

# Origins

## Origins

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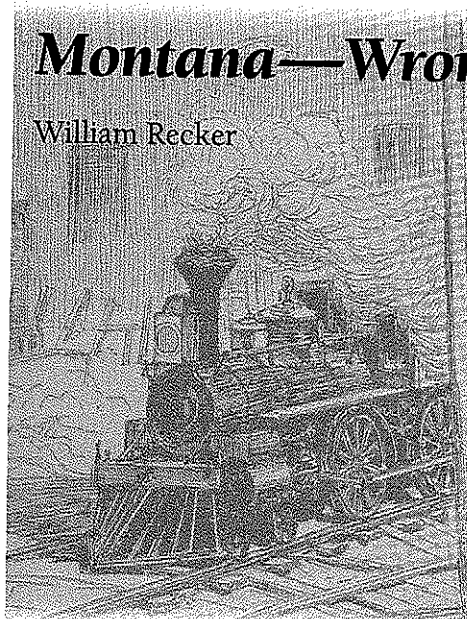
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# Montana

## Part II

### Montana—Wrong Side Up

William Recker



#### The Settlement Grows

The first winter [1916] proved to be a hard, cold one. Much snow fell, and those who arrived that early winter had no picnic getting their stuff unloaded from the boxcars and hauled out to the settlement. All who were already located in the settlement would take teams and wagons and go to town to haul out a load for the newcomers. In this way most of the later ones got all their stuff hauled in one day. This was a good way to get acquainted, and as most of these people were strangers, this community hauling broke the ice at once. All the newcomer was expected to do was to pay for the livery bill and the meals.

Money was scarce for those who were already located, so a little fresh money from the East was always welcome. This was true not only for the town merchants but also for the settlers, since they always had something to swap or sell. The main thing those first years was to try to get a dollar once in a while for things which were essential and also for collection on Sunday. No matter how poor these people became, the collection on Sunday was never stopped, and there was always enough money to pay the railroad fares for our guest

preachers. That first winter taught the primary lesson of hanging together or hanging separately.

I had homesteaded that fall on a piece of open ground, and after going East to get married, I was back in the settlement after an absence of two months. According to law I had to build within five months or lose my



William (the author) and bride, Jessie Staal, 30 May 1914. Wedding-day photo.

\*Recker named his recollections "Wrong Side Up"—a title which he took from the comments of an Indian who watched the settlers plowing. Recker wrote, "An Indian rode by on his pinto pony, and after watching us for a while, he shook his head and said, 'Wrong side up. Wrong side up!' We thought here's another person, like the sheepherders, who wants to keep it the way it was."

rights to the land. Being full of enthusiasm, we decided to haul some lumber from town and dump it on the ground so building operations could begin in the spring. We made three

trips to town for lumber and spent three weeks doing it. The snow was so deep, and it was so bitterly cold that it took us three days to make the return trip. I had homesteaded, but I really did not know exactly where my land was. There were no fences anywhere, only certain landmarks to go by. I knew that the

land had a creek running through it, so the lumber had better be dumped near the creek.

The first load which we hauled proved to us that we still did not know the lay of the land. The first day out we made fifteen miles before stopping at a homesteader's shack. He also had a small barn. Nobody was home, but we put the horses in his barn. On going into the house, we noticed a large pot on the stove. We were cold and hungry and naturally looked in the pot. There we saw beans, large brown beans, stiff but well cooked. We fell to at once, even before lighting the stove. Suddenly my partner looked at me and burst out laughing. He said that we were like hogs. By that time reason had come back somewhat, and we made a fire in the customary sheep stove. We thought that we had better leave some beans in the pot because Mike, the homesteader, might be home today or tomorrow and would be figuring on his beans.

We were soon warmed up, and as it was now dark, we sat drowsing in our chairs, when suddenly we heard the clump clump of horse hooves outside. Shortly thereafter Mike came into the lamp-lit room. Oh yes, we had made ourselves at home. Oh yes, we had had something to eat. Sure, thank you.



*William and Jessie Recker homestead in Montana.*

Beans. Fine, old man. "Well, boys, why didn't you look in that box in the corner? There is bread, coffee, and bacon." So late as it was, Mike set up another feed, and we fell to again. We stayed with Mike that night and started off again the next morning.

Now this man had never seen or heard of us before, and we had used his barn and precious hay. We had taken possession of his home, eaten most of his beans, burned some of his scanty supply of firewood, and he never seemed to think anything of it. He had herded sheep here for years, but when the settlers came, he decided that he had better grab a piece of land also. That was the spirit of the West. That was western hospitality. The unwritten law of the West was that you must never lock your door and must always keep some wood, food, and matches in the house. Any wayfarer was welcome to stop for a feed overnight, provided he would leave some new wood at the stove and wash any dishes which he had used. This was rigidly adhered to by all in the eight years which I spent on the homestead, except in very rare cases, and the men who stole or abused these rules were marked men and ostracized by society. Many a life was saved in this cold bleak land by these simple rules. In later years I often returned Mike's

hospitality by taking grocery orders out to him from town. We became the best of friends. He was killed when his horse fell over backwards. The saddle horn went through Mike's chest. We all missed his Irish wit and humor.

We had five miles to go from Mike's place to my homestead, but there was no road or trail. We

started out in the general direction, according to the map. It took us all day to make those five miles, and we unloaded and loaded that lumber six times when the wagon would get stuck in six or eight feet of snow. We could not see the canyons, for they were full of snow, and sometimes we would crash through, and the horses would flounder in the snow. That meant unhook, try to get the horses out and on the other bank of the coulee, and unload. Then take the chain, pull the wagon out, load it, and try again. This was all backbreaking, heart-rending work, but we were full of ambition, and all of these things would be forgotten when the crops started to come in.

That evening we arrived on my land, I set up a marker, and we finally unloaded that lumber for the last time. We could not get back to camp, which was three miles away, so we stayed at another homesteader's place overnight. The next day we broke a trail to our camp. Three days had gone by. Everything was frozen up; the kettle cover was an inch above the kettle. The bread was frozen as hard as a rock. All through this trip the thermometer had hovered around twenty below zero, as we sweated and struggled to get one load of lumber out to the site. This was a common experi-

ence. Everyone had experiences as bad as or worse than this. There was no easy way to get started. The distances were too great, the hills too high, and the climate too cold to get anything done quickly.

One man named Steve promised that he would haul a load of lumber for me as a wedding present. He managed to get to my homestead in a couple of days, but after unloading late in the afternoon, he made the



*Recher grandparents, Ahlrich and wife Boudewina Kok.*

mistake of thinking that he could get home before dark. But darkness fell soon after he started off. Steve began to wander, and soon he did not trust his horses any longer. It was not long before he was going in circles, and soon he noticed that he was crossing his own tracks in the snow. By now it was pitch dark, so he decided to let the horses have their heads. After another hour he decided to unhook and to go to the first light that he could see. So unhook he did, and he drove his team to a dim light off in the distance. When he finally arrived there, he found that he had returned to our area. We welcomed him heartily and invited him to stay overnight. He had lost all sense of direction.

The next day, when he arrived at home, he discovered his wagon standing about twenty rods from his shack. He had been home the night before, but because he did not trust his horses, he had walked two and a half miles to the nearest light.

The next spring many more settlers came, until all told we had forty-five families, some extra large ones and some young couples. That spring the bunkhouse became too small to

contain our worshipers, so we decided to build a church in the center of the township. Each settler agreed to haul one load of lumber gratis, which would mean forty to forty-five loads could be hauled. Each man agreed to work five days helping the one carpenter who was hired and who also drew up the plans which were adopted.

The spirit of the people was wonderful. A great many had not harvested any crop yet, but they gladly shared in the burden of building their church. The spot chosen for the church

was out on an open, wind-swept, barren rise. It could be seen for a great distance from all sides. The church was to have a steeple so that all could see that this was a church, and indeed it was the best house of all the houses that were built. It took that entire summer and fall to be completed, and during that time we still met at the home ranch. One room would not hold all the people, so they sat in three rooms. Of course, only one group could see the elder who was reading the sermon, but the others could hear him. The hosts surely deserve a word of praise for giving up their home every Sunday.

Many things were done in those first years that were "wrong side up."

The railroads had set a special rate for a boxcar which contained immigrant movables. This meant used furniture, farm machinery, and some livestock. But some immigrants took advantage of this bargain and loaded their railroad cars with new machinery, in front of which they would pile some old stuff in the doorway. The new machinery would then be unloaded and sold to other new settlers. This ploy was plain stealing and abusing the goodwill of the railroads. Yet our people prayed for good crops and expected God to hear their prayers.

Others sold horses that were not sound or were locoed\* to new settlers who were not wise to this disease. This was done among the brethren, and still they prayed for God's blessings. Some non-Dutch settlers used this behavior as good reason to stay away from the "wooden-shoes." It is not pleasant to recall some of these things, but it is necessary for understanding what is to follow. In many of their dealings they neglected to tell the truth and then hid behind the rationalization that they had not lied. As one man said, "My horse don't look so good," when really the animal was blind.

But what one sows, he is bound to reap. For instance, one man sold another a new wagon which he had smuggled through as old stuff. When the time came to pay for it, the man who had bought it could not do so. This man, his wife, and two children were living on less than a quarter a week for groceries. When the seller came to get the wagon, the man of the house had removed all the burrs from the wheels, so when the fellow tried to haul his wagon back, the wheels all fell off. In anger he went to the house to get the burrs by force if necessary, but the wife met him at the door and would not let him in. He tried, nevertheless, and the woman picked

\* Brain-damaged from eating loco weeds.



up a claw hammer lying near and popped him on the head. He went out cold, and after coming to, he decided to leave without the wagon and then take the case to court. In court the woman showed some bruises on her body, and that settled his hash as far as the judge was concerned. His case was kicked out of court.

All of these episodes made the work of the consistory very difficult. Many committees were sent out to erring brethren; much was done that peace might reign in this shepherdless flock. Peace and harmony often tottered on their throne.

There was one old mother in the congregation whom everyone called Muoike. Once a person asked her why these reverses had struck this new church. "Well," she said, "you must remember that we took our sins with us when we came from the East." Some took this seriously, but others worked and slaved only to get a big crop and be on top. One strove against the other to see who could get the most in crops. Many arguments over fences caused trouble and grief.

But old Muoike was in great demand. She was needed first here, then there. Whenever there was sickness or a childbirth, people would go for or send for Muoike. This old mother, who lived with her daughter, walked miles and miles over this country to help out people who needed a nurse or a midwife. The doctor from town said, "She knows more about that than I do. And as long as she is on the job, I don't have to worry." It was very expensive to send for the

doctor, so Muoike became more and more in demand.

When World War I was raging in Europe, everything was high priced. People acquired debts because money was easy to borrow, too easy for many, and everything was put on promissory notes. There was a note for this and a note for that. The banks in town were too liberal with their credit, although they charged 10 percent interest. Nobody seemed to worry about debts, for wouldn't they all be paid when a big crop was harvested? Soon the matter of debts was more and more the subject of conversations at church and when people visited with each other. Everyone was in the same boat, so no one was ashamed of debts anymore, because everyone had debts.

Some children visiting another family two miles away came back home one day saying that the neighbor lady had asked their father to come over because she had some notes to give away. As notes were the topic of the day, he thought that he had better go and see. Perhaps those neighbors were in some difficulty and needed his advice. So the same day he walked down there, having no horses handy. When he arrived, they talked a while, and at last he said, "What is it about those notes you wanted to give?"

"Notes?" asked the woman.

"Yes," he said, "the children came

home and said that we should come over sometime as you had notes to give."

"Oh," she said, "yes, I meant the children. Then I would give them some peanuts."\* The woman meant well, but in her Yankee Dutch way of speaking had caused this man to walk four miles—and he nearly blew up.

### The Big Crop

Much snow had fallen in the winter [1917?] and the next spring all the creeks were running full. The land was well soaked with water, and prospects for a good crop looked good. As soon as the land could be worked, everyone was in the field, because it looked like this was the year. Spring rains came right on time, everything was coming up 100 percent, and the winter wheat looked just wonderful. By the middle of June, what once was a buffalo-grass prairie was now field after field of waving grain. Winter wheat, spring wheat, oats, and flax were the four crops which were waving so gaily. The spirits of the people ran high. The wheat grew to shoulder height, and the heads were filling to the very tips. No one, old or new settler, had ever seen such a crop as the one that was now growing and coming to

\* The Dutch word for nuts is *nooten*.



*Hiemstra farmstead, ca 1933.*

maturity, and surely these people needed a big crop to get out from under the enormous load of debt that everyone was carrying. As the stalks began to turn yellow, it became evident that this was not just a big crop. It was a bumper crop.

Many and various were the estimates of the probable yield, but all of them were over forty bushels per acre and near a hundred bushels for the oat crop. The bankers were also in high spirits, because it looked like some of those bundles of notes that had accumulated might be paid off. As the date of the harvest drew near, many

a different way, and if you had done as I did, you would not have those hollow spots in your crop. I put my crop in early; I took advantage of all the moisture. I harrowed, and that will net me five bushel per acre more than you who only disced." Sundays before church and Sundays after church the main topic was the big crop. Farmers would stand in the churchyard and linger longer than usual, discussing all that was going to be done. Perhaps it was not only before and after church that these thoughts filled their minds. What did they think about during prayers and during the sermons?

more evenly maturing crop had never before been seen; it appeared that everyone was going to start cutting on the following Monday. That Saturday a few made a couple of experimental rounds to try out the binder, and by Sunday everyone was ready for the big harvest. The harvest that had been looked forward to for so long and was so sorely needed was at hand.

Maybe now they could build a parsonage, call their own pastor, and pay off their debts. Maybe now the people who had stayed out East would quit laughing at them. The laugh would rather be on them. Let them raise their old onions and cabbages. This Montana farming was a whole lot easier, and one did not have to crawl on the ground to do it either. "Let them crawl; we will ride" was the slogan. Everybody was more than elated.

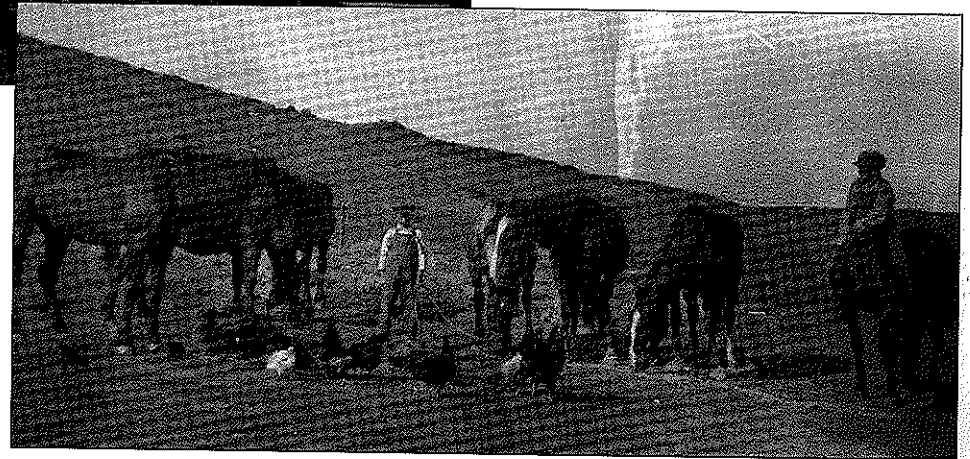
I was located about three miles north of the church and after much labor had managed to get twenty acres in wheat. This was only a drop in the bucket compared to those who had



(above and right) Joe Kortenhoeven farmstead.

people began buying things on credit—binders, wagons, and seeders. Many began to build granaries because they realized that no one had enough storage space for all the grain. The heads filled out, became very heavy with grain, and began nodding in the breeze, as if to say, "We have done our part. Now get ready to do yours."

You might ask, was there no sign of gratitude? Were the people of God fully conscious of the fact that it was not their might and power that had caused this great crop to grow? Perhaps some of them were, but too much was heard about how well the land had been worked. Too many said, "I did it so." Some said, "I did it



The weather remained ideal. There were occasional rains but no hard winds, and the crop promised unheard-of yields. Fifty and sixty bushels of wheat per acre was now estimated on some fields. The winter wheat would be about a week or ten days ahead of the oats, and everything was now in readiness for the harvest. A

from three hundred to four hundred acres in crop. I never mentioned my twenty acres. Mine was too small to talk about with the boys. So I became only a bystander, so to speak. Some said to me, "You should have had more in crop." I agreed with them, but wondered how I could have, as everyone was too busy with his own

fields to bother about a homesteader. After all, they were buying their land, and I was getting mine for nothing, so naturally they needed more than I did. Well, I must confess that the little devil of jealousy plagued me often that glorious summer.

Every time I drove my first team to church that year, I could not help seeing those fields of waving grain. I consoled myself with the thought that there would be much help needed on the threshing crews, so I also would get my share indirectly, as wages for a man and a team would be five dollars a day, plus board for man and team. I had already signed up with an outfit in the community that had bought a new separator. Not only was there a bumper crop of grain; all of the gardens and potato patches looked wonderful, too. The granaries would be filled, and the cellars would be well stocked for the winter.

It was now getting along toward the end of July, and it so happened that our home missionary was to be with us the Sunday before harvesting began in earnest on the following day. One of our elders hauled the reverend from town on Saturday afternoon, and that good old man was shown the sights along the way. Wasn't that a wonderful sight? Yes, indeed, God has surely heard the prayers of our people, and tomorrow we will meet together in his house and give him thanks for the harvest that is at hand.

### The Storm

It was Sunday morning, sunshine and white fleecy clouds in the sky. Yes, it was a beautiful morning and fine harvest weather. That's what was said as the people went to the house of God that day. The minister was also inspired by the promising outlook, and he preached a healthy Reformed sermon that morning. That afternoon the church was also filled to capacity, because these people were faithful

churchgoers, especially on a Sunday when a minister filled the pulpit. Everyone heard his sermon on gratitude, and that old pastor earnestly thanked God for the crop that was ready to harvest.

In church we noticed the sky getting cloudy and the air becoming hot and sticky. People glanced at the sky as they came out of church and hooked up the teams to their wagons. "Oh, it will blow over," said a weather prophet. "See, it is getting lighter in the west." They were not afraid of some rain, but everyone knew that sometimes hail could fall at this altitude. After the service the parishioners went home, and the minister went to an elder's home less than a mile from the church.

We will follow the minister to this elder's home. First he was served a cup of tea as the sky kept getting darker. Within half an hour the sky became black. Suddenly the wind began to blow, and a few splashes of rain fell against the windows of the room in which the elder and his family were entertaining the minister. The women had begun to set the table for an early supper, and some dishes had already been set, when suddenly a blast of wind smashed both windows and a driving hailstorm struck the house. The elder and the minister picked up the table and slammed it against the broken windows, but the wind was so strong and the hail hit so hard that they dared not let the table go, so they stood holding it against the storm while the hailstones were rattling inside around their knees. Neither spoke a word while they stood there, though they glanced at each other from time to time. It took all their strength to hold the table in place while the water swished four inches deep over the floor. The women and children retreated to other rooms at the east end of the house. Would the house hold out? That was the question

in the minds of these men as the wind drove with increasing fury. If they let the table down, the wind would have free play inside. What then? So they hung on while five, ten, fifteen minutes went by. The noise was deafening, a continuous drumming as the large hailstones hit roof and siding. Not a window in the west side of the church or any house in the entire settlement stood up under that bombardment.

As suddenly as the storm began, it stopped. When the table came down, their arms were lame from holding it up so long. They glanced outside, and oh, what a sight! The hailstones were piled around the house up to the windows and were frozen together in a solid chunk. Not a word was spoken as the elder glanced toward the church.

Words cannot describe the desolation wrought in those few minutes; the whole field was as white as snow. Not a stalk of grain was visible. Where was all that beautiful waving grain? It was under a cake of ice! But the ice melted fast, and a half hour after the storm the fields were covered with water—ice water made by the melting hailstones. The creeks all began to rise and became raging torrents of icy black water, which took everything that stood in its way on down to the lake twelve miles away. Water and mud were everywhere. They looked for the stock in the nearby pasture, but the animals had run with the storm and were nowhere to be seen.

The yard was full of dead chickens; they quickly counted forty-five of them, struck by the hail before they could find cover. Some hens were only ten feet from shelter, but the hail had nailed them to the ground. Some were pounded to pulp; others were stripped of feathers and were black and blue. The garden patch on a slope to the west of the house was flat. Potatoes, carrots, and beets were scattered all



*Peter Zwier discing on the Recker farm, 1921.*

over the yard wherever they had been washed after being pounded out of the ground. Potatoes had holes in them as large as a man's thumb. Carrots were cut in two.

It is hard to describe what a wheat field looked like after that storm. In some places it looked like freshly plowed ground; in other places it looked like it had been disced six or seven times with discs two inches apart. The longest straw I could find the next day, even by scratching in the ground, was only two inches long. For a strip of the country fifty miles wide and one hundred and fifty miles long there was no sign that there had ever been a crop. Millions of bushels of grain had been pounded into the soil in just fifteen minutes. Some fields close to this area were miraculously missed, and, indeed, they did produce yields of forty-five bushels of wheat and ninety bushels of oats per acre.

The west side of every house looked like fifty men had shot at it with buckshot for an hour or so. There was not a square inch that had not been hit and dented. The windows in the church had blown out with the first

blast, and the curtains had been cut to ribbons a half inch wide from top to bottom. Even the cedar fence posts, which were used so much in those days, were chipped and splintered.

Hundreds of chickens were killed in the settlement, cows and horses were killed by running into barbed wire fences, and of all those thousands of acres of grain only a handful were left when the sun set on that July Sunday.

The minister never said a word. The following day some horses were caught, and the minister was brought back to the railroad. Years later I asked the elder, "What did the minister say?"

"Not a word," said the elder, "not a word!" The old missionary had been struck speechless. Hadn't these people worked hard to get a crop? Hadn't they thanked God that very day as they gathered in his house? What was wrong that God had taken it all away in a moment's time? Did God want these people to stay here and call a minister or not? Had the church building for which so much had been sacrificed been built for naught? All of these questions were asked by the

people, and no doubt the man of God asked them, too. Where must we look for an answer to these questions? The psalmist said, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a guide unto my path." For an answer we must look to the law of God, and that is a mirror which reflects the life of those who look into the face of the law. Then the true Christian says, "It was God's will; we have merited none of his blessings and have transgressed all of his commandments."

While all of this was happening to the greater part of the Dutch settlement, not a hailstone had fallen on my homestead, but by six o'clock that evening my little creek had become a raging torrent. Though normally three feet wide and six inches deep, it became one hundred feet wide and fifteen feet deep, and took all before it that came in its path. One of my granaries built too close to the creek rose majestically and sailed away down the stream. It finally struck a bar a half mile downstream and teetered there precariously until the water receded. This took twelve hours, and it was fully two days before the creek was normal again.

I lost most of my tools and a barrel of salt melted away because the door swished open. The hogs in the pen kept on swimming until the water got deep enough for them to swim over the fence to high ground. They began to root in the grain at once as though this was a daily occurrence. My wife and I had prepared to carry our furniture out in case the water would reach the house, but as the house stood on somewhat higher ground, the water did not quite reach it. I made up my mind that night to go up the divide the next day in order to see where all that water had come from. It was a sobering trip.

### **Discouragement**

The next weeks were hot and sunny so



the grain that had been literally pounded into the soil sprouted and came up at once. There was no lack of moisture now, and inside of two weeks the fields looked like an immense rug. A green rug, the nap of which was so thick that one could stand on it. If we stop to think that normally one to two bushels of seed were sown per acre, and now forty-five bushels had been sown, we obtain an idea of the growth which stood on those fields inside of two weeks. Because the grain had been ripe and ready to cut, every kernel sprouted.

The men who had cut a few rounds the Saturday before the storm looked in vain for those golden bundles. Only a few binder twines were found with a few straws clinging to them. After the first shock had worn off somewhat, they at once made plans for the future, for a man can take stunning blows and still survive. Everyone realized that no crop could be had from that immense volunteer sowing of grain. To plow the fields and reseed them was out of the question, for they had no money and no seed. So they began to disc and disc some more. As fast as one

layer of seed was killed, more sprouted and came up. So when fall came and it was too late to do more, everyone said, "The stand is still too heavy!" And so it proved to be, for that summer the grain only grew to a height of six inches and headed out. Each little head brought forth only a half dozen kernels. So the crop was again disced in, for the stalks were too short to harvest. Thus, for two years nothing was harvested, and the banks were becoming more urgent. Interest payments also began to accumulate,

which put some folks totally into the hands of the bankers. Everything was mortgaged—crops, chattels, and livestock. At last some of the people thought it was hopeless to wait for another crop. Still many others said, "This cannot last, next year we'll hit

its toll among these settlers, even though they were living far from town and city. This was not only true of our Dutch settlement, but across hundreds of miles all over the West where dry-land farming had proved to be a hazardous undertaking. During all of these years large crops were grown where irrigation was available on similar soils.

### The Flu Epidemic—1918

The first winter after the hailstorm was the hardest one that the settlers experienced. After all the disappointments of the harvest which had been lost in a moment, sickness stalked the prairies. Most people lived twenty to thirty miles from town, and the doctors found themselves too busy attending the sick in town to go out into the country to make sick calls there. They told the people, "If you need treatment, then come to town." The hospital was filled to overflowing; so the pool tables in the pool rooms were also used to help out. Naturally, the hotels again did a land office business. Many died on the way to town or shortly after arriving.

The poor homesteader living way off by himself

suffered the most. Some died in their shacks and were not found for weeks. After getting well, neighbors who noticed that no smoke was coming from some stovepipes, discovered the dead. Those were trying days and the cemetery of the church received many a man and woman that had died of the flu. Families were broken up when a father or a mother was taken away.

