Origins

Origins

Volume XXXIX • Number 2 • 2021

Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives

Heritage Hall Archives is located in the Hekman Library at Calvin University. It is the archives of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University.

Heritage Hall, Calvin University
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546
(616) 526-6313

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.

William Katerberg
Editor

Laurie Haan
Circulation Manager

Tracey L. Gebbia
Designer

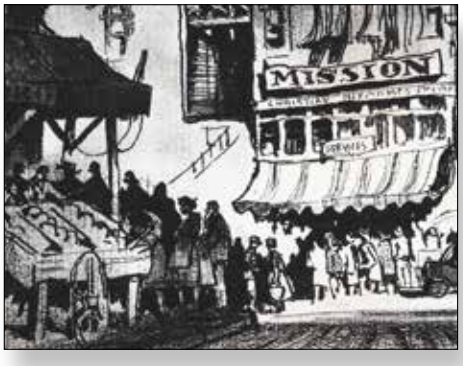
James C. Schaap
Robert Schoone-Jongen
Robert P. Swierenga
Contributing Editors

InnerWorkings
Printer

Cover photo:
From the Centennial Celebration calendar of the Christian Reformed Church in 1957. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

page 11

page 21



page 31

page 42

from the editor. . .

From the editor . . .

The articles in this issue of *Origins* explore a variety of themes. They include immigrant stories, concerns about immigrants, celebrating the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), and relations between Native Americans and the CRC.

The stories by Robert Schoone-Jongen and Liesbeth ten Hoeve Almendarez are about immigrants. Schoone-Jongen depicts the influence of an immigrant businessman, Abraham Vermeulen, in the Dutch immigrant community in Paterson, New Jersey. Ten Hoeve Almendarez chronicles four generations of the LeCocq family, from the first Dutch colony in Pella, Iowa, to Sioux County, then Harrison, South Dakota, and finally Lynden, Washington. The stories of Vermeulen and the LeCocq family are interesting in their own right, but also illustrate larger themes in the histories of immigrant communities, Reformed Christianity, and (in the case of the LeCocqs) frontier life.

The article by David Zwart on the 1957 Centennial Celebrations of the CRC and the book review by James Bratt explore Reformed history. The Centennial Celebration certainly included immigration stories, but it focused on the CRC's faithfulness to God and to Reformed Christianity. Bratt reviews a new biography of Herman Bavinck, the Dutch Reformed theologian and political leader, notably on how his Neo-Calvinism aspired to be both orthodox and engaged with modern life. Like Abraham Kuyper, Bavinck's thought and life were influential among Christian Reformed folk in North America.

My two essays explore stories that often are overlooked. One looks at the relationship between well-established, assimilated Dutch Americans and a wave of new Dutch immigrants, especially to Canada, in the decades after World War II. The CRC assisted and even helped recruit these immigrants. But native-born Americans of Dutch descent and the new immigrants were wary of each other sometimes. The other essay by me explores relations between Navajo Christians and the CRC, both efforts to bridge cultural differences and ways in which racism created barriers for Native peoples. We tend to focus on the missionaries, and most of the records we have in Heritage Hall are from CRC missionary perspectives. My essay tries to recover Navajo perspectives through the lives of two men who worked as assistants to CRC missionaries. One of them also was the Navajo Tribal Chairman in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

News from the Archives

As I wrote in the Spring 2021 issue, Heritage Hall is open for business even as COVID-19 continues to complicate our work. We are receiving more material, especially from Christian Reformed congregations sending their council minutes and other records. Work on the Van Raalte project with the Van Raalte Institute (VRI) at Hope College continues. Heritage Hall and the VRI received a grant from the Dutch government in 2020 to digitize our Van Raalte collections and put them online. (See more details in "From the Editor" in the Spring 2021 issue.)

We have seen a staffing change in Heritage Hall. Many of you know Hendrina Van Spronsen, who started working in Heritage Hall in 1989. She retired in June 2021, having worked with several curators over three decades. Hendrina did many things for Heritage Hall and *Origins* over the years, taking on new kinds of work as needed. We are reviewing her position, thinking about the needs of the moment, and working on creating a reconfigured position. We can replace the hours she worked but cannot replace Hendrina. The breadth and depth of her knowledge of the collections in Heritage Hall, and of the history of Dutch immigrants and Reformed Christianity, cannot easily be replaced. The relationships she built with people in the archives, the university, seminary, and denomination, and with scholars and patrons, cannot be replaced. We miss our colleague and friend, and we wish her and her family well.

If there are "hiccups" with your subscription (e.g., wrong mailing address), or if your name should but does not appear "contributors" pages in *Origins*, please be patient. These

were among the many things Hendrina did for *Origins* that we are figuring out! I also missed her editor's eye as I worked on this issue of *Origins*.

I continue to be in Heritage Hall for the whole day, most days. The other staff—Laurie Haan and Emily Koelzer—are part time, but collectively cover the whole week. All three of us have access to the general email address of Heritage Hall (crcarchives@calvin.edu) and general phone number (616-526-6313). Please be persistent if you call and no one answers. Leave a message. Email. You also can find us via the Heritage Hall website: (https://library.calvin.edu/guide/collections/hh/staff).

I am thankful for our volunteers and student workers. Phil Erffmeyer collects and processes congregation and classic minutes. Clarice Newhof is working on cataloging our extensive photo collection. This fall we have three student workers. They are working on the online catalogs of our collections, helping with the Van Raalte project, and helping me research the multicultural history of the Christian Reformed Church.

In between issues of *Origins* the magazine, remember to check out *Origins Online* (at https://origins.calvin.edu/). We have been busy enough that we have neglected the blog over the summer and early fall, but I expect to again have more material there later this fall. If you're on Facebook, check out our page for bits and pieces of history and news related to Heritage Hall (https://www.facebook.com/heritagehallarchives).

A New Way to Subscribe and Support Origins

Finally, we have a new way to subscribe to *Origins*, using a credit card. Go to *Origins Online*, our blog. Click on the "Origins in Print" link at the top of the home page of the blog. You'll see back issues of *Origins* from the very first one to 2014. You'll also see a link titled "SUBSCRIBE TO *ORIGINS*." The link takes you to an online store operated by Financial Services at Calvin. You'll see options for Heritage Hall, the Reflecting Faith – De Vries Institute, Student Life, and the Van Lunen Center. Click on the Heritage Hall option. You'll see two options. One is "Research & Scanning." That is for patrons who ask us to do that kind of work. The other is "Origins – Subscription and Contribution Options." Just like any other online "store," you can add stuff to a basket and then choose to "Continue Shopping" or "Checkout." You can "Register" or checkout as a "Guest." You'll go to a secure page where you provide you name, address, phone, and email. The address includes a "state" option. If you're from a country outside the United States, ignore that. On the next page, you'll be able to type in the province, state, or region of the country you are from and enter credit card information. Here is the place to start: (https://origins.calvin.edu/issues/) on the blog website.

We hope this is convenient for you. You can sill send checks or cash by mail. From Heritage Hall's perspective, and that of Financial Services at Calvin University, we hope people will consider switching to this online credit card option. It is cheaper for us to process credit card transactions than deposit cash and checks. If you run into problems, let us know. We can help you do transactions online over the phone.

William Katerberg, Curator

Western Migrations and the LeCocq Family

Liesbeth ten Hoeve Almendarez

The LeCocq family, led by its patriarch, Jean Francois (J. F.), emigrated from the Netherlands to the United States in 1847 as part of the Pella colony in Iowa. In 1872, J. F.'s son Frank Sr. moved his family to Orange City, a new colony in Sioux County in northwestern Iowa. In turn, Frank Jr. led his family to Douglas County, South Dakota, in 1882, helping to start a new colony. Finally, Frank Jr.'s son Ralph LeCocq, a lawyer, moved to Lynden, Washington, in 1914, his parents and brothers following him in 1917.

The LeCocq story is a reminder that migration and community building have been central to American regional and religious histories. Frontier families picked up and moved regularly, often because their farm had failed. They also moved for opportunity, drawn by visions of cheaper or better land on a new frontier. Some people simply had wanderlust. This is not just a story about individuals and families, however, even if it often is told that way in American lore. The desire to start new colonies and build communities also inspired immigrants like the Dutch Reformed.

All these factors can be seen in the first four generations of the LeCocq family in America. By the 1910s, some of the great grandchildren of the first pioneers had left colonizing behind, gone to high school and university, and found work in a variety of professions.

Liesbeth ten Hoeve Almendarez was a student at Northwestern College in Iowa, where she worked in the archives. Currently she is a Staff Accountant at Hogan-Hansen P.C. in Mason City, Iowa.

Immigration to "Amerika"

The LeCocq family story starts not in Iowa or even the Netherlands, but in France. J. F.'s ancestors migrated from France to Belgium and then the Netherlands. Johannes LeCocq (also spelled LeCox, Lecoc, or Le Coq) was born in 1756 in Attenhoven, Belgium. He married Johanna Huysman in 1798. Their son, Jean Francois (J. F.) LeCocq, was born in 1805. The family moved to Amsterdam in 1806, where it joined the French Reformed Church. J. F. became a modestly successful merchant. In 1824, he married Cornelia "Neeltje" Heere, and they soon started a family. [1]

Financial and religious struggles arose in the Netherlands in the 1830s and 1840s. High taxes, high rents, flooding, diseases among livestock and people, severe winters, and crop failure led to poverty and food shortages. King Willem I placed more state control over the national church, clergy, and training. He also renamed the church from the *Gereformeerde Kerk* to the *Hervormde Kerk* (both mean "Reformed"). The religious changes led to the *Afscheiding* (separation) in 1834, when traditionalist Reformed clergy and congregations seceded from the national church.[2] The state persecuted them, fining and jailing their leaders, until Willem II granted them toleration in 1841.

The desire for religious freedom and economic opportunity inspired some seceders to leave for "Amerika" in the 1840s. Rev. Hendrik Pieter Scholte led a group that organized a "Society for Emigration to North America." Among the 800 people who had signed up by March 1847 were J. F. LeCocq, Neeltje, and their six children.[3] J. F. was the Society's treasurer.

In April, most of the colonists boarded the *Pieter Floris* in Amsterdam. J. F. was a leader among them. Scholte, who had left for the U.S. earlier, put him in charge of the *Pieter Floris* group. Some 20 emigrants died on the difficult Atlantic journey. The ship arrived in Baltimore in June, where the colonists met Scholte and the rest of the group and then started their journey westward.

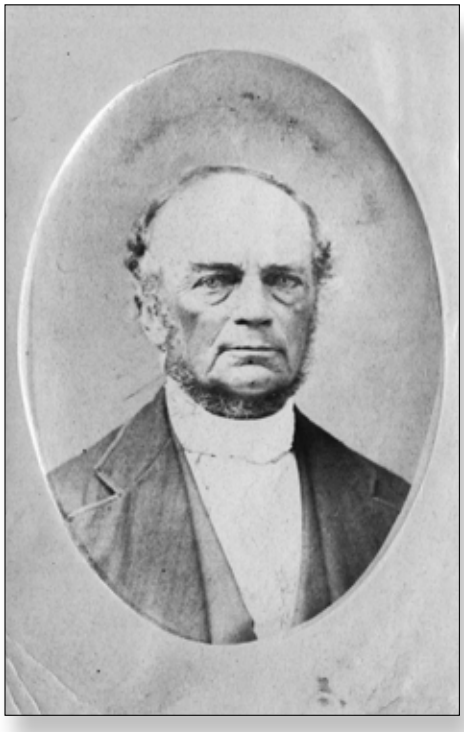


Photo of Jean Francois LeCocq (1805-1888) in 1880. Courtesy of tthe Northwestern College Archives.

The colonists took trains and canal boats to Pittsburgh. They preferred the familiar canal boats to the bumpy railroad cars. From Pittsburgh they took a steamboat on the Ohio River, arriving in St. Louis in July. A small party of men left with Scholte to look for a place to settle, while most of the group suffered in the heat and unsanitary living conditions in St. Louis.[4] The colonists received word about their new home after several weeks. They went by steamboat up the Mississippi River to Keokuk and then traveled 120 miles by horse and wagon to Pella, Iowa. They arrived in their new home in August.[5] Scholte had chosen the name, meaning "city of refuge."

The LeCocq Family in Iowa

The LeCocqs built a log cabin and began farming just outside of Pella. J. F. hoped that in America he would have more time for leisure than in his old life in the business world of Amsterdam. Frontier life was anything but leisurely, however![6]

The first winter was terribly cold, and the spring of 1848 brought a tornado that ruined many of Pella's temporary houses. LeCocq claimed 160 more acres in 1848. He owned two horses, a wagon, and some cows, geese, and doves.[7] He offered a man, his wife, and their children room and board in exchange for working for him. In 1849, J. F. LeCocq started adding on to their small cabin to create a double cabin.[8] That same year, he faced serious setbacks. He lost eight cows. The children and calves shared the milk from the remaining cows. If any was left over, the family used it to make butter to sell. They sold the eggs from their chickens to buy staple foods like bacon and wheat.[9]

The LeCocqs' pride made them reluctant to admit to family and friends in the Netherlands that they were struggling. At first, Neeltje hated living in America, with all the hardships it brought. She told a friend that it had been easier for her to buy expensive meat in Amsterdam than the scraps of bacon, meat, and even bread available in Iowa.[10] In 1850, J. F. LeCocq's estate was worth only $540 (about $19,000 today).[11]

As though living in a new land were not difficult enough, the Pella colonists discovered that Scholte had overcharged many of them (including J. F.) for their land. This news led to unrest, and Scholte resigned from his position as the settlement's leader.[12]

Like many farmers, J. F. and Neeltje depended on their children for labor. Jan and Frank, the two oldest boys, started a store in Pella to support the family.[13] They also helped

Painting of early Pella from an unknown itinerant artist. Courtesy of the Pella Historical Society.

The store opened by Jan and Frank LeCocq. Frank is standing in the background of the image. Courtesy of the Pella Historical Society.

their arthritic father do much of the farm work, especially when he became ill in 1853.[14] The younger children began making and selling cigars. Jan and Frank soon took over their idea and added it to their business.[15]

By 1855 the family's hard work started showing results, leading to an improving financial situation.[16] In 1860, J. F. was worth $3,600 (approximately $125,000 today). [17] J. F. passed away at home in 1888. Some of his descendants stayed in Pella; others took up his community building impulse on new frontiers.

J. F.'s son Jan LeCocq (1826–1911), for example, married Rinske vander Kolk (1837–1894) in 1869. They had four children. He stayed in Pella the rest of his life, selling cigars. He wrote long letters to his brother Frank, who migrated to Orange City in 1872.

Jan's letters reflected how his faith helped him endure both the tribulations of frontier life in the 1840s and 1850s and adapting to American culture as Pella became prosperous in the decades that followed. "O how fortunate it is for those who love God and feel that they do not belong here," he wrote in 1896. We but "are guests and strangers" on "a journey to the Heavenly fatherland."[18] These were common religious sentiments in this era. For Jan, they also likely reflected the challenges of the immigrant experience. In 1899, when his Pella church got a new pastor, he observed that "young pastors" in America were different from "old Dutchmen" like himself. America perhaps never truly became his home, but his faith left him sanguine. "Although the American ways still haven't gotten into me," he explained, "as long as they [clergy] are in the vineyard of the Lord fruitfully working to win souls for Jesus then causes or habits make little difference."[19] Jan died in 1911.[20]

Frank LeCocq (1828–1907), Jan's brother and business partner, married Maria van Gorkum in 1856.[21] Maria's family had immigrated to Pella in 1849. Maria's older sister, Sophia, married a man from Pella, and they and their children later moved to Oregon and California. Her twin sister, Theodora, married Theodorus, another of the LeCocq boys, and stayed in Pella. Frank and Maria had six daughters and one son (Frank Jr.).

Unlike Jan, Frank chose to start over again. As Pella's population grew

Frank LeCocq Sr. (1828-1907). Courtesy of Northwest College Archives.

land prices increased and some farmers had to rent. It would have been difficult for Frank's son and grandsons to buy farms. This was a common pattern. When frontiers became settled communities, free land disappeared or grew expensive, replicating economic conditions in Europe and eastern parts of the United States.

Opportunity came for Frank in 1870. A group from Pella decided to form a new settlement in Sioux County in northwest Iowa. (Other Hollanders were settling in Kansas and Nebraska.) Henry Hospers, one of the original Pella colonists, led the Sioux County colonization association. He had worked as a

Henry Hospers. Courtesy of the Pella Historical Society.

schoolteacher and land surveyor and become an attorney. He recruited Dutch Americans like Frank, getting them to commit money to the project, and traveled to the Netherlands to recruit more settlers. Hospers also served as the group's advisor, real estate agent, and lawyer, and he was the Iowa State Board of Immigration's commissioner to the Netherlands.[22]

Frank was attracted to the idea and joined the group. In 1872, he moved his family to the new town of Orange City.[23] The new settlement lay beyond the railroad lines and even wagon tracks, as had Pella. News of Sioux County's fertile soil spread—a testimony to Hospers's efforts. More families from Pella and other established Iowa towns soon settled in Sioux County, filling Orange City and forming other Dutch towns in Sioux County. The early years were difficult. Grasshoppers plagued farmers in the 1870s. For those who endured the grasshoppers, sometimes with loans from Hospers, the reward eventually came.

Frank prospered in Orange City and became a community leader. He served four years as county treasurer and four as county recorder, and the new Reformed Church there chose him as a deacon. It was not only opportunity that drew Frank, but the impulse to build.

The LeCocq Family in Harrison, South Dakota

Although Sioux County was flourishing in 1881, some Dutch settlers in Sioux County began looking further West again, this time to South Dakota. Land agents for the railroads played a role, promoting South Dakota with pamphlets, as did Dutch immigrant newspapers. A few men from Sioux County had been to South Dakota, trading with the Lakota for horses. Rising land prices in Iowa and a new generation of young farmers also "stirred the hunger for 'free land.'" So too did recent federal laws designed to get more public lands into settlers' hands, particularly on the arid parts of the Plains where a dry climate meant fewer bushels of grain per acre and farmers needed more land to get an adequate crop. The Timber Culture Act (1873), for example, addressed this challenge by adding 160 acres to the 160 allowed by the Homestead Act (1862), if homesteaders planted trees on their land.[24]

Another motivation was the desire to start a new colony. Some of the men looking to relocate again "were 'community engineers,'" historian Brian Beltman has argued, "persons who needed to be participating in the establishment of new settlements in part to re-experience the satisfaction of that building process and in part to perfect that which had already been done once or twice."[25] It makes sense to include the LeCocq family in this group of "community engineers." J. F. had been such an engineer for Pella, as had Frank for Orange City, and now one of Frank's children in South Dakota.

Frank's only son, Frank Jr. (1858–1930), was part of the South Dakota exploration party, alongside D. Vanden Bos and L. Vander Meer. The men first set out in 1881, but after little success they returned home and shared what little they had learned. The small group headed out again in January and February of 1882.

The second trip was more eventful. "[With] prayer and thanks to God they had their first meal on that vast open prairie," Frank Jr. recalled. "Just as the men were about to resume their journey, one of them, looking into the distance, exclaimed: 'See what's coming yonder!' A starving pack of wolves, attracted by the smell of frying ham, was approaching." The wolves kept their distance

Frank LeCocq, Jr. and family in their car, a Maxwell, in the early 1900s. The text on the photo says, "Father, Mother, sons Eddie, Frank & Irwin. RBLeCocq." Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

and the men stayed calm, not shooting at them.[26] Later in the trip, the men got lost in a fog that turned into a snowstorm. Luckily, they found shelter in an abandoned Indian dwelling. On a different day, the men thoughtlessly emptied their pipes in dried grass, which started a fire. The fire sent a group of angry Native Americans in pursuit of them for burning their horses' food.

Despite these dramatic events, the men found a location with grassland perfect for farming. Dutch farmers from northwest Iowa quickly settled in Douglas County, South Dakota, starting a new colony and forming the town of New Orange in 1882, renamed Harrison in 1885. Other Dutch colonies, such as New Holland and Grand View, started in the same era. One of the latter's founders was Peter Hospers, son of Henry. The colonizing institutions that had brought the Dutch from Pella to Sioux County now brought them to Douglas County. Peter Hospers, like his father, was a real estate agent, selling land to settlers. By 1910 he had moved to a booming Los Angeles, where he again worked as a real estate agent. When he died in 1929, however, his family laid his body to rest in Armour, Douglas County, South Dakota.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Frank Jr. thus was part of a network of entrepreneurs and institutions, as well as an entrepreneur in his own right. Taking advantage of being in the group that chose Douglas County, Frank Jr. claimed land and built a house for his family before other Dutch settlers got there. His farm was just east of Harrison. He married Rhoda Brinks in 1883, shortly after her family moved to Harrison. Rhoda was born into a Dutch immigrant family in Zeeland, Michigan, and her family had moved from there to Iowa and then to South Dakota.

