Origins

Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives

Christian Reformed Church in North America
Calvin Theological Seminary
Calvin University

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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.

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

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Cover photo:
Women students at Calvin College in the 1920s with motorcycle and sidecar. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

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from the editor. . .

From the Guest Editor, Mary Risseeuw

At the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies conference in 2021 I lectured on the limited inclusion of women's stories in Dutch American historical research and writing. I offered statistics and examples from publications and conference proceedings that provided an analytical view of the topic. One example I gave was the small number of articles in *Origins* that have focused on women or been written by women.

As a result of my presentation, Will Katerberg offered me the role of guest editor for this issue that would focus solely on women's stories. My journey then began to find women who were interested in writing new stories about Dutch American women. I purposely sought out material from women authors only. Our voice in writing about women is different from men's. It's not better; just different. And if we were being given space on this platform to step forward and be heard, I wanted those voices to be clear.

This issue includes some powerful stories about women. Some bucked the norms of their day and suffered from stigmas in the Dutch community and Reformed churches. Some endured personal loss, and some regretted emigration. Together, their stories illustrate diversity and commonality in Dutch American women's experiences.

Laura O'Brock presents an interesting comparison between two Dutch immigrant women, Wietske Heemstra Burggraaff and her daughter-in-law, Trientce (Theresa), and how their experiences shaped future generations. Between them, they raised six sons who served in the ministry of the Reformed Church in American and the Christian Reformed Church.

Jane Griffioen's memoir of her family's experiences amid the influences of the local church and ethnic culture offers us a glimpse into the stories we often don't tell, stories that are more familiar than we might like to admit. If this account strikes a chord with you, I highly recommend Jane's book, *London Street: A Memoir* (2020).

The social conditions and mores that dictated the lives of our female ancestors are examined by Janet Sjaarda Sheeres in her article on Dutch female emigrants of the laboring/lower class from the province of Groningen. This economic class context, both in the Netherlands and the United States, is critical to our understanding of their lives and the choices they made.

Rhonda Pennings provides an in-depth look into the remarkable life of Agnes Dykstra Te Paske. Her involvement in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, her work in naturalizing Dutch immigrants, and her own law career provide a look at a woman whose impact was felt by her immediate community and beyond.

The extraordinary lives of three women in medicine—Cornelia de Bey, Cornelia Van Kooy, and Henrietta Veltman—are the subject of Rachel Hekman's essay. They forged reputations as reformers in medical fields and served individuals and addressed the public health needs of their communities.

It is likely that the paths of Cornelia Van Kooy and Elizabeth Leenhouts crossed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Elizabeth's story is included in my article, which features examples of resilience among Dutch American women over a century-long timespan. Resilience may not be unique to women, but the stories I tell suggest that their resilience is distinctive, whether in ways specific to their times or ways that endured across a century of change.

There is a great deal of work to be done to continue to uncover the multitude of women's stories yet untold. We are grateful for this opportunity to share some new insights into Dutch American women and hope that our essays will inspire more interest and writing about such women.

News from the Curator, Will Katerberg

The work of Heritage Hall continues, of course. As usual, we have been receiving donations of interesting material from a variety of people and institutions. We are continuing to slowly digitize and put material online. And we respond to dozens of questions and

requests for help with research every month.

The most noteworthy news is personnel related. We continue to benefit from the good work of student workers and volunteers. Emily Koelzer has moved on to a full-time position as the archivist at Aquinas College. Laurie Haan is continuing her work in Heritage Hall. And Heritage Hall has hired a full-time assistant archivist in Jen Vos. She is a Calvin graduate with a history major from a decade ago. She also has a master's degree in museum studies and most recently worked at Tri-Cities Historical Museum in Grand Haven, Michigan.

In between issues of *Origins* in print, remember to check out *Origins Online*, our blog (at https://origins.calvin.edu/). 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). You can contact us at crcarchives@calvin.edu and 1-616-526-6313.

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After many years of the subscription price not changing, we are going to have to raise the subscription rate to $15.00 a year for 2023. The work of producing the content for *Origins* is supported by the "Friends of the Archives" endowment. My thanks to many of you who have contributed to the endowment. The subscriptions have paid for the cost of printing and mailing the magazine. The price of printing and mailing has gone up significantly in the past three years due to COVID-19. It will not fall any time soon, if ever. At $15.00 a year, *Origins* is still a bargain, we think, and at that price we will break even on the cost of printing and mailing.

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Resilience in Dutch American Women

Mary Risseeuw

In 1939 Geraldine Smies joined the mission team of Rev. Edwin Koeppe and his wife, Elizabeth Renskers Koeppe, in South Fukien Province, China. She had graduated from Hope College in 1932. Smies served at the school in Tongan until a pivotal day in 1941.

"On Monday morning, Dec 8, 1941, we on the island of Kulangsu were awakened by a student from the Women's Bible Training school," Geraldine reported in an interview. "[She] came to tell us that that Japanese flag was flying from the top of the Girl's Middle school, indicating that the break between Japan and the United States had come. . . . By 11 am the two ladies with whom I lived and I were arrested at the point of bayonets and taken to an internment camp."[1] These arrests occurred just four hours before the infamous attack by Japanese forces on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

Smies and Koeppe both reported that they were kept under heavy guard even after they were allowed to return to their homes, and all of their property was confiscated. After almost eight months they received word of the possibility of an exchange of prisoners. They left on a steamer bound for Shanghai, China, that provided no protection from airplanes and submarines. A month later they were transported to a ship where 636 people caught in the war in China set sail. At Hong Kong another 300 people came aboard.

The exchange of prisoners took place in what was then Portuguese East Africa before the ship continued to Rio De Janeiro. Almost a year after their capture, Smies and Koeppe finally set foot on United States soil at Jersey City, New Jersey. The training provided for missionaries was unlikely to have included the possibility of internment camps. This is just one of many stories of endurance and resilience among Dutch American women.

Geraldine Smies (ca. 1940). Courtesy of John R. Smies.

There are countless stories of endurance among Dutch American women, even if most are more prosaic than wartime arrests or prisoner exchanges. Dutch immigrant women survived the sinking of the Phoenix on Lake Michigan and endured isolation and loss of children on rural farms. Examples like these of the resilience and determination of our foremothers are often overlooked or downplayed, and they have not shaped the larger story of Dutch American history. Some of their stories are inspirational. Others make you wonder why the women in them kept going at all. Since the colonial era, women have been vital in establishing and maintaining the social structure of what became the United States since the colonial era. They cared for their households, raised children, milked cows, raised chickens, sold the surplus, and helped

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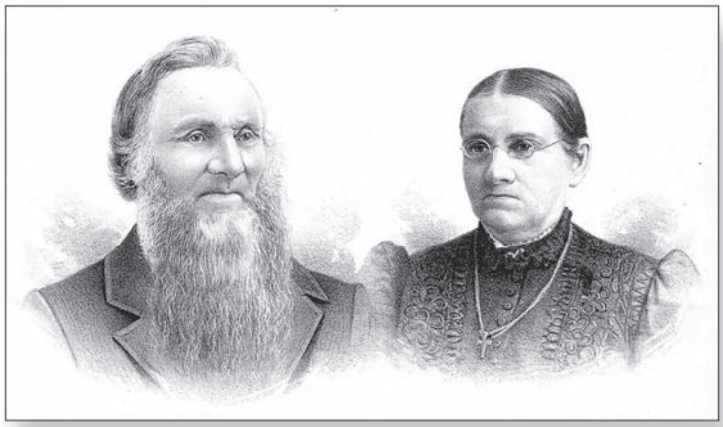
in family businesses (whether behind the scenes or at the front counter). Women also contributed to the economy by running businesses such as laundries, taking in boarders, working in middle- and upper-class homes, doing piece work at home (such as sewing), and working in factories.

In popular memory, women's stories tend to be forgotten or limited to those who had prominent husbands, such as Christina van Raalte and her sisters. Historians have begun to tell the story of Dutch American women, notably in the work of Suzanne Sinke and Janet Sheeres. But such work still tends to be an exception, and much more needs to be done.[2]

Women's social and legal status and location limited their opportunities. But would the careers and lifestyles of the men in their lives have been possible without the support, guidance, and determination of mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters? While a large part of the hard physical labor that the nineteenth-century immigrants took on after arrival was done by the men, women often worked alongside them to clear the land. They also held the major responsibility of keeping the house and raising the children. Farm men generally could not run their farms without a wife and children. Lots of children. There were hired farm hands for farmers who could afford them. But who fed those hands? Who helped in the barn and the fields if there was no hired help? Men often left their wives to run the farms and households when they went off to serve in the Civil War. Although some had arrived between 1848 and 1860, many women were still adapting to their new country, new methods of farming, and the isolation of living some distance from neighbors and towns.

The sacrifices that came with emigration, the challenges of adapting in a new country, and the desire for "more" is very often not documented or only selectively reported when it comes to women. Those who choose professions considered appropriate for their gender, like teaching, nursing, and missions, sometimes had both a career and a marriage and family. Others had no interest in marrying. The same can be seen in inspiring stories of women who successfully homesteaded. Men and women in the era both needed resilience to endure. But women needed a different kind of endurance to buck social norms, and they faced many more norms than men that limited their choices. The culture of Dutch communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not unlike that of other ethnic groups. Becoming a teacher or housekeeper or shop assistant typically was for a young woman a stop gap between school and marriage. Employers often fired a young woman when she wed. Women who pushed back and became doctors, lawyers, nurses, college professors, and missionaries sometimes sacrificed the possibility of having their own family.



Geraldine Smies (ca. 1940). Courtesy of John R. Smies.

The endurance of early immigrant pioneers can be seen in the life of Bernardina (Berendina) Bacot Sprangers. Bernardina and her family arrived in the United States in 1846 after a 55-day journey from Amsterdam to New York. They followed a typical pattern for new arrivals by taking the Hudson River to Albany and the railroad to Buffalo (a deviation from the typical Erie Canal voyage). They then boarded a steamer destined for Milwaukee. Two years later Bernardina married Matthias Sprangers. Then, to provide for their family, Matthias and Bernardina headed west to the gold fields of California. Accompanying them were their six-month-old daughter, Huberdina; Pieter Leyser (Leijser), Bernardina's stepfather; his wife, Alida; and his stepdaughter Maria. The family reportedly went by stage and ox team to Peoria, Illinois; by boat to St. Louis; and by covered wagon overland to California. Bernardina was pregnant during this journey with her fourth child, a son, born in June 1852. He died soon after, the third of her children to die during infancy. She lost another son in 1853.

Later in life Bernardina told stories to her grandchildren of dealing with hostile Indians, the shortage of water, and settling in a cabin near Sutter's Mill. The Sprangers stayed there for two years and discovered their first gold. They returned to Wisconsin in 1854. The ocean voyage from Amsterdam to New York likely was boring, even luxurious, compared to their journey back to Wisconsin. They traveled by boat from San Francisco to the Isthmus of Panama. Bernardina often recounted details of the next portion of the trip—crossing Panama on the back of a mule through endless mud, enduring a tropical storm, staying in the open all night, and being greeted

by countless monkeys and parrots in the morning. The journey continued by boat to Vera Cruz, Mexico; Santiago, Cuba; and New York City. From there the family once again took the Hudson River to Albany, the Erie Canal to Buffalo, and the Great Lakes back to Wisconsin.[3]

On the final stage of the journey home to Wisconsin, the oxen ran away and broke Bernardina's leg. For a time, she got around by pushing herself on a chair. A local doctor finally convinced her to have her leg re-broken, which he did by jumping on it. He reset the bones, and even though her leg healed four inches shorter than it had been, she eventually could walk.

This was endurance. Bernardina had trekked around a huge portion of the Western hemisphere, some it while pregnant. She had panned for gold. Back in Wisconsin, she bore nine more children, three of whom died young. She also lost two daughters, one in 1850 and the other in 1851 during their Gold Rush years. Bernardina died in 1906 at the age of 84. These events might sound like amazing adventures to our twenty-first century ears. And perhaps they were. Bernadina retold the stories, after all. But these events also required substantial fortitude in making a new life and enduring the failures and losses that came with it. The stories of ordinary men, and even men not so ordinary, are often forgotten. Even more so are the stories of women like Bernardina.

We can catch glimpses of stories like Bernardina's in immigrant letters by women. Collections in historical societies and archives offer voices that depict the conditions women and their families found on arrival and the work necessary to clear land, build homes, and adapt to their new communities. These women writers discussed the challenges of the ocean voyage and trip to their final destination. In their stories of pregnancy and childbirth, they tend to downplay their experiences as "what women had to bear." How did they endure death after death of babies and young children? (How would we today face another pregnancy with that in mind?)

A letter written in April 1866 by Matje Juffer Sneller of Alto, Wisconsin, to her brothers and sisters offers a poignant example of bearing loss. "There are few who wear mourning clothes so I have not done it either," she wrote. "I had no desire to go to the trouble of getting clothes because my grief was too great as you can imagine." Over three weeks Matje lost two children, Gerritje and Dries, and then a newborn little girl. "I did not know how I could ever bear it. I have wept many tears over the loss of my darling children which you as my dear sister can understand." The other children were sick too, one with "legs so swollen that we had to carry her for fourteen days." The family feared she had T.B. It turned out to be measles.[4]

Matje then explained the cause of all this death and sorrow, a story common among immigrants: the demands of long-distance travel combined with diseases that vaccines have almost allowed people today to forget. Some immigrants carried diseases aboard ship from Europe. Others contracted them in a North American port.

"Our troubles all started in New York when, my husband and three children were lost," Matje explained, and they continued as the family made its way to Wisconsin. Matje's telling of the story reflects the confusion she experienced.

Charles Parsons, *U.S. Mail Steamer, Illinois.* (ca. 1840). It carried the mail and passengers, including immigrants, on the Great Lakes from the 1830s to the 1860s. Courtesy of the Smithsonian (Creative Commons).

> I and three youngest had been put on the wagon with others, Hendrikje had the measles on board the ship and was so pale and weak and Driesje could not walk, so they were left behind with father. When the wagon landed at the station, I had to stand while the others went inside and my sister Aaltje left me too. Gerritje was in the wagon with the girl and I called for

my child. I couldn't get Gerritje and the wagon left. I called as loud as I could and there I stood with Dries in my arms and Wichgertje holding my hand. Then I went back to the house where we had been before and when they lit the lamps, there was my husband. This was Saturday and on Monday we left arriving at Albany on Tuesday. There the others were waiting. I asked my sister, 'Where is the child?' [Geeritje]. She said, 'She has already been buried.' What a shock that was for me. Dries had severe diarrhea, was wet and soiled and could not walk. Wichgertje had the measles and couldn't walk either. I had to carry one. There was no one to help me, so I could not rest. You can imagine who worried I was. I kept going till the last evening when I could go no more and I fainted. Then my sister took the child [Dries], otherwise she did not help me. Then they carried me to a baker. There we slept till morning when Lubbert got us. I was so glad to get to Alto [Wisconsin] on Sunday. On Monday I gave birth to a baby girl and remained quite strong. All the while Dries became weaker and he died on Thursday next to me in bed. Thus you can understand what an awful time I had. When the baby was a week old, she also died because of my weakened condition she did not get enough nourishment. This took away all my desire and pleasure. Otherwise I think I could enjoy being here.[5]

Hendrik Jan Wilterdink, Willemina Ten Dolle, and family (no date).

The trip from Rotterdam to New York in 1866 was long and hard on for the Sneller family. It took seventeen days. Many passengers were seasick due to severe storms. The water supply was limited and of very poor quality. A measles epidemic on board ship caused many deaths and left others in a weakened condition on arrival in New York. Not knowing English made communication a significant problem. These challenges were enough for any immigrant family. The Snellers endured them while deeply grieved by the loss of three children in just thirteen days.

Women like Willemina and Geziena Engelina ten Dolle faced a different challenge. Willemina came with the Hendrik Jan Wilterdink family as its maid. The group traveled with many other families from the Achterhoek in Gelderland on the *France*, sailing from Rotterdam. They made their way via the Erie Canal to the Great Lakes and then experienced disaster on the ill-fated steamship, the *Phoenix*, which sank in Lake Michigan in November 1847. Janna Willemina Mennink, Wilterdink's wife, died in the disaster, but he, his three children, and Willemina survived. She stepped in to help Wilterdink raise his children. Social mores in that era made it unacceptable for her to remain in the household for any length of time as a single woman. So, in 1848 she and Hendrik Jan married. They eventually had eight children of their own. The trauma of the shipwreck and the loss of family and friends were lifelong burdens for many of the survivors.

