Origins

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Volume XXXVII • Number 1 • 2019

Historical Magazine of The Archives

Calvin College and
Calvin Theological Seminary
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546
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Origins is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of The Archives. These goals include the gathering, organization, and study of historical materials produced by the day-to-day activities of the Christian Reformed Church, its institutions, communities, and people.

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Cover photo:
Young Vande Riet family in Downs, Kansas, in 1891. Image courtesy of LeRoy Stegink.



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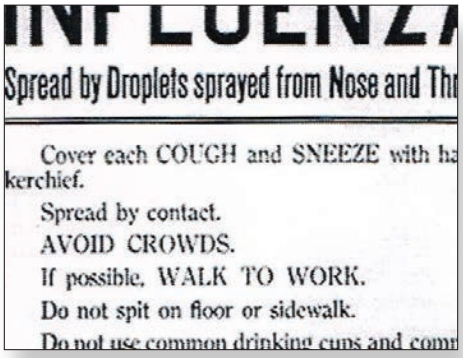
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From the editor

At the 2017 Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS) conference, the subject of *Origins* came up in a discussion. An attendee from Nebraska remarked that the story of Dutch settlers in Nebraska has been woefully neglected in the magazine. Later, checking out her observation, I found that she was correct. Of all the Midwestern states covered by *Origins* articles, Nebraska and Kansas were left out—until now. Dr. James Schaap, retired professor of English at Dordt College and contributing editor of *Origins*, has stepped up to the plate and filled in this oversight. In his article "The Dutch of Lancaster County, Nebraska," he sketches a vivid picture of life on the American Plains.

Hugging the southern border of Nebraska is the county of Smith in the state of Kansas, where Gertrude Vande Riet De Waard kept a diary covering the years 1938 to 1943—critical years that covered the Dust Bowl and Depression, as well as the start of World War II.

Joyce Vander Lugt adds to our stories set in the American Plains with her delightful account of a visit by a newlywed bride to her in-laws in South Dakota in the early 1930s.

When fiction authors are asked where they get their ideas, they usually answer "from recent or old news." Then, using their imaginations, they can spin these events any which way they like. Writers of history also zero in on real events, but they have to actively research the story and present it as it actually happened, or as best as they can reconstruct it. Writers of history, therefore, are very dependent on actual witnesses to the events. Diaries and letters, newspaper accounts, court records, and photos of the time are all a great help to present as actual an account as can be reconstructed many years after the fact.

The Calvin College Archives is fortunate to have many such sources. Gertrude Vande Riet's diary is an example. Dr. John Timmerman's thorough analysis of the diary is on page 14. Through his study of the time, the area, and the beliefs of the people in the diary, we gain a greater appreciation of life in solid Christian Reformed and Reformed communities during exceptionally hard times in our nation's history. Jan Harmen te Selle's timely letters, used in the Nebraska article, are safely archived in the Dutch Immigrant Papers Collection. If you are interested in searching this collection for possible family names, go to: *http://www.calvin.edu/hh/letters/letters_a.htm.*

Again, comparing fiction to history, E. L. Doctorow (1931–2015) remarked, "The historian will tell you what happened. The novelist will tell you what it felt like." In Gertrude Vande Riet's diary we find out not only what happened but also what

it felt like. The same may be said of the Vander Lugt story. One reads the emotions between the lines. Add to that the remarkable recounting of the Spanish flu ravaging Dutch settlements in late 1918 and early 1919 (one hundred years ago this spring) by Mary Risseeuw, and you sense the emotions right under the surface of the facts.

The stories in this issue also reflect how members of the CRC and RCA are related to each other. Joyce Vander Lugt mentions her grandfather, Rev. C. De Leeuw, who is also referred to in Mary Risseeuw's article on the Spanish flu. This is one of the reasons I have listed other names that were mentioned in the Vande Riet diary in the footnotes, as well as the school children's names in the Firth, Nebraska, school. It has happened before that an *Origins* reader has recognized a name in an article and appreciated the story even more because of it.

Finally, we include an article on the Dutch Immigrant/International Society—a remarkable endeavor by post WWII immigrants to keep the newly-arrived immigrants' ties to the Netherlands alive, without which, I am sure, many would have succumbed to homesickness.

Staffing Change

William Katerberg, Professor of History and Associate Dean for Partnerships and Programs, has been appointed part-time interim curator of Heritage Hall. Because the Archives is jointly funded by Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed denomination, the leaders of all three entities have endorsed Dr. Katerberg's interim appointment. He has served as a department chair for the History Department and held a variety of other administrative positions at the college. He edited an historical journal for five years and has helped develop ideas for public history and digital humanities at Calvin. These experiences speak to his abilities to jump into new situations and quickly be an effective team builder and collaborator. The Archive's staff welcomes Dr. Katerberg.

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

The Dutch of Lancaster County, Nebraska

James C. Schaap

One of the ethnic characteristics most notable in nineteenth-century Dutch-American immigrant people is the clannishness that prompted folks from Dutch hamlets throughout the Netherlands to leave Holland in the company of neighbors or family, then stay together when they arrived in the States.[1] Still today, regions and even municipalities throughout North America are known for their "Dutch-ness," even though those neighborhoods have not seen a Dutch immigrant in well over a half century. The then recently-arrived immigrants who left colonies in Michigan, Iowa, and Wisconsin within twenty years of immigrating, and who then headed west for the Great Plains in covered wagons, often knew each other as well.

While some of those who set up homesteads in and around Lancaster County, Nebraska, came from the same towns and townships, others who came—some directly from the Netherlands—were undoubtedly attracted by an ethnic community where like-minded people worshiped the same God in the same ways and knew the blessings of *boerekool* (kale and potatoes mash) and *karnemelse pap* (buttermilk porridge). They came to the wilds of Nebraska because there were already other Dutch there.

But someone had to be first. In Lancaster County, first to arrive was Mr. Henry Brethouwer, who, in 1868, disposed of the twenty acres of wooded Wisconsin land he owned (he'd come to America a decade earlier), sold most of what he and his family had, save beds and buggy, and set out West.[2] Others followed soon enough—so many of his lakeshore neighbors, in fact, that today's Oostburg First Reformed Church could well think of what would eventually become the Holland Reformed Church in Holland, Nebraska, as a daughter church.

Mr. Brethouwer's younger brother, Chris, came west a year later, along with families named Meinen and



Holland, Nebraska, Reformed Church. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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South Pass Township in Lancaster County. Image courtesy of Elaine Obbink Zimmerman.

Bykerk.[3] The railroad brought them from Wisconsin to the eastern banks of the Missouri River at Nebraska City, from which the trip west to Lancaster County took four days. For the most part penniless, the 1869 group lived on what wild game they could hunt along the way. As did many thousands of others moving west, they found crossing over the steep banks of slow-moving prairie rivers difficult, even dangerous, on the makeshift bridges they had to build themselves. When they arrived, all four families moved temporarily into Henry Brethouwer's year-old dugout, the only roof on the horizon.

A year later, the Wisner and Port families left the Wisconsin lakeshore aboard the train that took them even farther west, all the way to Lincoln, Nebraska. They stayed in Lincoln for some time before securing homesteading claims thirty miles south, adjacent to the other Hollanders in South Pass Precinct. Both families, like many others, eventually returned to the East, fatigued by what the prairie took from them. But many stayed.

Worth noting here is that the immigrant families who left the Wisconsin lakeshore did so clearly for economic motives, a slightly different motivation than the many hundreds who stayed behind in Wisconsin, Michigan, and central Iowa, where fortress communities were being established.[4] The Dutch who came to Nebraska were homesteaders, literally and legally, a newer breed of immigrant. They wanted a piece of the promised new land out West to attain the life they believed America offered to those who walked in and then out of Ellis Island. Their western trek made them more "American" than even they might have guessed, more part of the distinct worldview of "Manifest Destiny."[5] Dutch in speech and manners and in their clannishness, they were, on the basis of their dreams of new life in the West, verifiably American.

To hundreds of them—and to tens of thousands of Americans and almost as many European immigrants—the expansive grassland state of Nebraska, admitted to statehood just two years after the end of the Civil War, was blessed with handsome, productive land covering a generous landscape that, from the top of any hill or swell, seemed to expand into forever. In just ten years, from 1860 to 1870, 72,000 people pulled up stakes somewhere east and came to the Nebraska grasslands. State population increased from 28,000 to 122,000.

While not all the Dutch settlers hailed from the western shore of Lake Michigan, two considerations likely prompted the Wisconsin folks to head to the plains. First, readying the ground for farming in Wisconsin meant clearing the lakeshore woodlands—exhausting and even consuming work that could not be accomplished by one person.[6] That Nebraska grasslands had no trees prompted some to pull up stakes and move west in the years immediately following the Civil War. A treeless frontier looked more promising.

Second, although Van Hinte suggests that the Wisconsin Dutch were less affluent than the residents of Scholte's Pella, Iowa, they may well have been more financially able than many West Michigan Hollanders, who had suffered so greatly during their first years in America. In Wisconsin in the 1840s, the immigrant Dutch experienced significant poverty, but most were able to move into already constructed log homes along the lakeshore. Furthermore, good markets for their produce were convenient and local, in Sheboygan and Milwaukee, not all that far away. Some suggest that because economic stability came more quickly to the Wisconsin Dutch than it did to their relatives on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, the Wisconsinites were freed more quickly to look west, as did so many others.

Gerald De Jong somewhat facetiously speculates that immigrants from the Great Lakes regions may well have listened to the praise heaped on the Great Plains by Hayden Carruth, a South Dakota writer: "The Prairie is the world in its calm, serene, beautiful old age, meditative, unhurried, unafraid, approaching Nirvana. . . . The Prairie is but the desert watered, and as hath been said, 'The

Desert is of God, and in the desert no man may deny Him.'"[7] Spring and early summer featured native flowers whose colors turned the world kaleidoscopic.

What they may not have realized is that the lack of trees would create different kinds of problems. In June of 1870, Harmen te Selle, a resident of the Wisconsin colony writing to his older brother in the Netherlands, described dramatic events happening within his own family. "Brother J. H. [Jan Hendrick] is no longer here," he tells his brother. "He went at least 500 miles farther west to the state of Nebraska; there the land is cheap."[8]

He lists the price—"80 acres for $100"—but remarks that there is no wood. Lack thereof requires wholly different home construction: "When they first arrive, they must build a house with sod, or pieces of turf," he explains to his brother in Holland. "Wall boards are very costly there, and they have to drive 13 hours to get them." From brother Harmen's vantage point, a move to the flatland prairie may well have looked more challenging than it was worth: "It is an entire wilderness, so they say." (Just a few years later, Harmen would move to Nebraska himself.)

Nebraska's temperature extremes were also likely unforeseen. Both dire cold and crippling heat took a toll on the pioneers. When Gerrit Heusinkvelt, another Wisconsinite, was finally wealthy enough to build a cabin beside the dugout he had created from the dirt, it was only one room, plus a loft where his children could sleep. One of his sons remembered waking up in wretched cold because the insulation in that frame house was nonexistent. It had been warmer within the heavy earthen walls of the dugout.

Summer heat on the prairie was like nothing most of the settlers had ever experienced, no matter where they had once lived. For the Wisconsinites, no cool lake breeze spread over the land come nightfall. Temperatures were oppressive. Frontier life offered fully as many catastrophes as it did possibilities.



Nieveen family in covered wagon in Nebraska. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

One need only leaf through the trials of Gerrit Heusinkvelt and his wife, Johanna (Westendorp), to sense their struggles on the untrammeled plains.[9] The Heusinkvelts were born in Aalten, the Netherlands, where Gerrit made his living tying knots in ripped fishing nets before he left for America with his wife and young son. In Wisconsin, he worked for two years before heading west in 1868.

When he arrived in Lancaster County, all kinds of stone piles already existed on the land in front of him, each of them marking claims others had already set out. So he kept going, continuing west, until those telling stone piles no longer appeared. Ten miles west of the heart of the Dutch colony, he found open space. The next morning, he walked twenty-five miles to Lincoln to register that land as his, then walked those same twenty-five miles back to the colony.

Then, farther west, he dug out a place for his family in the land he wanted. In the colony, people were neighborly enough to put him up while he built a dugout, but his claim was ten miles away. Every day he walked. There and back. Every day. Twenty miles.

Just a half-dozen years after the Homestead Act in 1862 had passed, and not more than thirty miles from the very first applicant to sign up at Beatrice, Nebraska, Heusinkvelt was granted a patent on the eighty-acre plot of ground he had chosen.[10]

They were not far from a creek, but, as with so much of the region, the world before them seemed breathlessly open. There were no trees, so Heusinkvelt dug himself and his family in, literally, as had every other Hollander in the region. Their son, John Garret, who was four when they came west in a covered wagon, lived for his first six years in the dwelling Heusinkvelt dug for his family in good Nebraska earth, with mud for a floor and a roof of poles, brush, and dirt. The Heusinkvelts had but one window and one door, so the place was so dark inside that the boy cried the first time he was carried in. "They lived on corn meal and prairie chickens," the family genealogy claims, "and made coffee from dried rye."[11]

Making one's way in the new land

A Prairie Holocaust

"*Sunday, October 15, we went to church. The wind was then blowing wildly, but this became worse further along in the day. When we got out of church, we saw smoke in the distance, because the prairie was on fire.*"

It is November, 1871, and Harmen Jan te Selle, an immigrant homesteader from Lancaster County, Nebraska, is writing home, to the old country from a sod house amid grasslands his family could not have imagined, a roiling sea of grass he was trying to call home.

"When we got out of church," he writes, "*we saw the fire—the kind of fire that 'can burn for miles away.*"
And then the story:

"*Nikolaas VanderVelde saw that the fire was not far from his house. He was in church with his wife and two children. Three children were at home; a girl of eleven or twelve years, one of eight and the other of five or six. So, he ran as quickly as he could to reach home, but what did he see? His house lay entirely in ashes.*"

It was a holocaust. Things burned for miles around. "*High standing grain and 4 pigs were all burned, but not the worst*," te Selle writes. "*He* [VanderVelde] *saw in the distance something white lying on the ground, thinking it was a calf. But when he got closer, he saw it was his oldest girl lying burned on the ground, and upon investigation, the other two were in the house, entirely burned. Thus, a tragic situation for that man*."

As near as I can tell by old maps and surveys, this is the eighty acres Nikolaas VanderVelde long ago called his own, where he put up his soddie or where, with neighbors, he nailed together a one-room frame palace. Somewhere here, he and his wife and five children wanted to put down roots, following the way west to opportunity.

A line of cottonwoods lines the draw, trees that would not have been there then. And raging prairie fires are long gone. Here in Lancaster County, where once three girls died in a holocaust of flame, a repetition of that tragedy is unlikely.

VanderVelde's land is off the beaten path. There's no historical marker, no sign, no notice of that horrifying long-ago moment in community history, the day in 1871 when an immigrant farmer and his wife, strangers in a strange land, walked out of church and into their own kind of hell. There were no cemeteries. Who knows where the girls are buried?

I stopped in town at the church that grew out of the immigrant settlement all around, a handsome building in a small town that, like many Great Plains hamlets, looked to need some support to be able to hang on.

But the church looks to be doing well. Not long ago they celebrated their centennial, but no one remembered the prairie fire that killed three young women one hundred and fifty years earlier. There was no church back then. When the VanderVeldes walked out of church that morning, *church* was a neighbor's sod house.

For years, people could not—and would not—forget the prairie fire that consumed so much all around and killed three VanderVelde girls, a story told in whispers from one generation to another until, I suppose, it simply was forgotten. Like so many others, VanderVelde sold that eighty acres to neighbors and left, living up to his name's meaning—*vandevelde*: "from the fields."

I thought I'd go find the land where those the girls died in that hellish prairie fire. The story stuck with me with such tenacity that I figured I owed that much at least—I needed to pay my respects.

A friend of mine who's Cherokee insists that if you sit somewhere close to where such things happened—things like death in a prairie fire on a clear Sabbath morning—if you sit and look and listen long enough, you'll hear the voices in the wind.

There was a time I thought that was silly.

Things could not have been more different out there on the prairie when I tried to find his land. It was cold and snowy, dreary and January gray. There is a tree line, and behind it a corn field. The sea of grass in Lancaster County is no longer. The VanderVeldes and the homestead community that once existed are long gone.

But still today, even in the cold, if you wait and listen, it's as my friend says: you may just hear voices in the wind.

required endless work, often, initially at least, in someone else's employ, in order to make enough money to live and attempt to establish a farm. Letters from those earliest pioneers often remark about how much money a hired man could make out there in Nebraska; that information was of great interest to those who were considering coming West. Getting on your feet economically was a struggle, especially since living quarters were so difficult and, for most people, more taxing than the life they had experienced back East—those log cabins, in retrospect, having been a luxury.

The weather, like the rainfall, was ever fickle. Good years meant bounty, but annual rainfall could vary drastically. Bad years—with or without horrifying hosts of grasshoppers—brought immense desolation. When they came, the hoppers ate everything, even pitchfork handles. What's worse, they were far too frequent guests.

