

Timeline for John Helenus Bernhard

As of August 3, 2022

- February 13, 1884 born Amsterdam, Holland
- July 1905 graduates from "Middelbare Technishche School - Amsterdam" with diploma in Mechanical Engineering
- August 12, 1905 arrives in New York City on the SS Etrutia. Lists Mrs. Huddleston (sic?) living at Bay 18th Street, Bath Beach section of Brooklyn New York City as his destination upon arrival.
- 1905 employed by William Brothers Winches
- 1905 and 1906 employed by Bethlehem Steel Company. Assisted on steel work for the Hudson River Tunnel
- 1906 employed by Boswell Brothers Electrical Material selling product to southern states.
- December 24, 1906 marries (at age 22) Maria Barbara Nobel (age 27) in New York City (Manhattan) at Church of the Transfiguration, Episcopal
- 1907 employed as a sales agent for Bernhard & Williams
- November 26, 1907 returned to New York from Holland on board the SS Statendam with his wife, Maria Barbara. Lists the Mercantile Building St. Louis, Missouri as his destination.
- 1908 creates a "Dutch and American Syndicate" to start an Alabama-New Orleans transit company known as the Cullman Coal & Coke Company based in Cullman, AL. The company moved coal from the Warrior River down to New Orleans on self-propelled barges. Managing Director until 1914.
- The syndicate's plans "included a 60-mile railroad from the coal field to the Warrior River, a coal loading station on this river, the enlargement of the Lake Borgne Canal, the building of a shipyard, a coal-loading, storing, and unloading station near New Orleans, and a fleet of self-propelled barges of 1,000-ton capacity each."
- Details of the plans are in the proceedings of the 63rd Congress, 2nd Session, of the U.S. House of Representatives Document 857, Addendum E, prepared by Lansing H. Beach, future Chief Engineer of the U.S. Army.
- September 29, 1908 returns to New York from Holland via Bremen, Germany on board the SS Kron Prinz Wilhelm. Lists 230 West 114th in New York, NY as his home address.
- 1909 has the Mexican Concession for the Vera Cruz Pensacola SS Line to sell Alabama coal to Mexico.
- February 19, 1909 returns to New York from Holland via Liverpool, England on board the SS

Mauritania. Lists room 411 of the Mercantile Building in St. Louis, Missouri as his final destination

- November 21, 1909 in Holland [from January 21, 2021 email from Bertus translating a letter of that date from John Bernhard's father, Nicolaas Adrianus Bernhard to L. de Groot involving coal shipping vessel(s)].
- December 24, 1909 returns to New York from Holland via Liverpool, England on board the SS Lusitania with his wife, Maria Barbara. Lists 495 West End Avenue (between West 83rd and West 84th street) in New York, NY as his home address.
- March 18, 1910 returned to New York from Holland via Liverpool, England on board the SS Mauretania on. Lists Cullman, Alabama as his final destination. Lists his wife, Maria Barbara, as living at 495 West End Avenue (between West 83rd and West 84th street) in New York, NY and as his home address.
- August 11, 1910 returns to New York from Holland via Bremen, Germany on board the SS George Washington. Lists Cullman, Alabama as his final destination.
- 1911 to 1914 President of the Lake Borgne Canal¹
- March 23, 1911 returns to New York from Holland on board the SS Oceanic with his wife, Maria Barbara, and her Irish maid, Mary Connolly, age 30. Lists Cullman, Alabama as his final destination.
- November 7, 1911 returns to New York from Holland via Rotterdam on board the SS Noordam with his wife, Maria Barbara. Lists the Mercantile Building in St. Louis, Missouri as his final destination.
- In 1913 testifies before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee and speaks before the U.S. Rivers and Harbors Congress.
- October 28, 1913 President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan along with others attend the arrival of the first barge on the Warrior River at Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
- January 1914 creates Inland Navigation Company (INCO) with ~\$60 million in capital (in 2022 dollars) capital and builds a fleet of self-propelled barges to go from New Orleans to St. Louis.
- January 18, 1914 returns to New York from Holland via Liverpool, England on board the SS Caronia. Lists 19 Rosa Park, New Orleans, Louisiana as his residence with his wife, Maria Barbara.
- March 7, 1914 D.A. Thomas (Lord Rhondda), Welsh coal baron, visits America according to the New York Times. He later becomes a major investor in INCO
- 1915 listed in the New York City Directory with his wife Maria Barbara and their Irish maid,

