

A DUTCH SOCIALIST CONNECTION WITH WA

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SMALL IN NUMBERS BUT NOT UNNOTICED

Before World War II it would have been fairly unusual to come across someone of Dutch origin in Australia. While the nineteenth century had seen a few Dutch sailors, gold seekers and adventurers finding themselves in the Australian colonies, only the occasional emigrant had made the long journey from the Netherlands (NL) to Australia with the conscious purpose of making it home. Even from the 1890s, Dutch immigrants still represented only a few droplets in the immigration flow into Australia. This increased to a trickle after the First World War, but the Dutch still constituted only a tiny fraction of the total immigration into Australia until World War II and its aftermath dramatically changed the situation.

This is borne out by the census figures for WA. In the 1881, only nine males and two females gave their places of birth as the NL, representing a meagre 0.037 per cent of the total recorded population of the colony of 29,708¹. When the 1891 census was taken, the Dutch-born had only increased to nineteen², and by 1901, even the gold-rush years had not seemed to have attracted the Dutch, with only forty-one being counted³. By 1911 the NL-born reached eighty-four, out of a total state population of 282,114 (0.03 per cent). In 1921, the census still recorded a small Dutch community in WA – ninety-seven residents who declared their birthplace as the NL (0.029 per cent)⁴. The non-NL-born children of Dutch parents would have slightly added to these figures.

Such a small Dutch presence might have been expected to have gone almost unnoticed by the mainstream populace. However, world events such as the Anglo-Boer War and World War I, maritime contacts, including with the Dutch East Indies, and the actions of a few of the Dutch who had settled in Western Australia (WA), brought the Dutch and their nation a greater (sometimes unwelcome) prominence and scrutiny by the public and officialdom than their very small numbers might have otherwise been anticipated to result in.

The following pages outline the stories of two of the more ‘noticed’ Dutch emigrants to WA in the period - Willem Siebenhaar and Ferdinand Domela-Nieuwenhuis. They arrived together in 1891 and along with their wives became quite prominent and well known during the following decades. This was partly due to circumstance, but also due to their personalities, characters and abilities, as well as the social and political views that Siebenhaar particularly held.

Why did these two schooled and relatively well-to-do young men come to WA? The answer lies in a connection between European socialist movements and

WA, which few would conceive existed in the 1890s and the early twentieth-century, but such a link forms part of their story. Associated with Willem's story, is that of his sister, Anna Siebenhaar and her husband Edgar. Anna arrived a few years after her brother, and with Edgar became an advocate for Dutch interests in WA, although Anna's pro-German position during World War I, saw her come under the observation and suspicion of the authorities. Willem, Ferdinand and Anna were to receive public and official attention, including a degree of notoriety, some perhaps deserved, and some undeserved.

THE DUTCH NEWCOMERS

The Royal Mail Steamship *Ormuz* arrived at Albany from London on 6 March 1891. Travelling on board were two Dutch companions, 27-year-old Willem Siebenhaar and 20-year-old Ferdinand Jacobus Domela-Nieuwenhuis. They soon made their way to Perth. Not long afterwards, on 4 April, another Dutchman, 30-year-old Joseph Tomey (Tomeij), also arrived at Albany from London on the *Austral*, to join his two compatriots⁵.

So why did they come to WA together?

THE DOMELA-NIEUWENHUIS CONNECTION

The exact reasons will of course never be known, but a significant part of the story lies with the paternity of Ferdinand Domela-Nieuwenhuis. His father, also named Ferdinand Jacobus Domela-Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919), was the most prominent Dutch socialist, and later anarchist, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries⁶. He had been a Lutheran clergyman, but had lost his faith, and left the church in 1879. Being the lucky recipient of an inherited fortune equivalent to £5,000 per year⁷, he was able to follow his socialist ideals, fighting for workers' rights. From 1882, Domela-Nieuwenhuis was the leader of the Dutch Social Democratic League (*Sociaal-Democratische Bond*), a political party based on Marxist principles. In 1888 he became the first socialist member elected to the Dutch Parliament, where he served for three years. Often being at loggerheads with the authorities, in 1886 he was controversially gaoled for a year for using insulting and outrageous language in a journal article directed against the Dutch King. He accepted the blame as editor, although he was not the author of the article⁸. Domela-Nieuwenhuis was anti-militarist, and from the 1890s, he became increasingly sympathetic to anarchism.

Ferdinand Domela-Nieuwenhuis junior was the eldest child of Ferdinand senior, having been born in 1871 at Harlingen in Friesland, by Ferdinand

senior's first wife, Johanna Lulofs⁹. Ferdinand junior's mother died when he was a year old. His father remarried three further times. Ferdinand senior came to realise that his eldest son, whilst being intelligent, was not intellectual or academic, and that he had artistic and practical talents more suited to a singing career than to being a social theorist and agitator like himself. He sent young Ferdinand to study engineering at the Technical University (*Hogeschool* or *hbo*) in Zurich in the late 1880s as he wanted his son to gain practical skills in engineering rather than just theoretical knowledge. Ferdinand senior was, however, worried about reports of his son's exuberant student life whilst in Zurich. He realised that this son was not likely to live up to his hopes for him to one day lead the Dutch socialists. To that extent Ferdinand junior appears to have been somewhat of a disappointment to his father who nevertheless maintained hope that young Ferdinand might still amount to something as he matured.

Domela-Nieuwenhuis senior was a correspondent with Friedrich Engels, the co-author with Karl Marx of the *Communist Manifesto*. It is in Engels' and Domela-Nieuwenhuis' surviving correspondence that we find the apparent reason for the emigration of Ferdinand junior, and the major influence for his two compatriots to come to WA in 1891. In 1890, Ferdinand senior wrote from Den Haag to Engels in London seeking some advice as to the opportunities for his son Ferdinand junior, then aged nineteen, to be taken on as an apprentice in an engineering workshop in England¹⁰. Engels replied that he thought that there was no chance of this occurring, but he would get in touch if anything arose¹¹.

Engels apparently had no luck, because in December 1890, he replied to a follow-up letter from Domela-Nieuwenhuis senior in which the reason for trying to get his son out of the NL becomes apparent. The main topic that Domela-Nieuwenhuis raised in his letter was the propriety of him buying his son Ferdinand junior out of the compulsory military service that he was due to do in the NL. Under Dutch law, it was possible to pay for another man to be a *remplaçant* (replacement) to do someone else's army service. Engels advised Domela-Nieuwenhuis that he thought there was nothing wrong in principle with him purchasing his son's exemption, but it depended on the local situation with which he was not all that familiar. Nevertheless, Engels cautioned that a particular consideration would be the impression such a course of action might make on his party comrades and the mass of workers still outside his party, because it might stir working-class opinion against Social Democracy¹².

This presented Ferdinand senior with a tricky problem. Considering that the army would interfere with his son's opportunities, and as a champion of anti-militarism and equality, he could not let his son serve in the army and nor could he pay a substitute. Evasion still appeared to be the best solution to the problem. So it was that Ferdinand junior, having just turned twenty, left for WA in early 1891 with two of his father's socialist colleagues, Willem

Siebenhaar and Joseph Tomey, whom his father had requested to ‘keep an eye out’ for young Ferdinand.

Presumably, however, the three were also attracted to WA by the opportunities it presented, both economic and otherwise. There had been important gold-finds in the north-west of WA in the mid to late 1880s at Halls Creek in the Kimberley region and also in the Murchison region, but the huge discoveries of world significance at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, in what became the eastern goldfields, occurred in the two years after their arrival. Nevertheless, the early gold-finds in WA appear to have been at least a contributing factor to the decision for emigration. This is evident from Siebenhaar’s biographical note in J.S. Battye’s 1912 *Cyclopedia of WA* which states that due to the wonderful gold discoveries, ‘Mr Siebenhaar migrated to WA, believing that there would be greater scope for his ambition in a new land’¹³. Later, although, Siebenhaar would say that given he held socialistic views, he did not feel he could make a career in the NL, and so decided to go to a freer country, which he knew England was, and found subsequently that Australia held views even more free and democratic, and so came to Australia¹⁴.

Tomey left the Colony after a short time, but Siebenhaar and Domela-Nieuwenhuis (later just known as just ‘Domela’) made their homes in Perth. Quite different in their characters, they still mostly participated in the same social circles, becoming firmly part of the social scene.

WILLEM SIEBENHAAR (1863-1936)

Willem Siebenhaar was born in Den Haag in 1863, the son of Christiaan Siebenhaar, a sergeant and well known fencing master (*schermmeester*) in the Dutch army, and Geertruida Johanna (née Frölich)¹⁵. They had six children, although only Willem, the youngest son, and his older sisters Christina and Anna, survived to adulthood¹⁶. While Dutch-born and having a Dutch mother, Christiaan Siebenhaar’s father was German¹⁷, and Willem’s German sounding surname was later to result in some disadvantage when his loyalties were brought into question in WA.

In 1882, when Willem was nineteen, he is said to have matriculated at Delft University. He then took up the study of philology and literature for two years¹⁸. Already holding socialist views, he started associating with Ferdinand Domela-Nieuwenhuis¹⁹.

Siebenhaar went to England in 1884 where he lived for the next six years. He taught in London and at a private school near Reading²⁰. In 1885 he joined the British Socialist League²¹ and was corresponding with Friedrich Engels²².

On arriving in Perth in 1891, Siebenhaar initially taught at Perth Grammar School (later Hale School). In 1892 he secured a civil service position in the colonial administration, first working as a clerk, and subsequently being promoted to Compiler of Statistics and Sub-Editor of the Year Book in 1906, and eventually ending his career as Deputy Registrar-General, with on occasion, acting as Registrar-General²³.



