



In the winter of 1860-61 giant ice dams blocked the Maas and Waal, the dikes gave way, and the waard was flooded to a depth of many meters. Here, a farmer and his wife try to salvage food and fodder against a backdrop of huge ice blocks accumulated on the Waal dike [left] and frozen-over farms and villages [right]. [Collection : *Streekarchief Bommelerwaard, Zaltbommel*]

Chapter 16

Hard Times On The River 1840-1914

Toward Modern Nationhood

When King William I abdicated in 1840, he left his son - William II - with a united Dutch kingdom. But this nation had been stripped of its southern provinces, stripped of international power, and was divided along religious and political lines: it badly needed an overhaul.^{1, 2} True, there was still the vast income from the Dutch East Indies colony, but this was no solution for the country's main problem: too many people, too little development.³ So King William II supported his country's transition to modern nationhood by stimulating the growth of shipping and banking, and by backing the construction of harbors, canals, roads, and railways.⁴ The Netherlands, like England, was to be caught up in the frenzy of 19th century development - and none too soon. Between 1846 and 1913, the Dutch population would double - from 3 million to 6 million people.⁵ But for decades during this period more than half of the population practiced subsistence agriculture.⁶ The Dutch farmer was trapped in a peasant economy, selling what produce he could spare only in local markets.⁷ When farm crises erupted in 1845 and 1880, the population was hit hard.⁸ Many flocked to the big cities to eke out a living.⁹ Many emigrated to America. But although the Bommelerwaard was one of the poorest and hardest-hit areas, the Van Tuyls, for the most part, buckled down and made a go of it in or near their home village. For them and their neighbors, this would be no easy task.¹⁰

¹ Kossmann-Putto, J. and Kossmann, E., "The Low Countries," 1993, pp. 44-45.

² Romein, J. and Romein, A., "De Lage Landen bij de Zee," Den Haag, 1973, pg. 433.

³ Kossmann, pp. 44-45.

⁴ Romein, pp. 436-449.

⁵ Kossmann, pg. 45.

⁶ Romein, pg. 433.

⁷ Bank, J., Huizinga, J., and Minderaa, J., "De Nieuwste Tijd : 1813 tot heden," Groningen, 1993, pg. 15.

⁸ Romein, pg. 434.

⁹ Romein, pg. 446.

¹⁰ In the combined municipalities of Gameren and Nieuwaal, there were about 1100 residents making a living on 750 hectares [1853 acres] of arable land. More than half of this area was meadows (485 hectare), 225 ha was farmland, 34 ha orchards and 5 ha kitchen gardens. From the total area of 1210 hectares, 110 was hayfield, the rest willow woods, marshlands, uiterwards and dikes. [Sloet, L., "Bijdragen tot de Kennis van Gelderland," Arnhem, 1852-1855, pg. 83].

Famine

Two branches of the Van Tuyl family populated the Bommelerwaard in the 1840s. The relatively prosperous Gameren farmers - Gijsbert, Gijsbert Antonis, Otto, and Cornelis were all descendants of Otto Geerlofsz. The poorer laborers of Nieuwaal - Ahasverus and his sons Simon and Jan, were descendants of Jan Geerlofsz.¹¹ But the potato blight of 1845 - the same pestilence that devastated Ireland - visited the Bommelerwaard with a vengeance, and no one, however prosperous he may have been, was spared.¹² Eighty percent of Bommelerwaard farmland was planted in potatoes; even the poorest laborer leased some land to raise these *aardappels*, partly for his own consumption and partly for sale.¹³ While much of The Netherlands recovered somewhat in 1846, the Bommelerwaard suffered one of its periodic floods, and this made planting impossible.¹⁴ This, in combination with failure of the rye crop, brought high prices, food shortages and even famine to many villages in the Tielerswaard and Bommelerwaard.¹⁵ The Netherlands' death rate in 1847 was higher than its birthrate: diseases like cholera and typhoid were epidemic.¹⁶ In Gameren-Nieuwaal, 330 of the 1100 residents were "on the parish" - living off the charity of their neighbors - and small farmers were simply unable to pay the rent.¹⁷ In Nieuwaal more than 60% of the families were living on charity.¹⁸ Many men were unable to work. Minister Christiaan Le Roy wrote: "...my heart bleeds when I see them, lying in the cabins of the poor."¹⁹ People were literally dropping dead while working in their fields.²⁰ The poor were supported by the deaconry, but this was not enough. Even a 400 guilder donation from the church and 5000 guilders from the municipality, along with a special collection of 1722 guilders were not enough to meet the need.²¹

Hard times brought poor health to the area for much of the century, with children suffering the most. Four of Leendert van Tuyl's 8 children died young; Cornelis van Tuyl lost 8 of his 15 offspring; Simon van Tuyl buried 5 out of 10; 2 of Gellof van Tuyl's 3 children did not reach adulthood.²² For the more prosperous and fortunate Van Tuyls, hard times simply translated into debt. When Otto van Tuyl's estate was settled in 1880, accumulated debts left nothing to pass on

¹¹ See: *Dutch Genealogy*, Line Jan Geerlofsz van Tuyl.

¹² Van Zanden, J., "Den Zedelijken en Materielen Toestand der Arbeidende Bevolking ten Plattenlande," Wageningen, 1991, pg. 5.

¹³ Hooijer, C., "De Groote Nood des Hongers in en bij den Boemelerwaard," Zaltbommel, 1847, pg. 1.

¹⁴ Hooijer, pg. 2.

¹⁵ Van Zanden, pg. 5; Hooijer, pg. 5.

¹⁶ Bank, pg. 5 and 30; Hooijer, pg. 6.

¹⁷ Hooijer, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸ De Groot, J., "Zaltbommel, Stad en Waard door de Eeuwen heen," Zaltbommel, 1979, pg. 350.

¹⁹ Hooijer, pg. 10.

²⁰ Hooijer, pg. 9.

²¹ Hooijer, pg. 8.

²² See: *Dutch Genealogy*, Line Jan Geerlofsz van Tuyl.

to his heirs.²³ His sons Wouter and Dirk bought the family farm - the *Florenshof* - only by borrowing 2100 guilders.^{24, 25, 26} But for Otto's brother, Gijsbert Antonis, things went relatively well. He was actually able to accumulate property during his lifetime, including a farm on the *Burgersteeg* west of the *Adammenhof*. This farm had been sold nearly 200 years earlier by the children of Geerlof Otten van Tuyl. Now it was back in the family once again.^{27, 28, 29} For some, the stress and strain was just too much to bear. Two years after his wife, Willemke van Tuyl, divorced him "from table and bed," Joost van den Heuvel emigrated to the United States, to "...seek his fortune."^{30, 31}

Modern Flood Control

In 1820 the Provincial Government of Gelderland set up a committee to investigate changing the centuries-old method of local dike administration to a more modern, centralized, government-run system. Needless to say, the proposal was controversial.³² In the mind of many Bommelerwaard farmers, floods were inevitable, and this new system based on taxes - if not actually invented by the devil - was the next-worst thing: a scheme hatched by a far-away urban ruling class.³³

After years of politicking, a law was approved in 1837 and hailed by government as "*the finest example of provincial legislation*".³⁴ When the disastrous floods of 1840-41 did their worst, opponents were quick to point out the difference between idealized legislation and real-world practice. Men hired to watch the dikes were paid not in much-needed currency, but with rotten potatoes!³⁵ By 1858, the new administration - though still unable to prevent floods - at least introduced a system of publicly-funded flood insurance.³⁶

²³ At the time of his death Otto was a small farmer with - besides his farm - only two parcels of farmland and one parcel of willow woods. His relative penury can be judged from his livestock holdings: 1 old mare, 1 filly, 2 milk cows, 3 calves and 2 pigs. One cow, two calves and the mare were sold at auction [RAG, NAZ 5181, acte 8159, 20-09-1879].

