Haarlem Walking Tour -- by Jay Brentjes, October 2010

About eleven miles due west of Amsterdam is the city of Haarlem, a place that for many years was considered a 'bedroom community' for the rich merchants of Amsterdam. However, it has a history and charm of its own. So, if you have seen enough of Amsterdam and want to take a short excursion to Haarlem, hop on a train and 15 minutes later you will be in this old city. Like so many other towns, Haarlem is great to explore on foot, but you need a map and some directions to see the highlights. So at the end of page 2 you will find two maps. The first is for the overall tour, the second is the same from Google Earth. At the end of this page I have a detailed map to show you how to get to the Frans Hals Museum.

Our walk starts at the Haarlem train station, the oldest one in the Netherlands. It has a rather unique design with some art deco influences. Even the bathrooms have some unusual features. Since it may be a while before we stop for coffee or lunch, I recommend that you see and perhaps use these facilities before we walk. The maps at the end show numbers that correspond to the following sections and labels. Click on the map and it will take you to that spot. There are also a number of historic details in green print that are sprinkled throughout. Have fun exploring Haarlem.



1. The first thing you see when you leave the station are rows of bicycles. After all, you are in Holland where it is flat and very conducive for riding the two wheeler. The elevation of Haarlem is around 23 feet above sea level. If you feel lost just ask any one and you will be surprised how friendly the locals are and how well they know English. Keep in mind that people who don't live in one of the two provinces North or South Holland don't like to be called a 'Hollander', they are Nederlanders. But in Haarlem we are in North Holland. Of course the word 'Dutch' is a whole different story.

When you leave the station, bear to your right (west). Cross the area with all the buses and continue to the main street to the right. We are going to the center of the city first by taking the direct route of the Kruisstraat. It is about one half mile.
After a couple short blocks you come to our first canal. It is the Nieuwe Gracht (New Canal). While we are standing on the bridge, let me explain a couple things about the history of Haarlem.



The first indications of Haarlem date to the 10th century; but it was not until 1245 when Count Willem II officially granted it to be a city with its own sheriff and city administration. Haarlem had a good strategic location along the trading routes going north and south and right along the river Spaarne. Notice the river winding its way on the map below. The original city area was surrounded by the river, this 'new' canal we see here and the Oudegracht (Old Canal). The latter is now filled in and made into a major road.
The town grew and flourished and during the 14th century Haarlem was the second largest city in Holland, surpassing Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Hague. Only Dordrecht was larger.
As time passed the city prospered, defensive walls and more canals were built but the one we see here was the border of the city and the bridge we are standing on was actually the north gate.



At the top of this old map you can see how the road and the crossing had a jog or twist. This made it more difficult for the enemy to charge the defensive wall and tower. Considering this canal has been here well over five hundred years, it is interesting that it is still called the 'New Canal'.

Notice the large building to your left. This is the residence of the bishop of Haarlem. The church, St. Joseph, however, is further away on the Jansstraat. We will discuss religion in Holland a bit later when we are at the Grote Kerk (Large Church). Suffice it say here that the residence of a bishop came about in 1853, many years after the 'Reformation'.
Let us continue.
You will come to an intersection where the Kruisstraat changes from a busy city street to a narrow pedestrian-only road, the Barteljorisstraat. The origin of this name rests with Batte Joris, a resident who lived here around 1380. We are looking for number 19. It is the home of Corrie ten Boom and her family.

Corrie ten Boom and the Grote Markt

3. The story of Corrie ten Boom, as documented in a book and movie 'The Hiding Place' is fascinating. It is a true WWII story of how she and her family harbored numerous members of the underground and Jewish families in this tiny house with its secret hiding place until they were discovered and reported to the Nazis by someone nearby. Six persons stayed hidden in this tiny spot for several days while soldiers stayed inside the house. They were never discovered, but the sad tale of how Corrie and her sister were taken to a concentration camp in Poland where the sister Betsie died and how Corrie barely survived, is, in my opinion, more interesting than the Anne Frank history.
There is no entrance fee to see the museum, but you may have to wait until the next guided tour. In the little alley to the side of the jewelry store you will find a posting for the next time. If the wait is ten minutes or more, come back later, but don't miss it!!! Meanwhile take a quick look at the area near here**.**

4. Most European towns have a central market place where people used to come to shop and trade. It was a place where you could meet people and enjoy different events. In Haarlem it is still that way.



