

Origins

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Origins is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of The Archives.

These goals include the gathering, organization, and study of historical materials produced by the day-to-day activities of the Christian

Reformed Church, its institutions, communities, and people.

H.J. Brinks
Editor

Hendrina Van Spronsen
Circulation Manager

Conrad J. Bult
Book Reviewer

Tracey L. Gebbia
Designer

Eerdmans Printing Company
Printer

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Jacques Mountain from Mayflower Gulch, 1933. Photo by Bill Colsman



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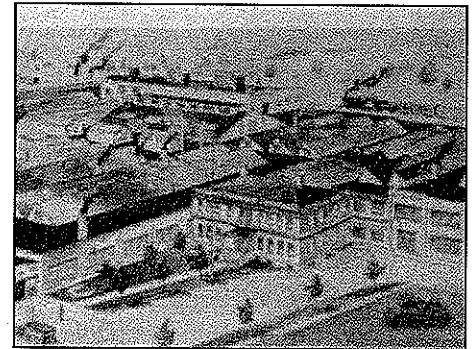
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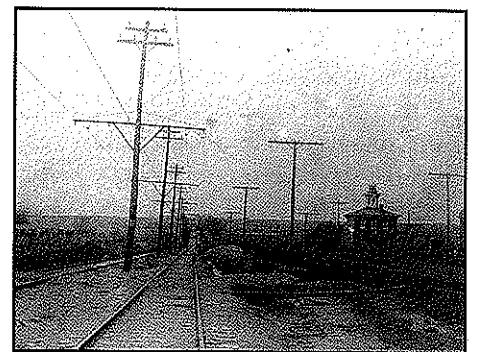
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Janet Huyser's Recollections

Janet Huyser's recollections begin with her childhood in Barendrecht, a Rotterdam suburb where her parents prospered as wholesale and retail grocers. After Pieter Huyser and Hendrika Ramen married in 1894 in Assen they settled in Barendrecht, with few assets. Pieter had been raised in an orphanage, which had apprenticed him to a shoe repair shop in Den Haag where he met Hendrika while she was employed by a Rev. Wisse as a

chambermaid. By the time they emigrated in 1911, they had acquired ample living quarters above their retail store and a warehouse along with the means to raise six children with help from a maid.

For the thirteen-year-old Janet, life in Barendrecht was comfortable with good prospects of advancing her well-recognized mental agility in a boarding school. The announcement that the whole family would be emigrating both

shocked and depressed her. Although her father expected to realize long-cherished dreams of success in the United States, Janet's dreams evaporated. The following excerpts from "My Life Story and Other Memories" recounts the emigration experience along with the generally dismal and unsuccessful efforts of the Huyser family in Winnie, Texas.

Editor

In the tenth grade of my accelerated educational program I really had to study and buckle down. The anticipation of going to a girls' boarding school prompted me on. We had a busy schedule. Organ lessons on Monday and Friday. Pa purchased a beautiful, small, frosted-oak-wood-organ which had four foot pedals. I was so proud of it. Beautiful! As a reward for students with above-average grades, a trip to The Hague and the resort town of Scheveningen was given. The catacombs, the beautiful royal palace, the Binnenhof and the boardwalk. What a memorable day!

Since we were Protestant, I went to a Protestant Christian school. I never went to Sunday school, but when I started school, I had to attend Sunday services which lasted for two hours. My favorite subjects were reading, history, geography, singing, and science. I had trouble with arithmetic, not ordinary arithmetic, but problem solving. My school days were happy days, not a cloud in the sky and not a worry or care. We got into trouble

when we didn't do our homework, came home late for dinner, disobeyed our parents, or showed disrespect for our teachers.

All was going so well that I didn't realize a dark cloud was threatening my complacency. Pa wanted to emigrate to America. He never had forgotten his boyhood dream. How I begged him not to go. Mother wasn't in favor of it, and many of his close associates were against it, but nothing could swerve his idea and determination. But for me it was a shattered dream. It meant no boarding school. The beautiful girl's bike I had received on my twelfth birthday had to be disposed of. My dear girlfriend Leentje was heartbroken, and so was I.

Preparations were made. The grocery business was sold for 40,000 guilders with promissory notes for the outstanding debt balance (which was never collected). Auction day was November 8. How painful it must have been for my mother to part with all her

This article was submitted by Janet Huyser's sons Robert and Louis Hoekstra.

belongings and to leave her home, parents, and kin. Klaartje [the maid] became ill to think that she would miss Johnnie and the family. At that time her mother was old and ailing; otherwise she would have gone with us to America.

We had a large beautiful mirror, and at housecleaning time Klaartje would polish the frame. She was so superstitious about handling it. Wouldn't you know it, on the day of the auction, the mirror fell and broke into a hundred pieces. Klaartje's grief was so great that the doctor had to administer a sedative. Seven years of bad luck, goes the superstition. If there is truth in it, we certainly experienced it.

By November 10 we were ready to go. We would sail on the *Nieuwe*

Rotterdam for America. The ship had its berth in Rotterdam, and we were to sail second class with every convenience in two staterooms. Hundreds of people were at the dock to bid us farewell. Finally the moorings were loosened, and the ship began to move. What wailing, handkerchief waving, sobbing, and crying.

A mighty chorus from the emigrants broke forth, a song of farewell to their beloved land:

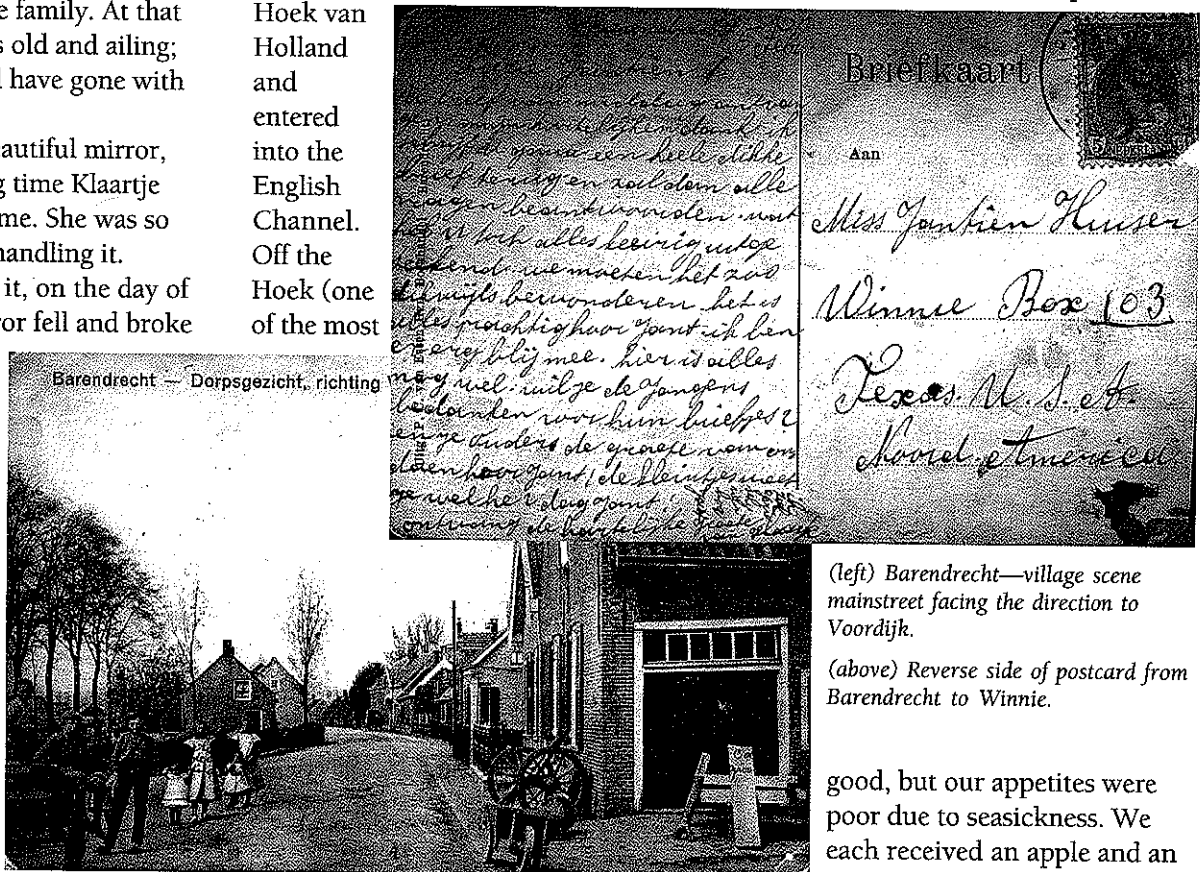
Good-bye my dear fatherland,
good-bye.
I go from here to distant shore.
Dear fatherland, good-bye.
All my weal, all my woe,
One last glance, a farewell salute,
Dear fatherland, good-bye.

Farther and farther away from the

dock the strains of the song echoed over the Maas River. Soon the docks were out of sight and we passed the Hoek van Holland and entered into the English Channel. Off the Hoek (one of the most

devoured the garbage as it was dumped into the ocean.

The meals aboard the ship were



(left) Barendrecht—village scene mainstreet facing the direction to Voordijk.

(above) Reverse side of postcard from Barendrecht to Winnie.

treacherous capes in the world) a fierce storm was raging. Decks were emptied. Lifeboats were in readiness, and everyone was ordered to stay in their staterooms. We were all sick, even the crew.

A rumor spread that an SOS had been sent because the *Nieuwe Rotterdam* was damaged. I don't know how much truth there was in this report, but the captain said that he had made many voyages and that this was the worst he had experienced in fifty trips. We surely did not enjoy it.

We stopped at Le Havre, France, for some loading and unloading. We passed the White Cliffs of Dover before entering the Atlantic Ocean. It was less stormy but far from smooth. Large schools of dolphins followed our ship. It was fun to see them jump, maneuver, and play in the water. They

good, but our appetites were poor due to seasickness. We each received an apple and an orange every day. We would

often throw our fruit to the Polish emigrants who were huddled on the lower deck. They carried their belongings, mostly bedding, with them.

After six days we saw land. Everyone went on deck and shouted, "Land! Land!" Strange, our seasickness left us when we spotted land. We could see the lit torch of the Statue of Liberty miles distant from the shore. It looked like a golden ball illuminated by the sun or artificial light—a glorious, welcome sight.

But tragedy struck. An elderly couple, also traveling second class, were taking a trip to Iowa to visit their son and his family after an absence of twenty years. The elderly gentleman contracted pneumonia and died on board ship after a two-day illness. He was buried at sea, and I'll never forget the sight when they lowered the bier

and the body sank into the sea. His wife was hysterical.

We lay at anchor for two days in quarantine off Ellis Island. No one was allowed to leave the ship, and we were quarantined to our rooms or to the deck for that time. The day after quarantine was lifted we went through Ellis Island customs, where crates were opened and contents piled alongside them. The elderly lady who had lost her husband had no help and was at a loss and distraught. Pa helped her with packing and sealing her trunks. The next day we went to Hoboken, New Jersey. What a turmoil in unloading freight and baggage and claiming our possessions! We—Pa, Ma, and six children—stayed close together. Brother Bill found something to amuse himself, a rocking chair, the first one we had seen. Bill rocked and rocked until finally he rocked over backward with the chair on top of him. I guess he learned a lesson.

We were so hungry that Pa ventured out to get us something to eat. He asked me to go with him, but Mother needed me. I told him to ask for bread, butter, ham, and milk and wrote it down on a slip of paper. Sure enough, Pa came back with a good supply. We ate like hungry wolves after fasting on board ship for five days.

From Hoboken they took us by omnibus to the New York Central Railroad Station to board a train for Chicago. The train was a great disappointment. Horrible! No compartments. In the Netherlands we traveled first class and always had a compartment for ourselves. Here everyone traveled the same class, and we were scattered throughout the coach. The train's whistle sounded horrible to us, a shrill sound and eerie. This was Pa's first disappointment.

It was evening. We were tired and soon asleep. When we awoke, it was bitter cold in the coach. We were

passing through snow-laden country, I think Pennsylvania. The countryside was bleak and bare and looked desolate and forsaken. It wasn't a very encouraging scene.

Farms and barns showed neglect on every hand.

Pa looked out the window and said, "Is this America? For two cents I would turn back and return to Holland." Pa's emotions were reflected in his facial expression. His glorious dreams and expectations of America were shattered. My heart bled for him, and I shared in his grief. To see Pa suffer this mental agony was too much for me. I think if he had had his way, he would have taken the next ship back to the Netherlands.

November 17 we arrived in Chicago and stayed overnight at Uncle Gerrit Raman's house in Roseland. The next day our journey resumed and on November 19, 1910, we arrived in Orange City, Iowa. The hospitality of Uncle John Raman and Aunt Willempie was genuine. They were overjoyed to meet the folks. We, a family of eight, stayed with them for a week.

Pa rented a spacious house in town across from the courthouse. It bore no comparison to our home in Holland. Everything was new to us. No one to help mother or wait on us or be of aid to the children—what a change. What a different world we had entered. The customs, the language barrier, and the standard of living had a big impact on



Barendrecht's Christian Reformed Church and parsonage.

us. At times our parents were overcome with fear and apprehension.

It was bitter, bitter cold, a deep freeze with mounds of snow. By December it was 43 degrees below zero, and the water in the kitchen pump was frozen every morning. The frost was so deep in the ground that it froze the water in the reservoir. Pa had to buy water, which was delivered in large barrels. Fortunately, the large cook stove had a water container on the side, and the water tank was heated by the cookstove. The firing up of the two big anthracite stoves at night was our first experience. We didn't have an inside toilet (another disappointment), and the privy was outdoors in the backyard. The snow was so deep that a rope was strung from the house to the privy with walls of snow on each side of the path.

Among all the changes, the greatest for me was the demotion to sixth grade. So humiliating. The taunts and ridicule from the classmates. To be sneered and laughed at was a stab in my heart. How I hated Orange City. I despised their boorish, ill-mannered attitudes. No culture. It wasn't long, though, and I was promoted to the eighth grade, but my desire for intense study was dampened. The future

seemed so empty, nothing to strive for. Shattered dreams. Disillusioned.

One day Pa received a letter from Holland from his brother Jan. Jan had a large linseed and peanut oil refinery on the docks at Rotterdam. It was a flourishing business. The residue was converted into fodder for cattle, and Jan held the patent and distributed the fodder cakes to various home and

Mother told me to keep still. Her answer to Pa was short and stern. I can still hear her say, "No, Pete, you're in the boat; now row." Mother's words fell like hammer blows on our heads. These were devastating words to Pa and me. Pa pleaded with her and said, "We have enough money to travel in second class. You'll have Klaartje and help again." Pa had outstanding cash

acres. That was too much for Pa to handle and certainly not a hobby farm. Some old settler told Pa, "Mr. Huyser, you'll never make an American dollar until your last guilder is spent." How true.

The Koch Real Estate Company was active in Orange City and employed many agents to promote the sale of land in Texas in the Rio Grande

Valley near Beaumont and Galveston. Mr. Bylsma, the agent for Iowa, approached Pa with the sales pitch. The brochures on citrus orchards and the prospects were alluring. In January 1912, the first excursion to Beaumont was undertaken by twenty Iowans, including Pa. They were taken to an established orange and citrus plantation producing figs and citrus fruit. At this time he didn't commit himself and came back to Orange City with pamphlets and many promising ideas in his head.

A month later, Pa, on another excursion,

went back to Texas to the Winnie and Hampshire area, fifty miles south of Galveston. This time he purchased forty acres of land in Jefferson County, three miles northwest of Winnie and three miles south of Hampshire, a thirty-year-old colony. The land was sold at \$40 an acre. The deal was settled, and Pa held the deed to forty acres of Texas soil.

On the excursions Pa and friends were shown thriving old settlements of orange plantations. This appealed to many. Of course, they were not



The Huyser family, October 1910, L to R: Mattheus (Matt), age 9; Jantien (Jen), 13; Pieter (Pa), 40; Johnnie, 6; Geerdina (Dena), 2; Hendrika (Mama), 39; Johanna (Ann), 3; Wilhelmus (Bill), 11.

foreign areas. He was a millionaire. Jan's letter was an appeal for Pa to return to the Netherlands to manage an oil refinery. It was an established business that was for sale, and Pa could have control of it immediately. He advised Pa to consider it seriously. As Pa presented the offer to Mother, I interrupted and said, "Ja, Pa, let's go back to the Netherlands. Then we can live as before. Klaartje will be so happy, and I will be able to go to boarding school." A few happy moments in a dark situation.

credits and interests in the Netherlands to buy the factory. Her answer, an emphatic no. Nothing more to be said. Matter closed.

Pa was confronted with a big problem. He had to find employment. He inquired about buying a grocery store but all in vain. He also made inquiry about buying a small parcel of land, five or ten acres, but no small parcels of land were sold. The land idea was squashed in a hurry. Iowa farmers held a monopoly on land, and most farms were two sections of 160

informed that these orange groves were of old standing and that it would take years of hard toil and labor to obtain this. They were led to believe that in a few years everyone would be rich and own an orange and fig plantation. This was to be a Dutch Paradise. Fond dreams. Pa was the owner of forty acres of untold future misery. At least now he had a goal in life, and with renewed courage he would start a new life in Texas.

In March of 1912 we moved to Winnie, Texas, by Santa Fe Railroad. We were shocked to see so many blacks. The farther south we came, we noticed separate coaches for the blacks. Bill ventured to go into a black coach, but the conductor called him and told him to stay in the white man's coach. We had to transfer in Galveston, and by interurban we arrived in Winnie. I think John Stob met us at the station.*

Winnie was something else. It was prairie and uncultivated land, pioneer country. Our abode was an old, wooden, unpainted house, if you could call it that, located one mile from Winnie and near the school and small church building where we worshiped. The house had two rooms, a large room which served for a bedroom and a smaller kitchen. At least we had a roof over our heads, but what a contrast to our palatial home in Holland. We lived here about four months.

Sister Cora was born here on April 22, 1912. How well I remember this event. Brother Matt and I were to sleep at a neighbor's house the evening of this memorable day. I felt so humiliated, so frustrated. Trudging down the road with our pillows and blankets was too much for me. I felt humiliated, how much more did our dear mother.

Sister Cora was a darling baby. At

*John was the father of Calvin Theological Seminary Professor Henry Stob (1908-1996). See *Origins*, Vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 9-18 for his recollection of Winnie.



John Stob's home in Winnie, Texas, was much like that which Pieter Huyser built.

first I was indifferent to the whole affair. A baby didn't interest me and I scarcely looked at her. One afternoon some girls came over to see the baby. They thought she was adorable. This awakened in me a desire to see how adorable she was and, for the first time in four weeks, I took a good look at her. She was darling, pretty as a picture, so sweet and cuddly! I think much of my disappointment, frustration and bitterness left me.

We obtained help for Mama after Cora was born, an elderly lady, Mrs. B. What a battle-axe. She drank like a fish. She cashed in the eggs she could gather and even an untouched pound of butter for liquor. Pa couldn't put up with her because she mistreated brother Johnnie. She also suffered from some ear infection and eczema. She was a loathsome sight. Pa was vies of her.

Our breakfast usually consisted of boiled eggs and homemade bread. On one occasion she dealt out the eggs and, as usual, Johnnie and Pa got the smallest ones. She always saw to it that she got the largest ones. This griped me, so one morning, at an unguarded

moment by her, I exchanged Johnnie's and Pa's eggs for her eggs. She was furious, but after that Pa had control of the egg situation.

Our bread was home baked in the wood stove. Mrs. B. would put the risen loaves in the oven, fill the stove to capacity, start it, and disappear for the afternoon. The result of this type of baking was bread burned on the outside and raw in the center.

Sis Dena had a painful experience one day while picking flowers. She decided to rest for a little while and sat on a little knoll. In no time she was covered with huge brown ants. We could hear her screaming. Mrs. B poured vinegar all over her, and this method of medication was painful. She developed big welts and some infection.

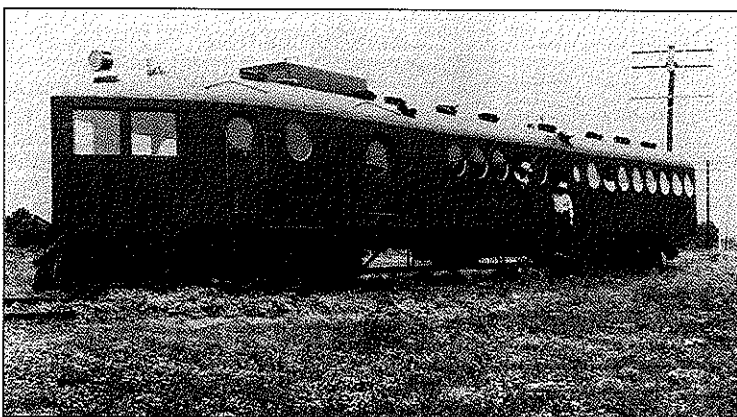
Pa was unaware of Mrs. B's doings. She hated Pa. If she prepared his lunch, she gave him the partially baked center slices. If I made his lunch, I used the slices from both ends. This provoked her to no end. We endured her for ten days, and it was a relief when she left.

While we lived at this place, I decided to clean out a cupboard. I found a can of pepper and emptied it outdoors on the trash pile. The wind blew the pepper into my eye, and an infection set in. I suffered for weeks with this infection and couldn't tolerate daylight or lamp light. Winnie had no doctor, and the closest one was in Lowell, thirty-five miles away. By buggy this was a day's trip. So we resorted to home remedies such as poultices of tea bags and hot water.

Once a week the butcher would come through with a wagon of meat cuts, unwrapped but covered at least to keep the multitude of flies away. The meat was tougher than cowhide.

By this time Pa was building a four-room house on the parcel of land he had bought. He would leave with brother Bill in the morning and return in the evening. School and education were of a minor obligation in Texas, and although Matt and Bill received some instruction, it wasn't anything to brag about.

Pa dug a deep well that produced clear drinking water and built a lean-to for the horses, a chicken coop, and



Theodore F. Koch's railroad car used to transport prospective buyers to his real estate developments in Texas.

a privy. A fence was erected with a sturdy gate and reinforced corner posts around the forty acres. I remember drilling for the fence posts. The fence

was meant to keep the free-roaming and grazing cattle out. A new era—the work began.

Farming was a new experience for Pa. He tilled about fifteen acres of sandy soil, which needed much fertilizer, and planted sorghum, sugar cane, and some corn. He also planted some fig and orange trees. Our garden consisted of cucumbers, honey dew and watermelons, okra and onions. We always had a good crop of black-eyed peas and sweet potatoes, which were our staples.

All indications were for a very decent crop until disaster struck one night. The Texas longhorn cattle roamed the country at free range. When the crops were in the ear the hordes broke through the fence and trampled down everything. Like a plague of locusts they devoured everything. We drove them away, but in no time they returned. More than once they broke into the field, trampled everything down, and ruined the crops.

Between the torrential rains, the scorching heat (105 to 110 degrees), and the cattle break-ins, we didn't harvest a single paying crop. Even if

the crops were fairly good, there was no market for the produce because the nearest was Houston or Fort Worth. We had no transportation in those days, so the crops were worthless. How disheartening. Work, work,

and it all seemed so futile.

Since the town of Hampshire operated a pickle factory, the next crop was a stab at growing pickles.

This brought a small margin of extra income, but not enough for support—a three- to four-mile drive with horse and wagon and forty-five cents for a load. But then forty-five cents is better than nothing.

Pa got a bright idea and bought a young pig in hopes of fattening it up and, in time, butchering it. But to all consternation, not even the pig flourished. It had to live on cucumbers, watermelon, and sweet potatoes. It may have gained ten pounds in a year's time.

One time Pa purchased a milk cow from a ranger near Lowell. It was a skinny, scrawny-looking animal and the first time Pa went to milk it he was disappointed in the quantity and quality of the milk. In the evening the same story, maybe a pint of milk. Strange! It didn't take long to find out the cause—she milked herself. Pa used all sorts of harnesses to protect the udder, but to no avail. She broke everything, and, no matter what he invented, the cow always won out.

One day a stampede of cattle came through that area, and Bessie broke loose and followed them. Brother Bill retrieved her and pulled her home. But the same thing happened again during the night a few weeks later, and we never saw hide nor hair of Bessie again.

Cattle and horses from the north or Midwestern states could not survive here. They contracted a blood disease caused by a fly or mosquito sting. I've seen a team of horses drop dead pulling a buggy. This disease would strike them suddenly and cause death. Pa lost three horses in this manner.

We weren't the only ones who suffered these setbacks and losses. Our neighbor De Boer's crop failed, and their horses died too. Mr. S. Hoekstra, who owned 1,000 acres, mostly lowland north of us, imported a boxcar load of beautiful cattle and horses from Illinois, but they all

died, causing great financial loss.

Our next team of horses were Texas born. One, a beautiful brown quarter horse, had a diamond on his forehead and one white hoof. Diamond was a beautiful animal, a lively horse and also a saddle horse. The other was an older horse and not much good. We still owned a gold-colored horse from the north, but it suffered from colic. When it would run, it sounded like a barrel of water was rolling around in its belly. This horse was Bill's favorite.

I was very fond of Diamond, the highlight of my dull existence. I learned to ride him and enjoyed riding immensely. A little tidbit after each performance was his reward. He was gentle with us, but tricky when in harness. One time we were riding to church and had to cross a stretch of prairie where some cattle were grazing close to the road. Diamond just bit one in the rear end and almost started a stampede.

