

# Origins

## 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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page 9



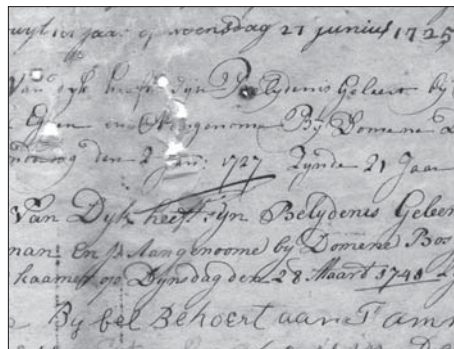
page 13

2 From the Editor

4 The Congregation of  
Tuberculosis Sufferers:  
Maxwell Christian Reformed  
Church  
*Angie Ploegstra and Paula Vander  
Hoven*

13 Early Members in the Maxwell  
Christian Reformed Church  
*Angie Ploegstra and Paula Vander  
Hoven*

22 Pacific Coast CRC Churches  
Before World War II, Part II  
*Howard B. Spaan*



page 35



page 40

33 Notes in a Seventeenth-Century  
Family Bible  
*Anne G. Bousema*

39 "Dear Father, . . ."  
*Leendert Woudstra  
translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres*

42 Book Reviews  
*Henry Baron, Conrad Bult*

46 For the Future  
*upcoming Origins articles*

47 Contributors

# from the editor . . .



## Time to Renew Your Subscription

As is our custom, this is your notice that it is time to renew your subscription. An envelope for this is included with this issue. Using this column to notify you saves the cost of a separate mailing for renewal notices. Subscriptions remain \$10 (US) per year. Gifts above \$10 are acknowledged as charitable gifts to *Origins* and we are grateful for this generosity. ♪

## This Issue

Paula Vander Hoven and Angie Ploegstra continue their indefatigable search for short-lived Dutch immigrant communities in North America. Following their earlier work on Perch Lake, Michigan, and Martin, South Dakota, this issue contains their detailed research on Maxwell, New Mexico, which was also home to the first Bethesda Sanitarium. A native of Lyn-

den, Washington, Rev. Howard Spaan continues his survey of pre-World War II Christian Reformed congregations west of the Great Plains. Anne G. Bousema, who lives in Hoevelaken (just outside of Amersfort), the Netherlands, teases out historical information from various sources in the Netherlands and compares these with those written in a family Bible and told in a family's story about that information to determine the accuracy of that story. ♪

## Available On-Line

From a variety of sources, we compiled the membership records of the South Holland, Michigan, Presbyterian Church, 1852–1867. This group was the first to leave the Reformed Church in America after the Dutch immigrants had joined the denomination in 1850. While conducting their research on the Dutch in Maxwell, New Mexico, Paula Vander Hoven and Angie Ploegstra assembled data on Dutch immigrants who joined the church there as well as those who lived in the area without joining the church. As part of our ongoing efforts

to make such data readily available, both sets of data are now available via the internet at [http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family\\_history\\_resources/soholland\\_church.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/soholland_church.htm) and [http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family\\_history\\_resources/Maxwell\\_church.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/Maxwell_church.htm); all of our on-line resources are listed at [http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family\\_history\\_resources/in\\_house\\_resources.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/in_house_resources.htm). ♪

## News from the Archives

During the summer staff members organized and opened for research approximately thirty-seven cubic feet of manuscript material. Among the larger collections are the research files of Dr. George M. Marsden, noted scholar and prolific author of American religious history; his most recent work is the multi-award winning *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*. We also processed the papers of Paul Zylstra and Tymen Hofman, both ministers in the Christian Reformed Church—the Zylstra material details his pastorates in several regions of the United States while the Hofman files detail his life-long research into the history of the Dutch in Canada and

the United States. Staff also added a significant run, fourteen cubic feet, of the various publications produced by Faith Alive Resources, the publishing ministry of the Christian Reformed Church that also provided resources for the Reformed Church in America. The addition contains Sunday school and catechetical material for students and instructors. We also processed a significant addition to the records of the Calvin College HPERDS (Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Dance, and Sport) Department. Included are records of the various inter-collegiate athletics programs.

Our volunteers continue working on the translation from Dutch into English of the minutes from Manhattan, Montana, CRC and Holland, Michigan's Central Avenue CRC. Indexing of *The Banner* vital records continues. The collating and keying into a database the information on post-World War II Dutch immigrants in Canada was completed and is currently being proofread.

Accessions during the summer included the Marsden collection (which was processed, as noted above); the

papers of H. Evan Runner, noted Christian philosopher and member of the college faculty, 1950-1981; fifteen cubic feet of records of the CRC Chaplaincy office; nine cubic feet from Classis Rocky Mountain; and four cubic feet from the office of the Calvin College Dean of the Chapel. ♣

#### **Publications**

*Origins* currently has two book-length manuscripts under consideration. A history of the CRC mission effort in China, 1920-1950, is being revised by the author, based on comments from four readers. The extensively annotated and translated minutes of the CRC synodical meetings (then called classical or general assembly meetings), 1857-1880, are also being reviewed this summer. These will appear in the same series as the recently published biographies of Douwe Vander Werp and H. J. Kuiper. ♣

#### **Staff**

Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives; Hendrina Van Spronsen is the office coordinator; Wendy Blankespoor is librarian and cataloging

archivist; Melanie Vander Wal is departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt is field agent and assistant archivist. Our capable student assistants are Cyndi Feenstra, and Dana Verhulst. Our volunteers include Willene De Groot, Rev. Henry De Mots, Ed Geritsen, Fred Greidanus, Ralph Haan, Dr. Henry Ippel, Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit W. Sheeres, and Janet S. Sheeres. ♣



Richard H. Harms

# The Congregation of Tuberculosis Sufferers<sup>1</sup>: Maxwell Christian Reformed Church

Angie Ploegstra and Paula Vander Hoven

In 1893 a core of about ten Dutch families—most of them in their twenties and thirties, with young children, and a few single people—formed a Christian Reformed church in Maxwell, New Mexico. The small congregation toiled through fifteen years of illness, death, land swindles, struggles for water, and ultimate failure far from the concentrations of the denomination's membership. They also established a tuberculosis sanitarium<sup>2</sup> and founded what is reputed to be the first Christian school in the West. Theirs is also the story of people persevering in an alien land, many of them ill with tuberculosis, and leaving a strong legacy.

Along with South Africa and the European Alps, the Maxwell area was one of several areas that came to the attention of Dutch tubercular patients and their families, particularly from the province of Groningen, during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Of these various locations, that in the Maxwell Land Grant, also known as the Beaubien-Miranda Land Grant, was selected to help the patients.<sup>3</sup> During the early 1840s the Mexican government had granted more than 1.8 million acres in Colfax County, New Mexico, and adjoining Las Animas County, Colorado, to Charles Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda for agricultural use. Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell, a native of Illinois, married Luz Beaubien and by 1865 had bought

out the other heirs to the property. In 1870 Maxwell sold the land to a group of English financiers who organized the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company, which went into foreclosure in 1879. A group from the Netherlands, including Samuel Van Houten, a lawyer from the province of Groningen and in 1894 a member of the Dutch cabinet, formed the Maxwell Land Grant Company and purchased the land, with headquarters in Amsterdam and offices in New Mexico and Colorado, and operated mining, timber, coal, farming, and irrigation projects, as well as plaster and cement manufacturing. By 1960, the company had sold off most of its land and left New Mexico, but the Maxwell Land Grant Company continued to exist in the Netherlands under the name of De Maxwell Petroleum Holding N. V. As part of its nineteenth-century sales operation, the Dutch company sold parcels to Dutch immigrants.

There had been forays into the high, dry country of the American Southwest by Dutch in 1889. Some ministers and schoolteachers had spoken favorably about the area, but two people who came to investigate found it to be an arid place where water was so scarce that it was selling for five cents a glass.<sup>4</sup> Writing in *De Grondwet* in November 1889, they urged caution, "Visit the lands yourself. Don't believe land agents, *dominies*, or schoolteachers."<sup>5</sup>

Angie Ploegstra, from Zeeland, Michigan, and Paula Vander Hoven, from Scholcraft, Michigan, have become regular contributors to *Origins*. Their previous work has been on *Perch Lake, Michigan* and *Martin, South Dakota*.



*Pier Bakker, as a seminary student, served the early Dutch immigrants in Maxwell, New Mexico. He was ordained into the ministry in October 1893 and died twenty-two months later. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

But two families and five single men did come, lured by land agents and promises of good farming.<sup>6</sup> There was talk of organizing a congregation as early as the summer of 1891, under the leadership of student pastor Pier Bakker. But the families stayed only long enough to realize they had been swindled, and those who remained were too few to form a congregation.<sup>7</sup> By 1893, after others had arrived, there again was talk of forming a church. The Interior Mission Committee of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) sent a promising young seminary student, Gerrit Berkhof, himself a tuberculosis sufferer, to preach and conduct meetings in August 1893.<sup>8</sup> Under his leadership the group successfully petitioned Classis Iowa to be organized as a church. Rev. Evert Bos, of Luctor, Kansas, organized the congregation on Thanksgiving Day 1893. The first elders were Jan Joling and Jan Zwier, and the first deacons were L. M. Aardema and Hendrik Ungersma. Berkhof returned to Grand Rapids to graduate in the



*The oldest of four brothers, Gerrit Berkhof (1865–1894), deferred his dream of teaching and began working for the John Widdicomb Furniture Company to help support the family. After several years of factory work, he became ill with tuberculosis. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

spring of 1894 and was appointed to teach at the Theological School.<sup>9</sup> But because of deteriorating health he returned to Maxwell in August 1894, and died there on 21 November.<sup>10</sup>

In October 1895, Idzerd Van Dellen was called to be the first pastor of the congregation, and would be its only pastor. His theological education, begun at the Theological School in

Kampen, the Netherlands, was completed in Grand Rapids. His fiancée, Margaretha Enter, a tuberculosis sufferer had preceded him to Maxwell in 1893 at the age of twenty-five, on the advice of her physician in Groningen, and very much against the wishes of her family. The two were married in New Mexico in September 1895.

### **The Congregation**

The members of the Jan Zwier family were stalwarts of that young congregation. Zwier, fifty-six when the church was founded, was by all accounts the emotional and spiritual leader of the group.<sup>11</sup> He and Wijntje (Winnie) Zwier and their children arrived in January 1893 from the failed Dutch community in Alamosa, Colorado, because of the health of their daughter. Their home was a simple adobe structure with “no carpet and no lace curtains.” For four years after its organization on that Thanksgiving Day in 1893, the congregation gathered weekly in the adobe house, using Winnie Zwier’s sewing machine case as a pulpit. Catechism classes were conducted in that house and consistory meetings were frequently held in their home as well. Almost all the families had young children, so worship was a noisy (and crowded)



*The Maxwell Christian Reformed Church, built with adobe bricks. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

event. Children sometimes escaped their parents' care and crawled up to where the young pastor Van Dellen was preaching.

Initially the elders had thought of conducting Sunday worship services in the soon-to-be-built sanitarium.<sup>12</sup> But when the Maxwell Land Grant Company offered to give the church forty acres for a building, they began collecting funds. Most of the Dutch residents of the community contributed something, even some not associated with the church. The \$350 collected was combined with \$125 borrowed from the denomination's Church Help Fund. In March 1897, Deacon Pieter Zwier offered to build an adobe church for \$400, but it was stipulated that the building was to be completed by November of that year. It was located south of the Zwier farm in Section 26.<sup>13</sup> He finished two weeks ahead of schedule, but \$68 over budget however, and was willing to wait until the next year for the additional funds.<sup>14</sup> They selected a shingled roof over one made of tin, and purchased a coal stove and chairs.<sup>15</sup> The congregation worshipped in its new home for the first time on 24 October 1897. Proudly writing in *De Wachter* in November of that year, Van Dellen pointed out that it was a unique congregation of "almost exclusively



*The John Zwier house in Maxwell, where church services were held and which was shared with the new pastor and his wife until the parsonage was completed. John Zwier is in the foreground, feeding the chickens. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

tuberculosis patients" worshipping in a unique, "mud brick" church building. In 1901 the consistory purchased a home for use as a parsonage, briefly owned by the Dragt family.<sup>16</sup> After having shared a home with the Zwier and Folkerts families, the Van Dellens lived in it only briefly, as he accepted a call to Luctor, Kansas, in January 1902.<sup>17</sup>

The pastor (when they had one)

and the elders and deacons of the small church took seriously their oversight of spiritual matters. They visited a member who didn't attend worship services. They tried hard to learn why one member declined to receive the sacrament of communion. They agonized over baptized members who did not attend worship and repeatedly sent letters of concern. They counseled a woman who absented herself from worship because she wanted to "keep the peace in her family." They pondered whether to baptize a young man who was "mentally challenged as a result of falling off a horse," and decided to concur with the advice of Classis to do so, since before his accident he "had given clear indications of having made the right choice." When financial pledges to the church weren't honored, they contacted the delinquent members. They took up offerings for the Theological School in Grand Rapids, and accounted for funds on hand. The elders attended Classis meetings



*Parsonage of the Maxwell CRC. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

when possible, due to the long and expensive travel involved. And when they had no pastor they read sermons during worship and conducted catechism classes for as many as eighteen students.

The elders and deacons of that outpost church also took on tasks not common for most of their fellow office holders in established churches. They supervised the education in the Christian school when it was begun and worked hard to establish the Bethesda Sanitarium. This small group of men also became a clearing house of sorts for young single Dutch people who arrived sick and seeking housing. They placed the new arrivals in members' homes with the proviso that they work as they were able, and pay a modest amount for room and board (generally \$3 per week). The elders and deacons were called upon to arbitrate financial disputes when boarders failed to pay their rent, and tried to resolve other differences between hosts and boarders. When what little money patients had brought with them was used up, the elders and deacons sought funds from generous individuals and managed these accounts. In one case, John Schoolland, already in the Netherlands for a visit, was asked to call upon the family of a penniless patient and seek financial assistance. He brought back the grand sum of \$6, from which some of his travel expenses were deducted.

Many Dutch immigrants, whose names were not recorded in the consistory minutes, came to Maxwell with advanced stages of tuberculosis. They may also have come under the care of the consistory. The nearby *Raton Gazette* reported in May 1898 that Jennie Smith of Grand Rapids had died, "The parents moved last December hoping that the climate would improve her health. They are to return home to bury the dead. They leave many friends and have our sym-

pathies." In January 1899 the *Raton Gazette* reported that John Nykamp of Roseland, Illinois, arrived to visit his son, who was seriously ill at the sanitarium. The same newspaper reported the son's death two months later.

Official church membership, as reported in the *jaarboekjes* (yearbooks), fluctuated between a low of eight families in 1895 to a high of forty in 1903. In 1898, a good year, there were eighty-four members, of whom thirty-five were adults. When the church was disbanding in 1908 there were fifty-four members—eighteen adults in ten households. Most of the single members were young men. The 1900 census lists 225 people in Precinct #18 of Colfax County, New Mexico, including children and patients at the sanitarium, about half of whom had recognizable Dutch surnames. Out of these, sixty-nine were a part of the church that year.

In the midst of the very hard work and suffering, there were also good times. A caravan of buggies and horses would set out for congregational picnics in the foothills. "The stronger ones climbed the hills, while the weaker ones remained below. And we sang our Dutch psalms, which echoed through the valley below."<sup>18</sup> Often families invited the single men for Sunday dinner, and that was the occasion for good times together and sometimes hilarity.<sup>19</sup>

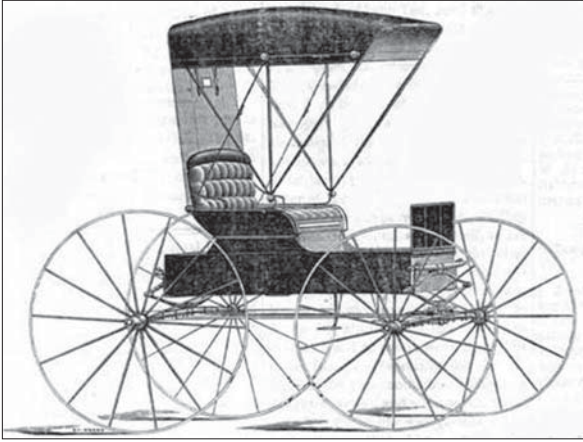
Young Pastor Van Dellen (twenty-four when he arrived) was often overwhelmed.<sup>20</sup> He was responsible for the spiritual lives and pastoral care of a group of mostly young people, some very sick, all far from family members and struggling with a strange culture, unfamiliar methods of farming, and trouble over water rights. With no doctor or registered nurse in the sanitarium, he supervised the workers there and generated its operating funds. He was often called upon to perform legal duties when

parishioners died far from home and from next of kin. He was surrounded by death, dissension, and tragedy. His wife was frail and at times the doctors feared her death was imminent. The *Raton Gazette* noted in April 1899 that "Mrs. Van Dellen was seriously ill in the sanitarium and not expected to live. Her husband was absent, in Kansas for a stay of some weeks, but was telegraphed and returned to her bedside to see her somewhat recovered." In the end it was too much for him and, as noted earlier, in 1902 he accepted a call to Luctor, Kansas.

His departure was a blow to the congregation. By 13 May 1903 the council decided that "no effort will be made to call a minister because of the dark future we face." The small group of elders and deacons kept at it valiantly for six more years. They rotated responsibilities, watched good leaders leave, welcomed a few newcomers and, finally, decided to disband. Water rights for farming on the high desert had always been an issue, and poor harvests plagued them in the end. The last consistory meeting was held on 4 December 1908. Harm Boxum, John Van Wijk, and John Brandsma were left to arrange for the sale of properties, send membership papers of the remaining few to the Denver congregation, and account for the distribution of final funds. Idzerd Van Dellen was there as classical counselor to lend support in the final tasks. He wrote movingly of both his sadness and his gratitude to God. He commended the elders who, since his departure, "have served the congregation to the very end with great devotion and zeal."

