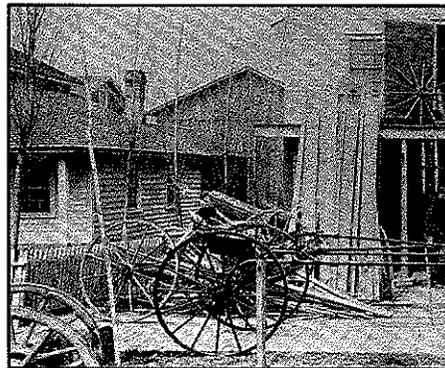


ORIGINS



page 7

- 2 The Brickyard: A Dutch Neighborhood in Grand Rapids
by Henry Ippel
- 9 R.T. Kuiper: Developer of Churches
by Hans Krabbendam



page 13

- 17 Holiday
by Michael Vander Weele
- 26 Memoirs: Rev. Arnold Brink
1913-1990

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page 37

- 34 The CRC in the 1930s
The Era of Henry J. Kuiper
by H.J. Brinks
- 42 Books
by Conrad J. Bult

Cover: Ship builder's Wharf in Wildervank.

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The Brickyard

A Dutch Neighborhood in Grand Rapids

by
Henry Ippel

The *Banner of Truth* published in New York City reported that a "new Holland congregation was organized

The Banner of Truth.

in the Grand Rapids Brickyard on Monday, February 6, 1893." Just what that reference to a brickyard conjured up in the minds of readers in Paterson, New Jersey; Cincinnati, Ohio; or Oostburg, Wisconsin, is difficult to determine. This article will attempt to describe what that news item meant to the residents of Grand Rapids, Michigan, at the end of the nineteenth century.

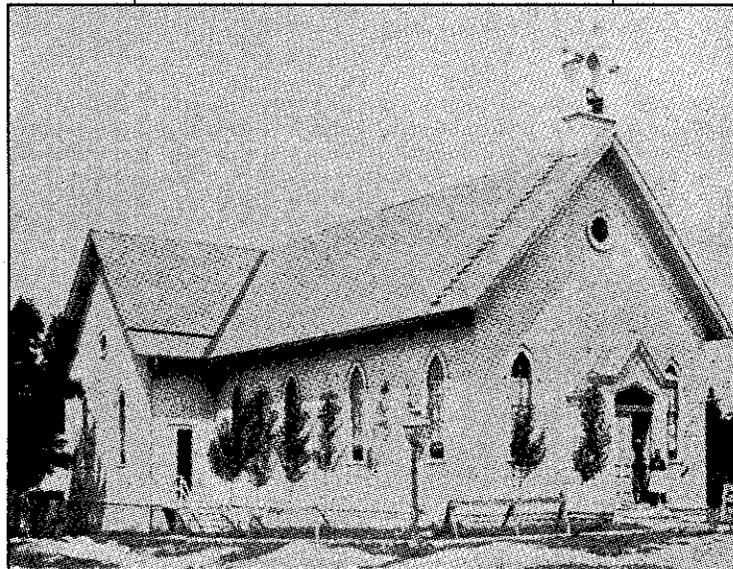
An area in Grand Rapids, Michigan, increasingly populated by residents of Dutch descent in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was called "the Brickyard." It is a rather peculiar, yet descriptive, name for what was then the eastern edge of the city. Already in 1852, the demand for bricks in the growing city encouraged the establishment of a

brick factory utilizing the clay found on the eastern fringe of the city. Shortly after the Civil War, more factories were formed, one by three Dutch entrepreneurs — Martin Klaassen, Anthony De Heus, and Frank Overbeek. By 1890 there were three substantial brick and tile manufacturers listed in the city directory, and five years later these companies were united into the Grand Rapids Consolidated Brick and Tile Company, which survived into the twentieth century.¹ This concentration of kilns, storage sheds, and clay pits

Henry Ippel is professor of history, emeritus, at Calvin College and the former field agent for the Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church. This article is adapted from his presentation at the 1993 AADAS conference.

therefore earned for the eastern portion of Grand Rapids the popular name "Brickyard."

The city of Grand Rapids, like many other American communities, experienced spectacular expansion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1900, Grand Rapids had 55,000 more people than it had had twenty years ear-



Original Dutch Congregation, RCA, 1875.

Commenting on the Reformed churches in Grand Rapids in the History of Grand Rapids and Its Industry, Vol. II, 1906, Rev. Matthew Kolyn reported that the Third Reformed Church, situated at the corner of Diamond and Hermitage, was organized in 1875 by a committee which included the venerable Rev. A.C. van Raalte, who was also present when the original structure of the Holland Brickyard Church, as it was called, was dedicated on the 12th of August, 1875.

lier. In these two decades Dutch immigrants were a significant portion of that growth so that by the turn of the century, as David Vanderstel has written, "There were in excess of 23,000 Dutch individuals in the city or 27 percent of the total population."² The Brickyard became a popular place for the settlement of Dutch families after it was incorporated into the city in 1891 and residential plots were laid out in the areas not used by the brick makers. Its proximity to the city and easy access to downtown shopping and factories made it a convenient and appealing community. A mile-and-a-half walk to and from one's place of employment or the larger retail stores was not considered too taxing, even after a ten-hour day at the counter or assembly line. Moreover, cheap housing was available on small lots on narrow streets and alleys on. Remnants of the Dutch settlement are still evident in the street names which real-estate developers selected — names such as Holland, Zeeland, Van Dine, Stormzand, Doezema, Barendse, Vanden Berg, Kornoelje, and Maris. Indeed, of the nineteen street names which appear to have a Dutch or Netherlandic connection in the Grand Rapids directory of 1900, nine are found in the Brickyard; the other ten are scattered throughout the city.

The close proximity which characterized the Dutch brickyard community is difficult to imagine today except in tenement-house districts or the teeming concentrations in Third World countries. In 1900, for instance, Doezema Alley had thirty homes, twenty-eight of which were occupied by Dutch families. Barendse Court had twenty homes, with sixteen occupied by Dutch families. Dennis Street's twelve homes were all occupied by the Dutch. Vanderstel describes a portion of the

Brickyard as "the most densely populated Dutch section of the city of Grand Rapids."³

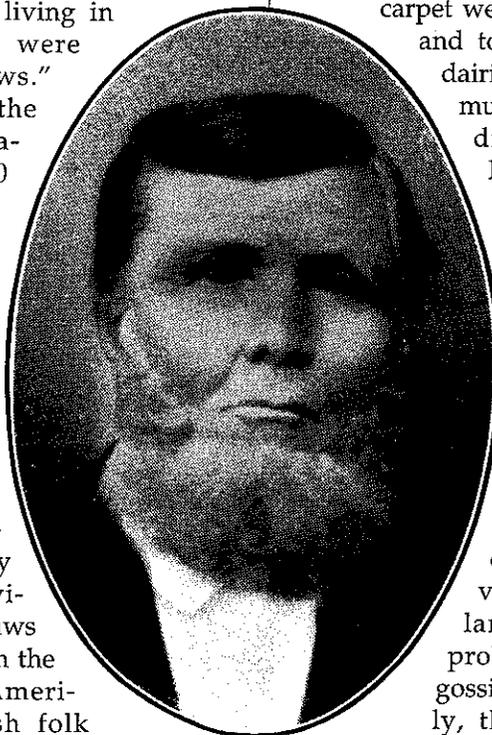
The community was bound together even more firmly by their shared provincial origins. Vanderstel's research concludes that the "neighborhood possessed an overwhelmingly Zeelandsche character." This was also the popular perception. Other Dutch groups in Grand Rapids knew that their fellow citizens living in the Brickyard were largely "Zeeuws." According to the 1900 enumeration, over 60 percent of the resident Dutch households had emigrated after 1880. Doubtless their ties with the Dutch homeland were strong, and their provincial identity was clearly evident in the Zeeuws dialect spoken in the Brickyard. "Americans" or Polish folk venturing on the streets or into the neighborhood stores would immediately be aware that they had entered a Dutch ghetto.

The insular character of the community was enhanced by the numerous businesses operated by Dutch shopkeepers. The residents had no need to travel far for groceries, meat, staples, or services. At the turn of the century the Brickyard had sixteen Dutch-owned grocery stores run by Dutchmen either on Fulton Road or in simple front-room shops on near-by alleys. The Buys general store, for

instance, was a major "emporium" featuring not only food, but hardware, tinware, etc.⁴ Even the daily mail was distributed here, so that the store became a gathering place for residents to exchange news about the old country or their reactions to America. Among other businesses in 1900 the *Grand Rapids Business Directory* listed two barbers, two blacksmiths, several shoemakers and retail shoe stores, three carpenters, two carpet weavers, several cigar and tobacco outlets, five dairies, a dressmaker, a music teacher, several dry-goods stores, house painters, a tinsmith, an undertaker and a saloon — all operated by Netherlanders. With everything available in the comfortable environment of "ons volk," customers felt the security that comes with conversing in a native language to share problems, news, and gossip. Not surprisingly, the directory does not list resident lawyers, bankers, a furniture

store or a jeweler! The occasional use of these services did not require them in the area. Apart from the brick and tile works, the only other products produced locally were wooden shoes and cigars.

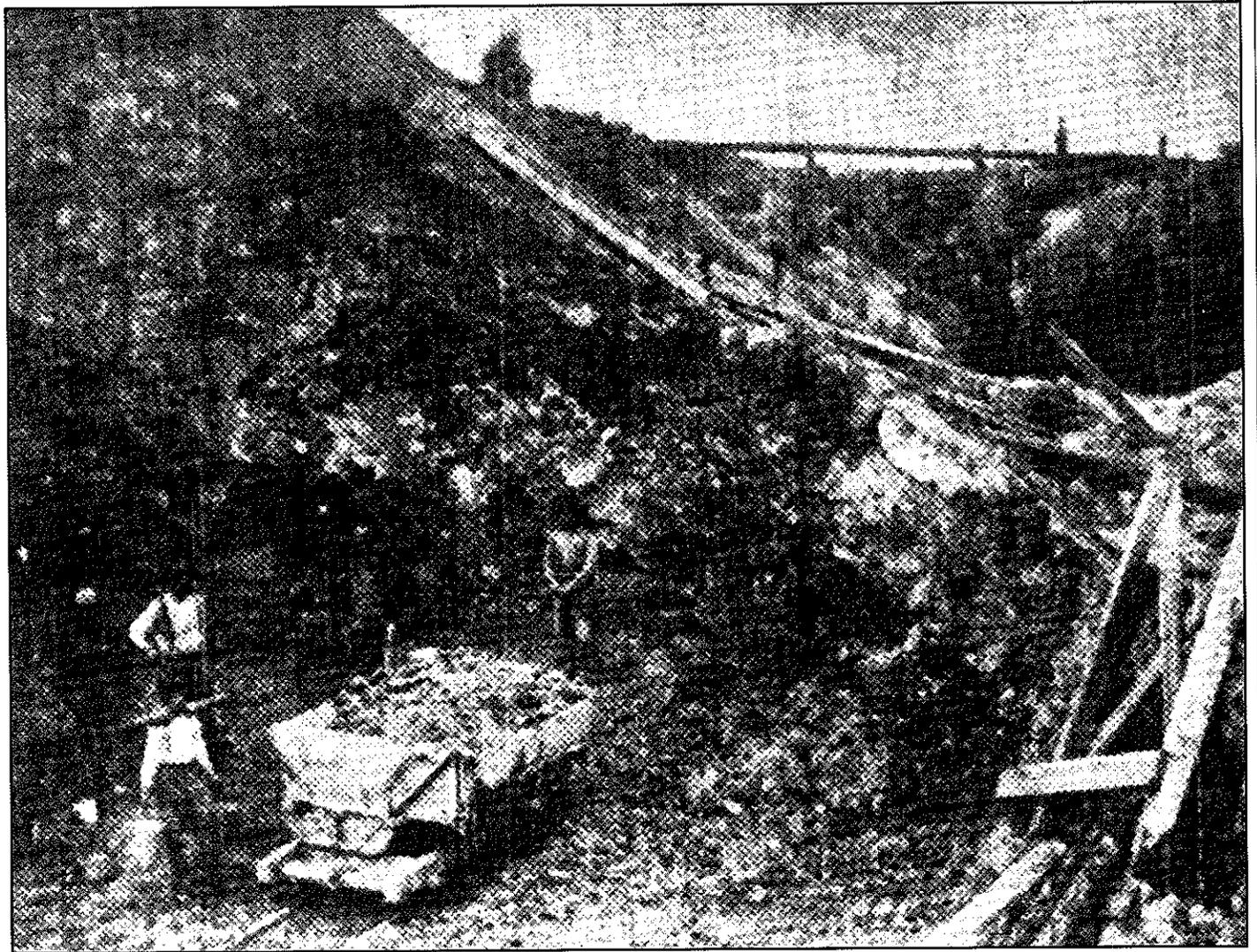
Three churches in this small segment of the city catered to the needs of an exclusively Dutch Reformed populace: a Dutch-speaking Reformed Church of America church, an English-speaking Reformed church, and a Dutch-speaking Christian Reformed church. The

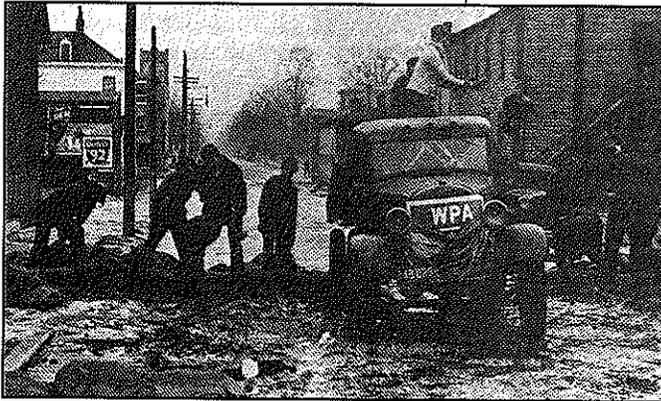


Brickyard owner, M. Klaassen.

Brickyard work crew, Grand Rapids Evening Press, August 17, 1901.

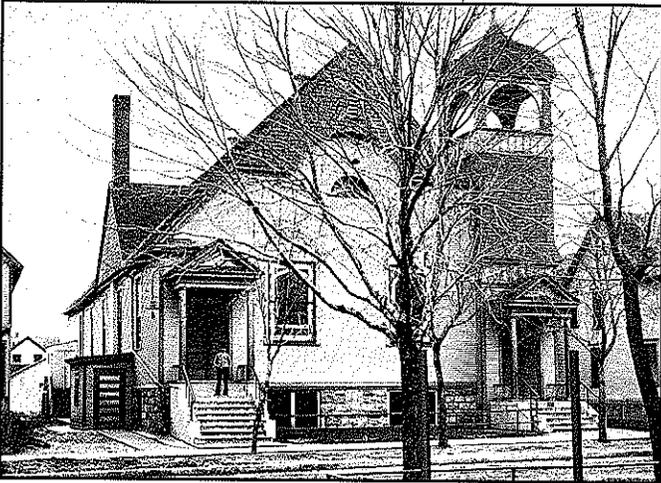
In 1852, S.L. Baldwin and his brother-in-law, David Seymour, began making bricks on the eastern edge of the city of Grand Rapids near the corner of Thornapple Road and Fulton Road. (Thornapple Road was a thoroughfare in the direction of Reeds Lake. It eventually was called Lake Avenue and later Lake Drive. Fulton Street was the main artery leading east out of the city toward Ada.) Shortly after the Civil War, this enterprise was joined by two others. Three Dutch entrepreneurs — Klaassen, De Heus, and Overbeek — established a brick factory a short distance east at the city limits known as East Street. About the same time, David L. Stiven and Charles A. Robinson erected their factory at a site north of the Klaassen works and advertised "bricks of all colors, drain tile, pottery and flower pots." Other brick and tile companies were formed in the succeeding years, but by 1890 there were three substantial brick and tile manufacturers listed in the city directory: S.L. Baldwin, Brown and Clark, and Hobart Sprague, all utilizing the clay found on the eastern fringe of the city. By 1895, these companies were united into the Grand Rapids Consolidated Brick and Tile Company, which continued the brickmaking into the twentieth century.





(left) WPA work crew.

(below) Dennis Avenue
Christian Reformed
Church.



Church) was organized. Therewith the Americanization in the "Brikyaat" was well under-way.⁶

That same year, 1893, the Dutch-language Christian Reformed church on East Street, about a mile south of Fulton Street, received a request for permission to organize a congregation in the Brickyard. The organization of this church took place with about

Third Reformed Church, known originally as the Holland Brickyard Church, was organized in 1875, and its first consistory included Martin Klaassen, the brickmaker, and Adrian Buys, the grocer. The growth of the local population can be seen from the rapid expansion of the church building, which was dedicated in 1875, enlarged the very next year and once again in 1887 so that it then accommodated 800 members.⁵ In 1893 this Dutch-speaking congregation refused to add a monthly English-language service. However, a group of young people did gain permission to organize a "Trial Movement" to determine the feasibility of organizing an English-speaking congregation in the Brickyard. The fruit of that effort appeared in April when the Tenth Reformed Church (later called Bethany Reformed

forty charter members on February 6, 1893. The group met in a vacant store building in the very center of the Brickyard on Fulton Street. An official notice of this event appeared in a church paper published in New York City which reported that a new Holland congregation had been organized at the Brickyard in Grand Rapids. Its first unofficial name was the Brickyard Church. The church and parsonage were located on Dennis Avenue just one long block from the Third Reformed Church. By 1900 this Dutch-speaking Christian Reformed church had approximately 1,000 members.⁷

CRC families in the Brickyard also established a Christian day school, which intensified their social cohesion. Their children had been attending the school of the East Street Christian Reformed Church. And, al-

Grand Rapids Evening News

August 17, 1901, p. 3

Some of the immigrants who were arriving by hundreds in the 1890s located "out by the brickyard" and the name of their little colony was about the first bit of English they picked up.

The "by the brickyard" settlement extending from the East Fulton Street cemetery nearly to North Fuller Street and bounded by Fountain and Fulton Streets probably contains more houses, more inhabitants and more children to the square than any other residence district in Grand Rapids.

The houses on the narrow courts and alleys are so close together that in many cases if a busy housewife should discover that she was out of tea she could borrow from a neighbor without leaving the house. All she would have to do would be to raise the window of her kitchen and stretch a little. The entire district is as densely populated as a beehive and on a summer's day it resembles one, with countless persons bustling in and out and scores of children playing in the roadways.

Why the Holland immigrants built so closely together just there is a mystery when there was so much vacant land available nearby. Perhaps they thought that by keeping in close touch with one another they could ward off that dreadful feeling of homesickness that comes to every exile at frequent intervals. A more characteristic reason is that the thrifty newcomers were in a hurry to own their own homes. They could afford to buy a few feet of land and a few boards while more pretentious real estate was beyond their dream.

Batavia Street.



though it was only a mile to the south, the Brickyard folk wanted their own school, which they located two blocks from the Dennis Avenue Christian Reformed Church.⁸

On a typical Sunday the area's unpaved roads were filled with worshipers winding their way to the church of their choice. Those who selected the Dennis Avenue CRC lived near its doors. As late as 1920, twenty-six homes on a short stretch of Baldwin Street were occupied by eighty-three members of the Dennis Avenue congregation. Fifty members lived on a few blocks of Diamond Avenue, and a small alley, Stormzand Court, contributed forty-three members, all from just eight families.⁹ Because the neighborhood was situated on the eastern edge of the city, a small minority of its mem-

bers lived in the rural area in 1900, but the vast majority resided within easy walking distance of the churches.

This heavy concentration of Dennis Avenue church members assured a routine of frequent encounters

throughout the comings and goings of the work week. Members met on the streets, chatted with each other over the back fence, encountered each other at the grocery store or when walking to and from work in the furniture factories and brickyards. Privacy was nearly impossible. Your neighbors knew who visited your home, when you retired for the evening, who was sick in the family, how your garden grew, whether you controlled your children, how often you quarreled and whether or not you attended worship services. Because the residents of the Brickyard could not speak or understand English, they sought out other Hollanders to share their thoughts. Because their neighbors were predominantly churchgoers much of their conversation was dominated by church concerns: the lives of



Stormzand Street.

other members, the Sunday sermon, the music of the organist, the children's decorum in catechism, the fancy hat or new dress displayed last Sunday.

