

ORIGINS

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ORIGINS



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Growing Up in Roseland 20^{'s} in the 30^{'s}

by Richard R. Tiemersma

The Roseland which I recall from my boyhood days was an ill-defined land mass bounded by such other ill-defined communities as Pull-

man, Kensington, Fernwood, Belleview, and West Pullman. I'm sure that someone knew where the boundaries lay (they were all parts of Chicago, and none at that time had its own governmental structure), but for the people living in those areas they merged imperceptibly into one another.*

The intersection of Michigan Avenue and 111th Street,

however, was definitely Roseland, sitting as it did in the heart of the Roseland shopping center that ran roughly from 109th to 113th Street. Readily accessible by way of the Chicago Surface Lines streetcars, it contained such

neighborhood. Down the hill, to the east of Michigan Avenue was Dr. Vande Roovaart's office, and a few blocks west on 111th Street were Yff and Vree's grocery and meat market, Roseland Community Hospital, and a

White Castle hamburger shop, where a hamburger could be had for a nickel.

Closer to home, on Wentworth Avenue between 103rd and 111th streets, was a smaller shopping area composed of spottily located neighborhood grocery stores like Lystra's, De Boer's, Bandstra's, and Flasman's; Stu De Jong's

gas station; Hofstra's bakery; several drug stores; and R. L. Hoekstra's real estate office. At the corner of 103rd and Wentworth were to chain grocery stores that put increasing pressure on the family grocery and meat markets as times grew harder and money scarcer.

The Fernwood shopping area was a one-block section on 103rd Street between Normal and Wallace avenues. Besides Spoelstra's butcher shop and Mehtesheimer's grocery and meat market, it boasted three chain



Baby and carriage, circa 1935.

*The street on which I lived, for example—the two blocks of 103rd Place running between the Western Indiana (or Eastern Illinois, as it was variously called) Railroad on the east and Wallace Street on the west—was loosely known as part of Fernwood, probably because Fernwood Park was located south of 104th Street on Wallace, though the southern boundary of Fernwood proper was generally thought to be 103rd streets. To the south of our neighborhood was what came to be known as Belleview when the boom of building, subdivision, sewers, sidewalks, and paved roads hit the area around 1928.

prestigious establishments as the local theater, Bovenkerk's clothing store, People's Store, several "five and tens," the Knights of Pythias Hall (where for a ten-cent ticket one could go to hear Seymour Swets and the Calvin Glee Club in what was for years the cultural high spot of the circles I moved in), and, until the crash of '29, the Wiersma State Bank. It was to this area that people went when they were "going up the Ave." from our

stores—Consumers (before it became Kroger), the A&P, and the National Tea store. Randomly located among these major commercial enterprises were a barber shop, where men's detachable shirt collars could be deposited for laundering; an ice cream parlor with honest twisted-wire legs for tables and chairs; two shoe-repair shops; another butcher shop; a dry-goods store; The Shack, a sleazy candy store where kids could buy "chances" (a pink-filled mint wafer netted one a free candy bar); and two drug stores, one of which was an old-fashioned apothecary shop run by Miss Oliver, who refused to stock "chances" and who kept a pair of gigantic glass urns filled with colored liquid in her show window.

Between Normal Avenue and the railroad tracks, spotted between residences, were Vander Woude's family grocery, which fought an heroic battle against the chain stores and finally lost; a small store that during prohibition days was a speak-easy and later became a tailor shop where a custom-made suit of the finest wool could be commissioned for thirty dollars; and Vander Meer's coal, hay, and feed store with extensive coal piles extending to 104th Street, a sizeable pasture for its horses, and marvelously aromatic bins of horse manure, from which favored customers could draw to increase the productivity of the gardens that almost every family maintained in the back yard.

Vestiges of earlier days, when the area had some of the richest truck-gardening soil in the Midwest (we could dig down eighteen inches through rich, brown loam in our back yard before encountering the first hint of yellow clay), were abundantly evident in the twenties. The streets, except for main thoroughfares at half-mile intervals, were unpaved; beyond 104th Street for what seemed an indefinite distance south there were no sidewalks; storm sewers were nonex-

istent; and the furrows, left over from farming days in what became the Bellevue subdivision, made playing infield in our pick-up ball games a highly hazardous way to while away an idle summer's afternoon.

Any vacant lots, overgrown after residential building encroached on the farm land, similarly reflected the scene that greeted the original settlers: they were locally known as "p'airies," the first *r*, like that in "lib'ary," being virtually unknown in our



culture. And three-fourths down our side of the street toward Wallace was a house invariably called the "onion house," a reflection of its humble origins as a place to store perishable garden crops awaiting their wagon trip to the Southwater Market miles away in downtown Chicago. Over the years the hovel had been added to and made minimally habitable for human beings, but it remained the "onion house" in the local patois.

Most of the houses on our street, in fact, resembled Topsy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, having "just growed" from the box-like, single-gabled, 1½-story originals with dirt basements and nickel-

plated heaters set up in the dining rooms to combat the bitter Chicago winters. Our own house was radically upgraded in 1923 to accommodate central heating (coal-fired) in a concreted basement. As I recall, two bay windows and front and back porches were also added at that time. Previously my father and older brother had finished off the attic with beaver board (the seams untaped and unplastered) to provide three bedrooms for our growing family.



Backyard scenes at 110th and State Street

Indoor plumbing and sanitary sewers were the rule by the time I was born, but the facilities were Spartan by today's standards. Our bathroom was just long enough for a claw-footed bathtub and a toilet along one side, leaving about a two-foot aisle for access, and a lavatory so placed at the end of the aisle that a person sitting on the toilet had his knees under the lavatory. We also had a sink in the kitchen and, somewhat later, a pair of "stationary tubs" in the basement for laundry. But with eight children—six of them girls—besides our parents, it

took logistics comparable to those for the Normandy invasion to get everyone off to work or school on time. Saturday nights—widely observed as bath night in our neighborhood—were especially hectic as, in addition to the weekly bath, my older sisters curled their hair for Sunday, using curling irons heated on the kitchen stove. I can still conjure up the smell of singed hair, mingled with that of shoe polish as the family shoes got their weekly going over, that pervaded the house on those nights.

Central heating notwithstanding, keeping the house warm was a continuous job. Most of the houses had storm windows, but insulation was virtually unheard of aside from the newspapers that some provident householders had stuffed between the wall studs before the plaster was applied over rough-sawn laths. As a result, the furnaces needed constant restocking during the day and judicious banking of the fires at bedtime to insure some glowing clinkers with which to get the next day's fire started.

An ingenious system of chains and pulleys running from the furnace to the dining room upstairs, and dampers in the flue pipe and heating pipes of the octopus-like furnace made for the most economical use of the coal that was delivered by the ton from Vander Meer's. But it was still the daily chore of the head of the family to fire up in the morning, and I shiver with sympathy to this day as I recall my father's predawn trips across the unheated back porch to the trapdoor leading to the basement.

Ashes from the furnace were used to improve the unpaved roads before 1928 and the unpaved alleys for as long as we lived in the neighborhood, and an occasional spoilsport housewife would use them to ruin the slides that we kids were always making on the public walks. (Real sliding, on sleds or toboggans, was something

we read about in *The Bobbsey Twins*, there being only two changes of level in the whole of Chicago. A "hill," for us, was a raised and sloped front lawn about two feet high.)

Those unpaved roads were the source of a good deal of inconvenience, not to say danger. The city paid no attention to them whatsoever, and the crosswalks of odds and ends of lumber laid down by public-spirited citizens didn't last long under the constant assault of steel-rimmed wagon wheels, horses' hooves, and the gradually increasing number of cars and trucks that plied the streets. Paved streets running east and west occurred about every half mile (103rd, 107th, 111th come to mind, but I believe that south of 111th and north of 103rd one had to go a mile before finding the next pavement). North-and-south streets fared somewhat better, very likely because of the commercial establishments that grew up at less than half-mile intervals. But Normal, Wallace, and 103rd Place, my immediate neighborhood, remained a quagmire during the rainy seasons and the spring thaws until 1928.

The dearth of automobiles among ordinary folk was surely owing to genteel poverty and thrift, but even the well-to-do thought twice before investing in a contraption that was likely to spend as much time mired as traveling. Several of the local independent grocers and butchers specialized in home delivery, coming first to take an order, phones being a rarity, returning to the store to fill it, and then delivering. De Boer's, which catered to Mrs. Vander Wal down the street, furnished the local urchins with an almost-weekly delight in spring and fall and any time during the summer when it rained hard. The joyful sound, "De Boer's in stuck!" would reverberate through the neighborhood, and we'd be treated to a quarter-hour's *schik* watching a perspiring delivery man trying to extri-

cate his panel truck from the morass that passed for a street.

All this changed in the building boom that preceded the crash of 1929. The abandoned farmland south of 104th Street was split into sizeable lots commensurate with the upper-class residences that would soon be abuilding; new asphalt streets and fine, smooth sidewalks, unlike the gritty, coarse-grained walks of the old neighborhood, provided us with literally miles of uninterrupted area for roller



(above) John Kleinhuizen residence in Pictoral Roseland n.p.; (facing page) John Hofstra, 1920s.

skating, scootering, and bike riding. The streets themselves could have been designed by a Ph.D. in urban recreation: at intervals within a block's length two manhole covers for the sanitary sewers were ideally located in the middle of the street to serve as home plate and second base, while grates for the storm sewers along the curb, equidistant from home and second and directly opposite each other, served admirably as first and third of a highly functional, if somewhat elongated, softball diamond.

There was, of course, the ever-present danger of knocking a ball through someone's window, and an

injudiciously parked car could cause an immediate postponement of the game; but, as far as I can recollect, I was corporately involved in only two window breakings over the years, and there was always the chance that a set of sewer covers down the street where no car was parked would be available.

The curbs of the new streets, too, made first-rate boundaries for games of pass football and something we called "shinney," which roughly resembled field hockey. Any slightly

nearest opponent's stick to the tune of "Shinney on you own side!" No offense was taken on such occasions; everyone acknowledged the wisdom of the rule, and like the Mafia, accepted the bruised shins as "nothing personal, just business."

Other sources of recreation, unfortunately, became passé with the encroachment of civilization. When the curbs made clearly defined parkways between sidewalks and roads, the horseshoe pitching contests that had

equally fortunate on the west, since the Vander Zees had chosen to build their house on the back of their single lot, their northeast corner almost touching our southwest. Across the street, however, the first five houses from the corner stood on single lots and had just enough space between them to allow for a narrow sidewalk. Neighbors in such circumstances could easily shake hands from their side windows if they chose to.

This coziness made for considerable excitement early one morning when the burly, pugnacious German across the street came home drunk and apparently tried to sneak into his own house through the chest-high dining-room window. Unfortunately, his compass bearings were off by about 180° as a result of his celebrating; so, instead of entering his own dining-room window, he went to work on the bedroom window of the Greek next door. The Greek had had words with the German during a long, simmering feud and, outweighed by a good hundred pounds and not inclined to risk his neck in a man-to-man confrontation, had taken to sleeping with a pistol under his pillow. When he heard his neighbor fussing and cussing at the bedroom window, he squeezed off a quick shot that, luckily, missed. But it was enough to arouse the neighborhood, and someone called the police, who hustled the German off to the drunk tank for the rest of the night.

The poor Greek was later to regret owning that pistol. Some years later, after the family had moved away, we heard that his youngest son, nine years old at the time, stole it when he ran away from home and, afraid of getting a beating if he returned, put the muzzle in his mouth and pulled the trigger, killing himself instantly.

The Greek and the German were relatively recent additions to our block; the houses that they lived in had previously been occupied by their



curved branch could serve as a hockey stick, though branches with an angular connection to a thicker branch were as prized as a matched set of golf clubs would be today. The puck was a half-size (the one in my wife's pantry reads "5.33 fl. oz.") evaporated milk can the likes of which could be found by the dozen in the nearest alley any time except immediately after the weekly garbage pickup. The curbs and the configuration of our sticks made it difficult, if not impossible, to hit a puck that hugged the left curb as one faced his own goal, since it was a flagrant violation of the rules to hit left-handed. That rule, I suspect, accounted for the name of the game; anyone brash enough to try a left-handed shot could be—and invariably was—whacked across the shins by the

been a nightly feature at Mike Boomsma's house across the street were given up in favor of maintaining a lawn. Similarly, the tackle football games that had been played on parkways that merged imperceptibly into the dirt roads had to be abandoned for lack of field width and householders' increasing concern for the grass and shrubs that the more aesthetically inclined cultivated on their meager lots.

And the lots were, to be sure, meager. A typical lot on our street was, I believe, about twenty feet wide. We were fortunate in that my father had had the foresight to buy a lot and a half on which to have our house built. We were, consequently, assured of light from the east side, some ten feet separating our house from that of Harm Hanko next door. We were

original owners—good sturdy, thrifty, if not parsimonious Dutch Calvinistic stock. The Dutch, in fact, were a formidable majority on our street and quietly imposed their manners and mores on the “lesser breeds without the law”—a few Swedes, a Polish family or two, a Hungarian, an Irish family, and several households vaguely referred to as “American”—that adulterated the Dutch enclave.

Not all of those “foreigners” were naturally inclined to our way of life; a family of miscellaneous origin, headed by a man known as “the horse killer” because he abused the team that he kept in a barn on his back lot, produced a son who was imprisoned for sexual assault sometime during World War II; and the Polish boys—one in particular, named Stash—would occasionally indulge in anti-social activities beyond the everyday bickering and infrequent fist fights that all of us contributed to. But, on the whole, decency and good order prevailed.

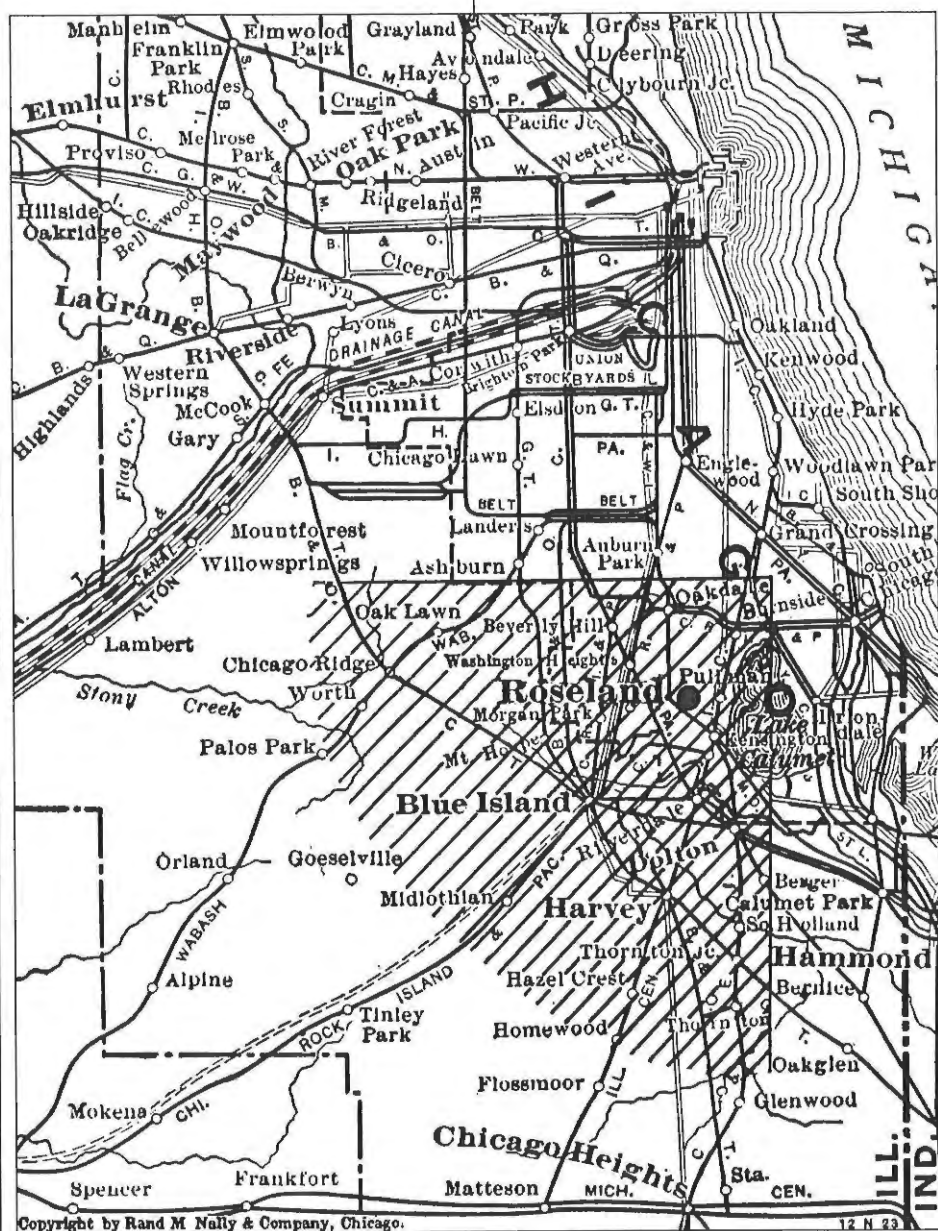
Respect for grownups and for private property was instilled at an early age. One did not “sass” adults with impunity on our street, and cutting through yards to avoid traveling around the block simply was not done without the explicit permission of the owner. We did not traffic in one another’s houses; we “called for” our playmates from the side or front yard (“Yo, Eddeee,” “Yo, Colleee”—the name was always disyllabic, ending in a drawn-out long *e*) and entered their houses only by specific invitation authenticated by their mothers.

Married people were addressed as “Mr.” and “Mrs.” by young and old alike except for a comparatively few whom grownups knew well enough to call by first names. The men of the family, through long familiarity that did not extend to newcomers, would sometimes drop the “Mr.” and use only the family name. But it was an audacious youngster, indeed, who ar-

rogated that privilege to himself, and, having done so once, he was not likely to try again if his parents got wind of his effrontery.

Calvinistic observance of the Sabbath, similarly, was subtly imposed on the neighborhood. The unregenerate could not, of course, be prevented from riding their bikes, scooters, and coaster wagons on the public sidewalk, but team games without the participation of the Dutch kids were a practical impossibility. Some curious

taboos existed among the Dutch in this respect. Playing catch in the back yard was condoned, though not strongly encouraged, but, as soon as a bat was introduced, the sport became Sabbath desecration; and not even catch was tolerated outside one’s own yard. Tricycle riding was also permissible for the very young; but, as soon as one graduated to the bicycle state, wheels on Sunday were restricted to automotile travel—and that only for such necessities as



church attendance or visiting relatives who lived too far away to be walked to.

"Joyriding" on Sunday was, quite simply, sin, and a young man who was courting was expected to take his girl friend to her home directly from church. There, if the family was musically inclined, he could join in a session of psalm or hymn singing (*The Golden Book of Favorite Songs* was borderline worldly but could occasionally be dipped into), drink coffee with the

young man—or young lady, for that matter—walked circumspectly with regard to the opposite sex. An early sign of budding romance was the regular appearance of a particular girl at ball games in which the favored boy was playing. When the boy abandoned his teammates to walk home with the girl, the secret was out, and knowledgeable mothers began working on trousseaus.

(I remember one hilarious incident that arose out of such a situation. The

the First National Bank, for which I later worked, among them—had an inflexible rule of three months and out. The reason was obvious: if all went well, a woman ought to be "expecting" by that time, and public display of pregnancy was decidedly in bad taste. One couple in our neighborhood earned almost unanimous opprobrium when the wife not only continued to work after the wedding but further flouted local standards by using her ill-gotten wages to buy a brand-new car during the depths of the Depression.

In spite of this somewhat rigorous, if unspoken, code of courting ethics, boys would be boys, and girls would be girls, and our community had, I suppose, its proportionate share of premature births among the firstborn. But promiscuity, as far as I know, was a rare phenomenon. Lack of mobility was surely a boon to morality; not many young people had cars, and so most coeducational activity was conducted under the public eye or in the living rooms of possibly wakeful parents. There were no sexually provocative television shows or commercials, and the movies—largely boycotted by our Dutch folk, though an occasional sinner would sneak in and sneak out, with a wary eye for passing acquaintances who might squeal on him—were, by today's standards, lily white. No doubt the religious upbringing of my contemporaries also played a part in encouraging chastity; annually at Chicago Christian High there would be sessions on personal hygiene and related matters, one for the boys and one for the girls; and we boys would be consumed with curiosity as we heard the girls singing at their session, as we had sung at ours, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin."

But an even stronger deterrent to illicit carryings on was the community's sense of responsibility for the proper upbringing of the younger



(facing page) 1923 map of Roseland (The Roseland District of Chicago; *Teninga Bros., Roseland, 1923*; p. 4); (above) *Jansen Paper Co., 1920's*.

family, and pray fervently that the old folks would go to bed mercifully short of the midnight by which he was expected to leave.

Dating, in fact, was not the casual thing it is nowadays. To be seen at a public function with a girl suggested strongly that a boy was "serious," and sitting with one in church was tantamount to an engagement announcement. Breakups were tacitly but quite firmly disapproved of, and broken engagements were highly discreditable to the offending party. Divorce, needless to say, was unheard of in our circles, though it was suspected that the lives of an occasional married couple would be improved by separation.

Consequently, the circumspect

catcher on our church twelve-inch, fast-pitch softball team was embarrassedly aware that a girl of whom he was fond had come out to watch him play. About halfway through the game he misjudged a vicious foul tip that caught him in a peculiarly sensitive area of the anatomy. From my position in short center field I had an unobstructed view of the situation, and surely everyone else within eyesight knew what had happened. But the poor fellow had, for the sake of propriety, to content himself with holding his head in both hands while writhing in pain on the ground.)

