

## A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is known among foreigners today for its cheese and its windmills, its Golden Age paintings and its experimentation in social policies, for example around cannabis and euthanasia. Yet the historical background for any of these quintessentially Dutch achievements is often unfamiliar to outsiders. This concise history offers an overview of this surprisingly little-known but fascinating country. Beginning with the first humanoid settlers, the book follows the most important contours of Dutch history, from Roman times through to the Habsburgs and the Dutch Republic and the Golden Age. The author, a modernist, pays particularly close attention to recent developments, including the signature features of contemporary Dutch society. In addition to being a political history, this overview also gives systematic attention to social and economic developments, as well as in religion, the arts and the Dutch struggle against the water. The Dutch Caribbean is also included in the narrative.

JAMES C. KENNEDY, an American, is an expert in recent Dutch history. He has published widely in this field, including books on the cultural revolution of the 1960s and Dutch euthanasia policy. For eight years he was Professor of Dutch History from the Middle Ages at the University of Amsterdam before becoming Dean of University College Utrecht.

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JAMES C. KENNEDY

*University College Utrecht*



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## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN DUTCH HISTORY

- c.* 5,550 BC First agricultural settlements in the Netherlands.  
*c.* 3,000 BC Dolmens constructed in Drenthe.  
*c.* 750 BC First *terpen*, or *wierden* (mounds), constructed in Frisia.  
 57 BC Julius Caesar invades the southern Netherlands.  
 12 BC Roman rule established in many parts of the Netherlands.  
 AD 69–70 Batavians revolt unsuccessfully against Roman rule.  
 270s Franks penetrate far below the old Roman boundaries.  
*c.* 400 Roman rule comes to an end in the Netherlands.  
 600s Rise of Dorestad as leading trade center of the region.  
 695 Missionary Willibrord becomes “archbishop of the Frisians.”  
 754 Missionary Boniface murdered in Frisia (Dokkum).  
 785 Charlemagne defeats the Saxons under Widukind  
 843 Treaty of Verdun divides Carolingian Empire into three parts.  
 1018 Dirck III defeats the emperor, helping to define the future county of Holland.  
 1227 Battle of Ane ensures eastern areas of the Sticht are free from Utrecht.  
 1288 Battle of Woeringen confirms Brabant’s leading regional role over Guelders.

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 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN DUTCH HISTORY
 

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- 1346 Beginning of the long-term clan conflicts in Holland between Cods and Hooks.
- 1356 “Joyous Entry” agreement compels dukes of Brabant to respect existing privileges.
- c. 1407 First windmill.
- 1421 Great St. Elizabeth’s Day Flood, destroying the Grote Waard.
- 1428 “Kiss of Delft” between Jacqueline (Jacoba) of Hainaut and her rival cousin Philip the Good.
- 1464 First meeting of the States-General after being called together by Philip the Good.
- 1477 Great Privilege concedes historical rights privileges and limits power of ruler.
- 1525 First Protestant martyr to be burned at the stake in the Netherlands.
- 1548 Burgundian Circle established, containing almost all of the Low Countries.
- 1566 The Great Iconoclasm, in which Protestants destroy “idols” across the region.
- 1568 Battle of Heiligerlee, now seen as start of the struggle for Dutch independence.
- 1572 Sea Beggars seize Den Briel, catalyzing revolt against Spain in Holland and Zeeland.
- 1573–1574 Alkmaar and Leiden withstand the sieges of the Spanish.
- 1579 Union of Utrecht signed, effectively the constitution of the future Dutch Republic.
- 1581 “Plakkaat van Verlatinghe” repudiates King Philip II and his “tyranny.”
- 1584 Murder of Willem the Silent.
- 1588 Defeat of the Spanish Armada.
- 1618–1619 Synod of Dordrecht, establishing Calvinist doctrine internationally.

