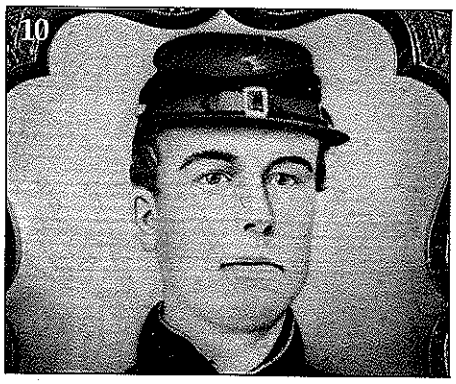
Historical Magazine of Calvin College and Seminary Archives Volume VI, Number 1, 1988

# ORIGINS



4 **Dutch American Reactions**
by H. J. Brinks

19 **View from Iowa**
Translations by Mr. E. R. Post

23 **Avoiding the War**
by Christine Jacobs

26 **Chicago: The Americanization of Bernardus De Beij (1815–1894)**
by H. J. Brinks

32 **The Passport**
by Jennie Visser

36 **Dutch Silver**

42 **For the Future**

43 **Books**
by Conrad Bult

45 **Contributors**


Cover: "A Soldier's Christmas"

*Origins*, Volume VI, Number 1
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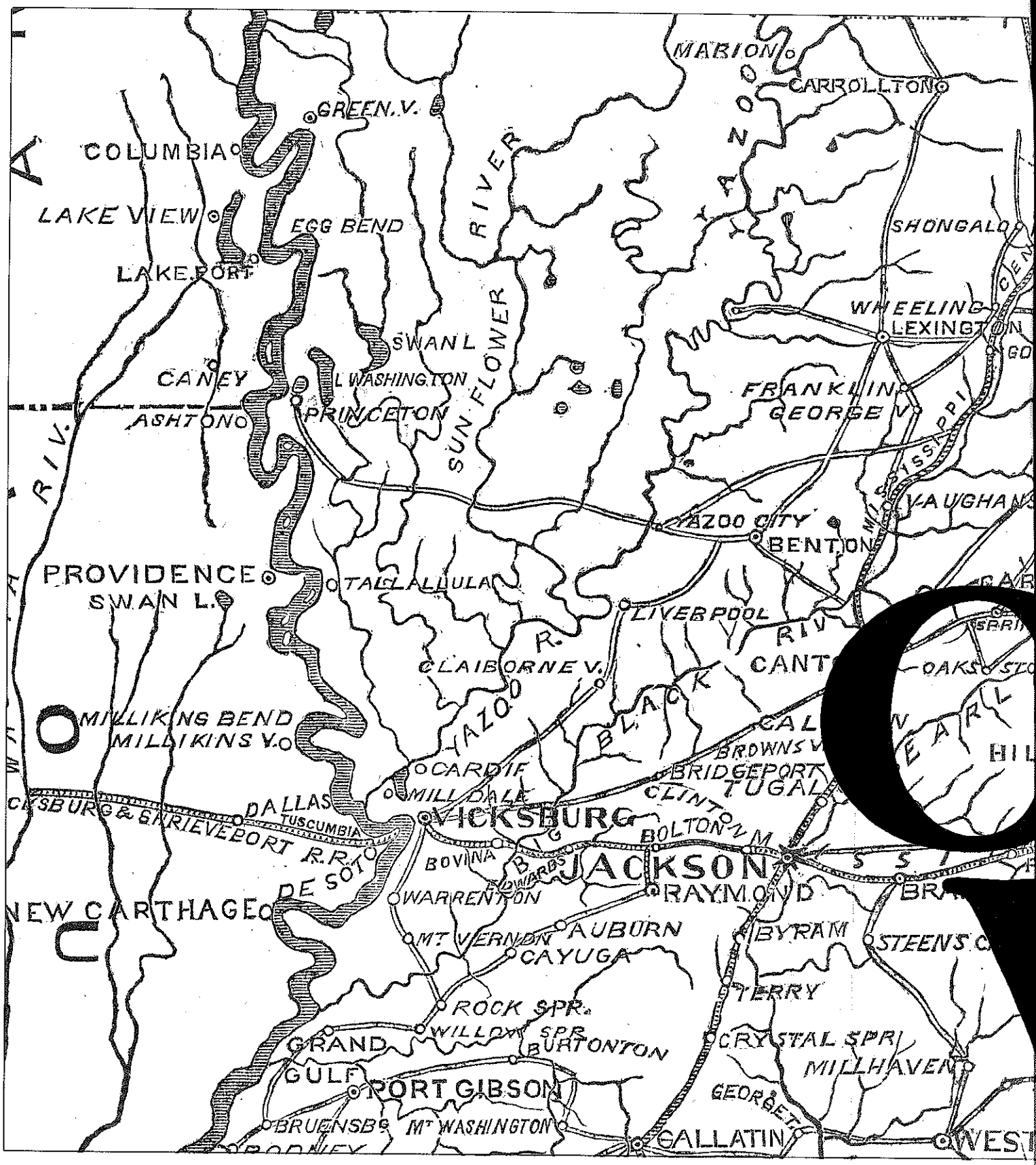
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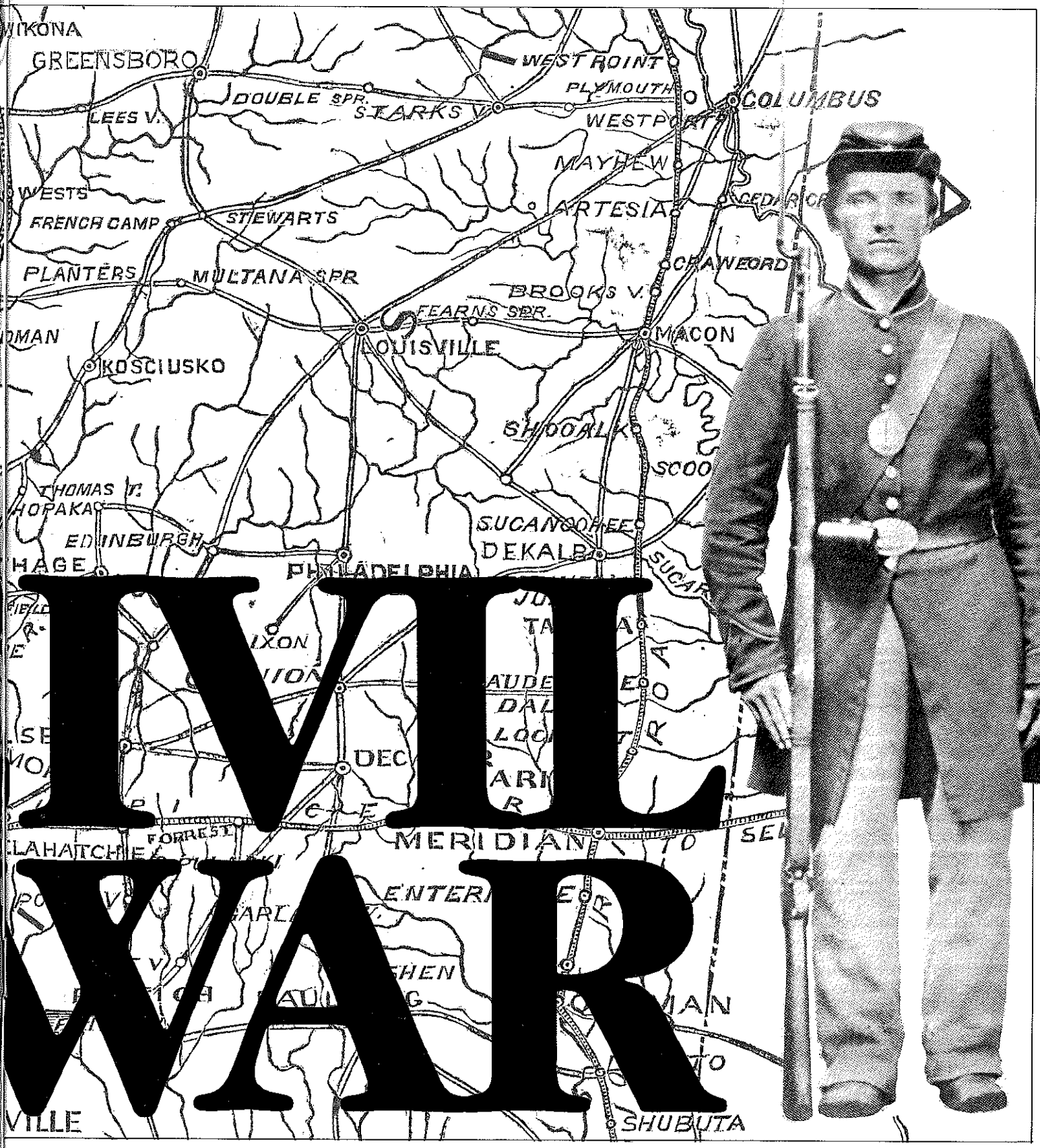
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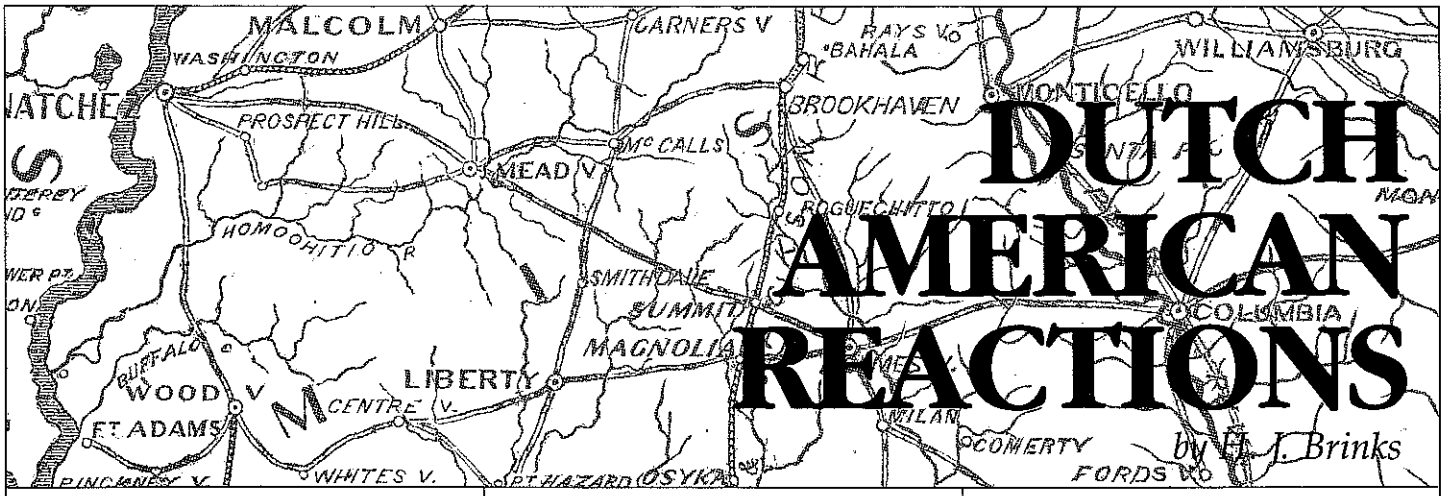



# DUTCH AMERICAN REACTIONS

by H. J. Brinks

The War Between the States has been described as the first modern war, but also as the last traditional war. Both of these judgments are tenable. The war began with gallant frontal assaults featuring individual combat between sword-wielding horsemen. War cries, ballads, and regimental flags provided festive accompaniment to charges and countercharges, while majors and generals stood out vulnerably in conflict. Courage topped every virtue, and conspicuous gallantry was expected. To be branded a coward was a fate worse than death. But, as the war continued, the accuracy of rifled barrels and the use of exploding mortars drove old-fashioned gallantry underground and forced the soldiers to scurry about like moles. They learned to conceal themselves and to burrow in trenches much like the soldiers of World War I. Discretion became the better part of valor.[1]

President Lincoln's early calls to arms attracted over 700,000 volunteers, and ultimately half of the North's eligible populace enlisted. Even after initial Northern defeats (in 1861–62), volunteers continued to sign up. They expected a short and glorious tour of duty. But casualties such as those which the troops incurred at Antietem diminished the romantic aura of military service,[2] and by 1863 Lincoln was constrained to employ the draft.

Still, draftees accounted for only about 10 percent of the North's troops—a probable consequence of their reputation as second-rate soldiers and potential cowards. Desertion was common after 1863, when some 200,000 Northern troops fled the ranks. Many of these were draftees or substitutes whose services had been purchased. On both sides the war's human cost was enormous. The North suffered 360,000 fatalities, the South, 260,000. The combined total, 620,000, nearly equals the 680,000 deaths inflicted by all the other wars which the United States has waged.[3] It is not surprising, then, that the Civil War has engendered unabated interest as well as contrasting interpretations from 1861 to the present. With its controversial generals and martyred president and its impact on noncombatants and the national economy, it has inspired an astonishing wealth of literature.

Understandably, too, the Civil War also received considerable attention within the Dutch-American community. Virtually every young man confronted the choice of voluntary enlistment, conscription with the possibility of purchasing a substitute, or outright draft evasion, and all of these choices were evident among the Dutch. On the home front no one could escape the impact of rising prices and taxes or the presence of inflated paper currency, which drove hard coinage out of circulation. Reports about the Civil War experience from battlefields, farms, and villages display a wide spectrum of Dutch-American reaction to that war. On the home front in Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, and elsewhere, the Civil War gained only grudging support. Lincoln's broad objective—to preserve the Union—enjoyed some approval but not at any cost, and many observers were convinced that the human and material losses of the conflict outweighed the benefits of victory. By contrast, most of the soldiers became enthusiastic combatants who identified heartily with Lincoln's policies.

**Views from the Home Front**

Illustrating the lukewarm home-front perception of the conflict, Peter Lankester's lengthy and remarkably accurate summary of the war in 1863 declared, "I can easily understand that you are curious to know something about this war, and I intend to tell you about it to the best of my ability. Still, it is hard to know where to begin because the war is so huge, bloody, and destructive that pen and ink cannot describe it.

"Unless God intervenes with a solution, I fear that the war will lead to total destruction on both sides because each side is determined to hold out until the last man falls—so they fight on

without hope of victory. When reports of each new battle arrive, the question is not how many hundreds, but how many thousands have been killed.

"I don't know if you have heard how this war began, so I will provide you with a brief account of its origin. In November 1860 a new president was elected, and it is normal for such an event to create great excitement here because the contest usually involves two or more contenders for the office. In the last election the contest was betwen the Democrats and Republicans, and the Republicans were victorious. As soon as the largely Democratic southern region of the country knew that they lost, they also knew that the future of southern slavery was in jeopardy. Thus they instigated a rebellion and seceded from the Union with six or seven states. If the old president (James Buchanan), who remained in office from November until March,* had acted immediately to quell the rebellion, it could have been contained, but [Buchanan] raised no army against the seceders, and thus Lincoln had to begin from the ground up with military preparations in March. Meanwhile, the armies of rebellion had become strong. Lincoln began his preparation by calling for a volunteer army, and people responded by the thousands. An army of 600,000 was assembled. I and other people thought that the rebellion would quickly be snuffed out, but we were mistaken, because we soon lost a major battle. We consoled ourselves by thinking that our army was not yet well enough organized and that things would go better in the future when the army was better trained. That turned out to be true, but our troops were so severely depleted from sickness, death, and casualties that the president had to call for another 600,000 troops, thus assembling an army of more than a million."[4]

*"A soldier's Christmas"*

The armies were gathered by assigning quotas to each state, and when the number of volunteers fell short, the states initiated local induction procedures. Thus, in 1862, when Wisconsin's volunteers were not sufficient to meet its quota, violent opposition erupted against the draft lottery. The state's Germans were especially agitated by the lottery because many of them had immigrated to escape military service in Germany. They had little sympathy for Lincoln's war or for the emancipation of slaves. Quite simply, it was not their war. So riots occurred in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Port Washington, and elsewhere.[5]

Commenting on two of these riots, P. Lankester explained: "This draft took place last summer in July [1862], but it did not proceed very smoothly. At first many volunteers were attracted by the offer of large bonuses which were offered by the government and by private citizens. Each city and town knew exactly how many soldiers they were required to deliver . . . and after the first volunteers were enumerated, Wisconsin remained four thousand short of its allotment. In our town [Milwaukee], fifty-three had to be chosen by lottery, and the day of the lottery was indeed a fearful one in Milwaukee—for myself and thousands more. I will never forget how the Lord spared me on that day.

"The lottery, though, was not carried on without difficulty, for on the day it was to be held, the people of Milwaukee chased the lottery committee and all of its assistants out of town. Then the lottery was postponed for ten days, with the warning that force would be used to punish any future troublemakers. The lottery then proceeded without difficulty because the governor of Wisconsin promised that the first person who dared to interfere with the lottery would be drafted into the army to serve for the duration of the war.

"In another place, though, the

**The so-called "lame duck" period, when the incumbent remained in power while the newly elected president awaited inauguration in March. This procedure was altered by the Twentieth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1933.*

people did chase the lottery committee out of town, throwing some of them into the mud and setting their homes afire. The governor then sent out a regiment of soldiers to enforce the law, but some people stationed cannons along the harbor where they expected the troops to arrive. The soldiers were too crafty for that tactic. They arrived overland from the opposite direction, and the ringleaders were imprisoned.

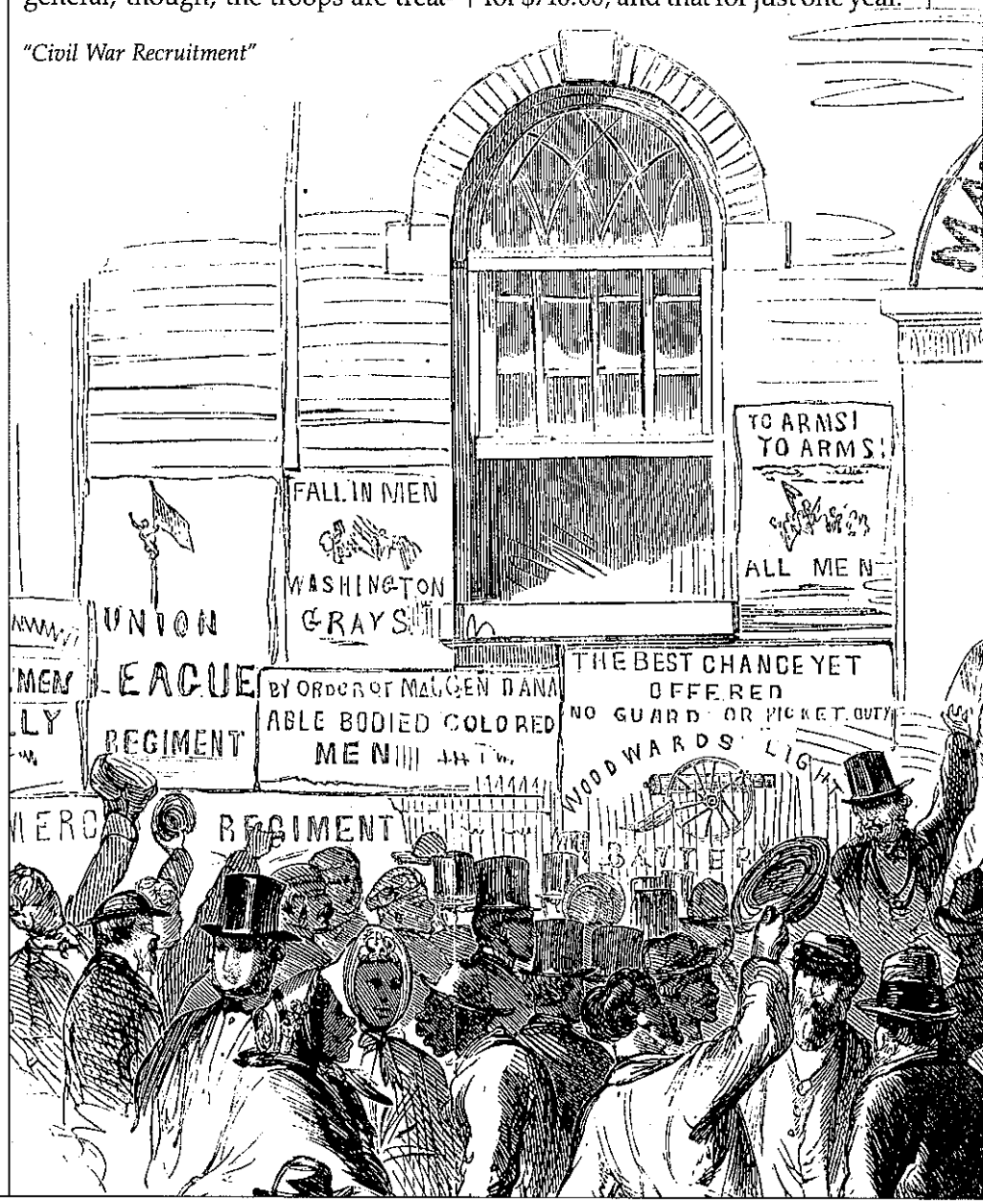
"The lottery is conducted quite differently here than in Holland. . . . Here, when a person's name is drawn, he is given notice to appear before the lottery committee within five days, and he is then transported to camp immediately. You can easily imagine how depressing it must be for a man with a wife and children who must leave everything behind while giving himself over to be armed and sent off to battle—and with little hope of returning."

The high rate of military fatalities, which led Lankester to conclude that "hope of returning" was slight, certainly heightened the fear of military duty. But death came more often from diseases than from bullets. Overall, the death rate from ordinary ailments exceeded battlefield casualties by two to one. At first measles and mumps romped through the ranks, and they were replaced by typhoid and malaria as the war went on. Coupled with battle casualties, these ailments decimated some units by as much as 50 percent. Although Lankester reported inflated casualty rates, the actual numbers were chilling enough.

His letter declares, "I can't write with too much authority about this last matter, but I know of several regiments which left in September with over one thousand men and are now less than three hundred strong. One Dutch farmhand, who lived with us for a few years before volunteering with the 20th Wisconsin Regiment, wrote to his father that only forty of his company of one hundred had remained—and that without fighting a battle. The loss of so many folk results from fatigue and privation, for conditions are so severe that they are hard to believe. Many times the soldiers must march for days and weeks through the woods and wilderness. Then they must sleep under the sky without half enough to eat. Mostly the food consists of a biscuit with coffee unless they are in a regular camp, where the food is somewhat better. In general, though, the troops are treated like animals. Thus it is no surprise that people resist the draft."[6]

Among the Dutch there is no record of organized resistance to the draft, but some did purchase substitutes or flee to Canada. From Pella, C. Jongewaard wrote, "F. Lakeman sold his property and went to Canada. . . . He was afraid of the draft because he is not married." From Wisconsin, G. W. Bloemers reported that Gerrit Ten Dollen was selected by the lottery but bought himself off [paid a substitute] for $710.00, and that for just one year."

*"Civil War Recruitment"*



Michigan's Lucas Vredeveld avoided the lottery twice by purchasing substitutes.[7] That option was designed for household heads like Vredeveld, but some married men actually volunteered. And when the recently married William Baden joined the army, his brother Peter hastened to the induction center, hoping to dissuade William. "As soon as I heard about it," Peter wrote, "I tried to change his mind, but he was indifferent and unchanged. I warned him about the temporal and eternal consequences of his action, but that did not move him either. When we parted, I reminded him of our many religious differences, and then he burst into tears. I told him that then and there I was bearing witness against him and that I hoped on the great day of judgment I would not again be required to testify against him. He left his wife here in Milwaukee, but they have no children." It is not clear whether Peter opposed all military service or only that which fractured families.[8]

On the home front gruesome reports of diseases, starvation, and death convinced many that enlistment was virtually suicidal. C. M. Budde wrote, "America is in a bad state of affairs. Thousands are dead and there is no progress." Another Iowan declared, "It is said that 600,000 are in arms—and that half of the army is already lost by strife and by imprisonment in the South. Reports are that the conflict is beyond description. Currently they are busily raising another army of six hundred thousand." Exaggerations spiraled when one correspondent declared, "The loss is now estimated to be one million men—on both sides. Many Hollanders have already volunteered for service, leaving large families behind. A soldier receives thirteen dollars a month, free clothing, and one hundred dollars when his time is up. But there is little chance of that. I know of some regiments which formerly consisted of a thousand men. They now have about fifty, and some still less. I, and many others, have been tired of this war for a long time, but it will not stop until we have the other folk under control. They say openly that they are not willing to stop until the last colored person is free. But I feel quite differently. I think slavery is permissible, but I would never want to have any [slaves]."[9]

Similarly morose, Peter Baden declared, "It is apparent that the nation is destroying itself. Provisions which armies leave behind are forgotten, and both cities and villages are set afire. Meanwhile, the nation is sinking into debt. Money is losing its value, but still the printing of paper money goes on. The sun of prosperity has set on this nation."[10]

Peter Lankester, who shared Baden's anxiety, complained, "Gold and silver coinage no longer circulate—even the copper cent has disappeared. Now nothing but paper money circulates, and for small change people have begun to use postage stamps. The government has now begun to print paper money for small coins, too, so we do all our business with paper money just as they did in Holland some time ago. But when you want to exchange this paper money for gold or silver, you have to pay a premium of 40 to 60 percent at the bank. As you can imagine, that creates an enormous shortage of imported goods, because importers must pay foreign business in hard coin, which raises the cost. At the moment many items (cotton, for example) are twice as expensive here as in the Netherlands.

