

Origins

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*Historical Magazine
of The Archives*

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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.

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Completed in 1931, the 1,252-foot tall Empire State Building with 102 floors was the tallest building in the world until 1972.



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This Issue

Our last number was the most popular in a number of years, particularly the photo-essay on the Thomas Street Dairy owned and operated by the Ondersma family. If such collections of images exist for other topics, we will gladly review them for inclusion in a future issue. In the current number we present the first portion of a unique travel account of G. J. Buth, a Dutch dairy farmer and veterinarian, visiting his relatives in Grand Raids during the summer of 1949. The diary, typewritten in Dutch, was brought to our attention by Clarence Hogeterp, owner of Redux Books, a used book store in Grand Rapids and was subsequently translated by Gerrit Sheeres. The diary provides another view of the dairy industry in West Michigan from roughly the same period as the Thomas Street Dairy and, as future installments will show, conditions in the Great Lakes region. Daniel Miller examines the birth and growth of the Christian Reformed

Church in Cuba during the last fifty years most of which have seen limited contact between Cubans and North American due to diplomatic tension between the United States and Cuban governments, while Robert Swierenga details the efforts by Rev. Edward Masselink and others to clean up politics in post WW II Cicero, Illinois. We conclude with a brief essay by Cornelis Van Nuis tracing the history of roosters as weather vanes on European churches. ♪

Available On-Line

We have just completed and made available via our website a PDF formatted index to anniversary, birthday, wedding, and obituary announcements from the *Banner*, the official publication of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, for the years 1996-2005. The list of just under 12,000 entries is available in alphabetical increments at <http://www.calvin.edu/hh/Banner/Banner.htm>. If the data were published, each entry contains the name of the person and place of residence on the first line; spouse or married name on the second line; the type of citation, date and page number on the third line; and any detailed data for the notice beginning on the fourth line. If a woman's

maiden name was published, she is listed under this name with name(s) of spouse(s), or married names listed subsequently. If a spouse was named in a notice, entries were made under both names. Names were keyed in as published, with or without spaces, so that "DeVries" is in a different part of the list than "De Vries." ♪

News from the Archives

The single largest addition to our manuscript collections was the 60-cubic feet of the papers of Dr. Peter Steen, Calvin alumnus and philosopher. The collection is particularly rich in the background of work of those involved with the Institute for Christian Studies, a Christian graduate school affiliated with the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto. We have begun organizing this collection but, because of its size, this will take some time. We have also received the papers of Dr. Bernard Fridsma, internationally recognized scholar on Friesland, who died last fall at the age of 100. We continue to receive and process regular transfers of records from the college, seminary and denomination. Among these are records from the college registrar, seminary committee, and several denominational synods.

We are receiving increasingly more requests from CRC congregations to translate their minutes in Dutch. Currently we are working on the minutes of Manhattan, MT, and have just begun on the minutes from Dispatch, KS. Due to the limited number of volunteer translators, current requests for this service are at least four years from being undertaken.

We have added approximately 24 cubic feet of records to our college archives, 2 cubic feet to our seminary archives and 9 cubic feet to our denominational archives collections. Thanks to the diligent labor and generosity of Gerben Oosterbaan, we now have a detailed index to the translation of Henry Beets' 1918 *The Christian Reformed Church in North America: Sixty Years of Struggle and Blessing*. ♣

Book Publication

As we reported earlier, *Origins* agreed to undertake the publication of two book projects from the Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church. To do this we have formed a cooperative effort with the Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America to produce these books through their services. The biography of Rev. Douwe J. Van der Werp by Janet Sheeres is now in final design

and will be available this summer, with *Origins* subscribers entitled to copies at a reduced price. The biography of Rev. H. J. Kuiper by James De Jong has just begun the editorial review process and we hope to have it published by this time next year.

We have also assumed the inventory of books from the Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church and can now offer *Origins* subscribers special prices on these titles as well. For \$19.95 (plus \$5.00 for shipping) you can obtain the *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: The Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 2004; retail price is \$34.95) and the recent reprint of Jacob van Hinte's *Netherlanders in America: A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America*; (Grand Rapids, Mich.: The Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 2003) 2 vols. in 1 with a retail price is \$39.95 is available for \$24.95 (plus \$5.00 for shipping). ♣

Staff

Richard Harms continues as the curator of the Archives, housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. Other staff members are: Hendrina Van

Spronsen, office manager; Wendy Blankespoor, librarian and cataloging archivist; Boukje Leegwater, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; and Renee LaCoss, our student assistant. We are particularly grateful to our dedicated volunteers: Floyd Antonides, Rev. Henry DeMots, Ed Gerritsen, Fred Greidanus, Dr. Henry Ippel, Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, and Rev. Leonard Sweetman. ♣

Endowment Fund

Due to improvements and the generosity of our contributors, the *Origins* endowment fund increased 11.1 percent during 2005 to \$310,008. We thank our loyal and generous readers who contributed above the annual subscription rate of \$10. Adjusting for inflation, we have now returned the value of the endowment to the level of five years ago, before the significant stock market downturn. In addition, we raised \$15,000 during the year to underwrite the costs of book publication. ♣



Richard H. Harms

Our Trip to North America

A brief account of our trip to and through America, Summer 1949

G. J. Buth, Nieuwe Tonge
[Gerrit Johannes Buth, 1905-1977]

Translated from the Dutch by
Gerrit W. Sheeres
Annotated by
Richard H. Harms
Calvin College Heritage Hall
Summer 2005

Editor's note: During the summer of 1949 Dr. Gerrit Johannes Buth, a dairy farmer and veterinarian on the Island of Overflakkee in the Province of Zeeland traveled to West Michigan to visit family members. His diary of that trip provides rich insight into life among Dutch immigrants in the Great Lakes basin. Buth lived in Sommelsdijk and operated the family farm "Dijk zicht," later "Sunny Home." He refers to his relatives in the USA as uncles and aunts, because the elder members of the American clan were of the same generation as his uncles and aunts; but he and his American "uncles and aunts" were second cousins. Traveling with Buth were his wife Anna, "An" Geertrudi van Es, their daughter Jacomina Anna "Miny," and Peter Buth, one of the American second cousins who had been visiting the Netherlands.

A native of the Netherlands, Gerrit Sheeres is a retired pastor and volunteers in the archives translating records from Dutch into English.

Departure on SS *Nieuw Amsterdam* on 31 May 1949

Before I begin to tell the story of our trip I should mention that prior to boarding a ship a lot of work goes into complying with all the formalities and getting all the required forms, papers, and documents ready. We began already in November 1948, getting all the documents we needed. The first item we had to submit was an affidavit from the [sponsoring] family in America. This is a guarantee of sorts, together with that family's bank account. These papers had to be sent to the American Consul at Parkhaven in Rotterdam. We also needed a copy of the Civil Registry of the municipality where we live, testifying that we were reliable politically and of sound moral conduct. Once all these documents had been delivered we received a summons to visit the consulate. This was around the middle of December. After we handed over all our data, fingerprints of all five fingers of both hands were taken, and following this we had to wait until the consul sent us our visa by registered mail. Once this was received we could go to the offices of the Holland-America Line to make reservations for the ship on which we wanted to sail.

Since we would most likely make such a trip only once in a lifetime, we decided to take the biggest and best ship that the company had to offer, *Nieuw Amsterdam*.

After this long time of getting ready, and as a reminder that time does fly, the moment for packing our suitcases and getting everything else that we needed for our long trip still came unexpectedly quick.

Our friends and acquaintances showed a lot of interest in our trip, and arrangements were made as to who all would see us off.

We spent Monday, 30 May, the day before our departure, at Mom Buth's,¹ after having said goodbye for the summer to all our other friends the day previous. We can only say that we certainly appreciated all the interest they showed us before we started on our trip. Mom Buth was very happy



The Buth family's Dutch relatives lived in and around Middelharnis on the Island of Overflakkee, in the Province of Zeeland.

that we could do this, but on the other hand she already looked forward to being able to welcome us back in our fatherland.

We very much appreciated Brother Jacob's readiness to take care of the business in our absence. And also Dis's spontaneous offer to look after all the housekeeping chores.

Finally the day of our departure, 31 May, arrived. We had arranged with Brother-in-law P. van Es that he would pick us up in Middelharnis at about 8:45 AM, since the red Ford would stay in Witvliet's garage. Miny would change cars at Uncle Jacob's in Dirksland, and Jaap and Dis would go with us to Rotterdam. We met at the Middelharnis harbor. The Skoda² with Suus, Joost, Mom, and Gert was there as well. L. van der Werf and J. Kievit had left already on their motorbikes. First we drove to the Holland-America Line to drop off our suitcases so we would not have to worry about them.

From there we went to the familiar Caland-West³ where we had a cup of coffee. Kees van Markensteijn had



The Holland-America Line sailed out of Rotterdam Harbor, the busiest port in Europe. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

been waiting for us and presented Miny with a sprig of Lathyrus for her costume. We thought this was very thoughtful. Soon Lina and Jaan arrived and we had eighteen people sitting around the coffee table.

First we agreed to have a cocktail in the dining hall and then order dinner. Lenie Nieuwenhuijzen also dropped by to say goodbye and joined us for a bite to eat. Leentje, daughter of D. van Noord, came as a representative of her family, which we appreciated very much. When we were seated Joost spoke, and after that Uncles Jacob, Piet, and Kees. They all said how happy they were for us and said that they hoped we would have a wonderful trip. At that moment we

had a few slight pangs of regret that we would have to miss these people for a time. Even so, it was a delightful get-together and we told them so during the meal. We also thanked them for being so kind as to be present at our departure. When it was 1:30 it was the time for us to go to the Wilhelminakade. We drove down there in three cars. Lina and Jaan took the ferry to the other side. When we arrived we were presented with flowers on behalf of the entire family, and we were somewhat embarrassed because of so much love.

Then the time came to say goodbye. [Holland-America] Line employees shouted that it was high time to board since we had yet to be

processed by customs. Saying goodbye is always somewhat poignant. Even though it is for a relatively short time, yet you feel that the distance is far, and you will be separated from each other. Uncle Pete⁴ felt this especially, since it is not likely he will see the Netherlands again.

Let us hope that his health and other circumstances will make it possible for him to return to the Netherlands once more. Thus we walked up the gangway and boarded *Nieuw Amsterdam*.⁵ You can say what



Nieuw Amsterdam, the second with the name, set out to sea in 1938, was fitted for troop service during WW II, refitted for passenger service in 1947, was the flagship of the Holland-America Line. She was cut up for scrap in 1974. Photo courtesy of: Archives, Calvin College.

you want; this is a momentous occasion in someone's life. Customs and other officials were on the lower deck, and we had to pass these gentlemen before we could look for our cabin. Still, everything went quite smoothly.

At first you feel like a stranger and hardly know where to go. Sometimes you wonder if you'll be able to find your cabin back even though you have been there a number of times already. But soon you do find your bearings. Our cabin was No. 513 on the B-deck. Having inspected the cabin, like everybody else you take care of your luggage and open your suitcases to put the clothes you will need in the closets. Dozens of coat hangers were waiting to be used, and we were all set in about half an hour. In the meantime Kees had seen an opportunity to come onboard to take a look in our cabin and that of Uncle Pete. Then we went on deck and could see our escorts in the passenger hall. It was three o'clock. By four o'clock we had to reserve deck chairs and a table in the dining room. We took the second seating because then things are a bit quieter, since no fellow passengers will sit in the next one. All of this was at the advice of Uncle Pete, of course, who knows the tricks of the trade. We knew the hour of departure was getting closer, because the big steamer had already blown the big whistle twice, which was an indication that it would be about fifteen minutes before the big moment when the tugboats would attach the hawsers to pull the monster from the wharf.

When this happens you become aware that this is a moment that you, as a human being, experience something special. The relatives on the wharf kept waving as long as they could see us. After that we went to the other side of the ship, for we knew that Joost, Suus, Mom and Gert, and many others were standing there to wave us goodbye. They certainly

did their best; Suus and Joost were the last ones we saw waving. We could see them walking and waving until the end of the covered walkway. For the time being this was the last farewell and we calmly sailed through the Maashaven; once we were past all the busyness of the Rotterdam harbor we entered the Nieuwe Waterweg and so reached Hook of Holland.

At Hook of Holland the [harbor] pilot left us; he was met by a small vessel that lowered a small rowboat which came alongside. The pilot used a rope ladder to get to the small boat. Then we headed for the open sea. Soon the engines ran at full speed and there was not much to be seen any longer.

Dinner for us began at eight o'clock. One of the boys walked up and down the decks with a musical box of sorts to let people know it was time to go to the dining room. Before going downstairs we got a glimpse yet of the Dome of Goeree [church] and the Ouddorp lighthouse and also the lightship *Maas*, which operates when the lighthouse does not. When we entered the dining room we were taken aback because it was such an incredibly beautiful room, so beautiful in fact that it is hard to describe. It resembles Caland a bit, including its dining room, but everything is on a much more massive scale and much more luxurious. The table you choose and the same steward are yours for the entire trip. We happen to have a very nice fellow. The menus are copious, with every kind of goodie imaginable. Every table has olives for appetizers. For the rest you can choose from all kinds of courses, and if you want to forego the pleasure of eating, that's okay as well.

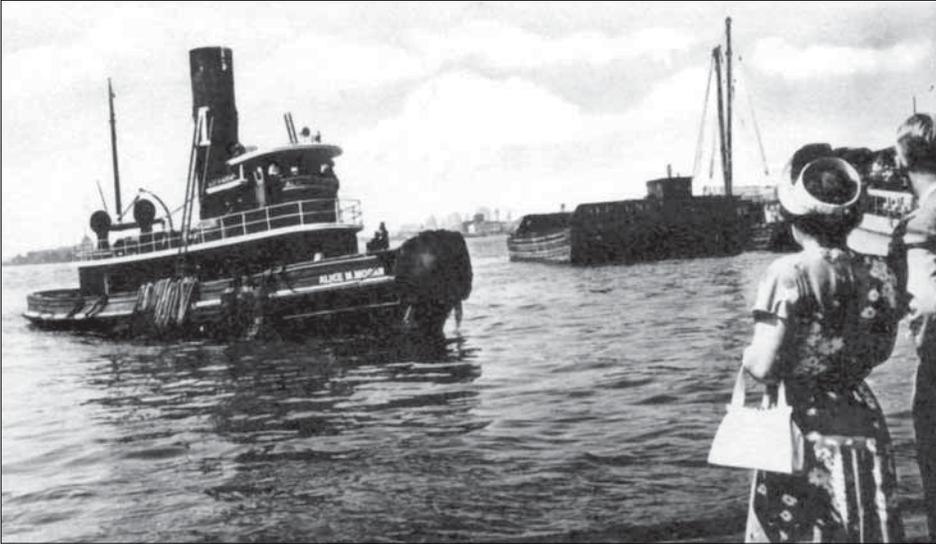
Before dinner we go to the Stuyvesant Bar, which is just as big as the entire Caland restaurant. We had a drink there, where you may also buy a pack of cigarettes of any brand you de-

sire. You pay for everything in Dutch currency. At the outset you set up an account at the office of the Holland-America Line with a maximum credit of Fl. 200 per person in the particular class for which we had bought tickets. Upon proof, the purser on board gives you Dutch money and every time you draw on the account you have to sign. Of course you don't have to take everything out at once, which is a good thing, but they are not allowed to reimburse you once you are in America.

In the evening everybody does his own thing. The first evening we amused ourselves by going to the bar and at ten o'clock we saw a movie; we went to bed at midnight. The first night is a strange experience. You can feel the engines and you can hear how this large ship plows through the waves. When we got up the next morning and had gotten dressed we saw that we had reached the port of Le Havre. The ship had already turned and entered the harbor and progressed quite a ways toward the terminal of the Holland-America Line.

A number of new passengers embarked here. Massive quantities of oranges, cabbages, potatoes, and other provisions were hoisted onboard with the ship's own swinging cranes.

At twelve noon the whistles blew again to indicate departure, and before we knew it we were back on the open seas. The view of the city built against the rocks, with those big hills around it, was beautiful. Now the ship headed for Southampton. In other words, we had to cross the English Channel diagonally. The sea was very calm, and you could barely feel the ship moving. Having sailed for about four hours we saw the Isle of Wight emerging on our left, which was an exceptionally beautiful sight. After an hour the British coastline with its big buildings and many hills came into view on the other side. We saw



These days ocean vessels have side thrusters to maneuver in harbor, but for many years tug boats worked as a team to move ships into and out of the harbors as Dr. Buth describes. Photo courtesy of Tom Wilson.

cows grazing. We passed an aircraft carrier and a little while later quite a few seaplanes, actually large flying-boats. These were anchored about 300 meters offshore, together with quite a few yachts and pleasure boats.

In the meantime we approached Southampton with its many harbors. A score of huge cranes came into view and, a little later, tugboats came alongside to fasten the hawsers. One pulled us and, with heavily padded fronts, a few along both sides helped to push us around. That's how we entered one of the harbors and moored in front of the passenger terminal. The covered gangways were waiting. We stayed there about an hour and a half, after which we were pulled out of the harbor backwards into the bay, which was connected to the Atlantic Ocean. It had gotten dark in the meantime and we went to the dining room. Our table steward told us that we now had entered the sea lanes and that tomorrow we should be fully at sea.

In the evening we saw the coastal lights of Great Britain and the thousands of city lights.

Thursday, 2 June. Breakfast at nine. All around us we see nothing but water and sky. The sea is like a beautiful green-colored carpet, and trailing our ship we see a beautiful, light green path caused by the propeller. Eleven o'clock finds us in the Stuyvesant Bar. An took her diary along for taking notes from time to time, which also is a pleasant activity. While working on her notes she said suddenly, "I am feeling flushed and my stomach does not feel right." The ship rolled quite a bit and the sea had become restless. Uncle Pete said that the best thing to do was to go to bed. Vomiting followed. The ship kept rolling quite a bit all day Thursday, and An just stayed in bed. Things remained the same during the night, but toward Friday morning things got worse and the only thing An could do was to stay in bed. Scores of passengers did the same. The breakfast room was only one-third filled. Many went back to bed for a while or lay down on a deck chair under a blanket. A ship like the one we are on sways many meters, first sideways and then up and down. Uncle Pete had to leave the

movie theater. He also got flushed. A lot of passengers did not feel too well this morning.

Lunch tasted good and it seemed that eating helped. Miny and I did not feel all that chipper, but it soon passed. An felt sick a bit longer.

