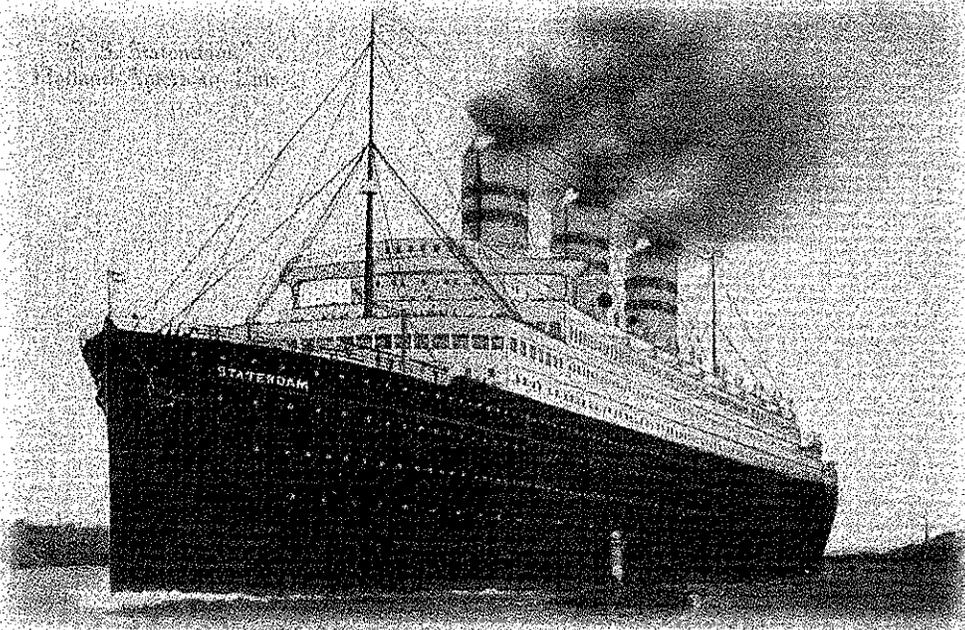


Origins

Historical Magazine of The Archives
Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary
Volume XX • Number 1 • 2002



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*Historical Magazine
of The Archives*

Calvin College and
Calvin Theological Seminary
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Origins is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of *The Archives*. These goals include the gathering, organization, and study of historical materials produced by the day-to-day activities of the Christian Reformed Church, its institutions, communities, and people.

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page 7

- 2 From the Editor
- 4 An Old Country Veterinarian in Oostburg, Wisconsin
Calvin D. Cevaal
- 11 Holland-America Line



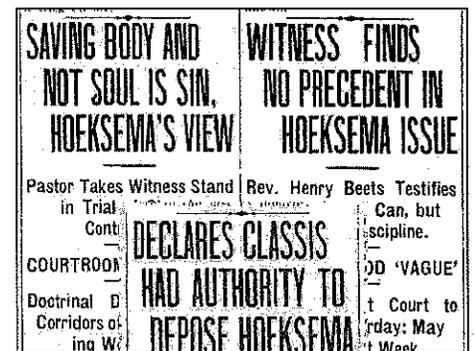
page 35

- 33 Douwe Johannes Vander Werp: Forty-two Carriages and Forty-three Calls
Douwe Johannes Vander Werp in Michigan
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres



page 28

- 18 Douwe Johannes Vander Werp: Forty-two Carriages and Forty-three Calls
Douwe Johannes Vander Werp in the Netherlands
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres
- 26 Douwe Johannes Vander Werp: The Fourth Wife
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres



page 43

- 39 Theology in Court: *Holwerd v. Hoeksema*
Harry Boonstra
- 48 Book Notes
- 49 For the Future
upcoming Origins articles
- 50 Contributors

from the editor . . .



This Issue

With this issue we return to a recurring topic in—Immigrants and their stories. Calvin Cevaal details the life of his father, from Middelburg, as a veterinarian in Oostburg, Wisconsin. Cevaal details both the commonalities of the Dutch immigrant experience and the uniqueness of his father's profession. Since so many Dutch immigrants crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the ships of the Holland America Line, a photo essay, drawn largely from the collections of Conrad Bult, attempts to present a taste of that experience. Janet Sheeres details the lives of a husband and wife in church ministry both in the Netherlands and the United States. Among the details she provides on life in the manse, her account of Gerritdina Vander Werp is one of the first to examine the experience from the woman's perspective. Much has been written, and even more said, about the separation and theological differences in the Christian Reformed Church that led to the formation of the Protestant Reformed Church. Harry Boonstra examines the court case resulting from this that determined ownership of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church building in Grand Rapids. ☪

Available On-Line

In recent issues of *Origins*, we reported our on-going efforts to make some of the archives resources available on-line. Working with the staff of the Hekman Library we have begun making some of our pictorials available through this means. Those currently available can be viewed at <http://www.calvin.edu/library/125th/> (then click on Click here to go to Heritage Hall Photographs). This digitizing project began more than a year ago as part of the 125th anniversary celebrations of the seminary and college. Our goal is to continue adding images to this database, as permitted by copyright limits, particularly those used to illustrate *Origins*. ☪

News from the Archives

We continue to move through the backlog of unprocessed materials. During the past six months we have completed organizing records from a variety of twentieth century organizations related to the Dutch in North America. Among the major collections completed were the archives of Calvin Theological Seminary. We also received and have organized the records (42 boxes, 21 cubic feet) of Bethesda Christian Hospital in Colorado, which began as a sanitarium to treat tuberculosis patients. We have also begun the process of cataloging our audio and video format materials. To date we have entered more than 6,000 titles into a database that will also include

titles held by other departments in Calvin College as well as Calvin Theological Seminary. We organized 27 cubic feet of correspondence from various *Banner* editors, from John Vander Ploeg through John Suk. Foldering and cataloging into WebCat of our extensive pamphlet collection was largely completed. A few titles that do not fit into our collection policy remain to be distributed to other repositories. Anyone with internet access to the Calvin College website can link to WebCat and search the holdings of the Hekman Library and Heritage Hall.

Archival records from 83 CRCNA congregations (eight more than last year) were received, microfilmed and returned. We also microfilmed the records of six Christian school organizations. The microfilm copies are stored in our vault and are available only with the written permission of the individual congregation or school. Official classical minutes were received from all 47 classes (an increase of four from last year). This year marks the first time in a number of years that every classis has sent minutes to the archives in a timely manner. Anniversary materials were received from 19 Christian Reformed churches.

Proofing of data for a historical directory of the Christian Reformed Church continues and the project is still due to be printed this summer by the Historical Committee of the CRCNA. This will be similar to the

directory that the Reformed Church in America has been producing for a number of years.

Our diligent translators continue with the formidable task of converting early Dutch-language sources into English. Current work continues on congregational and classical minutes and immigrant letters.☪

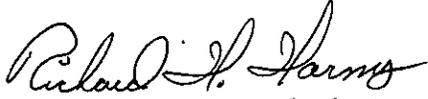
Staff

Richard Harms continues as the curator of the Archives, housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. Other staff members are: Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Wendy Blankespoor, library assistant; Boukje Leegwater, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; Nateisha De Cruz and Susan Potter, student assistants. We have a very faithful and dedicated corps of volunteers including: Floyd Antonides, Rev. Henry DeMots, Margaret Eshuis, Ed Gerritsen, Fred Greidanus, Hendrick Harms, John Hiemstra, Dr. Henry Ippel, Helen Meulink, Janice Overzet, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Ed Start, and Rev. Leonard Sweetman.☪

Endowment Fund

As with most investments last year, the Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund experienced a decrease in value. In January 2002 the endowment's market value stood at \$277,090, a decline of \$16,029 (5.5 percent) from the previous January. The actual

decline was a bit larger, but was offset by contributions into the endowment. Since revenue on investment also is down, we anticipate a slower growth rate for the fund than has been the case during the past few years, but there will still be growth. As always we will monitor expenses closely and are not planning any new projects. Thank you to all those who support our work beyond the subscription cost. This generosity allows us to keep subscriptions at \$10 per year and any funds remaining are added to the endowment.☪



Richard H. Harms

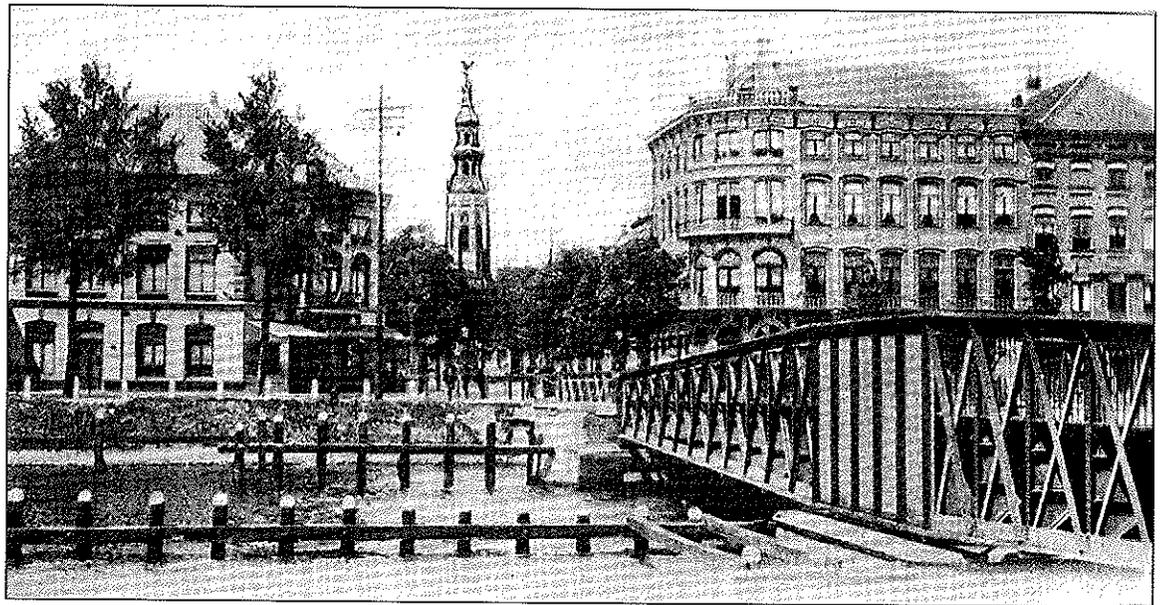
An Old Country Veterinarian in Oostburg, Wisconsin

Calvin D. Cevaal

In 1909 in Middelburg, the province of Zeeland, the Netherlands, twenty-two-year-old Jan (later John) Cevaal decided to emigrate to Sheboygan, Wisconsin, on the advice of a friend who had already made that journey. Two reasons were behind this decision. First was the family's poverty. His father had no trade and at times worked as a *sleper*, carting

keeper, Johanna Bosselaar, to help with the care of the children, and less than one year later they married.

The younger Cevaal probably saved the passage fare to the United States, 146 guilders and 75 cents, by working as a painter for a shipbuilding company in Vlissingen, near Middelburg.² But work was sporadic; later letters often refer to the dire economic



Middelburg, Zeeland home for the Cevaal family prior to emigration. Postcard: Archives, Calvin College.

luggage from the docks of the small fishing village of Vlissingen for arriving passengers. Second was the death of his mother when Jan was nine.¹ Jan's father, also named Jan, and Mother Cornelia Vos were married in 1884. At the time of Cornelia's death in 1897 there were four children: Johannes, Abraham, Jan, and Piernella (later Nell). The elder Cevaal immediately hired a house-

conditions and the scarcity of jobs.³ In spite of the difficulty, he was able to save the money, an ability that he carried with him the rest of his life.

Cevaal came during the height of immigration to the United States, a country just becoming a world military power, as evidenced by the navy's "Great White Fleet" which had sailed around the world in 1907. Although there had been a financial crisis in the

US in 1907, there was no long-term economic downturn. In fact, the nation was experiencing economic boom times. Compared to the opportunities open to Cevaal in the Netherlands, the US seemed to offer unlimited opportunity.

On 15 April 1909, with \$15.00 in his pocket, Cevaal took the train from Middelburg to Rotterdam. He boarded the *Nieuw Amsterdam* of the Holland-America Line (HAL)⁴ on Saturday the 17th, which sailed the next morning. The boat arrived in New York harbor on the evening of the 27th. The next day the passengers went through customs on Ellis Island, and at 10 o'clock that evening Cevaal was aboard a west-bound train.

He spent his first year in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, working in a chair factory, but found the work pure



Photo of Jan Cevaal taken just before he left for the United States in 1909. Photo: Courtesy of the author.

drudgery. It was enough to dampen his enthusiasm for any type of factory work for the rest of his life. During that year, his sister, Pieterella, urgently pled for him to send her

money so she could also emigrate. Her relationships with both her stepmother and father were strained, resulting from her friendship with a corporal in the army. In about a year's time Cevaal had saved enough money to pay for her passage to Sheboygan.

Since the chair factory was not to his liking, he obtained a job at the Mission House College and Theological School (now Lakeland College), an institution of the German Reformed Church, with about 300 students in 1911. Located about ten miles north of Sheboygan, the college had a working farm with cows, horses, and chickens and a vegetable garden to provide for the staff and students. Cevaal began working as a farm hand, milking cows, working in the fields, and doing such chores as were necessary, eventually becoming the driver of the

My Journey to America

J. Cevaal

About seven years ago, one of my schoolmates left his fatherland for that wonderful land America. When he took his farewell, I never thought that I would follow him so soon. After he arrived he soon wrote me a letter, saying the opportunity for the laboring man is better in America than in Holland. This news from America created a longing in me to journey across the ocean to make an honest living. So I spoke to my parents about it, and after much consideration, they gave their permission. Soon I was ready to leave my dear Holland, where I was born and reared, to leave my parents, my brothers, my sisters, and many friends, perhaps never to see them again. On the 15th of April 1909, I took the train from Middelburg, Province Zeeland, to Rotterdam, and on the 18th left Rotterdam on the steamer *Nieuw Amsterdam*. It was a beautiful morning when the ship lifted anchor and sailed for the open sea. The band began to play, and oh how grand it sounded when they played the national song. We all began to sing.

Soon we were in the North Sea and at Boulogne we took some more passengers and mail on board. We had all kinds of people on the boat—Hollanders, Germans,

Englishmen, Frenchmen, Polanders, Russians, all together about 1,400. It took us exactly nine days to cross the ocean to New York. The weather was very favorable. We only had one stormy day. We didn't see anything but water for seven days, and everybody was happy when we arrived safe and sound at New York. But we could not enter the harbor at that time, so we waited till the next morning about 8 o'clock. The inspector came and we had to open our trunks and suitcases before we could leave the boat. From there we went to Ellis Island where the doctors examined us, and also inquired about our railroad tickets, etc. At 10 o'clock in the evening I got on the train and Tuesday at 4:00 PM arrived in Sheboygan, without any trouble. The first wonderful thing I saw in Sheboygan was a hailstone as big as an English walnut. They had an awful hailstorm that day and it stopped just before I got there. My father's friend was waiting for me at the depot, and we soon were warm friends. The first night we had a terrible thunderstorm such as I had never seen before, not even in Holland, but my friend said it wasn't anything new here. I stayed there about five days and then started to work in a chair factory.

⁴According to the passenger list from that sailing, there were 531 passengers on board; later in the season the average passenger counts would be around 1,400.

Origins

college's stagecoach to Sheboygan. On Sundays he drove the theological professors to their various pulpit assignments in the German Reformed churches of the area.

Working at the college also gave him the opportunity to take courses. He studied English, chemistry, biology, mathematics, and German (which was mandatory). He became fluent in the German language, which later helped him in dealing with German farmers. His math skills also served him in good stead, allowing him to make mental calculations faster than the early mechanical adding machines.⁵

While working and studying, Cevaal received word from his father that he and the rest of the second family also wanted to emigrate (he had five children with his second wife). But money for the tickets was a problem.⁶ The younger Cevaal opened an account with the HAL agent in Sheboygan and began to make regular payments against the total cost of \$246.75. When the family arrived at the Sheboygan train station, John Cevaal picked them up with the Mission House stagecoach and took them to a small farm he had rented in the Black River section of Sheboygan.

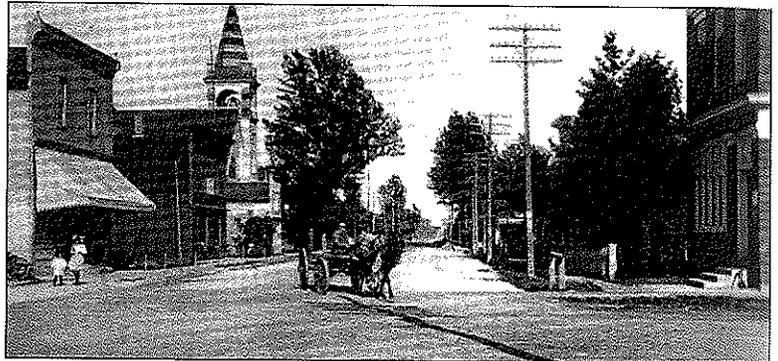
In September 1915, Cevaal left Sheboygan and Mission House College to enroll in the Chicago Veterinary College. The college was located in downtown Chicago, and consisted of a large building of six stories and a faculty of approximately twenty-five. Total enrollment was around two hundred. To pay for expenses he took a part-time janitorial job at the school. He graduated with honors in the spring of 1918 and began working for the Swift Meat Packing Company in Chicago, until called to military service in July.

He was assigned to the Cavalry, Veterinary Company One, in Camp Greenleaf, Georgia. Army life agreed

with him and he considered making a career out of it. The company graduated from training on 4 November 1918 and prepared to leave for France. But the armistice

on November 11 put an end to that. His honorable discharge notes that he was an excellent rider who could handle horses well. He returned to Sheboygan, arriving in early 1919. He opened a veterinary practice in Oostburg, ten miles south of Sheboygan, a half-mile west of Lake Michigan.⁷

The village had attracted Dutch settlers in the 1850s, with a Reformed church being established there in 1850. By 1920 it was a thriving village with a population of some 500–600, 99 percent or more of Dutch origin. There were a couple of grocery stores, a medical doctor with a general practice, a Christian Reformed church



Oostburg, Wisconsin, as it appeared in 1908, just before Cevaal arrived. Photo: Courtesy of the author.

(begun in 1875), a post office, a school, two hardware stores, a canning factory, a telephone company, a volunteer fire department, a bank, barbershops, car garages (selling Buick and Ford cars), a lumber and grain store, blacksmiths, a furniture store and an undertaker establishment, a harness and shoe shop, a bakery, a couple of taverns and a small hotel.

Initially Cevaal's veterinary practice was almost totally limited to farm animals—horses, cows, hogs, chickens and whatever else a farm had at that time.⁸ At the time, people were not inclined to spend money on dogs and cats. He bought a new Model T Ford in 1919 to facilitate his work. In 1921



The coach of Mission House College (now Lakeland College) that Cevaal drove transporting students and faculty. Photo: Courtesy of the author.



Dr. John Cevaál's graduation photo from the Chicago Veterinary College, 1918. Photo: Courtesy of the author.

Cevaál married Mary Van Der Puy from Sheboygan. They bought a house in the mid 1920s, and a room that would otherwise have served as the dining room became his office. Later, a new office would be built at the rear of the house.

The onset of the Great Depression was hard on everyone, with national unemployment reaching almost a third of the working force. If they could find a market for their produce, farmers found prices extremely low. Some found it cheaper to slaughter newborn calves than to raise them. The services of a veterinarian were not much in demand when cows were selling for ten to fifteen dollars a head.

Work did come as the result of an outbreak of brucellosis,⁹ a highly contagious disease that could only be eradicated by destroying infected animals. A statewide testing program was launched, and in some cases entire herds had to be destroyed. Although farmers were paid a small amount, the

loss was such that Cevaál at times had to call on the sheriff to gain access when farmers resisted testing.

The testing was not a simple operation. Animals were identified with an ear clip and a blood sample was drawn. Each day saw 25–50 tubes of blood that required testing. With equipment provided by the state, each sample was put on a rectangular glass that was divided into small checkerboard squares. The glass was placed on a device over high intensity light bulbs and a solution was added to the blood. If the sample remained clear the animal was disease free. The results were sent to the State Department of Agriculture, which arranged for the

disposition of infected cows.¹⁰ The task of washing the test tubes fell to Cevaál's children.¹¹

At the depth of the Great Depression, when calls for a veterinarian's services were few and the New Deal programs were yet to come, money earned from the state testing program was important to more than just the Cevaál family. When the fieldstones in the foundation of the Cevaál's house began to crumble, Cevaál decided to have the entire area under the house dug out for a proper basement.¹² An ad was put in the paper for men with shovels, at \$1.00 for eight hours of labor, the going wage for day labor during the Great Depression. Twenty men answered the ad and they completed the job in one day. The

next day masons put in a new foundation with cement blocks.

In 1936 the Works Progress Administration (WPA), started by the Roosevelt Administration to put the unemployed back to work, came to Oostburg. Although many people had misgivings about the federal work program (some called the WPA workers the "we poke along" club), it provided the village with a park, featuring a lighted baseball field, tennis courts, bathrooms, a picnic area, and a band shell. Another project was installing water and sewer lines throughout the village.



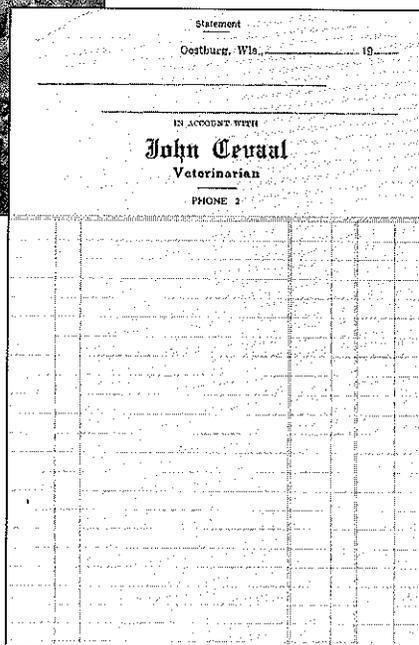
John Cevaál and Mary Van Der Puy on their wedding day, 1921. Photo: Courtesy of the author.