The first thing you see when you enter the Grote Markt is the church at the east end. It is the Grote Kerk or also known as Sint Bavo. We will visit it later during our walk and also learn a bit about its history, so 'ignore it' if you can. Right now let's stroll around the 'square' which is more like a rectangle. Besides the church you will notice the city hall to your right. It is at the west end or behind you in the picture that I show above.
It is a strange looking building with several sections that were added at various times. In 1955 remains were found that indicate that a wooden building was on this spot as early as 1100.
Then two large fires in 1347, and again in 1351, almost destroyed the wooden structures. The Count of Holland, William II had his castle at this location, but after the fires he moved to the Hague and donated the remaining building to the city. A completely new building was erected during the first part of the 17th century. The facade to the left was redesigned by the architect Lieven de Key around 1603. It shows the typical raised entry and steps sometimes used to make declarations and speeches to the audience on the square. The balcony on the floor above it served the same purpose.
If you should come to the Markt on Saturday or Monday, you will find numerous canvas covered stalls where you can buy flowers (Saturday) or clothing, fruits and vegetables on Monday. During the rest of the week and when the weather is nice, you can relax with a drink or buy some 'poffertjes' (little puffs) from the yellow wagon on the square. Poffertjes are small pancakes that are covered with powdered sugar or strawberries. The recipe uses yeast; hence they tend to puff up. They go well with a cup of coffee.

But let us take a stroll around the square in a counter-clockwise direction. There are a few buildings and a statue that you should see. The first section along the south side has an hotel and shops. Then you come to the 'Hallen', a long building with the baluster on top. It is known as the Verweyhal. It and the Vleeshal next door are part of the Frans Hals Museum where special exhibits can be seen. If there is something you like to see here, then by all means go ahead. But keep in mind that the main museum comes later on our tour.

The last building along the south side is the Vleeshal (Meat Hall). It has a very ornate design with a high gabled roof and lots of unusual features. This building was designed by the same architect who did the city hall from 1602 to 1604. It was originally used by a guild of butchers to sell fresh meat. Notice the ox-heads on the front of the building. In 1840 it was converted to the city's library and National Archives. The Haarlem Archeological Museum is located in the basement and there is no fee to see it. If you go around to the side of the Vleeshal you will have another interesting view, but come back to the Grote Markt. We will continue to the right of the church.



The long narrow building with the glass roof next to the St. Bavo church is the Vismarkt or Fish Market. It was built in 1769 and indeed this was where fish mongers conducted business for many years.It is now used for art exhibits and other cultural events. A few years ago it was the scene of a two day international chess tournament; but usually you can find exhibits of paintings, photographs, sculptures and other art objects. Let's have a look at the bronze statue in the square.

This is Laurens Janszoon Coster (born ca. 1370). Many Haarlemers know him as the inventor of the printing press. The story is told that Laurens during an outing with his grandchildren carved a letter out of the bark of a tree. The piece (that he holds in his hand) fell in the soft sand and left an imprint. This gave him the idea to carve wooden letters in reverse, coat them with ink and press them onto paper. He developed this further using lead and started a printing company. This was around 1420.
When Laurens was ill, one of his assistants, the letter cutter Johann Fust, stole his presses and type and took them to Mainz in Germany where he started his own printing company. It was here that much later, circa 1439, Johann Gutenberg printed the Gutenberg Bible and it was he who subsequently was credited with the invention of the printing press. The true story????



Let's finish our loop of the Grote Markt along the north side. Notice the square building on the corner. This is the Hoofdwacht, one of the oldest buildings in Haarlem. From 1250 to around 1350 it served as the first city hall of Haarlem. After that it became a private residence. The lower part of the house has been used as a printing shop and a beer storage place. The building was bought by the municipality in 1755 to serve as headquarters for the city guards; hence the name Hoofdwacht.
As we continue you will notice the awful white front of an otherwise old and stately house in the middle of the block. There are several places in Haarlem where the city fathers allowed these grotesque changes to be made. I my opinion, these 'modern' influences have no place in this historic setting. I have included a copy of a postcard showing what it looked like more than a hundred years ago.
When you arrive back at the city hall continue straight into the side street, the Zijlstraat (sail street).

