

Origins

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Volume XXVI • Number 1 • 2008

Historical Magazine
of The Archives

Calvin College and
Calvin Theological Seminary
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546
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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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Cover photo:
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This Issue

We begin with the first installment of Rev. Howard Spaan's discussion of the Dutch immigrants settling in the Far West of the United States prior to World War II. Due to the scope of his project, this work can only be an introduction to the topic. Next is a pictorial essay on the life of Meindert De Jong, the award-winning author of books for children and young people. The images highlight his life and career. Jenna Vanden Brink recounts her grandfather's harrowing adventure with his friends during the German occupation of the Netherlands. We conclude with the fifth and last installment of Gerit Buth's account of his visit to the Midwest in 1949. In addition to the details of the last days and the trip home, are his observations of life in North America compared to that in the Netherlands. 🐾

Available On-Line

We added the membership records of the Rilland, Colorado, Christian Reformed Church to our web site pages. This congregation existed for eleven months in 1893 near present-day Alamosa, Colorado. These Dutch immigrants were part of a larger group who were victims of a land swindle and ultimately were helped by Reformed and Christian Reformed churches in Iowa. The data can be found at http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/Rilland_church.htm. 🐾

News from the Archives

We organized and opened for research approximately forty cubic feet of manuscript material. These materials include denominational records of the synodical committee to study war and peace; the Wayne State University campus ministry files; records from the interchurch relations committee; files of Godwin Heights CRC, Grand Ledge CRC, and Third Paterson CRC (all discontinued CRC ministries). Also included are the personal papers of Thedford P. Dirkse, who did

groundbreaking work and became a recognized expert in battery storage; Christian Reformed Church minister Paul Zylstra's papers; additions to the Robert P. Swierenga collection; and records from several college offices, particularly Seminars in Christian Scholarship.

Our volunteers continue the indexing of our collection of family histories and cross-indexing of the surnames of women from the nineteenth century in those family histories. Indexing of *The Banner* vital records notices continues, with three volunteers now having completed approximately two-thirds of the years 1985-1994 and a fourth volunteer beginning the 1975-1984 span. Work continues collating and keying into a database the information on approximately 10,000 post World War II Dutch immigrants to Canada. Translation of minutes from Manhattan, Montana; Bemis, South Dakota; Birnamwood, Wisconsin; and Prairie View, Kansas, Christian Reformed Churches and CRCNA Classis Grand Rapids West continue. One major translation effort, the

minutes (1865–1901) of Central Avenue CRC in Holland, Michigan, was completed. Noteworthy among our translators is Rev. Henry DeMots, the oldest living minister in the denomination.

Particularly noteworthy among our recent accessions are the papers of Rev. John Westervelt (1857-1951), who began his ministry in 1880 in the True Protestant Dutch Reformed Church, which joined the CRCNA in 1890 as Classis Hackensack. In addition, we received the papers of several seminary and college emeriti; official records from denominational, seminary, and college offices; and a number of denominational ministries.

We are happy to report that renovation of the Heritage Hall facilities is part of the current Calvin College capital campaign. The plans call for renovated space, additional space, and state-of-the-art environmental controls. This is particularly welcome news since our current space dates back forty-five years, to the very beginning of the Knollcrest Campus. 🍀

Book Publication

No new books have been published since our last report, but two important projects are underway. One is a new translation and annotation of the minutes of the Christian Reformed Church's classical and general assembly minutes, 1857–1880. The other project is an examination the Christian Reformed Church's mission effort in China after WW I. 🍀

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, librarian and cataloging archivist; Melanie Vander Wal, processing archivist; Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; and Dana Verhulst and Cyndi Feenstra, our student assistants. We are particularly grateful to our dedicated volunteers: Rev. Henry DeMots, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Ralph Haan, Dr. Henry Ippel, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit W. Sheeres, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, Mrs.

Willene De Groot, Mrs. Marlene Post, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra. At 97, Rev. DeMots is the oldest minister in the Christian Reformed Church. 🍀

Endowment Fund

Due to the generosity of our contributors, and growth in investments, the *Origins* endowment fund increased 15 percent during 2006 to \$409,045. Because of this our annual subscription rate remains at \$10, as established in 1983 when *Origins* began. This is the second year of real growth of our endowment fund since the sharp stock market decline seven years ago. We are most grateful to all our supporters. 🍀



Richard H. Harms

Early Pacific Coast CRC Churches

Howard B. Spaan

Oak Harbor, Washington
Dutch immigrants came to the Pacific Northwest in the wake of the failure of a Whidbey Island land venture promoted by the Northern Pacific Railroad. Whidbey Island is north of Seattle at the confluence of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and one of the extension waterways of the Strait of Georgia, known as Rosario Strait. At the southern extremity of this fifty-mile-long and rather narrow island lies Puget Sound. Across the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the north is the much larger Vancouver Island.

The Tucker Porter Land Company, a private venture, took possession of the railroad's island holdings in 1892. The Tucker Porter effort was moderately successful and attracted a group of settlers mostly of Irish descent. One settler shared information with Reinder E. Werkman, a Holland, Michigan, man who had a reputation for public relations.

Werkman became interested in land sales and visited the island. He was impressed with the mild climate and the productivity of the soil, particularly when compared with those of the Great Lakes and the Midwest. He moved to Seattle to sell land on the island. On sales trips to Michigan he took along agricultural products, including very tall cornstalks, grain, and a variety of vegetables and fruits to attest to the fertility of the island and the mild climate. He also took along samples of smoked salmon. Michiganders particularly were astonished by the size of the potatoes grown on the island.

As a result, in 1894 eighteen Dutch pioneers disembarked from the small steamer *Idaho*, some miles south of the village of Oak Harbor. This settlement had an estimated population of two hundred and derived its name from the many Garry Oak trees (*Quercus garryana*, also known as

Howard Spaan, a minister living in Beaverton, Oregon, has written on a variety of topics having to do with the Pacific Northwest. He is the longest serving stated clerk of classis in the history of the Christian Reformed Church.



The church and parsonage of the Oak Harbor congregation built near the town. The church building was dedicated in January 1904 and served the congregation until a new church and parsonage were built in town in 1925. Image from the fiftieth anniversary booklet of the church from the congregation's collection in the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Oregon White Oak or Oregon Oak) growing in the area. Within two years this community saw the arrival of two hundred immigrants from the Netherlands who had lived primarily in Michigan and the Dakotas. They lived on the north end of the island, building makeshift log cabins and clearing the land with both human and horse power.

A particular difficulty for these first settlers was the lack of cash. While clearing land, John Ronhaar lost his only axe handle in a brush fire. When he was refused ten cents of credit for a new handle in the village, the son of a non-Dutch settler, overhearing the conversation, plunked down the ten cents. Further problems resulted from the very difficult economic times—the financial panic of 1893 developed into an economic depression that lasted for nearly six years. Because of this it was necessary to supplement income with wages from work off the farm. Those who had come from Michigan with experience in forestry worked in the lumbering industry, while those from the Great Plains states had a difficult time finding work. Some early entrepreneurs left farming altogether, opening businesses such as a real estate office, a grocery store, a butcher shop, a blacksmith shop, and a sawmill. In spite of the difficult conditions, reports of the land's fertility continued to whet the appetites of Michiganders.

Hardly any of these new residents spoke English. They did attend the local United Presbyterian Church, where the minister could not speak Dutch. Some of these folks decided to form a Christian Reformed congregation in 1896, the first on the Pacific Coast, which became part of Classis Iowa, then the westernmost regional governing body in the denomination. As was the case in many newly organized Reformed churches, an elder

led the worship services by reading sermons written by an ordained minister. In 1897 John Wiebenga, just graduated from what is now Calvin Theological Seminary, accepted the call to be a domestic missionary in Oak Harbor.

Some of the settlers were interested in dairy farming, but space for such an enterprise was rather limited on the island. The large flat area of very fertile soil in the low-lying Skagit River Delta on the mainland just across the bay was ideal for dairy farming, but was already mostly settled by Scandinavians. Further, according to oral tradition, although acquainted with dike construction and reclaiming lowlands, the Dutch didn't want to involve themselves with this kind of work again. Aart Veleke, whose former German neighbor in Vesper, Wisconsin, had relocated in the Lynden area, heard from that former neighbor that stump land in the fertile Nooksack River Valley was an ideal place for dairies. Three Oak Harbor settlers ventured north and came back reporting that good prospects were to be found at Lynden. This caused an exodus from this small church, which consequently dissolved in 1898.

Rev.¹ Wiebenga was left without much of a congregation. It ap-

pears that for a time he continued to minister to the Dutch remnant which sought support from the United Presbyterian Church. In progress at the time were talks of merging the Christian Reformed denomination with that of the United Presbyterian Church. When these talks failed, the Oak Harbor remnant dissolved and Wiebenga accepted a call from the East Side Christian Reformed Church of Cleveland, Ohio. Consequently a meeting was called at the Jacob Balda home to discuss establishing another Christian Reformed church. This July 1902 meeting resulted in beginning a church which met in the schoolhouse. During September 1902 the Mission Board sent Rev. Johann Gulker to Oak Harbor to organize the congregation, again as part of Classis Iowa. This brought to three the number of churches west of the Dakotas, since two Washington congregations



Rev. Abel Brink and his wife Hattie (Mulder) served pastorates in both Lynden and later Oak Harbor. As the article notes, most of his travel outside of town was on horseback. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

had been formed elsewhere: Lynden in 1900, and Zillah (first named Sunnyside) in 1901.

The following year a church building was completed in Clover Valley, a few miles northwest of the village. A shed was built next to the church where worshipers could stable their horses. The horse stalls were assigned to each family in alphabetical order. That meant the Zylstras were at the far end, up on a hillside. Years later when cars replaced horses and buggies, they also were parked in the same order in the same stalls.

Some Dutch, who chose not to join the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), continued in the United Presbyterian Church, which had no Dutch-speaking pastors. This led the Presbytery to contact the Reformed Church in America (RCA), which did have Dutch-speaking ministers. As a result, the congregation moved from the Presbyterian Church to the RCA in 1903 and was served by Rev. John Vander Beek beginning in 1905.

As was the custom in most of their former churches, the men sat on one side of the sanctuary and the women and children on the other side. The consistory stood during the congregational (long) prayer and services lasted from one to two hours. Singing was led by a “voorzinger” or precantor, since pianos and organs were not used during worship.

Rev. Gulker was serving as home missionary in Oak Harbor when the congregation was organized and then served as its pastor until 1904. He was succeeded by Rev. Abel Brink, who returned to Washington after having served in South Dakota for four years. He

ministered in Oak Harbor for three years and was succeeded by Derk Muyskens, who came as a candidate from the Theological School and also served three years. Oak Harbor was the first of three Washington churches that Muyskens served.

In 1902 the residents of Oak Harbor built a grade school, Freund Hill School. It had two large rooms and a basement with a dirt floor. The first high school in the region came into being in 1910. The first graduating class had three or four Dutch students. Perhaps the existence of the school explains why the Dutch of Oak Harbor did not form an exclusive enclave, as was the case elsewhere. In fact, over the years there have been five mayors of Oak Harbor, a couple of them who had Dutch roots, holding the post for a considerable period of time. The village became an incorporated city in 1915.

This is not to say the congregation was fully assimilated into the larger community. The first societal groups

in the church were the Ladies' Aid and the Young People's Society. The former held a big annual event, the Ladies' Aid Sale. In addition to their Sunday night meetings, the young people held frequent parties and picnics. The late hours of these parties became an agenda matter at one consistory meeting.

Although most of the members of the church communicated in English during their daily lives, Dutch was used exclusively during worship. When Rev. Nicholas Gelderloos became their minister in 1912, a summer school was introduced. It met in the public school and the minister taught Dutch to the youth of the congregation. During his tenure the use of a pump organ became part of the worship services; the console was placed in front of the pews where the consistory sat. By rule, no married woman was allowed to play the organ.

During the four-year tenure of Gelderloos, Otto Van Dyk built a round, hip-roofed barn in spite of the fact that non-Hollanders said it could



A characteristic of the Dutch in the Christian Reformed Church was the establishment of Christian day schools. The Lynden Christian School was two years old in this 1912 photograph. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



The funeral of Rev. Evert Breen at the First Christian Reformed Church of Lynden in 1921. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

not be done. But Van Dyk built the barn and it was dedicated with a huge barn dance. People from the mainland, Seattle, Everett, and other communities participated in the gala event, yet the social and religious mores of the Dutch prevented them from being part of the celebration.

In 1917 Rev. Frederik Drost, having arrived from a Los Angeles church, introduced a brief English presentation for the children, which was included with his regular Dutch sermon. English-language worship began in 1923 when Rev. Johannes (Joseph) Werkman conducted one English service each month. But Americanization faced opposition because of the fear that liberal theological ideas might follow. Young people, wanting to identify themselves as Americans, took a rather dim view of this slow process. English finally became the language for worship during World War II. It was during the Werkman pastorate that a new church structure was built, this time in the village of Oak Harbor. Otto Van Dyk was the architect and Henry Verbarendse was the builder. The well, dug with a pick and shovel, was four feet in diameter and ninety feet deep.

In 1935, during Rev. John Byleveld's pastorate, the Deception Pass Bridge was built from Fidalgo Island to Whidbey Island. Leaving the mainland, a traveler could then cross the narrow waterway to Fidalgo Island, next crossing the swift-moving current of Canoe Pass in the Strait of Georgia waters. As a result, the Oak Harbor congregation came into much greater fellowship with her sister churches on the Puget Sound mainland.

Lynden, Washington

When a former neighbor from Vesper, Wisconsin, who had relocated in the Lynden area, reported that a large river valley of stump land could be cleared for pasture, Aart Veleke, with his brother-in-law, Harm Oordt, and Douwe Zylstra from Oak Harbor, made an exploratory trip to the Nooksack Valley. In 1896 the trio boarded a little steamer at a Whidbey Island dock which took them to New Whatcom (now in the heart of the city of Bellingham). They hiked on a primitive road to the Nooksack River, some twelve miles north, and then Indians took them by canoe up the

river a couple of miles to the landing very near the town of Lynden.

Lynden had been founded about twenty-five years earlier by the Judsons, a family from Sandusky, Ohio, "in search of an ideal home." After brief sojourns in Oregon and the lower Puget Sound areas they came to an area where only one white man was then living. Seeing the gleaming snow-capped peak of Mount Baker in the distance, Phoebe Judson exclaimed to her husband, Holden, "This is the place I visualized while we were living in Sandusky." They bought the primitive log cabin of their host in 1871. The Judsons drew a town site and named it Lynden, for Phoebe Judson had read a poem about a linden tree and thought this was a pretty name, but changed the "i" to a "y."

