

Origins

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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.

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Cover photo:

The Tien Sisters. Mary (left), Rika (center), and Jo (right) as young married women. Image courtesy of James A. De Jong.

VOTES FOR WOMEN	
People Say:	We Say:
The majority of women don't want to vote.	The majority never wants progress.
Women will not vote when they are given the right.	Official figures show women DO vote largely when they have the right.
Women vote they ought to fight and do police duty.	Men who could not fight still vote; this is the RIGHT makes MIGHT.
Women vote they must hold office.	A woman will have to be elected to office by the women together. Do the men all have to hold office?
Women have enough to do without voting.	Voting takes but a few minutes and can be done at home.
It would interfere with a woman's business, the care of the house.	Does it interfere with man's business in factory, office?

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Origins is celebrating its thirty-fifth anniversary! The first issue was published in the spring of 1983 with Herbert J. Brinks (left) as its editor.

To read this issue go to: http://www.calvin.edu/hh/origins/Spring83_01_1.pdf.

The four articles in its maiden issue began an uninterrupted list of articles on the history of our Dutch immigrant people, their journeys and settlements, their biographies, their tragedies and triumphs. There were also articles on the history of Christian Reformed congregations and organizations. These stories have not only kept us informed about

our shared history, but also provide an emotional bond with our past. A list of authors who have contributed articles over these thirty-five years is on page 45. In one of the articles in this issue we find an echo to current experiences—take for instance, voting rights. We hear a lot about voting suppression, gerrymandering, etc. today. The article on woman suffrage shows how these voting freedoms were hard fought and should never be taken for granted.

One hundred years ago, in 1918, a woman suffrage state law appeared on the November ballot in Michigan and was passed by Michigan's (male) voters. (National woman suffrage would follow in 1920, with the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution.) This did not all go down without some vigorous debate in the Dutch community in Grand Rapids, MI, and in the CRC. The late Nicholas Huizenga wrote an informative article on the debate several years before his death; it is such a timely article that, with Mrs. Joan Huizenga's permission, we are including it in this issue. With the lead article highlight-

ing women, I thought it fitting to dedicate this issue to women's stories.

If you would like to know if your grandmother or great-grandmother registered to vote in Kent County, you can find that on this link: <http://www.migenweb.org/kent/Kent/1918petition/index.html>

Not being able to vote was probably not a high priority for the Tien sisters. James De Jong recalls the three outstanding women whose exemplary lives, not always free from heartaches, were blessed with numerous noteworthy descendants in various fields of theology, education, business, and medicine. None of the three reached the age of seventy, yet all three were truly "mothers in Israel."

A far cry from the Tien women's relatively easy childhood and teenage years is the story of Maartje. Kenneth Schaaf, the author of *Maartje's Story*, states that as a lover of history he believes "that the best stories, those filled with human interest, pathos, and emotion, are true stories—accounts of real people, who faced real challenges, people just like you and me, and those we know best. In

relating Maartje's story we honor the lives of countless women who were, as a product of their times and culture, undervalued and overlooked." In the course of his study, the author determined to his surprise that Maartje's paternal grandfather was his great-great-great-grandfather.

An issue about women's history would not be complete without stories about women history writers. Rachel Hekman's analysis of Dutch women writing history is, therefore, a vital contribution. A recent study found that seventy-five percent of America's history books are written by men about men. And most female biographers write about men as well, while only six percent of male biographers documented a woman's life. So, thank you Ken Schaaf and Jim De Jong for being part of that six percent! And thank you Rachel for bringing this disparity to our attention.

This year also marks the four-hundredth anniversary of the famous synod held in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, 1618-1619. This synod formulated a series of ecclesiastical rules and regulations known as

"The Church Order of Dort" that also included rules regarding marriage. These rules led to all manner of conflicts about who could marry whom, and we round out this issue with an article on how the RCA and the CRC grappled with the issue of marriage.

From Curator Denice Fett

In November 2017, the archive welcomed Consul General of the Netherlands Louis Piët, his wife Dyonne, and Joost Taverne, Cultural Attaché, for a tour of Heritage Hall. Our guests viewed many of the archive's treasures, and they agreed that our collections are an incredible resource for Dutch-American studies. As part of their visit to West Michigan, our guests toured the Van Raalte Institute in Holland and attended the annual Dutch American Heritage Day banquet.

As the archive continues to grow, one of our main goals has been to develop new relationships and ways of reaching out to the community. One of these goals is to further develop our digital presence, so that people around the world can discover the

archive and use our collections. As part of this program, the archive is excited to host three student interns from Calvin College in winter semester 2018. These students are researching and designing interactive digital exhibits that will eventually be displayed on the website of the CRCNA. These exhibits will feature materials drawn from the archive's collections and are designed to be interesting and useful to all ages. Watch for more news about our plans in upcoming issues!

Currently our staff consists of Hendrina Van Spronsen who is the office coordinator and business manager of *Origins*; Laurie Haan and Holly Waldenmeyer serve as department assistants; Robert Bolt is the denominational field agent. Jessi Vos is our student assistant. Our volunteers are Phil Erffmeyer, Ed Gerritsen, Ralph Haan, Helen Meulink, Clarice Newhof, Janet Sheeres, and Jeannette Smith. ☺

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

PLEASE NOTE

The Calvin College Financial Department requests that from now on all checks be made out to "Calvin College" rather than to "Origins," and that the word "Origins" be written on the memo line. Thank you so much!

The Christian Reformed Church and Woman Suffrage

Nicholas Huizenga

The 1910 United States Federal Census lists 15,203 Dutch born in Kent County, Michigan, with 12,350 of them living within the Grand Rapids city limits. There were also approximately an additional 15,898 second-generation Dutch in Kent County, of which 12,853 were living in Grand Rapids. The total population for Kent in 1910 was 159,000. An estimated 20 percent of the Kent County population in 1910 were first- and second-generation Dutch, which number would probably be higher if the third-generation Dutch were added. At the same time an estimated 40 percent of the population living in West Michigan was of Dutch descent.

The combined purchasing power of the Dutch bode well for the burgeoning Dutch shop and business owners in Grand Rapids and Kent County. By 1910 their combined numbers also formed a formidable voting bloc. When the State of Michigan put the woman suffrage question to a referendum in 1874, the second state to do so, the men overwhelmingly voted it down by more than three to one. The absence of any recorded debate in the Dutch press in Western Michigan indicates that the Hollanders did not consider it a debatable issue. Or, that the Hollanders had not yet reached the numbers they had in 1910 when they were about to be heard from.

In November 1912, Michigan and five other states put the issue of wom-

an suffrage before the voters. This time the campaign in Michigan was better organized. Two leaders of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)



Jacob Van Den Bosch.
Image courtesy of the
Archives, Calvin College,
Grand Rapids, MI.

felt the need to give some Christian counsel.

In the *Banner* issued a week before the election, Professor Jacob Van Den Bosch lamented the fact that those who supported woman suffrage were doing all of the talking.

At the outset, it is well to have clearly before our mind what woman suffrage really implies. It means vastly more than simply to give woman the right to vote; it means that all the political and social activities from which woman has been excluded thus far will be opened to her, and that she will be deprived of all the legal privileges which men chivalrously have accorded her. It means, among other things, that she will have the rights to . . . [h]old public office.¹

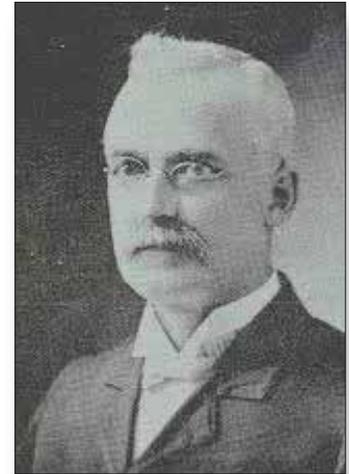
Nicholas Huizenga (1925-2016) was an educator serving as teacher and principal at various Christian schools in the Chicago area, and as an administrator at Trinity Christian College. In 1967 he became principal of Eastern Christian Junior High School in Prospect Park, New Jersey, a position he held until his retirement in 1987 when Nick and his wife, Joan, moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan. During his retirement Nick became involved in the Committee for Women in the CRC and promoted ordination for women in the CRC. Nick had a lifelong interest in history, and in later life became especially involved in collecting and writing the stories of his family and church denomination.

Van Den Bosch went on to explain how the State is based on the family unit, and “because the father is the representative head of the family, we believe that the right of suffrage should be restricted to male votes. This has been the view held ever since the advent of Christianity. . . .”²

To those who argued that women would improve government, Van Den Bosch countered with the claims that sin clings to both sexes and that one is no better than the other. He did not want to expose women to the hardships of public life, which “cannot but impair true womanliness, her chief glory, and of every home the sublimest charm.” He also warned that “to add to her interests outside the home cannot but tend to lessen her interest in the home,” and that the “difference

of political opinion may cause division and separation [in the home].” His concluding statement sounded a clear warning: “We cannot afford to vote for a measure which, if carried and enacted into law, will destroy love, harmony, and intimacy and thus strike a blow at the very foundations of the ideal home.”³

Shortly before the election, Calvin College Professor Klaas Schoolland wrote a letter to the “Public Pulse” section of the *Grand Rapids Press*. He first outlined some biblical texts that speak to the issue as he saw it: Genesis 1:27, Matthew 19:4, Genesis 1:21-24, Ephesians 5:21, I Timothy 2:8-15.⁴ He concluded his explanation of “headship” and the Christian view of the State thus: “Finally, the family constitutes naturally and in



Klaas Schoolland. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

all civilized history the essential and proper unit of the social, state, and church life. On the other hand, the



Grand Rapids, MI, Campau Square, 1905. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

emancipation of woman, of which woman suffrage is one branch and whereto it unavoidably leads, is based on the revolutionary principle of human individualism which fits exactly in socialistic-democratic communism Woman suffrage will break the divine laws of human life." Schoolland believed that it would undermine marriage by placing men against women as competitors. It was quite clear to him how a Christian should vote.⁵

The unofficial result of the 1912 election in Grand Rapids was that the amendment lost by a majority of 9,709 to 7,186. In analyzing the voting patterns in the city, a *Press* reporter observed that "Woman suffrage was hardest hit in the Holland precincts." It appeared to him that the Hollanders had been the major factors in the defeat in the city.⁶

The suffragists, however, did not give up. They changed their strategy and sought to change the minds of those who had objections. In Grand Rapids, "special efforts were made to convert the Hollander."⁷

Some five months later, in April 1913, another referendum was held. Apparently, the equal suffrage groups were getting through to some Hollanders. In the *Press* of 20 March 1913, Ate Dykstra, who was active politically, explained how he came to change his mind about giving women the ballot, and tried to persuade others.⁸ He claimed that Dr. Abraham Kuyper "favored woman suffrage long ago."⁹ He also echoed the claims of others that women could have a beneficial effect on the political life of the community. He reported that the record of women attending catechism classes and becoming full church members was better than that of men, and he stated that "women with their votes will help purify politics and give moral protection to our homes."¹⁰

Four days later, a Peter Bouma responded to Dykstra. He wanted him

to support his views from Scripture rather than appeal to Kuyper, and he accused Dykstra of "forsaking Calvinistic principles."¹¹

Four days later, John Van Lonkhuyzen, a CRC pastor, commented on the views of Kuyper, claiming that Kuyper favored *huismanskiesrecht*,

the rights of suffrage for heads of families.¹² He acknowledged that Kuyper approved of exceptions such as widows, single female teachers, and a few other classes of people. "But," wrote Van Lonkhuyzen, "never did Kuyper favor a general woman suffrage law."¹³

The next day the *Press* reported

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Women will not vote when they are given the right.	Official figures show women DO vote largely wherever they have the right.
If women vote they ought to fight and do police duty.	Men who could not fight still vote; this is the age when RIGHT makes MIGHT.
If women vote they must hold office.	A woman will have to be elected to office by the men and women together. Do the men all have to hold office?
Women have enough to do without voting.	Voting takes but a few minutes and can be done on the way to market.
It would interfere with a woman's business, the care of the house.	Does it interfere with man's business in factory, store or office?
It would double the ignorant vote.	1-3 more girls than boys attend the high schools and women will soon be the more educated class.
It would double the foreign vote.	There are in the United States over 12 times as many native born women as foreign born.
It would double the criminal vote.	Only 1 in 20 of the criminals are women. It would add largely to the good vote and very slightly to the bad vote.
It would double the expense and trouble of election.	The safety of a democracy lies in giving the vote to all classes so that ALL are fairly represented and the result will be a Fair Average opinion. Ought we to cut the present vote in half to save money?
Women can change or make laws by indirect influence.	Why be indirect when we can be direct? Why waste time and strength in beating around the bush?
A woman's place is in the home.	She leaves it to go to market and why not to vote—it takes less time.
Women are represented by men.	Would men let women represent them at the polls? Does a man with women to represent have more than one vote or does he cast his vote according to the majority vote of those he represents? No! Then he doesn't represent them. Is a man's vote given him to represent some one else's opinion or his own?



National American Woman Suffrage Association
 Headquarters: 505 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

Reprinted by Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame, Lansing, 1900

Flyer voting rights. Image courtesy of the Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids, MI.

about a speech that Dykstra had given to a group that favored woman suffrage. Dykstra had said, “The Hollanders cannot get used to the idea of a woman having the same privileges as a man because she had so few in the old country. But last election at the polls I was impressed forcibly with the injustice of not letting women vote. I think of the great corps of school-teachers, teaching our children civil government, who are not allowed to vote. Why do we let them teach our children civil government if they know nothing about laws? Why don’t we stop teaching it to the girls and teach it only to the boys if it is just for them?”¹⁴

To support his idea that the Hollanders’ position was traditional or cultural rather than biblical, he pointed to the fact that the one Christian Reformed minister who came out publicly for woman suffrage was born in Zeeland, Michigan, rather than in the old country. His concluding words were, “I believe it is unjust to let the mass of men who cannot read or write vote and keep out all the intelligent women.”¹⁵

On 29 March 1913, the *Press* printed two extended letters of contrasting views. One was written by a spokesperson for the Grand Rapids Equal Franchise Club and the other by Schoolland.¹⁶ The speaker for the pro-suffrage group spoke on the issues that had been raised earlier by Schoolland. Concerning the claims that the State is based on families, not individuals, she said, “The man does not represent the woman in religion. Why should he in politics? Each individual has to answer to God for himself or herself. Moreover, thousands of women are not wives or mothers. Who votes for them? What Scripture is there to prove that in the United States men should vote for the family? It is said that [the Apostle] Paul forbade women to speak in churches. How can we prove



Johannes Groen. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

that Paul meant this for all time? Do we break Paul’s commandment when women teach Sunday school? What has speaking in churches to do with voting at the ballot box? We plead with these conscientious church members to stand with us. We would remind them that one big organized foe with lots of money and workers is the saloon. Can these good people conscientiously help the saloon, to beat us at the polls? If there were any plain or implied Scripture command against woman suffrage we would not ask this, but there is no such command. Loyalty to the Bible does not require a Christian to deny women the chance to make government clean, pure, and uplifting.¹⁷

Schoolland’s next article was lengthier. Since Dykstra had referred to Kuyper’s views, he went into considerable detail expounding the theological views of Kuyper, concluding that “The woman is excluded from the representative or authoritative office in church and State.”¹⁸

According to Schoolland,

Woman suffrage as a subdivision of feminism, or probably better of the emancipation of woman, proceeds

historically from that large revolutionary movement centered in the French Revolution of 1789, whose fundamental principle ‘No God, no master’ has pervaded the whole civilization. For this reason, feminism, and also woman suffrage, is closely related to, and in perfect harmony with the revolutionary principles and agitations of socialism. I need only to refer to its great representatives like Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Schoolland went on to explain and defend the principle of *huismanskierecht*. He also claimed to be speaking for Calvinism in Europe and America, adding that, “this is the view of the Christian Political Organization, ‘Fas et Jus’ (Right and Just) in our good city of Grand Rapids.”¹⁹

In the *Press* of 1 April 1913, Albert Smith responded to the biblical text cited by Reformed people in support of the headship of the husband.²⁰ He said, “So far as man being the head of the home is concerned, who questions that? Will simply giving the wife a right to vote take from her husband that position? No, certainly, not.”²¹

The discussion really became heated on 1 April 1913 when Johannes Groen, the well-known pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC, the largest congregation in the denomination at the time, took a public stand for woman suffrage. It was one thing to deal with Dykstra because he was perceived as a practical politician who wanted votes. It was quite another to deal with one of the leading ministers. On Tuesday evening, 1 April 1913, Groen, spoke to a large audience of Holland-Americans on the subject of woman suffrage.²² “Our Holland people are too conservative,” he said. “The Bible is not opposed to woman suffrage. The Bible wants woman to be the equal of man. When it says in Genesis that man would rule over woman, this meant the condition that was the result of sin. We are to oppose sin; should we rest



Louis Berkhof. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

content with saying that the result of sin is to be our standard? I believe the State is built upon individualism and should be built upon it.”

The *News* reporter continued with reactions to Groen’s speech, “The statement has been made that if similar action had occurred in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, the minister would be barred from the pulpit the first Sunday after the event, and ecclesiastical discipline would be applied to him.”²³

According to a *Press* report, Groen maintained that outside of the marriage bond, woman is as free and independent an agent as a man and that man per se has absolutely no authority over her. “Woman in her sphere has as much authority as man in his. Woman has authority in all that pertains to home life, schools, child labor, playgrounds, amusements, manufacture of clothing, preparation of food, the saloon, morals, wage, all belong to woman’s sphere and she has a right to assist in regulating them.”