¹ From letter to Lillian Sanderson dated February 4, 1936

Mary Connolly

- May 31, 1917 returns to New York from Holland via Rotterdam on board the SS Noordam with his wife, Maria Barbara. Lists his residence as 52 Broadway, New York, NY
- June 1917 the U.S. Government commandeered INCO (later becomes the Federal Barge Lines, major barge line on the Mississippi) with the US entry into WWI. Unclear to what extent investors compensated by the US Government. See annals of the American Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers, Volume 23
- August 1917, applies for US citizenship
- In 1917 and 1918 serves as a consultant and contractor to the French High Commission on water transportation led by Andre Tardieu (future French Minister of Transportation in 1926, Minister of the Interior in 1928, and Prime Minister in the periods between 1929 to 1932)
- October 3, 1918 has his portrait done in return for raising funds for the "Liberty Bond Drive".
- May 31, 1919 returns to New York from Holland on board the SS Rotterdam via Plymouth, England. Lists 158 West 81st New York, NY as his residence with his wife, Maria Barbara.
- 1920 consults for the Dutch General Shipping Bureau
- 1921 serves as a consultant to Poland on the restoration of traffic on the Vistula River, Poland's longest river which connects Warsaw to the Baltic through the port of Gdansk.
- April 2, 1921 returns to New York from Holland via Boulogne-Sur-Mer on board the SS Rotterdam. Staying with the Countess Fontenailles 24 rue Vignois Paris, France. Lists 79 West 103rd New York, NY as his residence with his wife, Maria Barbara.
- July 24, 1922 becomes a naturalized American citizen at the U.S. Federal District Court, New Orleans, Louisiana after applying for citizenship in August 1917
- 1922 to 1928 creates and becomes President of the New Orleans Industrial Canal Development Company with ~\$400 million capital in 2022 dollars.²
- In July 1923, his father Nicolas and his father's second wife, Anna Elisabeth Roelen, visit him in New Orleans arriving via Havana, Cuba
- November 1924 speaks before the American Association of Port Authorities Convention held in Los Angeles, CA about a comprehensive plan for national inland water way system
- 1926 Pictured in Chamby, Switzerland with brother Bertus and Bertus' partner Anna Catherina van Norden with whom Bertus lived but never married, and their two sons,

² According to his March 20, 1946 speech to the New Orleans Propeller Club, the New Orleans Dock Board prevented the development of the land along that canal which contributed to the decline of the Port of New Orleans.

Bertus jr. and Klaas.

- Spring of 1927 sees historical flooding of the Mississippi at New Orleans. Unclear if the Industrial Canal, of which he was president and which connected Lake Ponchartrain and the Mississippi River, played a role in the degree of flooding (see insert for that date in following materials)
- November 11, 1927 Anna Catherina reports that Bertus has died
- January 11, 1928 returns to New York from Holland via Le Havre on board the SS Paris. Lists Canal Bank Building, New Orleans, Louisiana as his address.
- June 1928 formally resigns as president of the New Orleans Industrial Canal Development Company.
- The reasons for his resignation are unclear but it may have been due in part to the April 1927 Mississippi flood which severely threatened New Orleans. "The biggest problem was the new Industrial Canal, built to connect the river and Lake Pontchartrain. The height of its locks, Kemper said, "was based on a miscalculation in slope. The Mississippi River Commission and the Dock Board have concluded there is a four foot drop over the 10 miles between Carrollton and the canal. It is no more than one foot, eight inches. A flood equal to that of 1922 will overtop the locks by four feet. The turbulence this would generate could rip the locks, and the levee there, apart. They required immediate attention."
- 1928 pictured in Munich with Anna Catherina and her two sons.
- November 1928 buys a house at Mozartkade 12, Amsterdam for the account of Anna Catherina Bernhard. A garage needs to be built next to the house for his Buick coup [from Reinder Bernhard, Bertus' grandson]. Anna pays for garage and all work done on house.
- February 1, 1929 returns to New York from Holland via Rotterdam on board the SS Rotterdam. Lists 924 Moss Street, New Orleans, Louisiana as his address.
- April 5, 1929, registers officially at Mozartkade 12, Amsterdam after returning from a trip to the US.
- 1929 begins working as Chief Consulting Engineer for Inland Waterways U.S.S.R. reporting to the People's Commissar for Water Transport .
- From family correspondence it seems that he travelled with Anna, Klaas and Bertus in early 1930 to Moscow and they returned before September 26 1930 because Anna did not want to stay longer in Russia. Upon return they moved into a rental house in the Hektorstraat but Anna was not happy there and they moved to Parnassusweg with a three times higher rent. Later on, they moved back to Mozartkade 12 with financial assistance of his brothers, Herman and Adrian.
- May 1930 John and Maria Barbara Bernhard are listed in the 1930 Census as living in Payson Avenue Upper West Side Manhattan.
- 26 September 1930 writes Klaas [brother Bertus's son] in Holland from a paddle boat on a large river in Russia.

