



Belgian American Historical Society of Chicago

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A Word from our President :

In this issue we feature the history of a gentleman who was perhaps overlooked by his own ethnic Chicago community, the life of artist and club owner Joseph-Pierre Nuyttens. It is always a pleasure for me to read about someone I have not heard about before, and we hope that you readers also find this enjoyable. Bart Ryckbosch created this article from his own personal research, and we thank him for it. We also have a delightful discussion written by Christi Debrauwere on the “Bel-Gem” waffle, something that has become synonymous with Belgian culture. Great fun, Christi!

We ask you all to save two important dates: May 2nd is our Annual Membership Meeting, and June 13th will be our first Man of the Year presentation and celebration party honoring Arnold Van Puymbroeck (see following discussion). We hope to see you all at both events!

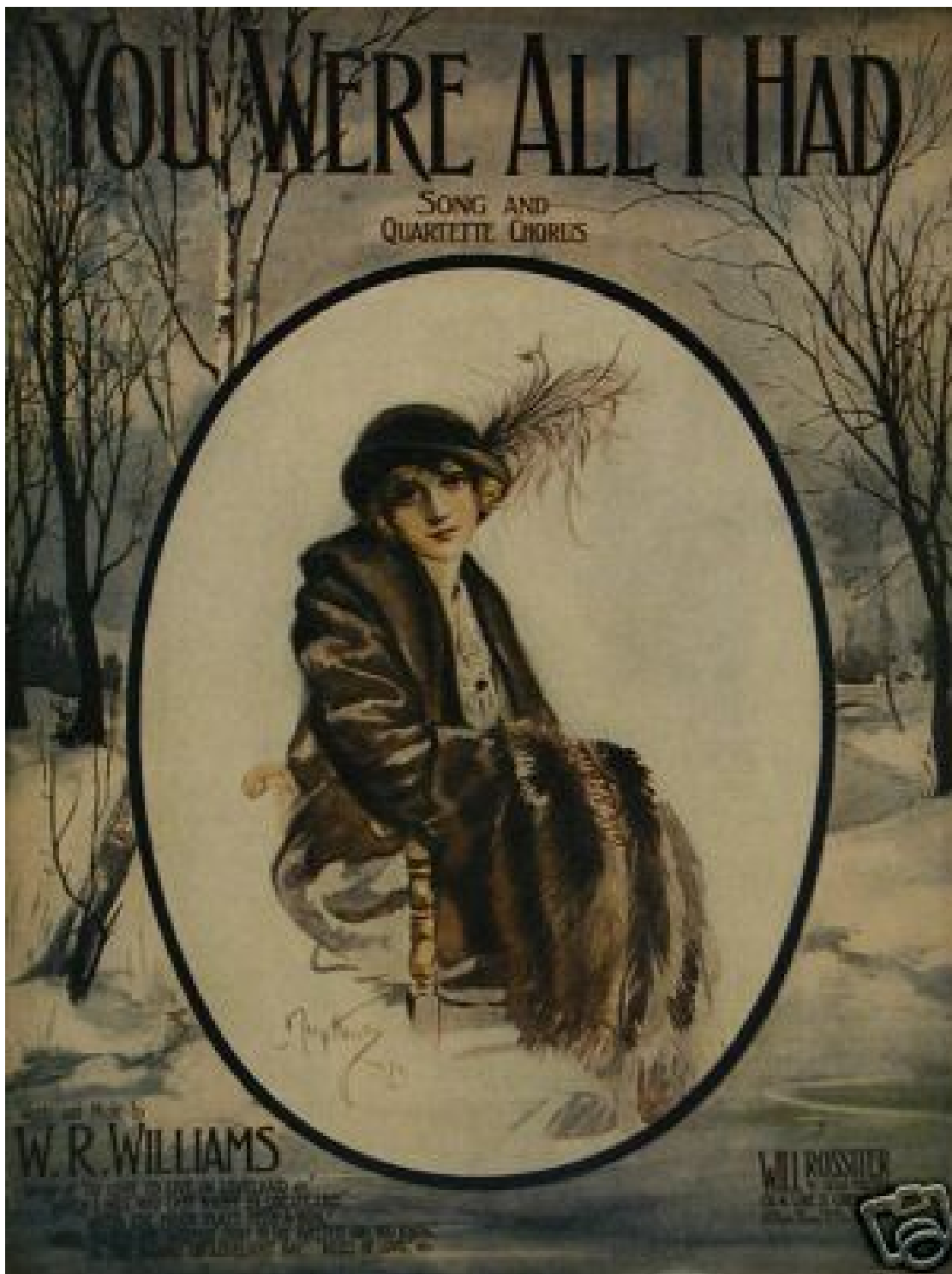
Belgian-American Artist and Club Owner: Joseph-Pierre Nuyttens (1877-1960) by Bart Ryckbosch

