

ORIGINS

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The uniformed people amongst the group are Canadian soldiers from the Royal Canadian Dragoons Regiment, a unit which took part in the liberation of the Northern Part of the Netherlands. (from left to right seated) Truus Kroeze, Mrs. A. de Vries-Postma, Mr. K. de Vries and Aly Brouwer; (standing from left to right) Miss Tuininga, Miss Kroeze, Christina Van der Meulen, Wietske Kroeze, Eland Meyer, Adri Tuininga, Gery and Ali De Vries, and Hermina Driesten-De Vries. Photo donated by Mr. & Mrs. Jan Drifsten from Heerde in Gelderland. Both Jan and Hermina are natives of Friesland. (For more on the invasion and liberation of the Netherlands, turn the page.)

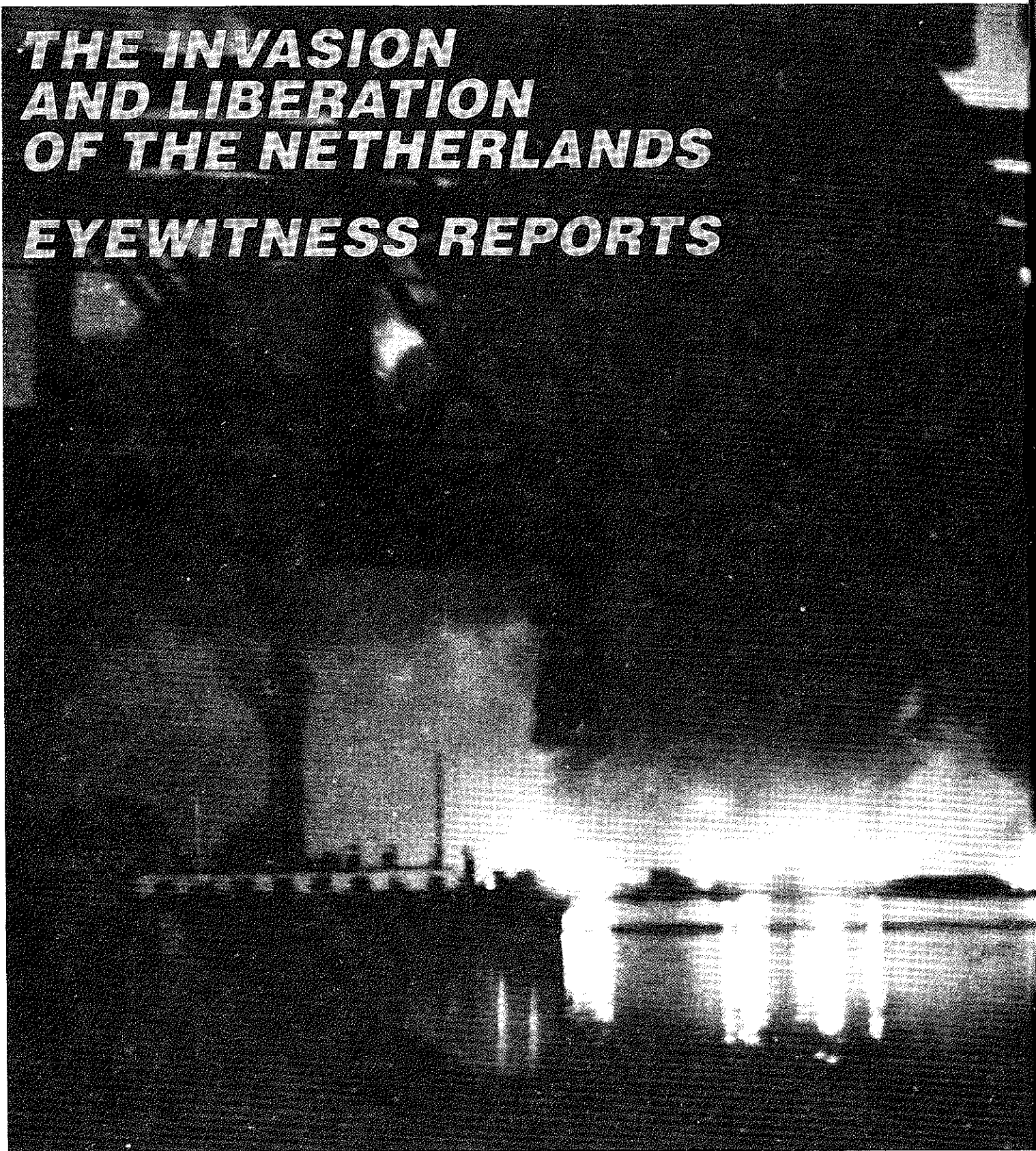
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H. J. Brinks, Editor
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- 2—Bredewold and Zwaan, 1940-45
4 (top)—L. De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk Der Nederland in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Vol. 4
4 (bottom)—Bredewold and Zwaan, 1940 *De Mei Dorlog*
5—C. Doeleman, *Arnhem: Stad Der Bezitlozen*
6 (top), 7 (top right), 8 (top and bottom right)—L. De Jong, *De Bezetting*
7 (left and bottom right), 9, 10, 12-13—*De Jaren '40-45*
8 (left), 11—Jan A. Niemeijer, *Groningen 1940-45*
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39—Henry Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*

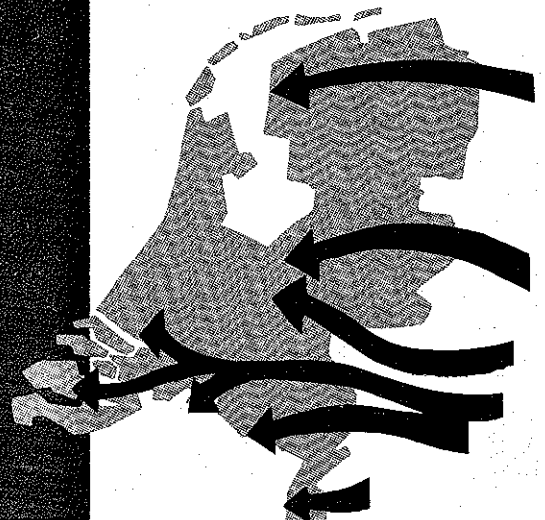
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THE INVASION AND LIBERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS EYEWITNESS REPORTS



WWII

Adolf Hitler repeatedly declared that he would not violate Holland's neutral borders, but despite such public assurances, German troops invaded the Netherlands at six different locations in 1940.



The military engagement which began that May 10th morning was completely lop-sided as Dutch forces could not match Hitler's war machine. Yet, even with outdated equipment and obsolete defense plans, the Low Landers fought the massive German thrust for four days. Arriving by air and over land, the invaders encountered only slight opposition in the Dutch skies, and, after German paratroopers secured a Dutch landing strip near Rotterdam, fresh troops and equipment arrived to further invade and occupy Holland's densely populated Western regions.

Elsewhere the Dutch more successfully resisted the invaders and along the Afsluitdijk, which joins Friesland to North Holland, Dutch defenses halted the German march. Efforts to establish a base for German operations near Den Haag also failed when effective anti-aircraft defenses destroyed incoming planes. The more than 1,000 Germans who did land in that effort were quickly captured and sent off to England as war prisoners. But, several days later, to avoid a wanton slaughter of civilians, the Netherlands surrendered.

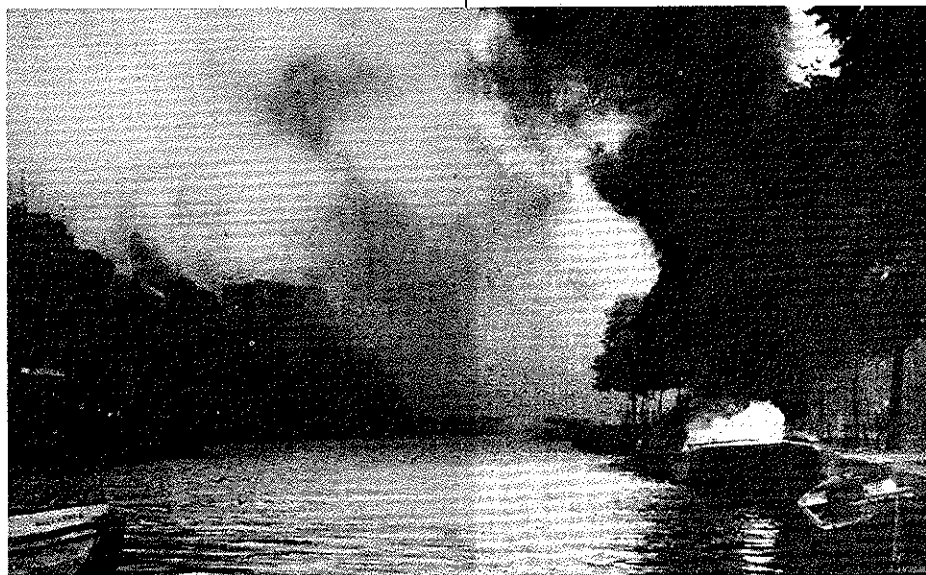
The May 14 bombing of Rotterdam, which obliterated the heart of that great port city, clearly demonstrated the unrestrained fury of

Hitler's tactics. Just prior to the air raid, Dutch authorities acceded to an ultimatum which promised to countermand the bombing as the reward for surrender. The official German explanation, that the surrender came too late to intercept the objectives of the bombing mission, is not convincing. It is clear, though, that Hitler was determined to crush Dutch resistance immediately, because the invasion of Holland was a diversionary phase in his larger European campaign; and, of course, the violation of public assurances and treaties had never hindered the realization of Hitler's designs. Still, the local German commander, General Schmidt, who observed the carnage of Rotterdam while holding the surrender documents in his hands, declared, "I can understand your bitterness."

By then Queen Wilhelmina had escaped to England where she established a Dutch government in exile. Initially some Dutch folk considered her departure a cowardly abandonment, but they eventually realized that the Queen served them better while free than she could have served them under the scrutiny of the Nazi regime. Though they could

not yet know it, the Dutch populace faced four years of tyranny which became increasingly oppressive as Hitler's schemes faltered and finally collapsed in 1945.

The hardships of the occupation were unevenly distributed in the Netherlands because the Nazi police state concentrated its presence in urban centers like Den Haag and Amsterdam while also building defenses along the militarily vulnerable



coastal dunes. Port cities bristled with German anti-aircraft guns and defensive bunkers while the harsh clump of marching boots echoed in the streets. The invaders were less obvious in the Eastern agricultural provinces, but no one escaped the reality of the Nazi presence. Toward the end of the war, when starvation stalked the urban centers of Holland, rural folk managed to survive on rough but adequate diets while literally thousands of urban refugees combed the countryside for a few potatoes and turnips. When possible, some city people boarded with farm families.

The story of the German occupation is nearly infinite in its ramifications, because each of those who survived recalls the experience from intensely personal perceptions. What follows, then, are several reports describing the terrors of oppression in the Netherlands between 1940 and 1945. For the most part these accounts were written in 1946 when uncensored mail could be sent to North America. Frequently the correspondents were complete strangers who became acquainted after sending and receiving "care" packages. Following the reception of such aid, letters expressing gratitude often initiated a continuing exchange of letters and further assistance.

Understandably, the Dutch folk in North America were deeply committed to relief efforts in Holland. Church groups organized to gather and ship gift packages soon after newspaper accounts reported the dire straits of Europe's war-weary survivors. And, of course, Dutch-Americans who could rediscover family members in the Netherlands, directed aid of all sorts to these relatives.

In some cases, liberators with Dutch-American ancestry searched for their relatives in the Netherlands

and described post-war conditions to State-side family members. These, in turn, gathered necessities such as shoes, soap, and medicines for shipment to the Netherlands. Illustrating that phenomenon, a pair of 1945 letters from Mr. A. Strikwerda began:

Dear Folks . . . Uncle and Aunt [from Zeist] are apparently in very good health. Uncle doesn't show his 75 years and Aunt is still extremely spry."

. . . "They say they have enough, but I'm sure they'd put most anything to good use. I gave Uncle my highly prized rubbers. I had a couple bars of soap which I gave them too. If you can get tea, coffee, rice, most any cheeses, jams, soap, scrub brushes, cereal, etc.—I'm sure they'd appreciate it. I guess they both wear long underwear. I saw Aunt fix some up which looked pretty well darned. They are about your size, so if you get the inspiration—I bet they'd use it. . . . What they need most is a ton of coal and a

few cords of wood, but not much can be done about that. I imagine sox would be put to good use too. You might pack some things in a cooking pan. I'm sure they have none too many of them. None have been available here for five years."

Commenting more broadly, Strikwerda continued, "Zeist has no battle scars like practically most other cities. The Germans used the town for a rest area and at one time 6 or 8 [Germans] lived in Uncle's house. Sure is pathetic to see those scarred cities. . . . One could see that 's Hertogenbosch felt the war even though the highway didn't pass through the heart of the city. Lots of trees are just high stumps and one can still see a tank or what's known as a "half-track" well sunk in the ground. In Arnhem there are almost acres of piled up bricks where buildings and homes once stood. Almost in every town the "pock" marks of bullets against brick walls can be seen. Windows are now boarded up; roofs are often nothing but rafters sticking in the air and many walls have large holes from shell bursts. Bridges, of course, are all of the temporary army engineer style."

"Roofs are often nothing but rafters sticking in the air."



The first hand descriptions of the war and occupation cited below require little commentary, and they have been selected to represent the varied regional experience of the war in the Netherlands.—H.J.B.

Correspondence to George Brinkerhoff in Hackensack from Kor Kee in Zaandam. This English language letter has been edited for clarity.

This is Easter Sunday and we greet you with, 'The Lord is risen,' for we are still rich in our knowledge of the true Lord and also in the bond which we true believers enjoy. We have felt this bond particularly with you this week as we received two packages and two letters from you. We were pleased also with the pictures you sent and we have looked at them time and again. We would so much like to visit with you.

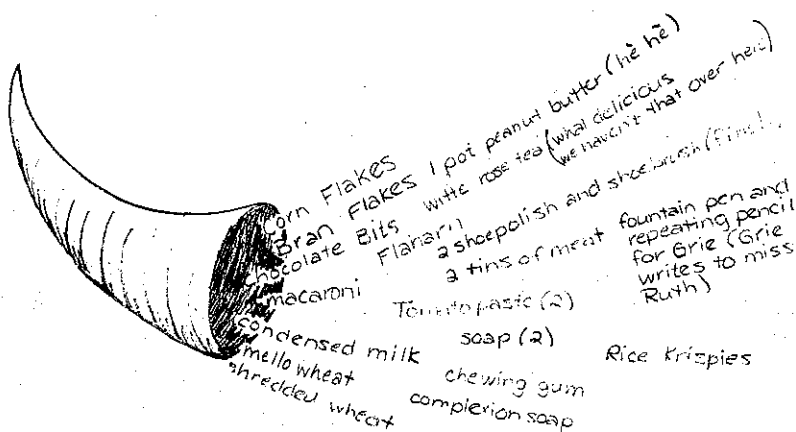
"With this letter we are sending a book which illustrates something of our war experience here in the Netherlands. It reminds us of the wars last year—our fight to remain alive, and our enormous longing for the end of the war. In that time of hunger 23,000 people died. I still vividly remember the mid-winter days when our boys were very hungry. I could not stand to look at them and went for long walks to ask for a potato at each house. At most places I got nothing, but when I came home, I did have a meal of potatoes. What a joy that was. It was a heavy, heavy time. But then came the excitement of the approaching victory. Next week we will celebrate a memorial feast for that event of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of May. Oh, how we were moved by the liberation and freedom. We could hardly believe it. When we compare the present to

those dark days we can almost believe that we are in paradise."

The Kee family began to receive gift packages from the Brinkerhoffs shortly after the 1945 liberation and Kee was literally overwhelmed with gratitude. On Feb. 15, 1946, Kee wrote, "You have surprised us enormously this day by sending your packet. What delicious food and what beautiful dresses! We didn't know what to say! Many thanks to

very welcome to us and fit very well.