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 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN DUTCH HISTORY
 

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- 1619 Establishment of Batavia on Java, the chief Dutch base in the East Indies.
- 1634 Dutch seize Curaçao, to become their most important base in the Caribbean.
- 1642 Rembrandt completes *The Night Watch*.
- 1648 Peace of Münster, which ends eighty-year war with Spain, recognizes Republic.
- 1650–1672 First period without a *stadhouder*, called the “True Freedom.”
- 1672 “Year of Disaster,” in which the Republic is attacked by France, England and others.
- 1688 *Stadhouder* Willem and his wife Mary seize power in Great Britain.
- 1702–1747 Second period without a *stadhouder*, after death of Willem III.
- 1713 Peace of Utrecht brings an end to long war with France.
- 1747–1748 Revolutionary tumult across the Netherlands brings the House of Orange back into power.
- 1787 Patriots’ Movement seeking restoration of old rights is suppressed by Prussian army.
- 1794–1795 French armies invade the Netherlands, ushering in revolutionary regimes.
- 1798 The first modern constitution promulgated, creating a unitary state.
- 1806 Louis Napoleon becomes the first king of the Netherlands.
- 1810–1813 The Netherlands in its entirety annexed to France.
- 1813 Return of Prince Willem Frederik of Orange to become head of new regime.
- 1814 Unification of the Netherlands and Belgium under guidance of the Great Powers.



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 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN DUTCH HISTORY
 

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- 1815 Napoleon defeated at Waterloo, in part through role of Dutch forces.
- 1830 Cultural system introduced on Java – a financial windfall for the Dutch government.
- 1830 Belgian revolt puts an end to the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.
- 1848 A new liberal constitution is penned by J. R. Thorbecke.
- 1873 Beginning of the Aceh Wars, signaling expansion of Dutch power in the East Indies.
- 1878 Opposition to the liberal School Law sparks political mobilization of religious groups.
- 1903 Great Railway Strike, forcefully put down by the confessional government.
- 1914–1918 The Netherlands, with occasional difficulties, stays neutral during World War I.
- 1917 Pacification of 1917 grants universal franchise and publicly funds religious schools.
- 1932 Completion of the causeway (Afsluitdijk) cuts Zuyder Zee off from the sea.
- 1935–1936 Dutch economy at its lowest point during the Great Depression.
- 1940–1945 The Netherlands invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany.
- 1942–1944 Jews systematically deported to their deaths in eastern Europe.
- 1944–1945 “Hunger Winter” in the Netherlands, resulting in over 50,000 deaths.
- 1948 Marshall Aid, including \$1 billion in grants, offered to the Netherlands.
- 1949 Netherlands recognizes Indonesian independence.

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 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN DUTCH HISTORY
 

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| 1953      | Great North Sea Flood hits the southwestern part of the country.                     |
| 1959      | Natural gas tapped in Groningen, financing Dutch welfare state.                      |
| 1965      | Provo launches activities in Amsterdam; advent of Dutch counterculture.              |
| 1973      | Oil Crisis emblematic of start of slowing economy and higher unemployment.           |
| 1975      | Independence of Surinam triggers widespread migration from that country.             |
| 1979–1985 | Large protest movements delay decision about stationing NATO cruise missiles.        |
| 1980      | Squatters demanding better housing disrupt inauguration of Queen Beatrix.            |
| 1982      | Wassenaar Accord revitalizes Dutch economic “polder model.”                          |
| 1995      | Dutch UN troops fail to prevent fall of Srebrenica and ensuing massacre.             |
| 2000      | Dutch Parliament legalizes same-sex marriage, the first to do so.                    |
| 2002      | Murder of Pim Fortuyn is the catalyst for political turmoil in Dutch politics.       |
| 2005      | Dutch voters reject the European Constitution by a wide margin.                      |
| 2010      | Dissolution of Dutch Antilles, with each island choosing its own form of government. |
| 2013      | Government begins decentralization of the once extensive welfare state.              |