It is now five o'clock Friday afternoon and according to a posting we have traveled 500 miles thus far. This is quite a distance and all along we see nothing but water and sky. Not a ship or bird is in sight, and like a mighty sea castle the ship continues its journey through the ocean with New York as its destination.

Saturday, 4 June. We just had a lunch consisting of pork cutlets, purslane,⁶ and tomato soup, followed by pudding and pineapple, coffee and cherries. Everybody is back again and feeling well. An also has shown up. At first she felt a bit unsteady on her feet, but after a drink and a good lunch all misery has been forgotten. Last night we went to the horse races, a race in sack format, but very interesting. I joined in the wagering and bet on horse number one. I won a prize of 3 guilders, having anted up 1 guilder. Now that the sea has grown calmer the atmosphere on board is a lot better. The four of us, Uncle Pete, Miny, Bakker, and I, played a game of hearts, which was fun. This morning the four of us played shuffleboard, also a nice game. In the meantime we have gotten to know quite a few people, which makes for nice conversations. Quite a few people are traveling as emigrants to Canada and other states in the New World.

All along *Nieuw Amsterdam* is finding its way toward its destination. It remains an impressive spectacle to see this luxurious ocean liner all by itself gently rocking in the endless blue-green expanse.

Sunday, 5 June. An got up at a 7:45

and we followed a little while later. The sea is restless again and the ship is rolling again like it did a few days ago. It affects An, who cannot cope with the annoying sway, and therefore she misses out on enjoying a lot of all the wonderful things a trip like this offers. At ten o'clock this morning we went to a church service which was held in the movie theater. The room was quite full and the minister had a nice talk about Pentecost. He reminded us how in the seventeenth century people left for the United States as a result of politics and the persecution of Christians. Two hundred people and a crew of fifty would take a small boat on a three-month journey. They were people driven by God. Commending themselves to His care they embarked on such a perilous journey. Today we sail in comfort on *Nieuw Amsterdam*, a luxurious sea castle, yet, the minister said that it is our duty to remember the One who has our lives in His hands. We too need the wind of the Spirit which was so indispensable in the seventeenth century to safely arrive on the other side. After the service we had a cup of coffee in the pleasant coffee room.

Among the people we met was a Mr. Cuperus from Grand Rapids. Before lunch we played some shuffleboard until the bellboy came around with his music box to invite us to eat. Afterwards An and I went to our cabin. Miny joined some younger passengers and had a good time. While I was working on my diary, An lay down to gain some strength. Uncle Pete was feeling better too and we enjoyed his company.

He knows a lot of things that are totally new to us. I wrote a minute ago that the sea had become restless again. People in the know tell us that this means that we have reached the most northern point of the route, and that we passed Cape Race. The arctic current creates instability and

oftentimes the weather here is rough and there is a lot of fog. There is more wind now and it is hazy. The beautiful blue hue of the ocean, together with its white foaming waves, makes the ship roll up and down.

Our course is directly into the wind, which means that we do not make any sideways motions. The ship keeps dipping its bow into the waves and my prediction is that quite a few of the passengers won't feel too well toward evening.

Yesterday we sailed a distance of 532 miles, which is quite a distance for a ship. It is three o'clock in the afternoon now and for the fourth time we have had to set the clocks back one hour. This means that right now it is seven o'clock on the Island of Flakkee; it is two o'clock in Grand Rapids. Tomorrow the clocks will be set back another hour.

To make a trip like this is quite interesting for the observant traveler; it provides many beautiful impressions and memories. We hope to be able to share some of these at a later time.

Sunday evening, eight o'clock. We are in the neighborhood of Newfoundland, and hope to have sunnier weather tomorrow. The sea has grown calmer, but in spite of this An has not been able to get up for dinner, which makes us sad. We expect that this will not change until we stand on terra firma. We went to the movies for a while and saw a nice movie in color. To end the day we had a drink and went to bed at one o'clock.

Monday, 6 June. It is the day after Pentecost, but you wouldn't know it here on board ship. The sea has become rough again, and the weather is far from nice. It rained last night and fog followed the rain. It was announced today that tomorrow morning our visas have to be stamped in the coffee room. This is one of the first signs that the journey is com-

ing to a close. An will be very happy when the engines end their monotonous noise, and we can leave our home at sea.

Later I'll comment on what we did 6 June. It is getting busier on the upper deck and the weather is quite mild. Some ladies even dare to occupy their deck chairs in swim suits! I thought it was a bit premature. But they did it. I presume it will warm up soon because in New York it is reportedly quite warm. On one side is the Arctic Ocean, where we will be briefly, soon in the other direction we will be across [to the continent] whose other border is the Pacific Ocean. To get there would certainly take us another four weeks. The last few days we have not seen a single ship. It is a strange experience at first not to see any sign of life around you anywhere, but soon you do get used to it.

We just finished lunch and spent some time in our cabin. The Holland-America Line does a great job of looking after its passengers. The employees are very helpful, always ready to assist you. The tables are exceptionally well set, and the stewards are dressed impeccably. Everything carries the company's logo. We always have clean tablecloths, napkins, and so on. Washcloths and towels are constantly replaced. The organization and service required for the good functioning of a ship like this certainly demand respect. As Dutchmen we can be proud of a Dutch ship like this that visits ports in every continent and hosts people from all over the world.

Monday afternoon, 5:00 PM. At four o'clock we had passed our first ship which caused everybody to come on deck. We didn't know what nationality it was, but it headed in the same direction of New York. Tea was served on deck. Small serving carts on wheels, with cups and saucers and a huge tea kettle, were used to serve the passengers.

Monday evening, 9:00 PM. We just finished dinner. It was the final official dinner of this trip. Most likely we will not disembark tomorrow evening, but everybody is busy packing and getting their documents in order for customs and other officials. The farewell dinner was delicious. It was a delightful experience. The dining room seats about 250 to 300 people and with all its hundreds of little lights makes for quite a sight. An was present too for the occasion, which made all of us happy. We could assume that no one would get seasick anymore now. We sailed 529 miles the last twenty-four hours. There seems to be fog in the forecast. This is often caused by warm air that comes from the land, which then mixes with the cold sea air, resulting in humidity.

Tuesday, 7 June. We had lunch and now are going to pack our suitcases, for tomorrow at 6:00 AM the suitcases that we do not need have to be taken to a central place to be available for customs. We will not disembark tonight anymore, and will have to stay on board the ship that will remain moored in the bay. By noon we had sailed 509 miles. Early this morning we passed the first American lightship, and we were scheduled to see the second one, after which the journey would soon come to an end. I am happy that An is also able to be present. Shortly after we passed the lightship the pilot came on board, and in the distance we could see the tall buildings of that metropolis called New York City, our destination.

The mood changes among the passengers when they see land. It makes a person feel good after all those days with nothing but water and sky. It was announced that we would not be able to disembark today, but would anchor in the bay. We slowly sailed up the Hudson River and it was an impressive sight to see all those enormously

tall buildings that are built in and upon rocks on both sides of the river and entirely lit up. We did not want to miss this and watched it for quite a while standing at the railing. We proceeded very leisurely until a huge winch dropped the anchor.

Sailing up the river was accompanied by the usual ceremony. The American flag was placed up front, which is the customary location for the flag of the nation of destination. The Holland-America Line flag went up the tall mast, while the Dutch tricolor followed. After we had anchored, the weather outside turned a bit cooler. According to our habit we went to the Stuyvesant Bar for a drink and a game of cards, but we agreed



Completed in 1931, the 1,252-foot tall Empire State Building with 102 floors was the tallest building in the world until 1972. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

not to go to bed too late this last evening on board so that we could get up early tomorrow morning when the ship would continue. The ladies went ahead of us and we turned in by eleven o'clock. The two suitcases that we did not need had been picked up by the steward. We were to look after the others ourselves. We had breakfast at six already, and could feel the boat moving toward its destination. We hurried upstairs because we did not want to miss this. Once we were on deck we could see the huge Statue of Liberty that seemed to welcome us with its uplifted arm. Tugboats came from all over to help and pull *Nieuw Amsterdam* toward the dock, while others with their protected bows pushed the ship to where it had to be. It was quite obvious that all of this was done professionally. To maneuver such a big ship did not seem to be an easy task. The first thing that occurred to us was that the docking area was quite different from what we have in Holland. Along the entire river you see diagonal slips with docks and terminals. *Nieuw Amsterdam* entered its own inlet that has the passenger terminal of the Holland-America Line. All passengers were ready to leave the ship as soon as possible. American citizens could disembark first, followed by immigrants and tourists like us. Everyone stood on deck in rows of four waiting for their turns. It went slowly but surely, and after one and a half hours our turn came to show our papers. It did not take long at all, and then we could leave what had been our home for seven and a half days. Through a covered ramp we left ship and came into one of those large halls with people coming and going. Everybody was looking for the people they were to meet, and it did not take long for us to spot Abe and Ann,⁷ daughter of Uncle Pete. They waved warmly at us and we waved at them. Uncle Pete showed up with his

suitcases ready for the next leg of the journey. Having greeted the first relatives on the other side of the ocean we started looking for our luggage to be released. We had to wait in line again to get to the office. A few days before our arrival we had received a form from the purser that we had to fill in, part of which we had to keep to be handed in to customs. This was checked here against the form. An official helped us look for our suitcases. We had to open them all, including the big chest.

The official assigned to us was not the most accommodating person to have because he dotted every "i." I thought him somewhat petty, certainly not someone who represented American magnanimity. Having had everything checked, we had to pay eleven dollars, and with that we were finished and we now stood on American soil. Abe was very helpful; we found him to be a very sympathetic fellow. The plan was first to go to the hotel where Ann and Abe had already stayed for a few days. The ladies and Abe went ahead to the other side [of the river] by taxi and Uncle Pete and I took the ferry.⁸ Now we were in New York. The weather was beautiful; in fact it was a bit on the warm side already. After an hour or so we arrived at our hotel and first freshened up. Following this, the plan was that we would go for a bite to eat, since Ann and Abe had come to the passenger terminal at seven in the morning and had not yet had breakfast. We dined in a beautiful restaurant where the food on land tasted wonderful. Abe started out with a toast to the Dutch relatives.

After this we went sightseeing and visited some of the most interesting and important points of interest in this big city, like Radio City, Broadway and other places. We had arranged that we would be at Marie's (daughter of Uncle John)⁹ at six o'clock; she is

married to Henry Francisco and lives in the state of New Jersey, a two-hour ride from New York.

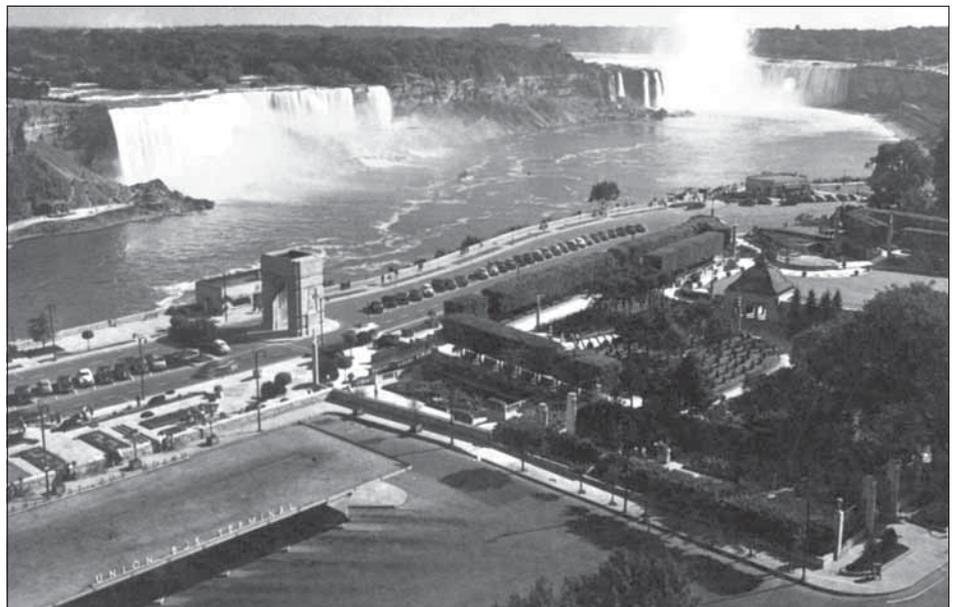
Everything went according to plan and we left at 3:30 in Abe's brand new Pontiac which could easily hold the six of us. We were at Marie's in Andover, New Jersey, at a 5:45. They were walking in their garden and expecting us. Riding on American roads, that were busy and endless it seemed, we soon got an impression of the huge distances of this country. The reception at Marie's was very warm and she was able to speak Dutch quite well.

They have three children, a daughter of thirteen, a tall girl; a son who is eleven; and one who is two, named Bill.¹⁰ We were offered a highball. Henry is a strapping, healthy fellow who seems quite trustworthy. Marie had set the table because we were going to eat at her place. We enjoyed a well-spread table of tomato juice, hors d'oeuvres, beef, and cauliflower.

We agreed that after dinner Henry would show us his farm. We went in two cars. The first farm was quite a distance from their house. His brother and father lived nearby. First we got

to the dairy farm. It was a big barn in a beautiful area. The stable was filled with Jersey cows, whose milk is quite high in fat content, according to Uncle Pete. The sight of cattle of such small, skinny stature is a bit strange at first sight. Haying was in full swing and the pressed bales were taken from the land straight to the barn where they were stacked quite high by large conveyors. The hay was fine and fragrant and had a nice, green color. After this we went to the other farm about four miles away. Here they kept the cattle to be sold. The buildings next to it housed white and spotted pigs. Here Henry's father was master and lord, which he enjoys. Henry himself does not care much about pigs. They feed the animals whey that is mixed lightly with flour. We were told it makes them grow like weeds. Following beautiful roads, we drove to the pastures. An, Miny, Uncle Pete, Frank, and I rode in Abe's Pontiac.

It was a nice ride through unknown territory and around nine o'clock we were back at Marie's, who kept urging us to stay overnight. But An and Pete told her that it would be



The falls have been a tourist destination since the 1820s, but the water's flow had powered water wheels as early as 1759. Electricity was first generated at the falls in 1881. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

much too much for her for all six of us to stay there.

We had a cup of tea yet, and in the meantime Henry had called a hotel in Newton, New Jersey, where we would stay overnight. This was about seven miles away. At eleven we said goodbye and drove to our hotel. This first day on terra firma had been an exceptionally good one. To be sure we were tired and hence we quickly went to our hotel room, where we enjoyed a well-deserved rest.

Thursday, 9 June. It was almost ten when we left Newton. Uncle Pete thought this was way too late, but he had to forgive us after such a busy day yesterday. Abe had parked his car outside in a one-hour parking zone, and it did not take the police long to give him a ticket. This is a simple process. The police jot down your license number and they'll notify you once you get home. So, we took off. Miny, Uncle Pete and Abe sat in the front and the rest in the back. Our trip took us through a colorful area and through mountains with protruding rocks. This was in the state of New Jersey. The weather remained beautiful all day long. We saw rivers at various places in the mountains and train tracks alongside them. It is difficult at first to imagine the immensity of this land. At one o'clock we had lunch, after which we continued the journey in our Pontiac. We arrived in Avon, New York, in the evening. We had traveled 300 miles that day and arrived at our destination at eight o'clock. We enjoyed a Manhattan, after which we had a tasty meal in another restaurant. We also had a beer. American beer, provided you have the right brand, is very good. Afterwards we did a bit of sightseeing in the town and walked past a large machinery sales lot.

All that expensive machinery stands out in the open in a pasture



Allie Durphy Hodges was married to Martin (Marinus) Daniel Buth, who had died the year before the Dutch family visited West Michigan. The Dutch guests stayed with "Aunt Allie" at Creston Farm for part of the summer. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

waiting for a buyer. This looks altogether different from what we are used to. Many expensive parts are just lying there but no one gives any thought to stealing them. I was also told that Americans tend to trust each other much more than our people back home. A promise is not easily broken. People can rely on each other. This is extremely valuable. We had a drink before turning in; we enjoyed sitting on the porch for a while. It had been a beautiful day. Our hotel was very clean. We agreed that we would get up the next morning at 6:30 and be ready to travel at 7:30. This worked well. The hotel did not offer breakfast so we left at the appointed time, with our destination the city of Niagara Falls (honeymoon) and the nearby well-known big waterfalls. We arrived there around eleven o'clock. Before reaching the bridge and driving across we had to pass from US soil into Canada in order to reach the falls. After this we had to re-enter the US in order to get into Detroit. Once our papers were checked and passports stamped we were allowed to go to the other side of the bridge where the Canadian customs officer had to

check our passports. Everything went fairly smoothly. Soon we reached the main building of the electrical generating plant which is powered by the falls. We drove first to this building to look inside. The building is located very well, with a beautiful view of the river. When we entered the building a lady asked us to sign the guest register. We bought some postcards that would be mailed right from there. They put the required stamps on them.

In the building we first saw a film of the operation of the entire installation with its mighty turbines. The receptionist also was our guide. Imagine us going down eight stories by elevator. The power created by the waterfall is tremendous.

The ten big turbines that provide constant electricity to hundreds of square miles in Canada and the US gave us an idea of the power that is generated. It is extremely interesting to see such an installation with water as the sole source of energy. We took a picture and admired the small cable train that crosses the river and goes into the mountains. It is possible to take a tour across the river, but for the sake of time we decided against it. When we went a bit farther we could see the first fall, which is also visible if you take the train from Grand Rapids to New York. Finally we came to the so-called Boulevard, which provides a beautiful view of both falls. Because of the tremendous power with which the water falls down, a huge mist or fog bank is created. Sightseeing motor boats take visitors very close to the falls. We only looked at these boats from the Boulevard. We certainly had a beautiful day weather-wise for this visit.

We bought a few more postcards and continued our journey. It was about lunchtime and opposite the waterfalls there happened to be a restaurant, where we ate. As we were sitting



Rowe Hotel, Grand Rapids. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

there it was hard to imagine that we were so far away from home.

We left at about 2:30. According to Abe we would not make it out of Canada anymore today, so we'd see how far we would get. We got into the car, but first we found \$200 in Uncle Pete's pants that were in his suitcase and which he thought he had lost. The mood was quite upbeat.

