

Origins

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Origins is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of The Archives.

These goals include the gathering, organization, and study of historical materials produced by the day-to-day activities of the Christian Reformed Church, its institutions, communities, and people.

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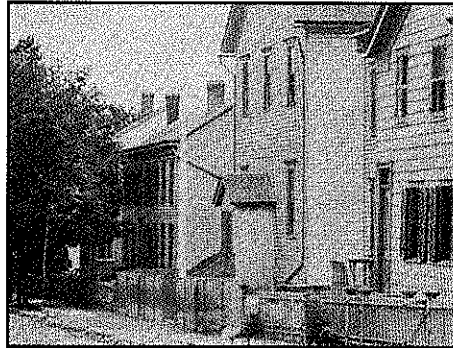
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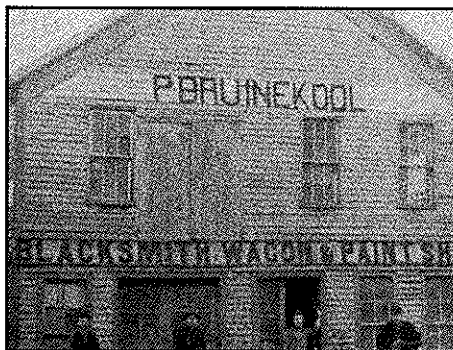


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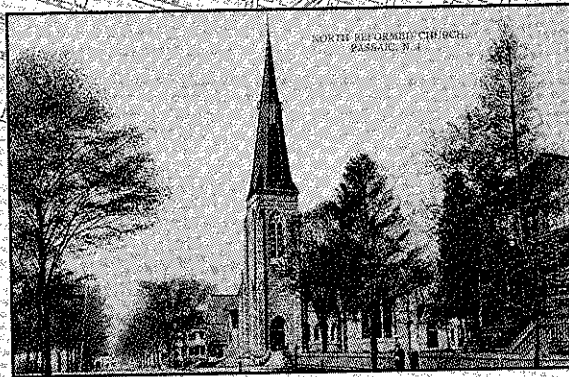
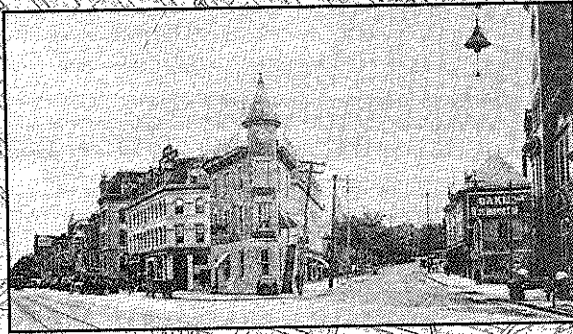
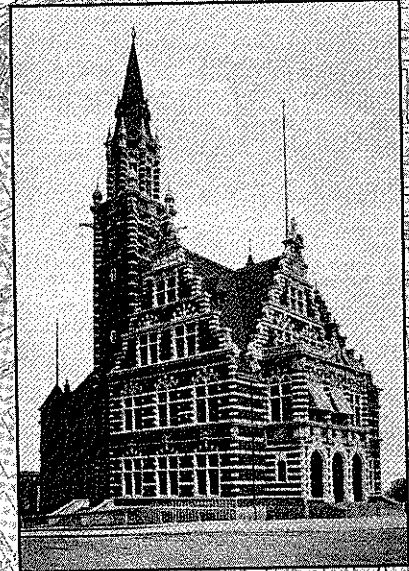
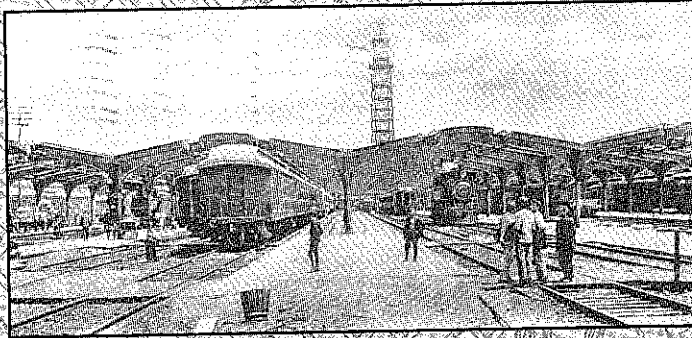
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A Centennial Sketch

Richard N. Ostling

Unlike the Protestant schools that have proliferated in America during the past generation, the pioneering institutions of Christian day-school education founded in the 19th century began largely under the sponsorship of ethnic groups, for instance the Irish Catholics or German Lutherans. Such was the case with the post-colonial "second wave" of Dutch American immigrants who set about a century ago to create what was to evolve into today's Eastern Christian School Association. The Dutch immigrant community centered on the city of Paterson was the largest in the eastern United States. Unlike their countrymen who settled in the Midwest and were largely farmers, the urbanized New Jerseyans began as factory hands, railroad workers, carpenters, laundrymen or dairymen. By 1920, over 35,000 first- or second-generation Dutch were living in New Jersey, among who some 60 percent were in the Paterson area.

As with most immigrants of that day, faith and ethnicity were essentially the same thing for members of Christian Reformed churches in northern New Jersey. They were unusually pious and loyal churchgoers, and the need for schools was straightforward. The immigrant churches retained the mother tongue for preaching and Sunday school, whereas children going off to public schools were trained in English only and thus found church teaching increasingly hard to absorb. Well into the 20th century, long after English was in use in daily life and schooling and English worship was

common in Christian Reformed congregations, some of the Paterson churches preserved services in the Dutch language as an emblem of tradition and orthodoxy.

A brochure written up on the 50th anniversary of EC said candidly that there were three categories of Christian school supporters in the early years: "In the first place there were those who wanted to teach their children Dutch. Secondly, there were a few who found fault with the public school because their children did not get along well, and last but not least were those who had a genuine love for Christian instruction." When training in the Dutch language died out, some former participants lost interest in the Christian school effort.

Members of the third group, said the anonymous writer, "are the people who support our schools today," which remains true another half-century later.

Commitment to Christian influence across the curriculum and in the life of the school, in other words, is the great constant across the one hundred years of EC. The strict denominational membership lines had been breaking down by the early 1930s when the schools reported enrollment of Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist and Methodist students and in ethnic terms, Italian, German and French students. In 1943 the high school board formalized its openness to students from other Protestant traditions. In 1971 the EC board launched a more conscious campaign to recruit students from

Photos on opposite page (clockwise, starting from top left)

Hoboken — railroad terminal, 1907.

Paterson Post Office, 1920s.

Paterson, De Haan Coal Co., 1940.

Passaic, North Reformed Church, 1920.

Passaic Main Street, 1920s.

Richard Ostling is an elder in the Ridgewood, New Jersey Christian Reformed Church and Senior Correspondent, TIME. Reprinted from *The Elegant Cook . . . Recipes from the Friends of E.C.S.A.* (1992).

other Protestant churches. Currently, the EC system enrolls students from one hundred and twenty congregations representing many different Christian denominations, including Catholic and Eastern Orthodox youngsters. Change in admission occurred in 1989. However, the official doctrinal basis for religious instruction in the schools remains "the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed Standards."

In times past there was some sensitivity about the system's undoubted ethnic heritage. Gerhardus Bos, who served as a principal in EC schools for a remarkable forty consecutive years before retiring in 1949, recalled that in the early days "our enemies" referred to his institution as a "Dutch School." It was, however, the simple truth that Bos and his colleagues were originally hired to stress instruction in Dutch while they sought also to enhance the role of English. The direct predecessor of the first day school was "De Hollandsche School," which met in the basement of the Second Christian Reformed Church in the summers of 1890 and 1891. The original entity was incorporated as the Holland Reformed School Society, though it was later renamed the Christian School Society. Moreover, there was proud immigrant symbolism in the date upon which the schools' first organizational meeting was held in 1892: August 17. It was on that date in 1878 that the king of the Netherlands decreed that schooling would be religiously neutral and the specifically Christian instruction would be curbed. That step provoked an extraordinary petition, signed by 306,000 Hollanders from two Reformed denominations and 164,000 Catholic heads of household, plus members of Lutheran and other societies. The Dutch Reformed folk of the Paterson area were fervent supporters of this protest, which rolled back the change and preserved

publicly-supported confessional schools in Holland.

Such was the backdrop as approximately sixty-five persons gathered on the evening of August 17, 1892, in the basement of Second Church to create the original school association. The beginnings were humble. The first classes were held in the basements of the First and Second Churches. The staff consisted of two men, the first principal, R. Haan, who was hired at \$7.50 per week and stayed only one year, and A. Van Vliet, who was paid \$5.00 per week. The original enrollment was 102.

On Election Day of 1893, the fledgling board managed to dedicate a new building, erected at a cost of \$1,129, and the Amity Street School was born. Obviously there was a growing market for such education, for within one year after that the enrollment increase required an addition costing \$1,361. To comprehend the commitment underlying those cold facts, it is important to realize that one of the nation's worst economic "Panics" erupted in 1893, early in the second administration of President Grover Cleveland. With businesses and banks failing and many thrown out of work, such zeal for the new Christian school project was noteworthy. Matching the hard work with fun, North Fourth Street held its first annual outing in 1898 at West Paterson's Idlewild Park.

Expansion led in another direction in 1899 when "School B" began holding classes in the basement of Paterson's Fourth Church. A school building on Third Avenue in the Riverside section was dedicated in 1901. The renamed Riverside School served not only the Riverside section of Paterson but Fair Lawn and Hawthorne. The Amity Street and Riverside schools formed separate boards in 1906. Amity Street's history concluded in 1908 when its student

body, waving flags, marched triumphantly from their old quarters, now hopelessly overcrowded, to open the new North Fourth Street Christian School in Paterson. Two new schools followed, the Midland Park Christian School on Maltbie Avenue, opened in 1913, and the Passaic Christian School, in 1916. The original Midland Park tuition was twenty-five cents per week, sent to school with the pupils.

As was typical with immigrant cultures, Dutch vs. English inevitably became the major educational conflict in the early years. As late as 1899, almost all instruction at Amity Street was given in Dutch and at Riverside, as late as 1905. In 1906 the Amity Street board confronted the issue head-on and proposed giving all classes in English, relegating Dutch to a subsidiary position of forty-five minutes per day. The association members, exercising their democratic privileges, reversed the proposal and made Dutch the main language, with English at forty-five minutes daily. Between 1910 and 1920, however, English took over. Riverside School was the most reluctant to give in, and it was 1925 before its board stopped keeping its minutes in Dutch. Language was a far more nettlesome matter than the early policy of educating girls and boys equally, which apparently never caused a fuss.

Academically, these early efforts were a far cry from today's EC system with its state-of-the-art offerings. Some of the early instructors were church young people who lacked any teacher training and were given special help by the principal after school on how and what to teach. In certain cases, the early teachers had only two or three years of high school but no diploma, and in others they had no high school at all. Since the community parents were not from the affluent classes, by and large, educational niceties were not of major concern.

In a history written in 1944, high

school history teacher Cornelius Bontekoe noted that during the years of 1910-1918, only one-fourth of graduates from the Christian elementary schools undertook secondary education. Nor were they unusual. Paterson in that era had only one public high school and it enrolled

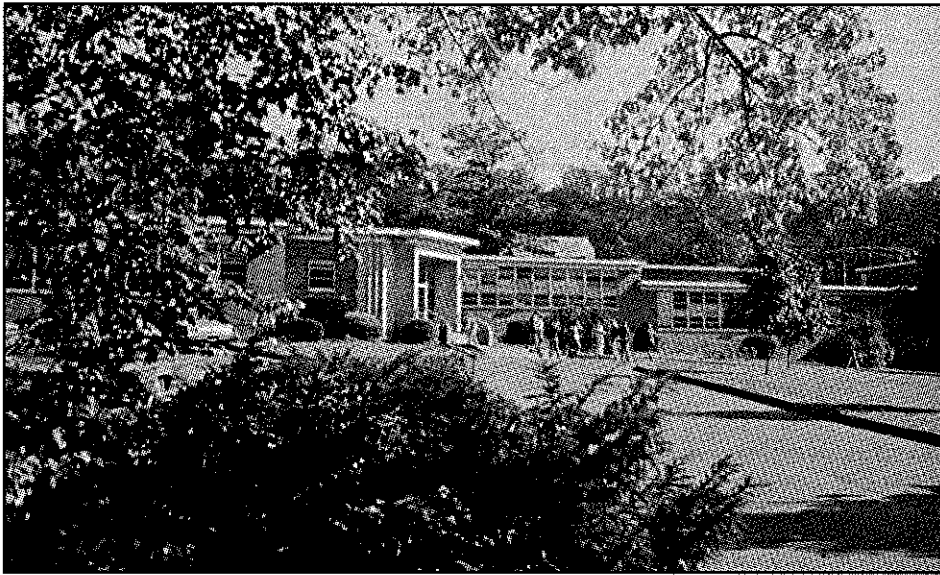
concept included "free" schools that were owned and operated by lay parents free of control by the church or clergy, which has been the governing principle of EC from the very beginning.

In the school year of 1913-14, an attempt to start a secondary-level

the board and supporters in creating the high school. Suffice it to say that broad community support was slow to develop, and money was so short that it was almost rash to launch the new school. When opening day loomed in the summer of 1919 and the budget was in serious trouble, board members and their wives, friends and students fanned out for emergency home visitations to solicit contributions from church members. Often the visits took an hour or even an entire evening and ended up yielding a small gift, or not at all. The board had a \$2,000 goal but there was only \$628 in the treasury on opening day.

Nonetheless, on September 3, 1919, seventeen ninth graders enrolled in a single rented room in the North Fourth Street building. The principal of the elementary school, Gerhardus Bos, was simultaneously the part-time, acting high school principal. Offered a \$400 stipend, he settled on \$200 and served several years without a raise. Bos had one full-time teacher, John B. Schoolland, whose salary was \$1,400. Schoolland handled Latin, English, history, and algebra, while Bos taught American history, arithmetic, geography and drawing. The course offerings were similar to those of the Paterson public schools. To start, annual tuition was \$25 for Paterson residents, \$18 for Passaic, and \$12.50 for Midland Park. The records offer no explanation for the differential but presumably allowance was made for the long walks or trolley fares of the out-of-towners. At one point the long hikers were also given physical education credit.

Tellingly, during the second year the high school board shifted its meetings to the last Monday of the month so a collection could be taken among members if necessary to insure payment of salaries the following week. But slowly, community support improved, perhaps because appeals to grim duty gave way to more light-



Eastern Christian High School, North Haledon, New Jersey.

only several hundred students. To many people, high school was a luxury without practical employment benefit, or beyond the reach of large families that needed children to become wage earners.

It is perhaps surprising, given these circumstances, that efforts toward a Christian high school were inaugurated so early and so successfully. Actually, from the formative years of the North Fourth Street School, the board president had envisioned adding secondary education someday when conditions permitted. The clergy and better-educated laity were strongly influenced by the work of Abraham Kuyper, the prime minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1905 and dominant personality in the revival of orthodox Calvinism in the mother country between 1870 and 1920. Distinctively Christian education was a pillar of Kuyper's philosophy. His

"normal school" to train teachers ran aground when only one pupil enrolled. That did not deter the Rev. Walter P. Heeres of the Prospect Park Church. At a 1917 Labor Day outing of the North Fourth Street School, he was the main speaker and offered to sell his own car and give the proceeds to start a high school if others would make comparable sacrifices. No one responded immediately, but the issue was put before the community in dramatic fashion.

The following February 18, a community rally was held at the Holland YMCA to establish a society for the "Christelijk Middelbaar Onderwijs" (Christian High School). In 1919 a formal board was formed to govern the Christian Secondary School for Paterson and Vicinity, which was given the simpler name of Eastern Academy in 1922. Bontekoe traced in detail the severe financial struggles of

hearted approaches. A poster advertising the 1922 "Grand Social" at the school building listed "Speaking, Music, Free Smokes & Refreshments" and promised: "A wonderful time you'll have." The Young Ladies' Societies in Prospect Park churches started holding fund-raising bazaars. The first, in 1924, raised a substantial \$672.07.

From the founding, one grade was added per year to the high school and the original class graduated on schedule in 1923. The first graduating class consisted of five girls and four boys. They received fully recognized diplomas, since the State Board of Education had granted accreditation to the four-year institution the previous January 9. Of equal concern with academic quality was the state's inquiry "whether there was any foreign element connected with the school which would seek the overthrow of the government." Eventually, in 1964 the academy was also granted accreditation by the regional Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

With the school now off and running, new quarters became a necessity. After five years in the North Fourth Street building, the high school moved to a refurnished home on North 7th Street in Prospect Park, which was purchased for \$13,000 plus \$8,000 for renovations. At that time, Gerhardus Bos stayed on at Fourth Street as the elementary principal and William Rozeboom was hired as the high school principal. He boosted academics and morale, and founded such new organizations as the orchestra, glee club and Forum Club. Another innovation was the beginning of the commercial diploma course, in 1925.

To accommodate the growing enrollment, a \$50,000 brick addition for the academy was dedicated in 1928. The same year there was a new

principal, John R. Bos, and a largely new faculty. There had been hopes for a \$100,000 building but the plan was scaled back radically in 1927. That limitation was providential, since the Great Depression was about to hit and the school had to struggle, even without the far heavier debt load. Through careful management and refinancing of the mortgage in 1931, the school was able to survive the financial hard times. Another sort of tragedy hit the community on March 31, 1933, when fire destroyed most of the top floor and roof of the North Fourth Street School, which also suffered severe water damage to the rest of the structure. While renovations proceeded, classes met in neighboring schools and churches.

Schools are known by their alumni. One of note who graduated from the Midland Park school (in 1929) was Johnny Vander Meer. He was the first man in baseball history to pitch two consecutive no-hitters (June 11 and June 15, 1938), when he led the Cincinnati Reds to victories over the Boston Braves and then the Brooklyn Dodgers. The latter was also the first night game ever played in Brooklyn. Counting hitless innings in the games just before and just after the two no-hitters, Vandy pitched twenty-three and two-thirds hitless innings consecutively, also a record. After a dozen years with the Reds, he played with the Chicago Cubs and Cleveland Indians.

The academic quality of Eastern Academy from its earliest days is seen in outstanding members of the first six graduating classes, including: William Spoelhof, who became President of Calvin College; John Timmerman, a noted English professor at Calvin; Leonard Haan, Supervisor of Schools for the State of Minnesota; and John Hamersma, Jr., a law graduate from the University of Michigan and prominent local attorney who was to lead the EC

board in the crucial years when consolidation occurred and a new high school was erected. Alums from the 1930s included John Feikens, a federal judge and Republican Party chairman for the state of Michigan. To date, over 8,000 youngsters have been educated in the Eastern Christian schools. Eastern Academy celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1944 by opening a second addition. At this point, the school boasted a faculty with a dozen teachers covering the basic specializations, among whom all but the commercial teacher held bachelor's degrees and an impressive eight had degrees beyond the bachelor's. Of that year's graduates, sixteen were in college prep, ten in the general curriculum, and thirteen (all women) in commercial.

In the atmosphere of post-war advance and growing enrollment, the limitations of the Prospect Park site became more and more apparent. In 1948 a widely heralded "new era" began with exploratory talks about consolidating the boards of the high school and the four elementary schools (North Fourth, Riverside, Midland Park, Passaic) into a unified Eastern Christian School Association. The plans were overwhelmingly approved at a 1950 meeting and took effect in 1951. As part of the plan the Eastern Christian Junior High School was to be established in the Eastern Academy building while a brand new Eastern Christian High School would be constructed (the name Eastern Academy was to be retired).

John Hamersma, who died of a heart attack in 1963 at the annual meeting where he presided, provided an apt summary of the EC philosophy in a 1952 brochure unveiling the specific plans for the new high school. He listed six requirements for "an acceptable" Christian school system that look quite contemporary in 1992:

1. A competent, devoted, Christian teaching staff.
2. An enlightened and progressive educational policy.
3. Christian academic freedom.
4. A well-integrated organizational and administrative machinery.
5. Adequate physical facilities.
6. An enthusiastic and sacrificing society membership.

The high school planners could have acquired the present site of William Paterson College for \$200,000 but settled upon a handsome 27-acre property on Oakwood Avenue in North Haledon, purchased for \$55,000. The new high school building, which cost \$500,000 opened in 1954. By this point the six-school system consisted of fifty faculty and 1,495 pupils. The enrollment went even higher for a time but later fell again due to declining birth rates, family mobility and rising cost, among other factors.

Meanwhile, residence patterns of the Christian Reformed families, still the heart of the enrollment, were shifting. A 1957 survey showed that the towns sending the most students were, in order: Prospect Park, Wyckoff, Midland Park, Hawthorne, North Haledon, and Clifton. The one-time core city, Paterson, had slipped to seventh place and Passaic students numbered a mere two dozen. Busing was being used to send students from Wyckoff and North Haledon into Paterson. Clearly changes were in the offing.

In 1959, the EC association constructed the Wyckoff Christian School to replace the Riverside School of Paterson, which remained open for a time thereafter to handle overflow from North Fourth Street. In 1966, a new Midland Park Christian School was opened, replacing the old Maltbie Avenue building. That same year,

expansion at the high school provided a library and several additional classrooms. Eventually the North Fourth Street School and Passaic schools were also closed.

EC supporters were instrumental in forming the Evangelical Committee for Urban Ministries in Paterson in 1971 to raise scholarship money for minority youths to attend EC schools. In 1976 this organization founded the Dawn Treader school in downtown Paterson, which is independent of the EC system but sends many of its graduates to the middle and high schools. (The EC system, it should be noted, maintains a steadfast policy of non-discrimination in regard to race, color or national origin.) Meanwhile, in 1973 EC launched its pre-kindergarten program, which provided not only a service to parents but a means of recruitment.

The latest phase of EC's history was a realignment necessitated by the aging junior high school building and its severe maintenance and fire safety problems. In 1988, a new wing was completed at the Midland Park building, consisting of 6,940 square feet at a cost of \$600,000 adding seven classrooms for a total of nineteen, as well as other facilities. The second step, expansion of the Wyckoff school, becomes possible through an \$1.8 million bond sale approved by association parents in September 1992. When this construction project is completed, the preschool will meet at Faith Community Church, kindergarten through grade 4 at Midland Park, and the middle school (grades 5-8) at Wyckoff, with 9-12 continuing at the high school.

In its 1992-93 centennial year, the three-building EC system has an enrollment of 923 and operates on a budget of just under \$4 million. Full-day tuition ranged from \$3,650 to \$4,800 depending on grade level, with discounts for families with more than

one child enrolled. In essence, all students receive financial aid, since tuition income covers only 64 percent of the operating budget. The remainder comes from the annual fund (16 percent), transportation reimbursements (9 percent), fund-raising (3 percent), endowment income (3 percent), church Booster Club projects (2 percent) and miscellaneous (3 percent). Some \$270,000 was allocated for the Tuition Assistance Program for those unable to provide full payment, in line with the systems's goal of making Christian education available to all regardless of ability to pay.

The earlier generations would probably be amazed to visit the EC schools of today. They would observe computer instruction in all grades, a language arts curriculum that features strong emphasis on writing, comprehensive remedial instruction, trained specialist in learning disabilities and speech, training in English as a second language (not for Dutch-speakers this time around), elementary music applying the Kodaly and Suzuki systems, advanced algebra for top middle school pupils, performances of dramas and musical comedies, competitive high school teams in six sports for boys and seven for girls, a refurbished physics laboratory, and a complete range of music groups including a high school jazz band.