Neighborhood disputes quickly became ecclesiastical problems needing arbitration by the ruling elders. If the father of the house came home quite late too often or if a son or daughter were too friendly with an "American" or if a husband showed too much interest in someone else's wife, these matters were known or rumored abroad and eventually came to the consistory. Membership in a "godless" labor union brought warnings of disciplinary action. When a church member's chickens trespassed into a neighbor's garden too frequently, the elders sent a committee. They also responded to a complaint of drainage water flooding a neighboring yard. A young lady reported to be frequenting the Ramona Amusement Park at Reeds Lake on a

Sunday afternoon was duly admonished, as were several sons of the congregation who were discovered playing baseball at Houseman Field on Sunday. When a "rumor" was reported to the elders that a member was selling tickets for dance parties or that another was selling milk on Sunday, committees were appointed both to investigate and act. Even a parishioner's outstanding debts at a neighborhood grocery store, when owned by a fellow parishioner, came to the attention of the ordained authorities.¹⁰ Because the church was also concerned about the whole neighborhood, elders attempted to close the local Fulton Street saloon and to ban the sale of peanuts and ice cream by street vendors on the Sabbath.¹¹

The Dutch enclave around the east end of Fulton Street reached its peak in about 1910, when the core of the Brickyard enclave incorporated 146 households. By 1930 the number di-

minished to 117, but during the housing shortage of World War II the area maintained its high concentration. However, in 1950 the households diminished to seventy-seven in this region, and by 1970 only thirty-six Dutch families remained.¹²

The Dennis Avenue CRC membership statistics reveal a similar population shift. For instance, in 1920, twenty-five years after the organization of the church, 900 of the 1,100 members lived in the Brickyard area. By 1930, 700 of the 1,000 members resided in the Brickyard, but by 1953, only 450 of the 885 members lived in the Brickyard. The ethnic Dutch concentration also declined on streets like Mack Avenue (actually a narrow alley), which had twenty-six families in 1920, twelve in 1930, and in 1953, just eight. Baldwin Street, which was very close to the church and Christian school, had eighty-three members in 1920 and fifty-five in 1930. Stormzand Court, another narrow al-

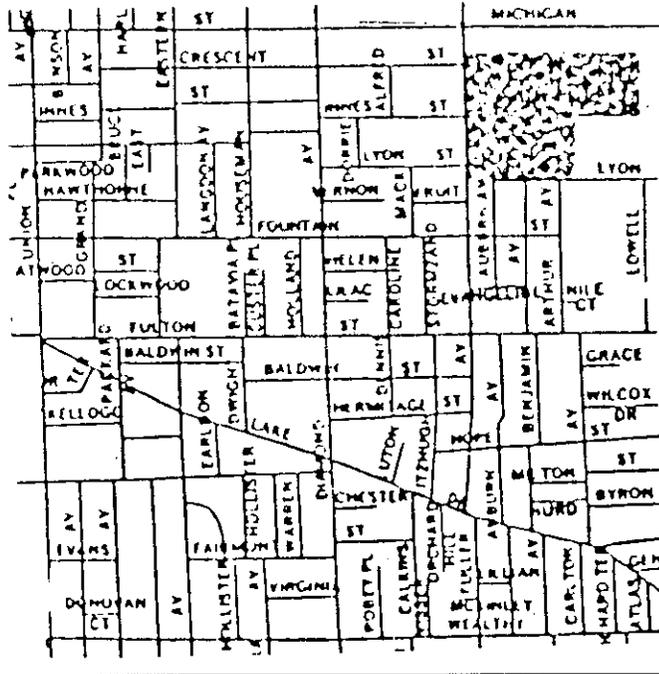
*Shops on Fulton Street,
c. 1910.*

*761 - 763 Fulton (now 1001 -
1005 Fulton Street): Faber's
Dry Goods; Verbrugge
Barbers, Plafkin Shoe Repair.*

*Left to Right: Jacob Verbrugge
(1860-1936) barber shop owner
and barber; came to USA,
Grand Rapids, in 1887 from
Wissenkerke, Zeeland Mrs.
Jacob (Cornelia nee Gillissee)
Verbrugge (1862-1930) Kate
Verbrugge (daughter), piano
teacher (married to Don
Brown). Joost Verbrugge
(nephew) worked at train
depot, handled mail. John de
Smit (employee), cobbler at
shoe repair in barber shop.
Jake Verbrugge (nephew),
fireman at Diamond Street
Station. Jarvis (Servaas)
Verbrugge (son), Linotype
operator at Cargill and
Onderdonk Printing.*



Grand Rapids (NORTHEAST)



ley, had forty-three members in 1920 and only eight in 1930.¹³ Fewer and fewer of the church families were living in close proximity to the church and school. The close-knit community was breaking apart as families relocated eastward into new real-estate developments. They scattered even further away when automobiles became more popular and accessible.

The removal of the Dutch from the Brickyard was reflected less immediately in the area's business district. In 1920 the Dutch continued to monopolize the retail activity much as they had twenty years before. There were a few changes — the addition of an auto-repair garage, several electric-appliance stores, a jewelry shop, and clothing stores. The only non-Dutch businesses were a Purity Tea Grocery and an A & P store. Other changes — a dentist, two physicians, dry-cleaning establishments, and real estate offices — came in the thirties. By

then five grocery chain stores and the locally prominent Loveland Drug Store chain were pushing the Dutch mom and pop stores to the economic wall. By 1950 much of the Brickyard's retail shopping strip had passed into the hands of non-Dutch owners.¹⁴ Obviously it was more difficult for businesses to relocate than for families. Moreover, it was not necessary for them to leave because the area's residents, though decreasingly

Dutch, still need-

ed goods and services. The new generation of Dutch families, largely World War II vets, was motivated by the American dream of a more commodious life in the suburbs. The predominant language among them was no longer Dutch, and the number of family heads working in factories was decreasing. The affluence which came in the post-World War II era financed relocation to ranch-type homes on large lots, with garages for automobiles.

The ethnic churches and schools soon followed their constituents. By 1955 the Baldwin Street Christian School and the Dennis Avenue Christian Reformed Church had relocated a mile away from the Brickyard, and in 1968 the Third Reformed Church also left the enclave. Only the original English-speaking Bethany Reformed Church remained, although it had long ceased to be a parish church. In the spring of 1993 Bethany

also decided to relocate, and consequently the Brickyard will soon lose its last Dutch Reformed institution.

The entire Dutch enclave has dispersed. Its churches and school have relocated, and only seven elderly members of the former Dennis Avenue church still reside there. The Dutch names on the store buildings along Fulton Street have dwindled to two — a bakery and a garage. The Dutch in Grand Rapids are no longer concentrated in the Brickyard or in any of their ten original ethnic neighborhoods. But in 1900 the name "Brickyard" identified a Dutch neighborhood very similar to insular neighborhoods in Paterson, New Jersey; Chicago, Illinois; and other parts of Grand Rapids. The Brickyard then was a tightly-knit Dutch community similar in many ways to a village in the Netherlands.

Endnotes

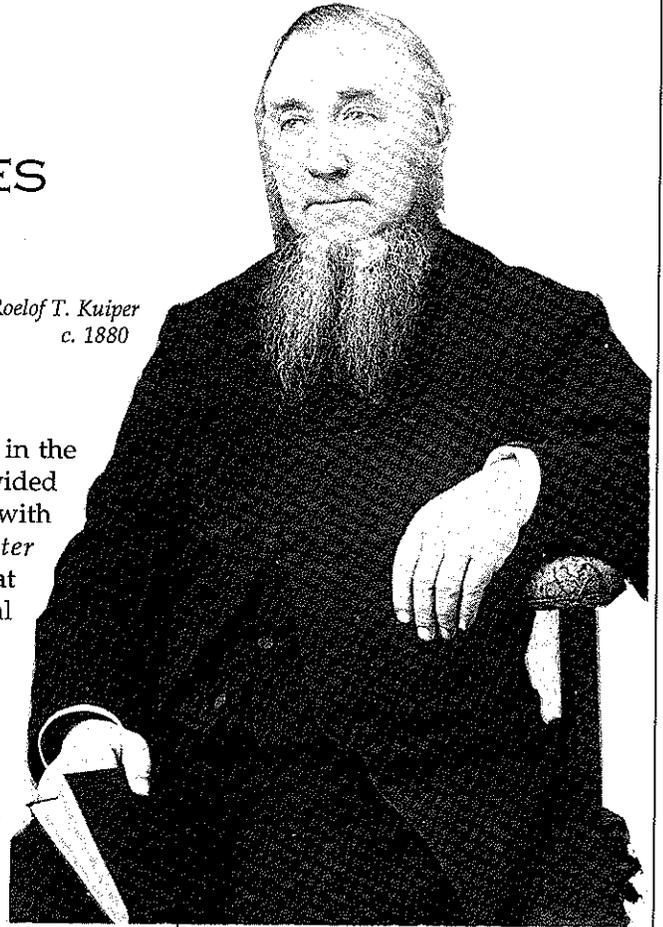
1. *Grand Rapids City Directory*, 1859-1900.
2. David G. Vanderstel, *The Dutch of Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1848-1900: Immigrant Neighborhood and Community Development in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Kent State University, 1983). Pp. 146-47.
3. *Ibid.*, 238.
4. *Grand Rapids City Directory*, 1900.
5. Third Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, *History of Third Reformed Church* (Centennial Year, 1975). Pp. 1, 3.
6. A brief history by Willard Ver Meulen, *The History of Bethany Reformed Church* (1893).
7. The history of the Dennis Avenue Christian Reformed Church is chronicled in *A Century of Work and Worship: Dennis Avenue-Mayfair Christian Reformed Church, 1893-1993* (1993).
8. The Baldwin Christian School history is found in *100 Years - His Abiding Love, Creston-Mayfield Christian School, 1890-1990*. Pp. 5, 6, 7.
9. *Grand Rapids City Directory*, 1920.
10. *A Century of Work and Worship*, pp. 10, 15.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 15, 99.
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13. Dennis Avenue Christian Reformed Church *directory*, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1953.
14. *Grand Rapids City Directory*, 1920, 1930, 1950.

R.T. Kuiper:

DEVELOPER OF CHURCHES

by Hans Krabbendam

Roelof T. Kuiper
c. 1880



The CRC's first two pastors, Koene Vanden Bosch and Hendrik Klijn, helped initiate the denomination in 1857, but only Vanden Bosch devoted his whole career to the movement. He, however, and Wilhelmus Van Leeuwen, who joined the CRC several years later (1863-72), were frequently at odds with their parishioners. Consequently the pastors who immigrated after the Civil War provided the stable leadership required for denominational growth and maturity. One of these, Roelof T. Kuiper, was especially influential throughout the CRC both while serving the Graafschap, Michigan, congregation (1879-89) and South Holland, Illinois (1889-1894), congregation, where he encountered and diplomatically defused controversies which had troubled that congregation from its beginnings. Throughout

the whole of his career in the USA, R.T. Kuiper provided wholesome leadership with writings in *De Wachter* and with wise counsel at classical and synodical gatherings.

Dutch Background

Kuiper was already fifty-three when he emigrated from his Wildervank congregation to Graafschap, Michigan, in 1879. In Diever, his native village, Kuiper's family affiliated with the seceded congregation which was organized there in 1836. Following a personal religious quickening in 1842, Kuiper taught a young people's group in that church, an experience which convinced him to study theology with Rev. W.A. Kok who trained students in the Hooergeveen parsonage, about nine miles southeast of Diever.

After completing his studies, Kuiper served two churches in the Netherlands, the Dalfsen Church, where he met his wife, Stiena Jans Koning, and the Wildervank congre-

gation, where he worked for twenty-five years. Wildervank was a prominent congregation containing ten percent of the Christian Seceded denomination's 6,000 members. Kuiper's annual salary, \$480, was substantial for that era, but with seven children, he certainly needed every penny of it.

In general Kuiper possessed a pleasant disposition. He enjoyed writing poetry and had a good and often self-effacing sense of humor. He was nonetheless deeply concerned about the spiritual and material welfare of his village and the Christian Seceded denomination.

In religious periodicals he dis-

Drs. Hans Krabbendam, a doctoral student of the University of Leiden, works currently at the Roosevelt Study Center in Middelburg, The Netherlands. Krabbendam's research includes an M.A. thesis comparing R.T. Kuiper and Bernardus De Beij. His doctoral study treats the life of Edward Bok, the longtime editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*.

cussed issues such as the process of gaining salvation and the eternal security of orthodox believers. But more mundane matters — the marriage of cousins and the wholesale destruction of livestock to prevent the spread of disease — also engaged his attention. In 1867 he petitioned King William III to restrict the destruction of farm animals because it was both wasteful and the source of great discontent among farmers.

Emigration

People did not emigrate from Wildervank in large numbers. Most of the inhabitants, employed by large-scale farmers or in small industries, such as shipbuilding, were not inclined to move. Kuiper, however, maintained contacts with a few parishioners who had settled in Michigan, and they informed him about the ecclesiastical struggles between

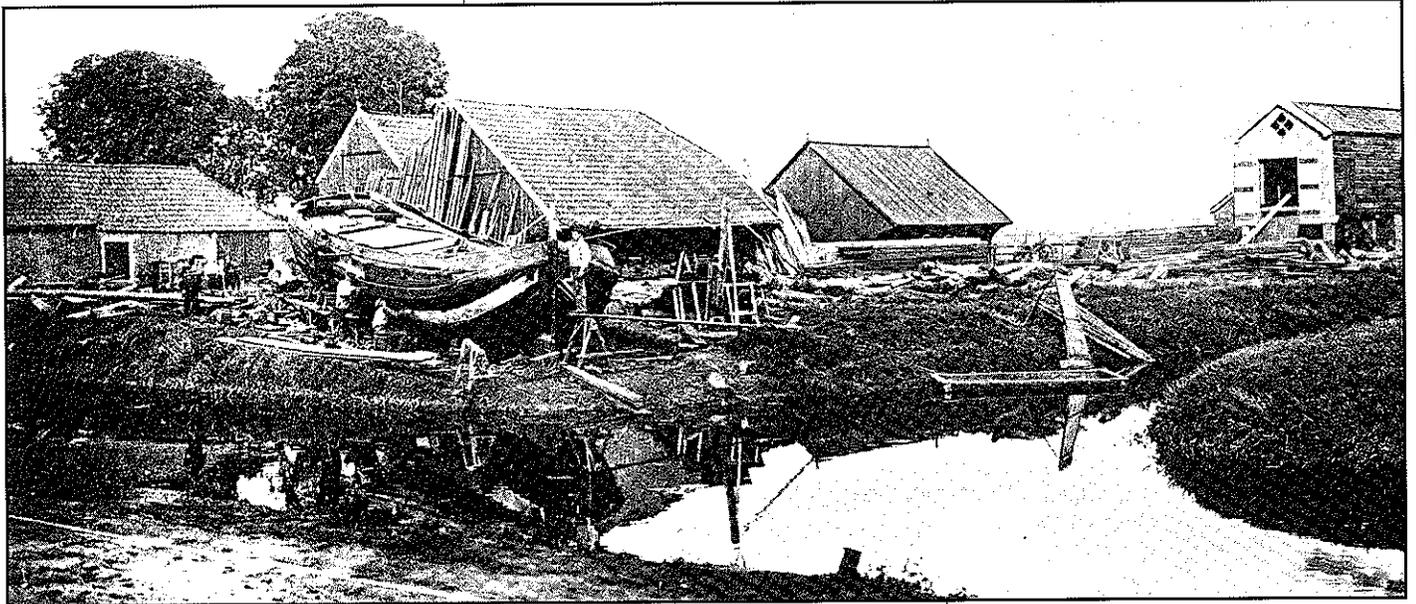
the RCA and CRC. These personal reports only added to his confusion about the problems in the Dutch-American churches. The book *Stemmen uit de Hollandsch-Gereformeerde Kerk in de Vereenigde Staten van Amerika* (Voices from the Dutch-Reformed Church in the United States), 1871, by the notable RCA ministers Bernardus de Beij and Adrian Zwemer, convinced Kuiper initially that the CRC was on the wrong path. That, however, did not prevent Kuiper from considering and accepting an invitation from the Christian Reformed Church of Graafschap in 1879.

Graafschap, initially the largest and most prosperous congregation of the True Dutch Reformed Church (in 1867 the name changed to CRC), had been vacant since



(left) Wildervank Canal and Main Street, c. 1923.

(below) Ship builder's Wharf, c. 1904.



1877. Several pastors declined calls from Graafschap, but in 1877 a student from the recently established seminary of the CRC in Grand Rapids, J. Vander Werp, visited Kuiper in Wildervank. Vander Werp was on leave for health reasons. He discovered that Kuiper had nurtured a long-standing attraction to America. The student, who had lived part of his childhood in Graafschap, returned to his seminary and reported his findings. The call followed in October 1878.

The congregation made an attractive proposal — a salary of \$700; the use of four acres of land, an orchard, the parsonage; free wood for fuel; and travel expenses. Kuiper took this call seriously. Immediately he sent out letters to friends, relatives, and acquaintances asking advice and information. Clearly, he was rather old for such a radical change, and he also enjoyed an appreciative congregation along with Wildervank's pleasant surroundings. His aged father especially dreaded the thought of his departure. Furthermore, a wholehearted welcome in the CRC was not assured. His private letters criticizing the CRC had been published in *De Hope*, and he had only recently altered his assessment of the 1857 secession. He was fully sensitive to his vulnerability to the accusation that he exchanged principles for profit.

Yet he was also impressed by the argument that calls were not merely issued by congregations, but by God himself. Kuiper also realized that America offered far more opportunities for young people than the Netherlands did, and his children ranged in age from nine to twenty-four. His children did not object to the prospect of immigrating, and his wife had died two years earlier, possibly arousing in Kuiper a desire for a change of scenery. In his own youth Kuiper had urged his parents to join



Wildervank church and Christian school.

the 1846 immigration. After he did immigrate, Kuiper reflected, "I harbored the hope that many of the cares and pressures which afflicted the lives of many people in the Netherlands would be lifted and that in many respects life would be freer and easier. In this I find I was not deceived."¹

Decision

Even though Kuiper was increasingly inclined to accept the call, he was cautious to the very end. Members of the Graafschap CRC encouraged Kuiper to come, and their former pastor, W.H. Frieling, informed him about the conditions in the church. Kuiper discovered that he was acceptable to the teacher who trained the new CRC ministers, Professor G.E. Boer. When he finally accepted the call, the Kuiper family's departure was a major event. The pastor delivered farewell addresses in crowded churches en route to Rotterdam, where the family boarded the steamship *Scholten*.²

Kuiper made a well-informed decision after examining a variety of opinions about the CRC. He also sought reliable information on the ecclesiastical situation in Dutch America. Initially he had disapproved of the 1850 union of the Dutch immigrants with the RCA, but he also opposed the CRC's secession in 1857. In the late 1870s his opinion of the CRC changed. As he read that denomination's periodical, *De Wachter*, he found himself increasingly in agreement with the CRC. Although he was not hostile to the RCA, he judged that the union of the immigrant churches of the West with the established churches of the East was unwise. That union he believed would cause immigrants to conform to the synodical decisions of the RCA, and they in turn would choose directions the immigrants could not appreciate. The separation of 1857 was, in his view, not a necessity but a wise solution. Kuiper's reflections on this issue were confirmed by the Freemasonry conflict of the 1880s. Meanwhile,

Graafschap, because of its prominence in the CRC, provided an influential and comfortable place for him.

Liaison Between Two Worlds

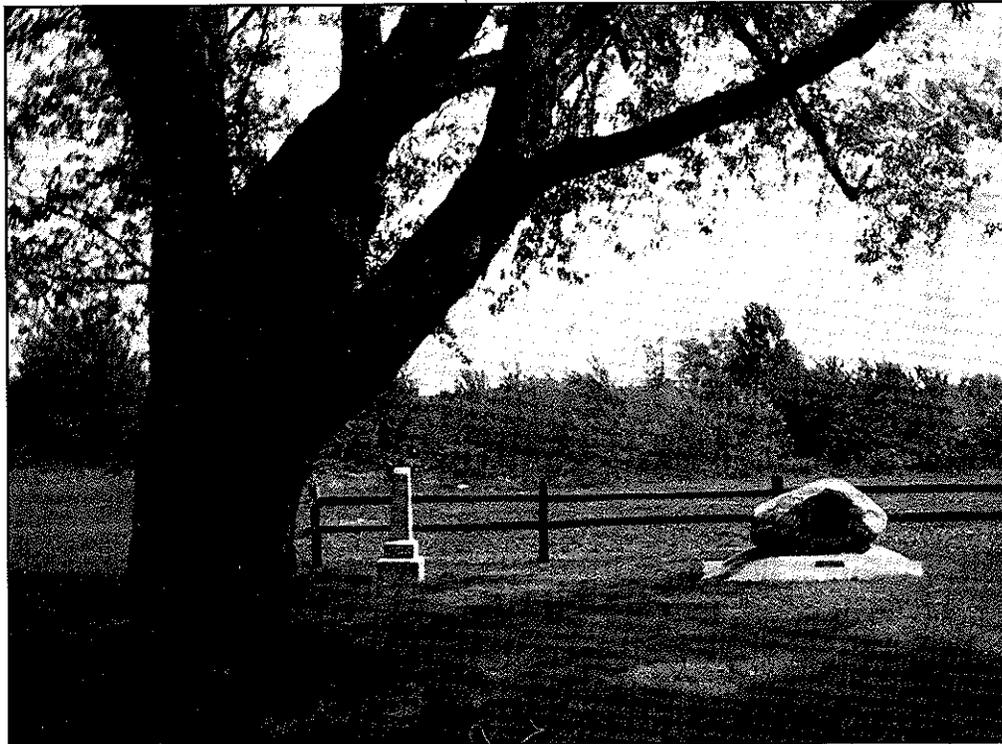
Roelof T. Kuiper was a valuable asset to the church. A year after arriving he was elected president of the synod, and in 1882 he was entrusted the task of convincing the synod of the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk (CGK) to recognize the CRC as its sister denomination. On this mission Kuiper was accompanied by the Rev. Leendert Rietdijk, and they made a strong team. Rietdijk, one of the first ministers trained within the CRC, brought the credentials of an American-trained pastor, while Kuiper was highly regarded by his former colleagues and parishioners. Just before their departure Kuiper sent a pamphlet to the Netherlands containing his memorial address at the twenty-

fifth anniversary of the Graafschap CRC. This booklet, delivered to all the CGK synodical delegates, refuted the rumors that the CRC was born out of personal quarrels.³ During their stay in the old country Kuiper and Rietdijk demonstrated their reliability by preaching frequently in Dutch churches.

