

IJZERLO AND THE DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOL until 1945*compiled by Gree van Daatselaar-Somsen [53]*

IJzerlo, a small hamlet in the Achterhoek, but nevertheless a place that is connected with our worldwide family in many ways.

IJzerlo, the place where we can find the Japikshuis from where the first Somsens emigrated to the United States in the 19th century and the place where the lime tree was planted to commemorate this.

The beautiful camping site where we have our Somsen camping weekends is situated in the heart of IJzerlo. In this article we write about – in brief – **denominational education in IJzerlo in the first half of the 20th century.**

*painting
of the old school
by: Piet te Lintum*

It must in probability have been in 1902 that for the first time mention was made of the building of a school in IJzerlo. In the other hamlets of Aalten there were already schools. The IJzerlo parents increasingly feel the difficulties their children experience on the long and bad roads to a distant school. It is no trifle for the very young ones having to walk for an hour every day in any weather.

A first meeting is held and then a committee is set up. It is this committee's task to prepare the IJzerlo population for and familiarize them with the building of a school of their own. In the course of 1903 there is another meeting, all the pros and cons are deliberated and all the calculations are made. Please note, until 1922 only state schools received subsidies from the government. Denominational schools had to be built with the money provided by the parents. The required number of pupils to start a school was attained in 1903.

The building site was purchased and well over half a year after putting out the contract the school is finished. Simple but functional. A clever piece of organisation, labour and readiness to make a sacrifice! A principal is appointed and a lady-teacher as the second teacher. On October 1, 1904, the denominational school in IJzerlo is officially opened. There is much thankfulness and satisfaction and a celebration!

They start with 55 pupils but after one year the number of pupils has grown so much that a third teacher can be appointed. In 1909 the school building has become too small. A third classroom is added. Later they build a spacious bay window, which provides more light and space. And it also renders a nice look.

The number of members of the school association is gradually increasing and consequently the number of pupils as well.

The school is flourishing, there are a few changes in the staff but education can continue quite regularly until 1914.

During World War One from 1914 – 1918 there are some difficulties from time to time because of lack of staff, so that they frequently have to work with two teachers in three classrooms. The communicating door was opened then or the teacher had to take a double number of pupils in his classroom. That is not easy.

Commemorative stone

Then we arrive at a milestone in the history of the denominational school in IJzerlo: October 4, 1929, the 25th anniversary! There are a memorial service and a celebration. The old pupils present the school with a commemorative stone. This stone can still be seen in the present school building, 't Warmelinck.

And so October 1930 is drawing near.

On the first day of this month a new teacher enters the school. Miss Beumer [70], born in the west of The Netherlands, in Edam. Later she is to be married to Harminus Somsen [45] from Aalten, the fifth son of Frederik Hendrik Somsen [16].

And so we see that there are connections between the Somsen family and IJzerlo again, through the denominational school over there. There is a needlework teacher at the school whose name is Christien Somsen [164]. The two teachers become friends.

From the records of the school of the 1930s the weak economic position of our country is clearly noticeable. Unemployment, dearth, economy measures.

Then it was possible to embody conditions in the appointment of a teacher that would be unthinkable now. For example: in the letter of appointment of Miss Beumer the obligation was laid upon her to be a member of the girls' association and also to live in IJzerlo. There was also a regulation that a female teacher would be dismissed as soon as she got married. And a married lady teacher would not get a permanent appointment.

In 1939 the threat of war is perceptible. There is also the threat of scarcity. Alarmed members of the school-board give the order to fill the coal storeroom.

Then the war breaks out on May 10, 1940. In the first few years things are going reasonably well but in the year 1944 it is getting increasingly difficult to run the school. In that year bombs hit the school twice. Devastation. Many bombers fly over IJzerlo on their way to the German Ruhr area. It is decided to close down the school temporarily.

On March 30, 1945, IJzerlo was liberated after stirring times.

Johanna Josina Somsen-Beumer

Miss Beumer, teacher of the 1st and 2nd classes, worked at the school for twelve years and eight months. 'A rich period', she writes when she is as old as eighty-five in 'Our School, a memorial book about past, present and future of 90 years of denominational education in the hamlet of IJzerlo'.

