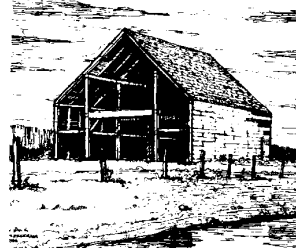


DUTCH BARN PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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The Netherlands in One Day

A TRAVELERS TALE

As nice as they are, one can take just so much of canals lined with slender houses and dimly lit museums, as Amsterdam is known for (Fig.1). We had one day remaining in our vacation, so Emily and I decided to go "All in." We would buy a rail pass and cover the Netherlands as far as we could go, hopefully from one end to the other and somewhere in between.

Everything seemed to go against us that morning. First, we were surprised to learn that the tram (trolley) did not start until 6 AM. We were ready at four. (In what was New Amsterdam (NYC), they run at all times.) That meant a two-hour delay. Luckily, we had a nice conversation with the night clerk at the hotel to pass the time. He was enamored with our president, and seemed to have a clearer picture of Bush's policies than we Americans do. He made much sense.



FIG 1 Amsterdam scene, canals and multi-story buildings.



FIG 2 Central Station.

The Netherlands in One Day (continued from page 1)

Central Station is the hub of Amsterdam (Fig.2). Trains, trams, buses, and taxis all converge at this building. This morning, at 6:30, it was deserted; we referred to one of the train schedules that are prominently displayed at every station. We found that on Saturdays the number of trains are reduced. Our ambitious trip schedule was in jeopardy and I had visions of making poor connections, being stranded on a dike somewhere with no way back, and missing our homeward flight on Sunday.

We had ten minutes to catch our train for Gronegan, a city located in the extreme north, our furthest destination. According to schedule Gronegan at 178 KM (109 miles) was to take 131 minutes. At the ticket office, we were pleased to learn that the day travel pass for two, first class, would cost 35 EURO (\$45.50). We had expected, according to brochure, that the cost would be 63.70 EURO each, or \$165.45. We took it without question only to speculate as to the difference in price. Perhaps because it was Saturday, or a senior discount? Our luck was now changing.

Grateful for the prompt departure we settled into a beautiful first class compartment, alone, only to realize we had had no breakfast. "Bon Voyage."

Outside, the view of Amsterdam's historical section gave way to a modern commercial factory and warehouse area as we "Steamed," out of Amsterdam. (Really, it was an electric train.) The scenery changed to grass. Green grass as far as the eye could see (Fig.3). Some of the fields contained 100 acres or more (40.5 hectares to the natives). The fields were mostly divided by water instead of fence. The ditches were anywhere from one foot to twenty feet across, providing drainage for the crops and barrier for the roaming cows, horses, sheep, and goats. Dispersed about were the bridges, allowing passage over the larger ditches. Culverts were used where heavy machinery was to cross. The grass along all of the ditches was manicured to the very edge. (My few ditches, at home, soon become clogged with growth.) How the Dutch maintain that extensive landscape escapes me. It was not perceptible but I knew we were below sea level and I wondered where all the water went. I saw one classical windmill pump-



FIG 3 Cows and their favorite lair.

ing water but there must be some massive pumping facilities to keep up with the surplus. The water is constantly being pumped over the dikes to the sea and being replaced by the frequent rain. This keeps the water fresh.



FIG 4 Cow barn with tower silo, slurry tank, and bunker silo, just like New York.



FIG 5 More low barns with silage stack, like New York.



FIG 6 Typical farmstead, island in the grass. Buildings old and new.

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The Netherlands in One Day (continued from page 3)

The land is incredibly level. With the water in the ditches as reference, it is easy to see that the land surface, about 3 feet above the water, mile after mile, does not vary an inch.

The farmsteads with their patches of trees usually contained at least one large barn which is characteristic, but they bore little resemblance to our American Dutch Barn. They were rather much longer and very low slung. I would judge, about 30-50 feet wide and 25 feet tall. They were never painted. Numerous small buildings bunched together completed a typical farmstead. Not typical, but often seen, are hay barracks (Fig.7,8,9). The familiar four-poster could also be seen in the suburbs, converted to houses or other commercial purposes. (See the accompanying photos.) About every tenth farm had a barrack and they were very well kept. For this ancient model to be so prevalent is astonishing. Was it a case of reverence or practicality, to me a dilemma?



