

Gerrit L. Peters memoir  
Edw L. Cousin

I, Gerrit L. Peters, son of Lambert Peters, whose father was John Peters, hereby testify that I have known grandfather, John Peters for 29 years, also his whole family and all persons mentioned in this document. I am spending a lot of time, and Mother and I are going to donate this to our future generation. It must go to the oldest son in each generation. If no children or no boys, it must be handed over to the next oldest son of his Brother. No one has the right to take away from this, and it must not be handled by small children. I appeal to our future generation to walk in the footsteps of your forefathers religion, our Protestant Reformation. So God Bless You.

Gerrit L. Peters

Grandfather, John Peters, was born in the year 1829 in Apeldoorn, Holland. He married Gurtie Bronkhorst, of the same place. After her marriage to John Peters, her kin folks immigrated to America. John Peters was employed by William III, King of the Netherlands. He was caretaker of the King's hunting equipment. The building was called the Hunting House. John was living on the premises near the Hunting House, and the King visited John on many occasions. At one time, John's oldest son, Lambert, fell into an open fireplace. The King came walking in and saw the boy suffering, for the boy lost three fingers on his left hand. The King felt sorry for him and ordered Lambert free schooling at the King's school near Apeldoorn. But the school where Lambert went was near to where they were living, so Lambert did not care to go to the King's school.

While John Peters was working for the King there were 10 children born to them. Their names are as follows, starting with the oldest: Lambert, Jan, ~~Allen~~ Gurtie, Gerrit, Andrew, John Jr. Henry, Guy and Cornelius. (Lambert was married to Friedrika Hulleman of Apeldoorn.) Jan, next to the oldest, was married to Miss Lina Jonker, of Apeldoorn. Both of them had families.

March 1859
Jan 56
Gurtie 59
Gerrit 62
Allen 64
John 66
Andrew 68
Guy 71
Henry 73
Cornelius 75

Now came 1881 when John Peters heard much about his wife's folks in America and the better standard of living they had, so they decided to go also, but the two oldest son's wives did not want to go and leave all their relatives behind. So in 1881 John Peters family immigrated to America and left their two oldest sons behind. After arriving in Waupun, Wisconsin, the place where his wives kinfolk were living, John Peters and his family settled on a farm two miles South of Brandon Wisconsin. While living there the oldest son he had living with them wanted to go to town. John's only daughter's husband, William Van Loenen, had rented a farm in Chester. Andrew then got a job selling farm machinery and John Jr. got an engineer job in a shoe factory and Guy also went to work in a shoe factory.

Finally, Cornelius got tired working on the farm and got a job in town. Between this time something had happened in Holland. Lambert's wife's Father and Mother had died, and Lambert's wife was ready to go to America. At this time Lambert had a family of six boys and one girl and did not have the money to buy tickets for all of them, but finally he had arranged for the transportation.

Three of his boys were working out. The oldest, John, was ready to go. Had it not been for Mother, I think the rest would have gone, but I had been working on the Queen's farm a year before, then Mother found a job for me in a product market, and wanted me to take that job and let my brother Guy have the job I had. I did not like the idea, but I finally consented. A year later I liked the produce job much better. When my father told me that we were going to America, my boss wanted to keep me. He offered me a better job, and that wasn't all. The boss had a daughter and she was very much interested in me. I told my father that I did not want to go. He got so made at me I thought he was going to beat up on me, so I finally decided to go. This was in 1894. In the latter part of July 1894, the Lambert Peters family left Rotterdam, Holland on the steamboat, Maasdam, of the Holland-American line, and arrived in New York the first part of August, and from there by train to Waupun, Wisconsin, the place where his father was at that time.

He rented a house about four miles North of Waupun. A few days later father started house-painting for \$1.00 for a ten hour day. John and Gerrit, sons of Lambert, went to work on farms, and the rest of the children, except Art the youngest, went to school. The next year John got a job with a building contractor, and Gerrit and Guy worked on farms for \$14.00 a month. Father kept on painting, but by this time, Lambert had proven his skill and qualifications as a painter, so had a lot of painting to do, and was already charging \$2.00 a day.