Veleke, Oordt, and Zylstra returned to Oak Harbor reporting that dairy pastures were possible in the Lynden area; as a result a number of Oak Harbor families moved to Whatcom County. The Dutch newcomers moved into some of the cabins and houses vacated earlier by workers who left when the panic of 1893 caused many shingle and lumber mills to shut down. Among those living in the area when the Oak Harbor Dutch arrived were Scandinavian immigrants and native Neuk-saks (Nooksack) Indians. The Nooksack had a longhouse and fishing traps along a stream which in later years became known as Fishtap Creek, an area now encompassed by the Lynden Christian High School campus.

Toward the close of 1899 more than a dozen Dutch families had come to the area. Rev. Henry Beets of Sioux Center, Iowa, came to Lynden that year, preached a sermon in the sanctuary of the town's only church, the Methodist Episcopal Church. Returning, he carried a petition addressed to Classis Iowa

from the Lynden Dutch, requesting that these families be organized as a congregation. During July 1900 this church became the second Christian Reformed church organized on the Pacific Coast. There were fourteen charter families, nine formerly of Oak Harbor, four from Michigan, and one from Nebraska. Worship began in each other's homes on Sundays, with one of the men reading a sermon.

During the fall of that year a recent candidate for the ministry, Abel Brink, and his bride came as a CRC home missionary to the community. Their parsonage was a log cabin with a not-well-sealed wooden floor. Mrs. Brink never used a dust pan when sweeping the floor; she swept what had accumulated into the spaces between the rough floor boards.

Nearly all the roads around Lynden were dirt tracks; most passed through heavily wooded areas. Since rain was common much of the year, Brink traveled on horseback and made his visits wearing high-topped boots. If he was traveling after dark he trusted his horse to find the way home. When the horse stopped, he knew he was home. His trips were not easy, for often he had to lie on the saddle to keep from being swept off his horse by low-hanging limbs.

At its formal organization in 1900, the church was located 1,500 miles from its nearest denominational neighbor in South Dakota. Brink served the congregation as home missionary for nine months before he was officially installed as its pastor. He had drafted his own letter calling him to ministry in Lynden when no one else in the congregation knew how to write such a letter. Rev. Gerrit Westenberg of New Era, Michigan, was the first minister who could make the long trip to install Brink in July 1901. The next September the Brink family moved to South Dakota, having taken a call to the congrega-

tion in Bemis. When they left, the Lynden church had grown to thirty-five families.

During 1902 Rev. Evert Bos became the second minister of this young church. During the latter part of that year construction on the church building was begun. Lumber came from the forest just outside the town and was sawed in the town's lumber mill. It was hauled to the site by church member Dionysius Vander Griend. Member Roelof Niemeyer was the architect and contractor, using the volunteer labor of parishioners. His craftsmanship can still be seen in the church steeple with its gables and decorative detail. During May 1903 the rapidly growing congregation dedicated its sanctuary, which could seat six hundred. The church property occupied a full block in Lynden and included stables for horses. When horses were no longer used, the stables were taken down, leaving the half block behind the church vacant. The church faced Front Street, the main street of the town. It was the second church inside Lynden, after the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Scandinavians attended churches outside of town. For the first ten years of the town's history the streets were a series of mud holes during the annual wet season. One of the Stremmer boys claims that he and his friends would stand fishing in one of these mud holes.

The stump land in the Nooksack River Valley was cleared and turned into dairy farms. The area north of the town with its mix of fir and jack pine trees was also logged off and replaced by dairy farms. Of the three Dutch pioneers to Lynden, Harm Oordt found dairying was not to his liking, so he began what turned out to be a thriving poultry business. At its zenith he had 5,000 laying hens and a hatchery that sold as many as 45,000 chicks a year. He employed

a number of single women from the church as candler, who checked under focused lights whether the eggs showed any defects or embryonic development, which meant they were not marketable. Another pioneer, Douwe Zylstra, owned and operated a merchandise store in town. Before and during his retirement years he also sold insurance.

As was done elsewhere in the denomination, the Lynden church followed the Dutch tradition of the pastor and consistory members processing from the consistory room just prior to the worship service. The minister marched to the front of the platform, stopping at the bottom steps to offer a short silent prayer. The elders and deacons took their places in pews at right angles to the raised platform with its pulpit lectern. At the conclusion of the message the minister would step down from the platform and with a handshake the elders could indicate their agreement with the content of the sermon. During the communion service worshipers came forward in successive groups to sit at the six tables in the front of the sanctuary, often slipping a thank offering under the linen communion tablecloth.

Rev. Peter Hoekenga became the minister of the Lynden congregation in 1907, when the congregation numbered one hundred families, including many young people. Often, after the pastor had assembled his catechism class, he would summon an elder to teach the students while he, with long coattails flying, would sail through Lynden's pool halls to catch truant catechumens. He also checked the Electric Theater, shoving aside the ticket taker saying, "I'll only be in here for a moment, so I won't bother buying a ticket." His enthusiasm for teaching youth led to the organization of two Christian schools in 1910, one in town and the other



The Ramerman family moved to the Yakima Valley when George was twelve. He graduated from the University of Redlands (where he is pictured in 1915) and married Jennie Wagenaar from Redlands. He spent most of his career in education at Lynden Christian School. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

a few miles to the north of town. During this pastorate a parsonage was built, featuring electric lighting; it was recognized as one of the finest houses in town.

In 1913, late in the Hoekenga pastorate, a six-rank pipe organ was purchased, replacing the *voorzinger*. The organ's air supply came from manual pumps, with the bellows operator stationed behind the beautiful paneling and the decorative organ pipes. On occasion the bellows operator would fall asleep during the sermon, resulting in no air being available for the song afterward. In later years an electric blower was installed. Once, during a power outage and unbeknownst to the minister, a bellows operator had to take over. When the minister was about to begin his sermon, the paneled door behind the minister opened so the bellows operator could sit in the auditorium. The congregation witnessed a very startled preacher!

Rev. Evert Breen replaced Hoekenga, who in 1914 left for mission work in Chicago. During Breen's pastorate the great influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 swept around the world, killing perhaps as many as 40 mil-

lion people worldwide, including six members of the Lynden congregation. Breen also became ill and never fully recovered, and was later diagnosed as having cancer. He died in 1921 at the age of fifty-nine.

A tribute to an early prominent elder is noteworthy. John Slotemaker lived on a farm about four miles from town. His sons drove him to consistory meetings. He regularly chose to walk home following the meetings, for this gave him opportunity to pray and talk over church business with his God. He was often the person chosen to read sermons when there was no pastor to preach. He prepared by practicing reading the sermons to his cows. Slotemaker was also the most effective monitor in the rear of the balcony, where many young men chose to sit during the service. If not monitored these young fellows occasionally became inattentive, playing cards and other games.

Both First Lynden CRC and First Lynden RCA, organized in 1911, used Dutch exclusively. As was the case elsewhere, requests for services and ministries in English began to increase. In response, a daughter English-speaking church, Second

Lynden CRC, was organized in 1920. During the pastorate of Rev. Peter Jonker, Jr., 1921-1929, English was introduced in the First Lynden CRC catechism classes and for a short time in 1921 an English worship service was held in the evening. This outgoing minister endeared himself to the congregation. He often went with members to the mountains or Birch Bay, as well as to church picnics. He openly rejoiced with his parishioners on happy occasions and shed tears with those who were in sorrow.

Following Jonker's departure, and just prior to Rev. Isaac Westra's arrival in 1929, one English service began to be held every other Sunday. Westra was an excellent pulpiteer and was well received as a teacher in the various societies. He had come from the very large First Church in the Englewood area of Chicago. But his rapport was poor with young people, who took advantage of his demeanor by playing pranks in the catechism classes. Due to failing health he took a disability retirement in 1933. He stayed in Lynden for just a year; with his health restored he accepted a call to the South Holland, Illinois, church.

Rev. Dirk Hollebeek arrived in 1933. In 1937 the church introduced one English and one Dutch service each Sunday. Yet there was a clamor for more Dutch, which resulted in a trial third service in Dutch. The church grew to 248 families with 1,200 members, many of whom wanted more English-language services. When this failed to happen, a number of families petitioned for another English-speaking church—Third Lynden CRC, organized in 1938.

Zillah, Washington

The state of Washington, divided by the Cascade Mountains down the middle of the state from north to south, has two very different

climates. The eastern half of the state is largely arid, where early settlers found little more than sagebrush, some trees along rivers and streams, and pine forests in scattered higher elevations. The only inhabitants of the sagebrush areas were jackrabbits, sage hens, and rattlesnakes. Most of this terrain is flat valley surrounded by low-lying hills. But the volcanic soil was rich in nutrients, lacking only water to become an enormous garden. In 1892 Walter Granger saw the possibility of irrigation in the Yakima River area. He originated the idea of diverting water from the river into the man-made Sunnyside Canal, which transformed the parched, sun-baked, sage-covered flatlands and lower reaches of the hills into flourishing orchards, lush pastures, and productive fields. He also chose the town site. Its name traces its origin to the young daughter of the president of the Northern Pacific railroad, Zillah Oakes. The most accepted story of naming the town is that while fording the Yakima River the buggy containing Oakes, his wife, and little daughter, was overturned

by the stream's current. To pacify the little girl's upset feelings, Oakes announced, "We'll name the town after you."

A realtor used samples of fruit from the newly opened irrigated territory in south central Washington to attract settlers. Ranier Harkema, living in Holland, was sold on the agricultural possibilities and in 1896 moved to the area where the town site of Zillah was being laid out. Two years later three families arrived from Cleveland, Ohio. Discovered among the records of the Zillah church is an unsigned account of these early arrivals, written most likely by one of the Ramermans. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the church the writer was asked to tell about the beginning of the church. "Mr. Oord, Dominie Vanden Heuvel, myself, and some young men took the Northern Pacific train from Cleveland, Ohio, to Toppenish. We were welcomed by Mr. Granger, who took us with a couple of horse-drawn buggies to Zillah. We stayed overnight in a hotel. The next day Mr. Granger brought us to Mr. Harkema. We were informed there

were more Dutch people living in this area."

Ramerman reports that when his family arrived on the train, his wife and children did not like it at all. They detested the sagebrush and wanted to return to Cleveland. In fact, his wife did not unpack her trunk for a year. The Oord family's thirteen children significantly increased the size of the community. Under the leadership of Vanden Heuvel, a letter was written to Classis Iowa, asking that a congregation be organized. Classis Iowa responded by sending Rev. Brink from the recently organized church in Lynden. Brink borrowed a horse for a couple of days to visit families in Sunnyside, about eighteen miles away. Brink met with the Harkema, William J. Oord, J. R. Ramerman, T. R. Bajema, G. D. Wesselius, and Sam Stuurmans. As elsewhere, services initially were held in private homes, with Harkema reading the sermons. On Saturday, 9 November 1901, Rev. Evert Bos from Rotterdam, Kansas, arrived and organized the Christian Reformed Church of the Sunnyside Valley in the Liberty

School, located between Zillah and Sunnyside.

At the same time Sam Stuurmans and his wife, and Piet van Belle made professions of faith. A consistory of three men was formed; they were installed the next day at a church service held in the school. Reading services were held in the homes of individual members in both Sunnyside and Zillah. On occasion a minister came to preach and administer the sacraments and met with families in the two locations, in turn, although joint meetings



The parsonage of the Zillah Christian Reformed congregation was remodeled in the fall of 1911 by Johannes Daverman, father-in-law of the pastor, Cornelius Vriesman. Daverman established J. & G. Daverman, which was a long-time architectural firm in Grand Rapids. Image from The Banner, 12 September 1912, p. 576.

were also held in the Liberty School from time to time.

On 24 November 1904 it was decided to build a church. Jan van Klinken and J. B. Ramerman were appointed to collect money for this, and received \$800 the first day. Ramerman was appointed to look for property and found four acres for \$100 on the northern bank of the Yakima River, two miles southeast of Zillah, but with water rights the price was \$150. The congregation voted to purchase the property paying \$25 down and returning with a bill of sale before the owner increased the price. The balance was paid after a clear deed was delivered.

The property needed leveling. Volunteers and their horses, of those who owned them, did the labor. The foundation was built of sandstone dynamited from nearby hills. The completed building was 32 feet by 24 feet and built at a cost of \$1,500. Worship services began in the building in the autumn of 1906. Soon afterwards the congregation was forced to sell the land to a railroad for \$4,500. As a result they bought an acre of land about one-half mile to the north in an area called Orchardvale, so named because of the surrounding fruit orchards. The church building was moved to that site in 1909. Next the parsonage was built. These facilities brought families living in the Sunnyside area to Zillah for worship, and thereby helped unite the two groups into a single congregation.

The original minute book reveals there was no office of treasurer; receipts and disbursements were recorded into and authorized in the minutes. For instance, from January to June 1902 the following receipts from offerings are recorded: January, \$1.70 and \$1.50; March, \$1.75 and \$1.71; plus a \$2.05 collection at Lord's Supper; April, \$5.37; and May, \$5.07. Expenditures during

this period were: January—book and wine, \$1.50; and later in the year, Classis assessment, \$2.00; mission assessment, 5 cents; tin box, 60 cents; money order, 10 cents; etc.

One of the congregation's charter members, William Oord, proved to be a rather colorful figure. In the community he was known as the singing apple peddler. Among his customers were Indians on the Yakima Reservation, where Oord traded apples for fish caught by the Indians. He was once robbed by bandits when traveling via the Satus Pass, taking his fruit in a wagon to Goldendale, some ninety miles to the southeast. He escaped injury and saved his load, but lost all his money. At home he was known for his unusual prayers. But he was also known to feed hungry people who came to his door.

The J. B. and W. Ramerman families also left a mark on the community. They made sorting and packing fruit a family affair. By 1910 the Ramerman orchards produced fruit which filled thirteen rail cars carrying 729 boxes of fruit. Apples were the dominant fruit, but there were also cherries, apricots, pears, and prunes. The Ramermans also made the wooden packing boxes used to transport the fruit. As a result, the siding where the fruit was loaded into the rail cars was named "Ramerman."

Beginning in 1910 more families began to move into the area. The first was the Den Boer family, who had to contend with illnesses for the next five months. The next spring they moved into a one-bedroom house, the girls slept in a whitewashed chicken coop and the boys slept in tents. Jasper Kleyn, who came across the Atlantic Ocean as a stowaway, made his way to Zillah to begin working in the fruit orchards. The head of the Warmenhoven family had worn a tuxedo to work in the Netherlands and was wearing this when he

was shown how to harness a team of horses!

Church life too produced interesting sidelights. Fred Koekkoek led the singing school, and the singers were paid twenty-five cents each time they came to sing. Political debates developed during consistory meetings—Adriaan Witte was a Democrat; William Oord, a Republican. On one occasion the two oldest children of the visiting Rev. William Meyer explored the chicken house of their host before the services. They came out with lice and during the service many worshipers watched them doing much scratching. One memorable Sunday the pastor's wife came to church with a curler in her hair.