Geziena Engelina, Willemina's sister, traveled as the maid to Johannes Arnoldus Ramaker and his family. Within a year of their arrival, Johannes's wife, Jane Bruggink, died, leaving him with three children under the age of seven. In a story not unlike her sister's, Geziena and Johannes married in May 1857 and had 12

Ramaker family (ca. 1880s). Courtesy of Mary Risseeuw.

children of their own. The sisters both were eighteen when they had to face caring for motherless children and marrying the widower. In each case there was a considerable age difference between spouses—20 years for Gezina and 22 for Willemina. Were these marriages of convenience only? Was marriage the only good option the two young women thought they had, even in a Dutch immigrant community that might have offered other choices? Did they feel bound by duty? Although they were part of a Dutch community, the sisters, like many other women, had left their own families behind. Clearing land, building a sod or log home, and adapting to a new country while pregnant and raising small children must have been daunting. Did they think that enduring such circumstances was a normal part of life? It is likely they did not enjoy today's assumption that they could choose the course of their lives.

There were different kinds of challenges for Dutch American women who worked in professional fields. A good example is nursing, a profession dominated by women that came into its own during the 1860s, amid wars such as the U.S. Civil War and the Crimean War in Europe. By the turn of the century, nursing was a suitable career choice for young women, even if atypical for women at the time. Middle class mores about women limited the professions they could choose, but these same values deemed nursing and teaching appropriate choices, as women were considered natural caregivers. During the Civil War, more than 5,000 women served as nurses, for example. By World War I, the Red Cross had recruited 22,000 nurses, and over 10,000 served on the Western Front.

Elizabeth Leenhouts is a good example. From Milwaukee, she trained at Columbia Hospital School of Nursing and became one of the first rural public health nurses in Wisconsin. After graduation from the Columbia Hospital in 1909, she worked as a private nurse. In September 1913, the Greenfield Sanatorium hired her. It was a tuberculosis hospital leased to Milwaukee County to do outpatient nursing in its rural areas. By 1916 Leenhouts was lecturing at the National Organization for Public Health Nursing Conference on New Orleans. She volunteered for the Army Nurse Corps during World War I and served in France at the Milwaukee's Base Hospital 22 near Bordeaux. She saw almost continuous service at the front until the signing of the Armistice. Elizabeth was mustered out of the Army in April 1919 and resumed her duties as a rural visiting public health nurse. She accepted a temporary appointment as Superintendent of Nurses at Muirdale Sanatorium in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, which turned into a permanent position. She served as the head of Muirdale until she retired in 1945. The paths of Elizabeth Leenhouts and Cornelia Van Kooy likely crossed on occasion in Milwaukee County. (See Rachel Hekman's essay in this issue on Van Kooy.)

Bertha Brunia's family (ca. 1890s). Courtesy of Mary Risseeuw.

Bertha Brunia of Pella, Iowa, also followed the call to use her nursing skills during WWI and served for 18 months in France and Germany. There are some curious pieces to her story, however. She was born in 1887 in Olivet, Iowa, the oldest child of Frans Willem Brunia and Aaltje Roorda. After a brief stint as a stenographer in Oskaloosa, she went into nursing training in 1912 at Mercy Hospital in Des Moines. By 1914 her sisters Letitia and Henrietta had joined her at nursing school, and in 1920 their younger sister Sara also enrolled. Although this career choice would have been acceptable for young women like these, their family story is unusual. What motivated all four sisters to all pursue nursing?

More curiously still, in 1917 Bertha, Letitia, and Henrietta all went to Pueblo, Colorado, to spend several months on a ranch. That year Bertha and Henrietta proved a claim on land in the White Rock community south of Fowler County, joining tens of thousands of other women who homesteaded in the West from the 1860s to the 1930s. By 1921 the sisters owned 2,000 acres and were raising cattle and horses. Family members shared that the sisters' father was adamantly opposed to their desire to homestead. It took boldness to defy their father and the prevailing norms of a conservative Dutch community in

Bertha Brunia in nursing school (ca.). Image courtesy of Mary Risseeuw.

that time period. And it took resilience to not just dream it and try but to do it successfully.

Edith Duenk attended the Wisconsin Memorial Academy in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, in the last years of its existence. She became an accomplished violinist and played with the McDowell Club Women's Symphony Orchestra in Milwaukee. After earning sociology and nursing degrees from the University of Wisconsin, she enlisted and served as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during World War II. She returned to the United States in 1947 and earned a law degree from the University of Michigan. She did not marry until 1953, when she was 36. In many circles she would have been considered by that point an "old maid." Her marriage to a well-known professor of engineering, Enrico Volterra, produced two daughters and another career for Edith teaching social studies in Austen, Texas.

The classical academies established by the Reformed Church in America in Orange City, Iowa; Cedar Grove, Wisconsin; and Holland, Michigan had many female graduates who chose careers in missions, teaching, nursing, and higher education or served as ministers' wives. Many of them came from small towns and rural areas. Something in their upbringing led them to seek further education and make choices that were not the norm.

It is hard to know to what degree we are born with resilience or learn it. It is the ability to adapt when faced with trauma, hardship, and challenges. Family, friends, faith, culture, and community all contribute to shaping one's resilience. These women, and countless more like them, faced challenges that we, in the twenty-first century, can only imagine. We can find the extraordinary in the ordinary lives of these Dutch American women. Social convention leads us to believe that they only played supporting roles, but we know that many did not. Their roles were as essential to their communities as those of the men who tended to dominate history writing. Dutch American history is incomplete and distorted until we research and write the stories of these women and remember them in their own right.

Endnotes

1. "Missionary Describes Interment by Japanese" (*Sheboygan Press*: 30 Sept 1942), 13.

2. For example, Suzanne M. Sinke, *Dutch American Women in the United States, 1880-1920* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Janet Sheeres, *For Better, For Worse: Stories of the Wives of Early Pastors of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Resources, 2017). Sheeres is finishing a book on Dutch American midwives.

3. Gary S. Spranger, *Mathias Sprangers (1822-1884) & Bernardina Bacot Sprangers (1831-1906): A Story about Our Early Pioneer Ancestors in Sheboygan County, WI* (Family History Publishers, 2001).

4. Letter written by Matje Juffer Sneller from Alto, Wisconsin, to brothers and sisters in 1866, Dutch Immigrant Letter Collection, Heritage Hall, Calvin University.

5. Ibid.

The Work of her Hands: Working Class Women Emigrants from Groningen, the Netherlands, 1881–1901

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

Already at her birth, Diewerke Hoekenga had two strikes against her. Her birth registration in November 1861 in the municipality of Stedum, province of Groningen, the Netherlands, states "father unknown," and because of that her mother, Janna Hoekenga, a *dienstmeid* (maid-servant), lost her job. Janna was no longer employable as a domestic with a child in tow. As a result, she had no choice but to engage in less desirable work, that of a *boeremeid* (dairymaid). For the succeeding six years little Diewerke (pronounced Deewerkeh) grew up amid the laboring class, surrounded by working-class women. When Janna married Fokke Doornbos in May of 1868, it looked as though Diewerke might have a chance at a normal home life.

But then another shoe dropped. Fokke and Janna would have nine children. Albert, the first one, arrived soon after the marriage, and Diewerke was kept at home to look after her baby stepbrother as more babies arrived.[1] At age twelve, she was hired out as a dairymaid to help feed the increasing number of mouths at home. She never had the opportunity to go to school and therefore did not learn how to read or write. Being born into the working classes determined her fate, as it did the fate of other girls born in similar circumstancess. While growing up, and as adults, these women were not encouraged to step outside this class system. They were deemed lower class and inferior to and apart from the wives and daughters of *boeren* (farmers) and *burgers* (middle-class professionals and merchants). This judgment was ingrained in the mindset of people in the Netherlands in the 1800s and continued well into the 1900s. Conservative church thought similarly maintained that one's place in this world had been ordained by God; accordingly, one had to be content with one's lot and not strive to rise above it.

The roots of these patronizing attitudes about the laboring classes went deep. In a congress on poverty convened in Groningen in 1854, the consensus was that reasons for poverty were alcoholism, early and unwise marriages, inability to save, and unemployment.[2] When someone suggested that perhaps low wages might also have a direct influence on poverty, the response was that "poverty was ordained by God; that hardship and hunger drive a person to work, and are therefore needful for people."[3] Those who complained about low wages should realize that wages were an exchange for service; if the wage was low, that meant that the service the laborer had provided must have been inferior enough to deserve such a low wage.[4]

The fact that laborers were not given a chance to climb out of their circumstances through education was not even mentioned. Education was reserved for those who could

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afford it. When in 1874 the Dutch government passed a law forbidding children under twelve from working in factories, it did not forbid agricultural or domestic labor. Even though it had been mandatory since 1871 for children from six to twelve to attend school, children of working-class families often were absent in order to do farm work at the expense of their education, and the circle of poverty continued. Diewerke, born in 1861, fell ten years shy of this educational mandate.

After the French occupation (1795–1813) during the Napoleonic era, the Netherlands experienced years of economic doldrums, culminating in severe poverty during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The collapse of the farm economy resulted in nearly a quarter of the population receiving welfare.

Before 1850 the various religious denominations in the Netherlands (Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish) took care of their own poor. The 1854 Constitutional Revision codified this arrangement, handing care of the poor to the church; those without a church affiliation could turn to their local municipality for help. Larger cities such as Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Groningen operated *werkhuizen* (workhouses) where unemployed people could do work, such as sawing wood, spinning wool, and knitting. The government also provided orphanages and schools for those with disabilities, such as being blind or deaf. Private organizations also stepped in to alleviate poverty by organizing schools teaching various occupations. These efforts were nowhere near adequate to address the problems of the working poor or unemployed. They were mostly on their own. Government-funded welfare programs that we take for granted today did not exist until well into the twentieth century.

Global trends also made life hard for the poor in the Netherlands. The United States and Canada began to produce huge quantities of cheap grain that saturated European markets, enough so that Dutch farmers could not compete. This led in turn to thousands of farm workers losing their jobs and farmers losing their farms.[5]

It is little wonder, then, that when letters from Dutch immigrant settlers in America began arriving with glowing accounts about life in their new country—the promise of plenty of food and less rigid class barriers—many of the Dutch laboring folk grasped this straw of opportunity and emigrated.

Occupations

Robert P. Swierenga's *Alphabetical Listing of Groninger Emigrants 1881–1991* records age, occupation, where from, where to, and year of immigration, making it possible to track the type of immigrants who went to the US from 1880 to 1900.[6] His listing includes 3,590 heads of households and single men and 791 single women who had emigrated from the province.

Because they ranged in age from twelve to seventy-five years, we must assume that some were widows. Although rare, some may have been married and traveling to meet husbands who had gone ahead. As "head of household" (on this trip), their occupations were listed. Even if we estimate the number lower, there were still an impressive number of single women who left in just two decades from one province. For our purpose, however, it is not the number who left but their occupations that matters. Of these 791 women, 392 (49.55 percent) were listed as *dienstmeid*, *dienstbode*, *boeremeid*, and *huishoudster* (servant girl, domestic, dairymaid, and housekeeper); another 205 (25.91 percent) were *arbeidster*, *dagloonster*, and *werkvrouw* (laborer, daylaborer, and working/char woman); 151 (19.08 percent) were *zonder* (no occupation given); and 28 (3.53 percent) were *naaisters* (seamstresses). The remaining 1.8 percent included a hatmaker (1), store clerks (5), a cooper (1), a companion lady (1), a nanny (1), and female farmers (2). Because only the occupations of the heads of

Local women working as domestics in middle class homes on Boekhorstenstraat in Arnhem, in 1901. Courtesy of the Gelders Archive in the Netherlands.

families and single persons are listed, the occupations of married women of the laboring class are not recorded, even though they generally worked outside of the home, as we shall see later in this article.

Since many of our immigrant ancestor mothers who hailed from Groningen fell into these categories, it is helpful to look at the occupations and resulting social and living conditions of these women.

The occupations and working conditions of these women have been thoroughly researched for the Netherlands.[7] At first glance there seems to be no noticeable difference between a *dienstmeid* and a *dienstbode*; the dictionary translates both as female servant and/or domestic. However, *dienstbode* was a term used by the higher class in city households, such as doctors, ministers, and lawyers, whereas *dienstmeid* was a term used more for female servants in the country (*het platteland*).

There were some positive aspects to becoming a *dienstmeid/diensbode* (domestic) for a young laboring-class woman. She was better housed and fed than she would have been at home. As a rule, she lived in with her employer in better circumstances than in her home surroundings. Even sharing a small attic room with another female servant allowed her more privacy than living at home in a one or two-room hovel with many siblings.[8] Besides room and board, she earned a small wage, which in most cases helped assuage the poverty of her family. She worked hard, but in large urban households there might have been up to three live-in maids sharing the workload. The youngest and most recently hired woman became the scullery maid, relegated to scrubbing the pots and pans, cleaning fireplaces, laying fires, polishing silver, peeling potatoes, and other menial tasks. The middle maid looked after cooking and food preparation, made beds, and washed and ironed. The remaining work—caring for children, shopping, serving guests—was left to the "first" maid. In smaller households one maid did all the tasks.

At the top of the pecking order of female servants was the *huishoudster*, or housekeeper. These women usually apprenticed as maids and worked until a housekeeper position became available. When a man's wife passed away, if he was financially able he would hire a housekeeper to oversee his household.[9] Although strictly speaking a domestic, she had greater responsibility and supervised the other household staff. This was also a more secure position, and many housekeepers stayed with their employers for years, in some cases marrying them. It was not uncommon for an employer, on his death, to leave his housekeeper a legacy so she could retire in comfort. The fact that in the entire list there were only twelve housekeepers who emigrated shows that their lives were economically and socially more secure and they had little need to emigrate. Emigration was regarded as desertion by many Dutch citizens, and emigrants often found themselves derided and jeered on their way to various ports.

A sub-category of *dienstmeid* was the *boeremeid*, or farm-maid. Although her job consisted primarily of the farm chores, such as milking, cleaning the milking equipment, churning butter, and making cheese, she might also help in the house if time allowed. The youngest emigrant in Swierenga's list, twelve-year-old Elizabeth Wit from Uithuizermeeden, gave her occupation as *boeremeid*. Diewerke's occupation also belonged to this category. From the age of twelve until twenty-five, when she emigrated in 1886, she lived and worked on a farm in less-than-desirable working conditions, especially for a young woman. She was housed in a part of the farm between the living quarters of the family and the attached cow stable. There was little privacy or regard for her personal needs or dignity.

In her book *Home is Where You Build It*, Suzane Sinke confirms that Dierwerke's experience was typical. "In a section of Groningen characterized by high emigration rates," she observes, "dairymaids generally lived in a section of the barn next to the animals. There was no heat, nor a place to dry clothing, a significant logistical problem for those with only one outfit."[10] Still, perhaps even Diewerke was better off than she would have been at home, as there is evidence that her step-father, Fokke Doornbos, had become abusive toward her mother and step-siblings.[11]

The next largest group (205, or 25.91 percent) were listed as *arbeidster, dagloonster* (female laborer), and *werkvrouw* (cleaning woman). The *arbeidster* and *dagloonster*, or laboress, hired herself out on an hourly or daily basis. This included seasonal farm work—raking hay dur-

Beorenmeisje (Farm Girl), Nicolaas van der Waay (ca. 1870s-1890s). Wikipedia Commons.

ing haying season; stooking wheat into sheaves during the grain harvest; and helping with the flax, potato, and beet harvests. Those living near the sea worked in fish preparation and preservation. These women worked long hours of demanding physical work; during months when there was no field work, they worked at home making brooms, carding wool, spinning, or whatever piece work was available in their region. Nor could these women rest at home. There was also cooking, cleaning, mending, and other household chores to be done for their own families. And, as a final indignity—even though she worked just as hard and as long as male farm laborers—her wages were considerably lower because she was a woman and deemed less important. The eldest *dagloonster* emigrant listed was seventy-five-year-old Ietje Bakker from Warffum.

