

# Origins

## Origins

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*Origins* is designed to  
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objectives of The Archives.

These goals include the  
gathering, organization, and  
study of historical materials  
produced by the day-to-day  
activities of the Christian  
Reformed Church, its  
institutions, communities,  
and people.

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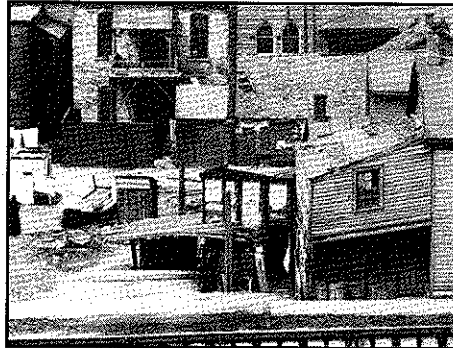
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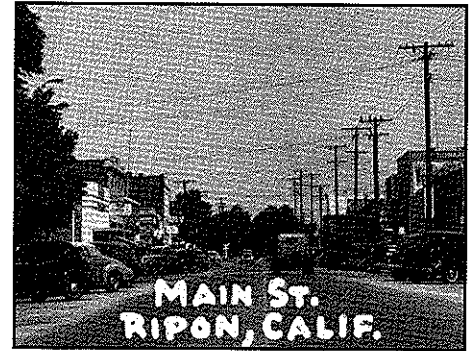
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# In the Beginning

H.J. Brinks

A downtown area in Grand Rapids known since the 1960s as Heartside has housed the city's poorest citizens for over 150 years. Its first residents were rambunctious riverboat hands and wharf workers, who spent short periods of time and most of their wages in the taverns and rooming houses which crowded the river's east bank. Already in the 1850s, Dutch immigrants, many escaping welfare in

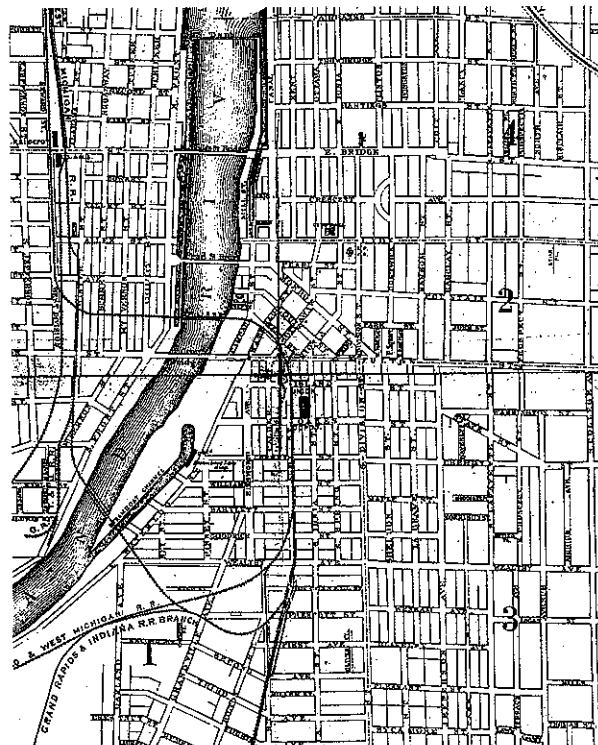
concentrated on Ionia, Commerce, and Division streets, bounded by Fulton on the north and Wealthy on the south. By 1876 this sector became the nerve center of the fledgling Christian Reformed Church.

Its landmark edifice, Spring Street Christian Reformed Church, stood at what is now 57 Commerce Street.\* The denomination's first group of theological students (1876) gathered in the upper rooms of the Dutch-language school at 43 Williams Street, and the CRC weekly Dutch-language periodical *De Wachter* was headquartered at 42 Commerce Street. These institutions were surrounded and supported by a large enclave of Dutch immigrants.

Netherlanders settled in the area because it offered unskilled jobs, low-cost housing, and ready access to both workplaces and retail stores. By 1857, when the first congregation organized and built a \$3,000 structure on Ionia Street, it attracted about fifty charter-member families. The 1860 census counted seventy-four households in or near the

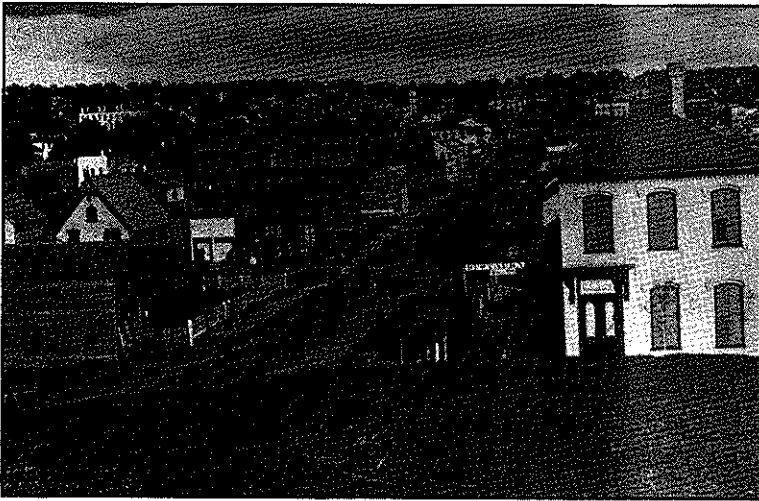
current boundaries of Heartside. During their first decade (1857-1867) Dutch Christian Reformed immigrants worshiped in a plain, rectangular wood structure on the northwest corner of Ionia and Weston streets, a

\* Commerce Street was Spring Street until 1912.



Grand Rapids street map, 1870s.

the Netherlands, began to replace the largely migrant riverside populace and establish the first ethnic enclave of its kind in Grand Rapids. After the Union Railroad Station and its associated web of tracks and warehouses filled the space between Ionia Street and the river, the Dutch were



Weston/Island Street. Looking west from Division Street.

site in the shadow of the newly constructed Van Andel Arena today.

The congregation erected a new sanctuary on 57 Commerce Street in 1867, where the first pastor, Rev. Wilhelmus Van Leeuwen, laid the cornerstone. This ample structure with a seating capacity of 1,300, was ornamented with a clock tower and a raised pulpit modeled after Reformed church architecture in the Netherlands. In 1887 membership peaked at 1,800, but in 1910, with only 500 members, the congregation decided to relocate. Its parishioners had moved elsewhere, and *Polk's Grand Rapids City Directory* in 1910 records only fourteen Dutch householders on Commerce and Williams streets—once the vital core of the ethnic enclave.

During its vigorous heyday Heartside's Dutch enclave supported an array of ethnically linked businesses—Steketee and Kim; Brink's Grocery; Van Driele's Flour, Feed, and Grain; and a wooden-shoe outlet. These and other aspects of the community are evident in the correspondence of Martin Schoonbeek, who arrived there in 1873. Martin's seven-member household, together with four other families, could find no housing on their Saturday-morning arrival and spent their first two nights in a barn.

family relocated in one of Piet Otte's apartments, just two doors away from Geert Stel's home. Martin wrote, "Piet Otte and his wife are Hollanders. In

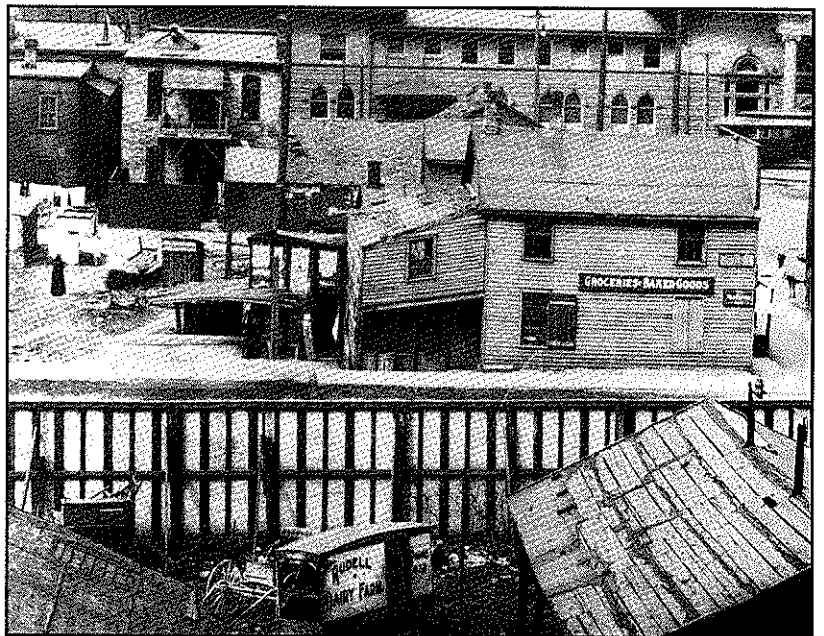
fact most people around here are Hollanders . . . . Geert Stel has been in Grand Rapids for about three years. He was in debt when he came, but he now has his own house and another which has two rental flats. He told me that he receives rental of \$4.50 per month for them."

For his own flat Martin paid Piet Otte \$2.00 monthly but within ninety days Schoonbeek was building a new home at 36 Logan Street SE. The lot, purchased from Jacobus De Jong, stood two doors east of Division Street,

On Monday an acquaintance from the province of Groningen, Geert Stel, offered his basement as temporary quarters for the Schoonbeeks at 46 Commerce Street. Within a few weeks the

on the fringe of the city. Martin wrote, "We have a fine house built entirely of wood, but wood is cheap here—\$14.00 for one thousand linear board feet. One side of the house is decorated with eight windows that have eight panes. Each window costs \$1.80, and they are well made." Two months later Martin added, "We have come to the point here where our lot must be fenced to enclose the garden . . . cows roam wherever there are no fences."

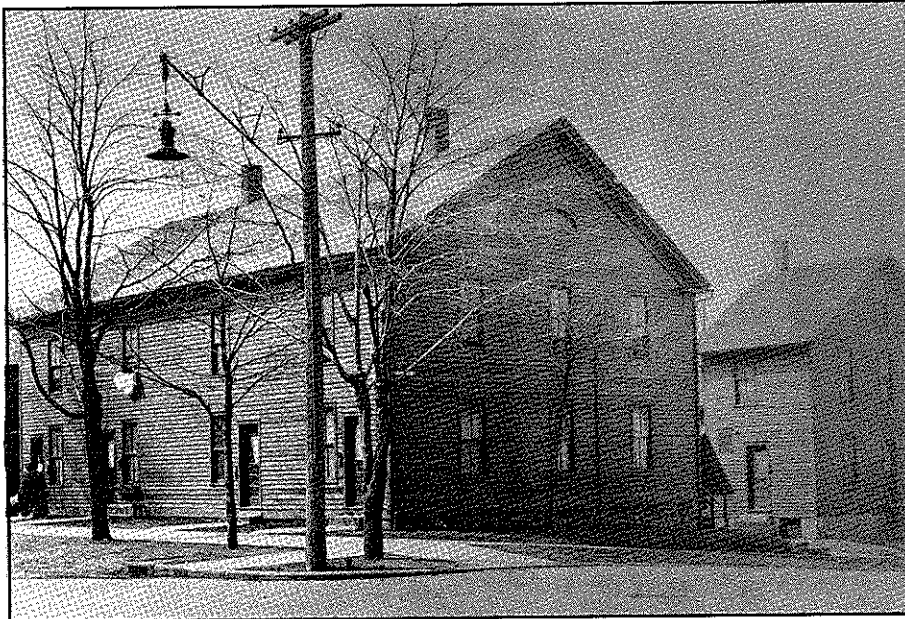
Schoonbeek's one-time neighbor on Spring, W.H. De Lange, also arrived in 1873 and provided a description of the area and his apartment: "There are many factories, large stores, and other expensive buildings here. The many wooden houses are well planned. Currently I live on the second floor of such a house and pay rent of \$2.00 per



Back yards—southeast corner of Weston/Island and Ionia facing the Union Station building. Courtesy of Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

month. It consists of two main rooms and two side rooms without windows [bedrooms?] and several closets. It stands directly across from my school."

De Lange's school was the Williams Street Dutch-language school sponsored by the Spring Street Christian Reformed Church. About that he reported, "I am required to teach the



First sanctuary of the CRC in Grand Rapids. Northwest corner of Ionia and Weston/Island. Courtesy of Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

Mrs. Spoelstra, nee Benjamin, recalled her early years, the 1860s, in the Ionia Street neighborhood and wrote in 1934,

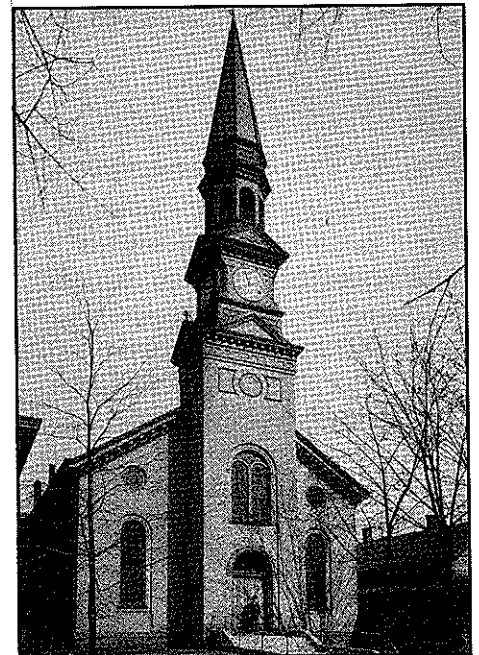
I was only five years old [1862] at that time . . . but I do remember going to that church and school—the very first church and school.

When I was about six or seven years old [1864] main-street Grand Rapids had only a few stores, some sawmills, flour mills, and some small factories, etc. A fifteen-minute walk took you out into the country.

Not long after the first church was built, in perhaps six or seven years, it became too small. Then we built a new brick church not far from the old one and called it Spring Street Church—which is now Commerce Street. . . .

Then the old building on south Ionia was used for immigrants who had no place to go at first.

children well enough so they can read and write Dutch. They learn other subjects in the English [public] schools.\* I teach from Monday through Friday, 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. The prospects are good because people can live well here on \$10.00 per week. So I opened the school with about one hundred students on August 11, 1873—one day after my



1869 sanctuary - Spring Street CRC, later Bates Street CRC or First CRC of Grand Rapids.

forty-eighth birthday . . . It was rather lively here at first and I doubted that I could hold out, but now, after eight weeks, I am getting used to it. Still, these Yankees are uncivilized rascals and not easy to control.”

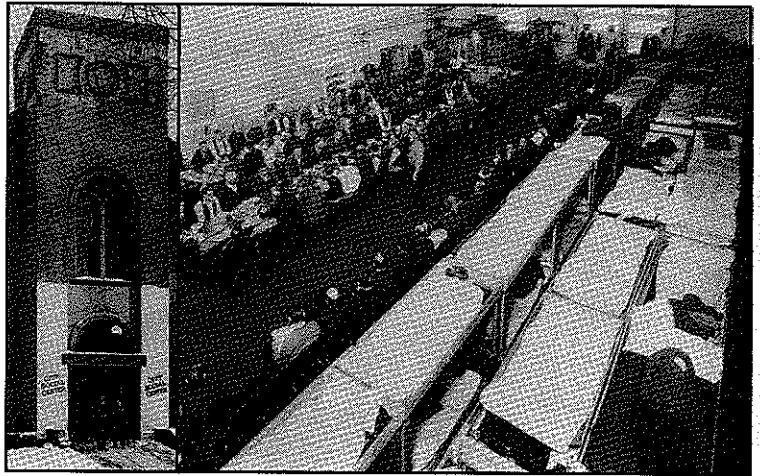
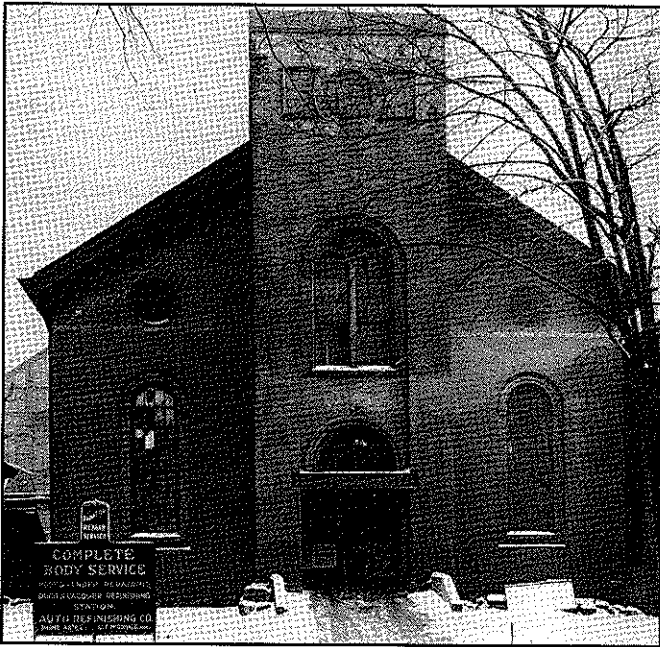
De Lange was accidentally killed in 1874, two years before the CRC's first group of theological students began to meet in the Williams Street school's second floor, quarters which served the seminary until 1892, when a

\* In 1884 the South Division Street School on the corner of Bartlett and Division stood where the Guiding Light Mission stands now. The school, with a seven-hundred-student capacity, was the largest in Grand Rapids.



Current use—site of remodeled furniture warehouse used now for loft apartments and a restaurant.



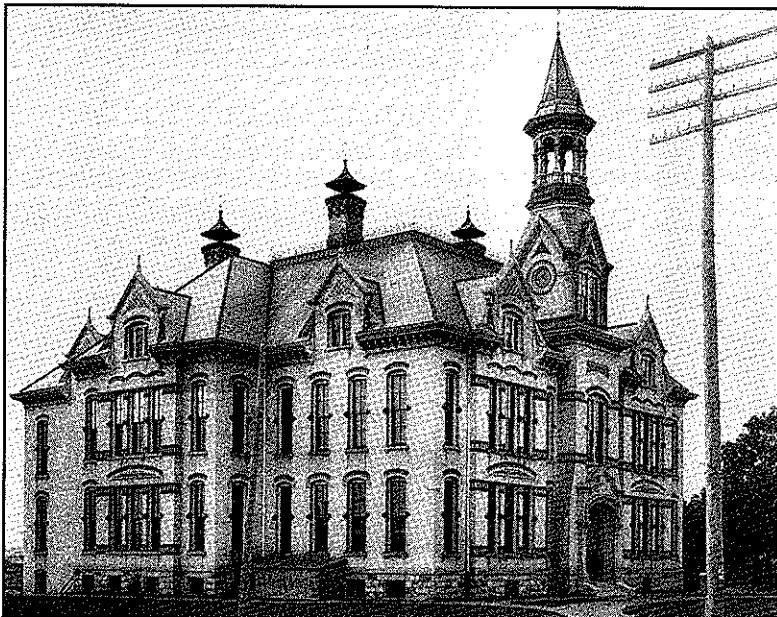


Interior of Spring Street CRC (with exterior bell tower as inset) used as soup kitchen. Courtesy of Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public

Spring Street CRC structure used as a garage after 1912. Courtesy of Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

monumental new structure was completed on the corner of Franklin and Madison streets. Grade-school education persisted in the old structure until 1905, when enrollment dropped to about sixty students. The Salvation Army purchased the building in 1907 to establish an industrial school and home.

then little remained of the old Dutch enclave's shops, homes, and apartments. Warehouses, factories, and cartage firms dominated the area. The Union Railway Station, completed in 1870, conveniently transported newly arriving immigrants to the doorstep of their enclave, but the station also transformed the local economy by



South Division Street School, 1884. Courtesy of Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library. Currently site of Guiding Light Mission.

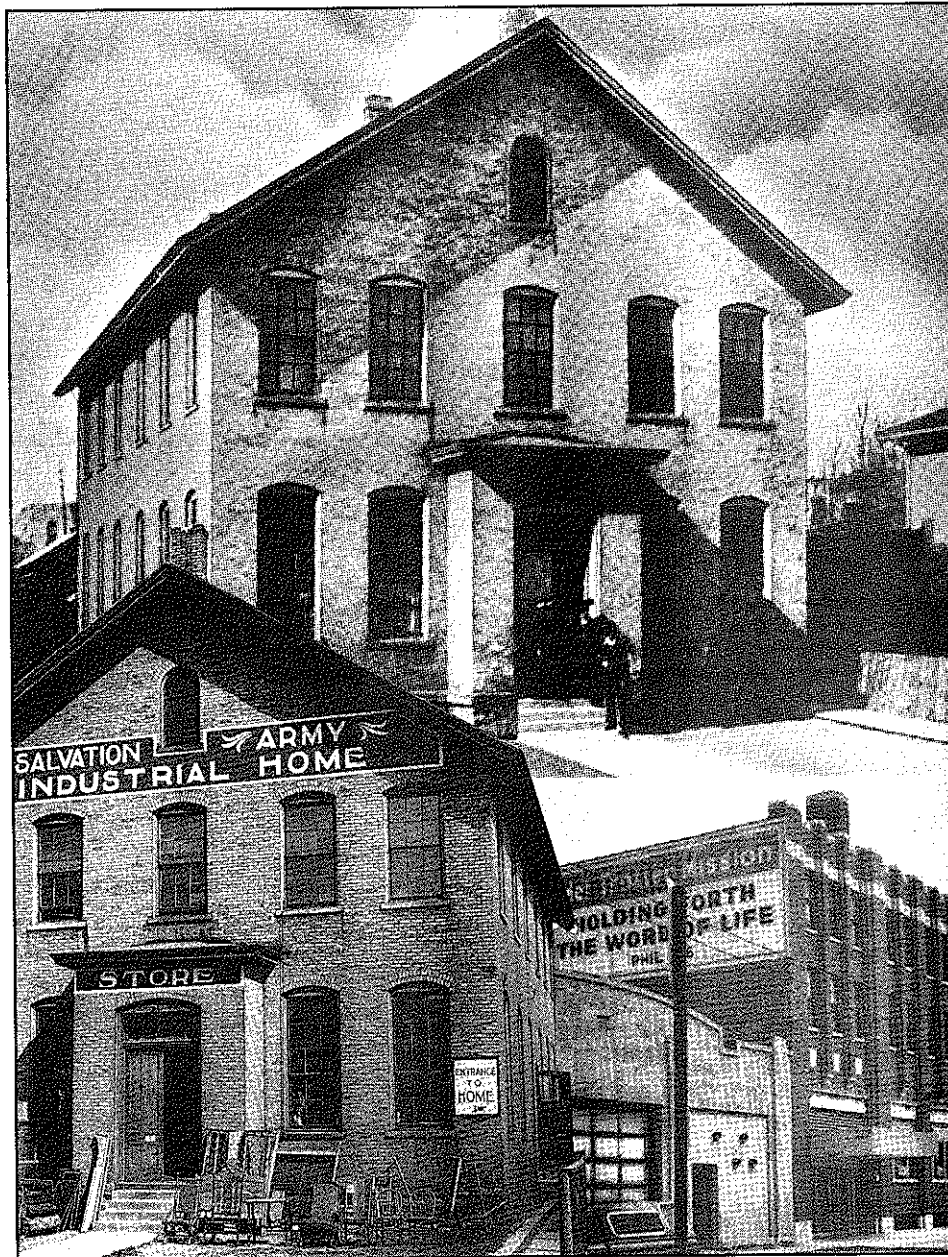
The Spring Street congregation did not relocate to its new Bates Street sanctuary until 1912, but by

facilitating the distribution of goods from both farms and factories. Ultimately all of the region's houses were razed to make room for commercial buildings, and by 1900 a new and larger Union Station

together with a train shed indicated the rapid growth of railroad-related businesses in Heartside.

The various uses put to the once-hallowed Spring Street sanctuary reflect the area's transformation. The Ryskamps, Division Street butchers, removed the pews and scrapped the high pulpit and clock tower to make space for horses, delivery wagons, and eventually trucks. In 1931, during the Great Depression, the city acquired the building for use as the City Social Center. Reflecting on the congregation's history that year, *Banner* editor Henry J. Kuiper wrote,

The pictures herewith represent the old Spring Street church building, for many years the home of the mother church of Grand Rapids. When, in the days of Rev. P. Ekster, the First Church, as it is now called, moved to a better neighborhood, the Spring Street property was sold. Being in the very heart of the city it should have been kept for church purposes, but the Grand Rapids churches did not realize how convenient it would be to have a building downtown for public religious gatherings. So the erstwhile dignified church edifice was shorn of its steeple and converted into a garage. The present owners are the Ryskamp brothers, meat dealers, who in the present unemployment



(top) Dutch school on Williams Street and CRC Theological School, 1876-1892.

(bottom left) Same building as Salvation Army Industrial Home, 1907.

Same site currently used as Mel Trotter Mission.

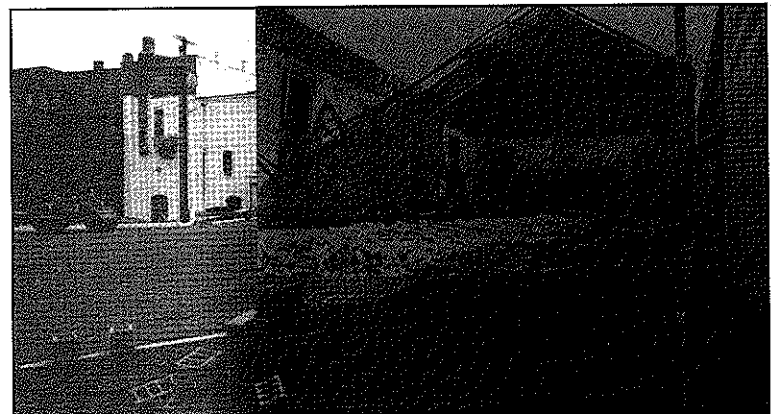
emergency have donated the use of the building to the city for charitable purposes. It is now a municipal clubhouse for homeless and jobless men. During the winter months about six hundred men were fed every day and sleeping accommodations were provided for one hundred and forty-five men.