Again the spirit of brotherly love was evident, for every family was touched either by disease or death. One man in the country was kept busy



Columbus, Montana, CRC, Young People's Society, 1920.

it!" But the next year proved too dry, and that settled it for half of the congregation.

Auction sales were the order of the day. The banks saw to it that a representative of the bank was clerk of these sales, and the banks got what little cash still remained. Imagine the discouragement of people who, after from five to eight years [1915-1922], had to bid farewell to their homes, and in many cases leave dear ones behind in the churchyard cemetery. The dreadful flu epidemic had also taken

making pine board coffins which were painted black. One helped another. And one old veterinarian took the place of an M.D. in many cases. Again and again the question was asked, "Why are all these things happening to us, and why so swiftly?" Again, as in the drought of the earlier years, the heavens seemed made of brass, and no direct answers came.

And in all this, the people had to forego the blessing of having their own pastor to help them bury their dead and comfort those who mourned. An elder of the church would speak a few words of comfort, lead in prayer, and read the funeral service at the graveside. Such men had a difficult task to perform, some being sick themselves; yet they traveled for miles to comfort and aid the people of their church. It seems as if God gives to certain lay people special grace and talents in times like those. Such were times which tested a person's faith in God.

In the midst of all these trials and difficulties the church attendance of the people never wavered or diminished, but rather it increased. Some of them lived twelve miles from church, and yet they came. A Methodist minister in town once said to me, "How can you explain the fact that I have only a few people in my church on Sundays and you Dutch have a church full? And besides, I preach a sermon and you folks only listen to one being ready by an elder." Furthermore, he could not understand why our consistory would not accept his offer to preach for us occasionally, and that free of charge. I tried to explain matters to him, but he dismissed my arguments with the statement that we were indeed old fashioned, and very narrow-minded to boot.

Yes, there is something to a heritage, and it proved itself on those foothills and prairies. The covenant promises went there also; God was

doing his part, but many times the people forgot, putting last things first, and first things last. Again the Indian's words apply here—"wrong side up."

It was hail in some years and the lack of moisture in other years which caused the exodus of the dry lander. For miles you could find nothing but abandoned farm homes, from the log cabin to the rambling farmhouse. Those who remained benefited by this. Whereas nearly all of the land went back to the loan company, fences, buildings, and everything portable was moved to the places of those who remained. They also used the abandoned farms as pastures, and growing livestock increased.

But the rich buffalo grass and bunch grass were gone. "Wrong side up!" said the Indian, and the other side was now beginning to blow away or raise only tumble weeds. These weeds would grow so rank that they looked like cattle racing over the field ahead of the winds which can really blow on these prairies. They would pile up in coulees to enormous heights, and also drift against fences until the combined weight would blow the fence down, even breaking fence posts.

Some of the hardy farmers who said, "We will try it a few more years," began sowing sweet clover which again anchored the soil and produced feed. By now about half of the original group had moved farther west, or had gone back to the Midwestern states, and things had picked up somewhat for those who remained. Livestock, cream, and eggs replaced wheat as a

medium of exchange. So much had changed in just a few years.

### Man Plans But God Disposes

These words surely apply to this settlement, for when things began to look brighter for those who remained, they again began to plan for a pastor of their own, and this time they were in earnest. The consistory appointed committees to build a parsonage close to the church.

So the committees worked with



*Staal family.*

hope and gathered material to present to the congregation. Much information was gathered and the day arrived that the meeting was to be held. Until then the settlement had been quite peaceful and harmonious, but when the discussion of the plans came on the floor of the meeting, the differences of opinion were many. It seemed as

though Satan said, "This is far enough with these plans," and from here on the people who remained split into two factions. The harmony was gone, hard words were spoken, and the peace of the congregation was broken as never before. Each faction tried to force their will on the other. The team was not pulling together anymore, the main goal had been lost sight of, and each had his own private goal for which he fought. Prayers could not be answered when conditions prevailed as they did in this church.

The same men who had worked so earnestly for the welfare of God's kingdom in this place, now seemed to have lost sight of this objective. Meetings were held, committees were appointed, settlements were gained and broken. Alas, it seemed to go from bad to worse. What was wrong here? after all those years of working together, sharing hardship on hardship.

This state of affairs spelled doom for this church, as many people became discouraged and moved away. So slowly but surely the congregation dwindled to a half dozen families and was finally disbanded by the Classis. Where once there had been hope of a flourishing congregation, there now remained only a few sadly disappointed families. Why? The only answer that makes sense to me is that right from the

beginning the congregation placed too much emphasis on material things. Not enough emphasis had been placed on the spiritual side. Oh yes, they were God-fearing people, but God's people often err and make sad mistakes.

What a strange and troubled feeling must have overwhelmed those few who remained in the community to see their church building sold. And then to watch the wrecking crew take the tower off and then slowly tear down the building! This church building for which so much had been sacrificed was torn down! This house of worship sold to the highest bidder and then the lumber sold to build houses and barns! Every board ripped off the roof must have been a tug at their heart strings. Every time a beam fell to the ground, a shock must have gone through their being. No more songs would be sung here to glorify God! No more would the Lord's supper be celebrated here. No more sermons would be preached, and no more children would be baptized, and no more confessions of faith would be heard.

Alas, the coyotes would once more sit and howl on that spot, as they had done years ago. If a coyote could talk, surely it would say, "Back to nature, man made a mistake; he stuck out his neck too far this time." Had the Indian

been right when he shook his head and said, "Wrong side up!" Or was it purely a case of trying to farm a country that was not suited for it? Or was it due to the attitude of the settlers themselves? What was the principle motive of these people when they had trekked to the West?

I think that we must find the answer in that last point. As it was explained by one man who had asked the question, "Is the Christ here for us, or are we here for the Christ?" This question caused much confusion among the brethren; some said one thing and some another! Others replied, "You cannot divide the two." So, no definite and final answer was given.

The frontiers are still there for every new generation, but one must have spirit-trained eyes in order to see them, and love-filled hearts in order to tackle them. He now challenges us to put our hands in the hand of the Master, and to walk forward. §

*William Recker*  
Born: February 14, 1894  
At Korteprinsengracht  
Centrum, Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
Died: May 24, 1953  
at De Motte, Indiana

# Henry Beets and the Mission Work in Canada

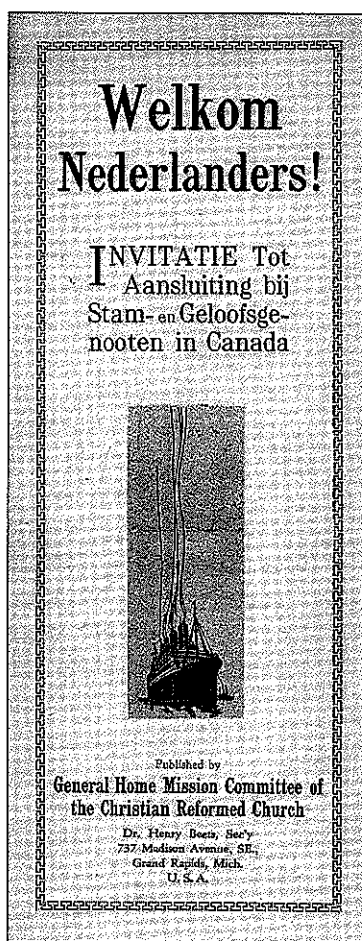
Willem Niemeijer

**H**enry Beets was born to Jasper and Margreet (Smit) Beets on January 5, 1869—an event fraught with joy and grief because Margreet Beets died of childbirth complications. Consequently, foster parents raised Henry until his father remarried. But

stepmother. Beets also suffered from poor eyesight, which, because it was not discovered until his elementary education was well advanced, resulted in some low scores, and he was not permitted to continue his education. Nonetheless, with help from tutors he learned English, German, Spanish, and French.

Because his educational prospects were blocked, Henry considered emigration to Argentina, but his father ruled out that choice in favor of the United States. His uncle, Mr. P. Smit, had already immigrated to Luctor, Kansas, and Henry was directed to join him. He arrived in New York's harbor on July 4, 1886, a festive day for Americans. Beets had sailed second class on the SS *Schiedam* and had made several friends during the passage. They roomed together briefly in Jersey City, and Beets recalled, "On the day of our arrival we went to New York City on the Courtland ferry and found the city filled with all sorts of unearthly noises—all in honor of Independence Day. I confess that I failed to see any connection between that heathen racket and a due Christian appreciation for the boon of liberty."

Beets arrived in Luctor with a rather sporadic background of religious training. His mother's parents, the Smits, had been active church members in the Reformed Church of Broek op Langendijk, and his mother had also been a person of faith, but his father and stepmother exhibited little religious inclination. When Beets formed a strong friendship with Rev. D. Scholten and his wife in Luctor, the



1929 brochure cover. Invitation to join with fellow believers and countrymen in Canada.

the boy was never completely at ease with his stepmother, and he always considered his foster parents to be more influential in his religious development than his father and

Willem Niemeijer is a graduate student at the University of Groningen who was an intern at the Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary Archives in 1999.



foundation for his growing religious concern was established. Rev. Frank De Jong, who knew Beets very well, wrote,

When he came to Luctor, Henry Beets was a skeptical intellectual making his home with his uncle, Smit. A godly elderly member of the Luctor church named Henrikus Pakkebiek spoke to the young man about the plan of salvation through the precious blood of Christ. With his rational approach Henry rejected this gracious offer at first. He told me he found employment in the small country store belonging to the Schemper family. One day, he said, he was alone in the store when a violent thunderstorm rocked the countryside. Together we visited that little store and Dr. Beets pointed to the place where he said he saw a ball of lightening roll across the floor in front of him. It almost frightened him to death. "Frank," he said to me, "right there behind that counter I fell on my knees and cried out, 'Lord, if you are the Christ, I want to believe!'" That was the turning point of his life.

That pivotal event led to his private study of the Bible and the Heidelberg Catechism, which led eventually to a seven-year stint of theological education at the Christian Reformed Church's Theological School in Grand Rapids. He completed his training in 1895, married Clara Poel, and took a pastorate in Sioux Center, Iowa, that same year.

Rev. Henry Beets served three congregations with distinction, but he was also an editor, author, and leading denominational administrator. He wrote hundreds of editorials and articles, along with dozens of books. Most of his writing was historical. He also collected historical source materials—especially pamphlets dealing with the history of Reformed churches in the Netherlands, the United States, South Africa, and elsewhere. Beets's books, pamphlets, and personal papers constitute a major and significant foundation for the Calvin College and

Calvin Theological Seminary Archives.

Church leaders in related denominations recognized Beets's important position in the CRC, and he, in turn,

with a sparse population, welcomed newcomers with a land-grant program on its vast and largely uncultivated western provinces. Furthermore, the



Dutch Reformed farmers. Arrival in Winnipeg under leadership of W. Van Ark. The Colonization Department of the Canadian Pacific, Rotterdam.

maintained contacts with a wide spectrum of pastors and church leaders around the world. As the CRC's director of missions he traveled the globe several times to inspect missions and advise missionaries in Africa, China, Indonesia, and South America. In that capacity he also encouraged emigration from the Netherlands to Canada, a country in which Beets expected a vast increase in CRC members and congregations.

Canadian immigration from the United States and the Netherlands mounted rapidly between 1890 and 1940, during which time about thirty thousand Netherlands arrived in Canada. Economic instability and hardships inclined Dutch farmers and farmhands to seek opportunities in the New World. By then, however, good homestead land in the United States was largely occupied, but Canada,

United States had begun to restrict immigration in the 1920s.

According to Herman Ganzevoort in *Dutch Immigration to Canada 1892-1940*, the pre-World War II immigration can be divided into three periods—1892-1913, 1913-1930, and 1930-1940. The first era was characterized by the immigration of individuals with no special leaders such as Rev. A.C. Van Raalte or Rev. H.P. Scholte in the US. The official Dutch policy was to remain neutral, neither encouraging and assisting emigration nor hindering the process. Beginning in 1913 the Netherlands Emigration League organized to provide information about Canadian opportunities. It was replaced in 1923 by the Central Emigration Foundation, which became the Netherlands Emigration Foundation in 1931. All of these were private information agencies with no budget

to assist emigrants with the cost of transportation or land acquisition. For these services the emigrant received better direction from Canadian railways, both the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National, which provided favorable transportation rates and opportunities to purchase land. The railroads, of course, hoped to gain a profit from the Dutch immigrants.

Ganzevoort explains,

The Netherlands Emigration League and the Central Emigration Foundation played conspicuous roles in the Dutch emigration movement from 1914 to 1930. Financial support from the Dutch government and access to the newspapers permitted them to have nationwide exposure. Yet they were in contact with only 5,000 applicants, less than one-third of the total Dutch origin immigration of 16,000 people. The complete lack of accurate statistics make this estimate a mere educated guess. In 1925 the Central handled less than 14 percent of the total national emigration. It extended loans to forty-three men, women and children, a number of possibly less than 4 percent of the total emigration. The religious emigration societies were also lax in assembling accurate statistical information to indicate the volume of their business. The general conclusion which must be drawn from inadequate statistics and the inferences of those deeply involved in emigration work in this period is that the bulk of Dutch emigration, from the very beginning, remained in the hands of those who were involved for financial gain [i.e., the railroads].

This situation accounts for why the Dutch communities in the USA mobilized to assist their religious compatriots on the Canadian frontier. They not only attempted to provide the immigrants with the best agricultural information but also to prevent them from scattering across the vast and diverse Canadian spaces. Henry Beets expressed the CRC's objective as an attempt to prevent the *verstrooiening* ("scattering") of the Dutch *stam*

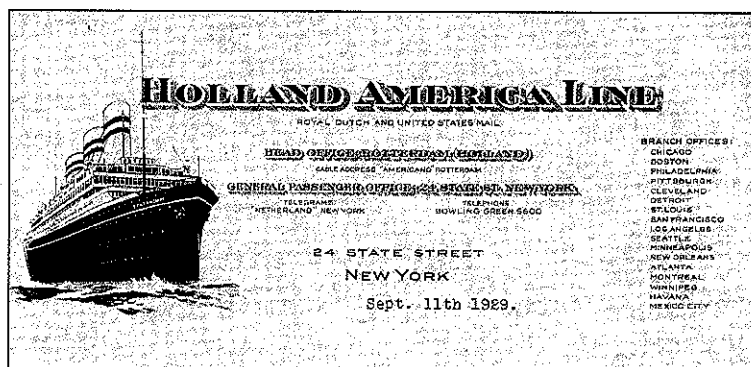


Neerlandia Cooperative Association.

("national family"), which would result in their losing contact with each other and the church. Together with *zendeling-leerlar* ("missionary teacher") J.R. Brink, Beets published in 1925 a short pamphlet titled *General Letter to the Dutch in Canada and the Nether-*

when Beets received a letter dated May 18, 1925, which asserted that the CRC had an obligation to do more than write about the Canadian situation. Within a month Beets organized a committee\* which agreed to study the immigration issues in Eastern Canada.

Classis Grand Rapids East joined with the Eastern (New Jersey) Home Missions Committee to sponsor a home missionary for Eastern Canada. The



1929 letterhead of the Holland-America Line.

lands which asked, "Are you thinking of moving to Canada now that the USA has closed its gates to immigrants?" It recommended Ontario as the best alternative in Canada because

it still has no less than 230,000,000 arable acres in the northern part of the province and is rich in minerals of all sorts. Enormous tracts of woodlands like nowhere else in the world are being found here which awaits the diligence of the claimer.

Concern for the scattered Reformed immigrants in Canada gained urgency

the committee also agreed to investigate the best locations for missionary work, to correspond with Dutch Prime Minister H. Colijn, and to seek funding for an immigration office in Canada from the synod of the CRC.

As the CRC director of missions, Beets supervised the project and maintained contacts with the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railroads. He urged them to promote group settlements and the sale of large contiguous land segments. He found

\*Reverends H.J. Heynen, I. Van Dellen, N. Gelderloos, W. Terpsma, J. Bruinooge, J.R. Brink, P.A. Hoekstra, J. Holwerda, H. Schultze, B. Essenberg, and Mr. B. Sevensma.

the Canadian Pacific Railroad to be more satisfactory than the National company, which led to his critical letter in 1928. "I notice," he wrote to a Mr. F. Dykstra, "that you sign yourself 'Immigrant Conductor, CNR.' That leads me," he continued,

to send an inquiry to you, and I shall be glad to have you furnish an official reply thereto. I have learned that five Holland Reformed families arrived at Tofield fifty miles east of Edmonton. They had been informed that there were more Hollanders living in Tofield and that they would soon be able to organize a church there. They first were to be sent to Camrose, where it was said several Hollanders lived, and could expect to be organized into a church. These people came there under the direction of the Canadian National Railway. That railway considered its job complete by bringing them to their destination, and leaving them on a sidetrack in a coach for three days, and being practically at a loss to know what to do with them, sent their agents. When the immigrants came to Tofield they found not a soul who could speak their language. One of the boys had a severe attack of pneumonia, and the only heated room where they could sit comfortably had to be given up for the boy and his nurse and that with a family of thirteen children.

In response the director of the

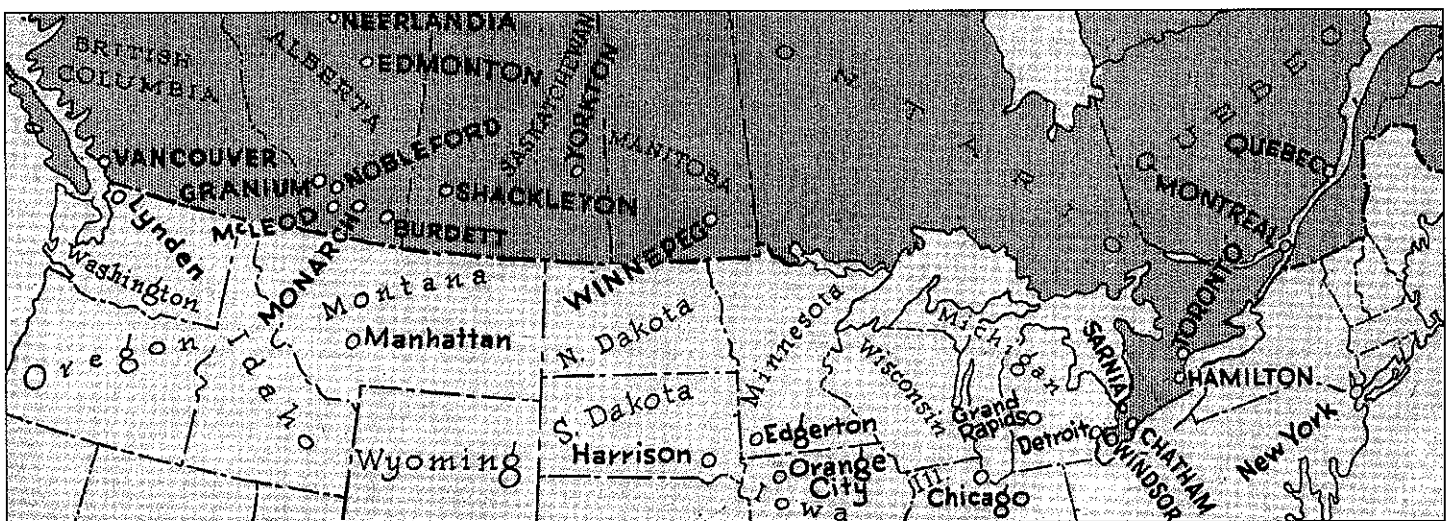
Canadian National Railroad asserted that Dutch-speaking Canadians were in the area, especially Mr. F. Dykstra. Furthermore, the pneumonia could not have been caused by exposure because all the other children were well and heated facilities were available for the whole group. Beets was not convinced, but an Edmonton pastor, Albert H. Selles, also came to the Canadian National Railroad's defense. "I do not think," he wrote,

that the Canadian Pacific Railway deserves the distinction [high regard] which you give it. It has been our experience that the Canadian National Railway is doing much more for our people than the CPR. (At least with regard to what we have been able to see in these Western extremities [Alberta].) We are perfectly convinced that the CNR has the welfare of our people at heart and is doing everything to make our people feel at home. From them we receive very courteous treatment, even when we were forced to break down [stop] their work at Tofield, they acted like real sports about that.

Beets recognized that the missionary work could not succeed without cooperation from both railroads and was, no doubt, pleased to hear a favorable report about the CPR. His other objectives were to gain financial

support from the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands and cooperation from Presbyterian churches in harbor cities—Halifax, Quebec, and Montreal. In these places the Presbyterians appointed representatives who helped incoming Dutch immigrants. For the major objective—mission work and church planting—Beets endeavored to collect information and addresses to encourage contacts between new immigrants and existing Dutch enclaves in Canada. These policies resulted in the formation or expansion of churches in places like Neerlandia, northwest of Edmonton.

As the director of the Holland Reformed Aid Society, founded in 1926, Beets was actively involved in the immigrant-settlement process. Headquartered in Winnipeg, the society, Beets asserted, was located in "the Chicago of Canada," a place from which a nationwide network could develop. To that end the society sponsored J.R. Brink as its home missionary and added J.J.A. Wijenberg as its first field agent. Even though the society did provide valuable service to the immigrants, Canadian Dutch Calvinists also began to organize local immigrant societies in Edmonton and Vancouver. In 1928 the various groups combined to organize the Holland



Map of Dutch-Canadian settlement.

Reformed Emigration Aid and Colonization Society, which had three primary goals—to prevent religious scattering, to provide social and moral direction, and to offer trustworthy information about land values and purchasing procedures. Its president, H. Ebberts, was located in St. Albert, Alberta.

In his 1929 pamphlet *Welcome Netherlander, An Invitation to Join Kinsmen and Fellow Believers in Canada*, Beets summarized the advantages of Canada for immigrants. "Canada is a country which respects religion," he wrote,

It is said that ninety-seven of every hundred residents belong to some denomination. Among these is the Christian Reformed Church in North America, ready to welcome you, as we do herewith. We feel that is not only our privilege, but also our duty to reach out our hand and to assure you that you are welcome, because our Church has a Holland background as well as having a Reformed confession.

The pamphlet included a map of North America which highlighted Dutch population concentrations, including Chicago, Neerlandia, Winnipeg, and Grand Rapids.

Typically enough, the globetrotting H. Beets arranged an extensive tour of

Canada in 1929. His traveling companion, T. Cnossen, was well informed about Canada and had written a book in 1927 titled *Dwars door Canada* ("Crossing through Canada"). Cnossen was also the editor of *De Standaard*, a Dutch Reformed newspaper. From Montreal, where Beets met Cnossen at the docks, they traveled together over a four-week period.\* The tour received prominent notice in the CRC's periodical *De Wachter*.

And of course Beets wrote extensively about the excursion in a dozen *Wachter* articles titled "De Zending Onze Kerk." He advised the immigrants to maintain a central location as the Dutch immigrants had in Pella, Iowa. From such a home base they were advised to radiate outward on all sides, buying, renting, and clustering together in wheel-shaped colonies with all parts linked to a central hub.



Immigration Committee on Canadian tour, Rev. Peter Hoekstra, Dr. Henry Beets and Mr. T. Cnossen. *De Wachter*, 4 Dec. 1929.

With these efforts, Beets, J.R. Brink, A.H. Selles, and others established the groundwork for the massive postwar immigration (1947-1970), when 185,000 Dutch immigrants settled in Canada. They have since become a significant segment of their adopted country and a major influence in the Christian Reformed Church.✠

\* The tour schedule, including places and hosts:

20 July	Montreal: pick up T. Cnossen
21 July	Hamilton (Rev. J. Balt)
28 July	Chatham and visit different places in Ontario (Rev. T. De Boer)
4 August	Winnipeg, preach in Shakleton (J.J.A. Wijenberg)
11 August	Edmonton and Neerlandia (Mr. C. Leder, Rev. H. De Goede, and Rev. H. Van der Woude)
18 August	Vancouver (Rev. P.J. Hoekstra)



# Highland, Indiana

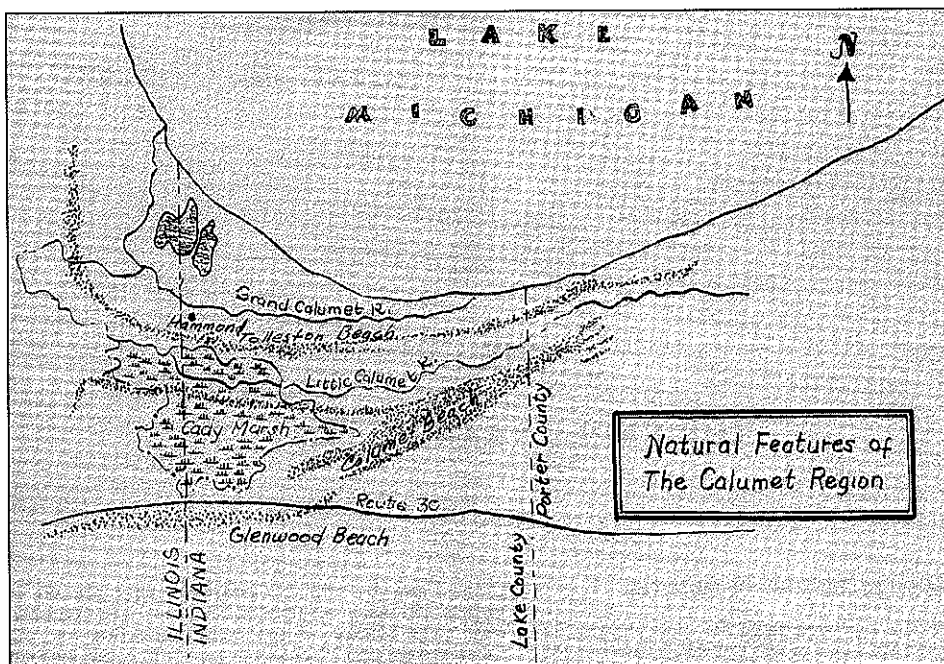
## The Dutch Settlers of Highland

David L. Zandstra

Highland is located in northwest Indiana at the southern tip of Lake Michigan, in the area known as the Calumet Region. Highland's settlement by the Dutch was part of a greater movement which began in 1847 in South Holland, Illinois—about ten miles to the west. For a period of about

Highland, and Ross. Highland, one of the later communities to form, had its beginnings just prior to the turn of the twentieth century.

