

Gerrit H. Gerrits: *They farmed well: The Dutch-Canadian agricultural community in Nova Scotia, 1945-1995*. Kentville, NS: Vinland Press, 1996.

The son of a Dutch immigrant farming family in Nova Scotia (he came with them in 1953), Gerrit Gerrits is a professor of history at Acadia University in that province. He is thus uniquely well qualified to write the history of the people he springs from.

As a number of our readers undoubtedly know, the postwar immigration into Nova Scotia was mainly comprised of two groups, a Catholic one from Noord-Brabant and a Protestant one which came mainly from the three provinces in the northeastern Netherlands. In this connection it is interesting to note Gerrits solution to a permanent nomenclature problem. In the Netherlands there are two Reformed churches, each with a distinct character and history. The older one, once the State church, is the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*), and the other is called the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*). The problem is that the terms *hervormd* and *gereformeed* have only one English translation between them: Reformed. Gerrits has solved the problem by calling the older church Dutch Reformed and the younger one neo-Reformed, an elegant solution. It enables Gerrits to explain that most of the Protestant immigrants to Nova Scotia belonged to the neo-Reformed faith, which traditionally is strongly represented in the lower middle class.

His study is in three parts, the first of which traces the settlement history of the Dutch immigrant farmers in Nova Scotia from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. We meet, among other people, Bishop John MacDonald and the

Reverend Francis N. I. MacIsaac, who aided the Catholic settlers in Antigonish County, and two agents of the Christian Reformed Church, Mr. Herman Lam, field man from 1953 to 1959, and the Reverend Ralph J. Bos, a home missionary from 1953 to 1961. In this section Gerrits analyses two important documents, the records of the *Land Settlement Committee of the Diocese of Antigonish*, and the 1955 *Agreement between the Government of the Netherlands and the Nova Scotia Land Settlement Board*, the text of which appears in an Appendix.

The second part is called "Inquiry into the make-up of the immigrant settlers." It discusses a number of aspects of the immigrants experience, such as their geographic origins, religious profiles and farming and educational background. Most interesting also is the chapter dealing with "Reasons for coming to Nova Scotia." The findings of this part of the study are based on the 250 responses to an extensive questionnaire sent to 288 addresses. The analysis of the responses is painstakingly accurate, as is the whole book.

The last part deals with the Dutch-Canadian farming community some 40 years after their arrival in Nova Scotia. In this section Gerrits discusses such matters as "The Dutch-Canadian participation in agricultural organizations," "The survival of the Dutch language" and "The level of satisfaction with coming to Nova Scotia after some forty years." Again this section is excellent in its accuracy.

The book has an attractive cover by Math Cupido, a (neo-Reformed) Dutch-Canadian artist who lives in Halifax. He shows us an old Nova Scotia farm from 1945 and a modern one. The value of the book has also been

enhanced by two photo sections, the first one showing ten pictures of people prominent in the history of this immigration (I would have liked to see a picture of Father Johan van Wezel) and the second showing seven pictures of farms and one of the immigrant ship *De Waterman*. The farm pictures are striking evidence of the fact that the Dutch-Canadians have done very well during their first half century in Nova Scotia. There are also a number of maps in the text, showing for instance the kinds of soil in the Netherlands most immigrants came from and where in Nova Scotia they settled. I found this latter

map (p.119) most helpful, though it was difficult to locate Antigonish County on it.

We congratulate Gerrit Gerrits on this superior study (of about 200 pages) which could be a model for similar studies of the history of immigration into other provinces. The only fault we can find with it is that an index of the names mentioned in the book would have been helpful.

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