Once married, a bride was expected to give up any job she may have had (not all brides during the Great Depression had jobs to give up) and become a full-time housekeeper. For those unwilling to make that sacrifice voluntarily, some institutions—

generation. Every adult considered it his or her duty to nip youthful iniquity in the bud wherever it blossomed, and most of my adult acquaintances carried out that obligation with a vengeance. When, for example, it was rumored that hanky-panky was going on with some of the local girls in a clubhouse built by a gang of Bellevue boys, the girls' fathers simply marched into the "p'airie" and burned the shack down. There were no reprisals; the culprits considered themselves lucky not to have been exposed to their parents.

"Shacks" and "caves," incidentally, were the dream of every loosely knit band of youngsters in the neighborhood. We would dig for days, scrounging materials to shore up the walls and to put a roof over the dug-out, and inevitably give up for lack of materials and because of the increasing difficulty of digging, once we had gotten through the rich loam topsoil and had run into the yellow clay below. No one, to my recollection, ever bought a piece of lumber unless a house or garage was being newly built or an old house remodeled. When our shed was torn down in 1928 to make room for a garage, the wood was used to improve the chicken coop; and when the chicken coop was finally torn down, its wood went into a back fence and a clothes post in the back yard, the rest being stored carefully under the back porch against the day when it might become useful. And "useful" did not include such frippery as shacks or cave roofs.

The Polish on 104th Street did succeed one year in making a magnificent cave over by the railroad tracks, so deep that one could stand up in it. But it was universally suspected that they stole the wood for construction and pilfered coal for their stove (complete with smokestack) from the pumping station across the tracks. And even that marvel of engineering was short-lived. With the first substantial rain it

flooded, and, one night when Stash and his cronies were elsewhere, a rival gang of big Dutch boys wrecked what was left.

Even the wood that we kids used in our amateurish woodworking projects—wren houses that no wren ever occupied, little Dutch-girl garden ornaments, weather vanes, and the like—came from the apple boxes and

Note C. E. Voogt's name on Bunte truck. Voogt's chocolates became popular in the Dutch community.

cabbage or orange crates that could sometimes be found behind the local A&P store. The apple boxes were especially prized, since they had solid sides almost a foot wide and a quarter of an inch thick. As such, they were ideally suited to coping-saw projects. The only trouble was their tendency to split along the grain at narrow points—a contingency that plywood would have averted, except that we had never seen or heard of plywood.

Apple boxes were also good for the scooters we made out of a length of 2 ×



4 with half an old roller skate at each end for wheels. The apple box, with or without handles as the local supply of salvage dictated, was mounted vertically atop the front end of the 2 × 4 and served as a steering apparatus as well as a storage bin for whatever junk could be accumulated to add to the vehicle's prestige. But for this purpose orange crates were preferred, being not only somewhat bigger than apple boxes, but also having a built-in shelf for the storage of more junk.

Junk was important in our lives. It

constituted practically the only source of spending money that a kid could count on. I never knew anyone who got an allowance, and, aside from a necessarily limited number of paper routes, almost no summer or after-school jobs were available. I did have a job of sorts shopping for Mrs. Vander Wal, who was so heavy as to be almost immobile. That job netted me a nickel a week, for which I did the weekend grocery shopping, going to as many as three different chain stores on 103rd Street to get the cheapest item, if only a cent cheaper. We would pore over the *Friday Daily News* ads to discover whether the A&P, Consumers, or National Tea had the best bargain on anything ranging from eggs (I was under orders to select only white ones and the biggest I could find in those days before prepackaging) to the evaporated (pronounced "evaporrrated") milk of which Mrs. Vander Wal's kitchen reeked.

For that nickel-a-week honorarium I was on constant call during the week as well. I tried to anticipate the weekly needs of the Vander Wal household while making up the Saturday lists, but Mrs. V. was reluctant to invest capital in items not immediately needed, and, as a result, my street ball games and other pastimes were periodically interrupted by a clarion call of "Rrrritz, vil you gho forrr me to storrrre?"

A few of my classmates found work at truck gardens around 107th and Halsted under conditions that amounted to slave labor; but junk, as I said, was our chief source of income. A large part of Saturdays, then, was devoted to "alley picking." We would prowl the alleys for a half mile around looking for saleable metal to be sold to the "rag sheeney" who regularly drove his horse and wagon down those same alleys, yelling what was interpreted as "Rags! Old iron!" but came out as "Aricks! Oiliricks!" Copper and aluminum, the latter very ex-

pensive then by today's costs, were the chief objects of our search through the raw garbage and trash casually heaped behind back fences awaiting the arrival of the garbage man and his dump wagon, into which he shoveled or forked the weekly accumulation of refuse. (Garbage cans were a city-mandated refinement some years in the future.)

The sight of an aluminum pot or pan would make our hearts leap with joy. Here, again, a special protocol prevailed; unless one's scavenging companion was a partner, in what was known as "cahoots," one established claim to a sighted treasure by yelling "Dibs!" the etymology of which escapes me today as it escaped me then. Copper was a more common find, almost invariably in the form of insulated wire, from which we burned the insulation in bonfires whenever the collection warranted. These semi-precious metals were hoarded against the day when, with the family's cache of old newspapers, rags, boxes, and bottles, they could be sold to the rag sheeny.

A very rare and highly prodigal citizen would occasionally throw away a family-size pop bottle which, if the label was still intact, could be turned in for two cents at Mechtersheimer's grocery and meat market—always provided that a surly younger Mechtersheimer son did not require proof of its having been bought at their store. One could hardly blame him, though we did; competition for the meager earnings of our neighborhood was keen, if not outright vicious, and family stores were hard put to stay in business. Vander Woude's went under when customers bought for cash at the cheaper chain stores and on credit from Vander Woude's when the cash ran out. Spoelstra's boasted that their chopmeat—as hamburger was locally called—at five cents a pound less came in "genuine maple trays," not



those cheap, flimsy, and very likely (it was clearly implied) unsanitary cardboard containers used by the chain stores. A candy bar or a package of gum costing five cents at a family store went at three for a dime at the A&P and for three cents at the Consumers. And a pound of Eight O'Clock coffee at the A&P was ground to suit the individual taste and sold for nineteen cents.

Other prices were proportionate. We made a regular Saturday trip to Stu De Jong's gas station at 106th Place and Wentworth to fill our '28 four-cylinder Chrysler's tank at eight gallons for a dollar, and that Chrysler cost my father \$844 brand-new, without trade-in. (In 1936, when the Chrysler had worn out, a six-cylinder four-door Plymouth cost him \$845 minus \$75 for the trade-in and an additional \$10 if he could find a customer to buy it from the dealer for \$100. He did.)

Wages, of course, for those fortunate enough to have jobs were commensurably low. I started at the First National Bank of Chicago (which was virtually a Chicago Christian High School alumni chapter, as was its arch-rival, the Continental Illinois) in 1935 as an office boy at \$50 a month plus free hot lunches that, in those days, were on a par with a substantial dinner. After three months, having been deemed worthy of retention, I was raised to \$55. Annually from then on I, like other employees, was granted a token raise—\$5 a month as a general rule, \$10 a month if one had distinguished himself in line of duty. Anyone getting a \$15-a-month raise was thought to be on his way to the top.

A vice president whose personal office boy I was for some months, earned the princely sum of \$4,000 a year; and a teller with whom I rode the Western Indiana to work and who was on the verge of his first three-week vacation (reserved for 25-year personnel; bank officers got four

weeks; the peasant class got two) envisioned, with considerable satisfaction, the possibility of one day earning as much as \$2,000 a year. When I left to go to college after some six-and-a-half years of peonage, my yearly salary was \$1,020.

Not enough, that is, to get married on, had I been so inclined. The bank—quite likely to prevent sticky fingers, though only a relatively small number of its thousands of employees handled cash—forbade marriage, on

pain of instant firing if caught, by anyone earning less than \$1,400 a year. With the written consent of the personnel director, an exemplary employee might be given permission to marry at \$1,200. I never met one of those

mythical, \$1,200 benedicts, but I worked for several years with a clerk who, I was sure from the way he talked about his "fiancee," was secretly married.

On these munificent salaries we were expected to dress in a manner befitting a dignified institution. Three-piece suits were the accepted uniform for anyone likely to be seen by the public. In the file room (to which I was relegated after one day taking the wrong file to my vice president when he was in conference with the president himself) we were allowed to strip down to vests or even, on hot days, to shirt sleeves; but during business hours on our rounds "on the floor" to collect files from the clerks who were finished with them, we reverted to full regalia. Such a suit, for many of us, was purchased at a

Bond's clothing store around the corner, where prices ranged from twenty-five to thirty dollars for a two-piece suit with vest. Our shoes we usually got at a nearby Thom McAnn's that sold a sturdy, good-looking pair of shoes for five dollars. A shine, in case we'd neglected our household chores, was available nearby for five

(below) The new car, 1925; (bottom) Typical Roseland home—10544 Eggleston Avenue, former home of Peter Cook; (facing page) Second Christian Reformed Church of Roseland



cents.

We Roselanders lived some thirteen to fifteen miles south of "the Loop" that housed these commercial firms. For those working an 8:30-to-5:00 day, the Western Indiana was the ideal mode of transportation. Three commuter trains made the run up and back to town from Monday through Friday—at the 103rd Street Station at 7:32, 8:02, and sometime around noon, arriving at the Dearborn Street Station about thirty min-

were also in effect) and at 5:18 and 5:48. A twenty-five-ride ticket came to fourteen cents a ride, just double the fare on the Surface Lines streetcars, but the doubled fare was more than compensated for by the saving in time and discomfort.

People with easy access to Michigan Avenue could get to the Loop in little more than an hour by streetcar. From our house, however, it took a mile ride on a branch line to reach Michigan Avenue, and that made for a

ninety-minute trip. The only drawback to using the railroad was the long walk—nearly a mile from station to office for the luckiest of us and considerably more for those working on the northern, eastern, and western sides of the Loop—at the downtown terminus in what was for months on end weather that rivaled the Arctic tundras in bitterness. The walk was not made more pleasant by the stench emanating from the cheap beer halls and alleys passed en route, but the company was generally *gezellig*.

All that, however, came after school days, which for some of my class mates ended when they

high school.

School, in the meanwhile, occupied most of our time from September until—for the Christian schools—late in June. The Roseland-Fernwood area contained five primary schools: Fernwood around Wallace and 100th, Kohn at 104th between Perry and State, and Van Vlissingen at 109th and Wentworth were where the public school kids went; the Roseland Christian School, originally at 110th and State and later on 108th Street just east of the tracks, and the Roseland School for Christian Instruction on 104th near Wentworth served the Christian Reformed and, to a smaller degree, the Reformed Hollanders in the community.

Our family, except for my older brother and two older sisters, who went through Fernwood school before my mother converted my father to a believer in Christian education (my father having been a member of the Reformed Church when he came to the States in 1893), went to the 104th Street Christian school, which had little, if anything, to do with its counterpart just a few blocks away. There was apparently little love lost between the adult constituents of the two schools; regional loyalties—closely associated with the churches that supported the schools—were strong, and all attempts at amalgamation failed until the changing ethnic constitution of the whole area after World War II made consolidation the only alternative to closing both schools. I was never aware of any animosity between the student bodies, however, though schoolmates who encountered students from the R.C.S. may have had a different experience.

We students of R.S.C.I. had most of our trouble with the public school kids from Kohn, located a scant two blocks east of us. I have heard rumors of Kohn school students assaulting one of our principals on the street, but I have no personal knowledge of such



utes later. The homeward runs were made in early afternoon (1:18 on Saturdays, when the usual morning runs

arrived at the legal working age of sixteen and for most of the rest of us culminated in graduation from

an incident. What I do vividly recall was the almost daily hazing we got on our way home. To avoid wholesale mayhem on the streets, the two principals arranged to dismiss classes for the day at different times. Kohn closed at 3 P.M., and we at 3:15. (We accepted, however grudgingly, the quarter-hour truncation of our after-school play time as part of the cross that Christians have to bear for their faith, and we hoped feebly that the books would be balanced in our favor when the final reckoning was made in a better land.)

Although this staggered-closing system probably worked well along Wentworth Avenue and other streets heavily traveled by students from both schools, it merely compounded the problems of those of us who, in smaller numbers, went home westward by way of 104th. A sizeable contingent of Kohn kids lived there, and their three-o'clock closing gave them enough time to muster their forces and ambush us just beyond the sanctuary provided by the chain-link fence surrounding our schoolyard. We were known to the Kohn kids as "bluetails," though how the term derived from our Dutch ancestry was, and is, a mystery to me; and it was by that name that they pummeled us, pulled our hair, and ran off with our headgear until our forces were augmented by a big boy named Bob, who had moved in with his married sister on our street.

This same boy (may his tribe increase!) also put an end to what struck me then, as it does now, as an even grosser form of bullying. To be set upon by Philistines was one thing; like the late school closing, it came with the territory, and there was perhaps some slight pharisaic satisfaction in suffering for God and nationality. But for months we younger students were sporadically waylaid by a group of older girls from our own school who would leap out on us with fiend-

ish shouts from behind the concrete steps of the swimming pool that we passed on the way home. One particular vixen in the gang would travel a half mile out of her way just for the pleasure of terrorizing us. No one, I think, was ever seriously hurt by these onslaughts, but the psychological effect was devastating; we dreaded going home when the weather made the path through the railroad park too muddy and we had to go by the pool.

Fortunately for me, my sister, two years older than I, attracted the favorable attention of Bob. One day, after observing the harassment we were subjected to, he caught the ringleader by her stringy hair and dragged her across the track in the direction of her own home, and that was the end of that.

There was, I suppose, the normal amount of bullying on the school playground, but it was kept in check by the teachers assigned to playground duty, and I cannot remember any persistent picking on of weaker members of the flock. Occasional cruelties occurred; we persuaded a California newcomer to put his tongue on the steel post of the fence surrounding the playground one bitter winter day and so contributed significantly to his education. And a favorite trick, in those days before zippered flies, was to catch some hapless boy on the "girls' side" of the playground, rip open his fly, and then run away, leaving the poor duffer to try to button up with a minimum of embarrassment. But, on the whole, we behaved no worse than would be considered reasonable for children who had been conceived and born in sin. The fly-ripping phase came to a screeching halt when all the boys were assembled one day after school in the "boys' side" of the basement and given a stern lecture by the stern eighth-grade teacher on the sin of "ripping open private barn doors."

The term *playground* is a decided

euphemism. It consisted of a cindered space, several lots wide and one deep, on which the bigger boys played softball and the younger ones played what I have since learned is called "prisoner's base" but that in our neighborhood was known as "stink." That was on the boys' side, where in season various types of marble games were played—for fun when the monitoring teacher was near, for keeps otherwise.

The bigger boys would also play a



(above) Adam Ooms, grocer and shoe-shop owner, 256 111th Street in Pictorial Roseland, n.p.; (facing page top) First Christian Reformed Church of Roseland, Princeton Avenue and 109th Place; (facing page bottom) Dekker Brothers, 10646-48 Michigan Avenue.

game called "buck-buck," in which the defending team would stand with bent backs, the front boy's head and shoulders cushioned against the belly of a team member who stood with his back to the school wall. Other members lined up behind, grasping the boy ahead by the hips, with heads off to the side and stiffening their back for the onslaught of the other team, who, one at a time, would leapfrog on top of them.

If the defending team caved, they were in for another go-round as leap-

ees. If the leapers managed to get all of their team on the defenders' backs, one would hold up a number of fingers and yell, "Buck, buck! How many fingers up?" If the defenders guessed right or if one of the leapers fell off, the roles were reversed. I am mildly surprised that most of our voices changed at the age when such change is supposed to take place.

The girls' side, after being as empty as the boys' for years, was finally blessed with some playground equip-

ment—four swings, a maypole, a few teetertotters, a merry-go-round—on which the boys were also allowed to play. Getting one of the swings was a real challenge. But in fourth grade a

friend of mine who was seated near the door by virtue of a last name beginning with *B*, managed quite consistently to get one at recess times. A generous soul, he regularly shared his prize with me and once let me use it to take up a sweet little girl on whom I had a crush.

This, my first venture into overt romance, ended disastrously when some of her lovely blond hair got caught in a button of my jacket as I stood on the seat, pumping to get us

take my time and savor every delicious second. But I was never even called, let alone chosen.

Once inside, we lined up in the basement, the girls on their side and the boys on theirs, and marched up, single file by grades, to our respective classrooms, while teachers stood at the landings clapping their hands in time with the piano music that a teacher or an upper-class student pounded out on an upright that stood outside the principal's office. In the days of my older sisters the rhythm was provided by a boy beating a snare drum. The drumsticks also served as chastening rods when the principal administered his frequent doses of what he called, in Dutch, *broekie koekie*; but that practice had been abandoned by the time I became a pupil.

As we left the basement, we also left behind the strong ammoniac odor that emanated from the boys' restroom, and entered a purer atmosphere redolent of chalk dust and cedar pencil shavings, a smell that I can still bring to my mind's nose in moments of nostalgia.

There were no frills—indeed, few amenities—in our grammar-school education. Grades began with the first, kindergarten being considered an unnecessary prelude to real learning and, since it smacked of the public schools, probably "worldly." In any event, we got ample doses of the basics, learning from the first day to read by way of the phonics method and memorizing our multiplication tables in increments that culminated in 12×12 at around the third grade, before going on to such mathematic arcana as fractions in the fourth. The one encyclopedia owned by the school was guarded in the principal's office (there was no central library and few, if any, non-text books in the classroom bookcases), and an occasional student was given the privilege of browsing through it when the teacher ran out of resources to keep a pre-



ment—four swings, a maypole, a few teetertotters, a merry-go-round—on which the boys were also allowed to play. Getting one of the swings was a real challenge. But in fourth grade a

higher, and the hair came out by the roots. She was, already at the age of eight, a real lady and never reproached me; but the shame of it all kept me from further coeducational playgrounding for a long time after.

Playtime ended when some lucky boy who had found favor in the principal's sight (or, as I think back, whom the principal may have been trying to cajole into good behavior; they were always *big* boys and not invariably the best behaved) would run around the two school buildings clanging a beautiful brass handbell. I longed to be chosen to that glorious mission, wondering whether it would be better to race around the yard in one meteoric burst that would go down in the annals of the 104th Street school or to

cocious urchin out of mischief.

Art and music, such as they were, seem to have depended on the inclination and natural gifts of the particular teacher. We had weekly periods of singing, besides the songs sung at opening devotions; and Friday afternoons allowed for an hour or so of copying pictures that the teacher distributed from an art folder, making sure that the indolent or inept did not get a silhouette that could too easily be traced from the original. But music or art lessons were left to the parents to procure on the outside, as were lessons in elocution, at which some of our female classmates became quite skilled.

Discipline was rigorous and included slaps, pinches, and—if the culprit was robust and the infraction serious—an occasional wallop. One woman teacher of sizeable proportions was known to quell incipient riot by sitting on victims. The most common form of discipline, however, was retention during recess or after school, often accompanied by the writing of lines calculated to dissuade the sinner from his sinful ways.

It is a commentary on the social structure of those days that students rarely complained at home about their punishment; to do so was to invite further punishment for having *deserved* (no questions asked) the original penalty. One seventh grader in my day did enlist the aid of an older

brother, a brawler, who showed up in class and offered to pound lumps on the teacher who had cuffed the younger brother; but nothing came of that affair, and most of us worried that a telltale sibling or meddling neighbor kid would squeal on us when we got home at night.

In short, the Roselander of the twenties and thirties took education seriously, and the "smart" student enjoyed some degree of celebrity among the parents and even, though per-

there was always the outside possibility, for the brightest of the bright or those whose parents could afford the luxury, of entering a profession—medicine, education, and above all, the ministry.

Still, when I was graduated from the eighth grade in 1931, a question to be asked on commencement day was "Are you going to high school?" And I would estimate that for one-fourth to one-third of the class the answer was "No." Some, those who had reached



haps a bit less enthusiastically, among his peers. If a smart kid was picked on by his classmates, it was usually not because he was smart but because he was a smart aleck. Parents and children alike, in that largely blue-collar constituency, had role models who, by dint of Calvinistic application of their natural gifts, had broken out of the immigrant workshop drudgery and had procured comfortable and relatively prestigious positions (though often at slave wages) as salaried employees. And, of course,

Abraham Sluis, founder of Sluis Electric Co.

the legal working age of sixteen, immediately began hunting whatever jobs their abilities could hope to qualify them for. Others, despairing of any further advancement in the academic treadmill, simply dropped out.

Most of those continuing their schooling went on to Chicago Christian High School, by then located at 71st Street and May. There they had a choice between the four-year course

styled "college preparatory" and a three-year commercial course patronized largely by girls who hoped to acquire enough skills to qualify them for a few years of paid employment before they assumed their destined roles as homemakers. Pullman Tech and the public Fenger High School, for a variety of reasons, became the school of choice for others. It is one of the tragedies of the Great Depression that some of our more gifted students were unable to pursue a liberal education beyond the eighth grade and that others, similarly talented, had to terminate their formal education after the twelfth.

Intrinsically tied up with, and to a large extent undergirding the quest for private, Christian education was, of course, the church. Roseland in those days was home to four Christian Reformed and three Reformed churches, and the support for the Christian school system came from those churches. Especially in the CRC, membership in good standing all but presupposed sending one's children to a Christian school. Extenuating circumstances such as a father's lack of employment might be considered on the high school level but were hardly grounds for sending one's children to a public grammar school. For a number of years during my time at 104th Street Christian, the good folk of Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn bused their children to our school from a distance of some six miles, and Chicago Christian High educated hosts of students from the Highland-Munster area before they got a high school of their own closer to home.

The church, in fact, was the backbone of family life, the real social center of the time, and the source of continuing education for its members. Attendance at two services a Sunday was *de rigueur*; attendance at three until the afternoon Dutch service was dropped for lack of attendants owing to the inroads of modernization and

Americanization, was better.