5. Behind the city hall and just off the Zijlstraat is a narrow alley called 't Pand or Pandpoort. It leads us to the Prinsenhof. This was originally the garden of a Dominican cloister. In 1477 it was converted to a graveyard. The 'Reformation' and the end of Catholic churches in Holland also meant the demise of the cloister. In 1721 the city converted the 'hof' or courtyard into a herb garden for use by the college of medicine (Collegium Medicum). Now these units are for rent by the city, but some herbs can still be found.
From here we go south to the Jacobijnestraat where we turn right. The name Jacobijn stems from the time of the Dominican monks and was named for another cloister in Paris, Rue St. Jacques. (Jacob and Jacque; get it?) We are on our way to the Frans Hals Museum but not until we have seen a few 'hofjes'.
Let me explain:

Hofjes





Hofjes date back to the 14th century, such as the van Bakenes Hofje. Even then these court-yard homes were intended to be for the older and poor women of the community. They consisted of a small room with tiny kitchen and the residents could plant vegetables in the garden. The hofjes were often built in response to a will left by a rich person who wanted to be in the good grace of God and donate land and buildings to those who were in need. Hence we have family names associated with most or all of them. To be admitted and live in one of these units, a committee of three or four regents had to except the applicant with the understanding that all belongings went to the organization when the person died. As a consequence several of these 'hofjes' and their regents became very rich and powerful.
Haarlem had many wealthy residents and at one time had as many as 40 hofjes. Now there remain 20. Most can be visited during the day. They are still occupied, so when you visit some of these, please be considerate of those who live here. Don't peek into any windows, for example.

6. Keep the map handy because we are now going through some narrow streets and alleys. Walk west along the Jacomijnenstraat and cross the busy Oude Gracht (Old Canal) that is now filled. Continue through the narrow connection to the Achterlange where we turn left. You should see the brick building and the sign for our second hofje at Zuiderstraat 12. I have marked the map with a **6A**; it is Zuiderhofje.
If possible, go through the brick building and out the back to the garden.

The Zuiderhofje was built in 1640 by Jacques van Damme and his wife Elisabeth Blenckvliet. They were devout Mennonites and the church still owns the complex. After the Protestant Reformation Mennonites were only tolerated. They accounted for only five percent of the Haarlem population, but did more than one quarter of the charity work. The Zuiderhofje is one of four in the city and in addition the Church also ran an orphanage. Actually the church people refer to themselves as 'Doopgezinde' or Baptists, because they followed the preaching of Zwingli (as far back as 1540) and not Menno Simons who is otherwise considered the founder of the Mennonites.

We continue our walk towards the Frans Hals Museum and are going south along the Gasthuisstraat. Along the way there are some other hofjes as marked on the map. The first, Hofje van Loo, requires a short detour to the west, and the next, Buinings Hofje, is actually on the Botermarkt a bit to the east. However, you cannot miss them. See the map below. If time permits, have a look at some or follow the map to the museum.

6B Hofje van Loo, Barrevoetstraat 7, was founded in 1489 by the mayor Symon Pieterszoon van Loo. It originally consisted of 13 rooms and, as their will provided, it was 'purely to honor and rest the souls of their parents and themselves'.
Extensive renovations have taken place since then and now this hofje is the most visible from the street of all the hofjes in Haarlem. The front-row of three houses was demolished in 1880 when the street in front, the Barrevoetesteeg, was widened. So instead of the typical U-shape of houses around a garden, one side of the hofje is now located at the street, separated only with a fence.

6C Buinings Hofje, Botermarkt 9, was founded in 1610 by Jan Bruininck Gerritz. It is also owned by the Mennonite Church. Look for the entrance near the bicycle rack. Again many changes have taken place during the last 400 years. The hofje originally had rooms for six women with a common privy in the garden. There was no running water or gas heat until 1936, when it was remodeled. That reduced the space to five homes, with further changes in 1978 when the number of houses was reduced to four. Because it is still one of the wealthiest in Haarlem, the rent is free for the 4 women living here; they only need to pay for the utilities.