Knowing the local geography helps in understanding Highland's Dutch community. During the Wisconsin Glacial Age several thousand years ago, a much younger and higher Lake Michigan left a series of beaches and dunes as it retreated to its present level. These beaches and dunes supported clumps of trees, which stood in stark contrast to the surrounding swamps. It was the aboriginal Americans who first used these ridges to traverse the otherwise trackless swamps. The ridges enabled them and later settlers to travel east and west. One of these dunes, called the Calumet Beach, later became known by its present name, Ridge Road. The swamps limited north and south travel for many decades. An early government surveyor traveling in winter over the frozen swamps described the area as unrecoverable marshland. For example, Highland, with the exception of the sand ridge, is indeed very flat and subject to flooding. When railroad surveyors passed through this area in the 1880s on their way to Cincinnati, they made notations on their charts indicating "highlands." They apparently were glad to rest their feet on dry, solid ground after traversing deep swamps for miles to the north and south. Eventually that notation, including the letter s, led to the name



Map of Calumet Region's natural features, p. 2, *A History of Munster, Indiana* by Lance Trusty (Hammond, IN: Purdue University, 1982).

fifty years, 1850-1900, immigrant Dutch farmers spawned a series of agricultural communities along what is still called Ridge Road. About every ten years a new community was organized with a Calvinist church at its center. Moving progressively eastward from South Holland, they started groups in Lansing, Munster,

David Zandstra, a history teacher at Illiana Christian High School, delivered this paper at the AADAS Conference sponsored by the Calvin College Archives in 1993.

of the town. The s remained as part of the town's name until the 1920s. The railroad depot retained the s until it was torn down in the 1950s.

The actual economic development of the

Calumet Region, of which Highland is the very center, is in many ways the story of draining the barrier

swamps. Aaron Hart, visionary land

speculator, bought vast expanses of northwest Indiana, including nearly all of Highland. He realized that the land could be drained and turned into marketable farmland. The most serious obstacle was the sand dune known as Ridge Road. Though it served as a safe and convenient east and west travel route, it also acted as a natural dam, holding back surface water from Lake Michigan. Hart, with little more than a horse-drawn plow, began the cut which today bears his name—the Hart Ditch. Other lateral cuts, such as the Cady Marsh Ditch and the Schoon Ditch, improved the drainage even more. Today Highland uses part of the Hart Ditch as its western boundary, the Cady Marsh Ditch, flowing west, cuts the town in the middle.

Prior to 1890 only a few families lived in the Highland area. They were not Dutch, and they made their living by subsistence farming and trading along the Ridge Road. A few miles to the west, however, there was the Dutch hamlet of Munster, which dated from 1870. It became the “mother colony” of the Highland Dutch. The



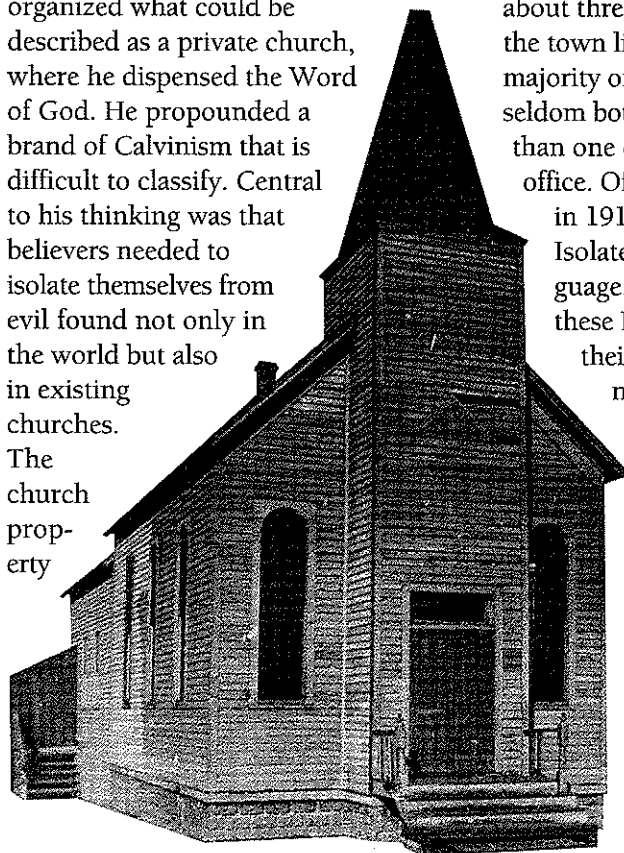
A.N. Hart, “Gentleman Ditchdigger,” pp. 10-11 in *Trusty, History of Hammond, Indiana*.

Dutch who came to the Calumet Region quickly realized the value of Hart's cut through the sand ridge, and sometime later they abandoned subsistence farming to become vegetable growers for local processing plants. Cabbage, tomatoes, pickles, and sugar beets were their basic crops.

About 1890 Dutch farmers began purchasing land east of Munster in an area known as Highlands. They came because the area was near their church in Munster and they needed room for growing families and new immigrants. The town had been platted in 1883 by a local “Yankee” entrepreneur, John Clough, who saw a future where the Ridge Road and the new Erie Railroad crossed. However, it would be twenty-five years before enough Dutch people moved in to create a legal town.

The first Dutch to arrive in Highland were a dissident lot led by a divisive man named Jacob Schoon. On the site of the present public library he organized what could be described as a private church, where he dispensed the Word of God. He propounded a brand of Calvinism that is difficult to classify. Central to his thinking was that believers needed to isolate themselves from evil found not only in the world but also in existing churches.

The church property



*Jacob Schoon Church in Diamond Jubilee, n.p.*

in Highland was divided into shares and owned by all adult members. Their inability to associate with others apparently was reflected in their inability to associate with each other. By 1900 this little church ceased to function. Some of the members joined the local People's Church; others may have associated with Munster Christian Reformed Church. A few probably gave up on religion. However, the little Schoon church building, as it was known by some, had a bright future. It became the first building of the Christian Reformed Church in Highland and later served as the Christian school.

In 1908 new settlers began holding services in the unused Schoon structure. The following year a much larger sanctuary was constructed, and the old building was then converted into the Highland Christian School. The following year, 1910, Highland was incorporated as a town. There were about three hundred persons within the town limits. Even as a strong majority of the electorate, the Dutch seldom bothered to nominate more than one of their group for public office. Of the first six town officials in 1910, only one was Dutch. Isolated by their religion, language, school, and rural setting, these Dutch farmers often limited their contacts with Yankee

neighbors to business and civic affairs. Without radio, television, or widely circulated newspapers, isolation was real. Even in 1917, when he was a young boy, Arnold Zandstra had no idea what he had found when he picked up a grapefruit rind along the railroad tracks.

Highland's early business district consisted of two vegetable-processing plants—the Libbey kraut

works, which attracted farmers from miles around, and later the Meeter pickle works; two churches—the People's Church and the Dutch Christian Reformed Church; a blacksmith shop opened by John Kortenhoeven; two general stores—the Johnson store and the Groot and Harkema store; two schools—the public grade school and the Dutch Christian school; two train depots—New York Central and the Erie; a sand-brick mining and manufacturing company; several homes built on the sand ridge; and considerable pasture.

plant, was cultivated by the Dutch growers to produce a large edible bulb in the second season rather than a seed head. Climatic conditions near Lake Michigan proved ideal for this production. Local railroads and highways gave farmers access to the entire continent for a marketplace. The Dutch developed a virtual monopoly in the production of onion sets, including their own marketing agents. The Calumet Region produced over 75 percent of the world supply during the 1930s and 1940s. Highland's Dutch farmers contributed their share.

Vogel cultivator, the Lagestee harvester, and the Degraff stoner. These tools were locally built and very popular with all growers.

Near the turn of the century, when the southern tip of Lake Michigan was selected by the American steel industry as the site for its new mills, the Dutch could not imagine the radical and long-term effect this decision would have. Though the mill sites were chosen on the basis of economic advantage, the area also provided a readily available work force: vast numbers of immigrants found work in these labor-intensive industries. New industrial cities sprang up where a few years earlier only swamp and dunes had existed. Though the Dutch found factory work distasteful, the factory workers became a ready market for their fresh produce. Industrial neighborhoods became markets for the produce of Highland Dutch farmers. Cabbage, tomatoes, onions, and beets, formerly sold on contract to one of the local processing plants, took on new and greater value when they were sold from wagons on their peddling routes.

As the tax base of the Calumet Region improved with the infusion of steel mills, the roads of the area were greatly improved. Good roads gave the Dutch of Highland easy access to the huge Chicago markets. They and others replaced the Dutch of Roseland, who had formerly cultivated garden farms.

The steel mills not only gave the Dutch of the Calumet Region a taste of greater prosperity, but they also opened their lives to new people, ideas, and values, for, in addition to being a market, these industrial communities also supplied labor for the Dutch growers. Religion excepted, a more cosmopolitan attitude toward "outsiders" developed. Delivering produce to their homes as well as working in the fields with mill workers' families affected the attitudes of the



*John Kortenhoeven General Store, Highland, Indiana: Diamond Jubilee 1910-1985, n.p.*

During the time when the Dutch moved into Highland, two unrelated events heavily influenced its future and its prosperity—the development of the onion-set industry in South Holland and the construction of steel mills in Gary and East Chicago along Lake Michigan. While looking for new crops, farmers in South Holland began experimenting with the production of onion sets. The onion, a biennial

Onion sets were often the crop that paid for the farm.

The labor-intensive nature of onion production in all stages—sowing, weeding, harvesting, and milling—led to a very creative period among local Dutch farmers. They began to invent and build machinery that reduced the time and labor necessary to raise this crop. Devices bearing Dutch names included the Dekker planter, the

Dutch, softening their isolation and insulation. Some of the young men occasionally even dated girls from the surrounding communities.

Some lifelong friendships also resulted. When one of Highland's favorite sons, Bartel Zandstra, ran for county public office, local political pundits were miffed that a Dutch Protestant farm boy could sweep the solid Catholic precincts of the mill towns. The explanation was quite simple: Zandstra and his brothers had peddled in many of those neighborhoods and had labored in the vegetable gardens with many of these same people. They knew and trusted each other. However, the Dutch church and school remained sacrosanct.

From its incorporation in 1910 to the end of World War II, life in Highland was typical of life in many Dutch vegetable-gardening communities. The pattern of living remained largely unchanged. Farming and church activities, day by day, season by season, year by year, were quite predictable. Change, though always present, proceeded at a glacial pace. The Dutch maintained a numerical advantage from the arrival of new immigrants and their renowned fecundity. On one farm road there were six families, each with eleven to sixteen children. Children, always regarded as a blessing from God, were also cheap field hands in the truck gardens. The Dutch language, though



Hon. Bartel Zandstra.

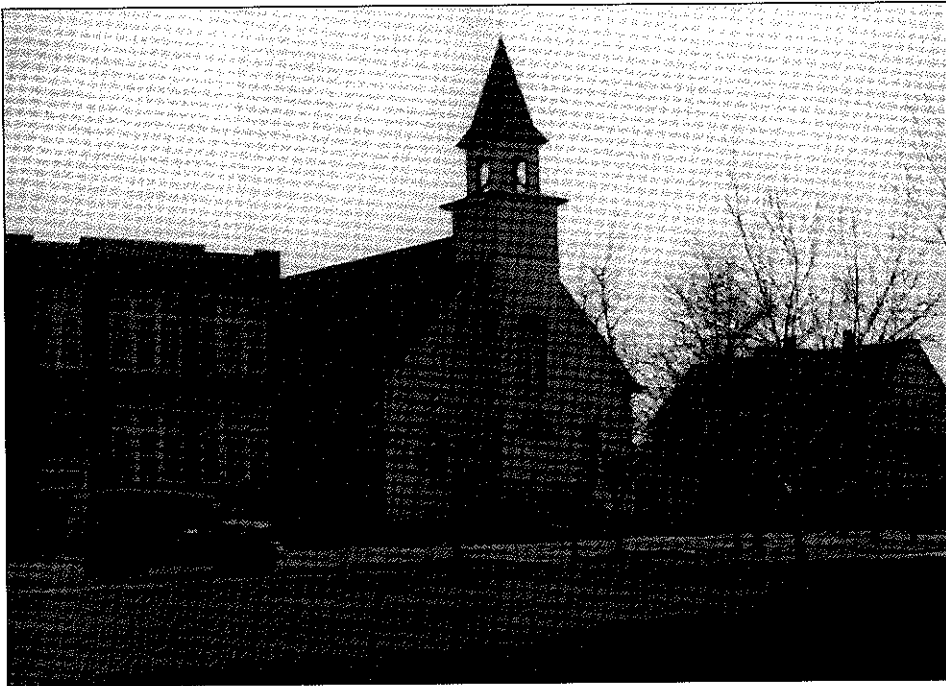
spoken into the 1930s, began to fade during World War I. The Dutch were regarded by the Yankees as possible German sympathizers and therefore of questionable loyalty. The Highland Farmers Co-Operative, composed of Dutch vegetable growers, took pains to mention their loyalty in the organization's minutes. About the same time, these co-op minutes were recorded in English rather than Dutch. Highland's population increased from about 300 at the time of incorporation to 3,500 in 1945. Until then, any resident could recognize everyone in town. Probably the biggest news of the era was the creation of a township park in the northwest corner of Highland. What had been fields and pastures for several Dutch farmers was disannexed and named Wicker Memorial Park. President Calvin Coolidge dedicated the park in 1924 to honor local veterans of the late war. Until the 1950s it was locally referred to as the Dutch park. Because almost no others used it, the local Dutch took full advantage of it. Beginning in 1919, the local Calvinists held a large Fourth of July festival in the park to celebrate Christian education. With ballgames, carnival contests, good food, patriotic oration, and fireworks, the festivals were a popular attraction for entire families. Later a second festival was added, on Labor Day, to promote foreign missions. This picnic was jointly sponsored with the Dutch communities in Munster and Lansing. These festivals remained popular until the mid 1950s. But as people's mobility increased and fewer were directly involved in agriculture, the Wicker Park festivals lost their appeal to the Dutch of Highland.

Fast-pitch softball was a major summertime entertainment. Church leagues formed during the 1940s and 1950s and Highland consistently fielded a team. Night games with paid admission were popular.

Highland was a place that few people noticed until after the Depression. An occasional travel brochure noted the existence of the Dutch villages as a bit of local color. Highland seldom made the news. One brief exception occurred during the latter days of Prohibition. B.H. Zandstra, the patriarch of the Zandstra family, in addition to being a market gardener, was a self-styled and dedicated missionary to the region. He was particularly galled by the large number of speakeasies that he had to pass each day on his peddling route along the Thornton-Lansing Road. Resolving to do something about this open violation of the Eighteenth Amendment, he, accompanied by his young sons, would stop his wagon and preach to the patrons concerning the evils of their lifestyle. At first the customers regarded him as a novelty, but after several weeks his persistence proved to be an annoyance. The seedy owners of the speakeasies threatened his life if he did not desist. At this point the *Chicago Tribune* heard of the confrontation and sent a reporter and photographer out to witness what would happen next. With the media there, no violence resulted, but Zandstra and his sons from Highland did make the front page of the *Tribune*.

In 1909 Highland Christian Reformed Church built a wood-frame building which resembled many other small country churches. It was a rectangular structure with tall windows on both sides, a rear entrance under the steeple, and a wide staircase leading to the door. In 1939 it was moved and remodeled by the various tradesmen in the church. It was extended at both ends, and double towers were built atop the new entrance section. For some years it dominated the skyline of Highland like a cathedral. In 1918 a square, two-story, brick Christian school was built next to the church, replacing the small





*Highland CRC, parsonage, and Christian school.*

chapel which earlier had served as the church. This school served until 1951, when a new building was erected.

Between the church and school stood the horse barn. With a capacity for sixty horses, it was used fully each Sunday before World War I. Progressively, as Model T's replaced horses, the size and use of the barn were reduced until its removal in about 1925. Until then the sanctuary was always charged with that unique odor generated by close contact with sweating horses. If several members, late for services, had raced to church, the smell was even more pervasive. Almost everyone regarded this aroma as a part of country living, perhaps even a sign of strong church attendance. The one notable exception was Mrs. Gabriel De Jong, the minister's wife. She believed that civilized people walked to church from their neighborhoods, thus avoiding the use—and smell—of horses on the Sabbath.

The horse barn was a natural playground for the school children. It was the regular hangout for the boys' gangs, and it served as the site for

new-member initiation ceremonies as well. Thus, when Pete Vander Molen requested to join the Jake and Nick Schoon gang, his ordeal took place in the barn. He was told to climb a stall divider and then reach up to take hold of a roof truss. Then hand-over-hand he had to move across to the other side of the barn. When Pete was midway across the barn and suspended by his arms, the gang peppered him with the very dry horse manure piled deep on the floor of the barn. The air was thick with dust and shouts. The school janitor, hearing the commotion, entered the barn only to see the gang members escaping out the barn door on the other side. He never noticed Pete, still hanging by his arms. The janitor, unable to catch the boys, threw his wooden shoe at them without success.

Internally the church frequently struggled with divisive issues. Real and imagined theological arguments, sometimes rooted in long-standing traditions rather than Scripture, were often on the agenda. Debates over the existence and nature of common grace

led to the departure of several families who joined the Protestant Reformed Church in the 1920s.

The Dutch language, which contributed to the Hollanders' isolation, briefly caused a division in the church when English became more popular. Initially Dutch had been taught in the primary grades in the Christian school, and Dutch was standard in schoolyard conversation as well. Sermons and catechism classes were all conducted in the native tongue. In the mid 1920s several families moved their church membership to the Lansing Christian Reformed Church, which was the local English-speaking congregation. An intense but brief confrontation over the use of English occurred when the Young Men's Society recruited E.K. Leep to lead its meetings. He had been one of those who joined the Lansing church in order to use English. Some parents then organized a separate Young Men's Society to avoid the corrupting influences of English. Use of the Dutch language, which had been regarded as a barrier against worldliness, gradually decreased as the need to communicate in business and peddling increased. By the mid 1920s Dutch had become a convenient second language, useful at various social gatherings and for making cogent theological statements. Even now certain Dutch words persist and are part of the local lexicon.

Until 1995 the most serious division within the Highland church was the debate in 1929 over the use of hymns in addition to psalms in worship services. The bitter dispute polarized the church community and some families. Both sides were led by honorable men with strong personalities. The pastor, Rev. John Rottier, championed the exclusive use of psalms. The Christian school principal, Mr. Dekker, promoted the use of both psalms and hymns. Scripture was used to demonstrate the validity of

both sides of the argument. The consistory, trying to demonstrate its ultimate authority, placed the entire school board under censure for promoting the use of hymns. After some weeks the matter was referred to classis, which sent a special delegation led by Rev. Herman Bel to resolve the controversy. Following an all-day session, the delegation determined that the consistory had to

revoke its censure and apologize to the school board. When the consistory refused to do as it was directed, Rev. Rottier personally did so for the consistory. This affair was not without a high price. The health of Rev. Rottier was broken, and he never recovered. The school principal left town the following year. The church did not bury its tendency for division until 1931, when a new pastor, Dr. Martin Van Dyke, arrived.

Some of the inherent discord in the Highland church was dissipated each year when the Young Men's Society challenged the Men's Society to a debate on some timely issue such as capital punishment. These formal debates regularly brought standing-room-only crowds to church, occasioning entertainment for the whole church community. This format, in which the young men usually overwhelmed the older men, became a kind of relief valve and diversion for the church.

The removal of the *voor alles*, or common cup, at communion services



Ed Van Til digging basement with horse slip scoop, ca 1937.

in 1925<sup>1</sup>—which had caused dissention in other Dutch churches—did not touch the Highland community. John Groot, the frugal Dutch banker at the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank, donated the entire service of individual glasses. Apparently he thought the old common cup was *vies* ("sickening"). Everyone in the congregation was grateful for his contribution.

Among these farmers there were also issues which focused on their livelihood. The records of the Farmers' Cooperative mention debates over the comparative merits of new commercial fertilizer and the traditional animal manure as well as whether a motor truck was superior to a horse-drawn wagon as a peddling rig. Because these Dutch growers invested little trust in each other, the cooperative enjoyed only limited success. Through sharing information and group purchasing this cooperative could have been quite beneficial, but the Dutch preferred privacy in their business. They feared that through the sharing of ideas a neighbor might gain some advantage.

When a similar organization in South Holland was asked how to better raise tomatoes, the minutes stated that "our request fell on deaf ears."

Periodically there were mass exoduses to the West from Highland as well as from the surrounding Calumet Region. Lured by various land schemes and inflated promises, many families attempted and failed at farming

in the West. The largest migration occurred during World War I, when several families traveled to Montana. Some left to avoid the impending draft of young men into the military. After several very difficult years they returned, wiser but poorer.\*

Declining economic conditions after World War I, followed by the Depression of 1929, set in motion the change from farming to related forms of employment in the Dutch community. The best example of this transition is the Pleasant View Dairy, which had its origins as a dairy farm. Begun in 1932, it was for many years the largest business in Highland. The initial stages of this company generated a colorful episode in the history of the Dutch in Highland. Nick E. Leep, the founder and a dairy farmer as well, was caught up in the middle of a confrontation between producers who needed more money for their milk and several large metropolitan dairies that did not want any more competition.

\*See "Montana," pp. 2-11 in this issue of *Origins*.

Shortly after Pleasant View began home deliveries, several drivers were assaulted, and their delivery vehicles were wrecked. One truck and unconscious driver were thrown into the Little Calumet River. Several loads of milk were also hijacked and dumped before the Dutch community banded together to pick up and deliver milk under armed escort. There was at least one armed standoff with guns at the ready. This tense situation was not without some comic relief. The young men who came to the aid of the fledgling dairy played their roles to the hilt, even dressing like gangsters in derbies and pinstripe suits. Other relatives who had just returned from failed farming in the West wore cowboy gear and side arms. Later it was learned that producers and other dairies were convinced that Nick Leep had hired real thugs to do his bidding. Fortunately no one was killed during this year-long confrontation. With County Sheriff Holley on their side, the Dutch were not to be intimidated. Today the dairy continues to prosper.

In less than ten years after World War II, Highland was transformed from a sleepy farm town into a fast-growing suburb of Chicago. The business district along the old Ridge Road quickly filled with various retail outlets, several of which were opened by the local Dutch. Land formerly devoted to cabbage, tomatoes, and corn was reallocated to housing subdivisions. Highland's population jumped from 5,800 in 1950 to 17,000 in 1960. Ten years later it had grown to about 25,000. Most of the new residents were not Dutch, although a number of Dutch families did migrate from Roseland at that time. Most new residents came from the old industrial neighborhoods to the north, where the Dutch had formerly peddled their farm produce. The majority were children of eastern-European steelworkers who had abandoned their old

urban enclaves. Several new public schools and a Catholic school were built. In fact, Highland's vegetable-garden foundation changed rapidly. With the advent of modern marketing, such as supermarkets and year-round availability of fresh produce, neighborhood peddling and even shipping to Chicago's street markets quietly shrank from the scene.

With the change in the town's demographics, the Dutch maintained a lower profile in town government. A few Dutch names that occasionally

found their place on the town board were Kooy, Krooswyk, Hoek, Blom, Zandstra, Van Prooyen, and Van Til. The Dutch focused most of their energy on business and professional interests, leaving Highland's politics largely to newer residents.

There were two waves of Dutch immigration to Highland following World War II. Several immigrant families from the Netherlands landed in Highland, usually because of family connections. Although these new residents almost always fit into the

existing Dutch community, it soon became apparent that the social mores of the Dutch in America and in Europe and even the Dutch language had changed in the previous fifty years. This reality was a surprise to both groups. The Dutch community enlarged again in the 1960s with the migration of Roseland's entire Dutch population. Some settled in Highland, bringing with them their professions and businesses. These two groups considerably enlarged dating possibilities for the young people.

The growing population numbers were reflected in the Christian school and the church. A new school was constructed in 1951, replacing the old square building of 1918.

Subsequently the Christian school has been enlarged four times to meet the growing student population, most recently in 1995. Like



*Rev. Martin Van Dyk with school principal John Vander Zee speaking during 1950 groundbreaking ceremony for the new Highland Christian School.*



*Highland Christian School, 1950s.*

the town itself, the school has also been integrated by others who favor Christian education.

Similarly, the local Christian Reformed church expanded with the formation of a second congregation in 1953. As the unwritten rules about marrying "outsiders" began to fade, the churches also saw new members joining from the non-Dutch community. After considerable discussion lasting several years, in the 1980s women were quietly given the choice to vote at congregational meetings.

At the same time, more Dutch people, often children of former gardeners, became shop owners,

business people, service personnel, and truck drivers serving the growing urban population of the Calumet Region. Today, as local urban expansion continues, there are Dutch firms in nearly all phases of construction—contractors, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and masons. Some of the Dutch have even found work in the many nearby factories and steel mills, in occupations the Dutch had traditionally shunned.

