

Origins

Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives

Volume XLII • Number 1 • 2024



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Historical Magazine
of the Heritage Hall Archives

Heritage Hall 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 goals of the archives.

These include the gathering,
organization, and study of historical
materials produced by the
day-to-day activities of the church,
seminary, university, and the diverse
communities that support them.

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Cover photo:

Five Calvin College students in 1917,
enjoying *Boerenjongens*, a Dutch treat
made of brandied raisins. Courtesy of
Heritage Hall. See stories by
Will Katerberg and Richard Mouw
related to the photo.



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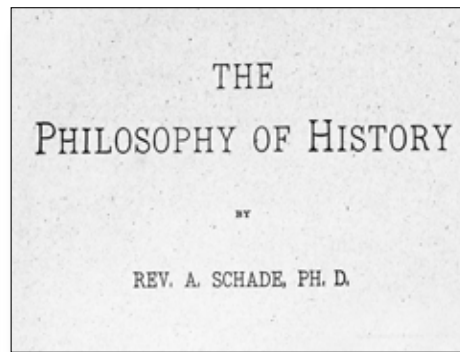
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The stories in the Spring 2024 issue of *Origins* tell various kinds of stories about Reformed Christianity and Dutch immigration in North America. Three of the stories are familiar Dutch American ones. Three reflect our effort to publish a broader range of history.

Marcia Lagerwey, Paula Vander Hoven, and Richard Mouw tell Dutch Reformed stories. Vander Hoven pieces together the founding of a Christian Reformed congregation in Vermont in the 1950s and 1960s. Denominational officials in Grand Rapids worried that the group was too small to support a congregation, but the folks in Vermont persisted, as she shows. Richard Mow, a philosopher himself, recounts the life, work, and faith of Oets “O. K.” Bouwsma, a Calvin College student in the 1910s who went on to a storied career as a philosopher at the University of Nebraska and then Texas. Marcia Lagerwey continues her story of Wilma and Walter Lagerwey and their letters during World War II. Part II depicts their early marriage, as Walt goes through basic training and ships to Europe and Wilma is pregnant with their first child.

Michael Douma, Anna Verhagen Gamble, and William Katerberg tell stories off the Dutch Reformed beaten path. Douma recounts the strange career of Augustus E. Schade, a German Reformed con artist who left

turmoil behind everywhere he went but until the end always seemed to find his feet—and another group of people to dupe. His entire career as a pastor, publisher, teacher, and colony organizer, Douma shows, amounted to one scheme after another. Ann Verhagen Gamble focuses on a Dutch-Indonesian family who fled to the Netherlands in 1950 and emigrated to Terra Ceia, North Carolina, in 1956, where there was a small Dutch American community and a Christian Reformed congregation. A multiracial family in a congregation in the segregated South would force the CRC to deal with racism and integration. Will Katerberg tells the story of Paul Jones, a young Navajo man whose relationship with Lee Huizenga, a medical missionary in New Mexico, would lead him to Calvin College. Four decades later he would be elected leader of the Navajo Tribal Council.

All of these stories are engaging. Together they remind us that the history of Reformed Christianity and Dutch North Americans is more diverse than we knew and connected to larger American stories in ways we might never have imagined.

News from the Archives

Heritage Hall has hired a new archives assistant. Aylssa Johansen joins the archives staff on a part-time basis. She is a graduate of the English program at Calvin University and comes to Heritage Hall from the Kent District Library system, where she also continues to work part time.

Renovations are ongoing in Hekman Library on the 100, 200, and 300 levels. Heritage Hall is open, even if the 200 level is closed off except for a corridor to our entrance. The work of the archives continues, despite the distractions of hammering, drilling, and cutting just outside our walls. We can see the shape the renovated floors will take as they put up drywall and cut into the floors to build a new central staircase. We expect that by the time of the Fall 2024 issue, the noise will be gone, all floors in the library will be open, and you’ll be able to find us in Heritage Hall more easily.

Traffic to Heritage Hall has been a little slow because of the renovations. But researchers continue to find us. In the past half-year, we have had researchers using collections related to Geerhardus Vos, Peter De Vries, H. Evan Runner, CRCNA missions in Japan, Dutch immigration to North America, and Christian Reformed church architecture. Others have used CRCNA or Calvin university- and seminary-related periodicals. And, as usual, we also have had a couple of dozen patrons working on genealogies and family histories, the history of their congregations, or something related to their student years at Calvin.

Remember that you can always contact us at crarchives@calvin.edu or 1-616-526-6313.

Subscribe to Origins and Support Heritage Hall

Please remember that in 2023 we raised the subscription rate to \$15.00, after many years of the subscription

price not changing. The “Friends of the Archives” endowment supports producing the content for *Origins*. This endowment is also called the “Origins” endowment, reflecting its close ties to the magazine. Subscriptions pay for the cost of printing and mailing the magazine. The endowment also supports other work in Heritage Hall, such as helping publishing books related to Dutch North American and Reformed history and special projects to digitize material and make it available online.

Remember that you can now subscribe to *Origins* using a credit card. If you want to do that, please go to *Origins Online* (<https://origins.calvin.edu/issues/>). Click on the “Origins in Print” link on the home page of the blog; it is near the top on the right side of the home page.

You’ll see back issues of *Origins* from 1983–2019. You’ll also see a link titled “SUBSCRIBE TO ORIGINS or PAY FOR SCANNING AND RESEARCH.” The link takes you to an online store operated by Financial Services at Calvin. Scroll down and

you’ll see an option for Heritage Hall. Click on it, and you’ll see two options. One is “Research & Scanning.” The other is “Origins—Subscription and Contribution Options.” Just as with any other online “store,” you can add items to a basket and then choose to “Continue Shopping” or “Check-out.”

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We hope this is convenient for you. You can still send checks or cash by mail. From Heritage Hall’s perspective, and that of the financial services office at Calvin University, we hope people will consider switching to this credit card option. It is more economical for us to process credit cards than to deposit cash and checks. If you run into problems, let us know. We can help you make transactions online over the phone. Whether you pay online or by cash or check, please always give us your email address, if you have one. That way, if we have any questions about your subscription or address, we can easily contact you.

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>).

Will Katerberg

Dutch-Indonesian Immigrants, Segregation, and the Christian Reformed Church in the 1950s

Anna Verhagen Gamble

During the 1950s, the civil rights movement started to gain momentum, prompting communities across the United States to grapple with issues of race. Integration became a central concern with the Brown versus Board of Education ruling in 1954 that declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. Although the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and its congregations had remained relatively insular in the first century of its history, the 1950s saw the church begin to face internal conflicts related to integration due to the arrival of an interracial family to one of its Southern congregations in Terra Ceia, North Carolina. This is the story of how my family came to be at the center of some of the first conversations concerning race in the Christian Reformed Church.

In 1950, Terra Ceia was the only Christian Reformed Church located in the South. During the 1920s Dutch settlers began to arrive in Terra Ceia. A man by the name of Hendrik Van Dorp saw an opportunity to capitalize on the Southern climate, starting a flower business that would become central to the identity of the community.¹ Over the next thirty years, Van Dorp's business expanded and attracted Hollanders to the area who had lost their farms in Iowa, South Dakota, Michigan, and New York because of the Great Depression. Terra Ceia was more than just a farming community. To the people that lived there, it was a refuge for Dutch

Christian Reformed values. In 1955, Van Dorp continued the tradition of recruiting Hollanders of the Christian Reformed faith by sponsoring the immigration of my family, the Verhagens, from the Netherlands to the United States.

My family was different from the Dutch families that had come to Terra Ceia before in several ways, however. They were an interracial family from the Molucca Islands in the former Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, and were heading for the American South just as conflicts over the civil rights movement were intensifying.

The Moluccas

The Moluccas are a small archipelago west of Papua New Guinea in the Banda Sea. This province was an area of colonial interest due to its native spice crops, including cloves and nutmeg. Portugal, the Netherlands, Spain, and Britain had all been involved in conquest in the Moluccas. The Dutch East India Trading Company took control of the islands as a colony by the late 1700s. Over the next two hundred years many in the native population on the islands intermarried with Dutch people and adopted pieces of their culture, including the Reformed branch of the Christian faith.

During World War II, the Netherlands lost control of the Moluccas to the Japanese. When the war ended, a newfound sense of patriotism motivated many Dutch men to join

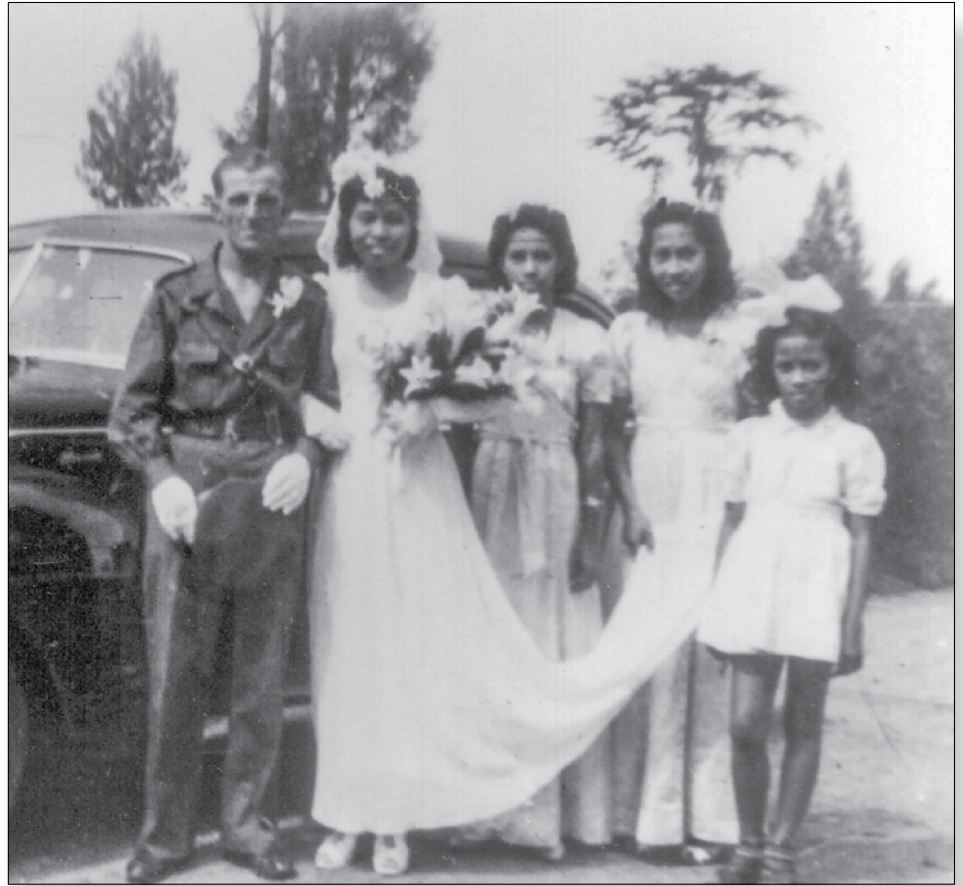
Anna Verhagen Gamble, MD, is a pediatric resident at the Boston Combined Residency Program in Massachusetts.

the effort to reclaim Indonesia as a colony. My grandfather, Arie Verhagen, was one of those Dutch soldiers. While on the island of Java, he met a Moluccan woman named Martha Tupamahu, who eventually would become my grandmother. By 1947 they were married. The church where they were wed had a red carpet decorating the aisle, and my grandmother cried during the sermon because she was filled with joy.

Despite a short stay in the Netherlands early in their marriage, my grandfather wanted to raise his children on the island of Ambon, where the family would grow authentic Dutch produce. So, in 1949 he rented out his farmland in the Netherlands and returned to the Moluccas. Six kilometers from Ambon, my family built a house and planted cauliflower, endive, and apple trees.

At the same time, the Indonesian independence movement was underway. The Moluccas had a strong pro-Dutch and Christian bloc. The majority in the rest of Indonesia was opposed to the idea of returning to colonial rule, however. They demanded independence, like native peoples in the many other European colonies in Asia and Africa. As the independence movement in Indonesia grew, many Dutch nationals and native sympathizers began to fear for their safety, prompting the Queen of the Netherlands in a radio broadcast to urge all Dutch people to leave Indonesia.

On 27 December 1949, the Netherlands relinquished colonial rule of Indonesia, prompting the exodus of thousands of Dutch nationals, Moluccans, and their families. My grandparents were not able to withdraw their money from the bank and were allowed only one piece of luggage when passing through customs. Arie, Martha, and their one-year-old daughter began their journey to the



Wedding photo of Arie Verhagen and Martha Tupamahu, Dutch East Indies, 1947. Courtesy of the author.

Netherlands in the spring of 1950. During the 28-day voyage, they stopped in Singapore, passed through the Suez Canal, and encountered storms in the Mediterranean.

Immigration

The arrival of thousands of Dutch nationals, Moluccans, and their families strained the resources of the Netherlands. World War II had left the nation's infrastructure and resources devastated. Then, in February 1953, a North Sea flood sent water into the southern provinces, increasing the height of rivers over eight feet. The flood, in combination with the effects of the war, prompted the United States to allow for the immigration of up to fifty thousand flood evacuees under the 1953 Refugee Relief Act.

Like many other Dutch families,

the Verhagens applied for immigration to the United States with help from the Christian Reformed Church and a cooperative agency in the Netherlands. My grandparents and their now two children faced unique obstacles in the process, foreshadowing what awaited them when they arrived in the United States. Their first application for placement at a farm in New Jersey was denied, puzzling the resettlement committee who had quickly processed similar applications in the past. Later, when Van Dorp wrote to the Calvinist Resettlement Committee to understand why his application to sponsor the Verhagen family had not been approved for over seven months, he was told that if "Mrs. Verhagen's ethnic origin is more than 50% Indonesian, the

American authorities will not grant an immigration visa to the family.”²

Van Dorp would not be deterred, however. The community had welcomed many Dutch immigrants before, and the subtropical climate of North Carolina seemed well suited for the family. In February 1956, Van Dorp enlisted his congressman to write to the Dutch government on the Verhagen family’s behalf. In a letter to the CRC, he wrote:

I was reading in the Banner today a piece entitled Beginning Life Over in the U.S., in which a plea was made for our people to support this worthy cause. However, it seems that the Government Agents, who handle these cases, are either inefficient or work against the program in practice... Last year in August I sent in an application sponsoring a man by the name of A. Verhagen, now almost seven months have gone by and I have not heard anything definitely... This man’s wife is a colored woman, and someone suggested that they just might not give her a visum to enter the USA, if this is the case, however, why don’t they say so.³

Despite what seemed like insurmountable obstacles in the immigration process, documents from the Calvinist Resettlement Committee suggest that a meeting between a representative of the Netherlands Government, the Netherlands Information Service, and the resettlement committee to discuss my family’s case ultimately resulted in their visas being approved three weeks after receiving Van Dorp’s letter.

On 21 March 1956, the Verhagen family immigrated by plane from Amsterdam to New York City. Martha was five months pregnant with her third child. Mr. Van Dorp met the family in New York and drove them the rest of the way to North Carolina.



Arie and Martha in the Netherlands, ca. 1956. Courtesy of the author.

The Verhagen’s settled in next to the Van Dorp’s gladiola farm, and Arie began his work as a dairy farmer. Their eldest daughter, who was six years old at the time, was to enroll in the Christian school that fall.

Terra Ceia

As soon as the family arrived, Terra Ceia CRC found itself at the heart of a struggle between Dutch cultural identity and white Southern racial values. Some members of the church resisted the company of a “colored” person in their fellowship, and others protested their child’s enrollment in the local Christian school. My grandmother was immediately viewed as black in North Carolina.

Case Van Wyk provided his recollection of the Verhagen family: “This man was a Dutch marine, and he’d married one of the Java or Indonesian women, which just looked like a woman straight out of the White Six ... very dark-skinned, looked just like.”⁴ The White Six, or Delta City, was an African American community

about a mile down the road from Terra Ceia. Another conversation between a husband and wife living in Terra Ceia at the time captures the challenge that many people faced in identifying my family. “We had a colored family move in here,” said Hank Van Staaldunen, to which his wife Johanna replied, “No, she was Indonesian, and he was white.”⁵

Either way, CRC theologian Lewis Smedes wrote in the *Reformed Journal* that “it is important to understand that the question never centered on whether the designation fit these people. It was assumed that the mother and the children were colored; the question was only that of their place within the church and the Christian community.”⁶

From its inception as a Dutch Christian Reformed community in 1936, the town of Terra Ceia had faced difficulty in navigating cultural differences between their overwhelmingly northern founders and the surrounding Southern community. Over



Unnamed family at Westerbork, NL, October 1950. The former German concentration camp “Westerbork” was renamed Schattenberg. It housed repatriates from Indonesia who were waiting for permanent housing. They stayed in the camp from several months to a year or longer. Collection Anefo, made by NN Winterbergen. Wikipedia Commons.

Terra Ceia
Christian
Reformed Church.
Courtesy of
Heritage Hall



time, however, intermarriage between Dutch folk and white Southerners did occur. According to Smedes, opposition to the family's presence in the community was primarily raised

by community members who had married white Southern partners and adopted the "traditionally strong bias of the south."⁷ Moreover, the church leadership's vision for the future included evangelizing the surrounding North Carolina communities of Pantego, Washington, and beyond. The presence of an interracial family in the church, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, or refugee status, was enough to create a hemorrhage in the congregation.

In its anniversary book in 1987, *I will build my church 1936-1986*, Terra Ceia CRC described itself as a community that in the 1950s was still fiercely opposed to the idea of integration. This conviction was grounded in the belief that the division of humanity into races was of divine intent and that humanity would be acting in defiance of God's creation by blurring these distinctions through intermarriage.⁸ Many in the church believed that interracial marriage, particularly between black and white, was immoral and used this rationale to oppose the integration of schools, churches, and other spaces in which intimate relationships could occur.

Hank Van Staaldinien recalled that

the aversion to interracial marriage, and as a result to the Verhagen family, was so strong that over the course of a couple of years the church lost a third of its membership. "Some of them—they were even church people—they would not.... They said, 'The Lord does not want us to mix races.' Anyway, we had thirty families here and ten left the church because that was against their feelings or whatever."⁹

As Gordon Negen, Christian Reformed church leader and civil rights activist, wrote in 1986:

The welcome—or lack of such—by the congregation created a division within the church. Some of the members pointed out that the surrounding community was just beginning to take this Christian Reformed Church seriously and that the church was hoping to evangelize the community. These members believed that the presence of a black person in their fellowship would end their budding evangelism program.¹⁰

Within months, it became clear that the issue could not be resolved by the Terre Ceia congregation alone.

Although the official decision of the school board and the consistory was to support the family's presence in the community, the church community remained divided. Early in the controversy, church members were surveyed about their willingness to partake in communion with the Verhagen family. Case Van Wyk recalls that this was a divisive topic, with many members of the congregation feeling branded by their response:

They had us down there as saying, No we wouldn't. Maybe I could've said no because I wasn't going to do anything at a time like that, but I never said I wouldn't partake of Communion with that family, because whether they were in Indonesia or in the Netherlands or wherever they were, they're still part of the Communion of Saints, so what



Arie and the children, New Jersey, 1959.
Courtesy of the author.

difference does it make whether they're here in our church or not? And that's how much they pigeonholed me. It was a tough time.¹¹

There was a feeling among some in the community that, although they personally did not take issue with the idea of integration, it was rude or impractical to expect their white Southern neighbors to change their values to accommodate the Verhagen family. As Case Van Wyk told it, "They felt that they should not put a stumbling block... before the Southern people. The Southern people were not used to integration in any way."¹² For a town of fewer than five hundred, the issue of integration affected everyone.