Figure 1
W. Siebenhaar (with a dedication from W. Siebenhaar to F. Domela Nieuwenhuis on back). Source: Album 141, nr. 70: International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (FDN) BG A12-932/124 B/C:30051000159555.

His commitment to make his home in WA is indicated by his successful application to be naturalised as a British subject in the Colony in 1894²⁴. Willem met English-born Lydia Bruce Dixon in Perth and they sailed to England where they married in 1899. After honeymooning in Italy, the couple returned to Perth, which they intended to make their home. They established themselves in Cottesloe²⁵. No children ever ensued from the union.

Siebenhaar's politics were labelled in WA as being "Libertarian Socialist". In his spare time, he applied his considerable intellect in many directions, being an author, a writer of articles on current issues, a poet, a magazine editor and a translator. Besides Dutch, he also had a sound knowledge of French and German and limited knowledge of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. He translated a number of works, including a portion of an early Dutch account of the wreck of the *Batavia* in 1629 which was published in the *Western Mail* newspaper in 1897, exciting public interest and laying the foundations for the wreck site's eventual discovery²⁶. A champion chess player, Siebenhaar's prowess was often reported in the chess news sections of the local newspapers, and for a time, he was chess editor for the *Western Mail*.

Supporting women's rights, he gave some of the earliest public lectures on the subject in WA. In 1909 Willem presented a talk on the suffragette movement at the Guildford Branch of the Australian Natives' Association. This was before the 1910 lecture tour of Australia by the famous Adelaide-born British suffragist Muriel Matters, which included Perth where her family lived, although the issue was perhaps not as controversial in WA, where without a great deal of fuss, women had achieved the vote in the local Parliament in 1899 and in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1902. At the 1911 annual meeting of the Women's Service Guild held at the Karrakatta Club, Siebenhaar gave a lecture entitled *The Revolt of Women* and in 1914 he presented on the militant suffragette movement at a number of venues²⁷.

Siebenhaar was a founding member of the Theosophical Society in Perth in 1897 and helped form the Civil Service Association in 1902, serving as its Vice-President.

On matters of external affairs, Siebenhaar became involved in controversy. He did not take a pro-war viewpoint on the Anglo-Boer War. He also adopted the anti-conscription position and was unfairly accused of pro-German sentiments during World War I.

This came to the fore in 1916, when Siebenhaar and a fellow officer of the Statistical Department named Harry Leighton, were the subject of an enquiry into allegations of misconduct as civil servants made under the *Public Service Act 1900*. Civil servants were not supposed to get involved in political matters during their work: a fundamental platform of the Westminster system of government is a politically neutral, impartial, merit-based career public service. Siebenhaar was charged with being guilty of improper conduct by manifesting sympathy with the illegal methods of the International Workers of the World (IWW) organisation. This alleged improper conduct was due to Siebenhaar collecting money and soliciting subscriptions during office hours

and at other times for the purpose of providing for the legal defence of one of the IWW's members, 85-year-old Montague Miller, who had been charged with an offence, which was said to be 'an act approaching sedition'. Leighton, a clerk, was charged with improper conduct under the Act because he had disregarded an order and distributed unattributed anti-conscription material in his department and in the Lands Department, which was also contrary to the *War Precautions Regulations* and the *Military Service Referendum Act 1916*²⁸. Both were suspended without pay from 7 November.

The press had a field-day, stating and inferring disloyal and unpatriotic conduct on Siebenhaar's behalf. Siebenhaar wrote to *The West Australian* pointing out that nowhere in the official charge against him were the words 'disloyal' or 'unpatriotic', and protesting that such terminology should not be used²⁹. On 29 November, the Public Service Commissioner handed down his decision. The charges against Leighton, were found to be proved and the penalty imposed being that he was called to resign from the public service. The Commissioner determined, however, that the charge of improper conduct against Siebenhaar was not proved, essentially finding that Siebenhaar had merely been trying to help an old friend by collecting the money, and not on account of any sympathy for the IWW, and that the evidence presented indicated that he was anti-German and in sympathy with the Allied cause³⁰.

Siebenhaar's position may not have been helped by the activities of his sister, Anna, who was pro-German and was investigated by the authorities (see more about her later).

Siebenhaar retired from the civil service as Deputy Government Statistician and Deputy Registrar General in 1924 with thirty-two years' service under his belt. Despite there being a dislike for his social and political views in a number of quarters, Willem had been highly respected by many, including his work colleagues. When submitting Siebenhaar's resignation to the Under Secretary for the Colonial Secretary's Office, the Registrar General, S. Bennett, noted 'I submit the foregoing resignation with much personal regret. Mr Siebenhaar has always been most loyal to me, and his great ability has made him a valuable colleague.'³¹

Willem returned to Europe, first to Italy, where Lydia had preceded him. Finding Mussolini's Italy not to their liking, they settled in England after travelling via the NL³². Willem did not forget WA though, as in Den Haag in 1926, he presented a public lecture with slide views on the subject of settling in WA. He advised that while life in WA could be hard, it was a good place to emigrate to³³. Willem Siebenhaar died in Sussex in 1936 aged 73 as the result of a motor accident³⁴.

Although a controversial character, Siebenhaar contributed to raise the level of intellectual debate in WA in the first-quarter of the twentieth century, sometimes providing an alternative to the mainstream view. This, as well as his translations and statistical work as a civil servant (including the Year Book compilations), deserve to be acknowledged as a significant Dutch contribution to WA. However, while Siebenhaar's life in WA has been fairly



Figure 2
Ferdinand Jacobus Domela Nieuwenhuis junior (1871 – 1911) Source: Domela Nieuwenhuis Museum, Heerenveen, Netherlands.

well documented, both in contemporary material and later works³⁵, little has been published about his 20-year-old travelling companion to WA, Ferdinand Jacobus Domela-Nieuwenhuis.

FERDINAND DOMELA-NIEUWENHUIS JUNIOR (1871-1911)

Like Siebenhaar, Ferdinand Domela (as he was generally known in WA) secured a job with the local civil service in April 1892 in the Registry of the Registrar General's Department at £200 per annum, £80 more than Siebenhaar's starting salary of £120. A year later, in April 1893, when still in the Department, Ferdinand submitted a memorial to the Governor stating that he had decided to settle permanently in WA, and requested naturalisation as a British subject in the Colony under the local *Naturalization Act 1871*. This was approved on 3 May³⁶.

Soon after, on 22 May 1893, Ferdinand Domela married Emilie Mary Nettle. The wedding took place at the residence of William Paterson MLA, Member for Murray, at Whitby Falls, 50 kilometres south-east of Perth, where Emilie was working as governess to his children. Siebenhaar was best man³⁷. Emilie was intelligent and ambitious³⁸.

On 24 March 1894, at their home in Perth, Ferdinand and Emilie had a daughter whom they named Emilie Johanna³⁹. She grew up being called 'Topsy' Domela and became a talented pianist. Ferdinand and Emilie purchased a block of land in Perth and had a house built on it⁴⁰. They entertained often at their home and became regular participants in the Perth social scene, with Emilie being particularly popular. Like Willem Siebenhaar, Ferdinand and Emilie Domela were keen chess players and often played each other.

Ferdinand took to cricket and is recorded in the local newspapers as playing in many matches, the first at York only three weeks after he arrived in the Colony⁴¹. Siebenhaar was more interested in soccer, chairing a public meeting in May 1892 at which an association was formed for the playing of the English Association and Rugby Union games⁴². Willem became a committee member⁴³, and both he and Ferdinand participated in the first game of soccer played in WA a few weeks later, with Siebenhaar being captain of one of the sides⁴⁴. Ferdinand also played in the rugby team⁴⁵.

Apart from his sporting abilities, Ferdinand could also sing, occasionally being noted in the papers singing at charity events⁴⁶. He was also a keen stamp collector, being president of the local Philatelic Society in 1902⁴⁷.

Emilie Domela put her hand to journalism from about 1898, including writing short stories⁴⁸. She also worked for *The Argonaut* newspaper, and was on the staff of *The Morning Herald*, writing under her pen-name, 'Egeria' ("patroness and adviser")⁴⁹. The newspapers note Emilie's involvement in many social activities, sometimes with Ferdinand, but often on her own in women's groups. She was elected General Secretary of the Women's Electoral League in 1901⁵⁰.

Ferdinand liked the good life and made investments in property and goldmines. One of his property investments landed him in the Perth Police Court on 3 February 1899 as a reluctant witness, and this provides a glimpse of his character. One Charles Neilson was charged with having let a house to be used for an unlawful purpose (a shop in William Street, Perth, known as the 'Gaiety'). It was alleged by the police prosecutor that the shop was operating as a brothel, which the evidence of witnesses clearly bore out. This appeared to be a generally well known fact around town, the Gaiety being described by a police constable as 'one of the worst places of the kind in Perth.' Ferdinand was described as 'a civil servant and part owner of the premises'. He testified that he had let the shop to Neilson two-and-a-half years before. He 'did not know that the place was used as a disorderly house'. However, the magistrate did not agree, particularly making the point in summing up that 'he did not like the evidence of Mr Domela. He could not help thinking that it must have come to his knowledge that the place was one of the worst in town' and that this also must have come to Neilson's knowledge. The magistrate fined Neilson £10 with costs⁵¹.