The CRC representatives enjoyed an advantage because the RCA delegate to the Dutch synod, P.D. Van Cleef, returned to the United States before the synod started. He left only a letter behind, which defended the RCA's toleration of Freemasonry. Freemasonry was a critical issue because it was a controversial symptom of Americanization. The RCA synod tolerated Masons because many influential members in the East were lodge members, and the discipline of such people was left to the judgment of local churches. Consequently, lodge members could select congregations which accepted them. For some members in the Western states

this was unacceptable because they considered membership in secret societies with pseudo-religious rituals as a threat to the purity of the church. Subsequently, several churches and many individuals left the RCA to join the CRC in the 1880s.

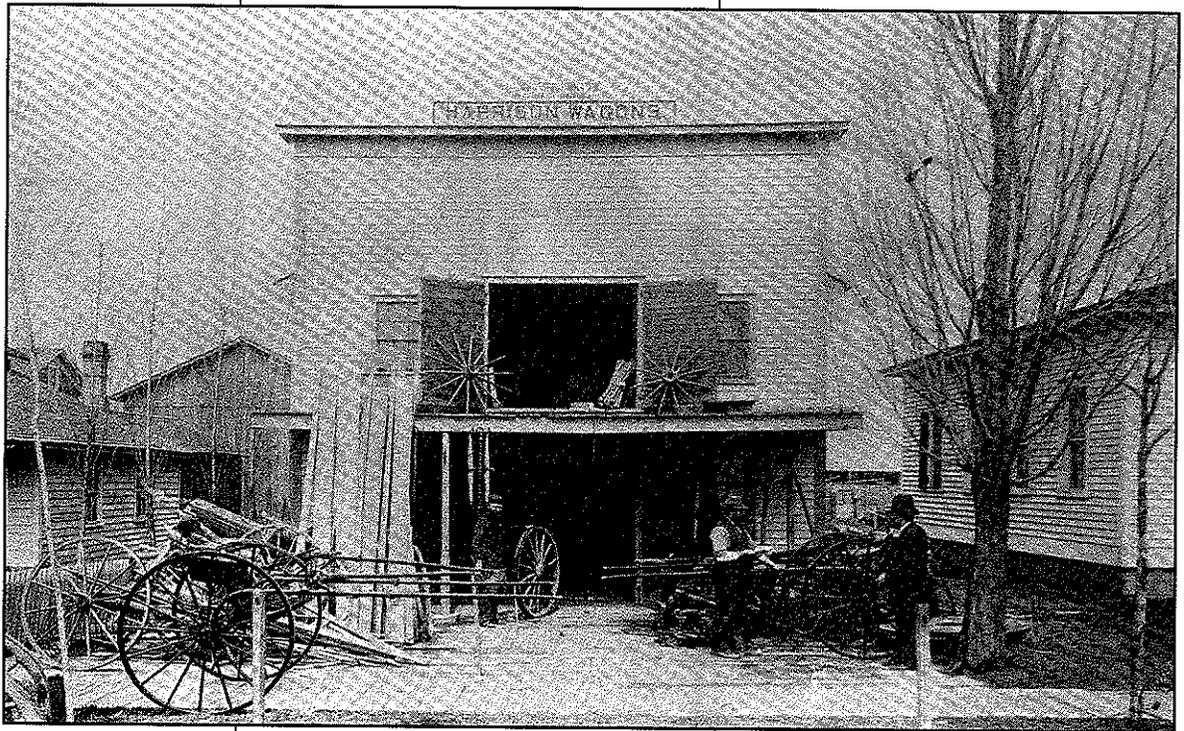
At the Kampen synod Kuiper and Rietdijk argued that the CRC's compatibility with the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk was obvious due to the striking similarities between the two denominations, similarities which extended even to the financial support of missionaries supported by the CGK. Although they could not convince the entire synod that the RCA was in error, they did gain a sympathetic hearing. Nonetheless, historical ties between the RCA and CGK remained strong, bolstered particularly by its identity with Rev. Albertus Van Raalte. The Dutch, however, agreed with Kuiper's assessment that lodge membership was incompatible with Christian commitments. The CGK tried to change the RCA's behavior by threatening to withhold membership certificates from emigrants who intended to join the RCA. Thus, although the CGK did not recognize the CRC as its exclusive sister church in the USA, Kuiper and Rietdijk acquired sufficient sympathy and agreement throughout the CGK



Graafschap, Michigan, grave marker with names of original settlers:

Lambert Tinholt, 1849; Infant Neerken, 1850; Geert Kamps, 1850; Roelaffe Schrow, 1850; Hendrik Brinkman, 1850; Geesje Kropschat, 1850; Wilhelmina H. Van Zanten, 1851; Gerrit Bouws, 1851; Hendrikje Klomparens, 1851; Derk Oude Gindel, 1851; Trutje Lucas, 1851; Jan Hendrik Lubbers, 1851; Johannes Hovenga, 1852; Steven Lucas, 1852; Berend Vos, 1852; Janna Lamping, 1852.

*Graafschap, Michigan,
wagon shop.*



to divert the flow of new immigrants away from the RCA and into the CRC in the 1880s and during the following half century.

Graafschap

The Graafschap colony had already existed for thirty-two years when Kuiper and his family arrived in 1879. The original settlers came from the German Bentheim area, where the language was related to Dutch, and from the Dutch province of Drenthe. One reason for the German emigration was the government's restriction on marriage which required couples to demonstrate adequate financial resources before marriage. Only a quarter of the boys and a third of the girls met this requirement. In Michigan these same young families cleared the woods, cultivated the fields, built a church (1848), and called Rev. H.G. Klijn, who stayed for only a short period because he doubted the viability of the settlement. Klijn misjudged the situation badly, and Graafschap flourished to provide both the original pioneers and their children with farms in the 1860s. By the time Kuiper arrived, Fillmore township, where Graafschap was located, had a stable population of about 2,300. The Graafschap CRC, with 140 families (850 souls), was twice as large as

the local RCA, with 71 families.

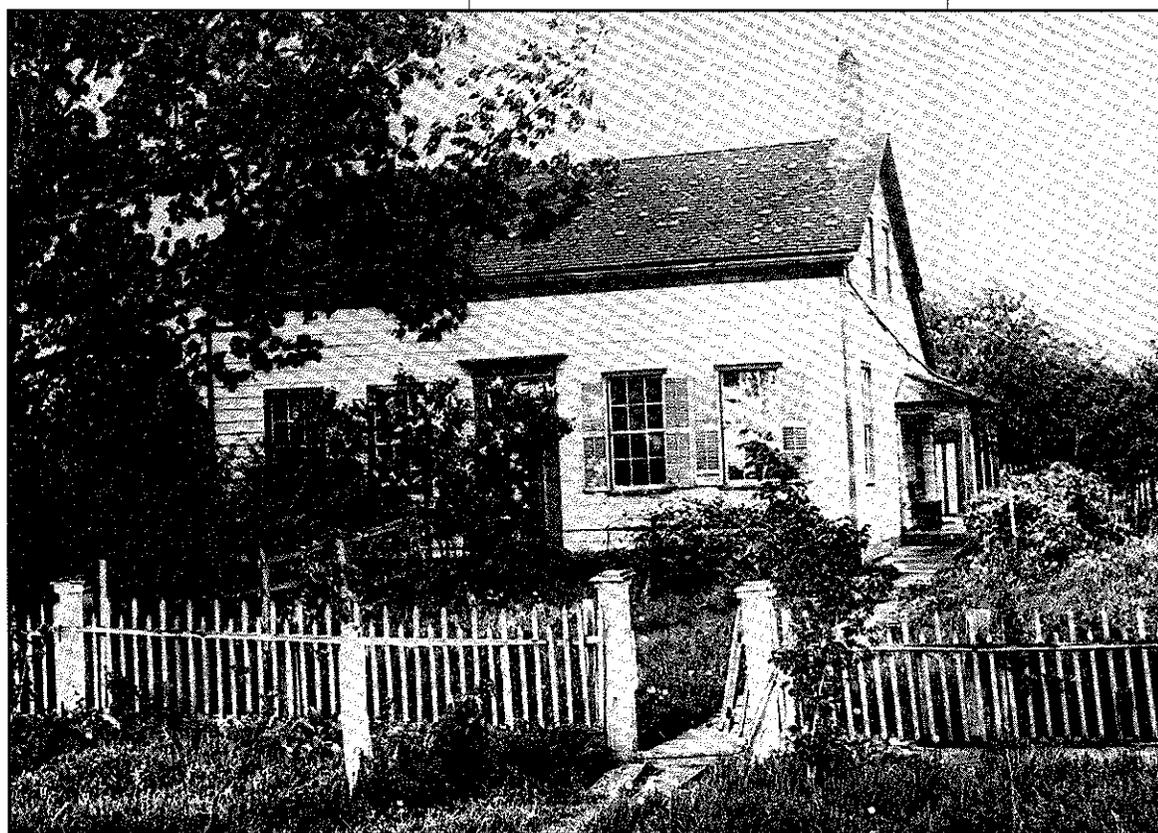
Graafschap had been a founding congregation of the CRC in 1857, and its parsonage had lodged the first American-educated ministers of the new denomination. In the mid-1870s the village itself contained four streets with twenty-five houses and several stores — two groceries, a hardware store, a furniture store, a blacksmith, a shoe- and dressmaker, and a wagon works. Most inhabitants lived on small farms averaging forty acres (the acreage that one man could develop by himself). The few large farms (over 160 acres) were in the hands of Englishmen or of original pioneers like H. Lucas and J.H. Eppink. It is safe to conclude that the Dutch churches were the main institutions in the township and that the CRC dominated the town.

Kuiper's presence was appreciated, and he worked in a period of stability. Apart from minor disciplinary cases, financial affairs were the most troublesome, and they stemmed

from financial surpluses rather than want.

Promotion

In an 1881 publication, *Eene stem uit Amerika over Amerika*, Kuiper described his environment and offered advice to potential immigrants. His aim was not to attract new settlers or even to gain new members for the CRC, but to encourage sensible immigration. People with money, he asserted, would find America a wise investment. The availability of land, the infrastructure, and innovative initiatives like cheese cooperatives promised good alternatives to the stagnant agriculture in the Netherlands. Kuiper had the well-being of new and poorer immigrants in mind when he traveled to new locations in upstate Michigan and the Dakotas. In those areas poor settlers could accumulate small sums as hired hands and then buy land. By clustering together, Dutch people increased their chances for success, and Kuiper visit-



Graafschap, Michigan,
parsonage.

ed these communities to organize young congregations. Of course he encouraged new immigrants to affiliate with the CRC, but he was not dogmatic. He noted that pastors from the CGK found places in several denominations.

Americanization, Education, and Missions

Kuiper advocated gradual Americanization, especially in a place like Graafschap, where the common everyday language was Dutch. He argued against the idea that an immigrant should immediately adopt English and American customs. From his own experience Kuiper knew that people maintaining the Dutch language while getting accustomed to the American tongue and culture did very well. His old-world experience also stimulated

him to promote Christian schools. Wildervank, his former pastorate in Groningen, supported one of the oldest Christian primary schools in Holland. In Graafschap, however, the Dutch dominated the public school board, and half of the teachers were children of RCA and CRC pastors. Kuiper promoted bilingual education because most CRC ministers could not conduct English-language worship services, and he feared the fragmentation of the community if the upcoming generation spoke only English while the older generation spoke Dutch. Nonetheless, Kuiper's articles expressing the need for Christian schools in *De Wachter* did not gain unanimous approval.⁴ Scores of immigrants had a good impression of American public education. Moreover, it was difficult to find qualified Dutch teachers because most of the capable men opted for the ministry. Since it was not yet

an acute problem and language usage was already in transition, public education was considered to be adequate. Consequently Kuiper's admonitions about Christian education remained without immediate effect in Dutch immigrant circles. The influx of the immigrants who followed Abraham Kuyper's 1886 Doleantie revived the issue and successfully spearheaded the organizing of Christian schools.

Kuiper also joined forces with those who worked to establish a denominational mission program for the CRC. Until 1886 the denomination collected funds for distribution by the CGK, but Kuiper was convinced that the CRC should establish its own mission program in North America. In a May 16, 1886, *Wachter* article he drew heavily on Netherlandic examples. "We have to establish a mission of our own. The Dutch have a debt to pay to the Javans,

Malaysians, and Chinese, people who enabled them to become rich. Our church, in my view, has a debt before God to repay the poor Indian who had to hand over his lands for a ridiculously low price, so that we and our children could benefit from them." Selecting Dakota as the first mission field was no coincidence because during one of his exploratory trips he encountered Sioux Indians rather near the Dutch settlements.

Though R.T. Kuiper was an active pastor and an authority in the denomination, his relationship with his congregation became less satisfactory. A conflict arose between the minister and his consistory about his salary. The elders had raised Kuiper's salary to \$800 to assist in the expenses of the education of his children. Kuiper had understood

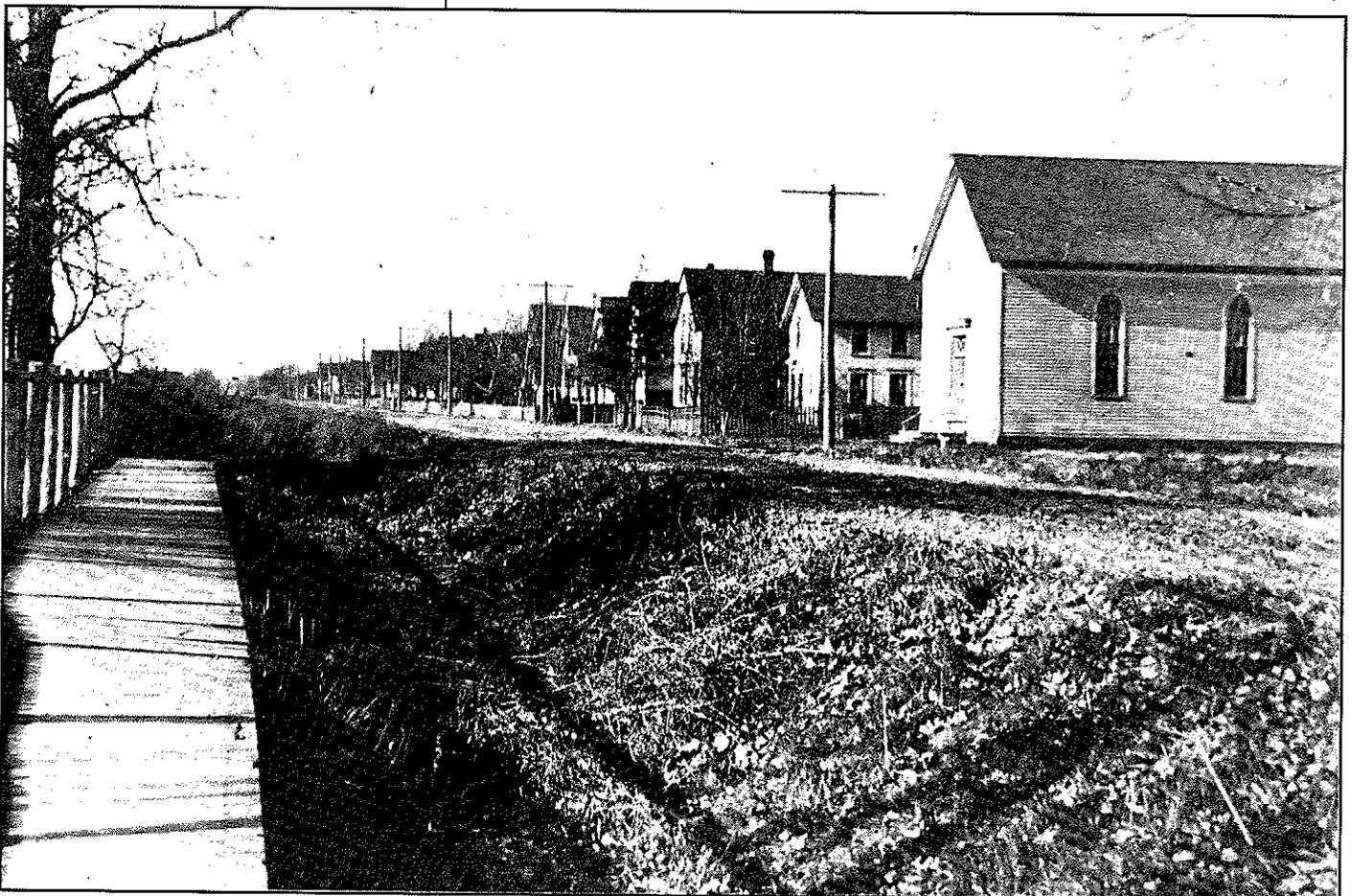
that his salary depended upon the wealth of the church and claimed a permanent raise. He complied with the interpretation of the brethren but sensed a lack of appreciation for his hard labor. When an opportunity arose to serve a smaller congregation that would demand less of his failing health, Kuiper accepted it. The church of South Holland greatly needed his experience.

South Holland

The South Holland CRC had experienced grievous trials during the 1880s due to the behavior of its pastor, E.L. Meinders. After immigrat-

ing from East Friesland, he served both the RCA and the Old School Presbyterians before joining the CRC in 1866. He rejected the RCA and the Presbyterians for being Arminian, but in due course Meinders also discovered impurities in the CRC. His preaching focused on conversion experiences, and when he spotted un-Reformed elements in the writings of Rev. L.J. Hulst and others, he poured out a barage of polemical brochures and presented accusations at classical meetings. Increasingly he maneuvered himself into isolation and then started preaching to a small group gathered from various CRC churches in the Chicago area. His

South Holland, IL. c. 1890. The Meinders church (still standing in 1994) is the first building on this early view of 159th Street looking west from the intersection of Chicago Road and 159th Street. Photo from the Walvoort Collection of the South Holland Historical Society.



long-standing objection to the denomination's dropping the prefix "true" from its old name added to his solitary position. A final cause for Meinders's leaving was his disapproval of a new pastor who joined the classis. He left the South Holland CRC in March 1886, taking the possessions of the church and part of the congregation with him. His stubborn, uncompromising character together with his rigid doctrinal position forced him into isolation. The South Holland CRC split, and though it counted sixty-one members in 1886, it was reduced to thirty-two in 1887. Under Kuiper's pastorate, 1888-1894, the membership returned to the 1886 level and then doubled in size. South Holland benefited greatly from Kuiper's experience and wisdom until at the age of seventy he grew weak as he suffered from cancer. He died on the last day of 1894, whereupon both of his American congregations held memorial services and praised him as "a diligent and honest laborer in the vineyard of the

Lord" and as a "faithful and wise counselor."

Endnotes

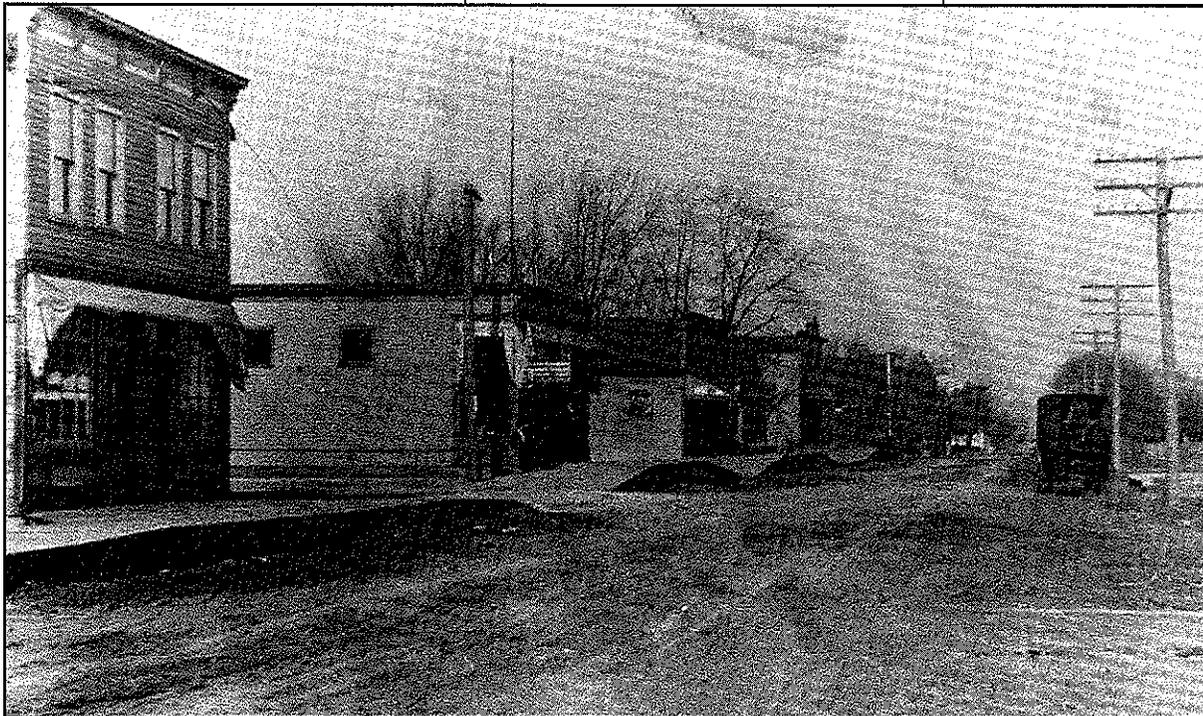
This article is based on my master's thesis, "Serving the Dutch Community: A Comparison of the Patterns of Americanization in the Lives of Two Immigrant Pastors." Kent State University, Kent Ohio, 1989.