Frank Jr., his parents (Frank Sr. and Maria), his siblings, and his aunt Christina (1842–1933) were instrumental to the success of Harrison. Until the construction of a house of worship, Harrison's Reformed Church held services in the LeCocq home. Once built, the church also served as the public school. Frank Jr.'s youngest sister, Sophia, was the first instructor of the school.[27] Cornelia, Frank Jr.'s oldest sister, owned a millinery store in the town.[28] Frank Sr. was a charter member of the church as well as an elder, a deacon, and the clerk. Together, father and son started one of the first businesses in Harrison, *LeCocq Banking, Loans, and Real Estate*, selling land. By the end of 1883, settlers had claimed all the land around Harrison.

Not all the LeCocq family members from Orange City who joined Frank Jr. shared his enthusiasm. His mother, Maria, feared Native Americans.[29] The Indian Wars were over on the northern Plains by 1883, as Native Americans such as the Lakota had been forced onto reservations. They sometimes hunted or grazed their horses off reservations, as treaty-mandated provisions from the federal government often were late or inadequate. Despite her fears, however, Maria gave bread, meat, or milk to anyone who came to her door in need.

The early years were difficult in South Dakota. The Dutch settlers discovered that Douglas County had been organized fraudulently. A man named Walter H. Brown had petitioned to the state for the organization of the county, showing over 50 signatures of supposedly legal voters. Most of the signatures were forged or fake. Unaware of the fraud, the state approved the petition, and Brown appointed himself and his friends as county commissioners. They wrote and sold fake warrants to earn money for themselves.[30] Douglas County residents took Brown and his gang to court when they discovered the fraud. Defeating them took years of litigation. Immigrants from the Netherlands with no experience on the Plains struggled more than families like the LeCocqs, who came from Iowa.[31] Climate also played havoc in

Women at Harrison Home. "Grandmother LeCocq, Aunt Cornelia and ?. Harrison, [South Dakota] home." Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

South Dakota, with years of drought from the late 1880s to the mid-1890s. Some Dutch settlers left for places like Prinsburg, Minnesota, and Manhattan, Montana. Churches took up benevolent offerings for suffering farm families in South Dakota.

Frank Sr. passed away in Harrison in 1907, survived by his adult children and wife. His funeral was one of the largest the town had ever held.[32] His pioneering legacy lived on through Frank Jr., also a beloved community leader in the region.

Frank Jr.'s influence can be seen in the many roles he played. Not just a farmer, he was also a banker and a county commissioner (1882–1889). He served as a Railroad Commissioner for six years and was the first representative of Douglas County in the state legislature (1889). He was cut from the same cloth as his father and grandfather.

During his time in the state legislature, Frank Jr. met Sitting Bull, the Lakota leader best known for his role at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.[33] Sitting Bull and some of his followers had escaped to Canada after Little Big Horn but returned and surrendered to the U.S. Army in 1881. His story is a reminder of the role played by Dutch settlers in the region's larger history. Occasional encounters and fears like Maria's aside, opportunity for settlers like the LeCocqs meant loss for Sitting Bull and his people. Frank Jr.'s children grew up as the frontier became a settled region. This history quickly became myth and memory for them.

Frank Jr.'s boys enjoyed fishing, hunting, adventure, and mischief, like other frontier children. They occasionally visited their cousins in Pella, two generations past the frontier era, where extended family still lived. Around 1903, the LeCocq brothers and other schoolboys got the idea to start a band. Frank III played the alto horn and Ralph played their father's old cornet. Since there was no music teacher, the boys bought instruction books and taught themselves to play. They eventually became good enough to hold a concert for the whole town.

LeCocq Family's Second Home in Harrison, S.D. Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

The settlers transplanted cultural institutions to their new home. Chief among them were churches: Harrison's Reformed congregation in 1883 and a Christian Reformed rival in 1884. By 1900, there were over 200 families, two Reformed congregations and three Christian Reformed ones in the area. Though there was no music teacher for Frank and Ralph, there eventually was a Christian school, the Harrison Classical Academy. It was modeled on the academy in Orange City (which eventually became Northwestern College), started by Henry Hospers. The Harrison Academy opened in 1902 and seems to have been sponsored by members of the area's Reformed churches.[34]

Frank Jr. made sure that his sons got an education. The oldest six boys graduated from the Harrison academy under B. D. Dykstra, its principal from 1902 to 1906. In a letter to Nelson Nieuwenhuis, an archivist at Northwestern College, Dykstra later wrote that "the two oldest sons, Frank and Ralph, were in that historic first group at the Academy. They were young men with magnificent capacities. You will probably never find such a family with such high average ability."[35]

Frank Jr. emphasized the importance of education in a letter he wrote to his two oldest sons in 1906 during

Hunting Prairie Chickens. Ralph, Frank, and "Old Ben." Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

their first year at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. "I would give all I have to see you happy and successful in your lives," he told them, "and would lay down my life to save that of my boys." In turn, the boys' minds had to be focused on their work. "Girls on the brain and study will not go together," their father declared.[36]

The boys' hard work and their father's dedication paid off in the 1910s. All of the LeCocq boys had successful careers. Frank III and Irwin became city engineers; Charles went into civil engineering; and Marion, John, and Edward became doctors. Gideon and Ralph became lawyers.[37]

By 1910, the frontier era in Harrison had passed. The railroad had come to nearby Corsica, six miles to the east. Some people and businesses moved from Harrison to Corsica as a result. Today, the once rival Reformed and Christian Reformed congregations are Harrison Community Church, part of both denominations, using their two buildings on a three-month rotation cycle.

Class photo of the Harrison Academy students. Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives. Among the members of the class were a future dentist, engineer, and merchant and two future teachers and lawyers. Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

The LeCocqs in Lynden, Washington

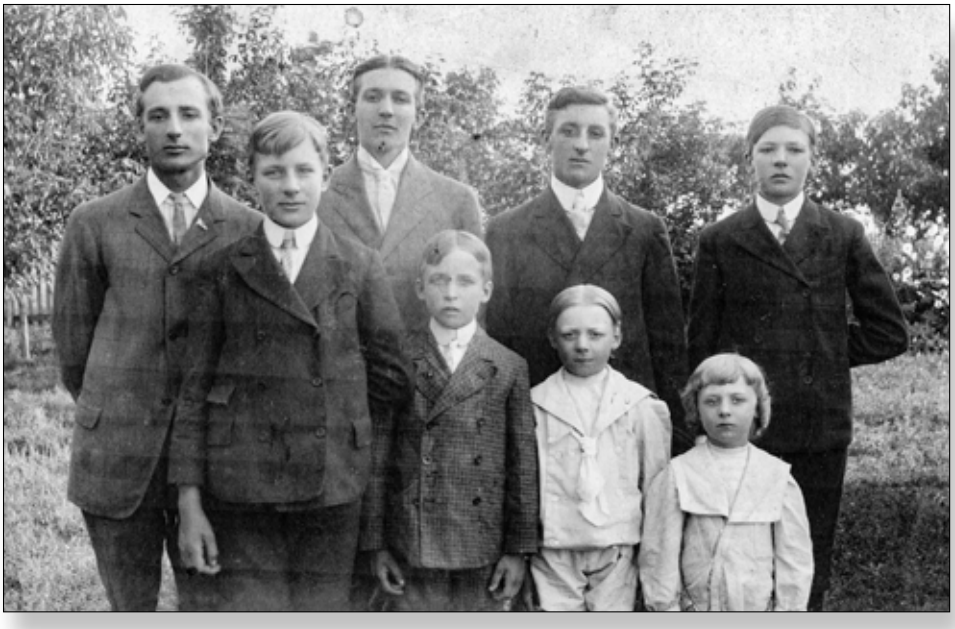
The story of the fourth generation of the LeCocq family in America was different, as suggested by the careers of Frank Jr.'s sons. Their "frontiers" were not founding new towns and farming on the Great Plains but being first-generation university students and white collar professionals.

Ralph Brinks LeCocq (1887–1984), Frank Jr.'s second son, is a good example. He went to Macalester College and Hope College and graduated from the University of Iowa. He then studied law at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1912. After working for two years in Armour, South Dakota, Ralph took a job as the only lawyer in Lynden, Washington. His father, mother, and brothers joined him there in 1917, the two youngest boys graduating from Lynden High School.[38]

Lynden was home to another Dutch colony. It had been a fading lumber town in the mid-1890s due to an economic depression and the lack of a railroad line. Dutch Americans and Dutch immigrants helped revitalize Lynden, migrating there from the late 1890s to the start of World War I. Railroad company land agents recruited settlers, published brochures, and marketed land. The Dutch settlers saw economic potential in the soil, manufacturing shingles, and accessible markets. They spread the word to Dutch communities on the Plains and in the Midwest. Dutch farmers migrated there from all over North America and the Netherlands to grow fruits and vegetables and start dairy farms.[39] Ralph thus move to an existing Dutch community in Lynden, not as part of its founding, as his forebears had in Iowa and South Dakota.

The story of the Dutch in Lynden, as in Pella, Orange City, and Harrison, was one of chain migration (familial, ethnic, and religious) and community building, not just the movement of individuals. Lynden was different, however. In the early 1900s it was in

Harrison Reformed Church and Harrison Academy in the background. "Harry Markus and I painting the church. We were 18 yrs old then." Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.



The eight LeCocq brothers in 1906. Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

its second stage of evolution from a new frontier to a settled region. Ralph helped Lynden grow through his work as a lawyer. His father, Frank Jr., served as a justice of the peace and police judge in Lynden until his death in 1930. His brother Irwin became the first Dutch American mayor of Lynden in 1948.

Ralph was a well-respected lawyer, providing over 50 years of service to Lynden, including 25 as city attorney.[40] He owned a farm that he named *Buitenzorg* ("place of no worry" or "peaceful place"). The name suggests a nostalgic retreat from the busyness of his legal practice. Ralph raised beef and dairy cattle. In the 1930s, he promoted vaccination of cattle for brucellosis and experimented by cross-breeding Angus cows with an imported Brahmin bull. Farming was a post-frontier avocation for him, perhaps a way of remaining connected to his frontier roots. He also hunted, hiked, traveled, and mountain climbed. This was quite different from the risks, struggles, and stresses faced by the first three generations of the LeCocq family on frontier farms in Iowa and South Dakota.

Ralph outlived his seven brothers, passing away in 1984. He donated records from his family and the frontier era on the Plains to the Northwestern College archives in Orange City, a sign of the strong ties that remained for him in South Dakota and Iowa. The immigrant frontier was memory for him, rooted in a mix of boyhood experience and stories told by his parents and grandparents. By 1984, for most people, even his own children and grandchildren, it had become history.

Conclusions

The first four generations of the LeCocqs in America had migrated from the Netherlands to Dutch immigrant colonies in Pella, Iowa (1847); Orange City, Iowa (1872); Harrison, South Dakota (1882); and Lynden, Washington (1914). In each place, they proved to be reliable community leaders.

The LeCocq story illustrates the frontier cycle that historians of the United States have described: frontiers became settled regions and subsequent generations sought new frontiers. The family story also suggests how the process of building immigrant communities evolved over three generations, relying less on religious visionaries like Scholte and more on networks, businesses, and state offices—even if fathers often passed the a pioneering impulse to their sons.

Finally, the LeCocq story is one of Americanization and becoming middle class and educated. J. F., a businessman in Amsterdam, had become a frontier farmer in Pella, Iowa, in the 1840s. A century later, his great grandson Ralph, who grew up in frontier South Dakota, was a lawyer in Lynden, Washington, who operated a hobby farm as an avocation.

Ralph LeCocq at his home in Lynden, Washington. Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

Endnotes

1. Letter from Anton and Liek Tjeenk Willink to Sandra Eben, 23 March 1991, LeCocq Family Papers, Northwestern College Archives, Orange City, Iowa, LeCocq Box 1, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/lecocqhistory/1/ (accessed 12 August 2021).
2. Gerald F. DeJong, *The Dutch in America*, 1609–1974 (Boston: Twayne, 1975).
3. Johan Stellingwerff, *Iowa Letters, Dutch Immigrants on the American Frontier*, edited by Robert P. Swierenga, translated by Walter Lagerwey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 37; and *Souvenir History of Pella, Iowa* (Pella: Booster Press, 1922). The children were: Jean Francois ("Jan"); Francois ("Frank"); Jacobus Hendrik; Theodorus ("Dorus") Christiaan; Maria J. C. ("Mietje"); and Christina C. Sara.
4. Cyrenus Cole, "Pella—A Bit of Holland in America," *Annals of Iowa: A Historical Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1898), 241–270.
5. Stellingwerff, 84.
6. Stellingwerff, 279.
7. Stellingwerff, 84.
8. Stellingwerff, 279.
9. Stellingwerff, 315.
10. Stellingwerff, 363–364.
11. Entry for LeCocq in the United States Federal Census of 1850 (accessed on Ancestry.com).
12. Stellingwerff, 314, 384.
13. Stellingwerff, 482.
14. Stellingwerff, 315.
15. Stellingwerff, 380.
16. Stellingwerff, 407.
17. Entry for LeCocq in the United States Federal Census of 1860 (accessed on Ancestry.com).
18. Letter from Jan LeCocq to Frank LeCocq Sr., 6 September 1896, LeCocq Family Papers, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/janlecocq/2/ (accessed 12 August 2021).
19. Jan LeCocq to Frank LeCocq Sr., 10 January 1899, LeCocq Family Papers, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/janlecocq/10/ (accessed 12 August 2021).
20. Obituary for Jan LeCocq, *The Pella Chronicle* 4 January 1912, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48932986/jean-francois-le_cocq (accessed 12 August 2021).
21. *Souvenir History of Pella,* 165.
22. Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955), 333–345.
23. *Souvenir History of Pella*, 165.
24. Brian W. Beltman, "From Orange City to Harrison: Dutch Settlement in Douglas County, South Dakota," in Hubert R. Krygsman et al, eds., *Dutch Immigrants on the Plains* (Holland, MI: Joint Archives of Holland, 2006), 112.
25. Beltman, "From Orange City to Harrison," 112, 115.
26. Henry Vander Pol, "Hollanders in Douglas County," in *On the Reservation Border—Hollanders in Douglas and Charles Mix Counties* (Stickney, SD: Argus Printers, 1969), 92.
27. Rev. Henry Straks, "History of the Holland Colony in Doulgas and Charles Mix Counties," in *Doane Robinson, History of South Dakota*, Vol. 1 (Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen,1904), 509–511.
28. "LeCocqs as Founders of 'Harrison Colony,'" *The Corsica Globe*, n.d., Northerwestern College Archives (https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/franklecocqsr/11/).
29. "LeCocqs as Founders."
30. Frank LeCocq Jr., "A Brief History of the Fraudulent Organization of Douglas County," *Corsica Globe*, 25 December 1907, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/franklecocqjr/19/ (accessed 12 August 2021).
31. Gerald De Jong, "The Coming of the Dutch to the Dakotas," *South Dakota History* 5:1 (1974), 21–51.
32. Obituary of Frank LeCocq Sr., publication unknown, 1907, LeCocq Family Papers, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/franklecocqsr/3/.
33. "LeCocqs as Founders."
34. The history of the Harrison Academy is hazy. It existed for four years (1902–1906) under Dykstra; he seems to have reopened it for several more years two decades later (1923–1928). Then another teacher ran it until the early 1930s. See an essay by his son, D. Ivan Dykstra, given at the AADAS conference in 1985: "The Harrison Academy," https://dutch-americans.org/past-conferences-proceedings/dutch-westward-migration-northwestern-college-orange-city-iowa-1985/ (accessed 12 August 2021).
35. B. D. Dykstra to Nelson Nieuwenhuis, n.d., LeCocq Family Papers, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/lecocqhistory/14/ (accessed 12 August 2021); Ralph B. LeCocq, "The Frank LeCocq Jr. Family," n.d., LeCocq Family Papers, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/lecocqhistory/8/ (accessed 12 August 2021).
36. Frank LeCocq Jr., to Frank III and Ralph, 24 September 1906, LeCocq Family Papers, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/franklecocqjr/3/ (accessed 12 August 2021).
37. Dykstra to Nieuwenhuis.
38. LeCocq, "The Frank LeCocq Jr. Family."
39. DeJong, *Dutch in America*, 162.
40. "Veteran Attorney to Take Life Easy After 52 Years of Practice," *Lynden Tribune*, 18 August 1966, 1, 37, https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/lecocqnewspaper/13/ (accessed 12 August 2021).

Abraham Vermeulen: Over the River's Undertaker

Robert Schoone-Jongen

When exactly it happened has been obscured by time. Most likely it was in the 1880s. A group of traveling musicians found themselves marooned in Paterson, New Jersey, on a Saturday evening. Stuck and hungry, the players made their way to 97 Clinton Street in the Over the River neighborhood. When the door opened, they were invited in. The man of the house ordered his wife to feed the troupe. And so, on a Saturday night, the food that had been prepared for a Sunday dinner satisfied the needs of strangers. How the substantial family of the household managed on that Sabbath is not recorded. But it was no coincidence that the stranded Hollanders had knocked on this particular door—for it was the home of Abraham Vermeulen.[1]

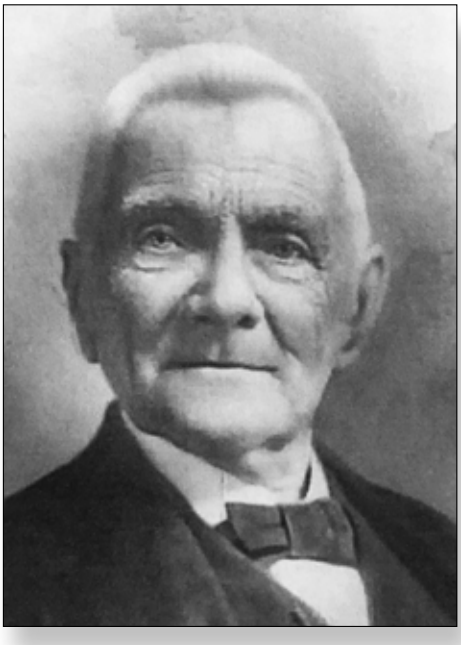
While the story of destitute Dutch immigrants is often recounted as a tale of dominees doing good unto others, the fact is that the do-gooders could just as well have been laymen as clerics. In the case of Paterson, the ministers generally came and went with great rapidity, often urged on their way by cantankerous parishioners. One of these parishioners, the owner of the Clinton Street house, made his living largely as an undertaker. He also had connections both to the area's political powerbrokers through his ties to the Republican Party and to his fellow Hollanders through his Holland-America Steamship Company ticket agency. While the ministers came and went, the undertaker lived on for almost 50 years. And the locals knew that if you needed a favor or assistance, Abraham Vermeulen was the man to see.

Vermeulen was not the first Dutch immigrant to arrive in Paterson in

Paterson, New Jersey, in the late nineteenth century. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Robert Schoone-Jongen is an emeritus professor of history at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His research is on Dutch immigration to the US since 1850, currently focusing on northern New Jersey.

the mid-nineteenth century—that distinction belonged to a medical doctor. He was not among the first new immigrant cluster to settle in the Passaic Valley—those folks spent the winter of 1847 in the area, seven years before him. He was not even the first of his family to come to New Jersey—three brothers having preceded him by a year. Despite this, Abraham Vermeulen justly deserves consideration as Paterson's founding Hollander. He was neither a dominee—like Michigan's Albertus Van



Abraham Vermeulen near the turn of the century.

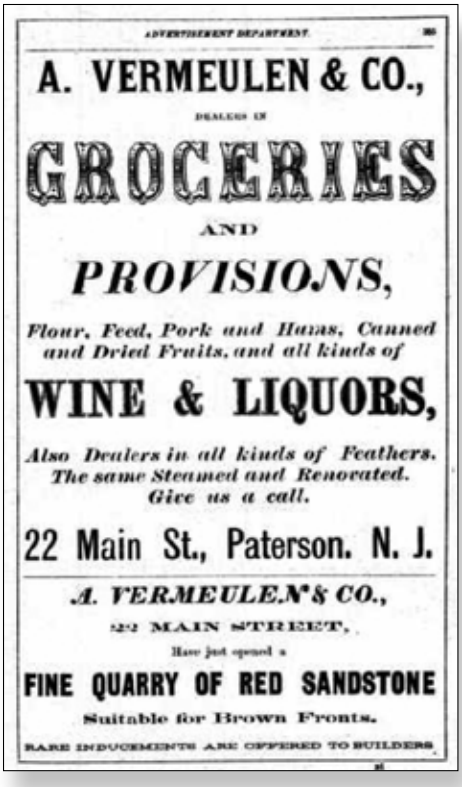
Raalte—nor a banker—like Iowa's Henry Hospers. Abraham Vermeulen was best known as an undertaker. But that was only one of his positions. He served the living as a tailor, grocer, ticket agent, insurance agent, realtor, justice of the peace, and lay religious leader. Because of him, thousands of Hollanders in the Silk City lived among familiar people in enclaves surrounded by strangers. Appropriately, one of Paterson's best-known sons—Yale professor William Graham Sumner—was a prophet of the social Darwinist dogma that unfettered conflict was the mother's milk of social progress. If he was the prophet, Paterson was one of his temples—an often violent place where the weak struggled and the strong survived. Some of the strong thrived, even among the immigrants.[2]

The photographs we have of Vermeulen show him as an old man. And the descriptions of him tend to include the sort of adjectives found in obituaries. He was "sympathetic, tactful and most considerate" and "grim faced but very kindly."[3] The fact that he so quickly became a notable figure in Paterson, and remained so for almost 50 years, shows that the phrases contained a good dose of truth. Paterson could be a very hard place to live. Danger lurked everywhere. The mills and foundries were dangerous places. Frequently disgruntled workers picketed factory doors and gates, threatening dire consequences upon those who dared cross the line. Diseases emanated both from the polluted wells from which people drank and the Passaic River, which doubled as both the power source and the sewer for the industries. And then there were ethnic and religious tensions. These divided the Dutch, Italian, Irish, German, and eastern European Jews who crowded the city's often ramshackle neighborhoods—like Over the River, where Vermeulen lived. Paterson's rough edges shaped the newcomers who stayed.