Domela's reputation was presumably at least a little tarnished by this event. Ferdinand's spendthrift attitude and gambling continued⁵², but his speculative investments in goldmines in WA in the late 1890s, which included the use of his own as well as family money (his father's and younger brother's in particular) were unsuccessful and debts accumulated⁵³. The family money had largely been accumulated via various inheritances over the years and both Ferdinand junior and his younger brother Theodore had inherited substantial sums. However, Ferdinand senior was a poor financier and made some unwise investments in the NL and the family fortune was dwindling in the 1890s.

By 1899 it became evident to the family in the NL that Ferdinand junior had lost much money in Perth and was in all sorts of problems. Young Ferdinand had apparently liquidated his stamp collection said by him to be worth 12,000 guilders (about £1,000). At the same time Ferdinand senior was in financial trouble at home. Family members in the NL grew impatient, anxious and despondent that the considerable sums loaned to Ferdinand junior for investment were not being repaid, or that even interest on the amount had not been forthcoming, and little was heard from him. His younger brother Theodore thought of visiting Perth to ascertain what the situation was but decided against it. By 1902 it was clear that there was no hope of retrieving the loaned family money, with Theodore lamenting that almost all of his inheritance from his mother had been lost (7,000 guilders or nearly £600) as well as a substantial part of his father's wealth, which without such loss, his father would not have been in such a bad financial situation. It is unknown exactly how much Ferdinand senior lost on young Ferdinand's speculations in WA, but it may have been some 12,000 guilders⁵⁴.

While Ferdinand and Emilie were, according to the newspaper reports, still on the social scene together in January 1903 attending civic and government

functions⁵⁵, the relationship was apparently finished. Ferdinand continued playing in cricket matches for the Claremont-Cottesloe club with his last participation recorded in the main newspapers on 28 February 1903, when he unfortunately got out for a ‘duck’ in the first innings after being stumped, with things not improving in the second innings, when he was caught-out with only one run⁵⁶. Perhaps he had the more serious issues of finances and his marital relationship on his mind. By February, the couple were no longer mentioned in the major newspaper social columns as attending events together.

In late April 1903 advertisements were placed in *The West Australian* newspaper for an auction at Mrs Domela’s home under her instructions. Available for sale was a list of ‘High Class Furniture’, apparently being all of the household contents, including an *Ibach* piano that nine-year-old Topsy would have played⁵⁷. Ferdinand’s debts had caught up with them.

The last mention of Ferdinand in the major newspapers is in May 1903, when he was playing in the Perth Chess Club’s Cup Tourney. He was beaten⁵⁸. In February 1902, Ferdinand’s title of ‘Clerk and Librarian’ in the Patents and Trademarks Branch had been improved to ‘Chief Clerk and Librarian’ although the salary had remained at the comfortable £290 per annum (Siebenhaar was earning £220 as ‘Sub-editor of the Statistical Year Book’). However, from one July 1903, Domela’s salary was reduced to £250 and the title of Chief Clerk was abolished. At the same date, Siebenhaar received a pay-rise to £230. This was likely the last straw for Ferdinand, because on 17 July 1903, he resigned from the civil service⁵⁹. A week later Emilie had sold the newspaper she had started a year before called *The Social Kodak*, although she was able to continue writing its social section⁶⁰.

Emilie’s name continues to appear in the social pages, but Ferdinand disappears from the scene. In September 1903, a Mr Herman laid a charge in the Perth Local Court for recovery of a debt owing to him on a dishonoured promissory note signed by Emilie Domela for the very large sum of £61 4 shillings and 10 pence. In her defence, Emilie told the Bench that the signatures on the note purporting to be hers were forgeries. The magistrate believed her and found in her favour⁶¹. But the question was: who forged her signature?

To escape mounting debts and a marriage in tatters, Ferdinand Domela slipped away to South Africa. He served as a police constable in the South African Constabulary in the Transvaal during 1906 and 1907⁶². Then he secured a position as a private school teacher in the Transvaal. On 17 July 1911 at Reitfontein, Lichtenburg, Transvaal, Ferdinand died aged only forty, apparently from apoplexy (a stroke). The Secretary of the School Board at Lichtenburg requested that the Dutch Consul-General in Pretoria inform Ferdinand senior in Holland, which the Consul did on 30 August. It was not until after the authorities had taken possession of Ferdinand’s small estate in South Africa of £14 plus a month’s salary owed to him by the Education Department, that documents were found indicating his marriage to Emilie

and that he had a daughter Topsy. The Consul-General in Pretoria then wrote to the Honorary Dutch Consul at Fremantle in October asking him to inform Emilie of his death⁶³. The Deaths column of *The West Australian* noted his passing in February 1912, eight months after the event⁶⁴, although Emilie had by then left the state.

EMILIE DOMELA'S NEW LIFE

Emilie, while having been deserted by Ferdinand, managed to stay on her feet and kept working in journalism. She found a new partner, Leonard Matters, a fellow journalist at *The Daily News*⁶⁵ who was sixteen years her junior and the brother of the Australian-British suffragette, Muriel Matters. She left Perth in 1910 for Sydney where Leonard had preceded her, and in 1911 they sailed for North America, later going to Britain⁶⁶. They worked in the newspaper business in Britain and Argentina, before returning to Perth in 1921. They went back to England, where Leonard was elected to the British House of Commons, serving between 1929 and 1931. Emilie died in Surrey in 1939. Her Perth obituary writer reflected on her life:

‘Mrs. Matters was well known in journalistic circles in Perth and had many friends all over WA and in Victoria, which was really her home State. She came to WA in the early nineties and not long after she came she married the late Mr. F. Domela, a charming Dutchman. She once told the writer she had two years of perfect happiness, the first two years of her married life. Later, life did not deal so gently with her and her husband left WA and never returned. Mrs. Matters was a woman of courage and became a journalist, working hard but happily and supporting and educating her only daughter “Topsy,”’⁶⁷

FERDINAND'S CONTRIBUTION TO WA

Ferdinand Domela's immigrant contribution to WA was clearly not comparable to Siebenhaar's, and did not fulfil his father's, nor his wife's, hopes and ambitions for him. He nevertheless left the legacy of a talented child. His wife was one of Perth's earliest female journalists. There were also some positive social and cultural contributions to the community that Ferdinand made during his more than twelve years in WA, including his involvement in sport, singing, chess-playing and philately.

ANNA SIEBENHAAR, WILLEM'S SISTER

Also not going unnoticed in Perth was Willem Siebenhaar's sister Anna (Johanna Elisabeth) who had followed him to Perth, and her husband Edgar Semmens. Like her younger brother, Anna had gone to teach in England in the 1880s, holding a position as a governess at a boarding school in Brighton before she too departed for WA in the early 1890s⁶⁸. In 1896, when aged forty-two she married Edgar George Semmens at Coolgardie⁶⁹.

Semmens was educated in South Australia and worked as a mining clerk and accountant in Broken Hill before going to Coolgardie in 1895, where he did the same type of work, later becoming a buyer for a mining company. In 1897, with a slump at Coolgardie, Edgar and Anna moved to Perth, and when staying with his brother-in-law Willem, he applied for and obtained a temporary position as a Record Clerk in the Statistical Branch of the Registrar General's Department in Perth. This was no coincidence as Siebenhaar was at the time Statistical Clerk in that Branch and Ferdinand Domela was Chief Clerk in the Patents' Branch, all sitting in the same small office. Soon after, Edgar gained a permanent position and in 1900 he was promoted to Registry Clerk, which was the beginning of a 40-year career in the State Public Service⁷⁰. Anna and Edgar settled in Claremont and busied themselves in their spare time with community affairs, much related to Dutch matters. Like her brother Willem, Anna had no children.

In 1908, Anna was appointed the Australasian representative of the 'Het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond' (the ANV or General Dutch League/ Union) in succession to the secretary to the Dutch Consulate in Melbourne⁷¹. The ANV had been founded in 1895 as a literary society with the object of promoting cooperation in the fields of Dutch language and culture, fostering kinship ties as well as trade and commerce between the NL and Dutch residents in its colonies and foreign lands.

Edgar Semmens was a founding member of the WA branch of the NL Chamber of Commerce for Australasia which had been established in Melbourne in 1903, and he developed a strong interest in trade and commerce, which he pursued in his spare time from his civil service job (in 1908, he was promoted to Deputy District Registrar for Perth)⁷².

In 1910, when his long service leave became due, Edgar was granted 12 months leave on half pay from his position to travel to Europe with the aim of promoting improved trade links between WA and the NL and the NL East Indies (NEI). Semmens pointed out that for 1909, WA imported £54,773 worth of goods from Java and £26,480 from the NL, whilst the State only exported £2,480 worth of goods to Java and nothing to the NL. Although he was undertaking the trip in an independent capacity, Semmens was provided with a letter of introduction to the Dutch Government from the State Premier and he was permitted to give papers in Den Haag, Amsterdam and Rotterdam⁷³.

In 1911, it was reported that there were many enquiries about WA from potential emigrants in the NL, and the State Government had even appointed an emigration agent there, although this appointment did not fulfil expectations⁷⁴. However, the enquiries had not led to many new arrivals, with the 1911 census recording a NL born population in WA of only eighty-four, out of a total State population of 282,114 (0.03%). Australia-wide in 1911, there were only 745 NL born of a total population of 4,455,005 (0.017%)⁷⁵. The figures for State financially assisted immigration into WA from overseas for the year ended 30 June 1912 were 9,697 passages in total, of which all came

from the British Isles except forty-eight from various European countries, of whom nearly all had been nominated by their friends already in the State. Only one of these forty-eight was from Holland⁷⁶. The official immigration statistics for the period 1901 to 1915 show net Dutch arrivals in WA of only 117 (218 arrivals minus 101 departures), and this included forty sailors from the Royal Dutch Navy who 'arrived' as deserters at Fremantle in 1910⁷⁷.

