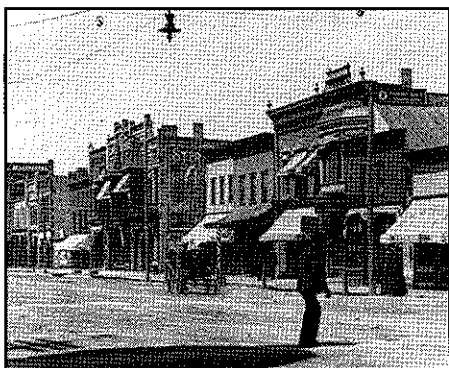


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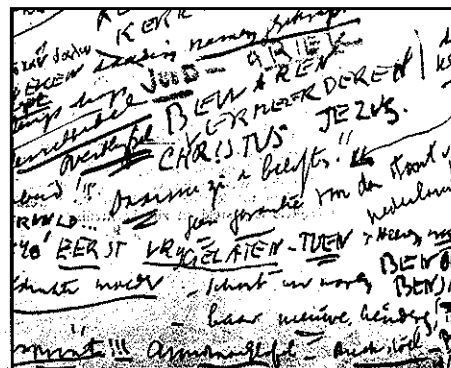
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ca. 1929.

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A Boy's Life in Holland, Michigan

by Henry ten Hoor



When I think back to the Holland of which I became conscious a little after World War I, I recall a well-defined, foursquare town of four square miles, rigidly planned. Streets numbered from one to thirty-two ran east and west, and avenues named after important people (Cleveland, Harrison, van Raalte), trees (Maple and Pine), and geographical reference points (First and Central) ran north and south. Two aberrant avenues, Michigan Avenue and State Street, formed an unorthodox V with the apex at Nineteenth Street and ran southeast and southwest respectively, to towns like Allegan and Saugatuck. The northwest corner of the grid was a bit irregular where the shore of Black Lake (later to become Lake Macatawa) wriggled vagrantly through that extremity, shortening the streets and avenues.

The most important streets of the town were Eighth Street and River Avenue. Their intersection was

Henry ten Hoor, professor of English emeritus, Hope College, has translated a number of significant Dutch-language manuscripts for the archives of both Calvin and Hope College. He is also well known as a master woodcarver.

Henry ten Hoor on tricycle on 13th Street.

dominated by the tower clock. I have a dim and early memory of crowds of noisy people here and a human effigy dangling from a rope. This must have been in celebration of the 1918 armistice. I remember the building beneath the tower as a bank. My family had little to do with banks, but in this one we lost, in the 1929 bank failure, the remnant of the insurance money that had come to us from my father's death in 1925.

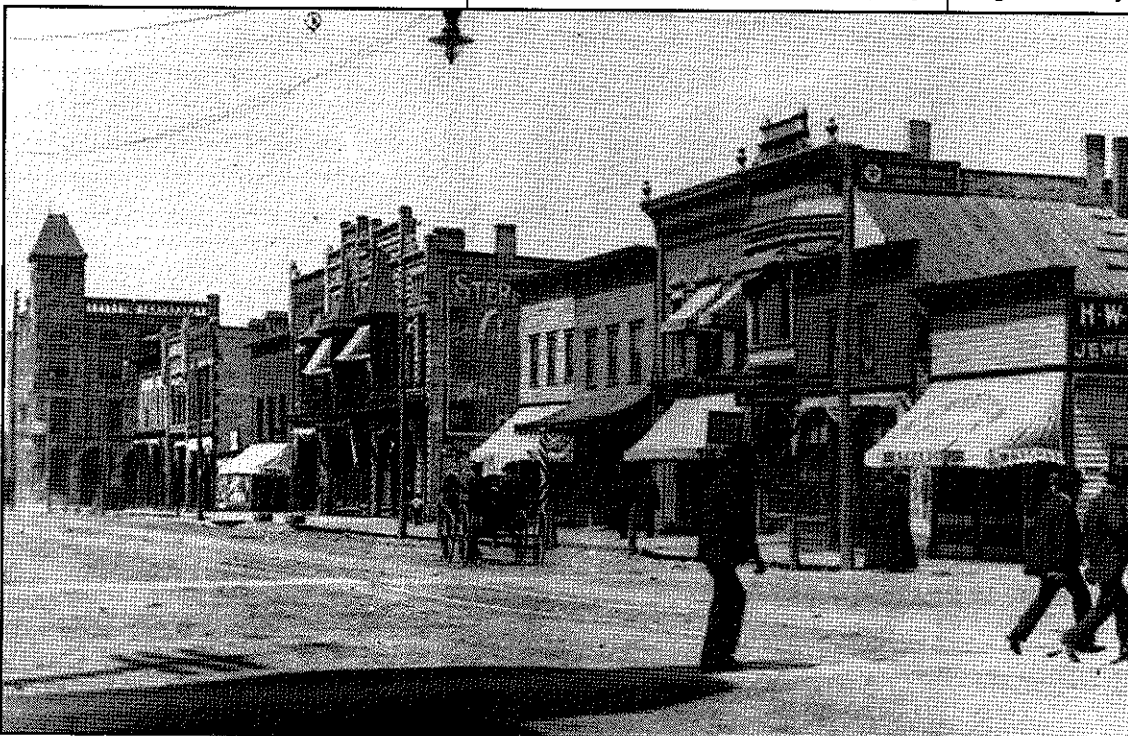
Eighth Street ran from the boat dock at the foot of First Avenue east through the whole length of the town. The boat docks served mostly passenger steamers that ran a regular schedule between Holland and Chicago and other cities across Lake Michigan. My older brother, living in Chicago, would now and then come home by this means. On holidays the steamers took party-goers for short, worldly cruises around Lake Michigan. We youngsters would get some notion of how the other half lived as we witnessed their dancing and drinking before they shoved off for a

day's fun. It was at the boat dock that the prison ship tied up the night that Tunney defeated Dempsey for the world's heavyweight boxing championship. The instruments of torture and the tales of unjust punishment that I saw and heard aboard that eighteenth-century penal relic plagued me with nightmares the entire night.

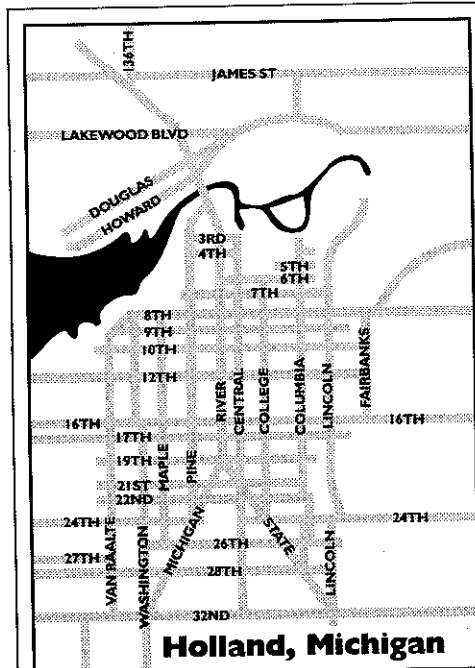
Eastward along Eighth Street were buildings important to my boyhood. There was Fabiano's ice cream parlor—the real thing—with wire-legged tables and chairs, where older children and adults could enjoy a sundae or a soda for a dime. Along a bit farther was the Strand Theater, which we always passed with averted eyes to avoid the temptation of the pictures displayed beside the entrance to that den of wickedness. There was Woolworth's, where it was possible on Saturday nights—the busy night downtown—to buy three packs of gum for ten cents and where older boys loitered to eye the girls as they went about their shopping.

Down the line a piece was Visser and Vander Linde's clothing store, where my mother on a memorable occasion bought me a Pony Boy suit like the one displayed on the plaster pony in the window, a suit with *two* pairs of short pants, for which she paid ten dollars, half of which I had found in the form of a five-dollar bill one Sunday morning on my way to Sunday school. And there was Nies' Hardware, where my father bought me one wintry Saturday night, out of a clear blue sky, a Flexible Flyer for a whole five dollars, a good part of his weekly wage as a furniture worker. Almost at the end of the street and across from each other were Peter Prins' grocery and the firehouse, the poised fire engines visible through open doors. Whenever I walked to town with my father on Saturday night, this was the farthest point of our journey. At the grocery store my father paid the weekly bill, and in appreciation Mr. Prins presented him with a couple of cigars and a small bag of candy, sometimes *flikjes*, my parents' favorite, because they reminded them of home in the Netherlands.

At the extreme end of Eighth Street, at the railroad tracks, was the Pere Marquette train station. Only once do I remember boarding the train here—with our entire family—to attend my older brother's wedding in Chicago. Beyond the tracks were country



8th Street looking west to the "tower" building (from the Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland).



Street map of Holland, Michigan.

and Zeeland and Grand Rapids. If we had business in that direction, we took the Interurban.

River Avenue, the other main street, began at the apex of the V and ran north through the rest of the town, across the Grand Haven bridge, and into the north country. I remember once riding across that bridge in a horse-drawn surrey (with a fringe on the top) belonging to the Vander Beeks, who lived across the lake. They picked us up for a day's visit to their farm and brought us home after dark—a momentous experience.

Along River Avenue were more important buildings. Within the V, where the avenue began, Holland Christian High School was built in the 1920s. It housed both the junior high and the high school classes; I got to go there when I entered the seventh grade and was graduated from the high school some years later.

A little north of the V was Dr. Poppen's house. Dr. Poppen was the

family doctor who attended all our ailments, made morose jokes that scandalized his patients, and was always ready to join a stricken family in a meal if the cooking was done with plenty of onions. It was in his office in the basement of his house—now replaced by a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant—that he set my arm broken in a roller-skating accident. Roller skating increased in popularity as I grew up because, as the town developed, more streets were being paved. We youngsters would watch the paving process going on, especially interested in the workmen wearing their clogs who shoveled the macadam and poured tar where it was needed. We gathered small balls of cold tar and chewed them, developing theories about tar's power to whiten the dullest teeth. When the street was finally smoothed out by the steam rollers (real ones) and the new macadam was brushed with what I think was dry cement, it became a smooth white sheet excellent for roller skating. Sometimes the city fathers would cordon off a block or two of new street for youngsters to use as a skating rink.

It was when the block of Eighteenth Street between First Avenue and van Raalte Avenue was completed—the block on which Johnny Visser lived and all the neighborhood children came to skate the first evening it was finished—that I broke my arm. The next morning my oldest sister took off from work to accompany me to Dr. Poppen. He scolded us for not coming earlier and then called his wife and his son, a medical student at the University of Michigan home for the summer vacation, to assist him in restraining the patient. The pain was bad. For comfort my sister took me afterwards to Lage's Drug Store, where we each had an ice cream soda. The rest of the sum-

mer my arm hung in splints.

Somewhat closer to downtown was the city hall, a new structure with pillars, still standing, in which were city offices and the public library. The latter was a forbidding place on the second floor, where absolute quiet was required and where a huge print of *Cleopatra Experimenting with Poisons*, by Alexandre Cabanel, showed people in various degrees of extremity, not exactly the thing to make one feel at home.

Across from the city hall was Centennnnial Park, two square blocks with flower gardens, meandering gravel walks, a decorative fountain, fish ponds, and, of course, park benches. My mother used to like to stop to rest here and to enjoy an ice cream cone from Arnold's across the street. Arnold's was important because it was the last stop on our way home on Saturday nights. Here we would pick up a pound of hot, freshly roasted peanuts, which the whole family shucked and ate around the dining room table before bedtime.

Across the street from the north edge of Centennial Park was the post office, another pillared structure; like the city hall, the Tower Building, and the Masonic Temple, it was one of the city's imposing buildings. Later came the Warm Friend Tavern, on Eighth Street, a skyscraper of five stories.

Nearer to where I was born and lived in the southwest section of town was a small group of stores between Eighteenth and Nineteenth Streets on First (now Washington) Avenue. The main store here was Peter Mass' grocery, presided over by Mr. Maas in his eternal gray sweater and Mrs. Maas in her perpetual white head cloth, needed, we were told, to alleviate her constant headaches. I do not remember that these two people ever smiled. Close by

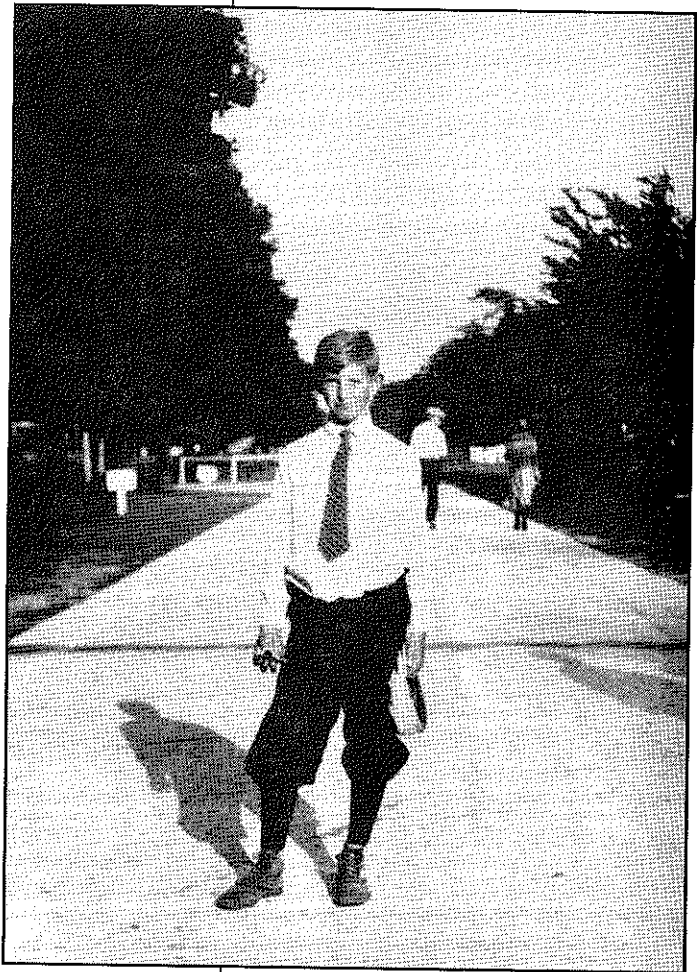
was Harry Dornbos' butcher shop, which took orders and delivered daily. My mother's usual order was *fijftien centen gehakte koevleesch* (hamburg). The Sunday order, given on Friday to be delivered on Saturday, was either a beef or a pork roast. Later a Kroger store came in across from the meat market, raising many arguments about the wisdom of patronizing chain stores. There was also the new Vogelzang Hardware and, somewhat later, a variety store connected with it. Between it and the alley was Ben Vander Vliet's bike shop, where we whiled away many hot summer hours, learned to insert brass plugs and to shoot rubber plugs, and followed the fortunes of the Cubs and the White Sox by radio. This building later became Ben Frens' garage, where once our Model T was repaired by Ben himself in such a way that the reverse pedal sent the vehicle forward.

Important among the businesses in this area now called Washington Square was the Geerds' Shoe Store, where one was fitted for his annual new shoes and where his old ones were soled and heeled. The attraction of the place was a ladder on wheels which ran on a track the whole length of the shelf-filled wall. This allowed Mr. Geerds to reach shoes at whatever height anywhere in the store. Now and then a well-behaved young customer was invited to take a small ride on this unusual conveyance.

Next to Geerds' was the French Pastry Shoppe, a bakery run by Leo, a Dutch baker, the husband of a Holland girl who, in a final desperate bid for matrimony tripped to Europe with the express object of finding a husband. The marriage and the bakery were both successes, although the pastry had little about it that was recognizably French.

And then there was De Loof's

*Henry at the entrance
of the Getz Lakewood
Farm Zoo.*



*Holland's Central
Avenue Christian
School, ca. 3rd
grade in 1922.
B.J. Bennink, Principal.
Henry ten Hoor –
first row, second from
right, with the tie.*



Drug Store, a hangout on warm summer days, where Herk, the proprietor, often allowed youngsters a bit of credit and where neighbors were allowed, since few of them had phones at home, to use the telephone "as long as you don't swear or talk Dutch."

Nearest to where I lived was Damvelds' store, a true corner store with crackers, dried beans, macaroni, and so forth, displayed in small square glass panels along the front of the counter. Both Mr. and Mrs. Damveld were about five feet tall, both gray haired, both laconic. His distinguishing features were a pair of severely bowed legs, often the subject of jest, and a Captain Katzenjammer mustache. Damvelds' was the place for kerosene for daily cooking and for emergency rations.

A Christian Reformed boy's life in the twenties was dominated by Christian school and church. Although there was a public school within a block of where I lived, I was sent to the Christian school about a mile distant. Everybody walked. Everybody walked four times a day: to school in the morning, home for lunch, back after lunch, and home in the evening. The distance was actually less than a mile because there were many vacant lots we could cut through, and it was an interesting walk because there were many alleys that led past many an interesting heap here and there that demanded exploration and often resulted in the discovery of some discarded treasure. But on rainy days and in wintry weather it was a long and sometimes exhausting trek.

School itself was not particularly exciting. There was always the Bible story at the beginning of the day, and usually some talkative pupil got to tell the whole thing. My neighbor, Mart, got to do this often, and he did it badly, linking all short, declarative

sentences with "and then."

There was little equipment on our gravel playground: three or four swings and some monkey bars. The best thing was our horseback fights, in which a big fellow as horse carried a little fellow as rider and made war upon a similar combination.

Near the school, in a house later to become a funeral parlor, lived the Races, an aged couple it seemed to us, who kept a small candy store in their front room. Now and then we stopped in here if we had a penny to spend and selected some goodies from the gleaming glass display case. The room was decorated with Civil War antiques: sabers, pistols, rifles, and odd pieces of uniform, which always sent our imaginations dancing.

Getting past the public school on our way to and from our school was not always without incident. This was evident in the stones, snowballs, and earthy names we hurled at each other. If our parents knew about this, they certainly did nothing to deter it or change our attitudes because nothing was ever mentioned to us about it.

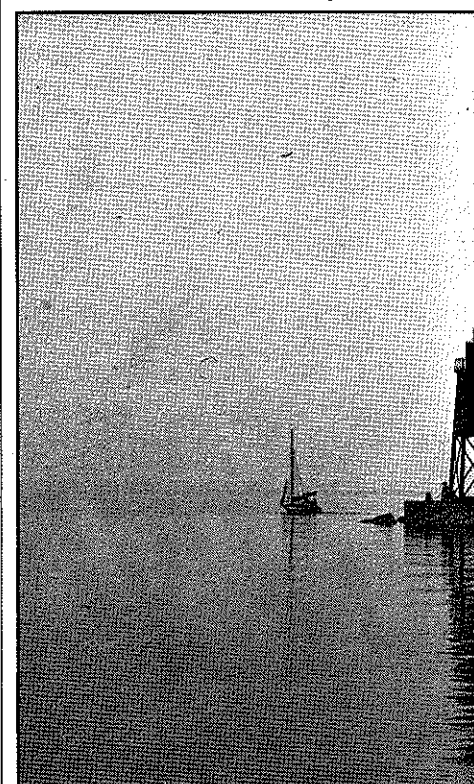
Sometimes the trips to and from school were taken on roller skates or bicycles or tricycles. Tricycles I remember well because the first time I rode my new one it disappeared, but by some miracle never explained to me, Principal Bennink recovered it and returned it to me the next day.

Generally speaking, I didn't find school very pleasant or enjoyable. Attempts to make learning pleasurable were few. At Christmas we sang Christmas songs, and at Thanksgiving time we always sang "Over the river and through the woods to Grandmother's house we go," but I had never seen a grandmother, so I always felt a bit out of it, and I suspect many other children of immi-

grant parents felt the same way.

The other dominating element in our lives was the church. I remember as a very small boy going to church with my father, an elder, and meeting with him and all the other consistory members in the smoke-filled consistory room before services. There was always a long prayer, usually in Dutch, which impressed me with its long, resonant words but defied my understanding. Then I sat with my father in pews designated for the consistory and was always intrigued by the handshaking with the minister that occurred after the service. No one ever explained this to me, and I don't remember asking about it. It was one of those things that a child takes for granted because it is done by adults.

After the morning service there was Sunday school, at least in the winter, about which I remember collecting colored cards with a weekly memory text and a pictorial illustration of some biblical story or teach-



Holland piers.

ing. I have a pack of these in my desk as I write. Some of the early ones from about 1915 have the memory text in English and the Bible story in Dutch. By 1918 everything was in English.

