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

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Cover photo:
Montana Homestead Land

2  From the Editor
4  Montana Journal
   Minnie Voetberg Brink
14  The Christian Reformed Church in Hamshire, Texas, 1929–1946
   Paula Vander Hoven
22  Members of the Hamshire Christian Reformed Church
   Paula Vander Hoven
31  The Dutch, and Texas, and a Hurricane
   Angie Ploegstra
39  To Go or to Stay—Jan Hopen's Dilemma
   Douglas Rozendal
44  Book Review
   Richard Harms
45  Book Notes
46  For the Future
   upcoming Origins articles
47  Contributors
from the editor...

This Issue

We begin this issue with a portion of Minnie Voetberg Brink’s recollections of her Montana childhood. Although her Montana journal was written many years after the events, her memory of the unsuccessful effort to establish a Dutch-American presence in north central Montana during the second decade of the twentieth century is remarkable. Paula Vander Hoven and Angie Ploegstra, who have written in Origins before on small short-lived Dutch communities about which little had been known, present results of their work in the Gulf Coast area of Texas. Vander Hoven focuses on the community of Hamshire, while Ploestra writes about nearby Amsterdam/Liverpool. Douglas Rozendal, using the experiences of Jan Hospers, details the difficult process some immigrants went through when deciding to immigrate. Lastly, we present a review of the latest book by Janet S. Sheeres on the Dutch settlement in Amelia County, Virginia.

News from the Archives

During the fall and early winter we processed several larger collections. First was a 13 cu. ft. addition of the research files of Dr. Quentin Schulze, Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences at Calvin College and holder of the Arthur H. DeKruyter Chair. The additional materials detail Schulze’s working on the Bible and communications and St. Augustine and communications. We also organized the 31 cu. ft. of correspondence from Alvin Plantinga, the John A. O’Brien Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for Philosophy of Religion emeritus at Calvin College. The files provide insight into the philosophy and Christian philosophy during the last three decades of the twentieth century. We processed an addition to the Robert Swierenga papers, consisting primarily of his research files for his Elm Christian School project; as well as an addition of the professional publications of Leonard Sweetman, Professor of Religion emeritus at Calvin College. And we received and organized the records of two discontinued Christian Reformed congregations, Good Shepherd of Flushing, Michigan, and Crookston, Minnesota. Among the materials received from individuals were the papers of Jack Kuipers, Professor of Mathematics emeritus and renowned scholar of quaternions, a number system defined as the quotient of two vectors in three dimensional space, used on guidance systems as well as virtual reality software. We also received the papers of historian Charles Miller and Rev. Timothy Monsma, who taught religion and theology at several institutions. And we received the records of the two discontinued Christian Reformed congregations mentioned above.

Origins published The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880 by Janet Shaarda Sheeres, which is reviewed in this issue. Her extensively annotated minutes of the synods of the Christian Reformed Church, 1857-1880 is being designed. Both are from the William B. Erdmans Publishing Company and the Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America.

We continue our work on indexing the birthday, obituary, marriage, and anniversary records from the Banner. The URL (uniform resource locator) for the data, 1984-2013 is http://www.calvin.edu/hh/Banner/Banner.htm.

Endowment

Currently our endowment fund and operating fund have a value of $462,163. Thanks to the generosity of so many donors and investment returns, this is a 14 percent increase from last year. The monies in our operating fund cover the various expenses for Origins, programs in Heritage Hall, and our book publication projects.

Staff

In January Wendy Blankespoor retired after twenty years in Heritage Hall (twenty-five years with Calvin College). We thank her for her dedicated service to Heritage Hall. She will continue to help us as a volunteer. Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives and editor of Origins; Hendrina VanSpronsen is the office coordinator and business manager of Origins; Laurie Haan is the department assistant; Robert Bolt is field agent and assistant archivist; and Anna Kathryn Feltes is our student assistant. Our volunteers include Ed Gerritsen, Ralph Haan, Helen Meulink, Clarice Newhof, Gerrit W. Sheeres, Janet Sheeres, Jeannette Smith, and Ralph Veenstra.

- Richard H. Harms
In November 1911 my parents, Wiebe and Chrisje Voetberg, with their then four children, the Sieger VandenAcres with six children, and the Leenderd Van Diggelens with one child left Racine, Wisconsin, for the Conrad, Montana, vicinity. All three families had been friends in the Netherlands. My father's brother George and family had moved there the previous year and had written many encouraging letters persuading our family to move to Montana.

Most of their furniture, trunks, buggies, and wagons, especially teams of horses, harnesses, baggage, and paraphernalia went along in boxcars attached to the passenger cars of the Great Northern Railroad. We arrived in the latter part of November, and winter had set in. Uncle George came to the depot with a crude wagon to take us the last rough seven miles. My oldest sister, Grace (age seven), had become ill on the train, and she became sicker with the long rough wagon ride.

The next day a vacant house was made available to us. Our furniture had arrived, so we were able to move into the house. After a week it became apparent that Grace was very ill. Dr. Powers from Conrad was called from a neighbor's phone, and when he came he said, “I’m going to have to take this little girl to the Conrad hospital.” My father went along. The hospital had accommodations in such cases for next of kin for a night or two. That same night they performed surgery for an abscessed appendix. My sister was in the hospital for five weeks following her appendectomy.

In the same hospital there was another patient who had accidentally been shot in his lower abdomen. His parents, Andrew and Ellen Kempenaar, could speak Dutch, so there was much conversation between them and my father. They told my father there was free government land available near where they lived, thirty-five miles southeast of Conrad, and they were eager to have congenial Christian neighbors.

Toward spring the three men investigated taking up homestead claims in Chouteau County. They had to apply for citizenship at Fort Benton prior to obtaining the homestead land. Each family was allowed 320 acres provided that within five years a house and barn (or granary) were built, a well was dug, and the land was fenced. A French-Canadian (whose wife and sons lived in Quebec) by the name of Clement was a good carpenter and was willing to help all three families build their homes. The VandenAcre house was built first, since they had the largest family; then our house, and then the VanDiggelens. With no basements to dig, the work went very rapidly. Each house required its own load of lumber to be hauled from Brady, twenty-three miles to the west. Each haul took two days and required two teams of horses to get through some of the snow.

Then came the big move to our homestead house. We loaded the wagon with as much as possible—the cook stove, the chaise lounge, all the beds, the trunks with those beautiful Dutch wool blankets. Between each layer of the blankets was a big charcoal portrait, behind glass, of each of our grandparents. The frames were very wide and ornate. The glass stood the test of many moves—the boat, the moves to several different homes—and never was a glass broken.

Since we did not immediately have a well, Mr. Clement said we could get water from his well. Mr. Clement was a good carpenter and was willing to help all three families.
The wheat seed was broadcast and cleared the land so plowing could begin. It took the wagon. My father dumped them; we found only one. It didn’t take long.

rocks in large circular formations, That piece of land was fenced first. decided to work a twenty-acre piece. The eastern part of that land did come running. We were all extremely excited I could hardly sleep that night. The next morning I asked many questions about the pages in the hymnbook. My parents had taken many Dutch song books with them, including the J. Worp Psalm Book. These books were used for services on Sunday afternoon.

In the early spring of 1918 we started going to Conrad for Sunday worship services. It was easy to get there since we now had a car. Both VanDiggelen’s and VanDigglen had cars as well, so the load was lifted for my father.

School During the first three years of home-living, our school was located four miles to the east. It was called the “Knee School,” named after a huge mini mountain just a bit northwest of this school. We had to leave home at 7:45 am in order to get there by 9:00 am. Sometimes we encountered a beautiful herd of antelope. They were such attractive creatures, but they were so timid and usually took off in a hurry. A few times we saw a large herd of cattle in the open field. If there was a bull amongst them we would throw dirt up in the air and make a roaring noise. We hardly dared to move. There was a fence on the south side of the road. We quickly cleared a space for the organ in the living room. Father had taken the train from Brady to Great Falls and found the organ in a store, to our delight. We never found out how he managed to get it to Brady by train. In Brady he received help getting it into the wagon. How he weathered the cold amazed him. He wore high overshoes and all wool clothing and a very warm fur coat of horse hide.

The organ was beautiful and ornate with many fancy knobs and pretty shelves to set things on. My father was the only one who could play. I was so excited I could hardly sleep that night. The next morning I asked many questions about the pages in the hymnbook. My parents had taken many Dutch song books with them, including the J. Worp Psalm Book. These books were used for services on Sunday afternoon.

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On the whole, we were eager to learn, so we did well in school. Our first teacher was Miss McDonald, who lived just a quarter mile north of the school. She was a very good teacher. The second year we had a Mr. Riekle. He was a very good teacher also, but very strict. There were forty pupils in the school that year. The following year our teacher was Miss Nolan from Great Falls. We all liked her. Every school we were in was a single room. After three years the school superintendent from Fort Benton came to talk to our father. When she came, he was plowing in the field. As he got to the end of the field, he greeted her. She introduced herself as Miss McNally, the Superintendent of Chouteau County. They talked for a long time, and in the evening my father told us what they had been talking about. There were enough children in our area to start a school, but they lacked funds. There were four VanDacce children, one VanDiggelen, and four of us Voetbergs. There were also a few children living south of us.

By the first of the following year a vacant old house was located a mile south of our house. We thought it would be great to have a school close by. A partition had to be removed in order to have a larger room. School in the remodeled old house didn’t start until the middle of January. The new teacher’s name was Miss Collins. She was from Great Falls. We loved her very much; she had such a kind personality. She allowed two hours on Friday afternoons for art work. It was so interesting and our favorite time. We were happy, but the school lasted only a little over three months. After a brief interlude we had a school in a one-room bachelor house across the coulee. The teacher’s name was Mr. Copenhaver. In order to have the school, he had put his belongings in his basement. To get there, we had to walk down the hill, across the coulee, and up a much steeper hill, and then walk nearly a mile south.

It was so beautiful to walk in the fresh morning air. There was no

The eastern part of that land did come running. We were all extremely excited I could hardly sleep that night. The next morning I asked many questions about the pages in the hymnbook. My parents had taken many Dutch song books with them, including the J. Worp Psalm Book. These books were used for services on Sunday afternoon.