Edgar was on a mission to do something about improving the trade deficit and the poor immigration performance of WA with the NL and its colonies in the East Indies. He and Anna sailed for the NL in May 1911⁷⁸. Edgar was able to meet with the Dutch Minister for Commerce regarding WA matters and gave various lectures⁷⁹.

While in NL in 1911, Anna called on Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis senior and provided him with her perspective on the lives of Ferdinand junior and his wife Emilie in Perth. Ferdinand senior heard much that he had never known. Anna said she was estranged from her brother Willem. Her view was that Ferdinand junior was a good and sympathetic young man, although weak. She felt that Emilie was his downfall, although after they first married in 1893, their house was a welcome place to visit. It was an ideal home in which they did all the housework themselves. When more money came their way they employed hired help as Emilie wanted to do more of her own journalistic work. The relationship then began to crumble. The house became a party-house. More and more, young Ferdinand did not find what he wanted in his home and he started to drink and gamble on the horse races. Ferdinand junior was well thought of by his superiors at work, and Anna considered Ferdinand to be a better person than her brother. After hearing Anna's assessment, Ferdinand senior concluded that, as the family had always thought, even though Emilie may have had talent, she had not been the right person for his son⁸⁰.

Edgar and Anna returned from Europe in April 1912 and Edgar presented the State Government with a report on his findings regarding trade opportunities with the NL and the East Indies, which was published in *The West Australian*⁸¹. Edgar Semmens continued to promote trade between the two countries and wrote many articles that were published in the local papers and even in the *British Trade Journal* into the 1920s⁸².

Like her brother, Anna Semmens Seibenhaar (the appellation she sometimes used), was talented and outspoken, as letters published in the newspapers and surviving in archives testify⁸³. But her marriage to Edgar was not a happy one. Writing to her unmarried sister, Christina, in Den Haag in September 1918, Anna complained that she had to manage on what money Edgar gave her, and told Christina 'I hate and abhor that miserable creature so much that it costs me pain to speak to him, and were I financially independent I would not suffer him in my proximity'. Anna continues with much more criticism and vitriol in regard to Edgar. Then in a following letter in January 1919, Anna wished her sister Christina a happy 67th birthday, with a further lament about her own situation:

‘I wish you much happiness on that day and hope that you will enjoy your liberty for many years to come. Certainly it is fortunate when one feels so free, but how many do reach it? And therefore there are so many women who prefer to go out working, as long as they can feel free in their own little rooms. One thinks that by marrying one goes towards ones freedom but then the slavery only starts, as long as there is attachment and collaboration, the tie does not pinch as much, but when things begin to go wrong, then a greater slavery is unimaginable. Mother also always spoke of her yoke and as likewise was unhappy in her marriage. I am now able to understand. Oh! Yes I prevent every unpleasantness and owing to having done so I rest, but imagine how lonesome my life is.’

The letter continues with much criticism of her brother Willem’s wife Lydia for her pro-British and anti-Dutch letter writing to the newspapers, referring to her as ‘that minx’, and expressing disappointment in herself for being the ‘intermedium’ in Willem’s proposal of marriage to her, and in Willem for allowing Lydia to write letters to the newspaper that were against his native country.⁸⁴

Anna had come to the attention of the Censorship Office of Military Intelligence in Perth, and the above is contained in two of a number of Anna’s letters to Holland that had been intercepted and translated between 1915 and 1919. The Censor notes that Anna was said to be on very bad terms with her husband Edgar⁸⁵. The military intelligence authorities also noted that; ‘She has been regarded as anti-British in her sympathies, and throughout the war her correspondence has been reported to the Censor as being of a disaffected character.’⁸⁶

As early as February 1915, Anna had come under observation when she had sent a letter on behalf of ‘Het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond’ (ANV or General Dutch Union) to the editor of the Dutch monthly paper *Neerlandia* in Dordrecht with the 1914 annual report on the local branch of the ‘union’⁸⁷. Anna’s report states that in the early part of 1914:

‘a second effort was made to unite the Hollanders living in WA, and at first it appeared as if sufficient collaboration could be expected in order to have better results than those experienced in 1911; but alas, disagreeable influences had their effects, preventing the union from obtaining any life existence, and notwithstanding that the most disquieting factors fortunately disappeared from our surroundings, not one has felt the spirit awake within one’s self to attack the task once more. Notwithstanding declarations and explanations which some don’t seem to understand there remains some sort of mistrust towards the Dutch General Union.’⁸⁸

In June 1915, the Dutch translator (and informant) for the Censor, J.H. Otto de Grancey, wrote a confidential memo to the Censor advancing his view that:

‘Mrs Semmens’ object for these meetings perhaps is, to engender her anti British propensities into the minds of a handful of deserters from the Dutch Warships and a few others. For about 15 years, we have known this lady to be very headstrong and anti British but all of the time she loses sight of the fact that both her husband and herself are Civil Servants as Registrars of Births Deaths and Marriages.....’⁸⁹.

Anna had organised a number of meetings of the ANV at her home. The deserters referred to are some of the forty Dutch sailors who deserted from a Dutch Naval Squadron visiting Fremantle in 1910.

In December 1918, the local military intelligence considered that the language used by Anna in her letters constituted a breach of Regulation 27A (a) of the *War Precautions Regulations* and conveyed this to the Commonwealth Secretary of Defence in Melbourne ‘as her hostile statements may receive a certain amount of damaging publicity’ in Holland. In January 1919 the Minister for Defence’s decision was conveyed to the Commandant of the 5th Military District in Perth: ‘As the publication of such letters in a neutral country might tend to discredit Britain, I authorise the District Commandant to prosecute, if after consultation with the representative of the Crown Solicitor, he is satisfied that a case would succeed’. The District Commandant sought a legal opinion, forwarding the file of letters to solicitors Moss, Dwyer, Unmack & Thomas. The solicitors’ view was that Anna had committed a breach of Regulation 27A in a letter dated 1 December 1918 to Felix Cohen in Rotterdam, in which she had said words calculated to incite hostility to the British Empire, although the legal advisers had some doubt as to the meaning of the words ‘calculated to incite hostility’ contained in Regulation 27A (Anna’s letter to Cohen expressed pro-German and anti-English sentiments)⁹⁰.

The preparation of the prosecution case was commenced. On 5 February 1919 a letter was sent to Anna from the Intelligence Section asking her to call at the Military District headquarters in Perth. The letter was addressed to her house ‘Forest Gate’, Riley Road, Claremont, perhaps provocatively; as it was a translation of the Dutch name she had given to her house, ‘Boschhek’, and which appeared on all her correspondence. Anna subsequently called at the Intelligence Section in Perth, presumably taking advantage of the First Class Railway pass from Claremont to Perth that had been included in the letter of invitation. The interviewing officer scrawled a handwritten note on the file:

‘Mrs Semmens is at feud with the wife of her brother – Lydia Bruce Siebenhaar, who is the author of anti-German letters in the press. Apparently a good deal of Mrs Semmens’ disaffection is caused by the hate and detestation of her sister in law. Mrs Semmens strikes me as half crazy on the subject of her

sister-in-law & Holland and I do not consider that prosecution of her would lead to a very good result.’⁹¹

That appears to have been the end of the matter.

In December 1921, Edgar was granted one day’s leave from the Registry for 8 December to attend the auction of his house in Riley Road, Claremont⁹². Put to auction was not only the house, but also its furniture and household effects, plus another vacant block of land in Claremont⁹³. Anna returned to the NL, possibly in 1922, and died at Voorburg in 1938⁹⁴. Edgar Semmens was promoted to District Registrar for Perth in 1925⁹⁵ and remarried Ivy Cooper at Perth in 1938. He died in 1958 at Mt Hawthorn, WA.

Thus, as often happens, what apparently started out as a good relationship where there were common interests, turned sour, with as in most such cases, faults on both sides. Yet there were positives in the relationship for WA. Perhaps Edgar may never have become interested in Dutch trade issues if he had never married Anna, and his efforts had lifted the profile of the NL in WA and in the Netherlands in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Willem Siebenhaar, Ferdinand Domela-Nieuwenhuis, Anna Siebenhaar and their spouses Lydia Siebenhaar, Emilie Domela and Edgar Semmens were very diverse in their characters and beliefs but all had considerable abilities. Their lives were intertwined in the small social scene of Perth in the last decade of the nineteenth and first two decades of the twentieth centuries. In their own ways they made some valuable and interesting contributions to WA. However, their activities did not go unnoticed by the general population or government authorities. Because of their Dutch connections, awareness of the NL was at least to some extent maintained in the minds of the general populace in WA in the period, even though the attention they received may not have been all positive.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr Bert Altena, Faculty of History and Arts, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, for generously providing me with guidance and background on various information sources relating to the Domela Nieuwenhuis family and Willem Siebenhaar, as well as Dr Nonja Peters for general advice, including on Dutch language matters.

ENDNOTES

- 1 L. S. Eliot, Superintendent of Census, *Census of the Colony of WA taken on 3rd April 1881*, Government Printer (Perth, 1882), pp. 99-103.
- 2 17 males and 2 females being 0.038% of the total recorded population of 49,782. *Census of WA 1891: General Report with Appendices*, Government Printer (Perth), p. 43, p. 119.

