Origins

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

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Cover photo:
New entrance to Heritage Hall.

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from the editor. . .

This Issue

This issue marks the beginning of our thirty-first year, which means we have published sixty issues (approximately 2,900 pages) on the Dutch and associated peoples in North America since the 1840s. It seems fitting in this anniversary issue to focus on the recent renovation of Heritage Hall that has resulted in state-of-the-art environmental controls, storage space for at least ten years, and a large and a well-appointed reading room that can accommodate twelve researchers all using modern technology. The other articles tell a variety of stories from the lives of Dutch immigrants. Rev. Paula Vander Hoven presents her work on the small groups of Dutch immigrants that attempted to settle in the Gulf Coast area of Texas at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Boersma family's experience in occupied Holland during World War II comes from Edward Boersma. Ministry broadcaster Abe Van Der Puy's life is described by Calvin Cevaal. Lastly, Kenneth Bus and Robert P. Swierenga trace the history of the chair used by Theodore Roosevelt when he worshiped in Chicago.

News from the Archives

Last summer staff traveled to New Jersey and brought back 77 boxes of records from Classes Hackensack and Hudson. The records, dating back to the 1820s, had been gathered and preserved by the classes to document the churches, schools, and outreach and ministry efforts in the New Jersey-New York region. Much of this material was collected by Yske C. Spyksma, who then preserved and cataloged the material. His son-in-law, Arthur Steensma, continued this work so that a total of eighty years were devoted to this work. These materials have been processed and are available for research use.

We processed more than 145 boxes of the Vernon Ehlers papers that detail both his academic (as a physicist) and political careers (in Kent County, Lansing, Michigan, and Washington, DC). Additions were made to the papers of Dirk Nieland (specialist in Yankee-Dutch language) and William Van Regenmorter (Michigan politician); the West Michigan Dobben family papers to the William Harry Jellema collection (the Dobbens were Jellema's maternal grandparents); and to the papers of noted mathematician Jack B. Kuipers. We organized the papers of Cora Helen Roelofs Verbrugge that detail the lives of Dutch immigrants in West Michigan and Minnesota; the inventory is currently being prepared. We also opened for research the papers of and documentation on inventions by Chicago-area waste hauler William Venema; the papers of Robert Recker, professor at Calvin Theological Seminary; and those of Rev. John Olthoff. Lastly we processed the records of the Parchment, Michigan, CRC, a discontinued ministry.

Our volunteers continue working on the translation of the Holland, Michigan, Central Avenue CRC minutes, keying in data of vital records information from the *Banner* also continues, and family data from the *Calvinist Contact*. After fifteen years of service, volunteer Fred Greidanus from Brampton, Ontario, was unable to continue. We thank and commend Mr. Greidanus for his faithful and diligent translation work.

Among material received during the year but not yet processed are 61 boxes of Calvin College records, 25 boxes of denominational records, and 2 boxes of Calvin Theological

Seminary records. We received the papers of Martin LaMaire and James LaGrand which provided further insight into the Lawndale-Timothy Christian School integration controversy of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Florence Schoolland DeRuiter donated a collection of very early twentieth-century glass-plate negatives of Grand Rapids and Calvin College locations and people. The family of the late David DeHeer, professor of biology at Calvin College, donated his teaching and research files. In preparation for his retirement, Corwin Smidt has begun transferring his files.

Lastly, we continue to review collections to determine whether their relevance and significance remain at levels to merit continued ongoing retention. Our main efforts in this work focused on our audio and video material on magnetic tape because the life expectancy of such magnetic tape is twenty-five years. Records that will be kept are being transferred to digital formats.

Publications

We have electronically published another year of *Origins* (2009) via our webpage (*http://www.calvin.edu/hh/origins/Origins_Maint_Page.htm*). In October we completed scanning the 35 boxes of the Evan Runner collection to digital files (high-resolution PDFs). These digital files are being used as a test to determine the advisability of scanning more of our manuscript collections. One researcher purchased a portable hard drive and took a copy of the collection to conduct research at his home institution.

Staff

Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives and editor of *Origins*; Hendrina VanSpronsen is the office coordinator and business manager of *Origins*; Wendy Blankespoor is our librarian and cataloging archivist; Laurie Haan is the department assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt is field agent and assistant archivist. Our student assistant, Ben Rietema, is studying in Spain during the spring semester. Our volunteers include Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Ralph Haan, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit W. Sheeres, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, Mrs. Jeannette Smith, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra.

Endowment Fund

Currently our endowment fund and operating fund have a value of $404,778. As noted a year ago, *Origins* contributed $100,000 toward the $770,000 needed for the recent renovation of Heritage Hall. Our annual subscription rate for two issues (in May and in November) remains at $10. We are grateful to our supporters, many of whom contribute well above the subscription cost, which allows us to keep the subscription rate stable.

Correction

On page 32 of the previous issue a paragraph in "From a Calvinist Cradle to a Catholic Grave" was lost in production. On page 32, before the heading 'A Working Woman in Chicago,' the following paragraph should have appeared:

> "May 1920 brought about a big change in Ida's life when she married Lawrence J. Dewig, a Roman Catholic from Evansville, Indiana, who had met Ida on a trip to Chicago. After the wedding Ida moved with him to Evansville where, after taking instruction in the faith, she joined the Roman Catholic Church and was finally baptized."

Richard H. Harms

The New Heritage Hall

Richard H. Harms

During the winter and spring of 2012 Heritage Hall at Calvin College was renovated and converted into a state-of-the-art records depository to hold the much-used material on the Dutch and related groups in North America since the 1840s and the non-current records of Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed Church. Although not a significant amount of square footage was added to our footprint, the reconfiguration of walls and space usage allowed us to move from being filled to capacity to having sufficient storage space for at least ten years of growth.

Heritage Hall began more than 150 years ago when the Christian Reformed Church emphasized the importance of keeping written records of its views, decisions, and work. The denomination made clear that the reason for such record keeping was that these were a more consistent reflection of actions than later human memory.[1] The denomination assigned the task of preserving the official records, or archives, to a series of people. Initially the presiding officer or clerk of the meeting was responsible for keeping the minutes. To give some permanence to the storage place, after the Theological School in Grand Rapids was established in 1876, its head, then Rev. Gerrit Boer, was designated the archivist. As the Theological School grew to eventually become Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College, sharing a common library, it was decided that the librarian should serve as the archivist.

In 1962, in addition to teaching history, Dr. Herbert Brinks was appointed by the college to take charge of these holdings and oversee the work of the newly created Heritage Hall. In 1971 Synod appointed Brinks as the denominational archivist. Brinks retired in 1995, and in late 1997 Dr. Richard Harms was appointed the first full-time archivist and head of Heritage Hall.[2]

The facility to store these records, likewise, has changed as the mandate and holdings of the archives came to be defined. As the volume of records increased, having the presiding officers or clerks of meetings safeguard records and bring them to subsequent meetings became unworkable, so the decision was made that the congregation hosting the synodical assembly hold the records until the next meeting.[3] Although not specifically stated, the respective congregations were relieved of this records storage responsibility in 1881 when the head of the Theological School was appointed archivist, with the implication that the records were to be kept at the Theological School.[4] To ensure the longevity of archival records, in 1941 Synod mandated that all such records be kept in fire-proof storage. When the library of the seminary and college was not able to establish such space, the archives were moved to the Christian Reformed Publishing House, until the library had suitable space. When library space again became limited due to the rapidly increasing enrollment at the college during the 1950s, the archives were moved to the

Born in Blije, Friesland, the Netherlands, Richard Harms is the head of Heritage Hall at Calvin College and editor of Origins. *During his career he has worked for the Grand Rapids Public Library, the State of Michigan, and Michigan State University. His current research interests are Dutch immigrant settlement patterns in nineteenth-century North America.*

recently completed denominational building on Kalamazoo Avenue, just south of 28th Street, then just outside the Grand Rapids city limits. A few years later, when the seminary and college moved to the Knollcrest Campus, the archives were placed in a new facility on that campus named Heritage Hall, which had space specifically designed for records storage, with a reading room and lecture hall.[5]

As the college grew, as needs appeared and new programs began, space had to be reassigned. The space originally used by the campus bookstore became available when the bookstore moved to the new commons in 1967 and that space became the new reading room as the former reading room space and lecture hall were converted to office space.[6] When the Meeter Center was built in 1982, its basement was added as records storage space. During the mid1990s, as the Hekman Library was being expanded and remodeled, plans to do the same for Heritage Hall could not be realized due to lack of funds. Instead, rooms vacant after offices moved to the Spoelhof Administration Building were used for the storage of the library's rare books and the growing Heritage Hall holdings. Over time, more rooms were converted to this usage until we occupied twelve rooms, one hallway, and a closet. By 2008 we had completely filled the storage space in these rooms, closet, and hallway. At that point, the college acquired a building about one-half mile from Heritage Hall, with a basement that had been used as a record center. Some of our supplies and materials that we accessed infrequently were moved there, but distance did not allow moving frequently accessed collections there.

Discussion of renovating our existing space to more efficiently store material and installing systems to maintain constant temperature and humidity to foster long-term preservation of this material always ended over the estimated cost. About ten years ago the late Dr. Cornelis (Case) Van Nuis began a personal campaign to raise funds for renovation work. His gift along with gifts from Rich and Fran Baker and Doug and Joan Gardner were added to funds provided by *Origins* and Hekman Library endowment funds, so that work could begin on part of the renovation in late 2011. At that point Calvin College provided the remaining funds so that the entire renovation could be undertaken. During the renovation, which took from December 2011 through May 2012, staff workspace and some of the most used collections were temporarily housed in the Surge Building at the northern edge of the Knollcrest Campus.

The newly renovated Heritage Hall holds the Archives and Hekman Library Rare Book Collection. We have a new, spacious reading room with power and data ports on the research tables, staff workspace specifically designed for our needs, as well as two large storage rooms. As the renovation progressed, all of the approximately 7,000 boxes of records had to be moved; some boxes as many as three times, so that staff and volunteers moved an estimated 15,000 boxes of records during the process.

The largest of the new storage rooms (approximately 2,500 square feet) now holds the library's rare book collection, with titles dating back to the fifteenth century, and the manuscript collections on the history of the Dutch in North America since the 1840s.[7] A second room (about 1,200 square feet) holds the historical documents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. These two storage areas allowed us to reorganize our previous storage room (approximately 1,500 square feet) so that we now have expansion space to accommodate collecting material for at least the next ten years. All our space also received state-of-the-art temperature and humidity controls. In addition, utility lines were moved and gutters installed so that should any water leak, it will not damage holdings.

The former reading room space was converted to storage for college and seminary records, also with up-to-date environmental controls. The former manuscript room was not physically altered but new, standard shelving replaced the shelving of assorted sizes and load-bearing capacity that had been used. The shelving was also reconfigured to widen the aisles and to increase the storage capacity of the room by 40 percent. Both our storage and workspace (for volunteers and staff) was specifically designed for these uses, so that we no longer have to make do with space originally designed for other uses.

The dedication of the new space occurred 13-21 October 2012, during a week of events culminating in the inauguration of Calvin's new president, Michael K. Le Roy, PhD. On Friday, the 19th, following a brief ceremony, the donors Rich and Fran Baker and Doug and Joan Gardener cut the ribbon on the new Heritage Hall.

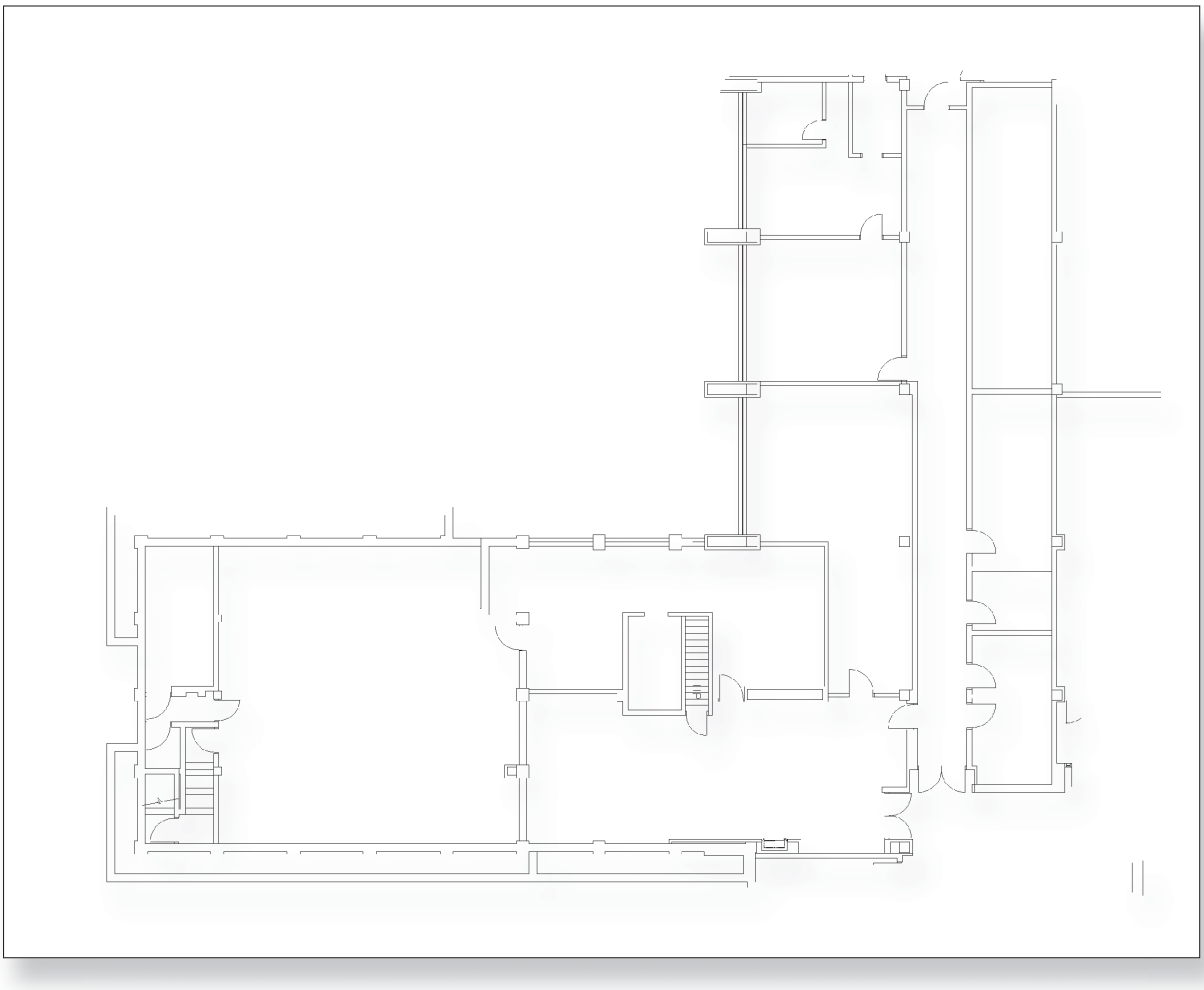
As the holdings of Heritage Hall increased, . . .

. . . adjacent rooms were used for storage and available shelving, including bookshelves that were braced at the top with 2x4s.

Neither the variety of rooms nor the shelving was suited for efficient storage of our holdings. All images courtesy of the author.