The *werkvrouw,* or cleaning lady (also called scrub or char woman), also hired herself out on an hourly or daily basis to various houses. She scrubbed floors; beat rugs; washed windows; and did other heavy, coarse labor common before the advent of vacuum cleaners and washing machines. Her smaller children might be cared for by an older sibling or a grandmother or aunt no longer able to work for a wage. Though nineteenth- and early twentieth-century mores balked against woman working outside the home, this sentiment excluded women of the laboring class. They were expected to work, and reformers seldom agitated against it.[12]

Cleaning lady in Amsterdam mopping the sidewalk (1912). Photo by C.J. Hofker.

The final category was that of the *naaister*, or seamstress. Like the *werkvrouw*, she had her steady customers to whom she would go at regular intervals to catch up on the new sewing, as well as to make repairs and alterations. This may appear to have been the least strenuous and stressful of the occupations mentioned, but, in fact, it had its own downside. She usually worked long hours sitting in one position and earning the lowest wage of all. To compensate somewhat for their low wages, seamstresses usually ate along with the particular family they were at and often were given leftovers to take home.

Living Conditions

One obstacle to living on the work premises was the threat of sexual harassment by employers, their sons, and other male employees. When unwanted sexual advances resulted in a pregnancy, the girl was usually considered the instigator and fired. It was the man's word against hers, and she usually lost. She was judged to be an immoral person and sent packing. Not readily hired again, she might turn to prostitution to keep body and soul together. Another way out was suicide.[13] Especially vulnerable were younger girls, those with mental disabilities, and orphaned girls without family support structures.

The law did not allow paternity suits, and girls and women thus had no recourse to stand up to their despoilers and accusers.[14] The law absolved the man who had fathered the child from paying for the birth expenses and child support. It also safeguarded him from any claim to his estate. The birth registration of a child born out of wedlock did not even record the name of the father. The law stipulated that a child born to a married couple had to be registered by the father within two days of birth. In the event there was no "father," the person assisting with the delivery, whether a doctor or a midwife, had to register the birth with the authorities. Sometimes, when a man who had fathered the child married the mother at a later date, he would "acknowledge" the child as his on the marriage registration, but this was not recorded on the birth registraton.[15] For the girl, it was bad enough to have to go home without a job but worse to come home without pay and with an extra mouth to feed. In the infant Diewerke's case, her mother, Janna, having lost her job, was taken in by her sister, Anje, married to Jan Wientje, a carpenter. The birth registration states that Jan and Anje assisted with the delivery and that Jan had registered Diewerke's birth.

Another negative aspect was the lack of free time. A maid was expected to be on call twenty-four hours a day with only one Sunday off every six weeks to visit her family. Besides that, her employer ruled over her comings

and goings and had the right to forbid her to see friends deemed unsuitable. It was not unheard of for a mistress to warn her maid against marriage. The only partner suitable for a maid was a farm laborer or factory worker. Single young women might enjoy a measure of well-being living in with their respected employers. Together as husband and wife, however, they had to rent a home and, when children came, feed and clothe other bodies besides their own. They almost always slid into the same poverty levels as their parents.

Marriage for the laboring class woman was considered unwise and ill advised, even in a time when society deemed marriage the highest aim for a woman.[16] Because a married woman lived in her own house, not in with her employers, she usually lost her position as maid and had to hire herself out as a *werkvrouw*, or cleaning lady. Frequently physically indisposed by pregnancies, and with little children to care for, her available working hours became less steady, and she would have to resort to finding part-time and/or seasonal work. In the list of female occupations, those of the day-laborer and cleaning (scrub) women increased in proportion to their age. Thus, while the younger women served as domestics and dairy-maids, the older ones took whatever menial job was available to them while raising their families.

Contracts

Contracts stipulating term and conditions for all laborers, male and female, were oral, with the power belonging to the employer. There were no national laws governing this labor pool; female servants could not appeal to any court over mistreatment or unfair practices on the part of her employer. Only adult men who paid taxes were allowed to vote, leaving laborers (men and women) without voices in government.[17] The only recourse an employee had was to leave at the end of the contract, which ran from May 1 of one year to May 1 of the next. Employers paid a servant at the end of the term; if she left before that time, she could forfeit her wages. Illness was another cause for concern. An employer might put up with a two- or three-day flu, but for anything lasting longer than a week the woman would be sent home without pay to recuperate, putting an extra burden on her family.

Milk collected to bring to the dairy factory for processing as sweet milk, buttermilk, and butter. Enspijk, Gerlderland, Netherlands (ca. 1915).

Although there were many instances of satisfactory relationships between maid and mistress, and many were treated as members of the family, the reverse was often true. Newspapers of the day decried the fact that there was a huge turnover in hired help, as well as the difficulty of keeping a maid.[18]

The ages of the female emigrants surveyed in the *Alphabetical Listing* correspond to their marital status. A full 66 percent of the women ranged from 12 to 29—the largest group by far. Fifteen percent fell into the 30 to 47 age group. (Due to financial constraints, the marriage age for the laboring class was in the mid- to late-twenties.) This age range showed fewer single emigrants because most in this age group would have been married and listed under their husband's names. Single women in this age range may also have been inhibited from emigrating because they were the sole supporters of their own parents by this time, or one parent or an orphaned niece or nephew. The older single female emigrant group, from 48 to 75, accounted for 19 percent. By the time they reached this age bracket, women were either widowed or their earlier obligations, such as looking after an aged parent, had ceased to be a deterrent to leaving.

The married women in this age group suffered the highest death rates due to childbirth and related illnesses. Pregnancies, miscarriages, and the care and nurture of small children, all the while working at physically demanding jobs, took their toll. Without proper nourishment—the best food often going to their children—or proper medical attention, they were

the first to succumb when an epidemic struck.[19]

Emigration as a Way Out

What happened in the province of Groningen—single laboring-class women emigrating on their own—occurred in other provinces as well. What prompted these women to leave the known for the unknown? Perhaps we should rephrase the question: What did they have to lose? Society looked down on them as second-class citizens and offered no future for them or their children. They were used to hard work without government assistance. And life in the United States had promise for women like them.

As early as 1851 Jacob Dunnink wrote from Drenthe, Michigan, "It is here by the Americans not the practice that women or girls work in the fields. And the Dutch girls agree that it is not women's work."[20] For the female field workers in the Netherlands this must have seemed like wonderful news. "Single women found immigration to America attractive as a way to marry and 'move up' socially and economically," observed Suzanne Sinke, for it "offered a better sex ratio, potential husbands earning more attractive wages, and greater long-term prospects to support a future family."[21] In the Netherlands they would have to work until they were too old or infirm and then be taken up in an old women's home as wards of the church or local government. In the United States they had a fighting chance for success. Who, given the chance, would not want to go?

Diewerke's Life in America

Diewerke (who changed her name to Della in the U.S.) sailed on the *Zaandam*, arriving in America in June 1886. She was then 25 and worked as a domestic in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for two years before marrying Harm Bont, a grocer and widower with two children. He had also emigrated from Stedum, arriving in 1880.[22] In the eleven years after getting married, the couple had seven children. When Harm died of malaria in 1897, he left Diewerke with her seven children, the youngest only four months old, as well as two children by his first marriage. She was now solely responsible for the care and feeding of nine children. With no education, she turned to the only occupation open to her—that of *werkvrouw*, or cleaning lady, working for various employers on a daily basis. She was not the only one.

Peasants Planting Potatoes, Vincent Van Gogh, 1884. Wikipedia Commons.

The 1900 United States Federal Census lists 324 Dutch-born women who had arrived between 1880 and 1900 working as domestics in Grand Rapids—the youngest eleven and the oldest sixty-three. The census also listed 30 Dutch-born females as factory workers and 18 as taking in laundry. (Of course, many of these girls and women had immigrated from other Dutch provinces, just as those from Groningen had immigrated to other parts of the US.) Once married, many of these women still worked by taking on various jobs. For instance, there were 14 Dutch immigrant women working as midwives in Grand Rapids, though they were not listed as such in the census. Additionally, there were 335 Dutch male immigrants boarding with Dutch families in Grand Rapids, meaning extra income for the family, with the woman in the family doing the extra work.

In 1900 Diewerke was living on Union Street; two years later she was on Visser Street, still working outside the home. By 1910, the older children were able to help support the family. Her stepson Cornelius (25) and oldest son Henry (20) were teamsters. Stepdaughter Cora (20) and daughters Jennie (19) and Gertie (17) were domestics. John (16) delivered parcels. Annie (15), Jeanette (14), and Hermina (13) were still at home but would become domestics when they turned sixteen. In the following decade, Diewerke lived at five different addresses, an indication that she was either renting and moving her family around or had become a live-in domestic at various addresses.

In 1921 Diewerke married a sixty-eight-year-old widower and fellow immigrant from Stedum, Harm Balkema. The marriage allowed her finally to quit waged labor, but her rest was short-lived. She died from a cerebral hermorrhage in 1925 at age sixty-four. In America she had outlived her mother by thirteen years; Janna had died in 1891 at fifty-one. Diewerke had lived long enough to witness women's suffrage in 1919.[23]

Regrets?

Did Diewerke ever regret her move to America—hoping for a better life but ending up working as hard as she had back in Stedum? There are indications that these working-class women preferred America. Housing conditions in the United States were much better than they would have been back home, even for working women married to a laborer. As Rev. H. van Hoogen explained to immigrants in *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan* in January 1898, "If those of you, who belonged to the laboring class in the Netherlands, and that is most of you, would compare your housing today with what you used to live in, you would have reason to say, 'How can we show our gratitude to God for so many blessings.'"[24] Diewerke showed her gratitude by making profession of faith in 1898 and becoming member of the Mayfair Christian Reformed Church. She would have felt at home in this congregaton, as its pastor, Rev. Eppe Vander Vries, was a fellow Groningen immigrant.

By the interwar years, traditional labor by working class women continued on farms and in cities, but there also was nostalgia about old ways. In this image by Willem van de Poll, a model poses as a milk-maid in Broek in Waterland, North Holland (1933). Wikipedia Commons.

In *A Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley*, Brian Beltman relates the story of his grandmother, Maaike Rypstra Eringa. At nineteen, in 1893, she left the Netherlands for America as a single woman to keep house for her brother and his partner. Her memories of being a servant in her homeland were such that years later she declined the opportunity to take a trip back. "I would not return to the Netherlands for any amount of money," she stated in 1927. The former maid simply did not want to see places again of which she had no happy memories.[25]

While women laborers worked as hard in America as in the Netherlands, in many cases their wages were higher and their money bought more. There were also more convenient home appliances. By 1890 women in the US were using washing machines instead of doing laundry by hand, and the Bissel carpet sweeper (made in Grand Rapids) replaced the carpet beater. They had more free time and freedom to make their own choices. There were fewer class distinctions among immigrants, and for women there were more marriage opportunities.

When Magdalena Elias, who had immigrated in 1848 and who, after six years in the US, was still single and still working as a domestic in Wayne county, New York, was asked if she would consider going back to Holland, she replied sharply, "Why would I do that? I have it so much better here. I make more money and I have more freedom."[26]

Diewerke would have agreed; in her nearly four decades in Grand Rapids, she had seen her children marry and settle into better lives than what would have been their lot as laborers in the Netherlands. There, even in the second half of the nineteenth century, class distinctions were still very much facts of life. She would have agreed that she and her children had successfully escaped what amounted to a caste designation.

Endnotes

1. Albert Doornbos was born December 5, 1868, one month after Diewerke's seventh birthday. Perhaps because she looked after him from his birth until she went to work out at age twelve, there was a bond between them; when Diewerke emigrated in 1886, she took Albert, then seventeen, with her to America.

2 "Unwise marriages" really meant "having to get married" due to the woman being pregnant.

3. *Kroniek van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Argon/Elsevier), 711.

4. Ibid.

5. H. de Vries, *Landbouw en Bevolking Tijdens de Agrarische Depressie in Friesland* (1878-1895) (Wageningen, Vereniging voor landbouwgeschiedenis, 1971).

6. Robert Swierenga (compiler), *Alphabetical Listing of Groninger Emigrants*, 1881-1991, based on provincial emigration records, Rijksarchief, Groningen, the Netherlands.

7. See for instance: Pott-Buter, H. & Tijdens, K. *Vrouwen leven en werk in de twintigste eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998).

8. *Kroniek*, 804. In a national survey, the Dutch government found in 1899 that in the province of

Groningen 58 percent of the population still lived in one-room houses.

9. The less well-off might engage an older daughter, unmarried sister, or aunt to fill the vacancy left by the wife.

10. Suzanne M. Sinke, *Home is Where You Build It: Duch Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920 (PhD Dissertation: University of Minnesota, 1993), 67.*

11. Comments attributed to Diewerke's stepsister Klaaske (Clara) Doornbos on her obituary information on www.findagrave.com.

12. Jeannette Dorsman and Monique Stavenuiter, *Nooit gehuwd, maar niet alleen; Vrijgezelle vrouwen uit de arbeidend klasse in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum, Verloren, 1993) 14, 15.

13. Leyenaar, Oldersma & Niemöller, *De Hoogste Tijd*, The Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* regularly reported on domestics' suicides.

14. Maja Mestdagh, *Gekend en niet erkend: de gedwongen erkenning van het vaderschap 1908-1987*. Masterproef van de opleiding "Master in de rechten" (Gent: Faculteit Rechtgeleerdheid Universiteit Gent, Academiejaar 2008-2009), 21, 22. These "natural" children were abandoned by the law. It was forbidden by law to pronounce the father, unless in the case of rape or incest.

15. See also *Herziening kinderalimentatiestelsel*, 11. http://arno.uvt.nl/show.cgi?fid=133583.

16. J. Dorsman and M. Stavenuiter, *Nooit gehuwd, maar niet alleen. Vrijgezelle vrouwen uit de arbeidende klasse in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw*. (Hilversum: Verloren, 1993), 15.

17. Not until 1918, were all Dutch men aged 25 and above entitled to vote. In 1919, Dutch women won the right to suffrage. These changes led to many improvements for the working class.

18. Between 1880 and 1900 there were over 11,300 advertisements for *dienstmeid, boeremeid, werkvrouw and arbeidster* in local and regional papers (www.delpher.nl).With thousands of women emigrating in the 1890s, and more young women receiving education and finding better positions, there was a shortage in this labor pool.

19. Janet Sheeres, *Sjaarda Genealogy*, Grand Rapids, MI, s.p., 1996), 180. Out of thirty-one children born in one generation to one particular clan comprised of twelve families, eighteen (58 percent) died before the age of twenty-six. The remaining thirteen children produced only five new family groups to form the next generation.

20. P. R. D. Stokvis, "Zeeuwen naar Amerika 1840-1914. Patronen, personen en motieven" *Zeeuwse Emigratie naar Amerika 1840-1920, Thema nummer 11,* Historische Studiedag, Middelburg, 6 September 1997.

21. Sinke, *Home is Where You Build It, 20-25.*

22. The province of Groningen consisted of fifty-five municipalities, of which Stedum contributed the most emigrants: 225, of which 50 (22.22 percent) were female laborers.

23. Michigan became one of the first states to ratify the amendment on June 10, 1919. It passed unanimously.

24. Rev. van Hoogen had served several congregations in the province of Groningen before coming to the US and knew the living and working conditons of laborers in the province.

25. Brian Beltman, *A Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 135.

26. Letter from Magdalena Elias to A. de Priester. Calvin University Heritage Hall, Collection 78, Box 19, Folder 3.

The 'S' Word

Jane Griffioen

They tore it down in the fall of 1981.

"There goes a piece of history," he said. "A lot of stories."

We were in the Monte Carlo waiting for the traffic signal, on our way to dinner. Each of us, my husband and I, my brother-in-law, and his wife, had turned to look east, staring out the passenger window cracked open a few inches to the mild autumn evening.

My brother-in-law was referring to the half-razed brick structure visible from the street corner through the grove of trees.

History, indeed. And stories. Many, many stories. Stories never told, I am sure.

The light at the corner of 68th and Division changed, and we continued on our way to our favorite Grand Rapids restaurant. While they chatted, no one seemed to notice my reticence.

I had stories about those grounds, those trees, other buildings there, and that building being demolished.

But I hadn't told the stories. Not to anyone. And as far as I was concerned that night, I never would.

Silence is a woman's ornament, Aristotle said. Silence is the women's best garment, Sophocles said earlier. Women should learn in silence, in subjection, according to Paul the Apostle.