The village of Oostburg in the mid 1930s can best be described as a fortress of conservative Reformed Protestantism. In addition to the large Reformed church and the Christian



Cevaal making a house call, c.1919. Photo: Courtesy of the author.

Invoice blank courtesy of the author.



Reformed church, there was a Presbyterian church (USA). The Presbyterian church (begun in 1867) was made up entirely of people of Dutch descent and always seemed to have a minister who was a graduate of Calvin College and Seminary. The minister in 1936 was Rev. Oscar Holkeboer, who led a part of his congregation away to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The split was bitter in the small town of 900, many linked by family.

Cevaal's only hobby was a vegetable garden that was admired by many as one of the best in the village. Aside from the *Sheboygan Press*, the only reading materials were veterinarian journals, *The Banner* and *De Wachter*;¹³ and the *Calvin Forum*, an intellectual publication put out by Calvin Theological Seminary. He did have some outside interests. He was a long-time member—one of a few in Oostburg to join—of the Gideons organization, which had been formed in Wisconsin in 1899 to distribute Bibles. He was a charter member of the American Legion, although in later years he was not active. He was the first scoutmaster in town, but apparently the church frowned on this, because of the oath that had to be taken, and he resigned.

One of the ministers in the Presbyterian church in Oostburg was John

Clover Monsma. He was a friend of Cevaal's who, prior to coming to Oostburg, had attempted in the early 1920s to operate a daily newspaper, *The American Daily Standard*, in Chicago. It had a Christian interpretation of the news, and plans were to make it a national daily, with printing plants from New York to San Francisco. Cevaal invested \$500, a sizable amount for someone just beginning his practice as well as a family, in the venture that failed in less than a year.

Although faith was important, the Bible was little read in the family. In the morning a one-sheet devotional, *The Daily Manna*, was used. Often a Psalm was read after the lunchtime meal, and in the evening the "Family Circle" from *The Banner* was read—a few Bible verses and mostly commentary, again by a minister. There were always prayers said before and after the meal. The family's religious thinking

was shaped by ministers. Whatever H. J. Kuiper said in *The Banner* was the gospel truth.¹⁴ Rulings pronounced by the denomination's synod were never questioned.

The Cevaal home had its share of notable houseguests during the 1930s. Among them Rev. Diedrich Kromminga, a professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, who had

studied at Mission House College from 1897-1899. Another guest was Dr. Frederick Wezeman, principal of the Chicago Christian High School and one who had helped found Chicago Christian College.¹⁵ Visiting ministers who preached when the local minister was absent stayed at the Cevaal house, as did agents soliciting donations for the denomination's psychiatric facility, Pine Rest, or for subscriptions to *The Banner*.

Cevaal championed the Christian school movement.¹⁶ By the 1950s, proponents of the Christian school said that the majority of the teachers in the public school were no longer of Reformed persuasion, and a stricter interpretation of the separation of church and state did not allow any religious instruction at the public school. As a result support for the Christian school movement gained momentum and Cevaal served as the first president of the Christian School Society in Oostburg. Today, by all accounts, the Christian school is doing well, as is the public school. A Christian high school in Sheboygan also serves students from Oostburg.

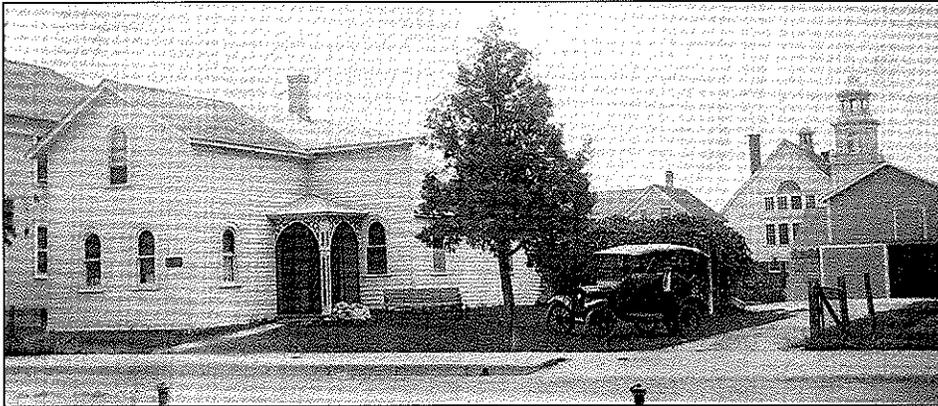
By 1940 the economy recovered with government spending for the preparation of World War II. And as the farmers prospered, so did my

father. Business was good and a small animal practice added to his business, often with the author as the anesthetologist during operations. The equipment consisted of a coffee can filled with cotton onto which ether would be poured. The animals breathed the fumes from the can and were rendered semi-conscious. Mrs. Cevaal handled the appointments and scheduling as well as accepting payments when the doctor was out. He never used a bill

Local church life was important to Cevaal. He was active in the Christian Reformed Church's Sunday School and Men's Society. He served the congregation as an elder several times and, like others, took the job seriously. He could stand his ground when needed, as when town's people criticized him for working on Sunday; "Sabbath desecration," they called it. But he paid this no mind, seeing the care of animals as essential work not

resign as president of the Oostburg Christian School Board. Cevaal considered placing barricades and lighted lanterns along open trenches as essential work as well. But when it was pointed out that same son was not contributing to the church, Cevaal took a different position. He delivered a pretty good lecture about tithing—which I have not forgotten to this day. And I did make a contribution to the church, but I don't remember the amount.

Cevaal became ill in 1950 and was diagnosed with a form of leukemia. No chemotherapy was available in those days, and he pretty much just wasted away. But he always spoke about his hope for recovery. He was a good man, a sincere Christian, generous to his parents, brothers and sisters, devoted to his wife and children. His love for Christian education was based on principle. He questioned whether the government should have a role in educating children, which he believed was solely the responsibility of parents. If I had to pick one verse from the Bible to characterize him it would be Micah 6:8, ". . . And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." §



Cevaal in front of his house. The Oostburg Reformed Church is in the background. Photo: Courtesy of the author.

collector or a lawyer and apparently made little effort to recover unpaid bills. Some farmers had passed away, others couldn't remember debts, and one wouldn't pay because the cow had died.

proscribed on the Sabbath. He took the same position later when criticized for allowing his son to work on a highway repair project on Sundays. As a result, a member from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church suggested Cevaal should

End Notes

1. John Cevaal often spoke of his mother and brought up the scene at the cemetery where she was buried. Because of the scarcity of land in Holland, graves would hold four to five caskets, and he said he watched in horror as her casket was lowered into a watery grave. He always expressed a desire to be buried in a concrete vault and his request was honored.

2. Cevaal purchased ticket number 1041 from De Bruyne & Co., the agent for the Holland-America Line in Middelburg. The third-class passage included rail fare from Middelburg to Rotterdam (fl 1.37) and rail fare from New York to Sheboygan, Wisconsin (fl 44.38). Holland-America Line Passenger Lists, 1900-1940, microfiche at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

3. These letters are in the Calvin Archives and all have been translated into English. Some letters have been quoted in *Origins*, the historical magazine of the Archives.

4. The *Nieuw Amsterdam* was built in 1906 by Harland and Wolff in Belfast, Ireland. She was 616 feet long, had a beam of 69 feet, and could sail at 16 knots. She was sold in 1932 and scrapped in Japan. H.M. Le Fleming, *Ships of the Holland-America Line* (London: John Marshbank, Ltd., 1963), p. 67.

5. This was demonstrated when Cevaal competed against an early Burroughs adding machine. Cevaal was able to multiply two three-digit numbers in his head, as he had been taught to do in the Netherlands, much faster than the adding machine representative

was able to get the machine to operate.

6. Cevaal had owned a house with his first wife (apparently she provided the money for the purchase). According to Dutch law at the time, this house had to be sold later and the proceeds divided when the youngest son of this marriage asked for his inheritance; one-half went to Cevaal and the other half was divided among the four children.

7. The original location of the village was about a quarter of a mile east of its present location. The move resulted when the railroad was not built directly through the old village.

8. Rev. John Piersma accompanied Cevaal on one visit and attests to his skill with animals. He was able to calm a very disturbed horse with soothing words and a calm demeanor, examine the animal, give it an injection, and then announced that the horse would be better in a day or two. Letter from John Piersma to the author, in the author's possession.

9. Also known as Bang's disease and undulant fever, the primary sign of infection in females is abortion and in males is epididymitis. <http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/fact/brucello.htm>.

10. Farmers were paid a small amount for cattle to be destroyed, but because of the potential for financial loss, some were not eager to have their animals inspected. On these occasions the sheriff was called to enforce the inspections.

11. The fact that brucellosis was a highly contagious and infectious disease in both man and domestic animals never

came up as my sister and I washed the tubes.

12. The original house had only a 9 by 12 foot root cellar used to store perishables.

13. Both official magazines of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the first in English the second in Dutch.

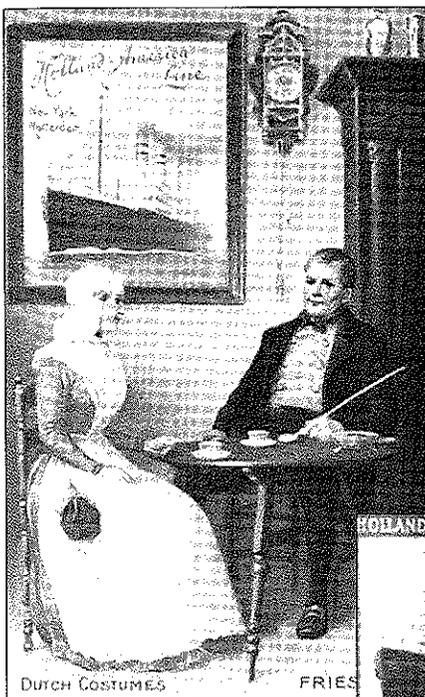
14. Rev. H. (Henry) J. Kuiper was editor of *The Banner*, 1928-1956.

15. For more information on Wezeman see Donald Sinnema, "The Story of Chicago Christian College (1931-1937)", in Richard H. Harms, ed., *The Dutch Adapting in North America: Papers Presented at the Thirteenth Biennial Conference for the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies* (Grand Rapids: AADAS, 2001): 9-17; and Earl William Kennedy, "Northwestern College," *Origins* (vol. 19, no. 1): 39-46.

16. Oostburg did not have a Christian school and even though the public school had graduates of Calvin College as teachers, after the first grade it was arranged for me and the pastor's youngest son, Ward Schaap, to ride with John Vander Ploeg, who taught at the Sheboygan Christian School. Being yanked out of school, where all my friends were, and sent to a new school was not to my liking. When I got home my friends would taunt me about going to the "Dutch" school. In Sheboygan I felt like I was treated like some hayseed from the village. Mr. Vander Ploeg left after a few years and I could go back to school in Oostburg.

Holland-America Line

Images Courtesy of Conrad Bult, unless noted otherwise.



1871

Plate, Reuchlin & Co. founded with two ships, *Rotterdam* and *Maas* (later *Maasdam*). Headquartered in Rotterdam which, due to locks at Hellevoetsluis and shallow water, had limited access to the North Sea.

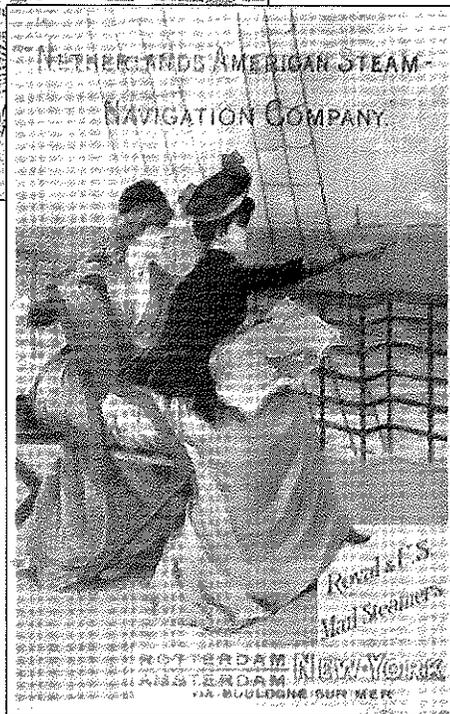
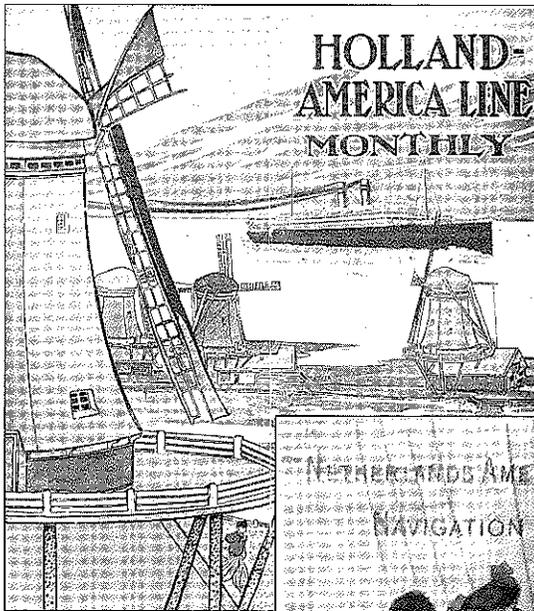
1873

Plate, Reuchlin & Co. expands with new investors and becomes *Nederlansch-Amerikaanche Stoomvaart Maatschaapij* (later renamed *Holland-America Line*).



1883

Because Amsterdam had better water access, NASM takes out a ten-year lease on a second Dutch terminus in Amsterdam to participate in growing immigrant passage trade to the United States.



1885

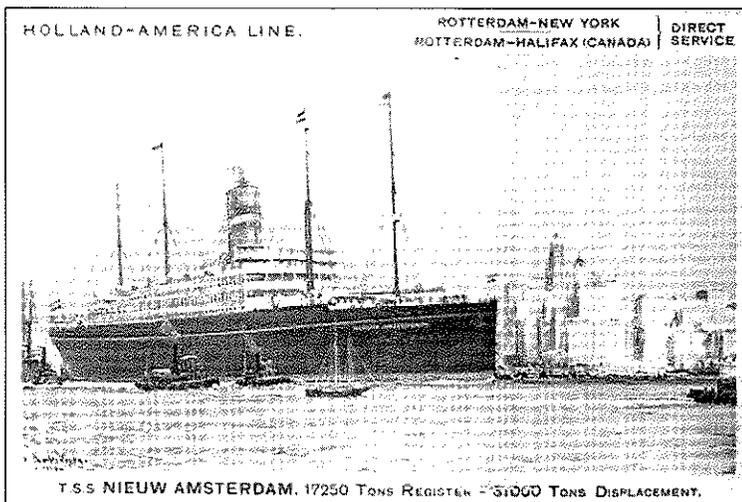
Twelve major cross-Atlantic lines carry immigrants: Cunard, White Star, American, Allan, Red Star, Hamburg-American, French, Norddeuther Lloyd, Thingvalla, Anchor, Atlantic Transport, and Holland-America.

1886

Work on Rotterdam waterway to North Sea completed, allowing unrestricted ocean access.

1888

HAL adds stop at Boulogne, service via a tender, to facilitate immigrant transit for southern and eastern European emigrants. Eventually agreements with European railroads bring these passengers directly to Rotterdam, with Boulogne becoming a transit point for passengers to France.



1893

Lease in Amsterdam expires and HAL builds an emigrant hotel near the HAL docks in Rotterdam.



1895 First pleasure sailing for HAL, Rotterdam (2) to Copenhagen.

1898 Funnel color changed from black to yellow to distinguish ships from an American line during Spanish-American War.

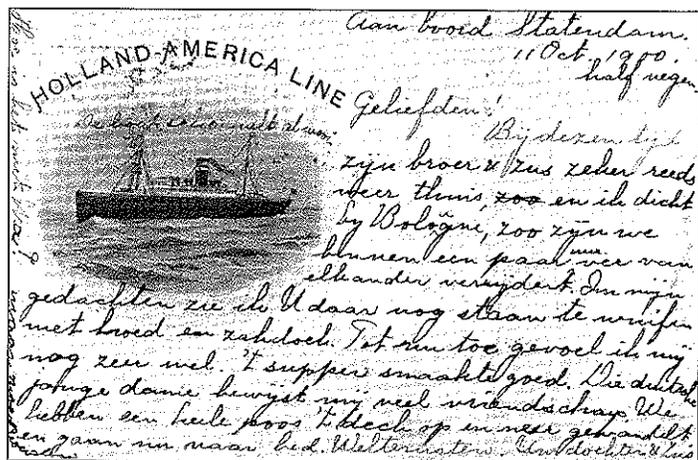


1899 Cargo freight service begins between Amsterdam and Newport News. Eventually ship names ending with "dyk" carry freight, those ending with "dam" carry passengers.



1900 Firm totals 1,300 sailings, 490,000 passengers, 5,000,000 tons of freight since its beginning.



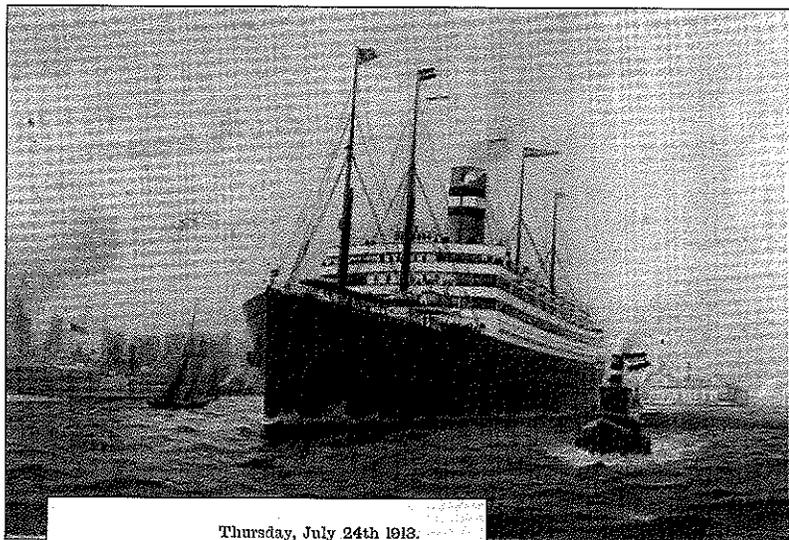


1902

International Mercantile Marine Corp. gains control of HAL.

1906

Maiden voyage of Nieuw Amsterdam, capable of carrying 3,100 passengers; last to carry sails for emergency use.



1910

Firm adds a stop at Plymouth, England.

1910-12

Freight lines added to Philadelphia, Savannah, Cuba. Rotterdam, Nieuw Amsterdam, Potsdam, Ryndam, Noordam and Statendam maintained weekly passenger service between Rotterdam and New York.

Thursday, July 24th 1913.

DINNER

— HORS D'OEUVRE —
Eggs Cyano - Fillets of Herring Bouillaise
Small Aspics of Shrimps - Sliced Smoked Salmon
Cassolottes Norvégiens - Olives

— SOUPS —
Clear Consommé Souveraine - Cream Virginia

— FISH —
Halibut à la Normay - Fillets of Whiting Mazarine

— RELEVÉS —
Sirloin of Beef Young Vegetables - Nat. of Veal Réformé

— HOT ENTRÉE —
Hollotine of Pigeon with Peas

— COLD ENTRÉES —
Turban of Goose liver Princesse
Terrine of Durham Beef à la Mode

— GRILL (15 min.) —
Entrecôte (Double or Single)
Lamb- and Mutton Cutlets

— VEGETABLES —
Spinach with Gravy - Broadbeans Edouard VII
Potatoes: Fondante - Château - Mousseine - Sweet au Gratin

— PUNCH —
Sorbet à la Samaritaine

— ROAST —
Roast Springchicken - Duckling au Suc d'Ananas

— SALADS, ETC. —
Lettuce - Polonaise
Compote: Apricots - Greengages - Mixed

— ICE-CREAMS —
Strawberry - Americaine

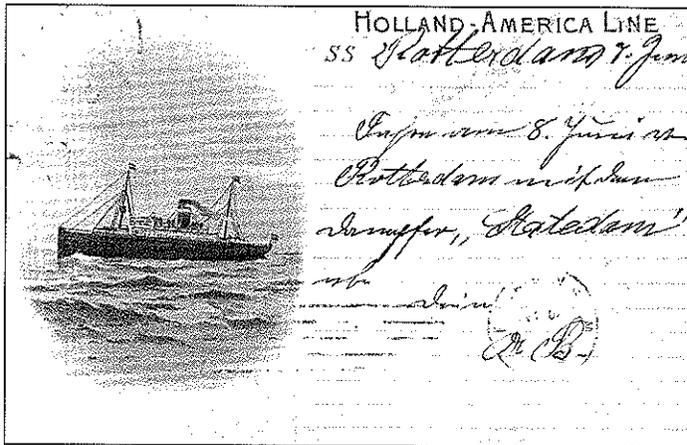
— PASTRIES —
Coraise à l'Ananas Cake
Profiteroles with Chocolate - Mignardises

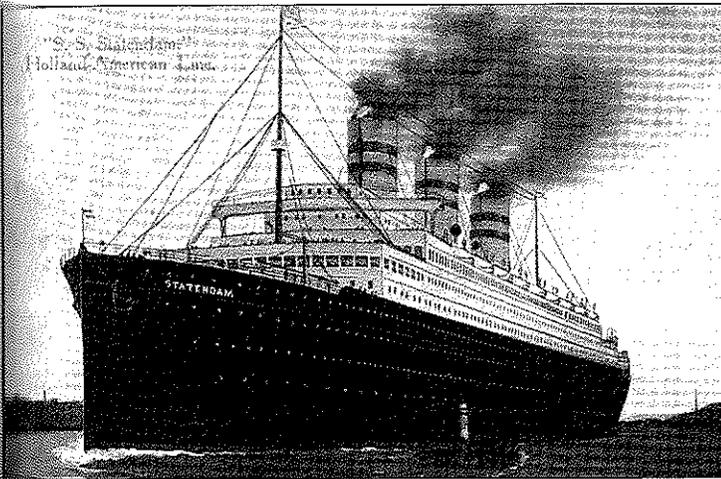
— FRUITS - DESSERT —

The first Nieuw Amsterdam built in 1906 had a service speed of 16 knots. She was sold in 1932 and scrapped in Japan.