"Everything was welcome. Our children were very glad with the toffee and chewing gum and the peanut butter is delightful. My wife danced around the room with the face soap because we had nearly forgotten its existence. Again and again we had to sniff the aroma of the coffee beans. You have done very much for us. We don't know how to thank you."



you! You are our friends indeed.

"The packet came at 12 noon and our whole family was home to unpack it. Our daughter had to try on the dress at once and it fits perfectly. And what beautiful socks!! They are

(above) "I vividly remember the mid-winter days when our boys were hungry. I could not stand to look at them." (below) Marguerite Witvoet's facsimile drawing taken from Kor Kee's July 23, 1946 letter.

Dec. 16, 1945

Letter to Rev. Peter
Van Tuinen in Holland,
Michigan

Dear Cousin,
I understand from your letter that you would like to hear about my imprisonment in the Netherlands and Germany. I was arrested by the German Gestapo on June 15, 1942, while I worked at the Rotterdam shipyards. I and six others employed there were arrested on the charge of circulating pro-English circulars which the Royal Air Force had dropped in Rotterdam. They also accused us of spreading anti-German radio reports.

They took me to my house by auto and turned everything upside down. They took my radio and brought me to a jail in Rotterdam. My wife was very frightened, but they did not allow us to say one word. I remained there until June 18 when they took me to the Gestapo for interrogation. At first I denied all knowledge of the issue, but we were betrayed and they knew so much that there was no point in further denials. I was imprisoned at Rotterdam until July 7 and there the food and treatment were rather good because we had Dutch guards.

On July 18, 1942, the "green police"* marched sixty-nine of us to a concentration camp in Amersfoort—known also as "the hell of Holland." During that transfer we gained a little insight into what we could

expect. The Jewish people in our column were beaten with gun butts and one of them, nearly half dead, was thrown into a hand cart to be carried into camp.

The camp was an area surrounded by four-meter-high barbed wire fences with twelve guards' towers containing machine guns and search lights. Inside the camp they clipped us entirely bald and had us remove all our clothing. Then they kicked us into the other side of the camp where we put on old prison clothes with ripped and dirty underwear. Meanwhile the "moffen" (Nazis), stood around laughing. Each of us wore a number. Mine was 1179 on a red patch indicating that I was a political prisoner. We were set to work cutting trees all day long with



hardly any food—200 grams of bread and ½ liter of watery soup per day. And the days lasted from 5:30 A.M. until 7:00 P.M.

Each day began with a roll call which lasted from between a half hour to two hours. The sick and healthy alike were forced to be there—rain or shine. These hard days of labor often ended with punishment—two hours of running in place or push ups all accompanied



(left) Jewish boy under arrest.

by blows. It goes without saying that our health drained rapidly and I lost 14 kilograms during the first month.

On a Saturday, August 1, two prisoners escaped who had been sentenced to death. For that the whole camp was forced to stand at attention—from 4:30 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. without food or drink. In the afternoon a thunderstorm broke overhead but we stood and stood despite the rain and chill. As you may well imagine, there were many victims on days like that. Who, you ask, did such things? It was the S.S.,

*German police force supervising domestic affairs in the occupied Netherlands.

Hitler's specially trained regiment.

... What have I seen?—a prisoner beaten to death for taking a turnip from the garden; a Jew who hanged himself was cut down before dying and then placed in a coffin wherein he lingered on for two more days, ... and other Jews hanging from the gutters of the barracks. These were the deeds of the S.S.

All sorts of people were in the camp—doctors, lawyers, pastors, laborers, and many others, so you will easily understand that I frequently doubted that I would ever see my family again. But we comforted each other and the clergymen were a special support.

On November 17, 1942, they transferred me to Utrecht where I was sentenced on April 2, 1943, for a year and a half. The food there was poor but we were not beaten. Meanwhile my weight dropped from 70 kilograms to 52.

On May 29 I went through transport to Germany. My wife and mother were at the station, but they could not get near the train because the "green police" pointed their cocked rifles from the train windows—ready for fire. Within a week I arrived in Bochum near Essen in the Ruher district. I was there until October 14, 1943, when, due to help from the Rotterdam Dockworkers Society, I was released.

In Bochum we experienced bombardments and the worst came on Pentecost in 1943. The Royal Air Force reduced the whole city to a rubble and our prison received two direct hits. Fortunately, they fell on the opposite side of the prison. But we were helpless—4,000 men locked in cells with no way out. It was horrible. The building shook as during an earthquake. I will never forget it.

I hope this story gives you an insight into the oppressions we experienced here. You may translate this letter into English and read it to your friends and acquaintances."

October 9, 1945
Letter from Amsterdam

Dear Brother and family,
Last night Egbert brought your letter here and we were happy to hear that all has gone well for you and that you do not need to go into military service.

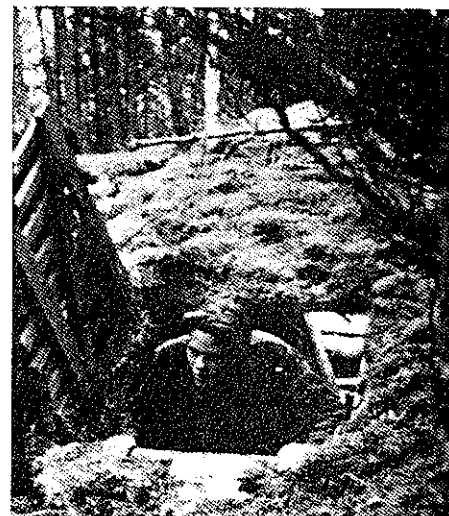
All is well here, and, wonder of wonders, the whole family is still alive. ... As you know, I was in the military when the war began and I served for nine months, including five days of combat. By the time we got used to fighting, the war was over. We were not prepared for all the bombing. By 11:00 A.M. on the first day of combat we had already been bombed five times, and twenty-one of our airplanes were



(above) "We had to give them all our valuables—brass, radios . . ." (right) "Underground in the woods."

grounded from damage. We tried our best, but it was futile. When the war was over, or rather, when we were occupied, then the fat was in the fire.

The "moffen" [Nazis] were going to improve us and make us into good Nazis, but they had little success with their propaganda. We had to give them our valuables: brass, radios, bikes, and one thing after another. Finally, they wanted me



too. I did not take that risk, but went underground, as many did. Toward the end of the occupation it seemed that more people were underground than above. I worked in my uncle's nursery, for a heating company, and for a casket maker. Meanwhile, Trijntje was left in Amsterdam to run the store by herself. . . . Before the war Trijntje had never been able to lie, but during the occupation she was very good at lying. Finally, I moved

back home and worked at upholstering in the back of the shop.

. . . Later my brother came to live with us also. During the invasion he had been captured and sent to Buchenwald. Thanks to the Americans, he survived. When he gained his freedom he weighed only 80 pounds. . . . We will never forget the last winter of the war—without natural gas, power, coal, and nearly

no food. We survived on sugar beets. Trijntje and I took turns dragging ourselves to the Haarlemmer polder or to Aalsmeer to find something to eat. We brought back sugar beet pulp.

Thank the Lord we stayed healthy and were better off than most people. When going down city streets it was common to see people collapse. Sometimes they were buried in gardens or in city parks. There was not enough wood to build coffins. The city of Amsterdam suffered little from bombing and shell fire, but thousands of homes were demolished for firewood. When a house was abandoned, all the wood was pulled out within five or six hours—even the ceiling came down so that only the walls remained standing. People paid thirty-five guilders for a bushel of potatoes.

The sight of the American planes dropping food packets is one I will never forget. I watched them fly over from a tall building with my binoculars. They flew over, one after another, and soon after that the war ended. When we look back at everything that happened—hunger, bombings, police raids, the shooting of innocent people, and still more—we cannot thank God enough that it has ended this way.

"The sight of American planes dropping food is one I will never forget."



February 10, 1946
Letter from Rotterdam Area
L. Molendijk to Rev. P Van Tuinen

You can never really understand, nephew, the terrible hunger that people have experienced here. We, though, did not suffer from starvation—neither ourselves, our children, or other relatives, and for that we are most thankful.

Some people collected potato peels when they were available, and everyone sought turnip greens which we normally used as cow food. People traveled for hours to get them and made a meal of them. I'm sure you are familiar with [Brussel] Sprouts. Well, people went crazy to get the stalks after the sprouts were removed and the stalks were considered a virtual feast. I cannot possibly write everything to you for it was worse than I have so far written.

Our son Adrie worked as a coppersmith in Rotterdam before the war, and he had many acquaintances there who came here for food during the war. They came around 11:00 o'clock in the morning with a bag or a small cart. We made sure that we always had coffee and bread for them. They were always so hungry—many not having had food for twenty-four hours. They actually cried for joy. We could give them bread without butter, but we did have syrup. We made our own syrup from sugar beets—a big job. Sometimes we gave them some leftover

hash, or a few carrots, or peas. . . .

On one occasion a man came with a sixteen-year-old boy. But even after eating, the boy was so weak that he fainted. There was also a man from Schiedam who came here regularly. But, then, because of police raids, he could not leave his home and thereafter we received a death notice which reported him to have said, 'If only I could get to Pernis to Leen,' (that is my husband's name) but he couldn't and he died of hunger. It is so terrible to hear such news and it was especially so in this case as the last time he came I remember that he cried like a child. He took potatoes and an onion along and said, 'I will never be able to repay you, but the Lord will bless you.' Cousin, hunger is a terrible chastisement. In Rotterdam people of all ages were seen collapsing along the road. Here in Pernis nobody died of starvation but many had hard times. Our experience was exceptional, and even though we did not deserve anything better, we came through it all very well.

We had potatoes and vegetables from our garden because my husband always kept a forty-meter garden plot and we fattened a hog. I baked bread because we could buy wheat. But you should know that all this had to be done very quietly—like mice—for otherwise they would come and collect your food. We never had our house searched, though they searched many others and took everything. . . . It was a busy, nerve-racking life, but that is all past. What is now left, though, is a disrupted Dutch nation. . . . When you look around, you are inclined to say, "It can never be restored. But that too is in God's hands, and what we are not able to do is possible with Him."

"They came with a bag or a small cart."



October 1, 1945

Letter from Groningen to
Dear Uncle & Aunt from "Your
niece Hillie"

We have experienced a terrible time and it is difficult, at times, to realize that things are normal again! We can walk abroad at night again with the street lights on. Before, we had to be in our houses at eight o'clock in the evening and everything was pitch black. Not one ray of light was permitted or we received a fine. It was especially bad during the winter of 1944-45, when almost no lights were permitted and we burned small oil lamps [a saucer with a small wick burning on the table]. You can easily imagine how dismal that was, but now, fortunately, that is past. Here in the North [Groningen] we did not suffer from hunger, but in Holland [South and North Holland], they suffered terribly.

The liberation was also a tense time here. When I went to work on April 13 it was rumored that the Canadians had advanced to the bridge. We remained at work for a while, but it was impossible to function normally so we all went home and that night we could hear gun fire in the distance.

The firing became heavier on into Saturday when suddenly we were terrified as a truck full of German soldiers stopped in front of our house. After a short while they drove off but left off a large supply

of ammunition, together with a small party of German soldiers. That was for a cannon which had been stationed just around the corner from our house. It made a horrible noise.

We didn't know where to go. We laid flat out on the floor in the hallway, in the kitchen, and even under the beds. Fortunately, by evening, the Germans had moved on because the Canadians had ad-



vanced into our neighborhood. By Sunday afternoon our neighborhood was liberated. For three days we had not even changed our clothes and a window above our door was shot out. But the center of the city was not yet liberated and soon we could see it burning—a terrible sight! The city square is a pile of rubble as well as other main streets and neighborhoods. Many shops are destroyed.

Even now [Oct. 1], there is nothing for sale, but that's nothing new because during the past few years it has been impossible to buy so much as darning yarn for stockings. Still, we can manage to survive. Shoes and stockings are completely unavailable. We go without stockings for most of the year in order to have something for Sundays and in the cold winter months. I patch other clothes together from this and that because I am a seamstress. But it is especially terrible for families with children as they can scarcely provide their children with shoes.

"The city square is a pile of rubble." (following pages) "Liberation!"





BORDER CROSSINGS

THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Until well into our present century, the U.S./Canadian border has functioned more like a sieve than a fence. People from both countries have moved and settled across their mutual border with little or no official hindrance. From the States, the first great wave of migration to Canada occurred during the American Revolution when over thirty thousand British loyalists relocated in the regions of Nova Scotia and the northern shores of Lake Ontario. Loyalty to the English monarch assured their welcome in British North America, but in subsequent decades, national loyalties were of slight significance among the migrants who crossed the U.S./Canadian border. For example, when the 1812 War between Great Britain and the U.S. broke out, over 80 percent of Upper Canada's residents were migrants from the States. Since the U.S. had threatened to conquer Canada during this conflict, Great Britain feared that the U.S. migrants in Canada would rise to support their former homeland. But they did no such thing.

During the next half century the migration pattern shifted southward as large numbers of Canadians drifted into the United States. Exact

statistics are not available, but port of entry records indicate that about four thousand Canadians recorded their entrance into the States annually. Many others simply moved south without recording their migration. In addition, over fifty thousand Canadian volunteers joined Lincoln's Northern army during the War Between the States (1860-64). Later, the 1890 census registered 1.5 million Canadian-born U.S. residents. These border crossings though, have always proceeded in both directions, and current estimates indicate that between 1900 and 1924 a million and a half immigrants entered Canada from the States while an equal number from the Provinces moved south.

For about thirty years, 1895-1925, farmers and farm laborers were drawn to Canada in particularly large numbers. Free land was the main incentive. For, as arable land in the States became nearly saturated with settlers, the great Canadian wheat belt attracted immigrants from Europe and the U.S.A. For such folk the Canadian plains had become the "Last Best West." And, as world markets expanded and the demand for Canadian wheat spiraled between 1896 and 1920, grain farmers prospered. It is not surprising, then, that a number of Dutch immigrants

and Dutch-Americans joined the general quest for land and success on the plains of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Still, the general era of prosperity could not guarantee the success of every farmer, and those who joined the Canadian land rush with scant resources were particularly vulnerable to setbacks from drought, early frost, and inexperience. Wiser migrants proceeded cautiously and gained experience as farm hands before launching their own ventures on unfamiliar soils with strange farm implements. The letters of W. M. Bos, an immigrant from Drenthe, clearly illustrate that sane course of action.

"Dear Friend Wilting," he wrote, "This year (1911) has been especially fertile in Canada, and barring unforeseen calamities, Canada will have a rich harvest. I am working for a farmer here near Swift Current. He is a very good boss and I worked for him six weeks last year. . . . He and his boys have 2,250 acres with twenty horses, four milk cows, and a steam engine for plowing and harvesting. . . .

"I am half inclined to buy more land here. I have been traveling around for a week. I visited the land office in Swift Current, and I also visited my brother, W. J., with whom



I investigated some available land. But I couldn't find anything that attracted me. One should not be a "bull in the china shop" and I will not buy land that is not exactly what I want.*

"Perhaps I will go to Montana because there are many farms available there. The existence there of a whole Dutch community (mainly Frisians and Groningers), together with a church may well be more satisfying. . . . I already have friends there and I will easily earn the cost of travel after working there for two months."

Bos did not move to Montana but chose, instead, Cramersburg in Saskatchewan. In 1912 he reported news of his marriage and the great joy it brought him. He noted further that he had sold his land near Swift Current and had settled in Cramersburg because that Community had organized a Christian Reformed Church. Of his newly purchased homestead he wrote, "We live on our own land here and have built a new barn. Part of it has been made into living quarters until we can build a new house next spring. For the moment we have purchased three horses, one cow, four pigs, and forty chickens. . . . All beginnings are difficult but I must say that we have experienced no problems yet. We have had a pleasant winter—not very cold and no snow

yet. I have been cutting firewood with my English neighbor. He has no horse so he helps me cut the wood and for that he gets every other load for himself."