For variety's sake we would sing a song that came to mind from time to time. My first impression of Canada was not all that exciting. We drove for several hours though infertile country with unimpressive buildings. There is no doubt that a person needs a lot of acreage in order to make a decent living, because there is lots of land that does not produce anything. We also saw the oil wells right in the middle

of the countryside. An oil company puts them down there when they find sufficient oil. The entire area where you see those things stinks of raw oil. The farmer is paid one-eighth of the revenues and has no other expenses. A decent well will pay a farmer some \$20 to \$25 dollars per day, which is a nice source of additional income.

We were in the neighborhood of Ontario,¹¹ which is close to the area where A. W. Keijzer's son lives. It is a horticultural area of sorts. The Pontiac kept whizzing through enormous Canada, and the countryside kept looking neglected. We agreed that we would drive until seven o'clock and dine in London. This was a nice city with a lot of beautiful hotels. It was too upscale to come to the table without a coat, which we would

have preferred after such a long trip; besides, it was warm. After dinner we had in mind to continue for a while to shorten the trip of the following day. We would not be able to reach a city of any consequence, so we decided we would chance it and see where we might find a place for the night. It was almost nine o'clock and still we had not seen anything that appealed to us, and that's why we decided to stay in a cabin for the last night. These are accommodations for the night located near highways. They are only for sleeping and offer no food. They are small but quite comfortable. There was a separate bathing facility with hot and cold water. After a beer, all of us went to bed.

Abe thought we should leave at 8:30 the next morning and we'd see

where we would wind up for breakfast. After a good night's rest we left at nine the next morning and kept our eyes open for a place for breakfast.

We quickly ate in a café. It tasted good. These places are furnished quite sensibly and many blue-collar people and office workers use them every day. After this we resumed the last part of our Canadian trip. Our goal was Detroit in the state of Michigan, in other words, in the United States. Having traveled for a few hours we reached a suburb and our passports had to be checked again. We drove pretty well through the entire city. Abe knew where he was going because he had worked there in a hospital for about two years. It is a

huge buildings of Ford and everything connected to them. They have their own mines, railroads, and blast-furnaces, in short, everything needed to get the raw materials needed to produce automobiles, and they even run silk-worm farms. A mile or so down the road you'll find the huge Kaiser-Frazer plant.¹² These plants produced many of the bombers that flew across our fatherland during the war on their way to an enemy target. We were also told that at the height of production one large bomber would leave the factory every hour to begin its destructive mission. The last plane is displayed as a memorial of that terrible and fearsome time. Behind the factory is a large airfield used to

have an opportunity to say hello to him this summer.

So we were in the state of Michigan. The general impression was that farms and buildings looked better [than in Canada]. We were going to have lunch in the city of Ann Arbor where Abe attended the university. This is a city full of buildings for people who study medicine, technology, law, theology, etc.

We took a quick look at the classroom buildings where law was taught. The size of the buildings is impressive. We had lunch in a self-serve restaurant. You take a tray and push it past a display of various dishes from which you can choose what you want. Toward the end of the display you

pay for what you took and you go to tables where you can eat. It is all very handy and you don't have to wait long to eat. This day was certainly the warmest we have experienced thus far. It did tire us out. The last stretch to Grand Rapids took about three hours. The area we drove through looked to be quite thriving agriculturally. It was obvious that the farmers in this region were more devoted to and had more knowledge of their trade. The houses and farm buildings looked a lot more prosperous. The city of Lansing which we approached is also a university town specializing in agriculture and cattle-breeding. In this college town many of our



Martin Buth Jr. with a new John Deere hay mower at Creston Farm in 1948. Dr. Buth commented on the high level of mechanization on American farms. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center, Archives, Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library.

beautiful city with nothing but cars, cars, cars. This is the place where almost all cars are made, like those of General Motors, Ford, Kaiser-Frazer, etc. There are also quite a few factories that make parts for automobiles. It takes your breath away to see the

test the airplanes. Domestic airlines use it now. I should mention also that we passed a lot of tobacco sheds in Canada and good potato fields. According to Uncle Pete we were close to where Dirk Buth and Maarten Nieuwenhuijzen live.¹³ Maybe we will

nieces and nephews have acquired their expertise, and the next generation of our family is studying there right now. We stopped briefly to take a look in the cattle sales barn. Small, fat, stout and black cows called Aberdeens [Angus] were sold there. They

were typical meat types, prized thoroughbreds of 2-3 years old, intended for breeding. The highest offer for a cow there was \$1,500. Now we headed for our final destination—Grand Rapids. First we passed the farm of Francis Campau, who is married to Ann, the daughter of Aunt Allie.¹⁴ It is a big farm of 120 acres located next to a highway.

Around six o'clock we arrived in the city and soon spotted one of Uncle Dirk's¹⁵ ice cream stores, and the house where Abe has his medical practice.

Before going to Abe's house we dined altogether in a nice hotel called the Rowe.¹⁶ This is the same hotel where Uncle Martin¹⁷ had invited all his brothers and a number of buyers from out of state to an elaborate dinner on the evening before the sale. We had a real good time and Uncle Pete treated us to a sumptuous dinner. Before dinner I offered a toast. Afterwards we went to Ann's house on Kent Hills. Everything looked spic and span and they have a cozy and well-furnished home there. Uncle Pete was happy to be back in his own home. We had a wonderful time there just relaxing. Abe treated us to a Manhattan. Shortly after we sat down there was a phone call informing us that Uncle John and Aunt Marie¹⁸ were coming to get Uncle Pete, so he could visit Mr. Spruit.

They arrived at dusk and we got acquainted with the eldest uncle and aunt of our American relatives. Abe took us to Aunt Allie around ten. We thanked Ann and Abe for everything they had done for us. It had been an unforgettable journey that we will remember for a long time. The Creston Farm was all lit up and Aunt Allie stood outside waiting for us. Without saying anything, we all felt that something was awry when Aunt Allie offered me the chair where Uncle Martin had always sat. Abe stayed for

another half hour; his Pontiac had served us well for the time being. We talked for a while yet and then it was time to retire for the night.

We had a wonderful rest that night and slept in on Sunday morning. Traveling does tire you out. We went downstairs at eleven o'clock

and when we were having breakfast Gerrit Markensteijn¹⁹ was the first one to greet us on the Creston Farm. You could see that he was pleased to see familiar faces from Flakkee. Before noon we took a brief look at the farm and the immediate area. In the afternoon Ann and Francis Campau stopped by. We had a good time together. Ann understands Dutch quite well, but cannot speak it too well. But we were able to communicate. At five o'clock we went to look how they milked the cows, by machine. Martin Jr.²⁰ milks thirty-five cows now. Ann drove us around the farm and we came back via Belmont. I got the impression that the Creston Farm is quite hilly, which is very pleasing to the eye. Perhaps it is not very easy to work, although this may not be a problem with modern machinery.

Sunday night we all stayed home and enjoyed a highball.

Monday, 13 June. Martin started to mow his twenty-five acres of clover, the big piece in front of the house. Here the big sale had been held, with a big tent in the middle [of the field]. Martin's home is just past Allie's



In both 1949 and 1950 the West Michigan Holstein Breeders' Association chose Village Acres Prince Triune Ormsby as their grand champion bull. The bull was owned by John C. Buth and Al Reisbig of Ionia. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center; Archives, Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library.

house across the road. It is not a big house, but very neat. Right after it was mowed the grass was cut quite fine and blown into a wagon that followed the mowing machine and took it straight to the silo. Next to the silo stood another blower with a long tube that reached to the top. It took quite a bit of energy to blow this heavy green load to the top. Just before noon Uncle John called to ask if I felt like taking a ride in the area in the afternoon, which I readily accepted. He arrived before noon with his new four-door Chevrolet and asked if I wanted to come along and have a warm dinner at Aunt Marie's. She had everything all ready.

I felt right at home there and the food she served was really Dutch. In the afternoon we drove around and looked at some farms. It rained quite hard, which was not good for the first cutting of hay. Since the soil remains warm, it soon spoils the hay. I stayed at Aunt Marie's also for a light supper and in the evening at around eight we went back to Aunt Allie's, where all the brothers and their wives met to greet their Dutch guests. We had a wonderful evening together, and



Creston Farm's Flying A Akastra Gerben, owned by Martin D. Buth Jr. and John R. Buth, was the West Michigan Holstein Breeders' Association's grand champion cow in 1950. That year Buth Holsteins placed first in eleven of the twelve categories. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center, Archives, Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library.

talked about everything under the sun. They all looked good and it was not until midnight that the whole tribe dispersed.

Tuesday, 14 June. The rain let up somewhat during the night, but it was too wet to cut hay. The rain had been good for the oats and the corn—because it had not rained for weeks there had not been much growth. The grass that had just been cut was spoiled for the most part. Martin Jr. was busily putting his twenty-five acres of grass in the silo for summer feed. In the afternoon Uncle John came to get me and we drove to Ionia, which is some forty miles from Grand Rapids in the direction of Detroit. The farmer from Coopersville who had bought a big farm lives there. The cows are Uncle John's, but one-half of the calves go to the farmer. We were unable to see the farm because it rained quite a bit and there was a strong wind. We drove back via a different route, and this too was a beautiful trip. Miny was at Ann and Abe's for the day. In the morning they had been to town in their new car. Uncle Pete was waiting for us in Com-

stock Park, so we just followed him and arrived safely at Kent Hills. The big suitcase had arrived during the day so we unpacked it immediately. There was very little breakage, and the most important things that we needed we had taken along.

We drove to the Creston Farm by ourselves and were quite proud of our accomplishment of driving in America.

In the evening Leenheer and his wife and Ann and Abe came to visit. It was fun to talk with them and the evening went by pretty quickly.

Wednesday, 15 June. It was a quiet day. Uncle John picked me up in the afternoon for a ride. Martin Jr. is still busy mowing grass for his silo. After a bite to eat, Aunt Allie, An, and I went to tour the immediate area. Miny rode with Ann Campau and stayed there for the night. In the afternoon we also met Peter and his wife. He came to give the cows a TB shot. This is done with a very small needle at the underside of the tail. After our walk we decided to go for tea with Martin's wife. Georgia Ann does not speak or understand Dutch, which made communicating a bit difficult. She is a very nice woman.

Thursday, 16 June. Today we were going to go on an outing to a thirty-six-square-mile state park in Battle Creek [Fort Custer State Recreation

Area] which is forty-nine miles south and east of Kent County. We had a good trip and saw a lot of beautiful scenery. It was too bad that the weather was threatening, and after a while the rain came down in buckets. When we arrived we had to hurry indoors, and we stayed inside the rest of the day. The park borders a big artificial lake which is surrounded by trees. There are beautiful buildings and a bird sanctuary as well. One of the guides told us the history of this sanctuary. In winter time more and more wild geese come here to find a safe harbor. Due to the many rain showers we could not see much of the rest. The ladies there had prepared an excellent picnic and we lacked nothing. The building we were in was part of an experimental farm, with a hall downstairs and upstairs. After lunch we went downstairs, where someone presented a talk about a recent trip to California. Martin Jr. and his wife and a few other people from Michigan had been part of that group. Martin answered a number of questions and did an excellent job of telling us about his experiences. We did not understand much of it, of course, but did get the gist of what was said. A projector showed various slides.

When it was all over we looked for Uncle Dirk's Buick and rode home. A neighboring farmer had joined us and came to our place with Miny, who had stayed with Ann Campau the previous night. After a quiet evening at Aunt Allie's, 16 June came to a close.

Friday, 17 June. We spent the morning writing letters. We had to answer quite a few letters that had already come from Flakkee, which we were happy to read. In the afternoon we went to the city with Aunt Allie. Uncle Pete had gotten Miny this morning. She was scheduled to go to Ann and Abe's for a few nights. From there

she would go to Uncle John's whom we would visit tomorrow.

Saturday, 18 June. We went to the city with the Chevrolet coupe, in order to visit the cemetery where Uncle Martin, Aunt Nel, and Jacob (1909-1925), son of Uncle John, were buried.

The cemetery is well kept. It is hilly with beautiful old trees. We drove to Uncle Martin's grave. A solemn tombstone covered the grave. The name Buth was in the center and underneath Martin D. It is a plot for seven people, which was not the original intent, but Aunt Allie wanted to stay in this area, since the other side [of the cemetery] is fairly new and lacks atmosphere. Cemeteries in America are very well-kept and many graves feature live flowers. This visit was rather emotional for us, and we left this garden of the dead deeply touched. We did a few errands after which we returned home.

The stores where American women do their shopping are very practical. You enter, take a steel cart, push it, and as you walk past the products that are all within your reach you deposit them in the cart. You walk through the store until you come to the checkout where each item is entered, the total immediately shown, and then you pay and leave. You can buy whatever you need, including vegetables, fruit, and meat.

When we returned from the city and had arrived in Comstock Park, a police car suddenly caught up with me and indicated that I should stop. He asked for my driver's license which I did not have, and my Dutch license was still in my pocket at Aunt Allie's house. Aunt Allie told the officer that I had just arrived from Holland and would get my driver's license next week, and that I was a safe driver, well-acquainted with American automobiles. We

were a bit frightened and promised to behave.

In the evening Pete and Kees Koert and their wives came to visit us. It was delightful to meet again after not having seen each other for so many years. We talked and talked, and Kees Koert especially asked a lot of questions about Flakkee. It got to be quite late again before we turned in for the night.

Saturday, 18 June. I went with John to the barber in Comstock Park this morning. John also needed a haircut because he had to attend a wedding some 350 miles away from Grand Rapids. They did a fine job and charged one dollar. To our notion this is quite expensive.

In the afternoon Uncle John picked me up again to see a demonstration of a hay-making machine about thirty-five miles from here. Uncle Dirk and Uncle Dan²¹ also rode along, so the car was filled with Buths. The dem-

onstrations were interesting and the weather was warm. The hay looked dusty and dark, an indication that it had suffered quite a bit from the rain. On the way back we enjoyed a cold beer.

We briefly stopped at Uncle Dirk's, had a cup of coffee, and were home by five. We also agreed that Uncle John would come and get us around eight o'clock for a stay at his place for a week. Around 8:30 PM we were now Aunt Marie's houseguests. We took care of our luggage first and enjoyed the cool evening temperatures on the porch for the rest of the evening.

Sunday, 19 June. The weather was beautiful and after having enjoyed a cup of coffee we planned to explore the Grand Rapids area. The city is beautifully located between hills, and there are many places that offer beautiful vistas. Uncle Pete, Dirk, Aunt Maatje, and Uncle Dan's daughter Frances and her husband²² all stopped



Dr. Buth was impressed with the practicality of self-serve shopping in American grocery stores as well as the inventory that also included produce and fresh meat. This is a Kroger store at 320 Michigan NE in Grand Rapids. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center, Archives, Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library.

by for a visit in the evening. We spent the evening on the porch again and enjoyed a glass of good wine and good conversation. Aunt Marie has a very pleasant home with a nice lawn and good-sized trees around the house, a nice driveway and a garage for two cars.

Monday, 20 June. Our first trip of the day is to the farms with Uncle John. We first went to the Red Rock Farm which is eighty-seven acres. That is the farm where Uncle John lived for many years. The big, brick house that used to be their home was sold and the tenant farmer who runs the place now lives in a much smaller house next to the barns. The land is level with good soil. The tenant farmer works the farm and the proceeds are split. The other farm, called the "Broers Farm," is larger, two hundred acres, and the land is more hilly. Here a pretty smart tenant farmer runs the place, and even partly owns some of the machinery. This young man won't have any trouble making it himself and will undoubtedly buy his own farm in a few years—maybe even the farm he works now. The buildings are in my estimation too small for this kind of farm.

We went back there in the afternoon. After coffee and after having refreshed ourselves we went to visit Mrs. Hummel in the evening. Her real name is Ploontje van Wezel. She hails from Nieuwe Tonge and her father used to live in the bakery of Dirk Prince. She was twenty years old when she came to America and her father was fifty-six. He died when he was fifty-nine, and it was rumored that he died of homesickness for



Letterhead from Creston Farm.

Holland. She lives in her own home. Her youngest daughter and husband, a Mr. Holleman, to whom she has been married for a number of years, live with her. She has her own living room and bedroom. Everything looks spotless. She is seventy-seven years old now and is quite healthy except for some deafness. She spoke the true Flakkee's dialect and was very much interested in things and people whom she used to know. She knew Mother Buth quite well, and thought of her as a school friend. Many of her contemporaries have died already, of course. A few are still alive, like Willem Tijn, B. van den Broek, Mina and Kee Duim, Gert Schilperoort, and others.

She was very much interested in everything. She also had a number of postcards of Nieuwe Tonge that Mr. Leenheer had taken along for her

last summer. She also had a few pictures of the front of Dirk Prince's bakery. We had a very sociable evening, and had a beer and a cup of coffee. You could see that she was extremely curious, and we felt good that we could satisfy her curiosity about the things she wanted to know. Later that evening after we got home we had a good laugh about all the things we had talked about. Uncle John was amazed that she remembered so much about Nieuwe Tonge and the area. When she had just come to America she took a job in a hotel washing dishes. When she went to work she rolled up her sleeves so she could work easier, but she was quickly told that she could not do this because it was improper. She said, "Now look at how the women are dressed.

Sometimes you wonder if they have any clothes on at all." Mr. Holleman is a son of the late Adrianus Holleman, so Jan Holleman, who used to be a carpenter, is a cousin of this man. He works in a General Motors factory. Mrs. Hummel had the opportunity a few years ago to go back to the Netherlands to live, but did not want to leave her children. Now she is sorry she did not make the move at that time. I don't think she will visit the Netherlands anymore. We had to promise to come back and to take our daughter along. We promised that before we would return to the Netherlands we would stop by to say goodbye.

Tuesday, 21 June. It is oppressively hot. Uncle John and I had agreed that the garden needed some weeding. I had gotten up earlier than normal and

after breakfast we headed to the garage for a hoe. Uncle John thinks that a hoe is the perfect garden implement. I found it rather dull, but was told that a good quality implement could not be beat. Having worked for a couple of hours I thought we had done a fine job weeding. We destroyed the rest of the radishes and spinach and replaced them with beans. As the sun climbed Uncle John advised that we had better quit. Abe Pott stopped at Aunt Marie's and was amazed at the result. The hoe gave me a blister on my thumb, which elicited the necessary commentary from Uncle John. We visited farms in the afternoon and in the evening we paid Gert a visit in Eastmanville. The five of us went there and found everything in fine shape. They had just remodeled the house and everything was spic and span. Pauline, Gert's wife,²³ is very friendly. Before we went to Gert we met Uncle John's neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Kuyper. His father was a Dutchman and came from Leeuwarden, where he had been a peat skipper.