- November 28, 1930 returns to New York from Holland via Southampton, England on board the SS Aquitania. Lists Engineers Club, New York, NY as his address.
- Sometime between 1931 and 1935 Maria Barbara Nobel Bernhard committed to Harlem Valley State Mental Hospital at Wingdale, NY.
- March 30, 1932 returns by train to Moscow and writes Bertus jr. that he became member of the high technical and economic council in Russia.
- September 1932 [1931 according to Reinder Bernhard papers] attends Inland Navigation Congress in Venice Italy as U.S.S.R. representative
- March 13, 1934, his boss, Nikolay Mikhailovich Janson, People's Commissar for Water Transport (named in January 1931) is demoted to Deputy People's Commissary for Offshore Transport.⁵
- On June 15, 1934 Janson writes an official letter praising the work done by JHB in "working out a series of great construction problems"
- June 1934 JHB moves out of house Anna's house at Mozartlaan 12
- End of 1934 JHB leaves Russia with the start of Stalin's Great Purge.
- After a series of subsequent demotions starting in June 1935, Janson is arrested on December 6, 1937 and accused of espionage and sabotage. On June 20, 1938 Janson is sentenced to death and then executed on the same day in Moscow.
- April 15, 1935 returns to New York from Holland via Antwerp, Belgium on board the SS Ilsestein. Lists 1014 Chartres, New Orleans, Louisiana as his address.
- In April/May 1935 is treated by Dr. Dora Solosko at her office on 587 West 23rd Street between 9th & 10th Avenue, New York City. A romantic relationship begins shortly afterwards.
- Mid-1935 returns to New Orleans begins work as a promotor of a canal between Houma, Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico
- September 19, 1935, he writes to Anna, Klaas and Bertus jr. - work in US is interesting (but Russia was better). He has no money. He cannot come back to Holland until he earns a proper living. The three of them have to sort out their own things in Holland for the time being. In a couple of months, he will be able to resume his tasks that he failed to conduct.
- From September 1935 the correspondence is mainly about lack of money and his not being able to respond to requests for money from Anna and her children Klaas and Bertus. Occasionally he sends a few dollars to the boys with promises to send more in future months. He finally admits that he is not able to pay the financial commitments he has towards Anna.
- October 23, 1935 obtains a divorce from his wife Maria Barbara Noble (at 10 am as noted in his handwriting) and later that day marries Dora Solosko in New Orleans, LA
- In 1936 prepares the Violet Canal Report. The Violet Canal connects the Mississippi River to Lake Borgne through the St. Bernard Parish and is part of the Lake Borgne Canal
- July 30, 1936 writes Bertus junior from Howard Avenue, New Orleans that he cannot send money.