But the spirit of theological discontent emerged again in 1995. This time the discord was part of a larger debate within the Christian Reformed Church. Central to the debate were

interpretations of biblical teachings concerning women in church offices and the best approach to homosexuality. Though the Highland CRC congregations were not seriously divided over the issues, their members were divided over whether to remain in the Christian Reformed denomination. Finally a sizable minority left to form an independent church.

Today the Dutch of Highland continue to struggle with their identity because, although they can be quite cosmopolitan at times, they have yet to find a comfortable position of being "in the world but not of the world." §

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## Recollections of Arnold (Dick) Zandstra—1999

H.J. Brinks

Last July, on a partly cloudy day, Dick Zandstra, his son David, and I spent a pleasant morning reminiscing among the tombstones of Highland's Hope Cemetery. Like many others who reach advancing years, Dick, who is ninety, knows more about people under the sod than above it. He told stories about several dozen former parishioners of Highland's Christian Reformed churches. Among the first to capture Dick's attention was Gabriel Huizenga.

*Dick:* He was an interesting old fellow—a great big fellow, and he was in the consistory often. During those days, you know, the consistory had to stand up during long prayer, we call it congregational prayer today. He [Gabriel] had trouble with sleeping in church, so during long prayer, even if he was not in the consistory, he would stand up all the time so that he would not fall asleep. He was a fine old

Christian gentleman. I've known him for many years, yes sir.

*David:* What did he do for a living?

*Dick:* I can't tell you that. But practically all people around here were in farming—one way or another.

*David:* Didn't he farm over by Wicker Park?

*Dick:* Well, yes, that's where he lived. Yes. Sometimes people had just a few acres. Because they were close to the cities, they could peddle. We had people who were very good with horses, like my father and mother. We would hitch the horses up at three o'clock in the morning if we were going to Chicago, or, if we had to go a little farther, we would start earlier. There was no traffic at all, of course, just horses. We generally had a lantern hanging on the side of the wagon just for light of some kind. The horses got used to it, and so a lot of times you would fall asleep while driving

because you were up so many hours. You took your lunch along of course because there were no restaurants. I would say 90 percent of our selling was to foreigners.

There were no stores in those days, just a few on the corner, but people had to have food, so they would buy cabbage and pickles. And most of those people would work in the steel mills or that type of thing around here. That's what their income was. So we did that for quite a few years until we got one of the later model trucks, high-wheeled Internationals, in 1912, that took over quite a bit of our work. It carried about a ton, had hard tires and wheels about five feet tall.

*H. Brinks (HJB), pointing to the Zandstra family grave marker:* Is this your mother, Tryntje? I once heard a story about her. Heard it actually from Rev. Clarence Boomsma, who used it in a children's sermon. He reported

that your mother saved one of her children by going in front of a train and knocking the child off the tracks. What about that?

**Dick:** Right. It was on a day when Mother came home from Roseland after visiting her sister, Tante Hil. We lived in Munster. All the traveling in those days was done by local trains. Those trains would stop and let off packages and let off people. Then they would travel to the next town. Over there they stopped in Maynard, we called it, that's part of Munster. The Grand Trunk and also Pennsylvania would stop there and let off packages and let off people, and then they'd go to the farm and pick up milk and let off people. When corn-planting time would come, they would sometimes leave off one hundred men, give them a pocket of seed corn and a stick, and that's how they planted corn. Then that train would go into Schererville and do the same thing. Well, our food and so, most of it came from Sears Roebuck. I often say today, there were

food in those days. You took a paper out of the back of the catalog and filled in all the numbers and wrote it up and signed it and sent it in. Put the check in there, or generally a money order in those days, and they would leave the order off at Maynard. And after a couple of days you'd go pick it up. But my mother one day wanted to go to Roseland to see her sister. And Brother John was just a little bit older than I. He must have been at least five or six years old. And she took him along. Both trains come into Maynard together, see. They cross each other. Well, she came off one train and was crossing the railroad to go to the station, which was on the other side of the track. Well, John was already old enough to run around. He ran ahead of her. And he didn't pay attention to the trains, and when my mother saw that train coming, she went after him and stumbled over the track. And one foot got caught under it, and the train cut the top of her foot off. Right off. That was a sad thing in those days. We

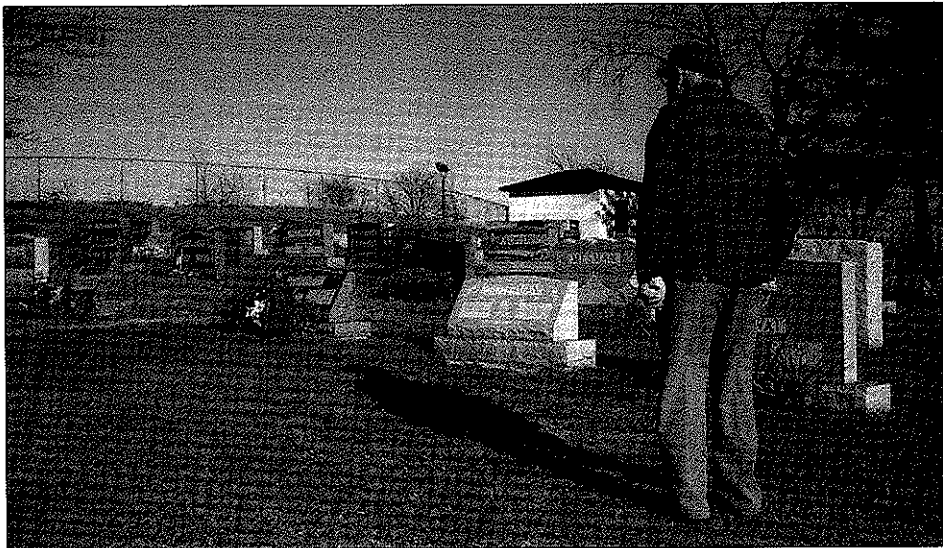
in St. Margaret's Hospital in Hammond. There's where they operated on her. They wanted to cut the leg off right here [points to ankle], because they knew about all the nerve endings and so in the foot. But my dad said, "No way. Keep everything you can." That was not smart, because all her life she had pain in her toes. With weather and so she had trouble all of her life. She did have one or two children after that yet.

**David:** There's Sam Van Til, the shopkeeper.

**Dick:** Sam Van Til. Yes. I wonder where Eta Van Til is buried. Sam was the father of all the Van Tils—Reinder, Nick, Jake, and Case Van Til, the professor. That whole family. His grave should be here, but I don't see it. But they're all gone now. Case [Cornelius] lived pretty long.

Sam was in the grocery business in town here, and he had two sons—Nick and Ed. Ed had the characteristics of his mother's family—the Schoons. He was just a little bit unpredictable. He was a genius in certain ways, and in other ways—well he was stubborn. When he said something, there could be no other interpretation. The only thing I really didn't like about him was from our school days. He sat in front of me, and we had a tin roof in our room. We used to chew on a piece of paper to make paper wads and shoot them up to the ceiling with a flippery kind of one-foot-long ruler. We'd flip them up there, and bing! The teacher would look around, but everyone would be studying. Well, anyway, Ed had twelve spit wads stuck up there on the ceiling, and I only had eight.

Nick became a grocer and later a partner in the Strack and Van Til stores. Nick and I did lots of things together. He joined the Gideons and was very good. Now his son Sam is in the store business, a fine gentleman and liberal with his charitable giving.



*Hope Cemetery for Highland's Christian Reformed church members.*

two books we had in those days, the Bible and the Sears Roebuck catalog. They were both very, very necessary, I tell you. Because Sears Roebuck handled all the dried food and canned

were there with a buggy and horse, and we took her home. There was no telephone to call the doctor. I forget how all of that happened—I was too young at the time. She finally landed



**HJB:** Once when we were here together—I think it was for Dena Kortenhoeven's funeral—you told me about a particular shoemaker. Who was that?

**Dick:** Old John Moes was the shoemaker. He weighed about one hundred pounds soaking wet. He was just a little guy, and he always wore a little beard. Yeah. I can still see him fixing shoes. His shop was close by the school, and we kids were walking by every day. Shoemaking was a vigorous business in those days. We had a couple of shoemakers in town here. Moes would be putting on a sole, and he chewed tobacco all the time. Then he would spit right under where he was putting on the sole. He never needed a spittoon. He'd spit right on that shoe—ping! It always struck me so funny. I thought in those days, as a kid you know, that the spit was necessary to keep the sole down, just part of the repair.

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There are the Lolkemas—real Frisians—John and Pete. They lived right here on the hill. They're gone now.

**HJB:** There are quite a few Frisians buried here—Fennema, Reitstra, Zandstra.

**Dick:** Yes sir, all of those and the Porters too. Sometime ago we sponsored four families from North Holland in the Netherlands as immigrants. They were talking about the Frisians, you know, that they are stiff-headed and such. Well, at that time I was treasurer of the Christian school, and I told these North Hollanders, "One thing I know for sure: Every time I go look up a Terpstra, Reitstra, Elzinga, or such names, I find them paid up. But the North Hollanders and



Arnold Zandstra beside his parents' grave marker.

Groningers—well you got to work on them." Now, truth is, I said that as a joke at that moment. But later I looked at the book, and that's just the way it was.

**HJB:** There . . . I see another Zandstra.

**Dick:** That's my oldest brother, Nick. He was in Montana. My father was always moving around, and he went to Montana and bought land there. My dad thought this was the most wonderful country in all the world. You could buy land in any state and buy it now. You could make up your mind to buy it and pay some other time.

Well, we just got through with a Colorado venture, and that took all that we had and somewhat more. But he bought land in Columbus, Montana, and Nick was running that land. It was fortunate in one way because with the war on, he would have to go

to the war . . . But he was a real Christian. We still have an outstanding letter from him which he wrote to his sister and to the folks. And he died of the flu epidemic. Yeah. And Jennie Plantinga was a single girl living with Rev. Boer; he was our preacher at the time. And she was Nick's girlfriend. She was here at the grave when we buried him. She said she wanted to lay next to him. And there she is. Both of them. They died in 1918—the flu.

That's Reinder Van Til's first wife; yes, she was a Lamke. [She also died of influenza in 1918.]

**HJB:** So that's the mother of Hank and all those older boys, eh?

**Dick:** They kinda had to get out of the old country in a way because she was from a higher class. You know what that was . . . *hoogstaand*? And she married

this Reinder Van Til, who was just a Groninger, and so there was a social distance. To do work did not fit her at all. In the old country that was for the Groningers. Then she had a large family, but the youngest was just a baby when they came here. They were living over here near where we lived. My mother and dad were working with them all the time. We took over the baby; Tootsie we called her. She lived with us for a couple of years. And then the epidemic, not the flu, but scarlet fever. We all had to get out, and anyway, she just died. It was a sad thing.

**HJB:** That was the daughter of Lamke?

**Dick:** Yes, that was her last child. My folks took her in . . . she lived with us for a long time.

**David:** You took in a couple other Van Til kids too, Hank and Ed . . . during the flu pandemic.

**Dick:** Well, the other boys . . . I remember . . . I always laugh about Nick Van Til. He became a professor at one of our colleges, Dordt. When he was a little boy, after his mother passed away, he would come over to our place because there was no mother over there, you know, and the girls, they were too young to help. He came in there about 1:30, and he'd say, *Ik heb niets te eten*. He hadn't had any lunch yet. Simple as that. I'll never forget that.

**HJB:** There's a different name, Zyp.

**Dick:** Yeah! He was killed right there. His house was right over there. Peter Zyp. His barn was on the other side of Ridge Road, and his house here on this side. One Sunday night he was going across, and there were hardly any cars here, maybe one or two. He didn't look, and he was going to get his milk. He was walking with his milk can, and one car killed him right there. That was Peter Zyp. And he was the father of a lot of Zyps here. See, Jake Groot married a Zyp, and Dave Moes married a Zyp. . . and Ben Blink married Mary Zyp. There's a few more of those . . . but it was a big family.

**HJB:** What do you know about De Kryger, the name on that marker over there?

**Dick:** The De Krygers intermarried with the Van Slootens, and they had a big family. Cornelia, Hank Bakker's wife, died not too long ago. Cornelia was a school teacher at Lansing Christian and a very intelligent woman.

**HJB:** She was my teacher, a very able woman. They called her Connie.

**Dick:** She enjoyed children even though she had none of her own. And her mother [De Kryger] had a big family, but she loved reading, so she just let the dishes take care of themselves. Everything would just pile up while she was reading. She'd get through with dinner and just sit down and read.

**HJB:** There's a Scheeringa. Is he the father of all the Scheeringas around here?

**Dick:** That's Henry. Old Jake Scheeringa was the original one. He [Jake] was a large fellow with a bald head. I remember his face perfectly. Henry married Winnie Van Slooten. She ran the show and got old Hank moving all the time. They had a big family and worked all the time. He made lots of money, but where he really hit the jackpot was because he never used banks. Lots of people thought banks were strange—didn't trust them. She put their money under her bed. I'd dare anyone to try to get it. But anyhow, when the Depression came, the banks were holding lots of mortgages—two- and three-thousand-dollar mortgages.

Nothing was selling, so to get their money, banks would sell the mortgages. So the banker comes to Hank and says, "We got a house over there on Lincoln Street where Gerrit lived. I got about a \$2,000 mortgage on it yet. You want it?" "I'll take

it," says Hank. And so he did. Well, I don't know how many homes he bought like that, and he painted them all alike, white with green trim. Today those homes are worth sixty or seventy thousand dollars. So that's Hank's stone right there.

**HJB:** I'd say its the biggest one in the cemetery.

**Dick:** Oh yeah. He always wanted

the biggest. The biggest car too. I often tell a story about Hank. It goes like this. Do you know about the time two guys tried to hold up Hank? No? Well, they got hold of him, and they wanted his money. He said no, you ain't getting my money. So they started fighting. And without knives or anything they got him down. Then they got into his pockets and found twenty-five cents. One of the crooks groaned, "We're lucky. If he'd had a dollar, he would have killed us."

But when you went to Hank's for money—for the church or school—you could get it . . . We had a school picnic every year, and in about 1955 I was the emcee. I made the announcement that we had some good news.



Grave markers of Nicholas Zandstra and Jennie Plantinga, an engaged couple who succumbed to the flu in 1918.

Even though we didn't know exactly how the new school's building fund was coming along, there was one very positive sign, I said. The windows were going to be painted white with green trim. That was a kind of inside joke because everyone in Highland knew that all of Hank's many houses were painted white with green trim.

~ ~ ~

Jessie Kooistra—well, that's a sad story. Jessie was a nice-looking girl. She was working in Chicago and got to going with a fellow and was deeply involved with him. She wanted to cut it off because she was intending to marry another fellow, Henry Bush. Well, she went to Chicago to tell that fellow. He had a .38 in his pocket, and he shot her, and then he killed himself. You talk about a scare!

~ ~ ~

*David:* There's our neighbor, the barber.

*Dick:* Yes, old Ben De Maar. Yeah. He was our barber. We'd go down to him with all the kids and he'd just clip all our hair—all for one price. No extra charge. If you talked to him, he'd answer everything with "That's the main thing." He had to keep his teeth together; otherwise his false teeth would fall out. He'd keep his teeth together and say, "That's the main thing." You could say anything to him, and he would say, "That's the main thing." Everything was the main thing.

~ ~ ~

The Van Tuinens. There they are. John Groot was their attorney, that is, he kept the books for them. And the coroner's report says that they died of malnutrition. They lived that way—so they just couldn't buy anything. When they would come over to our house to use the phone or something like that, they would eat and eat. So we wondered about them. Once when I was at their house, Rich Van Tuinen was eating a slice of bread with nothing on it but onions. She [Maggie] would use the dishwater to wash her feet—it was still warm, you know. She just couldn't throw it away. She was that

way. She was really a good woman, but . . . Rich always waited for one of his neighbors to return from the market because he always came home with a bag full of rolls, and old Rich would be waiting for that bag of rolls. Then they would live it up again. But they both died of malnutrition, as I said. I was on the Christian School Board at that time, and we got over \$700 from their estate. They had over \$65,000 in the bank.

*HJB:* They were too tight to eat?

*Dick:* They could not eat—it's as Solomon wrote in Proverbs. It's a sad evil when you have it and can't eat it. Yeah, that was Rich and Maggie.

~ ~ ~

And that's Jan Ploos Van Amstel. Quite a character in town here. He was the school's headmaster in the old days, the principal. He hated the Dutch social-class system. Once he went back to the Netherlands, where he visited his brother, a prominent preacher there. JP would get up in the morning, put on his robe and slippers, and go out on the street to talk with the street cleaners. His brother bawled him out something terrible. "You can't do that here in this country! You can't talk to those people."

JP was principal when two kids—very slow learners—were attending. And he kept them in school all the way up to the eighth grade. But to graduate they needed to pass the state test. JP knew they couldn't pass, but he wanted to make them very happy.



*Arnold Zandstra beside tree.*

So he got hold of my brother Joe. He was a professor at the university and knew a lot of people in the state's education department. So he went to Indianapolis to see what lessons were going to be on the test that year. Somehow he got the whole test and turned it over to J.P. Van Amstel. For months on end that was all he taught those two kids, and they both passed. It was illegal. I've been carrying that story in my heart all this time. I just never told anybody. But that's how we got them through.

~ ~ ~

# Dutch-American Immigration Issues During the Truman Administration

Jay Weessies



Jay Weessies

World War II thrust many changes on the world both during and after the war. Much has been written about many of these changes, such as the onset of the Cold War and the new political boundaries in Europe. Less has been written about the large problem of resettling the hundreds of thousands of Europeans known as displaced persons (DPs) or refugees, who were driven from their homes. Displaced persons are those people deported or forced to leave their countries to work in foreign factories or deported for racial, religious, or political reasons. Refugees,

Thousands of displaced Dutch had to find a way to return to productive lives after the war. Hundreds of thousands of DPs and refugees throughout Europe also desired a return to normal productive lives.

During the war populations had moved on a grand scale. The fighting pushed different people at different times. Also, the war's end caused further significant population movements as a dramatically changed Europe, with new political borders, was born. The most significant change was the ascendancy of the Soviet Union. Despite the loss of approxi-



Liberation in Zuid Beveland, Zeeland from the Knickerbocker Weekly.

"Dutch Women from the village of Heer Arendskerke, on the Zeeland island of Zuid Beveland in the Schelde Estuary, which was recently liberated in the swift Allied advance in southwest Holland, walk arm-in-arm with Scottish troops."

on the other hand, leave their countries "voluntarily" and cannot return because of a war or some other disaster.<sup>1</sup> Like every European nation, the Netherlands faced its own DP and refugee problem after World War II.

mately 25 million citizens, the Soviet Union's role in the war brought it a respect and legitimacy it had previously lacked. The Soviets came to dominate eastern Europe. The prewar Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and

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*Dutch refugees streaming back into the Netherlands after being liberated in Germany.*

"Netherlands civil administration officials have been working assiduously to alleviate suffering in the liberated parts of Holland. They have arranged for the feeding, housing and care of people whose dwellings and possessions have been destroyed. Despite the great military demands on vehicles and commodities they manage to find ways and means to carry on their work. Above, refugees wait for transport on a road near Nijmegen."

Lithuania became part of the soviet Union as did eastern Poland and parts of Czechoslovakia, Finland, and East Prussia.<sup>2</sup> These changes prompted thousands more to crowd into western Europe to seek new homes and avoid becoming Soviet citizens.

Western Europe also saw its share of upheaval. The German army rushed west in May 1940, defeating the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg quickly in order to focus on France and Great Britain. The Germans cruelly bombed the Dutch nation, severely damaging many key port cities. The initial bombing of Rotterdam, a city of 600,000, claimed 10,000 lives and destroyed 25,000 dwellings, 1,200 factories, and 4 hospitals.<sup>3</sup> Many Dutch citizens left Rotterdam and other port cities to find sanctuary in rural areas. The ensuing five-year occupation crippled the

Netherlands. The hopelessly undermanned Dutch troops had been able to resist the Germans only briefly. But the initial attack by no means ended suffering in the Netherlands. Rotterdam also sustained damage from British bombing in 1943 while that city was held by the Germans. The Hague also suffered severely when Hitler had large tank traps and an "Atlantic Wall" built to guard western Europe against Allied attacks. The demolition of buildings for these fortifications drove 85,000 people from the city. The Germans even used the grounds of the

Permanent Court of International Justice, known as the Peace Palace, to launch missiles at Britain. Amsterdam suffered less bomb damage. However, the city lost many dwellings in what had been the Jewish section when the city's remaining inhabitants destroyed the vacant buildings for firewood following the forced departure of the Jews.<sup>4</sup>

But the greatest hardships faced by the Dutch occurred in the last months of the war. In autumn 1944, the Allies began liberating the Netherlands. The province of Gelderland in the west-central Netherlands saw much fighting. The prominent city of Arnhem and neighboring towns sustained heavy damage, their streets and homes reduced to piles of rubble, many of their inhabitants made homeless. Along the coast Allied bombing in October 1944 tore holes in dikes,

which flooded Walcheren Island, destroying hundreds of houses and damaging thousands. These months of turmoil made food so scarce that many Dutch even ate grass and tulip bulbs.<sup>5</sup> By spring 1945 forty people were starving to death daily in Rotterdam and twenty-five in The Hague.<sup>6</sup> Wartime survivors returned to cities with drastically reduced housing. The postwar resettlement of Dutch people represented a major challenge for the weakened, densely populated nation.

Much of the Dutch population had been displaced. The small nation saw great shifts within and outside the country. Thousands fled the initial bombings by moving away from coastal areas. Another 160,000 emigrated, mostly to Belgium or France, only to return after the fighting shifted to other areas. The Germans deported 104,000 Dutch Jews to Poland, most of whom probably died in German concentration camps. And by January 1944, 350,000 Dutch civilians and military prisoners had been deported to labor in German factories.<sup>7</sup> Other countries had greater numbers of displaced persons, but the Dutch DPs represented a significant percentage of the prewar population of 8.8 million.<sup>8</sup>

The war created other problems for the Netherlands, a small nation with a prewar economy heavily dependent on trade. The Germans damaged ports and destroyed half of the Dutch shipping fleet.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the Netherlands lost control of a very large part of its economy when Japan captured the Netherlands East Indies, the area now known as Indonesia. At the onset of the war, no nation had depended on its colonial possessions as much as the Dutch did. At that time more than 400,000 Dutch had employment related to raw materials such as tin, rubber, palm oil, and pepper, imported from the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>10</sup> Some estimated that the Netherlands East Indies provided the



Netherlands with one-fifth of its national income.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the future of Dutch agriculture looked bleak after the war because German destruction of the dikes had flooded at least half a million acres of fertile land with salt water, 10 percent of the total arable acreage.<sup>12</sup> Authorities estimated that it would take at least five years to restore the land.<sup>13</sup> People returning home would have to struggle to make ends meet.

During the war a few people foresaw the massive DP and refugee problem. In October 1943 President Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested a



*Liberated boy in North Brabant.*

"Among the ruins of liberated Schijndel, halfway between Helmond and Hertogenbosch in the Province of North Brabant, this youngster licks his thumb after eating a piece of chocolate presented by a British Tommy. Although food is now being flown to liberated Holland the Netherlands are nevertheless still on curtailed rations and are facing the severest of winters. In the occupied parts of the country the people are facing actual starvation as the Nazis have now depleted the food stores of the larger cities."

then unthinkable figure of ten to twenty million refugees worldwide, an estimate that proved too low.<sup>14</sup> The most widely accepted figure was thirty million homeless, not including

expected movements after the war due to new international borders.<sup>15</sup> The first large-scale effort to deal with this massive problem came in November 1943, when forty-four nations established the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). This organization, which predated the United Nations peace organization, chartered in 1945, sought to relieve the victims of war by providing food, shelter, and other necessities until people could return to their homes, as they had following World War I.<sup>16</sup> UNRRA's real work began after the Allied invasion in June

1944, when it took responsibility for the DPs and refugees that the military had assembled in camps.<sup>17</sup>

At first these DP camps were populated by a variety of nationalities. However, soon after the war, most DPs from the free nations of western Europe returned to their war-battered homelands. Dutch DPs began streaming back to the Netherlands following the German withdrawal, many from their forced tenure in German factories. The challenge for the Dutch government was to become economically stable while rebuilding and finding places for the returnees to live. Dutch repatriation flowed briskly by late April 1945 and continued well into the summer. By August, 305,000 Dutch had been repatriated, at which time the influx slowed considerably. By the end of

September only about 13,600 displaced Dutch remained outside of the Netherlands. The repatriates, however, returned to a country still on the mend. Shortages of housing and

transportation had also slowed the postwar recovery. Within the Netherlands, there was a population shift as many thousands that had fled the battlefields in the northern provinces moved back after living in the south during the war. Amid this upheaval the Dutch nation began to return to normal life. Outside the Netherlands, Dutch DPs were but a fraction of the total number of DPs that UNRRA had to deal with in 1946. After the 1945-1946 winter, repatriation resumed, and 4,200 Dutch returned during the eight months preceding October 31, 1946.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the Dutch, DPs from eastern Europe faced the prospect of life under Soviet domination, and many opted to remain in the camps. Unlike the hundreds of thousands of Polish and Baltic DPs, Dutch DPs did not require much of UNRRA's time or resources.