Similarly nostalgic ruminations were published in 1956 when the venerable structure was razed. Noting that event, the *Grand Rapids Press* wrote,

**OLD CHURCH COMES DOWN**

Demolition of the former Spring Street Christian Reformed Church at 57 Commerce Avenue, SW, removed a historic landmark which was once the place of worship of the first Christian Reformed church on this continent and the mother church of all the Christian Reformed churches in this area. The picture at right, showing the almost classic beauty of the old structure, was made from an enlarged reproduction of an old photograph, prepared by Benjamin Hertel, whose father was an elder in the church, and who was baptized and catechized by one of its pastors. The congregation is now known as First Christian Reformed Church and its church is at Bates Street and Henry Avenue SE.

Today no remnant of the Dutch enclave can be detected. §



Spring Street CRC demolition in 1956 (as inset); site currently used as downtown parking lot.

# B.D. Dykstra and Californie

Rev. Broer Doekeles Dykstra, the author of *Californie*, wrote his booklet in 1936 because “it was the only way to get the trip out of my system.” He continued by way of disclaimer, “No one should expect to read everything about California. We did not visit Yosemite, nor the world-famous Big Trees. . . . We did not see Boulder Dam nor even smaller dams like Don Pedro. In fact we even missed the majestic Pacific Ocean—a regret for the rest of our lives.”

Instead of these, B.D. visited *onze volk*, “our people,” in their three major California locations—Los Angeles, Hanford, and Ripon. He traveled 1,900 miles by train and bicycle and extolled the virtues of both. B.D. once exclaimed, “With ever faster and safer trains, it seems to me that air travel is a useless recklessness.”

Dykstra was well-known in north-west Iowa for championing the virtues of bicycle transportation and reported that he “used it faithfully” during his four-week trip. “Local conditions left nothing to be desired—paved roads, level country and no wind. [In Iowa]

we were used to gravel and mud roads, hills and a strong head wind . . . The cyclist experiences a sense of inner ability. He generates his own power.”

In this and in other matters B.D.’s behavior was far from ordinary. His neighbors noticed and during World War I his pacifism cost him his position in a South Dakota parish. Stanley Wiersma also noticed and recorded his boyhood impressions of B.D. Dykstra:

B.D. had been silenced by the church.

He had been an outspoken pacifist during the First World War.

He had founded a Christian Academy in Harrison, South Dakota,

where all students would be expected to study Greek,

Latin, Dutch, German, French, English,

and, of course, Frisian.

English would be used only to study the other languages,

and subjects like math and geography

would be studied in foreign languages.

He did not bother to check with the State of South Dakota, of course, whether he could be accredited.

It ought to be evident to anybody that he was qualified to run the school.

It was a boarding school for which Mrs. Dykstra did all the cooking

and the washing—by hand,

for there was no washing machine, though there was a printing press.

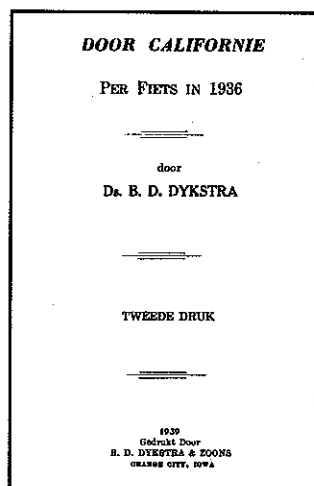
How else could he get out his pamphlets against war?

Against war and against the education around him,

he seemed anti-American,

and so he was relieved of his congregation in South Dakota

and placed under a form of house arrest.



Book title page. Door Californie.

He was never again an active pastor,  
but he served as stated clerk of  
classis,  
occupied pulpits a Sunday at a time,  
and  
edited *De Volksvriend*—  
the Dutch language weekly.  
There, under the pen name of

Agricola,  
he editorialized against war and for  
the simple life.  
If Roosevelt, Hoover, Churchill, and  
Hitler  
each tended his own acre of ground  
the way it ought to be tended—  
the way B.D. tended his own acre,

overrun with greenery—  
they would all be too busy to declare  
war on each other.  
If they all avoided motor cars—  
B.D. only ever rode happily on a  
bicycle or train—  
nobody would be able to drive a jeep  
or tank.

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## Through California by Bicycle in 1936\*

B.D. Dykstra

The rapidly growing city of Los Angeles has an ever-increasing need for milk, and as a result, a well-known colony of dairy farmers is located in the Hynes-Clearwater area. Bellflower, about twenty miles southeast of Los Angeles, is as attractive as the name itself. Artesia and Hynes combine with Bellflower to constitute an interrelated unit. We were privileged to spend several weeks going back and forth through this area. We investigated and enjoyed this immensely. The three villages are gradually losing their boundaries and becoming a unit. Even the undeveloped surrounding areas are exhibiting signs of citification. All the roads are now streets or boulevards, each with its own name. It is possible that in ten or twenty years this all could become part of greater Los Angeles, the present towns and villages becoming suburbs or boroughs such as Roseland and Englewood in Chicago. Then, of course, the dairies must be eliminated, as is already the

case in Long Beach. The entire state of California seems to be on the way to becoming one limitless city with only an occasional mountain range as an obstacle. From Los Angeles the Pacific Electric tramway connects all these places we mentioned and goes on all the way to Santa Ana. According to our estimation, by far most of our countrymen live in the south, Los Angeles being the central point.

It was pleasantly warm there in the latter part of September. But we know that citrus requires more heat than potatoes. One day we really felt that heat of the southerly sun which gives oranges that yellow kiss. We now understand better the name SUNKIST stenciled on the boxes. These few lines serve to make us better acquainted with this orange town called Redlands. But we must head north to continue our hasty bird's-eye view of our Dutch colonies in California. Hanford lies about two hundred miles from Los Angeles, almost halfway to San Francisco or to Sacramento . . . Just how this colony was established, we do not know, but at some time in the distant past a foothold must have been established here directly from the Netherlands. Thus the name Wilhelmina is preserved here. The founders of the settlement must have

been somewhat cultured folks, possibly members of the nobility, who occasionally came to America. Very little remains of that colony, but it may have been the forerunner of the present settlement around Hanford. These people are rather isolated. Hanford is located on the beautiful highway Sierra to the Sea. We cycled



B.D. Dykstra, 1939.

there from the little station of Goshen. It was here that we first saw cotton farming, it just happened that cotton picking was in full swing. It is warm work and is eagerly sought by Mexicans. They earn about three dollars a day. California produces five million pounds of cotton.

We remained here for a week and

\* Translation by Jan Kooi and Cornelius Van Duyn.

In 210 pages, Dykstra recounts his four-week trip and comments variously and lengthily on dozens of tangential matters. This excerpt severely reduces Dykstra's spontaneous effusions. The whole text in translation is available at the Calvin College Archives. HJB

then took a short two-hundred-mile northwesterly trek to reach Modesto and Ripon. We know from personal memory that Hollanders settled in this area. We had heard at times that Zweep and Veldhoen and others lived there. Mr. Volkert and Mrs. Vander Plaats also went there, from Los Angeles. He was the son of the well-known Vander Plaats of Bolsward, Friesland. He lived at Orange City for several years. At Modesto he was proprietor of a large fruit farm. Other pioneer families were Gerrit Dyk, Theo Harcksen, and Jan Weertman. And then also Van Konynenberg, Schaapman, and Veneman.



*Alfalfa cutting.*

But we must not continue to write the names of the many who came here from Dakota, as the list would be endless.

Modesto lies some seventy miles east of San Francisco and about the same distance south of Sacramento. In our opinion it was the most attractive of all the comparable towns we visited, especially because of the luxuriant foliage. About nine miles north of Modesto lies Ripon, an ordinary country town. This area was developed later. Ripon is now the heart of the colony, especially in church and worship leadership. With respect to farming, gardening, and fruit and cattle raising this country surpasses all the other sections we visited.



### **Near Los Angeles - Dairies**

The miracle of Hynes, Bellflower, and Artesia is the dairy cow. This is beyond any doubt. Everything there swims and dreams in milk and milking. That is especially true for new arrivals who spend eight hours a day

under twenty-five cows. California is a land flowing with milk and grape juice. The dairy industry in this fifteen-mile square is simply colossal. The proof is in these statistics. Yearly sales of milk come to seven million dollars. There are more cows per square mile here than anywhere else west of Chicago. There are some forty thousand cows in this section. They consume two million dollars worth of feed. These dairymen purchase new milk cows to the tune of a half million dollars annually. Hynes-Clearwater has the largest hay market in the world. Three and three-quarter million dollars worth of hay is traded here. Some one hundred giant trucks bring hay here from other parts of the state. All told, the dairy business is an eighteen-million-dollar-a-year industry, and that is only for this part of the state.

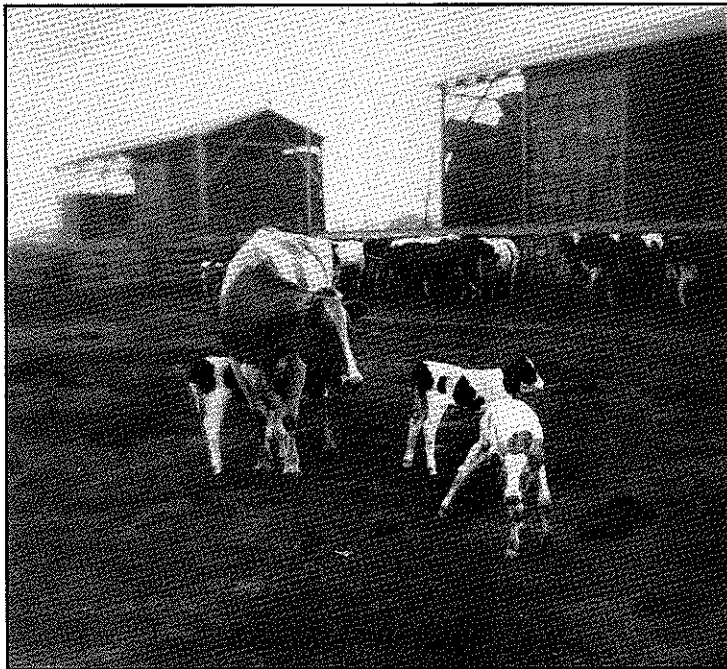
A milk farmer in California differs from the ordinary farmer as well as from the cattle farmer of Iowa or Dakota. The cow itself is a different

creature here. Don't look here for farms of 160 or 80 acres, with large pastures. Here we see parcels of five or ten acres, and the cow spends the entire year in a fenced-off milking area. The dairy farmer is expert at caring for cows to produce milk. The cows are fed and milked in a lightly built barn. Mostly they are outside, where they consume bales and mountains of alfalfa, usually not even a stalk of straw. Barns and cows are regularly washed and scrubbed. No fastidious Roman enjoyed his bath as faithfully as the California cow does. Cleanliness is the highest requisite in a dairy barn.

In Iowa we know a farmer who fed his cows only wild hay. He had five thousand bushels of corn in his crib. But he did not consider it worthwhile to feed some to his cows. In California the quantity of feed that can be eaten by a cow to maintain the maximum output of milk is subject to serious research. In addition to various grains, coconuts, imported from the Philippines, are ground up as an additive.



In the Los Angeles area practically all feed must be purchased, even hay and alfalfa. Most of the alfalfa is brought in from the Imperial Valley, about two hundred miles away. The valley



*Triplets on the A. Schilder dairy with hay storage in background.*

enjoys water and warmth and is really a huge hotbed. Transport trucks carry sixteen tons of hay. Maintenance costs for these trucks amount to a million dollars. Up to a year's supply of alfalfa bales are stacked at the dairies. The types and quantities of feed are established by scientific and practical experimentation to achieve maximum production. There is no thought of economizing. Less feed just means less milk. Every cow is a milk factory.

This clever manipulation of the cow can be overdone. We have heard it said that cows are literally burned out. Generally speaking, milking is hard work, as the udders and teats are so tightly filled. The cow has not been consulted as to her capacity. The formula is simple: stuff in the maximum amount of feed to squeeze out the maximum amount of milk. We are not saying that differences do not exist from cow to cow. They can't all be a

Carnation Ormsby Butter King, the cow near Seattle which produced a world's record 38,606 pounds of milk in 365 days. That equals nine times the production of the average cow. As

a result of this intensive production schedule, a California cow lasts only about two years. Exceptions occur where animals lead more normal lives in larger pastures—on Mr. Boertje's Artesia farm, for example, where cows can survive up to seven years.

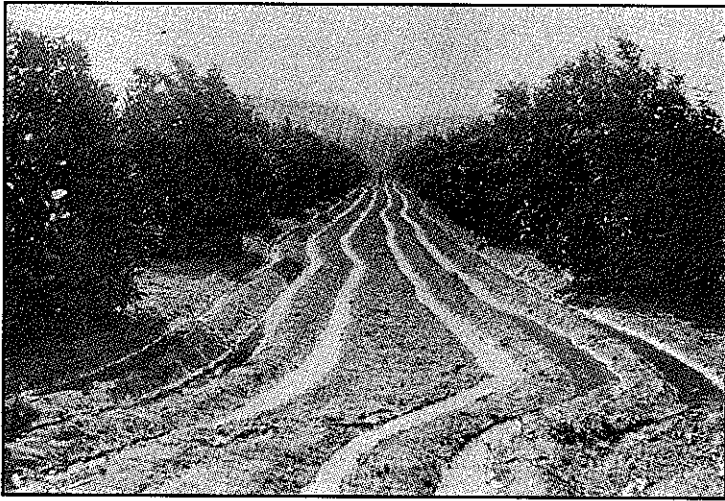
We were amazed at the practical knowledge of the cattle dealers. They are

apparently successful in supplying a constant demand for cows, year in and year out. Messrs. Middel and Van Der Horst received a shipment of cows one morning and by noon the entire supply was sold. It is a hectic and busy life, and we do not begrudge them their small percentage of profit in this half-million-dollar business. At the home of Mrs. Middel there is always hot coffee and tea for the visitor. Her hospitality is heartfelt. The milking of the forty-three thousand cows in the Hynes, Artesia, Bellflower area is certainly more than "just chores" as we commonly think of it. When you consider that each milker is responsible for about twenty-five cows, you know why they need an army of seven hundred milkers.

One would think that this certainly would be the place for milking machines. But that is definitely not the case. We found only one man in

California who used a milking machine, Mr. Verburg, six miles north of Hanford. There may have been more, but the machine is not popular. No, milking is hard, manual labor. Machines are not dependable. They make good cows nervous. Cows must be milked by hand. Cleaning the machines with all the hoses and so forth also is difficult. Three great agricultural inventions—the combine, the corn picker, and the milking machine—have so far proven impractical. Milking in California is definitely a ten-hour-a-day job. In dairy barn terms one soon learns that a "string" means twenty-five cows to be milked twice a day by the milker. Milking times begin at 2 A.M. and 2 P.M. On both occasions this means four hours of milking, followed by an hour for feeding and cleaning of cows and barn. Do these hours leave time for sleep? With proper planning it can be done. One can go to bed at 9 o'clock and rest until 1:30 A.M. That is not a long night. But a few hours can be snatched during the day. Many take a forenoon nap. From 8:00 until 12:00 it is quiet on the dairy. The farmer is in town or in bed during those hours. It is not unusual to see "do not disturb" signs on doors.

The fresh milk goes to the creameries. From 6:00 A.M. to 7:00 A.M. the milk trucks arrive to collect the full milk cans. Most of the milk goes to Los Angeles, where the large bottling plants process and bottle the milk. So the farmer has no need for an expensive separator. But every dairy needs a cooler for the milk. This requires an investment of a thousand dollars, a substantial outlay for a beginner. Starting in the dairy business requires capital investment. So many a beginner cannot get started or may lose his money. State inspections and rules are stringent and at times oppressive. Oil companies like Standard Oil have acquired many large dairies. Former



Irrigation.

owners may end up being employees. Either progress or poverty may be the final outcome. Success in the dairy business demands an intimate knowledge of the details. The dairyman is basically a businessman. There is much to be purchased—feed, cattle, and hay—expenditures of at least a thousand dollars a month. The last few years have been profitable, and the agricultural depression has barely been felt here. The price of milk is a good twenty cents a gallon wholesale. Along the way we saw it advertised retail at twenty-eight cents a gallon. But that is not always so. There were periods of large surpluses, times when it was practically necessary to give away the

milk. Let no one get the idea that he has overcome all obstacles once he owns a dairy in California.

### Hanford

Our travels now took us to Hanford, about two hundred miles to the north. We left the train at Goshen and rode

our bicycles the last fifteen miles in one-hundred-degree heat. There is a Christian Reformed congregation here, presently pastored by Rev. R.J. Frens. Hanford is the main town in this region. The church and parsonage are located at the west edge of town. We were lodged at the home of Dick Smits, brother of the late Rev. Theodore Smits, whose last charge was the Ebenezer congregation near Armour, South Dakota.

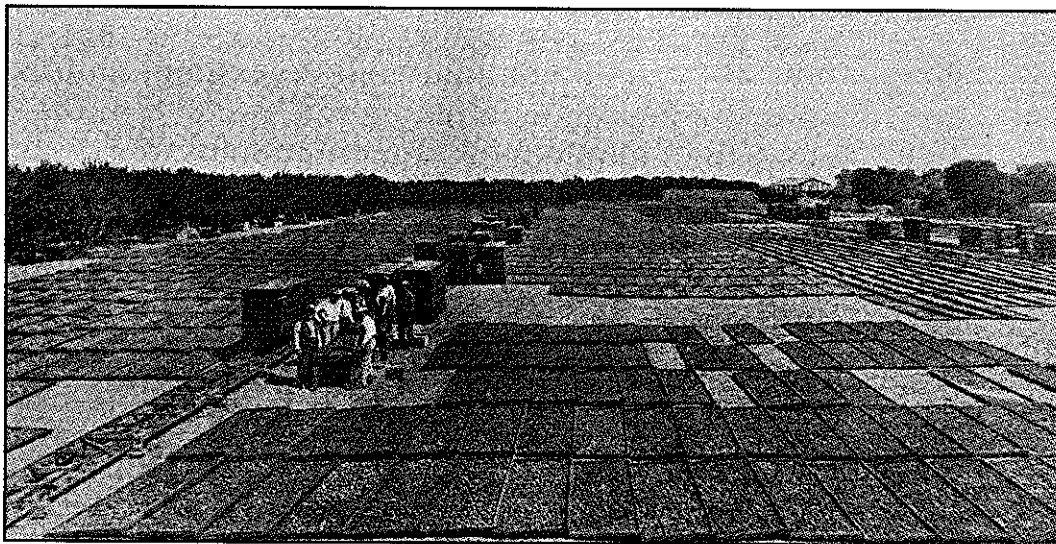
We attended church at both morning and evening services. In the few preceding days we had made some personal contacts with the people around Hanford; in the church we got to know them collectively. The Dutch

farmers at Hanford are a hardy group. As we saw them sitting in church, they appeared to us as sturdy men and capable women. Nearly all of them are North Hollanders from the IJselmeer region. Someone remarked to us that the North Hollanders are physically above average size. He credited the rich soil and resulting bountiful food supply for this. Be that as it may, in the Hanford colony you hear beautiful Dutch spoken. This they brought with them from Haarlem, where the purest Dutch is spoken. You hear no Hague accents or Rotterdam slang as is sometimes heard in other North Holland places. Rev. Frens speaks excellent Dutch. Some of his parishioners say his Dutch has improved since his coming here. That reflects credit on both pastor and flock. A preacher who learns nothing from his congregation can teach them nothing either. A language must be learned from people who use it. Rev. Frens is studious. There are pastors like that who do study.

In the customs of the Christian Reformed church in Hanford we noted the absence of some of the forms generally observed in most Christian Reformed churches. The pastor did not pause for silent prayer before ascending the steps to the platform but

followed the custom of the Reformed churches. Neither did the consistory stand during the congregational prayer. Presently, in some places the consistory stands, and elsewhere they remain seated, and there are cases where they sit where they please. This is customary in America, and so a consistory member's absence is not noticed as readily. But the sermon was to the point, and really that is the important thing.

Hanford will remain a



Drying peaches.



Hanford, CA, church and parsonage, 1914.

pleasant memory for us primarily because of the friendliness and courtesies of its people but also because we happened to arrive at an opportune time—the time of the grape harvest. We don't really care what the scientific names of the different kinds are; we noted mainly four varieties. First, the common dark wine grape; then the Thompson seedless, which is sweet and light green; the muscat is larger but sweet too. Between Modesto and Sacramento we saw large vineyards of Tokay grapes. Riding back and forth around Hanford and talking to the people, we learned that most of them had vineyards of some 40 acres. Mrs. Jenkins some five miles northwest had 120 acres. Full crates were piled everywhere, waiting to be trucked away. Some of these fields had yielded a harvest even without irrigation.

A portion of the grapes were dried to be sold as raisins. Mostly they are sun dried. Dry weather is desirable now. Drying is also done artificially, in plants designed for it called dehydrators, where drying is done by intensive heating. The natural way is much cheaper, and it is claimed that less of the aroma and taste is lost. If

time is important, the dehydrator is the answer. A substantial portion of the grape harvest goes to the winepresses. There are many wineries. There are also large orchards of peaches and apricots. In addition, there is quite a dairy industry, because alfalfa grows pro-

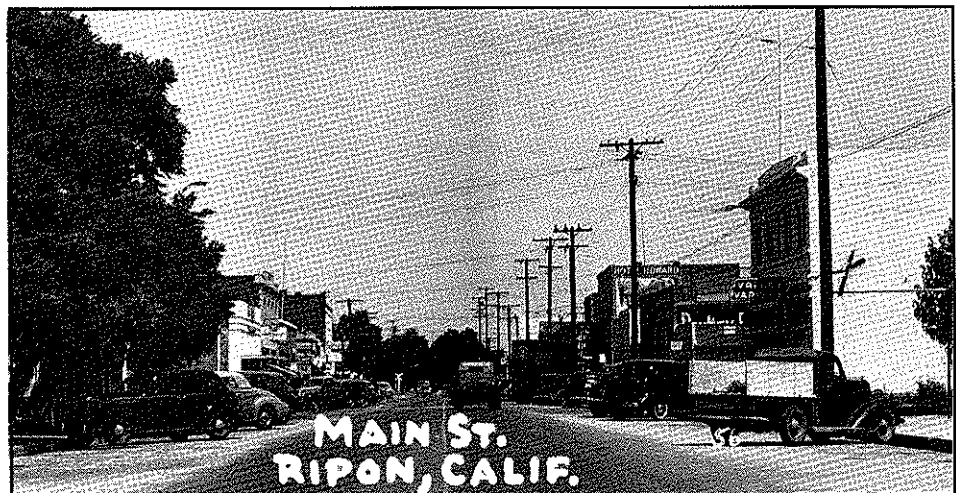
fusely. Corn of sorts is also raised for feed. But dairying here is not the all-important matter it is in Bellflower. The ground here, as in most of California, is a powdery gray and looks like cement. Most of California is of volcanic origin. The rainfall here is not sufficient, and because there is no irrigation system here as in some other parts of the state, water must be drawn from wells and is delivered by huge pumps driven by gasoline engines or electricity. It's a big job to pump enough water to cover forty acres. Pumps operate day and night

delivering a six-inch stream of water. This means an expense of \$300 a month in some cases. Mr. Stout showed us his system of obtaining water from his well. He raises mountains of alfalfa, six cuttings a year. The big question here is: whether this water supply will last. We hope so. Long live Hanford.

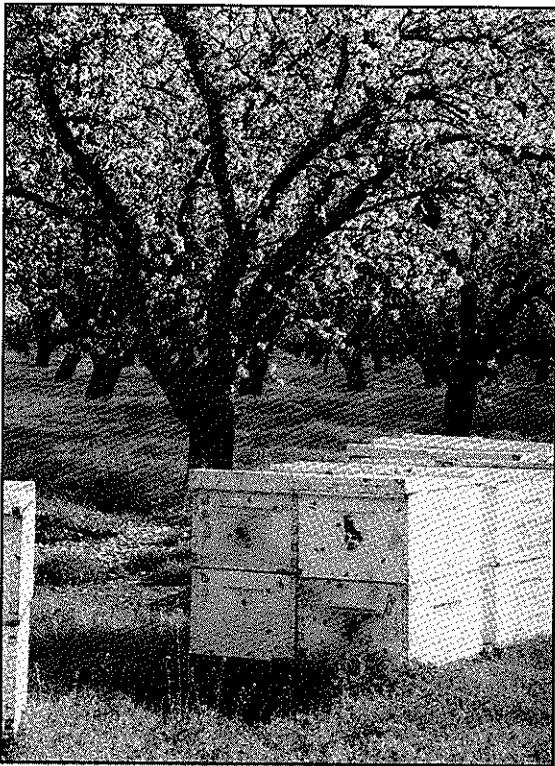
A group of young folks delivered us with our bicycles to the train station, and after a night in the rail station and on the train, we came to Modesto at sunrise. We are reluctant to make comparisons between the different colonies, but the Ripon-Modesto area impressed us particularly by the variety of products cultivated here in addition to the fruit and nut orchards.

### Ripon - Modesto

We spent two Sundays in Ripon and Modesto. We visited the youthful Reformed church too. For years the only church around here was the Christian Reformed Church, which grew into a large and strong church in Ripon. When the area was first settled, there was a question as to which denomination to favor. The Reformed people were well represented by several families from Platte, South Dakota, and elsewhere. But the Christian Reformed preference prevailed, and the church prospered.



