

## **Background on the Baggerman and Hoekstra Families**

Grandmother of William and Frederick Baggerman:

Neeltje (Nellie) Hoekstra Baggerman  
Born 1853 and died 1952.

Her parents were:

Jan Reinders Hoekstra (born 1823 in Berlikum, Holland and died 1870)  
Jitske Bentes Wassenaar (born 1828? in Lieve Vrouwenparochie in Friesland Province, Holland, died 1867)

Children:

Rigtje (Richtje)- 1850  
Reindre (Reinder) - 1851  
Neeltje (Nellie) - 1853  
Jetske (Henrietta) - 1855  
Maaïke (Maggie) - 1856  
Kornelis - 1858  
(all born in Berlikum, Holland)  
Bente - 1861

Jan and Jitske and their children left on May 4, 1865 from Vrouwenparochie for North America. They went by post wagon to Harlingen, by steam boat to Hull, England, by train to Liverpool and from there to North America where their destination was Lancaster County in New York state (?) or Erie near Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Apparently Frisians had moved there in 1849 after having suffered economic problems due to the potato disease. They were under the leadership of Worp van Peyma who was one of a group of 4 friends from Friesland who were prominent thinkers with interesting ideas. Another one was Bente Wassenaar, father of Jitske Hoekstra and grandfather of Nellie Hoekstra.

The reason for Jan and Jitske's departure from Holland was due to "a serious conflict, a fight, and a threat of death." (Apparently Nellie told her children that her father had lost his dairy cattle through disease and his inability to pay the person who had guaranteed his rent payments and that was the cause of the fight and threats.) They had given up a lease on a dairy farm in the district of Het Bildt in Friesland. For some reason they moved on from Lancaster to near Alton, Illinois where they started another dairy farm. (Some of the original Lancaster group of Frisians moved to Michigan and to Pella, Iowa where there was a Christian Reformed Church connection).



Jan and Jitske had financial difficulties--"others had taken advantage of their inexperience and lack of knowledge of the language." In 1867, Jitske died and in 1870 Jan passed away. The seven surviving children, aged 6 to 19 years old were orphaned. (Nellie was only 14 years old.) Richtje, the oldest daughter, and her husband lived in nearby St. Louis and they took in some of the younger children.

Nellie (19 years old) married Jan Baggerman (29) on October 24, 1872.

The husband of Nellie (and grandfather of William and Frederick):

Jan (Jon) Baggerman was about 11 years old when he emigrated to the US with his parents (Willem and Anna), 4 brothers and a sister (Maria?) from the Land of Maas and Waal. The family may have gone first to Pella, Iowa but they started farming near Alton, Illinois. This was probably not far from Nellie's brothers, Reinder and Cornelis. They had two children--Willem/William (born Oct. 20, 1873?) [father of William and Frederick Baggerman] and Jitske/Yetta. [Aunt Yetta]

In 1877 Jan Baggerman returned to The Netherlands in connection with business in Gelderland (the province in Holland that his family was from). Around Christmas he paid a visit to the Hoekstra and Wassenaar families in Friesland, accompanied by his brother Adrianus, who had stayed in Holland. On his return trip over the Atlantic by ship he contacted typhoid fever. Jan was ill when he landed and he became so seriously ill on the train trip back to their rented farm in Madison County, Illinois near Horseshoe Lake that he had to be taken off the train in Johnston, Pennsylvania where he passed away. The fellow passenger who helped him, Karel Hofman, may have been a relative by marriage. He is buried in Madison County, Illinois. [Note: the original of the last letter written by Jan to Nellie, dated November 21, 1877 is in the file of William Baggerman.]

After her husband's death Nellie wanted to go back to Holland but she didn't have much money and her uncle Hijltje Hoekstra of Finkum convinced her to stay. Her brother Reinder helped her on the farm and eventually she moved to St. Louis where her older sister Richtje was living. William Baggerman remembers that she earned money from sewing. She lived on 12th Street in St. Louis and later moved to 4238 Russell Avenue with her son William. She remained in St. Louis until her death in 1952 at the age of 99. She is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in St. Louis. (William J. and Emma Baggerman are buried there also.)

*This summary was written by Anne (Baggerman) Frej and William Baggerman on October 22, 2006 in Sarasota, Florida. The information came largely from notes from Tietje Piera de Boer. Her sources were from interviews with family members and Jelsuma Hoekstra's newsletters and "Letters to a Frisian Emigrant," a series of letters written by Hijltej Gaeles Hoekstra, a farmer in Finkum, to his brother-in-law Jan Reinders Hoekstra.*