Groen’s talk stirred up much action. The following day twelve CRC pastors issued a signed statement for the *Press*. In it they declared that they were “opposed to giving woman the ballot

because it is not in accordance with divine ordinances.” Apparently only two pastors agreed with Groen, the Revs. H. Beets and K. Poppen. Among the pastors who signed the *Press* statement were J. Hiemenga, E. Tanis, and F. Doezema.²⁴

On 4 April Rev. William Van Wijk stated, according to a *Press* reporter, that he was “very bitter in his opposition to Rev. Groen’s statements, which he characterized as unbiblical and unworthy.”²⁵ Also reported in the *Press* was a mass meeting on 5 April arranged by *Fas et Jus*, at which Van Lonkhuizen attacked Groen’s teachings “most vigorously and declared that they were a subversion of the creation ordinances of God.” During the discussion period that followed, a questioner asked, “What must be done with a minister who subverts the ordinances of God?” implying that excommunication proceedings should be started.²⁶

Action continued. At the Theological Seminary Professor Louis Berkhof devoted a whole hour refuting Groen’s arguments.²⁷ At the same time Professor Barend Kuiper wrote an article in *De Calvinist* in which he did not hesitate to decry the “insidiousness of the doctrines” espoused by Groen.²⁸

On the same day the *News* pub-

lished a letter from Prof. Bouma taking issue with Groen by writing that the individualistic view of society is wrong, “Here lies the crux of the argument, *Fas et Jus*, and the people that it represents, are convinced that society is composed of families not of individuals and that for that reason suffrage should be granted only to the head of the family.”²⁹

On 5 April 1913 a letter from Professor Louis Berkhof appeared in the “Public Pulse” section of the *Press*. Since his name had appeared in a church news article along with Beets and Groen, some people, according to Berkhof, incorrectly assumed that he was in agreement with these men on the question of woman suffrage. The editor wrote that the article neither stated nor implied such agreement, but, in fact was used in a “widely different connection.” Apparently, one had to be especially careful concerning this explosive matter. Berkhof wanted all to know that he was sorry that these men have taken a stand in favor of a theory and practice that is unbiblical and “fraught with dire consequence for the future.”³⁰

The *Press* of 10 April 1913 reported that some of Groen’s friends asserted that “he is being persecuted.” Regular attendants at his church also told the

Press reporter that the service on 6 April 1913 was “not as well attended as usual.”³¹

An anonymous reader accounts for the Reformed position with

Eastern Avenue CRC. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.



respect to woman suffrage in that “they are foreigners who have been educated on these lines different from Americans.”³²

Clarence Bouma readily dismissed this line of thought that had also been expressed earlier by Dykstra, by stating, “The argument that the Hollanders are opposed to giving woman the ballot because they cannot get away from their Netherland ideas is simply absurd.”³³

The “dire consequences” theme was echoed by Kuiper in the *Press* on 5 April 1913,

To adopt woman suffrage would be to introduce the most radical change in our form of government that ever was made or can be made. The false individualistic view (of the state) carries in it the germ of death in consequence of its inherent atomistic pulverizing tendency. Shall we now set a premium upon this condition of moral and social disorder by giving woman the ballot? A thousand times no!

Kuiper ended with these strong words:

Let us do so next Monday in the way that we give recognition to the fact that the family and not the individual is the unit of the State and that man as the organic head of that unit which is the family, is therefore the one called by God to rule also in the State, by casting our ballot against woman suffrage.³⁴

The *Press* reported the results of the polling on 8 April 1913. In the city there were 9,672 against woman suffrage, while those in favor numbered 4,225. In the Hollander Fifth Ward there were 538 votes for woman suffrage and 1,081 against. Some who were sympathetic to the pleas of the suffragists but did not want to “violate Reformed principles” noted that not all who voted were fathers or heads of households.³⁵

We cannot be sure that dire

consequences would have resulted had the referendum passed. However, there were dire consequences for Groen. He suffered ostracism by his fellow clergymen and was denied from then on the opportunity to serve on what is today the Calvin College Board of Trustees or to serve as delegate to Synod. In 1916 he was shaken by an attempt on his life. This was related to his unpopular stand on the woman suffrage issue in the minds of some, and it resulted in a breakdown of his health.³⁶ He had to give up his Eastern Avenue pastorate. After a period of rest, he served the Los Angeles Church



Henry Beets. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.



Herman Hoeksema. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

until his death in 1924 at the age of fifty-nine.

The vast majority of CRC ministers were strongly against woman suffrage, based on Scripture and Calvinistic principle; yet two well-known and influential pastors publicly disagreed with the traditional position. Therefore, it is not surprising that the CRC Synod of 1914 appointed a Committee on Woman Suffrage.

Taking into consideration the previous debates, the Committee’s report to Synod is surprising. The *Banner* of 14 May 1916, printed a translation of the Report to Synod. Rev. Nicholas Burggraaf wrote,

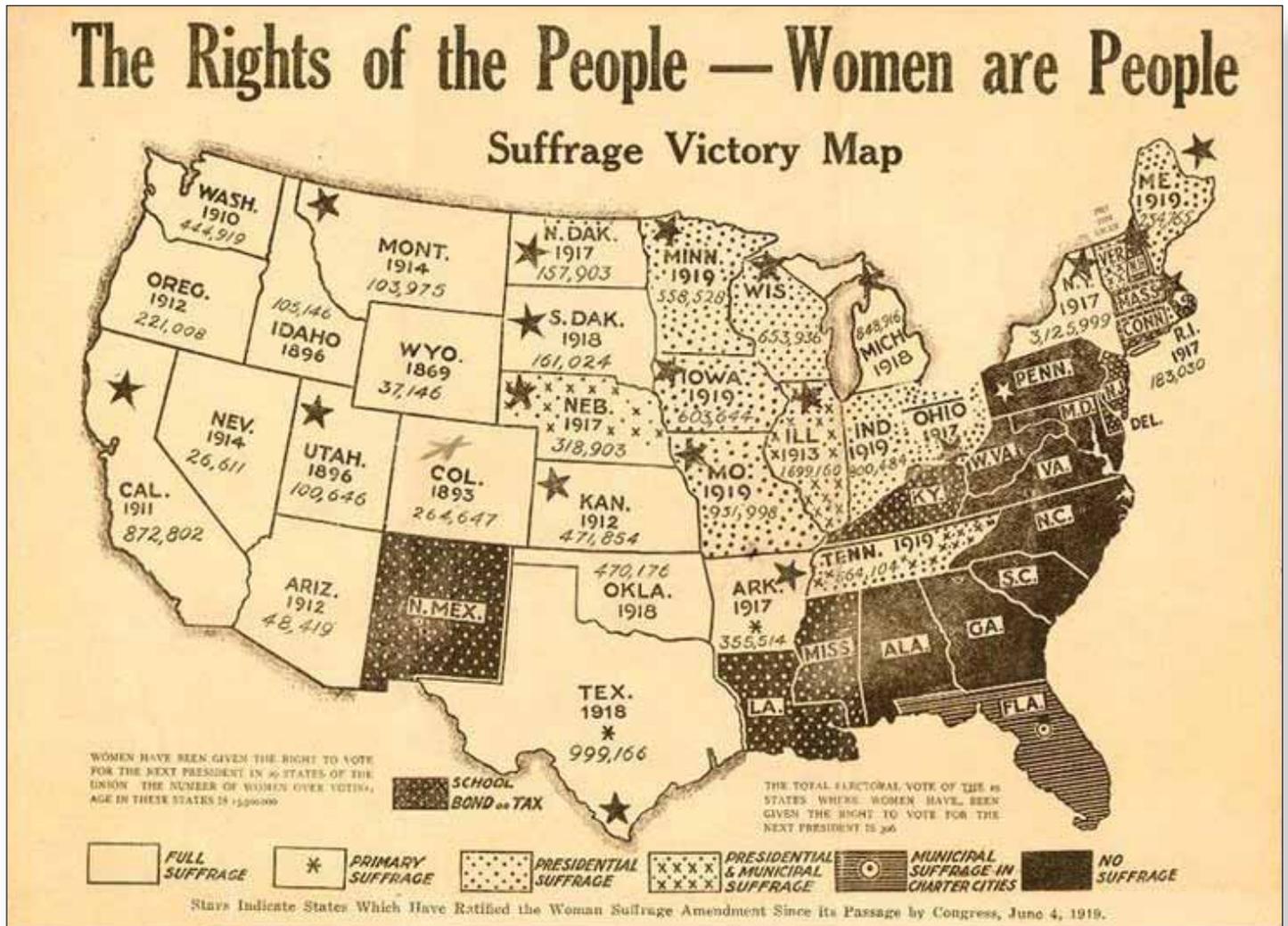
Whatever can be said in favor of or against Woman Suffrage, my opinion is that the Church should not concern itself with this question, while:

1. The Word of God gives no rule for suffrage, and consequently no rule in relation to suffrage for women;
2. The suffrage question does not belong to the province in which the church has any authority;
3. The Church will have no way of knowing whether the members are obeying its dictates or not;
4. As loyal citizens, our members should deport themselves in accordance with the law;
5. The political freedom of our members would be unwarrantedly limited.

Hence, my urgent advice is not to discuss Woman Suffrage, nor to make a decision regarding it.³⁷

Burggraaf made an interesting observation earlier in the report:

I am well aware that the Scripture treats on the relation of husband and wife, as we read in Gen. 3:16, “and he shall rule over thee,” Eph. 5:22, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,” and other passages, but we cannot very well formulate from this a rule for suffrage. Even ecclesiastically or in the family we do not give rule and submission an absolute meaning.



Map voting rights by states. Image courtesy of the Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids, MI.

Most Christian Reformed members remained true to their doctrines and principles, and some women stayed home on election day, despite state approval in 1918, and constitutional approval in 1920.

Incidentally, since many in the CRC regarded feminism as a serious foe during the years 1912-1913, it is interesting to note that Dr. Henry Beets, *Banner* editor, wrote approvingly of women as church deaconesses in the *Banner* in 1915.³⁸

One issue at the polls in 1920 involved the fate of all Michigan Christian schools, including Roman Catholic schools, an occasion that

forced a re-examination of the matter of woman suffrage. The Wayne County [Michigan] Civic Association circulated a petition that read, "Petition to amend the Constitution of the State of Michigan to require all residents of the state between the ages of five and sixteen years to attend the Public School." They received the required number of signatures; and the matter was put on the ballot to be decided in the fall of 1920. Some members of the CRC who believed the principle that the ballot box was for men only now asked some searching questions.

Indicative of the struggle is the following discussion between John

Monsma, Sr. and Rev. Herman Hoeksema, editor of *The Young Calvinist* and the successor to Groen as pastor of the Eastern Avenue CRC. Rev. Hoeksema translated Monsma's letter from the Dutch and then responded to it.³⁹

Mr. Monsma, in the first place, expresses that he is in full harmony with us in regard to the question of woman suffrage in general. He does not believe that our women have the right to vote, and that they ought to take an active part in public affairs. This, then is no question of debate between us. And, of course, this ought to simplify matters considerably.

Yet, thus is the argument of Mr. Monsma, in the present issue it is to be urged that our women go to the polls. The question is that of the Christian School. What we must cast our ballot for this time is not the question whether our women shall have the right to vote, but whether our Christian School shall have the right to exist in our State. And this is a matter that concerns not only the men, but the women as well. The woman as well as the man, the mother as well as the father is responsible for the education of the child. She also presents, with the father, the child for baptism, or even alone if the father is no more. And, therefore, upon her as well as upon the man rests the sacred obligation to defend her child when it is endangered.

Now, in this case, the vote of our women may be the decisive factor.

If our women stay home we may lose our schools. True, the end does not justify the means, Mr. Monsma admits. But in extraordinary cases we may be called upon to employ extraordinary means. And, therefore, our women must go to the polls and cast their ballot against the amendment proposed by the Wayne County Civic Association. It is their sacred duty.

Hoeksema noted that Monsma did not base his appeal on the fact that the State had approved woman suffrage as some did. Then for three pages he proclaimed that we must follow principle: "Scripture forbids the so-called emancipation of woman, and we must do the same."

"The question," said Hoeksema, "is not whether we make use of extraor-

dinary means, but whether we employ wrong means. Evil means. Means condemned by the Word of God.

In two other issues of *The Young Calvinist*, the same question came up in the Question Box, one from Michigan and one from New Jersey. Hoeksema's answer was dogmatic in each instance. Women should never vote in any election.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, when in 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution was passed, stating, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," the greater majority of CRC were in favor of women voting, if only to save their Christian schools. ☸

Endnotes

1. *Banner*, 31 October 1912, 684. Professor Jacob G. Van Den Bosch was a Calvin College professor of English. He was born in 1875 in Zeeland, MI; died in Grand Rapids, MI, in 1970.
2. Note change from father to male.
3. *Banner*, 31 October 1912, 684.
4. Klaas Schoolland was born in Friesland, the Netherlands, in 1851; emigrated in 1892; taught Latin, and Dutch Language and Literature at the Calvin Theological Seminary; died in 1938 in Grand Rapids, MI.
5. *Grand Rapids Press*, 4 November 1912, 6.
6. *Grand Rapids Press*, 6 November 1912.
7. Ruth E. Hoogland, "Petticoats, Politics, and Public Opinion," unpublished paper, Calvin College, 31 December 1975, 28.
8. Ate Dykstra was born in the Netherlands in 1866, emigrated in 1885, and owned a grocery and dry goods store in Grand Rapids, where he died in 1953. He was a city alderman, county supervisor, and for eighteen years a State Representative.
9. Abraham Kuyper was a Dutch theologian, preacher, editor, founder of a

political party, founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, a member of the Dutch Parliament, and prime minister of the Netherlands 1901 to 1905.

10. *Grand Rapids Press*, 20 March 1913, 6.
11. *Grand Rapids Press*, 24 March 1913, 6. There were a couple of Peter/Pieter Boumas living in Grand Rapids at the time, so it is difficult to determine the exact identity of the author.
12. John Van Lonkhuyzen was born in 1873 in Gelderland, the Netherlands, trained at the Free University in Amsterdam where he received his PhD. He served churches in the Netherlands, from 1911 to 1918 was pastor of the Alpine Avenue CRC, and from 1918 to 1928 at First CRC, Chicago, IL; died 1942 in Grand Rapids, MI.
13. *Grand Rapids Press*, 28 March 1913, 4.
14. *Grand Rapids Press*, 29 March 1913.
15. *Ibid.*
16. The Equal Franchise Society (EFS) was a state-by-state organization that advocated woman suffrage in the United States. It was a conduit through which the energies of upper-class

women could be channeled into political activism. The Grand Rapids Equal Franchise Club was formed in April 1910. This club spread literature and information about suffrage, which helped build local support for the movement. In 1914 the club sponsored a song and essay contest to further promote their efforts.

17. Grand Rapids Equal Franchise Club, *Grand Rapids Press*, 29 March 1913, 5. The *Press* article does not name the speaker; however, on page 12 it does mention that Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, national president, and Miss Alice Carpenter, had traveled from New York to assist the Grand Rapids women's suffrage movement. It may be assumed that one of these women was the speaker.

18. Scriptures cited by Schoolland: Eph. 5:25, 32, 22; I Cor. 2:11, 12, 13.

19. *Grand Rapids Press*, 29 March 1913, 5; *Fas et Jus* was a short-lived Christian political study organization that functioned for ten years. It had its own paper, *De Calvinist*.

20. There were several Albert Smiths living in Grand Rapids at the time, so it is difficult to determine the exact identity of the author.

21. *Grand Rapids Press*, 1 April 1913, 6.

22. Johannes Groen was born on 17 February 1865 in Vriesland, MI. He received his diploma from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1891. His first church was Eastern Avenue CRC, which he served until 1916.

23. *News*, 2 April 1913, 3.

24. *Grand Rapids Press*, 1 April 1913, 9. Rev. Henry Beets was born in 1869 in Noord Holland, the Netherlands, graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1895, in 1913 was pastor of Burton Heights CRC in Grand Rapids, MI; died 1947 in Grand Rapids, MI; K(laas) Poppen was born in Drenthe, Michigan, ordained in 1900, served CRC churches, died in Holland, MI in 1936; J(ohn) J. Hiemenga was born in Friesland, the Netherlands, ordained in 1905, served CRC churches, president of Calvin College; died 1974 Worthington, OH. In 1913 he was in Rochester, NY; E(dward) J. Tanis was born in 1887 in Paterson, NJ, ordained in 1911, served CRC churches, Bible teacher at Grand Rapids, MI, Christian High School, died in Grand Haven, MI, in 1958; F(rank) Doezema was born in Groningen, the Netherlands, ordained in 1899, served CRC churches, in 1913 was pastor at West Leonard, Grand Rapids, MI, died in 1967 in Palos Heights, IL.

25. Rev. William P. Van Wijk was born in Noord Holland, the Netherlands, ordained in 1902, served CRC churches, in 1913 was in Second CRC Orange City, IA, died in 1943 in Cutlerville, MI.

26. *Grand Rapids Press*, 10 April 1913, 9.

27. Louis Berkhof was born in 1873

in Drenthe, the Netherlands, ordained in 1900, served CRC churches, on faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary from 1906 to 1944; he died in 1957 in Grand Rapids, MI.

28. *Grand Rapids Press*, 10 April 1913. Barend Klaas Kuiper was born in the Netherlands in 1877. Kuiper enrolled at the University of Chicago where he graduated with a BA degree in 1900, professor of historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary and editor of *Christian Journal* and *De Wachter*.

29. *Grand Rapids News*, 3 April 1913. Clarence Bouma was born in Friesland, the Netherlands, in 1891; he was a theologian and professor at Calvin Theological Seminary. He died in 1962 in Grand Rapids, MI.

30. *Grand Rapids Press*, 5 April 1913, 6.

31. *Grand Rapids Press*, 19 April 1913.

32. *Grand Rapids Press*, 4 April 1913. The anonymous letter writer signs himself as Hesperia. The word Hesperia means "land of the west." The *Grand Rapids Press* allowed letters in the "Public Pulse" column to be signed anonymously, as in "A Citizen," "A Christian Citizen," etc.

33. *Grand Rapids News*, 3 April 1913.

34. *Grand Rapids Press*, 5 April 1913, 9.

35. *Grand Rapids Press*, 8 April 1913, 2.