Born in Zuidzande, Zeeland, in 1827—the sixth of seven children—Abraham Vermeulen apprenticed as a tailor in the nearby village of Nieuwvliet. In his spare time, he learned the clarinet well enough to qualify for service in the royal band. When his father died in 1847, young Abraham used his skills to support his mother, an older sister, and a younger brother. Given the family's attraction to the pietist religious revival that swept the rural Netherlands beginning in the 1830s and 1840s, one can understand Brom's "grim"-faced resolve to do the right thing for his family. Amid all these responsibilities, he found the time to court Johanna de Swarte, whom he married in 1849, a month before the birth of their first child.[4]

Many of Zeeland's religious dissenters searched for better prospects in the United States, beginning in the 1840s. Vermeulen's three older brothers joined the exodus in 1853, settling on farms near Godwinville in Bergen County, New Jersey, about five miles north of Paterson.[5] The next year, Abraham followed in their wake, arriving in New York on October 6, 1854, traveling with his wife, their three children, his mother, his sister and brother, and a niece and nephew. When they moved into a house in Paterson's Over the River neighborhood, their neighbors included a free black family, lots of New Jersey-born laborers, and about 100 Zuid Hollanders, mostly from villages like Ouddorp and Goedereede. Most of them were laborers, except for a few artisans—a shoemaker, a carpenter, and a blacksmith.[6]

The religious Hollanders attended services at the Second Dutch Reformed Church, with its steeple towering over the neighborhood. Paterson's Dutch doctor, Jan Everhardt Van Den Bylaardt, attended that church. But with the services exclusively in English, the newcomers gained little by their presence. Immigrants with accents were an embarrassment to the Dutch Reformed Church's leaders, who had finally expunged the Dutch language from the denomination's worship services only ten years previous. There were a few clerics who felt that the immigrants deserved to hear the Word in their language. A couple of them who could preach in Dutch would venture out from New York City to hold services in homes scattered along the banks of the Passaic. When


ADVERTISEMENT DEPARTMENT. 365

A. VERMEULEN & CO.,

DEALERS IN

GROCERIES

AND

PROVISIONS,

Flour, Feed, Pork and Hams, Canned and Dried Fruits, and all kinds of

WINE & LIQUORS,

Also Dealers in all kinds of Feathers. The same Steamed and Renovated. Give us a call.

22 Main St., Paterson. N. J.

A. VERMEULEN & CO.,

22 MAIN STREET,

Have just opened a

FINE QUARRY OF RED SANDSTONE

Suitable for Brown Fronts.

RARE INDUCEMENTS ARE OFFERED TO BUILDERS.

Vermeulen advertisement in the Paterson city directory of 1865.

the group in Over the River balked at walking several miles to Passaic for these meetings, they began gathering on their own in the back room of Second Reformed. On May 8, 1856, several them met there to organize Paterson's First Holland Reformed Church. Brom Vermeulen was chosen as a deacon.[7]

Clearly his fellow believers believed Vermeulen could be trusted with their funds. And with good reason. He prospered enough from tailoring to buy a shop of his own on the edge of Paterson's business district. When the Civil War erupted in 1861, he wielded his scissors on behalf of the Union cause. Brom and Jan produced uniforms for the army. Actually, they didn't sew them; they cut them out—one uniform every ten minutes—and paid seamstresses, as many as 60 of them at one time, to assemble the coats and pants. With the profits, Brom began investing in other enterprises. He purchased a mountainside tract a few miles north of Paterson, hoping to quarry and process stone into paving material. With two fellow Hollanders, Cornelius Laauwe from Ouddorp and Bartel Botbyl from Zierekzee, he opened a grocery store featuring a well-stocked liquor section. The store became a community center for lonely Hollanders, a place for discussing problems and catching up on the news in their own language. By now Vermeulen could do more than just commiserate; he could help solve problems, especially if they involved the government.[8]

If Brom could produce uniforms, he could negotiate contracts with factories and War Department agents. If he was buying real estate, he was dealing with the county courthouse employees. In short, Brom would have been functionally bilingual. He would have learned English in daily discourse, not in some formal way. He likely had help from the likes of Dr. Van Den Bylaardt, as well as from Garret Planten, another Amsterdammer who moved to Paterson from Brooklyn in about 1854 and joined Second Reformed. During those first years Vermeulen would have needed the doctor's assistance in his role as city physician, when Mrs. Vermeulen, Johanna de Swarte, died in 1859 and Abraham's mother, Maria Leggenaar, died in 1860.

During the Civil War, Vermeulen set aside a parcel of his quarry property as a burial ground. He also began undertaking as a sideline.[9] Having apprenticed as a barber for a time in the Netherlands, he would have learned enough anatomy to embalm a body, as became customary during the war years.[10] In 1864 the local Republican party organization nominated him as a candidate for county coroner, a post he would hold for the next 30 years. Vermeulen conducted his undertaking business under the radar, without bothering to advertise for almost 20 years. With the sale of his quarry and tailor shop, he financed a new two-and-a-half-story house in Over the River on a lot large enough to accommodate a sizable structure that housed his office, horses, and his collection of hearses and coaches.[11] After he remarried in 1864 to Jane Verduin, the couple filled the spacious house with their 13 children.

With his accumulating resources, Vermeulen rose in public esteem. He served successive terms as a deacon in the various iterations of his church. The congregation's first pastor, Jacobus de Rooy, lived with the Vermeulens during his five-year sojourn in Paterson. When De Rooy chafed under the supervision of the local classis of the Reformed Church, he convinced his congregants to sever ties with those De Rooy called "Baal worshipers."[12] Instead, they affiliated with the Church Under the Cross in the Netherlands. Then De Rooy left


OILS, ROPES, TWINES, PAPER, WOODEN WARE, &C.,

195 Main Street, Cor. Ellison, Paterson, N. J.

PAPER AND PAPER BAGS A SPECIALTY.

A. VERMEULEN,

NOTARY PUBLIC,

Real Estate and Shipping Agent,

AGENT FOR THE HOLLAND STEAMERS.

PROPRIETOR OF THE

Paterson Cemetery at "The Goffle,"

OFFICE--22 AND 24 MAIN STREET, PATERSON, N. J.

VAN HOUTEN & DEMAREST,

Vermeulen advertisement in the Paterson city directory of 1874.

Paterson for an extended visit with his aged mother in the Netherlands. While there, he accepted a call to another church, also in the Netherlands. Vermeulen took it upon himself to personally recruit another pastor, a Congregationalist missionary to the Dutch in the Boston area, Arend H. Bechtold. When Bechtold balked at leading a flock that gazed across the ocean for advice, Vermeulen attended a meeting of congregations scattered around the Great Lakes that would evolve into the Christian Reformed Church. When they urged him to affiliate with them, Vermeulen convinced the Paterson group to do just that. They reorganized as the First Holland Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, called Bechtold a second time, and persuaded him to accept the summons.

Vermeulen's name regularly appeared in the minutes of the Paterson

Willem Hendrik Van Leeuwen. Courtesy of Heritage Hall

church. So did his signature. As a deacon, he kept the group's accounts. When they decided to buy land and build their own church, Vermeulen took the lead. This brought him into the literal heart of Paterson's power brokers—the headquarters of the Society for the Establishment of

The first building of the congregation that became First Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, New Jersey. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Useful Manufactures. The brainchild of Alexander Hamilton, the Society owned much of the land on which Paterson stood. By the 1850s the Society was under the control of Samuel B. Colt—the revolver manufacturer whose home stood on a promontory modestly named Colt's Hill. By the time Bechtold arrived from Boston, the congregation met in a building at the corner of Bridge St. and River St., a place that would be their spiritual home for the next 40 years. The parsonage stood next door.

Rev. Bechtold found the Paterson group spiritually sketchy. He expressed affection for Vermeulen but deplored the lack of catechism classes for the young people. Within two years Bechtold despaired, for a number of reasons. De Rooy reappeared in Paterson, expecting to resume his calling but, mercifully, headed west to Wisconsin. Bechtold believed the group's new ties to the Great Lakes churches were a bad as the old ties to the Netherlands. He accepted a call from the Reformed Church to organize another congregation in Paterson, the short-lived Second Holland Reformed Church.[13]

However, Brom was more than a bookkeeper for the First Holland Christian Reformed Church of Paterson. In a consistory of only four members, the distinction between elders and deacons blurred. When Deacon Vermeulen traveled to Boston with Elder Jacob Fles to persuade Rev. Bechthold to accept Paterson's call, the Reverend himself noted that Vermeulen did the persuading. Deacon Vermeulen traveled to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to persuade another minister (any minister) to shepherd the congregation. His efforts produced Willem Hendrik Van Leeuwen, a dominee whose turbulent tenure would end in a lawsuit.[14]

Vermeulen's influence in the church increased even further when he was formally installed as an elder on January 1, 1868. By then, Van Leeuwen had been imposing his notions of good order on the congregants for two years. While Vermeulen sold spirits in his grocery, the ministers in Michigan (including Van Leeuwen) were censuring their members for just that thing—imbibing.[15] Since its founding, the Paterson church's minutes reflected a collegial

approach to leadership, with every member signing the account of each meeting. Van Leeuwen swept that away, writing the minutes in his own hand, signing them, with the clerk acting as a witness, ending each entry with a flourish worthy of John Hancock, and pointedly not listing the members present. Not only did Vermeulen become an elder, but he was named the vice president. In that role he would largely determine how much influence Van Leeuwen would be afforded.

The minister asserted his authority by refusing to attend meetings in Michigan. For this infraction he received the classis's formal reprimand.[16] In late 1871, Vermeulen began hearing of the pastor's personal improprieties. Specifically, the sixty-five-year-old Van Leeuwen stood accused of abusing his wife and keeping company with a married member of the congregation half his age. Those charges placed Abraham Vermeulen in the chair of the consistory meetings held to hear the charges. Their gravity also brought two ministers from Michigan to lead the investigation—Jacob Noordewier and Douwe Vander Werp.[17] On January 29, 1872, Vander Werp conducted the fateful meeting at which Van Leeuwen's wife and son testified against him, as well as against the young woman. In the end, Van Leeuwen was banned from the pulpit for six weeks and the woman barred from the communion table for over a year. In fact, Van Leeuwen never resumed his duties in Paterson, especially not after he filed suit against the congregation for breach of contract after resuming his liaison with the woman.[18]

Very quickly, Vermeulen secured another minister. After two disastrous ministers secured from within the United States, the congregation called Francis Rederus, who arrived from the Netherlands at the end of July.

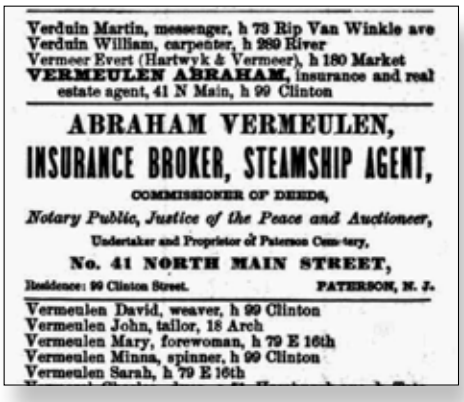

ABRAHAM VERMEULEN,
MERCHANT TAILOR,
62 Broadway, Paterson, N.J.
A FEW DOORS ABOVE THE GUARDIAN OFFICE.
Agent for Fisk's Patent Lamp Heating Apparatus.
—ALSO—
FINKLE & LYONS' SEWING MACHINES.
Furniture of all kinds on hand and for sale cheap, at
ABRAHAM VERMEULEN'S,
62 Broadway.

Vermeulen advertisement in the Paterson city directory of 1883.

Within two years he would depart under a cloud, accused of inappropriate behavior with a female member. But by then, after 17 years as the congregation's leader, Abraham Vermeulen had declined another term in the consistory. The fact of the matter was that the congregation no longer needed him as their indispensable man. The influx of immigrants that began with the end of the Civil War increased the church's membership so much that by 1878 the congregation voted to double the seating capacity to 600.[19]

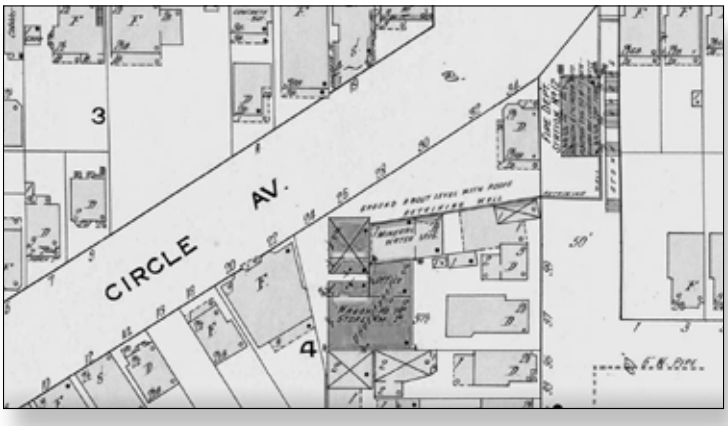
He had other pressures. In 1864, five years after the death of his first wife, Brom had remarried. By 1873 his second wife, Jannetje Verduin, had seven children with another on the way. In addition to his tailoring business, Brom was brokering real estate. That same year he became an agent for the new Netherlands American Steamship Company. Two years later, his ties to the Republican Party won him the job of justice of the peace.[20]

As both a justice and an elder, Vermeulen confronted the dark side of Dutch immigrant life. Consistory meetings could be quasi-judicial proceedings about cases of domestic abuse, extra-marital sex, separations, divorces, and drunkenness. Gossip was a huge problem, both among the members and the elders themselves. One person summarized First Church's first members as "just plain people. No college graduates, and they worked with what they had. People who had their ups and downs in life."[21] Of such was the community of saints that Vermeulen helped attract to Over the River. In 1868 one member stood accused of stealing his neighbor's cow. The accused first countered that the animal had merely followed him home. Later he said he had purchased the beast. Facing skepticism from the consistory members, the accused left in a huff, never to return to the church, but he did return the cow to her rightful owner. On another occasion a father who came to church in a drunken state got into a fight with his son during the service. When the father pulled out a knife, and the son took measures to defend himself, the son was barred from communion for fighting.


Verduin Martin, messenger, h 73 Rip Van Winkle ave
Verduin William, carpenter, h 289 River
Vermeer Evert (Hartwyk & Vermeer), h 180 Market
VERMEULEN ABRAHAM, insurance and real estate agent, 41 N Main, h 99 Clinton
ABRAHAM VERMEULEN,
INSURANCE BROKER, STEAMSHIP AGENT,
COMMISSIONER OF DEEDS,
Notary Public, Justice of the Peace and Auctioneer,
Undertaker and Proprietor of Paterson Cemetery,
No. 41 NORTH MAIN STREET,
Residence: 99 Clinton Street. PATERSON, N. J.
Vermeulen David, weaver, h 99 Clinton
Vermeulen John, tailor, 18 Arch
Vermeulen Mary, forewoman, h 79 E 16th
Vermeulen Minna, spinner, h 99 Clinton
Vermeulen Sarah, h 79 E 16th

Vermeulen advertisement in the Paterson city directory of 1885

As a justice of the peace, Vermeulen adjudicated neighborhood squabbles, disputes, and misdemeanors during hearings conducted either in his office or his home. Brom's language skills stood him in good stead in Over the River when the police would arrest a more recent arrival. The docket included the case of how the formidable Mary Fichter grabbed Charles Young by the throat and wrestled him to the floor of the Temple Street saloon she ran with her husband. Young had attempted to clean



Sanborn insurance map from 1915 with Vermeulen's undertaker property in the lower center. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

out the till. For this he spent several days in the Passaic County Jail.[22] In certain cases, especially those involving someone's public reputation, the justices could summon another justice to help make the decision. During the late 1870s this led Vermeulen into a heavily Irish neighborhood near the locomotive shops. Here Protestant Ulstermen and Catholic southerners mingled uneasily.[23]

The case involved a Protestant woman's paternity suit against a Catholic man. The local justice of the peace, despite being a Catholic from the south of Ireland, was viewed with a high degree of skepticism in the area due to his work as a crown constable on the Auld Sod. As Vermeulen neared the scene of the hearing, an Orangeman (Irish Protestant) grocer pulled the Hollander aside. The grocer warned that the Catholics would swear to anything on behalf of their own, especially if they took the oath on a Catholic edition of the Scriptures. So, he slipped Vermeulen a King James Bible to ensure a higher degree of honesty from the Catholic witnesses. Thus, armed with the holy book, Brom entered the crowded room on the second floor of a boarding house. When the Irish justice moved to swear in the first witness on a Catholic edition, Vermeulen demanded to examine the book. The elaborate cover was all the evidence he needed to conclude that the fix was in. He vigorously objected, demanding the use of the Authorized Version, to the horror of the people in the gallery. The constable assigned to maintain order, seeing a riot in the making, saved the day by suggesting that the witnesses take the oath on both books, allowing each witness then to decide which book they would kiss to seal the oath. When the trial concluded, with Vermeulen ruling in favor of the Protestant woman's claim and his Irish colleague ruling in favor of the man's denial of the claim, the assembled throng went home amazed at the Solomonic wisdom of the two justices.[24]

These were the issues that confronted immigrants once they arrived in Paterson. Abraham Vermeulen was instrumental in bringing them there in the first place. When the Netherlands-American Steamship Company formed in 1872–73, Vermeulen became its ticket agent in Paterson. In the early years few people were looking to sail to the Netherlands. But thousands were looking to sail from it. With cash of his own from his various enterprises, Vermeulen began advancing the fares relatives in Paterson paid for friends and relatives in the Netherlands. During the 1870s this fueled another wave of immigrants heavily concentrated from Zeeland province and the island of Goeree-Overflakee. Beginning in 1880, the mix shifted to include a significant number of people from the economically distressed sea clay region of Friesland. In exchange for their passage, Vermeulen secured the newcomers employment in the textile mills, dye houses, and locomotive shops that fueled the Passaic Valley's economy. They would pay him with their wages.

As a result of this influx, the Dutch immigrants to the Passaic Valley began organizing social clubs, a burial fund, and churches. Two of the largest Reformed congregations in the entire denomination were First Holland of Passaic and Sixth Holland of Paterson. Vermeulen's own First Christian Reformed Church was that denomination's second largest, until the building's limitations led to the founding of three more congregations in Paterson.

By then, Brom Vermeulen was beginning to scale back on his business activities. He passed down his ticket agency and insurance business to one of his sons and relied on three other sons to operate the funeral home. In 1894 father and sons jointly purchased a large tract of land for another cemetery, an enterprise Brom believed would be a financial legacy for his wife and their brood of children.[25]

Abraham Vermeulen lived long enough to see Paterson firmly planted in the Dutch-American firmament. When Dr. Abraham Kuyper—the moral guide of the Dutch Calvinists and soon-to-be prime minister of the Netherlands—barnstormed America's Hollander enclaves, his presence drew an over-capacity crowd to the largest Protestant church in downtown Paterson. For more than an hour Kuyper reminded the throng of their obligation to be good Americans. He likened Dutch culture and American culture to two inexpensive tulip bulbs, separately worth only a dime. But if the two were crossbred, the result would be a "new variety

Abraham Vermeulen's house on Clinton Street with some descendents standing in front of it. You can see a wrought iron arch with his name overhead and his multi-story barn behind the house.

that is worth ten times as much."[26] This was adrenaline for the coolest of Dutch souls. When the meeting ended that night, and Kuyper's admirers dispersed into their neighborhoods, they saw concrete proof of what they had accomplished in less than 50 years: nineteen Dutch-speaking churches (both Protestant and Catholic); three predominantly Dutch-speaking private schools (both Protestant and Catholic); and a retirement home supported by the region's Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. They stretched from Midland Park to the north to Lodi and Passaic to the south.

Near the center of a line between the north and south poles stood Abraham Vermeulen's house on Clinton Street in the Over the River neighborhood. By the time he died in 1902, that neighborhood was commonly called New Holland. Roughly 75 percent of its residents were Hollanders. Many of them had gotten there through Vermeulen's ticket agency. And many of them had secured their first jobs through Vermeulen's ties to the mill owners. Many of them had found their homes through Vermeulen's real estate business. And when tragedies struck, many of them had turned to the "sympathetic, tactful . . . considerate . . . grim faced but very kindly" white-haired man who had committed their loved ones to the ground in his cemeteries.