The Terra Ceia crisis, in addition to being a moral dilemma, posed economic and political challenges for the town. Those who chose to support the Verhagen family began advertising the church in denomination-wide papers in the hope of recruiting new members. Terra Ceia looked to the governing body of the CRC for assistance in resolving the issue of segregation within the church.

The Classis Hackensack Race Resolution

Lewis Smedes reports that Classis Hackensack became involved due to "side issues, personality, and procedural questions."¹³ A review of the church's local minutes reveals many visits to dissenting members of the church with little success in changing their position against integration. According to Gordon Negen, "The classis studied the problem at some length, then wrote a statement of race relations and forwarded its work to the 1957 Synod."¹⁴ In January of 1957, nine months after the arrival of the Verhagen family in North Carolina, Classis Hackensack adopted a

race resolution to provide moral and religious guidance, not only to the congregation of Terra Ceia but to any other church facing the challenge of segregation.

Many leaders in the larger Christian Reformed community hoped that Synod would adopt the resolution that summer at its annual meeting. Wrote Lewis Smedes, "Only a lapse of courage could possibly allow Synod to find reason for avoiding the only right

to the material found in this overture for guidance in the race segregation problem."¹⁶

Members in the larger Christian Reformed Community, such as Donald H. Bouma, a sociologist at Calvin College, saw the decision of Synod as an indication of a larger problem within the church. "Several reasons were stated at the Synod last June for not giving synodical approval to the race resolutions presented by Classis



The Verhagen Family celebrating Christmas in 1966. Courtesy of the author.

course...It is to be hoped that the synod will not bargain away this opportunity by filing down any sharp edges or watering down any of the substance of the resolution."¹⁵

In June of 1957, the annual meeting of the Synod of the CRC addressed a wide range of issues facing the denomination. That summer was the first in which the church as a body would face the issue of race relations. Classis Hackensack hoped that Synod would adopt its statement on race relations as an opportunity to take an official position on segregation in the church. Synod did not, however. "Instead of complying with the request to adopt the resolutions of the overture as its own," John Vander Ploeg wrote in *The Banner*, "Synod decided to 'refer the church

Hackensack," he observed. "One surely cannot reason that the absence of a church stand reveals the intensity of antagonism toward negroes... But whether one likes it this way or prefers another way, the fact remains that when outsiders look closely at our face, they see that we have no official denominational stand on the race problem."¹⁷

Two years later, Synod adopted Classis Hackensack's race resolution as its first official statement opposing segregation in the church. The resolution officially became known as the *Testimony of the Christian Reformed Church on Race Relations*. Commenting on the importance of the declaration, Synod stated, "In view of the racial tensions and the flagrant violation of the Scriptural principle

of equality occurring both in society and church, both in America and in our world, the church has a calling to register a clear and strong witness to her members and her world.”¹⁸

Unfortunately, Synod’s resolution did little to change daily life for my family in rural North Carolina. Although those left in the Terra Ceia congregation had decided to support my family’s presence in the community—in the wake of the initial uproar—the pressures of the Jim Crow South would prove too much for them to endure. Scrutiny from the surrounding community intensified in a way that could not be contained by the church. Interracial marriage was still illegal in North Carolina and would remain so until 1967, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state anti-miscegenation laws.

During their short time in Terra Ceia, my grandmother had given birth to two more children—one in the summer of 1956 and my mother in the fall of 1957. By the summer of

1958, the Verhagens stopped taking communion and requested that their membership be transferred to a Christian Reformed Church in Sussex, New Jersey.

In the seven years after leaving North Carolina, my family moved through numerous Christian Reformed communities in New Jersey. At his core, my grandfather wanted to be a farmer, but that dream was interrupted by a variety of misfortunes, including fire, bankruptcy, and poor health. Eventually, my family landed in West Michigan, where the automotive industry was booming and there was a Dutch community with shared faith and values. My grandfather needed to make a living and ultimately gave up farming to work in a factory. His disappointment was palpable, and my mother recalls asking him why, if he was so unhappy, he didn’t move back to the Netherlands. His response was, “This is where my children live.”

While my family’s time in Terra

Ceia was brief, the controversy surrounding it in the Christian Reformed Church laid the groundwork for addressing racial conflicts that would arise in the 1960s and 1970s. These included, most notably, the fight over integration in Timothy Christian School in Cicero, Illinois. It would be sixty years, however, before my family knew the full extent of what had occurred during their time in Terra Ceia and how it had affected the Christian Reformed Church.

My grandparents did not speak English when they arrived in North Carolina, let alone understand the complex racial history of the United States. They were just trying to survive. Given their circumstances, it is understandable that they never shared the experiences they had in North Carolina with their children. My family’s story highlights the numerous challenges immigrants encounter when arriving in the United States and their resilience in overcoming obstacles. 🌻

Endnotes

1. John H. Yzenbaard, “Terra Ceia: a Dutch settlement in North Carolina,” *Origins* 4:2 (Fall 1986), 40-47.

2. F. Schultz to Henry Van Dorp, March 7, 1956. Box 519, Christian Reformed Church Collection, Heritage Hall Archives, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

3. Henry Van Dorp to J. M. Vande Kieft, February 20, 1956. Box 519, Christian Reformed Church Collection, Heritage Hall Archives, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

4. Case and Ellene Van Wyk, interview by Melynn Glusman, The Southern Oral History Program, last modified August 11, 1998. <https://dcr.lib.unc.edu/record/c59291a6-ad7a-4ad4-b89d-e2fe8acac744>.

5. Hank and Johanna Van Staaldu-

inen, interview by Melynn Glusman, The Southern Oral History Program, last modified August 10, 1998. <https://dcr.lib.unc.edu/record/c59291a6-ad7a-4ad4-b89d-e2fe8acac744>.

6. Lewis Smedes, “The Hackensack race resolution,” *Reformed Journal*, April 1957, 16-19.

7. Smedes, “Hackensack.”

8. *I will build my church, 1936 – 1986* (Pantego, North Carolina: Terra Ceia Christian Reformed Church, 1987), 13-14. Heritage Hall, the archives at Calvin University, has the booklet in its Terra Ceia CRC collection.

9. Van Staalduinen, interview.

10. Gordon Negen, “The Christian and Race Relations,” *CRC Viewpoint*, 1986.

11. Van Wyk, interview.

12. Van Wyk, interview.

13. Smedes, “Hackensack.”

14. Negen, “Race.”

15. Smedes, “Hackensack.”

16. John Vander Ploeg, “Christian race relations,” *The Banner*, February 7, 1958, 4-5.

17. Donald Bouma, “The social face of the church,” *Reformed Journal*, April 1958, 3-11.

18. John Vander Ploeg, “Synod Acts on Education, Race Relations, etc.,” *Banner*, July 17, 1959, 4-5; 21.

From Calvin College Student to Chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council

William Katerberg

The photograph of five students from 1917 reveals an important story about the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), Calvin College, and the Theological School (as the latter two were known in 1917). I found it in a folder of images of students from

baccalaureates being granted in 1921. It also had, until the 1920s, a preparatory academy (high school).

The students have spoons and small dishes in their hands and are eating a dessert. The large glass jar with the spoon on the table has raisins



Calvin College students eating dessert, 1917. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

the 1910s and was intrigued. The names listed in an attached note are (from left to right in the photo) Lum K. Chu, Jacob Bruinooge, Oets Bouwsma, Eisse Woldring, and Paul Jones.

The school was a junior college in the 1910s, with a three-year program at the end of the decade. The 1920–1921 academic year was its first year as a four-year program, with the first

in it, soaked in brandy, water, sugar, and cinnamon, so they are plump like grapes. It is a Dutch treat, brandied raisons (*boerenjongens in Dutch*—literally, “farmer boys”). It is usually served on festive occasions. More important than the dessert, however, is who the students are and what they represent.

Three of the men in the photo

William Katerberg is curator of Heritage Hall and a professor of history at Calvin University.

have familiar kinds of Calvin College and Christian Reformed names. Bruinooge went on from the college to the Theological School, Princeton Seminary, and Louisville Seminary and became a CRC minister, serving congregations in Muskegon and Zeeland, Michigan. Bouwsma finished his baccalaureate degree at the University of Michigan, earned a PhD there, and went on to a storied career as a philosopher at the University of Nebraska and the University of Texas. Woldring returned to the Netherlands, where he was born, studied at the Theological School in Kampen, and served Reformed congregations there into the 1950s.

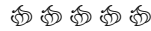
But what about Chu and Jones? The stories of the CRC, Calvin College, and the Theological School often are told as Dutch ones—until the last third of the twentieth century, when ethnic and racial diversity became a growing part of their histories. This image is a reminder that diversity has been part of their history for a long time.

Lum was Chinese, from Hong Kong, and the first student from Asia to graduate from the college. In 1918 Lum completed a two-year degree focused on education. He had come to the United States in 1908 and started at Calvin in 1916. He had an uncle in Kalamazoo. After Calvin he moved to Chicago, where he was part of the Chinese Students Christian Association, earned a baccalaureate degree from YMCA Central College, and wrote a thesis on how the Chinese had been treated in the United States.¹

Jones spent two years at Calvin, but his ties to the CRC went deeper and were more sustained. I found traces of his life and story from a variety of sources going back to his first encounters with the Christian Reformed Church in Tohatchi, New Mexico, in the early 1900s. Five decades later, the Navajo people elected

him chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council (1955–1963).

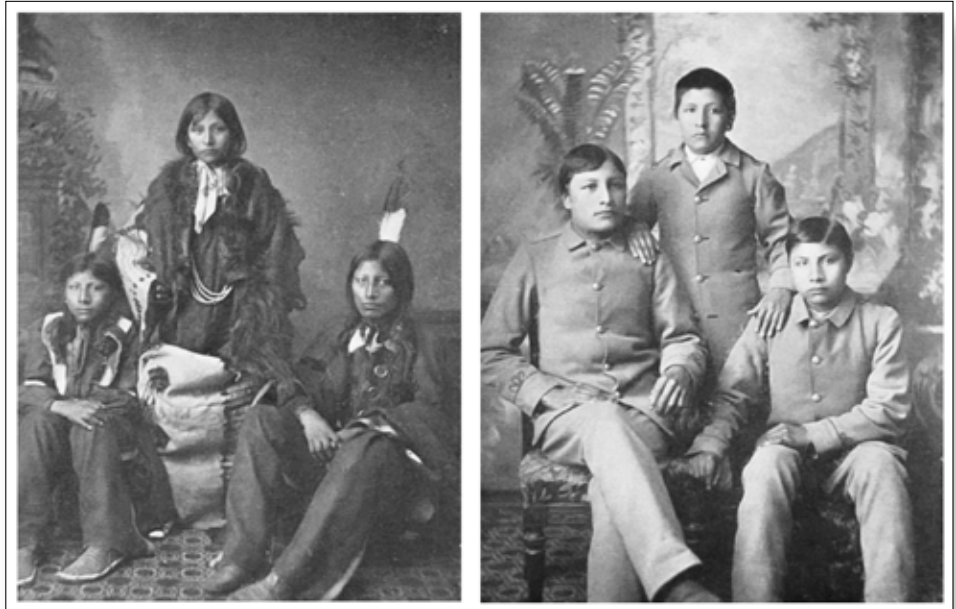
What do these traces tell us about Jones and how his connections to the Christian Reformed Church and Calvin College may have shaped his life?



Jones was born in 1895 in Naschitti, New Mexico. He was the last chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council born in the nineteenth century. His name was Tl'aashchi'i Biyé', or Klass Chee Begay, meaning the son of Klass Chee. He was raised in a traditional setting

on Native Americans, particularly on children in residential schools. The schools also cut the boys' hair short, forced the children to wear American-style clothing, and punished them for speaking their Native languages or practicing their traditions and rituals. Many students experienced trauma at these boarding schools.

Tohatchi also included a Christian Reformed mission. In 1913, a decade after Jones started at the school there, Reverend Lee Huizenga, MD, arrived. He was a CRC medical missionary. Huizenga quickly became a familiar figure among the Navajo people in



Richard Yellow Robe, Henry Standing Bear, and Chauncy Yellow Robe. The Lakota students, 1883, entering the Carlisle Indian School, and 1886. Before and after images like this were common forms of advertising by Indian boarding schools in the United States and Canada. Photos from Wikipedia Commons.

and as a boy herded sheep. Sheep and goats had been central to Navajo subsistence and trade for centuries, the herds traditionally managed by Navajo women.

When Tl'aashchi'i Biyé' was seven or eight, the principal of the boarding school in Tohatchi, twenty miles away, had police bring him to the school. The principal renamed him Paul Jones. These were common practices in an era when assimilation was forced

the region. He did not just preach the “Jesus-way” but also was a doctor, eventually seeing some eighty patients a month.

Huizenga took an interest in Jones, whose English had become quite good, and began employing him as a translator when he visited Navajo patients. Likewise, “Sunday after Sunday” Jones accompanied Huizenga when he “rode out on the reservation to deliver a Bible message to the

Indians at one hogan or another.”²

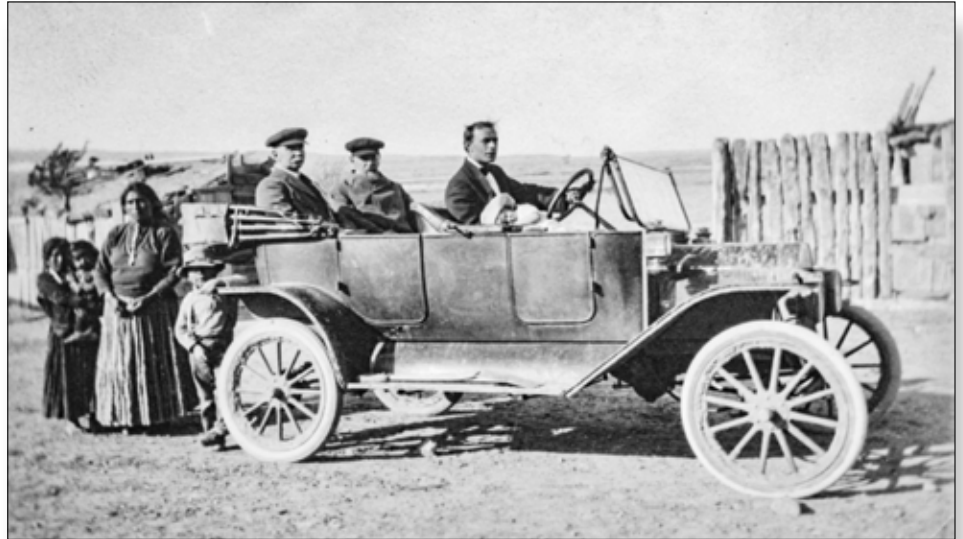
Jones also helped him get consent from parents to let their children at the Tohatchi boarding school participate in Huizenga’s Bible class.

In 1915 Huizenga returned East to do post-graduate work in eyes, ears, nose, and throat medicine. Jones went with the family, attending a Christian school in New Jersey for a year. By the time Huizenga went back to Tohatchi in 1917, Jones had moved on to Calvin College, studying there for two years (1916–1918). Huizenga went to China in 1920, the mission work for which he is best known.

Official records reveal little of Jones’s experience at Calvin, other than that he studied there. He stayed in Grand Rapids after finishing his studies. The United States entered World War I in late 1917, and in June 1918 the government drafted him into the army. At the time, Jones was working at the Pere Marquette Railways freight house in Grand Rapids. He served in Europe late in the war and was wounded in a German gas attack. He was recovering in a hospital when the war ended in November 1918.

Jones returned to Tohatchi in 1919 and worked at the school there. He saved money and the next year moved back to Grand Rapids, where he studied at McLaughlin’s Business College.

At some point after finishing at



Lee Huizenga in a car in New Mexico in the late 1910s. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

McLaughlin’s, Jones moved to Chicago. He worked a variety of jobs there, eventually becoming a shipping clerk for the National Tea Company, a grocery chain. He also married twice during this period in the Midwest.

Jones married Clarissa Pierson in Drenthe, Michigan, in 1921, according to the Ancestry Institution. Pierson was not from Michigan. She, like Jones, was Navajo and from New Mexico. *The Acts of Synod of the CRC* in 1914 record: “Missionary J. W. Brink addresses Synod, as does also Miss Clarissa Pierson, one of our converts at Rehoboth, N.M. Rev. J. Keizer responds, assuring both of them the prayers of the Church.”³ Brink was a

missionary in Rehoboth, New Mexico, and Pierson was a former student and an assistant housekeeper at the CRC-run school there.

Did Pierson and Jones meet in Tohatchi or Rehoboth during his year in New Mexico after World War I? We know only what the Ancestry Institution reports—that that they married in May 1921 and that she died a month later.

Jones married twice more. In 1924, in Grand Rapids, he and Nona Gordy married. She also was from Rehoboth, New Mexico. They had four children, according to an Indian Census Roll from 1936. Nona died of tuberculosis in 1938. Jones married a third time in 1940, to a younger Navajo woman, Helen Etta Mike. She was born in 1917 in Kearns Canyon, Arizona, and died in 2011 in Fort Apache, Arizona. They had eight children together.

We know a little about Jones family. The connections of Clarissa Pierson and Nona Gordy to Rehoboth and the Christian Reformed mission there suggest that Jones continued to have ties to the CRC and to Christianity more generally. The chapter about Jones in a collection of *Navajo Biographies* compiled for children notes that one of his daughters attended Bob



Christian Reformed Mission, Tohatchi, New Mexico, ca. 1915. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Jones University for a year and that his youngest daughter loved “summer Bible school.” Jones’s boys were all Boy Scouts, and he was a member of the Boy Scout organization’s National Advisory Committee. One of his sons, Paul Jr., worked for a time in the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity as a teacher for adults.⁴

One of the traces of Jones’s time as a district supervisor is a short letter from 1944. He wrote it to the superintendent of the Navajo Service in Kearns Canyon. Jones reported that Hopis were “trucking wood” from the region. He was not opposed to Navajos and Hopis taking small amounts of wood with wagons and burros (likely for subsistence use) but protested the use of trucks to take larger amounts (likely for commercial purposes). “I’d appreciate your help,” he concluded, “in saving what little wood there is left for less fortunate Hopis and Navajos.”⁵

In 1951, Jones and his family moved to the Navajo Nation’s seat of government at Window Rock, Arizona. There Jones worked as a liaison officer between the Navajo Nation and the federal government. He regularly traveled to Washington, DC, and various states as an interpreter, and he represented the Navajo Nation at meetings with other Native nations.

In 1955, the Navajo people elected Jones chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council. They chose him again in 1959. As the leader of his people, Jones focused on education and economic development. His experiences at Tohatchi, Calvin, and McLoughlin’s and his work in business and inter-governmental relations made him well suited to this role.