### **The Christian School**

During those few years the Dutch of Maxwell also began a Christian day school, thanks to Jan Zwier who knew a good opportunity when he saw one. He and his wife Winnie were



At one time the classroom of the Maxwell Christian School was an open-air top buggy, similar to the one pictured. Mattie Hooegeboom taught the Jan and Winnie Zwier children. Image courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

studious, well-educated people with school-aged children. When Mattie Hooegeboom, a young Christian school teacher from Grand Rapids, Michigan, arrived in Maxwell in April 1897, seeking relief from tuberculosis, they negotiated an arrangement with her whereby she would receive room and board in exchange for teaching three of their children “according to the Word of God.”<sup>21</sup> The Zwiers were used to having lodgers, since the Van Dellens, after their marriage, had shared the Zwier home, but had since moved out to make room for Peter, born in 1896. By the time Hooegeboom moved in there were seven Zwiers occupying that small, simple adobe house. Other parents requested Christian education for their children and, likely in the summer or fall of 1897, the school opened with four children.<sup>22</sup>

At first Hooegeboom taught in the Zwier home, sometimes in a top buggy,<sup>23</sup> and sometimes in the open air. But, as the class size grew these accommodations became unworkable. In January 1899, when the enrollment reached twelve, the consistory granted the school use of the consistory room and a table and a few chairs. And among all its other duties, the consis-

tory took over supervision of the education. The *Raton Gazette* of 23 February 1899 noted, “The Holland settlers have a successful school at present, which is in session in their church building.” For three years Hooegeboom taught her students there. But the room was located on the north side of the church and lighting was poor and the space again became a problem. In 1902 a school was built for fifteen students; its peak enrollment.<sup>24</sup> It was a wooden building and was most likely built on

Benne Folkerts’ farm, in section 25, about half a mile from the church.<sup>25</sup> Hooegeboom’s health did not improve in the New Mexico desert. She returned to Grand Rapids in February 1903, having taught in the outpost school for five years.<sup>26</sup> She died in February 1905, almost twenty seven years of age.

After Mattie Hooegeboom left, the school seems to have struggled. In fact, the entire little enclave seems to have struggled. The Brands family had left for Kansas in 1902, followed by the Schoollands and the Folkerts for Alamosa, Colorado, and the Oldenburgers and the Ungersmas for Montana. Cornelius Lodewijk taught thirteen students for a year following Hooegeboom’s departure. Lodewijk stayed in Maxwell until at least January 1906,<sup>27</sup> so it seems likely that he continued to teach. The Van Wijk family had chosen to settle in Maxwell in part because of the Christian school there,<sup>28</sup> and they remained. So did the Brandsma and Boxum/Smit families, and the orphaned children of Simon and Reina Zwier lived with their grandparents in Maxwell until the congregation dissolved. The last two *jaarboekje* entries in 1908 and 1909 indicate that the school was in

session only in the summer and that Effie Zwier<sup>29</sup> was the teacher. She went on to teach at Christian schools in Chicago, Grand Rapids, and Paterson, New Jersey.<sup>30</sup>

No list of students is available, but in addition to the three Zwier children (most likely Simon, Effie, and Jennie), Mattie and Jim Schoolland reported having been students there,<sup>31</sup> and it is likely that their sister Jeanette also attended, as did Martha and John Brands. Martha recalled that the classes met in the adobe church and outdoors when the weather was nice, and that they were conducted in Dutch.<sup>32</sup> The “Yearbook of the Free Christian Schools in America, 1923-1924” makes the point that it was the small and by that time long-closed Maxwell School that had earned the honor of being the first school for Christian instruction west of the Mississippi River.<sup>33</sup> But Peter De Klerk notes that a Christian school had been formed in Rilland, Colorado, on 13 February 1893 with thirty-five students and Feike Zijlstra as teacher.<sup>34</sup> That ill-fated community dissolved in November of that same year.

However this may be, Jan Zwier and Mattie Hooegeboom and those few Dutch families are heroes in the history of Christian education. Their persistence in the face of illness, homesickness, death, inhospitable conditions, and very slim resources was an inspiration to those who followed.

### The Bethesda Consumptive Relief Sanitarium

The sanitarium on “a beautiful piece of ridge land”<sup>35</sup> gave hope to many people stricken with tuberculosis, then also called the *great white plague*. A Dr. Kooij, a lung specialist from the city of Groningen in the Netherlands, promoted the area around Maxwell, New Mexico, as a place to recover from tuberculosis.<sup>36</sup> The air was drier





The north façade of the Bethesda Sanitarium in Maxwell, shortly after it was completed. Patients spent many hours on the large porch on the south side where they were sheltered from the wind. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

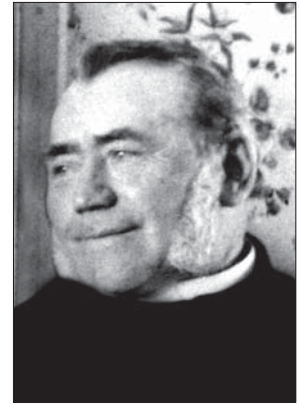


Maxwell colonist on the north porch of the sanitarium. Only Rev. and Mrs. Van Dellen, third and fourth from the right in the front row, are identified. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

on the plateau, 6,000 feet above sea level, on the Rocky Mountains and was preferable to Davos, Switzerland, or Transvaal, South Africa, other areas for Dutch tubercular patients to seek recovery during the late nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen also encouraged tuberculosis sufferers to come to Maxwell in the 18 December 1895 issue of the *De Wachter*. He touted the clean, pure, thin air and the Christian Reformed church with a pastor there. He listed the names

of several tuberculosis sufferers and that of his father and Rev. E. Bos as references to his claims.<sup>38</sup> Professor Henricus Beuker, of the Theological School, added a plea for a society to be formed and a sanitarium to be built.<sup>39</sup>

Patients came from the Netherlands, Michigan, Illinois, and New Jersey.<sup>40</sup> Initially the patients stayed in the homes of the congregation, but few families could provide the necessary care; their homes were small and



Born in Germany, Henricus Beuker served churches in both Germany and the Netherlands until accepting a call to the Allen Avenue CRC in Muskegon, Michigan, in 1893. He and his wife were strong supporters of Christian hospitals such as Bethesda and Pine Rest. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

primitive, and it was advisable to keep the patients out of homes with small children.<sup>41</sup> The consistory minutes of 3 February 1896 have the first mention of a sanitarium. A society was formed under the direction of Professor Beuker, who had been active in an organization of Christian health care institutions in the Netherlands.<sup>42</sup> He had seen first-hand the benefits such institutions could bring.<sup>43</sup>

With growing concern about the health conditions in Maxwell the consistory at its meeting of 1 February 1897 asked the newly formed Bethesda Society to send someone on a speaking tour to raise funds for a sanitarium. The society responded by asking the consistory to let Van Dellen do the fundraising over a period of three months.<sup>44</sup> The consistory granted the request and Van Dellen went east, making presentations in Christian Reformed and Reformed churches and taking collections for the building of Bethesda in Maxwell.<sup>45</sup> The expenses were \$100, but

the congregation offset other travel expenses by having Van Dellen attend a classical meeting in Iowa on his way home. The campaign was successful and for several weeks *De Wachter* listed the generous support of several individuals and organizations. Van Dellen also commented in his autobiography, “that the people contributed liberally for Bethesda.” The “Society Bethesda” was incorporated with capital stock of \$1,000 on 14 October 1897. In November 1898 the Society also borrowed an additional \$700 from a man in Iowa.<sup>46</sup> The northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of section 33 was purchased from Henry and Jitske Bakker for \$620, about three miles west of Maxwell on County Road 26.<sup>47</sup> The *Raton Gazette*, on 9 June 1898, notes that the Society had let a contract for 20,000 adobe bricks.

The north-facing Bethesda Sanitarium opened on 20 December 1898 with four patients who paid three to six dollars a week, but everyone received equal treatment. Dr. Adrian Holterman, a Dutch physician, provided the medical care.<sup>48</sup> There was a back porch made of cement (on the south side of the building, 76 feet by 8 feet), where the patients could

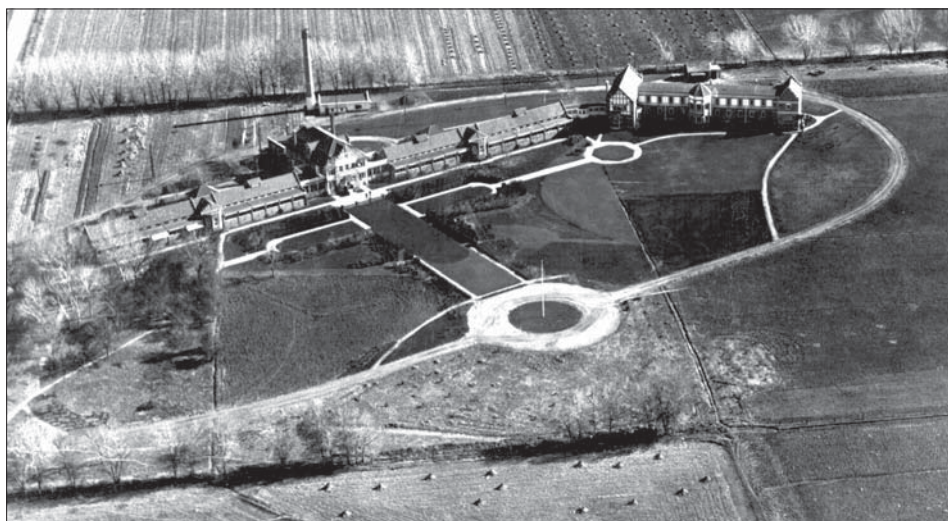
relax in the sun while sheltered from the wind. There were rooms for the patients and personnel—a sitting room, a dining room, and a kitchen. It had its own farm which produced milk and eggs.<sup>49</sup> George and Anna Dokter Branderhorst were the directors. They were married in Michigan on 30 November 1898 and immediately returned to Maxwell to take on their duties. According to John Van Wyke in a letter written to his wife, they probably only held that position for a year.<sup>50</sup>

The 1900 Colfax County Census Records list Van Dellen as the superintendent, Mrs. Van Dellen and Henrietta Homkes as housekeepers, and eleven patients.<sup>51</sup> Sometime in the early 1900s, Neeltje Zwiers took over the management of the sanitarium, possibly after the departure of Rev. Van Dellen in 1902.<sup>52</sup> The county clerk’s land records indicate that on 21 December 1904 the sanitarium was sold to Peter and Neeltje Zwiers for \$300. It’s not clear how long Bethesda kept functioning but it had closed when the church was dissolved and the last remaining families left Maxwell by the end of 1908.

Many patients came when their disease was too far advanced and there

was little chance for a cure. Many returned home to die or are buried in the Dutch section of Maxwell cemetery, most in unmarked graves.<sup>53</sup> Many of the patients were young and far from home and needed someone to lean on. Often people spent all their money to get to Maxwell and needed financial support from the church after they arrived. Van Dellen wrote, “Too much was expected of me and of the small group of brethren in Maxwell, who were functioning as the executive committee to assist me.”<sup>54</sup> Bethesda Sanitarium in Maxwell set the example for the new Bethesda which opened in 1910. Bethesda in Denver was founded on the same ideals and principles as Bethesda Maxwell and it inherited the assets of \$500 from Bethesda Maxwell.

Today the cement steps and part of the foundation of the south porch remain and the present owners use the foundation as a patio. Apparently the building burned a few years after the closing.<sup>55</sup> Those early Dutch settlers in Maxwell, so many of them ill themselves, welcomed and housed and cared for the sick and penniless and so provided a vibrant model for the church’s ministry. This small group in Maxwell brought spiritual and physical benefits to a number of people, which may be the greatest legacy of those struggling few. Meindert Bosch, long-time Chief Executive Officer of Bethesda in Denver, makes the point that diaconal ministry among the poor and ill was revitalized in Maxwell and defined the role of deacons today.<sup>56</sup>



*The efforts to establish a tuberculosis sanitarium moved from Maxwell to Denver, Colorado, in 1910. The facility, pictured here in the 1920s, served until the mid-1980s. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

## Endnotes

1. Title of an article by Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen which appeared in *De Wachter* on 3 November 1897; translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres.
2. A long-term medical facility, such as Bethesda, can be spelled *sanitarium*, *sanatorium*, or *sanitorium*. The facility in Maxwell used the first spelling, while the one in Denver used the second, but the words were used interchangeably. For consistency, the first spelling will be used in these articles.
3. Originally the town was known as Maxwell City, but the name has since been shortened to Maxwell.
4. Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1955), 429.
5. *Ibid.*, 430.
6. Hendrik Ruuls, Jan Postma, Willem Renselaar, Willem Feller, Jacob Pijper, the Klaas Fongers family and the Jan Joling family.
7. A persistent problem in the large Maxwell Land Grant was squatters, who assumed the land belonged to the federal government. A number of these early settlers, including some of the Dutch, “bought land” from these illegal squatters, only to be forced to leave by the true owner, the land company.
8. Consistory minutes introduction, p. 7; translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres, Maxwell CRC Collection, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Hereafter the minutes will be cited as “Consistory minutes” with the date.
9. Now Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College.
10. Harms, Richard H., “A Dream Not Realized—Gerrit Berkhof never had the opportunity to teach,” *Calvin College Spark* (Winter 2002), 12. He left behind a fiancée, Martha Dijkhuis, his parents, and brothers, including Louis Berkhof, who taught for many years at Calvin Theological Seminary, and Jan, also of Maxwell.
11. Information provided by Jolene Klynsma Vande Kamp, April 2006, and Wilma Westerman Brouwer, July 2007.
12. Consistory minutes, 3 March 1897; translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres.
13. Consistory minutes, 4 November 1895; translated by Janet Sjaarda Sheeres.
14. Consistory minutes, March 1897; translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres.
15. Shingles were selected because “many people who have knowledge of this say that because of the heat [in summer] one could not endure being inside, and also because it tends to make too much of a racket when it rains and is windy, which can be so bad that people might not be able to hear the minister when he preaches.” Besides which, a shingle roof was cheaper.
16. Consistory minutes, 15 January 1901; translated by Janet Sjaarda Sheeres.
17. Van Dellen, Idzerd, *In God’s Crucible*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), 65.
18. *Ibid.*, 64.
19. The Schoolland Family Tree: Family of J. B. and Trintjie Schoolland, 1995 edition, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
20. Van Dellen, *In God’s Crucible*, 63.
21. *Ibid.*, 64.
22. Aue, C., writing in *Yearbook of the Free Christian Schools in America*, National Union of Christian Schools (1923-1924), 133; states that the school opened in 1898. It is more likely to think that it opened soon after Mattie Hoozeboom arrived in 1897 according to the letter from her to “Esteemed Friend,” written from Maxwell, dated 29 April 1897, held by Ken Van Dellen.
23. “Maxwell, New Mexico, Reminiscences” an undated document (possibly by Mattie Schoolland) in the Cornelius Witt file, Archives, Calvin College.
24. Aue, C., “*Historische schets aangaande het Chr. Lager Onderwijs in het Westen: Bijblad van Onze Toekomst*,” 13 June 1923; translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres.
25. As indicated in a handwritten note on an untitled and unsigned document in the Cornelius Witt files in the Archives, Calvin College.
26. Aue concludes that she returned to Grand Rapids in 1902. A handwritten family note supplied by Ken Van Dellen indicates that it was February 1903.
27. His name appears in the consistory minutes of 15 January 1906. Translated by Janet Sjaarda Sheeres.
28. Van Wyke, Millie, *A Dutch Romance . . . An American Dream* (Denver, 1995), 169.
29. Daughter of John and Winnie and in all likelihood one of the first students.
30. And at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, according to Wilma Westerman Brouwer.
31. “Maxwell, New Mexico, Reminiscences,” and “The Schoolland Story, 1972” unpublished family history supplied by John Weston Schoolland.
32. “The Childhood History of Martha Brands Cook,” 30 April 1976, supplied by JoAnne Brands Baron.
33. Aue, C., is the presumed author of this chapter “Schools of the West,” 133-147. Aue makes the same point in *Historische schets*.
34. De Klerk, Peter, “The Ecclesiastical Struggles of the Rilland and Crook Christian Reformed Churches in Colorado in 1893,” *Perspectives on the Christian Reformed Church: Studies in Its History, Theology and Ecumenicity – Presented in Honor of John Henry Kromminga at His Retirement as President of Calvin Theological Seminary*, eds. Peter De Klerk and Richard R. De Ridder (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 83.
35. “Maxwell News,” *Raton Gazette*, Raton, New Mexico, 3.
36. Bosch, Meindert, *Bridges Across the Years: Ninety Years of History, The Bethesda Hospital Association, Denver, Colorado* (Denver: Bethesda PsychHealth System, Inc., 1988), 34.
37. Van Dellen, *In God’s Crucible*, 44.
38. Rev. Lubbert Van Dellen ordained his son Idzerd in Maxwell. Idzerd Van Dellen, *In God’s Crucible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), 61; in October 1893, Rev. Bos was appointed by Classis Iowa to help the people in Maxwell organize the church.
39. Van Dellen, Idzerd, “History of Bethesda Sanatorium,” *Bethesda Bulletin*, February 1943.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. Prof. H. Beuker, President; Prof. G. E. Boer, Vice President; Rev. P. Ekster, Secretaris; Rev. I. Van Dellen, Adj. Secretaris; Mr. W. H. van Leeuwen, Penningm; Mr. W. Brink, Adj. Penningm; Rev. E. R. Haan; Rev. E. Breen; Mr. J. H. Boswinkel. The 1901 *Jaarboekje* also lists John Schoolland and John Zwier.
43. Van Dellen, “History of Bethesda Sanatorium.”
44. Bosch, *Bridges Across the Years*, 35.
45. Psychopathic Hospitals at Cutlerville, Michigan; Sanatorium at Goffle Hill, New Jersey; and the second

Bethesda in Denver were all joint efforts between the Christian Reformed and Reformed denominations, Van Dellen, *In God's Crucible*, 61.

46. Van Wyke, *A Dutch Romance*, 180.

47. Colfax County Land Records, Raton, New Mexico, Courthouse, Book P, 269.

48. Dr. Holterman came from Kansas with Dr. Speckman, also from the Netherlands, and several of the Dutch families who lived in Maxwell. "The Childhood History of Martha Brands Cook," an unpublished history dated 30 April 1976. Supplied by JoAnne Brands Baron, 3 November 2007.

