

Origins

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(616) 957-6313

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Hendrina Van Spronsen
Circulation Manager

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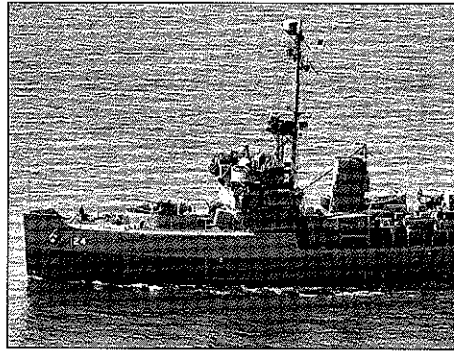
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*Richard Van Dellen with his wife Ella
and sister Ann posing in front of the new
Van Dellen residence on Fairmount Street,
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1912.*



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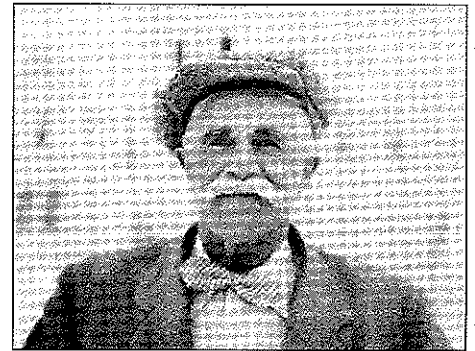
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Foxhole Religion in the East China Sea

Donald H. Bouma

Foxhole religion was a term familiar to me, but I never expected that I would experience it firsthand when clearing Japanese minefields in the East China Sea, between Japan and Korea, during World War II.

The term foxhole religion (you pray a lot when bombs are flying over the trenches, but not much when danger is past) must have been coined in World War I. I remember my catechism teacher, Rev. H.J. Kuiper of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed

Church and editor of *The Banner*, warning us about it in the 1930s. He stressed that it was not just a war-time phenomenon, but an ever-present threat.

I was communications deck officer on the USS *Threat*, a fleet mine-sweeper, 220 feet in length, with a crew of one hundred men and ten officers. With a master's degree and some high school teaching experience, I was given a commission as a Navy officer right out of civilian life. A wife and two-year-old son kept me

out of the service until 1944. After four months of orientation at Plattsburgh, New York, I was sent to communications school at Harvard.

At the end of the training period the Navy gave us a choice of three types of permanent assignments, usually dismissed as a laughing matter since the Navy paid no attention to the choice. This time I got my first choice. My choice of auxiliary ships turned out to be informed, but ill-advised. My fellow graduates thought I was insane, as they chose large ships or naval stations.

I had my reasons for choosing as I did. I have always loved ships and Mackinaw City and St. Ignace were favorite spots to watch Great Lakes shipping. Each fall the three passenger ships of the



Ensign Donald H. Bouma, 1945, with 12-inch signal searchlight.

Dr. Donald H. Bouma is an emerited professor of sociology from Western Michigan University. He was the first full-time professor of sociology at Calvin College (1946-1960) where he inspired and trained a large number of sociologists and social workers.

Chicago, Duluth and Georgian Bay Transit Company would be winter-berthed in Holland, Michigan, and we would drive from Grand Rapids to watch the docking of the *North American*, the *South American*, and the *Alabama*.

It was natural that I would be fascinated with the Navy shipyard in Boston Harbor. Each Sunday it was first to church, historic Old South Church on the Boston Commons, to hear the renowned Dr. Harold Ockinga preach. He was greatly respected by the Christian Reformed Church and often brought to Grand Rapids when the combined Reformation Day service was held for a packed audience at the Civic Auditorium.

After church I went straight to the Boston Harbor to see ships. There in dry dock was the two-stack *Queen Elizabeth I*. I was told she transported troops to England. The only U.S. Navy personnel were gunnery and communications officers, and it was classified as auxiliary duty. The next week the beautiful *Nieuw Amsterdam*

was in dry dock. It also carried troops to Europe, with U.S. sailors tending gunnery and communications. It was designated for auxiliary duty and that made me certain that I wanted auxiliary duty.

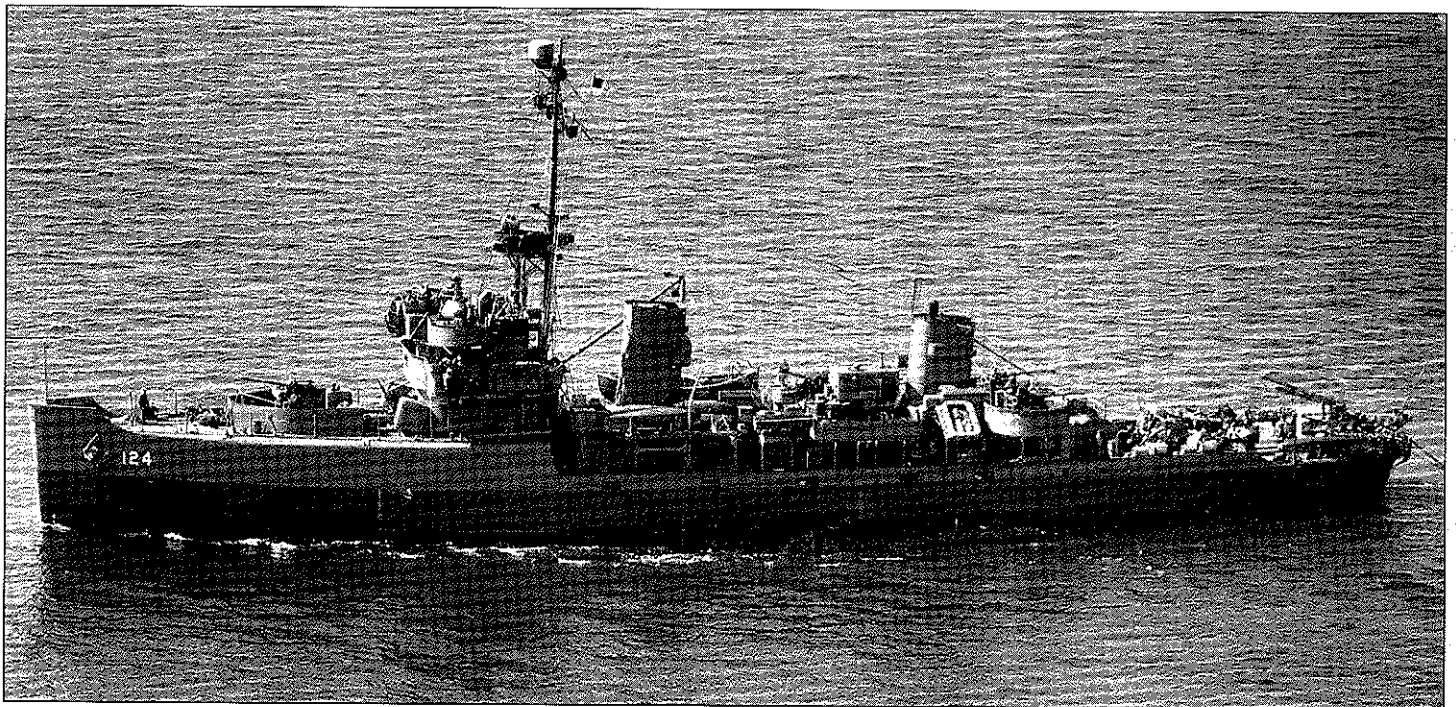
When I got my permanent orders it was to the USS *Threat*, a mine-sweeper. I should have known that minesweepers were also classified as auxiliary. So, I got my choice. It reminded me of the shibboleth—watch out for what you wish or pray for, because you may get it.

So, off for my ship at Norfolk Navy Base where signs in Norfolk read “dogs and sailors keep off the grass.” My ship had just returned from the invasion of Normandy, with a 25 percent loss of lives, and was being refitted for duty in the Pacific. We sailed for the Panama Canal but were diverted to Miami for installation of air-search radar since we would be used on picket duty to protect larger ships from *kamikaze* (suicide) attacks which had just begun in the Pacific. As officer of the deck on the day President Roosevelt died, it was my

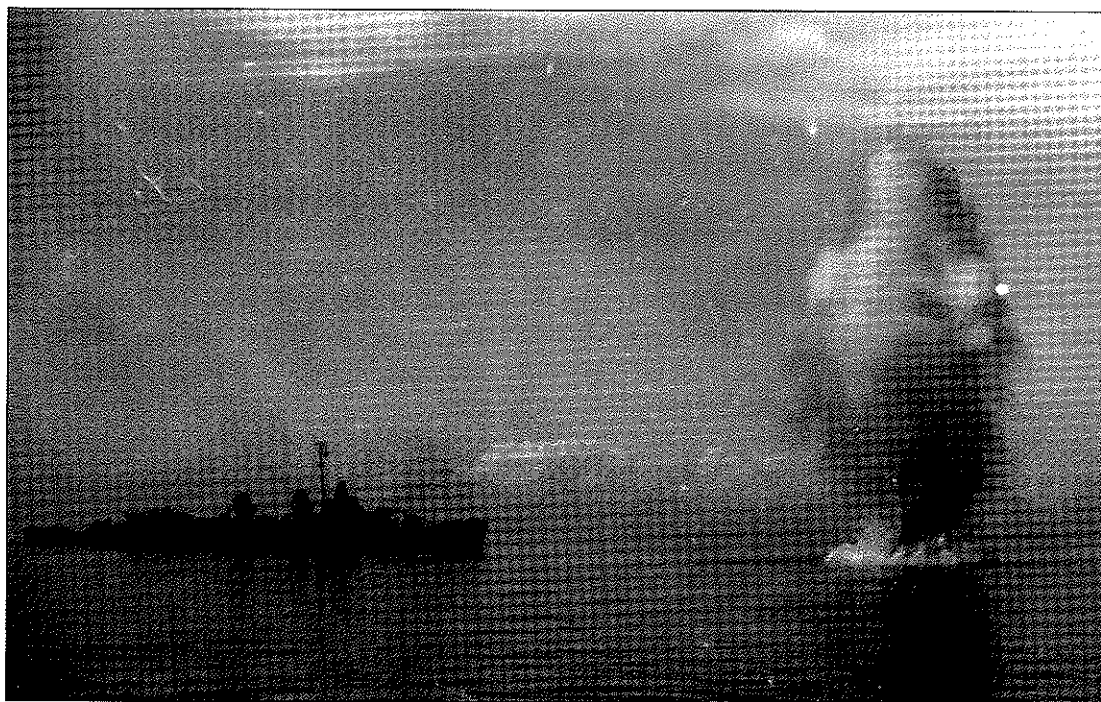
duty to order the ship's flags to half-mast.