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pollution. Because of the vast open sky we could see in all directions. Toward the west were the great majestic Rockies with sparkling, glittering snow like diamonds. Toward the north was the Sweet Grass country, and in the southeast, the Cascade Mountains. It was just magnificent to behold!

We had school there until the second of July. It was quite warm, especially going through the coulee in the afternoons. There were two large reservoirs, and we could cross over either one. They were about half a mile apart. These reservoirs were never dry.

Life on the government land
There were a few opportunities to earn extra income. The very many gophers in the fields were real pests. Each extra income. The very many gophers were set. In the afternoon we went until noon to catch gophers in traps.

The vultures took care of the carrion. The county road commissioners often asked my father and Mr. Clement to put culverts in the gullies to prevent the dirt from washing away in flash floods. They supplied the equipment to take the dirt from the hillside, widen the road, and cover all the culvert's, making a wider and more even road.

In June 1914 there was a knock at our door early in the morning. It was a neighbor to bring the sad news of his wife's sudden death and asking my father to come and help. He went there, offered his condolences to the bereaved, and then left for Conrad. He immediately went to the only undertaker. He received all the instructions necessary for embalming the body, besides selecting a coffin. My father and Mr. VandenAcre went to the neighbor's home that same evening and performed the embalming according to the instructions. Early the next morning my father went back to Conrad with the body. He had made arrangements for the funeral the third day and obtained the Reformed church minister in Conrad to officiate. My parents wrote letters to the Netherlands quite often. One particular time my parents had written a letter that they wanted mailed. It was in early spring when the snow was just beginning to melt and make all kinds of rustling noises and gurgles under the hard crusty snow. I had to meet the mailman down the coulee as he was traveling through the country from one post office to the next. I walked where I thought he would pass and sat on a stile. I waited and waited. I started to panic and the longer I stayed the worse it became. I ran home crying. But my father quickly harnessed a horse and drove down the road. After a few minutes the mailman came along and the letter was on its way.

In the summer of 1915, the Copenhavers asked us to come to a Fourth of July picnic. Everything at the picnic was homemade, including breads and rolls. I remember potato salad and baked beans, and a few men were turning an ice-cream maker. When I saw that dirty ice I thought, “How can they make ice cream from that?” Then they took the cover off. What luscious ice cream!

We loved to go ice cream!

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The Knees
One summer my father took an afternoon to go to the “Knees.”14 We loved to go there because we could see such a great distance. We enjoyed seeing all the great rock formations. There were some tunnels, high flat tops, just all sorts of formations. Many people had written their initials and dates on the rocks. Some of the dates went back many years. It all seemed very interesting to us.

In 1916 we had our first student for a summer preaching assignment from Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His name was Dirk Fleistra.16 He used to walk in the hills and valleys in our field and preach to himself out loud. We smiled about it because we could hear him. There seemed to be an echo. Wond got to the Copenhavers that we had a Calvin student who had come to preach for the summer. They asked whether he would be willing to preach for them as well. The church was at least two miles west from where they lived.

For the next two years we had Calvin Seminary students come and stay with us for two or three weeks. We enjoyed taking them to the Knees. If it was a very clear day we could see more than twenty-five miles to the west. We could see the railroad track north of Brady, Collins, and Drutton. These were very small towns. We enjoyed the vast openness and the majestic Rockies. On the Knee there were scrubby trees. We never saw any others elsewhere like those.

We went to the Teton River occasionally in the summertime. We liked to see the rushing water going over some rocky areas. There were so many beautiful trees that we dreamed about trees in the night.

Farm life
When we left Racine, Wisconsin, we had brought two teams of excellent work horses. One set was brown, the other grey. There was a mare with each set. But only the grey mare had a little colt. That same year the mare became ill. In fact, she was very ill. Father recognized the symptoms as lockjaw. The horse was taken away from the other horses. She was tied to a post so that she would be away from all the other animals and not infect them. It was difficult to keep the colt away from the mother. Father was not one to shoot such a horse, but it would have been for the best. In the evening she died. We felt as bad as if it had been a human being. Now the colt had to be fed much the same as we had done for Honey. My mother came with some milk in a pail, but the colt turned around and kicked my mother behind the knee. That meant it was up to my father to take care of the foal.

Two years later there was some plowing done with double plowshares, which required two teams of horses. At about eleven-thirty my father came home with only three horses. We noticed that Dolly, one of the brown team, wasn’t there. My father said Dolly just started going down, so he unharnessed her and she died right there. So we lost two horses in a short time. After dinner my father went to the field and opened her up to investi-
got her barrels, which were on a stone boat. They went to the well to fill the barrels and then back up to her house. Henry and Grace were each paid fifty cents whenever they did this. We each had six dollars at the end of the season.

When our livestock increased, so did the work. We had a few Chester White pigs, and one spring one of them had ten little piglets. As long as they had plenty to eat, they grew very fast. We had a few more cows, which meant much more milk and cream to churn. My father bought a barrel churn, that meant one of us had to turn the handle. Since we now had so much milk, my father made a cheese vat so we could have our own cheese. We did some butchering in the winter days, when the stove was good and dry. We had a three-burner kerosene stove and let it ferment. Today this would be called a sourdough starter. It had excellent leavening qualities. Each time it was used, more potato water was added for the next use, as it took only two cups of the starter for a batch of bread. A heaping tablespoon of sugar was also added.

My mother became an excellent bread baker. She also would make six strands the same length. My mother became an excellent bread baker. When the bread was fresh from the oven, Grace and Henry ate nearly a loaf between them. On cold winter days, when the stove was good and hot, we could have toast. A large pan of cinnamon toast was always a family tradition. My father bought a large bread mixer that allowed all the ingredients to be put in the pan and we would turn it to make the bread. Each year the first load of wheat went to Brady in order to pay all the bills that had accumulated during the year. My Quaamy, our grocer, had the biggest amount coming. Of course he sold much more than just groceries. His share generally was about a thousand dollars. The hospital and the doctors also were paid at this time. Since they knew our situation, they hardly use it all. We children had to keep the garden weeded. Green beans grew best; we had plenty of them.

Once we learned how to process them well, they were canned in fruit jars to eat during the winter. For the canning, our old copper wash boiler came in handy. Many shelves were made in the cellar for storing the filled jars. It was a cold place—good for storing food. Beef and pork was cut into big pieces and put in salt water for a few days. Then my father cut into a thigh there was a great big boil and water came out. That was it! The meat was thrown out as well as all the other rabbits. We thought perhaps they had the disease of tularemia. 1 It was the end of rabbit eating at our house.

After we lived on the homestead for over a year, my brother Marten was born. A little over two years later, my sister Hilda was born. Grace and I always had to turn stays staying home when the Sunday services were at Kempenaars. Later my mother had two more children, but they were stillborn. Each time my father wrapped the little body in clean white cloth, put it in a little wooden box, and buried the body on the hillside. We never knew about the stillbirths until years later.

When services were at the Kempenaars, all the cows were piled on one bed just off the living room. One Sunday when I stayed over two nights, they little ones, Grace walked in the house and I saw a bedbug on the side of her coat. We took care of that one but a little later we discovered we had them in our beds. We then had to do the work and put the mattresses outdoors. Along the seams all around the mattresses there were bedbugs. We did what we could outdoors to get rid of them, but after getting the mattresses back inside we fumigated the bedrooms. Then as an extra precaution my father put louse powder in tin cans and set each bedpost in a can. Our beds were new metal. We never found any bedbugs again.

In the spring of 1916 Father wanted to raise a big potato crop. We children always came in handy to plant the potatoes he had prepared for seed. The preparation consisted of setting
them in a large tub of water with a formaldehyde solution to prevent scab on the new potatoes. It worked fine. We had to put them in the furrows as we went along. That year was also our greatest wheat crop. Consequently, in the fall there was much to harvest. The threshing crew that went from farm to farm had a very busy time. Mrs. VandenAcre came to help cook for all the men at dinner time. The menu was potatoes, two kinds of vegetables from the garden, salad, and delicious pie for dessert. We also helped as much as possible. In turn, my mother helped her when the threshers were there.

We were getting a reputation for having great harvests and wonderful tasting water. The Rossmillers and the Snellers had been going to the Teton River and pumping water into huge tanks. Now they came to us. They lived about three miles east of us. My father had dug a second well about forty feet west of the first well, but the water wasn’t as good tasting as our first one.

Before long, many people were short of potatoes, and we had a high yield, so they came with their sacks. Selling these potatoes was something my father enjoyed doing. They were not different from any Idaho potatoes.

In mid-summer of 1917 we had a lull in work, so my father, having said, “She would like to have one.” It was better than having to eat berries on the table every day. We had to borrow money. A few men stood there and answered, “No.” It was not much to ask, three pretty parasols and wanted one. I asked for it, it was only 59 cents, but the answer was “no.” It was not much money. A few men stood there and said, “She would like to have one.” It was difficult for my father to say no. In the time I really got it, the joy was all gone. After we arrived home, I came into the house, and the parasol went under the stairway and stayed there.

My sister Jean was ill many times in winter. We had Dr. Collins, who lived near the Knee school, come to see her, but he couldn’t diagnose her case. Once he thought she might have typhoid fever. That wasn’t it either. We had bought a Ford in 1917 for $427. The car made it easy and quick to get Dr. Collins. This was on a Sunday morning. The doctor said that he didn’t know what to do and suggested taking her to Conrad. Immediately after breakfast, we started out. When we were halfway there, Jean said that she didn’t have so much pain anymore. We went by way of Brady, because it was a better road. In Conrad we immediately went to the hospital. Drs. Powers and Patterson were there. In less than an hour Jean was operated on. She had a ruptured abscessed kidney. They decided to leave the kidney in, hoping it would heal. Jean was ill for a long time again and had to drink distilled water until she fully recovered.

