
The Haagsma – Terpstra Family

The Haagsma family has its roots in the province of Friesland in the far north-central portion of the Netherlands bordering the Wadden See—an intertidal zone in the southeastern part of the North Sea. Friesland has the majority of the Netherlands' iconic windmills due to its low-lying nature. Long subject to flooding from North Sea storms, the Frisian countryside is marked with numerous dikes and small canals. Record books show Haagsma family births, deaths, and marriages in the villages of Tzumarrum, Firdgum, Wonseradeel, Minertsga, Barradeel, Sneek, and others.

The oldest identifiable Haagsma ancestor is Auke Folkerts Haagsma who was born about 1743. He was a farmer married to a woman named Hylkje Abes Boersma. The couple raised a family of four—two boys and two girls.

Their second son was named Jacob Aukes Haagsma. He was born about 1800 and was my great-great grandfather. Municipal records contain several references to Jacob in connection with debts and tenant documents, but none are very specific. The birth records of his children, however, do tell us about his occupation. According to the documents, he was a “kooltjer” or a farmer of cabbages and onions.

Jacob was married twice. His first marriage in 1828 was to a woman named Sipkje Soerds Boersma. She was a housemaid from Tzumarrum. The marriage produced a son named Auke Jacobs Haagsma who was born on April 24, 1829. The mother Sipkje died the following month on May 10 and Auke died on June 11. It must be assumed that both perished from childbirth complications.

On August 28, 1830, Jacob married Sipkje's sister Sjaartje Soerds Boersma. Their marriage produced seven children. There were three girls named Knierke, Hylkje, and Soerd and four boys named Folkert, Dirk, Auke and Auke. The first Auke died at the age of one month. The boy named Dirk was my great grandfather.

There's not much information about Dirk as a young man. His military registration file describes him as being five foot two and one-half inches tall with an oval face, brown hair, and blue eyes. The only other notable mention of him in official records is a listing in the local Leeuwarden logbook of criminal cases for September 1872. There it lists Dirk as the defendant in a criminal case. The record states “*Dirk Jacobs Haagsma, a labourer at Tzumarrum, Guilty of acts of violence that resulted in injury to a serving officer, sentenced to imprisonment of one month and costs.*” There are no further notations concerning exactly what led Dirk to get into trouble, but clearly, even though he was a small man, (or perhaps because he was) he wasn't afraid of a fight.

The next notations concerning Dirk are his marriage to Baukje Meinderts Tymensma in February 1879 and the births of their children. Perhaps nothing better illustrates the tough living conditions, nonexistent prenatal care, and high mortality rate of the mid-1800s in Europe than the story of the Dirk and Baukje.

They were married on February 20, 1879 in Wonseradeel in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands. At the time of their marriage, Baukje was approximately eight months pregnant. As previously mentioned, 19th century Western European marriage practices were considerably different from today. Once the children had received permission from their parents, the marriage was considered a contract and the church wedding only a formality. As a result, it was not unusual for the first child to be born shortly after the formal wedding vows were taken. So it was with Dirk and Baukje.

Their first child Beitske (#1) was born on March 26, 1879. Beitske lived less than two years and died on January 17, 1881. Their second child was born on June 27, 1880 — an event the Dutch registry marks as “levenloss” or stillborn. On June 8, 1881, Baukje gave birth to twin girls Sjaardtje and Beitske (#2). Beitske #2 died on October 6, 1886 at the age of five. On May 8, 1883, a boy named Jacob was born. Jacob

died at three years of age just a week after Beitske #2 on October 13, 1886. On December 26, 1884 a girl named Femke was born. Femke died seven months after Beitske #2 and Jacob on March 3, 1886. Femke was the last child born in the Netherlands to Dirk and Baukje before they left for America. Of the six children born to them in Wonsradeel, only Sjaardtje (later changed to Sarah) accompanied them on their voyage to the United States. The other five children were left behind in Dutch cemeteries — a common practice for immigrants who frequently said permanent goodbyes to not only Holland but deceased family members, too.

Off to America

Dirk, Baukje, and Sjaardtje sailed from Rotterdam on the P. Calland. They arrived in America on March 28, 1887. They were the last of our ancestors to pass through the Castle Garden immigration Station. When they arrived, the records show Dirk's occupation was farming. The records incorrectly state his age as 55 when he was actually 36. Baukje was admitted to America under her maiden name of Tymensma. This is probably the result of an occasional Dutch practice of married women maintaining their maiden names instead of taking their husband's name.