There is no record of whether Abraham Vermeulen was present when Abraham Kuyper spoke at Paterson's First Baptist Church in 1898. But it's hard to imagine the two Broms not meeting on that November night. Brom Vermeulen would have nodded approvingly as Brom Kuyper spoke of the wonders to be wrought by the fusion of Hollander and American. But when Vermeulen died, the eulogies bespoke of the impact he had had in Paterson, both among his fellow Hollanders and in the larger community. Years after his death, he would be numbered among the "who's who" of Passaic County.[27] The tailor from tiny Nieuwvliet had become a benevolent godfather in Over the River and helped make the new Hollanders of the Passaic Valley one of the centers of gravity in the Holland-American world.

Endnotes

1. William Vermeulen, "Vermeulen Family History" typescript in the collection of the Passaic County Historical Society, Paterson, New Jersey, 6.

2. Yale University's William Graham Sumner, arguably Americans best-known social Darwinist proponent, was born and raised in Paterson.

3. William W. Scott, *Passaic and Its Environs: Historical, Biographical* (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1922), 260; *Paterson Evening News*, 5 February 1902, 4.

4. Nieuwvliet municipal records accessed through wiewaswie.nl.

5. Izaak and Simon Vermeulen arrived with their families in New York on January 26, 1852 (Alkmaar passenger list). David Vermeulen was single when he arrived on September 29, 1852 (Cotton Parster passenger list). In 1892 Godwinville was incorporated into the Borough of Midland Park.

6. Eighth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for City of Paterson, County of Passaic, North Ward. New Jersey State Census, 1855, City of Paterson, County of Passaic, North Ward. Robert Schoone-Jongen, *Braen: A History Built in Stone. Haledon: Braen Stone Industries*, 2019.

7. First Holland Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, Minute book, in the Heritage Hall Collection, Hekman Library, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Annita Zalenski and Robert J. Hazenkamp Jr., E*cclesiastical History of Paterson, N.J.: A History of Paterson's Churches, Synagogues and Missions*. Paterson: Passaic County Historical Society Genealogy Club, 2011, 156–160. Christian Intelligencer 25 September 1856, 50.

8. *Paterson Evening News*, 15 March 1949, 11. "Vermeulen Family History." Paterson City Directory 1861–1865. Paterson's cotton and woolen mills provided the cloth. In addition to uniforms, Paterson's factories turned out locomotives and Colt firearms used by the Union Army. Both locomotives involved in the legendary Great Locomotive Chase of 1862 were built in Paterson—one by Rogers, Ketchum, and Grosvenor, the other by Danforth, Cooke and Company.

9. Vermeulen sold a parcel of the burial ground to Paterson's Congregation Ahavath Joseph during the 1890s. *Zalenski and Hazenkamp*, "Vermeulen Family History," 74–75.

10. For more on the Civil War's impact on burial practices, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *Republic of Suffering: Death and the Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).

11. 97 Clinton St., Paterson, New Jersey, in *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* 1899 (Vol. 1, 55) and 1915 (Vol. 2, 135). The first structure was of wood. It was replaced in about 1900 with a brick one. The property stood on a steep hillside, which provided direct access to the top story from the street.

12. "75th Anniversary: First Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, New Jersey," 10–11. in Heritage Hall Collection, Hekman Library, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

13. For Vermeulen's signatures, see the First Holland Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, New Jersey, minutes (1856–1867). For Bechtold's views on the Paterson church, see Arend H. Bechtold to Jacobus De Rooy, 10 August 1864, 11 January 1865, 20 June 1865, 31 August 1865 in the Jacobus De Rooy Collection, Heritage Hall, Hekman Library, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Mich. On Bechtold's starting a new Reformed congregation in Paterson, see *Christian Intelligencer* 4 October 1866, 158; 8 November 1866, 78. First CRC 75th anniversary, 12. Bechtold eventually settled into a Dutch immigrant congregation in New York City, where he aided distressed newcomers passing through Castle Garden. *Christian Intelligencer* 4 January 1872, 2; 24 April 1873, 5; 4 November 1875, 9; 29 August 1883, 4–5; 19 November 1884, 4.

14. *Acts of Synod* September 5, 6, 1866, 69. First Church histories, minutes. Janet Sjaarda Scheeres, For Better, For Worse: Stories of Wives of Early Pastors of the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2017), 67–84.

15. *Acts of Synod* April 5, 1865, Art. 14.

16. Acts of Classis, August 10–11, 1870. Art. 31.

17. Their enduring status is remembered in the names given to two of the oldest dormitories on the campus of Calvin University in Grand Rapids.

18. Scheeres 81–82. "Abe Rose's reminiscences of the first 75 years of the congregation, written in connection with the 125th anniversary (1981) and his translation of consistory minutes" in First Christian Reformed Church of Paterson files, Heritage Hall, Hekman Library, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Lena Botbyl, the object of Rev. Van Leeuwen's ministrations, was the sister of one of Vermeulen's grocery business partners. Her family had emigrated in 1852, on the same Atlantic crossing as Vermeulen's brothers Isaac and Simon.

19. First CRC 75th anniversary, 16.

20. See listings and advertisements for Abraham Vermeulen in Paterson City Directories 1873, 1874, 1876, 1878. By the latter date, he also functioned as a notary public. By 1882 he added commissioner of deeds and insurance agent to his repertoire.

21. Rose reminiscences.

22. *Passaic Daily News*, 17 August 1891, 3.

23. Until 1916 all of Ireland belonged to the United Kingdom. Since the 1680s the northern part of the island (Ulster) had become predominantly Protestant through the influx of settlers from Scotland. The rest of the island remained predominantly Roman Catholic. The Ulster Protestants were also known as Orangemen for their support of the Protestant William of Orange, whom Parliament installed as King of England in the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that ousted the Catholic King James II.

24. Or so the story went when recalled upon Vermeulen's death. P*aterson Evening News* 5 February 1902, 4.

25. The cemetery was located in Bergen County's Saddle River Township, today's Borough of Fair Lawn. Eventually the Vermeulens' enterprise became Fairlawn Memorial Park.

26. *Passaic Daily News* 25 November 1898, 4, *Paterson Evening News* 26 November 1898, 6.

27. *Who's Who in Passaic County*. Paterson: Paterson Evening News, 1917, 40. The volume included biographies of two of his sons and a nephew, who were all prominent businessmen. The nephew, Garret H. Vermeulen, served several terms as a state assemblyman from Passaic County.

Adjusting to Immigrants

William Katerberg

Pamphlet created to welcome Dutch immigrants to Canada, circa 1957. Donated to Pier 21, in 2008, by Helen Meyer (Meijer), who immigrated to Canada with her family. They arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1957. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 (Halifax, NS). DI2013.1558.

William Katerberg is curator of Heritage Hall and a professor of history at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His research has focused on religion, immigration, and politics in North America and on the American West.

"Immigration is taking place under greatly changed situations, and in a different land. So in that very real sense, history is *not* repeating itself."[1]

If you read this quotation with current headlines in mind, you might imagine that the context is debates over immigration to the United States today from Central America, Africa, or the Middle East. Or you might guess that the context is historical, related to native-born Americans who opposed the "new immigrants" from places like Italy, Poland, and Russia (1880s–1920s).

Both are reasonable guesses. Both are wrong. The context was not people of one ethnic descent and religious tradition worrying about immigrants from other ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds. The people unsettled by immigrants were indeed native-born Americans. But they were not fearful about how recent immigrants might change the American nation. They were wondering how waves of new immigrants would change their church.

The immigrants who needed adjusting to were Dutch and Reformed. The people doing the wondering were Dutch Americans in the Christian Reformed Church. It was 1952. Dutch Reformed immigrants were arriving in Canada by the tens of thousands. Smaller numbers were immigrating to the United States. What was the Christian Reformed Church to do with them?

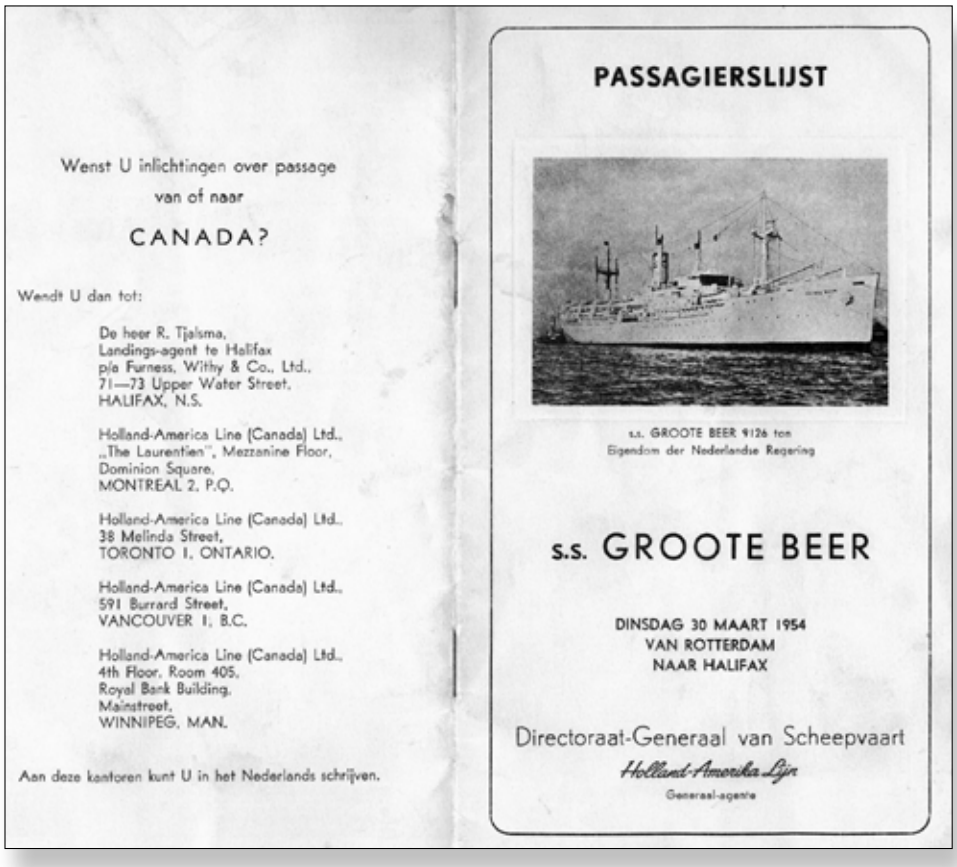
Context

Part of the problem, if indeed there was a problem, was the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) itself. After all, the CRC was working hard to recruit and settle these immigrants and helping them to start new CRC congregations—22 congregations in Canada in 1952. My parents and their families were part of this post-World War II wave of immigrants to Canada, my mother's family arriving in the 1940s and my father's family in the 1950s.

The waves of Dutch Reformed immigrants to Canada and the rapid organization of new CRC congregations there left some Americans in the CRC unsettled. What impact would these immigrants have on the denomination?

One challenge was cultural differences between recent immigrants and assimilated Dutch Americans whose families had come decades earlier. The two world wars had played a mighty role in Americanizing Dutch folk in the United States. Like other Americans, they came out of World War II confident, and by the early 1950s they were enjoying a wave of unprecedented prosperity. Dutch immigrants arriving in Canada and the United States in the 1950s had experienced World War II in quite different, traumatic ways in the German-occupied Netherlands. The immediate postwar years and early Cold War were difficult too.

Another challenge was that the new Dutch immigrants brought strains of Reformed Christianity with ideas subtly different from those familiar to people in the heartlands of the American CRC. Much had changed in the Netherlands and its Reformed churches in the decades between the last major wave of Dutch immigrants to the United States in



Wenst U inlichtingen over passage
van of naar
CANADA?

Wendt U dan tot:

De heer R. Tjalsma,
Landings-agent te Halifax
p/a Furness, Withy & Co., Ltd.,
71—73 Upper Water Street,
HALIFAX, N.S.

Holland-America Line (Canada) Ltd.,
„The Laurentien", Mezzanine Floor,
Dominion Square,
MONTREAL 2, P.Q.

Holland-America Line (Canada) Ltd.,
38 Melinda Street,
TORONTO 1, ONTARIO.

Holland-America Line (Canada) Ltd.,
591 Burrard Street,
VANCOUVER 1, B.C.

Holland-America Line (Canada) Ltd.,
4th Floor, Room 405,
Royal Bank Building,
Mainstreet,
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Aan deze kantoren kunt U in het Nederlands schrijven.

PASSAGIERSLIJST

s.s. GROOTE BEER 9126 ton
Eigendom der Nederlandse Regering

s.s. GROOTE BEER

DINSDAG 30 MAART 1954
VAN ROTTERDAM
NAAR HALIFAX

Directoraat-Generaal van Scheepvaart
Holland-Amerika Lijn
Generaal-agenten

Holland America Line passenger list for SS Groote Beer for Tuesday, 20 October 1953, which sailed Rotterdam to New York via Le Havre and Halifax. Donated to the Museum by Homena Vanderveen, in 2003. Her family arrived in Halifax in 1953 and went to St. Thomas, ON. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 (Halifax, NS) DI2013.1042.3

the 1910s and 1920s and the post-war wave arriving in Canada and the United States in the 1950s.[2]

Moreover, the CRC in the United States was undergoing its own transitions.[3] It would celebrate its centennial in 1957. It was no longer an immigrant denomination but increasingly, even confidently, assimilated to American life.

Much of the CRC was becoming middle class and well-off in an era of burgeoning prosperity. For example, its youth were in unprecedented numbers going to Christian Reformed colleges like Calvin and Dordt and to public universities. Dutch Americans in older immigrant neighborhoods in cities sometimes renovated and expanded their church and Christian school buildings. The arrival in their neighborhoods of recent immigrants from other ethnic groups, or African Americans, sometimes led to tensions. Many Dutch Americans moved to new suburbs (like other white Americans were doing). When enough people in a congregation had left for the suburbs, they built new churches and schools there.

All of this movement, change, and prosperity undermined the isolation of the CRC. Ethnic and religious clannishness could no longer be counted on to help maintain orthodoxy, faithfulness, and distinctiveness—at least not to the same degree as in the past. The denomination was confident about where it had come from and where it was. But it also was anxious about its open-ended future. Would it continue to be faithful and unified and receive God's covenantal blessing? Or would prosperous, confidently American CRC members wander from the fold? (David Zwart's essay in this issue of *Origins* explores these themes in relation to the 1957 Centennial of the CRC.)[4] Waves of new immigrant members and new congregations—in Canada—further stirred this mix of optimism and unease.

Family and Strangers

The Banner, the weekly English-language magazine of the CRC, addressed immigration in a series of articles from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s. The first articles were about Dutch Reformed immigration to Canada after World War II.

In January 1948, in "Pastor Writes About the Immigration Situation in

An immigration officer examines a Dutch family of seven on board S.S. Groote Beer in 1956 as it approaches the Port of Quebec. E. L. Homewood. *United Church Observer*. Library and Archives Canada, e004413840.

Canada," Gerrit Vander Ziel reported on the thousands of Dutch immigrants arriving and CRC efforts to establish "field-men" to help settle them and to start churches for them. The big concern was that, without churches, immigrants might drift away from the faith. In other cases, such as my mother's family, they would not have come unless they were confident that there would be a Christian Reformed congregation for them to join, sooner rather than later.[5]

Eighteen months later, John M. Vande Kieft reported on the "Canadian Immigration Field," describing the many organizations helping to recruit and settle Dutch immigrants to Canada.[6] These included the CRC, its Canadian Immigration Committee, and its fieldmen, but also Chr. Emigatie Centrale in the Netherlands and a variety of churches in Canada. Vande Kieft described stories of cooperation and competition, as immigrants looked for churches in Canada that matched their backgrounds in the Netherlands.

Other stories focused on the immigrant experience, one such being "Our Immigrant Ship Arrives in Canada" by Reverend Peter Kuiper, in July 1951. It described the excitement of seeing land, bicycles, and cars as the ship steamed down the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. It noted the anxiety and hope that coming to a "new fatherland" entailed. And it ended with a voice on a railroad platform lifting up a benediction, as a group of immigrants waited for the next stage of their journey to begin, that God would bless the immigrants in their new land.[7]

"A Different Immigrant," by Edward Tanis in June 1951, discussed church building and adapting to Canada. These new immigrants in the CRC would learn English more quickly, Tanis predicted. He described the use of English by young people in the new congregation in Drayton, Ontario, and the consistory's emphasis in a Hamilton, Ontario, congregation that people might not fully understand a sermon in English but were learning. His hope was that CRC churches in Canada would not rely on Dutch-speaking clergy from the Netherlands but would soon produce their own ministers.[8]

At the same time, and as the wave of Dutch immigrants continued and grew, writers in *The Banner* began to think through the implications for the church. In these stories, the focus shifted from the immigrants themselves to their impact on a denomination and congregations that had Americanized—people for whom the immigrant experience was history and distant family memories.


CALVINIST-CONTACT

CHATHAM, ONTARIO, APRIL 1, 1954
5TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION NO. 84

IN DIT NUMMER:
- Politieke Onderwerpen
- De Wereldraad van Kerken
- Immigratie

HOLLAND-CANADIAN MAGAZINE

DE HEER EN MEVROUW C. TROELSTRA EN HUN KINDEREN UIT HOENSBROEK, LIMBURG, IN HET WINDSOR STATION TE MONTREAL VOOR HUN VERTREK NAAR BRITISH COLUMBIA, BIJGESTAAN EN HUN REISPROBLEMEN DOOR DE HEER J. C. KRIJGSMAN, COLONIZATION AGENT, DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION & COLONIZATION VOOR DE CANADIAN PACIFIC SPOORWEG MAATSCHAPPIJ.

"Mr and Mrs C. Troelstra and their children from Hoensbroek, Limburg, at the Windsor Station in Montreal before their departure to British Columbia, assisted in their travel problems by Mr J.C. Krijgsman, colonization agent, department of immigration & colonization for the Canadian Pacific Railway Company." Cover of *Calvinist-Contact* (today *Christian Courier*), 1 April 1954. CC was a key news source for Dutch Reformed immigrants, much like *De Wachter* and *The Banner* in the U.S. CC transitioned steadily from being mostly Dutch language to English. Used with permission.

In "The Canadian Melting Pot," for example, in September 1952, John C. Verbrugge discussed how Dutch Americans had "melted" into American society in previous decades. He wondered how the "melting pot" pattern would play out in Canada in the years to come. (Some Canadians had long described their country as a "mosaic" of ethnic traditions. In the 1960s, the federal government would define Canada as multicultural and bilingual.)[9] Verbrugge also noted that Reformed Christianity had evolved in distinct ways in the Netherlands and the United States since the late 1800s and early 1900s. Recent Dutch immigrants to Canada and assimilated Dutch Americans in the CRC would have to adjust to each other. They were part of the same ethnic and

religious family, but also distant relatives with two generations of history separating them. Moreover, as the new immigrants assimilated, it would be to Canada for the bulk of them, not the United States.[10]

In his "melting pot" article Verbrugge described the challenge for the CRC. "The adjustment involves not only a matter of language but of customs and traditions." More importantly, the adjustment will be "denominational in scope," he observed. "The truth of this assertion will become increasingly evident in the future at Classical meetings, Synodical assemblies, and such organizations as the Young Calvinist Federation."[11]

Verbrugge continued his assessment of the immigration challenge in December 1952 with an article titled "Each Counting the Other Better." In it he gave advice about what the two groups should do. Assimilated Dutch Americans and newly arrived Dutch immigrants to Canada might find each other strange. Each group would be tempted to see itself as superior and the other as needing to change. But these strangers could learn from the best of each other.[12]

I understand this "adjustment." The child of Dutch immigrants to Canada, I found Calvin College and the CRC in West Michigan strange when I arrived on campus in the late 1980s. Calvin was not weirdly "Dutch" in my experience; it was weirdly "American." My viewpoint was shaped by my immigrant roots and by my Canadian upbringing. Both made me conscious of how I was different from Dutch Reformed Americans. I remember people in West Michigan talking about "Dutch niceness," by which they meant people being passive aggressive when they were unhappy. My experience of Dutch immigrants was that Dutch people were blunt and forthright (my own family included, on my mother's side especially). "Dutch niceness" struck me as a Midwestern trait, a sign of assimilation to American ways.

"Holland immigrants" to Canada and "old-timer" Americans would have a "modifying influence" on each other, Verbrugge hoped. "Different ways" are not necessarily inferior, he argued. "We must absorb one another's cultural strength." "The ability to use two languages is not a liability but an asset, an enrichment." Such an approach would lead to "the more glorious development of the Church and the Kingdom."