1. R.T. Kuiper, *A Voice from America about America* (orig. Dutch ed., 1882; reprint Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 20.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 86-87; letter of R.T. Kuiper to G.E. Boer in Grand Rapids, November 18, 1878; letter to unidentified, November 8, 1878. Both in letterbook of R.T. Kuiper, Archives of Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI.

3. R.T. Kuiper, *Een tijdswoord betrekkelijk de kerkelijke toestand in Noord-Amerika* (Wildervank: Van Halteren, 1882).

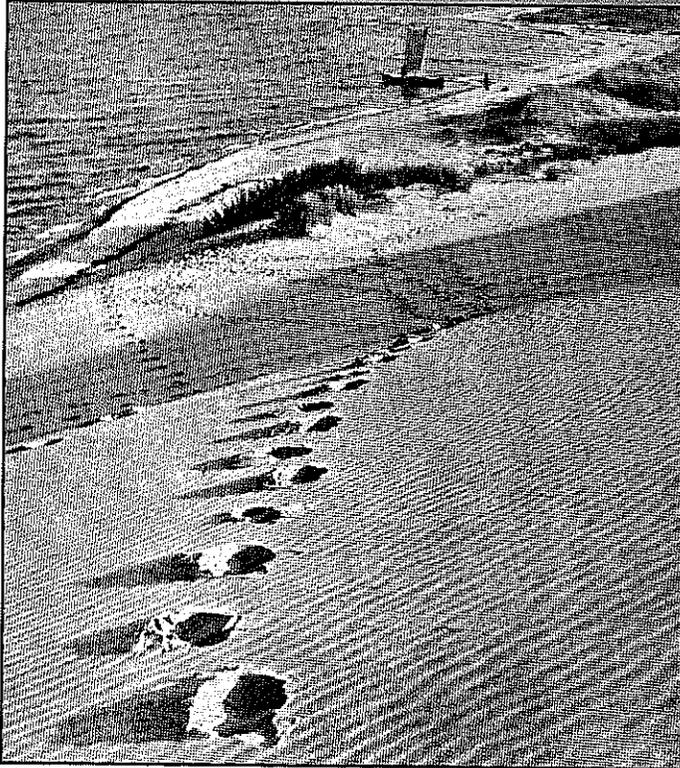
4. *De Wachter*, September 6 and December 9, 1883; February 27, 1884; March 11 and May 27, 1885.



Chicago Road (South Park Avenue), South Holland's main street, as it appeared in the time of R.T. Kuiper's pastorate, 1889-1894. Walvoort Collection.

Holiday

by Michael Vander Weele



"North Sea dunes" in Holland Seen by the Camera (Haarlem: De Librije, 1945), np.

Editor's Introduction:

In "Holiday" Michael Vander Weele* reconstructs a memorable day in the life of Jan and Agi De Groot. The De Groots left Broek op Langedijk in 1952 and have spent most of their forty-two immigrant years in Sarnia, Ontario. Using their recollections, the author creates a narrative which recounts the weekly round of work, worship, and social engagements characteristic of traditional village life in the Netherlands. Similar rituals prevailed in Holland from the seventeenth century until about thirty years ago. Consequently, Jan De Groot's recollections accurately reflect daily routines which, until very recently, were common to nearly every immigrant from the Netherlands. And, as many readers will notice, these old world patterns also dominated North American Dutch communities until recently.

H.J. Brinks

Even in the early years in Canada, Jan and Agi tried to squeeze in a short vacation for their children. Sometimes this meant an overnight trip for the father and older children to the Pineries, a provincial park near Lake Huron, or to Ipperwash, a beach just south of the provincial park. Other times it meant a trip with their mother to visit relatives in Chatham. Later, after the children had left home, it would mean a trip to Holland or to Florida. In Jan and Agi's youth it meant a single day.

Every year Jan's family, and many like them, had tried to get one day off, and usually that day they went to the dunes. If they stood at the back of their house, they were able to see the dunes about eight to ten kilometers to the west. They were part of the long row of dunes that protected Noord Holland and Zuid Holland from the North Sea, since those provinces lay below sea level.

Weather permitting, this trip, mostly a boat trip, had to be done in the month of August since by that time all the crops had been planted. On many parcels of land the market gardeners grew two crops, and August fell between the planting and the harvesting of the second crop. It was also the month that the children had their summer vacation from school, usually for three and a half weeks. But August also had the highest average rainfall, so one could never tell whether the trip to the dunes would be met with clement or inclement weather.

There were two ways that those living in Broek op Langedijk could get to the dunes: over Koedijk or over Schoorldam. If they went over Koedijk, they would have to take the boat for approximately one hour, put it behind a house, walk to catch the train to Bergen, and then walk another fifteen or twenty minutes to the dunes. If the weather was good, they could opt to take another train to the beach at the North Sea, five or six kilometers

*Professor Vander Weele teaches English at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. "Holiday" is a chapter in his *Separation and Inheritance*, the life story of his parents-in-law, Jan and Agi De Groot.

away. If they went over Schoorldam, the boat ride would take an hour longer, due to the locks between Broek and Schoorl, but then they would not have to wait for a train. The only drawback to this second route was that it didn't allow the choice of going all the way to the North Sea. Nonetheless, it was through Schoorldam that Jan and Agi had chosen to direct Agi's family.

I still remember that we were planning to go to Schoorl with the Dekker family. They did not have a boat since they worked in the village, so by nine o'clock in the morning I arrived with our boat, tying it up in the canal behind their house. Very well everybody's house could be reached by boat in Broek since we were surrounded by water. I had cleaned up the boat that was otherwise used to bring the workers to the *akkers* (small pieces of land separated by waterways) where we gardened. In the meantime, the weather was not improving. Just before we were ready to step into the boat, we got a good shower, and we started wondering if it was wise to make the trip. In order to reach the dunes we would have to spend about four hours back and forth in an open boat.

Mom's family ran a *smederij* (repair shop) and appliance store. They were in another category as us, the market-gardeners. "Those people," we said, "never look to the sky. They think that they are not dependent on the weather." At the same time, we could not completely wipe out the feeling that somehow they looked down on the gardener, even though they made their hands dirty as well as we did. Well, these business people, without saying it, expected from me that I would be able to forecast the weather for the day. The older ones just waited silently for me to speak while the younger children milled around me asking when we were going or if we were going and saying please as if I could control whether the rain would stop or start. Suddenly my position felt very vulnerable. I decided not to answer too many questions but realized I would not have too much time before having to make a statement one

way or the other to save my credibility.

I had good luck. Between ten o'clock and ten-thirty, someone discovered a few small blue openings in the cloudy sky. The majority agreed that those indications were hopeful signs, and by eleven o'clock, though it was



Aerial view of Broek up Langendijk showing the village strung out along the dike and the "akkers," the small ribbons of land cultivated for vegetables and flowers.

later than we had planned, we were underway, heading for Schoorldam to go through the locks. Whether the big oily tarp was along more for a mascot than to be used in case of rain was not a point of discussion.

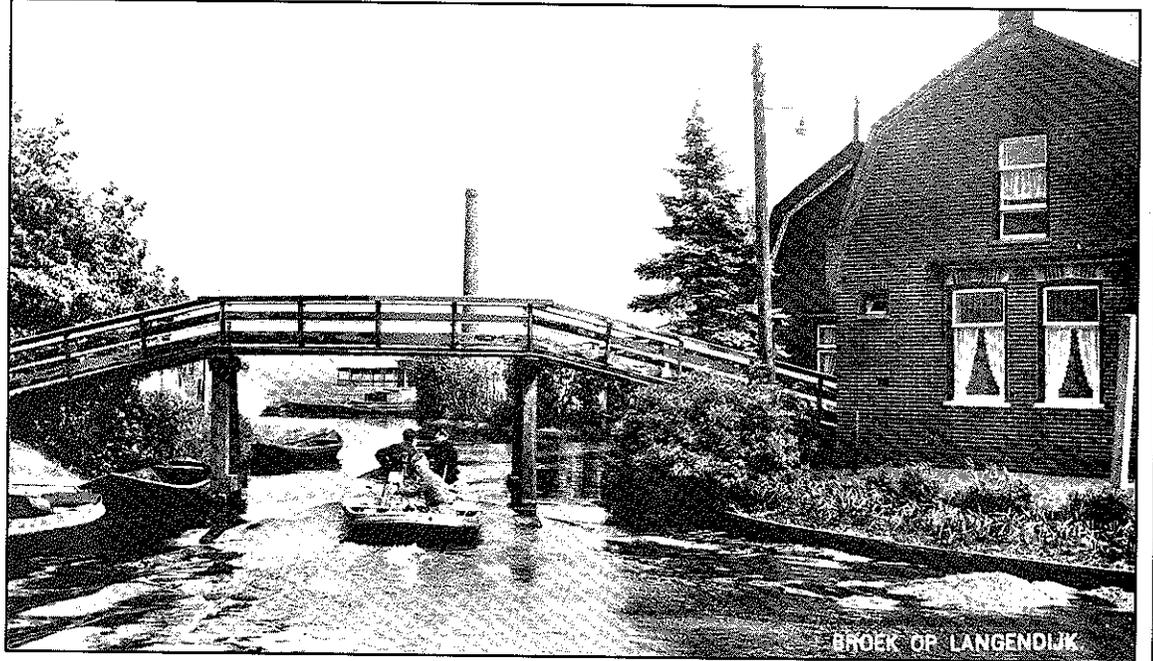
The two-cylinder Albin motor, one of the fastest in the village, pulled the three-ton boat through the sloten in the direction of the dunes. After about three quarters of an hour, the canals became smaller, there was less traffic, and the stagnant water's seaweed strangled the boat's propeller. Someone had to disentangle the propeller, which could hardly be seen anymore for the green weeds and the black ooze that kept them from separating into detachable strands.

The locks lifted the boat six or seven feet onto one of the exits of the Noord Holland Canal. Sometimes a larger boat would pass while a smaller one such as Jan's was trying to cross the canal. Its captain usually would not



(above) Langendijk vegetable market — cabbage, greens, etc.

(right) Langendijk waterway.



BRÖEK OP LANGENDIJK

pay attention to the smaller boats and they would frequently be rocked by the larger boat's waves. "Most of us," Jan writes, "did not realize the risk we took being on that deep waterway. We were used to water and thought very little about the fact that very well not a one of us know how to swim. Something like that did not enter our brains."

As soon as they reached the other side of the Noord Holland Canal, they had to pass under a very low bridge, children and adults alike ducking to protect their heads. After another fifteen or twenty minutes they could not go any farther but had to continue their trip on foot. Soon the boat would be secured to a pole by chain. A number of the younger ones stepped up on the sides of the boat, causing others to holler at them not to tip the boat. Suddenly the questions came all at once: Who would take care of Pietje? Jantje can't walk the whole stretch, and we only have one stroller. Who's going to take the bread? Where's the thermos and the *ranja* (orange drink)? Is the *potje* (small pot) still in the *tasch*?

After a while, the caravan was set in motion, with even the youngest looking for the promised spot. It was the spot of reflected light which had been seen already from a distance. Although it had looked small earlier, now the walkers could anticipate that in another twenty minutes the steep dune would be at their feet. When they arrived the older people looked for a comfortable spot near the bottom of the dune where they could unload their belongings and nestle in for the day.

After the younger ones got a small cup of *ranja*, their reward for behaving themselves, they were let loose to storm the steep sand dune. Jan and Agi and some of the older ones ran with them, and then ahead of them. Reaching the top of the dune, they could look over the trees and steeple of Schoorl into the polders. They could see the molen (mill) of the Grebepolder and then, after a while, someone spotted the Roman Catholic Church of North Scharwoude, and finally, off to the right and much smaller, the Netherlands Hervormde Kerk from Broek op Langedijk. They pointed and shouted, and at last grew quiet. There was something fascinating about seeing their whole world laid out before them as calmly and as beautifully as in a painting. With the wind to their backs, they felt for a few moments as if they had stepped out of the frame that held their daily lives. With an artist's appreciation, they nodded approvingly as their attention moved over the landscape before them.

Down below, there were many younger and older people, including most of their family, scrambling to reach the top where they stood. Though the conquerors of the hill felt kind of sorry for them (some of the older

ones had to give up), they could not help but feel that they had achieved some kind of victory that others could not attain. Once the exhilaration of climbing the dune had faded a little, most of Jan and Agi's party were ready for the "play garden," a small area enclosed by a high chicken-wire fence that held a slide, some swings, and a merry-go-round with horses. It was operated by a restaurant, and visitors were only allowed in if they first ordered some food or drink. After a few bottles of orange soda had been shared by the group (this was the real stuff, not the mixture of syrup and water that they had used for orange drinks), they negotiated the gate one at a time. The older ones passed by the slides and merry-go-round in search of the cages where monkeys performed for a few peanuts or where parrots raised their huge squawking voices in a rather small compartment. Jan remembers seeing, in some cages, silver and gold pheasants with a sign on their cage that said they were from North America. At that time it was a continent that seemed as if it were on the other side of the world or, what amounted to the same thing, on the other side of the ocean.

By five-thirty the whole group was back at the base of the dune waiting to eat the holiday roggebrood met kaas (rye bread and cheese), with plenty of krentenbrood (raisin bread) on the side. "I don't remember a communal prayer for those meals," Jan writes. "Likely we did it silently, feeling that at home we would make up for it." After the meal they were reminded in a variety of ways that holidays also had to end. Some of the breadwinners had to add to their speeches that the next morning the alarm clocks would be ringing at quarter after three in order that they could be in the fields by four o'clock. Even this did not convince the younger ones that they had to go, but by seven o'clock everybody had made the walk back to the boat, sporting evidence of the big sand dune they had stumbled up and down and of the gray dirt of the play garden that covered the empty stretches between slides and swings.

By nine or nine-thirty they were back home, looking forward to a similar day the next August, weather permitting. "Though some years this trip was canceled due to cold wind and rain," Jan writes, "this trip was a time we still remember now, more than fifty years later. The August outing was always one of the highlights of our family life in Broek op Langedijk."

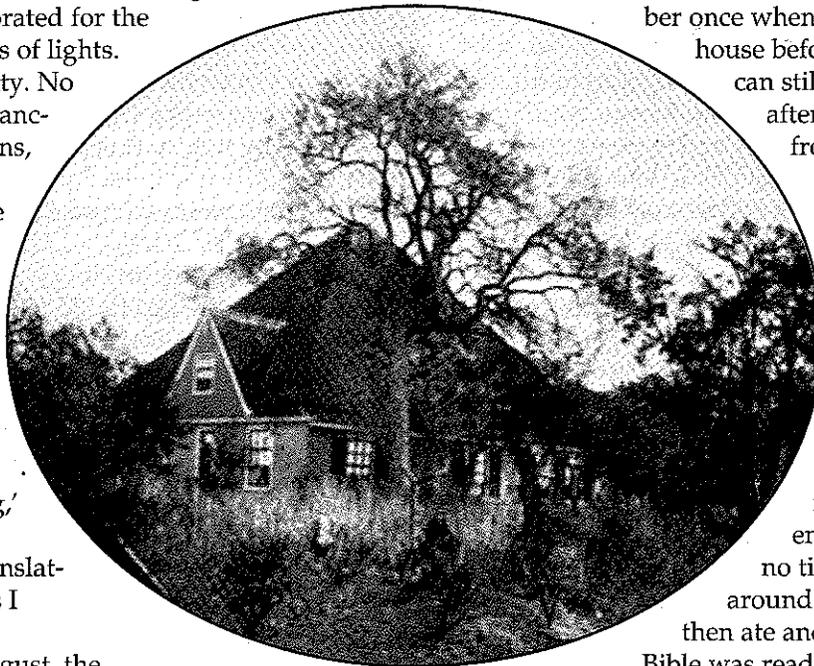
Though the vacation day was the highlight of the summer for children and young adults alike, there were other interruptions which became part of the weekly and annual rhythms of life. In September the Agricultural Show was held in Alkmaar, ending in a display of

fireworks. Many of the families of Broek op Langedijk would attend this annual festival, though some stayed away from the entertainments as a part of the world where they did not think they belonged. On the eighth of October Alkmaar celebrated the 1573 victory over the Spanish Army. Along with hundreds of others from the surrounding villages, the De Groots biked the seven kilometers to Alkmaar and walked along the bridges and canals decorated for the occasion with thousands of lights.

It was a day of civic unity. No matter the church allegiances or political persuasions, on this day everyone joined in to decorate the city. The lights of the bridges shining in the water dazzled the spectators. "We felt," Jan writes, "a kind of belonging to each other in this celebration of freedom — what we in Dutch called 'gezellig,' a sense of at-home-ness which hardly can be translated into English so far as I know."

The thirty-first of August, the birthday of the Queen, provided another interruption of the work week since it was declared a national holiday. Young and old wore orange bows or pins on their coats and shirts to show their love for the queen and the House of Orange. The celebration was officially opened by the mayor of the village while a few members of the Fanfare Orchestra accompanied the villagers' singing of The Netherlands' national anthem, "Wilhelmus van Nassau." With trumpets and drums leading the way, everyone marched to a field just outside the village where plays were given and contests were held, and where the winners could earn special prizes. As many people as possible participated in the contests or performed in the plays.

While these interruptions of the routine of work were important, nothing was more important than the Sunday day of rest. Its rituals, like the rituals of work, were similar to those lived through one hundred years earlier. Sunday gave time for family visitation and for physical and spiritual rejuvenation. Agi tries to explain its importance by contrasting it to the other days of the week.



"North Holland farmhouse architecture" in G.J. Nijland, *Ons Eigen Land* (Dordrecht: Geuze Co., 1926), p. 17.

In Holland life was very different from life in Canada. Dad, and every *tuinder* (market gardener), made very long days. They had to get up early in the morning — around four o'clock. They had breakfast first — six slices of brown bread — and made another six slices ready for their coffee time at nine o'clock out in the field. When they came home close to noon time, they had a warm

meal which had to be ready on time! I remember once when I was at Dad's parents' house before we were married. I

can still hear one of the sisters, after she heard a few noises from outside, raising her head and singing out, "De mannen!" Soon as the men were announced, all the sisters — and I myself too — dropped whatever they were doing and helped Dad's mom with final preparations for the meal before the men

entered the back door. In no time everybody sat around the table, prayed, and then ate and ate. After the meal the Bible was read, the men had a little nap (everybody could sleep at that time), the boat was started up again, and off they went, leaving always by one o'clock. That was written in stone.

That's how life was at that time for six days a week. On Saturdays some stopped half an hour earlier, at five-thirty, though those who stayed in the fields looked down on the ones who started their boats and left for home. It was no wonder they liked to go to bed at nine o'clock at night — and also that they sometimes fell asleep in church on Sunday. This was life in spring, summer and fall. Usually in winter it was a bit easier, depending on the weather, and there would be time for skating and visiting.

Life in the village was not quite so pressing. On Saturday nights, younger parents visited their parents. I can still hear moeder asking m'n vader if Grietje and Gerrit had passed by our house already. Though we did not have watches then, my parents agreed that it must be short of eight o'clock if Grietje and Gerrit had not yet passed by. When older parents had a birthday to go to, they walked to the house of one of their married children

in the early evening and three generations of family would celebrate together until shortly after ten o'clock.

For both the farm and the village families, though, Sunday was the most important interruption of the work week. Sunday was a big day for everybody — and also a big family day. I always went to our grandmother right after morning church, and so did the oldest children from my mother's two sisters and the oldest two from her brother. We always had a cup of tea and a jodenkoek from my grandmother, and another cup of tea later. Afterwards, we walked back home, the boys in front of us and my cousin and me following, arm in arm. That was the way it was supposed to be. We never used our bikes on Sunday; we did not have to. Where we lived, we had a big church but nobody had to walk more than ten minutes to get there. Once I went on my bike to the doctor to ask him for medicine for Jan because he had so much pain and we both knew it was from kidney stones again. In the following week so many people asked me what was the matter in our family — just because they had seen me on my bike on a Sunday!