My father, my church, and my school taught me the words of Saint Paul, just as my forebearers had been taught—the French Huguenots, the Dutch Calvinists, the Protestant Reformed Church (PRC), the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Women, submit to your husbands. Women are to keep silent in church. If you have questions, you are to ask your husband when you get home. Women should not teach in the church or assume authority over a man. Because Adam was formed before Eve. Besides, wrote Paul, it was the woman who

The men's building at Pine Rest (ca. late 1920s). Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

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was deceived and transgressed. But no fear—she would be saved in childbirth.

Paul, originally Saul of Tarsus, was a Roman citizen and a Greek-speaking Jew (ca. 5-65 AD). According to tradition, Paul was beheaded at the order of Roman Emperor Nero. Beheaded. But not before he made it clear who submitted, who was silenced, who was the head of whom, and why.

Like many women by the early 1980s, I was no longer silent in the church. I taught the high school Heidelberg Catechism class in our CRC congregation and co-led the denominational Bible study "Coffee Break" for women there once a week. My husband and children were first and foremost to me. Ours was a traditional marriage. I was a wife, mother, and homemaker. So, when the first woman graduated from the CRC seminary and sought to be ordained, my thought and main concern was "Who will take care of her children?"[1]

Holding official offices in the Christian Reformed Church was just opening for women. I wasn't interested in any church office. Teaching church classes and catechism was one thing. I was well-versed in our creeds and confessions and in the Scriptures, for that matter. However, holding an office of deacon and elder, let alone official ordination and actually administering the sacraments, felt inappropriate, if not pretentious, to me. I heard Marchiene Rienstra speak at a large women's breakfast gathering one spring in the 1980s. She did not change my mind. In my eyes this whole women-in-office business seemed egotistic and brazen.

I continued to adhere to my upbringing, and I took the King James Version of Saint Paul's instruction seriously back then. Or that which I was told was the apostle's instruction.

Junia was a little-known apostle whom Paul praised in his letter to the Romans. The editor, writer, and award-winning journalist Rena Pederson tells a story of her surprise when she first heard of Junia's story during a book club discussion on women in the Bible. A book club member pointed out that Junia should be included. She said that, in later years, translators had changed the name to Junias, a man's name, because they didn't believe a woman could be an apostle.

Pederson was stunned, she says. She had "spent a lifetime of Sundays in church" and never heard any story about anyone named Junia.[2]

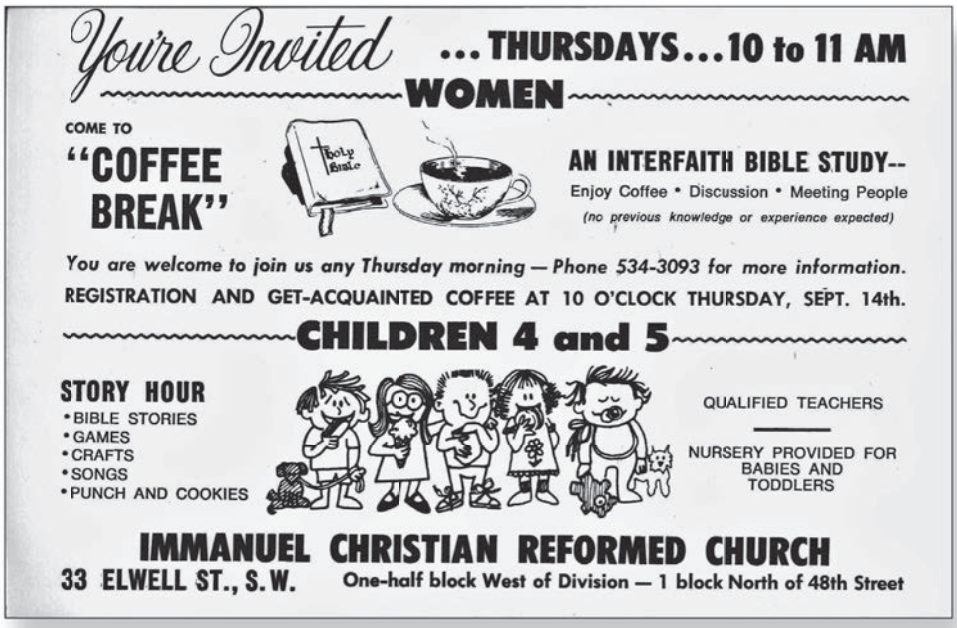
Not until the late 1980s did I come to understand Paul's teaching differently from what I had before.

It was 1957. I was five years old when my father said Mother was "in the hospital." After several weeks of Mother's absence, Father took me and my siblings to that hospital to visit her.

The grounds had a lot of pine trees. The building had several floors and a lot of steps. There were a lot of windows with wire mesh, a lot of locked doors, and a lot of jangling keys.

Pine Rest Christian Hospital was established in 1910, organized by members of the CRC and the Reformed Church of America (RCA). As a little girl, I don't remember hearing our family say "Pine Rest."

In *London Street: A Memoir* (2020), I tell my mother's story. But another woman shared Mother's dimly lit room when I visited in 1957. A woman who called in a weak voice from a bed along the wall opposite of my mother's bed, "What beautiful children you have!" My mother answered a raspy "Thank you," and that was the end of the conversation. I don't know whether my mother and the woman spoke much together, before or after that day, each from their place on the bleached white sheets. Maybe they stayed pretty much strangers. But I wonder today if that woman ever wanted to tell her story and if she ever had a chance.



Advertisement for Coffee Break bible study from Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids (1980s). Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

My first husband and I were married for nine years before we had children. During seven of those years, from 1973 to 1980, I held three

full-time positions: a secretarial job, followed by a houseparent position, followed by bookkeeping and accounting work. My hobbies back then included reading, playing the piano, gardening, and cross-stitching. One piece of stitchery I created from that time is blocked, framed, and wrapped in tissue paper, saved in an upstairs closet. It reads, "Equality of Worth does not mean Sameness of Task."

Although the saying was not my invention, the needle work was. The embroidery hung on the kitchen wall and daily reassured me that the chores I took on as a wife; a homemaker; and, eventually, a mother of our two young children were as worthwhile as any church office, political office, or other work that brought home a paycheck. I didn't rally with the more outspoken or progressive women of the 1980s. But I did pay attention to what they were saying. I hadn't swallowed the more traditional ideas regarding a woman's place hook, line, and sinker.

Work in the field of women's studies and scholarship pursued by women in the CRC, at Calvin and other Christian colleges, kept my interest, as did views from Episcopal and Presbyterian institutions. My unexpected find and the most significant to me came in the winter of 1987-1988. The translation of the Greek word for headship, *kephale*, in Paul's letters was not necessarily as I had been taught. Several studies showed the word *kephale* to mean beginning or origin or source, and rarely did it imply authority or chain of command. This was my Pederson moment.

I had already set aside a literal interpretation of the creation story in the book of Genesis a few years before this.[3] Now, I found my discovered translation of the Apostle Paul's words regarding headship substantial, and I considered my new understanding logical and refreshing.

I began questioning more biases in Scripture translation. Eventually, I realized the extent of patriarchal influence in Biblical interpretation; world history; church history; U.S. history—on and on to social norms; gender roles; and particularly, the silence of women. Better late than never.

It was 1961. I was nine years old. I heard my mother sobbing in the night. Our parents' bedroom was directly under the upstairs bedroom my sister and I shared. My sister stayed asleep, but I could hear some of the conversation coming from below us.

Between her soft cries, mother was saying, "No. I can't do it. I can't do it."

My father asked, "What do you mean?"

Mother spoke louder, like she was frustrated or angry. "You know what I mean . . ."

"What are you talking about?" Father asked. "You're being silly."

"You know very well what I'm talking about."

Father brushed it off. "It's all your imagination, Mom."

It wasn't the first time I heard my mother talk that way. Usually my father answered, "No, Mom." Or "Don't be ridiculous." Or "Bologna."

Once I heard Father say, "That's crazy."

When I came home from school a few days later, my mother was gone to the place where we had visited her years before. The place with the beds and the windows like jail and the jangling keys.

I wasn't sure of the details. When I asked my father, he only shook his head and didn't answer. But sometimes I caught him with a tear on his face, or he would swallow hard in the middle of his prayer at our evening meal. My sisters answered my questions with a simple "I don't know."

Perhaps by instinct, I kept these things a secret. I didn't hear anyone else talk about them. Not at church, not in the neighborhood, not at school. I kept quiet. I noticed that the minister did not pray for my mother during the long congregational prayer on Sundays.

When my mother came home eight weeks later, the secret stayed a secret. As a nine- year-old, my reasoning said that was what my mother wanted.

A theory from ancient times describes the source of women's insanity being the position of her uterus. The etymology of hysteria is the Greek word for womb, *hustera* (Latin *hystericus*) of the womb. The goal of treatments was to properly balance a woman's fluids. Centuries and centuries later, treatments remained linked to the idea of the hysterical wandering womb. Sometimes women were hung upside down to shift the uterus into place. From sweet herbs to hungry leeches to mutilation, from witch-burning to the swinging chair to surprise dunks in an ice-cold bath, from confining wraps in wetted-sheets to straitjackets, the shadows of the hysterical wandering womb lingered.

In the nineteenth century, doctors continued to claim that women with irregular menstrual cycles were especially susceptible to insanity. The norm remained to view women as the weaker sex, male dependent, with child-bearing their only significant contribution to society.

A chart of supposed causes of insanity from the Illinois State Hospital of Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1860 includes Paralysis and Epilepsy, Disappointed love, Over-exertion, Hard study, and Novel reading.[4]

Women were easily influenced. They were not to risk their fragile minds. Or their souls. They were capable of intellectual study but had "minds of limited capacity," and

"Kidnapping Mrs. Packard." The dialogue accompanying the image emphasizes her betrayal and the promise of her son to get her "out of prison." Illustration from *Modern Persecution; or, Insane Asylums Unveiled* (1873), by Elizabeth P. W. Packard.

therefore developing intelligence led to overuse of their brain and mental breakdown.[5]

Husbands were often intimidated by intelligence. Women were to be calm and compliant. For a woman to think her own thoughts and speak her own words was dangerous, even in religious households. Maybe more so in religious households. A woman was subordinate to a man.

Insubordination was a sin.

Independence was madness.

An assertive woman was unnatural and therefore sick. The more she protested, the more delusional she was seen to be. A woman *must* be insane not to bow to her husband. Not infrequently, a husband who wanted to keep his wife in line asserted his control and had her declared insane.

On June 18, 1860, Elizabeth Packard of Manteno, Illinois, was literally carried off to The Illinois State Hospital in Jacksonville, Illinois. Her husband, the Reverend Theophilus Packard, had labeled her insane and conveniently committed her to the asylum. "Wronged women were not supposed to come out fighting, or be angry, or battle for injustice to be overturned. Elizabeth's course was unnatural in his eyes—and therefore insane."[6] And the more a patient protested, the more she was viewed as sick.

All Elizabeth had to do to win her freedom was submit to her husband. Promise never to think for herself again.[7]

The definition of *asylum* is "sanctuary." An institution of protection, shelter, and support. But for Elizabeth Packard and hundreds of women like her, asylums were used instead for social control. And the standards set for society were set largely by white, Protestant, middle-class men.

It took until 1980 for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III) to delete hysterical neurosis.

The Traverse City State Hospital was built in 1885 and closed in 1989.[8] The grounds have been preserved, and dozens of the original brick buildings have been renovated. The Village at Grand Traverse Commons is now a mixed-use development that includes condominiums, apartments, restaurants, a winery, and a bakery. Behind the buildings of the complex's main area is the small farm that once helped to self-sustain the hospital. The farm was worked by both staff and patients.

Michigan autumns are beautiful. My husband and I travel the northern lower peninsula each year and typically stop in Traverse City to walk the old hospital grounds. We enjoy a bite and a sip at one of our favorite wineries. We grab a take-out sandwich at the central Commons, a cream-colored, tall brick building. The new renovations allow visitors to see much of the original hallways, walls, and arched wooden doors.

I admit that just waiting for the nice man in the friendly deli to spread a little mayonnaise over my sourdough turkey and cheese sandwich is rather creepy. Shadows, echoes, scraping chains, and jangling keys occupy my imagination in that building until we step outside once again into the brilliant fall color of our wooded Michigan surroundings.

Tours are offered at the Village in Traverse City, including an Historic Walking Tour, a Twilight Tour, and an Asylum Flashlight Tour where anyone under age eleven is NOT permitted and those under eighteen must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Tours of brick stairways, tunnels, barred windows, and men's and women's wards do not appeal to me. I can't help but think of these jaunts as inevitably disrespectful to the men and women of the past who suffered there. I can't help but consider the untold stories of submissive women unjustly committed. Women silenced. Stories buried in ruins and renovations.

It was 1981. I was twenty-nine years old. We were in the fourth year of a drawn-out process to adopt a child. Symptoms of a first-time serious depression haunted me. Family history of secrets, silence, suppression, and submission loomed and frightened me. I admitted myself into Pine Rest Christian Hospital. Voluntarily. Against my husband's wishes.

There is such a thing as the Right to Remain Silent. There is such a thing as a Rightful Secret.

"Well! She's got a lot of nerve!"

I smile and remember my mother using that phrase when slighted. I've heard other women burst out the words, likely without thought to the serious, historical accusatory implications. Strong resolution, ungovernernable personality, unglued, hysterical, unlady-like, a lot of nerve—these were once textbook examples of mental instability. Women controlled by a patriarchal society.

When my father used words like "Don't be silly" or "That's bologna" in answer to my mother's distress, he spoke out of fatigue and frustration. Perhaps he sounded dismissive, but he didn't act dismissively. I witnessed his concern and love for his wife and children. I vouch for both his hardheadedness and his openness of heart.

My parents had their share of disagreements. On more than one occasion in the heat of an argument, I heard Mother quip, "O, the woman Thou gavest me!" That wrapped things up pretty quickly. Dad would shake his head and exit the room. I consider her tactic hilarious.

Traverse City State Hospital (n.d.)

Due to our heritage of English law, "coverture" in the United States held that no female person had a legal identity. If a woman married, she took her husband's name. If a woman married, she legally owned nothing. If divorced, she had no legal right to her children.[9] Quotes were taken from the Bible.[10] "The two shall become one." Guess which one.

Bit by bit, beginning in 1839, states gradually adopted laws dismantling coverture. Yet recognizable shades of this legal practice still cloud us.

The Civil Rights Act of 1957 gave women the right to serve on federal juries, but in 1960, for example, you did not regularly see women on jury duty. It wasn't until 1973 that all fifty states passed "similar legislation."[11]

With the passing of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act in 1974, independent women could at last get credit cards themselves. Until then, a married, single, divorced, or widowed woman had to get a man to cosign any credit application before it would be granted.[12]

Marital rape wasn't a crime until the 1970s and 1980s. Consider the crimes never counted, never reported. Women silenced by submission and fear.

In my black moleskin notebook of 2014, I jotted down an announcement from the newly appointed U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Serviah: "Hurray! Being a woman is no longer a pre-existing condition."

My mother never had a woman pastor. She never had a female doctor. Some physicians, families, and media still tell women they are imagining or exaggerating their symptoms.

Women's mental health continues to be used as a weapon.[13] Lives of submission and labels of madness still silence women.

This might be the place for me to ask who designs women's restrooms. Just a little comic relief.

An old adage we once laughed over says, "A man can rest from dusk to dawn, but a woman's work is never done." That wasn't funny anymore even before my son and daughter were born eighteen months apart in the 1980s. Women's work in our house meant day and night feedings and diaper changes and twenty-four-hour nursing of tummy aches and fevers. The majority of raising and nurturing children was women's work, which I still consider my most loved and rewarding privilege. Grocery shopping, cooking, washing dishes, housecleaning, laundry, sewing, mending, and oftentimes yard and garden maintenance were also women's work.

Even into the 1970s and 1980s in a typical traditional home, a woman considered her husband the head of their household. The husband was of-

ten the sole provider. The wife stayed home and took care of things there.