6D Brouwers Hofje, Tuchthuisstraat 40. The Gasthuisstraat now has a new name. As you walk along, you might have a look at this hofje. Go through the gate shown to the right.
After you leave continue along the Gasthuisstraat until it meets up with the Breestraat. Make a brief jog to your left and go into the Annastaat.

6E Hofje van Guurtje de Waal, Lange Annastraat 40, was founded in 1616 by Guerte Jansdochter de Wael, daughter of a rich textile trader. Originally there were six units that have been converted into four rental units. The entrance gate is worth a look, but it may not be possible to visit the inside. Continue on Annastraat and turn left on Doelstraat. That takes you to a small 'square' or triangle where you turn right.

6F Het Proveniershuis, Grote Houtstraat 140, was originally a cloister for nuns. The 'Reformation' changed all of that and the city took over. In 1577, the city council refurbished the main buildings to house the 'schutterij' or shooting range for the prestigious militiamen. The garden was converted to include two shooting lanes; one for bow and arrow, and one for the blunderbuss (an old Dutch word for Thunder Gun).

Be sure to go through the stone archway and see the garden. I want to end up here because this site has a lot of history related to Frans Hals, the master painter and citizen of Haarlem during the early 1600s.





The militiamen who met here for shooting practice were also painted by Frans Halls. In fact, he was one of them. These were the gentlemen who were in charge of Haarlem during the first part of the 17th century. Sometime during that century the mansion was converted to a 'Heeren Logement' or gentlemen's hotel. It was a stagecoach stop between The Hague and Amsterdam. The etching by R. de Hooghe in 1688 shows the two distinct sections and the entry gate still visible today. In 1707 it became the 'proveniershuis', or a house for elderly men who were able to pay their share of room and board.

Others who had no money were kept in the men's poor house known as the 'Oudemannenhuis' which is a few blocks away and is now the Frans Hals Museum, our next stop.

Cross the little square and go north along the Grote Houtstraat. Turn right on Cornelissteeg. At Klein Heiligland turn right a bit and enter Ravelingsteeg to the street where we will find the museum, Groot Heiligland. I know this sounds confusing so I have included a detailed map below. You will find it an interesting stroll through some small but very safe alleys of old Haarlem. BTW, 'klein' and 'groot' mean small and large, while 'Heiligland' means holy land. I have no idea where that came from.





Frans Hals



7. When you arrive at the Frans Hals Museum you might think you were lost, because the exterior does not look like a museum that houses a large collection of valuable paintings. After you enter through the gate and see the interior and central courtyard, you might change your mind. Remember, this used to be another 'hofje', one for older men who needed financial help. The statue in the entrance is that of a resident with his poor-box asking for donations around the city. It is reminiscent of the days when men over 60 lived here, two to a tiny room, and had to go out and beg for their subsistence. A lot of changes have taken place, so enjoy the collection of the famous portrait painter.

Frans Hals was born in Antwerp around 1580 but came to Haarlem with his parents when he was four years old. Like so many other Flemish, they had fled the Spanish oppression. He studied painting under Karel van Mander and at age 27 became a member of the Guild of Saint Luke. He was hired by the city of Haarlem to restore a large number of religious paintings by earlier artists but his interests were portraits. In 1616 he was commissioned to do a large, full size group portrait called The Banquet of the Officers of the St. George Militia Company*. You will see it inside*. It was the real start of his career and fame. Like Rembrandt, Frans Hals excelled in capturing the individuals expressions, and in group paintings he did not pose them in formal settings. You can just feel that the likeness was real. The children laughed and all was peaceful and nice. No wonder he became famous and was asked to paint many of the wealthier and better known citizens. Yet, like Rembrandt, Frans Hals died in poverty.