Classes were arranged by gender and age. They were distributed throughout the sanctuary so that during story time and text-recitation time there was a general buzz throughout the room. Sessions were constantly interrupted by officers of the Sunday school who distributed library books, cards, and, later, *The Instructor*, and who collected the inevitable "collection."

At Christmas time there was a Sunday school program in which the pupils, sometimes costumed and bearing some prop or other, spoke small verses about the nativity and sang Christmas songs. The climactic event, at the conclusion of the performance, was the distribution to each child of a small cardboard satchel of Christmas candies and an

orange. The Christmas candy with flowers embedded in it always intrigued me.

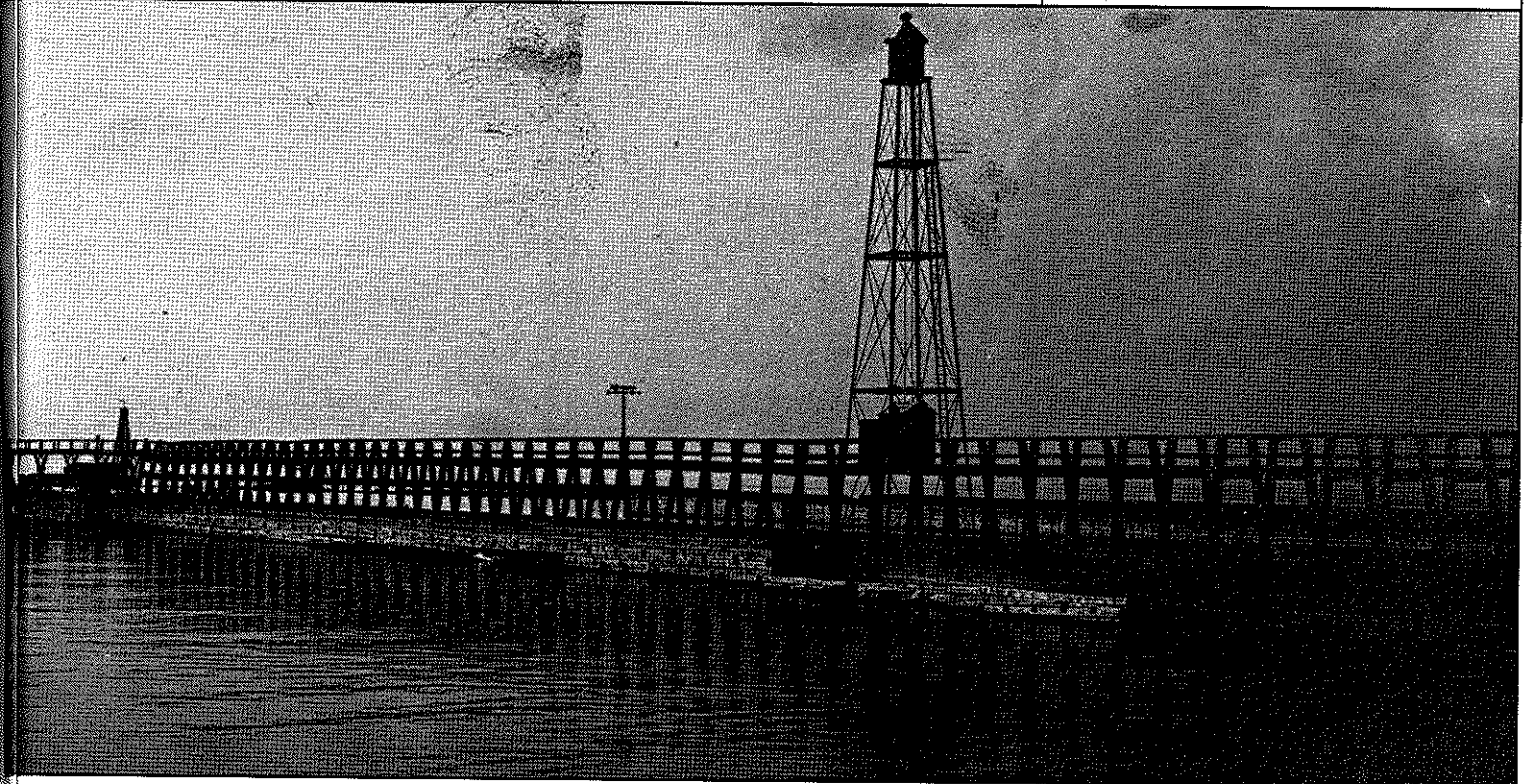
The summertime event connected with Sunday school was the annual picnic. This was the great outing for the whole congregation. I think that for my father it was the only real recreation of the year. I remember one picnic when we were all transported to a Lake Michigan beach by a launch that hauled everyone from the boat dock. I believe this happened only once. And it was at this picnic that my father, in some kind of contest, won a new shiny pair of pliers of the Oak Leaf brand. There were games for everyone—boys, girls, men, women—and there was always a huge barrel of lemonade with orange rinds and hunks of ice floating in it, an unforgettable treat.

At church there were three services each Sunday, and I often went to all three. After my father died, I went regularly to the two o'clock service with my mother, who often

wept quietly during the singing of certain psalms.

When we boys got a bit older, we were permitted to attend the evening service alone. We all sat together in two or three pews at the rear of the church. Decorum was not the best. I remember that we took it for granted that we should get our coats on during the singing of the doxology and then reform in the pews for the benediction. No one, parent or elder, ever pointed out the impropriety of this behavior.

And there was catechism. The younger children attended on Saturday morning during the school months. It was a rote business of question and answer which inspired a good deal of ingenuity in keeping the answer books visible to the pupils and invisible to the pastor. Children usually brought a penny for "collection." What it was for no one knew, and no one asked. Sometimes we sang a song. There were two prayers.



The pleasant thing about this Saturday catechism was that I always stopped to "call for" Johnny Visser, whose mother baked bread on Saturday morning. After catechism we stopped at his house and were fed thick, warm slices of fresh bread. Mrs. Visser spread the bread while it was still on the loaf and then tucked it under her competent arm and sawed off the slab with a huge knife. The procedure never ceased to interest me.

Older children attended catechism on Wednesday afternoon after school or on Wednesday evening. All extra-curricular activities in the Christian schools were suspended at these times so that the church program would have no interference.

When children had completed catechetical courses, they moved into Boys' Society or Young Men's Society. The boys met on Sunday mornings after the service, at the same time as the Sunday school. The society was organized with a president,

usually an elder or deacon, who taught the weekly Bible lesson; a vice-president from among the boys, who assigned topics for "after recess" discussions and essays; a secretary, who recorded the proceedings; and a treasurer, who collected the dues and saved up the money for the summer outing. I have among my souvenirs a long report to the Boys' Society called "Samuel," written in Dutch couplets by my oldest brother. It tells a lot about the mood of the boys and the quality of this Christian education.

The Boys' Society outing was a grand all-day affair which happened in the woods and on the beach bordering Lake Michigan. Provisioned with wieners, buns, all kinds of pop and ice cream, we spent the day eating, drinking, playing ball, swimming, engaging in wild games, and getting painfully sunburned.

The favorite game was to put one's head down on the end of a vertical ball bat, rotate ten times, and

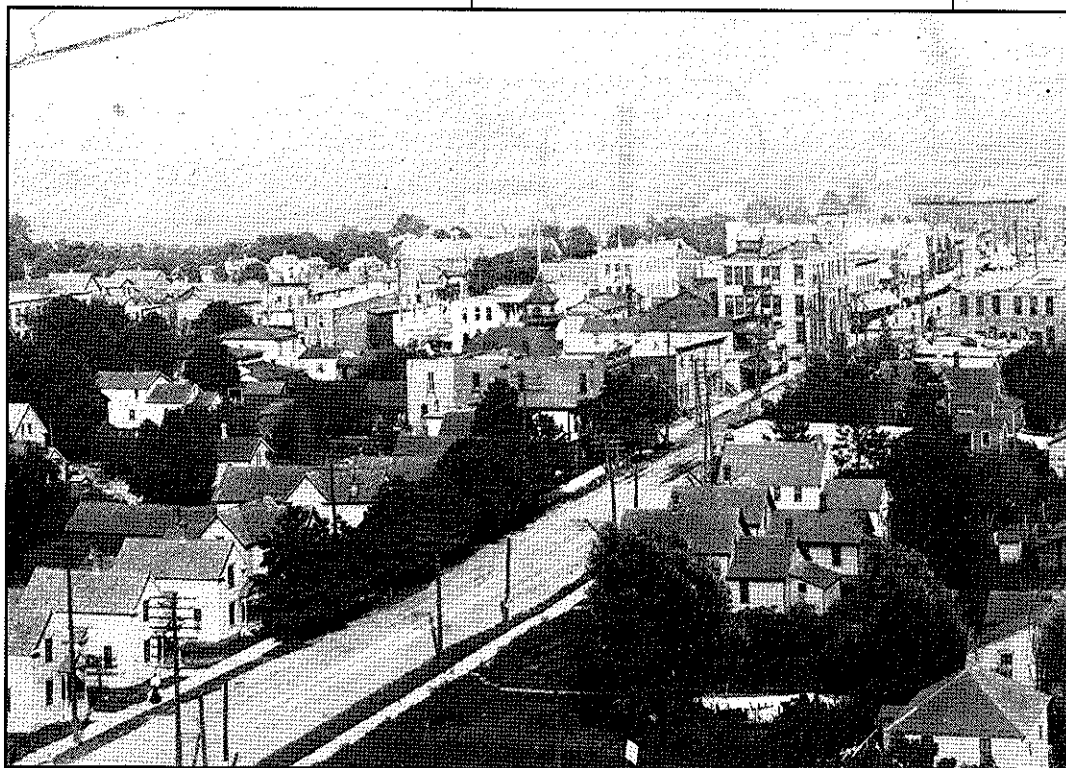
then try to run to a designated target. The erratic running of dizzy kids was funny, but the effects of this on stomachs full of junk food was often less than hilarious, and sometimes participants found it impossible to enjoy the continuing festivities.

Of course, there were things to do not connected with church or school. In the spring, when the snow had disappeared, roller skates and marbles appeared.*

And, of course, tops were popular—wooden tops with steel points (sometimes ball-bearing points). There was a great deal of popular doctrine about the right kind of cord to use for the best results. Sometimes steel points were sharpened and the top hurled at another spinning top with the intent of splitting it. Whoever split a top got to keep its steel point.

In the summer there were all

*The game of marbles was well defined. It was played on a smooth section of sidewalk. One player would "set up" an arnic (a particular kind of marble) and sit behind it with legs spread in a V. The rest of the players knelt on a line three sections of cement away and shot megs (clay marbles) at the arnic. The player who hit it won the arnic and the right to set it up. The original owner of the arnic got to keep all the megs that were shot at it. This game could go on for hours unless some lucky fellow "skunked" all the players, i.e., won all the megs. Girls never played this game. Certain rules applied. One might or might not join the game with "overboards," depending upon the decision of the group. Overboards were megs that escaped the V-spread legs of the boy who set up the arnic. Glassies were never accepted as arnics. Glassies were transparent and sometimes had colored spirals in them, but arnics looked like marble.



A bird's-eye view of Holland, 1919



Holland's backyards. Brinks kids with sprinkler, ca. 1918.

kinds of things to do. For the very young children there was the sand hill half a block from my house. It was a regular dune. There at the foot of the hill we could dig down to water with our hands and improvised shovels. We could build sand automobiles and equip them with old cart wheels for steering and sticks of various kinds for brake and shift levers.

Older children did more daring things. They curled up inside old automobile tires and rolled down the hill, across the avenue, and into the alley beyond Dutch Hank's. Not everyone dared to do this.

Within a couple of blocks of where I lived was Dunn's Woods. No one knew who owned this property, but it was located behind Dunn's brick factory and thus got its name. It had in it a small stream with one or two fallen trees across it and enough primeval forest to inspire Indian games and imaginary fears and deeds of derring-do. Besides, there were flow-

ers to pick—violets and buttercups, mostly—and, at the right times, strawberries and blackberries.

On the outskirts of Dunn's Woods and near the brick factory the stream from the woods widened into a sort of pond. By damming up the outlet, we could create quite a respectable pool for swimming. The dam always disappeared in our absence and had to be rebuilt regularly. Sometimes we built small booths of sumac and sassafras branches to provide some shade between swimming sessions.

Beyond Dunn's Woods was Kroll's Hill, a somewhat larger dune than the one near my house. Here we now and then built fires to roast potatoes buried shallowly in the sand. They never got quite done, but sprinkled with salt, they were better than any meal prepared at home, we thought.

The making of kites took up a good deal of time. Kite sticks were available free at the lumberyard. We

always asked the man in charge if we might have some, and he invariably referred us to the scrap pile behind the mill. Then came the problem of fastening the cross sticks together firmly, pasting the newspaper to the store-cord skeleton, adjusting the bellyband, and finding sufficient material for a tail. If, as sometimes happened, the kite flew, we would send up messages, rectangles of paper fastened around the kite string and urged up to the kite by jiggling and verbal encouragement. There were always those who experimented with unorthodox types of kites, like the bow kite, with the cross stick bent away from the wind and the box kite, a kind of square tunnel the aerodynamics of which no one understood. These were seldom successful. There were no ready-made kites to be had. If we wanted a kite, we built it.

And there was fun with bicycles. Mostly we had old "traps," but they

served the purpose. Often they were without seats, a deficiency overcome by winding burlap sacks where the seat should be. Pedals were frequently only the axles on which the pedals were supposed to rotate. Grips on the handlebars were a non-existent luxury. Often the bike was too large for the rider, in which case he rode "underbar," a difficult feat, especially if the pedals

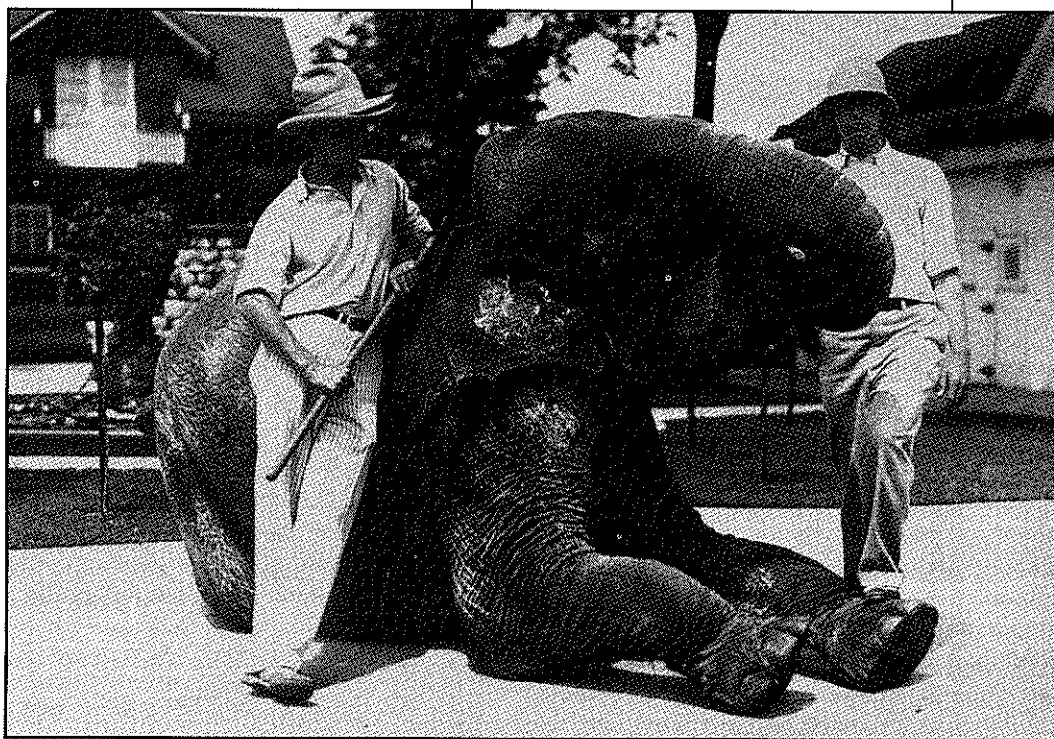
Grand Haven road to the farm.

A summer's bicycle jaunt to Getz's farm was a whole day affair which we brought off in the spirit of Tom Swift adventurers. Early in the morning we would mount our bikes, and, swinging our bags of lunch about our heads, we would shout, "We're off," in the best Swiftian style, speed through the vacant lot next to my house, through the alley, onto the

enade. As the couple drew abreast of me, the monkey stopped, eyed me with interest, grasped my hand in his, and drew me into their company. So the monkey, Mr. Getz, and I paraded about the farm to my amazement and the entertainment of my friends, who later observed that the monkey must have recognized a lost relative.

The zoo had other denizens: a boa constrictor that always showed a lump from just having swallowed a rabbit whole, an elephant named Nancy, a number of African beasts, and a variety of exotic fowl. Our greatest amusement, though, came from the distorting mirrors, in which we could make ourselves tall and lean or short and fat.

It was only in the summer that we ever got to drive Mr. Postma's mules. Mr. Postma (his name was always pronounced in the Dutch fashion) was the neighborhood handy man. He lived by himself in the sand hill in a two-room tarpaper house. He had a team of mules—Maud and Jennie—with which he did lots of plowing, excavating for basements, and hauling



The Getz brothers with their elephant Nancy. P. 51 in Donald Van Reken's The Farm That Was a Zoo (Holland, Michigan, privately printed, 1983).

were only slippery spikes.

But these bikes, inadequate as they were, took us to ball games, to Macatawa Park, and even to Getz's Farm, a private residence and small zoo across Black Lake and on the Lake Michigan shore.

Mr. Getz, a Chicago industrialist and one of the promoters of the Tunney-Dempsey championship fight, had a driveway laid from Holland to his farm north of Ottawa Beach—two strips of cement that ran the entire eight or ten miles from the

sidewalks of the city, across town, over the Grand Haven bridge, and onto the two strips of cement. These we followed up hill and down dale till we reached our destination.

One of these trips stands out in my memory because on this occasion Mr. Getz himself was in residence, which was not often the case, and on this day he elected to take a stroll about the farm hand in hand with his pet monkey. The visitors, I and my friends among them, lined the sidewalks watching this unusual prom-

things from place to place. He had a defective left arm, the result of incompetent medical attention to a break when he was young. This caused the arm to hang with the palm of his hand turned outward. The arm was not useless, just skewed. When he held the reins of his team, the knuckles of both hands pointed in the same direction, but that left arm was as strong as the right.

Quite often, as he creaked by in his wagon, we would beg for a ride,

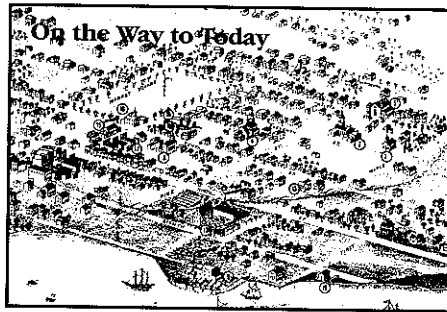
and quite often he would consent. One of the group usually got to sit up on the seat; the rest jogged along in the wagon. If he was in the right mood, he would, if asked, allow one of the boys to drive for a short distance on the straightaway. We learned that Jennie was gentle but that Maud was more mulish in temperament, and he taught us a good deal about the care and feeding of such animals.

I think Mr. Postma liked children, for, whenever I was sent by my parents to arrange with him to come and do some work, he would treat me to chocolate peppermints. Other boys had the same experience, and so it became a practice that, if any one of us was sent to him on business, he would call together all his friends and we would all call on him in a body and all enjoy the peppermint treat. He must have suspected the trick, but he was always cordial and generous.

My black three-legged cat, given me by Mrs. Tripp to distract me from a toothache (and in all innocence named Nigger) spent half his time at Mr. Postma's house and half his time at mine.

Mr. Postma had another attraction, a cement-block factory. In low, ramshackle sheds he had machines for mixing the cement, forms for shaping the blocks, and space for storing them. But most important was a small-gauge rail system by which he moved the blocks from the place of manufacture to the place of storage or loading. When the system was not in use for production, we boys would be allowed to play train with the empty cars, some of us pushing, some riding, and some acting as conductors and engineers. This was good for rainy days because it was snugly under a dry roof.