With five-year-old Sjaardtje in tow, Dirk and Baukje headed for Alton, Iowa. We don't know anything about their trip. As a matter of fact, we know only bits and pieces about their life because misfortune did not stay in Holland. It came with them to America.

At Alton, they had three more children. Twins Jacob and Beitsche (Bessie) arrived in an unusual manner — Jacob on March 2, 1888, and Beitsche on March 11, 1888. The church birth records note that they were “twins born nine days apart.” Finkje (Fannie) who became my grandmother when she was later married to Gradus (George) Van Roekel, was born on November 3, 1889. My grandmother never met her father. Misfortune returned once again when Dirk died on September 15, 1889, just six weeks before my grandmother was born. Dirk was 38.

Just a year later, Baukje remarried to another Dutch immigrant who had just arrived in America. Dirk was lost to history. My grandmother knew nothing about him, and as a result, she passed on no information about her father to my mother or any of her siblings. The circumstances surrounding his death and burial have been a mystery as has been the reason why Baukje would remarry so quickly after Dirk's death. The rest of the story illustrates how important details often surface more than 100 years after someone has long been forgotten.

The records of the Sioux County Genealogical Society contain microfilmed copies of a local Dutch language newspaper called *De Volksvriend* or The Peoples' Friend. De Volksvriend was started in 1874 in Orange City, Iowa by Henry Hospers who had led the first Dutch colonists from Pella to northwest Iowa to establish the new town of Orange City. De Volksvriend ceased publication in 1951, but its heyday years were 1874 to 1901. During that time, it served as the single biggest communication channel for the Dutch-speaking residents of northwestern Iowa. It contained every item of news no matter how trivial and probably looked then like many small-town newspapers still look today.

I discovered an obscure reference indicating that Dirk's death had been reported in the September 19, 1889 issue of De Volksvriend. An inquiry to the Sioux County Genealogical Society yielded most of the answers that have long been missing. Dirk's death notice, after being translated into English, was enlightening. It reads:

“On Sunday, Dirk Haagsma of Alton died at the age of 38 years and nearly 7 months. The deceased had long suffered from heart disease. He leaves behind a wife who remains in very helpless and destitute financial circumstances. The funeral was Monday, at which time Rev. J. W. Warnhuis gave a eulogy in the Reformed Church.”

The circumstances surrounding Dirk's death are now abundantly clear. Dirk and Baukje were poor, and his death left Baukje penniless, with three children, and pregnant. She couldn't afford a cemetery plot nor

headstone for Dirk. According to the Sioux County genealogist, the Nassau Township Cemetery just outside of Alton had a pauper's section until the early 1900s, and since it was the nearest cemetery, Baukje would have had little choice but to bury Dirk there with little more than a wooden marker.

According to the Nassau Township Cemetery Sexton, the oldest section of the cemetery is at the southwest corner. This part of the cemetery has a few markers from the late 1800s, but the largest part of the area is open space and probably contains unmarked graves. This area is likely Dirk's final resting place.

About Baukje's Second Husband

It's obvious now why Baukje would remarry so soon after Dirk's death. She was a penniless widow with four children and no means of support. She badly needed a man.

Her second husband was Ritske Terpstra. He was 18 years older than Baukje and also from Friesland. Ritske was the only father my grandmother ever knew.

Ritske's first wife was Pietje Peters Harkema. She and Ritske had three girls and eight boys. Three of these children died as infants. In mid 1800s Europe, 25% of infants died before their first birthday. Of the Haagsma's and Terpstra's 20 children, a total of eight died as infants. That's a combined mortality rate of 40%.

Pietje died in 1887 at the age of 45 in Baradeel, Friesland. Several years after her death, Ritske emigrated to America. He arrived on the P. Calland on March 3, 1890. He brought his children Sjoerd, Pieter, Jochum, Pieterje, Klass, Jeltje, and Sippe with him.

It wasn't long before Pieterje, Hiltje, and Klass found mates in America. They were married within months. Ritske married Baukje on October 22, 1890 just six months after he arrived.