Farming was difficult, and in the fall of 1918 the VandenAcre famous for its potatoes on the table. The car did not do us much good because none of us could drive. My mother knew very well how to manage even in hard times. We just ate differently. We did have the cows to milk, although there was very little pasture. Neither did we have much food for the pigs, we could see the whole year crumbling before our eyes, but our faith in the Lord’s leading did not diminish.

All our enthusiasm and all the hard work seemed to come to a dismal ending. We had to borrow money from the bank in Brady in order to continue. My father rented a house in Conrad and we moved everything there. We had to abandon everything, yet remain patient in adversity. In 1924 the family moved to Minnesota; then back to Racine; then to Martin, Michigan; then northern Allegan County; then southern Kent County; and finally back to Grand Rapids.
The Christian Reformed Church in Hamshire, Texas, 1929–1946

Paula Vander Hoven

The story of Hamshire, Texas, including the short-lived Christian Reformed church and the surrounding area, is one of booms and busts.¹ The earliest Dutch settlers arrived in southeast Texas in the final years of the nineteenth century, attracted by the possibilities of the rice-growing industry.² The Nederland Christian Reformed Church had been organized in 1898 and closed in 1905; another, in Winnie, had been in existence from 1910 to 1916, and a group of Dutch immigrants at a community called Derricks over oil wells in the Hamshire area, 1929. Image from the collections in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

members of the community were busy circulating the word about the favorable conditions in Hamshire, they also petitioned Classis Pella for assistance. A former member of the Winnie Christian Reformed Church sent a letter to Classis Pella that was discussed at the March 1928 meeting. His name is not mentioned, but he was almost certainly Ben Renkema. Apparently the request was granted, because at the September 1928 meeting a positive report for a potential church was made to the classis,³ which responded immediately and enthusiastically. At that meeting classis voted to open mission work in Hamshire, send a classical supply pastor there, and ask Rev. John R. Brink (serving at the time in Gallup, New Mexico) to help out for several weeks. They made stipulations for the

support. Soon there were also letters and articles in the Banner. The Dutch in Hamshire teamed with Dutch land developer Theodore F. Koch, who had promoted Dutch communities in Minnesota and elsewhere. They did well in the choice of Koch. He was ethical, with strong financial backing and extensive networks of support, resources that some other land developers of the time lacked.⁴ Koch provided printed booklets and placed ads in newspapers the Dutch were likely to read. One such ad offered round-trip train excursions to Hamshire from Chicago. For $41.30 a prospective settler could see new oil wells producing 100,000 barrels of oil per day, large refineries, skyscrapers in Beaumont, and ocean-going vessels in the Beaumont harbor. In February 1928 they could see for themselves cattle grazing in the pastures. One ad featured a picture of the congregation in November wearing summer clothing with the exaggerated claim that there was no cold winter there and the not incidental note that Rev. J. R. Brink was there to organize a congregation. While members of the community were busy circulating the word about the favorable conditions in Hamshire, they also petitioned Classis Pella for assistance. A former member of the Winnie Christian Reformed Church sent a letter to Classis Pella that was discussed at the March 1928 meeting. His name is not mentioned, but he was almost certainly Ben Renkema. Apparently the request was granted, because at the September 1928 meeting a positive report for a potential church was made to the classis,³ which responded immediately and enthusiastically. At that meeting classis voted to open mission work in Hamshire, send a classical supply pastor there, and ask Rev. John R. Brink (serving at the time in Gallup, New Mexico) to help out for several weeks. They made stipulations for the

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salary (at least $1,800 per year) and living arrangements for the pastor. Classis also took note of the fact that there was not a church building or parsonage in Hamshire and urged the congregation to begin building both immediately. Funds from the sale of property in Winnie were to be used for this purpose. Classis also agreed to help financially if a missionary pastor could be called.

By the April 1929 meeting, more financial support was promised to Hamshire in the form of loans, private property in Winnie were to be used to cover the cost of building the church, and urged the congregation to provide leadership and a pulpit. Light was provided by three lanterns lowered and raised on a pulley system. It was close to the village of Hamshire, and there was adequate room for "auto parking." The total cost was $2,400. The next year a church was erected in Pella, Iowa, donated a box of Psalter Hymnals, and the church in Osley, Iowa, sent a gasoline-powered "light machine" (an electric generator) that was received with thanks. There was a piano played by Rosannah De Young, but no organ, and the people, especially the men, sang lustily.

But by September of that year, a mere five months later, the early enthusiasm of both groups was being tested. The congregation had extended a series of calls to prospective pastors, all of which were declined. It's not hard to understand why. Many pastors would have been discouraged by the small size and remote location of the congregation. In the interim, they had made the acquaintance of Rev. Wesley Prince and believed he was the right man for their church. He had been born and raised among Dutch pion- neers in Osceola County, Michigan, and had studied at Calvin College before suffering from tuberculosis. After a stay at Bethesda Sanitorium in Den- ver, because of his uncertain health he went south to the Presbyterians in Texas, where he served a church in Llano. He would have been happy to come to Hamshire, if only because he could have spoken Dutch there, and, in September 1929, the congregation requested permission to call him.

Rev. Peter DeJong was interested in hearing sermons based on the Heidelberg Catechism, but soon realized that "there is a better appreciation of the financial obligations that rest upon the members." His hobbies were woodworking and building, which the congregation was happy to use to the fullest. The parsonage was completed while the Mellemas lived in Hamshire, and he installed electricity there (but not indoor plumbing) and taught Classical and electric trade. He was a kind man, unassuming and patient. And his wife, Helen Veen, served the church faithfully.

During his pastorate, Mellema wrote movingly and candidly of his work. In addition to being the pas- tor in Hamshire, he also conducted worship services and made contacts among the Dutch in Port Arthur, some thirty miles away, and in Nederland. These immigrants had become mem- bers of other churches, and while they may have appreciated Mellema's pastoral care and perhaps even his reformed teaching, they were reluct- ant to leave the churches where they and their children had already estab- lished relationships. He spoke about the difficulty of being Reformed in an area where even the Dutch fami- lies had become members of other denominations. He deeply regretted that there had not been a consistent Reformed presence among the Dutch in Port Arthur. Neder- land, and Win- nie. Relationships with non-Dutch were only sometimes successful, and work among the "negros" did not materialize.

All along, Mellema made reports to Classis Pella of his work in Hamshire, only a few of which have been re- trieved. In 1935 he reported that "There could be more cooperation and a better spirit of goodwill among the people who attend our services," but then he went on to report baptisms and professions of faith that were encouraging, and in another report he was heartened to have the cooperation of the superintendent of schools in Hamshire in the Christian education of the children. The Mellema fam- ily, including daughters Janice and Audrey, left Hamshire in late 1937 to serve a church in Woodville, Michi- gan.

Almost exactly two years later to the day, on 18 October 1939, recent seminary graduate Peter De Jong and Thelma Klooster were married, left their parents, and via their 1937 Ford Coupe came to Hamshire as newlyweds. They arrived to some surprises. De Jong was immediately told that the congregation wasn't in- terested in hearing sermons based on the Heidelberg Catechism, but soon...
in the church, soaked the parsonage, and lifted linoleum from the kitchen floor. At the beginning of World War II many Christian Reformed young men were stationed at bases in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma, and, as the nearest Christian Reformed pastor, he was called upon to provide pastoral care for these service members. Early in 1942, after a ministry of just over two years, the De Jong family left for Oak Harbor, Washington. He had strong ties to the state, and a military base nearby would allow him to continue serving personnel there. But it was in Hamshire that he learned the value of interacting with pastors of other denominations, a practice that turned into a life-long pattern. Immediately after De Jong’s departure, the congregation petitioned classis for permission to call another pastor. But classis declined, citing “problems which require special abilities in the minister working there. Should Hamshire issue a call it is not certain that the right kind of man could be found.” They conceded that sending occasional classical supply pastors would be expensive and that reading services held when a pastor from Kansas or Iowa couldn’t be present would be inadequate. The folks in Hamshire were not happy. They sent a letter which has not been preserved, but, judging from the minutes of the next meeting, the church accused Classis Pella of not providing enough classical funds. Classis in return justified its decision by saying that the Hamshire church had been given far more attention than the prospects warranted. Classis further reprimanded the consistory for the tone and spirit of its letter and noted that no elder from Hamshire had been present at the classis meeting to represent the church. The congregation limped along in this state of limbo for about three more years. Families that wished to relate the academics of seminary to his fig-growing, dairy farmer parishioners. Rather than being discouraged at the isolation and size of his congregation, he was invigorated by contacts with some of the members. Dirk Holtkamp was a superintendent for an oil company in Port Arthur, and Roemer van Til, another oil company employee, also read Kuyper. During De Jong’s pastorate in Hamshire, a hurricane flooded many blocks of Beaumont, destroyed the windows...
The Nick De Young house, which had once been part of the Hamshire Hotel. Image courtesy of Grace Humbarger.

The Nick De Young house, which had once been part of the Hamshire Hotel.

A 1949 view of the Herman De Young house. Image courtesy of Frederick Renkema.

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The Nick De Young house, which had once been part of the Hamshire Hotel.
Members of the Hamshire Christian Reformed Church

Paula Vander Hoven

Jacob and Dena (Berendina) Achterhof

Jacob Achterhof was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, but moved with his family to Baldwin, Wisconsin, about forty miles east of St. Paul, Minnesota. There he met and married Berendina Rademaker, who had been born in the Netherlands. The couple farmed in Baldwin Township and moved to Hamshire in 1928 when they were forty-six and forty-two, respectively, with their daughter Lucille, who was eighteen, and son Calvin, who was three. An older daughter, Helen, married to Lester Voskuil, elected not to leave Wisconsin, so the Achterhof family remained in Hamshire. Achterhof farmed the land, and his wife worked in the fig cannery as they were needed.

John and Lucille Achterhof De Young

John De Young was the son of Tye and Elizabeth De Young, and was born in Texas around 1915. John and Lucille, the daughter of Jacob and Dena Achterhof, were married in her parents’ home in Hamshire in 1937. They are one of only two couples known to have met in the church and married. The social isolation of that community and the general tendency for the Dutch to marry within their ethnic group made that quite remarkable.