Before the widespread ownership of cars by our people, families would troop in a body, in rain or shine, to church for services that lasted an hour and a half. Monday nights were for Catechism; Tuesday nights were for Young Men's Society, Young Women's Society (none of this mixed-sexes Christian Endeavor stuff such as the Reformed churches indulged in), and Consistory; Thursday nights were for Choral Society. (Note: "Choral Society," not, *definitely* not, "choir," an abomination to be found only in more liberal denominations. When once, for the first and last time, one of my church's pastors had the Choral Society sing before the benediction at the end of an evening service instead of properly closing the service before the post-worship cantata rendition began, two pillars of the congregation stomped out and didn't even come back for the program.)

For the lengthy services, families usually sat together in their accustomed pews. At a certain age most boys abandoned their families—in a sort of rite of passage—for the evening service and flocked together in the balconies of churches that had balconies and in the back rows of churches that had only ground-floor levels. It was not unusual for the preacher to interrupt his customary discourse and direct a special sermonette at the back rows. After such an event, one tried desperately to convince his parents that he had been sitting on the other side of the church when the sacrilege took place.

Those back pews in Second Roseland CRC, of which I was a member, were a treasure trove of memorabilia, what with the carved initials of bygone heroes (some, by this time, solemn members of the Consistory) and the usually scurrilous and sometimes witty references to local dignitaries that illuminated the pages of the *Psalter*. Periodically matters would get

so out of hand that elders were detailed to sit in back to keep order. But after a while, when things quieted down, the elders would resume their consistorial seats; and then the cycle would begin anew.

Ushers, when they became necessary as generations waxed and no new churches were started, had a privileged position, and I became an usher as soon as I could. We were exempt from sitting in the family pew, mornings as well as evenings. We had a reserved spot in the very last row. We could sneak down to the washroom for a last smoke and drink of water after the last latecomer had been seated and the service had already begun. And, best of all, in my church, at least, we got to work on the dozen or so cigars left to die out on the window sill at the back of the auditorium. Their owners would retrieve them after the service, and we would shake with concealed mirth as they vainly tried to suck a flame to the tips, not realizing that we had perforated the sides with our pocket knives or nail files.

After the morning service there was, of course, Sunday School, at which we were expected to recite the memory verse for the day and a stanza from the *Psalter*. For each successful recitation we received a little red or blue card. When we had accumulated ten of them, we would trade them in for a larger, white card that read "*Goed voor tien kaartjes*," a given number of which could, in turn, be used to buy a Bible or a pocket size *Psalter*, which the superintendent would deliver with a flourish suited to the occasion.

At Christmas each class provided a number for the inevitable Sunday School program. I once had the distinction of playing my violin to the accompaniment of a nose flute (a marvelously ingenious contraption that fitted over the nose and into the mouth, the sound being made by nasal exhalation and judicious shap-

ing of the oral cavity to produce the desired pitch) played by a classmate. We endured the programs in anticipation of the goodies that would be handed out at the end—a pound of Voogt's chocolates, an orange, and—in good times, or perhaps depending on the size of the weekly collections—an edifying book for each pupil and little boxes of hard candy for the younger children in the audience.

Wentworth Avenue, between 104th Place and 107th Street was the hang-out of the unattached young bucks and the more liberated young ladies after the evening service. The inset doorways of the various commercial establishments in that two-and-a-half-block stretch provided a modicum of shelter from the elements in inclement weather, and groups of friends would gather in whatever doorway gradually became acknowledged as their particular stamping ground. The one at which my little group established squatters' rights was, we thought, the best along the avenue; R. L. Hoekstra's real estate office, on the northeast corner of 107th and Wentworth, was ideally suited to our needs. It could accommodate a half-dozen or so of us without crowding; it was close enough to church for us to get to our hangout before the kids from First or Third CRC could pre-empt it; and it offered what was arguably the best ringside spot from which to ogle the passing girls, since the corner was at the confluence of two well-beaten paths for churchgoers.

We did what I suppose boys of that age did at any place in those days. We smoked forbidden cigarettes and sucked peppermints on the way home to cover the telltale odor. We exchanged pleasantries with passersby and good-natured insults with the boys from First or Third huddled in the doorway of the drugstore across the street. We discussed the prospects of the Cubs or the Sox or the local

church teams in season. And by 10 P.M. we would break up and go home, satisfied that we had done our manly duties for the day without serious infractions of the rules governing Sabbath observance.

Loyalty to one's local congregation was strong. There was little, if any, church hopping, except when a new preacher came to town and one's curiosity had to be satisfied. And with that loyalty went a pride that sometimes bordered on arrogance and occasionally erupted in violence on the playing field of Palmer or Fernwood Park, where the church teams held their weekly contests in summer.

For some reason the softball teams in the league in which I played for a number of years got along reasonably well; at least I can recall only one real donnybrook, and that did not involve the team on which I was playing. But when First Reformed and First Christian Reformed met on the baseball diamond, there was always the possibility of the game's turning into a brawl. Both teams were perennial contenders for the league championship; both had a few players with major-league aspirations; and, at least for a number of years, both had a pitcher with a short fuse and a devastating fast ball that he regularly used to dust off the opposing batters. As I recall, one particular encounter carried over to the streets after the game and wound up with one of the pitchers on his back, trying to sink his spikes into the chest of the partisan spectator who had knocked him down. He missed; but he did manage to kick the brass radiator cap off a Model T Ford parked by the curb, and his assailant promptly picked the cap up and hit him in the forehead with it.

Other forms of rivalry were, though quite possibly tainted by the primal sin, less obviously harmful and, in fact, productive of some good. The ladies' circles of the various churches vied in doing the most for

their respective Christian schools; and all of the congregations, I believe, took pride in the size of their Thanksgiving offerings, which, considering the times and the general economic level of our constituency, could only be called princely. In smaller, even petty ways too there was a subtle rivalry in such adiaphora as communion cups (individual versus common), offering receptacles (plates vs. the velvet bag on a stick), the quality of acoustical aids for the deaf (euphe-



(above) First Reformed Church of Roseland, 107th and Michigan Avenue; (facing page) Ton Family Homestead, 416 W. 103rd Street.

misms for handicaps were unknown; the deaf were plain "deaf," not "hearing impaired"), the caliber of the organ—not to say of the organist—and even the resonance of the church bell that summoned the faithful to worship. The matter of collection plates, for example, was a warm issue for a time at Second Roseland. Other churches had gone "modern" on that score, and the liberals in our congregation urged the consistory to do likewise. Whether some doctrinal principal was involved, I am not certain,

but the consistory refused to give in to such innovative heterodoxy.

For once, the ruling fathers had the enthusiastic support of the younger element. One of the things to look forward to on a New Year's morning after the new elders and deacons had been installed was the possibility that a neophyte deacon would miscue in his handling of the long pole on which he passed the velvet bag down the rows. If he neglected to raise his end of the pole in bringing the bag back to

neatly snipped the bottoms off. I forget how the offering was collected that morning, but by the next Sunday we had entered the twentieth century via the collection plate, and such other forms of modernism as the dropping of Dutch services, the truncation of the evening service to a mere hour and twenty minutes, the singing of hymns in church, and the use of individual communion cups soon followed this initial letting down of the bars.



the aisle, the pole would cross the aisle and bang heads and knock glasses on the other side. The effect was especially edifying if the deacon would move to the next row before noticing his error. Then the pole would cut a wide arc with the hapless deacon at the pivot, and it would become a case of being the quick or the dead across the aisle.

The issue was settled once and for all when, one Sunday morning as the pole-pushed bags made their ways down the front rows on both sides of the aisle, there was the rhythmic sound of nickels hitting the floor. Some modernist had gotten to the bags the previous week and had

Prior to that period of decline, individual cups were reserved for those communicants known to have active cases of tuberculosis, or "consumption," as it was more commonly called. T.B. was, indeed, a dread disease in those days before antibiotics. The treatment, as I well know, since my only brother underwent it before eventually succumbing to the disease at the age of thirty-four, consisted largely of rest, a nourishing diet heavy on eggs and milk, and fresh air, to the point even of sleeping on open porches in midwinter. Miraculously enough, some cases were "arrested" for a time, as was my brother's, and some people were even permanently

cured by—or possibly in spite of—this regimen. But the dangers of communicating the disease was great, and the victim had to keep even his or her family at arm's length.

Communicable diseases, in fact, periodically became the focus of attention in our community. Born in 1919, I had no personal experience of the great flu epidemic that followed World War I, but the number of widows and fatherless children in our area attested to the severity of that scourge. *Flu*, then, was a word to chill the spine, as was *pneumonia*, which—especially if it was "double pneumonia"—was one of the few causes for going to the hospital, aside from malfunctions requiring surgery. All doctors made house calls and did much of their practicing in their offices. (One of my sisters had her tonsils removed on our kitchen table, not once, but twice. And today, well into her seventies, she carries a third set in her throat.) Consequently, the hospital was a last resort, all too often a stopping-off place en route to the morgue. When, in 1923, I was stretched out on the operating table in the Pullman Hospital around 111th and Cottage Grove, I could look through a plain glass window at the telephone pole outside. And when my appendix ruptured as it was being removed, I was consigned to ten days in the hospital with drainage tubes in the incision to syphon off the putrescence. The medical staff functioned, however, heroically and sympathetically, under conditions not far removed from those achieved by Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War. Small wonder, then, that people dreaded going to the hospital.

Lacking adequate facilities for the numerous diseases that stalked the streets and were carried by legions of garbage- and- manure-fed flies into even the most fastidious homes, the community treated its sick at home, posting contagious-disease signs on doors behind which lurked such child

killers as scarlet fever, diphtheria, chicken pox, whooping cough, and measles. The signs forbade entry by any but medical personnel and similarly forbade egress by any already inside until the disease was considered past the communicable stage. Working fathers, if they were lucky enough to escape quarantine themselves, would stay at the homes of friends or relatives until the disease had run its course, and essential groceries were brought in by friends, neighbors, or family members who had escaped the ban.

Surprisingly, the mortality rate among my classmates was not as high as the current state of sanitation and health care might have entailed. I can recall only two schoolmates who died between 1924 and 1931, the years I was in grammar school. One died of what would probably be diagnosed today as a cerebral hemorrhage, and the other of a blood disease, rare at the time. Toward the end of my grammar-school days a neighboring pre-school boy died of a new and terrifying disease called streptococcus. That, in any case, was the post-mortem diagnosis. Those of us who knew him, however, were sure that at least a contributing cause of his untimely demise was the

fact that he had been heard cursing his mother, a thing that not even the roughest of the neighborhood rough-necks would dream of doing.

But the old died, and our street had its share of old people, including a tubercular neighbor whose wheezing "Uh-h-h—huh-huh-h-h" and Argus-eyed protection of his parkway grass made us steer clear of him and his swinging cane. They died, usually, at home, and when the dying was slow, we kids were expected to respect the deathbed and take our noisy pastimes out of hearing. The sign of death was the scary crape on the door—black and purple for grownups and white for children. The lying in state was also done at home, and, except for a prominent citizen whose burial service would attract more mourners than a house would hold, the funeral also began at the house. As a result, neighborhood children were given an early introduction to the grim realities of death.

When the president of our school board was killed in an auto accident, the entire student body trooped the

three or four blocks down Wentworth Avenue to pay their respects. Rumor had it that he had died of a piece of metal driven into his skull, and there was, as I recall, some morbid peering to see whether the wound could be seen. A few of my classmates solemnly affirmed that they had seen it, in spite of the wax that the undertaker had used to patch up the spot.

The bereaved observed a decent period of mourning in the twenties. As the thirties went by, however, visi-

(below) Fourth Christian Reformed Church of Roseland, 1923; (across) John Kuiper driving float in Roseland's Fourth of July parade.



ble signs were gradually abandoned—the black band on the left arm of men and dark, unostentatious clothes for women. On Mothers' Day, when it was for some years the fashion to wear a carnation in honor of the occasion, children whose mothers were living wore red flowers; those whose mothers had died wore white. This was sometimes a bit hard on step-mothers, some of whom did not need the visual reminder that the children they had reared did not consider

them their real mothers.

The thirties, with all their relative innocence and the stress brought about by the Great Depression, ground their way to an end. With the war in Europe calling for ever-increasing products from American factories, jobs became more available; fewer of our young men joined the paramilitary Civilian Conservation Corps; the dehumanizing Works Project Administration was phased out; the National Recovery Administration's blue eagle

gradually replaced the iceman's cards in windows as people began buying refrigerators; the poor were no longer tempted to steal coal from the pumping station by the tracks or to pick it up, piece by piece, from the tracks themselves, where it had fallen from passing coal cars. The new Roseland Community Hospital and increasing concern for maternity care made home births, supervised by a midwife and obliging neighbors, a thing of the past; and the hospital gradually came to be seen as a place for healing instead of an anteroom to the grave.

By the end of 1940, I and hundreds of thousands of my generation had registered for the draft. The "manhood" that we had anticipated so eagerly and that we had tried so prematurely to enter was about to be conferred on us, in ways not altogether to our liking. By the time we came back to Roseland after the war, it would, as the saying goes, be a whole new ball game; but the memory lingers on. They were, on the whole, the "good old days" that nostalgia creates for every new generation as those days give way to others. I suppose that, with some minor reservations, most of us would agree with the poet Wordsworth: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!"

Richard R. Tiemersma



PELGRIM VADERS VAN HET WESTEN (continued)

translated by William K. Reinsma

WOODS, ROADS, AND EARLY TRAVEL

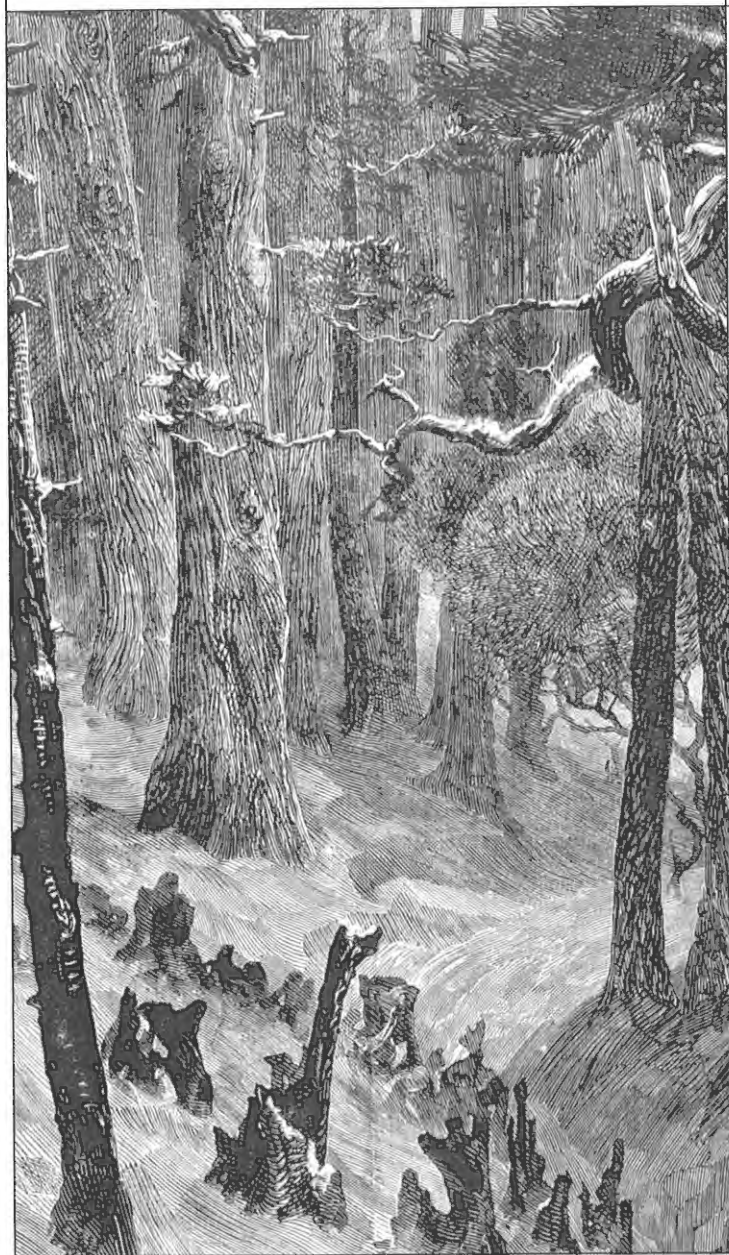
About Woods and Roads

All chances of making the colony a success depended on clearing the land of its timber so that there would be open spaces for dwellings and farmland. Compounding the problem was the size of the forest; the numerous streams, ponds, and marshes in the area; and the absence of all roads and bridges. Nothing about this chosen site would attract a person who had grown up in an atmosphere of culture. Only Indians and wildlife roamed here—and they competed with each other for survival.

Upon seeing this profusion of giant trees, some with a girth of six or more feet, the new settlers would contrast their own small numbers and limited energies with the size and number of the trees. They wondered how this could ever be made into an agricultural community. In the Netherlands most of them had only rarely cut down a tree, and the memory they had of this experience was of time-consuming, difficult work. It was small wonder that they despaired of success in this new venture!

Nevertheless, the surroundings fascinated them. The sight of these woods often evoked the exclamation "How great are Thy works, O God!" There was a variety of soil. Tall timber crowned the richer ground. Small, spindly trees dotted the dry, hilly, sandy soil. There were marshes whose murky waters nourished lush thickets and water plants. The overall sight reminded them of the billowy sea. In spots the clay and the sand were clearly demarcated. In other places the clay and sand were blended together. And so they found a great variety of trees, such as sycamore, walnut, cedar, oak, beech, maple, elm, pine, hemlock, linden, ash, alder, and willow. The area was devoid of all fruit except wild plums and grapes.

Because of the many branches and the heavy foliage only a soft, dusk-like light filtered into the forest during the summer days. Hence the woods were comparatively cool even on the hottest summer days. Neither did the icy



northwestern winter blasts penetrate. These passed over the tree crowns, making the winter climate rather moderate.

The colonists spent many pleasant hours in their sylvan surroundings. The sound of the south winds and the rustling of leaves and branches blending with the music of babbling streams enabled the new settlers to forget the pain of leaving their fatherland and to ignore present hardships. Seated on some fallen tree, the people often sang psalms of praise to God for bringing them to the New World. Occasionally someone climbed to the top of a tall tree and from that lofty pinnacle enjoyed the panorama before him, entranced by the sight of a river, a green valley, or some deep ravine which disappeared mysteriously. The sight of blue canopy above him combined with the magnificent scenery beneath was so inspiring that many years later people spoke of that sight with deep feeling.

The forest was not always entrancingly beautiful, however. Sometimes torrential rains crested swollen streams and made them flow with rushing force. The sound of roaring waters, the fury of an electrical storm with its crashing thunder, the snapping of limbs from trees, the horrendous crash of trees falling to earth, and the eerie howling of the wild-life made it appear as if the demons of the forest had united to create panic in the colonists' hearts and to stifle all songs of praise. However, even then the old Dutch psalms were the people's source of comfort and strength.

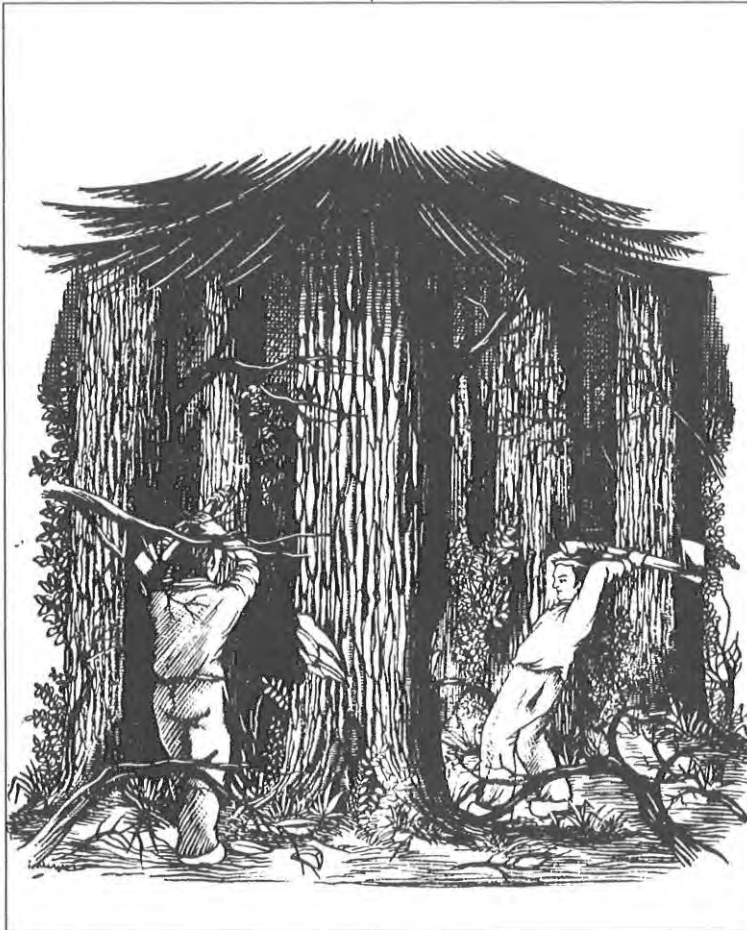
The density of the forest obstructed vision. Frequently months passed before new colonists met nearby neighbors. Clearing forests was hard and discouraging work, especially in the first days of the colony. The unwieldy square Dutch axes were unsuited for the job. Inexperienced woodsmen simply could not aim their axes to fall in the same spot over and over again. The colony's leaders, though just as inexperienced as the others in the

art of felling trees, instilled courage and hope in the fledgling woodsmen both by example and word. Repeatedly one of the leaders took the axe from a struggling woodsman and showed him how to perform his task.