"Yes, dear Uncle, only the Lord knows what will become of this country—but from our viewpoint the outlook is most dark. . . . There is not the least hope that the war will end quickly."[11] Gloomy assessments dominated the views which the home fronters penned to the Netherlands. America, many asserted, was under divine judgment for excessive luxury, sin, and irreligion.[12]

**The Soldiers' Viewpoint**

Similar assessments are nowhere evident in the correspondence of the soldiers, who were generally enthusiastic warriors and hopeful about a Northern victory. The youngest among them had immigrated as two- and three-year-olds. But even though they had time enough to identify with the United States and its culture, they were raised in ethnic enclaves which largely isolated them from the dominant cul-

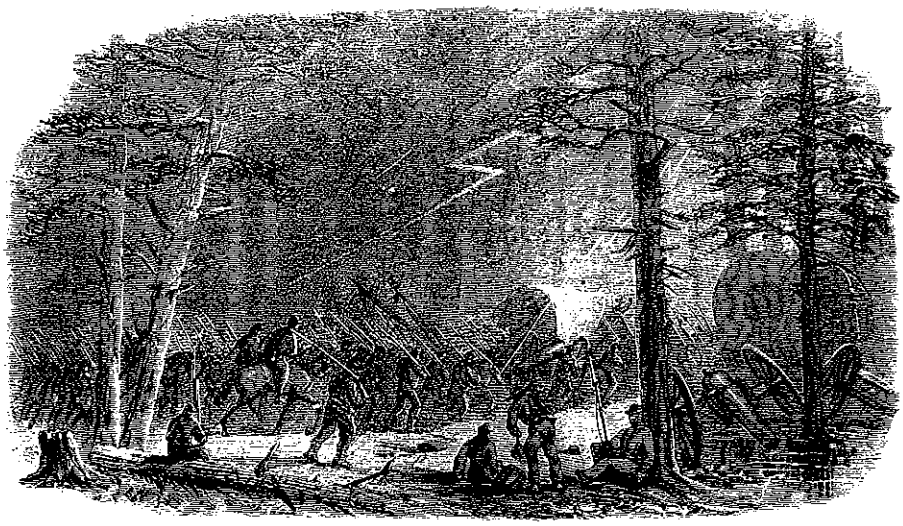
ture, and nearly all of them still corresponded in Dutch. It is surprising, then, that these young immigrants so readily adopted the patriotic verve of their comrades in arms. Their letters from military camps, battlefields, and hospitals extolled the Northern cause. Declarations of courage and bravery, including some jingoistic bravado, bristle from their letters. Like their American-born cohorts, they raged against cowards and slackers, and they denounced newspapers which reported gloomily of Northern losses.

Civil War historian Gerald Linderman convincingly demonstrates in *Embattled Courage* that the armies of both the North and South were motivated by traditional military values such as courage and manliness together with duty, honor, and godliness. But because Linderman's study excludes ethnic, black, and irregular military units, its thesis also needs testing within such groups. Available correspondence from Dutch immigrant soldiers indicates a general compatibility between the military values of the Dutch-Americans and their native-born comrades in arms. At the same time, some differences are evident. Linderman's thesis notes that traditional military values diminished as the war persisted and as its tactics became more modern. But the Dutch ethnics appear to have acquired a contrastingly greater enthusiasm for traditional military values as their terms of service lengthened. That development can probably be attributed to their status as cultural neophytes. Coming from isolated ethnic enclaves, they were not well acquainted with mainstream values, but after persisting contacts with their co-combatants, they learned to emulate their values.[13]

Dutch-American boys volunteered in significant numbers, and since the recruits from each geographic area remained together throughout their terms of service, military units formed in places like Pella and Holland were heavily tinctured, if not dominated, by Dutch Americans. Elsewhere whole companies and large parts of some regiments consisted of other ethnic groups such as the Germans and Irish. The Dutch were most heavily represented in Michigan's 25th Regiment, and Company I of that regiment consisted almost entirely of Dutch immigrants. Similarly, Iowa's Marion County provided over a hundred Dutch-American volunteers—a third of the total from that county.[14]

Available correspondence from these volunteers does not, however, demonstrate exuberant patriotism at the outset. Although obviously Unionist, they did not boast of Northern superiority or write glowingly of impending victories. They were driven more by duty than nationalistic bravado. As William G. Ledeboer* declared, "Sometimes I wish I was back home again, but when I think about the reasons I am here—fighting for the defense and love of my country—I am satisified." Another youth from

*"Cavalry Charge"*



*"Retreat"*

**W. G. Ledeboer from Holland, Michigan, served as a pharmacist and died of a fever in 1863.*

Ledeboer's company was quoted as having said, "Abe Lincoln is a fool to fight for a state such as this [Kentucky]. And if I was home, I'd not enlist again." Dirk Van Raalte, who later became an outspoken enthusiast for the Northern cause, wrote, "Father, when I ask you questions about the war, you should not think that I am getting tired of it. Oh no. Not at all. But I wouldn't mind if it came to an end."[15] Two years later, even after suffering wounds that required the amputation of his arm, Dirk was so committed to the cause that he planned to rejoin his regiment even though he was slated for discharge.** Of all the correspondents, only Benjamin Van Raalte began and continued his tour of service with unabated enthusiasm. His first letters declared, "The soldier's life is healthful" and, again, "Oh, what fun. Who wouldn't want to be a soldier? I have never had so much fun as I've had in camp." G. H. Slootman, however, offered an entirely different assessment. "How the war turns out makes little difference to the soldiers. Their only wish is for peace. The freeing of the slaves is not close to the soldiers' hearts. If we had half a chance, we would leave this army."[16]

Unlike most Civil War units, Michigan's Dutch company were well disciplined; they gained recognition as "white gloves" when they were used for the burial ceremonies of several generals. Of the "white glove" unit Lieutenant De Boe* wrote, "Every one of them is manly and well behaved—much more than I expected of some of them."[17] Describing an inspection drill which proceeded despite the unexpected absence of the reviewing general, Benjamin Van Raalte wrote, "Our colonel regretted it [the general's absence] because we looked so good. He'd allowed us a whole day to get ready, and he even hired a Louisville band. When the general didn't come, he said, 'We'll take the trip downtown anyway.' We had such good music it was a pleasure to listen. I would have spent $5.00 just to have you watch our battalion. I loved the sight of it—brass plates and buttons shining, guns glimmering, and our clothes all neat and clean. It went so smoothly. The whole unit moved as if it was one person. We wore white gloves like snow. We have been well drilled and go through our movements smoothly. I give our colonel the credit because our boys like him, and thus they catch on quickly." Writing similarly in October of that year, Dirk Van Raalte declared, "I wish you could be here to see the beautiful sight of the camp fires buring at night. The fires are spread out as far as the eye can see with soldiers standing or sitting near each fire. Some are cooking meals while others are chatting around the fire. I've never seen such a wonderful sight before."[18]

*Holland, Mich., Civil War Veterans, 1905*

As the war continued, and particularly after experiencing the rigors of combat, exuberant patriotism replaced dutiful compliance. For Michigan's Company I the July 4th defeat of J. C. Morgan's famed Kentucky Raiders at Tebb's Bend in 1863 was an emotional watershed. Following the battle, J. A. Wilterdink reported, "When the Rebels were within the range of a pistol shot, we opened fire, and every shot from our men was deadly. We lost very few. After bitter fighting, the enemy fled, and we could see that they had lost. I was quick to pick up a six-shot pistol from a dead officer. It is worth about $15.00. The dead men were lying all over. . . . The enemy had ten regiments, and we had only 250–257 men. It is clearly evident that God fought for us."[19]

Of that same engagement Dirk Van Raalte wrote, "It was a heavy battle and a glorious victory for us. The evening of July 3 we moved our camp across the Green River, and just as we transferred the goods (that is my re-

***Following Dirk's hospitalization (Aug. 9, 1864), his brother Ben wrote, "He [Dirk] has the courage of a lion and doesn't want to be mustered out after he is better. He wants to stay until his time is up." The Van Raalte boys were sons of Rev. Albertus Van Raalte, the leader of the Holland, Michigan, colony.*

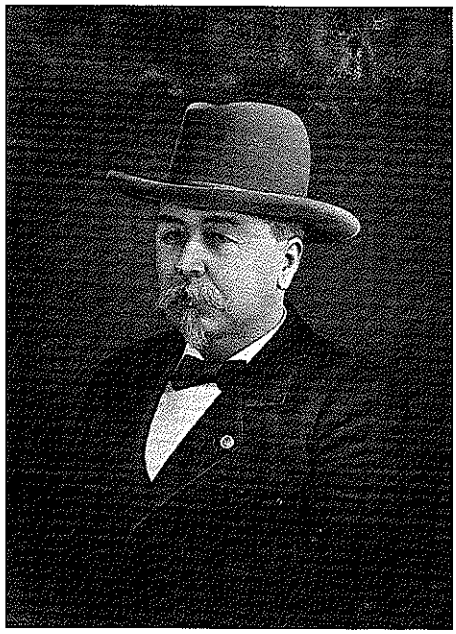
**De Boe, also from Holland, Michigan, was elected as the lieutenant of Company I.*

sponsibility because I am the hospital steward), we heard the racket of guns. . . . Then they came with a flag of truce and demanded our unconditional surrender. Our colonel* approached their major, shook his hand, and said, 'You know that today is the 4th of July, and it is too early in the morning to surrender on such a day!' The Rebels were as thick as hair on a dog. They were 5,000 strong, and we had no more than 175 men. The colonel moved to the rear and said, 'Now, boys, rise up and take deliberate aim.' This they did, and many Rebels were killed. We fought for almost four hours."[20]

*For a full and lucid account of the Tebb's Bend battle see Rev. Edward Masselink's article in the* Grand River Valley Review. *This article in 1979, Vol. I, #1, pp. 14–20 contains Rev. Masselink's careful research and reflection about a small but significant military encounter. The article is titled, "The Dutch Boys Stood Firm."*

The excitement of battle made the contrasting tedium of camp life nearly intolerable for Ben Van Raalte, and after Tebb's Bend he wrote, "I think our whole regiment will return to Louisville, but I would rather remain in the field. It's healthier and much more pleasant to make contact with the Rebels. Perhaps you think that once you've been exposed to battle you would be afraid of it. That's wrong. We are now more eager to fight than ever."[21]

Following Tebb's Bend and many additional engagements, John Wilterdink announced his complete espousal of the Northern cause. "I had entirely different thoughts about this war when I was home," he wrote, but here, on the battlefield, "my eyes see a different story than that which you see in your newspapers. . . . Although I would still like to agree with my family—including you, father—conditions are such that I am no longer cool or lukewarm toward the Rebellion."[22] Just before the 1864 presidential elections, Ben Van Raalte asserted, "I am happy about one thing for sure. Our boys have changed. Even Lieutenant Kramer, who was always such a staunch Democrat, has made a complete turnabout." In a postscript Van Raalte added, "I hope that our Hollanders [in Holland, Michigan] will know better than to vote for a peace Democrat like McClellan." Later Ben reported that thirty of his company favored Lincoln while only nine were still loyal to McClellan.[23] A vote for Lincoln was a vote for unconditional surrender and also then, continued hostilities. But long before the 1864 elections the Dutch volunteers had adjusted to the demands of battle and endorsed the virtues associated with successful combat.



*Dirk Van Raalte*

Military achievements, quite apart from the war's political objectives, produced their own rewards, and in the pursuit of objectives like victory and peer recognition, courage dwarfed all other virtues. Moreover, the isolated and artificial ethos of military life numbed the combatants' sensitivities to values like tolerance and respect for human life. Consequently, even first encounters with battlefield casualties elicited only mild expressions of horror. W. G. Ledeboer said it plainly: "You can't imagine what a sight it is to see one man shooting another. At first I thought it was horrible, but it almost seems like play now." Walter Weener** noted similarly that despite constant danger from crossfire, "It is just like anything else. It becomes a matter of custom."[24] Gerrit Van Bree, attatched to a cavalry unit stationed near Washington, D.C., complained during his hospitalization, "Oh, Father, it would do me so much good if I could get my hands on them [the enemy]. I'm fed up with lying in wait like a cat with a mouse." Following his convalescence and after an August cavalry engagement, Van Bree wrote, "We didn't dread the prospect of giving the Rebels a good beating. . . . I had to laugh at the way some of them jumped up and ran away. At times we literally

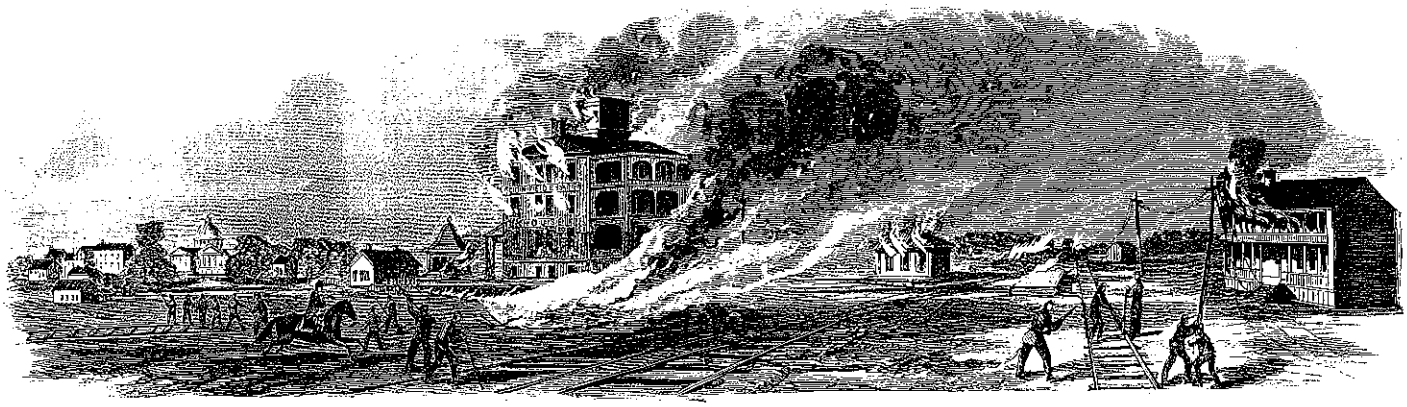
*Benjamin Van Raalte*

**Orland H. Moore, Regimental Commander of Michigan's 25th Regiment, was a native of Schoolcraft, Michigan.*

***Walter Weener, a Michigan volunteer, died in 1863 from wounds inflicted in Mississippi.*

split each other in two. We went at it as if we were plowing. It made no difference whom we rode over—both the living and dead. The dead lay so thick we couldn't help riding upon them. We have been in ten battles, and for my part, I've seen enough. I can't explain how we can be so embittered toward each other—especially since we've never seen each other before."[25] Casualties, though, did fuel both hatred of the enemy and loyalty to comrades. Ben Van Raalte, whose brother suffered wounds which required the amputation of an arm, fumed with rage, "I can make myself feel so full of hate for the Rebels that I could fight them the rest of my life and shoot them down in cold blood. The poor Rebs who fall into my hands are going to pay for Dirk's arm."[26]

Atrocities, while common enough on both sides, provided an additionally bitter dimension to the conflict. Reporting a particularly savage encounter, J. A. Wilterdink concluded, "This deed must be told time and again." During a counter maneuver in Tennessee, a Michigan and Indiana contingent marched sixty-five miles in a hasty retreat. "We did all right," Wilterdink wrote, "but we lost Otto Boot on our journey. First he was taken prisoner by guerrillas, but later he was shot dead with four others of our regiment and ten of the 13th Indiana Regiment. The Rebels thought all of them were dead, but one was not. He was wounded, and the next morning he came and told us about it. First they took everything away from them. They let them walk ten miles as fast as they could and then shot them dead to make an example of them. It is inhuman."[27]



*"Yesterday we burned a larger house—one just like the Holland Academy."—B. Van Raalte*

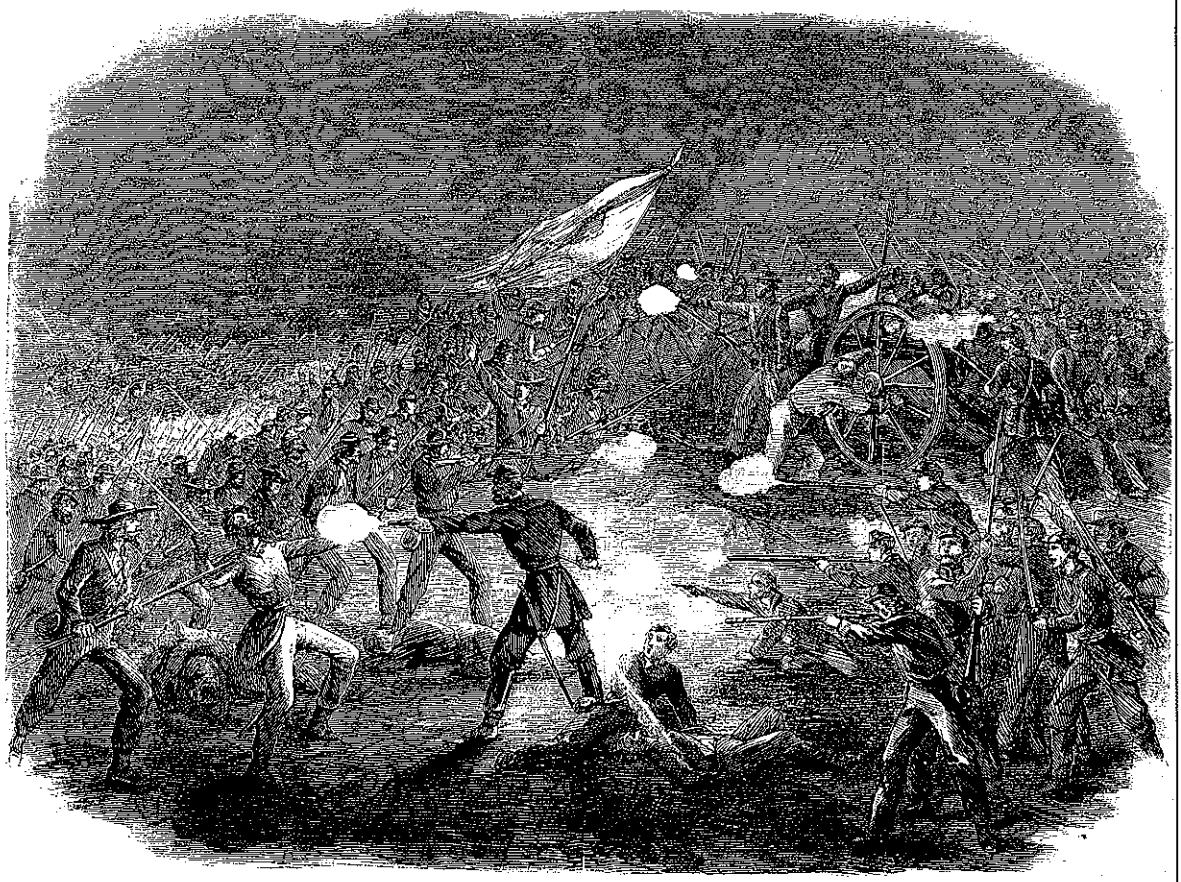
Despite such expressions of outrage, the warring contenders were also drawn together by shared experiences. Though enemies, they knew too that military life created a separate world which was closed to those without combat experience. Thus, the tedium of sentry duty often encouraged relaxed conversations among opposing sentries. For example, Dirk Van Raalte wrote, "We have much fun here. We are encamped on this side of the Tennessee River, and the Rebels are on the other side. We talk to them. They tease us and we tease them. We watch them and they watch us. . . . I guess we are not going to fight here." Similarly Gerrit Van Bree reported from Steven's Hill near Washington, D.C.: "Our camps are near each other, but now and then we go out to talk

with the Confederates, and they do the same with us. We grumble together quite a bit, but when we look at them, we have nothing to complain about. They run about with hardly any clothing, but we can get clothing if we pay for it. They can hardly get anything."[28]

The opponents also expressed admiration for obvious gallantry on both sides of the trenches. Thus, Ben Van Raalte commented, "The Rebs do fight desperately. . . . Last week we captured a Reb who kept on shooting when he was already as good as captured. Then he threw up his hands and said, 'Don't kill me!' The boys wanted to kill him, but the officers wouldn't allow it." In the same letter Van Raalte declared high admiration for a Captain Shields of the 19th Ohio Battery: "He is a real fighter. His battery belongs to our division, and Shields is the chief artillery officer. I have never seen his equal. He sometimes takes his battery right up to the skirmish line, and when he gets there, things really begin to happen. . . . I never saw such a man—he doesn't fear bullets and just stands there laughing. I am afraid he will get a bullet sometime because he is such a big fat fellow."[29]

In the presence of death, and even on deathbeds, manliness and courage were expected. Responding to his father's questions, Dirk Van Raalte answered, "You ask if the young men are downcast when they are wounded—not at all. They go into battle cheerfully, and they return cheerfully.* Also the wounded. Even the mortally wounded, although they are very quiet, say to us, 'Tell my folks that I have fought and that I did not die as a coward.' "[30]

Cowardice, or even the suggestion of it, was anathema to the seasoned volunteers. But as fresh recruits, the Dutch boys made little mention of cowardice or valor. They noted at times that some of their comrades claimed sickness to avoid onerous camp duties or that, in J. Wilterdink's words, "the Democrats** get the soft jobs like cooks, messengers, and orderlies."[31] But later, after battlefield experiences had sorted out the reluctant combatants, such behavior was singled out for brutal comment. When O. Doesburg returned to Michigan, Dirk Van Raalte reported, "He said he was sick, but actually he is homesick." Worse than that, "He's afraid of the bullets."[32] One year later, when a certain W. V. P. gained a medical discharge and returned to school, the ordinarily mild-mannered J. Wilterdink fumed, "I heard that W. V. P. is home with his full discharge. I wish that that coward with his lung or heart disease had come here in front of the enemy. Then he would have the heart disease! He has been playing sick pretty much all the time. As soon as

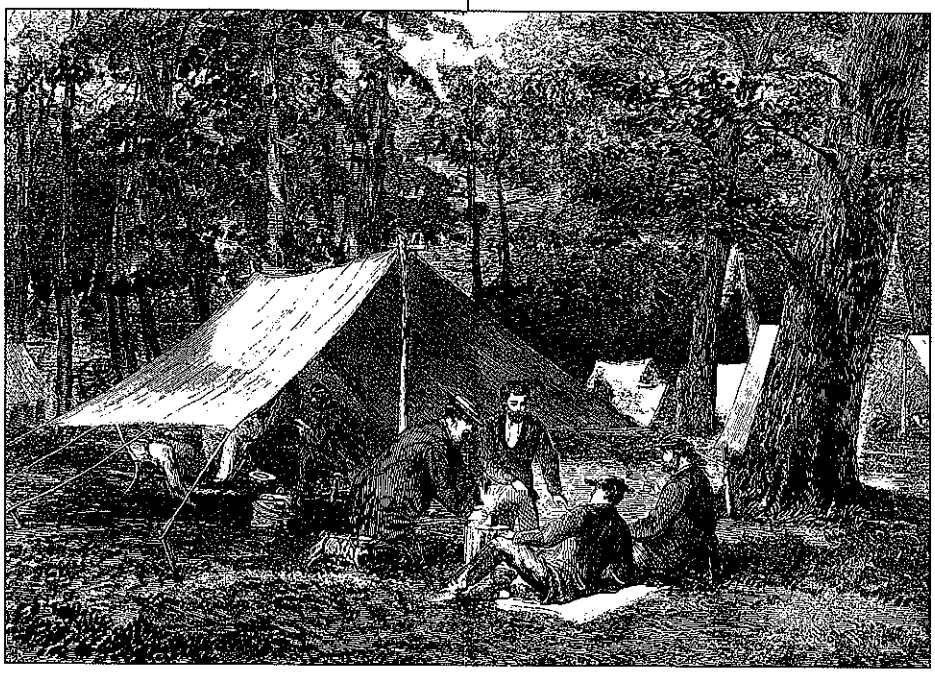


*"You could imagine what a sight it is to see one man shooting another."—W. G. Ledeboer*