News stories and scholarly studies provide context for Jones’s leadership. “All income from reservation resources is controlled by a 74-member council,” the *Calgary Herald*, a Canadian newspaper in an oil-rich province,

reported in 1960. It is “elected by the tribe and headed by Paul Jones,” the story continued, depicting Jones as “a 65-year-old Navajo with the shrewdness of a big-city banker.”⁶

The story describes the “Navajos,

pected wealth” the Navajo were now earning from oil and other “natural resources not known to be there in our earlier history.”⁸ Native American leaders sometimes are categorized as either “traditional” for trying to



9. Navajo Tribal Council of 74 members democratically elected have taken over many functions formerly performed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Council House at Window Rock, Arizona, 1951.

The Navajo Tribal Council meeting in the Council House in Window Rock, Arizona, 1951. Truman Library, accession Number 2013-2018

collectively,” as “among the wealthiest Indians in the country” and rapidly modernizing. It refers to the sounds of oil drilling, wheels on asphalt roads, and rock & roll music on radios. It also notes the low levels of literacy in the Navajo Nation and describes efforts to build roads and schools and to develop health and welfare programs. Jones also promoted dams for irrigation and power generation. Enrollment in schools in the previous decade had increased to more than ninety percent of school-age children. The money for efforts like these came in part from the federal government but also from Navajo resource development projects.⁷

In his second inaugural address, in 1959, Jones said that “Divine providence” had made possible the “unex-

preserve old ways or “progressive” for encouraging their people to adapt to modern American life. Most Native leaders and ordinary folk did not neatly fit such categories. Jones, like many, was pragmatic. “We are now making rapid strides in the management of our own affairs,” he emphasized, “in freeing ourselves from the past and now dead policies of paternalism in government, and in dedicating our resources to the betterment of Navajo life and in unfolding opportunities for every young Navajo.”⁹

Jones was in favor of modern developments in education and the economy. His thinking was practical, as were his policy goals. He worried that federal financial support for the Navajo Nation would disappear. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the federal

government was trying to “terminate” the “tribal status” of Native nations, in a renewed effort to push assimilation, erase treaty rights, sell off reservation lands, and cut costs. A related program relocated Native American individuals and families from reservations to cities.¹⁰

In this context Jones viewed natural resources, such as oil and coal, and building power plants as alternative sources of revenue to federal funds. Investments like these would support social development, greater autonomy, and self-sufficiency. The *Calgary Herald* story reported that petroleum companies had paid the Navajo tens of millions of dollars in lease fees in the 1950s, spending half the money and putting half in a trust fund. In 1960 there were 860 oil wells on Navajo lands. Rather than passively accepting low bids for Navajo resources, Jones and other Navajo leaders now knew the economic system better. They began to insist on competitive bids, such as those like businesses would get in other parts of the country, rather than accepting the low bids the Bureau of Indian Affairs had offered oil companies in the past. (The Bureau continued to not fully consult with the Navajo in its decisions, however.)

“We are not going to let our people starve,” Jones explained. “We will give [our people] as decent a living as we can within our power. That is the reason for the various projects, to get industry and drilling for gas and we are able to do this.”¹¹ One of his successors framed this goal politically by insisting on referring to the Navajo Nation, implying sovereignty and autonomy, rather than the Navajo reservation.

Jones emphasized concrete goals. Under his leadership, the Navajo Tribal Council funded the construction of housing developments. “I can visualize ultimately a grid of power lines throughout Navajoland,” he

said in 1956. He envisioned “electric power in Navajo dwellings and with the advent of such power, the acquisition of electrical appliances, including refrigeration.” Progress for his people would be “coupled with the further development of Phoenix, Tucson, and other cities.” Navajoland would vie with the big cities and suburbs of Arizona for influence.¹²

If Jones’s vision of providing “a modern way of living” for his people sounds progressive and modern, it was. “A truck is better than a horse,” he once quipped. The sheep and livestock economy he had grown up with in the late 1800s and early 1900s, he argued, could no longer sustain his people. They needed jobs and access to water, power, and transportation through modern infrastructure. But Jones’s vision of modernization was different from those of federal officials. He wanted to maintain a strong Navajo community with a stable economy and political autonomy. He visited Navajos in urban areas to survey how much contact they had with their families on the reservation. His policies were designed to ensure that Navajo citizens could choose to live, and live well, on their homeland, rather than having necessity and federal termination policies drive them



Paul Jones, giving his second inaugural speech, 1959. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

to seek work away from their home and scattering as a people.

Nor did a “modern way of living” mean that Jones believed that Navajos needed to shed their traditions. In a two-part documentary in 1959 by the National Education Television, in its series *The Search for America*, he discussed aspects of traditional culture giving way to modern ways. The filmmakers interviewed Jones and other Navajo Tribal Council members. Jones described both his own experience and those of “medicine men” recognizing how modern ways (e.g., medicine) improved on some traditional ways. He and other council members worked to modernize hospitals. But they also spoke positively about the Navajo “Blessing Way” and healing songs and rituals that promote harmony and balance in the world.

Jones seems to have wanted a middle ground of sorts, where his people both incorporated modern ways and maintained essential aspects of their traditions. “Education will be the means of giving the Navajos their rightful place in American society,” he believed. It would allow Navajos “fuller exercise and enjoyment of [the] right, privileges, and duties of American citizens.”¹³ He explained that what he cherished most in life was education, contact with the outside world, and people from the outside world learning more about his people.

The Navajo Tribal Council and Jones were aware of the risks that came with development. These included injuries to workers, injuries to and illnesses of people who lived near oil rigs or uranium mines, and degradation of the land. Much of his work as chairman was to try to win more profits for the Navajo from partnerships among the Navajo Nation, resource companies, and the federal government. He and his people had rejected early twentieth-century patterns of experiencing damage from resource development but seeing little of the profits. In 1957, for example, the Navajo Nation signed an agreement with an oil company without first getting approval from the federal government. The company and the Navajo Nation would share the profits of oil drilling, fifty-fifty, and the company would provide management training for Navajo workers.

Were the efforts of Jones and his

successors successful? Critics said that deals with industry did not benefit Navajos as much as they had hoped and argued that big coal and oil had plundered Navajoland, colonizing it in new ways. Navajo leaders and citizens would disagree over resource development and the environmental damage it caused into the twenty-first century, as would other Native American nations and Americans in general. But Native Americans would make decisions about such development with greater autonomy than in the past.

When Jones ran for re-election in 1963, enough Navajo voters consider him “old guard” that he lost to a younger candidate. In retirement, he continued to promote economic development and education. He lived in Window Rock, worked with the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity, and became a professor at the recently started Navajo Community College (now Diné College) in Arizona. It was the first post-secondary institution on a reservation.

Jones died in November 1971 at a hospital in Gallup, New Mexico. He was buried nearby in the Rehoboth Mission Cemetery, which was associated with the CRC. In a *Deseret News* story, the Navajo Tribal Council chairman Peter MacDonald said of Jones that he had always been “unquestionably devoted to the best interests of the Navajo people.”¹⁴

The traces we have of Jones’s life offer few details about his religious views and practices over the course of

his life. They suggest that he had an ongoing connection with Christian Reformed missions at Tohatchi and Rehoboth and that this connection changed the course of his life. As chairman he expressed support for medical missionaries and church-run hospitals, perhaps in part reflecting his relationship with Lee Huizenga in the 1910s. It is not clear whether he was a member of a Christian Reformed congregation, but he and his family seem to have been practicing Christians. He also continued to value his Navajo heritage and was proud to be a professor at Navajo Community College.

In general, Navajo leaders recognized the place of the CRC among Navajo people. Shortly after Jones left office as chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council, a Christian Reformed congregation started in Window Rock. Its leadership was Navajo, and Jones’s successor as Tribal Council chairman, Raymond Nakai, spoke at the dedication of its new building in 1967. 🌿

Endnotes

1. See Richard Harms, “Flashback: International Students, 1917,” *The Calvin Spark*, Summer 2014, 9.

2. L. J. Lamberts, *The Life Story of Dr. Lee S. Huizena* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 93.

3. English translation of the *Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church* (1914, 35. The pagination follows that of the Dutch original. https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1914acts_et.pdf (accessed 18 December 2023).

4. Virginia Hoffman and Broderick H. Johnson, *Navajo Biographies* (Chinle, AZ: Dine, INC., The Board of Education Rough Rock Demonstration School, and The Navajo Curriculum Center, 1970). The chapter on Jones is on pages 256-274.

5. Letter from Paul Jones to Bert Ladd, superintendent of the Navajo

Service in Kearns Canyon, Arizona, 13 January 1944, in Peter Iverson, ed., “*For Our Navajo People*”: *Diné Letters, Speeches & Petitions, 1900–1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 28.

6. “Indians Make Progress: Long ‘Sleep’ Ends for U.S. Navajos,” *Calgary Herald*, 7 December 1960, 46. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=X2VkAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=VnwNAAAAIIBAJ&dq=paul-jones%20navajo&pg=2159%2C1571326> (accessed 2 January 2024).

7. My description of Jones’s time as chairman draws on material from Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

8. Speech excerpted in Iverson, ed., “*For Our Navajo People*,” 253.

9. *Ibid.*, 253.

10. On these policies, see Donald Lee Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945–1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).

11. Speech by Jones in January 1956, excerpted in Iverson, ed., “*For Our Navajo People*,” 39.

12. Quoted in Needham, *Power Lines*, 153.

13. *Navajo Biographies*, 274.

14. “Reservation Flags at Half Mast,” *The Deseret News*, 10 November 1971, 9. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=nMlAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=fx8DAAAAIIBAJ&dq=paul-jones%20navajo&pg=4508%2C2341166> (accessed 3 January 2024).

Memories of O. K. Bouwsma

Richard Mouw

Oets Kolk Bouwsma was born in 1898 into a Christian Reformed family in Muskegon, Michigan. After completing Calvin College’s three-year course of study in 1919, he studied philosophy at the University of Michigan, completing his baccalaureate degree and earning his PhD. (Calvin College added a fourth undergraduate year in 1920 and awarded its first baccalaureate degrees in 1921.)

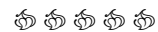
While most of Bouwsma’s career was as a professor of philosophy at the University of Nebraska, he also took study leaves in England, where he formed a friendship with Ludwig Wittgenstein. One of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, Wittgenstein wrote about logic, perception, and language. Bouwsma, similarly, was interested in perception, subjectivity, and language, notably the language of religious belief, and became known for “ordinary language philosophy.” He studied with Wittgenstein, wrote about his ideas, and applied some of them to his own work. When Wittgenstein came to the United States to teach briefly at Cornell University, he spent time staying with the Bouwsmas. In Bouwsma’s final years he was appointed Distinguished Professor at the University of Texas. In 1973 Calvin College honored Bouwsma with the Distinguished Alumni Award.

The award was appropriate. The Christian Reformed-reared, Calvin College-educated young man kept faith with his upbringing. The Reformed tradition’s emphasis that faith is the starting point of knowledge, not a product of knowing and learning,



Bouwsma at Calvin College in 1917-1918. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

shaped his philosophy and marked his piety.



I first met Oets and Gertrude Bouwsma in 1958, during the spring break of my freshman year at Northwestern Junior College in Orange City, Iowa. Each year at that time the college chaplain accompanied a four-student “Gospel team”—two musicians and two speakers—who would lead special evening sessions at supporting Reformed Church in America (RCA) congregations. My college roommate, Rich Jansma, and I were the team speakers that year—we told the audiences about spiritual life on our campus.

One of our evening events was at

Richard J. Mouw served as philosophy professor at Calvin University, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and director of the Institute of Faith and Public Life.

the First Reformed Church in Lincoln, Nebraska. Typically, we stayed in the homes of church members, and for that night the pastor told Rich and myself that we would be guests in the home of “Dr. and Mrs. Bouwsma.” We simply took it for granted that we were being hosted by a medical doctor and his wife.

As we sat in the Bouwsma living room, Mrs. Bouwsma served us a snack while her husband asked us friendly questions about college life. He was interested in what we studied and asked us about our favorite subjects. When we answered that we were interested in “philosophy and theology,” he prodded us: “Oh, tell me about what you like about those subjects.” I had recently read a magazine article about Paul Tillich and Karl Barth, and I explained to him how they disagreed about some important issues. Rich Jansma tossed in some comments about Albert Camus and existentialist thought. Dr. Bouwsma warmly thanked us for sharing our thoughts with him, and we soon retired for the night.

The next morning Mrs. Bouwsma prepared a breakfast for us. She apologized for her husband’s absence. He had an early meeting “on the campus,” she said, but he wanted her to be sure to tell us how much he had enjoyed talking with us. I then asked where the campus was that he had a meeting. “Oh,” she said, “it’s at the University of Nebraska. Oets is the chairman of the Philosophy Department there, and this morning he is meeting with two of his PhD students.”

She was busying herself in the kitchen and likely did not notice that Rich Jansma and I sat there for a few minutes in stunned silence. We—two teenage college freshmen—had not only offered a three-minute summary of two current theological systems, but we had also “explained” existen-

tialism—to the chairman of the Philosophy Department at the University of Nebraska! We were devastated, and the self-imposed humiliation lasted for several days.

I had the presence of mind to write down the Bouwsmas’ address. And when I also asked Mrs. Bouwsma how to spell “Oets,” she cheerily insisted that we should call her “Gertrude” as well. When we returned to Orange City I hand-wrote words of gratitude to them for their hospitality, and I



Bouwsma in the late 1920s.
Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

added a page or so of apology for acting as though we had known more than we did about ideas about which Dr. Bouwsma was an expert. Oets’s response came quickly. He really had enjoyed getting to know us, he said, and he hoped we would keep him informed of interesting books we were reading.

Two years later, when I was a student at Houghton College, I wrote a paper on Kierkegaard for which I received an “A.” I sent it to Bouwsma, saying that, while he would not learn anything from it, I hoped that he would at least see that I was making strides in intellectual growth. Again, he wrote right back, saying that he liked my paper. When, two years after

that, I was deciding where to apply for doctoral study, I wrote to ask him if I could study with him. He replied that it would be wonderful if that could happen, but it was not feasible, since he would soon be moving from Nebraska to a position at the University of Texas that involved a reduced teaching load.

The Bouwsmas were loyal to the CRC. When I had first met them, there was no CRC congregation in Nebraska, and they belonged to the RCA congregation where our college group visited. However, when the CRC established a congregation in Omaha in 1965, the Bouwsmas became members there and regularly made the hour-long drive from Lincoln to worship at the Omaha church. When they moved to Texas, they attended a local Presbyterian church, but they kept their CRC membership in Nebraska.

Oets and I corresponded occasionally during my years of graduate study. Then we finally got together again when Bouwsma gave a lecture at Elmhurst College in suburban Chicago, where I was teaching part time during the last year of my doctoral program at the University of Chicago. When I told my Elmhurst colleagues that I knew Bouwsma, they invited me to join them for dinner with him on the evening when he was to deliver the College’s annual Reinhold Niebuhr Religion Lecture. (The Niebuhr brothers were Elmhurst graduates.) Bouwsma greeted me warmly that evening, and he was clearly pleased when I told him that I had just been appointed to the Calvin College philosophy department faculty.

Bouwsma was a thoroughgoing fideist—the viewpoint that faith is independent of reason—and his lecture to the Elmhurst audience was pure Bouwsma. “Do we want to know what faith is?” he asked. To answer, he said, we need to understand two stories. In

the first Abram in Ur of the Chaldees heard the Lord instruct him to leave Ur and to travel until a time when the Lord would tell him that he had arrived. And Abram obeyed. “That is faith!” said Bouwsma.

In the second story, Saul of Tarsus has been persecuting Christians. But on the road to Damascus he is struck down and sees a bright light. He asks God what he wants him to do, and the Lord tells him to go into the city and await further instructions. And Saul—who will soon become Paul the apostle—obeys the voice of the Lord. “That too is faith!” said Bouwsma.

Beyond some brief elaboration of his two stories, that was basically his lecture. Faith happens when a person encounters the living God and obeys what the Lord has directed them to do.

When Bouwsma was finished, the moderator called for questions from the audience. But none came immediately. I had the sense that people were puzzled by the simplicity of the case he had made and were not sure how to initiate a discussion with him.

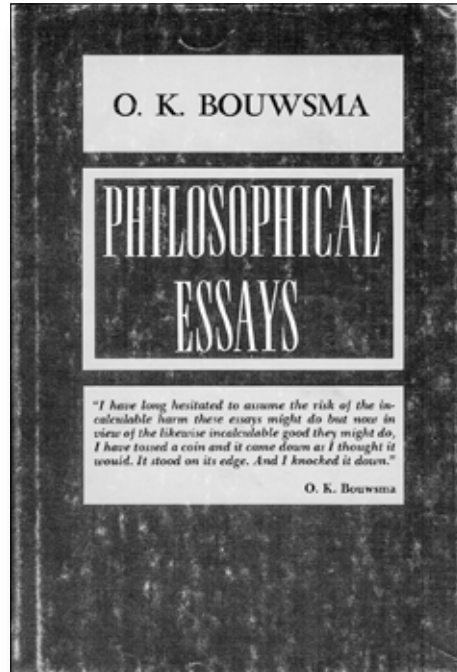
I was quite familiar with Bouwsma’s thoroughgoing fideism, however, so I was ready with questions. I asked Bouwsma how Abram and Saul could be sure that it was God who was communicating with them. Suppose, I said, it was Brigham Young claiming that the Lord was asking him to lead the Mormon community to Utah. How can we decide whether Brigham was exercising true faith in obeying a command from the true God?

Here is the public exchange which followed:

Bouwsma: “Mouw, are you a Mormon?”

Me: “No, but . . .”

Bouwsma: “You know, Gertrude and I give money each year to Calvin College, but if they have a Mormon teaching . . .”



A collection of Bouwsma’s essays, including “The Terms of Ordinary Language Are . . .”

Me: “Hey, I asked a good question. How can we tell whether or not Brigham Young heard the voice of the true God?”

Bouwsma: “Richard, answer me Yes or No—Do you believe that Brigham Young heard the voice of the true God?”

Me: “No, but . . .”

Bouwsma: Good answer, Richard. That’s how you tell!”

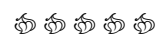
Next a brave soul in the Elmhurst audience asked him whether there wasn’t at least some merit in the Argument from Design for God’s existence. “Oh, yes, design,” said Bouwsma. “Like chipmunks. I like their design—white and black stripes on a brown background. If someone would design a carpet like that, I would buy it!” The questioner had no follow-up.

A few months later I saw Bouwsma again, at the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association,

held in Chicago that year. He had written to me a few weeks before, suggesting that we meet right before the social hour held toward the end of the convention.

We met and together walked around the large, crowded room, with him introducing me to a number of people. He especially kept an eye out for Calvin alumni, telling them that I would soon be moving to Grand Rapids to teach at the college. It was a heady experience for me. The most notable encounter was when Bouwsma introduced me to William Frankena, a Calvin alumnus who taught for four decades at the University of Michigan.

Frankena was one of the best-known ethicists in the twentieth century. He and I became friends, and Frankena often contacted me to discuss Calvinist ethical thought. One memorable conversation was when he called to tell me that he had just received the Dutch translation of his *Ethics*. That book had already appeared in several translations, but he told me that he wept when he held the Dutch version in his hands.