²⁴ Rijksarchief Gelderland (RAG), Notarieel Archief Zaltbommel (NAZ) 5181, acte 8303, 10-02-1880.

²⁵ RAG, NAZ 5181, acte 8206, 29-10-1879.

²⁶ RAG, NAZ 5181, acte 8303, 10-02-1880.

²⁷ Den Draak, J., and Van der Steessen, J.E., "Inventaris van de Notariele Archieven 1811-1905," Arnhem, 1988, nr. 5154, acte 2158, 1866.

²⁸ SAB, Nieuw Archief Dorpspolder Gameren (NAG) 1087/1088/1089.

²⁹ RAG, Rechterlijk Archief Zuilichem [RAZ], 678, fol. 309, 13-05-1700.

³⁰ Den Draak, nr. 5159, acte 3315, 09-09-1868.

³¹ He emigrated in 1870 according to family oral tradition.

³² Korf, J., "Tieler- en Bommelerwaarden 1327-1977, deel 2 : Het Tijdvak van 1838 tot 1954," Zaltbommel/Tiel, 1977, pp. 240-241.

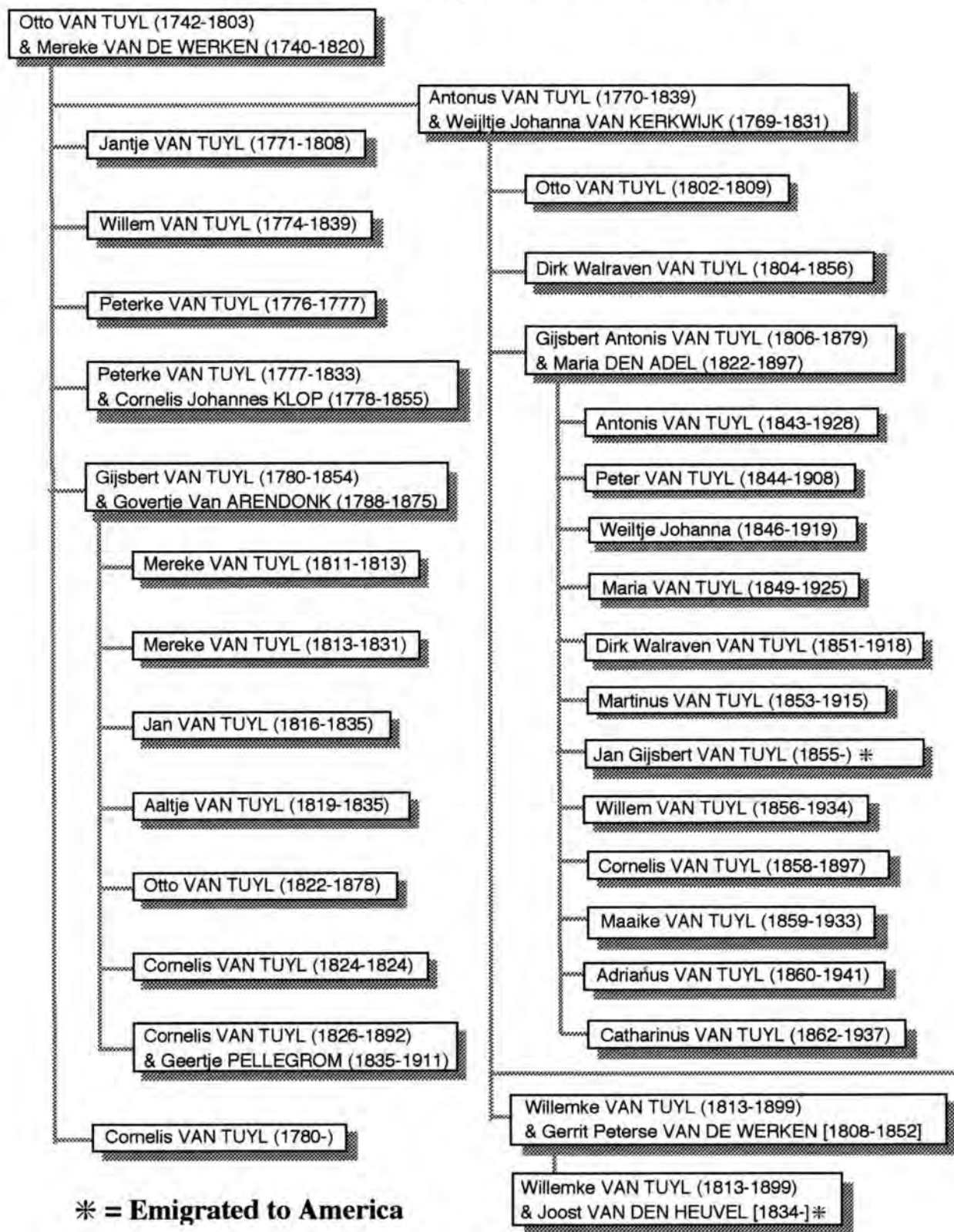
³³ Korf, pp. 260-261.

³⁴ Korf, pg. 239.