We sailed to Coco Solo, Navy port at the Atlantic Ocean entrance to the Panama Canal. I was surprised when Ens. Homer Hoeksema, cohort at Calvin and Harvard Communications School, came aboard to guide us to our anchorage. He knew I was on the *Threat* and worked it that way. He had opted for shore duty and got his choice.

Then came the shock. Each ship was ordered to send ashore an officer and two men (I still hate that distinction) for duty as shore patrol, because our crew had a night of liberty. I was sent by the captain, reported for duty, and was taken to a hotel to be in charge of the second floor. It turned out to be devoted to prostitution—completely legal. My duty was to see that it occurred “decently and in good order.” In the corridor, in front of each room, sat a girl displaying her attributes. My order was to see that the sailors did not molest the girls, and that the girls did not take advantage of drunken sailors. Welcome to



Broadside view of USS *Threat*.



Japanese 400-pound mine being exploded in Tsugaru Strait, 1945.

the Navy, Ens. Bouma. My Christian school upbringing had not prepared me for this.

We spent two days in San Diego. I remember with great fondness the dedication of Rev. and Mrs. Gerrit Boerfyn at the hospitality house they operated there. After a short stay in Pearl Harbor we were directed to Guam to escort a convoy of ships to Okinawa, the major launching point for the intended invasion of Japan. One of the ships in the large convoy was the USS *Calvin Victory*. With victory ships coming off the shipyards like an assembly line, many were named for colleges. After several weeks of picket duty outside of Okinawa's Buckner Bay, fending off with anti-aircraft guns the kamikaze attackers on the assembling Navy fleet, we were ordered into the harbor to prepare for the massive mine-sweeping operation prior to the invasion.

One afternoon word was passed (after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) that peace had been

declared. All ships in the harbor disregarded caution and fired guns into the air, not knowing the report was false by a day. Japanese suicide bombers flew in on the unprotected fleet and did enormous damage.

The battleship *Pennsylvania*, just returned from repairs after damage in Pearl Harbor, was hit and sinking just astern of us. Along with other ships

we were ordered to stand alongside and tie up to her to keep her afloat. Her aft compartments, housing many of the crew, were flooded to keep her from sinking. It was a difficult decision, resulting in the loss of eighty lives by drowning.

The next day peace came for real. Two days later we were ordered into the minefields in the Tsugaru Strait. A major passage from the Pacific to the East China Sea in northern Japan, it was strewn with mines for defense.

Shortly before we were to leave Okinawa for the minefields my steward's

mate, who had been on the ship in the bloody invasion of Europe, came to my cabin. He said, "I notice you read the Bible a lot. Could you conduct a service for some of us tomorrow?" The request surprised me; really touched me. Although never having conducted a service, I agreed if he obtained permission from the captain.

N. C. S. 387		U. S. NAVAL COMMUNICATION SERVICE		SRS
USS THREAT FROM USS SYMBOL Division 21 July 1945 M 224 V M 223				
BT CAN MR. BOUMA CONDUCT SERVICES FOR US SOMETIME TOMORROW AT HIS CONVENIENCE BT				
0430 TOR F.L. FA				

The captain, an old-time Navy man, agreed. In fact, he was overjoyed. He said that of all the pennants in the flag bag he had never had a chance to fly the church pennant. After seeing the unusual pennant flying from our yardarm the next morning, signals came inquiring about it from the large flotilla of small ships gathered in the harbor. They were minesweepers and gun boats. The latter followed our sweep patterns and were to fire on and explode the contact mines which popped to the ocean surface after the minesweepers, with their trailing gear, had cut the cables mooring the mines.

None of these ships had chaplains. When it was known that a religious service was to be had, requests to send personnel by whaleboats came from a number of ships. In fact, so many requests poured in that services were held on the hour, all day long. By late afternoon a total of eight services were held, starting at 8 AM. Since the services were held in the crew's mess hall, seating about 150, they were interrupted at noon so our own crew could chow down.

The captain's approval for the service came Saturday at 9 PM with the first service scheduled at 8 AM Sunday. Clearly, I had little time to decide what I was going to say. I chose to base my message on Philippians 4, calling it "Five Biblical Gems."

They were: Let your moderation be known to all men. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Whatsoever things are true, pure, etc., think on these things. I have learned in whatsoever state I am in, therein to be content. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me . . . my God shall supply all your needs.

While never having been to a seminary, I was grateful for all those who had impacted my life, including

Bible-reading parents, Christian school teachers, Calvin College professors, Sunday school and catechism teachers and pastors. I was particularly grateful for the monthly letters sent by my then pastor, Dr. George Goris of LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church. To this day I remember one bit of his advice, "It is not the ship in the water, but the water in the ship, which is to be feared."

At each service we concluded by singing the Navy hymn titled "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" (ca 1850) in many church hymn books.

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm doth calm the restless wave,
Who bids the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Since few knew all the words and we had no hymn books, we were grateful to our ship's yeoman for running off copies from my memory. With the unexpected large response, he was kept busy all day. I still thrill when my church sings that hymn each Memorial Day.

My pulpit was a stack of large cans containing films for the evening movie placed on a mess hall table. They were heavy enough to withstand the rocking of the ship. Several ships inquired whether the service was Catholic or Protestant. When told the latter, several ships with largely Catholic crews signaled into shore-based headquarters requesting approval from Catholic chaplains. Given the circumstances, approval was readily granted.

When I was discharged and returned to Grand Rapids the two questions I was most frequently asked were interesting. One inquired about the difficulties I had in relating to

other religions, especially Catholics. (Remember, this was 1945.) I found Catholics to be the most devout. The other asked whether I had problems with the movies shown. (Again, recall that this was 1945. When I joined the Calvin College faculty in 1946 I had to sign a pledge not to attend movies.) My answer was that I couldn't have held services without them.

The next day we left Okinawa for our primary task—sweeping the coast of Japan for what was to have been the invasion.

Signing the peace treaty only changed the purpose of our task, i.e., to clear the seaways for the occupation of Japan. No one told the mines that the war was over. They were just as deadly as before the peace treaty. They were percussion mines. If we hit a floating mine, in thirty seconds all was gone.

We swept our way up the east coast of Japan, through the Tsugaru Strait in the north, separating Hokkaido from Tokyo's island of Honshu, and into the East China Sea, separating Japan from Korea. Because of the dangerous mission, it was no longer possible for other ships to send crew members to our religious services.

But they continued on our ship each Sunday with almost all of our crew attending. It was months after the end of the war that our ship was ordered back to the states from Sasebo, on Japan's west coast. Now, safely out of the minefields, we faced a long sail, at 18 knots, to our



Prof. Donald Bouma, ca 1950.

decommissioning port of San Diego. We worried only about sporadic typhoons which treacherously rocked our small ship to the point of capsizing, and convincing me that we were too small a ship to be way out in the middle of the Pacific.

That was when the foxhole religion took over, and it was measurable. The farther we moved away from the dangers of the minefields, the smaller the attendance at worship services. By the time we stopped for refueling in Ulithi, a small dot of an island in the middle of the

Pacific, only some twenty men attended.

Oddly, Ulithi was very worthwhile for me personally. There I first learned that the baby born to my wife in Grand Rapids on September 1, 1945, was a girl. Letters had arrived at our ship, usually four or five weeks late, telling me that the baby had been born, that mother and baby were doing fine. They kept me informed on the doings of the baby, but never revealed whether "baby" was a boy or a girl.

As communications officer I went by small boat from our anchorage in Ulithi to the Naval base on shore to pick up any messages for our ship. When in combat areas, important messages (labeled top priority or priority) were received by larger ships and transmitted to us. Low priority messages were labeled deferred and often gathered dust at shore bases. In Ulithi I was handed a deferred message for Lt. Bouma (I had been promoted by that time), sent by the



SOCIOLOGY CLUB: Top Row: D. Clelland, C. Kooy, T. Bakker, W. De Roo, W. Dieleman, G. Douma, B. Rottschäfer, J. Voetberg, E. Smith, V. Laninga, R. Likkell. Third Row: L. Wondergem, J. Borgerding, J. Prins, H. Vanderveen, N. Van Dam, M. Posthumus, M. Jellema, M. Frens, B. Jasperse, S. Snider, D. Van Zomeren, K. M. Hunt, G. Folkerts. Second Row: J. Woldring, M. Lappinga, I. Svechs, M. Meurer, J. Sybesma, B. De Vries, A. Smith, K. Vis, J. Kooy. Bottom Row: S. Broersma, A. De Vries, C. Molenaar, pres., N. Aukeman, treas., Dr. D. Bouma, sponsor, E. Algra, sec., P. Van Heest, vice-pres., I. Barsema, J. Van Kley

1957 Sociology Club, Calvin College.

Navy in September. There I first learned that Margene Ruth Bouma had been born four months earlier. "Baby" was a girl!

By the time we reached peaceful Pearl Harbor, interest in worship services had been replaced by the excitement of docking in San Diego. Foxhole religion was left in the East China Sea. ♣

Rev. Leonard Verduin, 1897–1999

This funeral tribute by Rev. William Buursma sketches some main events in the life of Rev. Leonard Verduin. This is accompanied by a few paragraphs which Leonard wrote to his great-granddaughter, Elizabeth, who has been working in the Calvin College Archives during the past four years. Miss Verduin has also gained access to the photos used in the article.

We are here this morning to pay tribute to the memory of Leonard Verduin, gifted teacher and pastor to the church, loving father and grandfather, loyal friend and child of God. His departure from our fellowship leaves all of us poorer. Leonard Verduin's death marks the end of a lengthy era in the history of the Christian Reformed Church. He was born on March 9, 1897, in South Holland, Illinois. He often proudly mentioned that his father was the first infant baptized in the newly established Christian Reformed denomination.

Leonard passed away on November 10, 1999, in Payson, Arizona, the oldest minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He died only some fifty days short of reaching an ambition cherished in his later years—he had hoped to enter the new millenium, so that he would be able to say that he had lived in the 1800s, all through the twentieth century and into the year 2000.

The terse record in the CRC's *Yearbook* says of him: Ordained 1929, pastor, Corsica, South Dakota, 1929-1941; chaplain at the campus chapel, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1941 until retirement in 1962. A yearbook can only tell us *where* a man has been, not *who* he was. May I, on your behalf, attempt that latter task?

