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A DUTCH IMMIGRANT'S VIEW OF FRONTIER IOWA

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Dr. Swierenga, a graduate of Calvin College and Northwestern University, recently received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Iowa and is in his second year of teaching at Calvin College. He uncovered this 1849 pamphlet while engaged in research on the voting patterns of the Dutch immigrants in Iowa in the decade prior to the Civil War.¹ His interest in the local Hollanders derives from his own Dutch ancestry and from three years he spent teaching at the Pella Christian High School.

In August of 1847 a group of approximately eight hundred travel-weary Dutch immigrants reached the site of their future home in northeastern Marion County, Iowa. The new colony, called Pella (after the classical Greek "city of refuge" of that name where the Christians fled upon the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.), had its inception in religious and economic difficulties in the Netherlands, stemming from a schism in the state-supported Dutch Reformed Church in 1834 and a series of agricultural disasters in the 1840's.² Under the

¹ Robert P. Swierenga, "The Ethnic Voter and the First Lincoln Election," *Civil War History*, XI (March, 1965), 27-43.

² Excellent accounts of the Dutch migration to Iowa are in Jacob Van Der Zee, *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912), and Henry S. Lucas, *The Netherlands in*

leadership of the Reverend Mr. Henry Peter Scholte, a group of seceders met at Utrecht in 1846 and formed the "Netherlandish Association for Emigration to the United States of North America" to assist needy compatriots who wished to escape economic disasters and a mild persecution from government officials.³

Sjoerd Aukes Sipma, author of the following letter, here published for the first time in English, was one of the Netherlanders who migrated to Pella under the auspices of the association. Born into a large lower class family in Bornwerd, a city in the province of Friesland, and recently married, Sjoerd saw little economic opportunity in his homeland. With his bride and several other penniless Friesian seceders, he was sponsored by a local benefactor and fellow immigrant, Hierke Ypes Viersen. Working briefly for Scholte and Viersen and then for an unidentified American farmer living on the southern outskirts of the settlement, the Sipmas prospered and within two years managed to repay their 202 guilder (\$81.00) debt to Viersen and purchase a small twenty-five acre farm from the local school fund commissioner. Soon Sipma was buying and selling land extensively. In the next two decades his name appeared in the Marion County deed record books no less than forty times as either the grantee or grantor of local real estate. Eventually in the late 1860's when Pella became overcrowded and land prices soared, Sipma and a few others spearheaded the drive to open a new colony in Sioux County in northwestern Iowa where government land was yet available for homesteading. Sipma's granddaughter, Mrs. Lillian Top, still lives in Orange City, the hub of the new settlement.

In the letter the author frequently mentions the "association," which refers either to the Dutch immigrant organiza-

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

³ The only biography of Scholte is Lubbertus Oostendorp, *H. P. Scholte, Leader of the Secession of 1834 and Founder of Pella* (Franeker, Netherlands: T. Wever, 1964). For a copy of the rules of the Netherlandish Association, translated into English, see Henry S. Lucas, "A Document Relating to Dutch Immigration to Iowa in 1846," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, XXI (July, 1923), 457-465.

tion noted above or to the Pella colony, depending on the context. References to the "Far West" denote the Middle West. Sipma's Friesian nationality also bears mention. Although the members of the association were Netherlanders, a few such as Sipma were from the Dutch province of Friesland. Among themselves the Friesians commonly used their own dialect, which is related to, but distinct from, Dutch. Friesians also claimed a long national history of their own, gloried in their separate ethnic identity, and were careful to preserve it. To other Dutchmen they often seemed a rustic and clannish people. According to the late Professor Henry S. Lucas, lifelong student of the Dutch in America, a distinct Friesian community existed a mile north of the town of Pella, which became known as the Vriesche Buurt ("Friesian Neighborhood").⁴ Sipma himself, along with a few other Friesians, settled four to five miles southeast of Pella, but in his letter he displays a similar ethnic consciousness when he mentions that his wife mended clothing "for Gosse J. de Vries and Geert Dykstra [both Friesians] and also for a Hollander." He also states that the local Friesians, as a group, declined to participate in the business meetings of the immigrant association.

Whether or not this ethnic consciousness had anything to do with Sipma's obvious dislike of Scholte is a moot question. Certainly opposition to Scholte's leadership of the colony arose from many quarters and for various reasons, not all of them very clear.⁵ In any case, the accusation that immigrant leaders used their positions for personal aggrandizement is a common one, and was also leveled against the leader of an English settlement in Clinton County, Iowa, as well as against the leader of the Dutch colony at Holland, Michigan.⁶

⁴ Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, p. 185.

⁵ In the *Pella Blade*, April 6, 1865, an "open letter" discussed the charges against Scholte at some length. See typed copy in Henry P. Scholte Papers, Central College Archives, Pella. See also Swierenga, "Ethnic Leader," pp. 40-43, for evidence that the colony had turned against Scholte's political leadership by 1860.

⁶ The charge against the English leader, George Sheppard, is related in his letter to the Iowa Emigration Society (Hull, England), on August 15, 1850, in Grant Foreman, "English Emigrants in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, XLIV (October, 1946), 416. The



SJOERD AUKES SIPMA

This letter initially was the response to a request by Sipma's family and friends in the Netherlands, many of whom were prospective immigrants, for factual information about life in the Middle West. Sipma earlier had written a brief letter which, to his surprise, was published by a Dutch editor eager to capitalize on a keen interest in America among the Netherlands.⁷ Basking in his unexpected fame and prompted by requests for more detailed information, Sipma again took pen in hand, this time specifically for publication. The resulting document is priceless today, not only for illustrating

criticism of the Michigan leader, Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte is noted in Albert Hyma, *Albertus C. Van Raalte and His Dutch Settlements in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1947), pp. 182-184.

⁷ *Brief van Sjoerd Aukes Sipma aan de Ingezetenen van Bornwerd* . . . (Dockum, Netherlands: B. Schaafsma, 1848).

BELANGRIJKE BERIGTEN
UIT
PELLA,

IN DE VEREENIGDE STATEN

VAN

NOORD-AMERIKA,

OF TWEEDE BRIEF VAN

Sjoerd Aukes Sipma;

VAN DAAR GESCHREVEN AAN DE INGEZETENEN

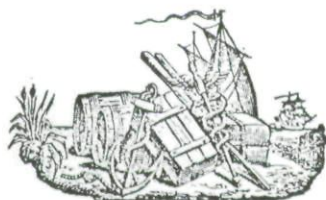
VAN

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WAARIN VELE BIJZONDERHEDEN, BETREFFENDE DE HOLLANDSCHE
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NAAR DE VEREENIGDE STATEN WILLEN VERHUIZEN, VOORKOMEN.

VOORZIEN MET EENIGE AANMERKINGEN DOOR

N. N.



G E D R U K T
BIJ DE WED. B. SCHAAFSMA, TE DOCKUM.
1849.

the pathos that immigrants experienced in the process of being uprooted but also for giving an excellent picture of pioneer life in central Iowa. Although the author admits to being uneducated and his style is an unpolished, rural Friesian vernacular, yet as a reporter his legacy to posterity is immense. For those interested in ethno-cultural aspects of American history, the document has an added bonus in that it reveals various facets of cultural conflict between native and foreign-born and even among the foreign-born themselves, conflicts which were endemic in American life.

R. John Vander Borgh, a native of the Netherlands and recently a student at Calvin College, assisted in the preparation of this translation of Sipma's tract, extracted from one of the few remaining copies of the original pamphlet, which is now located in the archives of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City. The text is complete except for the deletion (noted by ellipses) of irrelevant personalia in the opening and closing paragraphs. An extraneous preface and ten footnotes added by a Dutch editor are also deleted. Capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing have been altered where necessary to assist the reader, but many pronouns without antecedents have been left as is.

Pella, September 26, 1848

To my Relatives, to all the Farmers and
to the School Teacher at Bornwerd:⁸

Dear Friends,

We received your letter after it had been on the way for forty days and from it we learned that all our closest relatives are still in the land of the living and in good physical health. . . .