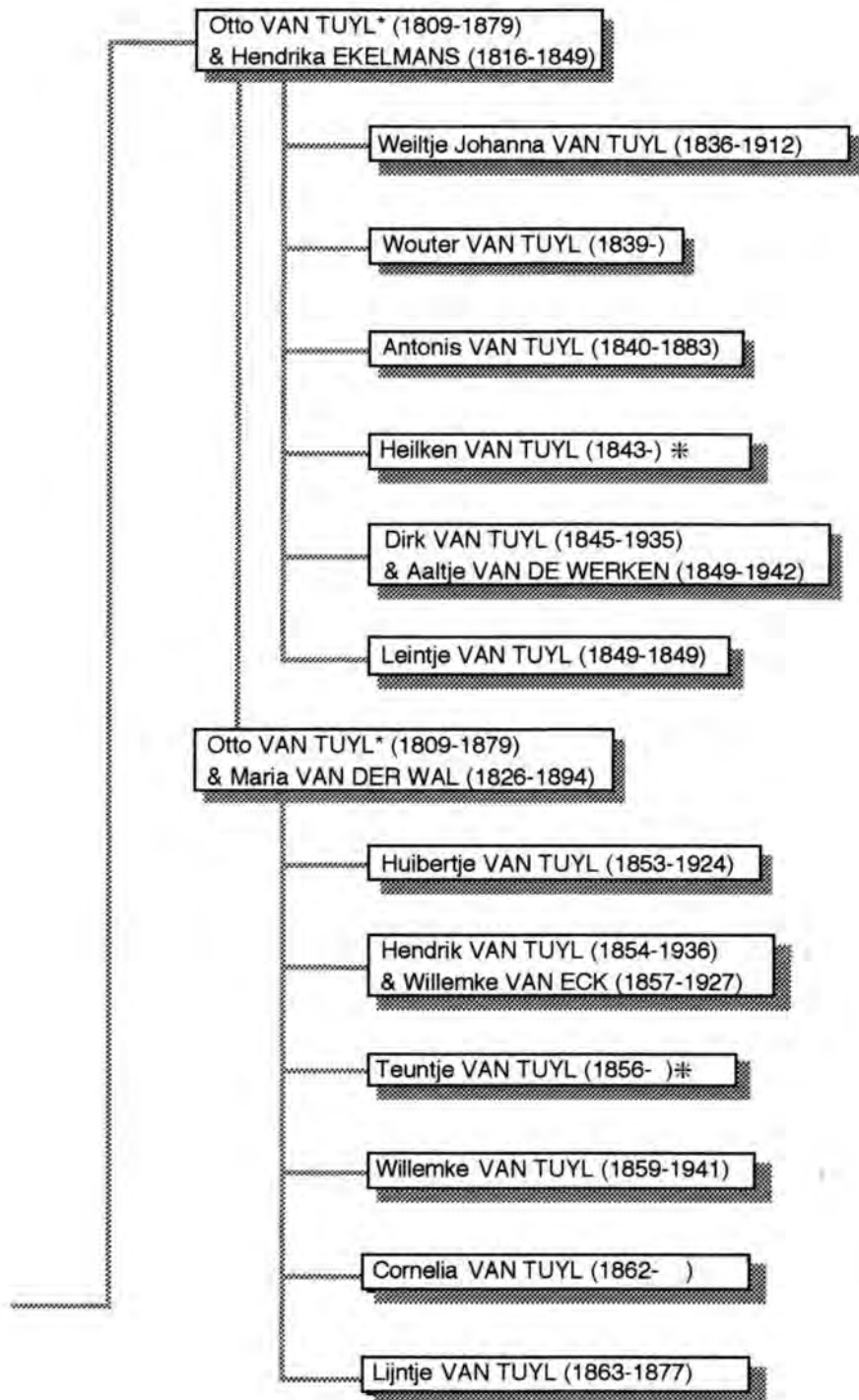
³⁵ Korf, pg. 262 and 264.

³⁶ Korf, pg. 272.

The Van Tuyls of Late



19th Century Gameren



Chapter 16

The winter of 1860/1861 was very severe and around the New Year ice dams developed in the Waal west of Brakel and in the Maas west of the Bommelerwaard.³⁷ Unable to flow downstream, the water slowly rose, and by January 3rd emergency watches were placed on the Waal dikes while crews battled to save the *Nieuwedijk*.³⁸ On January 4th, water started to flow over the *Nieuwedijk* and all the land west of the *Meidijk* was soon inundated.³⁹ All efforts were now concentrated on the Waal dike, but early in the morning of January 5th the dike east of Brakel, near the mill, gave way.⁴⁰ Minister Quack of Brakel saw it happen through his dormer window :

*I saw the hole in the dike with a length of 200 yards and the water streaming down with enormous lakes of ice which together with the water destroyed everything on its way inland.*⁴¹

And on the dike next to the break stood...⁴²

*'t Volk, beroofd van have en goed
Staart vol wanhoop op den vloed
Die voortgolft door de waard.*

*The folk, deprived of all possessions
Staring in agony at the flood
Rolling through the waard.*

Twenty three houses at Brakel were destroyed almost immediately.⁴³ Later that same day and the next day more breaches between Nieuwaal and Zuilichem, west of Brakel, and in the Maas dike near Poederoyen gave water and ice free access to the whole waard.⁴⁴ At Zuilichem the mill, the miller's house, and six other dwellings were swept away by the water. Parts of the mill were found near Aalst - 3 miles away!⁴⁵ The water came so fast and reached such a level that many people could barely save their own lives. Livestock was decimated at Gameren and Nieuwaal.⁴⁶ An old eyewitness later recounted that "...the water in 1809 came only to the top of my fireplace, but now it reaches all the way to the ceiling."⁴⁷ Otto van Tuyl, his wife Maria and

³⁷ De Groot, pg. 355.

³⁸ Quack, J., "Gedenkboek van den Watersnood in 1861," Dordrecht, 1862, annexes, pg. 4. At Zaltbommel the Waal reached its highest level on 6 January : 7.18 meters above Amsterdam's watermark. Although this was lower than in 1809 (7.68 meters) it was by far the highest level since 1841, when the water was 6.98 meters high [Sloet, pg. 248].

³⁹ Quack, pg. 14.

⁴⁰ De Groot, pg. 355; Quack, pg. 17.

⁴¹ Quack, pp. 19-20.

⁴² Ter Haar, B., "Gedichten," Leiden, 1874, pp. 193-194.

⁴³ Quack, pg. 17. Another source mentioned a remarkably higher number : 70 (F.C.D. Bauer : Berigten en Waarnemingen betreffende den Watervloed in Gelderland, Nijmegen/Arnhem, 1863).

⁴⁴ De Groot, pg. 355.

⁴⁵ Schimmelpenninck van der Oije, A., "Herinneringen aan de Overstroming van den Bommelerwaard in 1861," in : *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Gelre LXIV*, Arnhem, 1970, pg. 188.

⁴⁶ Vervoorn, J., "Watersnood in de Bommelerwaard," Veenendaal, 1982, pg. 18; Quack, pg. 33; Schimmelpenninck, pg. 188, states that the rich farmer Gerrit de Jongh of Gameren lost 43 cows.