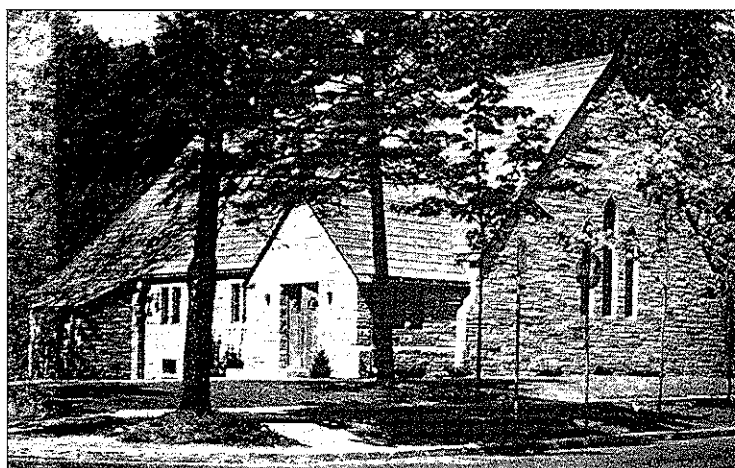
Dominie Verduin was a unique personality. Although he listened to the same drummer as his fellow Christians, and sounded the themes of grace, forgiveness, and salvation through Jesus Christ, somehow he heard the beat of the Divine Drummer



Chaplain Leonard Verduin, appointed in 1942.

before the rest of us. This prophetic quality gave luster to his ministry but also led some of his colleagues to view him with some suspicion. He did not always color within the lines assigned by our tradition. Controversy was not foreign to his experience. There are accounts of monumental battles with churchly bureaucrats whose devotion to proper procedure and to the letter of the church order left little room for the spirit. Verduin, in righteous zeal, left no one in doubt as to where he stood. In blazing anger, he condemned all cant and duplicity. Some scenes were less than winsome.

Leonard was a great and colorful preacher of the good news. He was biblically faithful and tuned in to his audience, whether that be aspiring intellectuals on the university campus, or devout Calvinistic farmers in South Dakota wheat fields. He was an extraordinary scholar, an astute historian and linguist. He read



Ann Arbor Chapel, 1950.

Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French, and spoke Dutch, medieval and

dialogue. "Come, let us reason together," describes the end result.

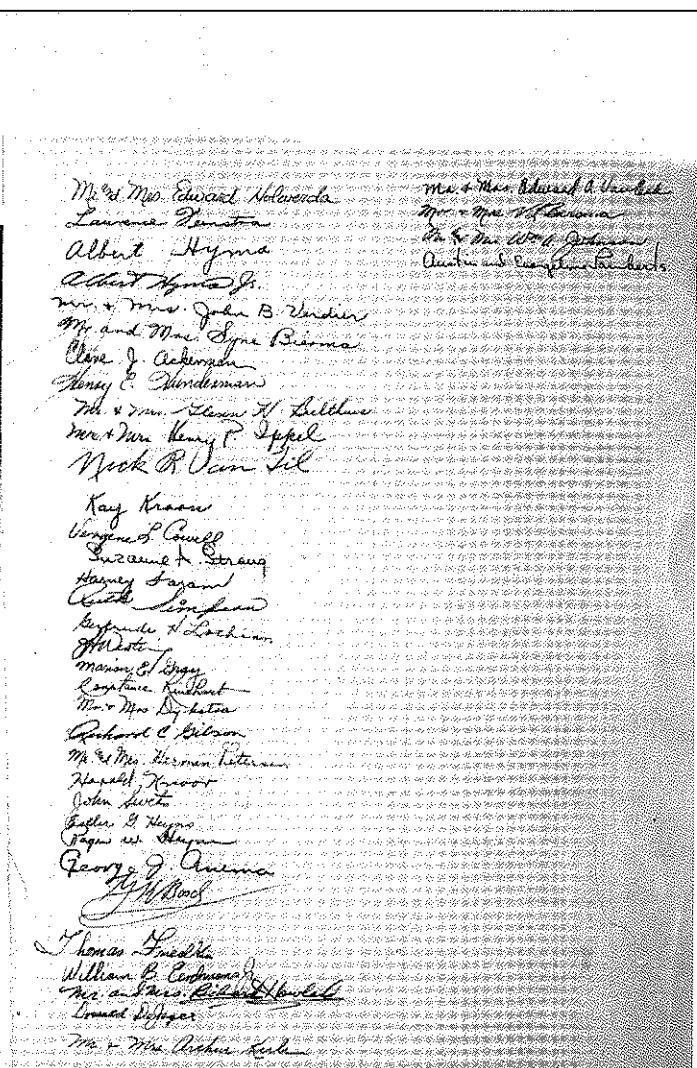
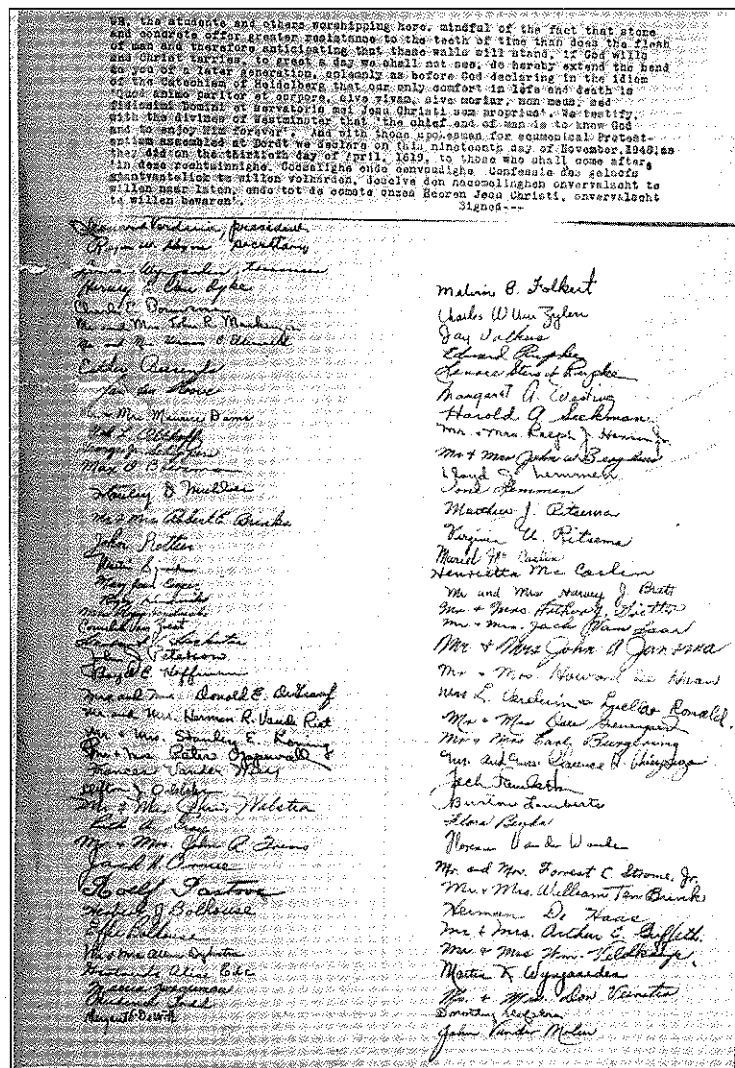
modern German, as well as English.

It was fascinating to note that when he preached, a strange chemistry took place: words left his lips as monologue, but arrived in the ears of his receptive listeners as

Dominie Verduin disdained high-flown rhetoric, arid speculation, and bombastic language. His approach was direct, forthright, and even blunt.

He honored his audience by taking them seriously, even though his frequent clever quips, delivered with a spritely twinkle and benign smile, betrayed a puckish sense of humor that was captivating.

Speaking of his sense of humor, let me make a personal and somewhat painful reference. Some years ago, Cal Verduin told me that he had appreciated certain remarks I had made about his mother at her funeral. Emboldened by that generosity, I said that I would welcome an



Chapel dedication, May 13, 1949, signatures of those in attendance.



Rev. Leonard Verduin, May 1984, receiving Calvin College's Distinguished Alumni Award from Rev. William Buursma.

opportunity to say a few words at his father's funeral. Cal assured me that he would mention this to his dad the next time he went to Arizona. He kept his promise and said to the dominie, "Bill Buursma would like to say a few words at your funeral." Without hesitation his dad replied, "You go back and tell Bill Buursma that I would like to say a few words at his funeral!"

Verduin's personality was complex, even paradoxical. He was pious, as a true descendant of the fathers of the *Afscheiding*, but found it difficult to talk about his most intimate walk with the Lord.

He had the respect of authentic scholars, but also the affection of little boys and girls (how children loved to

hear him regale their parents with tales about his experiences and the eccentricities of smug ecclesiastical politicians). His children's messages were masterpieces, holding youngsters spellbound.

He was progressive, ecumenical, yet, at heart, a conservative. Especially in later years, he viewed with jaundiced eye the fads in music and liturgy, as well as a lessening of the Reformed identity of the church he loved.

Among his most significant contributions was his prolific writing career. His magisterial works on the Anabaptists brought him recognition far beyond his own denomination. I suspect that his interest in the Anabaptists, the stepchildren of the Reformation, as he

called them, was stimulated by his lifelong sympathy for the underdog, the poor, and the oppressed.

In addition, he wrote many articles for *The Banner* and other periodicals. After he had passed the century mark, he was still busy thinking, writing, publishing, and planning for the future. Until his last days, he celebrated the three tenses of life: past, present and future.

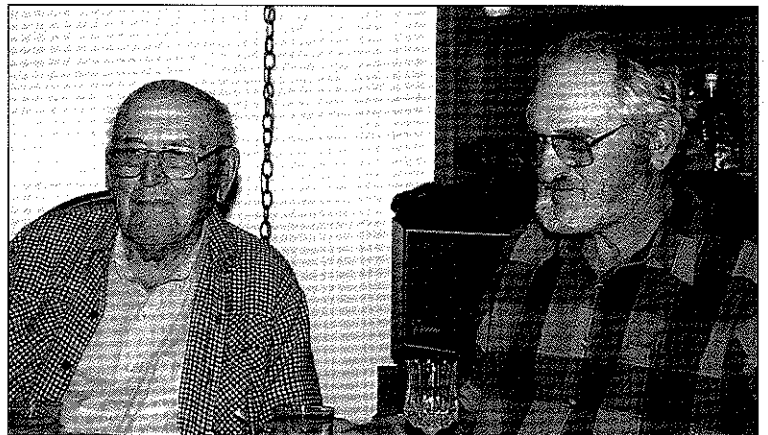
Verduin

loved to talk. In the earlier years of his retirement, he was a frequent visitor at Synod. He regularly attended the Ministers' Institute, usually the oldest man there. Many of us remember how he would approach a stranger and launch into a mini-lecture on truth being elliptical. At the end of the conversation, his awed audience of one would certainly be illuminated and possibly bewildered!

