Origins

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Historical Magazine of The Archives

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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.

Cover photo:
Montana Homestead Land

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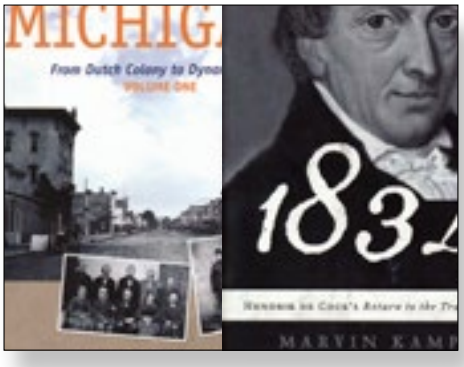

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from the editor. . .

This Issue

We begin this issue with a portion of Minnie Voetberg Brink's recollections of her Montana childhood. Although her Montana journal was written many years after the events, her memory of the unsuccessful effort to establish a Dutch-American presence in north central Montana during the second decade of the twentieth century is remarkable. Paula Vander Hoven and Angie Ploegstra, who have written in *Origins* before on small short-lived Dutch communities about which little had been known, present results of their work in the Gulf Coast area of Texas. Vander Hoven focuses on the community of Hamshire, while Ploestra writes about nearby Amsterdam/Liverpool. Douglas Rozendal, using the experiences of Jan Hospers, details the difficult process some immigrants went through when deciding to immigrate. Lastly, we present a review of the latest book by Janet S. Sheeres on the Dutch settlement in Amelia County, Virginia.

News from the Archives

During the fall and early winter we processed several larger collections. First was a 13 cu. ft. addition of the research files of Dr. Quentin Schulze, Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences at Calvin College and holder of the Arthur H. DeKruyter Chair. The additional materials detail Schultze's working on the Bible and communications and St. Augustine and communications. We also organized the 31 cu. ft. of correspondence from Alvin Plantinga, the John A. O'Brien Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for Philosophy of Religion emeritus at Notre Dame. The files provide insight into the philosophy and Christian philosophy during the last three decades of the twentieth century. We processed an addition to the Robert Swierenga papers, consisting primarily of his research files for his Elim Christian School project; as well as an addition of the professional publications of Leonard Sweetman, Professor of Religion emeritus at Calvin College. And we received and organized the records of two discontinued Christian Reformed congregations, Good Shepherd of Flushing, Michigan, and Crookston, Minnesota.

Among the materials received from individuals were the papers of Jack Kuipers, Professor of Mathematics emeritus and renowned scholar of quaternions, a number system defined as the quotient of two vectors in three dimensional space, used on guidance systems as well as virtual reality software. We also received the papers of historian Charles Miller and Rev. Timothy Monsma, who taught religion and theology at several institutions. And we received the records of the two discontinued Christian Reformed congregations mentioned above.

Origins published *The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880* by Janet Shaarda Sheeres, which is reviewed in this issue. Her extensively annotated minutes of the synods of the Christian Reformed Church, 1857-1880 is being designed. Both are from the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and the Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America.

We continue our work on indexing the birthday, obituary, marriage, and anniversary records from the *Banner*. The URL (uniform resource locator) for the data, 1984-2013 is *http://www.calvin.edu/hh/Banner/Banner.htm*.

Endowment

Currently our endowment fund and operating fund have a value of $462,163. Thanks to the generosity of so many donors and investment returns, this is a 14 percent increase from last year. The monies in our operating fund cover the various expenses for *Origins*, programs in Heritage Hall, and our book publication projects.

Staff

In January Wendy Blankespoor retired after twenty years in Heritage Hall (twenty-five years with Calvin College). We thank her for her dedicated service to Heritage Hall. She will continue to help us as a volunteer.

Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives and editor of *Origins*; Hendrina VanSpronsen is the office coordinator and business manager of *Origins*; Laurie Haan is the department assistant; Robert Bolt is field agent and assistant archivist; and Anna Kathryn Feltes is our student assistant. Our volunteers include Ed Gerritsen, Ralph Haan, Helen Meulink, Clarice Newhof, Gerrit W. Sheeres, Janet Sheeres, Jeannette Smith, and Ralph Veenstra.

Richard H. Harms

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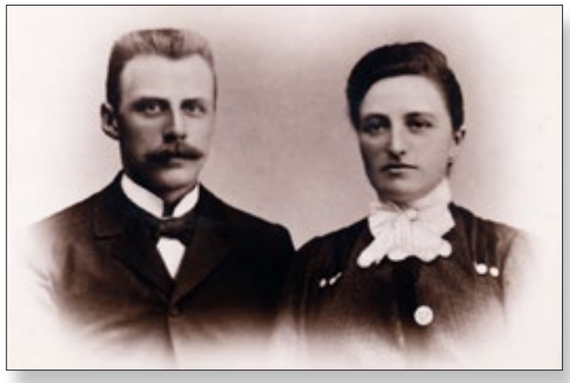
Montana Journal[1]

Minnie Voetberg Brink

In November 1911 my parents, Wiebe and Chrisje Voetberg, with their then four children,[2] the Sieger VandenAcres with six children,[3] and the Leenderd Van Diggelens with one child[4] left Racine, Wisconsin, for the Conrad, Montana, vicinity. All three families had been friends in the Netherlands.[5] My father's brother George and family had moved there the previous year and had written many encouraging letters persuading our family to move to Montana.



Wiebe Voetberg (1875-1948) and Chrisje Leistra (1880-1965) were married in 1903. After immigrating they lived, successively, in Michigan, Wisconsin, Montana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

In Grand Rapids, Minnie Voetberg attended business college and married Ralph Brink, a young widower with three small children, after meeting at Calvin's Oratorio Society. They had three more children, and she never wearied of caring for the family. In her fifties she became a successful realtor, and in her seventies took up painting—as well as writing her memoir.

Most of their furniture, trunks, buggies, and wagons, especially teams of horses, harnesses, baggage, and paraphernalia went along in boxcars attached to the passenger cars of the Great Northern Railroad. We arrived in the latter part of November, and winter had set in. Uncle George came to the depot with a crude wagon to take us the last rough seven miles. My oldest sister, Grace (age seven), had become ill on the train, and she became sicker with the long rough wagon ride.

The next day a vacant house was made available to us. Our furniture had arrived, so we were able to move into the house. After a week it became apparent that Grace was very ill. Dr. Powers from Conrad was called from a neighbor's phone, and when he came he said, "I'm going to have to take this little girl to the Conrad hospital." My father went along. The hospital had accommodations in such cases for next of kin for a night or two. That same night they performed surgery for an abscessed appendix. My sister was in the hospital for five weeks following her appendectomy.

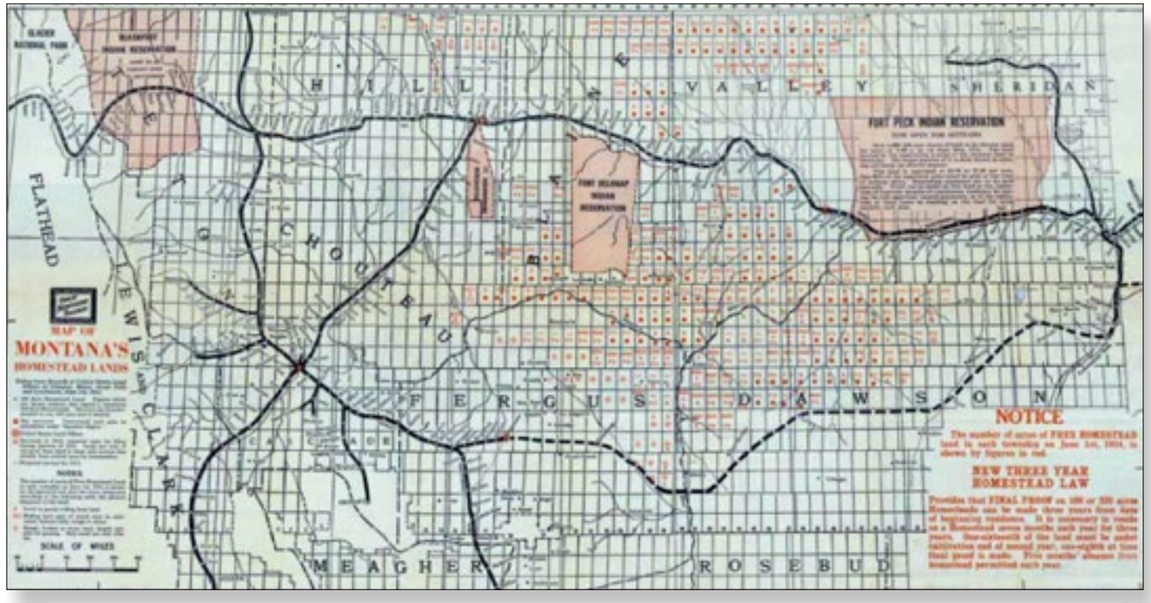
In the same hospital there was another patient who had accidentally been shot in his lower abdomen. His parents, Andrew and Ellen Kempenaar,[6] could speak Dutch, so there was much conversation between them and my father. They told my father there was free government land available near where they lived, thirty-five miles southeast of Conrad, and they were eager to have congenial Christian neighbors.

Toward spring the three men investigated taking up homestead claims in Chouteau County. They had to apply for citizenship at Fort Benton prior to obtaining the homestead land. Each family was allowed 320 acres provided that within five years a house and barn (or granary) were built, a well was dug, and the land was fenced. A French-Canadian (whose wife and sons lived in Quebec) by the name of Clement[7] was a good carpenter and was willing to help all three families build their homes. The VandenAcre house was built first, since they had the largest family, then our house, and then the VanDiggelens. With no basements to dig, the work went very rapidly. Each house required its own load of lumber to be hauled from Brady, twenty-three miles to the west. Each haul took two days and required two teams of horses to get through some of the snow.

Then came the big move to our homestead house. We loaded the wagon with as much as possible—the cook stove, the chaise lounge, all the beds, the trunks with those beautiful Dutch wool blankets. Between each layer of the blankets was a big charcoal portrait, behind glass, of each of our grandparents. The frames were very wide and ornate. The glass stood the test of many moves—the boat, the moves to several different homes—and never was a glass broken.

Since we did not immediately have a well, Mr. Clement said we could get water from his well. His land bordered

The offer of free homesteading land drew many immigrants willing to work hard, but soil fertility and climate often determined success or failure. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

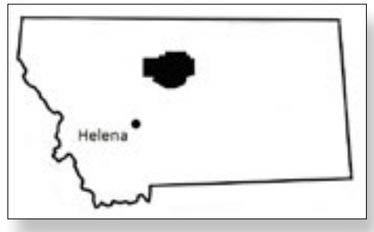


Maps with rail lines and water courses suggested that farming was readily feasible, but missing was vital data such as annual rainfall. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

ours, and he was our closest neighbor. But my father started digging a well as soon as possible, down the hill on a good level place. After several feet down it took two people, one to fill a bucket and another carry the bucket up and empty it. At a bit more than twenty feet deep there was water. Boards had to go down for a platform before my father could go on digging. Then twelve-inch boards lined the walls of the well; a frame of two-by-fours with a pulley was installed to lift the pail of water. We had so hoped it would be soft water, but it was hard. Nevertheless, it was crystal clear water and very good tasting.

Next was the barn. We had to have shelter for the horses. A barn into the hillside with three exposed walls was put together rather quickly. A chicken coop, off the south side and leading into the barn, was made of sod. This sod coop was warmer than any wood structure could have been.

The eastern part of that land did not have many rocks, so my father decided to work a twenty-acre piece. That piece of land was fenced first. The posthole digger, fence posts, barbed wire, and staples all had to come from Brady. There were almost three-quarters of a mile of post holes required for that piece; it was very hard work. There also were many rocks in large circular formations, indicating that Indians had lived there at one time. We were eager to see whether we could find any flint there; we found only one. It didn't take long to have a heavy load of rocks piled in the wagon. My father dumped them in a gully on the edge of the land that was not good for any plowing. It took at least two weeks of rock-picking to clear the land so plowing could begin. It was important to have rock-free land, or rocks would break the plow points. Discing and harrowing the land twice made it fit to plant wheat. The wheat seed was broadcast and



Chouteau County in north central Montana covers 3,997 square miles and today has fewer than 6,000 residents.

then the land was raked to form furrows.

Next a 160-acre quarter section was fenced in. Its dimensions were one mile by one quarter mile. That piece took two and a half miles of fencing. All that post-hole digging and fencing had to be done to keep the neighbor's sheep from roaming through our land, much to the dismay of our neighbor, Thomas Lytle, the sheepherder.

One day my father left to go to Brady for supplies and noticed a small colt standing beside its mother who, with a broken leg, could not move and was dying. On my father's way back home the colt was still standing there without nourishment. The law was that if an animal was not branded no one could later claim ownership. My father took pity on the poor little colt and somehow managed to get him into the wagon. When my father arrived in the yard, my mother hurriedly got some milk and sweetened it so he would drink it. The next day my mother boiled some flax and put a spoonful in a formula of milk, egg, and a bit of sweetener. There were no such things as plastic bottles and no large nipple for a foal. But he was so eager for liquid that it did not take long before he went after it in a big way. He stayed close to the house most of the time. When it was feeding time, my mother would call "Honey, Honey, Honey," and, sure enough, he came running. We were all extremely fond of Honey and could pet him very easily. Later he became frisky and started growing into a young horse, so my father put him with the other horses in the pasture at night. Honey, later called Jim, became a good working horse.

Worship

On Sundays Father had all the VandenAcre children and Stanley VanDiggelen come to our house at ten o'clock in the morning for Sunday school that he led. At two o'clock my parents invited all the neighbors for the church service—those living nearby, and those from across the coulee—the Kempenaars, their neighbors the Groenewegs, Douwe Belksma, and others.

After the service mother served coffee, tea, and cake. All the people usually stayed for nearly an hour to visit, partly due to the fact that they never saw each other during the week. The people all looked forward to the Sunday meetings. The sermons my father read were from a sermon book by the well-known Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a Baptist minister from England. Later we suggested that it might be good to have services at Kempenaars on alternate Sundays. This relieved my mother from hosting every week. Another reason to have services at Kempenaars was because there was a VanDyke family living several miles west of them. Having services at Kempenaars made it possible for the VanDykes to come for services every other week.

In the winter of 1914-1915 my father went away for three days. After dark on the third day we heard wagon wheels creaking on the snow. He came into the house and said he had bought an organ. We were so delighted we fairly jumped up and down. Grace and Henry were strong enough to help get it into the house. We quickly cleared a space for the organ in the living room. Father had taken the train from Brady to Great Falls and found the organ in a store, to our delight. We never found out how he managed to get it to Brady by train. In Brady he received help getting it into the wagon. How he weathered the cold amazed us. He wore high overshoes and all wool clothing and a very warm fur coat of horse hide.

The organ was beautiful and ornate with many fancy knobs and pretty shelves to set things on. My father was the only one who could play. I was so excited I could hardly sleep that night. The next morning I asked many questions about the notes on the pages of the hymnbook. My parents had taken many Dutch song books with them, including the J. Worp *Psalm Book*. These books were used for services on Sunday afternoons.

In the early spring of 1918 we started going to Conrad for Sunday worship services. It was easy to get there since we now had a car. Both VandenAcres and VanDiggelens had cars as well, so the load was lifted for my father.

School

During the first three years of homestead living, our school was located four miles to the east. It was called the "Knee School," named after a huge mini mountain just a bit northwest of this school. We had to leave home at 7:45 am in order to get there by 9:00 am. Sometimes we encountered a beautiful herd of antelope. They were such attractive creatures, but they were so timid and usually took off in a hurry. A few times we saw a large herd of cattle in the open field. If there was a bull amongst them we were so afraid. He would throw dirt up in the air and make a roaring noise. We hardly dared to move. There was a fence on the south side of the road. We crouched and edged over and under the fence and then we hurried until we were out of danger.

In the extremely cold weather when the snow was about two feet deep, we just didn't go to school. We nearly always took some of our books home over the weekends. Then, if we didn't go to school, we could at least do some studying. My father had us sit around the table and helped us with arithmetic.

Siblings Grace, Minnie, Henry, and Jean attended school in Montana with the children of neighboring families. In the nearly treeless area, lumber for such construction had to be hauled more than twenty miles from the nearest railroad station. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

On the whole, we were eager to learn, so we did well in school. Our first teacher was Miss McDonald, who lived just a quarter mile north of the school. She was a very good teacher. The second year we had a Mr. Riekle. He was a very good teacher also, but very strict. There were forty pupils in the school that year. The following year our teacher was Miss Nolan from Great Falls. We all liked her. Every school we were in was a single room.

After three years the school superintendent from Fort Benton came to talk to our father. When she came, he was plowing in the field. As he got to the end of the field, he greeted her. She introduced herself as Miss McNally, the Superintendent of Chouteau County. They talked for a long time, and in the evening my father told us what they had been talking about. There were enough children in our area to start a school, but they lacked funds. There were six VandenAcre children, one VanDiggelen, and four of us Voetbergs. There were also a few children living south of us.