⁴⁷ Buijtendijk, S., "Watersnood," Amsterdam, 1861, pp. 12-13. At Nieuwaal the water came to a level of 7.77 meters above Amsterdam's watermark (Schimmelpenninck, pg. 187) and near Brakel to 7.80 meters (Quack, annexes, pg. 4).

his nine children found refuge on the loft of the mill.⁴⁸ Within hours the whole Bommelerwaard had been transformed into a terrible frozen wasteland.⁴⁹

From all over the waard people sought refuge in Zaltbommel. Soon, its population of 3,000 had doubled, and Saint Martin's Church was turned into an enormous stable for cattle.^{50, 51} According to Gameren's mayor, 629 inhabitants left that village - 452 of them for Zaltbommel. In Gameren itself, 516 souls were dependent on the relief fund.⁵² Only one inhabitant drowned: his sledge went through the ice.⁵³ Most of the refugees stayed in Zaltbommel for more than 5 months.⁵⁴ During the enormous relief operation, supplies were brought over the ice from Haaften and Tuil to Zaltbommel,⁵⁵ and the Philips family put its warehouse at the disposal of the municipality.⁵⁶ Even the food had to be delivered. Each day warm meals in cauldrons were transported from Amsterdam by train to Utrecht, then by artillery wagon to Tuil, and finally by sledge over the ice to Zaltbommel.⁵⁷

A few days after the disaster an adventurous man crossed the Bommelerwaard on foot. He described the landscape as a continuous field of ice, with only the tops of the roofs protruding above it.⁵⁸ Icebergs as big as a house were lying on top of and behind the dikes,⁵⁹ and only by using mountaineering boots and a walking stick was he able to reach Gameren. There, he found the houses of the minister, the surgeon, and the schoolmaster full of refugees, with the schoolmaster making coffee on a stove atop the dike in front of his house.⁶⁰ The whole landscape reminded him of the *seracs* in the *Mer de Glace* in Switzerland, where he had been the year before.⁶¹

I walked through the orchards, with only the top of the trees peaking above the ice, almost at the same height as my head. It's deathlike with all the citizens fled to 's-Hertogenbosch and Zaltbommel. I pass a row of six small, abandoned houses, with only the roofs above the ice. From one a signboard swayed in the

⁴⁸ Oral information from the Van Tuyl family.

⁴⁹ Buijtendijk, pg. 21.

⁵⁰ Hooijer-Bruins, K., "Domineesdochter in 's-Graveland, domineesvrouw in Zaltbommel," Zaltbommel, 1981, pg. 136.

⁵¹ Quack, pg. 122.

⁵² Streekarchief Bommelerwaard (SAB), Gemeentearchief Gameren 1810-1955 (GAGam), brievenboek 19 April 1860 - February 1864, nr. 27, 06-02-1861.

⁵³ SAB, GAGam, brievenboek, nr. 27, 06-02-1861.

⁵⁴ De Groot, pg. 356.

⁵⁵ De Groot, pg. 357. The total relief fund amounted to 1.5 million guilders (Quack, pg. 39).

⁵⁶ Witteveen-Jansen, M., "Twee Eeuwen hilips in Zaltbommel," Zaltbommel, 1991, pg. 11.

⁵⁷ Hooijer-Bruins, pp. 141-142.

⁵⁸ Schimmelpenninck, pg. 191.

⁵⁹ Schimmelpenninck, pg. 188.

⁶⁰ Schimmelpenninck, pg. 187.

⁶¹ Schimmelpenninck, pp. 182, 188.

*wind. It darkened when I met a farmer. Glad to see a human being, he told me that the level of the water was 12 feet - 4 feet higher than the notorious flood of 1757.*⁶²

By the second week of February the ice started to melt and water slowly flowed out of the waard.⁶³ In mid-February, work on the dikes started and by the end of April all the breaks were repaired.⁶⁴ By June, with the whole waard finally dry, it was discovered that much fertile soil had washed away and that the fields were covered with sand and ruins.⁶⁵ The total damage in the Bommelerwaard amounted to almost 1.4 million guilders.⁶⁶ At Gameren 70 to 80 houses were unfit for habitation, and the decision was taken to give up a part of the village and the dike and to rebuild a new dike located farther inland.^{67,68} A lot of people had to move to new homes. Evert van Tuyl still remembers the stories of his mother, telling how her father was allowed - with other owners of small houses on the outside of the dike - to built a small house on land owned by the municipality east of the Leutsestraat.⁶⁹ Many people were honored by King William III for their relief work. Among them: the ministers Quack of Brakel and Le Roy of Gameren, and the boatmen who saved people from drowning in the flood.⁷⁰

Stagnation and Decline

For the most part, agriculture in The Netherlands developed rapidly in the second half of the 19th century. But the Bommelerwaard was an exception to the rule. While other agricultural regions modernized and flourished, the area along the Waal was characterized by stagnation and even decline. Of course the effects of the flood played an important role, but there were also more fundamental causes.⁷¹ Among them:

- the majority of agricultural enterprises were split up in small parcels and situated along the dikes, far away from most of the arable lands and meadows.
- a large undeveloped and uninhabited center of the region had drainage problems and poor soil.
- there were few roads within the region, especially in the center. There were few connections with the rest of the country, and most of these were ferries instead of bridges.

⁶² Schimmelpenninck, pg. 191.

⁶³ Quack, pg. 109; Hooijer-Bruins, pg. 143.

⁶⁴ Korf, pg. 305.

⁶⁵ Quack, pg. 110.

⁶⁶ Quack, pg. 20-21. The damage to houses and buildings was 435,000 guilders, to orchards and agricultural products 360,000 guilders and to cattle 42,000 guilders. For the River Region as a whole, damage amounted to 3.5 million guilders.

⁶⁷ SAB, GAGam, brievenboek, nr. 42, 23-02-1861.

⁶⁸ Korf, pg. 337. On 27 May 1865 the bill was passed in Parliament which made it possible to expropriate the land necessary for the work.

⁶⁹ Interview with Evert van Tuyl, 1995.

⁷⁰ Quack, pg. 52.

⁷¹ Nederlandse Heidemaatschappij: Agrarisch Bestemmingsplan Bommelerwaard, Amsterdam, 1942, pp. 9-10.

Chapter 16

Land problems plagued the Van Tuyls of Gameren as well as others. When Otto van Tuyl died in 1803, his properties were divided between his two sons. But some decades later, there were no less than 15 Van Tuyls farming a smaller area than old Otto had worked!⁷² In sharp contrast to America, where sons simply moved west to take up new land, the Bommelerwaard was mercilessly subdivided until there was barely enough land to support many families. Potatoes were still the most important crop. From a small harbor near the *Kluit* at Gameren, thousands of hectolitres of *aardappels* were shipped to the cities in the western part of the country each year.⁷³ Around 1850, each hectare would produce potatoes worth 500 guilders,⁷⁴ but by 1890 the value of production per hectare was halved.⁷⁵ At the same time the price of the land increased, making it very difficult for the small- and mid-sized farmers to enlarge their holdings.⁷⁶

Sometimes, marriage could enlarge a family's property. Hendrik van Tuyl [1854 - 1935], through his marriage to Willemke van Eck, inherited a house opposite that of his half brothers Dirk and Wouter, who owned the *Florenshof*. Hendrick was somewhat of a maverick in this very devout branch of the family Van Tuyl. His father, Otto, was one of the first Seceders of Gameren. Otto was an intensely religious man who left Gameren's conservative *Church in the Apple Cellar*, and converted to the *conventikelleven* - an unofficial religious group of family and friends not affiliated with any organized church. They engaged exclusively in home study of 17th century religious teachings. Members of the *conventikelleven* did not baptize their children. Otto's son Dirk, not surprisingly, was very religious. As an adult, he returned to the Seceder's church, was baptized in it, became an elder of the church, and led a devout and prayerful life.⁸⁶

⁷² In 1862, the majority of the property was not divided: the heirs of Antonus and Gijsbert paid 39.48 guilders property tax; Otto paid 15.65, Gijsbert Antonie 9.56 and the widow of Gijsbert and her son Gijsbert did not pay any property tax.