1914

Annual profits from previous ten years were 12½ percent on average.





This three-masted Statendam never sailed under the Holland-America Line flag. Anticipating her delivery the firm had images printed on postcards and menu covers but, before delivery in 1914, she was taken over by the British and fitted out as a troop ship, renamed Justicia, and torpedoed by the Germans in 1918.

WWI

Noordam mined; Potsdam sold; Ryndam chartered by United States as a troopship; Rotterdam taken out of service due to U-boat threat. Because of her speed Nieuw Amsterdam remained on the Atlantic route, profits still high during the war. Statendam, a three-funnel ship, was purchased by the British as she neared completion in Belfast, sailing as Justicia she was later torpedoed.

1920

Nieuw Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Ryndam, Volendam and Veendam, re-established North Atlantic passenger service.

1924

US immigration restriction severely cut the number of immigrants and as a result the company ships' passenger capacities are changed, freight continues to grow.

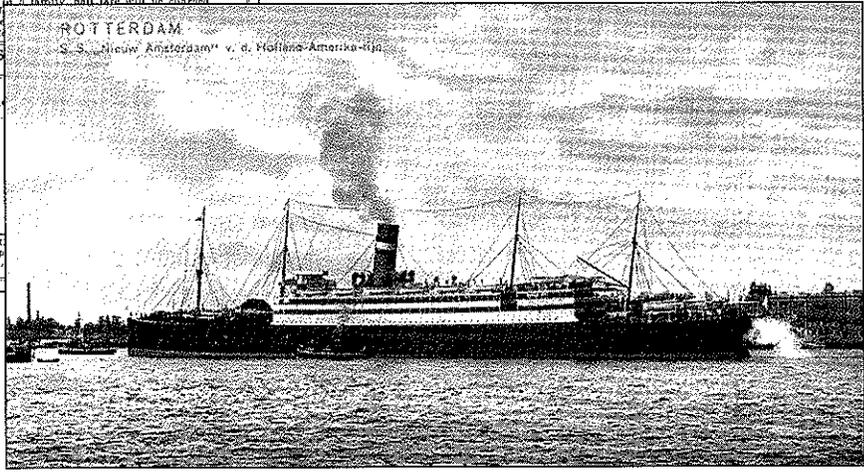
HOLLAND-AMERICA LINE			To Plymouth From Southampton	To or From Boulogne-sur-Mer or Rotterdam
T. S. S. "VOLENDAM" and "VEENDAM" 15,420 Tons Register				
DECK B. OUTSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 203, 204 (Voendam only), 207, 208, 209, 210, 215, 216, 217, 218, 220			\$135.00	\$140.00
OUTSIDE ROOM (with two berths): 218			137.50	142.50
INSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 202 (Voendam only), 205, 211, 213			132.50	137.50
INSIDE ROOMS (with two berths): 201, 202 (Voendam only), 206, 212, 214			135.00	140.00
DECK C. OUTSIDE ROOMS (with three berths): 303, 305, 329, 347, 355			132.50	137.50
OUTSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 307, 308, 311, 312, 315, 316, 317, 318, 323, 324, 325, 326, 331, 332, 334, 335, 337, 339, 340, 341, 342, 345, 346, 350, 358			132.50	137.50
INSIDE ROOMS (with three berths): 301, 302, 303, 304, 343, 344, 345, 346, 351, 352, 354, 359			130.00*	135.00*
INSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 305, 310, 313, 314, 319, 320, 321, 322, 327, 328, 330, 333, 338, 338			130.00*	135.00*
DECK D. ALL ROOMS (with four berths): 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 419, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441			130.00*	135.00*
T. S. S. "NOORDAM" and "RYNDAM" 12,531 Tons Register				
DECK B. OUTSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 205, 207, 213, 215, 220, 221, 223, 226, 228, 229, 231, 234, 236, 237, 239, 240, 245, 246, 247, 248, 254, 256, 257, 259, 262, 263, 264, 265, 277			127.50	132.50
OUTSIDE ROOMS: 273, 275			125.00*	130.00*
INSIDE ROOMS (with two berths): 201, 251, 253, 258			127.50	132.50
INSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 203, 209, 211, 217, 219, 222, 224, 225, 230, 232, 233, 235, 241, 242, 243, 244, 249, 250, 252, 253, 260, 261, 266, 267, 268, 269, 271			125.00*	130.00*
DECK C. OUTSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 300, 306, 308, 314, 316, 322			127.50	132.50
INSIDE ROOMS (with two berths): 304, 310			127.50	132.50
INSIDE ROOMS (with four berths): 302, 312, 318, 320			125.00*	130.00*
SPECIAL REDUCTION OF 10% ON ROUND-TRIP TICKETS FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY. * MINIMUM RATES				

Children between 1 and 10 years: Half Fare. Infants under 1 year: \$11.00.
The Company reserves the right to charge full rate for children more than one in a family, half fare will be charged occupying an entire berth.

EASTBOUND: U. S. or Canadian Revenue Tax additional. WESTBOUND: U. S. RAIL FARE. BOULOGNE-SUR-MER - PARIS Second Class \$2.50; Third Class \$1.25. CHG.

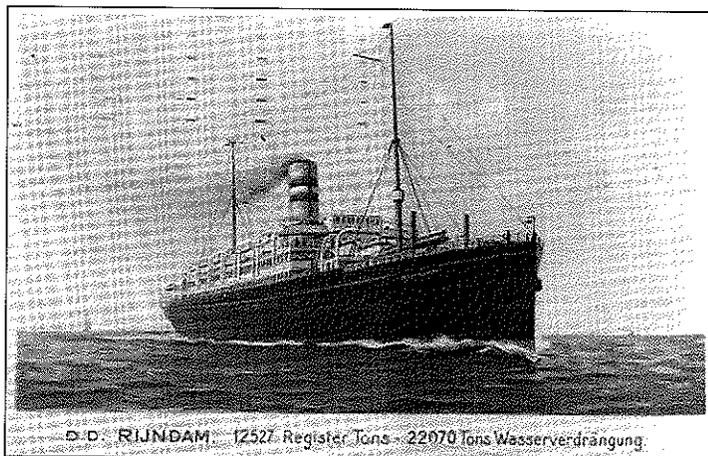
SECOND CLASS THROUGH RATES				
(SUMMIT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE)				
SCANDINAVIAN AND FINNISH PORTS (via Plymouth (Southampton))	U. S. S.			POINTS IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE
	Rotterdam	New Amsterdam Volendam Veendam	Nieuw Huydam	
DEMARK: Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo (Christiansia), Christiania, Stavanger	\$145.00*	\$140.00*	\$135.00*	DANZIG, via Rotterdam LITHAU or MEMEL PILLAU RIGA (Prepaid only) LENNINGRAD CONSTANTINOPLE PATRAS (Prepaid only)
SWEDEN: Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Malmö, Stockholm	115.00*	110.00*	105.00*	
FINLAND: Abo, Hango, Helsingfors	102.50*	147.50*	142.50*	
	165.00*	160.00*	155.00*	

*Including Board and Lodging in Great Britain. Children between 1 and 10 years: Half Fare. U. S. REVENUE OR HEAD TAX ADDITIONAL.





Passengers on the Holland-America Line Dock in Hoboken, New Jersey, c.1930. The three-funneled ship is Statendam which began sailing in 1929. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.



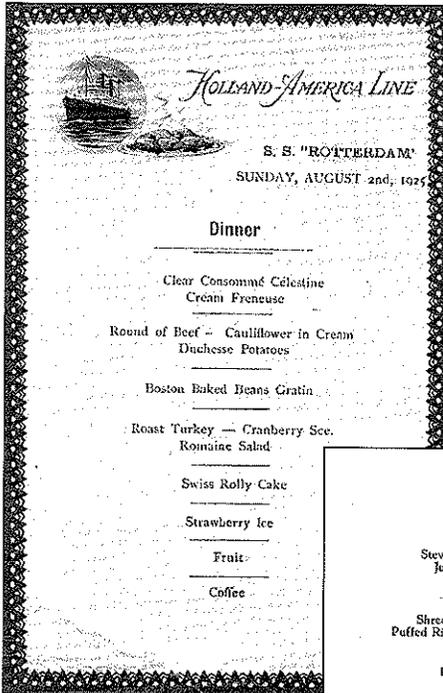
1929 Three-funneled *Statendam* sails.

1930s During the Depression, older ships sold, including *Nieuw Amsterdam*, and most were scrapped.

1937 A new keel was laid for *Nieuw Amsterdam* (2); designed for either passenger or cruise sailing, class partitioning was not as pronounced. She sailed in 1938 and could reach 20½ knots.

1939-40 Heavy passenger demand as war spread across Europe.

WWII *Nieuw Amsterdam* laid up in New York, *Statendam* in Rotterdam, *Rotterdam* scrapped; *Statendam* burned during German bombardment of Rotterdam in May 1940 office moved to Curacao. *Nieuw Amsterdam* transferred to Halifax, converted to troop ship (8,000 troops vs. 1,232 passengers) during the war carried 378,361 souls, sailed 530,452 miles; returned to Rotterdam 10 April 1946, having left 22 September 1939.



1946

Nine of 25 ships in 1939 remained, 12 lost, 3 captured, 1 converted; *Nieuw Amsterdam* returns to passenger service and in 1947 begins cruises from New York to West Indies.

BREAKFAST

Fruit
Apples, Oranges and Pears
Stewed Prunes and Apricots - Figs in Syrup
Juices - Orange, Tomato or Sauerkraut

Cereals
Oatmeal - Hominy
Shredded Wheat - All Bran - Puffed Wheat
Puffed Rice - Grepennuts - Corn Flakes - Rice Krispies

Toast
Plain, Milk, Butter, Cinnamon Toast

Fish
Pilchards in Tomato Sauce - Fresh Fish with Lemon

Eggs and Omelets
Boiled, Fried, Turned over, Scrambled, Poached
Omelet with: Cheese, Chickenlivers, Parsley

Grilled
Smoked Ham - Star Bacon - Hamburger

Cold Cuts
Roast Loin of Pork - Aloyau of Beef - Boiled Ham
Cervelat - Tongue and Bologne Sausage

Cheeses
Gouda, Leiden, Edam and Gruyère

Preserves
Honey - Marmalade - Peanut Butter
Strawberry, Apricot and Raspberry Jam

Bread
White, Rye and Graham Bread - Pumpernickel
Currant Buns, Sweet and Soft Rolls, Dutch Ruskis

Beverages
Coffee, Sanka Coffee, Instant Postum, Tea, Chocolate
Fresh and Malted Milk - Cream - Buttermilk
Iced Tea and Coffee

S.S. ROTTERDAM TOURIST CLASS
FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1966

Holland-America Line

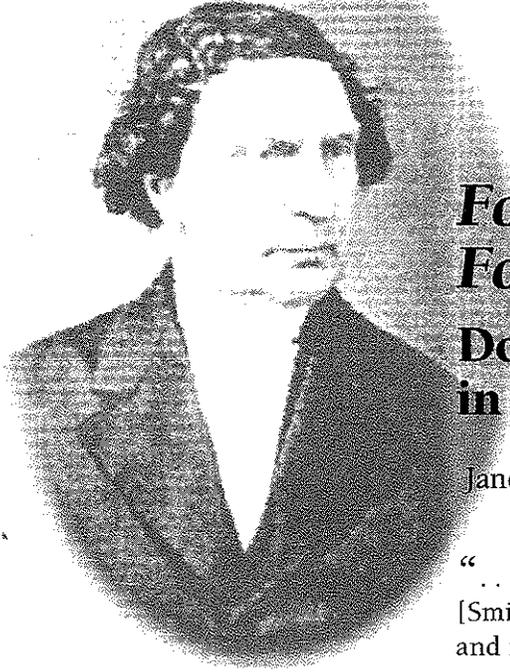
Sources

H. M. Le Fleming, *Ships of the Holland-America Line*, (London: John Marshbank Ltd. Publishers, 1963, 1965).
A Bridge to the Seven Seas: Holland-America Line Centennial, (Amsterdam: Meijer Pers bv., 1973).
<http://www.unofficial.net/hal/>



Passengers, boarding from Boulogne, were ferried out to the ship via tender.

Douwe Johannes Vander Werp



Forty-two Carriages and Forty-three Calls

Douwe Johannes Vander Werp in the Netherlands

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

“ . . . Dismissed from office there [Smilde] mainly due to his conduct and mystical ideas, and wandering around here for want of work. For several months he’s been roaming around here exhorting where he can, and his removal is very much desired.”¹ Such was the judgment of Burgemeester Kymmell of Smilde, Drenthe, regarding Douwe Vander Werp, in a letter to the provincial governor dated 14 November 1834.

And, regarding his teaching, “. . . filling the children with such awful and outlandish images about religion that the children became so afraid that some ran away crying and could not sleep at night.”²

One hundred sixty-six years later an elder of the Christian Reformed Church of Graafschap, Michigan, remarked about the same man, “He was like a Moses who led the church and the young (Christian Reformed)



Groningen. Postcard: Archives, Calvin College.

denomination out of the wilderness."³

The Early Years

When Douwe Vander Werp, pastor of the Secession congregation in Burum, Friesland, received a call in 1864 from the Christian Reformed Church in Graafschap, Michigan, to come and be their pastor, he declined. And when the call came a second time, he declined again. There were good reasons for Vander Werp to decline. As a highly respected and greatly involved pastor in the *Afgescheiden* Churches in the Netherlands,⁴ he was well aware that the Graafschap congregation belonged to a newly formed denomination that was not officially recognized by his own denomination in the Netherlands. From its beginning in 1857, the Christian Reformed Church had applied to the *Afgescheiden* Churches in the Netherlands to be a part of their fellowship. The *Afgescheiden* Churches, however, not sure what the group of emigrants thousands of miles away was all about, sent their regrets. According to James Schaap, "To Dutch pastors there was a deep suspicion that the CRC was an ill-gotten child in search of legitimacy."⁵

Once before, Vander Werp had found himself caught up in a small break-away group and had regretted that decision ever since. Did he really want to embroil himself again with such a group? Also, he knew all about the hardships and pitfalls of a new denomination getting started. As Hendrik De Cock's right-hand man, he had been there from the beginning of *Afgescheiden* Churches and had experienced all the pains and difficulties of the secession. His reluctance to throw himself into another religious maelstrom is understandable.

Further, there was the passage across the Atlantic for him to consider. In 1864 ocean travel was still an

uncomfortable if not an outright risky business. Moreover, letters testified to the hardships of life in the American colonies and the high mortality rates. Vander Werp had buried three wives and two children already. His fourth wife, Gerritdina Brummeler, was pregnant with their second child⁶ and his own health was not robust.⁷ When, however, the call came a third time, it could no longer be disregarded. He packed his books, said goodbye to all that was dear to him, and at age fifty-three began a new life in a new denomination and a new country. And he would play an important role in the early years of the Christian Reformed Church.

Born in the city of Groningen, the Netherlands, on 13 April 1811, Vander Werp was baptized in the State (*Hervormde*) Church.⁸ Around 1818, his parents, Johannes Vander Werp



Douwe Johannes Vander Werp. Photo taken about 1872. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

and Katarina Huizinga, previously *schippers*, settled in Uithuizen, Katarina's village of birth, where Johannes became a tinsmith.⁹ They joined the town's *Hervormde Kerk* and Johannes involved himself in church life by helping the custodian with various church duties. Financially

they must have been able to afford an education for their son, because at age eighteen he had achieved the third level of teacher training. There were four levels, the lowest labeled fourth. To qualify for a full teaching position one had to attain at least the second level. Lacking this, in 1829 he went to work for the old and ailing schoolmaster Wieko Pietersen in Houwerzijl.¹⁰ Houwerzijl is situated only a few kilometers south of Ulrum, where *Dominee* De Cock had become pastor that same year.

Circumstances and events soon led Vander Werp and De Cock to become acquainted with each other and begin a relationship of mutual support that lasted until De Cock died in 1842. Although De Cock was not their pastor, Pietersen and his wife were very much taken with him and invited him to their home. There the pastor soon took notice of the young and enthusiastic teacher's aide who had a fine hand for writing, a useful skill to assist someone who had many documents, letters, and missives to write and to copy. Vander Werp became De Cock's secretary, and a more intimate relationship developed as Vander Werp became an ardent disciple of De Cock and his message. Only three years after meeting De Cock, the twenty-one-year-old wrote to his parents ". . . oh that your eyes might be opened and you might see your sinful state . . ." ¹¹ His parents, however, never did leave the *Hervormde Kerk* for the *Afgescheiden* Churches.

Not only did Vander Werp write what was dictated to him, but in 1833 he was asked by De Cock to compose a rebuttal to a document printed in opposition to De Cock's preaching. This document, generally referred to as the "little bluebook," had been published anonymously, but common knowledge attributed the writing to Rev. Petrus Hofstede De Groot,

professor of theology at the nearby University of Groningen, De Cock's predecessor in Ulrum.¹² The response, titled *Public Protest*, co-authored with another young follower of De Cock, Luitsen Dijkstra, a peat worker from Smilde, came out in 1834.¹³ On the cover was the name De Cock, but clearly visible on the inside were the names Vander Werp and Dijkstra.

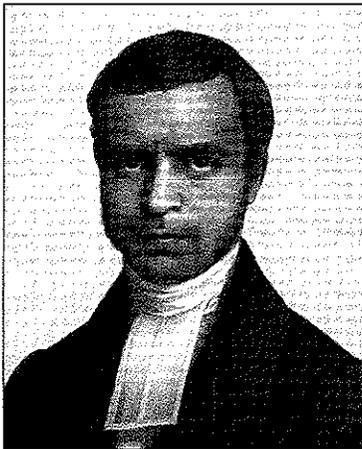
At the time, due to the social stratification of Dutch life, De Groot felt humiliated that De Cock had allowed two young men without any theological training to refute him as equals in a theological debate. De Cock's thinking, on the other hand, was that an unlettered and unlearned person endowed with the Holy Spirit was an equal match for any learned one. Nevertheless, the effects of H. P. De Groot's wrath soon were felt. Irritated at being bested by a simple grade school teacher, De Groot, who was also the School Supervisor for the district of Groningen, which included the Houwerzijl School, instructed Wieko Pietersen to fire Douwe. Disregarding Pietersen's petitions as well as those of the children's parents, De Groot prevailed, and Vander Werp was ousted as teacher not only from Houwerzijl, but from the entire province of Groningen. Grounds for dismissal were that he, De Groot, did not want *onzuivere godsdienst*, suspect religion, being taught in his schools.

With this, Vander Werp suffered personal loss because of his association with the Seceders; he could sympathize fully with De Cock, who had been dismissed from his Ulrum pulpit the year before. De Cock took the former teacher into his home to help him with the mountains of correspondence he was conducting with many church as well as government officials.¹⁴ As De Cock's valued scribe during these years, Vander Werp learned the language of the church, of governmental decrees, and of ecclesias-

tical debate—skills that in the years ahead he would use repeatedly as he presided over synods and classis meetings.

Smilde, School and Marriage

When De Cock was incarcerated in Groningen in November 1834, Vander



Hendrik De Cock (1801-1842) was a leader in the 1832 secession from the Dutch State Church and a mentor to Vander Werp. Image: Archives, Calvin College.

Werp moved to Smilde in Drenthe. On 20 November 1834 the church in Smilde became the second, after De Cock's church in Ulrum, to secede from the Hervormde Kerk. These people at Smilde were unhappy with the public school situation as well. Luitsen Dijkstra and two other men formed the Christian school board, and as soon as Vander Werp arrived they hired him as teacher. The very next day after they had incorporated themselves, Vander Werp began to teach in a small barn. Eight long benches and two tables were brought into the barn, and school began with twenty children the first day, and forty the second, who shared their school with farm animals. Vander Werp earned five cents per child per week. This was the first organized private school based on Reformed teachings in the Netherlands.