By the first of the following year a vacant old house was located a mile south of our house. We thought it would be great to have a school close by. A partition had to be removed in order to have a large room. School in the remodeled old house didn't start until the middle of January. The new teacher's name was Miss Collins. She was from Great Falls. We loved her very much; she had such a kind personality. She allowed two hours on Friday afternoons for art work. It was so interesting and our favorite time. We were happy, but the school lasted only a little over three months. After a brief interlude we had a school in a one-room bachelor house across the coulee. The teacher's name was Mr. Copenhaver. In order to have the school, he had put his belongings in his basement. To get there, we had to walk down the hill, across the coulee, and up a much steeper hill, and then walk nearly a mile south.

It was so beautiful to walk in the fresh morning air. There was no

pollution. Because of the vast open sky we could see in all directions. Toward the west were the great majestic Rockies with sparkling, glittering snow like diamonds. Toward the north was the Sweet Grass country, and in the southeast, the Cascade Mountains. It was just magnificent to behold!

We had school there until the second of July. It was quite warm, especially going through the coulee in the afternoons. There were two large reservoirs, and we could cross over either one. They were about half a mile apart. These reservoirs were never dry.

Life on the government land

There were a few opportunities to earn extra income. The very many gophers in the fields were real pests. Each morning after breakfast we went out until noon to catch gophers in traps. We also made snares after all our traps were set. In the afternoon we went out again. The largest number we ever caught in a day was one hundred two. If the gophers were left unchecked they could ruin the whole wheat crop. Later, the government offered a bounty for gopher tails at one cent apiece. That was an incentive for us. The vultures took care of the carrion.

The county road commissioners often asked my father and Mr. Clement to put culverts in the gullies to prevent the dirt from washing away in flash floods. They supplied the equipment to take the dirt from the hillside, widen the road, and cover all the culverts, making a wider and more even road.

In June 1914 there was a knock at our door early in the morning. It was a neighbor to bring the sad news of his wife's sudden death and asking my father to come and help. He went there, offered his condolence to the bereaved, and then left for Conrad. He immediately went to the only undertaker. He received all the instructions necessary for embalming the body, besides selecting a coffin. My father and Mr. VandenAcre went to the neighbor's home that same evening and performed the embalming according to the instructions. Early the next morning my father went back to Conrad with the body. He had made arrangements for the funeral the third day and obtained the Reformed church minister in Conrad to officiate.

My parents wrote letters to the Netherlands quite often. One particular time my parents had written a letter that they wanted mailed. It was in early spring when the snow was just beginning to melt and make all kinds of rustling noises and gurgles under the hard crusty snow. I had to meet the mailman down the coulee as he was traveling through the country from one post office to the next. I walked where I thought he would pass and sat on a stile. I waited and waited. I started to panic and the longer I stayed the worse it became. I ran home crying. But my father quickly harnessed a horse and drove down the road. After a few minutes the mailman came along and the letter was on its way.

In the summer of 1915, the Copenhavers asked us to come to a Fourth of July picnic. Everything at the picnic was homemade, including breads and rolls. I remember potato salad and baked beans, and a few men were turning an ice-cream maker. When I saw that dirty ice I thought, "How can they make ice cream from that?" Then they took the cover off. What luscious ice cream!

The Voetbergs and neighbors in Chouteau County. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

The Knees

One time my father took an afternoon to go to the "Knees."[8] We loved to go there because we could see such a great distance. We enjoyed seeing all the great rock formations. There were some tunnels, high flat tops, just all sorts of formations. Many people had written their initials and dates on the rocks. Some of the dates went back many years. It all seemed very interesting to us.

In 1916 we had our first student for a summer preaching assignment from Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His name was Dirk Flietstra.[9] He used to walk in the hills and valleys in our field and preach to himself out loud. We smiled about it because we could hear him. There seemed to be an echo. Word got to the Copenhavers that we had a Calvin student who had come to preach for the summer. They asked whether he would be willing to preach for them as well. Their church was at least two miles west from where they lived.

For the next two years we had Calvin Seminary students come and stay with us for two or three weeks. We enjoyed taking them to the Knees. If it was a very clear day we could see more than twenty-five miles to the west. We could see the railroad track north of Brady, Collins, and Dutton. These were very small towns. We enjoyed the vast openness and the majestic Rockies. On the Knee there were scrubby trees. We never saw any others elsewhere like those.

We went to the Teton River occasionally in the summertime. We liked to see the rushing water going over some rocky areas. There were so many beautiful trees that we dreamed about trees in the night.

Farm life

When we left Racine, Wisconsin, we had brought two teams of excellent work horses. One set was brown, the other grey. There was a mare with each set. But only the grey mare had a little colt. That same year the mare became ill. In fact, she was very ill. Father recognized the symptoms as lockjaw. The horse was taken away from the other horses. She was tied to a post so that she would be away from all the other animals and not infect them. It was difficult to keep the colt away from the mother. Father was not one to shoot such a horse, but it would have been for the best. In the evening she died. We felt as bad as if it had been a human being. Now the colt had to be fed much the same as we had done for Honey. My mother came with some milk in a pail, but the colt turned around and kicked my mother behind the knee. That meant it was up to my father to take care of the foal.

Keeping cows from being swept away as a herd was being driven across the river. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

Two years later there was some plowing done with double plowshares, which required two teams of horses. At about eleven-thirty my father came home with only three horses. We noticed that Dolly, one of the brown team, wasn't there. My father said Dolly just started going down, so he unharnessed her and she died right there. So we lost two horses in a short time. After dinner my father went to the field and opened her up to investigate the cause. She had a rusty nail in her stomach. Then my father went out and bought a beautiful sorrel-colored horse. He was very tame and fit well with our horses. We called him Sorrel.

Henry Voetberg riding bareback. Judging by his age, this photo was probably taken about the time the family left Montana in 1924, or later. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

Although there was no electricity or telephones, news spread very rapidly. We had the reputation for having the best tasting water. A lady who lived a mile to the south came to ask if we could bring her two barrels of water. Grace and Henry went to her house with a team of horses and

Hentry Voetberg cultivating corn after the family had moved back to Michigan. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

got her barrels, which were on a stone boat. They went to the well to fill the barrels and then back up to her house. Henry and Grace were each paid fifty cents whenever they did this. We each had six dollars at the end of the season.

When our livestock increased, so did the work. We had a few Chester White pigs, and one spring one of them had ten little piglets. As long as they had plenty to eat, they grew very fast. We had a few more cows, which meant much more milk and cream to churn. My father bought a barrel churn; that meant one of us had to turn the handle. Since we now had so much milk, my father made a cheese vat so we could have our own cheese. We did some butchering in the late fall, both pork and beef. Some meat was ground to make sausage or mettworst. He knew how to season it and put it in casings. It made about two dozen nice large rings. Previous to that, a smokehouse had been built and set about a hundred feet south of the house. There the mettworst was hung on a stick and smoked.

We had raised flax that year; flax straw is the best for smoking meat. The straw had to be kept a bit moist, so that it would smoke continuously. We had to keep a pail of water handy in case it started to burn. Two days of continuous smoking was sufficient for the best tasting mettworst. Then it was hidden in the oats bin to keep dry.

During the quiet winter months father also mended the harnesses. On a trip to Brady he had bought linen thread and black pitch for this purpose. He would attach one end to the knob of a chair and make the length he wanted. We would hold it and make six strands the same length. Then he would rub the threads with

With an average rainfall of less than twelve inches, water from wells was crucial. Henry Voetberg (1907-1965) fills a water tank. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

pitch until it was one long black thread, making it moisture-proof. This harness repair was done in one end of our kitchen. A small awl was used so he could get a large needle through for mending. The kitchen was also used as a cobbler's shop. There were always shoes to be repaired. That was a year-round task.

My mother also had a large year-round task. It was baking bread about twice a week. Someone told my mother about a self-starter yeast. To prepare it she used two cakes of the dry crumbly Red Star yeast, mixed it with two or three cups of potato water and let it ferment. Today this would be called a sourdough starter. It had excellent leavening qualities. Each time it was used, more potato water had to be added for the next use, as it took only two cups of the starter for a batch of bread. A heaping tablespoon of sugar was also added.

My mother became an excellent bread baker. When the bread was fresh from the oven, Grace and Henry ate nearly a loaf between them. On cold winter days, when the stove was good and hot, we could have toast. A large pan of cinnamon rolls was always wonderful. My father bought a large bread mixer that allowed all the ingredients to be put in the pail and we would take turns turning the handle.

Each year the first load of wheat went to Brady in order to pay all the bills that had accumulated during the year. Mr. Quamy, our grocer, had the biggest amount coming. Of course, he sold much more than just groceries. His share generally was about a thousand dollars. The hospital and the doctors also were paid at this time. Since they knew our situation, they were all very lenient during the year.

The next load was used to take care of any other unpaid accounts. But then immediately there was a large list for the next winter's supplies. For example, two hundred pounds of flour, one hundred pounds of sugar, a few eight-pound bags of rolled oats, twenty pound boxes of prunes, dried apples, peaches, pears, apricots, coffee beans (we had our own grinder), tea, salt, matches, and several other things. Mr. Quamy was always very grateful when all the bills were paid, so he sent along a bag of candy for us, a broom and dustpan with a long handle, or some other useful item.

A large piece of land near the house was plowed for a good garden. We planted all kinds of vegetables and sometimes had so much we could hardly use it all. We children had to keep the garden weeded. Green beans grew best; we had plenty of them. Once we learned how to process them well, they were canned in fruit jars to eat during the winter. For the canning, our old copper wash boiler came in handy. Many shelves were made in the cellar for storing the filled jars. It was a cold place—good for storing food.

Beef and pork were canned the same way. When meat was processed, it was done in a room in the granary. We had a three-burner kerosene stove we used for boiling the meat. It would take Grace and me the better part of a day to fill jars for the boiler. It had to boil for nearly three hours. By the time one batch was finished, we would have another batch ready. Lard and suet were rendered and put into eight- and ten-pound crocks. These were all stored in the cellar. The lard my mother liked best was the leaf lard, which was excellent for pie crust. My mother became a skilled baker of many kinds of pies: cream pies, lemon pies, and many kinds of fruit pies.

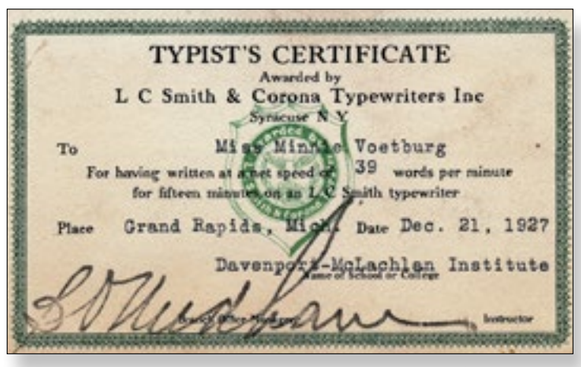
The first few years we were on the homestead we ate rabbit meat quite often. In the winter the cook stove was always ready to bake or roast anything. My father didn't have to go very far to shoot one or two and skin and clean one for dinner. We never were overly fond of them. In later years

Plentiful rain ensured good crops, particularly hay, for the Voetbergs, pictured here. But in 1918 the annual rains diminished, forcing the family to move to Conrad. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

there seemed to be an over-supply of those big jack rabbits. One moonlit night a little wheat was put near the granary on top of the snow, and it was only minutes until many rabbits were feeding there. It was so bright out that they were easy to spot. Father stood in the entryway with his gun and shot nine rabbits in a few minutes. That was a bit too much. A few were skinned and made pan-ready the next morning for noon dinner. But when my father cut into a thigh there was a great big boil and water came out. That was it! The meat was thrown out as well as all the other rabbits. We thought perhaps they had the disease of tularemia.[10] It was the end of rabbit eating at our house.

After we lived on the homestead for over a year, my brother Marten was born. A little over two years later, my sister Hilda was born. Grace and I always had to take turns staying home when the Sunday services were at Kempenaars. Later my mother had two more children, but they were stillborn. Each time my father wrapped the little body in clean white cloth, put it in a little wooden box, and buried the body on the hillside. We never knew about the stillbirths until years later.

When services were at the Kempenaars, all the coats were piled on one bed just off the living room. One Sunday when I stayed home with the little ones, Grace walked in the house and I saw a bedbug on the side of her coat. We took care of that one but a little later we discovered we had them in our beds. Immediately we got to work and put the mattresses outdoors. Along the seams all around the mattresses there were bedbugs. We did what we could outdoors to get rid of them, but after getting the mattresses back inside we fumigated the bedrooms. Then as an extra precaution my father put kerosene in tin cans and set each bedpost in a can. Our beds were all metal. We never found any bedbugs again.


TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE
Awarded by
L C Smith & Corona Typewriters Inc
Syracuse N Y
To Miss Minnie Voetburg
For having written at a net speed of 39 words per minute
for fifteen minutes on an L C Smith typewriter
Place Grand Rapids, Mich. Date Dec. 21, 1927
Davenport-Mclachlan Institute
Name of School or College
Instructor

Minnie Voetberg's (she later married Ralph Brink) 1927 certificate from what is today Davenport University. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

In the spring of 1916 Father wanted to raise a big potato crop. We children always came in handy to plant the potatoes he had prepared for seed. The preparation consisted of setting

them in a large tub of water with a formaldehyde solution to prevent scab on the new potatoes. It worked fine. We had to put them in the furrows as we went along. That year was also our greatest wheat crop. Consequently, in the fall there was much to harvest. The threshing crew that went from farm to farm had a very busy time. Mrs. VandenAcre came to help cook for all the men at dinner time. The menu was potatoes, two kinds of vegetables from the garden, salad, and delicious pie for dessert. We also helped as much as possible. In turn, my mother helped Mrs. VandenAcre when the threshers were there.

We were getting a reputation for having great harvests and wonderful tasting water. The Rossmillers and the Snellers had been going to the Teton River and pumping water into huge tanks. Now they came to us. They lived about three miles east of us. My father had dug a second well about forty feet west of the first well, but the water wasn't as good tasting as our first one.

Before long, many people were short of potatoes, and we had a high yield, so they came with their sacks. Selling these potatoes was something my father enjoyed doing. They were no different from any Idaho potatoes.

In mid-summer of 1917 we had a lull in work, so my father, having heard of berries at the Teton River, decided to take us there. We went there for two days. My mother packed our lunch so we could stay nearly all day. We picked so many berries that we were able to can about fifty quarts. They tasted very good, but not like the blueberries in Michigan. After that we had berries on the table every other day. It was better than having dried fruit all the time, such as prunes or cooked dried apples. They were the least expensive. Apricots, however, were very expensive and were an occasional Sunday treat.

Each year one of us was allowed to go along to Brady. It was a long, high, and dry ride on the wagon. After getting there I had to stay in Quamy's store while my father did his errands. When he came back, it was time to head back home. I had had plenty of time to look around, and I found three pretty parasols and wanted one. I asked for it; it was only 59 cents, but the answer was "no." It was not much money. A few men stood there and said, "She would like to have one." It was so difficult for my father to give in. By the time I really got it, the joy was all gone. After we arrived home, I came into the house, and the parasol went under the stairway and stayed there.

Chrisje and Wiebe surrounded by their children, Henry, Martin, Minnie, Jean, Hilda, Fred, and Grace. Image courtesy of the greater Voetberg family.

My sister Jean was ill many times in winter. We had Dr. Collins, who lived near the Knee school, come to treat her, but he couldn't diagnose her case. Once he thought she might have typhoid fever. That wasn't it either. We had bought a Ford in 1917 for $427. The car made it easy and quick to get Dr. Collins. This was on a Sunday morning. The doctor said that he didn't know what to do and suggested taking her to Conrad. Immediately after breakfast, we started out. When we were half way there, Jean said that she didn't have so much pain anymore. We went by way of Brady, because it was a better road. In Conrad we immediately went to the hospital. Drs. Powers and Patterson were there. In less than an hour Jean was operated on. She had a ruptured appendix. She had a drainage tube inserted, which remained in place for weeks. She should have had this surgery much earlier.

Our uncle, George Voetberg, and his family now lived just a half mile west of Conrad. This made it very convenient for my mother to stay with them while Jean was so seriously ill. We were happy that we had a car to get there in a much shorter time. Drs. Powers and Patterson performed surgery again but debated about her abscessed kidney. They decided to leave the kidney in, hoping it would heal. Jean was ill for a long time again and had to drink distilled water until she fully recovered.

