

MEMORIAL

WILLIAM VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN (1880-1949)

William van Holst Pellekaan died on June 8, 1949. For many months preceding he had been in poor health and the end came during a protracted operation. Funeral services were held at Anaheim, California, and he was laid to rest in Westminster Cemetery in Orange County, California, on Friday, June 10.

He is survived by his wife to whom he was married in Dallas on November 23, 1923. A twin brother, Cornelius van Holst Pellekaan, and a niece live in The Hague but no other near relatives survive him.

He was the son of Jacob van Holst Pellekaan and Dorine Ritmeester and was born on May 11, 1880, at Tegal on the island of Java. In 1884 his mother returned to Holland for medical treatment and took him and his brother with her to live in The Hague. It was the custom of those engaged in work in the colonies to have their children educated at home in Holland and when their mother rejoined her husband she left the two boys to be cared for by friends in Leiden where they attended the elementary schools and the first part of the secondary school. After this William entered a preparatory school for military officers at Alkmaar and on completing this training he entered the Military College at Breda and was graduated with a commission in 1901.

In 1902 he entered the Colonial Indian Army of the Netherlands East Indies and he served in North Sumatra until 1908, carrying on the customary duties of an officer of the Colonial Army. On some of his missions he penetrated parts of the jungle never before reached by a European and often this sort of duty involved him in fighting with hostile natives, some of whom were fanatics. On one occasion, while unarmed and writing in his temporary headquarters, he sent his orderly for a cup of coffee and as the soldier disappeared a native who had been awaiting this opportunity sprang from his hiding place and attacked him with a bolo. Fortunately the orderly was not out of hearing and, hastily returning, he shot the intruder and van Holst escaped death though severely wounded. On another occasion he was fired on from ambush but again he escaped though with severe wounds in the chest and scalp.

At various times he was in command of troops detailed to protect geological parties of the Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij from unfriendly natives and in this way he became acquainted with geologists and acquired a great interest in the work they were doing.

In the year 1908 he was sent to the Island of Nias where fighting was going on and during a serious encounter he was so severely wounded by a bolo cut in the thigh that he was incapacitated for many months. The wound was badly infected and the surgeons finally informed him that in order to save his life they would have to amputate the leg. He refused the operation and eventually recovered though only after 6 months in the hospital. Those who recall something of surgical methods before the first World War can imagine the intolerable suffering that van Holst endured during the dressing and treatment of such a wound.

On his recovery he was declared to be physically unfit for any further army service and was discharged from the army and returned to Holland. In Holland he was fortunate enough to find a surgeon who was willing to undertake to repair the muscles of his leg and actually succeeded to a degree that in after years van Holst was able to walk fairly well and only a few people ever suspected that he had had a serious accident.

With the ending of his army career he decided to take up the study of geology and in