49. Bosch, *Bridges Across the Years*, 36.

50. Van Wyke, *A Dutch Romance*, 190.

51. Jacob and Gertie Dragt, Clarence Vander Wies, Roel De Boer, Everett Vander Woude, Eelke Wierenga, John Klynsma, Arthur De Haan, Gerrit Faber, Nicholas Stavinga, Heino Pothof.

52. Conversations with Alida Postma Dekker, Betty Schaap, and Alvin Smit, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Neeltje.

53. Several years ago Maxwell Cemetery marked formerly unmarked graves with white metal crosses. Most of these white crosses are in the Dutch section of the cemetery.

54. Van Dellen, *In God's Crucible*, 62.

55. Bosch, *Bridges Across the Years*, 41.

56. *Ibid.*, 37.

# Early Members in the Maxwell Christian Reformed Church

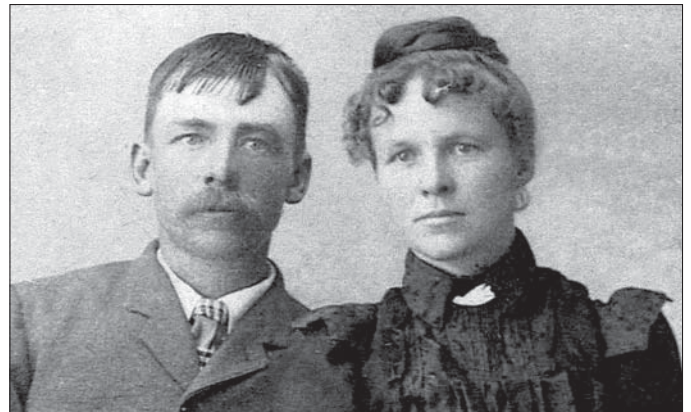
Angie Ploegstra and Paula Vander Hoven

In the 4 February 1890 issue of *De Grondwet* Hendrik Ruuls<sup>1</sup> wrote that the prospects for a settlement in Maxwell, New Mexico, were excellent, the soil seemed fertile, and there was sufficient water for irrigation. His only regret was that there was “no church and no Dutch neighbors I can visit occasionally.” As it turned out, even a brand new church and an influx of Dutch neighbors were not enough to keep Ruuls in Maxwell, for by late 1893 he had returned to the Netherlands. The experiences of subsequent Dutch immigrants to Maxwell mirrored those of Ruuls. Thirty-five-year-old Willem Feller had arrived before Ruuls, around 1889. He farmed in partnership with another bachelor, Wiebo Smit. Feller left in July 1903 to settle in Leavings (later Granum), Alberta, Canada.<sup>2</sup>

As happened elsewhere, attempting to lure families to the Maxwell area, much was promised. About 1890, the Jan and Roelfje Joling family came on the land agent promises of good farming land. “But it wasn’t. It was just desert,” so the family left in the fall of 1894 for Iowa, leaving behind their eighteen-year-old daughter Helen who had married Onea Nauta.<sup>3</sup> Another

early settler lured in 1890 was twenty-five-year-old Jan Postma. “There were many land speculators moving through cities, and Grand Rapids was no exception. Many Dutch people were targeted with promises of a great ‘paradise’ to be settled.”<sup>4</sup> In an early letter sent home he reported that though it was a hard life, he had made \$800 on his first harvest. At Postma’s urging his cousin, Hays Oldenburger, arrived in Maxwell on 17 March 1893, accompanied by his fiancée, Reintje Postma.<sup>5</sup> Less than a month later Jan died of mountain fever. The Dutch community mourned Postma’s death. Jan Van Houten,<sup>6</sup> Onea Nauta, and Willem Feller appraised and sold his belongings for \$802.<sup>7</sup> His final expenses were subtracted from that amount, including a coffin for \$8 and a grave for \$5.<sup>8</sup>

A landowner in Maxwell had promised Klaas and Kate Wormnest a



Onea Nauta and wife Helen Joling. The Joling family came to Maxwell with promises of good farming. The promises were empty and the family soon left, but Helen had met and married Onea, and remained. Photo courtesy of Charles Ray and Connie Nauta.

job and a home if they made the trek from Grand Rapids. But when they arrived in about 1890 there was neither a job nor a home, and they stayed only briefly.<sup>9</sup>

Willem Renselaar, Jacob Pijper (Piper), and the Klaus Fongers family all arrived some time in the early 1890s. The Fongers stayed only briefly, Renselaar left in the summer of 1893 for Iowa,<sup>10</sup> and Pijper married Elizabeth Nauta and later moved with that family to Johnson Mesa.

### Charter Members

Of the early settlers, the Ruuls, Pijper, Feller, and Joling families joined with others to comprise the thirteen families who were charter members of the Maxwell Christian Reformed Church. Almost every family had come to New Mexico because the health of a family member was compromised by tuberculosis. Others—men and women—were unmarried tubercular patients in their teens and twenties, some accompanied by family members or friends. They came, most of them, preparing to stay. They acquired land and started farming in an inhospitable place; then studied crop rotation and the mysteries of irrigation ditches; they farmed cooperatively.

Idzerd Van Dellen, the pastor of the congregation, and his wife Margaretha Enter came because of her health. While engaged and in the Netherlands, she moved to Maxwell and he followed.

Jan “John” and Wijntje “Winnie” (De Jong) Zwier and their children had arrived in January 1893 from the failed Dutch community in Alamosa, Colorado. They were leaders in the congregation and John Zwier died on 2 May 1908, as the church was in the process of disbanding. He was almost seventy-one and had had piloted the young church through numerous hardships. In December of that year

Winnie disposed of their property and moved to Denver.

Harm “Henry” Westerman came in the summer of 1892 at the age of twenty-two, due to ill health. The family story is that Van Dellen told Westerman, “There is an attractive widow in Luctor, Kansas, with a quarter section of land and a son.”<sup>11</sup> She was Hattie Schemper Sprik, and her son was Albert. Westerman married her, and she and her son moved to Maxwell.

Lykele M. Aardema came from Ureterp, the Netherlands, in 1892 for his health. At forty-five he was one of the oldest of the settlers and served as both an elder and a deacon. He left Maxwell late in 1898 for Alamosa, Colorado, and died in the spring of 1903 in Hospers, Iowa, having had a relapse of “the old ailment.”<sup>12</sup>

After Jan Postma’s death, Hays Oldenburger and Reintje Postma debated whether to remain in Maxwell, especially since there had been little rain in the spring of 1893. They prayed “that the Lord will be our spiritual guide,” and stayed.<sup>13</sup> Hays was twenty-six when they arrived in March 1893, and Reintje had just turned eighteen. The departure and trip across the ocean had been stressful. Reintje’s family was much opposed to her marriage on the grounds that Hays’s family was of a lower social and economic class. Hays’s father was vehemently opposed to his son’s plans to immigrate and refused to say goodbye to him. The family story is that as he was leaving, Hays tied a handkerchief around a tree in the yard, as a symbol that he would return. He never did, and the hand-



*Idzerd Van Dellen had emigrated because his fiancée, Margaretha Enter, left for New Mexico after contracting tuberculosis. They married in 1894 and she lived to be eighty years old. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

kerchief remained in the tree until it rotted away, many years later.<sup>14</sup> Once settled and married, Hays worked, in succession, for Dirk Boersma, Hendrik Ruuls, and Willem Feller.

By 1894 the Oldenburgers were living on the 140-acre farm rented from Dominie Ale Buursma and were doing quite well with nine horses, ten chickens, twenty-seven pigs, and a hired hand.<sup>15</sup> The Oldenburgers remained in Maxwell for ten years, during which time they acquired their own land and lived in a home they built themselves, with two rooms and a latched cellar. Hays was very active in church leadership. They moved to Montana in 1904.

Bart and Jetske “Jessie” (Anema) Nauta arrived in Maxwell in 1890 with seven of their eleven children.<sup>16</sup> They also had been lured by the Maxwell Land Grant Company advertising “the most beautiful and most fertile soil in Colorado and New Mexico,” and the promise of a free journey by train to all who purchased 160 acres.<sup>17</sup> But it was “hardscrabble”

and, after ten years of raising wheat, corn, and pinto beans there, the Nauta family left their adobe home and moved forty miles east to become ranchers on nearby Johnson Mesa. Their married children—Onea and Helen (Joling) Nauta and Lizzie and Jacob Piper (Pijper)—relocated with them. The Nautas moved into a log house with a lean-to addition and raised livestock and chickens; Helen sold the eggs and butter in Raton, north of Maxwell.<sup>18</sup> The Nautas may well have been the only Dutch family associated with the Maxwell church that stayed in New Mexico. Because their traditional farming methods involved a continual struggle due to the scarcity of water, they became ranchers and cattlemen, and Onea and his sons became cowboys.<sup>19</sup>

Arriving in April 1893, Hendrik “Henry” and Tjakka (Vrugt) Ungersma were apparently one of the few couples who did not come to Maxwell seeking better health.<sup>20</sup> Initially, farming conditions were reasonably good and, somehow, the family story is that Hindrik had \$4,000 in gold bullion in the house, hidden under the rafters, just above the studs in the wall. They also had seven children under those rafters. In that close-knit community, where everyone, even children, helped as they were able, young Hattie operated the treadle on the Van Dellen sewing machine.<sup>21</sup> Because of Margaretha Van Dellen’s frail health, the sewing sessions never lasted more than a few minutes. Hendrik Ungersma, thirty-seven when the church was founded, was immediately elected deacon, and later served also as an elder. The family left, probably early in 1904, and settled with the Oldenburger family near Manhattan, Montana.

Dirk Boersma came from the Netherlands on the advice of his doctor. Not wanting to undertake such an extended journey in frail health and

alone, he placed an advertisement in a weekly religious newspaper in Groningen which read, “Wanted: a dependable person or married couple, with Christian principles, to accompany a young man to Maxwell, New Mexico.”<sup>22</sup> That ad was answered by Klaas Schoolland, and the two arrived in the summer of 1892. Boersma lived only a short time.<sup>23</sup> Schoolland stayed long enough to welcome others of his family to Maxwell and, after surviving a case of mountain fever, he left in the spring of 1893. In 1894 he became part of the faculty of the Theological School in Grand Rapids, teaching languages in the position to which Gerrit Berkhof had been appointed before he died in Maxwell.

Bareld Jan and Martje (Hummel) Schoolland arrived from the Netherlands early in March 1893.<sup>24</sup> With them came their two sons, Albertus and Jan (John) Bareld with his wife, Trijntje (Dijkstra), and their baby daughter; Trijntje had tuberculosis. Albertus soon returned to the Netherlands, and Bareld Jan died of mountain fever three weeks after his arrival. Martje died three years later, never having become accustomed to the new country. John B. Schoolland became a deacon in 1898 and beginning in 1899 served as elder and clerk for the next four years. He was also active in the church’s Society for Christian Education and frequently served as the congregation’s only delegate to classical meetings, usually held in Iowa—a long, tiresome, and expensive train ride from Maxwell. In December 1903 “they loaded everything they owned into a boxcar, the machinery and home furnishing at one end and

the livestock at the other,” and left for Alamosa, Colorado.<sup>25</sup>

### Those Who Joined Later

Jan Berkhof (brother of Gerrit) was ill like many others. He purchased land and he stayed after Gerrit’s death, but his health must have declined. Also, like many others, he let his land revert to the government for taxes and returned to Grand Rapids where he died in 1907.<sup>26</sup>

Pieter<sup>27</sup> and Neeltje (Zwier) Zwier, and daughter Trijntje, had experienced not one, but two failed communities and swindles in Crook and Alamosa, Colorado.<sup>28</sup> In March 1897, at age fifty-seven, Zwier built the Maxwell church. He died in Maxwell on 19 May 1908, a few days after his brother, and just as the church was disbanding.

Back in the Netherlands, Trijntje Schoolland’s nineteen-year-old sister, Woptje (Winnebeth) Dijkstra, was engaged to marry twenty-one-year-old Benne Folkerts, who had come to Maxwell in 1894, suffering from tuberculosis. Once he had left, Woptje



*Hendrik and Tjakka (Vrugt) Ungersma came to Maxwell to farm and did reasonably well. They raised seven children in a house said to contain Hendrik’s hidden gold. Photo courtesy of Jim Terpstra.*



*After both of their parents died, siblings Peter and Anna Zwier went to live with their grandparents, Pieter and Neeltje Zwier, who were caretakers of the sanitarium. After Pieter died, the grandmother and grandchildren moved to Yellowstone City, Montana. Photo courtesy of Alida Postma Dekker and Jerry Dekker.*

had second thoughts about the long and hazardous trip across the ocean to marry a sick man. But her mother encouraged her to be true to her promise, all the while imagining also that her sickly daughter Trijntje would greatly benefit from having a sister nearby. Obediently, Woptje arrived in Maxwell and she and Ben were married in 1896. His health must have improved significantly and by 1896 he was able to farm 130 acres.<sup>29</sup> Further, the couple had seventeen children, some of whom did not survive. Folkerts had a beautiful, strong voice and singing was very much a part of their lives. In all likelihood he led the singing in the Maxwell church services

as he did in other congregations. He also directed the Song Society.<sup>30</sup> After about ten years in Maxwell, “the water supply for irrigation was insufficient and the settlers were more often disappointed than cheered by the results of their labors,” and the family moved to Alamosa, Colorado<sup>31</sup>

The story of Roelof (Stam) Beltman is typical and tragic. He and his wife, Aaltje Klazina Boerhave, had been living in Platte, South Dakota, with their baby daughter. He became gravely ill with tuberculosis and was encouraged to go to Maxwell. The young family spent all they had to get there, but shortly after arriving there he died, leaving his young widow and daughter destitute. They relied on the kindnesses of the Maxwell church until the church in Platte could send money for their return trip.<sup>32</sup>

Mark Bouma and his sister Lucy came to Maxwell in the early 1900s.<sup>33</sup> They came because he was in poor health and was presumed to have tuberculosis, when actually he was malnourished. There were several children in the family—all sickly because their father’s low income didn’t allow for nutritious meals. Once Mark arrived in Maxwell and started eating properly his health improved dramatically and in 1907 he left for Rehoboth, New Mexico, to teach in the Christian school there.

At the age of eighteen and in poor health, Mattie Hoozeboom arrived from Grand Rapids in April 1897. A few days after she arrived she was full of hope, “I can notice I do feel better here.”<sup>34</sup> She taught in the Maxwell Christian School for five years



*Mattie Hoozeboom arrived in Maxwell in 1897 hoping to recover from tuberculosis. She taught school for five years, but her health did not improve and she returned to Grand Rapids in 1903, where she died. Photo courtesy of Ken Van Dellen.*

but the Maxwell climate was not the cure Mattie had hoped for and she returned to Grand Rapids in February 1903 where she died.

Syne and Jane (Engelsman) Brands and their young family came by train to Maxwell from Luctor, Kansas, due to his health about 1897. They rented a frame house near the church. Syne learned to keep an eye on the weather and when it looked like rain he and his children would open up the irrigation ditches so the crops could benefit. But it was a losing endeavor because water was scarce and there was never enough rain for successful irrigation. In addition to farming, with horse and wagon Syne delivered mail and produce from the Maxwell railroad station into the mountains. The family moved back to Kansas in 1902.<sup>35</sup>

Adam and Peternella (de Vries) Jonas came to Maxwell from the Netherlands in the summer of 1901. Although almost all of the families in the Maxwell enclave lived with very serious illness and death, this family seems to have suffered more than most.<sup>36</sup> Adam was fifty-nine



years old when the family arrived, and Peternella was fifty-six. They had already known the loss of two of their daughters to tuberculosis in the Netherlands. One of their sons had fallen in an ice skating accident and, as a result of his injuries, was institutionalized. When another son became ill, Adam and Nellie made the decision to move to Maxwell. But a year after their arrival they experienced what they termed the “heaviest blow of our lives,” when their son Stoffel, twenty-seven, died. “Unaware of the danger, he tried to cross a fast-moving stream.”<sup>37</sup> Syne Brands found his neighbor drowned and the horses still hitched to the wagon.<sup>38</sup> Peternella literally tore her hair out when she heard the news. Their daughter, Roelfe, married a Doornbos who worked for the railroad and died tragically when a train rolled over his legs and amputated them. She married again to Thomas Broersma.<sup>39</sup> Eventually they moved to Denver.

Menne (Mike) Norden had arrived in America in 1891, alone and ill at the age of eighteen, “. . . so sick he couldn’t do a day’s work.”<sup>40</sup> By March 1894 he was working as a farm hand for Hays Oldenburger<sup>41</sup> and later he and Geert Smit were farming partners, both of them suffering from tuberculosis. Mike married Geradina Jonas in December 1901, a few months after she had arrived. By the time they moved to Montana in 1909, they had seven children, five of whom survived.

Wiebo Smit immigrated about 1897 at the age of twenty-three, for his health.<sup>42</sup> Later, presumably after his health improved, he and Willem Feller farmed as partners, and in December 1902 he married Christina Jonas. They also had five children quickly, two of whom died. The family lived in an adobe house with a dirt floor. Shortly after the church had disbanded, the family left for Boze-



Jan “John” Van Wijk and his wife Neeltje Van’t Sant, and their surviving children came to Maxwell in 1899 to farm, not because anyone in the family was ill. He was active in the church, serving as an elder, and was moderately successful in farming. Photo courtesy of Millie Van Wyke.

man, Montana, with the Nordens. Later, when Wiebo’s health worsened and so he could be treated at the sanatorium there, the family moved to Denver with only “a dollar and an old blanket.”<sup>43</sup>

About 1898, at the age of seventeen and along with her brother John, Grace Sikkens left the Netherlands for Maxwell.<sup>44</sup> Her fiancé, John T. Brandsma, came as soon after as he could, which turned out to be four years later, and the two were married on the day he arrived.<sup>45</sup> The couple had seven children,<sup>46</sup> three of whom were born in Maxwell.