By the 1870s, to most residents of

Lancaster County the native residents of the grasslands had already been displaced, considered more of a nuisance than a danger. Still, there was always reason to fear an Indian attack. Their music and dancing were unlike anything any Hollander had ever imagined, and all of them seemed to display a forwardness the immigrant Dutch found abhorrent: they would simply show up and insist on being fed, as well as partaking of much-beloved company. Frequently, the story goes, Johanna Heusinkvelt was afraid of them and even kept a club for defense. Her husband was often gone from home, out working for other neighbors and other farmers, sometimes at a distance. His absence intensified his family's fears.

A story told in those early years is illustrative of the precarious relationship between native peoples and white homesteaders. While a band of Indians—likely Otoes or Pawnees—were camped a half mile away at a creekside, Mrs. Heusinkvelt could not help but note that the family cow was giving no milk. She assumed Indians were taking it.

Her husband, determined to put a stop to their thievery, got up early one morning to get out to the pasture where their cow was kept. When he got there, what he saw surprised him—a fawn was the thief, not the Indians camped nearby.

In July of 1878, Harmen Jan te Selle, writing to his mother and brothers in the Netherlands, offered them a rough-hewn sketch in American history, including a commentary on the native people who only occasionally appeared in the neighborhood.[12] He calls them a "primitive people" and describes them as "copper-colored, or redskins they are mostly called." What he told his family in Holland could well have been the same description any other immigrant homesteader would have offered in the American West of the late nineteenth century. Indians, he states, "live off hunting, fishing, and stealing. But it will happen to them similar as to the Canaanites. They are removed by the whites."

The comparison to the Old Testament exodus is striking, but not unusual, but neither are te Selle's prejudices: native people, he maintained, "cannot be taught how to farm, and they don't even want to." The Christian faith, so important to the Dutch immigrants, was something he claimed simply beyond those "primitive people." "As far as religion is concerned, they are hopeless, because they are very hostile to the missionaries. Therefore, they just live in huts made of bark."

Those attitudes, prejudices held by most white pioneers, remained within the people for years after the First Nations had departed farther west or, like the Otoes, south to Indian Territory in what was to become the state of Oklahoma.

Miles and miles of looming open territory all around must have seemed gigantic, even scary. Covering huge distances was a requirement of life in Nebraska. Especially before the railroad came through, impoverished immigrants negotiated such distances the only way they could—by walking.

A man named Alco Vandertook, a good friend of *Dominee* Johannes Huizenga and of another man named Den Herder, was visiting Lancaster County in search of good land.[13] When Vandertook found railroad land he thought his two friends might like, he walked to the courthouse at Lincoln to make it his—*for* them (in their place, that is). The city of Lincoln was twenty-five miles north. He was so determined to get that land that he showed up at the surveyor's office at dawn.[14] Rev. Johannes Huizenga arrived in Nebraska from Amelia County, Virginia, in 1876, with a group of parishioners who had abandoned the failing colony started by Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte in 1868. He served the Holland Reformed Church for fifteen years, during which time the church grew to one hundred and ninety members.[15]



Polinder homestead in Lancaster County. Image courtesy of Marge Polinder Bos.



Rev. and Mrs. John Huizinga, pastor of the Reformed Church in Holland, Nebraska. Image courtesy of Jean Muste.

J. H. te Selle left Wisconsin to homestead Nebraska prairie, determined to open up the virgin soil beneath the deeply-rooted grasses that had grown there for centuries. Te Selle lacked a plow, however. Blessedly, his neighbor had one, a neighbor who farmed several miles away but claimed he would be happy to lend his implement out. But how to get it there? Te Selle had no choice, so he carried it, a whole breaking plow, on his back for the several miles that separated him from his neighbor.[16]

To invest as he wanted, one father and husband worked as a hired man, walked twenty miles on Monday morning to work, then didn't return until Saturday. But before he would return, he would pick up the groceries—flour, potatoes, and whatever else—and lug it all twenty miles back home to his wife and kids.

The Heusinkvelt family genealogy insists that because Gerrit wanted to save money on groceries he had determined that rather than walk to Lincoln, twenty-five miles away, where he thought prices were extravagant, he would hike all the way to Nebraska City, on the Missouri River, fifty miles east, and then come home with bags full of groceries.[17]

To receive good medical treatment required traveling significant, if not impossible, distances. In the early years of the colony, the only medical advice or treatment available was that gathered through the generations by untrained mothers and fathers. Pioneer families frequently had huge families; a dozen children was not particularly unusual. Without an available medical doctor, mothers who came to term carrying new babies were served by a pair of midwives, Mrs. Carlson and Mrs. Lokhorst.[18] Bade says that the register of the Holland Reformed Church between 1870 and 1886 includes three hundred and twenty-six new babies, almost all of them delivered by those two women.[19]

While the desire for land and self-sufficiency drove the Nebraska pioneers to try to put down roots in what seemed to them then as the far western edges of the country, the stubborn faith of the Dutch Calvinist immigrant people may have been a precipitating factor in the decision to go West. Some claim that dissatisfaction with the churches of Wisconsin was evident; some who left insisted that back there church members were moving ever farther along down the road toward becoming "American."[20]

Where the Nebraska Dutch stood on the ecclesiastical issues of their day is difficult to discern except by way of the causes of the troubles that arose. Those issues, it appears, were not dissimilar to those emerging elsewhere within Dutch settlements. At least some of the spats that developed into fights grew out of alterations in how the church handled funerals.

In the church at Holland, Nebraska, some of the eventual consternation may well have resulted from the death of a young man from consumption. The consistory determined that to prevent potential health problems the young man's body should remain outside the church sanctuary, even though bringing the deceased into the church for funerals had once been an accepted practice. When the consistory ruled that this time the body would stay outside, the boy's father changed plans then and there, making clear that his son's funeral would be held at the local Presbyterian church, where the consistory allowed the body a place in the sanctuary.

Whatever the tradition, the Dutch church consistory's ruling with regard to this particular death created some significant controversy. In order to deal with the dispute, the Holland consistory determined that from then on no bodies could be brought into the sanctuary. Case closed.

Bade goes on to relate a story that occurred soon after that funeral, after a prominent member of the community, a former sheriff, had died.[21] The pastor learned that a delegation of

county officials would be attending the funeral, most of whom were not members of the church. They would, without a doubt, simply assume that the sheriff's body would be placed, visibly, in front of the church for the funeral ceremony. On this occasion and for this particular funeral, the pastor determined that the casket would be brought to the front of the church, which violated the stated ruling the consistory had only recently, amid the furor, determined. What is more, the pastor allowed flowers atop the sheriff's casket, something that had been *verboten* for as long as the Holland church had conducted funerals.

That is not all. The pastor's grumbling critics discovered that the sheriff, who was an "American," was also a member of a local masonic lodge.

It would be some time before peace and order returned, and that only—as one might imagine—with the coming of the next pastor, *Dominee* Van Zyl, who not only quieted the funeral furor but also brought the church through turmoil attending to the end of the common cup being used at the Lord's Supper.[22] Of note here, however, is the fact that similar disputes made church life difficult for many pastors and parishioners across the country.

A Christian Reformed church was established in Firth in 1887, when fifteen families left the Reformed Church and, some say, termed themselves "seceders."[23] They too blamed the local churches for becoming far too dangerously "American." But making a financial go of it was difficult, so they reorganized to become the Firth Reformed Church. Today that lively fellowship, Living Life Reformed Church of Firth, Nebraska, is celebrating its centennial.

It's difficult to imagine what those early Dutch settlers to Lancaster County saw when they looked out across the land. Homesteading often meted out individual plots of only eighty acres. Today it would be impossible to make a living on that small a place. That means that fewer people lived in rural areas throughout the Great Plains and the Upper Midwest. Farmers today are all agribusiness men and women. Tree lines run hither and yon over the land, windbreaks that make it difficult to see the expanse that made so many think of Nebraska as an endless ocean of grass.



Firth School children. Image courtesy of Marge Polinder Bos.

Front Row 1. ?; 2. Dena Van Mersbergen Otter; 3. Julia Van Mersmergen Belms; 4. Clarence Vander Griend; 5. Martin Wijngaarden; 6. Maggie Abbink; 7. Kate Abbink; 8. Marie Van Mersbergen.

Middle Row 1. Hiltje Bakker; 2. Marie Vander Griend Meenk; 3. ?; 4. Bert Vander Griend; 5. Fred K. Polinder; 6. J. Bakker; 7. Gerrit Abbink; 8. Minnie Abbink; 9. ?; 10. Bill Vander Griend; 11. Bert Abbink.

Back Row 1. Nancy Z. De Boer; 2. Bill Bakker; 3. Tone Bakker; 4. F. Vander Griend; 5. Rev. Breen; 6. Rev. Wijngaarden; 7. Hessel Bakker; 8. Hank Bakker; 9. ?; 10. Martha Abbink.

If there is poverty, it certainly is not amply visible. For the most part, wooden barns are either going or long gone from the land. Some old houses remain, but just as noticeable are dozens and dozens of new homes on acreages in the country.

Where life itself seems precarious is in the towns in rural areas, where often Main Street businesses have long ago boarded up windows and left. If poverty is visible anywhere, it seems to be located in rundown village housing. Many small towns of the region do not look like inviting places to live.

Holland, Nebraska, is, at best, a bedroom community, and Firth, its bigger neighbor to the south (population fewer than five hundred), appears to be trying to hold on to something of what it was when transportation and communication had not robbed it of so much of its activity and enterprise.

Successful farmers abound in Lancaster County. Many of them, I'm sure, still have Dutch names or can

Brieven Boven Water—Salvaged Sea Letters

She introduced herself as being from Dutch television when she called from the Netherlands. She was the showrunner for a popular TV program. "You heard of it maybe? *Brieven Boven Water*," she said, as though this might spark familiarity. They reach into old letters, she told me, letters carried by merchant ships to and from the Netherlands—ships that, for whatever reason, never made it to their destinations. Nor did the letters.

Sounded fascinating, as did the show. And she was fun too, full of joy. The letters they were working with, she said, had shown up in an archive, having never reached their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century destinations.

The show's narrative line was as simple as it was dramatic: find a descendant of the letter writer, explain the circumstances of the old letter and the reason it was not delivered, and then try to find a descendant of the addressee, someone who had left for America or South Africa or Indonesia to some place else on the globe. Then, she explained, *Brieven Boven Water* gets the undelivered letter into the hands of a descendant of the intended recipient, crossing oceans to deliver it. "*Brieven Boven Water*," she said again proudly, as if to ensure I was not to forget.

She was a TV personality, crackling with energy. "Your name was given to us by someone who claimed you know about Dutch immigration to Nebraska."

I was pleased to be so referenced, but Americans, I told her, are catastrophic liars. Then we talked for some time about nineteenth-century Dutch immigration to Iowa and South Dakota. I told her I didn't know much about Nebraska.

"A very small town maybe in Nebraska, a town named 'Holland'?" she asked.

I've likely been in more Dutch hamlets than I'd care to list or remember, but never a place named Holland, Nebraska.

"You could maybe find out some things for us?" she suggested. I told her I probably knew people-who-knew-people—that kind of thing. She suggested the folks they had already contacted had not been as helpful as she would have liked.

"You want me to look?" I asked.

She said yes, and then, "Oh, yes, when we come to shoot, you will meet us there also? —at this place called Holland, Nebraska?"

Without her asking me directly, I understood at that moment that she had been interviewing me to see whether I sounded enough like an expert to be part of the story they were telling with this Nebraska segment of *Brieven Boven Water*.

I had a job.

Not long afterward, I sat over the keyboard and started to hunt for a place I'd never heard of—Holland, Nebraska. Info was scarce. Holland, Nebraska, was the center of a very small Dutch enclave in the mid-nineteenth century, a colony that never grew to the size of others in Michigan or Iowa or South Dakota.

The names were very familiar: Brethouwer, Walvoord, Obbink, Wissink—names I had grown up with a half century earlier in Oostburg, Wisconsin. I had never been to Holland, Nebraska, nor heard of the place, but when I started reading, the exhaustive list of names was like walking through a high school yearbook.

By the time I met the film crew, I knew more. The show's Nebraska story features a boy put out to sea to earn money for his poverty-stricken family. Gerrit Bakker, just seventeen years old, writes home to say how badly he misses them. His mother writes back to tell him he can come home soon, but he needs to make more money first because the family has so very little. That letter never got to Gerrit Bakker. His merchant ship went down and he drowned.

The show's Dutch Bakker family member, Erik, from Heemskerk, had never been to the States, much less Nebraska, and therefore had no sense of where his long-lost immigrant relatives would have lived when they came to Lancaster County, a place that was not, back then, particularly hospitable. My job—on camera—was to explain some things about how those people lived on the rugged edge of the Great Plains.

It was reality television, so the crew knew how all of this was going to turn out. I accompanied Erik Bakker to the State Archives at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, where we discovered where the immigrant Bakker family had lived. This was followed by a half-hour drive to Holland, where we looked through old church records and then stumbled (so to speak) on someone who had Bakker blood in his veins.

My part was shot by mid-afternoon on Saturday, but the crew stayed on overnight. Along with Erik, they attended the Holland church the next day, even shooting some video from the pews.

I'm not about to tell you how all of this turned out. You'll have to watch. Let me just say there were some tears. Reconciliation is always quite touching.

Want to get a glimpse of Lancaster County, Holland, Nebraska? In two segments of the show (11 and 18 June, 2014), you can watch the *Brieven Boven Water* Nebraska story here: https://tvblik.nl/brieven-boven-water.

trace the bloodline of their Dutch immigrant ancestors. Many early settlers left the region, with good reason—life was not easy. But among the descendants of those who stayed, clearly many have prospered, as have their churches. In Firth and Holland, the descendant congregations of those pioneers appear very much alive and successful.

How Gustave Adolph Bade, whose graduate dissertation was so helpful in this study, related to the community he studied is not clear. But on the basis of what one might call an aside, a short editorial comment he offered in his 1938 study, it's fair to say he felt that something was being lost in the lean toward "modernism" within the churches of the time: "It is unfortunate, in some respects, that many of the ancient customs, in late years, have felt the force of modernism and have to a certain extent been abrogated."[24]

Mr. Bade, were he still around, might well appreciate this little story about the Holland church. Elsewhere, I tell the tale of my experience with the Dutch television company that produced a segment of *Brieven Boven Water* (Salvaged Sea Letters) and spent two days in the very small community of Holland, Nebraska. On Saturday, at the end of my time with the production, I suggested to the preacher that I was somewhat surprised not to see some news people from local outlets covering what I thought to be an interesting story. After all, I said, a Dutch television production team might well not be an everyday experience on Holland's streets and in the church.



Rev. Te Winkle, pastor of the Reformed Church in Oostburg, Wisconsin, from 1869–1871, and first pastor of the Reformed Church in Holland, Nebraska, from 1871–1875. Image courtesy of the Joint Archives of Holland, Holland, Michigan.

The preacher shrugged his shoulders and winced a bit. "We're trying not to be 'the Dutch church,'" he told me.

It seemed to me that the church's goal was perfectly understandable, but today, one hundred and fifty years after the first Hollanders dug out mud dwellings in a sea of grass out there in rural Nebraska, that mission still might be easier said than accomplished.

Endnotes

1. My own Schaap ancestors came to America with a group of other immigrants from the island of Terschelling, the Netherlands. Once here, many of them stayed together in German Valley, Illinois, and later in Parkersburg, Iowa, and Northwest Iowa.

2. Gustave Adolph Bade, *A History of the Dutch Settlement in Lancaster County, Nebraska*, Elaine Obbink Zimmerman and Kenneth Edwin Zimmerman, eds. (Westminister, MD: Willow Bend Books, 2001). The editors made Bade's manuscript, his 1938 master's thesis while studying at the University of Nebraska, more accessible to a general reading audience. Bade's study was greatly blessed by the interviewing he did with Dutch Lancaster County pioneers still around to speak to him and tell their stories.

3. John Meinen and Cornelius Bykerk and families.

4. Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America, A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America,* Robert Swierenga, General Editor, Adrian de Wit, Chief Translator, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 541.

5. Manifest Destiny was a term used in and around 1845 to express the philosophy that drove nineteenth-century US territorial expansion. Manifest Destiny held that the United States was destined—by God, its advocates believed—to expand its dominion and spread democracy and capitalism across the entire North American continent.

6. Bade, 28.

7. *The Dutch in America, 1607–1974* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 158.

8. Te Selle letters, Calvin College Archives, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

9. *Heusinkvelds in America: a genealogy of the descendants of Evert Heusinkveld, Wisconsin and Minnesota, Gerrit Heusinkveld, Princeton, Nebraska, Derk Heusinkveld, S.E. South Dakota and N.W. Iowa, Willem Heusinkveld, Lynden, Washington*. Privately printed, 1991. Available in the Northwestern College Library, Orange City, Iowa, 230. Apparently, some of the Heusinkvelds spelled their name with a "t" at the end, i.e., Heusinkvelt. This variation of spelling in Dutch names of the same family tribe is not uncommon.

10. Daniel Freeman was the first to file for free land after the Homestead Act in 1862 became law. The farm where he and his wife, Agnes Suitor Freeman, lived and raised a family is the site of the Homestead National Monument of America, just outside of Beatrice, Nebraska. The Freeman homestead is just over thirty miles away.

11. *Heusinkvelds in America*, 230.