John inspected oil well pumps for the Texaco Oil Company. As a result, the family lived in a series of homes in a remote area where cattle grazed amid the oil well fields owned by Texaco. Later they purchased a house and had it moved to Hamshire.

Lucille had been active in the church before her marriage, as secretary of the Sunday school and of the Young People’s Society. She continued her involvement as president of the Ladies’ Aid Society, and the couple often hosted visiting pastors in their home. John was also active in the church. He became treasurer after the departure of long-time treasurer Edward Van Houten in 1945, and served in that capacity for the final months of the church’s existence. After the church closed, the De Youngs affiliated with the Baptist church, where he was also treasurer. John and Lucille had one daughter, Edith, who moved with her husband to Missouri. John and Lucille followed them there later and died there, he in 2009 and she in 2011.

Lester and Helen Achterhof Voskuil

Helen, twenty-three (the daughter of Jacob and Dena Achterhof), her husband Lester Voskuil, twenty-five, and five-year-old daughter Doris arrived about 1931. He suffered from chronic asthma and allergies to hay and horses, so he and Helen had first moved from Wisconsin to the Denver area in the hope of finding some relief. Initially they rented a house, but before long the members of the congregation built them a home on land adjacent to the Achterhof farm. There Helen milked their cows and tended their chickens while Lester found employment driving a truck and making deliveries to nearby farms for Humble Oil and Refining Company. During the war, Lester drove around the area with his headlights off to make sure that the community was adhering to the strict blackout requirements. Their daughter Shirley was born in 1938 and attended Sunday school at the church and elementary school in Hamshire.

In 1945 the family moved again for Lester’s health, this time to Arizona. There, in 1946, he married Johanna Calsbeek, born in Friesland in 1896 and attending Hamshire. They were married on May 19, 1946, in Phoenix at the age of fifty-two in 1958. Helen survived him by many years.

Samuel and Nellie Kooman Bandasma

Sam and Nellie were both born in the Netherlands, he in 1882 in the northern part of Friesland, and she in 1883 in Middelburg, Zeeland. He arrived in this country in 1904, and she in 1906. They married later that year in Randolf, Wisconsin, and had two children there. John and Minnie, before moving to Texas about 1915, where five more children were born: Joe, Paul, Emma, Nellie, and Sam Louis. The elder Sam’s brother, John J. Bandasma, also migrated to Texas and lived in Winnie during the years that the church was established there. Other members of the family stayed in Wisconsin. The Bandsmans lived near Port Arthur, and Sam was a dairy farmer there, along with his sons. They probably were not part of the church proper until Sam and Nellie moved to Hamshire at some point in the early 1940s, during the waning years of the church. Their children had established their own homes by that time and were never members of the church.

Nick and Johanna Calsbeek De Young

Nick De Young was born Klaas De Jong in Oudega, Friesland, in 1886. While still young, he emigrated to this country and lived in Michigan before settling in Orange City, Iowa. There, in 1896, he married Johanna Calsbeek, born in Friesland in 1896, and the couple soon moved to James town, Michigan. In 1911 they were persuaded by Theodore Koch to move to Hamshire. They arrived with their children Tye, Peter, Herman, Sarah, Rosannah, and Grace, who ranged in age from twenty-one to eight. An older son, John, was married in Michigan and briefly came to Texas later.

In Hamshire, Nick was one of the pioneers in the new fig-growing industry and along with his son Herman was often referred to as the “Father of the East Texas Fig Industry.” In 1912 he purchased one hundred seventy-five fig trees from a traveling salesmen and later added three thousand more. It was an impressive beginning until the hurricane of 16 August 1915 destroyed many of his trees and caused most of the Dutch in the area to leave within a matter of days. Nick stayed, nursing his trees back to production and adding more. By 1915 he harvested over twenty thousand bushels of figs, and with financial backing from other farmers and financiers he established a Hamshire fig cannery that both canned and bottled, located in an abandoned rice warehouse. At its peak, the operation could cook, fill, seal, and label the figs at a rate of 6,000 bottles an hour. During harvest season, the plant employed seventy-two women and girls, including many of

The Jacob and Dena Achterhof family and the family of their daughters Helen, and son-in-law, Lester Voskuil. Image courtesy of Shirley Gardner

Nicholas and Johanna De Young. Nicholas De Young is credited with establishing the fig-growing and canning industry in the Hamshire area. Image courtesy of Grace Hambarger
Grace had married, lived in Hamshire, as, just north of Austin. She had been Lizzie Weisgerber in Pflugerville, Texas, parents in 1911. In 1913 he married been born near Allegan, Michigan, also at one point the manager of the Hamshire Hotel, which later, after renovations, became the De Young family home. He was a jovial man who relished “harmless pleasantries.”

By the time the church in Hamshire was founded, Nick and Johanna’s son John was married and living in Michigan. Their children Tye, Herman, and Grace had married, lived in Hamshire, and with their families were attending the church. Rosannah was teaching and living in Nederland but came home on the weekends. Peter later went to study at Baylor University and later became a Baptist minister. Sarah had married and lived in Nebraska.

Rosannah De Young

Rosannah was born in 1900 in Michigan, the daughter of Nick and Johanna, and was an active member of the Winnie church until it closed. Following that, she attended Mary Hardin Baylor College in Belton, Texas, north of Austin, and became an elementary school teacher, first at the New Holland School in Hamshire, later in nearby Nederland, and still later in Winnie. She was very active in the Hamshire church as pianist for the worship services and also taught piano. When she was forty-three years old she married B. Arthur Heard, a Baptist minister. Five years later they moved to Arizona and in 1970 she died in Pima, a small town just west of the New Mexico border. They had no children.

Tye and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Weisgerber De Young

Tye, son of Nick and Johanna, had been born near Allegan, Michigan, in 1889 and came to Texas with his parents in 1911. In 1913 he married Lizzie Weisgerber in Phigerville, Texas, just north of Austin. She had been born in Dallas in 1893. They lived in Port Arthur, where Tye drove the “interurban” between Beaumont and Port Arthur, and later in Beaumont, where he drove the city bus. By 1926 they had moved to Hamshire with their children John, 13; Marguerite, 10; Earl, 6; Grace, 2; and Walter, 3. Dorothy was the second child and was born later. The two oldest children of several families attracted to Texas from the Hamshire neighborhood. The couple never had children, but he did develop a fondness for the youngsters of the congregation and sometimes would give them a nickel to put in the offering plate. The Munnikams sold their farm to the Van Noord family in 1941 and joined others from the Hamshire enclave in moving to Phoenix, Arizona. There they died in November 1958, within days of each other.

Ben (Berend) and Rose Spijters Renkema

Ben Renkema was born in 1879 in Lit-telbert, Groningen, the Netherlands. His father had been a dairy farmer and an astute businessman. The couple never had children, but he did develop a fondness for the youngsters of the congregation and sometimes would give them a nickel to put in the offering plate. The Munnikams sold their farm to the Van Noord family in 1941 and joined others from the Hamshire enclave in moving to Phoenix, Arizona. There they died in November 1958, within days of each other.

Harmen and Rena Brouwer Munnikama

Harmen was born in Appingedam, the Netherlands. His father had been a navigator of canal boats, and Harmen was also a sailor. He was apparently living in Chicago when he met Rena Brouwer. They married late in life and may have come to Texas soon after their marriage in about 1928, when they were both in their early fifties. He lent his name to the Hamshire advertisements and endorsements that were circulating throughout Dutch-speaking communities in this country.

Munnikama was a dairy farmer and an astute businessman. The couple never had children, but he did develop a fondness for the youngsters of the congregation and sometimes would give them a nickel to put in the offering plate. The Munnikams sold their farm to the Van Noord family in 1941 and joined others from the Hamshire enclave in moving to Phoenix, Arizona. There they died in November 1958, within days of each other.

Herman and Emma Wilhelmina Fischer De Young

Herman, another son of Nick and Johanna, was born in 1884, in James-town, Michigan. Six months before the infamous 1915 hurricane, he mar-ried Emma Fischer, who also lived in Hamshire. Herman and Emma were part of the mass exodus from Ham-shire and Winnie after the hurricane, and they lived briefly in New York, near her family and then in James-town before re-turning to Texas in 1917. Upon their return, Herman began to work with his father in the emerging fig-processing industry. Figs were in their family home. He was a jovial man who relished “harmless pleasantries.”

During the Depression the market for figs decreased considerably, and by 1933 the cannery closed. At that point Nick, ever the entrepreneur, began dairy farming with his grandson and farmed until his death in 1943, at the age of seventy-nine. He was also at one point the manager of the Hamshire Hotel, which later, after renovations, became the De Young family home. He was a jovial man who relished “harmless pleasantries.”

The family lived very near the Tye De Youngs and Nick and Johanna De Young, allowing frequent opportuni-ties for convivial socializing, and all of them lived near the cannery, the church, and the school. The Herman De Youngs remained in Hamshire after the church closed, and their member-ship papers were held by the Luctor, Kansas, church. They attended the Baptist church because it was only church in Hamshire, but Herman never officially joined. He died in Hamshire in 1966, and Lizzie in 1977.

Herman and Grace De Young Paetz

Grace was very active in the church as president of the Ladies’ Aid Society in the early 1930s. About two years after the church closed, the family, like many others, moved to Arizona, and in 1973 Grace died in Pima, as had her sister Rosannah. She was seventy-one. Herman died in 1989 at the age of ninety-two.

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Tessie Renkema, daughter of Rose and Van Til, was born in Chicago in 1905. Tessie was twenty-five, John was twenty-three, and Peter was sixteen. With his sons Ben began dairy farming.

Rose died in 1936, and two years later Ben surprised the family by coming back from Chicago married to Rose's sister, Anna Sprietsma. He gave his life and energies to the Christian Reformed Church and stayed to conduct the very last details of the closure and sale of the property. He was superintendent of the Sunday school during the church's early years, and clerk of the consistory from 1932 to 1946. He was a faithful elder and reliable delegate to classis, and he was committed to the Reformed tradition when others were more comfortable among other denominations. He was called upon to read sermons in worship when a pastor wasn’t present. In 1949 Ben sold his dairy farm in Texas, and he and Anna moved to Arizona where he worked in his son John’s church.