Even though all my memories of Mr. Postma are pleasant ones, I can-



Available at the Holland Sentinel. Send \$35.00 plus \$3.00 shipping to 54 West 8th Street, Holland, MI 49423.

not recall that I ever saw him smile. The same is true of Mr. De Boe, the Sunday school superintendent and perpetual elder; Mr. and Mrs. Damveld; Mr. and Mrs. Maas; and Mrs. Vander Ark, the principal. My childhood seems to have been filled with unsmiling adults.

There were many incidental games to fill an idle summer's day. Playing tag in "Big Tree" was one. "Big Tree" was a huge maple that stood in Elts' yard on Twenty-Second Street. Its branches were dispositioned like a circular stairway so that one could leap from one branch to another clear to the top of the tree and down again. Some who played in the tree daily could make the ascent and descent with eyes closed. Tag in the tree was much more exciting than the earth-bound version and resulted in many feats of aerial derring-do.

Hidden gezeek was always available because it could be played anywhere at any time, since anything could be designated as "goel." None of the players knew the word "goal." Gray wolf, which we usually played as dusk was falling, was a bit scary because of the eerie calls exchanged between the players. And there was pum pum pullaway, which demanded quite a group of players. All the above needed only space in which to be played. Sheeny, on the other hand, demanded some equip-

ment. Sheeny was a kind of dryland ice hockey. The sticks were naturally bent branches found among the shrubbery of Dunn's Woods and kept under some back porch until needed for the next game. The puck was a crumpled quarter-pint Pet milk can found in the trash of the neighborhood alleys. Any fairly level area could be the playing ground. The game began with two opponents crouched over the puck, tapping their sticks on either side of the puck, and then tapping each other's stick three times. On "four" both sticks swung at the puck. The object was to get the puck across a *goel* line. Any number of players could be accommodated.

Large tin cans also provided entertainment. The big Pet milk cans could be made into "horse shoes" by being stamped down so that the ends clamped themselves on one's shoes. To equip a number of "horses" demanded a thorough search of blocks of trash-filled alleys.

Summertime was not all play. There were jobs to be had, especially with farmers in the vicinity: picking strawberries or apples, weeding garden crops, and so on. My job was usually with the Vander Vliets, who kept a square block of truck farm a block from where I lived. The work varied: hoeing certain plots, weeding others, and cultivating with a hand cultivator, which included the mystery of sharpening the blades and adjusting them for depth and width. If not managed properly, the cultivator was a mortal machine that could wipe out three feet of produce in one thrust. One piece of farm lore I learned in those days is that parsnips should never be weeded in the morning because contact with their wet foilage raises blisters on the hands.

I don't remember what wages we were paid. This was never negotiated. We relied on the mercy of Mr.

John Nies Hardware decorated for a patriotic event (from the Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland).

Vander Vliet, who, at the end of the working day, doled out from his well-worn leather purse what he thought was fair. No one ever rebelled. Although I don't remember the rate of compensation, I do remember that one summer I had saved \$2.50 by the Fourth of July and spent most of it in patriotic celebration at Jenison Park. We rode there, in holiday clothes, on bikes decorated with red, white, and blue crepe paper. We rode the merry-go-round, threw baseballs for Kewpie dolls, watched at the rifle range, split a bottle of near beer (which tasted like yeast water), ate ice cream, and drank root beer.

Summertime also brought unscheduled exciting events such as airplanes passing overhead. This was rare. When it happened, the first person to notice the approaching plane would shout, "Airplane!" And all the people within earshot would stop what they were doing, tumble out of houses, find a point of vantage (the sand hill was excellent for this), and watch with craned neck as the novelty made its noisy way through the sky. Children shouted and waved. Adults waved. There was much speculation about where it had come from, where it was going, who might be aboard, what its business might be, until it disappeared over the horizon, and then someone always declared the end of the episode by announcing, "Out of sight!" Then everyone returned to his interrupted activity.

During the winter, because of school and catechism, there was less time for play, but there were after-school hours and partial Saturdays. Much of the fun had to do with



snow. After every snowfall there was sliding on the sand hill. On good days, on my Flexible Flyer I could make it across van Raalte Avenue to behind Dutch Hank's barn, and if sliding was good at Kroll's Hill, which was higher than the sand hill, I could manage a long, careening ride on curving paths through the underbrush at the foot of the hill.

Hopping bobs was a Saturday sport because it demanded lots of time and was dependent upon the farmers who came into town with their sleighs on Saturdays to get "soup" from Heinz Pickle. The "soup," a by-product of the pickle-canning process, they fed to their hogs. The trick was to attach your sled to the rear of these sleighs and enjoy the ride as long as you wished, provided the driver was agreeable or didn't know you were hitched up. Complications could arise. I remember one adventure when the rope attached to my sled became so badly entangled in the iron braces of the sleigh's runners that it took me miles to get the thing free. By that time I had been

pulled way beyond the Sixteenth Street cemetery. It was a long walk home.

I remember one good winter when we built a fine igloo in the Dielemans' yard. We piled the snow high, hollowed it out with what Robinson Crusoe would have called "inexpressible labor," soaked it with water to make it firm and icy, and put in a couple of small windows and niches in the walls to hold candles, which, when lit, made the interior sparkle. We played games in that snug igloo for a couple of nights, and then one day when we returned from school we found that it had been demolished by Mrs. Dieleman. We were never told why.

One cold winter there was an ice carnival on Black Lake. There were races of all sorts for skaters who used the old "Dutchies" and for those equipped with modern shoe skates, contests for ice boats, rinks for non-competing skaters, and ice fishing. Everyone thought it was a resounding success, but it was never repeated.

Children's lives are mixed with cer-

tain fears and mysteries. The children I knew and went to school with and played with were afraid of gypsies, of passing the open doors of the firehouse, of getting home after curfew blew, and, after the Loeb and Leopold frightfulness, of being kidnapped and murdered like Bobby Franks.

Now and then gypsies appeared during the summer. In one or two wagons they would camp beyond the southwest corner of the town, not far from my neighborhood. Though we never became aware of a documented case of their misbehavior, we feared them because of rumors of thievery (they stole money, bikes, and laundry off clotheslines), kidnapping (they stole babies, too). When the gypsies departed, we all felt relieved, and the good news circulated rapidly throughout the neighborhood.

We were afraid of passing in front of the firehouse with its wide-open doors and red monsters poised to rush out. We would dash past the open doors, keeping a suspicious eye on those unpredictable engines. Adults never hurried past, which we thought strange, and yet they were never harmed.

The same whistle (we called it the mockingbird) which blew at seven o'clock in the morning, twelve and one o'clock at noon, and six in the evening as signals to workers, also blew at five minutes to eight in the winter and five minutes to nine in the summer as a curfew to get the children off the streets. It was nice to be near home when it blew because we were afraid of being caught out late. Though we had no evidence that bad things happened to loiterers, our fear of the curfew persisted.

When the Loeb and Leopold story broke in the papers, we children began to feel at risk. Five or six of us provided ourselves with protection in the form of clubs, short ones like

billy clubs, equipped with thongs by which to tie them to our wrists. We carried these to school and catechism and wherever we were sent on errands, and we had long, serious discussions on how we would use our weapons to protect ourselves and each other.

Funeral crepes always affected our mood. Every now and then on the way to school we would discover one of these on the door of a house where death had occurred. The crepe was composed of flowers and ribbons of subdued colors: black, gray, lavender. We seldom knew the person whose death was thus announced, but we passed the house silently, not knowing quite how to assimilate this event into our usual experiences.

When I was eleven, my father died. I remember his coming home from work in pain in the middle of the day. I remember his being in bed during the day, something unprecedented. I remember his asking me to be quiet because noise disturbed him. And I remember the discussions about an operation, which was finally decided upon too late. I remember the bad reports from the hospital, my brothers' coming home from Chicago and Ann Arbor, and finally the funeral, the body in the coffin in the parlor, and the lunch prepared by the Ladies' Aid for the gathered mourners.

I have no recollection of any gesture of condolence nor any special attention from anyone in our congregation for a boy without a father. I remember with gratitude that Johnnie Visser's father, when I was old enough for college, offered to lend me money interest free. Though he never said so, I think it was a gesture in memory of my father, with whom he had served as an elder many years.

Making profession of faith signaled the end of boyhood. A group

of us high school boys appeared before the consistory to make our profession. In the consistory was Mr. Eissen, a self-styled lay theologian, usually at odds with whatever minister was serving at the time. The incumbent minister was a gentle pastor, somewhat given to sentiment but a stranger to profound and argumentative theology. He was a thorn in Eissen's flesh and vice versa.

So we were questioned by the minister as to our biblical knowledge, after which he invited the consistory members to ask us questions. There were questions about our observance of the current taboos, such as dancing, card playing, and moviegoing. No one asked us if we loved the Lord or why we desired to make profession. Mr. Eissen had his question, too. It was intended to show that the minister was incompetent. Mr. Eissen fixed his eye on Louie and launched his bombshell: "Louie," he said (Louie's father was an elder and present in the room), "who is the antichrist?" Louie was nonplussed. His eyes darted about; the blood began to rise into his fair-complected cheeks; he stole a glance at his father whose gaze was averted, turned an appealing eye to the minister, from whence came no help, and finally blurted out, "Bultema!" Eissen waggled his head to say, "See, I told you so." Others reacted stolidly or with suppressed laughter.

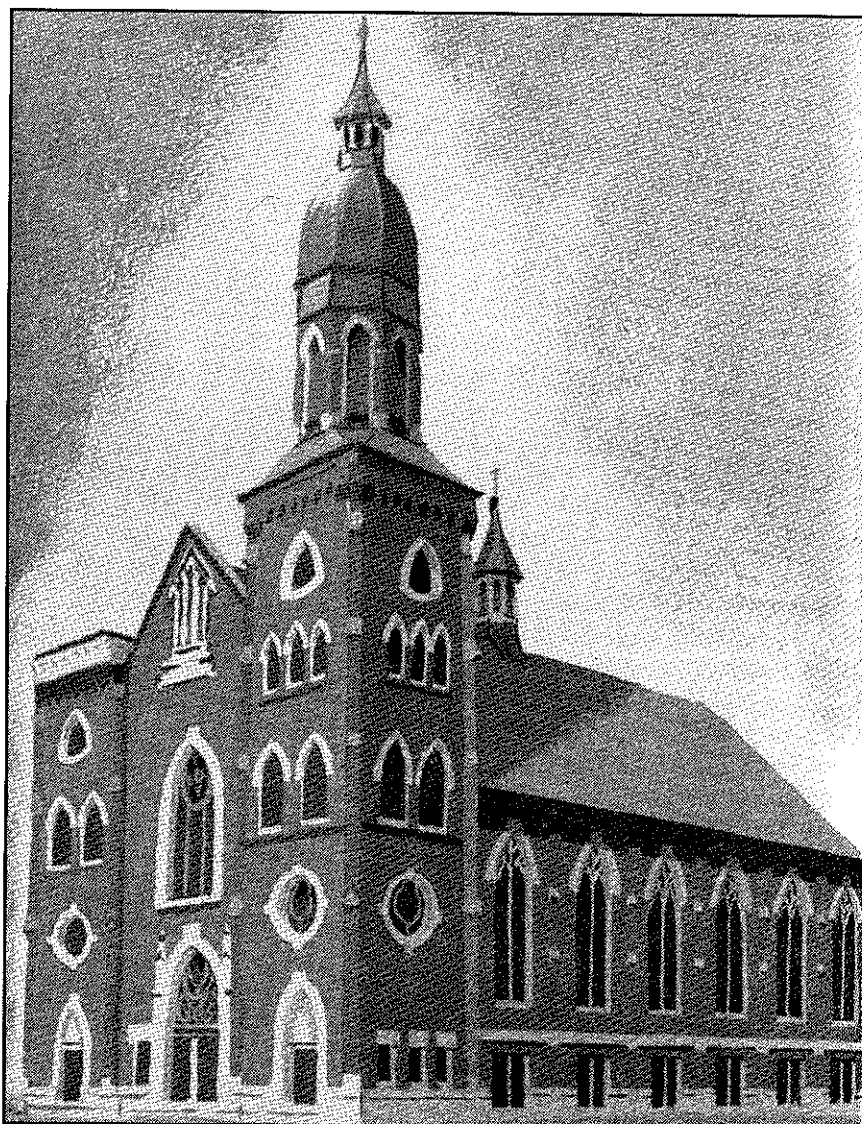
Despite this evidence of faulty knowledge and inadequate training, Louie and the rest of us were accepted into the membership of the church and thus mustered out of boyhood and into the adult world.

*Rev. Harry Bultema led a group of his followers out of First Christian Reformed Church in Muskegon to form the Berean Church. The doctrinal disagreements between the two groups arose from two different interpretations of Scripture regarding "the last things."

Church and School on Chicago's West Side 1913-1921

Part 1

by Henry Stob



*First CRC of Chicago,
Ashland Avenue, 1923-1946.*

Henry Stob, professor of philosophy emeritus, Calvin Theological Seminary, is in the process of writing his memoirs. See *Origins*, Volume IX, number 2 for the first selection from these memoirs.

What fashioned the Dutch people in our neighborhood into a community was the local church. It came into being in 1867 when several families left the Dutch Reformed denomination to make common cause with the Michigan secessionists who had left a decade earlier. The first worshipers met in a small forty- by sixty-foot frame building which they had erected on Gurley Street between Miller and Sholto, and my father joined them there when he first settled in Chicago. When, around 1883, the Gurley Street structure proved to be too small to accommodate the growing congregation, new accommodations were established on 14th Street between Throop and Loomis. It was in this church building that I was baptized and our family worshiped there until in the early 1920s when the congregation moved once again, this time into a large, handsome brick edifice on Ashland Avenue and Hastings Street which the Lutherans had put up for sale.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

I am told that before my time there had been three worship services on Sunday, but in my day these had been reduced to two, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and these I regularly attended. Adult

young people were expected, however, to be in church on Sunday evenings for singing school or for engagement in other religious activities. From attending these meetings boys and girls my age were exempt. Midweek prayer services were not in the Dutch tradition and were not held, but a number of "societies" for Bible study did meet during the week. There was also a Recitation Society, in which like-minded people practiced eloquence and presented poetic readings. The latter was a kind of corollary to the so-called singing school, where both young and older adults learned to develop their vocal talents. Their musical abilities were not, however, put to use in the worship services. Nothing like a choir was permitted to complement, much less supplant, the rendition of the Psalms by the voice of the assembled congregation.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Saturdays at our house, and I suppose elsewhere as well, were set aside for Sabbath preparation. Mother began the day by scrubbing the floors and dusting the furniture in an already clean house and by assigning Mart and me to take up the throw rugs for placement on a backyard clothesline, where, for the removal of all dust, we were to attack them with rug beaters. Next came Mother's inspection of the men's Sunday clothes, together with the mending and pressing they might require, whereupon Mart and I gathered up the Sunday shoes of the whole family and brought them to the back porch for polishing. We boys were free to play on Saturday afternoons, but we were expected to be in early enough to avoid the evening traffic that flowed in and out of the bathroom, for Saturday was bath day, and every member of the family had to be given his or her allotted time in the tub. Saturday night

was not a night for visiting, and on it neither the older children nor their properly trained peers went out on courting "dates"; such out-of-house engagements were held to be deleterious in their effect upon Sunday worship. Mother was not opposed to cooking on the Sabbath, our dinners on that day being uniformly great, but to minimize Sunday labor, she usually peeled the potatoes and made other culinary moves the evening before. Probably for similar reasons Father, instead of shaving in the morning as was his daily custom, did so on this day just before retiring for the night. When the evening's activities subsided, we joined in chatter and conversation, but no one stayed

Onze Toekomst

December 16, 1921

Church Plans to Purchase German Property

The First Christian Reformed Congregation, gathered Monday evening to discuss the purchase of the German Church, corner of Ashland Avenue and Hastings Street, and accepted, nearly unanimously, the proposition of the trustees of the German congregation to buy the property for \$75,000.00. This includes the pastor's house, the church, a large yard, excellent benches, carpets and an \$8,000.00 organ. Also the art glass in the windows. The German congregation reserves the right to use the edifice for one and one half years after the sale.

up late. We went to bed on time in order to be rested and alert when the Sabbath dawned.

After a communal Sunday breakfast we all dressed for church and walked in a group to the house of worship. Before we left our residence, peppermints were distributed

all around, and I was given two pennies, one for Sunday school and one for the church "collection," which was taken up in mid-service by deacons manning long poles at the end of which open-faced velvet bags were affixed for the reception of the offerings. Arriving at church, we entered as a family, and since ushers were then unknown or regarded as an impertinence, Father and Mother took the lead in conducting us to our customary pew midway the auditorium. It was customary in those days for boys who had reached the age of sixteen, and had thus become licensed to discard their knickers and wear long pants, to declare their maturity and independence by abandoning the family pew and sitting in the back rows or in the gallery of the church. Father frowned upon the practice, and it was not indulged in by my brothers.

The worship services were conducted in the Dutch language. This is not remarkable. It is natural that immigrants should wish to hear the gospel preached in their native tongue and to sing in church the songs they learned in the land of their birth. But many of the older

Onze Toekomst

June 8, 1906

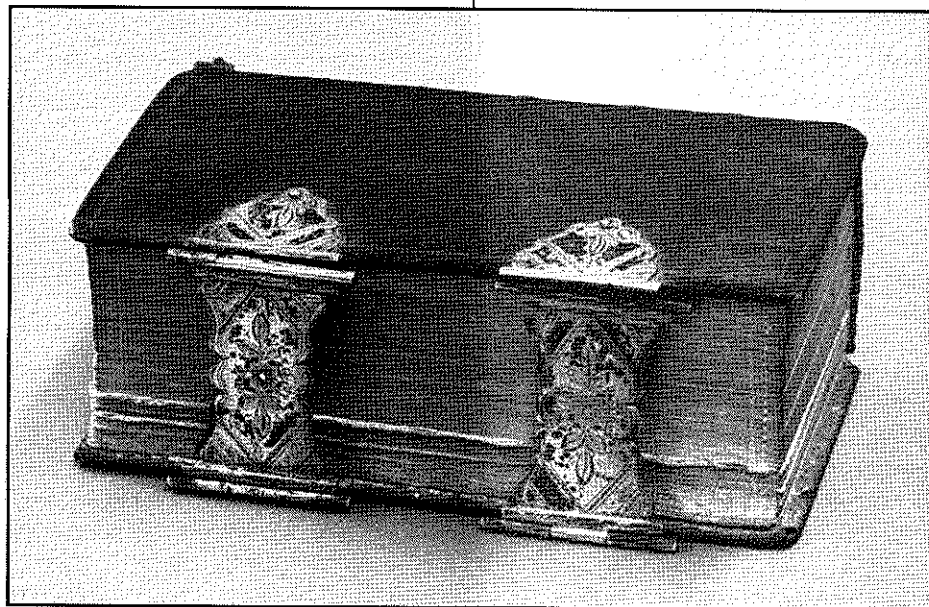
Laying of the Cornerstone of the New Christian School

Last Wednesday, the cornerstone of the new Christian School on 15th Street between Ashland and Paulina, was laid with fitting ceremonies. The festivities began at two o'clock in the afternoon. Before a large throng of interested people, Mr. H. Jacobsma, who functioned as master of ceremonies, opened the meeting and requested the singing of Psalm 105:5, after which he requested Dr. P. Moerdyke to lead in prayer. After the opening formalities, the Rev. H. Harneling spoke masterfully before the meeting on the topic "The positive confession of God is necessary in the teaching of children." Following this the chair was given to Mr. A. Bulthuis, who with a few proper remarks laid the cornerstone of the new building, after which the meeting sang loud and clear Psalm 100:4, now the chair was given to Dr. P. Moerdyke, who made a beautiful

speech in the English language, and his topic was: "Christian instruction a necessity for good citizenship." The last speaker on the program was the Rev. C. De Leeuw who spoke about Christian instruction and knowledge. The speech was outstanding through its simplicity and clearness. Then Rev. E. Breen led the meeting in a prayer of thanks to God. The Christian School on our West Side has progressed remarkably during its existence. It can boast now of 225 pupils with the following instructive personnel: Mr. H. Jacobsma, Mr. H. Van Dellen, Miss Jenney, Van Wesep and Miss Katie Venema. The new school building will be built at a cost of \$8,000. It will contain eight rooms, although only four will be used at the start. May the new school be blessed and at the same time be a blessing for Chicago!

worshippers on 14th Street had been in America for decades, and though they spoke intelligible if somewhat accented English on the job and in

the streets, most of them were opposed to the use of that language in the church. American religion, they believed, was Methodistic, and the Americanization of the church could only mean the dilution if not the dissolution of the Calvinistic faith. Forgetting that classic Calvinism was first articulated in French and Latin, some even held that no language was better fitted to preserve and propagate it than the Dutch. Whatever the reasons for it may have been, the fact is that as late as 1915, nearly sixty years after the church's founding, only 17 of the 223 congregations in the Christian Reformed Church conducted worship services in the English language. The slow pace adopted toward the Anglicizing of them is no doubt on many counts to



Psalter Hymnal with silver clasps.