In all those years she has developed strong ties with all of her pupils and their parents. These ties of friendship with her old pupils became lasting ties, also long after that she got married and became a mother of five children herself. Indeed, these ties lasted until she had reached a very old age.

Johanna Josina Somsen-Beumer died in Aalten on July 30, 2001, aged 92.

Her eldest daughter, **Harmien Bakker-Somsen** [73] relates in a beautiful *IN MEMORIAM* about her mother. (Quote):

'In frivolous Amsterdam clothes my mother rode on her bike from the train along the sandy paths of the Achterhoek countryside of those days in the wake of a member of the school-board, who was dressed in black.

Quite a change, a new world that my mother, gifted with the capacity to empathize was very eager to get acquainted with. First she got a temporary post as a teacher at the Heelweg and there she learned that there was a vacancy in IJzerlo. A permanent job!

The school-board of the IJzerlo school came over to watch a probation lesson. Quite accidentally Mother was dressed decently that day, wearing a sober dress with long sleeves. She had long hair and moreover she was a very good storyteller.

The board fell for her unanimously. She was to be the new teacher.

Thus a rich period started in my mother's life.

She was the teacher of the 1st and the 2nd classes in a very nice team. The children had just left their mothers for the first time and said in the vernacular: 'What a big house, how many rooms.

Mother was very sweet, but also strict and a very good teacher.

She enjoyed her work very much and also the contacts with the parents. She visited them in their homes and she got acquainted with the culture of the Achterhoek. She relished the warm-heartedness, the hospitality, the honest plainness, the humour and the solidarity of the people of IJzerlo.(-)

In 1935 mother found a boarding-house in Aalten in the home of the Stronks family.

That's where she met my father, Harminus Somsen from the Landstraat. They entered into a relationship just prior to the mobilization in 1939. Their engagement lasted four years.(-)

*Personnel of the school in the Thirties'
l.-r.: Mr. Kämink, Miss Beumer [70],
Mr. Harmsen and Mr. Dozeman*

Her wedding announcement implied her dismissal at the same time. There were plenty of teachers then, so married women could be dispensed with...

My father and mother were happily married for 25 years. In her marriage my mother was more tied than before her marriage. Together my parents raised five children with lots of love.(-)

Mother very strongly maintained the connections with IJzerlo and this was mutual. She kept following all the families, she sympathized with them and was always present in foul and fair.(-)

When she was around eighty travelling by train became difficult, she got bad on her legs and she was no longer able to visit her handicapped son Mas in Apeldoorn every Wednesday.

Then the old pupils came to the rescue. They made a timetable with volunteers and from then onwards, for more than ten years, every Wednesday an old pupil from IJzerlo drove up and accompanied mother to Mas in Apeldoorn for the whole day. This was tremendously valuable for mother.

I know that her old pupils also enjoyed these visits, for mother used to be a surprising party to a discussion. (Unquote).

Johanna Josina Somsen-Beumer died in full peace. Her life was complete, the life of a strong woman who kept thinking about God and about society.

She had requested that old pupils of the IJzerlo denominational school carried her out of the funeral centre accompanied by the sounds of 'May the Glory be with Thee'. ■

Sources: • ONZE SCHOOL, 90 jaar Christelijk Schoolonderwijs IJzerlo. ISBN 90-9007534-8 (OUR SCHOOL, 90 years of denominational education in IJzerlo)
• IJzerlo, d'Nestiezern

CAMPING WEEKEND AUGUST 23-26, 2001

by Wim Somsen [518]

For the fifth time already – an anniversary – the Somsen family is getting together at the camping site in IJzerlo. The weather is traditionally perfect. For this weekend a real heat wave was even forecast. *Alice and Eddy Sticker* have already anticipated for there is a pool in the middle of the camping site.

Pool with Maria [1013] and Laura [1014]

As usual the board retires on Thursday evening to have a long and serious talk about the activities of the year to come, the publication of the next Somsen Horizon, the financial affairs and many other important matters. In between we are sufficiently provided with food and drinks by *Ben and Hanny* [396 and 397] so that for some of us the meeting cannot last long enough.