**Dirk Van Raalte served as the hospital steward and could speak knowledgeably about the wounded and dying.*

***The label "Democrat" was associated with pro-Southern sentiments in the North. It was often interchanged with "Copperhead," although that term was reserved for greater opprobrium.*

we had orders to leave Lebanon, [Kentucky], he was lame and could not march, but two days after we left, he was walking up and down the street. He is a first-rate talker. He can use his mouth like a razor. His mouth put him in the hospital at Louisville and again in Madison. I think he paid a good deal of money for his discharge. As long as he was the colonel's orderly and cook, he was able, but he hated to go as a private in the ranks. He is the worst kind. Last year when G. Doesburg went home, I thought he would go the same way. When we started for Louisville last spring, the first thing he was doing was looking for a furlough. In fact, when he came back, he had a pain in his side. He bought a plaster to put on, but he did not quit his scuffling and fighting. To be sure, he was not sick. At last, when he could not make us believe it, he was as well as ever. In the beginning I had a good deal of confidence in him. He was a great hand for writing nice shining letters. I always hate to write about any person when he is with us, but when any person acts in such a way, I cannot bear it. His blood has turned to buttermilk. He got scared at Tebb's Bend, Green River. That kind would rather see the whole Southern Confederacy rule over us than fight them. He was one of the strongest men in our company, but of little use. I like to see a man discharged on account of disability but not by playing off as he did. He is a deceitful fellow. He still owes me forty cents from last spring."[33]



*"I wish you could be here to see the beautiful sight of camp fires burning at night."*
*—Dirk Van Raalte*

Also commenting on the W. V. P. case, Dirk Van Raalte oozed sarcasm: "I notice that this very learned gentleman, W. V. P., has returned to the academy—the poor soul. He had better refrain from hurting himself while studying because he has such a weak chest. You'd better have pity on the poor wretch who served his country in such a cowardly manner."[34]

Equally piercing barbs were directed at those who purchased substitutes and, on the home front, at folk who did not support the war vigorously. Already in 1862 Dirk Keppel was branding those "who called themselves Union men, but did not volunteer" as "cowardly."[35] And in 1863, with the announcement of the conscription law, news of slackers and draft dodgers produced a hail of comment. Thus, John Wilterdink declared, "The young men do not have to be scared to go into service, because if it was so bad, the older soldiers would not re-enlist. The dread of going in is usually the worst part. It seems to me the people in Holland cannot get a good night's sleep because they are so afraid of the lottery drawing. Enlistment is really the best. They get a good sum of money in their pocket and have the honor of being called volunteers. It gives me great pleasure that Hendrick Broek was drafted. I am sure he paid the three hundred dollars [for a substitute]. If he was drafted five times over, I would still say it was good. Whoever is able should go and help our land. The Lord can take care of us here as well as at home, even in the midst of many dangers."[36]

When Rev. Albertus Van Raalte sought donations for the Academy in Holland, Michigan, his son Dirk responded bluntly, "I won't give one red cent. If it were for a church, I would help. It would be better if the students came here carrying a rifle and a knapsack on their backs. They are needed here more than any other place. We have to bleed and die for our country, while they remain at home living off us—and then they make sport of us too. But I won't allow them to get me upset. We have to suffer a great deal, and we do it gladly for our country's sake, but the little bit of money that we make in the process we can use. It would be far better if half of the students were here in the ranks rather than remaining at home like cowards—waiting to see if they will be drafted and then begging for money to purchase a substitute. I say that any student who can't pay his own way

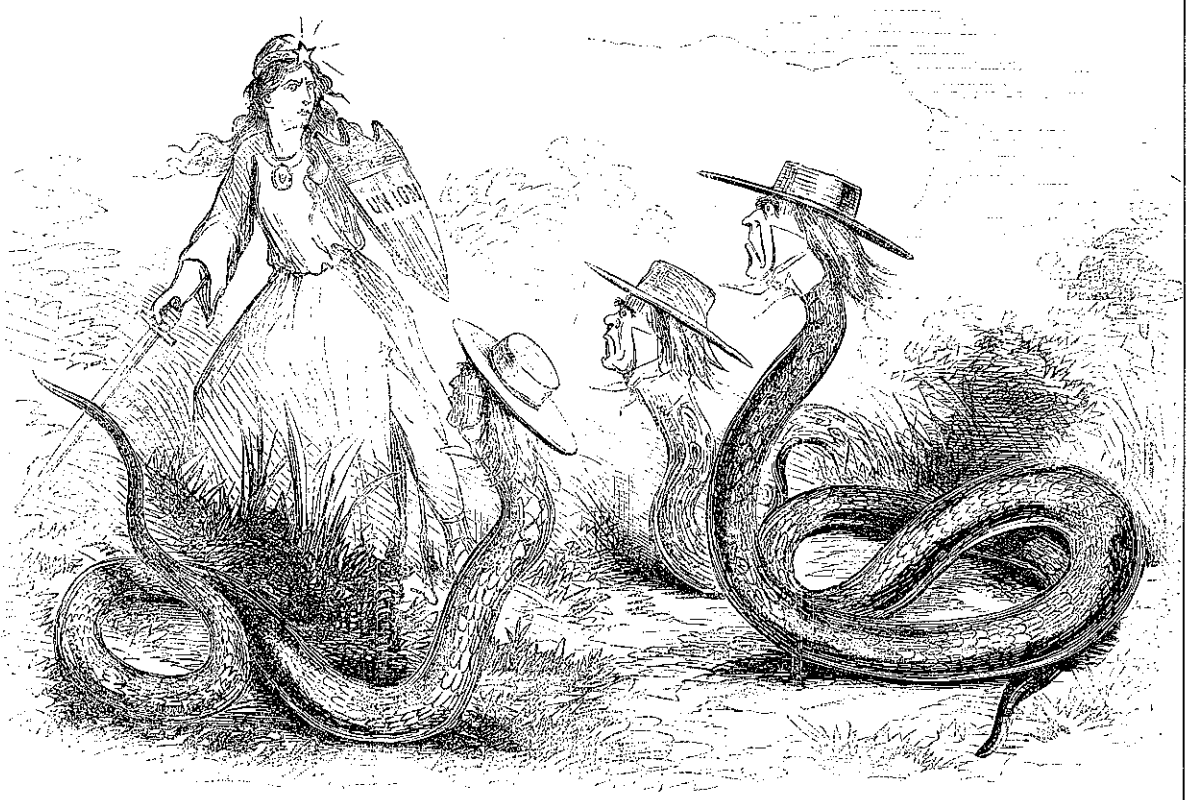
had better find a job or enlist. You may well say that that is selfish or stupid of me, but I believe it to be true, because we need soldiers far more than students at this moment. That is what I think, and I'm sure the other boys here agree with me. I am not writing in anger but with the best intent, for I think that the school will do well if everyone supports it as you do."[37]

Later, when Ben Van Raalte learned that the Holland, Michigan, area planned a local tax to finance the purchase of substitutes, he announced, "Company I is so disgusted with the Copperheads [in Holland, Michigan] they say that if they could re-enlist, it would never be for Holland. They would rather represent Kentucky. Those people at home are doing everything in their power to stay there and have actually gone about to collect substitute funds from parents who have all their children in the army. . . . so they can buy substitutes and let others pay their bills or even charge it to taxes. My advice is, never give anyone money in order to stay home. It would be better to perish!"[38]

The growth of disaffection between the West Michigan Kolonie and its troops stemmed, in part, from the region's allegiance to the Democratic Party. In the presidential elections of 1860 and 1864, Holland and its surrounding Dutch populace voted Democratic, which, at the very least, indicated a preference for peace.[39] From the soldiers' perspective (and analogies with the Vietnam War are obvious here), the home front appeared to have abandoned them. The most obvious culprit in this development was *De Hollander,* a local newspaper which urged support for the Democratic candidate, George B. McClellan. The paper's editor, Herman Doesburg, became a special object of hatred and scorn.

As early as 1863 John Wilterdink complained, "*The Hollander* says on the front page that only thirty-four men from Company I are physically fit for duty. . . . It is true that we have had some sickness in our company, but such articles should not be written, and I hope no more like it will be printed. *The Hollander* has always been known to exaggerate. Believe only half of what they write about Company I."[40]

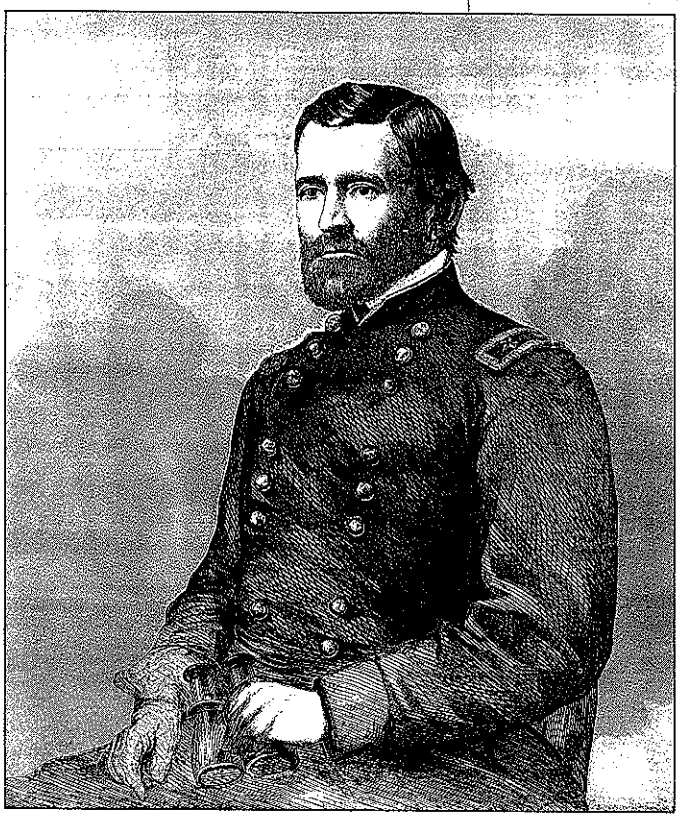
The following year reports of the Democratic political preference in the "Kolonie" arrived with Lieutenant Kramer, who had just returned to Company I from Holland, Michigan. Ben Van Raalte wrote, "The boys wanted to know how things were in the colony, and he [Kramer] said that it had grown tremendously—that we would hardly know the place anymore. But in the same breath he said the place was teeming with Copperheads. I'm sorry to hear that." Kramer, on the other hand, was surprised to discover the high morale existing in the army. "Well, one thing is for sure," Benjamin continued. "There is no Copperheadism in the army. . . . All that bad news published in the Northern papers is the same as favoring the Rebels. It's a pack of lies. The Rebels have not once had the advantage in this whole campaign. Sometimes we have had heavy losses, but that too has been exaggerated in the Northern papers."[41]



*"Copperhead Party"*

Pessimistic assessments about the

Northern military position seemed little better than treason to the fighting men, and Ben Van Raalte's exasperation over the issue spilled out time and again. Responding to news from Rev. A. C. Van Raalte regarding the 1864 draft, Ben declared, "Yesterday evening I received your letter of the 20th. The calling up of 500,000 suits me fine. I have no sympathy for those at home who are being drafted. In Holland they appear to be very scared. Doesburg is putting the fear of death into the hearts of the ignorant masses. They should burn his printing office—he speaks as if everyone who signs up is going to die. It is enough to put the death fear into anyone who has never seen a war. I am not surprised that the young people are running away. He is no better than a Rebel—his writings are shameful for our Holland people. I saw an article in the paper that he was making an estimate of the number of soldiers Lincoln had had in the service and how many survivors there were. It was such a large figure I hardly dare mention it. The way he figured, Lincoln had, through his stupidity, doomed all these men to eternity. But he overlooked the thousands of deserters and those who died of illness. Also those who bought their way out. I can name a couple for him—his own sons, the one a deserter and the other purchasing a substitute. Just cowards."



*General U.S. Grant*

Continuing that theme in a subsequent letter, Ben noted, "Some people and some newspapers seem to think that we are not making rapid enough progress. They should be here for a while, and then they'd talk differently. Not a foot of advance is made without heavy fighting . . . not that the old soldiers are complaining—on the contrary. . . . But the criticism from home isn't very pleasant to hear. . . . I don't think there will be many new volunteers from Holland." Then, following the November 1864 election, he wrote, "Have you paid my subscription for *De Hollander*? My intention is to discontinue."[42]

*De Hollander,* unfortunately, is no longer extant. The Holland fire of 1871 consumed it and much more. Thus, the possibility of assessing the publication's editorial perspective is severely limited. One can assume that it did not favor a Southern victory, but it may have decried the scorched-earth tactics of General William Sherman and the wanton pillage of Southern farms, homes, and towns. In any case, Michigan's 25th Regiment joined Sherman's attack on Atlanta, Georgia, and under the general's orders the whole of the South, both military and civilian, became legitimate targets of destruction. Sherman's total and unrestricted war became the "hell" that he said it was.*

While Sherman's perspective dominated the last phase of the Civil War, in earlier years the Northern troops were ordered not to abuse civilians or their property. Besides reflecting a more gallant concept of warfare, this policy was intended to encourage Unionist sentiments in border states like Kentucky and Tennessee. However, food shortages led to foraging, and by 1863 the practice had become rampant. In 1862 John Wilterdink noted that his colonel had paid for food stolen by another regiment, though John's own company was forbidden to steal wood for tent flooring. That same year Ben Van Raalte reported that his cavalry unit had skimmed wood and food from each passing cart. But that tactic still left the civilians with some of their goods.[43] One year later, however, foraging occurred without reservation, and Wilterdink reported, "The revolver is on my hip, and that's that. They dish out milk and biscuits or whatever else is good to eat." The following month he wrote, "This morning we had no bacon. So we went out and found it. Three days ago we had no meat, so six of us went out. . . . Soon we were chasing chickens and geese, and the six of us caught eighteen."[44]

G. H. Slootman reported similar practices but took little pleasure from such behavior. Writing to his uncle in

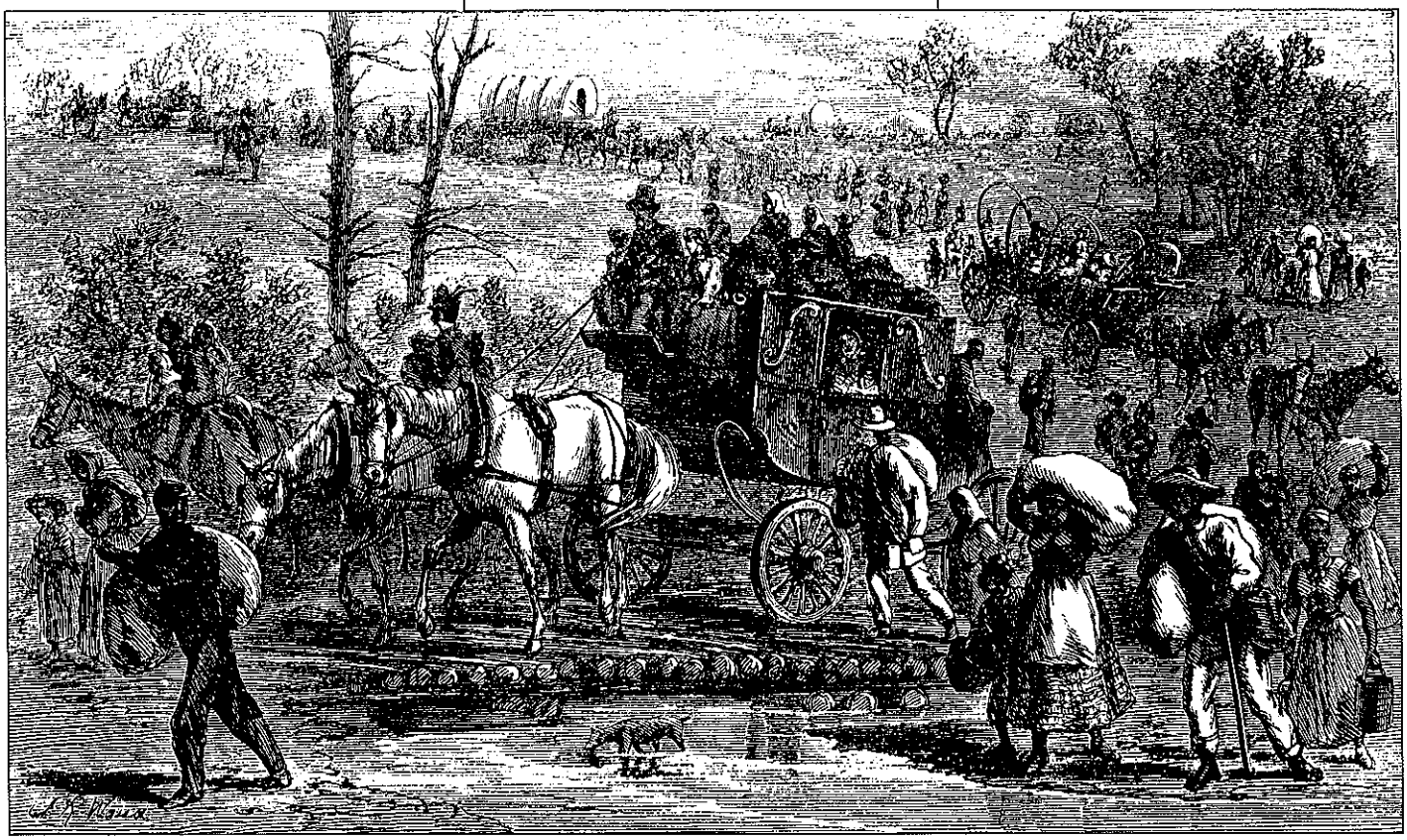
**For a telling analysis of the Civil War's moral transition, see Linderman's* Embattled Courage, *pp. 180–215, which focuses on changes in military values wrought by General U. S. Grant, but especially by W. T. Sherman, who boasted (p. 211), "I have taught people what war is."*

the Netherlands, he explained, "We feed our horses and mules by appropriating the supplies from local farmers. Sometimes we scour the countryside with a whole brigade, and when we find what we are looking for, we take it—no questions asked. The owner may glare at us, but he can do nothing. If there is something the soldiers wish to eat, they take that too. Often the farmer hides salted pork behind locked doors, but the doors are broken down, and everyone takes what he wants. That is what the war has come to here in the South. The farmer's wife may stand begging for something to be left for the family, but no one pays attention to her. Everything the farmer possesses is destroyed. Tell me, what do you think of this kind of war?"[45]

By 1864, and particularly during the Sherman campaign, foraging had become rampant. Writing from Knoxville, Tennessee, Ben Van Raalte reported, "We have been on half rations since coming to Tennessee, and sometimes we have nothing. But I've not suffered from hunger—we forage too well for that. We go out to shoot pigs or whatever else we can find. . . . The Michigan boys don't like to go hungry . . . and we are ahead of the other boys in that respect. At present we are getting plenty to eat. The soldiers have robbed the people around here a great deal, and they can either starve or move away. Many are leaving for the North. New Year's Day was the coldest I've ever experienced in the army, but on Old Year's Day I shot some pigs and got hold of some corn. I made the miller grind until I had enough. It was a fine day, and we had plenty to eat on New Year's Day. I'm not very easy on the Rebel citizens. If they have no more to eat, they had better die or join the army. That's what I think."[46]

Later, when they approached Atlanta, the troops entered the hastily evacuated city of Decatur, Georgia, which Dirk Van Raalte described as "about the size of Grand Rapids [with] many nice buildings. A local tin shop," he continued, "filled with pans, cups, coffeepots, and plates attracted the soldiers' attention, and they just ran off with them. Of course, we would not have taken them if the owner had not run off with the Rebels."[47]

General Sherman's policy of "total war" encouraged indiscriminate devastation, and when the Northern army stalled temporarily near the outskirts of Atlanta, Ben Van Raalte exclaimed, "I can't understand why we don't level the place with artillery fire. Yesterday we burned a large house—one just like the Holland Academy. It was a beautiful fire, and the boys en-



*"Refugee Train"*

joyed themselves." Then, following the evacuation of Atlanta, Ben reported, "Yesterday Dirk and I went out to look at the [Rebel] fortifications. The place is full of them. One corps of troops could easily hold the city. It was a pleasure to see how the houses have been shot through with shells."[48]

Civil wars usually trigger greater emotion than international wars, and that, no doubt, contributed to Ben Van Raalte's zealous declaration that while Southerners "may be people, they are still Rebels, [and] they must be exterminated to the last man."[49] It seems more plausible, though, that Ben and the other Dutch volunteers embraced the full spectrum of military values as part of a growing identity with the dominant culture of their companions in military service. It is a truism that patriotism generally captures the loyalty of immigrant children with greater intensity than it captures their parents. While adult immigrants cannot escape their foreign origins, their children can. Many of these, propelled toward a complete rejection of ancestral identities, react by immersing themselves in their new culture. The Dutch volunteers, for whom the very act of enlistment indicated a predisposition to adopt American ways, readily embraced the values which their peers and commanding officers endorsed. Within the first year of their military careers, they began to adopt a vocabulary of courage and gallantry much like that of the volunteers cited by Linderman in *Embattled Courage*. In 1863 Ben Van Raalte even complained that "the older veterans were . . . totally disinterested, and . . . displayed a kind of I-don't-care attitude." He added, "I hope that I will never get tired of it until we have knocked down the Rebellion totally."[50]

*"Foraging"*

It seems obvious, then, that participation in the Civil War accelerated the Americanization (i.e., cultural assimilation) of the Dutch-American volunteers. Nor would it be unlikely that their more blatant declarations of hatred for Southerners and Copperheads stemmed from an artificial zeal engendered to compensate for their ethnic identity. Whatever the case, it is abundantly clear that, by participating in the Civil War, the volunteers became more unreservedly American than their relatives and friends on the home front, among whom there is no evidence of an exuberant and widespread support for the Northern cause in any of the Dutch-American settlements. And in the case of Holland, Michigan, it appears that by 1864 a significant rift separated the dedicated enthusiasts of Company I from their war-weary relatives and acquaintances at home.

*Notes*

[1]*Gerald Linderman's* Embattled Courage *(New York: The Free Press, 1987), pp. 134–55, discusses the changing attitudes of soldiers during the Civil War.*

[2]*The September 17, 1862, battle of Antietem resulted in 11,000 Northern fatalities and 12,000 Confederate deaths. By comparison, D day in World War II claimed 6,000 U.S. lives, only one-fourth of the number lost at Antietem. For further amplification see James McPherson's* Ordeal by Fire *(New York: A. Knopf, 1982), 284.*

[3]*McPherson, 355–57, 488; Linderman, 176, 182.*

[4]*Peter Lankester correspondence, March 10, 1863, in the Immigrant Letter Collection of the Calvin College and Seminary Archives, Grand Rapids, Michigan (hereafter cited as Im. L. Col.).*

[5]*Richard N. Current,* Wisconsin: A Bicentennial History *(New York: Norton, 1977), 48–49; McPherson, 251–52.*

[6]*Peter Lankester correspondence, March 10, 1863, in Im. L. Col.; McPherson, pp. 383–86, discusses disease and medical care.*

[7]*C. Jongewaard correspondence, August 3, 1863; G. W. Bloemers correspondence, June 6, 1865; Lucas Vredeveld correspondence, May 2, 1865—all in Im. L. Col.*

[8]*Peter Baden correspondence, March 20, 1862; March 2, 1863, in Im. L. Col.*

[9]*Dr. J. Stellingwerff,* Amsterdamse Emigranten *(Amsterdam: Buijten and Schipperheijn, 1975), 316; John Witzenburg correspondence, September 2, 1862; C. Jongewaard correspondence, August 3, 1863, in Im. L. Col.*

[10]*Peter Baden correspondence, March 20, 1862, in Im. L. Col.*

[11]*Peter Lankester correspondence, March 10, 1863, in Im. L. Col.*

[12]*Peter Lankester correspondence, April 2, 1863; Peter Baden correspondence, March 20, 1862; Bastiaan Van Drunen's correspondence, March 1862, like that of many others, echoed Peter Baden's judgment that "God is chastising this land with many judgments because of its sin in departing from God's law and of the terrible wastefulness and pride practiced here in this nation" (Im. L. Col.).*

[13]*Linderman sets forth the thesis of his book in pages 7–16.*

[14]*Wynand Wichers,* The Dutch Churches in Michigan During the Civil War *(Lansing, Michigan: Michigan Civil War Centennial Commission, 1965), 10; Henry Lucas,* Netherlanders in America *(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1955), 562–64; K. Van Stigt,* Geschiedenis van Pella, Iowa *(Pella: Weekblad Drukkerij, 1897), 45–54.*

[15]*William G. Ledeboer correspondence, March 14 and November 15, 1862; Dirk Van Raalte correspon-*

*dence, November 22, 1862, in Albertus Van Raalte Papers (1836–1876) in Calvin College and Seminary Archives, Grand Rapids, Michigan (hereafter cited as Van Raalte Papers).*

[16]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, November 5 and November 15, 1862, in Van Raalte Papers; G. H. Slootman correspondence, February 5, 1863, in Im. L. Col.*

[17]*Linderman, 34–44; Martin De Boe to A. C. Van Raalte, January 4, 1863, in Van Raalte Papers; W. G. Ledeboer, November 15, 1862, wrote, "Ours is the best regiment here. They call us the 'White Gloves.' We have been used at the burial ceremonies of four generals" (Im. L. Col).*

[18]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, December 5, 1862; Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, October 23, 1863, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[19]*Albert H. McGeehan, ed.,* My Country and Cross *(Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1982), p. 45, contains Wilterdink's July 11, 1863, letter. This ninety-two-page volume consists mainly of Wilterdink's correspondence.*

[20]*Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, July 12, 1863, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[21]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, July 17, 1863, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[22]*McGeehan, p. 60, cites Wilterdink's February 14, 1864, letter.*

[23]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, October 14 and November 11, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers. Two years earlier, on November 12, 1862, W. G. Ledeboer had ridiculed the excessive political partisanship which led the Van Raalte boys to assert, "Every Democrat should be [shot, drafted, or something of that sort]." The word was obliterated by some "editor."*

[24]*W. G. Ledeboer correspondence, October 29, 1862, in Im L. Col.; Effa Zwier's "Walter Weener—Young Civil War Soldier,"* Young Calvinist, *October 1944, p. 7.*

[25]*Gerrit Van Bree correspondence, May 20, 1863, and August 2, 1863, in Im. L. Col.*

[26]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, September 16, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[27]*McGeehan, p. 74, cites Wilterdink's December 6, 1864, letter.*

[28]*Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, November 1863, in Van Raalte Papers; Gerrit Van Bree correspondence, December 30, 1863, in Im. L. Col.*

[29]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, July 3, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[30]*Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, August 1863, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[31]*McGeehan, p. 13, cites Wilterdink's October 15, 1862, letter.*

[32]*Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, February 16, 1863, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[33]*McGeehan, p. 58, cites Wilterdink's January 8, 1864, letter.*

[34]*Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, February 24, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[35]*Dirk Keppel correspondence, March 20, 1862, in Im. L. Col.*

[36]*McGeehan, p. 57, cites Wilterdink's December 21, 1863, letter.*

[37]*Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, December 20, 1862, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[38]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, August 4, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[39]*Christine Jacobs, "The Western Michigan Dutch During the American Civil War: Patriotic or Apathetic?" Student paper, 1987, in Calvin College and Seminary Archives.*

[40]*McGeehan, p. 27, cites Wilterdink's March 8, 1863, letter.*

[41]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, July 14, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[42]Ibid.