In their enthusiasm, however, the

Seceders sought no application for a license or permission from the provincial authorities. Citing that in their estimation the schoolroom was considered a fire hazard and an unhealthy place, the authorities quickly closed the school. As noted earlier, according to Mayor Kymell, "The children were so afraid of that dark place and the fiery teacher that some had run away crying while others could not sleep at night."¹⁵ Vander Werp gave up teaching, but was fined fifty guilders and court costs of two guilders and thirty-nine cents—a hefty sum for someone getting paid only in nickels.¹⁶

Without a full-time teaching position, Vander Werp turned to his second love, or perhaps by now his first—that of preaching. From November 1834 to March 1835 he traveled the countryside conducting services and teaching catechism in newly formed *Afgescheiden* congregations. Sometimes he would teach reading and writing to the students in his catechism classes so they could learn their lessons. When in March 1835 an *Afgescheiden* congregation was organized at Dwingelo, they called him as their regular *oefenaar*, or lay pastor. At Dwingelo he preached such fiery messages on their sinful state that many of the women in the audience fainted.¹⁷ The authorities however, were not pleased. The mayor reported, "For several months he's been roaming around here exhorting where he can, and his removal is very much desired."¹⁸

After De Cock was released from jail in February 1835, he also moved to Smilde. In May he was appointed pastor for the surrounding *Afgescheiden* churches, those within a seventy-five kilometer radius, leaving Vander Werp once again out of work. However, on the advise of De Cock, the congregation of Uithuizermeeden in Groningen hired Vander Werp as

their regular *oefenaar* at an annual salary of 450 guilders.¹⁹ He earned his keep. Each Sunday he preached three times and also during the week. Here, as in Dwingelo, his passionate sermons caused many to faint. Here he also experienced his share of governmental persecution. For gathering and addressing a group of more than twenty, he was fined one hundred guilders plus court costs. Because hefty fines like this were one-quarter of his annual income, Vander Werp held many services during the summer months in the countryside, away from prying eyes. His popularity as a preacher is confirmed by a letter dated 14 September 1835, written by Burgemeester H. B. Jonker to the Governor of the province, in which he stated “. . . the services conducted continually this summer by Douwe Vander Werp have drawn large crowds from all directions.”²⁰ But these services, too, were often interrupted. One Sunday, men armed with clubs broke up the meeting; at another time Vander Werp was pelted with apples.

But nothing could stop him from preaching the Word. Soon he was also helping out in his own hometown of Uithuizen. Both of these congregations were not entirely made up of poor laborers; they also had some wealthy members in their midst. One of these, the Van Dam family, had a marriageable daughter and, on 7 November 1835 Vander Werp married 25-year-old Martje Harms Van Dam in Uithuizen. Their son Johannes was born on 28 August 1836.²¹ Martje died in December of that same year. Later he often mentioned to his friends how on her deathbed she had prophesied that as long as he lived, he would see Zion grow.

The Road to Ordination

One of the greatest needs of the newly

formed *Afgescheiden* denomination was the need for pastors. Only seven pastors left the *Hervormde Kerk* to join the *Afgescheiden* and it was impossible for these seven to fulfill the demands made by the many new congregations being formed.²² To fill this need, vacant congregations looked to *oefenaars* or lay pastors. This was not a satisfactory solution, since many of these lay pastors did not have theological training. A number had only some grade school education and a few could not write.²³ The lack of systematic theological training also led to a diversity of teaching as each lay pastor preached as he felt led by the Spirit. Many *oefenaars* were also suspected of being driven by pride and a desire for attention, causing unrest with their inflammatory rhetoric. The situation deteriorated to such an extent that in 1838 Rev. Simon Van Velzen, in an article in the *De Reformatie*, strongly urged that no untrained pastors be allowed to shepherd a congregation. Or, in the event they were chosen to do so, that they refrain from preaching themselves, and instead read a sermon prepared by an ordained minister.

At the General Synod in Utrecht in 1837, with Van Velzen presiding, the main points under discussion were matters of Church Order. De Cock and many of the congregations in the northern provinces wanted a strict return to the Synod of Dordt Church Order while Scholte and the delegations from the southern provinces preferred a more updated version. One of the points of contention was the ordination of *oefenaars*.

De Cock, with his strong pietistic leanings, felt that piety was more important than learning. According to him, God's wisdom resided with the foolish. Scholte, trained at Leiden, had a different viewpoint. He warned against ordaining untrained men to the clergy. As early as 1833, shortly after Vander Werp had been dismissed

from his teaching position, De Cock had written privately to Scholte on behalf of Vander Werp, asking Scholte what he thought about ordaining Vander Werp as a pastor. Already then, Scholte strongly advised De Cock against ordaining lay people, including Vander Werp.

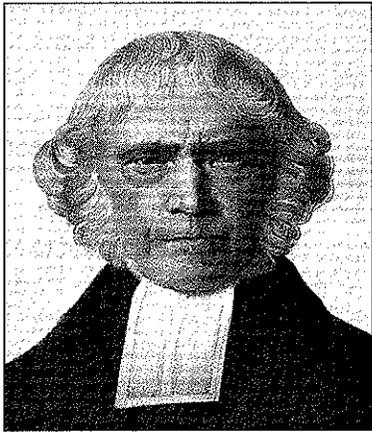
Unable to reconcile their differences, the congregations of Zwolle, Kampen, Mastenbroek and Zalk split from the *Afgescheiden*, calling themselves the *Kruisgezinden* (Churches under the Cross).²⁴ Initially De Cock sided with the group but, at the earnest plea of Albertus Van Raalte, returned to the main body. Being one of De Cock's disciples, Vander Werp followed his lead and joined the *Kruisgezinden*, but unlike De Cock, he stayed with the group.

On 11 June 1840 the *Kruisgezinden* held a meeting at Mastenbroek, during which there was a motion to ordain several *oefenaars*, among them Douwe Vander Werp, as ministers. There was some discussion regarding examination of the candidates, but that was set aside, as well as the ordination itself. The following Sunday, June 14, a plan was set into motion, of which those to be ordained apparently knew nothing.²⁵ In a church service held at the Ridderinkhoff home, elder Schouwenberg, of Zwolle, ordained W. W. Smitt and Douwe Vander Werp. In the evening service, Smitt ordained Schouwenberg.

Vander Werp's father-in-law, Harm Van Dam, and his brother-in-law, Wolter Van Dam, also were connected with the *Kruisgezinden*. Wolter, also a lay preacher, had been exhorting far and wide. He had left the *Hervormde Kerk* to go with De Cock, but at one point the two differed, and when De Cock censured him as elder, Wolter and his father went over to the *Kruisgezinden*. The extended Van Dam family, the parents and their two adult sons Remmert and Lammert, their

daughter Reina and her husband and their two little children, Vander Werp and his son Johannes, as well as two live-in maids, all lived in the same house.²⁶

But many in the congregation could not justify these ordinations and walked out of the service. Vander Werp



T.F. (Tamme Foppes) De Haan (1791-1868), taught many of the early ministers, including Vander Werp, in the secession. Initially De Haan taught in his parsonage, as Vander Werp would later do as well. Image: Archives, Calvin College.

himself began to doubt the validity of the ordination, since it had none of the prerequisites required by the Church Order of Dordt, such as passing a rigorous classical examination, and being called by a specific congregation. Working for De Cock, he would have become intimately familiar with the church order. By week's end Vander Werp had recanted his ordination and returned to the *Afgescheiden* group.

In order to become an ordained minister according to the church order, Vander Werp began theological study with De Cock in 1841. This continued until November 1842 when De Cock died. It is not quite clear how Vander Werp supported himself during this period. Due to his hasty ordination, he had lost some credibility with the people from Uithuizen and Uithuizermeeden, and by February 1843 he had relocated to Sappemeer, to

the south. This move may also have been due to his courting a woman from Sappemeer. On 29 November 1843 Albertje Reinders Boersma, a farmer's daughter, became Vander Werp's second wife.

With De Cock's death, and Vander Werp's studies curtailed, he received a call from a congregation in Leeuwarden, Friesland. There he would be able to serve the church and continue his education under the leadership of Rev. T. F. De Haan.²⁷

Leeuwarden, 1844–1851

Shortly before Vander Werp accepted the call to Leeuwarden, the congregation had experienced a split, reducing the number of members to a mere handful and, in fact, losing their church building in the process. Under the guidance of *Dominee* T. F. De Haan they worked out their differences, found another building and felt ready to call a new shepherd to lead them. De Haan proposed Vander Werp, who had not yet completed his studies for the ministry. As a result, the people of Leeuwarden deemed it inappropriate for him to preach from the pulpit. Wyger Doekes Hellema, a well-to-do and influential farmer, protested greatly at having an *oefenaar* as pastor.²⁸ Hellema had the support of Rev. Van Velzen in this matter, and so the raised pulpit was removed and a floor-level lectern installed, from which Vander Werp could exhort.

After completing his studies, Vander Werp was examined on Wednesday, 20 March 1844 and days following. The examination took place in a combined meeting of the classes of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe held in Leeuwarden. Twelve candidates presented themselves, and not only their knowledge but also their endurance was put to the test. On Thursday each candidate was given a text about which they were to prepare a written sermon by the next day. On Friday,

from 9 AM to 2 PM, the examination in foreign languages took place, after which followed nearly eight hours of questioning in biblical exegesis and Bible history.²⁹ After a short intermission, at 10 PM, the examinations continued in dogmatics until 6 the next morning. Then followed the questioning in church history and geography of Palestine, after which each candidate gave a personal testimony of his inner calling to the ministry. When the examination was over, four of the candidates were found wanting.³⁰ Vander Werp had passed.

He then officially accepted the call to Leeuwarden to become their pastor and was formally ordained on 7 April 1844 by Rev. De Haan. What a satisfying moment it must have been for Vander Werp, at age 33, to finally be considered a fully ordained pastor. From his annual salary of 800 guilders he had to supply his own lodging.³¹ He and Albertje lived next to the church on the *Wisserstraat*, where two sons and a daughter were born into the family.

Once a pastor, Vander Werp's tasks included ecclesiastical matters beyond his congregation. One issue was the protocol of the *ambsgewaad* or clergy costume. Many discussions were held concerning the correctness of wearing the standard costume, consisting of a long black coat, *kuitbroek* or knickers, and shirt with *befje*, a white bib-like tie. This was essentially the costume of the well-to-do Dutch burgher of the eighteenth century that over time had come to represent the garb reserved for clergy. Hendrik Scholte had soon eschewed this costume for more contemporary clothing. As early as 1840 the Synod of Amsterdam dealt with this question. It was decided that clergy should wear modest and fitting clothing that would not give offense. It was also recommended that ministers appear in the pulpit in the standard clergy costume, but this was not made mandatory. Vander Werp became

embroiled in this debate when the pastor of Zwolle, H. A. De Vos, accepted a call to Marrum, Friesland, and declared to his new congregation that he no longer wished to wear the traditional garb. The Marrum congregation insisted and De Vos refused. On the initiative of Vander Werp, this standoff was sent to a regional meeting of churches from Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe held in May 1846 in Groningen. As the provincial corre-

initiated a rigorous church discipline program. Along with an elder he visited each family before serving communion. In November 1851 he bade farewell to the congregation, having accepted a call to Ferwerd, Friesland.

The years of his pastorate in Leeuwarden were particularly difficult for the country. Failure of the potato crops, the principal food source for the Dutch, in 1846 and 1847 drove food

you and teach you in the way you should go," revealed the significance he placed on instruction. Besides the regular catechism lessons to the youth, he initiated lessons to the older members and those unable to read. He wrote all the council minutes and, in the minutes of 26 June 1854, he reported with great joy that the General Synod of 1854 held in Zwolle had decided to establish a theological school in Kampen.

When in due time he received two calls, the Ferwerd council tried to keep him by offering him a one-hundred-guilder increase in salary. He declined these calls, but shortly after he accepted a call to Lioessens. Although the congregation of Ferwerd had seemed anxious to keep him, they voiced some criticism when preparing to forward his membership papers. They complained that he had been unable to complete all the family visits for the year and had visited the home of one prominent member too much. Vander Werp defended himself by stating that in the summer it was difficult to find people at home because they were out working, and in the winter he had to preach three to four times a week, while also teaching six to seven catechism classes, so there really was not much time left. Besides, he chided them, why had they waited until his departure to raise these issues?³⁴

Lioessens, 1854–1857

The Lioessens congregation had organized in 1851 and in November 1854 Vander Werp became their first pastor. One reason for this three years of a vacant pulpit was that *Afgescheiden* congregations had an undersupply of ordained ministers. In 1854, thirty-four formally organized congregations had only twenty-three pastors to serve them.

Douwe, Albertje, and their children, Jan, Catharine, and Reinder, arrived a few days before the installation service.³⁵ Only two months later,



Ferwerd, Friesland, where Vander Werp served the secessionist congregation, 1851-1854. He preached four times per week and launched an educational program for both young and old. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

spondent for Friesland, Vander Werp presented the matter in such a way that the meeting was swayed in favor of Rev. De Vos. Yet he himself always wore the prescribed garb in all the churches he served in the Netherlands, as had his mentor, De Cock.

It appears that after his ordination, Vander Werp's preaching style changed. While he was commended for his preaching, there were no more references to the emotional rhetoric that caused offense to so many while he was still an *oefenaar*.

During the seven years he labored in Leeuwarden, Sunday services were well attended, so much so that within half a year the congregation had doubled and the building had to be enlarged several times.³² Vander Werp

prices to extremely high levels. The poor suffered, and many, such as groups led by Van Raalte and Scholte, looked to America as an answer. In the summer of 1849 Leeuwarden experienced a cholera epidemic with numerous deaths. And in March 1851, Douwe's own four-year-old son, Reinder, died.³³

Ferwerd, 1851–1854

Organized by De Cock in 1835, the *Afgescheiden* congregation of Ferwerd, too, benefited from Vander Werp's ministry. He preached three times a Sunday and on Thursday evenings. In all his churches in the Netherlands, he instituted a weeknight service, depending on a full moon. Douwe's installation text, Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct

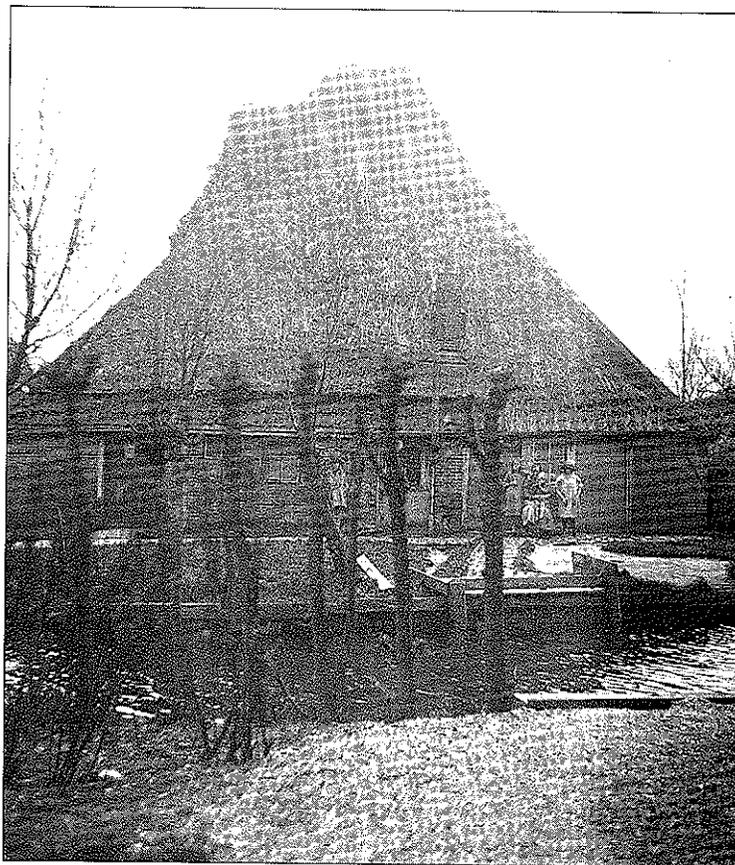
on 24 February 1855 Albertje passed away at the age of thirty-seven. With no one to oversee the busy household and three young children, Albertje's death must have been a heavy loss for a man whose whole life was taken up with work in his own church and the denomination at large. Yet, in spite of this, while serving at Lioessens, he became correspondent for Classis Dokkum, and worked, along with J. R. Kreulen from Hallum, and K. J. Pieters from Franeker, on a publication defending the *Afscheiding*.³⁶ In 1856 he married Hendrikje Karsten, who died two years later.

North Holland: Broek op Langedijk, 1857–1859 and Den Helder, 1859–1861

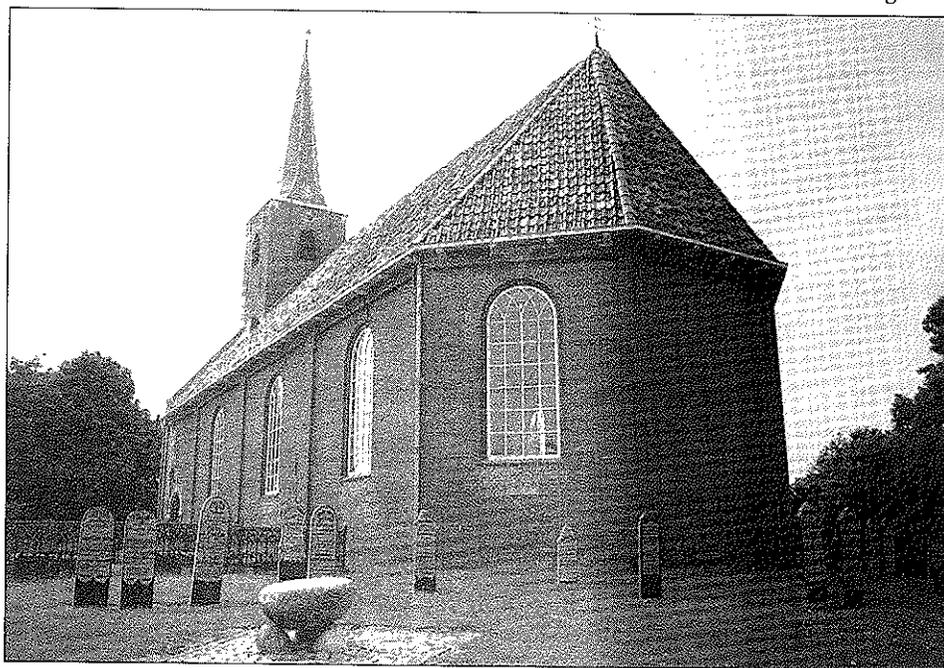
Little is known about his ministry to these two churches. It may be assumed that, as he had previously and did subsequently, he worked hard. After the death of Hendrikje he returned to Leeuwarden to a member of his former congregation and asked her to marry him. He and Gerritdina Johanna Brummeler, nineteen years his junior, were married on 27 May 1859 in Den Helder. With Gerritdina taking over the care of the children and family duties, he found time to use his organizational skills in gathering the synodical decisions of the Afscheiden church in the Netherlands and publishing them in 1859.³⁷

Burum, Friesland, 1861–1864

Burum was the first congregation to be organized by Hendrik De Cock on 21 June 1835. Burum lay within walking distance of Ulrum, and many from Burum had attended De Cock's services from the beginning. Among other Afscheiden groups, Burum was unique in that its consistory minutes contain no mention of disputes, arguments, or other internal strife. So sensitive were the members to



(left) The parsonage of the Broek op Langedijk congregation which Vander Werp served, 1857-1859. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.



