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Tulips and Turmoil:

H.P. Scholte and Pella's Early Struggle for Identity

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Abstract

The Tulip has reached prominence as a symbol of Dutch culture in America, but what does it symbolize? Exuding great beauty every spring, the Tulip's external glory seems to blind one from the scars of identity it holds within its roots. Once a haven for religious freedom, the Netherlands' bright colors became dull in the early nineteenth century, forcing many "dissenters" from the newly established, state-formed Dutch Reformed Christian Church to flee persecution. This essay tracks and details one of those dissenters, Hendrik Peter Scholte, along with his followers to America, and their founding of the "City of Refuge," known as Pella, Iowa. This essay will explore the foundations of identity in the newfound colony. From the church to the educational realm to the hot political debates of the day, Scholte found himself at extreme odds with many of the migrants who were once proud to follow him across the Atlantic. This essay shall argue that the crux of identity, particularly Dutch-American identity, appears hidden within the small fissures. While Scholte quickly touted the title of American, many of his fellow Pellians refused to pluck up the roots they left in the Netherlands.

Pre-Pella: Introduction and Persecution in the Netherlands

The Tulip has become a symbol of Dutch eloquence over the last few centuries. Bright, bold, and beautiful in its coloring, one would be hard-pressed to find any soul who does not associate the sublime plant with the nation hailing from the Netherlands. In America, the flower has become an identifier among those whose ancestors sailed across the Atlantic in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. For many Dutch Americans, Tulips are a vital segment of their identity. In Pella, Iowa, however, the Tulip is aged, its external beauty exuding from a cracked foundation. While the Tulip has become a mainstay of Dutch-American identity, it did not achieve its iconic spot in the heart of Pella, Iowa, without decades of strife, contention, and resolution. Pella founder H.P. Scholte and his people built the Pella Tulip by way of rivalry as they struggled to be both Dutch and American in a new land. Small rifts work to forge a true identity while making it evident over time, as seen clearly within the Pella colony.

Leading a colony of religious secessionists from the Netherlands to the United States was none other than Dominee Hendrik Peter Scholte (1805-1868), characterized as a man of religious fervor among the most polarizing of his time. He arrived in Pella, Iowa, during the year 1847 with around eight hundred devoted followers. Talk about him continues in both countries to this very day. Depending on whom one asks, the man was either a hero or a fool, a pioneer or a traitor. His allegiance was not to a nation, nor any denomination, but to God's kingdom.

Unmistakably, Scholte was a firebrand in the Netherlands during his time there prior to his trek across the Atlantic. A spirited, influential secessionist, waging war against the Dutch Reformed Church of the state in the Netherlands, not because he disagreed doctrinally, but because the state and church melded in such a way that he was "prevented from clothing his faith

in the straight-jacket of ecclesiastical formalism.”¹ Overtaken and corrupted by a form of governmental legalism Scholte felt overshadowed genuine Christian worship, the church needed restoration.

In 1898, Dutch historian Jan Nollen remarked upon the suffocation of religious freedom in the Netherlands. “Since 1816, the Dutch Reformed Church had become part of the machinery of government.”² Such were the unprecedented circumstances of H.P. Scholte and the seceders in the Netherlands during the 1830s. While similar circumstances existed in other parts of the world and were particularly common in many other nations, such as Anglican England and Catholic Spain, at this time. These realities, however, were foreign to Hollanders. The seven Netherlands provinces united as the Dutch Republic in 1579 by the Union of Utrecht, establishing freedom of religion, including freedom from prosecution on grounds of worship and the exercising of faith, hoping to maintain peace in the region.³ The Netherlands had become a haven for many different Christian denominations as well as other religions. However, the Dutch Republic fundamentally transformed during Napoleon France’s occupation of the Netherlands when it morphed into the Batavian Republic from 1795-1806, then into the Kingdom of Holland under Napoleon’s brother, Louis, from 1806-1810.

The restoration of the House of Orange to the Dutch crown led to a much more authoritarian Netherlands government in 1815.⁴ The unofficial religion of the Dutch, that is Dutch Reformed Christianity, became the official religion of the state of the Netherlands by royal

¹ Cyrenus Cole, *A Bit of Holland in America* (Pella, IA: Plain Talk Printing House, 1898), 2.

² Jan Nollen, *De Afscheiding een Gedenkschrift* (Orange City, IA: De Volksvriend Printing House), trans. Jared Poortinga, 30.

³ The Dutch Republic, *Union of Utrecht*, Section XIII, Utrecht, 1579.

⁴ Nollen, 9.

decree.⁵ It was at this point, anyone who dissented against the Reformed Church of the Netherlands became an enemy of the state. The Dutch government was even more likely to persecute anyone suspicious of dissent during the early and mid-1830s as the excitement that aroused the Belgian revolution in 1831 had yet to abate and the government remained sensitive to the slightest sign of rebellion.⁶

Like the silence that comes over the land before a tornado was H.P. Scholte's time in the Netherlands before coming to America. Early Pella historian Cyrenus Cole, writing in 1898 regarding the well-known, at the time, facts that led to the emigration to Pella, details the trial that labeled Scholte a dissenter in 1834 involving a clause he broke within the Code Napoleon instituted by the Dutch government which forbade those viewed as dissenters to gather in groups of more than nineteen.⁷ Some of those present at Scholte's trial would end up following him to Pella. Though imprisoned three weeks for the violation, he would remain a zealous light to his people amid the gloomy darkness of religious persecution, proclaiming that, "this may have a very gloomy outlook to you... but to me the outlook is glorious, indeed."⁸

Prominent Dutch-American historians Robert P. Swierenga and Muriel Kooi lay out the reality that Scholte was not the only one who felt such a way. Jacob Maasdam (1813-1858), an eventual supporter and friend of Scholte and minister in Scholte's church shortly after he arrived in Pella in 1849,⁹ became estranged from the state church in the Netherlands. In 1833, before he identified with Scholte and the secessionist movement, which started a year later, he protested

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 30.

⁷ Cole, 6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Robert P. Swierenga, Muriel Kooi, "Jacob Maasdam's Memoir, 1831-1840," trans. Michael Douma, *Origins* 24, no.2, (Fall 2006): 28, Editors Conclusion, <https://origins.calvin.edu/issues/origins-vol-24-no-2-fall-2006/download/>.

what he believed to be “terrible heresies”¹⁰ in a church in Hitzert, South Holland (a province in the Netherlands), he was attending at the time. The accusations of heresy included beliefs that man could work out his own salvation, that he could do good on his own apart from the grace of God, and that the Old Testament was no longer valid, among others.¹¹ The church elders brought Maasdam in front of them because of his protest and met him with hostility and slandering. At this point, many of his students in the church abandoned him. The elders made him out to be his “own god” and “worthy to be torn apart by four horses” because he had “defied the dominie (pastor)” and “brought dissent into the congregation.”¹² He noted the last time he was in the midst of this consistory, they “had the civil authorities fine me fifty guilders¹³ and threatened that if I did not stop challenging the minister I would be imprisoned.”¹⁴

In the sections that follow, the scene shifts from the religiously intolerant Netherlands to the, almost too tolerant, for the Dutch at least, United States. The intertwining of legal and religious conflicts weaved its way into Pella’s identity in its young life. The colony became a hotbed for the ideological conflict between Scholte and Albertus van Raalte, which also saw its way into the realm of higher education. Furthermore, the timing of the colony’s birth spared it not from the polarizing reality of the Civil War and slavery politics as many Dutch Americans experienced a real struggle to assimilate to American life and culture.