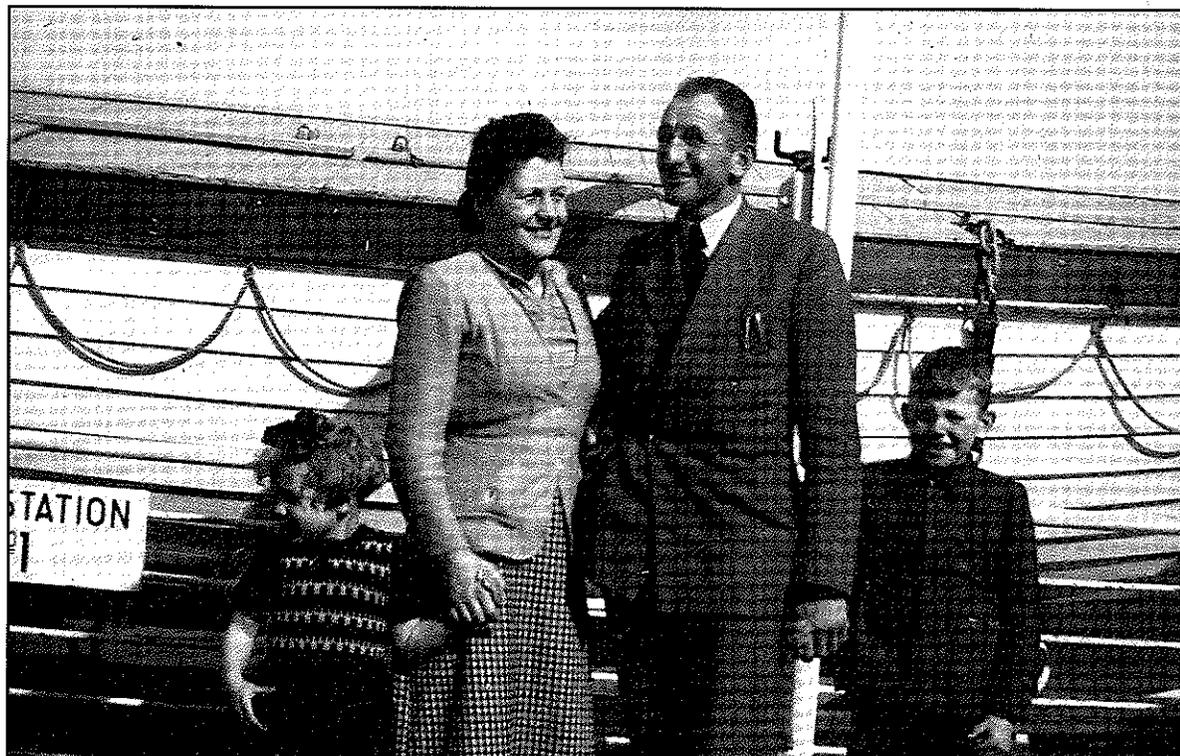
We had our second service at two-thirty in the afternoon and now I remember that even when we were little children and did not go to church in the afternoon we were not supposed to be outside on the street during church time. After church was over, the rest of the Sunday was for walking and talking and family life,

visiting friends and neighbors and relatives. We always did a lot of visiting. With a big family we had so many birthdays to celebrate — and we must have a good reason if we were to be excused from the celebration — but still we did not go on our bike to each other's house if it was on a Sunday.

Broek op Langedijk had a population of about twenty-eight hundred people. Of that number, Jan and Agi only recall one Roman Catholic family. Most of the rest attended one of three churches: the Gereformeerde, the Hervormde, and the Christelijk Gereformeerde. At nine-thirty in the morning, villagers dressed in their Sunday best could be seen walking in three different directions in their straightest postures. Looking back with wonder, Jan tries to put together the two different worlds he has lived in.

Did we have to go to church and did we feel that biking on Sunday was forbidden? I don't know. Maybe we did, but no, not really. I don't think so. We felt that it was a good tradition and it was a good feeling that it set us apart from those, although a minority, who were not going to church.

In church there was not much heating, at least not in the time when I was a small boy, but the custodian had piled up a number of stoofs (foot warmers) with glowing charcoal inside. Some of the older women paid a few pennies to take the stove to the pew with them. At least



*Jan and Agi De Groot
with children Cor
and Tina on the
Statendam, 1952.*

that kept their feet warm. Most of the men wore wooden shoes, which were much warmer than leather ones. The men and women were sitting separately, the men in benches and the women in chairs. The church service would usually take about one and a half hours. After the minister was preaching for a good half hour, we sang another psalm (the "between song"). As we settled down, reaching for our second peppermint, the minister began the second part of his sermon, the application. The sermons, you could say, were mostly about doctrine, but some ministers were able to relate this doctrine quite well to our practical day-to-day living. In the afternoon, ministers preached, almost without exception, from the Heidelberg Catechism, but somehow a number of them, out of that never-changing catechism, were able to come up with fresh sermons time and again. "Ik weet niet hoe dat was mogelijk" (I don't know how they did it).

Up at the front of the church the pipe organ was played by a boatmaker while our shoemaker provided the wind for the organ by operating the pump. Although a small organ, it could not be missed since the organist led the singing of the psalms by giving the first note of every line a second or two ahead of the singing. I remember that in later years some churches sang the psalms to faster rhythms, and started out *with* instead of *after* the organ, but it took more than one generation for the older church members to get used to this new singing.

After the morning service, there was opportunity to visit parents or uncles and aunts, and to renew the family ties. After visiting or having visitors, usually a special meal was served when we enjoyed some extras, maybe pudding with bessensap (red currant syrup). Then there was time for a short nap and by two-thirty we sat in church again, except those who had to do babysitting. We had time to visit again after the evening meal since we usually were finished by six o'clock in order to allow the boys to meet as "young people" in the rooms behind the church.

For a long time there were three "Young Peoples" groups in our church. Their annual meeting was an important event in the life of the church and was attended by most of the church members. Most every member of the Young People worked on skits, poems, and grapijes (teases or pointed jokes). While most of the jokes were told at the expense of other young people, it also happened that some members of the congregation got their turn as well! Many of them had a "message from the Young People" which they could not easily shake off and had to take home with them. Sometimes all the adults were at the mercy of the young people. Many big cans of chocolade (chocolate milk) and boxes of speculaas

(windmill cookies) were consumed at the annual meeting. Once, when the Young People took a collection with the kwast (long pole and bag), one of their members put in a cup of chocolate milk. As the bottom of the bag began to drip chocolate milk on the beautiful dresses of the ladies sitting around, you could hear an uproar begin to swell. Still, few complained about the Young People. There was a general sense, I suppose, that they ought to get some mischief out of their system.

After the Young People's meetings were over, we all went on the road walking again until it was time to go home and get ready for the next morning's work. You could say, I suppose, that on Sunday the most significant part of the day was the church service while during the other six days work was the significant part of the day and this meant *hard physical work* for days that, with few exceptions, seemed to go on and on.

WHY DO YOU PAY RENT?

With the rent that you now pay you could quickly have one of these farms for your own and live in your own house.

Price of the land:

\$ 125 PER ACRE

Conditions:

\$25 per acre cash the rest by installments.

FREE EXCURSION.

I will give a free excursion from Chicago.

Write for particulars and state how much land you want and how much money you have with which to begin.

We can show you the land, a distance of 1 1/2 hours from Chicago.

This land, without a doubt, will sell quickly. Never again will you have such an occasion to buy such very good land, near to Chicago, at such low prices. Do it now.

Mr. E.R. Tallmadge
111 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.

We have made an excursion with Mr. Olin Lewis to see the 2678 acres of land which you are planning to divide in farms and to colonize. Since we are all gardeners and truck farmers in the neighborhood of Chicago, we of course, have much interest in your plan.

That land is much better than we had expected and as good as possible for horticulture. The soil is loose, sandy, and easy to cultivate. According to our opinion it will yield good crops of all vegetable varieties. The hay is splendid, and the corn and pasture are the best that we have seen on our trip. The cattle are in excellent condition. The black

sandy loam soil sustains an enormous grass growth. The pastures indicate that the soil is rich and fruitful. Without doubt this land is of prime quality for general agriculture. In our opinion this land will become even more valuable after it is divided into smaller plots for vegetables, poultry, cattle, dairy farming, orchards and other purposes.

Railroad transportation is excellent with two competing lines to assure acceptable rates and good service. We are also convinced that the village of



A Holland family. Two members of the committee, John Piel on the left and G.K. Boerema on the right. Photo taken at their vegetable farm.

Tallmadge offers a good opportunity for shopkeepers and will quickly become a good-sized town.

We advise you to divide the land in small plots, and then you can assume that every acre will be sold by next spring. It is a splendid piece of land, and we advise anyone who desires a good home or who wants to invest money to come and see this land before others buy it.

PAY ATTENTION!

HOLLAND

The largest farm in the s

ILLINOIS

2678 Acres ma

In parcels to be chosen by the buyer,
10, 20, 40, 80, 160, 320 Acre Farms.

45 MILES FROM CHICAGO
TO TALLMADGE (TOWNSITE)

T. de Young Sr
H. K. De Young
John K. De Young
S. Van Deursen
John De Young
John Van Osten
Bert Witvoet
S. de Boer
B. P. Van drunen
Arie Vermeulen
Henry Van Milligan
J. G. Witvoet

T. de Young Sr.	Bert Witvoet
H. K. De Young	S. de Boer
John K. De Young	B. P. Van drunen
S. Van Deursen	Arie Vermeulen
John De Young	Henry Van Milligan
John Van Osten	J. G. Witvoet

Second Committee

Write for the report of the first committee

Tel. Randolph

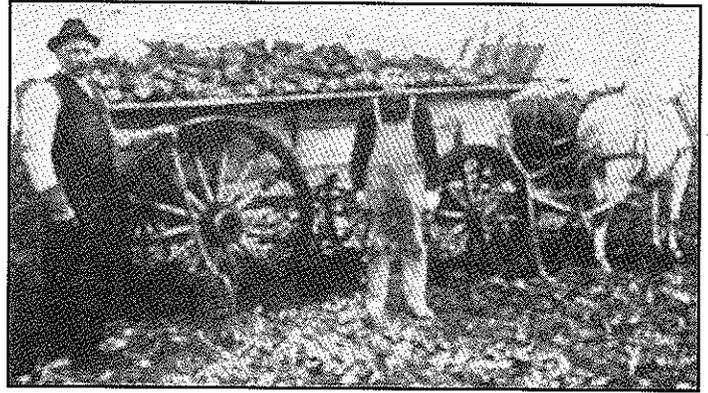
AD! THINK ABOUT IT!

D COLONY

to be parceled out in farms.

BLACK SOIL

ready for Colonizing



Mr. Albert Pranger, right, a member of the committee. Photo taken at his vegetable farm. A load of sugarbeets.

LET OP! De Hollandsche Farmer **LEES!** **OVERWEEG!**
Hollandsche Kolonie
Grooste boederij in den staat in farms verdeeld
ILLINOIS ZWARTE BOUWGROND
2678 Acres Tot Kolonie Gemaakt
48 MIJL CHICAGO TOT TALLMADGE (Township)

Wat is het land in? Het hool is prachtig, corn en welle de beste die we op onze reis gezien hebben. Het vee is in uitstekenden toestand. De grond is zwart zand, diegrig leen en uit de enorme groei van het gras sprekend feit, dat hij krachtig en vruchtbaar is. Zonder twijfel is dit land primo kwaliteit voor landbouw in het algemeen, zooals blijkt uit de die jaar daar groeide vruchten, maar naar onze meening zou dit land zeer kostbaar worden indien het verdeeld werd in kleine boerderijen voor zowel als voor fruitbouw en ander boerenbedrijf. De spoorweg gelegenheid zijn uitstekend. De nemeijk tarief en goede dienst. Wij zijn overtuigd dat het dorp Tallmadge goede gelegenheid biedt voor winkeliers, en spoedig een flink stadsje zal worden.

De eigenaar van dit land had een groote hoeveelheden vee, varkens, enz. Just heeft hij 500 stukke vee verkocht. De beste waren op dit jaarheid der grond jaarlijks aanmerkelijk verbeterd. Slechts een klein gedeelte werd bewerkt voor voedsel voor het vee gedurende den winter. Anders was alles onder gras. Wij gaan nu 1,000 akkers verkoopt. DENK EENS IN ILLINOIS VFRUCHTBAARST LAND, slechts 80 mijl van Chicago, de beste markt ter wereld, is te koop. Een buitenkansje dat haast nooit voorkomt.

Dit is Zeer Vruchtbare Grond. Weiland

25 per Acre

RIJKE EXCURSIE.

Wij maken u een dergelijke gelegenheid weer en dan zoo goedkoop. Doe het nu.

St. Chicago, Ill.

van Mr. Olin Lewis hebben we een netwerk van uw 2678 acres verdeelen en te koloniseeren. Wij zijn van Chicago, stellen wij veel belang in uw plan.

*To de Young Sr.
 H. K. De Young
 John K. De Young
 J. Van Dusen
 John De Young
 John Van Coten
 Bert Witvoet
 J. de Boer
 W. P. Van der Meer
 J. van der Meer
 Henry van Milligen
 J. J. Witvoet*

EEN EXCURSION VAN GRAND RAPIDS, EN EEN VAN UIT IOWA

En gij kunt Gratis met ons meegaan.

Ik verlang 10 flinke Hollanders als een Committee van Michigan en 10 Hollanders van Iowa, vrienden en buren kunnen zeggen dat zij het hun onderzoek hebben en derhalve weten dat het zelf uitnemende gelegenheid is voor onze liever Hollanders. Ik zal al de onkosten betalen die hieraan verbonden zijn van het oogenblik dat gij verrekt totdat gij weer te huis zijt. Het is uitnemend best land en daarom wil ik het ganse land zien. Schrijf mij inden gij een der Commissie wilt zijn. Nog eens, ik betaal alle kosten van de reis.

ALFALFA

Het U.S. Government heeft de Alfalfa laten inspecteeren en verklaard dat het de beste is die in Ill. groeit en door het Government werd over 4,000 akkers inspecteerd.

THIS IS VERY FERTILE SOIL. PASTURE LAND.

The owner of this land had a large number of cattle and hogs, and just recently he sold 500 head of cattle. Animals have been grazing on this land for many years, and they have greatly improved the fruitfulness of the soil. Only a small segment was cultivated to produce food for the cattle during the winter. Everything else is under grass. We are going to sell 1,000 acres now. THINK ABOUT IT. THIS MOST FERTILE SOIL IS FOR SALE. It is only fifty miles from Chicago, the best market in the world. An offer of this sort is very rare.

AN EXCURSION FROM GRAND RAPIDS, AND ONE FROM IOWA

And you can come along with us, free of charge.

I need a committee of twenty capable Hollanders, ten from Michigan and ten from Iowa, to inspect this land. That will enable them to tell their friends and neighbors that they have examined the land and therefore know that it provides an excellent opportunity for industrious Hollanders. I will pay all the expenses that are connected with this trip from the moment you leave until you are back home again. It is by far the best land available, and therefore I will gladly let you see it. Write me if you will be one of the Committee. Let me repeat, I will pay all expenses connected with this trip. Write soon.

ALFALFA

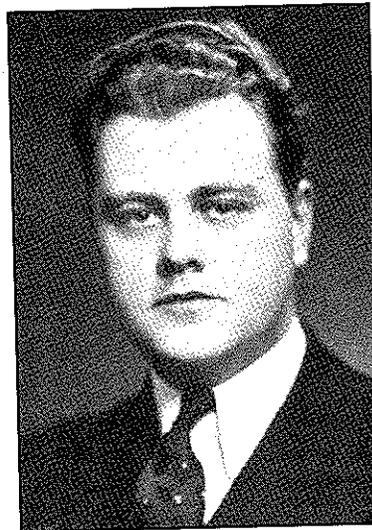
The U.S. government has inspected the alfalfa crop and declares it is the best that is grown in Illinois. The government inspected over 4,000 acres.

E. R. Tallmadge,
 W. Monroe St., CHICAGO, ILL.
 Room 804, 111

I own this land so you can deal with me directly.
 Ask for information by mail or telephone. My address:
E.R. Tallmadge, 111 W. Monroe Street, Room 804
 Chicago, Illinois Telephone, Randolph 7120

Memiors

Rev. Arnold Brink
1913-1990



Rev. Arnold Brink
Calvin Theological Seminary, 1938.

Editor's Introduction

Before his death (1990) Rev. Arnold Brink extended his memoirs beyond the Lynden, Washington, years (Origins, Volume IV, no. 2) to recount his first pastorate, in Bluffton, a home mission project near Muskegon, Michigan. This 1937 effort cut fresh ground for the CRC's home-mission program because in 1953 the Bluffton Chapel became the first CRC congregation organized almost entirely by non-Dutch parishioners. The unique and innovative strategies which Brink used to initiate and sustain the Bluffton Chapel were untried and somewhat controversial for that era. Today, however, most church planters would consider the Bluffton story something of a model. Due to population shifts and changing land use, the Bluffton parish dispersed, and its members have amalgamated with Muskegon's Calvin CRC.

H.J. Brinks

Bluffton was a very unusual community of about 300 families, most of whom, although remotely connected with some church, seldom made the five-mile trek to downtown Muskegon to attend church. Many others were quite out of touch with any religious loyalty at all. They were, in many cases, rather well read and interesting as well as interested in everything around them. They were as disparate as the population of America, yet all knit together with the undying loyalty of a single family.

The first Sunday morning I rounded the corner from Lakeshore Drive onto Thompson Street in my dusty Overland, I met an elephant and a zebra being led along the street by Max Gruber, famous animal trainer, who lived only a half-block away. It was my first introduction to the fact that Bluffton had been the summer resort for circus and vaudeville folk. Buster Keaton, the famous deadpan comedian, spent many a summer there. The home that was later purchased as our parsonage had been the home of "happy Jack" Gardiner, a vaudeville "end man." The colorful

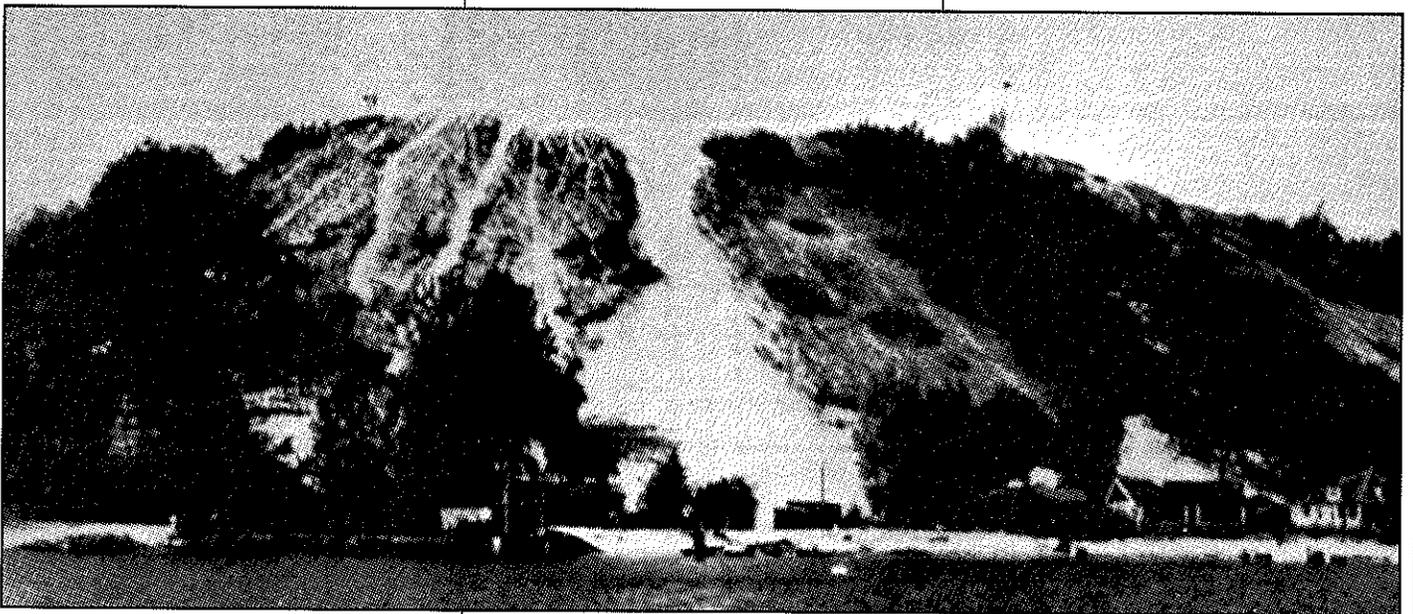
characters that inhabited that small community would fill a book. In fact, historical committees have published two books on the history of Bluffton.¹

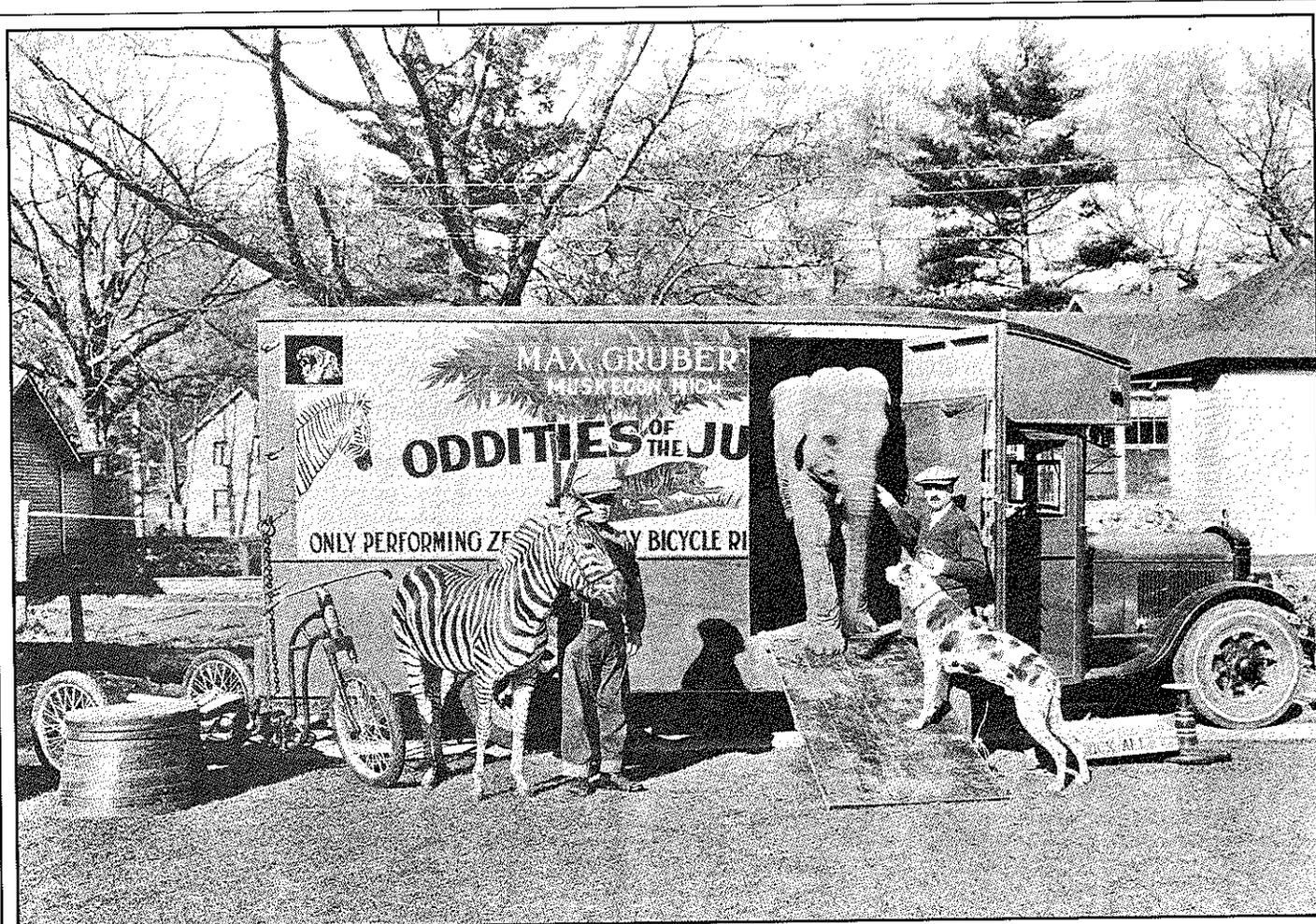
The elephant who met me on the corner bore the name Little Eva. Ten years later, when as a family we were vacationing in Florida and went to visit the winter quarters of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus, we heard the animal tender in the elephant barn shout a command at a misbehaving elephant, calling her Little Eva. It was the same elephant. Before Little Eva there had been Minnie. Only recently I learned that one day, as Minnie was being led through Lakeside, she spied a boy, Eddie Freye, eating a banana as he sat on the back of his dad's pickup. Without missing a step, Minnie reached out her trunk, picked the banana out of the boy's hand, and ate it!²

After getting over the surprise of the elephant/zebra encounter, I went to the small public school building where there was a Sunday school. It had been begun by people in the community and was rather loosely supervised by the American Sunday

School Union. That Sunday morning the little Sunday school was in a minor crisis. The young Swedish Baptist who had been in charge had not put in an appearance. No one else felt he could assume leadership, nor did the adult class have a teacher. After introducing myself and learning of their plight, I volunteered to lead in an opening hymn and prayer and to teach the adults. The following Sunday, when the young man learned what had taken place, he magnanimously, and with considerable relief, offered to let me continue in my dual role. He and his family really preferred to attend their church in Lakeside. The Sunday school continued as long as it met in the school. A few weeks later, when the discussion in the adult class proved interesting enough to merit extra time, I suggested a short gospel service after Sunday school. In that

Pigeon Hill, the mountain-like sand dune that was, for generations, the overshadowing hallmark of Bluffton, is now the site of a marina-condominium complex. The sand has been sold and removed to serve as landfill especially in Dearborn, Michigan, where some of the Ford industrial buildings were built on it. P. 81 in Sand in Their Shoes.