The Van Til’s and their children, Rose, Larry, and Ron. Riemer was a mason in Hamshire but eventually moved to Holland, Michigan, where he sold insurance and served in various elected offices. Image courtesy of Bernie Van Til.

Riemer home and was apparently smitten on the spot. He planted a kiss on Tessie at a moment when her arms were full of dishes and he married her in 1934. He worked as a brick mason at the Texaco Oil Refinery in Port Arthur, where the family lived, attended Port Arthur Business College, and then moved to Arizona to travel south in an old pickup truck with their five children.

John was born in Chicago in 1907. When the rest of the family returned to Texas in 1925, he stayed behind. In Chicago but later hitchhiked to Texas with a friend, John Wiersema. He joined his father, Ben Renkema, on the farm, and in 1934 he went back to Chicago to marry Alice Stob. She was twenty-five, the daughter of Jacob and Anna Stob. John and Alice were active in the church—he as superintendent of the Sunday school from 1942 until the church closed. She was active in the Ladies’ Aid Society and served as its secretary in its final years. In Hamshire, John was a dairy farmer like his father, and he continued when the family moved to Phoenix in 1947. He died there in June 1975. His wife, Alice, died there in 1980. Their children were Anna Rose, born in 1935, and John Renkema Jr., born in 1938.

Peter Renkema, his wife, Lois (De Young), and children, Wilma Rose, Bernard, Charles, Frederich, and Henrietta. Renkema eventually worked in the oil industry. Image courtesy of Frederick Renkema.

and the Renkemas returned to Chicago where he was a teamster haul- ing refuse. But they still owned land in Texas, and the family returned in 1925 as conditions there were improving. When the Hamshire church was formed, Ben was fifty-one and Rose was forty-eight. Tessie was twenty-five, John was twenty-three, and Peter was sixteen. With his sons Ben began dairy farming.

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During the waning days of the Hamshire church, Classis Pella sug-
gested that those in the church who wanted to remain Reformed should move elsewhere. Along with others, the Holikamps also took that advice. In 1944 Dirk and Mien retired and moved to Zillah, where they had dear friends, and became members of the Christian Reformed church there. He died in Zil-
lah the next year, and Mien died there in 1948. They had no children.

Edward and Helen Monsma Van Houten

Ed and Helen arrived in Hamshire from Lucas, Michigan, in 1924, when he was forty-seven and she was forty. A few years later he joined Ben Renkema, Nick De Young, and Har-
munnenkens in signing advertisements and promotional letters in an ef-
fort to recruit Dutch-speaking people to Hamshire. When the church was
formed, he was elected a deacon and served the congregation as its treasurer
until 1944. Helen had been a teacher in Lucas, and Ed was a farmer, and he turned to dairy farming in Hamshire. They had no children but raised a niece and nephew, Gertrude and John Monsma
(who was called Charlie). Ed, an easy-
going man, became disabled when he fell off a roof and broke his leg. He
declared that “You’re the man I want to sell my farm to.” The
Van Noords were success-
ful dairy farmers, partly because they
had seven child-
ren, and around 1935 she moved back to
the area and in other states, land
ruled. At one point the Van Noord
family had five hundred head of cattle,
called Marquette. In addition to being a cement
builder, he traveled back and forth
for baby Jean to be born. Another
cutter in Chicago, working with his son John
under the name of Workman27 and Sons. They poured sidewalks in Chi-
cago that still bear their name.

Henry and Ben Renkema had been
friends in Chicago, and, along with many others from the Chicago area, Henry bought land near the Renkema
farm during the time the Winnipeg
church was in existence. Alice was re-
linctant to leave her home in Chicago, so he hired a family to live and work
on the farm; he traveled back and forth
every summer to administer his invest-
ment. Finally, in 1939 Henry and Alice
moved to Hamshire, though she still
retained strong ties to Chicago.

Henry and his son Jake built a
swimming pool in Winnie and also
created native cement flower pots that
stood on each side of the school
door. In addition to being a cement
finisher, Henry was also a wallpaper
hanger and a dairy farmer. He had a
large garden and chickens and pigs
for feeding the family, and he also
sold butter and eggs (but never on
Sunday) and traded food for supplies at the store. He was a loving man
much loved by his grandchildren as their “fishing buddy.” He was active
in the church, served as president of a farmer’s co-op in Hamshire, and made
memorabilities for the children.

Alice died in Texas in 1942; Henry died in Hamshire in 1950. Both were
buried in Chicago.

Jacob and Elaine (Ebelina) Kok/Cook Van De Werken

Jacob Van De Werken was the son of Henry and Alice, and in 1939,
when he was thirty-one and his wife
Elaine was thirty-three, Jacob made
an impromptu decision to move to
Hamshire from Chicago, with his
parents and his very pregnant wife
and two daughters, Alice, 10, and
Grace, 8. They had to stop along the way to seek medical help for Elaine
and arrived in Hamshire just in time
for baby Jean to be born. Another
daughter, Jackie, was born in 1947 in
Hamshire. The couple and their four
dughters lived in a small two-bed-
room home with his parents.

He was car mechanic by profession
and reluctantly helped with the farm-
ning. His real love was repairing radios
and small machinery. Elaine was a
frugal woman, a good financial man-
ger, and an amiable person. She was

Gerrit and Alice Giroux Van Noord

Alice Giroux was born in 1912 and raised on a farm northwest of Grand
Rapids, Michigan, she graduated from
Union High School in Grand Rapids. She married Gerrit Van Noord when
she was eighteen and he was twenty-
two. He was a dairy farmer, born in Zutphen, Michigan. The two lived and
farmed in Byron Center, Dorr, Ada, and, by 1937, Jamestown, Michigan.
In addition to farming, Gerrit also worked at Keeler Brass Company in
Grand Rapids. Dairy farming is hard anywhere and anytime, but it was
especially hard in those years in Michigan, and Texas beckoned. In May
1941 Gerrit received a letter from Rev. Peter De Jong telling of land for sale
in Hamshire. He was adventuresome, and at the age of thirty-two he set out
to investigate the Hamshire area and the church there. He stayed with Ty De Young and talked with Ben Ren-


Van Noord’s youngest daughter, Ruth, still lives on the land her father pur-
chased “on a handshake.”

The Van Noords were success-
ful dairy farmers, partly because they
had seven children to help with the
milking and milk routes. Alice would
drive, and the children would deliver
the milk and collect the empty bottles.
Sometimes kind customers would
leave a quart or two of milk as a thank-
you for the milk they ordered. When
other members of the church
left Hamshire, Gerrit bought their
land and cattle and amassed several
properties in the area and in other
states, land that his son Gerrit farmed or super-
vised. At one point the Van Noord
family had five hundred head of cattle,
called Marquette. In addition to being a cement
builder, he traveled back and forth
for baby Jean to be born. Another
daughter, Jackie, was born in 1947 in
Hamshire. The couple and their four
dughters lived in a small two-bed-
room home with his parents.

He was car mechanic by profession
and reluctantly helped with the farm-
ning. His real love was repairing radios
and small machinery. Elaine was a
frugal woman, a good financial man-
ger, and an amiable person. She was

Gerrit and Alice Van Noord came to
Hamshire later than most, in 1941, but
eventually operated a successful dairy farm. Image courtesy of Sharon Van Noord Brinks.

Gerrit and Alice Van Noord

Gerrit bought a farm from Harmen
Munninkema. According to reports,
when Munninkema saw Gerrit and his children, he declared that “You’re the
man I want to sell my farm to.” The

Helen and Ed Van Houten moved to Hamshire from Lucas, Michigan, in 1924 and stayed just over two decades. Image courtesy of Edward and Jean Ausema.
formed pastor wasn't present. Farming was not for Jake, and, when his father died in 1950, he sold the farm; the family moved to Houston, where he was an auto mechanic and a night watchman.

There were other Dutch families in the area during the period when the church existed. The Peter and Mina Van Vliet Van Houten family, with their children Anne, Willem, Henry, and Grace, lived in the Beaumont area from about 1925 to 1928. Garrett John and Henrietta Koljen Kropscott lived in Hamshire as early as 1915 and subsequently in Beaumont. John Wiersema arrived in Hamshire from Chicago as early as 1923. He married Ella Marie Melanson and they lived in Hamshire. Their connections to the church could not be verified.

