

## AMSTERDAM WALKING TOUR – PART 2

### Singelkerk

Located on the Singel, no. 452, the Singelkerk was built in 1608 for the Flemish Mennonite congregation. The church was named Bij het Lam (At the Lamb) because the building next to it was the brewery Het Lam (The Lamb). In 1639, the Singelkerk was enlarged. The Waterlander congregation, with whom the Smyth group was in contact, did not meet at this church until 1668 when they merged with the Lamists. Until then they met at the church Bij de Toren (At the Tower).

The Lamists were progressive Flemish Mennonites who continued meeting at this address after a group of more conservative Flemish Mennonites, called the Zonists, left and met separately at the church named Bij de Zon (At the Sun). Only in 1801 did the Lamists and Zonists reconcile and meet together at the Singelkerk. A stone in the façade of the church reminds of this merger. The text on this stone reads "*amore et pace coniunctae*" (joined in love and peace).

In 1615, the Waterlander congregation Bij de Toren grew due to the acceptance of the Smyth group. Already in 1610, Smyth had petitioned for recognition of his group as a true church. The Waterlanders informed other Mennonite churches of this request. Most churches turned it down. On his deathbed in 1612, the Waterlander teacher Lubbert Gerritsz urged the teachers and elders present to revisit the English request. Both Gerritsz and Smyth died that year. The Smyth group petitioned in 1615 to merge with the Waterlanders. The merger took place that same year.



The information found in the Singelkerk shows the (joint) histories of the Flemish congregation Bij het Lam and the Waterlander congregation Bij de Toren. A plaque shows the teachers of the churches, including those of the Smyth group.

Did you know that the Netherlands has many so-called schuilkerken (hidden churches)? During times of persecution, many churches made sure they could not be recognized as such from the outside. Believers would meet at these churches without getting caught. The Singelkerk is one such church. Located on Oudezijds Voorburgwal 40, the Roman Catholic church Onze-Lieve-Heer-op-Zolder (Our-Dear-Lord-in-the-Attic) is another fine example of a hidden church.



[Interior of the Singelkerk](#)

### Jan Munter's Bakehouse

Jan Munter (1570-c. 1620) and his wife Sara van Tongerlo (1578-after 1639) were important as well as rich members of the Amsterdam Waterlander congregation. A merchant and shipowner, Munter bought the bakery of the East India Company shortly after 1599. Munter allowed the Smyth group to live, work, and worship in the bakehouse. The bakehouse gave its name to the street Bakkersstraat (Bakerstreet)

which should have been named Bakhuisstraat (Bakehousestreet). Today, the Bakkersstraat still exists – it's the street to the left of the restaurant L'Opera on the Rembrandtsplein. If you walk down the street and turn left, you will see to your left the site of the former bakehouse.

After Munter died, his wife Sara sold the bakehouse to John Jordan from Wolverhampton, England, hence his nickname "the Englishman." In 1623, Jordan also bought an empty plot right next to the bakehouse. By that time, John Smyth had died (1612) and his group had merged with the Waterlanders (1615). The group, however, often met separately to worship in English. Jordan, who was a member of the English Reformed Church in the Begijnhof, allowed them to hold their meetings at the bakehouse. Several of the English lived in the houses surrounding the bakehouse. The English continued their meetings at the bakehouse until 1639 when their leader Thomas Pigott died. Then they met at the Waterlander church for worship.

Some interesting facts about the Munter family:

- Jan Munter's brother, Bartholomeus, also was a prominent merchant in Amsterdam. They were both born in the northern province of Friesland. In 1616, Bartholomeus was baptized in the Waterlander congregation by the famous leader Hans de Ries. In 1621, Bartholomeus was found guilty of forgery (false coins) and was exiled for life.
- Jan Munter's son Joan (1611-85) left the Waterlander Mennonite congregation and joined the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1638, he became a Governor of the East India Company and in 1670, he became the first of the burgomasters of the Munter family.



View of the site of the former bake house along the Amstel River