Borstius, Primer, "First Lesson."

*(below) Ebenezer Christian School, 1923,
first-grade class.*

EERSTE AFDEELING.

EERSTE LES.

- 1 Vraag. Wie was de eerste mensch?
Antwoord. Adam. Genesis 1 vers 27.
- 2 V. Waarvan heet hij Adam?
A. Van de aarde. Gen. 3 vs. 19.
- 3 V. Wie maakte het eerste kleeid?
A. God.
- 4 V. Voor wie?
A. Voor Adam en Eva. Gen. 3:21.
- 5 V. Waarom?
A. Omdat zij naakt waren.
- 6 V. Hoe zijn zij naakt geworden?
A. Door de zonde. Gen. 3:7.
- 7 V. Wat was de eerste zonde des menschen?
A. Het eten van den boom der kennis des
goeds en des kwaad. Gen. 3:6.
- 8 V. Waar werd de zonde gedaan?
A. In het Paradijs.

be regretted, but, when I consider what has contributed to my own development, I cannot much lament the community's long retention of things Dutch. I learned the rudiments of a foreign language as a child. I also came to possess the stately full-noted Dutch Psalms, which on occasion I can still bring to mind, and I was insinuated into a history and into a culture of which there is reason to be justly proud.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

I don't know how much benefit I derived from Rev. Vander Heide's sermons. I listened as best I could, and I believe that I gasped the elements of his discourses. But a young boy's attention span is short, and the sermons were very long, so long indeed that to retain a hold upon even adult listeners the preacher often

asked for a psalm to be sung when he had arrived at the midpoint of his sermon. The congregational prayer—which omitted nothing pertaining to praise, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition—was lengthy, too, and was commonly referred to as the "long prayer." When it was about to begin, people generally resorted to their store of peppermints, it being understood that these hard candies were to be sucked and not chewed lest a sound disturbance be created. Hymns were not sung in church; only the Dutch Psalms were used. There were no racks with a supply of psalters; people owned their own copies, many adorned with gold or silver clasps, and these they carried to and from church. A hand- or foot-pumped organ accompanied the singing, but when a relatively un-



familiar psalm was announced, a *voorzinger* would appear up front to lead the congregation. The elders marched into church as a body, with the minister at their head, and they sat together on the side benches provided for them. To express their agreement with the preached word, each shook the hand of the minister as he descended from the pulpit. I know of no case where an approving hand was not offered, but I am told that it sometimes happened, to the embarrassment of all. The Communion wine was sipped from a common cup. Since Jesus drank with his disciples in this way, there was strong opposition to the introduction of individual cups, although synod did in 1918 leave the use of them to the discretion of local consistories.

Many of the modern conveniences were lacking in the church of my youth. There was no parking lot, and presumably none was needed since most of the people lived within walking distance of the church. There was no nursery, and crying infants sometimes proved distracting. There was no air conditioning, which meant that on hot summer days the congregation resembled a sea of waving fans. Since there was no loud-speaker, the minister in order to be heard had to be in good voice. Ours fortunately met the standard, though occasional guests did not, quite to the distress of those in the back rows. No coffee was served after the service had ended; to eat and drink even in the basement was tantamount to temple desecration.

My father was a firm believer in catechism training, but he was lukewarm toward Sunday school, it being in his

*Schedule of study used in Chicago-area
Christian schools, 1912.*

Onze Toekomst

March 14, 1913

Izak Da Costa Oratorical Society

Next Monday evening, March 17th, the Christian Recitation Society "Izak da Costa" will give a public performance in the church building of the Christian Reformed Congregation at 14th Street.

We mention this particularly because the society has made good progress since its existence. On this occasion a program will be given which is well worth hearing. Three competitions have been announced.

At the meeting a collection will be taken in behalf of the supplementary fund of the Ebenezer School.

judgment an alien importation, most likely from England. I nevertheless attended, in part because my playmates did, and he offered no objection. I don't remember much about the instruction. The teachers were no doubt devout and committed people, but they were untrained, and they worked under handicaps. The classes were scattered in pews

about the auditorium, and the general hubbub was disturbing. English was spoken here, but we often sang Dutch hymns. One of them—"Er ruist langs de volken een leeflyke naam"—still remains with me, and I sing it to myself on occasion. The Christmas celebration was the highlight of our Sunday-school life. It was then that we all received an orange and a small bag of hard candy. I don't believe, however, that I ever performed in the Christmas program.

Catechism classes were held once a week, after school. The instruction was given by the pastor, and it was conducted in the Dutch language. Our text was Borstius' *Primer*, a compendium of the Heidelberg Catechism. I still remember how it began: "Vraag: Wie was de eerste man? Antwoord: Adam." Classes met in the sparsely equipped and dank church basement, and to get there we had to pass through the largely Jewish settlement on 14th Street. The Dutch are not normally anti-Semitic, and Hollanders and Jews did in fact peacefully co-inhabit the neighborhood of my youth. But schoolboys invading an alien "turf"

TIME SCHEDULE BY MINUTES FOR SCHOOL WEEK

[illegible]

did sometimes get waylaid. This is why we tended to walk in groups and, for use in possible combat, often carried sticks. These were laid neatly beside our chairs when we recited Borstius' *Primer*. I was required by my parents to be prepared for class. On the evening before the class met the book was taken in hand by either Father or Mother, and one by one the questions were asked and the answers elicited. Should the recitation be to any degree faulty, I was ordered into a corner, there to improve my knowledge. Only when the lesson had been learned could I go to bed.

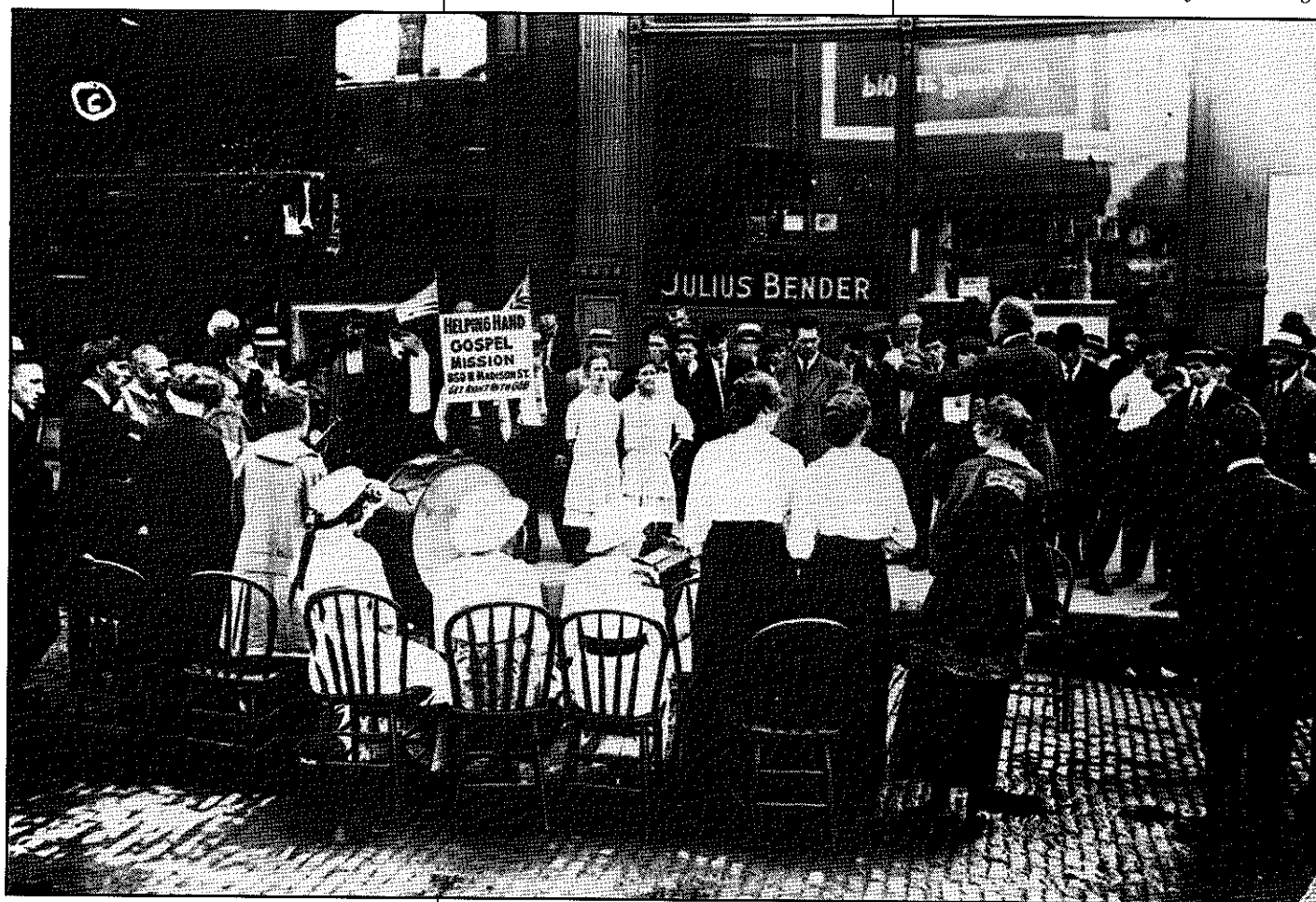
The Sabbath at our house was observed in quiet. We attended church, ate a good meal at noon, went to church again, and for the remainder of the day arrested all of our weekly

activities. We dressed in Sunday clothes, did not play outdoors, avoided team sports, threw no balls, rode no bikes, and rested. What occupied us was reading, hymn singing, and conversation, and in retrospect I know of no better way to spend the day on which the Lord arose.

The school that I attended was only twenty years old when I entered it. It was established in 1893 by the consistory of the 14th Street Church and was until 1902 under its governance. In its earliest years it was, therefore, a decidedly parochial institution, and it went by no other name than "The Christian School." During the first two years of its existence classes were held in a rented store located at 685 South Ashland Avenue

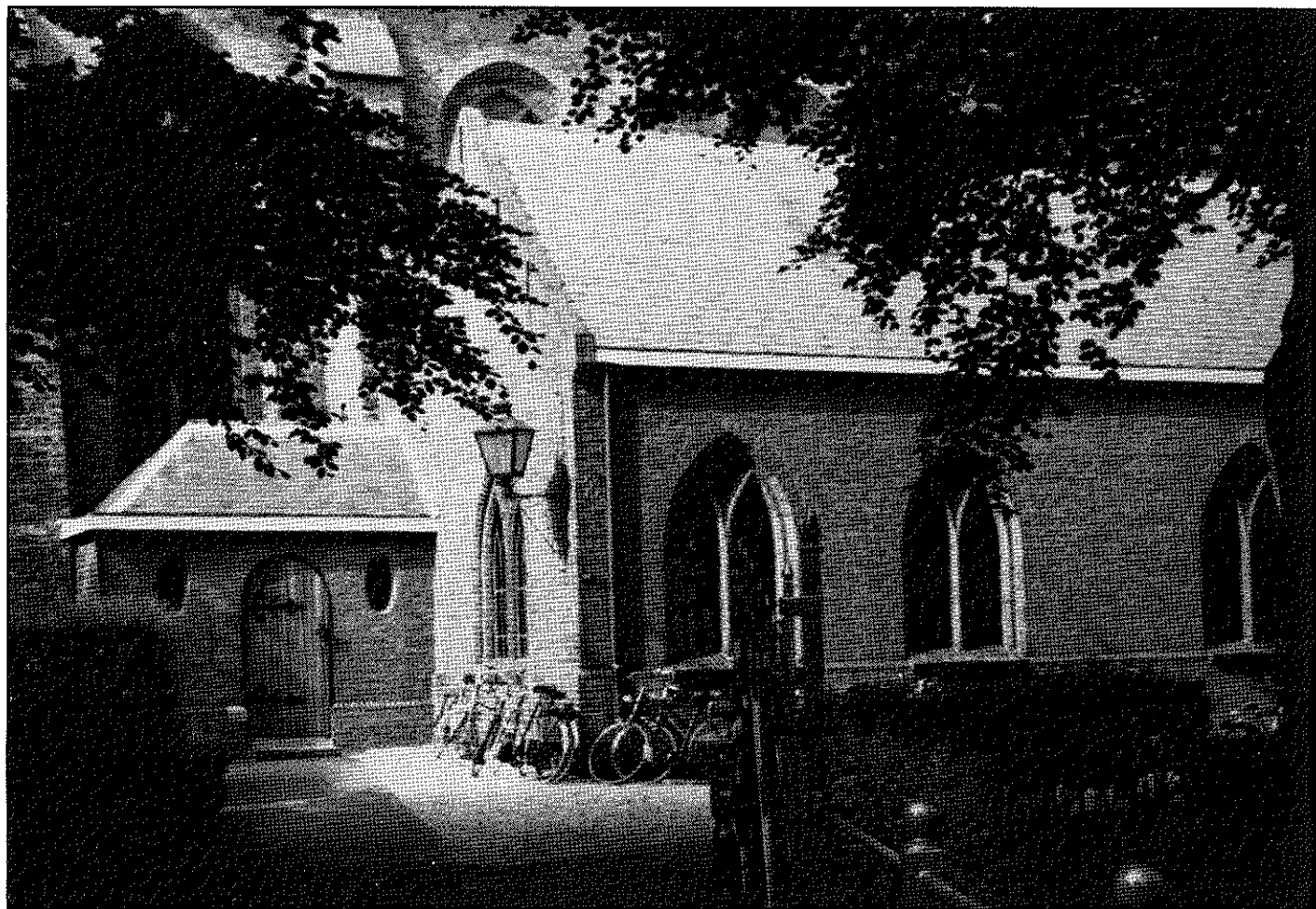
and thereafter, until 1906, in the basement of the church. In 1902, however, the school came under the supervision of an independent board. It then took on the character of a genuine non-parochial private school supported by a legally constituted association of parents and friends. In 1902 it was given the name *Ebenezer*, and four years later it was relocated in a building of its own.

Helping Hand Mission street ministry on Madison Avenue, led by P.J. Hoekenga.



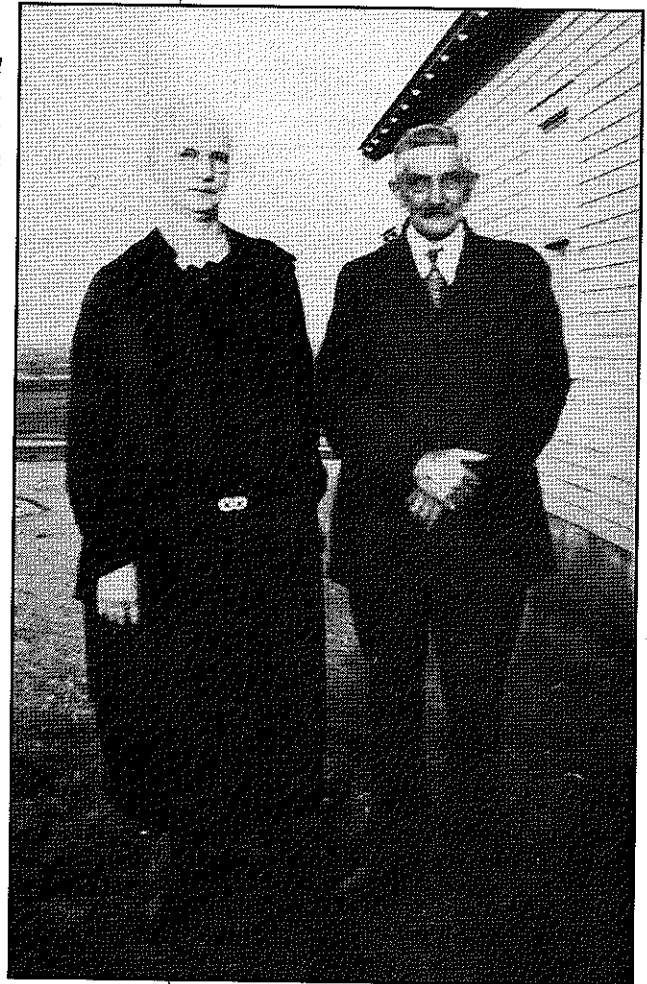
From Polder to Polder:
**The
William Plaisier Family's
Immigration to Grand Rapids**

by H.J. Brinks



(opposite, bottom) Reformed
Church in Ridderkerk,
South Holland, 1982.

William Sr. and Apolonia
Plaisier, 1918.



Near the village of Ridderkerk, William Plaisier's family tilled land in the Reijerwaard, a region that had been impoldered by 1442. Earthen barriers protected that area's five thousand productive acres from the Rhine River, which had deposited the polders' rich clay soils in prehistoric times. During the nineteenth century the region was well known for flax production, a venture which also engaged the Plaisier family, but around the turn of that century William Plaisier encountered hard times when the market for flax fibers fell victim to the growing preference for cotton. These market disruptions led to his bankruptcy, and he turned then to market gardening on leased

land. But, with diminished work and scant economic prospects, William's grown children were forced to find employment off the farm. One of his sons, Aart, became a skilled cabinet-maker, working twelve-hour days in Rotterdam.

Reports of favorable employment opportunities in Grand Rapids, Michigan, induced Aart to emigrate in 1910. Soon his optimistic reports kindled a case of "America fever" in the Ridderkerk segment of the family, and by 1911 Aart's parents and six of his eight siblings joined him in Grand Rapids. Aart's letters, printed below, were addressed to Cornelius "Core" Vander Wall, a cousin who remained on his

family's Ridderkerk farm.

Although most of Aart's correspondence over the subsequent years was posted from Grand Rapids, he and his family probably had no fixed plan to remain there. Good wages in the furniture industry enabled Aart to pay for the family's travel expenses and furnish a rented home for them in 1911. Thereafter the family prospered well on the income of three adults. William found work in a greenhouse, Aart continued to ply his cabinetmaking craft, and his brother Gerrit toiled in a gravel mine. During this prosperous era, 1911-1914, the Plaisier family enjoyed an income of about \$30.00 per week. That enabled them to begin farming

near Grant, Michigan, in 1914. Most of Aart's letters, however, disclose his impressions of Grand Rapids and its Dutch-American enclave.

The letters discuss employment, social adjustments, and the difficulties of dealing with English. And, although Aart observed his "American" neighbors with much curiosity, the routines of his new life were largely circumscribed by the Dutch subculture. Courtship, church attendance, and even travel beyond the city were all linked by ethnic networks.

While Aart provided revealing episodes about urban life, including comments about the 1911 strike in the furniture industry, he was more enthusiastic and perceptive when he commented about American agriculture. He noted, for example, that Grand Rapids provided a larger market for agricultural products than did Sheboygan, Wisconsin, the area to which his uncle had immigrated. The relationship between Ridderkerk and its markets in Rotterdam and Dordrecht informed Aart's judgments about marketing farm products.

On their farm near Grant, Michigan, the Plaisiers were less than an hour away from Grand Rapids by rail, a transportation link which consistently served the Grant area's agricultural businesses. In 1914 the Plaisiers were general farmers with a typical combination of livestock and pasture linked to hay and grain crops. Aart's letters blossom with enthusiasm when he describes his new village, farm, and church. The Plaisiers were obviously at home in their new setting. Their neighbors were Dutch, they were back on the land, and their church provided familiar amenities of worship and general sociability.

In 1919 Aart Plaisier married

Christina Brink (his last letter describes their courtship) and moved to Fremont, where he cultivated the Brink family farm until his retirement in 1967. Fremont, like Grant, was an agricultural village with a large Dutch-American subculture. After retiring, Aart returned to Grant Township, where his sons William and Peter had taken up residence already in the 1940s. Both of them worked on vegetable farms for part of their careers, but William was primarily a grocer. Peter, still living in



Cornelius Vander Wall, 1910.

