

'The Fox'

Hendrikus (Hent) Wilhelmus Derksen 4/2/1848-25/2/1932

of s'Heerenberg, Montferland, Gelderland, Netherlands

My two times Great Grandfather was someone growing up, I would glance at his photo on my Oma's wall and identify with an uncanny look of my father. I was told he was a Papal Guard and not much more.

Recently I was to discover he was known as a Papal Zouave and nicknamed 'de Vos' (The Fox). The Papal Zouaves¹ evolved out of a unit formed by Louis Juchault de Lamoriciere in 1860. On the 1/1/1861 the unit was renamed the Papal Zouaves. The men of this unit were mainly young men, unmarried and Roman Catholic, who would volunteer to assist Pope Pius IX and fight for the Papal States. Comprising of an international makeup, the Dutch numbered 1,910 and the country highest representation out of 4,592 men. Hent became a Zouave on 22/7/1869. He participated in the last battles in Rome under the Supreme Commander of the Pontifical Army, General Baron Athanase de Charefte de la Confrié. The Zouaves played a role in the final engagements against the forces of the newly united Kingdom of Italy in September 1870. The Papal forces were outnumbered almost 7-1, the Zouaves fought off enemy lancers on the 13th, withdrew with Papal artillery under heavy fire on the 20th, and prepared for a counterattack against the Italians before being told to surrender. Hent was released from service on the 22/9/1870.



Papal Zouaves 1860's 1. Service uniform 2. Parade uniform 3. Lieutenant I parade uniform 4. Captain



He was proud that he fought for the Pope and took great honour in appearing in the Zouave uniform at s'Heerenberg's festive occasions, decorated with various merits. He always took part in the Zouaves gatherings and feasts that were held. One of these meetings took place in Utrecht for the restoration of the Lateran Treaty.

Hent became an integral part of the s'Heerenberg community being a member and board member of the Society de Friendship. He was also regarded and loved by many as a source of information for those who sought a solution from him in difficult circumstances. For more than half a century he worked as builder of construction and maintenance work for the Castle 'Huis Bergh'. He also owned a café in Molenpoortstraat that his son-in-law, Wilhelmus Josephus Gerardus Aloisius van Seggelen, ran and was an agent for Zuidhollandse Bier-brouwerij Den Haag (South Holland Beer Brewery The Hague).

¹ Zouaves were a class of light infantry regiments of the French Army.

Upon his passing in 1932 the newspaper De Graafschapbode described Hent as a man of character and humanity, whose memory will be honoured by many in s'Heerenberg. His funeral procession reflected the esteem to which was held for Hendrikus Wilhelmus Derksen.



Hent Derksen 1848-1932



Rudolf Joustra 1937-1985



Castle Huis Bergh