Jacob and Gertie (Bomers) Dragt were both residents at the sanatorium in 1900. Their story also is a short and sad one. They had been married

in Michigan in 1897, came to Maxwell in August 1900, and returned to Michigan on 13 August 1901. He died in Graafschap a few days later at the age of twenty-nine. In an obituary notice that appeared in *De Wachter* Gertie wrote that he died “quite unexpectedly, in spite of our anticipating it. Together we looked everywhere for help, but it pleased the Lord not to heal his body.”<sup>47</sup>

The Van Wijk (Wyke) family was one of the few who did not come to Maxwell for health-related reasons. Jan “John” and Neeltje (Van’t Sant), thirty-five and twenty-nine respectively, had been a part of the failed Dutch community in Crook, Colorado, and had arrived in the summer of 1899 with their four surviving children,

perhaps because Jan found temporary work for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad.<sup>48</sup> They also wanted to join a Christian Reformed church where their children could be baptized and be educated in a Christian school. They lived in a simple adobe house and rented two parcels of land. John “owned six horses, helped to buy a threshing machine for the community, and was always looking for new and better seeds and farming methods. He rotated crops, understood the irrigation

system, and sought out cooperative ways for farmers to share in work and profits.”<sup>49</sup> In 1903 he was happy with his harvest—550 bushels of oats, 30 bushels of wheat, along with alfalfa hay, and wild hay. In July 1905 John took on another job, checking on the irrigation system throughout the region— sometimes a twenty-five-mile trek in the saddle. Most of the time the Van Wykes were in Maxwell; the church had no pastor, so Van Wyke was one of those who read sermons. He was elected an elder and clerk of the consistory in 1902, a position he held until the church disbanded in 1908.

Reina Buist answered an ad for a housekeeper placed by Simon Zwier (son of Pieter and Neeltje); they were married in Maxwell in January 1898. The couple had three children in a very short time period, one of whom was born disabled and died soon after birth. In 1901 Reina became ill and was hospitalized eighty miles away



*Kate Zwier's first husband, Geert Smit, died of tuberculosis, leaving her with two small children. She and Harm Boxum married in 1904, had three of their own children, and raised what today is called a “blended family.” Photo courtesy of Alvin and Helen Smit.*

in Las Vegas, New Mexico, where she died in 1906. Simon had died of tuberculosis in Maxwell in June 1903, at thirty-three, leaving his parents (caretakers of the sanitorium) to care for their two surviving children, Anna and Pieter. The youngsters joined Pieter and Neeltje Zwier living in the sanitorium, and after the senior Pieter's death the grandmother and grandchildren moved to Yellowstone City, Montana, living next to the Harm and Kate Zwier Boxum family.<sup>50</sup>

Geert Smit and Kate (Trientje) Zwier were married in Maxwell in November 1898. He had tuberculosis and had arrived three years earlier at the age of nineteen. When Kate was expecting their second child, his health worsened and he realized his death was imminent. Because his stepfather had treated him like a hired hand, a situation he wanted to avoid for his own children, he encouraged Kate to remarry quickly,

while the children were still young so that their new father would love the children as his own.<sup>51</sup> Harm Boxum had been part of the “Alamosa Disaster” in Colorado in late 1892 to mid 1893 and perhaps he remembered Kate from those sad days. He read of Geert's death in *De Wachter* in February 1903, and began corresponding with Kate, moved to Maxwell, and they married in January 1904. They had three children together and as Geert Smit had anticipated, “Harm Boxum al-

ways thought of Joe and Peter Smit as his own sons.”<sup>52</sup> In 1905, as several of the early settler families were leaving and hope for the community was waning, Harm became an elder. He was a learned man, and something of an author, and presumably he read sermons during worship, as he often did after the blended Boxum family moved to Montana.<sup>53</sup>

Trientje (Kate) Zwier (daughter of Jan and Winnie) was married in Maxwell to John Klynsmas in April 1904 and the couple had a young son. John had come to Maxwell for his health at the age of sixteen, and was a patient in the sanitorium. He died at twenty-nine in January 1907 from gangrene after being kicked by a horse. In June of that same year, Widow Kate gave birth to another son. Some years later, Kate received a letter from Jim Smit, a widower with five children in Hospers, Iowa, who asked her to come and marry him, and she did. “They married for need in those days.



There was so much death and so many children.”<sup>54</sup>

Jan Hazenberg and Elske van der Velde had been married in Marum, Groningen, on 5 October 1902 and came to Maxwell as newlyweds. In April 1903 he accepted the position of janitor in the church. As the Dutch community in Maxwell was dissipating they made plans to move to Kuner, Colorado. Jan died there in February 1913, at the age of thirty-six, leaving two small children. In his obituary the widow wrote, “It was my privilege to be united with him in a happy marriage for eleven years. He contracted tuberculosis and for that reason we moved to New Mexico to regain his health. However, it was in vain. Like it has so many others, pale death felled him at mid-life. We thank God that during his life he sought and found the Lord; and we believe that he now sings before the throne.”<sup>55</sup>

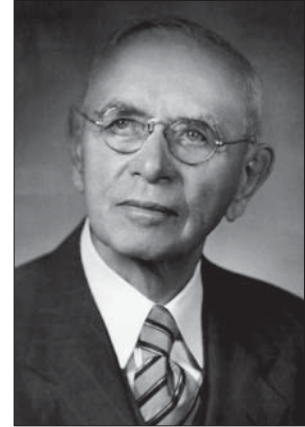
Johannes Bosma arrived in late 1895 and died in May 1898 at the age of thirty-three, during which time he had been elected a deacon. John Schoolland, Harm Westerman, and Rev. Van Dellen inventoried his estate and closed out his affairs. His horses, cows, calves, chickens, farm implements, oats, wheat, bedstead, pots and

pans, along with two watches and a half share of crops still in the field, were valued at just under \$500.

George Branderhorst arrived in the United States in July 1896, at the age of thirty-eight, apparently with the promise of a position as director of the soon to be founded Bethesda Sanitorium.<sup>56</sup> He resigned his position in late 1899 but remained in Maxwell with his wife, Anna Dokter. In 1901 the family moved to Michigan and by 1911 they were in Kuner, Colorado, with several of their old Maxwell friends, notably the Van Wykes.<sup>57</sup> Eventually they settled in Michigan.

When the Christian Reformed Church in Rilland, Colorado, dissolved, Classis gave the membership records and spiritual oversight of some of its members to the Maxwell church—Elizabeth (Rougoor) van Lummel and several children; Gjalt and Klaaske Heslinga with one child in Nepesta, Colorado; and Piebe and Sarah Rosendall with three children in Alamosa.<sup>58</sup> The minutes show an active interchange of letters back and forth between these families and the consistory. Arnaud Johan van Lummel, a school teacher in the Netherlands, had been a leader in the short-lived Rilland church, preaching the sermon at its first service in December 1892.<sup>59</sup> The family later moved to Holland, Michigan, where he graduated from Western Theological Seminary in 1906 and served RCA churches in New Jersey, Iowa, and Grand Rapids.<sup>60</sup>

When the decision was made to disband the congregation in 1908, the remaining members were transferred to the Denver Christian Reformed Church, where Idzerd Van Dellen, the only minister of Maxwell, had become the minister the previous year. ❧



*Idzerd Van Dellen, ordained in 1895 during a service conducted by his father, served western churches for forty-five years. In addition to pastoring congregations, he supported the establishment of Christian day schools, the operation of Bethesda Sanitarium and its successor Bethesda Sanatorium, as well as being a prolific author. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

## Endnotes

1. Consistory minutes and other official records are inconsistent in the spellings of first and even last names. In addition, some of the settlers in Maxwell Americanized their names rather quickly (but not always consistently) while others retained their Dutch names, and still others adopted nicknames. As much as possible, we have used Dutch names initially while sometimes switching to more commonly used names later.
2. Donald Sinnema, *The First Dutch Settlement in Alberta: Letters from the Pioneer Years 1903-1914*, trans. and ed. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 12.
3. Conversation with Bert Joling, 24 September 2007.
4. Information provided by John Nauta, in an e-mail dated 17 January 2008.
5. Reintje was Jan Postma's sister; she and Haye Oldenburger were first cousins. Letter from Jan Postma to his brother, Haye Postma, dated 26 March 1893; translated and supplied by John Nauta.
6. He was an official with the Maxwell Land Grant Company and son of Samuel Van Houten, Dutch Minister of Internal Affairs from 1894-1897.
7. The estate included 900 bushels of oats, 30 of corn, 3 horses, 2 sows, 9 pigs, 5 ducks, 24 chickens, a pony, a colt, a cow calf, a plow, a wagon, and two harnesses.
8. Document supplied by John Nauta.
9. Conversation with Gerrit Praasterink, 16 September 2007. Wormnest was born in the United States, the son of parents who had immigrated in 1873.
10. Undated introductory summary, Maxwell Christian Reformed Church consistory, translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres; Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
11. Conversations with Rev. Richard Venema, 21 July 2007, and Stan Sprik, 19 September 2007.
12. *De Wachter* obituary notice, 18 March 1903, Vital Records card file, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
13. Letter from Haye Oldenburger to Haye Postma, 12 April 1893; translated and supplied by John Nauta.
14. E-mail from John Nauta, 17 January 2008.
15. Ale Buursma was a Reformed Church in America pastor in Grand Rapids who apparently never lived in Maxwell. He later served on the board of the sanitarium. Letters from Haye Oldenburger, 9 December 1893 and 17 March 1894; translated and supplied by John Nauta.
16. Information provided by Joan Carlson, 12 February 2006.
17. Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America: a Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America*, Robert P. Swierenga, general editor, Adriaan de Wit, chief translator, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 666.
18. Conversations with Gladys Ellerman, 5 November 2007, and Connie Nauta, 9 November 2007.
19. Information provided by Loyce Rottman, in an e-mail, 10 November 2007.
20. Information provided by Jim Terpstra in an e-mail, 2 September 2007.
21. Conversation with Jesse Lucas, 14 August 2007.
22. Marian Schoolland, *A Goodly Heritage* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1957), 47-55.
23. His final affairs were settled by John B. Schoolland, and as a remembrance Schoolland kept a chair which had belonged to Boersma. That chair has been proudly handed down in the Schoolland family. Florence Schoolland De Ruiter and John Weston Schoolland, in an e-mail, 7 September 2006.
24. He was a brother of Klaas Schoolland, "The Schoolland Family Tree," 1972 and 1995 editions, an unpublished history written by Jeannette Witt, provided by Florence Schoolland DeRuiter.
25. E-mail from John Weston Schoolland, 7 September 2006.
26. Conversation with Ron Berkhof, 18 August 2007.
27. Brother of Jan Zwier.
28. Peter De Klerk, "The Ecclesiastical Struggles of the Rilland and Crook Christian Reformed Churches in Colorado in 1893," *Perspectives on the Christian Reformed Church: Studies in Its History, Theology, and Ecumenicity: Presented in Honor of John Henry Kromminga at His Retirement as President of Calvin Theological Seminary*, Peter De Klerk and Richard R. De Ridder, eds., (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983) 72-98.
29. Letter from Mattie Hoogeboom, 29 April 1897, provided by Ken Van Dellen.
30. *Jaarboekje—Hollandsch Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord Amerika*, 1902.
31. "The Schoolland Family Tree."
32. Conversation with Marlowe Pranger, 17 February 2006.
33. Conversation with Nelle Vander Ark, 13 January 2006.
34. Letter from Mattie Hoogeboom to "Esteemed Dear Friend," 29 April 1897, provided by Ken Van Dellen.
35. "The Childhood History of Martha Brands Cook," an unpublished family history dated 30 April 1976, provided by JoAnne Brands Baron.
36. Conversations with Jean Smith Zoetewey, 5 April 2008, and Wiebo Smith Jr., 5 April 2008.
37. *De Wachter* obituary notice, 3 September 1902, Vital Records card file, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres.
38. "The Childhood History of Martha Brands Cook," an unpublished family history, 30 April 1976, supplied by JoAnne Brands Baron.
39. Conversation with Jean Smith Zoetewey, 5 April 2008.
40. Conversation with Robert and Mary Norden, 3 January 2008.
41. Letter from Haye Oldenburger to Haye Postma, 17 March 1894, translated and supplied by John Nauta.
42. Conversation with Jean Smith Zoetewey, 5 April 2008.
43. Conversation with Jean Smith Zoetewey, 5 April 2008.
44. Conversation with Dorothy Brandsma Wassenaar, 31 May 2007.
45. Meindert Bosch, *Bridges Across the Years: Ninety Years of History, The Bethesda Hospital Association, Denver, Colorado 1895 to 1985* (Denver: Bethesda PsychHealth System, Inc., 1988), 37.
46. Conversation with John Pousma, 29 May 2007.
47. Translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres.
48. Three other children were born

in Maxwell and later one in Kuner, Colorado.

49. Millie Van Wyke, *A Dutch Romance . . . An American Dream!* (Denver, Colorado, 1995), 202.

50. Information provided by Alida Postma Dekker, 5 November 2007, and the 1910 federal census.

51. Conversation with Alvin Smit, 12 November 2007.

52. Ibid.

53. Conversation with Betty Schaap, 5 November 2007.

54. Conversation with Wilma Westerman Brouwer, 14 July 2007.

55. *De Wachter*, 12 March 1913, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres.

56. Conversation with Don Branderhorst, 3 April 2007.

57. Conversation with Arlene Branderhorst Christian, 24 March 2008.

58. Consistory minutes, November 1895, translated by Richard H. Harms.

59. Peter De Klerk, "The Ecclesiasti-

cal Struggles of the Rilland and Crook," 77.

60. Conversations with Rev. Peter Shortway, 17 and 23 July 2007. During these conversations Rev. Shortway was seated in a chair used by Abraham Kuyper, Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1905; Kuyper and van Lummel were personal friends.<sup>49</sup> Millie Van Wyke, *A Dutch Romance . . . An American Dream!* (Denver, Colorado, 1995), 202.

# Pacific Coast CRC Churches Before World War II, Part II

Howard B. Spaan

## Everett, Washington

As with some musical pieces, the story of Everett Christian Reformed Church (CRC), organized in 1911, has a prelude. In 1902 a congregation of seven families with thirty-five individuals was organized, with the handful of children formed into the

effort sponsored by Classis Orange City, also was started in 1902. Arlington was a farming community, while Everett was beginning to develop as a lumber milling town. After 1906 the Everett/Arlington church disappeared, leaving no records.

As the twentieth century began, Everett's population was about 8,000 and the town's hallmarks were its planked streets and boardwalks. These were dusty and warped in the summer and floated on a sea of mud during the rainy, winter months. Makeshift housing served the growing number of millworkers, while Victorian-style homes with ornate scrollwork and cornices served the well-to-do citizens. But Everett was still an emerging town, with cows often pastured inside the city limits. Workers earned \$1 - \$2 for a ten-hour day. By 1910 Everett had become a boomtown with a population of 30,000 and was called the "City of Smokestacks." With twelve lumber mills and sixteen shingle mills, it was the largest lumber processing town on the Pacific Coast and a center for manufacturing window sashes and doors, and paper. It was these industries that attracted new residents, including the Dutch.

During 1908 ministers Peter J. Hoekenga from Lynden and Derk H. Muyskens from Oak Harbor visited Everett on various occasions. A meeting, held the following year to determine interest in organizing a Dutch-speaking congregation, came to naught as some advocated joining the Reformed Church in America



The first graduating class (1925) of the American Christian School in Everett, Washington. The teacher is J. W. Postma; the students are, l-r: Marinus Goote, Betty Kadyck, Neil Palistijn, Elsie Boersma, and John Mulder. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Howard Spaan, a minister living in Beaverton, Oregon, has written on a variety of topics having to do with the Pacific Northwest. He is the longest serving stated clerk of classis in the history of the Christian Reformed Church.

Sunday school. During the four, or so, years the congregation existed, it had two clerks, R. Eylander and M. Brouwer. The 1906 CRC yearbook lists the congregation as having moved to Arlington, about fifteen miles north of Everett. Arlington, a mission outreach

(RCA) and others the CRC. Just over two years later, the CRC Classis Pacific (formed in 1910) decided to call a home missionary to be stationed in Everett. Klaas Poppen took up the work and services were held in a house at 1912—25<sup>th</sup> Street, the upstairs of which was occupied by the Ralph Van Zwol family. In March 1911 the group became an organized congregation with twenty-three communicant and thirty baptized members. During Poppen's relatively brief pastorate efforts failed to raise sufficient funds for a new building.

Arend Guikema was the next home missionary and a branch of the church was established in Sultan some twenty-four miles to the east. Because most of their salaries were paid by a classis, home missionaries were also required to preach elsewhere; in Guikema's case, in Montana and Alberta. During his pastorate the Dorcas ladies' society was formed and its members presented the congregation with its first communion set, which graced the communion table for thirty-eight years. Guikema left to serve a church in South Dakota in 1916.

Cornelius Vriesman, the minister in Zillah, was the next home missionary in Everett. With his coming, new lots were purchased on which a small structure was built, with a room at the rear for consistory meetings and catechism classes. A parsonage was built in 1918 by his father-in-law, Johannes Daverman,<sup>1</sup> the same year the young people purchased a chapel reed organ. As requests for English preaching grew, twice a month a third service, held in the evening, was in English. In 1920 the congregation assumed full financial responsibility and Vriesman became their pastor rather than a home missionary. The congregation's growth led to selling the sanctuary, which was moved, and a new larger structure was built on the site. Dur-

ing construction, services were held in the YMCA and in an Episcopalian parish hall. The new facility was dedicated in 1923.

During the three-year ministry of Jacob Mulder the congregation had regular Dutch and English services and a Christian school was established. His ministry saw a good deal of illness in his own family and among others; Mulder was remembered for his encouraging and comforting visits to ailing congregants.

During the difficulties of the Great Depression the full salary of pastor John Vanden Hoek Jr. was not always paid, and the Young People's Society contributed significantly toward paying the mortgages on the church and Christian school buildings.<sup>2</sup> Near the end of the 1930s the Young People's Society became a key group in creating the Young People's League of the Pacific Northwest. Herman Boersema and Elizabeth Oosterhof, later the League's secretary, both from Everett, along with a president of Second Lynden Young People's Society, conceived the establishment of a Bible conference which became known as the Seabeck Bible Conference, on Hood Canal, an arm of Puget Sound. The conference was short-lived due to World War II, but was revived as the Warm Beach Conference following the war.