Ripon, CA, Main Street, ca 1940.



Ripon area almond trees in bloom.

all unusual. The colony experienced rapid growth, and even if the first congregation had been Reformed, another would have been needed by this time. We have concluded that there were two basic reasons that led to the formation of a Reformed church. The Christian Reformed church was very strict in Sabbath observance, which created a problem for those whose main occupation is fruit and nut cultivation. And in addition there was the matter of the Grange. The churches in Sioux County faced this problem years ago. They saw the Grange as a secret society like a lodge. The language choice was also a matter for consideration. The Reformed solved the dilemma by organizing an English-speaking congregation.

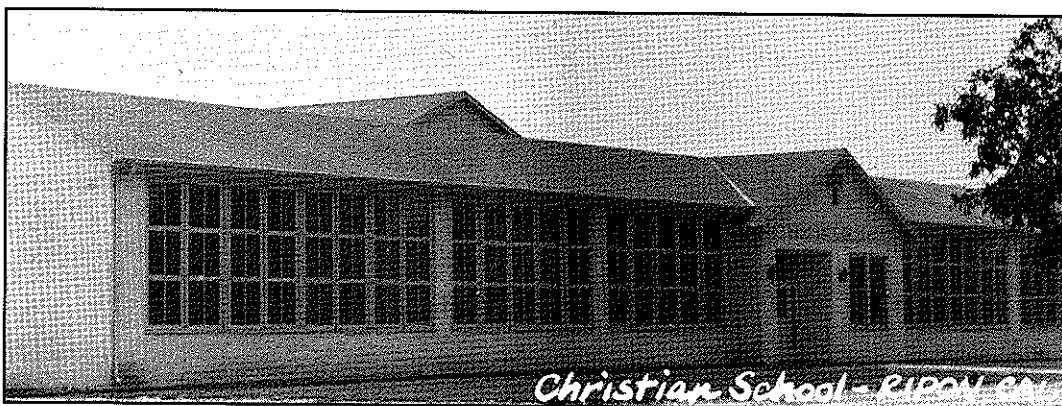
All worked together with unity of purpose.

Still, just a few years ago a separation occurred. As with any tearing, some noise results. Even at its mildest there is always some passion and

Behind the bounty and prosperity of this section one soon discovers an extensive irrigation system. Thirty-three years ago the Modesto area was

center on the mountains, the snowy Sierras to the east. Possibly a profit could come from there. The rainfall there, in the form of rain and snow, totals thirty to forty inches. With water at hand for irrigation, miracles could happen. So dams were constructed.

For example, the Don Pedro Dam was completed in 1923. This dam is 1,020 feet long, and 283 feet high and cost almost five million dollars. These dams, with their mighty stores of water, produce power in the form of electricity, which in turn is converted into light and power. Irrigation is used more and more. The thirteen-thousand-foot Sierras with their heavy annual snowfall assure plenty of water. Ripon is a later development. Our people did not favor that region until somewhat later. The productivity of this land is indescribable and includes products such as grapes, peaches, apricots, alfalfa, nuts, melons, tomatoes, grains—an impressive list and more could be mentioned—but not potatoes. For those you must go to Stockton, where they are plentiful. There a Japanese person is king of the potato farmers. In the Modesto and



Ripon Christian School, 1949.

pain. Not all the Reformed took part in the exodus. They had grown to love their church and also realized that there would be real difficulties ahead for the new movement.

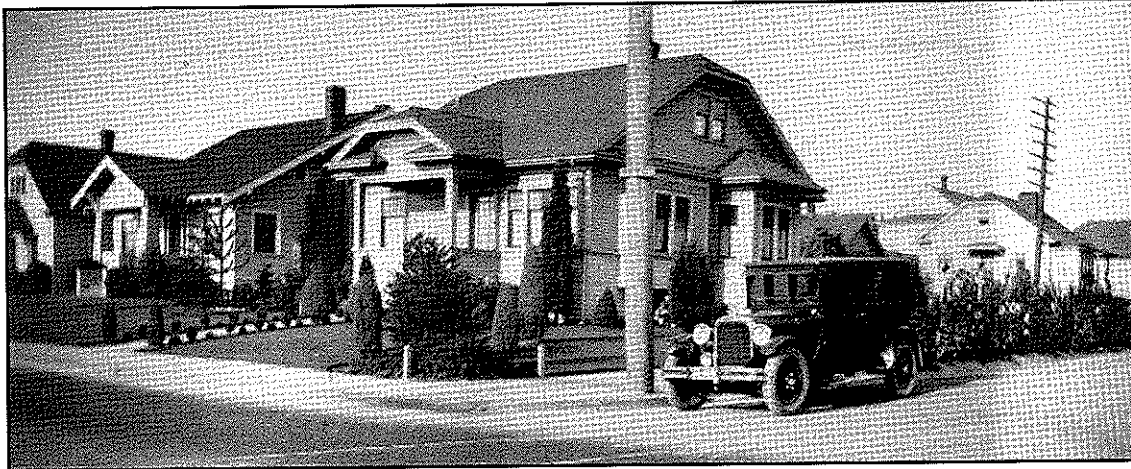
What happened in Ripon was not at

mainly a ninety-two-thousand-acre barley field. Annual rainfall is only nine inches, and usually the only crop would be some winter wheat. But more than a nominal wheat harvest was needed there. Attention began to

Ripon country grape farming is also on the increase. Dirk Van Konynenberg owns a dehydrator which dries and converts grapes to raisins. The process requires high heat in fiery ovens. A great deal of the grape harvest is converted to wine. This does not mean that there is no opposition to the use of alcohol. The *Los Angeles Times* does not hesitate to recommend local option.

Nut farming is important here. Almonds and English walnuts flourish here, and the famous black walnut predominates. Anyone who has successfully planted an orchard of these "has his sheep on dry ground." He can relax and be assured of a good





Ripon, CA, residential area, ca 1930.

Hendrik Vos of Bellflower, who provided them. He said that an equal number could probably be added, but we will publish what we have with the idea that many readers will recognize some names on the list.

income. There are beautiful nut orchards west of Ripon. In the midst of this nut country we encountered a son of Rev. K. Van Goor, who was a pastor in Holland, Michigan, forty years ago. He looked prosperous and happy. Often one sees nut trees planted along the highway. Walnuts are delicious when freshly picked. They resemble a miniature brain. Nut prices vary from sixteen to twenty cents a pound.

Anyone not growing nuts can usually be found in the bean fields. Dry beans are usually planted in fields that have previously yielded forage crops. Bean farming has its hazards. The weather can be too hot, or there can be too much rainfall. Harvesting begins at six in the morning to prevent the loss of drying beans falling to the ground. A machine does all the work of harvesting the drying beans. An acre can produce as much as twenty-four hundred-pound sacks of beans. At Ripon the firm of Den Dulk will take in a harvest of twenty-thousand sacks.

There is no fear of watermelon stealing. You can see fields of twenty to forty acres. Sometimes seed companies will purchase an entire field. They send in a machine that swallows and crushes everything it picks up. It

is reduced to a sludge so as to help remove the seed. The residue is returned to the field as fertilizer. Although one can depend on a crop because the supply of water is assured, this paradise of tasty food crops is not without its natural enemies. There is constant warfare against insects because nature seems to delight in confrontation. Farmers are armed to the teeth against these perils. If we consider the state to resemble a hotbed, it is inevitable that it also serves as a favorable environment for the growth of all sorts of insects and their eggs.

If there can be any place in this land that is completely self-sufficient, then it is this highly favored part of the state around Modesto and Ripon because our basic needs come from three sources—cattle, grain, and fruit—and these are all present here.

### The Names of Our People

I like the names of things and people . . . but for this publication I am especially pleased to highlight the names of our California people. I had plans to gather the names of one thousand California settlers, but I was too busy to list them during my trip. For the 350 names below I am deeply grateful to

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| H. Vos          | L. Nederveld  |
| S. Vierstra     | J. Oversyl    |
| R. Vos          | H. Ploot      |
| N. Brandsma     | G. Hilaridus  |
| S. Cnossen      | R. Bakendam   |
| A. de Graaf     | J. Bakendam   |
| L. Hakker       | G. Boersma    |
| S. Henstra      | G. Bouma      |
| D. Heuvel       | R. Byma       |
| J. v.d. Moren   | C. Reitsma    |
| U. v.d. Schaaf  | J. Buma       |
| A. v.d. Schaaf  | B. Boersma    |
| G. v.d. Stoel   | S. Bylsma     |
| H. Postma       | R. Kamping    |
| J. Reym         | G. De Jong    |
| J. Rietherk     | T. De Vries   |
| G. Rietherk     | M. de Hoog    |
| B. Rikkers      | S. Epema      |
| R. Ringnalda    | G. Haakma     |
| B. Schilder     | E. Haakma     |
| J. Sipma        | J. Huizinga   |
| H. Stam         | T. Huizinga   |
| G. Stellingwerf | W. Kool       |
| H. Struikman    | J.W. Koning   |
| H. de Jong      | E. Lautenbach |
| Venema          | H. Lautenbach |
| O. Jongsma      | A. Kompenberg |
| C. Kasper       | J. Martens    |
| J. Klomp        | B. Mellema    |
| C. Kuiper       | A. Mellema    |
| J. Kruidhof     | J. Mellema    |
| D. Lankhaar     | P. Mulder     |
| M. Lanting      | G. te Velde   |
| J. Luinstra     | H. te Velte   |
| F. Meiland      | R. Rynsma     |



J. Roelofson  
P. de Jong  
R. de Jong  
O. Goedhart  
C. Goedhart  
H. Goedhart  
J. Hibma  
T. Koopman  
K. Schaap  
E. Timmer  
G. v.d. Berg  
G. v.d. Laan  
P. van Eyck  
G. van't Riet  
J. van Leeuwen  
H. Wyma  
C. Menning  
H. Fikse  
A. Koopman  
N. Plat  
A. Visser  
E. Bosch  
W. Byker  
H. Geddes  
C. Meyer  
J. van Surksen  
N. Post  
J. Jongarius  
A. Plooster  
J. v.d. Zee  
E. Roukema  
G. Spaan  
G. van Diest  
H. Romberg  
H. Rodenberg  
S. Schaafsma  
B. Schut  
H. Sierdsma  
A. Spruitenburg  
C. Struikman  
G. Tit  
H. van Dam  
W. van Dam Jr.  
W. van Dam Sr.  
C. van Delft  
G. v.d. Bosch  
C. v.d. Ham  
J.M. Hoekstra  
J.v.d. Hoek Jr.  
G. v.d. Ham

J. v.d. Ham  
M. v.d. Dussen  
R. v.d. Kraan  
G. v.d. Meulen  
D. Buma  
H. Stellingwerf  
K. Kruidhof  
R. Algera  
T. Algera  
H. Bensema  
A. Bick  
C. Bos  
H. Buma  
A. Christoffel  
A. de Blij  
C. de Graaf  
F. Doting  
Plezier  
Rylaarsdam  
S. Boersma  
E. de Groot  
A. de Jager  
F. de Jong  
J. de Jong  
A. de Vries  
Hofman  
B. de Vries  
E. van Dykhuizen  
F. Dykstra  
Lukas  
J. Dykstra  
J. Elgersma  
Mrs. Visser  
H. Evink  
A. Fikse  
M. Flipse  
M. Herrema  
B. Hilaridus  
M. Hoekstra  
Rietkerk  
J. Spykeboer  
L. Stoker  
C. ter Maarten  
A. Rietkerk  
J. Hoksbergen  
G. van Hunnicks  
Douwma  
R. Goedhart  
J. Hup  
T. Broersma

R. Broersma  
B. Boeve  
J. Bollema  
G. Bos  
P. Bootsma  
H. Heida  
Vlaskamp  
Fadema  
M. Gelders  
F. Gelders  
J. Busman  
Tuinhout  
A. de Voss  
T. Hettinga  
J. Bokma  
Osinga  
W. Zylstra  
L. Zylstra  
R. Cristoffel  
J. Cnossen  
G. de Boer  
Jongbloed  
P. Schaafsma  
A. de Graaf  
L. de Boer  
W. de Boer  
J. Negerman  
Schouten  
J. Schouten  
S. Wyngaarden  
Smorenburg  
Noordman  
E. Scholten  
R. Sybesma  
G. Sybesma  
M. van Diest  
A. van Eyck  
P. van Eek  
S. van Garuw  
H. v.d. Weide  
L. van Gorkum  
H. van Manen  
P. van Slageren  
A. Verhoeven  
W. Verhoeven  
J. Veenstra  
G. v.d. Zee  
W. Wiersma  
K. Westra  
J. Lautenbach

Y. Ydema  
P. Griepsma  
D. Griepsma  
S. Porter  
P. Algra  
H. Westra  
L. Struikman  
F. Struikman  
E. Hoekstra  
U. Hoekstra  
H. Brunsting  
D. Baarda  
D. Bloemhof  
Mrs. Kraan  
G. Kraan  
R. Kores  
H. Kroeze  
J. Nab  
P. Nijdam  
P. Plantinga  
J. Plender  
R. Plender  
O. Rienstra  
T. Terpstra  
J. Troost  
J. v.d. Hoorn  
A. v.d. Berg  
F. v.d. Kieft  
W. v.d. Laan  
A. v.d. Stelt  
A. v.d. Vegte  
T. v.d. Zee  
W. van Kijk  
D. van Dijk  
J. van Dijk  
M. van Dijk  
L. van Laar  
G. van Leeuwen  
J. van Unen  
M. Veldhuis  
J. Vierstra  
J. Visser  
G. v.d. Wal  
M. van Zuien  
J. Wieringa  
H. Zylstra  
H. van Delft  
P. Abma  
R. Algra  
C. Anker

G. Bergsma  
Ed. Boer  
B. Bootsma  
S. Bouwma  
T. Bouwma  
J. Breeveld  
L. Brommer  
Ds. M. Cook  
H. de Graaf  
H. de Koekkoek  
J. de Koekkoek  
B. Vienstra  
H. Fien  
H. Grasman  
H. Groenhagen  
P. Hamel  
H. Hamstra  
P. Hettinga  
P. Hilaridus  
C. Hilt  
G. Hubbeling  
D. Jansen  
G. Jansen  
W. Jonker  
J. Kalisvaart  
J. Koopman  
R. Koopmans  
G. de Vries  
M. Elenbaas  
A. Visser  
C. Visser  
W. Visser  
G. Warntjes  
A. Wassenaar  
G. Wassenaar  
A. Wassink  
G. Wiebenga  
J. Wiersma  
H. Wiersma  
H. Wynia  
A. Zuidervaart  
D. Zuidervaart  
W. Zuidervaart  
W. Zwart  
A. de Boer  
A. van Dyk  
M. v.d. Seist  
A. Blaak  
R. Post  
P. van Foekan

J. van Foekan  
R. Heida  
G. van Leeuwen  
J. v. Leeuwen Sr.  
J. v. Leeuwen Jr.  
W. v. Leeuwen  
P. v. Leeuwen  
Z. van Spanje  
A. van Vliet  
J. van Zanten  
S. van Zanten  
R. Visbeek  
A. Boertien  
H. Boertien  
H. Veenstra  
C. Bosma  
H. Beltman  
B. Halboom  
H. Halboom  
A. Foreman  
T. Veenstra  
A. v.d. Stroom  
J. v.d. Hoek Jr.  
W.J. Wiersma  
Mrs. Kranenburg  
W. Spruitenburg  
Mrs. v.d. Moren  
D.v. Konynenberg  
B.v. Konynenberg  
R.v. Konynenberg  
G.v. Konynenberg  
F.v. Konynenberg  
G.v. Weerdhuizen  
Mrs. T. Groen  
M. Scholten  
P. Tillema  
J. Vrieling  
J. de Boer  
H. de Boer  
N. de Boer  
M. de Boer  
C. de Boer  
J. de Boer  
T. de Boer  
E. de Boer  
Mrs. H. Veneman  
M. Veneman  
H. Veneman  
G. Veneman  
J. Veneman

J. Beltman  
 G. Schaapman  
 J. Weerdman  
 A. ten Dolle  
 Sweep  
 T. Scheeringa  
 Zeilinga  
 I. van Duin  
 G. Versluis  
 C. Versluis  
 H. Vermeulen  
 A. Oosterkamp  
 G. de Jong  
 D. Donker  
 J. Visser  
 B. Blom  
 T. Blom  
 Hannink  
 S. Vis  
 J. Vis  
 B. Vis  
 G. Vis  
 J. Stuit  
 J. Veldhoen  
 G. Veldhoen  
 A. Veldhoen  
 R. Koster  
 E. Koster  
 S. Koster  
 E. Koster  
 P. Bruins  
 R. Visser  
 H. Marling  
 J. Marling  
 R. Postema  
 P. Greydanus  
 J.S. Greydanus  
 Zwaanstra  
 J. Willemsen  
 T. Harksen  
 A. Harksen  
 J.B. v.d. Plaats  
 J. de Kriek  
 E. Fikse  
 J. de Jong  
 P. Hekman  
 L. Ubels  
 B. Baron  
 J. Sanker  
 N. Bosscha

C. de Boer  
 A. Douma  
 H. Douma  
 H. Spaman  
 A. de Vries  
 W. de Boer  
 J. Pranger  
 H. Houbetin  
 J. Kamstra  
 C. de Vries  
 P. Stevens  
 W. Verver  
 S. Verver  
 D. Dedden  
 J. Kroll  
 H. Beuving  
 L. Beuving  
 J. Beuving  
 H. Woudstra  
 G.J. Budding  
 D. Bezemer  
 P.L. van Dyken  
 J.S. Dykstra  
 K. Vermeulen  
 D. Miedema  
 N. van Dyken  
 J. v.d. Kamp  
 H. Zwakenberg  
 D. Westering Sr.  
 D. Westering Jr.  
 A. den Dulk Sr.  
 A. den Dulk Jr.  
 G. den Dulk  
 G. den Dulk  
 Van Dam  
 P. Hoogendoorn  
 A. Hollander  
 J. v.d. Kraan  
 Kalfsbeek  
 J.v.d. Kamp  
 G. Schaapman  
 C. van Till  
 J. Enserink  
 H. v. Groningen  
 P. van Till  
 Mrs. D. Poelstra  
 Mrs. M. Meulink  
 B. Meulink  
 J. Vermeulen  
 H. Bouma

N.C. den Ouden  
 Mrs. S. Viss  
 T. Viss  
 J. Winters  
 O. Postma  
 D. Postma  
 T. Postumus  
 G. Meninga  
 B. van Elderen  
 S. Travaille  
 B. Travaille  
 L. Woudstra  
 J. Rylaarsdam  
 J. Moleyn  
 H. Boertien  
 H. Kamps  
 M. van Aniel  
 G. Feleke  
 B. Brink  
 D. Brink  
 J. Boer  
 M. Boer  
 S. v.d. Veen  
 G. v.d. Veen  
 J. Proos  
 H. Meninga  
 C.K. Pasma  
 B. Pasma  
 H. Smit  
 K. v.d. Meer  
 Mrs. Pater  
 H. Mulder  
 J. Nykamp  
 K. Winters  
 F. Schuurman  
 H. Avink  
 D. Boersma  
 T. de Jong  
 E. Poelstra  
 H. Veldstra  
 W. Schaapman  
 A. Schaapman  
 J. Schaapman  
 G.H. Schaapman  
 F. Sminck  
 J. Eckhoff  
 R. Schuiling  
 Mrs. A. Marsma  
 A. Sipma  
 L. Sikma

J. Bollema  
 G.H. Dalman  
 J. Weststeyn  
 W. McCoy  
 N. Kooy  
 W. van Goor  
 Saarloos  
 vWeerdhuizen  
 G. v.d. Beek  
 E. Gelderman  
 Keuning  
 Vellekoop  
 A. v.d. Akker  
 G. Vrieling  
 P. Vrieling  
 J. Vrieling  
 G. van Assen  
 J. van Assen  
 H. van Assen  
 N. Groetsema  
 H. Groetsema  
 M. Bekedam  
 S. Ufkes  
 H. Hoekstra  
 S. Scheeringa  
 Schuilenburg  
 Vogelzang  
 Heuvel  
 J.H. Rylaarsdam  
 M. van Aniel  
 Van Houten  
 T. van Ess  
 Fondse  
 Van der Plaats  
 Teunissen  
 Haarsma  
 P.G. Dolphin  
 A. de Witt  
 P. Struiving  
 Lekkerkerker  
 P. van der Pol  
 G. van der Pol  
 J. van Zee  
 J. van Donk  
 Schut

# California Immigrants 1928-1929

H.J. Brinks

Several Jorritsmas from Sneek, Friesland, migrated to the Los Angeles area in the late 1920s. Eps, married to Wiebs Wiersma, wrote several letters from Chino describing the routines of hired milkers like those which B.D. Dykstra mentions in his 1936 *Californie*.

Eps Jorritsma Wiersma penned her first impressions of California to her sister Lies in a September 12, 1928, letter:

The first week here we stayed with Tjitsch and Willem.\* Wiebs is already milking for the Iest family. They added forty-five cows and needed another milker. Wiebs milked twenty-five cows right away and has had no trouble with his hands.

I'm writing to you from my own little house—close to the Iest farm. It's a lovely little house, surrounded by trees, grapes, flowers, and as

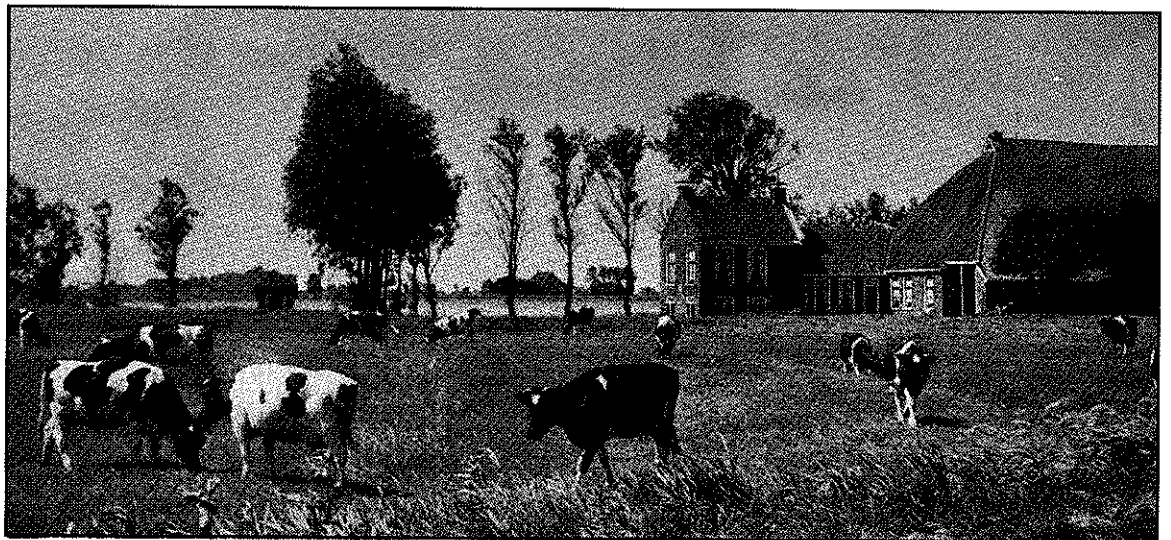
\* Sister and brother-in-law Willem Iest, a carpenter.

many apricots as you could want. The kitchen is even bigger than Mother's, with a much bigger sink, a big cupboard, and two little ones. Then a secondhand stove, a table and four chairs, and floor covering. We have a china dinner service with all the necessary dishes. Our bedroom has a big clothes closet, a new bed, a chair and a chest where I can store the bed sheets. We have rattan furniture in the living room—a couch, two side chairs, a coffee table, a plant stand, and a nice rug on the floor. We still need a buffet. We have electric lights and running water. What else could one wish for? I really like it here.

~

How is your boyfriend Piet? Do you get good news from him in Germany? I plan to write him after a while. It seems to me that this would be a good place for the two of you. Piet will be a good milker, and if he knows the English language, he will be able to find a job almost anywhere. Life is easier here because things are not very expensive. You could have a house here just as cozy as in Holland. And American women—myself too—have a much better life here.

I have to end this letter because it's supper time, 5:45 P.M. Wiebs will be home soon. He gets up at 1:00 A.M. and has to walk five minutes to his work. He finishes at 6:00 A.M. Then we eat breakfast and Wiebs



Frisian dairy farm.

goes to bed until 10:00 A.M. We eat dinner at 12:00 noon and he returns to work at 1:00 P.M. He milks until 6:00 P.M. and comes home for supper. In the evening we often visit with Tjitsch, Willem, and Cor. It's a nice life, Lies.

*P.S. Thursday, September 13*

We had a visitor this morning—Rev. De Vries. We sat in the kitchen because we are painting the living room. He isn't an ordained minister, but a missionary. This week the classis will meet and elect elders and deacons. Then a Christian Reformed church will be started here. That will be nice.

