

## News from Nan

### ANNA'S FAMILY HISTORY

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MY DUTCH GRANDMOTHER!

JUNE 26, 2018 | ANNA

June 26, 2018, is the 164th birth anniversary of my grandmother (*Opoe*, in Dutch), Elisabeth Johanna Maria Metsch van Raaphorst, born in 1854. Unfortunately I never knew her: she died about a year before I was born.



*Elisabeth Johanna Maria Metsch*

Elisabeth was the child of immigrants: the Metsch family lived in Hessigheim, Germany, for many generations and migrated to Amsterdam in the 1820s. She also became an immigrant herself: both she and my grandfather (along with the rest of their family) went first to Canada in 1910 and after a few years to Detroit, Michigan.

Elisabeth was named for her paternal grandmother, Johanna Elizabeth Niemöller, an orphan who was brought up in an Evangelical Lutheran orphanage. Elisabeth was also an Evangelical Lutheran, and there were religious conflicts between her and her Roman Catholic husband.

Elisabeth was friends with Jan Sluijters (1881-1957), a Dutch artist known as a pioneer of various post-impressionist movements, including fauvism, cubism, and expressionism. He once gave her one of his sketches.



Sketch by Jan Sluijters

Being interested in languages and linguistics myself, I'm fond of a story told about Elisabeth that took place in her later years when she was living in Detroit. She never spoke much English, and shopping was sometimes difficult for her. One day in the grocery store she asked the clerk for "twee rapen." He couldn't figure it out, and she was frustrated when she arrived home, and fumed (in Dutch), "Now what could be clearer than that: *twee rapen!*" [She wanted to buy two turnips; not an easy one for the clerk to decipher!]

Happy birthday, *Opoe!*

◀ 2018 ◀ AMSTERDAM ◀ BIRTHDAY ◀ CANADA ◀ DETROIT ◀ METSCH ◀ MICHIGAN ◀ NETHERLANDS  
◀ VAN RAAPHORST