I shall begin now to answer your questions even though I will not be able to express myself in the most effective man-

⁸ The school teacher referred to here and throughout the letter is likely Jelle Pelmulder, who in 1856, followed Sipma to Pella. Pelmulder,

ner. I am not an educated person but simply a laborer, even as you have known me to be in Friesland, and besides that, I am not expert enough in the English language to be able to discern everything adequately. Just the same, I am quite willing to answer you as best I can. I will begin by giving you a description of the state of Iowa.

You must not pronounce the word as if it were a Dutch word. It is an English word and is pronounced as ai-o-wa, in three syllables. On the east Iowa borders the Mississippi, on the south the state of Missouri, on the west the Missouri River, while the Indians mark its borders to the north. Indians also inhabit most of the land west of the Missouri River. Ten years ago there were no whites in Iowa yet. At that time the Indians were the only inhabitants here.⁹ Only three years ago the state of Iowa was accepted into the United States. The state is about one hundred thousand quadrate or square miles and counts nearly one hundred thousand souls.¹⁰ One mile here is twenty minutes walking distance. The state is divided into counties. Thirty counties have been surveyed, and according to the Americans there are to be sixty of them.¹¹ The counties are divided into townships, each county has sixteen townships.¹² The townships are divided into sections, each township has thirty-six sections, and each section in turn has 640 acres. Every section number sixteen of each township in Iowa is considered school property. In each county there is a person who sells the school property and places the money at interest. The teachers are paid from

with sipma and a few others, later led the movement to plant a new Dutch settlement in Sioux County in northwestern Iowa. See Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, pp. 34ff.

⁹ White settlement in Iowa began legally in 1833, fifteen years rather than ten years before Sipma wrote.

¹⁰ The total land area of Iowa is only 56,280 square miles and the total population according to the state census of 1847 was 117,954. Sipma's 1848 estimate of 100,000 is probably about 35,000 too low. In 1849, Iowa's population numbered 152,148. These census figures are taken from a population table appended to *The Census Returns of the Different Counties of the State of Iowa for 1859* (Des Moines, 1859).

¹¹ Iowa eventually had ninety-nine counties.

¹² There are many exceptions to this general rule. Some Iowa counties, such as Tama and Linn, have as many as twenty townships and some, such as Van Buren and Henry, have only twelve.

this interest, each according to the numbers of pupils he has.

The state of Iowa is very fertile, the soil is exceptionally good. So far as I know there is about three or four feet of topsoil and beneath that a sort of reddish clay. The topsoil is black. At a few high spots in the forest the subsoil is sandy. The Americans, who come from almost every other state, say that they have never seen a state which is as convenient for transportation as Iowa, since this state is bounded by the great Mississippi River on the east and intersected from the west by three large rivers, which empty into the Mississippi at various places. It would therefore be easy to build canals. Besides this, railroads could be built quite easily since there are no mountains in this state.

You must not get the impression, however, that the land here is as flat as in Friesland because then it would have no drainage system. The land is hilly, but the hills are not so steep as to prevent farming. In fact, as a general rule the hills provide the best arable soil. Here one can also find level areas of about two hours walking distance, there are no forests on these places. These fields are situated midway between the rivers and are drained toward either side. Most of the wooded areas are found by the rivers. Incidentally, I have not seen a single area of land which cannot absorb water the way God has planned it. Approximately in the center between the rivers the land is higher and this we call a ridge. From this ridge there are small rivers, called creeks, which run through valleys and into the bigger rivers. The river farthest south is the Des Moines, then we get the Skunk River, and finally the Iowa River. In this state there is much more prairie than wooded areas. There are not as many trees as one could wish for. In the first place, because a great deal of lumber is needed for building; then there is so much needed to fence the land, and finally because there is always a great need for fuel. However, if a person uses common sense there is always plenty. After all, one need not go about it as carelessly as the Americans.

During the winter the prairies are burnt off to get new and better grass for the cattle. The burning causes forest fires at times, which sometimes burn for weeks. Not only does all the

dead timber burn, but also nearly all the surrounding trees. Moreover, the young trees suffer so much that it rarely happens that even one reaches its full growth.

I cannot acquaint you with the different types of wood we have here because I simply do not know enough about trees. I do know this though, that most of it is oak. We have about seven or eight different types of oak, also linden and walnut trees. The wood is very hard and durable. Because of its tendency to split, oak wood is used exclusively for fencing. The trees are cut into eleven foot lengths after which they are split and used to fence the land.

I am not going to write much about the animal kingdom. As a rule the cattle here are not as heavy as in Friesland, and as far as I can see, this is caused by the fact that they are left on their own during the winter. Calves are not placed in the stable and no colts are taken inside, so livestock suffers terribly. For the rest I cannot detect much difference in the livestock. I am not familiar with wild animals other than wolves, deer, and snakes. The snakes are not very large, about three to four feet long. I have already killed some of them. In the more populated areas of this state, they are almost extinct. Rats are not common here but we have plenty of mice and even bedbugs although I have not seen any yet.

Now I shall tell you something about the plant kingdom. We grow more varieties of crops and vegetables than in Friesland. Some of these are oats, barley, buckwheat, wheat, rye, peas, beans, kohlrabi, cabbage, kale, and all kinds of vegetables, which I cannot explain to you because I cannot find names for them. Rapeseed, horsebeans, and big [lima] beans which the state did not have before, have been imported by the association.¹³ In the spring wild flowers change from one color to another and cover the entire field. This is the time when the fields are covered with the most beautiful yellow lilies.¹⁴ There is also a kind of flower which looks like

¹³ Sipma listed only the common names for these vegetables. Since usage varies considerably, he may have had other vegetables in mind than the ones given here.

¹⁴ There were no wild "yellow" lilies in Iowa. A likely specimen is the abundant orange Turk's Cap.

tulips but is somewhat smaller and entirely white; like tulips it also grows from bulbs.

Flax, hemp, and mustardseed are grown here and corn in great quantities. Those who have about fifty to sixty acres of workable land usually have about forty acres in corn since this crop is harvested during the winter and does not demand much work. One cannot enjoy the wild fruit which we have here. Wild apples are not good for food, wild grapes stay small and are as sour as vinegar. Wild plums are good and plentiful here; blackberries and hazelnuts are also plentiful and good to eat. In some years the hogs are tremendously fattened by them. I stop with this subject now as I think I have said enough about that.

Now I will write something about the poverty and riches of the inhabitants here. There is very little money in this state as yet; one is not rich because of his money. But there are many people who are rich in land, people who own hundreds of acres, yes and sometimes thousands of acres.¹⁵ There is very little poverty here, for those who want to work[as common laborers] can make just as good a living as farmers. Orphans who have lost their parents at an early age and who thus cannot support themselves are taken into the homes of relatives. They are expected to stay with their relatives until they have reached the age of twenty-one. It is considered a terrible shame if children leave their parents before the age of twenty-one, that is, if the parents have plenty of work for them. When the children have reached the age of twenty-one, they are considered on their own.

The taxes which we have here are the following: one cent (2½ [Dutch] cents) per dollar (2 guilders, 50[Dutch] cents) must be paid on everything one possesses. In the spring a man comes around to make a list of our possessions. Taxes must be paid on all livestock, cows, horses, sheep, and hogs, on everything more than half a year old. Everyone must make

¹⁵ My study "Pioneers and Profits: Land Speculation on the Iowa Frontier," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1965), disclosed that in thirty-three counties of central Iowa alone, over one thousand individual buyers each entered more than one thousand acres of government land at the local land offices (p. 55).

his own appraisal. Land that is fenced in and broken is appraised at about four dollars per acre, and on every hundred dollars worth, one dollar must be paid; the same applies to all the silver, gold, and loose money which a person has. Even on every hundred dollars worth of household goods one dollar must be paid. One must also pay a penny per dollar on the value of a pocket watch and a clock. On the same basis, the land which is appraised at four dollars per acre has a tax of four cents per acre. Money received from rent also is taxed one dollar for every hundred dollars. Thus, on all the things a person owns, the tax is one dollar per hundred dollars. All male persons over twenty-one must pay a poll tax; for those who are able-bodied fifty cents is the required amount. This year I am required to pay sixty cents to the tax collector. Taxes do not extend to anything else other than what I have mentioned. Every other thing, such as licenses, is tax free.¹⁶

The number of people here rises steadily. Almost every day two or three families travel through the Association. Some families remain but others move further west. The farmers profit greatly from the increased number of newcomers because of the fact that these people, who have practically no possessions, must buy everything during the first two years. If this were not so, the farmers could not make much, as we have as yet no means of transportation. If all merchandise had to be transported to the Mississippi from here, farmers would go bankrupt because it takes forty hours for the goods to be driven down to the river. If the wagoners take the goods, the cost is seventy-five cents per hundred pounds. However, when the Des Moines River is navigable for steamboats, and within three years this project is expected to be completed up to this area, then it is quite certain that the rates will be somewhat less, about sixty-five cents per hundred pounds.¹⁷

¹⁶ The meaning here is unclear. License fees are themselves a tax.