Meanwhile, in the United States a new man occupied the White House after twelve years of Roosevelt leadership. Many Americans had known only one President. During his tenure Roosevelt was an extremely powerful chief executive with a magnetic personality. His death in April 1945 left a huge void at the top of the United States government. Roosevelt was succeeded by his vice president, Harry S. Truman, who had held that title for only a few weeks. This new President had to grasp many issues simultaneously. In just a few months Truman had moved from being a second-term senator to being the leader of the most powerful and influential nation in the world. The task of reconstructing the postwar world thus fell to a man who had precious little international experience.

Another development occurred that would shape almost every decision made with regard to foreign policy. The Soviet Union's ascension into the ranks of world power and the expansion of Soviet-style communism made the American-led Western world

uneasy. This rivalry affected practically every issue, including the resettlement of DPs and refugees following the war. This adversarial relationship developed into the Cold War, a period filled with great tension despite the absence of any direct military action between the two superpowers. Refugees from communism provided a steady flow of people to the West in the postwar period, putting more strain on the already short resources there. In the United States, communism became a hated ideology. Anyone suspected of having communist sympathies was subject to harassment.

In this atmosphere the American government began to adjust to postwar life. The debate over immigration legislation in the United States was dominated by the DP issue in the years immediately following the war. After most of the DPs from western Europe left the camps to return to their homelands, there remained hundreds of thousands who refused to return to their former countries in eastern Europe. To alleviate this situation, the United States passed the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, which allowed over 200,000 DPs to enter the United States in addition to the number previously allowed. Two years later the Displaced Persons Act of 1950 was enacted to admit more DPs and correct the discriminatory features many people believed the 1948 act contained which made the entry of Jews and Catholics difficult. This special legislation did not permanently change United States immigration laws or affect many immigrants from the Netherlands. It did, however, show the world that the United States would take responsibility and help solve a tough postwar problem. Soon other nations followed the United States' lead and accepted more DPs.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands began feeling upheaval from another part of

the world, the Netherlands East Indies. During the war the Japanese had occupied the Dutch colony and encouraged anti-Dutch sentiment. When the Japanese left in 1945, the Dutch were preoccupied with events in Europe and in no position to reestablish control in the East Indies. A six-week delay occurred between Japanese surrender and the first Allied landing in the East Indies. This gave native Indonesian forces dedicated to independence time to become entrenched. When a combined British-Dutch force attempted to reestablish Dutch control, violence erupted between the Europeans and the independence forces. The fighting that ensued claimed over eight hundred lives among the pro-Dutch troops and many more among the Indonesians.<sup>19</sup> Understandably, many Dutch in the East Indies feared violence and saw the return to a war-battered but peaceful Netherlands as an attractive alternative.

The troubles in the East Indies continued into 1946. By then Dutch troops had replaced the British troops, but they lacked the arms necessary to discourage the Indonesians. The Indonesians, on the other hand, possessed the weapons that the Japanese had left behind. This made gaining control difficult for the Dutch. Meanwhile, the independence-minded Indonesians proclaimed their government a republic, winning friends among persons worldwide who favored republican governments but not familiar with the situation in Indonesia. In reality, Indonesia was far from a republic at this point. Further complicating the situation was the fact that the "republicans" and the Dutch were not the only groups clamoring for power in Indonesia. There were also people who had helped the Japanese and now feared for their own safety if Europeans regained control. There were communists, and there was a criminal element looking selfishly for

enrichment. The republicans had difficulty taking charge, but they were the only group resembling a government. The Dutch, recognizing their great economic interests, wanted protection for their people and assurances for their investments from the republicans.<sup>20</sup>

A large number of middle- and upper-class Dutch families in the Netherlands had property, investments, or relatives in Indonesia. Not wanting to lose their relatives or their valuable assets, the Dutch were willing to negotiate more self-government and eventual independence for the Indonesians, but in an orderly manner. To the Dutch this meant a stable government, not one influenced by lawless bands.<sup>21</sup> In November 1946 an agreement was concluded for the gradual transfer of all land held by Dutch forces to the republicans, with completion by January 1, 1949.<sup>22</sup> In early 1947, however, it became apparent that the republicans held little control over some groups. Meanwhile, many corrupt persons had gained power in the new government, leaving little hope for reform from within. The Dutch, recognizing the precarious state of the country, used force to restore order.<sup>23</sup>

During this turmoil American public opinion favored the native Indonesians. This made sense because the word *republic* reminded Americans of their own battle for independence in 1776. Further, the American public received a one-sided account of the situation, learning a good bit about the Dutch police action but little about the continuing Indonesian guerrilla activity.<sup>24</sup> The Indonesian situation left President Truman with a dilemma. The world, America included, was in a decidedly anticolonial mood. On the other hand, the Netherlands had a long tradition of democracy and had been a valuable trading partner for the United States. Further, a strong

Netherlands constituted a significant part of western-European stability. Also, Americans wanted access to Indonesian raw materials, always available under Dutch administration. A stable government in Indonesia clearly looked attractive to the United States. But weighing most heavily on the Truman administration was the threat of communist expansion all over the globe. Continued instability provided the communist movement with a chance. The 1947 unrest had weakened the republican government. By mid 1948 the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) doubted the long-term viability of the republicans. By then the communists touted themselves as the embodiment of Indonesian aspirations and sought to fill the leadership void. The CIA considered Indonesia a strategically important area and wished to avoid what would be "a major extension of Soviet influence."<sup>25</sup>

One consequence of the uncertain situation in Indonesia was the movement of Dutch people from there back to the Netherlands. In 1946, 69,300 Dutch left Indonesia for the Netherlands. Only 5,400 moved in the opposite direction. The number returning decreased after 1946 and was offset by the movement of servicemen from the Netherlands to Indonesia

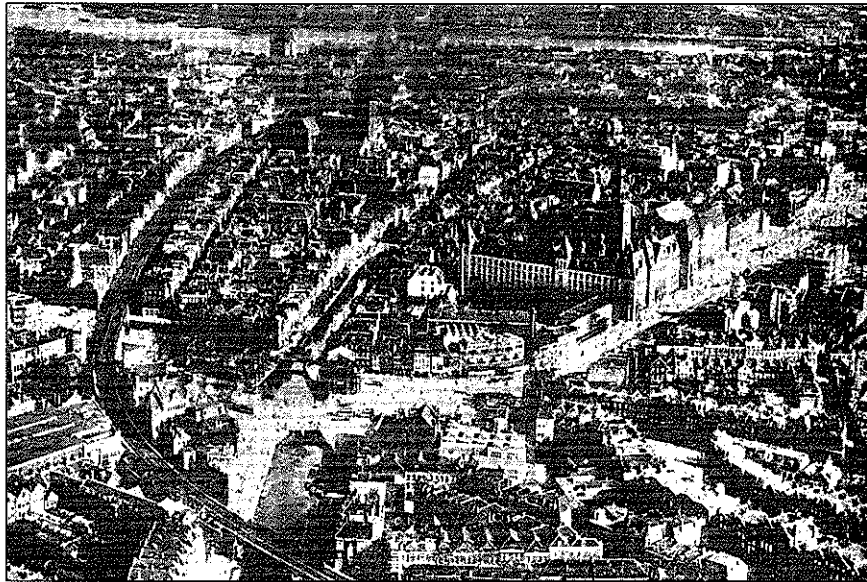
through 1949. This return to the Netherlands consisted mainly of former colonial officials who had held high-paying positions in the East Indies and could provide for themselves financially upon their return. Their major difficulty was finding housing. Many had to move in with relatives.<sup>26</sup>

The Indonesian situation began stabilizing in late 1949. Negotiators finally agreed on setting up the

Republic of the United States of Indonesia. The new nation would be headed by the Dutch Queen, but Indonesia would control its own economy and military. The Dutch received assurances that their property in the new republic would not be seized.<sup>27</sup> The United States hoped this solution would allow the more moderate elements to maintain control and would thus keep the communists out of power. Indonesia became independent on December 27, 1949.<sup>28</sup>

For many of the Dutch people still there, the prospect of life under Indonesian rule seemed unattractive, prompting another large movement to the Netherlands. In 1950 and 1951, 86,200 Dutch returned to the Netherlands, whereas only 18,900 moved the other way during the same two years.

The people moving during these years generally had less economic means than those in the first movement, and they had difficulty finding employment in the Netherlands. By this time the Dutch realized that their former colony was gone forever and looked at the repatriates as permanent additions to their already densely populated country.<sup>29</sup> One former Netherlander (relative Henry Weessies, who emigrated to Canada in the 1950s) recalled, "We didn't know



*Rotterdam, before bombardment and after.*

"Above, a bird's-eye view of the bustling city of Rotterdam, one of the world's great ports, as it appeared in the days preceding the Nazi invasion. Below, the city after the Nazis had finished with it. Two hundred thousand tons of debris were removed and dumped in the Schie during clearance operations."



much about the East Indies, but there were a lot of people who came back. More people meant less work."<sup>30</sup> By 1949 the postwar population topped 10 million, an increase of over 13 percent from the prewar level in an area roughly half the size of South Carolina.<sup>31</sup>

Many Dutch worried about the future of their homeland. Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union only added to their worries. In December 1945, 50 percent of Dutch people expected another world war, this time between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. A year later, the figure had grown to 63 percent, and it peaked at 71 percent in September 1948, soon after the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet blockade of Berlin. The possibility of war worried the Dutch. The proximity of the Netherlands to Soviet-dominated eastern Europe and the vivid memories of World War II led many to consider alternatives to living in their crowded homeland, seemingly caught between East and West. The growing population and their uncertain future changed the minds of many. Like the expectations of war, the desire to emigrate to another land also grew. In 1946, 22 percent of the population was in favor of emigration. The lack of economic opportunity, combined with Cold War tensions, boosted this figure to 32.5 percent by 1948.<sup>32</sup> But those desirous of emigration had few opportunities. Most nations, including the United States, had strict limits on the number of people allowed to enter.

In an effort to relieve population pressure, the Dutch government encouraged emigration the best it could, granting subsidies to persons without the economic resources to leave. Additionally, centers were set up to teach potential emigrants new skills, which, it was hoped, would

enhance their chances for admission to another country. Private organizations also helped. Many offered language courses and culture classes to ease the transition from the Netherlands to another nation.<sup>33</sup>

Many Dutch hoped the United States would be their new home but were discouraged by the American quota system. American immigration laws allocated immigration quotas to various countries on the basis of the national-origin distribution of the American population as determined by the 1920 census.<sup>34</sup> Under this system Dutch immigration was limited to a few more than 3,100 per year because considerably fewer Dutch people had settled in the United States than English or Irish.<sup>35</sup> Any larger movement to the United States would require special legislation as long as the 1920 quota system was in place. Therefore, some Dutch people wanting to emigrate considered other destinations, such as Canada and Australia. Canada was especially attractive because Canadian troops had liberated the Netherlands and the Dutch Queen had lived there during the war. Additionally, many Dutch girls had married Canadian soldiers and had subsequently accompanied their husbands to Canada. On the other side, Canada wanted Dutch people to bolster its own economy and especially encouraged the immigration of Dutch



*View of destruction in Nijmegen.*

"This view of Nijmegen shows the damage wrought by German and Allied bombardments. The bridge over the Rhine River is seen in the background."

agricultural workers. In each year from 1948 to 1950 Canada accepted more than twice as many Dutch immigrants as the United States' quota allowed.<sup>36</sup>

Australia also became a favored destination for Dutch emigrants. The Australian government encouraged a larger population for both economic and national security reasons. Australia sought European DPs to alleviate its labor shortage, accepting approximately 160,000 immigrants in 1949 with talk of increasing that number in 1950.<sup>37</sup> The Australian government encouraged Dutch immigration because of the similarity between the Dutch culture and its own. Australia even signed an agreement with a private organization in the Netherlands and contributed to the cost of moving the people. Australia was second only to Canada as a postwar destination for Dutch people.<sup>38</sup>

Even with the movements to Canada and Australia, the situation in the Netherlands looked bleak. Queen Juliana stated in 1950 that "the rapid



US President Harry Truman.  
Portrait by Leo Sporn,  
courtesy of Harry S. Truman  
Library.

growth of the population and the limited amount of land available continue to demand the vigorous promotion of emigration.”<sup>39</sup> This statement from the monarch clearly communicated the idea that the Netherlands could not maintain an acceptable level of prosperity if population trends continued. The



Temporary housing in liberated Limberg.

“EMERGENCY HOME —This hut erected in Limburg may serve as a home for this Dutch family this winter. Reconstruction work in Limburg started very late because of lack of materials, lack of transportation, lack of everything with which to rebuild. Coal shortage will add to the discomfort.”

perception of overpopulation added to people’s feelings of anxiety about their nation’s economic future. The anxiety troubled democratic nations outside the Soviet sphere of influence, including the United States. A nation with an uncertain future like the Netherlands’ was thought to be susceptible to unrest. The United States, above all, desired stability in the democratic world in order to contain Soviet-style communism. Therefore, encouraging emigration out of the Netherlands became part of American cold War strategy.

It was in this Cold War atmosphere that the Truman administration studied the problem of overpopulation in western Europe, including the Netherlands. Robert West, special consultant on migration affairs, prepared a memorandum on surplus population for the Department of State in June 1951. In it he saw the chances for assimilation of this excess as “very remote” and encouraged large-scale emigration to relieve the pressure. The

Netherlands was specifically cited as a problem area, as were Italy, Germany, Austria, and Greece. West characterized the United States’ interest as substantial because of the large economic commitment already made in this region with the Marshall Plan. He thought the overcrowded conditions increased tensions among persons and decreased hope for better lives. West believed emigration assistance should be an integral part of the United States’ foreign policy. He urged



HM Juliana, Queen of the  
Netherlands. Photo by Max Koot.

special legislation that would admit persons from the overpopulated nations in excess of the quotas. West saw the many agricultural workers without land to work and the natural population increases as problems that would only worsen conditions. West thought the United States should accept its share of immigrants. Other countries, notably Canada and Australia, would continue their liberal immigration policies under his proposed scenario. West estimated that 100,000 Dutch would need to find new homes. To help in this effort, he suggested that for five years the United States annually allow the immigration of 15,000 more Dutch people than permitted by 1920 quota legislation.<sup>40</sup>

West’s memorandum also outlined American interests in Europe’s overpopulation problem. It pointed to the large investment already made to help these nations recover and to improve defense capabilities. West believed unproductive people would only undermine Europe’s recovery. He warned that idle persons were “extraordinarily susceptible to propaganda designed to undermine our influence upon and help to these countries,” a reference to the Soviets’ efforts to extend their influence. He



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problem.<sup>45</sup>

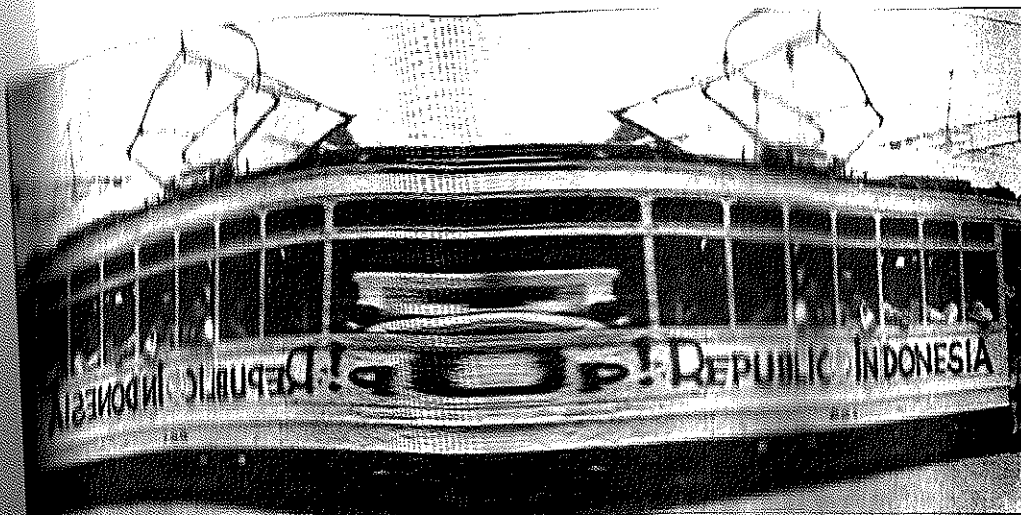
In early 1955  
Prime Minister  
visited the Uni

an interview  
to US News  
& World  
Report. He  
gave readers  
an idea of  
the condi-  
tions faced  
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The United  
Persons Comm



Indonesia

under the cloak of democracy, freedom  
overpopulation. Special Consultant  
West again urged a greater commit-  
ment to the crowded nations. He  
guessed that the idle persons drained  
their respective economies. West  
asserted that unemployed, unhappy  
people were a "political hazard" to the  
ability of democratic governments  
that opening America's doors to  
some of these persons would provide  
political boon of great consequence  
to our friends in western Europe."  
Human's Administrative Assistant  
West for specific proposals to  
as a starting point for discussion.  
West suggested admitting  
1,000,000 people over a five year  
period, 75,000 of them coming from  
Netherlands. The administration  
was willing to make special immigration an issue.  
In 1951 the United States received  
last people admitted under the DP  
Upon their arrival Truman  
minded Americans of the immigrant  
of the United States and  
the DP program for giving  
opportunity to people without hope.  
also lauded the program for  
making friends by lessening the  
crowded conditions in western  
Europe. But Truman warned that the

program's success should not take attention away from the problem of overpopulation that some free nations still faced. He cited the continuing movement of refugees to escape communism as a major reason to remain actively interested in the problem.<sup>45</sup>

In early 1952 another Dutch leader, Prime Minister Dr. Willem Drees, visited the United States and granted an interview

to *US News & World Report*. He gave readers an idea of the conditions faced by the Dutch, comparing the three hundred people per square kilometer



*Netherlands Prime Minister Willem Drees.*

living in the Netherlands to the eighteen in the United States. Drees told of the emigration then taking place to relieve some of the pressure. He praised Canada and Australia for receiving large numbers of Dutch immigrants and alluded to the limitations the quota system placed on emigration to the United States. Drees also mentioned the need for financial aid to reconstruct his country as well as military cooperation to defend it. The picture Drees painted was that of a small nation still struggling to put itself back together nearly seven years after liberation. He did not ask for special legislation to allow more immigration into the United States, but he clearly communicated that greater emigration to many destinations was an important part of the Netherlands' recovery.<sup>46</sup>

The United States' Displaced Persons Commission studied the

overpopulation problem in early 1952. Its report stated that the problem had reached "such magnitude as to present a serious obstacle to the defense, security and economic stability, as well as to the peace of Europe." The report urged the United States to help solve the problem through the absorption of additional immigrants. In outlining the situation in the Netherlands, the commission concluded that the Netherlands' economic outlook was bleak. Further emigration was seen as a way to help find jobs for the jobless. The Dutch government estimated a desirable yearly emigration figure of 60,000 to 65,000 with about two-thirds going to Canada, Australia, and Latin America. This left about 20,000 to 25,000 emigrants each year still in need of some place to settle. The commission supported an emigration program to help western Europe regain stability and to lessen the communists' ability to win over more people there.<sup>47</sup>

By March 1952 Truman, thoroughly convinced of the seriousness of the overpopulation problem, released a statement characterizing the issue as "one of the gravest problems." Truman thought Americans should be interested in the problem because the security of the free world was at stake. He also cited "our long-established humanitarian traditions." Truman asked Congress for legislation to increase immigration from overpopulated western Europe. He reminded Americans that, just as the United States had been strengthened by immigrants in the past, further immigration would be a new source of strength. Truman specifically mentioned the need in the United States for more agricultural workers and noted that the Netherlands had a surplus of farmers. But, as he pointed out, the quotas prohibited any more Dutch immigrants from entering the United States. Truman called the quota

system inadequate to meet emergencies and urged swift action either to revamp the system in order to admit more immigrants or temporarily to allow more to enter in order to help solve this problem. He asked for legislation admitting 300,000 persons over a three-year period from overpopulated areas in western Europe, where conditions had been worsened by an influx of people fleeing communism in eastern Europe. He recommended the admission of 7,500 Dutch per year for three years. Other groups he specifically mentioned included Germans, Greeks, Italians, and religious or political refugees from communism in eastern Europe.<sup>48</sup> Truman intended his statement to place the overpopulation issue before Congress, which at the time was attempting to codify all immigration laws under a single bill.

Queen Juliana's arrival in the United States two weeks after Truman's statement gave the President another opportunity to speak out on the subject of overpopulation in western Europe. During her visit Queen Juliana presented Truman a gift in a public ceremony where he thanked the Queen and warmly pointed out America's similarities to the Netherlands, naming examples of great American leaders of Dutch descent, including Franklin Roosevelt. Truman then politely spoke about his efforts to relieve European population pressures. He first mentioned American support for international efforts and then recalled his March statement to Congress calling for additional immigration from overpopulated areas. Truman reaffirmed his interest in securing legislation that would allow more Dutch families to enter the United States. Queen Juliana called Truman "a great friend of humanity," citing his efforts on behalf of the refugees and overcrowded Europeans.<sup>49</sup> Truman and Queen Juliana

shared their opinions during the visit. Both leaders realized that a stable western Europe would benefit all the world's democracies, increased Dutch emigration adding to that stability. But permitting more Dutch to enter the United States required Congressional action.

The drive to codify all immigration laws had actually begun in 1947, when the Senate approved a resolution authorizing a study. However, at that time the DP issue overshadowed all other immigration issues. The Judiciary Committee finally completed its study in 1950, and its findings became the basis for a bill. The bill, sponsored by Senator Patrick McCarran (Democrat-Nevada), largely maintained the status quo: The quota system remained central to United States immigration policy, and the largest quotas were still assigned to the northern-European countries whose immigrants had settled America in the largest numbers. These countries had less internal pressure than the overpopulated areas which would receive little relief under the bill. The McCarran bill did not reach the Senate floor until early 1951. Meanwhile, other bills had surfaced in the House. The House and Senate Judiciary Committees held joint hearings on the bills later in 1951, during which the quota system remained the main point of contention. Opponents of the quota system soon realized that the system had taken root and therefore redirected their efforts toward making it less discriminatory and more conducive to meeting current international emergencies.<sup>50</sup>

In January 1952 the committees produced a report suggesting a bill very similar to the one sponsored by McCarran. Legislators favoring more liberal policies in order to help overcrowded western Europe were not satisfied. Unable to support McCarran's bill, Senators Herbert

Lehman (Democrat-New York) and Hubert Humphrey (Democrat-Minnesota) introduced a starkly contrasting bill. The Humphrey-Lehman bill kept the national-origins quotas but allowed the large unused quotas, chiefly those of Great Britain and Ireland, to be transferred to other nations so more people could enter from overpopulated areas such as the Netherlands. Under the provisions of the Humphrey-Lehman bill, total yearly immigration could increase by 60,000.<sup>51</sup> The competing bills sent out quite different messages. Whereas the McCarran bill regarded potential immigrants with suspicion and attempted to maintain the American way of life by allowing mainly "compatible" peoples to enter, the Humphrey-Lehman bill attempted to treat everyone alike, regardless of national origin. By allowing more immigration with less discrimination, the liberal bill reflected the attitude that immigration strengthened America and helped make friends throughout the world.

