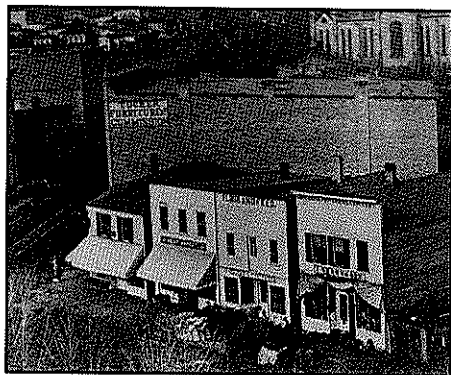


ORIGINS



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Cover: Highland, Indiana, circa 1937,
seen from overpass. First CRC is in
the background.



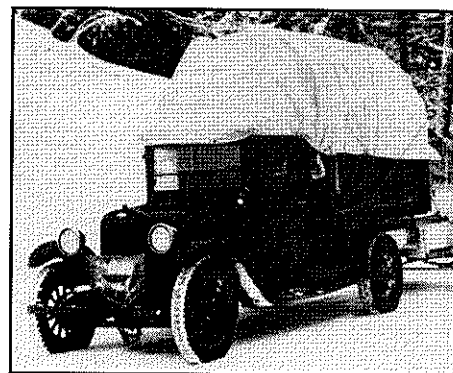
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Origins is designed to publicize
and advance the objectives of the
Archives. These goals include the
gathering, organization, and study of
historical materials produced by the
day-to-day activities of the Christian
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PETER LANKESTER

MILWAUKEE AND GRAND RAPIDS

1850 - 1870

by H.J. Brinks

In 1849 Peter Lankester (1799-1870) emigrated from Middelburg, the provincial capital of Zeeland, where he had helped organize a company of about 150 families who sailed with him from Rotterdam. The group split up in America, the largest segment going to Michigan with H. G. Klijn, a pastor among the religious seceders. Peter Lankester and a cluster of about twenty-five families settled in and around Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where several hundred urban immigrants had preceded them. But Peter, who wished to be a farmer, selected land in Franklin Township, located about fifteen miles southwest of Milwaukee. Although this Dutch settlement survived for at least fifty years, it did not become a notably flourishing ethnic enclave, because its residents were drawn into Milwaukee and to other places. By 1897 Franklin had retained only twenty Dutch families, and by then the Lankesters had also moved away.¹

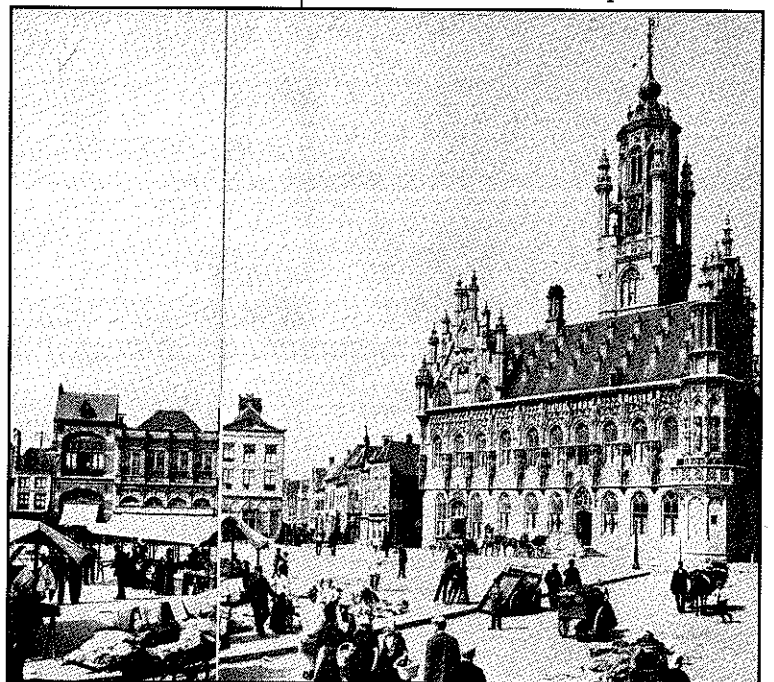
A wealthy immigrant, Lankester functioned as a gentleman farmer while also operating a small bakery on his farmstead. He had owned a bakery in Middelburg, and its sale contributed to the assets which enabled him to establish two farms in Franklin.

Lankester's letters disclose an obvious inclination toward business. His native place was the largest city in Zeeland, chartered in

the early thirteenth century. Middelburg's commercial "Golden Age" coincided with that of the Netherlands, and, like Amsterdam, Middelburg was a principal entrepot for the Dutch East India Trading Company. Trade was the city's lifeblood, and as the Netherlands lost commercial prominence in the eighteenth century, Middelburg's prosperity also waned. By 1849, when Peter Lankester emigrated, the city's port traffic was reduced severely (only forty-one ships left the harbor in 1844). The population in 1842 stood at 14,198, a number which, though sufficient to support busi-

nesses producing soap, beer, salt, leather and linen, was restricted by a largely local and agriculturally focused economy.² Lankester's bakery served a fragment of this economy.

Although they considered themselves to be farmers in Wisconsin, the Lankesters were drawn to Milwaukee's commercial life from the moment of their arrival. And it is obvious too that, while both Peter and his son, David, were listed as farmers in the census records, they spent little time behind plows. During the Civil War, when farmhands became scarce and expensive, the

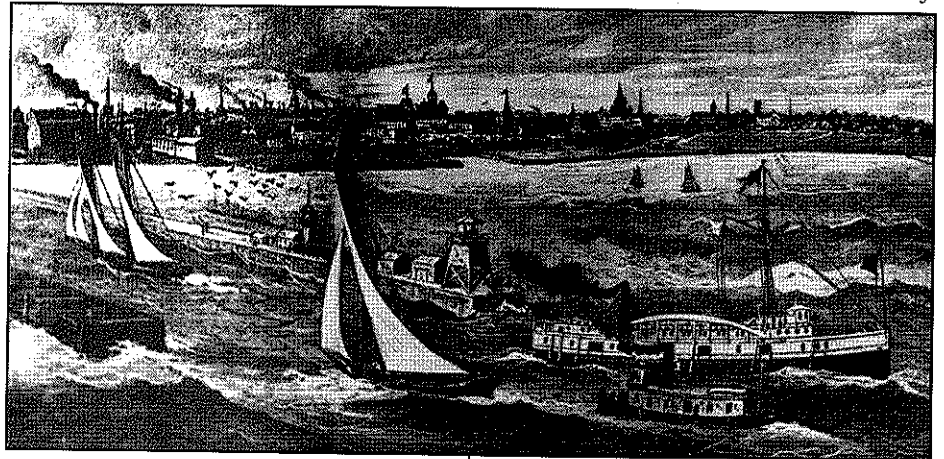


*Middelburg on
Market Day,
1860s,
pp. 36-67 from
Middelburg in
Beeld-Spraaks
(Den Boer,
Middelburg,
1967).*

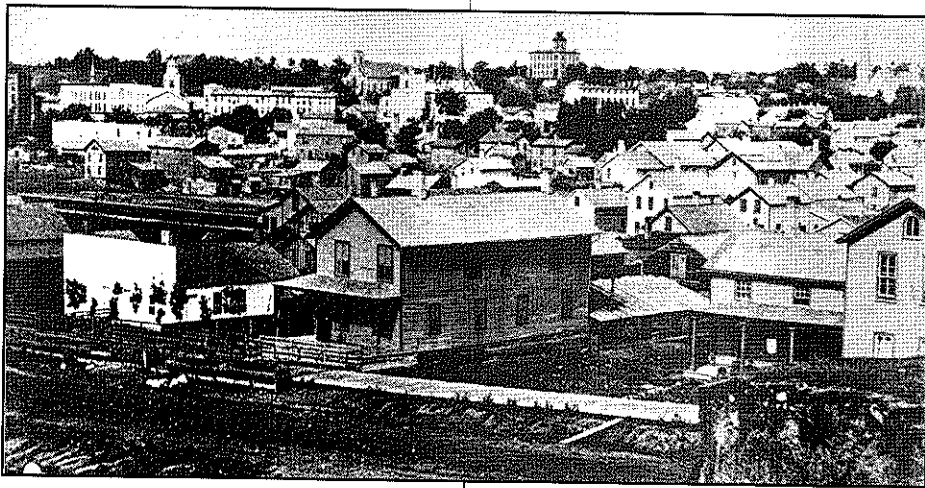


Butter Market, 1860s,
Middelburg. P. 15 from
Middelburg in Beeld-Spraaks
(Den Boer, Middelburg, 1967).

Lankester clan moved from Franklin to Milwaukee. And it appeared that they lived very comfortably there on an income from investments and land leases. In 1860 Peter's estate was worth about \$10,000. Ten years later, after the family moved to Grand Rapids, Peter's home on 59 LaGrave Avenue was valued at \$3,000. with his son, David, he established a potash factory on Ottawa Street, and David continued in that business until his death in 1903. During that era David lived successively on Hilton,



Milwaukee Harbor, 1870s.
Credit, Milwaukee Public Library.



Grand Rapids Housing near Grand Rapids' Center, 1880s. Credit, Grand Rapids Public Library, Michigan History Division.

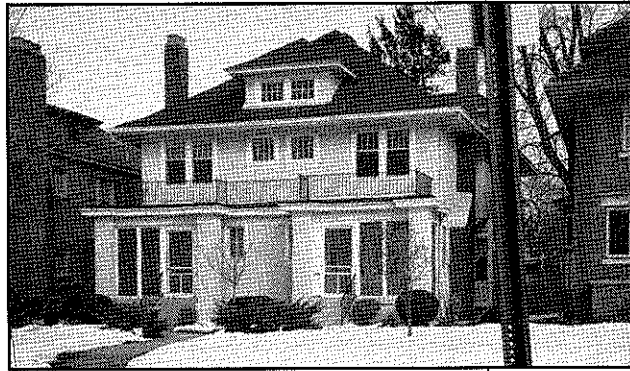
Spring, North, and Logan streets, all fringing the downtown commercial district, where his children worked in various retail shops.³

Prior to his immigration Peter Lankester had gained prominence in

the Dutch religious movement known as the *Afscheiding*; he was among those who were persecuted for leading illegal worship services in Middelburg. Nonetheless, he did not cite religious persecution as the motivation for his emigration. His intent, the record indicates, was "to join friends or family" in the U.S.A. Nonetheless, his piety and commitment to the *Afscheiding's* perspectives leap from the pages of his correspondence. He led worship services in Franklin and Milwaukee and served constantly as a church elder. In 1868, just two years before his death, he was still participating prominently in the activities of the Milwaukee Reformed Church. Then, following the family's migration to Grand Rapids in 1869, Peter, his children, and

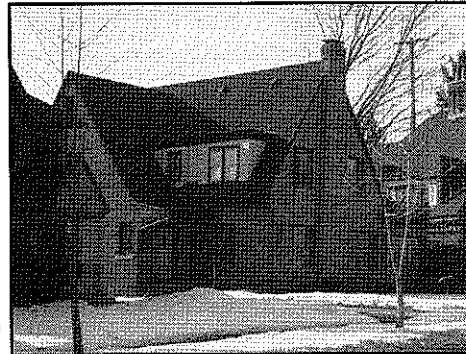
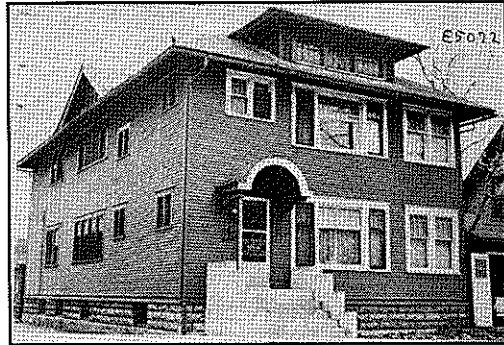


Lankester family homes 1869-1960

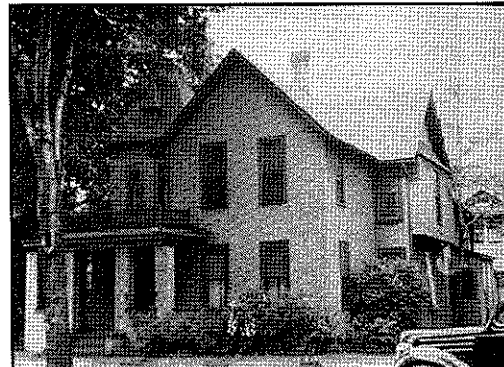


grandchildren attended Central Reformed Church. His great grandchildren, however, moved into mainline Protestant denominations, and the last to survive, Stephen D. Lankester, affiliated with the Grace Episcopal congregation. Mary Lankester, Stephen's wife, attended Fountain Street Church.⁴

Peter (1857-1928), the namesake and grandson of the original immigrant, acquired some prominence as a local businessman in Grand Rapids. Detailing his career as a sales representative and the manager of several wholesale grocery firms, the



Michigan Tradesman indicated that Peter was active in political, civic, and religious matters. His two sons, Paul and Stephen, were also managers and owners of small businesses. One of these, the Coffee Ranch, had been passed on to Paul Lankester from his father. Stephen (1893-1969) first managed and later owned the F. S. Torrey Veneer Company of Grand Rapids.



Citing his membership in the locally prestigious Peninsular Club and his burial in Graceland Mausoleum, Stephen's 1969 obituary discloses potent symbols of the area's social elite.⁵

(left top) 1911 514 North Avenue

(left middle) 1923 115 Logan

(left bottom) 1940 451 La Grave

(right top) 1940 410 Morris

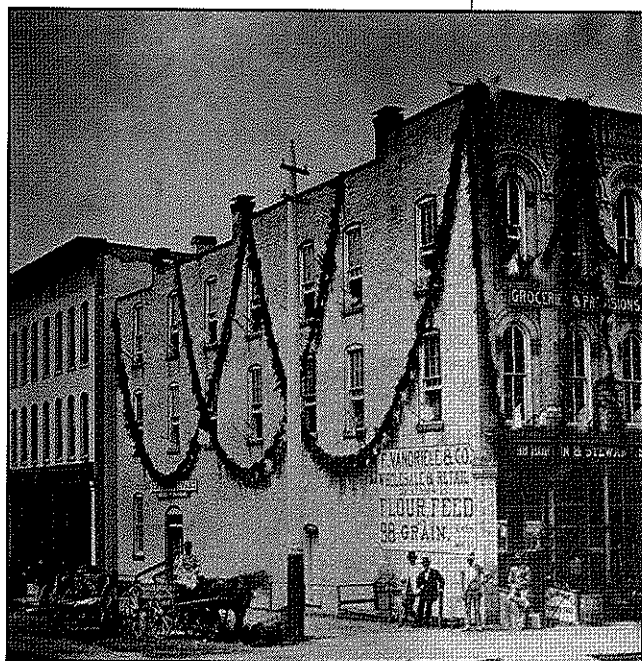
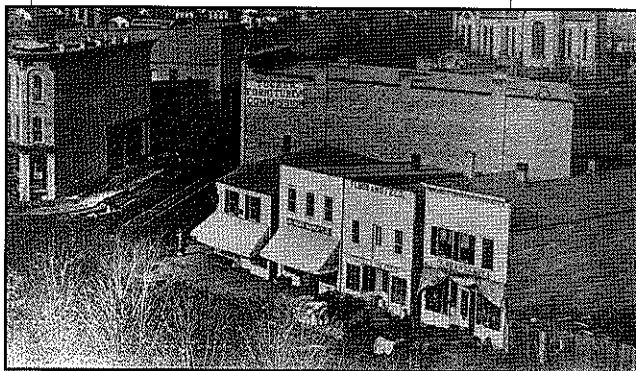
(right middle) 1940 1145 Cadillac Drive

(right bottom) 1949 533 Cambridge, EGR

The evidence of inherited economic well-being is detectable in the Lankester family's migrations within Grand Rapids. From the time of their arrival (1869) and until the 1940s, their homes were located among the well-off residents who clustered near the central business district. (Part of this area, Heritage Hill, gained admission to the national register for

Grand Rapids, 1880s. N.W.
Corner of Division at Monroe. Note
the stores owned by J. Gezon & Son;
DeJonge and Van Strien

photo right, below, courtesy of
Michigan History Division,
Grand Rapids Public Library



Monroe at Ionia, 1880,
across from current Morton
House.

On April 2, 1863 Peter wrote that he was sending some mail to the Netherlands with his friend, Frans van Driele. No doubt Peter also consulted with van Driele before moving to Grand Rapids in 1869. Van Driele was a prominent church and business leader in Grand Rapids who could have advised P. Lankester and his son David that a potash business would be profitable in Grand Rapids. No doubt the scrap lumber from the growing furniture industry of that era provided low-cost wood for the Lankesters' potash factory on Canal Street.

historic preservation in 1970.) In the 1940s, when the Ottawa Hills area became an elite neighborhood, both Paul and Stephen Lankester relocated to that southeastern segment of the city.⁶ Thus, until these last surviving Lankesters died in the 1960s, the benefits of their paternal great grandfather, Peter Lankester, continued to structure their lives.

The five letters following (1850-1867) disclose the impressions and thoughts of an agile mind. Peter Lankester's business schemes ranged from one venture to another, and, while promoting them, his lively portrayal of the Milwaukee area has heightened the historical significance of his correspondence.

Endnotes

1. Henry Lucas, *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings* (Assen, the Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1955), pp. 129-39; Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), p. 153.

2. A. J. van der Aa, *Aardrijkskundig Woordenboek der Nederlanden* (Gorinchem: Jacobus Noorduynd, 1846), vol. 7, pp. 875-914.

3. Robert Swierenga, *Dutch Households in U.S. Population Censuses 1850, 1860, 1870* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1987), vol. 2, p. 599; *Grand Rapids City Directory*, 1869, 1872, 1875, 1885.

4. Henry Lucas, *Memoirs*, p. 133; Robert Swierenga, *Dutch Emigrants to the United States . . . 1835-1880* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1983), p. 156; *Minutes of the Milwaukee Reformed Church*, December 1869, microfilm in Calvin College Library Archives; *Grand Rapids Herald*, 25 Sept. 1969; *Grand Rapids Press*, 19 Apr. 1966.

5. *Michgian Tradesman*, 11 Apr. 1928, p. 42; *Grand Rapids Herald*, 25 Sept. 1966.

6. *Grand Rapids City Directory*, 1903, 1916, 1923, 1931, 1940, 1949.

P. Lankester to J. M. Kuiler

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin,
to Veere, Zeeland, The Netherlands

October 10, 1850

Dear Brother, Sister, and Children,

I hope that you will receive these words in good health, a privilege which we have also enjoyed so that we are as healthy as we ever were in the Netherlands. Apart from my farm, which I have rented, I have four or five cows which give so much milk and butter that my family can hardly use it all. We have more garden produce than we can use, including the same kinds of herbs that you use. We have potatoes and winter vegetables from the cabbage family in over supply. People here eat bacon and meat three times daily and as much as a person wishes. Bread is made from the purest wheat flour; the finest kind can be bought at ten guilders (\$4.00) for 196 pounds. I bake my own bread from this flour and anything else I desire, such as rusks and sweet breads. I have set up a brick oven for that purpose with two doors. I have also learned to make a good yeast, which I make every week. It is as good as that which you have in the Netherlands. So my rusks are as good as those you buy in Middelburg. For the rest I have nothing to do with the farm.

This summer I had a nice house built for the farmer next to my own farmyard. And a man from Velp has also built next to my farm. This man is a painter married to a daughter of Karl Reemans, who lives at the end of the city hall street in Velp. He has been here two years longer than I, and lived eighty miles north of here. After I wrote to him, he came here for a visit and liked this area so much that he sold his farm and moved next door to me. We enjoy each other's company, and that is true of all the Zeelanders who live here.

I have one of the finest houses and two small wagons for traveling. With these we drive anywhere we please. In good weather I drive to Milwaukee two times each week. Milwaukee is fifteen miles away. Some of the distance is on plank roads, and on these I can cover ten miles in an hour. Most people, especially in the city, have horses and buggies. Nearly every shopkeeper has a horse and wagon because the distances are so great. You don't have to pay to use the streets except for the plank road, which costs one cent per mile to cover the cost of maintenance. There is so much more that I could write, but I don't know what impact it might have, and I certainly don't want to entice anyone to come here. Everyone must decide that for himself. I only want to give you my impressions. We, at least, have no remorse about our decision to come here. From all the matters above, which

pertain to material things, you can see that we find ourselves in good circumstances.

But more important than material matters, we have the privilege of worshiping Him unhindered, according to His Word. No one here is ridiculed due to his confession or religious convictions. In fact, the people are so free to worship here that the city contains signs with invitations encouraging people to worship the Lord on Sunday. We, along with our people in Milwaukee, have invited Rev. Klijn to serve us as our pastor and preacher. We trust he will come here to serve our church. The Americans have offered us everything, including a parcel of land in order to build a parsonage.

Our children are doing very well, especially David. He is as tall as I am and takes great pleasure in his work here. When he is finished with his apprenticeship, he will be a very capable [baker]. He is doing well with the language, both in speaking and understanding. He also handles horses well—just like the Americans. The farmers here all behave like gentlemen—dressed in wool, with pleated white shirts. And they live like gentlemen too.

I must close. If you can, greet our friends and acquaintances. Some time ago I sent a drawing of my farmyard to J. Poppe. I would like to have Poppe and Adamse come here. There are still many opportunities in my neighborhood. Thousands of acres are still uncultivated. The whole of the Netherlands could be transported to this single state, Wisconsin.

The Lord reigns, and He does what is good in His own eyes. You are heartily greeted by all of us. My address is

T. T. van der Plasche
care of Mr. P. Lankester
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Your brother, P. Lankester

P. Lankester to Brother [J. M. Kuiler]

Franklin, Milwaukee County,
to Veere, Zeeland

December 26, 1855

Esteemed Brother, Sister, and Children,

Your letter of June 1855 found us in good health. Kooman sent it to us by mail, and he has also written for some advice. He lives about sixty miles from us. I advised him that, if he wants to live here among us, he should let me know, and then I can pick him up in Milwaukee with my horses and wagon. I have not yet heard from him. He is probably busy at work.



Harbor in Veere—destination of P. Lankester's correspondence.

also very expensive. At this time it sells for from fourteen to twenty dollars per ton, depending on the quality. A ton weighs two thousands pounds here, and a pound is equal to the old Netherlandic pound. All foodstuffs are almost double the price since the time when we came. And all other necessities are also much more expensive. But earnings and profits have also doubled.

When we first arrived here, a bushel of wheat was fifty cents, and at the moment it is between \$1.50 and \$2.00, depending on the quality. The same is true for hay, but there are no complaints about that because earnings and profits are so great.

You folks cannot really understand the rapid progress going on in this country. It goes with giant strides. When we came [1849], the first railroad was being built, and now, so far as I can tell, there are more than six. Goods can be sent from all sections of the country. Railroads are the key to progress in this country. The price of farms is also rising—in our area some land has doubled in price over six years.