This brought Tuesday, 21 June, to a close. Uncle John and I talked for a while yet after the women had gone to bed. On occasions like that we tended to reminisce, which we did every so often.

Wednesday, 22 June. Again it was a gorgeous summer day. We had been away from the Creston Farm for about three days now, and began to wonder if the mailman had brought any mail. First we went to the farms and were going to pick up the mail on the way back. We were pleased with a few letters from Holland, which we enjoyed reading during coffee. The afternoon had been set aside to visit David Vroegindewey and his wife, who lived in Lowell. This is about thirty to thirty-five miles east of Grand Rapids.

I had earlier seen the farm from

a distance during our recent trip to Battle Creek.

We arrived at the Vroegindewey family around 3:30. They were waiting for us. They were a bit surprised when they saw us getting out of the car, and we could see from the way they looked at us that they did not recognize us. But they welcomed us heartily and David said in true Flakkees, "Well, Gert, so this is who you are, you have turned into quite a giant. " Mina Braber, his wife, was also surprised when she saw us. An, they said, looked like Mona Koert, but a bit heavier! They had imagined Miny to be a little girl yet, and had some peppermints and candy ready for her. We enjoyed having a cup of tea there. Mina came in the room with a big cake with the words "Welcome to America." We thought they were overdoing it, but they appreciated that we were interested in them and had come to visit them so shortly after having arrived in America. You can imagine how we talked about everything and anything under the sun. They were very much interested in everything. Mom Buth was among the first people they inquired about; they always thought she was such a friendly person and they said they would not soon forget her.

They have eleven children; one had died soon after birth. Krijntje, the eldest daughter, lives in Florida and is doing really well. Before she was married she flew as a stewardess for one of the national airlines. Last winter they visited her and had seen a lot of beautiful things. Three unmarried sons are part of the occupation army in Germany. The youngest of these is seventeen years old, and they have been gone now for nine months. They signed up for three years. That is really the American way of doing things. As soon as young people grow up they are quite eager to become independent and want to leave the

parental home. David did not like this very well, but this often tends to hasten the process. He has a nice farm and tenant farms the land for half, except the pasture. He also has a chicken and duck farm. We saw 500 chickens and 1,000 ducks. Most of them are sold when they weigh 1 kilogram [2.2 lbs]. Some ducks are also sold to carnivals where people toss wooden rings at them. The ducks swim in a tent with a circle of water and whoever is able to toss a ring around a duck from a certain distance is the winner. We had a very pleasant afternoon there and David said that I could borrow his car if I wanted it. Of course I did not need it, but it was a sign of his geniality. Because we had to go someplace for a visit in the evening we left on time, but not before David cleaned three chickens in boiling water for us to take along. He was glad he could do this because the Buth family had helped him so often after he had come to America. We had to promise to return so we did not say our final goodbyes. We would like to visit them again, because I feel a special affinity for them, maybe also because they used to live in Lorredijk. Having said goodbye we left the area and went home.

On our way home we passed big parking lots with used cars for sale. Every make and age were represented. It is hard to imagine why people get rid of cars, some of which are still almost new. Previously this was a very lucrative business. The slightly used cars were often more expensive than new ones because new cars were not too plentiful. Only the people who had connections could get a new one. In other words, the same phenomenon prevails there as with us in the Netherlands. If you want a new car they'll put your name on the list, and you will have to wait your turn.

After a bite to eat we sat on the porch for a while, after which we

went for a visit to Dantje Koert, who lives in Belmont. We did not know each other, because I was only a young boy when he went to America. His wife, who was much younger than he and originally came from Friesland, was a most pleasant person and was able to converse quite well with us. Later that evening we met Pete Koert's son, George, and his girlfriend. He had emigrated with his family from Zaltbommel some nine months ago. She was quite bright and quite a chatterer. Altogether we had a very nice evening and we brought Dan up-to-date on life on Flakkee. Uncle John indicated it was time to go home, because tomorrow we were to go on a two-day trip to Ohio. We said goodbye and drove to Grand Rapids at a steady clip.

The next day we were up with the chickens to get ready for the trip. The ladies decided to stay home because what we planned to see was intended more for men. The ladies planned to go shopping; Ann Pott would pick them up.

Having gassed-up, we left around 8:30. First we picked up Uncle Pete, and then we sped to Uncle Dirk's, where Aunt Allie would be to ride along to Ann Campau, who also planned to take a trip with friends. We were at the Campau's about 9:30, had a cup of coffee and a piece of cake, after which we drove in the direction of Lansing in two cars. Uncle Pete was behind the wheel of one; I sat next to him, with Uncle John and Dick in the back. The weather was beautiful and there were indications that it was going to be a warm day.

It was about a 400-mile trip to our destination, Mansfield [Ohio]. That is where we were going to stay for the night. At one o'clock we stopped for lunch and a delicious, much appreciated, cold beer. We were still in the state of Michigan but in about an hour we would reach the Ohio border.



Dirk A. Buth owned the dairy and ice cream store operations. This was one of the step-in vans used for home delivery in 1946. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center, Archives, Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library.

Travel in America is very easy. You just cross from one state into another and you don't need a passport or anything like that. For a few hours we drove through fine-looking, flat, farming country, with beautiful straight roads. We saw a lot of wheat fields that looked really good. It appeared they had used a lot of nitrogen, for we saw quite a number of big, heavy blocks, some of which seemed to be too heavy. The flatter the land the fewer cows we saw. The corn in some places looked excellent, but we also saw young corn that seemed to have suffered from the recent heavy rains. On the whole it was a good-looking area, with nice barns.

In some areas they have found oil and at various places you can see pumps that go up and down to bring the oil to the surface. Here also, like

in so many places, it is customary that the farmer receives one-eighth of the yield, without expenses. These things, that is the presence of oil wells, offer substantial extra income. Uncle John said that even though they had been in America for a long time, they had never profited from oil.

It seems like we don't have a nose for that sort of thing, but looking at other areas, we have done pretty well and we can't complain. "Ah," Uncle John said, "who finally cares [about oil profits], for currency is not feed for pigs." I am sure this must have been an expression, since I don't think he ever tried this on pigs. And, in the Netherlands, we sometimes talk that way as well. This then was a brief intermezzo on some of the comments of Uncle John. Around six o'clock we reached

Mansfield.

Francis was in the lead vehicle and headed straight for the hotel where we had reservations. We got our luggage and went to our rooms to freshen up a bit. It was an excellent hotel in this town of about 50,000 inhabitants. Our rooms were connected to separate bathrooms. We agreed that in the morning we would be downstairs at about 7:30 so we could go out for breakfast together. First we relaxed with a drink, after which we enjoyed a delicious dinner. At our table we had some other people who also belonged to the Michigan group, among them a reporter of one of the biggest newspapers who will report on this event.

We stayed at our hotel for a quiet evening. We settled in easy chairs in the lounge, almost right in front of

the radio and television. We watched a skating match, I don't know in what state. It was very interesting. Before going to bed we went to the bar for another drink; we had a highball and turned in for the night.

The next morning at eight we had to be ready to examine a few farms about fourteen miles away. Uncle John and I shared a room on the condition that I sleep quietly, in other words, without snoring—just like Uncle John, when he really sleeps you do not hear him.

We got under way the next morning and after looking a bit we found the farm that was our destination. There were a few cars already in the parking area that actually was a large pasture. It was a big farm with old barns, but everything looked quite tidy.

The house was very large and next to the barns were quite a few other buildings. Two big dogs stood ready to welcome us. The group grew steadily; we saw visitors from Ohio, and among them was a boy from New Jersey, who had hitchhiked there. I estimated him to be about twenty years old. We assembled in the pasture that

sloped upwards somewhat and after a while Mr. Bromfield, who was going to tell us what they did here to make the land productive, appeared. He started out by saying that this farm had been acquired six years earlier. It had been abandoned because the soil had become so poor that it was no longer productive. The necessary soil ingredients were no longer there, and something had to be done to bring it to new life. A special kind of grass, with roots of 4 to 5 meters²⁴ mixed with sweet clover, helped along with a bit of nitrogen resulted in many fields having a decent yield after two years. Since the soil was quite porous, the many rains had not done much damage. Before that, in other words, when the soil was unproductive, rainwater would just stream down the hills causing the last fertile soil to erode, making things worse. The leader of the group had worked in France for years and had returned to America shortly before the outbreak of the war. He seemed to be a specialist in the area of soil improvement and he showed that this was the way for a farmer to have a healthy farm.

I believe it is correct to say that

this sounded much like the theories of Cleveringa, who tends to exaggerate them somewhat. Yet he has alerted and convinced many Flakkee farmers that something needs to be done to also protect our soil and keep it productive. The Michigan County Extension officer promised me a report, which I will add later, that shows that there are instructive and important lessons to learn here. The summary given was in English, of course; regrettably I could not follow every detail. But when I receive the report I hope to be able to give a more exact account. We stayed there until about one o'clock and drove up the hill which is very high and which was abandoned six years ago as having no value.

By American standards it was covered by quite a bit of grass. All in all we had a very interesting day. We left our group and returned to Mansfield in order to look around a bit. After lunch we left around 2:30 to start our 400-mile trip home. Uncle Pete was the driver again and with Francis's car leading the way, we drove northwards at a fast clip. We had to stop for gas after a few hours, and at the same



At 2162 Wealthy SE in Grand Rapids, one of the Buth ice cream stores was in the De Golia Building. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center, Archives, Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library.

time had some soft drink²⁵ or orange juice. Not all businesses may sell beer. That requires a special permit.

We continued our trip until suppertime and then looked for a good restaurant with air conditioning. This really felt good because it was quite warm both outside and inside the car. After supper the sun was about to set, and we still had 200 miles to travel. We figured that we could be in Grand Rapids around midnight, assuming nothing untoward happened. I want to return to our supper for a moment. When the plate with meat was put on the table I thought, "That's a nice piece for all of us," but it turned out that those portions were for two people. I believe everybody received about one and a half pounds to eat. In America the meat is not deboned, nor is the fat removed, so there was quite a bit left, yet I must say I have never in my life eaten such a big piece of meat in a hotel. Toward evening the temperatures dropped and became more comfortable, also in the car. The traffic on the road also became less busy, which made it easier for the driver. We did see lots of trucks loaded with four new automobiles either inside or on top. These trailer trucks sometimes make long trips from the factory and usually have two drivers on board so they can stay on the road day and night.

The last city we passed was Battle Creek. We drove through the city and once again it struck me that all cities and towns are so well lit—nice looking light poles with big round bulbs. You see neon advertisements all over, both in the large cities and the smaller towns. This makes you aware that you are in a land with many opportunities. A little ways passed Battle Creek we separated. Francis was taking a different route to get home. We briefly said goodbye to each other and each went his own way.

Finally we saw the lights of the city

of Grand Rapids. It felt good to know that we were almost there, because a trip like this does tire you out. But we could look back on two delightful days. After having dropped off Uncle Pete, we gassed up. At first, the young fellow did not understand what Uncle John meant by high-test gasoline, but once Uncle John repeated it a bit louder he understood, and we could go home. In the meantime thunderstorms had moved in and it rained copiously, which was refreshing. As we approached Comstock [Park], we knew we were about ten minutes from Belmont.

From a distance, we saw that the lights of the Buth dairy farm were still on, and Aunt Maatje and Gerrit Markensteijn were enjoying the coolness of the evening. We stopped briefly. Uncle Dirk prepared a delicious highball. The lady of the house presented Uncle John with a cup of coffee because he may not and does not want to drink alcoholic beverages. The fact that in his day he had his share satisfies him.

We returned to our moorings about one o'clock and found everyone asleep. The porch light was on indicating that we were expected. After having washed up a bit, we quickly turned in.

Saturday, 25 June. We got up late this morning after several tiring days. It was still raining, which was not good for the hay. Around 11:30 we went to visit the farm because Uncle John wondered how much of the hay they had managed to bring inside. It had rained here all Thursday and Friday and Uncle John was very disappointed that not more had been brought in. After we ate, we had to run a few errands for Aunt Marie, and we had to have the car washed after the trip to Ohio. They make quite a production here of washing cars. First the car gets rinsed, and then it has to be polished.

The chrome areas are greased with something and then it is rinsed with soft soap water. The wheels are lifted up off the ground and cleaned. The white sides are rubbed in with some white powder and then rinsed; the entire outside of the car is dried with a chamois and all of this for one dollar.

We returned home with a clean car and after a cup of tea we went to buy some milk and cherries and with that the afternoon was history. After having eaten sandwiches we prepared to visit J. den Hartigh. Temperatures were very high and for that reason we planned not to leave too early. We arrived there at 8:45. Jaap and Adriana welcomed us. Their daughter, who lives in Florida, is home for a couple of months because it is so hot in Florida during these months. Jaap has four daughters and one son. The son works with his dad in the construction business. Daughter Johanna lives nearby; her husband is a salesman of something. The youngest daughter lives on a small farm and her husband works in a factory. She is quite plucky. We had a good evening.

Ann, Abe, and Uncle Pete came to chat for a while and we got to talking about hunting and fishing. Jaap told us that, when he still lived in Holland, one day he had to show his mother how to fish with a square net. He said, "Well, this is how, you let it sink," and he let it sink. Then he pulled it up and lo and behold it contained an eel of about one meter long and as thick as a man's wrist. Uncle John thought that was a little too big for an eel, but Jaap told me, if you ask my brother John he'll confirm what I said. Because we had a good time it got to be late again before we drove home.

Sunday, 26 June. Another sunny, hot day. We dined at Gert and Pauline's. We went there around noon. The distance to Greenville is fifteen miles along a beautiful, straight road. Gert

has a nice family, two sons and one daughter. After a drink we all sat down at the table. Pauline is a good cook. The table was well set and the food was delicious in spite of the searing heat. At three o'clock Abe, Ann, Uncle Pete, Gert Markensteijn, and the children also came for a little while. After tea we explored the area for a bit.

I suspect that Gert has one of the largest farms in this area. Big and beautiful barns, a few silos, a special barn with ten saddle horses and a tremendous inventory. A host of cattle completes this farm. Leen Nieuwenhuijzen from Dirksland works here. People work hard here and everyone knows what he has to do. Leen moved to a different boarding house that day and now lives a little closer to the farm. We had a pleasant afternoon and went home at 6:30. Tonight we were going to pay a visit to Martin Jr. and that would conclude our stay at Uncle John's for the time being. We had a wonderful time there and traveled long distances through the beautiful state of Michigan.

Monday, 27 June. We are back at Aunt Allie's. Our first item of business was to write a few letters to Flakkee and to update my diary. At Uncle John's I hardly had time for this, for when we were not gone we had an awful lot to talk about, which was good for me so I could get acquainted with conditions in America. Having taken care of a pile of correspondence, Miny and I drove to Uncle John's to fetch a hat that I had left there. In the evening we stayed home and Miny and Martin's wife went to see a movie called "Little Women."

Tuesday, 28 June. It looks like today it will be just as warm as it was yesterday. Uncle Pete came to get Miny who would stay for a few nights with Ann Pott. Martin Jr. came in for a minute

and had to laugh that I was always writing.

This did contain a grain of truth, but in order to keep track of everything one has to write things down every day. Uncle Pete told me as an aside that he had bought a new car yesterday, a four-door Dodge with an automatic transmission. I congratulated him on his new acquisition. In the forenoon we drove to Uncle Dirk's and took a letter along for Gert Markensteijn, one from his fellow dove fancier, Nieuwland from Dirksland.

We had to be back at 12:30, but by car it took only eight minutes so that we were back right on time. It was Aunt Allie's birthday and we congratulated her and the rest of the family. In the afternoon Ann, Aunt Allie, and I went to town to do some shopping. The weather was terribly hot. If you don't wear extra light clothing here it is just about unbearable. We also bought a few items we needed. You can buy whatever you want here; you don't need a ration card.

In the evening Gert Markensteijn stopped by for a little while and we had a nice chat on the porch.

Wednesday, 29 June. It now looks like it is going to be a little cooler than yesterday. An washed a few of our clothes because in these temperatures you have to change clothes frequently in order to remain cool.

My diary is up-to-date and I have had some time again to mull over all the things that we have seen and heard. My impressions of America are overwhelming and good. It is quite clear that it is a country with many more possibilities than we have in the Netherlands. But I believe it is true what many Americans say when they are in the Netherlands, namely, that not everybody in America will be able to accumulate great riches in a short time. Most people here work

very hard for their daily bread. The difference in the way they live and the standard of living is rather high. Many do have the opportunity to improve their standard of living. With a few exceptions nearly all have a good house, a good automobile, and after work they dress up so that you cannot detect the difference between them and the wealthy.

The relationship between employer and employee also is quite different from what it is in the Netherlands. The distance between them is much less. Most people call each other by their first names, and people mix much more, regardless of their position in the company. I am not able to judge whether this is good, it is probably like with everything, it has its good and bad sides.

Thursday, 30 June. One more day and the summer month is history. We've been gone from home for four weeks already and we've been on American soil for three. Time passes quickly, which is an indication that we are fully enjoying what this land has to offer. I went to see Dirk this morning but unfortunately found nobody home; the manager, Gertit Markensteijn, was busy haying with his people. Together we went to the back of the farm to look at the cows. When we returned it was noon already and Gert proposed that we have a highball. I was back home exactly at 12:30. In the afternoon we went to see Ann Campau. We took a little detour and Auntie showed us some beautiful spots. Toward four o'clock we were at the Cascade Farm, which is the name of their farm. The entrance to the farm has a sign with a cow, indicating that this farm has Frisian Holsteins.

This farm also has a beautiful home and the farm buildings seem to be in great shape. Two sisters of Francis were painting the house and,

believe me, they knew what they were doing. It is a farm of 120 acres.

Francis's mother and stepfather live across the road. The latter also helps out on the farm all the time. He is a hefty person whom I estimate to be close to sixty. The road they live on is the main highway from Detroit to Grand Rapids.

All fast traffic passes by there and when you leave the farm you always have to be very careful when you enter traffic. We had a pleasant afternoon and left in time so we would be home before dark. Slowly on you get used to the rules of traffic. Everything here is so different from the Netherlands. I will come back to this later. This evening we went to bed quite early because we wanted to get up early the next morning.