Soon after the Humphrey-Lehman bill was introduced, Truman released his message about overpopulation in western Europe. This message, combined with Queen Juliana's visit, raised consciousness about the overpopulation issue. Overpopulation in Europe became part of the debate on the competing bills then in Congress. Supporters of Humphrey-Lehman believed the Dutch problems further demonstrated their bill's superiority. Its flexible quotas allowed for emergencies, like that of the Netherlands and other parts of western Europe. But McCarran's bill also had supporters—



*Queen Juliana and Harry Truman.*

"The Royal visit started when on April 2 a silver KLM DC-6 came down from the blue sky and landed at Washington's National Airport, where President and Mrs. Truman welcomed the Royal couple heartily. From left to right: Queen Juliana, President Truman and Prince Bernhard."

leaders from twenty-three organizations, including the Patriotic Women of America, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Japanese American Citizens League.<sup>52</sup>

Most legislators supported the McCarran bill. At a time when the Cold War and national-security issues were foremost in the minds of many, the bill seemed to maintain the nation's ethnic balance while protecting against the dangers of communist infiltration. The House approved the bill in late April by a 206 to 68 margin. The Senate began consideration of the bill in mid May. The Truman administration still hoped the McCarran bill could be defeated. Truman's staff sent suggestions for testimony to various departments. The administration advised the State

Department of several points to include. Foremost was emphasis on the security of the United States, which depended on the containment of communism. The thinking was that security throughout the world would become more secure if overpopulation in Europe was relieved and refugees from communism could be resettled, giving hope to the free world in Europe. Liberal immigration then would be an important element in the Cold War. Greater

President admitted that the bill contained some good features, such as the granting of quotas to Asian nations, but, he argued, the good features were "embedded in a mass of legislation which would perpetuate injustices of long standing." Truman called for more discussion on the matter to enable "the good sense of the American people" to come to the forefront. To illustrate the inadequacy of the legislation, he pointed out that special legislation would be necessary

ment requesting 300,000 additional immigrants over a three-year period, which included several thousand from the Netherlands. This, he declared, would "relieve a great deal of the suffering and tension existing in the world today."<sup>54</sup>

Truman's message set up the final showdown in Congress. The best chance to sustain the veto was in the Senate. But advocates of a more liberal immigration policy in that body fell short by only two votes. The House

overrode the veto by a big margin, 278 to 113. In both houses the vote went more along sectional than party lines, southern and western legislators voting to override, northeastern members of both parties voting to sustain the veto.<sup>55</sup> But even after his veto was overridden, Truman was not satisfied to leave the new law alone. On September 4 he established a special Commission on Immigration and Naturalization to study the issue and make recommenda-



*Queen Juliana visiting Calvin College on Franklin Street campus.*

senators supporting the Humphrey-Lehman bill said that they lacked votes. They decided to let the McCarran bill pass and to concentrate on sustaining the anticipated presidential veto.<sup>53</sup> On September 13 Truman vetoed the McCarran bill. In his veto message he acknowledged the need for an immigration bill and explained that the McCarran bill did not meet international needs. The

"to admit any substantial portion of the refugees from communism or the victims of overcrowding in Europe." Truman then suggested that a representative commission made up of outstanding Americans be created to study all aspects of immigration law, and he outlined his hopes for any new legislation. He placed the removal of Asian racial barriers and relief for western Europe's overpopulation at the top of the list of priorities. He reminded Congress of his March state-

tions. He believed the policies covered by the new act were "of major importance to our own security and to the defense of the free world." Truman compared the problem of refugees streaming into overpopulated western Europe to the problem of homelessness after World War II and concluded that the problems were "equally grave and equally heart-rending." The President directed that the commission's study include "the need for authority to meet emergency conditions such as the

present overpopulation of parts of western Europe."<sup>56</sup>

The special commission held fifteen days of hearings in eleven cities and heard from individuals from many walks of life. After hearing all the testimony, the commission concluded that the new act "embodies policies and principles that are unwise and injurious to the nation" and that rest upon hostility, distrust, and discrimination. According to the commission, the law ignored the United States' need both in domestic and foreign affairs, was badly drafted, and appeared unworkable. In short, "It should be reconsidered and revised from beginning to end." Heeding the advice of Truman's March message to deal with overpopulation and other special needs in Europe, the commission called for the special admittance of 300,000 immigrants in a three-year period. This provision would help the Netherlands, a nation that needed to send 25,000 more people abroad per year than existing programs allowed in order to relieve its overpopulation problem, according to the commission.<sup>57</sup>

With only a week left in his Presidency, Truman sent a message to the new 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress regarding the commission's report. He lauded its work and urged "earnest and prompt consideration" by Congress to the commission's findings, which he intended to forward to President-elect Dwight Eisenhower.<sup>58</sup> Less than two months into the Eisenhower administration, Queen Juliana wrote a letter to the new President calling his attention to Europe's overpopulation and refugee problems. The Queen pointed to the lack of economic opportunity in Europe and the inability of free, overpopulated nations such as the Netherlands to absorb additional persons. She asserted that European stability was at stake because people leading unproductive lives could

possibly lose their faith in freedom. The Queen concluded that such people should be settled as soon as possible where they could be productive, and she gladly offered cooperation from the Netherlands. In April, Eisenhower became more involved in the overpopulation issue. He addressed the problem in friendly countries, saying, "It is imperative that we join with the other nations in helping to find a solution to these grave questions." Eisenhower recommended emergency legislation to admit 240,000 immigrants above the quotas over a two-year period.<sup>59</sup>

In July of 1953 a bill was introduced in Congress to admit 214,000 immigrants above the quotas. Unlike previous immigration bills, it passed Congress quickly. The House passed the bill 221 to 185 on July 28, and the

Senate passed it 63 to 30 the following day. Eisenhower signed the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 on August 7. Upon signing the bill, Eisenhower emphasized its humanitarian aspects and the hope it gave to the free nations. The act allowed 17,000 Dutch to enter over a two-year period.<sup>60</sup> The quick enactment of the bill seemingly justified Truman's creation of the special commission. The awareness raised by the commission helped prod legislators into action yet again and pushed Eisenhower to speak out. The new McCarran immigration law still stood, but the United States was again acting to help solve a serious international problem.

From his first harried days at the end of World War II, Truman emerged as a strong leader. His stance on immigration was an example of



*Arrival of Boersma family.*

"Otto Boersma, his wife Marianne, and their 11 children gathered on the deck of the Holland Government Liner Groote Beer after the ship docked at Hoboken, New Jersey. The happy Boersmas have meanwhile settled in Minneapolis where Otto has become an automotive parts specialist. The children, standing from left to right are: Ingrid, 5; Andre, 6; Otto, 7; Maria, 9; Marta, 11; Jos, 14; Annemaria, 12; Frans, 15; Albert, 17; and Marianne, 18. Mrs. Boersma holds 18 months old Evaline."



that. His first tentative statements evolved into strong declarations noticed by both American and other world leaders. Truman remained interested in immigration through all his years in the White House. In that

Cold War environment he did all he could do to keep peace while containing communism. By consistently supporting liberal immigration policies, Truman attempted to make the world more stable and to bring fairness

into American immigration law. His failure to prevent the passage of McCarran's immigration bill should not obscure his otherwise noteworthy record of fashioning solutions to one of the toughest postwar issues.¶

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# A Dutchman Among the Apache

Henry Ippel

President Ulysses S. Grant's Indian Peace Policy brought John P. Clum, the twenty-two-year-old son of Dutch Reformed parents, to the San Carlos (Arizona) Apache Reservation in 1874. The policy was based upon recommendations made to Grant by a group of Quakers who had embarked on a crusade to solve the "Indian problem" in the post-Civil War era in

The President and his advisers hoped that the Bureau of Indian Affairs would become the sole government agency responsible for the Native American tribes and the lands set aside for them. Civilian agents rather than military officers would implement the bureau's policies on the reservations and Christian organizations would be enlisted to assist the bureau in locating

men with high moral standards and enlightened motivations for these assignments. In response, a number of denominations became involved in the recruitment of Indian agents.

The Dutch Reformed denomination (RCA) was given responsibility for the Apache Indians. Church officials contacted Rutgers College, where the name of John P. Clum surfaced. While Clum was a freshman divinity student at Rutgers, his inflammatory rheumatism had flared up, and rather than pursue his studies, he had joined the United States Signal Services as a weatherman in September 1871. He was stationed in the old city of Santa Fe in the

Territory of New Mexico, and there he tended his thermometers, rain gauges, and barometers. Not content with this tedious task, Clum organized a private school and in his spare time taught the children of the town's elite; tuition was three dollars per month per pupil. Territorial Governor Giddings was evidently so impressed with the young man from the East that he asked him to take charge while he himself made a trip to Washington. (In later life, Clum enjoyed identifying himself as a



*John P. Clum as a young man.*

hopes of ending the bloodshed on the western frontier.

The major points of the plan were, first to settle the nomadic tribes on reservations and teach them how to become self-sufficient farmers; second, to introduce the Indians to Christianity and thus elevate them spiritually and subject them to Western civilization; and, third, perhaps a prerequisite to the first two, to reduce the role of the military on the western reservations.

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former governor of New Mexico, because he had slept in the royal bedroom of the palace and had received homage from amiable Hispanos who touched their sombreros and called him *el gobernador*.)

Obviously there were few Rutgers alumni with frontier experience. Clum seemed an ideal candidate for Indian agent and in February 1874 he accepted the bureau's offer.

John P. Clum became a legendary figure in the history of the Southwest. An article in *The Journal of Arizona History* (6.2 [1965]) heralds him as a "trailblazer of civilization." Another article includes him among the "Gentlemen of the Editorial Fraternity: Arizona's Fighting Pioneer Journalists" (*The Journal of Arizona History*, 31.3 [1990]), and still another places him among the "Shrewd, Able, and Dangerous Men: Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed Indian Agents in the Southwest, 1870-1882" (*The Journal of Arizona History*, 26.3 [1985]).\*

The Western History Association has given *Origins* permission to reprint portions of an article by Clum's granddaughter which appeared in *The American West*, 1972 (Vol. 9.1). Marjorie Clum Parker reviews the adventurous life of John P. Clum, perhaps the first Dutch Reformed contact with Native Americans in the Southwest.

## The Inside Story of an Inimitable Westerner

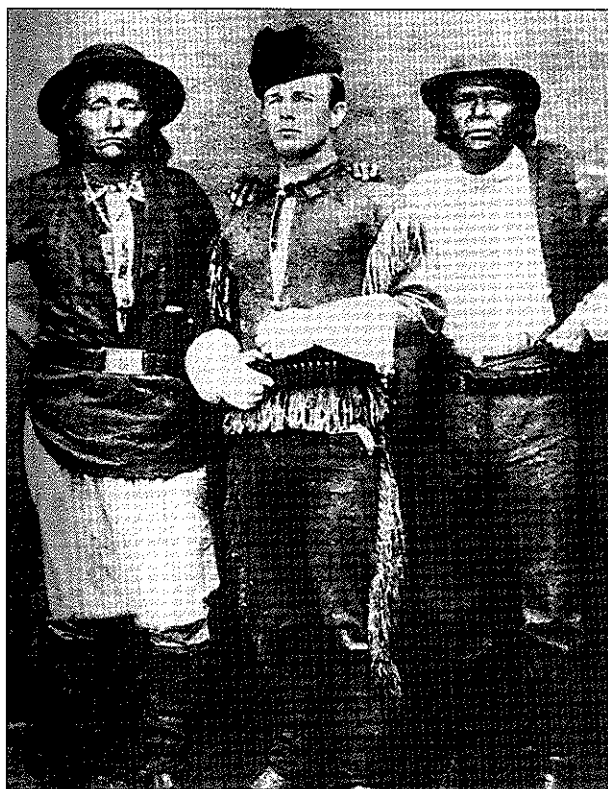
Marjorie Clum Parker

My grandfather is so much in the public domain that he is in comic books. In the gripping finale of one, he rides into the sunset with a US Cavalry officer—a pairing-off that he would sooner have been shot than caught at. In a 1956 "B" movie, *Walk the Proud Land*, and its interminable

hottest silver property in the West, where he was marked for assassination. In some few accounts he is put down as an upstart—a bombast who set himself against the army, public opinion and the early Establishment. Whichever he may have been, I seem to be the last one left to know what else he was.

He was born in 1851, of Dutch stock—a Clum and a Van Deusen—in upstate New York. He was schooled at Hudson River Institute and Rutgers College and at twenty-two was nominated by the Dutch Reformed church to become agent to the Apache on the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona Territory.

On arriving there, he was shocked to discover the War Department was pursuing a policy of steady extermination of the Apache, while the Interior Department acquiesced. He was sickened to meet his first charge, Eskiminzin, chief of the Arivaipas, hobbled in leg-irons at



John Clum with Chatto and Eskiminzin, far right.

television reruns, Grandfather, portrayed by Audie Murphy, leaves us grandchildren unsure as to whether our grandmother was the light-eyed Indian maiden or the other one.

In most southwestern histories John P. Clum appears as an enlightened man, years ahead of his time in his achievements as agent to the fiercely unsubmitive Apache, and later as an outspoken, crusading editor in the

Camp Grant because "he [was] an Apache and the major [didn't] like him."

His derby hat barely doffed, Clum ordered the two companies of US Cavalry on the reservation to keep hands off while he began to rebuild a concept of self-government not unlike tribal law. Apache police brought offenders before an Apache court where, if convicted, they were sen-

\* For other accounts of Clum's career, see Woodworth Clum (John's son), *Apache Agent: The Story of John P. Clum* (1936); Frank C. Lockwood, *The Apache Indians* (1938); Richard J. Perry, *Apache Reservations: Indigenous Peoples and the American State* (1993); *Journal of the West* (34.1 [1995]), "The Historicity of Tony Hillerman's Indian Police" by Paul Knepper and Michael B. Puckett; and Neal B. Carmony, ed., *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights* (1997).

tenced by Apache judges and delivered to Apache guards. Later an Apache territorial militia was formed; it marched four hundred miles with Clum to make the only forcible capture of the murdering Geronimo. Self-sufficiency and full stomachs for the ragtag, redskinned warriors came with his purchases of cattle, sheep, goats, and burros, and with the cultivation of corn and feed grasses. The only good Indians weren't dead—they were making a living in San Carlos. Other bands straggled in to join the original eight hundred in their wickiup villages.

Five thousand Apache—Arivaipas, Rio Verdes, Coyoteritos, Yumas, Pinals, Warm Springs, Chiricahuas—finally were at peace on the reservation in 1877. For the three years of John

hungry for military contracts to feed soldiers and mules.

Protesting hotly and to no avail, only bringing down a spate of invective and ridicule from higher up, John Clum resigned. He relinquished his \$1,600 annual pay and said a painful good-bye to his close friends, Eskiminzin, Sneezer, Goodah Goodah, and Taelclayee. He prophesied to the territorial papers that army occupation of San Carlos would trigger new and bloody fighting. As if compelled to fulfill his prophecy, the army released Geronimo to reservation privileges. He escaped, luring with him to Mexico the disenchanted Victorio, Warm Springs chief, and Nachee, son of Cochise, deceased chief of the Chiricahuas, along with their followers. The new Apache wars went on for



In Nome, Alaska, Clum (far right) with Wyatt Earp and unidentified companion.

Clum's jurisdiction, no renegades had holed up there, no Indians had run off, no cattle had been stolen. Drunken *tuhlepah* parties were down; otherwise spirits were up. Then the Indian Bureau gave in to political pressure and allowed the army to move back to supervise the reservation. A miniscule working democracy of red men was to go down the drain because Arizona merchants were

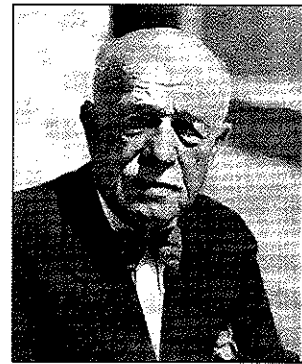
belabored outlaws and rustlers along with politicians. He was a courageous editor and a factual, if sometimes irascible reporter. He was elected mayor of Tombstone and hired Virgil Earp as chief of police. Virgil hired his brother Morgan as deputy. Brother Wyatt already was a deputy US marshal. One Wednesday afternoon the Earps, with Doc Holliday, met the

Clantons and the McLowerys in the nine years, costing five hundred lives and twelve million dollars. Grandfather bought the Tucson "Citizin" and changed it from weekly to daily, the better to belabor Arizona and Washington politicians. He sold it and established the Tombstone Epitaph and

belabored outlaws and rustlers along with politicians. He was a courageous editor and a factual, if sometimes irascible reporter. He was elected mayor of Tombstone and hired Virgil Earp as chief of police. Virgil hired his brother Morgan as deputy. Brother Wyatt already was a deputy US marshal. One Wednesday afternoon the Earps, with Doc Holliday, met the Clantons and the McLowerys in the

OK Corral, and practically everybody on this globe knows the outcome. In twenty seconds thirty-four bullets were shot; two McLowerys and one Clanton were dead; two Earps, Virgil and Morgan, wounded. Grandfather's editorial defense of the Earps' action and his outspoken attacks on the rowdy and lawless element that the Clantons seemed to represent brought retribution. Friends and cohorts of the Clantons—or perhaps they were just anti-Earp partisans—ambushed a stagecoach Clum was riding, and the doughty editor leapt into the darkness and walked half the night to avoid becoming copy for his own obituary column.

He sold the *Epitaph* and began the wandering and writing that continued until his death in 1932. He was a stocky man, about five feet nine inches tall, relaxed, and a good dancer. His face was strong, big-nosed, impassive; his hands, covered with brown freckles, often waved airily about. He always wore detachable stiff collars and



John Clum, 1931, at eighty.

bow ties, usually blue. Bald except for a white fringe, he maintained a trim white moustache over his long upper lip, and his eyes were

bright blue under papery, triangular lids. "It was Apache humor to name me *Nantan-betunnykahyeh*," he said. "It means Boss-with-the-high-forehead. From the time I was twenty, my forehead extended on and on, finally almost to the back of my neck." ❧

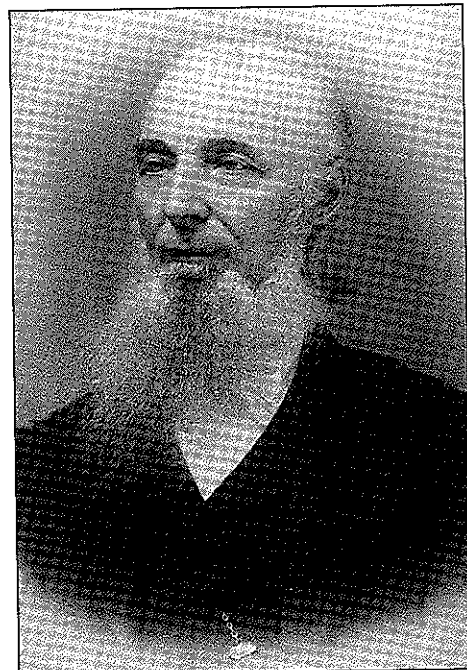


# Lammert Jan Hulst

Cornelis Van Nuis

Fifteen years after the Secession (Afscheiding) of 1834 in the Dutch Reformed Church in the small Frisian town of Birdaard, Lammert Jan Hulst was ordained and installed as minister of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk. The subsequent service by this remarkable man would have a profound and permanent effect on the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Lammert Jan was born to Bernardus Hulst and Maria Heinink on February 10, 1825, in Oudleusen, Overijssel, a farming community. Hulst attended the state-run grade school until age ten, at which point his parents removed him for home instruction. His religious awareness grew steadily under the influence of his older brother Jan. At age sixteen things changed when he took over the shepherding job of his next older brother, Hendrik, who had taken care of the family sheep and another church member's flock of two hundred. Lammert kept sheep for the next four years. As a result his contact with family and church deteriorated and was replaced in part by worldly associates whose negative impact would become much more apparent to him after he left this work and instead "enserfed" himself to a farmer of the Secessionist conviction for his twenty-first year. During that year he underwent conversion back to his original spiritual beliefs. Despite his young age, these changes were not solely based on emotional and mystical experiences but on theological considerations and insights which shed



Rev. Lammert Jan Hulst (1825–1922) in his prime, ca. 1900.

much light on his desire to enter the ministry a year later.

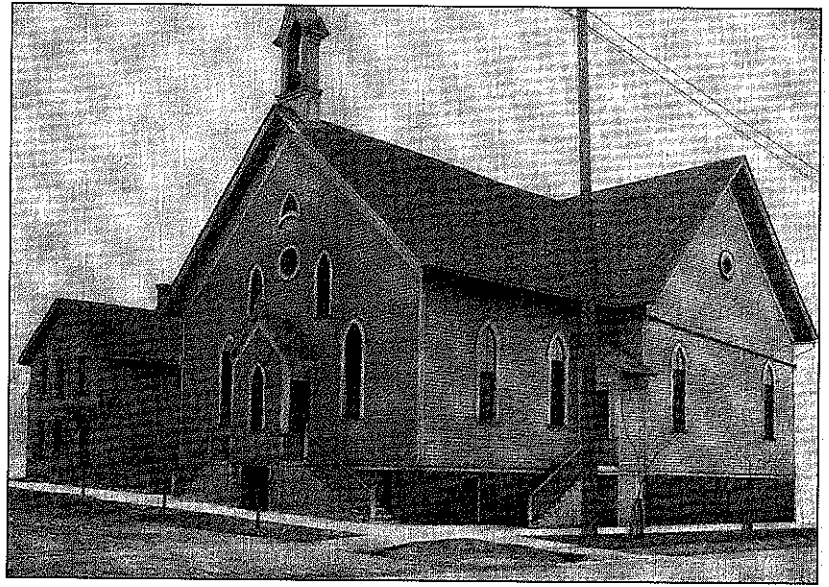
He remembered his actual "calling" to the ministry. It occurred during a sermon by a ministerial student at his parental home in 1847. The call led to theological instruction at the parsonage of the Rev. W.A. Kok in Hoogeveen to prepare for Secessionist ministry. That group had no formal seminary. He received financial support from his oldest brother, Jan. After two years he was thought to be ready for the final exams, which he passed. He received his first call from Birdaard, which he accepted. The need for ministers was great. It also was the generally held belief that the first call received had God's particular blessing, and thus the first call received was also generally accepted.

*Dr. Cornelis Van Nuis was married to Marjorie Lou Ondersma, a great-granddaughter of Lammert Jan Hulst. Marjorie joined her great-grandfather in their heavenly home in November 1989, 140 years after her great-grandfather's ordination. (Abeltje Hendriks Helling begat Margaret on 2-21-1866 in Stadskanaal by Lammert Jan Hulst. Margaret begat Berendina on 12-3-1906 in Grand Rapids by Lieuwé Groeneveld. Berendina begat Marjorie Lou on 10-2-1934 in Grand Rapids by Berend Ondersma.)*

The following year, on April 25, 1850, he married Abeltje Hendriks Hellenga, the oldest of four orphans. Her parents, Hendrik Martens Hellenga and Ijtje Piers de Groot, originally hailed from Rinsumageest, a few miles from Birdaard. Lammert Jan reported that she was from a neighboring town. He did not comment significantly on their relationship. The brief summary of their courtship reads, "*Wij werden het spoedig eens*" ("we were of one accord").

Hulst served Birdaard for six years, then Ferwerd until 1864, and finally Stadskanaal until 1874. During his Birdaard years he realized his inadequate education, and on his own initiative he began to study Latin, later on Greek, and finally Hebrew. He also developed what he termed *preekkoorts* ("preaching fever") as he struggled with feelings of religious inadequacy, and in his sermons he turned away from an emotional and experiential emphasis to a more Christ-centered and covenantal approach. Preaching fever took its physical toll and even raised the suspicion of consumption. This drive continued in Ferwerd, where he wrote over a thousand pages of dogmatics for his own use in addition to his preaching and pastoral duties and his tutoring of several future ministers, including the future Kampen professor W.K. Wielenga. Of particular concern to Hulst was covenant theology, and he resolved to his own satisfaction the relationships between eternal decree and covenant (*infralapsarian* interpretation). In Stadskanaal he regained much of his physical vigor and became more outgoing in the church community. He even assumed the editorship of the biweekly *Stuiver Preken* (*Nickel Sermons*) from 1866-1868.

Despite these years of intense service, including three sermons every Sunday (he would write the next Sunday-morning sermon on Monday.



Coldbrook CRC, first building, 1875-1920.

No ministerial golf!), he and Abeltje had seven surviving children—four daughters and three sons—when they sailed on the *W.A. Scholten* of the Netherlands American Steam Navigation Company in 1874, and arrived in New York on September 9. He had received a call from Danforth, Illinois, where two other Stadskanaal congregants had settled some years earlier.\* However, he felt too restricted in this small Reformed congregation, and, when a call came from the equally small Fourth Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, he gladly accepted. This congregation was born of the church on Bostwick Street and met on Coldbrook Street. It was barely a year old and had only twenty-six families. Hulst's arrival was followed by rapid growth. The following year, 1877, a parsonage was built next to the church and the original structure still stands functioning today as the main component of Schaafsma's Plumbing.

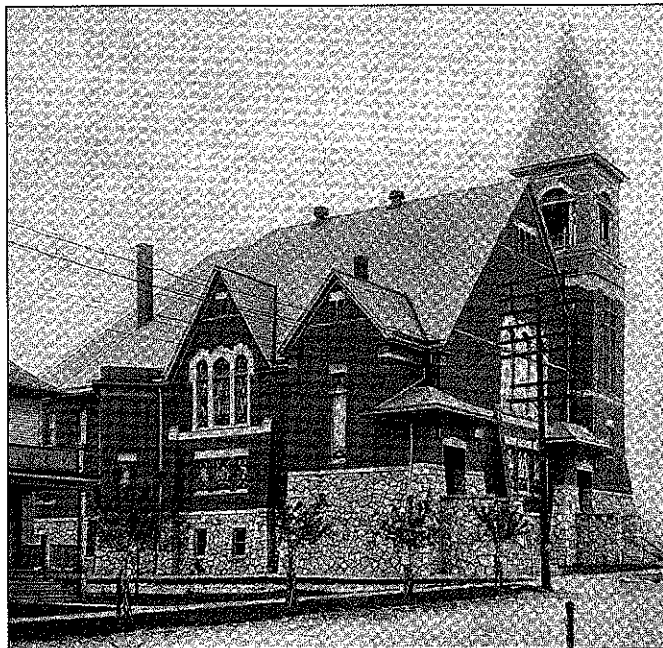
Hulst served Fourth Reformed until 1906. During this time, "Nothing had

greater significance for [his] ministry than the Freemasonry question." This issue began to brew in 1879 in Holland, Michigan, spread throughout the Reformed Church, and eventually reached synod. Several "West" congregations found synod's decision against censure for Freemasons unacceptable and severed relations with the denomination. Coldbrook Church was one of them. With an overwhelming vote of 100 to 14, on September 8, 1881, the congregation voted to leave, and in December 1882 it joined other congregations to form Coldbrook Christian Reformed Church.\*

During his tenure at Coldbrook Hulst made numerous other contributions to his beloved church, from the more mundane acquisition of an organ for \$400 to the more lofty presiding at synod in 1884 and 1890, serving as one of the curators of the new Theological School and functioning on its

\*His younger brother Frederikus had accepted a call to the Central Avenue church in Holland, Michigan, in 1868, a fact that did play a role in his desire to emigrate.

\*The Freemason issue was also an issue in the Netherlands. The Secessionists there took the anti-Mason stance. As Henry Beets would point out later, this had a tremendous impact on future Secessionist immigrants, who, upon arrival in the US, preferred to join the CRC rather than the RCA.



Coldbrook's new sanctuary built in 1910.

board and as examiner year after year, and editing *De Wachter* from 1884 to 1888. He also wrote extensively on such issues as supra- and infralapsarianism and published sundry pamphlets and sermons as well as several catechisms.

In 1888 he played a vital role in opening a Christian school in the basement of the Coldbrook Church. After the initial summer of classes, Lieuwe Groeneveld was hired as principal as well as teacher. By 1891 a bigger building was built on Franklin Street. In 1900 Groeneveld, whose wife had died, married Grietje, the youngest daughter of Hulst.