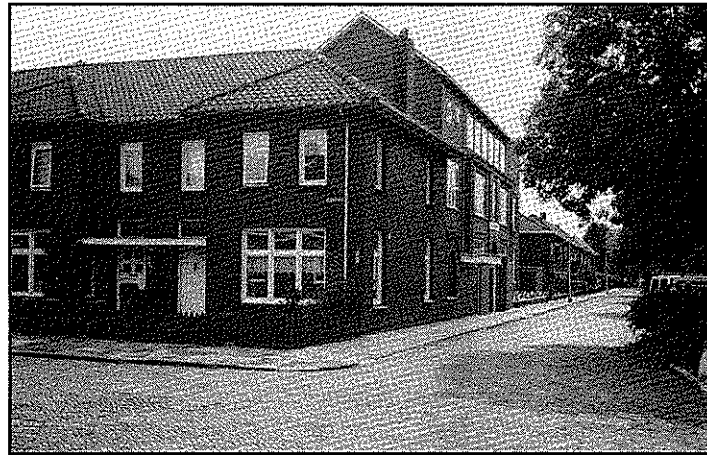
*Many greetings and kisses from your sister,  
Eps*

A few months later, in December 1928, Eps responded to the news that Lies and her fiancé Piet were intending to marry and move to California:

That will be a big change for Mother too, and I'm sorry about that because the two of you had such nice times together. But we all have to choose what's best for ourselves. Life here is much better than in Holland—especially if you hope to start something new. Mother, I would not advise you to come. You are too old for that. But you should come for a visit, traveling with other people. I don't know how best to advise you, Mother. Maybe you should move into a smaller house, but that might not be so easy either.



Hoof and mouth disease has broken out here so that cows can neither be transported nor bought. For the last three weeks only cows certified to be free of TBC could be milked, but that restriction is now lifted. It was a calamity for the small farmers and those who had just started because TBC-free cows are much more costly. But those are the ups and downs of life. As long as the Iest family's cows are disease free Wiebs earns \$135.00 (per month) and couldn't earn that much if he farmed on his own. Brother Siep

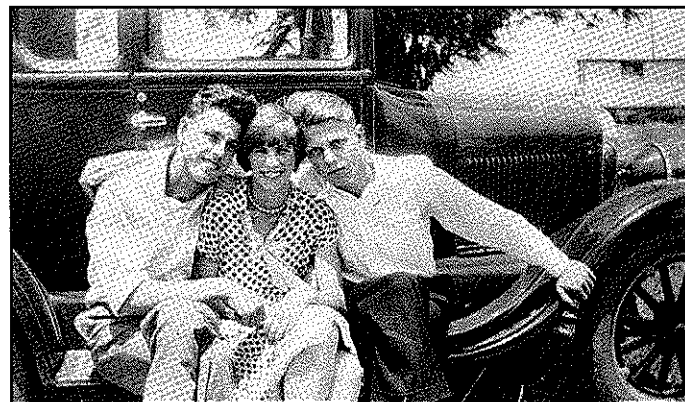


*Bloemstraat 33, address in Sneek, to which the Jorritsmas sent their letters.*

was planning to marry but he has postponed the wedding until the cow disease is past because he won't be able to afford cows for a time.

By January 1929, when sister Lies was more certain about emigrating, Eps sent a barrage of advice—what to buy, what to sell, and what to take along for the siblings in California.

You should bring elastic bands for your stockings, for it's very warm on the train; by using the bands, you won't need to wear your corset. And



*S. Jorritsma, Ann Iest, and Cor Jorritsma.*

bring all the knickknacks, such as small paintings, nice boxes, and vases—as much as you can. For you can use everything when you start your own household. Piet also should take as many knickknacks as he can. Also presents. Fill up a couple of chests.

Concerning the clothes for Piet, bring everything that still looks good, especially his (one-piece) underwear. In the morning it can be very cold. Bring, for instance, his vests and the green wool sports shirts and wool hand-knitted socks. Wiebs still wears his wool undershirts and underwear from Holland. Bring

black darning yarn, for the stuff here isn't worth a thing.

Bring all your own clothes, for in the wintertime you can wear wool dresses. Don't make a trousseau, for here you will need different underwear. You should look reasonably neat on the boat, but wear your old stuff on the train. You don't have any idea how dirty you'll get.

It would be good if Piet could write down (in English) what you're bringing and how much it's worth, for sometimes all the chests are opened and checked as they come off the boat.

Write the exact time of departure and on which train you're coming.

You should be able to get everything at Iemetik's store, Lies. Bring for yourself a colorful tablecloth that will work with all furniture, three floor-cleaning cloths, six white bone egg spoons, two or three wool blan-

kets (maybe Mother has some to spare since her household will be smaller), twelve nickel forks and knives (knives are very dull here) just like the ones I got with coupons, a medium-sized nickel tea tray, and a stone tea warmer. Ant has two; maybe she could give one

to you as a present. Then you don't have to buy it.

For sister Tjitsch bring six of the same nickel table knives and forks, six egg spoons and three floor-cleaning cloths, a stone tea warmer with a burner in it (I have plenty of cotton wicks), and white doilies for the tea tray and round ones for on the table, the same as Yebel and Yetse have. Then she would like the little clock from the front room along with the two big vases. And that sugar and cream set with silver edging that's in the little tea chest. You should bring white doilies for the tea tray yourself.

Then, for me, bring a nice-sized floral tablecloth in red or green. Ask sister Ant what the brown tablecloth she uses in the corner room cost. Six forks and six nickel table knives, three floor-cleaning cloths, six egg spoons, white doilies, two for the tea tray and two round ones for the table, a stone tea warmer just like the one Ant has. It would be nice if she could give me one, too. I would like all of this if you can take it along.

Dirk Jorritsma, another of the siblings in Sneek, was also considering emigration, and his brother Tjitse, in Hynes, California, offered advice by way of sister Lies.

If Dirk wants to come, tell him to spend no money on new clothes but to take only the bare minimum because clothes are cheap here. He should bring a pair of wooden shoes because they will come in handy. I wear them while I'm milking because during the winter you nearly die from cold feet with a concrete floor underfoot. With wooden shoes that does not happen. Leave your gold watch at home because it's too dangerous to wear it in Los Angeles. It could cost you your life. One is never safe wearing gold. I just wanted to tell you that because for \$10.00 they'll smash your brain. I assure you things are quite different here. So, Dirk and Lies, this is my advice. Exchange as much as you can for money and don't take any junk along.



*Tjitske (Jorritsma) test.*

Here in Hynes farmers and milkers get together every day to talk and play billiards—and have time for that every day . . . Those rotten farmers in Friesland can go to h—as quickly as possible, although it might take them a while to get there on their bikes. They can pedal themselves half to death while we can take a car anytime we wish. It's sunny here every day, and in the afternoons I work in my undershirt. At 3:00 P.M. we have a cup of tea with two or three cookies, and a timely cigarette. In Holland in January people are blue in the face from the cold, not to mention the fog and rain at this time of year. It's a fine fatherland, isn't it?

You're welcome to all the fun in that miserable place. Just throw twenty-five lumps of peat in the stove and try not to choke from the smoke.

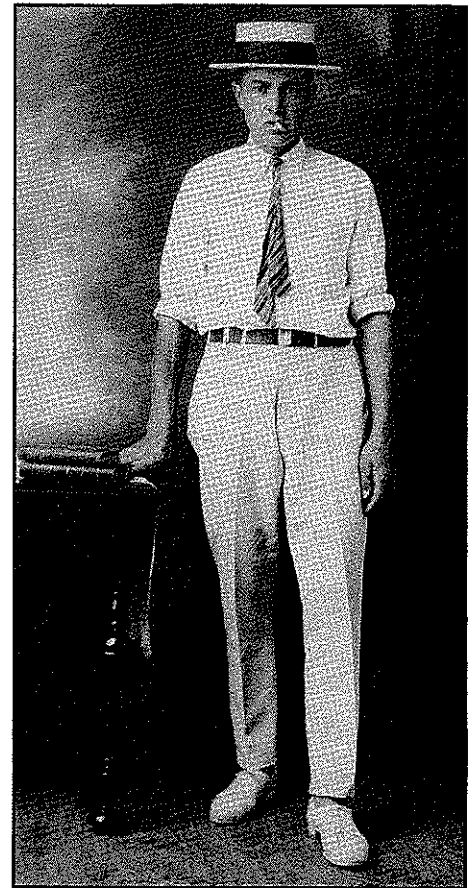
Six months from now Friesland's farmers will pull off their long underwear and the insects will be swarming around them as they sit milking under their cows' tails. Right now the farm boys should be hauling the manure from the manure pit. What fun! A farmhand is also human; after experiencing the

situation here I could curse Holland. I never knew that things could be so good.

Lies, please bike over to B. Visser, the painter in Oppenhuizen, and tell him that the wooden shoes, tobacco, and cigarettes have arrived. Ulbe [Visser] was very happy with the package when he received it. Thanks very much and tell Visser that Ulbe and I smoke the Dutch tobacco every day.

We are all well and hope you are too.

*Mr. T. Jorritsma  
Route 1 Box 75  
Hynes, California*



*Thijs Jorritsma.*

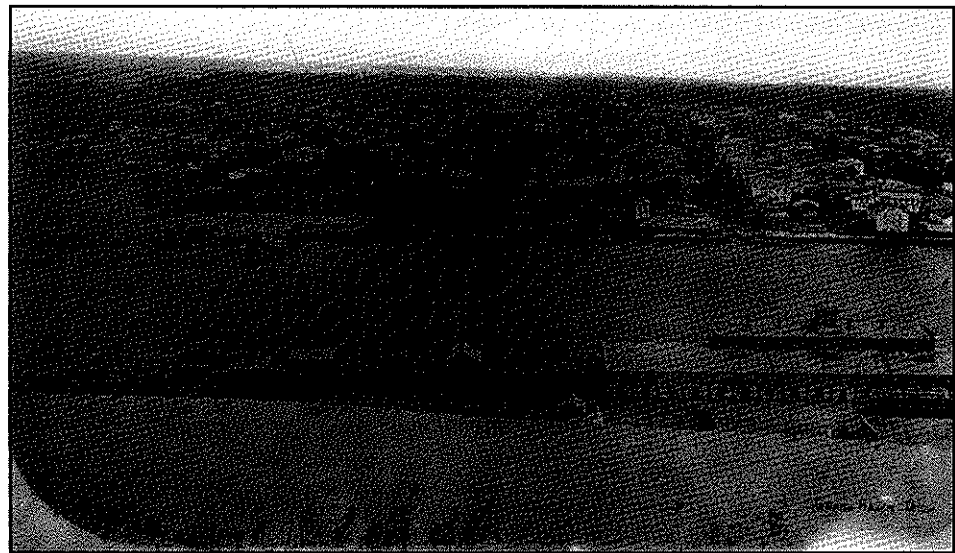


# Grand Haven Fishing

H.J. Brinks

Grand Haven, Michigan, was founded in 1834, the year when Rev. William Ferry\* arrived and joined Rix Robinson and others to establish the Grand Haven Company. Robinson was the American Fur Trading Company's agent for western Michigan. He managed twenty trading posts, including those in his home base of Ada, Michigan; in Grand Rapids; in Montague; in Muskegon;

Like other port cities Grand Haven is richly storied with tales of ships, seamen, and heroic rescues but also with tragedies. The port, formed by the massive outpouring of the Grand River, includes the outlet into Lake Michigan and backwaters stretching inland to include Spring Lake. This harbor sheltered nomadic Native Americans before fur traders joined them in the eighteenth century and acquainted them with European religion, goods and vices. The lumber industry, by logging vast stretches of virgin forests, dominated the area's economy from the 1850s to 1900. The harbor then bristled with the masts of lumber schooners hauling milled white pine to Milwaukee, Chicago,

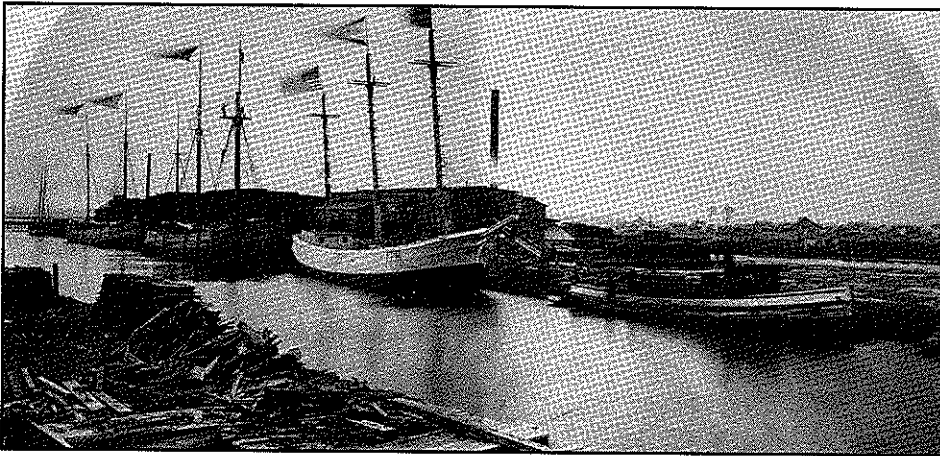


*Bird's-eye view of Grand Haven, 1869.*

and in Grand Haven. The Grand Haven Company purchased vast tracts of land and began to mill lumber, a small beginning at what became a vast enterprise that created the first generation of wealthy entrepreneurs in western Michigan. Their names—Ferry, Blodgett, Hackley, Boyden, and many more—remain on storefronts, parks, hospitals, and libraries.

\* "150 Years of History," *Grand Haven Tribune*. 2 Nov., 1984: Sec. A through J.

and other parts of the Midwest. Beginning in the 1890s manufacturing—furniture, leather, small foundries and machine companies—employed a majority of the town's work force. At the same time and increasingly into the present, tourism, lakeside vacationing, and recreational pursuits have defined Grand Haven's character. Throughout the whole sweep of its history, watercraft—from birch-bark canoes to passenger steamers and car ferries—have docked along



Schooners, 1880s.

the Grand River's quays, and fishing has been a constant feature of the port's activity.

When in 1847 the Dutch began to arrive in western Michigan, Grand Haven had a population of about six hundred, and it was the final port of arrival for immigrants who had sailed to New York and then proceeded via the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes to debark in Milwaukee. From Wisconsin they sailed eastward to Grand Haven, where they transferred to riverboats, which paddled up river to Grandville. Ox carts carried them further to Holland, Zeeland, and other parts of the *Kolonie*. A significant number of new arrivals returned to Grand Haven to find work on logging crews or lumber mills. Several, especially those who came from Dutch fishing villages, considered the economic potential of fishing Lake Michigan.

Commercial fishing began in Grand Haven during the mid 1850s, when a group of fishermen from Milwaukee transferred their businesses to Michigan. At first Swedes, Irish, and Dutch combined their efforts, but the Dutch came to dominate the fishery after the Civil War.\* In 1891 the U.S. commis-

sioner of fish and fisheries noted that of the fifty-two men engaged in Grand Haven's fishery nearly all were Dutch and that the yield, valued at \$16,401.64, went primarily to Chicago's markets. The report also added that "a small party of Indians remained along the river in Fish Town," where, although they "fished little themselves," they cleaned the catch from the tugs and were paid in fish. They also produced fish oil (1,100 gallons in 1885) from the refuse and smoked some fish for their own use during the winter. The report said that "spearing and hand-lining is followed by Indians on Grand River,

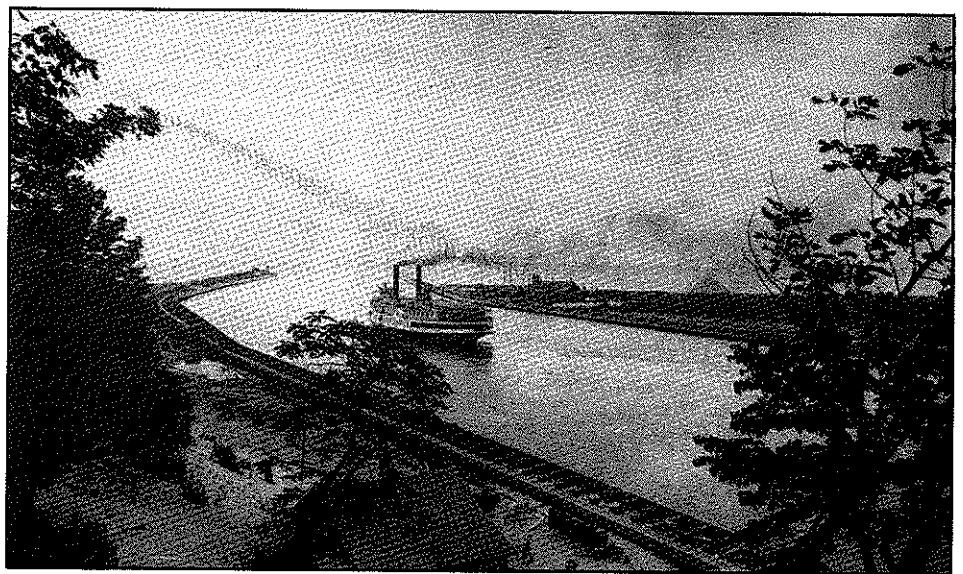
but they seldom fish in the lake." By 1900 most of the Indians had moved elsewhere, and by then firms like Dornbos Brothers were shipping smoked herring throughout the Great Lakes region.

H. Mulder, a Dutch immigrant from the fishing village of Lemmer, described Grand Haven's fishing business in a 1911 letter to P. de Rook, a Frisian fish merchant:

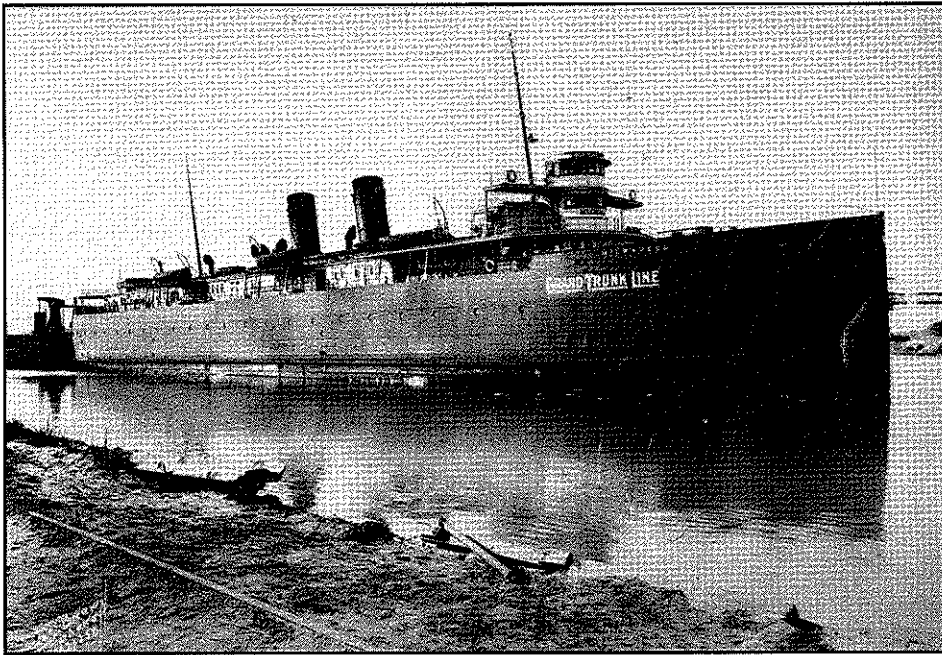
We hope to regain our independent position soon by returning to fishing—in Lake Michigan. Four of us went there last summer to scout out the possibilities and last week Siemen, Teike and Jakob talked to the fisherman who was written about in the *Fishing Newspaper*. Someone sent the paper to us so we had the right address. They were well received, and they obtained useful information. They have a major set up there—they fish with steamboats, but also with sloops.

Jake and Teike want to work on one of the steamboats, and if that works out well, we will move there too [from Grand Rapids]. I'm convinced we can succeed in the business, but on a smaller scale. We'll know more after that fisherman visits us next week.

What they catch there are trout, perch, sometimes pike, and many

Grand Haven harbor and channel—passenger steamer *The City of Milwaukee*, ca. 1880.

\* U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries, *Report of the Commissioners for 1887* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1891), Part 15: 174-77.



Car ferry of the Grand Trunk Line sank in October 1929.

whitefish—all extremely fat. You can buy all kinds of fish in town here [Grand Rapids]—freshwater, ocean, and smoked too. You see excellent pike and eel in the shop windows.

I would have started a fishing business earlier, but American laws are restrictive, so you can't fish any place but in the big lakes. And there you must use nets of a certain size. It is forbidden to fish the Grand River for business purposes, even though there are plenty of fish in the river. The boys have tried it a few times, but if you get caught, they confiscate all your equipment, and you get a stiff fine on top of that. The laws here are much stricter than in the Netherlands.

In 1930 the *Muskegon Chronicle* printed C.O. Reed's lengthy account of Grand Haven's fishery—its vessels, captains, and fishing methods.\* His subtitle, "Good Hauls Are the Rule This Year in Lake Michigan," indicates the healthy status of the industry at that time.

\* This account has been edited significantly for length and clarity.

Grand Haven, April 26—In the grey dawn of morning every day when Lake Michigan is not too turbulent the Grand Haven fishing fleet of six vessels steams off to the fishing grounds five, ten and sometimes as far as twenty-five miles out where the hook lines with their load of trout or the nets with whitefish, chubs, trout or herring must be lifted. A severe calling, this, attracting only those who are capable of putting in a hard day's work with hours dictated not by the clock but by weather conditions and the job to be done. The tugs leave at from 5:30 A.M. to 6 A.M. and after a long and dangerous working day, only return late in the afternoon or at night. Then those waiting on shore are relieved of their anxiety until the following day. The rule for the fishermen is the harder the going, the longer the day. In calm weather the lifts are relatively easy but in rough water lifting hook lines or nets is no picnic.

These captains and crews of the fishing tugs are true seamen—men who can and must encounter difficulties and dangers successfully because the probable penalty for a failure in judgment is disaster. The other day at the coast guard station I heard how the tug *Johanna*

steamed in during a high sea several years ago and was almost buried in the huge waves. Captain Bill Walker who was then in charge of the station ordered his crew to stand by but the sturdy little tug came up again with the cabin crew dripping wet. With skillful handling the tug reached calm water, but an error there could have been deadly. These men who wrest their living from the lake are mighty good citizens, homeowners and family men who vote on election day and think intelligently on public problems. They are religious men, too, fearing the Almighty and believing in His mercy with unswerving faith.

### Losses Are Heavy

The fishing tug owner must not only battle perils of the sea but he must also contend against financial losses. When the storms come up and the waters of Lake Michigan are agitated to great depths, nets, hooks and catches of fish are in danger and it is not uncommon for the fleet to go out after a big storm to find their marker buoys adrift, some nets lost, and others torn to uselessness and then the fish are gone too. Those who set their nets for whitefish nearer the shore face practically a sure loss in storms. The currents are active at this depth of fifty to seventy-five feet and old stumps, water-soaked timbers and other objects rip the nets as they mill about on the bottom. Last fall, the day the car ferry *Milwaukee* sank in a furious gale on the west shore, Grand Haven fishermen suffered losses running into several thousand dollars and a week later in the storm that sank the steamer *Wisconsin*, they lost heavily again just after their nets had been repaired and set. Fishing tackle can't be insured either, so the loss falls squarely on the shoulders of the owners.

It speaks well for the fleet and its crews that in the memory of the oldest skipper, Capt. William Ver Duin, no fishing boat operating out of this port has been lost, and only one fisherman has been accidentally swept overboard during a gale.

This accident occurred a few years ago aboard the *Dornbos* from which Orrie Foppen was believed to have been swept into the lake by a heavy sea. No trace of him was ever found other than the fish box that he had been carrying was floating at sea. Had he held onto the wooden box as George Fisher did during a December storm, he might have been saved. Fisher clung to the box and was rescued. Even the late Capt. Peter Fase was thrown into the waves one time during a high sea in winter when he slipped on an icy deck but he was rescued by his crew.

### Fog Is Enemy

Besides storms, fog, with its clammy whiteness, can threaten disaster as readily as a storm. Some years ago a big car ferry bound from Milwaukee to Grand Haven nearly ran the tug *C.J. Bos* down during a fog. "We had been signalling constantly with our steam whistle," Capt. Ver Duin of the *Bos* said. "We picked up the car ferry's signal and kept on with our own when suddenly we heard the larger boat churning the lake not far from us. Six short blasts from our signal were futile, she could not stop but we were much relieved when she passed not forty feet away from our bow. It sent a cold chill through us to think what going a short distance in the wrong direction might have meant. Our small tug would have been crushed beneath that big steel hull and a bursting boiler would have added to the terror. Danger is always present because the larger boats sometimes stray from their usual path in rough weather.

However, having the large ferries pass in and out during cold weather

when ice is on the lake is favorable to late season fishing out of Grand Haven. The men can sometimes follow the ferries out and get back through the ice field by following the larger boat. The big boats will also go out of their way to get the small tugs out if they can. Often the



Fishing tug Frank Edward, undated.

tugs are caught for several days in the ice though this has not occurred in the last few years. One season the tug *Dornbos* was held in the ice for several days and Herb Fase, a member of the crew, walked the ice to play an important basketball game with his team and then walked back to spend the night on the tug.

### Investment Heavy

Tug owners have from \$10,000 to \$20,000 invested in their equipment including the boat, dockage, drying racks, a big supply of nets, quantities of hooks, buoys, floats, leads and other equipment. All but one of Grand Haven's boats are steam driven. Those who fish farther out favor steam because of its dependability while the installation of dependable gasoline equipment would be costly. In winter the boiler helps keep the men warm and comfortable on their long trips.

The steam boiler is also used to heat the water for washing the nets.