Felling trees was dangerous work, especially for the unskilled. At first the trees were chopped near to the ground in a circular way around the entire tree. This meant that the huge tree stood and swayed on a small spindle. The danger increased tremendously at this stage, since no one knew just where the tree would fall. The woodsman looked up after each blow to see whether this "son of Anak" (for that is what the Dutch called these tall trees) was about ready to fall. Another individual was then stationed some distance away to warn which way to run to

avoid being hit by the falling giant. Of course, a sudden shift of wind upset many a calculation. Many trees fell where they were not expected to land, causing many injuries and not a few deaths.

A falling tree branch might cause the same kind of havoc. Many original colonists could point to injuries they had received in their struggle against "the sons of Anak." In these logging accidents some chopped off toes, whereas others wounded their legs. Some woodsmen tried to solve such problems by tying a rope to the tree's crown to guide the crashing tree. This effort generally proved quite unsuccessful. Notwithstanding all such difficulties, many colonists cleared four or five acres of land in the colony's



first year. After pushing aside the stumps, the process of tilling the soil and sowing the grain began.

The original colonists were fortunate to receive assistance from the Indians, earlier white settlers, and occasional passers-by, for such individuals were more familiar with the techniques of clearing forests. The Dutch settlers learned quickly from them how to fell trees in such a way that a whole row of trees would fall when the last tree in

line was chopped down. Initially the Dutch could topple only one tree a day. Erelong they became so adept at it that they did twenty to thirty a day. Instead of chopping near to the ground, they attacked the tree about four feet above the ground. The stumps were later removed by oxen after the roots had decayed somewhat. Some people tried to remove stumps by digging around them and building fires around them. Others dug a deep trench and then, having cut the roots, pulled the stump into the trench. Both methods proved very costly and so were discontinued rather soon.

After a tree had been felled, the branches were lopped off, and the trunk was cut into sixteen- or eighteen-foot lengths and was rolled onto a pile, allowed to dry two or three years, and, most generally, put to the torch. Sad to say, in those primitive days, several hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of timber were reduced to ashes. The branches and leaves received the same treatment. Even after the colonists had learned the commercial value of the timber, many of them were compelled to continue clearing the land by burning because of the distances from the market and the absence of passable roads.

For several years the colony seemed to be one huge pyre. The conflagration was so heavy at times that travel was impeded. Sometimes the burning timber piles sent sparks which ignited piles of wood that were to be saved. One Sunday afternoon a man did not get to church before three o'clock because he had been fighting fire in the woods around his home—a fire ignited by the sparks from burning stumps and branches. One Sunday morning in May 1849, the whole population of Zeeland was called out of church to fight such a fire. The stumps were usually lit toward evening, when the ground was damp with dew, because it was easier to keep the fire from spreading and getting out of control. The following morning the glowing embers were all heaped together and allowed to burn until all was consumed. The ashes were then used for fertilizer or for other purposes.

One colonist was chopping a huge tree which stood near his cabin, and, of course, he wanted the tree to fall without hitting his dwelling. The perplexed man looked at his cabin and then at the tree, wondering if there was not some way to avoid the danger of damaging his house. Just then an Indian came along, and, with sign language and broken English, the colonist communicated to the Indian

that he would pay four dollars if the Indian could make the tree fall away from the house. He accepted the challenge, and within four hours he toppled the tree, spared the cabin, and pocketed his money. Rather often, however, log cabins were demolished and furniture destroyed by falling trees. Such unfortunate individuals had to start anew to build themselves a dwelling and make new furniture.

Early one morning a certain colonist left home to fell a huge tree some distance from his cabin. At noon, however, he failed to come home. His family became uneasy about this and went with a couple neighbors to investigate. They found a tree that had been chopped down but saw no one. While they were standing there, they heard a voice which seemed to come from the depths crying, "Help me! I'm under the tree!" But they could not free him. So they dug a trench. By using this trench the victim, wholly unhurt, was able to squirm himself free from his prison. Then they



learned the details of the mishap: when the tree was about to fall, the man had walked away, but he stumbled and fell between two mounds of dirt on which the falling tree

landed. These mounds saved the man. He deemed it a miracle that he was not killed.

The earlier American settlers used to laugh at the way the Hollanders wielded their axes. They asserted that the Dutch would never be successful here. Nevertheless, they admired the Dutch for their persistent diligence and gladly taught them the necessary skills to clear away the trees.

When friends of the colony came to visit these parts after a few years, they were amazed at the accomplishments of the colonists and exclaimed, "How did you get all these trees down?" Van Raalte's direct and simple answer was, "God gave our people the strength."

Making the Roads

As chapter fourteen indicated, clearing the forests was the first thing needed to make the land fit for agriculture. But roads, too, were necessary to make communication



(above) "Road Building" (Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. 31, p. 577); (facing page top) "Northern Michigan country road about 1940;" (facing page bottom) "Woodland trail" (sketched in P.J. Risseuw's *Ik Worstel En Ontkom*, p. 22).

possible among the colonists and the world beyond the colony. Without roads it was virtually impossible to contact the outside world even during the daylight hours. And it was altogether impossible in the evening or at night. The difficulty lay in the danger of getting lost. Indeed, Indian trails meandered all through the woods, but sometimes they crossed each other, and at other times they merged or ran parallel to each other. Then suddenly they separated again or ended in a river or marsh. Wherever people went, they met obstacles such as moss lumps, holes, marshes, rivers, fallen tree stumps, or ravines. All these made travel on foot or in some sort of vehicle nearly impossible, and a person could make no more progress than two or three miles per day.

The road from Allegan to Holland existed already in 1846, and soon the merchants of Grand Rapids also built a road from Grand Rapids to the colony. They realized full

well that the cost of building such a road would be amply repaid through the profits made in commerce with the colonists. Once the colonists reached either the Allegan or Grand Rapids roads, it was comparatively easy to travel to either city.

The various homes in the colony were also linked by a network of roads, but at first these roads were little more than trails through the woods. After village sites were chosen, the villages had to be surveyed and their streets platted. Surveyors were needed, and since the state did not furnish such persons, the colonists had to pitch in and help. In Overisel a baker was appointed to this position. In Zeeland the pastor took the role of surveyor. In Holland an artist was appointed to this job. By and large, the roads and streets were surveyed as correctly as possible, with marks in the trees used as direction indicators.

At a town meeting the colonists decided that this work was to be done in relays, free of charge, each group working two or more weeks until the project was completed. The state even gave homesteads in payment for building roads and bridges. When the site for the new road had been determined, the men started out for the work early in the morning, equipped with an axe and a spade and with food supplies to last for a day or more. If they were too far from home to return that evening, they built a log cabin, where they could spend the night after their day's labor.

The cleared trees were removed by the owners of oxen or rolled out of the way and burned at a later date. Sometimes the bark was removed and converted into staves or other useable material. Holes were filled. Rough spots were leveled. Tree stump bridges were placed across streams and rivers. Gradually the landscape began to assume a more civilized and cultured appearance as it was taken over by industrious people.

The tree stumps, however, were left in the roads and streets until the roots disintegrated. When this occurred, the stumps were pulled out of the ground, piled on a heap, and burned. While the stumps remained in the roads and streets, it continued to be dangerous to venture out at night without the use of a light. Unless one proceeded especially carefully, feeling one's way with hands and feet, one risked the danger of stumbling over roots or walking into a stump.

Making roads through the forests was a difficult task, but it was especially difficult in the marshes. The colonists toiled two years to build a road through the swamp between Vriesland and Zeeland. But then they were still forced to give up the project and to start anew some distance away. The swamp seemed to have no bottom. It made no difference how many twigs, tree stumps, sand, or dirt they threw into it. Nothing seemed to fill that insatiable hole!

Between Overisel and Zeeland there was a road that ran partially through a marsh. However, before work on that marsh was undertaken, the owners of the farms were required to dig ditches along their farms so that the water could find an outlet to the Black River. When the road through the swamp had been drained off, it looked more like a wooden float than a road, especially after heavy rains or after a big thaw. It was difficult then for pedestrians to cross over it and still more difficult for vehicles of any sort. Vehicles often became bogged down and stuck—half floating and/or half riding—as they had to be pulled through the soupy, watery mess. But the persistence of the colonists overcame these obstacles too. A few years later there were not only roads and paths through the swamps, but seemingly useless cesspools were reclaimed into fruitful, fertile land.

Traveling

It was not long before the colonists were able to acquire their own oxen; in some cases people banded together to buy the oxen communally. The owners of the oxen were called "oxen-farmers"; they moved new colonists to their desired destinations, hauled logs for cabin builders, and carted food supplies from neighboring cities and towns. The roads from Zeeland, Friesland, Drenthe, and Beavertown ordinarily went to Grand Rapids. Those from Filmore and Overisel went to Allegan. Other travelers, especially from Holland and Graafschaap, went by scow to the mouth of the Kalamazoo River or to Grand Haven. The round trip from Zeeland or Friesland to Grand Rapids as a rule took about four days. The same amount of time was needed to make the round trip from Holland to Allegan.

These trips were usually hazardous and characterized by great difficulties. The roads, which did not deserve the name, were so poor that the drivers were hardly able to get through them. The "oxen-drivers," therefore, usually did not travel singly, but in pairs or groups, so as to help one another in times of need or crisis. Ordinarily they carried an axe with them for the purpose of cutting away trees that had toppled into their way. Trees that were too thick to pull down with their wagons they chopped down. The thinner trees they drove over. Some of the branches were used to repair their wagons, and their axes served as hammers, saws, and planes.

The load limit per wagon was one thousand pounds, and the drivers charged six dollars per load. The draymen paid twenty-five cents for their lodging and the same amount for lodging the oxen. The drivers always carried feed for the animals, for, if they were caught in a snowstorm, it could take four days to reach their destination.

One winter day a group of nineteen drivers left Overisel for Allegan. They carried their own food but bought coffee

along the way at a roadside inn where the whole group had to sleep in one room on a wooden floor. When one of the group awakened during the night, he added some fuel to the fire and then calmly went back to sleep.

The extra drivers usually traveled on the last wagon, which gave them a better opportunity to supervise the whole caravan. They sang psalms as they traveled, and some filled the time with knitting during the long, monotonous trip. They knitted coverings for their feet, as nearly all of them wore only wooden shoes.

The roads were in such poor condition that an entire wagonload could not be brought home at the same time, and part of the load had to be left in the forest for four or five days until the men returned for their supplies. Yet,



(above) "Oxen" (Souvenir Van Het 60 Javig Feestdag, Zeeland, Michigan, 1907); (facing page) "Making Camp" (Harper's Weekly, Vol. 27, 1883, p. 44).

seldom, if ever, did the drivers find any of their goods missing.

River Routes

The bargemen were not always safe on the waterways, due to the rusty condition of their vessels or because of the treacherousness of the lake and the danger of tree stumps and stones in the rivers. Such obstacles often caused delays and increased the possibility of losing lives and cargo.

Once, during one of the less favorable seasons for travel, some people had to sail from Holland to Grand Haven by barge with a load of supplies and take a load of ground meal back to Holland. When they wanted to embark on the return trip to Holland, the Lighthouse watchman advised them not to start out because the wind was unfavorable. Since the need was acute in Holland, they decided to set out anyway.

At noon the lighthouse guard peered through his bin-

oculars and saw the craft bobbing around on Lake Michigan. It was entering the mouth of the Grand River instead of the entrance to Black Lake. A short time later one of the skippers arrived in Grand Haven, bareheaded. His face was full of scratches, and he had an injured arm. The scow had overturned. In an attempt to save himself he had grasped the stope pipe. He knew nothing about the state or condition of his companions. The next day his companions also came to Grand Haven. "Where do you men come from?" was the question asked them. "Out of the brush," was their answer. To save themselves, they had clung to anything they could grasp. They had spent the night in the woods and walked to Grand Haven the following morning.

On another occasion, some travelers were returning toward evening from a jaunt on Lake Michigan. The winds increased, and the heaving surf compelled them to keep as far from the shore as possible. Having drawn in their sails, the "sailors" tried to row themselves in. When they tried to touch bottom with their sixteen-foot oars, they could not do it. The winds became more violent. The waves rolled higher and higher, and the "sailors" considered themselves lost. But fortunately the wind abated after a while.

The skippers were able to return to shore and after much anxiety came to the mouth of Black Lake. From this point on they continued the trip to Holland without further incident.

Land Travel

New immigrants usually traveled to their destination by ox-drawn wagon. On one occasion some travelers had to cross a swollen river. When the oxen stepped into the stream, they could not cross while pulling such a heavy load. The oxen "driver" cried like a baby because he feared he was going to lose his oxen by drowning. Finally, after an extended and strenuous effort, he succeeded in getting the wagon across to the other side.

On another occasion, three oxen drivers were traveling together; because there were no bridges the oxen had to swim across the streams while pulling the wagons. They came to a particular stream, but when the first span of oxen came to the water, they refused to enter the stream. The problem was soon solved by unhitching one of the teams and attaching a chain to the harness of the balky oxen. The unhitched team was then driven into the stream. After they had swum across the stream, the other oxen automat-



ically followed. Thus the obstinate teams were made to move too. Soon the wagons and oxen were all safely across the stream.

One summery day a colonist wanted to cross the Black River near the famous Waterhouse (Waterhuisje) which is near Zeeland. At this particular time the stream was wide and the water high. The driver drove his oxen into the water and then went to sit in the rear of the wagon. The driver's weight unbalanced the wagon, tipped it backward, and loosened the hitching bolt. So the oxen crossed over with the hitch, while the wagon and driver drifted downstream.

Fortunately, the current of the stream was not strong, and the driver, who had now become a skipper, could swim. The only person in sight was a young man who was working nearby. He laughed heartily at the driver's predicament. The driver undressed, jumped into the water, and, swimming, pushed the clumsy ship to shore. After reaching shore the driver caught his oxen and reattached them to the wagon. After tarrying a little while, he continued on his trip without greeting the young man in the field.

Once, when there was an urgent need for food supplies in Zeeland, Mr. Smit, the storekeeper, went to Rev. Van Der Meulen and asked the use of his oxen and wagon for a trip to Grand Rapids. Because the winter had been severe and normally small streams had become rushing torrents, Rev. Van Der Meulen sent a Mr. Van Noorden with Smit. Obviously, the trip would be dangerous.

The men chose a route which led through a pine woods and reached a place which now is called Jenison. There everything was under water. Since the weather had turned freezing cold, Smit wanted to cross over the ice. He walked onto the ice but soon fell through and had to be rescued from his plight by the use of boards.

Then they turned back and came to the cabin of a Scotsman. When the two travelers informed the Scotsman of their situation, he took his own oxen from their cozy stall and lodged the oxen of the travelers in his barn. He provided dry undergarments for Smit and let the travelers stay in his own bedroom. The next morning the two Dutchmen gratefully resumed their trip and again faced the swamp. They had either to cross it or return empty-handed. So, fearfully, yet prayerfully, they prodded the oxen on and succeeded in crossing the marsh.

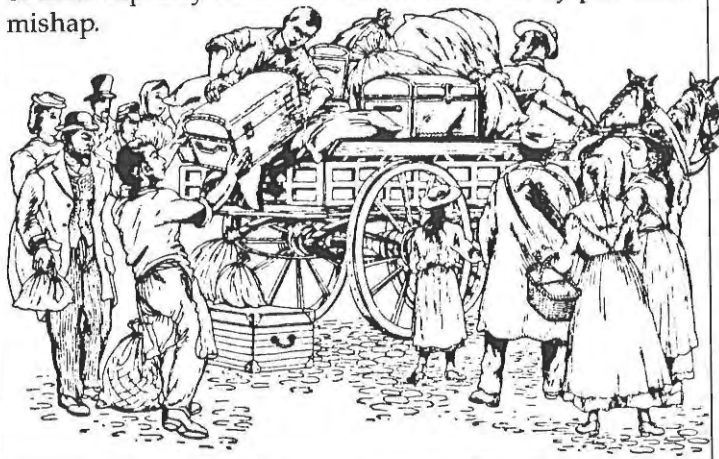
A little farther along they came to the home of an American colonist who informed them that the road to Grand Rapids was under water. He directed them, instead, to a higher road. That road crossed a stream with a strong current, "But," he said "don't be afraid. This stream has a good solid bed." But when they reached the stream, they despaired of getting the oxen to swim across it. Van

Noorden, however, was brave enough to lead the way. The oxen could barely swim the swift stream. The wagon box was hoisted upward by the force of the current and might have drifted away if it had not been firmly secured by chains to the rear part of the wagon.

Upon seeing the danger involved in crossing the stream, Smit hesitated to follow. But Van Noorden told Smit that there was no danger if he, too, firmly secured his wagon. Smit then drove into the water and, though pale from anxiety, got across safely. Finally at eight o'clock they reached their destination with stiff and tired limbs. A good night of sleep and rest restored and renewed their energies. The next morning they purchased their supplies and started out on their return trip. When they came back to the creek they had crossed the previous day, the stream was not nearly as forceful as the day before, nor as wide. The water had dropped at least a foot. And because the wagons were now heavily loaded, the danger was no longer as great as it had been on the previous day.

That night they arrived safely at the home of the American who had directed them to the higher road the previous day. The Dutchmen stayed overnight at his home and continued their trip home the next morning. Their heavily loaded wagons sank into the half-frozen mud up to the axles so that the drivers needed to stop every few moments to clear the mud out of the wheels' spokes.

Thus they struggled along until they got to the well-known clay hill. At this spot the weary oxen were unable to pull their wagons any further. So the drivers left one of the wagons at the foot of the hill and unhitched the oxen from the second wagon. Then they hitched both yokes of oxen to the first wagon and pulled the first wagon up the steep hill with the two teams. Thereafter, they returned to the other wagon and repeated the climb up the hill with the two teams pulling the last wagon up the clay hill. Then the drivers still had to negotiate the crossing of the big swamp, which was done safely. So on the evening of the fourth day of their trip they reached Zeeland without any particular mishap.



BRINGING THE NETHERLANDS TO CANADA

by Phil Reinders*



Reinders family in the 1940s. Frederik (FJR)—front, second from right.

After World War II, the young growing nation of Canada became home for many Dutch emigrants. They came to Canada with dreams for a new life, and they left their families and most of their friends behind. Their own "gezellig" country, rich in history and tradition, they traded for the New World. Its people were predominantly British and French, but a host of other nationalities were also represented. Though it was a country still very young in history and tradition, the Dutch came to Canada in droves by sea and later by air. The post-World War II emigration era (1946–1960) was the largest Dutch exodus, taking approximately 142,000 emigrants to Canada.

For many Netherlands, the years

following World War II were bleak. Liberation day celebrations soon faded and then the consequences of the harsh war and the cruel Nazi occupation became a stark reality. The Netherlands was disheveled, with a faltering economy, an increasing population, a short supply of housing and many unemployed citizens. In addition, ill feelings lingered among the Dutch—bitter sentiments toward some people, who were either neutral during the war or even sympathetic to the Germans, but who still gained prominence after the war ended. Then too, fears of a Russian invasion abounded. All these "push factors" convinced many to leave. But to where?

Canada provided many attractive advantages. The Dutch already had strong affection for Canadians be-

cause of their participation in the liberation of the Netherlands. Canada also had a relatively restriction-free immigration policy in contrast to the strict quota system of the United States. But most of all, Canada was a land of opportunity. It provided a chance to start anew, to acquire one's own farm or business, and to provide children with advantages. It was the Dutchmen's promised land of milk and honey, and so the exodus began.¹

Included in this migration was one Frederik Jan Reinders, a young, ambitious engineer. F. J. Reinders (cited hereafter as FJR) was a Dutchman, a born and bred Netherlander, steeped in Dutch history and tradi-

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**Socially comfortable or familiar.

tion. He, like all the emigrants, was a product of his country's history, culture, and heritage. And he retained a whole system of Dutch customs and culture. These native values preserved his ethnic consciousness but they also assisted his adaptation to the cultural mosaic of Canada.

Today, sitting in his Mississauga (Ontario) home, FJR readily acknowledges the Netherlandic tradition which shaped and formed his character. He says, "Sure I was formed by my days in Holland, I have inherited a Dutch history and also my family's own history."²

One of the largest influences in FJR's life, and in the lives of many other Dutchmen, is their struggle with Dutch environment. The Netherlands, since the last Pleistocene Ice Age, has been a flat, low-lying country, criss-crossed by a network of canals; a country whose primary fight for existence has not been against surrounding nations, but against the ever present forces of its environment. This struggle has created a way of life in the Netherlands. Survival on their small parcel of land forced the Dutch to develop ways of controlling nature's forces and to transform its destructive potential into gains. Poor soil became fertile land. But above all, the sea bottom has been reclaimed. The construction of dykes, and the use of windmills and the draining of lakes have kept the forces of the sea under control.

But this struggle has required daily activity for the Dutch, and has become a source of pride. The Dutch often boast, "God made the world, but the Dutch made Holland."³ This pride, though, is accompanied by a sense of stewardship in using and preserving their small lot of land.

Beginning with his grandfather, Frederik Reinders, FJR's family has taken an active role in land reclama-

tion in the Netherlands. Frederik helped pioneer the field of land reclamation. He specialized in digging under poor soil, to bring up more fertile soil. It was a slow process without modern machinery, but FJR proudly reports that six farms were reclaimed in the Drenthe region because of his grandfather's efforts. Meeuwes Reinders, FJR's father, continued in this tradition. He served as a district engineer in North Friesland, where he involved himself in sluicing and diking.

the Christian school board, and one of only ten or fifteen who owned a car. For the most part, growing up in Drachten was quite ordinary for FJR—going to school and playing "voetball" with the rest of the children his age. But as the rumors and fears of war turned into Nazi occupation, life changed drastically. FJR states, "During the war, we did without much. There was much uncertainty and we had to be tough to stick it out."⁴

But the war also renewed hopes



(above) Canadian liberators (p. 167 in *Friesland 1940-1945; Friese Pers, Leeuwarden, 1980*); (across) F. Reinders with his father, mother, and sister at time of departure for Canada; (facing page) Village landscape in Friesland (*Friesland, Feit En Onfeit; Miedema Pers, Leeuwarden, 1970; p. 4*).