Yet man cannot live by bread—or algebra or Kodaly—alone. Our forbearers' vision is still reflected in the fact that devotions and chapel remain a regular part of school life, and that each high school senior is required to fulfill a personal "Faith in Action" project. The school system sets these ever-challenging goals for all of its students:

- To recognize Jesus Christ as their Savior, and more and more make Him the Lord of their lives.
- To know the Bible thoroughly and

have a firm grasp on the essential teachings of Scripture.

- To practice serving others and putting others' welfare first.
- To develop a keen moral sense in personal and public matters.
- To develop the ability to analyze, to examine facts, evaluate assumptions, and make decisions from a Christian perspective.

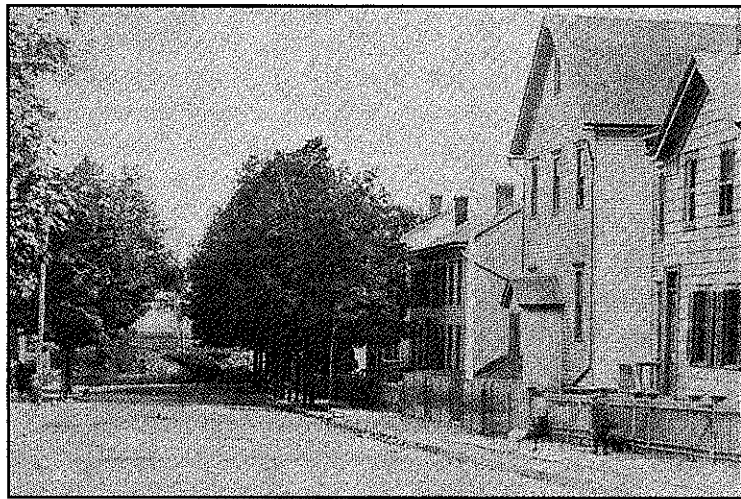
The faculty sets goals for itself as well as the students. These include the creation of a Christian community "where the love of Jesus Christ is radically evident," and where faculty takes responsibility for "modeling Christian thinking and living for God's kingdom over all of life."

The consistency of spiritual purpose of these distinct schools, through bad times and good, often in contrast with the values of secular society, shines forth clearly across a century. We can say of innumerable past teachers, staff members, administrators, board and committee members, parents, students, supporting pastors and congregants, that they built well, and better than they knew. §

Lay Leaders

In the oral tradition of the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches, laymen, especially elders, often gained prominence for their grasp of theological issues and/or pastoral skills. Their careers were marked by repeated elections to local consistories, by frequent selection for participation in classical and synodical gatherings, and, in rural areas where ordained pastors were in short supply, by occupying pulpits as liturgists and sermon readers. Stalwarts of this sort could be found in almost every congregation,

foundation for many achievements in Dutch ethnic history. Henry Spoelhof, author of *A Brief History of Classis Hackensack*, joined others to establish a significant historical archive for the eastern segment of the CRC. Dr. Peter Berkhout, a physician and theological-school graduate, was not intimidated by preachers, professors, or authors and debated regularly with Banner editors, authors such as historian Albert Hyma, and local pastors. Sytze Greydanus, an architect, provided leadership in both the church and



Amity Street Christian School—later North Fourth Street Christian School.

Christian-school movement. His vision for both reached well beyond their achievements.

An immigrant from Witmarsum, Friesland, S.E. Greydanus (1883-1964) came to the United States with his parents in 1893 and attended the

and some of them were well-known throughout whole denominations.

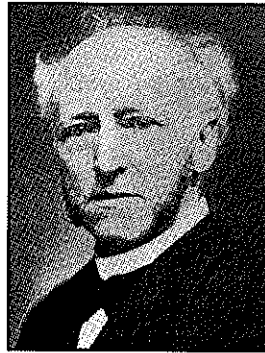
On the east coast, in the Paterson area, several lay leaders — Y.C. Spyksma, Henry Spoelhof, Dr. Peter Berkhout, and Sytze Greydanus — come readily to mind. Long before Apple computers and Bill Gates were conceived, Y.C. Spyksma discovered and transcribed the lists of Dutch immigrants which have become a

North Fourth Street Christian School for just one year. In 1942 he recalled,

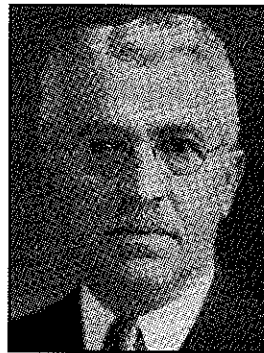
In those days we did not graduate, we simply got a job and quit, as I also did when I was eleven years. However, the principal, Mr. Peters, at that time, gave me books along for home study and occasionally I went to see him and he would give me tests. Later I attended evening classes with Mr. Steging. [Eventually] I became a board member for



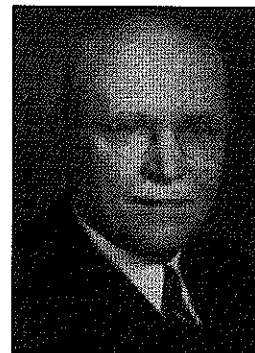
Rev. P. Van Vlaanderen



Rev. K. Van Goor



J. Van Vlaanderen



L. Steen



S.E. Greydanus

Founders and stalwarts of the Christian school movement in the Paterson area. Photos from Fiftieth Anniversary of North Fourth Street Christian School, 1892-1942.

the North Fourth Street School and I had the honor to be president of that board for four years.

The Greydanus family was among the large number of Abraham Kuyper's followers who left Friesland in the last century and, quite typically, supported the Christian school movement vigorously. Sytze wrote,

It was in the early part of 1893 that my parents and I arrived in Paterson, New Jersey. Immediately my parents made inquiry as to a Christian school. Yes, there was one on Amity Street. And, although we lived in Totowa with a public school practically next door, my parents sent me to the Christian school on Amity Street. It was a

long walk to and from school each day and the pump on North Main Street was a welcome refreshment point on those walks.

Speaking to the North Fourth Street Christian School Society on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee (October 21, 1942), Mr. Greydanus reconstructed aspects of the school's less formal activities — events missing from official minutes — for example, the excavation of a subterranean room that existed for a few weeks in the Amity Street school basement:

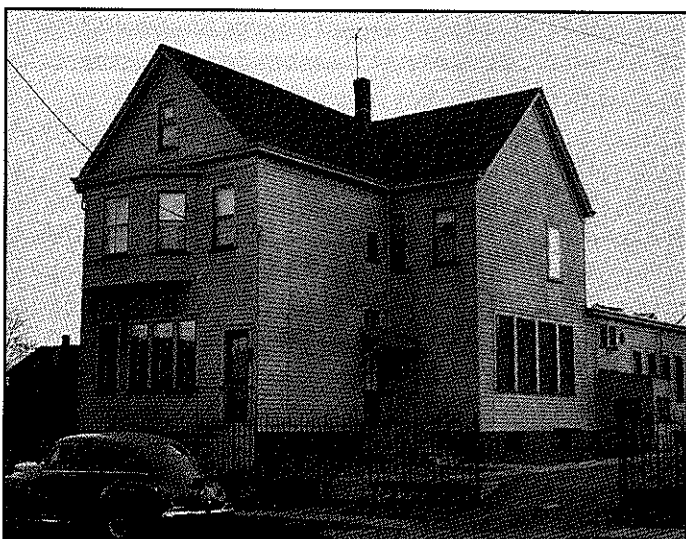
In those days concrete was not . . . used very much and the basement floors in all buildings were dirt. When the weather was bad we played in the basement which was not very large and we had no privacy. So the boys conceived the idea to construct a room below the basement for their use and to give them some privacy. All those who helped to dig and build it could make use of it. It was a busy time. All kinds of tools, boards and pieces of tin were used to move the dirt and finally it was complete.

Lined with paper, covered with boards and pieces of tin and dirt with a trap door for an entrance and a candle for light. All went well until one recess the teacher, who had been tipped off by one who had not worked but still wanted to use it, stuck his head through the trap door. The whole thing had to be restored to its former condition and the subterranean room was a thing of the past.

Incidentally, this schoolyard prank foreshadowed Sytze's career as a licensed architect, civil engineer, and surveyor—professional positions he achieved by attending evening classes at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute while working in New York City. Writing about this period (1910-1919) Frances Greydanus recalls,

He would leave home early in the morning, walking to the railroad station about a mile away. Before leaving he lit the fire and got coal for the day's use. After work he attended evening classes . . . and arrived home at midnight.

Pietje Minnema married Sytze in 1910 and mothered their growing family (eventually ten children) with but little assistance until 1919, when Sytze established his own business in Paterson. Thereafter he focused more of his attention on the institutions which related directly to his family



Riverside Christian School.

and the cultural fibers of the ethnic community. "For many years," Frances wrote, "he accompanied the singing of the Young Men's Society on a reed organ He was also instrumental in organizing the [English language] Bethel Church and was an elder there for many years. He was active on the local Christian school board" and as Sytze indicated in his 1942 Golden Jubilee speech, he regarded Christian education "a privilege and necessity" on the local, regional, and national levels. §

Sam Remembers Sytze

Sam Greydanus

It has always been clear to me that my father, Sytze, stood out as being somewhat different among Paterson's Dutch Christian Reformed people. For example, he worked in the urban secular world of New York, but all his domestic and religious activities were concentrated in Paterson. Most other kids had parents who worked and worshiped within their own neighborhoods. In Paterson's factories and dye houses they associated primarily with other Dutch people, but my father lived in two worlds.

He worked first as a draftsman for the Erie Railroad in New York and later as a civil engineer with New York's urban transit authority. When he established his own business in Paterson, most of his clients were people from outside of the Dutch community—Jewish lawyers, Irish and Italian construction companies. As borough engineer he dealt with road-construction companies from outside the Dutch community. I remember sitting in the governor's office of New Jersey while my father talked to the governor about funds for roads in our borough.

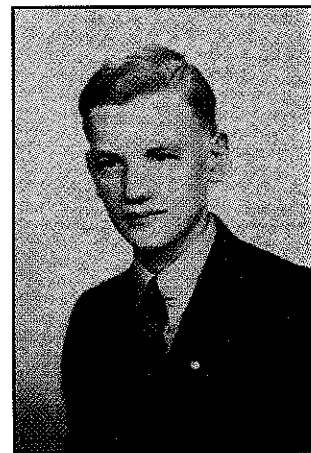
Ironically, these contacts made him a little suspect in the Christian Reformed community as far as business was concerned. An architect? Who needs one? Any carpenter worth his salt, they said, could draw up a plan. What does Sytze actually do for those people for whom he works? During the Great Depression he was appointed as district engineer for the WPA to survey and construct parks, ball fields, and other recreational sites. But not

many Dutch people worked in the WPA, so once again his work world had few links with other parts of his life.

As a churchman, however, he was highly regarded and was a regular delegate to Christian Reformed synodical gatherings—1924, 1928, and 1932. His remarks about the 1924 synod (which attempted to settle the common-grace issue and resulted in the establishment of the Protestant Reformed Church) were that it was largely a matter of strong personalities. The separation was not necessary. He remembered Herman Hoeksema pointing to Clarence Bouma and saying, "I want to debate that man!"

My father also thought that the problems in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands were driven by strong and conflicting personalities. "These brothers," he said, "could have come to an agreement." And one of the leading disputants in the 1944 Free Reformed secession was Sytze's brother, Professor Dr. Seakle Greidanus.

On one occasion in the late 1920s when Seakle came to New Jersey on a lecture tour, he stayed with us. His wife placed her shoes outside the



Samuel E. Greydanus, 1941.

bedroom door to have them polished. The next morning, according to my oldest brother, my father informed her in Frisian that in America people polished their own shoes.

When Professor Schilder came to the United States in 1938-1939, he also stayed at our house. I remember that when he returned from preaching at Bethel CRC he was dripping with sweat, and my mother had to wash his long underwear after dinner. My father helped my mother wash the dishes, and Professor Schilder was amazed. My father said curtly, "In America we don't have servants."

The only real Netherlandic interest that my father maintained was theological. He kept up his contacts with his brother Seakle, but he had no interest in visiting the Netherlands. He was irritated by the class system in Holland and talked disparagingly of the Dutch penchant to regard a person's stand (social position) with deference.

We had many guests at our house because of my father's involvement in the church and the Christian school movement. One of the guests, a director of the National Union of Christian Schools, stayed at our house whenever he was in town. We liked him, but he had horrible table manners—chewing noisily with his mouth open, squishing food, and picking his teeth. Whenever the man came, father warned us about laughing at him during the meal. We (all six of us) held in our laughter until he said something funny, and then we exploded.

During the twenties and thirties a group of men who called themselves the Calvin Forum met regularly, and I recall that my father created some disagreement in 1939 when he read a paper to them which advocated that women be allowed to vote at congregational meetings. That group was also interested in starting a Christian

university in the East. I remember in the late 1930s traveling in a long black Packard with six cigar-smoking men to examine a large estate near Philadelphia as a possible site for a Christian university. After World War II, when I returned to Paterson, I asked my father, "Whatever happened to the idea of a university out East?" He gave me the same answer I had heard with regard to other great ideas. "It was that Grand Rapids crowd that killed it. They want everything to stay there—that Jellema, Bouma, and others."

Father was not comfortable making small talk, and therefore he was to some extent isolated. But he did enjoy Sunday-evening discussions in the houses of several friends. The women visited in one room while the men gathered separately to talk and smoke cigars and pipes. The topics which engaged them—supra- and infra-lapsarianism, for example—may seem irrelevant today, but their discussions were lively and heated.

Reading, both in Dutch and English, took up much of father's time. He read everything except novels, which he regarded as a waste of time. Eight years before his death at eighty-one years he became blind. But that didn't stop his "reading." Everyone helped by reading to him, and I taped articles from journals like *Christianity Today* and even the whole of Bavinck's book *Our Reasonable Faith*. He also ordered books on tape circulated by the Library of Congress, and through that service he was finally induced to "read" novels.

Sytze was a Frisian and part of a vigorously self-conscious Frisian subculture in New Jersey (see A. Galema's *Frisians to America, 1880-1914, With the Baggage of the Fatherland*, reviewed in *Origins* on pp.33-36). He, Y.C. Spykma, and others were convinced that, for the most part, Frisians were natural leaders. In the 1940s, when Frances

Greydanus complained about the crude behavior of some Frisians (she was teaching in Bellflower, California), Sytze wrote,

Now about the Frisians. There are among them some, as among all other people, who are loud, dumb, and ignorant. You find such people among the Hollanders, English, Americans, etc. But you never judge all of them by these few. I believe that these people, if they are as described, come from one section, if you have a chance find out the section in Friesland that they come from, that may explain their behavior. You need not worry about the Frisians. If you check up on the leadership in the Christian Reformed Church you will find that the majority are Frisians. Also the movement for Christian schools are mostly Frisians. Further, if you had the resources to check on it, you would find that many of the leading men in the Reformed Church of the Netherlands, [G.K.N.,] are Frisians. The majority of the professors employed at our seminary are also Frisian, so you are not standing alone. §

Bill Hiemstra's Teachers (1920-1926)

Rev. William L. Hiemstra, Pine Rest Christian Hospital chaplain for many years, recalls precisely a number of his Pine Street Christian



Bill Hiemstra

School teachers (1920-1926). Some of these — Margaret Borduin, David Wondergem, and George Bos in particular — will be well remembered by others who attended the Paterson-area schools.

Rosa Prins

only older people called her “Rosie” — was my first teacher in first grade



Second Grade Class, 1922.

on the first floor of the two-story brick school where we first met in September 1920. She was a rather large lady with large glasses; her long brown hair was held on top of her head with large combs. She could smile demurely but still commanded respect. In later life Miss Prins married John Vander Plaat, a pleasant undertaker from 7 Passaic Street, Garfield; he had a big white mustache but was quite bald.

In late October Miss Prins made many small, individual pies for the children. Using both hands, I carefully carried my pie home, walking two and a half blocks over crooked flagstones, first along Pine Street, then down Burgess Place, past Federal Street, across busy Main Avenue, which was used by trolley-cars, horses and wagons, and a few cars. My grandmother insisted that I eat the pie myself since it was mine, even though

I very sincerely offered it to her first. How strange that a little pie should be so big in 1997!

Margaret Borduin

taught grades two and three. She wore white blouses with eyelet and embroidery. A white glove always covered her left hand because she had a wooden left arm and hand. She made birthdays special: your initials in colored chalk remained on the blackboard for two whole days. You also got first turn in playing initial tag where it was socially acceptable among peers for boys to write girls' initials and vice versa.

Miss Borduin lived with her sister and brother-in-law, Jake Vander Valk, a late convert with a bold witness, humbly serving as a “sandwich man” advertiser for the Star of Hope Mission in downtown Paterson. He later opened Jake's Coffee Pot just below Prospect Park. Miss Borduin was the aunt of Bessie Vander Valk, a pioneer missionary to Cuba who courageously went there alone as a single person because she sensed a great need before the churches did.

David Wondergem

taught grade four. He came from the metropolis of Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He was single and boarded on Hadley Avenue. He also coached me in my speech, “When Pa Is Sick,” for a school program at St. Peter's Hall in Clifton. Sick in my own stomach, I survived the ordeal. Thirty years later Mr. Wondergem heard me preach at Second Christian Reformed Church of Prospect Park and was surprised that a nervous boy could improve so much.

Agnes Cole

my fifth- and sixth-grade teacher kept her hair in a bun or puff over each ear. Pleasant, mild-mannered, and soft-spoken, she conscientiously followed her chosen calling to serve God as a



North Fourth Street Christian School teachers, 1940.

Back row, left to right: Gerrit Dykstra, Margaret Borduin, Annette Bouma (Mrs. Morris now), Radia Spoelhof, Elsie Frieswyk, Frances Greydanus, Principal Gerhardus Bos.

Front row: Gertrude Van Melle, Lena Walkotten (Mrs. Van Hoff), Martha Van Dyk (Mrs. Frank Van Hof), Agnes Bush (Mrs. Pete Steenland), Dave Wondergem.

Christian-school teacher for life. Miss Cole lived with her sister and brother on Autumn Street near Lexington Avenue, one block from where the Memorial Day parade began. I had been there with my father and brother.

At the end of my fifth-grade school year my sixth-grade friend Dave Wynbeek helped me move Miss Cole's geranium plants from school to home. We used my express wagon, walking in the road because of crooked sidewalks called flagstones. We went by way of Pine Street, then Summer Street, turning left on Central Avenue after crossing the Erie railroad tracks, then going right on Autumn to six houses beyond Lexington. In 1952 Miss Cole recognized me at her church.

Wilhelmina Pontier

taught the seventh grade. She always seemed dignified, maybe because she wore pince-nez spectacles; her mannerisms included a swaying motion of the head. Her humor was too subtle for

naive boys and girls. Miss Pontier lived with her sister on Lexington Avenue near Clifton Avenue; both were faithful members of the Prospect Street church in Passaic. She was encouraging to a public-school neighbor boy who was a very good student from a very poor home. This impressed me, but I was also slightly jealous!

She was my teacher for only a few difficult weeks before my brother and I were transferred to Public School No. 12 in Clifton, New Jersey. We had moved from our grandparents' house on DeMott Avenue to Center Street with father and stepmother. Possibly Miss Pontier said little when I left; probably I didn't say goodbye to her either. Perhaps I was just one of her many pupils, and in life we all lose something as we move along.

George Bos

was the school principal who also taught eighth grade. Because he was slightly lame, he used a cane as he

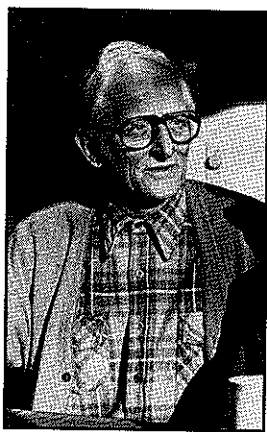
walked up Burgess Place to Paulison Avenue, most often wearing a gray suit and gray felt hat. Living with pain, he was serious, never frivolous. A good educator, he arranged for trips to museums, always concerned that pupils' behavior be very good so that people would see that Christ makes a difference, even in the behavior of young Christian-school students.

I saw Mr. Bos about transfers for my brother Arnold and me because there was a problem about tuition—either an unwillingness or inability to pay ninety cents a week. When asked by the principal about reasons for transfer, "My father said to get them," was all I could say, but our new stepmother may have been the reason. Could any of the adults involved ever have realized the trauma experienced by young boys uprooted from the only place they had ever known? ❧

The Aletheans

Henry Beversluis

As I remember, there were three “chapters” of Aletheans. They began in the forties and ran on into the sixties. The first group started in the late forties, and, mainly because of increasing membership, a second group organized, and still later a third. There



was, I believe, a total of thirty-five to forty men in these three groups. They met in homes by rotation and presented papers by rotation. The membership included

professional people—a couple of doctors, a couple of lawyers, a number of teachers, one or two principals, and a few clergy — and always a substantial number of questioning and informed nonprofessional laymen, the sort who in the past were the solid core of our Reformed people. The age range was from the twenties to the sixties.

Two of the major sources for the issues we discussed and two of our best stimulants were *The Reformed Journal*, and its counterpart *The Torch and Trumpet*, which appeared in the early fifties almost simultaneously with *The Reformed Journal*. These magazines regularly provided material for discussion by the Aletheans. The early numbers of *The Reformed Journal* were, in my opinion, a wonderful educational source of renewal for many people in the church, and I for one regret the change

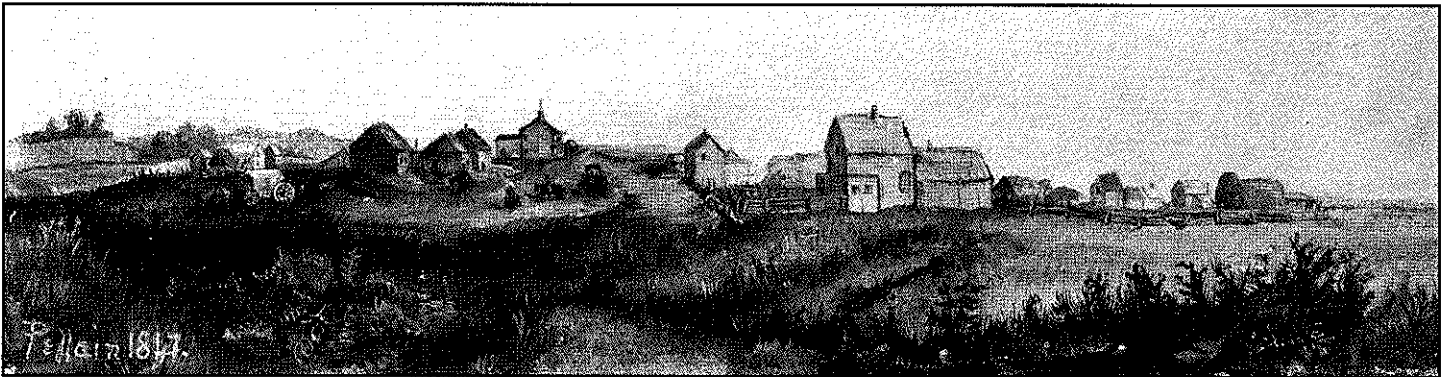
in and finally the demise of the magazine a few years ago.

We debated what were then frontier topics, and we kept each other alert and, I hope, honest. We tested the margins of orthodoxy, sometimes played with some delicious heresies — variations on what we thought were scholastic hardenings of formerly vital issues, some of which had disturbed the church since Reformation times. They were stimulating monthly meetings, and I would say that, when I left the East in 1966 to come to Calvin, there were no organizations in Grand Rapids comparable to the Aletheans — truth seekers. They were a great stimulus to our development — in which debate, disagreement, dissonance were prized and through which a Calvinist maturing was promoted. I am sure all former members remember these meetings with pleasure and gratitude.