⁷³ Van der Aa, A. J., "Aardrijkskundig Woordenboek der Nederlanden," Gorinchem, 1839-1854, pg. 247.

⁷⁴ Van Zanden, annex 4, pg. 165.

⁷⁵ Van Stuijvenberg, J., "De Economische Geschiedenis van Nederland," Groningen, 1977, pg. 231.

⁷⁶ Van Zanden, annex 4, pg. 165.



Poor, but obviously proud, strawberry farmers in the early 20th century, the family of Hendrik and Willemke van Tuyl pose before their farmhouse. Across the street was the *Florenshof* [above], the family home built by Hendrik's father, Otto Van Tuyl. The house was on 1 hectare [2.5 acres] of land which, of necessity, was cultivated right up to the edge of the house. Typical of farmhouses of the time, *Florenshof* contained a stable and threshing floor behind the kitchen/living room. To the right is the hand-drawn well. [Collection : *Rochus van Tuyl*]

A Van Tuyl Borrows Money ... from Karl Marx!

The van Tuyls of Gameren had a long tradition of borrowing money when they were in trouble, and Willemke van Tuyl, it seems, had her share of trouble. First, her husband - Gerrit van de Werken - died.⁷⁷ Then, one year later [1853], lightning struck her house, set it afire, and caused extensive damage.⁷⁸ Next, she married a man she would later divorce.⁷⁹ And finally, in 1858, she was driven to the money lenders.

The man who actually made her the loan was Lion Philips of Zaltbommel. Lion was the son of Benjamin Philips, who arrived in Zaltbommel around 1790 and became a respected citizen there.⁸⁰ Benjamin started a drapery business, but he also peddled draper's goods throughout the Bommelerwaard. He made the acquaintance of many distressed farmers, and entered the business of lending them money at interest.⁸¹ His son Lion started several enterprises (a tobacco factory, a coffee roasting factory, and a cotton & wool mill) and his grandson Benjamin Frederik David owned a bank in Zaltbommel.⁸²

Lion Philips arranged a loan of 2500 guilders for Willemke van Tuyl from a family fortune he administered: that of his sister-in-law, Henrietta Presburg and her son Karl Marx.^{83, 84} Willemke, of course, would have had no idea that this money came from the estate of the now-famous author of *The Communist Manifesto* [1848]. The scholarly Karl was then living in England, and was working on his masterpiece: *Das Kapital* [1867-94]. But Willemke was not that far removed from the famous philosopher, as it turns out. In 1863-64, while working on his masterpiece, Karl Marx came to Zaltbommel to spend some time living with his wealthy uncle, the moneylender. Some people wonder if Karl Marx - who must have seen the plight of the Bommelerwaard farmers firsthand, and who may have been revolted at his family's role in profiting from their distress - may have picked up a few of his ideas for *Das Kapital* while living near the Van Tuyls?⁸⁵

⁷⁷ See: *Dutch Genealogy*.

⁷⁸ Vermeulen, F., "De Monumenten van Geschiedenis en Kunst in de Provincie Gelderland; de Bommelerwaard," 1932, pg. 68. The house was *Het Sloth*, on the site of the old Gameren Castle.

⁷⁹ Joost van den Heuvel, who emigrated to America after the divorce.

⁸⁰ Hooijer-Bruins, K., "Domineesdochter in 's-Graveland, domineesvrouw in Zaltbommel," Zaltbommel, 1981, deel 2, pp. 11-12; Witteveen-Jansen, pg. 4; De Groot, pg. 365.

⁸¹ Witteveen-Jansen, M., "Twee eeuwen Philips in Zaltbommel," Zaltbommel, 1991, pg. 5.

⁸² De Groot, J., "Zaltbommel, Stad en Waard door de Eeuwen heen," Zaltbommel, 1979, pp. 365, 374.

The sons of Benjamin Frederik were the founders of the Philips concern.

⁸³ Den Draak, J., and Van der Steessen, J.E. "Inventaris van de Notariele Archieven 1811-1905," Arnhem, 1988, nr. 5127, acte 66, 19-03-1858.

⁸⁴ Witteveen-Jansen, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁵ De Groot, pg. 370.

Hendrik van Tuyl, however, was cast in a different mold. He was a crudely-behaved man given to vulgar and blasphemous outbursts. Among the locals, the half-brothers Van Tuyl - Dirk and Hendrik - were known, respectively, as the *bidder* (prayer) and the *vloeker* (swearer).⁸⁷

Hendrik was rumored to have been quite the lady's man - not unlike his contemporary distant cousin in America, Lew Van Tuyl. And like some of his forbears, Hendrick had a temper, and was quick with a knife. On one occasion, it is said, this poor farmer watched helplessly as his farm cart - probably containing a week's worth of his family's marketable produce - tumbled off the road, down the side of a dike, and dumped its load on the embankment. Enraged at his ill fortune, and probably screaming blasphemous imprecations all the while, he drew his *boer's* knife, fell to his knees, and violently stabbed the dike bank over and over in helpless frustration.⁸⁸

The Non-Farmers

For the Van Tuyls of Nieuwaal who, as day laborers, were at the bottom of the economic ladder, the situation was even worse than for the poor farmers. Poverty among them increased each year to the point where three quarters of the families were "on the parish."⁸⁹ They had work from spring until autumn, especially during the harvest. Around 1850, their average day's wage was 65 to 80 cents.⁹⁰ During the winter they were unemployed or - if they could find work - earned

⁸⁶ Smits, C., "De Afscheiding van 1834, deel 1, Gorinchem en Beneden-Gelderland," Oudkarspel, 1971, pg. 278. After its start, the Seceded Church grew slowly. Life became easier for the seceders after 1848 when the separation between state and church was laid down in the Dutch Constitution. It remained, however, a relative small church that later was confronted with two schisms. After the Secession the discussion between orthodox and modern church members in the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk* continued, resulting in a second separation. This was the so-called *Doleantie* of 1886, led by Abraham Kuyper (later Prime-Minister, 1901-1905), which became the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerken*. This church merged in 1892 with the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk* (a splinter group from the Seceded Church, also known as *Gereformeerde Gemeenten onder het Kruis*) into the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*. In 1909, another orthodox group inside the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk* founded the *Gereformeerde Bond*, still being a part of the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*. This church is today the main church at Gameren. The minor congregation of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* - the one directly descended from the Gameren Seceders' Church in the Apple Cellar - built its own church in Gameren around 1870.