Our children are all very happy to be here. When we speak of Holland, they all say that they would not like to go back. But this is not because there is so much so-called "fun" for young people to enjoy here—the kind that young and undisciplined people seek. No. There is nothing of the kind here—no celebrations and so-called holidays. We hold religious services on all holidays, and all who are able come to church. The others are busy at their jobs.

Brother, you wrote that you used the baking powder but that it didn't satisfy you. That is your fault. Thousands of people use it here, and it is a main product in all the best stores, sold in half-pound packages. I never bought any that was not as good as that which I make myself. I bake all kinds of tasty little pastries with it whenever I want something delicious and fresh to eat. And it can be done quickly. As far as the yeast goes, I bake everything with it just as successfully as I ever did in Holland. If I had known about it when I still had my bakery, it would have saved me hundreds of guilders. All bakers in America use that kind of yeast, and they make it themselves. Even though there are many breweries here, they don't bother to make dry yeast. I haven't seen it here yet. They consider it too unimportant a

That is usual here because people in all the trades are so busy that I can't describe it. In a word, all the tradesmen here in the West are so busy that good carpenters earn two dollars per day. Masons easily make the same, and that's the way it is with everyone who can work.

I have delayed writing in order to tell you that our son, David, was married on Tuesday, December 18, 1855. He married a Dutch girl from Zeist, near Utrecht. She is Margrieta Smit, 21 years of age. They live near us, in fact, in a house I had built two or three rods from my own house. David and his wife speak English as well as their native language. The other children are also beginning to speak the language pretty well for their ages. This is an absolute necessity here in America. Whoever knows the language well can succeed in all the trades.

Because of the European [Crimean] War all grain is very expensive. Grain has never been so high. Hay is

commodity. Sometimes they sell liquid yeast to private people, but not to bakers. The bakers make it themselves, and they would laugh at those who would consider that an important matter.

Brother, you can't imagine the unusually large scale on which things are done here. In Buffalo I was in a hardware store that was three stories high, and each floor was at least one hundred feet long, and on each floor there were more goods than in three stores in Middelburg. Each floor had an office with three or four clerks. Those store employees easily earn as much as twenty to forty dollars per month. It's the same in all the trades. This is an enterprising people who do gigantic things. It's the same with farming. The invention of all kinds of machinery is a great thing. Our crops are even harvested by machinery—fourteen acres [of wheat] per day and much more neatly than when mowed by hand. Hay is mowed in the same way.

I could close now, but I noticed that I made a mistake. (My marginal comments on the enclosed newspaper clipping were in error.) The article is actually about a plan for an unusually large steamboat. The keel will be seven hundred feet long and the deck five hundred feet. It is eighty feet wide and sixty feet high. The first dining room will be about two hundred feet long with facilities for three thousand passengers. It will have sixteen steam engines with a fourteen-thousand horsepower capacity. In Ohio they are building such vessels that are run by steam.

They also have an invention here known as central heating for the new houses of the rich and for new churches. The furnace is in the basement, and it heats the entire house or church. You see nothing of the pipes or that sort of thing, but ventilating outlets can be seen in the floors or walls. The same is true of the newly developed vessels. When I have a chance to send Weems a drawing of a fine steamship, I will do so. They are nice for framing. These vessels are unbelievably gigantic and equally beautiful. If our niece Betje comes over to us, she will undoubtedly come on such a ship. Have Betje write us a note sometime, and Kornelis too. That would please us very much. And I expect a letter from you, too, brother, when you have time. Just put it in the mail, and it will get here without problems. I have written you a rather long letter, which I will probably not do again. I have been sick and could not leave my room. When I am healthy, I don't have the patience to write so much, and I have work to do.

Now I must really close because I'm constantly thinking of new things to write. I would much prefer to tell you these things by word of mouth because I would

then be able to relate many unusual things, as for example, how the large cities here are supplied with a constant source of fresh water. They are also busy here in Milwaukee with the installation of such a system. They are building a large reservoir, four or five acres in size, just outside the city, by the lake. Water from the lake, which is especially good, is brought into the reservoir by pumping machines. There it is filtered and purified. The same pumps force the water through pipes into the city. On all the street corners there are hydrants which are merely turned open to get the most delicious water without any trouble. If you don't hold your glass or other container tightly, you will lose it because of the great force behind the water. I was frightened by that kind of hydrant one time in New York.

While I was writing this letter, a neighbor of mine dropped in and said that he had received a letter from the Netherlands. The letter claimed that we suffered a great deal from Indians and wild animals. How do people get hold of such lies? It is true that there are bears in our state, but certainly not where we live. We would, in fact be willing to walk a long distance just to see one. There are a few wolves. Once, by chance, when I was observing our cattle in the pasture with my binoculars, I saw one walking among the cows. That wolf killed a number of mine and my neighbor's sheep. But a few days later he was killed too. I saw him fall. And as for those Indians, we see them very seldom, and those unlucky people do no harm to anyone—except, perhaps, in wild country. But here among us it is just as peaceful as in the Netherlands.

We are having very cold weather at present. So cold that one must be careful that his ears and nose don't freeze. During the winter we have two or perhaps three months when everything moves on sleighs, which are very useful here.

Cordial greetings from all of us to your wife and children. . . . Greet everyone who asks about us.

Your ever affectionate brother, P. Lankester

Peter Lankester to Brother [J. M. Kuiler]

*Franklin, Milwaukee County,
to Veere, Zeeland*

April 2, 1863

Dear Brother,

I was very happy to receive your letter of March 6 in good health. . . . but it also told us of the loss of your son, of which we had not yet heard. Yes, brother, the Lord constantly knocks at our door and wishes to make us aware of His words, "It is appointed unto man once to

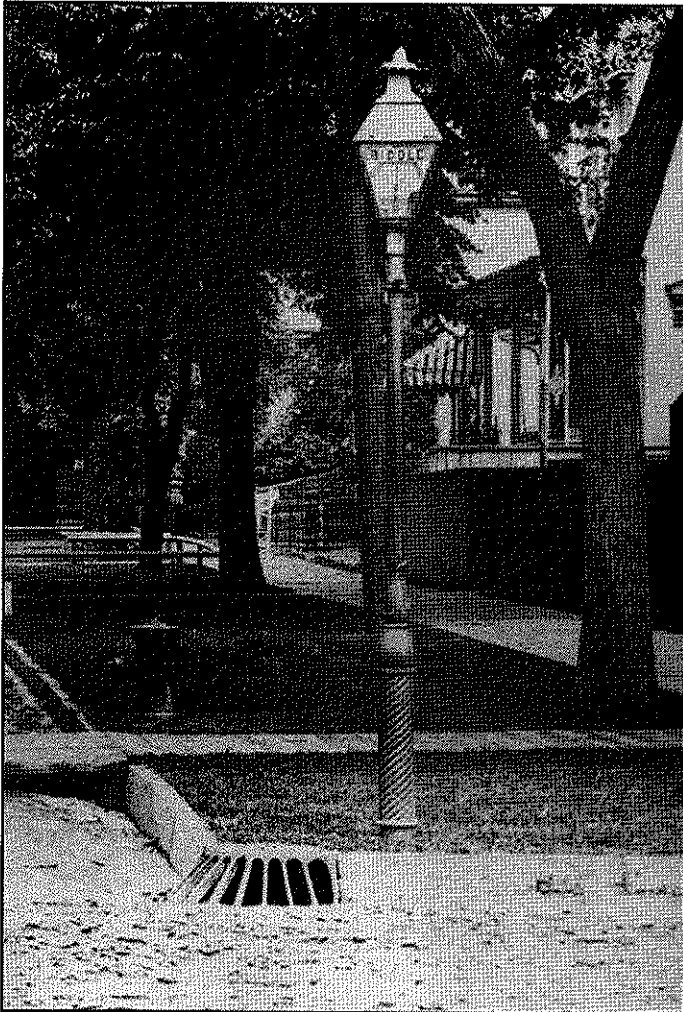
die, and after that the judgment." It is the great purpose of God to place us under the gospel here on earth so we may be prepared for eternity. Oh, what a happy privilege if we can say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

New York is a place where great events often occur. It is an exceptional commercial city, and on one of its streets seven hundred omnibuses pass regularly every hour to transport passengers.

No doubt you are aware from the newspapers of the sad circumstances related to our totally destructive war. It is a war that has no equal in world history. Two of my hired men have volunteered, and they are both fighting the rebels in the South. I get letters from them regularly. There are another three men from our congregation who

Close up of Milwaukee Street (water outlet, lamp and wood sidewalk), courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library.



have been drafted, and they are also in the South. There is much talk of another conscription, and that may include David because married men are not exempt. It is a dreadful judgment on this nation.

A few years ago we talked as if no war was possible in the United States, but the Lord knows how to visit a people when the measure of their iniquity is full. With this war too the Lord has a definite purpose.

This is an astonishing country and people. And, however wicked they may be, people regard religion highly, even if they are largely misguided.

Almost every regiment has a chaplain, and the soldiers are supplied with religious newspapers and tracts which are very good, with a special emphasis on preparation for eternity. We have seen some of them. In some regiments no work is done on Sunday apart from that which is absolutely necessary. Other regiments are entirely irreligious. It all depends on the regimental commander.

There are many English newspapers in this country which are entirely religious, and they often contain reports of unusual deaths in hospitals and how the Lord converts many sinners there. Even the U.S. President's wife visits these hospitals. No one is too important to offer services of that kind. People send crates of assorted refreshments from the North to hospitals in the South, and these gifts are distributed by women.

We have also read in these newspapers about the depraved condition of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. A certain pastor in Leyden expressed astonishment while serving communion by saying that he could not understand how after eighteen hundred years such a ceremony could continue on. It was merely a memorial for the death of a friend. We read that on another occasion he expressed astonishment at the mystical idea which the people in the church held regarding the sacrament of communion. Our attention was also drawn to a certain minister at Tiel who compared the Lord Jesus to Santa Claus, saying that the good deeds of both will be remembered long after their deaths. Brother, who would not shudder and shake in the face of such wickedness? And the fact that this is tolerated causes us to shake with fear for the time when the Lord's long-suffering patience will come to an end and He will visit such a country with His fearful judgments. Is that defending the faith for which our forefathers sacrificed their blood and property?

On the other hand, we have heard of many others in that same church who have been converted and also of several pastors who have turned to the right path. May the Lord continue to save many and either to cast out those who are wolves in sheep's clothing or turn them to

Himself. Brother, it appears that in all times and places, when a people mocks God and tramples on His truth and follows the desires of the heart—that such a country, when the measure of iniquity is full, will be visited by the Lord in a most fearful way. There are too many examples of this to enumerate; they are given for our admonition.

Brother, because of the war and the resulting scarcity of workmen and farmhands, I have decided, the Lord willing, to move from our farm to the city of Milwaukee after the harvest is in. David and his family are moving too. We have bought property in the city for that purpose—two lots next to each other. On one of these there is a house for David. I will have a house built on the other lot this summer. So you can see that we are facing a great change.

I and my wife desire a little more leisure at this time of our life. David and his wife would not be happy apart from us. So we decided to stick by each other in the city. I have no greater pleasure than to be near my family. We will lease out the farm on which we lived because that is easy to do here. It is a little sad to move because both David and I have nice and convenient houses. Financially, leasing makes the best sense because the war makes it impossible to get laborers or farmhands. A farmhand is paid two hundred dollars per year here and twenty or more in the summer months. I have recently sold our 70-acre farm, and if times improve, I will also sell the large 180-acre farm. David is inclined toward trade or business, which can earn a great deal here.

You remember Elias Braam, the brother of my first wife, who lived near us in Veere and Middelburg. He now lives near us here and owns a store with all kinds of goods. He is doing surprisingly well. He has more than thirty acres of land, a good house and barn—all free and clear. Besides that he has a lot of money out at interest.

The differences between shopkeeping here and in Holland are like day and night. It is incredible how much shopkeepers here make on everything, for example, more than two Dutch cents on a pound of butter, and everything else in proportion. But I must stop.

I have hastened to write you because David has written you a letter telling about the portraits which he is sending to you with a friend of ours. His name is Frans van Driele, the son of C. van Driele and Pieterella Sonius.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

We all send you hearty greetings.

Your ever-loving brother, P. Lankester

Peter Lankester to Brother [J. M. Kuiler]

Milwaukee to Veere

May 27, 1865

Dearlly Beloved,

We are, through God's unending goodness, enjoying good health. On May 13 our oldest daughter was married to a widower from Madison, where he is the foreman of a printing shop which publishes the state's books. Madison is the capital of the state and the seat of the government. This man's name is Johannes W. Corscot, and he earns seventy-five to eighty dollars per month. He was born in Winterswijk, Gelderland. They moved to Madison on May 22—a busy day for us. Madison is one hundred miles away and can be reached by train in four hours.

We have had exceptional events here in America. First, the Civil War, which, as everyone expected, ended with the defeat of the Southerners. Richmond, the Southern capital, was overrun by thousands of soldiers, and, because it was the capital, the South lost everything. A few of the Southern generals resisted and had to flee, but they were caught by the cavalry. The southern president, Jefferson Davis, was dressed in women's clothing to escape identification, but he was caught and also many of his cabinet. I think they will hang all of them, but you probably read all about this in the newspapers.

The murder of our brave President, Abraham Lincoln, was a second dreadful event. Everyone was so surprised by it that the murderer was able to flee, but they hunted him down and finally found him in another state, hiding in a barn. There he resisted wholeheartedly. After breaking his leg in flight, he continued shooting from the barn. Then, in order to save lives, the authorities set the barn afire and shot at him until they got him. There was a \$100,000 reward placed on his head, and I've heard that the murderer was supported by three hundred people. There are a lot of such people in Washington, and they will all be hanged.

Our new President, although a southerner, will not be so long-suffering as Lincoln. Our murdered President was buried in Springfield, Illinois, but the body was also on view in Washington. Following his wishes, it was transported the following day and the train also stopped in Chicago. People streamed there by the thousands, and the train did not move for a whole day. They passed by his casket all night long. Our pastor, who happened to be there, saw him that night too. The casket cost \$2,000. I have never seen such a procession. They had burial ceremonies all over just as if his body was present—including a burial coach and a funeral procession. The procession was so long in our city that it took one hour

for official mourners to walk by. All the shops were closed, everything stood still, and all the houses were decked in black.

All the churches were in deep mourning, and all the ministers were asked to give a suitable address and to offer prayers on the day of the funeral, which was Easter Sunday. I will send you a picture of his funeral and of the processions held in Washington, Chicago, and here in Milwaukee. I don't know if you will appreciate them.

We hear that all the drafted soldiers will be coming home. A half year ago we bought a substitute for David for \$600. American military power has become so great in these last years that almost all nations should stand in fear. England's sea power is no longer equal to ours.

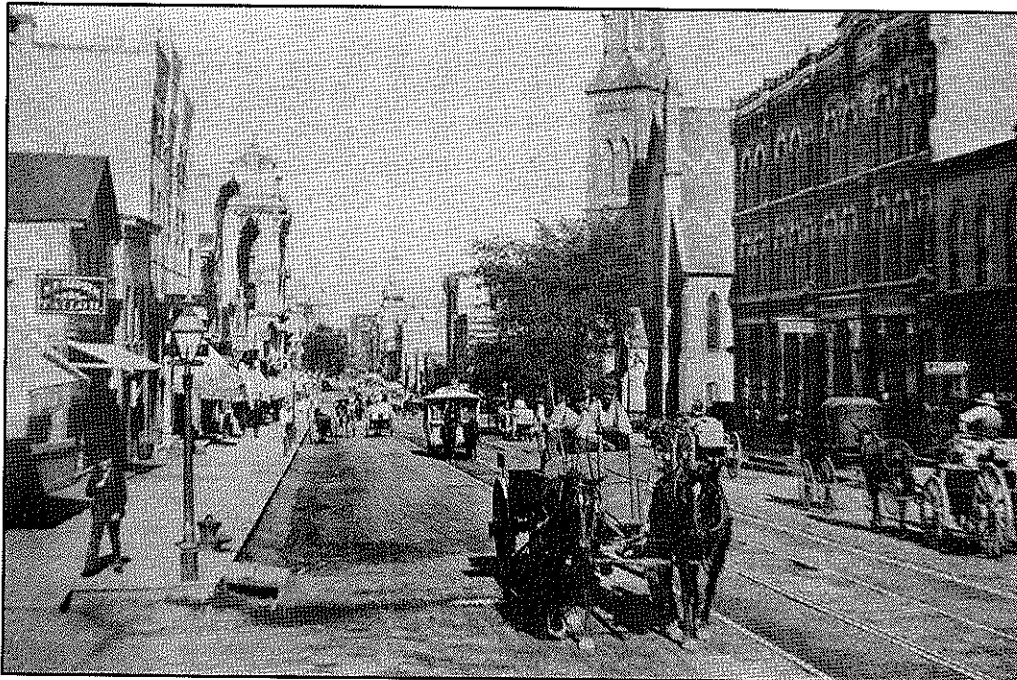
In all matters, wonderful and awesome things occur. They have put up a trade building here which people say is the largest of its kind in the world. It stands alongside the train station, and cars ride through the building in order to load grain. The top part of the building is for grain, and the lower part for all other trading goods. It can handle 1.5 million bushels of wheat (2.5 bushels equal 1 mud in Zeeland).

There are similar things in church affairs. A few weeks ago a preacher arrived here who was chosen by the synod to be a means in God's hand for the conversion and quickening of the people—to enlarge the Lord's kingdom and to give witness to the Christian life. There

are an enormous number of churches here, and each church has its own minister. But all of them have joined hands to help the visiting pastor in his work. He is Mr. Potter and has been with us for about fourteen days. He preaches three times each day. Other persons do most of the prayers. I have never heard such gifts. In the largest church, which seats about three thousand people, he preaches in the morning and afternoon. Every evening at 7:30 they use a rented hall which holds about six thousand. I have never seen so many people in one place. A prayer service is held every evening before the worship service. Mr. Potter invites everyone to submit all their concerns for prayer—problems concerning themselves and their relatives. I have never heard or seen so many different kinds of persons—men, women, sons, and daughters stand in line to make their prayer concerns known to him. I have been there with our pastor several times. It is very moving to have husbands or sons on the battlefield and their families seeking prayers for these people. It brought tears to my eyes. The minister [Potter] would accept no money, and no collection was taken up. This is almost never done in American churches. This is a wonderland in every respect.

Just today I had another surprising experience. You know that much oil has been found in this land and that some people have earned thousands and millions from it. The oil comes out of the ground, and people bore into the ground in places where they expect it to be located—sometimes fifty, one hundred, and up to six hundred feet down. Then the oil rushes out of the ground in amounts of from twenty to three hundred barrels per day. After that it is refined. As you know, I have some property here, and on that land are eight or nine springs. These are the places which people here call living water springs. You can't run out of this water. They run day and night, and when you dig a hole around the spring, it never freezes over. This is also mineral water and good for your health. A few days ago I read in the newspaper that people can almost predict where they will find oil—when certain conditions are present. And that is in locations where there are springs.

Milwaukee Main Street, 1870s. Credit, Milwaukee Public Library.



So we thought about our land and wondered if there might be oil there because we have there the conditions needed for finding oil.

I didn't mention this to anyone, and I didn't know that there was a group organized here to look for oil. Someone told them about my land, and without my knowledge three men rode out to my land and took samples of the water to study. The next day they came to me and asked if I would come to their office on the following day. They wished to draw up an agreement allowing them to bore for oil and also an agreement for buying the oil if they find some. We don't know the outcome because this just happened today. In a few days we will go to my property with a chemist to make a further study. But you see, brother, wonderful things occur here. Just as I was writing, David left with some people from the company and a chemist from the city to do further research on our land. The refined oil is called kerosene here. It gives an excellent light and is used to make some kinds of paint.

Now I will close. Please answer my letter and give my greetings to all who know us.

Your loving brother, P. Lankester

Peter Lankester to Brother [J. M. Kuiler]

Milwaukee to Veere

February 20, 1867

Dear Brother,

We received your letter on January 8 . . . and were dreadfully shocked by the death of your son, Hendrik. Yes, brother, our life is like a vapor, and everyone must experience the trouble and adversity that comes from sin in the world. We have a blessed privilege if we have the firm foundation of expecting a better life in eternity. By God's goodness we are all still living under His present grace.

I am writing you at David's request because he has no time at this moment. He has heard from his housemaid, who just came from the Netherlands, that a machine for peeling potatoes has been invented and it is for sale in Amsterdam. This would be very useful here. Although one can get a great many machines of all descriptions here, we have not noticed this sort to be available here yet.

People pay large patent rights for that sort of thing here, and David would like very much to have this machine here because it might produce unusual results. So, David's request is that you write immediately to

your son in Amsterdam and have him investigate thoroughly if such a thing is to be found and whether it is successful and efficient. If so, it should cost between twenty and forty guilders, and it should be well packed in a small crate and sent over. That can be done very easily by steamship. I will enclose an address, and then everything should go right. There is a company in New York which looks after property of this sort. Among them is Rev. Uiterwijk, a good friend of mine. I will write to him, and he will see to it that the package gets on the express train, and then it will get to me.

There are people here who have made large fortunes on such things. Recently a man invented a machine which makes curved metal spouts. They can be made by the thousands and shipped by the millions. That man sold his patent rights just in New York alone for \$20,000. And he still retains his rights in the other states. It is a very simple device. I saw them being made because a friend of mine works with them.

David would like to investigate [the potato peeling machine] not to manufacture it, but to get the patent rights. It is likely that he will be able to do this because Maria's husband, who lives in Madison, is well acquainted with important people and can speak with them about this matter.

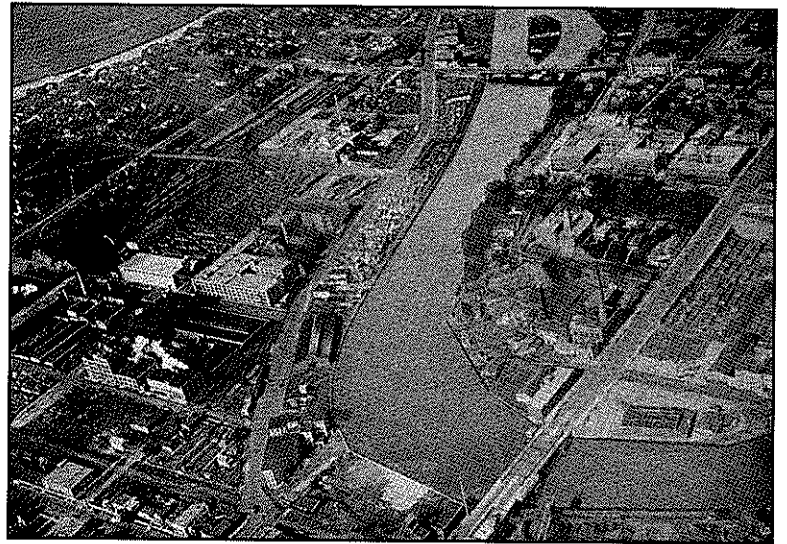
Now Brother, if you can, do this quickly. We will send the money as soon as possible. You don't have to worry about that. . . .