Among those who participated I remember Peter Berkhout, MD, an extremely vital and interesting man, deeply concerned about theological and collateral cultural issues, and Bastian Kruithof, a teacher in Eastern Academy and later a minister in a nearby Reformed church, widely read and stimulating, a regular contributor in Alethean discussions. He combined a perceptive mastery of literature with probing theories about Christian culture. Lambert Petsinger was a public-relations man with a local firm and an imaginative leader in the church — a great layman. John Breur was an attorney, a strong lay leader in the RCA. John Hamersma was another attorney, who developed into the East's outstanding leader in Chris-

tian educational vision and development. Other members included J.R. Bos, principal of the high school, as well as a number of staff members: master teacher and social critic Cornelius Bontekoe; Milo Okkema, who started out as a teacher of secretarial subjects, but became an ardent champion of Christian liberal education; and Sidney Van Til, English teacher and all-around valuable faculty member. (He was a brother of Cornelius of Westminster Theological Seminary, whose ideas were current and in debate in the Christian Reformed Church at the time — and which we discussed frequently and sometimes too caustically to suit Sidney.) Arthur Frieling was one of my favorite members, a businessman and church leader debonair, tentative, but rock-solid when it was time to take a stand. Bill Hiemstra, poet, thespian, chaplain at the Christian Sanatorium and later at Pine Rest, was a lively member, bridging the two cultures of art and psychology. A small number of CRC clergy were also members, including Lew Smedes, George Stob, and Harold Dekker, who were members while they had churches in the East and were, of course, outstanding and stimulating members. Two more doctors, John Kingma and Wendell Rooks, humane and broad-minded psychiatrists at the Christian Sanatorium, were also members, as was Peter Steenland, a vigorous and thoughtful business person, and John Maliepaard while he was minister in the Hoboken Christian Reformed Church. There were many others whose names escape me.

Occasionally, when denominational leaders were in the area, we would recruit them to spend an evening with us. So it was with Henry Stob, Henry Zylstra, and William Harry Jellema, whose visits were suitably appreciated and celebrated. I think in a sense we reassured them that the Kuyperian vision and what they had taught us was alive and well in the East. §



Pella panorama, 1847.

Pella, Iowa: 150 Years

1847-1997

Pella, Iowa: Tulips in a Crumbled Castle

John Huizenga

In the plains of southeast Iowa, near the Des Moines River, Pella, the name of a small city, rings discordantly among neighboring place names such as Knoxville, Montezuma, Oskaloosa, and Monroe. While these names memorialize other cities, native people, and famous persons, Pella speaks of ancient history and refuge. In AD 67, Pella was a Palestinian place of refuge for a number of Christians who fled when Roman soldiers occupied Jerusalem and subjugated rebellious Jews.

But Pella does not usually highlight the historical significance of its name. During its annual Tulip Time celebrations, the emphasis is on its founder, Hendrik Peter Scholte, and his seven hundred compatriots. One learns then

that Scholte selected the name Pella in 1847 because he considered his colony to be a place of refuge for Dutch immigrants who believed they were escaping economic and religious oppression in the Netherlands.

Just as the Christians fled God's judgment on Jerusalem, Scholte followers fled the Netherlands, which was, they thought, ripe for God's judgment in 1845. Scholte wanted a decisive and complete separation from the doomed fatherland — an American colony in which all traces of Holland were banished, a new beginning. It is ironic, therefore, that Pella's current residents heartily celebrate the Netherlandic heritage which Scholte wanted to destroy. This curious paradox can be understood best by distinguishing Scholte and his vision from the inclinations of those who joined and followed him in Pella.

People wanted to leave the Netherlands for several reasons, one of which

was the persecution some Netherlanders faced after separating from the national church in 1834 — in a movement known as *De Afscheiding*. The government declared that the seceded church was illegal because the national policy of religious freedom applied only to denominations that existed in 1816, when the policy was adopted. Soldiers were sent to make life miserable for the seceders, disrupting worship services, occupying their farms, and demanding to be fed and housed. Some were unable to find employment because they had affiliated with the seceded churches.

By itself the persecution was not enough to assure emigration to America. The persecution lasted for only five years (1835-1840), and the people had little time to think of leaving amid all their troubles. Neither was the idea of emigration popular among the Dutch. For many Dutchmen, America seemed uncivilized, far away, and dreamlike, and those who left were often thought of as outcasts and exiles. Most people were inclined to endure the persecution, hoping for better times.

Meanwhile, news of wide-open space, freedom, and opportunities in America trickled back to the

John Huizenga, a Christian school teacher in Randolph, Wisconsin, wrote this article while in graduate school.

Netherlands in letters from friends and relatives who had gone there. Increasingly the New World became attractive to many of the poor in the Netherlands, especially after 1845, when the land was hit with repeated potato-crop failures and a cattle plague. The secessionists, with fresh memories of persecution and the prospect of becoming paupers, lost faith in their fatherland.

Associations were formed to help the emigrants in Utrecht, Arnhem, and Zeeland. These associations

were headed respectively by the Reverends Scholte, Van Raalte, and Van der Meulen, all of whom were secessionist ministers. The charters of the associations contained detailed regulations pertaining to such matters as membership, financial obligations, conduct aboard ship, method of choosing a settlement site, and the manner in which a new settlement would be administered during the formative years. As might be expected, nonbelievers and Catholics could not become members of the associations, but their charters were quite liberal in accepting non-seceding Protestants. Provisions were frequently made for transporting emigrants who had limited economic means, with the understanding that payment would occur at a later date on terms agreeable to all parties. Governing boards were established for solving problems that might arise before the emigrants left the Netherlands, and to supervise affairs en route and at the settlement site. A small, advance group was generally sent to prepare the way for the main party. It made inquiries and obtained information that would be helpful when the main body arrived.¹

Although Scholte helped organize the emigration, he had no intention of going to America. The religious reformers he admired, members of the Reveil, despised the idea of going to America because they considered it a wild and uncultured place. This view

dampened Scholte's enthusiasm to emigrate until the 1840s, when he began to disagree with his compatriots in the seceded church. Ultimately he was isolated by being ejected from the Christian Seceded Church. He could no longer return to the national church, and apart from his own parishioners he had few allies among the leaders of the secession. That situation, coupled with the era's economic hardships, changed Scholte's view of emigration.

He had always been ready to consider emigration if certain specified conditions existed in Holland, and when some members of his own congregation began to leave, he found the necessary motivation to lead all of them to the New World. Scholte predicted that religious and moral conditions would become worse in Holland and that God would soon visit the Netherlands with judgment. With that he was ready to leave. He destroyed the bridges behind him and marched forward with Pella in his eyes.

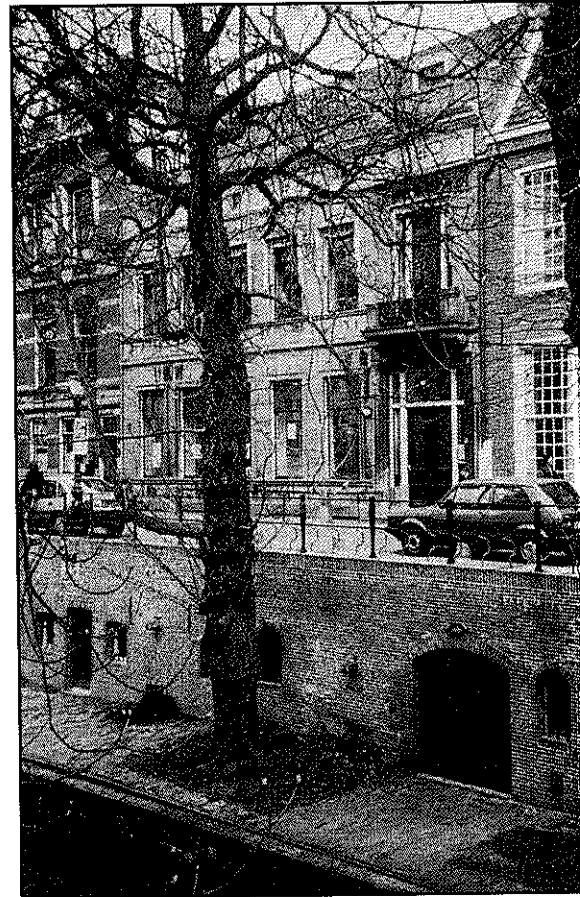
Confident that he should leave the Netherlands, Scholte worked together with Van Raalte and Van der Meulen to make plans for departure. They decided that North America was the place "where they sought to establish a 'Pella,' a land where they could establish a free school alongside a free church."² Meetings were arranged to stir up interest among those who wished to emigrate and to prepare for the journey.

It is noteworthy that the leaders specified "a free school alongside a free church" as grounds for leaving. In large measure the leaders were spiritually

motivated, but Scholte made it clear that he was also motivated by social, economic, and political factors. He wrote, "The reason of emigrations was principally the conviction that the social conditions in the old country were such that there was no opportunity for the honest poor."³ His refuge was not only to be a spiritual refuge but also a refuge from social, economic, and political evils.

During the time of preparation, two schools of thought formed over the question of where to settle in America. Scholte favored Iowa, and Van Raalte favored Wisconsin. After Van Raalte selected Michigan in 1846, it would have been sensible for Scholte to join the Van Raalte group. But

Scholte was above all else an individualist and would have found it



The home of Dominie Scholte on the canal called Nieuwegracht in Utrecht, as it appears today. It was from this home the family left for America.

difficult to play a role that was subsidiary to another person, which might have been the case had he located in Michigan. He also opposed the idea of transporting a Dutch church to the new land, whereas Van Raalte envisioned a church that would adhere strongly to the religious traditions and practices of the Netherlands. Furthermore, Van Raalte was interested in establishing a kind of theocratic society in which the church would play an important role in the government—an idea that Scholte abhorred.⁴

Scholte wanted a refuge from traditionalism. This was clearly evident in advertisements for interested emigrants. He wanted those who would be attracted to a congregationalist, not Reformed, church government. Society members must “consider themselves bound in truth by the revealed Word of God, in such a way that they will agree most nearly with the Congregationalist.”⁵ He did not want to be bothered by the other leaders, and that fact accounts in part for Pella’s unique and distant location from other Dutch settlements.

On October 2, 1846, Scholte sent a scouting party of eight families before the main body. They arrived at New York on November 19, and from there

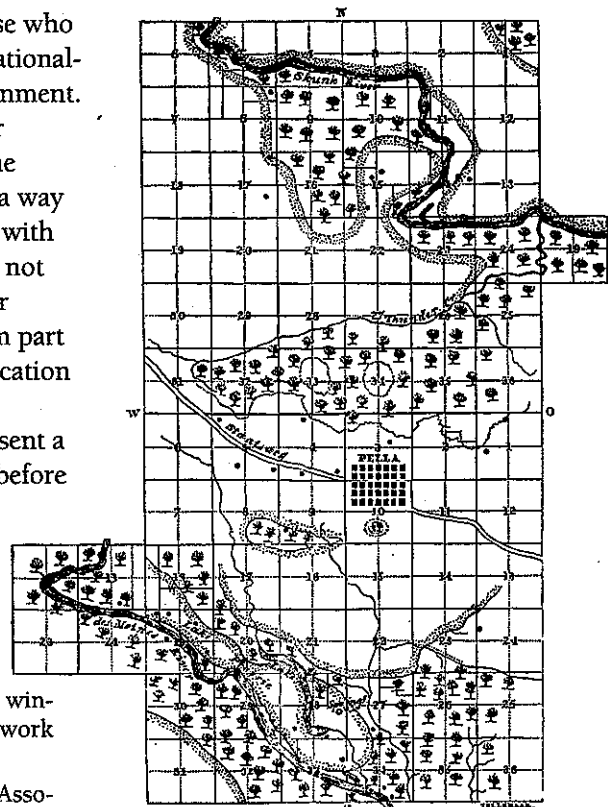
a steamboat brought them up the Mississippi River as far as St. Louis, where they went into winter quarters, finding whatever work they could.

The main body of the Utrecht Association departed in the following spring in four sailing vessels expressly chartered for the purpose. Carrying about eight hundred emigrants and loaded with household goods and farm machinery, these vessels arrived in Baltimore in late May and early June . . .

Scholte, who, with his family, made the crossing by steamship, arrived a few weeks before the main body of immigrants. While awaiting their appearance, he visited New York,

Albany, and Washington to secure information on possible settlement sites. Upon hearing of the arrival of his followers, he immediately went to Baltimore and soon had them on their way west. After three weeks of travel by rail, canal boat, mountain car, and steamboat, the main body joined the vanguard group at St. Louis. Here they remained while a committee of five land-seekers, headed by Scholte, searched for a settlement site.⁶

By now Scholte had found a number of more objective reasons to support his subjective reasons for settling in Iowa. He argued practically



that the Michigan colony was too far north, lacked good roads, and was too distant from other white settlements. He especially criticized it for being forested; it was too much work to cut down all the trees and clear out the stumps. Scholte had no experience with clearing trees or even with farming, for that matter, but his

arguments made sense, and they also supported his dream. They eventually proved to be true.

Through connections with a Baptist preacher, Scholte learned about some desirable land, only slightly inhabited, in Marion County, in southeastern Iowa. After investigating this region on July 29, 1847, he and his committee decided the location and soil were good, and proceeded to purchase over eighteen thousand acres of government land and partially developed farms. Shortly thereafter, most of the immigrants who had been waiting at St. Louis departed for their new home.⁷

Because Scholte had purchased whatever houses and crops happened to be on the land, the Pella settlers were better off than the Michigan colonies, but they still faced a great deal of work breaking the sod and preparing for winter.

While the settlers were taking care of their own business, Scholte was working to mold the community into his idea of a Pella. Noteworthy are the street names he wanted. Symbolic of their sole allegiance to America, the streets include such names as Columbus, Washington, Franklin, Liberty, Union, Independence, and Peace. Symbolic of the spirit of Pella, the avenues include such names as Entrance, Inquiry, Perseverance, Confidence, Expectation and Accomplishment.⁸ On September 17, 1857, Scholte and about two hundred of his followers became US citizens, and vowed to eschew all allegiance to foreign powers and pledging their allegiance to America. He did not want Pella “to be the church, but [rather] the world, in which God’s people would be found, together with unbelievers. . . . He wanted the town to be a decent habitation but not a new Jerusalem.”

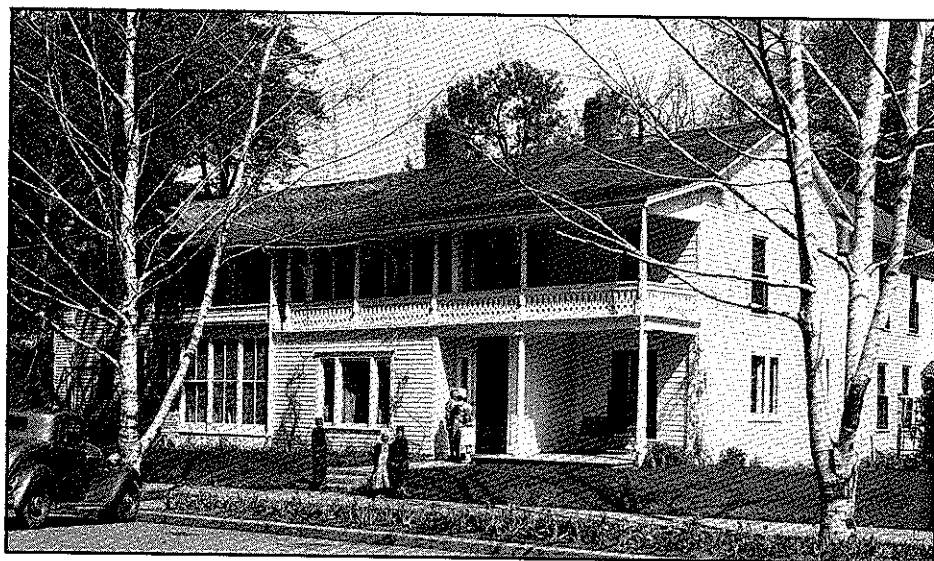
The congregation that was formed within Pella also reflects Scholte’s ecclesiastical independence.

Article 2 of the constitution reads,

All those who confess for themselves to believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and do not contradict this confession in their actions, can be accepted and recognized as members of the congregation and shall share in the privileges and duties of the congregation. The women shall only be excluded from discussion and voting about public matters, except in cases of recognized necessity.⁹

Within this congregation the elders were all allowed to preach. Scholte preached sometimes but was generally so occupied with other things that he did not have time. He was involved deeply in politics to such an extent that he gave a nominating speech at the convention which nominated Abraham Lincoln.

His church, however, was not happy with Scholte's political activi-



Scholte family home in Pella.

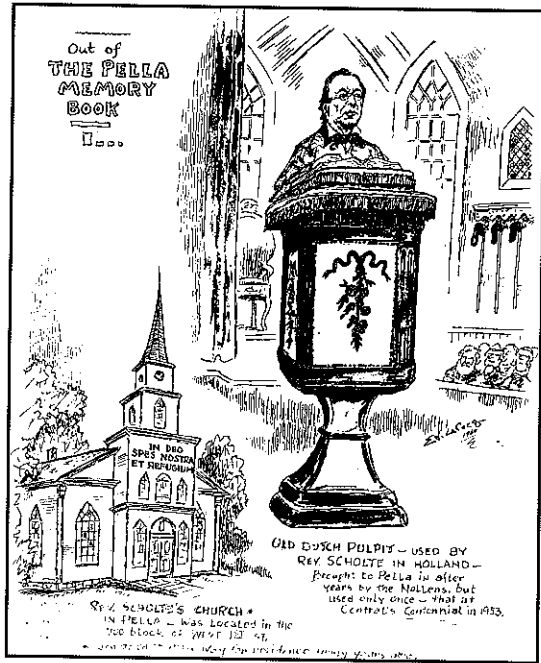
sive financial dealings. Scholte paid little attention, and eventually his congregation told him to give an account of his finances and preach more or else be dismissed from the church. Scholte agreed to preach once a Sunday.

But that was not the end of the problems. The congregation was still upset with Scholte's haphazard involvement and financial dealings with the people and the church. In addition, some did not like the mixed marriages that were taking place in the church and were dissatisfied with the inadequate preaching of some of the elders. Finally, in 1854, the congregation forbade fellowship with Scholte and took him to court over financial matters.

Thereafter Scholte established his own church with his adherents, but it disbanded a year after his death, which put an end to Scholte's Pella. From then on the community developed like most other settlements. On September 9, 1858, the original Scholte congrega-

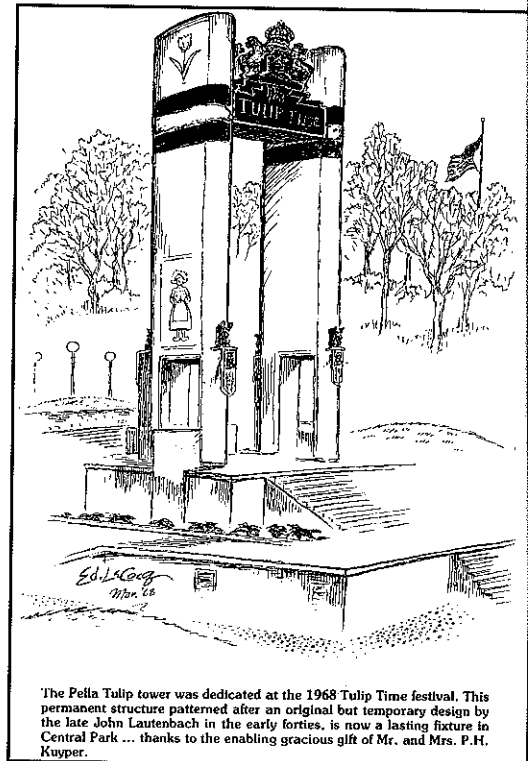
tion united with the church in Holland, Michigan, to become the *Protestantsche Gereformeerde Hollandsch Gemeente te Pella*.

Scholte's dream was shattered. Instead of producing a community free from its Dutch heritage, he produced a community that today competes with the tulip festivals in Michigan,



Scholte sketch by Ed. LeCocq in *Pella: A Collection of Historical Sketches*.

ties. His increasing lack of attention to the church, especially in the preaching, caused problems. The congregation wanted him to preach more and to disentangle himself from his exten-



The Pella Tulip tower was dedicated at the 1968 Tulip Time festival. This permanent structure patterned after an original but temporary design by the late John Lautenbach in the early forties, is now a lasting fixture in Central Park ... thanks to the enabling gracious gift of Mr. and Mrs. P.H. Kuiper.

Tulip Time Tower, by Ed. LeCocq in *Pella: A Collection of Historical Sketches*.

Wisconsin, and elsewhere. Today few except historians and local museum guides are even aware of the ideals and dreams which account for the naming of Pella. Nevertheless, the faith of those who were led to Pella continues in a thriving Reformed community — a place populated by some 10,000 residents with predominantly Netherlandic names and backgrounds. §

Endnotes

1. De Jong 135-36.
2. Versteeg II.
3. Oostendorp 150.
4. De Jong 140.
5. Oostendorp 153.
6. De Jong 139.
7. De Jong 141.
8. Leonora Scholte 42-43.
9. Oostendorp 165.

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Solving a Problem Like Mareah

Muriel Byers Kooi

Mareah Krantz, Rev. H.P. Scholte's second and much younger wife, was neither a typical pastor's wife nor a frontier settler. She was a problem, if not for Scholte, then certainly for Pella. And unlike Maria



Mareah.

in the Sound of Music, Scholte's Mareah was a problem never solved.

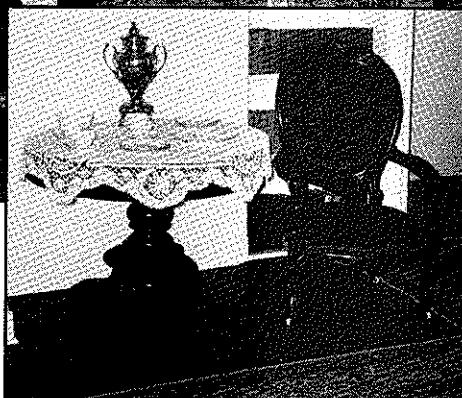
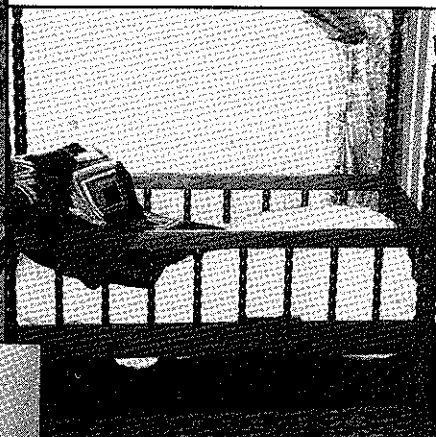
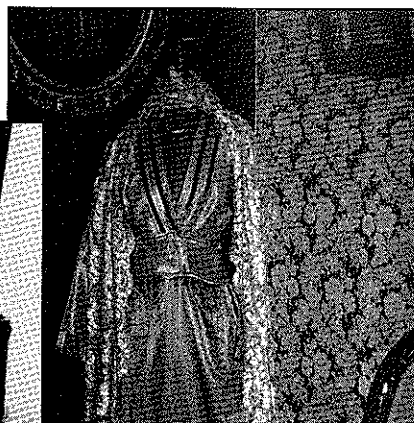
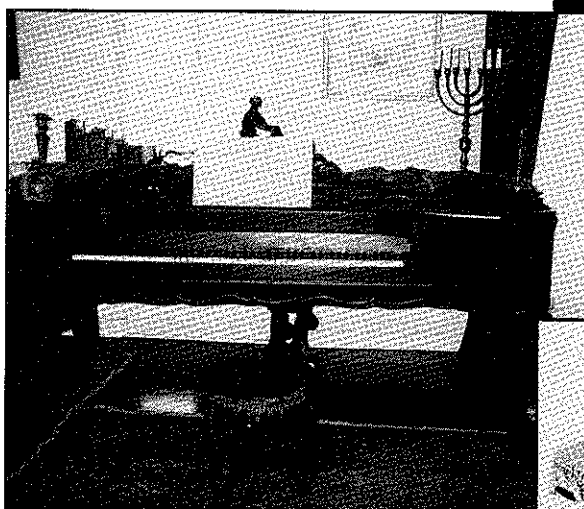
Very reluctantly she accompanied her husband to Pella as a most recalcitrant pioneer woman. This of course did not go unnoticed, and, human nature being what it is, the beautiful Mareah became the topic of many conversations among the Dutch settlers.