The following year Bos wrote lengthily of the spiritual dangers which immigrants faced when they settled far from their own churches and people. He cited examples of folk who had become virtually paganized as they lost all contact with Christians and the church. "Many," he wrote, "emigrate blindly. It is especially difficult for whole families to locate in a good place upon arrival." He praised the assistance and guidance which the CRC's Home Mission Board provided to new immigrants, but continued: "Even under those circumstances people should have some money in hand because there is no free land available where churches and communities have been organized."

Throughout his correspondence, Bos made no mention of his Canadian identity. His advice to prospective immigrants related rather exclusively to their spiritual needs—finding a home among Christians who had orthodox churches. And his only direct mention of national affairs reveals the insignificance of his residence in Canada. He reported that "his" country had set aside the last Thurs-

"I am working for a farmer . . . He is a very good boss . . . He has 2,250 acres with twenty horses."

day of November as a national day of thanksgiving.** Obviously, Bos celebrated the State-side Thanksgiving Day and his America had no Canadian border.

The recollections of Klaas De Vries (1892–1930) similarly illustrate the minimal significance of his identity with either Canada or the U.S.A. De Vries immigrated to Canada in 1892. He decided upon Canada rather than the U.S.A. because his pastor in Jubbega, Friesland, referred him to an article in *Het Oosten* (a Dutch-language newspaper published in Paterson, New Jersey), which advised farmers to choose Canada rather than the U.S.A. Canada, *Het Oosten* declared, offered the best agricultural opportunities at that time.

Travel costs for Klaas and his brother Reinder came from an immigration committee which sent the two young men to Canada as an

*Of his advice to a correspondent from Iowa, who had also immigrated from Drenthe, Bos wrote, "I have received two letters from a Mr. Geerlings who immigrated from Gees to Iowa last spring. I have advised him to remain there for a year—especially if he is working for a good farmer and also to save money."

**That year the Canadians designated October 22 as their national Thanksgiving Day.



advance party, and with expectations that their forthcoming letters would assist others in making decisions about immigration. The De Vries brothers crossed the Atlantic in fourteen days and traveled to Manitoba by train from New York. They arrived in Winnipeg on the second of June but were destined ultimately for Yorktown, Saskatchewan—another 300 miles to the north. Their rail pass did not include the last leg of their journey and they had only \$1.00 between them, but the Winnipeg station master loaned them free passes to Yorktown where they finally met their sponsor.

Over the next few years Klaas worked for farmers, loggers, a railroad crew, and on a fishing expedition. When his mother and brothers arrived in 1894, they chose Winnipeg as their home. Over the next five years the De Vries family successfully provided for its needs as each member found employment and contributed funds to a common purse. Then, at thirty-five years of age, Klaas returned to the Netherlands to find a wife. He returned with his bride in 1899 and settled into the family home in Winnipeg. Within two years the newlyweds and part of the larger family migrated to Oak Harbor, Washington.

That location attracted Klaas because of its description in the

(left) Area near Jubbega in eastern Friesland from which De Vries emigrated. (right) Winnipeg

Grondwet, a Dutch-language paper published in Holland, Michigan. The article noted that good soil, good climate, and a small Dutch community made Oak Harbor an attractive place for potential migrants and immigrants. Klaas settled there and remained long enough to carve out a farmstead in the forests while his family increased with the birth of three children. But, as he did not progress very rapidly in Oak Harbor, he sold out and returned to Winnipeg in 1905.

Back in Canada, De Vries began a garden farm and, with the city market near at hand, he did very well. So well, that in 1907 he was able to visit the Netherlands with his family of seven. The De Vries household, which ultimately included ten children, remained in Winnipeg until 1916. During that period the family's garden farm prospered, but in 1916 De Vries moved again. He returned to the States, settling successively in Racine, Wisconsin, and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

This last exit from Canada was motivated by a variety of considerations—religious, educational and social. But the justification which Klaas De Vries described most carefully concerned his political views.



By 1916 Canada had joined England in the war against Germany, and though Klaas expressed a high regard for Canada, he had none for England. He interpreted the war as a mere continuation of Great Britain's imperial greed. His personal dislike for England stemmed directly from the 1905 Anglo-Boer War in which England's oppressive retaliation extended to the erection of concentration camps and the outright slaughter of the South African

Dutch. As his sons matured and faced the potential of being drafted to advance English policies, Klaas resorted to immigration. He was, for all his moving, and after a twenty-four-year residence in North America, a Netherlander at heart. In the face of that loyalty, the Canadian border described little or nothing.

Another case involves the migration of James Douma, who traveled from Iowa to Saskatchewan in search of farmland.* The Douma family left Iowa in 1905 and, after failing to establish a profitable farm in South Dakota, moved to Saskatchewan in 1910. For various reasons the Doumas enjoyed no real success on either side of the border, and their last letters in 1920 disclose a mood of total despair. Their story is a vivid example of grinding poverty, hopeless dismay, and fifteen years of economic failure. But apart from that, the ease with which they left their native land suggests again that crossing the U.S./Canadian border was of little more consequence than moving from Iowa to Dakota.

Douma's casual account of his expatriation reports, "You will be surprised to learn that we are away up here in King George's domain, but such is the case. . . . This is a great big country with lots of open prairie." He reported further of the spring flowers which dotted the plains, the weather, and the proximity of towns and railroads, but altering his national residence evoked only a passing reference.

These scattered examples highlight the slight regard which some international migrants allotted to national loyalty. But, prior to the patriotic nationalism of World War I and the advent of immigration

quotas during the 1920s, both Canada and the U.S.A. lofted banners of economic well-being to lure new residents. Because political ideals and governmental practices were similar on both sides of the border, immigrants were not inclined to select Canada or the U.S. out of political considerations. Understandably, then, strangers pursued the material opportunities which both nations urgently pressed upon them, and borders meant little when land or potential wealth beckoned them to far-away places.

The accounts of those who trekked North America's unsettled spaces have been a constant source of interest, displaying the hopes and dismays which drove the migrants from place to place. Among such experiences, the saga of Klaas De Vries offers special attraction because his truly adventurous tale describes a fascinating encounter with the North American wilderness near the turn of the last century.

—H.J.B.

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*Origins Vol. II, No. 2, pp. 2-8 describes the Douma experience in "Journey to Despair."

THE SAGA OF KLAAS DE VRIES

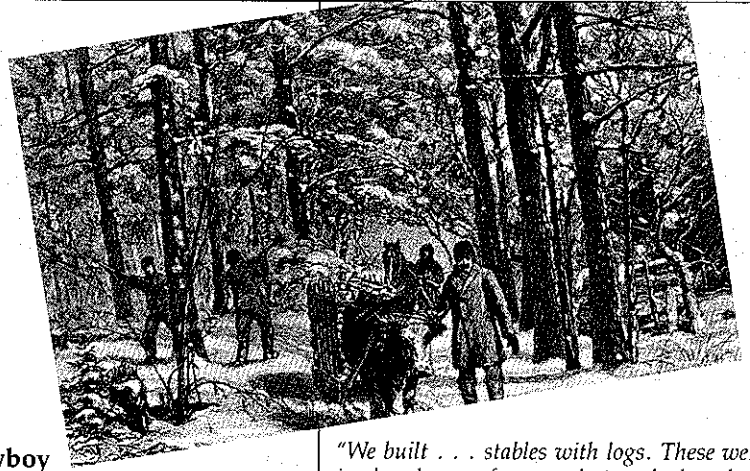


In 1892, Klaas De Vries immigrated from Jubbega—Schurega in Friesland. He was among the first in that region to accept assistance from the Christian Immigration Society of Utrecht which had been formed to relieve unemployment in Friesland. Amsterdam bankers funded this effort with loans for travel and settlement expenses, and a Canadian, Robert Insinger, traveled to the Netherlands to distribute publicity which proclaimed the advantages of Western Canada. There, land in 160-acre blocks was available for a \$10 filing claim, and Insinger correctly reported that Canada offered much unoccupied territory, while the U.S. was rapidly filling up. Klaas, and his brother Reinder, eagerly acquired the assistance offered by the Utrecht Society and one year later another 100 emigrants also accepted the Society's invitation to join the De Vries brothers in Canada.

By then, Klaas had worked a full year with a farmer who lived 300 miles north of Winnipeg, and that experience introduced the young immigrant to Canada's severe winters together with the trials of maintaining livestock through a six-month season of snow and cold. During his second year on that same farm, Klaas was solely responsible for the wintering herd and his vivid report of tending cattle during the winter of 1893 follows.

Winter Cowboy

1892 had been exceptionally dry, and winter set in very early. At the end of October there was already more than a foot of snow. So, on the 25th of October I was sent to the north again by my boss, with Fred my former partner. But this time not with a wagon but with a double sleigh, heavily laden with provisions and tools, fifty-five head of cattle, and five horses. We traveled thirty miles north where the hay was for the purpose of wintering the stock there. When we arrived there the following day we had a lot of work to do. We had to build five stables for all those cows. We built those stables with logs and these were in abundance but, of course, we had to chop them from the woods. Then a thick layer of prairie hay was placed on the roof and the logs caulked with clay. Besides the stables, we also built a log shanty for ourselves for the winter, also caulked with clay; one window and one door and also a bed built of poles from the woods, naturally with hay serving as a mattress. We had plenty of blankets and robes so that we could sleep warmly. We also had a large cook stove to heat the house and cook the meals. There was firewood aplenty. We were also well supplied with provisions of tea, sugar, oatmeal, and flour. We had a quarter of beef lying on the roof on the snow,



"We built . . . stables with logs. These were in abundance, of course, but we had to chop them from the woods."

which always remained fresh due to the continued heavy frost. We did not have potatoes because they were frozen before we arrived.

We lived primarily on meat, soup, bread, oatmeal, and tea or milk. It was January before we had finished building. The animals had to be out in the open up to that time. This will probably surprise the reader somewhat, especially considering the severe winter, and it does seem to be hard. But it is not so bad for animals which have been born in the northwest. They seem to be inured to it. One can see larger groups of horses, which are never stabled, running around all winter on the prairies. They paw the snow away with their front feet and live on the frozen grass and still they are healthy. In the spring you can see that they have been out in the open because the hair is very long.

And so my partner and I lived on until February 15 when he suggested to me that, if I dared, I could take on the responsibility alone and get along by myself . . . I accepted the proposal because I thought that it would not be long before spring and besides, then I would be my own boss, no one could order me around. All I had to do was to give the cows



"Every day more and more wolves came, so that in a couple weeks there was little left of the horse."

and horses their hay, once a day drive them to the well, and give them water. In the afternoon I would get a load of hay and, of course, cook my own meals. You can well understand that I had plenty to do, and as a result I was never bored. I was, as a rule, in a good mood and often sang a cheerful song.

Every week fresh provisions were sent to me from Yorktown through other ranchers who went to town. My nearest neighbor was $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. That was a Mr. McKay and his wife and her brother, R. Stevenson—Canadians. They also had a cattle ranch with one hundred head of stock. This Mrs. McKay baked bread for me. Every three or four days I visited these folk, on horseback, and so I learned some more English. For the rest I had no companionship except for the cattle, also a dog, and naturally also plenty of wolves. Now that I mention wolves, I must tell my readers about a little incident.

It was on a Sunday morning I saw a young horse which was not one of mine in my yard. It had evidently roamed from another ranch. That happened a great deal in the country. But when I watched for a time I noticed that it had a cramp or colic, and so bad that it died after a few

hours. There it lay near my shanty. I knew that if I allowed it to lie there, the prairie wolves would soon be around to eat it. So, I took a logging chain and team of horses and dragged it about five hundred yards from the front of my shanty and left it lying there. Sure enough, as I expected, there came the hungry wolves and the young horse was literally devoured. Every day more wolves came so that a couple of weeks later there was little left of the horse. But I enjoyed it especially when at last the wolves began to fight with one another. I could hardly keep my dog away. More than once he was in the fight with the wolves. On the one hand I was glad the horse had been eaten, but on the other hand I was sorry, for I often longed for a variation to my isolated life because many days passed when I saw no one. Oh, it could be so quiet, especially when there was no breeze. More than once I stood outside in the evening when the moon was shining and the stars sparkled in the sky, and when not a leaf stirred. Then there was an impressive calm. Then I felt at times that I was the only person on earth.

So, I recall that on such a quiet evening I had just eaten my supper and had read a chapter from the Bible, when all of a sudden there was a knock on the door. I jumped up and opened the door and who



"He asked me in a friendly manner if I could give him and his horse lodging for the night. Naturally, I was happy to do so. . ."

did I see standing before me? Well, he introduced himself to me. "I am a missionary of the Presbyterian church." He had a horse and sleigh and a valise with a Bible. He asked me in a friendly manner if I could give him and his horse lodging for the night. Naturally, I was happy to do so, especially because it was a servant of the Lord, who was sent by his church to visit the scattered members of the Presbyterian church and bring them the gospel, but I felt a little embarrassed to receive him in the bachelor circumstances in which I lived. But the brother knew how to remove that objection by saying that he was accustomed to such circumstances. In short, he was able to accommodate himself in every way. So he spent the night with me, but it was already late before we went to bed. He had had many experiences which he told me about, and I had a lot of questions to ask him, to the extent that I was able to express myself in English. The next morning he rode on after we had breakfast together, for which he thanked me kindly and wished me God's blessing.

And so I lived on for days and weeks. Every day the same monotonous life of a hermit. It remained



"So I returned to the south with . . . all the stock to the farm in Yorktown."

cold, a harsh long winter, -30-35-40 degrees. It was impossible for me to get a load of hay. By the end of March there was also a 30-inch snow cover which made hauling hay difficult; not only the snow but I had to shovel a lot of snow from the haystacks which took a great deal of time. Usually I sat on the largest horse and opened the road so that I could get through with the bobsleigh, a distance of about a mile.

When April arrived and winter weather continued, a shortage of hay developed for many cattle ranchers because in September there had been a prairie fire and a large amount of hay was burned. I fortunately had enough for my cattle-food, but I had orders from my boss not to sell any to anyone although I was often under pressure to do so. The hay famine became worse from day to day, so bad, in fact, that by the end of April cows and horses by the hundreds had died. There was almost no rancher who had not lost animals because of hunger. I have seen with my own eyes that the carcasses of cows lay all around in yards. Each day it was expected that spring would arrive but the winter weather kept on, and on April 30 there was another snowstorm, so

that I had to stay in my shanty. One night I had to give lodging to a few farmers who lived twenty miles farther north than I. They were on their way to the railroad station with three teams to get hay. The railroad company shipped the hay from the south and sold it at a high price. That night the men slept on the floor of the shanty where we had spread some hay. Robes and horse blankets served as covers. Early in the morning they traveled on. They had to go one hundred miles over and back again which would take them four days because the roads were very bad on account of the snow. I heard later, that when they returned, the starving cattle came to meet them and tore the baled hay from the sleighs. They bellowed in their hunger. There were also farmers who plowed away the snow and the cows ate the frozen grass as they followed them. But enough of this.

On May 4 there was a thaw and my hermit life came to an end, for my boss sent a young man, Mr. Eddie Wilcox, with a pony to get me. I heartily welcomed him because I had doubted sometimes if it would ever be summer again . . . And so I returned to the south with the above-named young man and with all the stock to the farm in Yorktown. Everything went well with no mishaps, and . . . I was finally back to civilization in Yorktown.