Early Stages of Conflict: Legal and Religious

The Pella colony in Southeast Central Iowa would not have been possible without its leader, Hendrik Peter Scholte. Yet it seems also to be the case that, though many of the original

¹⁰ Swierenga, Kooi, 24.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Equal to about \$27.90 U.S. Dollars, adjusted to about \$985.83 in 2022 currency.

¹⁴ Swierenga, Kooi, 24.

colonists, and subsequent generations, respected him, and some, like Maasdam, remained close friends with him, many were dead set against him in more ways than one. From religion, to politics, to personality, opposition permeated Scholte's relationship with his fellow settlers. The Dutch Reformed Church encompassed the Dutch identity for many Pella settlers. Scholte, as a secessionist who not only wished to separate from the corrupted Netherlands government but also the Dutch Reformed Church, simply was not Dutch enough in the eyes of many of his fellow colonists.

The rift between Scholte and the people of Pella escalated to the point of a public civil suit regarding a small plot of land in the center of the small town. This land plot fiasco is what resulted in his temporary, and eventually permanent, ban from pastoring the congregation at his church in Pella. *Christian Church v. Scholte, 2 Iowa 27 (1855)*, was a legal case where Scholte's congregation filed a lawsuit against Reverend Scholte himself. On June 5th, 1848, Scholte entitled one of the plots of land he bought in Pella, "church square." The church viewed his naming of this square as such an action effectively dedicating it to the church itself. Since December 2nd, 1849, the church had argued possession of the square belonged to them and on August 30th, 1854, brought forth a civil suit against Scholte in which they argued they had an interest in the plot of land, and a right to immediate possession of it as well as damages¹⁵ from Scholte.

Iowa Supreme Court Justice William G. Woodward determined the church congregation, the Plaintiff in the case, to possess "not a legal title; and neither have they, as yet, an exclusive right of any kind" regarding the plot of land in question. Therefore, the court recognized the plot of land as belonging to Scholte and dismissed the petition. This seemed to be such a minuscule

¹⁵ One-hundred dollars is what they sought. In 1854, when the petition was filed, \$100 would be equivalent to \$3,547.76 in 2022.

issue, and to a large extent, it was. However, it blew up into a much larger division that was playing out throughout the Pella colony. From the trek to Pella on there was dissension that took on a quieter form, but after the church square debacle, internal opposition to Scholte began to bear external fruit.

Scholte was not completely void of fans, and allies, however. One of the early Pella colony leaders by the name of Laurens Van Bergeijk wrote a strong defense of his colony's founder. His admiration for the leader is evident, clearly seen in the extravagant, long title of his piece: "A history of twenty-five years of the most reverend minister, H.P. Scholte, servant of the Word of God, noted with his good and his bad, composed by a brother of his reverence, in faith and love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our God and Redeemer, who brought life and its imperishableness to light." In Van Bergeijk's account of the "church square" events, the lawsuit against Scholte on part of the congregation arose in 1854 when he sold these two plots of land that he had formerly promised to donate to the church.¹⁶ While such an informal promise is not legally binding, as evidenced by Scholte's legal vindication, the breaking of it stressed the, already frayed, relationship between Scholte and the people of Pella. This church lot controversy was the second huge divisive ripple in the colony, the first being an accounting controversy in 1848-1849, stemming from Scholte's delayed financial accounting for the travel costs from the Netherlands and the purchase of land in Pella.¹⁷ This resulted in his first suspension from performing the duties of pastor at his church, lasting a few months in total.

The way Scholte's church worked, according to his philosophy, allowed for his own suspension and expulsion. Swierenga, along with Jacob E. Nyenhuis, longtime classics professor

¹⁶ Robert P. Swierenga, Jacob E. Nyenhuis, Nella Kennedy, *Dutch-American Arts and Letters in Historical Perspective* (Holland, MI: Van Raalte Press, 2008), 129.

¹⁷ Ibid.

and professor emeritus from Hope College in Holland, Michigan, and Nella Kennedy, Dutch translator, and historian, provide commentary on Van Bergeijk's personal accounts of events. In Van Bergeijk's writing, he acknowledges that the elders of the church would preside over a weekly, open congregational meeting that Scholte often failed to attend, claiming to be busy with other colony business.¹⁸ Here, members could bring up complaints and the congregation could vote on certain matters. A vacuum of leadership, Van Bergeijk argues, came about in which a conflict of interest arose as the complainers were also often the judges, making it "clear on whose neck the axe would fall."¹⁹ Eventually, Scholte saw himself permanently suspended for the church lot controversy, as the consistory of elders kept him under suspension until he repented for the matter; primarily, for the promise he made to the church he ended up backing out on regarding the lot in question. Scholte, however, refused, believing he had done nothing wrong,²⁰ effectively resulting in the maintenance of his suspension from pastoral duties.

This was the back-breaking event of Scholte's non-denominational experiment in Pella. This very event led to the establishment of Pella's first Dutch Reformed church. What Scholte had tried to keep away had slowly been creeping in. Like a cobra ready to attack, this split in the congregation alongside Scholte's derision and suspension with his congregation allowed them their chance to ditch him for the Reformed church as they had wanted for quite some time. According to Van Bergeijk's account, after Scholte's second crisis and refusal of repentance, the elder consistory together with newer immigrants and a small group that left the congregation after the first crisis negotiated with one another and contacted the "Reformed Church Classis of Holland, Michigan," where pastor and longtime Scholte frenemy, A.C. van Raalte, served.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid, 130.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 129.

²¹ Ibid.

Dominie van Raalte would end up traveling to Pella to accept and organize this new congregation as a member church of the Reformed Church in America. What Scholte worked to the bone fighting against had become a reality; the new congregation would become known as the “Protestant Reformed Church at Pella,” officially founded in 1856. The new Reformed church wrote van Raalte with a desire he come pastor their congregation, though he would end up declining.²² Those who refused to join the Protestant Reformed Church at Pella continued in Pella as the “First Christian Church.”²³ This is where Scholte would remain.

The Remnant and the Revitalization: van Raalte v. Scholte

There happened to be another Dutch colony set up in Holland Michigan under Albertus van Raalte (1811-1876), who happened to be an acquaintance of Scholte back in the Netherlands, and America to an extent. Both men were part of the secessionist movement, attended the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, albeit five years apart, and came to the United States with plans to settle together.²⁴ Robert P. Swierenga referred to them as “two stallions.... with steel in their bones,”²⁵ furthermore, “their personalities and religious temperaments differed so much that it was difficult for them to keep cordial relations.”²⁶ Smaller disagreements in their home country gave way to larger rifts later in their adopted one.