Everett had the reputation of being a "singing church." Neighbors on 234<sup>th</sup> Street stood on the sidewalk in front of the church listening to the congregation sing Dutch psalms. They enjoyed the music even though they did not understand the language. Although more and more cars came into use, the congregation came to be known as a "walking church." As limited parking near the sanctuary led the curbside parking of cars to radiate out, it seemed to onlookers that groups of people came from all directions to attend services.

### **Amsterdam, Idaho**

The next congregation organized in the Pacific Northwest was located about twenty-three miles south of Twin Falls, Idaho, on the Oregon Short Line Railroad. Salmon Creek flows through this area, about thirty miles from its source in Nevada, flowing into the Snake River some twenty-five miles west of Twin Falls. It once flowed through miles of sagebrush territory inhabited by jack rabbits and coyotes until the federal government dammed the creek, allowing the region to become irrigated farmland. It was difficult clearing the land of rocks, leveling the terrain, and digging irrigation ditches, but a small Dutch enclave, not deterred by the hard work, came in 1911 and named their community Amsterdam.

Those Dutch settlers, to whom church life was important, built a frame church edifice even as they built their houses. While traveling on the train along Salmon Creek, home missionary Peter Hoekenga asked a fellow traveler if he ever heard of Amsterdam. The ready response was, "That's the place where they had a church building before anything else."<sup>3</sup> The visiting dominie found a Ladies' Society and a Young People's Society with eighteen members. Most of the families came from Manhattan, Montana; Waupun, Wisconsin; Grangeville, Idaho; or Zillah, Washington, and the membership records reveal that most of the adults were in their early thirties.

Interestingly, in spite of the pioneer setting the facility featured electric lights. Thanks to the home missionaries in Classis Pacific, on 7 May 1912 the congregation of forty members was organized. Their only minister, William Meyer, was installed in February 1914, but took a call to Minnesota in 1917. Serious problems with the water supply developed, which caused most of the settlers to

leave, starting in 1918; a number of members moved to Ripon, California, while others went to Grangeville, Idaho, and Zillah, Washington. A couple of families stayed, but the congregation disbanded in 1919; the remaining members became part of the Manhattan, Montana, congregation, almost 300 miles to the northeast.

### Hanford, California

During the first decade of the twentieth century several Dutch families settled in the vicinity of Hanford, a town of 4,800 located in the Central Valley of California near Kings River,

could, first renting and then buying land. They were religious folks, attending the Free Methodist or Presbyterian churches, or the services of the Salvation Army held in a park.

One Sunday morning Dick Hoek and Peter Verhoeven were having a conversation, during which they wondered if the Dutch were interested in having their own church services. Hoek volunteered to host such a group in his house during which he would read a sermon and they all would lustily sing Dutch psalms. After the first meeting, all left with enthusiasm and agreed to continue

discover a Christian Reformed minister present. This event became the catalyst for the society to be organized as an independent congregation that in 1912 elected two elders and two deacons. The immigrants who had their membership certificates from the Netherlands gave them to Bolt, who urged them to ask to join Classis Pella that September. Classis gave Hanford permission to organize and granted \$1,000 annually toward the salary for a home missionary, which the congregation was to augment as much as possible and also provide a furnished home.

The new congregation was able to purchase the old Presbyterian Church building for \$1,000, which was moved to the congregation's land. But the congregation experienced a series of difficulties with their early ministers. Leonard P. Brink, working on the Navajo mission field, accepted a call to be a home missionary at Hanford. Very soon after his arrival catechism classes were begun and a Sunday school came into being. A parsonage was built, but they had lived in it for only a few days before Mrs. Brink, whose health had been failing, died. After her death, "LP," as he was known, returned to his former work in New Mexico. During the early spring of 1915 Frederik Stuart became the next missionary pastor in Hanford. At the beginning of 1919 Hanford was able to call him to be their pastor exclusively, but he died just five months later. During the next two years, eight calls extended by Hanford were declined. Finally, John De Jonge came in 1921 and served there for eight years. His successor, John Vande Lune, who thought a change of climate and environment might improve his health, asked to be released after just a few weeks. Richard Frens came during the Great Depression and at times his monthly salary could only be paid in installments. His unselfish



*The Hanford Church and parsonage; the parsonage was built in 1914. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

which provided the irrigation source for growing apricots, peaches, grapes, and grain, as well as supporting small dairy farms. About half of the Dutch had come directly from the Netherlands and took whatever work was available; some—particularly young men—milked, while others worked in the fields. Most came with only their clothes and a few other personal belongings so the farmers provided them with items such as used furniture. The immigrants saved all they

meeting; a board was chosen to oversee the meeting of the new society. The number of worshipers grew so that meetings had to be moved from Hoek's house to Dewey Hall. One day, as Hoek was working as the bookkeeper in the Foster store, Rev. Jacob Bolt stopped in, because he had learned a group of Dutch were meeting each Sunday to listen to sermons being read. He offered to stay and preach for them the next Sunday. That Sunday worshipers were surprised to



attitude endeared him to the congregation during the decade in which he served as their pastor.

### **Los Angeles, California**

One winter after Jacob Zimmer of Muskegon, Michigan, suffered two serious bouts with pneumonia and his doctor told him he probably would not survive another severe Michigan winter, he, his wife Della, and their young children moved to Denver, where the climate and altitude were helping those with tuberculosis. They had to leave behind most of their furniture, taking only a barrel packed with dishes and linens, and a sewing machine. But the cold and snowy Denver winter did not help Jacob's respiratory condition and, on the advice of a doctor, they contacted Rev. Jacob Bolt in Redlands. They left Colorado and three days and nights later were in warm California with swaying palm trees and blooming flowers.

Six weeks later an unusual weather condition, called the "Big Freeze of 1913," destroyed crops, including oranges which Redlands sold to the nation in numbers greater than that of any other region. The "Big Freeze" created an economic depression and Zimmer, a carpenter, could find no work. With a group of friends in the same circumstances, Zimmer headed for Los Angeles, seventy miles to the west, where work was readily available in the city of 320,000. He rented a house just to the south of the city's center. The only Dutch church there was that of the Nederduits, who would not accept the family because they were Christian Reformed.

The next Sunday the Zimmers attended a Nazarene church. After hearing the sermon, Jacob Zimmer decided to not go there again, but to start an independent Dutch church. Meetings were held in the home of Mr. Faase. Very soon after, the group expressed the desire to become a

mission station in the Christian Reformed Church. Faase wanted to remain independent so the meetings moved to the Zimmer house, which was their place of worship for well over a year. Typically, Jacob led the service and read a sermon. One Sunday only the Zimmer family was present but the service was held nonetheless. Jacob read the sermon and their young son, Ray, gathered the offering. About once a month Rev. Bolt came from Redlands to preach. The Zimmer sewing machine served as the pulpit. Following the service, coffee and cake would be served. Della Zimmer always had a big pot of soup, while others also brought food for lunch. The second service followed shortly after lunch.

In March 1913 Classis Pella made the group a mission station and Fredrik Drost agreed to serve as home missionary there, arriving at the end of 1913. The next spring the group became an organized church, with seven families and six single people. As was the case elsewhere, immediately a Sunday school and catechism classes were organized. A month later two lots on East 39<sup>th</sup> Street were purchased for \$2,000 and by August a small frame church had been completed for \$339.60. Funds were raised by securing a bank loan and monetary subscriptions from the members. Upon leaving the Zimmer home, the congregation presented them with a rug and two rocking chairs to "recompense" them for their trouble. The congregation experienced steady growth both numerically and financially.

Drost left for the Christian Reformed Church in Oak Harbor, Washington, at the beginning of 1917, and in May 1918 was replaced by Peter Hoekenga, who stayed a mere eleven months; tensions that had developed in the congregation caused stress to the minister who was already in frail

health. At that time one of the most prominent ministers in the denomination, Johannes Groen, who was on leave in California for health reasons, agreed to serve as an interim minister in Los Angeles. When his health improved, he returned to his congregation, Eastern Avenue in Grand Rapids. Los Angeles extended a call to him and he arrived in November 1920. The church prospered during his tenure and the congregation Americanized from two Dutch and one English service each Sunday to one Dutch and two English services. Los Angeles family histories further note how much the Young People's Groups enjoyed their roles in the church. Fellowship as well as song fests and social events were hallmark events. A singing school, precursor of the later church choir, also came into being during this period.

Both space needs for the growing congregation and an unfavorable neighborhood led to the purchase of a property at East 47<sup>th</sup> Place and San Pedro Avenue. Here a new building was dedicated in February 1923. Interestingly the bid for the new structure was \$57,775, just \$75 more than what was realized from the sale of the old church and parsonage.

Groen, however, continued to struggle with physical difficulties and was obliged to sit while preaching. During the late winter of 1924 he was forced to discontinue his ministry and on the afternoon of 19 March 1924, with most of the consistory members at his bedside, he died. He was well-known for his progressive ministry in both the church and in the community.<sup>4</sup>

Gerhardus Holwerda came as the next minister in the summer of 1924. The Dutch service was discontinued and again a stressful time developed. Less than two years after arriving, he left the ordained ministry to teach at the university level.

Watson Groen, the son of Johannes Groen, came in 1927 to the now Americanized congregation marked with renewed enthusiasm. The need for more space became urgent and a 1929 addition to the south of the auditorium provided classrooms and an assembly room. During his pastorate a new church was begun in Glendale, with one family from the Los Angeles congregation and several other new families joining the new congregation, yet the Los Angeles membership continued to grow. He was an effective preacher who was also skilled at leading meetings and dealing with cases of discipline. In the spring of 1934 he took leave for work in the Second CRC of Lynden, Washington. One Los Angeles memorial booklet notes, "When Rev. Groen bade farewell to the congregation, peace and harmony prevailed. He was an unsung hero of the faith."<sup>5</sup>

In 1934 Sebastian Struyk took up the helm of the congregation and remained until his retirement in 1948. He pressed for broadening of their "life view," both within the congregation and also in dealing with broader culture. The congregation disbanded in 1980, but throughout its history it attempted to adjust to its changing circumstances.

### Afton, California

During 1911 Egbert Stevens gathered a small group of Dutch immigrants for services in Prescott School north of Modesto, California. His effort to encourage more Hollanders to settle in that community had limited success. When Henry Avink arrived he concluded that Modesto, with its 6,500 residents, was too worldly for a Reformed congregation. At about the same time J. J. Rutgers of the Holland Land Company was promoting land in the Sacramento Valley, between the Sacramento River and Butte Creek, about 170 miles north. Stevens



*L. P. (Leonard Peter) Brink served most of his ministry in New Mexico, but went to California briefly, due to the failing health of his first wife. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

moved to the area and encouraged others to follow. Avink and his wife moved in June 1913 to a community of approximately 125 residents.

The CRC congregation at Afton began with six families meeting in the Marvin Chapel as a branch of the Hanford congregation.<sup>6</sup> They were the Houtman family from the New Era, Michigan, area; the Avinks from Ottawa County, Michigan; the Browsers (Brouwers) from Denver, Colorado; the Schuilings from Manhattan, Montana; and the Stevens family from Modesto.<sup>7</sup> In July 1914, they were organized as a congregation by Rev. L. P. Brink and elders from Hanford. Elected as elders were Stevens and Avink.

The use of English in the worship services quickly became a divisive matter in the congregation. Initially the first service on Sunday was in English, the second in Dutch, but this was quickly changed to both being in Dutch; only if a third was held, the language would be English. As early as 1914 those taking catechetical instruction asked that it be given in English. And according to Avink's diary, now archived at the

Ripon First CRC, one Sunday in August 1915 Brink preached in English during the second service, which had not been announced, causing "considerable dissatisfaction, which resulted in a lively exchange of opinions." After Brink left Hanford, Frederik Stuart, also of Hanford, served Afton from time-to-time. Another diary entry reads, "With Dominie Stuart we did the family visiting jogging along behind 'Old Joe,' myself holding the reins and the dominie holding the lantern."

Life in the little colony, according to Avink, had some good aspects, but mainly that of discouragement, for example, "the oats are turning out well, as high as 85 bushels. Mr. [Simon] Piers lost another horse, the sixth horse to drop dead." Before the end of 1913 the Schuilings had returned to Manhattan, Montana. And during the next six months, Avink records in his diary the constant problems with flooding during the winter, drought during the summer, difficulty in obtaining fresh water and clear land titles; he was concerned that Rutgers had greatly misrepresented the possibilities for profitable farming at Afton. As early as June 1914 Avink notes that their decision to move to Afton from Modesto had been a mistake.<sup>8</sup> The elders' minutes make clear the small congregation struggled with finances, which was confirmed by Avink when he observed in a 1916 diary entry, "As a Holland Colony it looks decidedly dismal." Apparently this accounts for a prospecting trip made by Avink and four others to the Montague area in northern California, where they reported being impressed with the clover and timothy (hay).

As had been the case in Modesto, few additional settlers were attracted to Afton. Marie Weertman, from Ripon, was engaged to the Stevens' son Peter and went to Butte City for a Christmas vacation. On her return

trip, while crossing the swollen Sacramento River in a canoe, the oarsman asked if she could swim and told her what to do if the canoe capsized. When she arrived back in Ripon the engagement ended, largely due to the prospect of living in Afton.

After the Schuilings left, gradually other families also left. Although the congregation's records indicate that at least thirteen families were part of the congregation during its six years, Avink's diary made clear that the most members at any one time was ten families. The Avinks left at the end of 1917. Afton could ill-afford such membership losses. In 1919 the decision was made to disband. Remaining assets of \$14.32 were sent to the classical treasurer, and the communion service, pulpit Bible, and bell were sent to the recently organized church in Ripon. Three families, Tubbergen, Pieter Houtman, and Gala Houtman, remained in the area and became part of the Ripon congregation.

### **Sultan, Washington**

Making a living in the Netherlands proved very difficult for Harm Vos. After fifteen years of marriage, the family, including four children and his parents-in-law, left for the Arlington, Washington area. Vos wanted to be his own boss, so he rented a farm some twenty miles to the south, near Snohomish. This property was in the low-lying lands of the Snohomish River Valley, where flooding was a regular problem. In 1909 he found 360 acres of land for sale in the much narrower Skykomish River Valley, some twenty miles upstream from the Snohomish River. He was able to finance the purchase by dividing the acreage and selling 40-acre parcels to a number of people, including four Dutch families, most of them his relatives.

The land was manually cleared of trees and brush but the stumps

were blasted with dynamite. Dynamite was so prevalent that Vos's very young daughter Winnie, when given a banana, which she had never seen before, exclaimed, "Boom," since it looked like a stick of dynamite. The Vos farm was located across the Skykomish River from nearby Sultan so that a raft was used to float their cattle across the river. When the raft was just beyond midstream all the cattle, becoming spooked, plunged into the river and then, making it to the other side, escaped into the brush and trees. It took their owners several days to recapture all the cattle.

By 1912 the few families were eager to establish a church. They began by holding services in the Vos home. Arend Guikema, Classis Pacific home missionary assigned to be the resident minister of the recently organized Everett congregation, came to preach for them. He traveled twenty-five miles by train on Saturday and left again on Monday. The library table in the front room of that home served as the pulpit. Lunch was served and the left-over cake, baked by their grandmother, was eaten by the children after school the following week.

Sultan was a mill town with four shingle mills and a population of 450. After two years the group had grown to eleven families, so that services were moved into the Congregational Church. All services were in Dutch, although very early on the young people successfully petitioned to have catechism instruction in English. A Young People's Society came into being with dues of one dollar a year for honorary members and five cents per meeting for active members. In 1920 a country schoolhouse became the congregation's home. About the same time Derk Muyskens, who had previously served twice in Oak Harbor as well as in other parts of the country, served the congregation on an interim basis and later as its full-time

pastor. Soon after his arrival a church building was constructed and then a parsonage. A goodly share of the cost was provided by other churches in Classis Pacific.

The Muyskens family lost their only child in Sultan. Father and son often went fishing in a slough<sup>9</sup> on the Vos land. When he was in his early teens the young man received permission to go fishing alone since his father was occupied with congregational duties, and the lad drowned in the slough on this fishing expedition.

Not long after this, Muyskens accepted a call from Second CRC in Lynden, Washington. That same year, 1926, Arend Guikema left his ministry in South Dakota to return to the Northwest becoming the Sultan minister until he retired from active ministry in 1935. The members from Everett joined one of the annual Fourth of July picnics on Lake Stevens. A teenager fell into the lake and then went home to change her clothing. Sultan observers commented that the Everett family must have a lot of money to be able to afford such an extensive wardrobe for her.

With the advent of automobiles, more Dutch farmers began settling in the Snoqualmie River Valley near Duvall, approximately twenty miles to the southwest, near two Sultan families who were already living in that area. In 1934 a branch congregation was established in Duvall, with Guikema conducting services in both locations. When Guikema retired, Peter J. Hoekstra came from Vancouver, British Columbia. During his ministry the Sultan public school introduced "released time" and he took advantage of this opportunity by holding catechism classes at his church a few blocks away. When Everett became an English-speaking church, a few Everett people drove the twenty-five miles to Sultan to worship in Dutch. The church remained a small

## Origins

congregation until Sultan and Duvall merged into one congregation and relocated to Monroe, a town halfway between.<sup>10</sup>

### Ripon, California

As noted, Egbert Stevens attempted to form a Dutch congregation near Modesto. Several years later, as new immigrant families moved into the area (including young men from the Netherlands, who often worked as milkers), services were held with the Hanford ministers providing guidance and occasional preaching. Later, ministers from Redlands also came to preach. Since the interested Hollanders were locating in the Salida area, north of Modesto, services were held on alternate Sundays in the homes of the Johannes Weertman and Johannes Schaapman

families. When the Schaapmans first arrived in California, Lubbigje—changed to Lucy—provided a newcomer's impression of the area. She was amazed to see children even going barefooted to school. Most of the girls wore white dresses while

the boys wore blue pants; people traveled by horse and buggy, on a donkey, or on a bike. She recorded that her brothers earned \$30 a month and a few as much as \$40 and reportedly the work was easier than it had been in Holland, particularly when milking machines were available. Girls earned \$15 to \$25 per month as domestics. The canning process intrigued her: “You cook the fruit, then bottle it, and then tighten the lids so no air can get

in.” Water for the kitchen was heated in a tank on the side of the stove. She was fascinated with the clean milk cans and the skimming of the cream from the top of each can and having the skimmed milk fed to the pigs and calves. Windmills pumped water via pipes into the barn; all you had to do was open the faucet for fresh water. Soon the Schaapmans were able to purchase their own farm in Salida with twenty-five cows, seven calves, and six horses.<sup>11</sup>

Marie Weertman, in an interview, reported that, with many young Dutch fellows around, the girls received a lot of attention. Further, the milkers didn't do their own shopping—Lucy Schaapman bought all their clothing and Lucy's mother did all their washing and mending.