The congregation experienced a steady growth, from 55 in 1903 to 103 members in 1911, according to denominational yearbooks. When the church was four years old the church was officially renamed Zillah Christian Reformed Church, but the yearbooks note that a branch was maintained in Sunnyside. The parsonage was first permanently occupied in 1911 when Rev. Cornelius Vriesman arrived. When Vriesman left after five years, Elder Harkema again resumed reading sermons until candidate John De Jong came two years later. Following De Jong's pastorate, John W. Brink left a thirteen-year ministry in Rehoboth, New Mexico, for Zillah, but returned to minister among the Navajo in New Mexico five years later. He was succeeded by Nick De Vries in 1930, during whose tenure Sunnyside reached sufficient numerical strength to become an organized church.

Initially, Lynden, Zillah, and Oak Harbor delegates traveled to southeast Iowa classical meetings. Later this travelling distance was shortened a bit when Classis Orange City (now Classis Heartland) was organized in 1905. This changed in 1910 when

Classis Pacific (now Classis Pacific Northwest) was organized, with churches in Washington, Montana, and Alberta, with the sessions almost always held in Washington.

Redlands, California

As early as 1904, three families with Reformed backgrounds were living in the Redlands community. Initially these families attended existing churches, but the arrival of three more such families in 1909 prompted them to form a Bible class in a Lutheran church. Barney Leest, from New Jersey and one of the first people of Dutch background to move to Redlands, was a key person leading toward the establishment of the Redlands CRC. He was an avid letter writer and became a promoter of the area to people in the Midwest and Great Lakes areas. He found jobs and housing for them. One of Leest's letters was to Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen in Denver, Colorado, requesting him to come to Redlands to assess the possibility of establishing a church. Arriving in August 1910, Van Dellen preached to twenty-seven people in the basement of the Lutheran church. From that time forward, reading services were held in homes or the United Presbyterian Church every Sunday. This resulted in a request that Classis Pella designate Redlands as a mission post. Thereupon Rev. Jacob Bolt, a classical home missionary, arrived to minister there for two months. On 11 May 1911 the group was organized as the first CRC congregation in the Golden State and Bolt became the missionary pastor of the new congregation.

It was a new world for the Dutch families who came to this community. Redlands was a growing town of 10,000 residents. It was situated in the midst of orange groves. In fact, at that time there were 3,000 acres of orange groves inside the city limits.



Jacob Cupido (1888–1954) was the third minister of the Redlands Christian Reformed congregation and the third minister of that congregation with the first name of Jacob. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A significant number of new church members came as the result of health problems. One of these residents, Sue Porte from Orange City, Iowa, was sent to Denver when diagnosed with tuberculosis. She became homesick, but her uncle Jacob Cupido (as one parishioner observed, all their ministers were “Jacobs”) had just become the pastor of the Redlands church in 1920, so the family decided she should go to live with her uncle and aunt. Meeting her at the train depot was Nick Roghair. In route to the Cupido home, Roghair stopped on a bridge and announced they were crossing the Santa Ana River. She looked down and saw only boulders and sand, suspecting that Roghair was “pulling her leg.”

The base of the San Bernardino Mountains attracted wealthy Californians to build their homes and estates, while the working class lived in the valley, among whom were many people of Dutch extraction. Most were not of agricultural background, but they soon became

workers in the orange groves or gardeners on the estates. Young women in particular became maids in the homes of the wealthy, while young men learned construction trades, and a few became chauffeurs. As was the case with Dutch immigrants elsewhere, those in Redlands practiced “in isolation lies our strength” by maintaining their language and culture and creating a community within a community. The crowning event of the congregation's cultural isolation was the annual Labor Day Mission Fest, an outdoor event featuring picnics and messages given largely by ministers.

The young, growing congregation soon realized the need of having its own church facility. Two lots at the corner of Sun and Clay streets were purchased for \$900, and a frame building measuring 28 by 38 feet, with an 18 by 28 foot basement, was dedicated the following June. Four months after the official birth of the church, when Jacob Bolt arrived with his wife to become the missionary pastor, Redlands paid \$18 towards his monthly salary, which was augmented by funds from the Home Missions Committee. This amount was raised to \$25 monthly at the beginning of 1912. Since his salary was shared, he was often called to visit other groups in California, resulting in frequent reading services in Redlands. In 1913 the schedule was regularized, with Rev. Bolt preaching in Redlands for three Sundays and elsewhere on the fourth Sunday.

After the appearance in *De Wachter* of an article about this new church, many inquiries about housing and work were addressed to Bolt. Most queries came from people who were seeking a better climate for health reasons. With the appearance of new faces, ninety-six additional chairs were purchased for the church auditorium. This influx created another

challenge: unwell people required financial help, and this became a tremendous burden for the diaconate of this small church.

As 1914 drew to a close, Bolt moved to Crownpoint, New Mexico, to become a missionary to the Navajo. Very early in 1915 Jacob Vissia arrived and language became a major issue in his pastorate. There was a belief that using English in worship could only corrupt the congregation. But the requests for services in English continued to grow so that for a time such services were held midweek. By 1919 morning and afternoon services were in Dutch and an English service was in the evening, with catechism classes, the Sunday school, and the societies using English.

One female member in a memoir concluded that Vissia “wasn’t much of a preacher. He would rather tinker with his Model T Ford than study.” But he was a good pastor and his prayers were heartfelt and earnest. Another parishioner pictured the minister at the bedside of her father. He was on his knees, begging God to spare her father’s life. She too said he wasn’t the best preacher, but he certainly had the gift of prayer. Just over

a year after Vissia began his work in Redlands, his wife became ill with tuberculosis and died. After a time he remarried, but before the end of 1919 the minister himself was seriously ill. This resulted in his retirement at the age of thirty-nine and his death five years later.

For several weeks during the summer of 1917 Wilhelmina Bolier from Michigan was engaged to teach Christian school classes, held in the church. The pews were removed and replaced with school desks. Bolier was enormously impressed with the flora of the area. She gathered blossoms, which she waxed and took with her to Michigan. Trees also captured her interest, for she had not seen eucalyptus, pomegranate, acacia, date palm, or orange trees before. Her teaching endeavor was the precursor to the establishment of the Christian school in 1921. A generous gift of \$4,000 was received, which enabled the supporters to erect a school building. The school gave further impetus to the movement of people to Redlands.

The church also branched out to do Sunday school work among Indian boys at the Sherman Institute in Riverside, a United States Government

boarding school for Native Americans. During these years the church had a singing school (choir) and an orchestra, which came to an end with the advent of World War II. On one occasion during the later 1920s, the orchestra went to perform at the Los Angeles church. A dense fog required that one of the boys sit on the hood of the car in order to help the driver navigate.

The youth of the church met separately as boys and girls, but in 1917, with consistorial approval, they were united to form a Young People’s Society, which met on Sunday evenings. For a time the young people were called upon to canvass the congregation to collect money for the pastor’s salary. During this time period it became a custom that the girls would march down the aisle to seat themselves in the front pews. Hard on the heels of this procession would come a procession of boys who also seated themselves in the front of the church—unlike other churches, where the boys would sit in the back of the church or some other less visible location.

Work also gave definition to the congregation. One parishioner noted that during the 1920s there were no

regulations regarding the use of smudge pots to protect the orange crops from frost. The smoke they created was so thick that visibility was close to zero. Even in church the worshipers could hear the preacher better than see him at times. One family (father and son-in-law) forming a partnership, ventured beyond the Dutch enclave and bought land in the San Bernardino area. It was swampland which they



Constructed in 1921, the Redlands Christian School began with classes taught during the summer of 1917 by a teacher visiting from West Michigan. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Oil-burning smudge pots, developed in Southern California after a particularly destructive freeze in 1913, produced heat and smoke to protect citrus fruit from frost. Rising oil prices and concern about the environment caused the pots to be phased out of use during the 1970s. Photo courtesy of the author.

drained by using tiles. The damp soil eliminated the need for irrigation. It produced many kinds of vegetables and strawberries in abundance, which they marketed in nearby cities. This was a very profitable enterprise for

a number of years—until Japanese people came into the area and took over the market farming. They even worked on Sundays, which one observer noted as “competition putting us out of business.”

Dutch people continued to move to the city. The year after Jacob Cupido began his ministerial work in 1920, the church building had to be enlarged. Both Cupido and his successor, Martin Schans, related very well to the young people and as a result church memberships grew. As elsewhere, however, the question of language in worship caused a controversy. During the 1920s, as the number of English-speaking members grew, the three Sunday services were changed to one in Dutch and two in English, the reverse of the prior arrangement. There was agitation for more services in Dutch, but the consistory felt this would be a step backwards, given the growing number of only English-speaking members. As a result nearly half the members left to form the Redlands Protestant Reformed Church. The result was that the one Dutch-language service was so poorly attended that it was discontinued. Four years later about a dozen families, whose roots were in the Reformed Church in America, also left to form Bethany Reformed Church. Although the congregation had been reduced to thirty-four families at the end of 1937, the remaining years prior to World War II were more peaceful. ☞

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"Fortieth Anniversary, 1900–1940"

"Golden Jubilee Anniversary, 1900–1950"

"Thanking God Each Time We Remember: Commemorating the One-Hundredth Anniversary of the First Christian Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington, 1900–2000"

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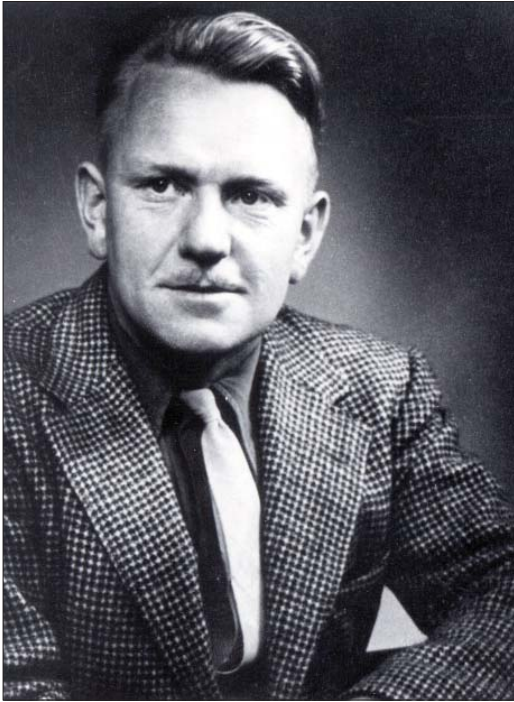
"Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1901–1976"

Endnotes

1. Until the 1930s, most of the members in the Christian Reformed Church were Dutch-speaking and referred to their ministers using the Dutch word *dominie*.

Meindert De Jong

Richard H. Harms



Meindert De Jong was born 4 March 1906 in Wierum, the Netherlands, to Remmeren Remmerens De Jong and Jantje Davids De Jong, the fourth of six sons, the first and last of whom did not survive infancy. Meindert De Jong won every major award for writing children's and juvenile literature offered in the United States during his lifetime, save the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award; he was also the first American to win the international Hans Christian Andersen Award.



Remmeren de Jong was a carpenter, mason, and builder in the Northern Netherlands. The parents of Meindert De Jong were from Wierum but lived briefly in Blija, Kostveloren, and Groningen before settling in Wierum.

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It was in Wierum where Meindert, “Mick” to friends and family, spent his first eight years, learning to read from the family Bible on his grandfather’s lap. His love of words and stories and childhood experiences formed the foundation of Meindert’s successful literary career. Church was central to the family’s life, as the building of the Hervormde Kerk seemed to De Jong to form the foundation of the dike. The dike has been rebuilt and currently a road passes between the church and the dike.



A modern view of “Peppermint Street.”

Meindert grew up playing in the streets, lanes, and alleys of Wierum, whose citizens were either stolid and staid farmers or superstitious and gregarious fisher folk. Muntjestege (Mint Lane) in Wierum became the basis for Peppermint Street the twenty-fourth of his twenty-seven books. For Dutch church-going folk mints (muntjes) and peppermints (pepermuntjes) were synonymous.



The De Jongs joined the nearby Dennis Street Christian Reformed Church and found their lack of being able to speak English of little inconvenience in the Dutch-speaking neighborhoods of Grand Rapids; in fact, Jantje De Jong, who died in 1953, never learned to speak English. The four boys Americanized quickly, but initially endured hazing as newly-arrived immigrants.

In 1914 the family immigrated to Grand Rapids, living successively in four houses in the vicinity of Wealthy Street and Diamond Avenue. The father became a builder and Mick and his younger brother Neil (both shown at left) played in the yards and the area neighborhoods. The older two brothers, David and Remmeren Jr. (Americanized to Raymond), began working at odd jobs to supplement the family's income.





The family sent all four boys to the Baldwin Street Christian School. Ray and Neil stopped going to school after the eighth grade and both became successful in construction-related trades. David and Meindert developed an interest in literature during school, particularly the adventure stories of authors such as James Oliver Curwood; both went on to high school.



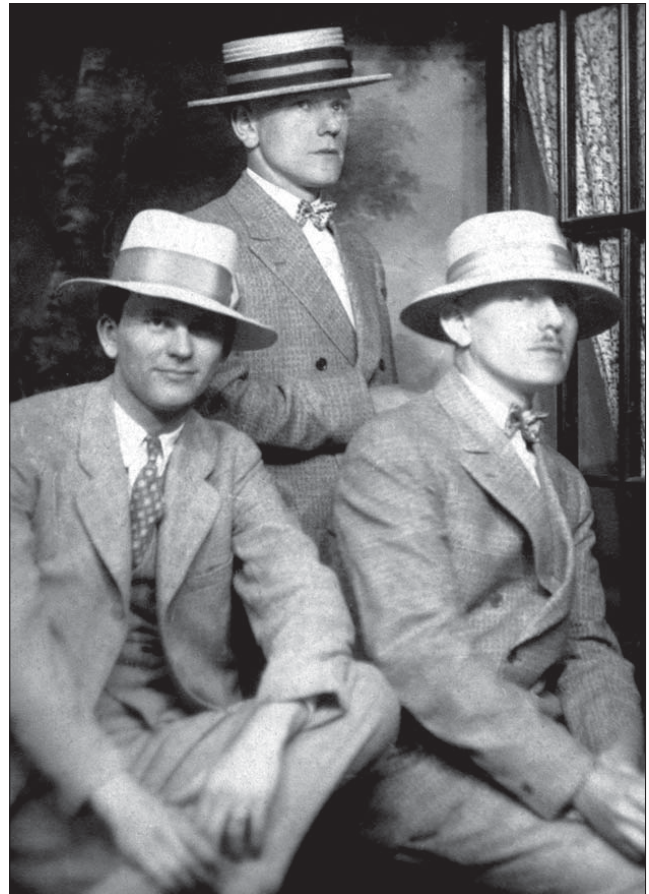
David went to work after the eighth grade in a drug store and later in a bank to help the family's income, but Meindert went on in 1920 to the newly opened Grand Rapids Christian High School, then meeting in the former building of the CRC Theological School (now Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College).