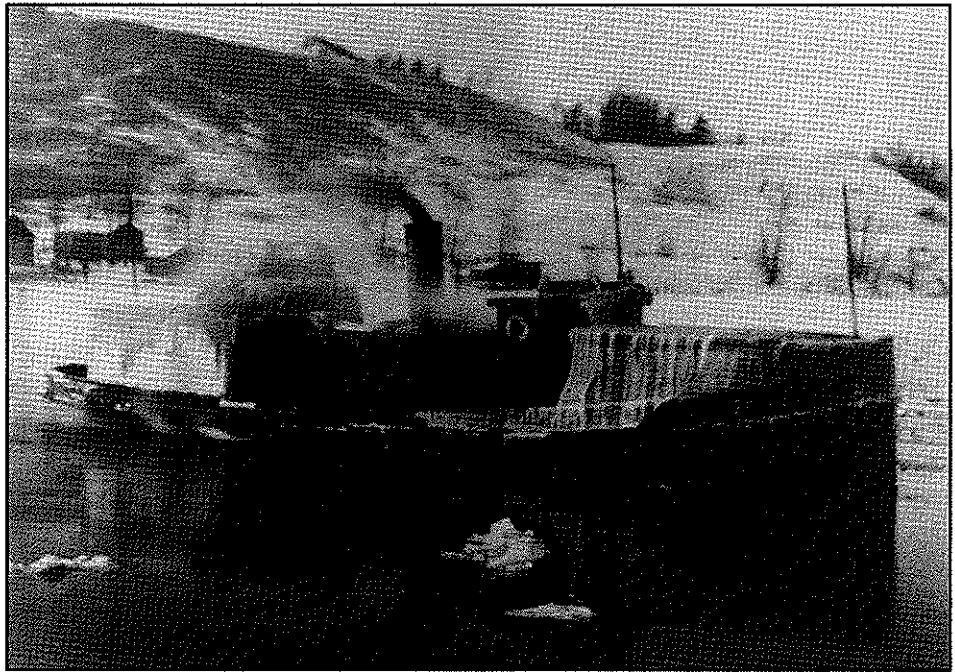
The nets are washed in hot water as they are lifted each time and once a month they are boiled. This cleaning keeps the nets in service for ten or twelve years. Capt. Henry Fase of the tug *Dornbos* claims that without washing they would last a much shorter time. Probably the most unusual service a tug boiler performs is as a stove. Fresh-caught herring [chubs] are laid on the hot steel, broiled and served with pepper and salt, a feast that is hard to beat, as anyone who likes fish will agree.

The working day starts early for the men of the fleet. They must be down at the docks about five o'clock, the engineers get up steam and the crews stow away fish boxes, nets and hook lines for the trip out. Most of the tugs are away by six o'clock and move along at eight to nine miles an hour. They reach the fishing ground within two and a half hours. The lifting of the hook lines or nets begins as the boats go down the lines and the fish are taken aboard. Light catches, a few hundred pounds, don't even pay the expenses, but this year fishing has been good, with a number of 1,000- to 1,500-pound hauls. The youngest skipper of the fleet, Capt. Fase claims a 2,250-pound lift of trout during the early part of January. This is the biggest lift reported so far this year. After the lift, the nets are set again and the hooks rebaited and let down. The tugs turn back while the crews dress fish unless the seas are too rough, then they wait until port is reached. This makes for a long tiring day. It's early to bed and early to rise for health and wisdom but the wealth depends a good deal on the lake and its finny inhabitants.

### Hooks Bring Fish

The big lifts of trout this year have been taken from hooks. The hooks are attached to a main line of cotton or linen with linen leaders or snells. The main line rests on the bottom, weighted every twenty-five feet with a brick. The hooks are eighteen feet apart on the line. Buoys are attached on each end of the line and the lift starts at one end and as the tug goes along the line, the fish are taken off. Lifting a gang of 2,400 hooks extending for about eight miles, takes about an hour. Capt. Ver Duin has made his entire lift in fifty-three minutes. Ordinary trout hooks are used and about a yard of leader is required. The hooks being baited with bloaters rise from the bottom to the length of the leader. Bloaters are a small fish taken in very deep water with nets. As they are pulled up, they swell, being used to heavy water pressure on the lake bottom. Care must be taken not to puncture the air bladder of the bloater when the hooks are baited as it is necessary that they rise from the bottom when the hooks are lowered to their 250- or 350-foot depth.

The trout nets are set from ten to fifteen miles out in the lake. To a diver they would look like a section of wire fence on land being weighted at the bottom end with lead sinkers and lightened with aluminum or wooden floats at the other edge so that they will remain upright in the water. The floats very frequently break loose and are washed ashore to be picked up by beach walkers. The nets themselves are of strong linen cord and about six feet high when they are set. The local tugs use a net four hundred feet in length to a section and the larger tugs carry sixteen boxes of nets with four nets to a box. Each box contains 1,620 feet of net which means about five miles of nets to be lifted and set by the larger tugs every day. The smaller tugs carry ten boxes of nets. The ends of the net "fence" are marked by buoys and the nets themselves are set in about thirty to forty fathoms of water which translated into feet is 180 to 240 feet, a fathom be-



Robbins III, February 12, 1907.

ing six feet. Trout swim into the nets and are caught by their teeth or wedged in by the body so they cannot get out. Hook lines and nets are lifted on a steam-driven reel aboard the steam tugs and on the gas boat, *Arlene*, a special auxiliary gasoline engine is used for this purpose.

### Fisher Is Veteran


The skiff\* fishermen, which quite a few still work, are led by Johannes Fisher, a 78-year-old veteran of the fishing industry. He is so fond of the work that during the summer he makes the five- or six-mile pull out to his nets every day in a dory without any outboard power. The small-boat fishermen use regular gill nets for whitefish in most cases and make their lifts by hand. Some of them employ what is known as pound nets, supported from long, slender piling driven into the lake bottom. This piling must be renewed every year as the ice carries it away during the winter. It is located but a few hundred feet offshore. The main catch of the skiff fishermen is perch and whitefish. They have small overhead, make fair hauls of fish and secure a good

living. In addition to Mr. Fisher, other skiff fishermen are Charles Anderson who recently brought in a trout weighing twenty-five pounds dressed, Lawrence Van Hall, George Fisher, Charlie Veltman and Claude Ver Duin. They all use regular fishing dories, powered with outboard motors to reach their nets which are sometimes several miles from the piers. Fisher, the old timer of the lot, is approaching his eightieth year and does his rowing with envious ease. Indeed, there are lots of oarsmen who probably couldn't make the pull that he makes. Mr. Fisher fishes more for the pleasure of it than any other reason. He's a veteran of the old days when sails were the only power for fishing craft.

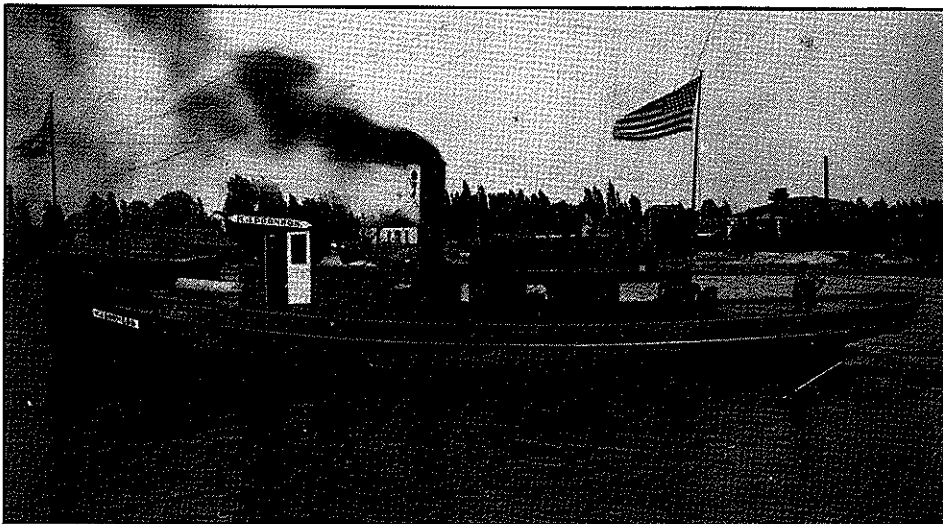
By contrast, the big black tug *C.J. Bos* captained by William Ver Duin, veteran skipper of the local fleet, will be the first to get away for fishing grounds, twenty to twenty-five miles out in Lake Michigan. Only the roughest seas keep Will Ver Duin and his sturdy tug from going out. He is a disciple of the old school—"go if you think you can make it." Capt. Ver Duin started fishing at the age of sixteen, and with forty years of experience his

\* Small flat-bottomed boat.



Phone 7-4688		Res. 3-5427		
				
<b>Lake - Ocean - Salt and Smoked Fish</b> 301 W. Leonard, Cor. Front GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.				
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QTY	Lbs.	Description	Price	Amount
	20	Trout	17	340
	20	Whitefish	17	340
Packers of <i>Mrs. Kett</i> The Genuine Imported Holland Pickled Herring				680

Invoice from P. Dornbos & Sons to Calvin Dormitory, June 22, 1934.



H.J. Dornbos.

steady hand at the wheel has always guided the *Bos* back to port even through very bad storms.

Ver Duin had to take over the responsibilities of bread winner at the age of sixteen, after his father John Ver Duin died. In the early days John Ver Duin fished with a sailboat and his catch was dressed by Indian women from a nearby village. They were paid with two or three trout in

lieu of money which was scarce at the time.

Capt. John saved enough money by 1888 to acquire a better boat. A well-known local builder, Jobin and Jobin, built the *Fleetwing*, better known as the black sailboat. The *Fleetwing* was a beautiful boat and made its builder a reputation. Capt. Ver Duin enjoyed his wonderful new vessel for only a short time be-

cause he died in July, 1888, the same year it was built. Will Ver Duin took over his father's boat and the responsibility of earning a living for the Ver Duin family.

Because he had only a few months' experience on the lake, older hands were hired to captain the *Fleetwing* but that plan failed and young Will told his mother he had better try fishing with himself in command. Some older fleet captains thought the Ver Duins were foolish to entrust their fortune to the young man but Lake Michigan seemed personally interested in his success. The Ver Duin nets were full, damage from storms was light and the boat was always in good shape. In a short time Will Ver Duin was reckoned with the leaders in the industry here, a lad four years short of voting age. He was an able seaman, too. One day while the black sailboat was far out in the lake a fierce storm broke and it became necessary to stop lifting nets and put back to the Haven immediately. The wind continued to rise and the sailboat took on water faster than the crew could bail it out. One old-time fisherman threw down his bailing bucket, crying out in despair, "Izie mijn vrouw en kindren, noot weer, noot weer" (I shall never see my wife and children any more). Capt. Ver Duin bolstered his men's courage, set them to bailing again and changed sail himself. Eventually they made port.

The black sailboat and its sister ship, another *Fleetwing*, built in 1891 by John Niel, continued to operate out of this port and many skillful yachtsmen, got their early training aboard the Ver Duin boats. As soon as Will Ver Duin was twenty-one, the government inspectors issued him his captain's papers for he easily qualified. That same year the steam tug *John A. Miller* was built. The *Miller*, caught fifteen miles out in the lake one time, in a strong east wind, sprang a leak and Capt. Ver Duin drove her for the local piers at full speed. He couldn't quite make the piers but did manage to beach the *Miller*, six miles north. The water was nearly up to the grates in her boilers and only

fast bailing by three of the fishermen had kept her from sinking on the trip in. A crew from the old life-saving service here came up in the afternoon and the *Miller* was bailed out and towed into Grand Haven. It was a close call and Capt. Ver Duin said he and his men felt pretty relieved when they struck the beach.

### Was Built in 1898

The present Ver Duin tug, *C.J. Bos*, was built in 1898. She was the first all steel tug to be built at Ferrysburg in the Johnston Brothers' yards. Another tug was built at Ferrysburg for the Ver Duins in 1901, the powerful ice-breaker *H.J. Dornbos*. She was larger than the *Bos* and was the pride of the Grand Haven fleet then. Fishing was very good and in October, 1905, the *Dornbos* brought in 7,200 pounds and the *Bos* 6,000 pounds of fish for a total catch of almost seven tons in one lift. The Ver Duin tugs also took a haul of four tons of chubs from a single gang of nets in the same year.

Trying experiences in the ice have been the lot of Lake Michigan fishermen almost every year and Capt. Ver Duin tells of a winter's day years ago when the three tugs *Anna*, *Bos*, and *Dornbos* were caught in a fast-running flow and how the *Anna* received such a wrenching that her steam pipes broke putting her out of commission for the time being. At one time the ice crowded her and lifted her so high that her propeller blades could be seen. The three boats stuck together and drifted for three days with the ice.

Eventually they saw clear water near Little Pointe Sauble, thirty-five miles north of Grand Haven. Open water was not far distant and as the *Dornbos* was attempting to break a path to it, her main shaft parted and the tugs were helpless again. A Pere Marquette car ferry out of Ludington finally cut out the tugs. The two others with the *Dornbos* in tow, finally got under way for Grand Haven. Upon their arrival, less than a bushel of coal was left aboard each boat.

### Tells of Life

The philosopher of the fleet Capt. Martin O'Beck speaks from thirty years of experience as a commercial captain, "there is bitter disappointment in this fishing game and it's pretty hard to make a long, stormy trip out only to find your nets ripped or full of weeds and snags with only a few fish to pay you for the trouble. Of course this doesn't happen often but it comes often enough to take the joy out of life. I wouldn't do anything else though and am more eager than ever to go out again after a day ashore." Capt. O'Beck is the only

of the local fishing industry who started fishing in the 1860s with sailboats. The elder O'Beck is in his eighty-fifth year. He retired in 1905, leaving his boat and gear in the hands of two sons, Martin and Roy. They sailed together several years and finally built the 42-foot steel tug *Johanna*. Later Martin O'Beck bought out his brother and has sailed alone for some time. Like most of the fishermen, Capt. O'Beck obtained his captain's papers immediately after his twenty-first birthday.

"Fishing isn't as good as it was thirty years ago," Capt. O'Beck



One-thousand-pound catch, 1915.

local fisherman who has fished in Lake Superior. "Went up there to Grand Marais one year after chubs," he explained, "we didn't make out very good at the fishing but the trip up the Soo River was worth the whole trip."

The Great Lakes fishermen know what it is to take loss but this is also mixed with profit. Capt. O'Beck has done well fishing out of northern ports on Lake Michigan several seasons and also out of Cheboygan in Lake Huron. He went with the rest of the fleet to Omena on Traverse Bay one season but this expedition made money for none of the local skippers.

Capt. O'Beck is the son of Capt. Adrien O'Beck, one of the pioneers

reminded. "I can remember a big haul of six tons of trout on our two boats twenty-five years ago." About a month ago the *Johanna* came in with 1,200 pounds of fish, reckoned a good catch nowadays. The *Johanna* is a steel tug built about fifteen or twenty years ago in Ludington by Klaus Katt, a ship-builder who now lives in Ferrysburg. The *Johanna* was launched with considerable fanfare and can be spotted a long way off with its white hull, yellow upper works and tall black stack with the white "o" on it. Like the rest of the tugs, she has a turtle deck up forward. The turtle deck is comparatively new, most of the early tugs not having them. They were found

to keep out seas and shelter the men so they have been built on all the local tugs now.

### Junior Skipper

The junior skipper of the fleet is Henry Fase (thirty-one) one of the most successful in the industry here. He holds the record so far this year. Capt. Fase has been at the fishing job in one way or another for the past twenty-three years. He started helping his father at the age of eight. The late Capt. Peter Fase was blessed with three husky athletic sons, all of whom have worked with him at one time or another. Henry Fase got lots of good training aboard his father's boats and kept on in school but when World War I broke out, contrary to his father's wishes, he joined the army. Peter Fase, who had served in the Spanish American War as an infantryman, wanted his son in the merchant marine. His father didn't remain angry over Henry's choice because he was a veteran himself and all his sons belonged at one time or another to Company F.

Upon his return Henry Fase took command of the tug *Sport* and played some independent football for he had been a star halfback in high school and a great basketball player. Two other brothers, both high school graduates, were also good athletes. Herb Fase was a star tackle on the Grand Haven teams of '20 and '21 and fans still well remember Jake Fase, the fullback who stood out on teams of recent years. Jake is now at State College where he was on the football squad last year. He fishes when home, even during the short spring vacation.

### Tug Is Rebuilt

Several years ago the Fase's tug *Alice* was rebuilt from the keel up in Sturgeon Bay. The job cost thousands of dollars but the boat came out with new planking and fixed up like a yacht. She was shortened to under sixty-five feet to meet a certain government classification and renamed the *H.J. Dornbos*.

Capt. Peter Fase was beginning to get his investment back in 1926 when, while returning from Omena by automobile, he died. Pete Fase, as he was known, was one of the best liked captains of the fleet, and took great pride in following the athletic careers of his three sons. He was a real sportsman in every sense of the word and while he always applauded a winner, he had a good word for every loser who had fought well. Henry Fase took charge of his father's fishing interests and has made them a paying venture. He operated just one boat, the *H.J. Dornbos*, which has a white hull and red deckhouse. She is built of wood and has proven a very serviceable craft.

The specialist is Capt. Ray Van Hall who operates the only gasoline-driven boat of the fleet. Capt. Van Hall fishes for whitefish exclusively and reports fine catches this year. One haul of eight hundred pounds was taken by him during the middle of March, excellent for whitefish. Capt. Van Hall says that the whitefish fisherman has a hard time with his nets. Being in shallow water compared to the trout nets, the gill nets used for whitefish are subject to destruction by

all sorts of submarine objects. Last fall in a bad storm, Capt. Van Hall went out to lift his nets and when he got there found that his auxiliary engine for the net hoist wouldn't start because water had gotten into it by coming down the exhaust pipe. Inability to raise the nets that day cost Capt. Van Hall a large catch of fish and about \$150 worth of nets. Whitefish are taken close to shore, perhaps a mile or two from land, and as the whitefish fights hard when it is taken, the nets have to be extra strong and consequently are quite costly.

The whitefish season is closed between November 5 and December 15 which practically assures them safety all winter as by mid-December the ice has usually started forming and it would not pay to set nets close enough to shore for the few fish that might be hauled up. Ice covers the water, nine to fifteen fathoms deep which is most favored by the whitefish during the winter. Capt. Van Hall has to wait until spring before he can go out again.

### Arlene, White Boat

Capt. Van Hall's *Arlene*, known as the white boat, is slicked up with white paint just as she was when she



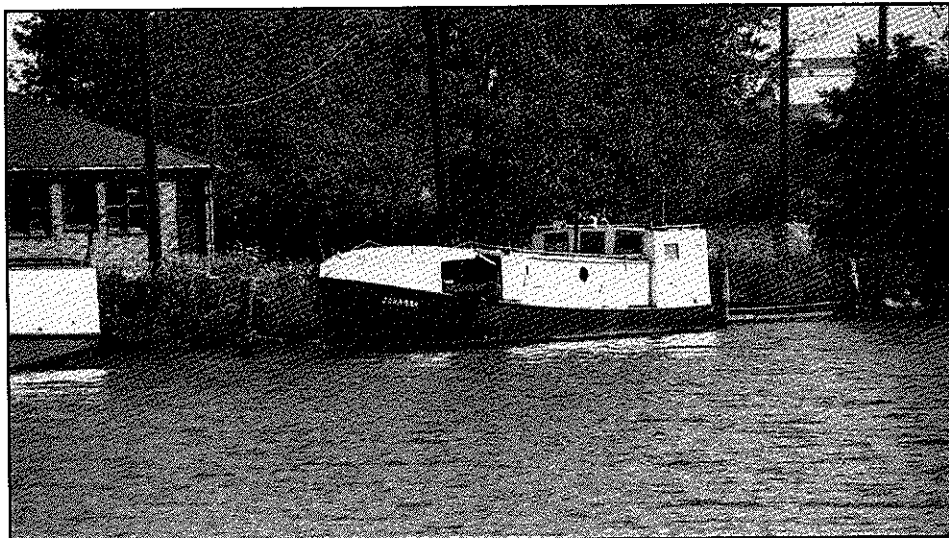
Fish nets drying.

was a coast guard lifeboat. Van Hall bought her from the Frankfort Coast Guard Station; built a cabin on her and remodeled her for fishing. The same motor put in by the government is still dependable. This thirty-five-foot-long craft is neat, dry, seaworthy and well adapted for the work.

Most of the fishermen start in young and Capt. Van Hall was no exception. He has been fishing for twenty-four years and started aboard the Van Zanten and O'Beck tugs *Meister* and *Andy*. Later he

Haven's fishery had been reduced to one tug, the *Johanna*, operated by Walter Fritz. The sea lamprey combined with pollution and over-fishing had virtually destroyed the industry in which Fisher had participated for seventy years. At eighty-three he recalled that he had never seen a lamprey while lifting nets. . . . "Years ago fishermen brought in catches of up to 5,000 pounds when they fished 'the Milwaukee reef' halfway across the lake. That meant leaving port from

Haven, recreational fishing has taken its place. The successful planting of Pacific salmon species, coho and chinook, together with the revival of native lake trout has attracted a sport fishery which injects over six million dollars into Grand Haven's local economy.\* No less than twenty-four charter vessels are captained from Grand Haven's docks while literally thousands of privately operated fishing boats motor up the channel each year in search of Lake Michigan's salmonids and perch. Meanwhile whitefish stocks have replenished sufficiently to support a small commercial fishery. ♣



Johanna, 1950s the last tug in service.

sailed on the *Robbins* and has also fished with the late Capt. Fase whom he termed "one of the best men I ever worked for." Before he bought the *Arlene*, Capt. Van Hall owned and operated the steam tug *Viola*.

There are twenty-four men on the local tugs, including the skippers. Most of the tug owners also keep what is known as a shore crew, men who work on land around the drying racks, removing weeds, bits of wood and patching the nets. There are many other kinds of work for the shore crew to keep the tugs at work in the lake without interruption.

When Clarence Poel interviewed Frank J. Fisher\* in 1956, Grand

\* *Grand Haven Tribune*, Dec. 6, 1956, p. 14.

2:00 to 4:00 A.M. and running several hours to reach the fishing grounds and lift.

"Usually the crewmen started dressing fish on the return trip to port and would have 500 to 1,000 pounds cleaned before arriving at the dock. After finishing that chore there was the task of reeling the nets (winding them on large revolving wooden frames to dry) before the day's work was done."

Clarence Poel concluded, "There's a lot of lake history wrapped up in [Fisher's] lifetime of fishing and he may be seeing the climax to a colorful industry that is bowing to the age-old problem of not catching enough of the right fish."

Although traditional commercial fishing has not returned to Grand

\* This information comes from a 1996 Michigan Department of Natural Resources analysis.

# Grand Haven, Michigan Fishing Families

Alan G. Vanderberg

The list of commercial fishing families in West Michigan is a long one. The following, compiled from news

articles, DNR records, city directories, and the *Michigan State Gazetteer*, is not intended to be definitive but

includes what I have found for the city of Grand Haven while researching my book. \$

Family	Tug(s)	Date
Adrian Van Hall	sailboat	pre 1894
John Van Hall	Viola	pre 1915
Arthur, Ray, Lawrence Van Hall	Viola	post 1915
James and Wilford Van Hall	Dabo Freitag Bros.	1950-1959
George Van Hall	Bertha G. Henrietta M. George Van Hall	
Ray Van Hall	Arlene R.V.H.	
Jan Verduin Cornelis Verduin Louis Verduin Willem Verduin	Fleetwing   John A. Miller C.J. Bos	   1892 1898
Claude Verduin Robert Verduin Peter Fase	Alice H.J. Dornbos	  1930
Henry Fase Herb Fase Jake Fase		
Cornelis Ball		1870
Isaac Warner		1862-1894
Vincent van der Burght		1870-1884
Gerrit Jan Tromp		1873-1884
Jan Tromp		mid 1800s
Henry Tromp		mid 1800s
Johannes Fisher		1930
George Fisher		1930

Family	Tug(s)	Date
Frank J. Fisher		early 1900s
Abram, John and Frank Fisher	E.C. Oggel	
Charles Anderson		1930
Charlie Veltman		1930
Adrian O'Beck	Meister	
Cornelis Van Zanten	Andy	mid 1800s
Martin & Roy O'Beck	Johanna	
T.W. Kirbey	J.W. Callister Elk, Deer	
VanTol Brothers	H.J. Johnson	
U.S. Cornell	Robbins	
Abel Abenga	Neptune	1930
Abel Abenga & Peter Fase	Alice, Dutch, Neptune, Sport	
Calvin Pooler	Smith Brothers	1930
E.H. "Gene" Hill	L.P. Hill	
Walter Fritz		1958
Adrian O'Beck, John Ball Pearl		1870
Nathaniel Robbins		early 1900s
H.J. Dornbos Company		
Cornelis Oranje		1869
Edward P. Kindema & Co.		
Gerard Barendse		1871
VanderVeere Brothers	T.W. Ferry	
John Zietlow	Kaiser William	

Alan Vanderberg is compiling a history of commercial fishing in western Michigan.



# profiles

## From Grand Rapids to Denver — the Experiences of the Joling Family

Helen Vander Meulen

In 1894 John Joling was born near Grand Rapids, Michigan, the place to which his grandparents and father immigrated when he was twelve. John's father, Hermanus, who owned a small clothespin factory and also imported Dutch



John and Evelyn (Hendricks) Joling, 1965, 50th Wedding Anniversary.

wooden shoes, frequently recalled that the last shipment of wooden shoes he purchased from Holland were shipped on the Lusitania. During John's early childhood in Grand Rapids Hermanus became ill with smallpox and was quarantined in the Pest House. During this time John brought food and other necessities to the Pest House to tend his father's needs.