Farming was difficult, and in the fall of 1918 the VandenAcres, VanDiggelens, and Kempenaars all moved away. We planted in the spring of 1919. I'll never forget that on 29 May we had a terrific downpour. It was a real torrential rain. We could hear the water rushing down the coulee. We could tell later how high the water had been by the debris it left on the sides of the coulee. It came down so fast that it never had a chance to soak in at all. That was the only rain we received for the entire year. The wheat never came up. No pretty green wheat fields as we were accustomed to seeing. All that grew were scrubby Russian thistles that had half-inch little worms. It was like a curse on the land. There was plenty of work in Conrad where the irrigated farms were, so my father went there with the wagon and a team of horses. He got plenty of work wherever he went. He came home about every other week. The car did not do us much good because none of us could drive.

My mother knew very well how to manage even in hard times. We just ate differently. We did have the cows to milk, although there was very little pasture. Neither did we have much food for the pigs. We could see the whole year crumbling before our eyes, but our faith in the Lord's leading did not diminish.

All our enthusiasm and all the hard work seemed to come to a dismal ending. We had to borrow money from the bank in Brady in order to continue. My father rented a house in Conrad and we moved everything there. We had to abandon everything, yet remain patient in adversity. In 1924 the family moved to Minnesota; then back to Racine; then to Martin, Michigan; then northern Allegan County; then southern Kent County; and finally back to Grand Rapids.

Endnotes

1. This article is excerpted from Minnie Voetberg Brink's original manuscript. The complete copy is available in Heritage Hall. After growing up in Montana she worked briefly as a maid in Beverly Hills, California. In addition to raising six children, the family always also had boarders (mainly Calvin students) to help with expenses. Her family notes that she never wearied of baking, organizing church and Christian school dinners, and welcoming Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church visitors into the home for Sunday dinners.

2. Wiebe Hendriks Voetberg (4 March 1875 – 20 June 1948) and Chrisje Leistra (22 November 1880 – 13 September 1965); children: Grace (married John Wagenveld), Minnie (married Ralph Brink), Henry (married Christine Kedde), and Jean (married Herbert Moelker); born after the move to Montana: Marten (married Clara Ritsema), Hilda (married Maurice Velting), and Fred (married Blanche).

3. Sieger H. Vandenacre (van den Akker, 1 December 1875 – 18 November 1865) and Taskje/Jackie/Thelma van Diggelen (15 February 1879 – 18 August 1957) and their children: Grace/Geeske, Henry, Jennie, William, Elizabeth, and Margaret; and born after the move to Montana: Alana, Mary A., John Albert, Leonard, and Helen. The surname was originally spelled "van den Akker" and became "VandenAcre" or "Vandenacre" in the United States.

4. Leenderd Van Diggelen (15 May 1886 – 31 August 1977) and Sadie (1886 – 17 November 1919), their son Stanley L. Leenderd and Teakje Vandenacre were siblings.

5. Before Racine, the Voetbergs had lived in Indiana and Grand Rapids.

6. Andrew J. Kempenaar and Ellen Elizabeth Strong had four children at the time: Mary, Jennie, May, and Pearl. Andrew J. Kempenaar was born in New York, Ellen in Canada; the family belongs to the Christian Reformed Church.

7. Probably Ullric H. Clement–ed.

8. East Knee and West Knee Mountains.

9. Dirk Flietstra, 1884-1966; served in the Christian Reformed Church ordained ministry, 1918-1966–ed.

10. Tularemia is a serious infectious bacterial disease. One strain, *F. tularensis tularensis*, is found in rabbits and similar animals in North America, and it is highly virulent in humans and domestic rabbits. These days it is very successfully treated with antibiotics.

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The Christian Reformed Church in Hamshire, Texas, 1929–1946

Paula Vander Hoven

The story of Hamshire, Texas, including the short-lived Christian Reformed church and the surrounding area, is one of booms and busts.[1] The earliest Dutch settlers arrived in southeast Texas in the final years of the nineteenth century, attracted by the possibilities of the rice-growing industry.[2] The Nederland Christian Reformed Church had been organized in 1898 and closed in 1905; another, in Winnie, had been in existence from 1910 to 1916, and a group of Dutch immigrants at a community called Amsterdam near Liverpool had met together from 1895 to 1900, without forming a church. Of the almost seventy Dutch families or individuals who had lived in Winnie, all but a handful had moved away. Of the original Winnie church, only Nick De Young and Ben Renkema and their families remained.[3]

Tessie, Rose, Ben, Peter, and John Renkema in 1929. The Renkemas were in Texas a second time and operated a dairy farm. Image from the collections in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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But much had changed between 1916 and 1929, and the Winnie/Hamshire area was now a promising place for new immigrants. There were about twenty homes in Hamshire, and Beaumont (population 70,000) was twenty miles away and a good market for farm products. New roads of crushed shell or cement to and from the city were well maintained, making transport easier. Land without stumps or rocks was cheap, available, and well suited for dairy farming, and cattle could be grazed outside much of the year, rather than in stables during the winter months. A farmers' co-operative had been formed. Milk, eggs, cream, chickens, and vegetables were sold at high prices. Milk could now be cooled using artificial (manufactured) ice, and milk haulers came every morning to take the milk to market. Fig growing was becoming widespread, and harvests were plentiful. The Beaumont and Hamshire Fig Factory employed a hundred people seasonally. Corn and cotton were also being harvested. Five nearby oil refineries–one only three miles from Hamshire–paid high wages. The temperate weather was a draw for those weary of battling the cold of the North.

The Dutch and others who had remained in Hamshire wrote about all of this and more in articles and letters that appeared in Dutch and in English newspapers with wide circulations.[4] Well-known local attorney LeRoy McCall added his considerable support. Soon there were also letters and articles in the *Banner.* The Dutch in Hamshire teamed with Dutch land developer Theodore F. Koch, who had promoted Dutch communities in Minnesota and elsewhere. They did well in the choice of Koch. He was ethical, with strong financial backing and extensive networks of support, resources that some other land developers of the time lacked.[5] Koch provided printed booklets and placed ads in newspapers the Dutch were likely to read. One such ad offered round-trip train excursions to Hamshire from Chicago. For $41.30, a prospective settler could see new oil wells producing 100,000 barrels of oil per day, large refineries, skyscrapers in Beaumont, and ocean-going vessels in the Beaumont harbor. In February 1928 they could see for themselves cattle grazing in the pastures. One ad featured a picture of the congregation in November wearing summer clothing with the exaggerated claim that there was no cold winter there and the not incidental note that Rev. J. R. Brink was there to organize a congregation.

The Renkema house in Texas; note that it is built off the ground. Image from the collections in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Derricks over oil wells in the Hamshire area, 1929. Image from the collections in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

While members of the community were busy circulating the word about the favorable conditions in Hamshire, they also petitioned Classis Pella for assistance. A former member of the Winnie Christian Reformed Church sent a letter to Classis Pella that was discussed at the March 1928 meeting. His name is not mentioned, but he was almost certainly Ben Renkema. Apparently the request was granted, because at the September 1928 meeting a positive report for a potential church was made to the classis,[6] which responded immediately and enthusiastically. At that meeting classis voted to open mission work in Hamshire, send a classical supply pastor there, and ask Rev. John R. Brink (serving at the time in Gallup, New Mexico) to help out for several weeks. They made stipulations for the

Members of the Hamshire Christian Reformed Church after a worship service. Image from the collections in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Hamshire church and parsonage. Image from the collections in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The church, from in front of the parsonage after the landscaping had grown a bit. Image courtesy of Mark DeJong.

salary (at least $1,800 per year) and living arrangements for the pastor. Classis also took note of the fact that there was not a church building or parsonage in Hamshire and urged the congregation to begin building both immediately. Funds from the sale of property in Winnie were to be used for this purpose. Classis also agreed to help financially if a missionary pastor could be called.

By the April 1929 meeting, more financial support was promised to Hamshire in the form of loans, private donations, and assistance from the Church Help Fund. Classis urged quick action on finding a home missionary to serve the church, and until then classical supply pastors were provided. Brink even dared to dream that Hamshire would become a mother church to others in Texas and Louisiana.

The folks in Hamshire moved quickly also. By 21 April 1929 the church building was erected, and the church was founded with fourteen charter families. Rev. J. R. Brink was present to provide leadership and wrote about the happy occasion in the *Banner*. Elders elected were Jacob Achterhof and Ben Renkema, and Edward Van Houten and Nick De Young were the deacons. These four men would continue as faithful leaders in the church throughout most of its existence—Renkema as clerk and Van Houten as treasurer. There were thirty in Sunday school, twelve in the Young People's Society, and twelve in the Ladies' Aid Society.

The church had been erected in less than two months almost entirely with volunteer labor on land donated by Nick De Young. It measured 32 by 50 feet and was furnished with pews and a pulpit. Light was provided by three lanterns lowered and raised on a pulley system. It was close to the village of Hamshire, and there was adequate room for "auto parking." The total cost was $2,400. The next year a church in Pella, Iowa, donated a box of *Psalter Hymnal*s, and the church in Otley, Iowa, sent a gasoline-powered "light machine" (an electric generator) that was received with thanks. There was a piano played by Rosannah De Young, but no organ, and the people, especially the men, sang lustily.

But by September of that year, a mere five months later, the early enthusiasm of both groups was being tested. The congregation had extended a series of calls to prospective pastors, all of which were declined. It's not hard to understand why. Many pastors would have been discouraged by the small size and remote location of the congregation. In the interim, they had made the acquaintance of Rev. Wesley Prince[7] and believed he was the right man for their church. He had been born and raised among Dutch pioneers in Osceola County, Michigan,[8] and had studied at Calvin College before suffering from tuberculosis. After a stay at Bethesda Sanitorium[9] in Denver, because of his uncertain health he went south to the Presbyterians in Texas, where he served a church in Llano. He would have been happy to come to Hamshire, if only because he could have spoken Dutch there, and, in September 1929, the congregation requested permission to call him.[10] But Classis Pella was skeptical and, after deliberating at length, denied the repeated requests to call Prince. Classis Pella also decided to withhold permission for Hamshire to call any pastor. Classis did promise an "ample" supply of pastors for preaching and administering sacraments. Half of the travel expenses of these pastors from their homes in Kansas and Iowa would be covered by the classis, half by the congregation.

And there was more bad news. The promised funds for building the church and the parsonage were slow in coming, and not all that had been promised arrived, so the parsonage wasn't built. The funds came with denominational understanding that new churches receiving classical funds for construction agreed that if the congregation dissolved or left the denomination, the building(s) would become the property of Classis.

Seminarians Herman Scripsema and Cornelius Schoolland preached during the summers of 1930 and 1931, respectively. Newly ordained Rev. Cornelius Witt came from Iowa for a few Sundays also. For the rest, pastors from Kansas and Iowa supplied the pulpit. In October 1931, two and a half years after its founding, Dirk Mellema became the church's first pastor.[11] He was a recent graduate of Calvin Seminary and had served in the First World War. Upon arriving in Hamshire, he volunteered to forego 5 percent of his salary to alleviate the financial situation in the congregation. The congregation was grateful for his generosity, and later he was able to note that "there is a better appreciation of the financial obligations that rest upon the members." His hobbies were woodworking and building, which the congregation was happy to use to the fullest. The parsonage was completed while the Mellemas lived in Hamshire, and he installed electricity there (but not indoor plumbing) and taught others in the church the electric trade. He was a kind man, unassuming and patient. He and his wife, Helen Veen, served the church faithfully.

Rev. Dirk Mellema (1895-1987) served the Hamshire congregation during the worst years of the Great Depression. Image courtesy of Audrey Mellema Meindertsma.

During his pastorate, Mellema wrote movingly and candidly of his work. In addition to being the pastor in Hamshire, he also conducted worship services and made contacts among the Dutch in Port Arthur, some thirty miles away, and in Nederland.[12] These immigrants had become members of other churches, and while they may have appreciated Mellema's pastoral care and perhaps even his Reformed teaching, they were reluctant to leave the churches where they and their children had already established relationships. He spoke about the difficulty of being Reformed in an area where even the Dutch families had become members of other denominations. He deeply regretted that there had not been a consistent Reformed presence among the Dutch in Port Arthur, Nederland, and Winnie. Relationships with non-Dutch were only sometimes successful, and work among the "negroes" did not materialize.

All along, Mellema made reports to Classis Pella of his work in Hamshire, only a few of which have been retrieved. In 1935 he reported that "There could be more cooperation and a better spirit of goodwill among the people who attend our services," but then he went on to report baptisms and professions of faith that were encouraging, and in another report he was heartened to have the cooperation of the superintendent of schools in Hamshire in the Christian education of the children. The Mellema family, including daughters Janice and Audrey, left Hamshire in late 1937 to serve a church in Woodville, Michigan.

Almost exactly two years later to the day, on 18 October 1939, recent seminary graduate Peter De Jong and Thelma Klooster were married, left their guests, and via their 1937 Ford Coupe came to Hamshire as newlyweds.[13] They arrived to some surprises. De Jong was immediately told that the congregation wasn't interested in hearing sermons based on the Heidelberg Catechism, but soon

Thelma and Rev. Peter DeJong began their marriage and ministry in Hamshire in 1939. The family reports the two "jumped in their Ford Coupe" when they left for Texas. Image courtesy of Mark DeJong.

Henry Van De Werken and one of his dairy cows in front of the milk house. Image courtesy of Alice Van De Werken Pritchett.

The flock of chickens on Henry Van De Werken's farm. Image courtesy of Alice Van De Werken Pritchett.

into his ministry he decided that "catechism preaching" was exactly what that congregation needed. Some, at least, in the congregation had little understanding or appreciation of what it meant to be Reformed, and some leaned more in the direction of their Southern Baptist neighbors. De Jong read the works of Abraham Kuyper to himself and to his small, isolated congregation of twelve families and learned how to relate the academics of seminary to his fig-growing, dairy farmer parishioners. Rather than being discouraged at the isolation and size of his congregation, he was invigorated by contacts with some of the members. Dirk Holtkamp was a superintendent for an oil company in Port Arthur, and Riemer van Til,[14] another oil company employee, also read Kuyper.

The children of a Dutch immigrant family in front of their school during the 1930s. Image courtesy of Rosannah De Young.

During De Jong's pastorate in Hamshire, a hurricane flooded many blocks of Beaumont, destroyed the windows in the church, soaked the parsonage, and lifted linoleum from the kitchen floor. At the beginning of World War II many Christian Reformed young men were stationed at bases in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma, and, as the nearest Christian Reformed pastor, he was called upon to provide pastoral care for these service members.

Early in 1942, after a ministry of just over two years, the De Jong family left for Oak Harbor, Washington. He had strong ties to the state, and a military base nearby would allow him to continue serving personnel there. But it was in Hamshire that he learned the value of interacting with pastors of other denominations, a practice that turned into a life-long pattern.

Immediately after De Jong's departure, the congregation petitioned classis for permission to call another pastor. But classis declined, citing "problems which require special abilities in the minister working there. Should Hamshire issue a call it is not certain that the right kind of man could be found." They conceded that sending occasional classical supply pastors would be expensive and that reading services held when a pastor from Kansas or Iowa couldn't be present would be inadequate. The folks in Hamshire were not happy. They sent a letter which has not been preserved, but, judging from the minutes of the next meeting, the church accused Classis Pella of not providing enough support and hinted that the congregation was ready to leave the denomination. Classis in return justified its decision by saying that the Hamshire church had been given far more attention than the prospects warranted. Classis further reprimanded the consistory for the tone and spirit of its letter and noted that no elder from Hamshire had been present at the classis meeting to represent the church.

In the meantime, since classical supply pastors were expensive, inconvenient, and sporadic, the church began to look to the Moody Bible Institute for a pastor. Classis did not look favorably upon this idea and warned the consistory of the consequences of this step. But the consistory persisted and hired a Moody Bible Institute graduate, William Suk. Finally, in a letter dated 18 February 1943, the congregation reported the members had unanimously decided to sever relationships with the Christian Reformed Church and intended to form an undenominational church. Classis responded by empowering a committee to work out the issues regarding the property.

But the church was not as unified as the letter indicated. Subsequently Treasurer Van Houten wrote to say that in fact there were six families who wished to leave the denomination and four who wanted to stay and that the small congregation was divided. Elder and Clerk Ben Renkema also wrote on behalf of the consistory to say that the congregation had been offended by the assertion that Hamshire was "out of sympathy with the Christian Reformed Church doctrinally." In a congregational meeting, the decision had been made to inquire about uniting with the Presbyterian Church.

The congregation limped along in this state of limbo for about three more years. Families that wished to remain Christian Reformed were urged by classis to move elsewhere in the interest of their spiritual welfare, and some did. Pastors came occasionally, but the congregation received no more classical funds nor permission to call its own pastor. Rev. Christian Ter Maat filled the pulpit for a time and taught catechism classes throughout the week.[15] Rev. Louis Voskuil sometimes preached when he was in Hamshire visiting family members. Ben Renkema and Lucille Achterhof taught Sunday school classes.

The Hamshire wives and daughters who worked in the fig cannery. Image courtesy of Shirley Gardner.