So, while growing up in the town of Drachten (Friesland), FJR was nurtured to struggle with the environment.

FJR's father, a district engineer, took on other leadership roles in Drachten. He was the clerk of the Gereformeerde Kerk*, chairman of



*This, the Reformed Church of the Netherlands, has been the sister church of the CRC since its organization in 1892.

and dreams. After the liberation FJR took a keen interest in Canada, the fanciful land of the mighty Canadian warriors. This ardent interest was fur-

thered when, as part of a school assignment, he received an informational booklet telling about Canada. He studied this booklet intently but he received much more information about Canada from his Tante (Aunt) Tina Zwiers, a widow who had just returned to the Netherlands after touring parts of North America. She brought many items from North America but especially stories of the land and people. She also told of one persistent Canadian farmer who trav-

eled with her, trying to get her consent to marriage. This farmer from Neerlandia (Alberta), a Mr. Elgersma, soon visited Tante Tina and the Rein- ders family. In discussions with Mr. Elgersma, FJR heard stories of wide open spaces and vast opportunities. "This was the clincher for me,"⁵ states FJR. Sooner or later, he would go to Canada!

During his youth FJR also cultivated a zealous faith, specifically the faith and tradition of the GKN. He

he could not find the "elbow room." These limitations motivated him to send in his documents to be processed for emigration. It was time to go to Canada.

Although his father was not too thrilled about his son moving to Canada, FJR anxiously awaited his day of departure, February 24, 1954. After goodbyes to his parents and three remaining sisters, he flew to Montreal, *via* KLM. There his fiancée, Jantje Vander Wey, who had come to Brockville, Ontario, Canada, a year earlier, awaited his arrival.

FJR's first few days in Canada gave him a taste of a good Canadian winter. It was bitterly cold, he reports, and the snow was piled high. Within three weeks he had his first job as a rod and chain man on a survey crew. Being out in the field with the crew, FJR experienced another "coldness" in Canada. FJR says, "The people were different, they dressed differently, they spoke differently."⁷ Although he had a fair command of the English language, conversations were still hard to follow and FJR felt the isolation experienced by many immigrants. Was life here in Canada always going to be this chilly?

Amidst the cold and isolation, FJR found warmth in the company of his wife, Jantje, and in the fellowship of the Brockville Christian Reformed Church. At home, most of the Dutch foods, traditions, and celebrations remained, while at church, Rev. Van Laar, a home missionary, filled his religious needs. There, too, FJR found common ground among the fellow Dutch immigrants and built many strong friendships. Yet in this stronghold of Dutch ethnicity, a small boy revealed to FJR the need to adapt to this new world.

In the Brockville CRC, FJR taught a boys club where Dutch was primarily spoken. During the club meetings, he noticed one boy looking quite bored and lost. Taking the boy aside, he found that he did not understand



became involved in the young people's group of his church and in the "Jeugd en Evangelie" (Youth and Gospel). In these groups, the doctrines and principles of the GKN were reasoned through and discussed, and issues of faith and the integration of faith and life were debated. So FJR became religiously knowledgeable.

He went on to study civil marine engineering at a technical college in Leeuwarden, but he also remained a member of the religious study groups. Soon he was a member of the junior Dutch Anti-Revolutionary party, the political party started by Abraham Kuyper, and he enjoyed discussions about various social and political issues. Thus, the ideas and principles formed in the "Wetsidee," the philosophy of the law idea, were firmly instilled in FJR.

These principles had become a part of his life when FJR finished college and began his engineering career with the Rijkswaterstaat, the Dutch agency responsible for water management. Here, he worked on the Zuiderzeewerken, a land reclamation project, and he was also involved in the design of locks, docks, and canals. In so doing, he continued the traditional fight, both of his country and family, against the watery environment.

Yet, even during his years at school, FJR noticed limitations and restrictions in the Netherlands. This perception intensified at the Rijkswaterstaat, where, FJR says, "I was bored to tears."⁶ He was stagnated and restrained. An innovative, entrepreneurial spirit had no space or leeway. FJR felt the need to take initiative on the job, to be innovative, but

Dutch but only English and some Frisian. The need to change became obvious—but to what extent? FJR faced the plight of most immigrants. Should they join the mainstream of society and abandon all former ways? Should they do only a bare minimum to adapt, or should they meet society halfway and become a mix, a Dutch-Canadian blend? Would it be assimilation, pluralism, or isolation?

In the case of FJR, we notice a largely pluralistic cultural orientation. For FJR, many of the inbred Dutch traits helped him adapt. As he became more proficient in English, he felt a greater ease in work, and could now concentrate on things other than communication. His initiative took him from rod and chain man, to instrument man, and to crew chief very quickly. To do the work for which he had been educated, FJR enrolled in the engineering program at the University of Toronto, where he spent the next two years. After graduating, he went to work for the consulting firm, Project Planning, and later worked with the Ontario St. Lawrence Development Commission, where he became assistant chief engineer. He reveled in the opportunities and challenges of his work, challenges he had not found in the Netherlands. His colleagues once told him "You know Fred, you fit in exactly in the North American scene."⁸ His initiative, ambition, aggressive spirit, though they had been developed in the Netherlands, were the very thing that Canada required of him. His entrepreneurial views fit in with the "frontier" attitude in Canada and North America.

While adapting exceptionally well in his profession, FJR held, and still holds, the beliefs, principles and philosophies of the religious tradition he acquired in the Netherlands. FJR was born into the Reformed Church of the Netherlands, which was a product of the Doleantie movement. Thus he

also grew up with the "Wetsidee," the philosophy of the law idea, or the Neo-Kuyperian philosophy which aimed to implement Christianity in all "spheres" of life. This system also guided him, as a Reformed Christian, in his new country.

Coming to Canada with other Dutchmen committed to the "Wetsidee," he had a plan for Christian living in the world. The Dutch Reformed immigrant community, in reassembling this religious philosophy in Canada, has organized a vast network of Christian institutions, and FJR participated in establishing this network. He became a member of the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies (the predecessor of the Institute for Christian Studies, in Toronto, Ontario). He helped establish the Toronto District Christian High School during his term as president of the school board. An ardent supporter of Christian education, he recently delivered a lecture at the Jubilee conference of the Coalition for Christian Outreach on "A Christian View of Technology." Yet these attempts to implement religious philosophy was more an attempt to remain Christian than Dutch. James Vreugdenhill comments: "By setting up Christian institutions in Canada, the Christian Dutch immigrants did not want to remain Dutch; they wanted to remain Christian, that is, the Reformed, Calvinist Christians they had been in Europe."⁹

Although his first priority was to remain Christian, FJR also retained his ethnicity. He, with others in the CRC, could not separate the religious philosophy from its origins in the Netherlands. Being that particular kind of a Reformed Christian led inevitably to remaining strongly Dutch. Thus, the Dutch Reformed religion spawned a certain clannishness.¹⁰

Before leaving the Netherlands, FJR hoped to capitalize on Canadian opportunities and to start his own engi-

neering firm. In 1967 he realized this dream by founding the Maple Engineering and Construction Company in the basement of his Toronto home. His business grew and became "The Reinders Group," a collection of five firms in various engineering and construction related fields with offices in Brampton and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario; as well as in Vancouver, British Columbia; and Halifax, Nova Scotia. In this firm, FJR has blended Dutch and Canadian influences successfully. He chose a Canadian symbol, the maple leaf, for his company



(above) FJR with surveying crew; (facing page) Drachton City Center in 1976 (Bosch & Keuning, Baarn, 1976; p. 93); (facing page corner) FJR and friend—home in Drachton, 1950.

name, and Canadians of many different ethnic origins work with him. They are of Polish, Scandinavian, Oriental, and East Indian backgrounds. And, of course, he does not limit his services to the Dutch community.

Yet, within his firm, one can see FJR's natural affinity for his homeland and its people. Names such as Hessels, Jonker, Feenstra, Haanstra, and Vanden Assen abound at all levels

in the companies. Because FJR values the Dutch work ethic he wants his company to reflect Dutch concerns for industry and quality workmanship, and he also tries to give other Dutch immigrants a hand. Many of his clients are Dutch, as he has worked for various Toronto Christian Reformed congregations, Voortman Cookies, and other small Dutch businesses. Presently he is completing the new campus of Redeemer College in Ancaster (Ontario). Sometimes, FJR offers his Dutch clients a reduced, "Reformed" price, and he is always

willing to make the extra effort for them.

As we enter FJR's personal office, a small Frisian flag is seen with other momentos from the Netherlands. FJR states, "Deep down I still feel I am a Dutchman. Sure, I've been Canadianized over the years—who hasn't?—But I still have strong Dutch roots. This is an important thing in my life and it's important for my children too."¹¹ After more than thirty years of life in Canada, FJR's Dutch heritage and tradition still remain strong and dynamic. He has found that his ethnic

traits and traditions have served him well in his adopted country. While attempting to become part of a Canadian society, FJR has also realized that in Canada, a land of immigrants with a multitude of different ethnic origins, his Dutch heritage is an acceptable element. Frederick J. Reinders' Dutch heritage and tradition have assisted him in remaining true to his faith, while also helping him to contribute to the "cultural mosaic" of Canada.

Footnotes

¹Gordon Oosterman et al., *To Find a Better Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: National Union of Christian Schools, 1975), p. 7.

²Personal interview with F. J. Reinders, April 1986.

³Albert VanderMey, *To All Our Children* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1983), p. 26.

⁴Personal interview with F. J. Reinders.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Oosterman et al., p. 81.

¹⁰William Petersen, *Planned Migration: The Social Determinants of the Dutch-Canadian Movement* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1955), p. v.

¹¹"Diversified Work," an unpublished paper, author unknown, May 1985, p. 5.



"Harrison Ladies Aid, 1909" in the Harrison Christian Reformed Church 100th anniversary book.



SOUTH DAKOTA

by Eunice Vander Laan

Harrison, South Dakota, and the several Dutch settlements of Douglas County were always sparsely populated. Harrison, itself, never contained more than three hundred residents, and its current population is just fifty-seven. Like most rural villages, its vitality depends less on the town's inhabitants than on the farmers who find the town convenient and helpful. Yet, despite its small size, several studies have been devoted to Harrison and its surroundings.* One of these, Henry Vander Pol's 355-page *On the Reservation Border*, contains a detailed and personal perspective on the region's history. Published in 1965, the book is out of print and rather scarce, but the following book review by Eunice Vander Laan captures much of the volume's flavor. (Printed originally in *Worthington, Minnesota's Daily Globe*, Feb. 17, 1976).

On the Reservation Border is a fascinating bundle of reminiscent essays

loosely bound. Drawing the bundle together consistently throughout is the author's sensitivity to his surroundings, a profound awareness of the place in which he was planted and destined to live. That awareness sanctifies events and places mentioned in the book that might otherwise be dismissed as trivial and unnecessary detail. "It would be good if these memories," the author notes in his foreword, "could help my children and their children get through these fluctuating times with a more generous spirit because they know they had a name and a place and were loved before they were born . . ."

Following the Dutch settlement of Pella, Iowa (Strawtown), in 1846, Dutch farmers seeking land spilled out into Sioux County, Iowa, in 1879. As homesteads were taken up, families established a new community in South Dakota near the towns of Harrison and New Holland. The group included immigrants newly arrived

from Holland, and Van Der Pol's father was one of these homesteading there in 1883.

What brought these folk from their native Holland to the United States? Van Der Pol begins by sketching a brief history of the migration. Members of the "Seceders" group in Holland (a group which broke away from the state church), the Van Der Pols were part of a larger company of immigrants leaving home for religious freedom—but economic freedom as well.

"My father was a farmer, the son of a gardener. As a day laborer, he found it hard to make a living for his family doing spade work, cleaning canals and ditches, and cutting hay or grain with the scythe. . . . It was not unusual for a laborer to walk several miles to the farm on which he was

*Nelson Nieuwenhuis, *A History of Dutch Settlement in South Dakota to 1900* (M.A. thesis, University of South Dakota, 1948).

employed. My father was considered a successful laborer, but like many others he could not drive a team of horses hitched to a two-wheeled cart that was equipped with a steering apparatus; such work was reserved for men brought up to tend the burgher's highly prized horses and trained to negotiate sharp turns among the canals. The fact that so simple a skill could be viewed as a source of pride and was denied to most laborers helps one understand the persistence of many homesteaders in making a name and a place for themselves once they arrived in America.

"In Holland, a large number of families were dependent on each landowner. Only two classes, the rich and the poor, existed, and they lived very different but equally tradition-bound lives. Jobs were handed down from father to son and the laborer was expected to doff his cap whenever a landowner or burgomeister (civic officeholder) passed by. . . ."

The potato famine plagued Holland as it did other European countries and the Dutch people watched their nation's fortune change from one of prosperous international trade to domestic depression. In particular, the financial problems of the poor mounted and seemed to burden them even more when added to the religious repression they already experienced. Having broken away from the state church because government churchmen had made troubling decisions about doctrine and about liturgy, the "Seceders," as they were called, listed among their complaints some of the things that had angered American colonists a century earlier: use of church buildings denied; loss of jobs when employers did not agree with employees' convictions; involuntary quartering of soldiers; denial of police protection; privilege of public meeting forbidden. And, so, they came to America, the land of freedom and their dreams.

There is a law that says "One man's freedom is another's shackle," and every thoughtful man must deal with that enigma. The author is no exception. The land that meant freedom and fulfillment for him and his family meant suppression and incredible sadness for the Red Man. There is a wish several times in the book to balance the problem, solve the enigma, but it cannot be done. The author is sympathetic to the Indian but stops short of understanding him. Previous

to the white man's coming, tribal routine had demanded hunting and fishing of the men, gardening and child-care of the women. This life-style was abruptly changed, and a livelihood destroyed as the restrictions of the reservation were introduced to the Indian people. Their struggle to adapt to this bewildering change was swiftly passed over by the insensitive observer. Too often that struggle is translated as common sloth and not the agony of a people dispossessed.



(top) "Village Scene about 1925" (Harrison Centennial, 1982, p. 7); (bottom) Harrison Creamery, 1919.

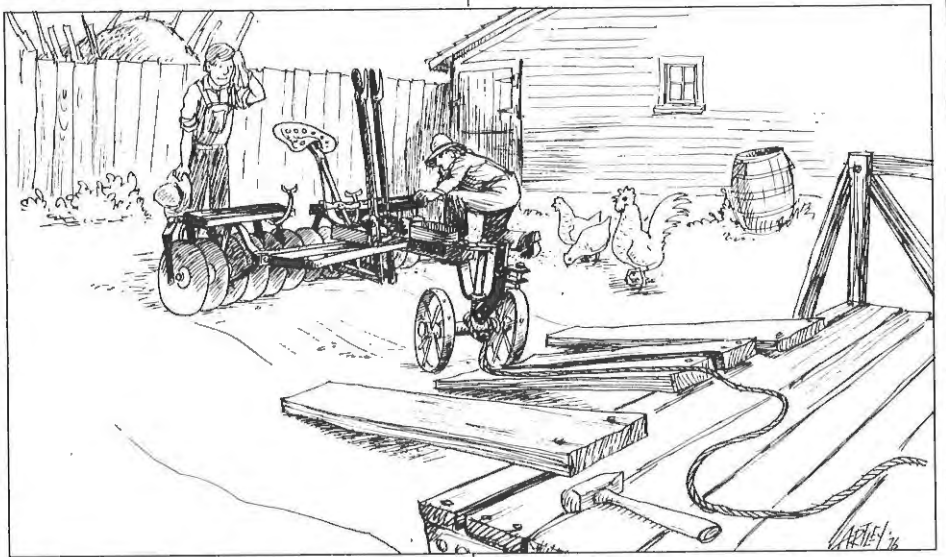
Dutch settlers were introduced in a hurry to prairie farming, a marked change from the gardening-agriculture of an essentially metropolitan

European country. Van Der Pol rejoiced with each new machine, each new invention planned to make the farmer's work easier.

"No matter what crop was planted there were difficulties. After the first corn crop, the fields were usually back-set and harrowed. Then we seeded all grains by hand, walking the field with a bag or small basket strapped over our shoulders. Sacks of grain were spaced around the field to save steps in refilling the bag we carried. A surprising acreage could be planted that way if the wind didn't blow too hard. . . . A mechanized small-grain seeder came on the market in the middle 80s. At first, it was simply a gadget placed in the endgate of a wagon which would be driven across the fields. It consisted of a double-wheel, four-blade fan driven from a sprocket on a wagon wheel. It could scatter seed over six or seven of the corn rows. Flax was planted that way for several years.

"All work with the small grain was practically inhuman until discs came on the market during the 90s. I can remember the exact spot on which my father and big brother, Pete, unloaded our first disc while brother John and I were cultivating wheat nearby. How we hoped it would work, for there had been some rumors that discs were no good for putting in small grain. Well, it did work pretty well and meant a lot less of just plain slavery for those who worked in the fields."

The Preacher of Ecclesiastes says there is nothing new under the sun. That is a familiar observation to the student of history. The crop failures, the dust storms, and the economic depression of the 1890s repeated themselves in Van Der Pol's lifetime during the 1930s. His account of the Great Blizzard, January 12, 1888,



(above) Sketch from Worthington, Minnesota, Globe, p. C-1; (facing page) Harrison Christian Reformed Church and parsonage in early 1920s.

sounds very much like January 10, 1975:

"The morning of that day was bright and moderate, even above freezing temperature. Many of the homesteaders were catching up on chores or on errands to town that had been held up by two days of light snow just before. All at once, without warning, the wind struck, carrying the falling snow straight out and lifting the old snow off the ground. It was impossible to see anything and very hard to breathe because the new snow was so very fine it pierced through everything.

"In a few minutes, the temperature dropped below zero. When the wind subsided the next morning, the temperature was 26 degrees below zero. It took months for all the people to be accounted for. Reports of strange rescues and tragic deaths have been written up in books ever since."

Van Der Pol's summary of the settlers' hardships is a stark time-line drawn in black and white:

1883 and 1884—good crops
1885—first taste of crop failure

1888—the Great Blizzard; no crops
1889 and 1890—no crops
1891—Bonanza Year!
1893—poor crops; low prices
1894—no crops to speak of; real need

1898—hail and floods
1899—dust storms and cyclones
Added to the misery of drought was an 1894 epidemic of diphtheria among the people and "black leg" in the cattle. Merchants staggered under a load of debt. Investors took over family farms in foreclosure. From Douglas County alone in the late 90s ten families left for Minnesota and another fifty-five persons left for Iowa.

Frequently in his book, Van Der Pol quotes from the writings of a Mrs. Christine Le Cocq Plomp. Her father was one of Harrison's founders, a banker in the community. Mrs. Plomp's accounts of the troubled times are especially poignant:

And so the drought continued. The earth seemed like iron, the sky like brass. One hot unbearable morning, the Reformed domine [pastor], Tamme Van Den Bosch, came to see Father. 'Mr. Le Cocq, wij moeten vasten.' (We must fast.) And fast we did, but of the result I am not sure. Finally in August, 1886, came the day when the cattle

plaintively lowed for water but there was none to give them. Domine Frederick Zwemer drove from Charles Mix County to talk it over with Father.

" 'Mr. Le Cocq, don't you realize something must be done?' he asked. 'Yes,' replied Father, 'but what?'

" 'Man,' he said 'where is your faith? Let's have a prayer meeting!' The domine took a big cotton umbrella with him to the meeting. He was amply rewarded for his firm faith, for the petitions addressed to the Creator were answered. Before the meeting was finished, it began to pour, and we ran home in the streaming rain, drizzling wet. The domine laughed under his umbrella. 'What did I tell you?' he said. 'My clothes are dry.' The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled but the distressed moan of the cattle had ceased."

Van Der Pol moves on recounting in various chapters memories of school days, the hardships of women and "Things I Remember". Time

passes in this South Dakota community and the people find themselves in the "Good Years—1905–1925" (Chapter 8). "The Hard Years—1929–1941" follow in Chapter 9. The author draws clear, descriptive pictures of what the dry, dusty 30s meant to the midwestern prairie family. We do well today to be warned by this past experience of general drought and terrible soil erosion. What Van Der Pol writes about the 30s will stir the memories of many of his readers who lived through those times. They will remember the public works projects he describes. Those born after the 30s are impressed with the efforts of men desperate for work; park pavilions of massive field stone, bridges, schools, street and road repair—all monuments to a nation in trouble. Shelterbelts, Van Der Pol says, were a public works project which "cost a terrific amount of money but many of these tree belts are in evidence today, forty years later, and have proved to be a real boon to the country in beauty as well as in wind breaks. . . ."