Father bought a small acreage on half mile North of Waupun and built a small house on it, but then he had to have a well on it, so he had a way to put his boys to work. He got three poles and tied the tops together and placed them upright over the hole. We had already dug with pick and shovel, and hung a pulley on top of the poles in the center over the hole. We tied a well bit over the hole, and the other end tied to a long hickory pole laying over a sawhorse-like frame, so it would work like a pump handle, up and down. We pumped that pole nearly all winter, but we finally got water at about 20 feet. That spring Gerrit went to work in a wagon and carriage factory. After I worked there for some time, brother Guy started to work there, and brother John was taken in as partner in the Company he started to work for. Brother Lambert worked on a farm. Henry worked on a farm too. Our sister also found a good job. Father Lambert added some more land to his little farm so he kept Art home on the farm.

I was planning on leaving my job in the factory. My father had more work than he could handle, and asked me to go in partnership with him, so Gerrit went into partnership with his father in 1900. Gerrit married Jonanna Klumpers December 11, 1901, and they Guy came into the Company as a partner in 1900. At that time Father did not care to work too steady, so Guy & Gerrit took the whole business and went under the name of Peters Bros. Father put in part of his time on his little farm, and at the same time he took on a little painting job now and then. Father lived a short life. He was born February 26, 1856 and died of cancer January 10, 1916, and was buried in Waupun cemetery.

*Lambert*

In the year of 1906 Gerrit and Guy had taken over all the business of Lambert Peters, and sons, and started under the name of Peters Brothers Painters and Paper Hangers. (just to let our future generation know the works of their forefathers). When Gerrit and Guy started under this new partnership, we had a good business, but there was just one thing lacking, we did not do any paper-hanging. Early in the spring, ( I think 1901 ), I went out with the best paper-hanger in town, and pasted the paper for him. I told him that I wanted to learn how to hang paper; but it would have been better for him if he had turned me down, for I was only a short time with him and I could do the hanging just as well as he could.

We got sample books from wallpaper companies, and also the tools. We started out selling wallpaper, also we had 5% profit on wallpaper, but not so much on house paints. I got married, and had built a house, and we stocked Acme paint and got the exclusive agency from the Acme White Lead and Color Works. We got our paint and wallpaper wholesale price so we could do the work cheaper than other painters. There were six more painting contractors in our town, Kauun, Wisc. We mixed our own colors and we had no left-overs standing around. If for nothing else, we could use the left-overs and mix them into floor paint. The only colors we did not mix in house paint was the bright greens and reds.

Nearly all the new houses were painted by Peters Bros. and that gave us work in the winter also. Finally, this inside work got me, inhaling the paint, varnish, wallpaper dust, and odor for 10 hours a day, my health broke down. Two doctors advised me to move to a higher altitude, so in 1910 we moved to Twin Falls, Idaho.

I, Gerrit, Lambert's son, arrived in Twin Falls with a wife and three children in September 1910. At this time Twin Falls had a population of 3,000. The townside of Twin Falls was laid out four years previous of this date. My Uncle, Guy and Corneil came out West at the same time. We had loaded a car in Kauun, Wisc. with all the furniture of our three families, but the car had not arrived yet. It was loaded a week before we left Kauun. All our three families got a room in the Waverly Hotel. We were tired from the trip, so we went to bed early that evening, but Oh, Behold! At nearly midnight one of the women was bitten by a bedbug. She got up and rapped at the door of the rest of us, and she had the bug stuck on a pin. You should have heard the commotion among the women. They did not rest that night. The next day we took a look at the town and country and it looked very good to us. So I, Gerrit, rented a house, so did Corneil. Then, Guy, John's son, and I bought a half acre of land on Addison Ave. in the block adjoining the block where the Washington School now stands on the East. We built two houses on the lot. We did the work ourselves except for the plumbing. Guy moved in one and we took the other, and moved in at that time in 1910.