12. Te Selle family letters.

13. Alco Vandertook (van der Tuuk) was born in Appingedam, province of Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1845. He immigrated in 1865, first settling in Illinois. He married Catherine Benes, and the two had thirteen children. He changed his name to Vandertook when he became a US citizen. He died in 1928 in Lancaster County, Nebraska. Den Herder was Cornelius Den Herder, born circa 1839; he served in the Civil War and lived in South Pass, Lancaster County, where he died in 1884.

14. Bade, 35.

15. For more on Rev. Huizenga and his ministry, see Janet Sjaarda Sheeres, *The Not-So Promised Land: the Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 63–69.

16. Bade, 39.

17. *Heusinkvelds in America*, 230.

18. Hendrika/Henrietta Bonneveld Lokhorst (born in 1825 in Oldebroek, Gelderland, the Netherlands; married Lubbert Lokhorst; immigrated in 1873; died in 1899 in Lancaster County, Nebraska). Mrs. Carlson is likely Catherine Carlson, wife of Zacharias Carlson, as she is the only female in Lancaster County born in Sweden and living in Lancaster County in 1870; she was then fifty years old.

19. Bade, 65.

20. Bade, 77.

21. Bade, 94.

22. Rev. Bart R. Van Zyl, born in Sioux County, Iowa, 1885. Attended Hope College and Western Theological Seminary. Ordained 1915. Served Reformed Churches in Sanborn, Iowa, 1915–1920; First Grandville, Michigan, 1920–1923; Holland, Nebraska, 1923–1933; First Chicago, Illinois, 1933–1943; Hollandale, Minnesota, 1943–1949. Died Hollandale, Minnesota, 1949.

23. Bade, 90.

24. Bade, 91.

A Woman's Voice from the Plains:

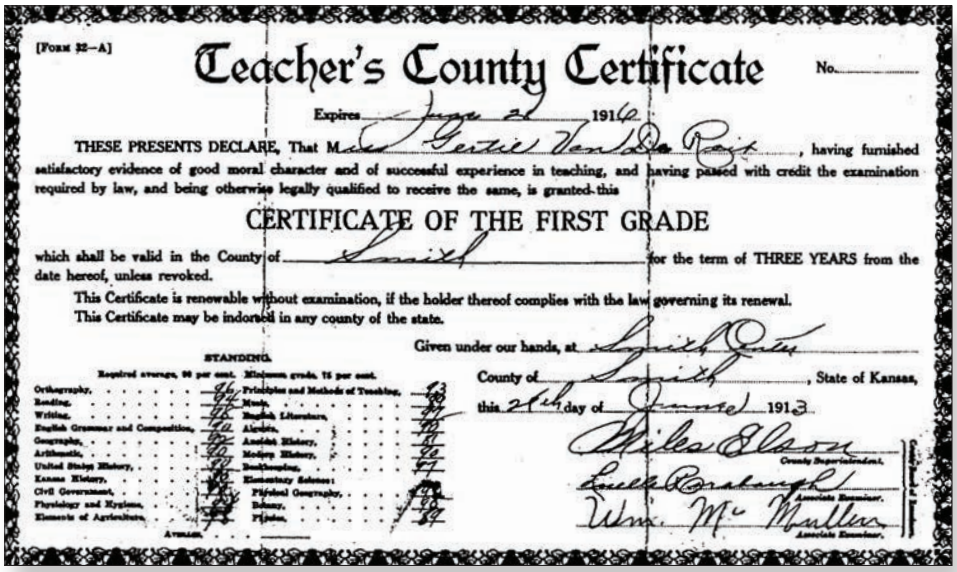
The Diary of Gertrude Vande Riet

John Timmerman

During the mid-nineteenth century Dutch immigrants settled mainly in three areas—Holland, Michigan; Pella, Iowa; and Sheboygan, Wisconsin. In these three places the settlers, mostly Reformed and Christian Reformed, set up their own nineteenth-century version of God's American Israel.

But there were little foxes in the vineyard. For one thing, there was only so much land available for purchase in these locations. Thus, as the first settlers adjusted, they sponsored new bands to look for land farther afield. With the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, many of these settlers made their way to Kansas, where four Dutch colonies were established in the 1860s and 1870s.[1] None of them fared well. What marked the Dispatch colony in particular was the religious intensity of the settlers. They formed not one, but two churches in town, a Christian Reformed church (a conservative denomination founded in 1857) at the west end of town and a Reformed church (old established Reformed Church in America) a few blocks east. And with the high value the Dutch placed on education, they built a schoolhouse as soon as possible. It was there that Gertrude Vande Riet spent twenty-eight years teaching all grades in a one-room schoolhouse. For five of those years she kept a noteworthy diary, commenting on farm, family, education, and religious life of this small Plains community.

The diary of Gertrude "Gertie" Vande Riet, held in the Heritage Hall Archives of Calvin College, is dated from 15 July 1938 to 19 April 1943. Her father, John Vande Riet, was a Dutch immigrant; her mother,



[Form 32—A]

Teacher's County Certificate

No.

Expires June 21 1916

THESE PRESENTS DECLARE, That Miss Gertie Van De Riet, having furnished satisfactory evidence of good moral character and of successful experience in teaching, and having passed with credit the examination required by law, and being otherwise legally qualified to receive the same, is granted this

CERTIFICATE OF THE FIRST GRADE

which shall be valid in the County of Lincoln for the term of THREE YEARS from the date hereof, unless revoked.

This Certificate is renewable without examination, if the holder thereof complies with the law governing its renewal.

This Certificate may be indorsed in any county of the state.

Given under our hands, at Lincoln Kans.

County of Lincoln, State of Kansas, this 21st day of January 1913.

STANDING.

Required average, 80 per cent. Minimum grade, 75 per cent.

Orthography,	94	Principles and Methods of Teaching,	93
Reading,	96	Music,	90
Writing,	95	English Literature,	94
English Grammar and Composition,	90	Algebra,	94
Geography,	90	Ancient History,	94
Arithmetic,	90	Modern History,	94
United States History,	92	Bookkeeping,	94
Kansas History,	96	Elementary Science:	
Civil Government,	94	Physical Geography,	94
Physiology and Hygiene,	94	Botany,	94
Elements of Agriculture,	94	Physics,	94
Average,			

Miles Olson
County Superintendent.

Louella Roadcap
Associate Examiner.

Wm. McMullen
Associate Examiner.

Certificate. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

John H. Timmerman received his PhD in English Literature from Ohio University in 1973. From 1977 until his retirement in 2014 he taught, among others, courses on creative writing, poetry, fantasy, and American literature. He has published twenty-six books as well as many short stories and articles.



Young Vande Riet family in Downs, Kansas, in 1891. Image courtesy of LeRoy Stegink.

Standing in the back: Gezina (Sinnie) Vande Riet Borger. Seated: John Vande Riet holding Cornelia Vande Riet Stegink; Elizabeth Van Dongen Vande Riet holding Gertie Vande Riet De Waard. Standing at the right: Bart Vande Riet.

Elizabeth Van Dongen, was born in Michigan. They came to Dispatch in 1873 shortly after the small colony was founded. Here Gertrude, one of seven siblings, was born on 21 June 1890. She graduated from Oak Creek School and took special training in Downs, Kansas. At the time of the diary, Gertrude's father has been dead for fifteen years, and she is caring for her seventy-one-year-old mother and also running the family farm to supplement her meager teacher's salary at the one-room Green Valley School.

Vande Riet's diary provides fascinating historical insights. It reveals the inner workings of a small, struggling settlement in the late Dust Bowl years. It shows the religious solidarity of a people who, if distrustful of the world around them, nonetheless believed fiercely that God was ultimately in control of this world. It provides surprising glimpses into the quarrels and festivities of that community—from doctrinal issues to Ladies' Aid bazaars to grand community picnics and family get-togethers.

More significant, perhaps, is the intimate portrait of one educated, thoughtful, and articulate woman's life on the American Plains. As a single woman, she looked upon life differently from others in her community. She was a professional, supposedly beyond human emotions. Yet her personal emotions—from wonder to joy to psychological anguish—color the pages in shades of human character. The manuscript is not merely a laundry list of details; it is very much a glimpse of Plains life through the eyes of this very perceptive and sensitive woman. References to Vande Riet's diary will be by date, since multiple dates appear on each page of the manuscript. The diary is written on common lined paper, typical of the period.[2]

One of the more fascinating values of the diary is the almost daily record of weather and farming activities in Dispatch in the waning years of the great Dust Bowl. Recorded 8 July 1938: *"A hot windy day . . . finished harvesting and shocking."*[3] Mixed with reports of insufferable heat are the farm activities that went with it. Then 21 July dawned a cooler, windless day: "*Such a nice cool day, spread poison 2 hrs this morn."* The poison, which she mentions spreading often, was for the clouds of grasshoppers that regularly kept descending on the fields.[4] This was a routine and necessary part of farm life. That life was dependent on, and revolved around, the weather is indicated by how often she writes about the dust storms and blizzards. The stormy weather also interfered with radio listening. Thursday, 28 September 1939: "*It is so stormy tonight . . . such static we can't listen to the radio tonight. Ma's eyes are bad, so I must read to her."*[5]

It seems that the farmers in Smith County were spared the most horrendous dust storms, so that though they did not lose their farms, they were nevertheless affected by storms. Sunday, 7 July 1940: "*Dry, dry."* This makes it even more understandable that there are eighty-three references to rain, which was vital to their survival as farmers.

Of particular interest to Gertrude, however, in addition to the wheat, oats, and corn the family raised, was the livestock. Diary entries turn enthusiastic when a new calf is born. Twelve times she records the birth of a calf, and from which mother. Dutifully she records the eggs collected and the hens she bought and sold. With a cousin, Gertrude cleaned and roasted twenty rabbits during two days of preparation for Christmas festivities and winter canning.

It was not all onerous duty for her, however. Repeatedly, Gertrude exudes a deep love for this land. She

prefaces her 15 July 1938 entry with a short poem:

Where has the summer gone
She was here just a moment ago
With roses & daisies to whisper her praises
And everyone loved her so.

And again, from a collective entry dated 1 through 7 September 1940: *"Walked after the cows every night. How I love those old hills. . . . [T]hose pioneers, what a rich full life they had."* Even during the brutally cold winters—and she faithfully recounts the blizzards that hit the plains—she tried to take her students out to play. She regularly arranged picnics for them, in addition to planning seasonal programs. For Gertrude, the land was not something merely to be used but an objective thing to be mined for its riches by dint of hard labor. She possessed a deep, rich love for the land, feminizing the seasons in a sister-like relationship, glorying in the maternal productivity of her livestock.

Throughout the 1930s settlers on the Great Plains battled two forces beyond their control: the stock market crash and the ensuing Great Depression that consolidated wealth into the hands of the few and left many small farmers heavily indebted. The persistent drought left them with little hope of repaying their debts. What saw them through? What centered their lives when everything else seemed scattered to the wind?

In the case of these settlers of Dispatch, it was often a deeply-rooted religious conviction. Despite all disorder, they believed that God's order would prevail. At the end of tribulation would be mercy. No matter how dry and thirsty the parched earth, God was the one who in times past had brought streams in the desert. For the Christian Dutch colonists in Kansas, their faith was an unbreachable bulwark. Their faith centered primarily around Sunday worship and suspicions of worldly answers to their trials. They protected the "pure" faith of their heavily doctrinal and creedal religion; they distrusted any "outsiders" and their advice. 14 November 1938: *"Preacher preached on 'Christ at the right hand' in the a.m. and 'Perseverance of the Saints' in the p.m. Good crowds in church."*

The distrust of outsiders typifies nearly any close-knit religious group, gripped by the fear that their faith would be diluted and, even worse, their progeny polluted. Taking their cue from Old Testament laws prohibiting the Israelites from intermarrying with other tribes, the Dispatch community also protected their offspring from contact with "worldly" people. One very brief entry in Gertrude's diary states simply: *"Boy couldn't have a date."* Boy was the nickname of Garret Vande Riet, son of Gertrude's brother Bart and his wife, Grace. Presumably, the reason Boy could not have the date was that the young lady was from outside the covenant community. Not long afterward, and especially because there was little future on the Dust Bowl farms, Boy left for Denver to seek his fortune, and, one suspects, greater freedom.

How a religious community deals with the world about it is one mark of its nature; more significant, however, is the way in which it exercises its beliefs within the community itself. In the Dispatch community all things religious centered on Sunday. It was a fairly strict Sabbatarian community in which six days of the week were devoted to hard labor but Sunday was the Lord's Day. The specialness of that day was protected by insulating it from other tasks of the week. The fierce determination of these settlers, however, to keep Sunday so busy with things holy meant that there was not much of a chance to do anything untoward. Two church services were held each Sunday, about which Gertrude dutifully wrote sermon notes in her diary. Over two hundred and thirty entries are devoted to church, including thirty-four about the preacher, and sixty-five reactions to the sermons. An example from Sunday, 30 July 1939: *"Preacher had best sermon he ever had and I told him so."* Less enthusiastic entries about sermons appear as well.

There was also Sunday school, which as a teacher Gertrude was naturally expected to teach. She also took upon herself the task of lighting the



Dispatch CRC. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Vande Riet family. Image courtesy of LeRoy Stegink.

Standing, back row: L–R: Ann Vande Riet Van Staalduine, Sinnie Vande Riet Borger, Gertie Vande Riet DeWaard, Gerrit Vande Riet, Bart Vande Riet, Nellie Vande Riet Stegink, Dan Vande Riet, Mary Vande Riet Huiting. Seated front row L–R: John Vande Riet, Alta Vande Riet Birza, Elizabeth Van Dongen Vande Riet, Henrietta Vande Riet.

morning fire in the church for winter services, on one occasion in weather so fierce that nobody bothered to show up for the service itself. When they were not doing some sanctified work, members of Gertrude's family generally gathered in the afternoon for a meal at one of the siblings' homes, a meal to which everyone contributed. She often described the food served—creamed chicken, fruit salad, pies, and cakes. During a spell of exceptionally hot weather, Gertrude had to refill the icebox with ice three times in one week, describing a time when life may have been simpler but was not easier.

One wonders how some of these small communities could support a church, let alone two of them in the case of Dispatch. The answer is, barely. In fact, the churches were often vacant, and without their own clergyman often had to rely on an itinerant pastor assigned to a number of communities. On those Sundays when a pastor was not available, one of the church elders led a service and read a sermon already prepared and distributed in bulk by the denomination. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper would have to wait until the ordained regional pastor made Dispatch a stop on his circuit. Gertrude comments on the appearance of such an itinerant minister on 11 December 1938: *"Today we went to church two times, it was cold and stormy but it is nice tonight. Bart* [her brother] *has bad cold, went to practice yesterday for Christmas program. I didn't sleep more than two hours last night, Preacher preached on Communion of Saints this A.M.—on coming to church only once a day. . . . This P.M. Does the destruction of the Jewish people predict the Judgment day? Let us all take warning."*

As in any modern church, inevitable conflicts between pastor and congregation arose. Sometimes a pastor cannot please everyone; sometimes a pastor cannot please anyone. The latter grew to be the case in Dispatch. By 1941, the community was emptying. Because of the continuing drought, many families had packed up and left for Denver, where opportunities were greater. On 10 August 1941, Gertrude observes that *"This Sunday A.M. went to church* [.] *50 in S.S.* [Sunday school] *We keep on getting less. Who will be here in 10 years* [?] *Church trouble—Harry & family gone too I guess."* A few lines further she adds an observation from her brother: *"Bart says that if Huizenga* [the minister] *stays we won't have a church left in 10 yrs. Will his prophecy come true?"*[6]

While the experience of the land and that of religious custom strongly shape Vande Riet's diary, perhaps the most significant portions are those from which we obtain deep and

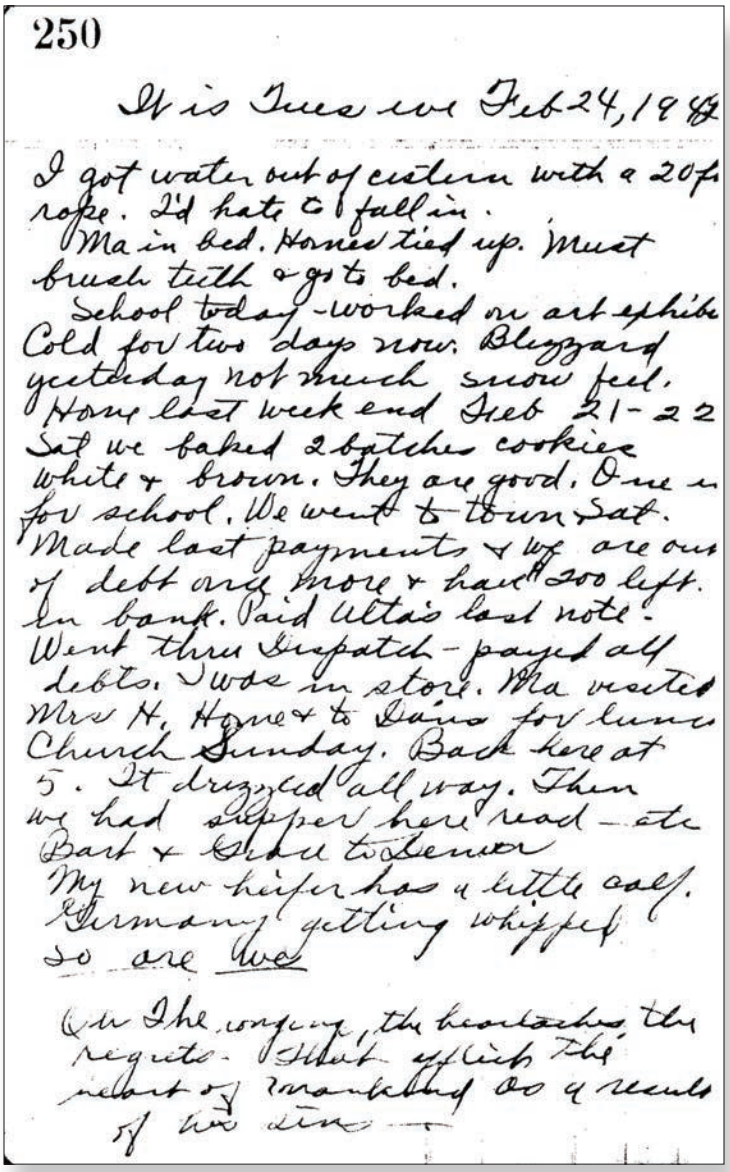
probing glimpses into her personal self. Although she is most often quite guarded, at other times Gertrude opens her heart to her diary pages.