FIG 7 Farm with huge barrack.



FIG 8 Barrack with steel roof and baled straw.



FIG 9 Residential barrack.

Two conductors came by to check our tickets. The lady and gentleman were surprised to see a day pass and were willing to answer our questions. They did bring us bad news; we were being, "Bumped". An accident ahead meant rerouting of trains. We would have to change trains. The lady took out her pocket computer and quickly gave us the new train number, the track, and the time of departure. The 15-minute layover was not enough to allow for eggs and sausage. Emily picked-up donuts and coffee, at a kiosk, and we dined as the scenery passed before us.



FIG 10 The train.



FIG 11 Arnhem Station.

All trains going to the north pass through the city of Zwolle, near the center of the country. From there they fan out in six directions. We went north to Groningen. The landscape continued as we have just described.

To go across northern Netherlands to Leeuwarden we switched from the National RR to a private line. Layover was 20 minutes. There was no difference in this train that we could see. They still honored our pass. In Leeuwarden we turned south towards Zwolle. The land continued to be level everywhere with ditches and grass. The loop we made around the northern part of the country found this scene repeated over and over. The grassland would yield to suburbs and then to industrial. Each town had a thriving business hub.

In 1960 Netherlands was listed with 931 people per square mile (NY with 89) so there is no such thing as a "Whistle stop." Each RR station is surrounded by city. The principle means of transportation for all these people is by bicycle. Each RR car has space, at the entrance, for bikes. Walking in Amsterdam, and I imagine everywhere, there is a constant contest with these bell ringing two wheelers. Seems like every tree, fence or post in the city has bikes chained to them. We saw a parking lot near Central Station that had what seemed like 3000 bicycles stored there.

Once again at Zwolle, we had to decide whether we had time to go all the way south and still make it back to Amsterdam in our allotted 12 hours. A look at the rail map showed us two more stations where we could cut our trip short. We decided to try for the extreme south destination.



At Arnhem we had a big surprise, a hill, perhaps 300 feet high. This was the only elevation we found in our entire tour of the country. A large part of the city is spread over the gentle hill. During WWII the Germans, no doubt, trained their artillery, over 20 miles, to the north, south, and west to harass the English troops. The three cardinal points would have covered an area of about 900 square miles ($\pi R^2 \times .75$).

It was decision time again. Do we shorten the trip? The allies did not stop when they passed near here during the war so neither would we. We would, "stay the course."

It was a short run to Roermond, our most southern destination. It was 4 PM and we

FIG 12 Our route, the whole of Netherlands flanked by Belgium and Germany.

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The Netherlands in One Day (continued from page 5)

had reached the extreme distance possible. Our trip was now considered a resounding success. We had achieved all we had asked for. Our remaining route, back to our starting point, was directly through the province of Holland to Amsterdam.

When we headed NE to the Holland sector and through Rotterdam, The Hague, Leiden, to Amsterdam, the train became crowded, standing room only. This was a Saturday night stampe for the city delights.

Rotterdam is a bright city with modern buildings and many skyscrapers. We did not see the well-known harbor. There was a large body of water but the docks and ships eluded us. Next, The Hague by comparison was very stately, older looking, in keeping with its world-wide reputation as the "World Court." At the time of the birth of the American Dutch Barn (1680) it was the diplomatic capitol of Europe. The city flows into Leiden which is very similar. This was where, in the early 1600s, Galileo published his epoch work on mechanics, a few years before our first American Dutch barn was built.

We approached Amsterdam in the failing light of day. I had missed my chance to photograph the graffiti which is prevalent along the railroad. Every unobstructed, vertical, surface was sprayed in vivid color. The messages, of course, were in Dutch so that I cannot report on what they said. The RR cars, though, were free of this adornment.