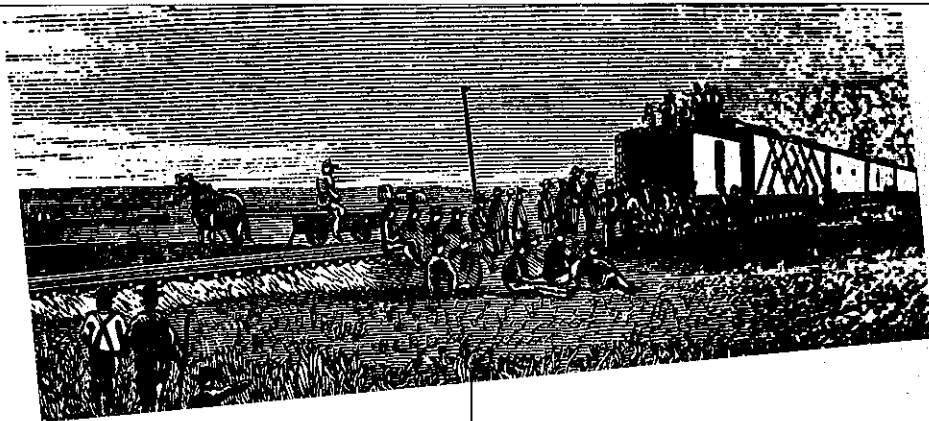
Winnipeg main street about 1880.

Rail Rooding

After his three-year stint as a farm hand, Klaas returned to Winnipeg and found employment on the Canadian Pacific Railroad's construction crew. The workers gained a free pass to the job site which was located thirty miles west of Moose Jaw and 430 miles from Winnipeg. They were promised a free return ride following three months on the job and, after room and board deductions, Klaas earned about \$3.50 per week.

Klaas and his friend J. De Graaf found both the work and their companions nearly unbearable, but they took some comfort from the mutuality of their despair. When they had worked a solid month amid swarms of mosquitoes and constant heat, the foreman layed off four crew members—including J. De Graaf. With the dismal prospect of another two lonely months with ten-hour working days in the company of "rough characters" for whom Klaas had "not the least respect," he decided to join De Graaf and return to Winnipeg. De Graaf had a free pass, but Klaas, with only \$4.75 in his pocket, could not buy a ticket, so he decided to bum his way whatever the consequences.

The long and frequently dangerous trip from Moose Jaw to Winnipeg left deep impressions with



"They worked a solid month amid swarms of mosquitoes and constant heat."

Klaas De Vries and his lengthy account of that adventure still captures the drama and suspense which he experienced.

Riding the Rails

"The train was about to leave so I had to make a quick decision," Klaas wrote. "My friend De Graaf was already boarding the train and he advised me to bum a ride. He said that he had done that before. 'Come on,' he said, 'take a chance. You'll get there without a ticket. Get on the platform of the baggage car, or climb on the coal tender. I will take your clothes along.'

I quickly handed over my clothes in a travel bag to De Graaf, even my socks, because it was so warm that I walked barefoot in my shoes, and then the train began to move. 'All aboard,' the conductor shouted, and I boldly stepped on the platform of the baggage car, and away we went. After standing there for some time, I climbed up on the coal car behind the engine, and so I arrived toward evening in Moose Jaw. But I was so afraid of being seen, that before the train stopped, I jumped off with the result that I fell flat on my stomach in the sand, but was fortunate not to be hurt. So I got up immediately and walked to the platform of the station

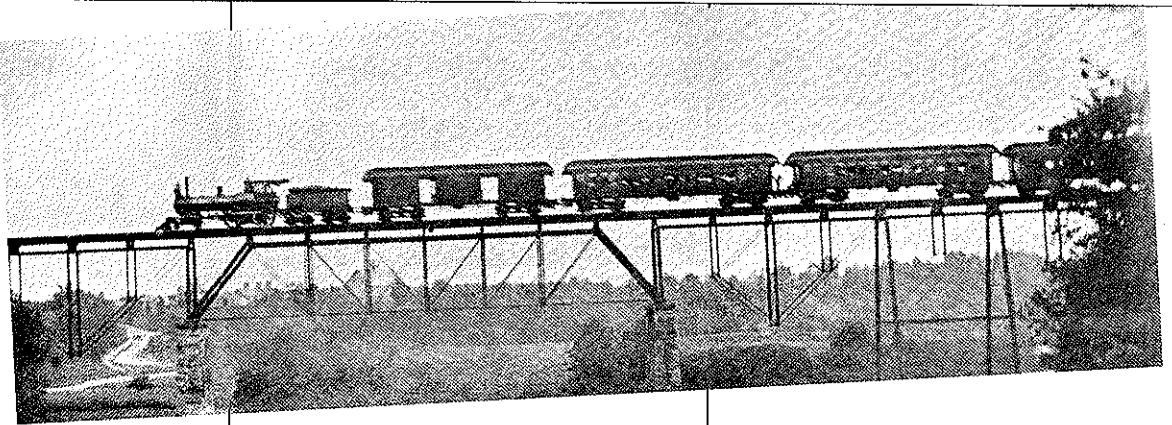
where J. De Graaf saw me and called out, 'Keep it up. You'll get there. Good-bye!' The train stopped for just a little while and began to move again. The conductor again called out, 'All aboard,' and I was about to step on the platform of the baggage car when I was roughly pushed back by a brakeman with the words: 'Keep back, you son - - -.' The train moved away and there I stood very disappointed.

There was another train standing on another track, but this one was not to leave for half an hour. It was going in the opposite direction to the United States, so that did not interest me. But the fireman of that train had noticed that the brakeman had pushed me back. He asked me where I wanted to go. I told him, 'To Winnipeg, in the east.' 'Oh,' he replied, 'then you had better wait. A couple of trains will come through late in the night. Then you will have a good chance to get away.' That man was so friendly that he got down from his engine and found out from the blackboard when those trains came in from the west. Some time later he came back and told me that I should be ready at two o'clock in the morning when a cattle car would come in. Those trains do not go as fast as the passenger trains, but they go through to Winnipeg and then on to the Atlantic coast. The cattle are sent to England.

So I waited until two o'clock in the night in the small town of Moose Jaw. There was no thought of sleeping, because I was very excited and far from feeling at ease. Sure enough, at two o'clock I heard the train coming, a long train loaded with fat steer or oxen.

The train stopped, and now I had to take my chance to climb aboard. But that was not so easy, for there was no moonlight, so it was quite dark. But finally I found a car where a steer had torn a board loose, so that there was enough of an opening for me to get in, but no more. It cost me some effort but I succeeded to get in; once I was in the car, however, I was afraid of the wild animals. They shoved and pushed so terribly that I decided to climb out, and did. But when I was back outside I again faced the same problem. I wanted to get out of Moose Jaw, but how? There was no other train now; under no circumstances did I want to go back, and I would not get the money which I had earned in August until I arrived in Winnipeg. I already had the time slip in my pocket. What now?

Now I began to blame myself for jumping back out of the car; I had dealt with cows so much in my life. 'Come on,' I thought, 'better climb back in the car. They won't squeeze you to death so easily.' But it was so dark, and the car so full I could see



nothing inside the car. I climbed back in and in the dark made my way over the backs of the cows to the end of the car, sat on the back of one of the animals until it became tired of having me on its back. Then he began to shove against the other steers, and yes, then there was some room for me. I jumped from the animal's back to the floor and stood there for a while. Then they began to shove and stomp at the other end of the car again and come toward me. Naturally, it became too crowded in the corner, and at that awful moment, the engine began to switch back and forth with the train.

But then I was in too much trouble in the corner. I could not stand it anymore and had to get back outside. I worked my way back over those animals and actually managed to get out. Was I glad! But when I had stood there a few minutes I suddenly heard the bell of the engine, which was a sign that it was ready to leave. Now I had to decide quickly whether to go along or not. I had no time to think it over, for the train had begun to move. So I jumped back on the train. I did not dare go back in and so I stood outside holding on tightly with my hands and in a few minutes was out of Moose Jaw. But then the train increased its speed, with the result that while riding not in but outside of the train, my hat blew off.

But, fortunately, the darkness of the night made way for the light of day, so that now I could see the animals in the car. And so I decided to climb back in, which I succeeded in doing while riding. It was soon daylight and now my fear of the wild animals subsided, for now I could see them. But now I stayed in a corner of the car and when they began to crowd me, I climbed up along the wall.

And so we went on until we came to Regina, one of the western cities, a town of a few thousand inhabitants. There the train stopped for about twenty minutes. Naturally I became somewhat uneasy that the conductor or brakeman would see me for I knew that in that case there was a danger that I would spend a few days in jail. And it is surely a wonder that the railroad officials did not discover me because the car in which I was riding stood right in front of the station. There I spent some anxious moments, so I stood in a stooped position, my feet close together, next to a larger steer.

As I stood there I heard the conductor say to the brakeman, 'Say, Billy, you had better fix that board which one of the steers knocked down.' Well, I thought then, with a few nails in that board I won't be able to get out.

But then I heard the bell of the engine again and we steamed away.

Now I was at ease. But in a short time the train stopped at a large water tank. The engine was supplied with water. Meanwhile, the brakeman inspected each car carefully, the steer were counted, etc., until he came to the car where I was. And as I write these lines I must still laugh, for I looked outside a moment and there we looked each other squarely in the eyes. The reader will understand what followed then. What he first said was a bad word. I do not want to write that. 'What are you doing in that car, and how did you get in there, and where did you get in? Do you want to get killed by those wild steer?' I told him I wanted to have a ride to Winnipeg and had no money. And I told him, 'You had better leave me in this car. I am not afraid of steer; I know how to handle them.' 'No sir,' he said. 'You have to come out right away.' So he made an opening and out I went. I heard the bell of the engine and away it went.

There I stood at the railroad station, still 348 miles from Winnipeg in a desolate country. For a moment my spirit sank because now I must walk that distance with my bare feet in my shoes and bare-headed. It was still very early in the morning and beautiful weather. Shortly I would see the sun rise. It would be another hot day, like every other day. So I walked on a couple of miles in an

oppressed mood. For I was becoming thirsty and hungry but I still had \$4.75 in my pocket. There was no house or store from which to buy anything! I saw nothing but that monotonous railroad before me and on both sides that sun-parched prairie. No water anywhere. So I walked on and became more and more depressed. I feared the wild timber wolves because they were much more dangerous than the prairie wolves. I had often been told that in the west, where I was now, there were many of those timber wolves. Oh, now I was sorry I had undertaken the return trip—as a bum. I also realized the sinfulness of it all. I felt guilty before God as a Christian. I was on the wrong track.

It was Saturday and tomorrow it would be Sunday and I had to deal with the prospect of making that entire trip on foot. For I figured that if I could cover twenty-five miles a day it would be fourteen days before I could be in Winnipeg, and then how could I get food? Four dollars and seventy-five cents divided by fourteen days would mean I would have to live on thirty-four cents a day, so, bread and water and sleeping under the bare sky would have to do. Or beg, and I was ashamed to do that. No, I would not beg. So, dear readers, all this depressed me so much that I stepped a few feet from the railroad and there in the

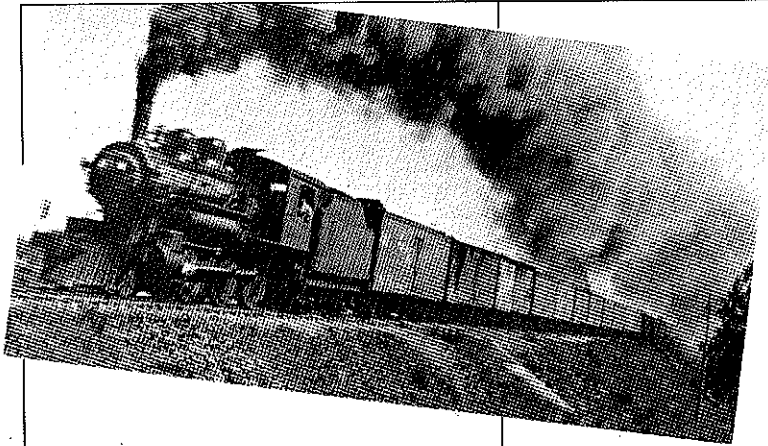
lonely prairie I fell on my knees with my hands uplifted, praying to God, and saying, 'Oh, Lord, I know I am guilty. It is my own fault that I have fallen under these circumstances. Oh, forgive my sins and help me now.' Tears flowed down my cheeks for I felt so guilty. I knew very well that the Lord could not bless this wayward path which I had chosen to take. And still, driven by my need, I begged the Lord, 'Be pleased nevertheless to help me out, and bless me for Jesus' sake, Amen.'

Then I rose from my knees and felt remarkably relieved that I had unburdened my soul before the Lord. And then with a renewed spirit I went on for about seven or eight miles when, to my great joy, I saw a house. This proved to be a small sub-station where, fortunately, there was a small store. the first thing I bought was a new straw hat for fifteen cents so that I was again protected against the sun. I also bought some bread and asked for a drink of water, and after that I traveled the remainder of the day without a rest. I saw no wolves at all nor a single person all of the following day. The only comfort was that I always knew just how many miles I had walked. The railroad has a small sign at the end of each mile nailed to a telegraph pole, so I knew how many more miles I had to walk to get to Winnipeg.

It was on Saturday evening at about eight o'clock when I neared a little town. There I spoke to a man and told him I had walked thirty-three miles, because I saw on the telegraph pole it was 315 miles from Winnipeg.

The railroad there ran over a small creek of running water. I went under the bridge and sat down. I picked up a tin can and took a drink but the water did not taste good. So I had a "fine" supper of bread and water. This man told me that every night a passenger train came through from the Pacific coast and ran to the Atlantic coast. He said if I only had the nerve to bum it I would have a good chance of reaching Winnipeg in one day. I would have to stand on the platform early in the morning, for the train arrived at 2:30 and stopped for only a few minutes.

The readers can well understand that I was tempted again because I had to choose between two extremes, to walk twelve or thirteen days living on bread and water including at least two Sundays, which seemed very difficult and sinful besides, or steal a train ride by bumming. That was not a Christian thing to do and dangerous and difficult besides. What should I do? I ask you now, placing yourself for a moment in my circumstances, what would you have done? I chose the latter—bumming. I don't know, but I



think you would have done the same.

But it was only 8 o'clock in the evening and, naturally, I was in need of rest. I had six and one half hours to rest before the passenger train arrived. But where could I rest? Oh, yes, luckily I saw a long row of empty freight cars on a siding. I tried to climb in but before I could, I was scared as a Negro jumped up before me and asked me, 'Say, young fellow, have you got anything for me to eat? I am hungry.' I told him, 'No. I am in the same fix as you are.' A short conversation followed. He told me he had come from the Pacific coast and was on his way to New York to perform in a circus. He showed me a small board in the center of which he had made a small groove with his pocket knife. He said, 'Look. This is my ticket. If I can't get into the car then I crawl underneath the train, put this little board on the axle of the car, and still have a ride.' He never paid a fare, indeed an experienced bum. I was glad when he left the car saying, 'I will see if I can get something to eat in this little town.' Then I took off my coat, rolled it up, and made a pillow of it. I soon fell into a deep sleep after the troubles of the day. Suddenly, I was aroused in the night by the roar of the engine and the ringing of the bell. It was the train from the west. That was the one I

had to take.

I jumped up from the hard floor, put on my coat, and ran as fast as I could until I reached the station where the train had stopped. I got there just in time for the train was already moving. I grabbed it and got on the platform of the last coach. So, I thought, now I am taken care of. But I had fostered a false hope, for it did not take long before the conductor came up to me. He had noticed me and asked, 'Where is your ticket?' I told him I had none. 'Well,' he said, 'you have to get off at the next station.' 'Alright,' I said. When we reached the next station I did jump off, but I ran to another coach nearer the engine, jumped on it and sat on a box on the platform and so I rode two or three stations farther. Then, all at once the conductor noticed me and said, 'So you are still on the train, eh?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Alright,' he said, 'I shall hand you over to the police at the next station.' You can well imagine that I did not relish that, and I surely wanted to stay on the train, so I decided, if possible, to see if I could get on the baggage car, behind the engine. The conductor would not come there. And yes, I succeeded. When the train stopped, I jumped off, ran as fast as I could to the front, climbed on the platform of the closed baggage car and then I was out of the conductor's sight. Now I was safe.

But now I had still another problem. Sparks from the engine fell on me continually and most of all in my shoes and I wore no socks. That was very troublesome. I got along until we came to Broadview, a nice little city. This was a division point, a place where trains change personnel and get another engine.