The 1900 Federal Census shows Ritske and Baukje living in Orange City with Sjaardtje (now named Sarah), Jacob, Bessie, and Fannie. The children are listed under the name of Haagsma. Ritske died 14 years later in 1904 at the age of 68, and once again, Baukje was a widow. The location of Ritske's grave is uncertain. Baukje continued to live in Orange City with Sarah, Jacob, Bessie, Fannie, and Ritske's youngest son Sippe. She eventually changed her name to Bertha. The 1905 Iowa regional census lists all the children with the last name of Terpstra. It's unknown if this was an error on Bertha's part or if Ritske adopted the children before he died. After a life of challenges and family misfortune, Bertha died in 1924. She's buried in Orange City's Westlawn Cemetery.

Nearly a spinster after years of looking after her mother, Sarah married George Sjoerd Wiersma in 1928. She was 47. George brought his 12-year-old son to the marriage, and Sarah was an instant mother. Their marriage lasted 30 years. George died in 1958 and Sarah a year later in 1959. They are both buried in Westlawn Cemetery not far from Sarah's mother Bertha.

Note:

Misfortune also followed Ritske's family after his death. His son Jeltje was working as a farmhand when he was kicked in the stomach by a horse. In spite of the doctor's best attempts, Jeltje died on 2 May 1897.

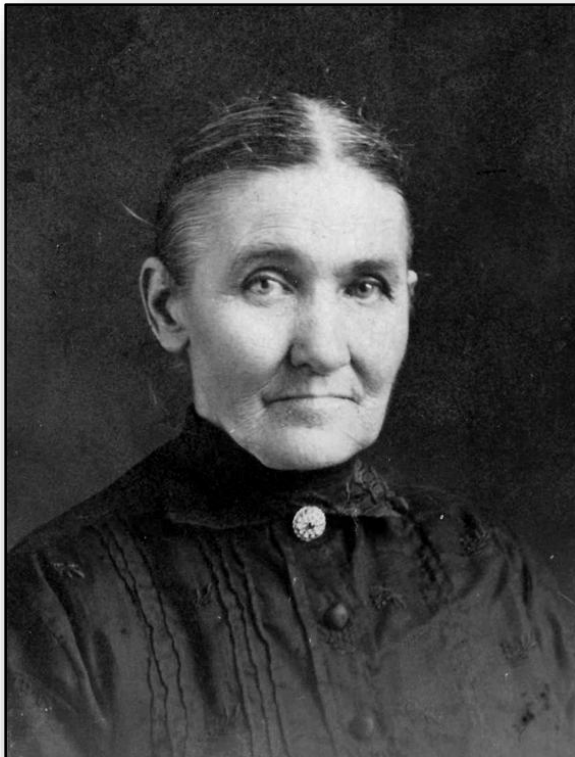
Then, on September 17, 1926, a torrential rainstorm inundated northwestern Iowa. Rock Rapids, Orange City, Sioux Center, and Hawarden were in the center of the deluge. The resulting floodwaters threatened people as far south as Sioux City. A few miles south of Sioux Center is the intersection of Highway 75 and Highway 10. Since the early 1900s, local residents have known it as The Million Dollar Corner because of the supposedly high cost of constructing it. The 1926 flood became known as the Million Dollar Corner Flood.

At 9:30 on Friday evening September 17, 1926, Sippe Terpstra (Ritske's youngest son) and his seven-year-old son Eugene were on their way from their home in Hospers to Sioux Center. Sippe's wife

Florence had been attending a missionary conference in Sioux Center that day and was waiting for Sippe and a ride home. Sippe tried to drive the family car through the rising floodwaters on Highway 75 just north of The Million Dollar Corner, and it stalled on the road. As the floodwaters rose and the sun went down, Sippe and Eugene climbed onto the roof of the car. Rescuers were unable to reach them and reported that they could only listen to their cries for help as darkness finally fell. Eventually the water rose high enough that Sippe and Eugene were washed away. Searchers found their car the next day. A week later their bodies were finally located when the search party came across a single hand sticking out of the mud and sand in a field. After digging, they found Sippe. He was still holding little Eugene.



The grave of Bertha Terpstra (Haagsma)



Bertha Haagsma in later life



St. Martinus Kerk or St. Martin's Church in Tzumarrum was the Haagsma's church. It was a Catholic Church before the Reformation.