On leaving Central Station, headed for the hotel, we experienced our longest "layover" of the day. The two dozen tram lines that converge there are each assigned their own stopping point, well designated with signs. For some reason, that night, our tram was reassigned at a great distance, as announced by the public address system. We finally found it. After missing one, the total time waiting was 45 minutes.

Back in the suburbs, the short walk from the tram to the hotel made us realize how "beat" and hungry we were. The next time we make this trip it will be by automobile for a closer look, to meet the people and to eat decently.

The whirlwind trip gave us a broad, fleeting glimpse of the country. Nevertheless the impressions left are profound. There was revealed an explanation for the greatness that is The Netherlands. "Dirt and Moisture", these are the necessary ingredients for a successful agriculture. The Netherlands has these in great quantity and quality. Nowhere else on earth does this concentration exist. Over 6 ? million acres of farm land and as we saw for ourselves, every foot of it prime "bottom land" with the weather to go with it. Other possibilities come to mind, such as the Nile, Yangtze, and Mekong Valley's to name a few. These rich soils require irrigation and manpower to bring them to the "Super" category. They all have shortcomings and pale in significance compared to that Rhine river delta called The Netherlands.

In the 1600's most of the world's manpower was devoted to subsistence. The production of food, shelter, and dress was of low efficiency. Key ingredients for production, like super soil and weather, made it possible for the Dutch farmer to survive and support many others. This led to the growth of cities. The windmill could be erected anywhere in the prevalent wind to provide power for the industrial part of the mercantile system that made The Netherlands so great. Nature was good to the Dutchman.

Epilogue – Amelia and Robert Andersen are charter members of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society. They made this trip in 2005 at the age of 79 and 84 respectively. The speedy trip produced a desire for more. We recommend you do this as a two-week automobile tour or for a month by bicycle. (Bring your rain coat.) Take two days in Amsterdam and spend the rest of the time among the farm folk.

Photography: Fig. 1, 2, 10, 11 by Amelia Andersen, Fig. 3-9 by Robert Andersen.

Barn Repair Workshops in Rhinebeck at a 1777 Dutch Barn

Funded by two \$1,000 gifts from the Dutch Barn Preservation Society and Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture, a six-day barn repair workshop was held in 2005 with Bob Hedges and Conrad Fingado as the restoration craftsmen who directed the operation. Archaeology was conducted that indicated the original foundation of the south-side wall lay beneath an eroding hill side. This and other things helped to confirm that the barn is on its original site. The rare date carved on the first interior anchorbeam "MD 1770" may refer to the carpenter rather than the farmer.

Both side aisles of the Palatine barn are gone. What remains is the center H-bent frame of three-bays. The columns above the anchorbeams, perhaps 5 to 6 feet, were cut off, twelve purlin braces removed and new sawn rafters applied to the lower roof. What remains of the frame is of high quality with lots of intriguing evidence. Originally the barn had a pair of harr-hung wagon doors only on the front end. Later, a three-part wagon door was put on the back end. These were fit with key-hinges. We hope by the end of May to have foundation walls repaired, all four sills in place and wagon doors installed.

The farmstead house is undergoing restoration and archaeology, and the 2-and-a-half acre site is being planned as a museum. Long term plans for the barn would be to remove the hill-side to its 18th century configuration and reconstruct the barn with side aisles and taller columns. Our work now is to study, stabilize and preserve what is left.

The DBPS and HWA have both pledged \$1,500 gifts to support the May 22-26, 2006 barn repair workshop at The Palatine Farmstead. The workshop will be free for those interested in helping or learning. Free lunch is provided.

For information contact: Peter Sinclair (845) 338-0257 <hvvernar@netstep.net



Eric Breymer doing archaeology to find the original south foundation.



Bob Hedges and Christian Tashjian resetting a post.

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Barn Repair Workshops (continued from page 7)



Boring holes by hand.



Bob Hedges and Eric Breymer hewing a log.



Boring holes by machine.

DUTCH BARN PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Detail: From early fourteenth century Flemish *Book of Hours*.