The Sunday routine after the morning service was lunch—usually consisting of soup, bread, and canned fruit—followed by an afternoon service. Marie Weertman played the piano, and in 1917 a pump organ was acquired. Music for the young people centered around these instruments and their voices.<sup>12</sup>

As more immigrants came into Stanislaus County, and San Joaquin County to the north, the group moved their meetings to Ripon, initially above a business and later in the Odd Fellows Hall, which was a luxury for the group, for it had good seats and soft carpets. A remodeling project of the hall led to a move to a dance barn and this caused Rev. Stuart to advise that they obtain their own property. Financial support was sought through



Before First Ripon CRC was organized in 1917, services were held in various locations including the John Schaapman farm near Salida, California. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



The first building of the Ripon CRC, completed in 1917. The Methodist Church building is in the background, to the right. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



*The enlarged first building of the Ripon First CRC during the early 1920s. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

subscriptions from the group, and Stuart solicited additional funds from the business community in Ripon, even the Chamber of Commerce. As a result, land was donated for a building.

With Lambert Ubels as the contractor, a building measuring 20 feet by 30 feet was erected. The group took occupancy in June 1917. Later that year Egbert Stevens and others returned from Afton, where they had moved in 1913. A small group from Idaho also joined the congregation. As a result, permission to organize as a congregation was sought from Clasis Pella. On 4 February 1918 Ripon was organized with twenty-nine communicants as charter members. Two men went to Hanford to confer with Stuart about calling a minister.<sup>13</sup>

As more families joined, by 1919 a larger building was needed. Ubels and Bouma were awarded the contract for \$1,151, minus the cost of lamps and painting. The original church building was sold to the Ladies' Improvement Society of Ripon. For a number of years many newlyweds used the old building for their wedding receptions.<sup>14</sup> The spring of 1919 saw the arrival of the congregation's first

minister, Peter Hoekenga, from Los Angeles. He preached three times each Sunday, twice in Dutch and once in English. A steady stream of newcomers joined the congregation, but many, from a variety of Dutch backgrounds, lived long distances from the church requiring much of Hoekenga's time to keep in touch. One issue that became paramount during his tenure was movie attendance. In 1921 the consistory presented a protest to the principal of the Ripon Grammar School due to the insistence of one teacher who required the children of her class to attend movies. The congregation continued to grow but construction of a new facility was delayed due to the language question.

Hoekenga's pastorate was followed by that of John De Jong, who had been serving in Zillah, Washington. When De Jong arrived, construction of the sanctuary had begun. By August 1924 the congregation moved into their new church facility at Second and Orange streets. De Jong was a strong advocate for Christian schools and that fall a Society for Christian Instruction was organized. Two years later the Society requested the use of the basement room of the church for

a Christian day school, which was rejected by a congregational vote. But in 1928 a school building was erected. The construction was spurred on when De Jong received support from the church in Manhattan, Montana, which already had a flourishing Christian school. De Jong became known as the "father of the Christian school system" in Ripon, which grew into a sizeable enterprise. From the school's beginning until 1935, no tuition was charged because church offerings and donations paid all the expenses.

De Jong's ministry was described as "vigorous and active, reaching out far and wide." He had a wiry, indefatigable constitution which served him well in covering this geographically large parish. He spearheaded much mission activity. During his tenure the congregation began a radio ministry and took on the support of Missionary Jacob Kobes at Toadlena, New Mexico. In 1937 a group of families living in Modesto organized a congregation there. It was difficult "to say goodbye to the tall, calm, gray-haired man-on-fire-for-the-Lord" after fifteen years, but he was showing signs of physical wear.<sup>15</sup> In 1939 he accepted the pastorate in the small Vancouver,



*The Second Lynden congregation worshiped in their basement church for almost a decade before the edifice was completed in 1929. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

British Columbia, congregation. Shortly thereafter Joseph J. Steigenga arrived as the new pastor of the church in the community now famous for its almond orchards.

### **Second Church, Lynden, Washington**

During the closing months of World War I the requests for English in the First Lynden CRC congregation almost reached the level of a demand. Gerrit Hoeksema, a seminarian, was scheduled during the summer of 1918 to conduct an evening worship service in English. Following this a request was made for an additional minister in English-language. As a result, the council held a meeting in December 1919 to gauge the support for English-language ministry and nineteen families requested that such a congregation be established. The council advised these families to present a formal request for this, which was done on 27 September 1920; it was supported by the council and

forwarded to Classis Pacific, which granted the request.

The Second Christian Reformed church in Lynden became a reality on 27 October 1920 as the first English-speaking Christian Reformed congregation west of the Mississippi River. Twenty-nine families became charter members.

Property was acquired two blocks east of First Church. Worship services and meetings were initially held in the Christian school. A basement was built and served as the congregation's home for eight years. The first pastor was Edward Joling, who had just graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary. His ministry spanned four and a half years during which the membership increased by twenty-five families. The Jolings initially lived in a rented house until the congregation built a parsonage. Two months after Joling's departure, Derk Muyskens arrived to serve his third congregation in the state of Washington. Growth continued to the point where the

“basement church” became inadequate. The superstructure was completed with pews and a pipe organ and was dedicated in the fall of 1929.

Two events tested the congregation during those early years. Abel Brink, the first Christian Reformed minister in Lynden, in his retirement became a charter member and was elected as an elder in the first consistory and as a delegate to synod in 1930. The church and community were stunned when word came that he had been struck and killed by a car on a Grand Rapids street corner near Calvin College. He had been a stalwart servant in the birth of the denomination in Lynden and particularly so of the Second Church. In March 1934 the congregation was again stunned when the morning service was delayed until Elder George Ramerman, principal of the Christian School, stepped onto the pulpit announcing he was reading a sermon. The delay was caused by the resignation of Muyskens from the ministry. After preaching for nearly twenty years he had lost his faith and left the congregation stunned and confused.<sup>16</sup>

The vacancy had lasted less than two months when Watson Groen came from Los Angeles. Early in his ministry a Sunday school was organized with Mike Vander Griend as the first superintendent. Groen was a very able pulpiteer and the congregation grew to 775 members as World War II began. Growth came as families from First church transferred, seeking English services, and many families arrived from the Great Plains who were forced to leave their farms during the Dust Bowl. Some found Rev. Groen austere, but once they knew him personally this opinion vanished. He loved to play checkers with parishioners. All societies valued him as a teacher and he gained a denominational reputation as an able churchman and was elected as president of



The young people's group of Second Lynden CRC, about 1935. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

the synods of 1939 and 1940.<sup>17</sup>

The congregation's Young People's Society was a thriving group attracting quite a number of members from other churches as well as a sprinkling of high school students from the community. The format of the meetings, in addition to Groen's teaching, included singing, special music, read-

ings, and a variety of presentations by the young people. Membership was open to all singles, sixteen or older, even into their thirties.<sup>18</sup> Although most young people's groups of the time had the minister as president, not so in Second Church, where presidents were elected from the ranks.<sup>19</sup> The young people of Second Church

enjoyed fellowship at banquets which followed a theme and had elaborate decorations that produced a festive atmosphere. Outings to various places and even ferry cruises around islands in the Strait of Georgia on moonlit nights were among the many social activities. ❧

#### Sources and further reading:

Community histories, letters, and diaries.  
Congregation files, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

William Meyer, "Historische Schets van de Wording der Chr. Greg. [sic] Gemeente te Amsterdam, Idaho," *Jaarboek van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans-Sevensma Co., 1915: 138-140.  
Lucas, Henry Stephen, *Netherlanders in Amer-*

*ica: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955).

Oral interviews with original members or descendants of original members of the churches.

Periodical clipping files for the Lynden, Oak Harbor, Zillah, and Redlands churches in the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.

Minute books held by the respective churches.

Van Reken, Donald L., "Reinder E. Werkman: the 'Gilded' Hollander 1855-1931," *Origins*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1998): 17-20.

Yearbooks of the Christian Reformed Church, 1895-1940.

Endnotes

1. For information about Daverman see: Richard H. Harms, "For the Humblest Worshipper," *Origins*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2002): 4-12.

2. A unique anecdote from the congregation's early years involves a visiting pastor and a young girl. During the service the young girl suffering a coughing spell and the minister left the pulpit with his glass of water to offer her a drink.

3. P. J. Hoekenga, "Impressions and Expressions about the North-West," *The Banner*, 1 May 1913, 279.

4. For a detailed review of this remarkable minister's life see the two articles by Harry Boonstra in *Origins*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2005): 22-35.

5. "Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Christian Reformed Church of Los Angeles, California" (1954), available First Los Angeles Christian Reformed Church Collection, Archives, Calvin College, box 1, folder 7.

6. Diary of Henry Avink, July 1913, p. 28, First Christian Reformed Church, Ripon, California.

7. Minute book of the Afton CRC, Archives, Calvin College, 1-8.

8. Avink diary, entries from November 1913 through August 1914.

9. In the eastern United States a slough generally refers to a swampy or marshy area, while in the western United States it refers to an alternate river channel.

10. Sadly, detailed history materials and mementos gathered by Herman Meima have been lost. He and his sister continued living in the family home after their parents died. After Herman died, Johanna continued caring for the items. When she went to an assisted care facility, thieves broke into the home and ransacked it, and burned all of the historical collection in a stove.

11. A number of Schaapman's letters to her friend Williamientje Beltman in the Netherlands are printed in the *Stanislaus Stepping Stones* (Fall 1986): 525-529 (quarterly publication of McHenry Museum and Historical Society, Modesto, California).

12. The wedding reception of Ben Meulink and Lucy Schaapman was held in Meulink's barn.

13. Because of the influenza pandemic that caused millions of deaths, they had to wear handkerchiefs over their faces because they hadn't taken masks along.

14. Ultimately the building fell into

disrepair. Recently the building was restored and houses a museum honoring war veterans from the Ripon community.

15. *50 Years, 1918-1968: First Christian Reformed Church* (Ripon: First Christian Reformed Church, 1968) [5].

16. He subsequently worked in various non-ministerial jobs. During his last years he suffered much in a battle with cancer. During that battle he again found his faith and died in Orange City, Iowa, where he had been born.

17. The story is told that just before a summer afternoon's worship as the consistory members met for prayer, the outside door to the room was open and a dog chased a cat across the entrance. The immediate reaction from Groen was, "Shall it be dogmatics or catechism from the pulpit this afternoon?"

18. Groen was anticipating the day when the attendance would reach one hundred. One Sunday evening ninety-nine persons were counted. Following the revelation of the number ninety-nine, a mouse raced across the basement floor. The pastor exclaimed, "We have now reached one hundred."

19. The author was elected president at the age of seventeen.



# Notes in a Seventeenth-Century Family Bible

Anne G. Bousema

Much genealogical information is often recorded in a family Bible. In May 1995, while my husband and I exchanged homes and cars for seven weeks with Roger and Joyce Vanden Bosch of Zeeland, Michigan, we became intrigued with one such Bible. While I was working on my family history in Heritage Hall at Calvin College, Henk examined old family Bibles donated by descendants of the early immigrants. One of these, from the seventeenth century, contained genealogical information about the van Dijk and the Vanden Bosch families; the latter are ancestors of the family in whose home we were staying.

The Bible measures 40 x 27 x 12 cm, with two brass clasps (one original, one replacement), back and front brass corner pieces with bosses, and an ornamental center boss on the back cover; the front boss is missing. The covers are wood, covered with leather. The front cover was broken and repaired with two brass brackets screwed through the two pieces. The Bible was printed in the Netherlands in 1690 and purchased by Jacobus van Dijk, who lived in Dordrecht and recorded his family information in it, as did children and grandchildren. The van Dijcks also lived in Gouda, and the family's last recorded

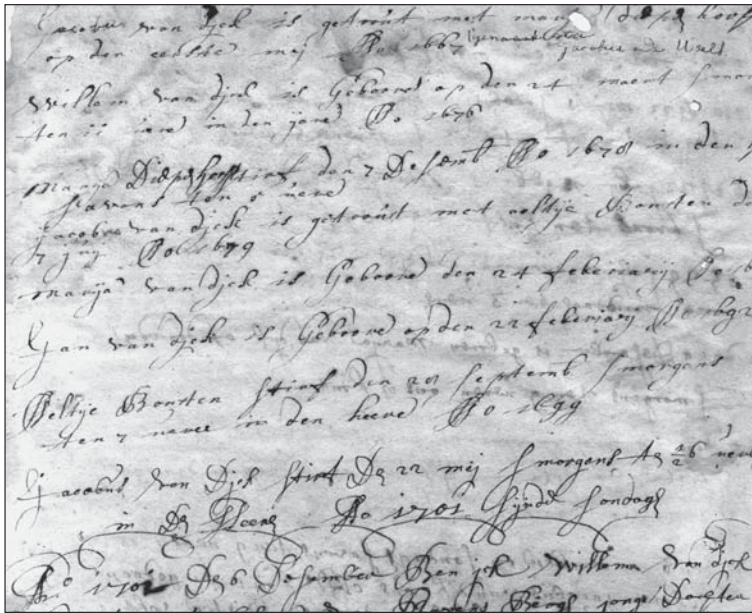
information was the death of Grandson Jacobus van Dijk in 1791. After this the Bible came into possession of the Vanden Bosch family in Friesland, some distance from Dordrecht and Gouda. The Bible was taken to America in 1848 by Tamme Vanden Bosch, and much later was given to Heritage Hall at Calvin College.

The staff of Heritage Hall told Henk that this Bible had belonged to Rev. Koene Tammes Vanden Bosch,



Cover plate of the van Dijk/Vanden Bosch Bible with its 1690 printing date. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Entries about the van Dijk family written in old script. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

for several years the only minister in the Christian Reformed Church, and that it had been exhibited in New York in honor of the inauguration of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. According to the family story and notes written in the Bible, it came from a sister of Sir Anthony van Dijk

and is linked to the Vanden Bosch clan, since Tamme Vanden Bosch's mother was a van Dijk; the daughter of Susanne van Dijk, born in 1707.

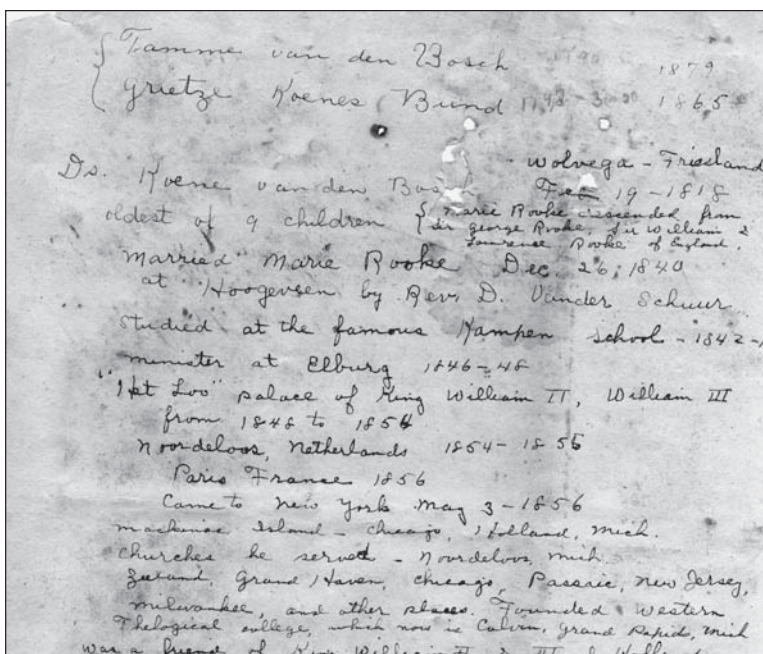
Sir Anthony van Dijk (also spelled Dyck) is a well-known Dutch painter, who did have a sister Susanne, so the suggestion that the

Vanden Bosch and van Dijk families are related seemed somewhat plausible and piqued my interest. Several years after returning to the Netherlands, I began doing research on the story of this Bible in the archives of Leeuwarden, Apeldoorn, Assen, Gouda, Dordrecht, Rotterdam, Steenwijk, Wolvega, and Zwolle.

**The van Dijk/van Dijck Families**

The earliest family information about the van Dijk family is written on the last three pages of the Bible (see sidebar); much of this information is confirmed by records in various archives. I found, for instance, confirmation of Jacobus van Dijk's second marriage in the archives of Dordrecht, where he is listed under his full name, Jacob Willemse van Dijck, indicating that his father's first name was Willem. After publishing an article in the February 2007 issue of *Gens Nostra*, the journal of the Dutch Genealogical Society, I received additional information. Mr. H. M. Kuypers from Voorschoten had evidence that Jacobus van Dijk was a son of Willem Dirxsz (Vermeulen) from Kralingen. He was married in Kralingen on 1 May 1667 as Jacob Willemsz Vermeulen to Maria Willems, from Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel, as is recorded in the Bible. Maria Willems was a daughter of Willem Jansz Engelsman, also named Diepenhorst. After Maria's death Jacobus married Aaltien Pieter Bonten.