We had to cross this stretch of prairie as a shortcut to get to church in Winnie, three miles distant. We would

Johnnie and the three younger sisters. Many times we took advantage of this opportunity to go horseback riding when Diamond was left home. What a beautiful, graceful animal. We rode him without a saddle, just an old blanket. We would take turns being sentinels to watch the entrance to the prairie for a speck on the horizon as a warning to put Diamond in his stall. So we enjoyed at least one highlight in our doleful existence.

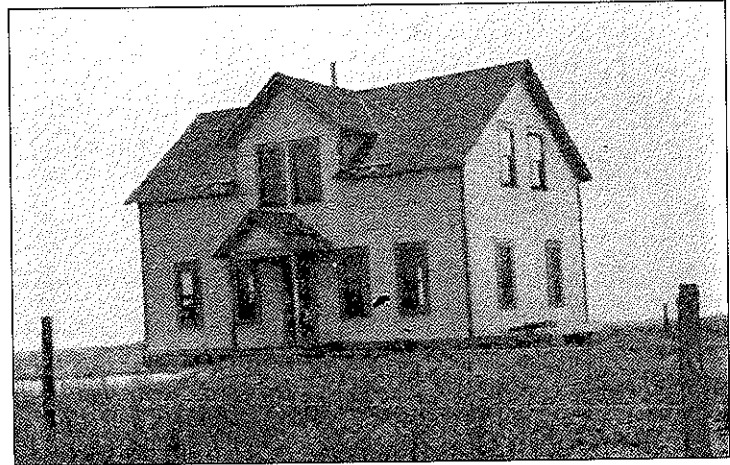
The situation became critical, and Pa had to find employment to support the family. With the help of De Boer, Pa found work at a rice plantation twenty-five miles away. Bill was a nuisance at home, so he went with Pa and was employed as a water boy for the field workers and filled the water troughs for the horses. Fortunately we had three horses, so a team and the wagon afforded transportation for Pa and Bill to the rice farm. Sometimes Diamond was

left home for our use.

Pa and Bill worked six days a week on the rice plantation, and they came home on Saturday tired and weary. I don't know what kind of work Pa did, but his wages were five dollars per

week, and he earned twenty dollars that month. We ordered food and groceries from a Sears Roebuck catalog. Twenty dollars provided the needed food but no luxuries. We were poor, desperately poor, yet we never went hungry.

So Matt and I had free rein at home,



Dutch Reformed Church near Winnie, Texas.



The Hampshire/Winnie Hotel with the owner's family (Mathers) on the veranda.

pile in our wagon or two-wheel buggy as transport. A seminarian usually had charge of the services. Often brother Matt and I were assigned to stay home on Sunday afternoons to baby-sit

and we tended to the chickens, garden, and wood pile. Every two months Pa would go to the woods to fell trees for our fuel. This was free. This was a day's work for the boys and Pa. It was our job to saw and chop the wood. We acquired a rhythm when sawing and sang songs or psalms, and, in no time, many a trunk became stumps and sizeable firewood.

In the fall of 1912 brother Matt and I worked at Miller's harvesting sweet potatoes and yams. We worked from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon for fifteen cents a day. By the end of the week we had earned one dollar. In those days a dollar was appreciated since sugar and rice sold for five cents a pound and a five-pound pail of shortening cost one dollar.

We had our rainy season for three months in the spring. The cloudburst would flood our yard. The ten acres of lowlands which we crossed going to

church would flood with from six to ten inches of water producing mosquitoes galore, the large type. Also malaria mosquitoes and sister Anne and Johnnie became infected requiring them to use quinine. After the rain a bluish, oily substance would float on the top of the water. This made the soil non-productive for anything. Twenty acres of lost land, we thought. Had we known as much about petroleum oil as we know now we would have thought differently. A gold mine was at our reach, but we were not aware of it.*

At times we would have to walk three miles to town to get some groceries. On one of those hikes a thunderstorm broke loose, scaring a herd of longhorns which came thundering down the road. Best get out of their way or get trampled, so we crawled through a culvert to a small cattle lean-to which offered shelter. We waited out the stampeding cattle and the fierce cloudburst and made it safely home.

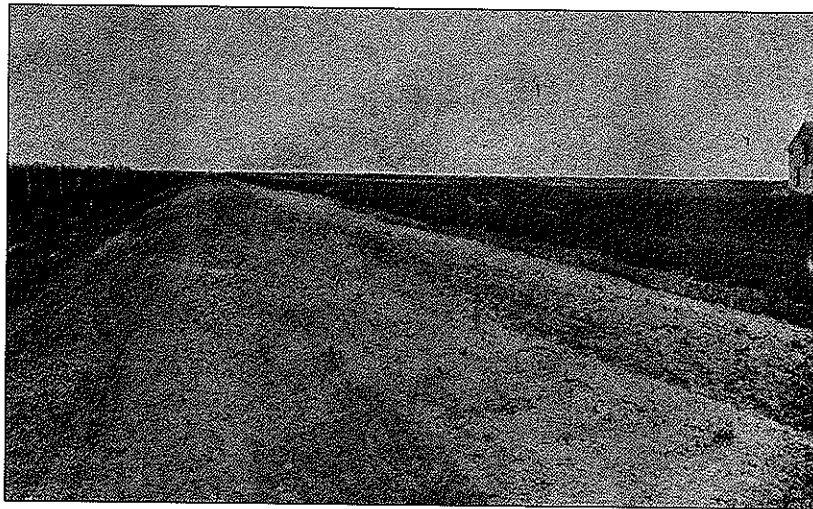
I remember the worst storm we ever experienced. Pa was not at home that evening. The sky in the west was ominous and inky black, and the air smelled like sulfur. In less than five minutes' time the storm's full force and fury were upon us. The wind was howling, and the lightning was fierce, flash after flash, and thunder, crash after crash. Mother gathered her chickens around her, and we sat quietly on our chairs.

All at once a blinding flash of lightning struck our homemade telephone and knocked it off the wall. De Boer had rigged this up for use

between us and our neighbors. A ball of fire circled around the kitchen wall and went down the wiring connected by the wall to the outside. We were petrified with fear; Mother was praying for our safety.

After the storm abated, a calm followed. We found that the wind had been so strong that it had buckled the kitchen door and had blown the privy off its mooring and landed it ten feet away. Part of the lean-to was damaged, and the chicken coop, which harbored the fertilizer, was damaged. Mother offered a prayer of gratitude to the Lord, who had so miraculously protected us. After this we went to bed.

One episode I can never forget. Mr. Arends, who had lived to the west of us and had moved back to his former state, had planted a field of black-eyed peas and said that we might have the yield for the picking. So Matt and I



Dirt road and landscape near Winnie, Texas.

each had a pail and a gunnysack, and we set out for the field a mile away to harvest the peas. It was a hot day, and the peas were dry and ripe and easy to pick.

After a few hours of picking we heard some noise and a snorting sound not far from us. Lo and behold, we recognized an injured bull that had

broken away from the herd and had been roaming the countryside with an infected hoof and leg. He was crazed with pain and would bellow, paw the ground, throw dust in the air, and charge at anything that moved.

He came upon us snorting and running fast. What to do? We dropped our pails and gunnysacks of peas and tried to find some shelter behind bushes. But the animal came closer. Spotting a lean-to about twenty-five feet away, we crawled so the bull couldn't see us and, when we thought the coast was clear, made a quick run for this shaky shelter. It was a small lean-to of four posts and a tin roof for shade for animals.

We clambered up the side and managed to get on the roof. While we lay flat on our stomachs, the hot sun beating on us, the enraged bull approached the lean-to. He leaned against a shaky two-by-four snorting, bellowing, blowing, and rubbing his body on the support. Oh, how we feared! Finally, Matt said in Dutch, "*Laat ons maar bidden*" [Let us pray]. Well, we did and prayed that the animal's attention might be distracted, and, after what seemed like hours, he finally moved away.

We waited until he was a good distance from us before we gathered our nerve and got down on the side where he couldn't see us. We crawled to where we had left our sacks of picked peas and headed quickly for De Boer's place, which was the only place between the Arends's place and our home. If only we could get safely to his fence we would be all right.

When we neared the barbed-wire fence, the bull spotted us and gave

*Later the Sun Oil Company exploited the area.

chase. We reached the fence and crawled under it, sacks and all. I tore my dress on the barbs, leaving part of my dress behind. We ran for De Boer's shack, but he wasn't home. We decided to go into the barn and wait for him to return and take us home in the wagon. A vicious mustang tied up in the stall tried to kick us, but he missed. We crawled in the manger and felt safe.

Finally De Boer came home from town. He was surprised to see us, and after we told him the story, he drove us home. We didn't go back again to pick peas, for we had picked enough to last us for a long time. This experience left me with nightmares and a dreadful fear of cows. Little did I know then that this bull would be the means for us to leave Texas.

About three weeks later, on a Sunday when Pa was home, the wounded critter broke into our fenced-in field. Matt tried to chase it away to the open prairie, but it charged, foaming at the mouth, straight for Matt. Reynard De Boer, our faithful neighbor and Pa's right-hand man, had advised Pa, "The next time he breaks into the fence, take a pop at him." Pa was on the porch and, sensing the danger, got his shotgun, and with one bullet he killed the bull. We witnessed this from the back porch. Mother was crying and perhaps praying at the same time.

The shot was heard, and it didn't take long before we had visitors—vultures on every fence post and some already devouring the dead animal. Within a half hour a posse was at the spot, led by Mr. Sorgius, leader of the county posse. The animal belonged to a private party, and Texas law allowed cattle to roam in open country. Pa was told that he had to pay a fine of thirty-five dollars or go to jail and sit out thirty-five days of penalty. The reason for this was that the animal was shot on our property. If it had been killed outside the fence, there would not have been any fine or charges. Mr.

Sorgius lived about one mile east of us and had been warned about this injured animal roaming the countryside but had just ignored it.

Mother was frantic and said, "Now Pete has to go to jail. Oh God, help us." The posse and Mr. Sorgius gave Pa a week to raise the money, but we didn't have thirty-five cents to spare let alone thirty-five dollars. Merciless people! My parents were God-fearing and praying people. The Lord heard their prayer.

It being Sunday, Pa and the older children went to church that evening. He must have told the story to the candidate who was our preacher, for he prayed for Pa and a way to help him. God is a hearer of prayer. Two days later two young men came to see Pa and proposed buying the place, for they wanted to settle down on their own. They paid Pa's fine and arrangement was made to settle the sale.

Pa received some cash for train fare and to start housekeeping again. A hundred-dollar note was to be paid at a later date. Ma sold the beautiful frosted-oak linen closet, the only piece of furniture they had taken along from the Netherlands, for four dollars. It was an elegant piece of furniture with

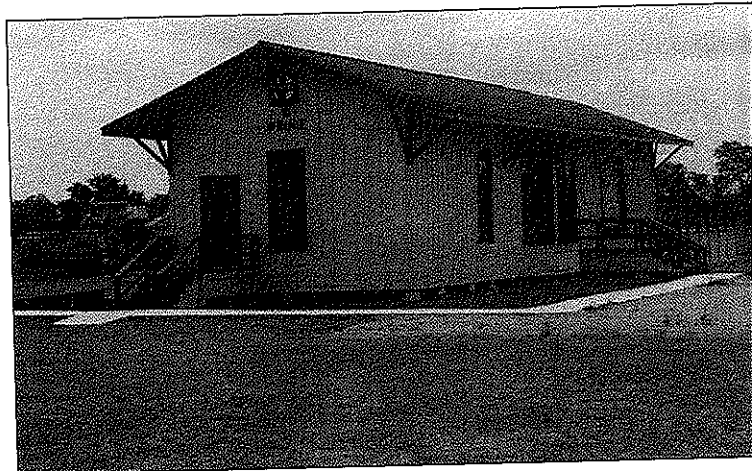
prism inserts in the doors, six in each, four inches square. There wasn't much else to dispose of.

We had a collie dog, Prince by name. This was Sis Corie's nursemaid. Ma would say to it, "Prince, take good care of Corie." Prince would walk next to Corie wherever she went. If he saw any danger, snake, or big spider, he

would pull her dress, bark, and push her away from it. The dog lived only one month after we left. He wouldn't eat, just whined and whined. De Boer, our bachelor neighbor from Wisconsin, dreaded to see us go, and the folks kept in touch with him.

No one was happier to get away than Pa. Often I had to drive the team after we did the shopping at the country store while he would lie on the floor of the wagon and just cry, "Why did I ever come to America and this God-forsaken country of Texas? I plunged the family into misery and poverty, no schooling, no future." He would cry like a baby, "Oh God, forgive the wrong that I did."

Remorse and regret are a killer of body and soul. I think the humiliation of working on road construction and in the rice farms also affected him. He had to learn the hard way to become humble. So, unforeseen, the way was opened for us to move from Texas. God in His providence provided a way for



Current Winnie Railroad Depot on the Santa Fe line.

us, and this gave Pa new courage and hope.

Good-bye, Diamond. Good-bye, Prince. Good-bye, De Boer. Good-bye, Texas, the land of longhorns, stampedes, mosquitoes, cloudbursts, scorching sun, and disappointments.

Holland

From Colony to City: Holland's First Twenty-Five Years

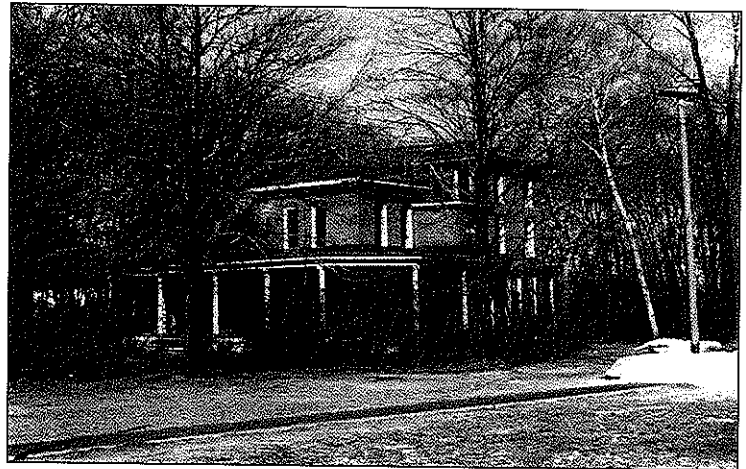
Robert P. Swierenga

In 1872 the Revs. Albertus Van Raalte of Holland and Cornelius Van Der Meulen of Zeeland, the founding pastors in the Holland colony, addressed an old settlers' celebration of the first quarter-century. Numerous Dutch and American flags in the crowd signaled the gradual transformation of these Hollanders into hyphenated Americans. In words that sang with satisfaction, Van Der Meulen declared:

Have we accomplished our purpose? Our answer is: We have grown up in this land; we have increased in number; our cattle have multiplied by the thousand; our woods have been transformed into fruitful acres. Accordingly in every respect there has been progress. But our greatest asset is the large group of youth who were born in this country and have grown up in it. A number who came here in their early years now are even men of power in government and administration, especially in school and church. What a change in twenty-five years! It is scarcely believable, nor can it be easily imagined.

Van Raalte was equally effusive in his commemorative message:

Is there anyone who can visit our villages and townships, covered with the richest farmsteads, and not be astonished? It is impossible to estimate the value of our ships, fisheries, mills, factories, and fruit farms We possess shipping lines and railway communications. In truth God has wrought great things for us!



Albertus C. Van Raalte mansion, demolished, 1960.

The pioneer dominions touched on all the important themes—population growth, farms and factories arising from forests, the coming of age of the second generation, the founding of religious and educational institutions, the triumph over poverty and adversity, and the marvel of railroads that reduced travel time by a factor of eight over ox-drawn wagons. Holland had become “simultaneously a market place, a harbor town, and an industrial center.”

What the clerics failed to mention in their celebratory sermons was the downside of progress, namely, rivalries, divisions, and religious conflict. Their leadership had been challenged

Robert P. Swierenga, Research Professor, A.C. Van Raalte Institute for Historical Studies, Hope College
This paper was presented to the 1997 conference of the Historical Society of Michigan, Hope College, September 20, 1997.

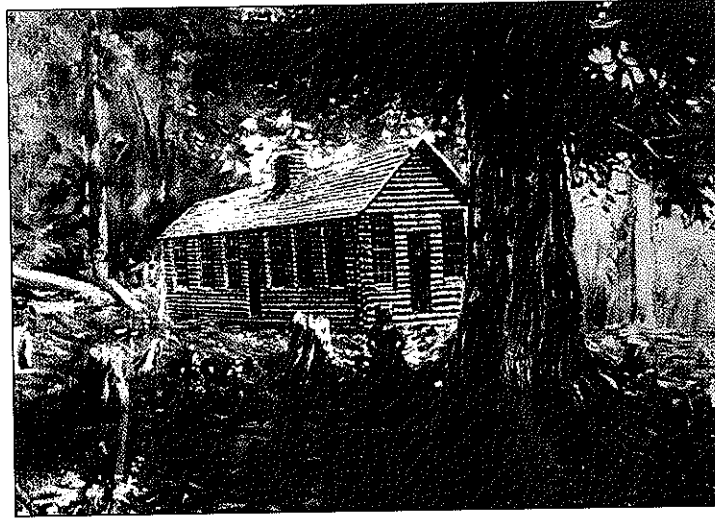
in church, government, and business. Religious unity had given way to plurality; church secessions as early as 1851 and a major split in 1857 rent the colony and divided families. This was significant because the church stood at the center of everything. In public life, elected officials had come to power, and theocracy gave way to democracy. The transfer of power from dominie to mayor in 1867 engendered painful discord.

The very success of the colony undermined the spirit of cooperation and piety that ruled in the first years; warm hearts had become cold. And rapid population growth had run up the price of farmland. Families had to send their adult children to distant daughter colonies, mainly near Cadillac, 120 miles to the north, in order to find affordable land. Even the mother tongue was losing ground to English, which was spoken in the public schools and increasingly in factories and shops.

Stages of Development

Immigrant communities typically pass through developmental stages, and Holland was no different. The first decade there was a time of mutual dependency because of the language barrier, strange environment, and poverty. During that time the immigrants acted cooperatively, led by Van Raalte, who served as town planter and promoter, land dealer, business entrepreneur, doctor, educator, newspaper editor, and unofficial mayor.

Van Raalte founded the town in February 1847 and had the county surveyor plat it several months later. Interestingly, the dominie gave none of the streets Dutch names, but he did follow the Dutch practice of setting aside open squares for a central market and a fish market. In 1848 he obtained a post office and presided at the organization of the first school district.



An artist's conception of woodland living in the colony.

The following year Holland Township was organized in Van Raalte's home by ten trusted American residents who divided the offices among themselves because the Dutch could not vote until they had applied for "first papers" after the mandatory two and one-half years of residence.

To handle civic matters during their legal minority, the Dutch created a town-meeting form of local government known as the *Volksvergadering*, or People's Assembly, which continued until 1851, when the Dutch gained the franchise and could participate in township government. The *Volksvergadering* met weekly to discuss and act on everyday concerns. It directed the construction of roads, bridges, and a schoolhouse; required pigs to be penned until November; and banned unnecessary work on Sunday. Closing the several saloons that flourished in a town was a major goal of the assembly. It required all of Van Raalte's rhetorical skills to get the offending places closed. In 1855, when the state legislature enacted a general prohibition law, Van Raalte saw to it that Holland remained dry, although Detroit and other cities openly violated the act.

In 1849, at the instigation of the

People's Assembly, Van Raalte took title to all town lots in his own name and assumed all debts and liens in order to ensure that all deeds passed to the colonists were sound. He had to do this because the board of trustees appointed by the People's Assembly to hold title was not incorporated and

could not act as law. This necessary arrangement later opened Van Raalte to much unfair criticism. As sole owner, Van Raalte used his authority to block a plan by four Dutch merchants to speculate in lands to make money at the expense of the community.

Whereas the town trustees wielded administrative and legislative powers, the church consistory held judicial power and enforced the biblical code of conduct. A woman who slandered another had to make a public confession, and a troublesome mother-in-law and a teenager who fled from her stepfather were admonished. An elder criticized a woman whose dress was not properly closed at the collar. A man whose son had cut down a neighbor's tree was sent home and ordered to read the biblical account of Eli, the judge of Israel who failed to discipline his two wicked sons. When the circus came to town and two elders posted themselves at the entrance to the tent, traffic was so inhibited that the promoter in frustration left "this d___ hole." A major problem was the remarriage of widows and widowers before waiting a proper time after burying a spouse, which happened too often in the early days when deat



Holland area home with Dutch decorative touches. Constructed with Veneklasen brick.

came early and children needed two parents. Church consistories deliberated this issue at length, and after five years Classis Holland came to a consensus: widows should wait nine months and widowers three months before remarrying. As Christian brothers and sisters, the people pooled their economic resources according to the "community of goods" principle. At Van Raalte's instigation and with the financial assistance of Jannes van de Luyster, a wealthy Zeelander, they collectively financed a colony store stocked with goods fetched from Albany, New York; a colony ship (the hundred-ton *A.E. Knickerbocker*) to ferry the goods and also new immigrants; a fishing vessel; a communal farm in Saugatuck; and a shingle factory, but the cooperative business ventures failed because of lack of capital and poor management. Some immigrants who came from Chicago on the ship refused to pay for their passage, claiming that it was a "colony vessel," hence community property. Van de Luyster lost heavily on the vessel and Van Raalte on the store. Leaders in the Dutch Reformed Church in the East rescued Van Raalte

from bankruptcy, and he plunged ahead. In 1848 he invested in the first factory in Holland, an ashery to manufacture pearl ash and baking soda (*saleratus*).

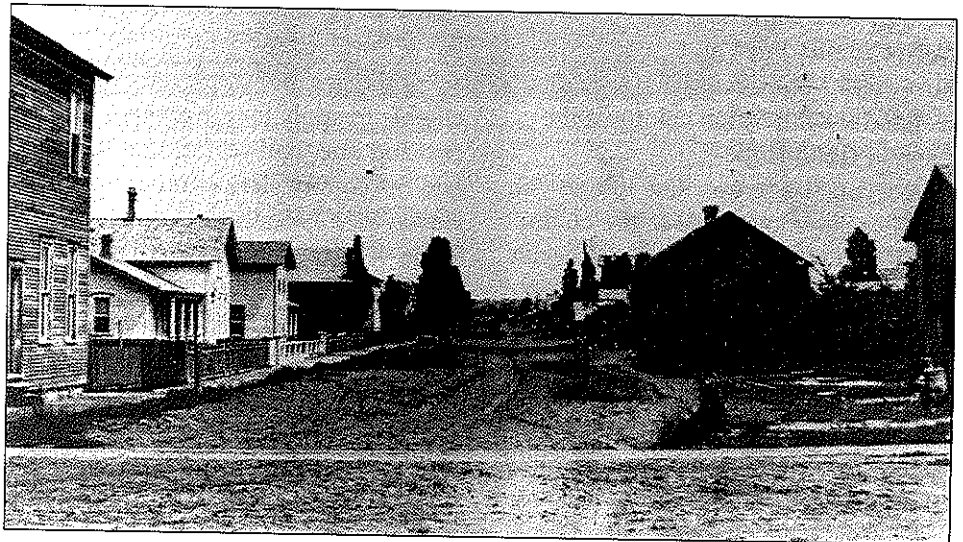
Van Raalte was the man in this founding period of Holland. The first historian of the colony,

the newspaperman Gerrit Van Schelven, aptly described the situation: "The People's Assembly at Holland was Van Raalte, the consistory at Holland was Van Raalte, the Classis of Holland was Van Raalte." Van Raalte's prominence was necessary, given the circumstances, and "it was the best way," said Van Schelven. "But

lands historian Jacob Van Hinte observed wryly that "not everyone was in favor of this theocracy and many saw in the 'democracy' of Van Raalte actually his 'autocracy.'"

In the second phase of development, which might be viewed as a time of adolescence, legal and social changes occurred in Holland that made the founders no longer "undisputed lords in their own castle," as Van Hinte put it. The formation of Holland Township, for example, had created a rival government for the consistory to deal with. Since neither body had clearly delineated authority, the township officials and consistory had to tread carefully so as not to walk on each other's turf. Fortunately, church members, guided by Van Raalte, served in both bodies, and they could maintain a measure of harmony. After ten years, in 1859, Van Raalte's church consistory decided no longer to act in matters that properly belonged to the civil government.

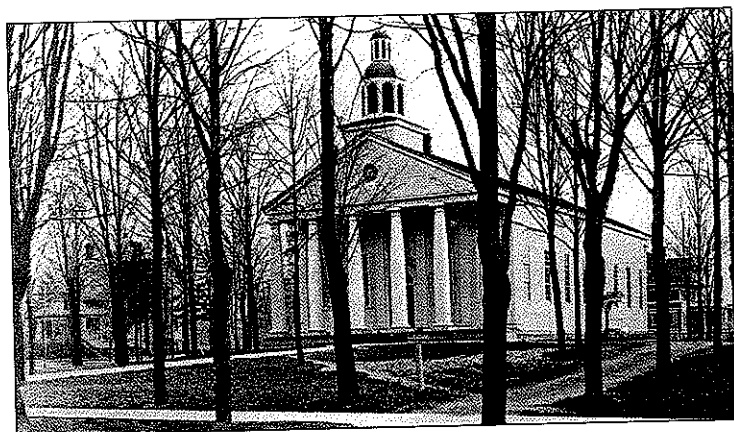
The major social change was that new immigrants continued to arrive who could not appreciate the



Holland's Seventh Street, looking east, 1876.

the inevitable outcome was this; since there was no appeal for the dissatisfied, justly or unjustly, there was little recourse besides secession." Nether-

founders' struggles for survival that had bound them together so tightly. The newcomers challenged the founders for economic and political



The "Pillar" Church, constructed while Van Raalte was its pastor.

power, and the dominies, willingly or not, had to step back. As early as 1852 Hermannus Doesburg, a maverick school teacher, gained editorial control of Van Raalte's newspaper, *De Hollander*, and began criticizing the dominie in print, despite pressure from Van Raalte's consistory to desist. Doesburg published an anonymous article that referred to Van Raalte and his consistory as "the Pope and his cardinals" and titled another article "Playing Boss." The consistory denied Doesburg the right to take Holy Communion until he repented, which he finally did, but Van Raalte was so hurt that he considered leaving Holland for the Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope.