In high school Meindert excelled in English and found Theron Jenne, a former Methodist minister, a fine and an encouraging teacher. Jenne encouraged Meindert to write, particularly poetry, some of which he submitted for publication. Although none of these poems were published, this launched Jenne's young student on a career in writing.



After graduating, Meindert reluctantly accepted a position to teach English, rhetoric, Latin, and English literature at Grundy College, a junior college and academy in northcentral Iowa. Meindert's misgivings resulted from his conviction that he could not teach and, within just a few weeks at Grundy, experience convinced him his misgivings had been accurate beyond expectations. This, coupled with the fact that the school was unable to pay any salary, caused him summarily to return to West Michigan.

Meindert attended Calvin College after high school. Because of work, David, five years older than Meindert, attended the academy at Calvin and entered the college curriculum a year after Meindert. Since the two brothers looked alike they often got into trouble by taking one another's tests and perpetrating other college shenanigans. As the De Jongs matriculated they published poetry and short stories in the school literary magazine Chimes and in the Young Calvinist, a new periodical devoted to young people from the Dutch Reformed tradition.

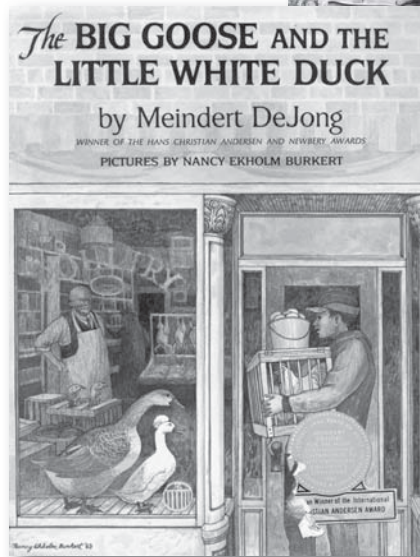




Meindert returned to Grand Rapids and moved in with his parents, who were renting a small farm on Richmond Road west of Grand Rapids. To supplement the family's income, Meindert began raising chickens and selling their eggs door-to-door, which brought two cents more per dozen than when selling the eggs to a dealer.



In 1933 Meindert married Hattie Overeinder. The Overeinder family had immigrated from Veendam, the Netherlands, in 1913, and Mrs. Overeinder had taught Jantje DeJong how to can and cook American food. The couple began married life on the second floor of the farmhouse on Richmond Road. Meindert continued the egg business, while Hattie took in laundry.



One of Meindert's best stops for selling eggs was the Children's Room of the Grand Rapids Public Library, where he enjoyed telling original stories, particularly to children. The head of the Children's Room, Mae Quigley, encouraged him to write these stories down. One, involving a goose and a duck, he wrote in three weeks and submitted it to the leading publisher in the country—Harper—which accepted it. Pictured here is the book after it was reprinted after De Jong won the Hans Christian Andersen medal.

Harper encouraged Meindert to write another story. Since the first story had been about an event on the Richmond Road farm, Dirk's Dog, Bello takes place in DeJong's native Wierum, which was spelled "Wierom," thanks to the editor at Harper.



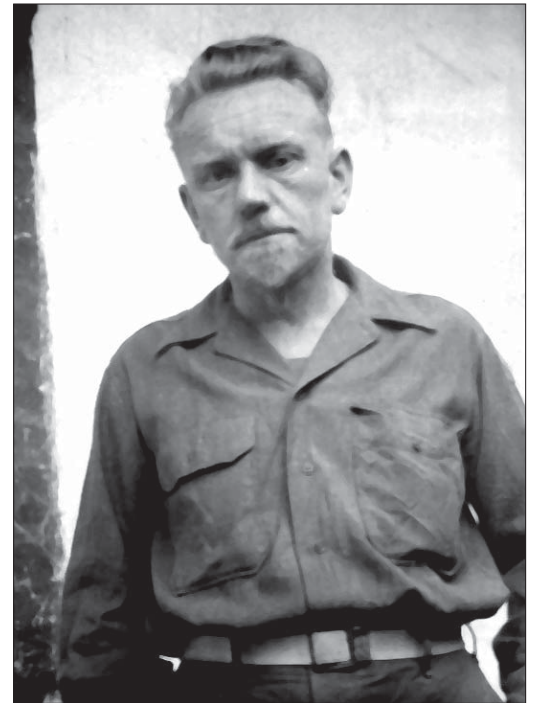
Because he and Hattie were not able to have children, during the summer of 1943 De Jong was drafted. As was the case for a number of college graduates, apparently due in large measure to their typing skills, Meindert was assigned to be a clerk-typist after basic training. He found army life intellectually deadening and felt totally unprepared for military recreation which include drinking, dancing, and gambling, since the Christian Reformed Church officially banned the latter two, along with movie attendance.

In 1944 De Jong received orders to travel via South America, Africa, and India to South Asia; to the headquarters of the Chinese-American 68th Composite Wing, US Army Air Corps, commanded by Claire Chennault. With this new assignment came two rapid promotions to sergeant, which brought a much needed increase in salary, but more importantly established a set eight-hour work day, during which he wrote combat chronologies and histories.² Less than two months into his new assignment he wrote David that he had an idea for a new book (House of Sixty Fathers) about a Chinese war orphan with a family pig befriended by American airmen, based on the life of a boy adopted by the men of a barracks in the unit.³



His army experience is best described in his own words, written to his brother and confidant, David:

I'm settled here in a barracks among a bunch of corporals and sergeants—drill instructors which are the lowest in intelligence & the loudest-mouthed bullying _____s in the army. They all seem to be hill-billys & coal miners and congenitally unable to talk except in loud shouts—it's a hellish bedlam of cussing & bickering & boasting—pretty loathsome.¹



Books by Meindert De Jong

with years of publication in English and in translations

The Big Goose and the Little

White Duck, 1938: Afrikaans, 1966; Italian, 1966

Dirk's Dog, Bello, 1939: Dutch, 1957; Swedish, 1960; Afrikaans, 1966

Bells of the Harbor, 1941

Wheels over the Bridge, 1941: Finnish, 1957; German, 1961; Dutch, 1963; Spanish, 1994

The Cat that Walked a Week, 1943: Afrikaans, 1963; Japanese, 1966

The Little Stray Dog, 1943

Billy and the Unhappy Bull, 1946: Swedish, 1964; Afrikaans, 1967

Bible Days, 1948 (Fideler of GR, Kreigh Collins, Illust.)

The Tower by the Sea, 1950: German, 1964; Japanese, 1964; Afrikaans, 1966

Good Luck Duck, 1950: Afrikaans, 1971

Smoke above the Lane, 1951: German, 1954; Afrikaans, 1966; Dutch 1972

Hurry Home, Candy, 1953: German, 1967; Afrikaans, 1968; Dutch, 1971; Polish, 1973; Chinese, 1995

Shadrach, 1953: Swedish, 1956; Dutch, 1959; Afrikaans, 1965; Czechoslovakian, 1965; Japanese, 1965; Danish, 1968; German, 1968; Polish, 1973; Chinese, 1974

The Wheel on the School, 1954: German, 1954; Dutch, 1956; Frisian, 1956; Swedish, 1957; Afrikaans, 1959; Polish, 1961; Spanish, 1964; Czechoslovakian, 1967; Italian, 1968; Portuguese, 1971; Chinese, 1972 (3 reprints); Slovenian, 1997

The Little Cow and the Turtle, 1955: Afrikaans, 1966

The House of Sixty Fathers, 1956: German, 1956; Swedish, 1958; Dutch, 1959; Italian, 1960; Danish, 1961; Afrikaans, 1961; Norwegian, 1972; Frisian, 1981; Chinese, 1991

Along Came a Dog, 1958: Afrikaans, 1966; Spanish, 1989

The Mighty Ones (Great Men and Women of Early Bible Days), 1959: Finnish, 1961; German, 1962

The Last Little Cat, 1961: German, 1962; Afrikaans, 1963; Japanese, 1966

Nobody Plays with a Cabbage, 1962: Afrikaans, 1963; Danish, 1963

The Singing Hill, 1962: Swedish, 1963; Afrikaans, 1964; Danish, 1965; Spanish, 1965; German, 1968; Portuguese, 1968; Dutch 1974; Spanish, 1964

Far Out the Long Canal, 1964: Afrikaans, 1966; Dutch, 1967; German, 1967

Puppy Summer, 1966: Afrikaans, 1967; Danish, 1967; Swedish, 1969

Journey from Peppermint Street, 1968: Dutch, 1969; Afrikaans, 1970

A Horse Came Running, 1970 (first book with Macmillan): Afrikaans, 1971; Swedish, 1971; Danish, 1972; German, 1972; Dutch, 1973

The Easter Cat, 1971: Dutch, 1973; German, 1973

The Almost All-White Rabbit Cat, 1972: Dutch, 1972

Since each brother was a published author, they tried writing a novel together, but while their personalities meshed well, their literary egos did not, and the effort failed, with each returning to writing his own works.



After the war Meindert (far right) returned to Grand Rapids and worked at various odd jobs while also writing. Recreation often included his brother David (center), also an author; and Bart Zandstra (far left), a friend from Calvin College who had married Gwen Jonkman, a friend of Meindert's from high school.



The De Jong brothers criticized each other's works and, with their wives, enjoyed each other's company on a variety of vacation trips.



The entire family remained close and the four brothers (from left to right) Ray, David, Neil, and Meindert, provided their parents' retirement support.



During the 1950s Meindert De Jong's fame spread around the globe so that ultimately twenty-five of his twenty-seven books were translated into twenty-two languages. Both Meindert and David loved animals, particularly cats. Daphne is pictured watching Meindert type.

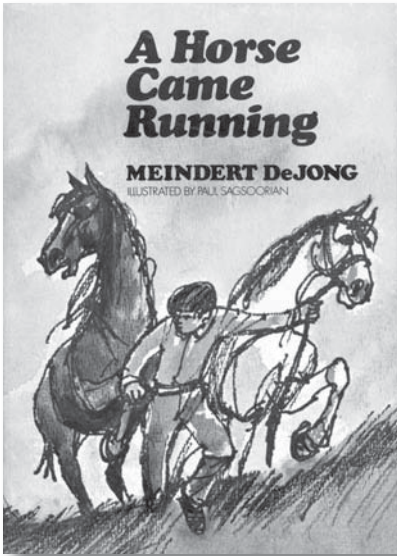


The popularity of The Wheel on the School in 1954 caused it to be translated that same year and ultimately into eleven more languages, the Chinese version going to three reprints.⁴ Meindert insisted that the version in his native Frisian appear before the Dutch translation.

The House of Sixty Fathers, finally published in 1956, received the Josette Frank Award (then called the Children's Book Award) and in 1957 was a Newbery Medal honor winner, as was Along Came a Dog in 1959. Then in 1962 came the highest international recognition in children's literature, when De Jong was given the International Hans Christian Andersen Award for his body of works to date. This is a newspaper clipping of De Jong reading to his nieces and nephew after receiving the Hans Christian Andersen Award.



Meindert remained close to his family, particularly his father, after his mother died in 1953.



Although his relationship with editors at Harper were always tumultuous, in 1970 a dispute regarding a scene in *A Horse Came Running* caused Meindert to leave Harper for Macmillan. But, he noted later, the fire was going out and he published his last book in 1972, *The Almost All-White Rabbit Cat*.



The awards brought increased sales and contracts from the Walt Disney Company. Meindert left Grand Rapids for Mexico, divorced Hattie, and married Beatrice DeClaire McElwee, a member of a writing class he had taught.⁵ Later he and Beatrice lived in Chapel Hill and then Allegan, Michigan.



Although he disliked public appearances intensely, in 1975 he accepted the Distinguished Alumni Award from Calvin College. Beatrice died in 1978 and eleven years later he married his good friend, the widowed Gwen Jonkman Zandstra. Meindert died 16 July 1991.

Endnotes

1. Letter to David De Jong, 7 November 1943, David De Jong Collection, box 2, folder 3, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
2. Letter to Estelle Austin, 2 May 1944, and letter to David De Jong, 14 May 1943, David De Jong Collection, box 2, folder 4.
3. Letter to David De Jong, 27 June 1944, David De Jong Collection, box 2, folder 4.
4. Letter to Ted and Ann De Leeuw, 13 January 1970, Meindert De Jong Collection, box 1, folder 2.
5. Helen De Jong's Diary note, David Cornell De Jong Collection, box 7, folder 1.

The Raid

Jenna Vanden Brink

Martinus Vanden Brink was born in 1932 in the Netherlands. After living in The Hague his family moved to Epe, North Gelderland, in 1944, as World War II was coming to an end. He told this true adventure to his grandchildren whenever they begged to hear a story.

In the central portion of the Netherlands, just north of Apeldoorn, there is the small town of Epe. In

among the dark houses, there were empty buildings, blocked off and boarded up by the Germans. Stores, factories, and even schools were shut down and guarded. The Germans had looted almost everything for transport by train back to Germany, leaving the town desperate and hungry.

One building, the School met de Bijbel, at 155 Hoofdstraat near the center of town, was used for storing the looted goods, so the classes each met only once a week in the Sunday school rooms of the big church that stood in the center of town, where the two main roads became one. Because of the limited school schedule, the children of the town had countless hours of daylight to fill. Some stayed inside, keeping out of trouble and not asking questions.

But those who could not stay in wandered, dreamed, schemed, and scrounged. Among these were four scheming boys, sitting slouched and attentive behind a low, wooden fence, across the road from the school gymnasium and beyond a ditch. The fence was hidden by a dense patch of trees, so the boys could remain concealed from searching German eyes. They spent a whole week perched on a splintered, wooden beam studying the German soldiers patrolling the gymnasium.

For the boys, having code names was not only exciting but also wise during the occupation when certain activity required secrecy and silence. One of the four was Kikker (frog), who was a master at mimicking a croaking frog. Martinus was Dobbetje, after the little fishing bobbbers



Maria Vanden Brink (seated) with Martinus in the dark clothing, turned away from the camera. Photo courtesy of the author.

1944 it was surrounded by farmland and nestled quietly among patches of woods. Each night Allied planes droned overhead, scanning the landscape for possible landmarks on their way to targets in Germany. All the houses in the town were dark. Thick black paper covered the windows to prevent any light from escaping and being seen by the pilots. In the town,

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that float on the water and then dart underwater when fish nibbled at the bait. The largest of the group was Anderhalf (one and a half). And Professor got his name from the thick-rimmed, Coke-bottle glasses he always wore.

It was Martinus's idea to raid the school, and his best friend Kikker was always keen for mischief. They were usually together, scrounging for food and finding trouble. Food was particularly scarce during the last year of the war because the Germans shipped most of the Dutch farm crops to Germany. In the Vanden Brink house it was Martinus's job to trade with the farmers and somehow come up with food for his mother and three sisters. Since his parents were divorced, he felt responsible for helping his mother and for providing something for his family.