Descendants of Auke Folkerts Haagsma

Generation #1 – Auke Folkerts Haagsma – b. ??, d. ??
& Spouse Hylkje Abes Borime – b. ??, d. ??, m. ?? had a child named

Generation #2 – Jacob Aukes Haagsma – b. abt 1800, d. 10 Jan 1870
& Spouse Sipkje Soerds Boersma – b. ??, d. ??
& Sjaartje Sjoerds Boersma – b. ??, d. 20 Jun 1861, m. 28 Aug 1830 had a child named

Generation #3 – Dirk Jacobs Haagsma – b. 17 Feb 1851, d. 15 Sep 1889
& Spouse Baukje (Bertha) Tymensma – b. 16 Feb 1854, d. 1924, m. 20 Feb 1879 had a child named

Generation #4 – Finkje (Fannie) Haagsma – b. 3 Nov 1889, d. 19 Jun 1986
& Spouse George (Gradus) Van Roekel – b. 18 Nov 1883, d. 15 May 1969, m. 19 Feb 1913 had a child named

Generation #5 – Dorothy Van Roekel – b. 24 Jul 1918, d. 19 Aug 2010
& Spouse Jake Ver Mulm – b. 16 Feb 1919, d. 29 Oct 2002, m. 19 Feb 1941 had a child named

Generation #6 – Dennis Eugene Ver Mulm – b. 6 Jul 1952
& Spouse Martha Leu Scott – b. 14 Apr 1952, m. 15 May 1976 had children named

Generation #7 – Scott Evan Ver Mulm – b. 10 Feb 1982
& Spouse Kasey Baker – b. 27 Feb 1979, m. 9 Oct 2010

Generation #7 – Molly Erin Ver Mulm – b. 7 Nov 1986

Dirk Haagsma was born in Tzummarum, Barradeel municipality, Friesland province in the Netherlands. Baukje was born in Tzummarum, Franekeradeel municipality in the same province. At the time, the village of Tzummarum was situated on the border of both municipalities. In 1984, a consolidation of the municipalities along with several other took place and the area was renamed Waadhoeke. Today Tzummarum has about 1400 residents.

Friesland is distinguished from the rest of the Netherlands by its own unique language called West Frisian or Fryske, which is more closely related to some German dialects than it is to Dutch. The area has nearly one-sixth of all the windmills in the Netherlands. Now, as in the 1800s, Friesland is a mostly agrarian province.

In the spring of 1887, Dirk and Baukje left five of the children buried in Dutch soil and set sail with the daughter Sjaardtje from Rotterdam on board the P. Caland, a 368 foot-long, steam and sail freighter. They shared steerage space with 600 other passengers.

They arrived at Castle Garden Immigration Station in New York Harbor on March 28, 1887. From there, they made their way to Alton, Iowa where they had three more children. Dirk did not live to see the birth of Finkje, his last child.



Immigrants outside Castle Garden in the 1870s

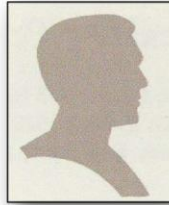


The P. Caland – Holland America Lines from 1874-1897

DIRK (DICK) HAAGSMA *Family Group Sheet*

Dirk (Dick) Haagsma

Birth: 17 Feb 1851 in Tzummarum, Friesland, Netherlands
 Death: 15 Sep 1889 in Orange City, Sioux, Iowa
 Parents: Jacob Aukes Haagsma &
 Sjaartje Soerds Boersma



Baukje (Bertha) Tymensma

Birth: 16 Feb 1854 in Tzummarum, Friesland, Neth.
 Death: 1924 in Orange City, Iowa
 Parents: Meindert Sakes Tymensma &
 Bietske Lieuwes Eringa
 Other Spouses: Ritske Terpstra