A second critic was Rev. Koene Van Den Bosch, who arrived in the colony in 1856 to serve the Reformed Church at Noordeloos, a village five miles northeast of Holland. Within months he charged Van Raalte with religious apostasy and led a secession in Classis Holland, which gave birth to a rival denomination, the Christian Reformed Church.

Gradually the newcomers and the "in-between generation"—children who were no longer truly Dutch but not yet fully American either—took control, and numerous institutions sprang up to direct everyday life. Holland reached its majority, its

West Michigan have traditionally been conservative and localistic in politics as in religion. And they have taken their politics seriously. Since the Civil War the Dutch have consistently voted the Republican ticket, but in the first years of the colony, they were staunch Democrats. The transition from Democrat to Republican after the Civil War is another marker of the maturing of the colony and signals the passing of the pioneer leader as the dominating community force. It also reveals the growing pace of Americanization, since the Republicans represented the dominant Yankee culture.

As soon as the Dutch became eligible to apply for citizenship (after two and one-half years), Van Raalte had the county clerk come from Grand Haven for a "wholesale naturalization." Some 440 men, almost every male of age in the 1847 contingent of colonists, turned out. The clerk gave them a "volume discount" and cut the fee in half for processing the first papers. At the next local election, held at the Zeeland log church in 1851, the Dutch turned the Americans out of office and fought over the political spoils in a raucous assembly that pitted Holland against Zeeland. The chair, Rev. Van Der Meulen, could barely keep order with cries of "*Broeders! O, Broeders!*" Van Raalte stood on top of the pews to be heard. There was strong language

coming of age, in 1867, when Isaac Cappon, the city's leading industrialist, took the oath of office as mayor in the newly incorporated city.

Political Developments

The pietistic Calvinists of

and scuffles both inside and outside the sacred precincts as the outlying villagers vented their spleen against the dominance of "*de stad*" and Van Raalte's autocracy. Surprisingly, Zeeland men captured all the best offices, even though Holland's 300 voters should easily have outvoted Zeeland's 140 voters. When Zeeland organized that year as a separate township, Holland politicians gained control of their own offices.

In national politics Van Raalte led his followers into the Democratic camp, which was firmly entrenched in Michigan. Very likely he was encouraged to do so by Democratic party leaders such as Detroit attorney Theodore Romeyn, Kalamazoo state senator Nathaniel Balch, Allegan judge John Kellogg, Ottawa County sheriff Henry Pennoyer, and the Post brothers, Henry and Hoyt, of Holland. All these close friends of Van Raalte in the early years indoctrinated him in the standard political doctrine that the Democratic party befriended immigrants while the Whigs were tainted with nativism. Holland's first newspaper, *De Hollander*, founded by Van Raalte in 1850 and controlled by him, endorsed Democratic candidates. In the presidential election of 1852, the first in which the Dutch could vote, they cast 123 Democratic ballots to 5 Whig ballots in Holland Township; Zeeland Township the outcome was 128 to 11 in favor of the Democrats. the words of old-timer Derk Vyn, the "Republicans were as scarce as hen's teeth."

The next year at a special election Holland Township voted against a Whig-sponsored prohibition referendum by a margin of more than three to one—surprising, given the early opposition to saloons in the People's Assembly—but the nativist overtone of the prohibition movement likely soured the Dutch, who, after all, liked their beer.

The vote against teetotalers brought nativist attacks down on immigrant heads. John Wilson, a Michigan Republican, charged in a speech that "not one single throb of patriotism" beats in the hearts of foreigners. "Some tell me that many foreigners are intelligent; yes intelligent," Wilson cried. "How in the name of Almighty God can they say it? Look at the Dutchman smoking his pipe, and if you can see a ray of intelligence in that dirty idiotic face of his, show it to me."

Rhetoric like Wilson's kept the Dutch in the Democratic camp despite their growing disappointment with the party's refusal to support internal-improvement grants and its increasingly Southern pro-slavery stance, especially on the controversial issue of the extension of slavery into the territories. By the midterm election of 1854, Dutch dissatisfaction with

the Democrats was evident; their 96 percent Democratic support of 1852 dwindled to only 64 percent in 1854, and this same level held in the 1856 Presidential race, but in the 1858 general election their support climbed dramatically to 81 percent.

In 1859 both Van Raalte and Hendrik Scholte, Van Raalte's counterpart clerical leader in the Pella, Iowa, colony, switched to the Republican party over the issues of slavery funding and for internal improvements. While no admirers of slavery, the two Dutch dominions were essentially constitutional Unionists, who con-

demned abolitionism more than they condemned slavery because the radicals embodied the greater threat to the survival of the Union. Van Raalte changed party allegiance rather quietly, as befits a minister of the gospel. But Scholte, who by this time was active in state politics, switched in such dramatic fashion that his name appeared in Iowa newspapers statewide. Although he was elected a delegate to the state Democratic convention in Des Moines, Scholte

and Scholte would carry their followers into the Republican camp. After all, the immigrants could barely read English or understand the nuances of American political rhetoric, and they would continue to need their dominions to explain and interpret the meaning of the ballot choices. Van Raalte even saw to it in 1860 that Hollanders had a new Republican paper (*De Grondwet*) in the Dutch language to tutor them, as Scholte did in his newspaper, *Pella Gazette*. But to the great surprise of the

politicos, in Holland and Pella most Dutch voters in November 1860 again cast Democratic ballots, although not as many as in the previous election. Holland Township voted Democratic by only 53 percent; Pella did so by 66 percent. In the 1864 election Holland again voted against Lincoln by 58 percent. Thus, the Dutch continued in the Democratic fold during the Civil War era.



Historical markers located near Van Raalte's grave in the Pilgrim Rest Cemetery.

instead appeared one day before the Democratic convention at the Republican convention in the same city as the head of the Marion County delegation! The convention then chose him as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Chicago, where he voted to nominate Lincoln for President. Subsequently, in the fall campaign Scholte made a political swing through the Dutch communities in western Michigan, speaking at Republican rallies and preaching in several Reformed churches, including Van Raalte's Pillar Church in Holland.

Party pros assumed that Van Raalte

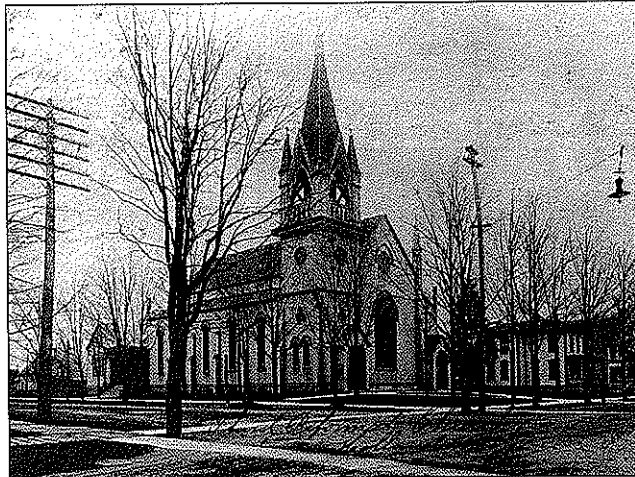
But 1864 was the last Democratic victory in Holland, although Pella continues in that tradition to the present day. In 1866—ten years behind the rest of Michigan, which had turned Republican in 1855—Holland went Republican for the first time, by a slim margin of 52 percent. It was a natural alliance: the Republican Party was composed of men of New England Calvinist ancestry, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, backers of denominational schools and a Christian society.

The refusal of the Dutch to follow Van Raalte politically during the Civil

War years indicates the passing of their time of dependency. The immigrants would vote with their American neighbors, not with their dominie.

The End of the Van Raalte Era

The colonists repudiated Van Raalte's leadership in church and community as well as in politics. His correspondence



Third Reformed Church.

during the Civil War reveals the depth of his despondency; he felt he had been stabbed in the back. In a confidential letter to a friend in the Netherlands in 1862, Van Raalte poured out his heart: "It is impossible for me to continue my work amongst this dissention." In 1866, after the war, he went to the Netherlands for several months and upon his return resigned as pastor of First Reformed Church, which he had founded and served since 1847. He also declined an offer to become a professor of theology at Hope College. The final blow came in 1867, when the citizens of Holland voted to incorporate, over

the dominie's strenuous objections. City real-estate taxes for another layer of government would fall heavily on the dominie because of his extensive land holdings, which included three hundred city lots plus "swamp lands" east of town. So Van Raalte now stood in an adversarial relationship with the local governing body of his creation, the town of Holland. The transformation of Holland from colony to city was complete.

Van Raalte's clerical colleagues in the Holland area came to the rescue. In 1868 they appointed him chairman of the church missionary committee to plant new colonies in the South which could replicate the Holland colony and prevent the dispersal of many new Dutch immigrants who were attracted

by cheap lands there. Van Raalte toured the states of Tennessee, Alabama, and Virginia and ultimately settled on Amelia County, Virginia, where a New York land dealer, apparently a member of the Reformed Church, had in 1867 attracted about eighty Hollanders to his properties. Van Raalte had his doubts about the venture because the people lacked adequate funding and farming experience, but in 1869 he left Michigan to lead the Amelia colony. He even founded an academy there modeled after Hope College. When things did not go well, the settlers unjustly

blamed Van Raalte, who returned to Holland in 1870 "a broken man with little influence," in Larry Wagenaar's words. Van Raalte lived out his last six years in relative obscurity, devoting his efforts to his beloved college, which he served as president of the governing board.

Conclusion

When the pioneers of 1847 first met to form an Old Settlers Society in 1878, more than half were gone, including Van Raalte, who had died in 1876. Their average age in 1847 was twenty-nine years, now they averaged sixty years. Immigration is a young person's game, and the founders had given their youth and the strength of their years to the colony. They could look back with satisfaction at what they had accomplished. The city had not yet recovered from the 1871 fire and the 1873 national financial panic, but farmers were thriving. A visitor from the Netherlands, Dr. M. Cohen Stuart observed in 1873 that "everything bespeaks of prosperity and abundance but without excessive luxury." Farm fences were "horse-high, bull-strong, and pig-tight." This was the ultimate compliment for Dutch farmers.

Van Raalte was right to be sanguine about Holland's future in 1872. "After a struggle of twenty-five years," he declared, "in spite of sin, misery, and severe discipline, we can nevertheless enjoy a beautiful festival. Because God has built, we live in the happy conviction that He has done well with us and granted our heart's desire." 6

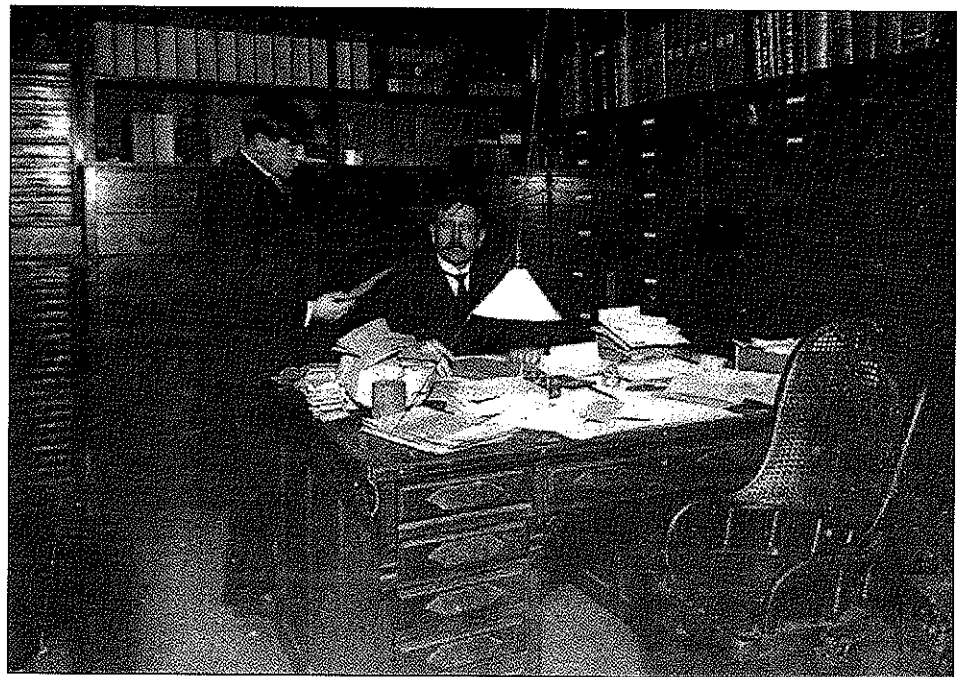
Reinder E. Werkman: The "Gilded" Hollander 1855-1931

Donald Van Reken

For about twenty years, 1872-1892, Reinder E. Werkman was a leading industrialist in Holland, Michigan, where his dramatic public-relations gestures and business ventures attracted attention and admiration. During this era of industrial giants—A. Carnegie, J.D. Rockefeller, and others, labeled The Gilded Age—R.E.

as he was called, worked hard to help his mother. By the time of the great Holland fire, October 1871, he was old enough, at sixteen years of age, to help his family survive that catastrophe.

After the fire every home in Holland had to be rebuilt—the log-cabin days were over. Now homes had proper doors, windows, siding, and so on. Rijn worked with home builders in the area and learned woodworking tools and techniques. By the end of the decade he was managing a small factory—the Phoenix Planing Mill—at the corner of River and 10th streets, the present site of the Holland Museum. This factory, rented or leased at first,



R.E. Werkman in his office with a clerk.

Werkman could be accurately called a "gilded Hollander." But, curiously, he is seldom mentioned in Holland's historical literature.

The Edward Werkman family emigrated from the Netherlands in May 1867 with several children, including son Reinder E., who was born in 1855. The year after their arrival in Holland Edward died, and the family had a great struggle. Rijn,

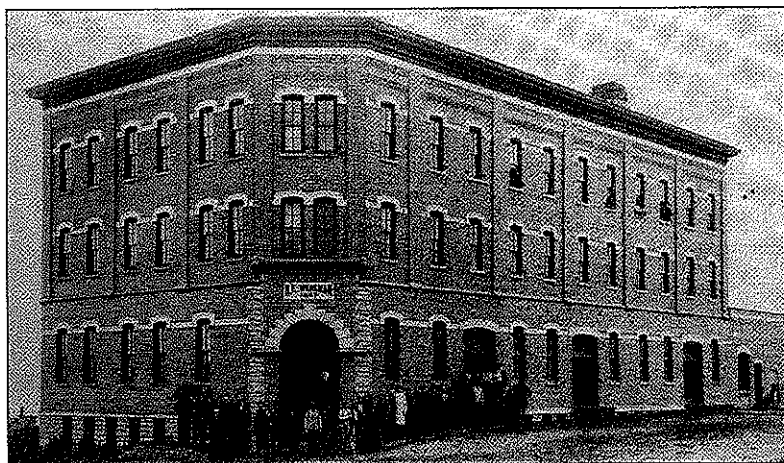
soon supplied window sashes, doors, and door frames to the entire region. From these activities he and his partners branched out into other woodworking construction.

A community activist, Werkman joined the Eagle Fire Company, one of Holland's volunteer companies, and soon became the foreman of the company. He made efforts to improve the conditions of the fire fighters and increase the number of water wells from which the large hand pumpers drew water. As a reward for his

Author of a dozen pictorial histories of the Holland, Michigan, area. Van Reken is also a librarian and former missionary in Nigeria.

diligence he was chosen to be the fire chief, and in that capacity he promoted the construction of a water system for the city, taking water from Black Lake through lines on 6th, 7th, and 8th streets. Thereafter he was elected to the Common Council, where he headed the Water Works Committee.

Werkman's range of business



Employees lined up in front of R.E. Werkman's factory on River and Fifth Streets. Known later as Ottawa Furniture factory.

included home construction on 6th Street, which, of course, benefited from the water system. He built more opulent homes in the area of 12th Street and Maple Avenue, now Holland's historic district. His wood fabricating business also produced building materials for others and for monumental structures—Hope Haven, the Ottawa County Poorhouse, and new schools in Graafschap and Zeeland. He sold great quantities of finished household lumber—doors, frames, window sashes, window blinds, and stair rails—which required a large inventory of raw lumber. On one occasion he purchased 200,000 feet of lumber at Saugatuck, ten miles south of Holland. He also bought wood, lath, and shingles in northern Michigan and sold finished lumber and materials to distant markets in Boston and New York.

In February 1883 Werkman was

responsible for getting Walsh, De Roo, and Company to locate in Holland. This company, which began as a milling company, along with Cappon and Bertsch did much to enhance the local economy. The newspaper noted that "it was through the energetic and enterprising spirit of one man that we secured the Standard Rolling Mills in our midst, and that

was none other than R.E.

Werkman."

Much later R.E. wrote, "I brought the Walsh De Roo Mill Company to Holland.

When I heard that Mr. De Roo was going to build a large flour mill in

Zeeland I drove over that very night and secured an agreement with him that if I would raise a bonus of \$2,500 he would agree to build the mill in Holland. I succeeded in raising a trifle over \$2,200 and that brought the mill to Holland." The rolling mill operated for about thirty years at 6th Street and River Avenue.

To advertise his business, in 1886 Werkman assembled a train of wagons pulled by horse teams from Saugatuck to 8th Street. Each wagon bore signs advertising his Phoenix Planing Mill. One week later he repeated the show. Meanwhile, his finished wood products found markets in the Saugatuck shipyards, where he supplied nearly all the materials for ship cabins and interior trim.

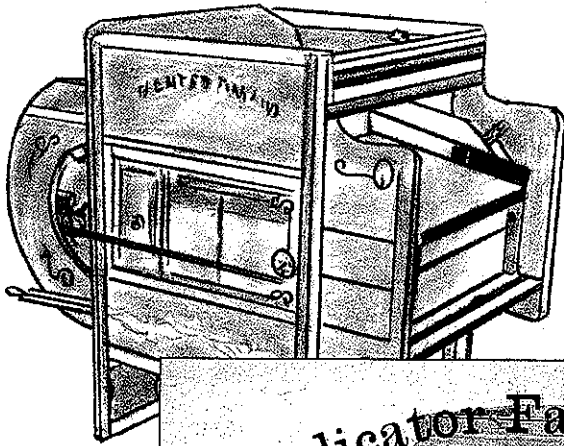
That same year Werkman, along with I.H. Lamoreaux of Otsego, began the mass production of a fanning mill patented by Lamoreaux. Fanning mills

were used to clean the chaff from the wheat and complemented the new McCormick reaper. Together they facilitated a huge increase in grain production. The Werkman factory made hundreds of fanning mills, and Werkman's salesmen traveled across the countryside to sell these hand-operated machines. The Vindicator fanning mill was good and popular. An 1886 article explaining the fine qualities of this mill proclaimed,

The strength of the mill compares with its lightness Any sieve or screen can be placed to do any grade of work Small lots of grain or seed can be cleaned and secured in the boxes without sweeping the floor, or the mill may be set out in the yard and dust kept out of the barn or grain house. Because of its perfect construction and steady motion its durability is assured The fact is that every mill is fitted to all grades of work and kind of seed. That is, the most perfect grade mill in existence

Later that year Werkman decided to build a factory and acquired land at the head of Black Lake, just west of River Street, the present site of the Louis Padnos Company. It was planned in the winter of 1886-1887 and the building was completed by October 1887. To acquire lumber, Werkman bought four hundred acres of forest land and a lumber mill in Kalkaska. A newly formed company, the Werkman Lumber Company,* initiated the Kalkaska venture with several carloads of supplies, seventeen men, six teams of horses, and a yoke of oxen. The partnership also acquired a small tugboat, *City of Holland*, and a barge, *Great Eastern*, used to transport logs and lumber from northern Michigan to Werkman's factory site in Holland. For this purpose he built a

* Partners in the venture included H. Walsh, W.C. Walsh, John De Vries, and G.J. Boone—all well-known businessmen in Holland.



local contractors, P. Oosting and D. Strovenjans, built both the factory and adjoining lumber-drying kilns. Furthermore, an engine room housed two steel boilers to drive a 110-horsepower

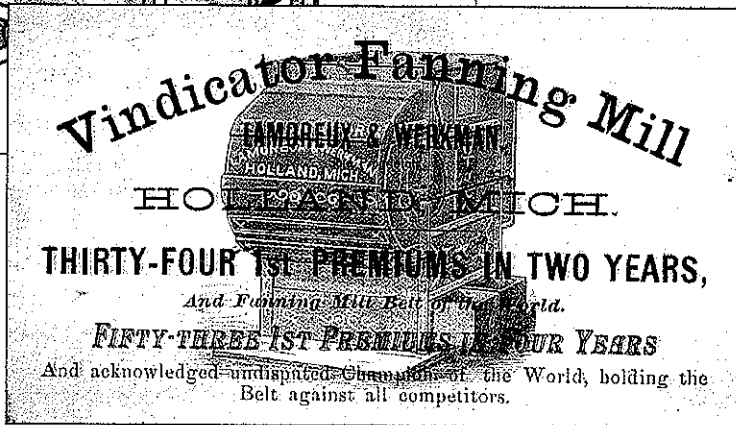
ing was finished, Werkman sold the old Phoenix site and transferred the fanning-mill production to the new location. Then Harm Te Roller went off on an extensive sales trip. Along with fanning-mill orders he came home with a contract to produce 1,500 bedsteads for a client in Iowa. With that, Werkman added furniture to his inventory.

Meanwhile, the factory continued its production of fanning mills at the rate of eighteen per day in 1888. That, together with the increasing orders for furniture, required additional employees and twelve-hour working days. Newspaper accounts noted that Werkman's people were running the factory day and night to keep up with the orders from New York and other places. But there was a price to be paid for this. Working by inadequate gas light was dangerous. From time to time the newspaper wrote about men losing fingers in the machinery. During that era, wherever large numbers were employed, injuries were common. In November 1889 the newspaper reported that the company had been "running their furniture factory day and night the last three months, and it will be necessary to continue night work for the next month, in order to fill the many large orders which they have received."

An 1889 State of Michigan Labor

dock on the lake at the foot of 4th Street.

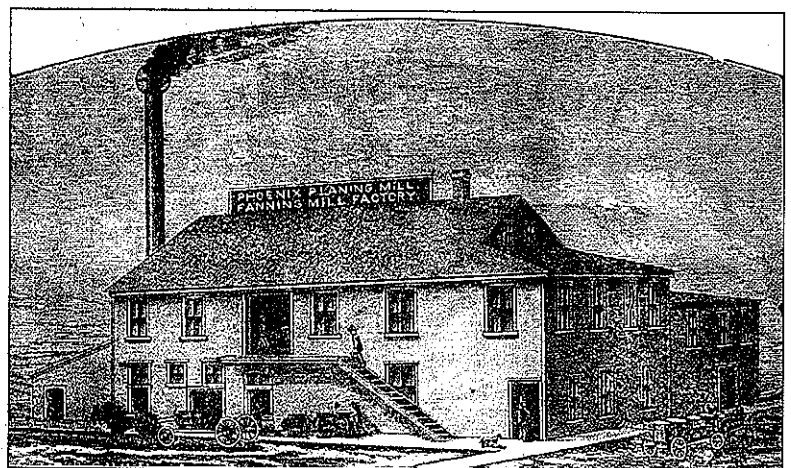
In January 1887 the Holland Businessmen's Association met and agreed to pay Werkman a bonus for locating his factory in Holland. He had been offered \$5,000 to locate elsewhere so a public meeting was called to encourage him by providing funds to locate locally. A committee of prominent local citizens was formed and "so well did they perform their task that by early Monday morning the entire sum had been raised and the factory was assured." The Holland Common Council also allowed Werkman to have a Chicago and West Michigan Railroad spur across River Avenue into his property. Thus the new factory was on the main north-south road in the city and had a dock on Black Lake as well as a rail connection at its back door. Werkman's three-story factory stood out in Holland as a modern structure featuring spacious floors, convenient loading docks, and an elevator. Its fieldstone foundation, wall bricks, and quarried stone came entirely from nearby sources. Two



Pencil drawing (above) and advertisement of the Vindicator Fanning Mill.

steam engine. The factory was designed for flexible use, with ceilings ranging from ten feet in the basement to fifteen feet on the third floor. An elevator, operated by counterbalanced weights, brought wood to machinery powered by steam-driven belts. Scraps from the woodworking process fed the boilers, which also pumped water to a roof-top tank that supplied water to the whole building. The plant was designed to employ 125 people, who were supervised by Werkman's friend Henry (Harm) Te Roller.

After the new build-



Werkman's Planing Mill Factory.

Bureau report, which gave data on the company as well as on its employees, noted that the company manufactured "cheap beds and chamber suites," and had a 1889 wholesale value of \$68,000. In early 1890 the *Detroit Evening News* noted that Werkman

came to the country without a cent. He was just as poor as anybody could be and hadn't a single friend. Two strong hands were his capital. For a long time he worked as an apprentice in a planing mill, managed to save a little, borrowed more, and started for himself He at last put up a \$33,000 furniture factory, borrowed every cent of the amount and today keeps one hundred men at work night and day.