1992, continues to manage a small farm, after a successful career in garden farming. But none of his children nor those of his brother William have become farmers.

Gerrit Plaisier, who was frequently mentioned in the letters, married Martha Brummel in 1919 and joined his father, William, on the family farmstead. William retired in 1923, and shortly thereafter Gerrit redirected his agricultural assets to garden farming on then recently

drained swampland near Grant. With that, Gerrit's agricultural routines reverted to patterns of soil management and cropping which were reminiscent of Ridderkerk and the Reijerwaard polder. The drainage of the Rice Lake wetlands in 1917 exposed about three thousand acres of rich muck soil, and by 1960 Gerrit's sons Wilbur and Jerry were actively expanding the size of their holdings.

When Wilbur and Jerry were named Master Farmers by the Michigan Vegetable Council in 1984, they were cultivating seven hundred acres. By then they had also entered into a partnership with the Van Singel* family, and together they expanded their packaging and warehousing of carrots, onions, and celery for direct interstate marketing. That, together with the operation of a mint still, created an agricultural network with features similar to the family's Old World flax business in Ridderkerk. In both instances the Plaisiers not only raised but also processed and marketed their crops. But, as in the case of Aart's descendants, Gerrit's grandchildren have also abandoned agriculture.

The available data on the Aart and Gerrit Plaisier families illustrates that their thirty-one descendants, (seven children and twenty-four grand-children) have begun to adopt mainstream American social and economic patterns. Aart and Gerrit, both immigrants, found spouses within the ethnic and religious subculture, and their children followed their example. But the third generation, born after World War II, has significantly altered that pattern. Of the twenty-four grandchildren, about 50 percent have mar-

*The partnership was dissolved, but the Van Singels continue to operate as the V & P Produce Company.

ried outside the ethnic nexus, and a larger percentage have adopted alternate religious affiliations. Thus, although all of them were baptized into the Christian Reformed Church, eight have retained that membership. While only eleven of the grandchildren have moved away from West Michigan (i.e., Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties), only three who remain in the area have retained farm-related occupations. In general the migrants—to Utah, Colorado, Wisconsin, California, Illinois and Florida—have been or are being educated for professions which foster geographic mobility. Probably the rapid erosion of ethnic cohesion which is evident in the second generation of Gerrit's and Aart's descendants will persist or accelerate in the third generation.

The letters which Aart Plaisier wrote between 1910 and 1914 provide an exceptionally vivid portrayal of the cultural matrix from which the Plaisier family has acculturated over the last eighty-two years. In addition, the letters are inherently interesting and charmingly naive.

Endnotes

1. A.J. van der Aa *Aardrijkskundig Woordenboek der Nederlanden* (Gorinchem, Jacobus Noorduyt, 1847) v. 9, pp. 404-405, 467-469; Audrey M. Lambert. *The Making of the Dutch Landscape* (London, Academic Press, 1985) pp. 262-63; *Grant Area Today* (Grant Public Library, Taylor Publishing Company, 1979) pp. 220-221; *Interview*, H.J. Brinks with Plaisier family members in Grant, Michigan, July 9, 1992.

2. *Interview*, Brinks/Plaisier.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Grant Area* pp. 220-221; *Interview*, Brinks/Plaisier; R.E. Kincaid, "Draining Rice Lake" in *The Beginnings of Grant, Michigan* (privately printed, [1954]), pp. 8-9.

5. Kurt Beckstrom, "Plaisiers Are Master Farmers" *Michigan Farmer*, May 19, 1984, p. 19; *Interview*, H.J. Brinks with Keith Van Singel, August 21, 1992.

6. *Interview*, H.J. Brinks with Greta Plaisier, August 19, 1992.

Aart Plaisier Letters

1910 - 1916

Grand Rapids, Michigan, to Ridderkerk, Zuid Holland

Aart Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

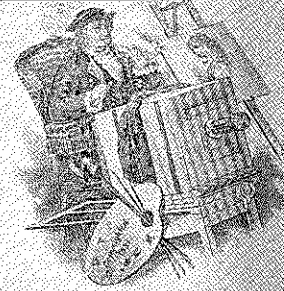
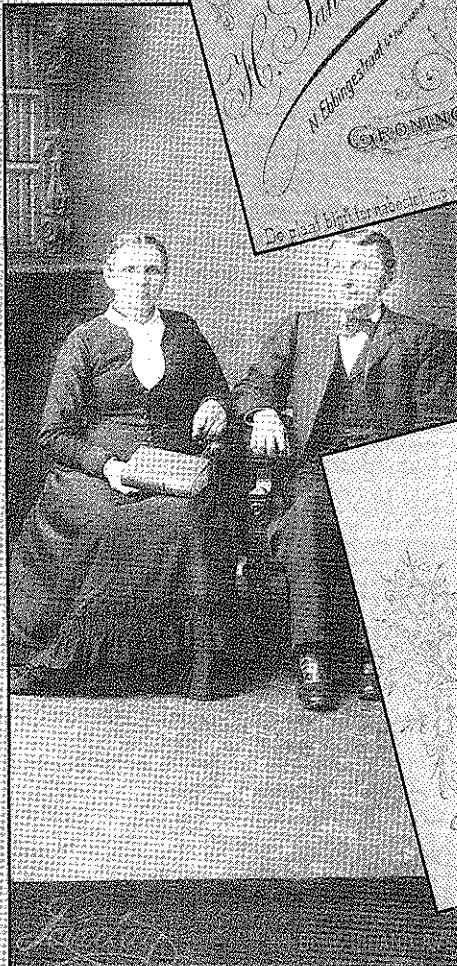
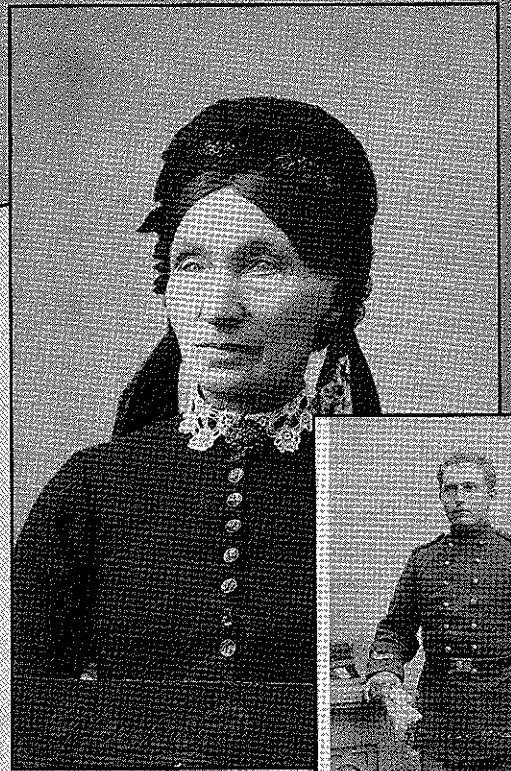
April 6, 1910 (fragment)

Dear Cousin: . . . I want to tell you that I am pleased to be here, and that is a good thing because it could also be the other way. The difference between America and the Netherlands is very great. Everything here is different.

. . . I liked the train trip better than the ocean travel.

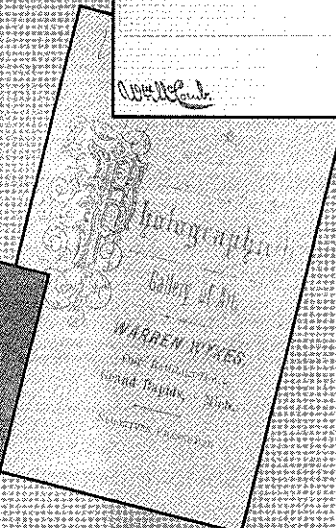
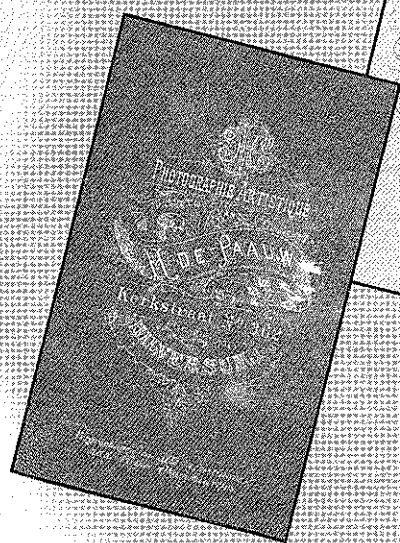
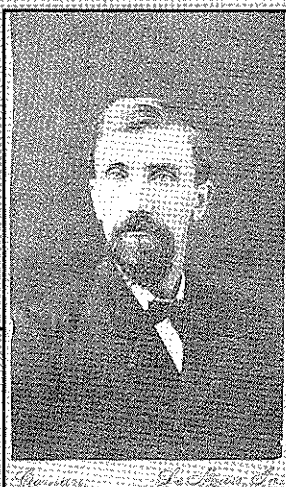
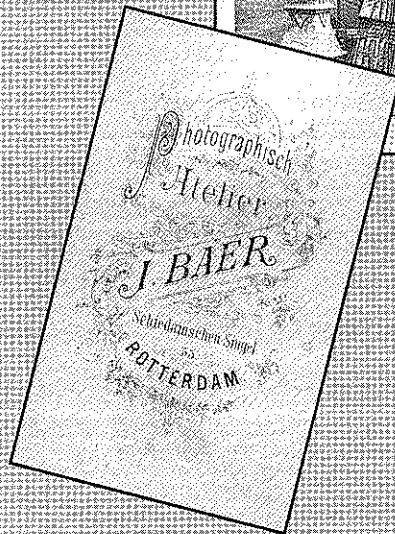
You don't have eyes enough to see because you can only see out one side of the train. Either side was equally nice, although they were also different. I cannot find the words to describe it for you—mountains and valleys. At times I felt like yelling "Stop!" I didn't have time enough to see. Everything went by in a blur. Once in a while in a valley or on a hill I could see little houses built of wood. They had little barns about the size of the houses. It looked like poverty—a few cows the size of goats with no more fat on them than a coat rack. It was difficult to imagine how anyone could survive. But as we rode further, the farms became better. And they are very different from Holland's farms. In a word, it was a pleasant trip. I cannot say more, but if you want to know more, you will have to look me up here. You know my address. Grand Rapids is also a pleasant city, arranged according to the newest plans. I had only one week's vacation. We arrived on a Friday, and by the next Friday I was at work. That suits me very well, but at first it is very difficult. You can't understand anyone, even though there are forty or fifty thousand Hollanders in the city.

(continued on page 26)



As the surrounding advertisements indicate, studio photographers provided highly valued services to immigrants who wished to visually record their changing appearances and the size of their families. Before the 1920s, when inexpensive snapshot cameras were mass-produced, posed studio images crossed the Atlantic Ocean by the millions in both directions, at considerable expense. In 1894, for example, when weekly wages were less than \$10.00, the cost of acquiring and mailing a studio photograph was between \$5.00 and \$10.00.

Frederik Diemer of Vogel Center, Michigan, wrote that he could not afford such an expenditure in 1894. But eventually he and thousands like him did find the necessary funds. Significant events (marriages, the births of children, school graduations, and anniversaries) were too important to go unrecorded. Consequently, a huge accumulation of photographs both in Europe and North America has been preserved in closets and cabinets. Although many of the images are unidentified because family ties have been disrupted by distance and time, the pictures are valuable for research. Students examine photos to analyze clothing styles, social conventions (who stands, who sits), and photography itself.



Aart Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

May 1, 1910

Dear Cousin:

Having received your letter just this Wednesday, I will sit down to write back to you. Usually I go to church on Sunday mornings, but because it is raining, I will go this evening instead. . . . It is a great pleasure to hear everything about the fatherland from you. I will try to answer all of your questions in full.

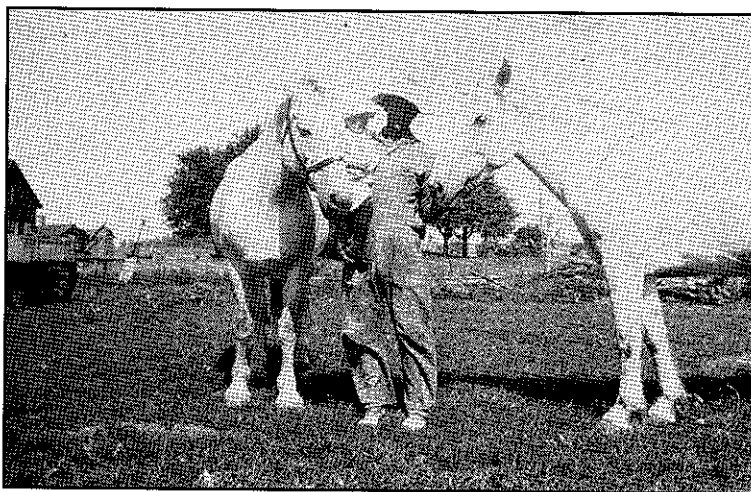
During our first four weeks here we had beautiful growing weather, but in the last two weeks it was different—and at times rather cold. But we are getting closer to summer.

At work things are going well too. We work from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., with an hour's rest. That is, then, ten hours per day, just as in Holland. But the work here in the factory is very different. You have to learn a great deal at first. There are many Hollanders here in the factory, which makes it very easy for me, but it does not help in learning English. But I will not stay with this job for very long. As soon as I have acquired enough English usage, I will go to another factory where everyone is English, and I will learn much more.

You asked about autos. They ride along by the hundreds, and they frequently have serious accidents. The other day one had to go up a high hill, and when it was near the top, a chain broke, and it came rolling crazily down again. Then it ran against a lamp post. There was hardly anything left of the auto worth saving. Often you can see children, that is boys or girls of sixteen or seventeen years, fly through the city in large autos. It is shocking sometimes, but people here are not surprised by this. Also, women are often seen driving horses and wagons. And women also ride with the horse between their legs—and galloping too. It is a treat to the eyes. But it is very ordinary here.

There are also many lovely girls here, but you must be careful. If you try to stop and say hello to such a girl, she calls a police agent, and then you go to jail or pay \$18.00. Yes, the stinkers do, in fact, have such a law here. Sometimes the girls walk along the streets and show off like peacocks. But, then, when I am inclined to get involved, I remind myself, there are plenty of Holland girls equally attractive. And they know it too. Furthermore, there are those among them who will not run off to call the police agent. For example, when you sit in church on Sunday, some are pleased to come and sit next to you. The seats are all free.* Now, enough of that . . .

You were certainly fortunate with your colts and



Aart Plaisier and son William with horses, 1921.

mares. And to hear that Adrian is doing well is no surprise to me. If any person, and especially the lovely girls of Ridderkerk, are curious about me, just tell them to send a letter or postcard, and I will answer them quickly.

The food here is very good—you could get fat here quickly. Meat in abundance all the time, and eggs and fruit. More than you can eat at every meal. But people here say that you need more food than in Holland—that it has something to do with the climate. But we eat three times daily. Six in the morning, at noon, and 6:30 in the evening. The style of clothing here is about the same as in Holland. For example, no one here notices that I wear a Dutch coat.

I don't know much about flowers and birds because it's not yet summer, but I have heard that the summer brings a delightful display of flowers. Everyone plants flowers around their houses, and the parks are beautiful at that time. You have seen the postcard of John Ball Park; well, I have been there once, and, although it was cloudy and cold out, I could still see the nice arrangement of things. The place is all hills and valleys, and some are high above the city. When you stand at the top you can see the whole city.

Bonjour

*Pew rental, common in the Netherlands, was not practiced in the immigrant churches.

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

August 31, 1910

Dear Cousin:

I received your letter on Thursday . . . I would have enjoyed going with you on your nice bike trip . . .

Perhaps you already know that I have changed my boarding house. I did not like my former place. All they ever did was argue there, and I had had enough of that. Now I live with English people, and they don't understand one word of Dutch. That is good for me, but not pleasant. English is not easily learned in a short time. But I learn more here in a week than in a month at the other place. With speaking I can take care of myself a little, but that's not the same as writing. School* is now over, and it begins again in September.

Greet Cory and Job Huisen for me. I sent them both a picture postcard. You should have a look at them.

We are having a celebration here this week. The sixtieth anniversary of Grand Rapids' founding. But you should not imagine that it is like a Dutch celebration. From my viewpoint, they don't know how to celebrate here.

A few weeks ago I went to Holland, Michigan, with the streetcar.** That was a pleasant little trip. I don't

remember much about the farmer there, but I do remember how much sweat my work produced. In succession I had to hoe corn, haul hay, and milk twenty-three cows. Fortunately, I was not very good at milking. Now you should not assume that they haul hay with a beautiful wagon. No sir. They work with one or two wagons for manure, hay, corn, and everything else. I sometimes laughed out loud from the wonder of how things worked out. They haul a whole load of hay on wagons without brakes going up and down high hills. They use here only a long hitch and reigns. But the horses know what to do as well as the workers. You wrote that you didn't harvest much fruit, but we have more than enough here—apples, pears, prunes, peaches, grapes, and still more. Everything is cheap, and everyone uses as much as they can.

You write nothing about T. Huisen and his courtship. Is it still going on? You must write about that. They have an uncle in Grand Rapids. Send me his address and I will look him up.

I do not have a girl friend. And I don't want to be tied down. I have no further news.

Greetings from your cousin,

Aart Plaisier

*Evening language school. **Interurban.

Bridge Street Bridge—factories in background.





Campau Square, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1907.

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

579 North Ionia Street

November 24, 1910

Dear Cousin:

Most of the Dutch girls here have been born in America. And they blunder through the Dutch language. But I have met a few who speak Dutch as well as I do. That depends directly on their parents. If the parents don't speak Dutch with their children, they will never speak the language, because English is much easier for them. I am now going to the English language school three evenings each week. I'm learning English very well now. When I learn more about writing, I will write you an English letter. For now I would make too many errors.

I will be happy when my parents come here. You asked what my plans are. If my parents were not coming, then I would go out West in the spring. But now I am going to stay here. Och! Who knows what is best? We will have to wait and see.[Closing]

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

113 Courtney Street

March 1911

Dear Cousin:

[He has been intending to write but has been very busy.]

By now I think my family must be aboard the *Isabella* and going along the English coast. I have already rented a house for them with some open land attached so they can do a little gardening in their free time. I have also taken care of providing the most essential furniture. They will be surprised by everything just as I was, but you soon get used to it.

Fortunately the winter is hastening by, but it is rather cold today. I'll tell you more about this later.

If they all arrive here in good health, I will be satisfied. They will be met by someone in New York and brought to the proper train, and then they will come to Grand Rapids automatically. I would like to make such a trip again.

Are you still unmarried, or are you now hitched? I read in the paper that Barendrecht will be the site of another great competition this summer and that the queen will attend. That is a great honor for Barendrecht. I would like to be there. Then we could have a good time once again. I receive the newspaper every week, but I don't know who sends it.

I have no more news.

Hearty greeting,

Aart Plaisier

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

113 Courtney Street

August 11, 1911

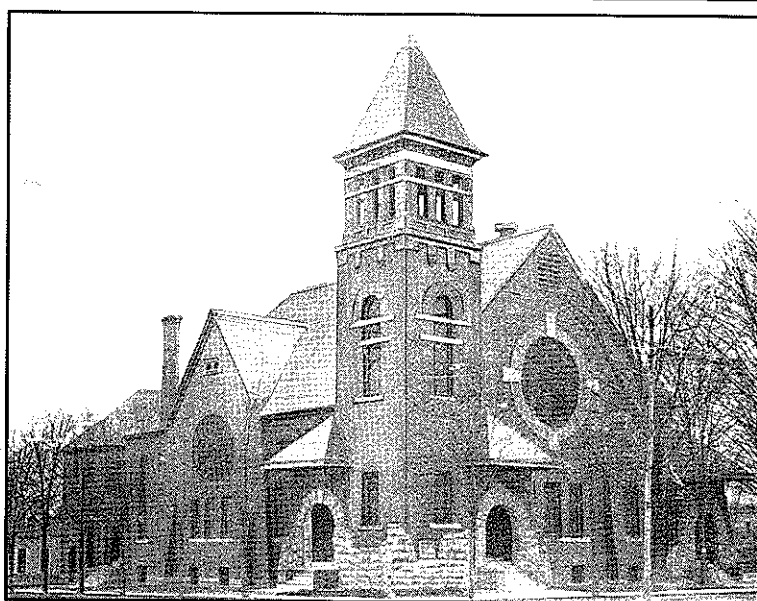
Dear Cousin:

We are all healthy despite the terribly hot weather we had here a few weeks ago This was an exceptional year. People who have been here fifteen to twenty years can't remember anything like it. On just two days, July 4 and 5, three hundred horses died from the heat in New York—and also many people throughout all of America. The sun shone as if through a magnifying glass. I was working for a farmer during that hot time. Because the labor strike continued, I had to find something to do, so I spent eight to nine weeks on the farm.