The Ladies' Aid Society of the congregation, which provided an opportunity for social contact, as in this photo of the celebration of Johanna DeYoung's 85th birthday. Image courtesy of Frederick Renkema.

The Hamshire Hotel, which was managed for a time by Nick De Young. Image courtesy of Grace Humbarger.

Finally, on 1 May 1946, Rev. Elco Oostendorp, from Luctor, Kansas, and Rev. Rens Hooker, from Denver, were in Hamshire to represent Classis Pella for the dissolution of the congregation. They met with the consistory and the congregation, and the congregation (at the time only men voted) voted nine to one to disband. After some contentious discussion, the congregation voted six to four to sell the church building and parsonage to the Hamshire Baptists for a total of $4,800, to be paid in installments which would be forwarded to Classis as had been earlier agreed. Herman De Young, John Renkema, and Ben Renkema were charged with overseeing the final details. Memberships of the families who wished to remain Christian Reformed were sent to the Luctor,

The Nick De Young house, which had once been part of the Hamshire Hotel. Image courtesy of Grace Humbarger.

Young People's Society, and twelve in the Ladies' Aid Society, and, for all the hope they had evidenced, they didn't grow. There had been some new members, but some had left, and in 1946 there were nine families and twelve members in the Ladies' Aid Society.

Throughout, classical committees were formed repeatedly to deal with each new issue as it arose and to make reports to the larger body. During the seventeen years of its history, classis appointed and received comprehensive reports from no fewer than thirteen committees, which certainly meant a good many visits, in addition to providing classical supply pastors.

In turn, elders and pastors from Hamshire were in attendance at classis meetings with remarkable faithfulness, considering the time and expense involved in traveling those distances, and sometimes they spoke or offered prayer in the meetings. Ben Renkema was a frequent attender, often present when the church was vacant, and so were Dirk Holtkamp and Jacob Achterhof. Sadly, the minutes of the consistory and congregational meetings and the membership rosters have not been located.

A 1949 view of the Herman De Young house. Image courtesy of Frederick Renkema.

Kansas, church with the notation that the elders in Luctor were to be responsible for their spiritual but not their financial welfare, and appropriate people were charged with handling the legal matters pertaining to the property.[16] The minutes of 27 May 1946 of the Luctor consistory indicate that Mr. and Mrs. Ben Renkema; Mr. and Mrs. John Renkema; Mr. and Mrs. John De Young and baptized daughter Edith Ann; Mr. and Mrs. Peter Renkema and baptized children Wilma Rosa, Bernard Herman, Henrietta Ann, Frederick Lee and Charles Peter; Mr. and Mrs. Nick De Jong;[17] and Mr. and Mrs. Herman De Young were received as members. The minutes of the 16 September meeting of that year further clarified that the Luctor church was not responsible for the financial welfare of the Hamshire residents they had accepted, but that, along with the classical home missions committee, they did assume responsibility for their spiritual welfare.[18]

It was a sad and contentious end after a hopeful beginning. There had been fourteen charter families, with thirty in Sunday school, twelve in the

Endnotes

1. LeRoy McCall Jr. in an email dated 13 January 2011. He also provided a copy of a book written by his father, LeRoy McCall Sr., *Mr. Mac: The Memoirs of a Country Lawyer*. It further describes the "booms and busts" mentioned in this article.

2. Paula Vander Hoven, "New Country—Familiar Name: The Christian Reformed Church of Nederland, Texas," *Origins* (Spring 2013) 26-32, and "Nederland, Texas, Christian Reformed Church Members," Ibid., 33-38.

3. Henry Van De Werken owned land there but lived most of the time in the Chicago area.

4. Including *Onze Toekomst* (Our Future) in 1928 and 1929, the *Holland Weekly Press*, and the Pella, Iowa, *Weekblad*.

5. Conversation with Robert Schoone-Jongen, 19 December 2012.

6. Translations of classical minutes and several other documents have been ably and cheerfully provided by Gerrit W. Sheeres.

7. In the classical minutes the name is spelled "Prins." He never served the Hamshire church, though he did sometimes fill the pulpit during a vacancy. He served two Presbyterian churches in nearby Beaumont, and he and his family remained firm friends of the Hamshire church and its pastor, Rev. Peter De Jong. Later he moved back to northern Michigan to teach Bible and Reformed doctrine at Northern Michigan Christian High School. Still later he became a CRC pastor in Sibley, Iowa, and Saginaw, Michigan. He also pastored CRC churches in his retirement.

8. He may have known Edward and Helen Van Houten there, and perhaps it was through that association that the congregation sought him as their pastor.

9. Also spelled as "Sanitarium."

10. Information regarding Wesley Prince has been provided by Mary Ann Prince De Young, Evelyn Prince Scholten, and Avonne Prince Zevenberger.

11. Information regarding Dirk Mellema has been provided by Audrey Mellema Meindertsma and Janice Mellema Berkompas.

12. Some of these families came to say farewell to Mellema when he left Hamshire, according to Marilyn Terwey.

13. Information regarding Peter De Jong has been provided by Art De Jong in a letter dated 8 January 2011; Ken De Jong, in a telephone conversation on 21 December 2012; Mark De Jong, in telephone conversations on 9 January 2011, and 26 March 2011; and Jeanne De Jong Beezhold in a telephone conversation on 9 January 2011.

14. Nephew of Cornelius Van Til, a well-known Reformed theologian. Cornelius Van Til studied at Calvin Theological Seminary and Princeton Seminary. He was an ordained pastor in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and one of the founders of Westminster Theological Seminary, where he taught for fifty years.

15. According to Gerrit Van Noord Jr., at the time Rev. Ter Maat was a pastor in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, serving as an itinerant missionary. In 1946 he became a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church, and served churches in South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

16. Rev. Ryan Faber, Stated Clerk of Classis Central Plains, provided the minutes of the final meetings of the consistory and congregation.

17. Nick De Young died 9 May 1943.

18. Larry Pakkebier and the Luctor Christian Reformed Church council graciously provided permission for the author to read these minutes.

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Members of the Hamshire Christian Reformed Church

Paula Vander Hoven

Jacob and Dena (Berendina) Achterhof[1]

Jacob Achterhof was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, but moved with his family to Baldwin, Wisconsin, about forty miles east of St. Paul, Minnesota. There he met and married Berendina Rademaker, who had been born in the Netherlands. The couple farmed in Baldwin Township and moved to Hamshire in 1928 when they were forty-six and forty-two, respectively, with their daughter Lucille, who was eighteen, and son Calvin, who was three. An older

The Jacob and Dena Achterhof family and the family of their daughter, Helen, and son-in-law, Lester Voskuil. Image courtesy of Shirley Gardner.

daughter, Helen, married to Lester Voskuil, elected not to leave Wisconsin at that time; a son, Marvin, also stayed in Wisconsin.

Jake Achterhof was a dairy farmer and raised chickens and hogs as well. The family took eggs and butter to a store near Beaumont in trade for sugar and other items that they didn't grow. Jake was also a musician, talented on several instruments: strings, woodwinds, and the piano. Dena and her daughters, with many of the other women in the church, worked in the fig cannery as they were needed.

Jake was elected an elder on the day the church was organized and also served for a time as Sunday school superintendent. He died in the Winnie-Stowell Hospital at the age of eighty-three in 1966. Dena survived him by many years and died in her nineties.

John and Lucille Achterhof De Young[2]

John De Young was the son of Tye and Elizabeth De Young and was born in Texas around 1915. John and Lucille, the daughter of Jacob and Dena Achterhof, were married in her parents' home in Hamshire in 1937. They are one of only two couples known to have met in the church and married,[3] somewhat remarkable given the isolation of that community and the general tendency for the Dutch to marry within their ethnic group.

John inspected oil well pumps for the Texaco Oil Company. As a result, the family lived in a series of homes in a remote area where cattle grazed amid the oil wells owned by Texaco. Later they purchased a house and had it moved to Hamshire.

Lucille had been active in the church before her marriage, as secretary of the Sunday school and of the Young People's Society. She continued her involvement as president of the Ladies' Aid Society, and the couple often hosted visiting pastors in their home. John was also active in the church. He became treasurer after the departure of long-time treasurer Edward Van Houten in 1945, and served in that capacity for the final months of the church's existence. After the church closed, the De Youngs affiliated with the Baptist church, where he was also treasurer. John and Lucille had one daughter, Edith, who moved with her husband to Missouri. John and Lucille followed them there later and died there, he in 2009 and she in 2011.

Lester and Helen Achterhof Voskuil[4]

Helen, twenty-three (the daughter of Jacob and Dena Achterhof), her husband Lester Voskuil, twenty-five, and five-year-old daughter Doris arrived about 1931. He suffered from chronic asthma and allergies to hay and horses, so he and Helen had first moved from Wisconsin to the Denver area in the hope of finding some relief. Initially they rented a house, but before long the members of the congregation built them a home on land adjacent to the Achterhof farm. There Helen milked their cows and tended their chickens while Lester found employment driving a truck and making deliveries to nearby farms for Humble Oil and Refining Company. During the war, Lester drove around the area with his headlights off to make sure that the community was adhering to the strict blackout requirements. Their daughter Shirley was born in 1938 and attended Sunday school at the church and elementary school in Hamshire.

In 1945 the family moved again for Lester's health, this time to Arizona, where they settled permanently. There they became charter members of the Christian Reformed Church in Phoenix when it was organized in 1946. Lester died in Phoenix at the age of fifty-two in 1958. Helen survived him by many years.

Samuel and Nellie Kooman Bandsma

Sam and Nellie were both born in the Netherlands, he in 1882 in the northern part of Friesland, and she in 1883 in Middelburg, Zeeland. He arrived in this country in 1904, and she in 1906. They married later that year in Randolph, Wisconsin, and had two children there, John and Minnie, before moving to Texas about 1915, where five more children were born: Joe, Paul, Emma, Nellie, and Sam Louis. The elder Sam's brother, John J. Bandsma, also migrated to Texas and lived in Winnie during the years that the church was established there. Other members of the family stayed in Wisconsin.

The Bandsmas lived near Port Arthur, and Sam was a dairy farmer there, along with his sons. They probably were not part of the church proper until Sam and Nellie moved to Hamshire at some point in the early 1940s, during the waning years of the church. Their children had established their own homes by that time and were never members of the church. Nellie passed away in Hamshire in 1957. After her death, Sam moved back to Port Arthur and died there in 1965.

Nick and Johanna Calsbeek De Young[5]

Nick De Young was born Klaas De Jong in Oudega, Friesland, in 1864. While still young, he emigrated to this country and lived in Michigan before settling in Orange City, Iowa. There, in 1886, he married Johanna Calsbeek, born in Friesland in 1860, and the couple soon moved to Jamestown, Michigan. In 1911 they were persuaded by Theodore Koch to move to Hamshire. They arrived with their children Tye,[6] Peter, Herman, Sarah,

Nicholas and Johanna De Young. Nicholas De Young is credited with establishing the fig-growing and canning industry in the Hamshire area. Image courtesy of Grace Humbarger.

Rosannah, and Grace, who ranged in age from twenty-one to eight. An older son, John, was married in Michigan and briefly came to Texas later.

In Hamshire Nick was one of the pioneers in the new fig-growing industry and along with his son Herman was often referred to as the "Father of the East Texas Fig Industry." In 1912 he purchased one hundred seventy-five fig trees from a traveling salesman and later added three thousand more. It was an impressive beginning until the hurricane of 16 August 1915 destroyed many of his trees and caused most of the Dutch in the area to leave within a matter of days. Nick stayed, nursing his trees back to production and adding more. By 1925 he harvested over twenty thousand bushels of figs, and with financial backing from other farmers and financiers he established a Hamshire fig cannery that both canned and bottled, located in an abandoned rice warehouse. At its peak, the operation could cook, fill, seal, and label the figs at a rate of 6,000 bottles an hour. During harvest season, the plant employed seventy women and girls, including many of

the women of the church. The plant shipped four boxcars of processed figs weekly.

During the Depression the market for figs decreased considerably, and by 1933 the cannery closed. At that point Nick, ever the entrepreneur, began dairy farming with his grandson and farmed until his death in 1943, at the age of seventy-nine. He was also at one point the manager of the Hamshire Hotel, which later, after renovations, became the De Young family home. He was a jovial man who relished "harmless pleasantries."[7] Johanna was a quiet person, a devout woman, who kept the family together while Nick worked hard at figs and cattle. She died at the age of eighty-seven in 1947.

Nick was active in forming the Christian Reformed Church in Winnie in 1910 and the church in Hamshire in 1929. The church and parsonage in Hamshire were built on land that Nick had owned, and he was one of the volunteers who helped in the construction.

By the time the church in Hamshire was founded, Nick and Johanna's son John was married and living in Michigan.[8] Their children Tye, Herman, and Grace had married, lived in Hamshire, and with their families were attending the church. Rosannah was teaching and living in Nederland but came home on the weekends. Peter left to study at Baylor University and later became a Baptist minister; Sarah had married and lived in Nebraska.

Nicholas De Young (center) with his sons, left to right: John, Tye, Pete, and Herman. All were farmers and important in establishing the fig industry. Image courtesy of Grace Humbarger.

Tye and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Weisgerber De Young[9]

Tye, son of Nick and Johanna, had been born near Allegan, Michigan, in 1889 and came to Texas with his parents in 1911. In 1913 he married Lizzie Weisgerber in Pflugerville, Texas, just north of Austin. She had been born in Dallas in 1893. They lived in Port Arthur, where Tye drove the "interurban" between Beaumont and Port Arthur, and later in Beaumont, where he drove the city bus.

By 1926 they had moved to Hamshire with their children John, 15; Marguerite, 10; Earl, 6; Grace, 2; and baby Betty. Tye worked with his father, Nick, growing and processing figs, and after the close of the canning plant he had his own dairy farm. He also had one thousand chickens and sold eggs and provided delivery service to Beaumont for other farmers who wanted to sell their milk there. It happened, though, that oil was discovered very near their farm and the noise of the drilling rigs agitated the cows. So Tye sold out in 1943 and the family moved back to Beaumont. He died there in 1966 at the age of seventy-seven.

Herman and Emma Wilhelmina Fischer De Young[10]

Herman, another son of Nick and Johanna, was born in 1894, in Jamestown, Michigan. Six months before the infamous 1915 hurricane, he married Emma Fischer, who also lived in Hamshire. Herman and Emma were part of the mass exodus from Hamshire and Winnie after the hurricane, and they lived briefly in Rome, New York, near her family and then in Jamestown before returning to Texas in 1917.

Upon their return, Herman began to work with his father in the emerging fig-processing industry. Figs are finicky. They need to be picked when fully ripe, handled with care to prevent bruising, and heated at just the right temperature at just the right moment. Herman was known as a "good cook." He became manager of the fig cannery and held that position until its close in 1933. About that time Dirk Mellema arrived in Hamshire to be pastor and amateur electrician and, as he wired the church and parsonage, he also taught Herman the trade. From that time on, Herman became the community's electrician and plumber. He was also a member of the Hamshire school board.

Herman was active in the church, serving as treasurer and Sunday school teacher. Emma had been raised in the Lutheran church and preferred to stay home. She was a quiet woman, but a fun-loving practical joker. During the Depression she held the family together; she had a garden and raised chickens, pigs, and a cow. At the time the church was founded, Herman and Emma had six children—Herman W., 13; Lois, 11; Raymond, 9; Jeanette, 8; Robert, 5; and Walter, 3. Dorothy was born later. The two oldest children were born in Michigan, and the others in Texas. Some of their descendants still live in Hamshire, and their daughter Jeanette De Young Kunefke lives on the family homestead.

The family lived very near the Tye De Youngs and Nick and Johanna De Young, allowing frequent opportunities for convivial socializing, and all of them lived near the cannery, the church, and the school. The Herman De Youngs remained in Hamshire after the church closed, and their membership papers were held by the Luctor, Kansas, church. They attended the Baptist church because it was only church in Hamshire, but Herman never officially joined. He died in Hamshire in 1966, and Lizzie in 1977.

The Nicholas De Young family in 1941: front, left to right: Pete, Johanna, Nicholas, Sarah, and John; back, left to right: Tye, Rosanna, Grace, and Herman. Image courtesy of Frederick Renkema.

Rosannah De Young[11]

Rosannah was born in 1900 in Michigan, the daughter of Nick and Johanna, and was an active member of the Winnie church until it closed. Following that, she attended Mary Hardin Baylor College[12] in Belton, Texas, north of Austin, and became an elementary school teacher, first at the New Holland School in Hamshire, later in nearby Nederland, and still later in Winnie. She was very active in the Hamshire church as pianist for the worship services and also taught piano. When she was forty-three years old she married B. Arthur Heard, a Baptist minister. Five years later they moved to Arizona and in 1970 she died in Pima, a small town just west of the New Mexico border. They had no children.