Your ever-loving brother, P. Lankester

P.S. The reason why a potato-peeling machine would be such a good thing here is that handwork is very expensive here, and as people are generally too lazy to peel potatoes, they are served unpeeled. Also, there are very large hotels here—one, for example, has 365 rooms—[where the machine would be attractive because] maids earn \$3.00 per week. Anyway people here like whatever is new.

Growing Up in Sheboygan County

by Steve J. Van Der Weele



1953 air view of Sheboygan, p. 9 in Sheboygan Centennial Celebration 1853-1953.

The Setting

The year was 1938; the occasion, the graduation of 458 seniors from Sheboygan (Central) High School; the setting, the remarkable land feature called the Vollrath Bowl—a block-long horseshoe-shaped ravine which balloons out westward from the shore of Lake Michigan. The lake was visible through the trees, and some of the graduates from the city's east side could see their own homes during the proceedings. The weather was cooperative, and the large crowd of parents and friends, disposed on the grassy terraces, was in a buoyant and proud mood, enjoying the recent transformation of miscellaneous knolls and depressions into a landscaping tour de force, the Bowl, one of the major local projects of Roosevelt's Public Works Administration. The pageantry was colorful and appropriate.

William Urban, the principal, expressed the hope that the school had

fulfilled parents' expectations that their children would be taught fundamental principles, correct social and physical habits, and certain vocational interests, together with ideas and ideals "for a fuller citizenship with high ethical standards." He presented us graduates to the community as sources of new talent and leadership. And he recommended to the class of '38 Oliver Wendell Holmes's "The Chambered Nautilus" as an inspiration for our future development and growth.

But the words of the main speaker, Dr. Preston Bradley, professor at the Chicago Divinity School, somewhat countered the ebullience of the afternoon. His remarks—his candor was disarming—amounted to an apology to all those born since 1914 for the mismanagement of the world's affairs by his generation. He was not here, he said, to join the popular game of age shellacking youth. "I come before you admitting that we have failed," he stated; then, urging us to resist the widespread cynicism and defeatism of the times, he pleaded with us to join his peers in a cooperative effort to do better,

merging our two generations as two streams merge, to make the world a more humane and civilized place.

Seventeen of us, graduates of nearby Sheboygan Christian School, had learned about the world Dr. Bradley was describing largely from our Dutch grandparents and parents. We interacted with them in a closely knit community, like pieces on a three-dimensional chessboard.

For these ancestors, the language problem, together with a pietistic habit of regarding temporal events important primarily for the transcendental events they represented, served as an important barrier to getting to know their world. I wish I had asked them more about their sense of things while I had the opportunity. They were not, of course, without some windows on the world. From their fellow factory workers, their growing children (our parents), conversations with neighbors, acquaintances they met in their walks to the park, they could have learned much about the development of the city and about worlds beyond.

Between 1890 and 1905 all sorts of improvements took place in

Steve Van Der Weele is a native of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and a professor emeritus of the Calvin College English Department.

Sheboygan County—enhanced utility services, labor maintenance, the beginning of a library (thanks to one of many \$25,000 grants from the Carnegie Foundation), upgrading of police and fire services, the abolition of toll roads, the laws requiring muzzling of dogs left free to roam. In due time, when the electric plant became operational, the aldermen no longer had to light the gas lamps in their districts by hand each night.

They had to know about—and fear—the smallpox epidemic of 1901, at which time a house was purchased as an isolation hospital and enclosed with an eight-foot fence. They were part of the Sheboygan that closed down for several weeks during the flu epidemic of 1918. Their use of Lifebuoy soap indicates their involvement in the passion for cleanliness which developed in the wake of that disaster. They had to learn to rub elbows—that did not come easily—in a variety of settings with the influx of immigrants from other countries—Greeks, Germans (especially Germans), Lithuanians, Poles, Belgians, Norwegians, and Russians. And they could not avoid the odors of the area—the slightly acidic smell of the breweries, the unique odor of the Horicon Marsh when the underground fires broke out, and, during Prohibition days, the odd smells from homes where basements had been converted into illegal stills to manufacture the beverages outlawed by the Prohibition Act. And what was that strange phrase, the Kettle Morain State Forest? They had never heard of such a geological phenomenon in their homeland of canals and dikes, where all the land was flat and lush and productive.

At some point, one supposes, they made their acquaintance with the

daily newspaper—probably through their growing children—though that resource was a luxury still, and, when subscribed to, sometimes shared by several families. Here they would be exposed to what passed then for the health industry—the ads for patent medicines, such as Pitcher's Castoria and Liver-T (liver, it had been ascertained, is the source of most of the body's ailments). They



Vollrath Park Bowl.

would have learned, through text supplemented by a gallows with corpses suspended by ropes, that "Our kidneys are the Vigilantes of our bodies." Some did, I know, go to consultants to be fitted for hernia trusses. Were any of these ancestors of ours tempted to respond to the ads for traveling consultants—the renowned Dr. Calligioistro, for example, "Who will heal the sick upon the stage at the Opera House"—sponsored by Zaegel's Drug Store? And there were ads offering thin people advice on how to get fat. If they were not taken in by these, it was because they believed in their own locally concocted remedies, such as Zaegel's Magic Oil.

Depending on the assiduity with which they pursued their acquaintance with the English language—and that varied—our grandparents could have entered vicariously into

the lives of the elite. The *Sheboygan Press* noted who had traveled where, whose son or daughter had left for the university that week. They could have learned about manners—how men should treat women, "the deference that strength must pay to weakness." They were instructed in how to write thank you notes and in other amenities, were admonished to be courteous to the new class of work-

ers—telephone operators—and were encouraged to improve themselves through self-education. Surely a few must have enrolled in language classes and evening business classes. They would have shaken their heads at the lively goings on at the Opera House, "Playing at all times the best legitimate and Vaudeville attractions obtainable." Did some

daughter now and then try to play the sheet music included periodically in the *Press*—"I'm Looking for a Dear Old Lady" and "Herzpein"—a really melancholy song? Would they have read the serialized stories, such as "The Girl from His Town"? Did they permit themselves a smile from the wit of the comics? And were they proud to read the full text of an address delivered by their own school principal, Rev. Louis Bolt, who addressed a civic group in November 1918, insisting that women are equal to men and are entitled to vote in civic elections and explaining that when Paul silenced women he was merely responding to a scandalous situation in Corinth?

Although those grandparents of ours read Smytegeld and Brakel, advocates of a conservative way of life, they did not regard alcohol itself as a sin. Still, I recall their displeasure at the plethora of taverns in the city (1 to 400, highest in the state) and at

tavern ads reading "serving in quantities less than a gallon of strong, spirituous, malt ardent or intoxicating liquors to be drunk on the premises." Some discerning readers might have understood the state superintendent's warning about efforts "to Prussianize American education." This good man detected subtle forces at work to perpetuate the caste system, pressures to keep children from the laboring classes out of schools so that they would never go beyond the level of hewers of wood and drawers of water. Let this not happen in America, he urged.

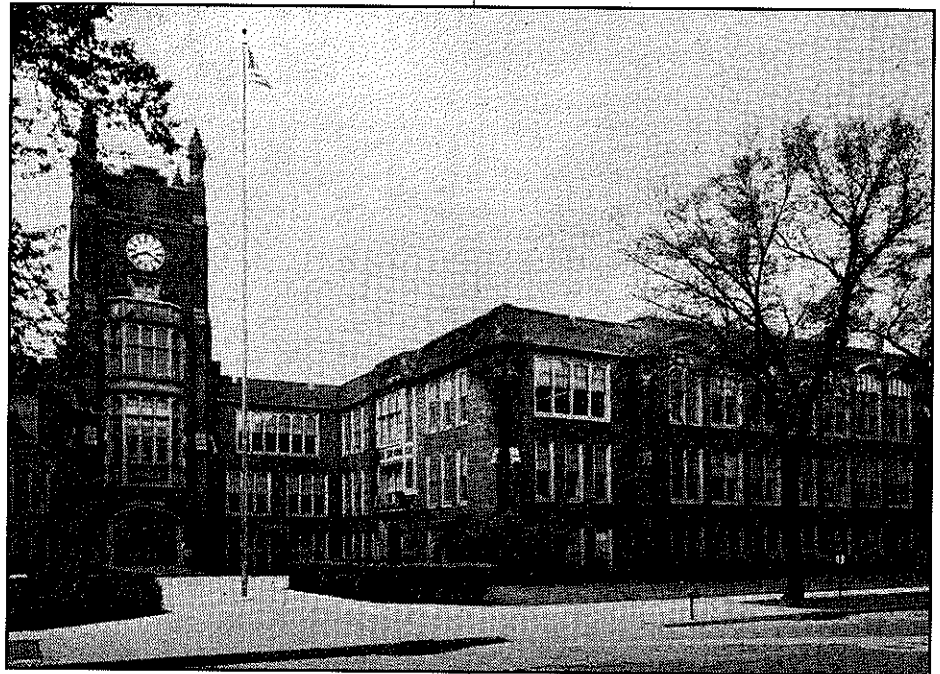
That older generation of sober and reflective people relied more on the *Volksfreund* and *De Wachter* than on the secular press to get a fix on reality. They would have paid little heed to newspaper headlines reading "Michigan Leads Ohio at the Half," or accounts of a runaway horse, or yet another problem with the 8th Street Bridge, or some new patent, or the text of a lecture offered downtown—"The Menace of Leisure," or publicity for another new conservation project, though this community offered excellent and early leadership in conservation matters. But being of European descent, they must surely have mulled over the news of what the Kaiser was up to during the First World War, and they watched—those of our grandparents who lived long enough to do so—the rise of Hitler. Aided by the editorials of newspaper editor Charles Broughton, they came to understand early the dangerous mixture of the claims expressed by that madman of racial and cultural supremacy, together with the growing martial strength of the German people.

How much did the older generation know and understand the world Dr. Bradley analyzed in his purview? Though somewhat detached theo-

logically, linguistically, and culturally from much of the already established momentum of the life of communities in eastern Wisconsin, something of these distressing events percolated down to them. But from a perspective derived from a thorough grounding in Scripture, they justified holding at arm's length that agitated world, with its turmoil, upheaval, the wrestling of principalities and powers, knowing full well the tentative-

of the colonists, or as Westerners, or as the landed gentry of the South. They were now Midwesterners trying to achieve their identity in the dynamics of Old World traditions, memories, and culture in their adopted land.

Imbued with these mental habits, these immigrants tried to hold at bay the brash, hedonistic, restless American way of life. They sensed the risk that isolation entailed, but they were



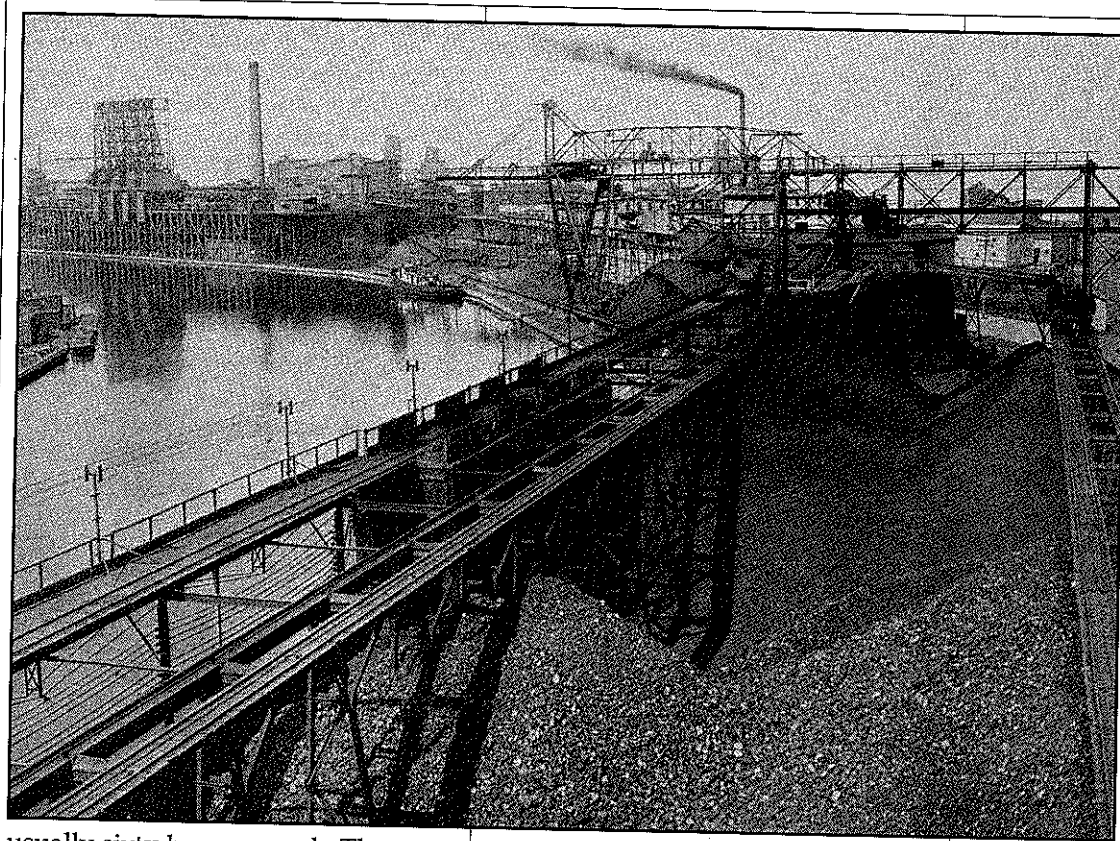
ness of all earthly power. The passion with which they adhered to their faith permitted a certain tranquillity about the raging of the nations and the assorted catastrophes that befall individuals and distant countries. As John Updike phrases this orientation, they lived in God's time and in God's sight.

Their lives were expressions of their history: the declaration of William of Orange in 1574 that Calvinism was to be the official religion of the reformists, together with the Secession of 1834 in the Netherlands and of 1857 in the United States. They differed from those Americans who experienced life as descendants

willing to take that risk. Interestingly enough, these attitudes went hand in hand with a healthy pragmatism, a disposition to tend to matters close at hand.

What matters? In the earlier phases, the struggle to carve farms and cities and businesses from the Wisconsin wilderness; in the later ones, the struggle to consolidate those efforts. The gardens. Fighting the stumps—of which there were reputedly twenty-six for every home in the city. They worked, of course—

Central High School—Sheboygan, 1953. P. 27 in Sheboygan Centennial Celebration 1853-1953.



Coal dock in upper harbor—*Sheboygan, 1953. P. 47 in Sheboygan Centennial Celebration 1853-1953.*

Some History

The development of Sheboygan County paralleled that of many American cities. The phases included Indian settlements, fur traders, the early entrepreneurs—especially New Englanders with their aggressiveness, business acumen, their optimism and dominating spirit, their talent for organizing land sales. The first white settlement is attributed to William Farnsworth in

1814 (regarded as the father of Sheboygan County); the first industry—and log cabin—to business partners William Paine and Col. Oiver C. Crocker in 1834. Once Sheboygan was “discovered,” it grew rapidly. In just a few decades it progressed from territory to village to city. The Germans arrived early, too, in the late 1830s and 1840s. An Easterner—Daniel Hyatt—wrote the following to his parents in 1850 from nearby Plymouth, explaining why he was rejecting their overtures to return home:

I do not know of anything that would induce me to come back . . . aside from the association of family ties. . . . Your rules of society with its codfish aristocracy is enough to disgust the independence of a Western man, to say nothing of stuck up noses of the folks that ape riches with silk and broadcloth. (Janice Hildebrand, *Sheboygan County: 150 Years of Progress*, p. 20)

usually sixty hours a week. They sacrificed for the school. They raised their families. Farmers worked even more hours than their city counterparts, and had a less assured income. Church life engaged them passionately—all those discussions about theology, nuancing the difference between “een verkiezing maar niet een uitverkiezing” (“a selection but not a choosing out from”); monitoring hymn books and discussions about appropriate organ music; overseeing the lives of fellow members—not for the sake of gossip but out of genuine concern for their mutual welfare; discussing whether or not the time had arrived for catechism to be taught in English and services to be carried on in English, when to offer, for the sake of nostalgia, a Dutch service or a Dutch hymn sing some Thursday evening.

Some issues impinged directly on their moral sense: Roosevelt’s abandonment of the gold standard,

worldly amusements, the dance halls and taverns and roadhouses, the perceived danger from the labor unions, alcoholism, Sabbath observance, mixed marriages, the risk—a concern of German Lutherans and Catholics as well—that the theology of their faith would be compromised when carried over into English. And their ethical scrupulosity generated such questions as these: How long should children go to school? Shouldn’t the older children, at least, stop at fourteen and start supporting the family? Is insurance wrong? Was it all right to join any of the numerous organizations springing up around town—the Boy Scouts, the Sheboygan Turverein, and the good programs which emanated from Mead Hall? (“All Sheboyganites,” said the *Press* editor, “should learn about Mead Hall. It does a lot of good in the city.”) Should the minister join the Sheboygan Ministerial Association?

The New Englanders, it turned out, were poor farmers. But they found ready buyers for the land among the Dutch—many of them Zeelanders—who began to arrive in the area of Oostburg, about twelve miles south of Sheboygan, in 1845.

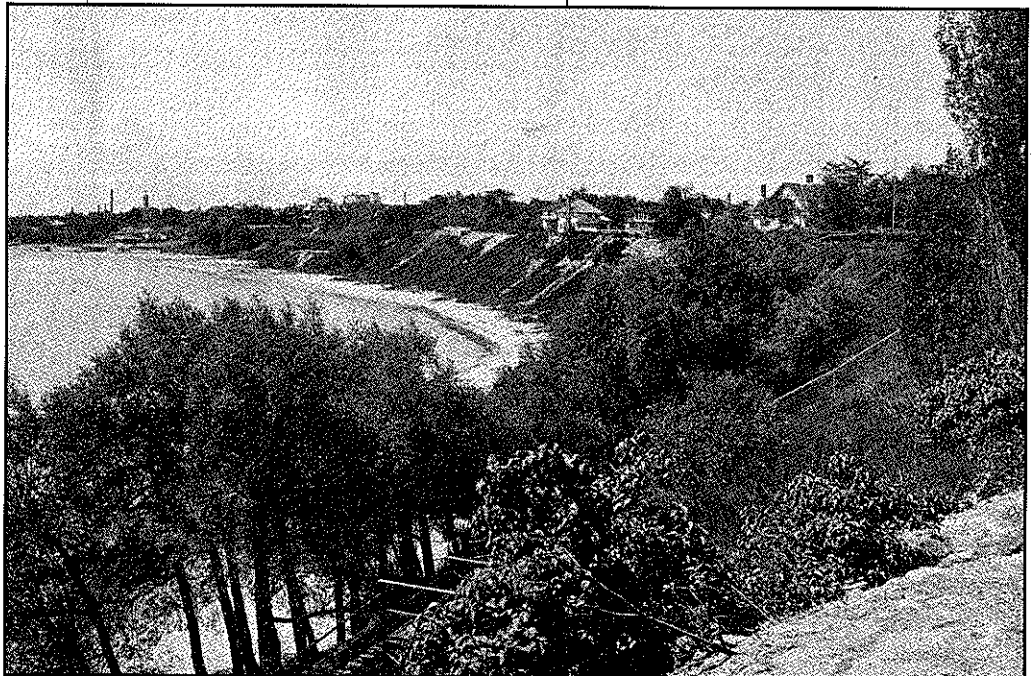
The Dutch, however, had to compete with the Germans in buying these farms, especially in Cedar Grove, in the town of Holland, and in Milwaukee. The story of Rev. Peter Zonne, an imaginative but disputatious immigrant who led many into the Presbyterian Church, belongs to the decades of the 1840s and 1850s. The development of social life and of public religious meetings among Milwaukee Hollanders also occurred in those decades. The Reformed Church of Oostburg, the pioneer church of Sheboygan County, was organized in 1854 with sixty families. The saga of a Rev. Jacobus De Rooy, a freelance minister in that area who split the Reformed Church to become successively Presbyterian and, finally, Christian Reformed, also occurred in the 1850s. In Sheboygan the Christian Reformed Church was organized in 1889 with five charter members. By 1912 the membership had increased to 105.

What possessed our forefathers to leave their homes in the Netherlands, secure in the belief that God would provide a home and place to work in this strange land? A mixture of motives, of course—some of them “push,” others “pull.” The economics are not to be slighted: overpopulation in Europe, the potato blight, the sluggishness of the economy in the Netherlands in the wake of the Napoleonic wars—not

unlike the situation in other countries. Closely related were the social reasons. The spirit of the French Revolution had not caught on equally everywhere. One could wear out his body in life-long servitude with little to show for his pains. The saying “Met de pet in de hand komt men door het gansche land” (“with hat in hand one walks through the country”) described the obligatory doffing of the cap when one was confronted by a person of higher status. Nor did Napoleon’s decree that all religions were to be placed on an equal footing take hold immediately in the Netherlands. And after the establishment of the Dutch monarchy in 1815, the Hervormde Kerk received special privileges. Ministers of that denomination were immune from discipline no matter how far they strayed from traditional orthodoxy. Meanwhile the most orthodox were harried and even arrested. Sheboygan Fourth of July pageants in the 1930s, no doubt exaggerating the number and duration of these persecutions, presented lively street scenes demonstrating tensions involving

what were seen as infringements on religious freedom, and the Hervormde social elite were not above displaying a patronizing attitude toward the pious folk of the lower social orders. The “pull” factors—the prospect of a new beginning, of improved opportunities for their children—combined with the “push” factors inclined family after family to make the decision to cast their lot in the new land. And many came to Wisconsin . . . not under a visionary leader like Scholte or Van Raalte, but as families and family groups.

All of Europe was astir with the prospect of emigration, which was well advertised in various ways, and people continued to come to this area for the rest of the century and after. The years from 1868 to 1885, when business and industry expanded greatly, were particularly propitious for the new arrivals. An 1885 Sheboygan map shows no fewer than fifty-four commercial establishments—including a few churches—disposed along the banks of the Sheboygan River and concentrated in



Lake side view of Sheboygan, 1953.
P. 31 in Sheboygan Centennial
Celebration 1853-1953.

several other areas in the interior of the city. Manufacturing has always been strong in Sheboygan, and one can follow from early days the growth in production of chairs and other furniture, kitchenware, shoes (made from locally processed hides), beer and clothes; the Vollrath-Kohler dynasty invested heavily in enamel and aluminum ware and developed the line of plumbing and china products manufactured at the Kohler plant, the largest employer in the area, located in the village of Kohler, just outside Sheboygan.