I forgot to mention that the afternoon of the 29th we attended the big Buth picnic. It was held east of Grand Rapids in a large park [Fallsburg] close to Lowell. It was 35 miles from home. We left at 1:30. The car was filled with the necessary food. All participants had been told by the organizer what to bring. We arrived nicely on time. As a Flakkee family it was very satisfying to see such a big crowd of young and old Buths together. After we had been introduced to all nieces and nephews, Abe and Gerrit, sons of Uncle John, thought it well to first pick up some beer in Lowell. The temperatures made it quite desirable. With the chairman's approval, the four of us, Abe, George van den Berg, Gert, and I went to town to get beer.

We treated ourselves to one to quench our own thirst first. When we came back everybody was there and after having handed out a bottle of beer to whoever wanted one, we sat down to eat. The ladies had done a fine job of looking after everything and the food tasted great. An and I sat opposite each other. Aunt Maatje, Uncle Dirk and Gert Markensteijn sat

with us. Each had his own little circle. Miny had joined the Pott family, so she also was in excellent company.

After a while Uncle John got up and welcomed the crowd. He said he was very happy that the entire American Buth family was present save only a few. He also said that they had organized this year's picnic with more anticipation because they knew that members of the Flakkee family would be present. He welcomed us most heartily, after which Uncle John, without warning, gave me the floor. I was not prepared for this. I was flustered for a moment as I stood in the midst of the family. But I composed myself and began by saying that we were very happy to be here as representatives of the Flakkee family. I made mention of the many difficulties we had encountered in getting here. Told them briefly that we had already visited quite a number of farms and surroundings and that farming here is quite different from that in the Netherlands. I said that I had noticed with pleasure that also here there were many opportunities for improvement, and it gives me pleasure to be able to say that the Buth family had understood this quickly and that they could be proud to belong to the Buth family.

"You may be assured that the family on Flakkee Island is thinking of us today since they know that we were going to get together today. And, we are as proud of our small country, a dot on the map of the world compared to your country, as you are of yours. I have noticed that here, as with us, a man has to work for his daily bread even though one is more successful than the other. I can tell you, however, that the Buth family in the Netherlands is doing quite well. Whoever wants to make a trip to the Netherlands will be welcomed with pleasure and we will show him everything in our small country."

I thanked the Pott family who had

been among the first to welcome us on American soil, and for the unforgettable trip from New York to Grand Rapids. There were fifty-four of the American side of the family at the picnic, both young and old. Ten were missing, five from New Jersey—the Franciscos; Gert, son of Uncle Dan; and the husband of Uncle Dirk's daughter Pauline. Also absent was Morris Lamoreaux, the husband of Frances, daughter of Uncle Dan, who could not be present because of his veterinary practice. Jan, son of Uncle Gert, had to remain on the farm because of the haying.

Uncle Dirk was appointed chairman of the next picnic and Uncle John would take care of the finances; leave it to him. So everybody takes part in this venture. Everybody pays his fair share to take care of the expenses. It is a good idea, no doubt, to have a family gathering every year. Because of the great distances between people no attention might be paid to birthdays, for instance. Plus the family would be too big.

On the way back we detoured a bit and saw a very nice area. At nine o'clock we were back on the Creston Farm. We had a nice, warm, and tiresome day.

Friday, 1 July. First I drove to Uncle John's where I had a delicious highball. The temperatures climbed hourly and by noon it was 100 degrees. Gert Markensteijn came in his truck in the morning to get some bales of hay from Martin Jr. Uncle Dirk always gets them from him since Martin buys them in large quantities.

After dinner we went to the city to do our weekly shopping.

We would eat early since Uncle Dirk is coming to get us this evening. We are going to move again to another stable.

At exactly eight o'clock the big Buick appeared; we put our daily

needs in the car, and said goodbye for the time being to Aunt Allie. Then we went in the direction of Belmont. Aunt Maatje welcomed us from afar and told us she was glad to see us. We stayed on the porch until late and had a good time and enjoyed a cool highball. We had a lot to talk about. It was delightful outside after such a hot day, and going to bed did not seem very inviting.

Saturday, 2 July. It was a gorgeous day again. At eight in the morning the thermometer already read 85 degrees. We decided to stay home that morning. While we are there, Gert Markensteijn will stay at Aunt Allie's. This had been arranged beforehand, which was a nice gesture to guests from Flakkee. In the afternoon Uncle Dirk, Miny, and I went to the city to do some shopping, and to get beer to extinguish the internal flames. The suggestion was made to go to the movies in the evening, where we might cool off a bit. We left at eight for the last show. It was a nice movie, but we did not find the cooling we had been looking for because the place was not air conditioned.

After we got home we discussed our plans for the next day. Uncle Dirk proposed that we go to Lake Michigan where it might possibly be cooler.

Sunday, 3 July. During breakfast we congratulated the family on the occasion of Uncle Jacob's birthday. For a moment the thoughts of all of us were on Flakkee, where the family was getting ready to go to the Boezemweg.

Aunt Maatje prepared a picnic basket and at eleven o'clock we left for the north country hoping to find cooler temperatures. However, our wish was not granted, for it stayed hot, in fact very hot. We picnicked in Grand Haven where it was busy, since many people must have had the same idea about cooling off. Hundreds of cars were parked there and we had to look for a good spot. Lake Michigan was full of bathers. Swift motorboats raced through the water pulling water-skiers. When they turned the skiers were thrown off their skis and disappeared in the water for a while. We stayed there for a few hours and then left thinking that riding through the country would cool us off a bit, since it was getting to be incredibly hot among that crowd of people. Others seemed to enjoy being so close together in the hot sun, enjoying each other's company.

We cruised around a bit and arrived in the city of Holland. It was named that because so many Dutchmen live there. It is a nice place with a big wooden shoe that hung from wires at the entrance.

The lake [Macatawa] here is small and hundreds of sailboats and motorboats were busy or were moored. When the sun went down the temperature in the car became more agreeable. When we drove through Holland suddenly one of the mansions caught our eye. Some dolls in Dutch costume were placed on the lawn, and this surely looked pretty and made you think for a moment that you were in the Netherlands.

On our way back we drove

through Vriesland and Drenthe, a sign that many years ago there were Dutch colonies here. In this area we saw fields of wheat that looked good and were standing in stacks just like in the Netherlands. The combine is not used much as yet in this area.

We returned home around eleven o'clock and although the temperatures were lower we were not looking forward to going to our warm bedroom. We stayed on the porch for a while yet and had a glass of beer before going to bed.

This, 3 July, can be mentioned as one of the hottest days America has known for a number of years.

Monday, 4 July. This day too was characterized by hot weather. We decided to take it easy today. We walked from the rear of the house to the front in search of a wisp of wind.

When we were having coffee Pete Koert stopped by for a chat. We talked about a lot of things. Pete still remembered which horses he had ridden. Today was a holiday for the Americans. They remember the day on which their thirteen states had gained independence from the British.

In the evening we went to eat at Gert's, son of Uncle Dirk, who is married to Barbara.²⁶ She is a perky woman and we had lots of fun. Afterwards we enjoyed a few highballs and a beer because it was so hot outside. Gert has a beautiful farm; I would almost say one of the nicest with a splendid house. We were home at about two o'clock and it stayed very hot, too hot. ☹

Endnotes

1. Jacomina Catharina Buth (b. 1873) was married to Dirk Abram Buth (1860-1942). They had two sons, the author and Jacob (b. 1900).

2. A Czechoslovakian auto manufacturer founded in 1895.

3. A well-known café/restaurant in Rotterdam.

4. Peter (Pieter) Buth (1880-1968), son of Gerrit Johannes Buth (1848-1912) and Anna Koert 1851-1936) emigrated to the USA in 1898; in 1949 he was a retired farmer living at 612 Kent Hills, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with his daughter Anna Marie (1908) and son-in-law, Abraham Pott (1899-1983), MD. Peter's wife was Pietertje "Nellie" Spruit (1882-1947).

5. Built 1936-1938, *Nieuw Amsterdam* was the second ship of the Holland-America Line with the name. She was 758 feet long, with a beam of 88 feet, had a gross tonnage of 36,667, with a service speed of 20.5 knots, and could carry 1,220 passengers. She had served as a troop ship during WW II, and been refitted for passenger service by the fall of 1947.

6. A succulent, creeping plant growing from mid-summer to fall; leaves are paddle-shaped; stems are reddish; it has a mild, sweet-sour flavor, and a chewy texture.

7. Abraham Pott, MD, and Ann Marie Buth had two children, Eric Winston (b. 1941) and Margaret Buth (b. 1946).

8. The Holland-America Line dock was on the New Jersey side of the river.

9. John (Jan) Cornelis Buth (b. 1878), son of Gerrit Johannis and Anna Koert Buth, born in Sommelsdijk, emigrating to the USA in 1897; a cattle dealer who owned Red Rock Stock Farm, 1257 Mound Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan; married to Marie Spruit (b. 1876-1972).

10. Children: Marie Elisabeth (b. 1935), Frank John (b. 1939), and Henry William (b. 1947).

11. Buth probably intended to mention a community in Ontario, or to say somewhere in Ontario.

12. Willow Run, Michigan.

13. They lived in Tilbury, Ontario.

14. Anna Wilhelmina Buth (b. 1921) is the daughter of Martin (Marinus) Daniel Buth (1882-1948; a brother of Peter) and Allie Durphy Hodges (1895-1994). Anna married Francis Charles Campau (b. 1917), a cattle breeder who owned "Cascade Farm" in Ada, Michigan, on Grand River Avenue.

15. Dirk Abraham Buth (1890-1978), son of Gerrit Johannes and Anna Koert Buth, emigrated to the USA in 1906 and married Martha "Maatje" Van Prooyen (b. 1891). Dirk was a dairy farmer, breeder, and owner of a dairy and ice cream stores; his address was 6266 West River Drive, Belmont, Michigan.

16. The Rowe Hotel, located at the northwest corner of Michigan and Monroe, was one of three first-class hotels in Grand Rapids. The other two first-class hotels were the Morton House and the Pantlind Hotel.

17. Martin (Marinus) Buth, son of Gerrit Johannes and Anna Koert Buth, emigrated to the USA in 1901. He was a Holstein cattle breeder and owner of Creston Farm, 1037 Buth Drive NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan; he married Allie Durphy Hodges.

18. John (Jan) Cornelis Buth, son of Gerrit Johannes and Anna Koert Buth, emigrated to the USA in 1897. A retired farmer and cattle dealer at Red Rock Stock Farm, he married Marie "Maatje" Spruit.

19. Gerrit Peter (b. 1926 in the Netherlands), whose mother was Anna Machelina Buth, a sister of the Buth

brothers, emigrated to the USA and was working for his Uncle Dirk Buth.

20. The oldest son of Martin Daniel Buth and Allie Durphy Hodges, Martin Jr. (b. 1917) was married to Georgia Ann Shaw (b. 1917). They had two children, Martin III (b. 1944) and George Shaw (b. 1946).

21. Daniel Buth (1887-1960), son of Gerrit Johannis and Anna Koert Buth, emigrated to the USA in 1904. A dairy farmer at 6181 West River Drive, Belmont, Michigan, he married Fredrika "Rika" Karesboom (1889-1961).

22. The daughter of Daniel Buth and Fredrika Karesboom; Frances Anna (1913-2003) married Morris Florence Lamoreaux (1904-1986), a veterinarian, who lived at 177 Turner NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan; he had one son, Mark Morris (b. 1945).

23. Gerrit Johannis Buth (1904-1978), oldest son of Jan Cornelis and Marie Spruit; cattle breeder, owner of Green Vale Farm in Coopersville; married to Pauline Louise Hankinson (b. 1907). They had three children, Joan Marie (b. 1931), John Gerrit (b. 1933), and Kenneth James (b. 1935).

24. The original says "4-5 meters," or 13-16 feet. According to botanists, grasses don't have such long roots systems, so in all likelihood the intent was 4-5 decimeters, or 16-20 inches.

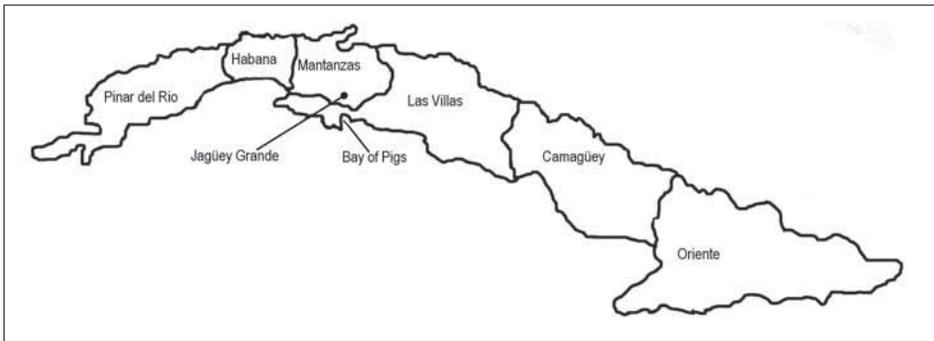
25. The original says "Coca Cola," but that generally was used as a generic term for soft drinks.

26. Gerrit Johannes Buth (b. 1915) was married to Barbara Henrietta Daane (b. 1917). They had three children at the time, Mary Barbara (b. 1944), Susan Margaret (b. 1946), Gary Martin (b. 1948), and, born the year after the visit, Charles Dirk (b. 1950). They lived at 3027 Lake Drive SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was head of Buth Dairy operations.

What's the Christian Reformed Church Doing in Cuba?

Daniel R. Miller

The Cuban Christian Reformed Church was a very young denomination at the time of the Fidelista Revolution in the late 1950s. Its original church building was not even a decade old and its denominational character had just been finalized. It owed its origins, literally, to a marriage of Cuban and North American religious influences.



Map of Cuba and its political divisions during the 1950s when the Interior Gospel Mission was being organized by the Izquierdos, with some financial support from Christian Reformed congregations in the United States. Image courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

The North American contribution to the Cuban CRC began with a determined young woman named Bessie Vander Valk. In 1940 Vander Valk was just twenty years old, unmarried, and a member of the Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, New Jersey. Despite the fact that she did not speak Spanish, she became convinced that God wanted her to go to Cuba to spread the Gospel. Her family and home congregation were dubious about the wisdom of a single young woman going to a foreign mission field, but Vander Valk felt called, and so she went, arriving in the Province

of Matanzas, east of Havana, in the fall of 1940.¹

Vander Valk was by no means the first Protestant missionary to come to this part of Cuba. Quakers had been active there since the turn of the century, and they had established a number of educational and philanthropic enterprises. Vander Valk began her missionary endeavors by serving in an orphanage founded by the Quakers in the western part of the province. As her competence in Spanish improved, she began working as an aide in the hospital at Matanzas, the provincial capital.² An irrepressible evangelist, she witnessed to the patients she encountered. One of her first converts was a woman from Jagüey Grande, a town in the southern portion of Matanzas Province, who urged Vander Valk to begin evangelistic work there. Vander Valk accepted the woman's offer of lodging and began teaching English classes and conducting Sunday school in Jagüey Grande in 1943.³

About a year and a half after Vander Valk's arrival in Jagüey Grande, a charismatic young preacher arrived to establish a church. The newcomer, Angel Vicente Izquierdo Alonso, was a student at Los Pinos Nuevos Evangelical Seminary, which was a joint enterprise of the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations.⁴ Just as they had with Vander Valk, the Quakers of Matanzas played an important role in helping Izquierdo get established in Christian ministry. In his case their support consisted

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of financial aid during his seminary studies. The two young evangelists began to collaborate with Vander Valk, teaching children and women and Izquierdo teaching men. Within five months they were married, a development that proved crucial to the formation of the Christian Reformed denomination in Cuba some years later. Appropriately enough, a Quaker officiated at the wedding ceremony.⁵

Their burgeoning ministry had no formal affiliation with any of the other Protestant denominations on the island, but Izquierdo called it “La Misión Evangélica del Interior.”⁶ A milestone was reached on 8 December 1951, when a church building was inaugurated in Jagüey Grande.⁷ During the next few years, Izquierdo recruited six evangelistic workers to extend the mission to new places. At the end of 1958 there were twelve “organized” congregations.⁸ By that time the Jagüey Grande church was also supporting the Ebenezer day school with seventy-five students and two teachers. The school offered free instruction through the sixth grade, with additional courses in English and business for adults.⁹ Barely a decade after its inauguration, the mission was becoming what could only be described as an independent Cuban denomination.

Independence had its price however, one that became more burdensome as the work expanded. The Misión Evangélica del Interior was registered in the Province of Matanzas, but it had no official standing with the national government. This circumstance made it difficult to begin work in the neighboring province of la Habana, something that Izquierdo was eager

to do. He concluded that affiliation with a North American denomination would make it easier to obtain the needed government recognition. Another concern was the low level of education, theological and otherwise, possessed by the mission’s evangelists. Izquierdo did not feel himself adequately prepared to provide what they lacked, but he hoped that an established denomination would be able to offer the needed theological training.



Vincente Izquierdos, a charismatic preacher, and Bessie Vander Valk, a Sunday school teacher, met in Jagüey Grande in 1944. Five months later they married and began the effort that would become the Cuban Christian Reformed Church. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

Most pressing of all was the matter of money. Izquierdo and Vander Valk received irregular contributions from Bethel CRC and from the Baptist Tabernacle in Paterson, but the mission’s six full-time evangelists had almost no support, as most of the mission’s converts were people of limited means. Once again, the solution seemed to lie in the mission’s attachment to a larger, better financed denomination.¹⁰

Izquierdo first approached the Southern Baptists. They were willing to provide him with a regular salary but would not take responsibility for the six evangelists he had recruited. At that point Vander Valk intervened.