The meeting and courtship of Hendrik and Mareah arose from a curious chain of events. Mareah was studying at a girls' school in Paris, where her father was teaching

astronomy while her mother tended her own bedridden mother in Maastricht. Enter Dominie Scholte, recently widowed and preaching with a charisma which Mother Krantz found assuring. Father Krantz, having completed his two-year stint in Paris, came home with Mareah. Mother urged Mareah to accompany her to hear the exceptional Scholte. Although Mareah was said to have little interest in religion, she agreed to attend the service, was converted, and soon thereafter was courted by the minister. After a June wedding in 1845, the three Scholte daughters had a new mother, who, blissfully ignorant of her impending emigration, settled into a comfortable domestic routine.

Although Mareah surely heard discussions about the emigration, Scholte had not made her aware of his specific plans, and she had no opportunity to imagine herself as an emigrant. She was happily pregnant and did not realize the implications of leaving on the venture. It was only after her son was born that a servant burst into her rooms to announce excitedly that the Dominie and all of them were going to America. Mareah became emotionally distraught. On the third day of its life, the tiny baby died, leaving Mareah in a state of depression. She was ill for a long time. The October departure Scholte had planned was put on hold until spring.

Father Krantz, now a member of the Utrecht congregation of Seceders, was adamant that Scholte would not take his Mareah to the new location across the ocean. One argument led to



Mareah's gown and furnishings from the Scholte house.

another until Scholte refused to allow his father-in-law in his home. The problem was brought before the consistory, where both Krantz and Scholte were interviewed, but no reconciliation ensued.

Mrs. Krantz had conceded to having her daughter accompany Scholte, who was, after all, her husband. She even suggested that a younger sister, Hubertina, go along as a companion. The parents might also have emigrated, but Mrs. Krantz was obligated to care for her ailing mother.

Mareah was never able to talk about the sad departure without crying. She and her father had been especially close. Ironically, although the Scholtes were very well-to-do, neither ever returned to their homeland.

Seasickness and homesickness plagued Mareah on the steamer on which the Scholtes sailed ahead of the four sailing vessels carrying the main body of emigrants. Hubertina blithely enjoyed the voyage and during the twelve-day passage was wooed and won by a young German passenger. Eventually, Scholte married the couple, and they set up housekeeping in St. Louis, leaving Mareah without her sister's companionship.

Initially, in the East, Mareah thought America to be a beautiful place. The two sisters enjoyed singing for Dutch Reformed congregations, and they became rather sensational entertainers in New York's New Knickerbocker Hotel, where they lived for a time. Leonora Scholte wrote in *A Stranger in a Strange Land* (p. 35),

It was a grand hotel for that day, and after a few days' rest Mareah was again her brilliant self. She would play the piano in the hotel parlor, and often she and her sister would sing the French and German songs they remembered. Her sister had a beautiful contralto voice, while Mareah sang soprano. Crowds would soon gather, cheering them and begging for more songs. What a sensation they cre-

ated, these girls with rosy cheeks, lovely complexions, black hair and lace caps. They spoke only very broken English, but it mattered not, for New York had many Hollanders who spoke French, German or Dutch.

Understandably, the reluctant pioneer was shocked to see Pella, her husband's dream. It was little more than a patch of trampled prairie gra-



The four Scholte grandchildren, 1907. Left to right: Miss Bess Scholte Gaass, Miss May Keables Smith, Miss Sarah Nollen, and Mrs. Marie Bousquet-Wills.

with a dilapidated log cabin, her new home. This woman of culture and refinement found the situation almo-

impossible. As a result, the Dominie had a problem . . . with Mareah!

Gradually a new home, an enormous structure, was built near the log cabin in the new town, and Mareah enjoyed filling the rooms with fashionable furnishings shipped from St. Louis to augment the items brought from the Netherlands. She dressed in the latest Parisian fashions. Once she was the concern of the church's consistory, who told Scholte they felt it was not right for a minister of the gospel to have such a beautiful wife. Scholte said, tongue-in-cheek, "Shall I poison her or drown her?" The staid elders got the point and left. Mareah, they ascertained, was not a typical *juffrouw*.

In her own domain, as a musician and artist, Mareah was able to persevere. There were the three stepdaughters to raise as well as her own two sons and daughter. Several babies died. In 1868, after twenty-one years in *de kolonie*, Mareah grieved at Dominie Scholte's death.

Scholte always regretted that his zeal to come to America had sometimes crushed his wife's spirit. The memory of leading Mareah to that little rustic log cabin always haunted him. Old hurts healed, but he could never forgive himself. If Mareah was a problem, the devoted Dominie didn't feel he had solved it. She was, as she herself said, "a stranger in a strange land." ♣

Pella in 1855

H.J. Brinks

T Van Veenschooten, who immigrated in 1855, penned a lengthy account of his travels to Iowa together with a detailed description of his new home. Aalbert Van Schothorst, who received the letter in Hengelo, Gelderland, answered his correspondent with a barrage of questions. Segments from both of these letters follow.

To reach Burlington, Iowa, from

New York's harbor the Van Veenschooten party was aboard trains for seven days. Describing the last leg of their trip and his first

impressions of Pella Van Veenschooten wrote the following:

I hired a carriage for forty dollars, and we started the next morning, and after a ride of three and one-half days we arrived at the town Pella on Saturday afternoon, the 29th of September, all fresh and healthy. We obtained lodging in a carpenter's barn, as houses are very hard to get. On the next day I went to van den Pol, who is married to a daughter of van Beek, in Bennekom (near Ede, Gelderland). I had a letter from the wife's family with me, and when I told them who I was

they nearly swooned. The next day they came to fetch my wife and children with the wagon to their house and they stayed there for two days. I and van den Pol went out to buy a farm, but we could not find one that suited us. That night I returned to the carpenter's barn and the following morning I went out with van den Pol once more. He said that last spring his neighbor, ten minutes from there, had his farm for sale because he wanted to



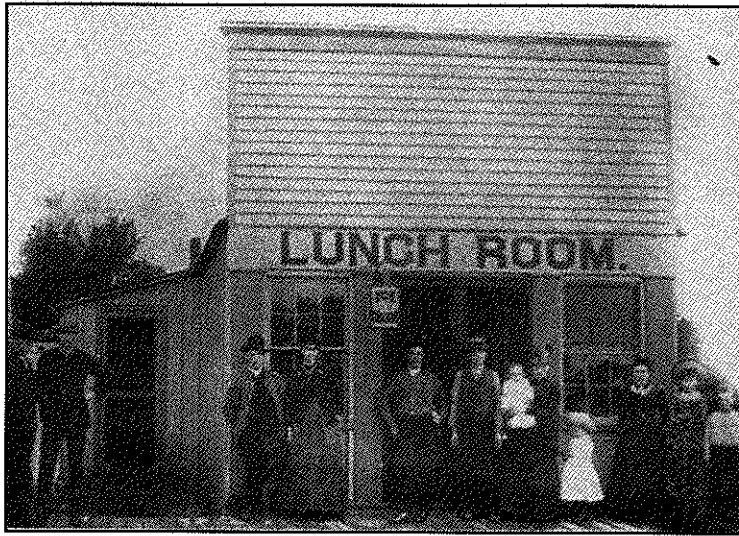
A.N. Kuyper's Lumber Company, 1880.

go to town, where his son lived and had a shop. Arriving there, the answer was "no"; but after thinking about it for a few moments, he said he would go to town to talk about it with his son. We went home not expecting any further news, but after one hour we received word that it was for sale. We bought the farm, 105 acres, at twenty dollars per acre, including five acres of maize. He instantly left the barn and on Friday that same week we were in our own house. The name of the man from whom I bought it is Tomas, a brother of Tomas who owns a corn mill right near the

town Arnhem. Now it happened that another man owned forty-five acres of land on the corner of my farm and he was able to buy a piece of land that would be much handier for him, so I bought those forty-five acres for eighteen dollars apiece. Now I own 150 acres, more than 84 old Dutch acres. I could make two large farms of it if there were another house on it. I live thirty-five minutes from Pella.

The town is situated on level ground, but the surrounding area is hilly and difficult to cultivate. But

my farm is not very hilly, and it is not difficult to work. The water drains quite well. A valley in the middle grows lots of grass, so that in winter or spring we have to burn it out. The soil here and all over in America is clay. If you would dig a hundred feet deep it is all yellow clay with three or four feet of black clay on top. That can be worked deeply enough with two horses; the upper soil is loose enough to stand dry weather. You don't have to dung the soil over here. They grow nothing but wheat, maize and potatoes. The wheat is sown in spring and mowed with a machine with four horses, each day ten acres, and afterwards it is put up in piles where it has fallen. In October or November the wheat is threshed by a threshing machine. These machines are run by eight horses, threshing a hundred Dutch bushels per day and the wheat drops without chaff into a basin. Then, near the piles they make square structures of cleft trees piled up on each other with some straw inside so that they are closed and then the wheat is poured in and covered with straw. As soon as the wheat is threshed, the chaff is dragged away by the horses and burned. The maize is partly cut in September and put in heaps as fodder for horses and cows; each day a horse gets thirty ears and the cows twenty. The cows are out all winter. They make fences against the north-



Lunch room, 1880.

ern and northwestern winds which are the coldest; and there the cows are fed, and for the rest they must find their own way. Sometimes it is very cold here and we always get a heavy snow fall. But the cattle are all fat, and they are accustomed to it. They don't do much dairy farming here. The farmers don't make much butter. Cattle raising is good just now. Four or five years ago you had to pay about ten dollars for a cow, and now, when we came here, I bought one with its calf for thirty-five dollars which is common here. But it is a nice black cow, about seven hundred pounds. And I bought another that will be fresh in March for twenty-five dollars, and also six calves half a year old at ten dollars apiece. I don't need to feed these during winter as they get enough off of the farm. I bought a horse, five years old, for \$112.50. I don't have enough work for it, but I feed it well. It is the custom here to go to town on horseback during the week for shopping or on Sunday to go to church. No one walks, but they put a saddle on a horse and ride to town. At first, when I had no horse, I was ashamed to go into town.

Potatoes grow excellently here, and manure helps too. The soil is worked with two horses; the rows are three and one-half feet apart. If there are any weeds you work it with a cultivator. When the pota-

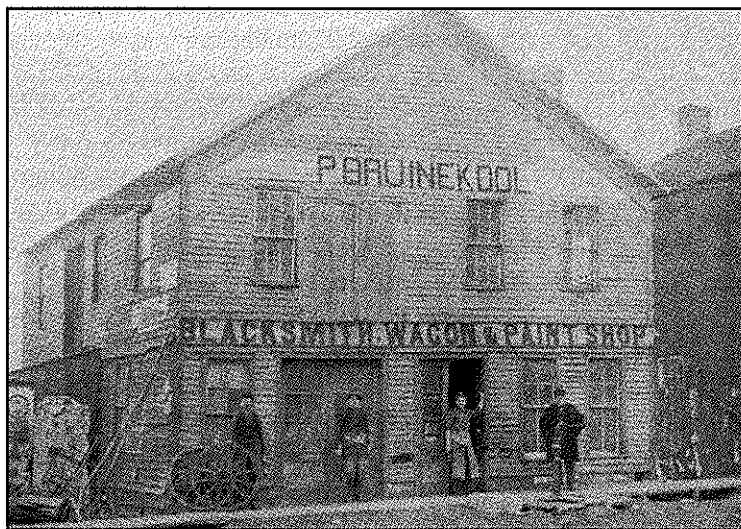
atoes are ripe, they are taken out, all in one day. They are as big as a fist, and of good taste. The farmers all have pigs here—thirty or forty each. They run in a big closed coral or pen until they are fat. They only eat maize ears and water. We have an easier and quieter life there than in Gelderland. We sleep till the sun rises. No bothering about cutting turf sod for fuel, or digging ditches. I shall have to pay four to five dollars tax, not a cent more, even when you buy a farm—not a cent to pay. We have no tax inspectors or policemen or sheriff's officers

here and also no tramps. Nor do we need to worry about military service for our sons. The Lord be praised that we are freed from Egypt and are safely living in a free country where there is an abundance of bread for everyone. Those who have lived here for six or seven years have never seen a poor man at their door. On Sundays they don't collect money for poor people. There are four ministers here, and three churches, with no special seats for the rich.

They don't grow rye here. We only eat wheat bread. When the wheat is ground you get the bran and the fine flour separate; we feed the bran to the cattle. We have square stoves here; four pots can be on top of it, and the lower part is an oven where each day or every other day our bread is baked. A stove like ours, one of the biggest, with pots, kettles, bread pans and further utensils costs thirty-three dollars.

They have bees too over here, but not many. Tomas has seven hives. These are square, made of wood, three and one-half feet high, weighing all together about five hundred pounds. I don't know where they get the honey from; honey is expensive here and costs thirty-seven and one-half cents Dutch money. Song birds are scarce, a few crows, but there are many big birds of prey, and many small partridges, many prairie chickens about the size of a

tame hen, many small hares, wild geese, wild turkeys and many deer in woods. Americans have many large dogs and both their cows and oxen are very stout. A great deal of work is done here with oxen especially to bring supplies and goods which must be fetched at a distance of forty hours. Then they use ten or twelve yokes of oxen per wagon (one yoke consists of two oxen); and they are very well-trained so



Blacksmith shop, 1880.

that a person can easily drive them without bridle or reins. They pull loads of ten or twelve thousand pounds. A very strong wood here, hickory, is used for wagon axles that are no thicker than in Gelderland, but they seldom break. There is also a kind of cattle without horns. All the cattle here are red with a little white. Horses are of many colors.

Goods are all quite expensive here, especially clothes. American mills are powered by water or steam. In Pella there are five or six sawmills, all are run with steam, and they saw one plank at a time. The saw is a round disk, like a big round table, and it runs so fast that a plank of twenty feet in length is sawed in two minutes. One hundred feet of planks cost seventy-five American cents to have them sawn and the sawmills are all kept busy. This summer seventy houses were built here in Pella, and if they had more workmen they could have built

more. Carpenters earn \$1.25 to \$1.50 a day, and farm hands \$16.00 to \$18.00 a month and they are still hard to find. They have to buy their clothes out of it, but there is no opportunity to squander money in any way because gin or strong drink may not be sold here. Fairs and other such entertainments are not held here. Once a year, July 4, everybody goes to the county seat where they celebrate in commemoration of the

liberation of America.

I could write lots and lots more, but I just can't remember everything. We speak about Gelderland every day, not to come back and live there — no. Indeed if you would give me two of the best farms in De

Valk or in Doesburg I would thank you heartily but remain here. Still I would like to see you for a few days to talk, especially now that I am settled in America. I am convinced that if I may remain strong and healthy, and the children get so far that I have the time to do so, that I may once more make a voyage to Europe, but not with a sailing boat, that takes too long. We are 2,000 hours from each other, but you can't believe it is so far away since you have not made that journey. When it is six o'clock in the morning here, then it is half past twelve in the afternoon in Gelderland.

It is generally said that Iowa is the best state for farming. Several shallow rivers run through this state, and alongside these are the woods and also hills of coal and rocky hills where they burn lime. Grass grows so high that when the cattle are lying down you must be quite near to see them. In winter they burn more grass here than grows in all of Holland. The farmhouses here are nearly all made of tree logs cut

flat and piled on each other, twenty to thirty feet long, and sixteen to twenty feet wide. There is just one room, in which there are as many beds as each family needs. Our house has a large cellar underneath in which we can store quite a lot, but for the rest everything must be placed in the one room or in the attic. But they set a better table here than in Gelderland. Pork and beef are eaten three times a day, but pigs' feet and ears are not used but thrown to the dogs or hogs. When we were first here I went to the butcher to buy a piece of meat. The butcher's wife had just rendered a large quantity of lard and the cracklings were standing in bowls. I asked how much she wanted for those. She answered, "Nothing at all, I'll be glad to have you take them along. Otherwise I'll have to throw them to the dogs." And there was still about four pounds of lard in them.

I can't brag about our house, but it is just like the others, and if you take into consideration the land and its fertility the houses don't matter so much. We wish that more people, yes, thousands more, from Europe were here. Those who now suffer hardships while here there is an abundance of food. As I said before, I was surprised to see how wheat is threshed in the field and then placed in bins. The owner of the threshing machine gets one-tenth of the crop as his hire. They put the grain in sacks and then pile them against the corn crib and they lay there for at least six weeks, far away from the houses, and never one sack of wheat is stolen. In town every house has a pile of wood nearby, with saw and axe remaining there day and night, but nothing is ever stolen. They don't lock their doors at night. We have had frost all this month, with some snow. Now and then it was terribly cold, especially on Sunday, the 23rd, when it froze exceptionally, even for America. I cannot remember that it ever froze so hard in Gelderland.

I remain in friendship,
Your brother,

T. van Veenschooten

Bursting with curiosity, Van Schothorst's return letter in August 1856 reveals the sorts of impressions and misimpressions which many Netherlanders had about America and its culture:

Although you wrote a lot about America, my curiosity was not fully satisfied. We wondered how it was possible for a state [Iowa] to be ruled without police — weeds always grow amid the rye. We also wonder if there are any beasts of prey or poisonous animals in Iowa or its vicinity. I would like to know what Pella looks like and about elementary schools and about religious teachings there. What language do the people of Iowa speak? What are the prices of corn and other grains. Where do you bring them to market? And how are your roads? Do they raise the same kinds of garden fruits and vegetables as we raise in Gelderland? How does that mowing machine work; we can't understand that. Are there any native Indian tribes nearby and do they mingle among the Europeans or do they withdraw before them and melt away? In case you write again and if it would not cause too much trouble,

I would like to hear some answers to these questions.

A. van Schothorst

Unfortunately, we have no record of further correspondence between these friends. Nonetheless, the existing letters provide the kind of detailed information that discloses much about daily life during the first decade of Pella's history. ♪

Scholte Trivia from Title Abstracts

Viola Hugen Van Der Weele

Henry Scholte was, of course, a fine preacher, and a good husband and father. He was also a member of a college board, a newspaper publisher, a politician, a legal advisor, a banker, and a lawyer. And he was a land agent. In fact, the abstract of title reveals that Scholte and his heirs once owned the property where my parents lived from 1962 to 1971 and my widowed mother lived until 1992.

We learned from title documents that Scholte acquired in 1849, three years after Iowa became a state, the 320 acres which included my parents' home (as well as Pella Christian High School). Prior to this, in 1845, the larger territory of which Scholte's section was a part was surveyed by order of the US Congress. It was ceded to the State of Iowa a year later by Congress for a very specific purpose: "... to aid in the improvement and navigation of the Des Moines River." The Indians who originally lived here are not a part of this legal history.

In 1854, five years after his purchase of the 320 acres, Scholte approved a document acknowledging a survey of the Town of North Pella and conveyed certain easements to the town but with the wise and understandable proviso "that I shall not be compelled to open Streets or alleys of the County Road running through said land and actually enclosed for farming and pasture before I give up said part of the land for said purpose"

At the time, the legal protocol regarding spelling and signatures was more informal than nowadays, and we have learned that Scholte caused the county clerks some confusion by spelling his name nine different ways

in assorted documents. And so an H. Wormhoudt (owner of the department store?), who had emigrated with Scholte, was called upon, in 1904, at the age of 97, to declare under oath that, however the name of Henry Scholte appears in legal documents throughout the county (he lists nine variations), there was but one Scholte and that the name "is always intended for one and the same person"; for emphasis he reiterates that whatever the spelling, the name "was always intended for and was in fact the same identical person, the said Henry P. Scholte."

Surprisingly, Scholte died intestate — without a will — and the legal matters pertaining to his estate were not settled until 1877, nine years after his death. Two-thirds of the property was distributed to his children and their families; one-third went to his wife, who bequeathed her portion to her heirs with the understanding that she was entitled to its use during her remaining years.

Our records contain some gaps, but the land eventually came into the possession of Arnold and Lucretia Bogaard, who sold their home to my parents in 1962. As I state above, they lived there together until my father's death in 1971; my mother continued to live there until 1992, when she moved to Park Centre, Newton, Iowa, where she has recently celebrated her 99th birthday.

Now my father and Henry Scholte (together with many of his heirs) share a common site — the Oakwood Cemetery in Pella, less than a half mile from 607 Jefferson in what was then called North Pella. ♪

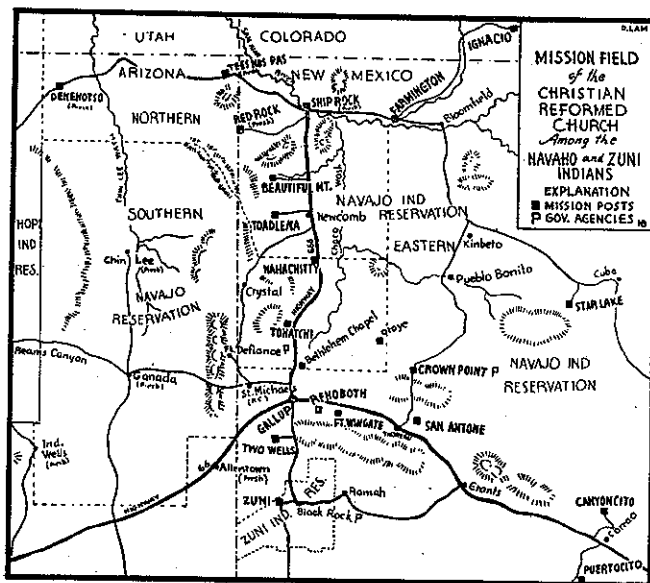
William Mierop, Camp Worker

Henry Ippel

Most unlikely candidate for the title of pioneer missionary to the Navajo Indians in New Mexico in the 1920s was William Mierop. Born in Passaic, New Jersey, on January 20, 1889, he married Catherine Rotteneel and moved to Chicago in his early twenties to pursue a career as public accountant. An entire change in career occurred in 1913. The Christian Reformed churches of Roseland, Chicago, appointed him to work among the Navajo Indians at Two Grey Hills, New Mexico. After a year on the field, Mierop decided to return to Chicago to receive sufficient education to qualify as an ordained minister. Having burdened himself by attempting to condense a

Arizona, first in Ganado and later at a new station called Kai-bi-toh (Willow in the Water). Here Mr. and Mrs. Mierop revealed their dedication to the mission endeavor and their abandonment of any desire for the comforts they had known in New Jersey and Chicago by living with their two children in a ten-by-twelve-foot shack under the most difficult conditions.