Max Gruber with Topsey, the zebra; Little Eva, the elephant; and Ringo, the trained dog (p. 98, Sand in Their Shoes).

inconspicuous manner, the work in Bluffton began. Attendance at the gospel service steadily increased. I spent Saturdays making calls through the neighborhood. From the beginning I encouraged the people to believe that we were working toward the establishment of a church in the community. The adult Sunday school class became a doctrine-discussion group meeting in private homes. When summer came, I broached the idea of a vacation Bible school. But that plan encountered some difficulties. The public school authorities had become aware that serious church work was going on and were reluctant to let public school facilities be used for the support of a specific denomination because it appeared to

be contrary to the principle of the separation of church and state.

I had begun to distribute a weekly bulletin.³ This little effort was intended to bring the community together into a greater understanding of the fact that a community "church" of a sort was actually beginning. The first bulletins were headed "Bluffton Community Chapel." Later it was "Bluffton Bethany Chapel," and by July 10, 1938 it was, quite frankly, "Bluffton Christian Reformed Chapel." The bulletins were handed out at each Sunday-morning chapel service and were a hand-out at the doors of those I called on in the course of canvassing the community. The first bul-

letin is dated May 30, 1937. My classes at the seminary were in summer recess, so the biblical doctrine class was scheduled for Tuesday evening and choir practice for Wednesday. These midweek meetings were scheduled at various homes. The first bulletin was also intended to publicize the intention to have a vacation Bible school, although there was still no assurance that there would be a place for it. But God has not promised that we are to know how he will do his work. It is for us to go forward in simple faith. The bulletin of June 27, 1937, revealed that Ralph Nelson, a car dealer in Muskegon who lived on Edgewater Street,

Personal Reflections on My Bluffton Days

Rodger R. Rice

Easter of 1942 was a providential turning point in my life. I remember that Sunday with good feelings. Not quite five, I knew that day was different. My family of four — Dad, Mom, brother, and I — had gone to church, to the Bluffton Chapel, and heard sermon and song by the Rev. Arnold Brink. Marital difficulties were tearing at my young parents. Dad had no use for religion. He had joined a lodge for the social life and loved to bang on his trap set on Sunday mornings. Brink had coaxed my mother into coming to church; she then placed the invitation before her husband. If it would help their marriage, he would go. On that Easter morning, Brink's sermon reference to those who darken the church sanctuary only on Easter and Christmas struck a nerve in father's soul. From church, I remember driving to the waterworks on Lake Michigan for some family photo taking, then to a restaurant for Sunday dinner.

Brink taught my parents the catechism. Later that year, we became the first "family" to join Bluffton Chapel. I remember vividly the service of their profession and my baptism. Water dripping on my forehead, I teetered, standing on my theater seat, then vanished when it

would let us use his boat house and recreation hall for vacation Bible school. In time a piano of sorts was brought in, and some chairs and tables; we were in business! We had songbooks for myself and the young woman who was to be my wife and who came from Grand Rapids to stay the three weeks in Muskegon. She was the piano player, the teacher of the younger children, the chief authority on handicraft materials — in

went upright from a miscalculated shifting of feet. Baptism and laughter are associated in my memory.

The roots of my providential connection to Bluffton Chapel began with Grandpa and Grandma Schaalma, my mother's parents, who during her childhood resided in Bluffton. Grandma was a Swedish Baptist who had a need for church. Bluffton was the only church in the area. Grandpa had been a renegade CRC youth, tossed out of his home at age fourteen, excommunicated at age seventeen. A "chapel" and Grandma's sweet talk nursed his re-entry to church, together with Brink's evangelistic passion. Influenced by her parents, Mom tried Bluffton Chapel a few times. Although Mom and Dad lived several miles from Bluffton in 1942, where else could they go to try church save this safe chapel in the neighborhood where they had romanced? Their marriage was saved, their faith gave them new reason for living, and my father grew into a devoted church leader.

In 1943, Brink left Bluffton for Bethany of Muskegon, the chapel's mother church. Blufftonites were bewildered, some even angry, that a mother church would rob her child

short, the only indispensable person on my staff. Since we had no books for the children, we sang by rote and memorized the songs. The cost to the pupils was fifteen cents or thirty cents, and that was optional, to cover the cost of handicraft materials. On July 10 there were thirty-eight children enrolled, and by the time the three weeks were over, fifty had been in regular attendance, about all the two of us could handle!

to serve herself. Later, after my Spirit-led transfer from public school to the local Christian high school, I gained new understanding of the church-chapel relationship. I was shocked to learn that in the CRC a chapel was not a church. For one thing, it was on the dole from the Fund for Needy Churches. Besides, we didn't follow CR ways. We used a piano, not the organ, in worship services. I remember too that Dad passed me Sen-Sen, not peppermints, when the sermon started. Worse yet, in my innocent years I played cards, attended movies, ate out on Sunday, and went to dances. Upon entering the CRC mainstream, I was shocked to learn that these were taboo.

By the time I was in high school, Brink had joined the Calvin College administration. In my senior year, he invited my parents and me to Grand Rapids for a tour of the campus. That did it. Aspiring to be a minister in the CRC, I thought enrolling at Calvin seemed the right thing to do. In retrospect, however, I believe the social marginality of my youth led me providentially to teaching sociology at Calvin College.

The same bulletin that announced the close of vacation Bible school, July 25, 1937, announced the birth of Rodger Reid Rice, destined to become a professor of sociology and a dean at Calvin College.

That first summer the vacation Bible school helped launch the chapel in Bluffton as nothing else could have done. It was ecumenicity in action. Catholic children called me Father. A little Jewish boy, visiting

from New York, spoke of me as the Rabbi. Bethany consistory was discussing what could be done about providing adequate facilities. The following is found in "A Brief History of Bluffton Christian Reformed Chapel," prepared for chapel board members by Arthur W. Felt, first secretary of Bethany's mission committee of the chapel board:⁴

Bethany decided to move the mission building from Beidler Street to Bluffton and accordingly bought a lot 100x100 feet on the corner of Walnut Street and Thompson Avenue.

This lot was owned by the city and had accumulated some expenses which however they kindly adjusted fixing the price of \$1,500 which

Bethany paid in cash. This was in the fall of 1937.

In April 1938, as soon as the pavement was free of frost, the building was moved on its four-mile journey in the record time of a little under three hours. Its arrival presented a sorry spectacle being a mere shell full of inside bracings.

It was placed on the lot with a basement foundation built under it, reconditioned throughout and a belfrey added and gradually molded into a colonial effect.

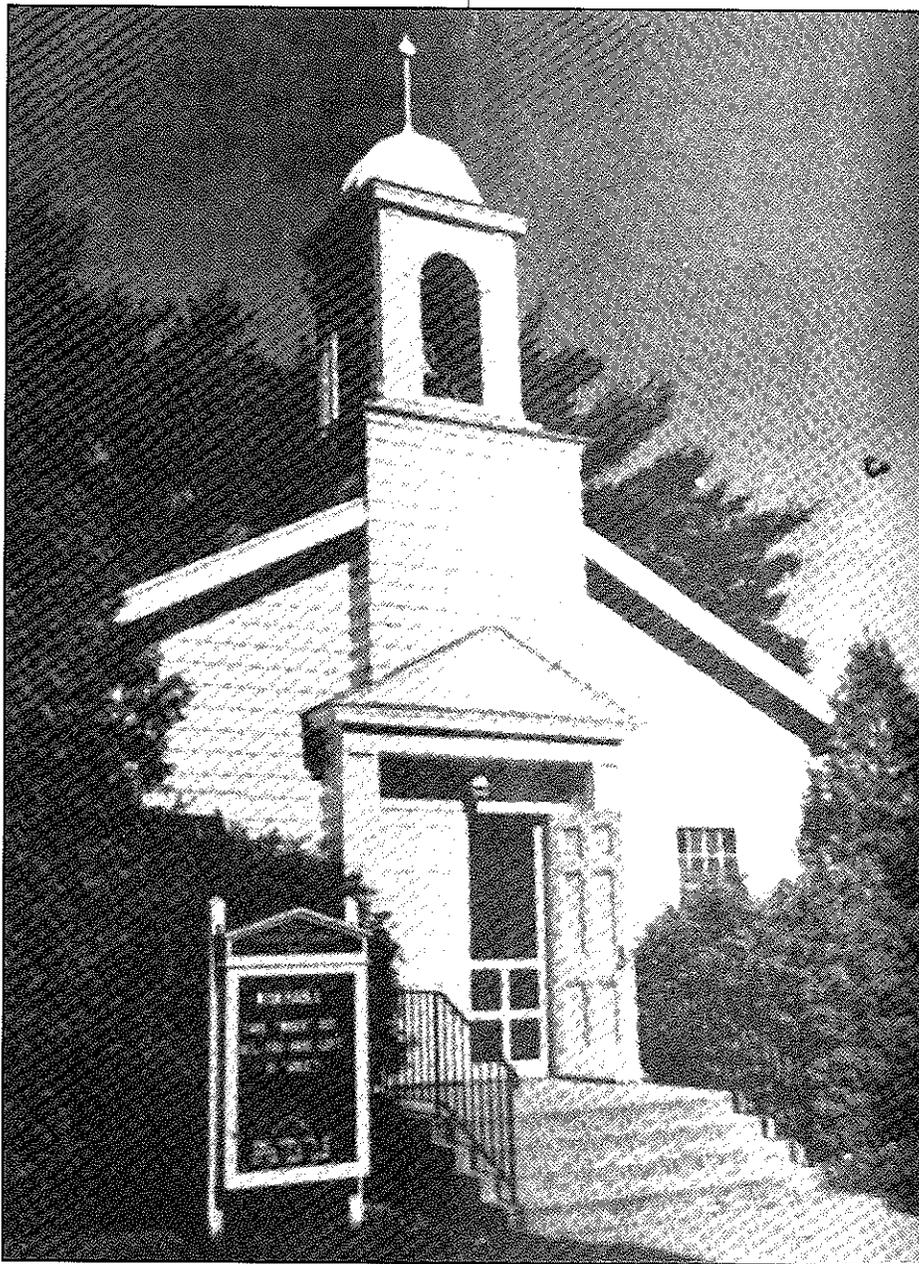
The Bluffton friends soon overcame their initial dismay at the sight of the old chapel and soon made its walls ring with a paraphrase of a familiar hymn, "Little White Church on the Hill."

June 1938 was a month of great ac-

tivity. On June 1 and 2 the chapel was dedicated. In anticipation of a full house each night, complimentary admission tickets were issued. Substituting for Dr. Samuel Volbeda of Calvin Seminary, Professor Henry Schultze was the speaker the first evening and Dr. John Dolfin the second. On June 16, immediately after my graduation from the seminary, Pauline Van Prooyen and I were married. Pauline was the young woman who had already given valuable service in vacation Bible school. Our honeymoon consisted of a trip to fill a preaching appointment in

Bluffton Public School building, where first meetings of Bluffton CRC were held (p. 59, Sand in Their Shoes).





Bluffton Chapel, Little White Church on the Hill (p. 79, Sand in Their Shoes).

Prairie City, Iowa. Our transportation was no longer the valiant old chariot that had carried me to and from Muskegon, but a 1934 Ford we purchased from Pauline's parents.

In July I received and accepted the official call of Bethany Church to be the assistant missionary-pastor. In September Classis Muskegon, at the

suggestion of Dr. Dolfin, met at Bluffton Chapel to carry out the examination and conduct its regular business. During the summer of 1938, in addition to the regular work at Bluffton, I conducted a door-to-door canvass of the Churchill district, where Immanuel Church had been carrying on a little mission

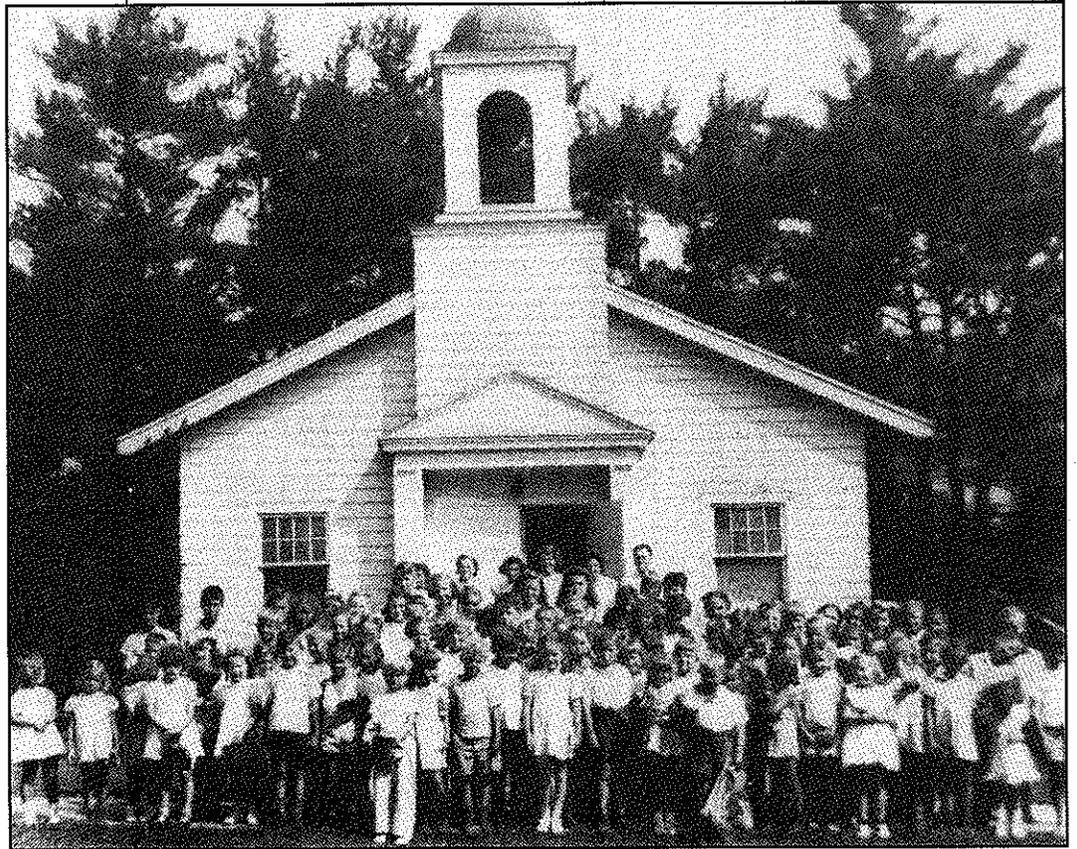
work. This led to the organization of Hope Christian Reformed Church, which in time, like the Bluffton Church, became part of Calvin Church of Muskegon. That summer we also had vacation Bible school, this time in the newly rebuilt chapel. We continued, however, the practice of singing not from books but from memory. At the program that climaxed three weeks of school, the children sang hymn after hymn, all from memory, for the better part of an hour, for the benefit of a packed chapel of parents and friends.

Bluffton Christian Reformed Church has the distinction of being the first in the Christian Reformed denomination to be formed out of the heterogeneous population of a characteristically American community. Home missions until then had consisted almost exclusively of gathering scattered families of Dutch background and Reformed persuasion into small congregations that were completely homogeneous. In addition, city missions gained a modest beginning in some urban centers in the East, in Chicago, and in Grand Rapids, for example, but those who were gained for Christ seldom joined Christian Reformed churches. More often, fundamentalist Baptist churches gained membership from Christian Reformed city missions. So, to move toward a church in Bluffton was to move along untried paths. There was no church order to follow that had any practical application.

A brief description of the *modus operandi* that evolved from our experiences may be helpful to valiant souls who are eager to follow a like procedure from a churchless community to the establishment of a Christian Reformed Church.

We simply started where we found ourselves and tried to carry on from there. In Bluffton we found a remarkably varied but also a remark-

Bluffton Chapel's vacation Bible school in the summer of 1938, when attendance had grown to more than one hundred children (p. 80 in Shifting Sands).



ably cohesive community, somewhat isolated from the mainstream of city life. It was an area that had attracted an amazingly diverse collection of characters. All of these were accepted at face value in a community that had a unity akin to that of a large family. Church work had to be just as catholic in its outreach. We learned a great deal of what it means to be "all things to all men, so that we might indeed win

some" (I Cor. 9:22). In the beginning I simply adapted myself to the Sunday school that was already there. Later we learned that there was a community bridge club which, by adding Bible discussion, became the Ladies Aid. The community loved getting together for all kinds of socials and pot-luck dinners, and we encouraged them. Each was an opportunity to invite someone into the shadow of the chapel. When the welfare office made available a demonstrator cook to show how welfare foods could be made more palatable, the chapel gave full cooperation. The weekly visit of Mrs. Hotvedt, a delightful former missionary for the Swedish Lutheran church, was another occasion for a luncheon to which visitors could be invited. In that we shared our feelings, our hopes, our problems. Mrs. Hotvedt had a son in the County Sanitarium in North

Muskegon, struggling with tuberculosis and diabetes. A call on him revealed not one but many lonely people, mostly young, equally at sea about their lives. By means of the trusty old mimeograph, weekly Bible lessons were prepared and distributed. It was a way of meeting these lonely, seeking souls and helping them, through the Bible, find answers to life's perplexing problems.

This many-faceted work needed something to bind it together. As early as July 8, 1938, an eight-point program of action was drawn up and adopted, first by the committee in charge of the Bluffton work and then by the Bethany consistory. It was a program that tried to give a bit of stability to the work in its inception and to foresee the needs of the future. Copies of that program are on file in the author's possession. At first a board, composed of Bluffton

believers and Bethany members, oversaw the work and reported regularly to the consistory. When sacraments were administered at Bluffton, representatives of the consistory were present. When, later, there could be an elder or two and a deacon or two at Bluffton, they were technically members of Bethany consistory, who functioned at Bluffton. In that carefully pedestrian way progress was made year by year until the time, in 1953, that the yearbook of the CRC could list Bluffton as an organized congregation and no longer a branch chapel.

The Second World War gave another unusual evangelistic opportunity. For a time, young people of the community published a mimeographed paper, *The Bluffton Crier*, but the service claimed many of these young writers, so we took over that newsletter and published a monthly

news sheet which we sent to every serviceman whose address we could get hold of. The Vontom family had three sons in service. The second, Sherwood, was stationed on Guam on Pearl Harbor Day and was captured by the Japanese and spent the entire war in a prison camp in Japan, undergoing nameless hardships. Personal letters from family and dear

about life as usual on the home front meant everything to them. When Sherwood was eventually released and came down the gangplank in Seattle, to be greeted by his waiting family, he carried under his arm the sheaf of those mimeographed sheets.