I leave to Don Postema the task of reflecting on the specifics of Pastor Verduin's long tenure at the Campus Chapel, but I do want to say a few words of tribute to his wife Hattie, who passed away on July 27, 1987. Leonard and Hattie were married for nearly seventy years. They were very close. She greatly enhanced and tempered his successful ministry in the gospel of Christ. Material things were not all that important to them. People were. Hattie not only loved her husband; she adored him. She was not alone. Their sons and daughters are united in their love and admiration for their parents.

Parishioners, students, colleagues learned to respect this unforgettable man, this great-hearted philosopher. Leonard lived and died carrying with him the golden treasure of a child-like heart.

Rest in peace, dear dominie, and may perpetual light shine upon you!✠



Rev. L. Verduin and son Arthur, 1998.

profiles

Things Remembered

Leonard Verduin

I When I was born in 1897 my mother had just lost a brother to what seems to have been tuberculosis. He had been born with a very flat, even hollow, chest. My hollow chest reminded my mother of her brother when he was still young. So she got a pair of shoulder braces, made me wear the braces by night and by day. When I was old enough to go to school my chest was no longer hollow, so that my mom let me lay the braces aside, as I gladly did. What became of the braces I do not know. I am glad that I can report that my mother evidently was mistaken about my dying young, for here I sit typing a letter being six months past my one hundredth year. I add here that my chest is even now far from concave, is more or less convex instead. It has, however, slipped down a foot or so.

2) When I was a child children still went to catechism class. We had to learn the given answers to questions asked. We also had to memorize a verse found in the versified Psalms. My two brothers and I used to memorize them while we sat around the hard-coal heater with transparent doors, keeping our feet close to it so as not to get too cold. I find it hard to believe, but as I am about to fall asleep verses memorized nine decades ago keep coming back, the one pushing the other. I recall that once as we were in catechism class with about twenty other youngsters one of them sneezed, letting out a kind of snort as he did so. This made us all laugh out loud

(although gently). Upon this the old preacher closed the book he was following as he taught. He began to scold us for laughing the way we did. I recall that he said that God would punish us for laughing in the presence of a catechism book wide open. After lecturing us for a while the old minister said, "We read nowhere in the Bible that Jesus laughed! Life is too serious to spend any part of it giggling!" Upon this my brother John (the only blond in the family, a meek little kid if there ever was one) threw back his head as far as it could go as he said calmly: "But, preacher dear, you don't read either that Jesus growled!" (In the Dutch of the times it went this way: "*Maar beste dominie, je leest ook nergens in de bijbel Jesus brombde!*").

3) When I was in my early teens we left South Holland, my parents heeding the call one heard often, "Go West, young man, go West!" Here in the West we also had some interesting experiences. Here we had a preacher who used to stop reading the baptism form to make some remarks and ask some questions. It happened that a young man, a fresh arrival from the Netherlands (as will become evident the fellow really was "fresh"), followed carefully the remarks being made. When the preacher turned his eyes back to the text he was heard to say, "Yes, congregation, where are we now?" Upon this the cocky young fellow, sitting in one of the front seats, got up to say:

"On page one hundred thirty-nine, the twenty-third line from the top."

4) Right after the first "world war" something at least a bit more serious took place in a CRC located in the West. On Thanksgiving Day there was a congregational meeting. At it two elders and two deacons were elected, the intention being to install them on New Year's Day, as was the custom. On the second Sunday after the election the young wife of one of the elected deacons came to church with her hair bobbed, proof positive that the young woman was going "worldly." It was decided (in the consistory room after the service had ended) to have a meeting of consistory on the following Wednesday evening to do what needed to be done in connection with the awful problem that had put in its appearance. Here it was decided to install the two elders and the one deacon as planned, and to inform that other elected deacon to see to it that his wife come back from her "worldly" movement, with the promise that he would be installed "as soon as your wife has her hair 'up' again."

5) When the Calvin College Choir, directed by the present writer's cousin, Sy Swets, had given their recital in one of the larger churches in the West, one of the songs they sang was the Russian *Vashpodi pomilui* (I'm not sure I have the spelling right, Russian being a language I have not as yet learned to handle). The local Ladies' Aid Society met in the afternoon of the next day, and, of course, the

program given the night before was discussed. One of the dear ladies present said something like the following (said it in Dutch of course): "I think the program as a whole was all right, so that I enjoyed it. But there was one song sung which I think was too childish for grown-up folk to listen to, as the choir sang and their leader motioned, doing so softly at times as to make it hard to hear, and, singing it at the top of their voices at other times, the complaint about "*last van de familie, last van de familie, last van de familie*, etc., etc." Why should a group of people sing that over and over—"Bothered by the relatives, bothered by the relatives, etc., etc.?"

6) Since the writer of these lines spent most of his active years in Ann Arbor and the Christian Reformed

Chapel there, it will be all right to conclude this little recital with the assertion that by far the most of the things that took place in connection with this assignment were downright pleasant. Nor was it without some fruit. Although it is getting to be a long time ago, I still get letters from people who attended the Chapel and were benefited by what they saw there and heard there. (Fact is that I recently got a letter from a distant land, a letter full of thanks to the services attended while studying at the U of M). When my service at the Chapel was beginning the idea was on-the-loose that "Redemptive truth is not propositional, is personal instead." We tried to show that it is both, and that simultaneously, this in view of the fact that Christian truth has a way of being elliptical. As I listen to

things being said today, and read what is being written, I become convinced that the *enemy* has not as yet given up. We tried to get young people to believe that truth is elliptical, which implies that error usually starts with the attempt to circularize the ellipse, the ellipse set forth, for instance in Philippians 2:12. It is good to keep in mind that our God comes at us not only in the spoken Word, does so also in laboratory fashion.

With that said the present writer gives the floor to younger persons, greeting them with fraternal greetings (here I feel inclined to add a much-needed adjective, one I have taken the liberty to coin, the adjective *sisternal*), greetings in our common Lord. §

Houston, British Columbia CRC: Recollections of Its Third Pastor, Rev. Wilbur De Jong

The Houston BC congregation originated in 1939 after a number of Dutch immigrants were attracted to that colony by Jacob Prins, an agent for the Canadian National Railroad. Prins had emigrated from Andyk, North Holland, to Edmonton, Alberta in 1927.

During the 1930s—when both the economic depression and the early rumblings of World War II disrupted normal life in the Netherlands—a number of Prins's acquaintances in Andyk wrote to

agriculture, Prins agreed to return to Andyk and other places in the Netherlands as an agent for both the Canadian Railroad and the Holland-America Steamship Line. He traveled around the Netherlands and convinced a number of people to emigrate. Understandably the first arrivals came from Andyk and its surroundings. Ultimately the settlers came from several agricultural provinces in the Netherlands. Before World War II stopped all emigration, Prins assisted over 250 families with transportation and the acquisition of new residences in Western Canada.

By the time that Rev. Wilbur De Jong arrived in Houston the congregation had been served by two pastors—H.S. Koning, 1949-51, and B. Nederlof, 1952-56. During its first decade (1939-49) over twenty pastors worked in Houston during summer assignments and for other short periods. Among these were Dr. Harry Boer, Paul De Koekkoek, Peter J. Hoekstra, and Jan K. Van Baalen. All of these were bilingual, but when Wilbur De Jong arrived in 1957 the congregation had become largely English speaking. Nonetheless, the Houston area was still largely undeveloped with primitive roads, and a CRC congregation which was struggling to make ends meet.

Rev. Bill De Jong's recollections of his and his family's life in Houston follows. Houston was his first congregation.



Wilbur and Marilyn De Jong.

inquire about economic opportunities in Canada. Prins then contacted the Colonization Division of the Canadian National Railroad which directed him to the Bulkley Valley in British Columbia. The railroad, of course, wanted to sell the land it had acquired as payment for building the transcanadian railroad.

After examining the Bulkley Valley and finding it well-suited for

I don't remember the exact date I accepted the call but it must have been early August, 1957. We immediately began planning for the move. It required a lot of correspondence to find out when Classis would meet for our examination, questions about contacts to make in preparation for the examination, what needed to be done in preparation for immigration, a description of the house and what furniture and appliances to take, etc. Arrangements had to be made to move our furniture, which was in storage with a moving company in Grand Rapids.

We left Pella around September 18, 1957, and spent the next Sunday in Lynden, Washington, with John and Dot Hofman, friends from Grand Rapids who were now serving a small Protestant Reformed church in Lynden. The trip itself was rather uneventful as I recall. I don't remember how many days it took. It was great to see John and Dot. John had also arranged for me to preach in Abbotsford, British Columbia in the morning and in Third Lynden in the afternoon.

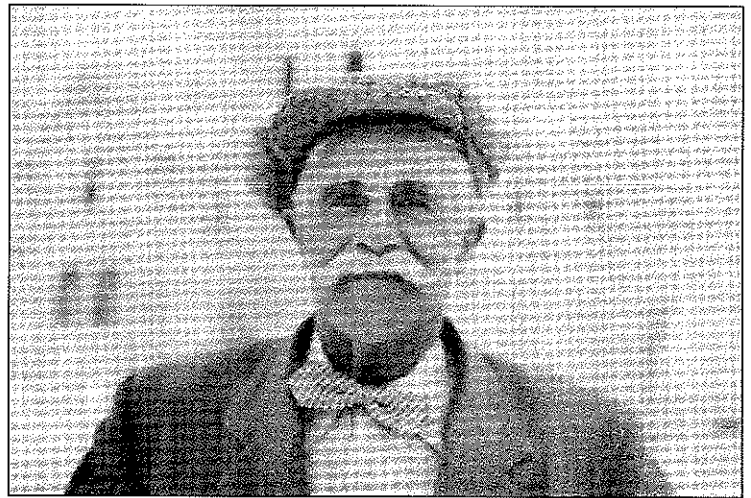
On Monday morning we set out for Canada in the hope of being in Houston (over 800 miles) in about three days. We drove from Lynden to the Canadian border, which is less than five miles. There we sat at Customs for about two and a half hours. A Canadian classmate had told us regarding immigration that "there is nothing to it! It's like crossing from one state to another." WRONG! We should have cleared it with Ottawa, a two-month or more process. The

officials from immigration first talked very seriously of not letting us go on without such clearance.