The 1885 map just alluded to shows how directly and abruptly the rural countryside impinged on the city of Sheboygan itself. Some immigrants went directly to the city. Others tried their hand at farming in Delavan, Vesper, Alto, Waupun, Randolph, or Friesland. Some of these stayed, others joined the city dwellers in due time. Some left because, as their children went to the cities to work, they wished to keep their families intact. Others found that working in factories or beginning one's own business was less

sense of the rural in the city of Sheboygan for decade after decade. Many city folk had kin or friends on the farms, and reciprocating visits were frequent. These urbanites developed a good sense of the rhythms of life, as nature's cycles focused on livestock, dairy cattle, field crops, truck gardening, and, now and then, orchards. The *Press* devoted much space to farm management. So did the university-operated radio. This ready liaison between two ways of life was dramatized further by the large European-style gardens so many of the city people maintained. They took over practices from Europe—piping rain water into huge barrels, drying herbs as celery and dill, getting enough potatoes and carrots and salt pork to see them through the winter. These links between city and country made for mutual respect and amicable relationships between rural and city church families as well as with community neighbors.

Much of the rural effort went into the making of cheese, an industry that began already in 1858. The

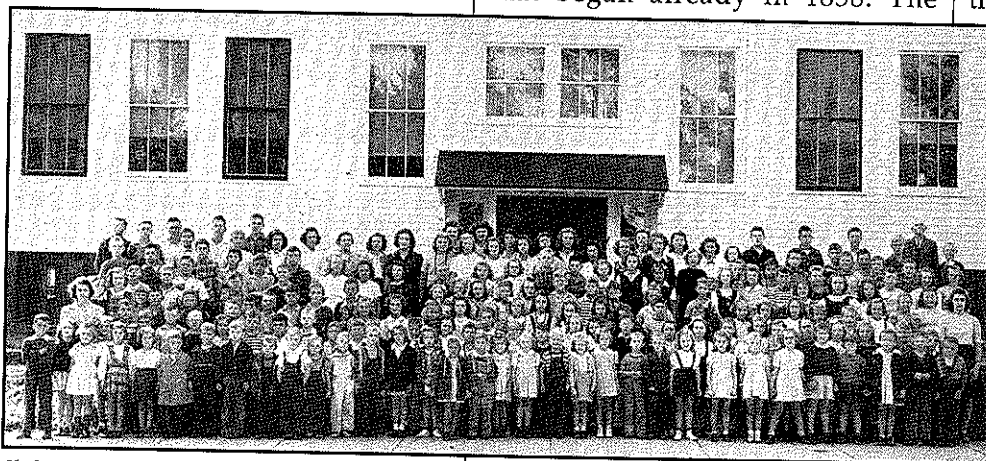
milk into the ditches when the situation became intolerable. Milk was even declared a "utility" at one point, to provide greater government pressure to settle the dispute.

Among the Dutch a palpable hush would fall on city and farm on Saturday afternoon and evening in preparation for Sunday—perhaps an old-world legacy of the angelus at vespers, a signal for all to store their tools and begin the day of much deserved rest.

The dominating reality in our lives was, of course, the church. It was seminary, music school, shaping force, social agency—the institution, in short, in which we were taught the transcendent realities and the wisdom that Truth, however contrary to appearances, ultimately wins the day—if not here and now, then in the hereafter. We were instructed to ask the right questions and were taught the right answers. The Heidelberg Catechism and other statements of the faith made us one with Protestant Christians since the sixteenth century (though we were far less tutored in the fifteen hundred years prior to the

Reformation). The religious ambience was more akin to Genesis 1—magisterial, lordly, authoritative—than to Genesis 2, with its greater emphasis on covenant, communion, intimacy. How fortunate are those of us who have experienced in our lifetime both rhythms and styles of worship and have had a chance to achieve maturity in the confluence of these varying approaches to life and worship.

Church for the immigrants and their families had always occupied a special place. In villages throughout Europe the church was the agency which ensured coherence, unity; even time was measured in religious rather than secular terms. When overpopulation imposed



Sheboygan Christian School, 1945.

onerous and more rewarding.

I regard it as an important feature of growing up in Sheboygan County that this lively movement between city and country kept alive some

newspaper paid a great deal of attention to the production of milk and cheese, recording in detail the difficulties farmers experienced when prices dropped, following the negotiations at times of milk strikes, photographing the farmers dumping

stresses on this coherence and when other catastrophes occurred compelling people to emigrate, they made a decision to leave, but reluctantly, for



CPL. STEVE VAN DER WEELE

Steve was confronted with many varied and interesting problems in connection with his duties with the Military Government Branch in Germany. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Danker Van Der Weele, and entered service September 5, 1942, receiving his discharge on December 7, 1945. He is now attending Calvin College.

Cpl. Steve Van Der Weele in Sheboygan Spotlight (Sheboygan, First CRC, 1945) np.

it still was a deviant thing to leave home, family, friends, and work. When they arrived, they discovered the common experiences of immigrants: they had to make a living right off; they were disoriented by reason of language, clothes, manners—sometimes, as one of them put it, not knowing whether to put the right or the left foot forward first. And they observed that, indeed, "You do not take your hat off to anyone in America." But the price for that freedom was that you did not know where you stood in terms of relationships. Life was fluid, and the newcomers were vulnerable. They had now to live out the ideas about free enterprise, the stock market, social mobility, progress, the American dream. Also, they discovered that, unlike in their ancestral villages, where family members worked somewhat alongside each other, here the father left the home to work—a very different role from the one he played in Europe. Now the mother did the nurturing, in the absence of the father, who was providing subsistence for the family.

In all this upheaval and disorientation, one institution remained firm and dependable—the church. It was more, to be sure, than a safety net, an ultimate haven in a sea of desperation. After all, church life had been vital and meaningful in the old country as well. But once in this country, immigrants could freely speak their own language, to say nothing of their own dialect, only at church and among fellow believers. And at church a man could speak his mind

in a way he could not with his fellow workers on the assembly line, at the chair factory, in the tannery, at Kohler, or wherever. Listen to J. McMullen, writing to a friend in May 1848, implying this "otherness." Speaking first of immigrants in general but at this point particularly about the Dutch, he says,

The Dutch are crowding into our territory in great numbers. They are filling up every nook and cubbyhole of this broad land, but they are generally sober and industrious, and when they get "anglicized" will make good citizens. (Gustav Buchen, *Historic Sheboygan County*)

But can anyone chronicle the price these and other immigrants paid for their "Anglicization"? Did they dare tell anyone of their frustration, their disappointments, their homesickness? A fisherman confided to me on the pier one day—this was during a college holiday—that America left much to be desired. "You get a good-morning grunt from your boss when you start the day, and then he comes around only to inspect your work. The company picnics are phony, and you never get a raise without an argument. It was more neighborly in the old country—Lithuania."

Because of our ancestors' emigration there was much about the world we children were about to enter that they could not teach us. Beyond normal curiosity about how we were getting along in school, our parents would ask questions out of sheer desire to know. People of scant education themselves, our elders took

interest in what we were learning in high school (a public high school)—in science, in literature, in physical education (no dancing for us, by special arrangement with the administration). They watched for signs of possible alien trends of thought, unacceptable teaching materials, the wrong friends. They also wished to know how economics works—and why did such a great country as the Soviet Union turn to Communism? What do scientists do? What can poetry do that hymns cannot? What were we being taught about the Civil War? I never did succeed in communicating to an older gentleman that, yes, it is possible to multiply $2\frac{1}{4}$ by $2\frac{1}{4}$ —that it is an authentic, not a contrived problem, with a real answer and a real function.

Church life among the Christian Reformed people of Sheboygan bore many resemblances to church life in many of our churches throughout the land. Some reminiscing and evaluating are inevitable. Was the ambience a bit rigid? Was the preaching too often limited to comparative theology? Did their legacy of secessions affect their ecclesiology? Could our leaders have been more hospitable to the surrounding culture, more congenial to the arts, more open to community life? Did they always do justice to the deep implications of the Kuyperian vision to which they did, in fact, hold themselves, the "world and life view" in which every inch of reality is to be subjected to the sovereignty of our Lord? Could professions of faith have been made more of a celebrative experience than an exami-

nation? In hindsight, answers to these questions may be easy. But these were residual old-world habits of thought, and they die hard. What we received was a faith to live by, if not to dance by, a faith that took deep roots in our hearts and souls. And I shall always cherish the grandeur of theism as it was expounded week in, week out during my youth, providing robust spiritual energy during the odyssey of my life—past, present, and still to come. The theological nuances of celebration and thankful joy—serving God with mirth—came with the next generation.

The Depression must always loom as a shaping reality in the minds and memories of anyone of my generation. In the sequence of speculative fever, stock-market crash, bank closings, unemployment, poverty, and economic paralysis, people had to come to terms with the transience of old formulas—formulas which Herbert Hoover was loathe to surrender—and to start anew. Many good church people, though not all, as I recall, opposed the election of Franklin Roosevelt, who promised intervention. Here it seems to me—I offer wisdom after the event—that their Calvinism should have directed them to demand a more creative role from their government. Economists at some of the large universities had warned people of the danger of an unregulated economy. Still, many of our people held stoutly to the belief that economic cycles are self-correcting and that intervention, for all its short-term benefits, would eventually backfire and cause even worse problems.

Whatever the theoretical problems, the hardships caused by the Depression were real and painful. The course of the Depression as charted by the *Sheboygan Press* had to compete with other dramatic news of

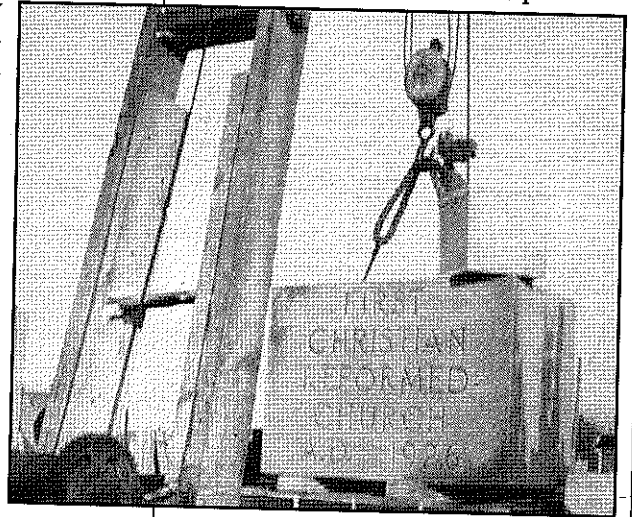
course—Hitler's rising power, the wild career of Al Capone, the Lindbergh kidnaping, repeal of Prohibition, the Dionne quintuplets, the mad escapades of John Dillinger, and mob lynchings. Still, one can follow Depression-related events as a continuing thread—the Washington Bonus March, the 1932 election campaign, the "Hooverilles," together with Hoover's statement—incredible as it may sound—that "many persons left their jobs for the more profitable one of selling apples."

Hoover's philosophy held that volunteer agencies must afford relief to the poor by imaginative fund-raising at the local level. In Sheboygan that relief fund, after some weeks, reached \$9,000, with business contributing from \$75 to \$500. The Police Department and the Kohler Company contributed an identical amount—\$500. Some pundits, such as Paul W. Glad, defended the much maligned WPA and PWA and pointed out how these programs provided far more jobs and economic assistance than did the private efforts of citizens. And always, as a counter position to Hoover's approach, was the insistence by the La Follettes that only massive federal aid would solve the searing social problems that existed in the municipalities.

Each household had to develop its own economies. Some bought each other's services—cookies or other products sold door to door. Surplus food and clothes from the relief agency made the difference in some families. Now and then a ton of coal was made available—duly noted, by the way in the municipal files of the recipient for possible recouping at a

later time. The deacons of that era strove heroically to meet the needs of the congregation. Eventually this forced austerity came to be almost normal. But the deprivation of resources and stimuli which would normally have been available to growing youngsters left scars intangible though they were, and restricted opportunities for pedagogy in music and the arts, education, travel, and involvement in the life of the larger community.

A recent (1989) book, *150 Years of Progress*, by Jan Hildebrand, provides



First CRC Sheboygan cornerstone laying, 1926.

The Sheboygan Christian Reformed Church was organized in 1889 with five charter members. By 1912 the membership had increased to 105.

valuable history about Sheboygan's development—especially about its economic development. Civic leaders have worked closely and effectively with business leaders over the years (though outlying townships were always—and still are—wary about paying taxes for causes which would benefit only the city) to make Sheboygan a good—some say an enviable—place to live and work. Many, in fact, call Sheboygan County a well-kept secret. Bounded by the sand dunes and high bluffs of Lake Michigan on the east, beneficiary of

several rivers and inland lakes—including the Sheboygan River, which divides the city—blessed with enlightened planners who reserved ample land for parks and playgrounds, Sheboygan has been home to thousands of citizens who have felt themselves privileged to live out their lives in this jewel-like setting.

In this setting, the Dutch were more often employees than owners, more often laborers than movers and shakers. They did attain an excellent reputation for being sober, dependable, contented workers. It was noted early that "they [the Dutch] are good insurance risks. No case of arson has been charged to them." Several of the surrounding communities—Gibbsville, Hingham, Holland,

Oostburg, Cedar Grove—for decades claimed only God-fearing, pious (for the most part) Protestants on their citizen roles. That is, of course, changing somewhat. Still, the "critical mass" of faithful church people continues to set the tone for much of life in the eastern part of the state of Wisconsin. The several generations alluded to in this article reminded themselves individually and communally that we have here no continuing city, no permanent abiding place. This affirmation has prompted them to live meaningful lives and, after some awkwardness during the period of transition, to make their contributions to their community.

Arend Jan Brusse summed up well already in 1909 the typical metamor-

phoses that occurred between the older and the newer generations. Speaking about the early Dutch settlement near Milwaukee, somewhat south of Sheboygan, he could say, "Now at the age of eighty-five years as I look back with my mind's eye to the first Hollanders as they came to this country, most of them poor, uneducated, and lacking in practically all of the civilities of American social life, I see them and their children, educated, enterprising, thrifty, and prosperous, equal in every way in social as well as in business life to any class of people in this broad land."

He ends with a prayer: "May God

First CRC, Sheboygan.



continue to bless the Hollanders and their descendants in America, who remain true to the faith of our fathers." That prayer has been answered in every possible way for the

facilities but with competent and dedicated teachers, together with principal Henry J. Kuiper, who stimulated our curiosity especially about history and walked to every

suspense of prisoner's goal—the ignominy of being caught, the great achievement of liberating prisoners? Jigsaw puzzles of a thousand pieces occupied many an hour of enforced leisure.

And I remember the piercing foghorn . . . the long wail of the train whistle (the editor's annoyance with Chicago and Northwestern railroad's unpredictability became apparent when, after one of his editorials, he noted, simply, "The 5:45 p.m. train arrived on time last night.") There were the marathon days of picking beans and thinning sugar beets—days which disciplined us to endure monotonous tasks. Some of us were able to work for relatives on the farm for several summers. I remember well the home-made root beer ventures, Fourth of July school picnics, the long summer vacations where, with so much open land still available, there was room to fish and roam and explore and follow trails along the lake,

days when indeed it could be said "A boy's will is the wind's will." And there were neighborhood baseball games, where we, alas, sometimes argued more than we pitched and fielded. There were the days of steaming laundry, of frozen jeans on the clothesline. One remembers a blur of shivarees, of rumble seats, the campaign against halitosis, the radio programs, Father Coughlin and his sense of "the mainstream of America." And when the Moody Bible Institute station, WMBI, became powerful enough to reach Sheboygan, people developed a different slant on faith and practice and



First CRC concert band +/- 1940

- Row 1 Joe Heule, James Heule, Gerhardt Otte, ? Otte, Nick Bruinooge, Andrew Van Haveren, Daniel Hendrikse, Martin Otten, Martin Wondergem
- Row 2, Ed Otten, Martin De Mey, Ed Leinse, Martin Hollander, Martin Buteyn, Dick Verlare, Anton Eggebeen, Martin Van Stelle, Peter Otte, Conrad Van Haveren
- Row 3 Peter Verlare, Casey Wondergem, ? Price, Chris Otten, Daniel Buyze, Peter Vanstelle, John Wondergem, Abe Vande Repe (director)
- Row 4, ? Nyenhuis, Jacob Verlare, Adrian Wondergem, Peter Van Haveren, Peter Hendrikse, Peter Wondergem, Arthur Ribbens, Dan Van Der Weele

heirs of the Dutch immigrants to Sheboygan County and environs.

Some Personal Reminiscences

Some personal memories will always remain vivid. I remember how working-age males would, during Depression summers, go to the parks and make life miserable for those of us youngsters who were busy with crafts. I remember the abandoned quarry, the favorite swimming hole for the intrepid, though dangerous to the uninitiated until the city made it manageable and safe. I remember the Christian grade school, modest in its

baseball game the school played. Yes, baseball—for the boys, batball for the girls—high drama as we took on the much larger public schools and the Catholic schools with strange-sounding names—St. Dominic, St. Clement's, and the one that always inspired respect if not terror—SS. Cyril and Methodius. By dint of excellent pitchers—and in the case of the girls, gymnastic deftness—we sometimes beat them.

And there were the indoor table games and outdoor diversions—many of them, or, at least, the equipment, improvised during the Depression. How can one explain the

engaged in many lively discussions about whether the alleged Arminian content of these programs was serious enough to require Reformed people to forego the spontaneity, warmth, and practical instruction they made available.

Those of us who lived at some distance from the Christian school (a few had to take a streetcar from the city's far limits) will always remember the walks to and from school as adventures in themselves. We envied at the time those who lived near the lake, on the east side; they, as we found out later, frequently envied those of us who could be more leisurely about our return homeward.

Alternative routes confronted us with different environments and different social strata, areas of two-family residences contrasting with the more spacious and luxurious homes as we approached the lake. We developed a sense of architectural and landscaping textures—as well as a wariness of dogs. Construction projects which we could follow over a period of time were very educational. Now and then there would be confrontations with our counterparts from the public schools. And the lake, despite its potential menace, was a playground in itself—an inescapable given—both a restriction and an opportunity, the freedom it offered contrasting sharply with the discipline and routine of our lives. We experienced very directly the changing of the seasons. The winter icebergs in their capricious formations showed us nature's whim and strength. For weather is big along the lake—enormous blizzards in the winter and terrifying lightning storms in the summer imparted very early a sense of these elemental forces and gave concrete substance to the descriptions in many of the biblical psalms.

Other memories come to mind.

The CRC Concert Band, involving a large percentage of the men and a commitment by the church to purchase the instruments, contributed immeasurably to the musical education of the church and community. Its performances at the Fourth of July picnics and at the annual Thanksgiving-evening concerts became longstanding traditions. Begun by Abe C. Van de Repe and continued under other able directors, it provided an entry for many a young person into the world of music and a profitable diversion for the older members. The band was also the chief attraction at the Christian-school bazaars—those annual fund-raisers which elicited such a variety of skills from the mothers. Their baked goods and sewing projects—aprons, pillowcases, pajamas—were eagerly sought after by the community people. One must note the fifteen-year ministry of Rev. E. B. Pekelder, who through his pedagogy raised the level of doctrinal literacy among adults and youth to new heights. His opposite was the Rev. T. Parry Jones, the resident liberal theologian, who always served the conservatives as a source of cautionary tales.

Because of our family's location on the north side of the city, just a block away from the Catholic cemetery, we witnessed a good deal of human drama. With such a large Catholic population, funerals occurred almost every day, and the reality of death struck home vividly, especially when it overtook people with whom we had some acquaintance. The humanity, the solemnity, and the pathos of those scenes somehow brought us closer to the Catholic adherents than our theology, strictly speaking, would permit.

As an early participant and long-time observer, I must record my admiration for the several generations which by now have been involved in

the weekly broadcast of the "Old Time Religion Hour." Carried on by the Christian Reformed Church choirs, pastors, faithful contributors, and supporting personnel, this fifty-five-year commitment is difficult to match.

How can one forget the dramatic softball games at Kuehne Court—great talent and five-cent admission? Or the quiet understanding that one's lot in life is pretty much "to work and observe the Ten Commandments"? Or the heavy reliance of the citizenry on proverbs—miniaturized wisdom which linked generations to each other. And Sheboyganites have always had an itch to organize. Of the present eighty-seven cultural, religious, and professional organizations, many have long historic and deep traditions.

A final note. It is gratifying to observe that over the years, as is true everywhere, grade-school and high-school graduation photographs show students with an increasingly relaxed expression and with a disposition to smile increasing by the year.

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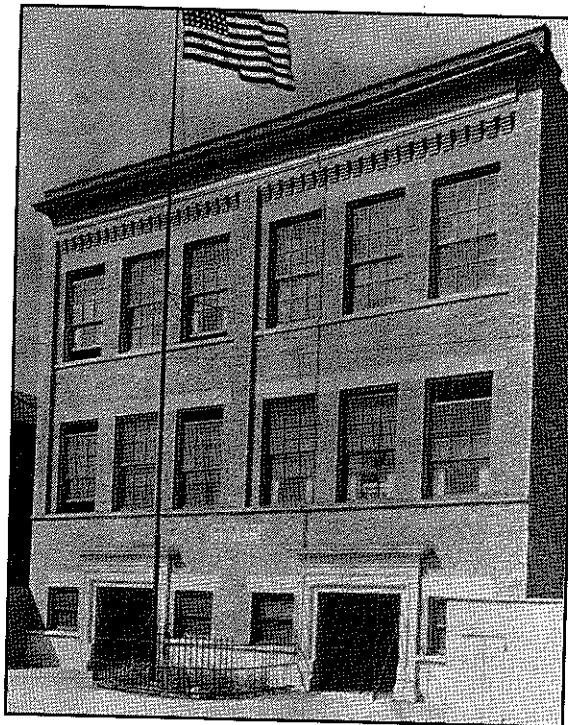
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Church and School on Chicago's West Side 1913-1921

Part 2

by Henry Stob



Ebenezer Christian School.

Onze Toekomst

June 8, 1906

Laying of the Cornerstone of the New Christian School

Last Wednesday, the cornerstone of the new [Ebenezer] 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. Harmeling 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 in 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!

I was already five and one-half years old when we returned from Texas in December of 1913 and thus quite ready for school, but classes at Ebenezer had already been in session for some months, and I was not allowed to matriculate until February of 1914. Since there was no kindergarten, I went directly into the first grade, where our schoolwork was done with the use of slates. The slates, however, were abandoned in the following year when we were trained in the use of pen and ink, the inkwells inserted in the desk sometimes tempting boys to blacken the hair of the girls sitting in front of them. The student enrollment at the time was about 330. I don't know what the tuition was when I began school, but a few years earlier parents with one child in school were charged \$2.00 per month. Those with two children enrolled paid \$3.00. The fees were staggered in such a way that parents with four or more children in school paid no more than \$3.75 a month. Teachers' salaries were comparably low. In 1919 the average salary was \$20.00 a week. The financial support of the school was provided almost exclusively by the members of the 14th Street congregation. People attending the nearby Dutch Reformed Church (RCA) tended to regard the Christian school as separatistic and un-American, and almost all of them sent their children to the Clark public school, located on Ashland Avenue near Hastings.