She remarked that there was a “very rich” Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan—LaGrave Avenue CRC—and she encouraged her husband to write to them to see whether they might be willing to take on the financial burden of supporting the seven pastors of the young Cuban denomination.¹¹

Rev. Jake Eppinga, then pastor of LaGrave, remembers receiving a letter from Izquierdo at the beginning of 1958, requesting financial support from the church’s Missions Committee. His initial response was to regard it as just one more unsolicited appeal and he threw it into a wastebasket. During the night his conscience got the better of him for treating the letter so cavalierly and he retrieved it from the trash the next day and forwarded the letter to the congregation’s Missions Committee. To his surprise, the committee took an immediate interest in Izquierdo’s request and commissioned Eppinga, along with three other congregational representa-

tatives, to investigate the Cuban mission to see whether it merited their support.¹²

The LaGrave delegation arrived at a very tense time in the history of Cuba. The Batista government was beginning to totter under the intensifying pressure of Fidel Castro’s guerrilla campaign. Jagüey Grande itself, where the LaGrave delegation spent most of its time, was the target of a nighttime raid by Ché Guevara during their visit. Yet the atmosphere of the church was exuberant. Eppinga recalled meeting with people in their homes during the day and preaching nightly in an open field to hundreds

of listeners over the course of their three-week stay. He recalls that he enjoyed preaching even though he had to come up with a new sermon every night because the people were so responsive. He left the island thinking that the Cuban Christians were very poor yet very happy.¹³

The delegation made its departue in the middle of the night at the urging of the mayor of Jagüey Grande, who feared for their safety if they stayed longer. The trip by taxi back to Havana was harrowing for the North Americans as they were stopped by armed Batista guards. Waiting for a plane to take them back to the US took another two days.¹⁴ Despite these difficulties, however, the delegation recommended to the LaGrave church that it sponsor the Cuban mission, at least until the Cubans' needs could be presented to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.¹⁵

For the Cubans, the willingness of the LaGrave church to sponsor their seven pastors was decisive: they agreed to identify themselves as a "Christian Reformed Church" and to seek financial support and theological instruction from the North American denomination. Their decision reflected more than just immediate financial need, and it portended more than a mere name change. Izquierdo had already encountered Reformed ideas at Los Pinos Nuevos Evangélica Seminary because one of the teachers there was a Presbyterian. However Vander Valk's influence was probably more crucial to the eventual outcome. Her spiritual formation had been in the Christian Reformed Church and her approach to evangelism and discipleship involved heavy doses of the Heidelberg Catechism, a mainstay of the Christian Reformed Church. Hence the basic ideas of Reformed Christian-



Letterhead of the Interior Gospel Mission in 1957. Image courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

ity were already familiar to some of the older members of the denomination whom Vander Valk had had a hand in converting and discipling.¹⁶ The support that she and her husband had received over the years from Bethel Christian Reformed Church had also helped to familiarize him with the CRC. And of course it was her suggestion to write LaGrave.¹⁷ These Reformed influences made the Cuban mission more receptive to Reformed theology than it might otherwise have been.¹⁸

For its part, the Christian Reformed Church in North America also took the budding relationship with the Cuban mission seriously. At its annual synod in the summer of 1958, the denomination put off formal adoption of the Cuban mission, opting instead to commission Clarence Nyenhuis, a recent graduate of the denomination's seminary, to go to Cuba to offer theological instruction to both pastors and laypeople, whom they viewed as excessively "fundamentalistic." The 1958 Synod also commissioned a missionary with prior experience in Latin America, J. Jerry Pott, to visit the Cuban churches and bring a report to the next synod about their suitability for adoption by the North American denomination. Pott spent nine weeks on the island at the close of 1958, and the report he filed on his return to the US strongly recommended adoption of the Cuban

churches as a mission of the CRC in North America. Synod agreed in the summer of 1959, and so the Misión Evangelica del Interior became the Interior Gospel Mission of the Christian Reformed Church.¹⁹

Had this relationship continued uninterrupted for many years, it seems possible that the Cubans might have become quite dependent on the North Americans. The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America assumed responsibility for three-quarters of the annual budget of the new Gospel Mission, including salaries and rental housing for the evangelists, with most of the money to come from the LaGrave Avenue church.²⁰ It approved a continuation of the catechetical work being done by Nyenhuis. And it voted to send a teacher to work in the Jagüey Grande school in order to align it more closely with the North American denomination's conception of what a Christian school should be like.²¹ Whatever this ecclesiastical collaboration might have produced, it was cut short by the Cuban Revolution.

The members of the Cuban Christian Reformed churches were not all of one mind about Fidel Castro and his revolutionary movement. Bessie Vander Valk began describing Cuba's new government as "communist" and warning about its aims almost from the start. Rev. Ramón Borrego remembers thinking that the men



Bessie Vander Valk. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

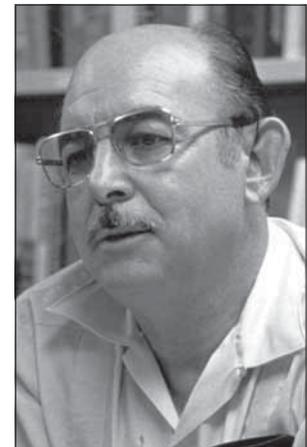
who showed up to take charge of the municipal government in Alacranes on 1 January 1959 were led by a very unsavory character. He and Izquierdo had come from families that owned small farms, and so it isn't too surprising that both were highly critical of the new government's collectivist plans. On the other hand, Rev. Domingo Romero was urged by one of his parishioners to join Ché Guevara's forces as a chaplain, an opportunity Romero tactfully declined.²² Several pastors and many lay members in the denomination believed that the Revolution represented a change for the better, not only for the nation, but for the churches as well.²³ Nyenhuis was undoubtedly reflecting their views when he wrote to his supporters in the United States at the beginning of 1959: "It's the year of the bearded rebel soldier coming to national power, the year of Cuban national peace with the promise of economic prosperity. It's a year in which evangelical churches are receiving official recognition and favors from the revolutionary government."²⁴ As it turned out, the Revolution would present the Cuban Christian Reformed Church with the challenge of a drastically narrowed space for religious activities and expressions of belief.

The first decade of the Revolutionary period was probably the most stressful for the Cuban CRC. The deterioration in relations between the governments of the United States and Cuba made life increasingly awkward for North Americans living in Cuba. Clarence and Arlene Nyenhuis remained in the country through 1959, but the approaching birth of their second child in the summer of 1960 prompted them to leave for Miami and, with the concurrence of the North American Mission Board, they decided not to return.²⁵ Izquierdo left the country in 1961 and was prevented from returning by the Cuban government. Bessie remained in Cuba with their children for another year, but she found herself having to cope with material privations and constant surveillance by members of the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution. After months of appeals for permission to emigrate she was allowed to leave for Miami in the fall of 1962.²⁶

The strained relations between the United States and Cuba also made it increasingly difficult for the Christian Reformed Churches in Cuba and North America to remain in contact with each other. In December of 1960, the CRC in North America sent Nyenhuis back to Jagüey Grande to sign papers granting full autonomy to the Cuban CRC and giving it legal title to all of the church's assets so that they could not be confiscated as foreign-owned properties.²⁷ Problems with mail delivery and wire transfers made it difficult for the Christian Reformed World Missions Board to provide pastors in Cuba with promised funds. A number of creative ways to transfer the money were tried but all eventually failed and the Cuban pastors lost all external support.²⁸

Relations between the churches and the Cuban government took a decisive turn for the worse in the spring

of 1961. Jagüey Grande is only fifteen miles from the Bay of Pigs, and when the exile forces came ashore on 16 April, members of the Christian Reformed Church found themselves on the front lines of the battle between communism and counter-revolution. The Cuban government pressed many members of the Cuban CRC into service to provide first aid and emergency transportation for wounded soldiers. The Ebenezer School was turned into a field hospital.²⁹ Immediately following his victory over the invaders, Castro declared that the Cuban Revolution was and always would be Marxist-Leninist. Because the counter-revolutionaries had justified their opposition to Castro on religious grounds, the churches now fell under suspicion. Restrictions were placed on all kinds of religious activities. The importation of Bibles was prohibited.³⁰ Religious events had to occur in legally registered church buildings and the events had to be announced in advance, sometimes by as much as a year, to local authorities. Any violation of the rules such



Rev. Ramón Borrego led the Iglesia Evangelica Reformada (Cuban Christian Reformed) following the accession to power of Fidel Castro. Surveillance and questioning by authorities convince many, including the Borregos, to leave Cuba. Photo courtesy of Winabelle Gritter.

as hosting a Bible study in a private home could lead to draconian penalties, including loss of the home.³¹ In May the government ordered the closing of all 300 Christian schools on the island, Protestant as well as Catholic, often accompanied by the confiscation of their facilities.³² While the Cuban Christian Reformed Church was spared the loss of its property because the building doubled as a sanctuary, the closing of the Ebenezer School meant a loss of employment for Izquierdo and several pastors' wives.³³ Their dismissal, coupled with the loss of financial support from North America, made the economic situation of Cuban pastors nearly impossible, since their congregations were in no position to support them financially. Izquierdo applied to the CRC Missions Board for an assignment in Mexico. Four other pastors emigrated to the United States during the ensuing decade, in part because of the practical difficulty of doing pastoral work under the new circumstances. Fifteen years after the triumph of the Revolution, only three Christian Reformed pastors remained in Cuba.³⁴

Even after the failure of the invasion, anti-Castro guerrillas remained active in the nearby Escambray Mountains. Naturally this made the Cuban government nervous, and they kept the entire area under very tight security. On one occasion over 600 residents of the area were rounded up on suspicion of supplying the rebels. Pastors were regarded with particular suspicion because of their presumed counter-revolutionary inclinations and their influence with parishioners. Religious meetings were confined to the churches and evangelistic trips into the countryside were forbidden. Both Ramón Borrego and Domingo Romero were called to party headquarters and questioned closely for hours about what they were preaching. Under the circumstances, oth-

erwise small matters could assume a very sinister guise. Borrego remembers hitchhiking to a farm where he bought bananas to supplement his family's legal food ration. While hitchhiking home, he was picked up by a car full of local communist party officials. The officials said nothing about the bananas which had obviously been obtained in violation of government prohibitions on private food sales, but Borrego was so shaken by the experience that when he got home he told his wife Norma that they should begin making arrangements to emigrate as soon as possible.³⁵ Given the fact that Cuba was a nation under siege during this time, it may be that the government's restrictions on the work of the pastors had as much or more to do with perceived threats to its security than to ideology. However it is also the case that pastors were often characterized as "worms" and "parasites."³⁶ Young men who applied to go to seminary were told that they must first do three years of military service.³⁷ One Christian Reformed pastor, Pedro Suárez, was drafted into the Unidades Militares en Apoyo de Producción (UMAP), an agricultural brigade supposedly reserved for social deviants. He acquitted himself well under the circumstances and was released after less than a year when the Cuban government closed the program in response to complaints of abuse, but the experience cast a pall on his reputation because of the supposedly unsavory nature of the people who were drafted into the brigade. The

current president of the Cuban Christian Reformed Church, David Lee Chang, was called to the UMAP office on several occasions, though he was never actually inducted. Cuban CRC historian Eduardo Pedraza speculates that such actions may have constituted a sort of psychological warfare directed against religious leaders by overzealous local officials.³⁸

Even after the threat of counter-revolution had faded, church members faced close scrutiny from Revolutionary officials. Jobs involving a degree of responsibility such as school teacher or sugar refinery manager required membership in the Communist Party, which at that



Water color of the Jagüey Grande church whose construction began in late 1951 and marked the beginning the organization of twelve other congregations and the establishment of a Christian day school. Image courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

time meant that one had to be an atheist.³⁹ Church members were faced with difficult choices about what to say and whether to go to church. Jorge Fontrodona was fired from his job at a radio station when he acknowledged that he was a Christian. His employers told him they would prefer "someone who was not very smart, but was not a Christian, [while] you would rather remain

a Christian than have a good job.” Later, while filling out an application for a teacher training program, he confronted a question which asked him whether he attended church and he answered “yes.” He was the only young person from his school to be rejected by the program.⁴⁰ Ramón and Norma Borrego recall that during the 1960s the Christian Reformed churches lost many members who feared that continued attendance at church might jeopardize their employment. At one point the main congregation at Jagüey Grande counted only four official members.⁴¹ Some congregations became almost entirely defunct. In a couple of cases the church buildings escaped confiscation as abandoned properties only because two or three faithful women gathered in them to pray each Sunday.⁴²

Cuba’s new public education system created one of the most agonizing issues that Reformed Christians had to confront. While the instruction was technically excellent, it was also secular and at times even anti-religious. Bessie Vander Valk noted that her daughter was singled out unfavorably by a teacher for admitting that she believed the Bible.⁴³ Students attended schools in their neighborhoods through the eighth grade, but after that they were assigned to boarding schools in the countryside where they spent half the day in study and half in agricultural work. This situation created a terrific dilemma for Reformed parents. Without a secondary education, their children would be seriously handicapped as adults. However they worried that, once removed from the home,

their children would be more vulnerable to indoctrination, and they had heard rumors that the barracks in which the students lived were places of great moral laxity. Moreover, in high school there was much more pressure on students to join the Communist youth organization but, like membership in the Communist Party itself, membership required a person to forswear belief in God. A great many families and young people left the church over this issue.⁴⁴ Some abandoned the church and accommodated themselves to the new order of things while others emigrated to the United States, including Borrego who had led the denomination for five years after the departure of Vicente Izquierdo. Borrego’s replacement as head of the Cuban Christian Reformed Church was Rev. Erelío Martínez.⁴⁵ It would be his task to find a way to combine loyalty to Christ and to the Revolution.

Martínez represented a new generation of leadership in the Cuban CRC. He was a teenager at the time of the Revolution, finished seminary train-



In 1967 Rev. Erelío Martínez became the leader of the Cuban Church. A teenager during the Cuban Revolution, Martínez followed a new course, attempting to find a place for the church in Cuba after the Revolution. Photo courtesy of Winabelle Gritter.

ing in the early 1960s, was ordained in 1963, and became head of the denomination when Borrego left Cuba in 1967.⁴⁶ Martínez combined a fervent evangelical spirit with sympathy for the goals of the Revolution. Norma Borrego recalls Martínez as a non-confrontational person who grew



An effective preacher and leader, Rev. Martínez also pioneered theological training focused on a more progressive theological orientation dealing with issues of social justice and assistance to the poor. Photo courtesy of Winabelle Gritter.



Rev. David Lee Chang was a student of Rev. Martínez and is currently one of seventeen ordained ministers in the Cuban church. Here he is worshipping in the Jagüey Grande church, now 45 years old. Photo courtesy of Winabelle Gritter.

up with the Revolution and was determined to remain in Cuba. In support of that opinion, Norma's husband Ramón describes a particularly difficult official at the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution with whom Borrego had frequent run-ins. Years later, when Borrego returned from the United States to preach at the Jagüey Grande Church, that former official was in attendance, having been befriended and converted in the meanwhile by Erelío Martínez.⁴⁷

Under the leadership of Martínez and two other young pastors, David Lee Chang and Pedro Suárez, the Cuban CRC developed a progressive theological emphasis that was more attuned to the contemporary Cuban situation. For example, they dedicated the year 1979 to the study of the Old Testament prophets for the light they shed on issues of justice and concern for the material needs of the poor.⁴⁸ They also sought theological instruction from the Presbyterian Seminary of Matanzas, which was considerably more open to the insights of Liberation Theology than was the Evangelical Seminary of Los Pinos Nuevos. According to Martínez, some of the

more "fundamentalist" members of the Cuban CRC objected to being taught by "communists," but the CRC pastors were unfazed by the criticism and the church continued to express a progressive theological orientation.⁴⁹

In fact, the Cuban CRC sought to make a name for itself as a church whose social vision was compatible with the new society that the Revolutionary government was seeking to

build. With the aid of foreign donors in the United States, Canada, and Europe, the denomination developed an ambitious array of social programs that provided services and benefits such as interest-free loans to enable home owners to improve their properties, free meals delivered to seniors in their homes, rides for people with medical appointments in distant cities, and distribution of relief supplies for victims of tornadoes and hurricanes.⁵⁰ Often, these services were provided in collaboration with the Cuban government. For example, the seniors who receive free meals are selected by a committee comprised of church members, city council members, and representatives of the Ministry of Public Health.⁵¹ The Cuban CRC also supported causes that expressed solidarity with other socialist countries, such as contributing money to a nation-wide collection for the reconstruction of Vietnam in the mid 1970s and collecting toys for children in Nicaragua during the 1980s.⁵² In 1998, the synod of the Cuban CRC expressed its opposition to the United States embargo against Cuba and called on its sister churches



The generations, Rev. David Lee Chang and the father of Rev. Erelío Martínez, talk. Photo courtesy of Winabelle Gritter.

in North America to do what they could as citizens to have the policy changed.⁵³

While cooperative in its approach to the Cuban government, the Cuban CRC has also defended the rights of believers. Martínez refused to participate in a public ceremony with a local official who had been depicting him as a “parasite” until the official agreed to respect Martínez’ pastoral ministry as a legal and honorable profession. He and other leaders in the denomination protested strongly when members of their churches were prevented from enrolling in the University because of their religious affiliation.⁵⁴ They based their appeals on the letter of Cuban law which guarantees freedom of conscience.⁵⁵ Unlike other denominations such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, some Baptists, and the Catholic hierarchy, which have at times taken a more confrontational approach, the official stance of the Cuban CRC has always been that as long as the laws were enforced as written, the Christian Reformed Church would have no problems with the Cuban government and that its pastors would refrain from commenting on “political matters.”⁵⁶ Summarizing his denomination’s approach to matters of social concern at the first annual workshop on “The Social Responsibility of the Christian” in 1998, Martínez stated:

... we know how to do evangelism without having to say to anybody: “Here is a plate of food for you if you come to our worship service tonight.” We believe that this [approach] is immoral and not worthy of a Christian, but we know that many people are going to ask themselves about the faith, that is to say, they are going to wonder in their mind what the connection is between the Christian faith and what we are doing. Many have asked: Why are you so crazy and foolish? ... A communist said to me: “Why, after you have been discrimi-

nated against, are you doing these things?” Well, they don’t understand our philosophy of forgiveness and love and that is what we are going to keep practicing.⁵⁷

At the same time, a process of rapprochement was also visible from the side of the government. In 1972 Castro addressed a meeting of Christians for Socialism in Chile, saying: “We both wish to struggle on behalf of man, for the welfare of man, for the happiness of man.”⁵⁸ Seven years later, the vocal support given to the Sandinistas by a “popular” faction of the Nicaraguan Catholic Church

between Cuba’s revolution and the Catholic Church. A transcript of their talks, published in Cuba under the title *Fidel y la religión*, further eroded the anti-religious stance of the Cuban government.⁶¹ The visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba in 1998 was a further milestone in the government’s acknowledgment of religion’s importance to the Cuban people.