It was about six o'clock in the morning. It was to my advantage that the train stopped next to a freight train, so that no one had noticed me. It was still very dark. Quietly and carefully I climbed down from the car and walked back and forth a little. All at once I had a shock as I ran into a man, but I was soon put at ease as he whispered in my ear, 'Are you looking for a ride?' 'Yes,' I said. 'Well,' he said, 'alright, then you will have some company. Here are six more fellows looking for a ride.' That pleased me somewhat for now I would not have to travel alone. But on the other hand, I was soon sorry because they were all rough fellows—all six. But what could I do about it? I was in a fix. I had to go ahead on the path I had begun.

Whispering in the dark, between the passenger and freight trains, we heard the engine's bell and then the sign of departure as the conductor shouted, 'All aboard.' Quickly all seven of us climbed on the platform to the baggage car, so that we took

up all the room. We were barely able to stand there. We went by a few stations and then day broke. The sun came up beautifully.

We were not noticed until we came to a place where the train stopped a little longer. Then the engineer saw us and he called out a friendly 'Good morning.' He motioned to us and said, 'Say, if you fellows want a ride, don't stay on that baggage car. There are two passenger cars without a soul in them. Open the windows and crawl in. Hurry up!' So we followed his friendly advice. The windows were shoved open in a hurry and we climbed in. Now we had things our way. We pulled the window shades down, sat on the seats and lit pipes.

We went on at a good speed, with almost no stops at the small stations. We were still in the empty car but the farther east we went, the more dangerous it became, because we would soon pass through larger cities where one always finds policemen or detectives on the platforms of the stations. So we decided that, while riding, we would climb out. But how? The door was locked and we could not leave. We were prisoners. There we sat. We looked at one another in dismay. What must be done now?

Finally, someone suggested that we might be able to open the window above the door. We tried, and

yes, the window opened but the space was limited. Still we succeeded one by one to struggle through and so we got back to the platform of the baggage car until we were a hundred miles farther.

Then I lost my companions again, for in this farm district, Virden, they planned to hire out to the farmers during harvest time. Now I was on my own but bummed on until I saw the 133 mile post for Winnipeg. I was only three miles from the city of Brandon and decided to stop there. I feared being arrested in Brandon and, besides, it was Sunday morning at about ten o'clock and I felt exhausted in body and soul.

The train stopped for a few minutes and I jumped off because I had had more than enough. But the engineer saw me and he called to me, 'You had better stay on. I'll take you up to Winnipeg.' But I told him, 'I am sick of bumming.'

I walked the remaining three miles and then I reached the city of Brandon, but before that I washed myself and combed my hair at a little creek with running water. Then I brushed my clothes and went to a restaurant where I enjoyed a hearty meal for I was as hungry as a horse. Also in the evening I enjoyed a good supper for twenty-five cents and then went to a meeting of the Salvation Army because there were no Dutch churches in the city. That night I



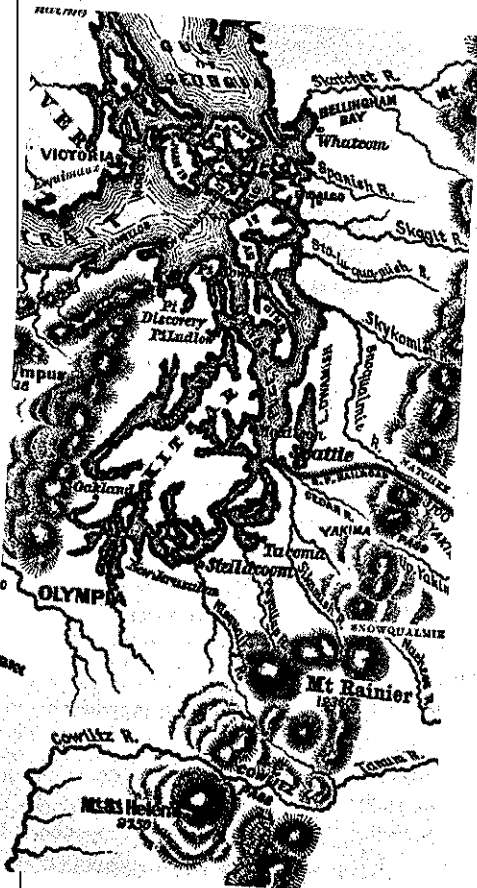
Remnant of De Vries family in Winnipeg.

slept in an empty box car and the next morning at six o'clock I traveled to Winnipeg no longer as a bum but as a passenger. The ticket cost four dollars.

I do not have to tell the readers that I was welcomed with shouts and rejoicing by J. De Graaf and other Dutch friends. I had much to tell them for I had had experiences which I will not forget the rest of my life. I also met my brother Reinder, whom I had not seen for a long time, and also another brother of mine, Jacob, who had come over from the Netherlands in the meantime. We soon agreed that it was now time to send tickets for mother and our two sisters Anna and Rika. After we had sent the tickets we parted again. I returned west 130 miles past Brandon to work for the farmer in the wheat harvest and remained there about five weeks."

—H.J.B.

OAK HARBOR WASHINGTON

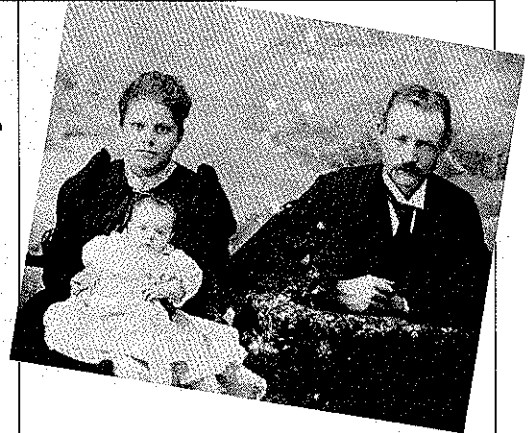


Map of Puget Sound area.

In 1901, and shortly after his marriage, Klaas De Vries migrated to Oak Harbor, Washington. His interest in that area had been kindled by publicity in the *Holland, Michigan, Grondwet* and in Orange City's *Volks-vriend*. More important, though, direct correspondence with Oak Harbor's pioneer settler, Rekele Zylstra, convinced Klaas that Washington's climate and economic potential surpassed that of the Winnipeg area.

Rekele Zylstra and several other founding settlers had already purchased land on Whidbey Island by 1895 and their first crops were better, they reported, than any they had seen in Iowa. Wheat yields averaged 50 bushels per acre and oats 75. Garden vegetables of nearly prize-winning proportions were sent from the Island to older Dutch settlements to suggest the fertility of Washington's soil. Thus, the new colony on the Pacific Ocean attracted much attention among Dutch folk from New Jersey to South Dakota and Canada.

Onno Heller, who migrated to Oak Harbor from Michigan in 1896, enthusiastically endorsed the Whidbey Island venture. He had emigrated from Groningen in 1891, and after unsuccessful efforts on a marginal 10-acre farm near Holland, Michigan, Heller was delighted by the contrasting success he enjoyed in

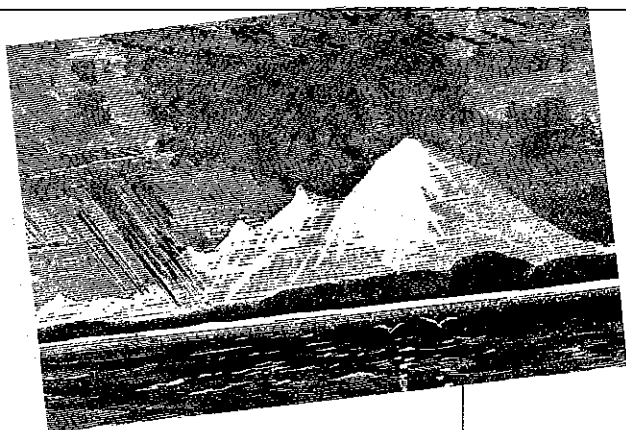


Klaas De Vries Family with one child.

Oak Harbor. The day labor, with which he supplemented his farm income, far exceeded the wages he had earned in Michigan and, furthermore, the trees and stumps from his land found a ready market as fuel for steam ships docked at Oak Harbor. Until they could move to their farm, the Hellsers rented a house in Oak Harbor, and, while living among several Dutch neighbors there, Onno's wife reported that they could eat fish regularly at no cost. "A whole sack for each of the five Groningen families living in our neighborhood."

One year later, in 1897, Onno wrote, "More Hollanders are coming here every day and they will continue to come until we establish a whole Dutch settlement."

"Things are improving economically too. That results from the election of a new President—a Republican. The factories and saw mills have begun to reopen and the fuel which we cut for the mills brings 30¢ more per cord. I can earn 60¢ more per day and occasionally \$1.00 more. Our boys cut the wood and I bring it to Oak Harbor. At the moment we can sell all that we are able to deliver. I hope this continues and even gets better. Then we will progress nicely because we will also begin to turn over our land this spring."



Mount Ranier

While comparing Washington with Michigan, Onno declared, "Here we don't have to work in the snow and cold. I would not live in Michigan again for \$1000—and that's the truth. I like it here. We are all happy that we made the trip. Money is scarce, but we are not broke all the time."

Washington's pleasant climate was a major aspect of its attraction, and when Klaas De Vries arrived there in 1901 his first impressions were of the weather. "What lovely weather every day," he wrote, "How different from the rough climate in Canada." The De Vries clan stopped first in Everett to visit a relative and then they crossed Puget Sound and moved in with Rekele Zylstra for a time. Klaas reported his experiences during the subsequent years in considerable detail and his account of Oak Harbor is one of the most complete available for that time.

"I will give you a short description of the Island," he began. "At the outset I must say that my first impressions were not favorable when I saw the thick woods with large pine trees which had to be felled and removed before one could begin to plow. So, I hesitated to begin, because I realized I would need a team of strong horses and dynamite. That naturally called for

some capital, and that was just what I lacked.

"Still, I had come to the Island with the purpose of buying a small tract of land and settling there. Friends living there, mostly Groningers and Friesians, advised me to do so. They too were pioneers who had purchased wild heavy wooded land. It was plain to see that they had worked hard. They already had a nice piece of land under cultivation and the quality of the soil was exceptionally good. The potatoe and vegetable crop was enormous. I have never seen better soil than that in the valley to the west of Oak Harbor. There were some who had harvested from seventy to ninety-six bushels of wheat per acre. Vegetables and fruit also brought an abundant return.

"After I had seen the prospects (problems on the one hand and good results on the other), I decided to set aside my objections and bought ten acres of land at \$18 per acre. I built a small house there, bought a couple of cows and a few chickens and began to farm. Brother Jacob did the same and lived with mother. So we were settled in the State of Washington on the Island in a valley with a rich fertile soil, but it was also a real wilderness.

"I lived there two years with my young wife. We had a child when we settled there, our Gertrude. She was born before we left Winnipeg,

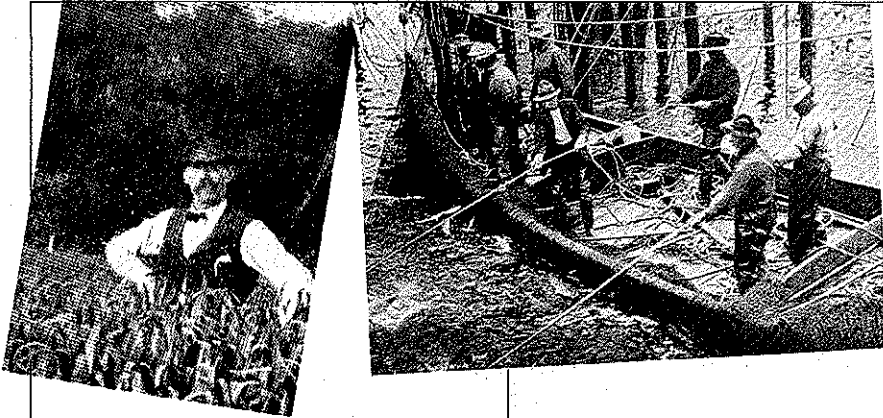


"I must say that my first impressions were not favorable when I saw the thick woods . . . which had to be felled and removed."

Canada. But the following year our second child, Peter, was born, and the next year our Winnie. So we had three children.

"In those years my life was like that of the earlier pioneers in Michigan, working hard to clear the dense woodland. But the soil, at least in the valley, was much more fertile than that in Michigan. I remember well that I harvested my first crop consisting of ten bags of peas and ten bags of onions from a small piece of ground. But selling these farm products was in those years not so easy. It was mostly trading or bartering. I seldom came in possession of a dollar bill. I could send my produce to the Seattle market by steamer but then one had to be satisfied with whatever the sales agent paid while waiting three or four weeks for the check.

"Now I must tell you something about church life on the Island. There was at the time a Christian Reformed Church, in fact, there were two small churches—one at Oak Harbor and one on the west coast. The second church had affiliated with the United Presbyterian Church just before we came to the Island. That was a disappointment



(left) Oats—waist high in July.(right) 50,000 Salmon Catch

for us because we had been told that there was a Holland-speaking congregation available. We had had to seek food for our souls for so many years in unfamiliar denominations, and now we had another denomination with an English-speaking minister, Rev. Best. But within two years we returned to the Christian Reformed Church, and Rev. Gulker became our pastor then.

"And now something about the highways. The roads in those years left much to be desired. If we wanted to go to church on the west beach on Sunday, we had to walk two miles (I had no horse and buggy). So brother Jacob and I decided to cut a path together through the heavy woods (a short cut). With that we could get to church by walking only one mile.

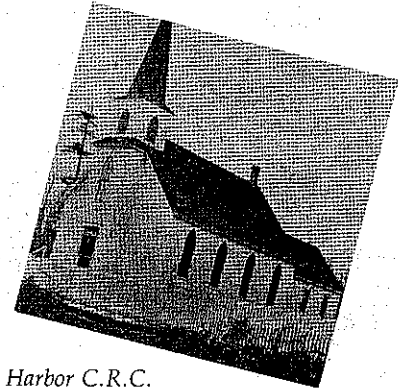
"We cut the path but it was more difficult and took more time than we had anticipated. The woods were very dense and many trees which had been blown down had to be moved. I remember that we found a heavy, long pine tree four feet in diameter lying in the middle of the woods. Seeing that it was too heavy to remove, we decided to saw a piece out of it, so we could walk through it. Later, when one of brother Jacob's cows was missing one

evening, we could not find the animal anywhere until we discovered that it was stuck in that tree. It could neither move ahead nor backwards, so we had to saw another piece out of the tree to rescue it.

"I could write much more about the things we experienced as pioneers on the Island, but then my story would become too long.

"I do want to add this. If I had had \$500 to \$600 cash at my disposal, I would not have returned to the east, but I did not have it, and saw no chance of saving it, as wages were low. All I could make cutting cord wood was \$1.50 per day. We sold it to the steamers which in those days burned wood instead of coal. So, in order to make a long story short, I agreed with my wife to sell my little property, not because we did not like the Island, but because I did not have the means to continue. It did not take long for me to sell my property for cash. Then trunks and boxes were packed and we said goodbye to the Island.

—H.J.B.



Oak Harbor C.R.C.

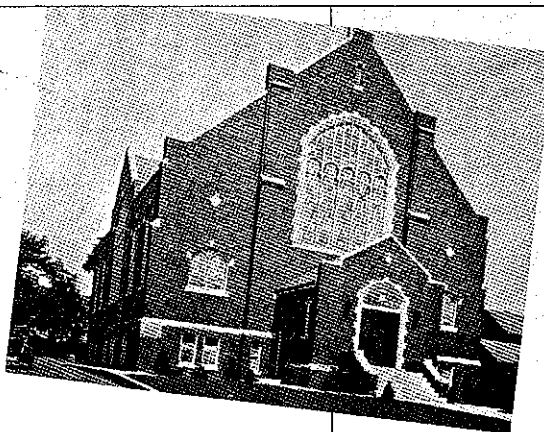


Rev. Kornelis Van Goor, pastor of the Second CRC, Paterson, New Jersey, traveled to the West in 1908 for relief from an asthmatic condition. His trip took him to Oak Harbor, Washington, and his account of that visit appeared in *New Jersey's Het Oosten* as well as *De Wachter*. Evert Van Steenbergen's translation follows.