Other than the notes written in the Bible, there is no evidence that Jacobus van Dijk was directly related to Anthony van Dijk. Although Anthony van Dijk (1599-1641) did have a sister Susanne, there is no evidence that this sister ever married. Van Dijk had a daughter, Maria Theresia, born in 1621. Nothing is known about the mother except that she and Van Dijk were not married. In 1632 Charles I invited van Dijk to England to be his court painter.



The upper portion features van Dijk entries, while the lower portion, in the more modern script, has Vanden Bosch entries. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Seven years later van Dijk married Mary Ruthven, a lady-in-waiting to the Queen Henrietta Maria. Van Dijk and Ruthven had one daughter, Justinianna, born 1 December 1641. Van Dijk died a few days later on 9 December, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. Through his will he bequeathed his possessions to his sister Susanne, who was responsible for their younger sister Isabella and for his illegitimate daughter Maria Theresia. Susanne and Isabella became Beguines, lay women who neither married nor took permanent religious vows but lived communally; they took care of Maria Theresia in the Antwerp Béguinage. None of these data is recorded in the Bible.

Via his will dated 13 Jul 1785, the Jacobus van Dijk (grandson of the first Jacobus van Dijk) mentioned in the Bible notes, left his estate to his sister Adriana, who was married to Jan van Ravensbergh. The fact that the will made no provisions for any other relatives suggests that no children survived from either of van Dijk's families. Adriana and Jan van Ravensbergh were survived by a son, but no daughters.

As a result, Susana Koenes van Dijk listed in the Bible notes, the mother of Tamme van den Bosch, cannot be a direct descendant of Jacobus van Dijk. Consequently, in tracing the van Dijk family, no historical evidence could be found to confirm the Vanden Bosch family story.

### The Vanden Bosch Family

Tamme Molles Vanden Bosch (1798-1874) was the third child (first son) of six born to Molle Tammes (1760-1818) and Grietje Hanses (1767-1842) in Knijpe, Friesland. They were married 21 June 1789 and the Vanden Bosch surname was added 28 January 1812, when the heads of all Dutch households were required to take a family name. Molle Tammes

was the son of Tamme Molles and Lutske Jacobs. The parents of Grietje Hanses have not been found. Tamme Molles Vanden Bosch married Grietje Koenen Bont in 1821; she was the daughter of Koene Pieters Bont and Annechien Koenderts Houwer. The claim that either Tamme's mother or grandmother was a van Dijk also is contradicted.

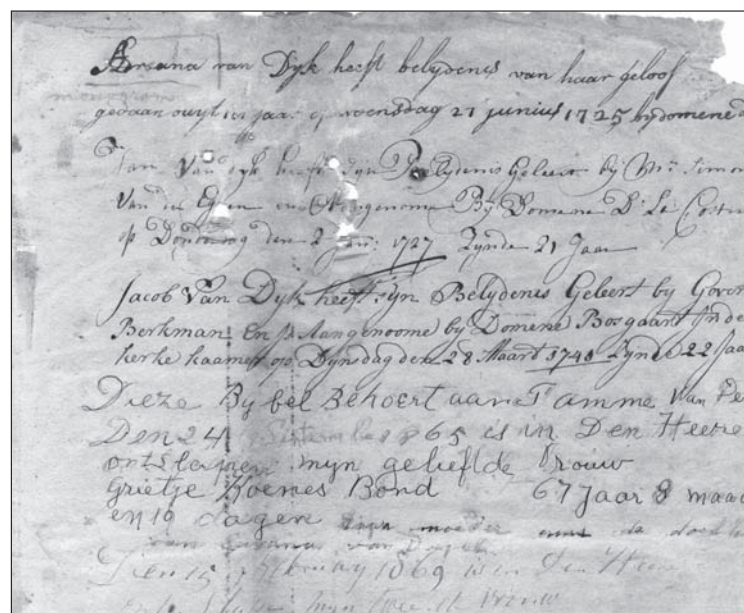
What can be proved is that by the middle 1840s Tamme and Grietjen had become part of the Secession from the Dutch Hervormde Kerk and were raising a family that included ten children—Koene, the oldest, was twenty-three and married and about to begin studying for the ministry when his youngest brother Johannes was born in 1841. Because of government oppression of the Seceders, Tamme talked of emigrating to the United States, but was reluctant to leave until his wife became convinced through prayer that emigration was God's will. Because he was studying for the ministry, Koene decided to remain in the Netherlands.

Their 35-day voyage began on 1 May 1848, and when they arrived in Zeeland, Michigan, Jan Steketee

offered them housing, until they could obtain their own. For two years Tamme worked as a butcher, then bought land that he cleared with the three older sons still living at home. Although the first years were difficult, with various pests eating crops, and sickness affecting everyone, thanks to minister/doctor Cornelius Van der Meulen the family survived until the second year on the farm, when enough corn was harvested to feed the hog as well as prepare johnnycake for the family.

Koene Vanden Bosch completed his theological studies with Frederik A. and Wolter A. Kok. To support the family during this period of theological study, Koene's wife, Marrigje Rook, took in sewing, and he knit stockings while looking after the sheep and cattle. In 1846 he became a lay leader in the small congregation of Elburg, passed his classical exam, and was ordained as a minister there in 1847. Contrary to claims written into the Bible, he did not attend the Theological School (now the *Theologische Universiteit*) in Kampen, since this school was not begun until 1854.

In 1848 he became a minister in



Vanden Bosch entries from the Bible. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Apeldoorn in the district of the Loo, not at the Loo Palace as descendant T. Cornell Vanden Bosch would later claim. In 1854 he accepted a call from the Seceder congregation in Noordeloos. He wanted to emigrate to the United States, but had no money for the passage until 1855, when a wealthy man from his congregation offered him a loan of 1,000 guilders for passage to America for the Vanden Bosch family and several members of his congregation. In late 1855 he received a call from a group of families living three to four miles through the woods north and west of Zeeland, Michigan. At the time these families were part of the church in Zeeland and not an independent congregation. Vanden Bosch arrived there in 1856 with twenty-nine members of his congregation in Noordeloos, the Netherlands. Even though the group in Noordeloos, Michigan, had not been organized as an independent congregation, Classis Holland accepted his credentials and approved his installation, thereby recognizing the de facto organization of the congregation.

From these beginnings, it appears that a complex family lore developed. During my correspondence with Roger and Joyce Vanden Bosch about an English translation they had e-mailed me, they provided a copy of a letter dated 17 December 1943 from Harriet Vanden Bosch (daughter of Henry Vanden Bosch) to her cousin-in-law, Mrs. Martin Vanden Bosch. Included were the following paragraphs:

Tamme, your father-in-law, being the oldest of Koene's children never had a robust health and because of that fact my father, Henry, being the strongest and largest, had to run all the errands for his father Koene, and so he was the messenger to the king. He had to take notes to the king, which had reference to the church sermons and music announcements made when

preaching for those rulers. The other children, born in the palace, did not remember anything about their life at court because they were too young.

Our grandfather (Koene) had hundreds of sermons which he had preached for the kings, one of these sermons was for the coronation of the King Willem III.

Our great-grandfather was Tamme Vanden Bosch and his mother was a van Dijck of the famous Dutch painter, Sir Anthony van Dijck. But because the van Dijcks were strict Catholics, this background was always kept a secret because my grandfather being a reformer would not want anyone to know that there were Catholic forbears [sic] in his family.

Now about our grandmother, her name was Marie Rooke and she was a descendent of the distinguished Admiral Sir George Rooke, who with Dutch and English armies captured the Rock of Gibraltar in 1704. He had brothers Sir William and Sir Laurence.

Sir Laurence was a famous astrologer, musician, and mathematician. Sir George was a soldier of fortune and lived for quite a time in Amsterdam and as the story goes he had a Dutch wife while living there. He later had three English wives but of course in England a Dutch wife would not be counted.

Referring again to the van Dijck-Vanden Bosch Bible, this Bible was from 1848-1856 used by the late Dr. [sic] Koene Vanden Bosch when he was a minister in the courts of King William II and III and lived at the historic palace "Castle Het Loo." After leaving the Dutch court, Dr. Koene Vanden Bosch took his family to Paris and from there to New York on 8 May 1856, and crossing the Hudson River came to Englewood where it was quiet, reminding him much of the area around the royal palace "Het Loo" in Apeldoorn. The famous Bible was used by Dr. Koene Vanden Bosch while as a visitor to these places, and he was an honored guest speaker in these various churches, including one at Bank Street, New York City (also possibly churches at Old North

Church at Schraalenburgh (now Dumont), churches at Leonia, Midland Park, Paterson, Hackensack and Englewood. Then leaving the East going by water through the Erie Canal, Lake Erie and up Lake Huron, after a long trip, they came to Mackinac Island, Michigan where Dr. Koene Vanden Bosch rested for a while in the summer resort of Astor House. These travelers then continued by water way to Chicago and from there to Holland, Michigan, where a log cabin became their home. The last years of his life Dr. Koene Vanden Bosch spent on the shores of Lake Michigan in the former Astor trading post, where he turned his attention to the raising of beautiful flowers, especially pansies, until the day of his death.

This was the information that T. Cornell Vanden Bosch as a child sought to substantiate via library research. He had been baptized Tamme (later changed to Thomas Cornell) in 1885, the son of Henry and grandson of Rev. Koene Vanden Bosch. T. Cornell studied at Harvard University and the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and became an accomplished musician and composer. While in New England, he also set about learning as much information as he could about Sir Anthony van Dijck. He took the Bible from Michigan while gathering information in eastern libraries. Using blue ink, he added the results of his research to the genealogical information about the two families already listed, written in black ink. Much of the information about Sir Anthony is correct, while the family linkages are a different matter.

Once he felt he had corroborating evidence he began to tell the stories to others. The *New York Herald Tribune* of 26 September 1948 reported about a display in honor of the recent inauguration (Dutch monarchs are not crowned) of Juliana as Queen of the Netherlands, "North Tarrytown,

New York, September 25, an exhibit of historic items including the van Dijck - Vanden Bosch Bible is being held in honor of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands at Phillipse Castle in the Hollow region here. T. Cornell Vanden Bosch is owner of this Bible, which was originally owned by the sister of Sir Anthony van Dijck, the Dutch artist. It contains, written in durable ink, the record of the van Dijck family from 1666 to about 1750, when it passed in the hands of the Vanden Bosch family.” Or a decade later, in a 31 October 1959 article in the *Grand Haven Tribune* “Vanden Bosch Bible used in Court of Dutch Kings, Training Area Preachers 100 Years Ago.” An accompanying photo shows Vanden Bosch holding the Bible and reports him saying that it goes back to the days of Sir Anthony van Dijck, famous Dutch artist from whom he is descended. Vanden Bosch mentions that Sir Anthony had a son Jacobus born in 1629 to whom he wanted to give a large Bible, but he never did. But some twenty-seven years after the death of Sir Anthony a fire swept St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, England, where Sir Anthony was buried and Jacobus recalled his father’s wish for a family Bible, so he went to Utrecht and purchased this Bible. Vanden Bosch died in 1961 and the Bible was donated to Calvin College in 1967.

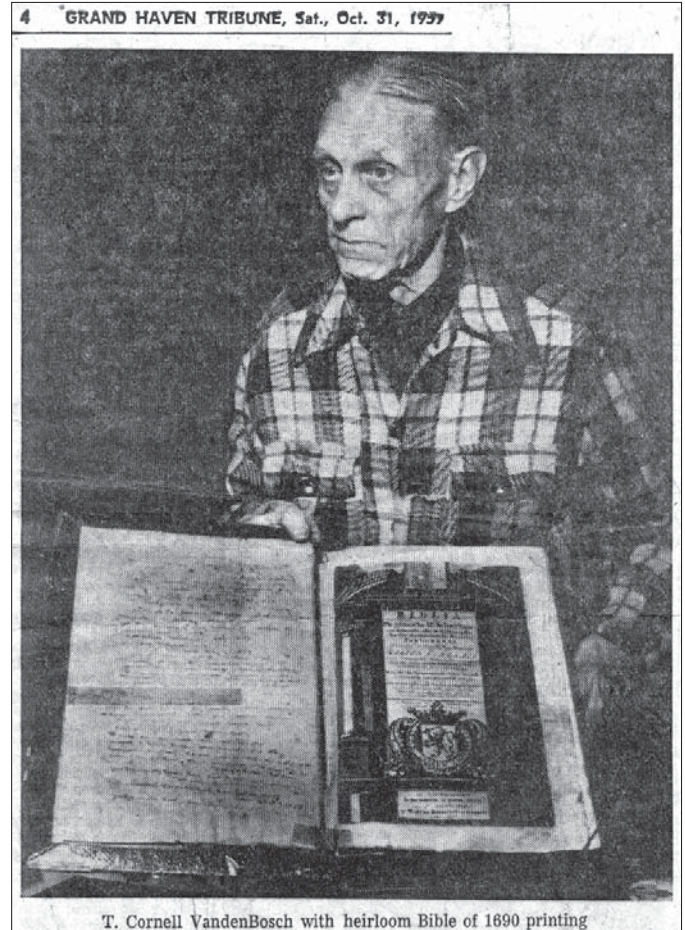
### Truth or Family Lore?

Although a wonderful family story developed about this Bible, the errors in it are several. To begin, Anthony van Dijck only had daughters Maria Theresia and Justinianna; he had a sister, Susanna, but there is no record that she married. There is no record of a son born to van Dijck or his sister. Lastly, van Dijck and his sisters were members of the Roman Catholic Church, while the data in the Bible made clear that all of the Van Dijks

listed were baptized in the Hervormde Kerk.

In the newspaper article Vanden Bosch goes on to state that his grandfather Koene Vanden Bosch was a pastor to and used the Bible in the courts of Kings William II and William III. In fact, Vanden Bosch was part of the 1834 Secession from the Hervormde Kerk, the Dutch national church. As head of the government, William II had used his army and constabulary to try to suppress the Seceders. It was not until the Dutch constitutional change of 1848 that the Seceders were granted official freedom to practice their religion. Records clearly indicate that he did not live at the historic castle, but lived in the district of Het Loo in house number 21, where two of his children were born. Further, Dutch church records are clear that Koene Vanden Bosch remained in the Netherlands, emigrating from Noordeloos to the United States in 1856, where records indicate he arrived in early 1856. He was never a minister in Paris; at best he could have traveled through Paris when emigrating. But, if he did leave from a French port this would have been Calais or La Harve. Going through Paris to either of these ports would have involved a significant detour to the south.

A note in the Bible also claims that Koene Vanden Bosch was one of



T. Cornell Vanden Bosch with the Bible, from a news clipping relating his attempt to demonstrate the validity of the family Bible’s history. Photo courtesy of the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

the founders of what is now Calvin College in Grand Rapids. Instruction for theological students was first given by Wilhelmus Van Leeuwen in 1863, and then by Douwe J. Vander Werp, 1864-1875. Geert Boer took over from Vander Werp and then carried on as docent of the Theological School when it was established in 1876. Vanden Bosch’s only recorded involvement with instruction of theological students is that he was one of the thirty-eight delegates to the 2 February 1876 meeting of the General Assembly that voted to create the Theological School, which became Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College.

The information about Marie Rook

being a descendant of Sir George Rooke, likewise is not substantiated by Dutch records. It is clear that her parents were of common origin, which is supported by the fact that she had to take in sewing to help support the family.

### Conclusions

According to information in the Bible, Jacobus Willems van Dijk from Dordrecht bought this Bible between 1690, when it was published, and 1701, when he died. Van Dijk was not related to the family of Dutch painter Sir Anthony van Dijck. After Jacobus Willems van Dijk's death, possession of the Bible passed to his oldest son Willem, who died in 1746; then it passed to his son Jacobus van Dijck, who died in Gouda in 1791. The latter Jacobus had no children, so the Bible probably passed in his estate to his sister Adriana. After the *Gens Nostra* article I also received an e-mail from Mr. M. O. Koopmans from Grijpskerk, who had evidence

that Ulcke Sickes and Grietje Lolles, the parents-in-law of Adriana van Dijk, were married in Joure, Friesland on 13 January 1689 and that Sickes was a barge skipper who traveled between Joure and Dordrecht. Their first child was born in Joure and the other six in Dordrecht. Perhaps the Bible was transported from Dordrecht to Friesland via boat after 1791.

I found no relationship between the descendents of Adriana van Dijk from Dordrecht and the Vanden Bosch clan from the area around Langezwaag in Friesland. The only connection appears to be that both families had ties to the vicinity of Heerenveen, Friesland. Joure is to the east while Langezwaag is just to the north; the distance between these two areas is perhaps nine miles. It seems most plausible that Tamme Vanden Bosch purchased the used Bible. The Bible now contains information about two extended families, whose only tie is that both at different times owned the same Bible. ❧

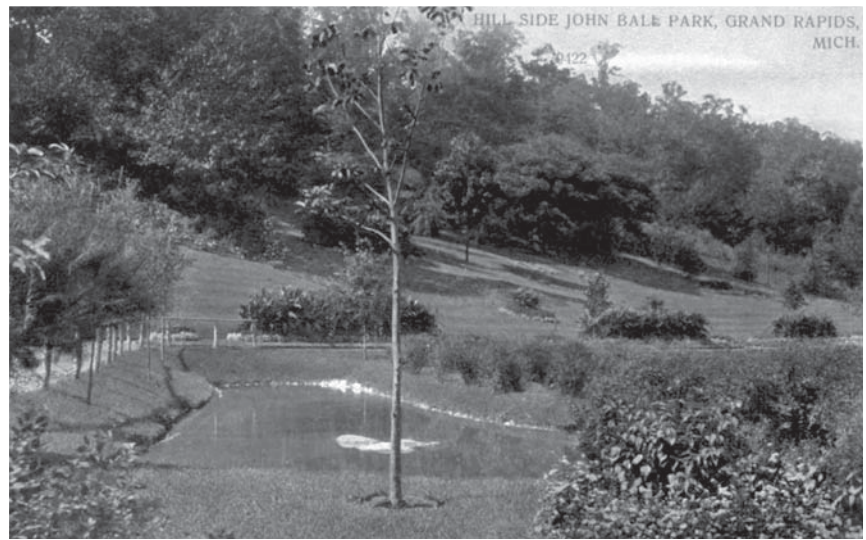
### Sources

In addition to the sources I cited, I want to thank Roger and Joyce Vanden Bosch and Mrs. Wendy Blankenspoor, cataloguing archivist in Heritage Hall for their information. Mrs. M. J. Platt-de Kiewit volunteered to search in the archives of Dordrecht for me and sent me all the information on Adriana van Dijck. I used some information on the Vanden Bosch family published by Yntze van der Honing via internet (<http://www.carsandtrucks.com/vdbba.html>). I'm very grateful to Mr. H. M. Kuypers, Mr. Y. van der Honing, and Mr. M. O. Koopmans for their help. I thank, our dear friend, John H. Dryfhout of New Hampshire, who assisted by reading and editing this article.