With these two leaders of “De Afscheiding (The Secession),” as known in the Netherlands, much in the way of disagreement attended them amongst theological and ecclesiastical lines. Van Raalte, considered a moderate in the movement, did not necessarily want to stray from the Dutch Reformed denomination, but defended “free church polity and liberty of

²² Jacob Van der Zee, *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Iowa City, IA: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912), 295.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Robert P. Swierenga, “Van Raalte and Scholte: A Soured Relationship and Personal Rivalry,” *Origins* 17, no.1 (Spring 1999): 21. <https://origins.calvin.edu/issues/origins-vol-17-no-1-spring-1999/download/>.

²⁵ Ibid, 22.

²⁶ Ibid.

conscious.”²⁷ Scholte, on the other hand, tended towards the far left, meaning he desired to completely separate from the Dutch Reformed denomination and “restore the pure form of primitive Christianity in a congregational structure.”²⁸ Scholte saw the non-denominational communion of believers united solely upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as the biblical basis for the church, which stressed smaller differences much less. Such communal, faith-based living encircled the early church as described in chapter two of the Book of Acts in the New Testament. United by Christ, the gospel, and their common persecution at the hands of the crown of the Netherlands were both men, but after that, only division remained. The division of these two men is quite emblematic in the analysis of early Pella disjuncture.

Seen throughout his dealings in Pella with its people was Scholte's extremity, as Pella historian and writer of a comprehensive history of the Dutch in Iowa up to the year 1912, Jacob Van der Zee, points out. Scholte's fringe view led to him “espousing a separatistic, premillennial, non-confessional Christianity – ‘no creed but the Bible.’”²⁹ The original Pella church, The Christian Church at Pella – pastored by Scholte himself, existed as a non-denominational congregation and based itself solely upon the one, entire and indivisible Word of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments, as declared in its constitution.³⁰

Meanwhile, Van Raalte and his colony in Holland, Michigan, chose to align with the Dutch Protestant Reformed Church of the East (United States),³¹ choosing instead to keep intact the Dutch religious identity many Dutch Americans held dear. Though in the same denomination, there were appeals to Scholte to unify himself with them, he instead refused and

²⁷ Ibid, 23.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Van der Zee, 288.

³¹ Swierenga, “Van Raalte and Scholte: A Soured Relationship and Personal Rivalry,” 21.

responded by making a point that he could not belong to any sect.³² For Scholte, to align with any specific denomination would be to submit to its specific rules and regulations, thus destroying his dream of restoring the church's original form. At this time in Western World History, the church seeped into every facet of life, including the educational sphere. Different denominations would not only compete for members, but they also would compete in the University. Pella was no exception.

Education and Doctrine: The “Non-Dutchness” of Scholte and Central College

The rift between Scholte and the rest of the Pella colony made its way into the educational realm with the founding of Central College in 1853. In a paper presented at the proceedings of the 11th Bicentennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies, historian James E. McMillan documents the tension in Pella surrounding the founding of Central College. Founded originally as a Baptist institution, many of Pella's residents formed objections regarding the fact it wasn't of the Reformed denomination. Scholte, however, embraced it. He hoped a college in Pella would further the amalgamation of positive Dutch and American characteristics.³³ For Scholte, the fact it was to be a Baptist institution was not a negative aspect of its potential founding. In fact, for him, it ought to have been a heavy weight in the positive category. Though a Baptist institution, a committee of three delegates drew up articles of incorporation offering “equal advantages to all students having the requisite literacy and moral qualifications, irrespective of denomination or religious profession.”³⁴ This, of course, was in

³² Van der Zee, 294.

³³ James E. McMillan, “The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration: 150 Years of Ethnic Heritage” Hope College, Holland, MI, June 12 and 13, 1997, ed. Larry J. Wagenaar and Robert P. Sweierenga, 115.

³⁴ The Central Ray, “Central University of Iowa: An Historical Sketch,” *The Central Ray* (Pella, Iowa), Jan. 1, 1892. http://centralcollege.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=equal%20advantages%20to%20all%20students&t=31415&i=t&by=1892&bdd=1890&d=01011892-01311892&m=between&ord=k1&fn=central_ray_usa_iowa_pella_18920101_english_2&df=1&dt=1 (accessed December 15, 2022).

tune with Scholte's more liberal view regarding religious formation. It makes sense, then, that the very next day, the delegates chose him as president of the executive committee on the first board of trustees.³⁵

Scholte's vehement resolution to remain non-denominational allowed him to welcome a Baptist institution with open arms. Scholte biographer, Lubbertus Ooestendorp, noted that Scholte "had no intentions of becoming a part of a denomination in America, least of all of transporting a 'Dutch' church to the new land."³⁶ He wanted no theocratic colony but held to a pure form of primitive Christianity where minor theological differences did not serve to split the congregation. As such, he was ecstatic about the Baptist push for a college in Central Iowa and was even more excited to offer up his colony as its landing spot. "The Baptists scarcely constituted an unbelieving congregation in the dominie's [Scholte's] mind, so it would only be natural for him to embrace and facilitate their offer of a higher educational institution."³⁷ The thriving of the Pella colony, for Scholte, transcended denomination and it was his staunch belief that a local institution of higher education would greatly benefit Pellians.

Scholte held mostly the same views biblically as the traditional Dutch Reformed denomination, but without the formalism that accompanied it. Scholte held to the same brand of Calvinistic theology as the Dutch Reformed denomination. This meant he affirmed reformed Calvinistic doctrines such as those detailed by the widely used acronym TULIP³⁸ and would acknowledge the founding Reformed documents, such as the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg

³⁵ McMillan, 115.

³⁶ Lubertus Ooestendorp, *H.P. Scholte: Leader of the Secession of 1834 and Founder of Pella* (T. Wever, 1964), 158, 160, 162.

³⁷ McMillan, 117.

³⁸ T- Total Depravity; U- Unconditional Election; L- Limited Atonement; I- Irresistible Grace; P- Perseverance of the Saints. Typically referred to as the five points of Calvinism, the theology of French Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564). They first appeared in codified doctrine in the Canons of Dordt by the Synod of Dordt in 1618 and 1619.

Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt, as accurate. So where was the difference? These theological positions are how many in the historical Reformed church found their identity. Scholte, however, sought the genuine gospel as the only valid means of identification for an authentic Christian. The Baptists, being Calvinistic themselves, were easy enough to support. They differed mostly from the traditional reformed view in topics such as church government and baptism, which are secondary issues. Meanwhile, they were like the Seceders, or at least, the Scholte branch of them, in many ways.

The Baptist difference in baptism came in the form of believer baptism. Believer baptism holds a valid profession of faith in Jesus Christ to be the crucial prerequisite to baptism. At the point of such a profession, they would experience baptism by immersion. The Dutch Reformed church, however, endorsed the baptism of infants. The Belgic Confession, one of the foundational Reformed documents, compares the sacrament of baptism in the New Testament, to circumcision in the Old Testament as the new sign of God's covenant with His people.³⁹ Existing amongst both camps was an acknowledgment that baptism is not sufficient for salvation, though children still experienced a bestowing of baptism upon them, thus abruptly including them in this union with God and His church. The Reformed church also relied on synodical authority to establish general rules for each congregation, creating a united top-down approach for the denomination, while the Baptist model allowed for congregational authority to determine general rules for each local church, giving way to more uniqueness across local churches.