Marriage: February 20, 1879 in Wonseradeel, Friesland, Netherlands

CHILDREN	SEX	BIRTH	SPOUSE	MARRIAGE	DEATH
Beitske (#1) Haagsma	F	26 Mar 1879 in Franekeradeel, Friesland, Netherlands			17 Jan 1881 in Franekeradeel, Friesland, Netherlands
Unnamed stillborn child	F	27 June 1880			27 Jun 1880
Beitske (#2) Haagsma	F	8 Jun 1881 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands			8 Oct 1886 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands
Sjaardtje (Sarah) Haagsma	F	8 Jun 1881 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands	George Wiersma	19 Jun 1928	1959 in Orange City, Sioux, Iowa
Jacob (#1) Haagsma	M	8 May 1883 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands			13 Oct 1886 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands
Femke Haagsma	F	26 Dec 1884 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands			3 Mar 1886 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands
Jacob (#2) Haagsma*	M	2 Mar 1888 in Alton, Sioux, Iowa	Gertrude Elgersma	27 Jan 1910	15 Sep 1961 in Sanborn, O'Brien, Iowa
Beitsche (Bessie) Haagsma*	F	11 Mar 1888 in Alton, Sioux, Iowa	Marinus Zwiep	26 Feb 1918	19 Feb 1981 in Zeeland, Ottawa, Michigan
Finkje (Fannie) Haagsma	F	3 Nov 1889 in Alton, Sioux, Iowa	Gradus (George) Van Roekel	19 Feb 1913	19 Jun 1986 in Rock Valley, Sioux, Iowa

* Note: Jacob and Bessie were twins born nine days apart according to the Alton Reformed Church Baptism Records

RITSKE TERPSTRA *Family Group Sheet*

Ritske Terpstra

Birth: 6 Jan 1836 in Oosterbierum, Friesland, Netherlands
 Death: 27 April 1904 in Orange City, Sioux, Iowa
 Parents: Pieter Jochums Terpstra &
 Reintje Sjoerds Bakker
 Other Spouses: Baukje (Bertha) Terpstra



Pietje Pieters Harkema

Birth: 29 May 1841 in Sexbierum, Friesland, Neth.
 Death: 23 Feb 1887 in Oosterbierum, Friesland, Neth.
 Parents: Pieter Sippes Harkema &
 Reinske Oenes Wieringa



Marriage: May 11, 1861 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands

CHILDREN	SEX	BIRTH	SPOUSE	MARRIAGE	DEATH
Reinskje Terpstra	F	22 Feb 1862			Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands.
Pietertje (#1) Terpstra	F	24 Apr 1863			4 Sep 1863 in Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands.
Pietertje (#2) Terpstra	F	28 Jun 1864	Hermanus Zoet	20 Feb 1890	26 Feb 1939 in Sheldon, O'Brien, Iowa
Pieter Terpstra	M	3 Sep 1865	Hitlje Boersma	25 Dec 1890	11 Nov 1943 in Isanti, Minnesota
Jochum Terpstra	M	20 Feb 1867	Doetje Veenstra	24 Mar 1893	25 Dec 1943 in Isanti, Minnesota
Sippe (#1) Terpstra	M	18 Aug 1869			Barradeel, Friesland, Netherlands.
Sjoerd Terpstra	M	9 Aug 1871	Tryntje Aardema	10 Mar 1892	3 Dec 1902 in Orange City, Sioux, Iowa
Klaas Terpstra	M	17 Sep 1873	Minnie Statema Flora Vander Heide	27 Mar 1890	17 Jun 1955 in Mille Lacs, Minnesota
Reintje Terpstra	M	3 Jun 1875			14 Apr 1876
Jeltje Terpstra	M	5 Nov 1877			2 May 1897 in Sioux, Iowa
Sippe (#2) Terpstra	M	16 Jun 1881	Florence Druger Stegeman	1910	17 Sep 1926 in Sioux, Iowa



The Blended Family of Bertha Haagsma and Ritske Terpstra

Back Row (L-R) Jeltje Terpstra, Sjaardtje (Sarah) Haagsma, Sippe Terpstra

Front Row (L-R) Baukje (Bertha) Haagsma, Beitsche (Bessie) Haagsma, Jacob Haagsma, Finkje (Fannie) Haagsma, Ritske Terpstra



Dear Ancestor

Your tombstone stands among the rest;
Neglected and alone.
The name and date are chiseled out
On polished, marbled stone.
It reaches out to all who care
It is too late to mourn.

You did not know that I exist
You died and I was born.
Yet each of us are cells of you
In flesh, in blood, in bone.
Our heart contracts and beats a pulse
Entirely not our own.

Dear Ancestor, the place you filled
One hundred years ago
Spreads out among the ones you left
Who would have loved you so.
I wonder if you lived and loved,
I wonder if you knew
That someday I would find this spot,
And come to visit you.

Walter Butler Palmer