I embarked on the boat which was going to take me to Oak Harbor from Seattle, at 8 A.M. It was a rare and lovely trip in the magnificent Pudget Sound arm of the sea. The area has about 500 small islands, but Whidbey, the largest, is about 120,000 acres.

Oak Harbor is one of three villages on the island. It is a very small town with farmers living around it and they are doing very well. Most of the land is fertile, but clearing a decent farm in the dense woods takes much work. On the west coast of the island there is an important salmon-fishing industry. They lift the bow nets every other day and yesterday they took in 32,000 pounds of fish. I can eat as much of this delicious product as I wish. I am staying here with some of my former catechism students, and I live like a prince with much cordiality.

The climate here is the best I have ever encountered. As you know, the area is surrounded by the waters of the Pacific. The location is northern,



Second Paterson CRC

and never hot, but also never cold. . . . At 10:30 A.M. the temperature is 78 in the sun and that is a normal day. The nights are always cool and a blanket is comfortable.

The Lord has a good congregation among the people here. I worship with about forty families and we walk to church along rows of blooming rose bushes to gather in the "Wood Church." . . . At the moment I am feeling well and my throat does not bother me very much. Let all things be well with my dear congregation in Paterson.

FOR THE FUTURE

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

Netherlands in Iowa

Alamosa, Colorado

Ralph Dekker: The Chicago Scene
1890-1930

Radicals of the Afscheiding: R. W.
Duin and H. J. Buddingh

Bastiaan Broere: Pioneer of "The
East"

Growing up Dutch in Grand Rapids:
Walter Lagerwey

Pelgrim Vaders (continued)

George Harper's Grand Rapids

Ellis Island

Chicago Area Garden Farms

The Kuipers: Klaas and His Boys

Y. P. De Jong: Patriarch of the
Southwest Side

Dutch-Americans in the Civil War,
1860-1864



The following article, authored by Rev. Gerrit Bieze, provides evidence for a re-interpretation of Christian Reformed and Reformed church histories. The typical pattern of that ecclesiastical narrative always notes that the Dutch immigrants who arrived in America during the 1840s joined hands with the RCA in 1850, but that the union was soon broken when the CRC organized in 1857. About twenty-five years later another segment of the RCA joined the 1857 seceders due to the Masonic Lodge controversy in the RCA. Since that time both the RCA and CRC have developed along parallel paths, although the CRC has been deeply influenced by Netherlandic theology and practice, while the RCA became increasingly formed by the examples of America's main-line denominations.

Rev. Bieze correctly notes that the 1850 union, spearheaded by Rev. Albertus Van Raalte, never enjoyed unanimous support among the immigrants. Bieze further discloses that some Dutch immigrants favored a special style of preaching, which began to diminish in both the CRC and the RCA during the 1880s. Loyalty to that religious mode resulted in disaffiliations from both the CRC and the RCA. These discontented folk then formed independent churches which called pastors who were known to preach in an experiential style—a mode which focuses on the biblical injunction to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

A growing number of these independent churches joined forces to organize the Netherlands Reformed Church in America in 1908. Though never a large denomination, the Netherlands Reformed people have consistently acquired pastors who have emphasized mankind's total depravity and the fearful struggle to

W.C.WUST

Founding Father of the Netherlands Reformed Church in America

overcome doubt. For these folk, salvation by grace is accompanied by a sense of insecurity which results in a constant testing of one's spiritual status.

Rev. W. C. Wust was the most influential leader among these troubled folk and his career in America also discloses a rather quiet but persistent ecclesiastical revolt, because virtually all of his congregations and disciples were drawn from the CRC and the RCA. Though little known, these secessions have depleted the ranks of the two main immigrant denominations from the 1840s and on into the present. Thus, a full narrative of Dutch-American church life should also record the birth and growth of the Netherlands Reformed denomination which seceded from the RCA and CRC in considerable numbers.

More significant is the clear probability that between 1857 and 1876 the CRC's founders also riveted their concerns on spiritual doubts and uncertainty. *Wachter* meditations during that era are studded with such

matters and many founding pastors of the CRC (E. L. Meinders, F. Hulst, K. Vanden Bosch, and J. R. Schepers) preached by the experiential model. Consequently, Bieze's view, that the 1857 secession stemmed largely from discontent with sermonic style and emphasis in the RCA, must be taken seriously. Later, as the CRC's pastors began to provide doctrinal preaching, some of the denomination's charter members (C. Vorst and Gijsbert Haan among them) worshiped independently and like-minded folk eventually organized the Netherlands Reformed Church in America.

W. C. Wust's career illustrates the general contours of these developments, and the larger issue which Rev. Bieze explores, should inspire others to a careful analysis of 19th century sermons. The sources for such a task are abundantly available in the Archives. We hope serious students will tend this fruitful potential.

—H.J.B.

By Rev. Gerrit Bieze



In 1983 the Reformed Church in America's *Historical Highlights* printed Rev. Arie Block's biographical sketch of Rev. W. C. Wust. This article declares that, because Wust founded churches in three different denominations, he demonstrated an ecumenical spirit. The whole picture, though, is more complicated because Wust organized several independent congregations and in each instance the telling characteristic of his churches stemmed from his peculiar religious insights rather than denominational identities. Denominational distinctions were nearly irrelevant to Wust's behavior, and in that sense he might be considered a kind of ecumenist, but he had no visions of a universal church on earth. Quite the contrary, each of his congregations became and continued to be isolated strongholds of loyalty to Wust's style of preaching. And even now, a century after Wust's death, his influence can be detected in the regions where he preached.

The Rev. W. C. Wust's ministry extended over a forty-five year

*To be fighting, fleeing, turning;
Ever sinking, yet to swim;
To converse with Jesus,
mourning for ourselves or else for Him.*

period, from 1840, when he was ordained as one of the first ministers in the "Kruiskerken,"* until 1885 when he retired from the active ministry and returned to the Netherlands to die. Thirty of those forty-five years were spent in America! He began his ministry in Den Helder in the province of Noord Holland, and after laboring there for six years, he accepted the call to the "Kruisgemeente" of Giessendam in 1846. But within a year both he and his congregation withdrew from that denomination due to disagreements with its foremost leaders: the Rev. C. van den Oever of Rotterdam and the Rev. Wm. H. van Leeuwen.** In 1847 the Giessendam church became independent, calling itself an "Oud Gereformeerde Gemeente," and Rev. Wust remained there until 1848. That year Wust and a part of the congregation emigrated to America, settling in what is now South Holland, Illinois. There an independent congregation was organized from among the people from Giessendam and several other families from Krabbendam—a congregation which Rev. Wust had counseled in the Netherlands. But in 1850 Rev. Wust returned to the Netherlands to serve the church at Giessendam a second time. That same year the South Holland, Illinois, church affiliated with the Reformed Church in America.

Then, in 1854, Wust crossed the ocean again and he intended to resettle in the South Holland area, even though no church there had called him. On his way West Rev. Wust arrived in Buffalo, New York, and while awaiting further transportation via Great Lakes steamer to Illinois, he was recognized by two members of the local Dutch immigrant church. They invited him to preach in their vacant congregation, on two successive Sundays, and, when the Buffalo congregation decided to call him as their pastor, he accepted and was admitted to the ministry of the RCA. One wonders just how this could happen! He had been a minister of the "Kruiskerken" and later of an independent church in the Netherlands, and his ministry was not recognized by the other churches of the Secession. It seems that the churches and ministers in the East had little knowledge or understanding of the various divisions and animosities among the churches in the Netherlands, and since there was a great need for

*This church group formed out of disagreement with the larger body of seceders in the Netherlands and it commonly ordained lay leaders. See *Origins* 1984, Vol. II No. 1, pp. 24-25.

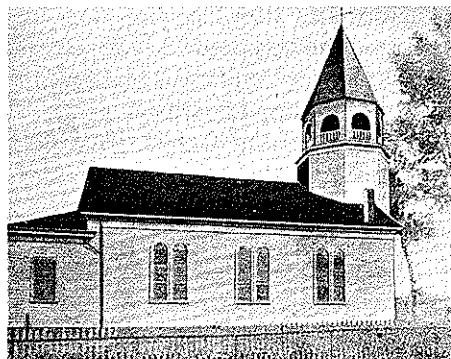
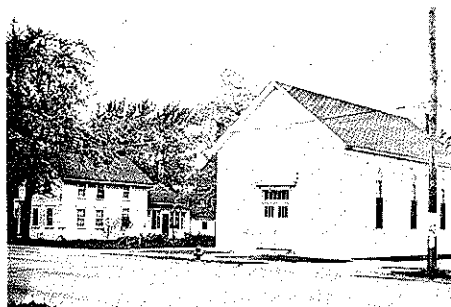
**In 1865, Van Leeuwen became the minister of the CRC in Paterson, NJ, where, as Wust's neighbor, the old battles in the Netherlands continued to influence relationships between the two ministers.

Dutch-speaking ministers, they accepted Rev. Wust because he carried a letter from the Giessendam congregation which declared him in good standing. So, W. C. Wust became a minister in the Reformed Church. He served the Buffalo church until 1856 when he accepted a call to the church at Rochester, New York. It is said that he served the Rochester church for 8 years with mutual happiness, although he did speak out vehemently against the Americanization of both his congregation and of the Reformed Church in America.

In 1864 Rev. Wust accepted the call to serve the immigrant congregation of the RCA in Lodi, New Jersey. But, four years later he and a majority of the congregation seceded from the Reformed Church to become an independent congregation. Then, when Wust and the congregation were approached to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church, they refused. It was said that Wust rejected the CRC because he viewed its origins in the 1857 Secession as sinful. However, the fact that the neighboring Christian Reformed minister in Paterson, Rev. W. H. van Leeuwen, was the man with whom Wust had crossed swords in 1846 probably influenced Wust's negative reactions to the CRC. It is significant in this instance to remember that van Leeuwen had fought for Wust's deposition from the "Kruiskerken."

Until late in 1878 Rev. Wust continued to serve the independent congregation at Lodi. Yet his influence reached out far among the Dutch immigrants along the eastern seaboard. Even people in West Sayville, Long Island, were affiliated with the Lodi congregation during Wust's pastorates in the congregation. Bastiaan Broere, commonly regarded as one of the founders of the Dutch settlement in

West Sayville, was affiliated with the Lodi congregation because of the type of preaching brought by Rev. Wust. Broere did not find the preaching in the West Sayville churches to his liking. He wanted to hear "old fashioned" preaching! From the consistory minutes of the Lodi congregation it can be seen that Rev. Wust was also very sympathetic to the views of Rev. Ledeboer and his followers in the Netherlands,



(top left) South Holland, Illinois Netherlands Reformed Church. (lower left) Lodi Reformed Church (above) Rev. E. L. Meinders.

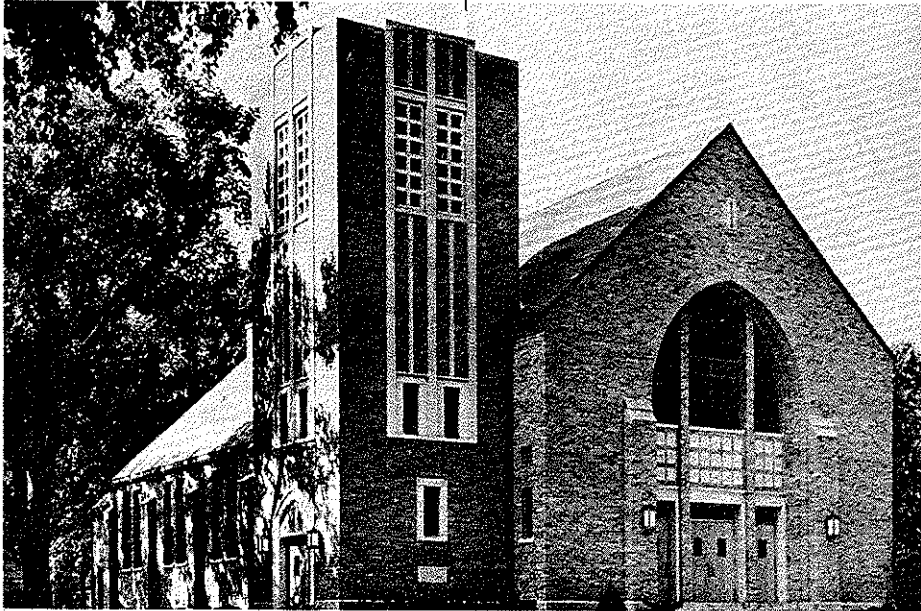
and frequently members of the Ledeboerian congregations, who emigrated to America, joined the church at Lodi. Thus it is not surprising that Wust accepted a call extended to him in November 1878 by the Ledeboerian congregation at Nieuw Beijerland. And at the age of 71 he again crossed the Atlantic and returned to the land of his birth.

With high hopes Rev. Wust accepted the call to serve the congregation at Nieuw Beijerland in the "Hoeksche Waard" of Zuid Holland, but within a year he and his consistory were engaged in conflict. He requested emeritation due to his

age and poor health, and his fellow Ledeboerian minister, Rev. Daniel Bakker of 's Gravenpolder, Zeeland, sought to work out a reconciliation between Wust and his consistory. But before the difficulties could be resolved, Wust received and accepted a call from his old congregation in Lodi, New Jersey, and he departed from Nieuw Beijerland in April 1881 to return to America for the third time. Rev. Bakker was left "holding the bag" since he had signed Rev. Wust's ministerial credentials without the approval of the general assembly of the Ledeboerian congregation.

With his return to Lodi, Rev. Wust began a brief two-year ministry among his former parishioners. Then in 1883, at 75 years of age, he was granted emeritation by the Lodi congregation. That fall, several families of the congregation, who lived in Passaic, organized a daughter

congregation which called Rev. Wust to be its pastor. Although retired, Wust accepted this call and served the congregation until June 1884, when he again requested emeritation. He served the congregation as counselor until he ordained an exhorter from the Grand Rapids area, Mr. H. Meijerink, on August 4, 1884. Soon thereafter Rev. Wust and his wife returned to the Netherlands where he passed away in November



1886.

Although Wust served American churches for nearly 30 years, he never adjusted to the American world. He was vehemently opposed to the Americanization of his congregations and that was the reason for his break with the RCA. He was only able to work independently, and so repeatedly during his ministerial career he stood apart from denominational fellowship. But in spite of these weaknesses, he reached many hearts with his style of preaching, and he molded successive generations which continue to long for the proclamation of the gospel in an experimental way.

Rev. Wust was known as an "ex-

perimental preacher" (een bevinde-lijk predikant), who used the Scriptures to explore the inner moods and struggles which the people of God experienced. Henry Beets* has said that this style of preaching, which sought to touch the emotional chords of faith, was typical of the preaching which Reformed seceders enjoyed before 1880. This type of preaching hit the hearts of the hearers, and it enabled the congregation

Grand Rapids Netherlands Reformed Church

to discern whether or not the salvation merited by Christ had been personally applied to them through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Experimental preaching (sometimes called experiential preaching) characterized the sermonizing of 17th century Dutch pietists like B. Smytegelt, W. 'a Brakel, and A. Hellenbroek (the so-called old writers or "Oude Schrijvers"), who were widely read and highly honored by the 19th century seceders. English Puritans and Scotch Presbyterians were similarly impressed with the conviction that true religion and real faith ought always to be accom-

panied by deep feelings which characterized a proper and vital relationship with God. Joseph Hart, an English hymn writer, disclosed the essence of experimental faith in verses such as:

"Vain is all our best devotions
If on false foundations built;
True religion's more than notion,
Something must be known and felt.