St. Bavo Church

8. We are on our way to the St. Bavo Church. So when you leave the museum turn left and go north along Groot Heiligland. On the map at the end of this page I have shown two ways you can go. The first is more direct, while the detour a bit more interesting. Your timing will dictate which way, but we are now about half way along. At the end of the picturesque Warmoesstraat you can see the south entrance to the church to your right.



The Grote Kerk, as it is known locally, dates back to around 1245. During the next two hundred years the building was erected basically as we see it today. But it took several modifications such as the taller section in light sandstone. Prior to that (1402) the tower was more 'free standing' and had a clock and seven bells, the heaviest of which weighs more than 10,000 pounds. The ceiling of the church is wood with detailed designs clearly visible from the inside. The Muller organ was added in 1738 and is the most ornate feature of the interior. It takes up most of the west wall and is almost 100 feet high. It has 5000 pipes, the biggest of which is more than 30 feet long. For many years it was the largest organ in the world.

Bavo is the patron saint of Ghent in Belgium and Haarlem. He was born in 589 AD, became a soldier and was later converted to be a Christian monk and donated his worldly possessions and time to the poor.
This was all during the era of the Catholic Church. But the 'Reformation' that took place during the 16th and 17th century changed all of this. Anabaptism, or the believe that a person should be baptized when he/she is old enough to know right from wrong rather than as an infant, became very popular in the low countries. John Calvin added to this with his teachings of absolute obedience to God. At the time Spain technically owned the country. The Spanish started harsh prosecution campaigns in the name of 'Inquisition', who were believers and who were not. The people in the north rebelled. This led to the 'Beeldenstorm' or 'Statue storm' of 1566. People went crazy and in groups entered the churches to destroy religious depictions of biblical scenes. Statues, paintings and other religious emblems and treasures were plundered and burst to pieces and burnt. The Spanish retaliated and it was the start of the 'Eighty Year War'. It finally ended in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia where the Netherlands was recognized as an independent state. But the damage to the church buildings, the removal of all 'icons' and the death of several priests would remain a blemish forever.

For the most part the decorations in the church are simple. The 'pews' are wooden chairs, there are few statues, no large paintings on the walls, and not the typical gold and glitter of churches in other parts of Europe. This is a Protestant Church, not a Catholic cathedral. The wooden ceiling deserves a long look (a look towards heaven?). And then there are the three ship models in front of the former chapel of the seamen's guild. They are Dutch warships: a 16th century armed merchant ship, a 17th century frigate and a pinnace. Unusual!
Also notice the falcon of St. Bavo on the table below and the grave of Frans Hals.
The church is open to the public on Monday through Saturday from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm.

When you are ready to leave go through the north wing entrance. To the left you will see the main square, but slightly to your right is the corner of Jansstraat. Our tour will go from this point to the Teyler Museum along the river Spaarne. If you think you have little or no time left, go up Jansstraat and it will take you to the train station.

9. Continue east passed the Jansstraat to the next corner where you see some interesting buildings. This is the 'Klokhuis Plein' or clock house square. The bell tower, originally from 1479, has been rebuilt but it used to be part of the printing shop of Johan Enschedé who was the countries printer of paper money and postage stamps. The building has since been converted into a food court. Now go south around the church to Damstraat where you turn left. It takes you to the river, the Spaarne. On the corner you see a gray stone house. It is now a bar, but used to be the 'Waag' or weigh house. It was used to weigh goods brought into Haarlem by boat. Turn the corner and you cannot miss the Teyler Museum, our next stop.



The Teyler Museum is the oldest museum in the Netherlands. It was built in 1784 to house exhibits of natural historic artifacts collected by Pieter Teyler, a wealthy banker and merchant. You will find fossils, minerals, coins and books as well as scientific instruments that were part of this fellows hobby. Teyler was a descendent of a rich Scottish family and made his wealth as a silk and cloth merchant in Haarlem. In 1763 he became more and more active as a banker. Pieter was a Mennonite and, because of the Reformation and the Protestant administration, he was unable to participate in organisations such as the Dutch Society of Science. So, he started his own collection of fossils and instruments. Eventually it became quite large and he decided to make the items available for study and put them up for display. In addition, Teyler's will made provisions for a yearly science prize to be awarded by the keepers of his library, art and science collection. Pieter Teyler died in April 1778, but his name is well remembered in Haarlem for the contributions he made to that city.