Scholte fell in-between these two camps. According to popular Dutch-American historian and Scholte scholar, Muriel Kooi, he opposed the baptism of infants when their parents were not

³⁹ Guido de Bres, *Belgic Confession*, Article 34, Rouen, France, 1561.

confessing church members.⁴⁰ Not quite the Baptist model, as he would still baptize infants so long as their parents were confessing church members yet differing from the typical Reformed view which was a bit more liberal in their application of infant baptism. Scholte, however, held a view preferring something much closer to the Baptist congregational structure. He resisted synodical authority, a synod being a council of a Christian denomination typically tasked with deciding issues of doctrine, administration, application, etc., and argued instead that each congregation should make its own rules.⁴¹ This second difference in view pertaining to church government is what led to his deposition in the Netherlands in 1840,⁴² and this difference led to continued separation and strife between him and his people in Pella. Nonetheless, it is clear why Scholte was massively in favor of a Baptist college in his colony and why he was willing to spend so much money to make its establishment in Pella a reality.

When it came to the people of Pella, there are some disagreements among historians regarding the value of the institution in their eyes. Historian Jacob Van Der Zee noted that it, “cannot be denied, however, that the founding of Central University in Pella was not sufficiently prized by the Hollanders for many years... the number in attendance until about [1890]... was almost negligible.”⁴³ An opposing view, however, is offered by historian Jacob Van Hinte, who maintained, “[Pellians] not only tolerated a Baptist school, but even frequented it: ‘that it is a Baptist school and not a Reformed one, we have always considered to be of very little importance in the field of scientific education.’”⁴⁴ It should be noted, however, that both historians are viewing Central College and its success through the lens of its existence in what is

⁴⁰ Muriel Kooi, “An Elusive Peace in Pella,” *Origins* 10, no.1 (Spring 1992): 35.
<https://origins.calvin.edu/issues/origins-vol-10-no-1-spring-1992/download/>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Van Der Zee, 279.

⁴⁴ Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America: A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries of America* (Ann Arbor, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), ed. Swierenga, trans. De Wit, 398.

now considered history. Van Der Zee wrote in 1912 and Van Hinte wrote in 1985. There was quite a difference in the realities of Central College's existence between the years 1912 and 1985 and an even bigger difference between 1985 and 2022. Though it should be noted that both historians are looking at Central College through the lens of two different, outdated periods, the analysis both take part in looks at the early history of Central College, which all have access to, though the standards of success may have been different in each of the periods these two authors wrote in.

The conversation and existence of Central University at Pella did not escape the rivalry between Van Raalte and Scholte. In addition to Van Raalte's summoning to Pella to establish the town's First Reformed Church in 1856, in 1859 and 1865 he visited the Iowa Dutch to ascertain the feasibility of starting a Reformed Church-affiliated college all the while receiving a thorough renouncing by Scholte in the process.⁴⁵ Scholte was temporarily successful in keeping a Reformed Church-affiliated college out of Pella,⁴⁶ as Van Raalte found, "the duplication of schools in such a rural town altogether unnecessary and superfluous,' for Central College was healthy and serving the community well."⁴⁷

Though just as the rivalry between Scholte and Van Raalte continued in the church realm, it would continue in the realm of higher education. In 1866, Van Raalte would found a Reformed Church-affiliated institution in his colony of Holland, Michigan, entitled Hope College. The Dutch colony that emigrated from Pella to Orange City, Iowa, in 1870 founded Northwestern College in 1882, which would feed into Hope rather than Central for post-graduate, specifically

⁴⁵ McMillan, 119.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Central College would become affiliated with the Reformed Church in 1916 when the Baptist Church consolidated into one school, Des Moines University, and abandoned Central entirely. The Reformed Church stepped in to save Central.

⁴⁷ Van Hinte, 400.

seminary, education.⁴⁸ Hope also experienced preferential treatment by many Dutch Pellians over Central because of its affiliation with the Reformed Church, rather than the Baptist Church which very few Dutch Iowans associated with.

Politics: Slavery and the Civil War

The realm of politics could not escape conflict in Pella either. Scholte and many Dutch Americans in the 1850s opposed slavery, as seen by their rejecting of Texas and Missouri as settlement spots, but were not Abolitionists. Many of them were loyal to the Democratic party. Civil War historian Ronald V. Rietveld noted that Scholte made the switch to the Republican party, however, in 1859 while the Democratic party remained dominant in Pella.⁴⁹ He even found himself selected as a delegate-at-large to go to the Republican National Convention in 1860 by the Iowa Republican State Convention.⁵⁰ He had a revolutionary spirit kindled in religion, yet widespread, bursting forth throughout every arena he dipped his toes into.

As if Scholte wasn't polarizing enough in his own town, it was common for others in other parts of Iowa to have strong opinions of him as well. Scholte was not quiet in the realm of politics, acting as a prominent political figure in Iowa with a decent amount of power on accord of his stature, wealth, and pull among the Dutch, as well as his position as owner and editor of the Pella Gazette. During the election cycle of 1856, Scholte found himself in multiple debates with other newspapers across Iowa as many of them levied accusation after accusation at him for his views on slavery, such as the editor of the Des Moines Citizen accusing Scholte of supporting

⁴⁸ McMillan, 118.

⁴⁹ Ronald V. Rietveld, "Henry P. Scholte and Abraham Lincoln: Compatriots in the Civil War" in *Dutch-Americans and War: United States and Abroad*, ed. Robert P. Swierenga, Nella Kennedy, Lisa Zylstra (Holland, MI, Van Raalte Press, 2014), 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

slavery as a “Divine and particularly Apostolic institution.”⁵¹ Scholte retorted by insisting he “never belonged to the fanatical fabrication of political gas and humbug,” and that he would “not surrender to the base and insipid vituperation of the sychophants of Black-Know-Nothing-Republicanism.”⁵² In a way, this was an attempt by Scholte to separate his biblical views from those wishing to use them to slander him as a political oppressor.

To understand the nineteenth-century Dutch view on slavery is to understand the Reformed Christian view on slavery. Historian John H. Yzenbaard notes the view many Dutch immigrants took, given the Netherlands’ long history as champions for freedom and their reason for coming to America, in general, was one of opposition against systems of bondage; however, “because of their Calvinistic predilection, many of the immigrants felt that the Biblical curse on Cain gave approval to a system of servitude.”⁵³ The word of God was their ultimate authority in all matters. Scholte recognized the existence of slavery, in the Bible and in the United States, though wished for its limitation to the states it was legal at the time. He wrote, “I have always been an opponent of slavery without approving the Abolitionists”⁵⁴ Though Scholte soon would align himself with the very man who would abolish slavery in the United States.