[43]*McGeehan, pp. 16 and 22, cites Wilterdink's letters of November 11 and December 18, 1862; Ben Van Raalte correspondence, December 5, 1862, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[44]*McGeehan, pp. 46 and 50, cites Wilterdink's July 14 and August 28, 1863, letters.*

[45]*G. H. Slootman correspondence, February 5, 1863, in Im. L. Col.*

[46]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, February 4, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

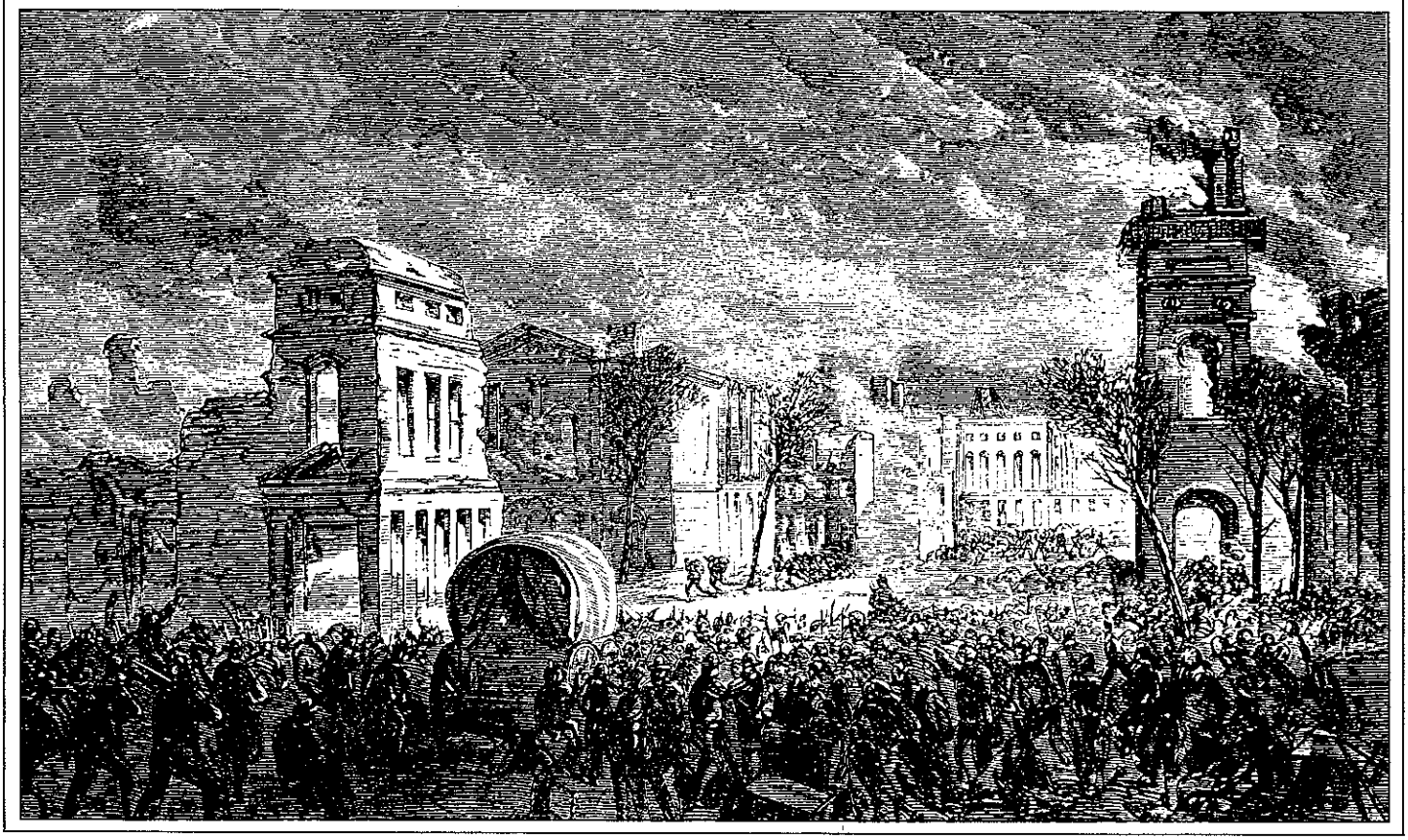
[47]*Dirk Van Raalte correspondence, July 21, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

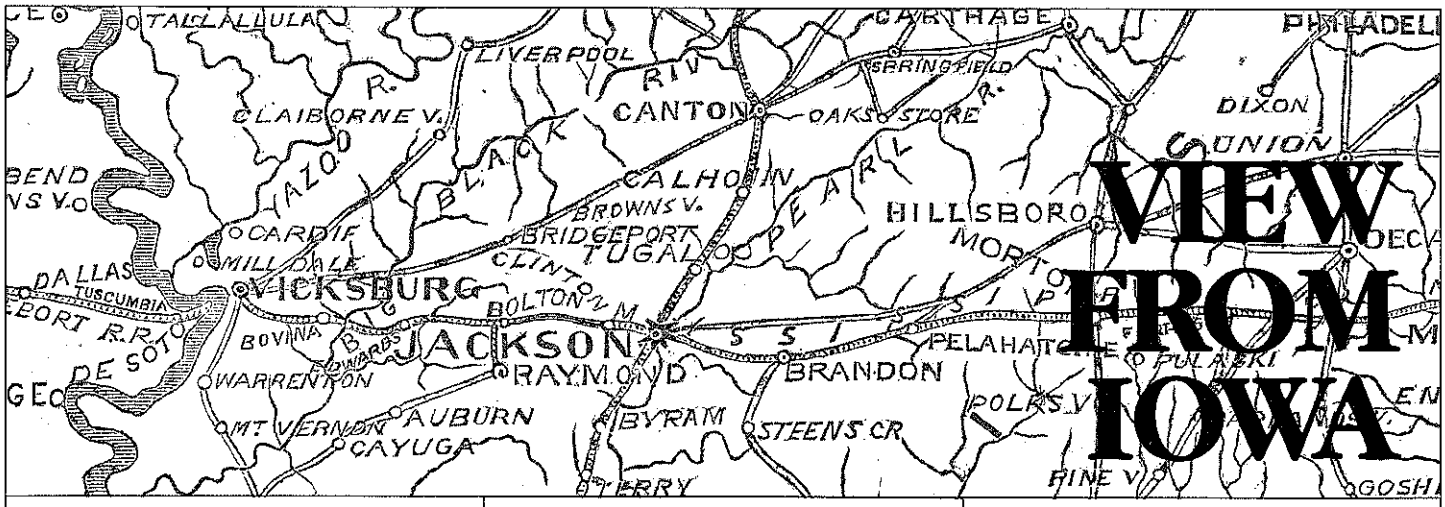
[48]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, July 28, and October 17, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[49]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, July 14, 1864, in Van Raalte Papers.*

[50]*Ben Van Raalte correspondence, May 20, 1863, in Van Raalte Papers.*

*Columbia, Georgia, on Fire*






# VIEW FROM IOWA

*The following letters, addressed from Burlington and Pella, Iowa, are taken from Dr. J. Stellingwerff's* Amsterdamse Emigranten, *a 1975 publication which contains correspondence to the J. A. Wormser family in Amsterdam. The writers, J. G. Budde, D. A. Budde, C. M. Budde-Stomp, and H. M. Bousquet Chabot, followed Rev. H. P. Scholte to the Iowa colony but remained deeply loyal to old-world friends like the Wormsers, with whom they had experienced the religious secession* (afscheiding) *of 1834. The five Civil War letters translated* below discuss the war from its beginning in 1861 to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865.—HJB*

### D. A. BUDDE TO J. A. WORMSER
December 12, 1861

By now you know that the people of America are at war with each other. The conflict is terrible in areas where they have taken up arms. War between one country and another is to be feared at any time, but a civil war such as we have here in America is even more fearful. Judging from the information we receive from different parts of the country, it seems that the Lord has abandoned Americans to mutual destruction. Almost a million soldiers from the North and South are opposing each other.

In October the military budget went up to ninety million dollars, while only nine million was spent during the previous year. Entire cities are being burned, and farms are being destroyed. Those in the South who favor the Union cause must forsake everything and flee to save their lives. Destruction, plundering, and killing are the order of the day. Repeated raids give evidence of hellish enimity. . . . At first almost everyone boasted, "We will soon defeat these troublemakers," but the Lord's answer brought loss and disappointment. It is the Lord who exalts and brings low.

Until now the outlook is very dismal. In Iowa we still enjoy the blessings of peace and quiet, but only the Lord knows how long that will continue.

### C. M. BUDDE-STOMP to THE WIDOW WORMSER
December 1862

You asked if we were affected by the war. Up to this time our state has been spared from battle, but we are in constant fear that the government will be forced to draft the eighteen- to forty-five-year-olds. . . . The situation in America is sad. The fighting has already gone on for a year and a half with thousands of casualties and no progress. It is true, of course, that the South is in rebellion, but the North is also being chastised by the Lord. It's like Israel against the Benjaminites because the nation has forsaken the Lord.

The cost of the war, both on sea and land, is borne by everyone. We no longer see silver money but instead paper money, including small change. Still, the Lord has, amid all this, granted us a fruitful harvest. We pray that the Lord will cause the people to repent and to place their swords in their scabbards.

### H. M. BOUSQUET CHABOT to J. WORMSER v. d. VEN
December 8, 1862

Three of my children have taken up arms in order to be helpful in suppressing the Southern rebellion. The youngest, Herman, left on May 29, 1861. John, the second son, left on November 19, 1861, and Henry, our third son, went on September 2, 1862. Each one left under an individual set of circumstances which were of such a character that I did not feel free to hold them back. But, most importantly, I was able to be submissive in this matter to the way that the Lord would have me walk. And I must say that the Lord has strengthened me in a remarkable way by ordering everything in a manner which demonstrated his

*Translations by Mr. E. R. Post.

protecting hand over my children.

In April 1862 a bullet went through Herman's cap without touching a hair on his head. He made profession of his faith in the Lord Jesus before he left, and his letters tell me, in a childlike manner, of the increase in his faith. John, who has been a longtime member of the Scholte church, has had his faith tested in a new and different training school. Last October he was wounded in his left leg, but the wound is of such a nature that, humanly speaking, he will regain the full use of his leg. Still, as he wrote me only yesterday, the healing progresses very slowly. He is in Keokok hospital, hardly 120 miles away. We are doing what we can to get a furlough for him so he can come to Pella, but until now we've had no success. . . . He can, however, walk with a crutch, and with several friends near there he has a few small pleasures. Rev. Gerrit Baaij also visits him regularly.

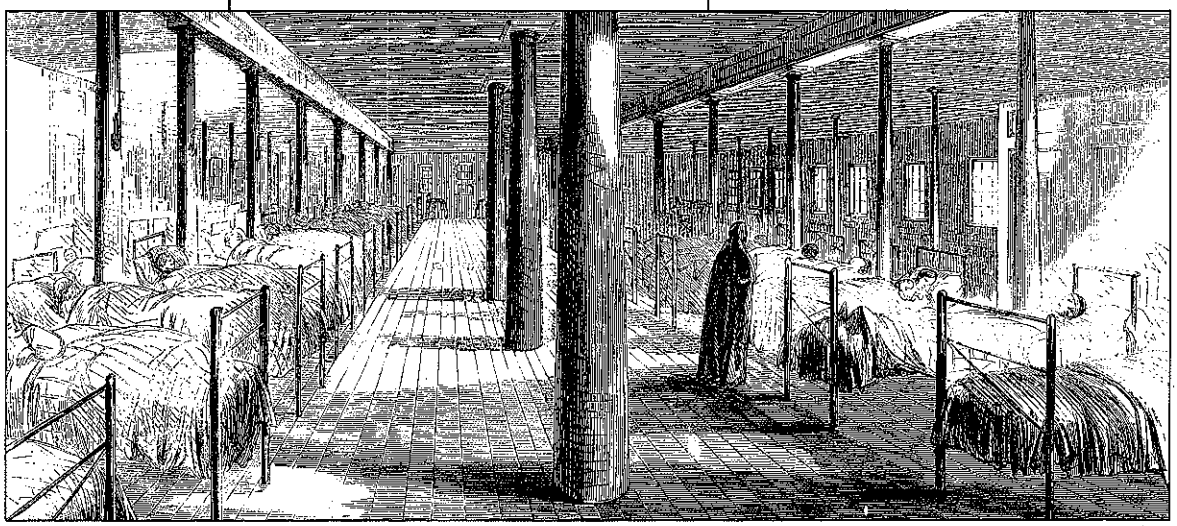
Henry [the third son] has been very fortunate. He joined a company made up almost entirely of people from Pella, both Hollanders and Americans. The captain, with whom he was acquainted, made him a clerk. He did well in that capacity, and now the colonel has retained him in that assignment. And with that promotion he is excused from military exercises. That is especially fortunate because his health leaves something to be desired.

So, you will notice that under the present circumstances I still have many reasons to be thankful. Above all else I wish that I and all of my family may learn to submit entirely to the Lord's leading.

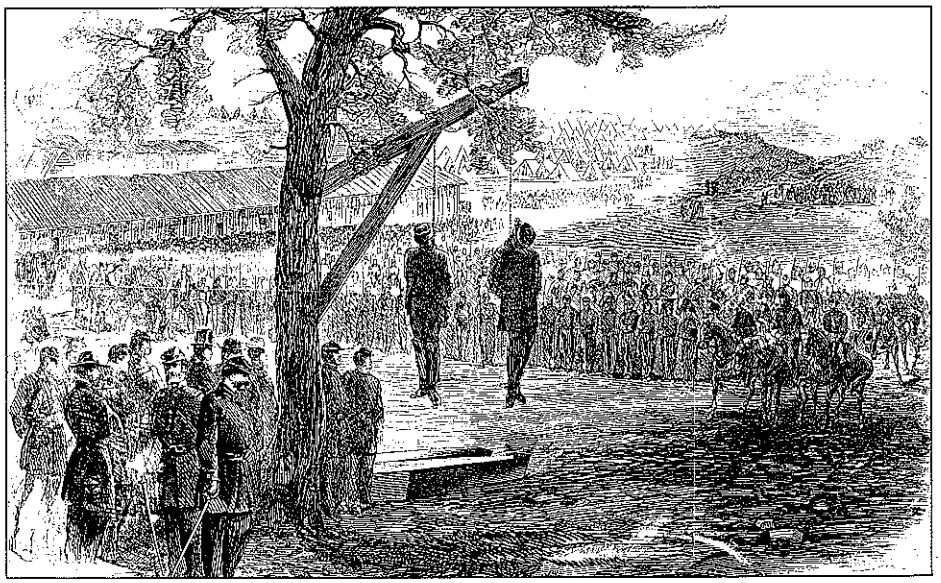
**J. G. BUDDE to**
**J. WORMSER v. d. VEN**
June 5, 1864

At present the war is being waged with greatest intensity in Virginia, where the two armies are located between the Northern capital of Washington and the Rebel capital of Richmond. It would seem that we could take their capital easily, but the many battles fought during the past month have not brought about that result. Meanwhile, 50,000 of our men have been killed, wounded, or taken as prisoners, with similar casualties for the Rebels. Our army is now located about thirty miles from Richmond, but before capturing the city, we face still more bloody battles and casualties because the enemy will exert every effort to prevent defeat.

Our people, who have enjoyed abundance until now, have lost ground because they have forgotten their Lord and Maker and have become drunk with wealth. The Lord is chastising our country, but the people still refuse to humble themselves. Until recently, I never knew how sin, deception, and



*"The healing progresses very slowly."*



*"Hanging Spies"*

luxury have come to dominate our seat of government in Washington. Arrogance and pride have the upper hand. . . . It is true that some have not bowed the knee before Baal, and if it were not for these, God's people, the country would die and perish.

From a strictly political viewpoint, it is not yet known if a country with a republican form of government can, in the long run, continue to govern itself. History indicates otherwise, because powerful nations with that form of government have fallen and have been destroyed from internal discontent.

*"Abraham Lincoln and the Drummer Boy"*

It is not yet possible to determine how many lives this war has cost—perhaps a million on both sides—and the outlook continues to be dark no matter what the newspapers tell us. Charleston, South Carolina, is still under bombardment without results, while the armies in the West (the Mississippi Valley) are frequently skirmishing. At present, all eyes are turned anxiously upon the army of the East.

One of our greatest problems is the discord and party spirit which are prevalent here in the North. One political group attempts to oppose the government in every way in order to gain political power. In addition, the land is full of spies—both in the army and the government—who favor the enemy. Our plans become known simultaneously by our own generals and the enemy.

If our expectation and comfort were not in the Lord, it would be a wretched time for us.

**C. M. BUDDE-STOMP to J. WORMSER v. d. VEN**
October 10, 1865

Concerning the Civil War, I must say that although we have been spared from battles in our area, everyone has experienced the effects of the war. We were in constant dread of what would happen to Johan after he was drafted.

* * * * *

A new president is chosen by the people here every four years, and President Lincoln was recently reelected by a large majority. He is a man with a strong character, who has the welfare of his fatherland at heart. And now, after fighting in vain for four years, the Lord has given us the victory. One stronghold after another was conquered. General Sherman penetrated the Southern lines, and then the South was under attack from the front and from the rear. At Richmond, the southern capital, where their President Davis was, the resistance was stubborn, but the defense was finally broken, and Richmond fell. The slaves were set free, and President Davis fled. He was later captured while disguised in his wife's clothing.

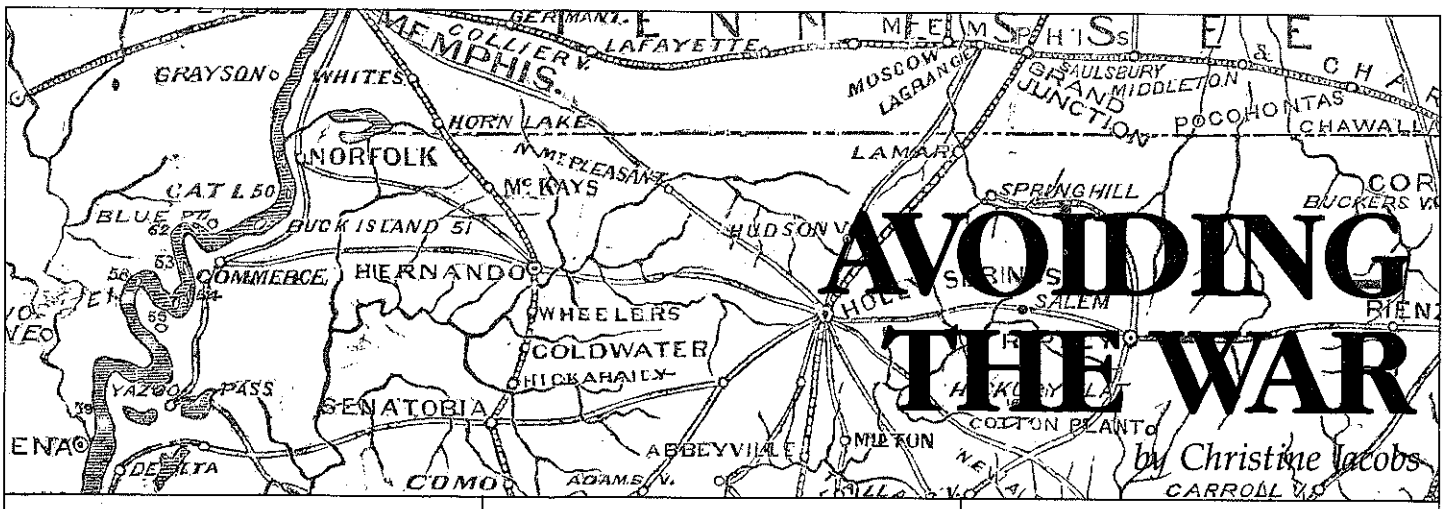
The South has been severely wounded. Entire cities have been destroyed, and the women, elderly men, and children are in deep poverty. Thus, the Rebellion is ended because suddenly the Lord changed everything. The first battle, which we lost, was at Fort Sumpter. But after four years it was recaptured, and the Union flag now waves again over the fort. The government proclaimed a day of thanksgiving.

But on a Friday evening in April, while a play was being enacted in a theater, an assassin's shot was fired. Our President was the victim, and he died the following morning. . . . That same day our city was notified by telegraph. The sorrow was painful. All of the homes, churches, and other buildings were draped in black and white. The stores were closed. Men and women stood weeping in the streets. There was widespread consternation.

The people who had so recently been elated by their fortunate victory were now cast into the deepest mourning. We were also deeply moved, especially because the assassin's bullet struck him in a theater. I do not wish to judge, but I am constrained to say, "Let us walk carefully lest we too become imitators of the world." At the time Lincoln took office he requested the prayers of Christians. And in the newspapers I read a great deal which encouraged me to think that he sought the Lord. I hope he has entered through the only gateway without which no one can be saved.

The murderer was shot at the time of his capture. His life ended swiftly, but eternity will be long enough for him to pay for his atrocity. As you can imagine, after facing such painful sorrow directly after a glorious victory, the country is exhausted. Yet in all this we must submit to the Lord. To him be the honor, the praise, and thanksgiving.

FAIR OAKS




# AVOIDING THE WAR

*by Christine Jacobs*

Following the outbreak of the American Civil War, many families from the border states were torn by divided loyalties, and in some cases brothers fought in opposing armies. Although Dutch-Americans in Michigan were not divided in that manner, they did view the war from contrasting perspectives. One contingent, which opposed Lincoln's policies both before and after the declaration of war, sought to avoid the military draft. Others, including Holland's very influential Albertus Van Raalte, supported the war enthusiastically, and many young immigrants from West Michigan demonstrated their patriotism by volunteering for military service. However, some local historians, in an apparent effort to make West Michigan's immigrants seem as patriotic and pro-Union as any New England Yankee, have largely ignored the divisive opinions which were evident in the Holland, Michigan, area. While writing for the Michigan Civil War Commission, one author declared, "When the secession began and the war was joined, there was no question of the patriotism and loyalty of the Dutch in the Michigan churches."[1] Evaluations of that sort have distorted the actual conditions which prevailed in West Michigan during the Civil War.

