

# The Emigration of the Huizenga family from Westdongeradeel to North and South America

49 of the 69 couples who married in 1864, at Westdongeradeel promising lifetime fidelity, did that in the month of May. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15 brides and bridegrooms reported to the city hall. On the 19<sup>th</sup> there are 11 and on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May there were 7. These couples who desire marriage in May are a splendid illustration of the agrarian character of daily life in the clay region. The contracts between the farmers and workers run each year from and to the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. If a young person is assured of a job and a house (frequently provided by the farmer!) then he dares to propose to his beloved!

Most of those ready for marriage are already in their twenties and have already had life experiences. When they were children they went to school and afterwards were thrown directly into battle with the farmer.. It did not matter much if you were the farmer's son or the son of a farmhand, first you had to learn the ropes working for another farmer. Afterwards the difference was that the : farmers helped their sons to work on their own farm or another advantageous position while the workers plodded on at their work just to continue to put bread on the table.. They were thereby mainly dependent on the good heartedness of the farmer families who had a firm finger in the pulse also at other areas in village life.. "It jild sprekt" (the same as "Money talks") was a common expression in worker circles.

Included in the couples who appear on 14 May 1864 at the city hall at Ternaard are also Adolf Jans Huizinga and Tytsje Jans Stoker. Adolf is 24 years old and born at Ternaard. Tytsje is almost 22 years and born in Oostdongeradeel. If they will remain the current pathway, Adolf Huizinga will be a farm worker; until his death Tytsje will bear children and they will raise them together, but will not live to an old age together. The industrialization , in development elsewhere, was still scarcely recognizable in the Netherlands. Although agriculture was not lucrative, there was no need to change course radically, because there was still sufficient for everyone to eat!

In the autumn of 1864 Tytsje is pregnant. On 30 January 1865 a son is born, who is named Jan after the two fathers. The gossips and finger counters of Ternaard must admit that Adolf and Tytsje are "good" people. Barely a year later the second son comes into the world, to be named Epke. Two years later small Bouwe is the cause of an addition to the family and after him, Tytsje will be pregnant at least six more times. It is exceptional that there is only one stillborn child and that the other children all become adults!

Adolf Huizinga works for farmers, first in Ternaard, then in Foudgum and also a short time in Kloosterburen.. The economic prospects meanwhile, do not improve. Science gets more knowledgeable on the transferability of cattle diseases. A consequence is that United Kingdom restricted by strict sanitary regulations the import of living cattle from the Netherlands. The creamery which stands in Dongeradelen on a high plain, is threatened because the foreign countries want a better quality and because margarine is becoming a more acceptable alternative. Dutch agriculture and livestock-farming must work hard to preserve a firm market position!

The real storm breaks loose around 1878. The grain production in the United States is growing greatly, because of the western migration and the plowing under of the prairie. At the same time new players (Canada, Argentina and India) present themselves who also want a portion of the international grain market. Although the crop yields between 1877-1880 are, because of harsh and wet winters, very small in the Netherlands. The prices are very low because the supply on the international grain market is larger than the demand.. Between 1877 and 1891 the Dutch agriculture production suffered an approximately 35 per cent loss. If the farmers wanted to survive, they would have to adapt their management. The wages were lowered, so fewer workers were hired.

In the year 1888 the agricultural crisis reaches a low point. Poverty is severe and the family of Adolf Huizinga and Tytsje Stoker is particularly vulnerable. Father Adolf is 49 years old and the sons Jan, Epke, Bouwe and Gosse are 23, 22, 20 and 18 years old respectively. By contrast to the youngest son Anne (12 years) and Tiete (9 years), the four oldest boys are ready to enter the labor force. Because of the economic crisis they keep coming up empty!

Parents and children need to find a future, but can that ever happen on the Frisian clay? Gradually the idea develops of emigrating. America becomes a magic word. In the middle of the 19th centuries a number of Dutch folks had accompanied dominee Van Raalte to America and founded Holland Michigan. The Huizinga's were not very religious, and did not feel a need to seek contact with those earlier immigrants. They also knew the tales of other Frisians who crossed the ocean on a venture and made a good life in the new land.. They would like to follow that example.

It is splendid and beautiful to have dreams, but if there is no money, in reality they will never happen. The Huizingas have a small amount of savings, but it would be impossible to cough up enough to cover the ticket price for father, mother and all those children. But first there is a weightier problem. The military draft for which the older sons are subject, hangs as a sword of Damocles over the dreams of the Huizingas. Jan, the oldest son, drew a high number for the draft lottery, so will not be called.. Epke and

Bouwe have both drawn lower numbers and are subject to call up by the fatherland to be a soldier at any moment.