Among the show people who had made Bluffton their haven from the hectic life of travel and performance

around the world was a couple one way or other they all accepted the little white chapel as *their* church.

That little chapel has produced some remarkable citizens in his kingdom. Two housemothers of Co-op houses at Calvin College, a professor at Calvin College, whole families of committed Christians, some still living where once Pigeon Hill loomed, others scattered from coast to coast. To God be the glory!

Second Board meeting, Friday July 22, 1938.

1. All present, meeting called to order 8:00 P.M. in Chapel.
2. Opening prayer by Mr. A. Brink.
3. Minutes of last meeting approved.
4. Mr. Schaalma gave a report on the book boxes and the same committee was reappointed with Mr. Schaalma Chairman with power to act.
5. Meeting adjourned to parsonage.
6. Purchasing of coal was discussed and Mr. John Wenk appointed to get prices and arrange for delivery as may be required.
7. It was approved that Mr. Brink will supply a speaker for Bluffton that he may accept an invitation to preach to old friends in the LaGrave Ave. church in Grand Rapids on Aug. 28th.
8. The offer of Mr. Lake to make new screens was kindly accepted, we to pay for the materials which he is authorized to purchase.
9. Approval was given the Girls Club of Bluffton to hold a bazaar in the basement and an edification program in the auditorium under the supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Brink.
10. The Muskegon Classic meeting in our chapel Sept. 7th was approved and it was stated that our sink would be installed before then.
11. Mr. Brink appointed Messrs. Pearce and Vontom to make a bulletin board, he to assist in its design and wording.
12. Mr. Lake gave a report on the sand filling project and this committee reappointed to continue.
13. Bills were discussed and approved the principal bill being for Hymnals \$57.50 and freight .65%. In future the small current bills shall be paid by the treasurer as due and approved by acceptance of the treasurers report rendered at each meeting.
14. The clerk shall prepare a brief report for the Bethany consistory regarding finances and activities.
15. Meeting adjourned. Closing prayer by Mr. DeWind.

Approved Aug 25-1938
 _____ Pres.
 _____ Clerk.

Bluffton Chapel Minutes, Friday, July 22, 1938.

ones never were given to him. He did receive the mimeographed sheets because they seemed impersonal and harmless. These went from hand to hand in the prison camp and had an amazing effect on the prisoners' morale. They had never been in Muskegon and knew nothing about Bluffton, but these newsy letters

entirely, she came to know the Lord through the help of chapel members, and, at the time of her impending death requested that I conduct her funeral. I came from summer school in Evanston, Illinois, to do so.

It was but one of many moving experiences we had with those colorful inhabitants of this unusual community — believers, unbelievers, suicides, seeking souls, hardened infidels —

Endnotes

1. *Shifting Sands: A Story of the Bluffton Area*, 1976, Muskegon, Michigan, Bluffton Historical Committee. *Sand in Their Shoes: A Story of the Bluffton Area*, Muskegon, Michigan, 1970 (reprinted 1971, 1975), Bluffton P.T.A. Historical Committee.
2. Personal note from Robert Freye in author's possession.
3. Bulletins, 1937 to 1943, in bound volumes in library, Calvin Christian Reformed Church, Muskegon, Michigan.
4. On file in author's possession.

The CRC in the 1930s The Era of Henry J. Kuiper

by H.J. Brinks

In 1940, *Banner* editor Henry J. Kuiper opened the new year with a lengthy analysis of the preceding three decades. He argued that the buoyant revival of Calvinism, which had inspired the Christian Reformed Church before World War I, had become seriously diminished. "Unless we retrace our steps and dedicate ourselves anew . . . to the development of everything in our Calvinistic heritage," he declared, "we shall gradually become a conglomerate of religious groups each working for its own pet cause . . . and inevitably we will break up into at least three elements — the one clinging to historical Calvinism, the other espousing a sort of fundamentalist evangelicalism, and another inclined to follow in the wake of the liberal, socializing modernistic churches of our land."¹ His predictions were astonishingly near the mark.

Kuiper attributed the decline of "progressive Calvinism" to the decrease in immigration caused by the First World War and immigration laws imposing quotas, which together nearly dried up the influx of Kuyperian newcomers. Furthermore, under the compulsion of "a government which had lost its head in fighting disloyalty," many Christian Reformed congregations adopted English prematurely, and with the ac-

celerated loss of Dutch, the rising generation could no longer "read the precious theological works of our reformed theologians in the Netherlands."²

Following the war, Kuiper noted, the denomination had been forced to exhaust its energies first in battles with premillennial influences and later with divisive debates about common grace and the assaults of materialism and worldly mindedness.* So, during the prosperous twenties, when the CRC should have been strengthening and expanding a distinctively Reformed witness, the denomination gained little or nothing. Then, with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, financial resources were sapped by the demands of survival, and even the Christian-school movement lost its momentum in some regions.

During the 1930s

*The H. Bultema controversy, the R. Janssen and H. Hoeksema cases, and the "movie" issue in particular.

H.J. clearly identified himself with what some historians have labeled the Progressive Calvinist wing of the CRC. In that general group his strongest affinities were with those who, like John Van Lonkhuizen, favored separate Calvinistic institutions. With Johannes Groen and those who advocated greater participation in American labor unions or other institutions, Kuiper had little sympathy. Instead, he traced the roots of favorable developments to Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. Christian schools, diaconal concerns for Christian mercy, city missions, distinctively Reformed labor and political

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—Dr. J. H. Bruinooge in *The Banner*, Aug. 17, 1939

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- c. Aions: Day of the Lord; Times of the Gentiles
- d. Israel
- e. Kingdom of God and the Church
- f. Imminent Coming of our Lord
- g. Events Prior and Subsequent to the Second Coming
- h. Premillennial Exegetical Principle Applied

CHAPTER 5—CRITICISM AND OBJECTIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY, 8 pages; 368 titles

"....Als historisch-dogmatische studie komt aan deze dissertatie alle lof toe."

—Dr. H. H. Kuyper in *De Heraut*, April 27, 1930

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organizations — even the structure of men's and women's societies — he attributed to the influences of Abraham Kuyper's Neo-Calvinism. Without such wellsprings, he asserted, "our deaconate would likely have begun to fade into the perfunctory and useless thing it is in most of our American churches," and "our societies for young men and women would have been swallowed up by the Christian Endeavor Movement, a nationwide organization on which modernism already has a firm hold." Instead of men's and women's societies we would have only "adult Sunday school."³

The final analysis was obvious. Although the solid foundation of distinctive Calvinism remained healthy in 1940, its developmental implica-

tions had not been completed. Across the spectrum, then, in church, school, and the larger society, the challenge to create a more specifically Reformed witness still beckoned. It grieved H.J. that he was forced to expend his initial years as *Banner* editor either in controversy or in shoring up the achievements of an earlier, more creative period of Dutch-American Calvinism.

Creativity, however, could not be severed from disciplined lives and distinctive Calvinism. If we fail in these, he wrote in 1931, "we shall fail everywhere." Fear also contributed to H.J.'s urgent espousal of a reinvigorated Calvinism. His July 17, 1931, editorial titled "The Wholesomeness of Fear" asserted "one of the most serious phenomenon in modern soci-

ety . . . is the breakdown of authority." "Fear," he continued, "can be wholesome — fear of God, parents, government, and the courts — but not slavish or disabling fear." To "sing endlessly" that "God is love" distorts the balance of biblical truth which proclaims, "The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge."⁴

The Christian-school movement, which consistently emblazoned that text in its banners and logos, provided the best opportunities to advance Reformed principles and institutions. At all levels — primary, secondary, and college — *The Banner* encouraged the expansion of Christian schools. Wrote Kuiper, "If they fail, we fail,"⁵ and throughout the thirties, Mark Fakkema's reports of "Our Christian Schools" chronicled every

facet of the movement. He demonstrated that in 1931 a full seventy percent of Christian Reformed Church parishioners used the private Christian schools.

Always enthusiastic about growth in Christian-school attendance, Kuiper, nonetheless, warned of dangers. Some teachers, he feared, might have selected Christian schools without full commitment to Reformed ideals, or some school boards might be appointing faculty members because they were sons and daughters of their local communities and not because of their devotion to Reformed principles. Higher education — college and seminary — contained the potential of other pitfalls because independent-minded students and professors could corrupt the sources of orthodoxy. The greatest danger came from those who disagreed with the church but refused to leave it.⁷

Henry Kuiper's frustration with denominational stagnation in the 1930s mirrored the general malaise of that Depression-ridden decade. The stock-market crash came shortly after his appointment as editor, and the combination of unemployment at home along with the rising tide of tyranny in Germany and Italy augured little for bright tomorrows. The images of the Depression — bread lines, street-corner apple stands, and farm failures with corn at ten cents per bushel — symbolized the era. Curiously, both *The Banner* and *De Wachter* avoided detailed descriptions of economic hardship, though occasionally *De Wachter* offered wry comments about the New Deal's excessive

optimism, or about the claim that President Roosevelt worked sixteen hours per day. "Why not?" *De Wachter* asked. "He has much to do," and, the editor continued, "many of us have done the same year after year."⁸ Although both *The Banner* and *De Wachter* suffered the loss of about one thousand subscribers during the Depression, in combination they still maintained subscriptions from about seventy-five percent of the denomination's families.⁹

While *De Wachter* assiduously avoided political and social issues, *The Banner*, which reached over fifty-five percent of the CRC's homes, consistently analyzed the major issues and events of the thirties. Editor H.J. Kuiper established the agenda but he did provide space for opposing viewpoints. For several months

in 1935 Dr. Peter Berkhout of New Jersey dueled with Kuiper on the issue of pacifism. That same year Kuiper's good friend, J. Gresham Machen of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, publicized his opposition to the Child Labor Law Amendment. Machen's argument, mainly a defense of state's rights in contrast to federal power, was vigorously challenged by Professor Amry Vandenbosch. Throughout the thirties and beyond, E.J. Tanis published independent views in "The World Today," which offered alternatives to some of H.J.'s assertions.¹⁰

For all that, *The Banner's* pervasive social perspective was firmly conservative. Even in the depths of the Depression, socialism, to say nothing of communism, was dismissed as unworkable and un-Christian — unworkable because it destroyed self-initiative and un-Christian because it required the theft of private property to redistribute wealth and opportunity. Using a major feature of Abraham Kuyper's system, both Ralph Danhof and H.J. Kuiper argued that governmental intrusion into family and economic life violated the principles of sphere sovereignty. Government, they argued, must be restricted to arbitration and law enforcement.¹¹

But capitalism also took some lumps. Together, E.J. Tanis, Ralph Danhof, and H.J. Kuiper repeatedly asserted that free-enterprise capitalism required alterations, and they did not reject all of Roosevelt's New Deal. Kuiper favored profit sharing, while Danhof

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Left to Right—J. Hollebeek, G. Rozeboom, W. Heynen, G. Vande Riet

highlighted the organic character of society as a balancing antidote to excessive individualism. Tanis declared that the Bible provided no economic road map and that Christians could function under any economic system — communist, socialist, or capitalist. The profit motive, he continued, could not be a Christian's primary economic concern, and all private possessions must be governed by Christian stewardship. Ultimately material wealth belonged to God, and wage levels were also governed by economic justice. H.J. added, "We fear the robber barons and financial dictators produced by modern capitalism. Something must be done to clip the wings of our unscrupulous 'money changers' and to curb the power of the 'malefactors of great wealth.'" "Without change," Tanis added, "our economic order will be destroyed by the weight of its own corruption."¹²

During the thirties four notable developments signaled the CRC's continuing efforts to broaden its influence in North America. The appearance of the *Calvin Forum* in 1935 marked the return of controversial journalism. Following the demise of *Religion and Culture* in 1925, *The Banner* and *De Wachter* had carried the burden of religious journalism. Greeting the birth of the *Calvin Forum* enthusiastically, H.J. Kuiper wrote,

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"The need for such a magazine is apparent." Speaking for the *Calvin Forum*, Clarence Bouma announced, "We welcome controversy. . . . The intelligent person cannot live without it." But the magazine's editorial perspective was hardly radical, for Bouma continued, "Conservatism by itself leads to stagnation and petrification; progressivism cut loose from history is like chasing the rainbows."¹³

Though edited and largely written by the Calvin College and Theologi-

cal Seminary faculty, the *Forum* also printed contributions from a wide range of Calvinistic scholars. Its content ranged across the cultural spectrum — evolution, the age of the earth, social justice, missionary strategies, and economic issues, among others. In the first issue, medical doctor Peter Berkhout presented the case for pacifism and conscientious objection to war. That led to disagreements with H.J. Kuiper, and the debate spilled over into *The Banner*. There Berkhout and Kuiper rigorously contested each other's method of scriptural exegesis.¹⁴ Over its twenty-year existence the *Forum* supplied a diet of theologically oriented discussions for the Reformed community in the USA.

Another periodical, *The Christian Labor Herald*, was also established in 1935 and proclaimed its dedication "to the service of God in the

sphere of labor and industry" and to the "Lordship of his son in the social and economic life of the nation." Again *The Banner* praised the arrival of this new magazine as well as its sponsor, the Christian Labor Association. This labor organization had been formed in 1931, and Kuiper noted, "It took real Christian heroism to organize Christian labor organizations and Christian political societies . . . yet we believe it is our duty to let our light shine in the political and industrial spheres, not only as

individuals but also collectively."¹⁵

Obviously, something of the Kuyperian vision from the pre-war era continued to percolate during the thirties. Kuiper counted the 1939 founding of the Reformed Bible Institute as hopeful evidence of Neo-Calvinistic vigor. The RBI, however, functioned more as an alternative to America's Bible institutes than as an outgrowth of the Kuyperian world and life view. The RBI was intended to offer Reformed doctrinal instruction as an alternative to both the Arminian and premillenarian views which pervaded schools like the Moody Bible Institute. Such schools, John Vander Ploeg argued, were attractive to some church members who were beyond high school age and who had no opportunity to attend college. "They long to render better service in their home churches or in some missionary endeavor . . . and they look with longing eyes at well-known Bible institutes where others have gone." For these folk, RBI was designed to instill Reformed doctrines while also preparing a cadre of skillful lay leaders who could impress their churches with the desire to spread the gospel.¹⁶

The attraction of premillenarian biblical interpretations and the Scofield Bible, which explained such views, drew frequent fire from *The Banner* but also from the *Calvin Forum*. Throughout the thirties and beyond, Kuiper characterized the premillenarian and nondenominationalists as hopelessly at odds with Reformed ideas. Once he thundered, "Their ranting against denom-

inationism comes close to religious Quackery." No doubt Rev. M.R. De Haan's defection from Calvary Reformed Church in 1929 provided H.J. Kuiper with a startling example of nondenominationalism's attractions — even in Grand Rapids. De Haan, Kuiper asserted, was, "Cock sure, but dead wrong."¹⁷

Trained as a physician, M.R. De Haan gave up his practice in Jamestown, Michigan, to attend Western Theological Seminary. Upon graduating in 1925, he came to Grand Rapids as the pastor of Calvary Reformed Church on Fulton Street. Once there, he packed the house, and the building was enlarged. He increased the number of Sunday services, conducted mid-week Bible classes, and joined forces

port the Reformed view of infant baptism. This conviction led to a dramatic confrontation when he informed a young married couple that he could not baptize their child. Consequently, the Reformed Church in America deposed De Haan as an apostate maverick.¹⁸

Because De Haan and his followers were Dutch, that movement threatened the CRC more directly than those of more typical fundamentalists like Dwight L. Moody. Thus, with a blunt diagnosis, H.J. identified the threatening malady: "Some of our own Christian Reformed folk," he wrote, "have been swept along with this movement . . . which may be characterized as fundamentalist, premillennial, baptistic, and sensationally evangelical."¹⁹

With these labels Kuiper succinctly castigated the variety of American Christianity which De Haan represented, and for a month, Kuiper pursued that theme in a four-part *Banner* series.

With infant baptism he built a barrier to protect his church from the inroads of fundamentalism in general, but particularly as it beckoned from the ethnically acceptable mantle it had assumed in the pulpit of M.R. De Haan. Thus, in his concluding article, Kuiper asserted, "We dare say that if . . . American Christianity had not been

so individualistic, if the churches had depended less for their growth upon spasmodic revivalistic campaigns, and more upon Christian parental training, Protestantism in America would not be as weak as it is today." With that judgment Kuiper sought to convince his readers that De Haan's

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with Mel Trotter's Friday Evening Bible Class. Soon De Haan found inspiring associations outside the typical paths of Reformed theory and practice. Replacing these with the Scofield Reference Bible and teachers like William L. Pettingill, De Haan realized that he could no longer sup-

example led, finally, to weakened faith and that the less dramatic process of Christian nurture provided the best path for the maintenance of a secure Christian community.²⁰

Ultimately M.R. De Haan's ascerbic individualism also fractured the Calvary undenominational congregation, and he went on to found the Radio Bible Class. That program gained a national audience and was later adapted for television under the direction of De Haan's son. M.R. De Haan's voice was only one of many which preached through a growing number of radio sets. By 1940 nearly every family in America owned a radio, and the clamor of the nation's religious variety became instantaneously and everywhere available.²¹

By 1927 several CRC congregations had also begun to broadcast worship services for shut-ins but also with the hope of reaching members who had fallen away. These efforts, both in Chicago and Grand Rapids, encouraged the 1928 synod to appoint a study committee which urged synod to appoint a denominational radio minister in 1930. When synod rejected that proposal, H.J. Kuiper was incensed. "Let us make use of the radio to propagate the true gospel of Jesus Christ," he urged, for "we believe that our Reformed doctrine is the purest interpretation of the gospel. We believe that our Calvinistic World and Life View is the only hope of the modern world in its intellectual bewilderment and moral confusion."²²

"Bewilderment," particularly in religious broadcasting, required a Reformed alternative. "False religion" and "sects of all kinds" spend "huge sums for the propagation of their principles," Kuiper noted, and he continued, "Religious ideas of the most fanatic and absurd kind are being sent over the air waves and are contributing to that lamentable and

ever-increasing confusion of thought on religious subjects which is one of the characteristics of religious life today — especially in our own country." By 1939 the proponents of a denominational broadcast succeeded in founding the *Back to God Hour*, and it reached its first audience from station WJJD in Chicago.²³

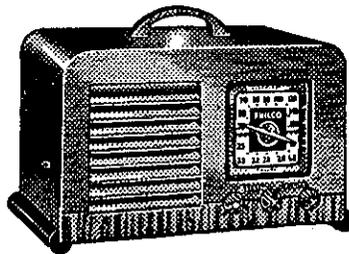
The radio, though, was a mixed blessing. It beamed the gospel to the world, but it also carried the world into the isolated kitchens and milking barns of every crossroad village. Discussing the "effect of the radio in Christian homes," Mr. Egbert R. Post declared, "We have never before been in such intimate contact with the world. Most of us have never before known what attractions were offered, nor known to what extent sacrilege and defiance of God have gone. . . . At the first of these demonic thrusts, we are shocked. Later we become more and more accustomed to it, and though not yet calloused [sic], we merely shrug our shoulders. Still later we meet an especially clever joke with an appreciative twinkle

wise-cracks. This may not be the invariable experience, but we are only reminding you of possible dangers."²⁴

It soon became obvious that the radio had circumvented synodical efforts to distance worldly thought and behavior. But the value of the radio could not be denied. It carried the news, weather and market reports, classical music, and even the gospel. Even so, its abuse, in Kuiper's words, "threatened the collapse of Christendom." The radio brought mainstream American culture into every Dutch-American community and with gentle persistence pierced the walls of ethnic isolation. Every community — Dutch, Polish, German, or otherwise — became more like its "American" neighbors in its knowing and thinking.

In *The Powers That Be*, David Halberstam tells the story of radio's impact on America. He reminds us that "by 1922 there were some 220 radio stations in the country. The sets themselves, simple models, sold for about ten dollars. Stores were not

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of the eye, the next one with a smile, and after having laughed heartily at the final spurt of humor on the program, we hopefully turn our dial in quest of another menu of Broadway hits, dance melodies and vaudeville

able to keep them in stock. . . . By 1923 there were already 2.5 million radio sets in the country. Millions of Americans had made radio the focal point of their households, scheduling their day around their favorite pro-

grams. When *Amos 'n' Andy* was on the air, the nation simply stopped all its other business and listened. When Pepsodent sponsored *Amos 'n' Andy*, its sales tripled in just a few weeks.²⁵

ways connected, not always sorted out."²⁶

The Christian Reformed Church was not immune. Despite early warnings against radio from H.J. Kuiper, elders making their annual

rounds of family visiting found sets everywhere. Whether they realized it or not, CRC people were letting the world into their living rooms, from *Amos 'n' Andy* in the 1930s to instant reports on the progress of the war by 1940. The radio put America in CRC homes with a thousand appealing personalities, a thousand dramatic stories, and a thousand products to sell.