Bouwsma had a unique style of discussing philosophical issues, often with a “puckish” sense of humor. Here are some of my favorite stories:

Bouwsma once was criticizing philosophers who find merit in Anselm’s argument for the existence of God. We have to choose, Bouwsma said. Either we believe in “the Being whom no greater can be conceived” or we put our trust in “the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”—one or the other! Someone challenged him: “But suppose a Voice spoke to you, saying ‘Oets Bouwsma, I am the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I am also the Being whom no greater can be conceived.’ What

would you say then?” Bouwsma: “I would say, ‘Congratulations!’”

Bouwsma called me once to ask whether I could tell him anything about someone named Francis Schaeffer. He had mentioned in a class that he, Bouwsma, was a Calvinist. A student who came up to him after class had told him that she had recently become a Calvinist, after reading Francis Schaeffer. “Who is this Schaeffer?” Bouwsma asked me. “And what has he written?”

I told him he would not learn anything from reading Schaeffer. “For example,” I said, “in one of his books he explains all of Kant’s philosophy in one not-very-long paragraph, and then he just has a footnote that says ‘see his Critique of Pure Reason.’”

“Wonderful! A whole paragraph on Kant!” Bouwsma responded with enthusiasm. “I once tried to write a sentence on Kant—I started it, but I couldn’t finish it. And this Schaeffer could write a whole paragraph! Amazing! Take me to him so that I, too, can worship him!”

Bouwsma once wrote an essay in which he poked fun at the views of the philosopher May Brodbeck. She was so offended that she told him that she would bring charges against him if he mentioned her name in a published version of his essay. Someone asked him, “So, are you still going to publish it?” Bouwsma replied: “Oh, yes, I’m publishing it. I just upgraded her. I called her ‘June Brodbeck.’”

A CRC pastor told me that, when Bouwsma was a visiting lecturer at a local university, he attended the pastor’s worship service. He also attended an adult Sunday school class, and at one point he raised his hand and asked a theological question. The teacher asked him if he would introduce himself, so Oets gave his name and said that he was “a visiting plumber.” Afterward the pastor asked

him why he had said he was a plumber. Bouwsma: “Philosophers plumb the depths.”

When Bouwsma was a visiting professor at Harvard one year, a group of Calvin philosophy majors wrote him. They knew he often visited family in Grand Rapids, they told him, and they would love to meet with him to discuss a couple of his essays. The six of them could not afford to pay him much, but if he could meet with them they would be able to give him a 25-dollar honorarium. Bouwsma wrote back to say that he and Gertrude had no plans to visit Grand Rapids soon but that he would love to meet with them. If the six of them would come to see him at Harvard, he said, he would give each of them 25 dollars!

Someone at Princeton University told me this story. Just before Bouwsma was to give a lecture sponsored by the philosophy department, a graduate student informed Bouwsma that he would be introducing him and that he needed a piece of information. Where, he asked, should he say that Bouwsma was educated? Bou-

wsma answered, “Muskegon Christian School.” The student asked how to spell “Muskegon,” dutifully wrote it down on his note card, and then included that in his introduction.

When Oets died in 1978, Gertrude called me from Texas. The philosophers at the university were planning a memorial, she said, but it would not be explicitly Christian. Oets’s body would be buried in Grand Rapids, with a small graveside service just for the family. But Oets loved the Calvin philosophers, she said, and would we plan a Christian memorial service for him? I told her that we would be honored to do so. I planned the service, held in the Calvin Seminary chapel. It was well attended, with the Calvin philosophers officiating. We plumbed the depths of our gratitude for a life of obedient faith to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



During my final months of graduate study in philosophy at the University of Chicago I mentioned to the chairman of the department that I



Bouwsma later in life, looking characteristically puckish. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

had just been appointed to the faculty of Calvin College. I wasn't sure how he, a secular Jew, would react. I was pleased, then, that his face lit up and he exclaimed, "Wonderful! That's an honor for us. Calvin has the best undergraduate philosophy department in the country!"

Many in the Calvin community would share his assessment. The college has long celebrated its philosophers. William Harry Jellema, Henry Stob, Clarence Bouma, Cecil De Boer, Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff—these names, from Bouwsma's own lifetime, comprise a kind of Philosophy Hall of Fame from the early years in the school's history. Those individuals are celebrated at Calvin because, of course, they have been beloved teacher-scholars on the Calvin faculty.

But the reputation of Calvin as a philosophical presence in the larger academy also has much to do with dozens of Calvin graduates who have gone on to teach at other colleges and universities. And many of them took their Calvinist convictions with them, testifying in their own way to the fact that the Reformed faith can inspire solid philosophical scholarship. These persons also deserve to be celebrated by the Calvinist community. My reminiscence about Oets Bouwsma here is meant to help that along.

In the introduction to a posthumous collection of Bouwsma's essays, one of his former students gave this summary of his career: "Well known as an essayist on Descartes, Moore, and Wittgenstein, O. K. Bouwsma was also an equally committed student of Kierkegaard, a devoted reader

of Scriptures, and a lifelong lover of the reformed church."¹

This is a telling tribute. If after his PhD studies at Michigan in the late 1920s Bouwsma had returned to join the Calvin faculty, he certainly would not have devoted his energies to scholarly studies of G. E. Moore and Ludwig Wittgenstein, the Cambridge scholars who were pioneers in the development of twentieth-century analytic philosophy. The Dutch Calvinist community was still reeling then from the recent controversies about common grace and worldliness, an agenda that would continue to occupy the CRC for the next decade or so. One searches in vain in Bouwsma's writings, for example, for any reference to Abraham Kuyper or Herman Bavinck, Reformed stalwarts from the Netherlands who influenced philosophy and theology at Calvin.

While teaching in the secular academy meant that Bouwsma was not able to concentrate on integrating his faith and philosophy in ways that would have been possible in a Calvinist institution, he was able at the Universities of Nebraska and Texas to pursue his Christian scholarly calling in other ways. By maintaining active membership in a Reformed congregation—and by letting students and colleagues know how important doing so was for him—he could address topics important to the larger profession while maintaining his identity as a philosopher who was also a committed Reformed Christian.² And in all of this he could serve as an encouraging, supportive colleague to those who carried out their vocations within the Calvinist academy. 🌱

Endnotes

1. From the editors' introduction to *Without Proof or Evidence: Essays of O. K. Bouwsma*, ed. J. L. Craft and Ronald E. Hustwit (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), vii.

2. The pattern I am ascribing to Bouwsma here also applies to William Frankena (who received Calvin's Distinguished Alumni Award in 1984). Frankena would occasionally refer in his writings to his Christian convictions. For example, in a "postscript" to a volume of his essays edited by a former student, Frankena described the intellectual context in which some of his earliest essays had been written: "I entered my graduate work (done at The University of Michigan, Harvard and Cambridge University) in 1930, with a Calvinistic background and Hegelian sympathies. Paul Henle later remarked that he could see the Calvinism in me but not the Hegelianism, and I suppose this is still true." William K. Frankena, "Concluding More or Less Philosophical Postscript," in *Perspectives on Morality: Essays by William K. Frankena*, ed. Kenneth Goodpaster (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 209.

“The Closest of Ties”

Marcia Lagerwey

“**W**e literally plunged into marriage,” Wilma wrote in her 2011 memoir about her hastily planned wedding to Walter Lagerwey on April 15, 1943, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The result of that decision: Walt’s military status changed to “eligible to draft.” Induction papers awaited in Washington DC, where Walt worked for the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service (FBIS). There, Walt asked for and received a two-month induction delay. He and Wilma spent two months together in Silver Springs, Maryland.

On June 18, 1943, Walt was inducted into the Army at Camp Lee, Virginia. From there he shipped to Camp Croft in Spartanburg, South Carolina, for 14 weeks of infantry training. He wrote Wilma, “I would like to save them all [the letters]. I still have a little plan—perhaps during furlough—or after the war!”

During Walt’s basic training, Wilma stayed in DC, living with Walt’s sister Sophia and working as an administrative assistant at the Dutch Embassy. Walt described how Wilma’s picture was a beautiful reminder: “There is such a sweet half smile on your face, such an interested inviting look, flowing locks

in glorious curls encircle your pretty upright head and neck. Then too there is a small heart of Gold upon your breast and as I say the word ‘breast’ I am almost inwardly stirred” (June 27, 1943).

Walt also described army training, wondering whether he was hard hearted or too sensitive when it came to his fellow soldiers. “At the tables, which are small, and really crowded with 10 men at them, there are no table waiters,” he told her. “The boys grab and are not polite or gentlemen, you grab or get nothing . . . sort of pig style” (June 30, 1943). Watching required sex films repeatedly also bothered him. “I guarantee you that Syphilis, Gonorrhoea are awful . . . After the film they asked if the boys knew where the prophylaxis stations are . . . You can’t imagine how much use is made of these facilities. There simply are no morals” (July 3, 1943).



Walt training with a gas mask at Camp Croft. Courtesy of the author.

Director of Education at Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, MA for 30 years, Marcia Lagerwey is writing a memoir titled “Diary of a Curator” as well as working on her parents’ World War II letters. This story is part II of the story of Walter and Wilma Lagerwey and their wartime letters. See Volume XLI, Number 2 of Origins from the fall of 2023 for part I.

On August 15, Wilma's birthday, Walt called to invite her to meet him at the Spartanburg train station. "Within hours I was on my way. We met and rejoiced together," she wrote. The next day Walt reminisced, clearly having delighted in the food they had eaten. Wilma had enjoyed the aroma of the cigar he smoked. Compared to Camp Croft, it "was physical, psychical and mental happiness—contentment, joy" (August 16, 1943).

Enjoying time together after separation had also moved Wilma. "Oh my precious what a beautiful future we may anticipate if our love may thus continue to grow," she told him. "Our relationship is far more beautiful than heretofore" (August 18, 1943). Walt's reply emphasized how much their letters also gave him domestic bliss. "It is wonderful how I can make you feel happy by a letter and in reply you make me feel like a young boy who has just earned his first dollar." Restricted to base that weekend, he soothed his longing for her with candy bars and cigars (August 20, 1943).

Four months later the army assigned Walt to the Signal Corps and transferred him to Camp Crowder in Neosho, Missouri. He met Wilma in Spartanburg to travel to Neosho. "I hopped on a train," Wilma reported in her memoir. Walt promised that he would try to sneak out of camp every night in Neosho. "As lovers we met," she remembered. "Those were wonderful days of our marriage."

Walt described joining the Signal Corps as "highly significant for my future army career. Signal Corps specialties included language, clerical, and communications skills." They were in Neosha from October 1943 to January 1944. Wilma found a room and a job, and they spent overnights together whenever Walt could sneak away, returning to the base by 5:00 a.m. He participated in field maneuvers in December, completed signal

corps training, and for several months waited to be shipped to Europe.

While he was on maneuvers, Wilma wrote him with longing for and anxiety about the future. She wondered whether "once settled in a cozy little home with our family," time would "slip by rapidly" and their children would suddenly have grown up "into manhood and womanhood" and "slip away" from their "paternal care." She trusted that he would "appreciate" and "live with" her "in thought in this beautiful future which we hope will be ours" (December 14, 1943).

Walt's short visits gave her glimpses of this future, but the fleeting time they had together left her with "melancholy," especially knowing they would be separated for a longer time when Walt's unit went to Europe. She described her feelings as "a sadness that was beautiful. I knew why I was sad and this gave a tinge of beauty," she explained. The "only certain thing today is uncertainty," she continued.

"One never knows what to expect next" (December 27, 1943).

"Here starts the story of our real life together," Wilma remembered in her memoir about their time in Neosha. "We had no idea what the future held in store for us. We were together and we were ecstatically happy. At this time of love and intimate relationship, Wally was conceived. . . . Each day together was a taste of heaven." But then Walt's orders came. The army gave him

permission to take her home to Grand Rapids. Her father then took Walt to the train station in Kalamazoo, where he left for his port of embarkation, New York City.

"I remember going to bed for a nap in a shade-drawn room," Wilma described. "All was dark and my heart was broken." From the train Walt wrote, "Oh parting is such sad misery."

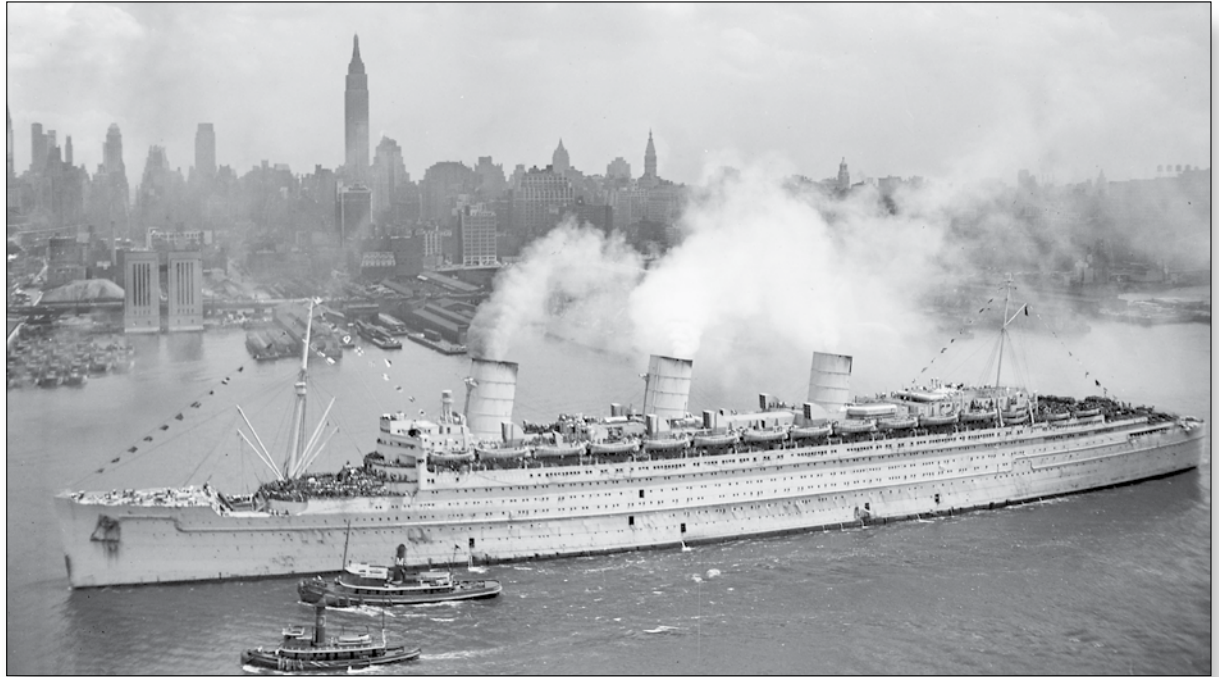
The next day he signed his letter from "Somewhere in the U.S.A.," observing that he was "being compelled to sacrifice a little freedom" as his "share in winning the war." He was not keen, he told her, about having his "letters subjected to an inspection—particularly while at home. But life is changing and no doubt each passing day will bring new adjustments" (March 16, 1944).

Before leaving, Walt developed a scheme based on his greetings to inform Wilma at any given time where he was stationed—*Holland*: my



Soldiers training in the Code and Traffic Section, Midwestern Signal Corps School, August 1942. National Archives.

British ocean liner RMS Queen Mary in the New York harbor in June 1945. It carried American troops to Europe during the war and brought them home after. U.S. Navy photo. Wikipedia Commons.



dearest Wilma; *France*: my precious love; *China*: my beloved Wilma; *D.E.I.* (Dutch East Indies): my beloved, etc. The army advised soldiers about how to write “the folks at home,” but he was determined to “stick to” their plan to “tell each other everything.”

Awaiting departure, he reflected on himself and his fellow soldiers. “I know you are more interested in knowing just how I feel than an attempt to just skip over the sad feelings,” he told her. “Sometimes it does us good to know and tell one another how much we miss each other.” Some soldiers did not do so. “So many fellows don’t seem to care. Others drown their sorrows in liquor. A good many seem to have no trouble finding new friends to spend a few hours of ‘pleasure.’ But I guess we have always been different . . .” He also described the Senate’s passing of the GI bill and found it “wonderful,” hoping “to take advantage of it ‘one of these days’” (March 18, 1944). In the meantime, throughout his service in the army, he took college correspondence courses.

On March 22, 1944, Walt left New York City on the *Queen Mary* with 15,000 GIs on board, zigzagging at high speed (thirty knots) across the ocean. Airplanes protected them part of the

way. Walt wrote five undated V-mail (victory mail) letters during the crossing, three of them censored.

“Wilma my love,” he wrote. “Sailing, sailing on what seems an endless expanse of water. As I was looking at all that water tonight I was reminded how far I was from you, how alone I was.” He wrote from his bunk in a room with eighteen bunks stacked three high. “For a while we had a . . . [censored-warship?] following us, later on a . . . [censored-plane?].” One day the “glorious sun and sky and mighty waves . . . as far as the eye can see” thrilled him. Then “a large American bomber” reminded him that they were not alone.

He attended chapel “mostly for the singing” and told Wilma, “Never have I appreciated the words of ‘The Old Rugged Cross,’ ‘Jesus Saviour Pilot Me’ and many more as I do now.” Traveling aboard the *Queen Mary* was “a luxury for a soldier,” he told her. But he took “no pleasure in it,” saying that he seemed “to be existing rather than living. I hardly dare look at your picture. I think when I hear from you again, when I

see your written words of love, then this band about my mind will break. Even one’s emotions seem to dry up.”

After six days, “welcomed by Spitfires!” the *Queen Mary* arrived in Glasgow, Scotland, “Somewhere in England.” A short time later Walt reflected on a “beautiful picture” of his “beloved,” whom he had left only a few weeks before. Her “encouraging,” “loving look” reminded him “first of all” of “your love for me (and mine to you).” Everything else seemed “so unreal.” “Be sure to write me all about your pregnancy developments as we go along,” he urged Wilma (March 29, 1944).

March was all “anxiety, turmoil, change and separation,” Walt told Wilma. “It seems strange but life is always filled with waiting. Waiting to be born, waiting to grow, waiting for courtship, marriage, and even death or should I say eternal life hereafter . . . In the army we certainly learn to wait” (March 31, 1944). He was stationed for a month in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he worked as a file clerk before traveling to Southport, England, via Scotland for a temporary clerical assignment. Then in June, he



Recruitment poster for the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Ca. 1942-1943. Wikipedia Commons.

finally joined a Dutch Signal Corps team in London, remaining there through September.

In London, Walt worked with a team of 18 enlisted men and three officers at the Signal Center for the European Theater of Operations, USA (ETOUSA). They received and sent mostly coded messages. As one of the more skilled Dutch speakers, Walt was important to the team. At the Dutch House he met the future Calvin College President William Spoelhof and attended the Dutch church. Little did Walt or Wilma know about the secretive planning for D-Day in early 1944. On June 6 over 150,000 American, British, and Canadian soldiers crossed the English Channel on seven thousand ships and attacked beaches in Normandy, France, beginning the Allied invasion of Western Europe. Walt's facility in Dutch would only grow in importance as Allied forces moved to liberate the Netherlands.

Walt walked all over London, enjoying its history but witnessing the devastation caused by German V-1 and V-2 bombs (missiles). His headquarters had been narrowly missed.

The first V-1—dubbed buzz bomb or doodlebug for its droning sound—was fired at London on June 13, 1944, with two thousand pounds of explosives. These bombs killed six thousand people in London alone. Walt spent some of his free time helping build air raid shelters.