Herman and Grace De Young Paetz[13]

Grace was born in 1902 in Michigan and moved with her family to Texas in 1910. Herman Paetz, born in 1897 in New York, the son of German and Swiss immigrants, was a boarder in the De Young home. The couple married in 1928. He was a dairy farmer and, in the way of small towns, supplemented his income by being a painter and wallpaper hanger. The couple had two sons— Charles, born in 1930, and Marvin, born in 1933. For a time Herman's parents lived with the couple.

Grace was very active in the church as president of the Ladies' Aid Society in the early 1930s. About two years after the church closed, the family, like many others, moved to Arizona, and in 1973 Grace died in Pima, as had her sister Rosannah. She was seventy-one. Herman died in 1989 at the age of ninety-two.

Harmen and Rena Brouwer Munniksma[14]

Harmen was born in Appingedam, the Netherlands. His father had been a navigator of canal boats, and Harmen was also a sailor.[15] He was apparently living in Chicago when he met Rena Brouwer. They married late in life and may have come to Texas soon after their marriage in about 1928, when they were both in their early fifties. He lent his name to the Hamshire advertisements and endorsements that were circulating throughout Dutch-speaking communities in this country.

Munniksma was a dairy farmer and an astute businessman. The couple never had children, but he did develop a fondness for the youngsters of the congregation and sometimes would give them a nickel to put in the offering plate. The Munniksmas sold their farm to the Van Noord family in 1941 and joined others from the Hamshire enclave in moving to Phoenix, Arizona. There they died in November 1958, within days of each other.

Ben (Berend) and Rose Sprietsma Renkema[16]

Ben Renkema was born in 1879 in Littelbert, Groningen, the Netherlands. He had worked with his brothers on a sea-going barge before coming to the United States with three of his siblings in November 1899. They settled among the Dutch in Chicago where Ben worked as a teamster, and were active in the Christian Reformed church there.

In 1904 Ben married Rose Spriet–sma, who had also been born in the Netherlands. The Renkemas were one of several families attracted to Texas by Theodore Koch. Ben bought thirty acres, and he and Rose arrived in the Winnie/Hamshire area in January 1910 with two very young children, Tess and John. A son, Peter, was born in Texas. Rose's brother (George) and mother (Susie[17] Sprietsma) lived with the Renkemas during those years.

Renkema became a truck farmer, and he was instrumental in founding the Christian Reformed church in Winnie in 1910. After the 1915 hurricane, most of the Dutch left Winnie,

and the Renkemas returned to Chicago where he was a teamster hauling refuse. But they still owned land in Texas, and the family returned in 1925 as conditions there were improving. When the Hamshire church was formed, Ben was fifty-one and Rose was forty-eight; Tessie was twenty-five, John was twenty-three, and Peter was sixteen. With his sons Ben began dairy farming.

Rose died in 1936, and two years later Ben surprised the family by coming back from Chicago married to Rose's sister, Anna Sprietsma.

He gave his life and energies to the Christian Reformed Church and stayed to conduct the very last details of the closure and sale of the property. He was superintendent of the Sunday school during the church's early years, and clerk of the consistory from 1932 to 1946. He was a faithful elder and reliable delegate to classis, and he was committed to the Reformed tradition when others were more comfortable among other denominations. He was called upon to read sermons in worship when a pastor wasn't present. In 1949 Ben sold his dairy farm in Texas, and he and Anna moved to Arizona where he worked in his son John's dairy operation. He died in Phoenix in 1953, at the age of seventy-three, and was buried in Chicago. Anna died in 1982 in the Chicago area, at the age of eighty-seven.

Riemer and Tessie Renkema Van Til[18]

Tessie Renkema, daughter of Rose and Ben, was born in Chicago in 1905. When the family moved back to Chicago for a time, Tessie was promoted to floor manager of a knitting company in Racine, Wisconsin. She returned to Texas with her parents and siblings in 1925 and was active in the Hamshire church, serving as president of the Young People's Society. When she was twenty-six, she married a neighboring hog farmer, John Brauer. But within three months of the wedding, he had an accident while vaccinating pigs and died. Although her marriage was short-lived, she had a long-time inheritance. Oil was discovered on land that had belonged to the couple; the well was named "Tessie," and checks arrived for the rest of her life.

Riemer was born in northern Indiana, the son of Reinder and Sena Van Til. One day he and his brother Bill left Indiana to travel south in an old pickup truck with three good tires and a list (given to them by their father) of all the Christian Reformed churches along the way. They moved south, guests at one parsonage after another, until they came to Hamshire. There Riemer was invited for dinner at the

Tessie Renkema Brauer was a young widow when Riemer Van Til visited from Indiana. They were married in 1934. Image courtesy of Bernie VanTil.

Renkema home and was apparently smitten on the spot. He planted a kiss on Tessie at a moment when her arms were full of dishes and he married her in 1934. He worked as a brick mason at the Texaco Oil Refinery in Port Arthur, where the family lived, attended Port Arthur Business College, and served in the Texas National Guard. Riemer was an elder in the church.

In 1940 the couple moved to South Holland, Illinois, where Riemer worked as a brick mason in the furnaces at Inland Steel Company. But it was hot work and grueling physically, and they soon moved to Hol-

The VanTils and their children, Rose, Larry, and Ron. Riemer was a mason in Hamshire but eventually moved to Holland, Michigan, where he sold insurance and served in various elected offices. Image courtesy of Bernie VanTil.

land, Michigan, where Riemer sold insurance. He served on the Holland Chamber of Commerce and on boards and committees in the Holland area, including the Children's Aid Society. From 1959 to 1964 he served in the Michigan House of Representatives, and during that time he served as chairman of the Labor Committee, where he headed an extensive study of construction safety legislation, no doubt important to him because of his years in the oil industry. At the time of his death in Holland in 1975, he was the Ottawa County Treasurer.

Tessie worked hard for the cause of Christian education in Holland, raising funds to reduce the tuition in the Christian schools there. She died in Holland in 1994. The couple had four children—Ronald, Rose, Lawrence, and Bernard.

John Renkema and Alice Stob Renkema[19]

John was born in Chicago in 1907. When the rest of the family returned to Texas in 1925, he stayed behind in Chicago but later hitchhiked to Texas with a friend, John Wiersema.[20] He joined his father, Ben Renkema, on the farm, and in 1934 he went back to Chicago to marry Alice Stob. She was twenty-five, the daughter of Jacob and Anna Stob.

John and Alice were active in the church—he as superintendent of the Sunday school from 1942 until the church closed. She was active in the Ladies' Aid Society and served as its secretary in its final years. In Hamshire, John was a dairy farmer like his father, a profession he continued when the family moved to Phoenix in 1947. He died there in June 1975. His wife, Alice, died there in 1990. Their children were Anna Rose, born in 1935, and John Renkema Jr., born in 1938.

Peter and Lois De Young Renkema[21]

Peter had been born in 1914 in Winnie. When the family returned to Texas in 1925, he worked with his father on the dairy farm. Peter and Lois De Young, the daughter of Herman and Emma De Young, grew up together in the Hamshire church and were both active in the Young People's Society. In 1934 they were married there by Rev. Mellema. They lived with Ben after the death of Peter's mother, Rose, and before Ben's marriage to Anna. Their five children grew up there: Wilma Rose was born in 1934, Bernard Herman in 1936, Henrietta Ann in 1937, Frederick Lee in 1943, and Charles Peter in 1945. Though Peter may have loved farming, what his father could pay him on the farm couldn't compete with what he could earn in the petroleum industry. After the birth of their fifth child, he left the farm and went to work in the oil fields and, following that, in the refinery.

Peter died in 1952 as result of a malignant brain tumor; his oldest child was seventeen, and the youngest was six. Lois raised the children on the farm, selling milk and milk products to the neighbors. In 1961, when she was forty-two and her youngest son was sixteen, she earned a nursing degree and worked at the Winnie Clinic

Peter Renkema, his wife, Lois (De Young), and children, Wilma Rose, Bernard, Charles, Frederick, and Henrietta. Renkema eventually worked in the oil industry. Image courtesy of Frederick Renkema.

Peter and Mina Van Houten and their nine children lived in the Beaumont, Texas, area, but there is no record of their joining the Hamshire church. Image courtesy of Frederick Renkema.

and later at the Winnie Hospital. She retired at the age of seventy-two and died in 2010 at the age of ninety-one.

After the church closed, the Renkema family attended the Baptist church, though their membership papers were held in the Luctor church.

Dirk (Dick) and Jacomijntje (Mien) van Eesteren Holtkamp[22][23]

Dirk was born in Zuidhorn, Groningen, in 1877, and Mien was born in Vlissingen, Zeeland, the next year. They were married in Vlissingen in 1904. In 1907 they emigrated to the United States and may have lived first in Paterson, New Jersey. As was the case with many immigrants, they moved several times during their years in this country; they lived for some years in Granger, Washington (near Zillah), where Dirk farmed. By 1922 they had moved to Port Arthur, Texas. There he became the loading superintendent for the large Texaco Oil tankers. Although the couple never moved to Hamshire, he also became the treasurer for a canning factory, presumably the Beaumont and Hamshire Fig Company.

When they were in their early fifties, they became members of the Hamshire church, almost certainly through Rev. Mellema's careful outreach to the Dutch in Port Arthur. Dirk served as an elder and attended at least two meetings of Classis Pella with Mellema. Rev. Peter De Jong recalled him as a good support to him in an isolated congregation. Dirk was a genial man with a good sense of humor, and Mien was a wonderful cook.

During the waning days of the Hamshire church, Classis Pella suggested that those in the church who wanted to remain Reformed should move elsewhere. Along with others, the Holtkamps also took that advice. In 1944 Dirk and Mien retired and moved to Zillah, where they had dear friends, and became members of the Christian Reformed church there. He died in Zillah the next year, and Mien died there in 1948. They had no children.

Edward and Helen Monsma Van Houten[24]

Ed and Helen arrived in Hamshire from Lucas, Michigan, in 1924, when he was forty-seven and she was forty. A few years later he joined with Ben Renkema, Nick De Young, and Harmen Munniksma in signing advertisements and promotional letters in an effort to recruit Dutch-speaking people to Hamshire. When the church was formed, he was elected a deacon and served the congregation as its treasurer until 1944.

Helen had been a teacher in Lucas, and Ed was a farmer, and he turned to dairy farming in Hamshire. They had no children but raised a niece and nephew, Gertrude and John Monsma (who was called Charlie). Ed, an easy-going man, became disabled when he fell off a roof and broke his leg. The doctor set it improperly so it didn't heal correctly.

Gertrude was sixteen when the church was founded, and Charlie thirteen. She was very active in the church and served as secretary of the Sunday school for a time. She did not attend high school but helped Edward with the cattle. It was her job to saddle a horse and ride through the pasture to bring the cows in for milking. There were no fences, so they could wander freely, and did. They were also unprotected from cattle thieves,

Edward and Helen Van Houten moved to Hamshire from Lucas, Michigan, in 1924 and stayed just over two decades. Image courtesy of Edward and Jean Ausema.

who caused trouble at times. Gertrude married John Ausema, who had come to Texas in the hope of finding relief from asthma and had boarded with the Van Houtens. After he returned to Michigan, Edward and Helen thought he might have been a good match for Gertrude. The two corresponded, and around 1935 she moved back to Michigan and married him. Charlie joined the merchant marine at the age of twenty, in 1937.

The Van Houtens left Texas in 1945 when they retired and as the church was in the process of disbanding. They moved to Michigan to be closer to Gertrude and her husband. Helen died in Cutlerville, Michigan, in 1956 at the age of seventy-two. Edward died in Grand Rapids circa 1968.

Gerrit and Alice Giroux Van Noord[25]

Alice Giroux was born in 1912 and raised on a farm northwest of Grand Rapids, Michigan; she graduated from Union High School in Grand Rapids. She married Gerrit Van Noord when she was eighteen and he was twenty-two. He was a dairy farmer, born in Zutphen, Michigan. The two lived and farmed in Byron Center, Dorr, Ada, and, by 1937, Jamestown, Michigan. In addition to farming, Gerrit also worked at Keeler Brass Company in Grand Rapids. Dairy farming is hard anywhere and anytime, but it was especially hard in those years in Michigan, and Texas beckoned. In May 1941 Gerrit received a letter from Rev. Peter De Jong telling of land for sale in Hamshire. He was adventuresome, and at the age of thirty-two he set out to investigate the Hamshire area and the church there. He stayed with Tye De Young and talked with Ben Ren-

Gerrit and Alice Van Noord came to Hamshire later than most, in 1941, but eventually operated a successful dairy farm. Image courtesy of Sharon Van Noord Brinks.

kema, and a few weeks later he moved to Texas with Alice, twenty-eight, and their young family—Laura May, 8; Gerrit, 6; Esther, 5; and Sharon, 3. Viola was born shortly after they arrived, and Eugene and Ruth were born in Texas in 1948 and 1950.

Gerrit bought a farm from Harmen Munniksma. According to reports, when Munniksma saw Gerrit and his children, he declared that "You're the man I want to sell my farm to." The

Gerrit, Viola, Laura, Sharon, and Esther; five of Gerrit and Alice Van Noord's children. Image courtesy of Sharon Van Noord Brinks.

Van Noord's youngest daughter, Ruth, still lives on the land her father purchased "on a handshake."

The Van Noords were successful dairy farmers, partly because they had seven children to help with the milking and milk routes. Alice would drive, and the children would deliver the milk and collect the empty bottles. Sometimes kind customers would leave a quarter in the bottle for them. When other members of the church left Hamshire, Gerrit bought their land and cattle and amassed several properties in the area and in other states, land that his son Gerrit farmed or supervised. At one point the Van Noord family had five hundred head of cattle, compared to typical herds of twenty-five or thirty at the time. As the church was disbanding, the Van Noords worshiped at a Presbyterian church in Beaumont, where Rev. Wesley Prince was pastor, and later at a Lutheran church in Beaumont. When Gerrit Sr. died in 1966, Prince officiated at the funeral. Alice died in Florida in 1996. Gerrit was very eager that his children all marry Dutch, Christian Reformed spouses, so the five oldest children left Hamshire and attended Calvin College and Reformed Bible College (now Kuyper College) in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Henry and Alice Tulp Van De Werken[26]

Henry had been born in the Netherlands in 1875 and had emigrated at the age of seventeen. He and Alice were married in Chicago in 1895 when he was twenty and she was seventeen, and by 1910 they had four children. He was a master cement finisher in Chicago, working with his son John under the name of Workman[27] and Sons. They poured sidewalks in Chicago that still bear their name.

Henry and Ben Renkema had been friends in Chicago, and, along with many others from the Chicago area, Henry bought land near the Renkema

Henry Van De Werken and his granddaughter Jacquelyn Faye. Image courtesy of Alice Van De Werken Pritchett.

farm during the time the Winnie church was in existence. Alice was reluctant to leave her home in Chicago, so he hired a family to live and work on the farm; he traveled back and forth every summer to administer his investment. Finally, in 1939 Henry and Alice moved to Hamshire, though she still retained strong ties to Chicago.

Henry and his son Jake built a swimming pool in Winnie and also created ornate cement flower pots that stood one on each side of the school door. In addition to being a cement finisher, Henry was also a wallpaper hanger and a dairy farmer. He had a large garden and chickens and pigs for feeding the family, and he also sold butter and eggs (but never on Sunday) and traded food for supplies at the store. He was a gentle man, much loved by his granddaughters as their "fishing buddy." He was active in the church, served as president of a farmers' co-op in Hamshire, and made memorable blackberry wine.

Alice died in Texas in 1942; Henry died in Hamshire in 1950. Both were buried in Chicago.

Jacob and Elaine (Ebelina) Kok/Cook Van De Werken

Jacob Van De Werken was the son of Henry and Alice, and in 1939, when he was thirty-one and his wife Elaine was thirty-three, Jacob made an impromptu decision to move to Hamshire from Chicago, with his parents and his very pregnant wife and two daughters, Alice, 10, and Grace, 8. They had to stop along the way to seek medical help for Elaine and arrived in Hamshire just in time for baby Jean to be born. Another daughter, Jackie, was born in 1947 in Hamshire. The couple and their four daughters lived in a small two-bedroom home with his parents.

He was car mechanic by profession and reluctantly helped with the farming. His real love was repairing radios and small machinery. Elaine was a frugal woman, a good financial manager, and an amiable person. She was

a good cook and canned large quantities of garden produce. She was also a skilled seamstress, and she knitted, crocheted, and sold handmade items to other women in the Ladies' Aid Society to augment the family's income.

In the final years of the church's existence, all the Van De Werkens faithfully attended services whenever they were held but worshiped in other churches when a Christian Reformed pastor wasn't present. Farming was not for Jake, and, when his father died in 1950, he sold the farm; the family moved to Houston, where he was an auto mechanic and a night watchman.