10. When you leave the museum go to the white draw bridge. You should at least walk across. Besides windmills, Holland is also famous for these unusual bridges. You can find them almost everywhere. Obviously the concept is that the center span can be tilted to let tall ships pass through. The top beams serve to carry the counter weights so it does not take much force to swing the centers up. Small bridges might have only one of those beams. Later along the Spaarne you will see another type of bridge that swivels at the center creating two passage ways for ships; it's called a 'draaibrug'.



I remember as a young man in Holland that when we took our sailboat through the canals and we had to have the bridge opened, we would blow a horn. The bridge keeper would come out, stop the traffic and open the bridge. As we passed by he would swing a pole with a rope to us. Attached to the end would be a small wooden shoe. We grabbed that and put in some money for the bridge keeper's efforts.

On the other side of the Spaarne you will also find the dock of the canal tour boats. If you have time you might consider taking this one hour tour. It takes you along the river and canals around Haarlem.
After you cross the bridge again and walk along the west bank, have a look across and back towards the bridge. You can see two old and two new home designs. Notice the square rigging of the modern style.

11. Follow the river as shown on the map. Just after it makes a sweeping turn you will find Teyler's Hofje. Just like the ones we saw earlier, this was for elderly women but it is by far the most prestigious in Haarlem not only

for its size and grandeur but also its prime location along the river. Pieter Teyler was the one who left instructions in his will for its construction in 1787. He wanted to found a hofje when his wife died in 1752 and purchased the Kolder hofje. It was renovated during his lifetime, but he found it still needed improvements for the residents. In his will he stipulated that a new hofje should be built in his name and the old hofje premises be sold. Below are pictures of the entrance and garden that you can visit at your leisure.

You may see some boat traffic on the river. Some of these barges are huge for the narrow channel. The waters of Holland have always been a means of transporting goods and for recreation. I remember once that we took our sailboat all the way from Rotterdam to Alkmaar, going from one canal to the next river or lake. We probably passed right by here; I don't remember the exact route.
Directly west of Haarlem are the dunes that protect the land from the pounding surf of the North Sea. The sandy hills mixed with the clay soil form a band of very fertile soil that is ideal for cultivating tulip and other flowering bulbs. But it also acts as a filtering system for the rain water that flows into the Spaarne.

Because of the clean water flowing through Haarlem numerous small beer breweries had their plants along the river until the 16th century. As a result of the Spanish repression in northern France and Belgium (Vlaanderen at that time) many immigrants came to live in Haarlem. They brought along their textile manufacturing skills and found that the clean water was ideal for making some of the best white linens and silk goods. The city's population grew from 18,000 in 1573 to around 40,000 in 1622. At one point, in 1621, over 50% of the population was Flemish-born. Haarlem's linen became world famous and the city flourished.
However, good clean water does not last when too many people up-stream misused it, and the river slowly became polluted. To continue making beer, another source for the water was needed. Rather than relocating, a canal was dug due west to a small lake in the dunes and ships would carry barrels of clear water to the breweries. The canal is still there and, of course, is called the Brouwersgracht (Brewers Canal). At one time there were as many as 100 breweries in the city. Most of the ale was distributed to North Holland, but towards the end of the 17th century the trade had diminished and in 1820 the city records did not list any breweries.

12. Our last point of interest is the windmill along the river. You will see it as we continue our stroll along the water front towards the swivel bridge. De Adriaan, it is called. As we get closer you can see that it is a bit unusual at the base. It is built on top of an old building, one of the towers of the former city walls. The mill has an interesting history and is quite picturesque at its location.
Now cross to the north side of the Nieuwegracht (New Canal) and walk along this scenic stretch until you come to the Jansstraat where we turn right to walk to the train station.



With the windmill in mind we have come to the end of a full day in Haarlem. I hope you had fun, didn't get lost too often and now know the difference between Haarlem and Harlem (New York). If you are going back to Amsterdam, be sure to buy your train ticket before you board.

Haarlem

Click on a number to go there

By Jacob Brentjes