In a war chronology, Walt described how he was a good soldier who at times antagonized the commanding officer by his obstinacy—for example, writing on both sides of air mail paper. “He threatened to send me back to the infantry at one point, but after I explained my background to him (no father, highly independent) he understood, and after that we got along all right,” Walt wrote.

On the home front, Wilma documented her pregnancy and shared how she would communicate the birth: “Straight cable 28c per word—also pay for address; deferred cable—14c per word—takes longer—overnight cable—\$2.34 for 25 words—form cable—can only state son born—daughter born only 66c. It seems to me if you know that a son or daughter is born you can conclude that I am well too” (August 1, 1944).

Wilma read about the war in the newspapers. “Churchill seems to be exceptionally optimistic,” she observed, hoping he was right so that Walt could return home soon to greet their new son or daughter. (August 2, 1944). She worried about the “robot bombs” (the V-1s and V-2s) and wondered how her husband was: “What would I ever do without you?” She described the blue sky in Michigan, the stars about to come out that evening. “Remember our romantic evenings together my love?” she asked. “I hope to spend many more with you. Are you game or not? . . . Imagine us silhouetted as one in the falling darkness. Oh what a dreamer I am” (August 3, 1944).

Wilma's letters kept Walt up to date

about her pregnancy, as he'd asked. After a doctor's visit, Wilma described how she'd gained 19 pounds, nearly her quota. The doctor “said that I should not drink so many liquids as they are fattening. This of course includes ice cream.” The doctor also said she carried the baby unusually low, and Wilma explained to Walt how the baby drops “about four weeks before its birth” and the head comes “in the right position for entry into this world” (August 7, 1944). And she described her family tempting her with ice cream, noting that she could not resist it in the hot summer weather. Walt might wonder what had happened to her “inflexible will,” she speculated. “Can you understand your wife having a craving for ice cream. I guess you can” (August 10, 1944).

As the months wore on, Wilma questioned the war and rejoiced at good news. She clearly was reading news reports on the war, commenting on plans to trap Germany's 7th Army and the “good news” of an invasion of France from the south. She hoped that success would more quickly end the war and the misery it brought but also thought about the moral impact of fighting a war. “I sometimes think with you about the real idealism of this war,” she wrote. “I fear we are going to be very dissatisfied with all the results and that the future looks often very dark for us not only but also for our children” (August 14, 1944).

On her birthday Wilma closed with, “P.S. Your 29-year-old wife still feels young having such a wonderful husband.” She continued to prepare for the birth and responded to photos Walt had sent. “I appreciate the one without a hat, with your curved pipe, and furrowed head (brow) most of all. It really is so typical of my love. He always frowns so much.” She was happy that he had “apparently not aged. . . . There are not any gray hairs

yet there?" Gray hair would suit him as a professor in his fifties, but she still wanted "to enjoy a romantic young life" with her "beloved husband" (August 17, 1944).

Dr. Moen "has me scheduled for the 29th of September," she wrote in late August. She asked the doctor about whether the baby would be a boy or girl, and the doctor listened to the heartbeat and guessed "a little boy." It didn't make a difference to her, but she knew Walt wanted a girl. They had names in mind already. She reported that his mother wondered whether they would name a boy Wallace Roosevelt. And she took to calling the baby "Little Wallace," describing how he was "getting his daily exercise," his "hands and feet and everything . . . in action" making her "a bit uncomfortable." "Perhaps he objects to something his mother is doing," she joked. "Am I perhaps giving his daddy too much attention? He certainly wouldn't object to that" (letters from August 21, 23, 26, and 27, 1944).

Wilma frequently dreamed about their future. Sitting at her window, she said, "I can just imagine sitting here waiting for you to come home evenings for supper. Perhaps there will be just a little Wallace standing here with me also looking to see if 'daddy' is coming." She asked Walt how his education about babies was going. "Well my love what have you further learned about babies? Did your books enlighten you at all or haven't you had an opportunity to do any reading from them?" (August 29, 1944).

Giving birth and the war preoccupied her. "I read yesterday that babies which are nursed have a far greater chance of survival than those who are on a bottle," she reported in one letter (September 23, 1944). In another she commented on the resistance Germany was putting up in Arnhem, with the Dutch flooding the country in self-



Walt standing in front of the Signal Service Group headquarters. Courtesy of the author.

defense, observing: "How horrible war is" (September 24, 1944).

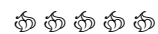
On September 25, Wilma spent a night in the hospital with labor pains but returned home when labor stopped. "Well now I'm again at 1804 Leonard Road and the baby is still safely tucked away in the womb," she wrote. She told Walt that his recent letters hadn't been cut up, that he was "safe in writing on both sides."

As the birth approached, her letters were much delayed. Walt waited anxiously as the due date passed. "Every day I hope that I shall hear from you. Today there was no news yet," he wrote. "I know you understand how I wonder—how perplexed I am—how curious—how anxious. I trust that even in these sentiments, written by your lonely lover—you will be able to find the vibration and sound of a heart that is bound to yours by the closest of ties, inseparable ties, bonds of love" (September 29, 1944).

In London on October 3, Walt finally got a telegram, "Son born—Both Fine—Love Wilma," about Wallace Peter's birth on October 1. He didn't

receive Wilma's birth letter, written on October 3, until December 2, likely because it had to be routed to Versailles, France, where he had been transferred in October.

Walt returned to London on December 27, 1944, two days after Germany's Christmas Day launching of the Battle of the Bulge (Bastogne), a surprise attack, which Walt described as a "real shocking experience."



Wilma's four-page excerpted birth letter is below, with Walt's response two months later. She was ahead of her time in confronting centuries-old taboos against describing birth in art and literature or even family relations. Recovering in the hospital for ten days after giving birth, medical practice at the time, she wrote a candid, scientific letter to invite Walt into the delivery room where she had labored and given birth alone:



Walter my love I feel as though I could write you a book. The past experiences have been so very many that it hardly seems to be reality. Perhaps as I relate everything to you and share all with you it will all seem much more real . . . Of course it is quite difficult for you to realize how I am going about writing this letter. Of course I'm not allowed to sit up yet so I'm lying on my side writing on a flat table which is right next to me. This accounts for the very unneat letter which I'm sure you will understand. I'm not having any visitors tonight so I finally am getting a chance to write . . .



"Daddy Walt.' Can you imagine him looking thus at his baby! Some day, he will my love. Walt." Picture sent to Wilma by Walt. Courtesy of the author.

As soon as I got to the hospital I was sent into the labor room where I spent many hours . . . Time just meant nothing to me anymore. I was living in such a strange world . . . The pains were agonizing and almost right on top of each other. It was hard, my love, but I kept telling myself that it was worth it all. Never did I regret anything. To have a child was so wonderful. As I had the terrible pains I repeated this to myself over and over again, "oh it's worth it." And how true this was. Then after a while I got a bloody discharge which was a good sign. The pains kept com-

ing more and more and more severe. While I was going through this I suddenly felt my water break. As you know the baby is in a membrane and lies in water. I immediately rang the bell . . . Dr. Moen came. She examined me and of course I knew it could not last much longer . . . They examine you through the rectum to see how far you are dilated and how near the baby is coming. After this I really had to work . . . Suddenly I heard the doctor say, "get the stretcher." This sounded good because I knew that soon I would be in the delivery room and put under. They pushed me to the delivery room, strapped my hands and in the meantime I clung to the fence handles. Each time I got a pain I had to pull



Wilma with baby Wally, with a photo of Walt on the record player in the background. Courtesy of the author.

up my legs, place them against the bars and push as hard as I could. It was agonizing but it could not last too much longer I knew. I could feel the head forcing its way down. Then Dr. Moen said call the anesthetist. Soon she came up and they started administering gas. I breathed it in as fast as I could. Then in the distance I heard the doctor and nurse talking. I heard what they were saying but then felt very little pain. Oh what a bless-

ing that gas was. Each time I could hear the doctor say to give me more and then I certainly breathed it in fast. I heard the doctor say it's a blondy. Then suddenly I heard a baby cry. Of course I was under the influence of gas but I remember saying "do I hear my baby crying?" The answer was "yes." Slowly I came to and the doctor showed me a nice little baby boy. My love I was so thrilled that I cannot explain it.

I was still a bit doped and I remember talking a great deal but I remember everything I said. I said to the doctor "Oh it was worth it all." My love it was. I was in the delivery room about 45 minutes in all which wasn't so long. I was then shoved into the hallway where I could see mother . . . Really Walt I could not be feeling any better. My heart caused no trouble at all and I do continue to feel fine. The next day they brought the baby to me just once and how I did examine it. I was of course to get him used to sucking on the breasts even though there was nothing there yet. As you know the mother's milk does not come in until the third day . . . Today they brought him to me twice and each time he had to practice nursing . . . Oh what a thrill it is to nurse your own child and how I hope I may continue to do so . . . Oh how I wish you could be watching our son with me and sharing all these joys . . . But now I must write you all about our son. I think I will let him speak.

Dear Daddy,

How I wish you could see me. Really I am a perfect picture of you. I do not look at all like my mother and someday I hope you can see for yourself.

Love Wally

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My love just a little novelty the above. But how true it is that our son

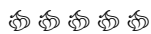
looks just exactly like you. I can find nothing but you in him . . . He has a dimple in his chin, small ears, a nose just like yours, in fact, his whole face is just a reminder of you . . . He has a very nice round face and seems very bright. The nurses tell me he is very content. He already frowns just like you. In every way it is son like father. This makes me love him even more . . . As I write all this to you my love it hardly seems reality. It seems as though I am living in a dream world all the time. There are so many new experiences that it seems too much to grasp and to realize. But my love I have been writing almost continuously now for two hours. I hope to finish this letter tomorrow . . . Goodnight my love.

My love it is now 11 o'clock in the morning. This is actually the first chance I have of completing this letter to you . . . I wish you could see how cute he nurses . . . The nurse told me something very encouraging . . . She said people with small breasts usually have more milk than those with large breasts . . . I want so badly to nurse our son.

About an hour ago Dr. Moen stopped in and talked to me about circumcising the baby. Of course I want this done . . . Most doctors charge \$10.00 for this . . .

As I write now I'm lying flat on my stomach. Order from the nurse. This is to help the organs go back into place. You can imagine how difficult this makes writing but I guess you will be able to read it . . .

Lovingly, your wife, Wilma and your son, Wallace (October 3, 1944).



My beloved Wife and Son,

. . . Wilma, you have shared all with me—in a wonderful way. I can only love you intensely for what you have done. Never will I forget those repeated—desperate thoughts—loving words: “It is worth it.” Never did I realize till now just what you experienced . . . I could see you so plainly—your description was so vivid—I do not believe I could bear the sight of it ever . . . You will always remain determined and resolute and extremely brave to me. How true it is that we need each other—I could never do what you have done—is it any wonder that I admire and love you—that I “worship” you, my love. For this letter I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Wilma . . . Our son becomes even more precious for every pain you suffered my love. How thankful I am that the joys of motherhood may in a way compensate for

all you went thru. I trust that my love and praise for you will help to make it all eminently worthwhile. How sinister it all seemed as I read of your great struggle—anxious moments and hours of waiting. I lived with you in hope as there came evidence of a baby coming into this world. I was thankful that those last minutes became easier because of merciful anesthetics. Your love spontaneous—what a mother you are—Wilma!

. . . lovingly, thankfully yours,
Walt—Daddy (December 2, 1944)



In the last months of 1944 and in 1945, Wilma waited on the home front, raising her and Walt's newborn son. In Britain and Europe, Walt continued his work in the U.S. Army Signal Corps. The next article will focus on Walt's experiences, as the war in Europe moved toward an Allied defeat of Germany and he celebrated Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) in May 1945. Would he soon go home? Would the Army send him to the Pacific, where the war against Japan continued? What would Wilma, back home, know and think during these months about what Walt was doing? What do their letters reveal about their hopes for life in the postwar world? 🍀

“The Spirit Among You”: The Christian Reformed Church in Vermont

Paula Vander Hoven

The small group of Hollanders who settled in Addison County, Vermont, in the late 1950s and early 1960s were a remarkable group. They were part of a post-World War II wave of immigration from the Netherlands that spanned two decades. Like others of that time, Dutch emigrants left with well-remembered but seldom mentioned memories of the German occupation of their homeland and their own experiences with German and then Allied soldiers. Like others, they left with the realization that the country they had known was changing. Traditional, small five-to-eight-acre family farmsteads were disappearing and being consolidated into larger, more industrialized farms. There was little opportunity for young farmers to purchase or even rent their own land.¹

But unlike the bulk of Dutch emigrants to North America during this period, these came to the United States rather than Canada. It had been Canadian forces that had liberated Holland at the end of the war, so that was perhaps the more natural choice for those leaving their homeland. These families made another choice, however.

The new Vermonters arrived singly, not in a group and not led by one charismatic leader, as in the nineteenth century. They had lived in diverse areas of the Netherlands, spoken regional dialects, and attended different churches there. They came not to an established Dutch community in Vermont, as most others did in the United States in the 1950s

and 1960s. And they came without the initial support of the Christian Reformed Church and the welcome it often provided to newcomers. Instead, they struck out as individual families for an area in the United States far removed from others who spoke their language, shared their traditions, and worshiped as they did. One by one, they found their way to Addison County, Vermont.

Most who came to Vermont had not planned to settle there. Some had relatives in Dutch American communities in other parts of the country and would have put down roots there. But they were faced with the reality of a quota system and long waits to leave the Netherlands for other states. Vermont, perhaps under the leadership of State Senator George Aiken, quickly and warmly welcomed experienced, hard-working Dutch farmers to revitalize Vermont's sagging agricultural industry.² There was a stipulation that immigrants remain in Vermont for one year, fulfilling their obligations to their sponsoring farm families. After that time they could leave, and many did.

The Smits, two Beenen families, and the De Graaf family stayed, however. They fulfilled the stipulations of their arrival and then purchased their own farms in the rural communities of Bridport, Ferrisburg,³ and Panton in Addison County. They were joined by the Oosterman family in Burlington, some twenty miles away. Over time they learned English and formed warm bonds of friendship and support with each other,

Paula Vander Hoven is a retired pastor in the Presbyterian Church USA. One of her ongoing interests is Dutch immigrant communities in North America. She has published stories about communities in Michigan, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Texas.

despite the disparity in their regional Dutch dialects and the miles between their individual homes in Vermont. They hosted each other for meals and met frequently for singing, prayer, Scripture reading and meditation, and talking over common issues. The records of those gatherings have been preserved, and, notably, women were a part of these conversations.⁴ These women loved music and joined together in vocal and instrumental ensembles. They also early on provided Christian education for their children.

In 1959 the small group in Vermont came under the care of the nearest Christian Reformed Church, some two hundred miles away in Whitinsville, Massachusetts,⁵ where Reverend William Vander Hoven was pastor. A vital and mutually affectionate relationship developed between the two communities. The “mother church” in Whitinsville provided practical and emotional support over many years and fostered lasting bonds of appreciation and friendship.

Whitinsville CRC accepted the membership papers of Vermonters as they arrived. And, as early as December of 1959,⁶ the pastors and elders from Whitinsville began traveling periodically to Vermont for worship and the celebration of holy communion. The group in Vermont gathered regularly for worship in each other’s homes and rented church buildings. They sat around a tape recorder listening to the voice of Rev. Vander Hoven and joined in the congregational singing. Whitinsville CRC formed a Vermont Committee, and between 1960 and 1967 it helped arrange for summer seminary students and other temporary pastors to lead and guide the group. Eventually the immigrants in Vergennes formed Ferrisburg Christian Reformed Church and a Christian School Society.

This story is about the families who stayed and the spirit among

them. The Smits family was the first to arrive, in early 1957. Over the next year others arrived, and by the end of 1958 the small colony of Dutch immigrants had swelled to nineteen families and four single men.⁷ All attended church services, whether they had been churchgoers or not, if only for the companionship. The group worshipped in the Weybridge Congregational church, and Pieter Smits read the sermons in Dutch. But most of those newcomers stayed only briefly, soon moving on to places like California, New Jersey, and New York.

Pieter and Alice Smits

Pieter and Alice (Atje) Renzema Smits, both 35, arrived in Bridport, Vermont, in February 1957 with their children James, Dirk, Jay, Bernard, and Antje, all under ten years of age. Pieter⁸ had been an active part of the Dutch underground resistance movement during the Second World War. He had lived under an assumed name for three years, with forged identity papers listing him as an official in the Ministry of Agriculture.⁹ Three of his comrades had been killed in a

firefight. Following the war, Pieter had returned to farming in Berlikum in northern Friesland, where he and Alice had married and started a family.

The Smits family were the first settlers in what would become a small Dutch colony in Addison County.¹⁰ In time they welcomed two more children, Josephine and William. They had originally planned to settle in California or Michigan, but at the last minute a World Council of Churches agency encouraged them to move to Vermont. As was common, Pieter worked first for their sponsor family, Carey and Ann Howlett, and later bought his own farm in Bridport. The family had been members of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (Reformed Church) in Friesland. On arriving in Vermont, they worshipped with the Howlett family at the Congregational Church in Bridport, though they spoke no English initially. On Sunday afternoons Pieter and Alice read Bible stories to their children in their native Frisian.

The Smits were devout Christians, and as one of the founding families of the Dutch Reformed immigrant com-



Pieter and Alice Smits family.

munity in Addison, they were central in the life of the emerging church. In 1960 Pieter was appointed a catechism instructor, along with several others. And Pieter and Alice took their turns hosting the early meetings of the group in their home. Pieter played the drums in the church band that was formed, and they supported the establishment of the Champlain Valley Christian School in 1974.

The family suffered through tragedy in July 1966 when 15-year-old Jay Smits was killed in a farming accident. He was the first of the young community to pass away and was deeply mourned.

Shortly after they arrived in Vermont, Alice's cousin Simon Runia visited from Burlington, Ontario. Following that visit, he contacted the Christian Reformed Church Home Missions Board on behalf of the Vermont church group. This introduction proved pivotal. It began a long and mostly mutual and supportive, but sometimes disappointing, relationship between the immigrants and the CRC. Rev. John Rubingh of the CRC arrived in the summer of 1958 and served the group for about a year. Other temporary pastors and seminarians followed him.

Gerrit and Johanna Beenen

Gerrit Beenen (50) and Johanna Hut-ton Beenen, (49) left the Netherlands with their children Egbert, Joanne, John, Swanee, Jeri, and Tina.¹¹ They arrived in Vergennes in September 1958, just as other Dutch immigrants were leaving, and became a continuing and vital part of the Dutch community. The Beenens had been dairy farmers in Gramsbergen, Overijssel, on the German border and spoke a local dialect of Dutch. They had left the Netherlands with difficult memories of the war in mind (frightening interactions with German troops), prompted by their son Egbert's hope



Gerrit and Johanna Beenen family.

for better farming opportunities in North America.

They did not settle in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where Johanna had a cousin, because the waiting list for immigrants was too long. They chose Vermont because the list was much shorter. The Dutch American Immigration Bureau helped arrange their coming; and, as required, the men of the family first worked for a sponsor on a local farm.