There were festive occasions that she positively gloried in. One Thanksgiving entry, 24 November 1938, meticulously lists the menu for dinner, including "*3 kinds of pie.*" *Her Christmas entry for 1938 lists her gifts and each of the givers.*[7] Gertrude's personal character is also reflected in her list of New Year's resolutions, the only such in the diary, entered for 1940:

To guard my words.
To do no destructive day-dreaming.
To take life as it comes and make the best of it.
To avoid the mistakes of 1939.
To do nothing I will be sorry of for years like in 1939.
To do everything I can to keep peace in the family.
To read the Bible more.
To memorize a verse every day from the Bible.
To teach school best I can for these next 4 mo's.

The list is fascinating in its variety, but also for mentioning the regrets from 1939. While Gertrude had a whimsical and spontaneous sense of fun, loving picnics and get-togethers, there was another side to her, one of grinding melancholy that she sometimes fought against for days and weeks at a time.

The depression episodes, or what was called "melancholy" at the time, begin as random entries in the diary. On 6 November 1939 she states, *"School all week—rainy & damp on Thursday & I had a blue day—Hope I never feel that way again."* On 5 February 1939 another episode occurs, and this time Gertrude attributes a cause: *"I have been much depressed this week, financial worries and so on. Spent some sleepless nights."* While she unmasked her privacy in her diary, by nature she was reluctant to pinpoint specific reasons for her emotional cycles. She was a stoic woman, accustomed now to the strenuous life on the Plains, and leaned heavily on her religious faith to see her through. The depressive episodes during 1938–1939 seemed to come, as Emily Dickinson said, "of the air." Nonetheless, it is not difficult to extrapolate several reasons. She was a single woman of forty-eight, caring for her mother in a community that prized large families as a sign of a woman's worth. Moreover, she surely must have felt that her chances ever to have a family were passing her by. Although she was far too modest to mention it in her diary, she had likely entered her menopausal years. She was also a professional but had an unfulfilled longing to write her own book. In her 14 August 1938 entry, she observed that she had to do a lot of copying, presumably in preparations for school, and wonders, *"Will I ever get my book written?"* While one can infer such likely possibilities, the tenuousness of her teaching position gradually became the foremost worry.


250

It is Tues eve Feb 24, 1942

I got water out of cistern with a 20ft rope. I'd hate to fall in.
Ma in bed. Hands tied up. Must brush teeth & go to bed.
School today - worked on art exhibit
Cold for two days now. Blizzard yesterday not much snow fell.
Home last week end Feb 21-22
Sat we baked 2 batches cookies white & brown. They are good. One in for school. We went to town Sat.
Made last payments & we are out of debt one more & had 200 left in bank. Paid Ulta's last note.
Went thru Dispatch - payed all debts. I was in store. Ma visited Mrs H. Home & to Sims for lunch
Church Sunday. Back here at 5. It drizzled all way. Then we had supper here read - ate Bart & Grace to Lenora
My new heifer has a little calf.
Germany getting whipped
so are we

(In the longing, the heartaches, the regrets. What a glib tho incident of remembering as a result of the sins —

Diary page. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

On the Plains during this era, school ended in late April so that the young people could get out in the fields as soon as the land dried. During 1939 it became evident that Gertrude's contract for the next year might not be renewed. Her 16 April 1939 entry reveals her increasing distress:

I haven't touched my diary in two weeks. They were very troubled weeks. All this school business nearly

drives me crazy. Only God knows what I have suffered this last week, but thanks to Bart I got my school back for one more year & then if it's the Lord's will I quit I quit, but there's one sure thing it will be soon. How I dread those long idle years ahead but I hope & pray I may still find something to do.

Several items come to bear upon the school situation. First, the school size was decreasing as families left the area. It became increasingly difficult, therefore, for the community to support a school and its teacher. Second, Gertrude herself was becoming increasingly deaf. She had just purchased an "earphone," but her inadequate hearing often led to disruptive behavior problems in her classroom. Third, her brother Bart, who held a position of authority in the community, intervened in the effort to fire Gertrude and managed to negotiate a contract for one more year. The cumulative effect was that Gertrude's lifetime profession was in jeopardy, her options as her mother's caretaker extremely limited, and her own sense of self-worth under attack.

The bouts of depression continued throughout the summer. This from 28 August 1939: *"I was very low spirited all day—all school worries. Where is my faith?"* Yet despite the worries she tried to face them realistically. She records a conversation with "Ma" in front of the fireplace when they discussed whether they would have to move and if they did, to where? As the days slid into early 1940, with increasing news of the war, highlights of which Gertrude now entered regularly, her depression deepened. She was halfway through her last year of teaching at Green Valley School. On 14 January 1940 she writes: *"I lived thru a terrible period of* melancholia. *Hope I never live thru another spell like that. Where is my faith?"* As the spring of her final year of teaching approached, her feeling intensified. Her Sunday, 3 March 1940 entry reads: *"It was a lonesome Sunday. Ma & I here all day. . . . I was lonesome & blue. . . . I can't believe I'll never teach again but I guess tis so. Best days of my life are over."* Indeed, it seemed so as the school year ran to its close in April. Her 14 April 1940 entry records her farewell to Green Valley: *"Thurs eve I packed up my books & said fare well [sic] to Green Valley forever. What memories crowded my mind as I closed my teaching career—the best years of my life are over."* Nevertheless, late



Elizabeth Vande Riet, Gertie's mother in 1944, Downs, Kansas. Image courtesy of LeRoy Stegink.

in the summer Gertrude did secure another one-year teaching position in Highland, Kansas, where she and her mother lived in the parsonage of a church near the school. Frequently they came home to Dispatch on weekends, but during the winter bad weather and Gertrude's additional chores of building a fire in the church stove kept them Highland bound.

More than the loss and reacquisition of a teaching job, however, the most momentous change in Gertrude's life was still to come. References in the diary are so few and cryptic as to be nearly inscrutable, yet a subtle pattern emerges. When she was fifty-three years of age, a man, Sam (Simon) De Waard, entered her life. On 2 October 1938, in a few words hidden amid a larger sentence, she writes, *"De Waard was also in church."* The first allusion to the relationship appears a couple of months later, with the 5 February 1939 entry stating simply, "There's a secret between me & Ma." Not uncommon for the time, a fair amount of courtship was done by letter. *"It might alter my whole future if I would let it. Ma not very anxious to have me leave, else I'd do it."* Could this be the first tentative probing of a marriage proposal? Very likely, but Gertrude felt compelled to weigh it against her responsibility for the care of her aging mother. Nonetheless, the courtship progressed as Gertrude weighed her options. In her 7 February 1943 entry she marks an emphasis: *"I wrote a* letter *& another."*

Gertrude's entry for 10 March 1943 is crowded with questions. It begins with the most mundane kind of observations that typified the start of entries throughout but then rushes toward the decision she was facing:

It is eve. Cold for a long time now. Didn't go home last weekend [from Highland to Dispatch]. *Such storms cold—below 0 and that for March. Sunday it was cold all day. We didn't mind staying here. Usual worries about school—not to get one—but to take one or not* [that is, if she married]—*What is wisest. How will things turn out for me?? Will it happen or not. Will it go well if it does. School comes along very well. Can I give it up* [as a married woman in this community she would be expected to quit teaching]*? We*

quilted a while—must work problems [for school lesson]. *Went to Athol* [a town seven miles distant] *the other eve. Nothing unusual.* Friday March 5, 1943, *an important* date in my life.

Gertrude and Sam De Waard were married later that year. The final entry in Gertrude's diary, undated, consists of five pages largely filled with farm accounts and miscellaneous entries, but also a poem:

I know not what the long years
hold—
Of winter days and summer clime—
But this I know when life grows old,
It shall be light at even time.
I cannot tell what boon awaits
To greet me with the failing night—
But this I know beyond the gates
At evening time it shall be light.

Read aloud, and slowly, one begins to hear echoed in the poem the tune of James McGranahan's setting for Daniel Whittle's famous hymn, "I know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace." The hymn was in fact in the official hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church to which Gertrude belonged. The hymn is, moreover, a powerful testament to God's grace and goodness.

Very early in her diary, with the burden of schoolwork pressing heavily upon her, she lamented, *"Will I ever get my book written?"* In her diary, she did.

Note: Gertrude married Sam (Simon) De Waard on 4 September 1943. Simon was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in December 1887 and arrived in the US in 1890. He remained single until his marriage to Gertie. They lived on a farm near Mentone, Indiana. On 4 April 1958, Sam passed away and Gertrude moved back to Kansas, to Downs, where she lived with her brother Bart. Her mother, Elizabeth Van Dongen Vande Riet, passed away the same year at the age of ninety-two. After Bart passed away, Gertrude entered the Downs Nursing Home, where she lived for fifteen more years. She died at the age of ninety-five on 27 December 1985 and is buried next to Sam in the Mentone Cemetery in Indiana.
The diary has been transcribed and annotated and may be read in its entirety in the Calvin College Heritage Hall, Hekman Library, Grand Rapids, Michigan.[8]



Simon's and Gertie's gravestone in Mentone Cemetery in Mentone, Indiana. Image courtesy of www.findagrave.com

Endnotes

1. These were Zutphen in Ottawa County and Wakefield in Clay County, which failed even to get established. Rotterdam—renamed Dispatch in 1891—in Smith County, which was the home of Gertrude Vande Riet, and Luctor in Phillips County.

2. Inclusive pages are 77–294.

3. Shocking or stoking is an arrangement of sheaves of cut grain stalks of wheat placed upright so as to keep the grain heads off the ground while still in the field and prior to collection for threshing.

4. Dennis Nordin and Roy V. Scott, *From Prairie Farmer to Entrepreneur: The Transformation of Midwestern Agriculture (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 101.* "Insect invasions accompanied the dry summers of the 1930s. Hoards [sic] of grasshoppers thrived in heat, consuming what remained of corn and other crops. The devastation was most severe in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska. In efforts to control the pests, Northcentral farmers relied mainly upon a mixture of bran, arsenic, and molasses. It was an effective killing agent, but the battle to spread enough poison to eliminate the insects could not be won by following this formula.

5. Radio reception was not as advanced as today, and in the early days of radio static was created by electrical processes in the atmosphere like lightning.

6. Fred M. Huizenga (1907–1988). Pastor at Dispatch from 1938 to 1943. Became Bible teacher at Pella, Iowa, Christian High School.

7. "This is what I got for Xmas 1938. Necklace from Terril [daughter of of Alois and Fred Ramaker]; powder puffs from Grace [sister-in-law]; dress from Nell [sister]; slippers from school [Green Valley School]; dish from Vera S. [relationship unknown]; stockings from Sin [her sister Sinnie married to Benjamin Borger, lived in Denver, Colorado]; Beauty Box from Alta [younger sister]."

8. For those of you with ancestors in Smith County, here are some of the other last names, besides Vande Riet, mentioned in the diary: Bos, Borger, Bouwman, Cornell, De Haan, De Rose/Roos, Dengerink, Deters, Hanneman, Gerwijse, Nijhof, Renken, Rotman, Schnell, Schoen, Schultz, Sneller, Soodsma, Steinhouser, Verhage, Walkers, Wierenga, Stegink, Voss, Staalduine(n), De Bey, Buikstra, Poppens, Koops, van Donge(n), Boxum, and Donker. For these and other names in Kansas, you may be interested in the The Downs News and The Downs Times provided by the Osborne Public Library at: *http://osborne.advantage-reservation.com/search?t=29163&i=t&bcn=1&m=between*

After the Honeymoon:

A Visit to the Plains during Drought and Depression

Joyce Vander Lugt

In the hot, dry summer of 1932, William (Bill) Vander Lugt and his bride, Peternell (Nell) Elisabeth De Leeuw, traveled to Colton, South Dakota, in a 1929 Chevy coupe after an idyllic month-long honeymoon at Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin. In Colton, Nell, a city girl and graduate of Northwestern University, became acquainted with Bill's parents, Teunis and Cornelia Vander Lugt, who were struggling to keep their farm and were not able to be present for the large Lansing, Illinois, wedding on 23 June 1932. Bill undoubtedly tried to prepare Nell for life on the farm with his parents, but even he could not anticipate all the challenges ahead. Fortunately, we have an insightful account, in Nell's own words, of that visit when the lives of two women of different generations and backgrounds intertwined after the marriage.

Nell's mother-in-law, Cornelia Adriana Vander Meer, was born in De Lier, province of South Holland, the Netherlands, in 1866; her childhood was shortened after her mother died in childbirth when Cornelia was only nine years old.[1] Soon after her mother's death, Cornelia had to leave her nine siblings when she was sent to live and work for a dairy farm family, for whom she did housework and other chores for the next sixteen years. She was allowed to go home to visit her family for only a few hours on Sunday afternoons. At the age of twenty-nine, Cornelia married Teunis Vander Lugt on 21 June 1896 in De Lier. Early in their marriage, Cornelia and Teunis moved to Rotterdam, where they owned a small dairy store, which provided income for the



Teunis Vander Lugt family in 1913. Image courtesy of Joyce Vander Lugt.

Joyce Vander Lugt earned a BA in chemistry from Hope College and an MS in medical technology from Wayne State University, her thesis topic being "A Consideration of the Immune Responses in Hashimoto's Disease." In 1968 her family moved to South Dakota, where Joyce did medical research in her pre-children years and later worked with the "friendly" bacteria used in cheesemaking. Her interests are broad, and besides exploring family history she has written on Paul Bunyan in South Dakota for South Dakota Magazine.

growing family living above the store. While Teunis made deliveries with his dog cart, Cornelia tended the store. Their son Gerrit was born within the first year of their marriage, and five other children (one of whom died in infancy) were born to them during the Rotterdam years. Although the store provided for their needs, Teunis decided that his family would have a brighter future with more opportunity in America, and a big decision was made. In May, 1905, the Vander Lugts sailed from the Netherlands with their five young children—Gerrit eight, Marie seven, Arie five, Willem almost three, and Gerritje fourteen months. They were joined by a cousin of Teunis and had chosen Northwest Iowa as their destination.



Vander Lugt home in Colton, South Dakota, at the time Peternell visited. Image courtesy of Joyce Vander Lugt.

In the ten years from 1905, when they came to the United States, to 1915, when they purchased a farm in South Dakota, Cornelia made a home for her family in five different houses in Northwest Iowa. Besides the packing and scrubbing that accompanied each move, Cornelia was busy caring for her family, which had grown with the births of Johanna in 1909 and Elizabeth in 1912. (Their first child born in the United States was stillborn.) With seven children, Cornelia was occupied with doing laundry without the benefit of running water; baking bread in a cook stove; preparing food; sewing clothing for her family; tending the garden; dutifully sending lunch at 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., when her husband or other workers were out in the field; and whatever else needed taking care of. The household awoke at 5 a.m., and after the cows were milked and the horses were curried and harnessed there was breakfast of potatoes, eggs, and milk. It is important to note that, according to Bill, "Teunis read a chapter of the Bible at the table at each meal, no matter how long the chapter or how busy the season." Sunday was the only day when Cornelia had a reprieve from her household work. Her social life revolved around the church. Although there were one or two shopping trips a year to Sioux Falls twenty-five miles away, most clothing was ordered from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. Dutch was the language spoken in their home, and it was the only language Cornelia ever spoke. Teunis returned to the Netherlands for a visit in the winter months of 1913–1914, leaving Cornelia to care for the children, ages one through sixteen.

In the spring of 1914 Teunis bought a new Ford Model T. In 1918, as the family prospered, they hired son-in-law Joe Nugteren, Marie's husband, and another man to build a large two-story home on the farm, two miles south and two miles west of Colton. Bill recalled, "Family life on the farm was enjoyable. We didn't have much in material goods, but the atmosphere was one of love and had a strong religious flavor. I never viewed my childhood as a time of austerity or work, but, when I look back now, I think it was." When asked about holidays and birthdays, Bill responded, "The Christmas orange, box of candies and a little book were Christmas gifts from the church. Nothing special at home for Christmas. On birthdays we shook hands and said, '*Gefeliciteerd met uw verjaardag*' (Congratulation on your birthday). No gifts or cards. No birthday cakes." Cornelia lived simply but loved largely. She found contentment and reward in seeing her family thrive. She turned sixty-six in July, the month in which Bill and Nell, her new twenty-four-year-old daughter-in-law, came to visit.