For Friday we have planned a visit to our lime tree

at the Japikshuis. But since Mrs Veerbeek has gone to a residential home for the elderly, 'Pronsweide' in Winterswijk, our chairman Theo brings her a nice bunch of flowers there. This time we skip the visit to the lime tree though I can say that the tree is doing great.

In the course of Friday more guests arrive so that the camping site is full and breathes a cosy atmosphere. It is also very nice that relatives arrive

who have not yet participated in the activities of the camping weekend so far. Everybody spends the day as he or she likes with biking, swimming, walking or just simply reading a fine book. In spite of the beautiful warm evening everybody turns in relatively early. Indeed, we are ageing a little and the years count. Except for one board member who spends a merry night till the early morning with a couple of bikers from Brabant.

Early on Saturday we leave for the Vragender swamps. Some brave ones go on their bikes and the others go by car.

We are ready for it: dressed in long trousers and Wellington boots, mosquito spray for the unprotected parts of the body and enough to drink. A reliable guide is waiting for us. After having established the exact number of participants we cheerfully go into the swamps. The first part of the trip takes us along several dikes. How easy! There are plenty of berries: blueberries, cranberries and what not. We eat till our fingers and mouths are totally blue. Then, at last, there is the moment that we have to traverse the swamp. The path is getting narrower and swampier – just walk right in the middle on the sticks and nothing will happen. The speed is slowing down drastically – sweat starts gushing down from our bodies because of endeavour and fear. Then, all of a sudden, there is the first cry of terror. Someone has sunk into the swamp as far as his middle. In unison he is dragged to the dry land again – while you have to stand aloof a bit for the mud produces a very special scent of its own. Not everybody is capable of listening to the explanations of the guide about the origin of the swamp and the various plants and animals anymore. They are too much occupied with themselves. For a matter of fact, it soon becomes clear that the preparations of all the individual participants are very much different. Whereas one individual has adjusted his footwear and clothes to the environment quite well, there are others who are only equipped for a light walk on the beach. But in the end everybody arrives at the place of departure safe and sound, in spite of much groaning and complaining. In any case the guide did a great job trying to teach us something about this swamp area and he also told us about the future plans for actions to preserve the swamps.

The pancakes and the beers and other drinks in Vragender afterwards taste wonderfully delicious. Back home at the camping site everybody needs some time to recover. Some float a little in the swimming pool. One among us has enough energy to catch one of the many chickens that walk about in a trap he developed all by himself. And to complete this act he shows us how to teach a chicken to lie on its back as if it is dead. To me it is clear that this chicken trainer can participate in our

cultural day to show this impressive trick to a larger audience.

A standard part of the weekend is the BBQ on Saturday evening. Again it has been perfectly taken care of by *Rudolf Brunsveld* from IJzerlo. It is very nice that also this time there are other new guests. The weather is great, there is enough food and drink and being seated under the majestic oak-trees of the camping-site renders a perfect night. Halfway through the evening *Johan* [1089] brings us a serenade from the hayloft. With a trained voice, accompanied by his inseparable accordion, he lets a somewhat profane song sound over the assembled family. He gets a well-deserved applause.

It is very late at night when under the leadership of *Rita* [409] and *Joke* [523] the dishes are done by women mainly and a few lonely men. Homage also to this team.

Sunday is a day of rest. Some go to church, others sit in the shade. Some start making preparations for the journey home. It is a nice surprise that we are being visited by *Dick* [144] and *Alie* [239] *Somsen* (from the Zelhem branch). The night before they celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary and with the remainders of the drinks the party is done over again at the camping site.

With the hard core we go out for dinner at the marketplace in Aalten. The owner with his dry comment entertains us again. He plays his role with fervour, even when the bills are being paid he manages to keep us in suspense – negotiations about the bill are even possible, but in the end the customer gets the worst of it.

The weekend is over. Again a great success I believe. Next year we will probably skip it because of the plans for our cultural day. (See enclosed instructions). Probably there will be a short weekend at some other time. You will be informed about this in *Somsen Horizon*. ■

*I.: Guide with the Somsen-team
in the Vragender swamps*