"Tis to feel the fight against us,
Yet the victory hope to gain;
To believe that Christ has cleansed us,

Though the leprosy remain.
"To be steadfast in believing,
Yet to tremble, fear, and quake;
Every moment be receiving
Strength, and yet be always weak.
"To be fighting, fleeing, turning;
Ever sinking, yet to swim;
To converse with Jesus, mourning
For ourselves or else for Him."

This pietistic mode was the hallmark of the experiential preaching which prevailed among ministers from the "Kruiskerken" and the "Ledeboerians," but it also characterized the preaching of the Christian Reformed Church until the 1880s.

The preaching which Wust brought to his congregations took deep rootage, and even now, churches which were formed by Wust's example remain loyal to his mode of preaching. The South Holland, Illinois, congregation, which he organized in 1848, continues to exist as the First Reformed Church. But already in 1862 that church experienced the beginnings of secession when Rev. S. Bolkes, a student of Albertus Van Raalte, brought a radically different preaching style to South Holland. Successive ministers there failed to restore experiential

*Henry Beets wrote many historical essays as Banner editor from 1904-1928, and also a history of the CRC published in 1918.

preaching and in 1868 Wust's disciples split to organize the first Christian Reformed Church of South Holland. Later, a majority of that congregation also formed an independent congregation under the direction of Rev. E. L. Meinders. He objected to the doctrinal preaching which increasingly replaced experiential preaching in the CRC. By 1908, Meinders's church joined hands with similarly minded dissidents to organize the Netherlands Reformed denomination in North America. Throughout that denomination, as well as the Netherlands Reformed congregation at South Holland, the "Wustian" style has prevailed to the present.

Buffalo, New York, became Rev. Wust's pastorate in 1854 and that congregation remained in the RCA until 1883 when it was officially eliminated from the denomination. The subsequent history of that group is unknown and, at present, Buffalo has neither a Christian Reformed Church nor a Netherlands Reformed congregation. But, as late as the 1960s, a small cluster of older people continued to gather for private services, and occasionally ministers from the Netherlands Reformed Church led them in worship. These folk are clearly the spiritual heirs of Rev. Wust in Buffalo.

Wust moved from Buffalo to Rochester, New York, and labored there for eight years. Because Rochester functioned as a temporary residence for many immigrants and several pastors who ultimately settled in Michigan, Wisconsin, and elsewhere, the constituency of Wust's congregation fluctuated constantly. For example, in 1869 a group of "Kruisgemeente" immigrants from Oud Vossemeer in Zeeland came to Rochester. The following year their pastor, Rev. C. Klompenburg, joined them. Shortly

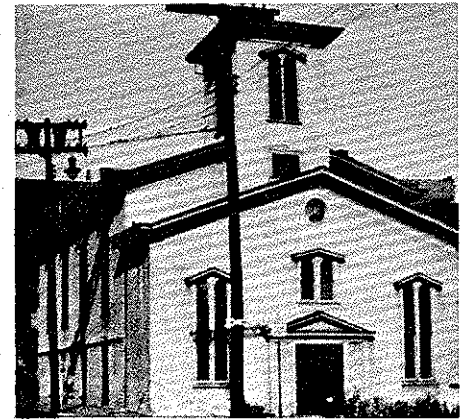
thereafter, Klompenburg received a call from an independent group in Grand Rapids. These people, who were discontented with the preaching provided in both the CRC and the RCA, gathered with Klompenburg to organize the First Netherlands Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. In 1887 a second "Kruisgemeente" pastor arrived in Grand Rapids via Rochester and organized the present Covell Ave.



Netherlands Reformed Church. It appears, then, that Rochester and Rev. Wust functioned together as a kind of pastoral brokerage agency through which "Kruisgemeente" pastors passed before taking assignments in Grand Rapids, Wisconsin, and elsewhere. While in Rochester, Wust also tended a flock in the nearby Palmyra region where, again, neither the existing CRC nor the RCA provided sermons which satisfied a segment of the immigrants.

Beginning in 1864, Rev. Wust pastored the Lodi, New Jersey, congregation for about 17 years. The Lodi church affiliated with the RCA until 1868 when it became indepen-

dent.* But again, connections between Wust's parsonage and groups in Passaic, New Jersey, and West Sayville, New York, demonstrate a wide-spread loyalty to experiential preaching. In 1883 the Lodi congregation organized a daughter church in Passaic. And, during Wust's Lodi pastorate, some folk in Long Island's West Sayville immigrant community affiliated with the distant Lodi congregation. In



(left) Bastiaan Broere (above) Passaic Netherlands Reformed Church

1912 these folk organized to affiliate with the Netherlands Reformed denomination, but since they could not sustain a pastor, the West Sayville church disbanded in 1951. Thereafter the parishioners met in homes and some of these became members of the distant Netherlands Reformed congregation in Passaic, New Jersey.

It is now nearly a century since Rev. Wust passed away, but his footsteps have left enduring impressions across the New World's landscape. His influence is clearly evident in South Holland, Illinois; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Passaic, New Jersey. Other regions, including Rochester, Sheboygan, West Sayville, and Sioux Center Iowa, also contain devotees of Wust's experiential preaching. It is probable, too, that some par-

ishioners in the RCA and CRC hunger for Wust's emphasis on poor and needy sinners who can do absolutely nothing for their own salvation. In any case, it seems clear that, prior to the 1880s, the CRC was deeply committed to experiential pietism, and apart from his excessive individualism, W. C. Wust could have found a comfortable home in the CRC.



(above) Sheboygan, Wisconsin Church
(left) Rev. C. Vorst



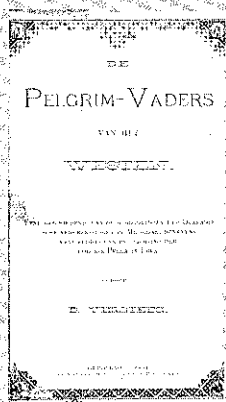
wouldn't accept him and the Lodi congregation into their fellowship. The Paterson churches also broke all contacts with him, and they joined together with several churches in Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin to form the Netherlands Reformed Church. Later on Rev. Contant's independent congregation became affiliated with the Presbyterian church, but a minority of the original Lodi congregation remained as a CRC congregation until 1975. Then it merged with a couple of other CRC congregations in the Passaic area to form the Richfield Christian Reformed Church of Clifton, New Jersey.

*Rev. C. Vorst was a charter member of the Christian Reformed Church in 1852. He also printed *De Wachter* which became the official periodical of the CRC in 1868. Vorst left the denomination and became the pastor of the First Netherlands Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

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Following Wust's emeritation, the Lodi congregation had no pastor until 1891 when Rev. C. Vorst arrived from the First Netherlands Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. In 1893 Vorst led the Lodi congregation into the CRC, and after his retirement, the Lodi parishioners sought a minister from the Netherlands. That pastor, Rev. I. Contant, from Kapelle Biezelingen, in Zeeland, gladly accepted the call to America in order to get away from "Kuyperianism" which had taken the churches in the Netherlands captive after 1892. But Rev. Contant was quickly disappointed when he discovered that "Kuyperianism" was also making rapid inroads in the CRC. Thus in 1899 he and a major part of the Lodi Christian Reformed Church seceded and again formed an independent church. Between 1899 and 1907 he and the congregation sought fellowship with either the continuing Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands or with a couple of independent congregations in the Paterson, New Jersey, area. But these efforts came to nothing because of Rev. Contant's radical views. The church in the Netherlands



FROM BLACK LAKE TO HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

Published in 1886, Dingman Versteeg's *Pelgrim Vaders van het Westen* was the first book-length account of nineteenth century immigration from the Netherlands to the U.S. Its two hundred pages contain many first-hand accounts of immigrant experiences and Versteeg was able to interview several original colonists. Many of his generalizations have been altered by more recent study, but the stories and personal accounts in Versteeg's book continue to be valuable and interesting.

During the early 1970s Rev. William K. Reinsma translated and edited Versteeg's book and *Origins* will publish parts of that translation over the next few issues. Rev. Reinsma contributed a great deal to promote the Calvin College and Seminary Archives during his tenure here as archivist between 1965 and 1971. As an emeritated pastor, Reinsma now lives in Lynden, Washington, but continues to translate books and other documents from both Dutch and Latin. One of his ongoing projects is a translation of Dr. Abraham Kuyper's *The Angels of God*.

Most emigrants had an erroneous conception of Holland, Michigan. They presumed that once they reached "the city" they could relax and rest in well-finished homes and comfortable beds, could stretch their bodily members and enjoy a well-earned rest. They expected regular streets, well-stocked stores, bakeries, lodging facilities and all that which one finds in a good town.

It is no wonder, then, that some, as soon as they landed, immediately undertook the trip to Holland along Black Lake shoreline, walking the five miles, in order to acquire refreshments in "the city" for themselves and their families and to look for some conveyance to transport their families and goods to Holland. The night sky often glowed with a bright tint of the fires of burning trees and timber. The new immigrants, judging by the size of the glowing circle and by the intense glow of the light, concluded that the glow was the light of a huge city not very far inland.

When the men, who had such high hopes, went there, they roamed in a limitless forest, now and then seeing a hut of branches hidden in a clearing. Yonder they could see a cloth tent on a little knoll or maybe they discovered further on a log cabin in an opening in the woods. They met no one except

some woodsmen busily engaged in the felling of huge gnarled trees.

Upon the immigrants' question, "How far is it to Holland?" they received the answer, "This is the city." Their hearts sank low. Their "dream castles" vanished. One of such, upon seeing all these giant trees asked a man if he could write. Receiving an affirmative answer, he said to him, "Well then, take a board and write in large letters, 'In the sweat of your brow you will work here as long as you live.' Then nail it to a tree."

Normally, the disappointed immigrants were brought to Van Raalte, who understood the art of talking to them in words which revived their hope and courage so that the disappointed ones returned to their families, with or without a boat (for water craft were not always available), and the ones who had been left behind were encouraged again about the actual state of affairs concerning the proposed colony.

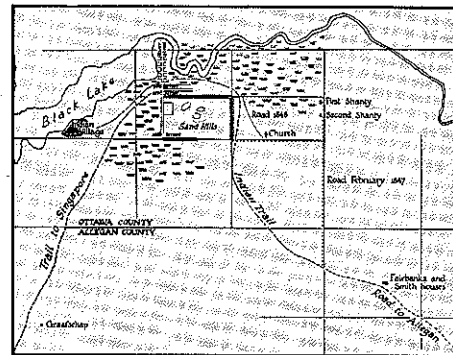
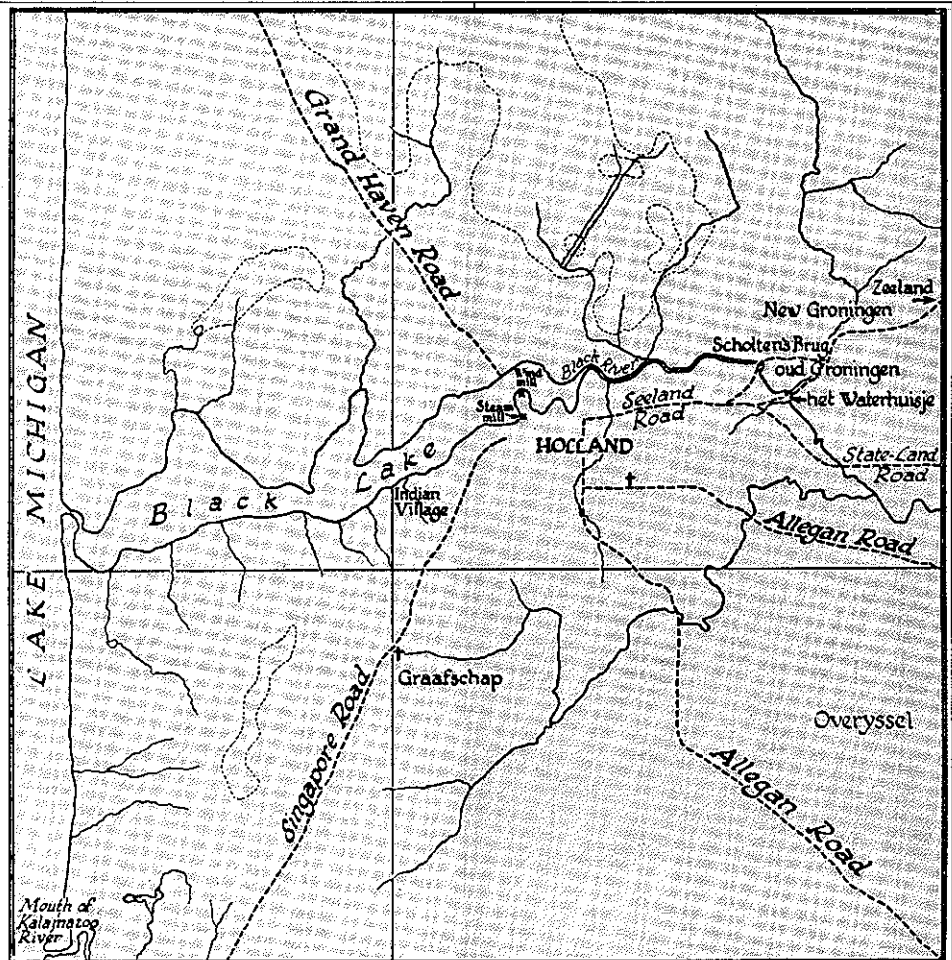
The discouraged arrivals then grasped at every opportunity to be conveyed to Holland. Some of them then loaded their belongings on a raft which came from the Kalamazoo River and went on to Holland in this manner, with the promise to assist the raft man in making the crossing if they got stuck. Others were transported by scow or flatboat. Still others traveled on foot along the

bank with their few possessions on their backs, going through creeks and wading through marshes in their difficult trip to the city. The Indians were absent in the summer and had left their city, so providing shelter for some in the vacated wigwams and unused church of these redskinned hunters.

Some of the Frisians, who camped at the mouth of the lake, sent some of their party to Holland



to dicker for a conveying craft. The appointees acquired a flat boat and returned with it to transport the remaining party. After all the passengers and possessions were loaded they took off into the lake and soon were in such depth of water that they could not propel the boat anymore with their poles, but had to turn back to shore. While moving the boat along the shore, the boat hit a fallen tree and sprang a leak. The men were obligated to jump into the lake and carry the women and children to shore. Since evening and darkness had come they had to spend the night in the underbrush. It was so dark that the company could not even see a place to sit or lie down. Someone gathered some dry sticks and leaves and lit a



fire. By that light they were able to observe an open spot where it was safe to ignite a large fire, and thus they spent the night. In the morning the men waded to the boat and pried it loose. The necessary repairs were made to make the craft seaworthy again. Without further incident the party reached Holland.

One time a group of men jour-

(above) Holland, Old Groningen, and New Groningen, Michigan in 1856. (lower left) The beginnings of Holland, Michigan (Summer, 1847).

neyed at night along the shore of the lake to go to Holland. Their water craft was a leaky Indian canoe. During the whole trip they sat in the cold water. The result was that one of the men got dysentery. The other men had to leave the sick one behind. They made a tent of twigs and laid the sick one on a bed of leaves. Without receiving much nursing care, any medical attention or refreshment, the sick man recovered and survived the attack of this disease, which normally was fatal.

After later arrivals came to "the city" their miseries began anew. Some new immigrants could find

shelter in the cabins of relatives or friends, but most of them had to help themselves by pitching tents which they set up here and there under the trees. Some time later this situation improved.

Three groups of Zeelanders, amounting to 400 persons altogether, had sent notice to Van Raalte that they expected to come to America and requested Van Raalte to provide shelter for them. As a consequence,



five large wooden sheds were erected. The Frisians and Graafschapers could use them at once, since the Frisians and Graafschapers had arrived in the colony before the Zeelanders. The Frisian group of the Rev. Ypma was occupying one of these sheds when the Zeelanders came to Holland. They vacated their shelter to make room for subsequent arrivals. Rev. Ypma placed some boards slantwise against one of the sheds to make himself some sort of shelter.