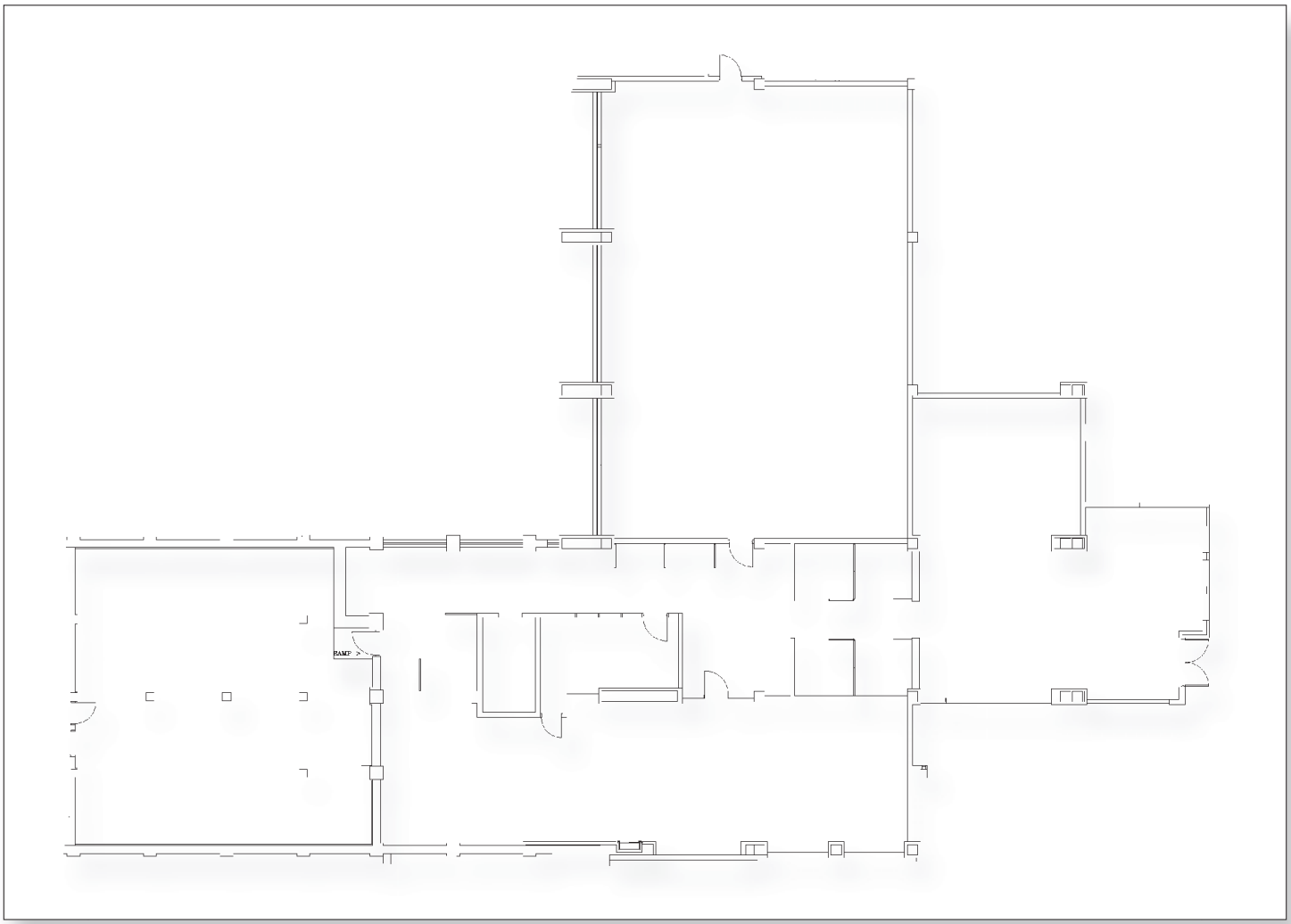
Before

The floor plan of Heritage Hall before the renovation, with thirteen rooms, two closets, and a hallway. Drawing courtesy of Physical Plant, Calvin College.



After

When the work was completed Heritage Hall occupied five rooms with space added for the reference/ research area. Drawing courtesy of Physical Plant, Calvin College



From mid-December 2011 through May 2012 . . .

. . . the offices, research area, and our most-used materials were moved into the Surge Building, on the east side the Beltline, at the northern edge of the campus. The former office building was not designed for archives, so staff made do. One advantage was the parking — just a few feet from the door.

During December 2011 . . .

. . . students took down the block walls to open the space so the masonry work on the new floor plan could begin in January. Building materials were reused, whenever possible, so that before the new paint was applied some walls consisted of blocks of various colors.

Electrical, data lines, water, . . .

. . . heating, and cooling lines (and ducts) were moved as part of the work. Most of this was subsequently hidden from view with a suspended ceiling. Also hidden from view was the construction of a new mechanical room with computer-controlled environmental systems.

Furniture was installed and . . .

. . . woodworking was completed by the skilled craftspeople of the campus Physical Plant during April and May 2012. During the summer staff and volunteers worked to reshelve our 7,000 boxes and establish workstations in the new space.

The dedication of the renovated space . . .

. . . on 19 October 2012. The façade features display cases that can be viewed from both the outside and inside. The center case is contained in a window frame from the Albertus C. Van Raalte house.


Heritage Hall

In addition to far more space . . .

. . . for researchers, the reading room has custom-built tables that have data and electrical ports on the table top so that computers can be used, as well as paper and pencils.

Below *Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, one of our volunteers, at one of the work stations.*

Endnotes

1. Classical meeting 10-11 August 1870, art. 9. Until 1865 classical meetings were the highest level of church governance in the CRC. That year a second classis was organized requiring the formation of the General Assembly as the highest level of governance. In 1880 the name General Assembly was changed to that of Synod. All minutes and Acts of Synod are in the Archives, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
2. Acts of Synod 1998, agenda, pp. 29-30.
3. General Assembly 1875 minutes, art. 30.
4. Acts of Synod 1881, art. 21.
5. Acts of Synod 1962, art. 115.
6. When the Commons Building at Knollcrest was completed the snack bar was moved and that space, now the footprint of Heritage Hall, was converted into rooms and hallways for use by campus offices, like that of the registrar, and as offices for visiting faculty, and some for Heritage Hall.
7. Space for the storage of the rare books was exchanged with the Hekman Library for the new reference-research space.

Doing the Right Thing

Edward Boersma

Two weeks after my grandpa's funeral, on 5 May 1940, the German army crossed the border and invaded the Netherlands. I had wondered why so many people had put masking tape on their windows, but then I understood. Dutch defenders were ordered to destroy the bridges across the canals. The tape on the windows prevented the glass from shattering each time there was an explosion. However, blowing up bridges did not help much against the well-trained German army. The resistance put up by the Dutch army of the 1940s was rather pathetic; it was nineteenth-century tactics against a twentieth-century attack from the air by paratroopers and bombers. The battle (Dutch, *Slag om Nederland*) was part of *Fall Gelb* (Case Yellow), the German invasion of the Low Countries and then France. The Dutch surrendered in five days, following the bombing of Rotterdam that destroyed the heart of the city. The German invaders very quickly became occupiers. I was almost six years old and all of a sudden we lived in German-occupied territory. The Dutch, weeklong defenders, became resisters for the next five years.

In the northern Dutch provinces of Groningen and Drenthe the resistance to the Nazi (members of the National Socialists) occupation had a religious component. My parents, Fokke and Antje Boersma, and others viewed the war as a satanic monster controlled by Adolph Hitler that needed to be stopped. This came, in part, because a Dutch Reformed minister, Frits Slomp,[1] traveled far and wide calling Christians to action against the danger of National Socialism. Slomp successfully recruited resis-

The Boersma family during the war years: (left to right) Fokke, Ed, Anneke, Antje, and Jennie.

Edward Boersma was born in Nieuw Amsterdam, Drenthe, the Netherlands in 1934. His family immigrated to America in December 1947 and settled in Bellflower, California. He graduated from California State University, Long Beach, in 1960. After ten years teaching, he was self-employed in enterprises closely related to agriculture.

tance fighters from various Christian denominations; my parents became fierce resistance fighters because of his efforts.

Almost immediately the occupation, which took on an aspect of a reign of terror at times, began with a number of military decrees. The very first decree was a message to the Dutch citizens from the supreme commander of the German army. This decree included statements such as, ". . . as long as your civil servants are loyal to the German authorities, they will be allowed to remain on their jobs. I expect all citizens to behave themselves and there shall be no acts of sabotage of any kind. There shall be swift and severe punishment for all violations."

Probably one of the most sinister changes was the requirement that all citizens, fifteen years and older, obtain an identification card. It was the application process that made these cards so sinister. Everyone was required to fill out a detailed questionnaire. If there was any Jewish blood anywhere in your lineage, a large "J" was stamped next to your photograph. On 5 October 1940 all government employees were required to sign a Declaration of Aryan Descent. Each civil servant was given two forms, one of which had to be signed by 26 October 1940 in order to remain employed. One form declared that a person was not Jewish, thus Aryan, and the other form, completed in duplicate, stated that you were Jewish. As a result German occupiers were able to identify all Jewish civil servants, who were soon dismissed from their government jobs. Further, restaurants and many public places were now told to put up signs stating that Jews were not welcome.

To keep the German army supplied, the civilian population did without. By the end of the war the Germans were taking almost everything—fuel for cooking and heating, electricity, milk, meat, vegetables, bicycles, textiles for clothing, leather for shoes, machinery, even entire factories, etc. The resulting food shortages led to a rationing system using cards. Because we were hiding people from the Germans in the upstairs of our house, in order to feed everyone in the house our mother generally needed at least three times the amount of food that could be purchased with our ration cards. Many families, including ours, received assistance from the Dutch Resistance, and many people resorted to stealing ration cards from the distribution centers.

It's been said that necessity is the mother of invention, and that was the case during those years. My dad raised his own tobacco in the back yard and then hung the ripe leaves in the rafters of the barn to dry. Due to limited electricity and tallow for candles, ingenuity provided other means of lighting, especially in the long winter months when it was dark by five in the afternoon. One of the more inventive devices was a used double-edged razor blade with three holes. A wick was fashioned out of old yarn and inserted in the center hole of such a blade and a piece of cork was inserted at each end of the blade. That small contraption was floated in a dish of vegetable oil extracted from kohlrabies and the wick was lit like a candle. As a boy I read many books by the light of the razor blade.

Another sight I vividly remember is that of my dad rubbing a razor blade back and forth on the inside of a water glass. He sharpened the blades that way and so got many shaves from one razor blade. He also became an expert shoe repairer. Sometimes he would find a piece of leather or a piece of an old tire and carefully cut it to the shape of a shoe sole and nail it to our shoes. Fancy it was not, but it worked.

Bust of Rev. Frederik (Frits) Slomp, "Frits the Hobo" or "Elder Van Zanten" (1898-1978), Dutch minister and Resistance fighter during WW II. The bust is in Heemse, near a church that he served. All images courtesy of Edward Boersma.

Perhaps the most bizarre sights were cars, trucks, and buses that ran on gasified charcoal, wood, coal, and even peat. Burning these carbon fuels

Jennie, Anneke, and Eddy, 1943.

produces a low quality gas used in the internal combustion engines of that day, modified to run on this gas, although they ran poorly. The charcoal contraptions were heavy and clumsy, therefore they were often built on a small trailer which was pulled by the truck or the bus powered by the gas. During the war many millions of vehicles were powered by gasified carbon: buses, trucks, autos, boats, and trains.

The Boersmas (far left) and two of the couples that were hidden in the Boersma home during the war. The Meyers are in the middle; the author never knew the name of the couple on the far right.

Everyone contributed to a family's effort to get by. One of my jobs was to get milk from our farm friends. For this my mother had a four-liter can with a handle so that I could carry the milk home. The job was dangerous because it was illegal for farmers to give or sell milk to individuals. So the job tended to be done after the 8 pm curfew. As did all children, I knew every back road, back yard, and back alley in my home town of Nieuw Amsterdam, Drenthe, and I always managed to get milk without being seen or caught.

Somehow, Dad was always able to get pork to eat. Our Jewish friends in hiding upstairs sometimes were troubled when Mom served pork. But, when you get hungry enough . . . . Dad often kept a pig in the back yard. That alone could have gotten him shot. All potato peels, carrot tops, and apple skins were fed to the hog. I was also assigned the job of finding feed for the hog. Growing along the canals and ditches was a certain kind of a weed with little seeds growing on it. It probably was something like wild mustard. This stuff was usually cooked with other discarded food items and used as animal feed. The various pigs did well on it.

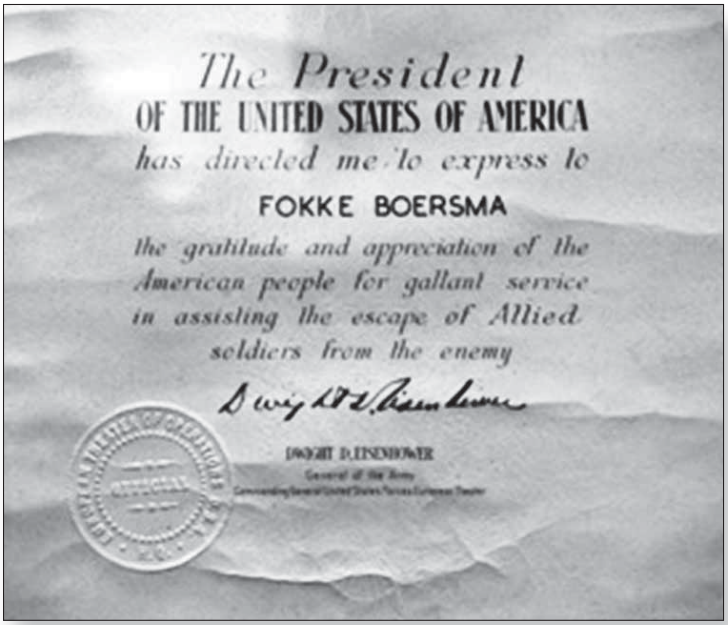
Sundays were always special in my hometown. Most folks went to church because attending worship services was a normal part of life. Ours was a church where the elders and deacons stood up during the long congregational prayer. The deacons also collected the offering in a little black bag which was attached to the end of a long stick. The deacons very carefully maneuvered the long stick down each row so that the bag was held in front of every worshiper.

Because most people went to church, on Sundays the Germans often set up checkpoints at all the intersections and bridges in town. As the people walked home, everyone was required to show their identity cards. If the paperwork was in order there was no problem; if there was a problem, the arrest was immediate, particularly for the men. These men generally were sent to forced labor in Germany, except for those wanted for committing crimes, who were then imprisoned. As a result, before the service ended the pastor usually sent someone out to see what was going on in town. Once the observer reported back to the pastor, the service was closed. The benediction usually closed with "Amen," which meant there were no problems. However, if there was trouble outside, the pastor closed the benediction with, "All men." That was our warning.

One Sunday it happened. We heard the "All men" and Dad realized he had forgotten his ID card, which would have meant being sent to Germany if he had been caught. Since children were not required to have an ID card, I was sent home to get his. The difficulty was that to avoid suspicion children should be seen at a checkpoint only once, and I would have to go home, return to church, and then go home again with the entire family. Fortunately there were three routes between church and home, and I followed the longest one to get home. Dad had told me where the card was so I had no trouble finding it. I took a second route back to church. The third route was the normal way home and those guards saw my family, and importantly me, for the first time. All was well and we made it home safely.