The American Civil War began as a volunteer war, and President Lincoln's first call for volunteers sparked fervor in the colony. Young men followed the sound of the fife and drum and enlisted readily for the cause of the Union. Many of these were from the city of Holland and members of Van Raalte's Pillar Church.[2] They followed the call of their "dominie" (pastor), who was well acquainted with the Civil War between Belgium and the Netherlands, which finally divided the low countries between its Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Thus, Van Raalte knew about military values and the glory of a brave soldier's return. Both of Van Raalte's sons, Dirk and Benjamin, fought as volunteers, and when Benjamin left for training, Van Raalte's farewell speech showed that he regarded bravery and courage more highly than life itself. "My boy," he said, "you are going to the battlefield. I would rather you come home dead than to have you be a coward and a stain on your family."[3] Still, not every family in the Holland-Zeeland area sent a volunteer to the war. And as the war continued and produced high fatality rates, President Lincoln was forced to issue repeated calls for volunteers. Then, as the number of new recruits dwindled, rumors of a draft spread. Cornelius Jongewaard confided to a friend in the Netherlands: "Since the North as well as the South has already lost so many men and cannot readily get volunteers anymore, we daily expect the draft."[4] Jan Wilterdink, a soldier in Kentucky, who also noticed the worry in Holland, wrote, "It seems to me the people in Holland cannot get a good night's sleep because they are so afraid of the lottery drawing."[5]

Indeed, the draft was initiated in March of 1863 and was met in some American cities by protest riots. There was so much aversion to the draft that President Lincoln legalized the practice of draftees buying substitutes. Following the draft, Dutch settlers who had passively avoided military service were forced either to join or to actively avoid the draft; purchasing substitutes seems to have been a popular option for them.

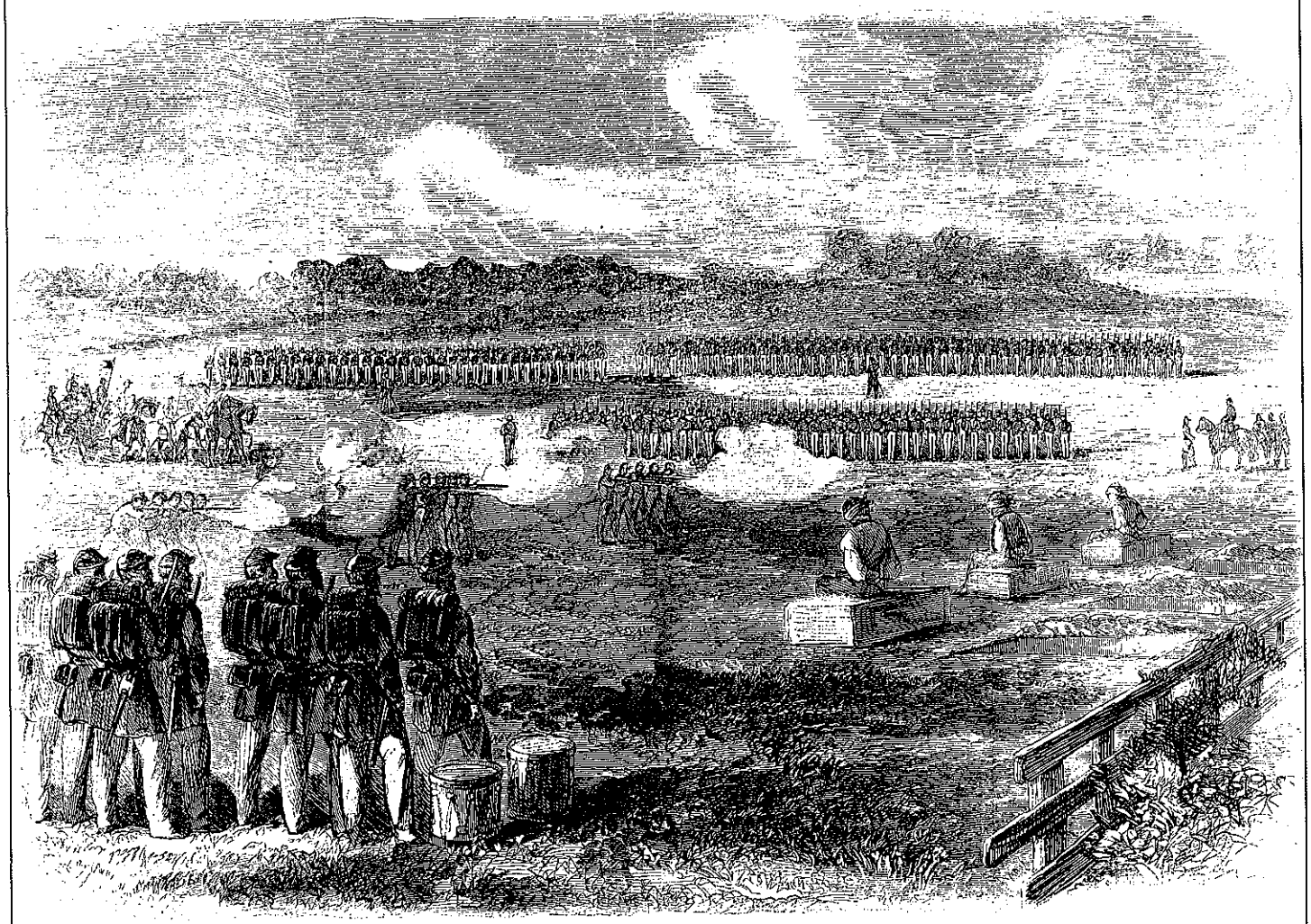
Still, not everyone could pay the going rate of three hundred dollars. Sometimes, as frequently happened in the Holland-Zeeland area, people would pool their money or make loans to buy an individual out of the draft. J. H. Dunnink of Zeeland reported to his family in the Netherlands: "I was drafted two times . . . with the help of all the people we have been able to purchase others to take our place. That costs much money."[6] Occasionally a township board would take on the responsibility of finding and paying bounties to volunteer substitutes for its citizens. *The Grand*

*Haven News* rejoiced in this fact.

> It is said that our Holland citizens of the colony are coming up nobly to the rescue. We are informed from the most reliable sources that the citizens of the townships of Holland and Zeeland in their liberality, have contributed $6,000 for [bounties] to volunteers. . . .[7]

Each township was required by the Federal government to provide a set number of volunteers, and when the township could no longer fill the quota with free-will soldiers, they created a bounty fund to lure recruits. Thus the township of Overisel also collected money to create a bounty fund. They scheduled a special December meeting in 1863 for the purpose of raising "a tax for paying volunteers who shall enlist for said township or to buy substitutes for men who shall be drafted in the next draft."[8] At the meeting of December 11, 1863, the township decided it should not levy a tax but, rather, borrow money (at seven percent per annum) from the voters to buy volunteers for its January, 1864 quota.[9] Once Overisel township had raised enough money to pay volunteers and substitutes, the scarcity of local manpower hindered the process, and in the early months of 1865 Overisel failed to meet its quota of men. On February 6, 1865, "resolutions were made by said board that C. J. Voorhorst and G. J. Wolterink should go to Kalamazoo and buy two volunteers for the money which was raised in 1864."[10] In Kalamazoo, poorer men, lured by the cash bounty, would answer the volunteer call. The Dutch did not seem to be troubled by the prospect of buying poor Dutchmen or Yankees from Kalamazoo as substitutes for Overisel farmers. The practice was accepted, and many exercised the right to buy substitutes.

The reaction of those who had already volunteered was so vehement that it suggests a widespread practice of draft substitution. Jan Wilterdink, a



*The Execution of Three Deserters*

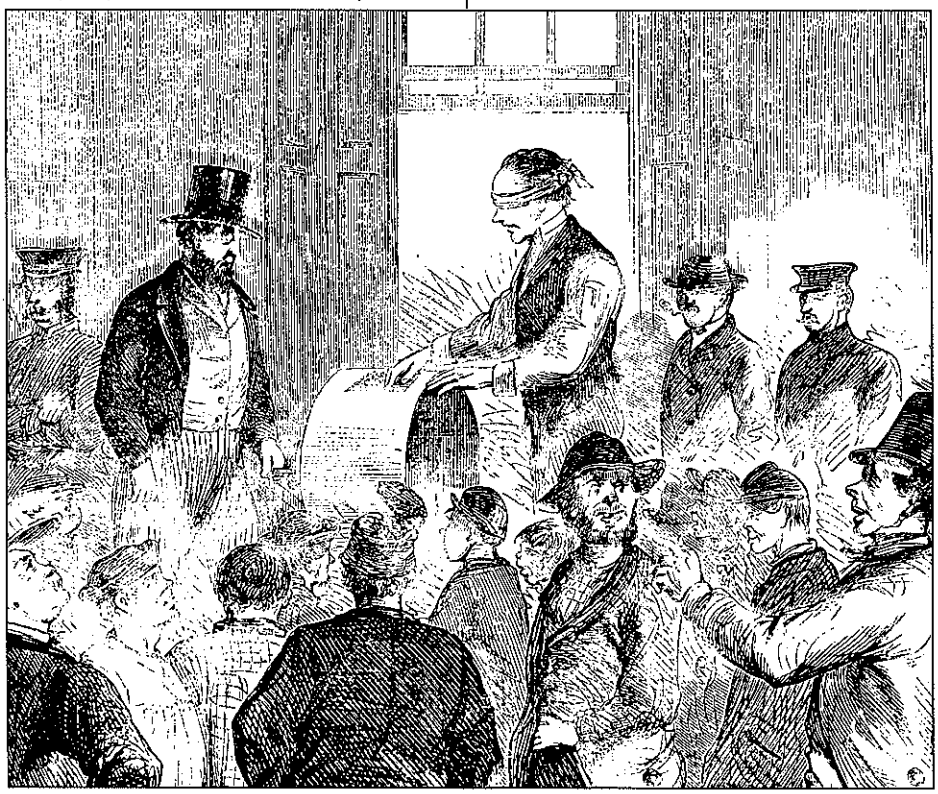
soldier in the 25th infantry, wrote to his family: "It gives me great pleasure that Hendrick Broek was drafted. I am sure he paid the three hundred dollars. If he was drafted five times over I would still say it was good."[11]

While Overisel chose to borrow from the community to create the bounty fund, some areas levied taxes to raise the money. Wilterdink had opinions on this as well.

> I hate in the worst way that the city of Holland voted 5,510 dollars for substitutes and to raise it with an eight year tax. In that way those who answered their country's call will be paying the tax for those who stayed at home where they have all the benefits in the world. That is not fair. . . . If it was only for those families who have already given a volunteer, I would say that's alright, but as it stands, our whole company dislikes it.[12]

Dirk Van Raalte harbored similarly bitter feelings toward those who were of fighting age but chose to stay at home. At that time Hope College was in its infancy, and some young men preferred being students rather than soldiers. Of these Dirk commented,

> It would be much better if half of the students were here in the ranks rather than staying at home like cowards until they are drafted. When they are drafted they go begging for money in order to buy themselves free. I say each student who cannot pay his own way to go to school should go to work or enlist.[13]



*Resumption of the Draft*

Virtually no records exist to explain the motives of those who purchased substitutes. Many, doubtless, were household heads—husbands and fathers—who were needed at home. Some draft evaders opposed the war on principle while others, quite simply, were unwilling to risk the hazards of training and combat. Some, even among those who volunteered, regretted their choice. Speaking for these, Gerrit Slootman wrote, "I hope . . . that the war will end. How the war turns out makes little difference to the soldiers; their only wish is for peace. The freeing of the slaves is not close to the soldiers' hearts. If we had half a chance we would leave this army."[14]

Thus, the evidence cited above reinforces the view that the West Michigan community did not welcome the conflict with single-minded enthusiasm. It is clear, too, that draft evasion became an acceptable alternative for those who could purchase substitutes to avoid the dangers of battle. These conclusions, however, are hardly surprising because few wars, if any, have enjoyed unanimous support. And the Civil War was no exception.

**Endnotes**

1. *Wynand Wichers,* The Dutch Churches in Michigan During the Civil War *(Lansing: Michigan Civil War Centennial Observance Commission) 1965, p. 6.*
2. *Van Raalte's Pillar Church is situated in what today is downtown Holland. It is also known as Ninth Street Christian Reformed Church.*
3. *Rev. Henry E. Dosker, Levensschets van Rev. A. C. Van Raalte, D.D. (Nijkerk, The Netherlands: Uitgeverij C. C. Callenback, 1893) p. 229.*
4. *Cornelius Jongewaard letter to Jan Schuitemaker, August 3, 1863. Jongewaard Papers. Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*
5. *Jan Wilterdink, letter to family, December 31, 1863, in* My Country and Cross, *A. McGeehan (Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1986), p. 57.*
6. *J. H. Dunnink, letter to family, 1865. Dunnink Papers, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*
7. Grand Haven News, *August 26, 1862, in Wichers, p. 8.*
8. *Overisel Township Board Minutes, 1857–1953, Overisel Township, Michigan, unpublished, p. 5.*
9. *Overisel Township Board Minutes, p. 5.*
10. *Overisel Township Board Minutes, p. 10.*
11. *Jan Wilterdink, letter to family, December 21, 1863.*
12. *Jan Wilterdink, letter to family, January 8, 1864.*
13. *Dirk Van Raalte, letter to family, in Walter Lagerwey, "Dutch Literary Culture in America, 1850–1950," in* The Dutch in America, *ed. Robert P. Swierenga, (New Brunswick, H. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1985) p. 253. My translation.*
14. *Gerrit Slootman, letter to family, February 5, 1863. Slootman Papers, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

# The Americanization of Bernardus De Beij (1815–1894)*

by H. J. Brinks

During a twenty-four-year pastorate in Chicago, Rev. Bernardus De Beij was the most prominent Dutch pastor in the region. His congregation, the First Reformed Church, flourished, and only four years after De Beij's 1868 arrival the congregation built a new structure. That sanctuary was singled out in the 1872 *Chicago Pulpit*, which reported, "The First Reformed Church on the corner of May and Harrison streets is now completed. The interior is neat, tastefully decorated, and furnished with an appropriate organ." But by 1873 the new structure was already overcrowded. Meanwhile, De Beij had been urging friends, acquaintances, and strangers alike to leave the Netherlands and join his growing church and community. He publicized Chicago's attractions in the *Provincial Groninger Courant*, and his personal correspondence contained expressions of civic pride and enthusiasm to equal the rhetoric of the most visionary civic boosters. Thus, despite his relatively advanced age (53), De Beij revealed an exceptional level of adaptability together with unreserved admiration for his new city and country.[1]

Before immigrating, he had served the Middelstum, Groningen, church for twenty-one years, and that congregation had also flourished. The sanctuary was enlarged twice, and, when the Middelstum church celebrated its centennial in 1935, De Beij's reputation had not yet faded from memory. People recalled that on several occasions he had wielded a shovel or scythe with as much skill and vigor as any farmhand. Clearly, the pastor made little effort to hide his humble origins.

That background probably had much to do with his unreserved admiration for the United States. Even though he had become a successful pastor in Middelstum, he had not entered the ministry until he was thirty years of age. Prior to his study and ordination, De Beij had labored in the turf mines of Drenthe—a clear indication of his narrow economic status and prospects. Thus, with little money and already approaching mid-life, he sought instruction from a local pastor rather than a formal university education. Rev. D. Postma, who instructed De Beij in classical languages and theology, also installed him in the Middelstum Christian Seceded Church. The new pastor did not forget his narrow escape from a life of drudgery, and he was known to criticize rich Groningen farmers for their stingy wages. Then, too, De Beij's origins in the laboring class probably lent credence to his judgment that, for common mon laborers, Chicago offered vastly better prospects than the farms, shops, and peat bogs of Drenthe and Groningen.[2]

Throughout two decades, 1868–1888, De Beij penned a stream of correspondence which demonstrated his growing enthusiasm for the "Windy City." Addressing most of his letters to Rev. A. P. Lanting (his "Dear Cousin"), De Beij declared as early as 1870, "We live here very comfortably, and perhaps you will have difficulty believing that our lives are more pleasurable here than in the Netherlands." Though he missed the companionship of friends like Lanting and others, De Beij added, "There are nonetheless many compensations here, including new friends. Above all, though, we enjoy a carefree social, economic, and religious life here. We have gained a wealth of experience with a wide variety of people. . . . Everyone here treats me with respect, and that without pretense, and that is not usually the case outside of our own circle of Seceders in the Netherlands. Yes, the fact is that a man from Groningen will greet me respectfully here and not stick out his tongue after passing me on the street. You know how it is in Holland; deep in their hearts they despise us [Seceders]. Here, though, we live in a most beautiful and pleasant city which also contains much natural beauty. If I lived here for another twenty years, I would not lack for new things to see—astonishing accomplishments in progress, power, arts, and good taste. I don't know how to begin in writing about it. It is surprising in every way. . . . My description can only degrade the reality."[3]

De Beij remained in Chicago for over twenty years, and his expectations were not disappointed. He reported constantly of the city's growth

*The first two pages of this article appeared earlier in* Origins, *1, pp. 9–10.*

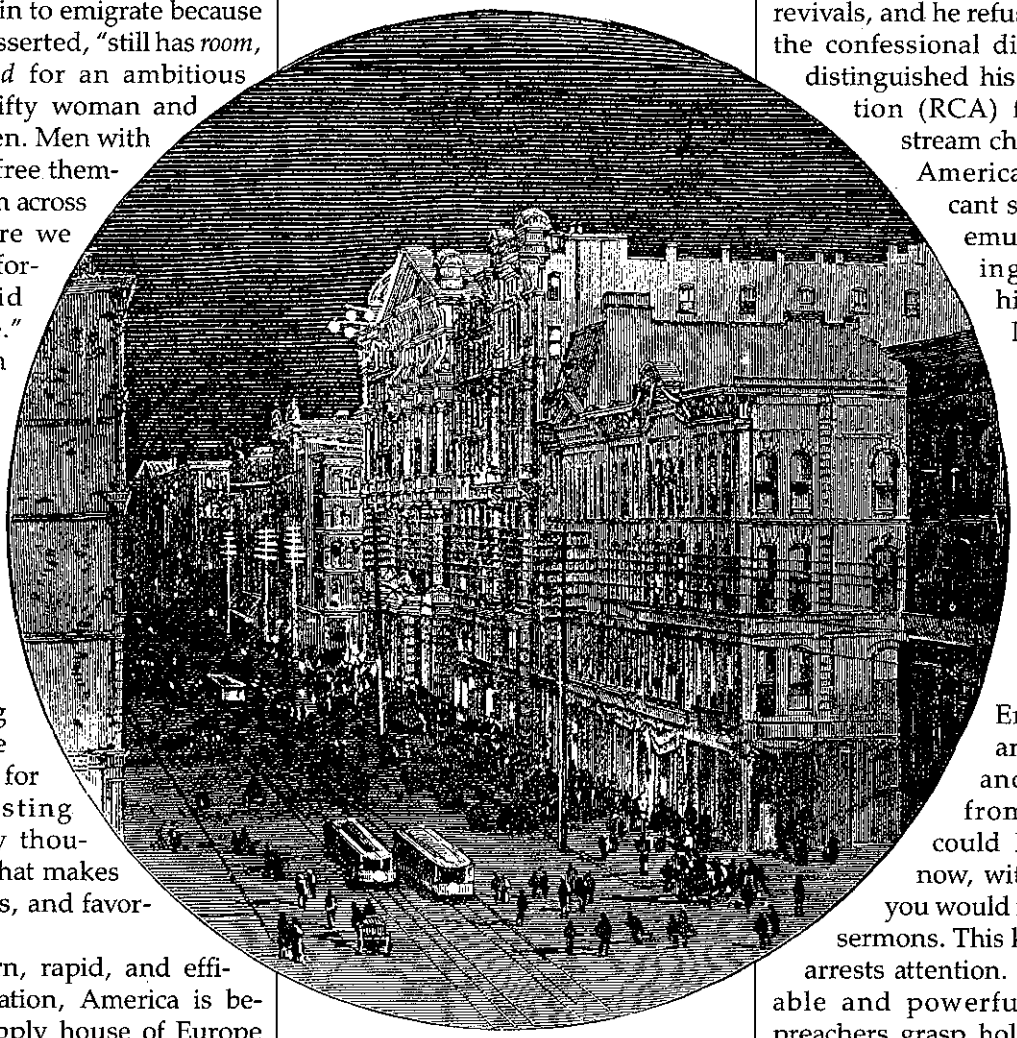
and development. Though he considered the 1872 Chicago fire a great setback, he portrayed the disaster as a mere prelude to even greater construction booms with unimaginable opportunities for gainful employment.

As late as 1880, during his twelfth year in Chicago, De Beij continued urging his cousin to emigrate because "America," he asserted, "still has *room, work,* and *bread* for an ambitious man, for a thrifty woman and growing children. Men with energy should free themselves and steam across the ocean. Here we consider them fortunate and bid them welcome."

Focusing on his city, the pastor reported, "Chicago, sixteen miles long and ten miles wide, with half a million people, is growing vigorously again. Building permits are granted weekly for structures costing forty and sixty thousand dollars. That makes for work, wages, and favorable prospects.

"With modern, rapid, and efficient transportation, America is becoming the supply house of Europe and other parts of the world. She has minerals from the most costly gold to the least valuable ore—and that in more abundance than all the nations of the world combined. She has cornfields that cannot be equaled in the world. She has prairies of a hundred million acres which produce fat cows and oxen to feed foreign countries. She has a restored confidence [following the depression of 1873–1879] and can carry on her business as she pleases.

"Chicago is the most important center of the great West, and it is apparent that in fifty years this city will surpass New York. Already it has the largest corn and lumber markets in the world. I often think that I came to America too late—that is, too late in life."[4]



*Chicago State Street, 1884*

With such boundless enthusiasm for the social and economic aspects of American culture, it is hardly surprising that De Beij also assessed the country's religious climate as generally wholesome and attractive. Despite his rigorously Calvinist background with its Netherlandic emphasis on the family and Christian nurture as the foundation for church expansion, De Beij expressed no anxieties about the revivalistic and individualistic character of American church life. He looked favorably on interchurch efforts to initiate and sustain revivals, and he refused to emphasize the confessional differences which distinguished his own denomination (RCA) from the mainstream churches of Anglo-America. More significant still, he sought to emulate the preaching techniques of his American colleagues in the city.

"Every Sunday," he wrote, "I go to an English church to learn something of the language and practical popular preaching. I must say the English preachers are skillful at this, and I learn much from them. If you could hear me preach now, without seeing me, you would not recognize my sermons. This kind of preaching arrests attention. It is very acceptable and powerful. The English preachers grasp hold on the central idea of the text, and without much exegesis, analysis, or synthesis, they develop the idea with a wealth of examples from daily life. You know—like Spurgeon."