JP Nuyttens was born in Antwerp, Belgium, on August 7, 1877. At a young age his artistic talents became very obvious. He initially studied at the Royal Academy of Antwerp, where he excelled and was awarded the first prize of the Ecole des Industries. Later his parents sent him abroad to study painting, drawing and etching at the famous Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He first set foot in America on October 1, 1894, arriving from Antwerp in New York on the Westerland, to continue his studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He obtained his US citizenship on October 15, 1900 in Chicago. By 1902 Nuyttens lives in Chicago, is married to an American lady, Antoinette “Nettie”, and works as an advertising artist. Their daughter Laura is born in 1903, son Georges in 1909. A full 17 years after his emigration, Nuyttens first returns to Belgium for a six month visit in 1912.



During the 1910s Nuyttens had his artist studio in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue, at that time the premier artist haven of the city, where he enjoyed the company of other esteemed artists and architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Frank Baum. His WWI draft registration card of Sept. 12, 1918 lists his home address on 844 W. Oakdale Avenue, his studio address on Pearson Street. The 1930 US Census finds the “portrait painter” Pierre Nuyttens as an official inhabitant of Manhattan in New York, while he still maintained the Chicago studio/residence on Pearson Street. His wife Nettie lived in Chicago with her married daughter Laura and son-in-law James Scofield, an advertising executive, at the time of the 1930 census.

By the 1930s Nuyttens had become a very successful artist, exhibiting all over the country in museums and galleries. Works by him were adorning the walls of the White House, Library of Congress and the Belgian Embassy in Washington DC, as well as the Governor’s Mansion, State House and Illinois State Library in Springfield, IL. He was frequently commissioned to draw, paint or etch portraits of members of high society in both Europe and Belgium, including the Belgian Royal Family in 1920. King Albert I decorated JP Nuyttens with Knighthood in the Order of Leopold II.



Joseph-Pierre Nuyttens' ambitions, talents and fortunes were not limited to the realm of the fine arts. He also made a name for himself as a theater set and costume designer, restaurant and dance club owner and music producer. As a stage designer and costumier he worked for the federal theater in 1933 and choreographed the

Lincoln Pagent in New Salem, IL in 1940. As a commercial artist he painted hundreds of posters and cover art for sheet music and song books.

In the prohibition era Nuyttens owned a nightclub in the River North area, Chez Pierre, on Ontario and Fairbanks, later renamed Chez Patee. He sold the business when gangsters tried to pressure him into selling bootleg liquor. After the prohibition was lifted, Nuyttens not a man to rest on his laurels, went back into the business, opening a restaurant and entertainment club, Pierre's Casino, on the corner of Rush and Ontario Streets.