Endnotes

1. Information regarding the Achterhof family was provided by Shirley Voskuil Gardner.
2. Information regarding the De Young family was provided by Edith De Young.
3. The other couple was Peter and Lois De Young Renkema.
4. Information regarding the Voskuil family was provided by Shirley Voskuil Gardner.
5. Information regarding the Nick De Young family was provided by Fred Renkema in emails and telephone conversations dated between 21 January and 9 April 2011; and by Robert De Young in a telephone conversation on 12 January 2011.
6. Teije, his paternal grandfather’s name.
7. So noted in a tribute written to the couple by Rev. Dirk Mellema on the occasion of their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1936.
8. According to Donna De Young Vance in a telephone conversation on 22 January 2011.
9. Information regarding the Teie De Young family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid, and Grace De Young Hubbanger in a telephone conversation on 25 February 2011.
10. Information regarding the Herman De Young family was provided by Robert De Young, ibid, and Jeannette De Young Kuzmik in telephone conversations on 27 January and 8 April 2011.
12. Now the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, a Baptist-related college.
13. Information regarding the Paetz family was provided by Gerrit Voskuil, ibid.
14. Information regarding the Voskuil family was provided by Gerrit Voskuil Jr. in telephone conversations on 8 and 7 February 2011 and 1 January 2013.
15. Information regarding the Van Noord family was provided by Gerrit Van Nood Jr.
16. Several who knew him in the church remembered that he was called a “sea captain” and liked to sleep in a hammock rather than a bed.
17. Information regarding the Renkema family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
18. Also called Sophie.
19. Information regarding the Riemer Van Til family was provided by Berrie Van Til in a telephone conversation on 12 January 2013 and an in-person conversation on 25 January 2013; and by Fred Renkema, ibid.
20. Information regarding the Hogema family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
21. Information regarding the De Vries family was provided by Fred Renkema, ibid.
22. Also Jacomijntje.
23. Information regarding Dick and Melba Houkamp was provided by Arnold Houkamp.
24. Information regarding the Van Houten family was provided by Edward Auwema in telephone conversations on 7 and 8 February 2011 and 1 January 2013.
25. Information regarding the Van Nood family was provided by Gerrit Van Nood Jr. in telephone conversations on 28 January, 5 and 19 February, and 4 April 2011; Laura May Van Noord DeWitt, Ruth Van Noord, and Sharon Van Noord Brinks in a telephone conversation on 28 January 2011 and written documents received 25 January 2013.
26. Information regarding the Van De Weerdt family was provided by Grace Van De Weerdt Bowers in a telephone conversation on 5 March 2011; Jean Van De Weerdt Murphy in a telephone conversation on 27 February 2011; Alice Van De Weerdt Prichett in a telephone conversation on 28 February 2011; and Jackie Van De Weerdt King in an email dated 1 March 2011. The surname was also spelled Van de Weerken in (with several other variations).
27. The Van De Weerden sometimes used the name Workman. John did not move to Texas.
28. Also Jacomijntje.
29. Information regarding Dick and Melba Houkamp was provided by Arnold Houkamp.
30. Information regarding the Van Nood family was provided by Gerrit Van Nood Jr. in telephone conversations on 28 January, 5 and 19 February, and 4 April 2011; Laura May Van Noord DeWitt, Ruth Van Noord, and Sharon Van Noord Brinks in a telephone conversation on 28 January 2011 and written documents received 25 January 2013.
31. Information regarding the Van De Weerdt family was provided by Grace Van De Weerdt Bowers in a telephone conversation on 5 March 2011; Jean Van De Weerdt Murphy in a telephone conversation on 27 February 2011; Alice Van De Weerdt Prichett in a telephone conversation on 28 February 2011; and Jackie Van De Weerdt King in an email dated 1 March 2011. The surname was also spelled Van de Weerken in (with several other variations).
32. The Van De Weerden sometimes used the name Workman. John did not move to Texas.

The Dutch, and Texas, and a Hurricane

Angie Ploegstra

Todays there is little tangible evidence twenty miles west of Galveston, Texas, on Chocolate Bay, to indicate that there was a Dutch community there, or that it was called Amsterdam. Its not on any map, and there are no road signs, and even a nearby museum and libraries have no records from the community. There are three or four old buildings in very poor repair but no indication of what they were. On the site, cattle graze in some fields and corn grows in others. Only a few local residents remember a Dutch settlement there that began to disintegrate after the devastating hurricane of 8 September 1900.

Initially the area was called Gothland, but after the Dutch immigrants arrived and the post office opened in early 1897, Gothland became Amsterdam. At the time it was a thriving community with boat docks, shipping wharves, a Monsonite academy, a broom factory, a telephone company, and an oil company. A one-acre lot was designated for a one-room public school organized on 6 October 1896, with Jacob D. Bos and Worsley Weynat Jr. as trustees. A stage road was opened between Amsterdam and Galveston, giving access to Alvin to the north and Angleton to the west.

southwest. A school tax of fifteen cents per $100 property valuation was levied by the newly formed Liverpool School District #10 to finance five district schools. There were also mosquitoes, malaria, and yellow fever to cope with, and in 1895 eighteen inches of snow fell along Chocolate Bayou.

As in other places, land developers had explored the area thoroughly. In 1894, John Broekema, of Siegel, Coo per and Company in Chicago, led a group of twelve men to visit Texas, to investigate a suitable site for a Dutch settlement. They went as far west as Fort Worth and as far south as Corpus Christi. In Houston they met P.A. Angenend and Jacob Meyer. Angenend had not met another Hollander. In four years he had been in America; he had lived the last two years in Texas.

He enjoyed conversing in Dutch with Broekema’s group. Meyer had been a resident of Pella, Iowa, for several years and was managing the St. Louis Pressed Brick Company in Houston. The two men highly recommended south Texas for a Dutch settlement, especially for anyone willing to work hard. After returning to Chicago, the group published favorable reports in De Grondwet encouraging Dutch settlements in south Texas.

Another group of Dutch investors from Iowa and Nebraska formed the Texas Colonization Company of Orange City, Iowa, with J.P. Koch, a land developer, as the manager. The company bought 6,879 acres of land in the Liverpool/Gothland area, located between the Chocolate and Buffalo bayous, thirty miles south of Houston and ten miles west of the Gulf of Mexico.
Early in 1895 Koch hired D. Lee Slapater to research the area. Giving a strong recommendation for south Texas to the colonists, Slapater visited men who had researched the area. Siegel, and Cooper, all trustworthy agents of the bank, purchased 1,280 acres in the area; and D. Ellerbroek, from the Bank of the Netherlands in Amsterdam, hired a lawyer and a surveyor of Alvin, Texas, to plat a city at Gothland. Next the company hired Albert Kuipers to research their holdings in the Gothland area, ten miles south of Alvin, Texas, near the nearest train station. Kuipers, thinking Texas too hot for Dutch immigrants, turned down the offer but was later persuaded to reconsider. He went to Texas four times, and each time he encountered other Dutch immigrants who were also investigating the area. Kuipers was so impressed with the Gothland area that he, along with several others, bought 2,600 acres of land there: “The land was top quality, partly heavy clay, close to good markets and a healthy climate.” On his fourth trip to Texas, Kuipers visited several Dutch immigrants living in the Gothland area. Giving a strong recommendation for a settlement in the area were J. D. Bos, a farmer from Michigan, and L. H. Boerhave, a shopkeeper in Liverpool; C. Van Beek, who rented a farm in the area, and D. Ellerbroek, from Sioux County, Iowa. Ellerbroek had purchased 1,280 acres in the area with the help of settling his adult children in farming. Kuipers journeyed to Chicago and sought the advice of George Birhol, Consul of the Netherlands. Birhol recommended he contact Broekema, Siegel, and Cooper, all trustworthy men who had researched the area.10 After talking with them, Kuipers recommended a settlement to the colonization company. The company began to promote the Gothland area in De Volksvriend en De Grondwet.

Farmers who have some revenue on hand, cannot find a better place to settle than Gothland in south Texas. The fertility of the soil is unsurpassable and the climate delightful, no droughts, hot winds, cyclones, blizzards or bitter winters. The colony is thriving. A Post Office at Amsterdam has been applied for. There is already the hotel, lumbaryard, blacksmith shop, store and even a school as well as a building for worship services. . . . it is 20 miles from Port Galveston and 30 miles from Houston where 15 railroads cross.11

A year later the company again promoted the area, this time in De Grondwet.

The fertility of the soil is unsurpassable, and only dream of.12 Note well that we are not speaking of the desert, there is an abundance of water, the rivers flow all the time. The climate—summers not too hot and winters not too cold, the humidity not too high, the winds not too strong, the storms not too frequent. The fertility of the soil is unsurpassable, no droughts, no cyclones, no blizzards, no bitter winters. The colony is thriving. A Post Office at Amsterdam has been applied for. There is already a hotel, lumbaryard, blacksmith shop, store and even a school as well as a building for worship services. . . . it is 20 miles from Port Galveston and 30 miles from Houston where 15 railroads cross.11

A year later the company again promoted the area, this time in De Grondwet.

Are there still people who with all their hard work still do not have any money in hand? People who can’t seem to get ahead? Who still would like to earn a worry-free existence and who would not despise a pleasant climate? If they really are such farmers then we would like them to write us for information and chance to see with their own eyes and we provide them with Twice monthly EXCURSIONS to GOTHLAND.

Note well that we are not speaking about anything other than the giant state of Texas—which has a delightful climate—summers not too hot and winters not too cold. You can sell all your products for the same prices the markts in New York would fetch, and because of the climate and the good living on 40 acres that someone in the Northern states would need a larger farm for, something he could only dream of. There is some money needed: a span of horses, seeds, and some implements as well as a house, but lumber is very cheap here. Also, one should be able to live for a couple months without income until the crops can be sold, but that is about the extent of the expenses. The rest will take care of itself.13

As positive and enticing as those announcements were, there was at least one other viewpoint. A gardener, H. Koopman, born in Borger, Drenthe, the Netherlands, had emigrated to America and was living in Chicago when Broekema and several ministers in the Reformed churches recommended south Texas as a place to settle. Based on that recommendation, Koopman wrote a favorable report to the bank about the ability to raise two crops a year in southern Texas on the same piece of land: ever potatoes! He then made the thousand-mile train trip to Alvin, Texas, to see the area for himself. He noted that the land was at sea level, waiting to be flooded, and observed that people were killing themselves breaking the soil. While he was there he had only coffee and pancakes to eat. He concluded that the region was “bad for agriculture” and returned to Chicago, discouraged and angry. He told the other interested immigrants about the conditions, but they persisted in their attempts to promote the area.

One of the promoters whom Koopman talked with was Rev. Lawrence Dykstra, of the First Englewood Reformed Church in Chicago, Reformed Church in America, who had been one of Broekema’s original group of twelve. Dykstra admitted he had only gone as far as Galveston and had not seen the southern area or the conditions that Koopman cited. After this encounter Koopman no longer had contact with Dutch ministers or Dutch newspapers.14 By 1900 forty-five families lived there, and “a Dutch Reformed Church met in the school and the area was taking on a look of growth.” When the devastating hurricane came onshore on 8 September 1900 with winds at 145 miles per hour and a tidal surge over fifteen feet, the low-lying land was flooded and people lost everything, as Koopman had feared. The hurricane devastated Galveston Island, killing an estimated 8,000 people, making it at the time the deadliest natural disaster in United States history, and caused property damage estimated at $104 billion (2010 dollars). Four days later, when the storm reached New York City, winds were still at 65 mph. The Dutch settlement of Amsterdam was one of the victims.