Mierop's ambition was to return to work in the Christian Reformed mission, and in 1920 he accepted the position of camp worker on the Navajo reservation. Unfortunately, the Board of Missions had insufficient funds for his annual salary of \$1500, so Dr. Henry Beets, the board secretary, solicited a



Mission area map.

three-year course into one, he became ill, and he abandoned this venture. Once again he sought employment, and in 1915 he received an appointment from the Presbyterian Church to serve as a missionary among the Navajos in

Arizona, first in Ganado and later at a new station called Kai-bi-toh (Willow in the Water). Here Mr. and Mrs. Mierop revealed their dedication to the mission endeavor and their abandonment of any desire for the comforts they had known in New Jersey and Chicago by living with their two children in a ten-by-twelve-foot shack under the most difficult conditions. Mierop's ambition was to return to work in the Christian Reformed mission, and in 1920 he accepted the position of camp worker on the Navajo reservation. Unfortunately, the Board of Missions had insufficient funds for his annual salary of \$1500, so Dr. Henry Beets, the board secretary, solicited a pledge from two Grand Rapids, Michigan, residents, a pledge which they kept until Mierop's untimely death. Nor was the board able to provide adequate housing for the couple and their children at the Rehoboth mission station. All that was available was an abandoned old laundry, which remained their "home" for four years. Moreover, Mierop's contract stipulated that he furnish a team of horses and a wagon, for which the board generously promised to supply the fodder.

During the nine years that William Mierop served as camp worker, he wrote numerous articles in the *Missionary Monthly*, *The Banner*, *The Instructor*

for the Sunday School, *The Christian Indian* and *De Wachter*. In 1925 he authored the small book *Ashki, the Navaho Schoolboy*, which was serialized in eight issues of *The Banner*. In these articles, this pioneer missionary vividly portrayed his work among the Navajo Indians of the Southwest during the 1920s.

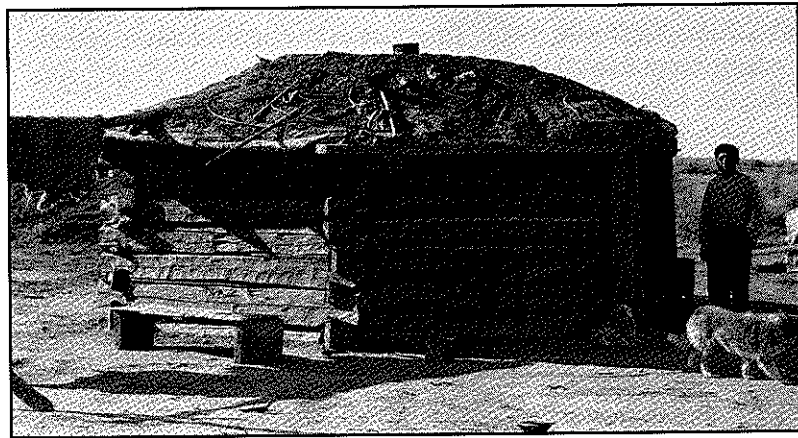
For Mierop, camp work was the ideal form of gospel evangelism. If the nomadic Indians were to be reached with the gospel, he insisted, it was well nigh impossible to gather them in large assemblies on the reservation because as a nomadic people, they moved with their flocks of sheep to wherever there was grass to eat and water to drink. Their hogans were easily constructed, and therefore they could move with ease into the mountains or canyons or out on the plains. In Mierop's words, you must fish where the fish are; the Navajo must be visited in their homes and in their camps, where, in small groups ranging from one or two individuals to gatherings of thirty or more, the gospel story could be presented.¹

The initial motivation for camp work was to follow up the religious instruction which Navaho children received in government boarding schools or at the Christian Reformed mission school at Rehoboth, near Gallup, New Mexico. Public policy permitted Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries to teach these pupils in a "release time" arrangement. Indian parents were requested to permit their children to attend these religious classes; they usually gave their permission by a thumb print on a government form.

This practice created tension in the Navajo religious culture. Although the parents were agreeable to religious instruction for their children, they themselves remained isolated from Christian teachings and consequently retained their indigenous religious beliefs and customs. Their offspring, on the other hand, were taught another

story. When these children returned to the hogan for the summer vacation or left the school upon graduation, they once again took their places in the nomadic families, thrust into a tension between the Christian story and the Native American story. Surrounded by their familiar environment and non-Christian family, boys and girls who had been baptized or who had developed a sympathy for the "other way" had serious difficulty remaining faithful to the religious teachings they had received. To the missionary, those children who returned to "paganism" were considered to have gone "back to the blanket." Just as they abandoned the school uniforms for their traditional attire, so they abandoned their Christian story for the Native American story and its ceremonies.

Mierop believed that the only way to prepare for the students' return to the hogans was to bring the same religious



A well-built hogan. Hogans vary greatly according to the type of timbers used and the ability of the builder. This is a picture of an exceptionally well-built hogan. Note the evenly cut timbers, and the interlocking joints, the sturdy door frame and the metal chimney.

teachings to the parents, to acquaint them with the gospel, and thereby to reduce the tension and opposition which students would endure when they went back into their Native American culture.

Moreover, the Native American Christians were scattered throughout the reservation. Mierop recognized the

difficulties these new converts experienced, as exemplified in the story of James and his wife:

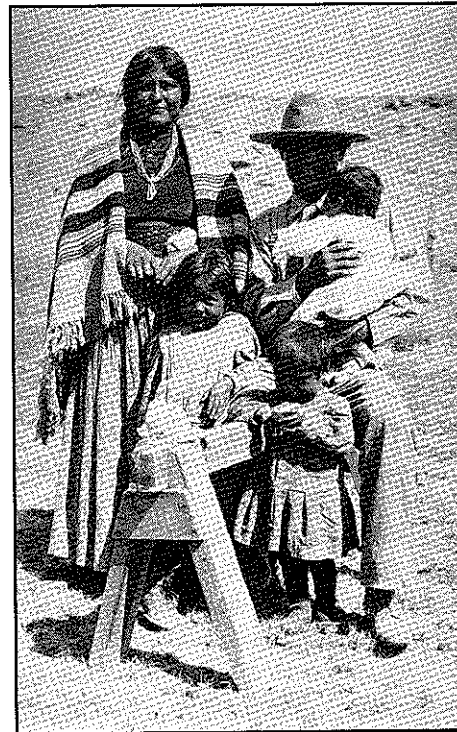
James and his wife are Christians. They do their best to walk the Jesus road, but it is very hard sometimes. On one side of their home lives the Tall Singer, one of the greatest medicine men in this part of the reservation. A few miles on the other side lives a man who loves "white mule" and gets drunk on it. Back of them lives a headsman who has no use for Protestants. About a mile in front lives a fortune teller. And the father-in-law, who is a small caliber medicine man, comes around trying to lead them back to the Old Road. So you see, surrounded this way by the enemies of Christ, this Christian family has a hard time to let their light shine. Everything around them has a tendency to extinguish their profession.²

Mierop believed that periodic visits to families like this were imperative if they

were to be encouraged and strengthened in their Christian life.

Although selective "follow-up" was the initial motivation, Mierop's goal was to visit every hogan, every camp,

in the vast territory to which he was assigned. He would fish where the fish were! His home base was the Rehoboth mission station, six miles from Gallup. The area he was assigned extended far into the Navajo Indian reservation. Because some Indians lived 125 miles away, he was unable to visit them more than once a year. Usually he attempted



Navajo family.

to visit other parts of the reservation every two or three months.

One account details a trek of "eighteen days of steady plodding camp work." He admits it was difficult to achieve the goal of "every camp, every hogan." Searching for a group of Indians who lived forty miles south of the Santa Fe Railroad, which crossed the area on its way west of Albuquerque, he observes, "When we made this distance we were informed they had moved ten miles southeast. When we got there, they had again moved nine miles east. All this moving done on account of grass and water scarcity." Nevertheless, nearly every report contains the assertion that he had attempted to the best of his ability to visit every hogan no matter how far off the path or how difficult to find or how treacherous the terrain.³

On one occasion a headman addressed his people,

You don't know this slim missionary. You can expect him anytime, in any kind of weather. Hot or cold, rain or snow, he will go through them all to

visit you and tell you about his story. Once we were in our hogan, the snow was falling and the wind howling and we were saying we thought this was one day the slim missionary would not be out, but we just had it out of our mouth when in stepped the missionary!⁴

Modes of transportation have changed so much in this century that it is difficult to picture the camp worker on his monthly trips. He and his interpreter traveled in a spring wagon pulled by a team of horses. Because his trips were usually two or three weeks long, during which time he had no contact with his home base and very infrequently encountered a trading post, and because he could not depend on receiving food or shelter from the Indians whom he visited, Mierop had to carry adequate provisions for food and shelter.

Frequently the Indians mistook his baggage for the equipment of less innocent intent:

When I leave home for a trip, I take canned goods, bread, flour mixed with baking powder all ready for biscuits, bedding, hay and oats and my indispensable ten-gallon water barrel. Many think my water barrel is a bootlegger's outfit and I invite those who greet me with a knowing wink and a broad grin to look in the barrel and smell, but many won't look in to avoid embarrassing me. Those who do look in are obviously satisfied with the contents!⁵

In addition to the grub box, the wagon also carried a medicine kit prepared for the missionary by the mission hospital staff. His medicine consisted of castor oil, pills, salve, and other simple remedies.

The cordial reception given Mierop by many of the Indians permitted him to supplement the meager and often boring diet which his provisions provided. Although he was accompanied by his Indian interpreter, the missionary was the cook and dish



Wealthy Navajo woman.

washer. He claims to have made adequate meals of fried potatoes and a few onions, but most of the time it was "beans, another time beans, and still another time beans!" But there were times when the water barrel and the grub box were empty:

We had been away from home fifteen days and our water gave out and we could find no water to refill the barrel. We had no coffee to drink, so the bread without butter would not go down our throats. We could not swallow it. So we called it off and did without eating. All that day we travelled; no water; therefore we ate nothing. Toward evening we met a Navaho who directed us to his hogan where we got a good long drink.⁶

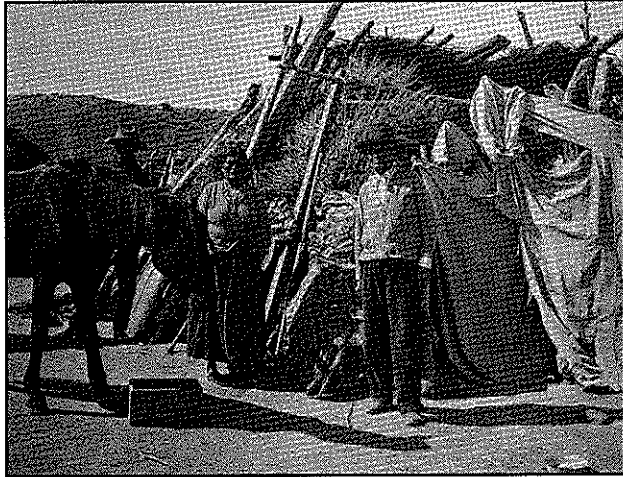
On at least one occasion the available water was far from satisfactory:

We were eighty miles from Rehoboth when our water gave out. We travelled all that day and half of the next before we came to a small body of water way off the beaten path. The horses, cattle and sheep were drinking in it. Our horses rolled in it for they were warm. We walked into the middle and filled our barrel. We vis-

ited all the Indians around there during the next three days and they were glad to see us. But we had to move on. Before we left I wanted to give that lake a last look and I have been sorry for it ever since because I came upon the carcass of an old horse lying in the water. All you could see was its head. How did it happen to be there? I presume the horse had been thirsty, but in a weak and emaciated condition it found the lake dry and fell down and died. The rains came from the mountains and filled up the lake and covered the dead horse. Now that the sheep, cattle, horses and missionary drank out of it and with some evaporation, the head of the horse emerged. What were we to do? Throw the precious water away? No, we were eighty miles from home and needed water. I will confess that every time we made coffee or tea we could see the glassy eyes of that horse. My interpreter said he did not feel hungry, so I told him go ahead and eat. "Don't be foolish. It was only a dead horse. The food won't hurt you." He grinned and replied, "How about yourself. Why don't you eat?" That was getting too close so I kept quiet. We ate hardly anything. You can't blame me I am sure.⁷

When the grub box was empty, it was time to presume upon Navajo hospitality. Even though the Navajo story included numerous episodes of maltreatment by white settlers, shady deals by white tradesmen, and an awful death march imposed by the United States Army and even though the majority of the Navajos were unwilling to give up their ceremonies and beliefs and replace them with the Christian gospel message, Mierop repeatedly reported from the field his great joy that his meager supplies had been supplemented by Navajo generosity:

Looking for Navahos to whom we might give the story, we found them at last among a clump of trees. They were as glad to see us as we were to see them for we had no bread and our flour for biscuits was gone and here was a chance to replenish our



A Navajo summer home.

larder. Accordingly, a deal was made and while we told the good news, the Mrs. baked about forty biscuits. Some turned to hard tack but we had to eat them for it was all we had.⁸

Mierop did not neglect to include in his journals the details of basic survival. He readily accepted invitations to a meal. On one occasion he says,

We were soon partaking of a hot meal of corn, chile and rice. This tasted good for us for we had been out a week and a good square meal was becoming a scarce article.⁹

Later, he speaks well of Navajo cooking:

Yes, we had to stay for dinner, and what a sumptuous affair it was. Delicious goat ribs, tender and juicy, the kind you seldom get out East; bread fried in the fat of a goat to a nice brown and such coffee as only an experienced Navaho lady can make.¹⁰

There were times when his hosts were intent that he receive goat meat in abundance, until finally, he reports, "We were getting so much goat meat, it was beginning to come out of our nose. Too much is too much is what I say."¹¹

Mutton was undoubtedly Mierop's favorite dish at any meal. He says, "We had some nice fat juicy ribs of lamb for breakfast and when we left we received a leg of lamb for lunch."¹² An article in *The Instructor for the Sunday School* in

1927 reads, "The most welcome smell — mutton!" But some mutton was better than other mutton:

You can eat beef, pork, chicken or rabbit and think you are fortunate but when you eat mutton you will realize that you have eaten the best of meats. Especially when a Navaho grandma fixes it.¹³

Although the grub box contained mostly canned meat and beans and

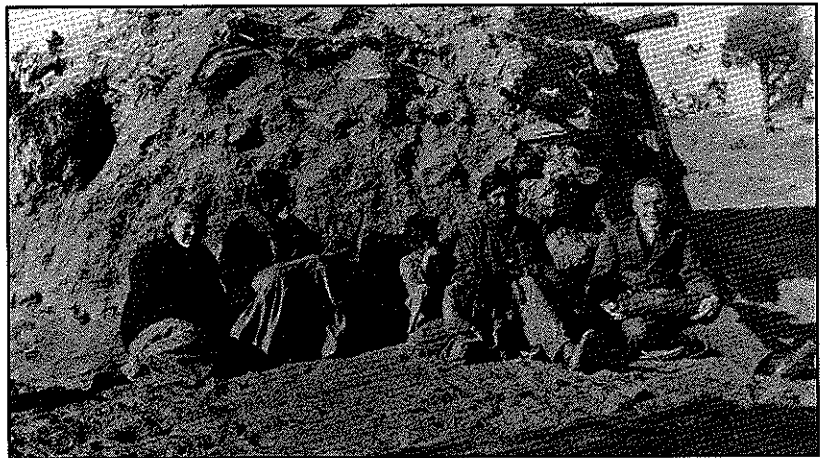
Mierop desired some variety to his diet, repeatedly he refused horse meat. That was *not* his dish. However, he declared a camp worker cannot afford to be fastidious. He ate ravenously even though "the daughter washed her hands in the wash basin which had already been used for washing the potatoes she had peeled and then used it as the receptacle for the fried potatoes we were

invited to eat."¹⁴ He learned the hard way never to refuse Navajo hospitality even if accepting it required serious compromises to his own standards of sanitation:

The Indians are not as clean as we are for their standard of living is so different and when they invite us to eat dinner with them we just eat and say nothing. They don't like to be refused and we should not either for then we hurt their feelings. You can't fool them by saying you don't want

their food because you are not hungry. They feel that maybe it is not clean enough to suit you. They see right through you. I tried it once, but never again! We came one time to a hogan where a boy had a leg of a kid in his hand using it as a club to hit a dog and cat. The lady of the house took this meat and laid it on the coals upon which her husband had been spitting tobacco juice. Coffee was ready and we were invited to eat, but I couldn't so I told them (it was the truth too) that I had a wife back home who liked this kind of meat and therefore I would keep it for her. Looking at me for a moment, they reached for a second leg which the cat was licking and said, "You keep that leg for your wife. We will fry this one for you." So I had to eat it. I vowed I would never try that again.¹⁵

Mierop never writes disparagingly of his Indian friends. He genuinely appreciated their sociability and hospitality:



Dr. Jacob Mulder making a "house" call (1918).

Hats off to Navaho hospitality, he wrote. Especially since you hear so much about their peculiar customs and superstitious beliefs, our attention must be directed to this desirable trait. I wouldn't permit a Navaho to take second place in this respect for anybody else, be he white man or Indian or another tribe.¹⁶

Mierop's readers in the 1920s may have been surprised if not chagrined by his nonjudgmental attitude toward his Indian friends. For instance, he writes,

“After giving him and his four wives the Gospel message we left for other camps.” However, after spending an uncomfortable and crowded night in a hogan observing the dynamics of a family consisting of four wives and many children and listening to the complaints of the husband, he was not afraid to tell his host, with reference to God’s command of one man for one woman, that his troubles were his own fault for having so many wives.¹⁷

Shelter was offered as graciously as food. Although the canvas tarpaulin on his wagon provided some shelter at night, the climatic conditions through which he traveled forced him to look for more adequate shelter out on the reservation. His letters are sprinkled with accounts of blinding snowstorms and blizzards, torrents of rain, excessive heat,

red clouds of sand, and bone-chilling cold.

Ordinarily he prepared his own sleeping arrangements. He enjoyed sleeping in the open under the trees, even though he admitted the ground became very hard during the night. Or he made a tent by throwing the wagon cover over a rope stretched between two trees. Hard ground was not his only complaint:

The day had been hot and sultry but when evening came we saw a large green bush about seven feet high. We headed for that bush and soon the



Navajo family posing with hand-woven blanket, lamb, and stone hogan.

poor horses had their heads in the shade and we too jumped out of the wagon to enjoy its cool shelter, meanwhile saying, “Heerlijk, heerlijk.” But the next morning the “heerlijk” was changed to “heden nog toe” for underneath our bedding were thousands of ants. Surely there is nothing “heerlijk” when these thousands of small black ants are crawling over your body and bedding.¹⁸

When the weather was excessively severe, he sought more adequate shelter, an abandoned hogan perhaps, even though most had leaky roofs — or a “devil’s hogan,” where someone had died and therefore the abode was not occupied — or a freight car with several drunks — or a brush corral which gave shelter from the wind and sand. But Mierop was not averse to sharing a hogan with hospitable Navajos if invited.

Imagine the surprise and pleasure he received from the following conversation with a Navajo living in an isolated area:



Mission staff with families, 1921.

First row, l. to r., children of missionaries: Helen Bosscher, Beatrice Bosscher, Jay Bosscher, Arthur Bosscher, Christine Brink, Jessica Mierop, Don Mulder, Wilhelmina Mierop, John Fryling.

Second row: Rev. and Mrs. Fryling, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Guichlaar, Rev. and Mrs. L.P. Brink, Mr. and Mrs. John Van Wyck (Prairie View, KS), Mr. and Mrs. Barney Stap (Paterson, NJ), Rev. John Groen.

Third Row: J.H. Bosscher and baby Ada, Mrs. Bosscher, Katherine Rosbach, Hattie Beekman, Mary Denetdele, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Vander Wagen, Dr. Jacob Mulder with baby Gladys, Mr. and Mrs. William Mierop, Nellie Baker, Mrs. Jacob Bolt, Rev. and Mrs. J.W. Brink.

Fourth row: Mrs. Edward Vander Wagen with baby Effa, Jeanette Lam, Marie Vander Weide, Renze Stob, Gertrude Bush, Anna Havinga, Sofia Fryling, Winnie Schoon, Nellie Lam, Jeanette Vander Werp, Fannie Vander Wall, Rev. Jacob Bolt.

Fifth row: Hugh Denetdele, Edward Vander Wagen, Cornelius Lucas, John Swets, Bert Sprik, Mark Bouma.

Why don't you come more often? You stay away too long. We forget your story so quickly. Last time you were here you slept under those trees. Now we have been thinking this way. The missionary must have a log cabin to stay in. From this cabin he can visit all the Navahos around here. He can stay a long time then to tell us the story. Trees have been cut, lying alongside of the road. Those trees are for your cabin.¹⁹

His Navajo friends were impressed by the missionary's sincere dedication. He persevered when so many conditions seemed to obstruct his work. His reports were candid and descriptive. He was not ashamed to admit to his readers that camp work was a "wearisome and tedious job," "plodding day after day, week after week," "working in obscurity, with no applause or encouragement."²⁰

In spite of the dangers he encountered, Mierop sought out the hogans no matter where they were or how difficult to reach. When the snows obliterated the roads, he gave his horses their heads to find their own way by instinct. When the descent of a hill was too steep, he tied logs to the rear wheels to brake the descent. When the wagon was so mired in the mud it could not be moved, he called for the "big black horses of the Rehoboth mission to help us out."²¹ When the trail which they were following gave way and began slipping away,

I jammed on the brake and braced myself for the crash; my interpreter put his feet against the dashboard and then we jumped for our lives. The crash came quickly. When I opened my eyes I was down in the arroyo on my stomach. I had taken a high dive over the horses and landed in the mud. The breath was knocked out of me. My interpreter landed on Prince's back. He never knew how he got there. We realized we had faced death and only God through his great mercy spared our lives.²²

When mountain roads became mountain trails, Mierop and his inter-

preter placed saddles on their steeds and proceeded up the mountain at some peril:

Suddenly we noticed a slightly used trail going up and around the side of the canyon. We decided to try it. It was about two hundred feet high. I was first as is my custom and had almost reached the top going around a curve when my horse stumbled. In a flash I was out of the saddle but it was not a moment too soon for my horse began to roll over and over until half way down a big boulder stopped her. My interpreter said he never saw a person get out of the saddle so quickly. I was like a rubber ball. Here my lightness was a blessing for if I had been heavy or clumsy I would not have been able to get off and I would have been crushed to death by my horse as she rolled down the canyon over the boulders.²³

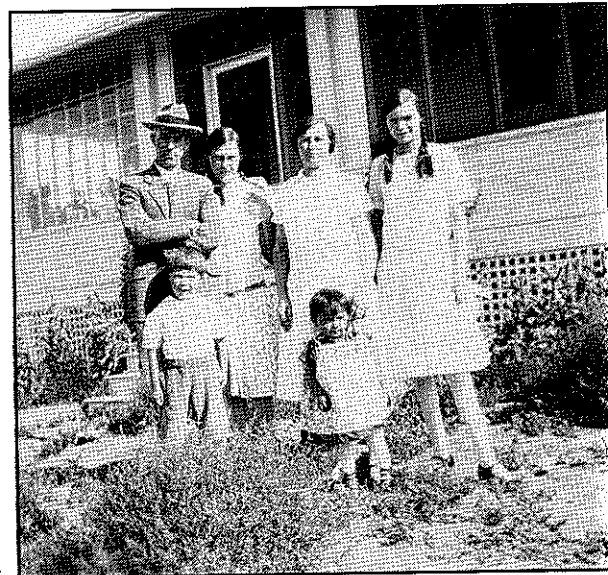
How did Mierop respond to the dangers and discomfort? In his own words,

Camp work is a fine work and although we encounter hardships which cause much suffering nevertheless we rejoice that our Lord gives us grace and strength to continue sowing the seed of the Gospel.²⁴

Sowing the seed was paramount in the life and journeys of this missionary. To this he dedicated his life. He seized every opportunity to tell the gospel message. Although Mierop claimed he could speak only "pidgin Navajo," the fact is that as soon as he moved to New Mexico in 1914, he began to study and learn this difficult language. For the intricacies of the Bible stories and the gospel message, he used his interpreter, but in personal conversation and personal witnessing, he had little difficulty.