There were other Dutch families in the area during the period when the church existed. The Peter and Mina Van Vliet Van Houten family, with their children Anne, Willem, Henry, and Grace, lived in the Beaumont area from about 1925 to 1928. Garrett John and Henrietta Kollen Kropscott lived in Hamshire as early as 1915 and subsequently in Beaumont. John Wiersema arrived in Hamshire from Chicago as early as 1925. He married Ella Marie Melanson and they lived in Hamshire. Their connections to the church could not be verified.

Endnotes

1. Information regarding the Achterhof family was provided by Shirley Voskuil Gardner in telephone conversations on 5, 6, and 8 January 2011.
2. Information regarding the De Young family was provided by Edith De Young Smith in a conversation on 21 February 2013.
3. The other couple was Peter and Lois De Young Renkema.
4. Information regarding the Voskuil family was provided by Shirley Voskuil Gardner.
5. Information regarding the Nick De Young family was provided by Fred Renkema in emails and telephone conversations dated between 21 January and 9 April 2011; and by Robert De Young in a telephone conversation on 12 January 2011.
6. Teije, his paternal grandfather's name.
7. So noted in a tribute written to the couple by Rev. Dirk Mellema on their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1936.
8. According to Donna De Young Vance in a telephone conversation on 22 January 2011.
9. Information regarding the Tye De Young family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid, and Grace De Young Humbarger in a telephone conversation on 25 February 2011.
10. Information regarding the Herman De Young family was provided by Robert De Young, ibid, and Jeanette De Young Kunefke in telephone conversations on 17 January and 8 April 2011.
11. Information regarding Rosannah De Young was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
12. Now the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, a Baptist-related college.
13. Information regarding the Paetz family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
14. Information regarding the Munniksmas was provided by Gerrit Van Noord Jr.
15. Several who knew him in the church remembered that he was called a "sea captain" and liked to sleep in a hammock rather than a bed.
16. Information regarding the Ben Renkema family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
17. Also called Sophie.
18. Information regarding the Riemer Van Til family was provided by Bernie Van Til in a telephone conversation on 3 January 2013 and an in-person conversation on 25 January 2013; and by Fred Renkema, ibid.
19. Information regarding the John Renkema family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
20. As far as can be determined, the Wiersema family was not a part of the Hamshire CRC, though the Wiersmas did live in the area.
21. Information regarding the Peter Renkema family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
22. Also Jacomyntje.
23. Information regarding Dick and Mien Holtkamp was provided by Arnold Koekkoek in emails dated 30 April and 1 May 2011.
24. Information regarding the Van Houten family was provided by Edward Ausema in telephone conversations on 7 and 8 February 2011 and 3 January 2013.
25. Information regarding the Van Noord family was provided by Gerrit Van Noord Jr. in telephone conversations on 28 January, 5 and 19 February, and 3 April 2011; Laura May Van Noord DeWitt, Ruth Van Noord, and Sharon Van Noord Brinks in a telephone conversation on 28 January 2011 and written documents received 25 January 2013.
26. Information regarding the Van De Werken family was provided by Grace Van De Werken Bowns in a telephone conversation on 5 March 2011; Jean Van De Werken Murphy, in a telephone conversation on 27 February 2011; Alice Van De Werken Pritchett in a telephone conversation on 28 February 2011; and Jackie Van De Werken King in an email dated 1 March 2011. The surname was also spelled Van de Werken (with several other variations).
27. The Van De Werkens sometimes used the name Workman. John did not move to Texas.

The Dutch, and Texas, and a Hurricane

Angie Ploegstra

Today there is little tangible evidence twenty miles west of Galveston, Texas, on Chocolate Bay, to indicate that there was a Dutch community there, or that it was called Amsterdam. It's not on any map, and there are no road signs, and even a nearby museum and libraries have no records from the community. There are three or four old buildings in very poor repair but no indication of what they were. On the site, cattle graze in some fields and corn grows in others. Only a few local residents remember a Dutch settlement there that began to disintegrate after the devastating hurricane of 8 September 1900.

Liverpool, Texas, in Brazoria County, is near where the unincorporated community of Amsterdam was located. Image courtesy of the author.

Always interested in history, Angie Ploegstra and her husband Joel spend ten to twelve weeks a year doing disaster relief work for World Renew. They went to the Liverpool/Amsterdam area six times between 2008 and 2010 because of the destruction from Hurricane Ike and became curious about the community's name.

Initially the area was called Gothland, but after the Dutch immigrants arrived and the post office opened in early 1897, Gothland became Amsterdam. At the time it was a thriving community with boat docks, shipping wharves, a Mennonite academy, a broom factory, a telephone company, and an oil company. A one-acre lot was designated for a one-room public school organized on 6 October 1896, with Jacob D. Bos and Worsley Weynat Jr. as trustees. A stage road was opened between Liverpool and Amsterdam, giving access to Alvin to the north and Angleton to the west-southwest. A school tax of fifteen cents per $100 property valuation was levied by the newly formed Liverpool School District #10 to finance five district schools. There were also mosquitoes, malaria, and yellow fever to cope with, and in 1895 eighteen inches of snow fell along Chocolate Bayou.

As in other places, land developers had explored the area thoroughly. In 1894, John Broekema, of Siegel, Cooper and Company in Chicago, led a group of twelve men to visit Texas, to investigate a suitable site for a Dutch settlement.[1] They went as far west as Fort Worth and as far south as Corpus Christi. In Houston they met P. A. Angenend and Jacob Meyer. Angenend had not met another Hollander in the four years he had been in America; he had lived the last two years in Texas.[2] He enjoyed conversing in Dutch with Broekema's group. Meyer had been a resident of Pella, Iowa, for several years and was managing the St. Louis Pressed Brick Company in Houston. The two men highly recommended south Texas for a Dutch settlement, especially for anyone willing to work hard.[3] After returning to Chicago, the group published favorable reports in *De Grondwet* encouraging Dutch settlements in south Texas.[4]

Another group of Dutch investors from Iowa and Nebraska formed the Texas Colonization Company of Orange City, Iowa, with J. P. Koch, a land developer, as the manager. The company bought 6,879 acres of land in the Liverpool/Gothland area, located between the Chocolate and Buffalo bayous, thirty miles south of Houston and ten miles west of the Gulf of Mexico.

Early in 1895 Koch hired D. Lee Slataper, the county extension surveyor of Alvin, Texas, to plat a city at Gothland.[5] Next the company hired Albert Kuipers[6] to research their holdings in the Gothland area, ten miles south of Alvin, Texas, the nearest train station. Kuipers, thinking Texas too hot for Dutch immigrants, turned down the offer but was later persuaded to reconsider. He went to Texas four times, and each time he encountered other Dutch immigrants who were also investigating the area. Kuipers was so impressed with the Gothland area that he, along with several others, bought 2,600 acres of land there: "The land was top quality, partly heavy clay, close to good markets and a healthy climate."[7] On his fourth trip to Texas, Kuipers visited several Dutch immigrants living in the Gothland area. Giving a strong recommendation for a settlement in the area were J. D. Bos, a farmer from Michigan; L. H. Boerhave, a shopkeeper in Liverpool;[8] C. Van Beek, who rented a farm in the area; and D. Ellerbroek, from Sioux County, Iowa. Ellerbroek had purchased 1,280 acres in the area with the hope of settling his adult children in farming.[9]

Kuipers journeyed to Chicago and sought the advice of George Birhof, Consul of the Netherlands. Birhof recommended he contact Broekema, Siegel, and Cooper, all trustworthy men who had researched the area.[10] After talking with them, Kuipers recommended south Texas to the colonization company. The company began to promote the Gothland area in *De Volksvriend and De Grondwet*.

> Farmers who have some revenue on hand, cannot find a better place to settle than Gothland in south Texas. The fertility of the soil is unsurpassable and the climate delightful, no droughts, hot winds, cyclones, blizzards or bitter winters. The colony is thriving. A Post Office at Amsterdam has been applied for. There is already a hotel, lumberyard, livery stable, a store and even a school as well as a building for worship services. . . . it is 20 miles from Port Galveston and 30 miles from Houston where 15 railroads cross.[11]

A year later the company again promoted the area, this time in *De Grondwet*.

> Are there still people who with all their hard work still do not have any money in hand? People who can't seem to get ahead? But who still would like to earn a worry-free existence and who would not despise a pleasant climate? If there are really such farmers then we would like them to write us for information and chance to see with their own eyes and we provide them with
>
> Twice monthly EXCURSIONS to GOTHLAND.
>
> Note well that we are not speaking about anything other than the giant state of Texas—which has a delightful climate—summers not too hot and winters mild. You can sell all your products for the same prices the markets in New York would fetch, and because of the climate and the good living on 40 acres that someone in the Northern states would need a much larger farm for, something he could only dream of.
>
> There is some money needed: a span of horses, seed, and some implements as well as a house, but lumber is very cheap here. Also, one should be able to live for a couple months without income until the crops can be sold, but that is about the extent of the expenses. The rest will take care of itself.[12]

As positive and enticing as those announcements were, there was at least one other viewpoint. A gardener, H. Koopman, born in Borger, Drenthe, the Netherlands, had emigrated to America and was living in Chicago when Broekema and several ministers in the Reformed churches recommended south Texas as a place to settle. Based on that recommendation, Koopman wrote a favorable report to his nephew about the ability to raise two crops a year in southern Texas on the same piece of land: even potatoes! He then made the thousand-mile train trip to Alvin, Texas, to see the area for himself. He noted that the land was at sea level, waiting to be flooded, and observed that people were killing themselves breaking the soil. While he was there he had only coffee and pancakes to eat. He concluded that the region was "bad for agriculture" and returned to Chicago, discouraged and angry. He told the other interested immigrants about the conditions, but they persisted in their attempts to promote the area.

One of the promoters whom Koopman talked with was Rev. Lawrence Dykstra, of the First Englewood, Chicago, Reformed Church in America, who had been one of Broekema's original group of twelve. Dykstra admitted he had only gone as far as Alvin and had not seen the Gothland area or the conditions that Koopman cited. After this encounter Koopman no longer had contact with Dutch ministers or Dutch newspapers.[13]

By 1900 forty-five families lived there, and "a Dutch Reformed Church met in the school and the area was taking on a look of growth."[14] When the devastating hurricane came onshore on 8 September 1900 with winds at 145 miles per hour and a tidal surge over fifteen feet, the low-lying land was flooded and people lost everything, as Koopman had feared. The hurricane devastated Galveston Island, killing an estimated 8,000 people, making it at the time the deadliest natural disaster in United States history, and caused property damage estimated at $104 billion (2010 dollars). Four days later, when the storm reached New York City, winds were still at 65 mph. The Dutch settlement of Amsterdam was one of the victims.

On the eve of the storm the wind blew hard all night in Brazoria County. In the morning the clouds were wild and the wind was blowing furiously, but Joe and Gertie Eefting drove a horse-drawn wagon to the woods to get fuel for supper. When Gertie returned home, she made a supper the family never ate. It was 5:30 pm, and the house shook. Willem gave the children blankets, ordering them to leave just minutes before the house slid off its foundation. They started for the barn, but that had also been destroyed, and they finally sought refuge in the home of a neighbor. They left with blankets over their heads, trudging through knee-deep salt water. The Eeftings, with seventeen other people, huddled in one room, and the girls began

Because her son Jacob had malaria, Jeannette Van Beek was with him in the hospital on Galveston Island during the hurricane. Image courtesy of the author.

singing hymns. At 3:00 am, with the porches down and covered with sand, the men helped the women to the second floor. That house endured the storm, and for the next twenty-one days twenty-one people lived there. At night they slept five to a bed, lying crosswise.

The Naaktgeboren house was pushed off its foundation and collapsed. Bastiaan, Pietronella, Pieter, and Mary sought refuge under the water tank behind their house, then in the summer kitchen, bracing themselves with two-by-fours. When the eye of the storm was over them, they crawled under the roof of the house, which lay on the ground. The winds started again, and they ran to their neighbor, the local school teacher whose last name was Everett, and along with several other people survived the remainder of the storm in his small house. At the time Johanna Naaktgeboren was working in Alvin, Texas, for a family that owned an ice plant. After the hurricane, she was found safe inside the rubble of the ice plant. Alvin was destroyed. There had been three hundred homes in Alvin, and only fourteen were left on their foundations, and those were badly damaged.[15]

Corstiaan Van Beek had gone through bankruptcy in the Netherlands before moving his family to the United States. The family moved to Texas in 1895 and lost most of their possessions in the hurricane. Image courtesy of the author.

The devastation was so complete and the storm so severe that the Dutch immigrant residents left. Bastiaan Naaktgeboren felt "had it not been for the hurricane he would have stayed. He had never done so well in his life."[16] Willem Eefting's property value decreased $200 in 1900. The Van Beek property was valued the same in 1899 and 1900. Adrian Groeneveld's land had increased in value, but he left for California even before the hurricane. Whatever the reasons for leaving, another Dutch settlement that started with promise ended with people losing all their possessions and needing to start a new life elsewhere.

When the Dutch settlers left the area, the community declined significantly. The Amsterdam school enrollment dropped, and in 1911 it was combined with two other schools and moved to Liverpool. The Amsterdam post office closed in 1905, and those residents who remained went to Liverpool for their mail until a rural route was established. Everett, the school teacher, was postmaster until the office closed three years later. The three-story hotel was destroyed during the hurricane, along with most of the other buildings in the area. The only reminder is that local residents call this area "Amsterdam."

Some of the Settlers[17]

Bastiaan **Naaktgeboren** and Pietronella van der Linden were married in Groote Lindt, the Netherlands, in 1870. They owned a windmill, and he was a successful flax and grain broker. She was a descendant of the wealthy royal Moer Kirk family who owned a castle. But during the depression of the early 1870s in Europe, the Naaktgeborens' home and windmill burned, and her dowry evaporated. They were penniless and decided to emigrate to America, as had many friends before them. Bastiaan left first and a year later, on 15 May 1882, Pietronella and four children—Jacob, Francis, Elizabeth, and Johanna—arrived in New York City. Bastiaan was waiting expecting to see five children, but Pieter, a one-year-old, had been ill when they left the Netherlands, developed brain

fever onboard the ship, and died. A year later they had another son and they named him Pieter; still later they had a daughter, Mary.

The family moved to the Blue Island region of Chicago at 115th and Wentworth streets. Naaktgeboren was a laborer and made brooms in their basement. He was ambitious and attended evening classes, studying mathematics. After six years they moved to Morrison, Illinois, and he helped organize the Ebenezer Holland Dutch Reformed Church in May 1896. He was elected one of the first deacons, and he assisted the minister in reading sermons. Since the church did not have an organ, he served as the precentor.

Because their seventeen-year-old daughter Johanna was in poor health, Naaktgeboren, having heard about the health benefits of living in the warm climate of south Texas, decided to take Johanna to the Gothland area. Johanna regained her health in a short time, crediting the climate and sweet potatoes for her recovery. Six months later Pietronella, Mary, Pieter, and Frances joined them in Texas. Their son Jacob brought the furniture from Chicago by train and stayed for six months before returning to Illinois. Daughter Elizabeth stayed in Chicago. Bastiaan and Pietronella bought property and a two-story house a mile from Chocolate Bayou. He raised broom corn, vegetables, peanuts, prairie grass, and cattle. They made brooms from their broom corn and had the handles shipped in from Temple, Texas.

The county property assessment of 1897 records that Bastiaan owned a hundred acres of land valued at $600, four horses, and a buggy, with a total value of $700. He paid $8.47 in taxes. Two years later he had purchased another eighty acres of land, and his total assets were valued at $2,260. This included three horses, five head of cattle, a buggy, and $15 of miscellaneous items. His total tax bill was $21.24. The following year his county assessment was the same even though he had added a horse and lost one head of cattle.

When the hurricane struck in September 1900, Frances had already moved back to Chicago and was planning to marry Ben Eefting, whom she had met in Texas. The Naaktgeborens lost all their possessions and sold their property for $1,000 to a Houston realtor, moved back to Chicago, and lived in a two-story house near their son Jacob. They later moved back to Morrison, Illinois, bought a farm, and again became members of the Ebenezer Reformed Church.

This field is a current view of the site of Amsterdam. Image courtesy of the author.

Willem **Eefting,** aged twenty-five years, and Janna Krekel, aged twenty-three years, were married in Onstwedde, the Netherlands, in 1868. He was a veterinarian and worked for the government. The family moved for a year to Batavia in the Dutch East Indies when Willem's skills as a veterinarian were needed there. But his eventual hope was to emigrate to America, and after returning to the Netherlands he started making plans to do so. His brothers Jan and Jan Henry and sister Jentje already lived in Hospers, Iowa.[18] Willem and Janna and their family bought passage on a German ship, settled in Hospers, and joined the First Reformed Church.