Ebenezer school was located on 15th Street between Ashland and Paulina, a half block south and another half block west of the flat we

first occupied on 14th Place. I could reach it by way of two alleys in almost no time at all. I don't remember the process by which I was enrolled, but I do remember not being scared or intimidated by the prospect of going to school. I knew most of my classmates from church and Sunday school, and, moreover, my brother Mart was a formidable fourth grader, and my brother George was in the class about to graduate. Under these circumstances there was nothing to fear.

Of some of my teachers I have only the dimmest of recollections. I recall, however, that all of them



Ed Teune family (ca. 1910), West Side.

were men, and this in retrospect strikes me as quite remarkable. Among these teachers were the Messrs. Pilon, Goeree, Bremer, Lobbes, and Van Harn, and I seem to recall that while the latter three were typical of the staff, the former two were considered distinctive in a "peculiar" sort of way, their views and habits being thought of by the older folk as somewhat eccentric.

Of course I remember our principal, Mr. Henry Kuiper, for though I

was normally a well-behaved scholar, I was occasionally sent to him for correction and nurture. This kindly man remedied my defects—and that of others—by smartly applying two rulers to the outstretched palms of any offender sent to him. I did not then, and I do not now, take this ill of him. I think corporal punishment, when exercised in moderation, to be generally wholesome, although I don't recall any of my regular teachers resorting to it. They usually required us to stay after school or to write some apologetic sentence fifty or a hundred times. It may as well be recorded here that

my parents always took the school's side in cases of this kind and endorsed the teacher's discipline by supplementing it with their own.

I distinctly remember Mr. Jacobsma, that lovable gray-bearded teacher who was with the school nearly from its beginning and who taught our second-grade class to read, write, and tell time. He was, moreover, a near neighbor and a

close friend of the family. Whether it was in his class or in the first grade escapes me now, but I remember that we learned about the letter z by viewing a picture of a sausage *sizzling* in a pan. All of us respected and admired Mr. Jacobsma. On Friday afternoons he taught us Dutch, thus supplementing the adventitious foreign-language instruction I was receiving in church, catechism, and home.

When I was at school, Lambert Flokstra taught the seventh grade and Mr. Kooistra, the eighth. I learned much from them. Mr. Kooistra excelled in mathematics, and he inspired in me a love of numbers and spaces. He later joined the high-school faculty, and, when I returned to school after spending three years in the work force, I benefited once more from his tutelage. I later served on the Calvin College faculty with Dr. Flokstra, and we would sometimes reminisce about our Ebenezer days.

A grade-school student does not normally concern himself with curricular affairs, and I simply do not recall how the curriculum was ordered. We were of course taught to read, and we were made to work hard at grammar, spelling, and composition. There was also geography to learn, and history, and civics, and arithmetic, and then there was Bible. Each of us had a Bible in his or her desk drawer, and we were required to follow the reading of it during daily devotions in class. One of the scariest moments in my young life occurred when in one such devotional period I accidentally tore out part of a Bible page and read thereon, "if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life" (Rev. 22:19). Accosting the teacher in some panic, I inquired about the judgment that

awaited me, but to my great relief he assured me that I was in no danger of damnation. He did not even reprimand me for being careless in the handling of books. The morning Bible readings were accompanied by singing, and the hymns we sang stuck in my memory, partly because I was impressionable at the time and partly because we sang them repeatedly around the organ at our house.

The brick school building was erected in 1906, when my father was secretary of the board (1904-08). A tall flagpole stood in a small flower garden in front of it, and the flag was ceremoniously hoisted every school-day morning. One entered the building on the ground floor by either of two doors, though I seem to remember that one entrance was for girls and the other for boys. The principal's office was on this (basement) level, as also were the boiler room, toilet rooms, and some open spaces furnished with clothes racks. There were two floors above ground level, each containing four classrooms, for a total of eight. That was it. There was no teachers' lounge or faculty room. Board and faculty meetings were presumably held in one of the classrooms. For the students there was no assembly room, no cafeteria, no gymnasium, and no library or music room. Yet the whole place was a seat of learning, and no one left it without having come into possession of the basic elements of knowledge.

To eat lunch in school was forbidden for most of us. Only a few who lived too far from school to go home during the noon recess were accorded the privilege. Instead of attending nonexistent gym classes, we did calisthenics for five or ten minutes in the classroom aisles. In fair weather and foul the windows were opened wide for this exercise, and selected students were appointed to

open them with the long, notched stick provided for the purpose.

Our gym was the school yard, where we played under supervision indeed, but not under instruction. It was not much of a yard by modern standards, but it suited us fine. It was about fifty feet wide on the east side of the building and ran in the north-south direction from 15th Street to the alley at the rear. In this space I once broke a school record and in the process elicited from the principal a display of truly gentlemanly behavior. There was a kind of sport current at the time which involved a device made out of two tops joined at their narrow ends by reason of the fact that the point of one had been inserted into a small hole bored into the other. Taking in hand two thin, round sticks to the ends of which a two- or three-foot length of string was attached, one tried to spin the jointed top upon the string, cast it high into the air with the leverage the sticks provided, catch it on the string when it descended, and then repeat the process, counting meanwhile the times the resistant top was thrown up and caught again. I was performing this act during one recess period, and just as I was approaching a record established by another student, the school bell rang, summoning us indoors. When neither I nor the rather large number of spectators heeded the call, the principal emerged frowning, but, when told what was in progress, he smiled, stayed to observe, and, when, having broken the existing record, I finally missed a catch, he escorted us all with due courtesy to our respective rooms.

In the school yard at recess time we played many different games. We played marbles and "buck, buck, how many fingers up?" But mostly we played ball, a home run being a hit that landed in the alley. In back of

the school was a still smaller space usually used by the girls to jump rope or do such other things as schoolgirls did. There were no trees and no grass. The whole yard was paved with cinders, a fact which discouraged sliding into second base. Altercations sometimes took place in the yard, and fisticuffs were not unknown. Bouts, however, were soon

Avenue and 17th Street. Between that school and ours lay the Baltimore and Ohio elevated railroad tracks. This multi-tracked rail course ran in an east-west direction abridging the backyards of the houses aforementioned and separated from them by a high concrete wall. A similar wall existed on the other side of the tracks. These walls and tracks minimized, if they did not eliminate, schoolboy

ments in rough sports and strenuous exercises were not my style, for I was rather frail and frequently sick. Like most children I contracted measles, mumps, whooping cough, influenza, and sundry other maladies, especially rheumatic fever. I don't know how often the doctor was called, but I know that it was my mother more than anyone else who nursed me back to health from these several illnesses. Home remedies were in vogue in those days, and, when I was suffering from a cold, Mother would apply goose grease to my chest and wrap around my upper body a heavy woolen cloth. This was designed to dispel the chills and fevers, and somehow it worked. I swallowed a good amount of Dr. Pieter's Zokoro in those days, as well as quantities of the evil-tasting Haarlemer Olie and unflavored castor oil. Sometime during this period I had my tonsils removed, and from then on my health and strength greatly improved. In my middle years at school I was as strong and robust as any boy my age.

I lost some days at school on account of these early and recurring illnesses, but there were compensations. While recuperating in bed or in a comfortable chair, I was led to read more than I would otherwise have done, and having once been introduced to books, I never thereafter abandoned the reading habit. In the ensuing years at school I read Jane Porter's *Scottish Chiefs*, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, Edward Eggleston's *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, and Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur*, among others. And then, of course, there were Zane Grey, Curwood, Altscheller, Standish, and Horatio Alger. These I read even though my parents sometimes wondered whether such reading befitted a covenant child.

The games we played after school and the activities we engaged in were numerous and varied. Al-

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Advertisements in The Banner, 1919.

broken up by the older and more responsible students, and by tradition a means was provided for the settlement of differences. After school a ring (or square) was drawn on the unpaved alley behind the school, and here, with upperclassmen acting as referees, the combatants were required to exhibit their fistic prowess, with or without gloves, before an attentive assembly of their peers. It is here that many of us received our first training in the fine art of boxing.

Across 15th Street to the south was a single row of houses, occupied mainly, I believe, by Polish people whose children attended a Catholic school which stood near Ashland

battles between the Polish Catholics and the Dutch Calvinists. Hostilities, when they occurred, took place under the Ashland Avenue viaduct, and only the very brave ventured unaccompanied through this space.

What we did after school is a very long story. Mostly we played, although when I was still quite young, in the second or third grade, engage-

DR. PIETERS

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though I am not perfectly sure, I believe that we were not permitted to use the school playground after classes were dismissed. We kids therefore took mainly to the street, although as we grew older, we played our more organized games on the Clark school cinder field. It was chiefly on 14th Place between

Teeken in op

"ONZE TOEKOMST"

Gereformeerd Weekblad

—
Hoofdredacteur: Dr. J. Van Lonkhuyzen
—

Medewerkers: Onderscheiden Predikanten, Onderwijzers en Ontwikkelde Mannen in en om Chicago.

Grootte van het Blad: 12 Bladzijden in het vroegere Wachter-formaat

RUBRIEKEN:

1. Van Werk tot Werk. Inland artikel op zaterdag.	ZONDAASBLAD (september 14) het Nieuwland
2. Amerikaans Nieuws.	1. Hoofdblad
3. Nederlands Nieuws.	2. Mededeel.
4. Ethisch Overzicht.	3. Bijdragen (Kerkelijk en Kerkelijk Leven).
5. Gezond en Plezant Nieuws.	4. Ouderlijk (Lagen, Middelen en Hoop).
6. Geestelijken.	5. Zondag.
7. Ingezonden.	6. Politiek en Maatschappij.
	7. Young People's Department.
	8. Verrengingstijden (Blad van Gereformeerde Missionarissen).
	9. Van het Jonge Volkje.
	10. Kerkelijken.
	11. Bijdragen.

PRIJS: \$1.50

Met 9 April als vierdejarige leersamenkomst Med. gereformeerde. Op de hereningsdagen wijzen. En voor de uitgeverijen laten wij. Het zal voornamelijk komen NIET UITSCHIJFEND, Hollandsch tijdschrift. Beide talen kunnen gebruikt. Hoofdredacteur noch medewerkers hebben aanspraak van nood.

HET BLAD SPREKT VOOR ZICH ZELF.

P.S. Wie V.I.F. tekenen kan krijgt het afzonderlijk jdel. verschenen werk van Her. John Olor. Nieuws. "WHAT CALVINISM HAS DONE FOR AMERICA" PRESENT.

Zend uw intekening met check voor \$1.75 aan:

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Print-Redactie Dr. C.

Advertisement for Onze Toekomst in 1919 Wachter.

Ashland and Paulina that we rode our bikes, sped on our roller skates, pushed our homemade scooters, and in winter belly flopped on our sleds. At times we wrestled or boxed, engaged in tug-of-war, or simply ran. We played shinny, dock on the rock, and mumblety-peg. We shot marbles, roasted potatoes, sailed straws along the curb after rain, and went junking down the alleys in search of salable bottles, old rags, and pieces of metal. What we collected on our junking forays we sold for pennies to an itinerant scrap dealer we called Sheeny Randolph. Sometimes we went swimming in a nearby municipi-

pal pool; at other times we retreated to a friend's backyard into the clubhouse we had erected out of salvaged lumber. We often simply sat and talked—about everything. As we matured, we even debated common grace with the Veldman boys, who, being nephews of Herman Hoeksema,* rejected the concept. I had learned to skate on ice, and in a juvenile race I once earned an all gold-plated medal. But mostly we played softball, using well-placed manhole covers and sewer outlets for bases. Later we formed a baseball team and joined the church league. I started out as a pitcher, but my young arm lost its dexterity when I began throwing curves prematurely. I wound up at second base, where I earned a mixed reputation as a good glove and a poor bat.

It was not all play after school. I often had to run errands for my brothers and sisters and to go to the store for items my mother ran out of or forgot to order. We usually traded at Rispens'. His store and butcher shop bore the likeness of all those independently owned establishments that dotted the landscape before the conglomerate supermarkets began to appear. Most things came in bulk. Cookies, crackers, flour, rice, coffee, and other things stood in boxes and bags upon the floor, and from these containers the grocer withdrew the amount a person ordered. Butter and lard came in large tubs, from which the required amount was scooped into boat-shaped, paper-thin wooden containers. Margarine came uncolored and was at home made to resemble butter by the addition of a capsule of food dye. Bread came unwrapped and unsliced. A barrel of dill pickles and another of salted herring stood temptingly in a corner. Canned goods placed on the higher

*Founding pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church.

shelves were retrieved by means of a sliding ladder or a long-handled grasping tool. Bills were figured by addition of penciled figures on a pad of paper. To take things home, one brought a shopping basket. Having not yet outgrown our Dutchiness, we frequently bought Dutch rye bread, an assortment of Dutch cheeses, and quantities of pickled herring. We also bought such favorites as kale and gray peas. Kale we ate mixed with mashed potatoes and attended with sizable slices of pork steak; gray peas, with bacon and quantities of bacon fat. What we usually bought in the butcher shop was pork chops and round steak. Chickens were expensive and eaten only on holidays. Liver was considered unfit for human consumption, and spareribs were uniformly held in disdain. Frankfurts were cheap, and I was given one whenever I made a purchase of meat.

But I did more than just shopping; I also worked at things. On several occasions I helped Mr. Rispens make sauerkraut in the dank basement under his store. I folded issues of *Onze Toekomst*, which was published by Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen in the small print shop adjoining the parsonage. I took woodworking classes at the nearby Church of the Brethren. I even took piano lessons for awhile, though for fear of being called a sissy I discontinued the instruction after half a year. My chief occupation was with the Jewish people in the neighborhood. Since orthodox Jews may not work on the Sabbath, they hired me to light their Saturday-morning fires during the winter. I usually found the stoves already laid with paper and kindling wood; I needed only to light a match and ignite the flammable materials. I had ten customers, and each paid me ten cents for my weekly services.

Honesty compels me now to re-

port some naughtiness. John Vander Velde and I sometimes took our lives into our hands by climbing the high el structure near his house, vaulting over the electrified rail, and, after mounting the platform, stealing a ride to the Loop and back. Of this I gave no account to my parents, who would certainly have disapproved of this adventure.

More innocent but fraught with consequences less pleasant was an action I took in the summer of 1919. My brother Neal was in the Army of

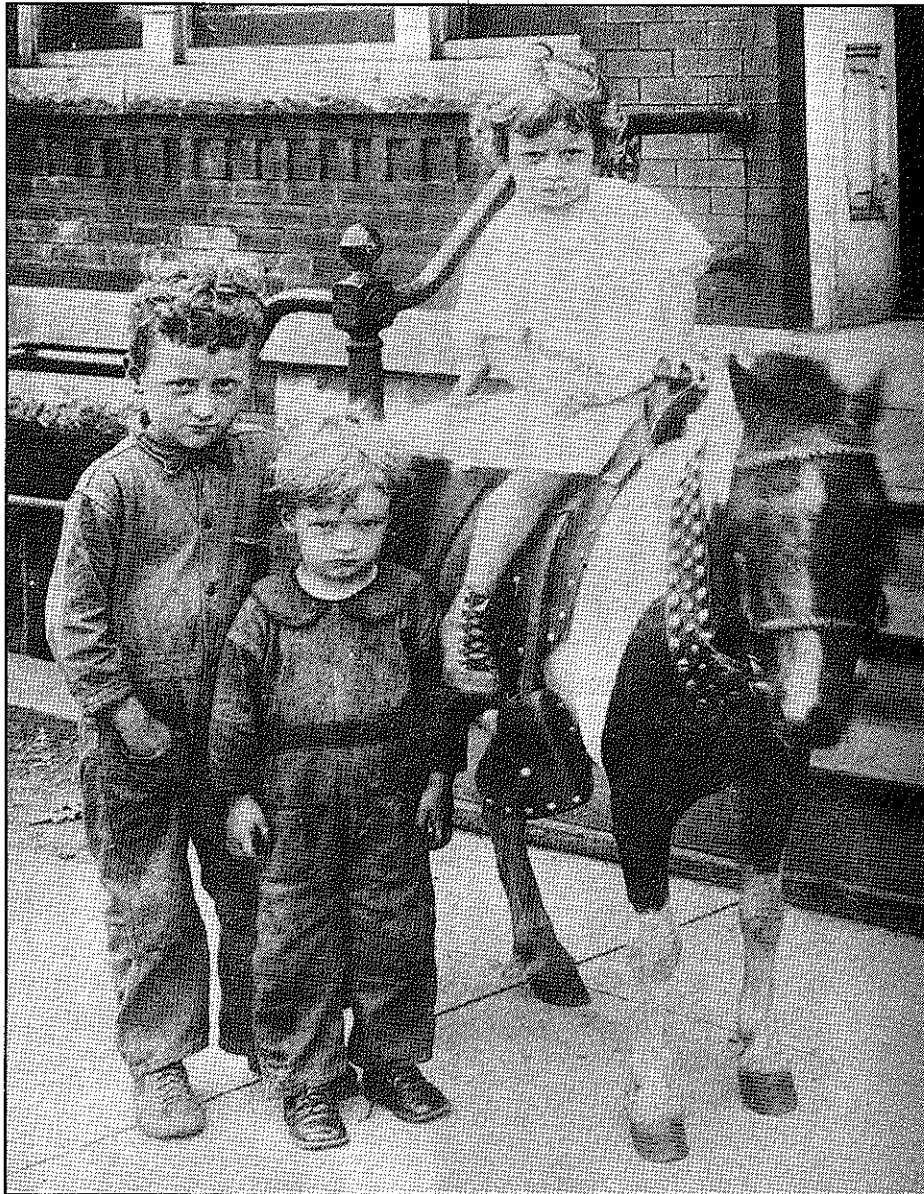
Occupation on the Rhine, and we looked forward eagerly to his imminent return. One day I spied on the nearby elevated Baltimore and Ohio tracks a stalled train, the cars of which were filled with soldiers about to be mustered out. Wanting to greet the tired-looking khaki-clad men and hoping that Neal might be among them, I managed somehow to climb the steep protective wall and land at last on the tracks. I had been there but a moment when a railroad guard took me in hand for trespassing and

walked me to the roundhouse on Wood Street. From there he called the police, and when they arrived, I was driven in a paddy wagon to the Maxwell Street station, where, though I was not booked, I was severely reprimanded by the officer in charge. I walked home disconsolately, but when told of the incident, my parents applied no censure. They thought indeed that a certain eleven-year-old boy had been unduly harassed and mistreated.

The course of study at school came finally to an end. I had done satisfactory work and was asked by the principal to give the student graduation oration. On the evening of January 26, 1922, we were given our diplomas at the exercises held in church, and I said some words in praise of George Washington, the father of our country. Our graduating class was much smaller than the one that had left school in June of the previous year. We numbered five boys and eight girls: Bertha Blauw, Anne Dekker, Tracy Hoffman, Tena Holtrop, Ella Mulder, Dena Rozema, Kate Van Byssum, Cora Vander Molen, John Blauw, William Noorlag, Henry Stob, John Stouwie, and John Vander Velde. I was thirteen and one-half years old at this time and still quite uninterested in girls, but to celebrate the occasion I asked the prettiest one in the class to accompany me to the ice cream parlor on 12th Street. This she did, and after we had a banana split, I walked her home. And that was that.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

*Ter Maat family, 14th Place (ca. 1910),
West Side.*



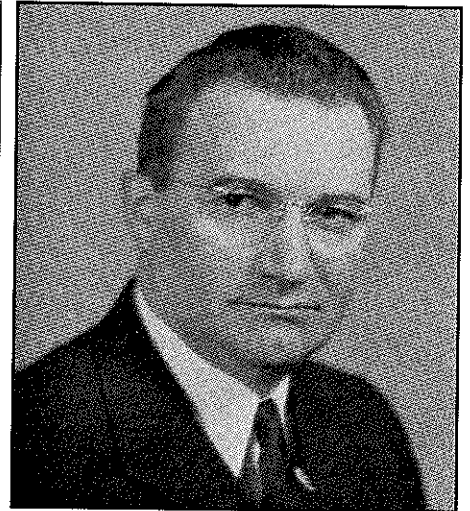
Johanna (Gelderloos) LaMaire: *Notes from and about the Past*

by H.J. Brinks

Johanna Gelderloos was born on the "old West Side" of Chicago and, like many of her neighbors, moved successively to Cicero, Berwyn, and Oak Park. That pattern mirrored the general migration of the Dutch community as it gained the means to become homeowners rather than renters and later to exchange narrow Chicago bungalows for more spacious suburban quarters.