His rapid switch from Democratic to Republican support between the years of 1856 to 1860 showcases the extremely dramatic shift in Scholte's views. Scholte was a well-known James Buchanan supporter. Elected as the 15th President of the United States in 1856, Democrat James Buchanan viewed the issue of slavery as handled best when relegated to individual states

⁵¹ John H. Yzenbaard, “H. P. Schölte and the 1856 Presidential Campaign in Michigan,” *Annals of Iowa* 42, no.1, 1973, 32. file:///C:/Users/jared/Downloads/annals-of-iowa-5833-yzenbaard.pdf.

⁵² Hendrik P. Scholte, “Black Republican Policy,” *Pella Gazette* (Pella, Iowa), Jun. 5, 1856. https://pella.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=humbug&t=26909&i=t&by=1856&bdd=1850&d=06041856-06051856&m=between&ord=k1&fn=pella_gazette_usa_iowa_pella_18560605_english_2&df=1&dt=1 (accessed December 15, 2022).

⁵³ Yzenbaard, 31-32.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

to decide upon its existence within their respective boundaries but made sure to speak much of the protection afforded to those who endorsed it. He approved of the infamous 1857 Dred Scott v. Sanford decision in which the Supreme Court determined that “negros” could not, under any circumstances, be American citizens. Buchanan used this case to make a foundational Constitutional argument about American Slavery. According to Scholte in 1860, Buchanan promulgated the doctrine that the United States carries slavery into all the territories of the expanding nation, according to the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case.⁵⁵

In 1856, Scholte was in lockstep with Buchanan, supporting the Pennsylvanian Democrat with all his weight. Scholte, in an August edition of *The Pella Gazette*, his well-known newspaper, wrote of the 1856 Republican Presidential candidate John C. Fremont and the Republicans as “hypocrites” for their, apparently hidden, views that black and white people are afforded the same inalienable rights according to the constitution.⁵⁶ Because of this supposed hypocrisy and hidden agenda, Scholte was confident Buchanan’s bid for President would result in victory: “The people will find out before November, and all true Americans will give their verdict against such Republicanism by voting for Buchanan and Breckenridge.”⁵⁷ Though just four years later, Scholte’s tone would change.

Once an ardent supporter of Buchanan, Scholte’s allegiance had changed. Even before the Republican challenger for the Presidency in 1860 was nominated, he expressed confidence in their future victory and occupancy of the highest public office in the United States: “We will

⁵⁵ Hendrik P. Scholte, “The President’s Message,” *Pella Gazette* (Pella, Iowa), Jan. 4, 1860. https://pella.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=slavery&t=26909&i=t&by=1860&bdd=1860&d=01011860-12311860&m=between&ord=k1&fn=pella_gazette_usa_iowa_pella_18600104_english_2&df=1&dt=4 (accessed December 15, 2022).

⁵⁶ Hendrik P. Scholte, “The Next Election,” *Pella Gazette* (Pella, Iowa), Aug. 21, 1856. https://pella.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=buchanan&t=26909&i=t&by=1856&bdd=1850&d=01011856-12311856&m=between&ord=k1&fn=pella_gazette_usa_iowa_pella_18560821_english_2&df=1&dt=10 (accessed December 5, 2022).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

enter in good spirits the Presidential campaign in the firm conviction that next fall the Pro-Slavery Democracy will be totally defeated in the triumphant election of the Chicago Republican candidates [the Republican National Convention was to be held in Chicago on June 13, 1860].”⁵⁸ Buchanan and his administration, once regarded by Scholte in high esteem, became viewed as a grave enemy in those very same eyes.

Baked within this switch, at heart, was Scholte’s evolving view of slavery. Though he had earlier supported Buchanan, Buchanan had vehemently promised not to seek re-election. Kentucky native John C. Breckenridge was the current Vice President and Buchanan’s right-hand man. Though he was the top Democratic nominee for President in 1860, Scholte, because of his change in ideology and the Democratic Party’s recent brashness in their stance on slavery, could not support him. He attacked Buchanan and Breckenridge’s administration with a passion; “we have to combat the foolish declaration of our Pro-Slavery Federal Administration, that our national constitution carries slavery everywhere,”⁵⁹ in opposition to Buchanan’s statement regarding the application of Dred Scott and Democratic Party’s insistence on spreading slavery throughout the new states. It was at this time Scholte viewed the Republican Party as the best protector of the sovereignty of the people.⁶⁰ Certainly, this belief in popular sovereignty played a major role alongside his ardent passion for stopping the spread of slavery in his newfound allegiance with the Republican Party.

Accordingly, this does not mean Scholte had a one-hundred-eighty-degree turnaround regarding his views on slavery. Rather, he responded to the Democratic Party's increasing

⁵⁸ Hendrik P. Scholte, “Our Legislature,” *Pella Gazette* (Pella, Iowa), Jan. 4, 1860. https://pella.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=slavery&t=26909&i=t&by=1860&bdd=1860&d=01011860-12311860&m=between&ord=k1&fn=pella_gazette_usa_iowa_pella_18600104_english_2&df=1&dt=4 (accessed December 15, 2022).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

radicalism on the issue of slavery while adapting himself to view the Republican Party as the best chance for the recognition of the sovereignty of the people, as well as the halting of the expansion of slavery within the United States. Without advocating abolition, Scholte planted himself in the camp that wished for slavery's containment within its already existing borders in the Southern portion of the United States.

Goals of a unified nation and peaceful harmony therein encompassed Scholte's switch from the Democratic party to the Republican Party in 1859. Having less to do with the issue of slavery directly, his newfound Republican support centered around his belief that they held a higher commitment to the aforementioned goals and their equipment to accomplish them. "The Republican party is at present the only one that can bring the ship of the union, now tossed with uncertainty upon the stormy waves, by the incessant blowing of the pro-slavery, in a safe harbor of constitutional peace and harmony."⁶¹ He aligned well with the Republican party. At this point, they were not arguing for abolition, simply a halting of the spread of slavery along with a healthy injection of national unity.

In the 1860 campaign cycle, Scholte originally supported New York Senator William H. Seward's bid for President. Elected as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Chicago, which began on May 16, 1860, Scholte became convinced of the surer viability of, then-former Congressman, Abraham Lincoln's victory in the general election while gathered with other Republican delegates in Chicago's Tremont House, Rietveld reports.⁶²

⁶¹ Hendrik P. Scholte, "State Printer," *Pella Gazette* (Pella, Iowa), Dec. 21, 1859. https://pella.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=peace&t=26909&i=t&by=1859&bdd=1850&d=01011859-12311859&m=between&ord=k1&fn=pella_gazette_usa_iowa_pella_18591221_english_2&df=1&dt=10 (accessed December 6, 2022).

⁶² Rietveld, 7.

Michael Burlingame, Professor Emeritus of History at Connecticut College, noted that much of the arising uncertainty of the once front-runner Seward came about due to the belief that he could not win Indiana and Pennsylvania,⁶³ crucial states for the Republican to carry in the upcoming General Election. Scholte was a man of reason, and so, this meant the only thing left to do was throw his support behind Lincoln. He cast his vote for Lincoln at the convention, but not without a remorseful heart. Scholte penned Seward, noting the fear within the delegation that the Republican Party was not yet strong enough to elect Seward, and that there abided “many tears in manly eyes when the result was announced.”⁶⁴ Scholte would not have been exempt from such tears.