The ideal setting for Mierop's work was a settlement of several hogans,

perhaps when the Navajos were camped for several months to gather pinon nuts. An audience would then assemble under the trees to hear the message. It was not uncommon in such circum-



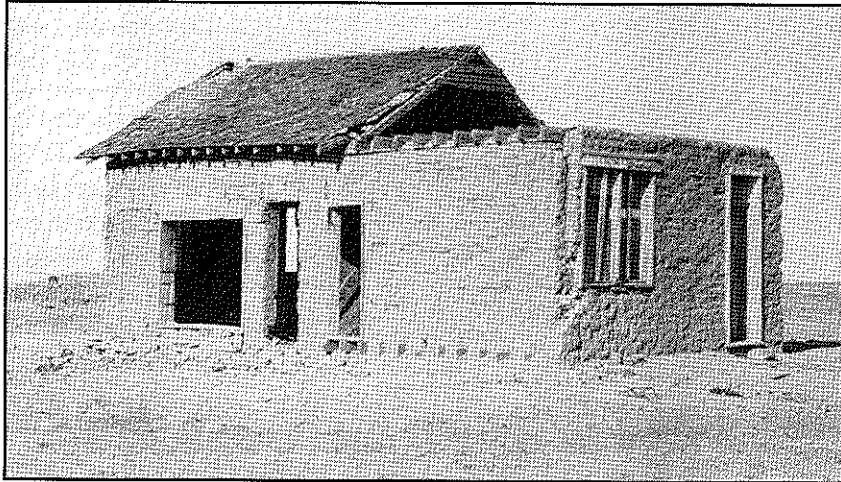
Mierop family.

stances to have three services on Sunday. However, the normal pattern of Mierop's ministry was systematic visitation of isolated individual camps and hogans. Usually after the dinner hour he would ask the headman to call together Indians in the area to receive the story which he would tell with a picture chart on the wall of a hogan or on the rear of his wagon or under a cottonwood tree.

The missionary was surely at his best in the intimate setting of a single family in its hogan:

When we come to a hogan, we do not knock. All I do is push the flap on the old discarded blanket which is used as the opening of the door and walk in. After a sheepskin is given to sit on, you begin to converse. To be given a sheepskin is a matter of courtesy, like offering a guest a chair. It is nice to talk about their sheep, the care of the farm and other things for then they think well of you. They appreciate the social call. The Indians are intensely sociable. Often our social visit provides me content for a sermonette according to their need

... One must give the message kindly, tactfully and repeatedly. Scolding will not bring you anything. Help them on their feet if they fall into sin and show by deeds that you love them.²⁵



Two Grey Hills mission station dwelling. This is the kind of home in which our missionaries lived during the horse and buggy days. It is located at Two Grey Hills, a former CRC mission station about two miles from Toadlena. This was originally a Baptist station, but later it was turned over to us for William Mierop's use. Rev. L.P. Brink followed Mierop, and lived here till part of the roof blew off in a heavy storm.

Mierop's single-handed ministry was very much a ministry of word and deed. Just as he never neglected an opportunity to speak of his Savior, he seized every opportunity to assist his Navaho friends.

Consequently, the missionary could be found in a council meeting serving as judge in a sheep-stealing case or playing the role of peacemaker when Navajos were in a dispute with white cowboys or sitting under a cedar tree advising a family whose husband had said,

We have been married a long time.

We have five children but we never received advice on how to be happy though married. When my wife comes you just give it to her and make her obey me!²⁶

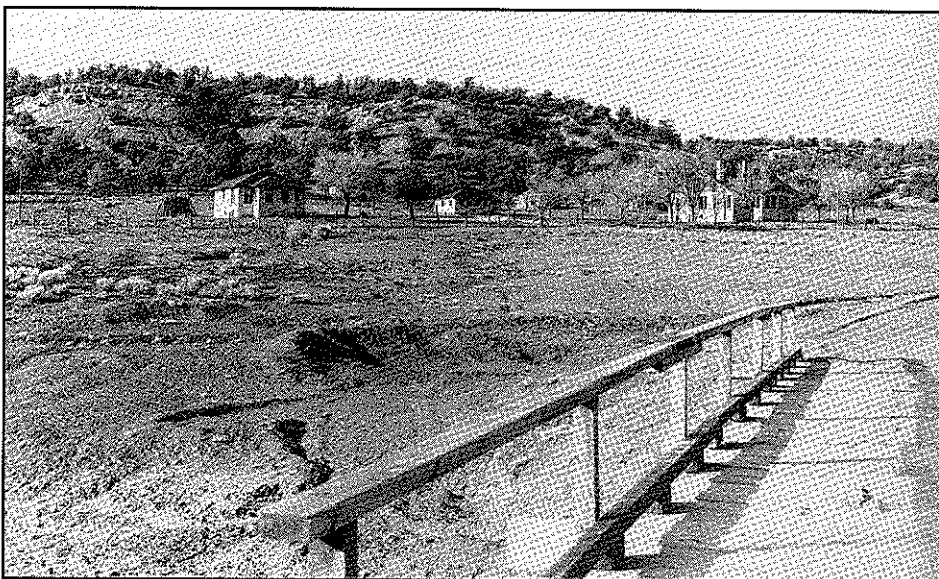
When he encountered Indians who were sick, he gave them drugs from his medicine kit. Individuals too sick for his simple remedies he carried in his

wagon back to the Rehoboth mission hospital. He readily admitted he was no undertaker, but he did assist in burying the dead. At Christmas, with generous donations from church members throughout the nation, he was able to distribute toys and clothing to the camp children. Indeed, one of the goals of Mierop's visits to Indian families was to receive parental consent for their children to receive religious instruction at

the government schools or at the Rehoboth mission boarding school.

Mr. and Mrs. Mierop's home in Rehoboth was known for its hospitality. Perhaps the privations the missionary experienced on the reservation were accepted with so little complaint because his own first residence was an abandoned laundry, a "dilapidated old home." Later a house was built for the camp worker, and here the Mierop family gained a reputation for the same openheartedness he displayed on the field. The results were impressive:

Everywhere we went we were received heartily. We had never in this place been received like this before. We became suspicious and began to wonder what was up. After a while we found out and it made us feel good. It seemed that last winter when the ground was covered with deep snow and the wind was howling, a Navaho couple visited us in our Rehoboth home. We treated them like we treat all our Indian visitors but it must have made a deep impression on them for when they returned home they broadcast throughout their neighborhood what we had done. They concluded their account of their stay by saying, "The missionary must think much of us so from now on we must listen well



Two Wells area. The attractive camp-worker's home on this site is among the best available for the \$6,000 which the mission board allots for home construction. This particular home was designed by Mrs. William Mierop, but in 1929 Mr. Mierop died before he and his wife could use the facilities. Rev. and Mrs. J.W. Brink were the first to occupy the home. Note the bell and bell tower behind the house—a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Mierop given by the Dennis Avenue CRC Sunday school in Grand Rapids.

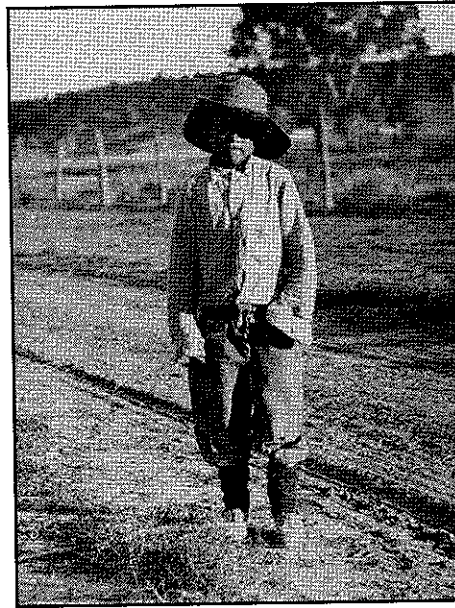
when he tells his Holy story, give our children to him and help him all we can."²⁷

The cordial acceptance of Mierop as a person was extended to his gospel message. He had great pleasure in telling his readers that his Indian friends were eager to hear the Jesus story. "Thank you for the story," Indian Frank said. "We are always glad to hear it." Another Indian likened Mierop's words to living water. He said, "Your words I am grateful and thankful for. It is like when I need some water and cannot get any but someone gives me some and I live, so the word of your story is like this water. It makes me live. I want you to come again and often, as I want to hear more of your God's story."²⁸

But often the Indians replied, "We believe God's story and also the Navajo story," or "Missionary, I am willing to walk on God's road but I want the Navajo road too. After walking on both roads then I will take what I think is the best one." Nevertheless, Mierop could rejoice to hear his friends say, "Don't pass us by," or "Please visit us again and teach us about the Holy One."²⁹

Mierop candidly admits that the reception given his message was not always pleasant. His visit was occasionally greeted with the words "Here comes the devil!" At times the missionary reports that the devil was indeed present. Even though his audiences were generally very attentive and appreciative, there were times when he concluded the devil was at work in the meeting:

When I speak of sin the devil is not stirred too much but when I talk about the cure of sin, the death of Jesus, then the trouble begins. When we show the pictures outside, no wind blows until we come to the death of Jesus; then it comes and it looks as if someone is angry and desires to tear the pictures into pieces. As long as we show the picture and talk about it just that long the wind continues. When we turn to another



Shepherd boy.

picture the wind stops. Once we went back to explain more about it and sure enough the wind came and almost tore it out of my hand.³⁰

One time when Mierop was telling the story of sin and redemption, all was quiet until he began talking about Jesus' death. Then things began to happen: a child began to whine, another to whimper, and finally a grand chorus of babies was crying. He observed, "Satan is back of a whole lot of these noises." He had a similar explanation for a service in a hogan where everybody was quiet until he started to show that in Christ we are not under condemnation but made free. "Then the music began. The dogs began to bark and howl, the babies awakened and started to cry, other children began to throw sand in each other's eyes." The bedlam ceased as soon as he said his last word.³¹

Local medicine men, the custodians of the holy songs and prayers and ceremonies, discouraged acceptance of the Jesus story, and some unexpected opposition came from students who had "returned to the blanket." Because they had learned to read and write and perhaps had received a sixth-grade education, these young men believed

they had the authority and wisdom to speak up for their community. As one said to Mierop, "The ceremonies of our people have to be preserved and it is up to the returned students to do it."³²

Indian ceremonies were a major distraction to Mierop's missionary effort. When he encountered a number of unoccupied hogans on his travels, he usually concluded that a ceremony was in process nearby. He had made a personal decision to avoid these "heathen ceremonies" because, as he said, "Humanly speaking not much can be accomplished as the Indians' hearts and heads are full of this devil-worship." To interrupt such a sacred occasion would destroy his welcome at other times. Overcome by the excitement and fervor of the event, his Indian friends would be dreadfully opposed to hearing the gospel story.

On occasion he observed a ceremony at close hand:

Upon my arrival the crier assigned me a place as follows: Slim Missionary, you go and sit down under that big pine tree and to the pine tree I went and camped. Later I sauntered over to the ceremony hogan to shake hands with the master of ceremonies. Dancers came from all over the reservation to participate. They were painted white, with eagle feathers in their hair and a mask to represent their gods. Soon the dancers began to chant and sing in a weird manner. With thirteen fires blazing to give light and about a thousand Navahos to watch, the dance went on and on. Faster and faster grew the pace of the dancers; louder and louder their weird and savage shouts. The clown or water spreader, brandished his fox skin and stooped down occasionally to examine the ground for fox tracks, while the dancers shook their music rattles and stamped hard upon the ground. The whole sight was terrible and savage and unholy as only things from hell and the devil can be. If this be not devil worship pure and simple, I do not know what devil worship is. It made me shud-

der and my spinal cord had the shivers. And then to think there are some who believe that the missionary's interpreter could go to such a ceremony and preach the gospel without being swept into this maelstrom and forget his mission! You would think these men who believe this would know better or be more acute. They are blind!³³

This amazing and indomitable missionary had such a keen appreciation for his Indian friends that he could sense when, even at a ceremony, he would be welcome:

Time was when they would not let the missionary in when a ceremony was in progress because then the charm would not work, but now they are over that and let him enter. But you must always turn to the left and go around the fire to the right when you leave otherwise the patient may not recover.³⁴

On some occasions he even received a cordial reception at a ceremony and had opportunity to tell God's story there.

Mierop revealed no rancor or dismay toward those who opposed or attempted to obstruct his work or refused to listen. When he learned that the "long robes," the Catholic missionaries, had warned the Navahos not to listen to the Protestant missionary he refrained from criticism but simply continued his frequent visits, saying, "We were sure it was God's will that we give them the gospel and so we kept on praying and visiting them. My, how discouraging it was at times, but we kept on."

His persistence and devotion spoke more loudly than an open confrontation or refutation. Once while traveling through the mountains covered deep with snow, he met a man on horseback who provided directions to some hogans. Then the man observed, "You are a short coat are you not?" The man had come to that conclusion because "You would not catch a long coat out here in the snow and cold to teach us about God. That's how I know."³⁵

To "catch" a family which repeatedly scurried like rabbits for cover when he arrived at their camp, Mierop used a little strategy. Leaving his wagon in plain sight, he walked around a hill and approached from behind. While their eyes were on the wagon, he surprised them with a hand outstretched and an "Is it well, friends?" When they recovered from their surprise, he told them his message. However, the next time he came, they ran away again. Mierop tried other methods — coming on horseback like a fellow Navajo instead of in his wagon and sending his interpreter the front way while he appeared the back way — until "they were at their wit's end and so gave up their game." Later these same people admitted their foolishness and said, "Please visit us again!"³⁶

Camp work was an exhausting task. At times, Mierop not only wished he had a thousand tongues to speak to more Navajos but also that he was bigger and had a stronger constitution. The Indians had named him "Slim Missionary" with good reason, for he was slender and thin, and he was not a robust person. The weakness which he revealed in 1913 had never left him. After long days in an uncomfortable saddle or seated on a bouncing wagon, he ached all over, and he often admitted that he longed for the comfort of home.

His winter trip in 1928 was especially grueling:

It was in January when I returned from a twenty-two-day camp trip. The last day I had to face the worst blizzard and wind storm I ever faced out here. But I went on and visited the last camps on the trip, nine in number. Facing the storm I had to breathe with my mouth open and as hard as I could. I could feel my heart hit bottom every breath I took. At home, two days later my heart gave way completely — the burden had been too hard for it to bear. I had asked too much of it and now it rebelled.³⁷

By the end of March he had

sufficient strength to make occasional day trips to a few hogans. The cold, damp, rainy spring weather was not favorable for his recovery, so he took a two-month vacation in Phoenix, Arizona, where he lived in a rooming house. "There we had four other roomers who worked all day. In the evening I had opportunity to speak a word for my master to them." He gained six pounds before he returned to Rehoboth, and in June he commenced his camp visits again, pleased that the Indians welcomed him so cordially and fed him quantities of mutton. "They wanted to make me fat and strong so I could continue to tell them the holy story,"³⁸ he writes.

Meanwhile, his team and wagon had been replaced with a Chevrolet truck. This permitted Mierop to spend practically every weekend at home with his family. The resident physician at the mission said, "He's a tough customer and it's hard to hold him down in spite of his illness."³⁹

The culmination of Mierop's career as camp worker was an unexpected and exhilarating event coupled with tragedy. Since beginning his task as camp worker, Mierop had never neglected an area called Two Wells, about thirty miles south of Rehoboth. The Indians living in this fertile valley dotted with hogans were prosperous. Their farms produced well, and their homes were filled with contented children. However, these homes did not open their doors to Mierop and his interpreter because a Catholic missionary had a strong influence over the people. After the priest's death opposition to Mierop's visits dwindled, and the interest in the gospel increased to the point where Mierop, although weakened by his heart condition, enthusiastically prepared for a camp meeting in the area.

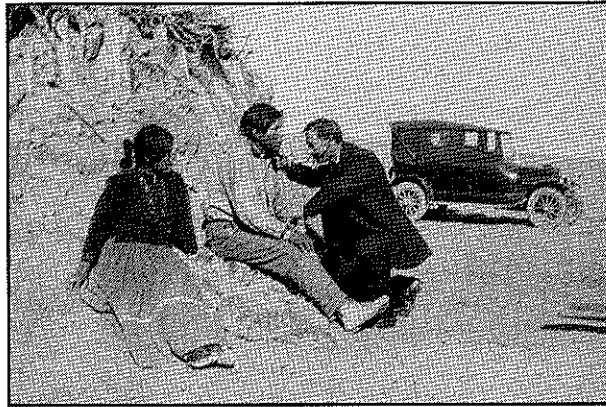
Preparations were made, tents put up, food bought and Native Christians invited. But weeks before prayer was

made for four things. First, that we have good weather, because it was to be an outside meeting; second, that Native Christians come to help; third, that the Indians come to hear; and lastly, that souls might be saved . . .

The weather was good and the Native Christians came in large numbers, some travelling one hundred eighty miles to show that God was able and willing to save camp Indians. And the Indians, almost two hundred of them, came from all directions, on foot, on horseback, on donkey, with team and wagon and a few in cars. For two afternoons and three evenings they heard the blessed gospel story that God is able to save to the uttermost.⁴⁰

The response at the meeting was indeed an answer to prayer. Rev. Mitchell, a Presbyterian missionary who had spent over twenty-five years among the Navajos and had attended numerous camp meetings, exclaimed, "I have never seen anything like this before. The Spirit is working. It would be a crime to refuse them a missionary to lead them in God's word." From forty Indians came this request: "We need a missionary who can tell us this story every day, every week and then we will be able to remember it. We want a doctor who can help us when we and our children become sick. Please help us."⁴¹

An Indian trader promptly offered a five-acre site for a mission. The Navajos at Two Wells sent a petition to the Christian Reformed mission board requesting a resident missionary, to which the board re-

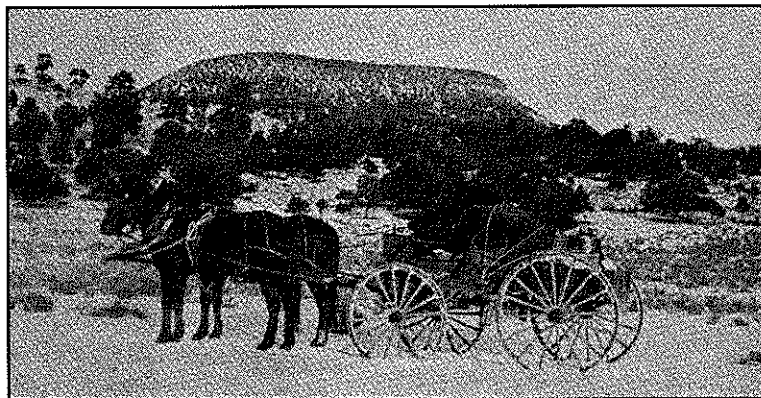


Dr. Lee S. Huizenga with patients.

sponded by appointing William Mierop. He immediately accepted because he considered this endeavor a most promising one, and he knew that his camp-working days were over.

Immediately, with architectural plans made by Mrs. Mierop, homes for the missionary and his interpreter were built. But Mierop was never able to occupy this post which was so dear to him. On the September 26, 1929, his weakened heart and the onset of pneumonia caused his death.

Even during his lingering illness Mierop was full of devotion to the work he had begun less than a decade before. While quenching his thirst caused by constant fevers, he quoted Jesus' invita-



Mr. William Mierop with wagon loaded for camp work.

tion "Whoever drinks the water I will give will never thirst" and then added, "Lord, my Navajos are not thirsting for that water of life but make them thirst."

William Mierop was one of the heroes

of the early missionary endeavor of the Christian Reformed Church among the Navajos in New Mexico. His greatest tribute was the tears shed by his Indian friends as they filed past his coffin. ❖

Endnotes

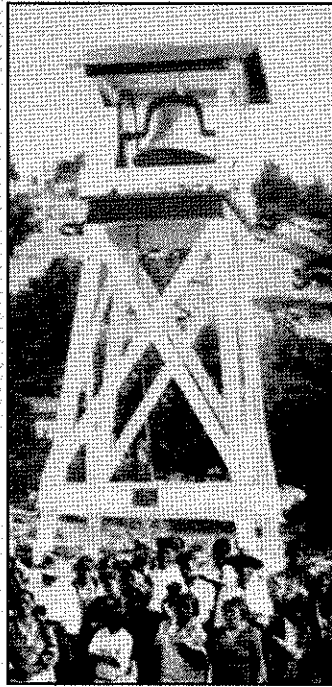
- 1 The Instructor for the Sunday School 27 July 1924.
- 2 The Banner 6 June 1924.
- 3 The Banner 1 February 1923.
- 4 The Instructor 20 Jan. 1924.
- 5 The Banner 21 Sept. 1924.
- 6 The Banner 20 Sept. 1923.
- 7 The Banner 21 Jan. 1927.
- 8 The Instructor 2 Sept. 1923.
- 9 The Banner 11 Oct. 1923.
- 10 The Banner 10 July 1925.
- 11 De Heidenwereld (later The Missionary Monthly) Nov. 1929.
- 12 De Heidenwereld May 1923.
- 13 The Instructor 24 Sept. 1927.
- 14 The Instructor 26 Mar. 1922.
- 15 The Banner 3 Dec. 1926.
- 16 The Banner 4 Nov. 1927.
- 17 The Banner 11 Oct. 1923; De Heidenwereld Apr. 1924.
- 18 The Banner 21 July 1921.
- 19 The Instructor 30 Sept. 1923.
- 20 The Banner 29 Dec. 1921; 18 Feb. 1927.
- 21 The Instructor 17 Mar. 1929; The Banner 2 Mar. 1922.
- 22 The Instructor 17 Mar. 1929.
- 23 The Instructor 15 May 1926.
- 24 De Heidenwereld Jan. 1929.
- 25 The Banner 19 Nov. 1926.
- 26 The Banner 7 Jan. 1927.
- 27 The Instructor 28 May 1927.
- 28 The Banner 25 July 1924; 22 Dec. 1921.
- 29 De Heidenwereld Sept. 1923; The Banner 15 Feb. 1929.
- 30 The Banner 28 Dec. 1923.
- 31 The Banner 28 Dec. 1923.
- 32 The Banner 26 Aug. 1923.
- 33 The Banner 20 Apr. 1922.
- 34 The Banner 9 Feb. 1922.
- 35 The Banner 2 Nov. 1928; De Heidenwereld Apr. 1929.
- 36 The Banner 15 Feb. 1929.
- 37 The Banner 24 Aug. 1928.
- 38 The Banner 24 Aug. 1928.
- 39 The Banner 7 Jan. 1928.
- 40 The Banner 2 Nov. 1926.
- 41 The Banner 9 Aug. 1929.

In Memory of William Mierop

The tidings came so sad and sudden,
That our dear friend and brother,
Mierop,
Who often wrote upon these pages
To tell us all about his Indians
About their huts, their scattered
hogans,
About the Word of God among them,
About their need of His salvation,
In words that could not fail to charm
us;
That he had come to his last journey,
Had laid aside his battered armour;
That he had heard his latest summons,
The voice that bade him "Come up
hither,
Your many tasks on earth are ended,
And joyful Welcome here awaits you."

It was some sixteen years or over,
He heard the call of his Redeemer,
He felt the Spirit's urge within him
To go into the desert's vastness,
To bring the name of God Almighty,
To regions where they did not know
Him;
To bring the Blessed Name of Jesus
Into the weary realms of evil,
To spend his life and all his talent,
To spread the message of salvation.