(below) A modern photo of the church in Burum, which was Vander Werp's last charge in the Netherlands. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

financial situations of less fortunate brothers and sisters, that they did away with collections during the services. Gifts from those who could pay were collected during the week. Vander Werp's predecessor, Frens Strik, stayed

in Burum for fourteen and a half years—an indication of the harmony within the congregation. Vander Werp's Burum pastorate concluded with the calls from Graafschap, Michigan.⁶

Endnotes

1. "... aldaar afgezet uit hoofd van zijn gedrag en mistieke denkbeelden, thans hier uit broodgebrek omlopende. Sedert maanden hier reeds rondgezworven hebbende en waar hij kan oefening houdende word zijn verwijdering zeer gewenscht." Verzonden brieven 1834-1836, Gemeentearchief Smilde, the Netherlands.
2. "... zulke schrikkelijke en wonderlijke voorstellingen betreffende de godsdienst aan de kinderen deed, dat deze daarvoor zoo bang werden dat eenigen schrijvende wegliepen en zelfs des nachts niet konden slapen." Ibid.
3. Bill Sytsma, elder of Graafschap CRC to John Burdick, staff writer of the *Holland Sentinel* in an article dated 5 February 2000.
4. The *Afgescheiden* denomination begun in 1834 was founded by Rev. H. De Cock in Ulrum, Groningen, the Netherlands.
5. James Schaap, *Our Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1998) p. 177.
6. Willemina Vander Werp was born 15 July 1864 in Burum, Friesland.
7. J. Wesseling, *Afscheiding in Friesland*, vol. 2 (Groningen: De Vuurbaak bv, 1981) p. 246. Already in Leeuwarden, Vander Werp's health suffered occasionally due to overwork. In December 1844 his consistory allowed him to decide for himself whether he was physically capable of preaching three times instead of two. He was also allowed to stay home and not travel during inclement weather.
8. There seems to be some confusion about his place of birth, since some mention Uithuizen. See: F.L. Bos, *Archiefstukken betreffende de Afscheiding van 1834*, vol. 2 (Kampen: J. H. Kok) p. 112. Vander Werp himself, in a court summons, answered the authorities that he was born in Groningen, and baptismal records of the Hervormde Kerk confirm this.
9. The word "werp" is an old Frisian/Groningen word for "kwelder," land situated outside the dikes which had silted in and did not flood during normal tides. Farmers working this land were called *kwelder* farmers and people from such land were called "from the *kwelder*," or "van de werp."
10. The people of Houwerzijl belonged to the parish of Niekerk and part of Vander Werp's job as Pietersen's assistant was also to be "voorzanger" or lead singer in the Niekerk church.
11. B. DeGroot, "Douwe Johannes van der Werp," in T. Kuiper, ed., *Jaarboek voor de Geschiedenis van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Kampen: J.H. Kok): 18-19; DeGroot cites *De Wachter*, 8 July 1869.
12. Hofstee's booklet, "Wien zult gij gelooven, den mensch of God" (Who will you believe: Man or God), was published in 1833.
13. *Openlijk Protest* was published in Veendam in 1834 by T.E. Mulder.
14. There is evidence that De Cock, feeling bad about Vander Werp's ouster, wrote on his behalf to Baron P.J. Van Zuylen Van Nijevelt, who wrote back in a letter on 29 July 1834, "Brother Vander Werp's dismissal saddens me; however, I am at present not able to help him, but will not forget him." G. Keizer, *De Afscheiding van 1834: Haar aanleiding, naar authentieke brieven en bescheiden beschreven* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1934): 419.
15. H. Bouma, *Een Vergeten Hoofdstuk* (Enschede: J. Boersma, 1959): 21.
16. The congregation of Wildervanck gathered fl 20 toward his fine. Perhaps there were others who helped as well, because without paying the fine, Vander Werp would have gone to jail and there is no record of him going to jail. Wesseling, *De Afscheiding van 1834 in Groningerland*, vol. 2, p. 262.
17. J. Kok, *Meister Albert en zijn zonen*, (Kampen, 1909) (reprinted 1984) p. 189.
18. Elly DeRover-Wijnstekers, "De Afscheiding van 1834 te Smilde" (2000), <http://www.members.tripod.lycis.nl/veldeing/smilde.htm>. Original in: Verzonden brieven, 1934-1836," Gemeentearchief, Smilde, the Netherlands.
19. On 3 August 1835 he preached his inaugural sermon on 1 Peter 5:10, 11.
20. J. Wesseling, *De Afscheiding van 1834 in Groningerland*, vol. 2, (Groningen, De Vuurbaak, 1978) p. 146.
21. Johannes died at age 20 while serving in the army.
22. Hendrik De Cock, Simon Van Velzen, Albertus Van Raalte, Hendrik Scholte, Anthonie Brummelkamp, and Gezelle Meerburg.
23. For instance, Pieter Kornelis Radema could not write; however, that did not mean these people were illiterate—many had been taught to read but not to write.
24. Literally "cross-focused."
25. J.C. van der Does, *Kruiggezinden en Separatisten* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1940) p. 45.
26. Wesseling *Afscheiding in Groningen*, vol. 1, p. 115.
27. Rev. Tamme Foppes De Haan (1791-1868) was a Hervormde minister in Molkwerum, Exmorra and Ee, Friesland. He left the Staté church to join the Afgescheidenen and instructed new pastors. Later he became a professor at the newly formed seminary at Kampen. He himself had formal theological training.
28. Son of Doeke Wygers Hellema, author of *Kroniek van een Friese Boer*.
29. Since Douwe's training had not included the study of Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, he was excused from this part of the examination.
30. It is of interest to note that Martin Ypma, of Minnertsgea, later pastor of Vriesland, Michigan, was one of those who did not pass his first examination for the ministry.
31. Pastors in the State Church earned salaries between fl 1,000 and fl 2,000 annually. *Afgescheiden* pastors earned between fl 500 and fl 1,000.
32. Between August 1843 and April 1844, 44 people made profession of faith and 30 other members added.
33. Reinder Vander Werp, born 7 November 1853, son of Douwe Vander Werp and Albertje Reinders Boerma.
34. Wesseling, *De Afscheiding van 1834 in Friesland*, vol. 1, p. 130.
35. This Reinder was named after the Reinder who had died. The children's ages were Jan, 6, Catharine 4 and Reinder 1. His oldest son, Johannes, was 18 years old at this time and perhaps still living with his maternal grandparents.
36. H.J. Pieters, D.J. Vander Werp, and J.H. Kreulen, *Apologie: Is het Afscheiding in Nederland van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap uit God of uit de menschen?* (Franeker: T. Telenga, 1856).
37. D. J. Vander Werp, *Synodale besluiten des Christelijke Afgescheidene Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland van 1836-1837: Bijeenverzameld en van een algemene register voorzien* (Kampen: S. Van Velzen, Jr., 1859).

Douwe Johannes Vander Werp



The Fourth Wife

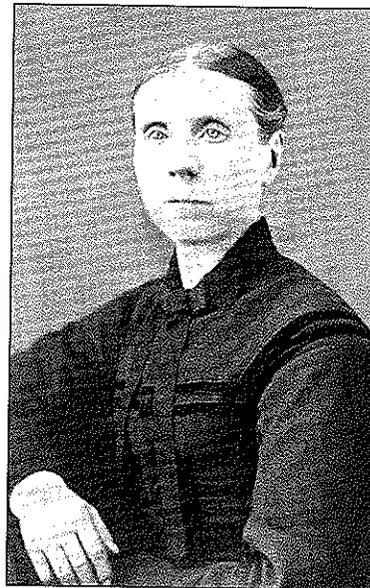
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

Like others of her day, Gerritdina Johanna Brummeler, Douwe Vander Werp's fourth wife, experienced both the soul-wrenching emotions of conversion and those of leaving the State Church to join the Secession movement. Even marrying Vander Werp was for her not so much a romantic decision as a spiritual one. Likewise, she viewed in spiritual terms their subsequent move to America and raising his children and their children while her husband worked endless hours for the church.

Her ancestors came from the province of Overijssel, the Netherlands. On 15 April 1824 her parents, Derk Ten Brummelaar¹ and Willemina Vierdag, were married in Zwolle and by 1828 had moved to Kampen, where Derk operated a hostelry and also worked as a traveling salesman. Once an important Hanseatic League city, Kampen had declined to a sleepy, picturesque port town by 1830, the year of Gerritdina's birth.²

As the third child in a family of nine children, Gerritdina knew from a young age what it was to look after little children, help around the house, and meet the public who stayed at their inn. Fortunately her education was not neglected. Letters written later in life reflect a beautiful penmanship and intelligent expression of thought. Her family belonged to the Dutch State Church (*Hervormde Kerk*) and was not swayed by leaders and followers of the 1834 secession movement, whom they

considered to be mostly uneducated religious fanatics. They may have based their bias on the fact that in Kampen the seceders did not have a good reputation. In a report of the member-



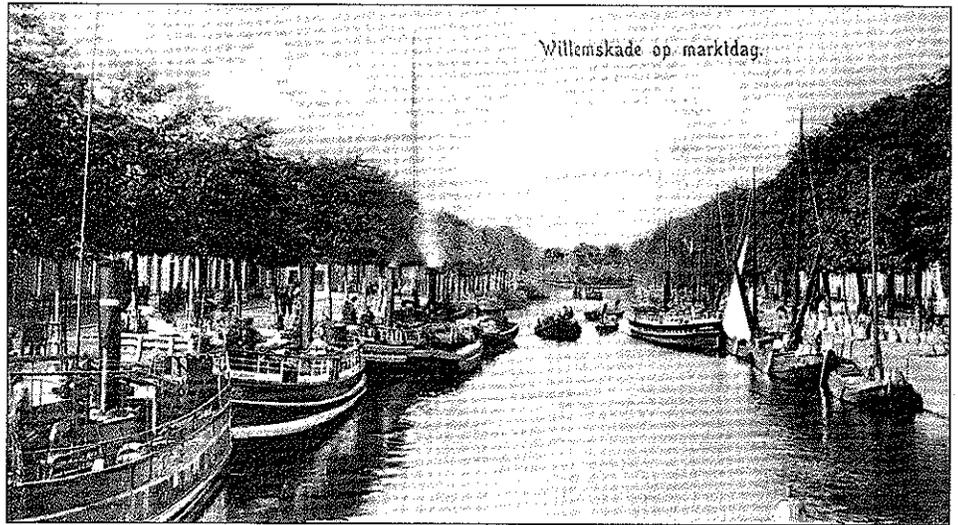
Gerritdina Johanna Brummeler Vander Werp when the family moved to Muskegon, Michigan, to serve the congregation there in 1872. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

ship of the Secession Church in the Netherlands, dated 1 April 1836, the members of the congregation in Kampen are described as, "... nearly all from the lower socio-economic class, and many not well mannered. On Sunday, 14 February, after the windows of their clandestine meeting house had been smashed in, the resulting melee had to be put down with military intervention."³ This did

not mean that the Ten Brummelaars themselves were lacking in faith or that they were not good church people because, according to Gerritina, “We had a good moral and virtuous upbringing.” She responded to that upbringing by making profession of faith in the State Church at age 18.⁴

Shortly after that her life took a dramatic turn when, like so many adult girls of her social class, she took a position as a domestic helper. The fact that Gerritina was already eighteen before she worked outside the home suggests that either she was needed at home or her family was sufficiently well-off for her not to have to find work at fourteen or sixteen years of age, as many of the poorer girls were required to do.

For the next ten and one-half years she worked for the well-to-do P. D. Simon family in Leeuwarden, Friesland. The journey from Kampen to Leeuwarden was usually accomplished by boat on the Zuider Zee to Lemmer, Friesland, and from Lemmer to Leeuwarden by canal boat. Not a difficult journey, but long enough that she could not readily visit home.



Leeuwarden (Ljouwert), Friesland, was, and remains, a busy commercial center for the region. Post card: Archives, Calvin College.

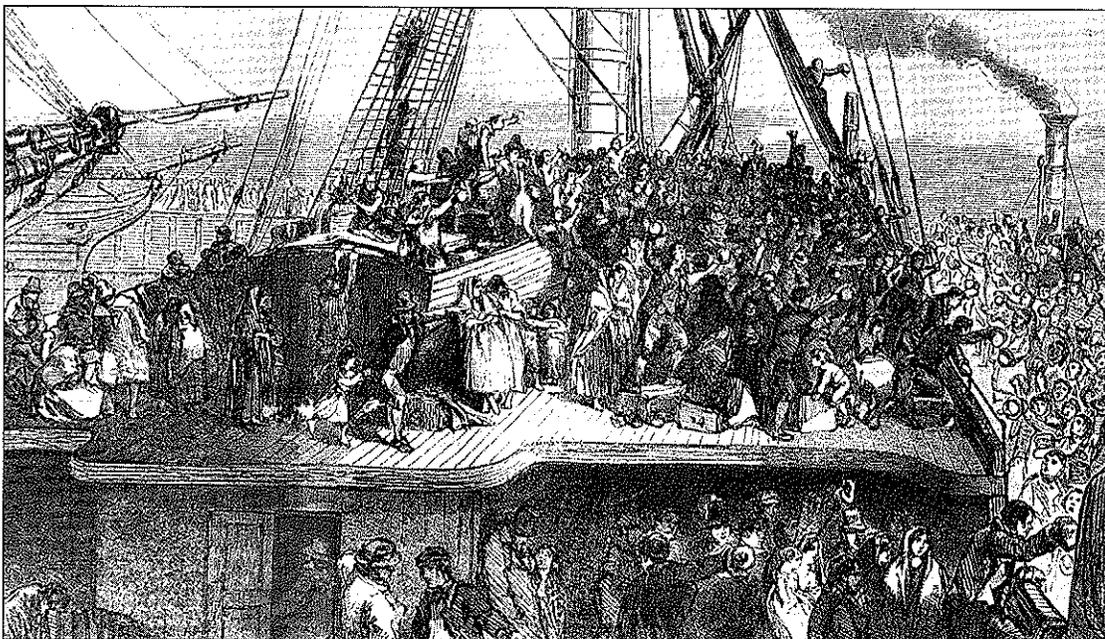
Moreover, maids received very little time off for such visits. At best she could have hoped for perhaps one Sunday in a month. Her communication with her family during those years was done mostly by letter.

Being a domestic in the Netherlands in the 1800s meant a life of hard work from sunup to sundown. A maid's day began early with laying the fires and preparing breakfast. After that she

scrubbed floors, washed and ironed clothes, did the marketing, tended the children and completed the numerous other tasks that came up in the course of daily life. Gerritina mentions how she rinsed laundry in the water of the canal by hanging over the side of a small rowboat. Still, the hard physical life paled in comparison to the efforts she expended on behalf of her soul.

She determined to live a “moral and virtuous life.” In Leeuwarden there may have been good reason for her to make that conscious decision, because Leeuwarden was a garrison town, a *kermis* or carnival town, and a market town that regularly attracted all kinds of people from the entire province. In short, it was a place with many temptations. In all likelihood her parents, as parents are wont to do, lectured her before she left home to “behave herself.”⁵

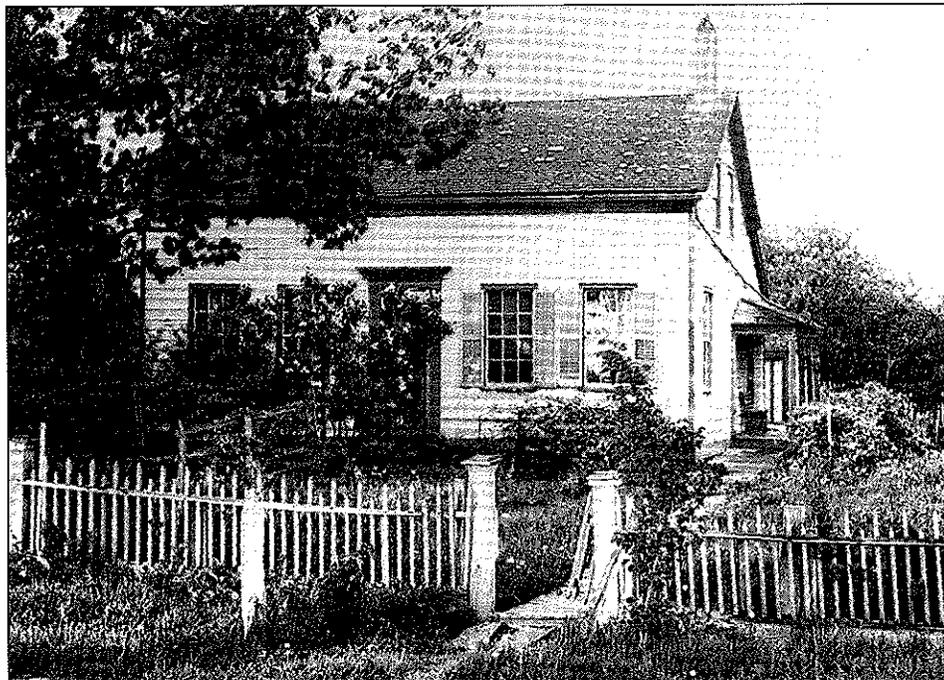
Once in Leeuwarden, she learned that in spite



Drawing of passengers on an immigrant ship from the middle of the nineteenth century, the time when the Vander Werps immigrated to West Michigan. Image: Illustrated London Times, 22 August 1896, p. 2.

of her “morality and virtuosity” she stood in grave danger of losing her soul unless she had a conversion experience. That news came to her particularly from Leentje Veluwenkamp, the Simon family’s other maid, who belonged to the *Afgescheiden* or Secessionists. She witnessed to Gerritdina about her own faith, and warned Gerritdina that unless she also became aware of her sinful state and the need for a Savior, she would surely perish. At Leentje’s invitation, Gerritdina accompanied her to the Secession church services and heard Rev. Douwe Vander Werp preach on the text, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”⁶ About that sermon, she wrote later, “I had never before heard a minister speak directly to two kinds of people in his message, implying that the hearers were either saved or unsaved. This put me in the class of the unconverted or unsaved who would be lost forever.”⁷

The ensuing struggle over her soul’s salvation caused her much grief. In order to find peace and assurance, she began to attend services at Rev. Vander Werp’s church, thereby neglecting her own congregation. Her employers, members of the State Church, wanted her to continue going to their church. They told her she shouldn’t take religious matters too seriously—that she was a fine person and would surely go to heaven. Her own family took a much harder line. With many angry letters they warned her to have nothing to do with the *Afgescheiden*. They were not the kind of people with whom her parents liked their well-brought-up daughter to associate. Her parents may also have worried that the Simons might let her go. Many employers belonging to the State



The parsonage at Graafschap, Michigan, was built specifically to receive the Vander Werps in 1864. In it Gerritdina Vander Werp raised her family, hosted congregational functions, and eventually also hosted the first students for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

Church dismissed their hired men and maids when they joined the *Afgescheiden*. They went to great lengths urging and ordering her to attend the State Church, including requests to the elders from the Hervormde church, who visited her on two occasions. But such admonition was to no avail. Gerritdina’s struggle continued for nearly three and one-half years.

Her struggle was not whether she would associate with the Seceders against her parents’ will, but rather whether she herself was saved. During this time she often visited the Vander Werps to unburden her soul. Even when the Vander Werp family moved to Ferwerd, she continued writing to them. Still, the assurance that she was saved eluded her in spite of her prayers and searching the Scriptures. At one point she truly believed she belonged to the “unsaved” and became so depressed she could hardly eat or drink. She dared not even go to sleep.

As her despair about her lost state deepened, those around her hardly knew how to deal with her. Leentje would not let her go into the boat alone to rinse out the wash for fear she would do something foolish. Then, on 30 June 1851, at midday when she had reached a moment of total hopelessness, she prayed aloud, “Lord, I know I deserve to be eternally cast out of Thy presence . . . my sins rise up against me. Is there no hope for such a one as I?” And then the words of Jeremiah 31:3 resounded in her ears. “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” It was the turning point in her crisis of faith. From then on she could accept that Jesus had died for her as well. Once fully assured, she immediately shared the good news with Leentje.

Later, when writing about this time in her life, Gerritdina devoted nearly half of her ten-page memoir to her conversion experience. Why, we

wonder, did she not write a little more about life in Leeuwarden, the daily tasks she performed, trips home, visits from relatives, clothes she wore, her hairstyle? In this too, she reflected the spirit of her Secession people. The noted Dutch historian A. Th. Van Deursen wrote about this phenomenon in *De Stille Luyden, Bevindelijk gereformeerden in de negentiende eeuw*; he notes, "Although they never rose to any importance or wealth in this world, still for them their struggle was not for daily bread here below; they looked beyond earthly needs, to eternity. Their journey was not of this world. They saw their life much as John Bunyan did in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Heaven was their home, this earth only a temporary abode. That is why if you are looking for historical data, such as how their crops were doing, what jobs they had, whom they married or what they ate, you will have to search hard. But conversion experiences, matters of the soul, deathbed scenes, those were the real important matters as far as they were concerned, and that is what they wrote about."⁸ So it was with Gerritdina. Her daily cares took a backseat to her spiritual ones. Even the short memoir written when she was seventy-three years old reflects this view; she wrote, "I hope that what has been written by me in this history may be a blessing to you for your soul's salvation."

Another matter which the people of the Secession strove for was purity of living. For people such as Gerritdina, who already lived a virtuous life, that meant looking ever deeper within, in order to please God. She chafed under the fact that her employers often entertained on Sundays, which meant that she had to work those days, and do not just necessary tasks, but also frivolous ones. Strict Sunday observance was for many common laborers and domestics almost impossible since they were the ones to cook the meals,

feed the family, and tend the cattle. She began to pray earnestly that the Lord would find a way out for her, so that she did not have to work so many Sundays. The answer came from a most unexpected source—a marriage proposal from Rev. Douwe Vander Werp, who had been newly widowed.⁹

A domestic position like Gerritdina's offered little career advancement. The most that one could hope for would be to become a first maid in a wealthy household, or a housekeeper in a home where the mistress had passed away. The housekeeper position afforded more status than a maid. She earned more and had more say in running the household. The other way out was marriage, and starting one's own household. Whether a possible suitor had ever come to the Simon home for her, she kept a secret.

Being a single pastor with children presented a problem for Vander Werp as well. With a salary barely sufficient to keep himself and his family going he could not afford to hire a housekeeper. Also, as a pastor he had to keep up an impeccable moral appearance, something not easily done with a single woman in his home day and night. For a person like Vander Werp, a housekeeper was not an option; finding a wife was an urgent matter, with no time to leisurely pursue and court a woman. Pondering his options, he remembered the young woman in his Leeuwarden congregation—the one who had so earnestly searched for and found the Lord. She met all the criteria for a pastor's wife—a devout Christian, a hard worker, someone who knew social graces, having worked in a well-to-do home, and who had experience looking after children. He asked her hand in marriage. Forty-three years later, Gerritdina wrote:

I felt that this was no doubt an



Gerritdina Vander Werp in her widow's clothing after Douwe's death in 1875. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

answer to my prayer for deliverance from my Sunday work and other things which bothered me there. The Lord had said to me, 'I have heard thy sighing and seen thy tears.' Nevertheless, I could visualize many difficulties. *Dominee* Vander Werp was nineteen years older and a widower with three children. To take upon myself the great responsibilities involved was not a small matter. Also thinking of the duties of a minister's wife weighed heavily. After much prayer and coming to the conclusion that it was God's will that I should do so, I agreed and beseeched the Lord for His grace to carry out what was involved.¹⁰

They were married on 27 May 1859 in Den Helder, where Douwe was a pastor at the time. Looking back over the decision she made, Gerritdina wrote only, "The Lord blessed us with love and peace. The three children loved me and I loved them. Later we had five more children."¹¹

By the "three children," Gerritdina meant Douwe's three children of an

earlier marriage. They were 11, 9 and 6 years old at the time,¹² old enough to know she was not their mother. They had also gone through the trauma of losing another step-mother just a year prior to Gerritdina's arrival.¹³

Whatever her feelings for Vander Werp were at the time of marriage, love grew over the years, as did her role as mother and pastor's wife. From the day of their marriage she was respectfully referred to as "*Juffrouw* Vander Werp." The correct Dutch word for a married woman of some standing was *Mevrouw*, *Juffrouw* for a single woman. Yet, *Juffrouw* became the designated title for the wives of *Afgescheiden* pastors. The Dutch State Church pastors' wives were referred to as *Mevrouw*, yet society at large did not want to accord the same status to the wives of the *Afgescheiden* clergy, since many of them were from the lower social classes, like Gerritdina herself.¹⁴

The couple lived in Den Helder for the first two years of their marriage. The devotion of the children to Gerritdina and the respect they accorded her during her life attest to the warm and loving qualities she brought to the marriage. Two years later, when they lived in Burum, Friesland, Gerritdina gave birth to her own firstborn, naming him Dirk, after her father.