Contrasting his ministerial activities in Chicago with the routine of his Groningen career, De Beij declared, "In our church here we have something going on virtually every eve-

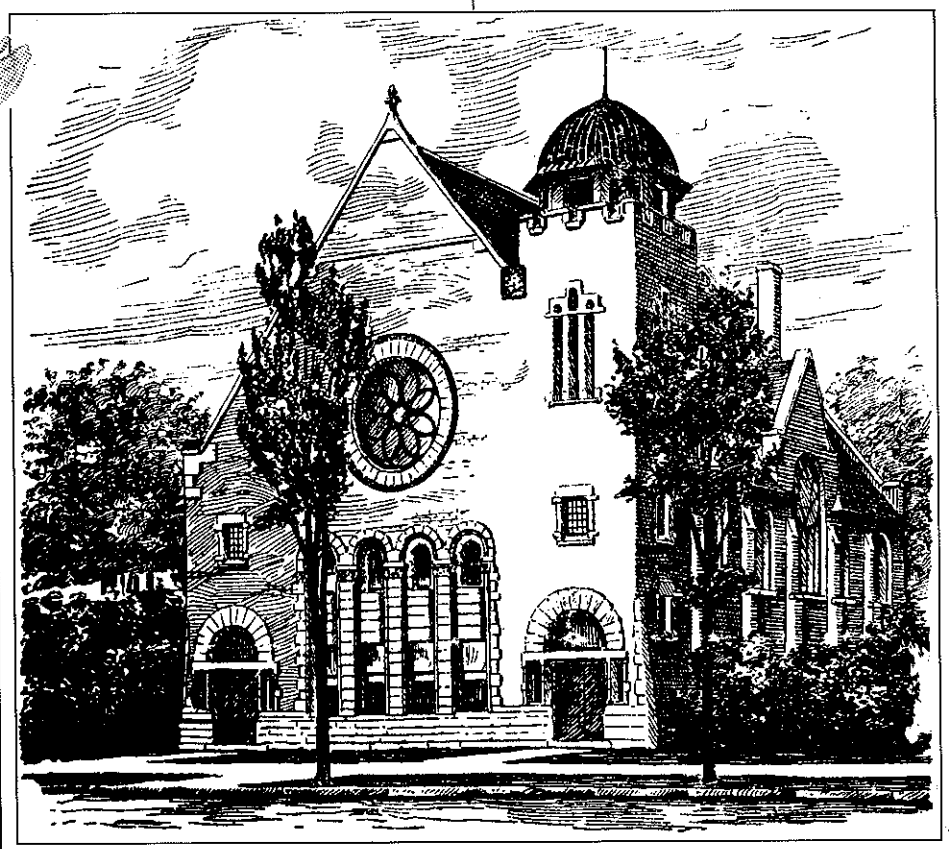
ning—prayer meetings, preaching, catechism, youth societies, and choral groups. . . . I would no longer feel at home with some of the pious customs and exclusively Sunday Christianity which characterized my life in Groningen. Here Christianity is more a way of life, an active love, a devotion to God—practicing his Word and laboring for his Kingdom. . . . It is now plain to me that my coming here was also personally beneficial—to prevent me from losing my own Christianity. Ah, as it was [in Middelstum], I did some preaching on Sunday, some cat-

*"Dwight L. Moody"*

echizing in winter, and some traveling in the summer. We visited a little during the week and conducted a little business from time to time. And in all of that my soul was wrapped up—becoming lean with but small comfort and little devotion. I provided no example worth following."[5]

These comments, written four years after his arrival, reflected a time of religious enthusiasm in his church, but of course that spiritual exuberance could not be maintained indefinitely. Still, whether it flourished or languished, De Beij's analysis of his congregation clearly reflected his adoption of the spiritual rhythms of American evangelism—conversion, backsliding, and renewal. Thus, in 1879 he wrote, "The religious condition of our people in general is not auspicious. There is a sad relaxation among many—especially among the youth who at the time of the revival seemed to have given themselves to the Lord and to us."[6]

During that same year, though, he expressed hope for renewal as he ex-



*"First Reformed Church" of Chicago*

plained, "Since our awakening of two years ago we have had a period of coldness so that it seemed to me that little of the former spirit remained, but beginning a short time ago a revival has begun and is increasing, so that the growth of the roots, invisible to man, is presently developing into leaf, blossoms, and fruit. Here on the West Side of Chicago we have a Rev. G. F. Pentecost on assignment—a tactful and unusually capable man, a man much like [Dwight L.] Moody, not quite so attractive, but much more knowledgeable. He is a blessed awakener whom my people (as many as understand English, and most do) attend regularly. I also attend as often as possible. He holds meetings four times each day: from 12 noon to 1 p.m., an hour of prayer; from 3 to 4 p.m., Bible study; from 4 to 5, dialogue and testimonies; and from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., preaching. Hundreds remain until 10 p.m. to receive added counsel from Pentecost and other pastors, and I am also among the counselors. Here in this land our divine worship is a lively activity. Conversion and renewal are the fruits of Rev. Pentecost's work."[7]

In adopting the methods and rhythms of the revival, De Beij could

not avoid the issue of interdenominational cooperation, for, beginning with the Great Awakening of the 1730s, the success of revivalists like George Whitfield, Charles G. Finney, and their successors was linked to interdenominational support. De Beij, then, quickly affirmed the generally wholesome character of ecumenism in the United States. Explaining this phenomenon in 1878, he wrote, "We have here a number of churches or denominations, and in very many of these the gospel is preached, and they contain a good Christian element. The best denominations are included in the general category of evangelical churches—the Presbyterians, the Dutch Reformed [RCA], Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Reformed Episcopalians, Lutherans, and others. Besides working in their own circles, these churches work together for the general promotion of Christianity. Thus, there are combined gatherings, prayer meetings, and other occasions in which there are no references to particular denominations. Together, then, they preach, speak, and pray to influence the unbelieving world and lead sinners to Jesus. I have a high regard for that work because, after all, faith in Jesus, turning to God, and renewal by the Holy Spirit are really what counts where Christianity and eternity are concerned. Fighting for one's own church and for remote, unimportant, and speculative doctrines has no significance for true Christianity and eternity. . . . A practical Christianity—faith, living, and doing—is earnestly recommended everywhere. Further, it is actually taken to heart in many excellent ways. . . . Now, you must not read between the lines that certain doctrines are denied in these evangelical churches and, even less, that I, if it were so, would approve. Still, it goes without saying that each church has individual practices—in baptism, customs, congregational management—but these matters have nothing to do with Jesus Christ. I tell you, cousin, I feel genuinely at home in this Christian life."[8] Though not explicitly embracing the nondenominational dictum "No creed but Christ," De Beij's perspective clearly encompassed the essence of that peculiarly Anglo-American anticreedal expression.

*"George F. Pentecost"*

Then, following his ardent defense of American revivalism, De Beij reported that the Christian Reformed Church, "our separated brothers," was "proceeding along the old paths." "Two of their congregations," he wrote, "are near neighbors of mine—one in High Prairie [Roseland] and another in Low Prairie, or South Holland. These congregations have been established by certain malcontents. . . . It happened this way. Rev. Koopman, a minister from Pernis in the Netherlandic province of South Holland, could not satisfy a small part of the [Roseland] congregation. Dissatisfaction grew and developed from the time of his arrival. Then the classis advised him to take another church, and when Koopman left, those who wanted him to stay resigned. Those folk are now served by two separatist pastors who plan to organize a 'true' church out of that mess."[9]

This "mess," though, had long predated H. R. Koopman's departure from High Prairie in 1877. Koopman had already served the Low Prairie segment of the South Chicago community between 1865 and 1868. But in 1862, before Koopman's arrival, the church there had fragmented. When Koopman was installed, some of the 1862 dissidents returned to the main body. They did this because Koopman's ministry in their native Netherlandic church (1842–1848) had established his credibility before their migration to Illinois. Then, when Koopman left Low Prairie to serve an Iowa church in 1868, the dissidents reasserted their independence. This group's shifting allegiances resulted from theological preferences which had become well entrenched among them in the Netherlands.[10]

These immigrants, from villages like Noordeloos in the Dutch province

of South Holland, had participated in the general revival and secession (Afscheiding) from the folk church of the Netherlands in 1834. Though marked by initial harmony, the Seceders soon split into three camps. The most traditional fragment was loyal to Hendrick De Cock, while the moderates adhered to the views of Anthony Brummelkamp. More radical than these, Henry P. Scholte advocated a variation of Congregationalism, and several of the churches he founded split, one portion opposing Scholte and another remaining loyal to him. The Noordeloos church in the Netherlands exemplifies this phenomenon, and that church divided into pro- and anti-Scholte factions in 1842. H. R. Koopman served the anti-Scholte faction as an unordained student pastor sometime after 1842 and until 1848. By that date, though, virtually all of the Scholte faction had immigrated to Iowa with Scholte, Meanwhile, many of the anti-Scholte party immigrated to Illinois. Thus, in both the High and Low Prairie communities the dissidents were anti-Scholte people who trusted the leadership of H. R. Koopman.[11] But the cause of the South Chicago area's divisions (1862 and 1868 in Low Prairie and 1877 in High Prairie) was not simply the discontent resulting from the loss of Rev. Koopman. Koopman's successors also contributed to the turmoil. Each of them had been trained in the United States and lacked sympathy for the ecclesiastical distinctions which the Seceders carried with them from Holland.[12] Whatever their faults, the Seceders were consistent in maintaining the theological preferences which they took with them from the Netherlands.

This tediously detailed history challenges patience itself, but the story's complicated path reveals well enough that the dissidents of the Low and High Prairies marched to tunes which Bernardus De Beij had firmly rejected. For him, immigration to the New World provided an opportunity to cast off the old patterns of the Netherlands and to adopt the more tolerant views of the Anglo-American evangelicals. Fine theological distinctions, denominational boundaries, and traditional piety were, from his perspective, no longer crucial. By contrast, the Seceders on the South Side of Chicago resisted American religious novelties and attempted to maintain the ecclesiastical and doctrinal distinctions that characterized their home churches in the Netherlands. De Beij, though, had no inclination to reestablish these Netherlandic patterns in his church. He did not even subscribe to the religious periodicals of his former denomination. "I do not get the *Bazuin* or the *Wekstem*," he wrote. "All I receive from the Dutch press is the *Provincial Groninger Courant*."[13] It is hardly surprising, then, that he regarded the conservative dissidents with scorn.

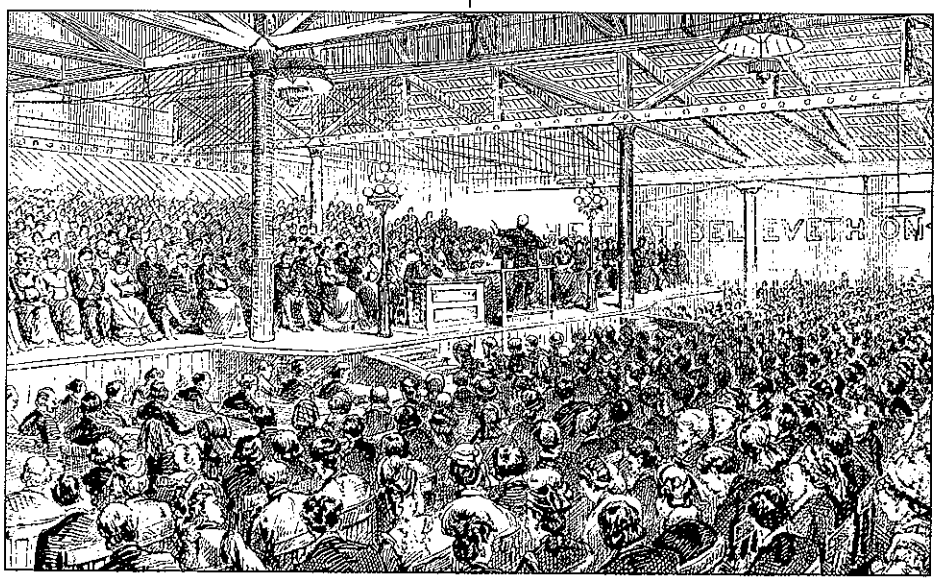
They were, in his words, "beneath criticism." If ignored, these "little brothers" who boasted the name "True" Holland Reformed Church (CRC) would quickly disappear.

*Chicago Dearborn Street, 1884*

"They can say and write what they wish," he declared, "and no one pays any attention to them. That is the best and quickest way to kill them off."[14]

If De Beij had followed his own advice, perhaps the "little brothers" would have been less successful. Instead, he, together with Adrian Zwemer,[15] authored the 225-page booklet *Voices from the Holland Reformed Church in the U.S.A.*, which attacked the motives of the Christian Reformed Church's founding congregations. But De Beij's polemic was not unprovoked, for the "little brothers" of the CRC had issued their own pamphlet, *the Actual Condition of the Reformed Protestant (Dutch) Church in America*, in 1869. This booklet, together with the many brochures and pamphlets which followed, detailed the differences between the RCA and the CRC, but the most distinguishing characteristics within the two churches arose from their attitudes toward the Anglo-American church world. For the RCA, Bernardus De Beij's views about Americanization accurately reflected the manner in which his denomination embraced American revivalism during the nineteenth century. By contrast, the "little brothers" of the CRC persisted with efforts to preserve the heritage of the seceded church in the Netherlands.

It is only recently, nearly a century after De Beij's death, that some segments of the CRC have begun to endorse the practices of Anglo-American revivalism. Testimonies, along with altar calls which urge conversions and recommitments, though not yet common in the CRC, have been introduced at Young Calvinist conventions, Christian school chapel exercises, and also in some regular worship services. Such developments demonstrate an Americanization process which would have been both unthinkable and repulsive to the leaders of the CRC before the 1950s. These are, to say the least, very curious developments, which, in the light of the CRC's 130-year tradition, require careful scrutiny and discussion. For indeed, the general adoption of revivalism in the CRC would constitute a cultural shift of major proportions.



*"Revival Meeting, 1875"*

**Notes**

[1]*Letter of Bernardus De Beij to A. P. Lanting, July 30, 1872, in Dutch-American Immigrant Collection in the Archives of the Calvin College and Seminary Library (cited hereafter as Im L. Col.).*

[2]*J. F. Van Hulsteijn,* De Gereformeerd Kerk te Middelstum, 1835–1935 *(Groningen), 1935, pp. 88–101. Additional information about the life and career of Bernardus De Beij is available in Peter Vandenberge,* Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America, 1828–1965 *(New Brunswick: RCA Historical Commission), 1966, p. 39, and in J. Wesseling, "Kerk Historische Notities," published between May 1975 and January 1976 in* Petah-Ju: Vrijgemaakte Des Heeren. *The same author's* Afscheiding van 1834 in Groninger Land *(Groningen: De Vuurbaak, Vol. I, pp. 181–91, sketches the history of the Middelstum church.*

[3]*Letter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, September 13, 1870, in Im. L. Col.*

[4]*Letter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, January 1880, in Im. L. Col.*

[5]*Letter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, March 9, 1871, in Im. L. Col.*

[6]*Leter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, March 30, 1879, in Im. L. Col.*

[7]*Letter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, February 2, 1879, in Im. L. Col.*

[8]*Letter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, January 3, 1878, in Im. L. Col.*

[9]Ibid.

[10]*C. Smits,* De Afscheiding van 1834 *(Dordrecht: J. P. van den Tol), Vol. II, pp. 357–64, provides a sketch of the Noordeloos church and H. R. Koopman's relationship to that congregation. The 1936 anniversary booklet* History of the First Christian Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, *pp. 2–3, relates H. R. Koopman's activity in Low Prairie along with a brief history of that congregation's changing affiliations between 1862 and 1886.*

*Koopman is also mentioned in C. Smits's second volume on* De Afscheiding van 1834. *On pp. 370–71 it is apparent that H. R. Koopman studied under F. A. Kok, who was a disciple of Hendrick De Cock. Like his mentor, Koopman disagreed with the theological and ecclesiastical direction represented by the Brummelkamp/Van Raalte faction and also with H. P. Scholte's party. Thus Koopman served the anti-Scholte faction of the Noordeloos congregation and other churches. In 1854, as a classical delegate, Koopman expressed the suspicion that Brummelkamp and others who might be appointed to the proposed theological school in Kampen were not sufficiently orthodox.*

[11]*See again C. Smits,* De Afscheiding van 1834, *Vol. II, pp. 357–64. For H. P. Scholte's position among the seceded factions in the Netherlands, consult R. P. D. Stokvis,* De Nederlandse Trek Naar Amerika *(Leiden: Universitaire Pers), 1977, pp. 58–75.*

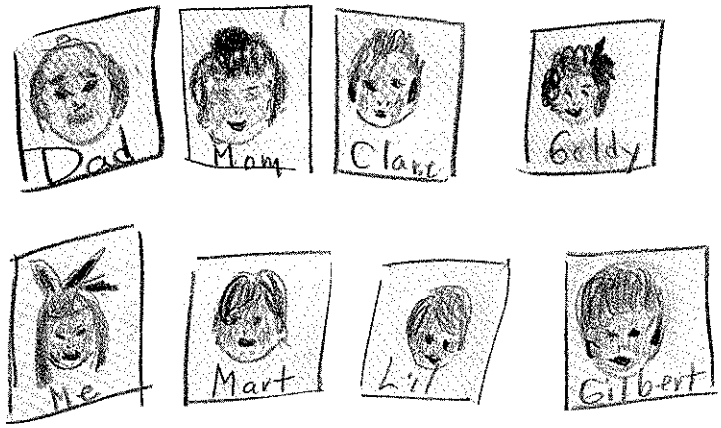
[12]*Edward Corwin,* A Manual of the Reformed Church in America *(New York: RCA Board of Publications), 1902 contains an alphabetical list of the denomination's ministers together with information about their education and subsequent careers.*

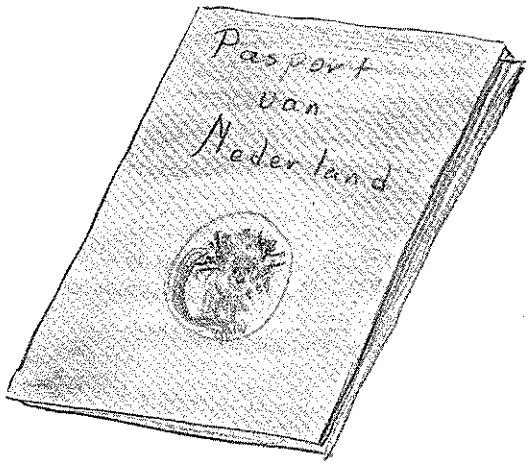
[13]*Letter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, September 13, 1870, in Im L. Col.*

[14]*Letter of B. De Beij to A. P. Lanting, May 26, 1873, in Im. L. Col.*

[15]*In 1868 Zwemer followed Koopman as the pastor of the Low Prairie church in South Holland, Illinois, and in 1871 he joined De Beij in writing* Voices. . . .

# The Passport




by Jennie Visser

"Leave room for all the documents," Dad said.

Mom looked at the odd accumulation. Dad had been busy so long. I pressed my nose into service too.

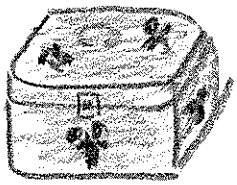
A passport, a neat little book. I could scribble some fine notes in that.

"Hands off, Ginny!" Dad ordered.

"What's it for?" I saw that my prize was about to go into Mother's big briefcase.

It was not the little metal box she generally displayed when an awesome thunderstorm struck our turfland. Then we as kids generally sat in the family room waiting for God's fury to pass. Mom held the metal box on her lap, all the important papers of deeds, property, and valuables inside. Lightning had no power to destroy metal boxes in those days. Kid brother Gilbert crawled underneath the table at such times, feeling secure behind the plush tablecloth that reached the floor. He held the soft part against his cheek and sucked his thumb vigorously with every added crash of God speaking in angry tones.

"What's it for?" I asked again.



"It's a book that tells you are a citizen of Friesland, Holland," said my older brother wisely. "It gives you a pass for travel to other countries, and maybe to let you out."

He had no idea where the "other country" was either, so it was assumed we had to cross mountains, rivers, oceans, and many, many countries.

"See!"

His grimy hands held the book I had wanted to touch so badly. I snatched it, and out rolled a package . . . and out rolled some more—extra passport pictures.

"Oh, Dad, quick!"

Mom cried as if a near tragedy had occurred.

Mom cried easily these last few days, so I was not alarmed, and the pictures, why, there was one of me.

Mom bent over to take them away, but neither Durk nor I was finished looking at ourselves. We had never seen a picture of ourselves before.

"You look like a bird," my brother laughed. I looked carefully to study my face but saw no resemblance to any known winged creature.

"Look at your wings spreading out," he continued. He was referring to my beautiful silk hair ribbon perched on top of my head rather hastily. I recall that morning when we all had to dress up for the passport pictures. What a hassle that was.

Dad was shouting commands left and right.

Mom was more confused than ever.

Sister was combing my hair. Combing! It was torture. It always was. Every morning she pulled extra hard at the knots I had teased in overnight. Then she tied the red ribbon on top.

Too bad the red ribbon didn't show up on the black-and-white passport picture, but I couldn't think of myself without that ribbon.

Maybe Durk was right; maybe the ribbon ends did look like fluttering wings.

I tossed the picture at mother so that Durk wouldn't have a chance to study his face.

"You look like something come out of a cocoon," I retorted.

"Hush, hush!" Mother was casting a wary eye in Dad's direction. He was hitting nails vehemently on wooden trunk lids to close them securely for the journey.

"The pictures are for Grandma and your uncles and aunts," Mom explained. She was gathering up the extras that had fallen out and replaced them in the neat blue booklet.

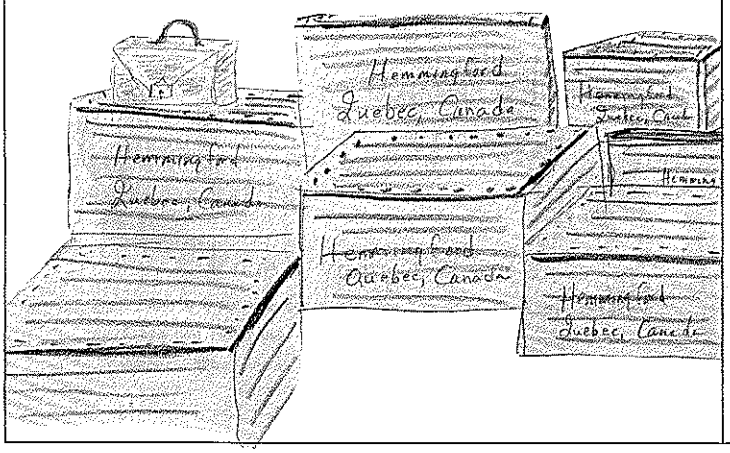
I would like to read that booklet someday.

It looked as though it had a lot to say about me, and I would like to know what it said.

Dad was finished making the awful din with hammer and trunks.

"Make sure you stash the passport in the briefcase with the other traveling documents," he said, "so that we can find them on short notice."

Dad had bought Mom a neat little briefcase.




**Going to Ca-anan, or Canada**

"We're going to Ca-anan," I announced triumphantly next day at school.

"Ca-anan??"

"Same place where Jesus was?"

"Yes," I confirmed rather hesitantly. I had never heard Dad talk that way. He talked of Quebec, and French, and Mr. Currie.

"Don't know why the girls are learning English," neighbor Klaas had remarked when he learned Dad had a sponsor in Quebec. "They speak French there, you know."

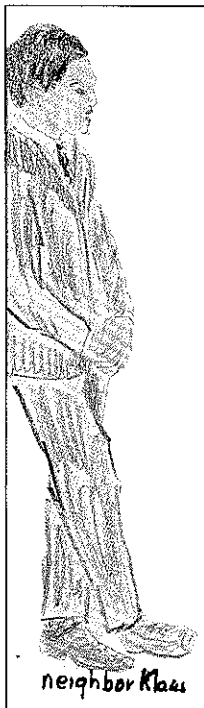
Neighbor Klaas would know. He was an engineer. He was smarter than Dad, in my opinion. He had helped drain the Zuider Zee. That in itself was quite a feat. Wish he'd drain the Atlantic too. Mom dreaded the ocean journey.

"You get so seasick," she complained.

"Nonsense," Dad objected. "They give you plenty of pills on board, or a pint of beer."

"Beer!" my sisters echoed. Never, never was such stuff mentioned, or swallowed. Or . . . did Dad perhaps . . . did he?

There was a hotel at the end of the polderdyk which sold beer, and funerals were often directed from that place to the cemetery. I had seen Dad dressed in tails and a stovepipe hat on such occasions. Dad was a town official, I believe, but what his particular function was, I never learned. He announced the deaths in the village, I know, for one time I met him unexpectedly at the corner store. I was eyeing the candy counter with no intent of any purchase, and in walked Dad.




"Did Mother send you here?" he questioned.

I nodded incomprehensibly. Why should Mother send me to survey the candy counter?

"Then move," he ordered. I whisked past him, but saw him hand Mr. Vis a letter edged in black.

"Beer's not for me," Mom protested. "But I dread that ten-day ocean trip. I'm so afraid."

No, I was not afraid, because we had just sung that morning in school:

E'en though the clouds sweep fast
and wild
and breaking billows roar,
we're safe with Jesus at the helm
to pilot us to shore.

I tried to hum the tune a bit to convince Mom that Jesus would go too, but Jesus was probably never on a big ocean anyway.

"Is that big ocean in Canaan, Mom?"

My hair-pulling sister laughed hilariously.

"It's not *Canaan*, silly. It's *Canada*."

No wonder the kids had stared at me in a curious way, as if I had come down from Hermon's mountaintop. The teacher had smiled a bit, but she had prayed for our safety. That I liked. And I liked the song she chose too: "In the good ship of our Captain, we are sailing o'er life's sea."

I sang the loudest.

**Where Is the Passport?**

Mom had already cried two handkerchiefs full of tears.

I thought she would have been happy to get going. She had said that many times.

The inoculations, the fevers we had as a result, the awful excitement of the passport photos . . .

Was Dad ever mad that day at the photographer's.