*The family of Bouwe Huizenga and Anne Santfort*

The family is able to scrape together enough to pay for the ticket for both Epke and Bouwe. If they leave before the others, two problems are solved. In the first place they escape the military service. In the second place, they are going to America, where wages are much better. They can earn the money required to bring the rest of the family over.. The boys agree and leave around 1888 for America! Those who remain behind are jealous but continue to cherish hope that they will soon meet again.

So far nothing has been learned of the ocean passage. It is unknown from which port they left, with which boat company they made the crossing and at which gateway they entered the United States. It is known that Detroit is the first city that the boys settle into. Bouwe worked there in a factory but suffers a layoff after a few short months. Shortly after arrival in America it becomes clear that Epke is suffering from tuberculosis. This illness was probably incurred in the confines of the ship and proves fatal. The letters which are received back home in Ternaard, were written on a sad note. The family is in mourning because of Epke's death and lets their courage fail. Will they ever taste the milk and honey of the promised land?

America remains the magic word and the desire. America is the country of unlimited possibilities, and America is large! But America is America. As a crisis dominates Europe, Argentina is experiencing an economic boom.. Craftsmen are needed and remuneration is higher than in Europe. Argentina is thinly populated and is looking for more agricultural development of the pampas. The Argentinian government wants to populate these new areas with farmers and unskilled laborers from Europe and opens, in important European cities, Oficinas de Informacion y propaganda. These offices introduce "travel on credit" and hopes this may persuade many to venture thst step to South America.!



*The family Huizenga worked in the beginning, with many others, on a farm in Argentina.*

The idea of migration to the pampas finds much resonance in the provinces of Friesland and Groningen. In the Dongeradelen, Mr J. Wijkstra Jr, is "head agent of the NASM". He is from Ee and a friendly advocate for the project. The Netherlands American Steam Faring Society (NASM) is to provide the passage for each passenger and pays a commission to Wijkstra for each one that he recommends. During the information meetings he promises the potential emigrants mountains of gold.. The Argentinian government offers travel "on credit" and initially pays for the ticket which costs 84 gulden for each adult. . The emigrant is promised that when he arrives in Argentina he will get maximum support and can also purchase land in the country "on credit".. In Argentina a farm worker can dream of becoming a farm owner!

The family of Adolf Huizinga and Tietje Stoker is entirely convinced. They write to their son Bouwe about their massive plans for the Argentinian adventure. America is at last in sight! Bouwe is worried about the enthusiasm with which his family members have made their decision and he answers by return mail. He lives meanwhile in Chicago and works there as a finish carpenter at George Pullman which produced fine railroad passenger cars. He makes a good living and within a short period of time he will have enough money to send to the Netherlands for the fare of the rest of the family. He only hopes that the family can remain patient and not do anything foolish.. His letter never reached the family in Friesland because they were already on the ship to Argentina. Shortly after arrival, the Huizingas are loaded into cattle cars with the other Frisians and hauled by railroad to the middle of the pampas, far from civilization in the middle of nowhere. For lack of the promised construction material the Huizinga family built a house of sod which offered insufficient shelter during the winter. Both parents, Adolf Huizinga and Tytsje Stoker did not survive that winter for lack of heat.

Emigration from the Netherlands to Argentina is briefly popular. In 1888, the first emigrants leave and already during 1890, warnings in the newspapers appear there saying, "Do not be enticed to make the crossing over here". Tjerk Helder, who ventured the crossing in the spring of 1889, wrote near the end of 1890 about his current situation in the Kollumer. "The emigrant hotel in Buenos Aires was the first setback: Everywhere we looked were bed bugs, rats and mice. We were warned not to proceed further inland because we would be deceived in every way.. Yet we didn't want to believe it, still dreaming of our castles in the sky, which we were promised back in the Netherlands. The promise made to the immigrants in the Netherlands to get 'land on credit' was 'nothing other than deception'". Helder continues and writes "Argentina is not the country that overflows with milk and honey: Someone who is in farming earns too much to die, and too little to live. That is not only the case in the regions where we are, but everywhere." Moreover he complained about the "Hollandsche lord" who squeezed out his emigrated countrymen. The landowners initially act pleasantly "until they have their



prey trapped in their claws, then they show their likeness of blood thirsty wolves. They squeeze the last drop of blood out of them, always leering, figuring how to catch more. Though they volunteered for this adventure, they are now caught in a snare, mainly concerned with mere existence, finding themselves in poverty like they had never known in the Netherlands. Would the agents have known nothing of this? If not, then they need to examine the truth. If so, then they are bigger rascals fit for maximum punishment.

