

Rowing at the Games of the 2nd Olympiad, Paris 1900 — or François Brandt's Statue Found

Anthony Th. Bijkerk

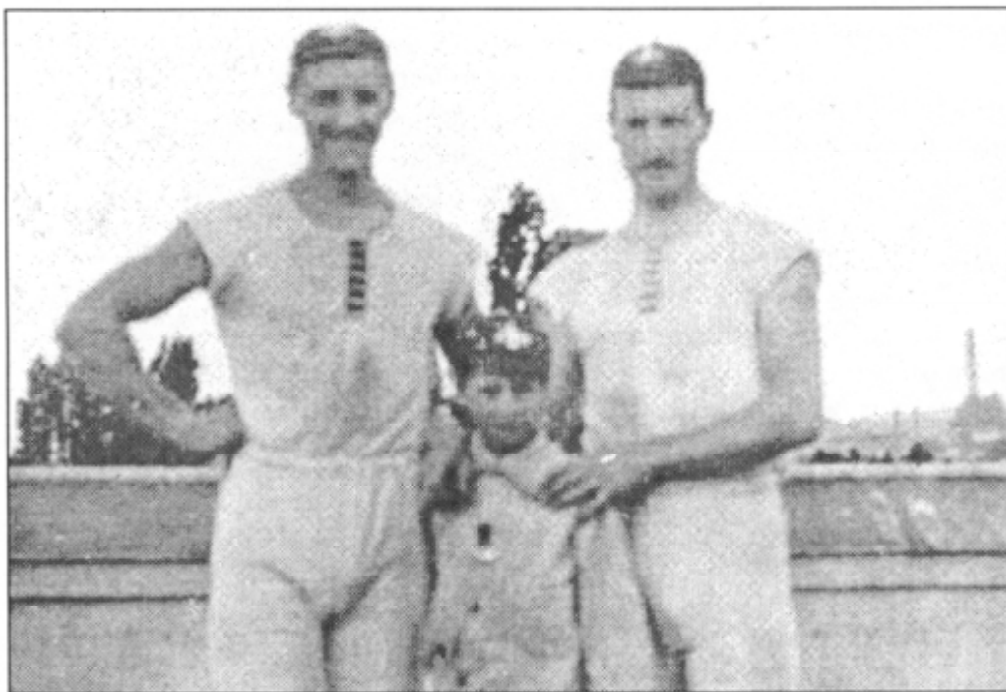
In the *Journal of Olympic History*, Volume 5, number 1, Spring 1997, I wrote an article with the same title as mentioned above in the first part of the new title. The first part of

coxswain of the Dutch pair, which won this rowing event at the 1900 Olympic Games. David Wallechinsky, in the 2000 issue of his now famous book: *The Complete Book of the Summer Olympics*, Sydney 2000 edition, paid attention to this young French coxswain. Unfortunately, the *Journal of Olympic History* in 1997 had no possibilities as yet to include photographs, but that situation has now been changed to the better.

Although the identity of the young French coxswain has never been detected, there does exist a photograph of him and it was published in a Memorial Book from the Dutch Student Rowing Club LAGA, in which François Antoine Brandt, in 1926, published his own story on the events in Paris.

One hundred years ago, on August 26, 1900, the Netherlands celebrated its first win in an Olympic event, and that specific event happened to be the championship of the senior 'coxed pair' in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900.

The two winners, Roelof Klein and François Antoine Brandt, together with that



Klein and Brandt with their still unidentified French coxswain, who they picked up from the shore to replace the original Dutch member of their team.

the contents of that article were centred on the age of the now famous 'youngest Olympic competitor, medalist and gold medalist ever', which text was quoted from the *Kamper/Mallon Golden Book of the Olympic Games* from 1992. This text mainly concerned the young French

François Antoine Brandt, together with that young French boy, are shown in the attached photograph.¹ An enlargement of this photograph, centered on the little French boy, is also added, but please forgive the author and the editorial team for the quality of this enlargement.

However, in another photograph, also found in the 1926 memorial book from LAGA, the Student Rowing Club from which both Klein and Brandt were members, we can now show the faces of Klein and Brandt even better. This other photograph was taken in 1899, when they had participated in the rowing regatta at Henley in 1899.²

In my earlier article I wrote (on page 26 of that *Journal*):

(The story continues with the tale how they experienced their stay in Paris and how they returned to the Netherlands with their price: "a heavy bronze statue of a lady," with which they passed the Belgian/Dutch border!)

In 1982, I had been in contact with one of Mr. Brandt's sons, who lived in Naarden and who had taken over his father's position as Bishop of the 'Free Catholic Church'. During a telephone call, he answered my request, saying that the Brandt family had never known (been told) the name of the young French boy. He then also told me that his father's 1900 statue had been taken away by one of Brandt's granddaughters to either New Zealand or to Australia. I tried to pursue that matter, but he wouldn't give me the name and the address of that person at the time. I tried it again two years later, in 1984, but then received no answer at all.

Less than a year afterwards, I read in an obituary, that Brandt's son had been ill and that he had passed away in 1985. After a proper time, I paid my respects to his widow and asked her the same question about the statue. She answered that she would contact the person involved, but that was my last contact with the family. I didn't want to press the matter and left it there.

Then, early 2000, Mr. Bert Schabbink, ISOH member, and working for Dutch television [Studio Sport],



Klein and Brandt in their normal attire, when they participated in the Royal Henley Regatta in 1899.

decided to pay attention to the centennial of this event, and told me that it was time to produce a short documentary on the two first Dutch Olympians who won a first place at the Olympic Games.

Mr. Schabbink requested that I provide him with all the data I had assembled over the period of my research, which for the greater part had been published in my book on the Dutch participation in the 1900 Olympic Games [Nederlandse Deelnemers aan de Tweede Olympische Spelen, published July 2000]. But I had more information for him! I still had the correspondence with the Brandt family and I gave Mr. Schabbink the address.

To make a long story short: he found Mr. Brandt's granddaughter in Australia, and, lo and behold, she still had the beautiful 'heavy bronze statue of a lady'!



The statue, called 'La Chanson', was won by Brandt in the Olympic final in Paris in 1900.



The inscription on the pedestal of Brandt's statue.

Australia to cover the Sydney Olympics to the address of the granddaughter. She was interviewed for the documentary. The statue was also filmed. From that film, we are now able to show our readers two photographs of that statue: one of the whole statue and one of the inscription at its base, which confirms that this is IT!

The documentary was shown on Dutch television on 25 August, one day before the actual centennial, and Mr. Schabbink and his team did a very good job!

So exactly 100 years after the event took place, another, but a rather small, mystery has been solved and an Olympic price [100 years old] has come to the light.

Mrs. Juliana Dominicus-Brandt told me by telephone that after her grandfather died in 1949, she inherited the statue. The statue even has a beautiful name: La Chanson ['the Hymn'].

The inscription on the pedestal reads:

EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE DE 1900
REGATES À L'AVIRON DU 26 AOÛT
2 RAMEURS SENIORS
1er PRIX

Although the first ever Dutch Olympic gold medal winners never received an Olympic gold medal, they received something of equal value, and it is with pride that the *Journal of Olympic History* can now show to its members a picture of the statue.