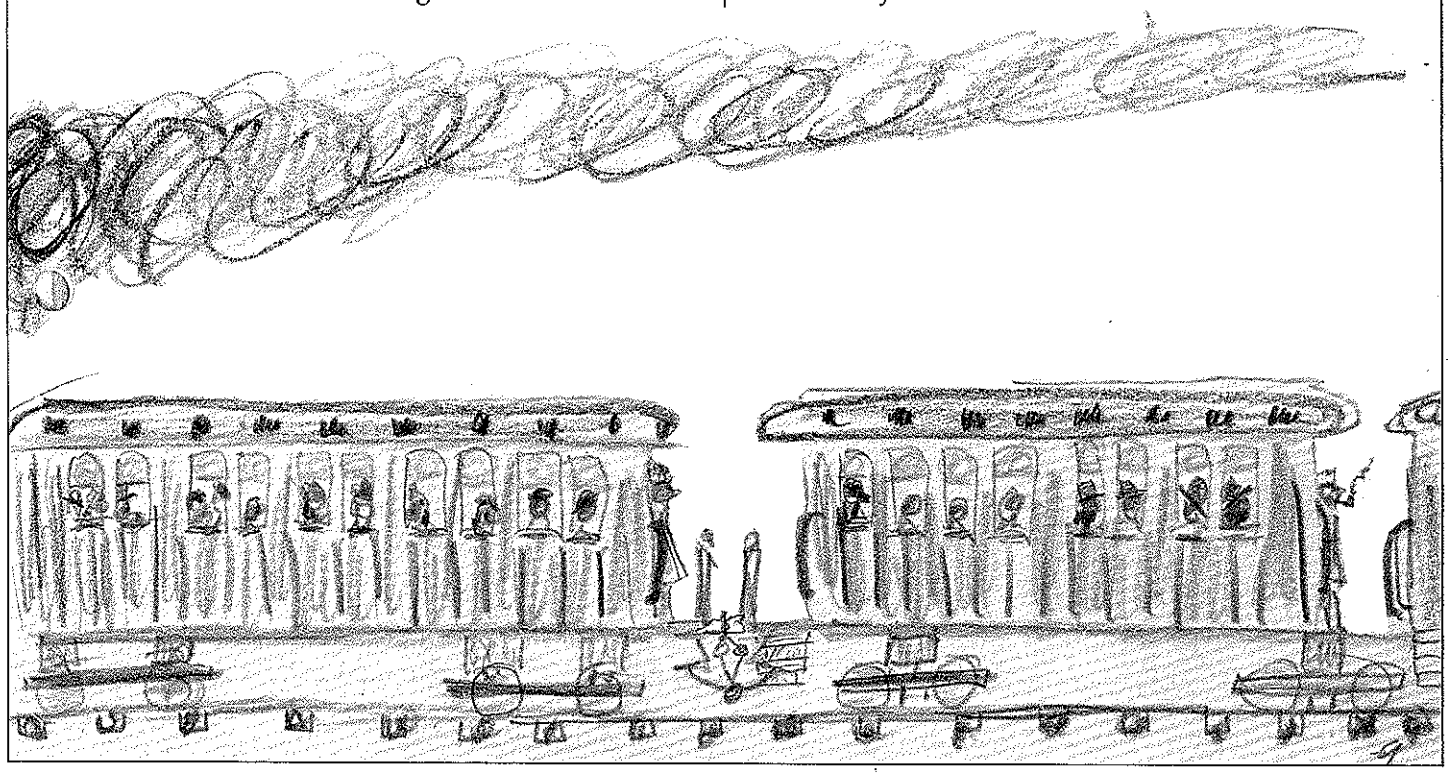
I thought about it as we rolled on the rails.

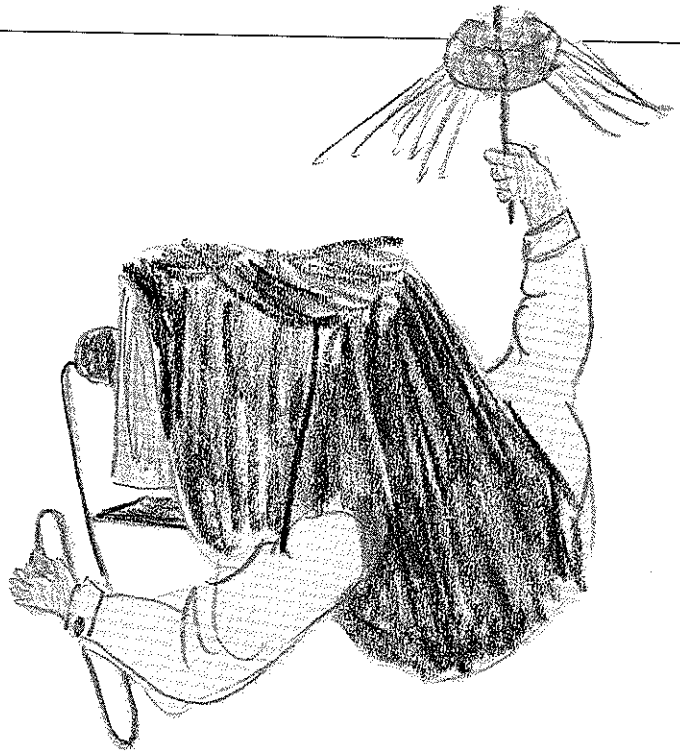
We should have been in a joyful mood. Having your picture taken is an event, and it had never happened to us before, but we were too joyful. Mom couldn't stop laughing, a bundle of nerves, and consequently we all looked very sober on the family picture because Dad threatened he'd spank us right in front of the hooded man.

The photographer was constantly under that black hood. Then he'd jump out to set Mom's foot in place. Mom shifted her feet constantly, and the hooded man worked up a sweat rearranging legs. The family picture for the relatives had to be proper and reflect our sanity at least.

Durk said the man saw us upside down, and that's why he stayed so long under the hood. That sent gales of laughter in the air from my two older sisters, and the hooded man said, "Good, nice smile."

But Mom objected. "They'll think we're glad to leave," she said. She'd had so many rows about that with her side of the family.





"Leaving your poor mother [my grandmother] at this age. What possesses you to be so cruel!"

That had brought tears again, because the year before Grandpa had been buried with all pomp and ceremony. My sister often recounted the details. Her most beautiful brown shoes had been dyed black, and her lavish wide-brimmed red hat had been made ugly with black ribbon.

"And then we marched around the cemetery seven times," she would add, "as if the walls of Jericho were going to fall."

Mom never corrected her, but I learned later on that the hearse had not arrived, so the mourning party had been asked to walk around the cemetery.

"It was," my sister ventured, "to scare the devil away."

But now Mom was crying so hard that I even sniffed and found a hanky in the bottom of my pocket.

"Good-bye, good-bye," we had said over and over again.

We were on our way to Rotterdam. There we would board the *New Amsterdam* ocean liner to sail across the Atlantic.

Neighbor Klaas had shown me the locations on his map, and Canada was not Canaan, even though Mom still called it "Ca-anan" when her voice was weary.

The train ride was okay. Our tickets were clipped perfunctorily by the conductor, who had a friendly little chat with Dad when he learned we were on our way to Canada.

"Nice country. I hope to go there myself someday," he said. "Have relatives in America. So this is your family. Where are the rest?" He held the tickets.

Dad waved his big arm in the direction where my older two sisters had disappeared. "You will see them," he said. "Here, Mom, show the passport."

Mom dug into her fancy new briefcase and retrieved a handful of documents, but no passport with pictures to identify our wandering tribe.

Mom dug again, but the end result was the same: more envelopes—blue, white, brown—but the neat little book was not there.

"Where did you put it?" Dad barked.

Mom shook her head. It was lost in the briefcase.

Police certificates of good conduct, itinerary of our stopovers, certificates of our inoculations against smallpox, typhus, and typhoid, visas and application forms—all were piled on her lap, and the two drenched handerchiefs lay hopelessly on top, but the hardcover booklet was not there.

Dad grabbed the briefcase and began his own search, with no better results. Then Mom lifted her feet from the little metal box she had tucked halfway under the seat. To make it secure, she had set her foot on it. Someone might sneak under the benches, you know.

I was about to speak, but Dad cut me right off.

Mom followed my gaze and bent over.

The visas and certificates and many envelopes of red, blue, white, and brown fell to the floor, as Mom triumphantly lifted the little metal box and put it on her lap.

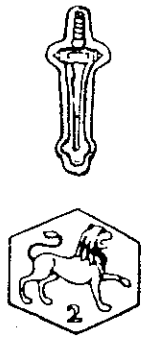
"I put it in here," she said simply.

"A good place," said the conductor. "Time and again people lose valuable documents. It is so hard to trace them." Mom was grateful for the support.

The conductor left, whistling down the aisle. Dad did not ask for the passport again. Mom kept it safe in the metal box, where all her precious keepsakes had been stored for years.

We'd never have made it to "Ca-anan" if it hadn't been for Mom.

# DUTCH SILVER

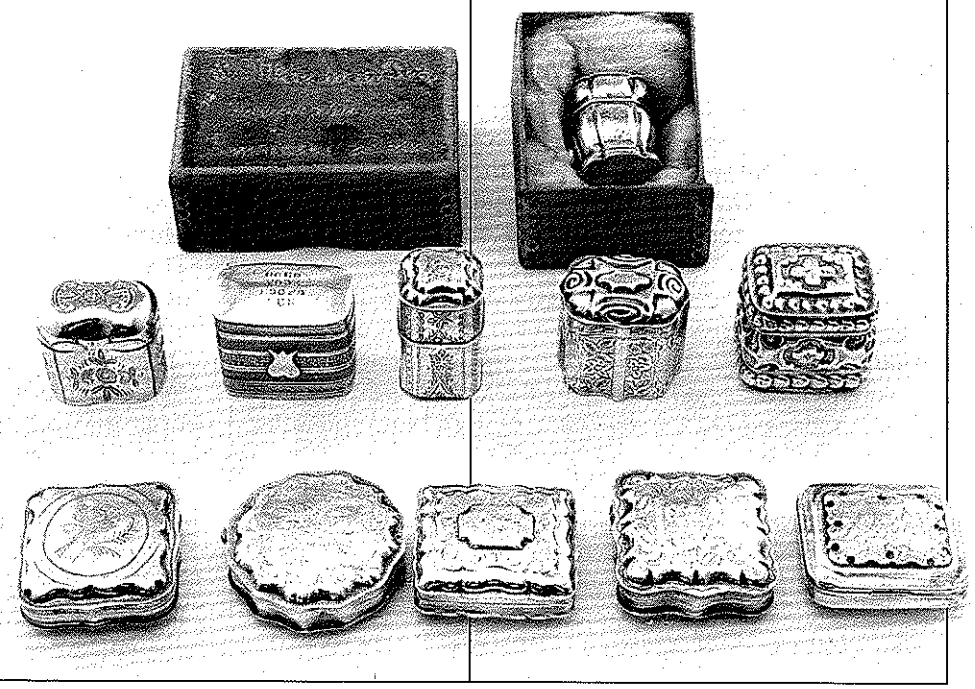


*by Conrad Bult*

*Very few of our Dutch ancestors owned silver tableware such as teapots, tablespoons, salad forks and spoons, pepper shakers, sugar sifters, tea caddies, or tea-caddy spoons. Before 1850, according to those who have written about Dutch silver, silver items of any kind were seldom found in Dutch homes. After 1850, the Netherlands became more prosperous, and use of silver in Dutch households became more common. Although this last observation may be correct, it is also true that families of the immigrant stock from which we came, possessed, if any, only one or two small silver items. Silversmiths catered to the wishes of the upper middle class and the very rich and found no customers among the farmhands or day laborers who lived on subsistence wages.*

*By the term* Dutch silver *we mean items which are at least 83 percent solid silver. In fact, Dutch silver objects produced from 1814 through 1952 contain either* $^{833}/_{1000}$ *or* $^{934}/_{1000}$ *silver. All silver objects pictured were made between 1814 and 1952 and are* $^{833}/_{1000}$ *silver, as indicated by a "hallmark," or stamp, on larger items and a minute cross or sword on very small objects.*

The top item is a *ruikdoosje* (possibly a better term is *snuifdoosie*) in its original presentation box. It was manufactured in 1905. The *ruikdoosjes* in the middle row, left to right, are hallmarked 1877, 1845, 1872, 1861, and 1875. On the lid of the box hallmarked 1845, we read, *Goed voor hoofd pijn* (Good for head pain). The peppermint boxes on the bottom row are hallmarked 1871, 1868, 1867, 1862, and 1864. In *Legends of the Dutch,* the author, Adrian Van Koevering, notes that to avoid sleep at worship services, "Women resorted to their *ruikdoosjes,* a small silver box with a hinged lid,



containing a sponge that had been moistened with cologne, which was repeatedly passed along the full length of the seat, as also were peppermint lozenges. These sponges were pressed to the nostrils, the pleasant odor also permeating the air."

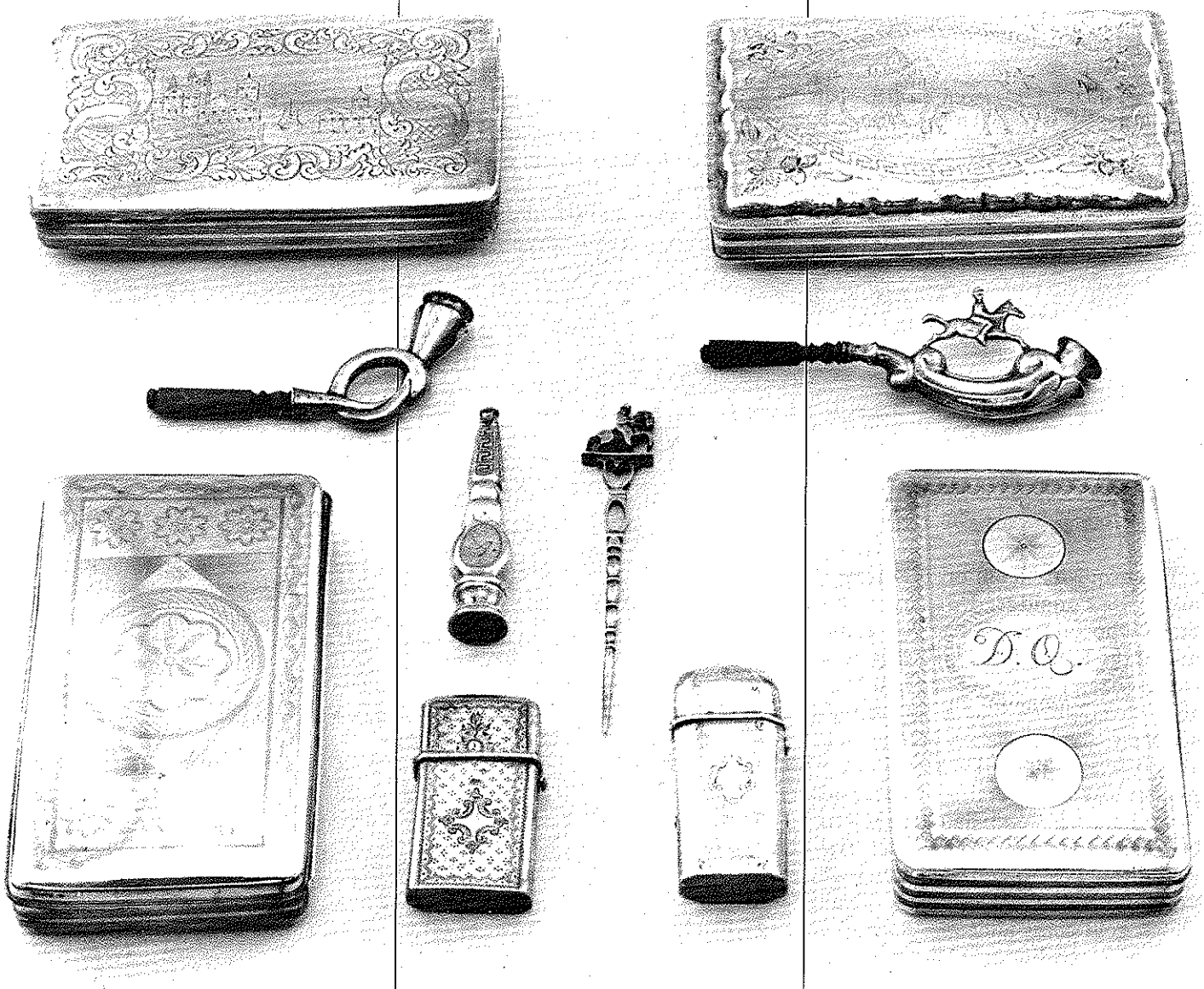
As Van Koevering states, "The Dutch pioneers, as a rule, were quite addicted to the use of tobacco, and the possession of a long fancy pipe was a mark of distinction. . . . Many pioneers both smoked and chewed tobacco, Peerless tobacco being the favorite of the masticators. This tobacco, juicy and cut fine, a most dynamic brand, was carried in a decorated metal box in the hip pocket." Tobacco boxes were made of either silver or brass. Those pictured here are made of silver and were used for either pipe tobacco or cigars.

*Top row from left to right: tobacco box hallmarked 1854, cigar box hallmarked 1876.*

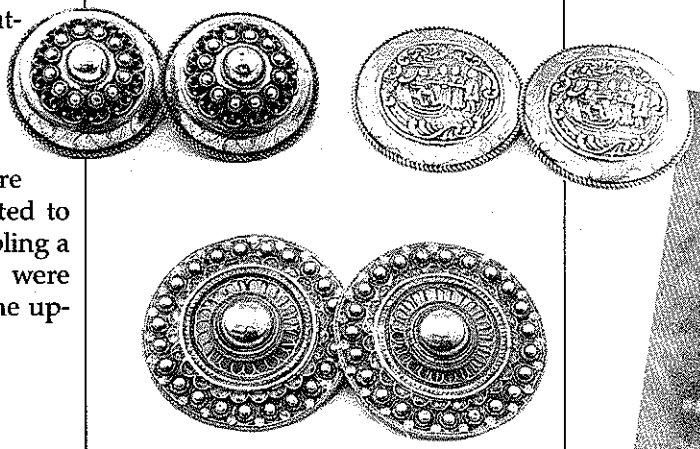
*Second row: cigar holders, each about 100 years old.*

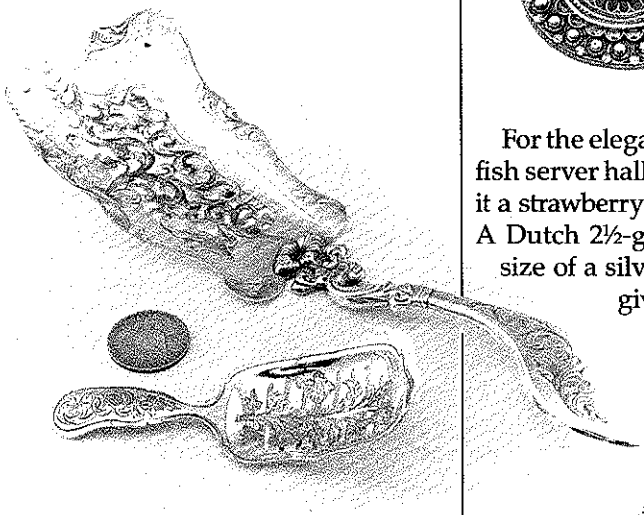
*Center: cigar holder, pick for cleaning a pipe, both about 100 years old.*

*Bottom row: tobacco box hallmarked 1839; two match boxes, each about 100 years old; tobacco box hallmarked 1832.*



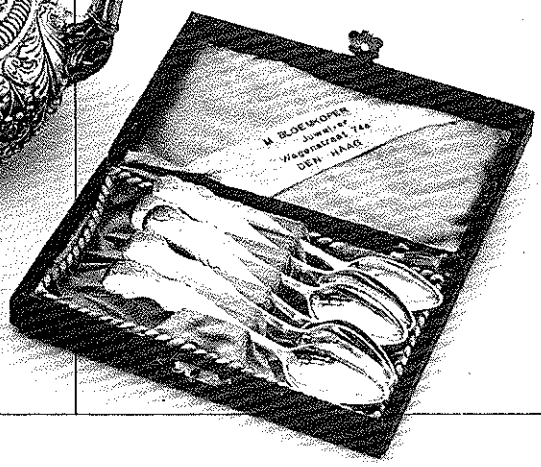
Many *Origins* readers have seen pictures of Dutch men from the province of Zeeland wearing trouser buttons. Here are three pairs, two of which exhibit the Zeeland filigree work found on smaller buttons and on jewelry for women. These buttons are found in pairs and are connected to one another by a device resembling a belt buckle. The buttons here were made before 1910; the pair in the upper left is a century old.

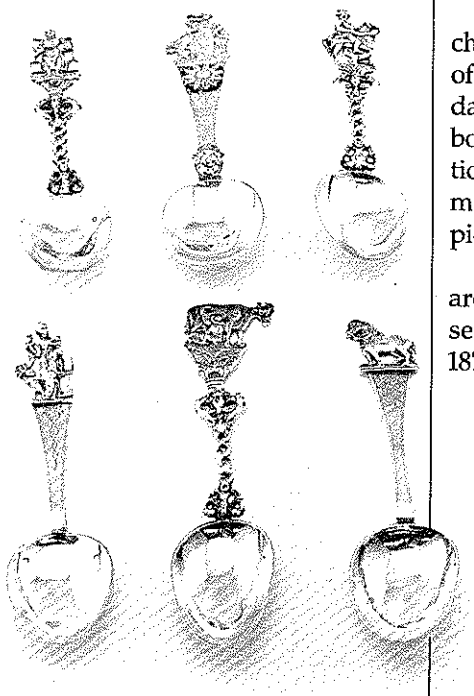




For the elegant table, here we have a fish server hallmarked 1847 and below it a strawberry server hallmarked 1855. A Dutch 2½-guilder piece, about the size of a silver dollar, is included to give an idea of the size of these serving pieces.

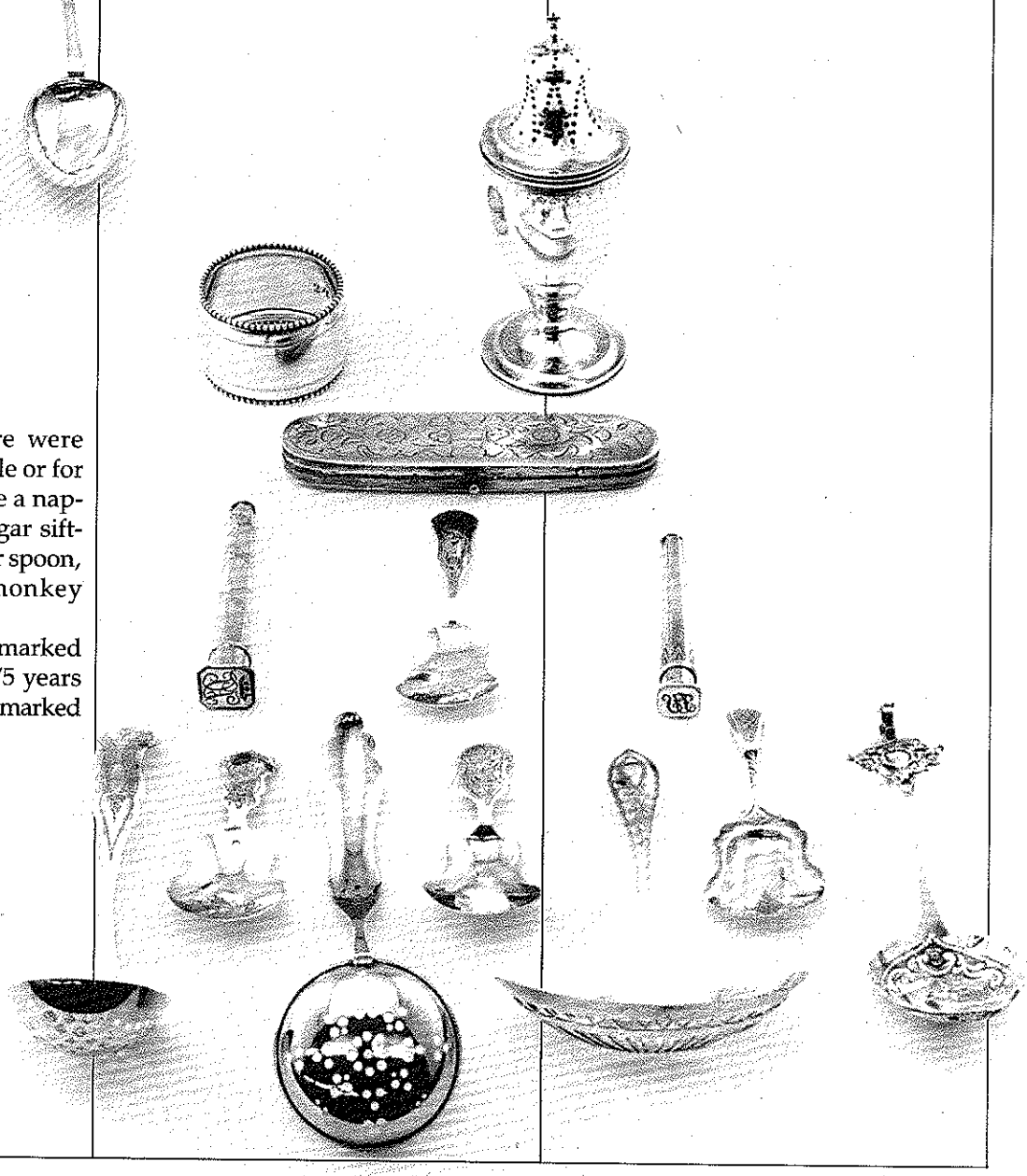
The exquisite detail on this teapot might be considered decadent by those who prefer silver with a more uncluttered look. No doubt, this item was a prized possession of a family of above average means. A set of teaspoons such as these was often given as a gift and passed down from a mother to a daughter. If a mother had three daughters, each daughter might be given two spoons from the set. The cylindrical box, about two hundred years old, originally contained small Dutch gold coins and was given to a bride as a wedding gift. The teapot is hallmarked 1867. The spoons are marked 1865.