His account of these hard years adds a fascinating personal dimension to human interest to the book. He tells the story of his struggle to keep his farm by setting up a moving business in the face of financial burdens, brought on by dust and drought. During those dry years he moved many buildings—many of the jobs a challenge to tackle in the days before massive equipment. "We spent most of our time working out to support the farm—some road grading but mostly moving buildings, often fifty or more miles from the original sites. We moved barns, houses, granaries, silos, elevators, and barracks." A picture on p. 235 shows a tall grain elevator being moved by the crew. The Dust Bowl presents the fledgling business with daily difficulties:

"By the mid-thirties, the whole country began to look very bad. Buildings could not be kept in repair and were sand-blasted by the dust storms. The well-painted homesteads and good-looking stock buildings that had set off the green of the early twenties now

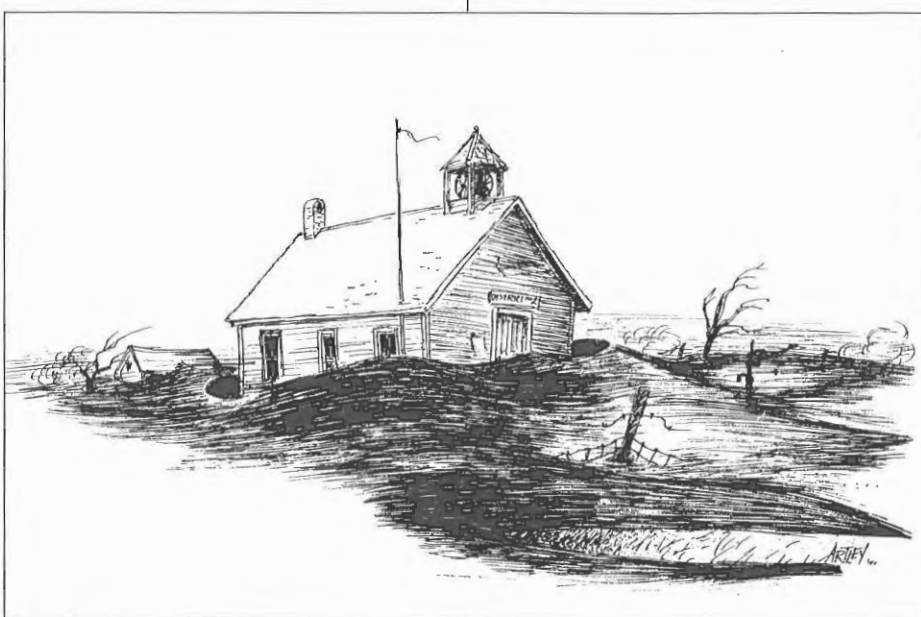


looked like uncared-for wrecks in an endless dust bowl. Many buildings were sold for ten per cent of their original cost. Many loan companies, having foreclosed on a farmer's mortgage would not repair or build but simply moved the buildings off to some place they owned in another locality. Many farm homes were deserted and whole sets of farm buildings were not in use. Farming became a business with absentee management instead of a way of life and a setting for a family's home. My outfit moved some buildings over a distance of a hundred miles or more.

"One moving job I remember painfully well was done during 1935 for Hollister Brothers of Sioux Falls (agents for Equitable Life Insurance). These were the parties who foreclosed the mortgage on our farm after selling us seed barley for \$1.35 and seed wheat at \$1.50 a bushel. These high prices we were trying to meet by giving the company half of the moving job to apply on the seed-grain loan.

"We loaded up a cottage house, about 26 by 26 feet, which we moved from Dallas to a farm nine miles north and two or three miles west of the town. This vicinity was one in which the dust storms were the most severe. We took two extra trucks to help pull the moving truck which had wide, high wheels which rolled over the 'blow dirt' much better than the lower wheels did.

"Starting north on a well-graded road north of Dallas we got along fairly well for the first four or five miles. But every mile we made was more completely covered with blow dirt. Finally, very little of the road could be seen. The ditches on the side of the grade were filled with blow dirt. We passed one vacant farmstead which was on the unprotected south side of a hill.



The cottage house in that place was almost completely covered by blow dirt and the machinery on its yard almost buried. Only the end of the mower's sickle-bar was still sticking out of that hill of blow dirt. About seven miles north of Dallas, we saw

(facing page) Sketch from Worthington, Minnesota, Globe, p. C-1; (below) Another immigrant family, the De Langes, also settled in Douglas County. They originated from Dedemsvaart in the province of Overijssel and left their native village in 1881. They moved successively from the Netherlands to Iowa and finally to South Dakota in 1883. The twelve De Langes are pictured above. In the back row are Cora, John, Cornelius, Albert, Henry, Jacob, and Jennie. Up front are Minnie, Nicholas, and Hattie with father Jacob and his wife Hendrikje front and center. (Photo from Jacob De Lange).



a schoolhouse surrounded by a four-foot bank of blow dirt.

"We were very glad we had hired a caterpillar tractor to help pull the house; several times we would unhook the tractor and spend some time packing the dirt on the road by running the tractor back and forth. Many times we would have to stop and dig the dirt from in front of the wheels which would start sliding when too much blow dirt collected in front of them. . . . We kept the outfit going as best we could until we turned to the west. We could not find one single sign of the road. This road had not been graded very high and several inches of blow dirt covered the road from ditch to ditch. One quarter on the south side of the road was entirely devoid of vegetation. Only a kind of weed some twelve inches high was growing—a few on each square rod of the floor-smooth dust."

As he recounts events, Van Der Pol's family life is integral to his story. He often speaks of Margaret, his wife. She was, he says, "the treasure of her parents entrusted to me." Her sudden death was painfully difficult for him and the adjustment to life without her was long and wearisome. That adjustment was, perhaps, life's toughest assignment for Van Der Pol. Yet, a glance at his "self-portrait" near the end of the book reveals an aged man, thoughtful and rich in personal resources. Because he believed so firmly in a transcendent purpose for his life, a specific reason for his being planted in the exact spot in which he was, he was able to put his roots down deep:

"Now, after several years of ill health and weakness, I have even learned the goodness of rest. Music, prayer, and the many lives of those close to us enrich my life, too. The children come often, singly or together. At least once a week the house is filled with life and noise

and cooking smells and the sharing of joys and sorrows.

"I pray that I miss no one's need if I can help; nor fail to savor the little or big blessings as they come. I know where to go when griefs require more patience or wisdom or courage than I can find within me. Always Margaret is beside me in a certain, real sense, though she has been gone before me these unbelievably many years.

"After certain depths of grief, it seems one learns that all life is partly a waiting through the years—not for death, not just for respite, or peace or the answers to specific prayers, but more like waiting for life to unfold.

"Margaret has been joined in death now by two of our six sons. Once it seemed no tears could be enough for Dick's pain-racked dying in 1967 or for the riper years which would never be his to experience. Alvin's sudden death in 1969 seemed also too soon, too soon—hardly believable even now. When we were young, the loss of one of our children would have been unbearable to Margaret and myself. But now, we 'wait upon the Lord.' "

One's own life is singularly enriched by reading this book. Such enrichment, it would seem, owes a debt of gratitude for one man's effort to observe events with so much sensitivity and record them with so much patience.



THE VANDEN HOEKS IN HARRISON

1884–1895

by H. J. Brinks

During the 1880s the southwest corner of the Dakotas attracted a rush of homesteaders from the Midwest and Europe.

Two South Dakota counties, Douglas and Charles Mix, gained special favor among Dutch immigrants, and their towns—Harrison, New Holland, Overijsel, and Friesland—sprouted quickly. These developments occurred after 1882, when an exploring party* from Orange City, Iowa, reported favorably about agricultural prospects in southeastern South Dakota. The soil, terrain, and moisture seemed comparable to those of northwest Iowa, and prospective homesteaders hoped that crop yields would also equal those of Iowa's farms. For a time, they did. Thus, between 1882 and 1884 new residents rushed for the newly available land, and they staked claims to the legal limits. Thereafter dozens of Dutch Reformed church spires poked up into the Dakota skyline. The Reformed Church in America (RCA) proceeded vigorously with the organization of sixteen congregations between 1883 and 1899, while the CRC founded four churches.**

*Leendert Van Der Meer, Dirk Van Den Bos, and Frank Le Cocq, Jr., conducted the original investigation for a group of interested people in Orange City.

**Statistics available in Peter Vanden Berge's Historical Directory of the RCA (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) and Yearbooks of the CRC.

But harsh weather—drought primarily—thinned both the settlements and their churches. Today only six RCA and three CRC congregations persist from that era.

Joining the land rush in 1884, Teunis Vanden Hoek's family left Orange City to resettle near Harrison, South Dakota. This third major uprooting followed the family's initial immigration in 1866 and a subsequent move from South Holland, Illinois, to Orange City. The short two-year Iowa stint was sandwiched between sixteen years in Illinois and Teunis's final residence in Harrison, South Dakota. For this last transplanting, Vanden Hoek hired two freight cars to carry his livestock and household goods 170 miles west from Orange City to Plankinton. From that point the family's belongings were loaded into wagons for the twenty-two-mile trip to Harrison. About twenty wagon loads, each requiring a two-day round trip, finally deposited all of Vanden Hoek's goods in Harrison.

There the family doubled its acreage from eighty in Orange City to 160 acres in Harrison. It was more than they could cultivate, but Teunis explained, "The reason my wife and I made this important decision . . . was to keep our dear children under our own supervision and control." These same objectives led Teunis to buy another 160 acres in 1885 after receiving a family inheritance from the Netherlands. Throughout his correspondence Vanden Hoek extolled land ownership and the ties of community life as the foundation for family cohesion, and by 1891 his ideals were beginning to be realized. That year he reported, "My son-in-law and daughter Willempje have purchased a 160-acre farm for \$1,000—with a house and barn. It is two miles away from our place. My oldest son, Jan,* is the clerk and bookkeeper in a large store and is earning \$34.00 per month. My youngest daughter, Eigje, is a school

teacher and earns \$30.00 per month. Willem and Eben Hazer work on the farm with me and go to school in the winter."

While writing to his family in the Netherlands, Teunis repeatedly urged them to consider the benefits of immigration. "You asked," he wrote to his brother, Arie, "if I am happy here with my home and farm. I answer, we (my wife and I and the children) are all happy here. We have Dutch neighbors on all sides. Our church has been organized since last year (1884) and has doubled in membership. We have a fine godly minister who is humble and kindhearted. He is respected even beyond our own circle."**

Several years later Teunis renewed his invitation. "You say that your son is in danger of becoming a soldier? I would prefer to have him here in America with us. In America there is no draft. Military service is by volunteers—except in time of war, and then there is a universal draft. You write that only the great distance prevents you from looking things over here. Well, why don't you send your son here first. After he arrives, he can earn your travel expenses, and then, if the Lord wills, all of you can come over." The following year Teunis urged again, "I wish God would give you the freedom to come here. You could make a good living here and do well both spiritually and physically. Besides, I have no relatives here." Finally, in May 1893, the Arie Vanden Hoek family immigrated to Harrison. Although their travels were untroubled, Arie's wife, Maggeltje, was ill when the train arrived at Armour, South Dakota, and she died several days later. Arie did not write a full account of this experience until January of the following year. But, then, despite the loss of his wife, he was generally pleased with his situation. "We live 1700 miles from New York, almost in the middle of America," he

reported, "but so far we have not regretted our move to America." Of his children he declared, "Teunis has earned \$85.00 in five months, Jan at least \$40.00 in six months, and I also have done rather well. Aartje works for C. Vanden Bosch in town for fifty cents per week, and he goes to the English school during the day—the school and the books are free. Arie Jr. earns board and clothes working for W. Niewenhuis, and they permit him to attend the English school too. There is no Dutch school here because English is the main language in America. But we all speak Dutch, and there are only Hollanders here for miles around. We have two churches in Harrison, one Dutch Reformed and one Christian Reformed . . . We are not sorry we came to America, but only wish we had come sooner."

That year, 1894, was relatively prosperous for Arie and his children. They were housed free in a home provided by brother Teunis, and they enjoyed abundant food. Writing again in April, Arie continued, "We are well impressed by the people here. They are kind and very friendly." But he also noted, "Becoming a farmer takes time. One must have quite a sum of money for horses and machinery, but as a laborer you can't earn much cash On the whole, the situation in America is not too favorable. Thousands upon thousands are without work, but we are in nearly the best location. Almost everyone here is a farmer, and, although there is almost no money around, everything is cheap But in spite of this, I say that I've never experienced such a fine winter in the Netherlands."

Though he did not yet own a farm, Arie kept a cow for milk and tended a two-acre vegetable garden. But he also worked at whatever tasks came his way. One job, burying huge bould-

*He studied and later became a minister of the CRC, 1905-1937.

**Rev. T. Vanden Bosch.

ders, was especially burdensome. "I have buried two stones," he wrote, "and am now busy with a third, which is six feet wide, seven feet long, and five feet thick. It weighs, I guess, about 20,000 pounds. I have to dig a deep hole into which it must go so it is out of the way for plowing. I get about \$2.00 per stone for this, but it is hard work! The ground when one gets down two feet is as hard as iron and stone. Then you have to break it up with a pick axe. If the stones are not too large, I can earn \$1.00 per day."

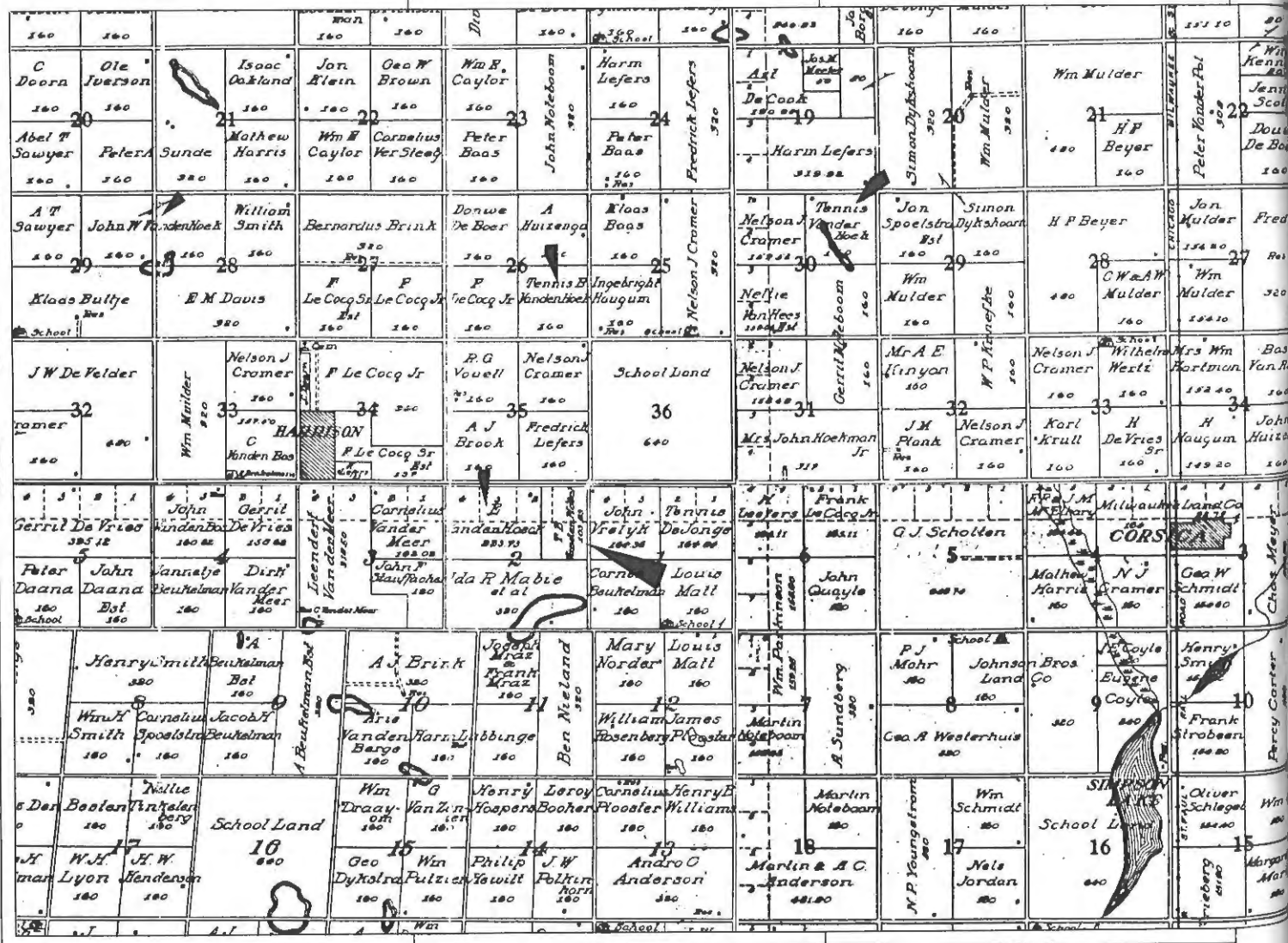
Arie's rather optimistic outlook was conditioned by his recent arrival.

Map of Harrison, S.D., area.

Brother Teunis, who had experienced far better years, judged more accurately that "conditions were very bad and disappointing" in 1894. By then Teunis had spent a full decade in Harrison—years which had shifted radically between prosperity and want. The drought years (1885, 1889, 1890) had severely tested the Dakota farmers' persistence. In the fall of 1890 Teunis had reported, "There have been crop failures in many states . . . but especially in South Dakota. In some cases entire villages have no more people or animals. The houses and barns are empty, and the people have moved to other states to make a living. A few miles from my place almost all

the grain has dried out. So, many Hollanders are also in need. Some have moved. In our area we have harvested about half of a crop—enough to pay taxes, interest, and support the church. We have had no significant rain for six months, and the ground is as hard as stone. Many cattle lack water, but so far we have had enough. Prayer days have been held. My hope is that the Father of all mercies will shorten these trying days for the sake of his chosen people, who call upon him day and night."

The following year's bumper crop had renewed Teunis's faith in God and the Dakotas. "This [1891] was a very prosperous year, and the land



bore fruit richly . . . after several years of drought and disappointment the Lord has given us a year of blessing with much cause for joyful thanksgiving." Relative prosperity then had continued for another two years, but 1894 brought total devastation. Both the crops and markets failed, and some farmers sold their whole estates for as little as \$100. Teunis Vanden Hoek's precise accounting of 1894 notes, "This spring I sowed 100 bushels of wheat and harvested only 84. I planted 105 acres of corn without harvesting half a bushel . . . 80 bushels of oats and 5 threshed . . . 30 acres of hay and not one forkful to harvest. I planted 6 bushels of potatoes and dug

up 3 bushels of small ones. There are thousands upon thousands of farmers in this situation. An African sunshine scorched everything that had life. Seventy- and eighty-year-old people have never experienced anything like this. Much livestock has starved, and the remainder is very thin.

"If America were not a land with great resources, things would have been far worse. Instead, railroad cars have come from more favored areas with donated foods as gifts of love. Next Monday, I and nine other relief officials will distribute six carloads of flour, clothing, and groceries to about two hundred needy families. These six carloads (the largest holds one thousand bushels of wheat) came mainly from Hollanders in Iowa. Arie has already received two thousand pounds of coal from the poor fund, and he will also receive wheat flour and clothing next Monday. Until last fall there was some work for hired hands and laborers, but now the farms are deserted, and nearly all the workers have been dismissed."

Even amid such dreary conditions, the Vanden Hoeks remained loyal to Douglas County, and they even enlarged their holdings. Teunis reported that his two nephews Teunis and Johannes had rented a hundred acres of land. "How this will all turn out," he wrote, "is more than I can guess. In the Netherlands, you would call this a risky business, but in America it is very common. They already have two cows, a colt, five hogs, a comparatively young horse, and a poor old nag with a colt and a wagon."

Apparently the new venture went well enough, and that spring, brother Arie reported that his sons Teunis and Johannes were at work in the field. But he also recalled the dismal story of 1894. "Of one hundred families," he wrote, "at least ninety were needy. But, because of the good hand of the Lord, we got through the winter. The

Lord moved the hearts of fellow Christians in other states to provide for us abundantly. Every family received six hundred pounds of wheat flour, and we had bread enough for half a year. We also received enough good wheat to feed horses, chickens, and hogs during the winter—all free of charge. We received two tons of coal, but we must pay for that next fall . . . the minister of the Reformed Church (Rev. A. G. Zeiglar) went out to solicit aid on an eight-week preaching and collection tour. He returned with about \$25,000,* which went for seed corn, for replanting, and to feed the horses."

The spring of 1895, though, was more hopeful. "The wheat and oats," Arie's May correspondence noted, "are well above ground, and Teunis is plowing ninety acres for the corn crops. At the same time, there is still a water shortage, and within nine miles of our place they have dug eight wells. They are a thousand feet deep and cost \$6,000 each. We get water from one of these about two miles away . . . But last year, I can assure you, will be long remembered.

During the ninety-two years since the Vanden Hoek family letters were written, agriculture has changed radically. Mechanization, irrigation, dry-farming technology, and astonishing discoveries in plant genetics have turned farmers into scientists and business people. But, for all that, unpredictable cycles of drought, floods, and plenty continue to cast the designs of advanced agricultural technology into disarray, and the farmers of 1987, much like the Vanden Hoeks and their Harrison neighbors in 1894, remain subject to forces beyond their control. Nonetheless, they plow on.

*Nieuwenhuis reports in *A History of Dutch Settlements in South Dakota to 1900*, pp. 63-64, that the preacher collected only \$5,000.

VAN DEN HOEK, MR. TEUNIS BOS

Today, at the age of more than seventy-six years, our beloved husband and father died. He served our Lord joyfully, for more than half a century. Born in Goudrian, Zuid Holland, the Netherlands in 1837, he came to Illinois in 1837 with his young spouse. For about thirty-two years he was permitted, quite uninterruptedly, to serve our churches as an elder. First in South Holland, then in Orange City, and finally for twenty-eight years in Harrison. He had the gift to lead and to comfort. He encouraged many through the soul's struggles which lead to Christ. And although in the last weeks he had to struggle through a dark stage of soul anguish, surely he is now in the Light which is prepared for the saints. His first wife and seven young children preceded him into the New Jerusalem. May the Lord also help us to safely arrive home.

