



The Roelofse Family

On August 18, 1906, Jan Dirk Roelofse and his oldest living son Roelof Roelofse left Rotterdam, Netherlands and arrived in New York on August 28, 1906. The name of their ship was the Potsdam. The ship's manifest lists Jan Dirk as a "nurseryman." They settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Jan Dirk's wife, Evertje, and the rest of the family came to America in 1907. They left Rotterdam, Netherlands on April 6, 1907 and arrived in New York on April 17, 1907. The name of their ship was the Nieuw Amsterdam and the family is listed on the ship's manifest:

Evertje Roelofse, age 44
Johanna Roelofse, age 19
Jan Dirk Roelofse, age 15
Dora Roelofse, age 13
Evertje Roelofse, 10
Jan Roelofse, age 9
Dirkje Roelofse, age 8
Anna Roelofse, age 6
Arie Roelofse, age 5
Jantje Roelofse, age 10 months

The family had four other children who were born and who died in The Netherlands. They were Roelof (1883), Johan (1884), Jan Dick (1889), Evert Jan (1895).

Evertje and her children planned to go from New York to Grand Rapids, Michigan and live with Jan Dirk and Roelof. When they arrived at Ellis Island, New York, Evertje and Johanna were sick and were detained until May 3. When they came into port, Jantje was well because she wasn't detained, but she became ill and died on May 11, 1907, of an "acute congestion of the lung" about the time the family arrived in Grand Rapids. She was one year and one day old.

Notwithstanding that tragedy, the family settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Another son was born in Grand Rapids in 1909. His name was Clayton and he was the family's only child born in the United States.

The family kept the "e" on the end of the name until about 1915. After they came to America, Jan Dirk became known as John Dick. Roelof Americanized his name to Ralph. Roelof means Ralph in Dutch and it means famous wolf in English. Dirkje Americanized her name to Della, Arie to Henry, and both Evertjes Americanized their names to Eva. Eva's maiden name is listed on documents as Peters. In total, they had fifteen children, including the four children who died in infancy in the Netherlands.