Using Dutch Church & Civil Records from WieWasWie on Ancestry

Ancestry has posted 9 collections of Dutch indexes. In addition to details extracted from the record, the name of the archive where the original can be found is also listed, as well as a link to the record on the Dutch website WieWasWie. There may be additional information available on that website, and in some cases you’ll find a link to the digitized image of the record.

Anytime you begin researching in records from your ancestor’s homeland, it’s best to gather as much information as you can here in the U.S. You’ll have the best chances of success if you know a bit about the family and where in the Netherlands they are from. Get to know your ancestor’s entire family and make note of your ancestor’s friends, associates, and neighbors.

Church Records

Records of births, marriages, and burials in the Netherlands were first recorded by churches, beginning in about the mid-16th century. You’ll sometimes see church registers referred to as DTB registers for Doopboeken, Trouwboeken, and Begraafboeken, the Dutch words for baptism records, marriage records, and burial records. Catholic records were typically kept in Latin, whereas other denominations kept their records in Dutch.

**Netherlands, Baptism Index, 1569-1879**

Baptisms (doop) will sometimes, but not always, include the birth date as well as the baptism date, but Catholics and Protestants were usually baptized within a few days after birth. This can be useful in estimating the date of birth.
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This Catholic baptism from Utrecht includes the date of the baptism; 7 June [1700 further up the page]; the child’s name, Cornelius; father’s name, Jan de Groot; mother’s name, Maritie Cornelis; and the name of the witness, Maritie de Groot.

This later record, from 6 October 1805, tells us that Klaas was baptised 13 September and that he is the son of Derk Klasen Houting and Anje Jacobs.

Netherlands, Marriage Index, 1570-1938
Beginning in the late 16th century and continuing through most of the 18th century, the Dutch Reformed Church was the de facto state church. Marriages (trouwen) were only recognized if performed in that church or by a civil authority. You may find that some Catholics and members of other denominations married again in their own church, so it pays to check to see if there is more than one marriage record for a couple.

Earlier records can be sparse in detail, with only the names of the bride and groom and the date and place. Often the location was the bride’s parish. Later records include more detail, such as occupation, residence, ages, birthplace, parents’ names, and witnesses.

The first record above, from Utrecht in 1795, gives the names of both the bride and groom and the names of the streets in Utrecht on which they live.

The groom in the second record is a soldier, and it lists his battalion, his commanding officer, and where he is garrisoned. For the bride, it tells us she lives on Zonstraat. Below is the translation.

[Groom:] Hermanus Aben T.M. of Biltstraat [a street in Utrecht]
[Bride:] Maria van der Meeren T.D. of Springweg [a street in Utrecht]

[Groom:] French Matthijs Meij T. M. Soldier in the 2nd Batt of the 3rd Brigade of Habre Collonel Gelderman garrison in Amersfoort
[Bride:] Catherine de Wilt T. D. in the Zonstraat [a street in Utrecht]
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**Netherlands, Burial Index, 1546-1821**

Burials (begraven) typically took place in the parish of the deceased and while many of the registers only give the name and the date of the burial, you may find other details like the residence, date of death and names of survivors. In some cases you'll even find costs associated with the burial listed.

In the burial register on the right, you’ll see several entries with “Een kind van…” This indicates it’s “a child of...”

**Civil Registration**

Civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths began during the Napoleonic Era when the Netherlands was under French rule. For most of the country, registration began 1 March 1811, although Limburg, North Brabant, and parts of Zeeland began as early as 1795. Civil registration continued after the period of French rule and continues to this day.

Recent records are not publicly available for privacy reasons. They are released to the public in 10-year blocks. Birth records (geboorte) are withheld for 100 years, and currently records for 1811-1911 are available. Marriage records (huwelijk) are withheld for 75 years, allowing us access to records for 1811-1932. Death records (overlijden) are made public after 50 years, allowing us to view records for 1811-1960.

Visit the Ancestry Support Center at help.ancestry.com. For account questions or technical help, call 1-800-262-3787.
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Netherlands, Birth Index, 1787-1915

Below is an example of a birth certificate that some of the indexes lead to:

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from WieWasWie on Ancestry

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Netherlands, Death Index, 1795-1965

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