Mrs. T. B. Van Den Hoek
J. B. Van Den Hoek, V.D.M.
Hiltje van den Hoek-Nieuwenhuis
W. Nieuwenhuis
Willempe Nieuwenhuis-van den Hoek
Mrs. Ida Smits
J. Willem van den Hoek
Mary van den Hoek-Noteboom
Ebenhaezer van den Hoek
Johanna van den Hoek-Den Besten

Harrison, South Dakota



by Robert J. Groelsema

CHRISTIAN ASSIMILATION

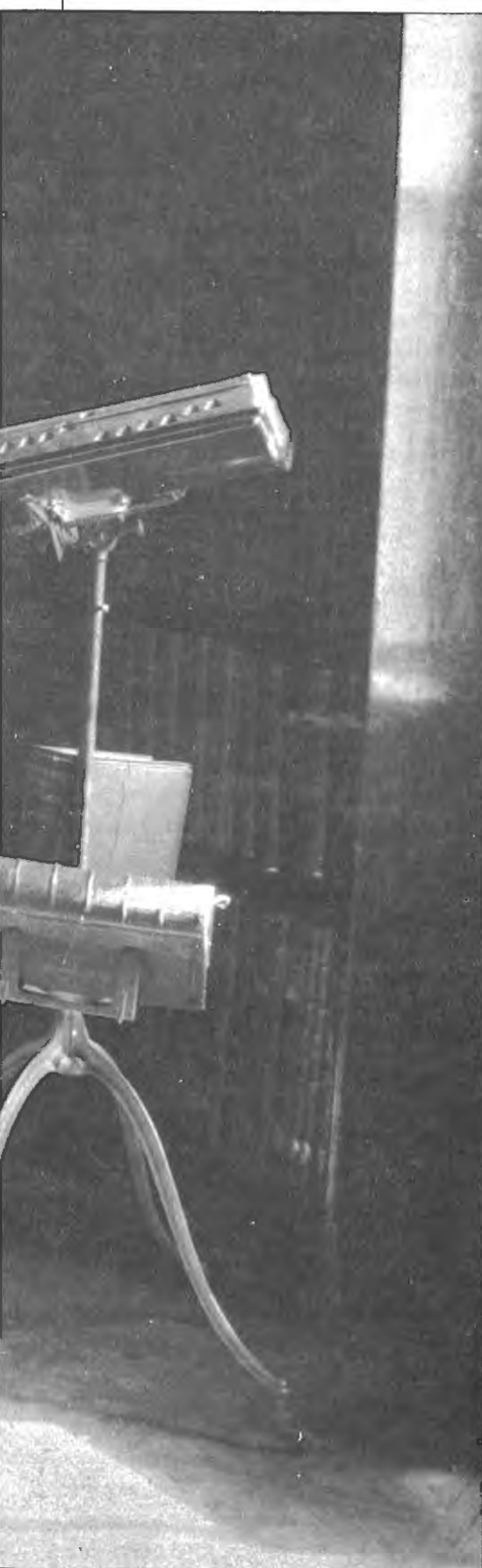
The Pioneer Christian Reformed Indian Mission

In 1886, ten years prior to sending Rev. Herman Fryling and Mr. Andrew Vander Wagen to Ft. Defiance, the CRC's Board of Heathen Missions faced considerable opposition from church members for having selected the Indian field for its mission work. The opposition doubted whether Indians could be gathered in one place in order to be reached effectively, and even if this were possible, why should the Indian, who had reason to hate the white man, accept his religion? Other opponents held a then popular notion that the number of Indians was declining and that eventually Indians would die out. But central to the opposition's arguments were assumptions that preaching would have little effect on Indians because they were stupid and hardhearted, and should they be converted, their lazy and roaming nature would prevent them from forming well-organized, self-supporting churches. The strength of these attitudes is perhaps best measured in Mission Secretary John

Groen's defense of the committee's selection. He chose not to rebut them directly; instead, he denounced scurrilous traders, land developers, and land grabbers, whose stories portrayed Indians in the worst possible way. He also reminded believers of their corporate guilt in the mistreatment of the Indian and of their great responsibility to him for inheriting his lands. For the doomsday sayers, he pleaded that all believers "take up with more haste, the cause of Evangelism among the vanishing race, that others may speedily be brought to the light."¹ The selection of the Indian field was not unanimous, but it prevailed.

Any further doubt regarding the choice of the field was laid to rest when Groen returned from an on-site inspection of the reservation in 1896. His report emphasized that, first, Navajos were a sinful, idolatrous people, pitifully superstitious, and "entangled in those sins that thrive so luxuriant in heathen soil. Stealing, lying, adultery, filthiness, [and] abuse of women" were predominant sins "occurring daily without much trou-

(left) J. C. Morgan and Rev. L. P. Brink



ble of conscience." Second, Navajos were not lazy or slovenly; rather, they were "industrious," had "good qualities for development," were "progressing in civilization," and learned "with ease." His observations established the worthiness of the field, the urgency of bringing the Gospel, and the likelihood of success of assimilation.²

The concept of Christian assimilation, however, was not new in America or limited to the CRC. The seventeenth-century Indian apostle John Eliot and other Puritans had endeavored to bring their religion and civilization to the Indians of New England two and a half centuries earlier. In 1887, assimilation was given a legal base under the Dawes Act and was promulgated from the highest executive posts in Washington and zealously promoted by the largest missionary societies, both Protestant and Catholic. That missionary personnel figured prominently in the government's plan was apparent in a declaration by Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, in 1897: "The greatest factors in the uplifting of Indians are the men



and women who are teaching the Indians to become Christian citizens."³ The Indian Bureau had published a list of religious offenses and relied on missionaries to enforce it by suppressing native ceremonies and imposing their code of ethics in place of the Indian one. A letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the field service underscores the value of the missionaries to Bureau policy:

The aim of both Indian Service employees and church workers is to fit the Indians to be self-sustaining, self-respecting American citizens. The Christian missionary was active in this field of service long before the Government, and the missionary has an essential function in the cultural development of the Indian. No effort should be spared to encourage effective cooperation and prevent misunderstanding and friction. Religious education and character training are necessary factors in the development of the Indian.⁴

G.E.E. Linquist, Home Missions Field Representative for the National Council of Churches, encouraged missionaries to use community resources and services to "gradually and normally" bring about "the assimilation and absorption of the Indian into American life."⁵ The assumption behind all this was, says R. J. Rushdoony, "that American culture was desirable and necessary to the good life, and that Indian culture was markedly inferior. Hence the Indian had to be systematically converted to this new way of life."⁶

The missions director of the CRC, Dr. Henry Beets, endorsed absorption, advocating that Indians intermarry with whites (given no stigma against the progeny of their mixed

marriages) and that they be absorbed into the mass, "not only to the benefit of the smaller fraction, but to the advantage of the larger."⁷ The missionary personnel, moreover, used what they saw as a providential relationship to reach Indian children in government schools. The CRC pioneer missionary in Tohatchi, Rev. L. P. Brink, preached at the government school each Sunday, acted as its Sunday school superintendent and taught catechism to about 150 pupils one hour per class each week. He was extremely pleased with a new regulation that required government teachers to urge their pupils to attend church services, since his church building, once constructed, would be the only one in Tohatchi.⁸ This cooperative relationship between church and state, reminiscent of European colonial models, identified Christianity with Western culture to an uncomfortable degree, and it may have injured missions as much as it aided them, since Christianity was labeled "the white man's religion."

For the Indian, native religion was his culture, his traditions, and his way of life, all in one, and CRC missionaries acknowledged this. Rev. L. P. Brink believed that Indian religion was "not without elements of divine truth," yet it was "a false religion."⁹ Most missionaries, however, were less sympathetic than Brink and considered it to be completely false, since it did not transform their lives, nor did it help them to progress in civilization because it was like a "millstone around their necks."¹⁰ Zuni Pueblo, for example, was referred to as a citadel of Satan for its frightening ceremonies, wild dancing and chanting, and pagan rituals, too immoral for missionaries to describe. The CRC missionary in Zuni, Mr. Andrew Vander Wagen, incurred the wrath of the Zunis for preaching their complete damnation, but he wanted to be certain "they wouldn't misunder-

Medical Doctor J. D. Mulder

stand."¹¹ Rev. Fryling sensed the failure of this approach and tried to explain such Christian principles as the difference between celestial bodies and their creator; the compatibility of the Trinity with monotheism; and the total depravity of man—his guilt, his doom, and his necessity to be saved by Jesus. The Zunis, having no words or concepts in their language for Christian doctrines, could scarcely comprehend them; moreover, they had little idea of

The missionaries generally perceived the Indian home environment to be humanly degrading and another impediment to the Indians' progress. Dr. Beets described the hogans as "little shacks or shanties . . . [with] no stoves, no chairs, no bed worthy of the name. Not even a chimney. Just a big hole in the so-called roof . . . and no door except a blanket." These "ancestral heathen hovels" were dirty and vermin infested, and here lived the Navajo, together with his virtually

the issue before the home churches: "As our Navajo converts multiply, the pressing question will be more and more: 'What shall we do for them and with them?' We certainly cannot leave them to shift for themselves as well as they can. Religious, social and natural conditions seem to forbid this."¹⁷

The answer to Beets's question was Rehoboth, a former ranch outside Gallup, which the church envisaged as a self-supporting colony where it could provide for the spiritual and material needs of its converts and separate them from their heathen, uncivilized kinsmen. Besides a church, boarding-school, and hospital, Rehoboth had a store and an industrial institution, whose purpose, in part, was to teach Indians the value of hard work, job responsibility, and thriftiness. Mr. J. H. Bosscher, the project supervisor, remarked that Navajos were "good with a shovel and pick" but needed supervision to become more efficient in "getting out the most work in the least time."¹⁸ Dr. J. R. Vander Veen simply refused to employ Navajo girls in the hospital kitchen because he had no one to supervise them. He described them as "utterly incapable for [sic] any responsibility."¹⁹ In money matters, Indians could not save; they liked to borrow, but getting them to pay back was like "pulling teeth." The saying was, if you wanted "to get rid of a Navajo, loan him fifty cents."²⁰

The hospital, built in 1910, served Indians well, since there were so few medical facilities on or near the reservation. Its humanitarian function, however, was secondary to its main purpose of serving as a maidservant to the gospel ministry. Nor did it hide the missionaries' negative opinions regarding native medicine as an evil and heathen practice, even a "positive insult and abomination to God." Indian medicine was essentially religious; therefore, despite its effectiveness in certain "mild cases," it had



Rehoboth in the early 1920s

what existed outside of Zuni. When Fryling told them how he had crossed the ocean in immigrating to America, they asked him if he had seen the great sea monster, Koliwoesi, on his passage over the great water. Given the isolation of Zunis and the disparity of Western and Zuni culture, the tracts, copies of *The Banner*, psalm books, and Sunday school papers which Vander Wagen and Fryling faithfully passed out (in English) could be of little help in converting them. No amount of repetition "of the same simple truths till boredom" seemed to make them understand.¹² Already at Ft. Defiance, Fryling had been overwhelmed by a sense of futility in his mission, which, if not for his faith and trust in Providence, would have caused him "to forsake the field" and give "the pagan and ungrateful creature up to his own helpless, hopeless and merciless condition."¹³

naked children.¹⁴

Perhaps because of this environment, it was easy to judge the Indian as strangely wild and uncultured, as several missionary personnel did. They saw no signs of good breeding and proper upbringing as they knew them. Thus, negative attitudes about Navajo character, such as those expressed by Rev. John Dolfin in *Bringing the Gospel in Hogan and Pueblo* (published for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Indian mission), were generally shared by the missionary staff. From what they could see, with few exceptions, Indians were "sluggish, indifferent and without the slightest ambition to be prosperous in life."¹⁵ the average Indian home was devoid of culture; it was a "blank"; its mother, "a drudge"; and its children "merely existed."¹⁶

Given such conceptions of the Indian environment and character and the evil influence they would have on new converts, the church felt an obligation to protect them. Dr. Beets put

to be "condemned as ineffective, cruel and idolatrous."²¹

The boarding school was by far the most important and effective instrument for implementing Christian assimilation. Since 1883, the government had used assimilation as a reason for removing children from undesirable homes and sending them as far away as California or Pennsylvania for long periods of time in order to undermine the existing native cultural values and replace them faster. The so-called "Navajo apostle of assimilation," J. C. Morgan, for one, had been home only once in nearly eleven years of boarding school life in Colorado and Virginia.²²

The Rehoboth boarding school, which opened in 1903 with only six pupils, had over six times that many by 1910—not that it was by any means easy to get pupils. Under pressure to increase the enrollment at Rehoboth, L. P. Brink put it this way to Beets: "To scare up Indian children" is a very serious matter. Maybe you would think it was more serious still if you had spent four days and nights scouring the country as I have done. . . ."²³ Records show that recruitment proved to be a continuing problem. In the notes of the missionary conferences of September 1907 and May 1908, we find that the missionaries were doing whatever they could to fill existing vacancies at Rehoboth. "It is a very hard matter to get children, especially since we must have little girls. . . . It is the desire of all to do everything in their power to get more children."²⁴ The church's day school in Zuni had its problems, too. Since

Fryling's children were the only regulars, the Board was forced to pay his Zuni neighbor, Mr. Hamone, one dollar per pupil per month, provided he got the children to school every day.²⁵

Their abrupt uprooting and sudden implantation into a foreign cultural setting with all the Anglo trappings must have been quite a shock to the Navajo children. They got the usual boarding-school introduction, complete with haircut and Anglo name. Miss Renzina Stob, principal-teacher at Rehoboth, describes their first day in a strange new world: "Everything is strange: new faces, large buildings, the first bath, the complete set of 'white people's clothes,' the unheard-of duties such as making of beds, setting tables, etc., and going to a room with many other children who sit perfectly still and do just as one called the 'School-lady' bids."²⁶

The curriculum at Rehoboth was, as far as we can tell, designed to fit a three-R Christian-school education, with strong emphasis on the ABCs as well as the memorization of a goodly

number of Bible texts, especially psalms, and also such things as the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. Pupils also learned to sing "Rescue the Perishing" the "Shelter in the Time of Storm."²⁷ In addition to the class work, teachers placed a high priority on domestic chores, since it was thought that these were not taught in the hogan. Miss Nellie Noordhoff showed the girls how to do housework, and Mr. D. Vander Wagen "introduced the boys to the mysteries of doing chores, mending shoes, and other kinds of manual labor."²⁸ When a housekeeper was hired, she taught the girls how to darn socks, mend clothes, and sew—practical skills which could benefit the entire family. Miss Cocia Hartog, Noordhoff's successor, was pleased with the girls' progress: "They delight in making clothes for their relatives and dress their little brothers and sisters in American style."²⁹

(below) Rev. H. Fryling with mission school children.



Living as they did in hogans or pueblo houses with dirt floors and having only limited access to water, the children's hygiene posed serious challenges to teachers and housekeepers obsessed with transferring their standards of cleanliness to the Indians. Every Monday morning at Zuni day school, the teacher gave the children "a thorough scrubbing from head to foot"; because they were living at home, the Monday bath was considered "more than necessary." At Rehoboth, the matron checked them to be sure they were "washed, combed, brushed" and their clothes clean and mended.³⁰ Indeed, the Dutch preoccupation with bathing made cleanliness a prerequisite to godliness: "It is filthiness that we have to battle against. Without observing the laws of health we cannot expect any spiritual growth, said one CRC missionary.³¹

The church schools placed a heavy emphasis on learning English but did less to suppress the native language than other Indian schools did. In some government schools, excessively harsh, humiliating, even brutal punishments were meted out for speaking the native language on the school grounds. These were justified from an assimilative point of view; for if one clung to one's language and thereby to one's culture, a good command of English and success in Anglo society would be sacrificed. For these reasons, the children, many of whom had no previous exposure to English, were forbidden to speak their mother tongue and for violation of the rule had their hands beaten with rulers, their mouths stuffed with rags or washed out with soap. Some children were made to stand on their heads for as long as thirty minutes. Others accumulated enough demerits to prevent them from returning home during a period of vacation.³² Aside from the punishments, depriving the children of their mother tongue

would necessarily deprive them of their culture, for language is, as J. H. Bavinck notes, one of the highest expressions of a nation's culture, "a storehouse of spiritual and cultural forces."³³

A common Anglo perception of Indian parents as lax, permissive, and unconcerned about disciplining their children led government and mission schools to require Indian children to wear uniforms to school and church and to line up and march in military fashion to and from them. In short, the schools sought to wean children from their timeless life-style through routine and regimentation. But there were signs that all this was paying off and that parents, influenced by their children, were gradually becoming acculturated:

Last year . . . but one of all our girls returned from home in her Navajo clothes. The others were all neatly dressed in their school clothes and many wore their hair braided and fastened with new ribbons. The Lord is able to strengthen that which he hath wrought in the hearts of the children, and we earnestly hope these summer vacations may be inducive to create a greater interest on the part of the parents in the ways of civilization and the new faith the children are learning to embrace in the schools.³⁴

Lurking behind the progress of assimilation was the constant fear of the blanket, that is, a concern that the Indian children would be pressured to return to their former ways once they had left the boarding-school environment. Miss Cocia Hartog lamented the temptations, the immorality, and the filth her pupils would have to endure on vacation. Still worse was the thought of losing them completely after graduation, when they would be re-exposed to the dominant ways of the "old life."³⁵ Dr. Beets was con-

cerned enough about the problem to reprint an article by E. R. Johnstone from the *Christian Herald* which dramatically illustrated the inability of the educated youth to civilize their elders. An Indian girl, having received the white man's education from age seven to eighteen, fluent in English and French, was forced to return to her father's camp to civilize her people. Within just six weeks, "she was seen in the middle of a beef corral . . . squabbling with sister squaws over unapportioned entrails of the animals, smeared with blood and paint, dressed as a squaw, without a vestige of civilization apparent, and absolutely unwilling to use any language but that of the Lacotahs." She later married a half-breed of "unsavory reputation" and never returned to civilized ways.³⁶

Yet despite the many descriptions of heathendom in letters, books, and articles for the home churches, few of the members apparently grasped the full implications of it, or *could*, never having seen it for themselves. Mr. Mark Bouma, Rehoboth's first superintendent, wrote of the impossibility of understanding heathendom unless one comes into daily personal contact with it.³⁷ Even Dr. Beets, failing to comprehend the plans for the construction of sick rooms at Tohatchi, had to be lectured by a distraught Rev. Brink on the disparity of civilization between "settled regions" like Grand Rapids and the wilderness of Tohatchi: "The idea of what *heathendom* means seems still foreign to you, and if it is to you who of necessity are in constant contact with our workers, what must it be to our people?"³⁸ Still, the people were served a regular fare of heathendom articles in church publications, and had they read ones like the following, they must have realized the difficulty of saving and assimilating the Indian:

The Indian is a true pagan and very much degraded, living a filthy

and shameless life like the brutes. His old customs and paganistic practices are as ever before still dear to him. Civilization . . . might have changed the dress of some a little, but has in reality made very little impression on him. . . . The longer and more we stare on the problem of Christianizing and civilizing the Indian, the more we become perplexed and as Christians persuaded that it is the grace of God only which is able to change his heart for the better. . . . The needs, the spiritual wants of the Indians, crying loudly in wretchedness and superstition, call for your help.³⁹

Adding to the already humiliating military defeat that Indians had suffered, the government did little to mend their broken spirits or improve communication with them; instead, it treated them as wards. The Indian missions, perhaps unintentionally, often perpetuated wardship, and home churches fostered benevolent paternalism through such charitable organizations as young ladies' and "one cent" societies, which sponsored school children and donated boxcars of used clothing and relief goods. At Rehoboth, for example, one of Miss Noordhoff's monthly inventories listed "four neckties, six aprons, eight handkerchiefs, [and] twelve suits of underwear."⁴⁰ These relief goods and the more than four hundred free meals given out to Indians at Rehoboth in an average year were undoubtedly well-intended, but they may have been construed as expressions of Anglo *noblesse oblige* and may have given Indians the impression that they could get anything they wanted from missionaries. The missionaries resented that attitude and complained that guests invited themselves and did not have "much of an idea when to leave."⁴¹ In 1902, Fryling grumbled that Indians coming to the Ft. Defiance mission on Christmas ex-

pected the missionaries to do nothing but "'give, give, give all in sight.'" Yet Indians may have misunderstood the meaning of Christmas, since the children received gifts and even Santa Claus came to the school chapel "and added greatly to the amusement of the evening."⁴²

In some ways, paternalism became a servant to assimilation; for in order to weaken the Indian resistance to Anglo ways, it was convenient to treat the Indian as a child, as somehow in-

awakened desires and passions of the flesh."⁴⁴ But in its worst forms, paternalism was little more than a disguise for racial superiority. In a speech read at the Southwest Indian Conference, reprinted in *The Banner*, the Rev. Thomas Moffett, of the Presbyterian Church, gave a physical justification for it:

The physical development of the Indian has so far surpassed his intellectual attainments that he has aptly been described as having 'the



(above) Pastors H. Beets and John Dolfin and Mr. VanderBeek; (facing page) Informal gathering of Navajo women in 1916

capable of making decisions for his own welfare. Assuming a "father knows best" attitude toward Indians, missionary personnel patronized them as "cousins," "brownies," and "dusky comrades." Rev. Fryling thought that the key to understand their mysterious ways was to consider them as "adults in body but children in mind and soul."⁴³ Rev. Dolfin came to the same conclusion and explained the supposedly immoral nature of the Navajo by his childish understanding of life. Like a child, he was spendthrift; he earned too much for his own good, and he chose first to satisfy his covetous nature "as well as the

mind of a child in the body of an adult." In cubical brain capacity, however, and in structural development the race ranks higher than the negro, occupying a place between that people and the Caucasian.⁴⁵

In the early years, there seems to be little evidence that the church or its missionaries were concerned about the effects of Christian assimilation on Indian culture or the resulting negative effects on its mission effort. To their credit, the pioneers Fryling, Vander Wagen, and Brink learned and used the native languages in their work, but they did not diminish their commitment to the assimilation process. Mr. J. H. Bosscher and Rev. J. Bolt (Crown Point, 1915-40) were aware of

and even sympathetic to Navajo skepticism regarding the so-called superiority of the white man's civilization, but they accused him of ingratitude, blaming him for his failure to appreciate the value of progress and education.⁴⁶