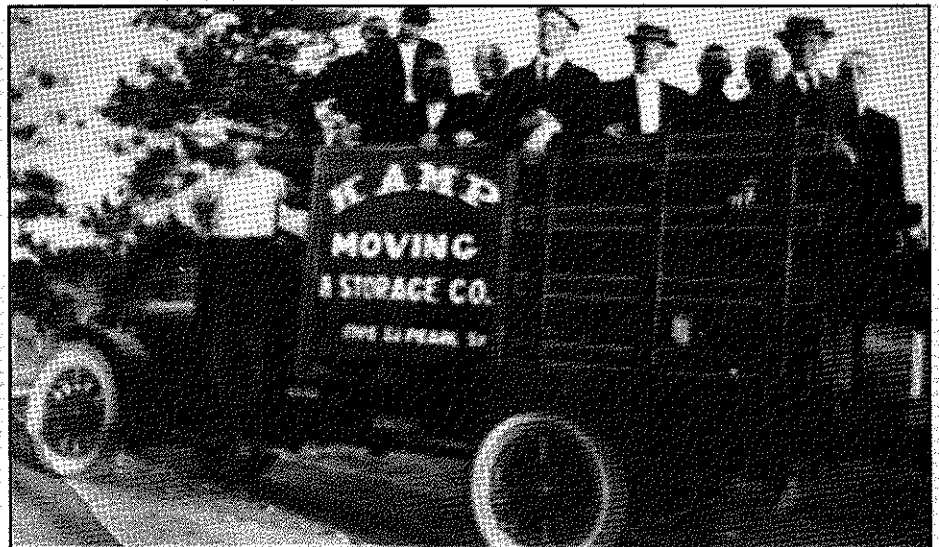
During a two-year period when the family lived on a farm in Grant, Michigan, tuberculosis was rampant and both of John's parents and most of his siblings became ill with TB. John believes that the family was infected by drinking the milk of infected cattle. Because of the tuberculosis the family, including six boys and one girl, moved to Colorado hoping desperately to survive

the disease. Shortly after their 1907 arrival in Denver, and a brief employment for the Hekman Biscuit Company, Hermanus succumbed to TB. Several of the children also died during that first year but John's mother, Alberdina, was determined to keep the family going, even though she was also infected with TB. Because the family needed his support John never returned to school but instead took on two large newspaper routes—a difficult task in those days.

He had to get up every morning at 2:00 AM, walk several miles to Alameda Avenue in all weather conditions, and pick up his morning papers. When he was late he was fined twenty-five cents, but sometimes the

delivered both the Morning News and the Evening Times, usually twelve-page papers, but the Sunday and New Year's editions were much larger. For the New Year's delivery John purchased calendars and his customers often returned his favor with a special gift of money. He recalls wryly that one particular customer took two calendars returning neither a thank you nor gift.

Reverend Van Dellen (the spiritual leader of the Denver Dutch community) objected to the fact that John delivered papers on Sunday morning. He urged Alberdina to accept financial support from one of the churches in Grand Rapids, but she was too proud to accept charity. Each morning and afternoon after expertly twisting the many papers, John fired them unerringly in the direction of each home. He recalled that there were five highly competitive newspapers in Denver which used all sorts of gimmicks to



Kamp Moving and Storage truck transporting picnic crowd to a hillside park, also John Joling's employer, ca 1915.

penalty was overlooked because he had such a large territory. He

lure new subscribers including such premiums as goldfish.



*John Joling with Robinson Lumber Company delivery truck (undated).*

About six months after his father's death, when Alberdina found that her health and that of her children was worsening, she took the family to California, hoping once again for a cure. There, with her four remaining children, Alberdina lived in crowded, sparse quarters. However within a few months she died, an event which is engraved in John's memory. He laid awake through the long hours of that last night while nightingales sang just outside his window. Although his mother had assured the children on the previous day that she was feeling much better, John was anxious and the next morning he found that she had died during the night . . . while sleeping between the two youngest children. The orphaned children, ranging in age from eleven to seventeen, became wards of the California welfare department which decided to send them off to relatives in Michigan. California provided the railroad tickets.

While changing trains, during a brief stopover in Wyoming, they decided to go to Denver, rather than to their relatives in Michigan. In

Denver they made their way to the Dutch community in South Denver, where they were taken in by several families. John and his oldest brother were taken in by the Hendricks family.

Although John's oldest brother also had TB he had a choice of two jobs and he managed to secure one for himself and the other for young John. Despite poor health the older brother worked steadily for some time. John remembers running to the corner drug store to purchase morphine for his suffering brother, until he too succumbed. Shortly thereafter John's sister also died.

Only John and his youngest brother, Joe, remained. They stayed with the Hendricks family and continued to work. Within a few years a friendship developed between John and Evelyn, one of the Hendricks' daughters. Eventually she suggested that their friendship should blossom into marriage, and John recalls with a smile that he accepted the proposal. Their married life began in the home he still occupies, a residence of almost seventy years.

The Dutch population, John recalls, was concentrated in South Denver, a

separate suburb of the city. The 1500 block of South Pearl known as "Dutchman's Boulevard," featured the Venendal house which functioned as the post office and Afman's grocery, an early Dutch business venture. At first John Camp's furniture and moving business employed John, but later, he found better-paying work with a wholesale furniture company. The area grew rapidly as newcomers came seeking a healthier climate, but also because South Denver's recreational, business and manufacturing facilities offered bright economic prospects.

Englewood, a small town situated south of South Denver, was the site of an amusement center, occupied currently by the large Cinderella City shopping center. Earlier the area contained a large swamp which was made into an amusement area containing a public dance hall, and a race track which drew large weekend and holiday crowds. Although the area was off limits to the staid Dutch community, John seems to have been familiar with the amusement park.

Overland Park, located between South Denver and the mountains included the fair grounds where John observed his first airplane, a barnstormer which landed in the park. The well-known dare-devil pilots, Hoxie and Johnson, asked bystanders to hold the plane back until the propellers were going fast enough for the plane to take off. Gypsies also stopped regularly at Overland Park and during the winter a traveling circus stayed for several months. John's future mother-in-law worked as the wash-woman for the Sels Floto Circus, owned by the Denver Post. Her teenage daughter, Evelyn, helped and was so entranced by the circus that the circus people wanted to train her as a bareback rider and accompany them during the traveling

season. Her mother promptly forbade it, and thereafter Evelyn was no longer allowed to help with the circus washing because the temptation might be too great.

The whole area of South Denver was a network of dirt roads, sometimes muddy but more often dry and dusty. John recalls that a journey anywhere would result in being covered with a thick layer of dust. He remembers the construction of the area's first concrete highway running from the small foothills town of Morrison to the nearer town of Sheridan . . . a miraculous mile which curved between the towns.

Electric streetcars, the main form of transportation, ran both morning and evenings. Some were assisted by horses when steeper inclines required extra pulling power. The trolley also had a special funeral car in which the coffin, with room for the mourners, was motored to Crown Hill Cemetery. The trolleys were powered by overhead electric wiring, and the trolley company also

owned a coal mine used to fuel their own power house, "making its own juice," John said.

At inception, the Dutch Christian Reformed Church held services in the homes of north Denver's original

they rented the Rainbow Girls' Hall on South Pearl Street. They had morning services, ate lunch together, and had another service in the afternoon. Finally, on South Emerson Street, they built a sanctuary, horse



*Ladies' Aid Society of Denver's First Christian Reformed Church (undated).*

Dutch settlers. Their homes were actually tents with wooden floors and four-foot-high walls topped by canvas over a frame of wood. Using a sewing machine as the pulpit, parishioners read sermons. When the group moved en masse to South Denver they rented an upper room over a tannery on South Broadway Street. John worshipped there with his parents. Later

barn, and outhouse, all of wood.

Today (1996), in his late eighties, John is still a hulking raw-boned man with a hearty disposition and a wry sense of humor. Both his healthy body and vigorous memory testify to a strength of character born of many hardships. He is a Denver patriarch and a devoted citizen of the "Mile High" city. §

# Come and See

Chris Stoffel Overvoorde

On Monday, June 17, 1957, I left the port of Rotterdam on the ocean liner *Johan van Oldenbarneveldt*. Why did I do it? Why did I, who never talked of going away, suddenly pack up and go? The answer to that question has never been entirely clear to me, and now, after forty years, I'm convinced that the reasons I've given on numerous occasions are not fully valid. Recently I have come to recognize that I had to go—God wanted me to go. It was all part of his plan for my



*The immigrant, 1957.*

life. Now I hasten to add that I did not know that while I was becoming acclimated to the American culture. Nor did I know it clearly when I requested to have my name put on a list at the American Consulate in Rotterdam. I can, of course, cite a number of reasons which can be discussed and explored, but none of

them dims my realization that God's hand was the catalyst for my decision.

In 1954, while I was serving in the Corps of Engineers in the Dutch army, Herb Koedoot, an old neighbor, returned to the Netherlands to explore his roots. He had left at the age of fourteen and was curious about what he had left behind. We spent some fine times together, exploring what it was like to live in the U.S.A. We also discussed my dream of becoming an artist. In the Dutch army I had discovered some of my creative skills while working as the company artist.

With the hope of becoming an artist of some sort, I approached the Academy of Fine Art in Rotterdam, but I did not have the proper entrance qualifications, and I was too

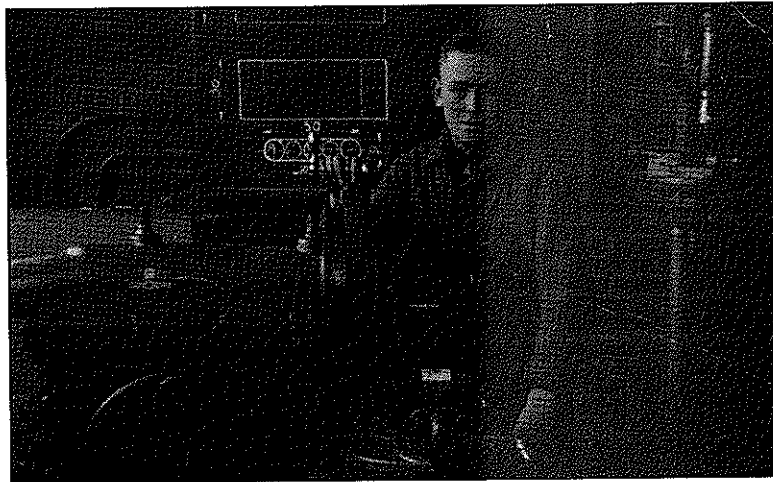
old to gain them in the Netherlands. My correspondence with Herb opened another door. Without that and without his help in finding me a sponsor, I would not have begun the process, nor would I have departed from Rotterdam.

I was dissatisfied with many things, including myself, after my discharge from the army in November of 1955. I had many questions about the

future, especially my personal future. I worked for six months in the old shipyard of Piet Smith, in the engine hall where I had worked since age fourteen. After six months on the job I could collect all the benefits I had accumulated during my stay in the army. When that time had elapsed, I requested a release in order to work

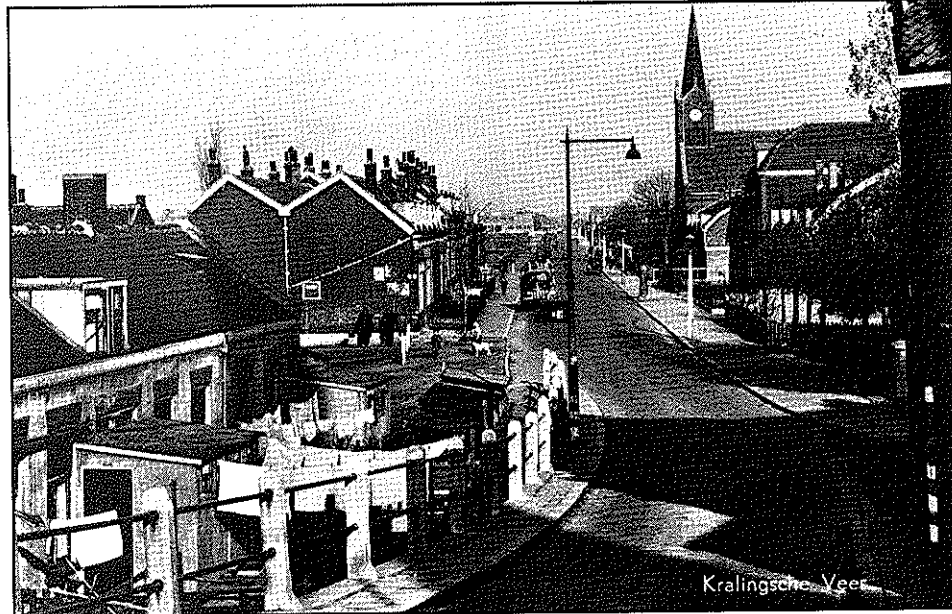
for another company, one that serviced smaller diesel engines, but they would not release me. The issue went to the arbitration board, and after six months I was given my papers and began my employment at Olthoff Diesel Motoren. I was still not satisfied. I needed more. For the Fine Arts Academy in Rotterdam I was too old, too late, and, I began to think, too dumb. So one Saturday, while I was with my friend Pieter de Boer in downtown Rotterdam, we went to the American Embassy, where I placed my name on the immigration list, secretly hoping that immigration to the U.S.A. would lead toward my dream of becoming an artist. The announcement of my leaving was received with shock and dismay by my father and mother, but eventually they gave their blessing. Though by this time I had sold many drawings and paintings to friends and relatives, I do not think my parents knew my secret dream.

The departure brought a mixture



*Diesel engine mechanic in training, age 12.*

of deep emotions, including the expectation of a great adventure. The *S.S. Johan van Oldenbarneveldt* was not full. Only 235 passengers were on board when it sailed from Rotterdam to New York. On the way back it would transport 2,500 students. We were therefore treated royally, as first-



*Kralingsche Veer.*

class passengers. It was a pleasant voyage, without storms or discomforts of any kind. After ten days we could see the New York skyline. On a sunny, ninety-eight-degree day we entered the harbor and saw the Statue of Liberty in the early morning sun.

After a long wait to clear customs, I took a taxi to the bus terminal on Forty-fourth Street. I checked in my suitcases and walked the street until I saw a bottle of Heineken in the window

of a bar. It was very hot in my Dutch woolen clothes, and I needed that Dutch drink rather badly. My first impressions of America were overwhelming.

The language was a major obstacle, and I was confused most of the time. It was all too big, too strange, too

incomprehensible for me—an extremely frightening experience. When I finally boarded the bus, I looked for my suitcases, but they were nowhere to be found. Everything I owned had gone somewhere, and I could not quite get what the bus officials were saying. Later I discovered that my belongings had been sent ahead on an earlier bus. That other bus was probably the slow bus, which stopped everywhere along the way, whereas I was on some kind of express bus. It was hot and stuffy in the back of the bus.

We drove all night and all day before we arrived in Detroit, where I was to meet Herb Koedoot. But Herb was not waiting because I had taken a different bus from the one he expected me to take. He was attending a barber school in downtown Detroit, where the students practiced on a drifting homeless clientele. After some time I found the place, and I was invited to sit down and have a haircut—I looked like a bum after my all-nighter on the bus in my Dutch long-sleeved pink shirt and gray woolen pants and jacket. I tried to explain what I was after, and someone finally put it



together and called Herb to the bus depot, where we finally met. He took me to his place, and there I got my first cool American shower. What a delight and what a strange experience. At home we had one tap in the house, and that was all. Here people had hot and cold water in several rooms.

The next day Herb put me on the bus to Grand Rapids, where I arrived



*The bride and groom, 1962.*

late in the afternoon on June 29, Prince Bernhard's birthday. I had arrived at my destination. Gerrit Koedoot, Herb's brother, showed me around that night. We walked to the corner of Sherman Street and Fuller Avenue and then toward Wealthy and the drugstore. The first nine months I stayed with the Koedoots.

After a week of rest, I found a job, bought my tools with the little money that I had, and paid for my room and board with some Dutch blankets. That first job was a fiasco. Eight days after my arrival I was hired by Lear Siegler as a first-class lathe operator. I began work on Wednesday, July 10. It was difficult and challenging, but I could read the blueprints and understood most of what needed to be done. I was doing well. My old training was paying off. Then one noon hour the union steward began

talking with me about joining the union now that I would be working the night shift. I was open, honest, and very naive. I had belonged to a Christian Metal Union (CVN) in the Netherlands, and I raised questions about the union at Lear Siegler, too many of them. Two days later I was out on the street, confused and bewildered by the American concept

of freedom. I learned something from that—freedom here comes in packages. Some you can open; others you must not touch. The following Monday I began a job as a tool and die maker in the tool room at Keeler Brass, the haven for many newly arrived Holland-

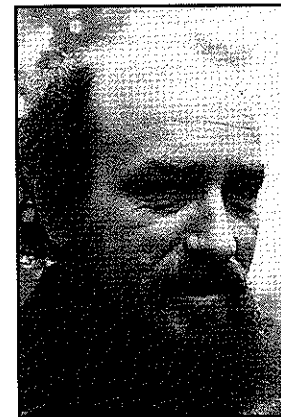
ers. It was a hot job, and the screwplant on Stevens Street was a noisy environment. I made screw dies and fixed the machines from 3:00 to 11:00 P.M. and sometimes later. I was glad to have a job. I bought a bike and explored the town.

After nine months with the Koedoots I began boarding with a Scottish lady. Language was still a problem, and my own shyness did not help. I was lonely, homesick, and lost. But things began to happen that gave me courage and strength to go on. I slowly developed some relationships with students and other factory workers. One of my first close American friends was an artist, Warren Van Ess. He was a polio victim who painted with a brush in his mouth. We talked, shared ideas, and worked together. We played chess and checkers and in general supported

each other. I visited him for many years and he was an inspiration to me.

At first I tried a correspondence course as a commercial artist, but after three lessons I gave up and dropped that idea. I was still not sure about what educational route could fulfill my dreams. When I developed some friendships with Calvin College students, and they encouraged me. The Young People's Society at Sherman Street CRC was also patient, kind, and supportive. At the end of January I applied at Kendall School of Design. Although the semester was three weeks underway, I was allowed to start immediately.

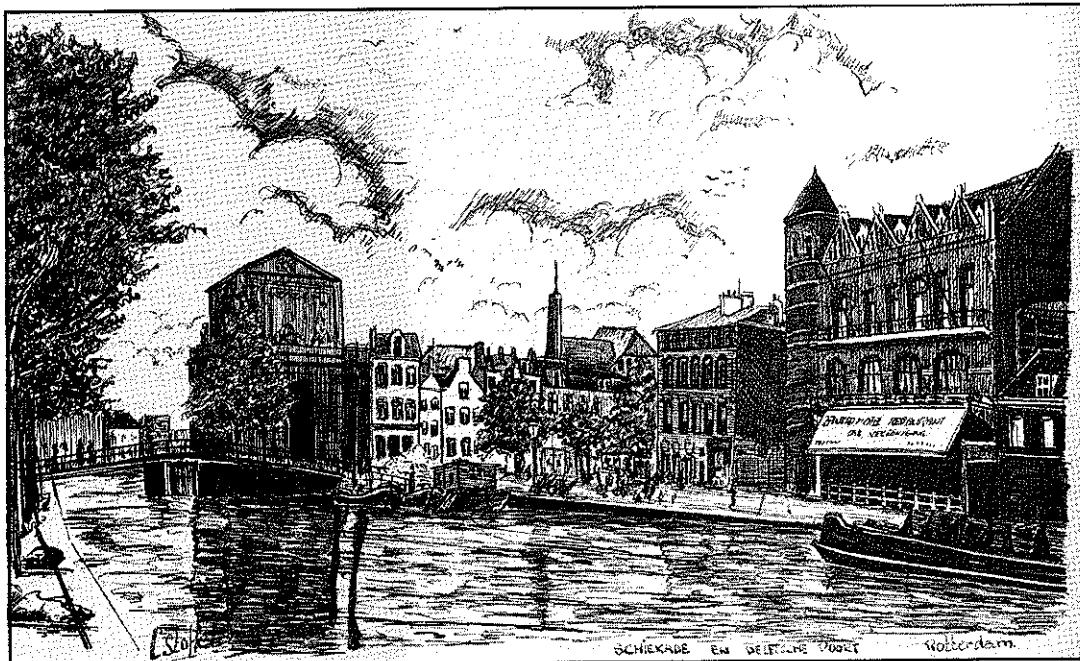
So on February 2 I went back to school and became a student once again. I was on my way. For the next two years I attended class from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. and worked at Keeler Brass from 5:00 P.M. to 12:30 A.M. After that I went home and did my homework. After one year of doing that I did two other things: I moved out of the Scottish lady's home and took room and board with the Groenendaal family on Alto Street, across from Oakdale Christian School (Jim Groenendaal was one of my



*The author, 1972.*

friends, and his parents were happy to have me around), and I took Thursday nights off so that I could attend the meetings and drawing sessions of the Grand

Valley Artists' Association. It was my primary artistic connection for those years. This group of realistic/naturalistic artists was very supportive of my work. Because I continued my study



Rotterdam—Delft port early Overvoorde sketch.

Duifhuis and I had been married on Friday the thirteenth in 1962. She had immigrated to Canada at the age of sixteen with her family and had attended Reformed Bible College. Later, in 1963, she graduated from Calvin College. When we were courting in 1961, she worked in Ontario, Canada, teaching grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 in a Christian school. While I attended the university, she taught in the South Salem Stone School, a one-room country school near Northville, Michigan. Later she taught grade 3 for the South Lyon Public School.

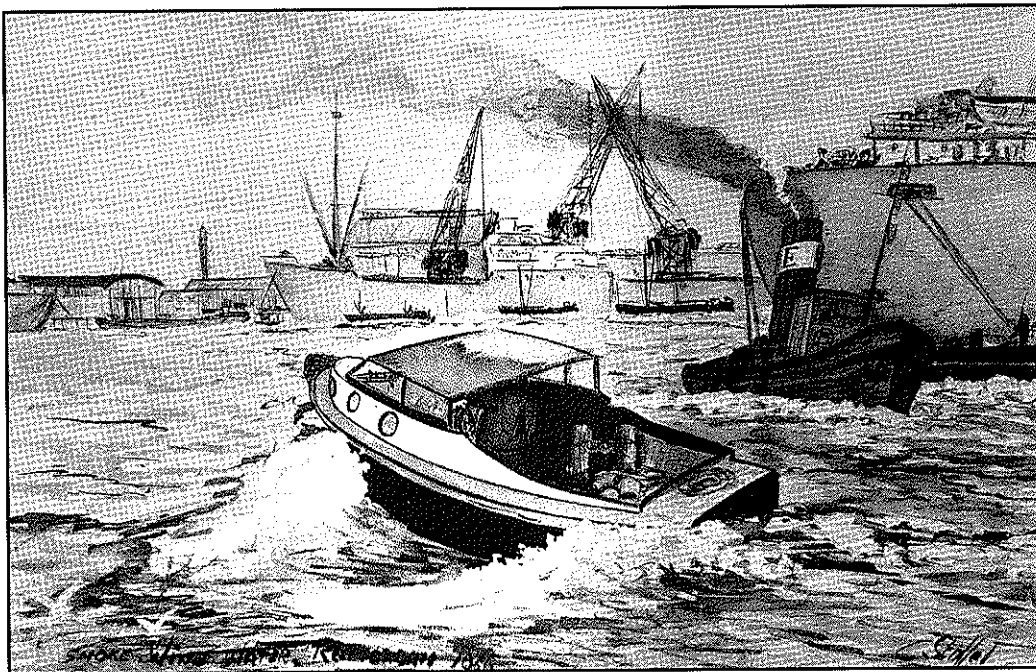
at Kendall School of Design year-round, I was able to complete the three-year program in two years.

When I received word at Keeler Brass that I would be laid off at the end of January, I went to the director of Kendall School of Design, and he set up an interview for me in Holland, Michigan. On February 1, 1961, I began my career as a visual designer at Steketee Van Huis Printing. It was a very good first job for me because we not only did printing preparations but also designed ads for professional journals. After six months I moved to Holland, but I continued my education by taking my first grammar course at Grand Rapids Junior College. I also took private art lessons with Harry Brorby in Holland. A printmaking graduate of the University of Iowa, Harry became very important to me. He opened my eyes to a growing range of possibilities which made it clear that I needed more education.

He sent me to the University of Michigan with a recommendation. To my surprise, Michigan immediately admitted me, and in the fall of 1963 I moved to Ann Arbor, where I overcame some of my shyness and my doubts about becoming an artist.

By then I was a married man. Greta

and often lost among the University of Michigan's 40,000 students. Praise and encouragement, however, boosted my confidence. The university allowed me to break out of my mental Dutch ghetto. To be a Dutchman in Ann Arbor was very different from being Dutch in Grand Rapids.

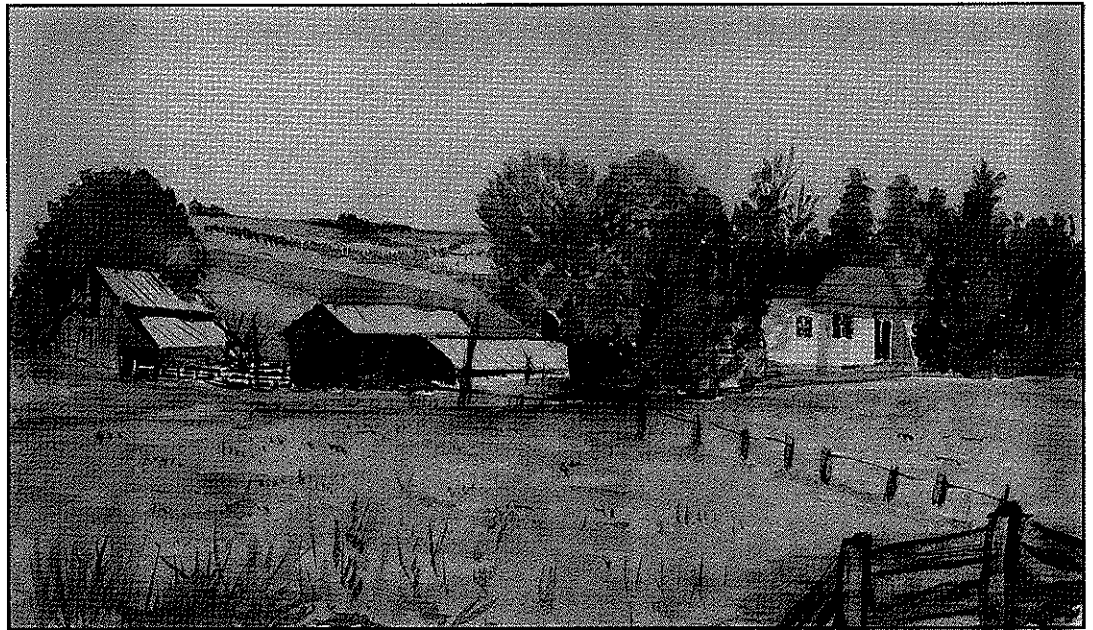


1956 watercolor, Smoke, Wind, and Water, Rotterdam.