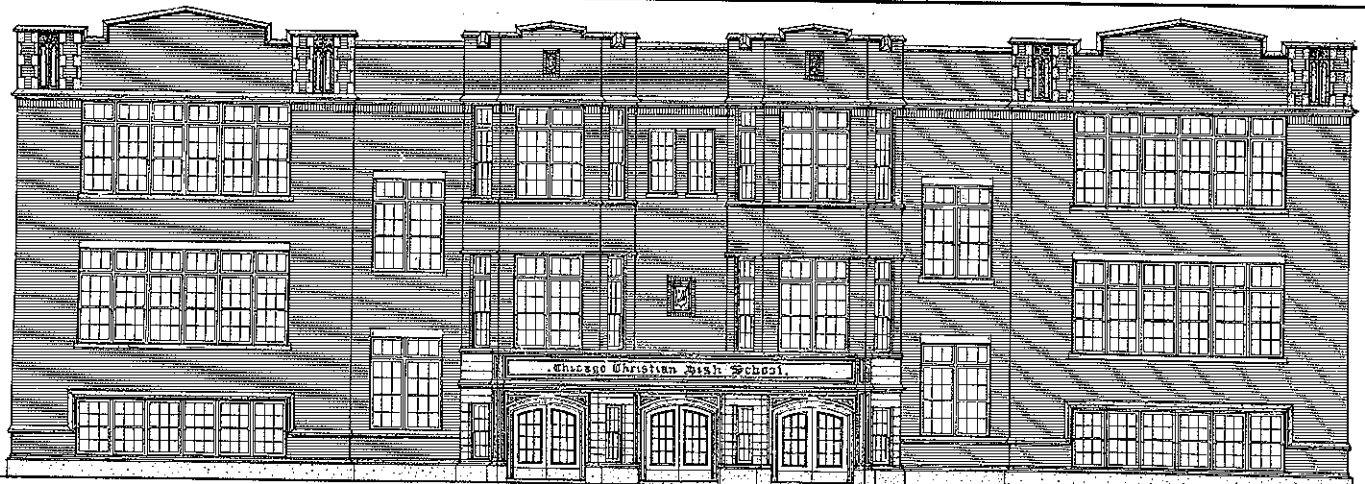
The local Ebenezer Christian School educated Johanna and most of the "West Siders" through basic studies, but for higher learning the Chicago area Dutch pooled their re-

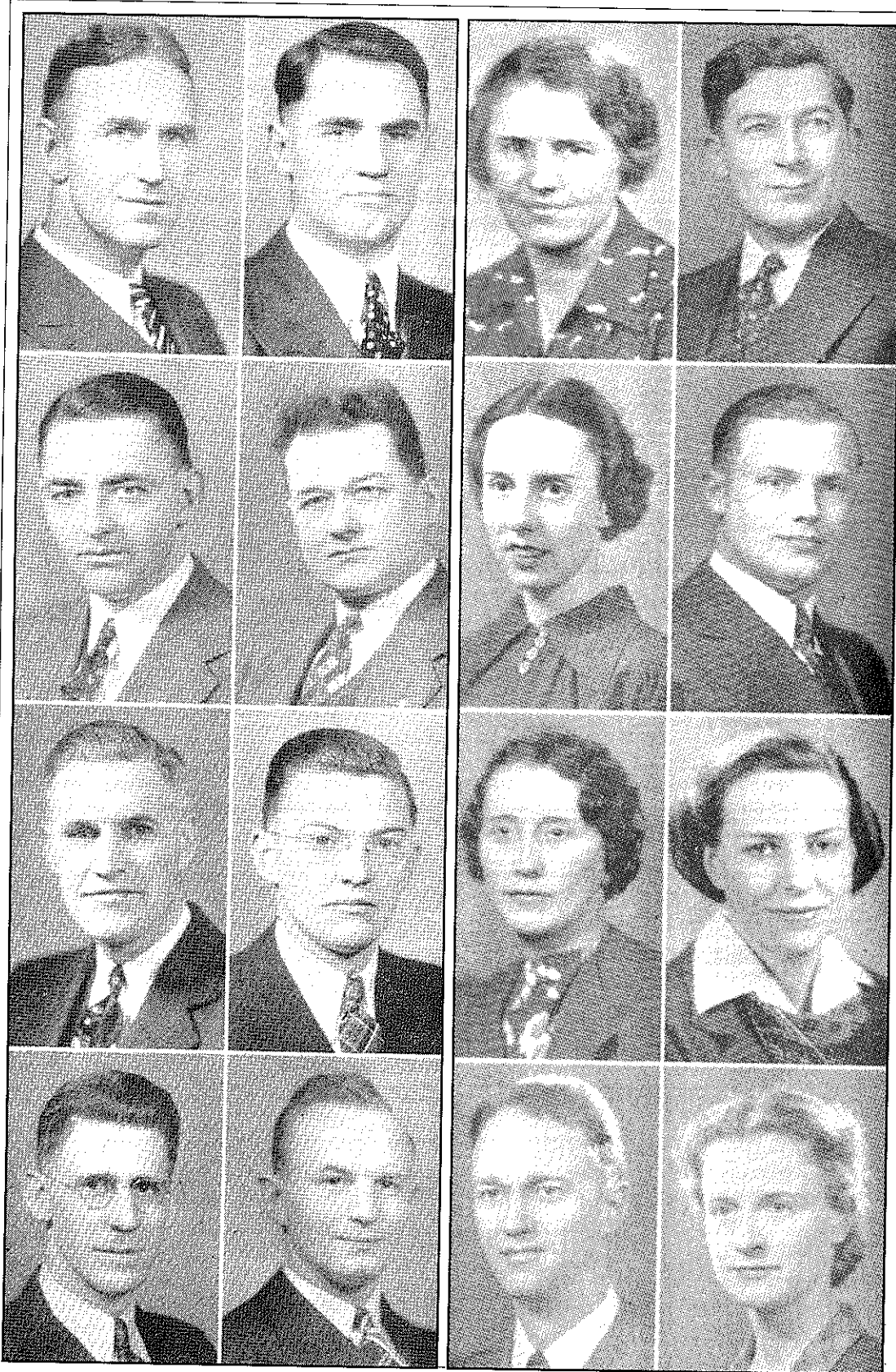
sources to establish Engelwood's Chicago Christian High School in 1918. There Johanna encountered a wide spectrum of Chicagoland's Netherlandic community—from Englewood, Roseland, South Holland, and even Munster, Indiana. The students traveled by streetcars, buses, and automobiles. Some families, like that of Henry Stob, actually moved to Englewood in order to fa-



(right) Christian High Principal, Fred Wezeman, 1938 Violet and Maize, p. 13.

Architectural drawing of proposed high school, 1921 Christian High Violet and Maize, p. 8.





*Christian High Faculty, 1938
Violet and Maize, pp. 14-15.*

*First Row (l to r): Henry A.
Swets, G. Harry Mouw, Tonnetta
Teninga, Henry Wezeman.*

*Second Row (l to r): Arthur
Lanning, James Baar, Kathryn V.
Schuringa, Henry Evenhouse.*

*Third Row (l to r): Cornelius
Van Beek, Oscar Hofstra, Martha
Laessemann, Winifred Haeck.*

*Fourth Row (l to r): Gerrit
De Vries, Maurice Vander Velde,
Henry M. Baar, Katherine Eaton.*

cilitate attendance at the high school. Johanna, for a seven-cent fare, traveled by streetcar from West 13th Street.

Before World War II a high-school education yielded credentials for jobs and social advancement similar to that which a college education provides today. Combined with short terms of occupational training, a high-school diploma could lead to careers in teaching, business, pharmacy, and many technical professions. Understandably then, high-school teachers were frequently prominent community leaders. The most memorable in Johanna's experience were Henry Swets, Cornelius Van Beek, and Fred Wezeman. Both

Van Beek and Wezeman went on to careers in school administration—the former as the founding administrator of Illiana Christian High School and the latter as president of Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa.

Although Chicago Christian High broadened the social and intellectual horizons of Ebenezer's graduates, their churches provided the most binding communal structures for daily routines. Mrs. LaMaire recalls that "church societies were a way of life. Our three

young ladies' groups were each very large. Annual socials were great occasions—mother and daughter festivities, socials for older ladies' aid groups, and also home-talent programs. In addition there were annual Sunday-school picnics and choirs of various kinds—a full choir, a male chorus, and a ladies' chorus."

But because each local Dutch community had links throughout the nation, local organizations often joined together at conventions which drew



participants from across the land. Johanna attended conferences of the American Federation of Reformed Young Women's Societies in Paterson, New Jersey, Denver, and Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Thus the opportunities to step outside the borders of each community were rather frequent, but these occasions were also structured by the ethnic and religious similarities of the participants. This pattern of combining local groups in national gathering places prevailed among most Christian Reformed organizations—the young men's societies, men's Bible-study groups, women's missionary societies, young Calvinist organizations, and more. All gath-

ered for their annual festivities.

Although the participants were often far from their homes, they discovered that the moral strictures and social patterns which characterized their home areas were those of a nationally dispersed ethnic community. In Lynden, in Paterson, Grand Rapids, Chicago, and Sheboygan they discovered the interdependent fragments of a nationally homogenous community. They encountered an interrelated network of churches, schools, social organizations, and economic activity. In short, they discovered the Dutch-American community. Until recently this larger community has been a source of pride, comfort, and social cohesion.

But it is disintegrating rather rapidly today.

While this development distresses some of the community, others regard the collapse of the subculture as a prelude to more mature and effective participation in American life. However viewed, it is clear that the Dutch-American community is at another significant intersection, facing choices that will reap both gains and losses. One obvious loss is the weakening of communal bonds, which probably peaked between 1920 and 1950.

1936 AFRYWS Convention, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.



Ralph Dekker's Englewood

by H.J. Brinks

My Uncle Ralph, tall and Lincolnesquely homely, died while on a "synod vacation." At 73 and long retired, he did not need, as we normally construe it, a vacation. But Ralph Dekker would literally cross the continent rather than miss the annual CRC synod. Over his lifetime he was a frequent delegate to these events, but he attended no matter what his official status. For Ralph, like his friend and equally venerable synod watcher, George Kamp, synods had the lure of a cockpit, and both Ralph and George were loathe

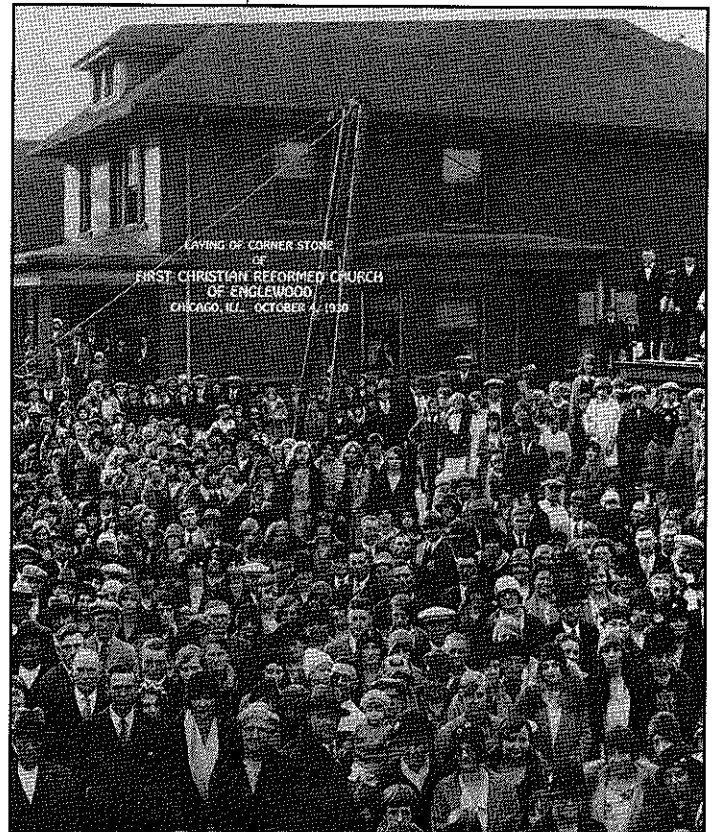
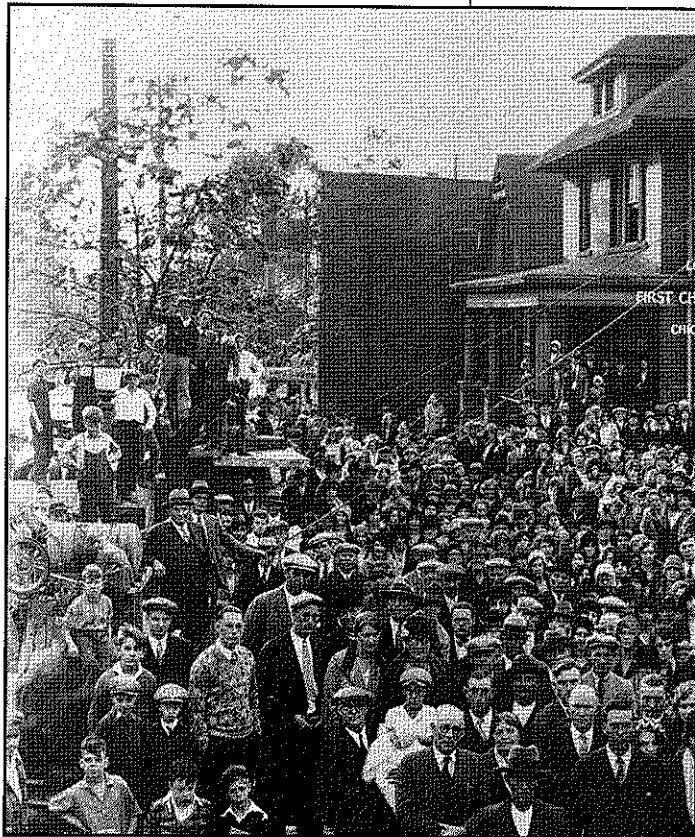
to miss the action. And, of course, there were others like them.

Ralph Dekker grew up in several Chicago-area neighborhoods because his father pursued a mix of careers ranging from garden farmer to electrician and shop owner. Ralph also became an electrician, and he inherited the small appliance store. His heart, however, was elsewhere. He was known best for his leadership in the Federated Men's Society, for his writing in the *Illinois Observer*,* and

*The successor to *Onze Toekomst*, the *Illinois Observer* became the *Church Observer* in 1960.

for his work as president of the Chicago area Christian Citizen Committee. Above all, he was a widely recognized CRC churchman from Englewood, Illinois.

In 1903 the Dekker family became members of Chicago's first English-language CRC (Second Christian Reformed Church of Englewood). When his parents transferred to Englewood I in 1908, Ralph went with them, but he returned to the English-language congregation in 1916 after marrying Helene Brinks, a Christian-school teacher. Along with his experiences in both of Englewood's congregations, Ralph identified closely with all the institutions which sprang up in the community—the Helping Hand Mission and schools of all sorts, the Christian day school and high school, the early sessions of the Reformed Bible Institute, and plans for a junior college which sputtered along until





Christian Citizens Committee

By RALPH DEKKER

Column masthead,
Church Observer—p. 23.

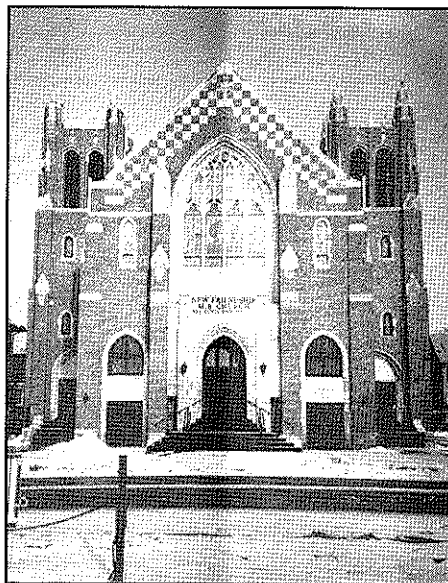
1st Englewood CRC

dents came from every Dutch village and neighborhood across northern Illinois and Indiana. Englewood's significance as an intra-ethnic gathering place is also evident in the recollections of Johanna (Gelderloos) LaMaire (see pp. 30-33).

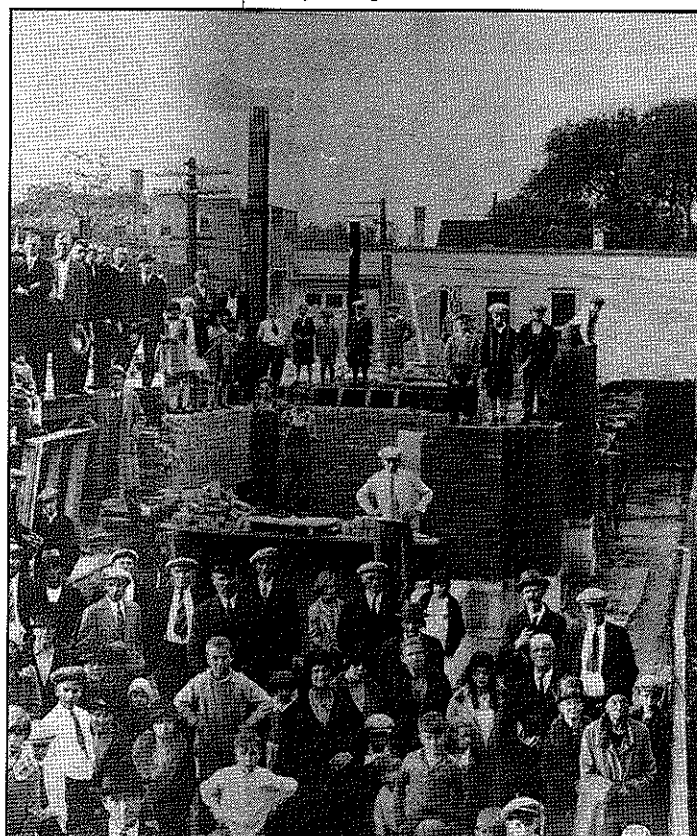
1959, when Trinity Christian College was organized.*

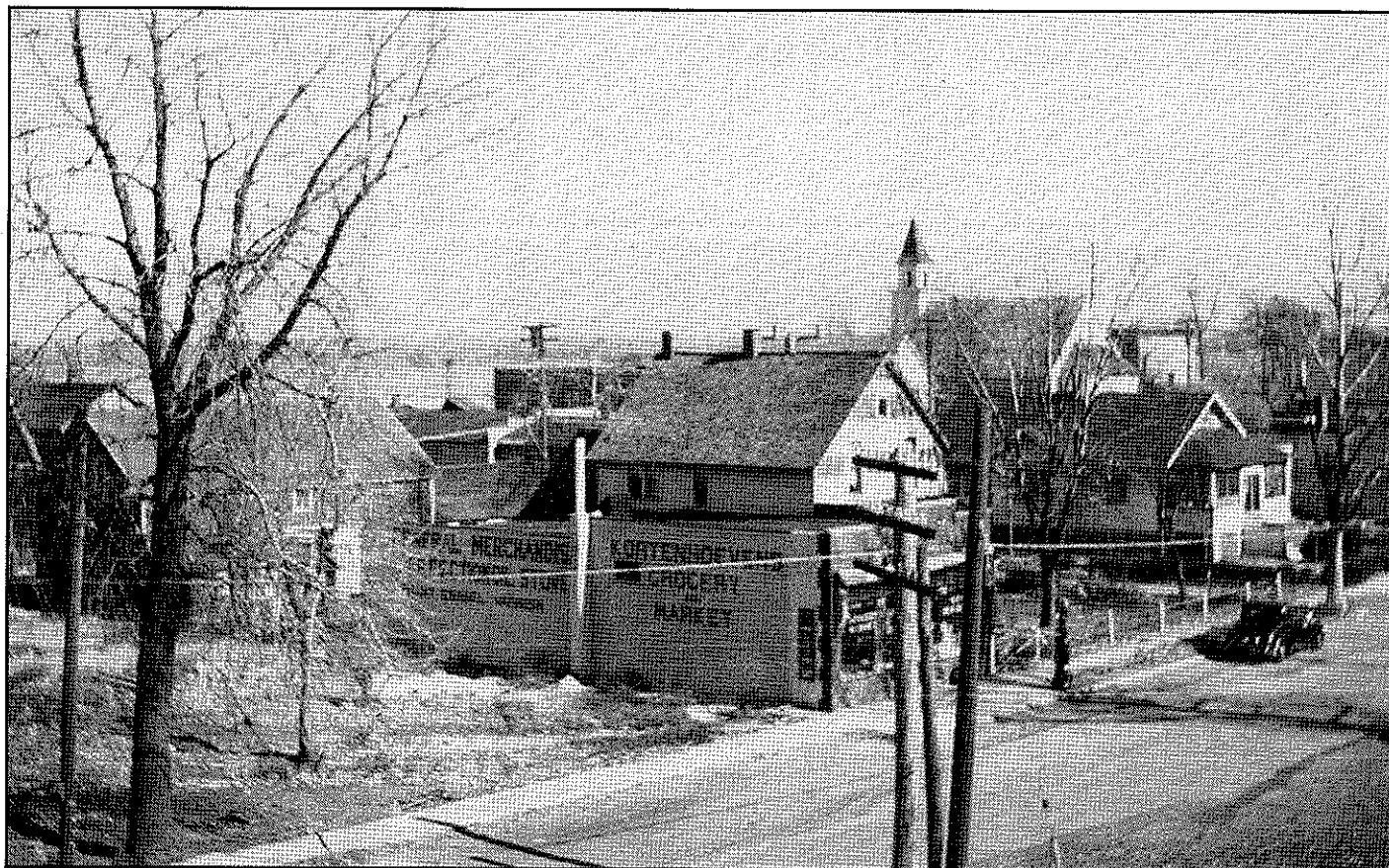
The prominence of the Englewood Dutch enclave diminished rapidly after Ralph's death in 1964, but many still remember it as the site of Chicago Christian High School, an institution which graced Chicagoland's entire Dutch subculture with an exceptional level of intellectual distinction. From 1919 and until 1945, as the only Christian high school in the area, it attracted prominent leaders and serious scholars to its staff. Stu-

*Ralph Dekker's "Reminiscences of a Septuagenarian" and his papers are preserved in the Calvin College and Theological Seminary Archives.



The 1930 pictures below of Englewood's people assembled for the cornerstone-laying festivities of First Englewood CRC vividly demonstrates the resolution which made this occasion possible. And their faces, exceptionally clear in Kaufman's photography, dramatize the event. Ralph's parents, Gerrit and Rose Dekker, are surely among them.





Highland, Indiana, circa 1937. Seen from overpass. First CRC is in background.

PARADISE LOST Columbus, Montana

by David Zandstra

Although B.H. Zandstra had previously failed at homesteading in Kuner, Colorado, in 1916 he was ready to try again in Columbus, Montana. The land salesman who advocated Columbus spoke excellent

David Zandstra is a history teacher at Illiana Christian High School (Lansing, Illinois) and a specialist in the local history of the Calumet area.

Frisian, prayed poetically and at length, carried a Bible under his arm, and professed Calvinism. But this time, because his wife would not allow the whole family to migrate, B.H. Zandstra encouraged his oldest son, Nicholas, to try farming in Montana. Nick wanted to go because his winter employment in Chicago-area factories did not suit him at all, and, as World War I began to intensify in

Europe, he feared that the United States might get involved and that he would be drafted into the Army. Furthermore, because he had been recently spurned by his one true love, Montana seemed like a good place to escape the reminders of his disappointment. The Zandstras expected Nicholas to help in supporting the family with the profits from the Montana farm. So B.H. invested in



Nick Zandstra inspecting his Titan 10-20 tractor, 1918. M. Oostema family in background.

East. . . I could hardly farm without a tractor . . . I have to disc and seed about 130 acres, so I'll be busy, and then I hope to plow some 50 acres. It's difficult and requires hard work." He was quite proud of the new Titan tractor, which he used to break the prairie sod and to transport his wheat to the local grain elevator. The local church, noting his positive attitude,

elected him president of the Young People's Society (named appropriately *Excelsior*, *i.e.*, "always upwards").

Nick's letters began to change as he experienced loneliness, disap-

pointment, and crop failures. After a hailstorm spoiled his first crop and drove him to despair, he wrote, "I sure was discouraged that Sunday night when everything was taken away in about fifteen or twenty minutes. How happy I was [to think] that I could have helped my folks out with [our] large family, and now [it's] all gone." At the same time, while worrying about possible military service, he wrote, "I believe they [the draft board] will not trouble me this year anymore. Maybe next spring . . . if I have to go, I would like to do clerical work or something of that sort." Feeling as though he was letting his family down, he stated in another letter, "They [his parents] were thinking of buying that land which they rent [in Highland]. Of course the idea changed since I'm hailed out."

Nick was a very devout person, and his piety strengthened him through intensifying frustrations. After the hailstorm he could still write, "I had a hard week, but Sunday morning [with] the sweet words of comfort for the afflicted [from the the sermon of a visiting minister], I could go forth with great joy."