- September 20, 1936, JHB's and Dora's son, Alexander, is born in New Orleans, La
- In 1937 retains the Jefferson Canal (Iberia Parish, LA) Franchise.
- 1937 writes a long letter to Bertus, jr. in which he blames Anna for the financial problems in Holland as she spent too much money on houses, piano and furniture. He accuses Anna and the boys of making his life miserable in Holland. The only solution was more money and therefore he moved to the US.
- November 8, 1937 prepares a detailed 25-page proposal for a triple screw self-propelled barge for the profitable transportation of gasoline on the Mississippi River.
- December 1937 submits a printed 46-page report on proposed Houma Ship Canal.
- Summer 1938 begins working and living in Houma / New Orleans
- In October 1938 he writes a last letter to Bertus jr. from Chicago: He writes that his plans to make money in the US failed. Anna did not need him anymore, Bertus junior rejected him with his English lessons and joining the family in Holland made therefore no sense anymore.
- On 11 September 1939 Bertus junior writes him in New Orleans that his brother Klaas died at the age of 24 in Denmark where he studied. This was the last correspondence between him and the family of Bertus according to the summary of Reinder Bernhard [provided to Bertus Bernhard in 2020]
- June 1940 via the US State Department, telegrams his family in Holland (loses all contact for more than four years)
- June 1940 the Louisiana State legislature repeals the establishment of Houma Dockland act and thereby defeats the attempt to build a canal from the Gulf of Mexico to Houma, the project he has worked on for five years.
- March 1941 thru June 1941 he sells fire extinguishers (designed by his brother in law Abe Solosko) in Salisbury, PA
- 1941? "Fiasco at Delta Shipbuilding" in New Orleans and protest to National Labor Relations Board (from AAB's notes from FBI report found in 1959)
- August 1941 begins working for Higgins Industries for the war effort. Earns \$50,000 annually in 2022 dollars. The average worker's pay in 1941 was \$8,000 annually in 2022 dollars.
- In 1942 develops a manufacturing process whereby 125-ton wooden barges were assembled at a record speed of one every 62 minutes.
- January 1942 files for bankruptcy owing \$650,000 (in 2017 \$)
 - Owes his wife, Dora, \$30,000 (in 2017 \$) for money borrowed from 1935 - 1941.
 - Owes his brothers (Adrian, Bertus, Fritz, and Herman) a total of \$40,000 (in 2017 \$) borrowed from 1935 to 1939.
 - The vast majority of the amount owed more than \$500,000 was to firms that would have provided construction and dredging services for the Houma channel project.

- On June 23, 1942 his bankruptcy case is closed.
- On August 2, 1942 wife, Dora, dies in Salisbury, PA. No evidence that he was with her when she died.
- In early 1943, at the recommendation of A.J. Higgins, President of Higgins Industries, Inc., Dr. T.V. Soong, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, invites him to spend four months in China and advise directly Mr. Tseng Chang Fu, Minister of Transportation on how China's inland navigation can be improved.
- Mid-1944, works in South America for governments of Brazil and Peru
- June 1944, marries Leona Nelken (New Orleans acquaintance) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; returns to New Orleans; Alexander leaves Evelyn and Alex and Salisbury and joins him and Leona in New Orleans. They live on Audubon Street and Hickory Street in New Orleans; then Beverly Drive in Matière.
- March 6, 1945 first wife, Maria Barbara Noble Bernhard dies in Harlem Valley State Mental Hospital at Wingdale, NY. (age 65). Buried near her surviving sister Lillian Nobel Sanderson in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo, New York <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=120888767&ref=acom>
- Returns to Holland in 1946 (?) with 3rd wife, Leona, to visit family after the war
- Leaves New Orleans 1949 (?) moves to Orient Avenue, Newton Center, consulting on Boston Harbor
- 1951 moves to Omaha, Nebraska.
- 1951 to 1953 lives in Mexico City, Mexico. Does some minor consulting for Mexican Government on development of the Papaloapan River in southern Mexico
- 1953 to 1957 (or 1958) lives in Clinton, Iowa where one of Leona's sons (Leonard Nelken) practices medicine and a daughter (Cecile McCann) live
- 1957 (or 1958) moves with Leona to San Francisco, CA where one of Leona's sons (Sam Nelken) practices psychiatry
- 1959 Leona dies in San Francisco; lives alone under Sam's general supervision while Alex is in the Navy and at Harvard Law School
- August 20, 1963 dies in Agnew State Hospital just south of San Francisco, CA after being committed there by Sam after being asked to leave old folks home because he was "running out for ice cream" according to Sam's son.
- Buried with third wife, Leona, in Metairie, Cemetery, Metairie LA in plot owned by her.