The development in the several churches in The Netherlands :

| | Ned. Hervormd | Roman Catholic | Gereformeerd | Others | No Affiliation |
|------|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------|----------------|
| 1815 | 55.5% | 38.3% | - | 6.2% | - |
| 1920 | 41.3% | 35.6% | 9.7% | 5.6% | 7.8% |
| 1986 | 12.6% | 28.6% | 7.7% | 2.5% | 48.6% |

(Bank, pg. 50, 51, 117 and 118)

⁸⁷ Oral history from the Van Tuyl family.

⁸⁸ Oral history from the Van Tuyl family.

⁸⁹ Van Zanden, annex 4, pg. 166.

⁹⁰ Hooijer, pg. 14; Van Zanden, pg. 19 and annex 4, pg. 166.

only 20 to 25 cents a day!⁹¹ None of the Van Tuyls in Nieuwaal paid income tax in 1862, and only two were assessed a very small property tax.⁹²

The more or less desperate economic situation forced both the farmers and the poor to look for other sources of income. They found it in horticulture and basketmaking. Also, a brick factory offered the laborers a secondary source of income. Many people seized every opportunity for work. Cornelis van Tuyl, for instance, worked as a basketmaker, but was also as dealer in rags and scrap, and later herded sheep.⁹³ Because of the growing population and the higher level of prosperity in the cities, there was a growing demand for fruits and vegetables.⁹⁴ Most farmers had an orchard and because of better manuring and tillage the yield per hectare increased from 100-200 guilders in 1890 to 600-700 in 1914.⁹⁵ Laborers also started to cultivate and sell those products, becoming small farmers on rented land.⁹⁶ In the Bommelerwaard, strawberry cultivation - favored by the fertile local soil which gave the strawberry a unique flavor - started to replace potato farming as a cash crop. At the end of the 19th century Gameren became a center of strawberry culture; whole families worked together in the fields.⁹⁷ The small farmers sold their own products. Using a cart drawn by a dog, they would go to cities like 's Hertogenbosch and Nijmegen, selling the strawberries on the streets and in the markets. Later on, they travelled by train.⁹⁸ This very inefficient distribution system improved in 1917 when an auction for vegetables and fruit was established in Zaltbommel.⁹⁹

Jan van Tuyl of Nieuwaal started another business: basketmaking. Through his marriage he inherited some parcels of land in Gameren - among them a parcel planted with willows.¹⁰⁰ Most farmers owned willow-woods, the twigs traditionally being used in dike maintenance, for hedges, and for household baskets.¹⁰¹ But Jan van Tuyl made basketmaking a flourishing business - one that continued for three generations after him.¹⁰²

⁹¹ Van Zanden, annex 4, pg. 166.

⁹² See: *Dutch Genealogy*, Line Jan Geerlofsz van Tuyl.

⁹³ See: *Dutch Genealogy* (A1.2.4.1.4.7.4). Information from his grandson Evert van Tuyl.

⁹⁴ Van Tijn, pg. 233.

⁹⁵ De Bruin, H., "Het Gelders Rivierengebied uit zijn Isolement," Zutphen, 1988, pg. 88.

⁹⁶ Van Tijn, pg. 243.

⁹⁷ Verkuil, G. & Ermstrang, H., "75 Jaar Vruchtbaar Veilen, Cooperatieve Tuinbouwveiling Zaltbommel," 1992, pg. 1.

⁹⁸ Verkuil, pg. 2.

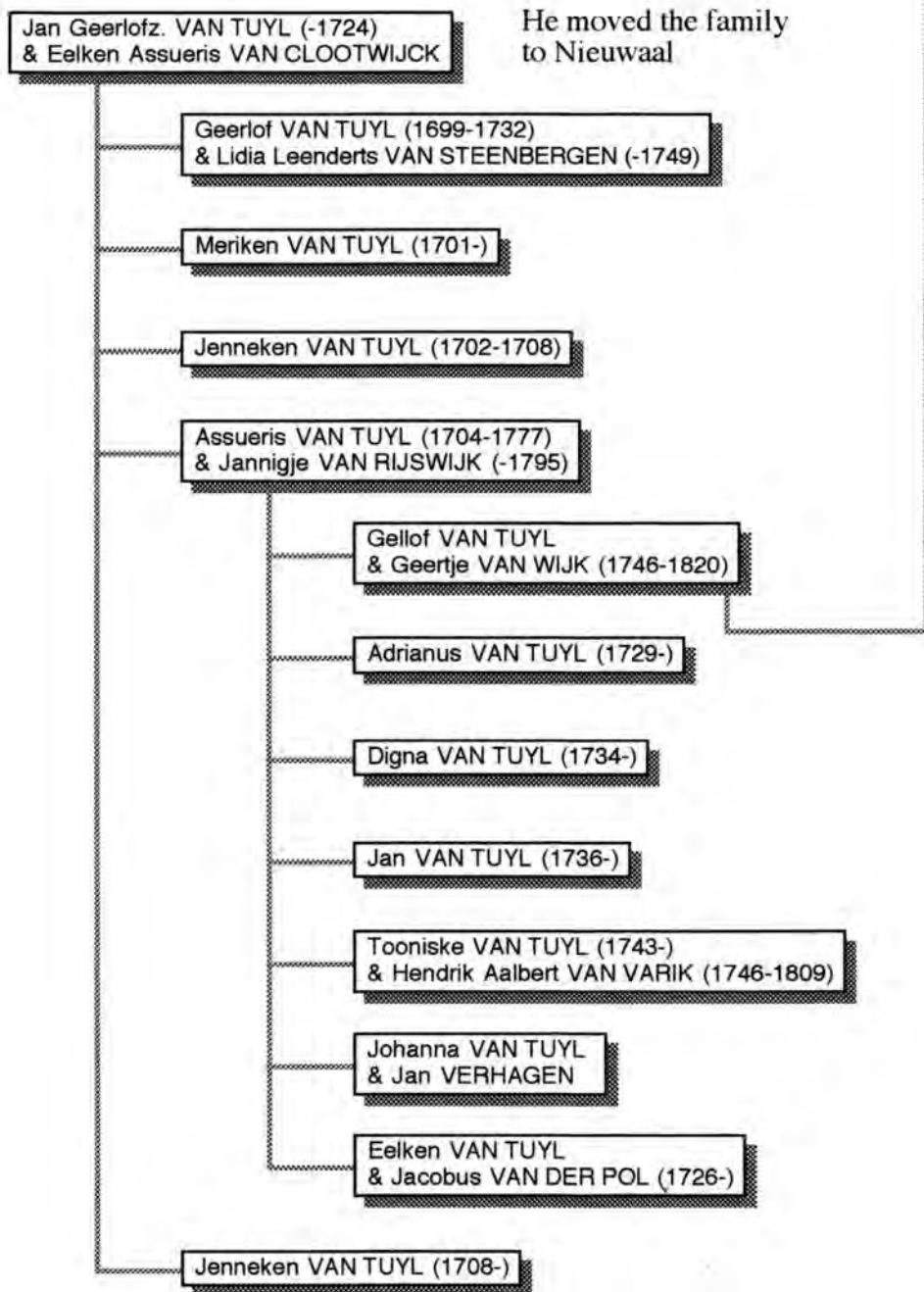
⁹⁹ First it was a limited liability company with shares of 500 guilders, and of 10 for the small farmers and market gardeners. Later it was transformed into a co-operative. In September 1918 the auction room was opened near the railway station [Verkuil, pp. 3, 8].