Social Security retirement payments are still based on the "traditional home" set-up. My social security statement shows "no earnings" during the time I was a stay-at-home mom, which was not news to me. When nearing age sixty-two and considering retirement, I visited the local Social Security office. It was then that I learned I was not eligible to draw on my first husband's social security. We were married from 1973 until 1995. Twenty-two years. However, because I had remarried before the age of sixty, I no longer qualified to draw from my first husband's earnings. Now *that* was news to me. I was fifty-two when I remarried. I've come to learn that this inequity is news to most women. The fact that in a "traditional marriage" a woman is *essential* to their husband's job and success isn't news to anyone.

A woman loses her first husband's social security benefits if she remarries before the age of sixty. This is a federal law in the United States, which takes an act of Congress to change. I have had discussions with four different attorneys, all of whom say that this law is both out of date and unjust. I have had dozens of correspondences with my U.S. senators in this regard. No changes are yet in the making. Refusing to be silent can be exhausting.

In contrast to ancient, medieval, and early modern treatments—hanging women upside down, bleeding them out, attempts to balance a woman's fluids, hungry leeches and mutilation, witch-burnings, swinging chairs, ice-water dunks, chains, and whippings—improved treatments of mental illness emerged in the 1820s as "Quakers demonstrated that kindness, healthy diets, ordinary comforts, and light work assignments benefited all patients while nurturing many to recovery."[14]

Dorthea L. Dix (1802–1887) was influential in inspiring an international movement for humane treatment of mental patients. Clifford Beers's autobiography, *A Mind that Found Itself*, influenced attitudes in the United States. From 1900 to 1903, Beers himself was hospitalized in a state facility where "untrained attendants functioned more like jailors than nurses," and his autobiography documents beatings and "assorted abuses."[15]

Pine Rest Christian Hospital was established in 1910 in cooperation with the CRC and the RCA. Pine Rest followed the example of mental health hospitals in the Netherlands committed to Christian mercy. Like the model in the old world, Pine Rest trained its own nursing staff, resulting in high levels of skill and a practice of Christian sympathy for patients with mental illnesses. In other words, a sanctuary. An institution of protection, shelter, and support.

Seventy-five years later, Herbert Brinks wrote of Pine Rest as an institution of mental health services that reaches beyond the Reformed community. "Like justice, Christian mercy must be blind."[16]

Perceptions, reflections, ideas, and opinions on how women's submission, secrets, and silence are joined have been with me for a very long time. When I was a little girl, the combination was likely nothing but a speck of intuition unconsciously developing. Osmosis might explain the next stage, given my upbringing in a small Dutch enclave in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Unsophisticated notions on the relationship between submission and a man's world grew slowly, slowly in my head. As a preteen, I wished I had been a boy, just so I could enjoy the privileges. As a teenager in the 1960s and then as a young adult, I wrestled on and off with the question of "a woman's place."

Eventually, I had to choose whether or not to submit to my husband to save my marriage.

Is that even a choice?

At forty years of age, I had come to understand some of the connections between women's submission, secrets, silence, and mental health. I sought a Bachelor of Arts degree and was accepted at Calvin College. I was a single mom with two children, ages nine and ten. It took six years before I graduated. During the time I spent at Calvin, the many options available to me as a woman never confused my goal. I didn't care about being a pastor, a teacher, a lawyer, a doctor. I would not academically articulate how patriarchy, submission, secrets, silence, and depression are fastened together. I only wanted to tell a story. A story of a woman's submission.

I'm fearful and keep my mouth shut when mean men throw their weight around. I get angry if male employers talk down to me. I laugh and nod in agreement with Rebecca Solnit when I read *Men Explain things to Me*. I wince when I hear famous men and men in power easily dismiss women who won't be silent by calling them crazy.

In a conversation with the author Kate Moore, the interviewer questions why, even in today's public discourse, denouncing opponents by calling them insane has such staying power. Moore believes the reason is that calling an opponent insane is so dismissive. "The accuser isn't even trying to engage with or debate their opponent," Moore points out.[17]

We need to recognize and acknowledge that patriarchy is still with us. The extent to which patriarchy has not been dismantled has been demonstrated, for example, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Consider

that 77 percent of hospital workers, 74 percent of school staff, and the majority of restaurant workers are/were women. Lack of childcare equals loss of jobs. While domestic violence escalated around the globe, shelters closed. We need more public education, forums, discussions, and acknowledgment of these things.[18]

We need to recognize the effects visited on women's children and on their children's children because of their submission. We need more safe places for women to end their silence. We need more stories, more listening, and much more empathy.

In reference to the Christian Reformed Church in particular, the church's responsibility regarding the history of women's submission, depression, denials of damage, and reputations ruined continues to be examined by people such as Larry Slings, a pastor working in the CRC Ministry of Healing for Churches. Reverend Slings informed me of the CRC Safe Church Ministry, launched in 1994.[19]

Perhaps acknowledgments are necessary, perhaps apologies.[20]

Readers of the story *London Street: A Memoir* frequently contact me. Often, they are folks raised in my neighborhood or a neighborhood like mine. Many were brought up in our Reformed churches. They tell me of similar experiences in their upbringing and their families.

Secrets, submission, silence, suppression. What are their threads? In emails and book clubs, readers of my book sometimes relay that their mothers spent time in Pine Rest. One member of a book club told me later that of ten people in their group meeting one night, eight confided that their mother had been in Pine Rest. I use the word "confided" because none of the members knew this about the other members. In one book club discussion I was invited to, a member surprised us with the same information about his mother. Another time a man disclosed information regarding his wife's hospitalization.

I have held author readings and events. I've been invited to and attended several different book clubs. I consider it a privilege to have face-to-face conversations with the readers of my story. We usually play an enjoyable round of Dutch Bingo at these gatherings. Inevitably, we talk about Pine Rest and mental illness. We talk about how, in ancient times, insanity was usually attributed to God's displeasure. I tell readers a little more about women in my family and depression. How already needless guilt and shame multiply when, at worst, immorality is implied or, at best, a lack of faith is said to be the cause of the troubles. I've been instructed to have more faith to treat my depression. It's been said to my face.

I have lied at job interviews. I admit it to folks who participate in these discussions. I remind them that we did not have the Americans with Disability Act until 1990. "It's okay," I smile and say. "I never plan to run for public office."

I grew up with gossip and stigma. It stays with a person. Through my life's course, I've known crushing scrutiny, distrust, atrocious implications, misunderstandings, dismissiveness. These are souvenirs I'd rather not carry. Sometimes it is easier to submit. Sometimes it's better to remain silent. Sometimes we still keep the secrets.

A frequent question I'm asked is why I wrote *London Street*. My answer: "For my mother."

Sometimes I hear the comment, "Things are better now."

Well . . . yes . . . But . . . .

Endnotes

1. In 1978, Marchiene Vroon Rienstra was the first woman to earn a M.Div. from the seminary. She applied for ordination and was denied.

2. Rena Pederson, *The Lost Apostle: Searching for the Truth About Junia* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc, 2008). Saint Paul mentions Junia in Romans 16:7, written before a planned visit to Rome around 56 or 57 AD.

3. Howard J. Van Till, *The Fourth Day* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

4. Kate Moore, *The Woman They Could Not Silence* (Naperville, IL: Source Books, 2021), 39.

5. ibid, 38.

6. Moore, 368.

7. Ibid, 165.

8. Heidi Johnson, preface to *Angels in the Architecture: A Photographic Elegy to an American Asylum* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004). This illustrated publication contains both (1) the attempt to integrate beauty and nature into patient's care, and (2) the darkness surrounding the care for the patients, "some truly ill and others only victims of society's ignorance and neglect."

9. Catherine Allgor, "Coverture: The Word You Probably Don't Know but Should," *National Women's History Museum*, September 4, 2014, https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/coverture-word-you-probably-dont-know-should (accessed 18 August 2022).

10. Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:8-10, Ephesians 5:31-32.

11. Allgor, "Coverture."

12. Moore, 461.

13. Ibid, xvii.

14. Herbert J. Brinks, *Pine Rest Christian Hospital: 75 Years, 1910-1985* (Grand Rapids, n.p., 1985?), 7.

15. ibid, 7-8. Clifford Beers, *A Mind that Found Itself* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908).

16. ibid, 9.

17. Moore, p. 458.

18. Eve Ensler. "Disaster Patriarchy: How the pandemic has unleashed a war on women," *The Guardian*, June 9, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jun/01/disaster-patriarchy-how-the-pandemic-has-unleashed-a-war-on-women (accessed 12 September 2022).

19. The CRC has encouraged each classis to have a Safe Church Team, to provide education regarding abuse, and to provide support for those who struggle with abuse, including allegations against a church leader. See www.crcna.org/SafeChurch (accessed 6 September 2022).

20. Ensler claims that the art of apology is as important as prayer. Apology "forces them to go back and examine, reevaluate . . ." Ensler reminds me to pursue questions like who it is that wields power, where women's agency is to be found, and whose stories—and when and what stories—are told.

Three Dutch 'Maiden Aunts' of Medicine

Rachel Hekman

In 1888, Reverend Bernardus de Bey approached the consistory of First Reformed Church in Chicago with an unusual request. His twenty-three-year-old daughter, Cornelia, was requiring payment for her services as church organist that year. Her argument was that a congregation that could raise $2,000 for a brand-new pipe organ could afford to compensate her fairly for her work. The elders uncomfortably agreed to give her a small gift—no one other than the *dominie* (minister) had ever been paid for church work at First Reformed before—but Cornelia was not satisfied. Three years later, after her father's retirement, she submitted another invoice for her services to the consistory. This time, the elders were shocked at the amount, and negotiated her down to $325, twice the salary of the next (male) organist First Reformed would hire. For Cornelia, it was the principle of the thing. She sought recognition for the work she had done for her community, and she finally received it.[1]

Cornelia would spend the rest of her life serving her community in—for the time—shockingly public ways. She, and the two other Dutch women depicted in this article, were part of the growing ranks of educated American women who were becoming more visible in the early twentieth century. Alongside a new generation of reformers who bucked tradition—such as Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells, and Alice Paul—these women sought to work in their communities rather than in their own homes, and they chose to do so in the male-dominated field of medicine.

The history of women in medicine is famously short, even as it goes back thousands of years. Metrodora, generally accepted as the first female medical writer, composed treatises on gynecology in the Greek world in the third or second century B.C.E., well after Hippocrates had already been established as a leading medical thinker. For most of Western history women were excluded from the medical profession. They were relegated to supportive positions—healer, midwife, nun—that fit within their prescribed social roles as nurturers and mothers. The generations of women whose quiet medical work kept their families and communities alive largely have disappeared from the historical record. Most never taught or sat in a medical school classroom. They worked quietly with relatives, friends, and children in their communities, and their labors largely went unnoticed. It is the rare few—Metrodora, Hildegard of Bingen, Florence Nightingale, and their like—who stepped out of the norm of this private work that we remember, specifically because they did not fit expectations about women's and men's roles in their times.

The history of medicine in the United States is no different. By 1910, only "three to four percent" of American doctors were women, despite there being more female college graduates than ever before.[2] The women who persisted in medicine despite this era's social and cultural barriers were often cut from similar cloth: they were devoted, single-minded, persevering, from families who valued education, and ready to do what

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it took to further public health. Most remained unmarried, whether due to personal preference and priorities or other factors—it is often impossible to say. Many moved away from their hometowns to do this work, seeking communities in need of their labor.

These Progressive-era doctors and nurses are remembered precisely because they were stubborn, hardworking, well-educated, and dedicated to serving others. It makes sense, then, that some of these women were from Dutch immigrant communities. Aletta Jacobs, a Dutch woman, is a good Old World example; she was a leading light in the turn-of-the-century suffrage, birth control, and pacifist movements. She opened the world's first birth control clinic in Amsterdam in the 1880s and inspired the work of influential American birth control advocate Margaret Sanger.[3] Johanna Veenstra is another example. She was a Dutch American missionary who moved from New Jersey to Nigeria in the 1920s to do medical work.[4]

The three medical women depicted in this article—Cornelia de Bey, Cornelia Van Kooy, and Henrietta Veltman—fall somewhere between the silent home nurses and the famous working women of their day (such as Jane Addams, the social worker). Their passions and achievements were recognized by many of their peers, and their names occasionally appear in historical and medical journals. But they are seldom recognized outside of those contexts. And yet they played a significant role in the story of Dutch Americans.

Dr. Aletta Jacobs, Dutch suffragette, first female Dutch university graduate, first female physician, and birth control advocate. ca. 1900. WIkipedia Commons.

They were contemporaries of each other, having been born into the time of cultural change between the Civil War (1860s) and the Spanish-American War (1890s). All were raised in the Midwest—though in different states—and worked in that general region. All used their medical training to serve their communities' public health throughout their lives. All were typical Progressive-era reformers, promoting a better, more equitable society. And all participated in the process of widening access to the world for future generations of women, particularly in medicine and community organizing—though none of them married and only one had children (adopted).

To call them "mothers of modern medicine" is not quite right. The profession itself was not their focus. They worked to aid society and science, promoting progress in a new era. They are perhaps better described as America's "maiden aunts," putting their lives' work into their communities rather than their own families.

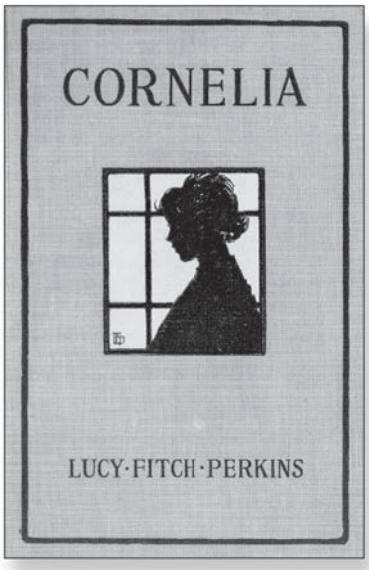
Cornelia de Bey: Urban Reformer

In 1919, the popular children's book author Lucy Fitch Perkins published *Cornelia: The Story of a Benevolent Despot*. The book opens with a young girl storming out of a schoolhouse on the west side of Chicago, petticoats swirling and red hat gleaming in the urban dinginess. Cornelia, Perkins wrote, was "almost aggressively American" in her demeanor and attitude towards life, despite her Dutch Reformed upbringing.[5]

Perkins's inspiration for *Cornelia* was the influential Chicago reformer Dr. Cornelia de Bey. Born in Groningen, the Netherlands, in the 1860s, de Bey was the daughter of Rev. Bernardus de Beij, an eminent professor and "*dominee*" (in Perkins's words) who imparted to her a "scholarly mind and Huguenot persistence."[6] When de Bey was three, in 1868, the family immigrated to Illinois, where her father took up the pastorate at Chicago's First Reformed Church (an Albertus C. Van Raalte plant).[7] It was there, in the immigrant neighborhood her parents served, that Cornelia de Bey learned her famous "unswerving honesty of purpose," as a teacher's union publication described her in 1901.[8]

Perkins retold the fictionalized and no doubt embellished story of Cornelia's unorthodox entree into Progressive Era reform work, which de Bey herself liked to tell. The reality of poverty in an Irish Catholic family confronted her. Concerned about its baby's case of measles, Cornelia helped one of the sons steal coal from the Reformed church's boiler room to heat his house. A constable caught the boy and brought him to court for theft. Cornelia felt compelled to intervene. "I thought it would be wrong to let the baby freeze," she tells the judge in Perkins's story. "I thought it was like your ox or ass falling into a pit on the Sabbath Day—you'd just *have* to get it out! The Bible says so!"[9] De Bey's dedication to reform and community service was, no doubt, inspired and informed by her Reformed upbringing.

De Bey's first steps into her career of community organization began with her graduation in 1889 from the Cook County Normal School with a degree in education. She later earned a degree in homeopathic medicine from Hahnemann Medical College (1895) and practiced privately in Chicago until the 1920s. But education remained her lifelong passion, likely also encouraged by her well-read parents. Her education in a normal school (institutions that trained teachers) had a significant impact on her worldview. The school's principal at the time was Colonel Francis Wayland Parker, a reformer and a leader in what education theorist John Dewey called "progressive education." Parker's ideal classroom would look very familiar to students in the twenty-first century; in the nineteenth century it was groundbreaking. "The primary concern of education is character," he argued. "A school should be a model home, a complete community, an embryonic democracy," a place of holistic character development in which students learn *how* to think, not *what* to think.[10]



Cover of Cornelia: The Story of a Benevolent Despot (1919). Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

De Bey took this approach to heart and championed empowerment and self-determination among Chicago's poor. A Chicago journalist wrote an article describing DeBey, the famous social worker Jane Addams, and three of their colleagues as Chicago's "five maiden aunts." "Dr. DeBey's great aim," he wrote, "is to make education so democratic that it will forswear its leisure class affectations and fit every boy thoroughly and directly for his duties as a wage-earner and a voter."[11] DeBey embodied this claim. She believed that access to knowledge about the world and one's body were basic human rights.