In April 1890 the local daily noted that the company's "payroll, every two weeks, amounts to over \$2,000 Lumber is brought in from points all along the lines of the C & WM and the GR&I railroads." The next month the company shipped "ten cars of furniture, all chamber sets, to points west—Denver, Pueblo, Salt Lake City, and Ogden. However, one year later

(January 1891) the factory stopped operations for a time, and by March Werkman had moved to Benton Harbor, where he was supervising the construction of another furniture factory. Werkman's sudden departure was never explained publicly. It seems clear that financial difficulties in 1887 led to his defaulting on a \$1,584 mortgage, but that can hardly explain his sudden departure, and the *Holland City News* offered no clarification of the mystery.

On April 11, 1891, the *News* reported that A.H. Brink of Graafschap was operating the Werkman factory and that its name "is to be changed to the Ottawa Furniture factory." The new owners and shareholders, a virtual who's who in Holland of that day, were also mentioned. Werkman was not among them because he had moved to Benton Harbor to operate a factory of which J.W. Bosman was the president.

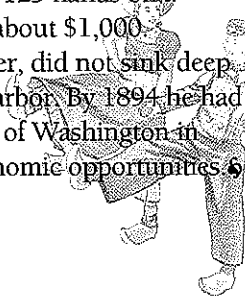
In July the newspaper did report that

Werkman moved his personal effects to Benton Harbor to become a

permanent resident there. It is generally felt that with his departure Holland has lost one of his most enterprising citizens, and that much of the recent growth and development of the town has been due to the vigorous manner by which Mr. Werkman managed to initiate and push matters. As Alderman and member of the Board of Water Commissioners he had served the municipality well.

Werkman was thirty-six years old when he moved from the city of Holland.

The Benton Harbor venture, incorporated with a capital of \$50,000, drew investors from Holland, including a number of Werkman's former employees; Pella, Iowa; and other places outside the Dutch ethnic community. By October, 1891 the Benton Harbor venture employed 125 hands on a weekly payroll of about \$1,000. Werkman, however, did not sink deep roots in Benton Harbor. By 1894 he had moved to the state of Washington in search of new economic opportunities.



Holland, Michigan: Industrialization and Social Transformation

Hero Bratt

Hero Bratt, who died in 1996, delivered this address at the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies Conference at Calvin College in 1993.

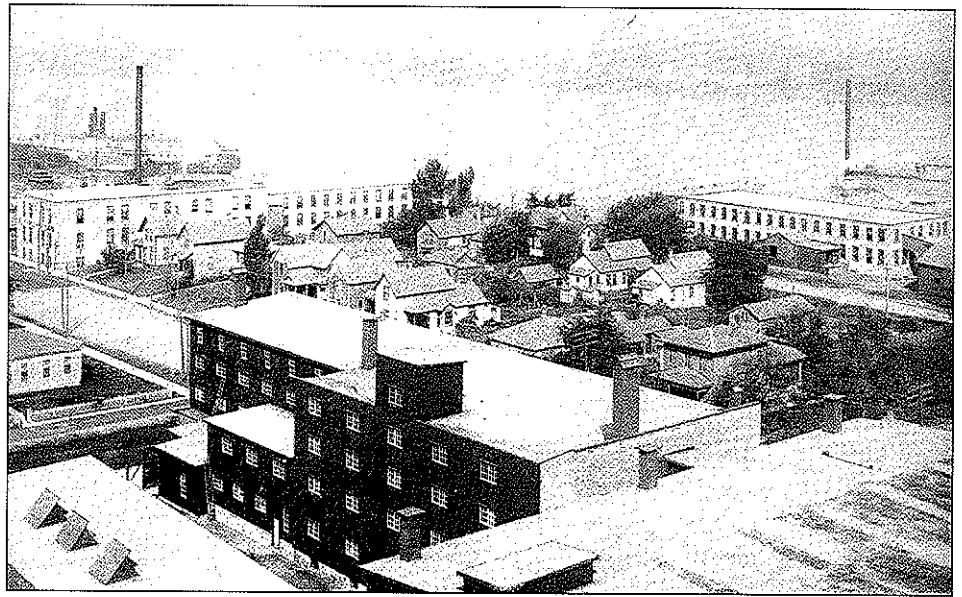
The Dutch immigrants who founded Holland, Michigan, 152 years ago brought with them a common bond and purpose which made them truly homogeneous. Their religious convictions, language, social conventions, mores, and economic status bound them together and marked them as a unique enclave in their American environment. The problem faced by

their versatile, gifted leader, Rev. A.C. Van Raalte, was how to introduce his Dutch followers to American culture while preserving the values of their heritage. For him it was urgent to hold the immigrants together. He greatly feared that their most precious inheritance, their faith, would be threatened if they scattered and lost their identity in the new and strange environment. He therefore established a settlement in western Michigan known as the Holland *Kolonie*, a cluster of small farming communities with "stad Holland" as its central focus. All of these communities were named the places of origin of their immigrant inhabitants.

Rev. A.C. Van Raalte, however, was not eager for his *Kolonie* to remain isolated. If we are to understand future developments in the new community, it is essential to consider his role in those developments. The immigrants who followed him to western Michigan were almost totally dependent on his leadership. He had carefully planned the immigration project. Not only were his followers aware of his plans; advance notice had also been sent to the Reformed brethren in America. As a result, upon arrival in New York harbor, his group was met by Rev. De Witt, a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in New York. At Albany they were greeted and assisted by Rev. I. Wyckoff. At Detroit Van Raalte sought assistance from civic and religious leaders, several of whom bore non-Dutch names. These helpful contacts with "Americans" deeply impressed him. Upon arrival at the site of the new settlement, once more non-Dutch people such as Rev. G.N. Smith, Isaac Fairbanks, H. Post, and others gave timely assistance to the struggling colonists.

In this light it is not difficult to understand why in 1849 Van Raalte and his colleagues warmly welcomed Rev. Wyckoff when he came from Albany to the *Kolonie* with an invitation to affiliate with the Dutch Reformed Church in America. The invitation was accepted, and thereafter the churches of the *Kolonie* looked for fellowship to the long-established and Americanized Reformed church instead of looking overseas for aid and comfort.

However, in 1857 four churches of Classis Holland seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church and organized what eventually became the Christian Reformed Church. The seceders viewed the union with the Dutch Reformed Church as a repudiation of their secession in the Netherlands. Henceforth this seceding group

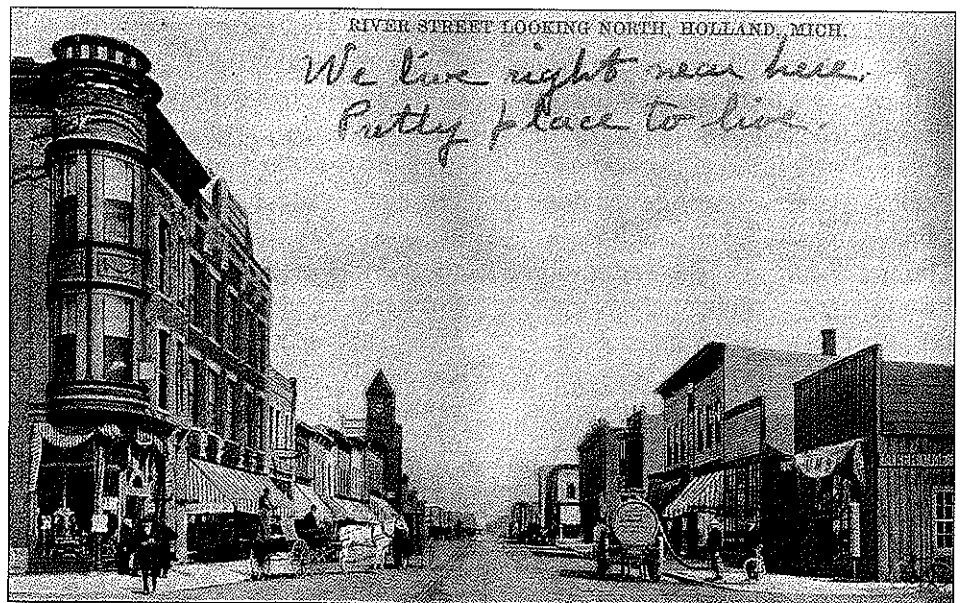


Factory district with boat dock on Holland's Black Lake.

sought help and guidance from sister churches in the Netherlands. Even Van Raalte's own church, the First Dutch Reformed Church of Holland, which united with the Christian Reformed Church in 1884, supplied its pulpit exclusively with Dutch-born ministers until 1910. Thus conflict arose in the *Kolonie* between the Dutch Reformed churches, which, by openness to Americanized churches of the East, declared their desire to assimilate

with their adopted brothers, and the fledgling Christian Reformed churches, which clung for many years to their native Dutch religious inheritance.

For many years the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches maintained a dominant presence in Holland, but never an exclusive presence. Already in the early years of the *Kolonie*, such non-Dutch churches as Methodist and Episcopal were



River Street looking north.

established in Holland. Eventually the number of these non-Dutch churches proliferated, until today they outnumber the churches of Reformed Dutch origin.

Another very significant factor that encouraged Americanization in the *Kolonie* was Van Raalte's vision of establishing an academy, which was realized in 1851. With the assistance and encouragement of the Dutch

seems clear that from both the viewpoint of outside observers and that of Holland's original enclave, the Dutch remained aware of their origins. The Reformed and Christian Reformed churches grew at a steady pace, and the Dutch language was used in most services, especially in the Christian Reformed churches, until the early years of the twentieth century. Even in Van Raalte's First Church (which later

attractive illustrated brochure entitled "Holland, the Gateway of Western Michigan for Chicago and the Great West." In glowing terms it displayed the religious, cultural, and economic opportunities in Holland open to anyone seeking to establish a business.

Several industries with national markets set up business in Holland. A prominent example of such an industry was the Holland Furnace Company, established in 1906. The history of this company has recently been published by Donald Van Reken, a Holland local historian, who has carefully documented the development of the company. The founders of this company were non-Dutch entrepreneurs from outside Holland, men with names like Kolla, Landwehr, Nystrom, Cheff, McLean and Howell. The work force, however, was largely of Dutch ancestry. The Holland Furnace Company drew national attention not only by the sale of its product but also by promotional stunts such as bringing movie stars like Dorothy Lamour and famous athletes like Rocky Marciano to Holland. The citizens of Holland watched with amusement the introduction of these glamorous Americans into their conservative enclave.

Although the history of the Holland Furnace Company ended in disaster, I cite it as an example of an industry established in the Dutch community by "outsiders" who saw great potential in a community with a stable and industrious work ethic. Among other industries with national markets advertised in the 1912 brochure were the H.J. Heinz Company, the Donnelly-Kelly Mirror Company, the Bush and Lane Piano Company, and the Holland-St. Louis Sugar Company. In the first half of the twentieth century there were no fewer than eight furniture factories in Holland, all of them with national markets. Gradually but persistently mainstream American culture was making its mark on the



Holland Furnace Company advertisement.

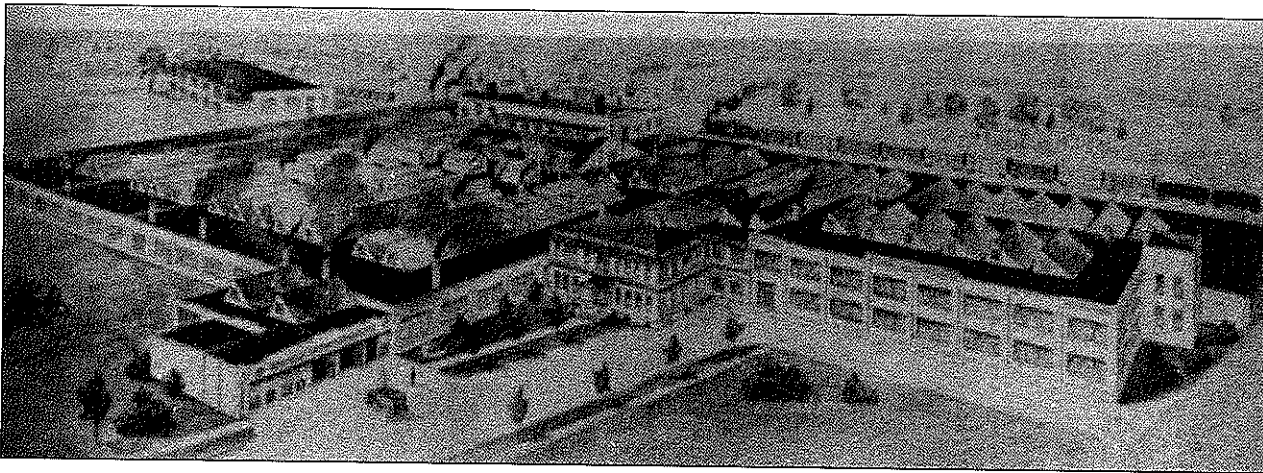
Reformed Church in the East, this venture developed into a full-fledged college in 1866 and, in time, to the formation of a theological seminary in Holland. The faculty members of the academy were of American vintage, English speakers, bearing such non-Dutch names as Taylor and Phelps. The establishment of these educational institutions was influential in turning the attention of the Dutch enclave toward the greater American scene. At the same time it attracted both professors and students from the broader American community.

In spite of these influences opening the door to ethnic diversity in the first fifty years of the *Kolonie's* history, it

became Christian Reformed), the consistory minutes were written in Dutch until about 1915.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, forces encouraging ethnic diversity began to appear, largely through industrial expansion, which attracted some non-Dutch laborers into the work force, although the labor force continued to be predominantly Dutch, according to a study done by Gordon W. Kirk.* As the twentieth century opened, the business leaders of Holland began to actively seek a greater share of American prosperity for their town. In 1912 the Board of Trade and Commerce issued an

**The Promise of American Life* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society: 1978).



Holland Furnace Company.

Obviously Van Raalte's *Kolonie* has become a more typically American city.

I have attempted to describe the ethnic transitions that have taken place in Holland since its

once homogeneous Dutch enclave.

As the twentieth century progressed, efforts were made to reinforce the community's awareness of its Dutch heritage. Under the guidance and inspiration of the late Willard C. Wichers, a Netherlands Information Bureau was established to preserve Dutch artifacts of Holland's early history. Around 1930 an annual Tulip Time Festival was initiated. Curiously enough, the idea of celebrating the tulip was inspired by a non-Dutch Holland High School biology teacher, Miss Rogers. The parade of bands which climaxed the festival featured Dutch dancers shod in wooden shoes. A sign of ethnic transition could be seen as Mexican and Asian students wearing wooden shoes participated in the dances. The acquisition of an authentic windmill from the Netherlands is the latest reminder of Holland's origins.

How should we evaluate these efforts to remind the town of its Dutch beginnings? Do they indicate a genuine interest in Dutch culture? Or are they simply reminders of a quaint Dutch past, useful mainly for seeking national attention for millions of beautiful flowers and a good show? Some of my immigrant friends who have come to Holland since World War II express feelings of culture

shock as they witness the incongruities which accompany Holland's efforts to celebrate its origins. To them wooden shoes are quaint but hardly meaningful as an expression of Holland's culture. The commercialism accompanying a national festival lends it the air of a carnival. The visiting crowds must be entertained.

On Sunday, February 9, 1947, two years after the close of World War II, the city of Holland opened a year of centennial celebration. At Dimnet Chapel on the campus of Hope College, the celebrations were officially launched with appropriate speeches reminding the citizens of their Dutch heritage. It seems ironic that, at about that same time, noticeable changes that would inevitably lead to diversity in the ethnic composition of the town became evident. The year 1950 may well be considered a turning point in the city's ethnic history. This can be illustrated by noting Holland's population statistics, 1950-1990, when the total number nearly doubled going from 15,000 to 30,000. But by 1990 only 40 percent of the populace claimed Dutch ancestry. During that same time span the Latino community grew from 7 to 14 percent of the populace. Combined with other minority groups, Latinos constitute nearly 20 percent of Holland's citizens.

founding, and especially since 1950. The statistics I have presented call for some explanation. Two questions come to mind. What were the circumstances that brought about this transition, especially since 1950? What are the effects on the quality of life accompanying the transition?

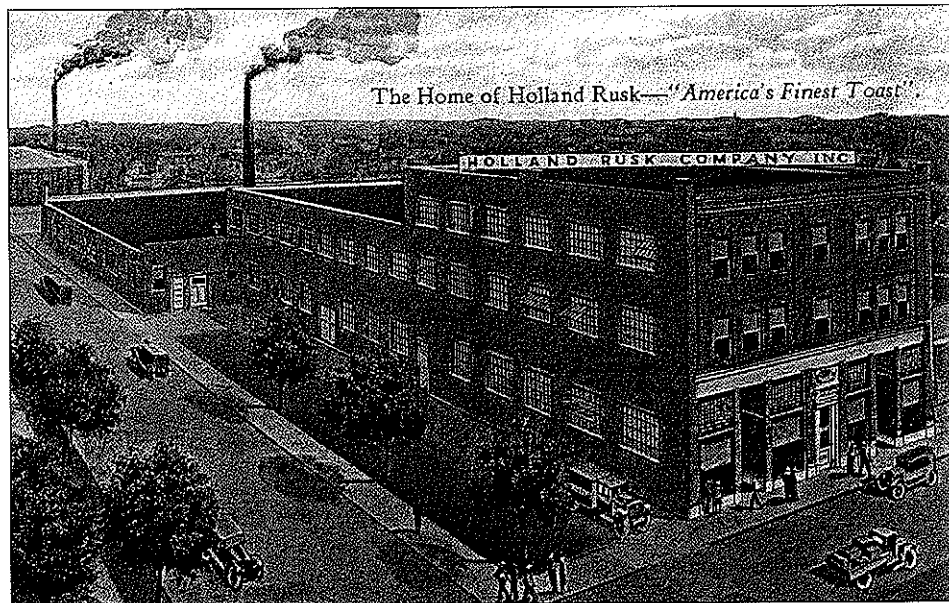
In the 1950s and even prior to that, migrant Mexican workers found their way to Holland to help in the harvest of such crops as pickles, beans, blueberries, and sugar beets. The farmers who raised these crops and the industries which processed them needed their help and welcomed them. The word was soon passed along to the families and friends of these workers that Holland was a favorable place to establish families. Although the Mexicans who settled here felt isolated and sometimes unfairly treated by their predominantly Dutch neighbors, the movement persisted. The rapid, almost explosive increase in business and industrial activity in Holland in the last three decades, served as a magnet for many poor Hispanics who found not only employment but also a city with a reputation for strong family life.

However, a recent spate of knifings and shootings in Holland and an increase in gang activities have made the citizens apprehensive. Could these

activities fairly be attributed to the growing ethnic diversity of Holland? Or do they simply reflect a broader national problem? Already in 1966 the City of Holland established a Human Relations Commission "to promote amicable relations and mutual respect between and among racial, cultural, religious and other groups within the greater Holland Community." This is clear evidence that diversity in racial composition is now a fact of life to be reckoned with by the people of Holland. Complaints of discrimination are now heard by the police, by the schools, and by employers. Over 10 percent of the students in the public schools now clamor for special attention due to language problems. Problems arising from English spoken as a second language, rather than as a primary language, are being vigorously debated, especially among the Hispanics.

Religiously, churches founded by people of Dutch origin are still most prominent, but intermarriage between persons of different denominations has also become common. A perusal of church services in the Saturday newspaper reveals an almost incredible proliferation of churches, including several Hispanic churches. Respect for Sunday as a day of rest and worship has greatly diminished. Large chain stores now do flourishing business on Sunday, ignoring the long-standing tradition of respect for the sacredness of that day.

Although Holland, named nostalgically after the motherland, continues to honor its tradition of Dutchness in a variety of ways, that acknowledgment of heritage has become more a delight



Holland Rusk Company.

in the quaintness of early life-styles than a meaningful and vibrant appreciation of the significant cultural and religious contributions brought by the Dutch to the New World. Holland has been and currently is being transformed from a homogeneous Dutch enclave with deep religious convictions into a bustling urban center preoccupied with obtaining its share of the American Dream—freedom, diversity, and affluence.

Let me close by reading to you a brief excerpt from a speech delivered by Marvin Lindeman to the Michigan Historical Society on October 10, 1947. It was delivered in Holland and was entitled "A Non-Hollander Looks at Holland." Mr. Lindeman, although courteous, presents a dim view of the Dutch in Holland as he views the situation in 1947. He denigrates them as being stodgy, unprogressive, ultraconservative, and clergy domi-

nated. Near the end of his speech he explodes: "What this town needs is an awakening to the fact that we are living in 1947, not in the medieval age. We have to be more broadminded about things. Holland has the natural advantages to be a big razzle-dazzle city, and we ought to come out of our sleep. Got to apply some vision and imagination! It's high time that the ministers quit confining the town to a straight-jacket. Let the church stick to its place and stop its domination of every move the town makes."*

Today the razzle-dazzle has arrived. Holland is getting to be big, and the ministers are losing their hold on the people. Business is booming, and the Dutch no longer dominate. Rev. Van Raalte would be amazed to see what time and circumstance have done to his vision for a Christian community.

*Michigan History 31 (1947): 414.

profiles

Biography of William Haverkamp

Rev. William Buursma

William Haverkamp was born in the small community of Zuidbroek, Groningen, on February 12, 1908. He died in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on August 11, 1983, just short of the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination into the ministry and the fiftieth anniversary of his marriage to Jeanne Larooy. His father was a baker, and shortly after their immigration in 1923, the Haverkamp family opened a bakery business in Grand Rapids.

Bill came to the United States at a propitious time. World War I had ended, and the 1929 stock-market crash was still six years away. He was fifteen years old and spoke his native language perfectly, but he also became one of the very few ministers in the denomination who could preach in either language without accent. He attended the Grand Rapids Christian schools, and ten years after his arrival in the United States he was ordained in De Motte, Indiana, the first of the seven congregations he served.

Gregarious and congenial, Haverkamp had an unbelievably wide circle of acquaintances in and outside of the Christian Reformed Church. He knew almost all his cohorts either in person or by reputation. He had a phenomenal memory and immediately recognized former parishioners even after a

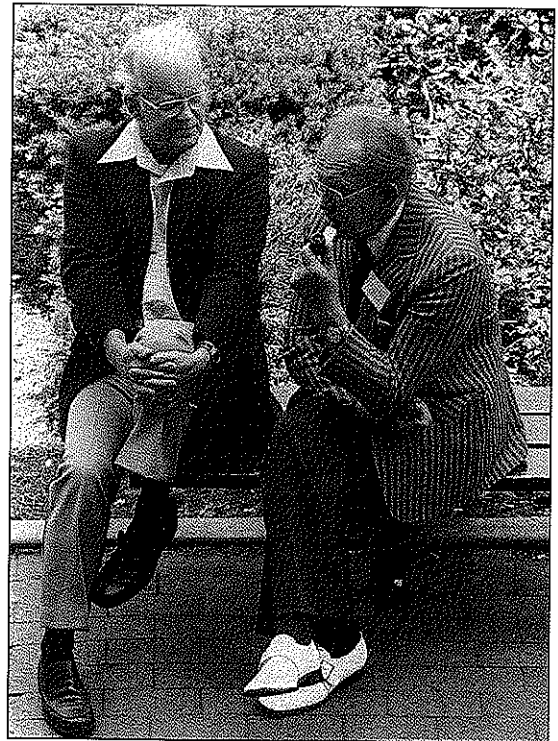
thirty- or forty-year separation.

During World War II, at both the Roseland and Paterson pastorates, he regularly corresponded with the many men and women who were serving in the armed forces and always found time for a chat with them when they were home on furlough. His sermons frequently alluded to the world situation. His concern for the land of his birth was reflected in his pastoral prayers for the beleaguered people in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands.

In Bill there was the unique blending of two traditions that have characterized post-Reformation Dutch church history, namely, the *Afscheiding* of 1834, which began in his native Groningen, and the *Doleantie* of 1883 under the leadership of Dr. Abraham Kuyper. The *Afscheiding* was pietistic, and Bill always reflected that strain in his personal Christian walk. The Kuyperian strain, a more developed form of Calvinism, stressed a world-and-life view which also came to expression in his ministry. For example, he supported Christian schools and other forms of organized solidarity among the followers of Christ. A brief survey of some extant sermons indicates that his preaching style drew heavily on the historic-redemptive method utilized by Kuyper and his followers. The balance that was Calvinism was dear to Bill's

heart, and he never apologized for his ardent exposition of the historic Reformed faith. His preaching style was direct, lucid, and energetic.

In the very best sense of the word,



Rev. William Haverkamp (1908-1983) in conversation with his colleague Rev. Clarence De Haan (1916-1990).

Haverkamp was a churchman. He loved the Christian Reformed Church passionately, and he enjoyed all of its institutional meetings—Inter Nos, classis, and synod. Ten times he was delegated to the annual synod, serving as president four times. He was an excellent parliamentarian, and this gift, combined with his basic decency, meant that even strident debate was never allowed to get out of hand.

Rev. William Buursma is emeritus pastor of the CRC and a member of its Historical Committee.

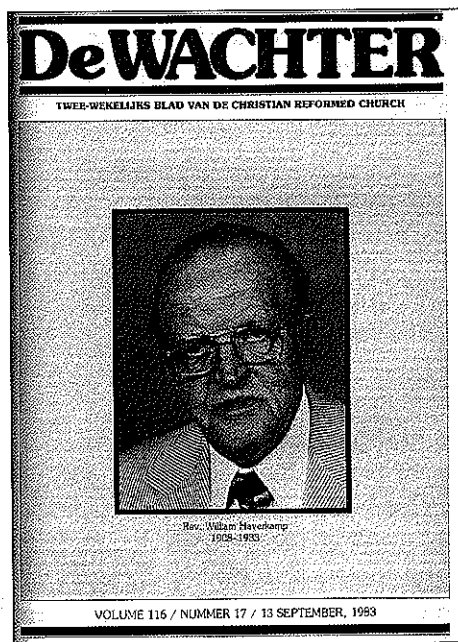
Overzealous partisans who spoke intemperately were curbed by his gentle but unmistakable reprimands.