- 3 36 males and 5 females or 0.022% of the recorded population of 184,124: *Seventh Census of WA Taken for the Night of 31st March 1901*, Comp. by Malcolm Fraser, Registrar General, Volume 1 – Superintendent's Report, Government Printer (Perth, 1904), pp. 123-124.
- 4 Of the Dutch born in W.A. in 1911, 73 were males and 11 were females. The total of 745 NL-born for Australia was comprised of 643 males and 102 females of a total population of 4,455,005 (0.017 per cent): *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia Taken for the Night between 2nd and 3rd of April, 1911*, Volume II: Detailed Tables, Commonwealth Statistician: Melbourne, 1914, p. 109, p. 113. The 1921 Census enumerated only 97 NL born in WA out of a total population of 332,732 (0.029%). Of the 97, there were 82 males and 15 females. Australia-wide there were only 1,391 NL born (1,058 males and 333 females) of a total population of 5,435,734 (0.026%): *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia Taken for the Night between 3rd and 4th of April, 1921*, Part II: Detailed Tables, Commonwealth Statistician: Melbourne, pp. 45-47, pp. 51-52.
- 5 *Albany Inwards Passenger Lists from Overseas*, 'Ormuz' & 'Austral', Cons 108/1, AN 371, State Records Office of WA (SROWA); *Outgoing Passengers Lists UK*, Ports, 'Ormuz' BT27/66-11 & 'Austral' BT 27/66-42, The National Archives (TNA), Kew; In the London outgoing *Ormuz* list, Domela is listed as an 'Engineer'.
- 6 Much has been written on Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis senior. An outline of his life is at: *Het leven van Domela Nieuwenhuis*, <http://www.fdnmuseum.nl/>. The family correspondence has mostly been published in *De familiecorrespondentie van en over Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 1846-1932*, collected and presented by Dr B. Altena in collaboration with R. de Jong, Amsterdam: Stichting IISG, 1997. Much information on Ferdinand junior and his family in this chapter has been taken from Dr Altena's General Introduction and the correspondence itself in this work (especially pages 34-36, 38-39, 42, 44, 395, 397-398, 402, 406-407, 410, 415-416, 430, 432, 434, 436, 465-466, 469-470, 473, 476, 505, 538, 544, 564, 573, 585, 595-600, 605). The International Institute of Social History (IISH/ISSG), Amsterdam, holds the *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis Archive*.
- 7 *Glasgow Herald* 14 July 1900; *The Pall Mall Gazette* 13 August 1886, p. 6.
- 8 *The Times*, 11 June 1886, p. 10; 17 September 1886, p. 3; 24 September 1886, p. 3; 12 January 1887, p. 6.
- 9 Ferdinand was born on 12 February 1871: Civil Register of Births, Gemeente Harlingen, Geboorteakte Aktenummer: A 53, Tresoar, Frysk Histoarysk en Letterkundich Sintrum. Registered 13 February 1871.
- 10 Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis in Den Haag, to Friedrich Engels in London, 7 April 1890, Briefe L5114, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Papers*, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
- 11 Friedrich Engels in London, to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis in The Hague, 9 April 1890, published in 'Frederick Engels Letters January 1887 – July 1890', Volume 48 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, (London, 1975), pp. 470-471.
- 12 Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis in Den Haag, to Friedrich Engels in London, 27 November 1890, Briefe L5115, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Papers*, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Friedrich Engels in London, to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis in The Hague, 3 December 1890, published in 'Karl Marx Frederick Engels: Engels 1890-92', Volume 49 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, (London, 1975), pp. 77-78.
- 13 J.S. Battye (editor), *The Cyclopaedia of WA*, Vol. 1 (Perth, 1912), p. 517.
- 14 Siebenhaar testified in the 1916 Public Service Commissioner's *Public Service Act* enquiry into his assistance to Montague Miller of the International Workers of the World. When asked by the Commissioner what parted him from Holland, Siebenhaar replied: 'The difficulty in my own country of reconciling myself to the state which at that time prevailed. Although my father was in an honourable position and commanded a good deal of influence, even Royal influence, to help me to get a position, as I held socialistic views, and as at that time things were not anything like so free as we know here in Australia, I left. Things were rather hot for you? -- It was not that they were hot for me, but I saw perfectly well that either I should have to give up my ideas or else relinquish the opportunity of making any career at all. I therefore looked round to go to a freer country, which I knew England was, and found subsequently that Australia held views more free and democratic. I afterwards found that Australia was much freer than most of the countries of Europe.....'. *The West Australian* 24 November 1916, p. 8.
- 15 Willem was born on 28 July 1863: Civil Birth Register, Gemeente Den Haag, (birth registered 30 July 1863, Akte 1815, Geboorten 's-Gravenhage Periode: 1863-1872: 18 Jul.1863-29 Aug. 1863 Aktenummer: 1733-2024, Fiche 418, afbeelding 14). Willem's father Christiaan was in the *Grenadiers en Jagers* regiment. In 1858 he translated the French manual for the teaching of swordsmanship entitled *Handleiding voor het onderwijs in de schermkunst*, laying the basis for what became known as the 'Dutch fencing school' or 'Dutch method'. It was published by Erven Doorman at Den Haag, had 58 figures and a title-plate and was recommended by the Ministers of the Army and Navy: *Nieuw Amsterdamsch handels-en effectenblad* (Amsterdam), 22 & 23 July 1858, p. 2; *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche courant : staats-, handels-, nieuws- en advertentieblad* (Rotterdam) 10 March 1859, p. 2, 23 June 1861 p. 2, 20 February 1864, p. 2; *Bredasche courant* (Breda) 10 February 1859 p. 2; *Dagblad van Zuidholland en 's Gravenhage* ('s Gravenhage) 22 July 1858 p. 2, 21 February 1868 p. 4. The seventh edition was still being offered for sale in 1888: *Java-bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie* (Batavia) 5 December 1888, p.3. In 1877, Chirstiaan published a revised work called *Wenken en*

- aanwijzingen voor den onderwijzer in dem schermkunst* ('Hints and instructions for the instructor in swordsmanship'). This was published at Den Haag ('s-Gravenhage) by Erven Doorman. Christiaan Siebenhaar had been born in 1814 at s'Hertogenbosch in Noord Brabant, the son of a German tailor, and he had married Geertruida Frölich at Delft, where their second child was born in 1853.
- 16 Christiaan's and Geertruida's first child, Christina, was born in 1852 in Den Haag, as were the other five children. Three children died in infancy, whilst Willem's older brother, Christiaan, died at only 18 after having achieved the rank of sergeant in the infantry.
- 17 Christiaan Siebenhaar was born on 18 October 1814, the son of Christiaan Siebenhaar, a 44 year old "bataillons kleermaker" (battalion tailor) living in s'Hertogenbosch, Nord Brabant, NL. His mother was Christina Johanna Fortuyn. The birth was registered on 19 October 1814 in the Civil Birth Register at s-Hertogenbosch (Gemeente s'Hertogenbosch, Stadsarchief). Christiaan Siebenhaar senior was German. In a letter intercepted for censorship purposes in 1919, Willem's sister, Mrs Anna Semmens (Siebenhaar) writing from Claremont, W.A. to her sister about the war asks Christina in Den Haag on 20 January 1919: 'How would father who was so for Germany have suffered under it, for were it not his father's native land.': *Siebenhaar*, file 1-12-326, Headquarters, 5 Military District [I], Commonwealth Military Forces, PP14/1 (*Intelligence reports of internments, repatriations, affiliations and general investigations, multiple number series*), BC747357, National Archives of Australia, Perth. Christiaan Siebenhaar senior's 1828 death registration at Den Haag states that he was born at "Basewalk, Pommeren" (Pasewalk, Pommern or Pomerania), and he was aged 58 at his death (i.e. born about 1770): Akte 1219, verlijdens 's-Gravenhage Periode 1823-1832 Aktenummer 1168-1379, Fiche 101, afbeelding 9, Gemeente Den Haag (Municipality of The Hague). Christiaan junior had other brothers and sisters and some of their children (Willem's cousins) used the more German sounding surname spelling of 'Siebenhar'. Christiaan Siebenhaar married on 26 June 1851 at Delft to Geertruida Johanna Frölich: Delft Civil Marriage Registration No. 1851/81, Gemeentearchief Delft. Christiaan Siebenhaar senior died 3 December 1885, death registered 4 December 1885: Civil Death Register, Gemeente Den Haag, Akte 3134 Overlijdens 's-Gravenhage Periode: 1883-1892 Aktenummer 3037-3216, Fiche 899, afbeelding 17; *Het nieuws van den dag: kleine courant* (Amsterdam), 5 December 1885, p.12. Honouring his father's achievements, Willem wrote a biography of him in 1888: W.Siebenhaar, *Christiaan Siebenhaar, stichter der Nederlandsche schermeschool : eene biografische bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der gymnastiek en schermkunst in Nederland*, 's-Gravenhage: Van Langenhuisen, (1888): 'Christiaan Siebenhaar, founder of the Dutch fencing school: a biographical contribution to the history of gymnastics and fencing in the NL'.
- 18 This is stated in J.S. Battye (editor) *The Cyclopaedia of WA*, Vol. 1 (Perth, 1912), p.517, and repeated in Matters, Mrs Leonard W. (formerly Mrs Emilie Domela), *Australasians Who Count in London and Who Counts in WA*, J. Truscott, (London 1913), p.230. However, it appears that he did not graduate from Delft University according to the University's records.
- 19 Item 218 *Siebenhaar, Frans H., W. Siebenhaar, J.E. Siebenhaar-Groot en L.L. Merhottein*. 1882; Item 219 *Siebenhaar W. 1885-1887, 1891-1893, 1897-1899*, 'Correspondentie: Ingekomen brieven en briefkaarten', Archief Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
- 20 'Schoolnieuws', *Het nieuws van den dag: kleine courant* (Amsterdam), 16 December, 1887, p. 5.
- 21 Item 164 (microfilm reel 4), F. Secretary's Office, Membership Cards, William Morris: Part 3: *Archives of the Socialist League (UK) 1884-1891*, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (microfilm copies by Research Publications, Reading, Berks, 1989). Willem Siebenhaar joined on 28 January 1885, giving his address as 3 St George's Road, Wimbledon. In 1886-87, he wrote four letters to the Socialist League. In August 1886 when in Den Haag, Siebenhaar forwarded an article to the editor of the Commonweal, the League's journal, writing 'I trust that the enclosed record of the Amsterdam riots, which according to my friend F. Domela Nieuwenhuis is the best in any paper, will be welcome to you'. Siebenhaar returned to London but then took up residence at Caversham House, Caversham, near Reading: Items 2722-2725, Series K. Correspondence (received), Socialist League (UK) Archives, *ibid*.
- 22 Items L5699 and L5700, *Siebenhaar, W. 1886. 2 Briefe.*, Series L. Letters of Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Papers*, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
- 23 *WA Blue Book for the Year (s)... 1892.....1915*, Government Printer (Perth); Colonial Secretary's Office file 2033/1919, *W. Siebenhaar (Registry) – Personal File*, Vols 1 & 2, Cons 752, SROWA.
- 24 Colonial Secretary's Office file 1827/94 *W. Siebenhaar*, Cons 527, SROWA. Siebenhaar was issued a naturalization certificate by the Governor on 15 November 1894 and this was enrolled as a record of the Supreme Court of WA on 23 November 1894.
- 25 General Register Office, Marriage Registration June Qtr 1899 - Bromley Vol. 2a p. 552. They married on 7 March in Bromley Parish Church, Kent (London) in a 'fashionable local wedding' according to the newspaper account: *Western Mail*, 21 April 1899, p. 46. A marriage notice was also published in *Het nieuws van den dag: kleine courant* (Amsterdam), 16 March 1899, p. 7. Lydia had been born in 1865 at Old Ford in the East End of London to Nathaniel Dixon, an accountant, and his wife Mary Harriet. By 1881 the family had moved to Hackney where Lydia was described with one of her sisters in the census return as a 'pupil teacher' and in 1891, whilst her family had moved to more fashionable Wimbledon, she was a governess in a small private school in the very fashionable Hampstead: General Register Office Birth Registration March Qtr - Poplar Vol. 1c p. 65; 1881