De Bey was unusual among women of her time, especially Dutch Reformed women. As historian Suzanne Sinke observes, had De Bey been "well-behaved," she would likely have taught for a few years after receiving her teaching degree, then left the classroom to marry and raise a family.[12] She did none of those things. She also seems to have become "aggressively American." Her Dutch roots and Reformed upbringing seem to have had little direct influence on her later work and life.

The media lambasted De Bey as often as it praised her, criticizing her masculine demeanor. De Bey wore clothes that were decidedly not in vogue. She favored tailored suits with high collars and stiff silhouettes, similar to male fashions of the turn of the century. She preferred the company of other single women of similar mindsets. Her longtime companion was activist Kate Starr Kellogg, with whom she lived for several decades.

Modern historians have speculated gently that De Bey (like Jane Addams and her longtime partner Mary Rozet Smith) was a lesbian, transgender, or somewhere else on the spectrum of non-heterosexuality.[13] It is impossible to say, of course, but these questions illustrate the unconventional way she lived. If De Bey had lived a "normal" life as a woman in the early twentieth century, a Chicago journalist noted in 1906, it is likely we never would have heard of her. And the many lives she touched through her decades of social work would have been markedly worse for it.[14]

Dr. Cornelia De Bey, Chicago, Prominent Chicago Doctor; member Committee on Arrangements for Womans Party Convention, Chicago, June 5, 6, 7. United States Illinois Chicago. Chicago Tribune Photo Bureau (1916). Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/resource/mnwp.148006

However much her career led her away from her roots, de Bey returned to them in death. She died in 1948 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and is buried in Holland's Pilgrim Home Cemetery. Her headstone simply points to her education, reading "Cornelia De Bey M.D.," befitting a woman whose purpose was always the service of others and never herself.

Cornelia Van Kooy: Mother of Wisconsin Public Health

There is no indication that Cornelia Van Kooy and Cornelia De Bey ever met, though they were contemporaries. That's too bad—they would have had much to talk about.

While De Bey immigrated to the United States as a child in the 1860s, Van Kooy was twenty when she and her family arrived in 1905. She was a generation younger than De Bey, though they died within a few years of each other in the 1940s. Little is known about Van Kooy's childhood. She was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 1885, to Mattheus and Adriaantje, a middling-class couple from Friesland. By 1910 the family of seven was living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The twenty-five-year-old Cornelia had already graduated from St. Joseph Nursing School (now part of the Marquette University College of Nursing) and was working as a private nurse.

By 1912 Van Kooy had been appointed Milwaukee's first child welfare nurse.[15] In 1914 she joined the staff of the Wisconsin Anti-Tuberculosis Association (WATA, now the Wisconsin American Lung Association). Her work there was interrupted by two years of service in Europe with the Red Cross during the First World War. Her typically Progressive advocacy for tuberculosis funding and public health legislation led to the creation of at least one county nursing position in Wisconsin, if not more.[16]

In 1927, Van Kooy became supervisor of the Bureau of Public Health Nursing, a state agency she was instrumental in creating. Under her leadership the Bureau transformed public health in Wisconsin. She turned a charity service for the poor and indigent into a science-based, comprehensive program for the improvement of society. She served the Bureau until her death from cancer in 1945.[17]

It was clear from early on that Van Kooy was driven, though it is difficult to say what drove her due to the dearth of sources from her early life. Perhaps she had known "consumptives" or been otherwise touched by the scourge of tuberculosis. Maybe her time in France had sparked a desire to be part of a movement that would better the world rather than

Saint Joseph's Hospital Training School for Nurses, Class of 1909, "Nellie" Van Kooy among them. Courtesy of Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Raynor Memorial Libraries, Marquette University. MUA_013014.

destroy it. Perhaps necessity called her to nursing. The federal census of 1910 indicates that her brothers were working rather than in school, which was typical of blue-collar families. Her sister Hermona also became a nurse. Had the family's circumstances become stable enough to afford the sisters going to nursing school? [18] Did their parents support their daughters pursuing unconventional careers?

Regardless, Van Kooy's dedication to public health and children's medicine was unflagging throughout her life. Even when she was not at work, medicine was on her mind. While on vacation in the Netherlands, for example, her "natural curiosity about 'tuberculosis in Holland' began to assert itself." This curiosity resulted in a long study of Dutch medical facilities that she reported on for her WATA colleagues in 1926.[19]

Van Kooy clearly had a keen mind, but she also had a sense of humor. She referred to herself as "grumbly" and described Holland as "watery" in an article she published about her vacation, and she included a tourist photo of herself in traditional Dutch clothing. Both qualities would have been essential in her work, which required knowledge of people as well as of science.

When Van Kooy died in 1945, it was with little fanfare. A few local newspapers carried her obituary, remarking on how well known she was to "ladies' clubs."[20] To the nursing community, however, her death was a loss. *The American Journal of Nursing*'s list of her accomplishments in October 1945 was three times the length of any other obituary in that issue.[21] A few months later, the Wisconsin State Organization for Public Health Nursing established the Cornelia Van Kooy Memorial Trust Fund to finance public health education.[22] This fund existed into the 1960s (and perhaps beyond). The Wisconsin Public Health Association has awarded an annual Cornelia Van Kooy Award for Distinguished Service to Public Health since 1991. It recognizes "public health nurses' contributions to public health nursing practice within their agency, community, region, state, nation, or globally."[23] The 2015 award recipient, who attended Marquette University, Van Kooy's alma mater, recognized Van Kooy as a model for public health nursing. "It's a tremendous honor to get an award named for a nurse who did so many different things," Alyssa Skiba observed. "Those nurses were pioneers."[24]

Cornelia Van Kooy may never have had children, but the field of public health in her adopted home itself was her brainchild, her fellow Wisconsinites her charges. It is not for nothing that she is today known as the "mother of Wisconsin public health nursing."[25]

Henrietta Veltman: Community Doctor

Born just a few years earlier than Cornelia Van Kooy, country doctor Henrietta Veltman's life ran parallel to that of her Wisconsin counterpart. Like Van Kooy and De Bey, Veltman was born to Dutch parents, though hers had immigrated to the United States in the 1860s, well before her birth in 1880. Her family was defined by her father, Jelle's, wandering spirit, or "moving fever," as Henrietta described it—first the Netherlands, then Virginia, then Nebraska (where Henrietta was born), then Michigan, then Tennessee.[26] Though she would spend most of the rest of her life in Henry County, Tennessee, she never shied away from taking opportunities where they presented themselves, studying and working in Kentucky, Chicago, and New Orleans. Like Van Kooy, Veltman felt called to the service of her community through the medical profession and pursued that calling doggedly.

"I thought about [becoming a doctor] a long time," Veltman told a Federal Writers Project interviewer in the 1930s, "and I finally decided to try it in spite of the fact that all my older friends seemed to think I was 'going wrong.'"[27] Her father refused to give her money to study medicine. Veltman tried being a secretary, tried marrying (but she "never could abide a man"), and tried being "a lady." But the desire to become a doctor was too strong. Plus, she hated long hair and feminine clothing.[28] Eventually, she borrowed money from other relatives and enrolled in the Kentucky School of Medicine in Louisville, the only medical school near her home in Tennessee that would admit women in 1906. (This was around the same time Van Kooy was beginning nursing school in Wisconsin.)[29]

In 1908, Veltman transferred to the Illinois Medical College (now part of Loyola University), because the Kentucky universities had retracted their admission of women into the medical programs. She worked in several Cook County hospitals during this last year of her training. She likely was within De Bey's sphere of influence (though there is no indication that they ever met).

Within a few months of graduating in 1910, Veltman opened her own practice near her hometown. A woman doctor was unheard of in a state like Tennessee, caught as it was

Henrietta Veltman, the first doctor in Henry County. About 1912. Courtesy of the Tennessee State Library & Archives.

at the crossroads of turn-of-the-century conservatism and progressivism. Ten years later, by one vote, Tennessee broke the national draw over ratifying the Nineteenth Amendment. In 1925 the state became a battleground over evolution and young earth creationism in the infamous Scopes Monkey Trial.

It was a difficult first few years for the young doctor, facing discrimination and mistrust, especially from her own profession. "A few of the [male] doctors have tolerated me," she observed in 1939, but "most of them have knifed me at every turn."[30] She then joked that her Dutch stubbornness didn't waver in the face of rumor, and her headstone continues to assert her credentials even after death, saying only, "Henrietta Veltman, M.D." But for a community that was underserved, especially its indigent and African American populations, "Doc" (as she came to be known) was a godsend.

Veltman was egalitarian. She offered her services to anyone, regardless of color or ability to pay. "People are always going to be having babies," she told her interviewer matter-of-factly. "Doesn't matter what's their race or color."[31] She often wouldn't take a fee for her doctoring and worked closely with the limited public welfare offerings available for needy patients. Sometimes she even provided baby formula, diapers, or food herself.[32] She was also a tireless advocate for education, arguing that no amount of welfare or medical care could heal the ills of people with few resources and little power. Her devotion to her community even manifested itself in her personal life. Different from De Bey and Van Kooy, she adopted three children from local foster care and raised them with the help of her nurse.[33]

During her years in practice, Veltman supervised the births of more than four thousand babies and touched thousands of other lives.[34] Her influence in Tennessee was palpable. On her death in May 1960 (she outlived both De Bey and Van Kooy by almost two decades), local newspapers lauded her determination and mission. They declared her a "philanthropist Paris and Henry County can scarcely afford to lose."[35] Even now, people that she helped birth recall her with fondness. "Once again thank you for saving my life . . . Dr Veltman 69 years ago tomorrow," wrote Judith Lee Oliver in a Facebook post commemorating the doctor's life in 2016.[36] "My Dad was just talking about her practice this week," Emily Barret Baker wrote in 2021. "She was a well-respected doctor in our community."[37] Mae Harter said much the same: "My mom talked about this 'lady doctor' when I was growing up . . . apparantly [sic] everyone loved her!"[38]

Harter's fond remembrance of Doc Veltman is indicative of the respect, gratitude, and acknowledgment that women in the medical sciences so often deserve. And yet, Cornelia De Bey, Cornelia Van Kooy, and Henrietta Veltman regularly experienced the opposite during their years of community service. Their gender and their unusual public roles made them

Henrietta Veltman working at her desk (date unknown). Image courtesy of the Henry County Archive.

lightning rods for critique and scrutiny in ways that men in medicine rarely experienced.

For all their differences, these women were similar in striking ways. They were all educated in the Midwest, prominent local figures, unmarried, and dedicated to the betterment of their communities. De Bey and Veltman dressed in masculine ways, eschewing traditional feminine demeanors. Van Kooy and Veltman pursued professional roles out of a desire to earn a living. De Bey and Van Kooy traveled nationally and internationally to advocate for their work. De Bey and Veltman used their training and status in the community to advocate for the underprivileged. Only Veltman had children.

They were truly the "maiden aunts" of the medical profession, to use a journalist's description of De Bey, pouring their resources and knowledge into their communities rather than their own families. Rather than relegating them to the dark corners of history, though, their sacrifices and hard, selfless work are worth remembering and recognizing.

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The Burggraaff Girls

Laura O'Brock

This is a story of two brave Dutch immigrant women separated by a generation, but with overlapping family members. They sacrificed by leaving their birth family behind to seek a better life with their husbands and for their children. Their lives and the lives of many of their children and grandchildren were shaped by the immigration experience and their spiritual homes in Dutch Reformed churches. This family history also reveals the crucial role of pastors' wives in supporting their husbands and the churches they together served. As Janet Sjaarda Sheeres showed in her book *The Better, For Worse* (2017),[1] the wives of Reformed pastors often played essential roles for their husbands, families, and churches. Here is how the story of two such women unfolded.

Wietske Heemstra Burggraaff, the matriarch of the first generation of Dutch immigrant women in my family, was born in Oosterbieren, Friesland, Netherlands in May 1842.[2] She married Jakob Burggraaff and gave birth to seven children. In 1886 she and Jakob decided to seek a better life for their family in America. In March 1886 my great grandparents traveled across the Atlantic with six of their seven children, ranging in age from four to seventeen, arriving in Castle Gardens.[3] Wietske was 44 and past childbearing. She spent the second half of her life clinging to Dutch traditions in a new country. Her oldest son, John, 21, stayed behind. He married in June 1887, and his new bride, Trientce DeBruin, was not emotionally ready to leave her parents and siblings behind.[4]

A young Wietske Burgraaff in the Netherlands (no date). Photo courtesy of Laura O'Brock.

The rest of the family left Rotterdam on the *Leerdam*. Their destination was Grand Rapids, Michigan, where they had relatives sponsoring them. The family lived in apartments for a time. In Grand Rapids they found a Dutch enclave that offered security and comfort, with everyone speaking Dutch, whether in church, at the bank, or in the store. Jakob established a business selling Dutch cheese and "oleomargarine." He delivered his products to other Dutch immigrants using a cart, until he could afford a horse and wagon.

Eventually the business prospered enough that the family was able to hire a relative, Harm Burggraaff, to build a wooden frame house on Lafayette Avenue NE, a few blocks away

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from what is now known as Heritage Hill near downtown Grand Rapids. There was no indoor plumbing or electricity at first, and heavy curtains separated the rooms, preserving heat and chasing drafts away. Having their own home was a luxury and convenient to the business, which Jacob ran from the basement.

Meanwhile, Wietske remained somber in her new environment, watching her children learn to speak English, take Americanized names, seek employment, and eventually establish their own Dutch American homes. In a family picture taken in 1910, her four daughters—Ann, Gertrude, Theresa, and Theodora—sport "Gibson Girl" hairdos and blouses with high-neck lace collars and puffed sleeves.

Wietske's children went in very different directions as adults. Theresa, for example, remained single and looked after her mother until she died.

The youngest daughter, Theodora (Dora), was just four years old when her family immigrated and did not follow the Dutch Reformed tradition. A rebel, at 25 she married a non-Dutch, 40-year-old widower surgeon and lodge member from Connecticut.[5] Her parents did not approve. Dora became a society person and enjoyed an affluent life in Chicago, where her husband, Uncle Walter, practiced medicine. All this was foreign to her family. Her trunk boasted stickers from travels around the world. Walter bought her fine clothing, and ornately carved furniture decorated their home.[6] He did, however, share some his wealth by buying ten cemetery plots for the financially strapped Burggraaff family at Washington Park Cemetery, on the west side of Grand Rapids. Dora's parents are buried there under a large family marker paid for by Walter, but they lack individual headstones marking names and dates.

Aunt Dora Sears (ca. 1910). Photo courtesy of Laura O'Brock.

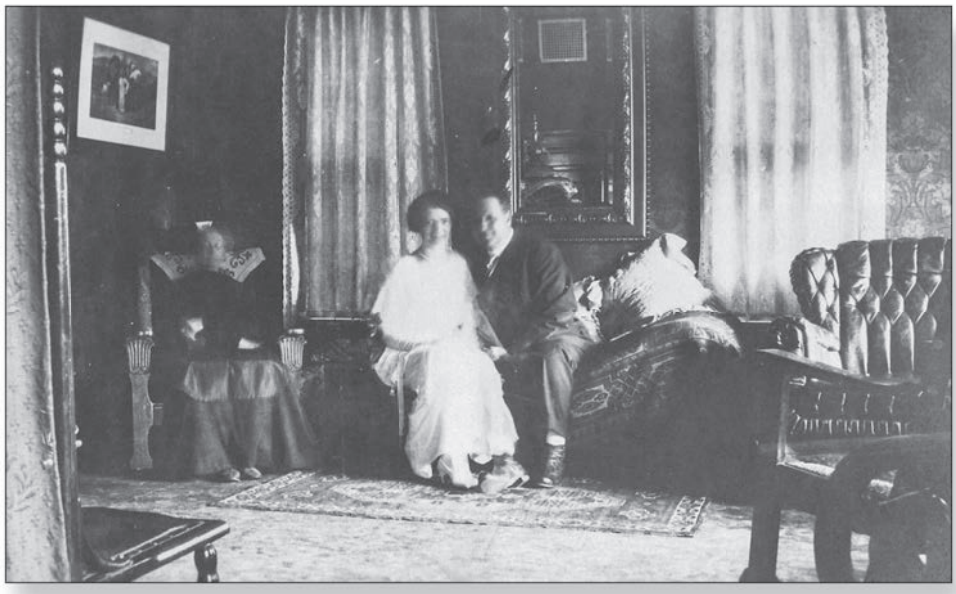
Walter has a prominent raised stone in that section, but Aunt Dora, buried next to him, lacks her own headstone.