Gerrit and Johanna served the church well in the early years. Johanna was a hospitable person who often invited guests into their home, including Rev. Vander Hoven when he traveled to Vermont to conduct worship services. In their turn, with the Smits and De Graaf families, the Beenens hosted the meetings of the church group. It soon asked Johanna to teach catechism classes, and in 1960 Gerrit became the first treasurer of the emerging congregation. Before a consistory was elected, he served on the Steering Committee that provided leadership and direction for the group. The steering committee had frequent contact with the Whitinsville congregation, and Gerrit, along with Pieter Smits, Bill De Graaf, and Bill Oosterman, went to Whitinsville

occasionally to meet with the consistory and Vermont Committee there to declare their needs and wishes and discuss details. Beenen also eventually served as an elder in the church.

Faithful to a promise he had made when the family emigrated, Egbert

returned to the Netherlands in March 1960, when he was 22, and married Berendina (Deeny) Rougoor. The wedding was celebrated in her hometown of Coevorden, Drenthe. They had known each other before he left and had corresponded weekly until he returned. They knew they would be leaving an active church community, family, and a familiar way of life in the Netherlands. In Vermont the local people, farms, homes, land, and language would be strange, and there would be no organized Reformed congregation. So, they choose as their wedding text Exodus 33:15: "If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here." Immigrating thus involved trust that God would indeed go with them.

The two generations of Beenen families formed a partnership, buying a dairy farm in West Ferrisburgh. As other immigrants were arriving and leaving rapidly, the Beenens' purchase of a farm signaled that they would remain.

Egbert and Deeny played active roles in the emerging church community as it developed. She taught Sunday school and was active as president of the Ladies' Aid. He taught catechism classes and served several



Egbert and Deeny Beenen family.

terms as an elder and a deacon. Their four daughters—Jeannette, Joann, Brenda, and Betty—were born in quick succession after their arrival in Vermont and were followed by sons Richard and Jeffrey.

William and Tilly De Graaf

William (39) and Tilly Dijkstra De Graaf (40) arrived in Waltham, Vermont with their six children—John, Bob, Agnes, Charles, Gerrit, and Martha—in November 1958. Their seventh child, Harold, was born in Vermont several months later.¹²

Bill had served in the Dutch Army during the Second World War. His unit had defended The Hague's airport long enough for the Dutch Royal family to escape to England and avoid

capture by the Germans. Later the war came near his home in Ternaard, as the Germans shot down several Allied planes in the area. Bill was arrested and imprisoned for three days for cutting up a downed parachute. He rarely talked about his wartime experiences, but his oldest son, John, clearly remembered the day Canadian troops liberated Ternaard in April 1945.

Bill and Tilly considered immigrating to Canada, New Zealand, or Australia. But the State of Vermont's program that sponsored Dutch farmers persuaded them to settle in Vermont's Champlain Valley. They sold their farm in Ternaard, Friesland, and arrived in Waltham 12 days later. Rev. Rubingh was waiting for them at the bus station in Middlebury, Massachusetts, and took the family to their new home. In February 1960, Bill bought a run-down farm in nearby Panton. After much hard work, the farm became a success. Tilly soon had a thriving baking business in their farmhouse kitchen. She made coffee cakes that her daughter Agnes sold in a nearby luxury resort.

When the group met in each other's homes for prayer, singing, and discussion, Bill kept minutes. His notes provide excellent commentary on the early history of the young church. He served as an elder many times

and was always willing to help with the church maintenance and repairs. Tilly was just as involved but in a different capacity. Her house was always open for guests, who enjoyed her hospitality. Sunday dinner meant that a large pot of homemade soup stood ready.

Often 12 or more hungry people sat around the dining room table. Many of those guests were other immigrants who were looking to buy a farm and had come to Bill for advice. It was a joyful event in the life of the young group when in September 1963 John, Bob, and Agnes De Graaf, along with John and Swanee Beenen, made profession of faith. Rev. John Holwerda came from Whitinsville for that happy occasion.

De Graaf joined what was often called "the Miedema Band." Members of the local community also joined the group, who often played at the park in Vergennes or at church functions. The "Dutch" congregation was known for their hearty singing. Bill Oosterman, who often led the singing, made sure that everybody participated to the fullest. Although Bill DeGraaf did not have much chance to play his trumpet or cornet in the early years, he made up for it by his hearty singing. His powerful voice could be heard no matter where you sat in church or how many people attended the worship service.

All of Bill and Tilly's children thrived in their adopted country. And all found their own way in life and took advantage of the many opportunities their adopted country offered. Five still live in Vermont, but, sadly, Agnes has passed away.

William and Gladys Oosterman

Between 1957 and 1960, some 25 other Dutch immigrants had come to Vermont and settled there briefly in Addison County, as required, before moving on to other states. Perhaps in recognition of this, Rev. John Rubingh reported to the Eastern Home Missions Board of the Christian Reformed Church that there was no future for a Christian Reformed Church in Vermont. He moved on in the winter of 1960, and the group was left with no church, no pastor, and



William and Tilly De Graaf family.

seemingly very little hope. The arrival of new immigrants who would stay, and the relationships they built with other stalwart families in the Dutch Reformed community, kept hope alive.

William (36) and Gladys (41) Oosterman and their sons Terry, Howard, William Glenn, Douglas, and Wesley had arrived from Whitinsville earlier in 1960, in February.¹³ Bill had tired of farming in Whitinsville and had accepted a position as a welder on a new highway to Vermont. The family settled in Burlington. Gladys fostered baby girls and worked as a housekeeper at a motel.

Though he did not speak Dutch, almost immediately Bill became an energetic and much valued leader in the group. In fact, he was identified as “the glue that held the group together.”¹⁴ The now five remaining families were eager to enlarge their group, and Bill Oosterman was a strong leader in that endeavor. Bill Oosterman got along well with Bill De Graaf, Oosterman having a “can do” attitude that De Graaf respected and admired. There always seemed to be a way to get things done without spending much money.

As early as 1961 Bill began to conduct worship services for the group. He spoke in English and relied on printed sermons, some first used by Billy Graham, adapting them well to suit his audience. He regularly served as moderator of the meetings the group (including the women) held in their homes in the early days before they formed a consistory. He offered an opening prayer, read Scripture and a mediation, and led the singing, while Gladys sometimes accompanied the group on the organ.

In time Bill purchased land in Ferrisburg and became a well-known farrier. He built a device into which a cow would walk and have its hooves clipped. Eventually he serviced herds



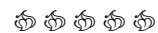
Bill Oosterman leading worship

throughout New England and into New York. His flexible work schedule and inventive skills enabled him to help his friends with what became known as Oosterman Inventions. “When Pieter Smits’ car became air-conditioned because of too many rust holes, the fenders fallen off,” De Graaf remembered, “it was Bill who came with tools and a welder to make of two old cars one, so Pieter’s kids didn’t have to hold the doors closed with twine anymore and the contents of the trunk would not roll along Route 7 coming from church.”¹⁵ Oosterman became known as a welder-blacksmith-horse-shoer-plumber-carpenter-painter-engineer-electrician-choir director¹⁶ throughout the community. Another gift he brought to the group was his English-language proficiency and his knowledge of CRC places and practices. Gladys Oosterman said little but was an able and eager host, and friends appreciated her hospitality over the years.

With his strong connections to Whitinsville, and a twinkle in his eye, Bill also encouraged young people to make the trip from there to Vermont, which resulted in the marriages of Whitinsville young women to Vermont young men, most of whom

remained in Vermont. “The young men would go to Massachusetts for an event and make it back to Vermont just in time for milking early in the morning.”¹⁷

On Sunday, 1 April 1962, the Ferrisburg Christian Reformed Chapel was dedicated with five original remaining families: Smits, Gerrit Beenen, Egbert Beenen, De Graaf and Oosterman, a total of 33 people. Rev. Vander Hoven was present from Whitinsville and titled his sermon “The Spirit Among You,” based on a passage from Haggai 2 that speaks of God’s continued care and promises to the returning exiles as they settled into their homeland. The church’s consistory minutes describe this as “an almost indescribable day, a richly blessed day, with prayers that we may continue to see God’s guiding hand. That we may receive the strength and wisdom to continue with our eyes and hearts lifted up to Him.”



In an effort to enlarge their small congregation, Bill Oosterman and Bill De Graaf traveled to Newton, New Jersey, and Goshen, New York, in February 1963 and met with other Dutch folk there. That trip proved pivotal to the eventual transformation of the Ferrisburg chapel group into a full-fledged congregation.

In the later post-World War II years, changes to the quota system meant that newcomers were no longer arriving in Vermont from the Netherlands but coming instead from other communities in the United States. Dutch dairy farmers had settled in Sussex County, New Jersey, and Orange County, New York, for many of the same reasons and under the same conditions as those who had settled in Vermont. But in the 1960s, rising land prices and a combination of changes in the dairy industry

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Advertisement about the community in *The Banner* in June 1961, placed by William Oosterman.

prompted younger families to look elsewhere.¹⁸ Over time newcomers arrived from those states and elsewhere, and some of them remained to become charter members of what eventually became the Ferrisburg Christian Reformed Church.

In March 1964 Arie and Ann Veldman Scholten and their young son, William, arrived from Goshen, New York. Her parents and siblings, the William and Gail Klooster Veldman family, quickly followed them. Albert and Ada Elzinga Van Der Weert and their children were also members of the Goshen Christian Reformed Church, and they arrived in 1965, followed the next year by Garry and Julia Vander Ploeg Elzinga and their daughters, also from New York.

The Louis and Harriet Sypersma Visser family arrived from the Newton, New Jersey, Christian Reformed Church, as did Bruce and Frances Visser Ourensma with their son, John. At about that time Ted Boelens from Prospect Park, New Jersey, met and married Agnes De Graaf, already a member. In 1964 and 1965 Whitinsville natives John and Barbara Jarrett Swart and Timothy and Charlotte Fonger Larsen from Michigan were welcomed.

The arrival of these dairy farmers from other states gave the group more viability and increased its desire to organize as a Christian Reformed congregation.¹⁹ The recent arrivals had come from already established Christian Reformed churches and communities and were more concerned about precise doctrine than the initial group members. The initial members had a strong interest in outreach, perhaps influenced by Oosterman's reliance on Billy Graham's sermons. Despite their differences, in 1966 they united to form what was then called the Ferrisburg Christian Reformed Church.



Over the years the Vermont group had a sometimes tenuous and disappointing relationship with the Board of Home Missions of the CRC. The board was reluctant to recognize the Vermont group for many years, judging that there was little prospect that a small, rural group like theirs could succeed as an organized church.

Despite that, the Whitinsville congregation in Massachusetts stood firmly behind Ferrisburg group in its desire that the CRC recognize it. In May 1961 Vander Hoven wrote a politely persuasive letter to Rev. Marvin Baarman, executive secretary of the board, offering some history and an invitation to visit Whitinsville and Vermont. Later that year the visit did occur. In the summers between 1960 and 1967 seminarians Stanley Vander Klay, Reimer Praamsma, and Ed Den Haan served the congregation well. They reported that the local community increasingly recognized the group and that visitors were coming with genuine interest.

Still the Board of Home Missions was reluctant. In December 1965 Stuart Visser, then the clerk of the Whitinsville congregation and later a Vermont resident himself, wrote

to Rev. Wesley Smedes, the board's minister of evangelism, expressing disappointment and enclosing a comprehensive 13-page report Den Haan had written that summer. "All indications at this time point to a growing future," Den Haan had urged. "Their cry goes up but has thus far been unheeded."²⁰

Finally, in May 1966 Bill Oosterman and Louis Visser attended a meeting of Classis Hudson in Prospect Park, New Jersey.²¹ There the Whitinsville church petitioned for organization of the Ferrisburg group. Classis Hudson approved the petition, and the Ferrisburg Christian Reformed Church organized on 12 August 1966 with 35 adults and 37 baptized members. When it built a new, larger facility in 1976 on the outskirts of Vergennes, it renamed itself Champlain Valley CRC. The new facility also would house Champlain Valley Christian School for three decades.

The congregation elected Albert Van De Weert and Timothy Larsen as deacons and Louis Visser and William Oosterman as elders to lead the congregation. Rev. John T. Holwerda preached an inspiring sermon, and seminarian Ed Den Haan assisted in the service.

"August 12, 1966 will long be remembered by a sturdy group of Vermonters as the day when the first Christian Reformed Church in the state of Vermont was organized," reported *The Banner*, the official magazine of the CRC. "Amid the indescribable beauty of the surrounding Green Mountains, and nestled in the rich verdure of the Champlain Valley, our new church truly occupies a choice spot in God's creation. . . . A spirit of joy and gratitude was very evident throughout the evening."²² 🌿

Endnotes

1. Chris Granstrom in "Father, I'm Going to America," *Vermont Life*, Spring, 1995.
2. John De Graaf in *Champlain Valley Christian Reformed Church 50th Anniversary Celebration 1966–2016*.
3. Alternately referred to as Ferrisburgh.
4. Those notes, recorded by Bill De Graaf, have been an important resource in this article. The first years were written in Dutch and translated by Henry De Moor.
5. Now the Pleasant Street Christian Reformed Church in Whitinsville.
6. When it was first noted in the Whitinsville Church minutes.
7. Alice Smits lists some of them in her early history of the church: two Faber families, the Frank Dykstra family, the Atse De Jager family, and the Vierzen family. John De Graaf lists others: Doeke and Wilma Dam, Jan De Vries, Jan Post, Wieger Alberts, Jan de Moes, and the Joekemas.
8. To avoid confusion, in most cases throughout this article the choice has been made to use American forms of first names. These are the names preferred by the Smits family.
9. Earl Welch in "Lock, Stock and Dike," in *Dairymen's League News*, November 5, 1967, offered by Swanee Beenen Visser.
10. Information about the Pieter and Alice Renzema Smits family has been provided by Antje Smits Haaijema in a phone conversation on April 3, 2022, and a letter dated May 3, 2022. Alice Smits wrote a brief history of the very early years of the church, which John De Graaf translated from the original Frisian and included, with permission from Antje Smits Haaijema, in the *Champlain Valley Christian Reformed Church 50th Anniversary Celebration, 1966–2016*. Information has also been provided by Chris Granstrom in "Father, I'm going to America," *Vermont Life*, Spring 1995. On December 1, 2022, Natasha Haaijema Rabideau shared notes from her interview with her grandfather, Pieter Smits.
11. Information about the Gerrit and Johanna Beenen and the Egbert and Deeny Beenen families is derived from the *Champlain Valley Christian Reformed Church 50th Anniversary Celebration 1966–2016*, written by John De Graaf; letters from Deeny Beenen, one undated and one dated April 5, 2022; a phone conversation with her on July 13, 2022; her notes of the early Champlain Valley Christian Reformed Church; a letter from Swanee Beenen Visser dated May 6, 2022; a phone conversation with her on July 19, 2022; and the minutes of the Pleasant Street Christian Reformed Church in Whitinsville, Massachusetts.
12. Information about the William and Tilly De Graaf family was provided by John De Graaf in several emails, the last dated November 4, 2022.
13. Information about the William and Gladys Oosterman family is provided by Deborah Oosterman Reitsma in a letter dated November 23, 2021.
14. Swanee Beenen Visser in a conversation, July 19, 2022.
15. William De Graaf in an undated speech honoring Bill and Gladys Oosterman. Offered by John De Graaf.
16. William De Graaf in an undated speech honoring Bill and Gladys Oosterman. Offered by John De Graaf.
17. Deborah Oosterman Reitsma in a letter dated November 23, 2021.
18. Robert Schoone-Jongen in emails dated May 26 and June 24, 2022.
19. Rev. Ed Den Haan in an email dated March 4, 2022.
20. Rev. Ed Den Haan, "Report on the Ferrisburg Chapel," submitted in the summer of 1965 and forwarded to Rev. Wesley Smedes on December 14, 1965, by Stuart W. Visser, Heritage Hall, Calvin University, Christian Reformed Church Collection, box, 1620, folder 1.
21. *The Banner*, September 2, 1966.
22. *The Banner*, November 18, 1966.

A Curious Fraud

Michael J. Douma

In 1899 a German Reformed minister named Augustus E. Schade self-published a book called *The Philosophy of History*.¹ The book was pure sophistry, some four hundred densely filled pages of esoteric nonsense masquerading as scholarship. It is a window into the mind and career of a huckster. Not just an intellectual fraud, Schade's entire career as a pastor, publisher, and teacher was marked by one scheme after another. He eventually also seems to have become delusional, before ending his life alone in a dingy hotel room.

Few people knew the real Augustus Schade, and indeed it would have been difficult to know him, since he seldom stayed in one place for long. A church historian in the 1950s had a difficult time gathering facts about him. Schade, he wrote, "seems to have been a sort of 'mystery man' so far as information about his life and activities are concerned. He was ignored by the biographers, passed over by [German Reformed magazines such as] the *Messenger*, and as for the *Almanac*—he simply did not exist."²

Although historians today might not be able to see as deeply into an era as the people who lived it, they can often see more widely and discover connections that no one at the time could have observed. With the advent of digital search engines like *archive.org* and *newspapers.com*, we can learn more about Schade than any of his contemporaries knew of him. We can also discover a wider pattern of controversy and fraud that followed him wherever he went.

In his forty-year career serving con-

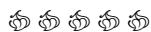
gregations in the Reformed Church of the United States from Baltimore to Seattle, Schade was accused of everything from arson, insurance fraud, adultery (on more than one occasion), filing bogus lawsuits, and abandonment of his wife. The failure of his biggest and final scheme led to his suicide.

In the last years of his life, Schade raised money, intending to establish a German colony in Panama. Some news stories depicted it as a utopian eugenics scheme, an effort to use racial science to breed a race of "supermen" by limiting entry only to those who passed examinations for physical and mental health. The science of eugenics was prominent at the time, and many took such ideas seriously. Schade's scheme in Panama may have been a mix of fraud and delusion, but in context elements of it were common at the time in both Europe and North America. Schade visited Panama on at least two occasions, and in the United States he carried rocks and pressed leaves from his sojourns in the tropics. But his stories of having acquired land in Panama appear to have been greatly exaggerated. Nevertheless, he convinced dozens, perhaps hundreds, of German American churchgoers to invest in a colony that had never existed.

In 1913 Schade was found dead in a Cincinnati hotel room. A 31-page autobiography, copies of his book, and some letters from his love interest were found next to his body. No less than a dozen newspapers from Maryland to Minnesota reported his death as a mystery, but the city coro-

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ner soon determined that it had come from cyanide poisoning and declared it a suicide. How did Schade arrive at this end?



Schade was born in Coburg-Saxe-Gotha, studied at the University of Halle, and migrated to the United States in the 1860s. He rarely spoke about his life in Germany or any family he might have left behind, and he had no letters of attestation. He appeared in America as a man who had no past.

There were concerns about his character expressed in the earliest American records that include his name, however. In 1869 the Iowa classis warned the Synod of the German Reformed Church about “ungentlemanly conduct and insinuations in the person of Aug. Schade and Gustav Ziph . . . in case they apply for licensure.”³ But the synod examined these and other applicants and accepted them all.