With wife and child he came
undaunted
And made in Two Grey Hills his
dwelling,
He brought the message to the hogans
Taught boys and girls in school of
Jesus;
Then way out on the western reaches
Made Kai-bi-toh his field of action;
And up and down through plains
wide-spreading,
O'er hills and on through deep
arroyos,
He wrought with energy and courage,
To bear glad tidings for his Savior.
From there the hand of God did guide
him
Unto the Mission, called Rehoboth,
To spend his life in camp work duties,



Bell and tower.

Full many a year he toiled and
labored,
With team and wagon and assistant,
From home to home he traveled
onward,
To all the hogans of his district,
He went 'way east to Canyoncito,
And south by east to Puertocito,
And up the vale to Mariano,
And cross the hills to Silh-ni-nex-ih
And all along the Zuni mountains,
And west to Arizona's border,
And northward up as far as Gorman's
And south unto the utmost limits,
Unto the farthest Indian hogan.
He bore the tidings of salvation
Through days of sunshine, nights of
darkness,
Through heat of summer, cold of
winter,
Through snow and storm and rain and
thunder,
Was sparing neither time nor talent,
In weakness oft, in pain and suffering,
Was pointing Indians to the Savior,

To lead them to the cross of Jesus,
To pray and plead for their salvation,
To seek their peace, their weal
eternal.
The Lord did bless his prayers and
labor,
For here and there among the Indians
Were weary souls by grace illumined,
Who came to Jesus with their burdens,
And found in Him eternal blessing.

'Twas in Two Wells he next would
labor,
For him and his a home was builded.
His longings were to serve his Master
At this new post in years before him.
But this was not to be; the Master
His servant called to come up higher,
The summons sent "My child, come
hither,
Where mansions are prepared, eternal
Where storms and blasts no more can
harm you.
Where sin and sickness never enter,
Where peace and joy are everlasting."
And William's soul obeyed the
summons,
And went to be at home with Jesus.

Sustain, Oh Lord, our widowed sister,
Pour out Thy balm of consolation,
To comfort her and her dear children;
That in their loss their hearts be
strengthened
To follow in the path of Jesus
By his example stirred, encouraged.
Grant to us all, O God Almighty
That we with steadfast zeal and power
May labor for our Lord and Savior
Until His Name, most holy, glorious
Shall ring in praise from all the
hogans,
Both on and off the reservation,
For grace and mercy and salvation
Unto Thine everlasting Glory.

L. P.

[L.P. is Rev. L.P. Brink, veteran missionary,
Mierop's mentor and friend.]

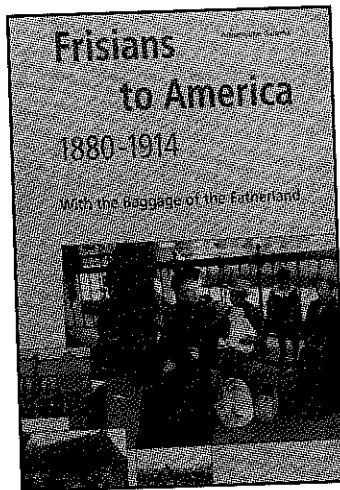
Frisians to America, 1880-1914, With the Baggage of the Fatherland

a book by Annemieke Galema

Groningen: REGIO Projekt Uitgevers, 1996. 357 pages. \$29.95. Distributed in the US and Canada by Wayne State University Press.

Bernard J. Fridsma

The Frisians, who in the Middle Ages formed an independent and formidable maritime nation along the North Sea, today live, as a national minority, in two political states: the Netherlands and Germany. Those in the Netherlands are called West Frisians, those in Germany are known



as East and North Frisians. Since government officials usually do not register immigrants according to their ethnicity, but according to their political affiliation, Frisian immigrants have entered this country as Dutchmen, Germans, or (in the case of the North Frisians) even as Danes. For the same reason, immigrant statistics on Frisians as a separate and individual group are

hard to come by, and few publications dealing with Frisian immigration exclusively have thus far appeared, at least in English. This reviewer can think of only two: a long article by Marten ten Hoor in the *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review* (December, 1951), titled "Frisians in the United States," and an entry simply called "Frisians" in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980). More and more of such studies, however, have come out in recent years. In 1986 there appeared an English translation of George Schnücker's book on the East Frisians,

titled *East Friesens in America*. Unfortunately, because of the strange bilingual neologism *Friesens*, these people may hardly be recognized by some as belonging to the Frisian family. Additionally, last year there appeared a treatise on North Frisian emigration: *Amerifrisica. Übersee-Auswanderung aus den Frieslanden und benachbarten Ländern*. One hopes that this book, too, will in time come out in English.

Galema's study, titled *Frisians to America*, deals with the West, or Netherlandish, Frisians. Readers of this periodical will most likely take that for granted, but those in the international English-speaking community, for whom this book is also intended, will not. It might therefore have been helpful if the author, in her title, had modified the noun Frisians with the adjective West. That having been said, it should immediately be added that Dr. Galema's dissertation does not deal with emigration from all of West Friesland. It focuses mainly on a region which had an unusually heavy immigration to the United States: that of the northern coastal area, known in Friesland as *De Klaar* or *De Bouhoeko*. In this territory there are nine municipalities, or counties. The first of the author's eight chapters we find a brief description of these counties in terms of their geographic, socio-economic, and religious features. The area of her case study, we learn, was largely agricultural, though there

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Baggage from emigrants on Rotterdam's quay.

was some dairying and fishing. In the period under discussion (1880-1914), about half of the labor force in the region was engaged in farming. Industrialization was negligible. This situation, the author stresses, meant that the Frisians in the clay region were severely affected by the agrarian depression of the late nineteenth century, and that it gave substantial impulse to mass emigration.

The six municipalities on which the author focuses are East Dongeradiel, West Dongeradiel, Ferwerderdiel, It Bildt, Barradiel, and Wûnseradiel. None of these offered much opportunity for finding work in trade or industry. Wages, both on the farm and in the peat bogs, were low and the working hours long. In addition, there was much absentee landlordism, an evil which increased the physical and social distance between farm owner and worker, and sent profits outside the Frisian borders. As might be expected, when the depression hit, widespread unrest among the laboring classes ensued. This was particularly true of It Bildt, where the Dutch labor leader Domela Nieuwenhuis and the Frisian poet-reformer Piter Jelles Troelstra found fertile soil for their radical messages. In this connection

the author brings up the strikes of the peat diggers, the rise of labor unions and socialism. She also brings up the fact that the churches' detachment from, and sometimes hostility to, the labor

movement caused many to make a breach with religion.

Most people in the clay region at that time were members of the Reformed church, though toward the end of the period the Christian Reformed church had gained strength. Followers of the Frisian reformer Menno Simons, known as Mennonites, formed the next largest percentage, followed by the Lutherans. The region had very few Catholics.

From the second chapter we learn that from 1880-1914 the population of Europe increased strongly, and that of the rest of the Netherlands rather steadily. However, it rose only slowly in Friesland, noticeably so in the clay region. By means of many charts and statistical tables the author makes clear that this fact was not due to a higher death rate or a lower birth rate, nor to migration to other parts of Friesland or to the rest of the Netherlands. The phenomenon was definitely due to immigration to the United States. There was mass emigration especially in the years 1880, 1881, 1889, 1892, and 1893. Whereas from the Netherlands as a whole, during the entire period, only 68 out of every 100,000 people left for the United States, 498 did so from the Frisian clay region.

Though most were young, many over sixty-five left as well. Children composed a large part of their groups, in fact a third, and there were twice as many males as females. The majority were members of the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches.

Though, on the whole, Frisians emigrated because of economic or social burdens, all of them did not. Some left to escape military service, others to be reunited with family or friends who had gone ahead, still others, seemingly, because emigration had become "trendy." Indeed, there was already before 1880 a solid tradition of emigration from the Frisian clay area. This becomes clear from the book's third chapter, in which Galema seeks to put late nineteenth-century emigration into perspective by reflecting on earlier migratory moves, as those led by Sipke Osinga from St. Anne, who settled in New York; by Marten Aukes Ypma from Minnertsgea, who founded Vriesland in Michigan; by Worp van Peyma from Ternaard, who started a colony in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; by Sjoerd Aukes Sipma from Boanwert, who with other Seceders trekked to Pella, Iowa; and by Oepke Bonnema from Kimswert, who founded Frisia, near La Crosse, in Wisconsin.

Among those emigrating before 1880 were also some Mennonites, who for religious reasons wanted to avoid bearing arms or paying taxes. There was, for instance, Hessel Yntema from Koudum, who with his family, settled a few miles east of Holland, Michigan. And there was, more importantly, the Mennonite group from Balk, who under the leadership of Ruerd Smit and Ruerd Symensma established itself in New Paris, near Goshen, Indiana.

Almost 10,000 people left the clay region of Friesland between the years 1880 and 1914, Galema reports. What motivated so many to leave? It is that question which the author seeks to

answer in her fourth chapter. There were, of course, the factors already mentioned. But there were others. Some immigrants, Galema finds, were—at least to some extent—lured by the glittering brochures and advertisements put out by the steamship companies, railroad lines, and land agents. But more of them were encouraged to leave because of letters sent by family members or friends who had already started a career in the New World. These letters were, on the whole, positive; sometimes even glowing. They spoke of the advantages derived from a higher standard of living and from a greater degree of social equality. Indeed, there were some complaints about the annoying



Poster of the *Nederlandsch Amerikaansche Stoomvaart Maatschappij*, around 1885.

differences in language and culture but, in comparison, these were few.

In a chapter titled “Room for Maneuvering” (the fifth), the author poses and answers the question: “Where did the Frisians go after they reached the American shore?” Though Galema considers research on area settlement still in an incomplete stage, she feels a few main facts are very

certain. Most Frisian immigrants from the clay region went to Michigan, to such places as Grand Rapids, Holland, and Kalamazoo. Not a few went to Iowa (Pella, Orange City) and to Chicago (Roseland, Kensington) as well. In Wisconsin, they sought new homes in Sheboygan, Prairie du Chien, and Waupun. New Jersey had its largest concentration of Frisians around Paterson and Passaic. Very few trekked to southern states, and initially none moved to Texas, Arizona, or New Mexico. As the American frontier moved further west, states such as Montana, South Dakota, and (rather late), California became more popular.

Frisian immigration in its early stages was largely to rural regions. Toward the turn of the century more and more immigrants began to seek their fortune in the expanding American cities. In Paterson the newcomers often worked in the silk mills, in Grand Rapids in the furniture factories, and in Chicago in the Pullman plant. On the outskirts of Chicago not a few earned their living by market gardening. Within two decades after arrival, about 40 percent of the Frisians owned their own home or farm, free or mortgaged. A good percentage learned English fairly soon. In 1900, for instance, 76 percent of the Frisian immigrants could read, write, and speak English. Five years after arrival (the required waiting period), many sought citizenship, 37.6 percent in 1900, 46.3 percent in 1910.

“Illiteracy,” writes Galema, “was rare in the Frisian immigrant groups.” She is right about that, of course. Practically all who came could read and understand Dutch, though many spoke or wrote it with difficulty. Very regrettable, however, was the fact that almost all were illiterate in their own language. In the period about which the author writes, ethnic and linguistic minorities did not enjoy full civil

rights, not in the Netherlands or anywhere else. Though Frisian is an older West Germanic language than Dutch, it was for centuries forbidden in the schools, sometimes even on the playgrounds. The native language was given an optional status in the curriculum for the first time in 1937, and a required status as late as 1980.

Turning her attention, in chapter seven, to “Urban Frisians,” Dr. Galema first takes a look at the immigrants who chose to come to Whitinsville, Massachusetts. That settlement, we learn, was begun in 1836, when two Frisians from the homeland accompanied a number of Holstein cattle to the New World. The animals had been ordered by Mrs. Whitin, the widow of John C. Whitin, after whose family the town is named. One of the two attendants returned to Friesland but the other, Jan Bosma, liked his new surroundings and got family and friends to follow him to America. By 1910 there were 987 Frisians among a population of 8,807, or 11 percent. Though most came from the southwestern part of Friesland, some hailed from the northern clay region. There was a large percentage from such towns as Minnertsgea, Tsjommearum, Ferwâlde, and Gaast. Around 1900 about half of the working force in the linking group engaged in industry. Most were factory workers, machine makers, or foundry men in the Whitin Machine Works. Others were employed in the Whitin Cotton Mill. There were only a few farmers.

The industrial workers in Whitinsville seemed to make a good living, though they lived in a company town and rented company houses. The Whitin family, in whose shops three-quarters of the townsmen worked, seemingly were progressive people, who maintained working hours and paid wages better than the average. Though the town had many English, Irish, and French Canadian



Front page from brochure of the North American Mortgage Company in Ljouwert.

immigrants, the Frisians had little contact with them. They formed a tightly-knit extended family, in which there were few, if any, non-Frisians.

Of the Frisians who landed in New Jersey, most settled in Paterson, an expanding industrial city already highly populated by immigrants from Italy, Poland, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Statistics show that most of the Frisians came from the politically radical county of It Bildt. Though the majority had previously worked on farms, in Paterson they found employment in the silk mills, for which the city at that time was famous.

Paterson Frisians, though ecclesiastically largely Reformed, showed a more diverse church affiliation, and a greater percentage of unchurched. Among the members of their group were socialist activists, as for instance Klaas Stienstra, the author of several Frisian-language plays. Some of these plays were performed by the society "*Utspanning troch Ynspanning*." This *selskip* (social and cultural organization) was the first of its kind to be organized in America (1893). Two *selskippen* followed a bit later: "Friso"

in Grand Rapids (1909) and "Nij Fryslân" in Rochester (1910). These societies, among other things, provided plays, dances, and sports (especially *keatsen*). Because of their secular (and sometimes anti-religious) character, there were few confessional Frisians among their members. The first Christian *selskip* was organized in 1933.

Of the northern Frisians that settled in Chicago, the majority worked in industry; the others had jobs in the areas of services and transport, or truck farming. Industrial workers, to a large extent, were employed by the Pullman Company, which manufactured sleeping cars for railroads. The Chicago Frisians, who at first had sometimes joined Dutch clubs, organized their own *selskippen* as soon as they were more numerous and better settled. The first society, named "*Ut en Thús*" came in 1923; the other, called "*Nocht en Wille*," in 1926.

In Grand Rapids, too, most Frisians worked in industry, especially in the furniture factories. There was among them more ownership and less renting of homes than among their kinsmen in Chicago. They concentrated largely in the West Leonard-Alpine district, though some chose the neighborhoods in the Canal-North Division area. Already in 1909, Grand Rapids had its own *selskip*, "Friso." Another—this one with a Christian basis—was organized there in 1933. It carried the name "*Gysbert Japiks*" and, in addition to having a social agenda, it was involved in nationalist activism. After World War II, with the founding of the Frisian Information Bureau, Grand Rapids became virtually the center of Frisian activity in this country.

Frisians did not immigrate only to the East and Midwest, they also, along with others, sought to push back the frontier by venturing further West. In the course of time, spottedly of course, their settlements would stretch from

ocean to ocean. In Wisconsin, as early as 1853, Oepke Bonnema, mentioned before, settled close to the Mississippi River in Frisia (Latin for Friesland). The place was later to be named New Amsterdam. Frisians also found new homes in La Crosse County, where in such towns as Holland and Onalaska they found very good farms. The highest concentration was in Columbia County, especially in Randolph and Friesland. The year 1858 marked the arrival of the first Frisians in the last-named town (then still called Randolph Center). Additional immigrants came to Friesland in 1861, among them Tjisse Tillema and his brother Teunis from De Lytse Jouwer (Hiaure). They liked the location to which they had come, and urged others from the *Klaai* to join them. The Tillemas were a real asset to the fledgling village, particularly in its (Reformed) church life. Friesland, in keeping with its name, long continued to be a village with a distinct Frisian flavor. Up to 1910 all the children and young people still spoke the language of their parents. A visitor, writing in a Ljouwert newspaper in 1928, reported that he heard children speaking Frisian as they played in the streets.

By the turn of the century, many Frisians had already sought new homes in Iowa. They had come under the leadership of Sjoerd Aukes Sipma, Anne van der Meulen (brother of the well-known poet Tsjibbe Gearts), and Jelle Pelmulder. The rich, deep, prairie soil around Pella and Orange City lured them. In the 1800s it was still possible to obtain a homestead there. Several Frisians played a significant role in the development of Sioux County, for instance Tsjoard Heemstra, Eabele de Groot, and Jabik Douma. Mention might be made here, too, of Broer Doekeles Dykstra of Peinjum, who came to Sioux County in 1881 as a child of ten, and later became well known, both in Iowa and

the Dakotas, as a preacher, teacher, and journalist. It was he who helped found the Harrison Classical Academy in 1902. It was he, too, who established the society "It Heitelân" in Orange City (1936) and preached the first Frisian sermon in this country (Grand Rapids, October 25, 1935).

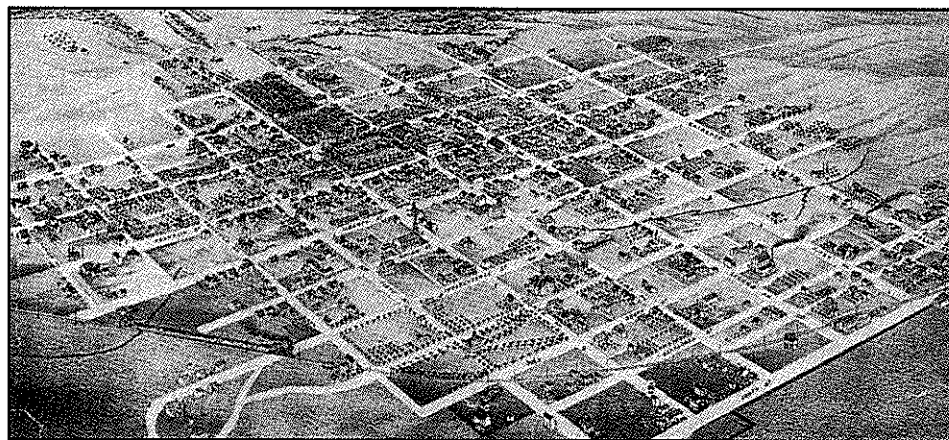
As the settlements in Sioux County and northwestern Iowa became increasingly filled, some Frisians moved to neighboring South Dakota. Those from the *Klaai* region located largely in Bon Homme or Charles Mix

Frisians attempted to settle outside the Gallatin Valley as well, but climatic and soil conditions, as they did in South Dakota, often brought discouragement and the desire to push further west. Some went to Washington, to Oak Harbor and Whidbey Island.

One who, by way of Whidbey Island, came to Washington, was Douwe J. Zylstra. His destination there was Lynden, a town in which he was to become a conspicuous leader. Initially, Lynden had only a few people from *de Klaai*, but their

the New World. That baggage, of course, consisted principally of their language, culture, religion, and politics. On the whole, she finds, Frisian immigrants held on to their ethnic heritage rather tightly, especially those of the first generation. Their customs, habits, and meals changed but slightly. In their new trilingual world they preserved their native language by using it in the home and in their *selskippen*. They zealously safeguarded their religion and moral values within the framework of the Reformed and Christian Reformed denominations. In politics they maintained a rather low profile; real activism in this area would come later. Frisians associated with the churches tended to be Republican, although among them were also staunch supporters of the Democratic Party. The unchurched, notably in Paterson, showed Socialist tendencies.

Readers of Galema's book will find that it is not free from overlapping and repetition, nor from English with a bit of a foreign tinge. But if they are fair, they will overlook these trivial matters and compliment the author on a task well performed. Herself a Frisian, she was able to tap sources in her native tongue—sources very likely not used by any other writer on this subject in the English language. From these and countless other better-known origins she has given us, for the first time in English, an extensive study of Frisian immigration. She has enhanced our knowledge in this field by material from heretofore uncollected letters, unquoted authors, and uncompiled statistics. Dr. Galema's research, done both here and in Europe, has eventuated in the publication of a welcome and noteworthy chronicle. §



Bird's-eye view of Pella, Iowa, 1869. Drawn by Augustus Koch, Chicago Lithographing Co. S. Clark Street, Chicago.

County. In the early 1900s they founded a village they called Friesland, today a part of neighboring Platte. The chief promoter of this region was Albert Kuipers of Warkum. During the 1870s he had made his first attempt to found a colony in the Midwest, but failed. Later, now in Wisconsin, he tried again, but with little success. Much hardship caused by storms and drought influenced some to leave for other states.

In the 1890s and 1900s, Frisian immigrants heading for Montana, settled for the most part in the Gallatin Valley, in villages such as Manhattan, Amsterdam, Belgrade, and Church Hill. Many of them operated homesteads. In some places, for instance Church Hill (Manhattan), a Christian Reformed church was organized.

numbers gradually increased. By 1910, they were represented by fifteen families, consisting of seventy-nine persons. Among the familiar family names were those of Wiersma, Dykstra, and Stuurmans. Their religious life centered around the Christian Reformed Church, organized in 1900. Most of the Frisians engaged in farming or dairying, as in the old country. In the period 1880-1914, only a few people migrated to Washington directly from Friesland. As in the case of those trekking to other western territory, most came from states to the east. After 1900, Galema believes, the Frisian population became a formidable factor in Lynden.

In her final chapter, Galema examines the "ethnic baggage" which the Frisians took along with them to

Grand Rapids Law and Order a Century Ago

Loren Lemmen

Grand Rapids Daily Democrat,
Tuesday Morning, December 18, 1883

Settling with Lead

THE TRAGIC END OF A
QUARREL IN A LAWYER'S
OFFICE

John Temmer* of North Holland
Shot by P.G. McPhillips.

*A Strong Probability that the Wound
Will Prove Fatal.*

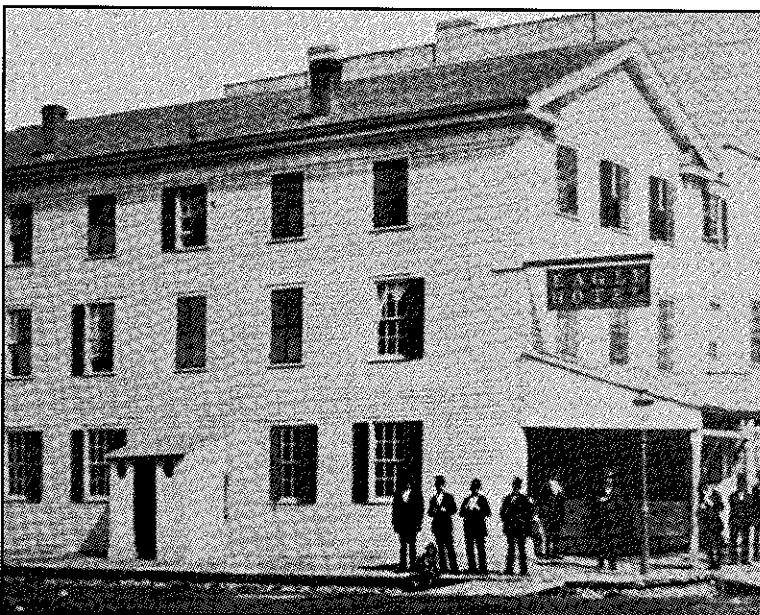
Shortly after one o'clock yesterday afternoon the report of a pistol was heard in the main hall of the east part of the Leppig block, on Lyon Street, and investigation revealed the fact that John Temmer of North Holland had been shot by F.P. McPhillips formerly of Diamond

Lake. The circumstances which led to the shooting are as follows: About ten days ago Mr. Temmer came here and opened negotiations for the purchase of the Scrafield & Baxter Saloon at No. 52

*Throughout, this account misspells Timmer's name.