In spite of poor farming results, Nicholas was not about to quit. After all, his father was counting on his contribution to purchase the family farm in Indiana. But in late September of 1918 he wrote an ominous letter to his favorite sister, Gertie. "Yesterday morning I was in church, but I felt so sick in the afternoon [that] I stayed home. I believe it came of working so hard Saturday and being soaked of sweat and chilled in the

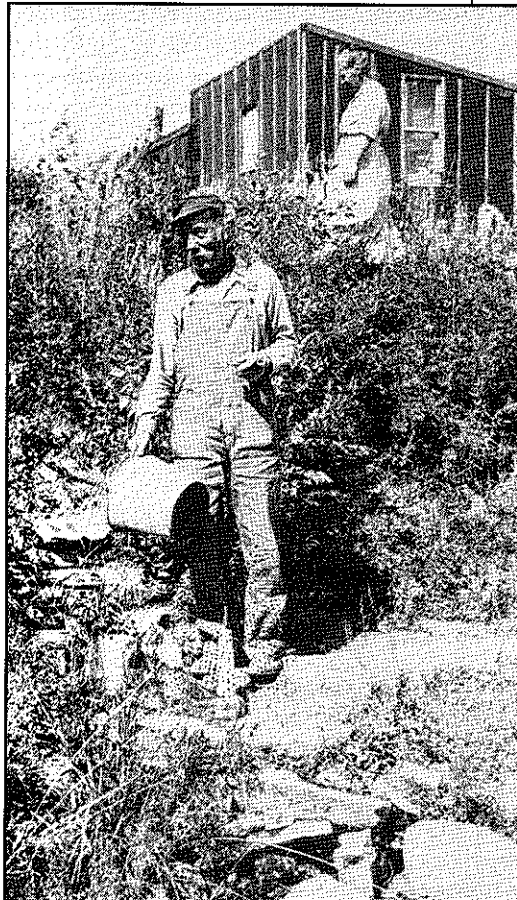
(below) Winnie and Aldrich Recker—springtime, ca. 1920.

the Columbus venture both to make a profit and to test that region's potential as a future residence.

Early in 1917, after a year's planning and the purchase of new equipment, Nicholas, age twenty-two, was ready to conquer the West. "Klaas," as he came to be known in Columbus, left Highland, Indiana, with a rail car loaded with new farm tools and some household goods. It had all been purchased with borrowed money. At a thousand dollars the new 10-20 Titan tractor with tillage equipment was a considerable investment.

Problems arose upon Klaas' arrival in Columbus. Though his carload of equipment had been prepaid in Chicago, the Northern Pacific Railroad tried to exact an overcharge. After several weeks of correspondence, however, the railroad acquiesced, and he began homesteading.

Nick confidently and aggressively assumed his duties. Rather than use valuable field time constructing a home, he boarded with the Oostemas, his neighbors and friends. Assessing his early experience, Nick wrote, "It sure takes ambition here, but I have it to some extent . . . I'm starting to like it [Western farming] all right. It ain't so busy as in the



evening." A few weeks later, as he lay dying of influenza, he knew that his father's dream of farming in Montana was also ending. With great effort he managed to scratch a brief note that captured the pathos of his feelings.

Dear Dad, You likely will not see me again. I have suffered much this week, and therefore I can't [come home as planned]. Oostema knows pretty much how our business stands here, and he will be happy to bring everything in order. Oh it grieves me so not to see you. The Lord's ways are different than ours. I feel I am going home. I will wish you good night. Hopefully I will soon see all of you again. Keep courage, Dad and Mom and kids, to struggle for Christ's kingdom. Offer Gertie [his favorite sister] my warmest kiss and tell her that I'm going to Jesus.

Your son, Nick

Unwilling to leave his son in Montana, B.H. Zandstra had the remains shipped home and interred in the Highland church plot. His mother played the old hymn "Sometime We'll Understand" on the family Victrola until the record was worn out. Never again did she allow her family to look west. Nick's death spared the Zandstra family any additional failures in the West and cast their future in northwestern Indiana. But others still followed the impossible dream in Columbus, Montana.

The beauty of the land was intoxicating and deceptive. Everyone was captivated by nature's bountiful displays, which gave the senses much to feast upon—the glorious daily sunsets, the spring and fall waves of migrating cranes, the pink bitterroot carpeting endless acres in June, a spirited patch of sweet-smelling shooting stars dancing where only a few weeks prior hard frozen snow had lain, a drink of cold precious wa-



Clothes washing on the Recker farm in 1922. Left to right: Winnie Recker, Lena Recker, Rika Staal.

gravelly clay. Void of trees and permanent streams, it was clearly semiarid. Choice locations—valleys with aspen trees, good water supplies, and richer soils—had all been taken by sheep ranchers who had homesteaded there years before under government land grants.

ter bubbling up in a rocky crevice, throngs of big-eared jack rabbits cavorting in the moonlight, the lonesome call of a coyote speaking to the moon, the mournful cry of the curlew circling high above, a noisy early morning scolding of a magpie, the merry songs of the little prairie birds throughout the lazy days of summer; and the panoramic vistas. Unfortunately, none of this contributed to the settlers' incomes but instead blurred the cruel reality. The secretary of the farmers' co-operative in Highland, Indiana, recorded in his minutes of November 14, 1916, that "N. Kortenhoeven, who had made a trip to Columbus, Montana gave a talk about the trip and his discoveries there. Everyone at the meeting was very satisfied." Kortenhoeven and several other families from the Calumet region migrated shortly thereafter.

Holland Settlement was a township located eighteen miles north of Columbus. A high-rolling prairie often interrupted by steep hills, high buttes, and deep coulees greeted the homesteaders. Most of the area was covered by a thin layer of coarse,

Nature itself seemed to mock these colonists. The weather, they soon discovered, was erratic and often extreme. The weather conditions of 1915, just prior to their arrival, had been exceptionally favorable, producing a heavy grain yield. They would wait in vain for nature to cooperate again. Periods of over one hundred days without significant rainfall were fairly common. Montana is also a windy place, particularly on the high plains. Often winds of thirty to fifty miles per hour continued for days. The raw and gusty winds of spring dried the land. In winter the meager snowfall was blown into the coulees, where it melted in spring, doing the soil little good. Moisture, when it came, was often violent—blizzards, hailstorms, or cloudbursts. Much of the fifteen-inch annual rainfall could come in a single storm, often with disastrous results. One farmer, commenting on a summer hailstorm, wrote, "I sure am discouraged . . . when everything was taken away in about fifteen or twenty minutes." His neighbor was so distressed that he proclaimed, "I don't believe there is a merciful Lord."

Reasons for coming to Montana varied, but all had a bit of Western romance in them. The settlers saw themselves, at least to some degree, as characters in a Zane Grey novel riding through the purple sage. Some came for abundant and cheap acreage and to get rich quick. Some came to try again after failing in another part of the American West. Others believed grain farming would provide an easier life than market gardening. To some young men who worked in the steel mills and car shops in South Chicago anything sounded better. Escaping the possibility of a military draft was also on the minds of some, particularly those with German sympathies. Still others came for a new start in life, escaping past conflicts in family, love, or church. With their hearts full of hope, these settlers came singing

Pete Zwier disking on the Recker farm, 1921.



"Some-where out in the West, I'll find a sweet little nest . . . a place that's known to God alone, just a spot to call our own . . . and let the rest of the world go by."

On the other hand, the selling of Montana was a well-calculated business. The entire area had been part of the A.L. Thomas sheep ranch, which was no longer viable without an

open range. Unless homesteaders were found to purchase the land in small parcels, it would be of little value. Apparently the developers were a Wisconsin-based syndicate of investors with previous experience in retailing Montana rangeland to small farmers. Railroads which had extensive holdings and investments in Montana also encouraged homesteaders to come, by offering reduced travel and shipping rates. Farmers, they believed, would increase the use and value of the many miles of rails across the state.

The Spoolstra Realty Company of Roseland, Illinois, was hired by a Columbus real estate firm, Williams and Jessen, to promote land sales in the midwestern United States. Peter Spoolstra, the owner, was a particularly aggressive and successful salesman. A heavy advertizing barrage in *The Banner* and *De Wachter* caught the attention of many faithful readers.

With the following advertisement he invited interested persons to purchase a homeseeker's rail ticket at reduced fare and to receive a guided tour of the site:

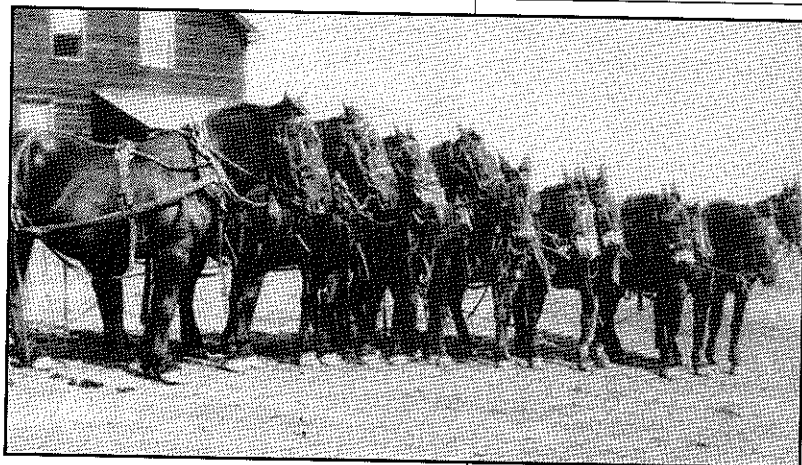
Now is the time to buy your ticket and travel to COLUMBUS, MONTANA, land of good success and personal happiness. Here is an opportunity to gain possession of

your own farm. Don't listen to those who are afraid of this. He who thinks good fortune does not accompany him never gets ahead. Consider the many good opportunities which in that way pass us by. Do you want to improve your condition? Write us then immediately for more information about Columbus, Montana, before you explore elsewhere. In some states a farm brings no gain but in Columbus, Montana, it is a success. This message is intended for every renter who does not get the desired advantage of someone else's land. Come with us to Columbus. An excursion on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Travel expense is very low.

De Wachter, July 5, 1916

Succeeding advertisements describe in prose and with photos comfortable homes and proper barns supported by ever verdant irrigated fields, none of which ever existed. One group of Grand Rapids businessmen, looking for investment possibilities, arrived in the middle of one of the periodic droughts. The meager crops and blowing dust did not impress the Michigan group. The local promoter admitted that conditions were dry but added that all Montana needed was a little rain, to which one of the Grand Rapids group replied, "That's all hell needs, too." But many homesteaders bought their land site unseen. The advertisements were clever if not deceptive: "Land for twenty to thirty dollars per acre. No irrigation, no trees or stumps, but beautiful prairie land." True enough, there were no stumps, but there was a lifetime's worth of rocks, which had to be removed as the land was plowed. Farmers who read such advertising visualized the rich and well-watered lands of the Midwest, not the rocky foothills of eastern Montana. Land prices were also deceptively high for the same reason.

Spoolstra eagerly preached the

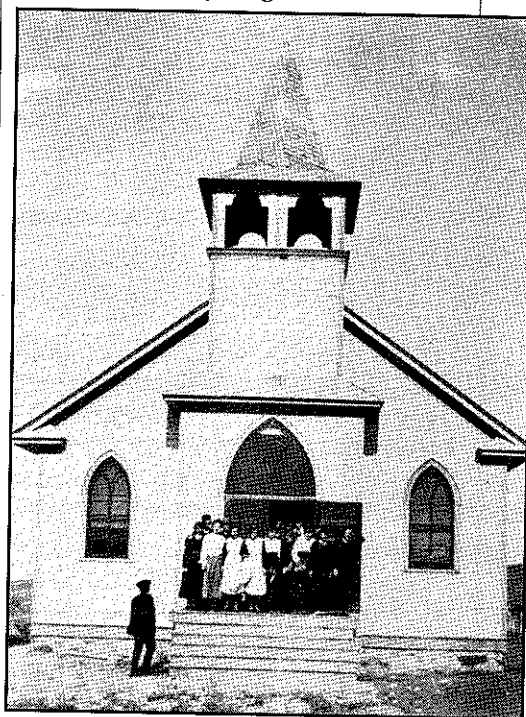


*Teams
harnessed
for work—
four horses
and six
mules.*

gospel of easy wealth to anyone who would listen. Addressing various farmer organizations, he portrayed Montana as the biblical "land flowing with milk and honey." Steadfast garden farmers who deftly resisted the temptations of mill-town harlots whom they confronted while peddling their produce could not resist the temptations of Columbus, Montana. Spoolstra's slick style, which included a lantern-slide presentation of the West, appealed mightily to the Dutch. His slides of the west, but not specifically of the Columbus area, glorified non-existent opportunities. With a Bible under his arm and a Frisian prayer on his lips, he was naively trusted by his fellow countrymen. Still, one farmer who eventually went West said, "He is one of us," and another, after returning from Montana considerably poorer, said, "He meant well."

When nine families, most from the Huntley, Montana, area, arrived in October 1915, the Holland Settlement was born. They were hoping to take advantage of the rich growing conditions which had been reported the previous summer. Meanwhile, with large numbers of Dutch homesteaders and others moving into Stillwater County, the Northern Pacific Railroad built a spur line to a point seven miles north of the settlement. There the small town of Rapelje developed

and soon became the primary trade center for the northern half of the settlement. With banks, general stores, creameries, a blacksmith, lumberyard, post office, doctor, and grain elevator, Rapelje had most of the facilities that farmers need. The euphoria of beginning anew and the adventure of moving west were soon replaced by a distressful reality, and leaving Montana became the secret goal of every family. Even though immigrant numbers rose to over forty families by 1917, the exodus had already begun. One of the



Columbus, Montana, CRC, 1920.

original families left after the initial crop failure of 1916. Seven more families arrived in 1918 and 1919, but after several consecutive crop failures no new settlers came. New persons were added to the settlement only through marriage.

Homesteading was not easy by any standard, and it was particularly distasteful to the women. For those who had come from the Midwest, living conditions in Montana were comparatively worse. Considerable responsibilities fell to the wives and children in their efforts to survive. Describing her own mother's tasks, Cecil Triemstra recounted, "Those days must have been extremely difficult for our mother—carrying wood and water and babies—washing by hand, and ironing for her family—churning butter, baking bread—cooking and canning—sewing and mending often by the dim light of a kerosene lamp. As for her family, she was alone, having left them all behind in Indiana. No telephone, no conveniences, and probably worst of all—no money."

Women and children also helped manage the farmyards. Their regular chores included milking cows, separating cream, raising chickens, and tending a vegetable garden. They often spent the cool summer morning hours with horses and stone boats, clearing fields of their endless supply of flat rocks. In the poorest seasons cream and eggs provided the only cash income. Children were so essential to survival that one mother who already had a large family, when she gave birth to twins, gave her sister who had no children one of the infants. Young girls often left the settlement to labor as maids and cooks at

nearby ranches or in homes of wealthy townspeople in Columbus, Billings, or Bozeman to supplement their families' meager income. Typically they earned fifty cents a day.

Generally homes were little more than tar-paper shacks. Although intended as temporary housing until "the first good year," they usually remained in service until the people abandoned their homesteads. Their only improvement was an annual layer of tar paper to keep out the incessant cold winds of winter. Conveniences were few. The floor plan usually consisted of a large kitchen, a pantry, and several bedrooms. A few homes had a front room for Sunday or guest use only. A cellar, accessible by a trapdoor in the kitchen floor, protected canned food and root crops for winter use. When additional children were born, and there were many, a room might be added to the rear of the house. Sometimes as one family abandoned a farmhouse, a lingering homesteader took possession because it was larger than his own. Old newspapers were used to insulate the otherwise bare walls.

A convenient water supply was a luxury. Occasionally an old "watermark"* indicated the presence of water, which was often little more than the seepage of spring water from a nearby coulee. But even these were rare, and hand-dug wells often became dry pits. Some settlers transported water as far as a mile to their homes.

Though the men regularly went to town for business and supplies, the women were often isolated in the Holland Settlement. When Cecil Triemstra, who grew up there, traveled as a young child with her mother and siblings to grandparents in Indiana, she was impressed. Until then she had had no idea how iso-

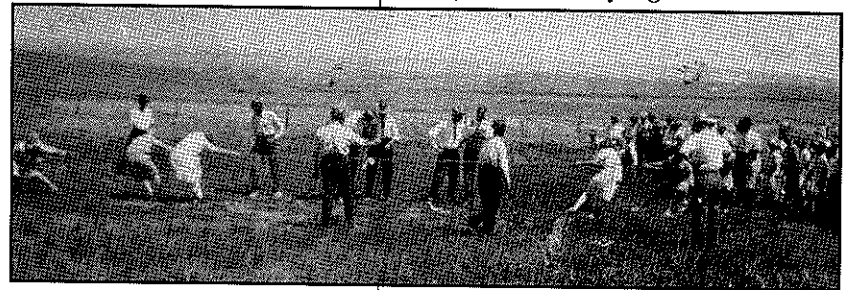
*A visible pile of rocks made by early explorers and ranchers.

lated her life in the settlement had been. She wrote, "To this day, when walking on thick fallen leaves, my mind goes back to Grampa Kaluf's farmyard, the smell of sweet hay in the big barn—the electric lights and the loud train whistles are vivid, pleasant memories of that visit."

Poverty became a way of life filled with inconvenience. When J. Kortenhoeven received notice that his mother in Indiana had died, he decided to return for the funeral by train. But lacking the cash for a coach ticket, he hired out as a cattle car attendant on a train hauling livestock to the Chicago stockyards.

For young children who didn't

in Montana, produced unexpected hazards. In drier years a new noxious weed appeared, the Russian thistle, or tumbleweed, which aggressively took over large portions of wheat land. Hordes of grasshoppers periodically descended upon the grain crops and devoured them. Only the farmyard chickens and turkeys prospered when the grasshoppers came. Army worms also attacked, eating everything green in their way. Gophers systematically cut stalks of ripening grain for their own use. (Children tried to poison these small beasts with little success.) Coyotes occasionally raided the farmyard, destroying chickens and



Fourth of July picnic on the church grounds.

(above) Tug of war.

(right) Concession stand under canvas.

realize how poverty bound they were, life in Montana was exciting. Hunting, horseback riding, hiking, climbing Battle Butte, and celebrating church holidays all made life worth living. Even school was an exciting change from farm work. And a summer hailstorm might mean homemade ice cream for children.

Fuel was always in short supply. Cow chips and aspen trees, which grew in a few protected valleys, were common energy sources. A low-grade brown coal called lignite, found in some nearby hills, was also used. Some settlers were forced to buy and transport good coal from the dealers in town.

Nature, never an easy taskmaster



turkeys, the main source of ready cash. Calves born in early spring sometimes died of exposure when trapped in the extensive gullies.

Nature, however, did share its wild bounty with the settlers. Jack rabbits, prairie chickens, and sage hens shot by family hunters provided meat for their dinner tables. On holidays the festive meal occasionally featured wild game as the main entree.

With only rudimentary farm implements available to them, the farmers faced Herculean tasks producing wheat and oats—the principal crops. Each part of the farming operation seemed to come with its own serious obstacle. Locally purchased horses were the primary source of power. Most were half-wild mustangs that had to be “broken” to accept a collar or saddle. Because most farmers feared this dangerous ritual, J. Smit was regularly called upon to train horses for field work. Occasionally work was done on foot. When P. Zwier purchased two milk cows near Columbus, he had no choice but to walk them home—some twenty miles. Breaking the virgin prairie sod was relentless and tiring work for the plows, the horses, and the men. Each year, when not sowing or harvesting, farmers cleared more land for production in this way. Harvesting the grain, which required many hands, was possible only through the cooperative effort of the settlement’s men. The crops had to be cut, bundled, transported, separated, and finally delivered to the Rapelje or Columbus elevator as quickly as possible. Teake Hiemstra supervised the community harvesting crews. Each year as winter approached, some families were left with little cash to show for their efforts. Some men, in an effort to stay, went to Billings to seek employment digging city sewer lines by hand.

Relief from these draconian tasks was of only the most basic kind. Sunday worship was clearly a respite from daily drudgery. Mail, delivered twice a week to drop points, was retrieved by children, who often had to travel several miles to do so. Letters and Sears Roebuck catalogs were read and re-read. A few homesteads had hand-cranked phonographs with a few well-worn records. Books and

magazines were the only other diversion. Reading material was restricted to the Bible, a few religious books, and periodicals like *De Wachter*, *Grondwet*, *Needlecraft*, *Onze Toekomst*, and *Woman’s World*. There was also a thin weekly newspaper, the *Rapelje Advocate*.

The settlement exhibited a curious

THE UNDERSIGNED WILL OFFER AT PUBLIC AUCTION TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER, AT THE OLD TAKEE HIEMSTRA PLACE, 14 MILES NORTH OF CO. COLUMBUS AND 12 MILES SOUTH OF RAPELJE, ON OLD EVERETT CREEK ROAD, THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED BELOW, ON—

Thursday Jan. 7

Wed. Starting promptly at 11 o'clock A. M. *Jan. 13* 1937

11 HEAD OF MILCH COWS

<p>3 3-year-old red white face cows, combed, fresh in February.</p> <p>2 Cursey cows, 4 and 5 years old, fresh in January.</p> <p>1 brown and white Flemish cow, 6 years old, fresh in February.</p>	<p>1 black cow, 8 years old, fresh in January.</p> <p>1 red cow, 4 years old, fresh in February.</p> <p>2 dark brown cows, 4 years old, fresh Feb.</p> <p>1 red cow, 7 years old, giving milk.</p> <p>1 red calf, two months old.</p>
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4 HEAD HORSES, ROSS, CHICKENS

<p>1 black mare, 9 years, with foal, 1200 lbs.</p> <p>1 bay mare, 7 years, with foal, 1200 lbs.</p> <p>1 bay gelding, 9 years old, 1200 lbs.</p> <p>1 grey gelding, 10 years old, 1250 lbs.</p> <p>1 roan coltsfoot.</p> <p>1 roan colt, 200, with 2 pigs wt. 100 lbs. each. Some halved all this day.</p>	<p>1 silver hen, 3 chickens.</p> <p>1 silver hen, 3 chickens.</p> <p>1 silver hen, 3 chickens.</p> <p>1 silver hen, 3 chickens.</p> <p>1 silver hen, 3 chickens.</p>
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FARM MACHINERY

<p>1 Deering header, 25-foot.</p> <p>1 Case gang plow, 14-foot.</p> <p>1 LaCrosse gang plow, 15-foot.</p> <p>1 McCormick mower, 4 1/2-foot.</p> <p>1 McCormick mower, 5-foot.</p> <p>1 header harrow.</p> <p>3 McCormick wagons, 1 1/2-inch wagon.</p> <p>3 sets of double harness.</p> <p>1 McCormick rake, 10-foot.</p> <p>1 Farming mill.</p> <p>40 rods of seven wire.</p> <p>Some harness: 1 pile of stenciled.</p> <p>Other articles too numerous to mention.</p>	<p>HOUSEHOLD GOODS</p> <p>1 oak doveport, leather upholstery.</p> <p>2 oak dining chairs, leather seats.</p> <p>1 oak dining table.</p> <p>1 battery radio.</p> <p>2 cooking chairs, 3 drawers.</p> <p>1 Universal kitchen range.</p> <p>1 Silverstone phonograph.</p> <p>1 set several beds with springs.</p> <p>About 100 quart cans goods.</p> <p>1 DeLaval cream separator, No. 12.</p> <p>1 high chair, 1 center table.</p> <p>1 New Perfection oil stove, with oven.</p> <p>1 Writing machine.</p> <p>Colman gas lamps and oil hanging lamp.</p> <p>Several Halloway tags.</p> <p>2 small Michan tables.</p> <p>1 Hot Blast heater.</p> <p>1/2 12 chicken coop, sprats shed attached.</p> <p>Cream cans, tubs and numerous miscellaneous articles.</p>
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FREE LUNCH AT NOON—BRING YOUR OWN CUP.