The synod of 1967, known as the "love of God" synod, severely tested his skills. Because this intensely debated theological controversy could not be resolved at the regular synod, Haverkamp suggested a second session in August. This was the only time in the history of the Christian Reformed Church that its annual synod was unable to conclude its scheduled meeting in June. In the period intervening between the two sessions, Haverkamp worked tirelessly to forge a compromise.

I shall never forget the evening of my ordination in 1952 at Strathroy, Ontario. Bill had preached the installation sermon in Dutch, and we had gathered in the large farmhouse of one of the families. Also present were my family members, consistory members, and their wives. Bill was totally the center of conversation, and he regaled us with hilarious tales of the foibles and frailties of God's people. Haverkamp's friends learned to avoid asking him about his sermons because he could not resist answering with a nearly unabridged recitation of his text, exposition, and application. During the course of these encounters he almost imperceptibly but progressively encroached upon the personal space of his hapless listener. And many times a navel engagement seemed imminent! The smoke-filled room echoed with laughter as one tale after the other surfaced from his memory.

One of the greatest services that Bill was able to give to the Christian Reformed Church was his role as mentor to many pastors. He took a genuine interest in them and never turned aside from a discouraged

young minister who came to him for counsel. Even the most dispiriting revelation and dark doubt were safe with him. He never betrayed a confidence.



De Wachter cover, September 13, 1983.

In a 1983 guest editorial in *The Banner*, entitled "Dear Candidate for the Ministry," he shared his philosophy and some of the secrets of his success. Among other words of sage advice, Haverkamp challenged youthful pastors as follows:

Your congregation may, in fact *must*, expect Reformed preaching from you, preaching faithful to the confessions to which you promised adherence. This needs to be underscored in a time when all too many seem ready to settle for a more general protestantism. Remember that the gospel of God's sovereign grace is the wonderful answer for humanity in its utter lostness. Be encouraged by the assurance that the Holy Spirit will own such preaching by blessing God's people and bringing sinners to repentance.

To all this should be added the need of clarity and order in your

presentation of the riches of God's Word. Put yourself wholly in the delivery of the message. Have it mastered well so that you can have eye contact with the hearers. And, finally, remember in your sermonizing the little lambs of the flock and the teenagers.

Another significant dimension of Bill's ministry was his nineteen-year editorship of *De Wachter*, the Dutch-language magazine, which was the only (as he often reminded us) "official" Christian Reformed journal. Bill succeeded the gentlemanly Rev. Emo Van Halsema. Haverkamp editorialized in the same irenic spirit.

A quick overview of his editorials reveals a pastoral heart, an intellectually inquisitive mind, and an alert awareness of the challenges facing the church. He was one of the first to note with alarm the postwar changes in the Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK). Toward the end of his life he was advocating distancing ourselves from the mother church in the Netherlands.

In many of the years of Bill's editorship there was a marked contrast between *The Banner* and *De Wachter*. When *The Banner* was often controversial and polemic, Haverkamp's journal remained true to the Reformed tradition and did not succumb to myopic partisanship. With the passing of William Haverkamp a remarkable era of the Christian Reformed Church ended. He was a transition figure who helped tremendously in the long process by which we became an Americanized version of the European Dutch Reformed tradition. He never forsook his ancient roots, but gradually they found sustenance in the soil of the new world. 5

Klaas and Claude

The Evolution of a Young Friesian Boy into an American Citizen

Leonard Sweetman

Introduction

In the Archives of the Hekman Library at Calvin College there is a collection of more than three hundred letters which were written between 1912 and 1932 by Klaas Hoekema to his parents, siblings, and grandparents. The Hoekema family, during that time, resided in the southeastern area of the Province of Friesland while Klaas lived in northwestern United States. However, during the final thirteen months of World War I and for the first four

received in Wommels, Friesland, Mrs. Geertje Hoekema-Piersma, the mother of Klaas, transcribed the letters in notebooks. The sisters of Klaas, Japke, Houkje, and Pietje, moreover, aided in the transcription of the letters. They translated a considerable number of the letters into English, an exercise their father, Andele Catharinus Hoekema, encouraged. After Klaas married an "American" girl, Grace Hoekema-Moriarty, they continued the translation to give Grace and her

children a good picture of the Hoekema family and of Klaas prior to their 1924 marriage. These letters reflect a fascinating picture of life in the agricultural community of the northwest during the first third of the twentieth century—the types of crops which were raised, the size of the farms, the mechanization of agricultural productivity, the salaries and working conditions of day laborers, the cost of land and of various foodstuffs, clothing, and entertainment. The responses which Klaas and his peers made to the events of the day are also incorporated into



Friends and peers of Klaas Hoekema in the state of Washington (l to r): Willem van Hallum, Krijn van der Veer, Reinder van der Veer, unidentified, Klaas Hoekema.

Leonard Sweetman is Calvin College Emeritus Professor of Religion and Theology with continuing volunteer activity for the Calvin Archives.

months after the Armistice Klaas served in the United States Army and wrote from Jefferson Barracks, Missouri and Camp Tienston, Kansas.

When the letters of Klaas were

the letters which Klaas sent to his family.

Klaas identified himself deliberately with his new country and peers, a feature which came to a very visible

expression in his use of the name "Claude" as his signature on his letters rather than his given name, "Klaas." He thought that "Claude" was an "American" name. He reinforced this metamorphosis by asserting with some frequency that he was an American, that he was losing his ability to speak in his native language, and stated (in Dutch) that the USA was far superior to the Netherlands. In summary, he was an excellent advertisement for those who were promoting emigration from the Netherlands to the United States.

First Encounters:

March 26, 1912 – October 8, 1917

Mrs. Paula Slaterus, a daughter of Klaas Hoekema's youngest sister, Pietje Krips-Hoekema, stated that Klaas' emigration from the Netherlands to the United States "was a great event for his family." In 1912 conditions in Friesland where the Hoekema family was living were "not good." Therefore, Andele Catharinus Hoekema, the father of Klaas, persuaded his son "to go to America." Mrs. Geertje Klazes Hoekema-Piersma, the mother of Klaas, never really was able to cope well with the reality of her son's emigration to America. She died in 1940 and her husband died in 1945. Neither of the parents ever again had the opportunity of meeting their son, Klaas. Mrs. Hoekema kept all the letters which Klaas wrote to the family. In fact, she, and later her daughters, immediately transcribed in notebooks the letters received from Klaas. Father Hoekema translated some of the letters into English and stimulated his daughters to join him in translating the letters at home as an exercise in their study of the English language. The English translations which the Hoekema girls made were also transcribed into notebooks. Mrs. Hoekema, at first, who initiated the project to preserve a record of her son's life on

the other side of the Atlantic Ocean was joined later by her husband and daughters.

The fifteen-year-old Klaas Hoekema traveled from Wommels in Friesland to Sunnyside, Washington, with a group of young men his own age most of whose names appear over and over again in Klaas' letters. The trip across the Atlantic Ocean seems to have been relatively peaceful, although they did experience a storm on the North Atlantic and some of the young emigrants became seasick for several days. What seemed to impress Klaas was not the storm at sea, but rather the quantity and the quality of the food which was served in the dining room of the ship.

On Wednesday, March 20, 1912, the ship arrived in the harbor of Hoboken, New Jersey. The young men disembarked and went through immigration and customs. After clearing customs they spent a few hours in New York "to see the sights there," an excursion which caused them to miss their train to Chicago. Therefore, at ten o'clock in the evening on March 20, the immigrants left for the west on the New York Central Railroad. In Chicago, on March 21, while waiting seven hours for the departure of the train which was to take the travelers to Sunnyside, Washington, they walked around in Chicago and reported seeing "buildings with thirty stories."

Why did these fellows choose the state of Washington? Why, moreover, did they choose to live in Sunnyside? Friends or acquaintances or relatives of one or more of the young men had emigrated from the Netherlands earlier than the group of which Klaas was a member. The first group of immigrants was employed in the Sunnyside area. As a result of correspondence with the residents in Sunnyside, the earlier immigrants made arrangements for their employment by farmers in

Sunnyside. Most of these employers were themselves emigrants from the Netherlands, and Dutch was then used on their farms and in their families. Therefore, the new immigrants were able to function well from their first day at work.

In his first letter to his family from the new land, which was dated March 26, 1912, Klaas wrote that Aant, the person who had made all the arrangements for the reception and employment of the new immigrants, took Klaas to meet his new boss, Piet van Belle. "When I came here this morning, I immediately changed my clothes and began to cultivate. Three horses were hitched to the cultivator, and I, myself, followed."

Agriculture, of course, involves seasonal employment and Klaas's letters between March 1912, and October 1917, reveal that he had worked in at least twenty-one different places! Most were farms. Because wages during the slack period were often unsatisfactory, Klaas moved on in search of employment with higher wages. The path which Klaas followed between March 26, 1912, through October 8, 1917, took him from Sunnyside, Washington, east through the area around Spokane; north about one hundred and twenty miles to a mine in Rock Cut, Washington; then to Idaho; later to Montana; and, finally, to North Dakota.

In Selah, Washington, located four miles west of North Yakima, Klaas worked in the orchards of a farmer for two days. Geert Napjes and Klaas worked together for this "boss" but Klaas had "trouble" and wrote that he would have shot the boss in the stomach if he had possessed a gun. He planned, instead, to hit his boss on the head with a hoe, but the boss showed Klaas an automatic pistol which, apparently, he carried on his person. The boss then discharged Klaas, and Klaas went to Yakima. This incident,

we must remember, involved a boy who was separated from the nurture and the protection of his parents by six thousand miles. One should not wonder that Klaas exhibited, at times, a certain degree of irresponsibility. His moving from job to job, for example, also characterized Klaas's friends. Gradually however this somewhat unstable teenager began to mature as he gained skills in the operation of farm machinery prior to his involvement in World War I. By trial and error he learned to live in the community of his peers and in the wider socio-political community. This

maturation is noticeable in his letters as he moved from job to job among "Americans" who had little or no contact with immigrants from the Netherlands.

Between March 19, 1915 and April 11, 1915, Klaas's brother Catharinus, who immediately became known as "Charlie," arrived in Washington. An April 11 letter indicates that Charlie has arrived, but Klaas and Charlie seldom worked for the same boss, and soon they were no longer living in the same area. Klaas thought it was not good to work together because they spoke Friesian and then Charlie made

too little progress in learning English. Charlie spent much of his time in the United States in the area of Great Falls, Montana. He returned to the Netherlands for a visit in the spring of 1919, and never returned to the United States.

The employer whom Klaas found to be most compatible was "Doc" Kloeber or Klober, who maintained an orchard and a few cows in Selah near Yakima. Klaas wrote this is "the best place I know of. The board is excellent and the work is also excellent. I can have as much milk and as many eggs as I want." The orchard was located in a "beautiful area with high hills all around, orchards and ranges in the valley, and a fine climate. The streetcar to Yakima runs by here every ten minutes so we can get to the city very cheaply If the boss treats me well I will stay here all summer. I think it will turn out well here. He is a good

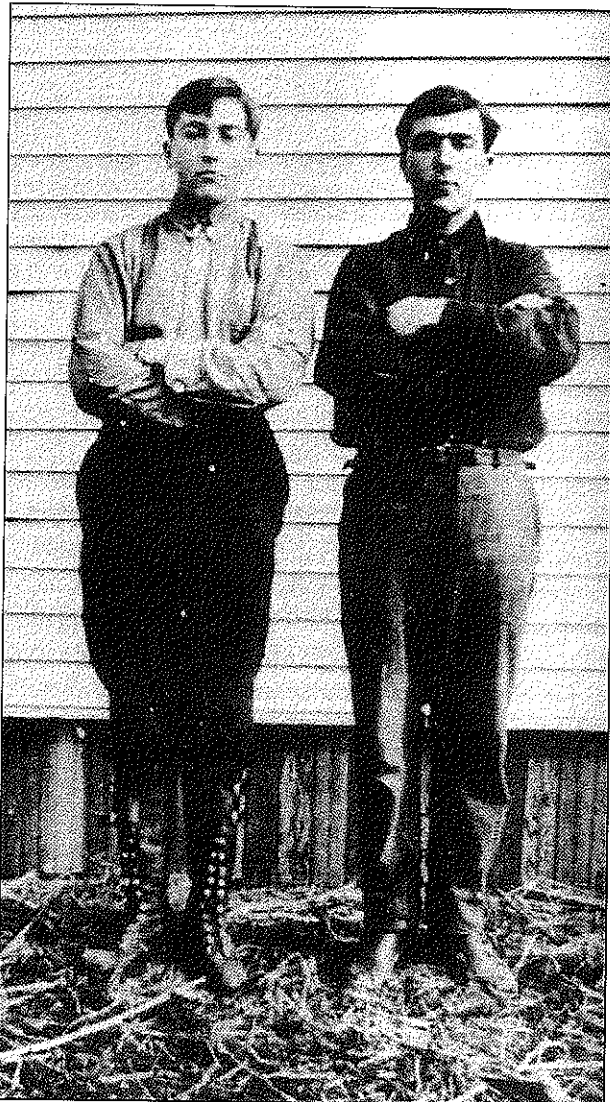
fellow." Klaas was required to spray the fruit trees with a power-driven sprayer and milk the two cows which Doc owned. He worked ten hours each day, and his salary was forty-five dollars per month.

After the pear harvest was completed, in the middle of the summer, Klaas and some friends went fishing for several days. On the return trip Klaas stopped in the County Clerk's office in North Yakima to pick up his "first papers" in the process of becoming a citizen. In three years, in August, 1917, Klaas would become eligible for American citizenship. When he had his "first papers" tucked away carefully in his baggage, the friends completed their trip back to Doc Kloeber's farm.

That fall Doc's crew harvested thirty-five thousand bushels of apples. Twenty-five men and six "girls" were picking and packing the apples. The apples were sorted by a machine. The machine sorted apples by size: 120 apples to the box, 135, 150, 160, 180, and 200 apples to the box. Klaas's job was to construct the boxes using a machine, a process he did not describe.

After the apple harvest was completed, Doc offered Klaas a job for the winter at a salary of \$30.00 per month. Klaas found this unacceptable and reluctantly left Doc's employ. Doc took an interest in Klaas and tried to persuade him to seek an education. He recognized raw gifts, competencies, skills, and abilities in Klaas which needed the discipline of formal education if they were to qualify Klaas to bloom as a person who could contribute significantly to the life of the American community.

Klaas next worked for a farmer located close to Lind, between Pasco and Spokane, Washington. This farm, 1,920 acres (three square miles) raised wheat but the farmer also had fifty cows and one thousand pigs. To pull



Left, Klaas Hoekema; right, Catharinus or Charlie Hoekema, a brother of Klaas who emigrated to Washington and lived in the United States for about four years.

the various machines in the operation of this farm the farmer had forty mules. When he began to work for this farmer, Mr. Smith, Klaas harrowed the land with two other men. The harrows were thirty feet wide. Therefore, in each swath the three men harrowed ninety feet of a field. This farm was an impressive operation in the period leading up to American participation in World War I.

In a letter which was dated July 25, 1915, Klaas informed his family that the "crew" began to thresh winter wheat that day.

Father, you should see how we mow and thresh at the same time—about forty acres a day We call these machines combines Well, these combines have a twenty-foot knife, and I stand on top to keep the knife out of the ground with a sort of steering wheel because the ground is very uneven. Of course, only the ears of grain are taken; the straw is plowed under again. In the evening I have to oil the machine. I get three dollars (per day) and by board There are usually thirty-two horses hitched to a combine, but this farmer has a gasoline motor in front which pulls the grain so that the mules pull only the machine. We have only fourteen mules for that. The drivers make five dollars and their board; so that is a good job.

One of the longest periods of employment during this phase of Klaas's life was in Rock Cut, about 120 miles north of Spokane and very close to the Canadian border. There he was employed at a mine, which yielded lead as the only mineral warranting exploitation. Klaas's job was to bring timbers to the mine from a logging site in the mountains. The timbers were used to shore up the walls and the ceiling of the mine as the digging in the mine progressed. Klaas hitched a horse to several logs and by this means dragged logs down from a 1,000-foot

elevation to the mine shaft located 100 feet above a nearby river. Each day Klaas made three trips from the logging site to the mine shaft. His salary was \$3.50 per nine-hour day with \$1.00 deducted for board. The mine owner paid Klaas, however, with stock in the mine which Klaas ultimately sent to his parents in order to guarantee the safety of the stock shares. As a result of receiving stock shares as his salary during his tenure in the mine Klaas was able to save some of his earnings. It is difficult to determine precisely how much stock Klaas was given as salary. Perhaps it is safe to use the two amounts he report in his letters. He evaluated his stock shares as somewhere between \$500 and \$750. When Klaas left the mine he continued for a while, at least, to invest \$8 per month in mine stock.

When he sold the stock for \$1,000 Klaas intended to send his parents \$200, but when finally he sent the money he sent merely \$100. This incident reflects poignantly the problem which this young man faced. For example, in Sunnyside, Washington, he escorted a young lady to a musical program and took her for refreshments after the program. That evening he spent \$19 for "entertainment." This was more than 50 percent of a month's salary. He was not able to save money; it burned a hole in his pocket. Receiving stock for salary forced him to save.

During the harvest of 1917 Klaas moved from Great Falls, Montana, where his brother Charlie (Catharinus) was working and continued his journey toward the east. He traveled on the Great Northern Railroad to Havre, Montana; Malta, Chinook, and finally Minot, North Dakota. Here he



Paulus Hoekema, the youngest brother of Klaas. He was born in 1907 and died in 1925. The bicycle was purchased with \$100 which Klaas sent his parents in 1917.

detained and went to Granville, about twenty miles east of Minot. Today Granville is located on Route 2. Granville is a "village about the size of Wommels," and also a place in which there were "many" Hollanders. Klaas worked for a boss named Opham, also the name of the post office in a nearby village where Mr. Opham owned land. The post office was named after the "boss's father," one of the early settlers in the 1880s. These Hollanders, incidentally, no longer spoke Dutch, and they were very poor.

Klaas wrote on August 8, 1917, that the grain was ripening at that time. Shocking was scheduled for about a week, and then the threshing was scheduled to begin. The boss said that Klaas could "have a good fall" on the Opham farm. Klaas planned, he added, to stay until he had \$200 in his pocket.

At this time the Industrial Workers



Pietje Hoekema, the youngest sister of Klaas. She was born in 1904 and died in 1996. Mrs. Paula Slaterus-Krips is a daughter of Pietje Hoekema and Frans Krips. The bicycle was purchased with \$100 which Klaas sent to his parents in 1917.

of the World, one of the early labor unions, was striking "everywhere" in the country. Klaas wrote that the residents of Butte, Montana, for example, "hanged the union leaders," and they gave a stern warning to others who seemed to sympathize with the union leaders. Klaas went on to write that four hundred workers refused to serve in the army in the state of Oklahoma. These men "fled into the woods with soldiers" at their heels. Klaas wrote this letter on August 8, 1917. The day before the Oklahoma "workers" shot and killed two soldiers; and the soldiers shot "eight of those bandits." He reported, finally, the unfounded rumor that "the majority of the IWW are German subjects," and "they'd better be careful, or they'll be hanged."

The War Years: October 8, 1917 – January 31, 1919

On October 10, 1917, Klaas wrote a very short letter. Following the wheat harvest he and five other fellows "enlisted in the army." They traveled from Minot, North Dakota, where they enlisted and moved on to St. Louis, Missouri to wait for physical examinations.

After successfully passing their examinations in Fort Leonard Wood, Klaas and his friends were stationed there for basic training. His salary as a private in the U.S. Army was \$30 per month of which \$15 was invested in war bonds which were scheduled to earn 4 percent interest. Consequently, he figured that he would be saving at least \$187 annually as long as he was in the U.S. Army. He also purchased a \$15,000 life insurance policy underwritten by the U.S.

government for a premium of \$8 per \$1,000.

Klaas volunteered to enter the U.S. Army because it provided an immediate route to American citizenship. In his June 17, 1918, letter Klaas wrote, "Congress made a law that all foreigners who aren't citizens get their citizenship papers when they enlist in the army. This is how I received my second papers last week. . . . I am now an American citizen, and I have renounced my loyalty to Holland." Klaas also enlisted because he thought he would be sent to France and he would be able to visit his family very inexpensively. What he failed to mention was that his participation in the war also entailed the possibility of being wounded or killed before seeing his family.

Contrary to his expectations Klaas remained in Fort Leonard wood after

basic training and was assigned to duty as a drill instructor. He badgered his superior officers to ship him overseas, but, when he was placed on order to ship out to the Philippine Islands, he refused to go. This was not where he wished to go. He wished to go to France. That rejected shipping order, however, was the last opportunity Klaas had to go overseas. Almost half way through his military career he was shipped to Camp Tienston in Kansas, 466 miles west of Fort Leonard Wood. He received promotions in grade there, but remained a drill instructor, while his peers shipped out. Group after group came for training under Corporal, and later Acting Sergeant Klaas A. Hoekema, and, on the completion of their training, shipped out for overseas service. Klaas, however, remained in Camp Tienston until he was discharged from military service.

Klaas was able to discern no other reason for his being retained stateside as a drill instructor than his language deficiency. On January 30, 1918, Klaas wrote,

I am the only one who was selected from the old bunch by the Company Commander to teach other soldiers; and the only thing that stops me is that I do not have sufficient knowledge of the English language. That is a pity because I am certain that if I could speak well I would make good progress. But it takes so much talking to teach the new men, especially those who aren't interested in the work.

A month and a half later, on March 14, 1918, he wrote, "I can never master this language, and that is so annoying. Because of this I never can associate with good groups. Of course, my girlfriend says that I am getting on well. But it is a disaster."

On September 15, 1918 he blamed his language deficiency for his failure to be promoted through the ranks of

non-commissioned officers into the ranks of commissioned officers. He narrowed the focus of his complaint to his formal educational deficiency. "Every man with a good education has a good chance here to become an officer, but I shall never get higher than sergeant."

Klaas praised Army meals, "The food here is very good. I know with certainty that if you were to eat an ordinary meal here you would say that you had had a Sunday dinner, or that we had guests for dinner." He, furthermore, appreciated the fact that he had good clothes which included two suits of clothing, "four suits of underwear, twelve pairs of socks, a heavy overcoat, and a raincoat."

He was also delighted to wear the uniform of the U.S. Army.

Of course, it is a great honor to wear a uniform, and we are invited everywhere People invite the soldiers for dinner today with two others, I paid a visit to people who had never seen us nor heard of us. We were on the road, and they asked us if we wished to have a ride in a big automobile. Of course we accepted, and so we came into good company. They entertained us throughout our entire free day. We enjoyed it very much. We met a lot of people and in this way we got a lot of invitations. If things like this continue, then this is a very fine life.

Klaas met and visited with older adults like his parents, but he also met and socialized with young women his own age. And he discovered that he was accepted by them, and invited into their homes. His uniform was a talisman opening doors which, in the Netherlands, would have remained closed. He lauded this social phenomenon without realizing that social barriers were not broken down for all members of the military.

On November 11, 1918, the armi-

stice which signaled "a temporary cessation or suspension of hostilities by mutual consent" was signed but Klaas did not write about that event until almost three weeks had passed, and then he reported, "I found out today that I will leave the army sooner than I thought. I'll come home (to Wommels) as soon as I can get enough money together. How soon that will be I don't know." Undoubtedly this statement did not move his parents to an immediate and joyful expectation of his return. Over and over again during the six years he lived in the United States Klaas had written that he soon would make a visit to the Netherlands. That trip was postponed always—until fall when the harvest would be completed, until the late days of winter, until the early days of spring, or until a variety of other conditions had been met.

Welding School and Business: February 6, 1919 – April 1, 1921

On January 31, 1919, Klaas was discharged from military service. Writing about this on January 26, 1919, he declared,

I have good and bad news for you. The good news is that I am leaving the service on Friday the 31st of January. Then I shall be a free man again. The bad news is that the \$150 in Liberty Bonds have not been received in Great Falls. I may have to wait a while for this \$150. They are very slow in Washington because they are amazingly busy with demobilization Next week I will let you know how everything has turned out with us, and what we are going to do. You must not think too much about us, and you must not expect us before we are on our way home. One thing is certain, if the \$150 arrive before Friday, then we shall go home.