Summit Street. After some delay the trade was made and the money, \$125, paid. On Wednesday of last week McPhillips and William Furlong made an offer of \$225 for the place and Temmer agreed to take it. That night McPhillips paid \$112.50—his half of the purchase price—and Furlong paid \$25, agreeing to pay the remainder the next day, after the lease, license, etc., had been transferred. This was not done, and the matter dragged along until yesterday, when all the parties were to meet at John A. Fairfield's office, in the Leppig block. There were present in the office Mr. Fairfield, a Mr. Brown, who lives outside of the city, and McPhillips and Temmer. McPhillips declared that the whole scheme was a plot to defraud him of his money and demanded that it be returned to him. Temmer said that he had not so much money with him, and McPhillips pulled a revolver and said he would kill him if the money was not returned. At this time Temmer had his pocketbook in his hand counting over some money. McPhillips rose to his feet when he drew the revolver, but Mr. Fairfield stepped in front of him so that he could not use it. He then stepped toward the window and passed behind the tables, still keeping the weapon pointed at Temmer. At the northwest corner of the table he was within five feet of Temmer, but Mr. Fairfield was still between them. McPhillips ran back and Temmer started for the door, saying that he would go and get the rest of the money. As he reached the door McPhillips came back to near the point from which he had started and fired, saying as he did so, "G—d d—n you, we'll settle now!"

Mr. Fairfield was trying to pacify Mr. McPhillips by saying that the money



The Eagle Hotel, built in 1834 on the northwest corner of Waterloo (Market) and Louis, the place in which John Timmer died of gunshot wounds.

would be paid and the whole thing settled. Mr. Temmer did not fall when struck by the bullet, but passed out into the hall and down the stairs, crying out that he had been shot. The noise of the pistol was heard across the hall and Mr. W.W. Taylor ran out and, seeing what had been done, called upon McPhillips to give up his pistol, which he did, also handing over a knife which he took from his pocket. He was then turned over to Constable Powers of Sparta, who in turn gave him in charge of Patrolman Willey and he was taken to headquarters and locked up. The wounded man was taken to Dr. DeCamp's office and the wound probed. It was found that the ball had entered about two inches to the left of the navel and passed downward through the hip bone, lodging in the muscles of the hip only a short distance from the surface. It was removed without difficulty by Drs. DeCamp and Morrison and the patient made as easy as possible. The ball was taken by Supt. Perry. It is from a 32-calibre revolver, and is not much dented. At the time of dressing the wound Dr. DeCamp expressed the opinion that there was about one chance in a hundred for the man's recovery. Temmer seemed to take the matter quite coolly, and was able to walk out of the office when taken to the Eagle Hotel where he now is.

What McPhillips Says.

The man who did the shooting was interviewed in his cell at headquarters soon after being locked up. He was pale and nervous, although naturally stolid in temperament. He said that he had been at Diamond Lake working for the West Michigan lumber company for five or six months. He is a carpenter by trade and was foreman of a gang of men. His parents live at Pinkney, Lewis County, New York. He is not a married man. He said that he meant to hit Temmer in the arm or shoulder, but had no idea of killing him. He came here on the fifth of this month with some money he had saved and wanted to go into business. He said that Temmer had his money and he had nothing to show for it.

He had been trying to get Furlong and Temmer together for a long time to have the matter settled, but could not do it. He expressed the hope that the wounded man would recover, and said that he did not much care what became of himself. He thought it would be life in the state prison. He said that his board was paid two weeks in advance at the Barnard house and his clothes were there. He had no money to use in his defense. He had heard it was being reported that he had drawn a revolver on Furlong and wished the story denied. He thought that Furlong was to blame, that he had misled Temmer and caused the delay. "He is the one that ought to have had it," he said coolly. He will probably have an examination in police court this morning.

Last Evening.

Mr. J.C. Post, Temmer's attorney at North Holland, arrived here at four o'clock yesterday afternoon and took his place by the bedside of the wounded man. He said that Temmer's brothers lived on a farm some distance from the station and he had sent them word and come on without waiting for them. Temmer, he said, was a sober, industrious man who had accumulated quite a little property, mostly by speculation in lumbering operations. His mother died about a year ago, and his four brothers live on the home farm. They came to this country about a dozen years ago. Prosecuting Attorney Turner visited Temmer after he was taken to the hotel and took a short statement from him. It is understood that Temmer made a will about a year ago, and that his brothers who are his only relatives, will inherit his property in case of his death. McPhillips was kept at headquarters last night. He sat in his cell until a late hour without trying to sleep and asked about the wounded man every time an officer approached him.

The Murder of Gerrit Timmer

Bygone decades which some people romanticize as "the good old days" were probably no less violent than our own times. The article below along with reports in the correspondence of Jan Janse, 1880-1886, suggest that law and order have always been more fleeting than not.

In 1883, when Gerrit Timmer was murdered in front of several witnesses, both the press and the public assumed his killer would be convicted of murder or at least manslaughter. However, two separate juries saw things differently. Here is the story as reported in local newspapers.

Gerrit was a Dutch immigrant who came to America shortly after the Civil War. Unmarried, he lived with his brothers on the family farm in North Holland, Michigan. He made a living in real estate, particularly lumbering operations. His attorney described him as a "sober and industrious man." In the fall of 1883 he purchased a saloon on Summit Street in Grand Rapids. A short time later two men, William Furlong and Patrick McPhillips, agreed to buy the property for \$225. McPhillips paid his share, and Furlong paid \$25, promising to pay the rest when the papers were all complete.

McPhillips was a twenty-eight-year-old carpenter who had been working as a foreman at a lumbering business. He had moved to Michigan from his native New York a few months earlier. He met Furlong in a local saloon, and they decided to go into business together. However, there was some problem with the completion of the papers for the Summit Street property, and Furlong didn't pay the rest of his share. Denied access to the saloon, McPhillips was enraged. He claimed Furlong had a key and was drinking up the stock. Unable to get Timmer and Furlong together, he went to the attorney, a Mr. Fairfield, who was handling the case. Fairfield

stated that, although Furlong was disreputable, Timmer seemed straight forward enough and should be brought to the law office. A meeting was arranged for the early afternoon of December 17. Fairfield's testimony of what happened next follows:

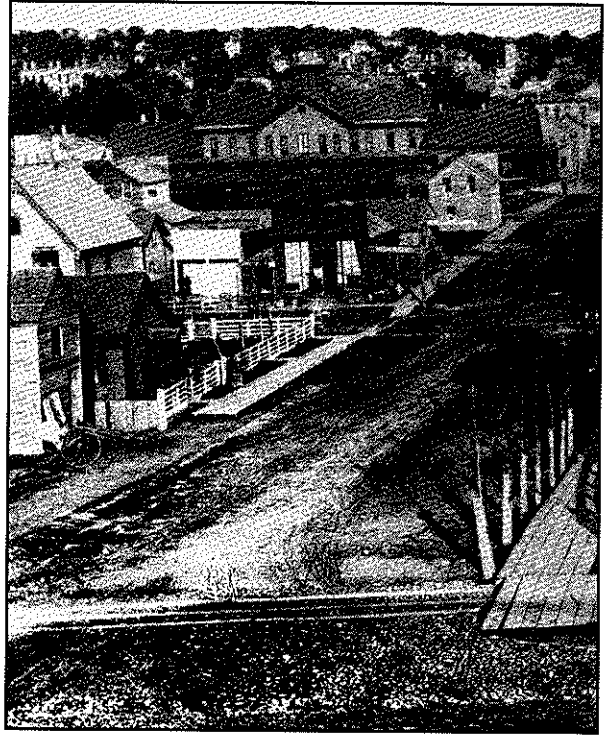
Timmer and McPhillips came into my office about noon and each took a chair and sat down. The former sat about two feet to my left and later five feet to the right of my desk. I said to Timmer, 'McPhillips has expressed dissatisfaction with the saloon he purchased and says there is fraud on your part and wants his money back. Can't you settle without a lawsuit?' Timmer remarked, 'Yes, I'll settle with him.' At this time McPhillips got up from his chair, and drawing a revolver held it in both hands. He then swore and said, 'You'll settle now or I'll kill you!' I stepped between them and put my hand on the revolver and shoved his arm down. He twisted the revolver around which caused me to release my hold. He then held it in both hands and pointed at Timmer. The latter was terribly frightened, and made an effort to get behind me all the while. He got beyond me and, taking out his pocketbook, said, 'I'll pay him \$45 now and get the balance in ten minutes.' He then started around the stove, and McPhillips again swore and said, 'You'll settle now or die.' At this Timmer moved towards the door and McPhillips fired. Timmer threw up his leg and bent over and screamed, and went out of the office.

Timmer managed to get to the street and with some help made it to a doctor's office. The bullet was removed, but the doctor offered no hope for recovery. Unable to sleep or eat and in constant agony Timmer died several days later in a local hotel.

McPhillips was arrested and talked freely about what he had done, telling both Fairfield and the arresting officer that he had intended to kill Timmer. Later he told the press, "I'll tell you just how it was boys, I intended to

shoot him, but did not intend to kill him." He also told one reporter that Furlong was the one to blame, for he had misled Timmer. "He is the one who ought to have had it," McPhillips stated. He earned his jailers' sympathies with his constant inquiries as to Timmer's condition and his inability to sleep. When told of Timmer's death, he wept uncontrollably.

Jury selection was difficult. The prosecution used its entire allotment of preemptory challenges before a complete jury was formed. McPhillips entered a plea of temporary insanity. His brother arrived from New York with a lawyer to help with the case. Soon there were rumors he had \$2,000 set aside for the defense. The trial attracted a lot of attention, and the courtroom was packed. A long list of defense witnesses testified to the strange behavior of McPhillips prior to the shooting. One witness stated that he had seen McPhillips pounding a revolver against a wall and muttering to himself something about killing someone. Others described the wild look in his eyes. The defense attorneys portrayed Timmer and Furlong as con artists, the later in particular as a man who "never had a dollar he didn't steal." They also called in several medical doctors, who were asked many hypothetical questions. When the doctors agreed that if McPhillips had been drugged, he might have become temporarily insane, the defense announced that Timmer had given McPhillips a drink and not taken one himself. They claimed this "drugged" drink and the attempts by Timmer and Furlong to cheat him had driven him temporarily insane. So effective was one attorney



Summit Street—location of the Scrafield & Baxter Saloon.

that a number of people, including several members of the jury, were moved to tears. One of McPhillip's lawyers reportedly made bets that the jury would take less than an hour to free his client. The local newspapers scoffed at the defense, particularly the expert testimony, calling it as "elastic as an auctioneer's conscience."

The prosecution called up a complete list of all those who were present at the murder or who saw McPhillips thereafter. They all testified to his soundness of mind. No effort was made to counter the attacks on Timmer's character. The Holland City News came to his defense by stating unequivocally, "It is a well-known fact to all in this locality that Gerrit Timmer was a quiet and respectable citizen."

The jury roamed the streets freely, without any surveillance, so the press was not surprised when it was announced that they could not reach an agreement. Four favored a conviction for murder, one a conviction for manslaughter, and the rest acquittal. The second trial, a few months later,

was basically a repeat of the first, although the jurors were sequestered this time, oddly enough, in the same hotel Timmer had died in. The judge charged the jury with returning a verdict and strongly indicated that temporary insanity was not what he had in mind. He stated clearly that there was no evidence to support the defense's contention that McPhillips had been drugged. One paper suggested an early verdict was likely because the circus would be in town the following day. After six hours the jury returned a verdict of not guilty by reason of temporary insanity. Only two jurors had supported a guilty charge.

While the verdict was lamented in local papers, the Holland City News expressed the bitterness felt in Timmer's hometown. "Murder seems to be no crime in Grand Rapids, criminals of the basest sort are set free with certificates of good character. Timmer, because he was a 'poor Dutchman' is considered of no account by Grand Rapids juries. A pretty community for honest men to dwell in."

Correspondence of Jan Janse

Jan Janse, who immigrated to Grand Rapids in 1880, corresponded regularly with Fernand Polderdijk in the Netherlandic province of Zeeland. Although focused primarily on working conditions in the west side of the city* Janse's letters often concluded with astonishing crime reports taken from local newspapers and his own experiences. The most dramatic tells what his neighbors on Myrtle Street experienced in 1880.

Let me tell you what happened to a dangerous thief after he knocked on our neighbor's door to ask for some food. These people are an older Dutch couple who live on a dairy farm near the edge of town. The mother and one son were home and gave the man something to eat. But

the son became suspicious and left to inform his father and brother who were working in the barn. Then he returned to the house and confronted the thief, asking him if he was the robber who had been frightening the neighborhood. The thief stood up and hit the young man so hard that he fell down, but then his father and brother rushed into the house; overpowered the thief, and tied him up.

Two English neighbors joined them and said that American laws allowed them to finish off dangerous thieves, especially when they defended themselves violently and then they hung him from a tree. But these Dutch people, who were not comfortable with taking such action, cut the thief down when he began to pull all sorts of funny faces. Later he regained consciousness and the police came to take him away. They discovered a gun and a knife in his boot, but he had not had a chance to use them. Another Dutch family in the area had been robbed a week before and people think that this thief did that too. Thieves of this sort usually get sent to prison for life.

Later that year Janse reported,

Last Sunday a man drowned here and another was shot to death. Their dogs had been fighting and they got so angry that the one shot the other. I'll send you a newspaper now and then when something like this happens.

A few years later, in 1883, Janse wrote about the confrontation he had had with his own neighbors. By then Janse had acquired enough land to keep a few animals.

This fall I slaughtered a beautiful pig and I have another one I'm fattening to sell this summer when the price of bacon will be high. I'm also going to buy a piglet to fatten for myself. In addition I have fifteen hens, one rooster, and two cats, but my neighbors shot my dog to death. I took them to court for that last November. They came onto my place and shot him while I was

working at the factory. They were an Englishman and an Irishman who said that my dog was chasing their sheep. I told them that they should have warned me and then I would have tied up my dog. Well, anyway, they had to pay me \$27.00 each. That penalty was not just for shooting the dog, but to cure them of their bold trespassing. They were so reckless that they shot through the window near where my wife was standing. They didn't seem to care if they had shot someone.

In 1886 Janse related two additional crime stories from Grand Rapids. A brief note said,

I also wanted to tell you that on February 26 a Frisian will be hanged. He is the father of five children and he has been in the USA for three years. He murdered his neighbor, a German widower without children.

Janse's December installment began,

I hope that you received the newspaper I sent you last year, because the seven criminals who are mentioned in that article have not yet been hanged. That was postponed until March when it will go to court again. Then, they will probably not be hanged.

There is no evidence that Jan Janse wrote about Gerrit Timmer's murder in 1883, but the newspaper account of that event could easily have been among those which Janse sent to his friend, F. Polderdijk. 6

* See Origins, XIII.2:11-12.

books

Reviews by Conrad J. Bult

The Christian School
Movement Among the Christian
Reformed Church in Northern
New Jersey: Charting the
'Americanization' of a Dutch
Calvinist Immigrant
Community, 1892-1980

Timothy VanDerWeert, M.A. Thesis.
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill.

According to Timothy VanDerWeert, New Jersey's Christian school movement can be used as a "barometer," to estimate and analyze the process of Americanization within this ethnic subculture. Poor and largely uneducated peasants from Groningen and Friesland settled in the Paterson-Passaic area and developed a genuine affection for America but remained uneasy about the area's emphasis on financial achievement, and individualism at the expense of the communal loyalty and cohesion. Moreover, here in their adopted land these folk found their staunchly held Reformed religious views at odds with others in America, people who embraced cultural novelty even when these adjustments threatened traditional social and religious ideals.

For New Jersey's Dutch-Americans, their local Reformed churches served as the focus for religious and social activity. By about 1900, additional institutions such as Christian schools, rest homes, and recreational facilities, all controlled directly or indirectly by the Reformed churches, contributed to an environment which perpetuated and strengthened the isolationist impulse of the New Jersey Holland-Americans. Consequently they did not dissolve in the American melting pot even though they appreciated America's religious freedom and economic promise.

In the first segment of VanDerWeert's thesis, 1892-1918, we meet Rev. Peter Van Vlaanderen, dominie of the First Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, who was elected president of the Holland

Reformed School Society in 1892. Fulfillment of his hopes occurred in 1919 when nineteen students attended the newly opened Christian high school. Van Vlaanderen was an ardent champion of both Christian education and isolation as a source of strength. Yet, as VanDerWeert points out, the true purpose and justification for isolation was unclear. From one viewpoint isolation preserved traditional pious values and behavior while another perspective (Abraham Kuyper's adherents) viewed isolation as a temporary strategy to prepare students for aggressive Christian action in the larger community.

As VanDerWeert asserts,

. . . While Christian school movement leaders advocated separation within the larger context of social transformation, the orthodox demanded separation to sustain traditional Reformed piety while awaiting a more otherworldly redemption. (p. 34-35)

Some New Jersey Dutch-Americans were enamored with Abraham Kuyper's success in advocating involvement in the prevailing social and political environment, but others saw little value in attempts to transform the world and were more interested in maintaining all aspects of their familiar way of life, even though they found this an increasingly impossible task during and after World War I. By 1918 the language of instruction in most Christian schools was English and in 1921 the First Christian Reformed Church of Paterson and the Prospect Park congregation voted for

English-language services. Once the language barrier was broken the Christian school became a bastion of isolation where the Reformed faith and heritage could be nurtured and passed on to future generations of young people.

The Christian school would be the place where, as one advocate said, ". . . God's Word will be the only soil and our Reformed faith the only root from which springs up a knowledge which can be a blessing to us and to our home, our church, and our people."

During the years 1919-1945, according to VanDerWeert, a consensus emerged concerning the function of Christian schools. These folk, though they now worshiped in the English language, found secular humanism, which had been their nemesis in the Old World, alive and well in America. To combat this new found foe, they found a weapon in vertical pillarization of society, a notion popular in the Netherlands after 1890. In the Netherlands pillarization established separate institutions for virtually every social function—education, labor, journalism and politics. Membership was based on confessional loyalty, i.e., Reformed, Catholic and secular, and each group sought to mold the larger society. But, in New Jersey, VanDerWeert asserts,

. . . its American version carried with it little of Kuyper's overtones of cultural engagement. On the contrary, the Paterson Christian Reformed community used this product of Kuyper's thought to justify its isolationist tendencies. (P. 61-62)

Following the generation of Gerhardus Bos (1877-1952), who served as a principal of North Fourth Street until 1948, the decades of the fifties and sixties were years of expansion and optimism. On November 26, 1953, John Hamersma Jr. (d. 1963),

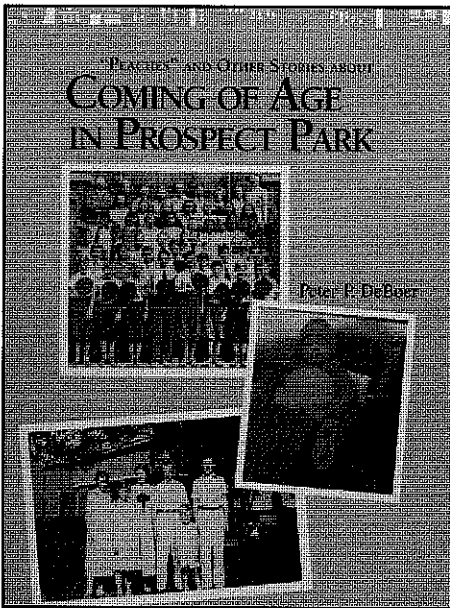
president of the Board of Directors of the newly consolidated Eastern Christian School Association, placed the cornerstone in the foundation of the new Eastern Christian High School building. During the fifties the schools grew and flourished. References to secular humanism as a rallying cry for support of Christian schools ceased or in the author's words "dried up." Though enrollment remained strong in the sixties, the community, VanDerWeert argues, simply did not accept the "positive, progressive" philosophies of Christian education propagated by its leadership.

The school year 1963-1964 with 1,855 pupils was the high point for Paterson area Christian school enrollment. By 1970-1971 it had declined to 1,662, and there was only lukewarm support for funding the education of Black students from nearby inner city neighborhoods. Instead, the Paterson community was more willing to welcome students from surrounding evangelical groups. Admission policies were revised and the words "evangelical" or "Christian" replaced "Reformed" which the author states ". . . had completely disappeared from the Association's vocabulary."

During the sixties and seventies, VanDerWeert notes, the Christian Reformed Church in northern New Jersey supported the Christian school movement because the denomination and its members were continually confronted and challenged by an energetic and aggressive secular humanism. No longer was America the religiously comfortable place it had been in the forties and fifties, a time when those who advocated Christian schools reflected American optimism and underestimated the insidious effects of materialism. The Christian schools' economic survival necessitated an alliance with those evangelicals who mirrored the values and hopes of the Paterson community. But neither

the New Jersey Dutch nor these evangelicals were greatly concerned about transforming the world the nation or the church.

Those who read this research paper may not agree with the author's ideas. Yet, his observations serve well as food for thought for those concerned with the future and purpose of the Christian school movement in Reformed communities and elsewhere. 6



Coming of Age in Prospect Park

Peter P. De Boer

Grand Rapids, MI: Pousma Books, 1996.
117 pages. \$12.95

Peter De Boer, professor of education, emeritus, spent his childhood and youth in Prospect Park, New Jersey. He attended North Fourth Street Christian School and Eastern Academy in nearby Paterson. He graduated from Calvin in 1951 and later obtained a Ph.D. in the history of education from the University of Chicago. Before coming to Calvin, where he taught for more than three decades, De Boer's experiences included teaching in Christian day schools and a few years as a Dordt College professor.

In a cheerful, light-hearted, and whimsical style, De Boer relives his years as a child and adolescent in Prospect Park, for many years a conservative Dutch enclave. The author's random reminiscences of his childhood include retribution for stealing peaches, a terrifying acquaintance with automatic flush toilets in the Second Christian Reformed Church, and not being allowed to use scissors on Sunday for fear that work would be required to clean up the left over bits of paper.

Here is De Boer's recollection of a catechism class incident:

Catechism classes could be memorable, too. For us younger members the Christian Reformed denomination would commission some pastor to write a "compendium," a shorter, more simplified though no less theologically correct version of the longer and more complicated Heidelberg Catechism. Our job would be to memorize answers to a series of questions such as this one:

"What is true faith?"

"True faith is a sure knowledge and hearty confidence that all my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake."

We rascals would give that answer special emphasis at the end. It was like being encouraged to use forbidden "street language" right in church — and we leaped at the chance! (p. 44)

Those who grew up in Prospect Park during the Depression and World War II years will share De Boer's recollections of an ethnic and religious way of life almost two generations removed from today's urban environment. As a social entity the Prospect Park De Boer knew no longer exists. For this reason, what he has to say about domestic mores, shopkeepers, teachers, the police, church services or whatever else strikes his fancy, recreates for today's reader the fabric of life in Prospect Park, a small town portrayed by De Boer in these faintly nostalgic words.

So it was that I went back, systematically thought my way back, into the Prospect Park of my boyhood. Back in the 1930's and 40's this half-mile square, hard-working blue-collar community—this urban rookery crowded with two-storied houses—consisted, ethnically, mostly of Dutch-Americans who were, religiously, more than anything else Reformed or Calvinist in the expression of their Christianity. (p. xii)

for the future

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



Boslooper-Ferwerda Service Station, 1929. Northwest corner of Fulton and Holland streets in Grand Rapids' east side, "the Brickyard" area.

The Dutch of Highland, Indiana by *David Zandstra*

Holland, Michigan in Transition by *Hero Bratt*

Friesland, Minnesota: A Little Town That Couldn't by *Robert Schoone-Jongen*

Chris Stoffel Overvoorde: Immigrant and Artist

Grand Haven — The Dutch Fishing Industry by *H.J. Brinks*

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Recollections of Janet Huyser Hoekstra — Winnie, Texas and Chicago

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Reformed Worldviews of Farming: German and Dutch by *Janel Curry-Roper*

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