# “Dear Father, . . .”

Leendert Woudstra  
translated by Gerrit W. Sheeres

**Editor’s note:** Leendert [Leonard] Woudstra, an immigrant from the Netherlands, arrived in New York on 2 March 1911. Woudstra (1889–1954) worked as a cement contractor in Grand Rapids. A year after immigrating Woudstra wrote his father, Sjerp Woudstra, about life in the new world. Such letters were common, but Woudstra went further, he sent along a postcard album to illustrate the letter. In 2007 Woudstra’s grand niece, Akky Sepers-de Boer, sent the album and letter to Heritage Hall. What follows is a sampling of the postcards and Woudstra’s comments, with editorial additions in square brackets.



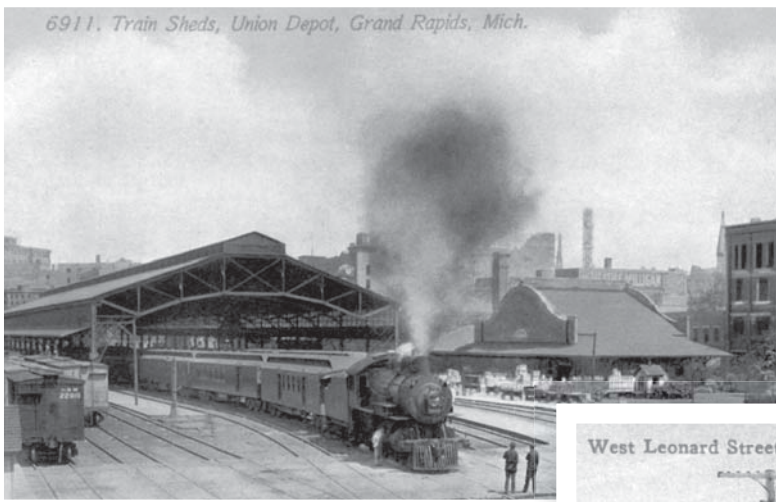
This is of a beautiful park [John Ball Park] here in the city; there are a number of such parks; it also shows you how big everything is; . . . there is always music, and they have all kinds of animals.



This is a brewery [the Grand Rapids Brewing Company, on Michigan Street].

Gerrit W. Sheeres is a retired pastor who volunteers in the Archives, translating records from Dutch into English. He is a native of the Netherlands.

6911. Train Sheds, Union Depot, Grand Rapids, Mich.



This shows the railroad station [Union Station] where I arrived – we have two railroad stations here.

... and then we have the street where we live.

West Leonard Street, looking East from Broadway, Grand Rapids, Mich.



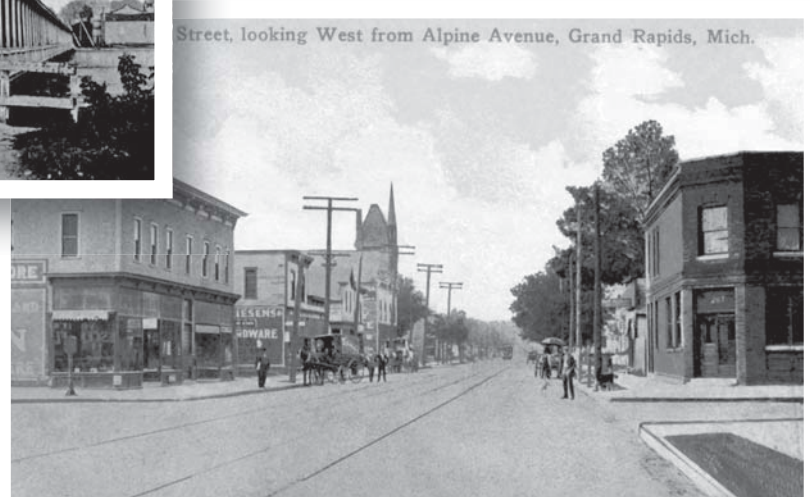
Old Leonard Street Bridge, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Oldest Bridge in Grand Rapids, Built in 1879.



It starts at the big bridge; they plan to demolish this bridge this summer and replace it with a steel bridge. This is the oldest bridge in Grand Rapids.

Street, looking West from Alpine Avenue, Grand Rapids, Mich.

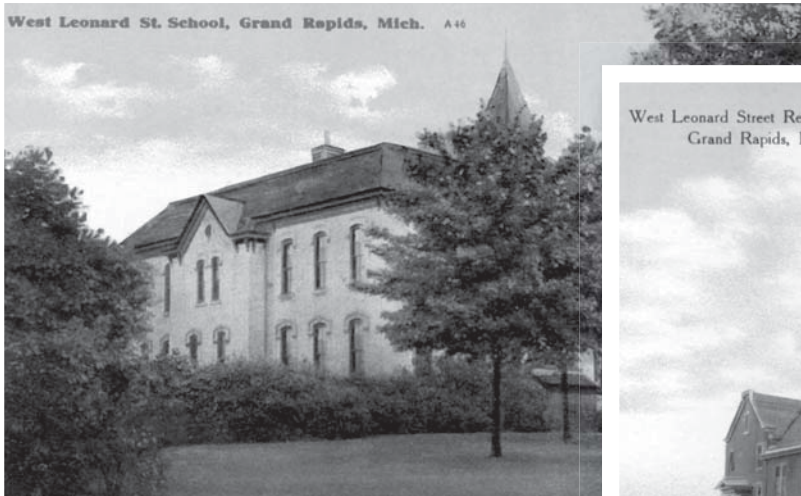


Then follows another stretch of West Leonard; ...

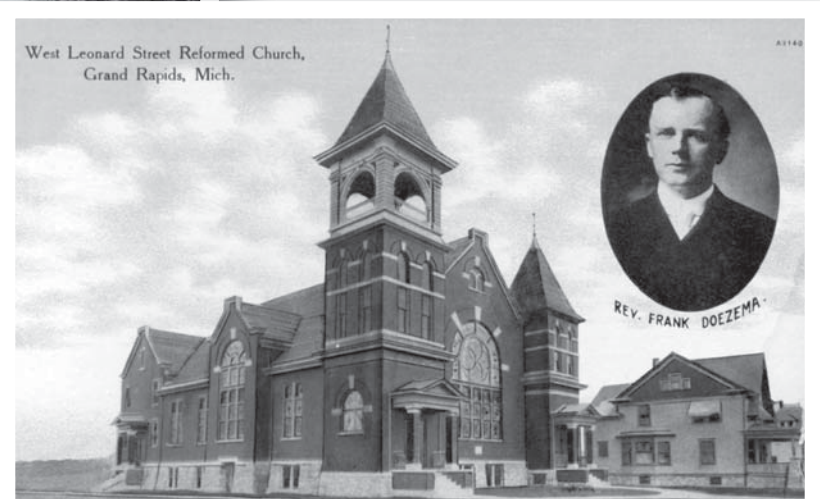




... next is the fire engine [Station 9 on West Leonard]. The one wagon is drawn by three horses – it is a big machine and it is steam driven and the one [wagon] with the two horses has the ladders.



Next is one of a school.

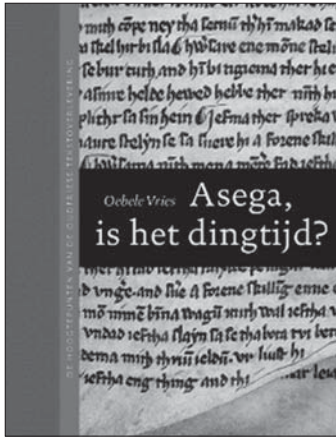


... and the next one is of a church on Leonard Street – although it is not the church we attend; ...



Then ... the area of a small sea [Reeds Lake], it is beautiful there in the summertime; [this one] shows the boats.

# book reviews



## Asega: is het dingtijd?: De hoogtepunten van de Oudfriesse tekstoverlevering

Oebele Vries

Steven Sterk  
Leeuwarden-Utrecht 2007.

536 pages.

€ 75.00

The murder of St. Boniface by a band of drunken Frisian ruffians in 754 didn't exactly mark the Frisian people as a law-abiding race. Interesting to know, then, that in fact a very detailed Frisian Law Code existed that was recorded in the last part of the 8th century, during the reign of Charlemagne, known as the *Lex Frisionum*. In its chapters a great many transgressions are listed, along with the punishment for each, usually in the form of fines. These laws applied to all of Frisia, which at that time extended well beyond the provincial borders of what we today know as Friesland. As the centuries progressed toward the later Middle Ages, other laws were added, and by the 1400s these were no longer recorded in Latin but in Old Frisian.

In this beautifully bound volume by Oebele Vries from the University of Groningen, the reader can peruse the penalties for an enormously wide range of transgressions, from adultery to violence in the church, from tax evasion to the neglect of proper dike maintenance, in both modern Frisian and Dutch, with the original text in the margins. Dr. Vries, an authority in Old Frisian documents, labored on *Asega, is het dingtij* for seven years, and the enthusiastic response from the public affirms that his labors were not in vain.

The *asega* was the official law advisor of the time, whose task was to resolve problems. He informed the people of their rights and directed the legal proceedings (*dingtijd*), though he himself could not make judgments or deliver verdicts. If, for example, a young ruffian came to him with the complaint that while fighting, an opponent had used unfair tactics by pulling his pants down, the *asega* would cite the rule: "If in a fight, one pulled another by the waistband so as to render it useless, preventing the victim from coming to the aid of another, then the perpetrator shall pay the victim two shillings for damages as well as two for the judge." And that would settle the matter. Or, should someone come to the *asega* complaining that he had been assaulted and thrown to the ground, he would be advised that the perpetrator would have to pay the penalty of six farthings; however, that fine would increase to nine farthings if it were a woman that had been thrown to the ground.

Severity of fines would also vary according to one's social station in life.

Thus, in the early middle ages, should one injure a nobleman, the fine would be twice as much as for wounding a freeman. Injury done to a serf would incur only half of the amount as that for a freeman, and half as much again when involving a slave. Equal rights for all would not be codified for some time to come.

Still, women's rights were remarkably well regarded in these early laws. Thus, the value of a woman was regarded as equal to that of a man: the fine for killing either was the same, unlike in other Germanic codes. And if, for example, a parent wanted to force his daughter to marry a man against her will, the *asega* would advise the parent that such action violated the rights of the daughter and that he would be penalized, should he hurt her for non-compliance. Another law protecting the woman goes into very concrete detail:

When a man forces a woman to become his wife, she should send a messenger to her relatives, who in turn will send a messenger to the count's representative; then the representative must gather the trial proceedings so close to the house of the man that he can touch the edge of the roof with his spear; the representative will then take the woman from the house and subsequently burn the house to the ground on the authority of the count; the man is then held responsible for payments to her, to the judges, and to the count's representative.

Rapists, too, would be dealt with severely: they would be fined nearly as heavily as for murder; and a rapist's house would be burned to the ground.

However, we find ourselves wincing

at this law that a woman accused of having been unfaithful to her husband might be subjected to the “hand proof” (putting a hot iron in her hand as a test of God’s judgment). The husband could declare her innocent, to avoid this. Otherwise, if she incurred burns by the hand proof, then the husband could reject her, or take her back.

Today’s reader may also be surprised to discover the compassionate protection accorded to needy children. The following example is especially poignant and graphic in its use of language:

. . . when a child is naked or homeless and the dark haze and bitter cold winter and the long dark night are spreading out over the surrounding fields, when each retreats to his hearth and home and to its warm corners and the wild animal seeks the protection of the mountains and the hollow tree where it can survive. Then the child weeps and cries and laments its naked limbs and its homelessness and its absent father who should protect the child against hunger and the cold of winter but lies buried in the deep dark earth with four nails in the oaken casket.

Then the mother may rent or sell the land of her child because she, as long as the child is a minor, has the responsibility and the duty to insure that the child will neither by monarch nor by hunger come to an untimely end.

Vries chose to include all the important original Old Frisian texts. Most deal with the law codes, but the book also includes chronicles and legends. Two, in poetic form, record the stories of how an alleged uniquely Frisian freedom originated. Whatever the facts may have been, freedom for the Frisians came with obligations, as evident in this law:

This is the law: when a free Frisian owns land worth thirty pounds, then he must provide a horse and weapon for the defense of the realm. Should he be unable to do so, then he must pay the count’s representative a fine of two pounds.

The last text in the book is the only one that deals specifically with a biblical vision, a rather frightening apocalyptic one that goes back to an early ninth-century source. It announces

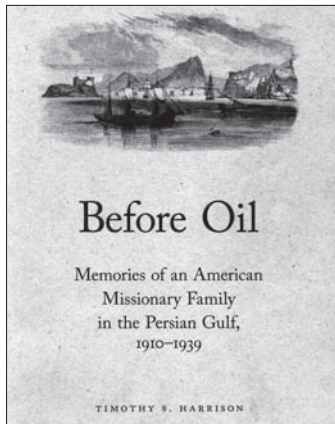
fifteen signs that will occur before the Day of Judgment, as St. Hieronymus found it recorded in the books of the Jews.

The value of this book is enhanced by an extremely informative introduction that sheds light on the context of these laws, on the Old Frisian language, as well as on the Frisian social community in medieval times. Helpful also is a section of explanations for each of the twenty-four texts, as well as the glossary and subject index. But it is especially the inclusion of two sections, one in the front and one in the back of the book that adds a special dimension of aesthetic delight. Each section features fourteen pages of stunning color reproductions of original pages, some of which were written in elegant longhand.

*Asega, is het dingtijd?* will interest historical scholars in early cultures, language, and law, but also the general reader with a lively curiosity of how these early Frisians conducted their life.

Henry Baron

# book reviews, continued



## Before Oil: Memories of an American Missionary Family in the Persian Gulf, 1910-1939

Timothy S. Harrison

Rumfordbooks, 2008

125 Miller Avenue, Suite B,  
Rumford, RI 02916

ISBN: 978-0-9815510-0-5

\$19.95, plus \$2.50 for postage

Blending nostalgia and realism, Timothy S. Harrison recalls in vivid detail his childhood years in the Middle East and India where he attended grade school. His father, Paul Harrison (1883–1962) was a medical missionary in the Persian Gulf, 1910–1953. Among the elder Harrison’s missionary cohorts were Dr. Eleanor Taylor Calverley, the first woman doctor in Kuwait, and John Van Ess, who labored for forty-seven years as a missionary in Iraq. Also mentioned is Henry Bilkert, a dedicated evangelist and talented administrator who was

killed while on a trip between Basra and Kuwait by the Ikhwan, a roaming Bedouin tribe intent on preserving a nomadic way of life which in their minds was threatened by radios and automobiles.

Medical missionary work in Arabia and Oman was a family enterprise. Wives and husbands learned and read Arabic, worked as partners and endured depression, loneliness, and oppressive heat. Self-pity and grumbling are not found in this narrative. Here we have the saga of the members of the Harrison family—Paul, his first wife Regina Rabbe who died tragically in 1930, and his second wife Anna Monteith Bilkert, whom he married in 1931. Love for missions and a sense of calling shared by this family trio are an inspiration for all who long to read a realistic account of missionary day-to-day endeavors where few Christians had gone before to heal a sick and economically deprived people. This domestic memoir is not fiction. Better than that, it is an authentic account of the actions of intelligent and astute members of a close-knit family who, while hoping for converts, gained a great appreciation for many aspects of the Islamic faith and a traditional way of life cherished by the Arabian people. But for the Harrisons and their friends, encountering slavery was more than a mere culture shock; it was the cause of much anguish.

To finance his mission efforts, Paul Harrison was willing to identify with the Dutch Reformed Church in

America even though in the words of his son, “Calvinism meant nothing.” In other words, to actualize his calling, monetary support was essential. Among other abundant vignettes about his career are his votes by absentee ballot for Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas (1928–1948), his *Atlantic Monthly* article critical of British Middle East policy, and his “epoch making” (p. 84) meeting with Abdul Aziz, who, in a sense, can be considered the founding father of Saudi Arabia.

Paul Harrison’s son Timothy, a graduate of Hope College and Johns Hopkins Medical School, has a distinguished international reputation. A biographical outline of his varied career includes recent appointments at the Aga Khan University Medical School in Karachi, Pakistan; and Surgeon, the Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman (1990–1994); added to this are years of service at Harvard, Yale, the University of Michigan, and Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine.

The recollections of young Timothy Harrison about bazaars, camel caravans, pearl fishermen, day-to-day life in a missionary family, and his experiences while attending school in India bring an intensely human touch to this narrative. All readers will, with understandable envy, have the privilege to watch and observe life in the Middle East three-quarters of a century ago. Like opening a time capsule, this book creates for the reader an Islamic and Arabian cultural,

economic, religious, and political environment virtually unknown in the Modern World. Maps, annotated footnotes, and a generous selection of contemporary photographs sprinkled through this volume make it a very readable and historically valuable document. Neither the *Arabian Nights*

we read as youngsters nor a modern political tract, Timothy Harrison's family memoir details the dedication of his own and other missionary families.

They were witnesses for Christ and served an impoverished people by providing medical care and

educational opportunities for those in great need who found their home on the Arabian Peninsula. This book is an engrossing tribute to those who accepted many challenges and did so with their eyes wide open.

*Conrad Bult*

# for the future

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

“Memories of Cedar Lake, Indiana,”  
by Rich Iwema

“Mission Fests in the Heartland,” by  
Robert Schoone-Jongen

Continuation of “The Dutch on  
America’s West Coast,” by Howard  
Spaan

“The Dutch Come to the Hacken-  
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