After a lot of explanation of who we were and what we were going to do they agreed to send us on to Vancouver, about an hour's drive in the

opposite direction from where we were headed. The Vancouver office had more clout than the border immigration people. There we were treated well and were given little hassle. We were registered as "Landed Immigrants" on the condition that Ottawa still needed to concur. That would take at least two weeks but in the meantime they allowed us to go to Houston with the understanding that there was still a possibility that we might be denied entrance and would then have to leave. We went on our way with a good deal of anxiety, as you might suspect.

We left Vancouver at 1:30 in the afternoon and drove to Lytton, BC that evening. We arrived there at 7:30 PM. Can you imagine driving only 150 miles in six hours? Even the good highways were none too good but the biggest problem was the Fraser Canyon. There the road was under construction. There were some waits, but even when we could move, the



Jacob Prins — "Father" of Bulkley Valley.

road was no more than a single bulldozer track in many places and every so often we had to pull over and wait while the oncoming traffic took their turns. There were times when the pullout was right on the edge of a high cliff. Even where there was supposedly two-way traffic, the big logging trucks often took up far more than half the road, especially on curves, and the best choice was to pull over and let them by.

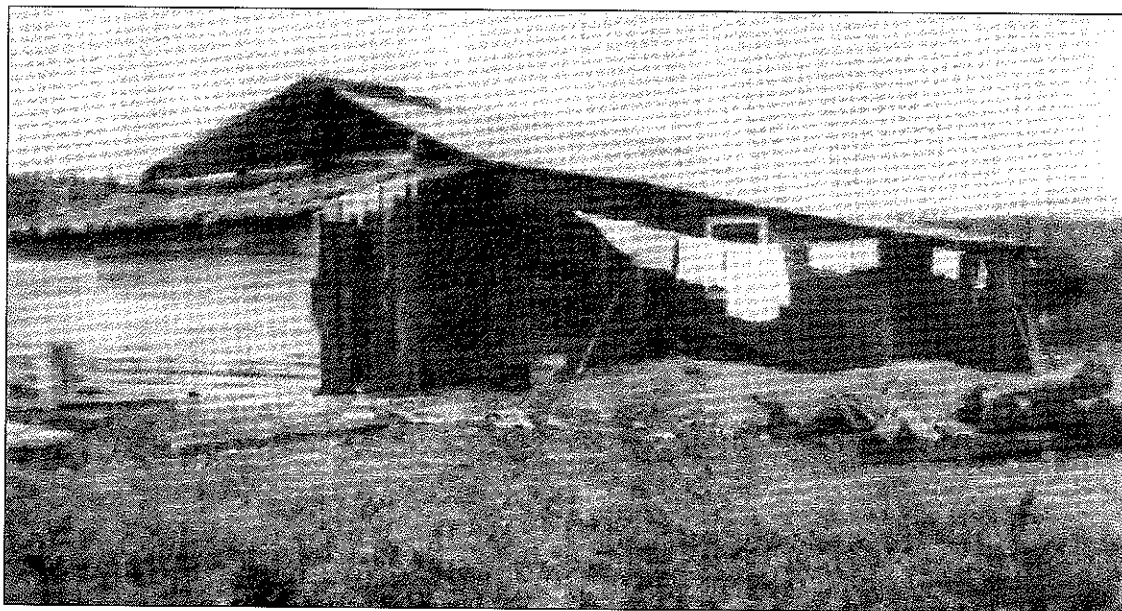
The next morning we had about twenty-five more miles like that but then we had paved roads for about 230 miles. However, we were faced with another adversity. At 150 Mile House (a name along the road) the fuel pump in our car went out of commission. Where to get a new one? After some telephoning and finagling the repairman was able to get one from a traveling salesman who picked one up about eighty miles away. After a four-hour delay we were once again on our way.

When we had covered the 230 miles of paved road we had the unimproved road for the next 80 miles. This stretch was so rough and rocky that, even though we could not go more than about twenty miles per hour most of the time, we knocked holes in both of our mufflers on that stretch. That night we stayed in the Prince George Hotel. We were struck by the separate entrances for men and for women. When we inquired about the road to Houston, we were told it would take us eight

hours to drive the 200 miles! There were two stretches of pavement, one of 60 miles and one of 30 miles. It took us six and a half hours the next day. We thought we had done well.

As we traveled north we saw more and more shabby and unpainted houses. We kept telling each other that Houston would be different because the Dutch people there would have painted houses. They did not, or at least many of them didn't. The church and the parsonage were both painted. However, the color choices left something to be desired. The window casings on the parsonage were set off by a four-inch trim board all around the window and painted black. When we saw them we remarked that they looked like raccoon eyes to us. The house was painted the next summer and the black trim was covered in white. However, the roofs of both the parsonage and the church were painted fire engine red! A year or two later a parishioner came who found the red offensive because it was the "color of the Devil."

We arrived on October 3, the day before Marilyn's birthday. The



Original site of first worship services, 1938, conducted in Houston, BC.

farmers were busy threshing their grain even though it had snowed the day before. We arrived, however, about a week before our furniture. That meant living with the furnishings left there from the summer seminario. I don't remember any horror stories so it must not have been too bad or we just took it in stride.

On the evening of our arrival we were invited to the home of one of the elders. Later we went to another elder's home for a welcome by the council members and their wives. They still served things the Dutch way and I had a hard time knowing how to juggle hands to receive what they served me. Marilyn did a little better although we both had trouble figuring out what was coming next and when the serving would finally stop. Regardless, we both felt they gave us their best at trying to welcome us.

Neither the parsonage nor the church building fit the dream of the ideal in the minds of the uninitiated. Yet, the people went out of their way to accommodate our needs and to make us feel at home so far away from

home. They wanted to renovate the parsonage but did not want to do it without our input. What is more, there were no skilled carpenters or decorators in the church and they really could not afford to hire others if there had been such in the town. But as was the case, I think, with most pioneer types, the people of Houston were "do-it-yourselfers." They were more than willing to make property improvements but they expected our involvement. We appreciated having a say in the choices that were made. My work on the farm, and especially my work with Dad Groenendyk the summer of graduation, gave me an advantage as to know what to do. We wallpapered, painted, and laid linoleum, but it was a trying experience because the house was not well built. The corners were not always square and that created problems with hanging wallpaper and laying linoleum. The trim wood was not high quality, and the post at the base of the stairway was pocked with so many blemishes that one of the local youths who helped us named it "the woodpecker

pole." Despite these shortcomings we always had the feeling that they gave us the best they could give. That's a tremendous feeling.

The church was located alongside Highway 16. The center of the road was probably less than thirty feet from the side of our house. The front door, living room window, and study windows all faced the church to the east. The dining room window faced west toward the mountains. Morris Mountain and the Telkwa Range had snow on them the year round. The sky colors at sunrise, but especially at sunset, were often very beautiful. The colors of the aspen were fantastic in the fall. We never tired of the natural beauty of the area. We do sometimes regret that we did not take more advantage of these natural wonders while we lived there. On the other hand, there were no parks, picnic tables, marked trails or good roads so it was difficult to take young children to the lakes and mountains. Marilyn probably was shorted the most, I at least found time for some fishing and hunting.

There were two men in the church who loved to go fishing and often invited me to go with them. I was not able to go with one of them very often because our work schedules did not mesh. The other, Ross Merkley, worked different shifts at the sawmill and was always game to find a time that suited. Depending on the season, he fished for Dolly Varden in the spring when the rivers were dirty, rainbow and lake trout when the rivers and lakes were clear in the summer, and salmon fishing in the fall when the rivers were full of fish going upstream to spawn. We even did some ice fishing in the winter.

Claude Parish and his wife, our next-door neighbors, also took our family to Babine Lake where they owned a cottage along with a fishing boat. We were there a few times with

them and they also loaned us their cottage a few times without their presence. One time Grandpa and Grandma Groenendyk were there with us. Claude also loaned me a gun and got me started hunting grouse.

He wanted me to join him on a moose hunt too but he could never get off enough time to go on a hunt (he managed one of the local sawmills). One fall he was determined to go but still couldn't make it so on the last day of the season he asked one of his truckers to shoot a moose for him. He planned to go up and tag it later and he asked me to help take it down out of the bush. The trucker shot twice and was sure he hit one. When we got up there to get the moose there were two! They were lying about 100 yards from the truck path, in an area with about six feet of snow.

We had taken along a toboggan-like vehicle on which to load the moose. We cut them in quarters and took them a quarter at a time and then loaded them in the back of his '59 Chevy El Camino. Claude had a heart condition and I was worried I might have to get him out too! Fortunately we made it. But then came the question, what does one do with all that moose meat? We each kept a half and we gave the rest away. Our half we had ground up into moose burger. Marilyn was tired of moose burger after that winter.

We were also introduced to bear meat in Houston. The cooking smell of that meat got to me so much I could not eat it. It smelled like skunk! But how do you graciously say thanks for such a well-meant "delicacy"? We had somewhat the same problem when a family brought us food "gifts" of non-butchered worn-out laying hens and rancid butter. Such experiences were lessons in diplomacy, shall we say? It's all part of living on the frontier. We also remember many gifts of special foods

at Christmas, and birthday gifts of English china.

Living near the 54th parallel was an experience climate-wise. The growing season is much shorter than in Central Iowa. The winters are much longer, the temperatures colder, while the summers are much shorter and cooler. At least one growing season on record had just seventeen days between the last killing frost of the spring and the first killing frost of the fall. Such conditions obviously restricted the farmers' choices of crops. Nevertheless, they did quite well with hay and oats. Potatoes did well four out of five years, which they considered good, and cabbage crops did exceptionally well. We've never seen, before or after, such beautiful large white heads of cauliflower.

Lumbering was the main industry of the area. Many of the farmers also worked in the sawmills or in the bush cutting and hauling logs. Houston's population in 1957 was around 1,000 people, many of them immigrants from the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Italy, East Asia and a fair number of British Canadians. There were Native Americans (now called First Nations) living on nearby reservations, and a few of them lived in Houston itself.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police came into Houston on Saturday evening to keep order in the local bar when the bush workers came into town to drink up their week's earnings. Alcohol abuse was a big problem in that north country. One New Year's Day we were invited to the Matthews's home after the morning service. On our way home at midnight we had to wait to get home because the road was blocked by two guys fighting in the middle of the road over a case of beer. They were visibly high on the stuff.

Because of our isolated environment the local church and community

became our central focus. But community life did not receive a high priority in the Houston village, perhaps because of the diversity in nationalities represented and the communication problems that go with it. Community services were very limited. The doctor came from Smithers (50 miles away) once per week and all who needed hospital care had to go to Smithers, a trip that took at least one and a half hours under the best circumstances when we first moved there. By the time we left in 1962 the trip could be made in one hour or less.