Wietske's sons stayed closer to home, either figuratively or literally. Nicholas pursued the ministry at the Theological School (today Calvin Seminary) and was ordained in 1902. He would serve churches in the Midwest and East Coast until his death in 1928.[7]

James, her youngest son, became his father's business partner, still operating out of the Burggraaff basement. When James married Marie Hendricks, they lived in the upstairs apartment of the house on Lafayette NE with their five children. The house now had indoor plumbing and electricity.

Wietske would sit in her Murphy chair in the corner of the living room observing life, listening to her children and grandchildren speak in English but never understanding it. As her photo reveals, she had a simple flat hairdo, parted in the center and pulled back in a tight bun. Always austere, she wore wire-rim glasses and black floor-length dresses. Her appearance did not change over the next 43 years, except for her graying hair, and she eventually developed senility.[8]

In 1905 the family transferred its membership from Fourth Reformed Church in Grand Rapids to Coldbrook Christian Reformed Church (now Beckwith Hills CRC). Coldbrook had formed in 1881 because of differences between the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches over lodge membership. The minister, Dominie Lammart Hulst, came with it.[9] By this time only the younger children were at home, and they attended



Wietske Burggraaf, Aunt Dora, and Uncle Walter in the Burgraaff living room (no date). Photo courtesy of Laura O'Brock.

that church until they established their own homes. The Dutch service was one of the few social events in Wietske's life, and it kept her connected with her past.

Wietske's grandchildren reported that she never smiled or communicated with them. They were afraid of her.[10] She was widowed at age 69 and remained so for 17 years, dying at 86 in April 1929.[11] She never learned English and still had her Dutch name on her death certificate. Her life was isolated from her new world and her family. Her Americanized children would sometimes call her Wilhelmina, but her preference was Wietske. Future generations had many Wilmas named in her honor.

One of the bright spots in Wietske's life was the immigration of her oldest son, Jan Jakob; his wife, Trientce; and their three living daughters, Taetske (age 4), Wytske (age 2), and Wypke, a babe in arms who learned to walk on the boat.[12] They arrived in June 1893, after traveling from Rotterdam on the ship *Rotterdam* and landing at Ellis Island.[13] Jan's family had written to him how wonderful things were in Michigan and encouraged him to come. Seven years had passed since he had seen his family, and his wife finally had agreed to a long voyage over the ocean, although she was deathly afraid of water.[14]

Jan and Trientce eventually Americanized, becoming John and Theresa. Unlike her mother-in-law, who was done having children, Theresa was 27 and would have six more, five of them living into adulthood. They found an apartment on Alpine Avenue in Grand Rapids and attended the Seventh Reformed Church. John was elected an elder in the church. The minister, *Dominie* Marinus Broekstra, and fellow consistory members noted his leadership qualities. The 1900 U.S. census lists the parents, ages 34 and 33, and five children in the household: Tillie (age 12), Rikie (age 9), Winnie (age 8), James (age 4), and Winfield (age 2). John had been educated in the Netherlands and acquired a job teaching in one of the first Christian schools on the West Side. His children doubtless benefited from having an educated father. His job included teaching Dutch to the students, to keep memories of the motherland alive and to facilitate communication with their immigrant parents.

Life for John's family did not turn out to be as bright as his family had predicted. Children at John's school brought coins every Friday to pay for tuition. Some weeks there were few coins, and other weeks none. One week there was no food to put on the family table for dinner. The children sat in front of empty bowls, and John offered a long prayer thanking God and affirming that the Almighty would provide for their needs. Then John and Theresa sent the children to bed with empty stomachs. Soon after there was a knock at the door. A man they didn't know was carrying a kettle of soup and said his wife had directed him to deliver it because it was too much for their family. The children were called back for a late dinner and a lesson in God's faithfulness.

Eventually the immigrant daughters assumed American names of Tillie, Wilma, and Winifred. Another sister was born (Tina) and another boy (Henry). Theresa had a full-time job caring for her growing family, preparing food with meager funds, and sewing their clothes on her sewing machine, for which she paid a quarter per week. Theresa, like her mother-in-law, remained comfortable speaking only Dutch.

In time, the Seventh Reformed consistory saw a need for John to become a preaching elder at the Attwood Reformed Church in Banks County, a Dutch community fifty miles north of Traverse City, Michigan. Moving by train was difficult and involved packing boxes and a lunch for the family. By this point the family was more economically stable. Winifred, who was 18, and Winfield and Henry went with their parents. James was at Hope

Nicholas, John (seated), and James Burgraaff, brothers, and sons of Wietske and Jakob Burgraaff (ca. 1900). Photo courtesy of Laura O'Brock.

College, and the older girls had an apartment in Grand Rapids.

In addition to the move, Theresa had an additional challenge as she approached menopause: pregnancy with her last surviving child, Nicholas. She had had one child die at birth in the Netherlands and another in Grand Rapids. Nicholas, born in September 1910, was frail; he didn't gain weight and doctors did not expect him to live. The parsonage was a country farmhouse in isolation. One night an unknown woman came to the door and asked to hold Nicholas. She told Theresa to feed him a little barley mixed in milk. The family remembers her as a miracle angel, as the event was a turning point in his survival. Nicholas grew to live a long, healthy, and fruitful life, eventually entering the ministry and blessing Theresa in many ways.

After a few years the classis suggested that John attend Western Seminary and become an ordained minister. Theresa had to endure yet another move, back to Grand Rapids, and more financial uncertainty. John took the interurban train to Holland daily to take classes. About this time Theresa inherited some money from her parents in the Netherlands and invested in a small grocery store in Grand Rapids. The family members worked together to support their needs during their father's seminary years. The girls became the clerks, and the boys delivered groceries in a cart. Little Nicholas was a toddler and wandered throughout the store. Theresa would be a store clerk until John's seminary years ended. She was a great spiritual encouragement to her husband during this time and had spiritual influence on her eight children.

John Jacob graduated from Western Seminary in 1914 and received a call to the North Blendon Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. He and Theresa were already 47 years old. She willingly packed their belongings yet again, and that was the end of the grocery store era. Their children moved in different directions during these years, with college, marriages, and careers, except for young Nicholas, who still had years of school to attend. John and Theresa remained at that church until 1920. During this time—amid the strong American nationalism of World War I and suspicion of immigrants—they recognized the need to learn English and took correspondence courses. Many Dutch Reformed churches introduced English language services, either in addition to Dutch services or replacing them.

In 1920 Theresa and John moved again, to the Decatur Reformed Church in southwest Michigan, where they stayed until 1927. During this time James and Winfield graduated from Western Seminary, and Henry began studies there. Daughters Tillie and Wilma got married in the parsonage. Young Nicholas was in high school. Theresa was eager to be involved in the women's ministry in Decatur and enjoyed singing hymns, especially when her children would play the piano and organ. She suffered age-related health problems, notably varicose veins in her legs, and wore thick support stockings. Nicholas learned to help with housework while she elevated her legs.

John and Theresa Burgraaff (ca. 1930). Photo courtesy of Laura O'Brock.

A sad time in Theresa's life began when Winfield graduated from seminary and decided to go to the Netherlands to attend the Free University in Amsterdam to earn a doctorate in theology. Theresa's regular sobbing upset her family, as it opened feelings of loss she had suppressed for many years. Perhaps thinking of his mother's grief, Winfield dedicated his ThD thesis to his "father and mother," his "first human teachers in the school of Christ."

Winfield served Theresa's home country as a navy chaplain during World War II, and he christened Princess Margriet at the Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Canada, where the Dutch royal family stayed during the war.[15] This event brought Winfield into the national spotlight. The royal family needed a minister who could conduct the baptism, preach a sermon in fluent Dutch, and represent the national Dutch Reformed Church while the royal family was in exile. Winfield was selected.

The next church for Theresa and John was in Vesper, Wisconsin from 1927 to 1929.[16] During this time John's brother Nicholas died suddenly in Grand Rapids from heart failure. John traveled alone by train to preach at his brother's funeral. The church Nicholas had been serving in Lodi, New Jersey, would call John to be its next pastor. Theresa would once again willingly pick up and move halfway across the country. She would be pastor's wife there for the next nine years, until John died at age 72.

Theresa enjoyed the urban setting in New Jersey and the fellowship

John, Theresa, and their adult children around the time Wilma married (ca. 1930s). Row 1: Winifred, John, Theresa, Tillie. Row 2: Wilma, Nick, Henry, James, Winfield, Tena. Photo courtesy of Laura O'Brock.

with other pastors and wives. She had moved at least eight times and raised eight children, five of them after arriving in a country she didn't want to move to, doing so with grace and spiritual strength. She had seen her husband and all four sons enter the ministry, along with her brother-in-law Nicholas.

Theresa's daughters all found their place in life as well. Tillie became a bookkeeper at the five-acre Eli Cross Greenhouse in Grand Rapids, later the location of Fourth Reformed Church on Union Avenue. She would marry Benjamin Moffit, who had a livery stable and later transitioned to motor vehicles. They did not have children and later relocated to Binghamton, New York.

Wilma became a schoolteacher at West Side Christian School in Grand Rapids, where she met her husband, George Van Wessep, who was a teacher and later a principal.[17] They had one daughter, Helen, who married Richard DeVos and now has a children's hospital named in her honor in Grand Rapids, located a few blocks from the homestead of her Burggraaff grandparents on Lafayette Avenue.

Winifred married a farmer, Martin Groenink, whom she met in singing class when her father was a preaching elder in Attwood. They married in Tillie's apartment in Grand Rapids on Carrier Street and established a farm in Ellsworth, Michigan. They had six children. The eldest child, Wilma, became a certified country schoolteacher for many years, receiving her education at Western Michigan University. Wilma's daughter, Celia Hastings, would study at Western Theological Seminary, enter the ministry, and support her husband, an undertaker, in Ellsworth—eventually writing a memoir, *The Undertaker's Wife* (2005).[18]

Theresa's fourth daughter, Tina, was born in Grand Rapids and married N. Herman Hoitsma, who owned a building supply company. They settled in Patterson, New Jersey, and had several children.

Theresa's daughters cared for her after John died. She moved between her daughters' homes in her final years, never having the luxury of owning her own house or living in one place because she had moved between parsonages like a nomad and gracefully bloomed in each new environment. Her devotion to her family was unfailing. Being the *dominie*'s wife—the *juffrouw*—was her passion. She died in June 1944 at the age of 77 and was buried next to her husband in Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Patterson, New Jersey.

These two brave women—Wietske and Theresa—arrived in America and made a difference in their families' lives, one in mid-life and the other when newly married. Both had large families and raised their children well. Both experienced loss, in having to say goodbye to their birth families in the Netherlands forever. They were supportive of their husbands and a strong spiritual influence on their children as they followed their distinct paths in life. Their faith and their churches provided the glue that cemented their newfound lives in America. They shared sons and grandsons, and a granddaughter, who entered the ministry. Theresa endured a husband's call to a change in vocation, full of uncertainty, change, and economic stress.

These six sons and grandsons entered the ministry of the gospel in the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches and are today honored in the Burggraaff Atrium at Western Theological Seminary in Holland. Behind these men are the sisters and daughters who labored to support them in active ministry, with encouragement, prayer, meals, apartment dwelling, transportation, and financial help, and even running a grocery store! Behind these girls are the two mothers, Wietske and Theresa, godly women whom we rise to call blessed.

Herbert J. Brinks observed in *Write*

Four generations of the Burgraaff family (ca. 1900). Wietske, Winifred, her infant, and John. Photo courtesy of Laura O'Brock.

Back Soon: Letters from Immigrants in America, that "immigrants took great delight in reporting that their children were also active church members," and being able to announce that a son or brother had become a minister was probably the most newsworthy event in a Dutch-American family."[19] These two women produced six ministers, and their descendants would include teachers, college professors, engineers, missionaries, medical personnel, lawyers, and business partners who were passed the torch of faith in this land of opportunity, embraced their heritage, and sacrificed to benefit our lives today. This might be a newsworthy item to those gone on before us, but today we can see God's providential plan and purpose.

As Wietske, Theresa, and their six *dominie* sons and grandsons said with their actions, "To God be the glory!"

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The Life and Legacy of Agnes Dykstra Te Paske

Rhonda Pennings

Agnes Te Paske was "the crowned jewel in our clan," observed her nephew B. Ivan Dykstra. "She shared her sisters' graciousness, their ladylikeness, their soft-spoken charm. But she surely put her own unique stamp on it. For one thing, she was richly cultured, in the educated sense of cultured, much of it self-acquired, all of it ready to bounce out in the form of some timely quotation from one of the classics of our literary heritage."[1]

Dyskstra nicely captured the essence of Agnes's personality. An avid reader, Te Paske read the classics regularly and studied classical literature at Northwestern Academy in Orange City, Iowa. She received a top-notch education there and was later tutored by her husband, Anthony Te Paske, a Harvard graduate. She spoke Frisian, Dutch, Geldersch (a Dutch dialect), and German and occasionally studied her Sunday school lessons in Greek.[2] She was able to converse with immigrants and helped them overcome barriers in America.

Agnes Te Paske (ca. 1900). Courtesy of the Sioux Center Library.

Te Paske's humanitarian contributions are well documented. She was a community leader in Sioux Center, Iowa, and was active in civic and social affairs, notably in the temperance movement.[3] She supported the right of women to vote and in her own life transcended

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conventional women's roles. Perhaps her most outstanding achievement was her love of faith and family.

The *Sioux City Sunday Journal* recognized Te Paske as a "Woman of Achievement" in October 1948, due to her work as an educator, community volunteer, temperance worker, and assistant in her husband's law office. She was well known in Iowa for her service to others. Yet she rarely sought credit for herself; instead she acknowledged others for their contributions. When she died, her family summarized the work she had done in her obituary, saying: "[Her] life, dedicated to God, was one of service to mankind and to her family."[4]

Immigrant Experiences

Agnes was born on in August 1878 in the Netherlands, the daughter of Doekle Dykstra and Bietsche Vander Schaaf. She was baptized with the name Akke and was the youngest of seven children. She grew up in the fiercely independent village of Pingjum, Friesland, a province that has its own language—Frisian.

Agnes's mother, Bietsche, had been orphaned when her parents died young. Fortunately, Bietsche won the affection of a widowed landowner many years older than herself, Doekle Dykstra. Dykstra was "substantial landowner" from a prominent family. However, he and Bietsche fell on hard times during the depression that followed the Franco-Prussian War (1870). Eventually Dykstra had to sell his land holdings due to deteriorating prices.

Agnes was four in 1882 when she immigrated to America with her family, her uncle Auke Vander Schaaf (Bietsche's brother), and his family. The two families decided to escape their poor economic circumstances by emigrating to the United States. Agnes was one of eleven children and four adults who left the Netherlands for a new home.

The two families had intended to settle in Orange City, Iowa. Due to a smallpox quarantine, the Dykstras moved instead to Sioux Center and bought a farm just west of Sioux Center. Agnes's father farmed while her mother cared for the home and served as a midwife. On the journey to America, Bietsche helped calm fellow passengers when their ship almost sank due to an explosion. In the United States she helped immigrants become U.S. citizens.

Bietsche's obituary noted her work as a midwife and her belief that "all things work together for good for those who love the Lord" (Romans 8:28). This belief helped her through many trials, including being a newcomer in a strange country, learning English, and having a much older husband. The characteristic hospitality and generosity of Bietsche and her family perhaps shaped young Akke, soon known as Agnes, as community service defined her adult life.

Early Life

Agnes attended a country school two miles south of Sioux Center and eventually attended and graduated from Northwestern Academy. In 1895, at sixteen, she began teaching at that country school—"the old home place," in her words—with a salary of $33 a month.[5] By all accounts she was an excellent schoolteacher, as she liked to engage her students' minds by explaining how things worked. She used these teaching skills in various activities throughout her life.