36. *Banner* 18 May 1916, 325. On 15 May 1916, William Hoekstra, a Dutch immigrant, shot at Groen two times, both bullets missing. Groen escaped by running into the stairwell of the Lindemulder building. However, Hoekstra

did not assail Groen because of Groen's woman suffrage stance; instead Hoekstra was upset because he had been denied membership in the Eastern Avenue CRC of which Groen was pastor. Hoekstra, according to Groen, was a religious fanatic who had not worked for three years, allowing his wife and daughter to support him. Groen had visited Hoekstra in his home and had urged him to go to work. *The Grand Rapids Press*, 16 May 1916, page 8, reported "that Willem Hoekstra was examined at Police Headquarters on Tuesday morning with Rev. Groen present. Hoekstra gave evidence of being mentally imbalanced and Superintendent of the Poor, Goudzwaard, and Judge Higby appointed Dr. A. Sevensma and R. Hulst to examine Hoekstra and their recommendation was to remand Hoekstra to the Kalamazoo Insane Asylum." According to the USFC he was still in the Asylum in 1920, but home in Grand Rapids in 1930. He died in Grand Rapids, MI, in 1963.

37. Nicholas J. Burggraaf was born in 1869 in Friesland, the Netherlands. He received his diploma from Calvin Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1902 and served several CRC churches. He transferred to the RCA in 1923. He died in Grand Rapids in 1928. At the time of this Synod, he was serving the Muskegon Heights CRC.

38. *Banner*, 29 July 1915, 160-461.

39. John Monsma, Sr., was born in Friesland, the Netherlands, in 1865. He worked at various positions, including financial officer for the Sanitorium; he died in 1943.

40. *The Young Calvinist*, April, May, and October 1920.

The Tien Sisters—Harm’s and Alie’s Daughters—Mothers in Israel

James A. De Jong

The three Tien sisters proved Edna Ferber dead wrong!

That’s amazing. Vindicating family honor not with words but by shaping a legacy is truly impressive. Words are cheap. Substantive outcomes are solid.

Ferber’s Pulitzer Prize winner *So Big*, published in 1924, is set in the agricultural village of South Holland, Illinois, at the turn of the twentieth century. Full of Dutch names, attitudes, and practices, it captures superbly the ethos of the Dutch market gardeners who carted their produce to the Chicago markets. The main theme of the book is that appreciation for arts and literacy is far superior to merely making money. On that level, the novel is an excellent, recommended read.

As it unfolds, a wealthy widow with designs on an upstanding but jinxed small-time operator uses every ploy she knows to capture his affections. In one scene, she flatters him by asking a simplistic question. Annoyed by her transparency, he responds, “Better you ask Harm Tien his advice.” Ferber immediately adds, “Harm Tien was the district idiot!”¹

You might pass over this reference to Tien with a hearty chuckle. But I did not. Harm Tien is my great, great grandfather. His three daughters are the subject of this article. Attempts to discover why Ferber maligned the Harm Tien name proved futile. Perhaps she just liked the ring or uniqueness of it.

Harm and Alie Tien

Harm Tien was born in 1824 in Emlenkamp; Alie Egbers in 1828 in Brandlecht. Both towns are in Graafschap Bentheim, Germany. They were raised as laborers, with little prospect for economic advancement. They were also reared substantially in the 1834 *Afscheiding* (Secession) tradition that had spread across the border from the Netherlands. Their faith was forcibly resisted by the established church and civil authorities. Engaged to be married, they emigrated in June 1858; the United States offered them hope.² They intended to relocate in Graafschap, Michigan, among fellow Bentheimers, but missed a train connection when the conductor failed to awaken them. Disembarking in Chicago, they found their way to the Roseland area, where they married in September 1858 and where they made their home for the next twenty-three years.³

In Roseland they went from “rags to riches.” They first lived in a lean-to on their employer’s property and began their climb to greater wealth as a manual laborer and a domestic servant. Then Harm rented land on which he planted produce and harvested hay. Both products were sold in Chicago to support a growing family. Eventually the couple purchased their own land. As the city grew and encroached on it, they sold at a handsome profit and purchased less expensive tillable ground farther out. This happened several times. Other

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Tien family
circa 1880.
Front row,
from left to
right: Gerrit,
Alie, Harmen,
Johanna; back
row, from left
to right: Rika,
Henry, Mary,
Herman.
Image
courtesy of
the author.



investments proved lucrative as well, so that by the time the couple finally moved to Graafschap in April 1881, they were quite wealthy.⁴ As Dutch wags put it, “*Al slapende werd Harm Tien rijk!*” (While sleeping, Harm Tien became rich.)⁵

In the absence of a Christian Reformed Church, the couple joined the First Reformed Church of Roseland. Harm became a leader and elder in that congregation. Their six children, born in rapid succession, were baptized in it: Henry, born in July 1859; Maria (Mary), in February 1861; Hendrika (Rika), in October 1862; Johanna (Jo), in November 1866; Gerrit, in October 1868; and Herman, in February 1872. Later, their pastor Hendrik R. Koopmans offended the church’s majority by his heavy tilt toward Christian Reformed emphases and his fellowship with its leaders.⁶ The council filed a complaint with Classis Wisconsin of the RCA that asked Koopmans to resign. The two

delegated Roseland elders, Harm Tien and Willem Prins, were the only ones who voted negatively. Then the two spearheaded the 1877 movement by a fourth of the congregation that started the First CRC of Roseland.⁷

When they moved to Michigan, the Tiens purchased a farm south of Graafschap and joined the historic Graafschap CRC. By then the children were young adults. Harm, who had already been delegated to the general assembly of his newly adopted denomination in 1878, 1879, and 1880, soon became an elder and a promoter of missions in Graafschap. He actively supported the congregation’s young people’s groups and was delegated to CRC synods from Classis Holland in both 1884 and 1888. Years later his son-in-law William Heyns wrote:

It was evidence of the esteem in which Father was held by the churches of Roseland and Graafschap that his gifts of insight and judgment,

sound knowledge of the truth, honesty and uprightness, and his straightforwardness, combined with that modesty which considers others better than himself, were acknowledged and appreciated.⁸

This was not Edna Ferber’s Harm Tien. This was the one who shaped his daughters’ lives and faith.

Maria Tien Meeter

As the oldest daughter, Mary carried a heavy load of household responsibilities. This was the pattern for large, struggling families with many children. Older daughters assisted significantly with domestic help. Mary attended the local public school and undoubtedly went further because the Tien family valued education also for its daughters.

Mary was nineteen when her church called Rev. Geert Broene from his first charge in Noordoos, Michigan. He had emigrated in 1865 with his parents and fiancé

from Graafschap Bentheim. Like the Tien parents, who had emigrated together as unmarried young adults seven years before, the couple married shortly after arriving, and Geert also began life in America as a farm laborer.⁹ The common background and similar experiences assured the compatibility of the two families. Harm undoubtedly played a large role in issuing Broene the call to become First Roseland's first pastor. The Broenes arrived with seven young children, ages twelve to one.¹⁰ They obviously needed domestic help. They turned to Mary, who for the next two years provided them with household service and nanny care. She held this position until her family moved to Michigan.

The Tiens were scarcely settled in West Michigan when a financially successful Chicago-area widower, John Meeter, came courting. He had lost his wife in July 1882, leaving him with five young children. He needed precisely the experienced help that Mary could provide. It helped that she was very attractive. Their courtship was relatively swift, and the pair was married by Rev. R. T. Kuiper on 21 August 1883, in Graafschap.¹¹ He was thirty-five and Mary was twenty-three. On her wedding day she became the step-mother of John's four surviving children.¹²

Because John's residence was listed as Englewood, Illinois, Mary returned with him to her roots.

The new bride was served a full plate! Such marriages were not uncommon in an era when children regularly came in rapid succession and mothers often died young, not infrequently in childbirth. Widowers remarried soon. Mary's situation was even more demanding in that she had to provide solace to grieving youngsters jarred by recently losing their youngest sibling as well as their mother.¹³ But she was fortunate



John and Mary Meeter wedding. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

in marrying a godly man who was already well situated. John had emigrated as a two-year-old in 1849 and was raised in the robust Chicago setting familiar with American ways.¹⁴ As a young husband and truck farmer in the 1870s, he worked land west of the city on Roosevelt Road. He sold hay to Marshall Field for the successful young department store's dray teams and discussed fine points of Reformed theology and church life with its devout Presbyterian owner. He sold in the same markets in the same years as Harm Tien, and the two kindred spirits presumably developed a close relationship. When the city encroached on his land west of Chicago, he found land in the Englewood area. One very dry year he made a killing in cabbages by irrigating his plants. His next bonanza came by outfoxing George Pullman. To build a huge

new plant, the mammoth railroad car company's owner wanted the ground on which Meeter held a long-term lease. When his thugs appeared on a Sunday morning to lay tracks on John's land, thus claiming possession to it by existing civil statutes, John met them shotgun in hand. Suspecting their intent, he had skipped church to do so. Pullman's crew backed down and he quickly met Meeter's terms. That happened shortly before John married Mary.¹⁵

So, Mary was immediately in a position to hire her own domestic help!¹⁶ She soon was blessed with children of her own: Alida, born in 1885, H. Henry in 1886, Martin in 1888, Emma in 1890, and Gerrit in 1892. Alida was named after Mary's mother, Alie, and Harm Henry after her father. Prudently her eldest son became known as H. Henry. Had he used his given first name, The H. Henry Meeter Center at Calvin College and Seminary would have become known as the Harm H. Meeter Center, giving the place a Ferberesque ring!

In time, the couple established the Meeter Sauerkraut Company in Lansing, Illinois, and marketed the product nationally. Sauerkraut sales only enhanced John and Mary's wealth. Financial success enabled her to travel widely and frequently both before and after the company's founding. Travel was one of her favorite pastimes. She especially delighted in visiting her two sisters and their families.

Wealth, however, did not insulate



Meeter railcar. Image courtesy of the author.

John and Mary Meeter later in life. Image courtesy of the author.



the Meeters from heartache. Less than four years after their wedding, they lost ten-year-old Martin, the third child by John's first marriage.¹⁷ The first two of her own children were still babies—Alida was a toddler, barely two, and Harm Henry a nine-month-old baby. Yet Martin had become one of her own and she loved him as such. "It has pleased the Lord of life and death to unexpectedly take to himself our beloved little son Martin at the flowering age of ten years, two months, and twenty-five days," wrote the couple in the obituary published in *De Grondwet* and signed by them both.¹⁸ Martin died after suffering for a week from an inflamed intestine; it might have been appendicitis.

The notice is a remarkable statement of the faith that characterized the Meeter marriage and home life. They testified that Martin "... was a loving, obedient, and submissive child, at home as well as in catechism class and the Christian school." In his illness he asked his "father and mother" to forgive him for any wrongs he may have done them. He repeatedly prayed for forgiveness, which "did our hearts good!" He acknowledged his intense pain but stated that "the Lord Jesus has suffered far more." He anticipated being welcomed into heaven, where he would meet Jesus and be reunited with his deceased

mother. Before dying, he admonished his three brothers to seek the Lord. "The Lord quieted our stifling sadness," testified John and Mary, noting that the Lord had poured his healing oil into their "wounded parental hearts."¹⁹

This remarkable testimony characterized the devotional literature of the Meeters' believing community. Such material was designed to encourage and inspire readers, especially mothers who were called to explain, reinforce, and exemplify the walk with the Lord that this piece reflects. Mary had experienced such spirituality in her parental home, and she transmitted it to her own.

As tragic as Martin's death had been, the couple had short reprieve.

In 1893, they sadly lost Mary's two youngest children, Emma at age three and Gerrit at one. They may have succumbed to the same childhood disease, for before 1900 culprits such as diphtheria, whooping cough, and scarlet fever were epidemic. That year Edward, John's oldest child by his first wife, passed away at the age of twenty-one. Three children in the same year! By December, then, John Meeter had buried five of his ten children and Mary the last two of her own five. Thus, Mary experienced much pain and sorrow before reaching her mid-thirties. To assuage her grief, Mary's parents accompanied her on a visit to Harrison, South Dakota, that September, where brother-in-law William Heyns was serving as pastor.²⁰

The angel of death visited the Meeters' home again in 1919. Agatha Wyngaarden, a musically gifted, confident, and vivacious niece, was teaching in Chicago when she contracted influenza. Admitted to a hospital for treatment at the age of twenty-two, she rallied and was released to recuperate in Aunt Mary's house. There she relapsed and died.²¹ Along with the extended Tien family, the Meeters bore the painful loss of another precious young person.



Harrison CRC, Harrison, SD. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

Through it all, Mary Meeter was a ministering angel in times of family crisis, pain, and death. She died at the relatively young age of sixty-three on 6 March 1925. John followed five years later at age eighty-three.



Tien Sisters. Mary (left), Rika (center), and Jo (right) as young married women. Image courtesy of the author.

Hendrika Tien Heyns

Hendrika's education would have been like Mary's. Any secondary education would have occurred at Calumet High School, where the Tien home was located.²² Various known as Henrietta, Hettie, and Rika, she went by the latter in her adult years.

Rika met her husband on a blind date at the home of her father's friend, Ralph Bloemendal.²³ Bloemendal, who became an RCA pastor in 1886, was studying at Hope's seminary while Rika's future husband was studying at the CRC's theological school.²⁴ Jacob Wyngaarden, who probably brokered the contact since he had an eye for Tien women, had transferred from Hope to Calvin and had friends at both schools. The not immature student who had been set up with Rika was William Wynand Heyns. Six years older than Rika, he was born in 1856 and raised on the family farm in the Haarlemmermeer polder, the

Netherlands.²⁵ He was in his mid- to late-twenties when the couple met. Well educated, he had attended local public schools, a nearby French academy, and a Christian training school for teachers. He was drafted into the Dutch army in 1874, where he felt called to ministry. Immediately after his discharge, he began five years of ministerial preparation in the Christian Seceders' Theological School in Kampen, Overijssel.²⁶ Student life on the IJssel was lively but academically rigorous. Here he forged friendships that would serve him well professionally in years to come. His academic preparation was cut short when in 1881 his family emigrated and settled in Paterson, New Jersey. By late 1882, however, he was enrolled in Grand Rapids to continue his preparation for ordination.

Rika was undoubtedly impressed by this urbane, gifted man who by his last year in school was serving as student body president. William was undoubtedly impressed with this fine young woman from a successful, exemplary Christian home whose father was a distinguished, respected leader in the church. Harm and Alie were undoubtedly impressed with the match, for they provided financial assistance to William as he completed his education.

Rika and William were married on 13 September 1885, three months after he completed his studies and was approved for ordination. Rika's *Autograph Book* contains several entries from friends and family members dated about the time of her wedding. Penciled in Dutch doggerel, most offered spiritual counsel and best wishes. Mary's read, "O may you never encounter or be opposed by any misfortunes here on earth." It was signed, "This is the wish of your loving sister Mary Meeter."²⁷ Her mother-in-law entered similar sentiments in Paterson two weeks after the mar-



Rika Tien and William Heyns. Image courtesy of the author.

riage, showing that the couple obviously was visiting East Coast relatives on their wedding trip.

Children and churches came in rhythmic succession. Jeanette in 1887, Herman in 1889, and Garrett in 1891 were born in Allendale, Michigan. While Rika did not want to move to Harrison, South Dakota, thinking "it was the end of the world," she dutifully went, and here Olive and Nicholas were born in 1894 and 1896 respectively. No children were born during their years in Prinsburg, Minnesota. During their pastorate at Ebenezer, Berwyn, Illinois (1899-1902), Marie was born in 1899 and Sara in 1901. The last two Heyns children arrived after their father began serving as professor of practical theology at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids: Henriette in 1904 and Anne in 1907. Having and nurturing nine children in twenty years obviously defined Rika's life. She definitely had to "trust the Lord" completely in meeting her "daily responsibilities," as her father jotted in her *Autograph Book* on 5 October 1894. That was the year after Mary had lost three in one year. Fortunately, Rika was spared her pain, for all nine of her children survived to adulthood.



Heyns house corner of Eastern Avenue and Watkins Street, Grand Rapids, MI. Image courtesy of the author.

Rika was the consummate homemaker. The Heynses lived in two Grand Rapids homes. The first was a large one on Eastern Avenue south of Franklin Street. It featured a mammoth wrap-around porch with intricately lathed spindles that caught the eyes of passersby and served as a favorite gathering spot in warm weather. It was always full of people: friends of the children, some nieces and nephews that boarded with the family while attending Calvin, and many guests. It was a healthy but not arduous walk from the school at the corner of Franklin and Madison. Daughter Anne recalled animated games played around the dining table. Delightful readings and musical renditions were given. Older brothers lovingly teased younger sisters. The home was full of warmth and affirmation. And Rika was a fine cook. On Sundays the dinner often consisted of a large rice dish cooked before the service, then wrapped to keep it hot and ready to eat when the family returned from worship. On Tuesdays and Fridays, Rika's baking turned out an enormous number of loaves and biscuits, with aromas wafting through

the home and out the windows. Her pea soup was legendary. Heyns home life was genuinely good.

One of Rika's assignments was to protect the professor's solitude and ability to concentrate in his upstairs study. Important work was going on



Rika Heyns at thirty-five years of age. Image courtesy of the author.

behind its closed doors and in heavy clouds of pipe smoke. Sermons, religious articles, books, and lectures were produced there. Children had to

respect father's solitude. Invitation to enter the sanctuary was a privilege. Being handed a #2 pencil when they occasionally were invited in was a notable occasion. Rika was the guardian of respect and household decorum.

Sundays were special days. Almost until Rika's death in 1928, the family did not own an automobile while living in Grand Rapids. How could it? It would take two to transport all eleven Heynses! So, they walked the mile from their home to the Lord's house at Oakdale Park CRC. The family processed impressively both ways twice a Sunday. It was a noticeable parade and unmistakable testimony to where people belonged one day in seven. Arriving, the entire entourage slid into their reserved pew designated with a brass plaque declaring "*Professors Bank*" (Professor's Pew). Father Heyns would warm the family up for worship by playing hymns on the family pump organ in the parlor prior to departure. Group singing around that instrument was a regular feature of the Heyns family and social life. Music had priority and a high value in the families of the Tien sisters.

By the 1920s the Heyns couple had moved to a smaller home closer to the new Calvin campus on Franklin Street. Several daughters were still living at home, now at 1319 Sigsbee. And the Heynses continued to be dedicated walkers. They transferred membership to the new Neland Avenue CRC, where nephew Henry Meeter was serving as first pastor; it was closer than Oakdale.