On the eve of the storm the wind blew, one night in Braus County. In the morning the clouds were wild and the wind was blowing furiously. But Joe and Gertie Etting left a horse-drawn wagon to sow the land and go to fuel for supper. When Gertie returned home, she made a supper the family never ate. It was 5:30 pm, and the house shook. Willem gave the children blankets, ordering them to leave just minutes before the house slid off its foundation. They started for the barn, but that had also been destroyed, and they finally sought refuge in the home of a neighbor. They left with blankets over their heads, trudging through knee-deep salt water. The Ettings, with seventeen other people, huddled in one room, and the girls began singing hymns. At 3:00 am, with the porches down and covered with sand, the men helped the women to the second floor. That house endured the storm, and for the next twenty-one days twenty-one people lived there. They slept five to a bed, lying crosswise.

The Naaktgeboren house was pushed off its foundation and collapsed. Bastiaan, Piertonella, Pieter, and Mary sought refuge under the water tank behind their house, then in the summer kitchen, bracing themselves with two-by-fours. When the eye of the storm was over them, they crawled under the roof of the house, which lay on the ground. The winds started, and they found safety in the house of the local school teacher whose last name was Everet, and along with several other people survived the remainder of the storm in his small house. At the time Johanna Naaktgeboren was working in Alvin, Texas, for a family that owned an ice plant. After the hurricane, she was found safe inside the rubble of the ice plant. Alvin was destroyed. There had been three hundred homes in Alvin, and only fourteen were left on their foundations, and those were badly damaged.

The devastation was so complete and the storm so severe that the Dutch immigrant residents left. Bastiaan Naaktgeboren felt “had it not been for the hurricane he would have stayed. He had never done so well in his life.”15 Willem Etting’s property value decreased $200 in 1900. The Van Beeck property was valued the same in 1899 and 1900. Adrian Groeneveld’s land had increased in value, but he left for California even before the hurricane. Whatever the reasons for leaving, another Dutch settlement that started with promise ended with people losing all their possessions and needing to start a new life elsewhere.

When the Dutch settlers left the area, the community declined significantly. The Amsterdam school enrollment dropped, and in 1911 it was combined with two other schools and moved to Liverpool. The Amsterdam post office closed in 1905, and those residents who remained went to Liverpool for their mail until a rural route was established. Everet, the Dutch school teacher, was postmaster until the office closed three years later. The three-story hotel was destroyed during the hurricane, along with most of the other buildings in the area. The only reminder is that local residents call this area “Amsterdam.”
fiver onboard the ship, and died. A year later they had another son and they named him Pieter, still later they had a daughter, Mary.

The family moved to the Blue Island region of Chicago at 115th and Wentworth streets. Naaktgeboren was a laborer and made brooms in their basement. He was ambitious and attended evening classes, studying mathematics. After six years they moved to Morrison, Illinois, and he helped organize the Ebenezer Hol-

land Dutch Reformed Church in May 1898. He was elected one of the first deacons, and he assisted the minister in reading sermons. Since the church did not have an organ, he served as the precentor.

Because their seventeen-year-old daughter Johanna was in poor health, Naaktgeboren, having heard about the health benefits of living in the warm climate of southern Texas, decided to take Johanna to the Gopherland area. Johanna regained her health in a warm climate, crediting the climate and sweet potatoes for her recovery. Six months later Pietronella, Mary, Pieter, and Frances joined them in Texas. Their son Jacob brought the furniture from Chicago by train and stayed for six months before returning to Illinois. Daughter Elizabeth stayed in Chicago. Bastiaan and Pietronella bought property and a two-story house a mile from Choco-

In May 1891 Willem along with two other men built a barn for the church. Son Ben was admitted to full commu-

A 3-year-old Dutch child in a natural environment.

This field is a current view of the site of Amsterdam. Image courtesy of the author.

cinio and their family bought passage on a ship to Batavia in the Dutch East Indies. Fifteen years later they left the family with bad memories for Texas. The heat, stench, and disgusted feelings for the rest of their lives. They first rented land and later purchased eighty acres from the Ellerbrooks, including a large frame house. They raised prairie grass which they baled for shipment and stored in a barn near Chocolate Bayou. Simons and his brother Henry raised vegetables on their farm and transported them by sailboat to be sold on Galveston Island. The distance and slow transportation to Galveston often resulted in high losses of the perish-

able vegetables.

Longhorn cattle roamed the prairie,
and Simon tells of the time they stumped toward him. After slapping his hands on his legs the cattle separated and ran past him. To supplement the family income, Simon moved to Galveston Island and worked in a men's clothing store. He also found employment in a general merchandise store/saloon owned by L. H. Boerhave and attended night school, studying civil engineering. At one point he developed typhoid fever and spent some time in the Temple, Texas, hospital. In 1897 the Van Beeks had four head of cattle valued at $100 and a buggy valued at $20. In the following two years the Van Beeks owned eighty acres of land valued at $600, a buggy, two horses, and a dog. Several members of the Van Beek family were on Galveston Island at the time of the hurricane. The morning after the hurricane Simon Van Beek and his brother-in-law, Jon Sudmeier, began looking for family members. Jon was also trying to find medicine for his wife, Jeannette, who was eight months pregnant. Simon and Jon were traveling in a buckboard and a bakery cart and had his own route, and they met when he delivered baked goods to the Van Beek home. They lived on Galveston Island, in the upstairs apartment above Boerhave's store, thirty blocks from the beach. The house wasn't destroyed but needed remodeling. Many of Jon and Jeannette's possessions were found on the street, including Jeannette's wedding dress and their feather mattress.

The Van Beeks' house was destroyed in the hurricane, and subsequently they sold the farm. Van Beek was a restless person, and his children went to work at an early age in factories and doing farm work and housework to help support the family. Sometimes after the storm the parents separated, and they were divorced in 1902. Jeannette, Simon, Henry, Jacob, Gertrude, and Martha moved to New York City from Haarlemmermeer, the Netherlands, on board Werkendam in October 1893. Hendrik's sister, Jeannette Van Beek, had arrived in America a few months earlier. The family traveled to Iowa and joined the Christian Reformed Church in Pella. Adrian Groeneveld, a nephew of Hendrik and Jeannette, came to America the same year. Eventually the family and Adrian moved to Texas to be nearer their relatives.

In 1898 Adrian and Hendrik were listed on the assessment of property, with Adrian owning forty acres of land valued at $160, two horses, and three head of cattle. Hendrik, living on the same property, had two horses. The following year Adrian's forty acres had increased in value to $260; he had two horses, seven head of cattle, and $15 in machinery, with a total value of $425. On the 1900 assessment, Adrian is no longer listed, and Hendrik was living on the property with the valuation the same as the previous year. Adrian married Tryntje Uithoven from Mississippi in 1889. Their farm seemed to be prospering, but Adrian and Tryntje moved to Hanford, California, before the 1900 hurricane. First they lived with Tryntje's sister and then on their own farm. After the hurricane, Hendrik, Klazina, and their family moved northeast to Nederland, Texas, and joined the Christian Reformed church there in 1901. Hendrik was appointed clerk of that congregation in 1904. But within six months they had moved again, this time to Kansas. Hendrik died in Pueblo, Colorado. George Reinstra, born 1865, arrived in America in 1889. He went first to Pella, Iowa, where he made tools and learned the blacksmith trade. A year later he traveled with his team and wagon to the Alvin, Texas, area, where several Dutch people were living. He left his possessions in the care of a Dutch family and returned to the Netherlands to visit his family. In the Netherlands, George learned about the beginning of a new Dutch settlement in Nederland, Texas. His sister Feikje came to America with him. In a letter to the Netherlands dated 17 May 1897 from Liverpool, Texas, Reinstra states that he is "moving to Nederland, Texas, and asked how many immigrants he should expect to join him in this new settlement."

Also living in the Amsterdam area were the Hanses, Scholtz, Westrup, and Weynam families. They became close friends with the Dutch settlers, and eventually most of these families also moved to the Fresno, California, area. •
To Go or to Stay—Jan Hospers’s Dilemma

Douglas Rozendal

At the end of the 1840s Jan Hospers had a successful public service career in the Netherlands, he was the headmaster of a school, and he was responsible for caring for older family members. Yet he felt called by God to go to America, as his son Hendrik had already done. Johan Stellingworf notes, ‘Beginning in mid-1848, the letters from Hoogblokland’ increase ingly relate the emotional struggle of the Hospers family about following their beloved son Hendrik to the Iowa frontier. To go or not to go was the question. Complicating factors were the many aged relatives, several unmarried, who relied on Jan Hospers for advice and care, and the matter of a substantial inheritance from an uncle without heirs who promised the money to Jan and Hendrika, provided they remained in the Netherlands.” Hospers was part of the Secession in the 1830s from the Dutch national church and was much influenced by Rev. Hendrik P. Scholte, a leader in the Secession and a powerful preacher. Hospers had become involved in the Secession through his father-in-law, Klaas Middelkoop, who had been an elder in the Nederlandse Her-vormde Kerk (the national church) in Hoogblokland and later took the same position in the secular church in Noordeloos, about four and a half miles from Hoogblokland. As an educator, Jan Hospers resonated with the seceders’ concerns about the development of education in the Netherlands in the early 1800s. As he notes in his autobiography, “I could not tolerate the fact that the Bible was barred from the school, and the education denied a Christian character.”

Because of economic conditions and religious oppression a few years earlier by the national government, seceders formed emigration societies a few years earlier by the national government, seceders formed emigration societies in the mid-1840s. One such group in Utrecht was the Society for Emigra tion to North America, whose board accepted only those who could pay their own expenses. By August 1846 nearly seventy moneyed families, mainly from the province of South Holland, had joined the society and subsequently decided to buy eighteen sections of land in North America. Two of the elected leaders of this group, Gerrit H. Overkamp and Isaac Overkamp, were to become the closest friends of the Hospers family and in 1863 Hendrik Hospers would marry Gerrit’s daughter Hendrika.