If you saw how farming is done here, you would be shocked. Not because of the beautiful farmyards but because of the operations. Consider, for example, that in one day the three of us hauled fourteen loads of hay into the barn, and then there were milking and other jobs to do.

We take two wagons to the field. One is left standing. Then we hook the hay loader behind a wagon. One person drives the horses, and two stand up on the wagon. We go on then in that way until we have a good load. Then we hook up the other wagon, and when both are filled, we go home. It takes a little more than a half hour to load two wagons. Then we drive into the barn. High up in the peak of the barn hangs a large hook, something like a harpoon. This [runs down] from a reel, and the hook is thrown down into the hay. Then one or two horses on the outside pulls on a rope which is tied to the fork, and about one-fourth of the wagonload is lifted up and thrown into the hayloft. We straighten it out a little, and then the process goes on and on. It is nice work, but you really sweat from it on such warm days. I could write six pages about the farm here, but there's not enough space on the page.

It is a shame that you had to lose your best milk cow. But fortunately the danger of disease is past. And now Cor, I have no more news. Greetings, and now I go to bed. Good night/good morning, whatever it is.

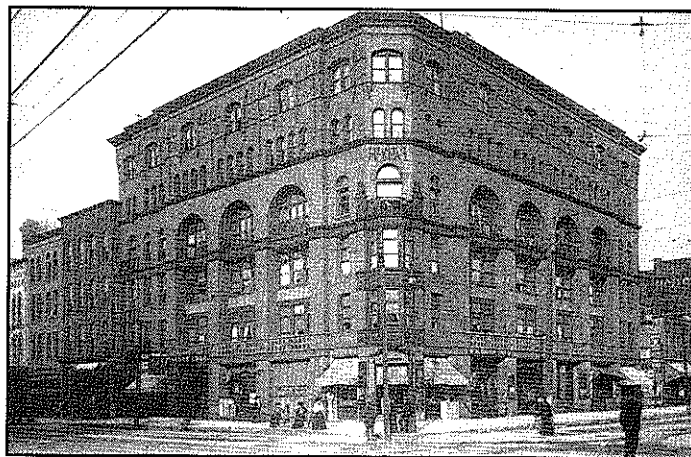


Letter fragment written approximately July 1, 1911.

It is now four weeks since the strike broke out, and it is not yet settled. It's too bad that I have to go about empty handed, and I'm beginning to feel the loss of money. But it will certainly come to an end.

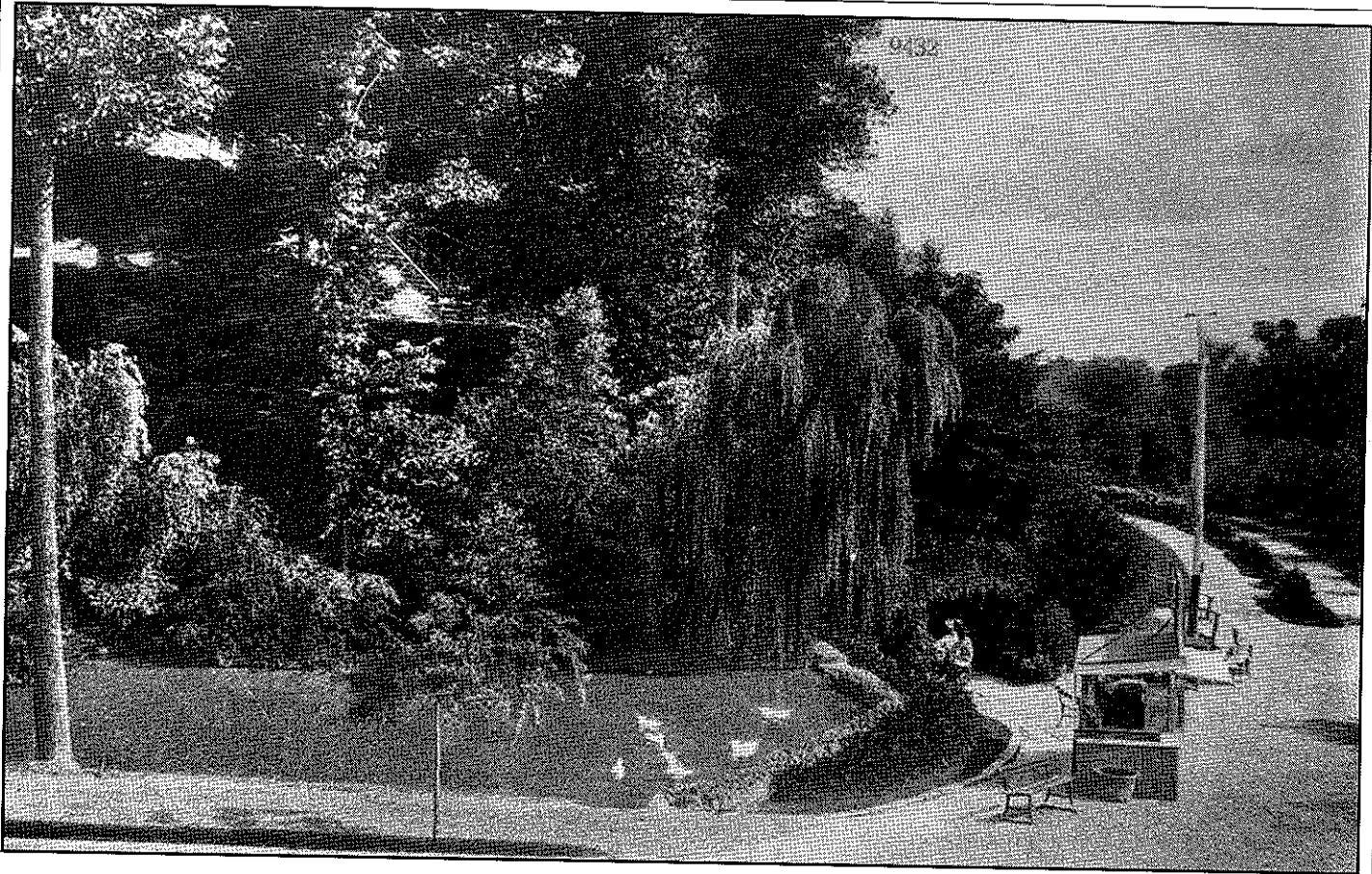
I am working a little in the garden, and there is a considerable amount of work with that. But when it gets too hot, I take refuge under a bush or in the shadow of a nearby oak tree to cool off a little.

Last week there was a bit of a fight at the furniture factory. The boss, who was driving from the factory in his auto, was attacked by a group of strikers—naturally all Polanders. They stopped the auto and then the boss, Mr. Wittekom [Widdecomb], pulled out his revolver to frighten the crowd, and that made things worse. They hit the auto with stones. The police arrived on the scene quickly, but they could do nothing. Women, children (all Polish), and men, all armed with large stones, went off to the factory with intentions of wrecking the place. A great number of windows were knocked out.



(above) Alpine Avenue CRC, 1912.

Hermitage Building, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1905.



John Ball Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan, ca. 1910. "I have been to [John Ball Park] at the top you can see the whole city."

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

113 Courtney Street
September 11, 1911

Dear Cousin:

[He begins with news of the changing season and reports that the fruit harvest was large.]

Last week Monday I went to the city of Holland near Lake Michigan. It is just like Scheveningen. A nice beach spreads out in front of a sea that stretches beyond your sight. The lake is so large that if you board a ship in the evening, you won't reach the other side until morning. Wisconsin is on the other side. That is where Uncle Arie lives.

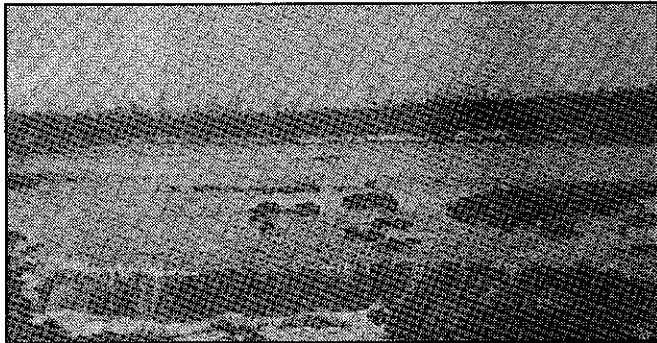
Last week a man came to our door to bring greetings to mother from her brothers in Wisconsin. That was a great

surprise. The man was on business in Grand Rapids. He reported that they were doing well in Wisconsin.

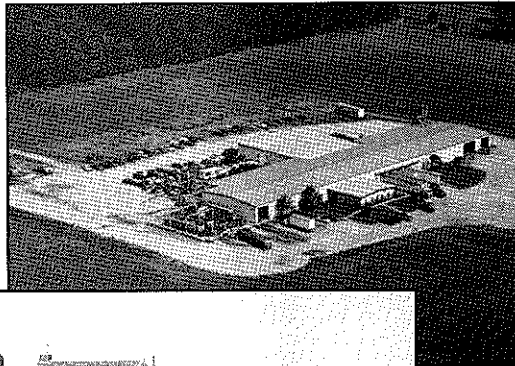
I am now back working in the factory at my old job. Now I earn \$13.00 per week. So all is well. I had my picture taken, and I will send some to you. I hope that you will send me one of you, too.

Greetings from your cousin,

Aart



Rice Lake Draining.



V & P Produce.

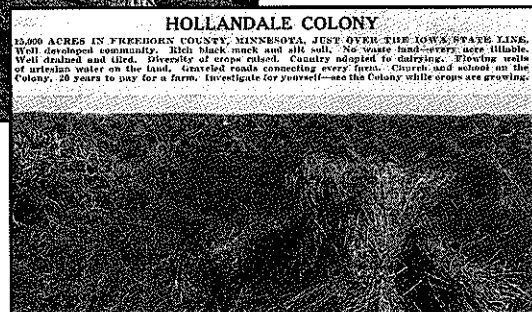


Holland Marsh settlement.

Weesies Brothers Farms.



WEESIES BROTHERS
FARMS, INC.
BEDDING PLANTS
GERANIUMS AND ROSES

Hollandale, Minnesota
(postcard).Kalamazoo, Michigan
(postcard).

According to R.E. Kincaid, who owned most of the Rice Lake swamp before he drained it, a Dutch farmer, John Beldt, first proposed the drainage project when he informed Kincaid that "... in the Netherlands they would drain such land, and it would be valuable for farming."

It is commonly observed that the Dutch have acquired much of Michigan's productive muck land. They farm tracts of it near Kalamazoo, Hudsonville, Fremont, Muskegon, Imlay City, and Montague. Willard, Ohio, is also a center for Dutch muck farmers, and the populations of these communities occasionally move from one site to another as agricultural opportunities arise. The Weesies of Montague, for example, farmed first in Muskegon and moved to Montague in 1909. Presently they manage 700 acres and cultivate 135 acres of muck land. Ontario's Holland Marsh settlement, ca. 1931, also exemplifies the Dutch penchant for wetland farming in Canada.

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall*R.R. 5 West Leonard Street**October 22 [1912]*

Dear Cousin:

Perhaps you already know that we have moved. We have a nice big house about one-half mile outside the city. A fine place with an acre of ground—a good opportunity to raise vegetables and chickens. The big electric train goes in front of our lot and goes between Grand Rapids, Muskegon, and Grand Haven. You have never seen such a car. It is two times longer and also higher and wider than normal. It does not travel from an electric rod but by a third rail. That is a rail which is next to the other but about one foot above the ground. The trains glide over it at an indescribable speed.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

According to our mail you had fearful weather in Holland. Gerardus sent us a newspaper which told of all the disasters and accidents. We hope that such things did not touch you.

I am planning to buy a photo camera, and then I will send you some pictures. [Closing]

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall*906 Pine Avenue**December 19, 1912*

Dear Cousin:

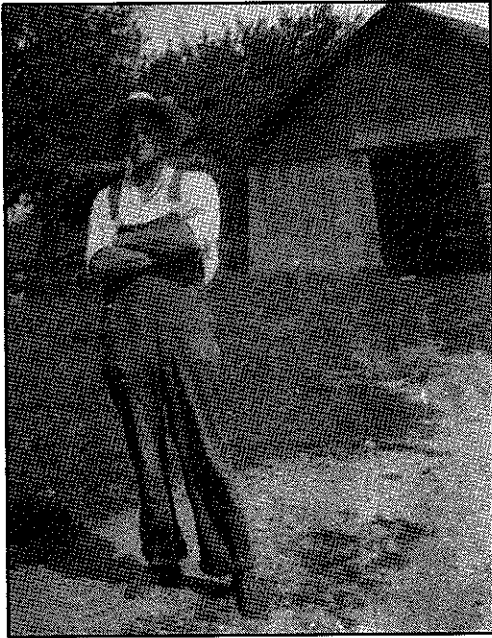
The year 1912 is almost over, and we await the coming of a new year. Boy, how fast time flies. When I look back, it is hard to believe that it is almost three years since I left the Netherlands.

We are ashamed that we forgot your mother's birthday, but for this time we will say, "Better late than never."

Tonight I will be having the Young People's Society at our house—it is a meeting of the officers. We have important business to discuss. A few weeks ago we had our annual banquet, and that was great fun. And best of all, "I took home a dandy girl. And I am still going with her."* How did you hear that I had a girl friend? I have dated many girls but always for only a few times, then on to another one. They are available here by the bushel, but you have to keep yourself informed about these things. You once told me that the daughter of J. Huizer from Barendrecht had an uncle in Grand Rapids. I know him well. His name is Maart Huizer, and he says that he

*Material in quotes was written in English





(opposite) Main
Street, Grant,
Michigan, 1940.

Gerrit Plaisier on
family farm in
Grant, Michigan,
1920.

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

Grant, Michigan to Ridderkerk
July 19, 1914

Dear Cousin:

I would like to thank you especially for your detailed description of grandmother's sickness and death Yes, Cousin, that is now the third grandparent that I have lost since leaving my fatherland We were well aware that grandmother was very ill, and we had news regularly to keep us informed. And then one afternoon, while I was cultivating the corn, I could see [my sister] Ing coming with something in her hand. I knew that if it was only a letter she would wait with it until we came home. I thought immediately of grandmother. Ing came running faster and faster, and I stopped the horses. I could see immediately that she had a telegram. Then I called father, who was also in the field. He had the same thought that I had—"Grandmother is dead."

It must be difficult for you to be forced off the farmstead, just as it was for us a few years ago when we had to leave our farm after living there for twenty-five years. I can easily understand how hard that is. The place where I and all of us were born continues to draw us. Many times I dream of that old barn and of the orchard where we played as children. I dream all the time of that old place. If it gets to the point that you will be forced to move, it will be the same with you. After leaving the old farm, we have moved so often that it has become ordinary. I hope we will now stay here. We are sitting here very comfortably.

I wish you could come here sometime and have a look. I think your eyes would pop if you could see how busy we are. There is so much land behind our house, and we have to work all of it with the three of us. Most of the work with haying is now over. We had wonderful weather last week, and we were able to haul in as much hay as we could mow. Last Thursday we hauled in fifteen big loads. [There follows here a description of the process which repeats the general contents of the August 11, 1911, letter.] We now have fifty-four loads in the barn, and if we get another twenty to twenty-five, that will be enough.

Our crops suffered a little in June from the rain, but everything is growing rapidly now. In a little over a week we will be cutting oats, and then we will begin to pick cucumbers. That is also a job and a half. So you can see that we have enough to do. We won't have any free time until frost, and then we will be ready to start over in a few months.

You certainly earn enough money to come here for a

has a relative in Barendrecht who is an oil manufacturer. That seems to be the same person.

I was planning to continue this letter on Sunday, but instead I went out with a few friends in the afternoon and then on to church. They have church services here three times on Sunday, but I never go in the afternoon. I usually go in the morning but always in the evening, because most of the young girls go then too. In other service times they sit with their families and go home directly. We live about twenty minutes from the church.

A short time ago a pastor from Holland came to preach at the Alpine Avenue Christian Reformed Church. Our former pastor, Volbeda, has gone to Amsterdam to study. If you ever hear of him, then you will know from where he comes.

Our work continues on as usual, but the factories are not very busy. Overtime work is about done. Father is still busy on the farm,* but he only has to pluck the corn from the plants. Gerrit and I work in the shop. We really have a nice house and for very little money.

You know that I was in Wisconsin to visit Uncle Arie last summer. I was not attracted to that area. I would rather farm here than by Uncle Arie in Wisconsin. That is a good place if you wish to go West, but they do not have a good market in Sheboygan, and that is essential if a farmer is to get ahead.

[Closing]

*The family had purchased a farm in Grant, Michigan.

few months of vacation. You won't have to work, and you can eat at cost. If you want to use a horse, just help yourself. "I know you would enjoy a trip like that, and it wouldn't cost so much. We will see what the time will bring. If you don't get married too quick, you could afford a trip like this. Now I will close because it is getting time to go to church."*

Greeting from your friend,

Art Plaisier

RFD 3

Grant, Michigan

*Material in quotes was written in English.

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

Grant, Michigan to Ridderkerk

January 6, 1915

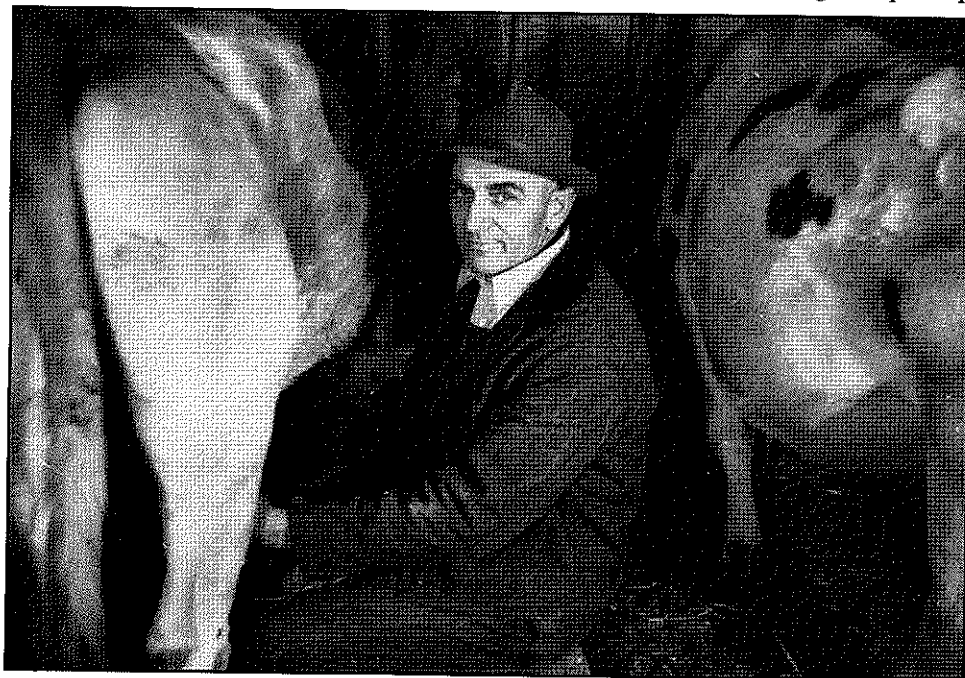
Dear Cousin:

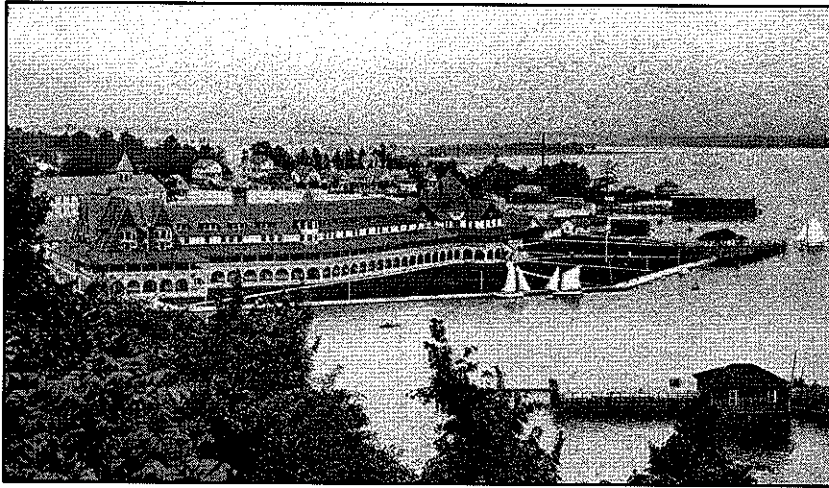
The longer people are here, the less they think about their former homes. Perhaps you think that is too crude, but if you were here for five years, you would say the same thing But still there are times when I miss all the former things, and they then appear clearly in my mind. And that is the case this evening. My thoughts are entirely occupied with Ridderkerk. I really should be at catechism class, but it has rained all day since noon, and so I have stayed home. It is a considerable distance—one and a half miles in the dark, although the darkness is not the worst part.