During the war Allied air forces

attempted to destroy transportation systems that could benefit the Germans. Trains and train stations were very vulnerable, which was a problem for our family, since we lived near the railroad station. In early September 1944, an order came from the Dutch government in exile in London ordering all Dutch railroad personnel to strike. Almost everyone complied, and strikers became criminals wanted by the Germans. The strike caused a lot of difficulties for the Resistance. All of a sudden there were thousands more who needed to find hiding places. The strike, however, created a fascinating phenomenon among the general Dutch population. People seemed to pull together against the oppressors with new pride, and hiding places for the strikers were quickly found.


The President
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
has directed me to express to
FOKKE BOERSMA
the gratitude and appreciation of the American people for gallant service in assisting the escape of Allied soldiers from the enemy
Dwight D. Eisenhower

The citation Fokke Boersma received for his work with the Dutch Resistance, a citation he maintained was unnecessary since he did the "right thing."`

The reality of air attacks became clear to me on a train trip I will never forget. On this trip—probably for the Resistance—Dad took me along. I was nine years old and it was an advantage to travel with children to avoid suspicion when going through checkpoints. The train was one of those typical European trains of the time, with passenger cars that had compartments with one door opening to the outside, and a second door to the car's hallway. During the trip the train began slowing and jerked to stop in the middle of nowhere. Dad grabbed me under his arm, grabbed his briefcase, kicked open the compartment door to the outside, jumped out, ran through the field, threw me in a ditch, and lay next to me. The rest of the passengers did not realize what was going on and slowly disembarked. Moments later, two American P-47s strafed the train from end to end and destroyed the locomotive. Dad's response paid off. After the planes disappeared, Dad went to the baggage car, retrieved his bike, and we continued on, with me riding on the back.

In 1944 the daily bombings of Germany intensified. Sometimes bombs missed their intended targets. This happened during an American raid on Nijmegen on 22 February,


Later in life, Frank and Angie Boersma in California.

during which more than 880 civilians were killed. But the pace of bombings increased; during that March 7,000 Allied planes bombed Germany.

That same year had several defining moments for my parents. By then my dad was wanted by the Gestapo (an abbreviation of Geheime Staatspolizei, or secret police). They offered 25,000 Dutch guilders for his capture, dead or alive. The high reward was in part due to the tide of war having turned against the Germans. The Normandy landings took place in June; the audacious but doomed-to-failure Operation Market Garden battle was in September.[2] Because he was hunted by the Gestapo, my dad never spent more than one night in the same place.

On a cool and windy day in September 1944, Mom said, "Eddie, tomorrow morning we have to leave this house. Make sure there is enough air in my bicycle tires and also in yours." I didn't know it at the time, but the people in hiding upstairs were already gone. Mom also told me that the next day two "uncles" would come to help us move. Early the following morning, so no one would see the Boersmas leaving, the "uncles" showed up and we left. After all, it was none of the neighbors' business that the Boersmas were leaving. Our little caravan was made up of three adults and three children on four bicycles. I rode my own bicycle and my two younger sisters rode on the suitcases on the backs of the uncles' bikes. We headed northwestward, into the ever-blowing wind. Occasionally, one of the uncles would throw me a rope to pull me along because I had trouble keeping up with the adults.

We bicycled about 20 kilometers to the small village of Zweeloo, also in the province of Drenthe. Dad had arranged with some people there to protect and look after us. While we biked, we were not challenged by anyone; nor did we pass through any checkpoints that day. We arrived safely at a temporary haven. To this day I do not know how Dad knew that we had to go into hiding. Twenty-four hours after we left, the Gestapo surrounded our house, but we were gone. We lived in Zweeloo until January 1945. The Gestapo caught up with us again. Because so many people were displaced and so many were in hiding, the Gestapo ordered that all ID cards had to be renewed.

Early on a very cold morning, a horse-drawn carriage showed up at our hiding place. Mom had all the suitcases packed again for our second escape. The owner and driver of the horse and carriage was a local farmer whom we did not know. Often times it was best to not know too much. We traveled most of that day to a village about 20 kilometers to the east with the difficult-to-pronounce name of Emmererfscheidenveen.

The rules of engagement were now changing as the Allied military successes led to increasing suppression of Dutch civilians by the Germans and particularly the Gestapo. In Emmererfscheidenveen we had to adopt a new identity. Because the southern part of the Netherlands was already being liberated, Nazi sympathizers and Dutch traitors were part of the refugees moving northward. The identity of these refugees was nearly impossible to trace. Given the circumstances, village residents assumed we were from the South. Our family paid a price for this because some thought we were traitors. The only people in town who knew our true identity were our hosts who looked after Mom and the three us.

We lived in Emmererfscheidenveen until the end of the war. Miraculously the Boersma family, including Dad, was never caught. We were liberated by the First Polish Armored Division, attached to the Canadian army, which was attached to the British army. Shortly after the war, Dad received a number of citations and many tokens of gratitude; all of them surely earned, but none of them really wanted. He dismissed these things with, "You don't need to be rewarded for doing the right thing." Three years after the war ended our family emigrated to California.

Endnotes

1. When, from the pulpit, Rev. Fredrik Slomp (1898-1978) called his parishioners to participate in sabotage, the Germans declared him a wanted criminal. During the war he convinced the village of Nieuwland (south of Utrecht) to hide two hundred Jewish people. Both reckless and stubborn, Slomp was captured in 1944, but broken out of jail by men ten days later. His brother Tieme died in Dachau. After the war he ministered to the spiritual needs of his imprisoned former adversaries.

2. This, the largest airborne assault at the time, was designed to cross into Germany by capturing a series of bridges in the southern Netherlands into the Ruhr Valley, forcing the Germans to surrender by Christmas. The effort failed when the Allied supply lines were stretched too far. The invasion depended on control of a single route with numerous bridges. When the Germans successfully destroyed the bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal, the advance halted and the operation ended in defeat.

Abraham Van Der Puy; Evangelist and Radio Minister

Calvin D. Cevaal

As Abraham Van Der Puy was growing up in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, during the 1930s and early 1940s, he thought he would enter the business world as his relatives had done. Instead, the son of Dutch immigrants became a respected radio minister in Latin American. The Van Der Puy clan, Abraham and Jennie (Janna) and their children Cornelis, John (Jan), and Mary (Marie)[1] immigrated in 1896. They settled in the southeastern part of Sheboygan known as the Black River Section because of its rich black soil suitable for growing vegetables, and therefore truck farming. Two more children were born in Wisconsin, Gerhard and Johannes.

All the children helped on the farm to provide family income. Mary learned to drive a truck in order to deliver produce to the market. In spite of the family's hard work, low prices made it difficult to support a family of five children on the meager profits from the farm. At various times their sons sought other employment — Cornelius became a skilled carpenter; John went to work at the nearby Kohler Plumbing Works. In the mid-twenties Gerhard and Johannes started a grocery store with living quarters for Gerhard and his family above the store. In 1929 the four brothers started the Paper Box and Specialty Company. Business was taxing in the early years of the Great Depression, but the firm survived and today it is a thriving enterprise with about thirty employees, and is still owned by the Van Der Puy family members.

All Van Der Puys became active in the First Christian Reformed Church, founded in 1889. In 1935, as the third generation of Van Der Puys in America was coming of age, Rev. Edward B. Pekelder began his ministry in the congregation and launched numerous organizations and activities for every age group. He was extremely organized, but not to the point of being fastidious. Although ministerial in bearing, he was nonetheless congenial and friendly.[2] On Sundays he preached twice and conducted a twenty-minute radio address in the

Abe Vander Puy in 1922. All images courtesy of Calvin Cevaal.

Before retirement, Calvin Cevaal had a career in the financial services industries, initially with A. G. Edwards, Inc., and then in securities arbitration for the New York Stock Exchange. He and his wife Pat live in North Carolina and he researches and writes about Wisconsin's Dutch immigrant communities.

The Van Der Puy Grocery store on North 8th Street in Sheboygan, during the 1920s. As was typical for such family operations, Gerhard, Marie (née Dekker), and their children lived above the store.

afternoon called the *Old Time Religion* on WHBL, a local radio station.

Cornelis was chairman of the building committee that dedicated a new structure in 1927. For seven years he was director of the concert band, and a gifted soloist who also joined with Mrs. Pekelder in duets for the radio broadcast. John served many years as an elder and was active in many societies. Gerhard was a member of the Christian school board. Johannes and his wife Dena produced the church's weekly bulletin for years.

Abe C. Van Der Puy was born 11 October 1919 to Gerhard and Marie. Three children followed—Janet, Gerald, and Mary Ann. The younger Abe's elementary education was in the Christian school and continued in the city's public high school. Sheboygan's school system was regarded as one of the best in the state, with excellent programs in music and speech. Abe took advantage of these opportunities and was on the debate team and a member of the National Honor Society. He was a member of the men's varsity debate team which won state and regional honors. He was elected president of his senior class and spoke at the commencement.

While in high school, Van Der Puy worked in his father and uncle's grocery store, among other tasks, serving as delivery boy, and he was also active in various church societies. Upon graduation from high school he chose to attend Wheaton College. Rev. Pekelder, who was on the board of trustees of Calvin College, tried to dissuade him, but was not successful.[3] Van Der Puy was planning on a career in the family box factory.

While in high school he had been influenced by Casey Wondergem Sr., a prominent businessman and influential member of the church.[4] Wondergem was a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and had an evangelical outlook on life. He mentored young men, students such as Abe and the pastor's son, Bernie, whom he thought had promise for Christian service. By his second year at Wheaton, Van Der Puy abandoned plans for a business career and instead focused on Christian mission work. In an article in the *Sheboygan Press*, Van Der Puy says, "I believe that the means the Lord used in directing me to the mission field came in the form of consecrated missionaries from South America, whom I met when I was in college."[5] For two years he served as student pastor at Cass Community Church in Downers Grove, Illinois. In his senior year he had the highest scholastic average in his class. While at Wheaton he was awarded three scholarships and graduated with a degree in speech with majors in Spanish and Greek. He taught speech at Wheaton as a graduate assistant while taking a year of graduate studies with an emphasis on Bible.

In 1942 he enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand

The store truck that Abe Van Der Puy drove when delivering groceries.

The Van Der Puys during the 1950s: (left to right) Abe, Lois, Joel, Mark, and Dolores (née Hicks).

Rapids, Michigan, and took a part-time position teaching speech at the college. Dr. Carl Kromminga, a student and later professor at the seminary, was in his speech class and states he was a very energetic, enthusiastic, and helpful teacher.[6] George Vanderhill, a classmate at the seminary, remembers him as ". . . articulate, with strong opinions, but congenial. But I never got the impression Abe was preparing to enter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. He was too evangelical and would not have fit in."[7] While in the seminary he pastored the Open Door Bible Church in Wyoming, Michigan. Such work was discouraged by the seminary faculty, who felt that a student's full time ought to be devoted to study. By his second year he began to have reservations about salient points of Reformed doctrine. He rejected infant baptism and election, and later repudiated his infant baptism by being re-baptized. He did not return to the seminary for the third year of study, but started to prepare himself for mission work in Ecuador. In 1943 he married Dolores Hicks, whom he had met at Wheaton College. She was on the staff of Moody Bible Institute and a soloist on the Institute's radio station WMBI.

In October 1945 the couple traveled to Quito, Ecuador, to begin their missionary ministry with radio station HCJB (the call letters stood for Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings). Founded in 1931, by the time the Van Der Puys arrived HCJB had distributed over 20,000 pre-tuned radio receivers to establish an audience. Van Der Puy worked at the station, operated a sound truck for the station, and conducted meetings in market places during the day and in public squares at night. The broadcast ministry, however, began to occupy more of his time as he became one of the main speakers.

In an interview he summarized his responsibilities, "When the red light goes on you know you have only a few minutes in which to have an important message to possibly millions of people, some of whom have never heard the Gospel. Such a challenge calls for serious stewardship in preparing each message." He noted their home in Quito, in a grove of eucalyptus trees, with breathtaking views of the valley and the snow-capped mountains, was conducive to study and preparation for this work.[8]

In the late 1940s Van Der Puy was a passenger on a bus that collided with another bus. His arm was seriously injured and subsequently required a number of surgeries. Because of unsanitary conditions in the Ecuadorian hospital, he received a blood transfusion from which he contracted hepatitis C. Ultimately he had to go to a Chicago hospital to save his arm, but the hepatitis C remained with him.

Administrative duties began to occupy more of Van Der Puy's time and in 1955 he was appointed HCJB station manager, a position he held for seven years. In 1962 he was elected president of World Radio Missionary Fellowship (WRMF). This was an umbrella organization encompassing HCJB and all other activities. In addition, he served as field director for Ecuador and was instrumental in building a hospital there. This

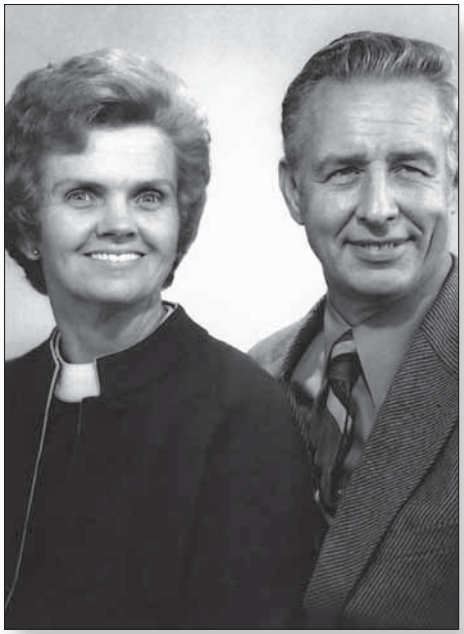
Abe Van Der Puy at the microphone for a HCJB broadcast.

enabled pilots to fly sick and injured people from the jungle for treatment. As president of WRMF, Van Der Puy set about to expand the radio ministry of HCJB into the United States. Eventually there were more than twenty-five outlets, mostly along the Mexico-United States border.

In 1956 the world was shocked to hear about the deaths of five missionaries speared to death by Auca Indians.[9] The missionary community selected Van Der Puy to prepare press releases about this, and these were broadcast to the world via HCJB. This caught the attention of a *Readers' Digest* editor who asked Van Der Puy to submit an article about the event, which was titled "Through Gates of Splendor," for the periodical's book section.

Four years later Dolores was diagnosed with cancer, requiring treatment in Miami, so the headquarters of WRMF was moved to Miami. Dolores died from the cancer in 1965. Her death left Abe with three teenage children— Lois, 19; Mark, 16; and Joel, 14. The Ecuadorian staff of HCJB lived in a gated compound with a Christian school for the education of the children. A neighbor of the Van Der Puys there had been Marjorie Saint (née Farris), whose husband Nate, a pilot, had been one of those killed by the Auca Indians. After her husband's death she became the manager of the guesthouse in the compound. Her three children were friends of the Van Der Puy children. The two shared the same goals and commitments and felt drawn to each other. His children, wanting a mother, suggested the two marry. She and Van Der Puy were married in August 1966, blending their six children into one family. The April 1981 *Family Life Today* featured the family in a story titled, "Blended Family, Blended Dreams."