Matters proceeded quickly from the meetings in 1846, and by April 1847
the first group of about seven hundred
left for America on three ships. Jan
Hospers could not see his way clear
to go at this point—he had too many
responsibilities to school, church, and
home. Nevertheless, the Hospers fam-
ily had lived in Hoornaar for at least seven
generations and his descendants live there
to this day. Hospers was the one to
to write to Aanen in 1843, “On behalf of
the Municipal Council of Hoornaar I
inform you herewith that your name
will be submitted to His Majesty the
King as Mayor. . . .” He also per-
formed Aanen’s wedding and worked with
him to get his son’s name, Duur Kornelis,
accepted by the government, since “Duur” was not on the govern-
ment’s list of approved names.
When Hospers announced his
decision to leave for America, Aanen
responded in a note that “Many, many
tears ran down my cheeks. . . .” As
time approached for Hospers to leave,
Aanen wrote again, providing maybe
the strongest arguments for Jan to stay:
“If it should be asked of me whether
you could be more useful elsewhere
than here, I must say, no, as I consider
from the youth to the aged. . . .” By
youth he meant, of course, the stu-
dents at the school in which Hospers
had taught for many years, and the
aged were the aged relatives under
Hospers’s charge.
Hospers had hoped that Hendrik
van Est would be well enough to come
to America. But Van Est felt too weak
to go. And this put Hospers in a bind:
“What would Pella people say about
this, to leave an old man without rela-
tives to look after him?” There was
also the inheritance from Van Est he
stood to lose. Pella. There was also the De Gelders, three unmar-
sried siblings of Hospers’s mother-in-
law. They had linked their estates so
that Hospers and his son, Hendrik,
would receive these only after all three
had died, and he would lose these by
emigrating. Moreover the three
were angry at the prospect of losing
Hospers: “But now that we would go,
while they, the old people, were in
need of us. . . .” These were so angry
Aunt Betsy cried, and said that we
could become rich in Holland, etc.”
Further, there was the question of how
he would make a livingsince once he
got to Pella. He had always worked
in education and wondered if there
were similar opportunities in Iowa.
His son, Hendrik, doubted the need
for many teachers in the new colony.
Instead, he proposed various enter-
tprises: “If legacies should come (for
which I may not long) then I would
have funds enough. . . .” Nevertheless, the Hospers fam-
ily decided to go. On 28 July 1849. One
of his first acts was to make confes-
sion of faith at the church in Pella.
The group that Jan and the two
others led brought much-needed
financial capital to Pella. The Sou-
venir History of Pella notes, “A
large store was erected by H. Van
Gelders went to Hospers’s brother-in-
law, Willem Middelkoop, who elected
to stay in the Netherlands and take
over Jan’s responsibilities for the older
relatives. Willem never married, and
his estate was divided between his
housekeeper, who had stayed with
him faithfully for many years, and the
Middelkoop descendants in America.
The money came to America after
Hospers’s death. Aanen’s son, Duur
Kornelis, became the legal representa-
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large store was erected by H. Van
Gelders went to Hospers’s brother-in-
law, Willem Middelkoop, who elected
to stay in the Netherlands and take
over Jan’s responsibilities for the older
relatives. Willem never married, and
his estate was divided between his
housekeeper, who had stayed with
him faithfully for many years, and the
Middelkoop descendants in America.
The money came to America after
Hospers’s death. Aanen’s son, Duur
Kornelis, became the legal representa-
tive for the Hospers in the matter of
Perhaps Hospers’s greatest gift to the new land was his son, Hendrik, known in America as Henry. Henry was a leader in Pella from the time he came at age seventeen. He became a county supervisor and city council member, and he served as mayor of Pella for four years. He was actively involved in the movement to start a new colony in the northwestern part of Iowa. He moved there in 1871 and helped found the town of Orange City. Henry started Dutch-language newspapers in both Pella and Orange City, and he was a banker and real estate agent in Orange City. After local municipal service, he was elected to the state assembly and later the senate.

But Jan Hospers himself contributed to Pella in other ways as well. In America (among other offices) he was active in his church as an elder and treasurer and was also treasurer of the school board. He also taught a Sunday school class for many years. In October 1883 he wrote, “I myself hold a number of posts: elder of the First Church, general bookkeeper of the same church, director of the Pella National Bank, treasurer of the School District, Agent for the Dutch Association of Christian Literature.”

Letters between the Hospers and Aanen families kept the immigrant up-to-date on developments in the Netherlands. A political movement started by conservative Christians in the Netherlands formed the first modern Dutch political party, the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Duur Kornelis Aanen was a local leader in this party and kept the Hosperses informed about developments locally and nationally. They were able to form Christian schools, including one begun directly by Duur Kornelis, that by the first part of the twentieth century were fully funded by the National Government. The spiritual aridity in the Netherlands Hospers felt also

Henry Hospers (1830-1907) emigrated to Iowa before his parents. He helped establish Orange City, among other achievements. He was married twice and fathered fourteen children. Image courtesy of the author.

Jan Hospers’s grave marker in Oakwood Cemetery, in Pella, Iowa. Image courtesy of Gerrit Sheeres

Endnotes
1. A small town in the Province of South Holland, between Dordrecht and Utrecht.
3. “Eloquent and effective in the pulpit, fearless in stressing the ancient truths, he was immensely popular.” Henry S. Lucas, Netherlands in America (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co., 1980) 49.
7. Stellingwerff, Iowa Letters, 197, in a letter dated 10 October 1848.
8. Ibid., 200.
9. Ibid., 164.
13. Ibid., 212-213 in a letter dated 20 February 1849.
15. Ibid., 207 in a letter dated 18 January 1849.
16. Ibid., 125 in a letter dated 28 August 1847.
17. Ibid., 145 in a letter dated 30 November 1847.
18. Ibid., 190 in a letter dated 10 July 1848.
19. Ibid., 215 in a letter dated April 1849.
20. Ibid., 215 in a letter dated 1 March 1849.
21. Jan Hospers, “Diary of a Journey,” from Iowa Journal of History & Politics (July 1912) 363-382. All the succeeding comments on the journey are from this source.
23. This letter, translated, is available in the Calvin College Heritage Hall Immigrant Letters Collection, http://www.calvin.edu/hh/lmmi- grantLettersPDFs/HenryHospers.pdf. In the introduction to the translation the letter is incorrectly attributed to Jan’s son Henry.
24. These letters are available online in their original Dutch with English translations at the Calvin College Archives Immigrant Letters Collection (http://www.calvin.edu/hh/ImmigrantLettersPDFs). The letters are alphabetized by the surname of the author. A compilation of the letters in book form is available from the author at douglasalbrightink.net.
26. Ibid., in a letter dated 12 April 1849.
27. Ibid., in a letter dated 30 October 1883.
28. Ibid., in a letter dated 12 April 1882.
book review

The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres
Softcover

The historiography of nineteenth-century Dutch-American history begins with the immigration of two groups, one led by Rev. Albertus C. Raalte, who brought a group to Fella, Iowa. In the subsequent story of Dutch migration, Van Raalte’s name becomes dominant as he organized communities and/or churches in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and even Iowa. Van Raalte served almost every need of the immigrants in West Michigan had as they struggled through the difficult first years. As a result, Van Raalte’s past, often the subject of books and articles; a statue was raised of him in Holland, Michigan, where a research and study institute also bears his name.

Those who know his story know that, in spite of his talents and accomplishments, Van Raalte’s name has become dominant as he organized communities and created and study institutes in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and even Iowa. Van Raalte served almost every need that such an organization could think of, and he was involved in controversies. From the time he left the pulpit of his church in 1867 and began the recruitment efforts, his critics and supporters are numerous.

The work demonstrates the author’s determined search for data when previous historians found sources to be scarce. At best. Consequently, the book contains an appended list of documents and biographical background of each family or individual involved in the Amelia County settlement, information that historians and genealogists alike, will find most useful.

The final three chapters of the book are especially intriguing. In these chapters, Sheeres examines the forces such as racers, soil fertility, racism, and even the idea of the settlers toward each other, to mention only a few, that worked contrary to the settlement. She further recounts experiences and the destinies of those, the majority, who left Virginia. Of course, since Van Raalte selected the location and began the recruitment efforts, Sheeres notes his contributions and, more usefully, what he failed to do in ensuring the future of the colony. The efforts of others are also included, such as those by the newly ordained Johannes Huizenga, who struggled mightily, but unsuccessfully, to save the disintegrating Virginia communities.

There are a few places where transitions between chapters could have been smoother and more effective. Chapter 9, the account of Martinus Cohen Stuart, seems better as an appendix than a chapter. But these criticisms are minor in view of the groundbreaking research and analysis here. The research is thorough, the writing is lively drawing the reader in, and the analysis well founded. Historians, genealogists, sociologists, students of immigration and north-south dynamics during Reconstruction, and descendants of the settlers will find that The Not-So-Promised Land is well worth acquiring and is required reading in the Van Raalte bibliography.

Richard H. Harms

book notes

1834: Hendrik de Cock’s Return to the True Church
Marvin Kamps
ISBN: 978-1-936054-23-7
$43.95 Hardcover, 490 pages

We Live Presently Under a Waning Moon
Nicolaus Martin Steffens as Leader of the Reformed Church in America in the West in Years of Transition (1878-1895)
George Harinch
Holland: Van Raalte Press, 2013
ISBN: 978-0-9801111-8-7
$15.00 Softcover, 204 pages

The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres
ISBN: 978-0-8028-7137-4
$28.00 Softcover, 231 pages

The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880
Janet Sjaarda Sheeres
$28.00 Softcover, 231 pages
for the future
The topics listed below are being researched, and articles about them will appear in future issues of Origins.

James Schaap reviews the novels of Rev. Cornelius Kooijers set in the American Southwest during the first half of the twentieth century
Janet Sheeres tells the story of Rev. Koene Vanderven Bosch
The Diary of Pioneer Settler Jan Vogel
Carolyn Van Ee recounts her training and early years as a nurse during the middle of the twentieth century

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46

47
The Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary Archives contains the historical records of the Christian Reformed Church, its College, its Theological Seminary, and other institutions related to the Reformed tradition in the Netherlands and North America. The Archives also contains a wide range of personal and family manuscripts.