This last point is interesting. Some CRC congregations only very recently had stopped offering Dutch-language worship services. The last in Paterson, New Jersey, for example, had done so in 1949. The new Dutch immigrants to Canada and the U.S. tended to learn English more quickly than previous generations had. Nonetheless, Verbrugge's point suggests that the desire for Dutch services and the sound of thick Dutch brogues and broken English were off-putting for some thoroughly assimilated Dutch Americans.[13]

This adjustment would not be easy, even for people who shared ethnic and religious roots, Verbrugge explained in his September article. "When two or three rivers join to make one larger stream, the waters are turbulent for a while. Farther downstream the water flows smoothly again. If this is kept in mind, it will be possible to work with confidence toward the strong fusion of the divergent elements; and the Christian Church of America, in the United States and Canada, will grow internally and exert a blessed influence externally."[14]

Immigration Policies

The Banner did not just discuss Dutch Reformed immigrants in the 1950s. It also addressed the larger context of immigration history and policy in the United States. In "The Problem of Immigration in the U.S.A." (March 1954), John M. Vande Kieft responded to recent legislation that had revised U.S. immigration policy. He had been a chaplain during the war. Many Dutch American veterans of the U.S. armed forces who had served overseas came home worldly and confident. They often were impatient with both the ethnic and religious clannishness of the CRC and narrow American views of the wider world. Vande Kieft criticized both the "National Origins Act" of 1924, written after World War I at the height of anti-immigrant agitation in the United States, and a modest revision to American policy in 1952.[15]

American immigration legislation from the 1920s to the 1960s was defined by "national origins" quotas. Congress designed the quotas in 1924 to maintain the ethnic and racial makeup of the nation. The quotas were based on the percentage of ethnic groups in the American population in the 1890 census, when the proportion of eastern and southern Europeans had been much smaller. U.S. policy thus discriminated against immigrants from eastern and southern Europe and favored those from northwestern Europe. The quotas would have been quite different if they had been based on the 1920 census. Legislation in the 1920s closed the door to immigration from Asia entirely. Canada had similar policies against Asian and southern and eastern European immigrants by the late 1920s and early 1930s. Both countries would revise immigrant legislation and regulations in the 1960s, changing racist policies that favored immigrants from Britain and northwestern Europe.[16]

Vander Kieft condemned the racism of national origins quotas on biblical grounds. He called on Christian

Christian Reformed Church in Iron Springs, Alberta, ca. 1957. The first Dutch Reformed immigrants arrived in 1948. They started construction of a church building in 1949, renting a United Church of Canada building until their own was completed. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Reformed members to support policies shaped by Christian values. "Let us as Christians not fail to see [the problem of immigration] in the light of the coming Day," he wrote. "In a world of increasing woes we must respond to the command to love and show mercy in this life, imitating *him*." [17] The CRC helped settle refugees fleeing communism in Hungary and Cuba in the 1950s and 1960s. It would do the same with people fleeing Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[18]

The stories about immigration in *The Banner* reflected the hopes, fears, and debates that shaped the United States and Canada when it came to immigration. People often notice even small cultural and religious differences from themselves—in this case, even among fellow Reformed Christians with Dutch ethnic roots. Those differences created "turbulence" (Verbrugge's word) for both native-born people and immigrants, as they adjusted to each other.

The Banner stories also reflected a familiar pattern: descendants of immigrants often forget their ancestors' experiences as immigrants. Some Dutch Americans faced anti-immigrant sentiment, even violence, during World War I, for example.[19] Some of their descendants may well have been among the CRC folk worried about assimilating the new immigrants from the Netherlands after World War II, with their ethnically and religiously strange ways.

Sunday School children in Kitchener CRC in Ontario, ca. 1948. The congregation held services at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church 1947 to 1953, when it built its own facility. John M. Vande Kieft was one of the CRC ministers who led worship services in the early years. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

For their part, the Dutch immigrants to Canada in the 1940s and 1950s brought with them a wariness about both America and Canada from the old world. The same was true of Dutch immigrants to the United States in the 1800s and early 1900s. Dutch Reformed immigrants in Canada quickly learned English, but they also started Christian schools, labor unions, a farmers federation, credit unions, and more. And they brough a new generation of Dutch Reformed thought to Calvin College and Seminary and the CRC.[20] As Dutch Reformed immigrants assimilated to Canadian life, they also often took on critical views of the United States common in Canada. I took my Dutch Reformed Canadian experiences and views with me to Calvin College in the 1980s and when I returned as a faculty member in the 1990s.

Conclusions

Compared to the extremism of anti-immigrant movements in the United States in the 1840s, 1870s, 1890s, and 1920s, the turbulence brought to the CRC in the 1950s by the arrival of Dutch Reformed immigrants to Canada was a tempest in a teapot. Even so, Verbrugge's "turbulence" suggests that the 1950s were more complicated than nostalgic memories of a simpler, confident time would allow. CRC

members (or at least leaders) were anxious about the very prosperity and the denomination's coming of age in America that they celebrated in the 1950s. Dutch immigrants in Canada were hopeful and apprehensive in their own ways, as they adjusted to the CRC and their new country. It took time for the two groups to adjust to each other. And there are still today differences and even tensions between the American and Canadian branches of the CRC.[21]

History does not repeat itself, and it does not teach us simple lessons, Verbrugge noted in 1952.[22] Nonetheless, it is dangerous to "refuse to let the past teach us," he thought. One way the past can serve us is as a "different mirror," it seems to me. We can study the faces of people in the past and listen to their stories to get new perspectives on ourselves, on the turbulence of our times, or on our hopes and anxieties.[23] The United States and Canada often are described as immigrant societies. The CRC was founded by immigrants. The experience of adjusting to new, more recent waves of immigrants is as American and Canadian as the immigrant experience itself. And that is true for churches too.

Endnotes

1. John C. Verbrugge, "The Canadian Melting Pot," *The Banner*, 26 September 1952.
2. On the CRC in Canada, see Tymen Hofman, *The Canadian Story of the CRC: Its First Century* (Bellville, Ont.: Guardian Books, 2004). Also see articles by Adrian Guldemond, Phil Teeuwsen, and William Katerberg in the Spring 2021 issue of *Origins: Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives*.
3. On this story, see Justin R. Vos, "Our People: *The Banner* and the Christian Reformed Church in the 1950s," *Origins: Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives* 39:1 (Spring 2021), 32-39.
4. David Zwart tells this story in his article in this issue: "Promoting Unity: The 1957 Centennial Celebration of the Christian Reformed Church" *Origins: Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives* 39:2 (Fall 2021).
5. "Pastor Writes About the Immigration Situation in Canada" *The Banner*, 9 January 1948.
6. "Canadian Immigration Field," *The Banner*, 17 June 1949.
7. Peter Kuiper, "Our Immigrant Ship Arrives in Canada," *The Banner*, 20 June 1951.
8. Edward Tanis, "A Different Immigrant," *The Banner*, 1 June 1951.
9. Multicultural ideals and policy in Canada are meant to be a form of acculturation that leaves more room for diversity than the melting pot idea. Indigenous peoples in Canada are referred to as "First Nations," reflecting the fact that they are the original population of the land, unlike all others, who are immigrants. On this history in Canada, see Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540–2015*, Fourth Edition (Toronto: Dundurn, 2016).
10. Verbrugge, "The Canadian Melting Pot."
11. Verbrugge, "The Canadian Melting Pot."
12. Verbrugge, "Each Counting the Other Better," *The Banner*, 26 December 1952.
13. Verbrugge, "Each Counting the Other Better."
14. Verbrugge, "Each Counting the Other Better."
15. Vande Kieft, "The Problem of Immigration in the U.S.A.," *The Banner*, 19 March 1954.
16. I've told this story in more detail in *Immigration Debates in America* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Press, 2020).
17. Vande Kieft, "The Problem of Immigration in the U.S.A."
18. On the history of American policies toward refugees, see Katerberg, *Immigration Debates in America*.
19. See, for example, Robert P. Swierenga, "Disloyal Dutch? Herman Hoeksema and the Flag in Church Controversy during World War I," *Origins: Historical Magazine of the Archives* 25:2 (Fall 2007), 28–35.
20. Adrian Guildemond tells this story in "Audacious Immigrants: Bringing Dutch Reformed Reforms to Canada," *Origins: Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives* 39:1 (Spring 2021), 4–10.
21. See, for example, Bruce Adema, "When Canadian Realities Are Ignored: The Challenges of Running One Church in Two Countries," *Christian Courier*, 4 August 2021, https://www.christiancourier.ca/when-canadian-realities-are-ignored/ (accessed 23 September 2021).
22. Verbrugge, "Each Counting the Other Better."
23. The phrase comes from Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, Revised Edition (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008).

Promoting Unity: The 1957 Centennial Celebration of the Christian Reformed Church

David Zwart

The 1957 Centennial Celebration was a big deal for the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The denomination held regional rallies across the country the third week of March. Members participated enthusiastically in these celebrations. A gathering in Chicago attracted 12,000 people to the International Amphitheater, and "many were turned away."[1] Actors and singers presented a pageant titled "Upon This Rock . . ." to over 10,000 people in Grand Rapids in February 1957, with plans for a repeat performance in June.[2] The pageant also played in slightly varied forms in at least eight other locations with high concentrations of CRC congregations, from Patterson, New Jersey, to Hull, Iowa. The CRC supplemented large events like these with "sight-sound" programs using slides and record albums and with special *Banner* issues and articles, books, calendars, and ephemera such as placemats, napkins, and key fobs with Centennial logos.

The central coordinating committee hoped the celebration would educate CRC members about themselves and their history. The Synod that established the committee in 1954 viewed the Centennial as "an excellent opportunity to make clear, both to ourselves and to our neighbors, just what we are and what we

Centennial rally of 12,000 in Chicago, the largest CRC gathering in the denomination's history. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

David Zwart is an associate professor of history at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. His interests include social studies education, migration history, and Dutch American history.

believe."[3] The central organizers eventually used multiple forms of media to present this message. The Centennial pageants, books, articles, bulletin covers, record albums and slide shows, pins, and more all promoted the theme of "God's Favor Is Our Challenge." The leaders wanted to knit the denomination together and emphasize a shared history of defending Calvinist orthodoxy. In their telling, history showed that a faithful denomination had God's favor. CRC leaders hoped that this history would inspire the same for the future.

The Centennial year of 1957 was an important moment for the Christian Reformed Church to tell its story. The denomination had experienced growth on numerous fronts in recent decades. Growing families had more money and options. Communities founded new congregations and Christian schools. New organizations were started. A postwar wave of immigrants settled in Canada and joined the denomination. These immigrants brought subtly different sensibilities to the denomination that were unfamiliar to Americans whose immigrant experiences was several decades past. The Centennial Celebration would remind American CRC folk of who they long had been, at a time when they had largely Americanized. At the same time, it would help recent immigrants in Canada understand the denomination they had recently joined as they adapted to life in their new homeland. No longer was survival the primary goal for the CRC; now leaders wanted their denomination to have an impact on North America. Yet growth and success brought anxiety. Would the CRC maintain its Calvinist distinctiveness? Or would it be swallowed up in the North American religious landscape? Optimism and anxiety spurred CRC leaders to craft a Centennial Celebration that would recognized and publicly acknowledge "God's blessings,"[4] but also unify the its members around a shared history and commitment to a shared future.

CRC Centennial Booth at the Edmonton Exhibition in July 1957. People staffing the booth distributed over 20,000 tracts to visitors, according to a *Banner* story in the 8 November 1957 edition. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Some church leaders perceived a slipping of the very orthodoxy that they considered essential to their denomination's distinct place in the religious landscape of North America. A broad ecumenical movement among North American Protestants meant that the CRC was feeling pressure to conform to its American (and Canadian) contexts. These leaders saw the Centennial as an opportunity to define a third way, one that avoided both "liberal" mainline Protestantism and "fundamentalist" evangelicalism. They promoted orthodoxy as coming not only from the Bible but also a confessional heritage, a message they hoped would unify and reinvigorate the denomination in a time of change.

Planning

In 1953, three classes (regional bodies in the church) made overtures to Synod calling for a centennial celebration.[5] Synod appointed a committee to make plans and report in 1954. It appears to have wanted a unified celebration and gave deference to Synod to accomplish this. The Centennial Committee reported in 1954 that it saw its primary purpose as celebrating God's blessings on the denomination. Its secondary purpose was "to preserve, and even if possible improve, the excellent denominational solidarity which characterized us up to this point." The committee also acknowledged that the Centennial provided an "excellent opportunity to make clear, both to ourselves and to our neighbors, just what we are and what we believe."[6] These purposes suggest that the Committee believed that the past could be retold in such a way as to have an influence on the present and future.

The membership of the Centennial Committee was typical of committees formed by Synod in this era. It was all men, and they were either pastors, seminary professors, or laymen with close connections to the history of the denomination.

The chair of the committee, John H. Kromminga, taught church history at Calvin Theological Seminary and soon would become its president. His appointment to the committee came as no surprise, since he had been

the chairman of the denomination's standing historical committee and had written a scholarly history of the denomination.[7] His understanding of CRC history, as he himself noted, was shaped by his father, Diedrich H. Kromminga. D. H. Kromminga had served as professor of church history at Calvin Theological Seminary from 1928 to 1947. In 1943 the senior Kromminga published *The Christian Reformed Tradition*, based on notes from a seminary course he taught. The book outlined his argument that the Dutch national church had completed its organization at the Synod of Dort in 1618–1619 in the Netherlands as the culmination of the Reformation. That church had deteriorated over time, which necessitated the 1834 *Afscheiding* (or separation) from the national church. The CRC's separation from the Reformed Church in American in 1857 was a continuation of the need to separate for the sake of orthodoxy.[8]

John Kromminga, D. H.'s son, told a similar story in his 1949 book, *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy*. He argued that the CRC had maintained orthodoxy in the face of liberalism because "its doctrinal standards remained basically unchanged from the time of its organization to the present." Kromminga pointed to such "time-honored practices as catechetical instruction, catechism preaching, church discipline, family visitation, and church visitation." These practices were still faithfully observed in 1957.[9] The ability of the CRC to maintain its Reformed orthodoxy was in jeopardy, Kromminga worried, because the ethnic and religious isolation of the past would be harder to maintain in a post-World War II era marked by prosperity and Americanization. The church and its members no longer set themselves apart, as they once had, but were more fully participating in American life. Of course, the flipside of anxiety was hope. The Centennial also was an opportunity to show off Christian Reformed faithfulness to a wider audience.

John H. Kromminga (right) and Casey Wondergem with a mock-up of the Centennial logo. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Actors staging a historical scene of Dutch immigrants for Centennial Celebration programming. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

One of the defining features of the Centennial was central control of the message by the small group of men on the planning committee. (They were Jacob T. Hoogstra, Henry Zylstra, Sydney T. Youngsma, and Fred H. Baker, in addition to Kromminga). The committee organized the Celebration with only limited oversight from Synod.[10] It provided annual reports over the next few years, but there was almost no deliberation beyond the committee except about how to fund its work. Neither subsequent Synods nor local congregations seem to have questioned the purpose or direction the committee took.[11] CRC members accepted their work, at least partially, because they deferred to leadership that was appointed and elected through the denomination.

The idea of using the CRC's history to knit together the denomination came from its chairman, John Kromminga. As a church history professor, and after 1956 president of Calvin Seminary, he had a vested interest in telling a certain story about the

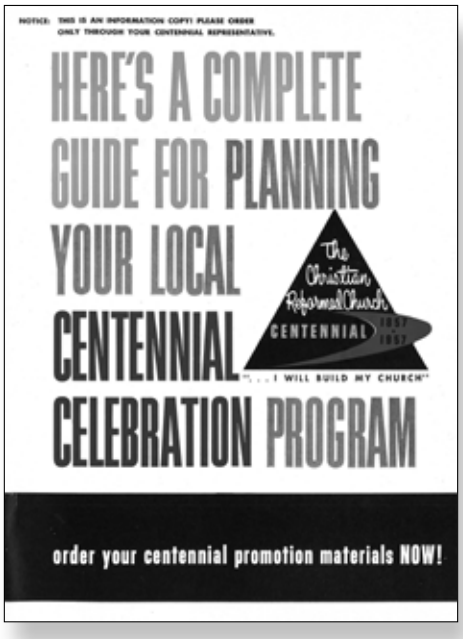
denomination. He brought a strong hand to the committee. He laid out his vision for the denomination in his book *In the Mirror: An Appraisal of the Christian Reformed Church* (1957). The Centennial Celebration seems to have been his attempt to bring the book's vision to the largest possible audience. He recognized that there were two sometimes conflicting historical streams in the Christian Reformed tradition. One focused on piety and the individual's relationship to God. The other put an emphasis on the practical impact of Christianity on the world.[12] Kromminga wanted the Centennial Celebration to provide a shared experience and heritage that promoted "unity in heritage and unity in mission."[13]

The Christian Reformed Church had a legacy to protect and divisions to overcome, Kromminga believed. But it also had something to offer the broader American culture. He rejected both isolationism and conformity to the broader culture. The Centennial Celebration offered a "middle-way," as he described it. For longtime members, Centennial programs and material emphasized the uniqueness of Dutch Calvinism. For the general American public, it presented CRC history in terms of "historical Christianity." For both groups, the Centennial would promote witness to what had worked in the past and what promised the surest road to faithfulness in the future.

Implementing

In 1955, the Committee hired Casey Wondergem Jr. as its "Centennial Manager."[14] He oversaw the day-to-day operations of coordinating a denomination-wide celebration and worked to keep local congregations informed using a newsletter. Wondergem sent the newsletters to regional coordinators and to "key-men" in each local church, alerting them to the planning and scope of the Celebration.[15]

Regional coordinators and "key-men" also received a *Centennial Facts and Background* booklet. It included essays on the history of the denomination and its work. Tables of historical statistics of the denomination and



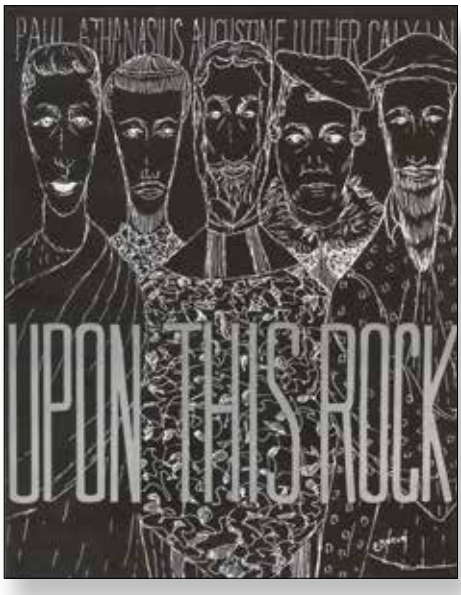
Centennial planning guide cover. Image Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

a list of "memorable dates" charted the establishment of new churches across North America and revealed how the CRC's geographic footprint had grown.[16] Churches received a catalog titled *Here's a Complete Guide for Planning Your Local Centennial Celebration Program*. It included a short letter by Kromminga and descriptions of the diverse resources available to local congregations.[17]

The Centennial Committee eventually assigned the work of producing Centennial materials to subcommittees. A member of the Centennial Executive Committee chaired each subcommittee. One of these committees was responsible for regional celebrations. These events for members and communities in the denomination promoted a theme titled "This We Believe." There would be little variation among the regional celebrations, since they were planned through the central committee. The committee suggested that a "mass-choir technique" be used to assure large crowds and that "every effort should be put forth to develop community appeal." It even proposed a roster of approved speakers. It ultimately dismissed the idea as unworkable, however, because the regional celebrations were being held during the same week in March 1957.[18]

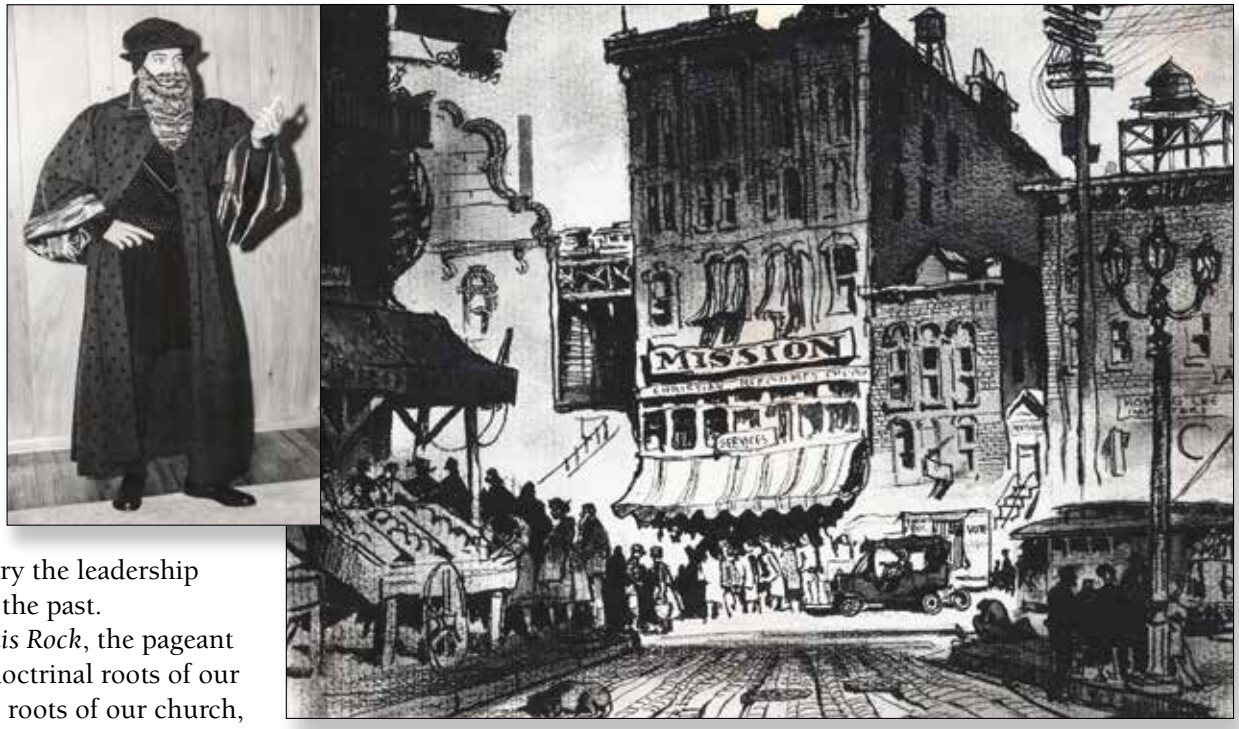
Message

The program subcommittee oversaw a variety of endeavors: a pageant, "sight-sound" programs, a central rally, and a Centennial hymn and anthem contest. The pageant was the centerpiece of this committee's work. Betty Duimstra wrote it, and Edgar and Ervina Boeve produced it. (The



Centennial pageant program cover. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

latter two were professors of art and communication at Calvin College.) This kind of dramatic production had a long history in America. It was old-fashioned by the 1950s and had enjoyed its heyday before World War I.[19] But the pageant proved popular for CRC audiences, however. It was a key place where members would



The two images at right depict the religious and ethnic themes in the centennial celebration. One is of a CRC mission to welcome Dutch immigrants arriving in New York. The other is an actor playing John Calvin in a centennial pageant. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

encounter the story the leadership was telling about the past.