"The Ark," a roller skating rink purchased by the Northwestern Academy and converted into its second building. Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

Only two weeks after she started to teach, Agnes saved the lives of her students. She had been warned that a tornado was coming, so she dismissed the class and led her students to a nearby ditch. The tornado ripped through the schoolhouse. While Agnes and her students found a haven, the storm killed eight people in northwest Iowa and wounded many more.

Agnes was an active member of the First Reformed Church of Sioux Center. She taught Sunday school, was involved in mission work, and participated in worship services. She

was a member of the Young People's society of local Reformed congregations. When her church began its own society in 1904, she became its first secretary.

Agnes was soon courted by Anthony Te Paske, a Harvard graduate and a new lawyer in Sioux Center. She had been his student at Northwestern Academy. They had much in common, including a love for the humanities and a passion for politics and social issues. "[The] young and ambitious school teacher was readily attracted to the educated and eligible lawyer who came to establish himself in Sioux Center," Te Paske papers in the Sioux Center Public Library record; "together they were swept along by the tide of optimism that fostered widespread belief in the perfect-ability of the individual and of society."[6]

Anthony's family was from Gelderland, a province in the Netherlands; he was born in a sod house in Minnesota. Hendrik Jan Te Paske, four children from his first marriage, and his second and pregnant wife left the Netherlands and settled in Greenleafton, Minnesota. The exact dates are not clear, but the child was born near Greenleafton in October 1868 and was named Dirk Antonie, later anglicized to Derrick Anthony.

When Henrik's wife died and he remarried, the task of nurturing Anthony fell to his sister, Johanna Adriana. She married Arend J. Pennings in 1877. After Hendrik Jan's death in 1886, Pennings became guardian of one of his brothers, though the stepmother and an older brother still lived.[7]

Anthony's education began modestly a local public school but progressed steadily. In 1882 he started at the fledgling Northwestern Classical Academy in Orange City, from which he graduated in 1889. His father's will had indicated that money should be directed toward his continuing education. He thus was able to attend Grinnell College in Iowa for a period and then transfer to Harvard University, where he graduated in 1893.

Te Paske taught English and Greek on the faculty of the Northwestern Classical Academy from 1893 to 1897, when he was admitted to the Iowa bar. In 1898 he established a law practice in the maturing town of Sioux Center.

Agnes Dykstra, her mother, and her sisters (ca. 1890s). Courtesy of the Sioux Center Library.

Married Life

Five years later, in July 1903, Anthony and Agnes married in the First Reformed Church in Sioux Center. Theirs was the first marriage held in the newly built church. "The bride and groom left the same evening on a honeymoon trip," the *Sioux Center News* recorded, "first to Minnesota with the intention also to visit some of the eastern states."[8]

When they returned, Agnes and Anthony settled on a three-acre plot on Wayenburg Street (now 4th Avenue) in Sioux Center. Anthony purchased this land from Auke Vander Schaaf, Agnes's uncle, who had been in the party that traveled with Agnes's family to the United States. Anthony and Agnes built a house on the land, and it stayed in the family for many generations. Agnes's mother, Beitche, lived with them for over twenty years and watched her grandchildren grow up.

Agnes and Anthony were active in the Sioux Center community. Agnes taught Sunday school at First Reformed Church during the years after her marriage, reportedly studying her lessons while she did the dishes. Records show that in 1897 the Sunday school boasted twenty-two classes with 371 scholars, of which Agnes taught 16. Anthony was county attorney from 1901 to 1904 and again 1916. He and Agnes joined local political organizations, entertained constituents in their home, and helped raise money for community improvements. They also supported the temperance movement.

Agnes became "caught up in" the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1905,[9] and she began a WCTU chapter in northwest Iowa. She and Anthony had been opposed to the WCTU for some of its political stances, but Agnes eventually

supported not just the WCTU but the right of women to vote.

Agnes believed in the mission of the WCTU. It argued that alcohol was a primary cause of unemployment, disease, poverty, immorality, and violence against women and children. It worked to empower women, prevent sexual violence, train women in public speaking and writing, and promote a greater political voice for women, including in the area of suffrage.

Agnes spoke regularly for the WCTU in Iowa. She hosted a WCTU baby party every summer, where mothers would promise to raise their children not to drink. Her daughter-in-law Vera continued this tradition. The poet Sietze Buning depicted one of her parties in "The Two Dykstras." He described Agnes appearing in a play with her brother B. D. Dykstra in which she refused to drink even make-believe alcohol on the stage. "'It needn't be a drink, Agnes, just the illusion of a drink,'" B. D. said in the poem. "Agnes would have none of it/ Sioux Center's first lady was teaching the community what wholesome entertainment is."[10]

In later years, Agnes continued to serve her church, taking a strong interest in missions. She and Anthony also promoted the Northwestern Academy, including expanding it into a two-year college. He served on Northwestern's Board of Trustees and in 1928 made the case at the General Synod of the RCA. Synod approved the idea on a trial basis. Northwestern Junior College survived the Depression years and became a four-year college in 1961.

A Lawyer

In keeping with the restrictions of the era, Agnes was not allowed to continue teaching after she married Anthony. They were not able to have children early in their marriage, and she was not content to stay at home; so, she set her eyes on studying law under the instruction of her husband. She passed the bar exam and was admitted to the Iowa Bar in 1909. She was one of a small number of female lawyers in Iowa at the time and the first Dutch American female lawyer.

She thus transcended conventional expectations for women in the Netherlands and the United States. Women were rallying for the right to vote during this time, and novels such as *Hilda van Suylenberg* (1897), about a woman who decided to become a lawyer, were changing people's attitudes about the role of women in society. The novel was immensely popular and, according to the *Volksvriend* newspaper, read by Dutch Americans in Iowa.

Agnes and Anthony Te Paske in the early 1900s. This likely is their wedding picture. Courtesy of the Sioux Center Library.

Agnes soon began assisting her husband in the Te Paske law office. He was active in income tax preparation, real estate dealings, and probate cases, and she was his efficient assistant. Her granddaughter Maureen remembers Agnes helping people in the busy office. Agnes also used her legal knowledge to help recent immigrants. When people could not afford her services, she did not charge them.

Many immigrants were settling in Sioux County in the early decades of the twentieth century. Agnes took a special interest in Americanization and encouraged hundreds of them to become U.S. citizens. Her legal experience helped them in the naturalization process. She and Anthony initiated citizenship classes for immigrants in their home. They taught English language skills and the fundamentals of American government. Their classes grew from a few people to large groups, especially during World War I, when it was imperative for immigrants to become naturalized.

These classes culminated in a judicial examination and a swearing-in ceremony at the Sioux County Courthouse, typically followed by a reception by the local WCTU. The process lent dignity and meaning to the day of naturalization. Reliable estimates indicate that more than a thousand immigrants—mostly young men—went through the classes at the Te Paske home and became new citizens in Orange City. Agnes's granddaughter Maureen remembers how she helped immigrants study the Constitution and how happy they were to become citizens.

Agnes and Anthony took a trip

to Europe in 1910, when she was thirty-two. In an interview she said that the trip was "for travel only" and that she and Anthony "roamed all over Europe."[11] They visited several countries, including Holland, Germany, and Switzerland, to experience the local culture and arts and humanities. In 1936 they returned to Europe, attending the World Sunday School Convention in Oslo, Norway, where they were delegates. Agnes compared the two trips, noting that Germany, now controlled by the Nazis, was "sadly different," that Holland had "made a surprising recovery" from the Depression, and that Switzerland was "beautiful and prosperous."[12]

Family Life

After they had been married for ten years, Agnes and Anthony decided to start a family. They adopted their first child, Amy Ruth. She was born in 1908, and the Te Paskes adopted her in 1913 when she was five. Amy eventually married Ralph Broad and lived in Quincy, Michigan. They had one child, a son. The Broads routinely visited the Te Paskes every other summer.

Some of Amy's earliest memories were of Agnes enlisting her help in citizenship classes. She remembered setting up and taking down the folding chairs and helping with the WTCU meetings.

In 1915 Agnes went to Mayo Clinic because she thought she had a stomach tumor. She was 37. She and Anthony were surprised to find out that she was pregnant. They named their second child Maurice Anthony. Her family said the joke was that the tumor was Maurice. He was born in 1916 and died in 1976. He eventually took over his father's law practice and land interests. He married Vera and had three children, Maureen, Derrick, and Bradley.

Agnes taught Maurice to read at an early age. By the time he was in kindergarten, he could read the Bible and Shakespeare; by age eight or nine he was reading the entire Bible for one penny per page, an incentive paid by his parents. Maurice passed this tradition on to his son Derrick, who also read the Bible for a penny a page.

A third son, Adelphos (Del) Herman, was born in 1917 when Agnes was 38. She had a beloved and scholarly brother whose Frisian name was Broer Doekles Dykstra. He became the Rev. B. D. Dykstra of renown in Re-

B. D. Dykstra (ca. 1900). Courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

formed circles. "Broer" translates literally as "brother." With a bow to her brother Broer's expertise in classical languages, she and Anthony bypassed the mundane, instead using the Greek word for brother—Adelphos. Exhausted by this feat of linguistics, they settled on Herman, the name of Anthony's younger brother, as a second name.

Del enjoyed gardening, a hobby he inherited from Agnes and Anthony. He loved the solitude of the Te Paske family garden and an orchard that contained apple trees and grapevines. One of the rites of passage for Sioux Center youth was to steal apples and grapes from the Te Paske's "Eden."

Del taught at the American College in Athens, Greece, from 1938–1940. He later joined the U.S. Army, where he rose from the ranks of private to captain during his long service in the South Pacific; after his release from the army, he had a diplomatic post in Germany. His military duties led him to also live in Mexico City. He later returned to Sioux Center and became a banker at the First National Bank. He married Yvette and had two children.

Maurice and Del were quite active growing up. Since they arrived later in life, Agnes and Anthony let them try many scientific experiments. They liked to wrestle and play with guns. Granddaughter Maureen recalls that they tried digging a tunnel in the backyard. They also conducted chemistry experiments. In 1929 the *Sioux Center News* described an incident when the Te Paske boys and three friends caused an explosion in their playroom using blasting powder and other chemicals. A neighbor driving by heard the explosion and the cries of the boys and took them the local doctor. The other boys were not seriously hurt, but Maurice was badly injured, rushed to the hospital, nearly died, and lost an eye.[13]

Maurice flourished despite the injury. He followed in his father's footsteps at Harvard and in his law office. Eventually he became a mayor of Sioux Center and was friendly with both Democrats and Republicans. He worked with Reverend B. J. Haan to establish Dordt College and helped to develop a growing hospital and municipal utilities. He spent countless hours serving his community, and the town thrived under his leadership. He often sat down at the dinner table, saying that he needed to get refueled, and then went back to work for the evening.

Later Life

Agnes was 67 when Anthony died in February 1946. She continued to live upstairs in the Te Paske house on 4th Avenue, while Maurice, her daughter-in-law Vera, and their three children lived in the downstairs level. Not prepared to give in to her grief, she continued to live life to the fullest. She read literary classics and the Bible, worked on needlepoint quotes, sang hymns, collected dolls from around the world, and admired the souvenirs she had collected during her travels. Her grandchildren remembered with fondness that she read to them on a loveseat with an Afghan blanket. She also continued her volunteer work.

Agnes also continued to serve her community. She devoted countless days to establishing a community hospital. Sioux Center had never had a true hospital, and she was credited for arousing community interest in meeting this need. The "peace dividend" (the end of wartime spending in 1945) made federal monies available for rural hospitals and jolted Sioux Center into action. At a meeting in early 1946, Agnes was appointed to a committee assigned to raise the money required for a locality to raise two-thirds of the cost of the proposed hospital. Agnes threw herself into fundraising. The hospital opening its doors to serve the community was a highlight in her long career of public service.

To celebrate her seventieth birthday, in 1948, Agnes flew to the Netherlands to visit her birthplace in Pingjum. She spent time with relatives and saw the house where she was born. She recalled this occasion with fondness and said that she "walked, thought, and read; played with the children in the neighborhood; and slept in the cupboard bed in the wall."[14]

When she was seventy-four, Agnes flew to Vancouver with her eleven-year-old granddaughter Maureen to attend the world WCTU conference. This was an adventure for Maureen, as it was her first time in an airplane. Maureen met delegates from various countries and enjoyed seeing posters about prominent women, including the carriage ride and coronation of a young Queen Elizabeth. Maureen said later that Agnes was a force for women and that she learned to be herself by following her grandmother's advice.

Agnes and Anthony Te Paske later in life (ca. 1940). Courtesy of the Sioux Center Library.

Maureen recognized that Agnes's strength was in not conforming to societal expectations. "Her legacy was that she was the first lady of Sioux Center," Maureen explained. "She was dedicated to her community and her family. I admired her willingness to share with the community, her desire to help others, and her emphasis on volunteerism."

More generally, Agnes's grandchildren remembered that she was a was the ultimate teacher and could explain many concepts and information in ways that they could understand. They also admired her strength and spirit in the way she lived out her convictions. Every Memorial Day Agnes took them to put a wreath of geraniums on the grave of their grandfather Anthony.

Untimely Death

The newspapers chronicled Agnes Te Paske's death in June 1954.[15] The *Sioux Center News* reported that she died of a broken neck in an automobile accident near Chicago while returning home from the meeting of the General Synod of the RCA with her family. The Te Paskes had traveled to Buck Hills Falls, Pennsylvania, for the General Synod and then took a vacation in New England. They were on their way home from Michigan, where they had visited Amy Broad, Agnes's daughter, and her family.

Maurice was driving the station wagon when it collided with a gravel truck during a pouring rainstorm in a northern suburb of Chicago. The accident resulted in Agnes's death and injuries to Maurice and his family. Agnes had been in the front seat next to Maurice. The truck driver was charged with reckless homicide, and the Te Paske station wagon was a total loss.

An ambulance took Vera and Maureen to a nearby hospital with serious

injuries. Vera had a back injury, Maureen suffered a ruptured spleen, and both had emergency surgery. Maurice and the two boys suffered only minor cuts and bruises. After being released from the hospital, Maurice flew home with the boys and made funeral arrangements for his mother. Adelphos and his family came home to Sioux Center from Mexico, where he was stationed in the military.

People from all over northwest Iowa attended Agnes's funeral at the First Reformed Church in Sioux Center. Rev. P. A. De Jong officiated the service. They sang her favorite hymns as a testament to her faith: "Precious Jewels," "Shall We Gather at the River?," "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," and "Be Still My Soul."[16]

Legacy

Agnes Te Paske left a lasting legacy for her family, her partners in social and civic work, and the community of Sioux Center. Defying convention, she had charted her own path. She believed that the world could be a better place if people worked together, and volunteerism and service to others were hallmarks in her life.

"When I think about it, Agnes was a powerful role model for my boyhood sense of a professional women in the mid-20th century," Derrick Te Paske recalled. She was "an independent soul—a genuine do-gooder," in his view. "She was part of a close-knit community. She taught English classes to incoming Dutch folks. She was very driven . . . so admirable"—a dynamic, demanding, and powerful woman.

Bradley Te Paske remembered Agnes as a religious, faith-filled woman. "She would sit with me on a maroon couch, reading Bible stories to me," he explained. "Often she would cut an apple crosswise so I could see the star of seeds that God put inside every apple." Brad's granddaughter, born in 2021, is named for her and will allow the name of Agnes Te Paske to live on.

B. Ivan Te Paske, a nephew, remembered how Agnes inspired others. "She seemed to operate so forcefully on not so much a specific self-conscious commitment, as on her own powerful instinct (this strikes me as an obviously good thing to do, so I will do it)," he wrote. She concentrated on "anything that was 'pure, lovely, and of good reputation' . . . She was truly one of the greatest ladies I have ever known."[17]

Agnes Te Paske was a loyal Dutch American Reformed woman who truly lived her faith. She was a forerunner for women in her social and political activism and as a lawyer. Through her life we can catch glimpses of the history of a Dutch family, Dutch American history, and the history of American woman breaking ground by taking on new roles and expanding traditional ones.

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for the future

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

Stories about Albertus Van Raalte, Henry Hospers, and early Dutch immigrant colonies in the Midwest; basketball at Calvin College in the 1910s and 1920s; and more!

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