The collapse of the Soviet bloc and the onset of the “special period in time of peace” resulted in a significant shift in the balance of power between the government and the churches. With greatly reduced economic re-



The Cuban Christian Reformed Church is vibrant and growing. Photo courtesy of Winabelle Gritter.

was acknowledged by Castro and the official Cuban press as a sign that a certain kind of religion could be useful to the Revolution.⁵⁹ In 1984, the Rev. Jesse Jackson went to Cuba to seek the release of some prisoners of conscience. During the visit he met with Castro and brought him to a Methodist Church in Havana, an act which undermined the widespread perception that communists should avoid contact with religion.⁶⁰ In the following year, Castro granted an extensive series of interviews to Frei Betto, a Brazilian bishop who was eager to find common ground

sources, the Cuban government found itself dependent on the churches to augment public social programs using relief supplies which the churches were receiving from abroad.⁶² Not coincidentally perhaps, the Cuban Communist Party dropped the word “atheist” from its list of requirements for membership. One result of this relaxation was that by 1998, four Protestant ministers had been elected to the National Assembly.⁶³ The government also showed unaccustomed openness to criticism. At a meeting with Castro in 1990, the Cuban Ecu-
menical Council, of which the Cuban



The administrative office of the Cuban Christian Reformed Church.
Photo courtesy of Winabelle Gritter.

CRC was a member, informed the President that while conditions were improving, “. . . as Christians we still do not have access to radio, television, and press. Education and job opportunities for many of our youth are limited, even though we contribute to the health of our nation.”⁶⁴ Castro admitted that Christians had suffered from discrimination and he promised to defend their right to worship.⁶⁵ By the early years of the twenty-first century, the government had dropped most restrictions on religious meet-

ings and was even providing support for the construction of new church buildings, although in a manner similar to its dealings with the private economic sector, the government was prone to retract such privileges without notice or explanation.⁶⁶

Like most other churches on the island, the Cuban CRC has experienced

considerable numerical growth during the last two decades. Formal membership grew from 600 to over 1000 and the number of fully organized congregations went from twelve to twenty between 1980 and 2000.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, recent reports from Christians in Cuba indicate that the government is once again clamping down on house churches, prayer meetings, and Bible studies. Sadly, Martínez died in 2005, but the church continues to grow under the leadership of President David Chang and

seventeen other full-time pastors, along with many laymen and laywomen who have shown remarkable stamina in doing the work of the Lord under difficult circumstances over many years.⁶⁸

This period of growth has coincided with and been aided by the restoration of close ties with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Telephone contact was restored between the two denominations in 1974 and members of the CRC in North America began visiting the island in the 1980s to offer much appreciated Bible training and to bring needed resources. The list of those who have aided the Cuban CRC in this way is long. The Cuba Committee of LaGrave Avenue CRC has provided substantial funds for the repair of old buildings and the construction of new ones.⁶⁹ Finally, in 2001, ties between the Cuban CRC and the CRC in North America were formally reestablished.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, there is much that North American Christians can learn about how to be “as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves” from the example of the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba. ☞

Endnotes

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2. Eppinga interview.
3. Pedraza, *Con las espaldas llenas*, 9, 14. Eppinga interview.
4. Borregos interview.
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30. Ramos, Marcos A., *Protestantism and Revolution in Cuba*. ([Coral Gables, FL.]: University of Miami, 1989) 73-74.

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34. Romero interview.

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36. Romero interview; Borregos interview; see also the account Eduardo Pedraza gives of his own interrogation by local police in 1964. He and a friend had just come from a worship service. They were wearing suits and carrying tracts while riding on a bus. A policeman took them to the station where they were interrogated for several hours and told that their literature was "trash." Pedraza comments that the experience was the result of overzealous local officials who misconstrued the Revolution's attitude toward religion. Pedraza, *Con las espaldas llenas*, 138-139.

37. Romero interview.

38. Romero interview; Pedraza, *Con las espaldas llenas*, 139-140.

39. Borregos interview.

40. Interview by the author with Jorge Fontrodona, Miami, FL, 27 May 2005.

41. Interview by the author with Tim and Kathy DeVries, Benton Harbor, MI, 4 August 2003.

42. James C. Dekker, "Cuba's CRC Nurtures Harvest in Rocky Soil," *The Banner* 133 (25 May 1998), 24.

43. Vander Valk radio talk.

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45. Clarence J. Nyenhuis, "Cuba," 145-146.

46. Eppinga interview; Pedraza, *Con las espaldas llenas*, 98; and Clarence J. Nyenhuis, "Cuba," 146.

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48. Pedraza, *Con las espaldas llenas*, 48.

49. *Ibid.*, 165-166.

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51. *Ibid.*, 64.

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the Revolution, education, or fulfillment of the obligation to work, defend the homeland with arms, revere its symbols, or other duties established by the Constitution."), <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Cuba/cuba1976.html> (accessed 26 August 2005). The Cuban CRC has understandably emphasized the rights and not the restrictions.

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65. Dekker, "Cuba's CRC Nurtures Harvest," 25.

66. "Fidel Castro offers support to build evangelical churches," *Christian Courier*, 12 September 2005, 24. "Cuba House Churches Face New Restrictions," <http://www.christianpost.com> (accessed 21 September 2005).

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68. Luis Pellecer, "Cuban CRC Leader Dies," *The Banner*, November 2005, Tim De Vries.

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70. "Synod Establishes Ties with Cuban CRC," *The Banner*, 9 July 2001, 17.

Masselink Challenges the Mob¹

Robert P. Swierenga

“If that Masselink doesn’t shut his mouth, we’ll have him riding out of town on a slab.” So a Chicago mobster in 1948 threatened the Reverend Dr. Edward J. Masselink, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Cicero, Illinois, for the previous four years. When his wife Clazina heard



Dr. Edward Masselink (1901-1999) served as the pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Cicero, IL, 1944-1950. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

the telephone ring at the parsonage in the middle of the night, she warned her husband not to turn on any lights for fear of a bullet coming through a window. Babysitters were reluctant to come to the parsonage. One father insisted on accompanying his daughter for protection.²

What had a minister of the Gospel done to incur the wrath of the infamous “Scarface Al” Capone? Masselink as a Christian leader felt duty-bound to help clean up the scandal-ridden government of the town of Cicero and so became involved in local politics.

Ever since Capone moved his headquarters to a Cicero hotel during the Prohibition era of the 1920s, this industrial town that bordered Chicago on the west became a haven for gangland vice and racketeering. Worse, city officials came under the influence (some would say *control*) of the crime syndicate.

First Cicero CRC had over 1,100 “souls” in the mid-1940s and was the flagship Dutch Reformed congregation in town. Masselink, a graduate of Princeton Seminary, with a Th.D. degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, moved his family into the manse in January 1944 after serving the LaGrave CRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He followed another high-profile pastor, the learned Dr. William Rutgers, who had nurtured high quality organ and choral work at the church led by Cornelius Kickert, a Calvin College graduate of 1927 and music teacher in the local Morton High School. The reputation of the church and its pastor induced the management of Cicero radio station WHFC-AM to beam Rutgers’s famed Heidelberg Catechism sermons in a program called *The Reformation Hour* across Chicagoland. Masselink, a biblical theologian with an experiential bent, took over Rutgers’s microphone but changed the format to a half-hour devotional that applied the Bible to everyday life. As with his predecessor, radio made Masselink’s name familiar in Christian circles in Chicagoland. But radio waves could not compete with newspaper headlines and photos that soon flashed Masselink’s name and face across Chicago.³

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That Rev. Masselink would get involved in politics was not surprising, given his strong convictions, but the long tradition of corrupt bossism in Chicago-area governments had reduced his congregants to passive citizens. The relatively small Dutch Reformed community in the metropolitan area voted out of duty but seldom ran for office themselves. “Leave us alone and we’ll leave you alone,” was the Dutch axiom concerning the politicians.⁴ First Cicero CRC was an exception; two of its leading members were leaders in the town government—Nick Hendrikse as town clerk and librarian, and Siebert Karsen as president of the town Parent Teacher Association. Hendrikse, a former principal of Timothy Christian School, was an elder and vice president of the consistory, and Karsen was superintendent of the Sunday school. These men and other activists in the congregation steered their willing pastor to join the Cicero Ministerial Association (CMA) and by 1948 Masselink was its president. The crusade of the CMA to take Cicero back from mob racketeering is what sparked the conflict that led to threats on Masselink’s life.

The suburb of Cicero had begun as a quiet, leafy suburb for upwardly mobile Chicagoans. The town was incorporated and chartered in 1869 and the truck farms quickly gave way to brick bungalows with tree-lined sidewalks and backyard gardens. Along the boundaries of Chicago sprawling factories sprang up, notably the Grand Locomotive Works and later the Western

Electric Hawthorne Works, which manufactured telephones and switching equipment for the Bell System. More than one in every five employees in Cicero “worked at the Western,” located along the Chicago border on Cicero Avenue.⁵

Cicero offered more jobs than workers, so men commuted to its factories from across Chicagoland, and the workforce soon surpassed the total town population of 75,000 in 1930. Near the factory gates and across town stood 275 taverns to slake the thirsts of the laborers, and many ran wide open twenty-four hours a day, despite the legally mandated 3:00 AM closing time on weekdays and 4:00 AM on Sundays. Foreign-born made up one-third of the Cicero populace, mostly Czechoslovakians (always called Bohemians), Lithuanians, Poles, with a smattering of Italians, Anglo-Saxons, Irish, Germans, Swedes, and about 3,000 Dutch Reformed. The latter lived cheek by jowl in the residential Warren Park district, close to Roosevelt Road and Austin Boule-

vard at the northern edge of Cicero, while the Hawthorne district, where Capone’s hangout was located, was at the southern edge. The Dutch fringe also spilled over into the adjoining towns of Berwyn and Oak Park. Most of the “white ethnics” had fled from the encroaching African-American slums on Chicago’s Old West Side, and they valued their bungalows and two-flats above all else. “My home is my God,” said a Bohemian in all seriousness, as he vowed to keep blacks out of Cicero.⁶

As the industries and their union workforce expanded, Cicero’s economy prospered and taxes on factory equipment and payrolls swelled the city coffers far above local needs. This bonanza attracted the mob. Cicero was the largest urban area in the county (outside Chicago) and the fifth in size in Illinois. During Prohibition in the 1920s, powerful Chicago vice families—the Jake Guzik-Ricco-Al Capone Syndicate—opened speakeasies, gambling halls, horse racing tracks, and houses of prostitution, and raked in the easy graft. Saloons were at the heart of the vice and in their backrooms the mob ran the numbers games, bootlegging, and prostitution. To obtain the necessary legal “cover” for the ubiquitous graft, the mob put Cicero politicians “on the payroll,” so to speak. Al Capone made his headquarters in the steel-armored, bombproof Hawthorne Hotel on Twenty-Second Street near the Hawthorne Works.⁷

In the 1924 municipal election, Capone gained control of the



The congregation was organized as Twelfth Street CRC in Chicago in 1912, became Third CRC in 1913, and was located in Cicero 1927-1975. It is now the Lombard, IL, CRC. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

entire town. As historian Humbert Nelli aptly noted: “Through fraudulent registration, bribery, ballot-box stuffing, kidnapping, slugging, and shooting, Capone ‘elected’ his candidate over an opposition equally corrupt but less resourceful.”⁸ How did the average “Joe Citizen” react to this travesty? Norbert Blei, who chronicled life in Cicero in these years, said it best: “Yes, Capone ruled Cicero. But the locals ‘never saw, or pretended not to see,’ what was going on under their very eyes. Even when the city newspaper, the *Cicero Life*, did acknowledge the ‘dark action,’ who cared? Not John Buchta, average Ciceronian, who had his own Cicero life to live.”⁹

Sometimes it was impossible to look the other way. In 1926 Sieb Karsen’s fiancé, the nineteen-year-old Margaret VanderBerg, while at work as a secretary for a roofing company on Twenty-Second Street, almost took a bullet from Capone mobsters. Her company was located next door to a local barbershop and mob hangout. One day VanderBerg looked outside and happened to see Capone’s gang coming down the street in a black car with guns poking out the windows. She dove under her desk as the thugs began firing. The target was a rival mobster sitting in the barber’s chair near the front window getting a haircut. The hail of bullets missed the intended target but killed another customer. When the firing stopped, Margaret crawled out from under her desk, happy to be alive. After her marriage the next year, Karsen insisted that she quit her job, which she agreed to do.¹⁰



The First Cicero CRC parsonage was perceived as a potential target for violence during Masselink’s pastorate. Photo courtesy of Archives, Calvin College.

In 1931 the US Department of Justice convicted Capone of income tax evasion and incarcerated him. Two years later the Franklin Roosevelt administration ended the Prohibition experiment. Yet the mob continued to hold Cicero captive. Saloons now operated legally and owners continued to ignore the old city ordinance that required them to close by 2:00 AM. Vice and gambling remained above the law.

This was the state of affairs that Masselink, his associate the Rev. William McCarrell of the large Cicero Bible Church, and the CMA, which included every Protestant minister in town, were determined to end. In a quick stroke, the CMA put up a reform candidate in the April 1948 local election and then went door to door during the campaign. Some 33,000 citizens turned out and, lo and behold, John Stoffel, the son of a former town clerk and scion of an old Czechoslovakian (Bohemian) family with a reputation for honesty, won the office of town president and ousted the mob front man. On the night of April 16 Stoffel was sworn in as presi-

dent in front of the town board, and then named Joseph Horejs, a fellow Czech, as chief of police, with orders to enforce town laws for tavern closing hours and state laws banning gambling houses. With reporters on hand from Cicero and Chicago newspapers, the flummoxed trustees found themselves “exposed” and they approved a formal motion to endorse the new mayor’s actions. The reformers went home, satisfied that the town government had been redeemed.¹¹

How wrong they were! The mobsters, who had been caught off guard by the civic reformers, quickly regrouped and fought back. Police enforcement of tavern closing hours and raids on gambling halls was costing the syndicate \$100,000 a day in revenue. They buttonholed individual trustees and demanded that they rein in the new mayor. Stoffel found himself largely alone in the reform campaign and considered giving in to the pressure and letting things return to “normal.” This was when Dr. Masselink came to the fore and mobilized the CMA for a long fight. On 3 June 1948 he had the Association pass a strongly worded resolution for the next town board meeting on 14 June, which was read by town clerk Jerry Justin, commending President Stoffel, the town board, and the *Cicero Life* newspaper for their courageous campaign to save the town, and serving notice on the forces of corruption that the good citizens would not back down. Masselink then took the floor and declared that the resolution was not empty words but a program of action. The clerics promised to make

the crusade a matter of public and personal prayer, and they called on public-minded civic organizations and individuals to come and stand with them.¹²

At the very next meeting of the town board, some 200 saloonkeepers and bartenders appeared, led by their lawyer, to complain about plummeting receipts. Police enforcement of the 2:00 AM closing time, they cried, threatened to put them out of business. They demanded immediate action by the trustees to make the police back off. When the trustees appeared to be sympathetic, Masselink and his fellow clerics, claiming to speak for the vast majority of citizens, demanded that the board hold public hearings on the matter. In the face of the packed courtroom, the trustees backed down and agreed to schedule a meeting the following Monday evening when both sides could be heard. The issue was clearly joined and the battle lines starkly drawn.

Masselink and his allies had one week to prepare. Since the saloon forces had gathered 200 strong, the ministers wanted to assemble 2,000 citizens as a show of support for reform. The clerics contacted every civic organization in town—the PTA, women's clubs, businessmen's organizations, Boy Scouts, etc., and they enlisted twenty-six organizations to send spokespersons to the meeting. The board was so intimidated that they took no action on the petition of the barkeepers and the matter was dropped. The forces for good had won the first battle, but would they win the next battles and, indeed, the war?

Round two began almost immediately. The syndicate quietly got the Cook County Sheriff's office, headed by Elmer Walsh, to discredit the Cicero police. The scheme worked as follows. The mob would give the city police a tip about a gambling hall, but when the officers arrived they

would find the place empty. However, an hour and a half later the sheriff's men would go to the same store and make an arrest, collect evidence, and close the place. When the newspapers reported the arrests, the impression was cleverly created that gambling continued openly in Cicero and Chief Horejs, a World War II naval hero and reputable crime fighter,¹³ derisively labeled "Keystone Cop," was too inept to close it down. Worse yet, charged the *Cicero News*, a mob-controlled paper, Mayor Stoffel and his "unfit" police chief were actually in cahoots with the syndicate!

At the next meeting of the town board, several trustees tried to censure or depose Stoffel and Horejs for condoning gambling, but Masselink lauded Horejs and argued that the accusations were false, even though he could not prove the underhandedness of the sheriff's office. Nonetheless, he did forestall a coup and Horejs continued in his post temporarily.

The mobsters then dropped their indirect methods, and at the 12 August 1948 board meeting a majority of trustees proposed to nullify the town ordinance of 1927 that gave the president the power to appoint the chief of police. They also voted to relax police enforcement of saloon and gambling laws. Round three had begun. Masselink learned of the intended actions and marshaled his forces to pack the town hall with "wildly indignant citizens," who insisted that any change in the town charter required a public referendum. After allowing a time for speeches, the seven trustees brazenly voted unanimously, amid boos, cheers, and futile attempts to gain the floor, to amend the charter and fire Chief Horejs. They then announced as the new chief a man who had served during the Capone regime. Stoffel promptly vetoed the resolution but, ten days later, after the prescribed waiting period the board met again

and, amidst stormy protests of a crowded chamber, overrode his veto. Masselink declared that the town board had shown a "sullen disregard for the will of the majority." "Good Government is Tottering," cried the *Cicero Life*.¹⁴

Two months later, on 23 August 1948, President Stoffel resigned in protest and to preserve his self respect. The syndicate was back in power. "Respectability dies in Cicero," screamed a large black headline in Chicago's *Herald American*. The *Cicero Life*, a paper that backed the reform efforts, decried the "Smell Over Cicero."¹⁵

Before his resignation, however, Masselink and the CMA got Stoffel to agree to head up a citizens' petition movement, the Cicero Citizens' City Government Committee, to change the structure of the government from a town to a city. A city charter would automatically terminate the terms of office of every town trustee, and future trustees would be elected by ward rather than "at large," which would make boss rule far more difficult. To make the case to the general public for a new charter, Masselink and his cohorts argued that the 1869 charter was outdated and inadequate to meet the needs of a large and complex city. Cicero must be incorporated under the Revised Cities and Villages Act of the State of Illinois, which had been enacted during the Progressive Era to strengthen citizen democracy and end boss rule. Litigation due to corrupt politicians had already cost the citizens more than \$300,000, Masselink argued.