Sometime between Gerritdina's conversion and the Vander Werps' plans to emigrate, her parents had a change of heart about the *Afgescheidenen* and they also joined the movement; when Vander Werp accepted the call to the Graafschap congregation in Michigan and the family emigrated, they came along and lived with the Vander Werps in Graafschap. Dirk Brummeler passed away within a year of their arrival, but Gerritdina's mother was still living at the time of Vander Werp's death in

1876.¹⁵ The Brummelers' reason for emigrating to America is not clear; none of their other children joined them.

Two months before the family boarded the ship for America in September 1864, Gerritdina gave birth to another child, Willemina, named after her mother. The three older children, aged 16, 14 and 11, were old enough to look after themselves and little 3-year-old Dirk, leaving Gerritdina and her mother to look after the baby. Unless the entire family became very seasick, this may well have been an exciting adventure,



Gerritdina Vander Werp Lokker in 1898.

especially for the children. Whatever thoughts Gerritdina had about moving to America she kept to herself. Like most women of her day, she subjugated her own will and desires to those of her husband.

Gerritdina's days as a maid were easy compared to her workload in the Graafschap parsonage. She not only had to do the hard manual work, but also had the responsibility for the entire household. Three more children were born—every other year another baby joined the family—leaving her physically drained; she also developed a nasty skin rash. In a letter to friends back in the Netherlands, she wrote

For a long time now I have been suffering a painful rash that sometimes is very intolerable. Recently I've had another episode that lasted for three weeks and was so bad especially on my hands that I could not knit or sew. That is a bit better, but now my legs and feet are so bad I can hardly walk. Besides that I am so skinny already. We have been doctoring around, but the doctors can't seem to find the cause or the cure. Sometimes I get very depressed because of it. Sometimes I feel so overwhelmed with our large household. We now have five little ones. My mother has also been sick and is still very weak. The maid had her hands full and I used to be able to do so much in my younger years and now I could hardly help.¹⁶

Her candid admission of her physical and emotional fatigue gives us an unvarnished glimpse of how stressful life really was for many women at the time. This in spite of the aid from a maid—a luxury not many in the Dutch colony could afford. Nevertheless, being the religious person she was, she found solace in her faith. In the same letter she wrote, "In my misery I cried to God and He reminded me of Psalm 130. In my sadness I recited that Psalm . . . and the last verse became so precious to me . . . 'Hope in the Lord O people, in his unfailing love.' There will be rest for me, if not now then surely in eternity, when I can lay aside all my cares and worries and worship Him perfectly. I gained much insight into how wonderful it will be to be released from our earthly cares."¹⁷

True to form also in America, she shared her faith in great detail, but said little about those daily activities which sapped her physical strength. She does mention that ". . . the people of Graafschap were always very precious to me. What we went through there is unforgettable. . . ." ¹⁸ Enduring the hardships of everyday life in the colony with other members of the congregation certainly made

Gerritdina a sympathetic and caring pastor's wife.

Although she and her mother were not feeling well, and her husband suffered from arthritis, the children thrived in America. "Reinder has gained so much weight he is now bigger than his father," she reported to her friends back home, ". . . Johannes is now five and a sturdy fellow, Douwe (George D.) is three and Willem one year old—those three are real Americans."

After eight years in Graafschap, both Douwe and Gerritdina were so overworked that he accepted the call to the smaller congregation in Muskegon. About this congregation Gerritdina also wrote positive words. However, after only two years in Muskegon, years of growth for the congregation, Douwe developed cancer in the back of his mouth. For the next year and a half she watched her husband suffer much pain. How helpless she must have felt as the disease ravaged and finally took her husband after only seventeen years of marriage. At 47, she was suddenly a widow directly responsible for the five children (the three older children were on their own) and an aged mother. When Vander Werp retired after the cancer was diagnosed, the Christian Reformed Church had granted him a \$300 annual pension, and that contin-

ued to be paid to her. She was also allowed to remain in the Muskegon parsonage until the next pastor arrived.

On 9 November 1879, three years and eight months after Vander Werp's death, Gerritdina married another widower, Cornelis Lokker.¹⁹ He had come to the United States in 1854 with his wife and four children. Since Lokker's farm was located in Graafschap, Gerritdina moved back there.²⁰ About her second marriage Gerritdina wrote, "Father Lokker was a devout Christian, and we lived together in love for twenty-two years."²¹ During those years she wrote often to her children, keeping in touch with them all, inviting them for visits. On 17 July 1895, in a letter to John and Agnes, she described the severe drought affecting the area. In the same letter she arranged for all the children to visit, suggesting how travel costs might be met, and stating that there is enough room for all and that she has plenty of bedding. She was very much in charge of the financial situation of everyone, reminding John that the insurance on the house was still unpaid and is in fact a month overdue, and that he and Douwe should pay the interest (presumably on the mortgage).²²

Yet always overriding her material needs were her spiritual concerns, and

those of her children. "For the past five years," she wrote, "I have been much in prayer that William may be a worthy successor of his beloved father."²³ Those prayers were answered. William became a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church, as did his son, and his grandson.

After Lokker's death in 1901, she moved back to Muskegon to be near to her children.²⁴ Even though she was widowed again, she remained full of gratitude for her comfortable home close to church and her sons. She rejoiced in the fact that she was in good health and in the visits of friends and church members. And on those days when she felt sad and lonely, she recited Psalms, which always comforted her.

She died on 19 June 1911 at Butterworth Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was buried in the Graafschap cemetery next to Vander Werp, with Rev. B. H. Einink of Muskegon and Rev. Marinus Van Vesseem of Graafschap officiating.²⁵ Although she was married to Vander Werp for 17 years and to Lokker for 22 years, her tombstone reads "Gerritdina J. vrouw van Ds. Vander Werp." No mention is made of her second husband. §

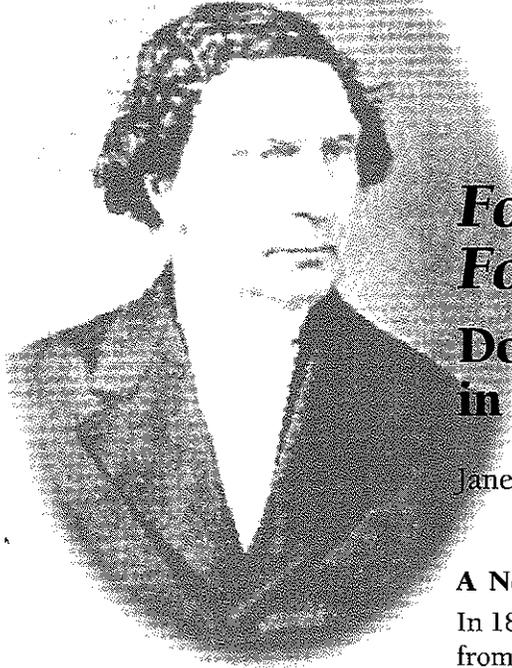
Endnotes

- 1 The name Ten Brummelaar was changed to Brummeler in America.
- 2 Twenty-four years later Kampen would become home to the Theological School of the largest portion of the 1834 Secessionist movement.
- 3 F.L. Bos, *Archiefstukken betreffende de Afscheiding van 1834*, Volume III, (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1934): p. 175.
- 4 Gerritdina Johanna Vander Werp-Lokker Collection, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- 5 In a letter written by Mrs. Brummeler before leaving the Netherlands in 1864, she admonished her adult children concerning how to live. Helen J. Martz, *The family of Dirk J. ten Brummelaar, 1804-1864* (Evanston, IL: self-published, 1981).
- 6 Matthew 10: 32, 33.
- 7 Vander Werp-Lokker Collection.
- 8 "Maar het ging (die dertig) hun om groter dinger. Als ze strijd gekend hebben. . . was het niet om de zorg voor het dagelijks brood. Zij keken over de drempel van dood en leven heen. . . Hun reisdoel lag buiten deze wereld. Ze zagen hun level zoals eens Johan Bunyan het gedaan had, als een pelgrimstocht naar het hemelse vaderland. Daar hoorden ze thuis. Hier op aarde waren ze alleen maar onderweg. De vromen zullen het ons dus ook niet zo gemakkelijk maken, als we vragen naar de gewone dingen van de dag, het huiselijk

- leven, de omgang tussen man en vrouw. Ze zijn pas mededeelzaam als hun bestaan in een crisis terecht komt, bij hun geestelijk ontwakken; bij ernstige ziekte, en bij de beschrijving van een sterbed. Omtrent hun overige lotgevallen hebben ze niet veel te berichten. . . hun werkelijke interesse gaat steeds uit naar het geestelijk leven. Al het andere is slechts achtergrond en omlijsting. Welk beroep ze uitoefenden, in welk dorp ze woonden, met wie ze getrouwd waren en hoeveel kinderen ze hadden, het zijn alles dingen die we soms terloops vernemen, maar vaker helemaal niet." A. Th. Van Deursen, *Vreemdelingen in Mesech* in F. A. van, Lieburg (ed). *De stille luymden, Bevindelijk gereformeerden in de negentiende eeuw*, (Kampen: Uitgeverij de Groot Goudriaan) pp. 85-89 (translated by author).
- 9 It was the third time he was widowed.
 - 10 Vander Werp-Lokker Collection.
 - 11 Ibid.
 - 12 Their mother had been Albertje Boersma, his second wife. Douwe's oldest son, Johannes, born in 1836 of his first wife, had continued living with his maternal grandparents in Uithuizen. He passed away at approximately age 21 while serving his term in the army.
 - 13 Hendrikje Karsten, Douwe's third wife had died in June 1858; there were no children of this union.

- 14 The term *Juffrouw* came to America with these women and lasted well into the next century.
- 15 Gerritdina's mother passed away 20 January 1887 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. By that time Gerritdina's siblings had emigrated to America and settled in Grand Rapids, and one of them may have taken her in.
- 16 G. J. and Douwe Vander Werp Collection 78, Dutch Immigrant Papers, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Vander Werp-Lokker Collection.
- 19 She requested that her pension from the Christian Reformed Church be stopped when she remarried.
- 20 The farm was located east of the village on 48th Street.
- 21 Vander Werp-Lokker Collection.
- 22 Judge Johannes "John" Vander Werp (1866-1939) and his wife Agnes Vogel (1869-1935).
- 23 Vander Werp, Douwe J., Biographical File, Archives, Calvin College.
- 24 Cornelis C. Lokker, born January 7, 1821, Goedereede, Zuid (South) Holland, Netherlands; died March 25, 1901, Filmore, Michigan.
- 25 Christian Reformed Church of Graafschap, Michigan, Historical Library.

Douwe Johannes Vander Werp



Forty-two Carriages and Forty-three Calls

Douwe Johannes Vander Werp in Michigan

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

A New Beginning

In 1864 your father received a call from Graafschap, Michigan, in the United States. He declined the call twice and after receiving it the third time he accepted it. In September 1864 we made the long trip to America. The things that happened at our arrival and after, you have heard from us upon many occasions. You know them as well as I do. Your father was a rich blessing to many through his preaching. The Graafschap people were always very precious to me. What we experienced there is unforgettable.”¹

When Gerritdina Vander Werp wrote to her children about her conversion and other life experiences, she assumed they knew the stories of their first years in America. She did not mention who or what had convinced Rev. Vander Werp to cast his lot with this barely surviving denomination on the American frontier. Was it the letters he received from the Graafschap congregation? Was it that all the charter members of the congregation cite the province of Drenthe in the Netherlands as their place of origin?² He had preached, full of fire, to these people in his younger days,

when he served churches in Drenthe as *oefenaar*, or exhorter.

Also, Vander Werp was acquainted with both Koenraad Van Den Bosch and Wilhelmus Van Leeuwen, the other two pastors in the newly established denomination. There were many strands that bound these three ministers together. Just like Vander Werp, Van Den Bosch had been a student of De Cock. And although born in Wolvega, Friesland, Van Den Bosch also had been raised in Drenthe among the peat workers. Van Leeuwen, born in Den Boer, Groningen, had also begun his career as a schoolmaster. Later he had become an *oefenaar*, and like Vander Werp, had been ordained in one of the *Kruisgezinden* (Churches under the Cross). He had served the congregation of Den Helder before Vander Werp. Whatever the reason, or combination of reasons, Vander Werp accepted the call.

Graafschap, Michigan 1864–1872

Vander Werp's installation in Graafschap took place on Sunday, 9 October 1864. Immediately one old habit from the Netherlands stopped in America. When he stepped out of his

study that Sunday morning, he was wearing *het ambsgewaad*, the standard clergy garb he had worn in the Netherlands—knickers, long coat, white bib tie and three-cornered hat. The maid took one look at the outfit and shrieked.

Vander Werp went back in the house, changed his clothes and never wore the old costume again.³

The pulpit was another matter.

Graafschap must not have had a proper

pulpit for their new pastor, for the church minutes note that in the midst of winter, on 12 January 1866, Vander Werp traveled to Grand Rapids to “negotiate the construction of a pulpit, to be picked up on two wagons at the cost of the hefty sum of \$100, or less.”⁴

Vander Werp was formally welcomed into the denomination at the classical meeting held on 12-13 October 1864 in Graafschap, and his credentials were found to be in good order. Thereupon he opened the meeting with a sermon on Galatians 6:14. One of the first orders of business was to insure that the elders understood the rules of the Church Order, and Vander Werp was commissioned to have Koelman’s work, *The Duty of the Elder*, republished.⁵ Another point brought up was that of beginning the meetings with a full-length sermon, which brought so many people out that the meeting seemed like a general public gathering rather than a classical meeting. Vander Werp suggested that rather than doing away with the sermon, it be held at the close of the



The Graafschap Christian Reformed Church in 1901. The long low building in front of the church is a stable for horses. By the time this photo was taken, the church exterior had already been altered from the original. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

meeting, so that parishioners who so wished could still attend.

Vander Werp’s workload grew steadily. At the January 1865 classical meeting, when the Zeeland congregation asked for a counselor, he was appointed. He was also elected as clerk for the classis. Considering that only a few short years later the number of churches went from four to thirteen, and all communication was by letter, being clerk involved a lot of writing. When Grand Haven desired to organize, he was sent as the organizer.⁶

By January 1865, Van Den Bosch, Van Leeuwen, and Vander Werp were shepherding five churches (Grand Rapids, Graafschap, Zeeland, Noordeloos, and Vriesland). Of the three, Vander Werp seemed the most statesmanlike and offered the soundest counsel. He was appointed to head a committee to organize a church in Paterson, New Jersey; classis also asked him to go to Pella, Iowa, at the request of some people there who were eager to organize a church. Also at this meeting, he was put in charge of the theological education of Harm Lukas,

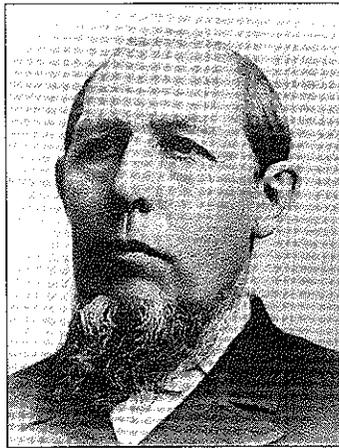


Rev. Koenraad Vanden Bosch and his wife Maria. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

to prepare him for the ministry.⁷ At the October classis meeting, John Schepers was added and a pattern formed whereby Vander Werp would take on the apprenticeship of young men, for which he would not receive any remuneration.⁸ In October 1866

he traveled to Pella, Iowa, and Ridott, Illinois, to organize congregations in both places.

His interest in education extended beyond that of theology students. In the classical meeting of September 1866, Vander Werp suggested publishing children's catechism and Sunday school materials to counteract the tracts and Sunday school materials put out by "American" churches.⁹ At the same meeting a discussion took place about the viability of a monthly periodical for the denomination. Vander Werp was asked to look into the cost of having a newsletter published for each member of the denomination. At a subsequent meeting he reported that nearly three hundred signatures support such a periodical; however, with thirteen churches and only four pastors, the congregational work came first.¹⁰ Still, classical delegates kept coming back to the idea of a publication, and two years later Vander Werp was asked to oversee such a publication. In 1867 he launched a trial publication called *De Stem uit het Westen* (The Voice from the West). Only one issue was published, but in February 1868 *De Wachter* came into being, with Vander Werp as its editor. Although the various work assignments stretched him to the limit of his work capacity, the idea of educating the members of the church via their own publication took precedence over his own comfort. *De Wachter* became a regular voice for the church. With the added responsibilities of editing a bi-weekly paper, Vander Werp



Jan Schepers (1837-1902) was the first ministerial candidate in the Christian Reformed Church, studying with Vander Werp 1864-1868. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

asked in the September 1869 classical meeting to be released from his position as clerk.

All this work was not making Vander Werp a rich man. The minutes of Graafschap report that three years after coming to America he still had outstanding travel debts. From his salary he also had to feed, clothe, and

educate his growing family. Besides the three older children, Reinder, Kaatje and Jan from previous a marriage, the Vander Werps had five children ranging from one to ten years of age. The household also included Gerritdina's elderly mother.¹¹ While Douwe was immersed in church work and instructing his theology students, Gerritdina became overworked at home. In 1871 she wrote to a friend in Burum, "For a while I was very depressed because of our large house-keeping. We have five little children. My mother has been ill as well and is still very weak. The maid has her hands full. I used to be able to do so much more, but lately I am so tired. I also have a bad rash on my arms and hands, so bad I cannot sew or knit." She also expressed some distress over losing Kaatje, who had left the family to marry one of her father's students, Leendert Rietdijk. Kaatje, born in 1850, was a teenager when they came to America. She must have been a great help to Gerritdina as they looked after the little children. But Kaatje married

in 1870 and moved to Muskegon with Rietdijk.

Already at the classis meeting of June 1870, Douwe Vander Werp asked if it would be possible to begin a theological school. After some discussion, it was decided that financially they were not yet able to do so. Vander Werp was asked to leave the room for a while, and while out, a resolution was passed, giving him \$50 for all the work he had done.¹² A year later, in June



Vander Werp (seated) and four of his students, l-r: Tamme M. Vanden Bosch, Eppe Vander Vries, Berend Mollema and William Hazenberg. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

With the added responsibilities of editing a bi-weekly paper, Vander Werp

1871, Vander Werp asked again if there was no one else who could take over the task of training students. One of the arguments he brought forward was that his own congregational work was beginning to suffer.¹³ But again he was asked to continue the work. In a letter to friends in Burum, Friesland, he wrote, "You have no idea how busy I am here. At sixty years of age, I am really too busy; I cannot keep up with it all." In the same letter, Gerritdina, besides complaining about her own physical state, added, "... dominee suffers from rheumatism, but still tries to do his work with cheerfulness."

Muskegon, Michigan, 1872-1875

When Vander Werp accepted a call to the smaller Muskegon congregation, it was clearly a sign that he wanted to reduce his workload. However, his students packed up and moved to Muskegon as well. In June 1873 he was given \$75 for teaching and another \$100 the following year. Vander Werp's move to Muskegon, a congregation he had organized in 1867, was a bit like going home. Elders Tempel and Yonker there had both come from Uithuizen, Vander Werp's hometown. Many of the other members—the Boersemas, Medemas, Klonts, Waalkeses—came from the province of Groningen as well. The Goudbergs and Sjerdas hailed from Burum, Vander Werp's last congregation in the Netherlands.¹⁴ Gerritdina wrote about the move to Muskegon: "The small church grew and both pastor and congregation were happy



Four generations of Christian Reformed Church ministers: Douwe (top); son William (left), 1870-1952; grandson Marvin (right), 1902-1976; and great-grandson, Vincent, 1936-1963. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

with each other. An addition to the church soon had to be built and two happy years passed. Shortly after this your father became ill and it was found that he had cancer in his mouth. This was very difficult and painful. We had much anxiety and we tried many means and so-called cures but nothing seemed to help."

About the time of the move to Muskegon, or shortly thereafter, he suffered an accident. On a preaching trip to Zeeland, his horse bolted and he was thrown from the carriage. The fall resulted in excessive bleeding from his lips. So much so that even though he continued with the worship service, several women in church that day

offered their hankies to staunch the flow of blood. It is possible that this event marked either the onset of the cancer or evidence of an existing cancerous condition.

Although Vander Werp sought the best medical treatment available, including trips to doctors as far away as Sheboygan, Wisconsin, there was no cure. Finally he was no longer able to speak and asked to be released from all ministerial duties. One of his students, Geert Broene, wrote about this time, "In the winter of 1874-1875 my tutor became uneasy about a growth in his throat. He and his wife went to Grand Rapids for a medical examination. There he was examined by three physicians. All three agreed he was suffering from cancer. They even consulted a woman quack in Ridott, Illinois. Two attempts to burn out the cancer were

so painful that a third treatment was never administered."¹⁵

That the Vander Werps would turn to a quack should not be so surprising. At the time, the practice of medicine was in the hands of self-professed healers. Also, as was common at the time, Vander Werp himself believed in folk remedies. In an 1837 letter to De Cock, who apparently suffered from ulcers on his legs, Douwe passed on a recipe to help heal the ulcers. "Take the root of a dandelion," he wrote, "and steep it in water. Use this water to wash the wounds. Purchase five cents worth of [oil of] basilicum in which to dip the dressing before putting it on the wounds. In between

dressings, continue to wash the wounds with the dandelion root water. After several days of this treatment, with God's blessing, healing should take place."