¹⁷ The Des Moines Navigation Improvement Company was established in 1846 to make the Des Moines River navigable as far upriver as the Raccoon Forks in Polk County. The construction costs were to be met by a federal land grant, donated on August 8, 1846, which ultimately

About five years ago the first white people came to Marion [County]. My boss told me that at first it was difficult for these settlers. They could not sell anything at that time because there were no other people here except Indians and these resided here by the hundreds. The Indians use wildlife as their food, such as hares, rabbits, wolves, dogs, snakes, and pigs.¹⁸ They only grow two kinds of crop, corn and white beans. The field work is left entirely to the women. They have to do the planting and harvesting and they have to get firewood from the forests, while the men do nothing but hunting. Last fall we had about fifty of them here in Pella—men, women, and children. We met them one Sunday as we came back from church. Those people looked plump, fat, and healthy. One could not tell whether or not they harbored hatred against the white people. When the first white people came here, the Indians certainly had the upper hand, but they have always conducted themselves peaceably. I will now end this topic.¹⁹

As I have said before, the first white people could not sell their goods and in order to get their necessities they had to drive a hundred miles to the nearest store. They had to drive just as far to get their wheat and corn ground at the mill. Eggs sold for fifty cents a bushel. At that time it was a hard life for these people but now they are making a substantial living. Now we have in this area two mills which grind grain, two saw-mills, two brickkilns, a pottery, and enough stores.

Most of the Americans still live on claimed land. Each has about three to four hundred acres. I presume you know what I mean by a "claim" — settling on an unsold piece of land

totaled 1,161,513 acres according to the *Report of the Department of the Interior*, 1907, Vol. I, p. 148. For an account of the ultimate failure of this project see Roscoe L. Lokken, *Iowa Public Land Disposal* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1942), ch. ix.

¹⁸ Sipma may be under the mistaken impression that wild boar were indigenous to Iowa. He may also have intended to mention deer instead of pigs.

¹⁹ By 1848 the various Iowa Indian groups had ceded to the United States all but their land in the northwest corner of the state. Most tribes removed further west but some straggler groups remained behind and roamed about as vagabonds.

without buying it. For a claim to be legal, a person must file it with the government and this costs each member of the family a half dollar.²⁰ A claim may not consist of more than 320 acres²¹ and the right of claim lasts for a year, after which it becomes accessible to anyone, unless the claim has been bought by the person who has settled on the "claim" land. But nobody seems to be concerned about this because one helps the other to retain or to get a claim. They just go to the woods, cut down some posts, set them up on the corners of their claimed land, and that's that. Then, if someone buys such a claim, which is anyone's privilege according to the law, it will be to his disadvantage.²²

It happened during this summer that we had a man here who, after having bought his own claim, also desired to have his neighbor's claim. He went to the government and bought two hundred acres of land which actually belonged to three of his neighbors. As can be understood, those people were very angry. The news traveled everywhere and people went to this man several times to persuade him to withdraw his claim, but he refused. Just a few days ago, when I was coming home to eat, I saw an army of people coming in the distance on wagons and on horseback. They were letting their flags wave freely, singing, whistling, and blowing their horns. I wondered what this meant. I asked my boss what this was all about and he told me that they were going to force this man to surrender his land. He also went along with the crowd himself, as well as all the other Americans. They went to the man's house but he was not at home; he had taken flight. They searched for two days and two nights but could not find him. Now the people really got angry — there were about two hundred men altogether — because since he stayed away,

²⁰ The Preemption Act of 1841 provided this right to any person over twenty-one, or to any other person at the head of a family. The fifty cent fee is paid by each claimant. (U.S. *Statutes at Large*, V, 455-456.). Often each member of the family over twenty-one would file his own claim.

²¹ The maximum claim allowed under the Preemption Act of 1841 was 160 acres, but by neighborhood consensus, Iowans often claimed twice or three times that amount.

²² A claim could be "jumped" legally only if the claimant failed to comply with the law, such as by not residing on his claim.

they thought that the man refused to reason with them. Then they began to carry out mischievous acts. The horse stable and a nearly-filled corn crib were put on fire. Fire was also set to about fifteen logs to be used for fencing; these logs were right beside his house. They also killed a few pigs. It seems as if the man heard this news, because he sent messengers who returned the land as well as the title deed. The government does not furnish a bill of sale, as is common among individuals, but rather they give a deed of property, and then it does not matter how many people use the same deed, as long as the valid deed can be presented. Thus it happened and every one returned home. This is the way one operates when someone tries to buy land which is held by a claimholder.²³

When there are a sufficient number of inhabitants in a county, then the government begins to sell the land publicly. We have had two such sales here already this summer at the home of my boss, as he happens to be a notary public.²⁴ At such sales one does not try to take advantage of the other. When they come to these sales, the one person will say to the other, "This is my land where I live and I want to keep it." Then this person buys it from the government for the fixed price of a dollar and a quarter; it is never sold for less.

Now I am going to tell you a few things about the American way of life. The people live in block or preferably log-houses. For this purpose the straightest and finest trees are sought out in the forest. Some people cut the logs square, while others do nothing to them. Just as in Friesland, one

²³ The writer has described the famed "Majors' War." See William M. Donnel, *Pioneers of Marion County, Consisting of a General History of the County . . .* (Des Moines: Republican Steam Printing House, 1872), pp. 50-57. The Marion County claim club was organized on August 19, 1848, seemingly in direct response to the alleged claim-jumping of Jacob H. Majors. See *ibid.*, pp. 42-49. Claim clubs were often used as a facade to shield petty land speculation by club members, as Allan G. Bogue has conclusively proved in his "Iowa Claim Clubs: Symbol and Substance," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLV (September, 1958), 231-253.

²⁴ All "Congress land" in Marion County was sold at the land offices at Iowa City and Fairfield. Therefore, Sipma here is likely referring to school land which was sold locally by the respective township boards of supervisors.

builds a better home than the other. Most houses are eighteen feet long and sixteen feet wide; there are smaller but also larger ones. Only heavy logs are used and these are locked together at the corners. This four-cornered building is usually built eight to eleven logs high. The roof is not very steep and is covered with a double layer of shingles so that it is leak-proof. Two doors are put in, one opposite the other, and usually on both sides of each door is a window. The chimney is generally built of rocks found in the forest but some people use prairie sod. Here in the forest is plenty of rocks and also coal.²⁵ For furniture they have a beautiful clock, a mirror, a beautiful bed, and the best quality of bedding. Most people have a little chest under their bed to keep valuables. I am writing about only one bed, but there are those who have two or even three, depending on the size of the family. Tools for every day use, and also the clothes, are all hung up on the walls. Americans do not have barns. The log house, which I have described, is the only building on three or four hundred acres of land. There is, however, a stable for horses and also a shed for sheep to protect them from wolves during the night; there is also a shed for corn.

The other grain is usually threshed by machine. There are people who go around with such a machine, just as in Friesland with a rapeseed canvass.²⁶ For payment they receive one-tenth of the grain. The farmer also must provide seven or eight workers. Americans do not carry on much dairying, usually they have only two or three cows for their own use. The calves suck the cows, not because the cows will not give milk otherwise, but to make the cows come home by themselves. During the day the calves are tied up and when at night the cows get home, they are tied up and milked. Then the calves are untied so that they can suck the cows during the night. When a cow calves, they do not look after it and

²⁵ The general vicinity of Pella contained some of the richest coal veins in Iowa. Mining has been part of the local scene since frontier days.