The dream of a trip home to the Netherlands, however, disappeared once again like soap bubbles. On February 6, 1919, already he wrote,

We were certain that we would go home immediately, but we changed our goal again. This summer we think that first we shall scrape together a hoard of money, and then next fall we shall go home. Our reason for this plan is that I only have \$200, and if I were to buy new



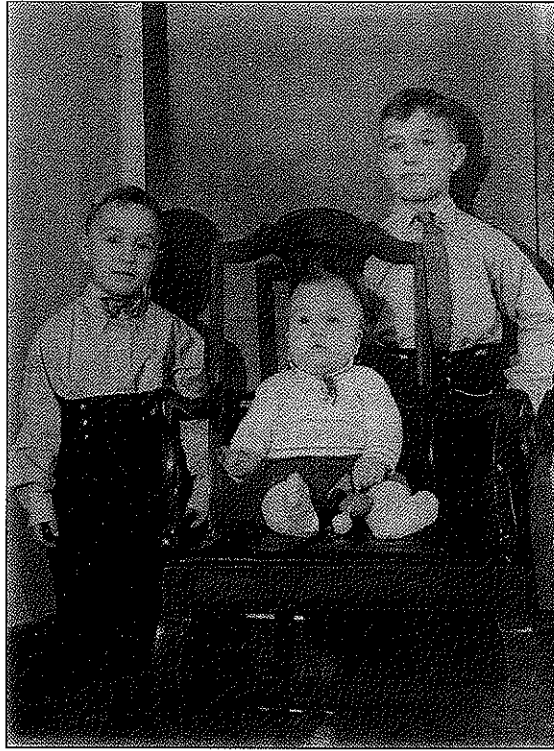
Mrs. Grace Hoekema-Moriarity and her oldest child, Donald Andle Hoekema. This picture was taken in 1927 when Donald was 2 years of age.

clothes there would not be enough to pay for the voyage. Another reason is that no passenger boats are running Aant wanted to go home, as you know. He was in Rochester (New York) and he could not get passage. The agent told him that he could go in two or three weeks, but it would be very expensive. So Aant came back here again. He will stay here (in Great Falls, Montana) the entire summer.

After Klaas settled down in Great

Falls, where his brother Catharinus or Charlie was working on a dairy farm, Klaas also worked for dairies transporting milk for \$75 a month. Within another month Klaas was "keeping company with a girl. This is serious," he said, "I already have bought an engagement ring. So that is going well." The girl, Margaret Pearson, emigrated from Sweden with her parents when she was four years old. The family worked a farm of 170 acres in the vicinity of Great Falls. On May 3, 1919, Klaas wrote that he was working for Margaret Pearson's family, and that he had contributed the money which enabled Father Pearson to sow a crop. Only one month later, on June 9, 1919, however, Klaas wrote that his engagement was broken. A bit of teasing by Klaas about another girl in the neighborhood resulted in Margaret becoming very angry and breaking off their engagement.

Klaas left Great Falls and went to Spokane where he decided to enroll in an "auto and tractor school." He had come to the conclusion "that a man who knows nothing never can have a good life. You cannot associate with people who have learned something. You are always pitied, and you never get ahead in the world." He added that he had "thrown away eight years of the best time of [his] life." He concluded, "It is not too late, is it?" Along with his "study" of autos and tractors he would learn the trade of oxyacetylene welding. The welding trade he wished to learn well. Therefore, he planned to "study" it for "another four or five months." In order to complete his training program in welding, Klaas borrowed \$250 from his old friend Geert Napjes. Charlie, his brother, sent Klaas the \$250 to repay Geert Napjes and Klaas wished to repay the loan from Charlie as quickly as possible. Therefore, he went to Colfax, about fifty miles south of Spokane, to work in the wheat harvest where he earned



L to r: Roy Paul Hoekema, 5 years and 15 days; Stanley Charles Hoekema, 7 months and 9 days; and Donald Andle Hoekema, 7 years and 1 month. The picture was taken in 1932.

\$50 in ten days. Then the threshing began. By the middle of August Klaas moved to Pullman, about twenty miles from Colfax, where he earned \$6 per day working on a threshing machine. Klaas and three other men fed bundles of grain into a threshing machine. In September Klaas returned to Colfax to haul grain to the grain elevator. Opportunity to work in the southeastern part of the state of Washington was so good at this time that Klaas postponed his return to school until "sometime around November 1."

He was still hauling wheat in October, "for twenty-six days with six horses for \$5 a day . . . [I] made a lot of money. When [I] arrived [back in Spokane, I] still had \$290, but [I] had to spend \$30 for clothes." His room and board, moreover, were about \$35 per month. He budgeted \$10 per month for "incidental expenses." On Sunday, December 21, 1919, Klaas

indicated that he was doing very well in the welding program and hoped, at that time, to study for two more months. "I am still going to school, but will go to work again in a few months to see if I can make some money."

On March 7, 1920, Klaas reported crucial events for his subsequent life and history.

A few days before I was to go to the farm the boss for whom I was working became ill. He wished me to stay for a while to help him. This is in the welding shop about which I have written before. We weld all kinds of breaks in steel, cast iron, aluminum, copper, and brass, in short, all metals. I learned to do this quite well in school, and the boss was very satisfied with my work. So I welded everything for four weeks. In those four weeks I did about \$1,200 worth of work for the shop. You can understand that the boss is satisfied.

There are two helpers, but I did all the welding as they were not able to weld well enough. The boss paid me \$30 a week. I made out well, and I learned a lot, and the pay was good. The boss was recovered and couldn't keep me and pay what he said I was worth. So he is going to try to find a good place for me. He said I am worth \$35 or \$40 a week in a good shop. You can see that I am not so bad and perhaps my schooling will pay off very well.

For Klaas, the next twelve or thirteen years focussed on welding and the dream of buying his own shop. In 1920 he wrote that one of the partners in the shop retired because of poor eyes which resulted from the sparks generated in the welding process. Klaas bought out this partner. The first \$125 of profit each month from his half-interest in the shop was wages while the balance covered payments for his purchase. When he had paid

off \$1,200 in principal, the contract stated, Klaas would own half of the business. Klaas thought it would take no longer than one year and he promised his parents that the "prodigal son finally will get his head above water, and in a few years [he] shall go home with a lot of money."

During the fall of 1920, Klaas attended an evening school to study English and mathematics. This evening school program was "... a free school for ex-soldiers." These courses Klaas regarded as the foundation and preparation for "a course in business." He wished to know enough about business to equip himself to assume a significant role as a partner in his business.

On August 4, 1920,, Klaas announced that he had purchased a car, an Oakland, which he drove on weekends to various places of interest—primarily lakes and mountains. One quiet Saturday, March 26, 1921, the day before Easter Sunday, in fact, the Oakland was the first in a line of about fifty cars. They were driving toward the peak of Mt. Spokane where his friends made a rock pile at "the highest peak" which Klaas claimed was 14,850 feet. (The highest point on Mt. Spokane is actually 5,870.) In order to reach the summit, the passengers in several of the cars joined forces to push their cars through high drifts. Finally all the cars reached the summit where Klaas and his friends posed in front of the rock pile marker. Photos enshrine the moment.

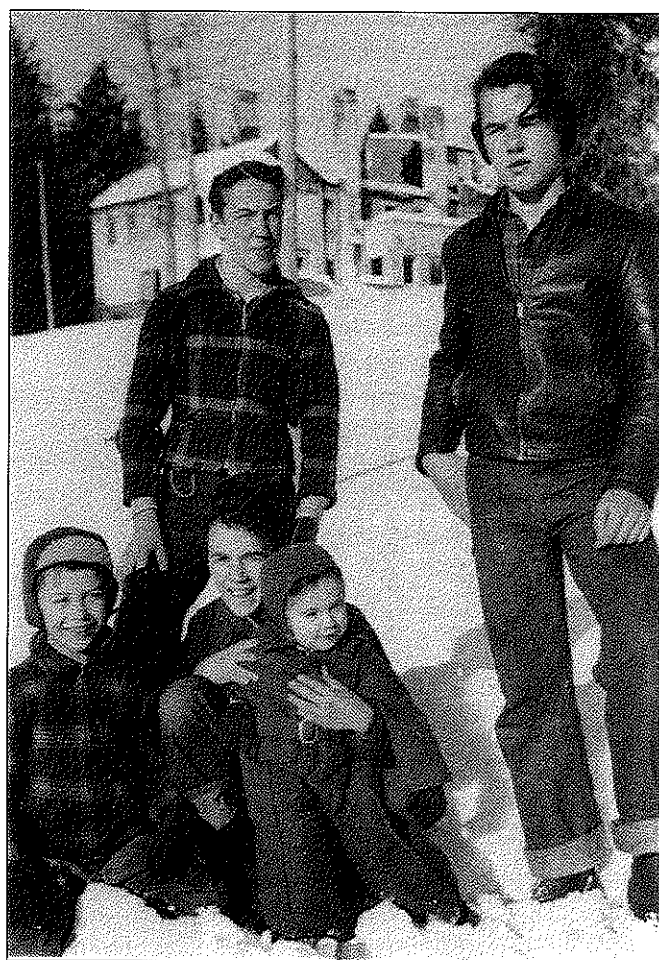
From November 7, 1924 Until December 29, 1932

The next available letter in the collection dated November 7, 1924, was written two days after Klaas's marriage to Grace Moriarity, an event that hastened his maturity. His subsequent letters disclose a diligent welding shopkeeper on State Street in Spokane, as well as an enviable gardener of

fruits and vegetables. This more mature Claude also assumed his paternal responsibilities following the birth of the three children between 1924 and 1932. The births of Donald Andle in 1925, of Roy Paul in 1927, and of Stanley Charles in 1932 were announced to Grandmother and Grandfather Hoekema in Wommels, the Netherlands, in the letters of Claude and Grace. The development of the boys is charted in the letters with details such as weight, height, the appearance and loss of teeth, and all the other details young mothers and fathers delight in sharing with their relatives and friends.

Klaas spent a significant amount of time after work each evening with the boys. He sometimes played a bit rough with them, but they enjoyed thoroughly their evenings with their father. During the winter Claude spent time on the hills in the vicinity of their home. These hills, frequently, were blanketed with snow in the winter. The oldest boys, Donald Andle and Roy Paul, went sleigh riding with Father. During the summer periods the entire family frequently drove to one of the many lakes in the general vicinity of Spokane for a picnic. There they enjoyed boating and swimming together.

As Claude wrote to his family about his business, he charted the economic problems which begin to multiply in the United States during the last half



The last five children of Grace Hoekema-Moriarity and Klaas A. Hoekema: rear, left, son #4, Clyde Edward, and right, son #3, Stanley Charles; front, left, son #6, Allen Bernard, son #5, Clifford David who is holding the seventh and last child, Claudia Grace.

of the 1920s. He points to an increasing number of business failures, to growing unemployment figures among the artisans in Spokane, and to people losing homes or businesses through foreclosure. Claude became increasingly concerned about losing his own business because of the economic depression. Therefore, he decided that he would buy a small farm a bit north of the city so that he could begin to farm. Grace and Claude had spent a significant amount of time and effort in altering their home and property during the years they lived just outside the city. By December of 1929, however, Claude and Grace were convinced that they should sell their house and buy a farm. They were

ready to move to a farm they found which pleased them no end—83 acres, of which only about five acres could not be cultivated. It was located about 150 feet above the Spokane Valley. The house provided a splendid view of that entire valley. Since it took only about thirty minutes to drive to the shop in Spokane, Claude expected that, at least for the first year of their residence on the farm, he would continue to work in the shop. The farm cost a total of \$3,600.

In 1930 Claude worked the farm in addition to working in the shop in Spokane, and he began to feel that farming was his real vocation. He demonstrated his ingenuity by installing a windmill to pump water from their well into a "holding tank" on a hill behind their farm home. Water flowed from the holding tank into the house, and could be led through small ditches into the parched fields during the dry summer of 1931. In this way, Claude installed his own system of "running water." In the midst of calamitous economic instability, he maintained a hopeful posture. He planted eight acres of wheat and three acres of clover, while together he and Grace planted a large garden and an orchard which promised an abundance of fruit. He calculated that

selling his horses to save on feed was less costly than buying new animals in the spring.

In spite of dim business prospects, Claude decided to buy out his business partner, and then get a new partner who would bring into the business the equipment necessary to do "electric welding." He hoped this change would result in their business increasing. That "guess" proved to be wrong. By the fall of 1931 the value of Claude's farm had depreciated 50 percent, and was worth only \$2,000, while his mortgage was \$1,500. In a letter to his grandfather in the Netherlands, dated January 3, 1930, Claude reflects on his life in which he has worked hard, in which he has struggled, and in which the economic circumstances of the day were totally beyond his ability to exercise any influence or control. Claude wrote, "When I look back, then I can see a large number of opportunities which I allowed to pass by. Everyone, however, has these. When I see people who are no better than I, but who always are fortunate enough to do the right thing, then I believe that there is a great power which steers us through life." This is probably the most explicitly religious statement which Claude made in the entire corpus of letters. It

is neither a specifically nor positively Christian expression, but it reflects well that Claude experienced his inability to control the conditions of his own life. He experienced himself to be under the domain of others, or of an Other. That experience reflects a good degree of maturity in Claude.

We know nothing about Claude and Grace after December 29, 1932. That is the date of the final letter in the collection. Through the letters of Klaas Hoekema, however, we have been able to look at the convulsions and convolutions operating in the economic and social contexts of the United States during a very critical period—from 1912 until 1932. We have seen this complex story through the eyes of a simple young man as he evolved from a Dutch national who loved his native village and his birth family into an American citizen—an evolution which took place at a great distance and largely isolated from the influence of those who gave birth to him and nurtured him through the earliest period of his life. The vision changes as the time and the circumstances change until we see the mature man, now proudly an American whose wife and children have contributed profoundly to the evolution from Klaas to Claude. §

The Colzman Family

Mayflower Gulch

Helen Vander Meulen

Early in the twentieth century many Dutch people migrated to Denver hoping to find a cure for tuberculosis and asthma because the clean air and sunshine seemed to be beneficial. While some families established small businesses to support

the Colsmans established a real estate business. Their timing, just as the Great Depression shut down the economy, was disastrous. But real estate clients and others had acquainted the Colsmans with gold-mining lore and some of the miners

who worked the sites.

Colzman visited the old mines looking for investment possibilities, and as the economic depression intensified and his family grew to five children, he saw mining as a possible means to support his family.

Conrad decided to enter the gold-mining industry and acquired financing in the Pella/Sully area, where he traveled several times. Meanwhile, he also explored existing mining sites in the

Colorado mountains. In 1933 he selected Mayflower Gulch, the site of the Boston mine, which included three rustic cabins. One cabin served as the kitchen and also provided sleeping quarters for the family. The ten miners and the two oldest Colzman boys, Con and Bill, stayed in the other cabins. Sitting out under the stars was a thrilling experience for the family. It seemed as though they could reach out and touch the heavens.

On their first night out, Con and Cynthia with the three younger children—Marie, Bernice, and Marvin—stayed at an abandoned mining cabin called Monte Carlo, located part way up to their destination. The Mayflower cabins about a mile farther had not yet been prepared



J.C. or Con Colzman, as he was generally known, 1930.

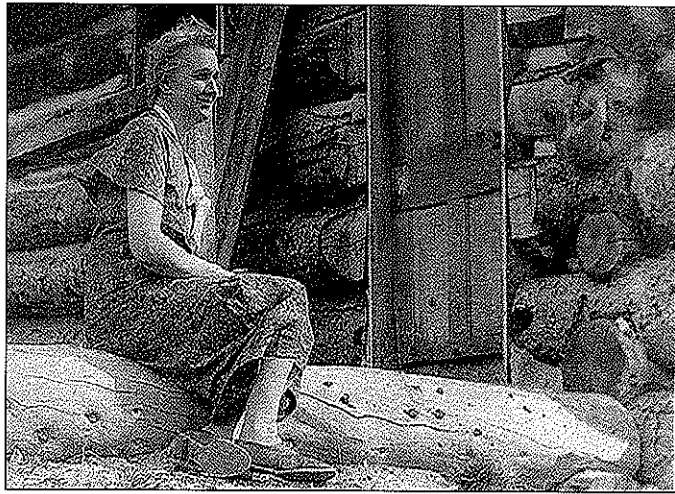
themselves, the Colsmans, one of the more adventurous families, looked beyond Denver to search for gold in the mountains.

The families of Cynthia Vos and Jacob Conrad Colzman settled initially in Sully, Iowa. Cynthia's father, a horse trader in the Netherlands, brought his family to a Sully area farm when Cynthia was just four years old. As she reached adulthood, she worked in Pella, doing general housework. It was there that she met Conrad J. Colzman, whom she married in 1911. He had been raised in Kansas but had moved to Pella to become a printer for the *Pella Weekblad*. After marrying, they moved to Sully, where he became a book-keeper and after that a retail merchant.

After a subsequent move to Denver,

Helen Vander Meulen is a native of Denver and a family historian.

for occupancy. The following day they moved their belongings the remaining mile up the narrow dirt road to the log cabins which became their home for the summer. Occasionally they re-



Cynthia Colsman, wife and mother of the Colsman family, not only cooked for her family but also for the whole camp.

turned to Denver for supplies by way of Loveland Pass, which at that time presented a considerable challenge. En route they always stopped at Dillon—not much more than a general store and an old hotel. The five-mile road from Ten Mile Creek and the small town of Kokomo up to Mayflower Gulch was another difficult route. During the summer the road was open and passable, but it was dangerous during the winter.

Cynthia cooked for the ten miners and her family under primitive conditions. They had no electricity, and the water for all purposes came from the creek. The stoves for heating and for cooking were heated by wood and coal. Perishable food was kept about fifty feet into the mining tunnel, where the temperature was just right for milk, butter and eggs. One indoor-outdoor privy was connected to the cabins; another, for men only, was up the hill. Life in the camp enriched the Colsman family's experiences with exceptional events and stories, including stories of household disasters—the

explosion of a pressure cooker which splattered pea soup throughout the whole cabin, a lantern fire which singed one whole wall, and a medical emergency caused by a falling swing support, which drove a nail into young Marvin Colsman's arm. Leadville, home of the nearest medical doctor, was twenty miles away through mountainous terrain. While there for treatment, Marvin saw Baby Doe Tabor, a familiar character on the Leadville streets.* Marvin remembers that his father bought some bedroom furniture from Baby Doe,

which was later abandoned in the cabin when the Colsmans gave up mining.

*Baby Doe Tabor (1854-1935) was the widow of U.S. Senator Horace Tabor, who made and lost millions in the silver mines. Baby Doe spent her last impoverished years in Leadville. According to an obituary report, "As years passed, Baby, with no income and unable to buy anything would wrap her feet in gunny sacks held on with twine. When sick she would doctor herself with turpentine and lard. With the help of creditors and through the kindness of her Leadville neighbors she was supplied with the bare necessities of life. A severe blizzard hit Leadville in February 1935. Sometime after it was over a neighbor noticed that there was no smoke coming from the shack at the Matchless mine. When help finally arrived they found Baby's frozen body on the floor of the cabin, arms outstretched in the shape of a cross." So it ended for Baby Doe Tabor, the "Silver Queen"—one of the richest persons in the U.S. during the 1880s . . . a pauper and recluse until her death in 1935. Her body was sent to Denver and buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery next to her beloved husband, Horace.

After their first summer in camp the family moved back to Denver and then to Idaho Springs, seeking employment. There the two older boys worked at the Alpine and McClelland Tunnel mines, where miners lowered buckets down a mine shaft to be filled with ore before being hoisted up by hand on pulleys. Dump trucks and horse-drawn wagons hauled ore away for processing. Logs were used to stabilize the mine shafts and the tunnels which snaked around underground for miles and often intersected with the tunnels of other mining companies.

Cynthia Colsman, who lived to be 101 years old, in her old age was still able to recall many events from the mining camp years. She recalled stories about notorious desperados hiding in the mountains, including the well-known "Legs Diamond."* While they lived in Idaho Springs, an ancient burial ground was moved to clear the path for someone's idea of progress. The bodies were transported to a new cemetery along Chicago Creek. The curious Colsman kids found a place to observe the procedure close up. The skeletons were exhumed

*Chicago's Jack "Legs" Diamond from the Al Capone era.



Cabin interior with window view of mining terrain.

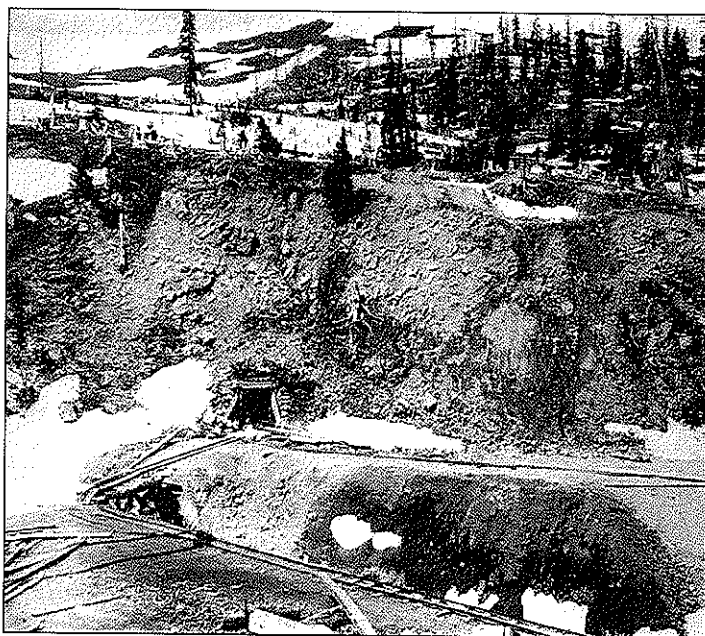
with little or no decorum, and, when the first skeleton figure they saw trailed long red hair, they made a quick retreat as fear overpowered their curiosity.

Conrad and his sons continued to mine Mayflower Gulch intermittently but finally left the mines in 1938. They had found some gold, but the quest was no longer wise or profitable. Many years later some family members

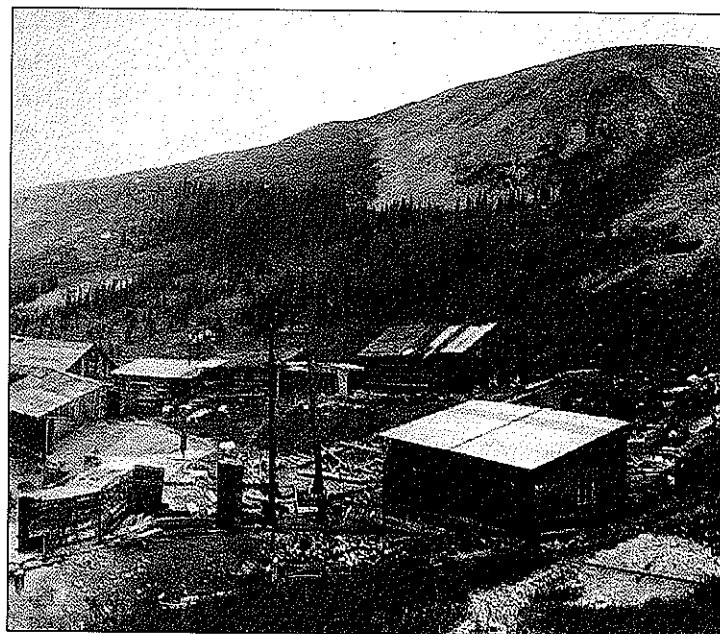
returned to the old site. They found the cabins with roofs caved in by heavy loads of snow but otherwise in surprisingly good shape. One cabin had been damaged by fire. Ragged curtains blew from the doorway. A toy truck lay abandoned in a corner. Much of the region had been purchased and mined by the Climax Mine Company, and over the years their tailings had drifted down the

mountainside to completely obliterate the small town of Kokomo at the bottom of the valley.

The dream which the Colsmans followed in the Colorado mountains gained them little more than memories. Mining had been neither a rich nor comfortable life. But the views from the old cabin windows remained as beautiful as ever. ♣



Entrance to the tunnel of the Boston Gold Mine in Mayflower Gulch above Kokomo, Colorado.



The buildings at the Boston Gold Mine include bunk houses, a barn, cook shack, compressor shack, ore bins, and a blacksmith shop. The covering over the tracks, built to provide protection during the winter snows, is partially dismantled.

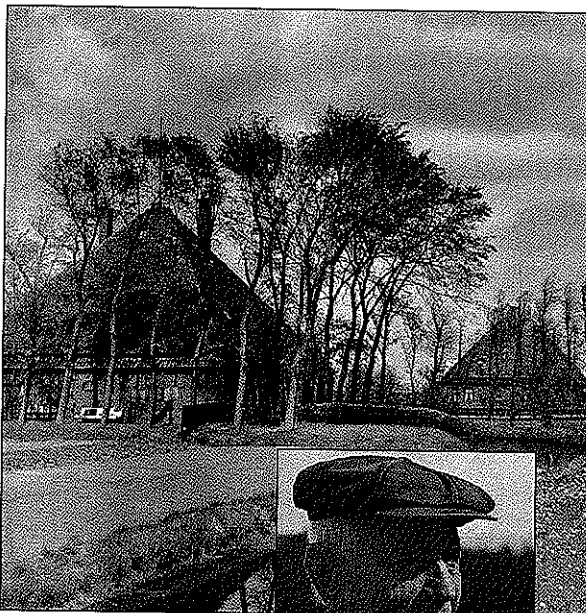
The photos accompanying this article are from Bill Colsmen, a nature photographer.

Henry Beets, 1869-1947

A Man for All Seasons

H.J. Brinks

During fifty-two years of service to the Christian Reformed Church, 1895-1947, Henry Beets created, controlled, or influenced virtually every denominational institution. No one was better known within the church, and no one represented it more authoritatively beyond its institutional borders. Beets began writing to and for the CRC already in 1895, when he became an author and associate editor for the *Gereformeerde Amerikaan*. His most influential post was as *Banner* editor, 1904-1929. In addition he coedited



Typical farm such as that which Jasper Beets, Henry's father, operated in Koedijk, North Holland.



Photo of typical North Holland farmer.

and published *Missionary Monthly* from 1915 until his death in 1947.

His books, ranging from *Het Leven Van William McKinley*

(1901) to *Hollanders Who Helped Build America* (1942), demonstrate a persisting

interest in history, but he also wrote or edited many catechisms, sermon

collections, and missionary biographies.