- Census RG11/288 f.60 p.11, TNA, Kew; 1891 Census RG12/604 f.47 p.18 & RG12/108 p.20, TNA, Kew.
- 26 Siebenhaar translated the first edition of *Ongeluckige voyagie van't schip Batavia* ('Unlucky voyage of the ship Batavia'), Jan Jansz's 1647 account of the 1629 *Batavia* shipwreck and mutiny on the Abrolhos Islands off the WAn coast, a third person transposition of Francisco Pelsaert's journal of the 1629 event. Siebenhaar's translation was called 'Abrolhos Tragedy'.
- 27 *The West Australian* 20 October 1909, p. 8; 'Women's Service Guild', *The West Australian*, 11 April 1911, p. 8; *Western Mail*, 22 May 1914, p. 54.
- 28 *The West Australian* 28 November 1916, p. 23.
- 29 *The West Australian* 15 November 1916, p. 16.
- 30 *The West Australian* 30 November 1916, p. 9. See also for more on this case: *The West Australian* 28 October 1916, p. 6; 31 October 1916, p. 23; 1 November 1916, p. 6; 3 November 1916, p. 49; 15 November 1916, p. 6; 22 November 1916, pp. 8-9; 30 November 1916, p. 9; 2 December 1916, p. 8; and 8 December 1916, p. 22. This case is dealt with in much more depth in Naomi Segal's *Who and What Was Siebenhaar: A Note on the Life and Persecution of a WAn Anarchist* (Nedlands, WA: Centre for WAn History, University of WA, 1988).
- 31 Colonial Secretary's Office file 2033/1919 W. Siebenhaar (*Registry*) – *Personal File*, Cons 752, SROWA, Vol. 2, folios 216-217.
- 32 Social Notes', *The West Australian*, 29 February 1924, p. 7. Some correspondence from this period survives in the Siebenhaar Papers, Accession 8062A, J.S. Battye Library.
- 33 'Residentienieuws Australië', *Het Vaderland: staat- en letterkundig nieuwsblad* (Den Haag), 27 September 1926, p. 2.
- 34 *Western Mail* 18 February 1937, p. 26; *The West Australian* 12 February 1937, p. 24. Lydia Siebenhaar survived him, dying in 1944 in south west England: General Register Office, Mere Registration District, June Qtr 1944, Death registration Vol. 5a p. 204.
- 35 Apart from the sources cited elsewhere herewith, see for instance: Battye, J.S. (editor) *The Cyclopaedia of WA*, Vol. 1 (Perth, 1912), p. 517; Matters, Mrs Leonard W. (formerly Mrs Emilie Domela), *Australians Who Count in London and Who Counts in WA*, J. Truscott, (London 1913); Segal, Naomi, *Who and What Was Siebenhaar: A Note on the Life and Persecution of a WAn Anarchist* (Nedlands, WA : Centre for WAn History, University of WA, 1988); Eggert, Paul, 'The Dutch-Australian Connection: Willem Siebenhaar, D.H. Lawrence, Max Havelaar and Kangaroo', *Australian Literary Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, May, 2003, pp 3-19; Segal, Naomi & Duyker, Edward 'Siebenhaar, Willem (1863 - 1936)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Supplementary Volume, Melbourne UP, 2005, pp. 359-360 and online version <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs>. Although he also used the names Wilhelm and William, his birth was registered as Willem.
- 36 Colonial Secretary's Office file 689/93 *F.J.Domela*, Cons 527, SROWA. An interesting point in the naturalization application is that Ferdinand states he is 26 years old, when in actual fact he was 22. Did he put his age up when he applied for the civil service position? When he commenced in his position in April 1892 he would have been 21. It would have been unusual for such an important document to have such an error. Domela was issued a naturalization certificate by the Governor on 18 April 1893 and this was enrolled as a record of the Supreme Court of WA on 3 May 1893: *Naturalization Register, 1841 - 1903*, Item 1, Cons 1157 (WAS 1547), SROWA; *Naturalization Register, 1871-1903*, Item 1, Cons 1293 (WAS 1547), SROWA; *Register of Naturalization Act Certificates (Consolidated Alphabetical Nominal Index, 1871-1903*, Item 3, Cons 3441 (WAS 60), SROWA; *Naturalization Certificates Issued Under Naturalization Act, 1871*, Boxes 1-3, Cons 3442 (WAS 61), SROWA. The reason for seeking naturalization may have been related to his impending marriage, because if Emilie married an alien, she would lose her British nationality. Dutch citizenship did not seem to impede Domela and Siebenhaar being admitted to the local civil service. It was not necessary for an alien to become naturalized to own land in W.A., because this was made legal for aliens by the W.A. *Naturalization Act, 1871*. The Act made provision for aliens residing in WA to apply to the Governor for a certificate of naturalization, which when granted, was to be enrolled as a record of the Supreme Court. Obtaining the grant of a certificate would, after the taking of an oath of allegiance, entitle an alien whilst resident in the Colony of WA, to all political and other rights, powers and privileges of a natural-born British subject, but would also require the alien to be subject to all obligations of a British subject. But naturalization only applied whilst resident in WA – if one went to another colony one would need to be naturalized again in that colony. With the federation of the six Australian colonies to form the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, the function of naturalization passed under the Commonwealth Constitution from the former Colony (now State) of WA to the Commonwealth Government. In 1903 the new Commonwealth Parliament passed the *Naturalization Act* (No. 11 of 1903). That Act provided that any person who had already been naturalized in an Australian State or colony was deemed naturalized under the Act. Thus Domela and Siebenhaar were able to be included on the Commonwealth electoral roll and vote or to stand for office. Siebenhaar's sister, Anna, became naturalized under the 1871 WA Act and the 1903 Commonwealth Act upon marrying Edgar Semmens, a British subject, and was able to vote in W.A. elections from 1899 and in Commonwealth elections from 1902, something she could not do if she was living in England or the NL where women were not given the vote until much later.