Tragedy struck the Heyns family when mother Alie Tien died while living with them in 1919.²⁸ It did again in 1921 when their oldest son, Herman, passed away of a ruptured appendix at age thirty-one. He was then serving as pastor of the East Paris CRC. William and Rika offered regular counsel and emotional support to Herman's young widow and

her two young daughters. Rika may not have lost any of her nine in their childhood, but the sting of Herman's death was sharp and deep.

William's deepest grief occurred in December, 1928. Rika was doing the laundry in the basement the old-fashioned way with water heated on a gas burner. Her clothing caught fire. Daughter Anne, twenty-two, tried to beat out the flames and burned her arms in the process. William severely wrenched his back tumbling down the stairs to help. Rika was admitted to Blodgett Hospital with deep, pervasive burns. She seemed to rally, but then went into shock and passed away the next day. Local papers and church weeklies highlighted the tragic death. Condolences poured in from William's colleagues and former students from around the country and overseas.²⁹ Still active in denominational leadership after retiring, he was never the same. On his desk until he died five years later, he kept a poem that fittingly echoed her consoling voice from heaven.

Heyns wrote a number of solid theological pieces on covenant theology. But it was the Tien sisters that embodied covenant living and service in their marriages and homes, none more than Rika.

Johanna Tien Wyngaarden

Like those of her two sisters, Jo's adult life consisted primarily of raising her family. She was barely in her teens when the family moved to Graafschap and she enrolled in the Hope academy for two years, 1881-1883.³⁰ One classmate was a Christian Reformed farmer's son by the name of Jacob Wyngaarden, from Zeeland. He attended for only a year, testing his aptitude for academic work on the advice of his pastor, Gerrit Hemkes of Vriesland, who had just been appointed as the school's second *docent* or teacher.³¹ Finding it to his liking,



Jacob and Johanna Wyngaarden. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

he immediately transferred to the CRC's Theological School in Grand Rapids. It took Jacob another seven years to finish his preparation. Jo was only fifteen and Jacob eighteen the year they were together at Hope—too young to get serious, but not too young to be attracted to each other. When she completed her own preparation, Jo taught while their romance blossomed.

The couple was married on 24 August 1890, two months after Jacob was declared a candidate for ministry. William Heyns performed the ceremony in the Graafschap church. Harm and Alie outfitted the newlyweds with a roomful of quality parlor furniture suited for a parsonage.³² A succession of children and churches followed: Oostburg, Wisconsin (1890-1893), where sons Martin in 1891 and Herman in 1892 were born; Firth, Nebraska (1893-1898), where daughters Agatha in 1895 and Aletta (Letty) in 1897 joined the family.³³ Harrison, South Dakota (1898-1904), when Gerrit Renze in 1900, and Garrett in 1902 were born;³⁴ New Era, Michigan (1904-1911), when Maria born in 1905 and John in 1907 became the last of the eight children the couple had. Subsequently, Jacob and Jo served two more congregations before retiring: Eastmanville (1915-1918) and Walker (1918-1928), both in

Michigan. By the time they died, two of their children had already passed away: Gerrit Renze in infancy and Agatha in 1919 at her Aunt Mary's home in Cook County, Illinois. Jo, too, knew the pain of burying children.

But mostly, Jo's life was filled with rich, fulfilling experiences in raising her children. Her years of teaching gave her insight into children's fears and delights. Son Herman recalls South Dakota bank robberies, horse thieves, and the school year extended from six to seven months. He remembers life there without automobiles or telephones. In winter they sliced through the snow and bitter cold in the family cutter. They plucked prairie chickens for dinner, fished, and rode horses bareback. He tells how his mother shouldered extra responsibilities when his father was absent for long stretches planting and serving emerging churches in Washington, Texas, Oregon, and Idaho. His father would come home with tales of train robberies and hangings and other adventures that a busy mother could never match. Once he returned unrecognizable, sporting a full beard, and Jo had to reassure Herman that the wooly stranger was in fact his father.

One notable adventure was the move from Harrison to New Era, Michigan. Possessions had to be loaded onto horse-drawn wagons

and hauled to a railroad siding. There they were reloaded onto a freight car. Knowing that delivery would take a number of days, the Wyngaardens spent several of them with the Heynses in Berwyn and several more with the Meeters in Lansing, both places in Illinois. Cousins frolicked and the sisters luxuriated in their time together. Then the family moved on to Graafschap where members were parceled out to Tien homes. Subsequently they went to Vriesland, where their fellowship continued with Wyngaarden relatives. There Herman hacked weeds with grandfather Wyngaarden, pretending they were Indians. Political incorrectness aside, the event conveys the childhood reverie that mothers relish. Jo must also have wearied when the freight car strayed to unscheduled places and finally arrived in New Era almost four weeks late. That much time sponging off relatives taxes even strong marriages.

New Era was a Canaan overflowing with the apples, peaches, pears, cherries, and a variety of succulent berries that South Dakota refused to yield. Life now involved years of preserving and canning for Jo. She schooled the whole family on pitching in. The boys caught a variety of pan fish in nearby lakes and probably had to gut and scrape them before Jo cooked them up for a meal. For a time the family milked a family cow, then sold it and bought milk from neighbors. In the summers, older children worked in area orchards and fields for spending money.

Academic achievement became paramount for Wyngaardens. Their children excelled. Music lessons were mandatory: Agatha on the piano, Martin on the organ, Herman on the violin and so on down the line. Soon the

two oldest were off to Calvin Academy. Meanwhile a high school began in New Era, and Agatha followed the boys there after attending it. Letty chose the Hope academy. Both daughters went into teaching like their mother. Martin took two years off to teach in Sioux Center, Iowa, where he met his future wife. When Herman caught up in his educational program, the two of them made off to California together at their parents' encouragement. They enrolled at Occidental College for one year and for a second at the University of Washington in Seattle.³⁵ Martin then graduated from Calvin Seminary, Princeton Seminary, Princeton University, and the University of Pennsylvania. After teaching in Muskegon and serving in the army, Herman taught briefly on the first faculty of Western Christian High School in Hull, Iowa, where cousin Garrett Heyns was serving as founding principal. He then enrolled in the business and economics program at the University of Michigan, where he simultaneously held an instructorship. At the same time sister Lettie was appointed to the first faculty of Grand Rapids Christian High School, which replaced the Calvin Academy program in 1920. She taught business and secretarial courses there for a number of years before getting married. Both the older brothers had life-long careers in academia. Higher education had high value in the Wyngaarden home, as it did in the Meeter and Heyns households.

The Wyngaardens had picnics at a place called Stoney Lake near New Era, sometimes with church families. They also rented cottages at area lakes where occasionally they were joined by Heyns cousins and parents. Anne De Beer remembers a year when the

two families rented cottages close together. The Wyngaardens had to give theirs up by the Labor Day weekend, but the Heynses could retain theirs, and the two families moved in together, "and we slept crosswise—four in a bed. Fun!" she writes.³⁶

The Tien sisterhood held strong. The three were devoted to one another and were models of progressive Christian womanhood to their families. They had the values and resources to provide what they judged best for their families by the best standards of their day. They also made important time for each other. "Mother and her two sisters were very close," writes Herman. ". . . It was always Aunt Mary and Aunt Rika and Aunt Jo. They took pictures together and made trips together." An especially memorable one was to Colorado to visit their brother Garrett. Aunt Mary was a frequent visitor in the Wyngaarden home. "She was the real traveler of the three girls."³⁷

A Brief Reflection

Despite the fact that these sisters were circumscribed by the social constraints and sharply defined role for married women of their time, they lived hugely successful and fulfilling lives. Their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren loved and honored them. Many descendants had successful careers in business, education, medicine, politics, scientific research, missions, ministry, and philanthropic and social service that reflected the ideals cherished and instilled by all three of Harm Tien's daughters.

What would he have thought?
What would Edna Ferber? 

Endnotes

1. Edna Ferber, *So Big* (second edition; Cutchague, New York: Buccaneer Books, 1951), 75.
2. Swenna Harger and Loren Lemmen, *The County of Bentheim and Her Emigrants to North America* (Lansing, MI: MSU, 2013), 196.
3. A brief, one-and-a-half-page account (mimeographed and undated) of this couple is William Heyns' "Biographical Sketch of Father and Mother Tien," widely circulated among descendants.
4. For a more in-depth story of the farmers in the Chicago area, see Herbert Brinks "Netherlanders in the Chicago Area" *Origins*, Vol. I, no. 1, 1983, 1-7.
5. This Dutch adage does not have an English equivalent; a looser translation would be "Harm Tien became rich without lifting a finger."
6. Hendrik R. Koopmans (1824 Netherlands - 1884 New Jersey), pastored churches in the Netherlands before emigrating. Served Low Prairie RCA, IL 1865-1867; High Prairie RCA, IL, 1870-1877; Sixth RCA, Paterson, NJ, 1879-1884; First CRC, Pella, IA, 1867-1869.
7. Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 302-303.
8. Heyns, 2.
9. J. Noordewier, "Korte Levenschets van Wijlen Ds. Geert Broene," *Jaarboekje ten dienste der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord Amerika*, Vol. 40/1920, 171-75.
10. 1880 United States Federal Census.
11. Marriage license No. 44, Allegan County, Michigan, 21 Aug 1882.
12. Meeter's first wife, Cornelia Biemolt, died in July 1882 at age thirty, leaving her children: Edward (1872), Herman (1874), Martin (1877), and Anthony (1879). In Cornelia's obituary in *De Wächter*, another unnamed child was listed as born in 1881, who died on 4 August 1882, so only a couple of weeks before John and Mary's wedding.
13. See above note.
14. The Meeter family originated from Wielsryp, Friesland, the Netherlands.
15. See <http://www.pullman-museum.org/theCompany/>, accessed 6 Jan 2018, which gives the date of the Pullman land acquisitions as 1880.
16. Clarence Boomsma, "Profiles: Meet Mr. Meeter," *Origins*, Vol. XVI, no. 1 (1998), 43-46. Also see Swierenga, 551-553, on Chicago truck farming.
17. Martin was born on 19 Oct 1877 and died on 12 Jan 1887 in Cook County, IL.
18. *De Grondwet*, 27/21, 17 Jan 1887.
19. *Ibid.*, translations mine.
20. *De Volksvriend*, 19/41, 28 Sep 1893.
21. Henry J. Wyngarden, "The Wyngarden Story," a mimeographed transcription of three oral interviews, typed and proofed by Ruth De Young. Tape 1, page 35. Henry dropped the second "a" in his last name.
22. See Swierenga, 364, for background on early education in Roseland.
23. Jacqueline Heyns Rudeen, "Heijns/Heyns Family History," mimeographed, 1995. Unpaginated (4). Much of the information in this document comes from material gathered by Rudeen's father, Garrett Heyns, and her aunt Anne Heyns De Beer. Garrett was Rika's third child and Anne her ninth and last.
24. Russell L. Gasero, *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 34.
25. Heyns was born on 18 Mar 1856 in Haarlemmermeer, Noord Holland, the Netherlands. Noord Hollands Archief, Burgelijke Stand Geboorten, Haarlem, #74.
26. Founded in 1854 to train pastors for the Christian Seceder denomination, which was founded in 1834. For the twenty years between, several of the denomination's pastors trained young men in their homes.
27. Hendrika Tien Heyns' "Autograph Book." I am grateful to its present owner, Dr. Karen De Mol, daughter of Anne Heyns De Beer, for the privilege of sharing this source with me. Translations are mine.
28. Alie Tien Harms died on 1 Jan 1919 at age ninety of carcinoma on the ear. www.seekingmichigan.org
29. Collection 104, William Heyns, box 6, folder 10 (1928); Calvin College Archives.
30. *Hope College Catalogue* (now spelled catalog), 1881-82, p. 17, and 1882-83, p. 8.
31. Wyngarden, tape 1, p. 11.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
33. This is the Agatha who passed away in Cook County at her aunt Mary's home of the Spanish flu in 1919.
34. *Volksvriend*, 27 Sep 1900. Gerrit Renze born 26 June 1900 and died three months later on 23 Sep 1900.
35. *Ibid.*, tape 2, p. 8.
36. Rudeen, [9].
37. Wyngarden, tape 2, p. 18.

Maartje's Story: from Dutch Polderland to American Heartland

Kenneth A. Schaaf

This is the account of an ordinary woman. It is not the story of someone we would read about in Dutch-American history. Rather it is a narrative of a common servant girl, a *dienstmeid*. Were it not for the discovery of her efforts to reach America, she would have remained like so many women depicted in the art of Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Van Gogh, engaged in doing the common—scrubbing pots, sweeping the floor, hanging the wash—but forever anonymous. She was raised on the very edge of obscurity, on the flat polderland of Vrouwenparochie, in the northern part of the province of Friesland. Her portrait is one of hardship and adversity, all too common for that age, a way of life that would follow her across the Atlantic to the American heartland.

Her name is Maartje. She was born in 1830, the fifth child of carpenter Pieter Schaaf and his wife Mettje. Her story, however, does not begin with her birth, but goes back to her parents and her grandparents. Maartje's paternal grandfather, Sjoerd, was a master carpenter who gained a reputation for his skillful use of a carpenter's plane—in Dutch, a *schaaf*—so much so that he became known as Sjoerd *de schAAF*. The name stuck. But Sjoerd had another reputation; he got caught up in the politics of his day and became part of a movement to overthrow the Dutch Stadholder. Unlike the American experience, the short-lived Patriot revolution ended in failure.

The Patriots were citizens of the

Dutch Republic who, toward the end of the eighteenth century, wanted to stimulate democracy and end the absolutist power of Stadhouder Willem V. These patriots, inspired by the American Revolution for Independence, championed a more representative form of government and freedom of self-expression. From 1781 on they opposed the aristocracy and their lucrative and hereditary positions. Their actions were outlawed and many, including Sjoerd, fled to France. The Patriots were allowed to return when the French invaded the Netherlands in 1795.



Woman Hanging Out Laundry, etching by Johannes Pieter de Frey, 1770-1834. Image courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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Sjoerd's involvement in the movement had resulted in a seven-year, self-imposed exile to France. When he returned to Friesland in 1795, he found his business in shambles, his marriage in crisis, and his life generally on a downward spiral. By the time Maartje's father, Pieter, entered the family, Sjoerd had begun a pattern of moving from place to place, from job to job. Stability and security, essentials in raising children, were sadly absent from the home.

The environment in which Maartje's mother was brought up was equally challenging. Her maternal grandfather, Nammen Sybesma, was the proprietor of an inn called "The Gray Horse," one of four pubs in the tiny village of Oudebildtzijl, in the municipality of Sint Annaparochie. Eventually, the inn and its outstanding mortgage were passed down to Maartje's parents, Pieter and Mettje, then in their early twenties. The inn, however, failed to turn a profit, despite being at the very center of life in the town, where public meetings were held and property bought and sold. When the young couple purchased additional real estate and later sold it at a loss, they found themselves in a financial crisis. Like many others in a similar situation, their impulse was to flee. In haste, Pieter and Mettje moved to Hichtum, a hamlet of only fifteen homes some twenty miles to the southwest in the municipality of Wonseradeel. Here Pieter worked as a carpenter's helper on the estate of a Frisian nobleman. And it was here, at five p.m. on 20 June 1830, that Maartje was born. The following morning, two policemen from nearby Bolsward accompanied Pieter to verify the birth and register the event in the municipal office.

Financial conditions, however, did not improve for the family. There was already another carpenter in Hichtum and not enough work to keep Pieter



The Armhuis or poorhouse in Vrouwenparochie, Friesland. Maartje's home from 1831 to 1848. Image courtesy of the Tresoar, Leeuwarden, Friesland, Netherlands.

employed. Back in Vrouwenparochie, the state of the economy was so dire that, in 1828, the town and church established an *armhuis*, a poorhouse, for the most destitute. In an act of desperation, Pieter swallowed his pride, made the decision to leave Hichtum and return to Vrouwenparochie. In December of 1831, just three days before Christmas, Mettje and three of the couple's five children, including one-year-old Maartje, were placed in the care of the *armhuis*.¹ Pieter and the two oldest children, ages twelve and thirteen, were left to raise what money they could. Pieter would work hard, things would improve, and when they did, he would call for his wife and children.

The economy for the region continued to deteriorate, so much so that in 1833, the poorhouse in Vrouwenparochie expanded its facility. With no improvement in Pieter's circumstances, Maartje's entire childhood was spent in the poorhouse. She was sheltered, fed, and clothed, and even though she had her mother with her, yet there was always the stigma of poverty. Like the other children in town, she attended school from age six to about eleven, but forever with a telltale yellow stripe on her sleeve, the mark of those who lived in the *armhuis*. When she turned eleven, Maartje was

sent out to work in the community, and her meager earnings were then submitted as her contribution toward her living expenses.² Although many girls her age worked as house servants, Maartje appears to have been sent into the fields; the poorhouse record shows her wages were primarily earned during the growing and harvest seasons.

The wet summer of 1845 resulted in a devastating potato blight in the Netherlands; the economy of Friesland was particularly hard hit. The number of *armhuis* residents went from thirty-five in 1845, to seventy in 1846, and then to one hundred in 1847. But, from that calamity, something began to slowly develop for Maartje's betterment. The year 1845 was when Maartje turned fifteen and the year her sister, Aaltje, married Jan Elsma, a former *armhuis* resident, in the nearby town of Hallum in the municipality of Ferwerderadeel. Hallum was the location of a newly established *Afgescheiden* or Seceder church, assembled under the leadership of Dominee Marten Ypma. It was by way of Ypma's direction that a group formed and began to plan a move to the United States, the land of promise, for a better economy and opportunity to worship free of government interference.³

It is in this group of hopefuls that we find Maartje's sister and her husband, as well as Maartje's father and brother. There was a new optimism, a firm belief that, once settled in the American Midwest, things would improve, they would build a house, and eventually call for Maartje and her mother.⁴ Even the municipality of Het Bildt added its blessing on the venture, giving each impoverished emigrant ten guilders to supplement their travel expenses. On 7 April 1847, the group left Rotterdam on the bark *Vesta* and by 25 June had reached western Michigan. It was reported that Maartje's brother-in-law, Jan Elsma, was one of the first to build his house.

But for those left behind in the poorhouse, progress in establishing a homestead did not come soon enough. In early June of 1848, Maartje sent word that her mother had died.⁵ Now at age eighteen, alone, and without resources, any hope of rejoining her family vanished. It was time for Maartje to leave the poorhouse, to find work and a place to live on her own.