Though Seward was an avid foe of slavery, Lincoln was certainly more moderate, especially at this point. The language of the Republican Party platform behind Lincoln mentioned the issue of slavery and American values of freedom and equality under the law for all, but never explicitly mentioned the abolition of slavery. Nonetheless, the Republican Party, now represented by Lincoln, would not stand for the expansion of Slavery into new territories.⁶⁵ At a speech in Ohio during eighteen months of great popularity cultivation before the National Republican Convention, Abraham Lincoln stated, “I think Slavery is wrong, morally, and politically. I desire that it should be no further spread in these United States, and I should not object if it should gradually terminate in the whole Union.”⁶⁶ Such factors allowed Scholte to easily support Lincoln, as these were identical to his long-held beliefs and Lincoln’s character

⁶³ Michael Burlingame, “Abraham Lincoln: Campaigns and Elections,” *UVA Miller Center*, accessed December 6, 2022, <https://millercenter.org/president/lincoln/campaigns-and-elections>.

⁶⁴ Rietveld, 8.

⁶⁵ Republican National Committee, *National Republican Platform*, Chicago, IL, May 17, 1860.

⁶⁶ Abraham Lincoln, Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio, Sep. 17, 1859 (III, 40).

<https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/slavery.htm#:~:text=Those%20who%20deny%20freedom%20to,%20not%20long%20retain%20it.&text=I%20think%20Slavery%20is%20wrong,terminate%20in%20the%20whole%20Union>.

and values seemed to align closely with his own. Therefore, the lynchpin of Scholte's transition from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party was the Dred Scott decision, and the Democratic attempts to apply it to the entire growing nation, thus causing massive division and the Republican attempts to reconcile the nation under greater American ideals of freedom and equality, a cause which Scholte counted as moral and necessary.

In Pella, however, a challenge presented itself unto Scholte. His resolution to do whatever he could for the success of the Lincoln campaign, particularly in his own colony, became presented with a glaring conflict as many Pellians still identified with the Democratic party and, not to mention, opposed Scholte himself. His division amongst his people, historically docile regarding violence, was a boiling pot ready to tip over, and the 1860 election was the final ingredient. On October 11, 1860, a Republican rally took place in Pella. Right across from Scholte's home, the head of one participating marcher became the landing spot of a thrown rock. Reported also was that of a roaming Democrat armed with a revolver in one hand and a club in the other, creating a disturbance. In all, six Democrats stumbled upon arrestation for their involvement in terrorizing Republicans at the event that fateful night.⁶⁷ Not thought of as a particularly violent place, nor a particularly violent people, the violence seen here in Pella at this time was quite unusual. It goes to show the stakes of this election, and the passions involved in it did not escape the Dutch in Iowa, nor did they escape the pre-existing friction between Scholte and the people of Pella.

While Scholte put forth considerable effort for the election of Lincoln in the Pella colony, including giving three speeches in support of Lincoln in the Dutch language in Pella,⁶⁸ he was unsuccessful in convincing his colony to join him. "Scholte's best efforts had not delivered the

⁶⁷ Rietveld, 12.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Dutch vote; they remained loyal Democrats.”⁶⁹ The Lake Prairie Township, which included Pella and the surrounding area, vote tallies point out this truth as there existed 199 votes for Republicans and 398 for Democrats, despite the popularity of Lincoln throughout the rest of Iowa, proven by his victory in the state. Scholte seemed to have more pull and influence everywhere other than his colony in Pella. In the election of 1860, Scholte proved himself American, and Pella proved itself Dutch.

There happens to be a further correlation between migrants who founded Orange City in Northwestern Iowa in 1870, and the political tension during the Antebellum period in Pella. As discussed earlier, these same migrants, certainly entrenched within Pella’s political crisis, founded Northwestern College, an avowedly Reformed college, in contrast to the Scholte-supported, Baptist, Central College. It is no mistake, this group who, while in Pella, wished to remain in support of the Democratic party of the 1860s, settled in a region considered one of the most conservative today, not only in the state of Iowa but in the entire United States. Nate Cohn, Chief Political Analyst for *The New York Times* covered the region during the 2016 Republican Presidential Iowa Caucuses. In an article entitled, “How a Quiet Corner of Iowa Packs Such a Fierce Conservative Punch,” he stated of the Orange City Dutch,

“It is here where the Iowa caucuses earn their reputation for backing the most conservative and religious candidates. Despite representing less than 2 percent of the state’s population, the region so overwhelmingly favors conservative candidates that it punches far above its weight. The area can deliver such lopsided margins to conservative candidates that it can cancel out the tallies of far more moderate and populous areas.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid, 13.

⁷⁰ Nate Cohn, “How a Quiet Corner of Iowa Packs Such a Fierce Conservative Punch,” *The New York Times* (New York City, New York), Dec. 17, 2015.

Extremely conservative, religious fundamentalist candidate Ted Cruz would go on to win the state, in large part due to the influence of the Northwestern Iowa Dutch populace.

Those from Orange City who voted in the 2016 election were descendants of the group of Dutch traditionalists who quarreled with Scholte and left their original colony in Southeastern Iowa. Many of them were also part of the group enraged at Scholte's politics and his support of Abraham Lincoln. Reminiscent of the old Netherlands' glory, a progressive, transcendent figure like Scholte threatened the traditional identity of many Dutch-Iowan settlers. The Dutch people are a fascinating example of identity's grasp upon the unbreakable relationship between religion and politics. Even today, 85 percent of Sioux County, which houses Orange City, residents belong to one of the area's 39 religious congregations, one of the highest rates in the country.⁷¹ Back in 1870, as with the current day, religion remains the dominant partner in the relationship between religion and politics within Orange City, with religion acting as the main driving factor of political belief in the region. Scholte's embracing of the American ideal, in religion first, then in politics, threatened to break the stranglehold of a long-held Dutch nationalist identity for many of his fellow settlers.

Scholte's desire for his people to become Americans clashed with every fabric of their makeup as Dutch immigrants. The conflict between Scholte and van Raalte, including their intellectual differences, shows forth in the conflict between their colonies, and Scholte with his fellow settlers in Pella. However, the two opposed leaders found unity in their disliking of slavery and support of Lincoln. The New Netherland Institute states, "Van Raalte was a strong

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/17/upshot/how-a-quiet-corner-of-iowa-packs-such-a-fierce-conservative-punch.html>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

opponent of slavery and he became a strong supporter of Lincoln and the Republican Party.”⁷² That said, the founding dignitary found himself quickly thrown away by his own people as they pursued the ideals his Dutch-American rival put forth in Michigan. While politics were important to the Dutch identity, they were far inferior to the influence religion and culture had. In fact, Tulip Time in Pella did not come to be until 1935 with an impromptu gathering of those with Dutch ancestry.⁷³ There are still conversations happening in the Netherlands, and the U.S., wondering whether Scholte would be approving of this festival, or if he was “too American” for such a celebration of Dutch culture.