Ann Arbor gave me a new perception of my own rich cultural heritage. Yes, I had been culturally deprived, but now I discovered wonderful and meaningful things from my professors. People spoke highly of the Dutch—a new experience for me. Dr. Wolfgang Stechow, who taught the history of northern painting, was special to me. Integration into the American culture became easier. I studied with two printmakers, Frank Cassara and Emile Weddige, and two painters, William Lewis and Allen Mullen. All four were very good to me and taught me a great deal about image making and about myself. I worked for Frank Cassara in the print studio as an assistant and taught printmaking for him as a teaching assistant.

In 1964 I received my B.S. and in 1966 I received a M.F.A. degree. In some sense 1966 was a dream year. Early that year I became a U.S. citizen and received my appointment to teach at Calvin College. Greta was expecting our first child. We also bought our first house, and my parents visited us that summer. It was all too unreal, too unbelievable, and yet it was true. Even today I am amazed about the whole thing. But going from grease monkey to professor is not especially strange in the U.S.A. where people talk about going from newspaper boy to president. The American way requires the flexibility to change, the freedom to move, the strength to provide, and institutions which encourage people. I have experienced all of these things in America; they are part of my personal history.

The front page of my Dutch Bible



Pella, Iowa, Vermeer Farm, ca. 1960.

contains a note from my mother, which reads, "To our Jan in remembrance of your confession on Sunday, January 16, 1955. Psalm 119:105, your thankful parents." In Dutch it reads, *Aan onze Jan. Ter gedachtenis aan uw belijdenis op zondag 16 jan, 1955. Ps 119:105. je dankbare ouders, Jan Overvoorde, A.D. Overvoorde den Braber.* That text, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," also became our wedding text in 1962.

It was customary in those days for the minister to select an appropriate text for each person who made public confession of faith. I also received a text from my minister, a strange one I thought, John 1:46a, just three words: "Come and see," the reply Philip gave to Nathanael when he spoke to him about Jesus of Nazareth. I remember some of the discussions at our home after the service. It appeared to be totally unrelated to my life. At that time I was in the Dutch army serving in the Corp of Engineers. Before that, beginning at age fourteen, I was trained as a metal worker in a nearby shipyard. My

grandfather and three of my uncles were shipbuilders and ship's carpenters—all working-class people. After the completion of my army duty I returned to the shipyard and worked as a diesel mechanic on ocean liners, as a member of the repair crew. Indeed, "Come and see" seemed totally unrelated to what I was doing.

Kralingsche Veer, my birthplace and the village in which I grew up, is difficult to find even on enlarged Netherlandic maps. How, one might ask, can anything good come out of Kralingsche Veer, a small landlocked place? The street in which I kicked tin cans (we had no soccer balls to kick around) has not changed much. Buffelstraat, number 100, the old place where I was raised, is still there. The old tobacco store at the end of the street is now a Chinese take-out. The Christian school I attended is gone, and the church building in which I made my public confession is virtually empty now on Sunday morning in spite of the fact that the Reformed and the Christian Reformed worship together.

From that place I came to the



From Weeping to Fruit Bearing, award-winning etching in dark brown, 1966.

United States of America. It was not easy leaving six brothers and two sisters behind. However, after immigrating I discovered the importance of Christian fellowship in churches where brothers and sisters in the Lord could become more important to me than my blood brothers and sisters. It

was here, in the U.S.A., that I learned to trust the Lord and to follow. Here, too, the Lord completed my education and training, which transformed me from metal worker to fine artist. Looking back, the text which my Dutch pastor assigned to me has been prophetic—"Come and see." 6

# Friesland, Minnesota: A Little Town That Couldn't

Robert Schoone-Jongen

An abandoned gas station, a converted country school, and a green and white sign along a Midwestern road—these solitary structures and a dot on the map were once dreams which promoters and settlers shared, momentary missteps in the march of progress. They symbolize many towns which arose, flourished briefly, and died slowly, unmourned and largely forgotten.

One such place is Friesland, Minnesota. This tiny spot on the map of Minnesota, midway between Duluth

and the Twin Cities, was a town for about thirty years. It arose from the ashes of the Hinckley fire of 1894, grew for a year or so, and then slowly, inexorably disappeared among the pines and poplars.

According to Theodore F. Koch, his Dutch colony in Pine County, Minnesota, originated when

... Mr. Hopewell Clark, who was the Land Commissioner of the St. Paul & Duluth Railroad, asked me to take charge of the sale of part of its land grant in the vicinity of Hinckley, and about ten miles north thereof. I was given the exclusive agency for thousands of acres of said lands, and established the stations and villages of Friesland, and Groningen along the St. Paul & Duluth line.<sup>1</sup>

The origin of this settlement was no



*Deserted farmhouse, p. 122 in Literary American, 1952.*



different from that of hundreds of other ethnic colonies which dotted the Great Plains. Dozens of such settlements attracted colonists who traced their ancestry back to the Netherlands. To outsiders, as well as to the Federal Census Bureau, they were all Dutch.



*Friesland town marker still standing, 1997.*

But within the group, religious tensions and cultural differences divided them into subcategories which paralleled the various provincial subdivisions of the Netherlands. Friesland's story is the story of Dutch Calvinists trying to build an outpost of faith in the pine forests of Minnesota. Their failure is an illustration that faith alone cannot sustain a community. Their assiduous effort is testimony that life is sustained by more than economic factors.

The Friesland founders left a sizeable paper trail behind. Theodore F. Koch, the town's promoter, wrote a lengthy account of his life. The St. Paul & Duluth Railroad Company maintained detailed records of its land holdings, records which include detailed descriptions of the topography of the land, records of the agricultural development of the region, and character sketches of many settlers. Though their English was often tortured, the Frieslanders were prolific writers. One of them, Klaas Feyma,

wrote bimonthly dispatches to a Dutch-language newspaper published in Orange City, Iowa. He described the crops, social events, church business, the weather, epidemics, and almost anything else that struck his fancy. He continued to write these

reports for almost thirty years. From such sources a provocative story can be written.

Theodore F. Koch was one of many agents engaged by the railroad companies to sell the vast tracts of

land which had been their reward from the states and federal governments. Koch was a phenomenal salesman. Energetic, resourceful, opinionated, part visionary, part promoter, Koch had accumulated a significant reputation in Minnesota as a land salesman who got results. By 1895 he had already sold hundreds of thousands of Minnesota land parcels to German, Swedish, and Dutch settlers throughout the central and southern parts of the state as well as in the Red River Valley.<sup>2</sup>

Prinsburg in Kandiyohi County and Clara City in Chippewa County were his greatest achievements to date. He had taken control of a tenuous town project in Murray County at Lake Wilson and turned a marginal settlement into a bustling little community by simply broadening the streets and placing a little park across the street from the depot. His business had gone through very tough times during the depression which followed the Panic of 1893. As economic

activity resumed, Koch was looking for new lands to sell. The railroad was hoping to sell off lands rendered useless for logging by the great Hinckley fire of September 1, 1894. Koch had successfully sold the company's lands in central Minnesota, and so the railroaders again turned to him. From this mutual need, Friesland was born.

The railroad gained the cooperation of a proven salesman. Koch, in turn, was able to tap into sources of ready cash in Europe. From the beginning of his career in America, Theodore Koch was a front man for German investors. His most significant backer was Wilhelm Funcke. Koch and Funcke had known each other for many years, and they trusted each other. Funcke had made his fortune in mining the rich coal deposits of the Ruhr Valley. His surplus cash was put to work by Koch in developing American real estate. Funcke's money and Koch's expertise were organized as the Theo F. Koch Land Co., Inc. with an office on East Third Street in St. Paul, just a block or two from the Union Depot.

From his office Koch organized an advertising campaign in Dutch newspapers throughout the Midwest. In addition to handling railroad land, Koch had land of his own to peddle. He had bought large tracts of land on which logging companies had failed to pay taxes.<sup>3</sup> The first advertisements for Friesland appeared in December 1895, urging Hollanders to consider the benefits of buying land in a new colony which was bound to thrive in the near future. The soil, it was said, was fertile, the trees suitable for firewood (a ready source of cash). Koch promised work for those who were short of money. Roads had to be built from the townsite to the farmlands. A demonstration farm was being developed, and two large apartments were being built to house newcomers waiting for houses of their own.<sup>4</sup> Here

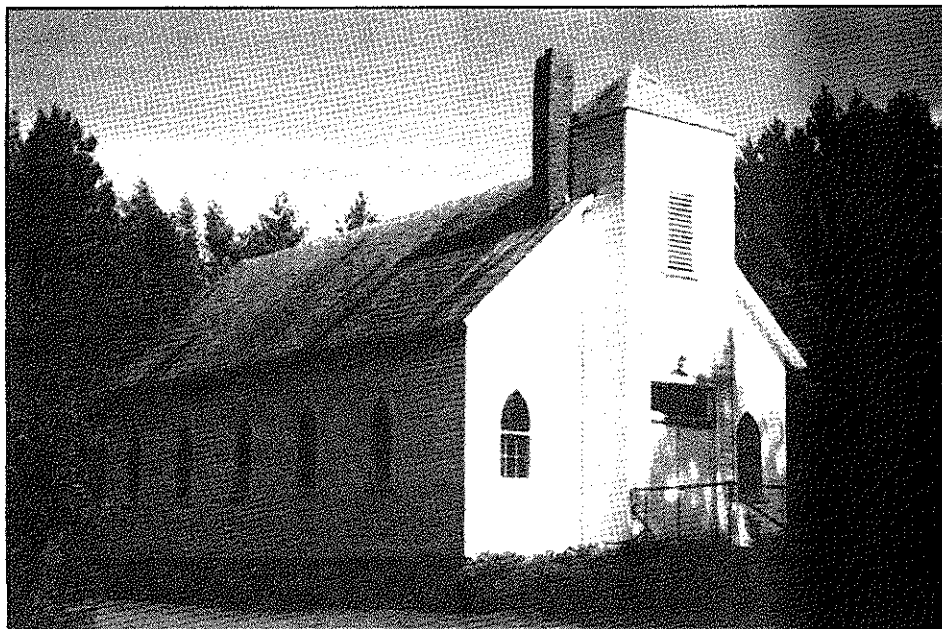


*Commercial building, unoccupied, 1997.*

were opportunities to use sweat equity to earn a down payment on a farm.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1896, St. Paul & Duluth excursion trains carried land seekers to Pine County. Most of the prospects had arrived in St. Paul the previous day

and were met at the Union Depot by Koch or one of his agents. The Dutch land seekers had been urged to identify themselves by wearing Dutch flags in their lapels. After being housed and fed overnight in St. Paul, they proceeded the seventy miles



*Friesland, Minnesota Reformed Church, disbanded.*

north, passing established towns like Pine City and the recently rebuilt Hinckley.

Five miles beyond Hinckley was Friesland.<sup>5</sup> The excursionists were assured that a bustling town would arise in the woods as soon as spring arrived. The streets were already staked out and the locations pinpointed for a hotel, store, depot, post office, and produce warehouse.

Koch knew one very important thing about his Dutch customers. Land quality was important, but an equally important factor for the Hollanders was the assurance that there would be a Reformed church in

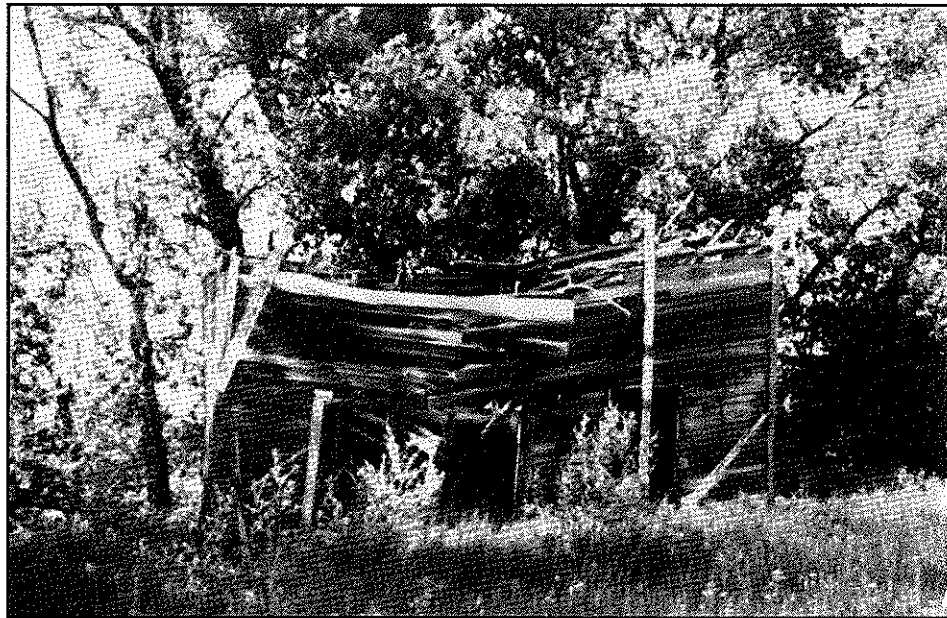
their new community. Although he himself was a Unitarian, Koch counted the support of the Dutch clergy as vital to the success of his colonies. For Friesland he promised a free church building if enough people moved in. His advertisements and letters to newspapers were placed in periodicals which consciously identified themselves with one or another of the Calvinist factions in the upper Midwest. These periodicals in turn reached Hollanders throughout the United States and the Netherlands. Although only a few of the periodicals were official publications of the churches, the readers tended to place great faith in the information which appeared in their pages.<sup>6</sup>

Among the clergy of the Reformed denominations were ministers who had grown up on farms and many who actively farmed for years prior to their ordination. Their services as home missionaries took them to agricultural colonies throughout the plains, acquainting them with

conditions among their parishioners, information which they carried to other locations on their travels. Their opinions were doubly respectable as coming from individuals who were both men of God and fellow farmers.

In 1896 a sudden proliferation of new settlements like Friesland caused a stir within the Dutch Calvinist communities. On the one hand were those who welcomed new opportunities for farmers, especially young ones, to settle on land of their own. Among this group would be found older individuals who either welcomed a new challenge or who simply wished to go to a new settlement as an elder statesman. On the other hand were those who argued that further dispersal would only serve to dilute the existing communities and open the way to cultural and religious obliteration under the overwhelming waves of Americanization and life with other "foreigners." There was a clear recognition that if a new settlement was to remain truly Dutch, a central institution (a viable church) and a critical mass of settlers (a number sufficient to support a minister and provide a social outlet) were required. The prospect of a church and assurances that the old traditions would be maintained were the magnets which would lead some to move to new locations.<sup>7</sup>

In the euphoria of Koch's low prices, easy credit, and large numbers of fellow excursionists, many bought land near Friesland, practically sight unseen since the landscape they saw was draped with a blanket of snow. During March and April 1896 many settlers appeared in the woods to clear their new farms, build their houses, and plant a small crop. That spring stores appeared along Friesland's Front Street. The usual contingent of Yankees was joined by a few Dutch entrepreneurs—a blacksmith, a butcher, some carpenters, and Koch's own Dutch agent. A Dutch-English newspaper was touted and



*Early settler's house remainders, 1997, West Groningen.*

even appeared for a few weeks in the fall of 1896.

The Friesland colony began as a tightly knit cluster bound together by their Dutch Reformed background and a very high incidence of intermarriage. Home missionaries of the two Dutch denominations in America visited the newcomers, and two congregations were organized that first summer. At least two dominions purchased land from the Koch company for themselves and to encourage the growth of the colony.<sup>8</sup>

A symptom of the tentativeness with which the Dutch moved can be seen in the complex family relationships. Church records, census data, newspaper accounts, and railroad land records all indicate that Friesland was settled mostly by four or five clans. Fathers and sons, in-laws, and brothers formed the social fabric. The clan structures apparently carried over into church affiliations.<sup>9</sup>

While close marriage and family ties suggest parallel church ties, there is also an element of economic assistance at work in these family networks. Several of the families that moved to Friesland were moving for the second

or third time. One family's odyssey took them from the Netherlands and Michigan to Kansas, Nebraska, and North Dakota before they came to rest in Friesland. Age and finances made Friesland the final stop for some of the patriarchs. They had tried and became disenchanted with older settlements more than once, or they had failed and were forced to move. Approximately forty Dutch households were settled in Pine County in 1896.<sup>10</sup>

Though all the settlers were Dutch in the eyes of the U.S. Census Bureau, such a generalization made sense only to the outsiders. Within the group there were some very significant fault lines, mere cracks to the untrained eyes of the government and the Yankees but chasms to the Dutch community, threats to its very survival. The settlers of Friesland were overwhelmingly immigrants. Most had been in the United States for fewer than ten years. Those who had arrived earlier displayed a preference for joining already struggling settlements in Wisconsin, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. Many were inexperienced as farmers. Several had been sailors and fishermen in the old country. Still

others had served apprenticeships as carpenters.

The religious divisions which had driven many from the Netherlands, particularly from the northern province of Friesland, arrived in Pine County with the first settlers. Several families moved to the new settlement hoping for a Christian Reformed congregation. They had been dissenters before emigrating. Lured by other land agents, they had settled in places where the dissenters had been unable to organize their own congregations. Pine County seemed to offer a solution to their spiritual crisis. After Koch's advertisements began promising generous subsidies for a church, ministers began visiting the area every month or so. Maybe here they could finally worship exactly as they had in the Netherlands without the distasteful "American" elements which seemed to dilute the faith of some less "devout" immigrants.

The formula for failure was unmistakable—lack of capital, religious divisions, inexperience with American agricultural practices, lack of agricultural experience of any kind for some, forest conditions alien to anything they had seen on the prairie or in Europe. But there were a few who fell into a different category. They had either been born in the United States or had immigrated as small children. Many of these people had grown up in the wooded areas and swamps of western Michigan. They had been acclimated to the United States in colonies which were becoming more at home with their non-Dutch neighbors. They had been lured onto the prairies in the 1870s and 1880s. For them Pine County was almost a homecoming, a return to the geography of their youth. Their fathers and grandfathers had once hacked an existence from the wilderness; they would accept the challenge and do it again, this time in Minnesota.

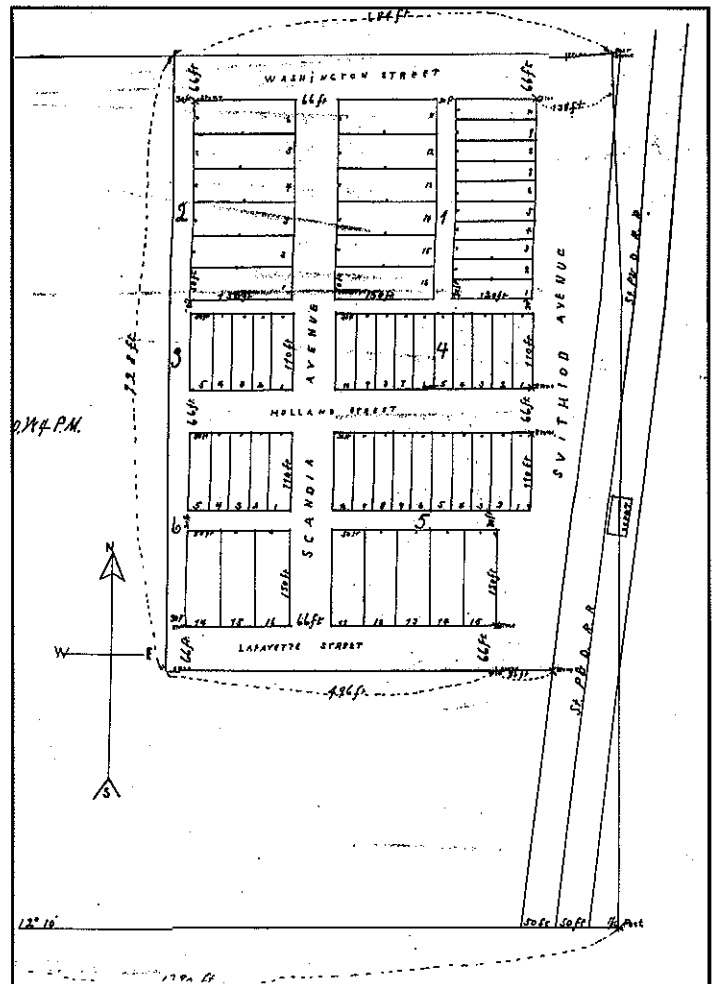
Within a year there were unmistakable signs of trouble. The division into two congregations precluded the presence of a full-time minister for either group. Instead each made do with monthly or quarterly visits by a pastor and the services of lay readers for the rest of the time. The primitive roads made church attendance problematic, especially during the winter. This quickly led those living to the northeast and southeast of Friesland to consider starting other congregations in Sandstone and Hinckley. The Koch company also encouraged further dispersion by renaming Miller Station (five miles north of Friesland) as Groningen. By 1898 there were no fewer than five separate Dutch groups meeting under the auspices of two denominations. The largest of the congregations included fourteen families, seventy-seven individuals.

Theodore Koch donated land and building materials for the Friesland Reformed Church. While this house of worship was rising in 1897, the foundations of the Dutch community were already cracking.

Dispersion was further propelled by Friesland's failure to generate the businesses that the farmers needed. A railroad and a few buildings were not enough. Koch built a warehouse for the expected harvest of potatoes, corn, and other vegetables, but he

also sold farmers on the idea of dairies as a ready source of cash. While the farmers did organize a creamery in nearby Groningen, they were unable to raise enough capital for both a building and the necessary equipment. Without equipment the venture quickly failed. Hinckley's creamery was organized at the same time, and one of Koch's Dutch settlers chaired its first board of directors. Since the Hinckley creamery was the only market for milk and cream, the dairymen who had selected farms believing that Friesland would be their market town found themselves with the real possibility of financial ruin.<sup>11</sup> The only source of cash for their products was too far away and reachable only by primitive roads.

As more land was developed, most



Town site of Groningen, Pine County, Minnesota.

farmers became convinced that the area was unsuitable for the crops they knew how to cultivate. The railroad's own private assessments of the land and dozens of letters from the buyers, often written in Dutch or broken English, confirm that much of the area was scarcely concealed rock. The lowlands were swampy, and everywhere the poplars regenerated almost as quickly as they were felled. One Hollander likened farming near Friesland to "a rooster trying to build a nest in a bush." He concluded in despair, "What can we expect?"<sup>12</sup>

Koch experimented with potatoes and other crops to demonstrate what could be done with a little patience. But his experiments, carried out with hired help, were very different from actually wresting a living from difficult soils. Cash for the infrastructure needed to develop the region was simply not available. The railroad failed to live up to promises it had made to Koch. Ditching would also be an expensive proposition. Koch was unwilling to undertake these projects unless he was assured a better return on his investment. The settlers were understandably reluctant to subscribe to bond issues and higher taxes. To Koch's frustration his fellow Hollanders were not interested in working on road crews when there were fields to be cleared and plowed.

The colony's cash troubles drove many to seek work elsewhere, including the Kettle River Quarries and other employers in the Sandstone area. Others went to work in the lumber camps and sawmills. But these alternatives forced many to live away from Friesland for extended periods. Upon their return they often lamented that their efforts at clearing the land had been erased during their absence.<sup>13</sup>

Some Dutch settlers quickly gave up and left, either going back to their previous homes or going on to some other prospect. Again there was a

tendency for clans to leave as they arrived. One of the Friesland congregations disbanded in 1899. The other, reduced to four families by 1905, spent its entire existence sharing a minister with the Sandstone Reformed Church, a minister who frequently could not reach the town due to road conditions.<sup>14</sup>

In 1901 Theodore Koch bought up the railroad's remaining interest in the Friesland area and spent considerable sums to improve the roads and drainage. But by then the Dutch were no longer interested in a place their compatriots and relatives were abandoning, if they were financially able.

Theodore Koch had warned his buyers that life in Friesland would not be easy, that it was a new colony with no amenities. However, he did promise that with effort and patience the Dutch settlers would soon see the day when their little town would thrive. What many of the settlers could not foresee was the monumental task which confronted—and eventually discouraged—them. Those who stayed did so without much enthusiasm. When asked,

"Why did you stay?" they answered simply and truthfully, "We were too poor to leave."<sup>15</sup>

The Friesland, Minnesota, byline disappeared from Dutch newspapers after 1910. No one was left who was willing to tout the virtues of the place. The focus of the Pine County Dutch settlers shifted to Sandstone. Friesland's Front Street was soon reduced to a general store and depot. Postal service ended in 1917. The Friesland Reformed Church was mortally wounded by the departure of the leading elder in 1909. It finally disbanded in the early 1920s, the building sold to the local Presbyterians. Of the few Dutch families which remained, none successfully passed a farm on to a second generation. The diaspora led to other Dutch colonies in

Montana, Canada, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and California.