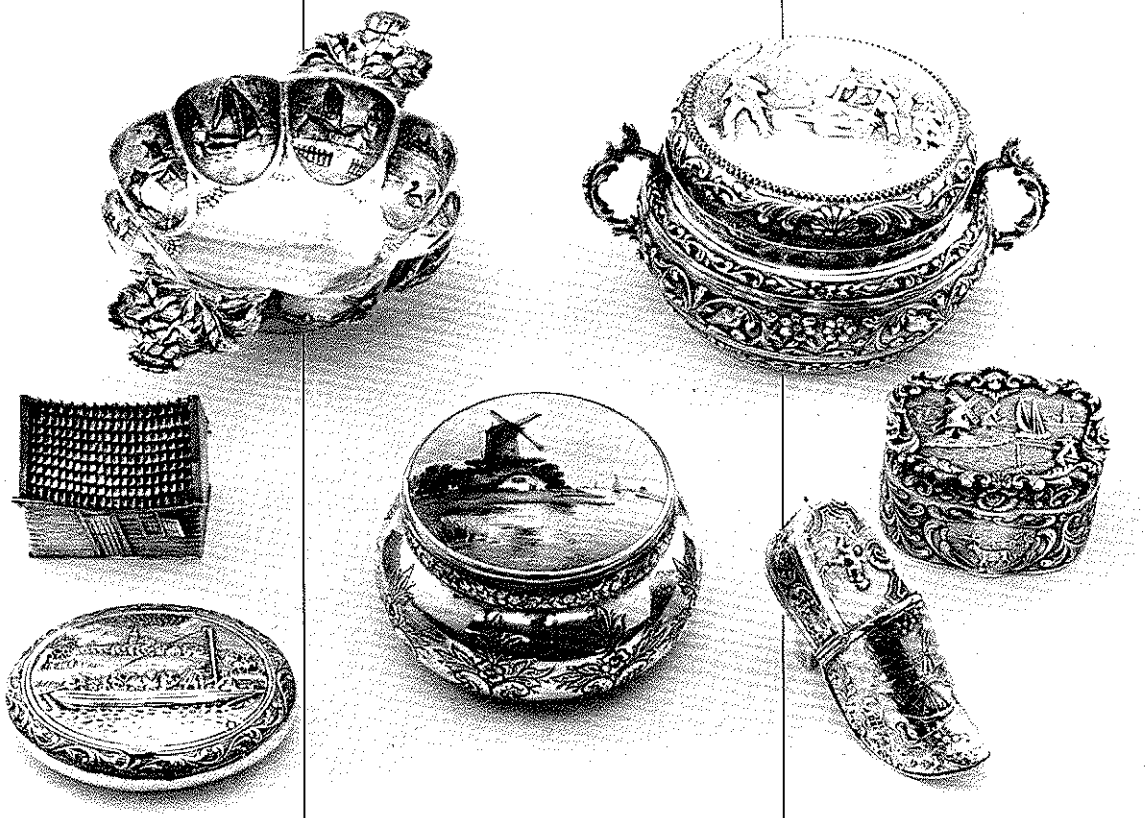
Birth spoons were often given to a child to commemorate his or her date of birth. The child's name and birth date were engraved on the back of the bowl. If the child died, that information was also included. Rural and domestic scenes were frequently depicted on these items.

On the top, left to right, the spoons are hallmarked 1874, 1869, 1869. In the second row, they are hallmarked 1818, 1871, 1846.



The objects in this picture were made for use either on the table or for special purposes. Included are a napkin ring, a pepper shaker, sugar sifters, a glasses case, seals, a sugar spoon, tea-caddy spoons, and a monkey spoon.

The pepper shaker is hallmarked 1824. Both seals are at least 175 years old. The oval sugar sifter is hallmarked 1816.

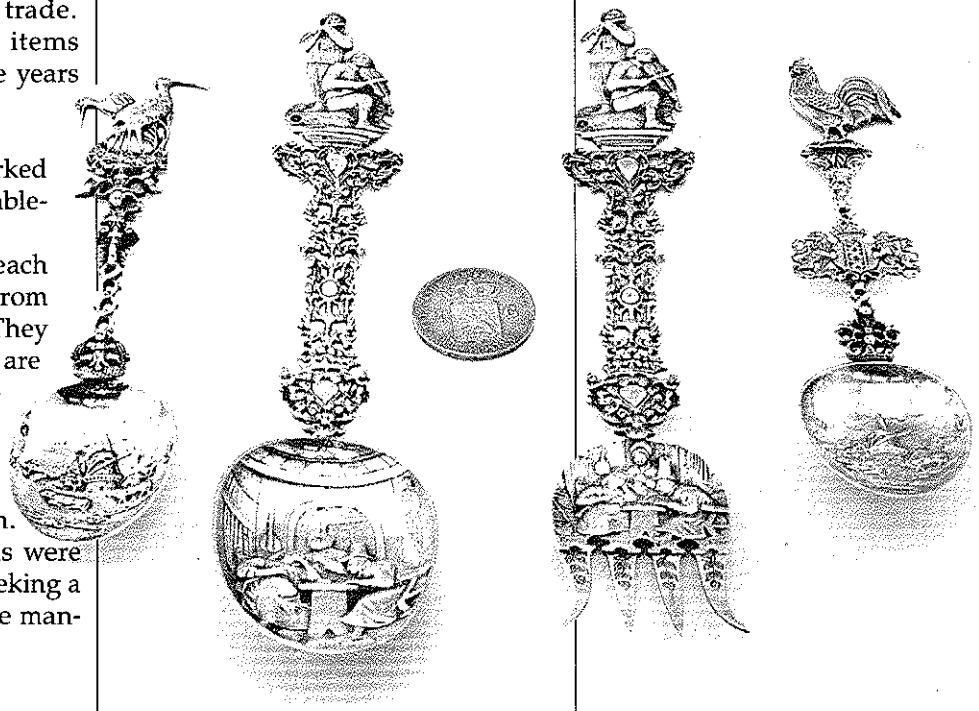


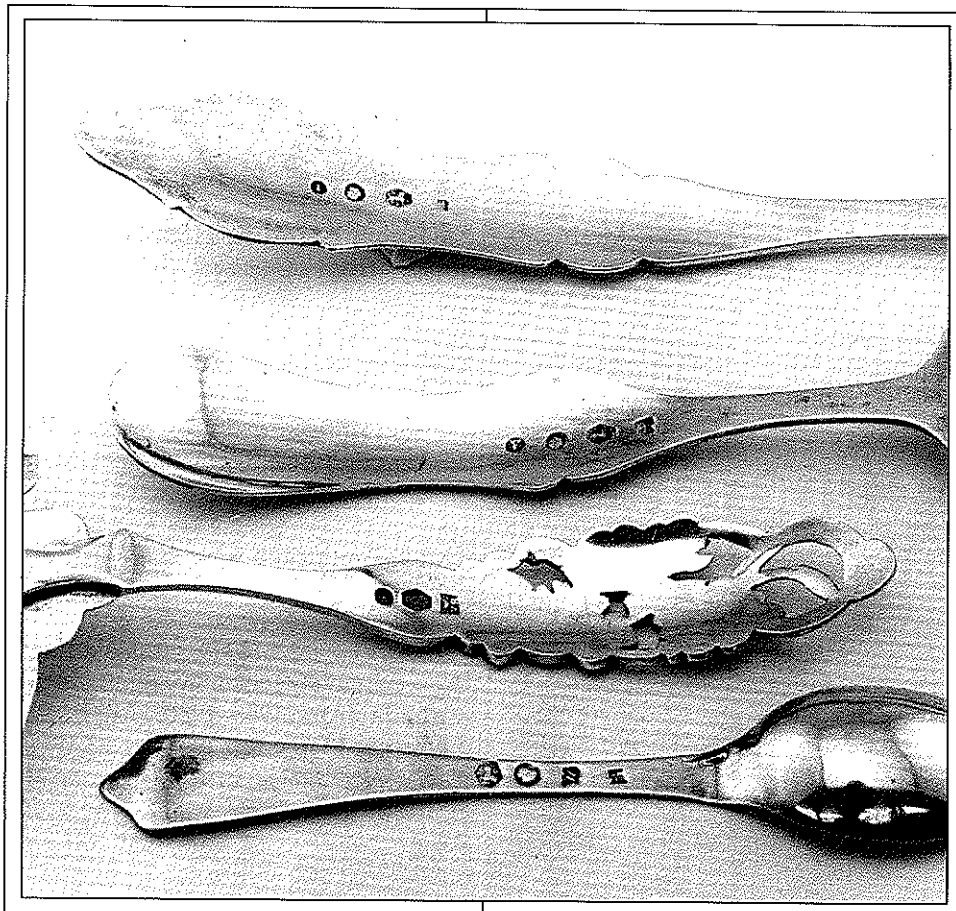
Souvenirs were produced to meet the demands of the tourist trade. Many of the more elaborate items were manufactured during the years 1880–1920.

Left to right:

- A stork spoon hallmarked 1900. It is larger than a tablespoon.
- The spoon and fork each contain the same scene from a John Steen painting. They are hallmarked 1909 and are much larger than tablespoons.
- A rooster spoon hallmarked 1900. It is larger than a tablespoon.

Souvenirs other than spoons were also available for the tourist seeking a memento. Those pictured were manufactured before 1910.





Since 1814, each piece of Dutch silver must, by law, have the following set of marks. As before, we are describing items produced during the period 1814–1952. Looking at the top item here, we note left to right:

1. The date letter, first used in 1814. Date letters indicate the year a silver item was made. Each year from 1814 to the present has a specific date letter. To determine the year that a date letter stands for, a collector can check published lists of alphabet letters in various type styles (italics, capitals, gothic, etc.). Each letter of each type style represents one year.
2. Head of the goddess Minerva—a hallmark found on larger silver pieces.
3. This mark, with the lion facing right and a 2 below the lion, indicates the purity of the silver (833/1000). Another mark sometimes used is a lion facing right accompanied by a *1*. This indicates silver of a purity of 934/1000.
4. The mark of the manufacturer or silversmith.

Often these marks are not in a row, as indicated on this picture. You will find marks in most obscure locations, and at times you will need a strong magnifying glass to locate them.

On small items you may find only a maker's mark and a tiny mark similar to a sword or cross. This sword or cross indicates that the silver content is at least 833/1000.

The items pictured are from a private collection. Without the cooperation of the owner, who desires to remain anonymous, this article could not have been written.

The following books contain information on Dutch silver:

Clarijs, Petra. *Wat is Antiek?* 2 vols. Bussum: C. A. J. van Dishoeck, 1958. Volume 1 contains several pictures of Dutch silver items.

Edwards, George Wharton. *Holland of Today.* New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1909. Chapter 9 is titled "Dutch Silver." Many full-page pictures of Dutch silver are included in this volume.

Rainwater, Dorothy T., and Donna H. Felger. *A Collector's Guide to Spoons Around the World.* Hanover, PA: Everybody's Press, 1976. Monkey spoons are pictured on pages 86–89. Pages 167–76 include many pictures of Dutch souvenir spoons.

Van Koevering, Adrian. *Legends of the Dutch: The Story of a Mass Movement of Nineteenth Century Pilgrims.* Zeeland, MI: Zeeland Record Co., Inc., 1960. Chapter 25, "Life among the Colonists," is especially valuable to those concerned with the day-to-day life of our ancestors.

Voet, Jr., Elias. *Nederlandse Goud- en Zilvermerken.* 9th printing. 'S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978. This volume is essential reading for anyone seriously interested in Dutch silver.

# FOR THE FUTURE

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

The China Mission 1920–1944

Quincy, Illinois: Bitter Years *by* Henry Ippel

The Life of Hendrik H. Dieperink-Langereis *by* Gerrit Bieze

Student Life a Century Ago: The Grand Rapids Theological Seminary

Pelgrim Vaders (continued), translation by the late Rev. W. K. Reinsma

Van Schelven's *Grondwet* series, "Historical Sketches from Colonial Life"

Political Life in Holland, Michigan, 1847–1867 *by* Larry J. Wagenaar

Ellis Island

Additional Notes on the Civil War

The Yff Family—from Amsterdam to Chicago

F. W. N. Huggenholtz, a Liberal Dutch Minister in America *by* Walter Lagerwey

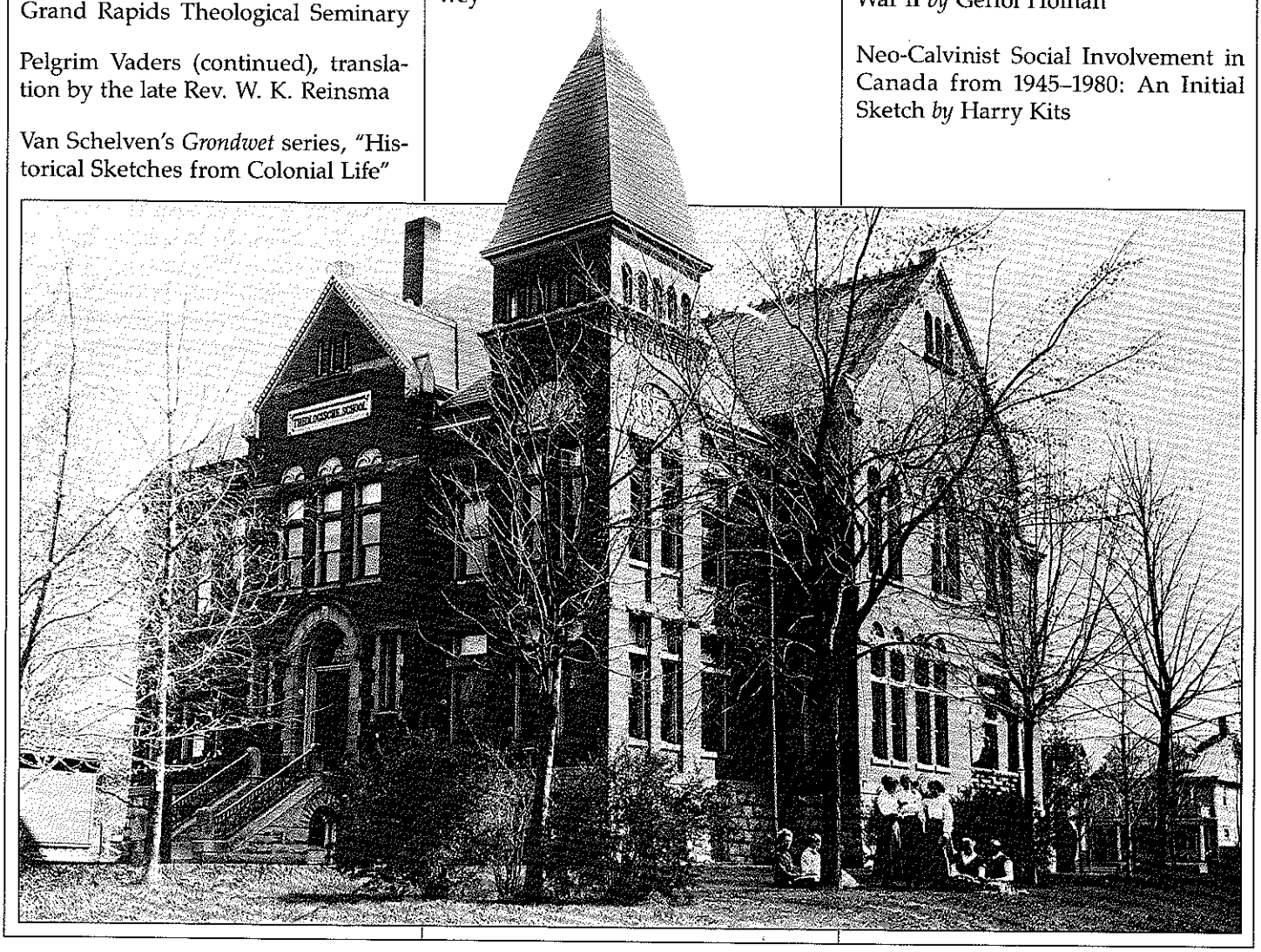
"A Dutch Island in Hoboken, New Jersey" from *De Spiegel*, 1952

Cramersburg: A Prairie Experiment in Saskatchewan *by* David Zandstra

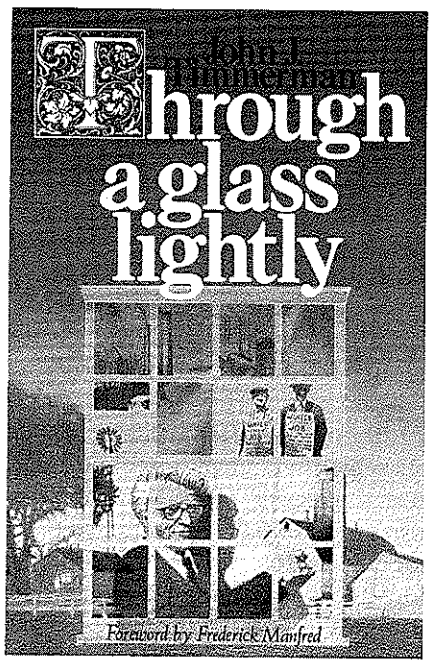
Samuel Volbeda and the Christian Reformed Pulpit *by* Rev. Charles Greenfield

Dutch-Americans who served in the Netherlands Armed Forces in World War II *by* Gerlof Homan

Neo-Calvinist Social Involvement in Canada from 1945–1980: An Initial Sketch *by* Harry Kits



# BOOKS *by Conrad Bult*




**Through a Glass Lightly.** By John J. Timmerman. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987. $12.95.

Those who have read the author's *Promises to Keep* (1975), an informal history of Calvin College, and his more recent *Markings on a Long Journey* (1982), a collection of articles he penned for *The Banner,* the *Reformed Journal,* and *Calvin Forum,* will welcome the third in a sequence of volumes describing Timmerman's intellectual world, his Christian Reformed background, his teaching experiences, his love for baseball, and his upbringing in the parsonage as the adopted son of the Christian Reformed minister Rev. Jan J. Timmerman and his wife, Mathilda.

Born in 1908, Timmerman spent his childhood years first in Orange City and later in Grundy Center, Iowa. While an adolescent, he lived in Paterson, New Jersey, and about it he states, "As far as a minister's son can have a hometown, mine was Paterson." Early in life he fought with those who made cutting remarks about his "biological origin" and has this to say about the opinions held about adopted children around the turn of the century:

> The attitude toward adopted children in 1909 differed markedly from our attitude today. Adopted children, which were few in number, were often the object of waspish remarks by the young cherubs of the church, who, when angry, were explicitly vicious.

Seventy years have not obliterated the rejection felt by the eight-year-old Timmerman, who, after distributing thirty valentines, received only one in return and that from Sarah Slosky, daughter of a Jewish ragpicker, whose single valentine had come from "the German," John Timmerman. (Timmerman's father had been born in East Friesland, and his mother's parents were also German.) Evidently, Germans and Jews were not popular with the predominantly Anglo-American population of Grundy Center. When he was twelve, however, Timmerman impressed his Italian playmates in his new urban New Jersey environment by stating that in Iowa the church barns housing parishioners' horses were guarded against Indians "by two of the fastest guns west of the Missouri, Cupido and Wiersma."

For the author, being a minister's son in Paterson meant he had to exhibit exemplary behavior, and he notes that "church members pointed out my lapses with unfailing devotion." But, as the author observes, not all of his father's parishioners were nosy busybodies. In fact, many were kind to the teenager occupying the parsonage and often helped him find summer jobs. From Timmerman's acute autobiographical observations, we catch a glimpse of just how members of various congregations viewed their minister and his family, and, in turn, we see through the eyes of a sensitive preacher's son how he and his father and mother coped with a day-to-day procession of congregational demands in an ethnic environment where occupants of the manse often sacrificed their privacy and domestic tranquility for the benefit of the congregation, whose members often looked to the minister and his family for moral guidance and a pious Chris-

tian life-style they might replicate in their own lives.

In the approximately one hundred pages of the section "Embers of the Past" Timmerman recalls not only his childhood and adolescence but also his student years at Calvin (1927–1931), his graduate-school career at Michigan and Northwestern, his experiences teaching high school in the 1930s and early 1940s, his thirty years (1945–1975) on the faculty at Calvin, the Lackawanna Limited, the Depression, and his year of teaching in the Netherlands. Peter De Vries, Feike Feikema (Frederick Manfred), and John De Bie were among his fellow undergraduates at Calvin, where the antithesis was intellectually significant and chapel attendance compulsory. Student clubs were in vogue, and intercollegiate debate contests were as well attended as today's Hope-Calvin basketball games. For Timmerman, "Professors were much more distant then than they are now," and "Prof. Rooks gave his talks in the Oxford accent he had acquired in Graafschap." The youthful scholar found little religious commitment among his teachers at Michigan, and no attempts were made to integrate faith and learning by his professors at Northwestern University. Comparing Michigan and Northwestern, he states,

> At Michigan it seemed as though one should be ecstatically pleased to be admitted; at Northwestern, I felt that the professors were pleased you had been admitted.

From Michigan the author received his M.A. in English in the depression year 1932; later, while teaching at Calvin, he earned his Ph.D. from Northwestern in 1948.

Wistfully, Timmerman recalls the era of the Great Depression and early forties. For the most part, he spent these years teaching at Grundy Center Junior College, Eastern Academy in Paterson, and Grand Rapids Christian High. As depicted by the author, the Great Depression was an era when "the times were out of joint and money almost out of sight," and yet he remembers with fondness his youthful hitchhiking experiences, especially the rides between Grundy Center and Waterloo, Iowa. After all, as Timmerman remarks, "Grundy Center, a good place to be, had to be escaped from at times." Today, Timmerman reluctantly admits, he does not give hitchhikers rides, since "the trust of the thirties and forties has eroded and we pass them by with sadness and discomfort." In a slightly sad and nostalgic way, he remembers the railroads and his Paterson days with these thoughts:

> Now the Lackawanna is part of Conrail and carries only freight. The parsonage was sold and moved to another street, and the church burned down. I can't go home again.

Although he often writes in a manner which will elicit a smile or laugh from the reader, Timmerman does not turn away from the serious side of life, nor does he tolerate what he considers poor teaching, intellectual laziness, arrogance, or a lack of personal warmth and kindness. Those who read his volume will note these characteristics in the author's words about theologians, ministers, his year in the Netherlands, and in his candid remarks about the behavior of students and the relationships between students and faculty. Occasionally the author reveals twinges of disillusionment and disappointment, but for the most part the book contains hard-headed, humorous, and warm recollections and views of a man who cherishes his friends and remembers his teaching colleagues and many students with fondness. While reading this book, you will learn much about Timmerman's family, his faith, his love for Christian education, and his opinions about various authors and poets such as Peter De Vries and Robert Frost. Among the humble and great mentioned by the author are his inner-city neighbors, Rev. Henry Beets, Free University professors, an Italian storekeeper, and a host of others known to him and his family.

There is an undisguised honesty in Timmerman's prose, which the reader will detect in the author's remarks about the Dutch, whom Timmerman observed while teaching in the Netherlands during the early 1960s. For the author, "The Dutch practice variety in unity; they specialize in splinter groups, but number all the splinters." About their physical stamina he remarks, "I never saw a Dutchman drunk. Dutchmen drink a lot, eat a lot, smoke a lot, and die at eight-five and beyond." Timmerman characterizes his college classmate, lifelong friend, and teaching colleague John De Bie as "a saint with a sense of humor." These words apply just as well to the author himself, who looks at his world, himself, and his Christian Reformed heritage with his eyes wide open, a half grin, and a sense of both the humorous and the somber elements of life. You will hear Timmerman chuckle when you read his book and in your mind's eye will see a man who smiles at life but who can also be stern if the need arises.

*The following books may interest* Origins *readers:*

**The Dutch Language Press in America.** By Hendrik Edelman. Nieuwkoop: De Graaf Publishers, 1986. 95 guilders (approximately $50.00).

**The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age.** By Simon Schama. Knopf, 1987. $39.95.

**Ottawa Beach and Waukazoo: A History.** By Donald L. Van Reken. Holland, Mich.: Donald L. Van Reken, 1987. $8.95.

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