Historiography: Struggles of Assimilation

Of the religious nature of the internal conflicts within nineteenth-century, midwestern Dutch-American settlements, renowned Dutch-American historian Robert P. Swierenga in his piece entitled, “Local-Cosmopolitan Theory and Immigrant Religion: The Social Bases of the Antebellum Dutch Reformed Schism,” strives to apply Mertonian theories of social group behavior in an attempt to explain the mid-nineteenth-century religious conflict among Dutch Protestant immigrants in the Midwest.⁷⁴ As Swierenga explains, Mertonian theory, also known as local-cosmopolitan theory, is a theory developed by American Sociologist Robert K. Merton. This theory expresses the idea that localism and cosmopolitanism are alternate nodal points of reference group orientation and social interaction. Swierenga describes it in such a way: “The

⁷² New Netherland Institute, “Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte [1811-1876],” *New Netherland Institute*, accessed November 29, 2022,

https://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch_americans/albertus-christiaan-van-raalte/.

⁷³ Omar Waheed, “Tulip Time returns to Pella. What you need to know about the 2022 festival,” *Des Moines Register*, accessed November 7, 2022,

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/entertainment/2022/04/26/flowers-and-tradition-everything-you-need-know-tulip-time-festival-pella/7435351001/>.

⁷⁴ Robert P. Swierenga, “Local-Cosmopolitan Theory and Immigrant Religion: The Social Bases of the Antebellum Dutch Reformed Schism,” *Journal of Social History* 14, No. 1 (Autumn, 1980), 113-135 (114).

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3787089>.

local versus extralocal distinction may be conceptualized as a measure of the individual's primary point of orientation toward the world around him: one that fixes identity with reference to one's immediate family and church or to broader impersonal values and perspectives."⁷⁵ In other words, the local-cosmopolitan concept refers to the alternate connections between oneself and the society around them. These connections may merge via interpersonal relationships or the broader external world. Swierenga notes that only in a pluralistic culture where people can choose between a marketplace of worldviews is such a distinction meaningful.⁷⁶ In the land of Pella, over the course of less than a year, many found themselves plucked up from familiar cultural conditions to a completely new world with completely new lives, thus leading to ripe conditions for conflict as they tried to figure out their identity in the midst of this new environment.

Most of Swierenga's work in this piece hones in on the Michigan colony, however, there are important divisions that take place in the colony's formative years regarding church denomination. The Reformed Church in America split in 1857 in Holland, Michigan, establishing the Christian Reformed Church amongst division between Dutch immigrants from different areas of the Netherlands and separatist views varying in extremity. Utilizing local-cosmopolitan theory, Swierenga attempts to locate connections between the emigration areas of these immigrants and their subsequent church orientation and beliefs.

Swierenga ends up concluding, according to relevant data, that "the comparative data on place of origin show first that the 1857 Michigan Seceders [Christian Reformed Church] had greater membership from the traditional, localistic regions of the Netherlands than did the Reformed Church... [also], the traditionalist habits and customs remained strong for a longer

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

time in the junior denomination.”⁷⁷ Interestingly, Swierenga contrasts the regions within the Netherlands in terms of outlook, noting that the regions near major waterways and seaports, as well as those near Belgian and German borders and northern commercial farming areas, hosted people most international in outlook, thus, classifying them as cosmopolitan would be most appropriate.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, the interior regions in the east and north Netherlands were geographically, economically, and culturally isolated, and so, tended toward localism.⁷⁹ Further noticing the distinction between emigrants from these differing regions as separating themselves into differing Reformed denominations in Southwest Michigan, Swierenga points out the Christian Reformed Seceders as those considered more traditional and who hailed, by and large, from the interior-rural, local communities in the Netherlands, while those who remained in the longstanding Reformed Church in America happened to take on a characterization of cosmopolitanism and were from those areas which more closely interacted with diverse peoples and other aspects of the world.⁸⁰ A better understanding of the early colony of Pella may come about by utilizing Swierenga's acute analysis here, but not without some significant challenges.

It is relevant to note the original cast of settlers Scholte came to America with. In Scholte's writing, “First Voice from Pella,” he noted that most of those who came with him to settle Pella were peasant farmers from back in the Netherlands.⁸¹ They were hard workers who knew farming and building, making Iowa appealing to Scholte. In a lecture given by Swierenga to the Van Raalte Institute at Hope College entitled “Place Mattered: The Social Geography of

⁷⁷ Ibid, 130.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 129.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Hendrik P. Scholte, Pamphlet *Eene Stem Uit Pella* (1848), Van Raalte Papers: 1840-1849, trans. Jared Poortinga, 4.

Dutch-American Immigration in the Nineteenth-century,” he details the emigration patterns of immigrants from the Netherlands to America in the nineteenth century. He posits that there were a few immigration hot spots within the Netherlands with very little emigration occurring from large areas, but most coming from around the Great Lakes in the Dutch nation.⁸² According to Swierenga, “few immigrant groups, if any, have clustered more than the Dutch.... their colonizing created a choice environment in which to nurture and sustain a strong sense of ‘Dutchness’ for many generations.”⁸³ The largest number of immigrants to Pella came from the provinces of Utrecht, Friesland, Gelderland, and South Holland.⁸⁴ Birthed from smaller villages within municipalities in these provinces was the base of Pella. Swierenga depicts these areas as wealthier regions with more international interaction, and thus, people from these areas were more likely to side with the Reformed Church in America.⁸⁵ The make-up of the original Dutch settlers in Iowa, then, encompassed ‘peasants in name only,’ that is, in the Netherlands, they became recognized as peasants on account of occupation but by no means were they poor.

In Pella, the church split in 1856 and the section opposed to Scholte sided with the Reformed Church in America, following the likes of van Raalte. Happening before the denomination split, Pella would not receive its first Christian Reformed Church until ten years later in 1866.⁸⁶ However, the splitting of the Reformed Church looked much different in Pella, that is, it was not immediately relevant.

⁸² Robert P. Swierenga, “Place Mattered: The Social Geography of Dutch-American Immigration in the Nineteenth-century,” Van Raalte Institute, Hope College, spons. Calvin College Geography Department, Nov. 17, 1998. https://www.swierenga.com/Calvin_lec.html.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Swierenga, “Local-Cosmopolitan Theory and Immigrant Religion: The Social Bases of the Antebellum Dutch Reformed Schism,” 113-135 (126).

⁸⁶ Connect Church Pella, “About us – History,” *Connect Church Pella*, accessed December 13, 2022, <https://connectchurchpella.org/about/>.

While Swierenga's thesis for the splitting of the church and division on geographical lines may sufficiently work to explain the events that occurred in the church in Michigan in 1857, when applying his methods to Pella, it leaves one with something yet to desire. He states, "Immigrant members of the Reformed Church in America accommodated themselves theologically, ecclesiastically, and culturally to their new environment."⁸⁷ The local-cosmopolitan concept acknowledges the vast majority of original settlers in Pella as more cross-culturally adaptable, being wealthy farmers and builders in the Netherlands, and often trading and doing business internationally. Such a forthright determination may come about because of the geographical location they emigrated from as well as their occupations.