²⁶ Rapeseed is a plant similar to a mustard plant which was useful for its oil. A rapeseed canvas was generally 125 feet square and was spread out on a piece of cleared ground in the middle of a rapeseed patch. On it the seed was threshed by a cylindrical block pulled by horses.

it is not brought to the house. It has to take care of itself. During the first fourteen days the milk is no good; then it is all for the calf. Americans claim that sheepmilk is no good for people either. Last year my boss had two sheep whose lambs died. I told him that these sheep had to be milked. "No," he said, "that milk is no good." I said, "Sheep milk is good for me, and I can milk them." "You may milk them," he said, "but the milk is no good." We are still milking them and the milk is just as good as in Friesland. When a horse gets a colt nobody concerns himself about it; and that goes for hogs too. Everything must go its own natural way.²⁷

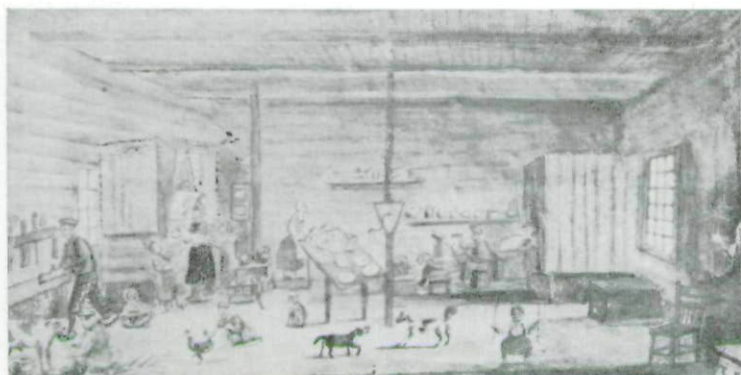
Americans do not need very many tools to work their land. Sixty acres of land can be easily cultivated by one man, two horses, and two oxen. The land is plowed once a year. The corn is cleaned of weeds by means of small cultivators; the other grains are sown and harvested, and this is all there is done to that. The winter wheat is always sown early and at present it already colors some fields green. We have finished plowing and seeding for this year.

Now something else. As far as eating and drinking is concerned, Americans are very particular. The dinner table is set with a white table cloth and dishes which have just been washed in warm water. Three different courses are always served, with as much wheatbread and bacon as one desires. Coffee is also served at every meal, usually with sugar.²⁸ After the meal the leftovers are gathered in the table cloth and are given to the dogs.

American women are terribly lazy. They do nothing but prepare food and drink. They never mend their clothes; they wear them until they become rags and are not fit to wear anymore; and then they buy new ones. They also do not like to walk. When they have to visit a neighbor-lady once in a while, they must have a horse. All the women know how to ride a horse. My boss, his wife, and their two children—one

²⁷ This and the following paragraphs clearly illustrate the different opinions on animal husbandry, family life, and the role of women, held by foreign-born overagainst native-born citizens.

²⁸ Sugar was regarded in Friesland as well as in other parts of the Netherlands as a luxury beyond the reach of the working man.



Courtesy Martha Lautenbach

Painting done by an unknown artist depicts the birth of the first girl in Pella, February 7, 1848. She was Nellie Kramer, born in a log cabin belonging to the LeCocq family. Note calf (lower left), chickens, and other animals in the scene. Early Dutch farmers brought their young stock inside for protection against the elements.

two-years old and the other three-weeks old—all ride on one horse. The women ride horseback sideways, and then spur the horses as fast as they can go. The women wear their hair loose. Otherwise, fashions are about the same as in the cities of Friesland. Men's clothing differ very little from ours. Whiskey-drinking is scandalous here.

I was asked whether we still have good land around here at a reasonable cost for settlers. To this I can only answer in the affirmative. There is still plenty room here for all Friesland. Within the association one can yet get a great deal of land, and even more outside of it. Also, someone asked me whether a person can be certain of a good living here. This is a somewhat more difficult question because I do not want to mislead anyone if I can help it. I am not sure when the transportation problem will be solved, but if it remains as it is now, and everyone gets his land cultivated, then we are bound to run into difficulty with the grain. As of now, because of the multiplying population, no grain needs to be shipped. Even though the price of grain is not high, farmers can still make a fair living. Farmers here need very little money, only to pay their labor wages and taxes; whatever they need from the store can be paid for with grain.

Some people want to know how much a good farm of two hundred pondematen [Dutch measurement] would cost and also what the initial cost would be for clearing and breaking the land if such would be necessary. I will try to explain this in every detail as well as I can. For one-fourth of a section — a so-called quarter-section — or 160 acres, which is exactly two hundred pondematen, one has to pay the government two hundred dollars. One dollar as you know is two guilders and fifty cents in Dutch currency. A dollar has a hundred cents just as your guilder, but when I speak of cents now I mean American cents. For so much land, I say, two hundred dollars must be paid to the government if there is no claim on it. There is a claim on most of the good land in this area, but the majority are willing to sell their claim. If one wants to buy, something must be paid for the claim deed, often a half dollar per acre, sometimes more, and sometimes a little less. With such a large amount of land, one must have no less than forty acres of woodland, but land which is claimed usually has plenty of timber.

First of all a house has to be built. If one wants to build a loghouse, he can get the logs from the forest and for fifty dollars he can build himself a home. A brick house can also be built. Bricks can be bought at four dollars per thousand. These bricks are slightly larger than in Friesland. Lime is not expensive, but I am not sure as to how much it costs. A well has to be dug which would take three men three to four days to complete. Stones for this purpose can be taken from the woods. The men earn fifty cents per day plus board. Next, rails must be made to fence off the land because we cannot dig ditches here. The rails are cut from one's own forest and these are prepared for one dollar per hundred. In order to fence in forty acres completely, one needs seven thousand rails and usually a whole field like this is done all at once. Then the rails must be hauled to the field, but a person can do this with his own ox team. With two oxen and a wagon one man can normally haul about 150 to 200 rails per day, if it is not too far. After this the rails have to be placed on top of each other and this does not take much work. A person can place seven to eight hundred rails a day.

Now the field is fenced and ready to be broken. This is again done by someone else. There are men here who will break prairie for others. This is always done with oxen, usually eight or ten in front of the plow, and costs \$1.50 or sometimes \$2.00 per acre. Now the land is ready for farming. If the land is broken in the spring, corn is almost always planted. If the land is broken in the fall, either oats or summer wheat are sown. The latter will usually ensure a better crop than the former. Forty acres of land are now ready and that is enough at first. If the farmer has a hired man or laborer, then he has little to do himself and can easily add ten acres every year. After the first field has been fenced in, the remaining land can be fenced in with less expense because no new rails are needed between the two pieces of land. All that has to be done is to set the fences out farther.

On this land which is ready, two horses are needed. One could get by with one but two are better. Also needed are two oxen, a wagon, at least three plows, and a good harrow. A good workhorse can be bought for forty to fifty dollars, two good oxen plus a yoke for forty dollars and a very good new wagon for sixty to seventy dollars. A second-hand wagon usually costs about thirty to forty dollars. Plows are not expensive. They are made in the cities and can be bought here for six to nine dollars. I do not know the price of a good harrow. Americans usually make them themselves entirely out of wood. A harness for two horses costs about twenty dollars if purchased new.

Now I have told the price of different things so that every one of you can figure out what it costs. As far as I know I have not yet given you the cost of cows, sheep, and hogs. A person can handle as much livestock of this sort as he wishes, even if he has only one acre of land. The land which is not fenced in is open to all people, and there are at least ten acres of unbroken land to every one that is broken. A cow can be bought for ten to fifteen dollars and this includes the calf. A sheep costs a dollar fifty or two dollars while a good sow with seven, eight, or nine young ones, amounts to anywhere from four to six dollars. Such a farm as I have just described can be expected to give a substantial living but

it cannot be expected to give one much profit. One can also settle nearer to the Mississippi where there is still plenty of land available. Prices are much higher there but transportation of course is much better. I cannot tell you more about this.

Now I am going to give you the average price of grains as they are sold here at present. Corn is twenty cents per bushel, wheat fifty cents, oats fifteen cents, white beans forty cents, and potatoes twenty cents. These are the products most commonly grown here. There are still other crops but there is no market for them. I have been asked how much interest a person can obtain in America. That varies quite a bit. The minimum is 6 per cent and the maximum is 10 per cent. The government here in Iowa loans at 7 per cent at present.