For a week the boys planned and calculated and schemed and dreamed about raiding the gymnasium-warehouse. They imagined all the valuable food that must be stored inside those brick walls. They waited for the right night that November. They measured the time it took a soldier to walk around the building once; they found the best point of entry; and they counted the number of brick courses from the ground to a barred, broken window that was just big enough for Martinus to fit through. He could reach the window with Professor and Anderhalf hoisting him as a human ladder. The ditch, filled with high grass and about ten meters from the side of the building, was dry—a perfect hiding place. They figured it took approximately three minutes for a soldier to make it around the building and they would then have that long to get Martinus through the window.

Finally the overcast day they had waited for arrived. Thick clouds cloaked the moon and the four boys, dressed in black, waited behind

Martinus's house for two hours after curfew. Kikker shoved a burned cork to Martinus/Dobbetje and told him to smear the charcoal on his face. Dobbetje rubbed the black soot on until his face blended with the night. Anderhalf and Professor did the same. Then the boys set out, making their way down back alleys and through cow pastures to the school.

The thick clouds broke and it started to rain. Charcoal dripped into their eyes and mouths. They cursed Kikker. Rainwater sloshed in their shoes as they made their way through the murk. By the time they got to the ditch, it was no longer dry, and they clambered down the bank and found themselves in ice-cold water up to their knees.

Kikker was the lookout, hidden near the corner of the gymnasium where he had a good view of the front and could see the soldier coming. One croak meant danger; two signaled safety.

They waited, crouched in the murky water. Two croaks. The boys scampered out of the ditch. In order to climb, Dobbetje had left his shoes in the ditch, and Anderhalf grumbled when he felt a muddy sock in his face. Shivering, Dobbetje clambered his way up the human ladder and reached for the windowsill, but his fingertips could not find the bar. Professor grunted and shoved Dobbetje's feet up with wet, slippery hands until Dobbetje was able to grab a bar. One croak. The human ladder disappeared from beneath his feet and he was left dangling desperately, with his wrists pressed hard against the crude metal sill.

He hung there, apprehensively listening to the sound of the German's boots sloshing heavily through the mud,

expecting them to stop at any moment. Gludge. Gludge. Gludge. His wrists seared with pain. As he dangled helplessly, squeezing his eyes shut, he wondered what it would feel like to get a bullet in the butt. Silently squatting in the frigid water of the ditch, Anderhalf and Professor tried not to breath. Their bodies were frozen from cold and fear. With their heads bowed, they willed the soldier not to notice their friend dangling from the side of the gymnasium wall.

The sound of the boots faded, and Kikker croaked twice from his lookout spot. Anderhalf grabbed the rope, motioned to Professor, and the human ladder re-formed. Anderhalf hoisted Professor onto his shoulders and they managed to maneuver Dobbetje a little higher. He groped blindly for a latch.

By the time Dobbetje poked his legs inside, a single croak again sounded danger. Sticking half out of the building, he looked down at the guard's helmet and rifle passing only a half a meter below where his dangling feet had been and then realized why



Maria Vanden Brink with children (l-r) Miesje, Martinus, and Adrie in Santpoort, Zuid Holland, just north of Haarlem. Photo courtesy of the author.



The Vanden Brinks, mother and four children, lived in the left half of this house (seen in a modern view) in Epe during the end of the war. Photo courtesy of the author.

the guard had not seen him. To keep the rain from running down his neck, the soldier had tucked the collar of his raincoat inside his helmet, which prevented him from looking left, right, or up.

Dobbetje squeezed his body sideways through the iron bars of the window and tied the rope securely so that he could slide down from the window. As he clung to the rope inside the pitch-black building his eyes were useless in that terrifying darkness. Looking into the black below him he envisioned a row of rifles with mounted bayonets pointing upwards. The urge to retreat and call the entire, stupid plan off tempted him. He continued down, but the rope was not long enough to reach the floor. With a prayer, Dobbetje lowered himself slowly into the deep, black below. His body was tense; the taste of charcoal and perspiration was in his mouth. As he hung from the rope, one soggy sock slid off the foot which probed about, searching for the floor. It found something, a wooden box

that seemed sturdy. It held his weight as he nervously made his way to the floor.

The room was so dark that from the floor Dobbetje could barely see the broken window above. He breathed deeply and tried not to dwell on how utterly idiotic the entire situation suddenly seemed. He felt around with his hands for something small enough to fit through the broken window and finally came across a pile of long, narrow boxes. They were perfect—heavy, probably filled with cans of food.

He stacked large crates against the wall and dragged a box up to the windowsill. Peering through the bars, Dobbetje saw his friends huddled in the frigid water as the guard passed. He heard two croaks and, with a strained heave, he poked the box through the bars and it splashed into the mud below. Waiting anxiously beneath the window, Anderhalf scooped up the heavy box and



Miesje, Martinus, and their mother on a ferry prior to the war. Photo courtesy of the author.

returned to Professor, who was keeping watch from the ditch. In whispers they considered what the box might contain. All they knew was that it was heavy. Kikker croaked twice again and another box appeared at the window. Finally, after another two croaks, seven boxes were safely in the ditch and Dobbetje lowered himself down the human ladder, proud and relieved.

Martinus and his friends began lifting the loot. Anderhalf hoisted three boxes in a firm, two-armed grip and silently they began the long journey of transporting the heavy load home. Laden with the boxes, the boys trudged down alleys and through cow pastures—they were elated. They had pulled it off. They had schemed and planned and could not wait to open the boxes and inspect the loot. We fooled those rotten moffen (a term of derision for the German occupiers), the boys thought.

Finally, back behind Martinus's house, each ripped open the soft, sodden boxes, their blood pumping with excitement and their eyes wide with anticipation. Shock, silence, and disbelief followed as their eyes narrowed and foreheads twisted. Cold, drenched, and filthy, with aching muscles, they stared at hundreds and hundreds of brilliant white tubes. Kikker, Anderhalf, and Professor stared at Dobbetje, crouched over his own box, afraid to look up at his comrades. He picked up a tube, twisted off its small cap, and squeezed the contents onto his finger. As the minty flavor tingled his tongue, he knew it was true.

Toothpaste! They had risked their lives for toothpaste!

For years to come, in all future adventures, Martinus's code name was mijnheer Tandpasta, "Mr. Toothpaste." ❧

Our Trip to North America, Part V

Summer 1949

G. J. Buth, Nieuwe Tonge

[Gerrit Johannes Buth – b. 16 May 1905]¹

Translated from the Dutch by
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Summer 2005

Friday, 12 August. It was nice and cool in the morning. The thunderstorms brought cooler weather. In the Belmont area they had received little rain. After breakfast Uncle Dan and I went to Rockford to buy some brown work boots. On the way back we stopped to take a look at Richard's farm and to take a closer look at the

left at 2:30 and passed a few beautiful lakes. Geneveva has a house under construction at Silver Lake. They think they may move in this fall. Her future husband lives in the area and they plan to work in the store his father runs. We arrived in Ionia around four. We parked the car in a large field. There were already hundreds of other cars. The ladies went their own way and we planned to meet again at seven o'clock. Then we planned to go together to a big show, which was sort of an open air play.

The show was quite interesting. Amazingly, many big machines were on display, which drew a lot of attention. Behind the show area was a fair, so big that it was hard to imagine it. Never in my life did I see such a huge fair; especially at night it was an impressive scene.

The evening show was absolutely wonderful. It had been going on for a week already, and every evening they would present two shows, and all the seats were taken at both performances, which meant that it was worthwhile. The display of cattle and horses was also very good. Uncles Jan and Dirk did well. We were home at midnight. We quickly ate a hamburger in the kitchen, that is, a bun with meat, and went to bed. It had been another nice day.

Sunday, 14 August. First Uncle John, Miny, Marie, Francis, and I went to church. It was interesting to



Beginning in 1915, but tracing its roots to a city and county fair that began in 1857, the Ionia Free Fair is the second largest agricultural fair in Michigan and among the fifty largest in the United States. Image courtesy of Tom Wilson.

meadows and the cattle. Everything looked fine, including the farm buildings. Since we had to go to Ionia in the afternoon we did not stay long. In Ionia we visited a big agricultural show [the Ionia Free Fair]. It is an event that takes place every year. We had dined at home and had taken some sandwiches along for the evening. We

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The last major shopping trip before returning to the Netherlands was to Paul Steketee & Sons, one of the three large department stores in downtown Grand Rapids. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids Public Library.

experience this as well. The service lasted an hour and fifteen minutes. In the afternoon we left for Jaap den Hartigh who had invited all of us for supper. We had a very good time there and Smitshoek and Flakkee were often the topic of conversation.

Tuesday, 16 August. Yesterday afternoon between four and six o'clock we went to town, where we ran into Pete Van Eck in Steketee's [department] store. He had expected us to stop by, and we told him that we had planned to do so, but our program had been so busy that we just did not get around to it yet. We agreed to visit this evening. The ladies preferred to stay home, so Uncle John and I went to see Kees Van Eck. He lives in a charming brick house and in a

pleasant looking neighborhood.

At eleven o'clock we went home, after agreeing that we would have a cup of coffee at his brother's the next day. Many old stories were recalled about the past, which was a lot of fun.

So, Tuesday morning we went to visit Pete Van Eck. He lives on Dolby Street, about six to seven miles from Uncle John. We were received very cordially. His wife, Sophie

De Jong, hails from Nieuwe Tonge. They have three children, two daughters and a son. The eldest is planning to get married on 16 August. We had coffee and cake. On the dresser we saw beautiful Delftware that came from Dirk Breesnee. Maarten Breesnee had given it to Sophie when they had stayed at his place two years ago when they were in the Netherlands. Uncle John asked if she might want to sell it, but the answer was, "It is not for sale." After a pleasant chat we left again. At their request we took a watch along for Van Eck's wife's sister who lives in the Netherlands. Pete works in a factory where condensed milk is processed, but had the morning off. Both Van Ecks appreciated very much that we visited them. After dinner I went to the Hill to get the

mail. There were five letters and a stack of newspapers, which are always much appreciated. I did not find Aunt Allie at home, and at Uncle Dirk's no one was home either. Gert Markensteijn is the manager and I talked with him for a while yet. Upon our return, the Vroegindewey family was going to stop by for a cup of tea and say goodbye before our trip back to the Netherlands. Uncle Pete was present as well this afternoon and stayed with us all day. Mina Braber, David's wife, had taken along a nice bunch of gladioli for Miny. She gave me a copper ashtray and letter opener as a memento. At 5:30 they said goodbye. We expressed the hope that they might visit Holland someday, and that they should not forget to stop at the Lorredijk.

The family has always been very kind to us and indicated that they appreciated very much that we visited them so soon after our arrival in America.

Uncle Pete stayed until eleven o'clock in the evening. This too was a quiet but very pleasant day.

Friday, 19 August. Miny came along too; at 5:45 Uncle Dirk's big Buick parked in front of the door. Uncle Pete did not care to make the major trip, so Uncle Dirk was the only one left. Pete Koert had been invited to come along; he was quite interested, but early in the morning he called to say that he did not feel well, and that he would rather stay home. So that left the three of us.

We had made this trip earlier with Uncle Pete and the Pott family, but returned home disappointed because we had been unable to find Dirk Buth. Now we had written to Flakkee first for the correct address and Miny wrote Dirk that we were going to give it one more try.

We had received a letter back from him that he was looking forward to

meeting us at the Hotel Empire in Tilbury, so that we could not miss him. Full of good cheer, we drove on the American roads. We had breakfast at a place along the road, after which we continued on to Detroit.

We went through customs at the bridge quite smoothly and were back in Canada. When we arrived there, it was immediately one hour later than in Michigan, for America and Canada are one hour different.

As agreed, we tried to be in Tilbury at one o'clock, but arrived ten minutes late and did not find Dirk at the hotel. So we had a bite to eat there, which took us about an hour, and still no Dirk. It was not a pleasant situation; we did not quite know what to do. Finally we decided to inquire at the post office in Coatsworth, since we knew that mail for Dirk was sent there. We received concrete information, after which we went into the hinterlands and after some time we arrived his farm. He was in the yard tinkering with his automobile. He greeted us very warmly. He had waited for us in Tilbury until one o'clock and then left for home thinking the letter containing directions had not arrived in time.

We had a cup of tea in the kitchen, and he took care of everything quite expertly, which people learn soon once they are in Canada. He lives here with a colleague, and they work the farm together, with each getting half. We toured the farm and the surroundings and saw crops like sugar beets, tobacco, and tomatoes. It all looked pretty good; especially the sugar beets. Yet I thought he could have planted more. The tobacco was still quite green, which, according to Dirk, was due to the clay soil, which is not the best soil for tobacco. The tomatoes were starting to ripen and he was eagerly looking forward to the arrival of his father, who would help with the picking. The tomatoes are sold

exclusively to factories for their juice. The yield of the sugar beets was about fourteen tons per acre, and the price varies from twelve to fourteen dollars per ton. Thinning the plants costs fourteen dollars and weeding costs four dollars per acre. Fertilizer is \$89 per ton. Fertilizing here is similar to that in Holland. Dirk appeared to be in great shape and made a favorable impression on us.

We asked about Maarten Nieuwenhuijzen, who, we heard, lives about fifty miles from him. We would really like to visit him as well. Dirk was quite ready to go with us and in order to get there a bit quicker we took the shortest route. The four of us went to look for Maarten and his wife. All of a sudden we were surrounded by people from Flakkee, which was fun. We met Maarten's wife, who had just collected some onion seed from the field. Dirk took our car to get Maarten, who was on his rented field preparing flowers for tomorrow's market. We spent an exceptionally pleasant hour in the Nieuwenhuijzen family home. They told us that on 30 September they would leave Canada in order to return to their former home in Langstreet. Having been enriched by new experiences they planned to become citizens of Flakkee again, yet they do not intend to stay there all of their lives. Mom was going to pour us another cup of coffee, but there was no electricity to heat the stove; it seemed that there was a break somewhere, which did not seem unusual for overhead wires.

We left around five o'clock, and all of us were happy to have had this opportunity to see each other. We took Dirk to his home and we wished him much luck for the future in this great land of Canada. We are sure that he will succeed. He thanked us for having made the effort to visit him. We were in Detroit before dark and had lunch just outside the city.

We were not tired yet, because Uncle Dirk's Buick is a fine automobile that carries you along at a pretty fast clip. We stopped in Portland and were home again at midnight. It had been a long day, but we were quite pleased with our visits. Uncle Dirk came in for a minute at Uncle John's, had a nip and, after we had thanked him most heartily, he left for home. We read a few letters that had arrived, and then went to bed.

Sunday, August 21. Today we were going to go to a horse show in Owosso. It is located about 90 miles from Grand Rapids. Pauline and Gert were there with their horses and looked forward to seeing the show. We left home at ten and had lunch just outside Owosso. It tasted great after this trip. The show began at one o'clock, so we were right on time. Pauline has beautiful horses and was awarded two ribbons. We were home at 10:30, had supper, and went to Uncle Dirk's where we arrived at midnight. We had enjoyed a pleasant week at Aunt Marie's, thanked both of them, after which we went to bed.