As Vander Werp became increasingly unwell, he asked Broene to substitute for him at church services, funerals and visiting the sick, to the point that Broene's studies began to suffer. Another student, Cornelius Bode, went to the manse and discussed the situation with Vander Werp. As a result, Vander Werp advised the students to go to Grand Rapids to continue their studies with G. E. Boer, which they did in October 1875.

The next annual General Assembly dealt with the issue of Vander Werp's retirement and replacement. After twelve years of faithfully attending these meetings, this was only the second one he missed since his illness, his request for emeritus status was granted. An annual stipend of \$300, to be paid in monthly installments, was approved for Vander Werp. The funds were to come from two special collections to be held throughout the denomination every year.

A fitting tribute to Vander Werp, the man and his work, was copied as an addendum to the minutes. It reads:

Much beloved Brother in the Lord Jesus Christ! May the God of all comfort grant you and yours an all-sufficient portion of comfort. Your request for emeritation (at our Classical Assembly in Michigan) we had reluctantly anticipated, since we knew of your suffering and since we received your written request at the above named assembly in December 1875, which grieved us very much. But with all willingness Classis granted (according to Art. 13 of the subsequent decisions of the National Synod of Dordtrecht, 1618-19) its approval of this and since the general assembly of our church on this continent was approached, this matter was presented by our Classis and sincerely supported. Your inability to carry on

Doodberigt.	Dankbetuiging.
<p>Heden behaagde het den Vrijmagnigen God; door den onverbiddelijken dood, in een smartelijk doch geduldig lijden, vijf en een jaar, van mijne zijde en uit ons midden weg te nemen onzen geliefte man en vader den H. Ew. heer Ds. D. J. VAN DER WERP, in den ouderdom van bijna 63 jaren. In hem verlies ik, als weduwe, eenen lieflichbenden, getrouwen en voor mij onvergetelijken man, nalatende acht kinderen, die in hem verliezen eenen zorgdragende en godzaligen vader, waar van uit zijn laatste huwelijk, waarin ik bijna 17 jaren in een gelukkig en aangenaam huwelijks leven met den overledene mocht verkeeren; vijf kinderen gesproten zijn; van welken het Inceerenddeel te jong is om de grootheid van het verlies te beseffen. Zwaar was het lijden dat dochter overledenen in den laatsten tijd zijns levens gedragen is; doch overvloedig zijn de vertroosting en gewest, die hij van zijn man getrouwen Verbands God ontvinge.</p>	<p>Van harte brengen wij door deze onzen dank aan allen voor de hartelijke deelneming in het lijden van mijnen geliefden man en onzen beminden vader, zowel in Nederland als mede in dit land en in onze woning, beide in het westen en oosten, hetwelk den overledenen en ons te samen in het lijden tot verkwikking strekte.</p> <p>Aan de leeraars, voor de liefdediensten die door H. Ew. bewezen zijn, als mede de deelneming in ons verlies, zoo klaarlijk betoond en door zoo vele van onze vrienden en bekenden, beiden in en buiten onze Kerk bewezen. Geve de Heere u allen rijkelijk. Zijnen zegen! beiden in leven en sterven, zij u van harte toegewenscht.</p> <p>Namens de weduwe, kinderen en behalve kinderen en verdere familie betrekkingen.</p> <p>van G. J. VAN DER WERP, wed. Geb. ten Brummelaar, Muskegon, Mich., 1 April, 1876. De Hoop, Welstem en Bazuin gelieve dit over te nemen.</p>

A portion of Vander Werp's obituary from De Wachter.

the ministry, due to much suffering from cancer of the mouth, causes us much sorrow. But we look back on a labor, in our old fatherland and the years in this land (North America), during which you with your gifts and talents attempted to build up God's Kingdom, and that neither the fruits of your labors, or the strife, have been left behind. Oh dear Brother, we most gladly give you your emeritation (just as we do) as an honorable discharge of your services. At the same time we promise you and yours an annual stipend of \$300, that is three hundred dollars. And should the Lord restore you to health so that you can work again (which however we do not expect), then you are hereby given complete freedom to resume your work of preaching the Gospel, and you will again be declared eligible for call, and should we hear this, it would fill us with sincere joy. But above all it is our desire and wish that the God, whom you have served, richly comfort and strengthen you in your difficult suffering. May he grant you and yours a view of his holy sovereign will. And when the time comes for you to

exchange the temporal for the eternal, may He grant you an abundant entry into eternal rest. In the name of the General Assembly, held 2-5 February 1876,

Rev. G. E. Boer, president
Rev. J. Noordewier, clerk¹⁶

There was more good news from that meeting. As Vander Werp had recommended to several previous assemblies, the decision was made to form a theological school and with Boer chosen as its first full-time professor. Vander Werp retired as this dream came to fruition.

Conclusion

Douwe J. Vander Werp had run the race, staying faithful and working exceedingly hard for the sake of the church. During his years as pastor, he received forty-three calls—forty in the Netherlands and three in the US. Since 1846 he was a delegate to almost every synod and was clerk at the synods of 1846, 1849 and 1854. He

had organized two congregations in the Netherlands—Boxum, Friesland, in 1847 and Bergum, Friesland, in 1850. From 1854 to 1864 he served as curator of the new Theological School at Kampen, the Netherlands. He always wrote the minutes for the council meetings he chaired. In 1859 he gathered up all the synodical decisions of the Afscheiden churches and published them. Along with K. J. Pieters and J. R. Kreulen, he wrote *Apologie*, a document justifying the Secession.

His labors were prodigious. He organized many churches in America, often traveling great distances to do so. He was clerk from 1864 to 1869. In 1868 he became editor of *De Wachter*, published by C. Vorst until 1875, when the paper was bought by the denomination. However, his work was to pass his knowledge, wisdom and love for that church on to the next generation of leaders, not out of selfish ambition or gain, but as a sacrificial service. Reverend Douwe Vander Werp passed away on 1 April 1876 in Muskegon, Michigan. He was buried in the Graafschap Cemetery. Someone counted forty-two carriages in the funeral procession, an indication of the high esteem in which he was held. §

Endnotes

1. Gerritdina Johanna Brummeler Vander Werp Lokker to her children, 29 April 1903, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

2. True, the original settlers of Graafschap in 1847 were largely from Graafschap in the County of Bentheim, Germany, but among them was a sizeable group from Drenthe. (It was the latter who in 1857 seceded from Reformed Church that the Dutch had joined in 1850.)

3. Marvin J. Vanderwerp, "Rev. Douwe Johannes Vander Werp, Eerste Hoofredacteur." *De Wachter*, 6 Feb. 1968.

4. Minutes of Graafschap CRC.

5. J. Koelman, *De Pligt der Ouderlingen* (Holland: T. Binnekant, n.d.).

6. Classical meeting minutes, article 24, January 1865, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

7. Ibid., article 17. There is no record that Lukas actually began this training.

8. John Schepers began his studies a year earlier with Van Leeuwen but was transferred to Vander Werp at this meeting. See: Richard Harms, "Jan Schepers, 1832-1902, Pioneer Pastor," *Origins* vol. 16 no. 2 (1998), 50-52. Six of Vander Werp's students were admitted into the CRC ministry: Schepers, Willem Greve, Leendert Rietdijk, Bernard Mollema, Eppe Vander Vries, and Jan Stadt. Others, who began their studies with him, completed their courses with Professor Boer at the Theological School newly established in 1876.

9. Classical meeting minutes, September 1866, Article 18.

10. In December 1866 the denomination considered the following congregations as legally established: Grand Rapids, Grand Haven, Holland, Niekerk, Graafschap, Vriesland, Noordeloos, Zeeland, Paterson (NJ), Pella (IA), Ridott (German Valley, IL), Gibbsville (First, Oostburg, WI), and Lage Prairie (South Holland, IL). These thirteen congregations had four ordained pastors: Van Den Bosch, Vander Werp, Van Leeuwen and the recently arrived Ds. Frieling (also from Burum).

11. Both her parents made the trip to America with the Vander Werps in 1864, but her father died shortly after their arrival, leaving Gerritdina and Douwe the sole providers for her mother.

12. Classical meeting minutes, June 1870, Article 32.

13. Ibid., Article 41. In addition, all the travels he did to organize other churches did not go unnoticed by his own consistory. In July 1866 the Graafschap consistory discussed his Pella travel plans. They urged him to return as soon as possible, but left the time element to his own discretion.

14. At the request made by N. Van Balen to organize a church in Muskegon at the 2-3 October 1867 General Assembly meeting, Vander Werp was delegated to do so.

15. Geert Broene, "Autobiography," Archives, Calvin College.

16. Certificate for the emeritated minister, Rev. D. J. Vander Werp, as evidence of honorable completion of his ministry in the True Dutch Reformed Church in North America.

Theology in Court: Holwerda v. Hoeksema

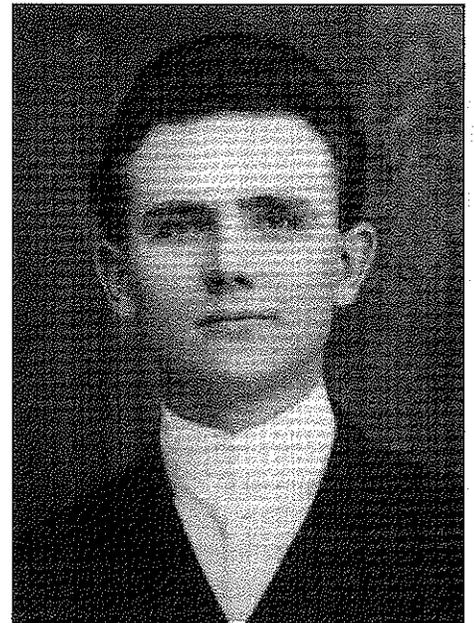
Harry Boonstra

The 1925 John Scopes “monkey trial” in Dayton, Tennessee, with attorney Clarence Darrow and star witness William Jennings Bryan, grabbed national attention as the court decided that the teaching of evolution was against Tennessee law. During that same year a trial in Grand Rapids, *William Holwerda, et al., v. Herman Hoeksema, et al.*¹ drew as much attention at the local level as the Scopes trial did at the national level. During the trial, the Christian Reformed Church’s doctrine of grace came under legal review. Although much has been written about this dispute and the subsequent schism,² this essay will begin with a sketch of the main contours of the background to the trial.

Background

Synod 1924 (meeting from June 18–July 8) became one of the most significant synods in the history of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), and its principal issue was to judge the views of Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. Henry Danhof, who denied the CRC’s position on common grace. Synod judged their views erroneous, noting “that various expressions in the writings of the Revs. H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema do not harmonize with what Scripture and the Confessions teach us regarding the three points [on grace] mentioned above.” Also, “Synod admonishes (*vermaant*) both brothers to hold themselves in their preaching and writing to the position of our Confession in reference to the three points under discussion. . . .”³ However, the two were not of a mind

to acquiesce in the decision of the ecclesiastical trial. In their preaching and speaking, they continued their opposition to the doctrine of common grace and synod’s decisions, and they established a periodical, *The Standard Bearer*, which became the major



Herman Hoeksema, as he graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1915. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

avenue for propagating their theological interpretation and broadening their support.

At the same time, their opposition had a direct impact on the CRC at the congregational and classical levels, events which led to the legal trial. Hoeksema had come to the Eastern Avenue CRC congregation in February 1920. He was a very popular preacher, and the congregation grew. However, some members disagreed with his preaching, especially with his

views on common grace, which the synod subsequently also denounced. Because of their opposition to Hoeksema's views, these members quickly became involved in a convoluted church discipline process. In March 1924, three members (John De Hoog; Wobko Hoeksema, no relation to Rev. Hoeksema; and Henry Vander Vennen) lodged a complaint against Hoeksema with the church consistory. The consistory considered their complaint "mutinous," and barred the three members from the communion table, thus bypassing the preliminary steps to this level of church discipline. The 1924 synod instructed the consistory to lift this censure, but the consistory refused. At the 20 August meeting of Classis Grand Rapids East, to which the Eastern Avenue CRC belonged, the same instruction was given—to no avail.⁴ On 2 September 1924 the consistory called a congregational meeting and the members were given the opportunity to sign a statement which read, in part, "The undersigned expresses (his, her) desire that the consistory refuse to follow the advice of the classis in this respect, because under the present circumstances (he, she) could not partake of communion with these [censured] brethren." Over 800 people signed the ballot.⁵

As a response, 92 members of the church, loyal to the denomination, signed a petition which was presented to Classis Grand Rapids East. In the petition this remnant of members protested that they refused to cooperate further with the minister and consistory and requested a special meeting of classis which would require Hoeksema and the consistory to submit themselves, without reservation, to classis and synod. If they refused to submit, then the loyal remnant argued that they should be considered the legitimate congregation of Eastern Avenue.⁶

The consistory responded promptly and harshly. All the signatories were sent a notice by registered mail, informing them, "Therefore, be it resolved by said Consistory of said Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church that the said signers and subscribers to said pamphlet or communication be and they are hereby suspended or removed from further membership or communion with said



Rev. Henry Danhof, initially stood with Hoeksema but then separated to lead the *Protesting Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo*. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

church or congregation, subject, however, to any provisions of the Church Order."⁷

Such unilateral action was not permitted under the Church Order, and Classis Grand Rapids East called a special session that lasted eighteen weekdays, beginning November 19 and concluding December 12 (including a 3-day recess), dutifully recorded in 43 handwritten pages of minutes.⁸ The climax of the classis meeting was the demand by classis that Hoeksema declare "that he is in full agreement with the three points declared by Synod . . . , and that he will not teach or defend, in preaching or writing, anything that would go against the Confessions of the Church, as interpreted [*verklaart*] by the Synod of 1924." Twice Hoeksema refused to

declare agreement in writing, and finally the president of classis presented the same questions orally. Again Hoeksema refused: "You have . . . my final word and I will not and cannot promise that I will remain silent in the next year and a half" [i.e., till the next synod meeting, at which the decisions of 1924 could be appealed].⁹ Classis then declared Hoeksema guilty of insubordination and he was, for the time being, suspended from his office, as was the consistory.

Although Hoeksema and the consistory had been suspended, they continued to occupy the Eastern Avenue Church building, while the loyal minority met at the Sherman Street Church. In order to break this deadlock, the consistory elected by the minority, on 31 December 1924, filed a bill of complaint with the Kent County Circuit Court judge, asking that they be declared the rightful owners of the property. The trial to resolve this began on 9 February 1925 and was concluded on 25 February.

The Trial

Many of the issues mentioned were carried into the courtroom, often at great length. The charges involved both the suspended consistory and Hoeksema. For example, the consistory was questioned on the propriety of censuring the three men who had first lodged complaints against Hoeksema. The Bill of Complaint rehearses the charges brought against Hoeksema by the three members, and the response of the consistory: ". . . said consistory refused and neglected to pass upon the merits of said protest," and when the protestants refused to retract their accusation, they "were not permitted to partake of communion. . . ." ¹⁰ The consistory reiterated its stance that the protest constituted "mutiny," and that the three members were properly placed under church discipline. The

discussion followed a similar pattern in the case of the 92 members protesting the conduct of Hoeksema and the consistory. The consistory testified that “said plaintiffs and certain other members removed themselves from membership in said church by not complying with the proper and lawful demands of the consistory thereof.”¹¹

Nearly all the witnesses for the plaintiffs were men with some office in the church—mostly ordained ministers. But the first witness called to the stand was one of the chief plaintiffs, Wobko Hoeksema, who identified himself as a shoe dealer and repairer; he had lived across the street from the church for fifteen years. According to Wobko Hoeksema, the pastor brushed off the protest from the three plaintiffs and quibbled about technicalities. A second meeting was even less satisfactory. “At 9 o’clock we met him [Rev. Hoeksema] and were through in one minute. We were let into the house by Mrs. Hoeksema, and he walked from the dining room into the living room and says, ‘I will have nothing to do with this protest, nothing at all, because it is addressed to the consistory,’ and with a motion of the thumb to the church, he says, ‘you better go to the consistory with it.’ We were rather taken aback.”¹² When the consistory finally did deal with the protest, they called the action of the three brethren “mutiny,” and summarily barred them from participating in holy communion.

Even though Rev. Hoeksema later often made the point that his ministry was derailed by the hierarchical powers of the church, it is significant that the plaintiffs in the legal battle were members of his congregation. Although the majority of the congregation remained loyal to Hoeksema, a number of members found his theology and his leadership wanting. And Wobko Hoeksema was representative of those who had the courage to

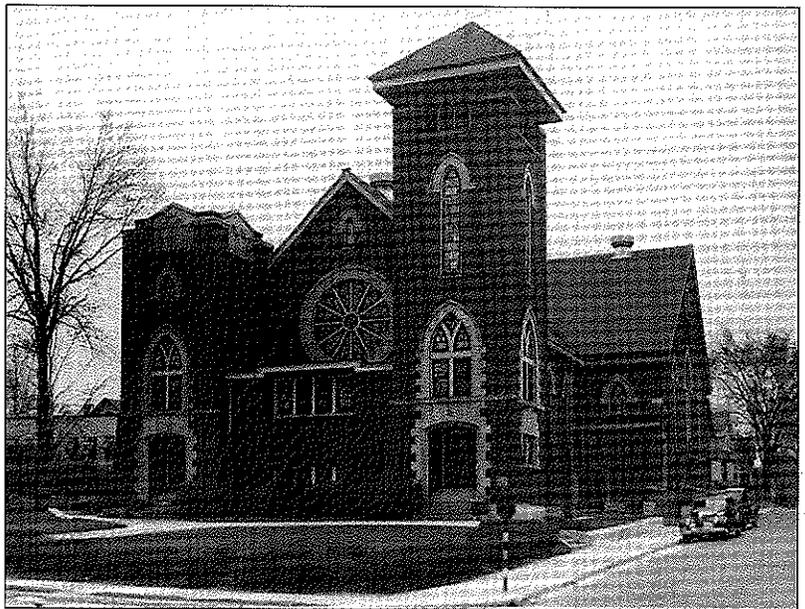
oppose one of the most astute theological minds and formidable debaters in the denomination.

The counsel for the plaintiffs called five prominent CRC pastors and professors to the stand. Rev. Henry Beets was one of the most influential and respected pastors in the CRC. He

especially served the cause of missions, was editor of *The Banner* for twenty-five years, and stated clerk for the denomination for forty years. Much of his testimony was an indictment of Hoeksema, of both his theological views and his unwillingness to submit to synod and classis.

Defense attorney Harris E. Galpin pressed Beets hard on the failure of Synod 1924 to speak unambiguously. First, he challenged Beets as stated clerk of the denomination and synod about the “blue-penciled” section, that is, that part of the recommendation of the advisory committee that did not appear in the final statement of synod. Neither Beets’ memory nor testimony was very clear, as he summed up: “The blue pencil was probably applied by the clerk of the synod, but I don’t know what led up to that. . . . I couldn’t say about the advice of the committee being rejected because I don’t think I was there when it took place.”¹³ Even though Beets admitted that some of the wording of the original recommendation was

changed, the intent was not. The *admonition* of synod was a clear demand that Hoeksema was not to preach or write against the synodical interpretation, since “Synod decided that as far as the three points were concerned he is not reformed.”¹⁴ Beets admitted that synod could have been



Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church. The court trial decided who held ownership of the building. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

more clear and forceful, but it chose to speak moderately, because it was primarily concerned with reconciliation.

Another eminent witness for the denomination was Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen, frequent delegate to synod, author of a volume on the church order, and president of the 1924 synod. In this capacity he had written part of the final synodical decision. In some ways Van Dellen was not a strong witness for the plaintiffs, since he admitted to some memory lapses, and at several points complained “I must say that it is almost impossible for me at present to think.” At one point the court took a brief recess, since Van Dellen felt faint and was allowed to step outside. But he was clear on the essential point of Hoeksema’s guilt: “Rev. Hoeksema had to obey the

decision of synod and when he did not do so he became insubordinate.”¹⁵

Three others testified for the denomination: Calvin Seminary professors Clarence Bouma, Samuel Volbeda, and H. Henry Meeter, a local pastor. Even though their testimony differed in some details, they all were unanimous in their conclusion that Herman Hoeksema had disobeyed the clear admonition of synod and was therefore in rebellion against the denomination.

The only witness for the defense was Herman Hoeksema himself. Most of his testimony is found in the cross-examination by attorney Jay W. Linsey.¹⁶ Hoeksema’s testimony, like that of the other pastors and professors, often delved into theological and historical questions—sometimes at great length, apparently without interruption. But he was always clear and cogent, arguing his points forcefully. Perhaps both his theology and his temperament are displayed accurately when he responded three times

in succession with “Absolutely!”¹⁷

Linsey pressed Hoeksema very hard on his theological views, especially after Hoeksema had said, “It is my claim that the unregenerate cannot do anything that is not sin. . . . I claim that the unregenerate always sins.”

Q. All right, let us understand that.

You also preach, too, if this man, if he is not of the elect, if he picks [another] man out of the gutter that this act, that is this picking of [another man] out of the gutter and takes him to the hospital, that is sin?

A. If he does not do it from the love of God, it is sin.

Q. How can he do it with the love of God in his heart if he is not one of the elect?

A. Why, he cannot; of course he cannot.¹⁸

Throughout the testimony Hoeksema made it clear that he disagreed with the “three points” on

common grace, that he intended to preach and write against those points, and that he had the full right to do so.

Q. You expect to go out and spread propaganda just as much as lies within your power against those three points, do you not?

A. I surely do.

Q. Not only in your public preaching, but also in whatever public press you may get your thoughts?

A. Yes, sir, I will; there is no question of it.¹⁹

Linsey was very harsh in his closing argument.