Also I have been asked how much of an annual income one needs here for an average-sized family to have a decent living. I am going to let you answer this out for yourself because I cannot figure out someone else's household costs. I will write you what everything costs individually and then each of you can figure it out for yourself. First of all, let me say that a pound is lighter here than in the Netherlands. One pound here is four Dutch ounces. Wheat flour costs two cents per pound, buckwheat flour one and a half cents, and corn meal around half a cent. If a person buys the grain and takes it to the mill himself, the cost is less. Women here bake their own bread and this is quite easy to learn. Dried bacon costs three to three and a half cents per pound; fresh bacon costs two cents. You probably know already the price of potatoes and beans, but perhaps you are not yet familiar with the bushel. A bushel of wheat weighs sixty pounds and a bushel of beans weighs sixty-five pounds, I cannot say more about this either. Rice is priced at eight to ten cents, coffee beans at ten cents per pound. Tea is some what more expensive here than in Friesland. Sugar costs seven to ten cents, salt two and a half cents, tobacco twelve and a half cents, soap five cents, and syrup ten cents per pound. I do not know the exact price of [edible] oil but it is more expensive than in Friesland. I think I have now mentioned most of the products needed in a family. I am not sure as to

the price of clothes. As far as I know, cotton costs ten to twenty cents per yard. The yard is longer here than by you. Three American yards equal four Dutch yards. Wool clothing is not used to a great extent here and it is more expensive than in Friesland, and even then, it is not near as good. Shoes cost about one to two dollars and are not as good as yours. I think this will do. I have already written about taxes which are very low.

Now I am going to write something about religion and school life. There are many denominations in the United States, but they all have equal privileges. Not one minister is paid by the government. Every congregation, regardless of its denomination, must pay its own minister. I do not know how it is in the most populated cities, but here in the Far West our preachers cannot make a living from their office as minister. Most of them around here are both farmer and preacher. Everyone has the freedom to preach.

The government, however, is concerned with educating the youth. I do not know the situation in the states that were settled first, but in these new states of the west one thirty-sixth piece of land [section sixteen] is sold to finance the education of the youth. The money received from the sale of this land is placed at interest and teachers get their yearly salary from this money, each according to the number of pupils he has. Since the teacher's salary is not an adequate means of livelihood, teachers also farm in addition to their teaching. Anyone who wishes can teach. Here in this state the knowledge of the English language is necessary. We have two teachers in the association at Pella and both give instruction in the English as well as the Dutch language. The state of Missouri has both French and German schools, but I am not certain whether a knowledge of the English language is required there. In Missouri there are many French and Germans, but the climate is not healthy there.

I dare not advise anyone to come to the United States to be a teacher and expect a substantial living here, unless he came along with a group of colonists from the Netherlands who would keep him as their teacher, and that in addition he could be certain of a salary from the government over

here. Anyone who can speak and write English fluently, however, can make a respectable living here in some other way, but he should not come to the Far West. He should stay in the big cities where he can find office work, no matter where he goes. I spoke to someone about this who is better acquainted with this, and he told me that anyone who had a knowledge of the English, German, French, and Dutch languages and came to the United States, could figure on having a very good living here. I cannot say much more about this. But I almost forgot, Teacher, that your wife could certainly earn a great deal of money in the big cities. We had with us several tailors and seamstresses who stayed behind for some time in St. Louis and they made money there like water. Tailoring in the cities is very expensive. Enough said about this.

Will a blacksmith who knows his trade well, be able to make a living? He cannot count on an adequate income merely from his trade. If a blacksmith wants to be self-employed, he must go to the city where he will be able to make a good living. A blacksmith can also make a good living here but he has to be a farmer and a blacksmith at the same time. In this area we need farmers and laborers.

Someone wanted to know how the future would look if he came to the United States with a capital of eight to ten thousand guilders. I would have to answer that he would be able to make a better living here than in Friesland. As a lender a person can make more money here than in the Netherlands. Money carries a heavy interest. The lowest is 6 per cent and when there is a lack of money, 10 per cent is paid. The school property in Marion County brings 9 and 10 per cent. Let us take the minimum interest for example, that is, 6 per cent. After deducting the tax [of 1 per cent], you still have 5 per cent left of the interest. There are no more taxes for anything else, except for your gold, silver, and household goods, and a half dollar poll tax. There are no taxes to support the poor or on real estate and personal possessions other than what I have mentioned.

I have told you about the prices of other products. Compared to the taxes and cost of living in the Netherlands, one

could live twice as cheap here. When a person moves to the city some products are more expensive, but other things again are cheaper. I think I have said enough about the buying and breaking of land. Those who come to these western states should, in my opinion, buy government land which is still unsettled, rather than place their money at interest. After buying it, the land can be left alone just as it is until there are buyers who are interested in it. There are many people in America with money who do exactly that. In Iowa we have speculators who five years ago bought large areas of government land in the eastern part of our state at \$1.25 per acre. These people are now selling it again for ten dollars or more. This is much better than tying up your money at interest. In short, if a person comes to the United States with such a large amount of cash, he need not doubt for a minute but that he surely will have a very substantial living.

I have gathered from the letter I received that my relatives and the citizens of Bornwerd are under the impression that there is some disagreement between H. Viersen and myself since I do not work for him. I shall tell you the reason for this. I wrote you how many men a farmer with forty acres of land needs. H. Viersen did not get land that was still wild. Scholte bought about thirty-six claims. These had to be entered first [at the land office]. P. and H. Viersen received one claim together; two-thirds went to H. Viersen and P. Viersen received one-third.²⁹ Of this claim, eighty to ninety acres were fenced in and cultivated and everything had already been harvested except the corn. There were two houses on this property and considering that it was an American farm, it was in good condition. H. Viersen had one hired man and another laborer besides me, and P. Viersen had three hired men, so the work on the place was just about finished. Consequently Viersen told us that we could all come to work for him whenever he had work to do, but he would not have work for us all the time. So he gave us the opportunity to look

²⁹ H. Viersen is the H. Y. Viersen who advanced money for the Sipma family's transoceanic crossing. P. Viersen is Pieter O. Viersen, H. Y.'s brother. Both were fellow Friesians who came to Pella with Sipma in the initial colonization group. See Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, pp. 165, 185, 669.

for work someplace else. Each one had to look out for himself. I always had steady work, and I worked for Scholte even before Viersen came here. This is the reason why I do not work for Viersen anymore. But there is no ill-will between us. We still live in the same friendly way as we did when we left Friesland. My feelings were hurt, however, when we never heard from our relatives in the letters received from Friesland, but I never said anything about it to him. And now I understand from your letters that you did not hear about us either from the letters you receive in Friesland. Twice he told me that he wrote a few things about us and this is the reason I did not write back any sooner.

You also wrote me about the rumors which seem to be spreading among you that the immigrants lost money because of [Albertus C.] Van Raalte.³⁰ This is not true; no money has been lost. I was also asked how much it cost me to reach my destination. As yet I cannot tell you exactly because no one has received the bill from Scholte. But I will write you as much as I know about it. It cost me five guilders and eighty-one cents from Dockum to Amsterdam, and the food at Amsterdam for the ocean voyage cost forty guilders and fifty cents. Now I am going to tell you what I heard from someone else. The ocean voyage cost 45 guilders per person and the trip from Baltimore to St. Louis \$11.50 per person, at their own expense. But each person was allowed to take along one hundred pounds of baggage at no charge. If the baggage weighed more than this, however, one had to pay \$1.50 for each additional hundred pounds. From St. Louis to Keokuk cost one dollar per person, and ten cents for every hundred pounds of weight. Finally, from Keokuk to Pella the transportation came to one dollar per person and seventy-five cents for each hundred pounds of weight.

For traveling expenses from Amsterdam to St. Louis, as

³⁰ The Reverend Dr. Van Raalte was the leader of the initial Dutch colony in the midwest, founded in February, 1847, at Holland, Michigan. The source of the allegations against Van Raalte circulating in Bornwerd is unknown, but the rumors may have been planted by over-zealous Pella colonists who at the time were bidding against the Michigan settlement to attract the new colonists from the Old Country. See *ibid.*, pp. 91-92, 187.

you already know, I paid 202 guilders in advance. For the trip from St. Louis to our destination Scholte had not paid anything from the money we had already made available to him, but each had to pay for himself. At Baltimore Scholte arranged for some Jews to take us to St. Louis for the above mentioned sum of money. This normally would cost no more than seven or eight dollars per person, but we paid \$11.50. We were about fourteen hundred people.³¹ I think I have paid about fifty guilders too much. I do not remember how much I spent on meals during the trip through America, but that did not cost me very much. Now you know a little about this and once the account is settled I can tell you the costs more precisely.