Despite all these accomplishments, Henry Beets, in a memorial editorial at the time of Hulst's death in the August 31, 1922, *Banner*, felt obliged to point out some deficiencies as well. In particular he was critical of Hulst's opposition to any Americanization (including the use of English in the churches), his theological rigidity on the supra-infra question, his intolerance during ministerial candidates' examinations, and his opposition to Dr. Vos, which resulted in Vos's

departure from the Theological School.

One gets the strong feeling that, as Hulst perceived it, purity of doctrine was the penultimate issue. Interestingly, after Vos's departure Hulst himself taught for a year at the Theological School. One can well imagine what he taught. This teaching was in addition to his three sermons each Sunday and all his other obligations.

In 1893 he had what he called "cholera morbeus," which must have been severe

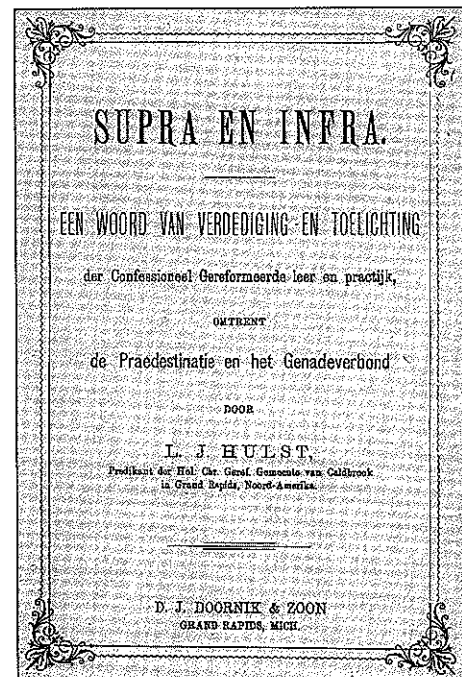
enough to make his wife worry about his imminent death. He saw this as the cause of the stroke she suffered shortly thereafter, which left her impaired with *verlamming* ("paralysis") until she died fourteen years later, in 1907. This tragic event was recorded in his autobiography with barely any emotion.

Hulst's fiftieth-anniversary sermon was preached in 1899 and subsequently published. In it he reviewed his life in detail, taking as his text Amos 7:14-15: "I am no prophet nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my children Israel.'" This was the overriding and all-consuming purpose in his life. Toward the end of the sermon he "must speak a word of gratitude." He thanked his older brother Jan "for the help he gave me in caring for me as a father," three of his mentors, his congregation at Coldbrook, the Christian school teachers, and numerous organizations in his church. There was no word of thanks to his wife. All this was followed by a defense of catechism and condemnation of "the Sunday

school." Biblical doctrine should be the standard, according to Hulst.

Other more practical issues arose over time. The selling and renting of church pews appeared to have been introduced from the Netherlands. It generated up to \$600 annually at Coldbrook. Nevertheless, maybe because of more egalitarian thinking, it was eliminated in 1903. Also, in 1906 it was decided to turn over school governance to a parental board. Church supervision of the board assured orthodoxy.

Under Hulst, church growth had been remarkable—from the initial 26 families to 207 in 1905. Maybe this was



Pamphlet discussing the supra- and infralapsarian interpretations of predestination or election.

one reason he accepted the call from Eastmanville the following year, as he entered his ninth decade of life. He served the small Eastmanville congregation for the next four years, but then he had to request emeritus status because of *rheumatiek*. Two years later, however, in 1912, he had improved enough to preach again—twice and sometimes three times per Sunday! (Could he

have been having an episode of polymyalgia rheumatica?) When his *Drie en Zestig Jaren Prediker* appeared in 1913, it received the expected praise and was taken note of in the Netherlands in a prepublication review by *De Spiegel*, which published his portrait on the cover and reviewed his life on page one.

But Hulst was still not finished. He continued to contribute to the *Vragenbus* (Questionbox) in *De Wachter* until finally on May 28, 1919, he asked to be relieved. "*Ik kan het niet meer*" ("I am no longer able"), he said. He saw himself as dying. He stayed at his daughter Maria's (Mrs. P. Muller) farm in Nunica until August 21, 1922, when he died at the age of ninety-seven and a half years. According to his pupil and friend Henry Beets, he died of pneumonia. According to Beets, he also had suffered from diabetes for the last two or three decades. Hulst's son, Henry Hulst, MD, who had diabetes himself and was one of the first to use insulin, reportedly guided his father's care of "this dread disease."

There is no question about the unique life and service of this devout Christian, whose primary purpose in life was to serve his Lord unconditionally.

Among his sermon outlines is one

based on Deuteronomy 32:39: "*Jehovah alleen God en Opperregeerder der Wereld*" ("Jehovah, God alone and supreme Ruler of the world"). Hulst lived this theme. It ruled his entire life. §



Rev. Hulst near the end of his life, ca. 1920.

# As I Remember It

Art Van Groningen

World war was raging in Europe by 1940. The United States was not involved yet, but on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked American ships in Pearl Harbor, and the US was plunged into the war. A few days later war was declared with both Japan and Germany, and subsequently men were drafted to serve in the armed forces. Men from 18 to 35 years were eligible to be called. Older men were called up first. I was only 18 years old at the time, and I was deferred for a while because farm men were needed to help raise food, but by late 1943 I was called up and told to report to Sacramento for a physical examination. After passing all the tests, I was told I would be in the Navy, but when I expressed a preference for the Army, my wish was honored. A friend of mine, John Schaapman, was called up and inducted the same day. A couple

of weeks later we both left from Manteca on a bus for Monterey, California, to begin our Army duty. What a change that was, leaving home and a girlfriend for a life in the Army.

## Army Duty

Leaving a few days after Christmas, we arrived that evening at the Army camp, Presidio of Monterey. At this camp all the new recruits received their Army clothes. Then, after taking a battery of tests, they were sent to various Army camps around the country for training. My friend and I were both sent to Camp Barkley in Texas for general training. We left for Texas on a troop train in early evening. Our first stop was Barstow, California, where we all got off the train and had breakfast in the train station. Traveling to Texas was a slow affair. We had bunks to sleep on and



The Van Groningen family in 1935.

Art Van Groningen is a WWII veteran and retired farmer in Ripon, CA



the train had a kitchen, so we ate on board. Finally, after four days, we arrived in Abilene. It was cold and just beginning to snow.

From the train station we were taken by truck to our new training camp. We had no more than gotten off the truck when we found out how nasty our company trainers could be. We were immediately chewed out for at least half an hour for no apparent reason. That evening it started to snow again, and we had a real blizzard. It snowed for several days and got really cold. The next two weeks of weather were the worst I've ever experienced in my life. The newspapers said it was the coldest weather in fifty-two years, and in the panhandle of Texas cattle were dying like flies.

Our company was housed in twelve-man huts that were poorly built. Each hut had two potbelly stoves for heat. Each man in the hut took his turn at night keeping coal in the stove. Even with the stoves it was still freezing cold, and we had to put all our Army clothes on top of the blankets to keep warm. After a couple of weeks of training in this cold weather, half of the men ended up in the hospital. My friend and I both came down with bad colds, and we, too, were sent to the hospital. I stayed for several days and then returned to the training camp. My friend stayed in the hospital for two weeks to recover. If a person was out of training more than a week, he was not allowed to return to



*Art Van Groningen, early in his military service.*

the same company. So the two of us were no longer in the same company, but we were still able to see each other on weekends.

Training was bad. We had to drill in the snow, go on marches, and spend a lot of time outdoors. Not being dressed for this kind of weather, I suffered from cold feet. Most of the time my legs felt numb to my knees. Part of our training was to go through the infiltration course, crawling on our stomachs for a hundred yards with machine guns firing over our heads. If you didn't stay low, you could be hit with machine-gun fire. After doing the course, we were covered with mud and looked like hogs. We also had to go on night hikes that consisted of walking single file along country roads outside of camp. We would walk part of the time and then run for a period of time. Every week the day and night hikes were lengthened. After a number of weeks we were up to twenty miles.

Food at this training camp was bad too, and we ate everything out of a bowl. One particular time I will never forget. Our meal consisted of watery mashed potatoes, peas, a slice of bread on top of the food, and a scoop of Jell-O. Before long everything ran together, and it was like eating a bowl of soup. The training and the bad food caused everyone to lose a lot of weight.

After six weeks of this type of training, if a soldier would qualify, he could be picked to go to baker, clerk, chauffeur, or mechanic school. I was fortunate enough to be picked to go to chauffeur school. Army life really improved after I left the training camp area for another part of the camp. There we lived in nice barracks and had a PX. It was called King's Row. There I attended classes and had to do convoy driving and learned how to maintain a vehicle. The Army camp had a large motor pool made up of all kinds of vehicles which were used for different purposes. Part of our training

on certain days was to be available to drive these vehicles if they were needed somewhere. This was good duty, and I enjoyed it.



*Wilna Brandt.*

After the first six weeks we were allowed a pass to go to the nearest city, Abilene. On a number of Sunday mornings my friend John and I went to a church service at a Baptist church in Abilene. After the service the GIs would be served lunch in the large social hall, and they could also spend the afternoon reading or writing letters. In early evening we would leave for the Presbyterian church a few blocks away. There, after a short service, food was also available. These Sundays always turned out to be nice days away from camp.

There were not many enjoyable things to do in camp. Once a week a new movie would be shown in the evening, and if nothing else was scheduled, we were permitted to go. A number of times, for a five-cent ticket we could ride the camp bus all the way around camp. This took about an hour since Camp Barkley, which housed over 100,000 men, was spread over a large area.

After sixteen weeks, when training was completed, I was ready for overseas duty. In twenty-one days I was to report to Camp Beale near Marysville, California, about 120 miles from Ripon, and I was happy to be sent there.

Leaving Abilene, Texas, a half dozen other GIs and I boarded a

passenger train only to find there were no seats available. The train was fully loaded with civilians. So that evening we had to lie down on the floor to get some sleep. The next day some passengers got off, so we finally got seats. We arrived in Los Angeles the next evening, just before dark. Since there was no train service to Ripon, I decided to hitchhike. Everyone supported the war effort and was helpful to servicemen. All I had to do was get on the road and thumb, and I got a ride in a short time.

Furlough time was a pleasant two weeks. During that time my girlfriend and I decided to get married after I returned home from Army duty, which we both knew would be a couple of years.

When furlough time was up, I had to report to Camp Beale. From this camp soldiers who had finished their training were sent anywhere in the world they were needed. For the most part, GIs were sent to fill up units that had lost men and needed replacements. My time at Camp Beale lasted for thirteen weeks before I was shipped out. I was fortunate to be able to go home on a pass every weekend. Normally we were allowed a pass every other week, but since I was in good with the person giving out passes, I got one every week in exchange for gas ration stamps I had, which were hard to get. I hitchhiked for the first couple of weeks and met some interesting people along the way. One particular Saturday morning I was picked up by some black folks. I found myself sitting in the back seat of their old car with a large black lady. They were jolly people. This must have been a sight, me squished in the middle of all these folk. After several weeks I started taking my car to camp, having made arrangements for someone to take it back home if I was shipped out in a hurry.

At Camp Beale there were a large

number of captured German soldiers. They lived in an enclosed area in the middle of the camp. These were troops that had been captured in the Africa Campaign. These soldiers did odd jobs around camp, and in the evening they always had a soccer game going. They must have had sides because everybody was out watching the game and cheering. They always seemed to be enjoying themselves. They lived like kings. I was envious of them because the war was over for them and I still did not know what the war held for me.

After thirteen weeks at Camp Beale I was in a large number of men who were shipped to New Guinea. From Camp Beale we were bussed to Camp Stoneman, near Pittsburg, California. After being there for a few days, we were loaded on a truck and brought to a pier in San Francisco. This pier was on the north side of the Bay Bridge, almost directly under the bridge.

We were loaded onto a large troop transport called the *USS General John Pope*. From Saturday noon until Monday morning troops were being loaded. At seven o'clock on Monday morning a tugboat pulled us from the pier into the bay. Slowly on we went out of the bay, under the Golden Gate Bridge, and into the open sea. Standing in back of the ship, I had a sinking feeling as I saw the bridge and land disappear. I knew that Japanese submarines were always a danger outside of US ports. I always had the feeling that I would return someday, though, and I didn't expect my life to end on some Pacific island.

With thousands of men aboard, we could be fed only twice a day. We spent many hours in the chow line, which would circle all the way around the ship. The food was not the best. We always had beans for breakfast along with a soupy sausage mixture served over toast. (The GIs had their own name for this delicacy.)



*Wilna and Art at the time they became engaged while he was in early training.*

Because we had to cross the equator, we were in for very hot weather. During the day we had to stay on deck, so after breakfast we all started to look for a spot to sit for the day. If you were lucky, you could find a shady spot, maybe under a lifeboat. Late afternoon was again chow time, and before sundown we were all forced to go below deck. We slept on canvas bunks or hammocks that were in rows, four bunks on top of each other. The heat was almost unbearable at night. We perspired so much that it was not uncommon for sweat to drip through the canvas above onto the person below. Since there were no air conditioners, the hold we stayed in always smelled bad, so in the morning we were glad to be

allowed to go up on top deck. Because we had only two meals a day, we were always hungry, and there was no chance to buy any food aboard ship.

Finally we reached Milne Bay, a port on the tip of New Guinea nearest to Australia, where some of the troops disembarked. Next we went to Oro Bay up the coast for the final stop. There we were taken to a camp in a jungle clearing which was to be home for a number of months. This camp was a holding area for Army replacements which would be sent out to various units as needed. As it turned out, the Army was short of infantry replacements, so 1,600 of us were told to "forget what you were trained for because now you will be in the infantry." For twelve weeks we were retrained into infantry soldiers.

New Guinea is a tropical island, hot and humid. It rained a lot during the night, which made for very humid days. This camp had no amenities. We lived in tents and had Australian rations. For shower water for our tent we dug a hole to reach the water table, which was around six feet down. With a bucket and a rope we hauled water up into a used fuel tank. A tin cup with holes in it became our showerhead. We cooked our clothes clean in five-gallon cases over an open fire. Since it was so hot and humid, we had to take salt pills every day to help retain body fluids. We also took Atabrine pills every day to combat malaria. These pills tasted terrible, and they made your skin turn yellow after several weeks. We could always tell how long a soldier had been stationed in the Pacific by how yellow his skin had become.

The training period for the infantry included two weeks in the jungle. We called this time the second battle of Buna. A few months before, the Americans had battled the Japanese at Buna, and there were even some

remains of bodies to be found. In these two weeks we were also on Australian rations: three cans of stew and several packs of crackers per day for each GI. After a few days, no one had the stomach to eat the stew. We settled for coconuts instead. For drinking water and water for coffee we dug a shallow hole and let our canteens slowly fill with the water that seeped into the hole. We purified the water by putting a Halazone tablet in it.

After twelve weeks of training, we GIs were sent out to infantry units, but only 1,200 of the 1,600 men were needed for this purpose. I was one of the extra men. All the men with names near the end of the alphabet were left behind. After several days five of us were told we would be sent to a medical unit at Sansapor, hundreds of miles up the New Guinea coast. We left on an LCI, a small landing craft that held around a hundred men. Keeping close to the shore the whole distance, we traveled for five days to reach Hollandia, where we were loaded on an LST, a ship used for hauling Army equipment.

From there we went on to Sansapor. After arriving there, we were taken to our new unit, the 608<sup>th</sup> Medical Clearing Company. The 608<sup>th</sup> was a medical unit attached to the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. The company was made up of ninety-eight men—in addition to five doctors and two dentists. The function of this unit was to accompany the infantry in combat and give first aid to the injured, after which they would be sent back to a field hospital. When I arrived at the 608<sup>th</sup>, the unit was preparing to take part in the invasion of Luzon, an island of the Philippines.

After several days we were loaded on a troop ship which was to be part of the invasion fleet. The first night aboard ship we experienced our first Japanese air raid—without much damage. The next day we joined a

large convoy made up of hundreds of ships divided into three groups. The groups were spaced a good distance from each other, all of them in orderly rows. Our convoy was in the middle with one group several miles ahead and another several miles behind. A large number of Navy ships surrounded us to protect us from Japanese submarines.

Air raids by the Japanese were common every day for the seven days it took us to get to Luzon. The convoy ahead of us caught most of the Japanese fire since they were closer to the Japanese air bases in the Philippines. Whenever an air raid began, the general alarm would sound, and all troops aboard had to go below deck for safety. Consequently, we could never witness an air raid. One morning, however, they must have forgotten to sound the general alarm. Coming from below deck after breakfast, we could see puffs of smoke off to our right, and I realized that an air raid was taking place. All the Navy ships surrounding us were firing at the plane. Seconds later I noticed a Japanese plane on fire and trying to make its way to a large US battleship so it could crash into it. Fortunately the plane fell short and crashed into the ocean. About this time the alarm went off, and we were told to go below deck. As we were going down the steps of the first deck, the troop ships opened fire at a Japanese plane coming up from the rear. The plane missed our ship but crashed into the ship ahead of us in the convoy, starting a fire in the upper part of the ship. That afternoon I witnessed the watery burial of thirty-two bodies from the *Storm King*.

We spent Christmas 1944 slowly making our way to the Philippines. Here, too, it was too hot to sleep below deck, but now we were allowed to sleep on deck at night. With several blankets on the steel deck I was able to

sleep fairly well. On the trip to Luzon there was nothing to do but read and play cards. This being the Christmas season, the PA system played Christmas carols and many other songs of the season. In the middle of the tropics Bing Crosby sang "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." I'm sure everyone aboard ship would indeed have been happy to see a white Christmas.

We were always well informed about the war going on in Europe. It was really disheartening to hear at that time that the German army had broken through and driven the Allied armies back in France and Belgium. We were hoping for a quick victory in Europe so those armies could come over to the Pacific area and help us win the war with Japan. Several days before our landing date on Luzon we were told that we would be landing on January 9 in the Lingayan Gulf, a large shallow bay.

The island of Luzon is the largest Philippine island; Manila is its capital. The evening before the landing was to take place, our large armada went past the inlet of the bay before dark. The Japanese had been prepared for us there, but we hoped to fool them by passing the inlet and leaving the area to make the Japanese think we were not going to make our landing there. During the night the convoy turned around and entered the gulf before daybreak. I was awakened by the noise of the bombardment of the beach. From the top deck I witnessed the shelling that was taking place. It went on for several hours in order to soften up the Japanese positions. After the shelling of the beach the troops began landing.

The landing was done in waves of landing craft going in at one time, spread out so they would all reach the beach at the same time. As

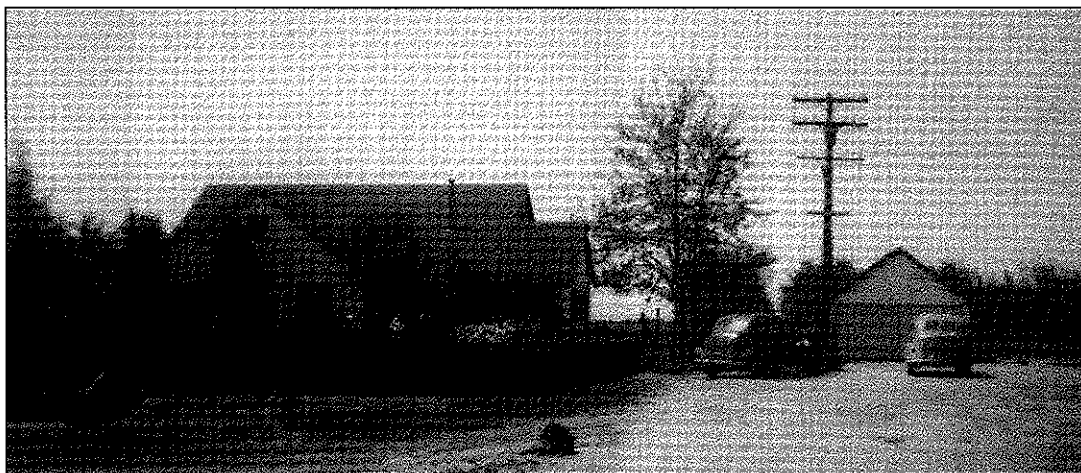
soon as the troops were unloaded, the landing craft would go back for another load of infantrymen. The 608<sup>th</sup> went in on the thirteenth wave, several hours after the landing had begun. We climbed down rope ladders to get from the troop ship into the landing craft. For the last few hundred yards near the beach the water was very shallow, and the landing craft would be grounded before it reached the beach, so the soldiers had to wade for hundreds of yards to reach the shore. It was a treacherous stretch because we could not see the large craters left by shells that had fallen short of land, and men would suddenly sink in over their heads. I remember helping one fellow get back to shallow water by using my gun for him to grab on to. With the heavy packs and other equipment we carried as we went ashore, it was not easy to get out of these craters by oneself.

The next morning, after getting all our equipment, including trucks, and medical supplies, off the ships, we were told to head for an inland town. We walked across rice paddies to a road that would take us to the town of Rosales, where we were to set up and be ready to treat the wounded. Since there was no opposition where we landed, we were able to go at least ten miles inland on the second day. Walking single file down the road, we

entered our first town. The townspeople were so happy to see us that they were clapping their hands and singing "God Bless America." That was a really nice welcome for us. By nightfall we had not yet reached our destination, so we stopped along the road and dug in for the night. My foxhole for the night was close to some farm buildings that housed cattle and chickens. I woke up the next morning to a sound that reminded me of home: a rooster crowing.

We settled in a schoolhouse, where we set up the equipment and made ready to receive the wounded. It was not long before a number of soldiers arrived who had been badly burned when their tanks were shot up and destroyed. The badly burned were completely bandaged, from head to foot, so that they looked like mummies. It was not unusual for us to have men die before they were shipped out to a field hospital. One particular morning there were a number of GIs who did not make it through the night. They were wrapped in blankets and made ready to be taken away. I clearly remember looking at their nametags. One fellow's name was Lovejoy. I will never forget his name.

Being a new replacement in the 608<sup>th</sup>, I did not have a particular job. (Replacements entering a new unit are always on the bottom of the totem



*The Van Groningen farm on Jack Tone Road in 1942.*

pole.) All the good jobs were already taken, and a person could not be promoted unless a position opened up. That happened only when someone was killed, left for home, or goofed up. I did odd jobs until a truck driver goofed up and I got his job. Later on I was promoted to motor sergeant when the previous sergeant left for home. At first I did ward duty, staying in the room with the wounded and helping out as needed.

The school building was large enough that we also slept in the building. Our food was provided by the field kitchen across the street from the schoolhouse. After every meal the Filipinos would raid the garbage cans for the food that was left over from our mess kits. They would come with gallon cans and fill them to take home.

As our infantry kept advancing we also moved along with them. After a period of time we left Rosales and headed down the main road to Manila. There we set up again, this time close to a river. Here my job changed again: I had guard duty every night, guarding our supply tent. The reason for guarding the supply tent was that pockets of Japanese had been bypassed by our advancing troops, and these Japanese soldiers were so desperate for food that they would try to sneak in to get some.

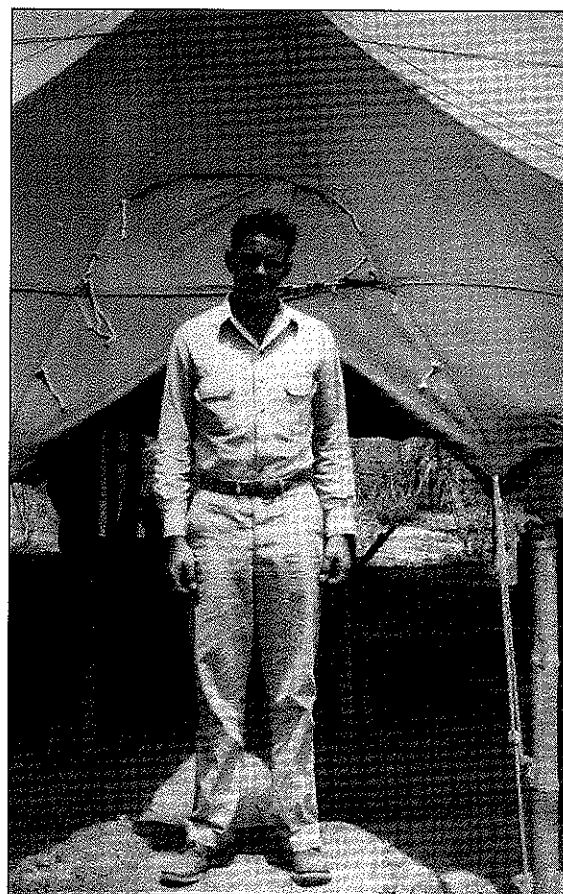
The Japanese soldiers that we captured had been left behind by the Japanese for various reasons. They were no longer of any use to the Japanese. The ones that we captured were either badly wounded or sick and malnourished. They were all in terrible condition. It was not uncommon for many to die each day. Every morning the corpses were loaded on a small truck and hauled away. Our doctors would treat the Japanese prisoners as well as they could. I remember seeing one prisoner with a number of shrapnel wounds on his back that had not ever been treated.

These wounds were filled with maggots that had to be picked out. The worst case I ever saw, though, was a prisoner who had had his right arm badly shot up. It was bandaged, but gangrene had set in, and our doctors decided to amputate. In an open, make-shift operating room under a tree, his arm was removed. I witnessed the whole operation, which was done without any drugs of any kind. When the operation was finished, even after all the pain he had endured, he tried to thank the doctors by nodding his head in a gesture of approval.