South of Vrouwenparochie, on the Zuidhoeksterweg, was a large farm operated by

the Bouma family. It consisted of acres of productive land on both sides of road, with a house and large barn on the north side and another, a near mirror image, on the south. Maartje was hired by the Boumas as a *dienstmeid* and moved into the northern house, House #18. There she served as cook, washer, cleaner, in general, servant to the others living on the farm. Certainly, there were letters sent to her sister in Vriesland, Michigan, letters expressing a young woman's discouragement—of loneliness, bleak marital prospects, and lack of financial betterment. Yet she continued in this employ for five years.

During the winter of 1852-1853, a new hope appeared for Maartje to rejoin her family in Michigan. A British shipping company announced it would soon begin service from Harlingen, Friesland, to Lowestoft, England. From Lowestoft, travelers could board a series of trains that would take them

across England to Liverpool, the departure point for American ports. This caught the attention of an enterprising young Frisian grain dealer by the name of Oepke Bonnema. He reasoned that he could grow grain in the Midwest as easily as in Friesland, and make a healthy profit in the Chicago market. Further, the idea of establishing a colony comprised of those who could not otherwise afford travel to the United States or hesitate to venture on their own appealed to him. He quickly prepared contracts to transport up to one hundred Frisians to America with the understanding that, once established, they would return his investment over a period of years.

We do not know if it was Maartje or her cousin, Sjoerd Bekius, who first heard of this opportunity, but what we do know is that it did not take long for the two twenty-three-year-olds to pack their bags and make their way to Harlingen. There, on 26 February



Detail of the 1852 Eekhoff map of Het Bildt showing the location of the Vrouwenparochie Armhuis and the Bouma farm. Image courtesy of the Tresoar, Leeuwarden, Friesland, Netherlands.



The Bouma farmhouse, Maartje's home and place of employment from 1848 to 1853. Image courtesy of Sjoerd Schaaf.

1853, a bitter cold, snowy Saturday morning, a day when few cared to leave the warmth of their kitchens, Maartje and Sjoerd and ninety others found themselves walking up the gangplank of the *City of Norwich* and stepping into the unknown.

It was a calamitous start. What was advertised to be a thirteen-hour voyage to England turned out to be a twenty-six-hour, tempest-tossed ordeal on the North Sea. This was followed by a slow, numb, rattling rail trek across the British countryside, only to arrive in Liverpool too late for their planned departure. The next three weeks were spent in a boarding house, waiting for a ship that offered Bonnema the price he was willing to pay. Rather than paying for a steamship to New York, or a sailing ship that offered a fixed departure date, Bonnema selected a packet ship that would not leave port until it was filled with merchandise.

All too soon, this strategy was shown to be a mistake. His choice was a new American ship, the *William and Mary*; its destination: New Orleans. Under the command of a young, novice captain, the vessel was

overcrowded, insufficiently supplied with water and food, and overburdened with a cargo of railroad iron.⁶ The first death in the company of Frisians occurred just six days after departure; over the next six weeks, eleven sea burials followed. For two weeks, Maartje feared for the life of her cousin as he lay sick in his bunk. By God's grace, he survived.

It was during the seventh week at

sea, at the point when food supplies were dangerously low, that the captain made a serious navigational error. Rather than sailing east of Abaco Island in the Bahamas, he found himself sailing west, directly toward the north flowing gulf stream. While he realized his miscalculation, and corrected his course, it delayed his progress in clearing the Northwest Providence Channel during daylight hours. Later that night, he made yet another error, one he could not correct. Thinking he was west of the Great Isaac Rocks and could safely alter his sail to the south, he made a premature course change and ran his ship directly on the submerged reef. Immediately the wooden hull was opened and the ship began taking in water.

All through the night, passengers manned the ship's two bilge pumps. But the captain, fearing that his ship, its cargo, and its passengers would soon be lost to the sea, did the unthinkable—he and several of his crew abandoned ship in one of its two working boats. There are many accounts of the anguish, confusion, and horror experienced by those left behind on the sinking ship. Some



NIEUWE STOOMVAART
tusschen **HARLINGEN** en **NIEUWEDIEP** naar **LOWESTOFT**, in directe verbinding met de Spoorwegen naar **LONDON, YARMOUTH, NORWICH, MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL**, en de tusschen- en omliggende plaatsen.

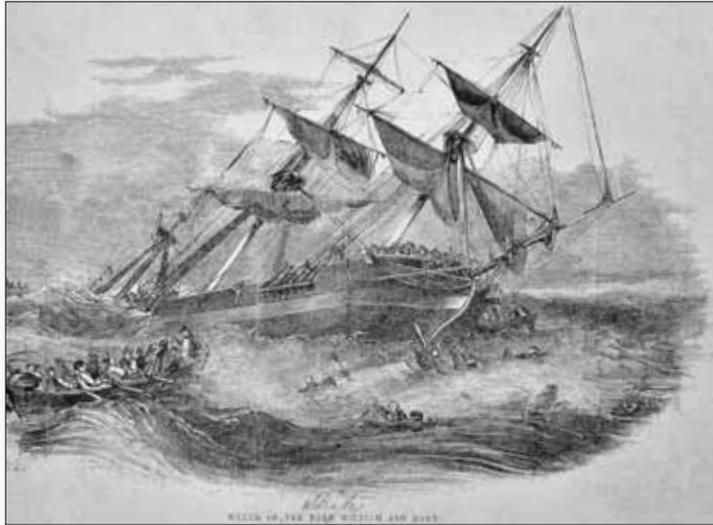
Overtogt van **HARLINGEN** naar **LOWESTOFT** circa 13 uren, en naar **LONDON** 18, de andere Plaatsen naar evenredigheid.
Zal van **HARLINGEN** vertrekken op **Zaterdag 26 Februarij 1853**,
Het nieuw gebouwde **IJZEREN STOOMSCHIP**
CITY OF NORWICH,
groot 700 ton en van 300 paardekrachten.
Landverhuizers worden op deze gelegenheid attent gemaakt, daar zij voor # 12 de persoon van *Harlingen* naar *Liverpool* worden vervoerd.
Voor Goederen en Vee gelieve men zich te adresseren te *Harlingen* en *Nieuwediep* bij de Agenten

R. MUNTZ & Co.

en verders Informatien te bekomen bij **DE NORTH of EUROPE STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY**, 84 King William Street London.

Advertisement that appeared in the Leeuwer Courant during the winter of 1852-1853. Image courtesy of the Tresoar, Leeuwarden, Friesland, Netherlands.

Illustration of the William and Mary from the Illustrated News, 28 May 1853. Image courtesy of Kari Best Stiegelmar.



passengers foolishly climbed the masts, some cried and hoped their end would be swift, some attempted to construct rafts, and some prayed. Down in the hold, men continued to pump.

It was late morning on the third day after hitting the reef that those on deck saw in the east a small coastal schooner. A signal flag was quickly run up one of the ship's masts. And then, to the amazement and relief of the passengers, the schooner changed its course and headed in their direction. Someone on deck commented that that day, 5 May, was Ascension Day, a day of God's special grace. By that evening, those abandoned on the *William and Mary* were safely placed on the beach of Grand Bahama Island. Over the next several days, all were taken to Nassau where, for three weeks, they were graciously cared for by both the British government and island residents. Once recovered and ready to continue, Maartje and Sjoerd and their Frisian companions boarded yet another schooner, the *Time*, transporting them without incident to the port of New Orleans and away from the cholera outbreak that weeks later would take so many lives in Nassau.⁷

During the summer of 1853, New Orleans was not a healthy location for residents or transients. In fact, on the

day the Frisians arrived, city doctors confirmed the first two yellow-fever deaths of the season. By the end of the summer, nearly eight-thousand persons died of yellow fever in the city. But the day following their arrival, the Dutch immigrants were safely on board the steamboat *Grand Turk*, and making their way up the winding lower Mississippi River.

Drought conditions in the Mississippi Valley that summer resulted in

low water levels and arduous navigation. It took ten days to reach St. Louis, Missouri, and then another five days to reach Galena, Illinois. They had left Friesland in late February with ninety-two travelers; and now, in late June, were down to seventy. Having seen the loss of life and experiencing shipwreck, forfeiture of all possessions, unimaginable discomforts, and significant delays, several raised the question: were they still bound by the terms of their contract with Bonnema?

It was early July when Bonnema and his group reached La Crosse, Wisconsin. Several days later and a few miles north of the city, they staked their claim for a colony they named Frisia.⁸ One family separated from the company in St. Louis, two more families left in Galena. It is certain that Maartje and Sjoerd also left the group in Galena, hoping to take advantage of the available eastbound rail transportation to Michigan. In Sjoerd's account to his family, he writes of passing through Columbus;



Detail of the 1876 Map of Wyoming Township, Kent County, Michigan, showing the van der Stolpe farm. Image courtesy of the Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids, MI.

it is certain he meant Chicago. From Chicago, he and Maartje would have taken the train to Kalamazoo, Michigan, and from that point, a slow wagon northward to Vriesland. Sometime around 4 July, Independence Day, after a separation of six years, there was a joyous family gathering as Maartje reunited with her father, brother, sister and brother-in-law.

It probably did not take long for Maartje to see that, in some respects, little had changed. Even the flat terrain of Vriesland resembled that which she left behind in Friesland. She was with her family; she was in America; but once again she was working as a domestic maid, doing the cooking, washing, cleaning, just as she had done in Friesland. Although her cousin, Sjoerd, married soon after arriving—curiously to a young woman who arrived on the *Vesta* with Maartje's family. Marriage prospects for Maartje in the small community were slim. But nearby, in the town of Grand Rapids, with a growing population of nearly three thousand, there were better opportunities for work and marriage.

The Second Dutch Reformed Church on Bostwick Street between Fountain and Lyon streets was known to help young women arriving to work in Grand Rapids.⁹ We know that Maartje's brother attended this church, as did members of the van der Stolpe family. In all likelihood, it is here where Maartje met Leendert van der Stolpe, an 1854 arrival from Zeeland, Netherlands. They became members of the church and were married in 1858. Their first child, Martijntje, was born in 1859; daughter Metje arrived the following year. While the Dutch-speaking congregation retained their Dutch names, census records give evidence of assimilation: Leendert became Leonard,



Tombstone of Maartje (Maude) Schaaf van der Stolpe, Fulton Street Cemetery, Grand Rapids, MI. Image courtesy of Wayne Schaaf.

Maartje became Mary or sometimes Maude, and the girls, Matilda and Mary respectively.

Leendert was a farmer. Although illiterate in English, he was industrious; within six years of his arrival he owned a farm valued at \$7,000. In 1860, he declared owning two horses, six cows, two pigs, and in that year produced two hundred bushels of wheat and corn each, eighteen bushels of rye, and one hundred and thirty bushels of oats.

In 1864, Leendert and Maartje moved to section one of Wyoming Township, to a farm of thirty-six acres. Daughter Pieterella, Nellie for short, was born there in 1866, and Martina in 1870. Unlike the lives of her parents and grandparents, Maartje's life in the United States was quiet and free of financial distress. But, like so many pioneer women, she knew the sadness of losing children. Two of her daughters died in 1870. Maartje herself succumbed to pneumonia during the winter of 1879.

Maartje left us no statement of her life. We have no known photograph of her, no copy of her signature, no letter by her hand. Roadside markers are not posted for common people; monuments are not erected for immigrant farm wives who work alongside their husbands and care for their

children. The once productive van der Stolpe farm was subdivided, first by the railroad, then by US 131, and eventually the construction of one hundred and thirty suburban homes. The farmhouse was razed almost a century ago.

On the south side of Grand Rapids, on Grandville Avenue, strapped to a utility pole is the green street sign "Stolpe SW," a simple marker of where she once lived and where she raised her daughters. And in downtown Grand Rapids, in the Fulton Street Cemetery, marking her grave is a heavily encrusted, hardly legible stone with the caption: MOTHER, MAUDE, 1830-1879.

Maartje's story is certainly not one of privilege. By all standards, her youth was one of abject poverty. And yet we see repeated evidences of God's fatherly care for her wellbeing: the provision of a home with her mother, the means and companionship for her transport to America, her rescue from shipwreck, her timely removal from Nassau and New Orleans before the deadly outbreaks of disease in both cities, her successful reunion with her family in America, the provision of a family of her own and, most important, a faith that would carry her home. ☁

Endnotes

1. At the end of 2017, the Municipal Archive of Het Bildt in St. Annaparochie, Friesland was closed. All records, including the records for the *armhuis* in Vrouwenparochie, were transferred to a facility in Franeker, Friesland.

2. In 1841, at age eleven, Maartje's earnings amounted to fl. 4.93; in 1842, fl. 8.73; in 1843, fl. 12.35; in 1844, fl. 13.27; in 1845, fl. 26.31; in 1846, fl. 31.8; and in 1847, her last full year in the *armhuis*, fl. 36.34.

3. Rev. Martin Ypma (1810-1863) was born in Minnertsga, Friesland, the Netherlands, trained for the ministry in the Christian Seceder denomination by Rev. T. F. de Haan, and was ordained in Hallum in 1845. In February 1847 he emigrated to Michigan as leader of a group of twenty families and thirteen

singles. The group settled in Vriesland, Ottawa County, MI, where he served as Reformed Church in America pastor from 1847 to 1852. Subsequently he served in Graafschap, MI, 1852-1855, High and Low Prairie (Cook County) IL, 1855-1861, and Alto, WI, 1861-1863, where he died.

4. Despite the hope of establishing a new home for the family, there remains the troubling notation "*verlatene vrouw*" or "deserted wife" next to Metje's name in the records of the *armhuis*.

5. *Armhuis* records note that neighbors took responsibility for the burial at the cost of fifteen cents.

6. For the full story of the shipwreck, see Loren Lemmen, "The Wreck of the William and Mary," *Origins*, Vol. II, no. 2, 1995, 2-9.

7. The full account of the journey of the Frisians was also carefully recorded in Dutch by Bonnema's bookkeeper, Broer Haagsma, in his pamphlet, *Lotgevallen van den Heer Bonnema en Zijne Toetgenooten op Reis Uit Friesland Naar de Vereenigde Staten van Noord-Amerika*, Harlingen, Friesland: S. Houtsma, 1853.

8. Hoping to attract other Dutch immigrants, the name was later changed from Frisia to New Amsterdam. Although a few families did join the effort, the colony failed to flourish.

9. The Second Dutch Reformed Church of Grand Rapids was organized by A. C. Van Raalte during the summer of 1849, because it had attracted a large number of immigrant young people.

Dutch-American Women History Writers

Rachel Hekman

The history of the Dutch in America has largely been written by and about men. Many of their names—van Hinte, Lucas, Swierenga, Brinks, van Raalte, Scholte, etc.—are familiar to members of the Dutch community. Comparatively little attention has been given to women historians writing on similar topics.

Women, however, have not only contributed to the making of the Dutch settlements in the United States, but to the writing of its history, as well. This article will highlight several of these Dutch-American women historians who have done just that. One of these is Ruth Keppel, who recognized the vital but unrecognized role played by women in the development of the early Dutch settlements in the United States. “We are apt to forget the part played by the pioneer women,” she wrote in her 1947 history of Holland, Michigan, “who without recognition formed the foundation of a fine city.”¹ Keppel, whose story is included in this article, pointed out the lack of women in the historical record at the same time when she, a woman, became an addition to that historical record.

Cornelia De Groot

Dutch writer Cornelia De Groot is the earliest published of the women historians. While De Groot did not write about the history of the early Dutch emigrants to the United States as the other women did, she wrote memories about her childhood in the Netherlands and her decision to emigrate to the United States in the early

twentieth century. The book titled *When I was a Girl in Holland* was published in 1917 when she was thirty-nine.² Her personality and worldview,



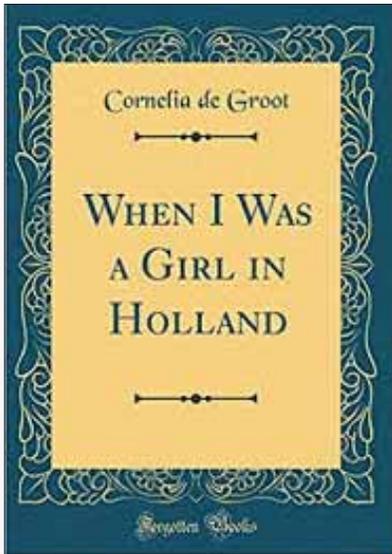
Cornelia De Groot. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

interspersed with domestic and trivial details of Dutch domestic life, make De Groot an essential part of the Dutch-American historical narrative.

De Groot was born on 9 January 1878 in Deersum, in the province of Friesland, as the daughter of a fairly well-to-do farming family. Religion did not seem to play much of a role in her life, nor in her narrative, as she makes little mention of it in the book, and no reference to God at all. She briefly describes attending the liberal branch of the Dutch Reformed Church in their village at Christmas and the use of its library.³

Education is a major theme of the book. De Groot was extraordinarily well educated, receiving both private tutoring and classroom teaching,

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When I Was a Girl. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

which was far more education than most other women of her era received. De Groot's thirst for knowledge permeates the book, feeding the wanderlust that would eventually lead her to emigrate to the United States. She writes, "The lovelier the day was, the sweeter the birds sang, the stronger I felt the draw and pull of the wonderful, big, beautiful world outside."

Indeed, De Groot emigrated as soon as she was twenty-three, the Dutch age of adulthood, arriving in New York City in 1901.⁴ Her experience with the United States was, at least in hindsight, overwhelmingly positive; she describes immediately liking the first Americans she met and comments approvingly on American women's independence and democratic attitude.⁵ She eventually settled permanently in California.⁶

De Groot's timing is worth noting. Her memoirs were published the same year [1917] that the United States declared war on Germany. She applied for American citizenship in 1943, two years after the US declaration of war on Germany a second time in World War II. De Groot, whether

intentionally or not, seems to make a point of differentiating Germany from the Netherlands in her book, going as far as to comment dryly that "Many Americans seem to think that Dutch is the same as German."⁷

Cornelia De Groot is an excellent example of a woman becoming part of Dutch-American history by writing it. Though De Groot's memoirs were not a history of Dutch emigration to the United States in 1917, they are a rare peek into the mind of an emigrant Dutch woman and are, therefore, invaluable.