In May 1891 Willem along with two other men built a barn for the church. Son Ben was admitted to full communion in December of the same year at the age of twenty-two, according to the church's minutes. Ben was also asked to check over the financial records of the church. But, very shortly thereafter on 3 March 1892, Willem and Janna asked that their church membership and that of their son Ben be sent to them in Chicago. The Naaktgeborens wrote Willem and Janna and suggested that they buy a farm and set up a veterinary practice near Amsterdam. The land was flat and low and had plenty of water, similar to the Netherlands.

So, in September 1897, the Eeftings and their children (Ben, born 1869; Lydia, born 1870; Hattie, born 1874; Jennie, born 1878; Joe, born 1879; and Gertie, born 1881[19]) settled on an eighty-acre farm in the Amsterdam area. Willem and Janna's two daughters, Lydia and Anna, were married in Iowa and remained there.[20] Ben was a surveyor and a civil engineer in Chicago.[21] Joe joined a telephone company and helped string wires from the mainland of Texas to Galveston Island.

The 1898 county tax assessment of eighty acres in Brazoria County valued the land at $600. They had three horses valued at $80 and one cow valued at $20. The following year the value of their land had risen to $1,000, and they had another horse. In 1900 their land value decreased to $800; they also had two horses, one cow, and a buggy.

Janna was able to save a teapot purchased in Java that held their family savings. The other household items, clothing, farm supplies, animals, and veterinary supplies were lost. The waters had been high, with decaying human bodies and animal carcasses, and Willem feared the plague. Along with the free railroad passes sent from churches in Chicago there was a barrel of donated clothes delivered via the Santa Fe Railroad to Alvin, Texas. The clothes were fancy, and not practical, but the family wore them back and were a sorry-looking sight when they arrived in Chicago.

Bastiaan and Pietronella Naaktgeboren moved to Texas for their daughter's health. They also lost their possessions during the hurricane and returned to Chicago. Image courtesy of the author.

Willem had lost all his material possessions and, despite having a wife, children, and successful employment, he gave up hope. He died in Chicago, four months after the hurricane, and was buried in Pilgrim Home Cemetery in Holland, Michigan, where his daughter Anna lived. Janna remarried and died in 1915. She was buried beside her husband in Holland, Michigan.

Corstiaan and Jeannette Groeneveld **Van Beek** and their children—Simon, born 1877; Henry, born 1878; Jeannette, born 1880; Gertrude, born 1884; Martha, born 1885; and Jacob, born 1887. Corstiaan, twenty-two, and Jeannette, twenty-one, were married in Hazerwoude, the Netherlands, in 1876, and lived in a house built for them by Corstiaan's father on the same polder. Fifteen years later they went through bankruptcy and decided to emigrate to America. Corstiaan had visited America earlier with his sister. The family arrived in New York City aboard *Veendam,*[22] having sailed first class with Corstiaan's father paying the passage. Young Jacob celebrated his sixth birthday on the voyage with a party given by the captain.

The fierce winds of the 1900 Galveston hurricane pushed the Naaktgeborens' house off its foundation and caused so much damage that only the roof briefly remained intact. Image courtesy of the author.

For the first three months the family lived in Paterson, New Jersey, in a cockroach-infested two-story apartment building. Some of the family, including twelve-year-old Jeannette, worked at the Dolphin Jute Mill manufacturing ropes and mats. In New Jersey Jeannette developed rheumatic fever, which caused heart problems for the remainder of her life. Next Van Beek moved his family to Pella, Iowa, living briefly in town before moving to a farm. A year and a half later he was feeling unsuccessful, so for the summer he moved his family to Fruitdale, Alabama (fifty miles north of Mobile). There Simon worked in a sawmill for scrip, which enabled him to buy goods at the general store. His wage amounted to seventy-five cents a day. It was in Fruitdale that Corstiaan heard about the Dutch settlement in the Gothland area of Texas.

In 1895 he loaded his family and animals into one boxcar and headed for Texas. The heat, stench, and crowded conditions in the boxcar left the family with bad memories and disgusted feelings for the rest of their lives. They first rented land and later purchased eighty acres from the Ellerbroeks, including a large frame house. They raised prairie grass which they baled for shipment and stored in a barn near Chocolate Bayou. Simon and his brother Henry raised vegetables on their farm and transported them by sailboat to be sold on Galveston Island. The distance and slow transportation to Galveston often resulted in high losses of the perishable vegetables.

Longhorn cattle roamed the prairie,

A current view of Chocolate Bayou, west of Galveston, which provides water access to Amsterdam. Image courtesy of the author.

and Simon tells of the time they stampeded toward him. After slapping his hands on his legs the cattle separated and ran past him. To supplement the family income, Simon moved to Galveston Island and worked in a men's clothing store. He also found employment in a general merchandise store/saloon owned by L. H. Boerhave and attended night school, studying civil engineering. At one point he developed typhoid fever and spent some time in the Temple, Texas, hospital.

In 1897 the Van Beeks had four head of cattle valued at $100 and a buggy valued at $20. In the following two years the Van Beeks owned eighty acres of land valued at $600, a buggy, two horses, and a dog. Several members of the Van Beek family were on Galveston Island at the time of the hurricane. The morning after the hurricane Simon Van Beek and his brother-in-law, Jon Sudmeier, began looking for family members. Jon was also trying to find medicine for his wife, Jeannette, who was eight months pregnant. Simon and Jon were traveling in a buckboard and a bakery cart but were soon asked by the police if they could help transport the injured and dead. The injured were transported to the hospitals, and the dead bodies were being brought out to sea. While doing this, Jon found the needed medication for his wife.

The morning after the hurricane, Simon Van Beek and his brother-in-law, Jon Sudmeier, began transporting the injured on a buckboard and a bakery wagon. Image courtesy of the author.

Thirteen-year-old Jacob had malaria, and his mother Jeannette was with him in a hospital on Galveston Island when the hurricane came ashore. They were found safe in a stairway of the hospital, along with many other people. Gertrude was working at the time for a family on Galveston Island, and she was also found in a stairway of that home. The house was located on a hill, so many people had gone there to take refuge. She recalled that during the storm people were praying and crying. When the storm subsided, they went back to their usual cursing and forgot their promises made in prayers the previous night. Henry Van Beek was on the mainland. An excellent swimmer, he is credited with saving many lives. But he grieved for the ones he couldn't save.[23]

Daughter Jeannette married Jon Sudmeier, who had come to America in 1894. He worked for a bakery and had his own route, and they met when he delivered baked goods to the Van Beek home. They lived on Galveston Island, in the upstairs apartment above Boerhave's store, thirty blocks from the beach. The house wasn't destroyed but needed remodeling. Many of Jon and Jeannette's possessions were found on the street, including Jeanette's wedding dress and their feather mattress.

The Van Beeks' house was destroyed in the hurricane, and subsequently they sold the farm. Van Beek was a restless person, and his children went to work at an early age in factories and doing farm work and housework to help support the family. Sometime after the storm the parents separated, and they were divorced in 1902.

Jeannette, Simon, Henry, Jacob, Gertrude, and Martha moved to Hanford, California, taking advantage of the free passes given by the Santa Fe Railroad. As a family they purchased a sixty-acre farm with a house, starting over once again. Six months after the hurricane, Jon, Jeannette, and new son Henry Sudmeier moved to Minnesota but eventually moved to Oakland, California, to be near the other members of her family.

At his mother's urging, Simon took the train to Morrison, Illinois, and courted Frances Naaktgeboren. In the fall of the same year Frances took the train to California and married Simon. In her own portion of the house, Jeannette lived with Simon and Frances until 1922. At that time Jeannette moved to Oakland, California, to care for her daughter Jeannette who was still suffering the effects of a weak heart.

Dutch was spoken by the family as long as Grandma Jeannette lived, even though she could speak and understand English. She looked forward to reading *De Wachter,* a Dutch-language newspaper. A Christian Reformed church had been organized in Hanford, and Jeannette attended it until her death in 1940. The children credited Jeannette's thriftiness, good management, determination, religious upbringing, and outstanding character for keeping the family together. She was the guiding hand that influenced her children to become successful in their lives.

Hendrik and Klazina Koetsier **Groeneveld** and their children (Ingeltje, born 1886; Teuntje, born 1887; Adriana, born 1888; Metta Wilhelmina, born 1889; Jan, born 1890; Hendrika, born 1891; and Klazina, born 1893) and nephew Adrian Groeneveld, born 1879. Groeneveld, aged forty, his wife, aged thirty-three, and their children arrived in New York City from Haarlemmermeer, the Netherlands, on board *Werkendam* in October 1893. Hendrik's sister, Jeannette Van Beek, had arrived in America a few months earlier. The family traveled to Iowa and joined the Christian Reformed Church in Pella. Adrian Groeneveld, a nephew of Hendrik and Jeannette, came to America the same year. Eventually the family and Adrian moved to Texas to be nearer their relatives.

In 1898 Adrian and Hendrik were listed on the assessment of property, with Adrian owning forty acres of land valued at $160, two horses, and three head of cattle. Hendrik, living on the same property, had two horses. The following year Adrian's forty acres had increased in value to $260; he had two horses, seven head of cattle, and $15 in machinery, with a total value of $425. On the 1900 assessment, Adrian is no longer listed, and Hendrik was living on the property with the valuation the same as the previous year.

Adrian married Tryntje Uithoven from Mississippi in 1899. Their farm seemed to be prospering, but Adrian and Tryntje moved to Hanford, California, before the 1900 hurricane. First they lived with Tryntje's sister and then on their own farm.

After the hurricane, Hendrik, Klazina, and their family moved northeast to Nederland, Texas, and joined the Christian Reformed church there in 1901. Hendrik was appointed clerk of that congregation in 1904, but within six months they had moved again, this time to Kansas. Hendrik died in Prairie View, Kansas, on 3 December 1904. Klazina lived to be ninety-nine years old and died in Denver, Colorado.

George **Reinstra**, born 1865, arrived in America in 1895. He went first to Pella, Iowa, where he made tools and learned the blacksmith trade. A year later he traveled with his team and wagon to the Alvin, Texas, area, where several Dutch people were living. He left his possessions in the care of a Dutch family and returned to the Netherlands to visit his family. In the Netherlands, George learned about the beginning of a new Dutch settlement in Nederland, Texas. His sister Feikje came to America with him. In a letter to the Netherlands dated 17 May 1897 from Liverpool, Texas, Reinstra states that he is "moving to Nederland, Texas, and asked how many immigrants he should expect to join him in this new settlement."[24]

Also living in the Amsterdam area were the Hanse, Schorel, Westrup, and Weynat families. They became close friends with the Dutch settlers, and eventually most of these families also moved to the Fresno, California, area.

Endnotes

1. This group included four from Englewood, Illinois; two from Roseland, Illinois; four from Chicago; two from Michigan, one from Kalamazoo, and one from Holland.

2. He had an important function with Inman & Company, the largest cotton manufacturer in Houston, Texas.

3. *De Grondwet*, 17 July 1894. Translated by Janet Sheeres.

4. *De Grondwet,* 10, 17, and 24 July 1894. Translated by Janet Sheeres.

5. The Liverpool History Book Committee, *The History of Liverpool, Texas and Its People* (D. Armstrong Book Publishing Company: Houston, 1996) 38.

6. Albert Kuipers traveled twenty-five states looking for appropriate land for Dutch settlements.

7. A. Kuipers, "Hope and Potential for the Dutch Farmer, Truck Farmer, and Rancher with Limited Means in South East Texas, North America," 2 and 3. [Translated from "Redding en Toekomst voor den Nederlanschen Lanbouwer, Tuinder en Veeboer, met geringe middelen in Zuid-Oostelcjk Texas, Noord-American" and too literally translated and cataloged as "Deliverance and Future for the Dutch Agriculturist, Horticulturist and Cattle Farmer with Limited Means in South East Texas, North America."] The pamphlet is available in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

8. In the 1900 Federal Census, Boerhave is listed as a grocer on Galveston Island.

9. Steggerda to A. Kuipers, "Hope and Potential."

10. Ibid.

11. Dutch Colony Gothland in South Texas, *De Volksvriend,* 20 August 1896. Translated by Janet Sheeres.

12. *De Grondwet,* 24 August 1897. Translated by Janet Sheeres.

13. Herbert J. Brinks., *Dutch American Voices: Letters from the United States, 1850-1930*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 429, 432-435.

14. Samuel P. Nesbit, *People Magazine* (September-October, 1975) 5.

15. Ida M. Blanchette, *Babe on the Bayou, Alvin at Centennial,* (Texan Press: Waco, Texas, 1979) 28.

16. Esther Van Beek Hatherly, assisted by Ella Van Beek Van Horn, *The Van Beek and Naaktgeboren History: dedicated to our forbearers, the present generation to posterity* (Copyrama: San Leandro, California, 1981).

17. The stories of the families were taken from *The Van Beek and Naaktgeboren History*. The author sincerely thanks Holly Sonksen, Donna Van Beek, and Carol Heikema for making the information available.

18. Lydia arrived in New York City, 26 March 1888, aboard *Rotterdam*.

19. Willem, age 53; Janna, age 57; Ben, age 28; Hattie, age 23; Jennie, age 19; Joe, age 18; and Gertie, age 16.

20. Lydia married John Hoffkamp and lived in Hospers, Iowa; Anna married Richard Meengs and lived in Englewood, Illinois, and later in Holland, Michigan.

21. He spent some time in Texas because he later married Frances Naaktgeboren, whom he met in Texas.

22. Arrived 7 April 1893.

23. The Ellerbroeks lost one or two sons during the hurricane.

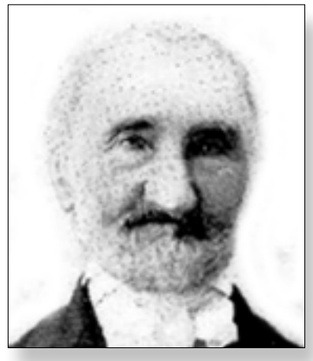
24. Nederland Heritage Festival Program, Nederland, Texas, 12-16 March 1975, (Nederland Publishing Company, Nederland, Texas) 2 and 3.

To Go or to Stay—Jan Hospers's Dilemma

Douglas Rozendal

Douglas Rozendal is a graduate of Hope College. He worked for the Ecumenical Institute (Chicago) for fifteen years and in their Amsterdam office from 1978 to 1980, where he became acquainted with distant Hospers and Rozendal relatives. Since 1984 he has lived in Los Angeles, and he developed a bookkeeping practice for local churches and other non-profit organizations.

At the end of the 1840s Jan Hospers had a successful public service career in the Netherlands; he was the headmaster of a school, and he was responsible for caring for older family members. Yet he felt called by God to go to America, as his son Hendrik had already done. Johan Stellingwerf notes, "Beginning in mid-1848, the letters from Hoogblokland[1] increasingly relate the emotional struggle of the Hospers family about following their beloved [son] Hendrik to the Iowa frontier. To go or not to go was the question. Complicating factors were the many aged relatives, several unmarried, who relied on Jan Hospers for advice and care, and the matter of a substantial inheritance from an uncle without heirs who promised the money to Jan and Hendrika, provided they remained in the Netherlands."[2]



Jan Hospers (1801-1888) and his wife Hendrika (nee Middelkoop) had ten children; one died in the Netherlands, two during the voyage to America, and one shortly after arriving. Image courtesy of the author.

Hospers was part of the Secession in the 1830s from the Dutch national church and was much influenced by Rev. Hendrik P. Scholte, a leader in the Secession and a powerful preacher.[3] Hospers had become involved in the Secession through his father-in-law, Klaas Middelkoop, who had been an elder in the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (the national church) in Hoogblokland and later took the same position in the seceder church in Noordeloos, about four and a half miles from Hoogblokland. As an educator, Jan Hospers resonated with the seceders' concerns about the development of education in the Netherlands in the early 1800s. As he notes in his autobiography, "I could not tolerate the fact that the Bible was barred from the school, and the education denied a Christian character."[4]

Because of economic conditions and religious oppression a few years earlier by the national government, seceders formed emigration societies in the mid-1840s. One such group in Utrecht was the Society for Emigration to North America, whose board accepted only those who could pay their own expenses. By August 1846 nearly seventy moneyed families, mainly from the province of South Holland, had joined the society and subsequently decided to buy eighteen sections of land in North America.[5] Two of the elected leaders of this group, Gerrit H. Overkamp and Isaac Overkamp, were to become the closest friends of the Hospers family and in 1863 Hendrik Hospers would marry Gerrit's daughter Hendrika.

Matters proceeded quickly from the meetings in 1846, and by April 1847

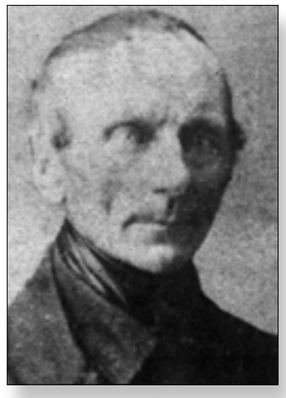
the first group of about seven hundred left for America on three ships. Jan Hospers could not see his way clear to go at this point—he had too many responsibilities to school, church, and the diaconate, and he also served as polder collector and as the secretary-treasurer of Hoornaar, about two miles west of Hoogblokland.[6] But his oldest son, Hendrik, who was seventeen, was eager and went on behalf of the Hospers clan, traveling with the G. H. Overkamp family.