In January of 1982, after twenty



Abe and Marj Van Der Puy during the 1960s. Marj(orie) Ann Farris was born in Clifton Hill, Missouri, but grew up in Idaho and was a member of the US Army Air Corps before marrying Nate Saint.

years as president of HCJB, Van Der Puy stepped down and became honorary chairman of the board. That year HCJB celebrated fifty years of broadcasting and under his leadership had grown from a lower-power AM station of 250 watts that could broadcast about 7-10 miles and a staff of two families to a global network with a total of more than one million watts with a staff of over four hundred people. During those years broadcasts began in Arabic, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Yiddish, Portuguese, and Japanese.

The higher powered transmitters required more electricity so a hydroelectric generation plant was built in 1965. Because this proved to be a less costly and cleaner source of electricity, two more hydroelectric plants were added later. Billy Graham wrote a letter of congratulations saying, "I am grateful to God for the fifty years of faithful witness which has consistently marked the work of Abe Van Der Puy and his associates. May the Lord use you in even greater ways during the years ahead for the glory of the kingdom."[10]

In July Van Der Puy became a speaker of the *Voice of Missions* for the *Back to the Bible* ministry of WMFR, headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska.[11] Being the *Voice of Missions* made for long hours of commuting between Quito and Lincoln, so in 1983 Abe moved to Lincoln. In addition he served as president of the National Religious Broadcasters. He retired from ministry in 1991 and moved to Keystone Heights, near Ocala, Florida.

During his working career Van Der Puy authored a number of books published by the *Back to the Bible*'s publishing arm: *Like a Mighty Army*, *The High Calling of God*, *Let the Earth Rejoice*, and *From Eden to Eternity*. He also published numerous articles written for *Confident Living*.

In retirement Van Der Puy never regretted his decision to change from a business career to a missionary. He summed up his life by stating, "I take

In addition to graduating from Wheaton College in 1941, Van Der Puy received a doctorate of divinity from Wheaton in 1965.

great joy in the privilege of being a minister of the Gospel. If I had to choose a life's work again, I'd make the same choice." In 2002 the hepatitis C that been dormant for more than fifty years reappeared and eventually

caused liver failure, which took his life in 2003. In a memorial service he was called a man of vision, a man of multi-talents, a man of integrity, and a man of humility. The speaker summed it all up by closing with these words about Van Der Puy: "Missionary, statesman, evangelist, radio broadcaster, gifted administrator, convincing preacher, peacemaker, author, and exemplary husband and father."[12] Marj died in 2004.[13]

The author, Calvin D. Cevaal, is retired and resides with his wife Pat in North Carolina. He writes about people in Oostburg, Wisconsin, and for this article traveled ten miles north from Oostburg to the city of Sheboygan to write about his cousin.

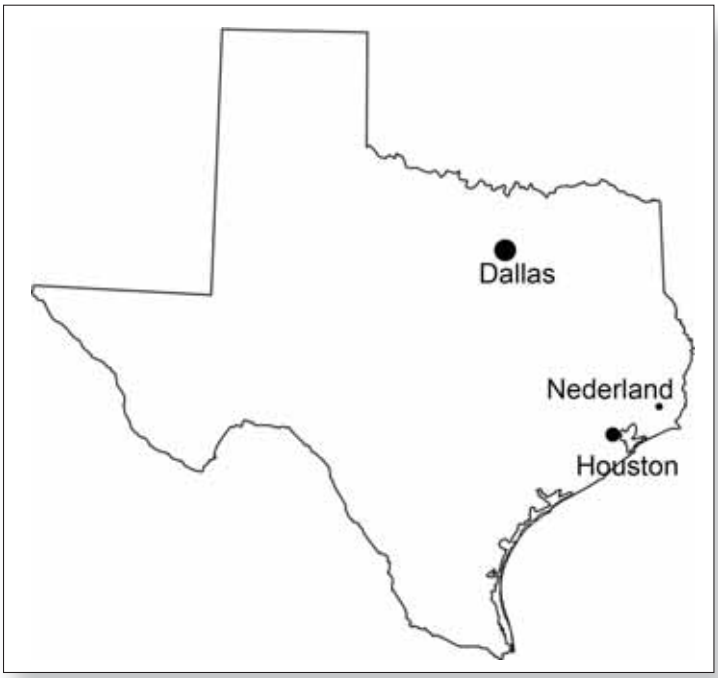
Endnotes

1. Mary was the author's mother.
2. The author wishes to thank his cousin Cornelius "Zip" Van Der Puy for his wealth of material on the Sheboygan Christian Reformed Church; information about Rev. Pekelder came via a telephone conversation with his son, Rev. Bernard Pekelder.
3. His sister Mary Ann DeSmith, the youngest in the family, thinks his choice was dictated by the fact that Wheaton offered better business courses than Calvin.
4. According to Cornelius Van Der Puy.
5. Undated *Sheboygan Press* clipping in possession of the author.
6. Telephone conversation with Carl Kromminga.
7. Telephone conversation with George Vanderhill.
8. An edition of the *Faith-Partner Bulletin*, no date or name of interviewer given, in possession of the author.
9. The Waodani/Huaorani are natives of the Amazonian Region in Ecuador. The alternate name Auca is a pejorative term used by neighboring Indians that means "savage," and was adopted by Spanish speakers.
10. "50 Years on the Brink of Tomorrow," published by HCJB.
11. Back to the Bible Ministry began in 1939 by Myron Webb, a medical doctor turned radio minster. It began as a 15-minute broadcast and by 1951 went coast-to-coast via the ABC radio networks.
12. Tribute to Dr. Abe, 16 September 2003, name of speaker not given.
13. Many facts of Van Der Puy's life are taken from the radio program *Beyond the Call,* hosted by Ron Cline, HCJB World Radio, April 2003, and also from a bulletin from HCJB World Radio, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2003.

New Country — Familiar Name

The Christian Reformed Church of Nederland, Texas

Paula Vander Hoven



Paula Vander Hoven is a retired minister in the Presbyterian Church USA now serving churches as an interim pastor. She is a 1988 graduate of McCormick Theological Seminary. One of her interests is short-lived Dutch immigrant communities in North America; the stories of several of these have been published in Origins.

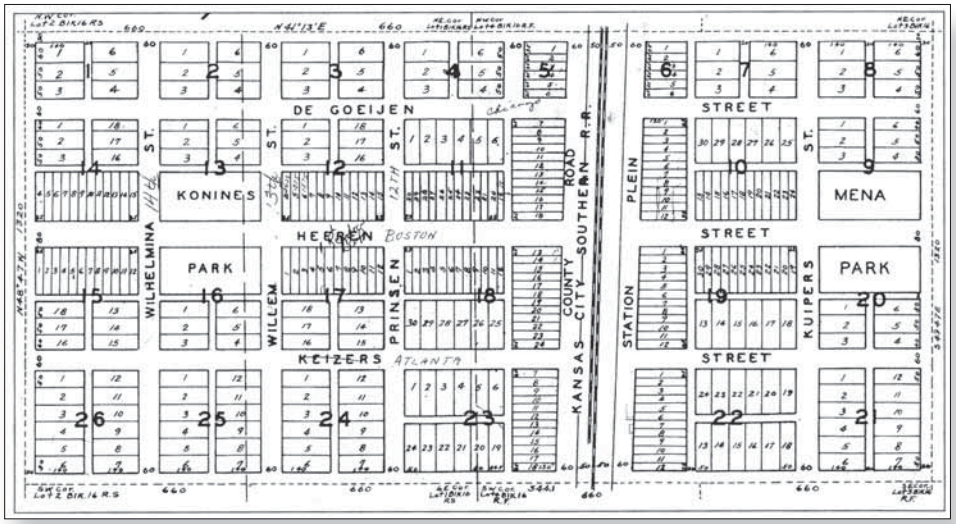
The Dutch settlement near Port Arthur and Galveston, Texas, began the way many others did in the final years of the nineteenth century. Entrepreneurs invested in new railroads and in the land around them and lured new immigrants to put down roots there.[1]

The entrepreneurs in this case happened to be Dutch, and they hoped to attract fellow Dutch. The railroad was the Kansas City Southern Railroad and prominent among these entrepreneurs was a Dutch banker named J. De Goeijen. He and others associated with the Port Arthur Land Company plotted out a village and named it Nederland. The streets were named de Goeijenstraat, Heerenstraat, Kuiperstraat,[2] Prinzenstraat, Willemstraat, Wilhelminastraat, and Keizerstraat. They platted an open area called Konings (King's) Park. As soon as about fifty Dutch people had arrived, but before these newcomers were reasonably settled in, on 24 December 1897 the boosters literally put the community on the map.

They bought advertisements in newspapers that circulated among the Dutch immigrants in this country and sent agents to the Netherlands to entice their country folk. These agents did their jobs thoroughly and recruited immigrants from small towns and villages in all but the southernmost regions of the country.[3] They showed pictures of successful farms and healthy cattle (some actually taken in Florida) and promised a moderate climate (although the temperature dropped to two degrees the first winter and to four degrees in the winter of 1899), good growing conditions, and excellent soil. They offered land parcels of ten and twenty acres for $20-$35 an acre, with reasonable terms for repayment. An irrigation company was promised and products could be sold in nearby Port Arthur, easily accessible by train. The Port Arthur *Herald* in 1897 reported proudly that "it has been demonstrated that the soil in the vicinity of Port Arthur is equal to raising any amount of any kind of farm produce with comparatively little labor, and now that the [Port Arthur Land] Company has started emigration [sic] to this part of the country of the thrifty Hollanders, it will be but a short time until much of the land will be under cultivation, and early fruits and vegetables will be shipped by carload lots to the northern cities."[4]

In the summer of 1897 the Port Arthur Land Company also began construction of a three-story wooden

building, painted it bright orange, and named it the Orange Hotel to honor the Dutch royal family. It was an imposing building with thirty-three guest rooms, some with fireplaces. There was a large combination dining room and ballroom that had an organ, a large fireplace, and seated 125 people. Parties of all kinds were held in that room. There was a Ladies Social Room, bathrooms with indoor toilets, and a library that contained a thousand Dutch books. The Company overlooked nothing in its efforts to make the new settlers comfortable. The crowning feature of the hotel was a winding staircase to the second and third floors. The building was completed just in time for a large influx of Hollanders, and they made it their temporary home as they established themselves. Hearty Dutch meals were served for twenty-five cents, and a month's worth of room and board was $15.50, including laundry. As the hoped-for immigrants arrived and the community began to grow up around it, the Orange Hotel became the center of social life. Polka dancing was held every other week and the game room was often full of laughter.[5] Eventually the hotel served as a temporary home to the next influx of newcomers when oil was discovered at nearby Spindletop. Finally, though, there was no need for such an elegant structure and it fell into disuse and, following a storm, it was torn down in 1915. For virtually all the years of its existence, Dutch families were managers of the hotel and it had a reputation for absolute cleanliness and warm hospitality.



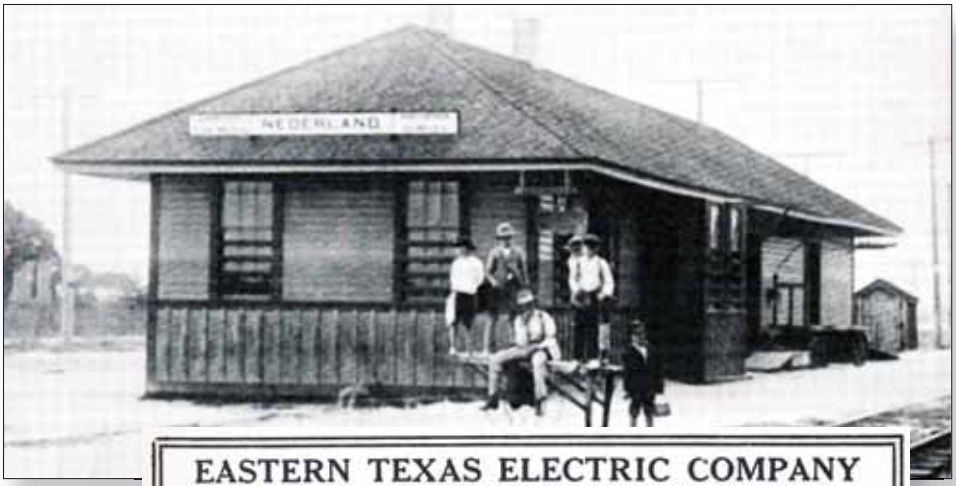
The plat map of Nederland. Image courtesy of the Nederland Historical Society.

At the time the first wave of immigrants arrived, the town of Nederland consisted of the hotel, two stores, and one or two homes. About six months later, in May 1898, the Port Arthur Land Company officials provided for a school, which met in a one-room building behind the hotel. Classes were taught by a sixteen-year-old young Beaumont woman and Klaas Koelemay,[6] one of the immigrants, serving as English teacher and translator to perhaps fifteen Dutch children, including Joe and Dirk Elings.[7]

The Orange Hotel. Bricks for the foundation, 80-foot well, and chimneys were handmade. Image courtesy of the Nederland Historical Society.

Some came to Nederland from established communities in the United States, but most of these were disillusioned with what they saw and returned home. A widespread agricultural crisis in the Netherlands had convinced many Dutch that the only hope was to emigrate. Significant groups of Hollanders came in two shiploads from the Netherlands, but most of these also left soon.

Even if the reports about farming conditions had been true, none of the Dutch immigrants had experience in growing rice, the principal crop of the area. Further difficulties occurred with the irrigation company, and the water supply failed. In the winter of 1899 a blizzard destroyed thousands of cattle and caused all the lakes and



Top *The Nederland train depot where many immigrants arrived and almost as many soon departed. Image courtesy of the Nederland Historical Society.*

Above *A ticket for the interurban (electric train) to communities near Nederland. Image courtesy of the Nederland Historical Society.*

rivers to freeze over. Later, mosquitoes were a serious threat; girls were said to have protected themselves by wearing newspaper pages inside their stockings to prevent bites. None of the immigrants anticipated a hurricane, but the one in September 1900 caused serious damage. Rain and winds of up to 100 miles an hour left water six inches deep in some homes and flattened others.[8] The Orange Hotel was seriously damaged and the building being used as a school was destroyed. Ten Dutch families were left with only the clothes on their backs and appealed to churches in Chicago for help. Many were forced to leave.

Nor could they have predicted that an oil gusher would "come in" a well on 10 January 1901 at nearby Spindletop, a salt oil dome south of Beaumont, Texas, about ten miles from Nederland. The new oil field soon produced more than 100,000 barrels per day, still the most productive oil field ever discovered. The gusher proved to be a turning point for Texas as it marked the beginning of oil exploration and the economic development known as the Texas Oil Boom. A flood of unsavory characters came to the area seeking employment; rather than mix with them, more Dutch left.

But some stayed, at least long enough to establish themselves, and a small number of those who stayed founded the small Christian Reformed church.[9] This is the story of the short-lived Christian Reformed church in Nederland and the few Dutch families and single individuals who formed it.

Thirty-year-old Gatze (George) Rienstra and his sister Feikje (Fannie) were the first permanent settlers to arrive in Nederland in the spring of 1897, and his descendants are still an important part of the business community there.[10] Following their arrival, the first wave of forty-six Hollanders, including at least four families, arrived in the port of Galveston on the steamship *Olinda* in November 1897. The Galveston *Daily News* reported that the passengers "were undoubtedly the finest lot of people that has been brought here by any steamer recently."[11]

The *Olinda* arrived again in March 1898, this time bringing twenty-six passengers, mostly single young men—about twenty of them—full of high hopes and promises. The Galveston *Daily News* was even more glowing in its report, ". . . the passengers made the finest looking company of immigrants that have landed here in recent years. They all showed comfortable living, being neatly dressed, the men being attired in white linen and black ties usually and freshly shaven faces. The women were in keeping with the men . . . well dressed and apparently contented."[12] On the whole though, their first impressions of Nederland were not favorable and many left. Some found positions in nearby Port Arthur and Beaumont, the women as maids with families or in hotels earning $10 a month, and the young men as railroad workers earning 95 cents a day for twelve hours' work.