Although the Beets legacy cannot be separated from its identity with the CRC, he knew nothing about that church until after he immigrated to Luctor, Kansas, in 1886. His own family was culturally connected to the *Hervormde* or State Church in Koedijk, Noord Holland, but they were not, as Beets put it, "converted Christians." When fifteen-year-old Henry wanted to emigrate, his father only consented after arrangements were made to join up with an uncle, Peter Smit, in Luctor. There Henry also met Dirk Scholten, a Reformed Church in America pastor who, with his immigrant bride, provided both friendship and the spiritual models which sparked Henry's religious curiosity and admiration. Seven years later, on February 6, 1893, while studying at the CRC's theological school in Grand Rapids, Henry Beets wrote to his former mentor,

Perhaps you have thought that your protégé of former days had forgotten you. But, no, this is not the case . . . be assured I will never forget you—the remembrance of bygone days when both of you in the quiet parsonage of Luctor pointed me by word and action to the holy work of God, to the Lamb slain for the sin of the world—will always cling to me, will always abide in my heart, no matter where I go, no matter what may happen.

"I am now in my first year of theological studies," Beets continued,

two and a half more years to go, if it pleases God, and I hope to be sent

into the vineyard of the Master. . . . I like my theological studies very well. We have a splendid professor in Dr. Vos. He is a Calvinist of the most pronounced type and a supra-lapsarian at that. And of course we, as his pupils, his disciples, are becoming his enthusiastic followers in supra-lapsarianism also. I am very much pleased with Dr. [Vos]. I wish you could form his acquaintance. He is a young man of thirty and as kind and obliging and humble as I never saw a man before. And what a treasure of knowledge he may call his own! I suppose you know he is a close friend of your old professor Dr. Steffens and also to the Drs. Bavinck, Kuiper, Warfield, etc. I suppose you will smile at my enthusiasm for him—but never mind.

Beets, who became an ardent defender of the CRC's 1857 secession and its ecclesiastical independence, also regarded the eventual reunification of the RCA and the CRC as an obligatory and nearly inevitable event. Optimistically ecumenical, he exclaimed,

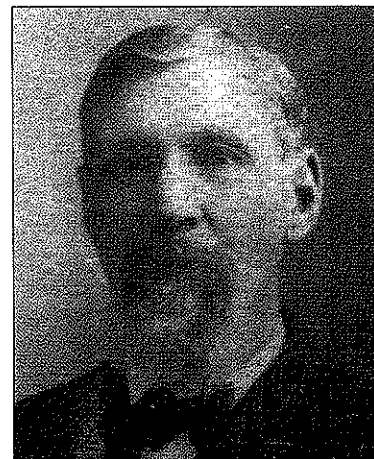
May God hasten the day when the staunch Calvinists of your denomi-

nation will leave the more liberal minded, and, together with us, form the Holland Reformed Church, the church of the fathers of Dordt, aye, above all, the Church of Christ the Lord!!

Now do not call these ideas castles in Spain, for they are not, but well-based hopes, well-formed expectations for the future. What a grand day that will be when we will have a day like Amsterdam saw June 27, 1892!*

Because Beets's decision to affirm his baptism was nurtured by members and pastors of both the RCA and CRC, he developed a strong and lifelong interest in the history of both institutions and of the Reformed tradition in general. In Luctor, where he publicly professed his faith in a Christian Reformed gathering, his first religion guide had been Rev. Dirk Scholten, but thereafter Beets met regularly with a Bible study group of CRC immigrants, and consequently he affiliated with the CRC rather than the

*The date when the seceding church groups, *Afscheiding* and *Doleante*, united in the Netherlands.

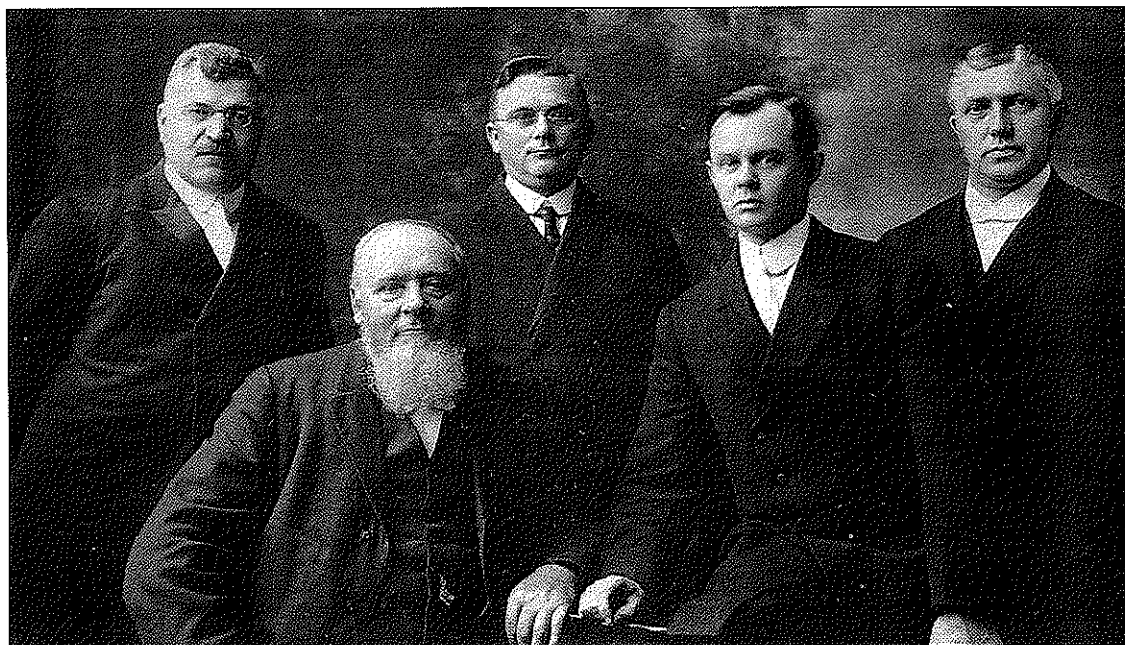


Rev. D. Scholten (1852-1922), RCA pastor, ignited the spiritual concerns of Henry Beets in Luctor, Kansas.

RCA. Then, in 1888, when the CRC's Classis Orange City agreed to fund his pastoral training, Beets's loyalty and obligations to the CRC extended and strengthened.

Although he had had educational ambitions in the Netherlands, Beets was not admitted to advanced schooling because he scored low in mathematics exams. He reported that poor and uncorrected eyesight had prevented him from following mathemat-

ics lessons on the blackboard, but he had no trouble with desk work. In fact, he was especially adept at language study—German, French, Latin—and strongly inclined to study history, geography, and literature. Consequently, he was well prepared and gifted for the study of theology. Within seven years, 1888-1895, he completed both the prep-school courses (college level) and theological requirements so that in 1895 he and his new bride, Clara Poel, moved to the



Rev. H. Beets, first pastor of Sioux Center CRC, pictured with the next three—J. Smitter, 1900-1904; W.P. Van Wyk, 1904-1911; H.M. Vander Ploeg, 1911-1918—and C. Bode.

parsonage of the First CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. They served there until 1899 when they returned to Grand Rapids to occupy the LaGrave Avenue CRC manse.

By then Beets's reputation as a clear-thinking Dutch-language writer was well established, but, after accepting the LaGrave Avenue pastorate (a congregation organized to satisfy demands for the use of English in worship) Beets gained an increasing proficiency with English. Even though his speech always rolled with a pronounced Dutch brogue, his writing betrayed little of his linguistic ancestry. Then, after he began to edit the English-language *Banner* in 1904, he almost automatically became a leading advocate of English usage in the CRC.

The *Banner* did not become an official CRC publication until 1914, when the denomination purchased the periodical from *The Banner of Truth* Publication Company for \$5,000. During the prior decade (1904-1914) Beets edited *The Banner* for a group of fellow investors, including Revs. Jacob Noordewier, William Vander Werp, Menno Bosma and several lay persons. Meanwhile, by 1914 the circulation had grown from virtually zero in 1904 to about 3,000. *De Wachter* claimed about 9,000 subscribers that year. When Beets relinquished the editorship in 1929, his subscription list nearly equaled that of *De Wachter*.

During the twenties the direction of Beets's research and writing shifted from the history of the CRC and its Dutch Reformed traditions toward the promotion of mission work—both foreign and domestic. After he became the director of missions in 1920, the CRC's Publication Committee discussed the possibility that Beets might be too busy to carry on as *Banner* editor, but they did not force the issue until 1924, a year when the denomination was heavily beset by controversy. The Publication Com-

mittee did not nominate Beets as continuing editor because, they said, he had not provided forceful editorial leadership. True enough, Beets attempted to avoid partisanship and taking sides in the theological

debates which resulted in the ejection of Harry Bultema (1918), Ralph Janssen (1922), and Herman Hoeksema (1924).^{*} Nonetheless, synod refused to follow the Publication Committee's recommendation. So Beets remained at his editorial desk until 1928, when he was pleased to pass the task on to his successor, Henry J. Kuiper. As director of missions, coeditor of *Missionary Monthly*, stated clerk of the synod and

a prolific author, Beets continued to enjoy a full agenda.

The twenties was a watershed decade for Beets and the CRC. Several major debates—Dutch/English language, establishing a church-owned liberal arts college, adopting individual cups for commemorating the Lord's Supper, and the endorsement of hymn singing in worship—became irrelevant or nearly so during that decade. Thereafter, without direction



LaGrave Avenue CRC parsonage.

^{*}Summarizing that whole decade, Beets wrote:

Quiet has returned to our churches after the trouble of the Hoeksema faction. You know two men were leading that movement: Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. H. Danhof. Hoeksema being at the head of the Eastern Avenue Church in Grand Rapids, and Danhof at the head of the First Church in Kalamazoo. At first they were great friends, but in recent weeks they have become estranged, and Danhof and his congregation decided to withdraw from connection already made. As you know two nephews of the Rev. Danhof, both of them candidates, have also come back to us, or expect to come back. So we are happy to be able to state that the movement has not amounted to as much as the people thought. If you wish you can make a little note of that in your paper [*Grensboode*], although I do not care to have you mention my name. They have small congregations in perhaps half a dozen places, but excepting the strong church of Rev. Hoeksema, the movement does not amount to anything. They have been trying to train a few students in a hasty manner, and maybe they will be able to keep the remnant alive. But that is all there is to it.

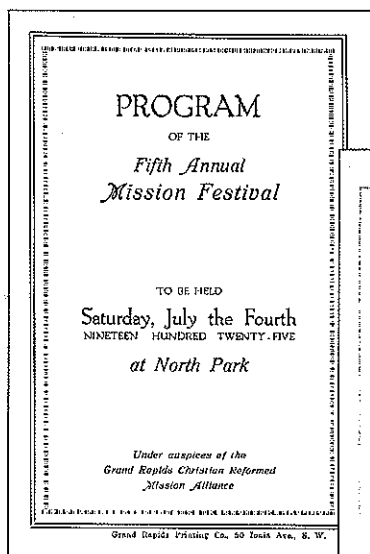
The Rev. Bultema, the head of the premillennial movement, is going to Europe this summer. Maybe he will be agitating his premillennialism in connection with "Het Zoeklicht," but the movement which he headed too has practically come to a standstill, except his rather strong church in Muskegon, there are but a few small congregations in about four or five places left. Happily our people stick to the old Reformed truth pretty well. (Henry Beets to E. Kolthoff, in Veldhuizen, Germany, June 8, 1927)

from formally adopted policies or declarations, the CRC turned toward and into the main channels of American religious culture, concerning itself with worldly amusements, Darwinian evolution, and opposition to theological modernism. The growing popularity of missionary activity, a significant part of this transition, led to a growing ecumenical cooperation with other church groups and missionary cohorts at work in Nigeria, New Mexico, and China. Beets flourished amid these expanding endeavors, and he became the CRC's leading advocate of missionary work.

As director of missions he continued to publicize and promote missionary activity in his *Missionary Monthly* columns and as the feature writer for *The Banner's* missionary page. These articles were usually fueled by Beets's visits to and correspondence with the CRC's missionaries around the world. After he was released from *The Banner's* weekly deadline schedules in 1929, Beets visited the CRC's American Indian Mission in New Mexico as his first major stop on his way to China, the Dutch East Indies, and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). He returned via Egypt, Italy, Geneva,

and the Netherlands. He was always careful to mention that the Hekman brothers and banker G.L. Daane had funded the excursion. The denomination was not yet ready to fund supervisory travel for its administrators.

The 1925 organization



Mission Festival Program, 1925.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:	
President	Dr. H. Beets
First Vice-President	Mr. O. Boscher
Second Vice-President	Mr. P. Tigchou
Secretary	Mr. A. C. Boerkoel
Assistant Secretary	Miss M. Dekker
Treasurer	Mr. H. Horrema
Assistant Treasurer	Mr. J. Kingma
FESTIVAL COMMITTEES:	
Program Committee:	
Mr. O. Boscher	
Mr. A. C. Boerkoel	
Music Committee:	
Miss M. Dekker	
Miss K. Scheepstra	
Mr. H. Wieringa	
Canteen Committee:	
Mr. P. Tigchou	
Mr. Clarence Broersma	
Mr. H. Horrema	
Miss De Boer	
Miss Holthrop	
Building Committee:	
Mr. G. Van Dijken	

of the CRC's Women's Missionary Union in Beets's LaGrave Avenue parsonage became a major vehicle for the promotion of missionary work. A similar group, the Christian Reformed Ladies' Missionary Union, took shape in Chicago that same year. Beets nourished these organizations enthusiastically and became a virtual fixture at their national conventions. Wherever they met—Chicago, Muskegon, Paterson, and Grand Rapids—the conferees lined up for a group photo with Henry Beets always among them. While the denomination's pastors, professors, and leading office holders were seriously at each other's throats throughout the 1920s, the CRC's women gathered to support mission work, to spread the gospel, and, not so incidentally, to advance the programs of missions director Dr. Henry Beets.

Until recently (1964) the organization of the CRC's missionary programs reflected curiously myopic assump-



Women's Missionary Alliance meeting in Muskegon, Michigan, 1926.

tions. During the Beets era home and foreign missions were not separately administered. The American Indian Mission was considered foreign though church planting at greater distances from the Midwest, i.e., in California, Washington, and Canada, were regarded as home missions. This distinction was probably ethnic rather than geographic: wherever Dutch people settled, the CRC promoted vigorous home mission activity.

Beets's sturdy support for these ventures stemmed partly from the fact that his own spiritual awakening in 1886 had benefited from the work of itinerant home missionaries like Rev. Marcus

Marcusse (1860-1913) and Rev. Marinus Van Vessem (1866-1945). It's not surprising, then, to discover that Henry Beets vigorously supported efforts to welcome, settle, and support Dutch-Canadian immigrants from the early twenties until 1940, when World War II closed Netherlandic borders. These prewar efforts established foundations for the astonishing success of the CRC's home mission program among Dutch-Canadian immigrants after the war, 1946-1956. It was ironic



1929 visit of Henry Beets to China mission field. Jukao, Kiangsu Province, residence of Rev. Smit in background. Headquarters of the China mission.

Standing, men, (L to R): Rev. Albert Smit; Rev. Harry Dykstra; Rev. John De Korne; unidentified; Mr. Soong, Bible man; Mr. Shao, evangelist in Jukao; Dr. Beets; Mr. Wang, evangelist, co-worker of Rev. Smit; unidentified; unidentified; Rev. Simon Dykstra; Rev. Albert Selles.

Seated, women: Miss W. Kalsbeek; Mrs. A. Selles; Miss Lillian Bode; Mrs. H. Dykstra; Mrs. A. Smit; Mrs. S. Dykstra; Mrs. J. De Korne; unidentified; Mrs. Shao; Mrs. Ruby Liu.

Children, on laps: Peter Dykstra; Harvey Smit; Evelyn Dykstra.

Children, front: Jean Dykstra; Eunice Smit; Cornelia Dykstra; Andy Dykstra.

if not insulting to label Dutch-Canadians as home-missionary clients because large numbers of them were members and former officers of the *Gereformeerde Kerken der Nederlanden*, i.e., the CRC's mother church. But that awkward designation evaporated rapidly as Canadian congregations organized to take their place in the CRC.

Among the many home missionaries none was more prominent than Rev. John R. Brink (1872-1960), who

helped organize at least twenty-eight churches among the far-flung Dutch immigrant settlements.* His personal correspondence with Henry Beets could easily sustain a lengthy article about the CRC's home-mission activity during its most successful era. More recently, the denomination's church-planting (home missions) policy has been disconnected from its traditional

*Ron Vander Laan, *The Life of Rev. J.R. Brink, 1872-1960*, student paper in Calvin College Archives.

ethnicity. The jury on this strategy is still out.

The American Indian Mission, a work which Beets also cherished, was designated as "heathen" and "foreign" until 1964, when it became a home missions endeavor. After the 1982 formation of Classis Red Mesa, most of the New Mexico and Arizona congregations acquired organized status. Once again Beets's correspondence with missionaries such as Leonard P. Brink (1876-1936), Lee S. Huizenga (1881-1945), and others contains information enough to write a fascinating account of mission work among the Navajo and Zuni tribes of New Mexico.

In his last book about CRC missions, *Toiling and Trusting* (1940), Beets reviewed fifty years of the denomination's activity in New Mexico, China, South America, and Nigeria. The last of these was, of course, the country to which Johanna Veenstra devoted her life. Beets, in turn, devoted a book-length account, *Johanna of Nigeria* (1937), to Veenstra's work in Africa. And again, for those who may be interested, Johanna Veenstra's personal correspondence with Henry and Clara Beets is an informative, inspirational, and thoughtful record of events. It is not excessive to claim that for the history of the CRC's first century, 1857-1957, Henry Beets's papers provide the most important sources for almost any aspect of the denomination's past. Anyone who could devote a year's time to systematically reading the Henry Beets Papers would become an expert historian of the CRC.

L.P. Brink to Henry Beets

March 31, 1914

Dear Brother Beets,

My wife and I arrived at Tohatchi September 6, 1900, and we left about the first of April, 1913 [i.e., a thirteen-year stint]. The exact number of converts at the Tohatchi Mission, if I mistake not, is sixty-nine.

Brother Huizenga

[i.e., Lee S. Huizenga] evidently has not seen them yet, and does not seem to be aware of the fact, that not over five of them live within half a dozen miles of the Tohatchi Mission. A goodly number of them are now in non-reservation schools (Riverside, CA; Phoenix, AZ; Albuquerque, NM; etc.) and not a few of them, I am sorry to say, have passed to the great Beyond.

Mission stations to the Navajos are as follows:

Christian Reformed:

Tohatchi Mission
Rehoboth Mission
Crownpoint Mission
Two Grey Hills Mission

Presbyterian:

Fort Defiance, Arizona
Ganado, Arizona
Tuba, Arizona
Leupp, Arizona
Indian Wells, Arizona
Liberty, New Mexico
Marsh Pass, Arizona

Roman Catholic:

St. Michaels, Arizona
Lukachukai, Arizona

I do not know how many workers each of these posts has; in fact, I am not sure whether they are all occupied at present.

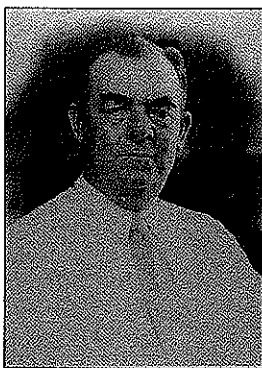
I am slated for a lecture on the Religious Ideas of Navajo Indians in the near future.

Best wishes to you and yours, from us both,

Yours as ever, L.P. Brink



Rev. L.P. Brink in Rehoboth dressed in "work" clothes with his Navajo staff.



Leonard P. Brink, formal portrait, with notation by Rev. Lee S. Huizenga, "evidently a later [1936] picture—a fine character study."

Johanna Veenstra to Henry Beets

*Ibi, via Jos
Northern Nigeria
British West Africa
June 2nd, 1925*

Dear Dr. Beets,

Your last letter, dated March 16th, was a real treat. It was friendly, sympathetic and helpful, whereas a few before that seemed like business notes. I am not complaining, merely letting you know I sense the difference and appreciate it very much.

Again I am feeling my normal self, though I cannot accomplish as much as last year and before. One can hardly believe how this climate saps one's energy and especially one's nervous strength. I have had just two small doses of fever this year so far, and they have been because of worry over the "little lambs



Johanna Veenstra, with Nelle Breen Smith in the foreground.

of the fold." I have yet to learn the secret "Be ye anxious in nothing—casting all your care upon Him." And you struck the right note in calling my attention to the fact that I have been too much of a "Martha" and not enough of a "Mary." "Two or three hours a day in prayer," it seems such a lot! But I know too well that time spent at Jesus' feet is time gained, still I confess that I fall far short in this. You know the little book "Practice the Presence of God"—this seems to fit my experience spiritually. Inability to concentrate in prayer is the great sorrow of all the missionaries in these tropics. But I will not excuse myself in any sense. We start the day with Chapel worship at 6:00 A.M. (We rise at 5:00.) And generally in this little morning prayer the Lord draws very near and makes His presence felt. In this we rejoice. In the evening my co-worker and I spend a solid half-hour in intercession. So every day the first and last thing is a kneeling at the mercy-seat, and if I find a solid hour for my personal devotion beside this I do well, but seldom do I take more. Blessed assurance, the Lord understands, and in the matter of devotion I say with Paul, "The good that I would I do not." Your letter came as a rebuke in a time when we were a bit down-cast, and we felt that if we had been standing on the "watch tower" we would have been rejoicing instead of sighing.

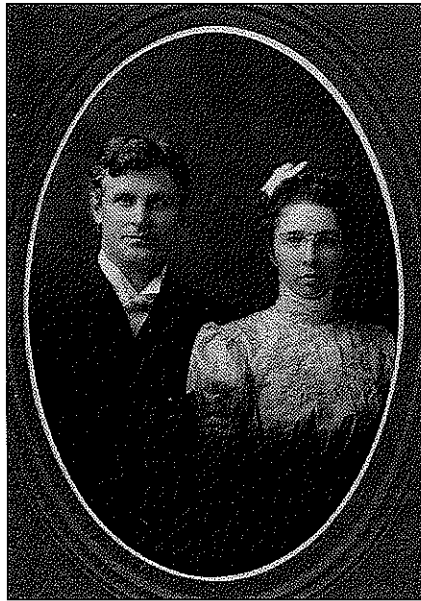
Johanna Veenstra

J.R. Brink to Henry Beets

Dear Brother Dr. Beets:

Grand Rapids, June 15, 1926

Allow me to write a few lines about Canada which may be necessary information for synod. I am sorry I cannot be there myself but I know if necessary it will be fully safe to leave things in your hands.



John R. Brink and his wife Helen
Noordewier Brink.

You know that Rev. Hoekenga, the secretary of the colonization committee, has a statement in his report which contains a criticism on our work and our report. I suppose you remember that it was decided at our Chicago conference last winter to send a circular letter about Ontario. We simply followed the suggestion of this conference. But, you may not know that I corresponded with Cousin Abel [Brink] and Brother-in-law [Henry] Heynen to get their advice about Canada. Abel wrote that it would be folly to have people from the Netherlands sent to the far west if they could find good opportunity at the gates of Canada. Both are members, as you know, of the colonization committee. But the peculiar thing is, that when I spoke to Heynen about this, he told me that he had not seen Hoekenga's report, so it seems that Hoekenga alone . . . is responsible for the report.*

I was in Chatham the week before last and the people are very appreciative of our services. We had an attendance of fifty-seven or fifty-eight and some were absent. Soon we hope to organize with about eighteen families, and several single men. I still believe the course we took was the best one under the

circumstances but I am often reminded of Father Noordewier's words when he advised me not to accept this call "*omdat Dominees het akeligste volk is om voor te werken*."** Yet, it seems to me that the results have justified our course of action. But our men certainly know how to criticize.

J.R. Brink

* Hoekenga and others preferred sending new immigrants to the West and the Pacific Coast.

** "Ministers are the worst people to work for."

Saginaw. The services at Saginaw, Michigan which had been discontinued during the summer were resumed under the direction of the Rev. H. Baker. Prior to that date he canvassed the field and the result has been a renewed interest and an increase in attendance. The Rev. J. R. Brink also has spent several weeks in Saginaw. Since the beginning of March of this year the Rev. J. De Haan, Sr., has been engaged in ministering to this loyal group. At present 18 families and several individuals are attending our Mission.

Hazen St. Since the fourth of December, 1925, services have been held regularly in the Hazen St. Chapel in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The missionary-at-large has given this field as much attention as his other duties allowed. A petition for organization signed by 34 families and several individuals was presented to Classis Grand Rapids, East. The organization will be effected, D. V., this month.

Houston, British Columbia, Canada. This is a new settlement. At present there are four or five families which hold membership in Edmonton, Canada. Soon according to reports several families will be located in the vicinity of Houston under the auspices of the Canadian National Railroad. These families hail from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

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Houston is located near Prince Rupert which is 550 miles north of Vancouver, B. C. The people will settle in virgin country which, naturally, means pioneer service with its attending difficulties and hardships.

Classis Pacific decided to request the Executive Committee to authorize an investigation of the field by the Rev. J. De Jong of Vancouver, B. C. It was decided to authorize the investigation as requested when the new settlers have arrived.

1939 Acts of Synod, p. 128, discussing early home mission efforts in Canada.

Missionary Monthly—What's in a Name?

After 1926 the short title for *De Heidenwereld* (1896-1925) became *Missionary Monthly*, indicating that for the future English usage would take primacy in the publication. However, the complicated variations in its subtitles provide far more interesting symptoms of editorial change and Americanization. The earliest subtitle read, "Illustrated Monthly dedicated to concern for missionary work to the Jews, Heathen, and Mohammedans." By 1900 the subtitle included "Indians" meaning American Indians and in 1905 the subtitle was lengthened to identify its task as "Service to families of Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches." From its 1896 beginning *Missionary Monthly* linked these two church groups through editors such as Evert Breen, CRC, and Matthew Kolyn, RCA. Henry Beets followed that pattern when he joined the editorial staff in 1915.