Nell De Leeuw had enjoyed a very different childhood from that of her mother-in-law. Nell described her family life: "It was a rather 'privileged life' in some ways. The parsonage was a better house and more richly furnished than the houses of my playmates. Also, we had a live-in maid for many years, and always some 'help' part-time. The *dominee*'s children were looked upon as special, and I, as oldest daughter, enjoyed the love and acceptance. The Dutch people at that time had a high regard for their *Dominee en Juffrouw en familie,* sort of putting them on a pedestal. A great fuss was made when Dad accepted a call and we would leave a church—



Young Peternell De Leeuw. Image courtesy of Joyce Vander Lugt.

farewell parties with gifts and tears, and then a big welcome reception when we arrived (by train) in a new place. I can recall the occasions and the new clothes we wore, parts of the programs and speeches, etc." She added, "I was probably fearful at times that we would not live up to what we—or the congregation—thought was the ideal for a minister's family. We had to be an example. 'What will the people think?' was a guideline for actions, appearance, etc." Nell's mother, Hermina Fles De Leeuw, had also been the child of a *dominee* and was well aware of expectations.[2]

Birthdays and holidays called for celebration in Nell's family, and she recalled, "I can remember two or three birthday parties before I was twelve, but we did not have one every year. On 5 December, the eve of St. Nicholas Day (which was 6 December), we put big dinner plates at our places on the round oak dining room table. When we came down for breakfast the next morning there were nuts and candy on our plates. Each Christmas we got a book and probably some article of clothing like a scarf, mittens or wool bonnet. I don't recall any toys for myself except dolls, which I loved. The boys probably got a sled or tools. It was a happy time. In our home Christmas was very special and, on Christmas Eve, our parents would hang paper garlands, tinsel and fold-out bells in the wide doorway between the dining room and sitting room."

Nell and Bill met in 1925 when both were students at Calvin College. Bill, a junior, invited the attractive brunette to be his date for a Christmas party. He wrote, "We dated several times that school year and quite regularly the next year." Upon graduation, Bill took a one-semester position at Hull Academy, after which he began graduate work in philosophy at the University of Michigan. Nell transferred to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where she completed her junior and senior years, graduating in 1929. She was offered and accepted a teaching position in Centreville, Michigan, where she taught vocal music in grades K–12 in addition to English in the high school. Many letters traveled between the two, frequently every day. They were married in 1932, after Bill received his PhD. Nell had a job; Bill did not, but hope for the future abounded.

Nell, who was essentially a city girl, provided an account of the wedding and the visit to eastern South Dakota after their honeymoon:

We were married in my father's church, the Christian Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois, at 7 p.m., 23 June 1932. My father performed the ceremony, assisted by my uncle, Rev. John J. Hiemenga.[3] *My sister Hermine was maid of honor; Dr. Joe Zandstra was the best man. There were six bridesmaids and ushers and two flower girls. The reception for sixty-to-seventy people was held in the Indiana Hotel in Hammond, Indiana. We had a sit-down dinner (creamed chicken, etc.). There were guests from several states. Yes, it was a big wedding and my mother engineered it all*



Wedding photo of Peternell and Bill. Image courtesy of Joyce Vander Lugt.

beautifully—keeping guests for several overnights, housing some with friends, serving a buffet lunch on our screened porch at home before the wedding, etc. After the supper in Hammond, they had a party for people to see the gifts and meet each other. Looking back, I'm glad we had the church wedding because it was the only one for us three sisters.

And, we had a car—a '29 green Chevy coupe which I bought after my first year of teaching. We spent a honeymoon month at Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin, (June–July '32). On our way to Colton, we spent a night at Waukesha with your Uncle Jack and Aunt Ann.[4] *I got sick there—probably from the heat. They called their family doctor and we had to delay the trip a day. They called Grandpa Vander Lugt, who was disappointed because they had already butchered a chicken and, of course, could not save it without ice! We also stopped at the Wisconsin Dells.*

It was terribly hot and dry in South Dakota. The drought was a disaster for several years. I remember Ma (that's what we called Cornelia, as did all her children) told us that Aunt Gert had made up our bed upstairs before they had left a few weeks earlier. The language was a problem for communication because Ma spoke and understood only Dutch. I could understand her but found it difficult to speak Dutch.

The house had no bathroom, so we washed, brushed our teeth, etc., at the kitchen sink. There was a pail underneath to catch the water. When I took a bath, Bill would carry up a few pails of water and pour them into a washtub in our bedroom. He took the tin tub out to "the grove" for his baths. At bedtime, I was afraid to go down the dark path to "the privy" as it was pitch dark and there were always so many cats around. Bill walked with me with a flashlight.

The well had run dry. We drank brown smelly water which came from near bottom of the cistern. There was no ice or anything cold in the hot weather. Milk was drunk fresh and warm from the cow. I could not drink it! They ate quite a few soft-boiled eggs, which I don't like either. The flour bin had tiny live ants all thru it. Ma baked her own bread, but she could not see the ants.[5] *She had to start a fire in the black cook-stove for any cooking—no kerosene stove. That added to the heat in the house. Considering it all, I do not think I gained any weight there. I did not enjoy the food. We could not make anything refreshing like salad or jello. The garden produce had dried up in the garden—even the beets below ground had shriveled up. The only grocery store in town had a few cabbages and dry onions, so we could not buy fresh fruits and vegetables for them.*

In his account, Bill wrote,

It had been a hot, dry summer in Colton. The folks had no fresh veg-



Wedding party. Image courtesy of Joyce Vander Lugt.

etables, we bought some cabbages, cucumbers, tomatoes, raspberries, and beans in Worthington to bring them. While we were visiting in Colton, I took Dad's place with the threshing crew. Six or seven farmers would form what was called a threshing ring and each farmer supplied one or two men to haul the bundles to the machine or to haul the grain to the farm yard or to the elevator in town. The men—about twelve or fifteen— all had their noon meal in the home of the farmer where the threshing was done. This was quite an occasion. Teunis prayed and read the Bible in Dutch even when the Norwegian threshers came, though he did speak English.

Nell recalled such an occasion.

Ma and I went along the day they threshed at Uncle Tienes's farm. Uncle Tienes was quite a character—he served home-made beer under the tree while the other men worked. When it was our turn to "have the threshers," Ma asked if I could bake some pies. That was the standard dessert for the men, and she never baked any. But without recipes and using a cook stove, I did not dare to try it. I offered to make a fancy pudding since I had the recipe with me. Dad and I drove to town to buy the ingredients. The cream would not whip because it was not cold enough in "de kelder" (cellar), and I was a little disappointed in the pudding.

In church, Uncle Tienes played the pump organ. His wife, tante Jantje, was Dad Vander Lugt's youngest sister. I wore a blue silk dress and matching hat with white silk gloves. I could feel the eyes turning our way, to size up the new Vander Lugt bride. The people were dressed mainly in black or very dark clothes. We also spent a Sunday evening "buurten" (visiting neighbors) at the Zuiderhofs. The men, in clean bib overalls, sat in the kitchen, and the women, in black dresses, sat in the front room.

Cornelia and Teunis were experiencing a time of great duress as the Depression coupled with the drought exacerbated conditions. Their financial future was at stake, and they struggled to make payments on the farm, which they lost in 1935.[6] The newlyweds' two-week visit in South Dakota might have seemed like an eternity to Nell, but driving eastward she could be grateful. She would return to her teaching position, and Bill had a teaching fellowship at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, one hundred twenty-five miles from Centreville. Money was scarce, and Nell kept a notebook "with every penny recorded." In our first year of marriage, Nell wrote, *"I had my salary cut to something like $1,250."* In their second year, they decided they would rather be together than apart for the $600 provided by the teaching assistantship. They moved into the main floor of a large furnished house with a furnace that did not work very well. "*To save fuel we used it only on weekends, when we would open up the house. The other five days we burned mainly wood in the big old cook stove and lived in the large kitchen.*" Bill and Nell were happy to be together and lived with hope for a bright future. That future eventually included four children—Robert, Karel, Elisabeth, and William—as well as positions at Central and later Hope College for Bill.[7] Nell was a homemaker and always a gracious hostess who took her responsibilities seriously, whether parenting or teaching, to which she returned for ten years after her children were grown.[8]

Faith and family were important in the lives of both Cornelia Adriana (Vander Meer) Vander Lugt and Peternell Elisabeth (De Leeuw) Vander Lugt. These women most certainly were familiar with the biblical story of Ruth and embraced the thought of Ruth: "Your people shall be my people."[9] Nell's character was put to the test when she and Bill went to be with his parents for two weeks in 1932, and her observations about that time indicate that the visit was not easy. She was undoubtedly thankful to return to the life with which she was familiar. Regrettably, distance and circumstances made visits to Bill's parents rare, and occasional letters had to suffice, though Cornelia could not read English. She died in Grand Rapids in 1948, six years before Bill and Nell and family moved to Holland, Michigan. Their son, Karel,



Older Peternell and Bill in later years. Image courtesy of Joyce Vander Lugt.

recalls only one visit with his paternal grandmother.

Nell wrote, "*In spite of all the differences in our parental homes and backgrounds, Dad and I have always liked and enjoyed each other's families.*" Despite cultural, educational, economic, and generational differences, mother-in-law Cornelia Vander Lugt and daughter-in-law Nell Vander Lugt seemed to find accommodation and acceptance in their relationship. Beyond that, there was mutual respect, transcended by love.

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Interview with William Vander Lugt by author when writing her paper, titled "*The Experience of Teunis and Cornelia Vander Lugt in South Dakota.*"

Joyce Vander Lugt, BA, Hope College; MS in Medical Technology, Wayne State University; Joyce is the author of *Behind the Scenes in South Dakota* (Sioux Falls, South Dakota: ThinkPrint, 1994).

Endnotes

1. Cornelia's mother, Marie Boekestijn, died at age thirty-eight on 28 January 1876 in De Lier, Zuid Holland.

2. Nell's father, Rev. Cornelius De Leeuw, was born on 8 January 1876 in the province of Zeeland, the Netherlands. He arrived in the USA with his parents in 1892, settling in Lodi, New Jersey. He graduated from Calvin College in 1904 and spent one year at Princeton Seminary. He married Hermina Johanna Fles in 1905 in Muskegon, Michigan, and the two had five children. He served the following CRCs: Douglas Park, Chicago, Illinois, 1905–1910; First, Pella, Iowa, 1910–1919; Sioux Center, Iowa, 1919–1924; Lansing, Illinois, 1924–1944; Tracy, Iowa, 1944–1953.

3. Rev. John J. Hiemenga was president of Calvin College from 1919 to 1925.

4. "Jack" was the family name for Gerrit Vander Lugt, who earned a PhD in Philosophy at the University of Michigan in 1927, after which he became a professor and later president of Carroll College, Waukesha, Wisconsin. He also served as president of Central College, Pella, Iowa, and later taught at New Brunswick Seminary. Interestingly, he went off to college with the idea of going into ministry, perhaps the only reason his father consented. Thus, his father would have been pleased that he eventually found his way to a seminary.

5. These were probably weevils that look like little grains of rice but are brown and move.

6. After attending the Christian Reformed Church Synod in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1921, Teunis decided the family should move there. The family lived at 727 Baxter Street, and while he worked as a laborer in Grand Rapids Teunis rented the farm to a nephew and later to his son Arie and his wife, Jacoba, for seven years. In her history and genealogy, Jacoba Vander Lugt Voss wrote, "When the Depression came, he found that he had overextended himself. Times got very bad and Grandfather and Grandmother moved back to South Dakota to live with son Arie and family for one year. During this time the two youngest girls, Jo and Liz, stayed in Grand Rapids to live with their sister Gert and her family. Arie and family then moved to Iowa and Grandfather stayed on the farm four more years. Finally, Grandfather lost the farm and everything he owned." After moving to Grand Rapids in 1935, Cornelia and Teunis lived upstairs in the home of their youngest daughter, Liz, and her husband, Joe Heslinga. Cornelia died in 1948 at the age of 81; Teunis died on 15 February 1962.

7. William Vander Lugt served at Hope College as professor, Dean of the College (1955–1966), Distinguished Professor at Large (1966–1970), and Chancellor (1970–1972). He died on 9 June 1992.

8. Peternell suffered a major stroke, which took her speech and mobility in her later years. Bill cared for his dear Nell in a way that few men could or would have done. She survived him and died on 15 December 1993.

9. Ruth 1:16.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Celebration of the Dutch Settlement at Hull and Westfield, North Dakota, on 6 October 1910

This article is from: De Volksvriend *of 29 September 1910, commemorating the founding of the Hull, North Dakota, Christian Reformed Church in 1887.*[1] *This article shows the perseverance of the settlers in harsh North Dakota conditions reflecting similar situations in Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota.*

On the 6th of October we, as old-Netherlanders of Hull and Westfield, North Dakota, hope to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our settlement here.

The first who came were the Widow Haspers and her three sons, as well as L. Sikkema, H. Van der Beek and J. Pekelder, all from Sioux County, Iowa, as well as P. and H. Bakker, R. Sinnema and S. Schat from Kansas. The numbers soon increased with others from Nebraska, Iowa and Michigan.

Today the settlement counts approximately 120 families. Forty-seven families belong to the Hull Christian Reformed congregation, and by the Reformed congregation at Westfield 62 families. Additionally, there are families who attend church and contribute, but have not joined either congregation.

Soon worship services began in the Hull schoolhouse, wherein all took part under the leading of H. Van Beek and the undersigned. Shortly thereafter we were served by the students Pool and Van den Berge.

The First Reformed congregation was organized in Hull by Rev. Fred J. Zwemer [Reformed] home missionary in Dakota and Rev. A. Stegeman of Harrison, South Dakota. The year after that, Rev. C. Bode organized the Christian Reformed congregation in Hull.

At that time most of the settlers lived in the Hull area. The year after that the population of Westfield grew considerably, so that a Reformed congregation was organized there as well, by those who lived there and by the transfer of Reformed members from Hull. And that is how it remained: those living in Hull belong to the CRC and those in Westfield belong to the Reformed congregation. Both congregations live together in harmony.

The first pastor at Hull was Rev. [H.] Ahuis; the second Rev. [M.] Botbijl; the third Rev. [M.] Borduin, and the fourth is Rev. Huizingh.

The first pastor at Westfield was Rev. Jac. Van der Meulen; the second Rev. K. J. Dykema; the third Rev. P. Braak; the fourth Rev. [B.] Lammers, and the fifth is Rev. [E.] Schilstra.

Soon each congregation built their own



Above and left to right: Rev. Ahuis, Rev. Botbijl, Rev. Borduin, and Rev. Huizingh. Images courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

church and parsonage and there is no debt on these properties.

In the beginning we experienced set-backs, especially due to drought, so that the crops failed partially or entirely. From time to time this changed and in 1891 there was an abundant crop. Still in that year many lost parts or all [of their crops] due to prairie fires. Some even lost horses and cattle that were burned in the barns. Some settlers, however, were spared.

Later, these changes were less drastic and some settlers had satisfactory crops; the last years have even been really good, yes abundant even after we received more rain. This year, however, the yield is less; again, due to drought, as it is the case in many other places.

In the beginning there were only two or three small houses built of wood, the rest were all sod homes and barns. The lumber had to be carted from Ipswich, a distance of eighty miles. Currently people are living in houses worth $1,000 to $3,000.

Twenty-five years ago, our people acquired all their land as homestead; so really for almost nothing. Now the price of the land—please note without buildings—is $30 to $50 per acre.



Hull, North Dakota, CRC 1899-1902. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

There was a time when produce had to be transported thirty-five miles to Eureka. Because a railroad was built the distance of the settlement to the market is now only six miles.

The products that are raised here are, like in Iowa, wheat and corn.

The population has increased not so much the last years by people coming from other areas, as well as by the youth marrying and settling on the land claims purchased by their parents.

Neither are there any moving out. Whoever has settled here, are happy to remain here.

We have about fifteen public schools. Prayer and Bible reading is allowed. Not all of our teachers use this privilege; and because of that, we long for such who, besides the necessary [teaching] ability, also possess the fear of the Lord, and they can lead the children in what is most essential.

On the occasion of the coming celebration we expect the Governor of our State and Rouwerdink, Grevink, and undersigned are appointed to receive his Honor. Besides the governor we also expect Mr. Streeter, who lived here at the founding of the settlement but now lives in Lynden, Washington. Mr. S. will also give a speech. Besides that, the teachers Arend Haspers, Gerrit Renskers and others will give presentations. There will be a basket picnic and there will also be the desired drinks available.

Gladly we invite our friends living elsewhere to celebrate this day with us. The Lord has protected us mercifully, guided us graciously, and blessed us abundantly. It is therefore fitting for us to humbly thank and praise his Great Name.

[signed] G. Haak



Hull, North Dakota, CRC 1902-1929. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Endnote

1. *De Volksvriend* was a Dutch-language weekly published in Orange City, Iowa, from 1874 to 1951. Article translated by the editor of *Origins*.