Despite the length of the winter and some very cold days, our children, mostly Judy and Carl, played outside there much more than they did in Oak Harbor in the winter. While Houston's temperature was much colder, there was very little wind. In Oak Harbor the wind off the water was fairly constant and very cold.

Judy started school in Houston.

She either walked with the Parish kids or later rode her bike with them. Judy and Carl both have fond memories of playing with Daniel and "Weetie" Parish, a daily ritual with them.

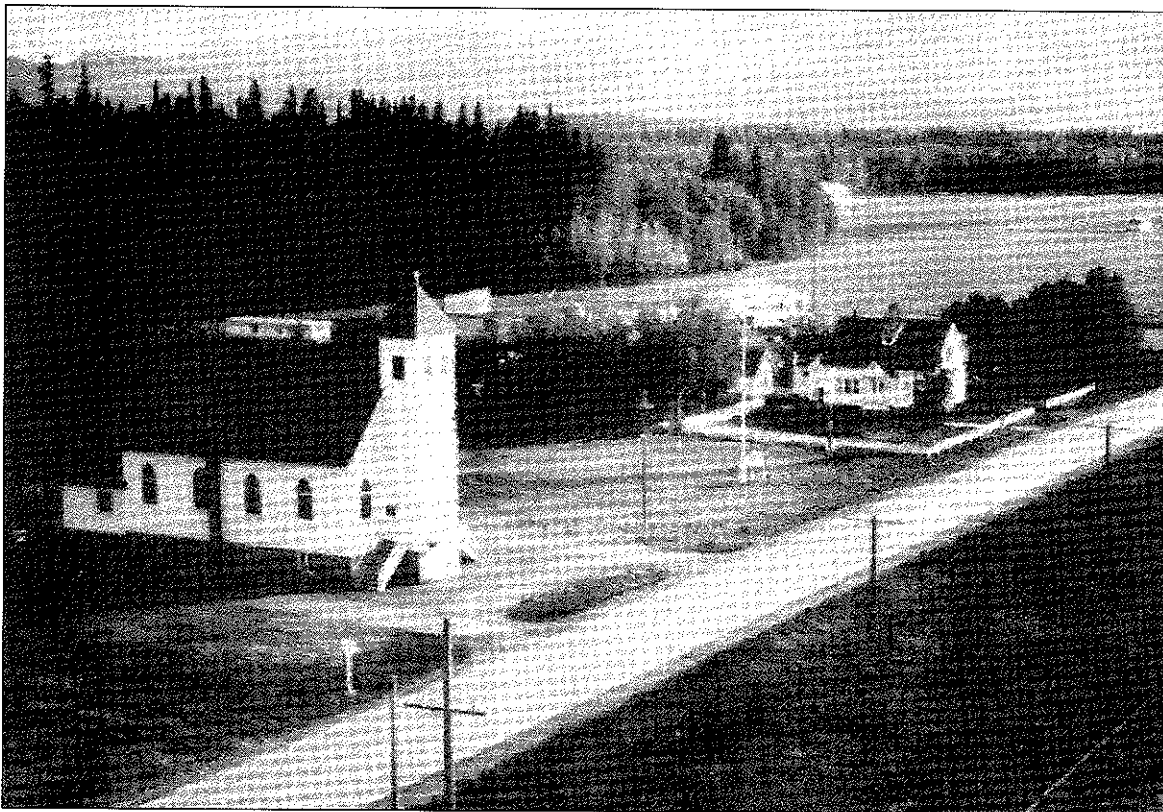
The Houston CRC was not large, about thirty-two families, but it was fairly demanding. There were problems because of immigrant unsettledness and the harshness of the climate and environment. There were older (long-term) members who felt a desire to minister to their neighbors and community. Others were more concerned about making their church a transplant from the Netherlands. This latter concern became more and more problematic because the provincial types from the Netherlands did not easily compromise on what was a true representation of the Netherlands church. Often they told me about their "problems with the brothers." Such tensions required a lot of pastoral attention and work. At the

same time, it was to my advantage to be an American pastor because I was not identified with any of their past traditions and was therefore no immediate threat to them.

I also had some very sad funerals to cope with. The first was a little two-year-old girl who drowned in the river. The second was a little boy four years of age who died of leukemia. The third funeral (from the Telkwa church) was for two people who had asked me to marry them the next week. They were older. He had lost his wife several years before and she had never married. When she came to Canada they got together. The Sunday before the wedding was to take place they both died in a house fire on his farm. He was milking when he saw the flames at the house. He ran to rescue her but died with her in the fire. The fourth funeral was for a member of the Smithers church who had gone to a hospital in Vancouver for depression. He was

released to go home for Christmas whereupon he committed suicide. When I first entered the ministry I was sure I could not handle a funeral. After these experiences a fellow preacher told me I had been baptized by fire. It was a learning experience, but not one I would have chosen.

I also did some work for the denomination. Prince George, BC (200 miles east of Houston) had a small unorganized group of CRC people who had been served by



Aerial view — Houston, BC church and parsonage with Christian school in background.

a traveling home missionary, Rev. G. Van Laar. When he accepted a call to Zillah, Washington, the Houston congregation was given responsibility for the care of this group. Such responsibilities involved preaching there on occasion, administering the sacraments when needed, etc. At least twice Marilyn went with me on a trip to Prince George.

One such trip during the winter we came across a car that had skidded off the road but it was still running to keep the passengers warm. I stopped to ask if we could help. There was nothing we could do there but one of them asked if he could ride along to the next town, about 20 miles away. Marilyn and I talked it over and agreed he could sit in front with me and she would sit in the back seat. He was obviously intoxicated and after we had driven a few miles he asked to get out and became very sick. When it was all over he got back in and we delivered him to the town where he could get help.

Another time we went in the spring. The snow was melting rapidly with lots of water in the ditches. Marilyn saw some cattails in the ditch on our way home and asked if I would mind getting her some. I obliged but at the expense of falling through the snow in the ditch and getting soaked above my knees in a stream about two feet deep under the snow!

On another occasion I took one of our congregation's young men with me during the summertime. We were starting Bible School the next day and my passenger really had to go to work on Monday so we decided to drive home on Sunday night. That was not bad in June because the sun did not go down until 11 PM and it does not get totally dark at that time of year. However, out in the middle of nowhere we had a flat tire and we found that our spare was flat too. A

lady in a pickup truck came along, stopped, and asked if she could help. We told her our plight. She told us to get into the pickup with our tire and drove us back about 16 miles to the nearest town. She waited for the tire to be fixed and drove us back to the car. We tried to pay her but she wanted absolutely nothing.

When my classmate, Louis Tamminga, in Smithers and Telkwa accepted a call to Edmonton I became counselor of those respective churches. That involved technical work like suggesting names for people to be put on a trio to serve those churches, approving a trio for calling, signing the call letter, etc. I was also requested to meet with the consistory on occasion. Much more time was given to preaching there and teaching catechism. For a while I went in every week to teach catechism and often preached there. I would preach in either Telkwa or Smithers in the late afternoon after our 2:00 service. On two different Sundays during the summer I preached four times: in Houston at 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM; then in Telkwa at 4:30 PM and in Smithers at 7:00 PM!

By the time we left in January 1962 those two churches had another minister. In fact, the van that moved him in moved us out. There was about two feet of snow on the ground at that time, making it hard for the moving van to get off the road in order to load us. I don't remember a lot about the move except that we could not take our house plants across the border nor the pet hamster. For the latter the kids never quite forgave us.

I think both sets of parents had some difficulty with that move to Houston although they never said it in so many words. They tried very hard to remain objective and I would say they did very well. Marilyn also loyally went along but not without

pain. Looking back, those were still the days of a man's world. Men received the Lord's call and the wives were expected to go along. I look back with some real regret about having such chauvinistic attitudes. I believed then that I was doing the will of the Lord, but I now realize I was not listening to the other voices in my life through whom the Lord was also speaking. Old traditions die hard.

At the same time I do not hesitate to say that both Marilyn and I believe that the Houston experience was probably the best thing that could have happened to us in terms of experience and training for future ministry. I certainly believe that was true for me. Houston and its people became very special to us and remain so to this day. They had their own way of expressing due appreciation for our work while also holding us accountable as servants of God. 6

After Rev. De Jong left Houston to serve the Oak Harbor, Washington congregation, he wrote to several pastors who had received calls from Houston and described the church, its parsonage, and the general character of the region. Two of these letters, written to Rev. Simon Viss who accepted Houston's invitation in 1962, provide interesting glimpses of the parish as Bill De Jong described it at that time.

January 30, 1962
Rev. Wilbur De Jong
to Rev. Simon Viss

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The spirit in the Houston church is generally good. The support which they give to the minister and the church, both morally and financially, is gratifying. Although the people do not have a lot of money and do not live in nice homes they are generous in their support of Kingdom work. This is evidenced by their decision to open a Christian school next fall in their church basement. We had hoped and prayed for this and were very happy to hear that the decision was taken just last week. It will not be easy for them and they will need much moral and prayer support. However, if they have taken a decision they will do their best to carry it out.

As to the language, there is no problem in Houston. They have no Dutch services any more. A few of the older people will appreciate it if you are able to converse with them in Dutch. The greatest need in Houston is with the youth. Therefore, we are happy to hear of their decision to begin a school. Bible knowledge is poor among the youth and efforts to teach it have been hampered by an inability to read properly and study effectively. The school was necessary not only to give a positive Christian witness but also for academic reasons. The Smithers Christian School did wonders to open the eyes of our Houston people.

The Young People's Society is a struggling group. They try but have

not always succeeded too well in making their discussions live. They are a very nice and responsive group of young people but the local educational system has taken its toll on them too.

There is a young couples' club which was organized this fall which I think will present a challenge to you and your wife. It was organized with



Rev. Wilbur De Jong,
Houston's pastor, 1957-1961.

some outsiders married into the church in mind. The initial response was very rewarding.

The congregation numbers thirty-eight families at the present time, an increase of

five families over when we came in '57. The congregation feels the need of a minister because of the isolation. There is also an Article 31 church in the village which has done a lot of harm to our church. Their minister is a rather contentious fellow and has done nothing to promote goodwill between the churches. He will not condone his people going along with the Christian school either. However, his attitude has backfired in his face. During the past year two of their families came over to our church because of his intolerable attitude. The opening of the school will have further

effects in that direction I feel sure.

There are good relations between the Christian Reformed Church and the people of the village. Some Canadians have given ear to our church's ministry and attend the services occasionally. One family is quite regular in their attendance.