Our prison compound was large enough to contain a number of large ward tents for the prisoners. The stockade had two gun towers, opposite each other, each one guarding the runways between the two fences that surrounded the compound. No one was allowed to get into this runway between the two fences. One Japanese soldier never made it out alive because a number of times he tried to crawl under the fence, but he was always forced back into the compound. One evening about dark a machine gun in a tower opened fire a number of times and put an end to his attempts. I do not know of any other Japanese soldier that was killed for trying to escape.

Our unit was set up along a country road, as were many other units. For the most part we acted as a hospital for seriously sick men and for those that went on sick call for minor problems. Many of us caught one kind of sickness or another. I also got really sick and was sick for at least ten days. I never knew what the problem was.

There was not much work for us to do at this time. We spent several



*Van Groningen in front of his tent in the Philippines, April 1945.*

months here, and I had a variety of different jobs. We lived in tents and slept on cots. Filipino men were hired to build a mess hall, a kitchen, and a chapel—all made out of bamboo. Our laundry was done by two young Filipino sisters—Concepcion and Maria. They would come to our tent a couple of times a week to pick up our clothes. They took them home and washed and ironed them. They did a really good job, and we paid them with money, soap, or chocolate candy. These women could talk English, as most Filipinos could.

We had plenty of time for recreation, and we played basketball against other units in the area. I was the second tallest in our unit, and I played center on our team. We also spent a lot of time playing volleyball and cards, and occasionally we watched a movie. It was a special treat to be entertained



by the USO troops when they came into our area.

Filipino men love the sport of cockfighting, and every afternoon they had contests in a town close by. Betting on a certain bird to win by killing its opponent was great sport for the local men. Before long some GIs also got involved in this sport and had their own roosters which they kept tied to their cots. Before long, orders came down from headquarters against cockfighting and owning a rooster.

The chapel on the compound was used by Catholics and Protestants alike. Servicemen from other units nearby also came to our Sunday services. One Sunday we had a visiting chaplain. From his style and name I thought it was possible that he was Christian Reformed. After the service I spoke to him and found that his name was Schoolland and it was his first Sunday in the Philippines. After I mentioned what my name was, he asked if I was from Ripon. He then went on to say that the last Sunday he was in the States he had visited our church and after the service had spoken to my mom—and now he was speaking with me, the first GI he had met in the Philippines. What a coincidence!

When the war in Europe came to an end in July of 1945, we were preparing for the invasion of Japan, which was scheduled to begin in early September. Our unit was to land on the first day of the invasion. This was something we were not too eager about. We were told that the Japanese would fight to the last man and that we could expect large losses in men and material. Since the weather was colder in Japan than in the Philippines, we had already been issued heavy clothing to replace our summer clothes.

In early August we heard that the first atomic bomb had been dropped on a Japanese city. We had never

heard about the atomic bomb before and were more than surprised to hear that a whole city could be destroyed with one bomb. After the bomb was dropped, we started hearing news that Japan might be ready to surrender.

At about this time I received a letter from the Young Calvinist Federation announcing a meeting in Manila for all the CRC servicemen. All the CRC servicemen were contacted on the island of Luzon. I received permission to go from the company commander. A couple of days before I was ready to leave another atomic bomb was dropped, and again a whole city was destroyed.

Leaving on a Friday evening, I headed for John Swier's company, which was close to Clark Air Force Base. I had found John a couple of months before and had planned to stop by to see him that evening. It was raining hard when I left with someone who was driving in that direction. When we arrived in the town of Tarlack, we could hear a lot of guns being fired and asked what was going on. We were told that the Japanese had decided to surrender and that the war was over. The atomic bomb on Nagasaki had convinced them that they had had enough. Everyone was celebrating and very happy. From Tarlack I still had several miles to go to reach John's company. Arriving at his area, I found it deserted. They had packed up and moved several days before. I went to a nearby company and was asked to stay there overnight. The next morning I headed for Manila and that evening stayed in a camp that was used for servicemen who had a few days off and needed a bed and some chow. The next morning being Sunday, I located the church where the Young Calvinist meeting was to be held. There I met a number of men from the Ripon area. All told, there were around 140 men in the group. We spent a nice day visiting, having a

church service, and taking pictures of the whole group.

On Monday morning, after the meeting in Manila, I headed back to my unit, where I heard the 608<sup>th</sup> was to pack up and get ready to leave for Subic Bay. We were to go to Japan as part of the occupation troops. All the units that were to have taken part in the invasion of Japan on the first day were ordered to go first.

In the early morning of September 2, 1945, the ships entered Tokyo Bay in single file and dropped anchor. Even a mile from shore it was possible to see all the destruction that had been done to Yokohama by the air raids. The city looked dead and deserted. There was no activity. At around ten o'clock that same morning the Air Force put on a show of strength with squadron after squadron of fighter planes and bombers flying over the bay. At eleven o'clock the peace ceremony began on the battleship *Missouri*. We could hear the ceremony over the PA system on board our ship.

At noon the ceremony was over, and we were ready to go ashore. We unloaded on the docks of Yokohama. It took several hours to get our trucks and other equipment off the ship. It was late afternoon when we received orders to go inland about fifteen miles and stay for the time being. At that time the US Army was uncertain what the Japanese might do, so all the troops fanned out to form a perimeter around Yokohama. There was not a person to be seen as we traveled throughout the city. The whole city was devastated from the fire bombing it had taken. On reaching the outskirts of the city, we headed down the main road to Atsugi Airfield, where we saw our first Japanese person. This fellow was facing the traffic, holding his bike, and saluting every truck as it went by.

We stayed for a number of days at a compound that the Japanese soldiers



*Setting up a ward tent in the Philippines, 1945.*

had formerly used. We all got a heavy dose of lice from the straw mats we slept on at night, and we all had to get deloused with DDT—blankets, equipment, and all. Several days later we had orders to pack up and return to Yokohama, where we were to go on dock detail. Our job there was to help unload ships that carried supplies for the US Army. We worked down in the hold, filling large nets which were lifted out of the hold with a large crane. We worked eight-hour shifts with twenty-four hours off between. This meant I worked during the night sometimes. At this time we were camped in a baseball park close to the docks and we slept on cots beneath the cement bleachers so we could stay dry when it rained.

While we were doing our dock detail for several weeks, the city of Yokohama slowly began coming back to life. Japanese civilians slowly filtered back into the city from the surrounding hills. Cleaning the streets was the first job to be done. The US Army hired Japanese labor to do it. Before long the streetcars began to run again, which gave us an opportunity to ride and see the city. But soon we

received orders not to ride the streetcars. They were for the Japanese, not for GI sightseers.

After several weeks we were ordered to pack up and move again to Atsugi Airfield. There we settled down in a one-story hospital. We slept in two-man rooms with steam radiators for heat, which we much appreciated since by now the weather was cold. We stayed in this building for over a year.

The 608<sup>th</sup>'s function at Atsugi was to treat war prisoners that were released. The first to arrive were some Dutch soldiers that had been captured in Indonesia and taken to Japan. These men were in bad shape because of lack of food. I could converse with them because I know the Dutch language and can speak it fairly well. The American soldiers released from Japanese prisons were also a pitiful sight. Their clothes were no more than rags. One function of the 608<sup>th</sup> was to help airlift certain GIs back to the States. These men had gone berserk for some reason. They would be strapped down on litters and put on planes to go back to the US.

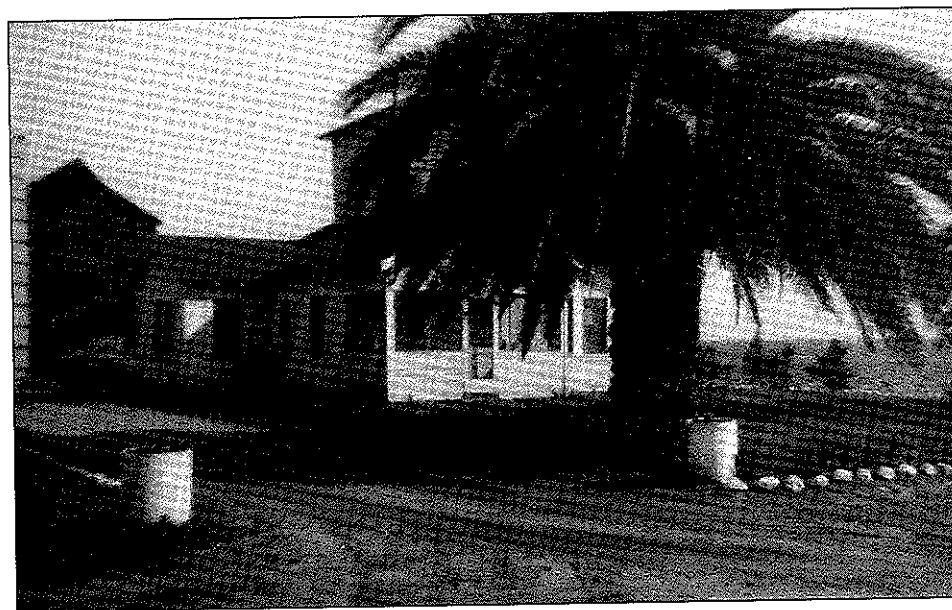
After being in Japan for a short

time, I finally got in the motor pool and became a truck driver. This was good duty because I could go out of camp and see the country while hauling supplies. Army life in Japan was a great improvement over what I had seen earlier. Food was better, and we had a decent place to live indoors. After being a truck driver for a short period of time, I was promoted to motor sergeant and was in charge of fourteen vehicles, their drivers, and two mechanics. I had my own personal jeep to get around in.

I found the Japanese to be very polite and easy to get along with. The Japanese soldiers were well-trained and very dedicated to their country. They would fight a battle to the last man. Very few Japanese prisoners were ever taken. They had really been brainwashed into loyalty by their army officers.

My roommate in Japan was a fellow named Bill Ross, who was a first sergeant and a very good athlete. He had attended Ohio University before the war and had played basketball there. We became very good friends. Fifty-two years later I had the pleasure of seeing him again on a trip to Ohio.

One of the most interesting experiences I had in the service occurred while I was with Bill. One Sunday he asked me to go with him to MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo. He had received a letter from a friend stationed in MacArthur's headquarters, and he wished to visit this friend. He suggested I take my jeep and drive him over to Tokyo. So on Sunday afternoon we headed out on our thirty-five- to forty-five-mile trip. We drove through the suburbs of Yokohama and Tokyo, which join each other. All we could see was total destruction. Mile after mile there was nothing left. Everything was burned out. We found MacArthur's headquarters across the street from the Japanese Imperial Palace, which had not been



Art and Wilna Van Groningen's first home in 1946.

destroyed. A few other buildings had also been spared—a six-story hotel and several other buildings the Army had taken over. We found the person we were looking for. He was a first lieutenant. Also in his hotel room were two other officers, a captain and a second lieutenant. While Sergeant Ross was visiting his friend, I spent time looking around the area. I saw the Imperial Palace, the home of the Emperor of Japan, a large building which covers a city block. Around the building there is a high wall and a moat filled with water. In the moat were a large number of goldfish. (Fifty years later a person who had recently been there told me it still is filled with goldfish.)

When I returned to the hotel around five o'clock, it was chow time for the officers. The hotel had a large dining room which was used as the officers' mess hall. According to Army rules, officers eat with officers, and enlisted men eat with enlisted men. The two do not eat together. What were the two of us enlisted men to do for chow? One of the officers suggested that we put on officers' jackets and eat with them. This would be breaking

two Army rules: eating with officers and impersonating officers. I could manage to squeeze into a captain's coat—one with two bars. My friend could fit into a first lieutenant's jacket, so off we went to the officers' mess hall. We were told to flash our billfold at the guard at the door to make him think we had proper IDs. This worked well. Entering the mess hall, we found a table for the five of us. As I looked around I saw a large number of Army officers at various tables. By now, I realized I could be in deep trouble if it was found out I was impersonating an officer. This could result in severe punishment, maybe even time in the brig. For sure, a demotion back to being a private. The whole time during the meal I did not dare look up. I thought an officer would come over and ask what unit I was with. The meal couldn't get over fast enough for me. I really was in a sweat. Fortunately nothing happened, and I was glad to head back to our company.

The next couple of months in Japan were uneventful. I was just waiting for the day it would be my turn to be discharged and go home. Men were discharged according to the

number of points they had accumulated—time of service, age, and the number of battles one had been in. My number was forty-three. Several times a week the numbers of those who were to leave the next morning were called out over the PA system. Finally number forty-three was called, and it was my turn to pack up and go home. Several days later I boarded the *General John Pope* again. The trip back from Japan was much cooler than the trip to New Guinea because we stayed much farther from the equator. Also, we had three meals a day since the ship was not too crowded.

After a number of days we reached Seattle, Washington. My exhilaration at seeing the good old USA again was as great as the depression I had felt as I left for Japan. Coming into Seattle, we saw a huge sign ashore that read "Welcome Home." We were told that after the ship had docked, we could disembark in a short time. The gang plank was already down, and the Red Cross women were ready to serve us coffee and donuts, when somebody announced a delay. After an hour of waiting it was explained over the PA system that a sickness had been found aboard and we were being quarantined. What a disappointment! For three days we lay in the Seattle Harbor, wondering when we would be able to get ashore. Finally, on the fourth morning, the anchor was pulled up, we headed for the dock, and we stepped onto American soil again after twenty months overseas.

That night we stayed in an Army camp and the next morning boarded a troop train headed for Camp Beale in California. We were told, "If you want to get discharged from the Army, just stay with the train." We also were told that if the train would stop in a town along the way, we could get off if we wished. This we did, loading up with goodies—milk,

donuts, candy, pie, and ice cream. Many of these items we had not seen for a long time. Three long blasts on the whistle would signal that the train would be leaving in five minutes. It was really a sight to see everyone scurrying back to the train. Finally, after reaching Camp Beale, getting my last Army pay, turning in my equipment, and receiving my discharge papers, I was ready to head for home. The evening before, I had called to tell my family what time I would be in the Greyhound bus depot in

Stockton. Waiting for me in Stockton were my parents, my brother Hank, and my future wife. It was too good to be true—back after two and a half years with the Army. What an experience it had been. I was really thankful to God that I was able to return without any physical or mental scars.

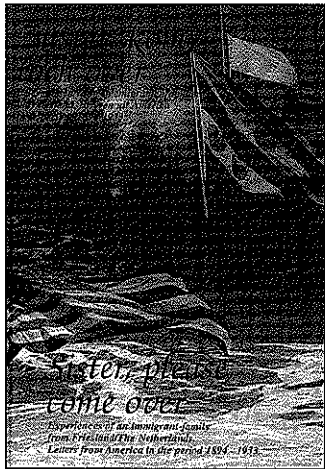
### **Home Again**

It took some time to adjust to civilian life again. Wilna and I were married on July 16, 1946, several months after I returned. We started our new home

on Jack Tone Road, where we lived for the first thirty years of our marriage. In 1976 we moved into a newly built home on Clinton South Avenue.

After we were married, I began farming with my brother Hank. We took over the home ranch and dairy from our parents and ran them together for twenty-five years. In 1947, our first son, Robert, was born. In the next thirteen years four more were added to the family—three sons and a daughter—Dan, John, Marv, and Donna. §

# book notes



## Zuster, kom toch over— Sister, please come over

Experiences of an immigrant family  
from Friesland, the Netherlands.  
Letters from America in the period  
1894-1933.

Ulbe B. Bakker, editor

Kollum, Netherlands: Trion GAC, 1999  
Available in North America from:  
Leigh Anne Haisch, 2211 N. Kimball,  
Mitchell, SD 57301  
lahaisch@hdc.net, 496 pages \$48.00

In 1894 Lieuwe De Jong and his wife Tjitske Memerda, with five of their eight children, left their farm in Friesland for the prairies near New Holland and Platte, South Dakota. Two other children had preceded them, to prepare the way. They left behind a daughter, Baaye, and her husband, Gerrit Bakker, whom the parents and siblings never saw again, save for one sister Nellie who visited the Netherlands during the winter of 1901-1902. This family's story is poignantly presented in remarkable

detail in *Zuster, kom toch over—Sister, please come over* edited by Baaye's grandson, Ulbe Bakker.

Bakker found the letters his grandmother protected and cherished, had them transcribed, translated, and assembled into this book, which is illustrated with images from family photographs. Bakker sets the stage for the De Jong family's experience with a very readable introductory essay on northern Dutch immigrants to North America by an established scholar in the field, Dr. Annemieke Galema.

Because the De Jongs wanted their daughter and son-in-law in the Netherlands to also immigrate, hence the book's title, the letters are rich in details and candid about Friesian farmers adapting to prairie agriculture, a new climate, and a new land. The letters begin with an account of the journey to South Dakota, from which it becomes clear that the family's faith is central in their lives. Descriptions of plowing, planting, threshing, crops, crop prices, and animals are specific and to the point. The various family members also comment on political events (the 1896 Presidential election), national news (President McKinley's death), and local events, particularly the importance of religion, faith, and the church (Christian Reformed) to the De Jongs and the community.

The letters present a balanced view of the immigrant experience. Because the De Jongs borrowed money from their son-in-law there are requests for extensions of loans due to economic difficulties. The De Jongs (having immigrated at the onset of the second most severe economic depression in

United States history, crop failures, and extremes of climate) endure these difficulties as well as the deaths of infants and children. Contact between differing cultures are described by several members of the family when they tell of Native Americans, other immigrant groups, and American citizens. Of note are daughter Nellie's letters while teaching at a church mission school in Zuni, New Mexico.

The transcribed letters in Dutch—Friesian in three cases—are presented on the even-numbered pages while the translations are on the odd-numbered pages. Unfortunately, when the book was designed, the originals and translations were not kept on opposing pages, so a reader familiar with the various languages is forced to constantly page back and forth. On the whole the translations are well done, although the United States reader will have to get used to British English spellings and usage such as plough (plow), and dung (manure), to mention two. A bit more nettlesome is that in a few cases translations are into literal rather than idiomatic English. For instance, "a good week later" (letter 29) should read a full week later, or "halfway October" (letter 48) should read mid October. Letter 138 has several of these, *pastorie* is translated as presbytery when the context makes it clear that it should be parsonage, and *dominee* should be ministers or perhaps clergy, but certainly not vicar as is the case, since the term vicar applies only to Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Episcopal clerics and the



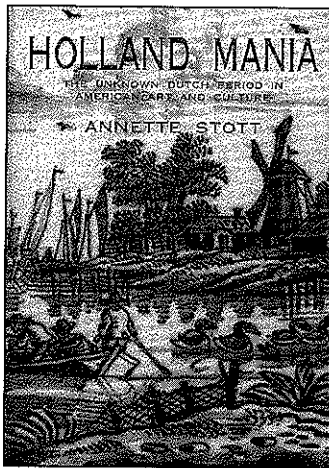
De Jongs were clearly Dutch Calvinists.

In spite of such minor technical lapses, the book presents a very readable and an engrossing account of immigrants in a new land. Those knowledgeable in history will find it a

good story, well explained, with the introduction and copious notes. Those not familiar with history will be drawn in by the detail and honesty of the primary sources. This volume should be in any library having to do with the history of immigration, the American

West, prairie life and agriculture, South Dakota, Calvinism in North America, Dutch immigration, acculturation and cultural conflict, and the Christian Reformed Church. §

*Reviewed by Richard H. Harms*



## Holland Mania— The Unknown Dutch Period in American Art and Culture

*Annette Stott*

The Overlook Press,  
Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc.  
Lewis Hollow Road,  
Woodstock, NY 12498  
320 pages, \$37.95

Annette Stott, Associate Professor of Art History and Women's Studies at the University of Denver, writes about the American fascination with all things Dutch during the years 1880-1920. Throughout these four decades, wealthy and upper-middle-class Americans particularly acquired paintings by seventeenth-century Dutch and late nineteenth-century works by members of the Hague School, such as Anton Mauve, H. Willem Mesdag, and Jozef Israëls. Also, there was a brisk market in

America for the works of American artists who found a congenial cultural atmosphere in art colonies established in Volendam, Laren, Hattem-Nunspeet, Katwijk, Egmond, and Rijsoord. Through these, Americans recalled the Holland of Rembrandt, while at the same time reading romanticized accounts of Holland's heroic age in the popular works by the American historian John Lothrop Motley.

In addition, American artists residing for a time in the Dutch art colonies painted pictures of Dutch life on the threshold of the twentieth century. Eager American buyers found these canvases and watercolors very appealing. After all, what they saw often portrayed nature scenes or domestic life unsullied by industrialization or a grim urban existence. An unblemished countryside or portrait of Dutch folkways reminded these American purchasers of an appealing environment and way of life fast disappearing in Holland and their own America.

This scholarly volume contains many well-chosen illustrations in color and in black and white to illustrate American images of Dutch life. There are advertisements for Old Dutch cleanser or Dutch Boy paint. Also present are postcards of Dutch kids giving greetings for a variety of occasions in a somewhat peculiar Yankee-Dutch dialect. Dutch Masters cigars are mentioned as are Dutch enclaves in Pella and Holland. Hans

Brinker, an American invention of Dutch life, is here as are debates among American historians concerning the influence of the Netherlands in America's development. Observations of American tourists visiting the Netherlands, remarks about Dutch antiques, and depictions of Holland in American juvenile literature will all vie for your attention in this book. If you are enamored with what Americans then and even now perceive when they think of the land of windmills and wooden shoes, read this book and draw your own conclusions about the significance of Holland Mania, a cultural phenomenon in America brought to an end by World War I. §

*Reviewed by Conrad Bult*

# for the future

The topics listed below are being researched, and articles about them will appear in future issues of *Origins*.

Selections from J. Marion Snapper's *Memoirs*

*Remembering Wealthy Street* by Marvin Van Dellen

*Recollections of Bill Colsman*

*Day of Deliverance, March 30, 1945* by Henry Lammers

*For the Humblest Worshiper: Architectural Styles* by Richard Harms

Leonard Verduin—*Reflections*

*Odyssey of Lambert and Maria Ubels—the Netherlands to California*

*Klompdancing Through America* by Janet Sheeres

*Wilhelmina Bolier Pool's Whistlestops 1920s* by Janet Sheeres

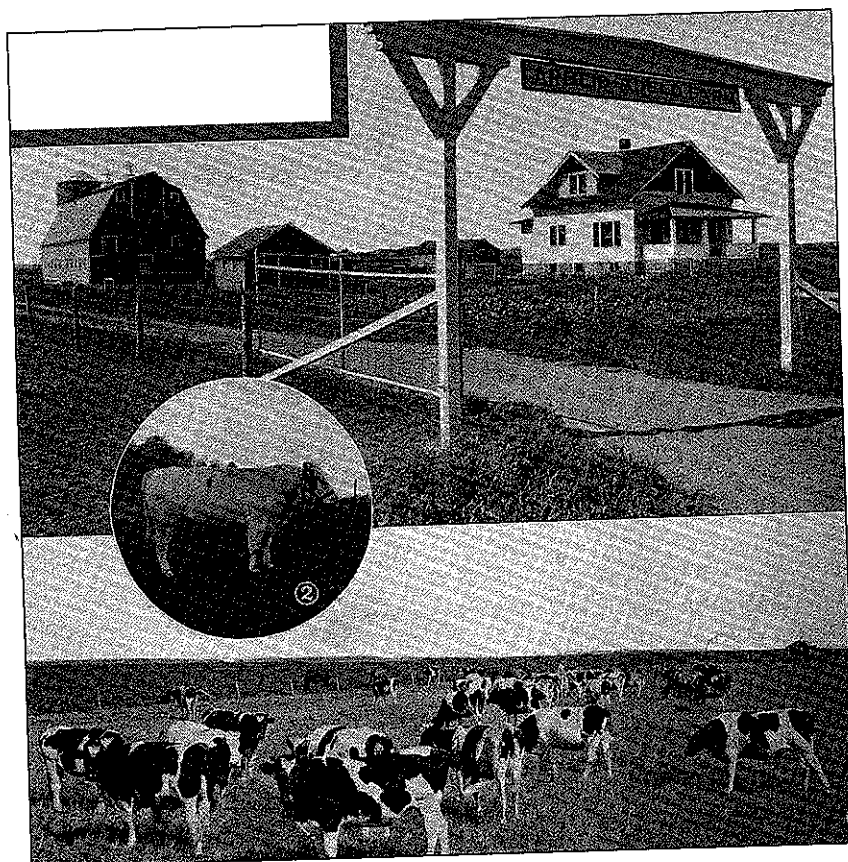
*From Pella, Iowa to the California Gold Fields* by Brian Beltman

*Canada Calling—Houston BC, 1957-1962* by Wilber "Bill" De Jong

*Development of the Chinese CRC* by Peter Szto

*Hollandale, Minnesota—a photo essay* by H.J. Brinks

*Early Days at Calvin College* by Harry Boonstra



Hollandale, Minnesota

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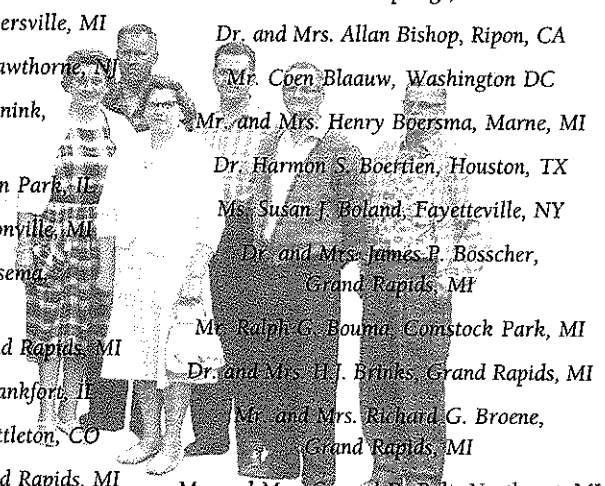
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