The complete Huizinga family is now in America. One son is in North America and the rest of them are in South America! As he grows up in this strange country, Anne changes his name to Honorio, which can be understood in Spanish. He takes as his bride, Ebeltje Kooistra, who has come with her parents from Ee to South America. Ebeltje has also taken a Spanish name and maintains contact with the family in North America as Avelina,



*Anne Huizenga on the right near the bicycle. In the middle of the picture his wife Ebeltje Kooistra surrounded with their children. The name of the man on the left is unknown.*

During the time that the Huizinga family lived in Friesland they were not members of the church. The land owners were faithful church goers, but, according to the history handed down in the Huizinga family, they were required to work long hours every day, seven days per week with no time off to visit a church. Bouwe had never seen the inside of a church before he came to Detroit and found all his Dutch neighbors attending church on Sundays. The Huizinga family had not felt drawn to the experiment of Dominee van Raalte so they decided to make the passage to America on their own. In Detroit, Bouwe becomes a regular at church services and maintains close contacts with other settlers in Michigan where van Raalte's followers have preceded him.

He moved to the Chicago area because of lack of work in Michigan. There he found a young woman of Dutch descent ladling soup in a soup kitchen line when he reported there looking for food.. She was Anna Santefort, the daughter of Cornelius Santefort, a settler in South Holland. He had begun as an onion farmer, and became a broker of set onions. Bouwe found a good job at Pullman as a finish carpenter. He married Anna and began a family in Chicago. However, it was a time of heavy labor union activity and Bouwe did not appreciate that. One year they found a farm to rent near Holland Michigan, but that same winter both Cornelius Santefort and his wife Sarah within two weeks. They had to move back to Chicago. Bouwe also built many homes in the Roseland, Illinois area, but found his work frequently sabotaged by union enthusiasts and finally decided to move to Randolph, Wisconsin with the comment "Chicago is no place to raise a family. One can't tell the difference between the unions and the gangsters."

First in Randolph where he opened a butcher shop and later as a farmer, eventually buying a farm west of Friesland, WI. The family is Christian Reformed and the children go to their Christian Schools. Through marriage, one of the daughters finds herself in the Reformed Church, and the rest remain Christian Reformed. Although the Protestant Reformed Church was formed in 1924, a congregation is not formed in Randolph until the early 1940s. At that time, the 3 youngest children, Ted, William and Grace, with their spouses and young children join the Protestant Reformed Church, which arguably continues the strictest practices and sternest interpretation of Calvinism. All them, at that time, remained faithful churchgoing people, maintaining strict standards of living. At this date, with intermarriages of the non Dutch population, partners of other faiths, some disillusioned by the rigors of Calvinism, a number of religions as well as lack of religion can be found in the many descendants. The majority still live near Randolph and Friesland and are still involved in one of the three Reformed types of churches there, some still firmly involved with the Protestant Reformed Church in positions of leadership.

Bouwe (now Benjamin) Huizinga never saw his family again and only kept informed about them by the correspondence with "Tante (aunt) Avelina." Because of severe lung disease (probably emphysema) he died in 1923. Avelina continues to write to Anna and after Anna's death to the eldest daughter Trijntje (Katherine) who is married and living in Seattle and to son Adolph who remained in Randolph. . She was the last member of the family in South America who could speak and write Dutch, The final letter announcing her death in the mid 1940s, was written in Spanish. Following that the contact is lost until 2002 when 2 descendants of Bouwe went to Argentina for a visit to meet the long lost family and to investigate.

The Argentinian Huizingas first lived in the city of Bernasconi in the state of La Pampa. The nearest port is Bahia Blanca. Anne (Honorio) Huizinga, who was twelve years old when he left Friesland, was eventually able to buy a farm in Darregueirra. Gosse Huizinga established himself at Puan, (Tiete Huizinga at col. Pichi?) and Jan (Juan) at Bernasconi. The family has blended completely into the Argentinian society and all have married partners who have roots in Germany, France, Italy, Portugal and Russia and possibly others. The family does not appear to be practicing, but do show some of the religious pictures in their homes. They all appear to have become marginally practicing Roman Catholics.

The tradition of naming children after the grandparents in North and South America continues to live on. However, after the second world war, the North Americans have avoided the name Adolf. The Argentinians see no problem with it and there are several Huizingas in Argentina walking around with the name of Adolfo.