The Port Arthur Land Company and the Kansas City Southern Railroad were eager to make the new community a place where the Dutch would stay. So, in September 1898 they enthusiastically celebrated the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina in the Netherlands. By that time there were about a hundred Dutch in Nederland and the community planned the event for weeks in advance. About two thousand guests from Port Arthur and Beaumont flocked to the brand new village in several trainloads. All the stores in town were decorated

in red, white, and blue, the national colors of both countries, and both the Dutch and American flags flew over every building. The Orange Hotel was decked out with evergreens and red, white, and blue roses and a large portrait of the new queen hung in the dining room. A band from Port Arthur arrived on the train at 7:45 that morning and played several selections throughout the festivities. A tree was planted in King's Park across from the hotel. There is a rumor floating around Nederland even today that the new queen sent gold to be "planted" along with the tree, to tide the Dutch over any hard times they might experience in their new country. (The tree is now long gone and the gold has never been discovered.) Fitting speeches were given in Dutch and English, many of them expressing the belief that the Dutch would stay and prosper in their new home. A festive meal in two sittings was served in the hotel. Dutch beer, twenty kegs of it, and American politicians were plentiful. So was Dutch singing. All day there were foot races, obstacle races, bicycle races (with only two entries), kite races, and horse races, with appropriate prizes awarded. In the evening there were fireworks and dancing. The final train of partiers left for Port Arthur at two o'clock in the morning, convinced that the Dutch knew how to put on a gala affair.[13]

After the arrival of the second shipload of Hollanders in March 1898, it didn't take the newcomers long to form a church. Reverend Henry Beets, of Sioux Center, Iowa, had been delegated by Classis Iowa to fulfill that purpose and, on 25 April 1898, he met in the Orange Hotel with fifteen adults and sixteen children and constituted the Nederland Christian Reformed Church. Some of the members had been affiliated with the *Gereformeerde Kerk,* and they were accepted into membership without question. Others had been members of the *Hervormde Kerk* and they were received into membership after having been examined. Still others were received by profession of faith.

Charter members[14] were Tuenis Den Dekker; Adrian Johan Elings, wife Agatha Stufkens and their children; Carolina Elings; Willem Jansonius, his wife Anje Woldinga and children; Cornelis Jensma; Gerrit Klinkenberg, his wife Henrikje Otten; Hendrik Rodrigo, and wife Anna Lissenberg, and their children; Cornelis Van Den Bout and wife Gerdina Hamel; Pieter Van Der Plas; Geert Venhuizen; and Elizabeth Waterdrinker. Tuenis Den Dekker, a single man of twenty-nine, and Cornelis Van Den Bout, a newlywed of twenty-four, were elected elders and president and clerk, respectively. Adrian Elings, at forty-six, was elected deacon. In the first minutes they added, "We His servants are ready, and may heaven grant us success!"[15] By November 1898 the young group had a student pastor, Evert Van Korlaar, in his last year

Texas Historical Marker at Nederland. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College.

of what is now Calvin Theological Seminary.

But very soon their optimism was tempered by reality. Two young men, Venhuizen and Jensma, left in August 1898, followed quickly by Den Dekker, Waterdrinker, and the Elings family in January 1899, and the Rodrigo family later that same year. As a result, by January 1900 the congregation was reduced to seven adults and five children.[16]

In the meantime, young Den Dekker was busy in the church. In addition to being the president of the council, he was appointed to supervise and teach Sunday school and catechism classes and also asked to lead the Young Men's Society. At the council's next meeting, four months later, the job descriptions were slightly revised, with Den Dekker instructing the older and Van Den Bout the younger children. There were a total of fourteen children eligible for classes. Hope of starting a Young Men's Society (presumably with the twenty or so young men who had arrived on the *Olinda*) faded when it was concluded that there were too few and they lived too far away.

The first worship services were held in the Orange Hotel, but the members were eager for their own church building. Plans for that were finalized during a congregational meeting about seven months after the church's founding. It was to be twenty by thirty feet, on land donated by the "Company"[17] at the corner of Kuiperstraat and Heerenstraat. A member of the congregation offered to be the contractor to supervise the volunteers doing the construction. He gave assurances that he could do the job though, in fact, he had no experience as a carpenter. The two relatively young elders and one older deacon deliberated along with the thirty-four-year-old student pastor. They put the matter to a congregational vote one month later and, on the

Charter members of the Nederland CRC

Tuenis Den Dekker, 29

Adrian Johan Elings, 41; wife Agatha Stufkens, 46; children Jan, 16; Johannes, 12; and Anton Dirk, 10; daughter Carolina, 14, joined by profession of faith

Willem Jansonius, 46; wife Anje Woldinga, 44; children Klaas, 19; Anje, 16; Jacobus, 14; Janno, 11; and Gerrit, 8

Cornelis Jensma, 21

Gerrit Klinkenberg, 46; wife Henrikje Otten, 43

Hendrik Rodrigo, 37; wife Anna Lissenberg, 40; children Hendrik Jan, 13; Gerard, 12; Jessie, 11; Anna, 9; Jan, 8; Peter, 5; and Letta, just a few days old

Cornelis Van Den Bout, 24; wife Gerdina Hamel, 20

Pieter Van Der Plas, 24

Geert Venhuizen, 21

Elizabeth Waterdrinker, 25

Evert Van Korlaar (1864-1938) was in his last year (1898-1899) at the seminary when he served the Nederland congregation as a student pastor. After he was ordained he served churches in Spring Lake, Caldwell, and West Branch, Michigan; and Vesper and Baldwin, Wisconsin. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College.

advice of Van Korlaar, they voted to engage an American carpenter, partly out of a sense of good stewardship of the land and money given to them. An additional factor in their decision was that Elder Den Dekker and Deacon Elings were soon to leave the settlement and there was some urgency to complete the building.

From the outset the small congregation struggled financially. They had decided that all the monies collected would be channeled toward congregational expenses, with nothing available for denominational causes. One assumption apparently had been that children would pay for their own Sunday school supplies. But they were unable to contribute and, rather than pressure those families to do so and face the possibility that they would leave altogether, the congregation decided to cover those expenses. After the church building was completed, the council minutes record that the congregation took offerings for some denominational causes. The only financial report given states that there was $10.10 on hand, which was immediately designated to "paint the church and make everything (ceiling, windows and pews) just so." There was also the matter of room and board for Van Korlaar. The congregation was unable to raise the $4 per week for his stay at the Orange Hotel and had to appeal to classis[18] for assistance.[19] No matter how that may have been resolved, a local historian remembers that as a way of keeping the new little church and its members in Nederland, the Port Arthur Land Company paid for Van Korlaar's room and board at the hotel.[20]

After Van Korlaar completed his assignment and graduated from seminary, the congregation at least twice petitioned classis for a pastor, but none was provided. Instead, Classis Iowa sent a church visitor every six months, and the congregation offered $20 to these pastors to cover their travel expenses. The church visitors, from South Dakota or Iowa, regularly instructed that the council should meet on a scheduled basis, minutes should be signed, two worship services should be held every Sunday, and family visitation should be conducted. These suggestions were always graciously received, but never followed. In fact, the council rarely met, except when a church visitor was present, and the only family visitations recorded in the council minutes were in November 1903. The congregation did, however, faithfully elect Willem Jansonius, Pieter Van Der Plas, and Hendrik Groeneveld as elders, and Cornelis Van Den Bout and Gerrit Klinkenberg as deacons. Van Den Bout continued as clerk for all but the last two meetings. In 1902 the congregation's small size led to the consideration to allow women to vote at congregational meetings, a move

the denomination did not make until 1957, but this idea was never implemented.[21]

There are hints of discouragement and friction in the tiny congregation. At least one of the members was contentious and opinionated, and at one congregational meeting, Van Korlaar presented devotions in which he compared the small group to the Jews after their return from Babylon. He encouraged them to take courage and be supportive of each other. In addition to the matter of choosing an "American" contractor for the building rather than a member of the congregation, the minutes report that one brother presented his grievances to the council and declared that he could not celebrate the Lord's Supper with a few other members. Considering that at that date there were a total of fifteen adult members in the congregation, and five of them belonged to the family with grievances, that was a significant rift.

Just when it might have seemed that conditions were improving for the small young church, the minutes end abruptly with the 13 June 1904 meeting, and the church dissolved soon thereafter. Although some had moved to other locations, others had arrived, and in June 1904 the membership stood at fourteen adults, in seven families, and twenty-three children—more members than ever before, and the most children ever. At the time, the congregation had just purchased Bavinck's catechism books and had decided to make repairs to the church building—all indications that the congregation was thinking to the future. But in two of the families only the wives were members,[22] and one single man joined the church just as it was dissolving, so there were only four potential male office holders, which may have been discouraging.

About a year later, in March 1905,

The intersection of Willemstraat and Heerenstraat is one block south of Konings (now King's) Park. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College.

Rev. Peter Jonker Sr. of Peoria, Iowa, simply reported to classis that the congregation had ceased to exist. Council minutes and church membership records were saved and the responsibility for the sale of the church building was given to the Luctor, Kansas, church. For a time the church building was used as a school. Later Methodists and Baptists worshiped there and eventually it was purchased by a private family and razed.

By 1905 there were estimated to be about 350 Dutch residents (out of a total population of 500) in Nederland, but only one family (the Bruinsmas) had been members of the Christian Reformed Church. Nederland did become a thriving rice-growing area, with eventually 13,000 acres under cultivation. By 1900, shortly after the first Dutch arrived, the railroad tracks already were lined with large warehouses for storing rice for shipment elsewhere. About half the rice farmers were Dutch. Some of the members of the congregation may have been employed as laborers in the rice industry, but there is no indication that any of them were significant rice producers. In 1902 a weekly newspaper was established as well as grocery stores, feed and hardware stores, and farm implement businesses. There was a restaurant and a livery stable, but very few Dutch (and none of them church members, as far as can be determined) became merchants or trades people in the new village.

At about the time the church was closing, the community suffered serious economic setbacks. Rice production and prices fell drastically in 1905 and, according to one report, Texas rice farmers lost $2 million that year alone. The newly formed First National Bank of Nederland closed its doors and the Port Arthur Rice and Irrigation Company was having serious problems. People, including the Dutch, left in droves for nearby cities like Winnie and Port Arthur, and some headed for Colorado, Arkansas, or for established Dutch colonies in Iowa or Michigan. By 1914 there were only a few Dutch families in the area—and these owned large tracts of land and had diversified into dairy farming, ranching, or truck farming. Among the few who stayed were the Doornbos, Rienstra, and Koelemay families who prospered and became leaders and philanthropists in the community to this day, but none had been members of the Christian Reformed Church. ❧

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Endnotes

1. Sources consulted include: Henry S. Lucas (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1989) 435-441; minute book, church council of the Nederland Christian Reformed Church (CRC), Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan (translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres); Nederland Chamber of Commerce, Nederland, Texas. "Nederland Centennial History: A Pictorial History of Nederland, Texas, 1898-2000"; Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002) 567-575; and Jacob Van Hinte *Netherlanders in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985) 706-716.

2. So named for Albert Kuipers, who had scouted out several places in the west for a new Dutch colony and finally settled on Nederland.

3. Albert Kuipers, "Deliverance and Future for the Dutch Agriculturalist, Horticulturist and Cattle Farmer with Limited Means in South East Texas, North America," (Platte, South Dakota, March 1897).

4. Quoted in Marie R. Fleming, ed. *Nederland, 1898-1986, Texas Sesquicentennial Edition* (Texas Historical Society. Premier Press, Inc., 1986).

5. Eventually the hotel served as a temporary home to the next influx of newcomers when oil was discovered at nearby Spindletop. Finally, though, there was no need for such an elegant structure and it fell into disrepair and was torn down following a storm in 1915. For its entire existence, Dutch families were managers of the hotel and it had a reputation for warm hospitality and absolute cleanliness.

6. The Maarten Koelemay family with eight children, most of whom were adults or approaching adulthood, arrived in March, 1898. Maarten had been a cheesemaker in the Netherlands. The family was active and prominent in the early days of Nederland but never associated with the Christian Reformed Church. Unlike most immigrants to Nederland, the family remained in the area and their descendants still live in Texas.

7. That one-room school was destroyed in the hurricane of 1900. Classes were temporarily conducted in the church until a new building could be completed in 1902. In 1903 there were thirty-two students enrolled, only seven of whom had Dutch surnames.

8. The hurricane hit Galveston especially hard. An estimated 8,000 people perished, making it the deadliest storm in US history.

9. Some secular historical reports are confused when they identify it as a Reformed Church in America congregation.

10. They were never a part of the church, however. Only one of the few Dutch families who remained in Nederland had membership in the church. "A History of the Gatze Jan (George) Rienstra Family," provided by Jan Rienstra.

11. Reported in Marie R. Fleming, ed. *Nederland, 1898-1986, Texas Sesquicentennial Edition* (Texas Historical Society. Premier Press, Inc., 1986) 6-8.

12. Ibid.

13. W. T. Block, "'Didja Knows' About Nederland, Texas"; "Early Nederland Settlers Farmed Rice"; "Elings Family Earliest Hosts of Orange Hotel"; "First Nederland Christmas Celebrated in 1898," "Local Dutch Celebrated Coronation," "Nederland Has History of Festivals," "Rice Crops Brought Dutch Prosperity," "Some Notes on the Adrian Johan Elings Family," with the notation "Most of the credit for this story is due to Mr. Ron Van Zomeren and Mrs. Carol Konynenbelt"; and "Tulip Transplants in East Texas: the Dutch Migration to Nederland, Texas," at *www.wtblock.com*.

14. In most cases, the names used for individuals in this article are their original Dutch names as listed in birth or marriage records or as given in the church membership records.

15. Minute books, Nederland, Texas, records, Archives, Heritage Hall, Calvin College.

16. Newcomers Hendrik and Jannetje Swets arrived in December 1898 and were briefly part of the church before leaving in March 1899.

17. Presumably the Port Arthur Land Company.

18. Classis is a regional body in the Reformed tradition that oversees the work of local congregations.

19. According to congregational minutes, 20 December 1898.

20. Marie Rienstra Fleming, granddaughter of Dirk Ballast, in Robert J. Duncan's "Footprints of Wooden Shoes," in Abernethy, Edward Francis, ed., *The Folklore of Texan Cultures* (Nacogdoches, TX: Texas Folklore Society, 1975).

21. Congregational meeting minutes, 10 August 1902, Nederland CRC Collection, Archives, Heritage Hall, Calvin College.

22. The Jansonius family had three adult children by this time.

Nederland, Texas, Christian Reformed Church Members

Paula Vander Hoven

Tuenis Den Dekker

Only Tuenis Den Dekker lived in Nederland. He married Johanna Van Baardewyk later in Maryland and they subsequently lived in Illinois and Wisconsin. Image courtesy of Ann Smedema.

