer, the brewer who lived next to the tavern, and tavern-keeper Krijn van de Werken and his wife.

The church members were justifiably outraged. Referring to the church law of 1619, their lawyers made the case that doctrinal purity was not the only thing to be considered in approving such a nomination. Lifestyle counted, too. A minister must practice what he preached.

For some reason, Van Randwijk would not, or could not, withdraw his nomination of Abbingh. So for almost two years pleas and counterpleas followed, one after the other, until the villagers finally won their case. They were able to prove that the incident was not an isolated one. Abbingh had been seen drunk many times in other places. He was clearly not what they wanted in a pastor.

Finally, the legal process ground through all the arguments and rendered its verdict. On 3 April, 1784 the Court of Gelre passed judgment that Abbingh was *persona non habilis et grata*. The villagers had at long last prevailed. Half a year later they got a pastor they could live with: Hermanus Thoofst.

### References:

Groenendijk, J., "Dat er op die tijd iets aan Abbingh haperde," in *Tussen De Voorn en Loevestein*, May and September, 1985.

Note: After his dismissal at Gameren, Abbingh became pastor in Meerkerk (15-08-1785), but died three years later [Letter from F.A. van Lieburg to J.N.A. Groenendijk, 29-03-1996].

For Gameren there began a long era of potato production. The Bommelerwaard farmers were able to grow enough to export to the cities of Holland, as well as to meet their own needs. Of course, these needs seem modest by modern standards: most country folk ate potatoes with bacon-drippings, cabbage, onions, and carrots. Meat found its way to the table only once a week - in soup.<sup>64</sup> Surely the daily menu in the home of Antonis van Tuyl must have been better than this peasant's fare. He was, after all, a prosperous man. Around 1750 he built an impressive new house on the *Adammenhof* - a farm he'd purchased in 1745.<sup>65</sup> And by 1762, after inheriting his father-in-law's lands, Antonis actually owned three farms along the Burgersteegh.

Antonis felt wealthy enough - and lucky enough - to wager a substantial 9 guilders, 9 stivers with brewer David Timmer in 1747. The subject of this bet? "*Will the parson get permission from the village lord to build a barn, even though the villagers oppose the construction?*" Antonis bet against the parson and with the people. He lost. It seems that some vestige of the feudal system was alive and well in 18th century Gameren.<sup>66</sup>

Another tradition - one with potentially disastrous consequences for the Van Tuyls of Gameren - was still thriving in 1749: the barroom brawl. As out-of-character as it may seem, our successful pillar of the community, civic leader, and church deacon Antonis van Tuyl got himself into a knife fight sometime during 1749 at a tavern in Nieuwaal! His opponent was another local - Christiaan Timmer. Both Timmer and Van Tuyl suffered knife wounds to the hand, but these were easily treated by the surgeon.<sup>67</sup> An angry Antonis van Tuyl felt he was the victim, so he sued Christiaan Timmer for 1000 guilders.<sup>68</sup> The high court took a dim view of his suit, rejecting his claim on the grounds - true or not - that both parties were equally at fault.<sup>69</sup>

### ***Otto and Antonis***

When Otto van Tuyl - who, as far as we know, was the only son of Antonis van Tuyl - came of age in 1763, he started following in his father's footsteps. First - as dad had done - Otto started buying land for himself in Gameren and Nieuwaal.<sup>70</sup> Second - as dad had done - he married a Van de Werken.<sup>71</sup> Third - as dad had done - Otto continued to live along the Burgersteegh, first at the *Adammenhof*, later at the *Hooge Scheylweg*. Finally - as dad had done - Otto took his place as a leader of the village and of the church: *gerichtsnabuur*, *buurmeester*, tax collector, church

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<sup>64</sup> Manning, pp. 100-1.

<sup>65</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Oud Archief Dorpspolder Gameren 767. The house stands to this day.

<sup>66</sup> Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Nieuw Archief Dorpspolder Gameren 1261. Also: SAB, OAG 864.

<sup>67</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Hof van Gelre, Civiele procesdossiers 6619, 08-08-1750.

<sup>68</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 20, 20-02-1749.

<sup>69</sup> Rijksarchief Gelderland, Hof van Gelre, appelprocessen 6619, nr. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Among other properties was 8 hont called *Florishof* on the Burgersteegh. This is still owned by his descendants (Rijksarchief Gelderland, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem 687, 02-06-1794).

<sup>71</sup> Mereke - [See: *Dutch Genealogy*].





The Gameraen church *circa* 1740, with the rectory on the left and a small farmhouse to the right. Notice that the church, originally built in the 14th or 15th century, still stood only partly repaired some 165 years after the Spanish damaged it in 1574. The small bell tower was added in 1725, and the structure was finally rebuilt in 1786. Sadly, the historic old church was completely demolished by German occupation forces in 1945.

H. Spilman, *circa* 1740. [J.N.A. Groenendijk collection]

property administrator.<sup>72</sup> But - unlike dad - Otto fathered seven children. Raised by their mother Mereke van de Werken, tutored by their schoolmaster uncle Gijsbert Jansz van de Werken<sup>73</sup> in reading, writing, psalm-singing, and perhaps some arithmetic, the five surviving van Tuyl children - Antonus, Jantje, Willem, Peterke, and Gijsbert - must have been well-prepared to lead their family into the 19th century.

### ***The End of a Peaceful Century***

When Antonis van Tuyl died in 1796, there had been 133 eventful years in Gameren and Nieuwaal since that black year of 1663 which had nearly destroyed his family. Did he even remember the name of Jan Otten, or Geerlof? Probably not. Most people are concerned only with the *here* and *now* of life. But looking back on his own life, and that of his father, Antonis could have felt justifiable pride. They had brought the family up from poverty. Once again, the Van Tuyls were leading citizens of Gameren. Antonis probably thought of his five grandchildren, and the world they would inherit. Would it be as good as the world he had known? Antonis van Tuyl was a man who had never known war or military occupation, but he had probably heard the horror stories from the past. So as the armies of France marched once again northward, he must have died a worried man, wondering how his grandchildren might survive another conquest.

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<sup>72</sup> See: *Dutch Genealogy*.

<sup>73</sup> Manning, pp. 116, 119, 122.