In the 1870s Schade reputedly was a “brilliant German pulpit orator” as he led two churches in Ohio, Salem Reformed and Mt. Union Reformed.⁴ Then, from 1883 to 1887, he was the minister of Cleveland’s Sixth Reformed Church. This had been a Lutheran church, and Schade’s arrival had caused the congregation to split. New immigrants from Germany increased the size of his congregation. It appears that Schade took the pulpit without pay, or at least at a reduced salary, while also working as an editor of the *Reformirte Kirchenzeitung* and *Die Abendlust*, two German periodicals published by Cleveland’s German Reformed Publishing House. In 1885 Schade appeared in the Cleveland city directory as the principal of Calvin College, a short-lived Ohio institute (1866–1899), not to be confused with the Calvin College in Michigan.⁵

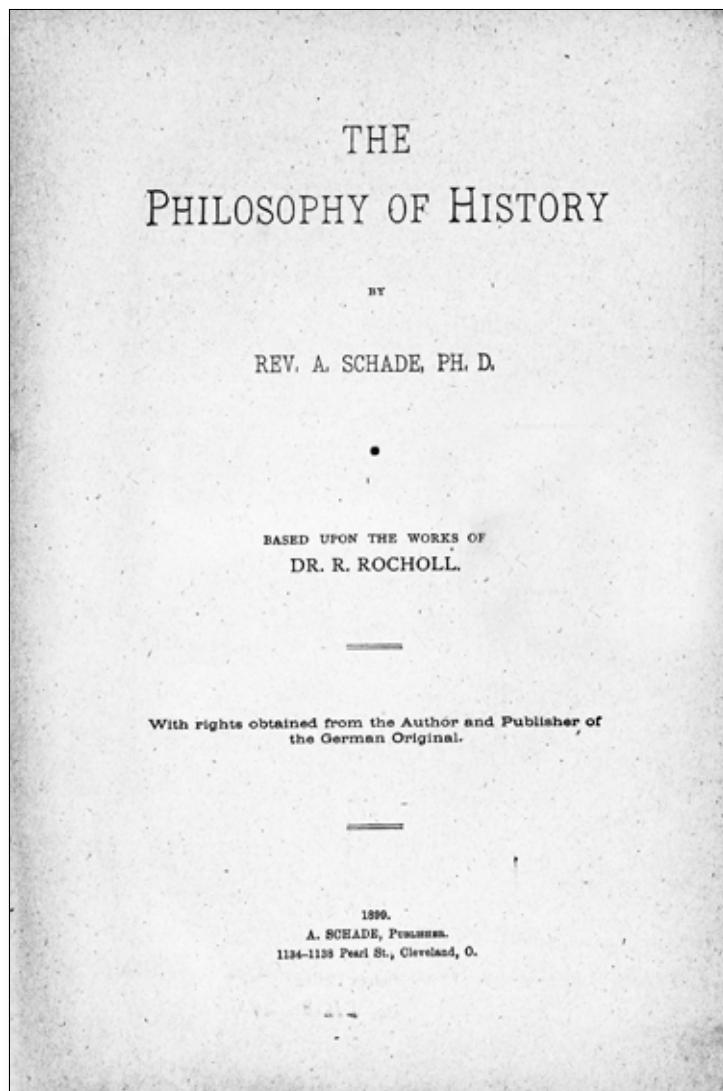
He likely came into this position through the efforts of J. H. Ruetenik, the founder the college, who was also the head of the German Reformed Publishing House. But this was a short-lived appointment.

In 1888 Schade left Cleveland and was installed as pastor of the St. John’s German Reformed Church in Baltimore, where he remained until 1891.⁶ It is only from later reports that we learn about Schade’s troubles in Baltimore. Marcus Bachman, president of the Maryland classis of the German Reformed Church, believed that Schade was a pious church reformer but reported that his ways led to “constant battle” in the church and that he was “chased from the congregation like a dog.”⁷ When Schade left Baltimore, there were also reports that he had left his wife behind and was “accompanied by a young woman of the congregation.”⁸

In the summer of 1891, Schade moved to Seattle. He quickly purchased a minor newspaper called the *Seattle Tribune* and consolidated it with a local German sheet, the *Staats-Zeitung*. Schade then ingratiated himself with the congregation of the local German Reformed Church

and replaced their minister, again offering his services at a reduced rate, as he hoped to earn the rest of his salary through his newspaper work.

Just after 2:00 a.m. on December 12, 1891, a fire started at the *Seattle Tribune* building, and Schade claimed that he suspected foul play. Others, however, suspected Schade himself, suggesting that he had hired a man to burn the place down so that he could collect on the insurance. Suspicious spread. During his six months in Seattle, Schade had seldom paid a bill. “Claims against the vanished clerical editor seem to be numerous,” the city’s main newspaper reported.⁹ Schade never paid his lawyer or his employees at the *Tribune*. Nor



did he pay his newspaper editors or the printers. On January 7, 1892, a warrant was issued for his arrest for larceny.¹⁰

The next day Schade's possessions were forcefully removed from the parsonage of his German Reformed Church. Schade skipped town without collecting any insurance money. But he was not clear of trouble just yet. The Northern Pacific railroad had once given Schade a free travel pass, since it believed that he was working to promote the growth of the Northwest. When Schade fled Seattle, he made it only as far as Spokane before the railroad, having heard rumors of his misdeeds, revoked the pass. Schade had no choice but to pay for the rest of his fare to St. Paul, Minnesota. The "Notorious Clerical Editor" never returned to Seattle.¹¹

A week later, however, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* published a letter from Mr. A. Butz Sr. of Fremont (a Seattle neighborhood). Butz offered a qualified defense of Schade, whom he claimed to have known for ten years in Ohio and whom he thought was an honest man. According to Butz, a Seattle church minister named Gottfried Graedel had been looking to be replaced in his position and move elsewhere. Butz had informed Schade about this opportunity, and Schade had come to Seattle to see about the job. The two ministers "did not agree well one with the other," however. Graedel eventually resigned from his position but spread rumors against the reputation of Schade. Butz was sure that Schade, if given an "opportunity to answer charges brought against him," would "be able to justify himself."¹²

Two days later Graedel responded to Butz in the press. He and Schade had indeed spoken of an "exchange of pulpits," Graedel noted. "[At] that time, however, I did not know that he was in trouble in Baltimore."¹³

From the evidence in today's digital newspaper databases, an historian can easily recognize that Schade was a difficult character who brought trouble everywhere he went. But to each new place he arrived, in his time, he cut the image of a respectable, albeit odd, German cleric.

While stories of Schade's troubles in Baltimore eventually followed him to Seattle, stories of his troubles in Seattle apparently did not follow him back East. He was able to shrug off controversy and failure and start over again. It was common for ministers to move frequently among churches and to accept calls to serve in other states. Besides, squabbles between churches and their ministers were nothing new or out of the ordinary, so from a distance it was hard to know who was at fault. But a pattern of reported misbehavior suggests at least that much of the blame was Schade's.

Back in Ohio Schade acquired a position as a professor at Ursinus College in 1892–1893.¹⁴ He sometimes claimed to have a Doctor of Divinity degree (DD) or a PhD, but when or where he could have received either of these degrees is not clear.

Then, in 1894, Schade became the minister of Immanuel Reformed Church in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. But he did not last long in this position, either. The congregation called him "a liar and fraud" and dismissed him for "conduct unbecoming a minister and a gentleman."¹⁵ Schade refused to leave. One Sunday, intending to preach a sermon, he found that his key would no longer unlock the church doors.¹⁶

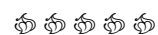
Schade's trouble in Williamsport did not end there. He ordered the arrest of a man who had not paid him the fee for a burial service of a deceased child. The case was decided against Schade, as were seven cases of unpaid labor claims made against him by members of the church. Schade

won a suit against the Trustees of the German Reformed Church, however, and was paid \$107.97 of salary owed to him. But over the next two years, Schade had initiated so many other lawsuits in the area that he was indicted for "barratry, or vexatious, habitual and unwarranted litigation."¹⁷

In 1897 the *Pittsburgh Press* printed a notice that "Rev. Herbert E. Schade" (obviously the incorrect first name) had been appointed to teach German at Mt. Union College in Alliance, Ohio. "Rev. Schade is a thorough scholar of high ability and attainments and in every way well equipped for the position," the notice read. If the name had not been incorrect, one would suspect that Schade had written the notice himself.¹⁸ In typical fashion Schade resigned from his position at Mt. Union College after two years.¹⁹

If Schade had a hometown in his adult life, it was Cleveland, a place to which he always seemed to return after his failed adventures elsewhere. From at least 1900 to 1904 he was living there, working as an editor for the Central Publishing House (formerly German Reformed Publishing House).

Again and again Schade was able to make strong first impressions and tell convincing stories. He used this skill to further his schemes.



In 1901, when President William McKinley visited his hometown of Canton, Ohio, the *Indianapolis Journal* reported that a Rev. A. E. Schade of Cleveland, formerly of Alliance, Ohio, visited Canton to see the President and discuss "securing some government assistance" for a plan of colonization in Cuba.²⁰ In 1906 Schade visited Edmonton, Canada, supposedly serving as superintendent of the mission board of the German Reformed Church. He told his hosts

that he sought to establish a church and college in Edmonton.²¹

In these years the pace of Schade movements accelerated, and the scope of his troubles grew. Schade took a position at a church in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he lived from 1907 to 1909. Again this ended in a dispute. Schade accused the officers of his church of being “deficient in Christian insight” and convinced the city prosecutor to arrest the church officers and charge them with “conspiracy in an attempt to oust him from the pastorate.” Again he refused to resign from his position, despite letters from church members asking him to do so.²² The 1909 City Directory for St. Paul, Minnesota noted that he had “moved to Brooklyn, N.Y.”

In the next few years, when Schade was not in the Caribbean, he was traveling around the United States, trying to find investors for a scheme to create a German colony in Panama. Shipping manifests confirm that Schade visited Cuba from New York in 1909 and 1910 and that he went to Panama in 1911 and again in 1912. He tended to live in and travel to places with a German American population.

The 1910 census recorded a 64-year-old Schade boarding in Cleveland with a 47-year-old woman, Rachael Roscoe. He reported his occupation as that of bookkeeper at a wholesale house, and he was described as the uncle of Ms. Roscoe, likely a convenient ruse so that no one would suspect any inappropriate relations between him, the boarder, and his female host. After his death it was discovered that Schade had recently been boarding at a home of a Mrs. S. Rebholz and that he owed her money for lodging.

When Cuba was the proposed location of his “Era Nueva Mission and Industrial School Syndicate,” Schade

claimed to have “secured” 150,000 acres in the Cuban mountains and announced that a university was to be built at the colony.²³ The number of acres he owned—or, as he liked to say, “secured,” as this was more ambiguous—often changed as he told the story.

In 1911 Schade claimed ownership

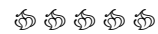


Rev. Augustus E. Schade.

of just 100 acres in Panama.²⁴ By 1913 it was 30,000 and then 50,000 in the “Bocas del Torro.” Some of this land he claimed to have purchased, while other parcels he said had been granted to his “Laymen Mission Society” by the Panamanian government. Plans for the colony included hundreds of fertile farms and a trolley line connecting to Panama City. Schade spoke of harvesting mahogany, raising alligators to sell their hides, and even domesticating manatees.²⁵

In 1910 Schade attempted, through an assemblyman in Brooklyn, to get the state of New York to incorporate his “Era Nueva Mission and School Syndicate.” A state senator rejected the bill because “it contained very broad provisions, which would permit the syndicate to do almost anything.”²⁶ Schade continued to raise money, nevertheless. In August 1912 he advertised in the St. Louis

German-language *Westliche Post* for interested parties to pay \$300 to his mission and receive 30 acres of land and a building lot, with a contract of five years. The payment could be made to general delivery at Era Nueva Mission in Panama.²⁷



No one discovered that the scheme was fraudulent until Schade was found dead at Cincinnati’s Rand Hotel on January 6, 1913. Although cyanide was found in the room, local authorities initially declared his death “mysterious” and began an inquiry into it.

Reporters at the *Cincinnati Enquirer* eventually did the most to put the pieces together. For the last week of his life, Schade had lodged at the hotel and had entertained a stream of visitors, mostly Germans investing in his Panama colonization project.

Schade had associates in this plan, too, but it is not always clear who, if anyone, was benefiting from the scheme and who was injured by it. One of his associates was Henry Rohr, an American correspondent in Panama. Rohr had met the reverend during his visit to Panama, when both had fallen ill and been laid up in adjacent beds. Rohr returned to Ohio to help source machinery for the colony, but he never received any money from Schade to make the purchases. Rohr had been warned in letters to stay clear of Schade because the reverend was reportedly too interested in “wine and women.” Shortly before Schade’s death, Rohr discovered that the bank account for the colonization company was nearly empty and that Schade was busy “consorting with actresses in wine-rooms, drinking and carousing at all hours of the night.”

Schade had also employed an H. D. Lingenfelter as a secretary of his “Era Nueva Development Company.” Lingenfelter believed Schade to have

been at the time 72 years of age. He said that Schade had been in the tropics for 12 years and had received 500 acres of land in Panama. In total, the company had given Schade \$6,000 to finance the project. “Dr. Schade was not crazy,” Lingenfelter protested. “He had an exceedingly brilliant mind.”

From Ironton, Ohio, came the message that there was a Charlotte Schade, a former wife of the Rev. Augustus. The two had been divorced six years prior. Charlotte complained of her ex-husband’s “erratic disposition” and “penchant for wandering in pursuit of schemes.” She claimed that Augustus once took his entire library into the “extreme far north” and lived for months with Indian guides. He then left his books there. Charlotte was supposedly too ill travel to the funeral.²⁸

The *Enquirer* also found an intimate friend of Schade, a publishing house colleague named August Becker. Becker claimed that Schade had been selling rights to farms in Panama that he did not own. It was all a hallucination, he said, of a man who had become feeble-minded. Other evidence of Schade’s mental decline came in recollections of a story he had told about having been chased by Indians and crocodiles when in Panama. *The Cincinnati Post* explained, “As there are no crocodiles in Panama, this statement, together with others equally incoherent, seems to indicate a confused condition of the mind.”²⁹ It is not clear whether Schade had been descending into delusions or simply was losing his ability to craft and keep track of plausible sounding fraudulent claims.

The one who was injured the most by Schade’s last scheme was the object of his affections, a Miss Nellie Mew, an actress more commonly known by her stage name, Allene Wilson. Allene had come to Chicago

from Australia some three years prior and lived there with her brother, Wilson. Schade met Allene in New York in September 1911, and the elderly man tried to win her heart. Some newspapers reported that Allene was but 18 years old, while others said she was 27.³⁰ Records of her entering the country, however, indicate that she was 24.

The love-struck Schade told Allene various stories of his wealth and his plans for Panama. Allene was hesitant but felt something for Schade too, despite the age difference. It appears that she did not want to disappoint him and had only asked not to be rushed into marriage. In a letter a month before Schade’s death, she asked for his patience. The relationship had certainly not ended when Schade died.

This is why Allene struggled to believe that Schade had committed suicide. She suspected foul play. She also believed that Schade was worth \$500,000.³¹

Allene and her brother had intended to join Schade in Panama and had been surprised by the news of his death. In fact, they had been waiting for Schade to send them money he had promised so that they could join him in New York. From there, the plan was, they would sail for Panama. Naturally, the money never arrived. In a letter to Allene, Schade wrote that a New York man would fund the trip. “Most likely we will go on his own yacht,” he had told them.³²

Dozens of newspapers around the country carried the story of Schade’s suicide, and they mostly treated it as a tale of failed romance. Some identified Schade’s Panama colony as an attempt to bring Germans together or as a eugenics experiment to create the perfect man. Others called it a “love colony,” with Allene his intended “queen.”³³ Some of these newspapers might have mirrored Schade’s own

tendencies to concoct lurid stories to sell papers. Or the stories may have reflected Schade’s own tales or the rumors swirling about him.

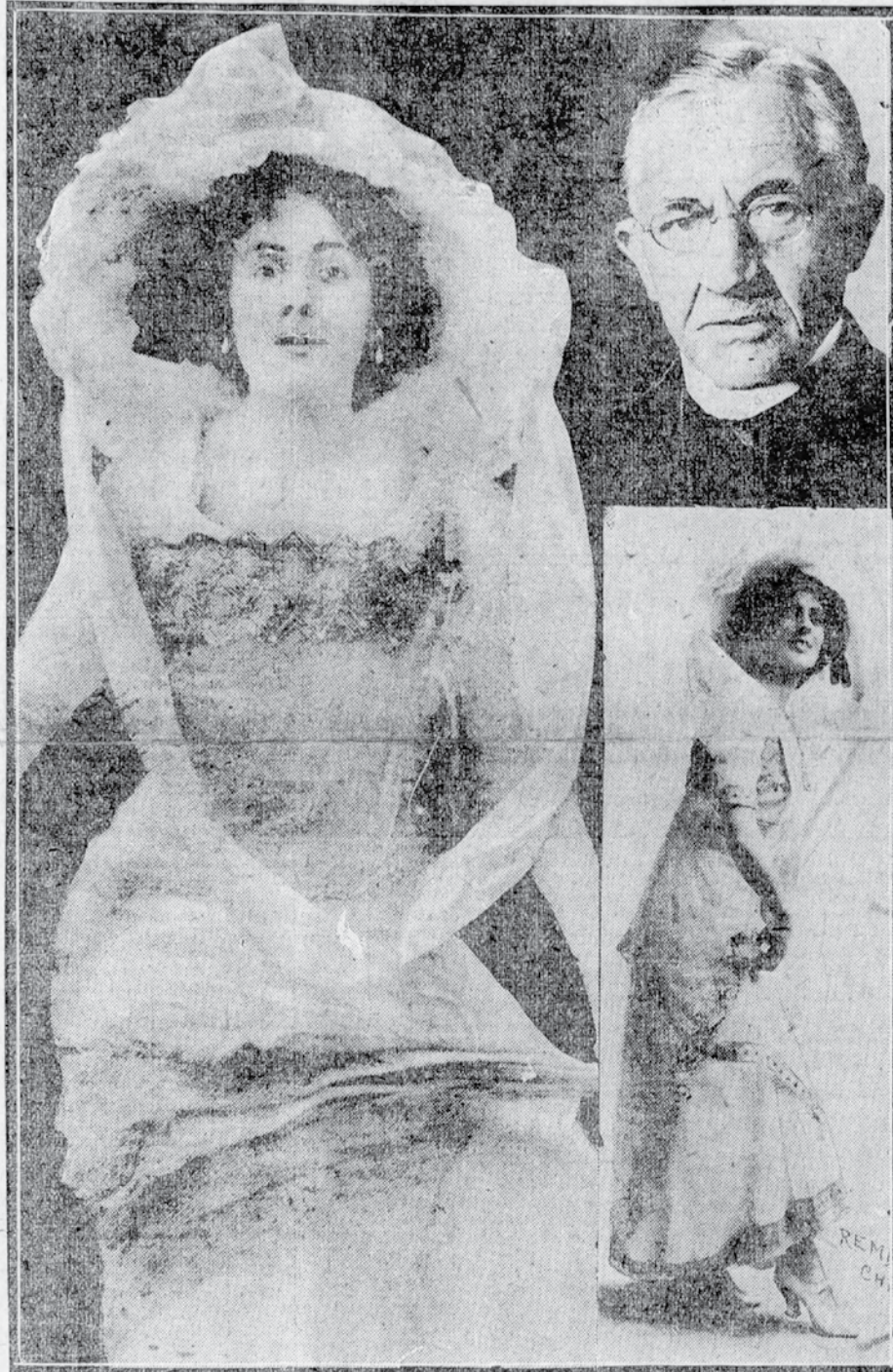
Copies of Schade’s *Philosophy of History* were also found in the room where he died. One copy was open, as if Schade had been reading from it. Because the book’s language was so dense, and the subject so obscure, not even experts in the field bothered reading or refuting it. Common readers might not have suspected that it was bogus or might have dismissed it as typical of highfalutin’ scholarly nonsense. With a book to his name, even a self-published one, Schade could more easily claim status in the academic and ecclesiastical realms.

