

How Dutch Americans Stayed Dutch: An Historical Perspective on Ethnic Identities

Douglas Firth Anderson
Northwestern College (Iowa)

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houses of worship and cemeteries and fostering Jewish education and a social infrastructure. Jews prayed together in homes in Des Moines as early as 1869 and formed Des Moines's first synagogue, B'nai Jeshuran (Children of Righteousness) in 1873. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, the unaffiliated, and, since 1978, Chabad, cooperated to improve the quality of Jewish life.

This book memorializes the 100 years since the founding of United Jewish Philanthropies in 1914. Twenty-eight vignettes identify synagogues, economic life, social services, personalities, and the Iowa Jewish Historical Society, established in 1989. The book even includes a section on "Jewish Cooking in Iowa." This showcase of Jewish Des Moines is attractively illustrated. Two maps indicate Jewish residences, businesses, and houses of worship in east and west Des Moines in 1895. This thumbnail history suggests how much more depth could be achieved in a lengthier study.

How Dutch Americans Stayed Dutch: An Historical Perspective on Ethnic Identities, by Michael J. Douma. American Studies. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014. 238 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$99.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Douglas Firth Anderson is professor emeritus of history and interim reference librarian and archivist at Northwestern College (Iowa). He is a co-author of *Orange City* (2014).

Michael J. Douma's *How Dutch Americans Stayed Dutch* is about ethnic identity historically considered: Who did the Dutch who came to the American Midwest in the nineteenth century think they were, who do they think they have become, and why have their self-perceptions changed from then to now? Douma has a personal stake in his account. When relatives from the Netherlands visited his grandfather in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1993, it "triggered" an "ethnic awareness" in him that he pursued into graduate studies (15). This book is Douma's revised Florida State University dissertation. Rather than rewriting his dissertation, he appears merely to have added to it.

Douma examines various factors that helped shift midwestern Dutch American self-understanding. The Civil War, for example, spurred many new immigrants to commit to American citizenship (chap. 2). The war's aftermath as well as individual African Americans helped immigrants and their children begin to come to terms with America's "whiteness" (chap. 3). Dutch consulates in the U.S. played a role in connecting immigrants to each other and to their former homeland (chap. 5). The native-born second generation, typified by Michigan

journalist and novelist Arnold Mulder, found it easier to think of themselves as American Dutch rather than Dutch Americans (chap. 6). Also in Michigan, Holland's annual Tulip Time, begun in 1929, became a way of secularizing Dutch American identity in a way that was "colorful, quaint, and commercial" (135; chap. 7). The fading away of the Dutch language, particularly after World War I, was a major marker, along with others, of a shifting self-perception among midwestern Dutch Americans (chap. 8). Yet even today there are institutions that foster Dutch heritage, and genealogy is helping many Dutch Americans stay Dutch in the twenty-first century, even if in ways far different than in the mid-nineteenth century (chap. 9).

Douma's study is important for the field of Dutch American history in the Midwest. He focuses primarily on nineteenth-century Dutch immigrants to Michigan and Iowa and their descendants. Secessionists from the Netherlands state Reformed church only briefly dominated numerically the colonies of Holland, Michigan, and Pella, Iowa, yet their piety and denominational commitments have long held sway over midwestern Dutch identity. "Religion (and not class nor race) was the central premise upon which Dutch American communities were formed" (16), and rivalry between the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) helped the Dutch stay Dutch (chaps. 1 and 4).

There is, however, less to this book than first appears. To begin, there are a disconcerting number of errors, and the lack of maps to clarify where Dutch Americans came from and where they settled, as well as the lack of any illustrations from before 1897, is disappointing. Furthermore, given the "central premise" of religion for Dutch American identity, it is puzzling how little Douma seems to make of the ethnic community's "pietism," especially since he lists Eugene P. Heideman's *The Practice of Piety: The Theology of the Midwestern Reformed Church in America, 1866–1966* in his bibliography.

Heideman's "phantom" presence—listed in the bibliography but not appearing substantively in the text or in the notes—is not an outlier. The work of David E. Zwart—"Faithful Remembering: Constructing Dutch America in the Twentieth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Western Michigan University, 2012)—is too recent for Douma to have used. However, his bibliography lists the Dutch-language weekly newspaper *De Volksvriend* (Orange City, Iowa) and Robert Schoone-Jongen's *Annals of Iowa* article (Summer 2010) about it—but there is no substantive use of the newspaper in the text. Further, although an article by Brian Beltman on the Pella Dutch is cited in a note (188n), there is nothing by Beltman in the bibliography. Beltman has a fine biographical article on Henry

Hospers, Orange City's colony leader, in the *Biographical Dictionary of Iowa* and three useful articles in the *Annals of Iowa* on the Dutch in northwest Iowa (Winter 1993, Spring 1996, and Spring 2003), but there is no discussion of Hospers or of the Dutch colony in northwest Iowa. Finally, the absence of Beltman's *Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley: The Life and Letters of Ulbe Eringa, 1866–1950* (1996) in a book about Dutch American identity is troubling.

The arc of Douma's argument is quite plausible: "Dutch American identities were originally anchored in the social structure of the church, which served as a de facto ethnic institution. Dutch American ethnic identities today, however, are tied more closely to the family unit than to community or congregation. . . . Dutch ethnic identification in America has been replaced with a strong interest in Dutch heritage and ancestry, both largely detached from religion" (157). Yet the preponderance of his evidence is from western Michigan in general, and Holland in particular. He gives only a cursory nod to Wisconsin, Iowa (i.e., Pella), Chicago, southern California, and a few other places. Thus, the applicability of his argument for Dutch Americans beyond Holland, Michigan, remains to be shown. Western Michigan was, and still is, the center of midwestern and western Dutch American culture, but it is not, and never has been, the entirety of that culture.

Prohibition in Eastern Iowa, by Linda Betsinger McCann. Des Moines: The Iowan Books. 128 pp. Illustrations, bibliography. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Timothy Walch is the director emeritus of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and a volunteer at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City.

"All I know is what I read in the papers," Will Rogers told the *New York Times* in September 1923. That humorous observation could have been the organizing principle for *Prohibition in Eastern Iowa*. In 128 pages, Linda Betsinger McCann provides something of a compilation of newspaper stories about prohibition in eastern Iowa.

McCann may be familiar to readers with an interest in local Iowa history. She is the author of two dozen books, including seven on the history of the Cedar Valley alone. A history enthusiast who spent many years as a registered nurse, McCann has devoted her retirement to writing histories of various Iowa topics. Her most recent book before this one was on the interurban railroad between Waverly and Cedar Rapids; her next will be on Civilian Conservation Camps, presumably in Iowa.

McCann's interest in prohibition came as a result of conversations with young people who have never heard of this "noble experiment." As she did for her other books, McCann conducted substantial library