Titled *Upon This Rock*, the pageant had four parts: "doctrinal roots of our church, historical roots of our church, our church within, and our church and evangelism." The separation of doctrinal roots from the historical roots was probably more a production choice than a theological one, because the story of the theology of the church was framed in relation to the broader biblical history. The doctrinal section connected CRC folk to their deeper roots in the New Testament, the Council of Nicaea, the theologian Augustine, and the Reformation (Martin Luther and John Calvin) as the basis for the doctrines of the church. The more recent history sections focused on the Dutch background, with such things as the Synod of Dort in 1618–1619 and the struggle for "purity of doctrine" in the *Afscheiding* (the separation from the Dutch national church in 1834).

The pageant depicted the actual beginning of the CRC in America in 1857 as necessary because of differences in practices from the "older Reformed body," the Reformed Church in America. These differences forced the CRC to "resume the independent status of the Church."[20] This section of the pageant concluded by noting how "the church has paid the price for purity" in the century since its founding in North America. It had stood for orthodoxy, whatever the cost. The pageant's final two sections highlighted the contemporary work of the church (e.g., missions).[21] The Centennial Committee hoped that presenting the CRC's story in this manner would leave denominational members with a shared, orthodox impression of their history.

The "sight-sound" programs were available to local congregations for viewing. Twelve slide shows, with record albums providing music and narrative, depicted different aspects of the CRC. Some focused mostly on doctrine, such as one on the Heidelberg Catechism. Several celebrated the ministries of the denomination (e.g., home missions in cities, the "Indian Mission field" in the American Southwest, world missions in Asia and Africa, the work of mercy, and Christian day schools). Other "sight-sound" programs told various aspects of the history of the CRC. One was about Calvin College. Another, titled *Unrest, Peril and Blessing*, focused on the immigrant colonies that arrived in 1846–1847. Still another was about Canada and current work to settle immigrants and build churches there. These productions related the story of the church "to the membership."[22] Congregations and other organizations purchased some 750 of these programs.[23]

The Centennial Hymn and Centennial Anthem competitions provided an opportunity for musicians to submit entries to be selected as the official hymn or anthem of the Centennial. The hymn competition was meant to produce a piece of music that entire congregations could sing, while the anthem was meant for choirs. Marie J. Post's "O Lord, Beneath Thy Guiding Hand," set to an Adrian Hartog tune, won the hymn contest.[24] Her first verse emphasized a shared creedal orthodoxy: "O Lord beneath Thy guiding hand / Our fathers' fathers formed our creed / Brought prayer and psalm to this fair land / And were supplied in every need." The effort to unite the CRC

musically included calls for a new hymnal. It would appear in 1959 and be called the "Centennial Edition."[25] The new hymnal provided a Sabbath-day reminder of the Centennial effort in congregations that used it.

Another subcommittee oversaw a large effort to publish books and pamphlets that would continue to tell the same story. This subcommittee had published and distributed a *Centennial Facts and Background* booklet to regional coordinators and key-men. The booklet included a chart that described the 1618 Synod of Dort in the Netherlands as the "rock" of Reformed Christianity. From this rock flowed the many different Dutch Reformed denominations in the Netherlands and North America. The booklet noted the many schisms among Dutch Calvinists and showed how the CRC fit into this history.

CRC Centenary float from Munster Indiana. The birthday cake float has a model of the local church atop it. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

The subcommittee helped CRC members envision the CRC literally with a memorial "yearbook," published in 1958. Titled *One Hundred Years in the New World,* the yearbook-syle volume had pictures of church buildings that showed off the rootedness and material success of the church. Chairman Kromminga wrote an extended essay about the first one hundred years of the denomination. The story he told justified the founding and continued existence of the CRC as a protector of orthodoxy. Kromminga was less interested in immigrant stories and transplanting Dutch ways in the New World than in maintaining orthodoxy, no matter where the faithful lived.[26] In his view, the unity of the denomination did not ultimately depend on Dutch ethnicity or American success but on faithfulness to the Bible and to Reformed creeds and confessions.[27]

Beyond its own publications, the publishing subcommittee gave its seal of approval to books and articles by individual writers not part of the official planning process. Thea Van Halsema, for instance, had the Centennial symbol printed on the title page of her book, *I Will Build My Church*.[28] Van Halsema wrote her story to appeal to a broad audience. It set the history of Christian Reformed Church as part of the larger biblical story of God's redemptive work.[29]

The publications subcommittee also wrote articles for the official CRC magazines, *The Banner* and *De Wachter*. These articles alerted readers to the importance of the celebration for the denomination. One article explained why the denomination was making such a big deal of the Centennial. It argued that the Centennial was "an occasion to tell men the message we bear in behalf of the King!"[30] Some articles seem to have been meant to justify the expense of the Celebration. A "Centennial Issue" of *The Banner* (5 April 1957), featured stories about CRC history that highlighted Centennial Committee themes.

Finally, the publications committee oversaw *This is Our Story*. While other Centennial publications targeted CRC members, this book reached out beyond the denomination.[31] It played down the Dutch roots of the CRC and instead laid out the basic doctrines of the church. It also described the work of the denomination and explained why someone should join a Christian Reformed congregation. It was an evangelistic tool meant to introduce the CRC to neighbors of local congregations and to invite them to Sunday worship and church programs. With this goal in mind, the book listed all the congregations in the denomination.[32] The committee sold over 34,000 copies of *This Is Our Story* to local churches for distribution.[33]

Promotion

A promotions subcommittee of the Centennial Committee made a serious attempt to publicize the Centennial not only in the denomination but also to people who might have some acquaintance with the CRC. Its goal was to create "a setting for the witness we want to give to our communities."[34]

The Centennial evangelism campaign included everything from radio advertisements to church signs. The signs were large, included the Centennial symbol, and were designed to be displayed with a regular church sign. The committee reported selling

Billboard on a country road promoting the CRC Centenary. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

226 of them.[35] The signs would give congregations a visible presence and help their neighbors to see them as part of the community. The advertising campaign included billboards that local churches could purchase to advertise a CRC presence on local roads and regional highways. The promotion committee also designed the ads for congregations to publish in local newspapers. The ads emphasized the "historic Christianity" of the CRC and invited readers to contact a local CRC congregation. A series of Centennial Sunday bulletin covers from March 15 through May 26 corresponded with the ads. Churches also could purchase ads for local radio stations. In turn, the radio program of the denomination, *The Back to God Hour,* provided a weekly message on the same topic as the campaign.[36] Local churches purchased over 100 of the series of ads for local newspapers[37] and over 80,000 of the bulletin covers.[38] The entire series of 13 newspaper ads, bulletin covers, and radio ads focused solely on religious faithfulness. There was not a single mention of the ethnic origins and history of the Christian Reformed Church.

Finally, the promotions committee promoted the Centennial Celebration within the denomination. The common bulletin covers, for example, also were a way to knit the denomination together. The committee promoted ephemeral items such as lapel pins, mailing seals, placemats, and napkins that had the Centennial symbol on them. The calendar published by this subcommittee not only included a picture for each month highlighting an aspect of the denomination's history, it also included "memorable dates" and Centennial events as a reminder to members of important dates in the Centennial year and in the history of the denomination. It sold over 50,000 copies.

This material was meant to unite the denomination across the continent simply by members having a shared experience with the "stuff" of the celebration. Members who did not read the Centennial Celebration literature, go to pageants or "sight-sound" shows, or buy into the story being told in them, at least would share the visual experience of the Centennial campaign.

Analysis

The central Centennial Committee coordinated an elaborate plan for the Centennial Celebration of the Christian Reformed Church. The work its members did to craft a unified story and then distribute it across many platforms was impressive. It showed a strong commitment to the denomination's religious heritage and to situating the church in the American religious and social landscape. The campaign's emphasis was on doctrinal orthodoxy instead of immigrant success. CRC folk and their denomination had experienced institutional success with buildings, mission organizations, and educational institutions. But anxiety over the possibility of being swept into the broader American Protestant mainstream and losing distinctives lurked below the surface. They had been faithful in their covenant with God in the past, and the Almighty had blessed them. Would they continue to be faithful (and thus blessed) in the future?

The Centennial Celebration provided an opportunity to create a shared experience that might strengthen the unity of the denomination as a covenanted community. By writing articles and books, leaders like Kromminga shaped the story. The Centennial campaign's emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy reflected their concerns. The pageants, "sight and sound" programs, publications, and Centennial "tchotchkes" spread those ideas to CRC members. Centennial promotional material also publicized the denomination and local congregations to their neighbors as a religiously vibrant, orthodox American denomination that was open to them.

The Christian Reformed Church celebration of 1957 tried to balance the CRC's typical emphasis on its distinctiveness with fitting into and contributing to local communities and American society. Some parts of the celebration, such as the pageant, emphasized the doctrinal distinctives of the denomination within Calvinist orthodoxy.[39] Other parts, such as the memorial book narrative, highlighted CRC schools, home mission work, and institutions of mercy as contributions to the greater good of the United States and signs of good citizenship.[40] When the Centennial Committee produced information for use in local papers, much of it underlined how Christian Reformed congregations

fell within the normal range of churches in the United States. One of the committee's advertisements designed for newspapers connected the "inalienable rights which we claim in a democracy" to finding true happiness in the Christian faith.[41]

Navajo artist with a traditionally woven Navajo rug featuring the CRC Centennial logo. This was the cover image of *The Banner* on 1 March 1957. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

The Centennial appealed to the familiar biblical idea of the covenant. Because the CRC had faithfully upheld traditional Christian orthodoxy, God had in the past blessed it and its many ministries and allied institutions (e.g., Calvin College and Seminary). If the Reformed Christians continued to be faithful, then God would continue to bless them and their many institutions in the future. The covenantal ideal implicitly promoted Reformed unity. It perhaps also echoed familiar American ideals of the United States as a nation favored by God, a message that would have appealed to most CRC folk and to Americans more generally in the Cold War era. And it hinted at anxiety and contained an implicit warning. Continued blessing depended on continued faithfulness.

A scene depicting inter-generational covenantal faithfulness, with a grandfather with his grandchildren reaching for a donation envelope. The text on the display says, "and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever." Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

The Centennial Committee leaders used various techniques to knit the CRC together across the continent, and it glossed over issues that might be divisive within the denomination or inhibit evangelism. The Centennial Celebration campaign was part of a larger effort of promote unity and continued orthodoxy in an era of rapid change for the denomination. The material prepared for the Centennial Celebration was impressive in its scope, even if it seems dated in content and style from a twenty-first century point of view.

Conclusions

The Centennial showed what a small denomination and small committee of planners could accomplish. A committee guided by one man oversaw the story for the denomination. It took a top-down approach to accomplish its goals. The message flowed from the Centennial Committee to the rest of the denomination. This approach fit a culture of deference in the CRC for leadership, even if this culture was in tension with a church order that gave a good deal of independence to regional classes and local congregations.

The impact of the celebration on ordinary CRC folk effort is hard to gauge. It needs to be seen as part of a larger effort by the CRC in the 1950s and 1960s to promote unity, faithfulness, and orthodoxy through conferences, radio programming, and publications such as *The Banner*.[42] The CRC no longer thought in terms of surviving as an immigrant church. Its Centennial Celebration reflected an era characterized by growth and optimism (and anxiety) about the

impact of prosperity. The Centennial Committee, like denominational leaders more broadly, wanted to help members navigate a changing context and steer the CRC in a faithful direction. It could now try to influence its surroundings through maintaining Reformed orthodoxy.

Endnotes

1. Newsletter, Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 528, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
2. "Pageant Here Impressive" and "Centennial Pageant Here Proves Vivid, Impressive," *Grand Rapids Press*, 28 February 1957.
3. *1954 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, 256.
4. *1954 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, 256.
5. *1953 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, 539, 560.
6. *1954 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church Publishing House, 1954), 256.
7. 1953 *Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, 22, 155, 215.
8. D. H. Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Tradition: From the Reformation Till the Present* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943).
9. John Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), 14.
10. Jacob Hoogstra was Assistant Secretary of Calvin College Board of Trustees and pastor at Prospect Park Holland, 1940–1965; Henry Zylstra was a Calvin College Professor of English, 1938–1956; and Sydney Youngsma was the Calvin College Development Secretary, 1952–1974. Fred Baker, the son of Henry Baker, a prominent CRC minister, had worked as a reporter and seems to have done communication work for Calvin College and Seminary.
11. See the relevant sections of the *Acts of Synod* for the years 1953 through 1958.
12. John H. Kromminga, *In the Mirror: An Appraisal of the Christian Reformed Church* (Hamilton, Ont.: Guardian Publishing Co., 1957), 86–91.
13. John H. Kromminga, *In the Mirror,* 94.
14. *1955 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, 96; *1956 Agenda of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, 263.
15. Newsletters are available in Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 527 and 528, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
16. Centennial Facts and Background, Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 528, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
17. *Here's a Complete Guide for Planning Your Local Centennial Celebration Program, Centennial Celebration Committee*, Box 528, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
18. *Here's a Complete Guide.*
19. David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1990).
20. "Upon This Rock," Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 527, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 13.
21. "Upon This Rock."
22. *Here's a Complete Guide.*
23. February–March 1957 Newsletter, Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 527, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
24. No. 486, *Psalter Hymnal: Centennial Edition* (Grand Rapids: Publications Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 1959), 565.
25. *Psalter Hymnal: Centennial Edition* (Grand Rapids: Publications Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 1959).
26. Kromminga had published *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy* in 1949.
27. *One Hundred Years in the New World: The Story of the Christian Reformed Church from 1857 to 1957* (Grand Rapids: Centennial Committee, 1957).
28. Minutes, Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 527, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
29. Thea B. Van Halsema, *". . . I Will Build My Church"* (Grand Rapids: International Publications, 1956).
30. Fred H. Baker, "1957—Year of Opportunity," *The Banner*, 13 July 1956, 54.
31. *Here's a Complete Guide*, 20–21.
32. *This Is Our Story,* Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 528, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
33. February–March 1957.
34. *Here's a Complete Guide.*
35. February–March 1957 Newsletter.
36. Advertisements, Centennial Celebration Committee, Box 527, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
37. February–March 1957.
38. February–March 1957.
39. Betty M. Duimstra, *"Upon This Rock . . ."* Christian Reformed Church in North America Collection, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, box 528, folder 12.
40. *One Hundred Years in the New World* (Grand Rapids: Publication Section of the Centennial Committee, 1957).
41. "Open Doors," Christian Reformed Church in North America Collection, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, box 528, folder 9.
42. For more on this theme, see Justin R. Vos, "Our People: *The Banner* and the Christian Reformed Church in the 1950s," *Origins: Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives* 39:1 (Spring 2021), 32-39.

Navajo Voices and Christian Reformed Missions

William Katerberg

In December 1934, *The Banner* published "A Voice from an Indian," by "J.C. Morgan, Navaho Indian." Reverend L.P. Brink, a missionary, introduced Morgan and his article in a short piece entitled, "J.C. Morgan Writes About the Wheeler-Howard Bill."

The Brink and Morgan articles are interesting in several ways. First, an article by a Native American was a rarity in *The Banner*, despite the Christian Reformed Church's four decades of missions in Navajo communities. Usually, missionaries wrote about and spoke for "their" Indians. Second, Brink's introduction of Morgan got the main headline, not Morgan's article. Third, with Brink and Morgan's articles, the CRC and *Banner* were criticizing recent federal legislation and John Collier, Commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a prominent official in Franklin D. Roosevelt's first "New Deal" administration.[1]

J.C. Morgan with his family, ca. 1925-1930. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall

The Wheeler-Howard Act also was known as the "Indian Reorganization Act." The act and Collier's policies more generally sometimes are called the "Indian New Deal." They transformed a century of policies designed to force Native Americans to give up their cultures, "civilize" and "Christianize," and thus assimilate to American ways (e.g., through boarding schools for children). This re-education goal was summarized bluntly by Captain Richard Pratt in 1892. He ran the Carlisle school in Pennsylvania, the most influential boarding school for Native children in the nation. "[All] the Indian there is in the race should be dead," Pratt said. "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."[2]

Morgan's article defended the civilizing and Christianizing program and criticized Collier and the "Indian New Deal" for being out of touch with "Indian" needs. Brink's anger at Collier and "the whole bunch of radicals that [were] in cahoots with him" was evident.

More interesting, perhaps, is how Brink's introduction and Morgan's article supported each other, reinforcing the hierarchical sensibility that shaped missions in this era. Brink's white Christian voice gave CRC approval and authority to a Native American voice. Morgan's voice provided authenticity for the CRC's criticism of Collier, his policies, and their threat to the prevailing mission model. "I am a Navaho Indian and

should know the inside life of my people," Morgan concluded. "You have heard the voice of an Indian concerning his people."[3]

The relationship between Brink and Morgan as missionary and assistant and their *Banner* articles suggest how church leaders and government officials sometimes listened to, sometimes used, and often did not listen to Native voices. This essay explores these issues through the lives of two Navajo men who worked with L.P. Brink and other CRC missionaries: J.C. Morgan and Edward Becenti.

Contexts

The context for this story is the history of conquest, removal to reservations, and efforts to assimilate Native peoples. The U.S. Army established forts in Navajo territory after defeating Mexico in war in 1846 and seizing northern Mexico as U.S. territory. New Mexicans and Navajos raided each other occasionally, taking livestock. New Mexicans also sometimes took Navajo women and children as captives. In the early 1860s, New Mexico's militia and U.S. Army forces attacked Navajo communities, killing and destroying crops and homes. In 1864, the U.S. Army forced 10,000 Navajo (and Apache) people on the "Long Walk," a 300 mile trek to Bosque Redondo, a reservation. There, disease outbreaks and inadequate water, wood, provisions and livestock led to the deaths of 2400 people. In 1868, the Army escorted the survivors back to their home territories, creating reservations there.

Map of the CRC "Mission Field" to Navajo and Zuni peoples in New Mexico and Arizona. The map is from a glass slide, presumably used by missionaries when they visited churches in the Midwest to encourage support for the mission work. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

During the "Indian Wars" in the West (1860s-1880s), the Bureau of Indian Affairs established policies to assimilate conquered Native Americans. These included schools for children (often forcibly separating children from families and communities, sending them to boarding schools) and banning Native religious practices. The government also bullied tribal governments into accepting programs where reservation lands were broken up into individual holdings and allotted to individual Native men, women, and children. The rest of the land then was opened to white settlement. In the allotment process (1880s-1930s), the government took 90 million acres from Native American communities (two-thirds of Native land held by treaty in the early 1880s).[4]

Churches played a crucial role in the assimilation process, promoting Christianity and civilization. Native American leaders recognized the need for change. But they wanted a say in deciding what education and economic development programs would look like. Instead, the U.S. government forced changes on reservation communities and families. Churches established missions, did evangelism, ran boarding schools for Native children, and promoted modernization and assimilation.

U.S. Indian Commission John Collier appearing before the Senate Indian Affairs Committee in June 1940, testifying about opposition by some Indian nations about the Indian Reorganization Act. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. LOC 2016877727.