Tuesday, 23 August. This was the day that all of us, Aunt Allie included, would leave on a three-day trip. We were going to visit Chicago. We left around 9:30 to get Aunt Allie; the ladies put a few dresses in a wrinkle-free bag. The weather was beautiful for a road trip. First we drove in the direction of Kalamazoo and for the rest detoured through the beautiful interior of the state in order to find our way to beautiful Lake Michigan.

We stopped for a cup of coffee in the village of Cassopolis and drove on to Niles where we had lunch in a nice-looking restaurant. When one of the ladies heard that we were Dutch, she told Miny that her husband was of Dutch origin. His name was Polderman and had come here when he was



The traffic and pace of city life was a bit unnerving during the Buths' visit to Chicago in 1949. They stayed in one of the city's finest hotels, the Palmer House, located just above and to the right of center in this photograph. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids Public Library.

1½ years old. His parents came from Enschede. They were very happy here and would not care to live in the Netherlands; in fact, she said her husband would sooner die. I thought this was a dumb comment to make to customers, and out of line. We quickly continued our journey and soon were in the neighborhood of Michigan City in Indiana.

In the distance you could see that you were entering an industrial center. Tall smokestacks indicated this, as did the polluted air from the tremendous clouds of smoke that filled the entire area. There were quite a few oil refineries, cement, and soap factories. We also saw a Rinso factory, a brand name well-known in the Netherlands. Actually these were all in suburbs of Chicago, though it seemed to us as if we had already arrived in the metropolis. Once we had reached the outskirts of Chicago we had to find our hotel, which was not easy. We had followed Highway 12-20, but suddenly we found ourselves at a crossing with Highway 41. In retrospect, this is the road that

runs around the city. It has to carry all automobile traffic that leaves and enters the city. Once we were part of this traffic pattern we were forced to keep going. An unbelievable number of cars all raced in the same direction. Cars whizzed past in four or five lanes. We sensed we were lost since we had to be inside the city, but there was no way to get out of this traffic. Finally we came to a section of the highway that was a bit wider and that featured a sign saying that the police would be there every twenty minutes to give direction to continuing traffic. We felt ill at ease, since we saw no opportunity to exit the traffic flow. We had arranged that we would be at our hotel at 6 p.m.; our rooms had been reserved until that time and after that the rooms might be given to other guests. Finally we came to a traffic light where the roads split. One led back to the city with normal traffic. We had gone too far, but we were quite relieved that we were back in normal city traffic. We asked a police officer for directions and he said that we should follow the street car tracks

and we would get to our hotel. This worked, and we notified them that we had arrived and that we would be back in a half an hour. At 6:15 we stood in front of the Palmer House. It was very busy with travelers coming and going. A porter took care of our luggage and parked the car. An and Miny shared a room. Everything looked very clean and tidy, big rooms with big bathrooms. We were on the ninth floor, which had twenty-five rooms. The hotel can accommodate 2,500 guests and had smoking rooms, meeting rooms, etc. In the basement were all kinds of stores where you could buy just about anything. After we had freshened up a bit we had a drink in our rooms; Uncle Dirk had taken care of that. We dined in a restaurant in the city at eight. The food was excellent and all of us felt quite up to spending a few enjoyable days there. After dinner we went to a movie across from the restaurant. The ladies thought the movie was a bit coarse, what with cowboys who did little else but shoot. The film was finished by one. We went to our rooms, had a highball, and went to sleep at two o'clock. The next morning we got up at eight.

Wednesday, 24 August. At 9:30 we were all ready for the day's schedule. The ladies first went to a shopping center and the men were going to visit one of the big slaughter houses. We planned to take the train; first we rode part of the way underground and the last part above ground. Chicago has an elevated track with a very fast electric train that winds its way through the entire city. The distance from our hotel to the slaughter house was not great. The city train stopped exactly at the entrance to the Armour slaughter house, one of the biggest in the world. We were just in time, because a large group stood ready to start a tour through the factory.

First we saw where the pigs are slaughtered, some 10,000 per day. They entered slowly, hanging by one hind leg on a hook, then slowly passing a man who stabs them in the throat; blood spattered high and in an arch and then disappeared into a grated floor where it was caught. Then the carcasses were put into tubs with boiling water and disappeared on conveyor belts that ran through the factory and they eventually re-appeared in refrigerators as ham, sausage, and all kinds of other delicacies. In the cattle section it was pretty much the same. The animals were driven into a narrow chute, at the end of which a man stood ready with a huge sledge hammer to strike them down one by one. Then the floor pitched slightly and the animals disappeared. Another man attached a chain around a leg which was attached to a winch, and again another man stood ready to cut their throats. They were given just enough time to bleed out and then they went on a conveyor belt where skinners removed the hides. After a while the carcasses reappeared, neatly packaged in paper in order to be taken into refrigerators. It was very interesting to see all this. I do not think I will ever see such a huge export slaughter house again in my entire life.

In view of the temperatures, we went for a glass of beer after this visit. We then took the train back to our hotel, we had been gone a couple of hours; the ladies, of course, were still absent. Therefore we decided to go for a walk, so as not to sit idly in our hotel, and we went to one of the largest stores in the world, Marshall Fields. This store covers as much ground as a country village; its size is enormous. At six o'clock all of us were back to our hotel; we took baths before dinner and changed clothes. In the evening we planned to go to the famous Empire Room; this is a dining

room connected to the hotel. It was beautiful and looked like a fairy tale. An excellent band provided background music. We planned to spend the evening there. We enjoyed it all very much and were not back in our rooms until two o'clock.

Thursday, 25 August. The next day we were downstairs at ten o'clock. The ladies were surprised at the many stores, and decided to go back into the city; we arranged to be back in the hotel by noon. Uncle Dirk and I first went to the garage where our car was parked. He gave instructions to fill the gas tank as full as possible for the long ride home, but, the gas stations seemed to be without gas due to a strike by gas truck drivers. We had enough gasoline for about half an hour and decided to try to get it filled in the evening somewhere outside the city. This worried us a bit, but we retained our good humor. After dinner we decided to go to the railroad [station] where you can find all sorts of things displayed in their natural state since the days of Lincoln. We also saw how people moved about in those days with their primitive means of transportation. In contrast, we saw the modern trains that are used today, with their enormous locomotives. When you see this you are amazed at the fast and radical changes that have taken place, and you begin to have a greater admiration for those first pioneers and what they accomplished in their day.

We stopped at 5:30, although actually, you never do get finished. In the blazing heat we went to get the car so we could pick up the ladies at the exit where they would be waiting for us. First we had a delicious glass of lemonade to quench our thirst. Having picked up the ladies, we tried to leave the city because we were low on gas. We were lucky, after half an hour we found a gas station that was

very busy but, since they used four pumps, after a twenty-minute wait we had a full tank. We felt at ease again. By now it was evening and we had about six hours of driving ahead of us. An had a headache from the heat, but after sitting quietly for some time it improved, which made all of us feel better. The plan was that we would drive through to Michigan City, where we would stop for something to eat. We arrived there at eight. Our chicken dinner was excellent, and at nine o'clock we continued our journey, following Highway 12-20.

In the meantime we amused ourselves by singing a number of Dutch ditties. Uncle Dirk happily joined us in this and we all sang lustily; that way we hardly realized that we were so far away from home. The road led us via Benton Harbor to the city of Holland. We stopped in Zeeland for a bottle of orange drink. It was about one o'clock when we got to Aunt Allie's on the Hill.

Miny wondered if there had been mail from the Netherlands, but it seemed that Geert Markensteijn had taken it home. We wished Aunt Allie a good night and we started for Belmont. When we got there the house was locked. Since Geert had not been on the Hill we assumed that he might have fallen asleep on the porch. We climbed through the bedroom window of Uncle Dirk's and yes, that produced signs of life and Geert got out of bed. He had gone to sleep because he had not expected us anymore. Aunt Maatje wasn't too pleased with this; he was supposed to have slept on the Hill, like always when we were visiting Uncle Dirk's. He was sorry, which quieted Aunt Maatje somewhat, and he went to Aunt Allie's long after midnight.

We had an exceptionally wonderful trip and owe much thanks to Uncle Dirk, Aunt Maatje, and Allie

for everything we experienced. We will often think back on this trip.

Saturday, 27 August. It was noon before we finished breakfast. I should add something about the picture taking of yesterday. First I took a few of Uncle Dirk's beautiful cows; then we went to the city. I had agreed with Mrs. Hummels that I would come back to her house on Saturday morning and take a picture of it. We were at her place at eleven o'clock; she had worried that we might forget. She remembered Uncle Dirk, and first we had a cup of coffee with a home-made sausage roll. After having taken a picture of her house we left with the promise to say hello to all of her acquaintances. On Leonard Street we took a picture of the ice cream store. The original idea was to take a picture of all four of them, but we didn't have time for that anymore, and we hoped that we might have some time in the afternoon yet. We also had to visit Win Sonneveld's bakery, since in the evening the children were going to come home for a little farewell party. In the afternoon we spent some time sitting on the porch and around four o'clock Uncle Dirk dropped in. The afternoon was almost gone. The sky turned darker so there was not much of an opportunity to take pictures anymore, and we had to hurry to pick up the things that had been ordered by telephone. It was seven o'clock and high time to eat, so we would be ready for our guests.

All the guests arrived rather late; the reason was that the boys had to close the books first, so they were a bit later than the rest.

Jan and Bernice were the first to arrive, after that Ann and George Van den Berg, who also took Pali along. Pauline came by herself; her husband could not make it because of his work. Gerrit and Barbara were the last to arrive. We had a happy group and

it did not take long for them to get in the mood. The highball Geensteijn made was much appreciated and it does make the blood run a bit faster. The atmosphere was very congenial. Anna, Uncle Dirk's daughter, presented us with a very nice memento. An received a nice container with perfume in the shape of pasta. Miny and I received a beautiful cigarette lighter with our names engraved. She said that it was the idea of all the brothers and sisters with their spouses and they hoped that it might make us think back many a time of this summer. We appreciated all of this very much and we thanked Anna in particular for the words she spoke to us in Dutch. We played a few games and Jan, Bernice, Gerrit, Barbara, and Miny sang the ditty, "I have an old, old aunt." We carried on animated discussions about the pros and cons of both America and Holland. It was not until after midnight that the family made ready to leave after having eaten a sandwich. They left at three; the women cleaned up and it was not until 3:30 that we were in bed. We will remember this evening for a long time. It occurs to us that Uncle Dirk and Aunt Maatje surely are surrounded by nice and pleasant children.

Monday, 29 August. It was quite clear early that it would be a hot day again. Yesterday, Sunday, 28 August, we stayed home. The only thing we did was have a cup of tea at the home of P. Joppe, who was still in the Netherlands. His daughter Marie and her husband met us there. The Joppe family has a beautiful home in a great location. Following tea the men went to take a look at their well-kept dairy.

We left again at 5:30, for we were going to stop at Barbara's mother; she is the wife of Gerrit, Uncle Dirk's son, and lives in a cottage on the lake. It took us about an hour to

get there. Geert was there also with his wife and children and a friend of Barbara's mother. We received a very warm welcome. The summer cottage is located right next to the big lake and has a beautiful view. Before supper we had a drink and An had a nice conversation with the friend of Barbara's mom, who spoke Dutch quite well. She had been to Holland several times, and had already booked passage for next year. She has relatives in the neighborhood of Utrecht. She said that she likes SS Veendam better than SS Nieuw Amsterdam because the latter is less stable. We had heard this from more travelers, and so there must be some truth to this.

After a delightful supper we stayed for a while. Geert and his offspring went home at eleven, and it was time for us to go as well. We were home by midnight and looked back on a pleasant day.

Wednesday, 31 August. The men were busy filling the silo today. The entire neighborhood helped, and in the afternoon Aunt Allie had five men at her table. During the morning hours we had kept busy packing the last suitcase. After a lot of deliberation we put everything in this suitcase that we might need immediately. It was a good feeling that now we were ready. Since Aunt Maatje was in the city for the day, Uncle Dirk came to Aunt Allie's for dinner. Miny wrote the labels for the chests and suitcases and suddenly discovered that she had taken the wrong labels along. They were tourist instead of cabin labels. Since this could lead to confusion in Rotterdam we decided to go to Wagenaar [Travel Bureau] after we had eaten and exchange them. So, back to the city. With this the afternoon was far spent; we completed the inventory of the various suitcases and we were ready.

The nieces and nephews were

going to come to Aunt Allie's in the evening to see the Frisian film about cattle. Thirty-four showed up, so it was quite a gathering. We used the opportunity to say goodbye to the young ones, since we would not have sufficient time anymore to do so individually. The evening went quite smoothly. First we watched the film in the garage. Jan had gotten chairs from the high school, so that worked really well. The weather had changed and it rained quite hard all evening. The temperature had gone down considerably; in fact, if you sat still for a while one could even say that it was cold. It was quite the group. Mr. and Mrs. Bjork, acquaintances of Martin Jr., showed the film. He also showed his home movies which made for a full evening. When it was done we all had coffee and visited for a while. Around one o'clock everybody went home and we said goodbye to most of them. An and Miny received a number of nice mementos and Aunt Maatje gave me a nice photo album. We will put all the pictures we took in it, and it will be a nice and valuable reminder of our trip.

Everybody treated us very warmly and we will certainly think back with a great deal of pleasure on the younger Buth generation, fully convinced that the family ties between America and Holland have been solidified some more.

Thursday, 1 September. In the morning we took the suitcases to the train station, to be shipped to Hoboken. Jan took the truck and Miny and I rode along. At the same time we took along the chairs we had used last night. Upon arrival at the station the suitcases were weighed first. Every person is entitled to take along 150 pounds free. For us this meant a total of 450 pounds. I had to pay extra, and the freight from New York to Hoboken was separate as well.

Saturday, 3 September. The weather was beautiful, and this morning we were going to say goodbye to Jacob Vreeswijk and Gerrit Koert. Aunt Allie stayed home to take care of the meal, for we were scheduled to make other farewell calls in the afternoon.

Since Jacob Vreeswijk lives quite a ways out and cannot be found easily, we decided to first ask Mrs. Leenheer for directions, but she was not home, and Brother Dan had no idea either. So we thought it advisable to first go past the Leenheer Dairy on Leonard Street. Leenheer himself was not there at the time but would return in about ten or fifteen minutes. Having received directions, we arrived at Jacob Vreeswijk's in about half an hour. Fortunately we found him at home. He was helping his wife hang curtains. We came unannounced so we made it very brief, the idea was simply to say goodbye and also to pick up a few packages for family in Utrecht and Apeldoorn. The picture we had taken of his house last week did not turn out, so we took another one. We had to promise to convey greetings to the relatives and to tell them how things went here. He did not think that he himself would visit the Netherlands soon, first of all because of his age and secondly because of the cost. As we said goodbye we wished them many years of good health. Then we made our way to Gerrit Koert. For the sake of convenience we made a detour around the city, took the Beltline, turned right, and were at the Koert's surprisingly quickly. They were glad that we came, even though they had planned to stop by before our departure.