We have had a pleasant winter, with storms off and on. The snow is three feet deep in many places. Thus, you can easily understand that we use sleighs. Wagons will not work. But if this rain continues, the sleighs will be done too. Yesterday I was trying to drag a few trees out of the woods, but I gave up on that. I worked until noon, but I was soaked through and through from the wet snow. So we will have to wait until the snow melts a little. At present we are doing almost nothing but hunting—I think we have eaten more than fifty wild rabbits this fall and winter. There were a lot of them this year We find most of them in flat land that is not yet under cultivation. I could tell you a great deal more about hunting, but perhaps you are not curious about that.

Every day we hear news about the war being fought. The newspapers are full of it, but I don't believe the half of what I read One time we counted the number of Germans who were reported dead, and I don't remember the number just now, but it appeared to be more than the total population of Germany. But that the war is terrible cannot be disputed. And that the whole world is involved is also true. I can imagine what a troop it must be with all the refugees from Belgium storming into the Netherlands. I think that Belgium must be totally destroyed—at least if what we hear is true. And the end is not yet in sight! How long will the sword of war reap misery? May almighty God speedily cause it to be

Aart Plaisier, 1922.





Ottawa Beach, ca. 1910. "It was just like Scheveningen."

A. Plaisier to C. Vander Wall

Grant, Michigan to Ridderkerk

December 22, 1916

Dear Cousin:

[Greeting]

We have a foot of snow here, and it is packed well, so we can make good use of the sleigh. I hope to make use of the cutter tomorrow and look up a girl I know. She lives sixteen miles (thirty-two km) away. I will use two horses, and then it will go easily. I have a great deal to tell you, but it would take too long to write all of it.

We live here in Grant, about twenty-eight miles northwest of Grand Rapids. A large group of Hollanders live in this area. We have an energetic church of about forty families.

put back in the sheath. He alone has his purpose with this war. But we must also say that those who are not involved are privileged. People talk easily about feeling the consequences of this war—that it causes damage. But I say there is a great difference between feeling and fighting.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

I hope that the Netherlands will be spared and that the war will end quickly.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Why have you not yet married? Have you not had the chance yet? "That's the trouble with me. I can't get nothing which suits me. I had several different, but I don't know enough to stick to it. Brother Gerrit isn't going with that girl anymore—the one he's on the picture with. She was an American girl, and my folks didn't like that at all. But of course he got another girl again. But she is from Holland parents." Ingetje also has a boy friend. Also a Dutchman born here. His parents came from Oud-Beijerland. I think I will go to the Netherlands and look around before I get married. Perhaps I can tap an attractive girl on the shoulder there. It is a sad situation with females here. I think they make boys here more easily than girls.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

I must close now.

Your cousin,

A. Plaisier

And our pastor, Oostendorp, is a pleasant man. Worship services are in the morning and afternoon with Young People's Society in the evening. We live about four and a half miles from Grant, through which the train runs and where we sell our produce. The prices are especially high, almost double, because of the war. Tomorrow we hope to thresh white princess beans (dry beans). You should see that sometime. They come with a large self-driving steam machine which pulls the threshing mill. They set up the whole thing where the beans are, and when the machine goes "Toet! Toet!" everyone gets ready. Three men throw the plants in, and a few others hold the sacks. A person with a team of horses is busy hauling the sacks away. If all goes well, they are done in four to five hours, and they move on to another farm. They do the same with grain, clover seed, beans, and all. Everything, quick, quick. If it doesn't go quickly, it's no good. And so everything here flies along. Autos here are as common as bikes in the Netherlands. Anyone here who does not have an auto is not highly regarded. Thus we are also not much because we don't have a car. And it will be a while before we have one. Still, they are so ridiculously cheap here that almost everyone can afford one. For \$350 you can have a dandy car for five persons. You can also pay from \$600 to \$2,000, but that is exceptional.

We have nothing to complain of regarding our dairy herd. We have eight milk cows. We had ten this summer, but we sold two of them last Saturday. In all, including the young cattle, we have seventeen head. We have no colts. We had the mares with a stud, but he didn't get them with young.

I can imagine to some extent how strange things must

be in Holland. We received a letter today from Uncle Wouter, and he wrote lengthily about the situation. It is really something when you are not any longer in charge of your own affairs [due to wartime blockades]. I think they are pulling the rope too tightly. Time and again I am happy that I'm not involved. Not that it could not happen here—but God preserves us from it. But I think America will get its turn too.

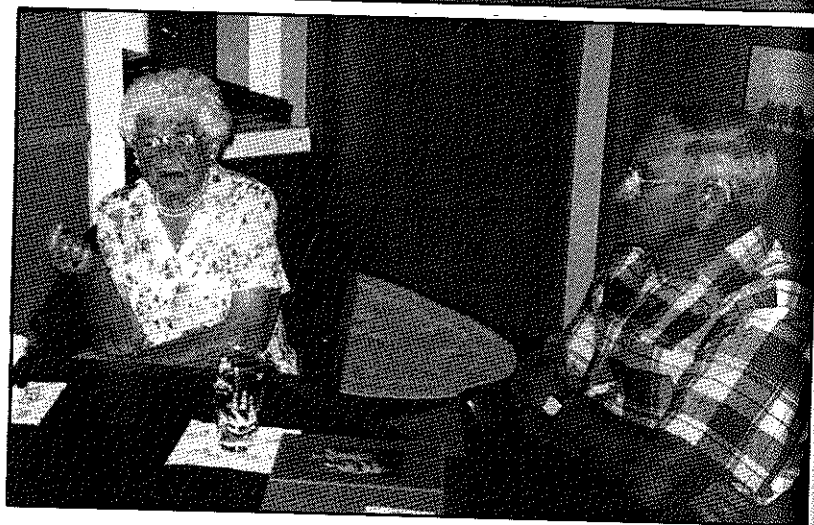
♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"I will also enclose a picture of me wich is taking last year. I cannot send you one of my girl because I only got one of her wich I would like to keep for myself. But you'll get one some other time when we have some taking again. It would be kind of nice if you see her once. Her name is Christina Brink. She is born in this country but from Holland parents. Well my dear, I'll have to qeuit, my paper is almost filled. Greet your girl from me, if she knows me. Now I remain with my best wish to all, from us all, but from me a handshake.

Your Cusent and Friend,"

Arthur Plaisier

P.S. "You come over some time for a vacation trip. Your board is free."*



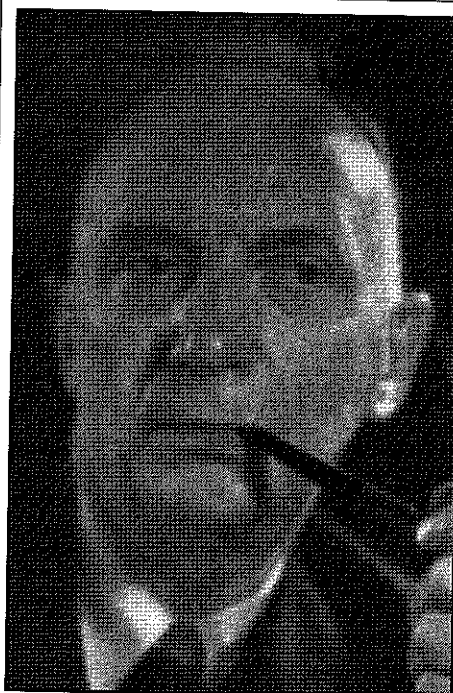
(top) Vander Wall farmstead in Ridderkerk, 1982.
Aart's younger siblings, Anna and William, July 1992.

*Material in quotes was written in English.

the Theological School. Through their joint influence Schilder was enrolled as a student at the gymnasium and later at the Theological School. There, to everyone's amazement, he turned out to be an exceptionally gifted student. This once shy and aloof boy became the center of student life at the Theological School. Under a pseudonym he wrote poems in Dutch, German, Latin, and Greek for the Theological School's yearbook.⁷

In 1914 Schilder was ordained in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, and between 1914 and 1930, while serving six congregations, he published nearly a dozen books. For the next two years he studied at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität of Erlangen, Germany, receiving his doctor's degree in 1933, *summa cum laude*. The same year the Synod of Middelburg appointed him to the chair of dogmatics to succeed Anthony G. Honig at the Theological School in Kampen. He soon won admiration as a teacher, and his preaching attracted a large and loyal following. Some rode their bicycles for many miles to listen to him.⁸

Schilder was not, however, an easy man to listen to. He spoke rapidly, habitually swallowing his words and failing to enunciate them fully. Besides, he lacked a booming voice, so his hearers had to listen very attentively. He seldom had a complete manuscript of his sermon before him. Usually his only written aid was a piece of paper containing a few random scribbles. Very often he preached with only an open Bible. While lecturing or preaching, he drank a lot of water.⁹ I well remember the time when Schilder asked my father, who was then the sexton of the Schinkelkerk in Amsterdam (this was before the Second World War), for a carafe of hot water, which sat steaming on the railing of the pulpit during the first part of the service.



Schilder during his underground years. Page 25 in Zien in de Toekomst (Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1979).

Regular attendants were well aware that, while Schilder was speaking or preaching, he often showered those who sat near the pulpit with a fine spray of moisture.

A prodigious worker, Schilder was able to take cat naps on the spur of the moment. After ten minutes or so, he would be refreshed and could continue his work, frequently till the early morning hours.¹⁰ In those days there were two morning services in Amsterdam's Schinkelkerk. Between these services Schilder would sit sound asleep for fifteen or twenty minutes in a small office, his overcoat on and collar up. Refreshed by such short naps, he was ready for the second service.

From boyhood on, Schilder was fascinated by organ music. Just to touch the keys was a spiritual experience for him. Although he had received no organ lessons and was unable to read a note, he played church organs skillfully. It was not

unusual for him to accompany the congregational singing on the organ. At Jan Bavinck's funeral in 1909, Schilder, then only eighteen years old, played suitable funeral music which he improvised under the impulses of his fantasies and deep emotions. For years he carried the keys to several church organs with him. While playing these organs, he poured out his ravished and torn soul, his accumulated sorrow, and his trembling and rekindled hope. After Schilder was informed that the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken had suspended him on March 23, 1944, the host of his war-time hiding place heard him singing Psalm 25, verse 8, at the harmonium.¹¹

Turn Thou unto me in mercy;
Have compassion on my soul.
I am sore distressed and lonely;
Waves of trouble o'er me roll.
Myriad woes beset my heart,
Myriad doubts and bitternesses;
Thou who my Deliverer art,
Bring me out of my distresses.¹²

Earlier, while in his third charge, on a very warm and humid night, Schilder woke up in the early morning hours. Forgetting that all the windows of his parsonage were cranked wide open, he went to the harmonium and began playing—with all the stops out. It was not long before almost the entire neighborhood was awake.

In the 1920s a new and fresh wind was sweeping through the Gereformeerde Kerken. The Great War had ended, the struggle for state financing of Christian schools had succeeded in 1920, and the rights of suffrage had been expanded—for men in 1917 and for women in 1922. Also, several of the key leaders in these struggles, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck among them, had died.¹³ These men had fashioned many basic principles to guide the

life of the church and society, but they also left many challenges for the next generation. While many of the older fighters wanted to hang on to all that they had struggled so long to achieve, younger voices¹⁴ called for changes. These were not beardless boys, but mature men in their forties. They found the older generation's

glorification of the Kuyperian era a source of stagnation, and they identified a number of deficiencies which needed correction. They declared that the church should (1) sharpen its evangelistic and missionary calling; (2) enlarge its ecumenical vision and practice; (3) acquire a broader cultural vision, including a greater ap-

preciation of science; (4) provide a more meaningful liturgy for worship; and (5) cultivate both in liturgy and preaching a more vital communion with God.¹⁶ In short, they argued that an undue regard for the patterns of the older generation had spawned a cold, intellectual orthodoxy. Schilder shared the younger generation's longing for renewal and worked hard to achieve it.¹⁷

In 1920 the younger generation initiated a periodical, *De Reformatie*, to voice its concerns about the situation in the Gereformeerde Kerken. Schilder was not involved in the preliminary discussions leading to *De Reformatie's* founding, but he was soon a regular contributor, and in 1924 he became one of its editors. For many years the weekly periodical's editorial board did not see eye to eye, but in 1935, after several stormy years, Schilder became the paper's sole editor.¹⁸ When one thinks of *De Reformatie* today, one thinks automatically of Schilder because he was the soul of the periodical after 1935.

In his writing and speaking Schilder expressed his views about the local and universal church straightforwardly, and when his vigorous polemics clashed with the sacred cows of his day, controversies flourished. He challenged those who were saying, "Is not everything concerning faith and morals in order? We know exactly how to live, for do we not have God's word in the Bible from cover to cover? Who has a right to question?" Schilder was especially critical of such Kuyperian constructions as the visible and invisible church and common grace. His words fell like a meteor on a tranquil pond. The waves were enormous, and they led to the great battle which resulted in Schilder's deposition in 1944.¹⁹

Schilder denied the charge that his polemics originated from personal

Schilder's hiding place in Leiden, 1943-44. House number 72 on the Witte Singel. Page 198 in *Ontmoetingen met Schilder* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990), ed. G. Puchinger.



animosities or from personal peculiarities. Johannes J. Buskes recalls that after he and Schilder had publicly reacted to each other's articles in an unflattering manner, he decided to see Schilder personally about the matter. Schilder received him very cordially. After some fifteen minutes Buskes said to Schilder, "With your approval I am going." Amazed, Schilder asked, "Why?" To that Buskes replied, "I think I am at the wrong address, for I wanted to talk with the Schilder of *De Reformatie*." Laughing, Schilder replied, "Here we meet each other in a personal way, as human beings and Christians; but when I write in *De Reformatie*,²⁰ I have nothing to do with you personally; then I dispute principles!" Schilder, however, was unable to understand that his razor-sharp pen produced antagonism. Then, when his opponents attacked him personally, he was greatly troubled, and he considered such attacks the product of unfaithfulness, dishonesty, and meanness. Consequently he suffered great personal distress from these confrontations.

Often Schilder stood alone in his efforts to warn the Gereformeerde Kerken of the evils on the horizon. In 1936, when the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken approved a committee report²¹ concerning the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland (NSB) and the Christen Democratische Unie (CDU), Schilder indicated that the NSB was not a Christian movement and that its principles were directly opposed to the Reformed confessions.²² In 1936 some eight thousand confessing members of the Gereformeerde Kerken were also registered members of the NSB. The movement was relatively young, and it appealed to the younger generation. Even Schilder's sons felt some sympathy for it. His warning against the evils

of the NSB was a nationally significant event in the 1930s.²³

After the surrender of the Netherlands to the Germans in May 1940, Schilder was one of the first resisters to the German regime, and he used the columns of *De Reformatie* to break the angstpsychose.* Once again he opened the eyes of the Reformed people to the evils of the Nazis. In his article "Den schuilkelder uit; de uniform aan" (To Leave the Underground Shelter; to Don the Uniform) Schilder showed that the catastrophe of German occupation was less dangerous than the slow disarmament of the spirit. He encouraged his readers to take up the spiritual fight.²⁴

For nine weeks his editorials in *De Reformatie* drummed this theme, and he had to be silenced. In the issue of August 16, 1940 the NSB found a paragraph which gave them grounds to call for Schilder's arrest. He wrote,

Authority and power are two things. Eventually the antichrist shall keep **that** and the church **this**. And after that the day of the great harvest comes. Come, Lord of the Harvest, yes come quickly, come over the Channel and over the Brenner Pass, come via Malta and Japan, yes, come from the ends of the earth, and bring along your pruning knife, and be merciful to your people; your people are well qualified, but only from you, from you alone, for God's eternal pleasure.²⁵

This was interpreted to be an open prayer for the victory of England and the defeat of Germany. Schilder was arrested. At his hearing he denied the allegations. He had, he insisted, written nothing more than a prayer for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Germans, however, forbade the publishing of *De Reformatie* and later imposed a ban on Schilder's writing.²⁶

*Psychology of fear.

For three and a half months Schilder was confined to a prison in Arnhem. While he was there, well-wishers showered him with fruit, cheese, cookies, lunch meats, soap, cigars, flowers, and more. Later, the guards refused to pass the gifts on, indicating that the German authorities had prohibited this.²⁷

On December 6, 1940, Schilder was set free and resumed his teaching at the Theological School in Kampen. In 1942 the Germans felt that Schilder still had too much influence—because many of the younger ministers refused to accept National Socialism—consequently his second arrest was imminent. On a Sunday morning, the arresting officers parked their car in front of Schilder's home and rang the doorbell, but no one answered. They rang the bell once more. Again there was no response. A Dutch policeman who was with them remarked that Schilder might not be at home, since he very often went out preaching on Sundays. Hearing that, the Germans left. Actually Schilder and his wife had gone to bed very late and, being still asleep, had not heard the doorbell. Others soon warned Schilder about what had happened, and he left immediately on a passenger boat for Amsterdam. He found safe haven with the Groeneveld family near Giessendam, and there he worked on a revision of his three-volume set *Christus in zijn lijden* (Christ in His Suffering).²⁸

A little more than a year later Schilder's haven was no longer safe because his hiding place had become known. After a short stay in Voorburg, probably with his daughter, Schilder found his next hiding place in December 1943 with Pieter Jasperse, a physician, in Leiden. Here, on March 23, 1944, Schilder received the news of his suspension by the Synod of the Gereformeerde

Kerken. It was then that he sat at the harmonium to unburden his soul with the singing of Psalm 25, verse 8. Five months later he learned of his deposition.

After Schilder's deposition the events which led to the organization of the Liberated Church moved very swiftly. It became known throughout the land that a meeting was going to take place in a small building in the Hague on August 11, 1944. No large crowd was expected. But such a throng of people appeared that the meeting place was quickly moved to the large Lutheran church. To everyone's surprise, not only Seakle Greijdanus but also Schilder himself was present. Here the "Acte van Vrijmaking of Wederkeer" (Act of Liberation or Return) was read and accepted, and the birth of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland onder Artikel 31 became a *fait accompli*.²⁹

By then the Nazi charges against Schilder had been dropped. He had been declared a free man on July 12, 1944.³⁰ But, if Schilder had not gone underground in 1942, he would almost certainly have died in a concentration camp. After the war he remained professor of dogmatics, but now in the Theological School of the newly organized Liberated Churches.

In August 1947 Schilder made his second visit to the United States. During his first visit, in 1939, he found the pulpits of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) open to him. But in 1947, the situation had changed. The Synodical Committee placed a notice in *The Banner* that the CRC had no sister relationship with the Liberated Churches. Schilder was therefore not allowed in the CRC's pulpits. But those of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) remained open, as they had been in 1939. That

1952 funeral procession.
Page 198 in
W.G. de Vries,
K. Schilder als
Gevangene en
Onderduiker
(Groningen: De
Vuurbaak, 1977).



prompted Schilder to write that the Protestant Reformed Churches were the only churches where members of the Liberated Churches immigrating to North America could feel at home.³¹ Rev. Peter De Boer, writing for the PRC, wrote,

We earnestly believe that our Protestant Reformed Churches are the purest manifestation of the church of Jesus Christ, that the earmarks of the true church are found with us, and that it is to the spiritual benefit of the Dutch immigrants to affiliate with our churches. Naturally our churches do not intend to simply gather in all, whether or

not they agree with our stand as churches.³²

Thus it appears that from the very outset the PRC placed certain roadblocks in the way of receiving the newly arriving immigrants in North America as full members. Herman Hoeksema* wrote,

We strive rather to keep our churches as pure as possible, both in regard to doctrine and life. And as a result we cannot expect a remarkable growth, especially not in the miserable age in which we live.