The CRC started its mission work with the Navajo in 1896. By the 1930s, it had mission churches in New Mexico and Arizona in locations such as Zuni (1897), Tohatchi (1898), Rehoboth (1899), Crownpoint (1912), Toadlena (1915), Farmington (1925), Naschitti (1926), Gallup (1928), Fort Wingate (1930), Shiprock (1934), Teec Nos Pos (1934), and Red Valley (1934). Rehoboth also had a school and hospital and Zuni a school.[5]

Histories of missions in Native American communities often have put the missionaries and the institutions they build at the center of the story. This approach reflected churches telling their histories, with missionaries often doing the writing, just as histories of the United States historically tended to focus on white Americans and U.S. institutions. This approach also reflects the fact that most of the documents we have are from churches and their publications. Histories of CRC missions are not unusual in this regard. In the material generated by the church and its missionaries, however, we can occasionally hear Native American

voices and catch glimpses of Navajo perspectives.[6]

J.C. Morgan

Jacob Casimera Morgan was born into the Salt Clan near Crownpoint, New Mexico in 1879 and raised by the last Navajo generation that had known life before conquest and captivity. His first sustained contact with white Americans came in 1889 when his family sent him to a government-run Navajo residential school at Fort Defiance in Arizona. A year later, at a school in Grand Junction, Colorado, Morgan converted to Christianity. In 1898, he went to the Hampton Institute in Virginia to learn carpentry and business.[7]

These experiences led Morgan to become an advocate for assimilation. He wore a suit and tie in public, as an adult, and carried a briefcase. In 1910, he married Zahrina Tso, a Navajo woman who like him was school educated. They had three sons, Irwin, William, and Jacob Casimera, Jr. (Buddy).

Morgan's education and work put him in the borderland between Navajo and white cultures. His many jobs included being a clerk and interpreter for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and operating a trading post. In 1910, he began to assist the CRC missionary Reverend Brink, helping him with Bible translation. In 1914, Morgan became a shop teacher and the band director at boarding school in Crownpoint, New Mexico. He had learned to play coronet at Hampton. He joined the staff at Boarding School in Shiprock in the 1920s.

These experiences did not lead Morgan away from his Navajo community, however. In 1923 he won a seat on the Navajo Council. He and some other Navajo boarding school graduates felt that they were being excluded from BIA jobs by older Navajo leaders such as Chee Dodge. Morgan criticized Dodge for his Roman Catholic faith and alleged immorality.

Sometimes conflict like that between Morgan and Dodge is categorized in terms of "progressive" vs. "traditional" Native Americans. These labels are not entirely helpful, however. Elements of each category could be found in younger men like Morgan and older ones like Dodge. Both generations were finding their way among Navajo traditions and modern American ways.

Morgan also continued his work with the CRC. In 1925 he left his BIA job and moved to Farmington to assist Brink. He taught in the CRC school, continued translation work, and served as a "Native Evangelist." His name appeared in CRC publications in stories by missionaries like Brink describing their mission work. He visited churches "back East" to promote the mission work. And he occasionally wrote in CRC periodicals, including *The Banner*.[8]

Missionary with Henry Beets, CRC director of missions from the 1910s to 1930s, during a visit to the mission field in New Mexico and Arizona.

As his *Banner* article showed, Morgan sometimes criticized traditional Navajo beliefs and practices, especially those that conflicted with Christianity—notably Navajo religious ceremonies and medicine men. Yet, Morgan also explored parallels between Hebrew concepts of story and family and Navajo traditions in his sermons. Brink's fluency in Navajo likely meant that he understood what Morgan was doing, unlike most of the other CRC missionaries, who were less fluent.[9] Brink trusted Morgan as a translator, not just in the linguistic sense but in a broader cultural and theological one.

Morgan's work with Brink provides the context for his opposition to "Indian New Deal" and John Collier. Collier ended federal policies that repressed Native traditions and promoted assimilation because he believed that Native peoples should have religious and cultural freed. He also believed that their traditions should be reinvigorated, that American society was unhealthy, and that white Americans could learn from Native peoples. His "Indian Reorganization Act" also promoted a new form of "tribal organization" that Collier claimed would enable Native self-government and lead to more efficient relations with the BIA.

In 1934, Morgan and other Native leaders hostile Collier's program started the American Indian Federation. Morgan was its first national vice chairman.[10] In his article in *The Banner* in 1934, "A Voice from an Indian," he explained his views in detail. While the federal government said that it wanted to encourage "the American Indian" to "live his own life in his own way," Morgan said reorganization would leave Indians worse off, as the new policies ignored local circumstances and were "supposed to apply to every tribe alike."

Morgan described the poverty of

many Navajo homes and claimed that Collier's policies would keep them this way. He also criticized "medicine men" and the "paganistic practices" that Collier wanted to preserve, noting his refusal to teach his own children some Navajo traditions. Morgan praised efforts to promote civilization and Christianity so that Native people could better support themselves. "To deny education to an Indian," he insisted, "is to deny him his right to citizenship of his own country."

In some ways, Morgan shared the perception of white Americans, including reformers who styled themselves "friends of the Indian," that Native Americans, or at least their ways, were fated to disappear.[11] Photographs and paintings often depicted this fate by showing Native peoples at sunset, their day presumably over. Morgan argued that Collier's policies, meant to reinvigorate traditional ways, would "hold back" Indians and lead to such decline. "The future of the Indian under this idea," he concluded, "is a sunset, it is gloomy and—come to your own conclusion on this question."[12]

And yet, in 1935, seemingly in contradiction to his embrace of modernization, Morgan helped convince the Navajo to reject the Indian Reorganization Act's proposal to replace the traditional Navajo council with a more American-style representative structure. Political allies such as Senator Dennis Chavez, Protestant missionaries, former boarding school students, and some traditional tribal leaders supported Morgan. Indeed, some Native critics accused Collier of subverting American values. Many Native Americans disagreed with Morgan, wanting to preserve or adapt elements of their traditional cultures. But like Morgan, they often opposed the reorganization of "tribal" government structures. In common, Navajo "progressives" and "conservatives" opposed government officials imposing things on them, particularly one-size fits all policies. In his resistance to listening to Native Americans on matters like this, Collier was not so different from BIA officials in the past.[13]

In 1937, the relationship between Morgan and the CRC turned sour. L.P. Brink, the missionary with whom Morgan long had worked, had died in March 1936. While convalescing in Grand Rapids, in February 1936, he wrote *The Banner* about the work in New Mexico. "We rejoice," Brink said, "that J.C. Morgan is steadily carrying on the work in Farmington which includes the school work at Ignacio and at Burnham, putting about 250 people under his care and much evangelistic opportunity."

An image scanned from a glass slide (1910s?) depicted Native Americans at the end of a day, silhouetted in the setting sun, a classic "vanishing Indian" image. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Morgan expected to become the new missionary after Brink's death, as he had long been the assistant and had taken over much of the work during Brink's illness. But the CRC sent another Calvin Seminary educated, Dutch American missionary to Farmington instead. Morgan was angry at having been passed over, despite his extensive experience, and he felt slighted because the new missionary treated him as a subordinate not a partner.

The conflict between Morgan and the new missionary in Farmington led the CRC mission board to decide that Morgan had to resign from his mission work or be transferred to another station. Morgan resigned and left the CRC to form his own congregation in Shiprock, west of Farmington. A significant portion of the Navajo population of the Farmington congregation left with him.

What should we make of this separation? Difficult personalities doubtless were part of the conflicts between Morgan and CRC missionaries, BIA officials, and "Indian New Deal" policies. The larger context, however, was the failure of white Americans—government officials and missionaries—to truly listen to and consult with the Navajo and Native communities generally.

Collier's New Deal tried to impose a new system of tribal organization in one-size-fits-all fashion. Worse, Collier and the BIA forced the Navajo to cull their herds of sheep and goats. They did not consult with Navajo women, who by tradition controlled the herds. They did not listen to Navajo leaders who appealed to long experience on the land and argued that overgrazing was not the problem, but drought. And they did not trust that the Navajo had experience in riding out droughts.

The CRC, similarly, did not adequately listen to or give agency to the Navajo. It resisted "indigenization" (encouraging Native leadership of mission churches and schools). This was true not just for the Navajo missions, but in Africa and Asia.

The CRC board of missions had not even proposed Morgan as a possible successor to Brink, despite warnings from a veteran missionary that not doing so would lead to trouble. The directly stated issue was the necessity of being educated in a Reformed seminary and ordained. But the CRC did under special circum-

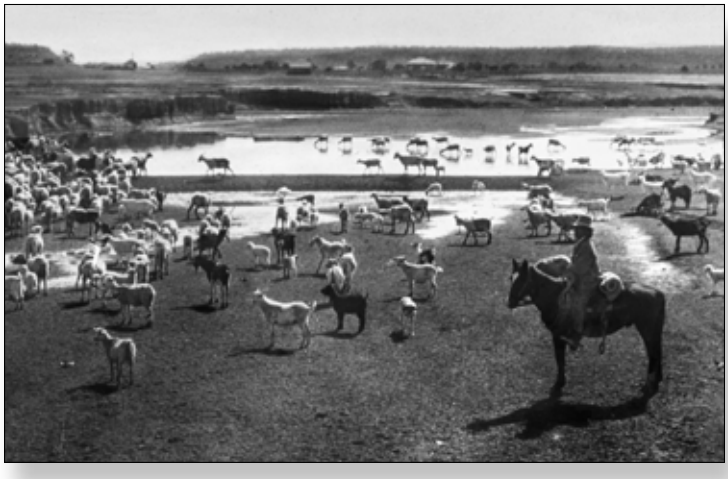
stances occasionally ordain Dutch American men without seminary education for CRC congregations. More deeply, the issue was about race, in not trusting Native peoples deemed primitive and uncivilized.

When missionaries encouraged him to rejoin the CRC and tried to make peace between CRC mission efforts and Morgan's independent church, a frustrated Morgan pushed back, saying that it "sounds very much like no one is saved from wrath to come unless he belongs to your church." Morgan had experienced his relationship with Brink as one of trusted partners. This was not the case with the board of missions and Brink's successor, who viewed Morgan as a subordinate, not recognizing his stature in his community. There was not much chance of "an Indian … gaining justice," Morgan observed about the CRC's decision. A "white jury will always decide in favor of the white." [14] From Morgan's perspective, neither the mission board and the CRC nor Collier and the BIA trusted the Navajo with self-determination, unless it was on their terms.

In 1938 the Navajo chose Morgan as chairman of the Navajo council. He now spoke for his people. Practical necessity led him and the BIA to cooperate on a variety of issues, even livestock reductions and BIA-sponsored commercial enterprises. This cooperation undermined Morgan's standing among many Navajo. He lost his reelection effort in 1942 and Chee Dodge succeeded him.

During World War II, Morgan supported the war effort and encouraged Navajo men to register for the draft. Tragically, his son Buddy was captured in the Philippines and died in a Japanese POW camp.

Morgan retired from politics in 1942 and returned to religious work. Floris Vander Stoep, a new CRC missionary, tried to reconcile Morgan and the denomination. The mission board seemed willing to recognize Morgan as a "native missionary" with his own congregation, but ultimately rejected the idea. Morgan continued his evangelistic work with his own people and established missions among the Apache and in other Native communities in the region.



Navajo shepherd with sheep. 1910s? Image scanned from glass slide. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

The Evangelistic Alliance of Wheaton, Illinois, ordained Morgan in 1943, and friends and the Methodist mission in Farmington celebrated the occasion with him. When Morgan died in May 1950, the community laid his body to rest in the Methodist cemetery in Farmington.

Edward Becenti

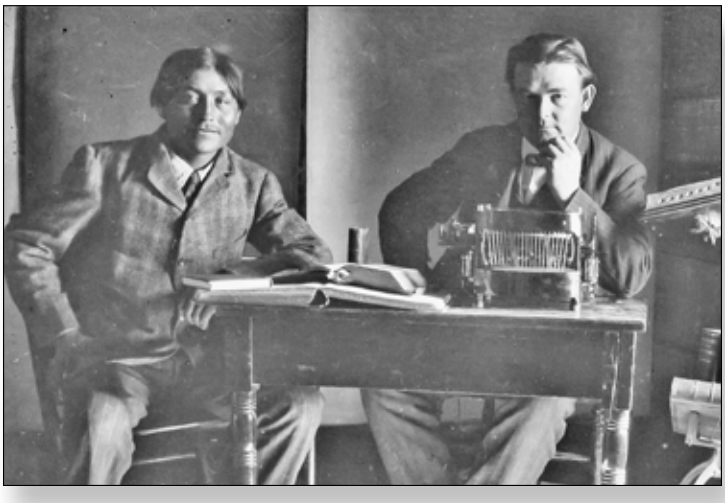
Edward Becenti (1882-1929) was a Navajo who converted to Christianity and worked with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) as a missionary. We don't have many of his own words on record. But missionaries who worked with Becenti testified that his was a fluent, compelling voice.[15]

Becenti first encountered missionaries from the CRC in his teens, in the mid-1890s. He was a student at the boarding school for Navajo student at Fort Defiance when Reverend Herman Fryling and Andrew Vander Wagen started a CRC mission there. With some of the other students, Becenti attended a Bible study that the two missionaries had organized. Vander Wagen soon moved on to a mission among the Zuni.

Vander Wagen and Becenti met again in 1902 at a trading post northeast of Gallup, NM. Vander Wagen was looking for a new mission site. He noticed a young man watching him. A Navajo woman pointed out the young man, Becenti, as someone

Edward Becent in his teens with other members of Andrew Vander Wagen's Bible class in Fort Defiance in 1897. Becenti is on the left in the first row of students. The image was used at the time of Becenti's death in 1930 in *The Christian Indian*, a Christian Reformed mission publication. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

who spoke English. Becenti asked if the missionary remembered him. It took Vander Wagen some time, as he recalled the names of the students in the Bible class and tried to connect the boys that he remembered to the young man in front of him. He eventually recognized Becenti and confirmed the young man's memory of him. In Vander Wagen's telling,



Edward Becenti and L.P. Brink studying together. 1910s? The image is a scan of glass slide. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Becenti exclaimed that Vander Wagen and Fryling "were the best friends I have had in the world!"[16]

Excited by the unexpected encounter, Vander Wagen asked if he could give a brief gospel message. Becenti explained the request to the Navajo at the post and got their permission. Then he translated Vander Wagen's brief message. Vander Wagen hired Becenti on the spot and Becenti worked at the mission in Zuni, Arizona, for a time. It is hard to know what Becenti's goals were in this moment. He had not yet declared himself Christian. Perhaps he simply judged that there was opportunity in renewing his connection to the missionaries.

In 1904, Leonard Brink, then a missionary in Rehoboth, NM, hired Becenti to haul lumber for the mission. Brink also performed a Christian marriage for Becenti and his wife at Becenti's request.

Soon Becenti was teaching the Navajo language to the eager Brink, six to eight hours a day, painstakingly helping him with pronunciation. Brink credited Becenti for his knowledge of Navajo. Becenti also helped Brink translate the Bible, catechisms, and other missionary material into Navajo. In the process, he became a Christian. He asked Brink to baptize him in 1909, and his children and wife Johanna eventually were baptized too. She did not speak English and was the first member of the local church who had not attended a boarding school for Native American children.

Becenti became a deacon in the local CRC congregation, the first Navajo man chosen for such ordination. "His opinion is especially valuable as understanding both Navajo and English," Brink reported. "If he is a prophecy of what Navajo Christians are going to be, we may take courage. At present I am giving him special training in Biblical knowledge, and he shows wonderful interest and zeal."[17]

Following his own inclination, and with Brink's encouragement, in the 1910s and 1920s Becenti served as a missionary in a variety of ways. "I told him that my intention was to send him out off and on to hold meetings with his scattered people," Brink remembered; "he was glad, and said: 'I wish I could spend all my time that way.'"[18]

Becenti was not just a translator. Like Morgan, he helped to interpret the gospel message culturally in ways that made sense to his Navajo people. In the process, he became an effective preacher. Descriptions of camp meetings list Becenti and Morgan as speakers, along with the Dutch Reformed missionaries. Jacob Kamps, a CRC missionary, remembered Becenti this way.

> Mr. Becenti was an interpreter, not merely a translator. He sought to convey the spirit of a message as well as the thought and often he said more than he was asked to. Once we were giving a talk on the ten commandments. I had said they served as a mirror to show us our faults and our sins. As he interpreted this part of my message the people began to laugh. I wondered why and felt a little bit uneasy. They quieted down very soon but the next day I asked him what he had said to make the people laugh. "Well," he said, "just what you told me; only I added that often we look at each other instead of God's law. If we do, we will probably be just like two men who were laughing at each other. The one said: 'What are you laughing at me for?' The other replied, 'Why your face is all black. But what are you laughing at me for?' 'Why?' he said, 'your face is black too.' They all laughed but he soon stopped them by saying in a very convincing way that this was no laughing matter."[19]

Kamps, who worked at Rehoboth from 1927 to 1951, knew the mature Becenti. He viewed Becenti as genuinely Christian, authentically Navajo, and highly effective in his work. In formal terms, Kamps recalled, Becenti "was a man of limited training." But he was gifted intellectually and "a convincing and persuasive speaker." Becenti also spoke at CRC churches in the Midwest about the work in New Mexico.

Listening for Navajo Voices

How do we recover the voices and experiences of people like Edward Becenti, where we know something of

Edward Becenti (front left) and Jacob Kamps (front right) in a Navajo camp. 1920s. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

them but mostly through the memories and reports of others? For J.C. Morgan, who was formally educated and became a prominent political figure, we have a variety of material in his own words—letters, articles in magazines like *The Banner*—and church, political, and government records. We hear Becenti's voice indirectly—quoted, summarized, or remembered by missionaries. Henry Ippel, a historian at Calvin College (1950s-1980s), spent time at the Rehoboth school in retirement and researched the history of CRC missions among the Navajo. He met some of Becenti's descendants. So, we know something of Becenti's family legacy.

Becenti died suddenly of appendicitis in his late 40s, in October 1929. The funeral was in Rehoboth, and they laid him to rest there. Stories in 1929 and 1930 recounted Becenti's work and poured out grief at a life cut short. They can be found in *The Banner* and mission magazines such as *The Christian Indian*.

Morgan spoke at Becenti's funeral. "He was always ready to go," Morgan said. "Nothing stayed him. Indeed, he has kept the faith." Both men worked as missionaries for the CRC, translating, interpreting, and preaching. Both were effective because they remained vitally connected to their indigenous culture and community.[20]

We don't know what Becenti would have thought of Morgan leaving the CRC in 1937 over frustration at not being recognized as a missionary with the same status as seminary-educated, ordained, white clergy. Becenti would have recognized that the CRC did not see Navajo evangelists like him and Morgan as equal in status with CRC clergy. And he would have recognized how this CRC viewpoint in part echoed the racial assumptions that had shaped both the conquest of Native American nations and assimilation policies. We have no record of any involvement by Becenti in politics or of his views of assimilation policies and Navajo relations with the federal government. So, we are left to wonder.

Reading what the missionaries said directly, and reading between the lines, Becenti seems to have chosen to engage with the missionaries, Christianity, and the wider American culture, rather than avoid them. He seems to have found his own way of keeping faith with both his Navajo traditions and the Christian ways that he made his own. And he made a profound impression on the people he worked with.

Conclusions

Perhaps most importantly, Becenti's and Morgan's stories are a reminder that the history of Christianity among the Navajo is its own story, distinct from the stories of Christian Reformed missionaries. Both sets of stories are important to tell. And they are entangled stories. But they're not the same story.

The lives of Becenti and Morgan also remind us that the CRC's story has long been a diverse one. The CRC's story often is told as one of origins in separation from the Dutch national church and from the Reformed Church in America, and immigration from the Netherlands to the United States and later Canada. But the CRC is more diverse than this Dutch-dominated story allows.

Edward Becenti and his family, on the cover of *The Banner* in January 1911. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, used with the permission of *The Banner.*

Already by the 1890s and early 1900s, the CRC's story began to

include Native Americans, with missions in Navajo and Zuni communities in the American Southwest and congregations dating to the early 1900s. Today, some 170 Christian Reformed congregations use a language other than English (or Dutch). There are predominantly Korean, African-American, Hispanic, Navajo, Chinese, and Vietnamese congregations, for example. The voices of individuals like Becenti and Morgan, and the stories of their communities, are as essential to understanding Christian Reformed history, as the founding and evolution of the first Dutch Reformed immigrant colonies in the Midwest.

Endnotes

1. L.P. Brink, "J.C. Morgan Writes About the Wheeler-Howard Bill," *The Banner*, 21 December 1934, 1116. Morgan's part, "A Voice from an Indian," was on 1116-1117. On Navajo history, see Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002). "Diné" is the Navajo name for their people. "Navaho" is an older spelling; I use it only in quotations.

2. See David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020). For comparisons to Canada, see Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (Norman: University of Nebraska Press, 2018). Richard H. Pratt, "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites," *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1880–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 261.

3. All Morgan quotes from "A Voice from an Indian," 1116-1117.

4. See Iverson, *Diné*, chapter 2, on conquest and the Long Walk; chapters 3-5 on the assimilation era.

5. On CRC missions, see Scott Hoezee and Christopher Meehan, *Flourishing in the Land: A Hundred-Year History of Christian Reformed Missions in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), chapter 1.

6. For Native American voices, see Jacqueline Emery, ed., *Recovering Native American Writings in the Board School Press* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017). It has material from students, including well-known graduates such as Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala-Ša), Charles Eastman, and Luther Standing Bear. Also see Frederick Hoxie, ed., *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), which has material from activists, 1890s-1920s.