¹⁰⁰ SAB, NAG 1086.

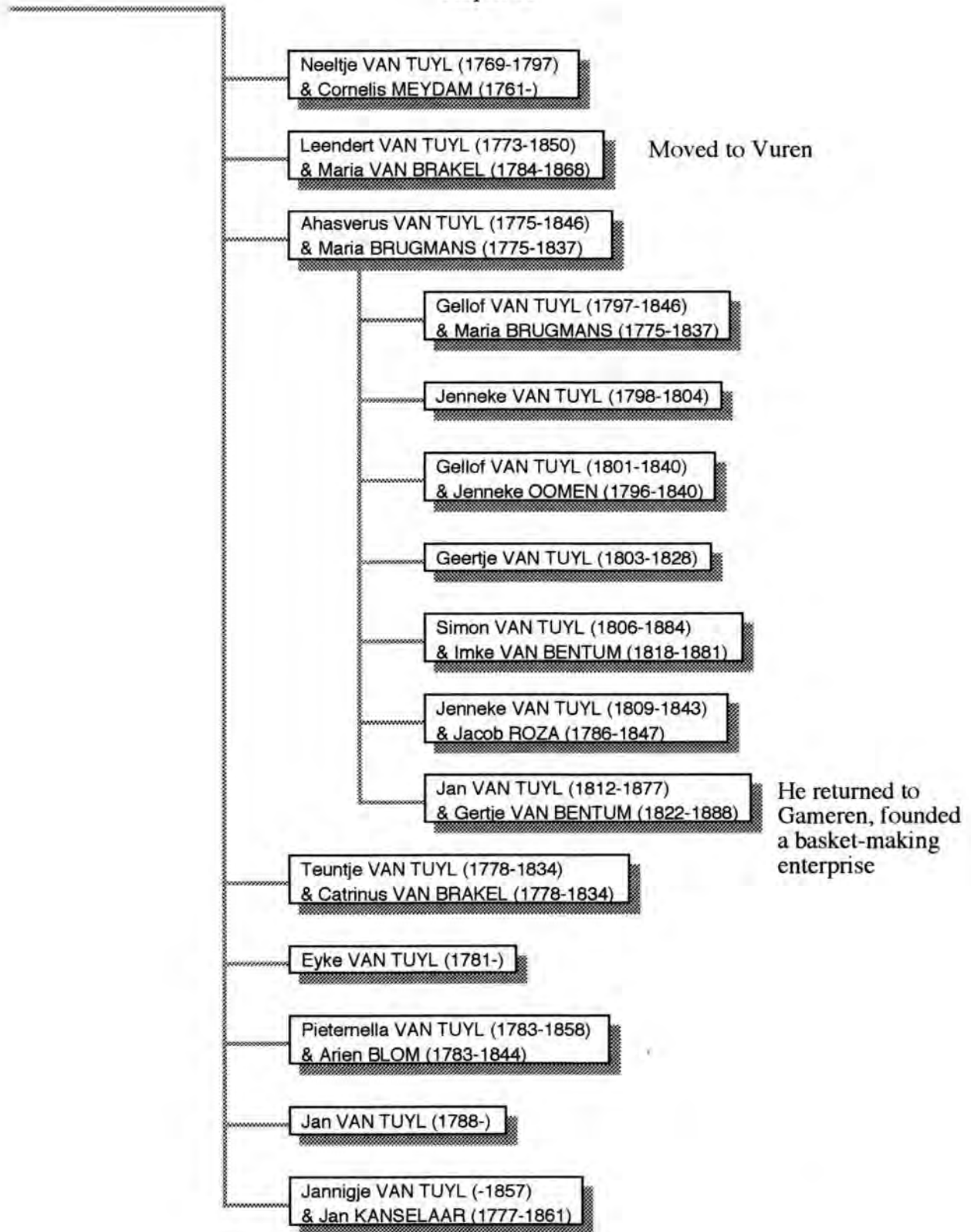
¹⁰¹ Van Balken, A., et al., "De Bommelerwaard zien, kennen en waarderen," Zaltbommel, 1978, pp. 79-81.

¹⁰² See *Dutch Genealogy*: Jan van Tuyl (A1.2.4.1.4.7) and his descendants.

The Van Tuyls of Nieuwaaal



Chapter 16





The brick factory, built in 1860 in Gameren's *uiterwaard*, provided hard, low-paying, but much-needed seasonal work for the village's poorer inhabitants, including Lambertus van Tuyl. This 1931 photo shows owner Johan Arie de Jongh [left] atop a pile of paving bricks made by his workers, many of whom were children. [Collection : *Jan Groenendijk*]



Azwerus van Tuyl and his son Jan [second and third from right] are shown sometime before World War I standing before their willow-basket factory. This family-run enterprise provided employment for up to 70 people. The craft disappeared after World War II. [By permission: *Europese Bibliotheek, Zaltbommel*]

One of Jan's sons, Azwerus, owned a large basketry in the center of the village, where he produced large fish baskets and vessels for the Ministry of Waterworks.¹⁰³ The willows used for this production were grown near the watercourse behind the Van Tuyl farm. Basket making created jobs for 12 to 15 men, including five of Jan's sons and his son-in-law Frederik van Ballegoyen.¹⁰⁴ Evert van Tuyl of Gameren remembers the business:¹⁰⁵

A lot of people found employment there, sometimes 60 to 70. The bundles of twigs were lying in the watercourse to make them flexible and white. Beautiful bussels¹⁰⁶ were made of it, used for carrying fruit.

The Brick Factory

For those who could not find work elsewhere, or could not make ends meet with but a single job, there was always the employer of last resort: the brick factory. This, it seems, was the local version of that 19th century factory, mine, or mill, where the poor of all ages labored from dawn to dusk under appalling conditions for nothing but subsistence wages. Given the conditions of the place and time, however, the Gameren brick factory must have been a welcome addition to the community.

Brick making was nothing new in Gameren. From about 1650 a brick kiln had operated near the *Kluit*, but the production must have been small, and intended mostly for local use.¹⁰⁷ About 1708, the Gameren brick kiln was moved to its present location in the *uiterwaard*.¹⁰⁸ During the 19th century, explosive growth of the cities and road networks created a huge demand for bricks and paving stones.¹⁰⁹ To meet the demand, factory-like brick kilns - *steenovens* - sprang up all along the country's rivers. Between 1806 and 1854 the number of brick factories in the river

¹⁰³ Van Heeswijk, J., "Gameren en Nieuwaal in oude ansichten," Zaltbommel, 1975, pg. 16.