Mr. Hoeksema has some power in this church circle. Such power should sober and restrain him in his acts, but, dressed in a little authority, he would by his own acts and teachings, make the angels weep. . . . This defendant has within him the spirit of the ‘boss’ which is always the spirit of anti-Christ. . . . No man is more tempted to



Christian Reformed Church Synod that met in Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1924. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

SAVING BODY AND NOT SOUL IS SIN, HOEKSEMA'S VIEW

Pastor Takes Witness Stand in Trial of Church Controversy.

COURTROOM IS CROWDED

Doctrinal Debates Invade Corridors of County Building Wednesday.

A physician man, thereby ad to his life, and d his patient's sou of sin. Rev. H deposed pastor Christian Refor

Headlines (above and at right) from The Grand Rapids Press.

be masterful, than the man with a sense of a supernatural commission to his fellows. . . . Here, then, is the amazing spectacle of a young man, an orator, fluent, of powerful personality, yet with ideas which, while they may have found place in the Middle Ages, ought not to find standing room in the intellectual world today. . . . The sin of Mr. Hoeksema and his consistory reaches its spiritual climax in Milton's archangel who refused to serve in heaven that he might reign in hell.²⁰

Hoeksema was not pleased: "Had I known I was to be abused in such fashion, I would not have come this

afternoon. The language attorney Linsey used was the language of medievalism. His statements are slime. He has no conception of the principle involved."²¹

Besides the disciplinary issues, the court also had to take the theological questions into account. Although Judge Dunham noted that a civil court has no jurisdiction in the doctrines or the disciplinary procedures of a church, doctrine did frequently raise its head in the trial. This attention to theological teaching was necessary for both the plaintiffs and for the defend-

dants, since both parties contended that they were loyal to the church. The plaintiffs had to prove that Hoeksema was at odds with the doctrines of the Reformed tradition, while Hoeksema contended that he faithfully represented that tradition. The theological testimony was at times instructive in getting at the nub of some crucial doctrinal points, but did not present any new viewpoints.

It is too much to claim that the whole common grace controversy turned on one word, but it is nevertheless true that the word *vermaant* became crucial in both church and civil court deliberations.²² The complete sentence reads, "Synod admonishes [*vermaant*] both brothers to hold themselves in their preaching and writing to the position of our Confession in reference to the

three points under discussion. . . ."²³ Part of the difficulty came with a change in this sentence from the earlier wording proposed by synod's Common Grace Advisory Committee. That committee had proposed that Hoeksema and Danhof be required to make an explicit promise "that in the

WITNESS FINDS NO PRECEDENT IN HOEKSEMA ISSUE

Rev. Henry Beets Testifies High Tribunal Can, but Need Not Discipline.

REGRETS SYNOD 'VAGUE'

ial in Circuit Court to Continue Saturday; May Recess Next Week.

Dr. Henry Beets, regarded as a being authority on doctrine and church order in the Christian Reformed denomination, testifying Monday morning in circuit court in suit for possession of Eastern-church property, admitted there is no precedent in the records of

DECLARES CLASSIS HAD AUTHORITY TO DEPOSE HOEKSEMA

Rev. Henry Beets, Stated Clerk of Synod, Witness in Controversy.

GIVES THEORY OF GOOD

Charges Eastern-av. Minister Preaches Doctrines of Super-Calvinism.

Each kind of good were detailed by Rev. Henry Beets, stated clerk of the general synod of the Christian Reformed church, testifying Wednesday to the circuit court trial of the controversy over possession of Eastern-av. Christian Reformed church building. Dr.

future they will adhere to what synod expressed in the three points mentioned above." Moreover, if the brethren "will not adhere to the decisions of synod, this body will be obliged, though very loath to do so, to make the case pending with their respective consistories . . . , and synod would have to appoint a committee."²⁴ Certainly this wording is stronger than that finally adopted by synod; it intimates that disobedience in the future would result in disciplinary procedure.

Because synod did not accept the exact language of the advisory committee, the Eastern Avenue consistory concluded that synod had rejected the entire advice. They further concluded that synod did not ask Danhof and Hoeksema to retract anything or to promise a single thing.²⁵ Hoeksema was convinced that this conclusion was correct and he defended his continued preaching and writing against the three points on this premise that "Synod 1924 did not reprove or censure or discipline me in any way, and therefore I can freely condemn the three points until a future synod might discipline me." As noted earlier, prosecuting attorney Linsey asked, "You expect to go out and spread propaganda just as much as lies within your power against those three points, do you not?" Hoeksema answered, "I surely do."²⁶ Hoeksema's interpretation (or, rather, his ignoring of the admonition), along with synod's evaluation of Hoeksema and Danhof ("in the basic truths of the Reformed faith as set forth in our Confessions they are Reformed, albeit with a tendency to one-sidedness") was sufficient cause for Hoeksema to oppose Synod 1924.

Predictably, the ministers and professors who testified against Hoeksema did not agree; their testimony was virtually unanimous. Clarence Bouma, who was mercifully

brief in his comments, made this point clearly:

Synod, in passing upon these three points, made an interpretation of the confessional standards, and after this interpretation it became the duty of all members of the Christian Reformed Church to submit to them ipso facto. . . . There is nothing vague or uncertain about these three points as determined by synod to anyone who reads them and is interested in finding out what they say without any ulterior motive. The decision of synod on these three points is the official interpretation of the highest judicatory in the church as to what the confessions mean on the disputed points. If Rev. Hoeksema does not submit to these interpretations, he lays himself open to be deposed in the proper way.²⁷

The *Grand Rapids Press* and the *Grand Rapids Herald* were both present throughout the trial, and they generally reported accurately on the proceedings. In addition to details included in the official court record, the newspapers portrayed the social context, and the role of the spectators, and they occasionally provided insights into the proceedings.

Much of the testimony of the trial was hardly the stuff on which reporters thrive. The first two days consisted entirely of the reading of reports of synod and classis meetings; many of which had to be translated from Dutch into English, and some witnesses argued abstruse theological points. When the testimony was not exciting, the newspapers tried to liven up the reports with some of their headlines: "MEMBERS OF TWO WARRING CHURCH FACTIONS PACK COURTROOM"; "HOEKSEMA PLAYED AS EXPONENT OF MEDIEVAL THEORIES."

The case certainly caught the interest of the citizenry, at least the Christian Reformed constituency. The *Press* reported that "every available inch of space in the spectator section,

in and around the jury box, and in front of the rail was taken. Several visitors carried their lunches so as to be sure of not losing their places."²⁸ The smokers beclouded the court room with their cigarette and cigar smoke during the recesses (remaining inside so that they would not lose their seats), until Judge Dunham banished the smokers to the hallway. But the spectators generally behaved well, and won the praise of the judge. Only two untoward incidents were reported. When Wobko Hoeksema reported that the "faithful" congregation met in the Sherman Street CRC with about 600 people, "the audience snickered. A woman whispered audibly, 'O, what a lie, not over 85.'" Judge Dunham halted the proceedings and threatened to clear the courtroom if there were a repeat of such behavior.²⁹ A few days later the crowd pushed and shoved so mightily to get into the courtroom for the afternoon session, "that John Hodson, second floor janitor in the county building, severely injured his right wrist on opening the doors and one man was injured about the right leg when he was trampled."³⁰

The Verdict and Aftermath

It may be argued that less confusion may have resulted had synod used more explicit and stronger language. But Hoeksema's construal that the lack of more forceful language allowed full permission to speak against synod's interpretation seems a willful misreading, resulting in flagrant disregard of the synodical admonition that became the major cause for denominational unrest.

Judge Dunham filed his "Opinion" on 5 March 1925.³¹ Synod, he said, "did specifically direct [Hoeksema] to hold himself in his preaching and writings to the standpoint of the confession of the church in regard to the three points which it in that very decision formulated."³² Hoeksema's

failure to follow the admonition meant that he was “disloyal” to the CRC.³³ For the court this disloyalty became the main reason for ruling against Hoeksema and the suspended consistory. Judge Dunham concluded, “It is my opinion that the defendants have, by their own acts, removed themselves from this religious body and consequently now have no legal right to claim to be acting as the minister and officers of the local church, belonging to the Christian Reformed denomination.”³⁴ With this statement Dunham answered both questions that he had posed earlier as the pivotal issues. Without ruling on doctrinal matter, he determined that the defendants had been properly suspended or deposed from their offices and therefore they had no legal rights or claims in this case. Further, he ruled that Classis Grand Rapids East’s finding both Hoeksema and the consistory guilty of insubordination was a legitimate decision, made by the proper body: “I am of the opinion, classis did have jurisdiction.”³⁵ The judge specifically pointed to the CRC “Form of Subscription” which Hoeksema had signed, which requires that the signatory be “ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory, classis and synod.” Hoeksema had not submitted to either classis or synod, and neither had the consistory. The church building was therefore granted to the plaintiffs, that is, the consistory and members faithful to the denomination, and they were also entitled to \$192.00 per week rental for the time the suspended group had used the building.

Hoeksema and fellow defendants promptly appealed the ruling to the Michigan Supreme Court. However, on 22 December 1925, this court upheld the ruling of the Kent County Circuit Court. This ruling could not have come at a worse time for the Hoeksema congregation—just as they

were preparing for the Christmas services. Hoeksema’s daughter, Gertrude, describes the reaction:

Immediately, before either of the contending groups received an official copy of the decree, members of the group of the ninety-two installed new locks on the church doors, to prevent the members of the group of eight hundred from entering or using the building. And Friday was Christmas! Franklin Community House was the only auditorium in the vicinity large enough and available at such short notice. Folding chairs were brought in, and people trekked through the snow-covered Franklin Park for the Christmas morning service. . . . The congregation made the decision to buy the property at the corner of Fuller and Franklin Street. . . . On the first Sunday of April, 1926, the congregation worshipped in the basement, and met there until the auditorium was finished.³⁶

Hoeksema and several other ministers were instrumental in the formation of a new denomination, originally called the Protesting Christian Reformed Churches, and, since 1926, the Protestant Reformed Churches. In the 1950s the denomination split, with about one-half of the members leaving the church; most of these later returned to the CRC. The denomination, currently with a membership of about 6,500 members, recently celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary.

Observations

As always in such conflicts, perceptions by the two sides in the conflict were radically different. Hoeksema’s supporters saw a noble leader, who bravely fought ecclesiastical misuse of authority and doctrinal heresy. He acted in righteous indignation against the powers of evil. The faithful remnant of Eastern Avenue Church and many in the denomination saw a self-righteous, power-hungry minister who sought to further his aims by

manipulation and self-aggrandizement, and who was wrong on some basic Reformed views.³⁷ But what strikes one, especially when reading the accounts of the time, is the people’s interest in and loyalty to “their” church. The church papers



Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen, president of the 1924 synod and witness at the trail. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

carried long reports, the congregants jammed the courtroom, adherence to the right theological interpretation was fierce, and allegiance to leaders never wavered.

Over the years Hoeksema and later Protestant Reformed writers have maintained that he was done great injustice by the CRC. He was, they say, condemned by an ecclesiastical hierarchy that acted out of envy of Hoeksema’s popularity and influence; he was accused falsely by those who wanted to take revenge on him for his role in the “Janssen case”; he was subjected to a classical court that acted hastily and illegally; he was the victim of a conspiracy that plotted to eject him from the denomination.

But from the civil court records it appears that most of the CRC leaders were convinced that Hoeksema’s

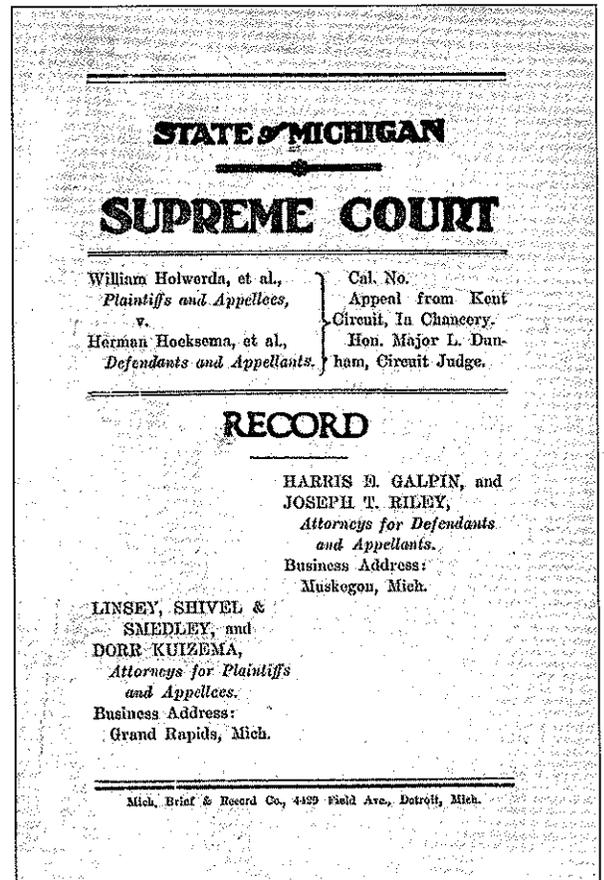
views on divine grace were a deviation from mainline Reformed, Calvinistic doctrine, and therefore deserved censure. This conviction was their motivation for acting—not revenge against Hoeksema. Further, Hoeksema placed himself in jeopardy by refusing to heed the instructions of synod and classes as he had agreed to do when he signed the “Form for Subscription.”

It is also clear that Classis Grand Rapids East and Synod 1924 often acted with undue haste, and in retrospect one wishes that they had deliberated more carefully. Some in the CRC may have been eager to be rid of Hoeksema, whom they regarded as a theological upstart causing division in the denomination, as some in the Protestant Reformed Church have argued. John Bolt, professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, largely accepts this interpretation, “There is . . . evidence supporting the idea that the opposition to Hoeksema was collaborative and perhaps well-financed.” Again: “. . . it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the hasty maneuvering was designed to provide an umbrella of legality for a conclusion already

arrived at.”³⁸ Bolt makes much of a “blue-penciled” section deleted from the advisory committee report to Synod 1924, and finds all kinds of mystery and plotting. But a study of the court record finds no evidence supporting such suspicion.³⁹

As always in church controversies, the tendency is to interpret the conflict (only) in theological terms. With the Hoeksema controversy, the writings of the time were nearly all theological, as both sides sought to defend their doctrinal positions on common grace, an important part of Reformed theology. Again, a study of the court trial demonstrates that many other issues are usually present in church conflicts. Strong personalities, stubbornly defending their views and ecclesiastical turf, were certainly part of the whole picture. And then there was the fact, which ultimately swayed the judge, that Rev. Hoeksema

and his supporters failed to heed the admonitions of the classis and synod as they had previously agreed they would. §



Cover of the brief files during the appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court.

End Notes

1. This study is based largely on the *State of Michigan Supreme Court Record, 1925*. All further citations will be indicated as *Record*.

2. For a summary of this dispute from Rev. Hoeksema's point of view see: Herman Hanko, *For Thy Truth's Sake: A Doctrinal History of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000), particularly chapters 1-13. The Christian Reformed position is being discussed again, for an understanding of this side of the dispute see: James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984): chapters 7 and 8; and James C. Schaap, *Our Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1998): chapter 13.

3. *Christian Reformed Church Acts of Synod 1924*, p. 147.

4. According to church order of the CRC, the classis has jurisdiction over its member congregations.

5. This ballot became "Exhibit B" in the court case.

6. The petition was also issued as a pamphlet, *Aan de Classis Grand Rapids, Oost . . . , vergaderd op den 19 den November, 1924*. In the *Record* a translation is presented as "Plaintiffs' Exhibit 7."

7. Information on this and other aspects of the Eastern Avenue congregation can be found in *100 Years in the Covenant: Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids:

[Eastern Avenue CRC], 1979), pp. 30-40.

8. Reprinted in *De Wachter*, Dec. 3 and Dec. 31, 1924; Jan. 7, Jan. 14, Jan. 21, 1925.

9. *De Wachter*, Jan. 21, 1925, p. 40.

10. *Record*, p. 9.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-167.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

20. This argument is not found in the *Record*, but in the "Brief for Plaintiffs," (pp. 81-83) submitted to the Michigan Supreme Court.

21. *Grand Rapids Press*, Feb. 26, 1925, p. 14.

22. At the time, some of the business before the CRC synods, including the Hoeksema-Danhof questions, was conducted in Dutch.

23. *Acts of Synod 1924*, p. 147.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

25. Quoted in Herman Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches: Their Origin, Early History and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: First Protestant Reformed Church, 1936), p. 191.

26. *Record*, p. 13.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 263.

28. *Grand Rapids Press*, Feb. 12, 1925, p. 20.

29. *Ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1925, p. 2.

30. *Ibid.*, Feb. 20, 1925, p. 2.

31. *Record*, pp. 68-95.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

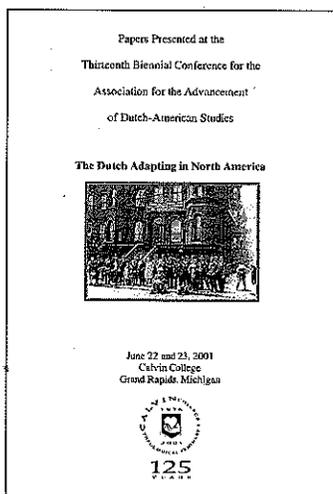
36. Gertrude Hoeksema, *Therefore Have I Spoken: A Biography of Herman Hoeksema* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1969), pp. 162-163.

37. See especially J. Vander Mey's essay in *100 Years in the Covenant*, pp. 27-32.

38. John Bolt, "Common Grace and the Christian Reformed Synod of Kalamazoo (1924): A Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Perspective," *Calvin Theological Journal* 35, 1 (April 2000) pp. 19, 21.

39. Bolt unfortunately bases his conclusions largely on PR sources, even though there is a substantial body of material that explains and justifies the CRC position and actions (see, for example, the *Acts of Synod 1926*). Also, his characterization of the proceedings against Hoeksema as a "conspiracy," characterized by "hasty maneuvering," is never proved in his essay. But then he still ends his essay by repeating that Hoeksema's removal from the CRC was "like an ecclesiastical blitzkrieg, a hurried and well-orchestrated attack on the person and ideas of Herman Hoeksema" (p. 36). For further detail on this discussion see my contribution in the April 2002 *Calvin Theological Journal*, followed by Bolt's response.

book notes

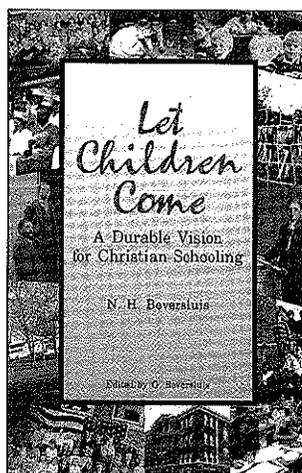


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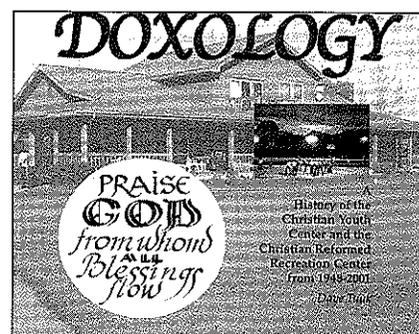
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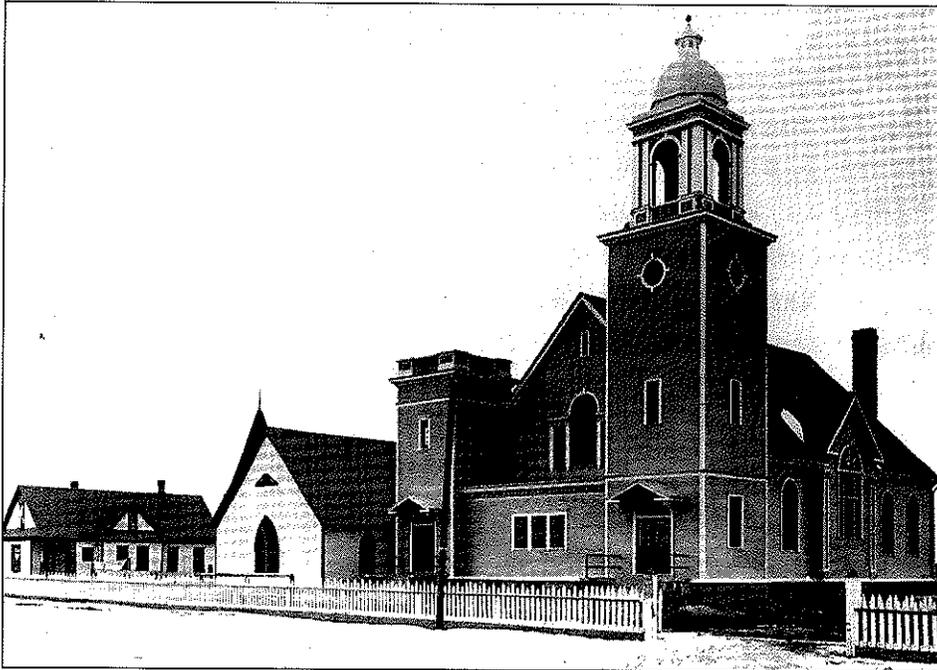
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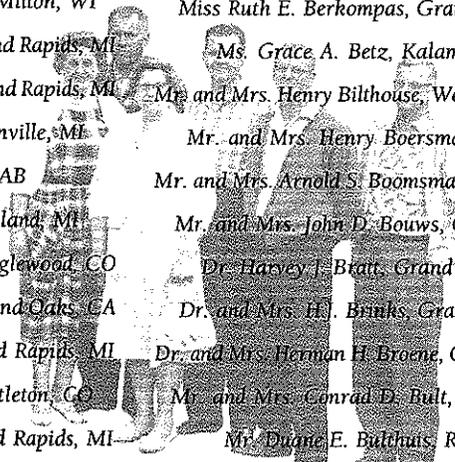
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