Aleida J. Pieters

In 1923, five years after the publication of Cornelia De Groot's memoirs, Aleida J. Pieters published *A Dutch Settlement in Michigan, a history of Holland, Michigan*.⁸ Though Pieters, unlike De Groot, was a trained historian, the two women were very similar in that Pieters also spent her whole life pursuing knowledge. She began her career as a teacher, then earned a master's degree before going on to finish a PhD in history from Columbia University in 1923.⁹ At the time of publication, forty-six-year-old Pieters was serving as the Dean of

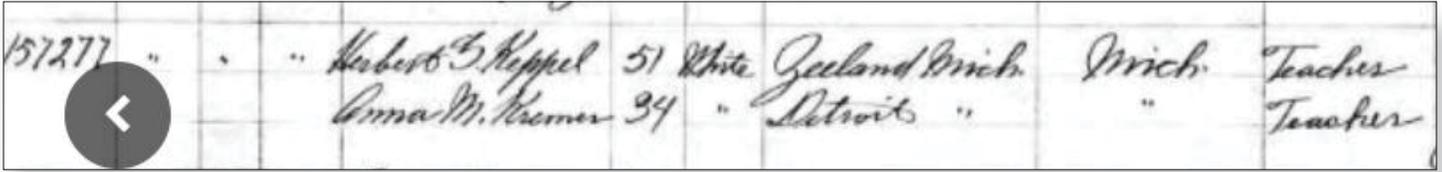
Milwaukee-Downer College in Wisconsin, where she was also a professor of government and history.

Pieters was born on 8 October 1876 in Holland, Michigan, to Dutch immigrants Roelof Pieters and Hendrikje Van Zwaluwenburg. Roelof had arrived in the United States as a young man in 1848 from Havelte, Overijssel, while Hendrikje arrived with her parents, Reijer Van Zwaluwenburg and Sara Kools, in 1850 from the province of Gelderland. They were among the first wave of Dutch immigrants to arrive in the United States after the Revolutionary War, destined for the new colony in Holland, Michigan, founded in 1847 by Dutch Reformed immigrants. In the 1860 United States Federal Census, both are boarding with the Kroes family in Holland, Michigan: Roelof as a student and Hendrikje as a teacher. They were married on 9 July 1861 by Rev. A. C. Van Raalte. Pieters was only three years old when her pastor father passed away, but her widowed mother continued providing higher education for her five children.¹⁰

Though Pieters clearly had a personal link to the story of Holland, Michigan, her description of its



Holland, MI. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.



Anna Kremer and Herbert Keppel marriage registration. Image courtesy of www.ancestry.com.

development reflects her professional historical training in its organization and reliance on primary documents. In Pieters's perception, religion and God played key roles in the lives of the Dutch immigrants—both in their worldview and their decisions to leave the Netherlands. We may assume that the same held true for Pieters's parents. While she does not go out of her way to discuss the role of women in the early colony, Pieters does make several references to the unique burdens placed on the early Dutch women and spends several lines on female education.¹¹

Pieters places the Holland settlers into an American context, comparing them to the Puritans in their trailblazing search for religious freedom, and makes an explicit effort to explain how the Dutch were like the pioneers of the nineteenth century.¹² Pieters, as a natural-born American, may also

have been trying to emphasize the Americanness of the Dutch community in the United States in the uncertain times between the World Wars. This pattern repeats itself in the writings of the historians featured below. Pieters is thus significant because her personal connection to Holland, Michigan, close relation to its earliest settlers, and professional historical training made her uniquely qualified to write the history of Dutch emigration to the United States.

Anna Kremer Keppel

Like Aleida Pieters, Anna Kremer Keppel was the daughter of Dutch immigrants. When she was born in Zeeland, Michigan, on 1 June 1883, her parents Jan, a pastor, and Maria Kroeze Kremer had been in the United States for six years, having arrived in New York City in May 1877 from the province of Friesland, the

Netherlands.¹³ Kremer Keppel was also a woman of education. After receiving a degree from the University of Michigan in 1903, she became a teacher, spending two years in Orange City, Iowa, before returning to Holland, Michigan, to teach English and German. After 1918, at least, she also taught history, as she is listed as a history teacher in the membership directory of the American Historical Association beginning in 1918, but it was not until 1925, when she was forty-two, that Kremer Keppel published her history of Zeeland, *The Immigration and Early History of the People of Zeeland, Ottawa County, Michigan in 1847*.¹⁴

Kremer Keppel may have become particularly interested in Dutch-American history because of her marriage to Herbert G. Keppel in 1917. She was thirty-four years old at the time, compared to Herbert's fifty-one.¹⁵ Herbert was the son of Govert Keppel and the grandson of Huibert Keppel, both original settlers of Holland and Zeeland and influential in the cities' development and functioning. Herbert, who also spent his life dedicated to education, seemed to have had an interest in local history; in 1903, he wrote a detailed history of his mother's family's contributions to Holland and Sioux Center, Iowa, and he helped oversee Holland's sixtieth anniversary celebrations in 1907. The marriage, however, was short-lived. In September 1917, Herbert was appointed by the National War Work Committee to make a survey of the teaching of mathematics in the naval stations of the southeastern section



Zeeland, MI. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

of the United States.¹⁶ While on this mission he died in November 1918 in Alachua County, Florida, of the Spanish flu.

Anna Kremer Keppel began writing her history of Zeeland after Herbert's death and dedicated it to his memory. Based on secondary sources and personal interviews with the first Zeeland

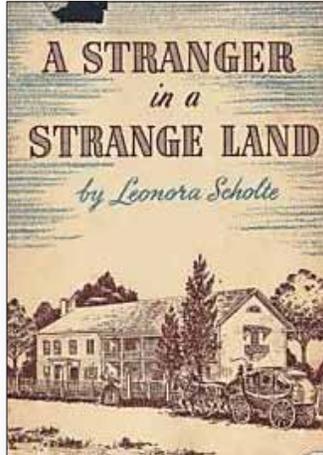


Leonora Keables Scholte. Image courtesy of the Pella Historical Society and Museums, Pella, IA.

settlers, including her late husband's family, the book traces the development of the idea of religious liberty from the French Revolution to the *Afscheiding* (Secession) in the Netherlands, when members of the Seceding churches

decided to leave the Netherlands, and then through the first few years of the Zeeland settlement. In Kremer Keppel's view, the settlement of Ottawa County was the result of a desperate desire for religious freedom. She points to Zeeland founder Johannes Van de Luijster as embodying the belief that "America offered a way of escape for God's people from the judgments of the Almighty."¹⁷

While Kremer Keppel did not specifically mention women in her history of Zeeland, she has many similarities with her female peers who were writing narratives of Dutch America at the same time—well educated herself, she traveled in educated circles and had a personal connection to the history she was writing through both her husband and her parents. As the descendant of immigrants, she regarded the United States as a place of refuge for her people; as the child of a Reformed minister, she saw the history of Zeeland through the lens of faith.¹⁸



A Stranger in a Strange Land. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

She died in 1968 at age eighty-five and is buried in the Zeeland cemetery alongside Herbert.

Leonora R. Keables Scholte

Similar to Anna Kremer Keppel, Leonora R. Scholte's connection to Dutch immigrant history was strongest through her connection to her



Mareah Scholte. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

husband. Born to Americans Dr. Erastus H. Keables and his second wife, Harriet, in Pella, Iowa, in 1860, Leonora attended Central College and married Henry Peter Scholte, the son of Pella, Iowa, founder Henry Scholte in 1878.¹⁹ Her historical novel of

Pella, Iowa, (*A Stranger in a Strange Land*) published first in the April 1939 issue of *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* and then in book format in 1942 when she was in her eighties, portrays the controversial Dominee Scholte in a positive light.²⁰ In Leonora's depiction, Scholte was a true American in the mold of the Pilgrims; she writes that he "must have desired to wrap [the Stars and Stripes'] folds around him and say: '[. . .] May we ever be an honor to your stars and stripes.'"²¹ She also emphasizes his involvement in American politics, particularly his work in the newly-formed Republican Party, and describes "loyal" Pella's contributions to the Civil War, perhaps in an effort to draw a distinction between the Dutch and the Germans, one that was all the more important in 1939.²²

Leonora's account is surprisingly sensitive, however, towards the experiences of her mother-in-law, Mareah Scholte, who features almost as prominently in the book as her husband, and whose remembrances formed the backbone of the book.²³ Leonora gives Mareah's fear of and resistance to emigration weight in the narrative; her uniquely difficult adjustment to life on the American prairies is not only understandable in Leonora's description, but justified. Particularly tragic is Leonora's depiction of Mareah's heartbreak upon finding that her beloved delft-blue porcelain, her only memento of her old life and status in the Netherlands, where she had buried a child, had symbolically shattered *en route to Pella*.²⁴ In so doing, Leonora's book acknowledges in a small way the particular pain and weight borne by Dutch immigrant women.

Though she was not trained as the historians Aleida Pieters and Anna Kremer Keppel were, and was not Dutch herself, Leonora Scholte's book was widely read and heavily influenced perceptions of Pella

Dutch's heritage.²⁵ Her portrayal of the Pella settlers transitioning from religious refugees to loyal Americans was timely in 1939 and beyond, as it distinguished the Dutch immigrants from their German peers while simultaneously serving to assimilate them into the American story. Her lifelong residence in the city of Pella, and her close relationship with her Dutch mother-in-law, led her to see and therefore to portray the story of Pella in a way that only an American woman could.

Ruth Keppel

Ruth Keppel had much in common with the other historians discussed above, especially Aleida Pieters and Anna Kremer Keppel. Like them, Ruth Keppel grew up in a Dutch American community with close links to the original immigrants—she was born in Holland, Michigan, in 1896, only a few years after Anna Kremer Keppel, and was in fact Kremer Keppel's husband's second cousin once removed.²⁶ She was also the granddaughter of some of Holland, Michigan's earliest settlers. Her father Albert Keppel's father Teunis Keppel was an assistant to Rev. Van Raalte. The parents of Ruth's mother, Kate (Cornelia) DeVries, were also early residents of Zeeland, having arrived in the United States as adolescents.²⁷

Like De Groot, Pieters, and Kremer Keppel, Ruth Keppel valued education as well as music. She became a prodigiously talented violinist and moved to Illinois in 1914 to attend the Chicago Oberlin Conservatory of Music and then Chicago Musical College, where she earned her teaching certificate.²⁸ Keppel then returned to Holland and pursued a career as a music teacher at Holland High School.²⁹

Eventually, when illness forced Keppel to retire from teaching, she turned to writing, growing increasingly interested in her own family's



Ruth Keppel. Image courtesy of the Holland Museum, Holland, MI.

history as well as that of the town they had helped establish. In 1947, at age fifty-one, Keppel wrote *Trees to Tulips: Authentic Tales of the Pioneers of Holland, Michigan*, a history of the city published as part of its centennial celebrations.

Keppel presents the history of the Dutch migration to Holland in *Trees to Tulips* in a highly readable way, using her ancestor Teunis Keppel and his family as lenses through which the reader can view Holland's development; in that way, *Trees to Tulips* is intensely personal, both for the author and for the reader. Keppel's writing is full of communal, familial language, such as her description of historical artifacts that "our grandmothers made which are preserved for us in the Holland Museum."³⁰

Like Pieters, Kremer Keppel, and Leonora Scholte, Keppel presents the Dutch migrants as religious refugees, going so far as to say that there was "no freedom of religion in the Netherlands."³¹ However, the faith of the original Dutch settlers seems to be of secondary importance in Keppel's telling of the history of Holland.

Compared to the other historians, Keppel spends comparatively little time discussing the doctrinal and spiritual struggles experienced by Van Raalte, Scholte, and their congregations, and mentions the denominational split in 1857 only to express a desire for reunification.³² Instead, she focused on the day-to-day experiences of the settlers and the work of city-building.

Keppel does present the Dutch settlers as essentially American. She describes her grandfather Teunis as being "anxious to become an American citizen" as early as 1849, and remarks that the Hollanders were "always loyal to their adopted land," being more patriotic during the Civil War than any other Michiganders.³³ While the need to differentiate the Dutch from the Germans was not as strong in 1947 as it was in 1939, Keppel is careful to use her writing to establish a place for the Dutch in the history of the United States.

Dutch women feature more prominently in Keppel's writing than in anyone else's. *Trees to Tulips* features a section on "Pioneer Women," reflecting Keppel's belief that the work of creating a new society in the United States rested largely on the backs of Dutch women: the deprivation, fear, and suffering of the early years discussed by the other historians were women's burdens, as they were the child bearers, child rearers, doctors, cooks, seamstresses, and teachers of their families in addition to doing the backbreaking work of establishing homesteads. "We are so apt to forget the women," she said in 1980, "and they contributed as much as the men did." Though Keppel was never able to write more extensively about Dutch women before her death in 1993, many of her biographies and written remembrances of Holland, Michigan, women, like Christine Van Raalte Gilmore and Anna Sims



Marian Schoolland. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

Perkins, ensure that they will not be forgotten.³⁴

Keppel's dedication to Holland's history, seen in *Trees to Tulips*, as well as her many other writings and involvement with local historical organizations, solidified Keppel's enduring reputation as the "Holland Historian," one of the earliest and most important preservers of the region's past—indeed, many of the "facts about Holland today originally came from [her] tongue."³⁵ At the same time as she was advocating for the place of women in the history of Holland, she was making a place for herself in it. It is fitting, then, that when she died in 1993, she was buried in Holland's oldest burial ground, Pilgrim Home Cemetery.

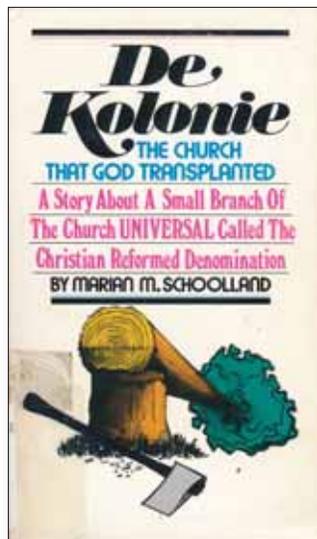
Marian Schoolland

No chronology of Dutch American writers would be complete without a mention of Marian Schoolland. Like many of the writers mentioned earlier, Schoolland was born in the Dutch community of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to immigrants Klaas Schoolland and Pieterella Heyboer.³⁶ While Schoolland's mother spent most of her life in the United States, having arrived while in her early teens, her

father was a relatively new arrival from the Netherlands at the time of her birth in 1902; he immigrated in 1891, when he was in his forties.

Schoolland thus grew up in a Dutch household that, like those of many of the other writers, valued education and the Reformed faith. Her father was a prominent intellectual, both in the Netherlands and in the United States, who combined politics and abstract Reformed theology in the same vein as Abraham Kuyper.³⁷ In the United States, he was a professor at Calvin Theological School and was instrumental in the development of the English and Classical Languages departments in what would become known as Calvin College.

Her father's dedication to the academic life must have had a powerful influence on Schoolland's intellectual and spiritual development. In 1928, she enrolled at Calvin College and



De Kolonie. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

completed her degree in 1934, after which she pursued a master's degree at the University of Michigan.³⁸ She then returned to her alma mater to teach freshman English.

Schoolland's experience of teaching at Calvin College deepened her

love of writing that had been sparked by her excellent education. Beginning in the late 1930s continuing until her death in 1984, Schoolland embarked on a prolific career as a writer. Over her lifetime, Schoolland wrote, edited, and translated dozens of books and innumerable articles, ranging from children's Bible stories to biographies of important figures to novels to regular articles in the *Holland (Michigan) Sentinel*. She was, in fact, one of the first women in the Christian Reformed Church to dedicate her entire career to writing.

A considerable number of her publications are historical in nature, presenting Schoolland's uniquely Reformed perspective on Dutch history. One of her earlier books, published in 1951, is a biography of Holland founder Rev. A. C. Van Raalte.³⁹ In it, Schoolland describes the challenges faced by Van Raalte and his congregation of Dutch Seceder immigrants, before and after 1847. Schoolland's Christian faith is evident in her celebration of Van Raalte as a quasi-modern-day John the Baptist, venturing forth as a "defender of the truth" and rejecting the Dutch church's authority.⁴⁰ Unlike the writers discussed above, Schoolland not only gives credence to the faith of the original immigrants, but sees their exodus to the United States through the lens of her own faith, describing Holland's success as evidence of God's ultimate provision and providence.

Schoolland's broad history of the Christian Reformed Church, published a few years later in 1958, is similarly deferential. In *Children of the Reformation*, Schoolland traces the historical development of the church from its origins in the Protestant Reformation to its centennial in 1958, describing a people whom "God had guided to this place," and whose "faith was rewarded" time and time again.⁴¹

De Kolonie: The Church that God Transplanted, Schoolland's long-form

history of Holland, published much later in 1973, is even more clearly providential in its outlook, as evidenced even in its title. “God makes history,” she declares early in the book, neatly summarizing her approach to writing about the past.⁴² In *De Kolonie*, as in her biography of Van Raalte, Schoolland describes Dutch immigration to the United States as part of God’s ultimate plan.⁴³

Unlike the other writers, Schoolland does not seem to treat the issue of Americanization with as much urgency. By 1951, of course, the need to prove “American-ness” in Dutch communities was largely unnecessary; though she describes enlistment rates in the World Wars as evidence of Dutch-American patriotism, Schoolland seems comfortable in acknowledging the early settlers’ initial resistance to American citizenship in ways that her predecessors did not.⁴⁴

Schoolland’s understanding of the Dutch in America as being “God-fearing people, but intensely human” also does not shy away from discussing Dutch women and their unique struggles.⁴⁵ In both *Children of the Reformation* and *The Story of Van Raalte*, Schoolland acknowledges them as Ruth Keppel does, writing, “The brunt of the hardship of pioneering has often fallen upon women and children.”⁴⁶

As Leonora Scholte did with Mareah Scholte, Schoolland treats Christina Van Raalte and her spiritual struggle with the isolation of immigration gently, praising her for her courage rather than condemning her for a lack of faith.⁴⁷ Schoolland also dedicates significant space in all three books to describing the work of women, both in the home and in the church over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁸

Marion Schoolland’s education and faith informed her writing and each other, in equal amounts. Her love of learning and her belief that Christians are called to pursue it led her to affirm that “girls as well as boys” have minds “eager for more knowledge” even as she upheld woman’s traditional role as “helpmeet.”⁴⁹ Indeed, her own career exemplified that belief, as she was one of the first women to write for the Christian Reformed Church weekly the *Banner*. Her historical writing is an outstanding example of the form – many of her books are fully footnoted with excellent primary and secondary sources – but her identity as a Dutch American woman is also what makes Schoolland a part of Dutch history even as she was writing it.