The Spanish Flu: How It Affected and Afflicted Hollanders in the USA

Mary Risseeuw

Spanish Influenza – What it is and How it Should be Treated

Go to Bed and Stay Quiet –
Take a Laxative –
Eat Plenty of Nourishing Food –
Keep up Your Strength –
Nature is the Only "Cure"

NO OCCASION FOR PANIC.

Spanish influenza, which appeared in Spain in May, has all the appearance of grip or la grippe, which has spread over the world in numerous epidemics as far back as history runs. Hippocrates refers to an epidemic in 412 B.C., which is regarded by many to have been influenza. Every century has had its attacks. Beginning with 1831, this country has had five epidemics, the last in 1889-90.

There is no occasion for panic—influenza itself has a very low percentage of fatalities—not over one death out of every four hundred cases, according to the North Carolina Board of Health. The chief danger lies in complications arising, attacking principally, patients in a run-down condition—those who don't go to bed soon enough, or those who get up too early.[1]

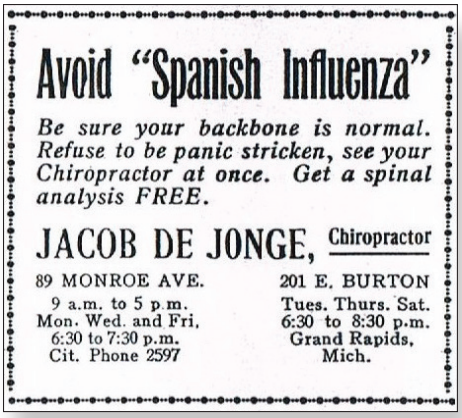
Mary Risseeuw has researched nineteenth- and twentieth-century Dutch immigration to Wisconsin for almost thirty years. She has lectured throughout the Midwest and the Netherlands on the subject. She has a BS from UW-Madison and an MA and MFA from Northern Illinois University. In May 2018 she presented two genealogical sessions at the National Genealogical Society's annual conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

These advertisements may have been an attempt to calm the storm of hysteria or simply naiveté regarding the reality of the pandemic that was gripping the nation . . . and the world. The truth was that almost six hundred fifty thousand people died in the US and fifty million worldwide. Approximately five hundred million people around the world became ill; this was one third of the entire population at that time. The effects were staggering, and one hundred years later medical researchers are still examining this pandemic.

The Onset

The disease first came to be called influenza during a pandemic in 1781. This is the Italian word for "influence." At that time it was believed that the health of people was influenced by the heavens. The flu that inhabited the world in 1918 was the most lethal known to date and occurred during the last months of World War I. It was known by different names in different countries. The Italians referred to it as sand fly fever. Germans called it lightening catarrh or Flanders fever. The French used purulent bronchitis or the grippe (*griep* in Dutch). The name that has been most prevalent through history is the Spanish flu. One out of every three people in Spain—more than eight million—had the flu in the summer of 1918. Word spread, and although the same flu had hit the US and other places in the world, the name stuck. There were three waves.

The first started in March 1918 and lasted through the summer. This wave was relatively mild in comparison to that in the months to come. The second wave was the most lethal and lasted until November of 1918. The third deadly wave began at the end of 1918 and lasted until the spring of 1919. Outbreaks continued well into 1920. This particular strain of influenza rapidly gave way to pneumonia. Deaths and illnesses reported during this time period are often listed as pneumonia, which was actually a secondary illness.



The Banner ad 31 October 1918. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

It is very likely that an unnamed young farmer who reported for duty as soldier at Fort Riley, Kansas, was the catalyst for this pandemic.[2] Other soldiers quickly developed the same flu-like symptoms. The illness seemed to develop more quickly and destructively in those from their late teens to mid-thirties. Soldiers leaving from Fort Riley boarded ships for abroad, taking the disease with them.

By early October of 1918, newspapers from Michigan to Montana, and around the United States, included daily reports of this spreading epidemic. In Omaha, Nebraska, it was reported that the flu had been documented in forty-three states and the District of Columbia. The number of new cases in army camps during the twenty-four hours ending at noon on 3 October 1918 was slightly more than thirteen thousand. Influenza at all camps numbered more than one hundred thousand.[3] The first death in Nebraska was reported in Lincoln on 3 October 1918. By 29 October there were approximately forty-two thousand cases in Nebraska.[4] The report from Camp Sherman in Chillicothe, Oklahoma, on 8 October was overwhelming. Between 3 p.m. 7 October and 6 a.m. 8 October one hundred had died. This brought the total for that camp alone to almost five hundred.[5]



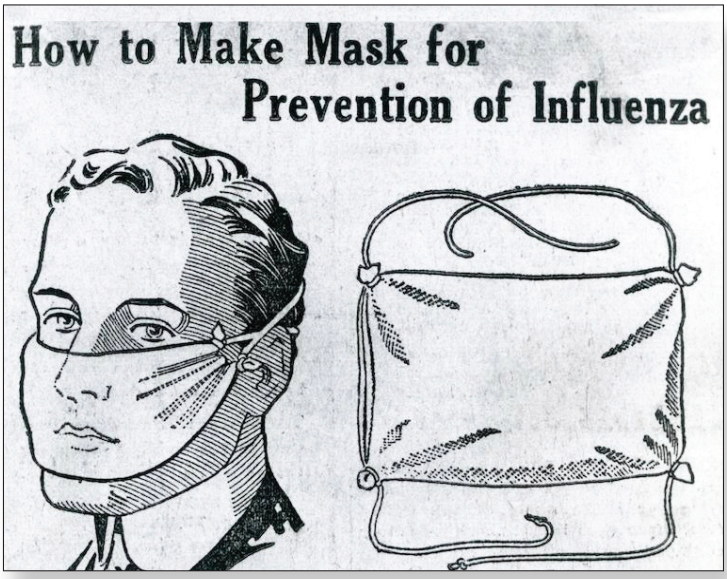
The Banner ad 7 November 1918. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Overwhelmed Medical Personnel and Hospitals

The sheer volume of patients overwhelmed medical personnel throughout the country. Physicians serving rural communities were often taxed beyond their capabilities. The time and distance to reach the ill meant that some went untreated. Midwives and mothers did what they could with little knowledge of infectious diseases, no medicine, and the threat of succumbing themselves. Dutch communities on the Great Plains were small and rural, and most lacked professionally trained physicians and a local hospital. In 1882 an outbreak of smallpox that occurred among the Dutch in Sioux City, Iowa, became another reason for families to move further westward on the Great Plains.[6] This migration from one rural community to another that was equally isolated left them in no better circumstances.

Midwives finally entered the picture in the 1870s in Nebraska, but they too were untrained. Treatment of any illness relied on whatever remedies the women of the community were aware of. These ranged from lard and turpentine to onion and sugar, mustard plasters and kerosene.

Vicks VapoRub was a common remedy at the time to relieve flu symptoms. Advertisement for Vicks as a treatment appeared in most newspapers throughout the US. The company



Influenza public service ad showing people how to make a rudimentary face mask to avoid the influenza. Image courtesy of the *Red Deer News* (Alberta, Canada) 20 November 1918.


The Home of
Kansas Central Indemnity

Groveland, Kansas,
March, 8 1920

Kansas Central Indemnity Co.,
Hutchinson, Kansas
Gentlemen:

Just received check for illness caused from influenza, and am very well satisfied with the way in which this company has treated me, I have held insurance in this company less than two months, and I have received two claims, both of which have been satisfactory.

J. W. Hall

What's your Chance when you are sick or hurt?
Your outgo is increased—Your income decreased.

Better Insure Your Income

Costs only a few cents a day with the Home company. Pay us a visit while you are here attending the Three in One Week Show. You are welcome.

Kansas Central Indemnity Co.

Kansas Hutchison News ad 22 March 1920. Courtesy of the *Kansas Hutchison News*.

marketed their product so well that they could not keep up with the demand. After only a few months of ads, the company asked newspapers to stop publishing them until they could replenish their stock. According to the company's history timeline, sales went from $900,000 to $2.9 million during the epidemic. They produced more than one million jars per week and were still unable to meet the demand. Loyal Vicks customers and new customers stocked up on the medicine to stave off or fight the disease. The Vicks plant in Greensboro, North Carolina, operated around the clock, and salesmen were pulled off the road to help at the manufacturing facility in an effort to keep up with demand. Unfortunately, those millions of jars were useless in fighting this virus. Along with the advertisements for Vicks and other remedies, advertisements appeared in the *Hutchison News* for the Kansas Central Indemnity Company. The company had been formed in 1916, and insurance was a new concept in that area of the country. Their ads promoted testimonials of customers who had submitted "honest" claims for their influenza treatment. For many of the immigrant families on the Great Plains, the cost of insurance to carry them through something like this epidemic was more than their small incomes could bear.



"St. Louis Red Cross Motor Corps on duty, October, 1918 influenza epidemic." Image courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (www.loc.gov/item2011661525).

Hospitals and trained medical personnel were not easily accessible, and pregnant women, especially, relied on the few midwives available. Mrs. Lubbert Lokhorst (Hendrika/Henrietta Bonneveld) was the first Dutch-born midwife to arrive in Lancaster County, Nebraska, around 1881. The arrival of doctors helped to lessen some of the responsibilities of the midwives. Although referred to as "Doctor," Evert Brethouwer had no medical training. He arrived in Wisconsin in 1847 and after his marriage operated a small farm in rural Sheboygan County. He and his wife, Helena van de Wege, migrated to Holland, Nebraska, about 1871. He had been issued a license to practice medicine in Wisconsin before moving to Nebraska.[7] It was reported that he "pulled teeth, delivered babies, and had different kinds of pills for any ailment one might have."[8] The first trained physician to arrive, Dr. Vandenburg, stayed a short time and was quite unpopular. Subsequent doctors were able to establish practices in general medicine but because they did not speak Dutch mothers did not call them for assistance during childbirth.

By 1877, Rev. John Huizenga, pastor of the First Reformed Church in Holland, Nebraska, advertised for a doctor who could speak Dutch and was familiar with obstetrics. Dr. Louis Was[9] had graduated from Rush Medical College in Chicago that year and replied to the advertisement. Dr. Was was from a family of physicians in the Netherlands and had come to the US

in 1877 to join his older brother Johannes, who was already a physician in Paterson, New Jersey. After two years he returned to the Netherlands to study medicine under his father, who was a physician and a druggist. He then returned to the US to study at Rush Medical College in Chicago.

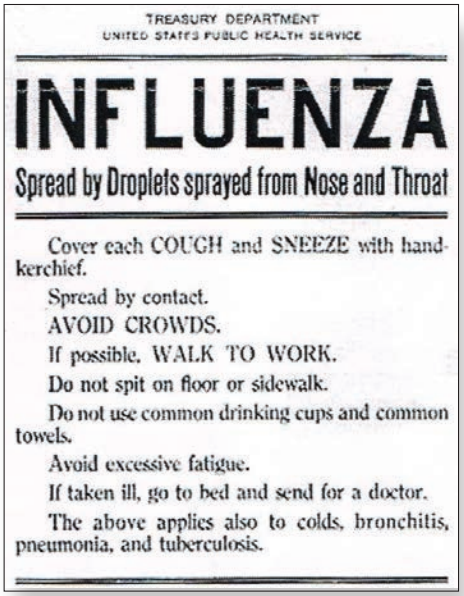
While very successful as an obstetrician, Dr. Was's medical training was not always sufficient to tackle the challenges of diseases ranging from scarlet fever and diphtheria to severe influenza. Access to medication and other treatment options was far more limited in these isolated rural communities. Dr. Was also served the Dutch community in the Panama territory and made calls throughout the Dutch settlements in the area. The challenges that faced him and other rural physicians in those early years of the twentieth century and through the years of the influenza epidemic can be seen in Dr. Was's own words:

> At nine o'clock in the morning I was called by telephone to visit a child ill with pneumonia, four and a half miles west of Holland. The snow was from four to six feet high and many fences were completely covered. The liveryman flatly refused to go through so much snow. Finally, I persuaded a young man to go with us. Armed with two shovels we started on our snow shoveling trip. As we proceeded, the farmers seeing that it was doctor, promptly came to our assistance. By the time we had the road opened for a distance of two and one-half miles, we had six men to help out. Fortunately, we had reached a farmer who had a phone, so I called the party of the sick child whom I was to visit. I told them to send men from that direction and meet us. I told them to have a warm dinner ready for the men who were assisting me on this trip. We finally arrived at our destination at two o'clock in the afternoon, and I found my patient suffering a great deal. In all I had twelve men who aided me in shoveling snow on this trip. Such experiences I had every winter. When these trips occurred at night our suffering was more intense. It was not possible to get help, hence the liveryman and I had to battle the way by ourselves. On such trips I only added the expense of the liveryman to my regular charges.[10]

Diphtheria and scarlet fever had already claimed many lives in the small Dutch community in Bon Homme County, South Dakota, in the 1870s,



"Influenza Ward No. 1 Camp Hospital No. 45, Aix les Bains, Savoie, France." 19 January 1919. Image courtesy of the Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860–1985; National Archives Identifier 86709539 (http://catalog.archives.gov/id/86709539).



TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

INFLUENZA

Spread by Droplets sprayed from Nose and Throat

Cover each COUGH and SNEEZE with handkerchief.
Spread by contact.
AVOID CROWDS.
If possible, WALK TO WORK.
Do not spit on floor or sidewalk.
Do not use common drinking cups and common towels.
Avoid excessive fatigue.
If taken ill, go to bed and send for a doctor.
The above applies also to colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.

Joint Archives ad. Image courtesy of *The Joint Archives Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Summer 2018, Holland, Michigan.

and their access to medical care was no better than in Nebraska. Bon Homme County was home to three hundred and eighty-two Dutch-born residents in 1915. By 1920 that number had dropped to two hundred and seventy, partially due to the migration into the nearby Todd County, where land prices were cheaper.

World War I and the Flu

Emmanuel Reformed Church in Springfield sent twenty-one young men to serve in World War I. They all returned except one—John Palsma. John was the oldest son of Lou (Louw Hendricks) Palsma and Lena (Helena Regina) Hamminga. Lou had emigrated from Baarderadeel, Friesland, in 1872 and Lena from Muntendam, Groningen, in 1892. They married in Orange City, Iowa, on 6 December 1893, and John was born in Sheldon, Iowa, 29 March 1896. John was one of thousands of servicemen who contracted influenza while serving in France, and where he died on 28 March 1919.

The letters of Ulbe Eringa to his family in the Netherlands provide



"Masks for protection against influenza. New York City conductorettes wearing masks." 16 October 1918. Image courtesy of the Record Group 165: Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, 1860–1952; National Archives Identifiers 45499323 (http://catlog.archives.gov/id45499323).

only a brief glimpse into the effect of the outbreak in South Dakota. Although members of his family had contracted the flu, they all recovered. In December 1919 his only comment was, "The influenza last year caused many deaths but I don't hear much about it any more."[11]

The population of Pella, Iowa, during the years of the epidemic was about thirty-one hundred. The existence of a local newspaper in Pella provides a closer look at the impact of the pandemic on this community. The *Pella Chronicle* reported on a weekly basis those who were ill or had died, the status of quarantines and closures, and the recommendations of the city council and the mayor. As had been reported in the Nebraska papers, the army camps were beleaguered with flu victims. Although most of the camps were quarantined, the boys still came home ill. The first report of this in Pella was of the return of Carl VerSteeg. He had been working with the Army YMCA at Camp Dodge, had contracted the flu, and returned to Pella.[12] A week later the report came of the deaths of Henry S. Tyseeling at Fort Riley, Kansas, and Teunis S. VerBeek at Camp Dodge, Iowa.[13]

The death of Gerrit Van Setten on 4 October at Camp Pike, Arkansas, was not reported until 31 October. Gerrit had emigrated in 1912 with his three sisters, leaving behind their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jan Willem Van Setten in Doorn, Utrecht, Netherlands. Gerrit had served for only ten weeks at the time of his death.[14] Two weeks before Gerrit's death was reported, Rev. C. De Leeuw[15] of the First Christian Reformed Church and Rev. John Wesselink from the First Reformed Church called for more stringent quarantines. Both served on the Committee for Resolutions for the Red Cross. In spite of their call, by late November there were one hundred and two reported cases and twenty-three new cases on 21 November alone. On that same day it was reported that Theresa Visser, who had started as a nurse at Mercy Hospital about six months prior, had died within four days of taking ill.[16]

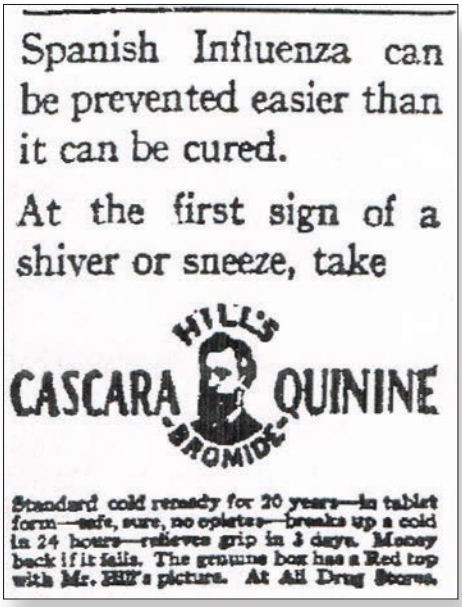
Quarantines

The illness was spreading so rapidly that by 5 December the decision was made to close Central College. There were now three hundred and four reported cases in Pella and one hundred and sixty-five families in quarantine. Within the month doctors thought they had gotten the best of the flu. The city had been under quarantine for eleven weeks, and the number of families subjected to quarantine had dropped to fifty. The emergency hospital had only twenty current patients suffering from influenza.