¹⁰⁴ See: *Dutch Genealogy*. One of his sons, Gerrit, started a basketry at Jutphaas in the province of Utrecht and another one, Arie, became a bookseller; he owned a shop on the dike and produced picture postcards of the village (Van Heeswijk, pg. 3). A brother of Azwuerus, Jan, started a basketry at Zaltbommel. After World War II the industry disappeared and Azwuerus, the great-grandson of the founder, was the last basket maker in Gameren.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Evert van Tuyl, 1995.

¹⁰⁶ Handbaskets, the name derived from the English measure *bushel*.

¹⁰⁷ RAG, RAZ 675, fol. 97v, 10-04-1649. Jan Vergeer deeded the house and the brick kiln built by him near the *Cluyt* at Gameren to Gerard Goris. When this was closed down, it was transformed into the brewery of the family Timmer [RAG, RAZ 679, fol. 77, 23-12-1710]. The heirs of Leonard Goris deeded the *steenovenswaard* to Hendrick Timmer [RAG, RAZ 681, 27-04-1733]. Hendrick Timmer passed the *steenovenswaard* and the brewery on to his son Hermen (*steenoven* = brick kiln).

¹⁰⁸ RAG, RAZ 679, fol. 45v, 06-11-1708. Otto de Ruuck mortgaged his house and brick kiln in the *uiterwaard*, worth 4,500 guilders. Since the end of the 19th century the brick kiln was run by the family De Jongh, who specialized in paving stones [Acte 30-05-1897 (Information G.Krijgh-Both, widow P.C. de Jongh)]. In 1860 the farmer Gerrit de Jongh and other farmers leased the *uiterwaard* and the old kiln to the brothers Mijnlief, brickmakers at Herwijnen and Vianen. They were allowed to produce 25 *monden* a year [SAB, Oud Archief Gameren (OAG) 928, 29-08-1860]. In 1907 a new factory, built by the grandsons of Gerrit de Jongh - who became owners in 1903 - produced more than 1 million stones a year (37 *monden*) [Acte 13-11-1903; letter Ministry of Trade and Industry 09-01-1906 (Information G.Krijgh-Both)].

¹⁰⁹ Janssen, G.B., "Baksteenfabricage in Nederland 1850-1920," Arnhem, 1987, pg. 31.

region of Gelderland increased from 34 to 104, and by 1906 the number had doubled again, giving employment to around 10,000 people.¹¹⁰ The low cost of labor, the availability of shipping along the river, and the quality of the clay in the *uiterwaarden* along the Waal stimulated the development of numerous brickworks.¹¹¹ The Gameren operation was expanded to meet the new demand, and local families went to work making bricks. The men did the heavy work: they filled and emptied the kiln and formed the bricks. A lot of the preparatory work was done by women and children. They prepared the clay with their bare feet, assisted the men who shaped the bricks and hauled the still-wet stones to the drying field.¹¹² It was hard labor with long days during the season. When the kiln was in production, work was performed at a breakneck pace.¹¹³ When it started to rain - day or night, regardless of the hour - the workers were called up immediately to cover the drying bricks with reed mats.¹¹⁴ The working children were often absent from school, and during the summer many of them worked in both the factory and the fields. From spring until autumn as many as 60% of these working children would be absent from school.¹¹⁵ The seasonal nature of the employment meant that for many people in Gameren brick making was a sideline. Brickmaker Lambertus van Tuyl, for instance, also ran a barber shop.¹¹⁶

Into the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Van Tuyls of Gameren found themselves in a position of limited opportunity compared to that of their American cousins. During the 250 years that had elapsed from the time Jan Otten van Tuyl headed for America and Geerlof Otten remained behind, the descendants of each had had their ups and downs. But the American branch had a significant advantage: land, free for the taking. So while the luckiest and most successful Gameren Van Tuyls clung to the small farms along Gameren's Burgersteeg, their American cousins were able to acquire farms and ranches ranging from 80 to 640 acres [32 - 259 hectares] for a single family. And while The Netherlands - along with much of Europe - was developing apace during this century of progress, the Bommelerwaard seems to have been left behind, a sort of backwater in a river of progress. Whereas the Americans moving west to form new communities were *forced* to try new things - anything that worked - the *boeren* along the Waal were held back by their own attitudes toward progress - attitudes developed through centuries of tradition. Even if they had acquired a progressive ethic, the Bommelerwaard citizens, hampered as they were by centuries of war and floods, had not been able to accumulate the wealth needed

¹¹⁰ De Bruin, pg. 80.

¹¹¹ De Bruin, pg. 79; Janssen, pg. 31.

¹¹² Janssen, pp. 54-65.

¹¹³ Janssen, pp. 70 and 542. In 1860, at the kiln in Brakel, men, women, and children all worked 12 hours a day.

¹¹⁴ Hoekstra, S., "Steen en Steun (memories of a surgeon)," in : *Arts en Auto*, jaargang 53, pg. 1654.

¹¹⁵ De Bruin, pp. 70-71.

¹¹⁶ See: *Dutch Genealogy*, (A1.2.4.1.4.5.7.9).

Chapter 16

to improve roads, build bridges, and effect other much-needed improvements. As their American cousins continued to own land of their own - a tradition they had maintained since immigrating in 1663 - a number of the poorer Dutch Van Tuyls, along with an increasing number of their neighbors - declined into a virtual tenant-farmer class (called *spade-boeren*) who rented and leased land from owners.¹¹⁷ And up until 1910, the land owners were still shackled with the centuries-old *tithe* system!¹¹⁸ One result was that farm yields for the region along the Waal were actually lower than for the nation as a whole.¹¹⁹ So while the American Van Tuyls were, by the beginning of the 20th century, occupying levels of society ranging from the poorest of Ozark farmers up to the ranks of university graduates, the Bommelerwaard Van Tuyls seemed stuck, waiting for things to change. Two wars and half a century later, they would finally get their chance.



Nineteenth century Gameren basketmaker Azwerus van Tuyl celebrates his 50th anniversary with wife Cornelia and their family. While Cornelia still wears her traditional bonnet in this 1923 photo, the younger generations have obviously entered the 20th century, judging from their modern outfits. With the demise of the family basket making enterprise, members of this family entered 20th century occupations, such as administration, business, music, and engineering.

¹¹⁷ De Bruin pp. 78, 82, 90 and 105. Arable land was leased for a period of six years. The first year the field was very well prepared and manured; the second through fourth years, it produced well; but during the fifth and six years, fields were allowed to deteriorate so as to keep the lease price for the next 6-year period as low as possible.

¹¹⁸ De Bruin, pg. 87.

¹¹⁹ De Bruin, pg. 88. Data for 1861 and 1921 show a relative decline in productivity for the period for farms along the Waal and Maas.