As early as 1916, however, it was apparent that not everybody was swallowing the pro-policy reports of the Board and its missionary personnel. An editorial in *De Wachter* criticized pious accounts of rough trips



and the like and demanded to hear more of " 'the unbarring of the heart of the Indian, a development of the problems that are in the mission if they are universal or particular . . . the direction of a solution, the future of the mission to the people among whom we work.' " ⁴⁷ But it was not until well after the turbulent New Deal era that criticism of Christian assimilation really intensified. In 1945, Rev. A. A. Koning attacked the Indian missionaries for "having substituted education for salvation, [and] for having identified civilization with salva-

tion." He questioned whether synod's goal was really to establish an independent, indigenous church or to set up "a puppet regime, perhaps quite willing to carry out our mandate, but wholly subservient to us and dependent on us . . . saddled down heavily with burdens of our making as to make an indigenous church utterly impossible!"⁴⁸

Koning's criticisms caused repercussions throughout the home churches. At least four classes overtured synod to reject, reconsider, review, or exercise extreme caution with regard to budget requests for Rehoboth.⁴⁹ Rev. Harry Boer, who saw far better mission results in Nigeria for the money, blasted the missionaries for having generally neglected to learn Indian languages ("knowledge of the language is a *sine qua non* of good mission work") and for having failed, after all those years, to do any authoritative studies on the "culture, history, religion and customs of the Navajos," which should have led "to an investigation of the central problem of conflict between the Indian and Western cultures." Boer criticized the removal of Indian children from their home environments and their subsequent indoctrination in Anglo values:

Indian children are taken out of their simple environment and put up in the white man's dormitories, they are supervised by matrons and cared for by cooks and laundresses, they are warmed by central heating and taught by teachers who do not know their language in schools that bear little relation to their native way of life. All of this is, as the committee put it, that they may learn "what it means to live a Christian life under all circumstances in a Christian community."⁵⁰

The response of the CRC General Conference of Indian missionaries to these criticisms became an apology

for their mission policy, but it revealed a dramatic change in attitude toward the Indian cultural predicament and was, perhaps, an inward look at Christian assimilation. Recognizing the gross injustices committed against Indians by the white man throughout history, aware that Indians were "once belittled as 'stupid, dirty, hardhearted' by those who did not know them, frequently bested . . . by unscrupulous exponents of our supposedly superior culture," the missionaries no longer blamed them for distrusting their proposals for an indigenous church. Ashamed of their country's treatment of the Indian, they called on the church to set a better example for an enlightened Christian nation. But, more importantly, they recognized their need to accommodate themselves to Indian environment in "language, social customs, [and] public services," and they cautiously applied the brakes to assimilation: "Even its [the Native church's] liturgy and creed may vary somewhat from the mother church, at least for a season." The church, they conceded, must be "suited to its particular environment. . . ."⁵¹

In word at least, formerly unquestioned assumptions and attitudes became increasingly suspect. Rev. C. Kuipers (Zuni, 1927-32; 1939-54) declared that, although he had encouraged school children to speak English, he had not tried to suppress their language or customs because "We didn't want to kill the culture."⁵² Rev. J. Van Bruggen (Crownpoint, 1940-70) insisted that he tried to preach Christianity in a positive way, hoping to find answers to Indian problems without ridiculing Indian religion.⁵³ The housemother at Rehoboth from 1948 to 1973, Miss Julia Ensink, avowed that earlier missionaries did not understand the Indian or his native religion, and she thought it regrettable that the Indian had been considered completely ignorant of

God: "I think one big mistake we made was not reaching the Indians where they were. The Indians really had a better grasp on spiritual beings and spiritual life in a way than what we Christian Reformed people did. . . ." She felt that missionaries should have told Indians they were right about some things like the disruption of harmony in the world, the power of medicine men, the real existence of the spirit world, "instead of just calling it superstition, which they did. . . ." Missionaries put the Indian on the defensive, she says, because they didn't believe in Indian ways and told him "the medicine man is a lot of bunk. . . ." ⁵⁴

Judge Tom Tso, a Navajo tribal judge and pastor in the CRC, grew up as a shepherd in a traditional Navajo environment. At night, next to the fire, he listened to his elders tell stories and legends about the past. In these legends were lessons and morals which warned him of past mistakes his people had made. His parents and grandparents also taught him the priorities of life: songs and prayers to bring blessings and peace of mind; respect for the medicine man and how to use what he could offer the concept of life as religion and religion as the land and its livestock. The more you have of these, he learned, the wealthier you are. His father taught him about selectivity—how to take only what is good and useful for life. He was told that "putting the white man's tongue-skin on your own [learning his language]" could increase his wealth. Later, in high school, he had to decide how he was going to blend Anglo and Indian culture. His teachers told him his past was bad; yet he was able, on his own, to make it compatible with Anglo society. He knew what to reject and what to hold fast. Other classmates were not so fortunate; they could not cope, and even though they were smart, they just could not learn and

got bad grades. They were embarrassed and ashamed of their past. Many of those classmates, he says, turned to alcohol. ⁵⁵

Mr. Jack De Groat, the regional home missionary for the CRC in 1985, recalls his school days at the government boarding school at Crownpoint: "It was a very military-like school. We marched to school, [to] eat, [to] church." The children were punished for speaking Navajo. To them, the suppression of their language meant a

her that no matter how hard she scrubbed, she was still and would always remain a Navajo. His daughter, now grown up, still remembers that incident. "Those are the type of schools that we went through," he says. ⁵⁶

The harmful effects that Anglo attitudes caused Indians are further illustrated in the following examples. Rev. Roe Lewis, a Pima brought up and educated under the Presbyterians, described the experience of



condemnation of their culture and themselves. "It [the language] was bad. You should forget it—your identity, your way of life. . . . One of the reasons behind it was to re-do the individual . . . trying to phase him into white society." Years later, an incident occurred which showed the effects of "all the scrubbing and brushing" taught in school. When his young daughter was being given a bath by her mother, she said, " 'Mommy, scrub me so I can be white like my friend.' So I guess she learned that," says De Groat. Her mother had to tell

(above) Rehoboth school boys in the early 1950s; (facing page) Contrasting styles in school groups in the 1930s and the 1950s

assimilation as "painful, extremely painful." He blamed paternalism (or "150 years of destruction of Indian culture") for developing an inferiority complex in Indians. ⁵⁷ Evelyn Begay, a former Navajo teacher at Rehoboth, was asked to give an Indian perspective on the bicentennial for *The Banner*. She spoke forthrightly of the need for CRC members to understand themselves and their relationship to Indians:

As much as any Indian can say he is a Christian, somewhere down deep in his heart there is that hurt feeling toward the white man. There is a scar that will take time to heal. . . . And so in this year of the bicentennial, I only ask that our white brothers make themselves more aware of their attitudes not only to the Navajos, but to Indians in general. Work with us in an honest way—we've suffered enough.⁵⁸

A survey conducted on the alumni of Rehoboth in the early to mid 1970s confronted the assumptions and attitudes of Christian assimilation. Of the Indian respondents, 39 percent criticized Anglos for appearing dominant and superior, power hungry, unwilling to listen to Indians, and unwilling to change their ways, while 64 percent thought Anglos should learn an appreciation of the Navajo way of life, particularly its values of

patience, friendliness, and human concern. Seventy percent agreed that " 'one of the greatest handicaps to progress in the Indian field is that the Anglos who make decisions do not understand Navajo language and culture.' " Of all the alumni, both Anglo and Indian, only 15 percent thought it appropriate to regard Indian religious practices as heathen and evil.⁵⁹ The study, which was commissioned by the CRC Synodical Committee on Race Relations, concluded:

Perhaps it is inevitable that Anglo missionaries have been the bearers of Anglo culture as well as the bearers of the Good News. However, as most missionaries now realize, it is essential that we attempt the difficult process of distinguishing between Christian and Anglo values, so as to avoid the paternalistic assumption that becoming Christian means becoming assimilated to Anglo culture . . . it seems neither desirable nor a realistic view of the future to expect Indian Christians to become totally assimilated to the life style or even the religious practices of Anglo members of the CRC.⁶⁰

The assumptions of Christian assimilation that forced Indians to do away with their culture, identity, background, and language in order to fit into church society "hindered our growth for the past eighty years in the CRC," says Mr. Jack De Groat. But attitudes have changed, a separate Classis Red Mesa has been formed, and Navajos are currently developing native leaders to take hold of the church themselves. In spite of the past, says De Groat, the CRC is fifteen to twenty years ahead of other denominations in Indian missions; its future "looks excellent out there." For him, a new era began in the 1980s, when, he says, "[the] ministry became ours. . . ." ⁶¹



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Twenty-fifth anniversary—first row (l to r): children of missionaries: Helen Bosscher, Ben Mierop, John Fryling; second row: Rev. and Mrs. Fryling, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Guichlaar, Rev. (Paterson, N.J.), Rev. John Groen; third row: J. H. Bosscher and baby Ada and Mrs. Bosscher, Jacob Mulder with baby Gladys, Mr. and Mrs. William Mierop, Nellie Baker, Mrs. Jacob Bolt, Vander Weide, Renze Stob, Gertrude Bush, Anna Havinga, Sofia Fryling, Winnie Schoon, N. Vander Wagen, Cornelius Lucas, John Swets, Bert Sprik, Mark Bouma.

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⁵¹General Conference of Christian Reformed Missionaries on the Indian Field, *Our Indian Missions: Pietistic or Reformed?* (Grand Rapids, MI, n.p., circa 1950) 20, 33.

⁵²Taped interview, 1973.

⁵³Taped interview, undated.

⁵⁴Julia Ensink, personal interview, 14 Jan. 1985, Hudsonville, Michigan.

⁵⁵Tom Tso, personal interview, 15 Feb. 1985, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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⁵⁸"An Indian Views the Bicentennial," 2 July 1976: 10, 11.

⁵⁹Social Research Center of Calvin College, *The Christian Reformed Mission to Reservation and Urban Indians: A Sociological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, 1975) 68-69.

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⁶¹Personal Interview.



Back row: Jay Bosscher, Arthur Bosscher, Christine Brink, Jessica Mierop, Don Mulder, Wilhelmina Brink, L. P. Brink, Mr. and Mrs. John VanWyck (Prairie View, Kan.), Mr. and Mrs. Barney Stapp, Mrs. Rosbach, Hattie Beekman, Mary Denetdele, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Vander Wagen, Dr. J. W. Brink; fourth row: Mrs. Edward Vander Wagen with baby Effa, Jeanette Lam, Marie m, Jeanette Vander Werp, Fannie Vander Wall, Rev. Jacob Bolt; fifth row: Hugh Denetdele, Edward

BOOKS

Telling the Next Generation: Educational Development in North American Calvinist Christian Schools. Harro W. Van Brummelen. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1986. \$14.75 (U.S.), paperback.

Harro W. Van Brummelen's education includes a Master's degree in education (1971) from the University of Toronto and a doctorate in education (1984) from the University of British Columbia. Over the past two decades, his varied experience in Canadian Christian schools includes positions

such as high school teacher, principal, and education coordinator for the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia. For the years 1978-84, he functioned as chairman of the Canadian Curriculum Council, created in 1978 by Christian Schools International, and presently is chairman of the Education Department of Trinity Western University in British Columbia.

Those who are interested in a profusely detailed, extensively documented, and penetrating historical analysis of the Calvinist Christian school movement in North America written by a person who labels himself a "Kuyperian Calvinist" will find this revised doctoral dissertation essential reading. For Van Brummelen, key factors in the development of the North American Dutch community were and still are ethnicity, religion, and education. How the Christian schools established by this community reflect in both their character and curriculum the thinking of those who have made these institutions a reality is the question Van Brummelen strives to answer. Calvinist Dutch-Americans, both leaders in the education movement and common folk, saw the need for Christian schools. But, according to Van Brummelen, unity of philosophic purpose for the existence of Christian schools escaped them and still remains an elusive goal. Often this lack of agreement is exhibited in conflicting and, at times,

hostile views concerning curriculum, teaching methods, and textbook content.

Both in the Netherlands and in America, Calvinist Christian schools have flourished, but this growth, Van Brummelen asserts, does not reflect unity of purpose as to why these schools should exist and what is to be taught in them. In the early nineteenth-century Netherlands, many in the Réveil (upper-class intellectuals) and Afscheiding (lower-class day laborers and farmers) saw the need for Christian schools but differed concerning the reasons for these institutions. For Van Brummelen the struggle for the soul of the Christian school movement is between those who share the seceder isolationist mentality and those who cherish the ideas of the Réveil and are therefore sympathetic to Abraham Kuyper's sphere sovereignty notions and, above all, to his belief that all of life is religious. Sympathetic to the Kuyperian view, Van Brummelen believes the Christian school is the place where the student must gain this Kuyperian vision and be equipped to practice in a socially relevant way what he has been taught. Van Brummelen is critical of what is for him a "monastic view," which makes the Christian school a pious preserve where students are isolated from a worldly society and where the school functions as an appendage of the church.

CHRISTIAN STUDIES TODAY

TELLING THE NEXT GENERATION

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH AMERICAN CALVINIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

HARRO W. VAN BRUMMELEN

In tracing the ideological shifts in Calvinist Christian schools in America, Van Brummelen notes that by 1920 these schools were no longer parochial. Societies or boards controlled them. Often those supporting these institutions saw much good in the American social and political environment, and as a consequence the schools became Americanized. Patriotism, loss of the Dutch language, fondness for the American way, and World War I had by 1920 rendered the Kuyperian ideal obsolete. During the years 1920–45, those supporting Christian schools desired institutions where their children would be protected from worldly influences, be well educated, be nurtured in piety and love of country, and, thus, be molded into loyal members of church and nation. Since World War II this outlook has been challenged by Dutch-Canadians who, embracing the Kuyperian world view, desire schools and curricula where this philosophy becomes an educational reality. In many ways these postwar immigrants to Canada and their children held and still hold views similar to those of Van Brummelen.

After three chapters about curriculum both in the United States and Canadian Calvinist Christian schools, Van Brummelen closes his work with a section titled "Isolation, Conformation, or Transformation." Here his concluding sentences reveal his thinking about the future of Calvinist Christian schools. He desires distinctive schools where curriculum and textbook content put into practice the theories of Abraham Kuyper and where students are trained to transform society and not conform to it. This, he believes, and not religious and social isolation is the primary mission of the Christian school, separating it from the public institution.

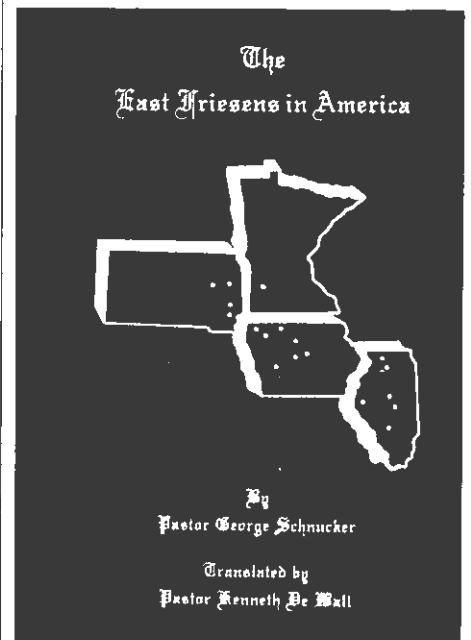
Van Brummelen's narrative is critical in tone, and he scrutinizes with great care the ideas of past and con-

temporary leaders in the North American Calvinist Christian school movement. Among those not immune to the author's acute judgment are Bernard J. Bennink (1864–1947), Mark Fakkema (1890–1970), Henry Zylstra (1909–56), Nicholas Wolterstorff, Lambert J. Flokstra (1897–1965), Henry Beversluis, and Arnold De Graaff. The author desires careful and precise thinking about curriculum matters, which will result in fleshed-out materials for student use. Past and present leaders, movements, and institutions such as the National Union of Christian Schools* are examined and assessed in a manner which helps the reader comprehend the challenges faced by educational leaders and parents in the United States and Canada who are thinking hard about faith and practice in school and curriculum.

As a history of American and Canadian Christian schools and their origins in the Netherlands, Van Brummelen's study is second to none. His extensive annotated chapter bibliographies indicate wide reading in both English and Dutch sources. As a scholarly resource for both discussion and historical background, this volume belongs in all Christian school libraries and also in all church libraries, where any member of the congregation who has an interest in the subject can read about it and become both better informed and inspired.

The East Friesens in America: An Illustrated History of Their Colonies to the Present Time.** George H. Schnucker. Trans. Kenneth H. De Wall. Topeka, Kansas: H. Jostens, 1986. \$19.95.

Originally written in German by the Reformed Church of America minister George Schnucker (1874–1934), *The East Friesens in America* first appeared in 1917 under the



title *Die Ostfriesen in Amerika*. Though not an East Friesian himself, Schnucker served the Silver Creek Reformed Church, located in German Valley, Illinois, during the years 1907–1916. He is a staunch admirer of these German folk who came to the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century and settled in the Midwest, primarily in Illinois, central and northwest Iowa, southwestern Minnesota, and near the eastern border of South Dakota. For Kenneth H. De Wall, translating this work was "a labor of love." His statement "Like Pastor Schnucker I, too, love and admire the East Friesen people" reveals that both he and the author are a bit less than objective when they think and write about these Germans.

By the second decade of this century, Schnucker asserts, 8,075 families, or about 40,375 persons, who considered their background East Friesian and Reformed lived in America, some in enclaves predominantly East Friesian and others in towns and

*Currently known as Christian Schools International.

**G. Schnucker's spelling.

cities where these immigrants constituted a strong ethnic minority. First settled, and the mother colony, was the area in the vicinity of German Valley, Illinois (located about fifteen miles slightly southwest of Rockford, Illinois), where Arend J. Arends arrived with his family in 1847. Arends left East Friesland to improve his prospects, not for reasons of poverty or religious persecution. As a member of the established Reformed Church and a wheelwright by occupation, his future in his native town of Neermoor, East Friesland, Germany, was fairly secure. Schnucker says very little about religious freedom as a reason for immigration of the East Friesians, nor did ministers lead their flocks from East Friesland to America as Van Raalte and Scholte had guided immigrants from the Netherlands.

More than half of this volume is devoted to the German Valley community and the Silver Creek Reformed Church, founded there in 1851. Not neglected are seventeen other East Friesian settlements, which are discussed in a hundred-page section of the book titled "The Later Developing Colonies." Here we read about Emden, Illinois; the Iowa towns of Steamboat Rock and Grundy Center; and Clara City, Minnesota, to name just a few. For each, the names of the founders are given as well as a brief historical sketch and random comments about church life and the rural economy. Occasionally Schnucker makes comparisons between the various settlements. For example,

Yes, the prosperity of the Mother Colony [German Valley] is not small and is only surpassed by the Daughter Colony in the counties of Grundy and Butler in Iowa.

and

. . . the oldest Colony has purely protected, as faithfully as possible, the way of the East

Friesens and perhaps held even tighter the character, the customs, and the habits of the fathers, than the younger colonies which lie further to the west. (114)

Schnucker writes about both the trivial and the profound. Not only did the early pioneers face loneliness, poverty, and disease; they also had to outrun fast-moving snakes called blue racers and cope with a lay carpenter-preacher who believed he could mail letters to heaven and receive answers in the same way. For those interested in the names of early families and ministers, the index includes prominent men of the cloth such as H. C. Bode and Nicholas Steffens and a host of family names. Among these are Primus, Janssen, Reints, Arends, and Meyer. Scattered throughout are nuggets of historical information about churches. Schnucker identifies ninety-five "pure" East Friesian congregations; of these, forty are Reformed Church of America, thirty-five are Presbyterian, eight are Christian Reformed, and eight are Baptist.

Also significant are the author's observations about the East Friesians' lack of enthusiasm for either achievements of the intellect or education, and in particular secondary and higher learning. This East Friesian immigrant mentality, in Schnucker's view, can be understood if the reader remembers that the East Friesians were members of the working class in Germany and had little contact with those in intellectual circles. In America these people arrived poor, worked hard, and prospered without the benefits of education. Consequently, they saw little pragmatic value in learning for their children, who helped with farm chores. Notable change did not take place until the early years of this century. Institutions offering secondary and higher education for East Friesian scholars were, at the time of Schnucker's book, Dubuque German College and Seminary; Pleasant

Prairie Academy in German Valley, Illinois; and Grundy College.

Schnucker's history can be thought of as a pious vibrant sermon containing a multitude of historical exhortations. The East Friesians are compared to the Israelites in the time of Isaiah, and the devout statements of the early immigrants are quoted by the author as examples of righteousness for all who read his volume. East Friesians are very well off, yet for Schnucker, their earthly success is a mixed blessing. His apprehension can be noted in these remarks:

. . . the former poverty stricken have soared to such significant riches. . . . But, it is also to be feared, that many, in all this grasping, running and struggling after earthly possessions, will view it as their life's highest goal.

Somewhat more somber are the author's observations about the decline of the East Friesian dialect and his dire predictions about what will inevitably occur when his beloved East Friesians become Americans. He writes,

Experience has taught us again and again, that German, and especially East Friesen diligence, righteousness, honesty, family life, togetherness, love of church, piety and depth of character suffer great harm under the process of Americanization.

Seventy years have passed since this book's publication. Now available in translation, *The East Friesens in America* will be of interest to all in the Reformed community who have ancestors from East Friesland, the area of Germany directly adjacent to the Dutch province of Groningen. Through Schnucker's eyes we see these East Friesian Americans, their farms, churches, and communities as they were seventy years ago.

FOR THE FUTURE

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

Grand Rapids: The Southwest Side and Rev. Y. P. De Jong

Dutch-Americans and the Civil War

The China Mission 1920–1944

Montana—Boom and Bust by David Zandstra

Quincy, Illinois: Bitter Years by Henry Ippel

The Life of Hendrik H. Dieperink-Langereis by Gerrit Bieze

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Van Schelven's *Grondwet* series, "Historical Sketches from Colonial Life"

Political Life in Holland, Michigan 1847–1867 by Larry J. Wagenaar



Y. P. De Jong holding James A. De Jong at his baptism.

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