After the Zeelanders vacated these buildings the space was used for other purposes, although some of it was retained for immigrants who arrived later. This structure, crude though it was, was quite an improvement over the situation which obtained when the first immigrants landed.

We get a clearer mental picture of

Holland, Michigan, in 1847 by reading the letter of Mr. H. Van Eijk, who came to Holland about the middle of 1848, a year and a half after the founding of the colony. He writes as follows:

On August 21, 1848, I and my friend Mr. A. Van Der Wall came to Grand Haven, Michigan. Since our trip across Lake Michigan had been rough and stormy, I had no desire to board the schooner again to complete the trip from Grand Haven via Chicago to Black Lake. Therefore, we decided to follow the shoreline of Black Lake on foot. An added incentive to me to do this was the fact that my friend, G. J. Mulder, who had crossed the Atlantic with me, lived in Port Sheldon. I wished very much to visit him.

Port Sheldon was a deserted French settlement, twelve miles from Grand Haven and ten miles from Holland. Remnants of the former French settlement were a dilapidated hotel, post office, saw mill, etc. I found my friend and spent the night with him. The next morning he canoed me across Pigeon Creek because this stream still lacked a bridge.

At this point I entered the forest. A semblance of a path, meandering through the trees, had been hewn in the woods. Farther ahead was a new, straight road which led directly to Black Lake, opposite the city of Holland. Here and there some trees had been felled and stripped of their bark and there were some clearings in the trees. About every two or three miles I saw the remains of log cabins which had been temporary shelters for the men who had hewn the road through the forest. Having reached a spot directly across the city of Holland, I saw a few clearings, some log cabins, and a couple of frame houses.

There lay the city of Holland, to

be sure, but the river and surrounding marshes were between me and the city. The problem was how to get there since there was no bridge. Following instructions which I had received previously, I walked westward along the edges of Black Lake. Eventually I found a log cabin and its occupant was willing to row me across the lake. I went ashore at the place where Indian Village still stands. It had, at the time, a few huts and a large structure which was their church. Next to it was an Indian cemetery, with a huge wooden cross, which stood for many more years after I first saw it. The Indians had been Roman Catholics. They could still speak a little French and were a peaceful tribe which never created any trouble for the whites living in the area.

I now resumed my travel by walking eastward until I reached the city and found old friends of mine. There were many here from Zwolle, Netherlands, my last place of residence. They had crossed the Atlantic with me, such as the families Slag, Smit, the Van Der Veens of Amsterdam and others. What impressed me the most in this visit was the fact that in almost every home I entered were sick—sometimes five, six or more in one house—and all were lying on the floor!

Many former friends and acquaintances were no longer living. Due to ailments, privations, and disappointments of every sort they had succumbed. It is easy to imagine the disappointment and discontent of many when, after coming here, they failed to find the idyllic land they had dreamed of finding. Instead they found seemingly impenetrable forests and almost no human beings, no signs of industry, and no suitable dwellings. Only the barest necessities of life could be obtained, and that at high cost. The roads were not

yet built, but all goods had to be transported by flat boats plying the waters of Lake Michigan or from the mouth of the Kalamazoo River—even shingles and lumber. All these disappointing obstacles were enough to crush the hopes and aspirations of the most stout-hearted person.

After a forty to fifty day ocean voyage followed by either an arduous boat trip from the East or a difficult overland journey to the mouth of Black Lake, the immigrants found no dwellings and an insufficient food supply. They would hastily put together some make-shift shelter on or near the beach. No wonder that many of them succumbed right there on the lake shore. I have seen the bleached bones of some of those unfortunate people buried there in the sand. For in the course of time the stiff winds had blown away the sand and exposed their skeletons.

By the time of our arrival conditions had already improved greatly. There was still much illness and fever, but the death rate had dropped sharply since the previous year. Hence the immigrants that arrived later had a much easier time. Several good dwellings had been built. Lodging and food supplies were also available at new boarding houses and stores.

After an exploration of the platted city and its outlying areas I made the following report: 'At first glance, one is not favorably impressed by the new colony. One sees only an occasional house in the small glades of the almost impenetrable virgin forest. These homes are surrounded by tree stumps two or three feet high.'

With but few exceptions the houses are found along Eighth Street. Along this street one finds about thirty homes and elsewhere about twenty more. People are, however, busy building homes and

felling trees. As yet not much of a dent has been made into the forest. All around are trees—standing or felled—so that visibility is limited to about five rods. In the first few days of my stay I wanted to visit the Rev. Van Raalte, but I became hopelessly lost, utterly unable to find his home. I wandered for two or three miles, completely missing the clearing to his house.

At the time of this writing the



farmers had spread throughout the woods, building log cabins and clearing trees. It is alleged that the colony has four thousand members in an area of almost twenty miles. Holland itself is platted on poor sandy soil along Black Lake—an area suitable for business, erection of factories, and excellent for navigation or shipping.

By his matchless, enterprising spirit, sensible diligence, and tireless effort in designing and expanding the colony, Van Raalte has erected for himself a lasting monument. Future generations will admire it. He is, as it were, the soul of every undertaking and development of the colony. He is to be appreciated equally for his work of preaching the gospel, of caring for souls, of serving as physician before the days of a professional doctor, and for his leadership in community affairs. He is in

every respect the leader and counsellor who always forges ahead with hope and courage.*

Only a small percentage of the four thousand immigrants settled in Holland. Most of them went farther inland to begin new settlements and farming communities. They worked under the same handicaps, hardships, and obstacles as the immigrants in Holland, Michigan.

The women, children, and infirm

remained in "the city" while the men went ahead to build cabins, clear the land, etc. The men returned home to Holland on Saturday afternoons for Sunday worship with their families. When the cabins were in a crude state of readiness, the women, children, and infirm were transported via the Black River to Groningen.**

*This concludes the letter of H. Van Eijk.

**This is the name of a small settlement near Zeeland, Michigan.

BOOKS



Perspectives on the Christian Reformed Church: Studies in its History, Theology and Ecumenicity. Edited by Peter DeKlerk and Richard R. DeRidder. Baker Book House, 1983. \$14.95.

Published to commemorate the distinguished career of John H. Kromminga as preacher, teacher, and President of Calvin Seminary, this volume contains eighteen essays on the history, theology, and ecumenical activities of the Christian Reformed Church. In this review, only the historical section will be considered since the chapters it contains are devoted to various aspects of Christian Reformed history and in particular, on immigrant experiences

in America.

Herbert Brink's contribution, "Ostfrisians in Two Worlds," traces the development of the Old Reformed Church, whose German congregations along the borders of Groningen, survived as an identifiable group even though it was affiliated with Orthodox Reformed churches in the Netherlands and used Dutch in teaching, preaching, and denominational papers until the 1890's. During that decade the Old Reformed Church began to use German. Following the example of their leaders in the Old World, the Ostfrisians of the Midwest also switched from Dutch to German. The Ostfrisians of Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois reinforced their decision to follow the patterns of their birthplace by calling German speaking ministers from the Old Reformed Church in Germany and by the formation of Classis Ostfriesland based on ethnic and not geographic lines as is the common practice in the Christian Reformed Church. Many of the Ostfrisians in this classis saw the need for a college where instruction would be in German as another means for preserving their heritage. With the establishment of Grundy College in 1916, this hope became a reality.

In part this essay is a tribute to the Kromminga family which originated in the East Frisian corner of

West Germany.

"Grundy College: 1916-1934" is Henry Zwaanstra's very detailed chronicle of the school's two decade struggle to stay alive. During the early years of its existence, Grundy flourished, a fact, the author observes, "... greeted with considerably more enthusiasm in Classis Ostfriesland than in the Christian Reformed Church at large." Problems caused by the vagueness of the institution's relationship with the Christian Reformed Church and its competition with Calvin College and Seminary for students and financial support surfaced at the 1918 Synod. Compromise failed and the 1922 Synod discontinued subsidizing Grundy, an action which in essence terminated any possibility for a future official relationship between the school and denomination. In Zwaanstra's view, the struggle over the relationship of Grundy College to the entire Christian Reformed Church was caused by antagonistic ideas about the role of the Christian Reformed Church in higher education. Personifying these opposing views were long-time Grundy President William Bode, who desired a college to serve the needs of the Ostfriesland community, and John J. Hieminga, president of Calvin during the years 1919-1925, who had as his goal one excellent institution

designed to serve all Christian Reformed constituents. Lack of funds, poor administration, constant faculty turnover, and the depression contributed to the school's demise. The dreary history of Grundy's last years reveals many of the almost insurmountable challenges faced by those who shared the vision Grundy embodied.

Still another western venture is sketched by Peter DeKlerk in "The Ecclesiastical Struggles of the Rilland and Crook Christian Reformed Churches in Colorado in 1893," an account of the financial and ecclesiastical problems encountered by Dutch folk who were victimized by a Netherlands-based land company promoting settlement in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. Where they settled was not, the immigrants discovered, the "Paradise of Colorado" or the "Italy of North America" as advertised by the promoters. In truth, they found they had purchased poor land in an area with a climate unsuitable for farming. Economic hardship and competition between the Reformed and Christian Reformed denominations for the allegiance of the new arrivals did little to make their new found life a happy one. After about one year's existence, the Rilland and Crook churches disbanded and their members searched for better economic opportunities elsewhere.

Not poor soil but the eccentric personality and unique religious outlook of Pella's founder, Hendrik Peter Scholte, as characterized by Lubbertus Oostendorp, made life for those in the settlement a challenging religious and social experience. "The Americanization of Hendrik Peter Scholte" is Oostendorp's succinct biography of a man who spoke English very well, desired to establish a church in America free from all denominational ties, was politi-

cally active, published an English language newspaper, and did his best to make Pella attractive to settlers other than Dutch. Many of Scholte's followers were put off by his premillennial views, change in party affiliation from Democratic to Republican, and did not share his notion that rapid Americanization was a good thing in itself. For Oostendorp, what was consistent about Scholte was his inconsistency. In short, the author believes Scholte's hopes and dreams were not those of many around him. Oostendorp views Scholte a failure in many ways. Still, as the author states, the man's stubborn adherence to what he thought right may be considered a quality of greatness.

Scholte's anti-masonic views were those of many early immigrants who settled in Pella and Holland, Michigan. Elton Bruins presents a penetrating historical analysis of the lodge membership problem in "The Masonic Controversy in Holland, Michigan." Basically, as Bruins asserts, the struggle took place between the leaders of the two century old Reformed Church on the East Coast who believed lodge membership to be compatible with church membership and not a sin, and their midwestern brethren, new in America and not yet Americanized, who held exactly opposite views which were also those cherished by many in the Netherlands.

Bruins does not, as does Henry Beets, believe that lodge membership was a cause for the formation of the Christian Reformed Church in 1857. For Bruins, the consistent position of the Reformed Church, which allowed lodge members to be church members, was unsatisfactory in the Midwest and resulted in a growth spurt during the years 1880-1900 in the Christian Reformed Church where lodge

members were not allowed. Also, most immigrants who came to America during these decades preferred to affiliate with this new denomination which mirrored the views of their parent church in the Netherlands. Thus, Bruins concludes, the Reformed Church, especially after 1880, was faced by a sturdy rapidly growing rival denomination with its own newspaper, school, and loyal constituency.

Donald Bruggink in "Ecclesiastical Architecture in the Christian Reformed Church" describes its architecture as distinctly American and he claims that those in the Christian Reformed Church, though very anxious to retain their ethnic and religious heritage, did little to model their houses of worship after those they had known in the Netherlands. Influenced by the iconoclasm of the Reformation, most Christian Reformed Church members, Bruggink notes, had little concern for church architecture as a means by which the worship of God would become for both the individual and congregation a more sacred exercise. Bruggink sees signs of change in the denomination and he hopes those in the Christian Reformed Church will utilize their rich theological background in a way which will develop a deeper understanding of architecture's contribution to worship.

How the immigrants adjusted to their new life is the central theme of all six essays. Most new arrivals prized their theological and social heritage but found in America an environment where the demand for change was relentless. In these chapters we read about the pain, anguish, successes, and failures of those hearty souls who experienced first hand the tension caused by exchanging an old way of life for a new mode of existence.

The Life of Hendrik Meijer: Thrifty Years. By Hendrik G. Meijer. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1984. \$8.95.

Hendrik Meijer's grandson, Hendrik G. Meijer, does not believe his grandfather can be portrayed as the typical Horatio Alger rags-to-riches hero. When the future founder of the Thrifty Acres empire arrived in America in 1907 at the age of twenty-three, he was, in the author's words, "... a socialist and anarchist..." who exchanged his homeland and a grim economic future for America, where he hoped to find a better life. This vision he shared with many America-bound immigrants whom he had seen traveling by train through his hometown in Overisel to the port city of Rotterdam. Meijer did not suddenly forsake socialism for capitalism, nor did his hostile views concerning Christianity and its practitioners moderate the moment he set foot on American soil.

According to the author, Hendrik Meijer's views were molded by less than devout parents together with loyalties to socialism and the trade union movement, which flourished in the large weaving mills of Hengelo and the Twente region. Though Hendrik's father favored socialism, the younger Meijer's attachment to Marxist views increased when he courted and ultimately married Zien Mantel. The Mantel family had been devoutly Mennonite until that group's local pastor cooperated with factory officials in a labor dispute. The Mantels then rejected their church and redirected their religious energies to support the socialist movement in the Netherlands. Hendrik's views flourished in this atmosphere, and he became an ardent young socialist.

While wandering through America during the years 1907-1912, Hendrik retained his socialistic notions. At the same time, he found America a land of opportunity which lacked the rigid class distinctions he considered so abhorrent in the Netherlands. The author asserts that the absence of class lines was a primary reason for Hendrik's decision to remain in America, even though his future wife, who remained in the Netherlands until 1912, at times urged him to make the Netherlands his permanent home. Factory or foundry labor in Yakima, Washington, in Holland, Michigan, or in Chicago did not appeal to the young immigrant. Thus, by 1912, married and fresh from barber school in Chicago, Hendrik began cutting hair in Greenville, Michigan.

The recently married barber, in the author's view, had little time to think about the political and economic problems of the Netherlands, nor did he support or join Greenville's socialist party, even though in 1912 it was second only to the Republican party among those who registered a party preference. The author believes his grandfather's youthful radicalism and zeal for socialism were tempered by a keen awareness of his immigrant status coupled with his growing maturity in the conservative atmosphere of Greenville. Economically, Meijer was restless. During the years 1912-1934, in addition to barbering, he at times worked as a sales manager for Holland Furnace, represented a Dutch lace company, tried dairying, and functioned as a landlord.

The author's statement "... not vision as much as naiveté and chance..." turned Hendrik Meijer's thoughts to opening a grocery store in 1934, one of the worst depression years. Self-service, chain-store mentality, "cash—no credit," willingness

to serve welfare customers, heavy advertising, and constant hard work contributed to the eventual success of the Greenville enterprise and most future stores. Constant worry about obtaining credit, choosing new store locations, family strife over a proposed merger with the Plumb chain in 1960, and a search for financial backers for the Thrifty Acres' 28th-Street venture were the challenging and occasionally unhappy elements characterizing the Meijer Thrifty Acres success story.

The author is at his best when he writes about Hendrik Meijer's early life in the Netherlands and his wanderlust in America during the period 1907-1912. Much of the entire biographical narrative is the author's explanation of how the young socialist became a middle-aged capitalist. Making a profit by volume selling may well have been Hendrik Meijer's creed for financial success. On the other hand, as a young socialist he had developed an outlook which can best be seen in his willingness to give black people haircuts, in his insistence that ample supplies of low-cost grocery staples always be available for those who could not afford the higher-priced items, and in his determination to make his stores places where employees and customers would be treated fairly and with dignity.

Thrifty Years is the title of this book, but an alternate choice might well have been *Hendrik Meijer, Capitalist with a Socialist Conscience*. If Horatio Alger had written this biography, he would have entitled it *Socialist Pluck Makes Capitalist Luck*.

—C. J. Bult

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