Beginning in May, 1920, *De Heidenwereld* gained the English-language subtitle *Missionary Monthly* but dropped its specifically targeted subjects, i.e., "Jews, Indians, Heathen and Mohammedans." In 1926 *Missionary Monthly* became the leading title while *De Heidenwereld* acquired a diminished status in the subtitle. By 1929 the full title became even more complicated—*Missionary Monthly, Reformed Review continuing De Heidenwereld, Devoted to the Mission Work of the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches of America and the interests of Reformed Christendom throughout the world*. But even then one segment continued in the Dutch language under the subtitle *Continuing Heidenwereld*.

By including *Reformed Review* in the subtitle Henry Beets gained the editorial ledge he needed to justify the broad scope of his interests. As indicated in the January 1929 issue, he, "intended to devote some space to the

cause of Calvinism, the great bond that holds our churches together." He specifically wanted to highlight the *Missionary Monthly's* interdenominational success which "during more than three decades has served two denominations successfully and it seems by heritage and tradition to be the chosen instrument" for bonding the CRC and RCA together with their mutual dedication to Calvinism.

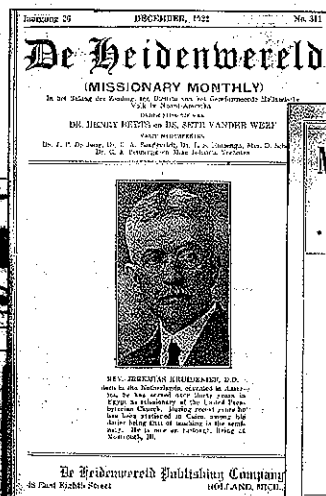
That same year, 1929, Beets had passed off the *Banner* to its new editor, Henry J. Kuiper, who, though sturdily Calvinistic, could not reflect the Dutch and American sensitivities which shaped Beets's editorial perspective. Not surprisingly then Beets used the *Missionary Monthly-Reformed Review* to publicize themes which appeared time and again during his twenty-five year *Banner* stint. For example from 1946-7 the *Missionary Monthly* offered a twenty-three-part Henry



November 1896



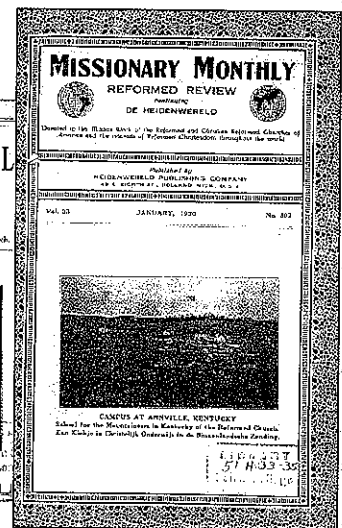
February 1920



December 1922



January 1926



January 1930

Beets series titled, "Netherlanders in North America."

On other occasions Beets published lengthy obituaries for philanthropists such as William Van Agthoven (1861-1930) or significant events such as the 1944 appointment of Samuel Volbeda as President of Calvin Seminary. After Beets's death in 1947 the *Missionary Monthly* printed a ten-part autobiographical series titled, "The Life and Labors of Henry Beets." Although not intended for publication, Beets's autobiography contributes significantly to understanding the motives behind his long list of achievements. 6

96-19425

Bill of Sale

Orange City, Iowa, March 25 1920

The undersigned, Dr. H. P. Oggel, of Orange City Ia., hereby agree to sell for \$1.00, paid in hand, to Rev. Henry Beets of Grand Rapids Mich. and Rev. Seth VanderWerf of Holland Mich., the monthly missionary paper called DE HEIDENWEKELD and all the rights and titles pertaining thereto, including the collecting of all the arrears owed by subscribers, with the stipulation that Revs. Henry Beets and S. VanderWerf are to send copies of the paper to all subscribers who paid in advance, as shown by the books of Dr. H. P. Oggel.

Furthermore a complete and up to date list of subscribers with their complete addresses and statements of indebtedness to the monthly, will be furnished within reasonable time, so that the publication of the monthly can be continued without the least possible loss of time involved in the transfer of the paper from Orange City, Ia. to Holland Mich.; In witness whereof We have this day, March 25, 1920 affixed our signature.

In the presence of
Mr. Rhynburgers
A. van der Meer

H. P. Oggel
J. C. Oggel

Bill of sale indicating that H. Beets and S. VanderWerf privately owned and published *Missionary Monthly*.

October, 1930

REFORMED REVIEW

401



WILLIAM VAN AGTHOVEN IN MEMORIAM

THE courtesy of the Cincinnati Times-Star enables us to re-print here the engraving which appeared in its issue of July 23rd. We give it here to keep green the memory of one of God's noblemen, in lowly form: Mr. William Van Agthoven. Born March 6, 1861, he died July 14, 1930, in the frame building here shown, located at 2156 Rice Street, Cincinnati, a place he and his parents before him, had occupied for 62 years. His father had laid the foundation of the family fortune — by means of a coeperage business in Cincinnati. Bro. Van Agthoven left an estate of about a million of dollars, bequeathed largely to the various missionary and benevolent enterprises of the Christian Reformed Church. He was a member of its Cincinnati congregation, of which he served some 35 years as deacon, as his father had done before him. His great motto was: "Once I was blind, but now I can see," and his greatest enjoyment to make money—not for himself, but for the Kingdom of God. It is said that each year he contributed some \$50,000 for all kinds of benevolent purposes. The employees of his two factories he remembered in his will as well as the Church organizations. He was a friend of hoboes and tramps. Though chiding them for their faults, he allowed no one needing help to leave his place empty-handed.—H. B.

William Van Agthoven (1861-1930), example of H. Beets's *Reformed Review* contributions.

profiles

Gerrit Siereveld

Paul Zylstra

On January 11, 1917, at 2:00p.m., Gerrit Siereveld, 18, and Kate Pauwe, 21, were married by Kate's minister, Rev. Jacob Wielhouwer, in the Pauwe home at 931 Courtney Street in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They were attended by two witnesses from their Netherlands Reformed (Turner Avenue) Church. That



Gerrit and Kate Siereveld, 1992.

evening there was a reception in their honor at the same home with the two families present.

Gerrit had left school at 16 to work for Waddell Manufacturing Company. Waddell made specialty wooden parts, and his first job was to sand wooden knobs. He worked ten hours a day, six days a week at fifteen cents an hour. Except for a brief period during

World War I, he remained at Waddell's all his working days and rose to the position of superintendent.

Kate was an inspector for the Pearl Button Company. They made buttons from clam shells found in the Grand River. Kate sorted them according to color and design.

A mutual friend introduced them as they all walked across the Leonard Street bridge to their jobs on the east side. Although both Gerrit and Kate attended the same church, they did not know each other. (In that day, there was little social life in that church; even catechism classes were segregated.)

One day at a carnival at Davis and Leonard, Gerrit and his brother spotted Kate, the girl to whom Gerrit had been introduced. Gerrit offered her some popcorn and eventually walked her home. That was the start of a courtship that continued on Gerrit's single-cylinder motorcycle.

Two years after their marriage they bought a house on Davis Avenue (with a downpayment loaned them by Kate's father) and lived there for the next fifty-three years.

Kate, one of fourteen children, was born in the Netherlands and received most of her education there. She came to Grand Rapids when she was eleven. Gerrit was born in Grand Rapids on Alpine Avenue and attended the Holland Christian School on Alpine, where he learned English.

At the Turner Church Dutch was used exclusively. This posed no problem for Kate, but Gerrit missed a lot of words and thus grasped little of the thought. Disillusionment set in.

Fellow employee George Vander Laan, a Broadway Avenue CRC elder, suggested he try Broadway. He did and soon transferred his membership. But wife Kate was not ready and stubbornly resisted.

Gerrit went ahead with catechism training. "For the first time I truly understood key Scripture passages," he said. At the age of 21 he was converted. This prompted Kate to follow suit. She took the same extensive indoctrination and a year later became a member of Broadway.

This two-stage exit of the young couple did not sit well with the old Turner Church. Quipped Gerrit,

An English-speaking church was bad enough, but with Broadway's modern ideas on top of that Broadway had only two services each Sunday while Turner Avenue had three.

Gerrit gave a lifetime of unstinting service to Broadway. He served as a Sunday school teacher, assistant Sunday school superintendent, and superintendent for many years. He was awarded the twenty-five-year pin for perfect year-round Sunday school attendance all those years. For more than fifteen years he never missed a Sunday school teachers' meeting. He was both president and a teacher of the church's Men's Society for innumerable years. He served many years in consistory as vice president and clerk.

He also played a hand in some of the physical improvements at Broadway, including the 1924 new choir loft and grille work, and then in the

Profile from Paul Zylstra's "West Side Story."

extensive additions of 1940. He crawled into the old, undug portion of the basement and took pictures which helped him in drawing plans with John Garvelink for a new downstairs kitchen and reconstructed meeting room.

Gerrit and Kate had five children: Janet (Les) Rickson, Marjorie Verburg (deceased), Roland (Marilyn) Siereveld, Ruth (Gordon) Ver Merris, and Lois (Russel) Rykse. They have twenty-three grandchildren, sixty-three great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grand-children.

In later years the Sierevelts, like all couples, had their little rituals. Every Saturday they lunched at McDonalds restaurant on Plainfield Avenue. They always ordered the same thing: hamburgers with just ketchup, coffee, and hot fudge sundaes.

Recently their eightieth wedding anniversary was celebrated with an

open house for their family at Holland Home's Fulton Manor, where the couple has lived for more than twenty years.

They live in separate rooms on different floors, and their memories have clouded with time, yet their eighty years of marriage reflect a Christlikeness: they're courteously reverent and loving to one another. This makes them whole, and they bring the best out of each other.

"Hi, Katie," says Gerrit. "How are you doing?" And Katie leans over for a kiss, holding his hand all the while.

They were the focus of the national spotlight when they were featured on NBC's *Today Show*. They watched with wonder as the world of the West Side changed around them. Said daughter Lois, "They've been through it all, and they view it all through the prism of their faith."

Actually the twenty-two years at

Fulton Manor have contributed to their advanced years. The care and balanced diet have been good for them, and even their being separated avoids for each the ordinary stress that any couple endures. They live apart so neither person will have to shoulder the other's health problems but are brought together during frequent family visits, relatives said.

They've found a lot of joy throughout the years in the simple pleasures of life. When Kate was the first to move to a different room to receive nursing care, Gerrit visited every day, sometimes twice, often bringing her to his room to play cards. They enjoyed such gladness.

Gerrit is representative of thousands of Dutch West Siders who've led exemplary lives in home, church, and the workplace, a leader for all seasons and many reasons. 6

profiles

Jan Schepers, 1832-1902, Pioneer Pastor

Richard Harms

When the Christian Reformed Church began in 1857, it had approximately 250 communicant members in four congregations—Graafschap, Grand Rapids, Polkton, and Noordeloos. Only one pastor, Koenraad Vanden Bosch, served the needs of the first four congregations,

Dr. Richard Harms is Director of the Calvin College and Calvin College Theological Seminary Archives and will be the managing editor of Origins in 1999.

traveling through the forests of western Michigan in an ox cart. Probably the most challenging task for the new denomination was finding more ministers.

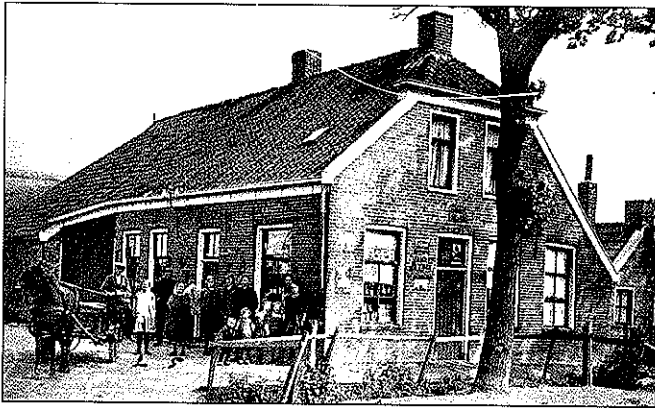
During those early years, calls to pastors in the Netherlands were consistently declined. Beginning in 1861, classis (known as synod since 1880) began looking to the denomination's own ranks for possible candidates. Finding someone to train such candidates was a different matter, since Vanden Bosch clearly had enough to

do. In 1863 Wilhelmus H. Van Leeuwen, of Werkendam, the Netherlands, after declining three successive calls from the



Rev. Jan Schepers (1832-1902).

Grand Rapids congregation, accepted the fourth call from the Spring Street congregation in Grand



Hijken village store in Drenthe, the Netherlands.

Rapids (now First Christian Reformed). At the first classical meeting Van Leeuwen attended, he offered to tutor candidates. Classis accepted the offer and directed the congregations to begin taking monthly offerings for the Student Fund. An average of just over \$11.00 per month resulted, which was enough to pay the \$100 needed per year for one student's expenses.

At the August 10, 1864, classical meeting at Vriesland, Elder H. Dam, representing Vriesland, mentioned that Jan Schepers (the son of the other Vriesland delegate, Harm Schepers) was interested in studying for the ministry and could provide for his own expenses.

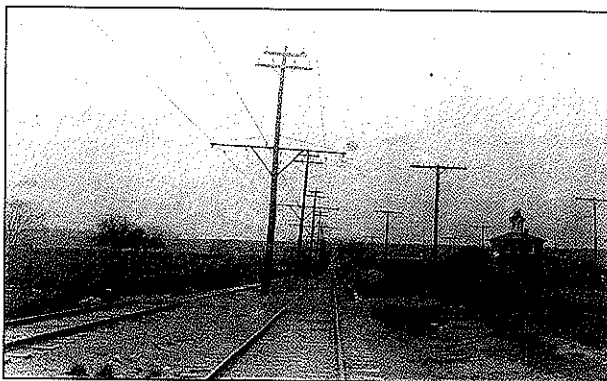
Classis asked J. Schepers to prepare a short discourse on I Timothy 1:15 for their next quarterly meeting. A nervous Schepers, who had

never spoken in public before, convinced the delegates at the October 13, 1864, meeting that he had potential, though they felt that

he needed three or four years of training. His first year would be spent in preliminary study with Van Leeuwen, particularly learning to speak English better. This was necessary since at the time the minister was generally the most educated person in the congregation and

served as a liaison between members of the immigrant congregates and their English-speaking neighbors.

Jan Schepers, a native of Hijken, the Netherlands, was born on May 25, 1837. In 1849 the Schepers family, very much a part of the Secession of 1834 from the Dutch Reformed Church, followed the Van Raalte-led immigrants to western Michigan. Seventeen-year-old Jan lived and worked on the farm that the family pioneered near Drenthe, Allegan County, Michigan.

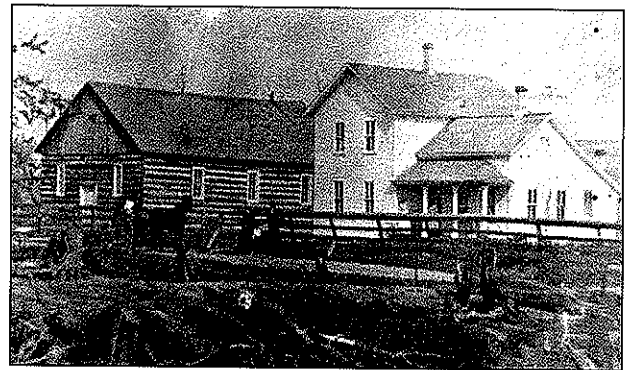


Meeng's Crossing in Vriesland, Michigan.

Christian Reformed Church in 1857. Sometime in 1862 he married Jantje Rabbers. At Jantje's untimely death in February 1864, Schepers had property

worth \$400 and felt called to the ministry.

Following the example of the seceding churches in the Netherlands, Schepers took instruction from Van Leeuwen in the parsonage of the Spring Street church. When Van Leeuwen accepted a call to Paterson, New Jersey, the next year, classis arranged for him to study with Douwe J. Vander Werp at Graafschap. According to Schepers, he received instruction twice per week, in addition to helping Vander Werp with pastoral duties in the congregation. By 1868 Schepers had progressed sufficiently to conduct



Vogel Center, Michigan, church and parsonage, 1887.

services in the vacant pulpit in Cincinnati. During that summer he also received a call to the newly organized First Christian Reformed Church of Chicago (now Ebenezer CRC, Berwyn, Illinois). After successfully preaching to the classis meeting at Noordeloos and passing his examinations on September 3, Schepers and his second wife, Johanna Van Strien (the date of their marriage was not found), moved to Chicago. On October 25, 1868, he was installed as the first Christian Reformed pastor wholly trained in the United States.

With Schepers as its pastor, the pioneer Chicago congregation, without many financial resources, completed its edifice on Gurley



Vogel Center Church and parsonage, 1897.

Street by the end of 1868 and approved adding a two-story parsonage the next May. Well-liked by the congregation, Schepers was particularly adept at attracting newly arrived Dutch immigrants to the church.

In 1871 Schepers accepted a call to Lafayette, Indiana, succeeding his cousin Rev. Jacob R. Schepers. The Indiana congregation, many of whom were farmers, also took to the relatively new pastor. His council

pastor in Ackley, Iowa. Again he pastored a fledgling congregation through financial hardship and the construction of an edifice within a year of his pastorate. Membership grew as Schepers again demonstrated ability in attracting both Dutch and German immigrants. He was particularly skilled in showing these immigrants how to adapt to the farming requirements of the new land.

In September 1881 the Vogel Center (then Clam Union), Michigan congre-

and leadership were such that the congregation grew in spite of financial difficulties and the fact that some lived as far as twelve miles from the church.

After five years Schepers accepted a call to become the first

gation called Schepers. When Schepers and his family arrived, they found a forty-by-sixty-foot log church and a rented parsonage. Again Schepers served during a period of growth fed by the influx of Dutch and German immigrants. In 1897 a new structure replaced the log church. One of the carpenters who built it reported, "Rev. J. Schepers is, at present, very happy about the new church. He comes over almost every day to look things over. It will not have a high pulpit but a platform. The windows are of stained glass." During his Vogel Center pastorate (1882-1902), Schepers traveled throughout the area ministering to people too far away to be able to attend services. The pioneer denominational pastor of a succession of pioneer congregations died unexpectedly in August 1902 after a two-week bout with pneumonia. 6

book notes

Review by Conrad J. Bult

Maroon and Gold Will Bind Our Hearts

*A History of Calvin Athletics
1915-1953*

David B. Tuuk

The Calvin Alumni Association and the Calvin College Physical Education and Recreation Dept. 108 pages. \$15.00

David Tuuk graduated from Calvin in 1949 and received an M.A. in Physical Education from the University of Michigan the next year. For thirty-six years, 1952-1988, he served as a member of the Calvin Physical Education Department where he coached junior varsity basketball for five years, track and field for twenty-five, and cross-country for thirty-three years. Not daunted by these responsibilities he also served as Athletic Director for almost two decades, 1970-1988.

In a style reminiscent of informal sports journalism replete with pictures, names, statistics, and not always unbiased commentary, Tuuk traces the development of Calvin athletics from the World War I era to the first year of the Eisenhower administration.

Tuuk titled his first chapter "Early Beginnings 1915-1920" and here we note Tuuk's remarks that "the period from 1915-1920 thus saw the birth of athletics at Calvin, a birth due almost solely to student initiative." On December 7, 1917, a few Calvin students and non-students challenged Hope to a basketball game. The results of Calvin's first intercollegiate effort were disastrous. Calvin lost by a score of 56 to 8. During this era Calvin men and women organized their own basketball teams. The

men took the name *Rivals* and the women called themselves *Rivalettes*. Also, about this time the Calvin Athletic Association, a vibrant student organization supporting athletics, chose maroon and gold as the school's colors.

In the following three sections, "The William Cornelisse Era 1920-1935," "The Albert H. Muyskens Era 1935-45," and "The John Charles Bult Era 1945-1953," Tuuk presents a personal profile of each coach followed by a yearly chronology of all men's and women's sporting events held during the tenure of each of these men who seem almost more than human when we read about their varied duties and responsibilities. Calvin's first basketball coach, William Cornelisse, was hired in 1920. The first women's physical education instructor Kay Hager, later Kay Tiemersma, joined the staff in the 1946-1947 academic year.

For Tuuk, the highlights of the Cornelisse era were two victories over Hope during the 1929-1930 season. As a result of these two triumphs, Tuuk observes, "Calvin basketball came of age and attained respectability . . ." Coach Albert "Coochie" Muyskens came to Calvin from Holland Christian where his teams had an enviable 129-13 win-loss record and were twice Class C champions. While at Calvin his mathematically designed x and o plays confounded most opponents of the Knights. Muyskens's contribution, Tuuk asserts, cannot be overestimated. Yet in the final paragraph about the 1935-1945 years the writer has this to say,

However, especially from today's perspective, something vital was missing. It is true that the women had a basketball team and that they were given excellent coaching by Muyskens. Yet they clearly did not enjoy the same privileges granted the men's teams. This obviously is one unhappy aspect of the early years of Calvin athletics. (p. 63)

John Charles (Chuck) Bult served Calvin for the period 1945-1953. His far-reaching vision enhanced all aspects

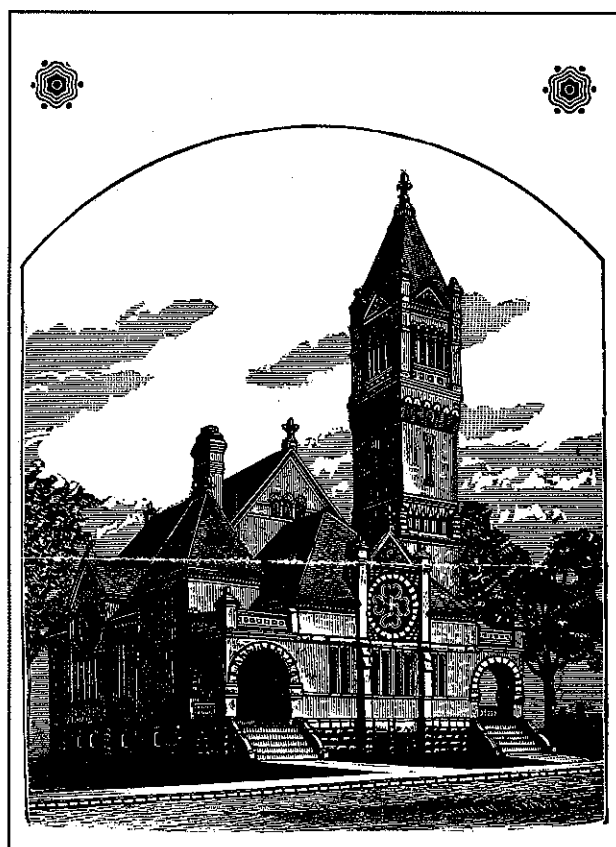
of Calvin's athletic program including intramurals in which a large body of students participated. Under Bult's guidance Calvin developed a full-fledged athletic program and his efforts to establish a good Hope-Calvin athletic relationship bore fruit throughout later years. Bult resigned in 1953. Many faculty members did not share Bult's vision for a strong athletic program nor did they see the need for personnel and facilities essential for the realization of the goals Bult held before them. Still, Tuuk notes, now Bult's hopes for Calvin's athletic program have been realized.

Though the exploits of Calvin's basketball teams, both men's and women's, comprise the bulk of the material found in this book, track and field, cross-country, baseball, golf, and tennis are not neglected. Statistics abound, as do team pictures, and a veritable host of athletes, male and female, are mentioned by name. Readers over sixty will remember the players. Those under sixty may well find a relative, perhaps a grandfather or grandmother.

When you have finished this slender volume, you will know that Calvin male cheerleaders were at one time called yellmasters and that for many years the official name of the women's basketball team was the Knighties. Appreciation for the benefits of team spirit and physical education came late to Calvin, but you will not believe this today when you walk around the campus or read *Chimes*. Take a bit of time with Tuuk's book to savor Calvin's victories, bask in the glow of the Calvin spark, and spend a few moments in thought about those dedicated student athletes who nourished this small but bright and glowing ember during the years 1915-1953. Tuuk's style is complimentary but he can be critical when necessary. This makes his book of value for either the researcher or the casual reader who desires to know more about the role of athletics on the campus of a college such as Calvin. 6

for the future

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



Worship Reminiscences by
Harry Boonstra

Dutch-American Tales and
Folkways by *H.J. Brinks*

Americanization and
Language Conflict by *Walter
Lagerwey*

Selections from J. Marion
Snapper's "Memoirs"

"Wrong Side Up"—selec-
tions from William Recker's
autobiography, Chicago to
Montana (1894-1953)

Remembering Wealthy
Street by *Marvin Van Dellen*

Recollections of Bill
Colsman

Day of Deliverance, March
30, 1945 by *Henry Lammers*

Reformed Worldviews of Farming:
German and Dutch by *Janel Curry-Roper*

Van Raalte and Scholte, A Soured Rela-
tionship and Personal Rivalry by *Robert
Swierenga*

The Dutch in Lafayette and Tippecanoe
County by *P. John De Young*

The Dutch of Highland, Indiana by *David
Zandstra*

For the Humblest Worshiper: Architec-
tural Styles by *Richard Harms*

Voices from the Holland Unitarian
Church in Grand Rapids 1885-1915
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