For example, when Harmen and Hielke De Boer moved to [Central] California after ten years of struggle in Friesland, Minnesota, they thought they had entered the promised land. Together with their brother Siebe they had been part-time farmers and part-time carpenters in the colony. They were among the original buyers of 1896, relocating from Westfield, North Dakota. Harmen helped finance his farm by working several years for the Pullman Palace Car Company. By 1915 Hielke had moved to California. Harmen followed in 1917.

It is appropriate that the Reformed church was the last Dutch institution to die in Friesland. Many Hollanders had come there because the church would be there. But the faith that sustained their souls was not enough to sustain a town—a town which, hindsight shows, never had a chance to thrive. It was a little town that couldn't. It was the wrong town in the wrong place at the wrong time. §

*This research has been supported in part by a grant from the Publications and Research Division of the Minnesota Historical Society with funds provided by the State of Minnesota.*



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Theodore F. Koch, *Memoirs of Theodore F. Koch*, 1935, I:105. Type-script original in the collection of the Riviera Historical Museum, Riviera, Texas.

<sup>2</sup>For a fuller treatment of Koch's background and experience see Robert Schoone-Jongen, "Theodore F. Koch: Dutch-American Land Promoter." *Origins*, XI.2:32-44, and Robert Schoone-Jongen, "Cheap Land and Community: Theodore F. Koch, Dutch Colonizer." *Minnesota History*, LIII.6 (1993):214-24.

<sup>3</sup>Koch, *Memoirs*, I:105-06.

<sup>4</sup>*De Volksvriend*, December 18, 1895, carried the first advertisement. The campaign peaked in January and February 1896 with a series of ads which featured various aspects of the colony and its vicinity. Also during this period letters to the editor appeared touting the virtues of Friesland. The January 31, 1896, number of *De Volksvriend* included a full-page supplement written by Koch giving all the details about his colony including a testimonial from the vice consul of the Netherlands in St. Paul vouching for Koch's integrity.

<sup>5</sup>The plat map of Friesland was filed in the Pine County Court House on December 29, 1896. The site was surveyed on May 5, 1896. Streets in the town were assigned the names Leiden, Arnhem, Groningen, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Front, and Elfrieda (for Koch's daughter).

<sup>6</sup>For a more complete analysis of the Dutch-American press, see Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, Rpt. Grand Rapids, MI, 1989, pp. 529-41.

<sup>7</sup>Unsigned letter to the editor of *De Volksvriend*, March 14, 1896, p. 6. The writer was presumably from Greenleafton, Minnesota, since he describes a meeting of farmers in that Dutch community.

<sup>8</sup>Rev. Henry Straks of Maurice, Iowa, and Rev. Cornelius Bode of Austinville, Iowa, were two early buyers, neither of whom ever settled in the area (St. Paul & Duluth Railroad Co. Land Contracts #4166 and #4612, Northern Pacific Railroad Collection, Minnesota Historical Society). Apparently other ministers at least expressed an interest in buying land. There was a letter to the editor urging ministers not only to buy land in Friesland but also to settle there as they had in older colonies (*De Volksvriend*, 30 April 1896:8).

<sup>9</sup>Home addresses, census reports and church membership records indicate that five or six clans constituted the bulk of Friesland's buyers: Vorks, Straatsmas, Sikkinks, Hanenburgs, and DeBoers. The Vorks were numerically the largest, with two brothers and a brother-in-law all settling in the area. Each of the three households had many children. Of these, Vork and Sikkink are the only surnames still found in the local telephone directories. Many of the other unrelated settlers, such as the Zwakmans, Zwiers, Klijnstras, and Feymas eventually married into these clans.

<sup>10</sup>Quirinus Huyzer is an example of someone who had a track record of being an enthusiastic booster who eventually left one colony after another. Lucas (*Netherlanders*, p. 353) quotes a letter Huyzer wrote in 1884 describing the virtues of Pella, Nebraska. Fifteen years later he was a booster of Friesland, serving as chairman of the Dell Grove Township Committee (*Hinckley Enterprise*, 28 May 1898.) In 1908 he moved to Big Timber, Montana (*De Volksvriend*, 12 Nov. 1908).

<sup>11</sup>*One Hundred Years In Pine County*, Askov, Minnesota, 1977, p. 94. R.L. Polk and Co., *R.L. Polk's Minnesota Gazetteer and Business Directory*. St. Paul: Polk (biennial). Minnesota Historical Society Collection, 1901-1916. John A. Sikkink was elected the president of Hinckley Cooperative Creamery Association (*Hinckley Enterprise*, 2 Sept. 1899).

<sup>12</sup>Fanny H. Smith, *Hanenburg-Rozendal: A Goodly Heritage*. Privately published, 1986, p. 256.

<sup>13</sup>St. Paul & Duluth land-sale contracts had letters to the company attached to them. Also of interest were the St. Paul & Duluth's own inspectors' analyses of the land conditions and settlers' characters. The trees and the rocky soil were the most consistently voiced complaints. Other problems the settlers mentioned were an appalling number of sicknesses and injuries, many of which were attributable to the primitive sanitary facilities and the dangerous methods used to grub out stumps (Northern Pacific Railroad Collection, Minnesota Historical Society).

<sup>14</sup>Friesland Reformed Church submitted an annual statistical and anecdotal report to Classis Iowa of the Reformed Church in America. These reports were published in *De Volksvriend*.

until the Minnesota churches were placed into a separate classis in 1917.

<sup>15</sup>Mrs. Klaas Oly as quoted in Alida Nieboer Bjerke, "Town of Friesland" Collection of the Hinckley Fire Museum, Hinckley, Minnesota.

# profiles

## Jappe De Boer (1861-1941)

Paul C. Zylstra

When I arranged an interview with Jappe De Boer at the Juvenile Home as an elementary school project, he seemed at first amused that I was so serious about my note-taking and the questions I shyly ventured. But then he soon took me seriously.

"There are two kinds of children here," he began in his broken English while he walked me to an enclosed area inside, "older boys and girls housed in the 'Tight Rooms'—those are locked dorms and they are for offenders. They were naughty and broke the law." He opened the door to reveal a few of them who looked the part. "But there are lots of other children in the detention area who need a place to stay for a while."

He went on to say that at 7:00 PM they'd march single-file to the meeting room—boys on one side, girls on the other. There'd be singing, prayer, and a Bible story. Each child was to have memorized and be able to recite a Bible verse.

Daytime the well-behaved were released for school, and in summer would work and do chores inside or help in the vegetable garden outside.

"We get to love these kids," he explained, "they all need to have Jesus. They've been deprived in some way or other for a long time."

Jappe knew first-hand what that was like. He was born in the Netherlands in a non-Christian home. After his father left home (never to be seen again), Jappe and a sister were placed in an orphanage.

When he struck out on his own, he roamed the seas as a commercial sailor for thirteen years. He relished this life with all its usual adventurous stops at major ports. His father had pursued a like career as a captain of two British navy vessels; it was natural he should follow suit. He learned four languages along the way: Dutch, English, German, Swedish.

### Conversion under Spurgeon

Shortly before he came to America in 1886, while in London, he was converted under the famed preacher-evangelist-author, Charles Spurgeon. There too, he met and married a French young lady, Harriet Magré.

He headed for Grand Rapids to look up a cousin after his arrival in New York. Soon after, he met Calvin Theological student Henry Beets. Their mutual vision for Missions made them close friends.

Spurred on by Beets, who had joined English-speaking LaGrave CRC, the ex-sailor and Harriet linked hands with the group pushing for a second English-speaking church.

At Broadway CRC's organizational meeting, the west side tradesman (pipe fitter) was elected as deacon, part of the first consistory.

Meanwhile he and Harriet raised a family of six children. (The first two, sons, died young, and the last child died at seventeen.)

During the two years of vacancy after organization it fell upon Jappe to read a sermon whenever a preacher was unavailable on a given Sunday. Whose sermons did he choose?

Charles Spurgeon, of course.

Jappe had a good business. But Jappe's main business was missions. He only used plumbing to make ends meet so he could carry on this main business. After all, he had found Christ in a mission church, and when his friend Beets plunged into all kinds of missions projects, he, Jappe, was included in some.

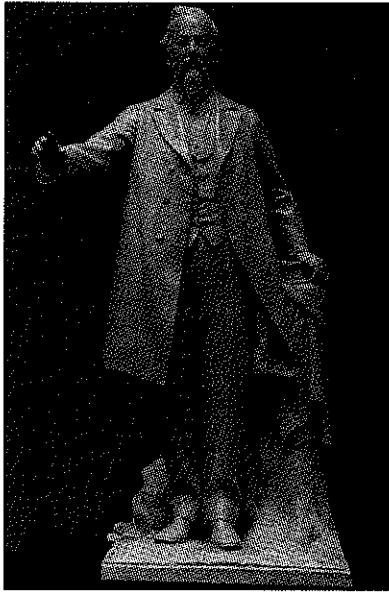
Thus the project that absorbed him for twenty-five years (1913-1938) was the Juvenile Home work. It was first undertaken as a private venture of a few Broadway church men. Their first meeting place was a small building on West Leonard Road. But in 1913 De Boer and George Vander Laan organized a mission Sunday school sponsored by Broadway. They began meeting with a few deprived children in the Hurley residence on Stocking Street, then in new quarters erected on Walker near Leonard, the Juvenile Home. When the building was destroyed by fire, a new home was built. At the new home services were held Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings.

In 1926 De Boer retired and devoted himself to mission activity with a greater intensity. He stayed on with the Sunday portion of the work throughout most of the 1930s, by this time assisted by Peter Vander Meer.

Jappe came upon hard times beginning with the death of Harriet, his dedicated partner for forty-one years. Then he lost much of his real estate holdings in the Crash of 1929. He married again (to Katy Stapstra). When he died at eighty in 1941 at his Fuller Avenue home, his friend, Dr. Henry Beets, conducted the funeral. &

# books

Reviews by Conrad J. Bult



## Albertus C. Van Raalte: Dutch Leader and American Patriot

Jeanne M. Jacobson, Elton J. Bruins, and  
Larry J. Wagenaar.  
Holland, MI: Hope College, 1996.  
250 pages. \$34.95.\*

Resembling volumes found on many coffee tables, this elegantly written book is a monument dedicated to the memory of Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte (1811-1876), seceder from the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, leader of immigrants to America, and founder of Holland, Michigan, in 1847. For many years he functioned as spiritual leader, as chief landholder, and as town doctor of this pioneer settlement. Van Raalte was also an ardent champion of education at all levels. Without his efforts, Hope College might never have been established.

One of seventeen children, Albertus Van Raalte fathered ten children himself; of these, seven reached adulthood. His wife, Christina Johanna De Moen Van Raalte (d. 1871), a truly heroic pioneer woman and *juffrouw* in the best sense of the word, supported her husband through good times and bad. Often she bore the brunt of hostile remarks directed toward him. As the writers observe,

Christina Van Raalte suffered for her husband because she loved him, but she also suffered directly. There is nothing weak or feeble about experiencing pain which is inflicted by others, and she endured bravely and with dignity. (p. 173)

Two of the Van Raalte sons, Dirk and Ben, served in the Civil War. Severely wounded during the fighting near Atlanta, Dirk lost an arm. Later he served three terms in the Michigan legislature. The Civil War correspondence between Albertus Van Raalte and his sons gives the reader a rare glimpse of Van Raalte family relationships,

spiritual life, and domestic concerns. Van Raalte, the authors note, "destroyed many family documents" (p. 119). Consequently, this surviving Civil War correspondence, quoted voluminously in the book, reveals in a unique way the hopes and fears of the letter writers.

Albertus Van Raalte's reputation remains untarnished throughout this volume. Those who criticize him are branded petty; he is always portrayed as tolerant and long suffering.

The authors' admiration for their subject is readily apparent, as in the following passage:

Throughout his life his heart leapt up at the thought of new challenges, and he reacted to the possibility of new endeavors with the thought, "I could do that! I could do that *well!*" Eventually it grew more and more difficult for him to walk and not faint, to run and not be weary—but it was always in his power to mount up with wings like an eagle. (p. 156)

Already on page 1 the reader is apprised of the uniqueness of this book's subject: The distance between a jail cell [in the Netherlands] and an honored place in history cannot be measured in miles, and few people travel that course. This book tells the story of such a journey.

In 1850 Van Raalte was the guiding force in the decision of Classis Holland to affiliate with the Reformed Church in the eastern part of the United States. Many early immigrants, including Van Raalte, had been treated very well by members of the well-established Reformed Church in America, and a warm relationship had developed between these eastern Dutch immigrants and those in the Michigan settlement. Later immigrants, desiring to retain their seceder heritage, did not have a high regard for the Reformed Church in America and were less keen on the rapid cultural adaptation to the American way of life reflected in most of their social, educational, and religious institutions.

\* To order, please send \$34.95, which includes shipping and handling, to Hope-Geneva Bookstore, Hope College, P.O. Box 9000, Holland, MI 49422-9000.

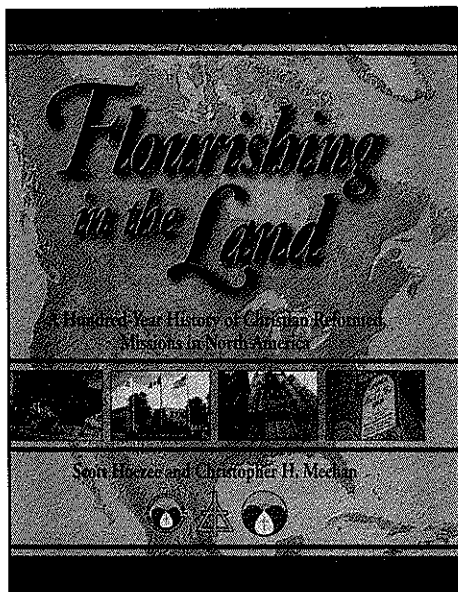
They were also not fond of hymn singing in church services, an RCA liturgical practice. In their view, the Reformed Church in the east was lax in house visitation and catechetical training. Schism ensued, and in 1857 the denomination later known as the Christian Reformed Church was born.

This ecclesiastical break among these early Dutch immigrants has been a subject of scholarly attention for many years. Van Raalte's responsibility for this split among pious brethren is a matter of debate between Christian Reformed and Reformed Church historians. This volume reflects the Reformed Church point of view of this parting of the ways between believers who were like-minded in many ways.

In the post-Civil War era Van Raalte

was no longer the dynamic force he had been in the early years of the Holland settlement. Nor did the success of the Holland enclave depend on what he said and did. Van Raalte, the authors observe, "needed to escape with dignity from the stresses in the Holland community" (p. 165). Amelia County south of the James River in Virginia was Van Raalte's choice for a new colony and missionary venture. But Van Raalte failed in his attempt to replicate his earlier success in the founding of Holland, Michigan. He was old and tired, and immigrants who came to Amelia did not find it, as they hoped, to be part of "America the land of promise." In 1877, after a life of less than ten years, this Dutch colony in Virginia ceased to exist.

*Albertus C. Van Raalte: Dutch Leader and American Patriot*, which commemorates the sesquicentennial of Holland, Michigan, will delight Civil War buffs, genealogists, and those who want to know more about the Holland fire. Though a scholarly analytical biography of Van Raalte remains to be written, this lavishly illustrated tome, complete with references, endnotes, and indexes, is an effort which complements the recently cast bronze statue of Van Raalte, featured on the book's dust jacket and frontispiece and situated in Holland's Centennial Park. Those who wrote this book cherish Van Raalte; Holland, Michigan; Hope College; and the Reformed Church in America—a fact readily evident to anyone who leafs through a few pages in this oversize volume. §



**Flourishing in the Land**  
*A Hundred-Year History of  
Christian Reformed Missions in  
North America*

Scott Hoezee and Christopher H. Meehan  
Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans  
Publishing Company, 1996.  
213 pages. \$30.00

How Christian Reformed missions in North America flourished, withered, or alternated between these two conditions is narrated by Scott Hoezee, pastor of Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Supplementing this story are Christopher Meehan's biographical vignettes which personify the contributions of dedicated men and women who in one way or another sustained the CRC home missions efforts. Also found in this candid and critical volume are introspective remarks about the CRC's theologically conservative and ethnically cohesive traditions (1857-1960). Thus we see woven in the fabric of the denomination's history, the why and wherefore of its missionary endeavors. Meehan, religion editor for the *Grand Rapids Press* during the years 1983-1987, and Hoezee, a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, know the CRC very well.

The CRC's first mission activities among the Navajo and Zuni, which

originated in 1896, have, by the author's estimate, born fruit but not in overabundance. Work with urban Jews in Paterson, New Jersey, and Chicago (Nathanael Institute) though well intentioned, ended in failure after more than six decades of service begun in 1912 by a few folk who considered this task a particular calling. Not neglected, though much more could be said, is the work of fieldmen in Canada. After World War II, these hard-working individuals helped many Dutch immigrants adjust to a new way of life in their adopted land.

In the chapter titled "The Electronic Church" we learn about the Back to God Hour, first on the air in 1939, and later denominational forays in the fields of television and overseas broadcasting. A section "Going to School" is devoted to campus ministry. This denominational outreach developed from a program sponsored by Classis Grand Rapids South in 1940 to meet the spiritual needs of Christian

Reformed students attending the University of Michigan.

"The Reverend Chaplain" section portraying military and institutional ministries is filled with intriguing historical tidbits about the activities of Christian Reformed chaplains. During World War II and after, these military chaplains toiled under the watchful eye of a denomination which was anxious about the retention of doctrinal fidelity when chaplains preached or administered communion to non-CRC military personnel. Recent ministries to Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Cambodian and Vietnamese, the authors observe, portend well for future growth, even though cultural and theological differences remain as challenges to be overcome. Hope for the twenty-first century is best seen in the final segment "Gathering God's Growing Family" where various missionary techniques such as seeker services are discussed and evaluated.

"Great Cities: Urban Missions" is a thirty-page primer on what to do and what to avoid in work with inner city folk, especially African-Americans in places such as Chicago and Harlem. What we find here about the career of Rev. Eugene Callender in New York City, or the episode in the early sixties concerning Timothy Christian School's reservations about enrolling African-American students who attended the Lawndale Christian Reformed Church, leaves room for sober reflection.

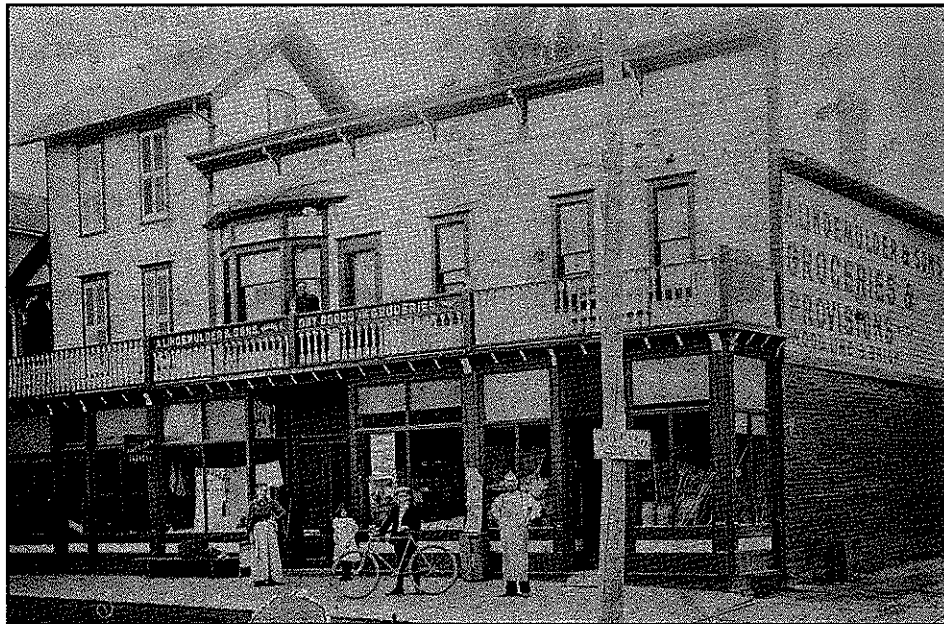
Though published under the auspices of Christian Reformed Home Missions, this well written illustrated volume with notes on the sources and an index of names is not an exercise in public relations. Undiluted self-serving praise for CRC home missions is scrupulously avoided and flattering comments are few. Paternalism is sharply criticized, even though well deserved praise for individual achievements often appears. Personalities are

shown warts and all, and denominational failures are unflinchingly recounted. Yet depth of faith, optimism and hope for the future, shine forth in this volume. Whether in the past, present or future, it is the people who do missions work. Read about them in this volume which belongs in every library serving those who have an interest in the Reformed missionary effort in North America. §



# for the future

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



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Van Raalte and Scholte, A Soured Relationship and Personal Rivalry by Robert Swierenga

The Dutch of Highland, Indiana by David Zandstra

Burum, Groningen—Its Claim to Fame by Janet Sheeres

The Colman Family—Gold Mining near Denver by Helen Vander Meulen

Gerrit Siereveld Profile by Paul Zylstra

R.E. Werkman: An Entrepreneur from Holland, Michigan by Donald Van Reken  
 “Wrong Side Up”—selections from William Recker’s autobiography, Chicago to Montana (1894-1953)

Working Together for Good: An RCA/CRC Family Heritage by Thomas Boslooper

Paulus Den Bleyker and the Origins of Kalamazoo by H.J. Brinks

Recollections of Janet Huyser Hoekstra—Winnie, Texas and Chicago

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

A feature segment (Spring 1998) edited by Harry Boonstra will explore Dutch Reformed worship past and present. Authors will include Harry Boonstra, Bert Polman, Walter Lagerwey and interviews with Ruth Hoekema, Nettie Plantinga, William Spoelhof and others.

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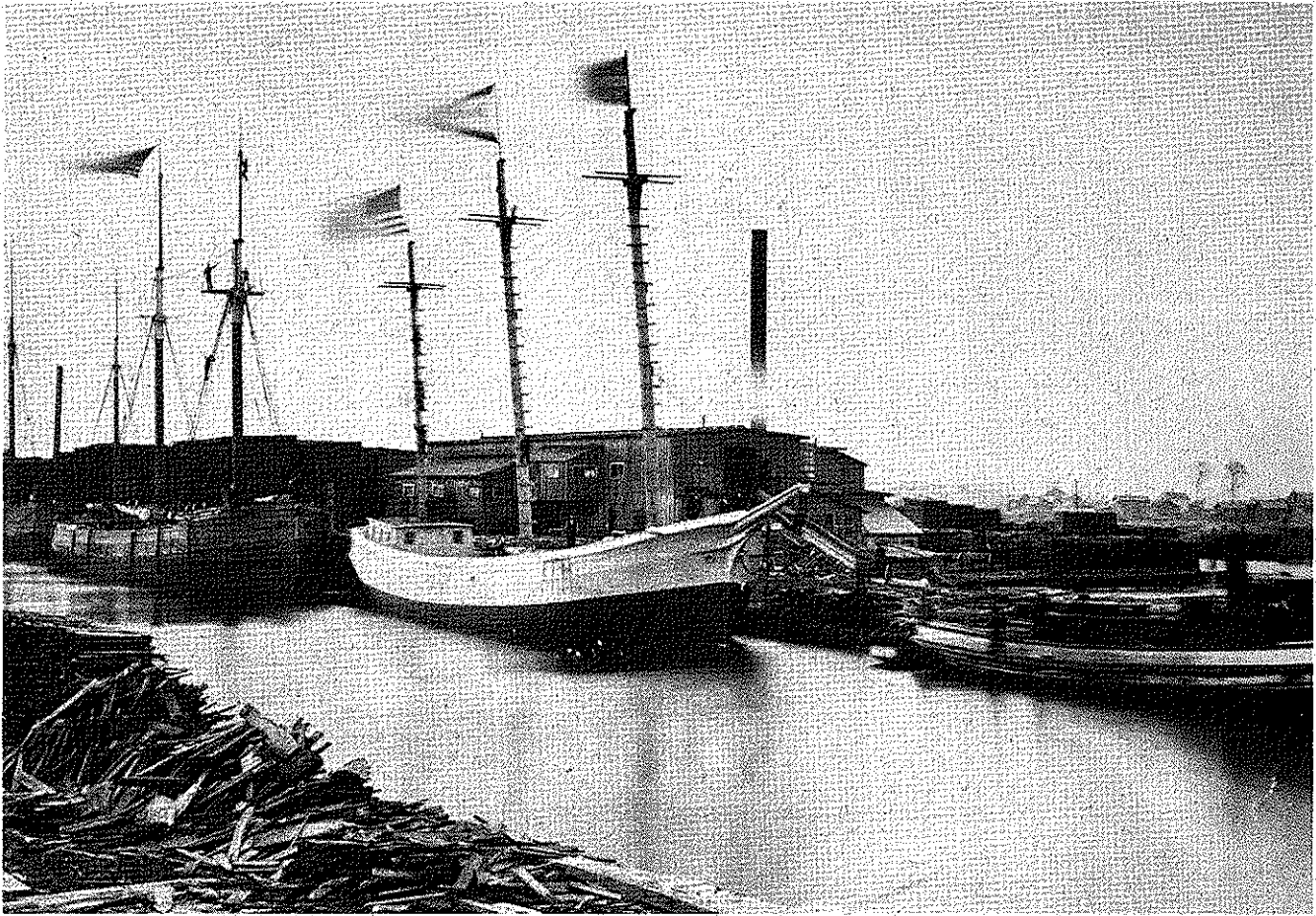
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