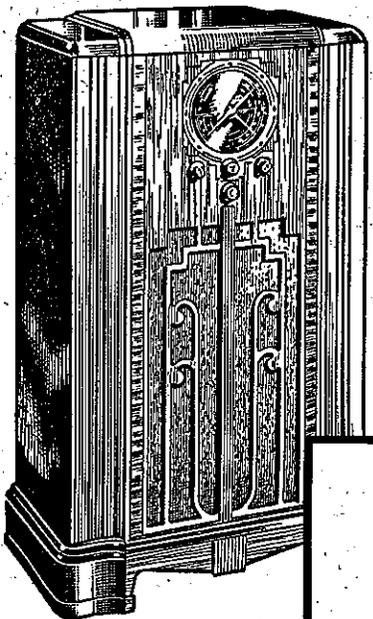
The validity of Halberstam's assertions can be readily demonstrated in the experiences of the CRC. From its founding in 1857, it was an immigrant church, and the open gate of immigration

filled, and a considerable number of Dutch-Americans returned to the Netherlands.²⁷ Between the two world wars, 1918-1945, one generation matured, and another reached school age without the influence of newly arriving immigrants from Holland. For most of these, English was their only language, and they grew up with the radio. Under such circumstances, being raised in Washington, Iowa, or Indiana no longer assured the retention of local characteristics. At the same time, Dutch-Americans everywhere could easily "pass" into the American mainstream. In most observable characteristics — language, dress, and diet — the CRC became much like its American neighbors during the thirties.

They were, some historians have asserted, finally Americanized. That, however, is a murky designation. English speaking and conversant on topics ranging from the Chicago Cubs to the latest stock-market quotations, the CRC's parishioners still remained fundamentally Dutch-Americans. They both maintained and enlarged the institutions which their grandparents established. From cradle to grave, with churches, schools, mental hospitals, recreational facilities, homes for the aged, cemeteries, and an adoption agency, the ethnic community maintained the boundaries of its enclave.

The 1940s, however, provided little opportunity to expand the vision and mission of these institutions. War once again throttled domestic programs, channeling the spiritual and material resources of the nation and the CRC toward a single concern. And once again H.J. Kuiper bent his back to the generally thankless causes of moderation. Yes, he noted, it was right to hate Nazism and Japanese imperialism but not the Germans, Italians, or any other people.²⁸

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drew a flood of Netherlanders into the church until World War I. These were the people who filled the pews, built the schools, and gave the church its language, theology, and cultural interpretations. Then came the war. Immigration stopped, and after the war the United States Immigration Office initiated the quota system. At first 3,600 Hollanders were admitted annually, but the ceiling was lowered to 1,650 in 1924. During the Depression the quota was never

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Nor, Kuiper warned, could Americans complacently assume their own moral superiority. He decried those voices in the USA which "preach white supremacy because they are alarmed by the progress of the Negroes among us. Many others would be all too ready for Jew-baiting campaigns. Still others cherish contempt for foreigners in general; they would welcome stern measures for the suppression of our entire alien population. The Germans have no monopoly on intolerance, hatred, and cruelty. The worst of human vices are latent in all human beings. War unleashes the wild beasts in the human heart."²⁹

During the war Kuiper joined forces with others who attempted to limit national arrogance and remind the denomination that Christianity knows no geographic or ethnic boundaries.³⁰ It is ironic that, despite his misgivings about the 1930s, he was, throughout that decade, significantly instrumental in retaining the CRC's confessional identity and in bolstering the institutional network which had been inspired by Abraham Kuyper's Neo-Calvinism. H.J.'s somber predictions of January 1940 have, in fact, only become more clearly demonstrable in our own time.

Endnotes

1. *The Banner*, January 12, 1940, pp. 28-29.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1931. James Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism*, p. 125.
4. *The Banner*, July 17, 1931, pp. 660-61.
5. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1931, p. 44.
6. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1931, p. 75; March 13, 1931, p. 248; August 23, 1935, p. 748.
7. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1931, p. 68; March 20, 1931, p. 260.
8. *De Wachter*, September 27, 1933, p. 597, notes the fuss being made over the N.R.A. Other comments are found in Editor H. Keegstra's serial column "Aan Mijn Jeugdigen Ambtgenoot te Urbana" ("To My Youthful Colleagues"), in which he made occasional reference to the New Deal and President Roosevelt.

9. *De Wachter*, November 7, 1934, p. 692.
10. *The Banner*, July 26, 1935, p. 697; April 5, 1935, pp. 326-28; December 27, 1935, p. 1191.
11. *The Banner*, January 4, 1935, p. 4; February 22, 1935, p. 172; April 5, 1935, p. 316.
12. *The Banner*, April 12, 1935, p. 340; April 28, 1935, p. 388; May 17, 1935, pp. 460-61.
13. *The Banner*, June 7, 1935, p. 532; *Calvin Forum*, May 1935, p. 5.
14. *The Banner*, December 27, 1935, p. 1191.
15. *The Banner*, January 18, 1935, p. 52.
16. *The Banner*, January 5, 1940, p. 14; James Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism*, p. 133.
17. *The Banner*, March 15, 1929, p. 188. The *Banners* of August 28, September 18, September 25, and October 2, 1931, contain H.J. Kuiper's reaction to M.R. De Haan's views.
18. James R. Adair, *M.R. De Haan, The Man and His Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), pp. 69-77.
19. *The Banner*, March 15, 1929, p. 188.
20. *The Banner*, March 15, 22, and 29, 1929 (H.J. Kuiper's series on infant baptism).
21. Adair, *M.R. De Haan*, pp. 79-107.
22. Mark Luckey, "Early Response to Radio in the Christian Reformed Church," student research papers in Calvin College and Theological Seminary Archives.
23. *The Banner*, October 10, 1930, p. 908.
24. *The Banner*, June 12, 1931, pp. 552-55.
25. David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Knopf, 1979), pp. 27 and 92.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
27. Brinks, "Recent Dutch Immigration," pp. 143-44, in *Contemporary American Immigration* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), ed., D.L. Cuddy.
28. *The Banner*, June 5, 1942, p. 533.
29. *Ibid.*, August 28, 1942, p. 756.
30. See *Origins*, Vol. VII, no. 2, pp. 33-41, for a discussion of the CRC during World War II.

BOOKS

Review by Conrad J. Bult

Home Is Where You Build It: Dutch Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920. Suzanne Marie Sinke.* Ph.D. Diss. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1993. 404 pages.

During the years 1873-1874, Rev. M. Cohen Stuart, a distinguished minister from The Netherlands, spent six months in America. Among his observations about the Dutch in Orange City, Iowa, is this description of a young farmer's daughter on her way to church for the Sunday morning service:

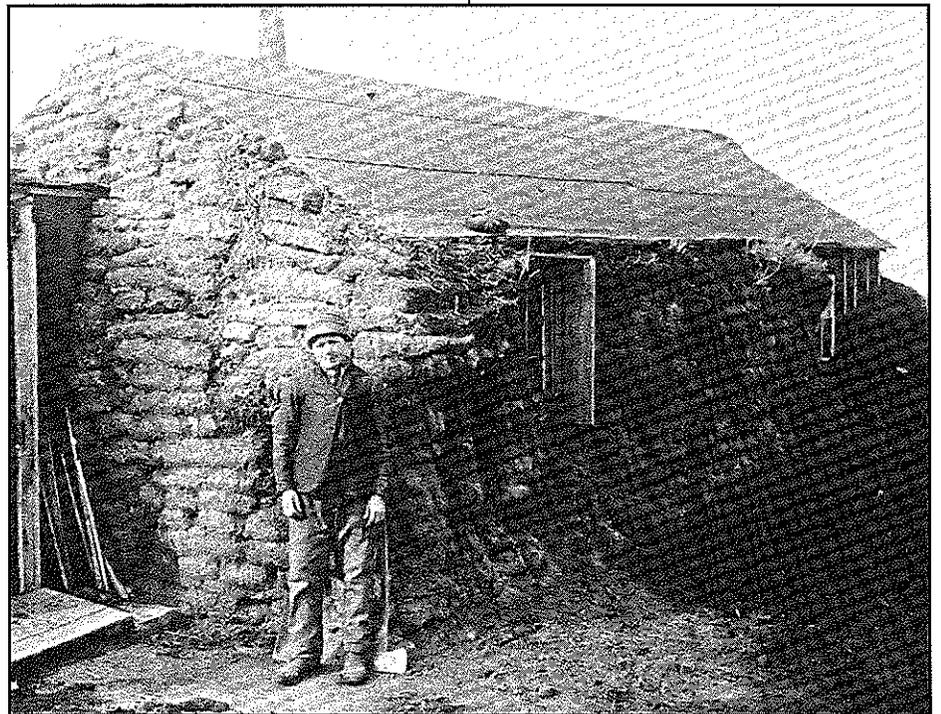
. . . a single amazon, a stout, young farmer's daughter who comes galloping over the fields, a delightful sight to see. (p. 2)

For Suzanne Sinke, author of *Home Is Where You Build It: Dutch Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920*, this "young amazon" and others like her do not appear with great frequency on the pages of Dutch-American history. To be more precise, Sinke desires to give Dutch Protestant immigrant women a history all their own. Sinke focuses on the years 1880-1920, an era she considers neglected by those who have written about Dutch-Americans from 1850 to the present. Life in America changed these Reformed and Christian Reformed women. Just how much and in what ways are the central themes of Sinke's dissertation. Searching for answers to these questions, she used

*Professor Suzanne Sinke is a member of the Clemson University History Department.

oral materials gathered by Dutch dialectologists who came to America in the 1960s to find remnants of the use of Dutch and thousands of letters, of which about three hundred she considers most useful.

of marriage; immigrant men found mates in the Netherlands or among second- or third-generation young ladies in America. In 1915, two young men had this to say about young ladies they met in Grand Rapids:



For immigrant men and women, America offered economic possibilities and, consequently, opportunities for marriage. Getting married in America was easier than in the old country: there were fewer legal requirements, church demands concerning engagement announcements were less stringent, and often marriages took place without a host of friends and relatives. Immigrant women came to America with hopes

Now they say that there are no girls in America, but I can tell you that there are more girls than boys here in Grand Rapids, but they don't want to speak Dutch and they have a lot of say in things. . . . the girls are nice enough, but they are the boss. (p. 24)

Sinke believes the family, not the church, to be the most influential institution in the life of the immigrant. This is true, she asserts, even for

those immigrants who at times found family ties less than warm or considerate. As Sinke declares, "The family functioned as an economic and emotional base for every immigrant I studied, even the most rebellious" (p. 79). Immigrant women who had gossiped in the Netherlands now wrote letters instead and separation from an extended family often meant that these women would look to the church for support.

The use of spoken Dutch in home and church also captured Sinke's attention. According to Sinke, children of Dutch-American parents "began to associate the Dutch language with spankings, long church sermons, and distant older relatives" (p. 107). Parental use of Dutch as a "secret language" made it less than popular among children who often responded "good evening pastor" to the dominie's personal Sunday-evening greeting of "goede avond" (p. 109).

For immigrant women food and clothing were major concerns. "The cry of the immigrants was not bread and roses, but meat and a new dress" are Sinke's thoughtful words on the aspirations of those who arrived in the new world (p. 146). In America immigrant women spent more time preparing meals and baking. They compromised on household cleanliness, often noting the differences between the Netherlands and America on this matter. Sewing declined, and as the years went by, Dutch-Americans more and more preferred all types of ready-made clothing found in mail-order catalogs or local general stores. Clothing was a badge of class in the Netherlands, but in America a young lady earning \$2.50 a week could dress as well as a farmer's daughter in the Netherlands. Sinke views this observation

by a young lady's mother as ample evidence of social equality in America. Increasingly, Dutch-American women, married or not, on farms or



in towns, found domestic self-sufficiency a thing of the past. Necessities and affordable luxuries were purchased for cash.

In America, young ladies found a seller's market for their domestic services. Wages and working conditions were much better than in the Netherlands. At times, second-generation daughters found positions in teaching or on the mission field, but for most, housework, managing family finances, or helping husbands in a store or on the farm remained primary activities. Keeping house, Sinke points out, was, for those who wrote in Christian Reformed periodicals, what the Lord had ordained women to do. Concerning gender roles, Sinke writes the following about a Rock Valley, Iowa, couple married in 1894 and interviewed in the 1960s:

The husband who quipped "everyone in his place" had a wife who clarified that though he never dried a dish or set the table she worked side by side with him in the family store. (p. 235)

The author devotes the chapter "Our Father, Who Art Everywhere" to the religious beliefs these women held and elaborates on how these principles were practiced in the church and home. About church relationships Sinke portrays the dilemma of women in this discerning statement:

But as adults women were in a quandary in theological terms. On the one hand their churches talked of equality before God yet they* saw the family rather than the individual as the basis of society. (p. 264)

Men and women shared the same orthodoxy, though Sinke thinks men cherished it more than women did. Though the letters women wrote contain little about theological matters, much is said about personal faith and its implications for everyday life. This emphasis on faith and life, Sinke asserts, came about gradually and was a result of the constantly changing religious environment in both Dutch-American communities and the world around them.

Frequently, Reformed and Christian Reformed consistories faced problems of divorce and marital abuse. These rather discomfoting remarks from Sinke will, to say the least, intrigue the thoughtful reader:

As a whole, church consistories offered little to women in bad marital situations, for any assistance could have an influence on their ideal of family. For better or worse, these women were married,

* That is, the churches.

and they had to live with that reality. (p. 285)

Adultery was considered by all consistories as biblical grounds for divorce, but few divorces took place for this reason. And those that did were based not on adultery but on the venereal disease of one of the marriage partners. With increasing frequency women turned to civil authorities and the courts to redress their marital grievances or obtain divorces. Women in unhappy marital circumstances found themselves in

Christian Reformed Church was desertion as a biblical ground for divorce. More than once during the years 1894-1920 synod reversed itself on this question, and by 1920 it had not given the final word. Synod may have vacillated on desertion, but Sinke believes consistories consistently treated abusive husbands better than they treated abused wives:

It was striking that none of the consistories I studied took significant measures against abusive husbands. I did not encounter any

help bear the load or offer consolation when family members died. Close transatlantic family ties were also hard to keep up. Inheritance disputes and a decline in the ability to write Dutch fostered this decline in concern about those in the old country. Though the church hierarchy was closed to them, these women found mission societies, Ladies Aid societies, sewing societies, and other such groups to be substitutes for a close-at-hand extended family. Skills and training acquired in these organizations helped many of these women, who later urged their Christian communities to provide institutional care for the aged and mentally ill.

For Dutch-American women of the 1880-1920 era, life in America was not a replication of life in the Netherlands. They changed, some more, some less, the young more than the old. More and more they thought about and defined their faith, marriage, domestic life, social life, and relationship to their church in ways reflecting their American environment. Often in Sinke's dissertation women speak for themselves about life in America. Their words personalize Sinke's learned prose and give it a sense of human warmth. Migrant Dutch Protestant women changed their way of life, but just how much is the question, as we note in these words from Sinke's concluding chapter:

Yet for all the changes which migration entailed, the extent to which life remained the same for these Dutch Protestant immigrant women was astonishing. (p. 375)

After reading this thesis and its multitude of explanatory footnotes, a reader will have much food for thought regarding the role of women in the ethnic and religious past of immigrant Dutch Protestants in America.



situations where resolving their domestic difficulties meant either submitting to the decisions of consistories or seeking legal and economic assistance outside the boundaries of their Dutch-American enclave, which was embodied in their local church. Women found neither choice a happy one. Both denominations, but especially the Christian Reformed, found these appeals to civil authorities alarming. Another thorny issue for the

cases of a man even having to make confession of this before the full congregation, let alone facing excommunication, though there were several cases of repeat offenders. Going to the lake on Sunday generally received harsher treatment. (p. 307)

Women were not expected to be ill and often tended sick children or husbands while ailing themselves. Relatives were not always nearby as in the Netherlands and not able to

FOR THE FUTURE

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

The Dutch Down Under
by Gary D. Bouma

Christian Education in Northern New Jersey

Polkton, Michigan, RCA-CRC-RCA-CRC-RCA
by Loren Lemmen

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

Whitinsville, Massachusetts by Annemieke
Galema, et al.

Frontier Women: A Different View of Immigration

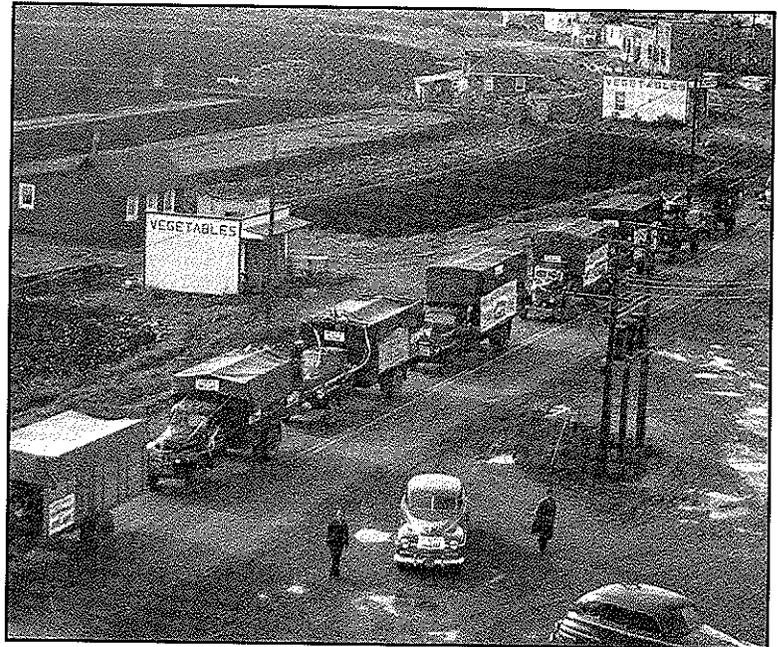
Another Look at Grand Rapids' West-Side Dutch
by H.J. Brinks, et al.

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: *And the Swamp Flourished*
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Holland Marsh, Ontario, 1948, parade of farm trucks.
P. 61 in *And the Swamp Flourished*.

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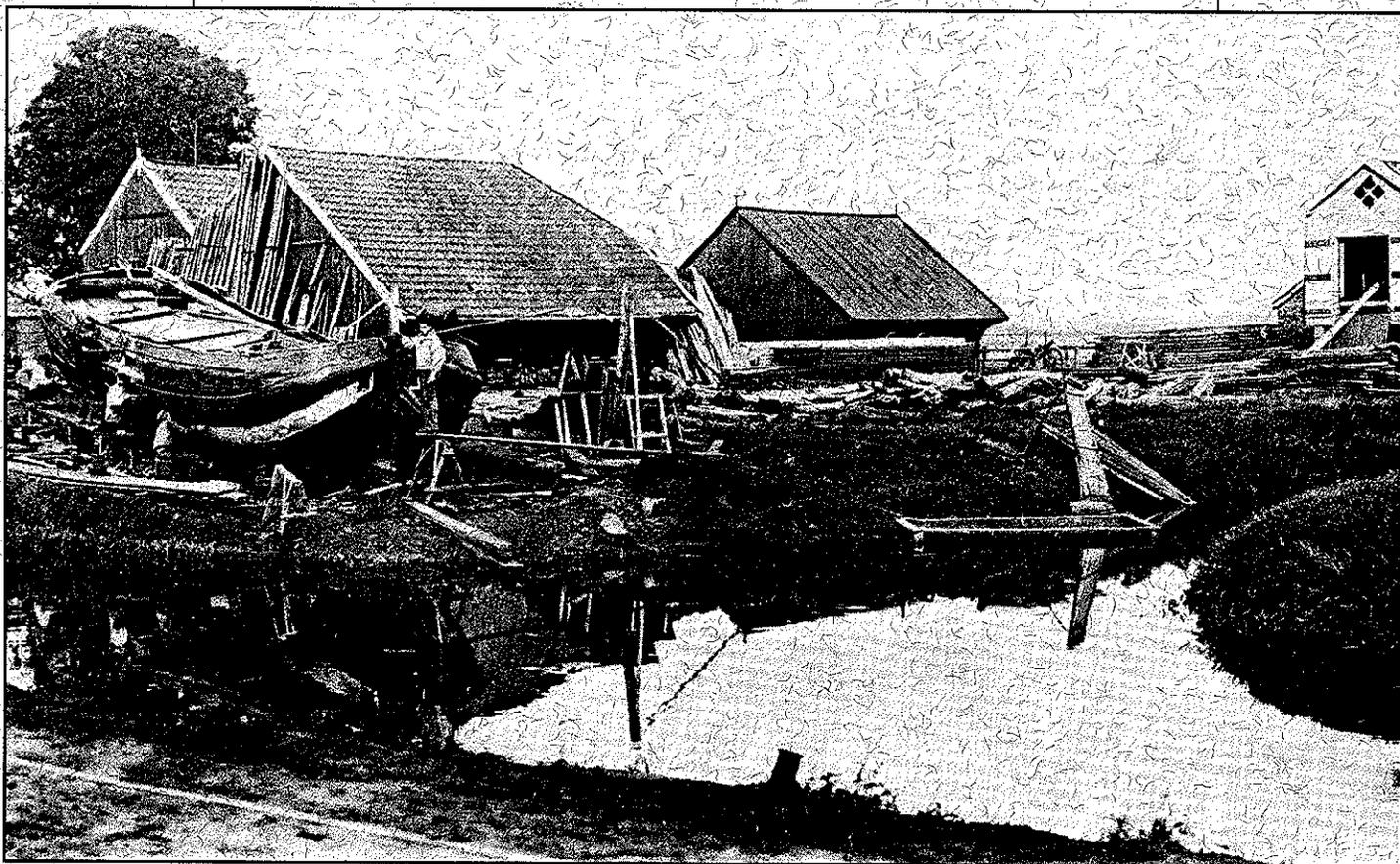
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