We had a cup of coffee there. They told us that their granddaughter had been hit by a large truck some time ago and had suffered a concussion. After weeks of being unconscious her condition had improved. We had a pleasant visit and took a few pictures

for Mina Koert in the Hague. It was one o'clock by the time we said goodbye.

Sunday, 4 September. We first went to church, which started at ten. Ann Campau had asked us over for dinner. We arrived at their place at noon. First we all had a highball and then enjoyed a delicious chicken dinner. After the meal we visited on the porch which surrounds the entire house. Francis's sisters had painted the house this summer. He had built himself a silo recently that measured forty feet high and fourteen feet in diameter. It will hold about eighteen tons of corn. He needed more than one. This is the cheapest way to store feed, even though a silo like that costs about \$1,300. We left at 5:30 and were going to have supper at Uncle John's. An had a bit of a rough time saying goodbye because we won't see each other for a long time. On the way to Uncle John the sky grew darker and darker; a violent thunderstorm was forming. While still on the road the rain came down in buckets, accompanied by loud thunder claps. After supper the weather cleared and we spent the evening on the porch. We said goodbye at 11:30. We wished Uncle John and Aunt Marie many years of good health and they wished us a good voyage. This will probably be the last time that we will shake their hands because at their age they are not likely to undertake such a long trip. Uncle John stopped by and said he expected to be at the train station. The Sunday was over before we realized it.

Monday, September 5. The last few days of a trip like this are not the most pleasant; there is certain sadness that accompanies farewells; but this is unavoidable. There is a time to arrive and now it was our time to leave again.

Abe Pott brought some Dramamine

tablets for An, which were supposed to be very good in case of seasickness. He gave a few instructions how to use them, after which we said goodbye very warmly. We have to say that they certainly contributed much to making our stay in America very pleasant. It was quite plain that Abe did not like us leaving, but he hoped to make a trip to Holland next year. When we arrived at Aunt Allie's it was 1:30 and she had lunch ready.

At 1:30 [that night] we went up the stairs at Aunt Allie's, realizing this would be the last time. The next morning we were downstairs at nine o'clock. The last suitcases were quickly packed, and it surprised us that we could stuff everything in them. Toward ten o'clock Uncle Dirk and Aunt Maatje came to take us and Aunt Allie to the train station. We thanked them before we left for their gracious hospitality which we will never forget. We thanked all the relatives for the many beautiful trips they took us on, and for the preparations before our trip, in short; for all that they had done for us.

Tuesday, 6 September. At 11:45 we left, having said goodbye to Martin Jr. and his wife. We had said goodbye to Jan earlier because he had to go to Detroit with cattle. We left the Creston farm at exactly noon.

We drove through what to us is now the familiar Comstock Park to the train station. Uncle John and Aunt Marie had wished us all the best by telephone, and reminded us to be sure to give greetings to all the relatives and acquaintances back home. When we got to the station the train was ready. We had to wait about a half an hour which we spent in the waiting room.

Uncle Pete, Gerrit, Uncle John's son, and Pauline and their daughter Joan stopped by. The final farewells came quickly, a moment that is

never much fun. They all wished us a safe trip and said that they had really appreciated the first Flak-kee nephew visiting the relatives in America. This has and will lead to closer ties between relatives and certainly the younger generation. A moment later the train left the Grand Rapids station and the personal contact with the relatives was broken!

In the train we had a reserved compartment, actually two small rooms, but it did not take long before an attendant came to ask if we preferred perhaps to have the partition removed. We liked this better. We now had a nice compartment with everything in it. The ladies were in charge of the luggage and removed whatever we needed for the trip. We stayed in the same compartment until New York, which was very convenient. At six o'clock we went to the dining car where an excellent meal was served. It soon grew dark and we went to our own room, and went to bed at eleven to rest from the emotions of the last few days. To truly sleep in a train was not easy. The rocking motion of the train woke us up frequently.

Wednesday, 7 September. The next morning we got up at 6:30 and were ready by the time we reached New York. We arrived in the station at 7:45; another man stood ready to move our luggage to a cart. All suitcases were deposited in the baggage



Although they arrived in Grand Rapids by car, the Buths left Grand Rapids, as did the group of Dutch visitors pictured here, by the train from Union Station. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids Public Library.

depot. They gave us a receipt and we went into the waiting room for breakfast. A good cup of coffee did wonders. We had enough time to go into the city for a while. The ladies enjoyed the many beautiful shops.

Toward 12:30 we tried to find Hoboken, where *Nieuw Amsterdam* was docked. We chartered a redcap for the luggage that had to be transported by taxi. Everything went very smoothly and within a half an hour we were at the Lackawanna Ferry. It stood ready and we could transfer right from the taxi onto the ferry. The ride across took only a few minutes and we were in Hoboken. In a few more minutes we were at the pier and *Nieuw Amsterdam*. We did all this on the advice of Uncle Pete and Abe, and everything went smoothly.

Miny with her knowledge of English was quite helpful and this gave us a sense of safety. We were at the departure hall by 1:30. We freshened up a bit and after having shown our papers we were able to board the ship at 1:45. Everything went fairly quickly and we felt quite at home on our ocean giant.

We did not have to look for our cabin this time, but headed straight for number 408. The cabin was clean, and when we were busily engaged in re-arranging things a farewell telegram from the Potts was delivered, wishing us a safe voyage, a happy arrival, and *au revoir* until we meet in Holland. A little while later the steward brought us a nice bouquet of roses from Aunt Allie and the children.

We were certainly impressed by all this spontaneity. And especially at this time it was very much appreciated. After having come to terms with our emotions we continued to arrange our luggage and enjoy our roomy cabin.

There were many American visitors on board who came to say goodbye to relatives or acquaintances. In America they are allowed on board—in contrast to the Netherlands. At 3:30 the ship's bell sounded to indicate that visitors had to leave the ship. At four o'clock the steam siren blew three times and *Nieuw Amsterdam* slowly moved. About fifteen minutes later we passed the Statue of Liberty, which we waved at and of which we took a picture. It did not take long before we lost sight of the American shoreline. Life on board was very pleasant and An did quite well, perhaps owing to the tablets she had received from Abe.

Yesterday we sailed 365 miles in eighteen hours which was not far in view of the fact that the ship is able to make 29 ½ miles an hour. The first day of the voyage the weather was excellent and the atmosphere on board was very good.

Monday, 12 September. It is ten o'clock. An and I are sitting in the sun room and Miny is still sleeping. She had been with some young people last night and had come in rather late, I believe. The journey went quite well, although toward Friday evening the weather forecast became somewhat problematic. The necessary

precautions were taken, like all deck chairs being put together and fastened securely. Much of the furniture also was fastened so it could not move. The steel covers of the portholes were closed, so we did not have any daylight.

A rather violent storm was forecast, similar to the one *Veendam* had experienced on the way to America. *Nieuw Amsterdam* steered a course toward the south to escape the storm. Before evening the wind whistled though the rigging and the sea became more and more restless. The ship started to roll quite a bit, though someone in the know said that we had experienced the worst. Fortunately An did not get seasick, which made us quite happy. Very few people, in fact, got seasick this time. Yesterday a cabin steward died at the age of forty-six. The man had contracted meningitis. One day a passenger lost \$300, presumably in an elevator; imagine how this would inconvenience a person.

This time too, the kitchen was excellent and we had a very pleasant table steward. Without a delay we were scheduled to reach the British coast by Wednesday morning and Le-Havre by Wednesday afternoon. Then, one more night, and Thursday morning around 8 or 9 o'clock we were scheduled to arrive in Rotterdam.

After lunch we were in our cabin and An became sick and nauseous. There was a brisk wind and the sea was quite restless making the ship roll back and forth. It was too bad that we were about to have our farewell dinner, which An had to miss on the trip to America as well. Tuesday afternoon we approached the British coast and during the night we were supposed to enter the Southampton harbor. Miny was in the Stuyvesant bar for the last dance of the trip. She was fortunate, because she had a nice group of young people that she could associate with.

We were hoping that things would improve the next morning, because it was about time to get things ready for our arrival. Wednesday evening An still did not feel all that chipper, so we stayed in our cabin. Everybody was busy packing, but An had gone to bed, which is the best thing to do when you are seasick. At seven on Wednesday morning we reached the coast. However the ship did not moor, because we had lost too much time when we detoured because of the storm last Sunday. A tender came alongside and took on the passengers and even an automobile. After about an hour we proceeded toward the French coast. The Channel was quiet and at four o'clock we entered the harbor.

A lot of passengers and also four automobiles debarked here. The French coast is beautiful with its rock formations. At 5:30 the steam siren sounded three times again, and the tugboats pulled the ship around. A lot of curious people stood on shore and waved at us. Within the hour we were quite a ways into the North Sea again, and An said that she would be happy to put foot on Dutch soil again. Miny went to the lounge for a few hours for a farewell ball. When you have a pleasant group of people with whom you associate on board, life certainly becomes much more pleasant.

One of our table companions also had a daughter of about the same age as Miny, whom she befriended. When Miny returned to our cabin I went to the Stuyvesant bar for a while. It was not very busy there. On the last day of a trip everything is different from the normal routine; everybody is busy packing, so that when you arrive the luggage will be ready. All suitcases had to be placed outside the door before five, with the exception of your personal suitcase which had to be ready the next morning before seven.

Customs had already boarded the

ship in England so that immediately upon departure they started checking things, including the amount of money you carried. When we left we had fl.30 and \$25 a person in currency. The dollars were spent, of course, and our papers only showed the fl.30. We did not have to declare the remainder of our ship's credit because the purser had given us a receipt. I went to the purser, but he thought it too risky not to declare the money, since they could check you at Rotterdam, and if caught you'd be accused of currency smuggling with the associated punishment. So I decided to exchange my dollars for Dutch currency. I obtained a regular receipt saying that they had been exchanged properly. It made me feel at ease; now I could be inspected without fear. Miny came in around 10:30 and went straight to bed.

The ladies were going to try to quickly get their beauty sleep, and I went for a last nightcap aboard *Nieuw Amsterdam*. The atmosphere was already quite different from when we were on the high seas. Then everybody is relaxed and considers the ship to be his hotel, but as soon as the final destination is in sight things change. In the evening a lot of passengers were standing at the railing watching the shore lights, and also indoors there was a restlessness with people running back and forth. Most people hope that they won't have to submit to an inspection, for fear that they might have to pay additional money. But even so it was still pleasant there. It was already midnight by the time I went back to our cabin.

The ladies were sound asleep. We were scheduled to pass the Hook of Holland tomorrow morning at 6:30. The pilot had come aboard already at LeHavre. The cabin steward awoke us at six o'clock saying that you could see the Dutch shoreline. We quickly got dressed and put the personal suitcase in the hallway. We all went

upstairs and could see the lighthouse of the Hook quite clearly. Sometime later we entered the piers of the Nieuwe Waterweg. It does affect a person to see those familiar sights. We saw the Goeree tower, the city of Brielle, and the towers of the Spijkenisse lift bridge.

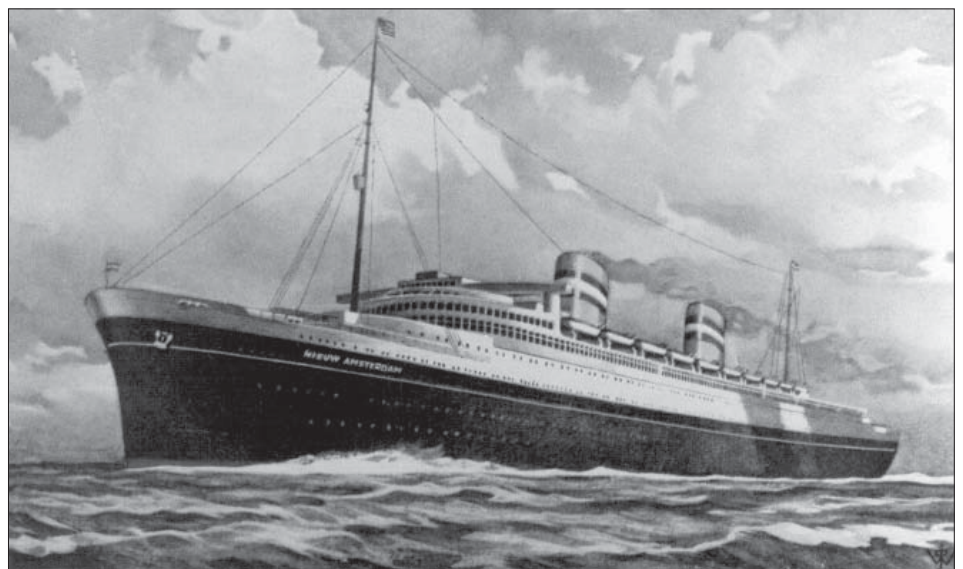
An was getting a bit nervous; you could see her face getting flushed with excitement. It was great to see the busy Maas traffic from the vantage point of our ocean giant. Foreigners especially were surprised. And also for us Dutchmen it remains a fascinating sight to see. You look at the activities of the big harbor, which is known all over the world.

The tugboats met us and soon had themselves attached to the ship, after which we glided slowly into the Parkhaven.

As always a lot of people watched this spectacle from shore and waved at the passengers. The Holland-America Hall flew the tri-color; there was much activity on the wharf and also in front of the Hall. Just before the final point of destination the tugboats pulled the ship around in the middle of the Maas River, which took about a

half an hour, so that the bow pointed toward the North Sea. The visitors' hall teemed with people and we tried to see if we might see acquaintances that might have come to welcome us. We hoped, of course, that they would be present, but the early hour might have prevented them from coming. But soon enough our doubts were disproved, for in the throng of people we found brother-in-law Pete Van Es. The closer we got, the more people we started to recognize. Later we saw Lina, Uncle Han's daughter, and sister-in-law Ma, who shouted a "Welcome back to Holland." It impressed us deeply; we received an especially warm welcome. In the meantime we exchanged greetings.

Joost called and wondered how long it would be before we would stand on Rotterdam soil. I thought that maybe it would be about a half an hour, but it took at least a full hour. Finally it was our turn and we entered the big hall via the long gangway. They all stood above the stairs that we had to take, and we were greeted with a big applause. In the baggage area all suitcases were placed alphabetically, which meant



The Buths traveled on the second ship in the fleet of the Holland-America Line with the name Nieuw Amsterdam. It was in service 1938–1971 and scrapped in Taiwan in 1974. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

that we had to look for the letter B. We found our suitcases nearly at the other end of the hall. Everything was there except Miny's backpack, so we had to do some searching, which did not take long. Miny saw the customs agent who had signed off on our paper the day before, and we asked him if he could help us since we were in a bit of a hurry. After having looked at our luggage he put a big white stripe on it with chalk signifying that our suitcases had been checked. We entrusted a few of our suitcases to a passing porter to take them to the car. The rest of the suitcases and chests would be taken home by a Buth truck. A short time later we finally stood where all the relatives and acquaintances could give us a most hearty welcome. I should not forget to mention that Kees Markensteijn managed to get on board when all passengers were still on board. He seems to know the ropes, because when we left he also was on board.