Stoffel and the clerics put all their faith in the ballot resolution to "take back Cicero" and they worked furiously to enlist allies in the cause. The action group quickly obtained 10,000 signatures on petitions to force a charter vote. The list far exceeded the required minimum of 4,500 names

(one-eighth the number of votes cast in the last election).

To blunt the petition drive, the board had their attorney declare that the 1869 charter was a compact

between the town and the Illinois State Legislature and it could be altered only with the permission of the

legislature. The citizens' petition was therefore illegal. Stoffel and his charter revision committee countered this clever ploy by filing suit in the circuit court to force the town board to hold the charter referendum. The trustees

also ordered Frank Marek, the Cicero representative in the Illinois statehouse, to introduce a bill barring any

change in the Cicero town charter for four years, until 1952. The bill, euphemistically labeled the "Save Cicero Bill," passed

the House of Representatives unanimously and the Senate by 33 to 5. Governor Adlai Stevenson, a reformer himself, vetoed it. Ciceronians, he declared, de-

served the right to have a city, if they so desired. The lawmakers, however, had no difficulty overriding Stevenson's veto.¹⁶

Round three had taken the fight from Cicero into the state court system and the statehouse in Springfield, but the outcome looked bleak. The tentacles of the syndicate extended all the way to Springfield. The reform crusade bogged down after the legal wrangling began. Then in March 1949 came a

breakthrough. Circuit Court Judge Harry Fisher issued a writ that ordered the town board to call an election on the charter petition signed by the 10,000 voters. The board appealed

Cicero President Defies Hoodlums, Keeps Lid On

Judge Fisher's ruling to the Illinois Supreme Court, and this gave lawyers for the Cicero Citizens' Committee the opportunity to stand before the state's high court. Both sides held their breath while waiting for a decision.

Stevenson Vetoes 'Save Cicero' Bill

On 23 November 1949, the Court declared that Ciceronians had the right to change their government and the Court ordered the town board to hold an election. The trustees reluctantly obeyed and set a date in early January 1950. Stoffel and his Citizens' Committee had won in court and Masselink and the CMA were ecstatic. Victory now seemed certain, provided that the referendum passed.¹⁷

The reformers girded for the election battle, but they were no match for the town trustees, who "played the race card." The board arranged for "burly" black males to go door to door with flyers that urged

CICERO BOARD FIRES CHIEF AS CROWD OBJECTS
Overrides Veto 6 to 0; Gags Audience

citizens to approve the new charter so that blacks could move into "lily-white" Cicero. Many residents had fled Chicago's inner city for just this reason; fear of an influx of blacks was the ultimate threat. The dirty trick worked to perfection. The referendum went down to defeat. The crushing loss totally demoralized the civic reformers and they gave up the crusade.

Only two years later, in 1951, the citizens paid a steep price for their racism. A black family, the husband a bus driver for the Chicago Transit Authority, moved into a third-floor flat of a twelve-unit apartment building on the

Nineteenth Street parkway at Lombard Avenue, the dividing line between Cicero and Berwyn. Less

than a mile from the apartment in Berwyn stood the First Reformed Church of Chicago and the Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church. A little over a mile away in Cicero stood the First Christian Reformed and Warren Park Christian Reformed churches and the West Side Reformed Church. The Oak Park Christian Reformed Church was located within two miles.

The arrival of the first black family to live in Cicero or Berwyn brought out an angry crowd of four hundred who, on a summer evening, pitched the family's possessions out the front windows into the street below and torched them, all under the eyes of Cicero policemen who stood by after having guaranteed the family protection.

Some rioters were Dutch Reformed young men from Masselink's former congregation. The church softball team had just finished its game, heard about the "happening," and headed right over to join the action.

NEITHER A RELIC NOR AN EXPERIMENT

THE CICERO NEWS

HOME NEWSPAPER OF HAWTHORNE, MORTON PARK, CLYDE, WARREN PARK, PARKHOLME, GRANT WORKS, BOULEVARD MANOR, DREXEL

Vol. XXXX, No. 13 CICERO, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, JULY 9, 1948 \$2.00 A YEAR

CHIEF HOREJS' ASSERTIONS PROVED FALSE; GAMBLING CONTINUES OPENLY IN CICERO

NEWS Obtains Evidence Branding The 'Keystone Cop' as Unfit to Continue in Responsible Post

Here it is - - the true story about gambling in Cicero - - a story completely different from the publicity "puffs" that

Subsequently, the governor called out the National Guard to restore order. For this clear civil rights violation, the town of Cicero had to pay a large sum to the family.

Masselink and the forces had fought vigorously for nearly two years, but in the end they could not save Ciceronians from their own prejudices and fears. The crime syndicate and the conniving Cicero trustees were too wily and resourceful. The telephone crusades, the marshalling of church members across all Protestant denominations, the visits to Springfield, and the alliances with President Stoffel, Police Chief Morejs, and Governor Stevenson all came to naught. Cicero's town hall and police department remained in the clutches of corrupt political bosses for the next fifty years.¹⁸

As recently as 1998, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) charged Cicero's town president, Betty Loren-Maltese, and nine other officials with stealing \$10 million in taxpayer monies. Loren-Maltese went to prison, following on the heels of her husband, Frank "Baldy" Maltese, a one-time town clerk. "The Cicero candy store is closed," declared an FBI investigator confidently. But if past history is any guide, the agent may well have spoken prematurely. The crime syndicate may be as resourceful today as ever.¹⁹

Rev. Masselink paid a personal price for leading the crusade to save Cicero. He and his family were harassed and threatened with physical harm by the mob. But he never lost the esteem of his congregation, although some members might have had misgivings

about their activist pastor, believing strongly that politics should be kept out of the pulpit or, in this case, the manse. Others grumbled about the name of the church being dragged into the public eye in the frequent newspaper reports about the political battles of their pastor. Yet others thought the ministerial reform campaign was hopeless, a waste of time, and a distraction from more important "church business."²⁰ A year after the crusade collapsed in disarray Masselink accepted the call of the Twelfth Street CRC of Grand Rapids and quietly left town. One might think that he departed, shaking the dust of Cicero off his feet, but he and Clazina testified later that their seven years in Cicero were happy ones, even if they were far from tranquil.²¹ ∞

Endnotes

1. I am indebted to Martin Essenburg, Harvey Huiner, Wendell Karsen, James McCosh, and Clare Van Zeelt for assistance in researching this article.

2. Reminiscence of Clazina (Mrs. Edward) Masselink, undated manuscript, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. This document and the manuscript, "Cicero Strikes Back" by Edward Masselink, are the primary sources for this article, along with many newspaper clippings preserved by the Masselinks.

3. Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago: A History of the Hollanders in the Windy City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 219-221.

4. *Ibid.*, 676-715; quote, 687.

5. Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969) 250, 339.

6. Norbert Blei, *Neighborhood* (Peoria, Ill.: Ellis Press, 1987) 35-38;

Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago*, 431.

7. Capone actually had headquarters in two hotels facing each other across Twenty-Second Street (later Cermak Road)—the Anton Hotel at 4835 West and the Hawthorne at 4923 West. Mark H. Haller, "Ethnic Crime: The Organized Underworld of Early 20th Century Chicago," in Melvin G. Holly and Peter d'A Jones, *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 557-573.

8. Humbert S. Nelli, *The Italians of Chicago, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) 217, 218 (quote).

9. Blei, *Neighborhood*, 16.

10. Story recounted to the author by son Wendell Karsen, e-mail of 2 June 2005.

11. This and the next paragraphs rely on Masselink, "Cicero Strikes Back."

12. *Chicago Sun Times*, 15 June 1948.

13. *Cicero News*, 2, 9 July 1948.

14. *Cicero Life*, 15 August 1948; *Herald American*, 24 August 1948.

15. *Chicago Daily News*, 13, 17 August 1948; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13, 17, 24 August 1948, *Herald American*, 28 August 1948; *Cicero Life*, 25 August 1948; *Chicago Sun Times*, 24 August 1948.

16. *Cicero Life*, 13 June 1949; *Chicago Daily News*, 29 July 1949; *Chicago Sun Times*, 29 July 1949.

17. *Cicero Life*, 14 August 1949; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 23 November 1949.

18. *Cicero Life*, 13 June 1949; *Chicago Daily News*, 29 July 1949; *Chicago Sun Times*, 29 July 1949.

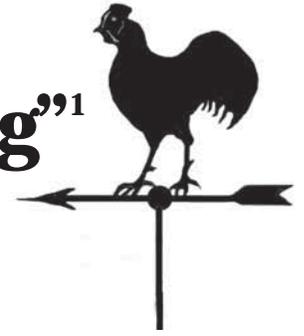
19. Undated 1998 *Cicero Life* clipping of story by *Associated Press* reporter Mike Robinson; *Chicago Tribune*, 28 April 1998.

20. As Bernard Huiner said, according to his son Harvey, e-mail to the author, 31 May 2005.

21. Clazina (Mrs. Edward) Masselink, "Cicero Strikes Back," p. 7.

Cock-a-doodle-do, or, “Wake, Awake for Night is Flying”¹

Cornelis Van Nuis



Some years ago I took a course from an eminent historian who implied that roosters appeared as weathervanes on church towers in Hungary as the result of the momentous Reformation events. Having grown up in the Netherlands in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, a predominantly Roman Catholic city in those days, my travels as a teenager from Protestant Friesland in the “far north” to Roman Catholic Limburg in the “deep south” made me very aware of the frequent displays of roosters in many places. Not only that, the west tower of the Cathedral of St. John (Sint Janskathedraal) in ‘s-Hertogenbosch was topped by a graceful, shiny cock. I am certain that neither the pope nor the bishop would have allowed a Reformed symbol at the pinnacle of their Gothic edifice. This raises the question: Is this bird Reformed or not? The answer is a definitive NO!

Various Christian interpretations of the rooster symbol have been suggested over the centuries. One is that since the rooster announces the dawn it represents readiness or vigilance, an idea the Greeks and Romans noted in their mythology. Some have suggested Christianity assimilated this earlier symbolism as its own, and now can be found in such items as Philipp Nicolai’s *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* (Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying).²

But there is no historical confirmation that this interpretation led to rooster weathervanes. What is certain is that the rooster was not an exclusively Reformed symbol. It is true

that in 1629, following centuries of Roman Catholic worship, St. John’s became a Reformed church after Frederick Hendrick of Orange captured the city from the Spanish. Then in 1810 Napoleon at the Tuilleries in Paris, without asking Pope Pius VII for his opinion, returned the edifice to its Roman Catholic origin by appointing a new bishop for ‘s-Hertogenbosch, with St. John’s again as the cathedral. But during the church’s first Roman Catholic period, a panoramic drawing of the city by Anton van den Wijngaerde made between 1548-1558 reveals a large rooster gracing the enormous tower over the central crossing.³ In 1584 this rooster crowed his “swan song” when a bolt of lightning struck, causing an enormous fire that collapsed the tower, spread to the west tower and demolished the organ, bells, and clockworks. The crossing tower was never rebuilt and in its place a more humble cupola was raised. The west tower was repaired and by 1642 – 1643 had a gilded weathercock installed.⁴ This then must have been a Reformed bird. He also was an expensive one, requiring frequent repairs and re-gilding, and total replacement at least once, in 1702, for several hundred guilders.⁵ When the church and its rooster returned to their original Confession after 1810, such expenses continued. Photographs from the mid-nineteenth century repeatedly document the rooster, and an aerial view of 1930, the closest to my birth year, shows him on top of the West Tower

Cornelis Van Nuis, also a native of the Netherlands, is a retired neurologist and an avid family historian.

cross—undoubtedly the bird I knew as a youth.⁶

To return to the origin of roosters as weathervanes, the year before the calamitous iconoclasm riots of 1566, beginning in Antwerp, a panorama of that city was published clearly showing two towers with roosters.⁷ Earlier, a fifteenth-century miniature in Froissart's "Chronicle," shows the entry of Queen Isabella into Paris (1389), with a view of Notre Dame in the background, its crossing flèche topped by an *Ile de France chanticleer*.⁸ At the end of the Eadwine Psalter is a map of the

church or chapel is evident, with a prominent rooster on its dome.⁹ This could not have been an Anglican rooster, since Henry VIII didn't launch that religious effort until 1534.

Further back, the Bayeux Tapestry, created some time between 1066 and 1082, measuring 68 meters by approximately 50 centimeters, depicts the events leading to the Norman invasion of England and the Battle of Hastings, ending with the English defeat. Among the scenes on the tapestry is King Edward the Confessor receiving Harold, then still a duke, upon his return from France. Harold is on the king's right, while on the other side of Edward's throne the newly built Westminster Abbey is visible, ready to be consecrated (this occurred on 4 January 1066). In the scene, a workman on a most precarious ladder struggles to the roof of the Abbey to install a late Anglo-Saxon rooster.¹⁰

The oldest reported rooster (stationary, not a vane) atop a church was on the Basilica Brescia, in Italy, about A.D. 820. Although no evidence has ever been found to confirm this, a persistent rumor from about this time has one of the popes decreeing that every church in Europe should display a cock on its dome or steeple as a reminder of Jesus' prophecy of Peter's denial in Luke 22.

The future of the rooster weathervane is not certain, although a song by Andraé Crouch of more recent vintage "Soon, and Very Soon"¹¹ might imply that our friend may finally have the luxury of sleeping in one morning and taking some avian snores. ☺



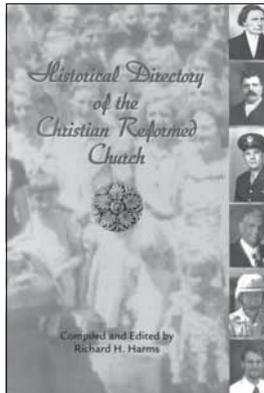
The rooster being placed atop Westminster Cathedral in the Bayeux Tapestry. Detail from plate 32 in Sir Frank Stenton, et al., *The Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Phaidon Publishers, Inc., 1957).

Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, the seat of the Archbishop of England. The map was probably drawn during Thomas à Becket's Archbishopric (1162-1170). In the northeast corner of the map, incorporated in the wall between monastery and city, a small

Endnotes

1. *Psalter Hymnal* # 613 (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1987, 1988).
2. Matthew 25: 1-13.
3. C. J. A. C. Peeters, *De Sint Janskathedraal te 's Hertogenbosch* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij—Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg, 1985) 30-31.
4. Peeters, *De Sint Janskathedraal* 402.
5. *Ibid.*, 402-3. The purchasing power of 100 guilders would be approximately \$3,200 today.
6. *Ibid.*, 65.
7. C. Koeman, *The History of Abraham Ortelius and His Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Co., Inc., 1964) 30-31.
8. H. R. Loyer, general editor, *The Middle Ages: A Concise Encyclopaedia* (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1991) 256.
9. Koert van der Horst, William Noel, Wilhelmina C. M. Wüsterfel, editors, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David* (Westrenen, Netherlands: HES Publishers BV, 1996) 120.
10. *The Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1985) 182-plate 28.
11. <http://www.rr-bb.com/archive/index.php/t-96573.html> (10 February 2006).

book notes



Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church

Richard H. Harms, editor

Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Board of Publications (available from Heritage Hall, Calvin College)
511 pages, \$34.95

Origins subscribers can purchase the book for \$19.95 at Heritage Hall or \$25.00 via the mail (prices in US currency). Send payment in check or money order to *Origins*, Calvin College Archives, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546-4402.



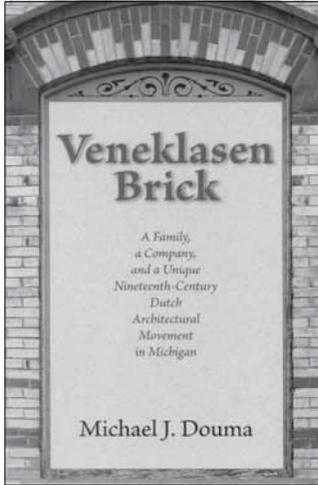
Netherlanders in America: A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America

Jacob van Hinte

Grand Rapids, MI: The Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 2003) 2 vols. in 1. Translation of: *Nederlanders in Amerika, een Studie over Landverhuizers en Volkplanters in de 19e en 20ste Eeuw in de Vereenigde Staten van Amerika*. Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1928, 1152 pages, \$39.95.

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book review



Veneklasen Brick

A Family, a Company, and a Unique Nineteenth-Century Dutch Architectural Movement in Michigan

Michael J. Douma

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005
103 pages, illustrations, maps, index
paperback \$16.00

Veneklasen red brick homes, often with buff brick decorative architectural ornamental borders both above the windows and framing the pointed house gables, are the

primary subjects of this very readable and scholarly 103-page well-illustrated study. Many, but not all of the structures, were built during the years 1850-1910 and exhibit both the use of local materials and Dutch craftsmanship. Formed in 1848, the Veneklasen firm's most prosperous years were the three decades following the 1871 Holland fire. The result of this disastrous conflagration was a building boom. Consequently, Veneklasen bricks were in great demand. By 1930 the Veneklasen Company was no more. The author attributes its demise to a decreasing availability of local clay and, above all, an economic restructuring of the brick-making industry throughout the United States. Decreasing transportation costs for both bricks and clay enabled large firms to compete on an equal footing with small local enterprises.

Adding substantially to the value of this history of the Veneklasen family and its firm are the sections titled "Brickworkers and Brickyards" and "Brick House Architecture." In "A Survey of Veneklasen Brick Houses" the reader will find

a location map and an address for each still-existing home or site where a home has been demolished. Also here, when available, are construction dates, brick colors used in construction and year of destruction of each home no longer standing.

Michael Douma, a research assistant at the A. C. Van Raalte Institute in Holland, Michigan, makes an eloquent plea for the preservation of these historic houses in his concluding remarks titled, "Future of the Houses and Conservation." The remaining Veneklasen homes are more than antiquated relics of times gone by. They are, in fact, architectural structures which in unique ways exhibit varied elements of Dutch-American culture in West Michigan. After paging through this book, the reader will appreciate all the more the value of these architectural treasures made from Veneklasen brick. ♪

Conrad Bult

for the future

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

- Jan Gelock's Autobiography
- Voices from the Free Congregation at Grand Rapids* by Walter Lagerwey
- The Dutch Come to the Hackensack River Valley* by Richard Harms
- Holland Marsh, Ontario* by Harry Vander Kooij



Jim Schaap laments the life of Siouxland author Frederick Manfred.

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