America's Most Beautiful Theater Restaurant
Chez Pierre *By the Lake*
ONTARIO AND FAIRBANKS CT.
(3 Min. from Loop)
Pierre Nuyttens Presents
A NEW RUSSIAN EXTRAVAGANZA
“THE CZAR”
featuring
Countess Santa Alexeeva
and a Brilliant Company of Russian Dancers
*No Cover Charge to Dinner Guests
Arriving Before 9:00 P. M. for the
Entire Evening Except Saturday.*

Excellent restaurants in their own right, Nuyttens' clubs were best known for the beautiful dance girls that performed on stage. Many of them became famous, went on to Broadway or onto a singing career, or married into Chicago's high society. Not surprisingly, these performers became favorite subjects for Nuyttens' art work. Many of his paintings, drawings and etchings depict these gorgeous young dancers and singers.

Crippled by arthritis later in life, Joseph Pierre Nuyttens died of smoke inhalation at age 72, on January 9, 1960, when a fire destroyed his two-level studio at 1819 Lincoln Park West. Over a hundred works of art were destroyed in the fire, but many of his works can still be found in museums, galleries and auctions all over Europe and the USA.

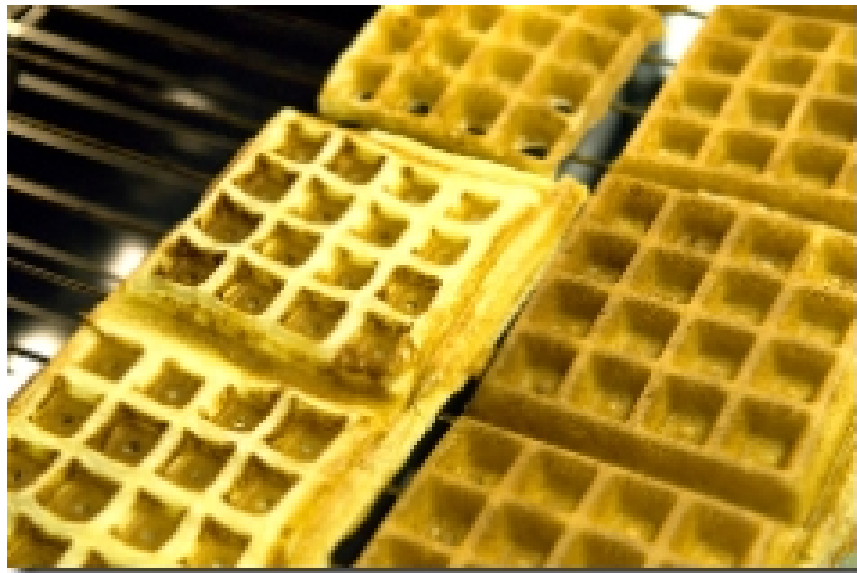
Bel-Gem Waffles

By: Christi DeBrauwere

I am not sure if you are all aware but the United States is in the throws of a waffle crisis! Due to a flooded production plant in Georgia and a broken bakery in Tennessee the Kellogg Corporation is being forced to ration their Eggo waffle supply well into 2010. The Eggo waffles account for nearly 70% of the frozen waffles sold and consumed in the United States today according to a recent article in Time Magazine. 70%! Well this is a waffle crisis indeed.

That is unless you are a self-respecting Belgian-American anyways! Even if you were born here as I was, your true-blue Belgian roots cause your taste buds to reject any frozen, sorry-excuse-for-a-waffle they encounter. You then find yourself buying, as I did, a waffle iron, even if it is one that makes waffles in the shape of Mickey Mouse's head.

Before I get ahead of my self, let's look at the history of the waffle, this is of course, a publication dedicated to all things historical, after all.



Brussels waffles

A Quick Waffle History Lesson*

13th Century A.C. - Ancient Greeks cook flat cakes between two metal plates. These early waffles were called obleios and were primarily savory in nature, prepared with cheeses and herbs.

1620 - The pilgrims bring Dutch "waffles" to America.

1735 - The word "waffle" - with two "f"s - appears in English print for the first time.

Late 1800s - Thomas Jefferson returns to the U.S. from France with a long handled, patterned waffle iron.

1869 - Cornelius Swarthout patents the first U.S. Waffle Iron.

1953 - Frank Dorsa's Eggo Frozen Waffles are sold in Supermarkets for the first time.