The writing in Schade’s book is long and convoluted, with plenty of ambiguity and passive voice. Paragraphs seem to have a topic but never a purpose. For Schade, no verbal transition was off limits: he jumped from biology to metaphysics, or from the history of “early man” to an inquiry about life in the cosmos. He dropped obscure reference after obscure reference, rarely citing the precise location of his source. And he was interested in absolutely everything.

Schade included references to the “Accado-Sumerians,” the law of “polar tension,” and “Zeit-raum” all on one page. The Turano-Mongolo-Malayan nations make an appearance. We fly from Cape Comorin to the steppes of the Kirgheeze, from the Isle of Efat near Erromanga in the group of the New Hebrides, and make acquaintance with the Tauregs, Basutos, and Betsuanes, the Hermundurians and Herulians, Cheruskians and Sigambrians, the Albanese, Etruscans, and the Ægyptians (his spelling).

It is unfortunate that some real academic writing is dense enough that it is difficult to discern whether Schade’s writing makes sense or not. Line after line reads like this: “Despite such a

Two Photographs of Beautiful Woman Found Near Dead Man



These two photographs, presumably of the same girl, were found in the effects of Rev. August E. Schade, who was found dead at the Rand Hotel Monday. There were no names on the pictures to identify them. Across the back of the larger one was written, apparently in the handwriting of Rev. Schade, "Auf Wiedersehn." The photographs were made in Chicago. Many letters signed "Allene" were found in Schade's suit case. Several were dated Chicago. The picture of the man above is that of Schade. These pictures are printed in the hope that they may be recognized and that friends of Schade may thus be located.

negative result, the reason within us would insist upon its claim for an answer to its postulate. The postulate of reason cannot point us all into an empty void which is unthinkable, since matters and facts press upon us with incitements to think, and since reason itself continues to challenge reasons." But what does this mean? Nothing, mostly likely. Or perhaps an English variation of German philosophical prose.

Schade does seem to have believed in progress and to have imagined a divine being shaping history. He felt that a philosophy of history needed to be comprehensive and to explain everything. He did not call it "a" philosophy of history, though. In typically confident style, he called it *The Philosophy of History*. But like the story of Schade's life, his book made little sense and was largely fraudulent. His "Era Nueva" Mission also reflected his belief in grand changes in history, shaped by a divine power. In the end, Schade died with his book beside him and 45-cents in his pocket.

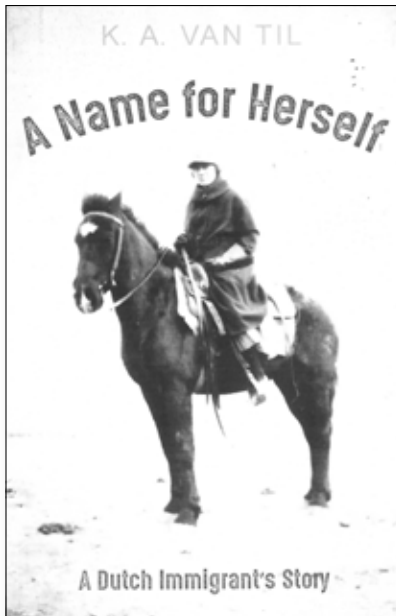


There is one final twist in the story. Schade's first name was not Augustus but rather Ernest. At some point in the early 1870s, he had begun to invert his first and middle names. Ernest Frederick Augustus was the name he had used on his naturalization papers in 1879. It is also the name used for him in 1910 in the U.S. Census for Brooklyn when he was a sometime resident in an "Altenheim" (The German Evangelical Home for the Aged). As with so much of his life and "career," it is not clear what he was thinking or what his purposes were in changing his name.³⁴

Endnotes

1. A. E. Schade, *The Philosophy of History* (Cleveland: A. Schade Publisher, 1899). The title page notes that Schade's work is "based upon the works of Dr. R. Rocholl."
2. The researcher was Guy P. Bready. Information provided by Alison Mallin, archives assistant at the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society.
3. *Acts and Proceedings of the Synod of the German Reformed Church of Ohio and Adjacent States* (Cincinnati, T. P. Bucher, 1869), 2, 26.
4. Theodore P. Bolliger, *History of the First Reformed Church of Canton, Ohio* (Cleveland, OH: Central Publishing House, 1917), 125.
5. Robert Swierenga, "Ohio's Calvin College," Swierenga website, http://swierenga.com/OhioCalvinCollege_art.html (accessed 27 July 2023).
6. *De Deutsche correspondent*, 19 January 1891; *Baltimore Sun*, 19 November 1888.
7. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 8 January 1892.
8. *The Democratic Advocate*, 11 July 1891; *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 29 January 1892.
9. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 5 August 1892.
10. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 12 December 1891; 7 January 1892; 28 January 1892; 1 April 1892; 4 December 1892; *The Morning Call*, 8 January 1892.
11. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 9 January 1892; 13 January 1892; 29 January 1892.
12. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 15 January 1892.
13. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 17 January 1892. I could find no evidence that an "A. Butz Sr." ever lived in Fremont, Washington, or in any other Fremont, for that matter. It would not have been out of character for Schade to have invented the man and written letters pretending to be him.
14. *Ursinus College Bulletin*, 10:2 (November 1893). Digital Commons at Ursinus College.
15. *Harrisburg Daily Independent*, 20 December 1894; *Altoona Tribune*, 20 December 1894. *The Scranton Tribune*, 21 December 1894, adds that he was called a "fraud, a nuisance, and a liar."
16. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 25 December 1894.
17. *The Morning Call*, 7 February 1895; *The Evening Democrat*, 20 May 1895; *Williamsport Sun-Gazette*, 11 December 1895; *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, 9 April 1897.
18. *The Pittsburgh Press*, 1 August 1897.
19. *Freie Presse Fur Texas*, 3 August 1899; *Der Deutsche Correspondent*, 3 August 1899.
20. *The Indianapolis Journal*, 14 July 1901.
21. *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 January 1906.
22. *Star Tribune*, 28 May 1908.
23. *The Cuba Review* (December 1908), 26.
24. *The Lima Morning Star and Republican Gazette*, 21 September 1911.
25. *Pomona Morning Times*, 23 October 1912.
26. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 5 May 1910.
27. *Westliche Post*, 9 August 1912.
28. *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 9 January 1913.
29. *The Cincinnati Post*, 7 January 1913.
30. *Minnesotke noviny*, 16 January 1913; *Omaha World-Herald*, 10 January 1913.
31. *The Cincinnati Post*, 10 January 1913.
32. *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8 January 1913.
33. *Portsmouth Daily Times*, 7 January 1913; *The Lima News*, 7 January 1913; *Telegraph-Forum*, 10 January 1913.
34. The observant reader will note that Schade appeared in the U.S. 1910 Census twice, one time in Cleveland and another in New York. Demographers point out that such double counting, or "overcounting" on the census is not rare, especially for persons who moved frequently. Schade's landlord in Cleveland and the manager of the retirement home in Brooklyn likely entered his name in the census in both cases.

book reviews



A Name for Herself: A Dutch Immigrant's Story

K. A. Van Til

Eugene, Oregon:
Resource Publications, 2020

A *Name for Herself* is a well-told story, one that mixes a variety of genres. It's not an academic book, though its author, Kent Van Til, is a scholar who has taught at various kinds of institutions. It reads at times like history, memoir, and fiction—and occasionally “tall tale.” Except for the introduction and epilogue, where the voice is Kent's, the story is told in the voice of Minnie Zwier, his grandmother.

In the introduction, Van Til recounts a conversation with Minnie in which she tells him that she hasn't made a name for herself. Maybe her grandchildren will, she offers. Kent

wrote the book, he explains, to honor his beloved grandmother and the countless “ordinary” women like her. Like so many such people who usually are forgotten, it turns out that Zwier's life sometimes was extraordinary.

Whether her life was ordinary or extraordinary, Van Til's book, in the voice of his grandmother, gives Minnie Zwier a name and a story. The story takes her family and her from the Netherlands to the United States, from blue collar life in Illinois to the frontier in Montana and back again, from a horse-and-buggy world in 1898 to one with jet airplanes in the late twentieth century.

We see Minnie sewing clothes and riding horses and hear her complain—or pretend to complain—about her husband's libido. We catch glimpses of the prejudices of the past, ones we're not yet done with. We experience immigrants becoming Americans. Al Capone shows up, along with a Christian Reformed “rum runner.” Minnie wins the right to vote in her congregation, and her daughter becomes a deacon in the Christian Reformed Church. We see how church communities shaped her life and listen in as she talks with a Roman Catholic neighbor. The 1960s happen.

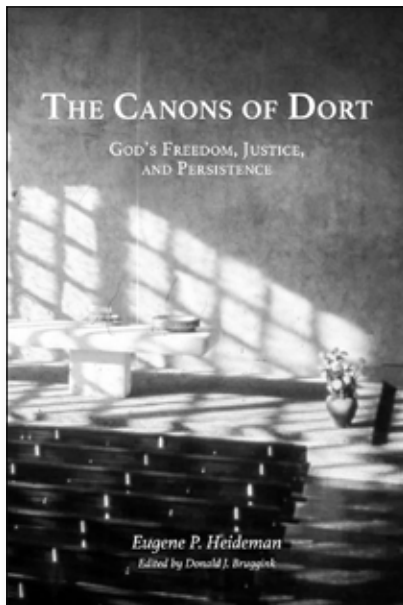
In short, it's a story that takes us deep into the experience of the past in times of change, and one that lifts us up as readers. It's an earthy story in every sense of the word, and one filled with spirit and faith.

The measure of a book like this is not where it fits in with the

scholarship on Dutch American history or whether it gets all the details of context, fact, and translation exactly right. It's not a book with footnotes that I could check. And I was not sure how to assess whether possible “errors” were attributable to Van Til, the scholar, or reflections of a person remembering her distant past. At points the voice of Minnie—or is it Kent's scholarly voice?—shifts from recalling memories to sounding like a historian. But the book works.

A book like this works when you feel that you've vicariously experienced—and to some degree understood—what life was like for folk in a different time and place. Van Til's book and Minnie's story do this and do it delightfully. *Origins* readers will immensely enjoy *A Name for Herself*.

William Katerberg
Calvin University



The Canons of Dort: God's Freedom, Justice, and Persistence

Eugene P. Heideman and
Donald J. Bruggink, ed
Holland, Michigan:
Van Raalte Press, 2023
394 pp. \$30.00

The doctrinal statement known as the Canons of Dort has had a central place in the history of Dutch Calvinism going back four centuries. In recent decades, however, both the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) have adhered to it practically in an only occasional manner. Many, if not most, people within both denominations may know of the Canons, but few now give much attention to this Reformed standard.

In *The Canons of Dort: God's Freedom, Justice, and Persistence*, the late Eugene Heideman reintroduces the Canons to the church. He sets this confession in historical context, emphasizing the biblical texts that animate it. Heideman was a pastor and a professor at Western Theological Seminary (WTS). He died before completing the book, so his WTS colleague Donald Bruggink completed it. Readers will find illuminating its descriptions of some of the heated debates in the Dutch Reformed church back in the early 1600s.

Heideman astutely treats the canons (Latin for “rule” or “law”) in the singular voice, rather than the plural. The Synod of Dort in the Netherlands in 1619 adopted the Canons. “It,” to use Heideman’s preference, was given equal stature with the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. But while the latter two doctrinal statements address broad issues of faith, not so with the Canons of Dort. Rather, the Canons speak to specific, limited issues of faith: God’s role in election, as well as the role of those whom God elects.

Some, known as Arminians, believed that God’s role in saving the elect boils down to God’s foreknowing those who, during their earthly lives, would choose of their own free will to believe. To them, God then gives the gift of election—eternal life. The counterpart Arminian belief was that those whom God knows from the beginning of time will reject God—the reprobate—God simply allows to be damned for eternity. The former seem to have earned their salvation, and

the latter seem to have earned their damnation.

Contentious—even assaultive—debates about Arminianism erupted during the first decade of the seventeenth century. Church and government leaders in the Netherlands demanded clarification of Arminian (and other suspect) teachings about salvation. That clarifying document was called the Remonstrance of 1610. Within that document—ultimately declared by the Synod of Dort to be heresy—were five points. The Synod of Dort met from late 1618 to mid-1619, during which those five points were rejected, giving birth to the Canons of Dort and its own five points.

Heideman’s book tracks the order and content of the Canons of Dort’s five points. He focusses on the Canons’ emphasis on God’s justice, love, and wrath. He notes the first canon’s uncompromising insistence that God’s love is free to be unlimited in embracing the undeserving elect, at the same time as being unimpeachable in allowing the deserving reprobate to be hell-bound. That is, God is absolutely free to elect only some, and God has purpose in such a selective election. Heideman writes, “In its response to the Remonstrants’ quotation of John 3:16, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,’ the Synod of Dort substituted for that clause the words from 1 John 4:9, ‘God sent His only begotten Son into the world.’ The Canons of Dort then completed the sentence with the remaining clause of John 3:16, ‘so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.’ The synod wrote the combination of

the verses in that way because it did not believe that God loves the entire world—just the elect. It was ready to agree that God does have a *sort* [emphasis mine] of love for the world in general, but it was not ready to agree that God loves all people redemptively in Christ” (126).

This review does not permit space to give anything close to a comprehensive overview of Heideman’s astonishing illustration of all that is addressed—either explicitly or implicitly—within the Canons of Dort. Those who work their way through Heideman’s book will find it unarguably comprehensive—and equally evocative. To wit...

As a retired pastor who served an RCA congregation for 31 years, I can attest to some of the ways that the Canons of Dort remains a doctrinal standard that continues to stretch, if not stress, parishioners who sit in the pews from Sabbath to Sabbath. Countless such faithful sisters and brothers in Christ confided in me their deep yearning, if not conviction, that if God loves one, God loves all. More than one of these dear friends in my congregation referenced their discovery in parenthood that they could never, ever give preferential care to one of their offspring over another. To the contrary, those mothers and fathers would say to me with tears in their faith-filled eyes, “I love each and every one of my children, equally and unboundedly.” Those words would always move my pastoral heart. And they almost always would be followed with those fellow believers saying, “And I believe God does, too.”

Such spiritually instinctive confessions point to the center of what must have energized, if not schismatized, those who participated in the Synod of Dort in the early seventeenth century. Heideman’s incisive analysis captures much of the essence of that dialogue. I sincerely believe that dialogue is not meant to end, even—if not especially—with the seemingly concretized standard of Reformed doctrine known as the Canons of Dort. Heideman’s work, graciously and masterfully completed by Bruggink, should be a part of that ongoing dialogue within the wider church.

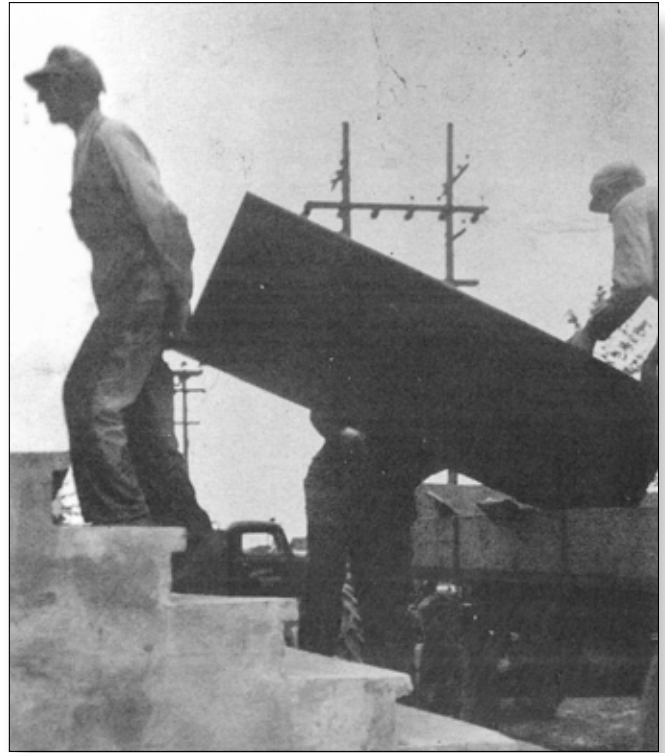
Robert J. Luidens
Holland, Michigan

for the future

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

The Fall 2024 issue is in the planning phases. It will include stories about the “Seminary Dames,” a club organized by wives of seminary students in the 1920s; part three of the story of Wilma and Walter Lagerwey; Christian Reformed Church building in Canada, and much more!

Dick Veenendaal helping carry a pew into the newly renovated church building of First Christian Reformed Church in Sarnia, 1949. Dick’s crew would build or renovate a dozen church buildings for new Christian Reformed congregations started by immigrants in Ontario from the late 1940s to the late 1950s. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.



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Give 'Em the Axe

Give 'em the axe, the axe, the axe,
Give 'em the axe, the axe, the axe,
WHERE! ? ? ? ?
Right in the neck, the neck, the neck
Right in the neck, the neck, the neck
THERE! ! ! !

Who For?

1 — 2 — 3 — 4, who for? What for?
Who are you going to root for?
CALVIN! !
(Repeat three times)

All Hail!

All hail!
All hail!
All hail!
All hail!
(Name of individual.)

Hold, Team

Hold, team, hold!
Hold, team, hold!
Hold, team, hold!
Fight, Fight,
Fight!



Pud and Shiner in Action

Sic 'Em

S-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-c
Um-m-m-m-m-m-m
Ah-h-h-h-h-h
(Whistle)
CALVIN!

Boom Chicka Boom

Boom chicka boom, Boom chicka boom
Boom chicka, ricka chicka, ricka
chicka boom,
Siss boom bah! Siss boom bah!
Calvin College, rah! rah! rah!

Calvin Locomotive

U!.....Rah!.....Rah!.....Rah! Calvin! Calvin!
U!.....Rah!.....Rah!.....Rah! Calvin! Calvin!
U!.....Rah!.....Rah!.....Rah! Calvin! Calvin!
Rah!.....

(Start slowly, gradual increase of speed.)

We had a bit of room at the end of the issue, so I added this image. It's just here to enjoy! A bit of Calvin College history from the 1921 Prism Yearbook. 1920 was the first year Calvin had a yearbook and the year it graduated its first students with baccalaureate degrees. Sports teams also were a new thing at Calvin. The College's men's basketball team played its first official game in December 1920 against Hope College, losing 30-13. "Pud" and "Shiner," the "Yell-masters," were Calvin College's first cheer leaders. Their cheers are an odd mix of, well, odd and blood-thirsty! To use a phrase from the 1920s, they were the "cat's pajamas."

Will Katerberg

Origins

Heritage Hall Archives

Calvin University
3201 Burton Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

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