Conclusion

These Dutch women historians have a

number of similarities. They were all immigrants or closely related to one; only two, Leonora Scholte and Anna Keppel Kremer, were married. All of them valued and pursued education. Almost all of them were concerned about portraying themselves or their people as American as much as Dutch.

There were also some significant differences, though. These women and their families represented different provinces of the Netherlands, came to different regions of the United States, and were brought up in a variety of circumstances. Cornelia De Groot, unlike the other women, was born in the Netherlands. Leonora Scholte was Dutch only by marriage. And while they all had connections to Reformed Christianity, Marian Schoolland was alone in her explicit connections between faith and history. Only two of these historical writers, Aleida Pieters and Anna Keppel Kremer, were actually trained as historians.

But all of these women are alike in that they reclaimed a bit of history for themselves and for Dutch women, by writing about the past in a time when history was written by men. Even though none of these women likely considered themselves to be revolutionaries, in that regard they were. 

Endnotes

1. Ruth Keppel, *Trees to Tulips: Authentic Tales of the Pioneers of Holland, Michigan* (Holland, MI: n.p. 1947), 19.

2. Cornelia De Groot, *When I Was a Girl in Holland* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1917).

3. *Ibid.*, 74, 192.

4. De Groot petitioned for naturalization on 2 December 1943. National Archives at San Francisco, San Bruno, California; NAI #605504.

5. De Groot, *When I Was a Girl in Holland*, 203.

6. 1910 United States Federal Census.

7. De Groot, *When I Was a Girl in Holland*, 32.

8. Aleida Pieters, *A Dutch Settlement in Michigan* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Reformed Press, Eerdmans-Sevensma Co., 1923).

9. Aleida J. Pieters, “Some Practical

Considerations on the Report of the Committee of Eight on the Teaching of History,” *Journal of the Michigan Schoolmasters’ Club* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Michigan Schoolmasters’ Club, 1909), 94-101; Columbia University Catalogue, Volume 1923/1924 (New York: Columbia University, 1923), 40.

10. 1860, 1870, and 1880 United States Federal Censuses; Weddings (1847-1875) performed by Rev. Albertus

C. Van Raalte, a minister in the Reformed Church in North America, compiled by Ralph Haan and Richard H. Harms, 2005. Calvin College Archives.

11. Pieters, *A Dutch Settlement*, 102, 143-144.
12. Ibid., 7, 63; references to Puritans appear on pages 7, 38, 96, and 148.
13. 1880 United States Federal Census. Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving at New York, NY 1820-1897 on Ancestry.com; Zeeland First Reformed Church membership records.
14. Anna Kremer Keppel, *The Immigration and Early History of the People of Zeeland, Ottawa County, Michigan in 1847* (Zeeland, MI: Zeeland Record Press, 1925).
15. Michigan Marriage Registers, 1887-1925; 1917 for Wayne County on www.ancestry.com
16. *Zeeland Record*, November 8, 1918. Herbert Govert Keppel, born 7 April 1866, Zeeland, Ottawa County, Michigan; died 1918, Alachua County, Florida.
17. Kremer Keppel, *The Immigration*, 25.
18. Richard Harms, Comp. and Ed. *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids, MI, Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2004). Anna Kremer Keppel's father, Jan Kremer (1832-1907), served both RCA and CRC congregations. Upon arrival in the United States he served First CRC in Grand Rapids, MI, from 1877 to 1879, then served RCA congregations in South Holland, IL, 1879-1883, First RCA Zeeland, MI, 1883-1892, and Detroit, MI, 1892-1902.
19. 1860 USFC; "History of Pella compiled by the Hospital auxiliary," *The Sioux County Capital* (Orange City, IA), 16 January 1874. According to Valerie Van Kooten, Director of the Pella Historical Museums & Tulip Time, Maria's name was spelled Maria from birth. That is how she signed her wedding license, paintings, etc. Her descendants changed it to Mareah, no one knows why, but the Pella Historical Society Museums

changed the spelling back to Maria in its collections and histories, per AMA standards.

20. Leonora R. Scholte, "A Stranger in a Strange Land: Romance in Pella History," *Journal of Iowa History and Politics*, vol. 37, no. 2 (April 1939), 135.
21. Ibid., 136.
22. Ibid., 177-179; Terence G. Schoone-Jongen, *The Dutch American Identity: Staging Memory and Ethnicity in Community Celebrations* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 273-274.
23. Scholte, "Stranger in a Strange Land," 115; "Mrs. Scholte dies in Iowa," *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, Iowa) 8 December, 1943.
24. Scholte, "Stranger" 152-153.
25. See Schoone-Jongen, *The Dutch American Identity*, 272-275, for more about the construction of Pella history in the twentieth century.
26. Ruth Keppel is therefore the second cousin once removed of the husband of the author's first cousin five times removed.
27. 1880 USFC; Holland First Reformed Church membership records.
28. Ruth Keppel interview in her home in Holland, Michigan on 6 August 1981 by Carol Bechtel; Hope College Living Heritage Oral History Project, Holland, Michigan, Hope College Archives.
29. 1900 USFC; Keppel, interview, 11.
30. Keppel, *Trees to Tulips*, 19.
31. Ibid., 11.
32. Ibid., 34.
33. Ibid., 26-27.
34. Christine Van Raalte Gilmore (1846-1933) was the daughter of Albertus C. Van Raalte and Christina Moen. She married Rev. Wm. B. Gilmore. After his death in 1884, Christine returned to live in Holland, Michigan, where she became very involved in the social and educational life of the city. Anna Sims Perkins (1864-1955) was not of Dutch heritage. She was born in Pennsylvania, worked in the Delphos (Ohio) Manufacturing Company. In 1904 the company, a ten-thousand-dollar corporation, was

producing a non-overflow pump can. Forty years later, its assets were over a million dollars. Annie had served as sales manager, secretary, and treasurer, and after retirement remained on the board of directors. After retirement she spent her summers in Holland, Michigan, at the home of her daughter and son-in-law, Helen and Leonard Stallkamp. She spent her winters in Florida. While in Holland, she became involved in the city's Garden Club and other social endeavors.

35. Ruth Keppel interview, 8.
36. 1910 USFC.
37. James Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1984), 50-51.
38. The Calvin College 1929-1930 Yearbook lists Marian Schoolland as a sophomore student the same year my great-grandfather, Walter Hekman, is listed as a freshman student.
39. Marian M. Schoolland, *The Story of Van Raalte: "A Man Strong and of Good Courage"* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951).
40. Ibid., 17.
41. Marian M. Schoolland, *Children of the Reformation: The Story of the Christian Reformed Church – Its Origin and Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), 23.
42. Marian M. Schoolland, *De Kolonie: The Church that God Transplanted* (Grand Rapids, MI: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1973), 11.
43. Ibid., 161.
44. Schoolland, *Children of the Reformation*, 67, 69-70.
45. Ibid., 264.
46. Schoolland, *The Story of Van Raalte*, 110.
47. Ibid., 110-111.
48. Ibid., 110-112; *Children of the Reformation*, 63-66; *De Kolonie*, 109, 166, 258.
49. *Children of the Reformation*, 63, 64.

Before God and these Witnesses:

Six Cases of Contested Marriages in the RCA and CRC¹

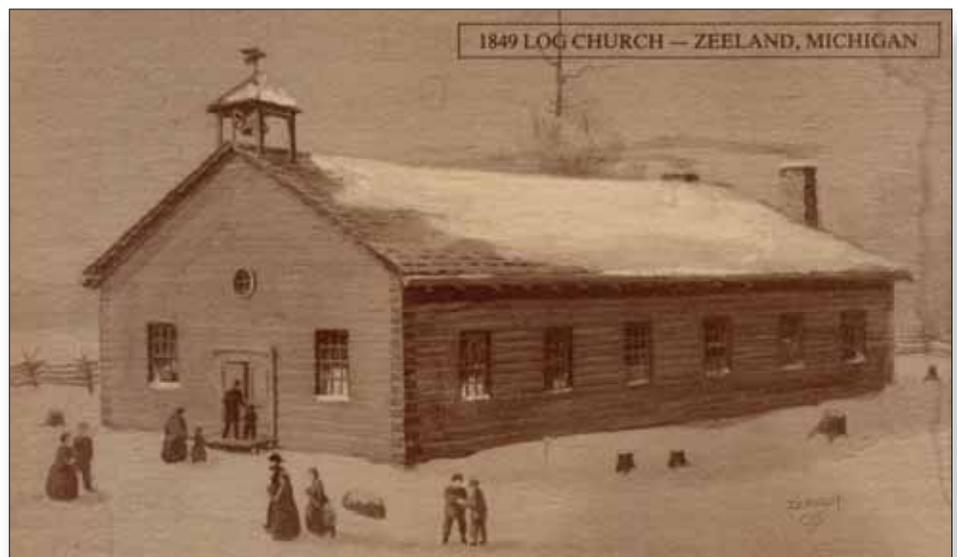
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

One of the changes the Protestant Reformers enacted was to dissolve the Roman Catholic sacrament of marriage and replace it with a ceremony. Still, recognizing the importance of the rite, the Dutch Reformed Church decreed that, to be legally binding, all marriages were to be performed by ordained clergy in front of witnesses. What seemed to be straightforward—a man and a woman being joined in matrimony—turned out to be fraught with all manner of disputes, not the least being who could marry whom. These marital problems also became headaches for the Christian Seceder Church in the Netherlands (established in 1835), as evidenced by the many times its Synods had to deal with the subject of marriage.² At the first General Synod of the denomination, held in Amsterdam in

March 1836, the matter of marriages not solemnized in church came up for discussion. In every subsequent Synod until 1869 except one, questions about marriages arose, and then such questions would continue to be a headache for the denomination in the new world.³ The following cases are representative of similar cases found in CRC and RCA records.

On 23 April 1848, Classis Holland met for the first time, in the village of Zeeland, Michigan.⁴ After having dealt with the business of electing a president, a clerk, and other procedural matters, their first discussion did not deal with ecclesiastical or dogmatic issues, but with marriage.⁵ Article 7 raised the question. In Rev. Martin Ypma's Vriesland congregation, a widow wished to marry again, but because her husband had died only three months before, some of the

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First RCA, Zeeland, MI, where the first Classis meeting was held. Image courtesy of the author.

brethren objected and wanted her to wait a while.

The delegates were aware that the situation of their fellow members was perilous. Many had died and were dying in the new settlements and widowers were unable to go out to work because they had small children to care for, while widows were left without a male to provide for them. The practical solution was then for these bereft people to marry. Classis therefore decided that,

Whereas the assembly knows of no pertinent regulations in the Word of God, it cannot place any obstacle in the way of this marriage; but advises that the parties who contemplate it be instructed; in order that we may seek that which is lovely and of good report; and that no offense be given to decency, honor and natural human feeling.

This settled that issue, but a little later in the meeting, another marriage question was not so easily resolved, when a member of the church asked

permission to marry the wife of his deceased brother, who had children by this woman who were still living.⁶ The answer was swift and undisputable: “The assembly judges that such marriages cannot be permitted in the church of God, inasmuch as it is incest, according to Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21.”⁷

The man, Derk Zaalmlink, had arrived in Graafschap, Michigan, with his wife Berendina Olthuis. Traveling with him were his brothers, Geert and wife Janneken Harms, and Hendrik and wife Hendrikje Wiegink. Shortly after arrival in September 1847, Geert died, leaving his wife, Janneken Harms, a widow with four children. Then, tragedy upon tragedy, Derk’s wife, Berendina, also died, leaving Derk a widower.⁸ Derk and his sister-in-law, Janneken Harms, decided to marry and asked the Graafschap church for permission. The Graafschap council brought the matter to Classis, and as noted above the answer was swift and negative.⁹

Derk Zaalmlink was not satisfied

with the answer and appeared in person three months later at the next Classis to plead his case. He was told that if he stubbornly refused to obey or comply with the authority of the church, he would be excluded from the congregation.¹⁰ The case was referred to the next meeting of the Particular Synod of the Reformed Church in America in Albany, New York, but it never appeared on its agenda, the reason being that the RCA had dropped its prohibitions against such marriages in 1843.

It seems, however, that the Graafschap church was still uncomfortable with performing the marriage in spite of the fact that the RCA had no objections. In the Reverend David Smith’s diary of 17 October 1848 is the following notation: “10 o’clock A.M. I solemnized the marriage of a Dutch couple. Derk Zaalmlink aged thirty-five and Janneken Harms aged thirty-eight years. Horatio Brooks and my wife witnessed.” David Smith was a missionary to the local Indians.¹¹

The Case of Kornelis van Farowe & Cornelia Wagemaker

Classis Holland would go on to deal with other marital issues, including divorce, with the case of the Cornelia Wagemaker and Kornelis van Farowe which played out in the Grand Rapids congregation.¹²

On Wednesday, 27 May 1846, in the courthouse of Ouwerkerk, province of Zeeland, the Netherlands, twenty-one-year-old Cornelia Wagemaker and twenty-three-year-old Kornelis van Farowe exchanged their wedding vows in front of their parents, witnesses, and the officer of the Civil Registry of the municipality.¹³ If the bride thought that she would live happily ever after in a state of marital bliss, she was soon rudely cured of that notion. Apparently Kornelis, unable to control his temper, physically abused Cornelia. Her only protection was her parents, Jan and Anna Wagemaker, and by 1849, only three years after the wedding, Cornelia lived

separately from Kornelis in order to protect herself. When his parents decided to emigrate to America, Kornelis wanted to go along and persuaded Cornelia to join them. On 16 June 1849, Dirk and Gielte van Farowe and Kornelis and Cornelia van Farowe and their son John sailed on the *Maria Magdalena* to America, settling in the Grandville, Michigan, area.

Once in America, Kornelis began abusing Cornelia again. Her only consolation was that her in-laws lived nearby for protection. When in early 1850 her father-in-law died, her mother-in-law wanted to return to the Netherlands. Kornelis, having had enough of the tough life in the colony, wanted to return with her. He insisted that Cornelia and their now two children return with him. At the same time, in the spring of 1850, Cornelia’s own parents had immigrated, and Cornelia



First CRC, Grand Rapids, MI. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

realized that if she went back to the Netherlands with Kornelis, there would be no one left there to protect her from his cruelty. She decided to stay in the United States. In the 1850s, Michigan law gave the wife a legal divorce and the right to remarry if the husband failed to support her, or if he had abandoned her for two years. Kornelis sought a divorce, paid Cornelia the \$500 court-ordered support, and sailed back to the Netherlands. Cornelia moved in with her parents, who had settled in Grand Rapids. Still, there was a cloud over her ecclesiastical standing. A year later, in 1851, John De Young, thirty-three, asked Cornelia to marry him. The couple asked the pastor of the Grand Rapids congregation to perform the ceremony. “Not so fast,” said the church elders. They first wanted to ascertain “who left whom?” and decided to take the matter to Classis. At the April 1851 meeting of Classis Holland in Holland, Michigan, elder Frans Van Driele presented Cornelia’s case. After explaining the situation to Classis, he asked whether this marriage could be solemnized in the midst of the congregation.

After a good many different views had been expressed, Classis decided the following,

[t]hat, on the one hand, the woman, after having been reconciled to her husband, cannot be considered as being free from the marriage bond; that, however, mercy forbids us to command the wife to return, seeing she has had so great experience of her husband’s cruel and wick-

ed conduct. That since the government in this country does grant divorce under certain conditions, and also is prepared to legitimize a new marriage, therefore the Classis judges that it is its duty to acquiesce fearlessly and completely in this decision of the government of the land. However, as such a case is to some extent a matter for the individual conscience, and as it is the government that grants the divorce, it is, in the judgment of the Classis, more prudent to leave it to the magistrate to solemnize the new marriage since it is easier, and also the clear duty of the church to acquiesce in the action of the authorities in this case, but it remains always the duty and privilege of the church to refrain from herself having any part in doubtful cases.¹⁴

In other words, Cornelia, you may marry, but not in our church. You took your case to the court, now let the court finish the job. She did. On 25 March 1852, James Miller, Justice of the Peace in Grand Rapids, married John De Young and Cornelia van Farrow. But her struggles with the church were not yet over.

In 1857 John and Cornelia went to the council of the newly formed Grand Rapids CRC in order to have their first two children baptized. Council members remembered the story of Cornelia and her divorce and wondered if they were allowed to baptize the children of “such a woman.” They took the matter to the Christian Reformed Church Classical Assembly held in February 1858 in Grand Rapids. The answer was swift and cut to the core: “After having heard [the issue] the Assembly resolved to require them [Cornelia and her new husband] to separate, and if they remain together, to excommunicate them from the congregation.” Next how to deal with the two children was handled. The matter was resolved by having the grandfather, a former elder, present the children for baptism.