The village is growing. Some who are in the know predict that it will grow rapidly in the next ten years because of its strategic location for the lumber industry. They claim that within that period it will have outgrown Smithers. I don't know about that but certainly it is growing.

There is a real challenge in Houston. In many ways we were sorry to leave the place. It is wide open for opportunity since it is such a new area. Yet, there were other reasons for which we felt compelled to leave.

As to the country, you'll love it. All kinds of opportunity for hunting and fishing, beautiful scenery on every side. Generally, it does not get so very cold there. In the four years we were there we had only a few days each winter that the temperature dropped to twenty below zero.

~ ~ ~

February 22, 1962
Rev. Wilbur De Jong
to Rev. Simon Viss

We were so pleased to receive word that you have accepted the call to Houston. It will indeed be a big change for you but with God's blessing I am sure you will have a blessed ministry there. Incidentally, if you are an outdoor sportsman, you will enjoy



Rev. Simon Viss who followed Wilbur De Jong as Houston's fourth pastor, 1962-1967.

the fishing and hunting immensely. The scenery is beautiful too.

I shall try to answer your questions about the house. First of all, let me warn you that it is not a dream palace as you can see from the pictures. It was styled by a Dutch carpenter and this has left its mark both inside and out. Though the house is good and accommodated us well, it is a bit odd in arrangement as well as styling. To begin with, the rooms facing the highway are the study and a bedroom no less! The study has the two windows which you see on the slide to the right of the front door. The study is a very nice room and is very nicely situated next to the front door. The three windows to the left of the front door are in the living room. (Between the study and the living room is a hallway which nicely shuts off most of the conversation which may be going on in the living room. The hallway also contains a stairway leading to the second floor.) I'll try to show the other rooms on a separate floor plan. The dining and living rooms are joined with a kind of archway. They are very pleasant rooms and the floor is covered with a good grade of linoleum. The color of the linoleum is a soft gray with a swirl effect. No showy flowers

or the like. All the windows have shades but no drapes are furnished. If you want them and do not have them you might do well to buy them in Michigan. Ask one of the church ladies to measure the windows for you. The kitchen is small but probably adequate for two people. (It is arranged rather awkward.) It has a relatively new electric range and also a rather new refrigerator.

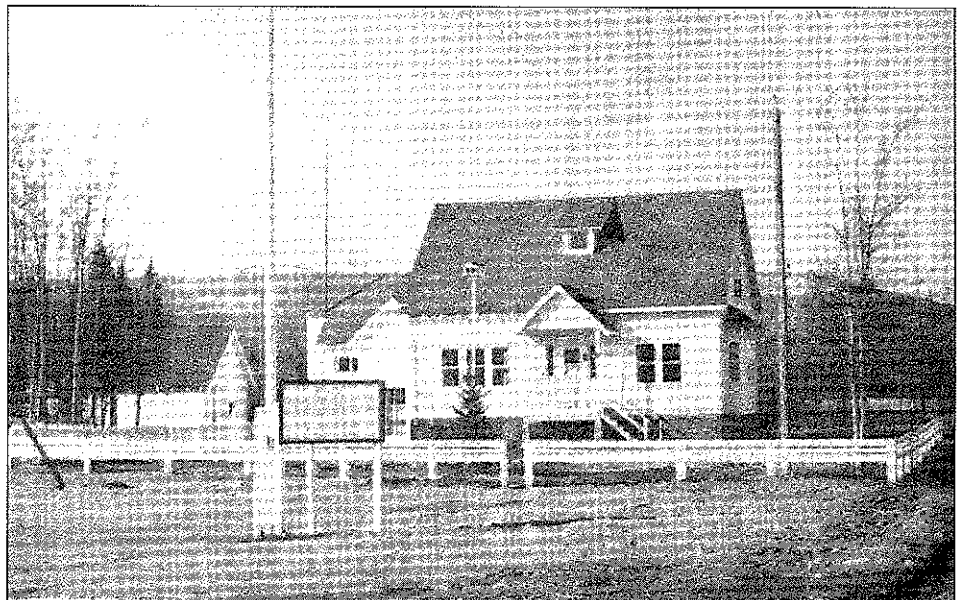
There is no TV in Houston. We have heard that it may come in a

couple of years but there is nothing definite on that. The long pole you noticed on the picture is one of two which hold up a radio antenna. The poles are about fifty feet tall. Radio reception in general is poor in the summer but fairly good in the winter when you have a good antenna. However, there is now a local booster station for CBC which is always at your disposal.

As to your stuff, I hardly know how to advise you since that is very much a



Houston CRC, 1950-1990.



Houston CRC parsonage.

personal decision to make. If you have a piano, do not sell it, that is if you care to keep one. They are at a premium in Canada. If you have a new car, you better stay in the U.S. until you have owned it for six months or you will have to pay duty. That is rough. I know from experience! As to immigration, it is best to contact the nearest Canadian Consulate as soon as possible. I think Chicago is your nearest one. Calling them may be more fruitful than writing since they can sometimes be rather slow in writing.

The Houston church does not own a typewriter. They do have a mimeograph machine and I did print the bulletin. Houston does not have

R.F.D. mail delivery. The church has a box in the post office which you will undoubtedly be using. It is Box 6. Perhaps it would be well to check with them for sure about this.

You may keep the slides as long as you wish just so we get them back in good shape.

As to your nearest neighbors, they live about 300 feet west of the parsonage. They are Canadian people. They do attend the Christian Reformed Church quite often. Their children are sent regularly to catechism and Sunday school and I understand they have promised to send their children to the Christian school next fall. We have learned to become very fond of

these people. They did not attend church anywhere when we came but have gradually come more and more. They are sincere people but are not yet ready for membership in the Christian Reformed Church. But they are thinking seriously about their responsibility toward God. For this we are so very thankful. Whether they will ever become members we do not know but we pray much for them. We shall be happy to tell you more about them when you come this way next spring. We shall be happy to see you. Please inform us before you come so we may arrange accordingly.

~ ~ ~

The Jan Veldheer Family of North Holland, Michigan

Joel Veldheer

The Jan Veldheer family came to West Michigan in 1848 and today, after one hundred and fifty years, they are still directly connected with the Netherlandic culture from which they came. The Veldheer tulip farm, located in the North Holland area, occupies land purchased by Jan Veldheer in 1851. And it is, in fact, the only remaining tulip farm near Holland, Michigan.

The family arrived in West Michigan in 1848, about one year after the

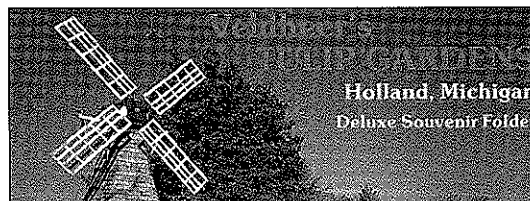
George Duckwitz on April 20, 1848. They sailed with sixty-one cohorts emigrating from the county of Staphorst-Rouveen and expected to settle in Drenthe where another Staphorster, Jan Hulst, had preceded them.

Jan Hulst was a very interesting person. Unlike other immigrants, he took his family from Baltimore, their port of entry, on an overland route to Michigan with a team of oxen. Most immigrants traveled on the Erie Canal and sailed to Michigan on the Great Lakes in a matter of weeks. Jan Hulst's trip took fifty-three days and since he knew little or no English and had no road maps, the task must have been daunting. But Hulst was not easily daunted nor intimidated. For example, he became an immediate and persistent critic

of Rev. A.C. Van Raalte, the leader of the Holland Colony so that Van Raalte and his

consistory excommunicated Jan Hulst for "stinginess, violence, irreconcilability [and] wickedness."

Even though Klaasje Veldheer was Aaltje Hulst's sister, the Veldheers did not settle in Drenthe but selected land in North Holland, a considerable distance from Jan and Aaltje Hulst—



Veldheer's Tulip Gardens

Veldheer's, the Nation's finest tulip farm, with the Dutch traditions of windmills, canals and drawbridges. It is here that one will find more varieties of tulips grown than anywhere else in the world. Over two million tulips are planted each fall for their forty days of blooming each spring. The bulbs are cleaned, sorted and sized, with only top-size bulbs released for market. The summer gardens are bursting with many different types of perennials and bedding plants. The gardens open April 10 and close in October.

Retail/Fundraiser/Wholesale orders are taken year 'round for delivery at the proper time for planting.

To cultivate and look after a farm such as this takes a lot of work. In addition, it gets a lot of Dutch "know-how" and loving care by more than one generation of the Veldheer family. Located 4 miles north of Holland, Michigan on U.S. 31 at Quincy Street.



Holland Colony was founded. Jan was one of thirteen charter members of the Noordeloos Christian

Reformed Church which, along with the Graafschap congregation, constituted the original members of the seceding CRC in 1857.

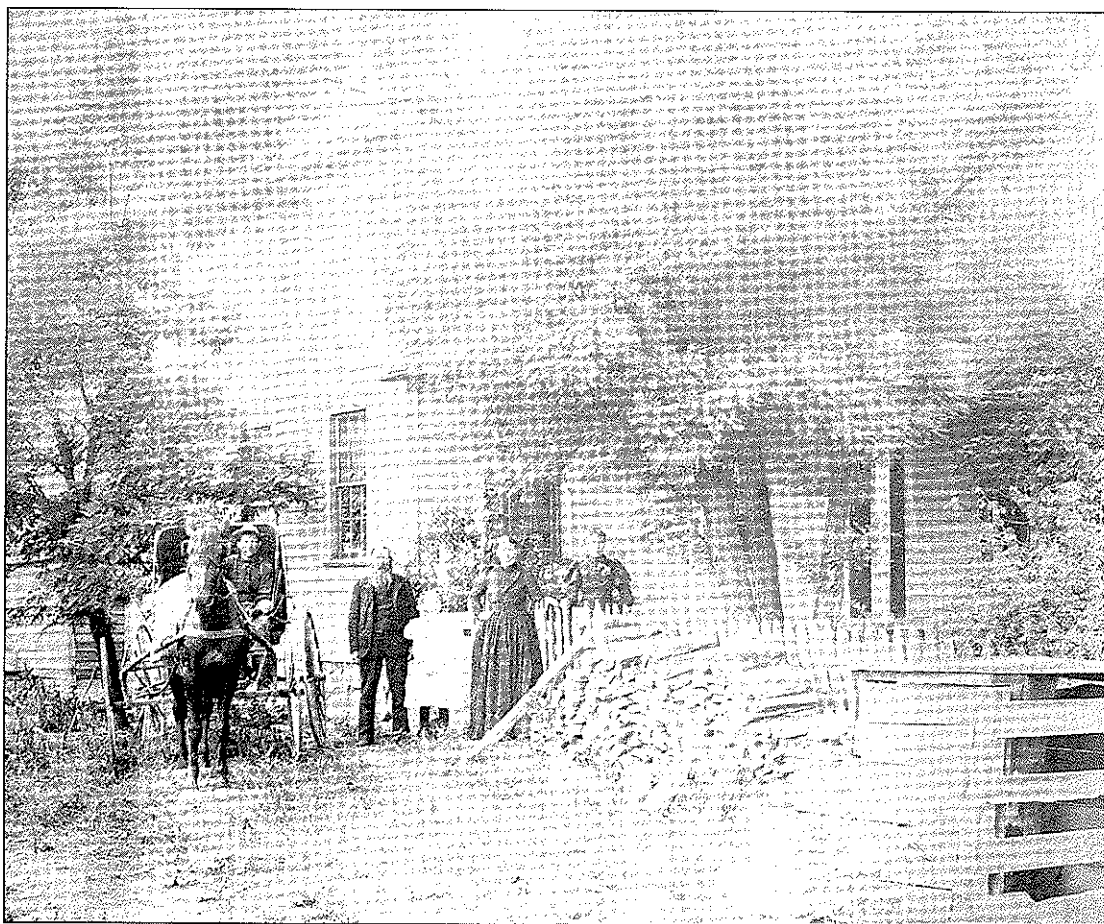
The Veldheers, Jan and Klaasje, with one daughter and three sons, left Staphorst, Overijssel on February 25, 1848, and debarked from the SS Big

