

Introduction

After researching the Welmerinks and other members of my family, I found the Welmerinks to be the most notorious of all sides of my family. I thought I would construct a website that contains many of the public stories I have been able to gather over the last several years to share them with family members who have an interest in Christian Welmerink and Anna Gertrude te Vaanholt's family. There was a great deal of tragedy in the Welmerinks' lives and much of that was shared in public through the newspapers. The most notorious of all is the John Berend Welmerik bar fight where John was shot through the heart and killed. He was the nephew of Christian and Anna and the son of Christian's brother Hermanus. Hermanus died in 1894 and it appears that his wife, Johanna Zweers Welmerink died before 1900, too. Some of the records show that Christian and Anna helped raise some of Hermanus' children. As a matter of fact, great grandfather Christian Welmerink and son-in-law Harm Wolbers were the witnesses at John's wedding.

Summary of the Stories

Bear Hunt in Grand Rapids. December 12, 1897, our Great Grandpa Christian Welmerink was a park officer in John Ball Park. He was a significant factor in Jack the bear's death after Jack escaped from John Ball Park. Jack was the favorite member of the park bear family.

Welmerink was Angry. Park officer Welmerink arrested three women on Memorial Day in 1898 for being on the grass in John Ball Park. He probably got fired after he threw his badge in the face of the police superintendent when the superintendent nullified the arrests of the three women. One of the women was a daughter of a Grand Rapids alderman.

Smashes His Ribs – Crushed Bones. March 2, 1910, Great Grandpa Welmerink was crushed in an industrial accident and three ribs were splintered at Grand Rapids-Muskegon Power Company on Straight Street. It was feared "because of his age," he might die because "his age was against him," but he lived another 10 years and did not die until 1920. They erroneously gave his age at 64 in the article, when in fact, he was only 54 years old.

The Bar Fight. Grandma Anna's oldest brother, John was one of the two men that John Berend was with when he came into the bar, just before he was shot through the heart. The paper talked about a "young John" Welmerink being with John Berend and then gave the address of "young John" as 48 Hogadone Avenue in Grand Rapids. The "Grandmother Book" says that Grandma Anna was born at 48 Hogadone Avenue and Christian's death certificate shows that he lived at 48 Hogadone Avenue. Apparently our great grandfather's brother Berend Welmerink was in Frank Hendrick's Saloon the night John Berend was killed because he testified at a hearing about what he saw that night, including the fact that he never knew any of the

boys to be able to whip John Berend in a fight. Nothing more needs to be said about the bar fight other than to read the stories.

Gave Him Burial. March 13, 1903, our great grandfather Christian Welmerink and his brother Berend Welmerink chipped in to help pay for the expenses of their nephew, John Berend Welmerink who was shot through the heart in a bar fight at Frank Hendrick's Saloon in Grand Rapids.

Arrests and Convictions. Some of our cousins were arrested and convicted of various crimes like begging, being drunk in public, and larceny, and spent time in very bad prisons.

Where Brother Died. September 9, 1907, Garret Welmerink, John Berend Welmerink's brother who was killed in the bar fight in 1903, pulls the same stunt and goes behind the bar to get a drink when the bartender refused to serve him. Garret was not killed as was John, but he went to jail for 30 days. (How stupid is that?)

She Needs Husband. September 8, 1907, Mrs. Garrett Welmerink wrote a letter to Judge Hess appealing to have Garrett Welmerink released from jail because she is destitute and has no means of support.

Henry Welmerink is in Very Serious Condition. August 23, 1914, Henry Welmerink, son of Berend Welmerink (Berend, the brother of our great grandfather) fell in front of a saloon and fractured his leg. Evidently he had the delirium tremens so bad that they could not set his leg. He died about a month or so later and his death certificate said he died of chronic alcoholism. It was also noted in the article that "through an error, the name of his cousin, John Welmerink (our grandmothers' brother) was used as the man who was the victim of the accident." I don't know what that was about.

Finally a Hero. William Welmerink, son of Berend Welmerink, was a war hero in World War I. Unfortunately, he was killed in Fance on August 2, 1918. There are some sad and some inspirational articles on William.

Those are just some of the articles you will read on this website. The Welmerinks were pretty notorious in those days.

- By Ken Roelofs