Tuenis[1] Den Dekker was born in Gorinchem, in the province of South Holland, in 1869. He was twenty-eight years old when he arrived with the first Dutch immigrants on the *Olinda* in November 1897. Despite his youth, he was immediately elected one of the first elders in the new church, and was named president of the congregation. The members also looked to him to educate their children in the faith. But his stay in Nederland and his leadership of that congregation was brief. He left in January 1899, settled very briefly in Maryland, long enough to greet the ship carrying his bride, Johanna Van Baardewyk, also from Gorinchem. She arrived in February and they were married immediately. In Maryland, the newlyweds lived next door to the Elings; Agatha Stufjens Elings was also from Gorinchem. Earlier the Elings had lived in Nederland with Tuenis. The Den Dekkers moved to the Roseland neighborhood of Chicago and later Wisconsin and had five surviving children: Johanna, Willem, Maria, Cornelis, and Tuenis.

For the rest of his life, in Chicago and in East Friesland, Wisconsin, when the family lived there between 1915 and 1923, Den Dekker was a devoted church leader and elder. He read avidly and was a mentor and confidant to pastors throughout his lifetime, sometimes talking through difficult Scripture passages with them.[2]

Elings family

Adrian Elings and his wife Agatha (Stufkens) lived in Maryland, Montana, and Washington after emigrating to Nederland. Images courtesy of Tosha Bos and Carol Konynenbelt.

Adrian J. Elings was born in Amsterdam and had operated a hotel there for ten years.[3] He may have been specifically recruited for his position as manager of the Orange Hotel in Nederland. But, like many other immigrants, he had a bit of the wanderlust in him, and that may have been reason enough to allow him to be enticed to a new opportunity. Elings and his wife Agatha Stufkens[4] and their children Jan, Carolina, Johannes, and Anton Dirk also arrived in Galveston with the first contingent of Dutch newcomers on *Olinda* on 14 November 1897. By the morning of the 18th he was hard at work in his new role as manager of the hotel and she was cooking hearty meals for the forty-six people who had traveled with them.

Her skills and resources were put to the test during the Queen's coronation celebration when she provided meals for hundreds of guests, featuring authentic Dutch cooking. The menu included Hollandsch oranje soep (Dutch orange soup), gekookte visch in boter saus (boiled fish in butter sauce), kalfs carbonade (veal cutlets), gestoofde savoije kool (stewed savoy cabbage), and vrijheids taart (liberty cake). For dessert, ice cream and Dutch cakes were served along with apples, pears, and grapes which must have been transported long distances by train.

It was not surprising that Adrian Elings was chosen to be a deacon when the Nederland church was formed. He had been a staunch member of the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands. He may have stayed in Nederland long enough to see the new church building completed, but just barely. By January 1899 the family had left for Baltimore and they settled soon after that in New Glatz, Maryland.[5] In 1903 they moved to the Amsterdam/Church Hill (later Churchill) area of Montana to farm. When the Manhattan Christian Reformed Church was formed there, Elings was elected one of the first elders. Subsequently the Elings lived in Conrad, Montana, and Zillah, Washington.

Jansonius family

Willem and Anje (Woldinga) Jansonius and their five children. After living in Nederland, most of the family settled in Kansas.

Willem and Anje (Woldinga) Jansonius had been born within a few miles of each other in Leermens and Middelstum in the northern part of the province of Groningen. He had farmed in nearby Zeerijp, where their surviving children were born: Klaas, Anje, Jacobus, Janno, and Gerrit. When they arrived in March 1898, the children ranged in age from eight to nineteen.

The Jansonius family arrived a few weeks before the church was founded and stayed to guide it through its demise. When the Den Dekker and Elings families left in 1899, the congregation chose Jansonius to be their elder, and he filled that position for the remainder of the life of the church. One of his last official acts in that capacity was to sign membership transfers for those who were still members when the church had closed.

The family left Nederland at some point in 1904, soon after the closure of the church, stopping to tour the World's Fair in St. Louis and intending to purchase farmland in Iowa. But the high prices there drove them to Kansas. In the spring of 1905 Willem and Anje and their three youngest sons permanently settled in the Luctor-Prairie View community west of Phillipsburg. Just before they left Nederland, daughter Anje married Pieter Van Der Plas, and the two of them farmed some fifteen miles north in Long Island, Kansas. Sons John and Gerrit Jansonius became well known throughout a wide area in Kansas as pioneers in the breeding of registered Hereford cattle. Son Klaas had married in Texas and remained there.[6]

Kornelis (Cornelius) Pieter Jensma

Jensma arrived with twenty energetic young men on *Olinda* on 28 March 1898. He was twenty years old, the second son of a Frisian farmer and his wife; the rest of his family appear to have remained in the Netherlands. B. J. Dijksma, one of the men who accompanied the group, wrote a few days later in the 12 April issue of *De Grondwet* that "When sitting in your cozy living room in the old country reading a book . . . a prospective immigrant has no inkling of what may befall him when he lands on foreign soil. Spurred on by promises, many of them later had regrets that they were not more cautious about leaving their native land . . . . I have to admit our first impressions of Nederland were not very favorable."[7]

Most of those twenty men were immediately hired by the railroad, and that may have been the case for Kornelis as well. He joined the church when it was formed a month after his arrival, upon making profession of faith. Kornelis, Tuenis Den Dekker, and Geert Venhuizen, also on that voyage, have formed the nucleus for a planned Young Men's Society that never materialized.

By August, after only some five months in Nederland, Jensma left for Chicago, according to the church records. By 1900 he was living in Whitman County, Washington, renting a farm in partnership with another Dutch man. There were only a few other Dutch in that county, and they didn't stay long. The 1910 and the 1920 census record that he was married and living in Nampa, Idaho, where there were about thirty Dutch households.

Klinkenberg family

With the eager young men that arrived in March 1898 were two older people, Gerrit and Hendrikje (Otten) Klinkenberg. They were forty-six and forty-three and had been married about three years earlier, so they came to Nederland as relative newlyweds. Both were from Friesland, he from Bolsward and she from Harlingen, and both had been members of the *Hervormde Kerk*. Gerrit served two terms as deacon of the small Nederland church and he was serving in that capacity when the church dissolved.

The public records in this country and the Netherlands reveal very little about this couple. They apparently had no children, and they returned to the Netherlands. In 1909 they were living in Hichtum (near Bolsward) when he bought from the Lantinga shipbuilders of IJlst, Friesland, a modest 13-foot boat for fishing in the canals. Hendrikje died in Wonseradeel, Friesland, on 3 February 1929.

Rodrigo family

Hendrik, thirty-seven, and Anna (Lissenberg), forty, had both been born in Utrecht as had their six oldest children, Hendrik, Gerard, Jessie, Anna, Jan, and Peter Jan. This family was part of the first wave of newcomers to Nederland and, at the time of their arrival, the children ranged in age from five to thirteen. A daughter Letta was born in April 1898, followed by Ruth in 1904.

Anna had been a member of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* in the Nether-

lands and, on the day the church was formed, she was received into membership on that basis. Her husband Hendrik joined by making profession of faith. That same evening Anna and Hendrik hosted the entire congregation in their home for the installation of the newly-elected elders and deacon. In November 1899, the family relocated to Beaumont, Texas, where he worked as a railroad machinist. When they left, membership of the church fell to nine adults and only the five Jansonius children. By 1910 the Rodrigos were living in Houston and Hendrik was the owner of an iron foundry.

Van Den Bout family

Cornelis and Gerdina (Hamel) were twenty-four and twenty when they arrived in November 1897. He was born in Hardinxveld and she in nearby Werkendam, both east of Rotterdam in the province of South Holland. They had been lured to Nederland by stories of grass growing up to horses' bellies. Young Cornelis proved to be one of the very stable leaders in the Nederland church from the day it was founded until its final days. At the first meeting of the congregation he was elected as an elder, and he also held the office of deacon. He served as clerk for all but the last two meetings. At least once the couple hosted the council meeting in their home.

He recorded the congregation's initial optimism and also the council's struggle with finances and other issues—friction among the members, and the decision to not admit a man whose former congregation declined to forward his membership papers. Cornelis faithfully recorded Scripture passages used to begin meetings, words of encouragement and advice from Student Pastor Van Korlaar and the classical visitors, and the outcome of elections. In addition to those clerical duties, Cornelis was asked to teach Sunday school for the younger children.

Three children were born to the couple in the seven years they lived in Nederland: Cornelia, Adrianus (later Edward), and Teuntje. Cornelis did not record the name of the pastor who baptized his or the other children.

The family moved to Dexter, New Mexico, in December 1904. Fellow Nederlanders the Swets and Huibert Van Der Plas families also settled there at about that time, as did briefly Gatze (George) and Kate (Koelemay) Reinstra.[8] In Dexter the soil was hard as was life. It had been their intention to grow apples and the Van Den Bouts planted an orchard, but hard frosts destroyed some apples, and when they shipped others to faraway markets they didn't receive payment. So the family kept livestock and chickens and collected honey, grew produce, and made cheese to sell. They lived in Dexter for the long term and seven other children were born to them there: Roe, Ted, Elizabeth, Geraldine, Annie, Dora, and Henry. Some of their descendants still live in Dexter. Cornelis and Gerdina Van Den Bout moved to California in their later years to be near their daughters.[9]

Pieter and Anje Van Der Plas

Pieter Van Der Plas and Anje Jansonius married in May 1904, just before the Nederland church closed. Image courtesy of Alta Groeneweg.

Van Der Plas also came from Hardinxveld, the son of a Rhine River fisherman who had drowned; he was related to Cornelis Van Den Bout, who was one day older. He also arrived on *Olinda* in January 1898. Van Der Plas was the only single young man who remained in the church, and one of only a few of all who came that remained in Nederland. He served as an elder in 1901 and 1902. At one point prior to his election, the council had not met for almost two years, a fact which was distressing to the church visitors and apparently to Pieter, since he suggested they meet regularly every three months. As with other suggestions in that little church, it was graciously received and duly noted but never carried out.

In May 1904, as the church was dissolving and most of the congregation moving away, Pieter married Anje Jansonius, the daughter of Willem and Anje. He was thirty-one and she was twenty-two years old and by the time they married they had known each other for seven years. The couple moved to Long Island, Kansas, near her parents and siblings. They farmed there for forty years until they moved to Rock Valley, Iowa, in 1945. They had four children: Christine, William, Tenis and Annette.[10]

Geert Venhuizen

When Geert Venhuizen arrived in Nederland in March 1898 he had $33 in his pocket. He had come from Ten Boer in the province of Groningen, not far from Middlestum and Leermens, and may have known Willem and Anje Jansonius there. He had wanted to be a pastor, and he seems to have had at least some of the skills required to be pastor—he was bright, well-educated, and expressed himself well. His parents were strongly opposed to his career choice and

insisted that he become a farmer like his father.

Like so many, he had a bit of the wanderlust in him. He left Nederland in August, only a few months after arriving. His reported destination was Chicago; he and Cornelis Jensma may have spent some little time there together. But, by early 1901, when he was twenty-four, he had returned to his hometown in the Netherlands to marry Klaassien Dijkema, the daughter of a farmer. Back in this country they stopped off briefly in Maryland, but then lived in the Dutch enclave near Manhattan, Montana, where a daughter Harriett was born to them. In 1904 they homesteaded in MacLeod,[11] Alberta, Canada, where four more children were born during the next eleven years: Alice, Anna, Aldert, and Ada. A number of other Dutch families from Manhattan settled nearby in Alberta. But life was very hard and they were very poor. His dream had always been to go to South Africa and in fact he had written persuasively on that subject. In 1915 they set out from Alberta with that intention but stopped over for a bit in Manhattan and remained there permanently. The last of their children were born there: Clara, Marie, Margaretha, Henry, and John.[12]

Elizabeth Waterdrinker

In a boatload of eager twenty-something young men and a few families arriving in Nederland in 1897, Waterdrinker was about the only young woman. She was twenty-five years old, from Nieuw Niedorp in the province of North Holland, and she made profession of faith on the day the church was founded. Elizabeth may have found work as a maid but however that may have been and wherever she may have worked, her stay in Nederland was short. In January 1899 Elizabeth left for Port Arthur where she worked as a maid in a private home. Nothing more could be discovered about her in the public records in either country.[13]

Hendrik and Jannetje (Annie Van Den Bout) Swets

The Swets family joined the Nederland church in December 1898, transferring from the small and new Christian Reformed church in Maxwell, New Mexico. In the 1890s Maxwell had gained acclaim in the province of Groningen as a place for treatment of tuberculosis sufferers, and Dutch patients made the long trip there in hope of healing. Perhaps either Hendrik or Jannetje were patients there, though there is no record of this. They undoubtedly came to Nederland at the invitation of Jannetje's brother Cornelis; they were thirty-four and twenty-eight years old at the time, with no children. But Nederland church records indicate that they returned to the Netherlands three months later in March 1899. Their stay in the old country wasn't permanent and they once again followed the Van Den Bout family, this time to Dexter, New Mexico.

As noted, there were several other Dutch families in Dexter and, in March 1914, a Christian Reformed congregation was organized there with eight families, five single adults, and twenty-six baptized members. "William Swets" is listed as the clerk of the congregation when it was founded, but there is no other record of a person with this name in Dexter, and it may well be that Hendrik Swets was clerk. This church closed in 1920 without ever having had a pastor and, at some point, the Swets family moved to a farm near Everett, Washington. They sold their Dexter home to the Van Den Bout family for one dollar. Hendrik and Jannetje Swets had two daughters, Edith and Ellen.[14]

Groeneveld family

Hendrik W. and Clara Groeneveld and family arrived from Pella, Iowa, and joined the church in May 1901 with their seven children: Ingeltje, Teuntje, Metta Wilhelmina, Jan, Hendrika, Clazina, and Adrianna, ranging in age from two to fifteen. They had immigrated in October 1893 and had also apparently lived briefly in Houston where their youngest daughter was born.

The little congregation in Nederland must have been happy to welcome the Groeneveld family since membership had declined to seven adults, plus the three Jansonius young adults and two Jansonius children. Further, the community had recently survived the devastating hurricane of 1900. Surely their coming with seven children was seen as good news for Sunday school or catechism classes.

Hendrik became an elder in 1902 and served as clerk of the council in 1904, following the long tenure of Cornelis Van Den Bout in that position. He recorded the final two meetings of the council and died six months later in Prairie View, Kansas, where they had settled along with the Jansonius family. Clara was forty-four and her only son, Jan, was fifteen at the time. As soon as he was able, Jan took over farming, and supported his mother and his sisters.[15]

Ynskje (Annie) Uilkema Hooyenga family

In 1903 Ynskje Uilkema came to the Nederland church from the Christian Reformed church in Passaic, New Jersey. She and her husband Dirk Hooyenga (who did not join) had

four daughters and two sons: Tamme, Janke, Alida, Martje, Boltje, and Abel, ranging in age from three to fifteen. The two oldest had been born in villages in Friesland and the rest in New Jersey.

This seems to have been another family driven by the need to roam. They stayed only very briefly in Texas and then moved to Kansas, where another son was born in 1904. A couple of years later Dirk and Ynskje were living in northcentral Montana with the youngest of their children, including two more born there. Following that, they made their way back east and settled in upstate New York.

Willemke (Van Randen) Bruinsma family

Carolus Bruinsma and Willemke (the sister of Ypkje van Randen Ballast) and their children Anke, 8; Gerke, 7; and Afke, 4; arrived in Galveston in July 1903 and by the time they joined the church a year later a daughter Anna had been born. The family had lived in Amsterdam where the older children had been baptized.