The elder Hospers struggled to keep his spirits up with the loss of the fellowship of those who left for America. It is clear from the letters between Hendrik in America and his family that there was deep love and devotion between them. Solace came from the letters they received from Iowa: "We just devour all news of Pella, our future earthly fatherland. We rejoice especially to learn of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in Pella."[7] In other letters Jan mentions that a group got together on occasion to read sermons Scholte had preached in Pella. On 24 November 1848 he began his letter to Hendrik with "We are all well as to the body, but as to the soul it is dry and withered; how can it be otherwise in such dead surroundings?"[8] The son's correspondence with his mother, Hendrika, in particular, was warm. Hendrika's 16 April 1848 letter to Hendrik begins, "Dearly Beloved Son, it is already a year ago since I saw you pack your things with energy and speed . . . , my heart draws to you stronger than to any other of the family and we do not feel free to wait for their property. . . ."[9]

But there were forces that tugged at Jan Hospers's heart and kept him in the Netherlands. He had been born in 1801 in Amsterdam, the son of a tailor. His mother had died when he was four years old. His stepmother, Geertrui van Est, made sure he received a good education, including five years in a French school. As a result, he says that he was "as conversant with the French language as I was with my native tongue."[10] His knowledge of French would prove useful when, in the spring of 1813, his father Hendrik took him to live with Geertrui's brother Hendrik van Est. Van Est was married but had no children and desired to make Jan his heir. Van Est was the schoolmaster in Hoogblokland, and Jan became the French tutor in his school.

Not long after, the local government used Hospers's proficiency in French, and as time went by his municipal responsibilities grew. When he left to go to America in 1849, he had been secretary-treasurer of Hoornaar and Hoogblokland for thirty-two years. When Van Est retired, Jan also became the headmaster of the school.

His involvement in Hoornaar led to an enduring friendship with Eimert Aanen. Eimert's family had lived in Hoornaar for at least seven generations and his descendants live there to this day. Hospers was the one to write to Aanen in 1843, "On behalf of the Municipal Council of Hoornaar I inform you herewith that your name will be submitted to His Majesty the King as Mayor. . . ."[11] He also performed Aanen's wedding and worked with him to get his son's name, Duur Kornelis, accepted by the government, since "Duur" was not on the government's list of approved names.



Jan Hospers's good friend, Eimert Aanen, who grieved when Hospers decided to emigrate. Image courtesy of the author.

The Hendrik van Est house in Hoogbloland. Van Est would have made Jan Hospers his heir, had Jan remained in the Netherlands. Image courtesy of the author.

When Hospers announced his decision to leave for America, Aanen responded in a note that "Many, many tears ran down my cheeks. . . ."[12] As time approached for Hospers to leave, Aanen wrote again, providing maybe the strongest arguments for Jan to stay. "If it should be asked of me whether you could be more useful elsewhere than here, I must say, no, as I consider from the youth to the aged. . . ."[13] By youth he meant, of course, the students at the school in which Hospers had taught for many years, and the aged were the aged relatives under Hospers's charge.

Hospers had hoped that Hendrik van Est would be well enough to come to America. But Van Est felt too weak to go. And this put Hospers in a bind: "What would Pella people say about this, to leave an old man without relatives to look after him?"[14] There was also the inheritance from Van Est he stood to lose by going to Pella. There was also the De Gelders, three unmarried siblings of Hospers's mother-in-law. They had linked their estates so that Hospers and his son, Hendrik, would receive these only after all three had died, and he would lose these by emigrating. Moreover the three were angry at the prospect of losing Hospers: "But now that we would go, while they, the old people, were in need of us. . . . O, they were so angry. Aunt Betje cried, and said that we could become rich in Holland, etc."[15]

Further, there was the question of how he would make a living once he got to Pella. He had always worked in education and wondered if there were similar opportunities in Iowa.[16] His son, Hendrik, doubted the need for many teachers in the new colony.[17] Instead, he proposed various enterprises his father could be involved in or fund, such as a gristmill, a sawmill run by steam or water power, a grocery store, a tannery, or a cotton-spinning or wood-turning operation. But the elder Hospers doubted there was sufficient capital for these enterprises: "If legacies should come (for which I may not long) then I would have funds enough. . . ."[18]

Nevertheless, the Hospers family decided to emigrate. Not even a serious controversy in Pella between Scholte and many of the settlers, which Hendrik reported to his father,[19] could stop them. In March 1849 he wrote to his son that he and Klaas Middlekoop would be coming to Pella with capital in excess of 10,000 florins combined.[20]

Hospers, Arie C. Kuyper, and Jacob Maasdam led a group that left Rotterdam for Pella on 3 May 1849 on *Franziska*. Hospers kept a diary of the trip.[21] They traveled by sailing ship, river boats (twice), train, lake boat, coach, ferry, and covered wagon. It took his family, who were separated from the larger group due to the sickness and eventual death of one of his daughters (one of three children who died in route), eighty-six days. They arrived in Pella on 28 July 1849. One of his first acts was to make confession of faith at the church in Pella.

The group that Jan and the two others led brought much-needed financial capital to Pella. The *Souvenir History of Pella* notes, "A large store was erected by H. Van Dam . . . J. Berkhout conducted a very successful general store . . . A. G. van der Meulen [and] H. Kupyer [both opened jewelry stores]."[22] Hospers's concerns about making a livelihood in Pella seem to have been assuaged. His farm, which was largely run by three of his sons, was successful. In 1853 he wrote, "My occupation is farmer. . . . Every day sixty to eighty wagons go past my door. . . . It looks good for the future."[23]

The inheritance from the De Gelders went to Hospers's brother-in-law, Willem Middelkoop, who elected to stay in the Netherlands and take over Jan's responsibilities for the older relatives. Willem never married, and his estate was divided between his housekeeper, who had stayed with him faithfully for many years, and the Middelkoop descendants in America. The money came to America after Hospers's death. Aanen's son, Duur Kornelis, became the legal representative for the Hospers in the matter of

Jan Hospers's family in front of his house in 1879, at the fiftieth anniversary of Jan's marriage to Hendrika Middelkoop. Image courtesy of the author.

the estate of Willem Middelkoop.[24]

Perhaps Hospers's greatest gift to the new land was his son, Hendrik, known in America as Henry. Henry was a leader in Pella from the time he came at age seventeen. He became a county supervisor and city council member, and he served as mayor of Pella for four years. He was actively involved in the movement to start a new colony in the northwestern part of Iowa. He moved there in 1871 and helped found the town of Orange City. Henry started Dutch-language newspapers in both Pella and Orange City, and he was a banker and real estate agent in Orange City. After local municipal service, he was elected to the state assembly and later the senate.

But Jan Hospers himself contributed to Pella in other ways as well. In America (among other offices) he was active in his church as an elder and treasurer and was also treasurer of the school board. He also taught a Sunday school class for many years. In October 1883 he wrote, "I myself hold a number of posts yet: elder of the First Church, general bookkeeper of the same church, director of the Pella National Bank, treasurer of the School District, Agent for the Dutch Association of Christian Literature."[25]

Letters between the Hospers and Aanen families kept the immigrant up-to-date on developments in the Netherlands. A political movement started by conservative Christians in the Netherlands formed the first modern Dutch political party, the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Duur Kornelis Aanen was a local leader in this party and kept the Hosperses informed about developments locally and nationally. They were able to form Christian schools, including one begun directly by Duur Kornelis, that by the first part of the twentieth century were fully funded by the National Government. The spiritual aridity in the Netherlands Hospers felt also

Henry Hospers (1830-1901) emigrated to Iowa before his parents. He helped establish Orange City, among other achievements. He was married twice and fathered fourteen children. Image courtesy of the author.

changed, as he himself noted. When Jan's friend Aanen died, Duur Kornelis sent a copy of the bulletin from the funeral. Hospers commented that it was much more religious than it would have been in the 1840s.[26] In another letter he mentioned a cousin, who lived in Twente, and a lay evangelist involved in a spiritual revival of some five hundred communicants.[27]

Eimert Aanen's son Duur Kornelis, whose name Hospers was able to get the Dutch government to accept when it was not on the list of acceptable first names. Image courtesy of the author.

It is noteworthy that Hospers came to see his life in biblical terms. In one of his letters back to the Aanens, he notes, "It is amazing how many people are coming to America from Europe. They are coming by the thousands. They settle all over the United States. I often think of Acts 17:26. A lot of Frisians have come here. Orange City, the place where Hendrik is administrator, is getting crowded. There is a lot going on there: houses are being built, land is being bought and sold, the railroad is being laid, and cities are being built and planned. Hendrik is involved in all of that, and is profiting from it."[28] Hospers seems to have seen the doctrine of Manifest Destiny as the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy.

Jan Hospers's grave marker in Oak Wood Cemetery, in Pella, Iowa. Image courtesy of Gerrit Sheeres

Endnotes

1. A small town in the Province of South Holland, between Dordrecht and Utrecht.
2. Johan Stellingwerff, *Iowa Letters: Dutch Immigrants on the American Frontier* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co., 2004) 116,117.
3. "Eloquent and effective in the pulpit, fearless in stressing the ancient truths, he was immensely popular." Henry S Lucas, *Netherlanders in America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co., 1989) 49.
4. Jan Hospers, "Autobiography of Jan Hospers," in John Keith Rozendal, *Our Family History* (El Cajon, CA: self-published) I-68.
5. Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985) 138.
6. Jan Hospers, "Autobiography," I-69.
7. Stellingwerff, *Iowa Letters*, 197, in a letter dated 10 October 1848.
8. Ibid., 200.
9. Ibid., 164.
10. Jan Hospers, "Autobiography," I-66.
11. *http://www.calvin.edu/hh/ImmigrantLettersPDFs/Hospers_Jan.pdf* on the first two pages.
12. Stellingwerff, *Iowa Letters*, 203 in a letter dated 21 December 1848.
13. Ibid., 212-213 in a letter dated 20 February 1849.
14. Ibid., 199 in a letter dated 13 October 1848.
15. Ibid., 207 in a letter dated 18 January 1849.
16. Ibid., 125 in a letter dated 28 August 1847.
17. Ibid., 145 in a letter dated 30 November 1847.
18. Ibid., 190 in a letter dated 10 July 1848.
19. Ibid., 215 in a letter dated April 1849.
20. Ibid., 215 in a letter dated 1 March 1849.
21. Jan Hospers, "Diary of a Journey," from *Iowa Journal of History & Politics* (July 1912) 363-382. All the succeeding comments on the journey are from this source.
22. G. A. Stout, *Souvenir History of Pella Iowa 1847-1922 (Pella, IA: Booster Press, 1922)* 55, 60.
23. This letter, translated, is available in the Calvin College Heritage Hall Immigrant Letters Collection, *http://www.calvin.edu/hh/ImmigrantLettersPDFs/HenryHospers.pdf*. In the introduction to the translation the letter is incorrectly attributed to Jan's son Henry.
24. These letters are available online in their original Dutch with English translations at the Calvin College Archives Immigrant Letters Collection (*http://www.calvin.edu/hh/letters/letters_a.htm*). The letters are alphabetized by the surname of the author. A compilation of the letters in book form is available from the author at *doalro@earthlink.net*.
25. *http://www.calvin.edu/hh/ImmigrantLettersPDFs/Hospers_Jan.pdf* in a letter dated 30 October 1883.
26. Ibid., in a letter dated 12 April 1884.
27. Ibid., in a letter dated 30 October 1883.
28 Ibid., in a letter dated 12 April 1882.

Volume XXXII • Number 1 • 2014

book review

The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County Virginia, 1868-1880

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

Grand Rapids:
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013

Softcover

The historiography of nineteenth-century Dutch-American history begins with the immigration of two groups, one led by Rev. Albertus C. Raalte, who brought a group to West Michigan, and the other led by Rev. Hendrik P. Scholte, who brought a group to Pella, Iowa. In the subsequent story of Dutch migration, Van Raalte's name becomes dominant as he organized communities and/or churches in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and even Iowa. Van Raalte served almost every need the immigrants in West Michigan had as they struggled through the difficult first years. As a result, Van Raalte justifiably has been the subject of books and articles; a statue was raised of him in Holland, Michigan, where a research and study institute also bears his name.

Those who know his story know that, in spite of his talents and accomplishments, Van Raalte had his critics and was involved in controversies. From the time he left the pulpit of his Holland, Michigan, church in 1867 until that city began to rebuild after the Great Michigan Fire of 1871, Van Raalte was largely ignored by his former parishioners and the larger community. His biographies note that he was not idle during these years, particularly working on behalf of Hope College, which he helped open in 1862. Janet Sjaarda Sheeres, a published student of Dutch-American history, recounts another of Van Raalte's projects during these years in *The Not-So-Promised-Land: The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880*. The book describes his motivation and efforts to establish a Dutch settlement in Amelia County, Virginia, in 1868. These twelve chapters and several appendices constitute the first scholarly and critical treatment of the effort rather than the cursory or passing coverage given previously.

In an engaging and lively style, Sheeres reviews the process of site selection, the recruiting of settlers (from the ranks of both Dutch immigrants already in the United States and Dutch residents thinking about emigration), the difficulties encountered by these settlers during their travels to and time in Amelia County, as well as the efforts to solidify the communities with the establishment of churches and a school. Of note is her careful analysis of the differences within this Dutch community, resulting from where they emigrated and their social and educational backgrounds. She suggests reasons for the colony's failure to take root, and she details various efforts by the immigrants to Virginia and their leaders to stave off that failure.

The work demonstrates the author's determined search for data when previous historians found sources to be scant, at best. Consequently, the book contains an appended complete list and brief background of each family or single individual involved in the Amelia County settlement, information that historians and genealogists, alike, will find most useful.

The final three chapters of the book are especially intriguing. In these chapters, Sheeres examines the forces such as regionalism, soil fertility, racism, and even biases among the settlers toward each other, to mention only a few, that worked contrary to the settlement. She further recounts the experiences and traces the destinations of those, the majority, who left Virginia. Of course, since Van Raalte selected the location and began the recruitment efforts, Sheeres notes his contributions and, more usefully, what he failed to do in ensuring the future of the colony. The efforts of others are also included, such as those by the newly ordained Johannes Huizenga, who struggled mightily, but unsuccessfully, to save the disintegrating Virginia communities.

There are a few places where transitions between chapters could have been smoother and more effective. Chapter 9, the account of Martinus Cohen Stuart, seems better as an appendix than a chapter. But these criticisms are minor in view of the groundbreaking research and analysis here. The research is thorough, the writing is lively drawing the reader in, and the analysis well founded. Historians, genealogists, sociologists, students of immigration and north-south dynamics during Reconstruction, and descendants of the settlers will find that *The Not-So-Promised Land* is well worth acquiring and is required reading in the Van Raalte bibliography.

Richard H. Harms

book notes

We Live Presently Under a Waning Moon: Nicolaus Martin Steffens as Leader of the Reformed Church in America in the West in Years of Transition (1878-1895)

George Harinck

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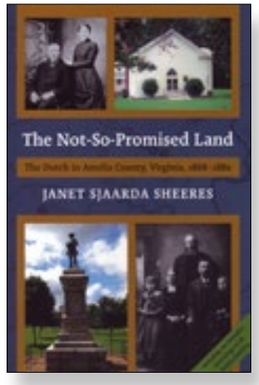

The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County Virginia, 1868-1880

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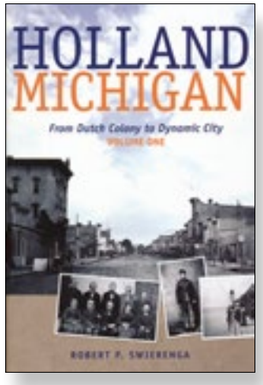

Holland, Michigan: From Dutch Colony to Dynamic City

Robert P. Swierenga

Grand Rapids:
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. & Holland: Van Raalte Press, 2014

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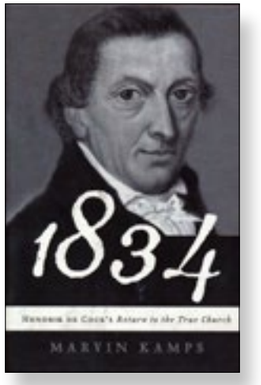

1834: Hendrik de Cock's Return to the True Church

Marvin Kamps

Jenison, Michigan:
Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2014

ISBN: 978-1-936054-23-7

$43.95 Hardcover,
490 pages

for the future

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

James Schaap reviews the novels of Rev. Cornelius Kuipers set in the American Southwest during the first half of the twentieth century

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