There were just two houses on that 40 acres of ground on which the Washington school is now standing. The next year I built a house on the corner of Elm St. and Addison Ave. and sold the house we were living in. I also bought 10 acres of land on which the old hospital stands, just East of the new Memorial Hospital. I planted apple trees on the whole 10 acres. In 1912, the year the Salmon River Dam was completed, a surveyor came to our house accompanied by my banker. The banker had given him all the information he wanted about me. He wanted a Hollander to help him put his plan over. So he told me that he and the banker of Hollister had a half section of land all laid out in city lots and had taken options on nearly all the land around the townsite. I told him I was not interested. "Well," he said, "If you've never been in that country, I will take you out there. It will not cost you a dime, and I would like to have your Uncle come along. We will have to stay in Hollister over-night." The next day, this surveyor, by the name of Adams, took us to Hollister on the train and there was the banker waiting for us with a hack with two fine horses hitched to it, and the four of us went over the land, dam, and canal system. We thought it was a fine set-up. We asked several questions about the water, and we were told the state had taken measurements of the water run-off for several years, by the state engineers, and had given the project Co. right to build the dam. Even the banker said if he thought that it was not safe to invest in, he would have nothing to do with it. So Adams and the banker offered me, (Gerrit, Lambert's son) and Guy, (my Uncle John's son), half interest in the townsite for the same price that it cost them, if I would get an ad in a Holland newspaper about getting a Holland settlement started. I did so. About ten days later, four men from Mahattan, Montana came to my place in Twin Falls. I took them to our project and they got stuck on our set-up at first sight. They investigated all they could and the four men each bought farm land. The following week one of the four men came back and had three men with him, all of them bought a farm. The news came to Grangeville, Idaho to the five Holland families there, and they all bought land around our project. We did not have to advertise any more, for the men that moved here did the advertising.

In less than two years, we had 22 buildings on the townside, including a school, livery barn, grain elevator, lumber-yard, hotel, real estate office, blacksmith shop, Church, general merchandise store, and a post office in the store. I was recommended by our Congressman, Addison T. Smith, to be appointed as postmaster of Amsterdam. (this was the name the settlers on the townsite decided on.) In the meantime, three of my brothers had come to Idaho, John, Art and Guy. John L. Peters started the lumberyard, Art went to work for Guy. (John's son, my uncle Guy). He did all the building around there. Guy, my brother, bought half the store in which I already had started a year before in 1912. So Guy and I again formed a partnership under the name of Peters Bros. General Merchandise. In 1913 John Mokenkamp, my brother-in-law, and his wife came. He was also a carpenter.

Our new town of Amsterdam had a population of 60, and the population of the farmers that settled around the town was 73. A year before, the settlers had built a church, and had a meeting to decide of what denomination Minister to call. The Church Christian Reformed won out. We called William Meyers from New Jersey as our Minister. He preached two sermons a day every Sunday and the church was filled. In 1914 the farmers over the whole tract found out that the water Company could not deliver the water we were entitled to. The project was 60,000 acres, and nearly all the farms started to use water at this time. We started a settlers association and refused to make payments on the water, and we brought suit against the Salmon River Land and Water Co. The court made the company cut the project down to 55,000 acres. During all this litigation in court, and not enough water, the farmers got disgusted, and moved off and sold. Nearly all the people on the townsite moved off too. No more lumber sold, the livery barn closed, business went down in the store, so we traded our store for a nice farm, machinery and livestock. We thought maybe we could see the farm better than the store. Brother Guy and myself worked on the farm, but we soon found out that two families could not make a living on an 80 acre farm. Brother Guy bought a farm three miles East of Hollister, and sold his half interest to me.

At this time all the buildings except the elevator, hotel, church and school house were moved elsewhere. Out of the 21 families and 8 bachelor land owners, only 4 families stayed. Brother Guy and I were two of them. We had to buy more water stock so we could double up our water. I already bought five parcels of land adjoining our farm to make it 400 acres, but most of the years we could not water all of it.

In about 1935 our son, Leonard then wanted heavy machinery to farm with, so that is what we got. About then, our bank foreclosed on a farm and I bought the farm, 160 acres with the intention to use the water on the home place, but it so happened that there was plenty water that year, so we put this farm in crop, and the crop we took off paid for the farm. The next year I bought another 100 acres that had to be sold, and that farm paid for itself also.

The next year after this the price of water came up slowly and so did labor. Therefore, I sold lots of land and water at a good profit. This will show again that mostly the stockers are the winners, for the four of us that stayed on the Salmon Tract can take care of themselves now...A rolling stone gathers no moss.. I, Gerrit Peters, and wife moved to Twin Falls in 1942 and celebrated our 60th. wedding anniversary December 11, 1961.