Carolus Bruinsma had been a butcher by trade, but in Nederland he worked in the rice fields. He was known as an honest, upright, and hard-working person. Shortly after they arrived and before the family joined the church, he died in his sleep of what was presumed to be a heart attack. This left Willemke, also in her early thirties, to care for her four young children in a little red cottage on the main street. As others were leaving Nederland she and the Ballast family stayed and after a few years she married again. Her second husband, William De Vries, had worked in Africa for the Netherland South African Railroad Company. They had one daughter, Dena.

All the Bruinsma children attended Nederland schools, at first as a way of learning English. In 1917 Gerke was in the first graduating class of Nederland High School. The sisters each married local Nederlanders and each in their own way served the village well. Many descendants of this family still live in Nederland and have contributed generously to the community.[16]

Huibert Van Der Plas

At the very last recorded meeting of the council of the Nederland Christian Reformed Church, Huibert Van Der Plas made profession of faith and was received as a member. He was the brother of Pieter, also from Hardinxveld, and they were related to the Van Den Bouts. When oil was discovered at Spindletop, near Nederland, an influx of rough characters arrived to work there and lived in the Orange Hotel. Some of the Dutch, including the Van Der Plas brothers, decided it was time to move on.

In 1909 Huibert returned to his hometown in the Netherlands to marry Elizabeth Kamsteeg, whose father was a fisherman there. The couple emigrated and lived briefly in Dexter, New Mexico, but then they migrated northward, working in fruit orchards and potato fields, often living in tents near the work they found. Eventually they arrived in Kansas and purchased a very small farm near Long Island and the Jansonius family and Huibert's brother Pieter. This was also close to the Luctor Christian Reformed Church, where they became active and faithful members for the rest of their lives. They were simple people, never wealthy, who, once they settled in Kansas, never traveled far. Elizabeth was disabled from birth and they never had children.[17]

Ladies' Aid Society in Luctor, Kansas. The woman on the far right in the front row is Lizzie (Mrs. Huibert) Van Der Plas. Image courtesy of by Henrietta Van Kooten.

Dirk and Ypkje (Van Randen) Ballast family

The Ballast family: Rev. Dirk, Dirk Jr,, Ypkje (Van Randen), and Johanna. Johanna later married Dan Rienstra, who became a community leader in Nederland. Image courtesy of the Nederland Historical Society.

There is an intriguing discrepancy between the church minutes and membership records and other reports about Dirk Ballast. Ballast is never mentioned in the church documents, but secular records describing the time suggest that he was pastor of the congregation; some suggest he was

a lay pastor rather than an ordained pastor, but he is reported to have performed at least one baptism.[18]

Ballast, from Bolsward, Friesland, had spent two years in Alamosa, Colorado, from 1892 to 1894, working as a carpenter and furniture maker, but then returned to the Netherlands. He and his wife, Ypkje Van Randen, and children, Johanna and Dirk, arrived in Nederland in November 1897. On Christmas Eve 1898 he gathered several other Dutch families at the Orange Hotel and from Luke 1 read the story of the angel's announcement to Mary. One of the immigrant girls played a zither and provided music for dancing, and Agatha Elings served a meal of soup, boiled fish, roast beef, stewed cabbage, and cookies—all Dutch treats. For a short period the Ballast family became managers of the Orange Hotel. In 1903 Ypkje Ballast's sister Willemke arrived from Nederland with her husband Carolus Bruinsma and family and Dirk Ballast baptized their daughter Anna when she was born the next year. Eventually the Ballasts moved to Mena, Arkansas.

Endnotes

1. Official Dutch records cite his name as Tuenis den Dekker, but in this country he used this alternate spelling.
2. Debbie McLaughlin e-mails dated 22 and 26 February 2010, 1 and 2 March 2010.
3. The family had also lived in Rotterdam where, according to the church membership records, their oldest child was born.
4. Also written as Stufkes.
5. According to the church membership records in the Archives at Calvin College. The records state, erroneously, that it was January 1898. The minutes of the congregational meeting of 20 December 1898 refer to the imminent departure of both Elings and Den Dekker. At the congregational meeting of 14 February 1899, an elder and a deacon were elected to replace them.
6. H. J. Jansonius, "Genealogy Jansonius," 1956. Unpublished family history provided by Alta Groeneweg, February 2010; from Henry De Witt's research assistance pertaining to the Jansonius family, 15 December 2011.
7. Marie R. Fleming, ed., *Nederland: 1898-1986 — Texas Sesquicentennial Edition* Nederland, 1898-1986, (Texas Historical Society. Premier Press, Inc., 1986) 7.
8. The Rienstras lived in Dexter in 1906 or 1907 before they returned to Texas. Other Dutch families not associated with the Christian Reformed Church in Nederland also migrated there.
9. Telephone conversation with Isadora Van Den Bout on 8 March 2010.
10. H. J. Jansonius, "Genealogy Jansonius," 1956. Unpublished family history provided by Alta Groeneweg, February 2010.
11. Near Lethbridge.
12. Telephone conversation with Margaret Venhuizen Emmelkamp on 6 February 2010.
13. Janet Sjaarda Sheeres research pertaining to Elizabeth Waterdrinker, 20 January 2010.
14. James Stavinga, research assistance in an e-mail and attachments dated 12 April 2010; and Gert De Groot telephone conversation on 19 April 2010.
15. Angie Pluger Ploegstra research provided on 16 June 2011; and Janet Sjaarda Sheeres e-mail of 5 May 2010.
16. Marilyn Terwey telephone conversation on 20 February 2010, mail received 22 March 2010, and e-mails on 22 February 2010, and 8 and 25 March 2010.
17. Henrietta Van Kooten telephone conversation on 31 March 2010 and information sent on 28 June 2010; Bill Van Der Plas telephone conversation on 16 April 2010.
18. W. T. Block, "A History of the Albert Henry Rienstra Family — The Memoirs of Dorothy Davis," (Mrs. A. H.) Rienstra reports "Mr. Ballast was a lay minister for the local Dutch Reformed Congregation"; and Marie R. Fleming, ed. Nederland, 1898-1986, Texas Sesquicentennial Edition (Texas Historical Society, Inc., 1986) 80, reports the baptism. Neither the Christian Reformed Church in North America nor the Reformed Church in America has a record of him as a minister. Dirk Ballast, his grandson, in a conversation on 1 March 2010, mentioned his grandfather was a Methodist minister.

Birth Years for Nederland Church Members

Tuenis Den Dekker 1869

Adrian J. Elings 1857
Agatha Stufkens Elings 1852
Jan 1882
Carolina 1884
Johannes 1886
Anton Dirk 1888

Willem Jansonius 1852
Anje Woldinga Jansonius 1854
Klaas 1879
Anje 1882
Jacobus 1884
Janno 1887
Gerrit 1890

Kornelis Pieter Jensma c. 1878

Gerrit Klinkenberg 1852
Hendrikje Otten Klinkenberg 1855

Hendrik Rodrigo c. 1861
Anna Lissenberg Rodrigo c. 1858
Hendrik 1885
Gerard 1886
Jessie 1887
Anna 1889
Jan 1890
Peter Jan 1893
Letta 1898
Ruth c. 1904

Cornelis van den Bout 1873
Gerdina Hamel van den Bout 1876
Cornelia 1901
Adrianus (Edward) 1902
Teuntje 1904

Pieter van der Plas 1873

Geert Venhuizen 1877

Elizabeth Waterdrinker 1872

Hendrik Swets 1864
Jannetje (Annie) van den Bout Swets 1870

Hendrik Groeneveld c. 1854
Clara/Clazina Koetsier Groeneveld 1861
Ingeltje 1886
Teuntje 1887
Metta Wilhelmina 1889
Jan 1890
Hendrika 1891
Clazina 1893
Adrianna 1899

Huibert van der Plas 1877

Ynskje (Annie) Uilkema Hooyenga 1863 (wife of Dirk Hooyenga)
Tamme 1888
Janke 1890
Alida 1892
Martje 1894
Boltje 1897
Abel 1900

Willemke van Randen (wife of Carolus Bruinsma) c. 1871
Anke 1896
Gerke 1897
Afke 1900
Anna 1904

Ages of members when the church was founded in 1898

Willem Jansonius 46

Agatha Stufken Elings 46

Gerrit Klinkenberg 46
Anje Woldinga Jansonius 44

Hendrikje Otten Klinkenberg 43

Adrian Elings 41

Anna Lissenberg Rodrigo 40

Hendrik Rodrigo 37

Tuenis Den Dekker 29

Elizabeth Waterdrinker 26

Pieter van der Plas 25

Cornelis van den Bout 25

Gerdina Hamel van den Bout 22

Geert Venhuizen 21

Kornelis Pieter Jensma c. 20

Klaas Jansonius 19

Anje Jansonius 16

Jan Elings 16

Carolina Elings 14

Jacobus Jansonius 14

Hendrik Rodrigo 13

Johannes Elings 12

Gerard Rodrigo 12

Jessie Rodrigo 11

Janno Jansonius 11

Anton Dirk Elings 10

Anna Rodrigo 9

Gerrit Jansonius 8

Jan Rodrigo 8

Peter Jan Rodrigo 5

Letta Rodrigo baby (not yet born)

Cornelia van den Bout 1901

Adrianus van den Bout 1902

Teuntje van den Bout 1904

Then came (approximate ages when they arrived)

Arrived later in 1898

Hendrik Swets 34
Jannetje van den Bout Swets 28

1901

Clara Groeneveld 40
Hendrik Groeneveld 47
Ingeltje 15
Teuntje 14
Metta Wilhelmina 12
Jan 11
Hendrika 10
Clazina 8
Adriana 2

1903

Ynskje Uilkema Hooyenga 40
Tamme 15
Janke 13
Alida 11
Martje 8
Boltje 6
Abel 3

1904

Huibert van der Plas 27

Willemke van Randen Bruinsma 33
Anke 8
Gerke 7
Afke 4
Anna Bruinsma baby

The Theodore Roosevelt Chair

Robert P. Swierenga and Kenneth Bus

The former Trinity Reformed Church,[1] founded in 1891 under the energetic leadership of Rev. Peter Moerdyke, was the first English-language Reformed Church in America (RCA) congregation in Chicago. Although it built an impressive brick edifice, membership peaked at 300 in 1895 and then declined steadily until the church closed in 1919. But the church was home to an artifact—the Roosevelt chair—made famous by its occasional occupant, Theodore Roosevelt.

Roosevelt, also known as "Teddy," "Theodore Rex," and "TR," prized his Dutch heritage and, when he traveled the country as the governor of New York (1898-1900) and vice-president and president (1901-1909), he made it a practice to worship in Dutch Reformed congregations. The Roosevelt family hailed from the province of Zeeland during the seventeenth century and held a patronship in the New Netherlands colony.[2] TR's political career began with an appointment as New York State Assemblyman, followed in order by member of the New York City Board of Police Commissioners, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Governor of New York, US Civil Service Commissioner, Vice President, and then President of the United States.[3]

On three occasions, when Roosevelt was in Chicago he worshiped with Trinity Reformed at 913 South Marshfield Avenue, located on the northern fringe of the *Groninger Hoek* (the area of Harrison Street west of Halsted Street) two miles southwest of downtown Chicago. Trinity had been founded by members of the First Reformed Church of Chicago, after the mother church refused to give up Dutch-language worship and, at the time, Trinity became the only English-language Dutch Reformed congregation in the city.[4]

Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), the 26th President of the United States. Public domain image.

The fledgling congregation, which affiliated with the English-speaking Classis of Illinois of the Reformed Church in America rather than the Dutch-speaking Classis of Holland (Michigan), called as their first pastor Rev. Peter Moerdyke, a native of Biervliet in the province of Zeeland. Moerdyke grew up in Zeeland, Michigan, after his immigrant parents settled there when he was five years old. A shared Zeeland heritage and Moerdyke's unabashed belief in Americanism undoubtedly appealed to Roosevelt, who similarly took pride in his Zeeland roots and in America's greatness.[5]

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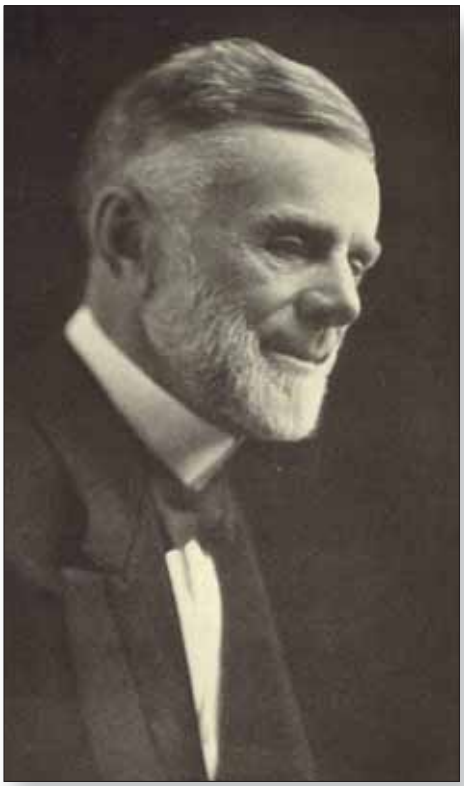
A native of Elmhurst, Illinois, Kenneth Bus has bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. He is the director of the International Education Program at Glendale Community College. Previously he lived and worked outside the United States for almost fifteen years in Iran and Saudi Arabia.



Rev. Peter Moerdyke (1845-1923) was ordained by the Reformed Church in America in 1869 and served three churches in Michigan and on the Hope College faculty before accepting the call to Trinity Reformed Church in Chicago. Images courtesy of the Joint Archives of Holland.

Moerdyke and his older brother William made up one-quarter of the first graduating class of Hope College in 1866, with Peter the youngest class member. He and William went on to the college theology department (now Western Theological Seminary) and graduated in 1869. Peter's first charge was a shared pastorate in the small Macon and South Macon Reformed churches in Lenawee County, Michigan, which were members of the English-speaking Classis of Michigan, which ordained Moerdyke. His stay in Lenawee County was less than two years as Hope College came calling for a classics (Latin and Greek) professor.

After a two-year professorship at his alma mater (1871-1873), Moerdyke accepted a call from the small and struggling First Reformed Church of Grand Rapids (also English-speaking), founded in 1840, where he remained nineteen years. When the Reformed Church Synod of 1884 recommended that Hope College reopen its theology department, Moerdyke and Rev. Henry E. Dosker were appointed temporary lectors to join Professor Nicholas Steffens. Moerdyke taught courses in Greek, exegesis, and biblical antiquities.