You wanted to know about my relationship with the Dutch association and I can only write that it is good; it could not be better. I have many good friends among them but the Friesians seem to stick together the most. Now I will give a few details about the association. As to religion it is fairly good. A large building was built in Pella where school is held during the week and church services on Sunday. Catechism is held there on Saturdays for the children, while the men who reached to the age of discretion have catechism from eight-thirty to ten o'clock on Sunday mornings. At ten o'clock the sermon is preached. At one-thirty o'clock in the afternoon is catechism again, this time for the womenfolk, and at three o'clock another sermon. We do not have a preacher here like you have in Friesland and the church is ruled by elders and deacons. Scholte is one of the elders. Five of them preach on Sundays and take turns conducting the services.³² There is one thing which I do not approve of — and

³¹ To avoid having his colonists victimized by unscrupulous travel agents who were known to prey on bewildered immigrants, Scholte after much effort and investigation, contracted with some Jewish businessmen in Baltimore to transport his group to St. Louis. Despite Sipma's charge, it appears likely that Scholte's careful planning reduced rather than raised the transportation costs.

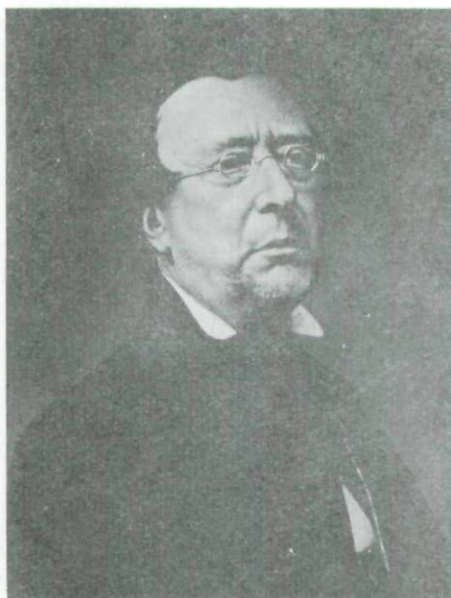
³² Unlike the typical Dutch Reformed congregation, the religiously independent Scholte insisted on an undenominational church with a lay brotherhood much akin to John N. Darbey's Plymouth Brethren Church. Darbey's strong influence on Scholte is demonstrated in Oostendorp, *H. P. Scholte*, pp. 162-169 and *passim*.

there are many others who also think this way — and that is that the festive days such as Christmas, New Year, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost are not celebrated anymore. There is no sermon on these days and everyone does his daily work as he sees fit. Not everyone, however, follows this custom. They defend their position by saying that there is no commandment in the Bible that requires it and furthermore they claim that these festivities were introduced by the Roman [Catholic] church. Be that as it may, I cannot go along with this opinion. Church worship then is the only good thing around here; in the other things Scholte acts very improperly.

As you know, when we were still in Friesland we had to pay in advance for our traveling expenses and the land which Scholte was going to buy for the whole association. When we arrived at St. Louis, he thought that several farmers should go with him to help him choose what seemed the most favorable land. He admitted that he was not as qualified to make a judgment concerning land as some of our farmers. Scholte then bought land bordering two or three townships, situated between the Des Moines and Skunk rivers, forty hours west of the Mississippi.³³ Pella is located midway between these two rivers which are about four hours from each other.

There were about thirty Americans who had claims on this land and Scholte bought all of these claims because no Americans were to remain with us. For these claims he paid altogether too much, but for the land he gave no more than \$1.25 per acre [at the land office]. He bought for the whole association and then the claims were to be divided. There were a good many who wanted to do that because then they were immediately put in possession of everything. Scholte bought the claims with the condition that the Americans must leave behind horses, cows, pigs, sheep, plows, harrows, wagons, etc. Those who had paid most money in advance received the claims and Scholte told them what the price was. It was expensive but of course they received everything with

³³ Scholte and a wealthy friend, John Armstrong Graham, mayor of Keokuk, entered 16,600 acres of land, all in Townships 76 and 77 North, Range 18 West. By a special act of the state legislature, in January of 1848, these two townships were combined into one and called Lake Prairie. See *Laws of Iowa*, 1848 (Extra sess.), p. 16.



HENRY PETER SCHOLTE

it. They were so ignorant that they gladly accepted it from Scholte. They put too much trust in him and later their stupidity became evident. For one claim he charged \$400 too much, for another 5, for another 6, yes, he even asked up to \$700 more for the claims than what they had cost him. Thus this man operates. Rather than fighting like a father for his children, he is out to fill his own purse.

H. Viersen also experienced this; he paid 2000 guilders too much. It has already become known how much Scholte himself paid. The Americans who had lived on the claims came to visit their successors once in a while and so the people found out to the last cent what Scholte had paid. The other land buyers who did not receive claims had to pay \$2.25 per acre; this was also one dollar too much. It is now thought that we are not going to receive any extra money back from what we have paid for our trip. So he also makes about twenty guilders from every person in this respect and even more from some. As yet not one has received the title deed for his land, even though the money was already paid

in advance in the Netherlands! There are some people who are after him, and they want him to give an account and hand out title deeds for the land. But he does not seem to care at all. I think we have reached the point where he will be challenged to appear before the American judges.³⁴ He, himself, is justice of the peace in Pella but this does not matter because the Americans sometimes give us instructions.

At this point you can probably understand why there is so much discord and confusion in the association; not so much among the people themselves, but toward the officers of the association. There are a few who are on the side of Scholte and do not want to hear anything unfavorable about him. These perhaps expect to share the booty with him.³⁵ The Americans keep an eye on him constantly. They say that he is making everybody poor. Not so long ago an American said, "You left the confines of a ruling monarch in order to live in a free land, but you yourselves have taken along a monarch who devours you."³⁶ The fact is that those who have not ad-

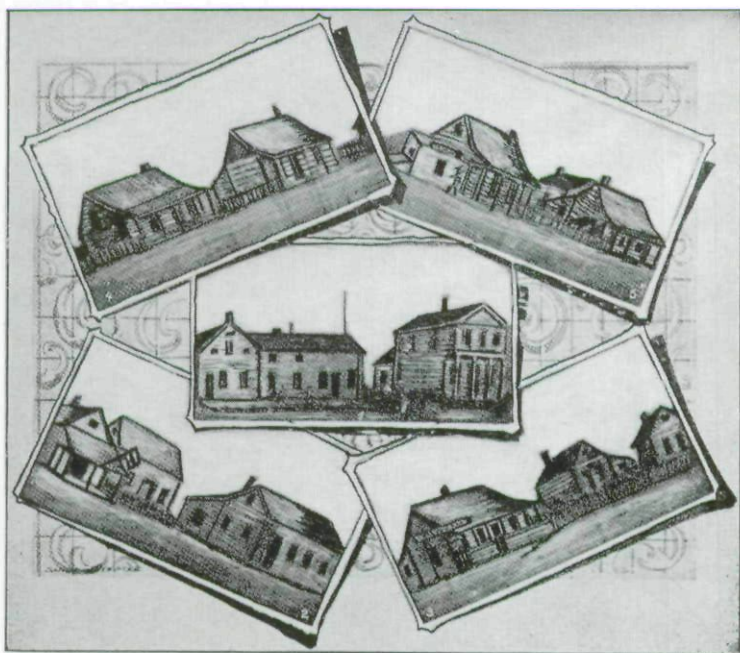
³⁴ The local church censured Scholte for his recalcitrant attitude toward the colonists but apparently no legal steps were taken as the deeds were eventually distributed. See Oostendorp, *H. P. Scholte*, pp. 168-169 and the Marion County deed record books. In 1849 Scholte issued the first deeds, forty-one in number, covering nearly three thousand acres. On eighteen deeds, totaling 1220 acres, the consideration recorded was only \$1.25 per acre, the exact price which Scholte had paid for the tracts at the land office. On twenty-three deeds, totaling 1723 acres, the average consideration given was \$2.36 per acre. These involved improved tracts for which Scholte had purchased both the original squatter's claim and the government's title. This analysis of the deed records indicates, therefore, that Scholte did not take advantage of his colonists.