- 37 *The West Australian* 27 May 1893, p. 4; *Western Mail* 3 June 1893, p. 26, p. 28; She was the daughter of Richard Nettle (deceased) of Ballarat, Victoria. Marriage Registration Serpentine 1893/165, Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages, WA and Typescript of Anglican Church Registers for Pinjarra 1880-1982, J.S. Battye Library, Accession 3463A, MNG14; *The West Australian* 16 May 1930, p. 6. For Ferdinand, the marriage was registered as Domela Nieuwenhuis.
- 38 In 1881, when a 16 year old pupil at Mt Pleasant State School at Ballarat, Emilie had attempted and passed the Victorian Civil Service examinations, qualifying for admission to the ordinary division of the civil service: *The Argus* (Melbourne), 27 January 1882, p.6: 'The Civil Service List'. The following year, whilst still at Mt Pleasant School, she passed the matriculation examinations held by Melbourne University: 'The Matriculation Examinations', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 11 January 1883, p.10. The University of Melbourne Archives *Student Cards* series do not include Emilie which means that she did not undertake a degree course if she did attend.
- 39 Birth Registration Perth 1894/574, Registrar General of WA (the birth was registered as Domela); *The West Australian* (Perth, WA), 31 March 1894, p. 4.
- 40 *Rate Books*, City of Perth North Ward, Perth Town Lot N81, SROWA: For Year 1894 (dated 16 Dec. 1893), Assessment No. 226, Vacant Ground sold to Ferdinand Domela, Civil Servant, by Alec Forrest, Agent; For Year 1895 (dated 15 Dec. 1894), p.21, Assessment No. 270, includes a house on the block, Net Annual Value £30; 1898, p.49, Assessment No. 622, Net Annual Value £60, Capital Value £1200. The house at No. 166 Palmerston Street, was on the south-east corner of the intersection with Bulwer Street, but was demolished in the 1960s to make way for a block of flats. The 1894-95 Pierssene *WAn Directory* (Battye Library) shows Domela F.J. living in Beaufort Street, but the 1895-6 Wise's *Post Office Directory* lists 'Domela Ferdinand' at the corner of Palmerston & Bulwer Streets. *The West Australian*, 8 August 1898, p. 5 states that the house was named 'Salvani'.
- 41 Between 29-30 March 1891: *The West Australian*, 30 March 1891, p.3 & 1 April 1891, p. 4. Domela was good enough at cricket to be selected by the Cricket Association in 1892 as part of a squad of 20 players from which a team was to be selected to play inter-colony matches in South Australia the following year: *The West Australian*, 21 December 1892, p. 2. Domela was clearly a good overall sportsman. In a W.A. Cricket Association's sports day, for the Half Mile Steeple Chase, Domela was given a handicap of 80 yards, with the lowest handicap being 15 yards: *The West Australian*, 28 December 1893, p. 3.
- 42 On 5 May 1892, a public meeting was called at Strickland's Hotel, Perth for the purpose of considering the advisability of forming an association to promote the playing of the English Association game and the Rugby Union game. There were about 22 persons present. Willem Siebenhaar took the chair. After a considerable amount of discussion as to whether the Rugby game alone should be played, it was decided to form a club to be called the English Association and Rugby Union Football Club. Siebenhaar was appointed to a preliminary committee as well as temporary Secretary and Treasurer, and was to receive the names and subscriptions of all intending players: *The West Australian*, 30 April 1892, p. 2; 5 May 1892, p. 6; 6 May 1892, p. 6. 'C.B' had written a letter to the Sporting Editor of *The West Australian* published on 15 April 1892 (p. 3) suggesting the formation of a Club for Association football. Advertisements were placed in *The West Australian* calling the public meeting. A practice rugby match was played on 7 May and an Association scratch match was held on 9 May on the New Recreation Ground: *The West Australian* 10 May 1892, p. 3.
- 43 On 17 May 1892, the second meeting of the Club adopted rules for the Club and appointed office bearers, with Siebenhaar being elected to the permanent committee, after declining to be nominated for the Secretary position: *The West Australian* 19 May 1892, p. 6.
- 44 The new club has organised the Association (soccer) football match in Perth a week later on 25 May 1892 to satisfy those in the club with a passion for that code. Siebenhaar was made captain of the 'White' team with Ferdinand Domela being his team mate, both playing as 'forwards'. The opposition team were the 'Blacks' (in white with black sash). *The West Australian* reported that 'This match will be of special interest, as it is the first one of its kind played in this colony'. The Whites won 2 to nil: *The West Australian*, 25 May 1892, p. 2 & 26 May 1892, p. 6. It was a Wednesday, and the match was played from 4:15 in the afternoon on 'the green' (the New Recreation ground, on The Esplanade which had been reclaimed from the river).
- 45 There was a slight change to the club name: Rugby and English Association Football Club. The new club decided to first organise a 'social' rugby union match which was played on 18 May 1892, the teams being 'England verses the Colonies'. It appears that rugby wasn't Siebenhaar's forté, but Domela got involved, perhaps as he was a bit younger and more 'sporty'. Ferdinand was half-back for the 'England' team: *The West Australian*, 18 May 1892, p. 6.
- 46 Such as when he was a solo vocalist at a Civil Service Association Promenade Concert in Perth in August 1902: *The West Australian*, 30 August 1902, p. 8.
- 47 *The West Australian*, 11 October 1902, p. 12.
- 48 *Western Mail*, 21 July 1899, p. 52.
- 49 *The West Australian* 15 November 1910, p. 7, 16 May 1930, p. 6, 16 June 1939 p. 8.
- 50 *The West Australian* 20 March 1901, p. 4.
- 51 *The Daily News* 3 February 1899, p. 3; *The West Australian* 4 February 1899, p. 10.

- 52 In the 'Turf' section of *The West Australian* in March 1900 it was noted that 'Mr F.J. Domela, the well-known cricketer, who drew Merryman, the second horse, on Tattersall's consultation on the Kalgoorlie Summer Cup, had previously won four or five placed horse prizes in the same promoter's sweeps.' The second place for Merryman won Ferdinand £157, a significant amount of money. There were 6,281 in the draw. One wonders how many of the entries were Ferdinand's? Some of his other wins were noted in the papers: *The West Australian* 12 March 1900, p. 2.
- 53 At the Perth Local Court on 11 December 1902, for instance, judgements were entered against him for debts owing on dishonoured promissory notes for £8 and £11 he had made in favour of Messrs Abrahams and Jeffrey: *The West Australian* 12 December 1902, p. 6.
- 54 The assessment of Dr Bert Altena, in *De familiecorrespondentie van en over Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 1846-1932*, p.44.
- 55 *The West Australian* 8 January 1903, p. 5; 20 January 1903, p. 5.
- 56 *The West Australian*, 2 March 1903, p. 6.
- 57 *The West Australian*, 25 April 1903, p. 2.
- 58 *Western Mail*, 16 May 1903, p. 38.
- 59 *WA Blue Book for the Year 1903*, Government Printer (Perth, 1904), p. 14 & p. 45.
- 60 *The Daily News* 24 July 1903, p. 1.
- 61 On 10 September: *The West Australian* 12 September 1903, p. 11.
- 62 *Record of Conduct and Service of South African Constabulary: Ferdinand James Domela*, Chief Staff Officer, South African Constabulary (SAC), Vol. 60, System 01, Reference H2848, TAB: National Archives Repository, Pretoria (Public Records of former Transvaal Province and its predecessors as well as of magistrates and local authorities).
- 63 File 1921/292, *Ferdinand Jacobus Domela*, Applications for Grants of Letters of Administration, Supreme Court of WA, Cons 3458, SROWA.; Death Notice 18439/1911 *Ferdinand Jacobus Nieuwenhuis*, Master of the Supreme Court, Pretoria - Estates (MHG), Transvaal, TAB: National Archives Repository, Pretoria.
- 64 *The West Australian* 16 February 1912, p. 1.
- 65 *The West Australian* 24 January 1907, p. 5.
- 66 *The West Australian* 15 November 1910, p. 7; *Border Crossings from Canada to the US 1895-1956: Manifests of Passengers Arriving in the St. Albans, VT, District through Canadian Pacific and Atlantic Ports, 1895-1954*, Arriving from Vancouver, B.C., Jan. 1911, Leonard W. Matters (aged 29, single, advertising agent), Emilie M Domela (aged 40, married, journalist), Emilie J. Domela (aged 16), Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Pub. No. M1464, Roll No. 145, RG 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.
- 67 *The West Australian*, 16 June 1939, p. 8.
- 68 1891 *Census of England and Wales*, RG12/804 folio 9 p. 11, The National Archives, Kew. Noted in census return as 'Anna', not 'Johanna'.
- 69 *Registrar General of WA, marriage registration Coolgardie 1896/114*; *The West Australian* 25 November 1896, p. 4.
- 70 'District Registrar', *The West Australian*, 19 January 1937, p. 15; *WA Blue Book for the Year 1898*, Government Printer, (Perth, 1899), p. 95; Colonial Secretary's Office file 2867/1919 *Edgar G. Semmens Registry – Personal File*, Cons752, SROWA.
- 71 *The West Australian*, 28 September 1908, p. 5. Also translated as Pan-Dutch Union or General Dutch Union/Alliance/Confederacy. Anna stated she was representative of the 'NL Union for Australasia' in 1913 (*The West Australian*, 29 March 1913, p. 8), but in an article in 1911, J. H. Otto de Grancey stated that he was the Australian representative of the ANV: *The West Australian*, 7 July 1911, p. 9.
- 72 'Dutch East Indies and Australia', *The West Australian*, 15 July 1910, p. 6 (a report on the sixth annual report of the Chamber).
- 73 *Western Mail*, 29 April 1911, p. 14, p. 24 (includes portrait photo); *The West Australian*, 24 April 1911, p. 2.
- 74 *The West Australian*, 7 July 1911, p. 9.
- 75 Of the Dutch born in W.A. in 1911, 73 were males and 11 were females. The total of 745 for Australia being comprised of 643 males and 102 females: *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia Taken for the Night between 2nd and 3rd of April, 1911*, Volume II: Detailed Tables, Commonwealth Statistician: Melbourne, 1914, p. 109, p. 113. The 1921 Census enumerated only 97 NL born in WA out of a total population of 332,732 (0.029%). Of this 97, there were 82 males and 15 females. Australia-wide there were only 1,391 NL born (1,058 males and 333 females) of a total population of 5,435,734 (0.026%): *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia Taken for the Night between 3rd and 4th of April, 1921*, Part II: Detailed Tables, Commonwealth Statistician: Melbourne, pp. 46-47, pp. 51-52.
- 76 *The West Australian*, 9 December 1912, p. 7.
- 77 The writer's analysis of data in *WAn Statistical Register* (Government Printer, Perth), editions 1900-1915.