In Pella, it is certainly not the case that settlers assimilated easily to their new home. They held on tightly to Dutch familiarities throughout many areas of life, including their theological and ecclesiastical beliefs as well as their culture. As with many of van Raalte's followers in Holland, Michigan, the Pella colony fell in the middle of the "ecclesiastical spectrum" detailed earlier. As Swierenga previously noted, Scholte was more liberal, an anomaly in many ways when it came to church formalism and denominational structure, while van Raalte was a theological moderate in terms of nineteenth-century Reformed theology. The Christian Reformed Church settled on the more conservative side and remained the least separated from the traditional aspects of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands which Scholte, van Raalte, and their followers seceded from. Members of the new Christian Reformed denomination "continued to look to the Mother Country for leadership and direction."⁸⁸ The divide in Holland was

⁸⁷ Swierenga, "Local-Cosmopolitan Theory and Immigrant Religion: The Social Bases of the Antebellum Dutch Reformed Schism," 113-135 (130).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

between the moderates and those on the right, while the divide in Pella was between Scholte, those few with him on the left, and the moderates.

Further work needs to occur involving direct geographical and cultural-historical work within the colony of Pella to prove the local-cosmopolitan method accurate. As stands, it is not sufficient to explain the Pella divide. Rather, everything in Pella seems to point to Scholte, his American mindset, and his form of Christianity as the major culprits in the division between him and his fellow settlers. Though it seemed as though the two sides were too far apart to reconcile these differences in Scholte's lifetime, there yet stood hope for future generations.

In his article, "Tulip Time and the Invention of a New Dutch-American Ethnic Identity," Assistant Professor of History at James Madison University, Michael J. Douma, addresses the aspects of Dutch Identity by analyzing Tulip Time, the popular Dutch festival which gained popularity throughout the twentieth-century and has effectively retained popularity to this day. Tulip Time features a swath of Dutch cultural aspects, cultivated for a wide American audience. Douma argues that "the essential force behind the birth and development of Tulip Time was tension between immigrants at different levels of assimilation and their ideas of what it meant to be Dutch."⁸⁹ Such tensions over time, Douma argues, lead to cultural splitting and the arising of individual groups. An event such as Tulip Time acted to bring the Dutch back together upon the foundations of their ancestral roots. As this essay has detailed, such tensions in Pella at the colonial founding led to the major fracturing in the colony amongst religious, political, and identification lines as the crew struggled to assimilate and recognize what they were in America. Scholte and those who aligned with him took on an American identity, while those opposed to

⁸⁹ Michael Douma, "Tulip Time and the Invention of a New Dutch-American Ethnic Identity," *American Studies* 53, No. 1 (2014), 149-167 (152). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24589301>.

Scholte and his ideals clung to their Dutch identity. Tulip Time provided an opportunity to reconcile the groups on shared American and Dutch values.

Douma focuses mostly on Holland, Michigan, the colony set up by van Raalte. However, the Dutch-American struggles he portrays showed themselves throughout many Dutch-American settlements including Pella. Tulip Time began in Holland, Michigan in 1929. In Pella, the festival began in 1935, responding to the event's apparent success in Holland. Tulip Time addressed a problem Douma notices occurring with the common, early twentieth-century Dutch American struggling to assimilate. Jacob van Hinte, a prominent Dutch historian who visited America from the Netherlands in 1921, when communicating with some Dutch-American immigrants, became informed of the following:

“... it happened that some educated Dutch Americans revealed their deepest feelings to me and confessed that they actually did not feel at home in America even though they had lived here since their childhood and admitted that they “had it very good here.” They felt it was impossible for them to become wrapped up in Yankee life, but they could not return to the Netherlands and to its spiritual atmosphere that they felt they needed. They felt therefore unbalanced, without a real identity, for they were no longer Netherlanders and actually they were not American either.”⁹⁰

Douma understands this observation from Van Hinte as Dutch Americans longing for identity, yet not knowing where to find it.⁹¹ Far away from the old country, yet still experiencing struggles in relating to the new country. Douma also makes a point that various reactions

⁹⁰ Van Hinte, 1015.

⁹¹ Douma, 149-167 (154).

appeared amongst Dutch Americans whose competition developed Tulip Time in its early stages. There were those who promoted it, those who criticized it, and those who capitalized on the promotion of Dutch culture.⁹² While Douma accurately and importantly provides the reader with the realities of the Dutch-American's struggle to assimilate over the years and the role of Tulip Time in defining Dutch culture in America, he never explains the origins of such confusion and contention which brought about and exacerbated such an identity crisis decades later.

Conclusion: Scholte, an American Leader

While a stalwart like Scholte, who embodied the American mentality from even before he immigrated westward, certainly exacerbated the tension between a people attempting to figure out if they belonged more to their former country or their adopted one, the internal battle of identity and belonging played itself out throughout the United States in a multitude of Dutch-American settlements. Many wished to hang on tightly to their authentic Dutch roots, a few gave them up to be truly "American." Others straggled the line between the two with no place to call home. Douma correctly recognizes Tulip Time's opportunity to bring together Dutch Americans across the United States and give them a common staple of identity; both Dutch and American.

The Tulip tells a story of assimilation struggles in Pella, common in many other Dutch-American colonies. When one digs into the prominent Dutch flower just a bit deeper, the struggle for identity among those in the early days of Pella becomes unveiled. In modern-day Pella, this strife is quite difficult to see with the bare eye. Dutch-American identity seems to have melded some prominent aspects of traditional Dutch culture, such as emphasized religion, familial togetherness, and delicious baking, into the current American societal context. Arriving

⁹² Ibid, 153.

at this point, however, encompassed many decades of friction, which ended up filing down the sharp edges of the opposing groups in Pella to develop what is now Dutch-American identity.

Scholte took up many offices in addition to migration leader, including the first pastor and ministerial leader in Pella, founder of the Pella post office, founder, owner, and editor of two original newspapers in Pella,⁹³ and political delegate among many other impressive titles. Still, he never received honor, not by his generation nor subsequent generations. Ne'er was a man more active in the setting-up of his region and single-handedly dedicated to the flourishing of his people in it yet met with more disdain and controversy within the same settlement.

Love him or hate him, Hendrik Peter Scholte is the foundational piece in the puzzle that is Pella. Without him, the entire picture falls apart. While many of his critics levied genuine complaints against him, in many ways, he did not obtain respect as he should have from the people of his time. Without him, there is no Pella colony. More importantly, without him, there is no Dutch-American identity as we know it today. His ecclesiastical beliefs point to the historical American church, his politics took an American form, and he espoused the brand of freedom the Netherlands once held dear, and America became founded upon. The bulb of the Tulip may speak of Dutch elegance, but those that lay within American soil have the word "Scholte" eternally written upon their roots.

⁹³ One in Dutch and one in English, including *The Pella Gazette*.

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