³⁵ Although Scholte seems to have dealt honestly with his colonists, he certainly tried to invest his rather substantial inherited wealth wisely. In the 1850 manuscript federal population census his net worth is listed at \$20,960. In 1860 this had increased to \$40,000. At his death in 1868 Marion County Probate Court records list the value of his personal property at \$20,000. In addition he owned 115 town lots in Pella and Knoxville worth a minimum of \$100 each and 2,646 acres of land worth a minimum of \$5.00 per acre or \$13,230 for a total net worth of about \$45,000.

³⁶ This comment portrays political overtones. Living on the outskirts of the Pella colony among native Americans who were staunch Democrats, Sipma had obviously accepted their rhetoric concerning Scholte, an ardent Whig advocate. See Swierenga, "The Ethnic Voter and the First Lincoln Election," 30 and *passim*.

vanced any money for land are better off because he can take no more from these people than the balance of their traveling expenses.

In Pella there are nearly forty houses I think. Building lots are quite expensive. On each acre there are three lots; that gives sufficient space. Such a piece of ground, if on the main street, which is also the state highway, costs \$100.³⁷ On the other streets they are much cheaper. Many lots have been sold because every farmer wanted to have a house in town.



Scenes around the Garden Square in Pella—1847.

During this summer they have platted another town within the association on the Des Moines River. Scholte has made it known that this town will be open to Americans as well as to Netherlands — in Pella no Americans are allowed. The new town is called Amsterdam, but I heard that so far only one

³⁷ This is the present highway number 163.

lot has been sold there.³⁸ Pella could have been quite a fair-sized city if Scholte had only allowed Americans to settle there, but as it is now, the association remains about the same size. We do not number as many souls as when we left the Netherlands.³⁹ There are bad rumors about Scholte all over the United States and that is why most Netherlanders go to the state of Michigan, including quite a number of people who first intended to go here when they left the Netherlands.

The colony in Holland, Michigan, consists of between seven and eight thousand souls.⁴⁰ There are also Dutch people who settle in Iowa but who refuse to join the association. There are also many Dutch people south of the Des Moines River, but they were already there when we arrived.⁴¹ In the last two months many Netherlanders came to this state and settled close to the Mississippi.⁴² It seems as if the whole state of Iowa is no good with Scholte operating the way he does but there is plenty of room here outside of the association. This soil here is excellent; it slopes well and we have no mountains. The water is delicious and I never tasted such good water in Friesland. The air is healthy. The summer is a little

³⁸ With the failure of the Des Moines River navigation project, Amsterdam, which had grown into a modest village by 1850, gradually became a ghost town. Today only one building remains.

³⁹ Sipma is in error concerning the exclusion of native Americans from Pella. Although Scholte refused to sell farm land within the settlement to native Americans, the Pella leader did sell city lots to Americans. Indeed, from the beginning the city always contained a nucleus of non-Dutch citizens, many of whom were businessmen and proprietors. And the population growth of the community was steady — 75 newcomers arrived in 1848, 250 in 1849, and 600 in 1850-1854. By 1857 the settlement numbered about 2,000 people and covered an area of approximately one hundred square miles. Of the twenty-one stores in Pella at the time, Americans operated seven, or one-third. See Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, pp. 187-188, 194-195. Cf. Donnel, *Pioneers of Marion County*, pp. 139-155.

⁴⁰ This is a gross exaggeration. Early in 1849, Isaac N. Wyckoff, of Albany, New York, visited the Michigan settlements and counted 630 houses and a population of only about three thousand. See Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, p. 254.

⁴¹ This likely refers to the more than one hundred Dutchmen who had settled in St. Louis. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

⁴² A substantial Dutch settlement developed in Keokuk, with smaller groups in the Iowa river towns of Burlington, Muscatine, and Davenport. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

warmer than in Friesland but the nights are quite cool so that one can rest comfortably. This summer there was not one day that I could not work because of the heat and I have been so healthy that I have not been sick a single day.

Beukema said that you lose weight in America but this is not all the case.⁴³ All of the Hollanders and Friesians here are plump. During this summer all of the people in the association have been very healthy. I suppose the climate in Michigan is also healthy but the Americans tell us that the soil is not as good. There is also much more forest which of course costs more money and labor to clear. The soil there is sandy and the topsoil is of a reddish cast. Transportation is much better there but that can be improved here as well. The government has surrendered all the uneven numbered sections of land along the Des Moines River, five miles southward and five miles northward, to make the river more useful. This land is now being sold and the proceeds will be used to make the Des Moines River navigable. This is done by erecting dams or levies.

We still live in the same house as when I wrote my previous letter⁴⁴ and I still work for the same man.⁴⁵ I have already given him my word to work for him until March of next year. The first two months, as I wrote before, I received eight dollars per month but now I earn ten dollars per month for the entire year, winter as well as summer, and free quarters and fuel besides. Fuel is not expensive here but it costs quite a bit yet to haul it out of the forests. However, I do not have to worry about that. I do haul the wood from the forest all right but this is on the time of the boss. Because I work for him we share the fuel together. There is no peat here. The only fuels are wood and coal. Nothing but wood is used for the fireplace and there is plenty of that. I would not want to trade it for peat either because then it takes too much time starting the fire. During the winter Americans start the fire twice a day, in the morning when they get up and in the evening when the sun goes down. When there are two menfolk

⁴³ I have not been able to identify this Dutch immigrant.

⁴⁴ See footnote 7 above.

⁴⁵ This man, a native American, I have not been able to identify.

at home, they help each other and haul pieces of wood as large as they can carry. Trees are cut into pieces of about four feet in length and without a trim job are put directly on the fire. When it is cold the fire then burns brightly all night.

We work here from sunup to sundown throughout the whole year. In the morning we sleep until sunup. Then I feed the horses, milk the cows, and chop as much wood as we both need for one day. Then we have our first meal. It is customary here to eat three times a day. After breakfast I work until twelve o'clock when we have our second meal. At one-thirty I again go to work until sunset. This is typical all year long. The [working] days are long in the summer but short in the winter for then we always sleep until sunrise. It is not customary here to use a light in the morning.⁴⁶ I have no free board. I have to pay for that myself.

The houses are so close to each other that if we set foot outside our house, we could step right into the next one. We have many happy experiences here together. They are all very nice people. At first we could not understand each other; we always had to make signs with our hands. When I first went to work, my boss had to go along to point things out with his finger. Sometimes we nearly split laughing because he could not understand me and I could not understand him, but now we can talk with each other well. The Americans who live around here tell me that I speak English quite well, and sometimes they use me as their interpreter when they are with Hollanders that they cannot understand. I cannot tell you how profitable it has been for me to be able to live among the American people so soon. Now I learn the English language, earn good money, and am never pushed to do my work. Whenever it rains or is wet I do not have to work. Americans are terribly afraid of rain. I think that about one-third of the laborers from the association now work for Americans because there is not much money in the association. Scholte has all that. Most people have invested all their money in land and now they have nothing to work it.

I am renting an acre and a half from my boss for three dol-

⁴⁶ This was a typical custom in the Netherlands.

lars, or two dollars per acre, and then he has to plow it; otherwise the rent would be less than this. We grow for ourselves such things as peas, beans, potatoes, carrots, and turnips. We always have more than enough. And wherever we have not planted vegetables, we have corn for fodder for our hogs. At present we have eight hogs, one of them is a brood-sow. If we have a little luck with these, we will soon not have to buy any more bacon. We have no other cattle and hogs yet. If did not seem advisable to us to get a cow this summer because I was employed full-time. You have to run after a cow too much and besides we get plenty of milk from the two sheep of my boss. We did not have to do this because of a shortage of money as you can readily see from what I wrote about my earnings. My wife also earns quite a bit. She sews for two hired men of Pieter Viersen, Gosse J. de Vries and Geert Dykstra, and also for a Hollander; for this each pays eight guilders per year.⁴⁷ She also spins quite a bit. We buy the wool for twenty cents a pound and we sell the yarn for seventy to eighty cents. It is a good thing that we brought a spinning wheel along because they cost five dollars here.