John and Cornelia decided not to separate, resulting in their excommunication from the CRC. The family is listed in the membership records of the Second Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, showing that, after their dismissal from the CRC, they found a faith community in the Reformed Church. Together they had seven children. Cornelia died at the relatively young age of fifty-two years on 16 November 1877, her youngest child only seven years old at the time. She rests in Oakhill Cemetery, Grand Rapids Township.¹⁵

The Case of Lammert Vander Kooi & Maartje Verduin

The terms “domestic violence” and “spousal abuse” were not coined until well into the twentieth century, but nevertheless abuse occurred, as we read in the above case, even among church members. The Vriesland CRC’s case of Maartje Verduin Vander Kooi was typical of how all-male church councils dealt with these matters, usually ruling against the wife. In the summer of 1868, twenty-six-year-old Frisian-born Lammert Vander Kooi and eighteen-year-old Dutch-born Maartje Verduin were married in the small Chris-

ther, and in order to distance herself even further from Lammert, she moved to Grand Rapids. She may have worked there as a domestic like so many young women did at the time. Relieved to be rid of the problem, the Vriesland council sent her papers on to the Grand Rapids church to have it deal with the situation. But Maartje’s stay in Grand Rapids was short-lived. Having been married, even for a short while, she was pregnant and, with working in Grand Rapids no longer an option, she returned home to her folks, where her daughter was born in 1869. It appears that Lammert made an attempt at reconciliation when Rev. Vander Werp was asked to mediate.¹⁶ But to no avail, as he reported later to the Classical Assembly. Neither Maartje nor the father could be persuaded that she should return to Lammert, and hence the church ruled that Maartje be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline. But that was not enough for Lammert. He began to stalk her, behavior that led Marinus to bring suit against him in a civil court. Vriesland CRC asked the CRC General Assembly what measures to take with Verduin about this.¹⁷ It was decided to deal with him then according to the Church Order. Going to a civil court was not appreciated in the CRC hierarchy, even though Verduin stated that Vander Kooi had treated him and his family badly and unfairly. Because there is no mention of the affair in the minutes for the next several years, it is unclear whether any disciplinary action was taken against Maartje. What is conspicuous is the absence of any church involvement by Marinus Verduin during these years. Whereas before he served regularly as a deacon, volunteered actively to do work for the church, paid his share in ministerial shares, etc., his name disappears until 1878, when it comes to the attention of the council that Maartje had remarried. She had gained a civil divorce in 1878 and married Cornelis Kosten, six years her junior. The council was of the opinion that Maartje’s divorce was unbiblical since no adultery had taken place and that now, living with another man, she was living in sin. Because Maartje and her new husband lived with the Verduins, the church decided to address all the issues in one session, that is, Marinus’s neglect of church attendance and Maartje’s unwillingness to reconcile with Lammert. The case went to the CRC General Assembly which judged that Maartje should be excommunicated and that Lammert be given “some time.”¹⁸ Time for



Vriesland CRC, Vriesland, MI. Image courtesy of Ralph Haan.

tian Reformed Church of Vriesland, Michigan, by Rev. Willem Frieling. Their honeymoon did not last long. On 28 August 1868, Lammert brought a complaint against his wife and his in-laws to the council of the Vriesland CRC. He complained that his wife had left him and taken refuge with her parents. Council, hearing only his side, decided that Maartje had no “scriptural grounds,” i.e., adultery, to leave Lammert, and a committee was formed to visit her and bring her to reason. That proved easier said than done. Maartje was the only daughter of deacon Marinus Verduin—she had one younger brother—and she was the apple of her father’s eye. Why she fled was never fully explained but problematic enough for the Verduins to side with their daughter. Council’s advice to Maartje that she return to her husband neither sat well with her nor with her fa-

what is not stated. Perhaps to acknowledge his part in the separation. For the time being, Lammert was spared excommunication. But then he did a foolish thing—he was found working on Sundays, thereby transgressing the 4th Commandment, and was summarily excommunicated. By these actions two sheep were herded out of the fold.

Perhaps being married as a divorcee carried with it too much of a stigma in the predominantly CRC community, for shortly after the marriage Maartje and Cor-

nelis moved to Zutphen, later to Grant, Michigan, where their four children were born, and in 1910 they were living even farther north, in Sweetwater Township, Lake County. Lammert Vander Kooi did not remarry.¹⁹ We will never know what happened between those two, but Maartje was spooked enough not to have anything more to do with him and was willing to suffer the disgrace of a divorce rather than to return to him. She died in 1933 in Lake Township, Michigan.²⁰

The Case of Jacobus Vinke & Grietje Kapinga

The Niekerk, Michigan, CRC also had a dilemma in dealing with the case of Jacobus Vinke and Grietje Kapinga. It brought the case to the CRC Classical Assembly of August 1870, and it was not resolved until 30 May 1879.²⁰

Grietje Kapinga already had several strikes against her when she became Jacobus Vinke's housekeeper. Two illegitimate children, and a failed marriage, were not exactly recommendations for membership in the church. Thus, the Niekerk council asked how to deal with the member, Jacobus Vinke, who was being censured for offensive behavior. It was suggested to continue with censure if he remained resolute. What was the nature of Vinke's offensive behavior? Apparently, he had engaged a housekeeper with a shady reputation—Grietje Kapinga.

Grietje, from Ulrum, province of Groningen, had married Matthias Ophoven on 13 August 1837 in Hoorn, a port city in the province of Noord Holland; the bride was twenty-six, the groom twenty-nine. Matthias acknowledged two children at the time of the marriage, meaning that Grietje had given birth to two out-of-wedlock children, either his or someone else's. His occupation of skipper meant repeated times of separation. At some time in their relationship, Grietje left him and emigrated to America. There are no records of any Ophovens emigrating, but Grietje's brother Albert had emigrated in 1848 and had settled in the Niekerk area, where Grietje joined him. The fact that she kept her maiden name in the United States Federal Census

(USFC) is not so strange, given that Dutch married women were used to stating their maiden names for the records.

Jacobus Vinke was born in 1815 in Baarland, in the province of Zeeland. He emigrated in 1847 with his first wife, Willemina Mangs. After her death, he married Neeltje Schilling in 1856, and when Neeltje passed away as well, he hired Grietje to be his housekeeper and to look after his young daughter, Mina. As his housekeeper, Grietje lived in the same house as Jacobus and Mina. This arrangement upset the church elders, who reminded him that she was a married woman who had left her husband, albeit years ago. Vinke, in a bind, said he was willing to marry Grietje if that would satisfy council. The council then proposed to send a letter to the Netherlands to gain insight into her previous marital situation, after which it would refer the matter to the Classical Assembly. In the meantime, to avoid scandal and to protect the reputation of the church, the council advised Grietje to sleep elsewhere. In the 1870 USFC she is listed as Grietje Kapinga, housekeeper; however, by the 1880 census she is listed as Vinke's housewife. Subsequently, the Niekerk council disciplined Vinke for marrying her, because, in its opinion, by doing so he was living in sin. This meant that from its correspondence with the Netherlands the council had determined that Grietje had not received a biblical divorce. Two more sheep were put outside the fold. Grietje died in 1891 and is buried in the Pilgrim Home Cemetery as Mrs. Kapinga Vinke.²¹

The Case of Harm Breuker & Geesje Kuipers

Running simultaneously with the case of Maartje Verduin in the Vriesland CRC minutes is the case of Geesje Kuipers. Geesje's request to have her son baptized was dead on arrival at the council meeting of the Vriesland CRC on 28 April 1870. Geesje had divorced her husband and therefore was ineligible to have her child baptized. What had forced Geesje to take the drastic measures of divorce—a most sinful act—after only two years of marriage? Divorce was so discounted as a valid reason to end a marriage that the CRC did not take up the subject of divorce of its members until a century later at the 1973 Synod. But divorce, as we shall see, was not the only reason for Geesje's ouster from the church.

Geesje was born in 1842 in Laar, Germany, the middle child of Hendrik Ramaker and Jenne Kuipers. Ramaker died before 1850, and subsequently his widow, Jenne, married Harm Breuker.²² Breuker, who had not been married previously, adopted Jenne's three children, Gerrit, Gesina, and Geesje. The family immigrated to America in 1866 and settled in the Overisel Township of Allegan County, Michigan. Geesje, now twenty-four, found work as a housekeeper for Gerrit Jan Hofman, a widower with three children, aged seven, ten, and eleven.²³ Hofman and Geesje married in December 1867, and in October 1868 their child, Hendrik, was born. But before Hendrik was even baptized in the Overisel Reformed Church, Geesje fled with her son to her mother and stepfather, who lived in the Vriesland area. She joined the Vriesland CRC in 1870, where her stepfather, Harm Breuker, was a member, but when Geesje asked to have her baby baptized, she was denied the sacrament. The council would approve the baptism only if the grandparents would present the child. Geesje continued living with her mother and step-father. Sometime between her moving in with them and 1877, Geesje's mother died, leaving Geesje and her son living with her stepfather.

The 15 October 1878 minutes of the Vriesland CRC

(Art. 5) record that council was informed that Harm Breuker had married his step-daughter. Council advised the couple to refrain from the Lord's Supper until it could seek the advice of Classis.²⁴ Also, a committee was sent to reprimand them for their unlawful marriage. At the 21 November 1878 council meeting (Art. 3), the committee reported that Harm Breuker and his wife had shown no remorse; they were again warned, and the congregation was informed. At the 14 January 1879 (Art. 3) meeting, the council presented the problem of their "improper lifestyle" to Classis, which ruled that Harm Breuker and his wife were to be kept under censure.²⁵ They are referred to twice more in the Vriesland CRC minutes. The 10 March 1879 entry (Art. 4) reads: "No action has been taken as yet against H. Breuker and his wife." The couple had been visited by Rev. Hemkes and elder P. Karsten, who reported that "the couple feels guilty about the fact that they had a premarital relationship, but that they do not see anything wrong with their marriage." They also stated their desire to stay in the congregation. It was decided to let the matter rest until the next Classis meeting, which recommended that Harm Breuker and his wife were to be removed from the congregation by way of the Form for Excommunication."²⁶

Why would the thirty-five-year-old Geesje marry her sixty-four-year-old step-father? Apparently Geesje had become pregnant, and the prudent thing to do was to marry the father. On 9 July 1878, Harm and Geesje were married in Holland, Michigan, by the Justice of the Peace. Their son Hendrik was born on 23 November 1878.²⁷ The CRC did not look kindly on these events, and the membership records indicate that Harm Breuker allowed his membership to lapse without transferring to another church. Perhaps he weighed the joy of having a son in his old age over against his church membership. He died in July 1896. Geesje died in Hamilton, Michigan, in October 1913.²⁸

The Case of Hendrik Lippenga & Zwaantje Suikerbakker

Lastly, a case that did not make it in its initial phase to the council meeting of First CRC in Muskegon for adjudication. On 1 December 1870, Hendrik Lippenga placed the following ad in *De Wachter*:

Attention: Eight weeks ago my wife, Zwaantje, nee Suikerbakker, left me and took with her a small black and white dog that responds to the name Pluut. At the same time, Hermanus Broekmeijer, of whom it is rumored to have an intimate relationship with Zwaantje, also left from here. Neither can speak English at all, or very little. The public is warned not to give her any money or assistance to my credit as I will not pay any debt incurred by her. In fact, anyone knowing of her whereabouts is advised to let me know so that she may return home.²⁹

Zwaantje Suikerbakker was born on Friday the 13th of January 1843 in Baflo, Groningen, the Netherlands. For the superstitious, this may not have been an auspicious day to be born. She worked as a domestic and at age twenty she delivered a child out of wedlock. The child died four months later.³⁰ She married Hendrik Lippenga on Thursday 22 June 1865 in Baflo. A son was born to them three months later in September, but

he died before the year was out.³¹ The couple immigrated in 1867 and settled in Muskegon, where they joined the RCA. But apparently all was not well, and Zwaantje left her husband. There were no children involved, only a dog.

Lippenga was not a member of First Muskegon CRC, but Hermanus (Manus) Broekemeijer was. In the minutes of First Muskegon of 4 October 1870, he is cautioned that his objectionable behavior was causing a disturbance in the congregation and that a committee would be sent to him to inform him that he would be barred from communion.³² Since Manus was a member of the CRC, it made sense that Lippenga put the notice in *De Wachter*, the CRC periodical.

The spurned husband soon found comfort in the arms of the ten-year-younger Matientje/Matilda Van Neuren, whom he married in 1871; they stayed married for over forty years until death parted them. However, for divorcing his first wife, he was denied full membership for the remainder of his life in the Vriesland Reformed Church.³³ What happened to Zwaantje and Manus remains a mystery.³⁴

What may seem as severe judgment calls in the above cases must be seen in the light of the Reformed church councils' desire to keep the church pure, as set forth by the Reformation church fathers and codified at the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619).³⁴ The three signs of a true church were faithful preaching of the Word, faithful administration of the sacraments, and faithful exercise of discipline. By adhering to these guidelines and disciplining the wayward member, the Reformation cast a long shadow over the Reformed churches in America. ☞

Endnotes

1. RCA: Reformed Church in America; CRC: Christian Reformed Church.
2. The Christian Seceder Church in the Netherlands is the parent denomination of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. *Handelingen en Verslagen van de Algemene Synoden van de Christelijk Afgescheidene Gereformeerde Kerk* (1836-1869) (Utrecht, Den Hertog, 1884), 36. (Fifth session, Art. 36.). The reason for couples not marrying in a church was due in part to the scarcity of clergy in the newly formed denomination, and Synod decided that in the case of a congregation being without a pastor, an elder be allowed to officiate. Other questions included, may cousins marry, may a person marry a person belonging to another denomination, may a man marry the sister of his deceased wife, etc.
4. Dutch immigrants arriving in 1847 and 1848 with the Revs. Van Raalte, Vander Meulen, and Ypma had established congregations in their various settlements, and these men with several elders gathered to form Classis Holland, which would join the Reformed Church in America in 1850. A classis in the Reformed tradition is a group of area churches that meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern.
5. *Classis Holland Minutes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids Printing Co. 1943), 23 April 1848, Arts. 5 (2) and 7.
6. *Ibid.* Art. 11.
7. NIV Lev. 18:16: Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother. Lev. 20:21: 'If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless.
8. Swenna Harger and Loren Lemmen, *The County of Bentheim and Her Emigrants to North America* (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 2013), 77.
9. Since all information in this article has been published previously and is available in public records, the names have not been changed.
10. *Classis Holland Minutes*, 27 Sept. 1848, Art. 7.
11. Harger and Lemmen, *The County of Bentheim*, 78.
12. *Classis Holland Minutes*, *Ibid.* 30 April 1851, Art. 6.
13. By 1811 the Dutch Government had adopted a Civil Registry for births, deaths, and marriages, and only

those marriages performed before a civil magistrate were considered legally binding. Couples who desired a religious ceremony were allowed to do so only after the civil rite. This law reduced solemnization of marriages in church to such a degree that in one municipality only 5 out of 15 marriages were solemnized in church. The Christian Seceders, wanting to restore the church ceremony, declared at its first (1836) Synod, that in such a highly important matter, it was of utmost importance to call on the name of the Lord and to begin the marriage in His Name.

14. *Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858*, 47 (30 April 1851, Art. 6).
15. All information on the Kornelis van Farowe and Cornelia Wagemaker case can be found on: www.Zeeuwengezocht.nl, Kent County Marriages, Kent County Cemetery Records, and the United States Federal Census, and *Minutes of the Christian Reformed Church Classical Assembly 1857-1870, General Assembly 1867-1879 and Synodical Assembly 1880* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2013), xxv, 6, 9, 27, 571, 583.
16. *Ibid.*, 217.
17. *Minutes of the Christian Reformed Church Classical Assembly 1857-1870, General Assembly 1867-1879 and Synodical Assembly 1880* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 217.
18. *Ibid.*, meeting held in Vriesland, Michigan, 28 and 29 April 1869, Art. 11.
19. All information on the Vander Kooi – Verduin case can be found in the Vriesland CRC Minutes; the Michigan Department of Health, www.Ancestry.com, www.familysearch.org; and in *Minutes of the Christian Reformed Church Classical Assembly 1857-1870, General Assembly 1867-1879 and Synodical Assembly 1880* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 203, 217, 222, 565, 578.
20. *CRC Classical Assembly Minutes* 10 and 11 Aug. 1870, Art. 18; Niekerk CRC Minutes 30 May 1879; Art. 3.
21. All information on the Vinke – Kapinga case can be found in *Minutes of the Christian Reformed Church Classical Assembly 1857-1870, General Assembly 1867-1879 and Synodical Assembly 1880*, Dutch in America, www.wiewaswie.nl, Pillar CRC membership records, and the United States Federal Census.
22. <https://www.genealogieonline.nl/en/stamboom-visscher/115736.php>

23. Hofman's first wife, Geertrui Veneklaasen Hofman, died in 1865.
24. At the 4 Nov. 1878 council meeting (Art. 4) a committee consisting of P. Karsten and Rev. G. Hemkes were sent to the couple to reprimand them for their unlawful marriage. Why unlawful? They were not related by blood, but because Geesje had not received a divorce on biblical grounds, i.e. adultery.
25. Vriesland Minutes, 20 Feb. 1879, Art. 2.
26. CRC Holland Classis Minutes, 3 July 1879, Art. 4.
27. Hendrik Breuker died on 20 Sept. 1918, still single. In 1917 he was working for M. Brandt as farmhand at R.R. 1 Hamilton, Ontario. His nearest relative was his step-brother John Hofman.
28. Vriesland CRC Membership Records 1857-1893; Geesje was excommunicated because of her marriage to her step-father.
29. *Sedert acht weken heeft mijne huisvrouw Zwaantje geboren Suikerbakker mij verlaten met haar hebbende een zwart-bont hondje dat luistert naar den naam van Pluut. Tegerlijkertijd is van deze plaats vertrokken Hermanus Broekenmeijer met wien zij volgens algemeen gerucht in naauwe betrekking verkeerde. Beide kunnen weinig of geen Engelsch spreken. Ieder wordt gewaarschuwt geen geld of goed op mijne rekening aan haar te geven daar ik niet voor de betaling zal staan. Integendeel wordt aan ieder vriendelijk verzocht die van haar verblijf mogt weten dit aan mij bekend te willen maken opdat zij terug kan keeren.* Hendrik Lippenga, Muskegon Mich. 1 Dec. 1870.
30. Antje was born 11 Jan. 1863 and died 2 May 1863.
31. Evert was born 23 Sept. 1865 and died 7 Dec. 1865.
32. Art. 10, *Is voortgebracht een bezwaar tegen Manus Broekemeijer zijn wandel en om de Schijn des kwaads hem het nachtmaal ontzegd de wyl de gemeente door zijn wandel gestoord is en dat zulks hem door de commissie schriftelijk of mondelijks zal aangekondigt worden.*
33. Vriesland Reformed Church Members, 1879-1947; Death notations, 3 July 1910.
34. Herman H. Kuyper, editor. *De Post-acta of Nahandelingen van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht in 1618 en 1619 gehouden* (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, 1899) 179.

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