- 78 They sailed for London on the *Suevic* on 3 May 1911: *The West Australian*, 4 May 1911, p. 4;
- 79 *The West Australian*, 18 September 1911, p. 6.
- 80 B. Altena and R. de Jong, *De familiecorrespondentie van en over Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 1846-1932* Amsterdam: Stichting IISG, 1997, pp. 599-600.
- 81 *The West Australian*, 18 July 1912, p. 5, 19 July 1912, p. 3.
- 82 See for example *The West Australian* 26 May 1915, p. 8, 26 October 1922 p. 16, 2 December 1922, p. 13, 5 January 1923, pp. 7-8, 6 January 1923, p. 10, 6 April 1923, p. 10, 26 April 1923, p. 9, 19 July 1924, p. 14, 7 July 1925, p. 8, 1 August 1925, p. 11, 25 December 1925, p. 5; *Western Mail* 6 July 1922, p. 16, 27 July 1922, p. 8 (includes portrait photo), 12 October 1922, pp. 14-15, 23 November 1922, p. 21.
- 83 For example, she wrote to the Editor of *The West Australian* on diverse subjects such as public health, including the need for sex education (12 December 1916, p. 4); Dutch matters such as notice of the impending visit to Fremantle of a Dutch Naval Squadron (6 September 1910, p. 6), the celebration of 100 years of peace in The NL and the Palace of Peace established The Hague (29 March 1913, p. 8) and a proposal for public contributions be sent to neutral Holland to support the many Belgian refugees there (10 December 1914, p. 5); the conscription referendum – not openly disapproving of it (12 October 1916, p. 10); the prevention of war (20 April 1917, p. 9), parliamentary reform, suggesting that candidates should be required to undertake training before standing for election (9 March 1918, p. 10); and town planning (18 February 1921, p. 8).
- 84 Translated letters: Anna Semmens Siebenhaar to Miss C. Siebenhaar, The Hague, 29 September, 1918 & 20 January 1919, *Siebenhaar*, file 1-12-326, Headquarters, 5 Military District [I], Commonwealth Military Forces, PP14/1 (*Intelligence reports of internments, repatriations, affiliations and general investigations, multiple number series*), BC747357, National Archives of Australia, Perth. The letters were translated for the Censor by J.H. Otto De Grancey.
- 85 Censor to Headquarters 5th Military District, Perth, 23 January 1919 in file 1-12-326, *ibid*.
- 86 A/Commandant, 5th Military District to the Secretary for Defence, Melbourne, 12 December 1918, in file 1-12-326, *ibid*. Willem Siebenhaar was still writing to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis senior in Hilversum, but his letters too were subject to the censor's scrutiny. In one intercepted letter on this file, dated 1 October 1917, Siebenhaar complains 'I commence to fear that either your letters or mine are at the bottom of the sea.....', noting that he had sent a number of previous letters but without reply. Siebenhaar sees progress in Russia, hopes 'the Germans will throw off the tyranny, then everywhere the right spirit would set in', complains that the State Liberal Ministry has been stifling his long-merited promotion under the pretence of economy, and describes the situation of Montague Miller, the 85 year old local leader of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) who had been gaoled essentially for his anti-war position, and for whom Siebenhaar had collected funds at his work and had been consequently subject to a Public Service Commission Enquiry. Ferdinand (junior) Domela Nieuwenhuis' sister, Madame Johanna l'Arbalestrier (wife of Captain Octave l'Arbalestrier) who was prima donna in German opera in Belgium, was also in correspondence with Willem Siebenhaar in 1916: *The West Australian* 23 September 1916, p. 7.
- 87 File 1-12-326, *ibid*.
- 88 Anna Semmens-Siebenhaar to C. van Son, Dortrecht (Editor of *Neerlandia*), 14 February 1915, file 1-12-326, *ibid*.
- 89 De Grancey to Censor, 30 June 1915, internal memo, file 1-12-326, *ibid*.
- 90 File 1-12-326, *ibid*.
- 91 File 1-12-326, *ibid*.
- 92 Colonial Secretary's Office file 2867/1919 *Edgar G. Semmens Registry – Personal File*, Cons 752, SROWA.
- 93 *The West Australian*, 7 December 1921, p. 3.
- 94 *De Sumatra Post* 14 July 1922 p. 11 states that J. Semmens left Batavia for Amsterdam aboard the *Prins der Nederlanden* on 12 July 1922; Civil Death Register, Gemeentearchief Leidschendam-Voorburg, Akte 134, Johanna Elisabeth Siebenhaar, died 28 May 1938, death registered 30 May 1938. The death registration indicates she was married to Edgar Semmens and the WA Divorce Registers 1919–1937 do not list a divorce for Edgar and Anna: Supreme Court of WA, Cons 3409/6 to 3409/13, SROWA.
- 95 *Western Mail* 7 May 1925, p. 8 supplement (photo); *The West Australian*, 19 January 1937, p. 15 (biography).

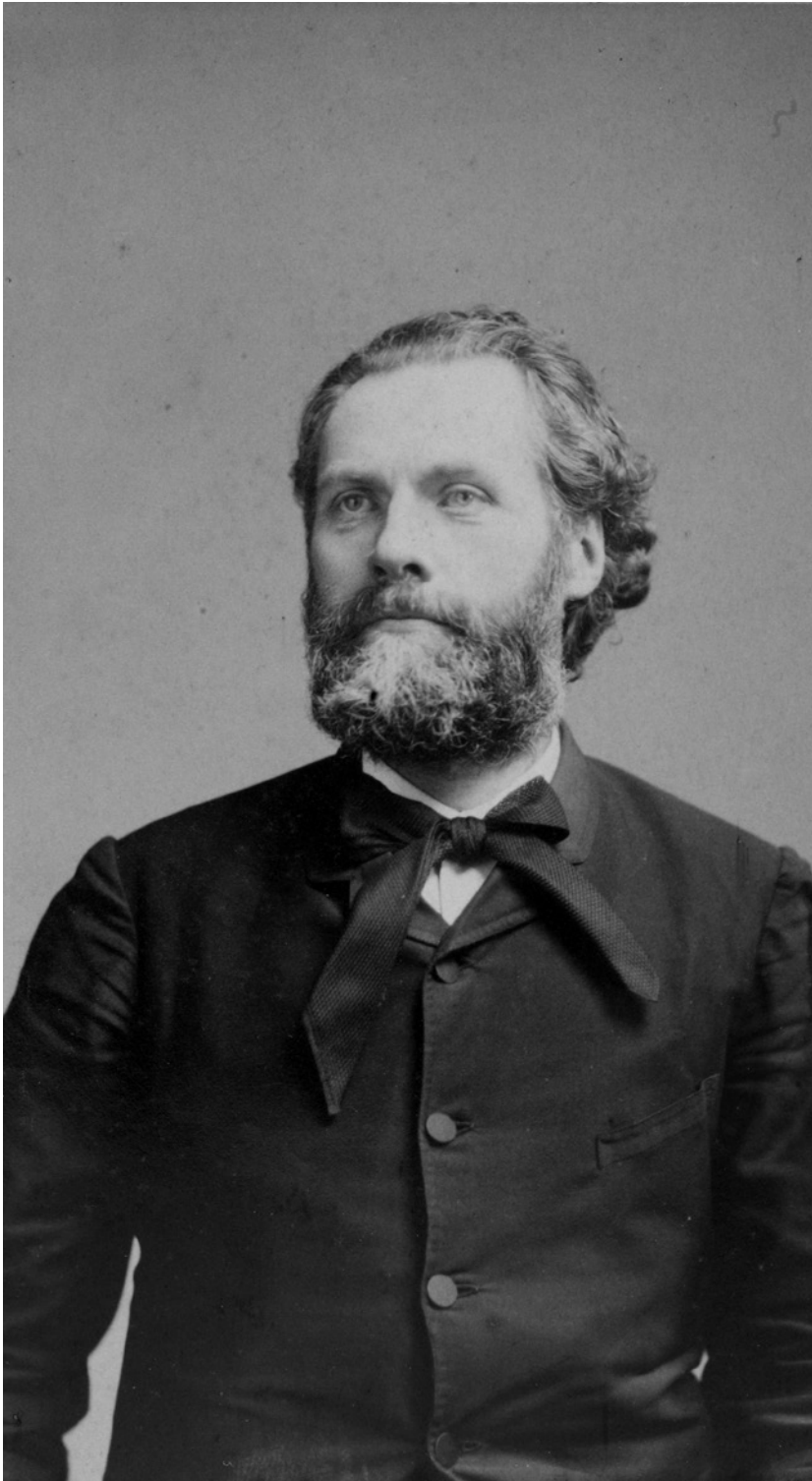


Figure 3
Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919). Nieuwenhuis was born in Amsterdam. He had a theological education and became an Evangelical-Lutheran preacher serving in various Dutch towns until he gradually lost his faith and stopped preaching in 1879. He came into contact with the social issues of the time and became one of the founding fathers of Dutch socialism. A contemporary of Marx and Engels, he is remembered as a charismatic leader of the Dutch labour movement and a revolutionary. He was the father of Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis Junior, who migrated to Western Australia with Willem Siebehaar (see Neil Foley's chapter).
Courtesy: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.