*Founding pastor of the Protestant Reformed denomination.

There are not many that will accept the pure Reformed truth, and very few in our age will live from the principle of the antithesis and keep their garments clean. And as far as increasing our membership from the immigrants in Canada is concerned, I have stated before, and I say it again, . . . they cannot be received as members with us unless they are converted.³³

In 1950, the synod of the PRC presented a document (for adoption a year later) entitled "A Brief Declaration of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Churches."³⁴ In it the PRC set forth their doctrinal positions. This declaration was not well received by the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands.³⁵ Schilder had tried from the very beginning to keep an open mind about the relationship of the Liberated Churches with the PRC.

However, his polemics with Hoeksema finally caused Schilder to explode and write, "De kous is af" (the stocking is finished*).³⁶ And with that the possibility of the two denominations affiliating as "sister" churches was ended. Immigrants from the Liberated Churches were advised to find another church, but not the CRC. When many of them banded together to start their own churches, the Canadian Reformed Churches were instituted.

The years after the "Vrijmaking" ("Liberation") were difficult for Schilder. He had to struggle to keep his flock together. There were those who did not see the need for a "doorgaande reformatie" ("continuous reformation"), a view that required separate organizations for education, politics, social services, and the like. Others wanted to eliminate traditional church practices, such as using advisory professors at synods and publishing reports in the

Acts of Synod. And there were those who asserted that the confessional statements were taking the place of the Scriptures.³⁷

Schilder died at sixty-one years of age of a heart attack on March 23, 1952. He worked until the last and left enormous plans unfinished. Only four volumes of his projected twelve-volume commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism³⁸ were published. His death caused great consternation among his followers, and many of those who had long opposed him mourned his passing. In death the last two lines of his much-loved Psalm 25, verse 8, became abundantly appropriate:

Thou who my Deliverer art,
Bring me out of my distresses.

And that is what his deliverer did.

Endnotes

1. Jan Dirk Boerkoel, "Verdergaande verwijdering," *De Bazuin* 103 (15 juli 1950) 1; Rudolf van Reest [Karel C. van Spronsen], *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1990), p. 112; Cornelis Veenhof, "Schilder—de Strijder," in *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren*. In memoriam Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, 19 december 1890 - 23 maart 1952 (Goes: Oosterbaan & le Cointre, 1953), p. 36; Harm Jan Jager, "Professor Schilder als collega," in *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren*, p. 47; W.K. van Dijk, "Denkend aan Schilder . . ." in *Ontmoetingen met Schilder*. Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, 1890 - 19 december - 1990. Red. van G. Puchinger (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990), p. 14.
2. *Ontmoetingen met Schilder*. Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, 1890 - 19 december - 1990. Red. van George Puchinger (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990); G. Harinck, *Klaas Schilder: een keuze uit zijn werk* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1989); Erik A. de Boer, *Prof. dr. K. Schilder, eerste rede, eerste optreden* (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 1989); Jozias Johan Christoffel Dee, *Pictorialia-K. Schilder*. RB-Serie (Goes: Oosterbaan & le Cointre, 1990); Jacobus De Jong, *Accommodatio Dei*. A theme in K. Schilder's theology of revelation. ThD Dissertation (Kampen: Dissertatie-Uitgeverij Mondiss, 1990); *Geen duimbreed*. Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder. Red. van Jan de Bruijn en George Harinck. Passage (Baarn: ten Have, 1990); Jozias Johan Christoffel Dee, *K. Schilder zijn leven en werk*. Deel I, 1890-

1934. ThD Dissertation (Goes: Oosterbaan & Cointre, 1990). Prof. Dr. K. Schilder 1890 - 1990. Herdenkingsbundel (to be published).

3. Het Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme sponsored a symposium entitled "Geen Duimbreed" concerning Klaas Schilder at De Vrije Universiteit on April 6, 1990. See Trouw 7 april 1990, p. 11, and *Nederlands Dagblad*, april 1990, p. 2. Other symposia were held at the Theological University, Broederweg, Kampen, The Netherlands and Pretoria, South Africa, in December 1990.

4. This utterance was made by Johan J. D. Dee, a minister in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, who received his doctor's degree on the life and work of Klaas Schilder from the Theological School (Broederweg) at Kampen in 1990. See *Nederlands Dagblad*, 6 April 1990, p. 2. His doctoral dissertation will form the first volume of a three volume set of a biography on Klaas Schilder. See footnote 2.

5. Boerkoel wrote a long series of articles about Schilder in *De Bazuin*, which were very interesting indeed. His articles in *De Bazuin* appeared from May 6, 1960, through June 9, 1961. These articles did not receive a warm approval from Wietze G. de Vries, Schilder's son-in-law, and from Rudolf van Reest. See Wietze Geert de Vries, *Calvinisten op de tweesprong*. De Internationale Federatie van Calvinisten en haar invloed op de onderlinge verhoudingen in De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in de dertiger jaren van de twintigste eeuw. ThD dissertation (Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1974), pp. 66-67, and van Reest, *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, p. 119; "Datalijst," in *Ontmoetingen met Schilder*, p. 141; Cornelis Veenhof, "Ten Geleide" in *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren*, p. 17; Jan Dirk Boerkoel, "Leiding Gods in Schilders leven," *De Bazuin* 103 (12 augustus 1960) 1.

6. Veenhof, "Ten geleide," p. 9; Boerkoel, "Verdergaande verwijdering," p. 1; Wietze Geert de Vries, *K. Schilder als gevangene en onderduiker*. Het leven van K. Schilder tijdens de jaren 1940 en 1942-1944 in het licht van zijn correspondentie met zijn echtgenote mevr. A.J. Schilder-Walter (Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1977), pp. 54-55.

7. Veenhof, "Ten geleide," pp. 9-10; J. de Waard, "Een man een man, een woord een woord," in *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren*, p. 43; Boerkoel, "Verdergaande verwijdering," p. 1.

8. De Vries, *Calvinisten op de tweesprong*, p. 67; Klaas Schilder's dissertation was entitled *Zur Begriffsgeschichte der "Paradoxen" mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Calvins und des nachkierkegaardischen "Paradoxen"* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1933); the congregations Schilder served were Ambt-Vollenhove (June 21, 1914), Vlaardingen (December 10, 1916), Gorinchem (September 28, 1919), Delft (October 4, 1922),

*That is the end of it.

Oegstgeest (October 11, 1925) and Rotterdam-Delfshaven (June 27, 1928); Rik Valkenburg, "Onderhoud met Pieter Jasperse," in his **Gedreigt door't Vuur: Ware oorlogsverhalen uit de tweede wereldoorlog**. 2 delen (Veenendaal: Uitgeverij Kool, 1985), 2: 48; van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, p. 131.

9. Jan Dirk Boerkoel, "De eenzame zoekt gemeenschap," **De Bazuin** 103 (2 September 1960) 1; van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, p. 126.

10. Jan Dirk Boerkoel, "Een rijkbegaafde student," **De Bazuin** 103 (22 July 1960): 1.

11. De Vries, **Calvinisten op de tweesprong**, p. 67; Veenhof, "Ten geleide," p. 10; Boerkoel, "Verdergaande verwijdering," p. 1; van Reest, **Schilder's struggle for the unity of the church**, pp. 117-18, 140-41.

12. **Psalter Hymnal**. Centennial edition. Doctrinal Standards and liturgy of the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: Publication Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 1959), p. 49. Dutch text is found in **Liedboek voor de kerken**. Psalmen en gezangen voor de eredienst in kerk en huis aangeboden door de interkerkelijke stichting voor het kerklied ('s-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum/Leeuwarden: Jongbloed-Zetka 1973), p. 41, and reads as follows:

Zie op mij in gunst van boven,
wees mij toch genadig, Heer!
Eenzaam ben ik en verschoven,
ja, d'ellende drukt mij neer.
'k Roep U aan in angst en smart,
duizend zorgen, duizend doden
kwelen mijn bekommert hart:
voer mij uit mijn angst en noden!

13. Cornelis Trimp, "'Ontwikkeling' van het gereformeerde leven," **De Reformatie** 65 (1989/90) 467.

14. J.C. Aalders. **Veruitwendigen onze kerken?** Referaat gehouden voor de Friesche Vereniging van Predikanten der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, den 27en September 1916 te Leeuwarden (Kampen: J.K. Kok, 1916); J.C. Aalders. **De critiek der jongeren**. Een woord tot de Gereformeerde Kerken (Baarn: Drukkerij Oranje Nassau, 1918); Cornelis Veenhof. "De beweging der jongeren," **De Reformatie** 26 (1950/51) 364-65, 372-73, 380-81, 388-89, 396-97; Dirk Th. Kuiper. "Gefnuikte vernieuwing: de 'beweging der jongeren' in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in de periode 1910-1930," in **Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland**, Jaargang 1. Red. van Dirk Th. Kuiper, e.a. (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1987), pp. 57-87.

15. Trimp, "'Ontwikkeling' van het gereformeerde leven," pp. 467, 485-86.

16. Trimp, p. 486.

17. Trimp, p. 487.

18. L. Smit, "Iets uit de geschiedenis van

het weekblad **De Reformatie**," **De Reformatie** 26 (1950/51) 5-6; van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, pp. 146-50; De Vries, **Calvinisten op de tweesprong**, pp. 107-15, 232-34; "Datalijst," in **Ontmoetingen met Schilder**, p. 141.

19. Van Dijk, "Denkend aan Schilder...," pp. 14-15.

20. Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer. **Zoeken en Vinden**. Herinneringen en ervaringen (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1989), p. 323; Johannes Jacobus Buskes. **Mensen die je niet vergeet** (Apeldoorn: Uitgeverij Semper Agendo, 1970), pp. 41-42. See also "Uitspraken over Schilder en zijn werk" in **Ontmoetingen met Schilder**, p. 135, and Jan Dirk Boerkoel, "Een gecompliceerd karakter," **De Bazuin** 103 (29 juli 1960) 1; M. Oudkerk, "Profeet tegen het nihilisme," in **Ontmoetingen met Schilder**, p. 55; De Waard, "Een man een man, een woord een woord," p. 42.

21. "Artikel 272" and "Bijlage LXIV" in **Acta der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland** gehouden te Amsterdam van 25 augustus tot 2 oktober 1936 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1936), pp. 127-29, 326-33.

22. Klaas Schilder. **Geen duimbreed!** Een synodaal besluit in zake 't lidmaatschap van NSB en CDU (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1936), p. 15; Harmjan Dam. "Prof. Dr. K. Schilder: 'Geen duimbreed!'" in **De NSB en de Kerken**. De opstelling van de Nationaal Socialistische Beweging in Nederland ten opzichte van het christendom en met name de Gereformeerde Kerken, 1931-1940 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1986), pp. 147-49.

23. van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, pp. 190, 203-04; George Puchinger, "Prof. Dr. K. Schilder: vijftientwintig jaar na de vrijmaking," in **Theologische persoonlijkheden** (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1973), p. 148.

24. Thomas Delleman. "Het begin van het verzet," in **Opdat wij niet vergeten**. De bijdrage van Gereformeerde Kerken, van haar voorgangers en leden, in het verzet tegen het Nationaal-Socialisme en de Duitse tyrannie. Saamgesteld door Th. Delleman (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1949), pp. 21-24; Puchinger, "Prof. Dr. K. Schilder: vijftientwintig jaar na de vrijmaking," p. 148; Klaas Schilder, "Den schuilkelder uit; de uniform aan," in his **Bezet bezit**. Artikelen opgenomen in de nummers van **De Reformatie** uit de eerste maanden na de bezetting van Nederland—juni-augustus 1940 (Goes: Oosterbaan & le Cointre, 1945), pp. 16-22.

25. Klaas Schilder, "'Op de grens van twee werelden,'" in his **Bezet bezit**, pp. 92-93.

26. van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, pp. 274-75; Valkenburg, "Onderhoud met Pieter Jasperse," pp. 47-49; K.G. Idema, "Predikanten in gevangenschap,"

in **Opdat wij niet vergeten**, p. 231.

27. De Vries, "K. Schilder als gevangene en onderduiker," pp. 19, 22, 30, 37, 39.

28. Valkenburg, "Onderhoud met Pieter Jasperse," pp. 49-52.

29. Valkenburg, pp. 53-56; van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, pp. 303-04, 313, 319-20; "Datalijst," in **Ontmoetingen met Schilder**, p. 151.

30. van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, pp. 341-42; Klaas Schilder, "Acte van Vrijmaking of Wederkeer," in his **Looze kalk**. Een wederwoord over de (zedelijke) crisis in de "Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland" (Groningen: Erven A. de Jager, 1946); Rudolf van Reest [Karel C. van Spronsen], "Een korte levensbeschrijving," in **Gedenkt uw voorgangers**, p. 25.

31. "Consistories, Attention!" **The Banner** 82 (1947) 947. This notice was signed by Ralph J. Danhof, secretary of the Synodical Committee. See also **Acts of Synod 1948** of the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Publishing House, 1948), pp. 427-28; van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, pp. 361-62; Klaas Schilder, "Over Emigranten," **De Reformatie** 23 (12 juni 1948) 312.

32. Peter De Boer, "Our Work in Canada," **Concordia** 5 (January 20, 1949) 2.

33. Herman Hoeksema, "Advice to Immigrants," **The Standard Bearer** 25 (1948/49) 177.

34. "A Declaration of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Church," in **Acts of Synod**. Protestant Reformed Churches of America, 1950. [Grand Rapids: Protestant Reformed Churches, 1950], pp. 83-90. Also in **The Standard Bearer** 26 (1949/50) 436-40, and in **Concordia** 7 (June 22, 1950) 2-3, (July 20, 1950) 2-3.

35. Karel C. van Spronsen [Rudolf van Reest], "Letter from Netherlands," **Concordia** 7 (November 9, 1950) 4-5.

36. Klaas Schilder, "De kous is af," **De Reformatie** 27 (November 17, 1951) 58-59. See also Peter De Boer, "It's All Your Fault!" **Concordia** 9 (February 14, 1952) 2-3, and Herman Hoeksema, "The Stocking Is Finished," **The Standard Bearer** 28 (1951/52) 148-53.

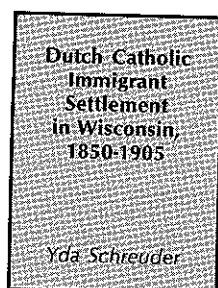
37. van Reest, **Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church**, pp. 380-81, 383-84.

38. Klaas Schilder, **Heidelbergsche Catechismus**. 4 delen (Goes: Oosterbaan & le Cointre, 1947-53).

BOOKS

Review by Conrad J. Bult

Two Studies about Dutch Catholics



Dutch Catholic Immigrant Settlement in Wisconsin, 1850-1905. Yda Schreuder. New York: Garland, 1989.

Yda Schreuder, a member of the Geography Department at the University of Delaware, has published several journal articles about the Dutch Catholic immigrants who settled in the Fox River Valley, a part of Wisconsin a few miles slightly southwest of Green Bay. Little, the author observes, has been written about these folk, who first came to Little Chute in 1848. Their leader was the Dominican priest Father Theodorus Van den Broek, who in 1836 established St. John's Parish at Little Chute for the Menominee Indians. The Indians were relocated in 1843, and, consequently, in 1846 he found himself without a position. After a decade of parish service (1836-1846), he spent 1847 and part of 1848 in the Netherlands, promoting Dutch Catholic immigration to America. Those he led to America came primarily from the northeastern part of the Dutch province of Noord-Brabant.

The "frontier phase" of the Wisconsin settlements lasted only twenty

years, and by 1870 a rural to urban population transfer was clearly discernible. In short, Dutch Catholic immigrant settlers were leaving the countryside for better-paying jobs in nearby towns and cities. Schreuder demonstrates that for Dutch Catholics assimilation took place in medium-sized midwestern cities and not on the frontier. The American Catholic hierarchy's preference for urban parishes also contributed to the assimilation of its members in an urban setting.

In highly technical social-geographic prose Schreuder tells much about Dutch Catholics who left Noord-Brabant for the Fox River Valley. In each of the book's eight chapters, the author includes lengthy annotated notes on sources. At the end of the volume is a ten-page appendix concerning immigrant records, followed by an eighteen-page bibliography listing primary and secondary material relevant to the topic. Schreuder writes much about the economic-social-religious environment of the areas in the Netherlands from which the immigrants came. Similar information is included about the Fox River Valley, their new home. Schreuder studies the characteristics of these folk as a group and not as individuals. For this reason very few persons other than Father Godhart and Father Van den Broek are mentioned by name. If you are fascinated by the Dutch Catholics who emigrated to Little Chute, De Pere, or other Fox River communi-

ties, Schreuder's study is foundational. Genealogists will also find the author's comments about the availability and scope of existing immigrant records useful.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Landverhuizing als regionaal verschijnsel van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1820-1880 (Immigration as a Regional Phenomenon from North Brabant to North America 1820-1880). H. van Stekelenburg. Tilburg: Stichting Zuidelijk Historisch Contact, 1991.

No longer neglected by scholars, the Dutch Catholic emigrants from Noord-Brabant are also the subject of Henri van Stekelenburg's doctoral thesis submitted to the Katholieke Universiteit Brabant. Regional factors determining decisions to leave the homeland are his primary concern, and secondarily he describes the emigration movement and generalizes about it. More studies, the author declares, must be made of the regions which these emigrants left. For van Stekelenburg, repressive social control and an "emigration offer" such as that of Father Van den Broek are essential for an explanation of the character of nineteenth-century regional emigration to America.

Van Stekelenburg's illustrated Dutch-language dissertation includes a summary in English and separate indexes of geographic and personal names which will be helpful to anyone desiring to know more about a group of emigrants who deserve more scholarly attention.



FOR THE FUTURE

The topics listed below are being researched, and articles about them will appear in future issues of *Origins*.

The "Brickyard": Zeelanders in Grand Rapids *by* Henry Ippel

Dirk Nieland and the Perch Lake Artist's Colony, 1927-1947 *by* George Harper

Memoirs of Rev. Arnold Brink

Ralph Dekker's Englewood

The South African Boer War *by* H. Ippel

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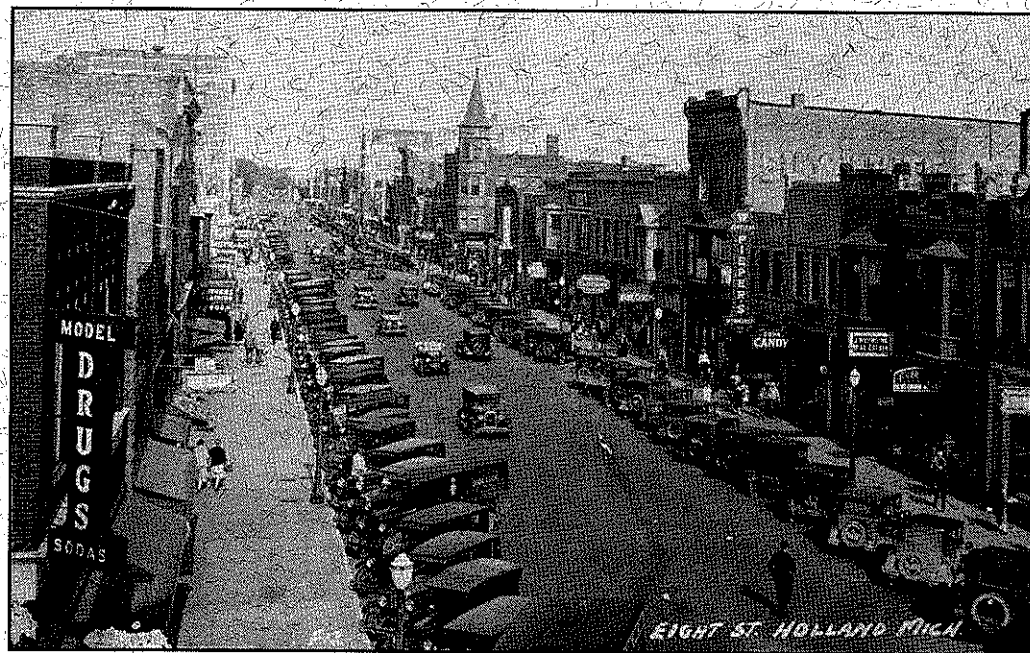
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