After having talked for a while, we went to the cars that were waiting. Mien and Bouke, Uncle Han and Jaan did not come along. Mien planned to come to Flakkee soon and Jaan preferred to go home because it was Aunt Leentje's birthday. We congratulated them because of their spouse and mother² and inquired how Jaap was doing.

We were happy to hear that the news from Indonesia was good. After this the entire gang went to Caland-West, where we enjoyed a good cup of coffee.

This homecoming to so many old acquaintances certainly was a pleasure. We had a cup of coffee and a drink, after which we checked the schedule of the Hellevoetsluis ferry. We decided on the 2:30 ferry and thus had plenty of time for a bite to eat. Everybody joined us at one table which heightened the camaraderie. We had a very good time together.

We got into Pete Van Es's Mercedes and Miny joined Joost and his family who were followed directly by the DKW³ of Jan Nijs, who had given Jaap and Dis a ride. Seeing we did not have too much time to lose, we took off at a fast clip. We were at Hellevoetsluis just in time and were fortunate that everybody could make the ferry. At 3:45 we stood on Flakkee soil again. Right from the start we saw wagons loaded with sugar beets, which were almost too much to comprehend since when we left the island on 31 May they had barely come up.

We stopped first at the Witvliet garage, where my red Ford was waiting for me, all set to go. I found a beautiful bouquet of roses on the front seat with a note saying, "Welcome home." Here we said goodbye to Pete and thanked him for the fine transportation he had provided, after which I got into my own car to drive to Dirksland.

Mother was waiting eagerly, of course. To see each other again was an emotional experience and plenty of tears were shed. So now we were back in the well-known room upstairs that had been decorated with many flowers. We were home, and the big trip had come to an end. We had agreed that we would stay at Mother's until Monday. This was a great idea, for after a trip like ours a person needs to unwind a bit before getting involved again in everyday affairs. We did have plenty of visitors and our own house on the Lorredijk showed the signs of our return home. There, too, lots of flowers from acquaintances and personnel were expressions of joy for our safe return. We noticed this first when Miny and I went to take a quick look on Friday afternoon. Everything looked well kept. The threshing machine was almost done with the last of the harvest, which meant that another harvest was history.

It looked like my brother Jaap

had done a good job managing the business. He worked hard to see that everything would run smoothly. We owe him a great deal of thanks for all his efforts and promised him that we would do the same for him if he might decide to cross the ocean someday. We also are indebted to Leen Milissant, the foreman and his wife, for everything they did this summer. In fact, everything was in great shape. We also owe a debt of gratitude to all the people who kept us abreast of all the things that happened here by sending us letters. All told we received 144 letters from family and friends. This did mean that while we were in America we kept up a busy correspondence, but Miny was a great help in this.

Closing thoughts

The arrival in America had been an event all by itself. You leave Holland, and for days the only thing you see is water and sky, except for the British and French coasts which are quite beautiful by themselves, until something looms up on the horizon which turns out to be the mighty skyscrapers of New York. This is a sight that you will not forget as long as you live. The farther you get inland—and this begins already in New Jersey—the more you are impressed with the vastness of the country. Just to experience the enormous distances one has to travel is worth the trip. The endless roads that meander through the United States, and never become monotonous because of the hilly landscape, demand enormous respect for the design of such an infrastructure. Most roads are made of concrete or asphalt, with two lanes. In my estimation the highways that connect the big cities are definitely inadequate for today's traffic. They will certainly have to find a solution for the heavy traffic and will need more roads to accommodate the traffic. You have to see

this problem to realize its extent. It is true that people have been working on this for years already, but it will be quite a few years, no doubt, before the problem is solved.

The well-known Bonds⁴ road signs that are familiar to us are not found in America. All roads have numbers and, if I understand it correctly, every state has its own numbering system. On steel posts, about three feet off the ground, one sees signs about two feet square which announce the number of the road. At road junctions one finds the numbers of the various roads.

Road maps, of course, show all these numbers. It is a very practical way of doing things and after a short while one can navigate the system quite safely. The traffic rules seem to be simpler in America than here. Just as here, traffic lights, blinking lights, and stop signs see to it that traffic flows smoothly. Ordinary signs with the word "STOP" are very effective, and also the steel poles with three or four reflectors are good guides when it gets dark and they reflect headlights. Most stop signs are illuminated the same way. Roads that are bordered by tall woods tend to be quite dark at night and, in such cases, the rows of reflectors are good guides. The courtesy of drivers also is striking and we can learn a lesson from them. If there is a stop sign people stop, even when there is no traffic. In the cities you see very few traffic cops. Everything is regulated by stoplights and other signs, and it all works quite well. I can imagine that when an American comes to Holland he may have some difficulty adjusting to our system.

What also struck us is that most telephone, telegraph, and electrical wires are above ground. All these wires crisscross America via poles.

If there are too many wires for one line they are replaced by cables, but these too remain above ground using

the same poles. From these poles connections branch off to homes. Interruptions are therefore quite frequent especially in the wintertime, and when the weather is stormy, and when there is snow and sleet.

As people start crowding together in communities this system will have to be abandoned in spite of the enormous costs that will have to be absorbed for long distances. In this respect we are somewhat ahead since most of our wiring is underground. It is possible that the rocky soil in America makes it a bit difficult to install underground cables especially in hilly country. What are quite striking are the street lights both in the cities and the small villages. Every village, however small, bathes in light in the evening. The lantern poles are close together and shopping centers usually do the rest. The enormous electric signs almost turn everything into a fairy tale. Unlike on East Flakkee where the street lights are turned off (except at important intersections) when there is a full moon. Most city lights consist of two or three globes that form a crown. It is a pleasure to go for a ride through a large city at night.

Hotels, cafes, and restaurants follow a different work method than here. I find it somewhat confusing. It is more defined. What one business sells the next may not. There are, for example, coffee shops, beer houses and ice-cream bars. Besides, there are also bars where you can buy everything. These matters are being governed by a sort of municipal council or commission. The people decide how many businesses one wants in a certain area.

Many hotels are exclusively for lodging, and do not serve breakfast. You get up in the morning and go to the nearby coffee shop for breakfast. In the larger hotels it is possible to eat breakfast, but this is served in a separate part.

Kitchens also are quite different from ours. Everything is prepared differently and a lot of dishes are served that are totally unknown to us. We did not notice this too much since our relatives still maintain pretty much a Dutch kitchen. Fruit and fruit juices are served at every meal, which is much appreciated especially in summertime. Olives and celery are always on the table. Sweet corn is used in many courses as a vegetable. Coffee, pie, and cake are often served. All these things are quite nutritious. Meat is always available in good quantities. Butchers, however, do not prepare meat as carefully as they do here. All the meat one buys in the store still has the bone in it. Quite a bit of steak is sold that really does not merit the name. On the whole, butchers have dull knives. I prefer the Dutch kitchen.

The difference in beverages is quite significant too. Whiskey is the principal alcoholic beverage, with the Manhattan and martini next. We were told that there are at least some 250 different drinks. Beer is a bit heavier and more bitter than in Holland. Whiskey, when consumed as a highball, is especially good-tasting in the summertime. We did not miss our gin or brandy with sugar and, if we should live in America permanently, I for one would not need them anymore.

Talking about farming—the work there is quite different from what we are used to. First of all they do not have the manpower to work the farms intensively. Secondly, in quite a few places the soil is unfit for many crops. One has to limit himself almost entirely to crops that require few laborers and that can be worked by machine. Fertilizer is used more often in the Netherlands than in America. Fertilizer is certainly as costly there as here. The main crops are: corn, oats, barley, wheat, and Lucerne clover. As you can see from this listing these are

all crops that don't require much manpower to harvest.

The combine and chopper perform much work in a short time. Still, there were many places where one could see that the wheat was mowed with a mowing machine and threshed in a machine. I liked this method the best and I did notice that the farm-

ers who used this method had farms that looked the best well-cared for. When grain is sowed thinly—which is quite customary in America—weeds grow quickly and when the combine is used for harvesting the wheat or barley is often mixed with the seed of the weeds. Storing the straw that has been combined can be quite expensive. This is baled which requires expensive machines. But one obtains a better product when one harvests it the old way, as we do here. Too many small farmers pay way too much attention to the machine and spend far too much money.

It also is customary to let the machines sit in the open air, which causes quick deterioration. As far as that is concerned, people are much more careless than the average Dutch farmer. There is an abundance of machinery for sale and maybe this is due to the nonchalant way of dealing with their equipment. Possession does not seem to be that important.

The yield per hectare is usually less than in Holland. But when you see how few people are used to run a



Tug boats work a freighter through the Rotterdam harbor. Behind the freighter is the passenger terminal of the Holland-America Line. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

fairly large farm which has between twenty and twenty-five milk cows in addition, then, in many cases, the results are quite a bit better, with fewer risks than a farmer runs in Holland.

The American farmer works harder and longer hours than his Dutch counterpart. First of all because it is more difficult to get help, and secondly because the business requires the personal attention of the farmer himself especially when he has a valuable registered Holstein herd.

Finally, it is every farmer's dream to acquire as many dollars as he can within the shortest possible time. But, this is not easy for the average farmer. Generally speaking, they all earn their keep, but to really strike it rich is reserved for only a few. Houses in general are built of wood, but their arrangement is usually very practical. They stay cool in the summertime and are well-insulated against the cold in the wintertime. Refrigerators in the kitchens and deep freezers in the basements are common on every farm. You find these amenities in the homes also. The standard of living

therefore is much higher than in the Netherlands, and even more so for the employees. A car is almost a necessity and whoever has a few extra dollars also buys a second car for his wife. She does her own thing, as is customary there. Both the furnishing of a house as well as the demands made on life require a substantial income, and in many cases depend on the credit system. This is an accepted reality. The wide choice of all kinds of appealing articles leads to purchases by less well-situated people. As far as that is concerned, things in America are the same as here, whoever does not have the willpower to put a part of his earned income in the bank will never get any further than here. This applies to people the world over, of course. This is nothing new.

It struck me at various times that family ties are not as strong as they are in the Netherlands. Children seem to become independent at a much younger age. This means that girls and boys from all segments of the population make use of the opportunity to earn a decent weekly or

monthly paycheck in factories, offices, stores, and many other places of employment. In other words, if a family stays together for a few years and they all save, they can have a sizable kitty. That way a family can build up its credit rating and it is easier for them to get help and create their own way of making a living. When the family does not stay together long, but each goes his separate way because the children want to be independent, then things for such families usually are not quite as promising.

A car is easily purchased and the young man who wants to be independent tries to make life as pleasant as possible for himself, but the result is that not much thought is given to saving money. I think here of the Mast family, e.g., who were reunited this spring. Three boys and a daughter went ahead, and now six boys and five girls all go to work each day, meaning that together they have a sizable income. They seem to be a solid family and, if they continue this way, they certainly will lay the foundation for a good life in America. Enterprising young people who are willing to work and are thrifty certainly have a good future.

I did notice several times that the social provision for employees is still in its infancy. In this respect industry is ahead of agriculture, although if one compares social provisions in agriculture to that in Holland one could conclude that in Holland we are being overloaded. The burdens [costs] here

are getting too heavy for the businesses.

However, the way it is in America right now seems to be at the other extreme. After all, people who help build a business, or who help to keep it going, should receive decent care and benefits in case of sickness, or when they are permanently disabled, rather than being dependent on a generous farmer. This is incompatible with our present-day society and should certainly be different in a democratic country like America. It appears that a drastic change is being worked on for the near future. It certainly is in keeping with the spirit of the times, which is bound to impact the entire world. Whatever people's opinions may be on this matter, these are things that ought to be settled. America has a true sense of community, I was told, and therefore it will be taken care of, I am sure. It will undoubtedly mean sacrifices which the businesses will have to pay and which will eventually be passed on to the consumer.

Let me conclude this brief observation by saying that it is well for a person to get acquainted with another continent. Without a doubt one's horizons are enlarged, while one also gains a better understanding of what is good and what is lacking in one's own country. We will continue to be impressed by the size of the country and the progressive attitude of its people, its inventive spirit, and its rational way of operating. I count

myself fortunate to have been able to observe all of this firsthand. This was only possible because of the real hospitality all the relatives offered us, all of whom gave us the opportunity to see a large part of America and Canada. Once again, we thank all of you who were ready this summer to do so much for us in such a short time. ☺

Endnotes

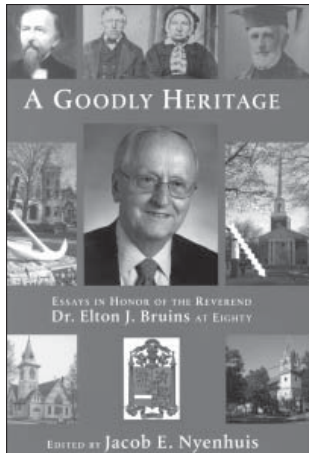
1. Buth refers to his family in the USA as uncles and aunts, but he was their second cousin, in age they would have been the age of his uncles and aunts. He and his wife Anna "An" Gertrudi van Es and their daughter Jacomina Anna "Miny," born in 1929. Gerrit Johannes was a successful farmer on Sommelsdijk, and operated the Buth family farm "Dijk zicht," later "Sunny Home."

2. It is a Dutch custom not only to congratulate the person who celebrates a birthday, but also the husband and children with, "I congratulate you with your Mother's birthday."

3. DKW was an automobile and motorcycle brand that began in 1916 in Saxony, Germany, to produce steam fittings. Efforts to manufacture a steam-driven car failed, but in 1919 a two-stroke gasoline engine was manufactured. In 1932 DKW merged with Audi, Horch, and Wanderer to form the Auto Union. All brands continued until World War II. Auto Union later became a part of what is now Volkswagen. DKW cars were made from 1928 until 1966. They always used two-stroke engines and from 1931 the company was a pioneer in front-wheel drive.

4. A well-known Dutch organization that used to put up road signs for the benefit of travelers.

book notes



**A Goodly Heritage: Essays
in Honor of the Reverend Dr.
Elton J. Bruins at Eighty**

Jacob E. Nyenhuis, editor

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans
Publishing Company, 2007

ISBN 978-0-8028-6002-6

\$35.00



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Sid Baron

Bellingham, WA: Exxel
Publishing Company, 2007

ISBN 0-9785582-0-0

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

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by Ann G. Bousema-Valkema

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