I almost forgot to write how much a dairy farm earns. Actually I have so many things to write about. Butter during the summer is worth six to seven cents per pound and ten cents per pound during the winter. Cheese until now has brought six to seven cents. This summer a shipment was sent to St. Louis and after subtracting the expenses, the producer received about the same price which I have just mentioned. At the moment another shipment is on its way, and it is believed that the profit will be somewhat higher than before. We make nothing but cream cheese here since the price of butter and cheese is the same. When cheese brings seven cents per pound, dairying is better than farming, but we lack a good quality of grass around here. The prairie is destroyed by too much grazing and mowing. When a few cows have grazed on one piece of land for four or five years, then the prairie grass disappears and nothing but weeds will grow there. Americans do have some tame grass, but it is not the

⁴⁷ Sipma here distinguishes between Friesians (de Vries and Dykstra) and Hollanders.

right kind. I can best compare it to what we call "mollestaarten" in Friesland; it grows as tall as oats. We have clover here alright, but almost nothing but red clover. . . .

Pieter Viersen, Gerrit Van der Weit, and we live four to five miles southeast of Pella while the other [H.] Viersen lives one mile northwest of Pella. Gerrit Van der Weit bought a claim of forty acres of prairie and five acres of woodland for twenty-five dollars from an American. The greater part of this amount he can earn by working for it. But he still has to pay the government for the land. He has a loghouse there which he built himself. Last spring he had six acres broken and he grew corn on this. He had to harvest this rather early because his fences were so poor that the oxen and cows broke in. They are quite content and are healthy and able to make a good living. But last fall, when they lost their children, Van der Weit was ailing for a long time.



Courtesy Martha Lautenbach

The H. Viersen log cabin northwest of Pella was among the first homes built in the community.

Pieter Viersen sold his part in the place which he shared with H. Viersen. He bought another claim here — actually not a claim because the land is paid for — of 160 acres of prairie and sixty acres of timber, for \$450. Seventeen acres have been broken and fenced in. This is better than to buy from Scholte. Now he lives on a rented place nearby. For rent he pays one-third of the grain. His new farm is in Mahaska County. The association land is in the northern part of Marion County. Mahaska County lies to the east of Marion County. This winter he wants to build a house on his land. A daughter was born to them this summer and at present they are all healthy. The other Viersens in Pella are also healthy and since I wrote my last letter not one of the Viersens has died.

If there are Friesians who plan to migrate to America, I am not quite sure how to advise them as to where they might settle. There is room everywhere for immigrants to settle. In the state of Michigan, in Illinois, in Wisconsin, and in Iowa; everywhere there is plenty of space. But let me advise you, do not join any association in the Netherlands as we did; travel at your own expense and do not turn your money over to others. In this way you will certainly save many guilders. The cheapest and quickest way is to travel via New Orleans. At New Orleans you can go right on to St. Louis without having to transfer all of your goods, for only \$2.25 per person. I do not know what the cost of each hundred pounds of freight would be, but surely not more than fifty cents. If you start the trip in the spring, then I would advise you not to travel by way of New Orleans, because it is too hot for comfort there in the summer. If, however, you plan your trip for the fall, I would suggest that you travel by way of New Orleans for the reasons mentioned above. There you cannot see that many new and wonderful things anyway.

Friesians, my recent compatriots, I dare freely to invite all of you to come to the United States. Luxury and pomp are not to be found here, but a simple farmer's occupation. Do not expect to gather riches here in the Far West, but you can be sure of a substantial living without doing much work. A laborer who is willing to work hard can within a matter of a

few years buy himself a small farm. But a person who comes here with money certainly has a head start. I only wish my whole family were here, for then I would know for sure that they would have a good living, if they would be healthy. But there is likely no possibility for them to come, unless some well-to-do immigrants from your area would be willing to take another family with them.

Citizens of Bornwerd, I only wish that you could help Ritske and his family in some way or another to come here, especially since he wants to come here so badly.⁴⁸ I would really appreciate it if some people in your neighborhood who plan to migrate would share with some other people of your village the expenses for this family. I think that it would cost, all in all, about 500 guilders for this family to come here. But do not count on H. Viersen; I do not think that he would help laborers to come over here.

When we left, my sister, Ytje, also showed some desire to come to America. If this is still the case, and if there is someone who would take her along at his own expense, then I pledge myself as surety for her in case she cannot repay the traveling expenses. No more of my brothers and sisters had a desire to migrate to America when we left. I do not know how it is now but I certainly wish they were all here. I may be far away from you but my thoughts are often with you.

Now a few words to you, my old father, if you are still alive.⁴⁹ For you to come here is perhaps not advisable since you would probably succumb on the journey. They were a few older people who left with us, but almost every one of them has descended into the grave. Two of them, however, had the privilege to see Pella. During the last days of their life, they rejoiced in the fact that they had brought their offspring to America. Of course it was only for a short while, for now they already rest in the dust.

Departing from you, beloved father, was very hard for me, even harder than I let on. But I suppose it was still harder for you to say good-bye to your nearest of kin so suddenly.

⁴⁸ Ritske was one of Sjoerd's brothers.

⁴⁹ Sjoerd's father, Auke Sipkes Sipma, was at this time a respectable, old man of eighty-five years of age.

But really, dear father, we did not leave to get away from you as you know very well, but it was to go to a land where by working hard we could hope to find a better living than in Friesland. And we really have not been disappointed because, if we remain healthy, we will be able in a few years to start our own farm, which we would never have been able to do in Friesland. And then to live on one's own land! Even now we already have a better living. We can eat the best bacon and meat three times a day, and we save money besides. What a contrast to Friesland! There is not one who by moving to America does not make more in his own trade than the common laborer over there. If we had stayed in Friesland, we would probably have suffered poverty within a few years. If you think seriously about all these things, beloved father, you need not be sorry at all that we left Friesland. Of course you never advised me against going and this was always very encouraging for me. We seldom spoke much about it, because really, it was so hard to think of parting. But I am still happy that I left Friesland behind. It must certainly be a blessing for you, beloved father, to receive reports from us now and then, and to know that we are in a much better land and that your children are well, even though we may never again behold each other's faces. I would like to be with you, father, and be near all my brothers and sisters, but I do not wish to live in Friesland again. Oh, father, may our names be written in the Book of Life, of which we know something on this side of the grave. In the hereafter we will again see each other in the heavenly Jerusalem where there will be no sorrow nor weeping, and all our tears will be wiped away. This is the prayer of my heart for you and for our whole family. . . .

I do not know whether I have now answered all your questions adequately, but I have done my best. If I have not properly answered some of your questions you had better write to me again. I have written nothing about the mutual affairs of the association because we are not concerned with this. When there is a meeting in Pella concerning some matter or another, it is open to everybody, but none of the Friesians

go there because we know enough about the association by now. . . .

I am going to let you decide what you want to do with this letter. We thank all those who make it possible to send letters and in this way give us the privilege of sending and receiving letters from our relatives. I also thank you, Teacher, for being willing to go through all the trouble of copying my letter and sending it to our relatives in Engwierum. Whenever I can do something for you, let me know. Write as much and as often as you wish. . . .

SJOERD AUKES SIPMA
JANTJE DeVRIES

LIBRARY NOTES

By LIDA L. GREENE

When I think of summer, 1965, I hope I shall always remember the morning John Smith came by to tell us he was making the long-hoped-for trip to Dakota. You would like John. He is young, with football shoulders, and he has this *thing* about Indians—mostly Sioux Indians.

He can talk for hours about winter counts and the Sun Dance. Now he was going to see the Medicine Pipe, sacred symbol of the seven (Sioux) council fires. Only four or five other white men have been invited to sit with the Guardians of the Pipe in the presence of the great *Mystery*.

"I think I'm a little sad," John confessed. I nodded. It would be the sadness of old splendors, long dimmed, to look upon the naked Pipe, the mystique of an ancient people.

I keep thinking, "John Smith will be back this fall and then we'll know."

* * * *

For several weeks the Drake University seminar men sat at our long tables. They were having a go at Iowa politics—

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