1964-65 - Brussels restaurateur Maurice Vermeersch brings his wife's Brussels Waffle recipe to the World's Fair in New York. The fluffy yeast-infused waffle becomes a huge hit and becomes known as the Belgium waffle.

*obtained from Mr. Breakfast's website: www.mrbreakfast.com

So Mr. Vermeersch takes his wife's recipe and heads to the New York World's Fair in 1964. It is her recipe and the poor woman's name is never noted. The waffles are thicker fluffier and crispier than traditional American waffles due to the yeast added for leavening the batter. These waffles originate in Brussels, but they market them as the "Bel-Gems" at the fair. It is at the fair where these waffles gain critical acclaim and popularity.

There are of course the Liege-style waffles as well. These are not noted on the waffle time line as they are the lesser known variety of waffles from Belgium here in the U.S. They are denser and have pearls of sugar in the batter that melt and caramelize when cooked so that these waffles may be eaten "as is" out of the waffle iron without additional toppings. The Brussels style waffles are usually always eaten with decadent toppings such as whipped cream and strawberries.

So leggo the Eggo, who needs it. We Belgians have this waffle thing mastered! Now, where did I store that Mickey Mouse waffle iron I have.....

Brussels Waffles Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ oz of yeast (40 grams)
- 1 pint of tepid sparkling mineral water (4 dl)
- 1 lb of flour (500 grams)
- a pinch of salt
- 1 pint of tepid milk
- 8 eggs
- ½ lb of melted butter

Directions:

- Dissolve the yeast in the tepid water.
- Sift the flour into a bowl and make a hole in the middle.
- Mix the dissolved yeast slowly with the flour, add the salt and the milk.
- Add the egg yolks.
- Whisk the egg whites and scoop them carefully with a slice through the tough.
- Cover the dough and leave it to rise until its volume has doubled (about 15 to 20 minutes).

- Use the oil to grease the waffle iron (which should be very hot) so your waffles don't stick to it and pour the dough in it.
 - Bake until they turn golden brown.
- Serve with butter and vanillated sugar or powdered sugar.

You need a bigger waffle iron for this variant. The light structure is due to the use of sparkling water.



Liege Waffles

The Liège Waffles

These are also known as the Luikse wafel in Flemish and as Lütticher waffeln in German. This waffle is more or less oval-shaped, a thinner and smaller waffle than the Brussels counterpart. But it's also more substantial, and has a significant crunch due to the small nuggets of pearl sugar or “parelsuiker” that are added to the batter just before baking. In this Belgian waffle recipe these bits of sugar melt when being baked on the waffle iron and caramelize, producing a sugary crust like what's found on a crème brûlée.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 lb of butter (250 gram)
- 1/2 lb of sugar (250 gram)
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 lb of flour (250 gram)

- 1 ounce of vanillated sugar (30 gram)
- 1 spoon of oil
- - 2 tablespoons of pearl sugar (hard to find)

Directions:

Warm the butter until it is almost melted. Mix the sugar with it and whisk the eggs, one for one, into the mass. Mix with the flour and the vanillated sugar, stir vigorously and add the oil. Continue until you have homogeneous dough. Add the pearl sugar if you have some. Grease the waffle iron (which should be very hot) so your waffles don't stick to it and pour the dough in it. Bake the waffles until they turn golden brown.

Save the date!

On Sunday, June 13, 2010, the Belgian-American Historical Society of Chicago will hold a major event to celebrate the 80th birthday of our very own **Arnold Van Puymbroeck**, de Man van het Jaar. The event will include Belgian beers, a delicious buffet dinner/roast, and stories about the exploits of Arnold and the Belgian gang from 1950 to 2010. Over the years, Arnold formed a band, a bow and arrow club, and a card playing club. He even chartered an airplane to visit the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. He and his compatriots met regularly in their favorite tavern where the owner was Belgian and where Flemish words did not sound foreign. Don't miss this chance to reminisce, and please bring your own stories of the old and not so old days. We will keep you informed about the details.

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