TERMS OF SALE: All sums of \$25.00 and under Cash; on sums over \$25.00 time before and starts if credit is desired.

SAM A. STAAL, Owner

JESS FARRELL, Auctioneer R. L. DUBA, Clerk

Auction notice.

mixture of language. Most spoke Dutch, but many preferred their native tongue, Frisian. Church services were conducted in Dutch. English, which had been tried briefly in the early 1920s, was discarded as unsatisfactory for worship. But for the sake of the young people, English was used for catechism and prayers. Meanwhile, the local public school, though attended primarily by the Dutch settlers’ children, used English as the language of instruction.

It was the church that gave the Dutch colonists a sense of community. Only weeks after the first settlers arrived in October of 1915, they organized the church, which survived until 1940. They met first in C. Cook’s abandoned ranch house. Easy

credit from local banks and an optimistic view of the future induced the colonists to erect a church the next year. It was built on land donated by H. Boxum at the very center of the township. The building committee selected a basic plan often used throughout the denomination. William Jongsma constructed the wood frame building large enough to accommodate two hundred people. The congregation was already gathering there early in 1917. As the only painted building in the township, the white church with a bell tower over the rear entry was truly impressive. To complete the layout, a horse barn, fence, cemetery plot, and hitching post were added. When more families arrived in 1918, a consistory room was added behind the church. After an unsuccessful organ-fund drive, the congregation accepted J. Vander By’s offer to loan the church his parlor organ. Eventually the church did find a used one. Thomas Van Dyk, a perennial elder, often served as organist.

Services, usually readings, were led by elder Gerben Poortenga. But in the summer of 1917, with hopes still high, the church enjoyed the luxury of its only seminary student, Dirk Flietstra. During the bitter winter months services were held only once a Sunday, and, because the perils of winter travel were so great, pastors rarely visited in those months. Elders were therefore called upon to perform necessary services, including funerals for their own children. Administration of the sacraments was reserved for visiting pastors, who included D. Vander Ploeg, N. Gelderloos, F. Drost, William Meyer, P. Jonker, M. Borduin, J. Homan, A. Bratt, J. Swierenga, and R. Star.

In addition to regular activities (catechism, Young People’s Society, church band, and worship services)

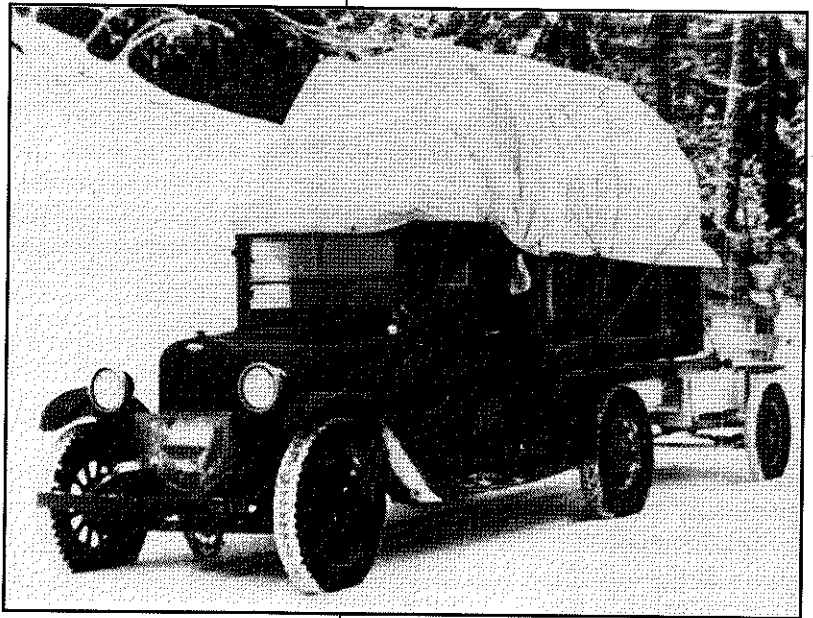
the Columbus church sponsored two annual celebrations—for Independence Day and Christmas. Because no one could afford to celebrate occasions such as anniversaries and birthdays, the holidays took on special significance for everyone. Cecil Triemstra vividly recalled the Fourth of July celebrations of her youth:

It was an all-day picnic on the churchyard with a canteen put up against the north end of the church. Such goodies as Cracker Jack, gum, candy, and ice cream, as well as fresh lemonade, were sold there. The band played some rousing numbers, and a patriotic speech was read. We ate lunch sitting out on the grass, which was usually quite dry . . . already. Lawns were unheard of. Various contests and races took up the afternoon. One year Mama won six silver spoons for having the fattest baby. With not a tree around for shade, everybody wore hats, and the mothers sat under umbrellas. We went home tired and sunburned, comparing our Cracker Jack toys. Not an exciting day ahead until the first day of school.

The Independence Day orator of 1918 appropriately reminded the struggling farmers of their utter dependence on God for their survival even though they were celebrating independence as a nation.

Christmas was also a day-long celebration. The program included band music, recitations by the children, group singing, and a lunch. After the program each child was given a bag of candy and an orange. Older children received a book. The orange would be savored for days before it was finally eaten. Cigars were also purchased by the church for the men.

Although constantly short of funds, the consistory, buoyed by the growing numbers of immigrants, proposed that the cost of a missionary (student pastor) and a small par-



sonage be added to the 1920 budget. But membership had already peaked in 1918 at about forty families and individuals, and with repeated crop failures in 1920 and 1921, the parishioners and the church encountered serious financial trouble. Each fall more families decided they had had enough of Montana's "milk and honey." When the Columbus bank wanted some payment on the church's loan, the plans for the missionary and parsonage and the completion of the bell tower were delayed and finally abandoned. When membership slipped to thirty-two families in 1921, even meeting the interest costs became a losing struggle. Loans from the denominational Church Help Fund and from Classis Pacific provided operating cash for the consistory. The remaining members pledged to pay forty dollars a year toward debt retirement, a grand obligation that no one was able to meet. When asked their opinion about organizing a church in Billings in 1921, the Columbus consistory responded with a rather circumspect statement: "The decision of the consistory was that the time is not right to organize a congregation.

Hiemstra family—loaded and moving out from Rapelje to Sumas, Washington, in 1937. The family traveled three in the truck cab and seven in a Dodge sedan, which pulled a four-wheeled trailer.

Reasons (a) that some are there temporarily, (b) whereas it has happened in the West that such congregations disband after much expense has been made, (c) that most of the farmers are renting, they might stay or they might go."

With membership continuing to dwindle and the heavy burden of debt falling on fewer families, personal relationships within the Dutch community deteriorated. The church records mentioned a variety of contested matters. A debate concerning the purchase of lumber for the parsonage (i.e., whether to buy a Sears Roebuck kit or to patronize the local lumber company) resulted in the temporary excommunication of one member. The house, however, was never built. When the influenza epidemic ravaged the settlement and caused the death of several members, the consistory debated about who should dig the graves. Because the cemetery committee would not do it, the consistory instructed neighbors

of the deceased to do the task. An unsettled bill between neighbors or an offhand comment made about the consistory often resulted in a threat or application of discipline. People wondered if settlers who had not joined the church could be buried in the Dutch cemetery. A far corner of the plot was reserved for them to assure no confusion at the resurrection. When some church members, trying to avoid another hailstorm, harvested their wheat on Sunday, the consistory reprimanded them severely in writing. The officers struggled with a range of issues: Should the young people be allowed to meet in the church in winter? (Yes, but only if they supplied their own wood and coal for the stove.) How should the consistory respond to the Bultema controversy, which was raveling the entire denomination? (One member, a proponent of Bultema's dispensationalism was told to change his ideas or leave. He left.) What should be done about members who absented themselves from a Communion service? (They were informed to be present at the next service and be seated in the front row.)

The consistory minutes were filled with references to the cash shortage. Each family was told to pay two dollars a year for the consistory room addition, but pledges went unpaid. Other churches were asked for a "merciful gift." Without cash, the consistory could have no seminary students to preach in the summer.

Perhaps the most revealing comment appears in the September 15, 1922, consistory minutes: "Decided to write to Classis that Classis advise against the ad of the land agent in our church papers. The grounds for this is that the truth is not revealed to

our estimation, for in the past it has been learned it can be disappointing."

As a matter of fact, economic depression had plagued the settlement from its beginnings. But the added



Johan Kortenhoeven grave marker. Born September 9, 1914. Died August 8, 1918.

problems of the 1930s hastened the painful end. The church virtually ceased to function by 1936. Debts were consolidated or dismissed as the best way to settle its affairs. Church books were no longer audited. The Christmas program ceased. With so few men available, elders and deacons were elected without council nominations. As a result, church leaders G. Poortenga and T. Van Dyk served as elders year after year until they moved away. Then the church building was sold and dismantled to pay old bills. The benches, pulpit, and carpets were sold to the CRC in Sumas, Washington. (Several Columbus families had moved there.) The consistory room addition served as the church until the last members left in 1939.

Burdened by feelings of guilt and failure, the farmers simply had to leave. An auction was the last blow to their dreams. Few had ever owned

the land they farmed. With few possessions to sell and prices low, the auctions raised barely enough cash to make leaving possible for many of the families. Like Sam Staal, some settlers had to postpone their auctions because of the bitter cold of the winter of 1937. Eventually many of the Columbus settlers returned to the Midwest; others migrated to Washington and California; a few moved to the Gallatin Valley in Montana.

Little evidence remains of the Holland Settlement. Most of its roads are now abandoned. Barbed wire fences enclose vast sections of land once divided into separate farms. Mountain View School serves as a grain shed. Rows of flat rocks outline the foundations of long-gone buildings. Obscured by time and weeds, the church cemetery provides forage for grazing cattle. Only the Peter Lindemulder family continues to ranch in what once was the Holland Settlement.

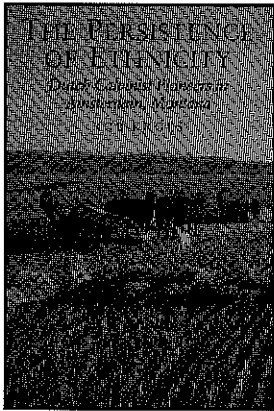
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BOOKS

Reviewed by Conrad J. Bult

The Persistence of Ethnicity: Dutch Calvinist Pioneers in Amsterdam, Montana. Rob Kroes. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992. 161 pages.



This scholarly narrative about Amsterdam and Churchill, Montana, follows the author's central and paradoxical theme that despite this Dutch community's rancorous religious strife in the 1930s, the community remained ethnically cohesive. He attributes this unexpected outcome to the esoteric character of the religious disputes. Participation demanded a shared vocabulary and theological tradition which could only be grasped within the Dutch enclave. Outsiders were unable to take sides, and that left the insiders to grapple only with each other.

Put otherwise, this theological war of ideas among those in the community contributed to the ethnic, social, and religious unity of the community as a whole and rendered it somewhat immune to outside influences. Pres-

ently about two thousand people live in the Amsterdam-Churchill area and attend four Christian Reformed Churches with a total membership of about seventeen hundred. Farming is the way of life in this area a few miles west of Bozeman, and crops grow well on level, fertile irrigated land encircled by rolling hills and distant craggy mountains.

Kroes's remarks about these Montana Dutch-Americans are based on answers to questionnaires, letters, diaries, family histories, published journals and county-courthouse records. During the winter of 1988, Kroes lived in the community and had extensive conversations with many of its citizens. After reading questionnaires sent to ninety-eight people of varying ages, social standing, and wealth, the author concludes,

As their answers showed, the whole tone of their self-reflection has changed. From the militant introspection of the 1930s it has changed into a blend of nostalgia, contentedness, and anticipation of change. Yet even today, with its much greater openness toward the world, the older awareness of common cultural descent is still there (p. 11).

Fascinating for Kroes is the religious and cultural baggage of these Montana pioneers and their children. For him what constituted this baggage, what was left behind, and what is still carried along today are provocative topics. The motivation of

those who came to America from the Netherlands during the 1840s and – after is complex, an intricate combination of religious, social, and economic factors often directly related to unhappy experiences in the homeland and fond hopes for a better life in America. In the minds of many who left the Netherlands lurked a sense of rebellion against class distinctions. Commenting on a 1911 train trip in America, H.J. Hoekstra, as quoted by Kroes, wrote,

One can walk all the way from one car to the next. It is all one and the same class. Would it were like this in the Netherlands! But there we have "standen" [class distinctions], don't we? (p. 24).

The history of the successful Gallatin Valley settlement dates from the 1880s when rail transportation became available, and from 1891 when Rev. A. Wormser, a representative of the West Gallatin Irrigation Company, was urging Dutch farmers in America and Holland to make Montana their home. A Christian Reformed church was established on Church Hill (later Churchill) in 1903. By 1913 this congregation numbered ninety families and nourished the inward cohesiveness of the enclave. Though members of the community did not consider preservation of the Dutch language a vital part of their heritage, their fondness for things Dutch and their reluctance to adapt to the American scene were made clear with the choice of the name

Amsterdam for a cluster of homes and businesses surrounding a nearby railroad spur constructed in 1911.

Some years later in this decade, settlers in the Gallatin Valley found themselves manipulated by an event directly challenging their isolated ethnic existence. The event was World War I. Thirty-three young men from the area served in the army, and one, Cornelius Lucas, was killed.

An excerpt from a letter he wrote to Rev. Hoekenga reads,

But here as elsewhere it is the Lord that reigns, and no thing passes without His will. And although the shrapnels and bullets at times are shrieking about our heads, we can rest assured that without His will not a hair on our head will be touched. And that to a Christian is quite a privilege (p. 64).

Through letters sent to relatives in the old country, the reader, with Kroes, becomes intimately acquainted with several members of this rural enclave. When reading these often intensely human documents, we vicariously experience loneliness, cope with sickness and death, share economic success and failure, argue about religion, and exhibit alternating moods of pessimism and optimism. Chapter 5, "A Family History in Letters," is based on letters which Klass Schuiling and his wife, Geertje, wrote to a relative in the Netherlands during the years 1898 through 1916. When Geertje tells about doing with old clothes a bit longer, Klaas adds these words to a letter she wrote about ninety years ago:

Nonsense, she has no room left in a closet that measures nine feet by seven feet and is eight feet high. And he concludes: I'm getting to the end of the sheet. Geertje is getting drowsy, she says, so she is

having a cookie. That's how it is each day, three times pork or beef, or morning and evening G and I have two eggs each. We can AFFORD it (p. 73).

In the next chapter, covering the years 1898 through 1950, Kroes once again selects excerpts from letters sent from America to what he calls the "Home Front," his name for the Netherlands. On the minds of the letter writers are the developing social and economic class distinctions, upward mobility, ostentation, and economic hard times. Written about more vigorously than before are politics, doctrine, and church affairs. After reading these personal missives, we see how these folk wrestled with threats to their way of life from without and within. As Kroes says,

Strategies on both fronts were similar. In both instances, an outward strategy of fending off outside forces was used, but always in conjunction with an inward defense, aimed at "the enemy within the gates," the outside world's fifth column (p. 92).

The seventh chapter, "Feuding over the Faith of the Fathers," is filled with the theological controversies of the 1920s, and 1930s, which are often articulated in the words of the participants, among whom were both men of the cloth and lay persons. Taken seriously by these covenant people who had a rich religious heritage embracing the Synod of Dordt and the teachings of Abraham Kuyper were any notions or behavior threatening their cherished Reformed faith. Revivalism, premillennialism, baptism of adopted children, the common grace controversy, and a lukewarmness for the tenets of Reformed dogma weighed heavily on the minds of many, as did the thoughts of the Protestant Reformed minister

Herman Hoeksema and his cohort Rev. Bernard Kok, who visited the community in 1938 and had a part in the establishment of a Protestant Reformed church there in 1939. (In 1960 this congregation rejoined the Christian Reformed Church.)

According to Kroes, Kok wanted schism, and yet he was an ardent advocate of Christian education, a matter on which many of Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed persuasion thought alike. Though divided by church affiliation, those folks saw no problem in working together for the success of their local Christian school.

The era from the 1950s to the present is briefly sketched in the closing chapter. Here Kroes's observations include the all too familiar changes caused by the relentless influences of American culture on the community. Ethnic, social, and religious bonds remain, but time has eroded their strength.

After reading this illustrated narrative, you will have a fondness for this rural Montana enclave and its inhabitants past and present. Arid theorizing and less than understandable jargon are not found among Kroes's thoughts about his subject. Flesh-and-blood people, the true makers of history, exist in Kroes's book and often tell the story of their community in ways never to be replicated by those not experiencing life's triumphs and failures on the American frontier firsthand. Kroes helps us remember our own individual pasts by personalizing the history of a rural community similar to many others and yet not the same.

Rob Kroes is chairman of the American Studies Department at the University of Amsterdam.

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

The South African Boer War by H. Ippel

"Silk City": Reports from Paterson's immi-
grant mill hands by H. J. Brinks

Christian Education in Northern New Jersey

M. Schoonbeek—Hard Times in Grand
Rapids, 1873 - 1890 by H.J. Brinks

Roelof T. Kuiper: Developer of Church and
Settlement by Hans Krabbendam

Frontier Women: A Different View of
Immigration

Theodore F. Koch: Dutch-American Land
Promoter by Robert Schoone-Jogen

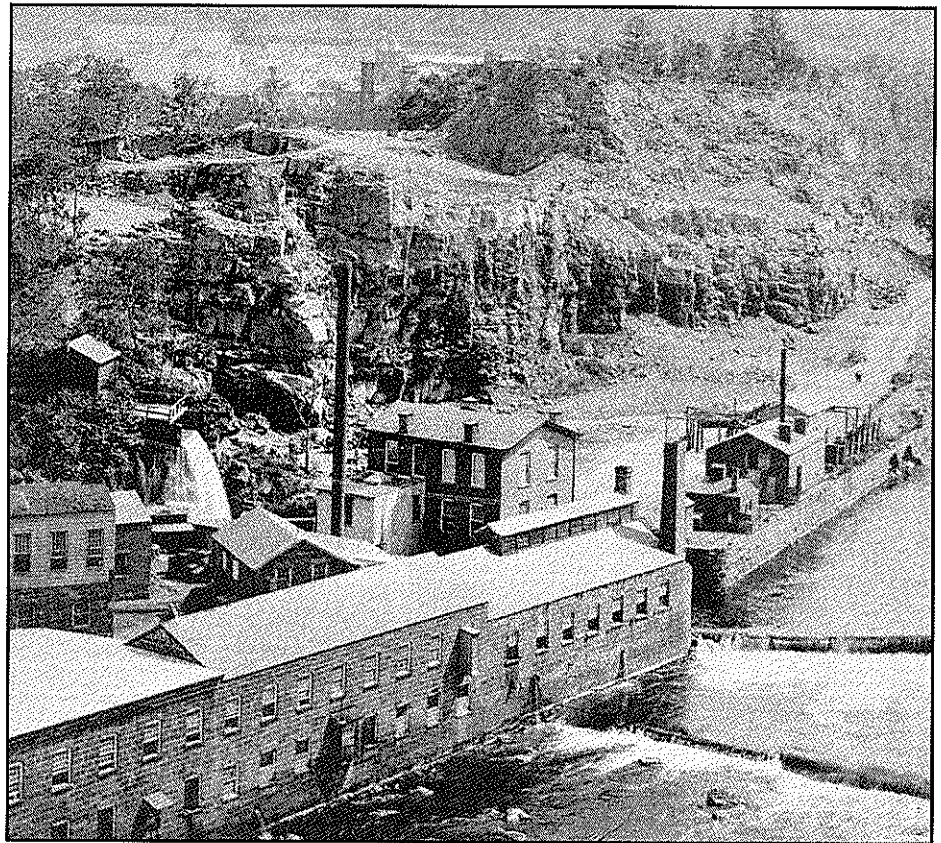
Another Look at Grand Rapids' West-Side
Dutch by H.J. Brinks, *et al.*

Comparison: The Dutch and Their Neighbors
in Grand Rapids by James Bratt

Ministering on the Canadian Prairies: Menzo
Dornbush, 1950-1962 by David Zandstra

Dutch Muck Gardeners: Two Views of
Holland Marsh, Ontario by Rem Kooistra

More About Pella by Muriel Kooi



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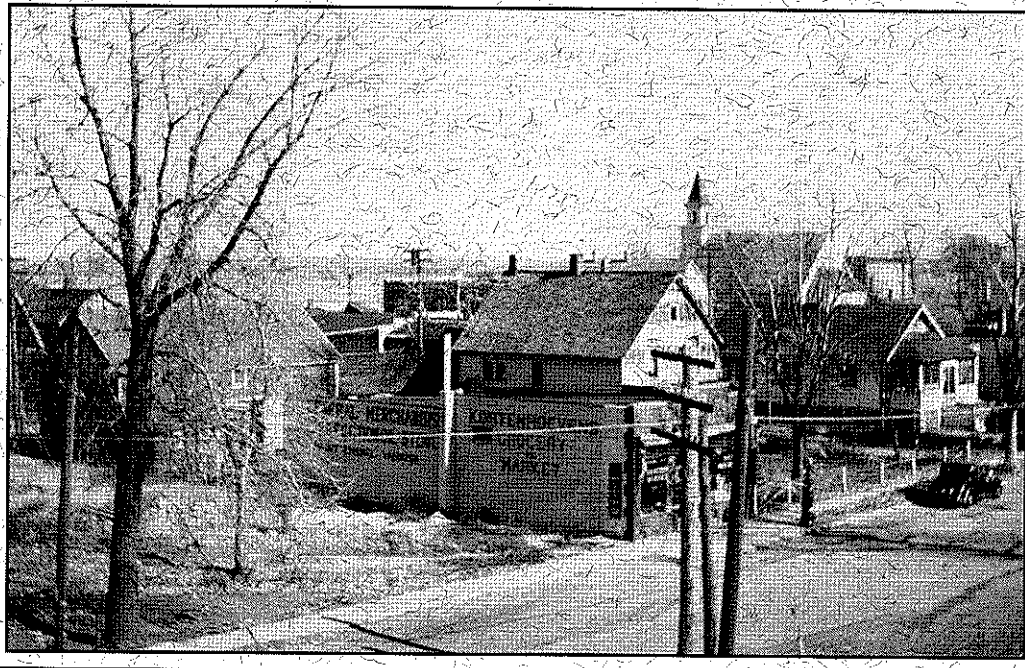
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