7. My summary of Morgan's life depends on Bruce James Gjeltema, *Jacob Casimera Morgan and the Development of Navajo Nationalism* (PhD Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 2004), and Donald Lee Parman, "J.C. Morgan: Apostle of Assimilation," *Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives* (Summer 1972), 83-98.

8. See "Newsletter by J. C. Morgan, Native Evangelist to the Navajoes," *The Banner*, 19 February 1926, 105.

9. See Gjeltema, *Jacob Casimera Morgan*, 229-230.

10. See Laurence Hauptman, "The American Indian Federation and the Indian New Deal: A Reinterpretation," *Pacific Historical Review* 52:4 (November 1983), 378-402. See also, Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy,* Revised Edition (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

11. See William T. Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt and Six Friends of the Indian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

12. All Morgan quotes in this section are from "A Voice from an Indian," 1116-1117.

13. See Donald Lee Parman, *The Navajos and the New Deal* (Yale University Press, 1976) and "J.C. Morgan: Apostle of Assimilation." Parman interviewed former CRC missionaries. Heritage Hall has an interview in the Jacob H. Bosscher (1909-1966) collection (COLL 312, box 2, folder 6).

14. Letter from. Morgan to J.C. DeKorne, 9 December 1939. Heritage Hall, Calvin University, CRC Record Group, box 69, folder 12; also quoted in Gjeltema, *Jacob Casimera Morgan*, 233. Gjeltema has a detailed account of the controversy.

15. My account of Becenti draws on material about him during his life and at his death and a brief account by Henry Ippel, "Edward Becenti: God's Messenger to His People," *Rehoboth Newsletter* (Winter 2004), in Heritage Hall's collection of material from Ippel (Collection 519, box 4, folder 10); there also is material collected by Ippel on Becenti and his family in box 6, folder 3.

16. Ippel, "Edward Becenti: God's Messenger to His People."

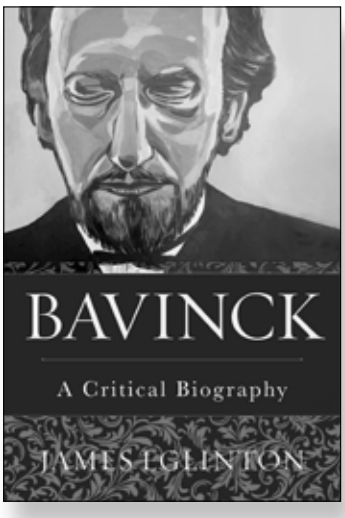
17. L.P. Brink, Tohatchi, NM, to Henry Beets, Secretary of Board of Christian Reformed Missions, 23 January 1910. Heritage Hall, CRC Record Group, box 224, folder 5.

18. L.P. Brink, "Becenti, Our Helper, A Sketch of His Life," *The Banner*, 5 January 1911, 12.

19. Jacob R. Kamps, "Edward Becenti---? 1929," *The Banner*, 27 December 1929, 993.

20. Ippel, "Edward Becenti: God's Messenger to His People."

book review



Bavinck: A Critical Biography

James Eglinton

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.
xxiv + 450pp. $44.99

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) is a giant on the Dutch branch of Reformed theology. His magnum opus, the four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics*, finally appeared in English translation early in this century on the centennial of its second Dutch edition. Now James Eglinton, a theologian at the University of Edinburgh, has produced a topflight biography of the man, which puts that and Bavinck's many other works in context. This is a meticulous piece of scholarship, with 125 pages of notes (sometimes three in a single sentence!), bibliography, and index; but none of that gets in the way of the significant story Eglinton has to tell. Significant because we get to follow up close and personal the course by which a committed Reformed Christian of keen mind and generous spirit tried to navigate the tumultuous changes in European society from 1880 to 1920. Bavinck, that is, provides a textbook case in the matter of Christ and culture. He was also one of the two primary architects of the Dutch Neo-Calvinist model for that relationship, thus not just finding his personal way but helping lead a mass movement through the tumult of the times. In offering apt comparisons between Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper, the other eminence in that enterprise, Eglinton's biography shows how the personal and public intersect, how important tone and temperament are alongside the principles and agenda that Neo-Calvinism is always quick to emphasize.

Eglinton casts Bavinck's life as one of consistency and continuities—this over against earlier accounts of "two Bavincks," one "orthodox," the other "modern" (xviii). Bavinck was always both at once, Eglinton demonstrates, but also a persistent work in progress, given the changing demands of a changing scene. The traditional two-Bavincks thesis pits Bavinck's roots in the ecclesiastical Secession (*Afscheiding*) of 1834, stereotyped as culture-averse, over against Modernist demands for theological adaptation and Neo-Calvinist commitments to world engagement. Eglinton adds to the scholarship, showing that the Secession had several streams and an ambivalence toward modernity that people like Bavinck could harvest to good effect in coming to a critical stance within—not just against—their life and times. He inherited this impulse from his father, Jan Bavinck, a leading pastor in the seceded Christian Reformed churches. Jan's piety, as with that of others in the movement, spiraled around no little ambition, and Herman brought that double helix to a fine finish.

After receiving a solid gymnasium education, Herman entered the den of theological Modernism, Leiden, for his university education and doctorate (1874–80). He went on to pastoral education at the Christian Reformed theological school at Kampen and a year in parish ministry (1880–82) before taking up a twenty-year stint on the Kampen faculty (1883–1902). Adhering strictly to the documentary record, Eglinton minimizes any crisis of faith that pious mythology has found along this way. Instead, the Leiden years began Bavinck's fascinating, lifelong friendship with Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who would go on to become one of Europe's foremost authorities on Islam. Likewise, Bavinck's de facto dissertation director, Abraham Kuenen, proved to be sympathetic and supportive, despite his reputation in orthodox circles as a foe of Christ due to his higher-critical approach to Scripture. Herman's real problem in these years turned out to be romantic. As a 17-year-old high schooler, he fell in love with the 22-year-old Amelia den Dekker and pursued her for seven years, until his quest was quashed once for all by her dogmatically pietistic father. Herman would not marry until he was 36; Amelia never did. This is a new chapter in Bavinck studies, welcome for its humanizing effect—and its assurance that budding great theologians too can write bad poetry.

Bavinck's years at Kampen were bisected exactly by his denomination's 1892 merger with the churches belonging to Kuyper's split from the Dutch Reformed Church, the *Doleantie*. For the next ten years Bavinck pushed for a similar merger of the two streams' theological institutions, Kampen and the Free University (VU). Kampen resisted that step, and Bavinck's faculty colleague, Lucas Lindeboom, deployed resolute hostility to Neo-Calvinism. (Full disclosure: Lindeboom introduced two of my great-grandparents to each other!).

These circumstances led Bavinck to pull up stakes and move to Amsterdam, where he took the post at the VU vacated when Kuyper became prime minister of the Netherlands. There, Bavinck accelerated his remarkable productivity as a scholar and public intellectual. The first edition of *Reformed Dogmatics* came out already at Kampen between 1895 and 1901 (the same years, notably, during which Kuyper was composing his three-volume *Common Grace*), and there he began to broaden his palette with his opening explorations in psychology. More essays would follow in the Amsterdam years—path-breaking works on education, the family, women's place in public life, Christianity and science, new directions in theology, and war and peace.

Eglinton is very helpful in showing that Amsterdam did not see a "new Bavinck" emerge, but rather a new center of his concern and therefore a new agenda for action. Previously, Bavinck had been convinced that the Netherlands would not accept the endless strife of competing worldviews. He believed that the atheist and Modernist-Christian options lacked long-term appeal and that the country would return to its Calvinist heritage. But around 1900, Bavinck saw, there dawned the "age of Nietzsche": the country *would* go on amid a cacophony of contenders, and the new atheism on offer would entirely dispense with Christian ethics and tradition. Therefore, Bavinck worked less at elaborating Calvinism than at building a general "theistic coalition" (227). He hoped that Christianity would be attractive for the coherence and capaciousness it offered amid the fragmented jumble of the times. He was still advocating a "Christian worldview," but one of new tone and priorities because of new forces in the field.

This further complicated his relationship with Kuyper. Bavinck was enthusiastic upon first hearing Kuyper in the early 1870s, and despite declining three previous entreaties to join the VU before finally accepting in 1902, he had ever followed Kuyper as a lodestar, inspiration, and hero. Kuyper had reciprocated by adopting Bavinck as something of a son and successor. But tragically, Kuyper did not get out of the way when the time for that step had come. He insisted on maintaining control of their political party in his seventies when "new blood," including Bavinck, started pressing for new approaches and a larger role. The result was a bitter intra-party conflict in 1915 (one sorely underexamined by Eglinton), one that depleted the movement of morale, energy, and worthy successors amid the crisis of World War I and Kuyper's pending death. The new spirit Bavinck represented would be sadly missed in the decades ahead, as Neo-Calvinism hardened into protective and reactionary stances. It took half a century before its heirs grasped the insight that Bavinck had come to already in 1904, that (in Eglinton's words) "life in a fallen creation was messier and more surprising" than ideological determinism would predict, that "sin was systemic rather than systematic and was seen in madness more than in method" (231). If Kuyper did adapt to these insights in practice, he stayed with grand dialectics in his public utterances. Eglinton ascribes this to philosophical orientation, to Kuyper's idealism over against Bavinck's increasing realism; but Bavinck's daughter nailed the other aspect: "Kuyper wanted to rule, my father wanted to serve" (235).

Origins readers will be particularly intrigued by Bavinck's impressions of North America. He visited twice: in 1892 to deliver a speech in Toronto and in 1908 to give the Stone Lectures at Princeton. (An English translation of his reflections on the former is nicely provided in an appendix.) Bavinck, following his father, always opposed Dutch emigration to America and in his commentary on the place showed why. On his first tour, during his high Calvinist phase, he concluded that the United States was an indelibly Arminian country, enthralled with human achievement and self-formation. Still, he thought that Christianity, if of a superficial and activist sort, had a promising future in America; religion would adapt to native soil, and "Calvinism, after all, is not the only truth" (189). By 1908 his outlook had dimmed. He found America shockingly callous toward workers' rights and social welfare. The youth were rude, the population in general "superficial, ignorant, materialistic, and self-interested." Worst of all, the "problems of racial hatred were overwhelming and . . . almost impossible to resolve" (246). To an SRO crowd in Rotterdam upon his return, Bavinck held forth "in apocalyptic tones of the unfolding disaster that was racialized hatred in America" (248).

I write this on the last day of Donald Trump's presidency, during which the forces Bavinck observed in the USA over a hundred years ago have exploded back on the public scene. Kuyper's name has been invoked on Trump's behalf, and some of Kuyper's worst racist rhetoric has been cited to explain why. Without accepting either side of that argument, which evinces some of the "superficiality" of which Bavinck complained, it is important to recover the richer texture of the Neo-Calvinist tradition to offset Kuyper's more noxious elements. This biography does just that. James Eglinton deserves our gratitude for his exhaustive research and critical intelligence in recovering the worthy Christian mind and heart of Herman Bavinck.

James Bratt
Calvin University

for the future

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

A memoir about Reformed piety, faith, death, and comfort.

The escapades of a scoundrel whose schemes took him from the Netherlands to South Africa and Dutch immigrant colonies in America.

A story of family, farming, and faith among immigrants in Canada in the decades after World War II.

Members of the congregation working on the first church built by Drayton Christian Reformed Church, in Ontario, Canada (1952). Notice the wooden shoes on the man on the right. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

PLEASE NOTE
The Calvin University Financial Department requests that from now on all checks be made out to "**Calvin University**" rather than to "*Origins*," and that the word "*Origins*" be written on the memo line.
Or, renew your subscription online at https://origins.calvin.edu/issues/
Thank you so much!

☐ **Yes, I wish to join the "Friends of the Archives."**

Name _____
Address _____
_____

Subscriber $10.00 ☐
Contributing Member $50.00 ☐
Contributing Sponsor $100.00 ☐
Contributing Founder $500.00 ☐

Send to: *Origins,* Heritage Hall, Calvin University,
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

☐ **Yes, I would also like a gift subscription for:**

Name _____
Address _____
_____

My Name _____
Address _____
_____

Send to: *Origins,* Heritage Hall, Calvin University,
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

contributors

Origins is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of the Calvin University and Seminary 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. We invite you to support the continued publication of *Origins* by becoming "Friends of the Archives."

Enabling Contributor

Mr. and Mrs. John Meyer, Palos Park, IL

Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund Builders

AEGON Insurance Group, Cedar Rapids, IA

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth J. Baas, Grand Rapids, MI

Robert and Jane Baker Foundation, Kalamazoo, MI

Mr. Duane D. Binns, Oak Park, IL

Mr. and Mrs. Roger W. Boer, Grand Rapids, MI

Dr. and Mrs. James A. De Jong, Grand Rapids, MI

Lester Hoogland, Zeeland, MI

Holland American Wafer Company, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Huizenga, Oak Brook, IL

Dr. William Huizingh, Scottsdale, AZ

Estate of Dick and Dena Kortenhoeven, Highland, IN

Meijer, Inc., Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. Gerald W. Meyering, Denver, CO

Drs. Kornelis J. Storm, Aerdenhout, the Netherlands

Jay and Betty Van Andel Foundation, Grand Rapids, MI

David and Sheryl Vander Ploeg, St. Joseph, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Claude J. Venema, Jackson, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Gary J. Vermeer, Pella, IA

Contributing Founders

Mr. and Mrs. Richard T. Dykema, New York, NY

Lester Hoogland, Zeeland, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Bastian A. Knoppers, Oak Brook, IL

Peters Import Marketplace, Grandville, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Peters, Grand Rapids, MI

Clara and Leonard Sweetman, Kentwood, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Max B. Van Wyk, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. John Zonneveld Sr., Laton, CA

Contributing Sponsors

David and Rene Baatenburg, Jenison, MI

Dr. Kenneth J. Betten, Kalamazoo, MI

James H. and Diane Bloem, Louisville, KY

David and Mary Bosscher, Zeeland, MI

Janet Borgdorff, Kentwood, MI

John and Sharon Bouma, Holland, MI

John and Beth Bouws, Holland, MI

Connie and Roger Brummel, Holland, MI

Conrad and Helen Bult, Jenison, MI

Robert DeBruin, Grand Rapids, MI

Jan and Jeannie de Vries, Berkeley, CA

Mark and Ginny Dykstra, South Holland, IL

Mr. Kenneth D. Engelsman, Centennial, CO

Phil and Trudy Erffmeyer, Grand Rapids, MI

John H. and Marcia R. Evenhouse, Westmont, IL

David and Connie Fennema, Durham, NC

Ginny Geldof, Grand Rapids, MI

Carl and Sandy Gronsman, Grand Rapids, MI

Dr. James and Barbara Hoogeboom, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth A. Hoving, Middleville, MI

Harold and Esther Huizenga, Grand Rapids, MI

Rich and Carla Huizenga, Seattle, WA

Hessel and Alice Kielstra, Calgary, AB

Mr. John E. King, Wyckoff, NJ

Herb and Bernace Korthuis, Lynden WA

Ms. Annette LaMaire, Bradenton, FL

Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Mast, Jenison, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Graydon M. Meints, Kalamazoo, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Hendrik Porte, Byron Center, MI

Ed and Noreen Reitsma, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Scheeres, Grand Rapids, MI

Lugene and Carla Schemper, Chicago, IL

Dr. and Mrs. Richard D. Sjoerdsma, Racine, WI

LeRoy and Anjean Stegink, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. William C. Terpstra, Schererville, IN

Steven and Barbara Timmermans, Grand Rapids, MI

Benjamin and Debrah Vander Kooi, Luverne, MN

Jan and Gary Vander Meer, DeKalb, IL

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Vander Weide, Ontario, CA

Mr. and Mrs. George J. Vande Werken, Pflugerville, TX

Dr. John E. Van Domelen, College Station, TX

Mr. and Mrs. Allan J. Van Popering, Grand Rapids, MI

Max and Carol Van Wyk, Grand Rapids, MI

Dr. and Mrs. Daniel R. Vellenga, Waco, TX

Bill and Pat Waanders, Grand Rapids, MI

Wilbert Wichers, Bradenton, FL

Dave and Brenda Wiersma, Tucson, AZ

Rev. and Mrs. Donald Wisse, North Haledon, NJ

Mr. and Mrs. Henry I. Witte, Ada, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Teunis Witte, Byron Center, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard H. Zandstra, Holt, MI

Mr. and Mrs. John Zomer, Peterborough, ON

Contributing Members

John and Maria Bajema, Rockford, MI

Ms. Jennifer Baker, Grandville, MI

Richard and Cynthia Bandstra, Grand Rapids, MI

Audrey and Frank Berkenpas, Grandville, MI

Ed and Betty Boersma, Nampa, ID

Richard and Trena Boonstra, Grand Rapids, MI

Carl A. Botting, Ada, MI

Larry and Jeanne Borst, Grand Rapids, MI

Linda L. Bouterse, Moline, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Bratt, Lynden, WA

Ms. Carol Bredeweg, Hudsonville, MI

Peter Buma, Grand Rapids, MI

Wayne and Greta Clousing, Shoreline, WA

Stuart E. Cok, Sparta, MI

Ron and Cathie Corstange, Hudsonville, MI

Ms. Mary Cremer, Grand Rapids, MI

Ronald De Valois, Lynden, WA

Rev. and Mrs. Sidney Draayer, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. David Eisen, Mishawaka, IN

Mr. Les Faber, Mount Vernon, WA

Dave and Trudy Boerema Fetters, Holland, MI

Harold and Nancy Gazan, Holland, MI

Carl and Sandy Gronsman, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Ulrich Haasdyk, Calgary, AB

Henrietta Hamersma, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hekstra, Byron Center, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoeks, Ada, MI

Ralph and Jane Hoekstra, Huntington Beach, CA

Mr. and Mrs. James Holkeboer, Grand Rapids, MI
Mrs. Richard Houskamp, Grand Rapids, MI
Mrs. Marjorie K. Huiner, Lynchburg, VA
Cornie and Marcia Huizinga, Jenison, MI
Mr. and Mrs. Rolland Hyma, Zeeland, MI
Miss Rita Jager, Edmonton, AB
Mr. Glenn R. Jasperse, Sheboygan, WI
Mary E. Jellema, Holland, MI
Rev. John M. V. Koole, Strathroy, ON
Mr. and Mrs. Gerard Koster, Grand Rapids, MI
Mr. Lawrence R. Koster, Hudsonville, MI
Mrs. Ardene Lambers, Grand Rapids, MI
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Land, Lowell, MI
Mr. and Mrs. Loren J. Lemmen, Ada, MI
Roland and Polly S. Lindh, Grand Rapids, MI
Rev. Gene and Shirley Los, Zeeland, MI
Mr. Charles Mackus, Grand Rapids, MI
Rev. and Mrs. Peter Mans, Blaine, WA
William and Shirley Van Baak Martinus, West Olive, MI
Dave and Barb Meeuwse, Hopkins, MI
Joshua Meeuwse, Thornton, CO
Mr. Gerald Meyer, Holland, MI
Drs. George and Ellen Monsma, Grand Rapids, MI
Mr. and Mrs. James Monsma, Medford, MA
Marilyn Myers, Byron Center, MI
Mr. Andrew Ooms, Redondo Beach, CA
Miss Janice Overzet, Fremont, MI
Angie and Joel Ploegstra, Zeeland, MI
David and Pamela Reitsema, Castle Rock, CO
Dr. Joan Ringerwole, Hudsonville, MI
Al and Rika Scheenstra, Visalia, CA
Ben and Henny Senneker, Lethbridge, AB
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Sikkenga, Whitehall, MI
Mrs. Freda Snippe, Owen Sound, ON
Richard and Joyce Stienstra, Oro Valley, AZ
Dr. and Mrs. Ryan Tolsma, Redlands, CA
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Van Dellen, Grosse Pointe Park, MI
Nolan and Joey Vander Ark, Denver, CO
Mrs. Agatha Vander Kooi, Portage, MI
John and Donna Vander Meer, Grand Rapids, MI
Ron and Phyllis Vander Molen, Modesto, CA
Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Van Dokkenburg, West Lafayette, IN
Dr. and Mrs. James Y. Van Dyk, Grand Rapids, MI
Ruth and Martin Van Dyke, Denver, CO
Catherine Van Eck, Crete, IL
Dr. Larry Van Genderen, Jackson, WY
Mr. Daniel Van Meurs, Grand Rapids, MI
Lambert and Kathryn Van Poolen, Grand Rapids, MI
Mr. Maurice Veenstra, Lynden, WA
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Verhoeven, Visalia, CA
Mr. Evert Volkersz, Stony Brook, NY
Alvin and Joyce Vos, Endwell, NY
Ms. Jane E. Warners, Grand Rapids, MI
Rev. Homer and Betty Wigboldy, Lynden, WA
Kenneth and Elaine Zimmerman, Woodstock, MD

Origins

Heritage Hall Archives
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Heritage Hall Archives contains the historical records of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, and other institutions related to the Reformed tradition in the Netherlands and North America. The Archives also contains a wide range of personal and family manuscripts.

Origins

Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives

Christian Reformed Church in North America
Calvin Theological Seminary
Calvin University

Volume XXXIX • Number 2 • 2021