In late 1891 Moerdyke left Grand Rapids for the Chicago charge, where he labored energetically for nearly seventeen years, until 1907. German-Reformed Heidelberg University (Tiffin, Ohio) conferred on him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in 1889 and his alma mater, Hope College, did the same in 1905. The General Synod of the Reformed Church elected him its vice president in 1888 and president in 1916.[6]

Shortly after Moerdyke was installed at Trinity, the fledgling congregation erected a brick edifice to seat five hundred, with an ornate Portland brownstone façade and a copper cornice. The cornerstone ceremony took place in an impressive service on New Year's Day 1892 and the joyous "feast of dedication" followed in July.[7]

Moerdyke made a name for himself in the RCA by writing a regular feature, entitled "Chicago Letter," in the denominational weekly, the *Christian Intelligencer*, published in New York. He wrote the column faithfully during his sixteen years in Chicago.[8]

"Chicago Letter," *Christian Intelligencer* 11 July 1900

Governor Theodore Roosevelt worshiped in Trinity Reformed Church, Chicago, last Sunday morning. His loyalty to his own Church delighted our people. The Colonel threw himself heartily into every part of our services rising with Christians to welcome four new members, partaking of communion with us, joining in our old-fashioned congregational singing, and not leaving himself without telling witness in the deacon's basket. At my request he addressed the Sunday school, all the people remaining seated after the benediction to hear a very sensible, earnest, winning talk. And then came an extemporized and most enthusiastic reception given him by old and young. He had to tear himself away after his lengthy and pleasing fellowship with us all, and after placing his autograph in numerous Bibles of the children.

Without any reference to politics in any of our services by anyone, his frank, cordial spirit and manner won all hearts, and all believed his statement that he had greatly enjoyed the morning with our Church. We beheld in exercise the traits of our excellent, distinguished fellow-citizen, which make him so popular and powerful. We commend to all Reformed visitors and settlers here, from the East, the example of his love for his own Church, knowing how they could, and should, strengthen and cheer us, and how gladly they, too, would be welcomed among us. The Governor's happy surprise to us as a Reformed Church means more than a passing sensation and will be practically appreciated by all our Western people. When he so unaffectedly spoke to groups about him of his Dutch ancestry, and recited snatches of Dutch nursery rhymes, and bade us his friendly good-bye we all felt, as if he were an old friend, and a few boys about his parting carriage could no longer restrain the cheers they had ached to give him.

P. Moerdyke, 6 July 1900

Moerdyke also wielded his pen as the stated clerk of the Particular Synod of Chicago for the same sixteen years.

Moerdyke and his congregation, strongly Republican in political allegiance, warmly welcomed Governor Theodore Roosevelt to worship services at Trinity Reformed Church three times between July and October 1900. Each visit was dutifully reported in Moerdyke's "Chicago Letter" column in the *Christian Intelligencer*, which was read coast to coast in Dutch Reformed Church circles.

At the first visit, in early July, Moerdyke invited the governor to address the Sunday school immediately following the morning service. Everyone stayed seated after the benediction "to hear a very sensible, earnest, winning talk." Moerdyke did not indicate the theme, but he reported that TR won every heart by reveling in their common Dutch ancestry and reciting snatches of Dutch nursery rhymes. He left with the "friendly good-bye" of "an old friend." When the governor's carriage left the curb, a "few boys" could no longer contain themselves; they broke the Sabbath decorum by cheering loudly.

The Chippendale-style chair that was used by Theodore Roosevelt when he worshiped at Trinity Reformed Church in Chicago.

At the time Roosevelt visited Trinity Reformed Church, Chippendale-designed chairs were very popular in the United States. Images courtesy of Kenneth Bus.

As Governor Roosevelt's visibility spread as the 1900 presidential campaign developed, his second visit in September drew a standing-room-only crowd. After the worship service, again everyone stayed to hear his fifteen-minute Sunday school talk on the topic of education and the building of character in the family. On this occasion, Moerdyke offered Roosevelt a "free and reserved seat," the famous Roosevelt chair.

This visit caught the attention of the "street." As TR walked down the church steps to his carriage, about a dozen neighborhood boys rudely shouted the name of William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate for president. As Moerdyke reported in his "Chicago Letter" column: "The Colonel gently raised his hand and voice, saying: 'Boys, be still.' Then one or two of this little gang—utter strangers to us all, threw a handful of dry sand, taken from a pile of it dumped at the curb for the construction of our new sidewalk. The sand fell upon the famous Rough Rider's hat and upon others as well. As the carriage moved off, the hoodlums ran after it some seventy yards, full of vile epithets, curses, mud, sticks and stone hurling . . . ."[9]

Chicago newspapers, notably the *Chicago Record*, a Democratic sheet, in its Monday edition played up the public insult of the Republican leader and embellished the story. The pastor, caught off guard, supposedly called the police "amid the women's shrieks and apprehensions of bloodshed, etc., etc. . . ." Moerdyke condemned these "wildest, wilful (sic), most insulting misrepresentations. . . . Pity the poor dupe who patronizes and trusts any such unscrupulous sensationalism. Our congregation and visitors who witnessed the whole affair are indignant, aggrieved and filled with loathing of such journalism. This campaign falsehood was almost 'created out of nothing,' as the plain facts will show."[10]

After William McKinley and Roosevelt won the presidential and vice-presidential election, Trinity Reformed Church adopted the following resolution:

Not a few enthusiastic congratulations are extended by Trinity (our) Reformed Church of this city to our distinguished and loyal friend, Vice-President-elect [sic] Theodore Roosevelt. Our interest in his career and present successes has grown deep and lively and from our acquaintance with him and his magnetism as a man of genuine worth and brave deeds we contend that no small proportion of the great victory just

"Chicago Letter," *Christian Intelligencer* 17 October 1900

Governor Roosevelt, our "parishioner when in this city," as he puts it, was most heartily welcomed for the third time by Trinity Reformed Church last Sunday morning. As he was expected, the capacity of our church was taxed by the large gathering of his admirers, who gave him an informal reception at the close of the service. Thereupon occurred the alleged insult upon the street, of which the wildest, wilful (sic), most insulting misrepresentations were made by some of the Monday newspapers, among which the *Chicago Record* was the most eminent in studied fabrications. Pity the poor dupe who patronizes and trusts any such unscrupulous sensationalism. Our congregation and visitors who witnessed the whole affair are indignant, aggrieved and filled with loathing of such journalism. This campaign falsehood was almost "created out of nothing," as the plain facts will show.

Our distinguished visitor walked rapidly down the steps toward his waiting carriage, about a dozen mere boys rudely shouting meanwhile for Bryan. The Colonel gently raised his hand and voice, saying: "Boys, be still." Then one or two of this little gang — utter strangers to us all — threw a handful of dry sand, taken from a pile of it dumped at the curb for the construction of our new sidewalk. The sand fell upon the famous Rough Rider's hat and upon others as well. As the carriage moved off, the hoodlums ran after it some seventy yards, full of vile epithets, curses, mud, sticks and stone hurling, of the pastor's "unpreparedness" (sic) and his apology for the small congregation of "sixty," of his calling for the police, of the women's shrieks and apprehensions of bloodshed, etc., etc., the conscienceless reporter was the inventor. As one of our parishioners remarked: "Had any such rank offense as *The Record* palms off upon the public really occurred, I "standing right by" and scores of others would instantly and summarily have dealt with those gamins in protection of the noble candidate, who so highly honors our church, our denomination, and the Hollanders of this country by his loyal and most cordial visits!

P. Moerdyk 12 October 1900

achieved is due to his name and efforts. Honor to whom honor is due![11]

When "our distinguished fellow-worshipper" and "occasional parishioner" visited Trinity Church for the third time on 1 September 1901, he came as the distinguished Vice President of the United States. It was a mere five days before President McKinley was shot and fatally wounded by an assassin's bullet in Buffalo, New York. McKinley died eight days later, elevating Roosevelt to the nation's highest office.[12] The September visit was unannounced, due ostensibly to Roosevelt's policy of keeping his Sunday morning schedule "strictly private." No doubt the actions of the nasty street urchins on the previous visit played into the secrecy.[13]

Moerdyke, by now TR's personal friend, invited the vice president to deliver the homily. Roosevelt obliged and expounded extemporaneously for forty minutes on the New Testament text: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22). The sermon, Moerdyke reported, ". . . was marked by his characteristic strenuous and sound sense and plain, direct speech,

Siewert and Anje (Annie) Veenkamp Bus as they were boarding a flight from Chicago to New York to honor their 60th wedding anniversary. Image courtesy of Kenneth Bus.

and was received by a full house with decided satisfaction."

November 1901 was the last time Roosevelt is known to have worshiped at Trinity Church. The president returned to Chicago in July 1903 and Moerdyke participated in an official dinner reception with 6,000 fellow Chicagoans, headed by Mayor Carter Harrison II. Moerdyke left Trinity in 1907 to accept a call in South Bend, Indiana. When the neighborhood changed, the church closed in 1919 and the Roosevelt chair seems to have passed to the Siewert Bus family, which has preserved it.

Siewert Bus (1854-1938) immigrated to Chicago at age seventeen with his parents and siblings in 1872. The city was still recovering from the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The family sold their home and belongings in the small village of Westerwijtwerd near Middelstum in the province of Groningen, Netherlands, largely at the urging of Rev. Bernardus de Beij, pastor of the First Reformed Church of Chicago (1868-1891) and the fam-

ily's former pastor in Middelstum. Siewert's father, Jan Bus, died a few days after their arrival in Chicago, leaving Siewert to support his mother and younger brothers and sisters. The family depended heavily on assistance from their new church, De Beij's congregation.[14]

In 1878 Siewert married Anje (Annie) Veenkamp in Chicago and together they ran a small grocery store on West Adams Street in the first *Groninger Hoek*. They started a family and by 1890 they had eight children. In 1891 Siewert and Annie became charter members of Trinity Reformed Church, where he served as one of the first deacons. They were attracted to the congregation because of its English-language and progressive worship.

Trinity Church hung on for a while after Moerdyke's departure, but by 1919 the neighborhood had changed and the congregation decided to disband. After Trinity closed, Bus and his family moved to a new house at 4921 West Van Buren Street, a few miles west of Trinity, where he lived until his death on 27 December 1938. His wife Annie lived there another year until she died on 2 December 1939. At that time the chair seems to have passed to the youngest child, Marinus Bus, who had moved into the Van Buren Street house to take care of his aging parents. Marinus was the only one of five surviving children—all sons—still living in Chicago. When Annie passed away, all of the items in the house, including the famous chair, came into his possession. Marinus "Rene" Bus (1890-1966) was a carpenter and jobber. He married Myrtle Albee in 1915 and the couple had one child, a daughter named Marie, who died at age twelve in 1932; his wife Myrtle died about 1935. In 1937 he married Lillian Lindner, but the couple had no children. Lillian died in 1960 and Marinus died on 10 December 1966.

After the Van Buren Street house was sold, Marinus had moved to an apartment, taking his parents' treasures with him. The job of clearing out his apartment in Chicago fell to a nephew, Sievert Bus (1917-1991).[15] Sievert was the son of Cornelius Bus (1887-1969) and Aafke "Effie" Bandringa (1888-1981), and had been named after his grandfather in the Dutch tradition. Sievert was married to Leona Behm and the couple had seven children. They lived in Elmhurst, Illinois, about fifteen miles west of Chicago's Loop. Bus had been close to his uncle and took some of his children along to the apartment on a sunny winter Saturday morning to go through all of Marinus's possessions. What they found there was a treasure-trove of family heirlooms and sentimental objects, most of them passed on by clan patriarch Siewert Bus. The cache included a memoir of his emigration from the Netherlands as a teenager, his arrival in Chicago, and his courtship and marriage. There were photographs and albums of family history and documents, including his original marriage certificate signed by Rev. De Beij, and a 16mm film of the fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration of Siewert and Annie Bus in 1928 with their seven children and spouses and grandchildren. Almost overlooked was an old oak chair, dark with age, with a broken cane seat. When the chair was turned over, a faded piece of paper on the bottom noted that Theodore Roosevelt had sat in that chair. All of the items were taken to Elmhurst.

Sievert Bus, handy with carpentry tools, like his grandfather, cleaned up the chair and replaced the missing caning with an upholstered piece of plywood. He carefully removed the written documentation on the underside of the chair and copied it in his own handwriting onto a sturdy

"Chicago Letter," *Christian Intelligencer* 11 September 1901

Vice President Theodore Roosevelt was again most cordially welcomed as our occasional "parishioner" on last Sunday morning. The congregation of Trinity Church were [sic] anew confirmed in their admiration of our distinguished fellow-worshipper because of his loyalty to his own church, his manly declaration in the midst of public political life and friends that he is a Christian, and his charming humility in meeting with us and not seeking the sanctuaries of the wealthy or aristocratic.

He had not forgotten his promise to preach a lay sermon at his next visit, and, upon our reminder, gave us a forty-minute address on being doers of the Word and not hearers only. It was marked by his characteristic strenuous and sound sense and plain, direct speech, and was received by a full house with decided satisfaction. After the service all gathered about him to honor and thank him, and to make his acquaintance. His attendance with us is never announced by him in his published programme for the Lord's Day, since he wishes his movements during hours of worship to be "strictly private." At this sadly critical juncture, while the nation entreats the All-Ruler to spare our noble Chief Magistrate, there is relief, in the midst of a threatened blow, by reason of a possible successor so eminently qualified and deservedly popular.

P. Moerdyke, 7 September [1901]

piece of cardboard that he affixed to the bottom of the plywood.

For thirty-three years the chair was proudly displayed and used in the living room of the modest Bus family ranch home at 295 East Van Buren Street in Elmhurst, Illinois. Sievert Bus died in 1991, but his wife Leona continued living in the house until 1999. When she moved to a retirement home in Elmhurst the chair passed to the couple's eldest son, who recently had the chair reconditioned and re-caned in an attempt to return it as close as possible to its original condition. Roosevelt first worshiped at Trinity in 1900, making the chair at least 112 years old. It remains in excellent condition, with no major blemishes or flaws, and seems likely to stay in the Bus family for many years to come. ❧

Endnotes

1. At the time called Trinity American Reformed Church because of its use of English.
2. Roosevelt's fourth great grandfather, Claes Maartenszen van Rosenvelt, came to America about 1640. Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were fifth cousins; Eleanor Roosevelt was Theodore's niece and Franklin's fifth cousin once removed.
3. Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1979) and *Theodore Rex* (New York: Random House, 2001).
4. Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002) 141-42.
5. "Peter Moerdyke, D. D.," *The Anchor* (July 1891) 160-61; Erica Heeg, "The Force of Americanization: Peter Moerdyke and His American Pursuit" (student paper, Hope College, 2004).
6. "Moerdyke," *Anchor*, 160; Wynand Wichers, *A Century of Hope, 1866-1966* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1966), 284, 151.
7. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago*, 142.
8. All the columns have been electronically scanned and exceed 320,000 words.
9. "Chicago Letter," *Christian Intelligencer*, 17 October 1900.
10. "Chicago Letter," *Christian Intelligencer*, 17 October 1900.
11. Moerdyke, "Chicago Letter," (9 November 1900) *Christian Intelligencer*, 14 November 1900.
12. As he was shaking hands with the public inside the Temple of Music on the grounds of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, McKinley was shot on 6 September 1901 by Leon Czolgosz. He died on 14 September 1901 from the gangrenous bullet wounds. Czolgosz, a native of Alpena, Michigan, was arrested immediately and his trial began on 23 September 1901, he was found guilty the next day, and executed on 29 October 1901.
13. "The Chicago Letter," dated 7 September 1901, which reports on Roosevelt's visit as vice president, was in press when McKinley was shot on the 6th.
14. Kenneth P. Bus, ed., *The Story of My Life by Siewert Bus. 1854-1938* (Chicago, 1999).
15. He spelled his name "Sievert" rather than "Siewert" as his grandfather had.

for the future

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

William Braaksma traces the history of a Reformed resort community in northern Michigan on Big Star Lake.

Image courtesy of Richard H. Harms.

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