This advertisement in the *Pella Chronicle* by Alex DeBoer provides a bit of insight into the challenges the community faced:

> We herewith wish to express our appreciation and gratitude to all who have in our time of sickness and trouble rendered valuable assistance. Our whole family being stricken with the influenza at the same time; especially to Dr. Chalfont, who attended us until she herself became exhausted; then Dr. Carpenter taking charge of same even at a time when he was a very busy man. The helping hands of the kind nurses and those who day and night ministered to our dear sick ones; also the comforting words and prayers of our pastor, Rev. C. De Leeuw, who by word and deeds so willingly and unselfishly gave himself to our family and neighbors; the telephone company and any and all persons of whom we may have no knowledge at this time; but above all to our Lord and Christ, who has sustained and supported us and who it was pleased to spare all of us so that we may now be on the road to recovery.[17]

Alleviation came by early January



Sheboygan Press ad 31 October 1918. Image courtesy of the *Sheboygan Press*. Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

1919 when reported cases dropped from two hundred to less than twenty-four.[18] H. J. VandenBerg, Pella's mayor, and the Board of Health finally ordered the quarantine lifted on 5 January 1919. After a closure of almost six weeks, Central College permitted classes to resume on 7 January. As in most communities around the United States, however, this was the calm before the next storm. By the end of January, the flu reappeared, and placing families under quarantine was resumed. The following article in the *Pella Chronicle* is a rare example in which the quarantined families were actually named:

> Last week we reported that Spanish Influenza has reappeared in Pella–two families being quarantined at that time. Towards the end of the week, the number of cases was largely increased, and Marshal Charley Dennis has been kept busy tacking up the yellow cards that warn the public of the presence of the disease. So far as we have learned, all cases are in milder form than those that prevailed last year. The homes reported quarantined last week have been released, and even some of those shut up on Friday and Saturday are already out. The list of homes under quarantine at some time between Friday and Wednesday noon, as this is written are those of Walter Vander Har, Antonia Braam, Gerrit Brouwer, Mrs. G. Bos, Otto De Hoog, Mrs. John Vander Pol, H. Van Roekel, H. S. Keuning, Perry Renaud, M. M. Boot, Dewey Koopman, A. P. Vandermeiden, John Vander Ploeg, C. Van Steenhoek, Mrs. John Dekker, W. P. Kaapman, Mrs. Charles Groenweg, John Meyer, George Kimmel, G. Goedhart, and A. J. Ten Hagen. We have heard of a number of other cases of illness where flu was suspected but the home not yet quarantined. It will be recalled that Pella was shut off from schools, churches, and all other public meetings for nearly three months last year on account of this disease, and yet it continued to spread, many deaths resulted from it. We have as yet no talk of closing school or other gatherings, and probably it will not be considered worthwhile unless cases develop of a more dangerous type.[19]

Further to the north the *Sioux Center News* reported: "Among the one hundred and seven Sioux Center men that saw military service during World War I were Fred Kooi, Ben Kooi, and Gerrit Vander Lugt. Only one of the one hundred and seven lost his life and that was due to flu, not war."[20] This was in sharp contrast to the report that almost all of the men from Holland, Michigan, who died in World War I were killed by diseases like the Spanish influenza.[21]

In his book *A Pocket of Civility, A History of Sioux County*, Mike Vanden Bosch provides the following insight:

> In Sioux County all the churches and schools were closed and no meeting of any kind was allowed except in the open. By Armistice Day, November 11, the threat of the disease had passed. During this time (1915-1919) in Lebanon, Reverend Jonker was ministering to the eighty families who were members of the Lebanon Christian Reformed Church. He shall long be remembered for the sacrifices he made in behalf of the congregation during the flu epidemic. When he could not ride, he would walk. And he lost many a night's sleep sitting up with those whom the doctors had given up on.[22]

Vanden Bosch, in an article in the *Banner* entitled "Telling Your Life Story," relates that the epidemic was a perfect example of how stories could remain hidden unless pointed questions were asked. He recalled that his father had never spoken about the circumstances of the death of his first wife. At his second wife's funeral he finally related the following to his children:

> In 1918 many people had already died of the flu, and we thought the epidemic was over. Then on a Wednesday in February 1919, I got the flu and my wife cared for me. No one dared to come on our farmyard—I had no visitors, not even a doctor. Only one cousin dared to come on my yard to do my chores and then left hastily. On Friday morning my wife caught the flu—she died 18 hours later, midnight Saturday. I could not attend her funeral, and no one dared to visit me—such was the fear of the flu.[23]

The Dutch communities in Michigan were as ravaged as any other. The statistics coming from Camp Custer in Battle Creek were astounding. Over one hundred thousand soldiers had been at this camp during the course of the war. There was even a hotel that family members could utilize in order to visit their boys. This would prove fatal for many of them, as they were exposed as readily as the soldiers. About ten thousand men were hospitalized at Camp Custer, and about six hundred and seventy-five died, along with their visiting family members. It became necessary to end training earlier at this camp than in

others around the country in order to halt the spread of the flu.

By 19 October 1918, Governor Sleeper had essentially closed down the state, asking the federal government to send medical personnel to help. When the first case was reported in a city, it was likely to see thirty to forty new cases within a twenty-four-hour period. It was hard for communities to know how to react quickly enough to halt the spread. Some businesses closed voluntarily, but it didn't take long for mandatory closings of any kind of public event to become the norm. The governor also declared that any person who died from the flu had to have a private funeral rather than one in a church. This mandate was made in most states throughout the US. The bodies of soldiers were not allowed to come home because of this ban.

The *Banner* provided small snapshots of the epidemic's effect on Christian Reformed congregations throughout Michigan and around the country. The First Christian Reformed Church in Fremont, Michigan, mourned the loss of Ben Lambers, who died at twenty-one years of age after serving the country for only a few days. The church at Comstock, Michigan, reported only one death in the 14 November 1918 issue, but it was a particularly tragic one. Mrs. R. Cramer died of pneumonia after giving birth and left behind a husband and nine children. It also included updates from Rev. John W. Brink concerning the severity of the outbreaks at the Zuni Christian Reformed Mission and the Rehoboth Christian School in New Mexico.

Garret Kwekkeboom and his family arrived in the US in 1918 from Enschede, Overijssel, and had settled in an old log cabin about twenty-five miles from Kalamazoo. Garret's daughter, Dena,[24] reported to the *Tampa Tribune* in February of 1994 her recollections of the distress the influenza caused her family:

> Soon after we arrived, we heard news going around of a flu epidemic. I heard my parents talk about how many of our soldiers fighting the war in Europe were coming down with this influenza and how it was spreading all over Europe. Then I remember my father coming home one day desperately ill with the chills and high fever that went with this illness. Because he was afraid my mother and I would get sick, he tried to sleep on the kitchen floor, which was nearly impossible. But soon Mother and I also had symptoms. All church services, school classes and other kinds of meetings were cancelled. There was no doctor nearby. Even if there had been, we were snowed in – and besides, the doctors didn't know how to stop this terrible illness. Our landlady, who lived on the same farm, made up a salve for us of lard, wintergreen oil liniment and some other concoctions, telling us to rub it on our chests. She also told us to take a teaspoon of kerosene followed by a teaspoon of sugar. That was the only remedy she knew. But nothing seemed to help. After weeks and weeks of illness, weakness and coughing, we miraculously recovered. One family in the little country church we attended lost five of their nine children.[25]

Another sobering example of the impact of the epidemic is found in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin. Cornelia De Young, a thirty-four-year-old mother of seven children, died of influenza on 17 October 1918. She had emigrated from Westkapelle, Zeeland, in 1886 with her parents, Pieter den Hollander and Cornelia Gabrielse, and had settled in the township of Holland in Sheboygan County. She married Edward De Young (Adriaan de Jonge) in 1903 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Edward had migrated with his parents, Michael De Young (Machiel/Mitchel de Jonge) and Dina van Maldegem from Kruiningen, Zeeland, in 1889 and settled in Kent County, Michigan.

After Cornelia's death, Edward placed his seven children with other families. Although it is unlikely they



"Deadly: the 1918 Influenza Pandemic." Image courtesy of the *Columbia Surgery News,* 21 January 2016.

were formally adopted, five of them assumed the surnames of the families that took them in. And Edward returned to Grand Rapids alone. In 1922 he returned to Oostburg, Wisconsin, to marry Cena Graskamp. Shortly after their marriage they returned to Grand Rapids but did not take any of the children with them. This may have been a purposeful attempt to not interrupt their lives again, but one has to wonder at the trauma the children experienced at essentially losing both of their parents. There were, however, visits over the years noted in the newspaper columns devoted to news in these communities. It seems telling that in the obituary of one of his sons, Edward is listed only as an out-of-town guest at the funeral. Three of the children did attend Edward's funeral in Grand Rapids, "where they had gone because of the death of Mr. Ed DeYoung."[26]

The Lammers and Morell families in Oostburg fared no better. Garret John Lammers, who was stationed at the US Naval Station in Great Lakes, Illinois, died there on 25 September 1918. His brother Peter was stationed at Camp Gordon in Georgia and was summoned when weeks later his sister, Cynthia, died on 7 December. Three days later Cynthia's two-week-old son, Donald Morell, and their sister Jacomina were also gone. All of these families were treated by Dr. Edward Was, the twin brother of Dr. Louis Was, who was serving the Nebraska Dutch community. He emigrated in 1882, a few years after his brother, and also did his medical training at Rush Medical College in Chicago. He established his practice in Oostburg days after his graduation and was honored by the community in 1934 for fifty years of service.

To a large extent the impact of the war overshadowed the epidemic and the tragedies that families experienced were interwoven between the two. In her Prologue to *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918,* Gina Kolata states:

> The 1918 flu epidemic puts every other epidemic of this century to shame. It was a plague so deadly that if a similar virus were to strike today, it would kill more people in a single year than heart disease, cancers, strokes, chronic pulmonary disease, AIDS, and Alzheimer's disease combined. The epidemic affected the course of history and was a terrifying presence at the end of World War I, killing more Americans in a single year than died in battle in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.[27]

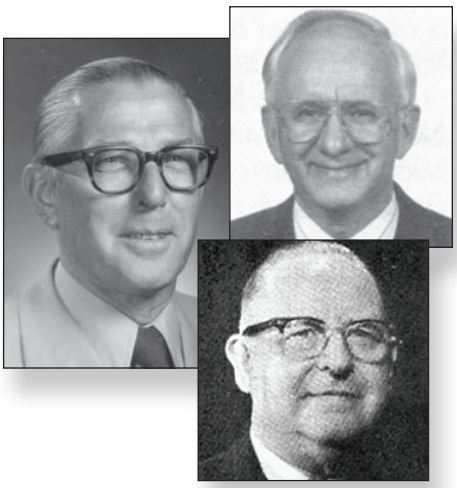
The flu was life altering for far too many people. While there have been advancements in flu vaccinations and treatment, there is still a great deal we have yet to learn in the one hundred years since this pandemic circled the globe.

Endnotes

1. *Banner,* 24 Oct 1918.
2. According to Robert Smith, director of the museum division at Ford Riley, the flu originated there. Scientists believe it may have been a form of swine, or bird flu, and is now considered to have been H1N1. *https://www.army.mil/article/188078/scientists_learn_history_of_spanish_flu_at_fort_riley* .
3. *Omaha Daily Bee,* 3 October 1918.
4. Nebraska State Board of Health.
5. *Sheboygan Press,* 8 October 1918.
6. Gilbert Fite, *The Farmers' Frontier* (New York: Holt & Rinehart, 1966), 34.
7. The Ancestors of George Alfred "Kelly" Northup and Evelyn TeSelle, https://sites.rootsweb.com .
8. Gustave Bade, *A History of the Dutch Settlement in Lancaster County, NE,* dissertation, 1936, 78.
9. Louis Was was born 21 July 1858 in Oosterland, Zeeland, the Netherlands, the son of Frans Pieter Jacobus Was and Maria Amalia van Damme. He married Antonia Kroese in 1888 in Nebraska. He died 21 August 1934 in Santa Ana, California.
10. *History of Doctor Was,* manuscript in private possession of Gustave Bade. See endnote 7.
11. Brian Beltman, *Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley,* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1996), 204.
12. *Pella Chronicle, 10 October 1918.*
13. *Pella Chronicle,* 17 October 1918.
14. *Pella Chronicle,* 31 October 1918.
15. Rev. Cornelius De Leeuw was born on 8 January 1876 in the province of Zeeland, the Netherlands. He arrived in the USA with his parents in 1892 settling in Lodi, New Jersey. He graduated from Calvin in 1904 and spent one year at Princeton Seminary. He married Hermina Johanna Fles in 1905 in Muskegon, Michigan, and the two had five children. He served the following CRCs: Douglas Park, Chicago, Illinois, 1905–1910; First, Pella, Iowa, 1910–1919; Sioux Center, Iowa, 1919–1924; Lansing, Illinois, 1924–1944; Tracy, Iowa, 1944–1953.
16. *Pella Chronicle,* 21 November 1918.
17. *Pella Chronicle,* 12 December 1918.
18. *Pella Chronicle,* 2 January 1919.
19. *Pella Chronicle,* 29 January 1919.
20. *Sioux Center News,* 18 March 1965.
21. Aine O'Connor, "Here As at Home: the 1918 Holland Influenza Epidemic," *Joint Archives Quarterly,* Holland, Michigan, Summer 2018, 4.
22. Mike Vanden Bosch, ed., *A Pocket of Civility, A History of Sioux Count,* (Sioux Falls, SD: Modern Press, Inc., 1976), 229.
23. *Banner,* 18 January 2011.
24. Berdena was born 30 March 1913 in Enschede, Overijssel, to Garret Kwekkeboom and Margret Huiskes. She married Arnold Wykstra in Kalamazoo, Michigan, 28 May 1934.
25. *Tampa Tribune,* 1 February 1994.
26. *Sheboygan Press,* 14 March 1951.
27. Gina Kolata, *Flu:The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918* (New York: Farrarm Straus & Giroux, 1999).

The Dutch Immigration/International Society: End of an Era

Janet Sheeres



Clockwise from left: John Witte Sr., Neal Peters, Henry De Lugt. Images courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Janet Sheeres is a researcher, author, editor, and frequent contributor to Origins. *She has authored three books and edited and annotated one. She frequently presents her findings at various historical, genealogical, and church organizations. Her current research is centered on Dutch immigrant women working as midwives in Dutch colonies in the United States.*

Even a decade after the Second World War the Netherlands was still struggling economically. That, combined with a housing shortage and other factors, led to mass emigration from the Netherlands. The trickle that began in the late 1940s became a veritable wave in the 1950s, when Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States all became immigrant destination points.

The Witte family, father Johannes, mother Ena, and seven children arrived in Grand Rapids in January 1956. Although the Wittes did not have any relatives here, they chose the city because they wanted to live where there were Christian Reformed churches, Christian schools, and an established Dutch community. However, this "established Dutch community" had been so thoroughly Americanized that Dutch newcomers found it sometimes difficult to fit in.

Thus, when this post WWII wave of Dutch immigrants arrived in the United States, they, like many immigrants before them, sought each other's company. This was also the case with the Dutch settling in the Grand Rapids area, including the Witte family.

After only a year in America, Witte and several other Dutch immigrants joined together to assist each other to acclimate to the American culture. Their ideas culminated on 18 March 1957, when four men—Henry De Lugt, John Witte, Cornelius (Neal) Peters, and one other unnamed person—met in the home of Henry De Lugt, to form the Dutch Immigrant Society (in 1984 changed to the Dutch International Society) better known as the DIS. In the first issue of the *d.i.s.* magazine (1970) Witte wrote, "Upon arrival in the USA many immigrants felt the need to remain together, to hold on to each other, as it were. The main reasons for this attempt to associate with like-minded people were a lack of knowledge of the English language, a feeling of loneliness, and confrontation with totally different and new situations. The hardships resulting from these inconveniences could conceivably lead to an immigrant's failure to adjust to his newly chosen country." Their efforts bore fruit and soon other immigrants joined.

At that first meeting Henry De Lugt was elected president and Peters secretary. The minutes make clear the committee's intentions which were to arrange for Dutch-language worship services and other programs. Their first order of business was to arrange for a Dutch-language Easter service, schedule a pastor, a meeting place, an organist, etc. At the second meeting, in October of 1957, a Dutch-language Advent service was planned. These Dutch-language Easter and Advent services became annual events.

With such limited goals, it is remarkable that this small band of immigrants became one of the largest and oldest Dutch-American organization in the United States, with a mandate to maintain, keep, and strengthen Dutch immigrants' ties with their Dutch heritage.

Six years after forming their society, the board decided to incorporate with the State of Michigan. The Articles of Incorporation were filed on 30 July 1963 with the first meeting as a legal entity following on 11 September 1963. Board members were Henry De Lugt, president; Dirk Bakhuyzen, vice president; John Witte, secretary; Lucas De Vries, treasurer; and Clarence Visser, assistant treasurer. At that time Secretary Witte informed John Steketee, Netherlands Consul, that the Society had 1,250 members, with most of them residing in Michigan, and approximately four hundred living outside of the state.

For the following decades the DIS functioned as a bridge between post WWII Dutch immigrants and the "old country." During the Society's peak years, about 15,000 families were members, living not only in Western Michigan, but also in other states and Canada.

Throughout its existence the DIS sponsored Dutch choirs, bands, orchestras, organ concerts, and film programs, filling up auditoriums around the country. Membership meetings averaged 1,000 persons, with 1,400 attending a program of Dutch comedians Snip and Snap in the Kentwood High School auditorium in the fall of 1972. These events were not only held in Grand Rapids, but also in places like Detroit, Holland, and Kalamazoo, Michigan; Pella, Iowa; and Chicago, Illinois. The September 1976 issue of *d.i.s.* listed an impressive twenty-eight programs for the months of October, November, and December with thirteen taking place in other states as far away as South Dakota. To make these events *gezellige* gatherings, the wives of the board members served refreshments and, until 2007, these women also provided a Sinterklaas celebration, or *feestje*, for the children of DIS members.

Just to give you an idea of the scope



Sinterklaas program for children. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

of these *feestjes,* the March 1979 *d.i.s.* reported that, on 5 December 1978, Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital had a visit from Saint Nicolas, when the DIS presented a check for $3,200 for a "Sip and Puff" wheelchair. This was a sophisticated electronic wheelchair designed for use by severely disabled patients who may not have the strength to operate a conventional electric wheelchair. In 1987 the Sinterklaas celebration was held in Chicago where over six hundred people attended the 12 December program including the Consul General of the Netherlands. Fifty fourth-grade students from the Lansing Christian School sang Sinterklaas songs. DIS member Albert Slendebroek often played the role of the good saint.

With that many members sending in their annual dues, you can imagine the amount of work it took to open the envelopes, mark off the checks against the membership list, and deposit the checks. This task fell to the treasurer, Luke De Vries, who together with his wife Ann and a few other volunteers worked tirelessly for the Society.

Charter Flights

Around 1959 the Board discussed whether they should help members visit their homeland by organizing charter flights. Their thoughts turned into actions and over the next twenty years



Luke De Vries. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

the DIS conducted a highly successful charter flight program helping many thousands of its members to be able to visit their families and friends in the Netherlands at reduced rates. In 1961 the prices were $325 for adults, $205 for children two to twelve years old, and $35 for babies up to two years. The duration of a stay in the Netherlands was usually six weeks! A large burden of the logistical work for these flights fell on the shoulders of John Witte, Dirk Bakhuyzen, Neal Peters, Luke De Vries, and Henry De Lugt. Luke De Vries recalls spending many evenings trying to arrange the seating schedule on the airplanes. At first Pan-American Airlines worked with the DIS, but soon KLM (*Koninglijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij*) saw an opportunity

and outbid Pan-Am. Being a Dutch company, KLM was a more natural fit to fly Dutch immigrants back to their homeland. Passengers would meet at the Bates Street Christian Reformed Church and, after a short devotion and prayer for a safe trip, were bussed to either Chicago or Detroit from where the flights would take off for Amsterdam. In one year, 1974, the DIS ran charter flights #34 through #40 with six flights leaving from Detroit and one from Chicago, from where the flight would take them to Amsterdam. In 1978 there were twenty-four flights! Thirteen from Chicago and eleven from Detroit.

In the beginning the DIS board members, not knowing all the rules and regulations of the airline industry, learned the hard way. On 9 January 1962, Neal Peters accompanied a Pan-Am flight back from the Netherlands to the USA and was told by an airline employee, "Mr. Peters you have to help us. This airplane is overloaded. You have to put all your people, one by one, on a scale, with their luggage and all extras they took along from Holland." Apparently, the passengers had loaded up so much on "stuff" they bought in the Netherlands, that the total weight had to be recalibrated because the airline had to figure out how much gas and oil it could take on at Reykjavik, Iceland. In spite of some glitches, the work of the DIS on behalf of thousands of members and their families is one for the record books.

The d.i.s. magazine

To observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands, a special "*Herdenkings Concert*" (Commemoration Concert) was held on the evenings of 9 and 11 May 1970 in the Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids and at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, respectively. Director Arie Pronk directed the *Christelijke Residentie Mannenkoor* from 's Gravenhage, the Netherlands. This 230-voice male choir was the largest in the world at the time. DIS members in the West Michigan area hosted the choir members in their homes. It was a massive logistical undertaking to find host families and match them with choir members.

Also, in commemoration of the Liberation of the Netherlands, the DIS launched a magazine, simply titled *d.i.s.* The first issue, dated 1970, contains congratulatory letters from then President Nixon, Senator Robert Griffin, Congressman Gerald R. Ford, Consul General Jan C. van den Berg, and several other notables. The Society formed a publication committee to continue the publication, and was able to produce a quarterly magazine that is still being published. Contents of the issues reflect the Christian character of the Society. Each issue features a devotional piece written by area clergy. Nearly all articles, especially in the early issues, were written in the Dutch and English languages. Besides news about the Society, articles include stories, book reports, news of Holland, Dutch art, language, literature, history, geography, etc.

Not only did the *d.i.s.* keep its members up to date on Dutch news but was also helping its readers to understand the history of earlier Dutch immigrants in American history. Dr. Elton C. Bruins, Professor of Historical



Pan-Am charter flight. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



First *d.i.s.* magazine cover 1973. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Theology at Western Theological Seminary, wrote on such topics as Rev. A. C. Van Raalte, and the early Dutch settlements in West Michigan. Nelson Nieuwenhuis, Associate Professor of History and Archivist at Northwestern College, wrote about the Dutch settlements in Iowa, and South Dakota. Y. C. Spykman, Chair of the Committee in the East of the Christian Reformed Church, wrote about the Dutch settlements in New Jersey, while Gerald F. De Jong, Professor of History at the University of South Dakota, wrote about the early Dutch settlements in Wisconsin. Editors have included W. Turkenburg, S. Woudstra, W. Lagerwey, and, since 1998, Arend Vander Pols.



Information pamphlet. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

For their printing services, the DIS turned to Pieter Wobbema, of Wobbema and Son, a linotype printing business in Grand Rapids. Wobbema, who was president of the DIS board for two terms in the 1980s, chuckled when he stated that he was "the only American-born board member in the DIS history." His company printed the *d.i.s.* as well as the programs, brochures, membership cards, and whatever else needed printing.

In 1975, 18,300 copies were mailed out. Last December that number was down to 1,020. One of the casualties of disbanding the Society is the publication of the magazine, which will print its last issue in September of this year. An index of past articles can be found at *http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcpi/adv.stm* Be sure to choose DIS in the publication dialog box. All back copies of the magazine are available in the Hekman Library of Calvin College on the 5th floor, call # JV6001.D2

The American Bicentennial

With 14,000 members in 1975, the DIS began to dream how to best celebrate the American Bicentennial. A Bicentennial committee was formed consisting of W. Turkenburg, M. L. Smith, C. Overvoorde, W. C. Wichters, and Suze Romein. One idea proposed was to have a field day for all Dutch immigrants, including non-DIS members. The amount of $5,000



Program brochure. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

was set aside for the purpose and a central place was selected. The Grand Rapids Vintage Car Club displayed their antique cars, sky divers performed four jumps, a hot air balloon was available for an evening flight, fireworks, food tents, bands, etc. This field day—named Landdag—was such a success that it was repeated annually until last September when it too was terminated due to lack of attendees.

Much of the success of the annual DIS *Landdag* belongs to Luke and Ann De Vries and Tom Slenderbroek who worked tirelessly to make the day a success. Krijn Klompien took care of the games, such as the Dutch game of *sjoelbakken*. Dutch delicacies, such as *zoute haring*, pigs in a blanket, *oliebollen*, pea soup, etc., were consumed in large quantities. Fred Hekstra's Frisian horses were always a big attraction as well. Drawings for door prizes, including even a trip to the Netherlands, concluded the day-long festivities.

Another idea for the Bicentennial

celebration was proposed by Calvin College Art Professor Chris Stoffel Overvoorde. He suggested making four paintings portraying two hundred years of history between the Netherlands and the United States. The completed paintings depicted the Exploration, the Great Migration, the Midwest Migration, and the Integration. This project found its fulfillment on 2 February 1976 with a presentation of the paintings to President Gerald R. Ford in the White House Oval Office. Board members W. Turkenburg and L. De Vries, together with Prof. and Mrs. Overvoorde, represented the Society for this event. The paintings were displayed from March until the end of the year in the Great Hall of Commerce Building in Washington DC and are now part of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum collection.

Because the American Bicentennial coincided with the Grand Rapids Sesquicentennial, the DIS arranged for a gift of 25,000 hyacinth bulbs to be flown in from the Netherlands as a gift to the city. These bulbs were planted by the Grand Rapids Park Department employees in the fall of 1975, so that in April 1976 the red, white, and blue hyacinths were blooming in fragrant color on the Calder Plaza. When the hyacinths were through blooming, the bulbs were dug up, stored, and replanted the next fall.

One of the more ambitious Bicentennial plans was to sponsor a traveling exhibition highlighting the Dutch maritime history and was called "Dutch Navigation: An Exploration of the New World." This traveling exhibition would be for one year beginning February 1976. However, the sheer logistics and price of gathering the artifacts in the Netherlands, crating and shipping them, and the hefty insurance required for them, became the ultimate reason to forego the project.

Scholarships and Endowment Fund

Only ten years after their first meeting, in September 1967, the DIS began granting scholarships. The first four scholarships in the amount of $250 each were given to two students at Hope College and two at Calvin College. At first the selection of students to receive a scholarship was left in the hands of the directors of Scholarship and Financial Aid of Hope and Calvin College. The following year the amounts were increased to $500 for four scholarships, again with Hope and Calvin students as the beneficiaries. By April 1974 the amount of scholarship funds was increased to $3,250 and the number of schools from two to six: Hope and Calvin



White House visit. L–R: Artist Chris Overvoorde; President Gerald R. Ford; DIS President Wm. Turkenburg; Greta Overvoorde; Chairman of the DIS Bicentennial Luke De Vries. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

in Michigan; Trinity in Illinois; and Dordt, Central, and Northwestern in Iowa. The majority of recipients were children of post WWII Dutch immigrants living in Canada.

In 2008 an Endowment Fund was set up at Calvin College to benefit the Dutch Language Department. This endowment allowed many more scholarships. Ten scholarships of $3,000 were awarded in the 2018-2019 school year. In this way, the DIS is leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Youth Exchange Program

Besides the scholarships, the DIS began discussing a Youth Exchange Program. Already in 1974 it had provided financial assistance for Dr. Walter Lagerwey and a small group of his Dutch-language class students to travel to the Netherlands. Perhaps this trip gave rise to the idea for a student exchange program; however, it was not until 1984 that the plans for a youth exchange program began in earnest. The DIS partnered with the *Christelijke Emigratie Centrale* (Christian Emigration Bureau, CEC) in the Netherlands to make it happen. In 1985 six girls from West Michigan spent five weeks in the Netherlands where they were guests in Dutch homes. At the same time an equal number of young people from the Netherlands experienced the hospitality of American host families in the Grand Rapids area. These Dutch teens were treated to an extra trip when the DIS arranged for a motorhome to take them to Niagara Falls, Boston, New York, and Washington DC. The following year an even larger group of teens was dispatched across the ocean. Nelleke Vanderheide accompanied the Dutch students back to the Netherlands, returning with the American group. In 1990 thirteen American students were hosted in the Netherlands, while thirteen Dutch students came to the United States. The program ran into a snag when the CEC decided to back out of the partnership. Apparently, it was becoming more difficult to find host families on both sides of the ocean. Without the cooperation of the CEC, the DIS decided to put the program on hold for the time being; however, it never regained traction. Even though it was of short duration, the Youth Exchange Program left lasting relationships.



Wim Vander Panne. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

In 2016, one of the students, Carol Woltjer, wrote in the *d.i.s.* about the thirty-year-long friendship with her Dutch host family, De Vries in Wilnis, the Netherlands, and her Woltjer family in Jenison, Michigan. Over the years they have stayed connected through snail-mail, e-mail, and now Skype.

One Washington State recipient, Mark Sheeres, flew straight from Seattle to Amsterdam where his host family picked him up. Mark, a senior at Lynden Christian High School, was studying organ music at the time and had the good fortune that his host was a well-known Dutch organist, and that the family invited him along on their vacation to Salzburg, Austria.

With these and all the amazing numerous other programs, the DIS has helped thousands of post WWII Dutch immigrants who came here as strangers, to feel more at home in this country without losing ties with their roots. Kudos to the DIS,

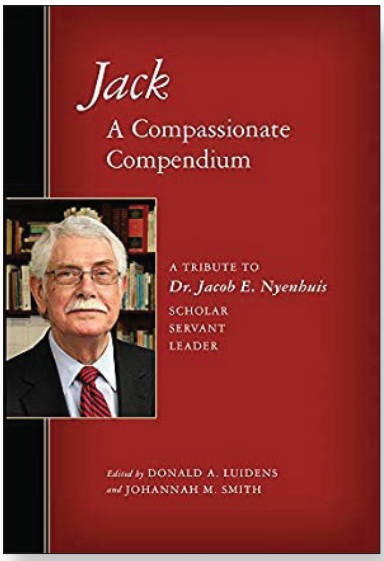
Projected Dissolution

With the membership of the DIS now having dwindled to eight hundred families, funds running low, and its members aging, the board decided that it was time to be practical and to dissolve the society. However, several members, opposed to the dissolution, plan to form a new board, and to revive the society. Since many of the events that shaped the DIS over the years have served their purpose, it will be up to the new board to find new ways of how to serve the second and third generations of Dutch immigrants.

And, well may you ask, what happens to all the materials that an organization like the DIS generated over the years—minutes, brochures, programs, photos, etc.—well, they are now safely stored in nineteen boxes, with ten to twenty folders in each box, and archived under the title Dutch International Society, Collection 429, in the Calvin College Archives, Hekman Library.

All the information for this article is derived from information in this collection as well as conversations with Cornelius (Neal) Peters, Pieter Wobbema, and John Witte.

book review



Jack: A Compassionate Compendium— A Tribute to Dr. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, Scholar, Servant, Leader

Edited by Donald A. Luden and Johanna Smith

The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America

(Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2018)
$20.00

The making of a man—from his genealogical roots to his current scholarly endeavors—this festschrift is equally biographical and a tribute to Jacob Nyenhuis as a scholar, servant, and leader. It is personal in a way that previous festschrifts in the Historical Series were not. For many of us who only know "pieces" of Jack, this volume puts all the pieces of the puzzle together. The three dozen contributions range from personal and professional tributes to artistic contributions.

Contributors were asked to address the ways in which Nyenhuis had had an impact on them personally and professionally. The title of Chapter 1 by Henk Aay says it quite succinctly: "Synopsis of a Remarkable Career." This festshcrift is a synopsis of a remarkable life. It is divided into four sections. Part One: Point of Departure follows the genealogical roots of the Nyenhuis family through his graduate career. Part Two: Minotaur Risen examines his remarkable accomplishments as a Professor of Classics, the author of the best-selling text Latin Via Ovid: A First Course, a champion of women, a leader in the Christian Reformed community, and a mentor par-excellence. Part Three: Corporate Head or Reflective Head reflects on his many administrative roles at Hope College, the Joint Archives of Holland, the Van Raalte Institute, and the impact of those roles on a community far beyond the city limits of Holland, Michigan. Part Four: Laucoon Maze Figure II is an incredible look at his lifelong interest in, and advocacy for, public art and sculpture. Dr. Nyenhuis is internationally recognized as an expert on the Greek myth of Daedalus, a registered tour guide of Greece, and a committed contributor to Dutch-American studies and the study of local history.

In Todd Erickson's tribute he observed that during Nyenhuis's time at Hope College the best characteristics of the college and community were education, tradition, respect, compassion, responsibility, humility, and faith. These all seem to be the measure of the man who is reflected in these pages. Mr. Erickson further reflects on Dr. Nyenhuis, "He is a visionary, a scholar, and a believer in others. Jack is courageous, generous, and compassionate. He is true to himself, his family, his community and God."

Mary Risseeuw

for the future

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

When the Lathes Stopped Turning: The Grand Rapids Furniture Strike of 1911
by Robert Schoone-Jongen

From Bekius to Bekins Van Lines, Inc.: Dutch Entrepreneurs Found the Oldest and Largest Household Moving Company in the United States
by Robert Yonker

Immigrants Make Fine Furniture: Baker Furniture and Hekman Furniture
by Mary Risseeuw

Grandpa's Philosophy, "If You Can't Find a Job, Create One!"
by Joyce Cammenga and Ronald Cammenga



Van Raalte's chair, used circa 1860 in the council room.

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Historical Magazine of The Archives
Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary
Volume XXXVII • Number 1 • 2019