Joel Veldheer is a high school counselor and social studies teacher in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

that choice probably reflected their intimate knowledge of Hulst's domineering personality.

The Veldheers did not move to North Holland immediately because the 1850 Census indicates that they were living in Holland at that time. According to *The History of Ottawa County*, p. 89, A.C. Van Raalte urged some men to investigate an area north of Holland which local Indians had described as good for crops. The report was favorable so that in the winter of 1849-50 six families moved to North Holland, about five miles from Holland. In 1851 the Veldheers joined the new settlement and bought eighty acres on the southwest corner of 120th Street and New Holland Road. The house which they built narrowly missed being destroyed by the great fire of 1871 and it still stands today. The area must have been a hunter's paradise because an article in *De Grondwet*, July 29, 1911, claims the farmer Veldheer was a good deer hunter. One of his neighbors, J. Van Tongeren, reported that he had killed seventy deer.

The Veldheers rest now in the North Holland cemetery which is far closer to Holland than their North Holland residence on New Holland Road. The cemetery is at the corner of Beeline Road and Lakewood Boulevard. Even though they lived long lives, Jan (1809-1882) and Klaasje (1809-1889), there was no grave marker for them until my brother, Jack Veldheer, placed one there for them in 1988.¶



Veldheer's home and family, ca 1900.



Veldheer home still standing in 1982 with Joel Veldheer in foreground.

Klompdancing through America

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

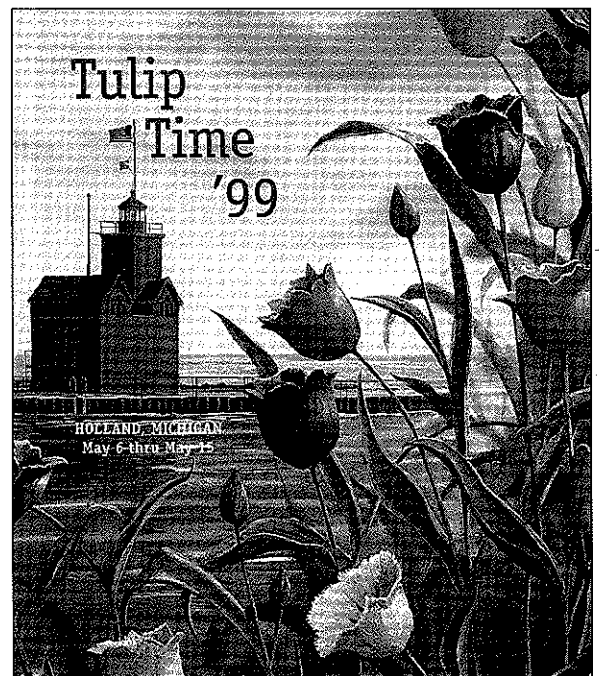
Although I lived in the Netherlands for the first eleven years of my life, and wore wooden shoes for most of those years, I never *danced* in them. Neither did I ever wear a Dutch costume. While we did scrub our front *stoeps* on Saturdays, I don't remember anyone ever scrubbing the streets of our village—we let the rain and wind take care of that. In 1951 I emigrated with my family to Canada, and in 1962 married an American. Ten years later, while living in Western Michigan, I attended my first Tulip Time Festival. I still remember my astonishment at the large number of *klompen* dancers and street scrubbers, as well as the sight of the many children of different ethnic backgrounds parading in Dutch costumes. I really did not know, at least initially, what to think of this stereotypical portrayal of the Dutch. However, as I observed various festivals since, I have come to appreciate them for what they are—celebrations of Dutch pioneers settling in a new country, taking with them their particular culture and customs—not celebrations of the Netherlands and the

Dutch. These are first and foremost American festivals celebrating a specific ethnic group and its heritage. These are celebrations of how they adapted their old-world culture in a new-world setting. By inviting their American neighbors to join in these celebrations, they not only opened up

their communities but also promoted them in the process. This article will give a brief history of the various festivals, their structure, i.e., what makes up a Dutch ethnic festival, how they are perceived by the non-Dutch, and how they impact their communities.

History

The grande dame of Dutch festivals, and the oldest, is Holland, Michigan's Tulip Time. It began, oddly enough,



Tulip Time '99, Holland, Michigan.

not with a consortium of progressive-thinking Dutch, but with a school-teacher who thought that the city could use a bit of brightening up. The city fathers heeded her suggestion to plant flowers. The only flower that they could envision for a city with the name Holland was, of

course, the tulip. In the fall of 1928 they planted the first tulips, whose bloom in the spring of 1929 brought many people to the city. And, even while the stock market crashed in the fall of 1929, setting off a nation-wide depression, the people of Holland confidently planted more tulip bulbs, setting off a nation-wide interest in their city. As the tulips flourished and people from far and wide came to admire them, the next step seemed obvious—why not an annual tulip festival?

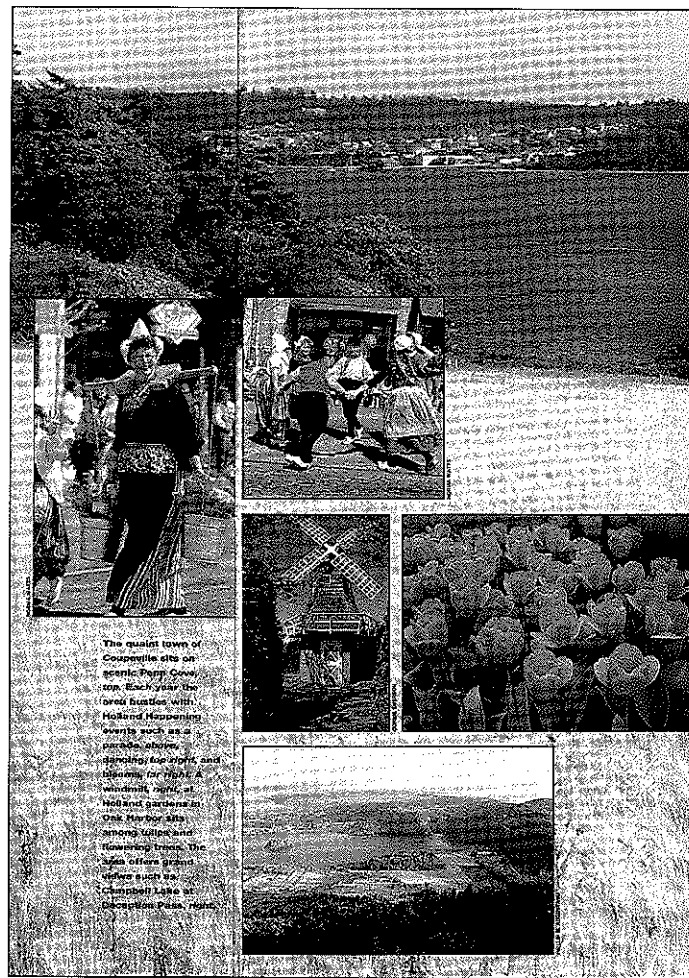
Six years later, unaware of the historic consequences their performance would have, the students of Pella, Iowa, High School presented an operetta called "Tulip Time in Pella." This operetta, featuring Dutch songs and the history of the founding of Pella, was so successful that civic leaders along with the Chamber of Commerce immediately put their heads together and planned a Tulip Time Festival for May of the same year—1935. *Zo gezegd, zo gedaan.* (No sooner said than done.) Since no tulips had been planted, potted and wooden ones provided the prerequisite floral backdrop. This one-day Tulip Time Festival was such a resounding success that it was decided to make it an annual event. In the fall of 1935 thousands of tulip bulbs were planted in Pella. Although the people of Pella did not, from the outset, set out to copy Holland's Tulip Time, a delegation of five businessmen did go to Holland, Michigan, to observe the festival there.

Word of happenings in Pella soon reached and inspired the citizens of Orange City, Iowa, to also celebrate their heritage, which is closely tied to that of Pella. Because they had named their town after the Dutch Royal House of Orange, the people of Orange City felt they had a special link with the Dutch Royal House.

Apparently they did—for Queen Wilhelmina provided 50,000 tulip bulbs for the first planting. Patterns for authentic costumes were obtained, songs learned, and another Tulip Time Festival bloomed.

The next three festivals organized were in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, in 1947, in Albany, New York, and in Edgerton, Minnesota, the latter two in 1949. Cedar Grove and Edgerton elected to use the words *Dutch* and *Holland* rather than *Tulip* in naming their festivals. To help celebrate their centennial in 1947, Cedar Grove organized a Holland Festival, which has continued annually since then. Albany, New York, has the distinction of being the oldest Dutch city in America. In May 1949 the *Knickerbocker News* editors wrote, "Aware that Albany, being an old Dutch city, naturally has a soft spot in its heart for tulips, we respectfully suggest to the Mayor and the city fathers that the tulip be formally designated the official flower of the city of Albany and that the city conduct an annual official tulip festival." The Mayor and city fathers took the words to heart and in 1999 Albany celebrated the 50th anniversary of its festival. No such lofty prose for Edgerton, Minnesota. The aim of their festival: "attract tourists and help expose the town's businesses."

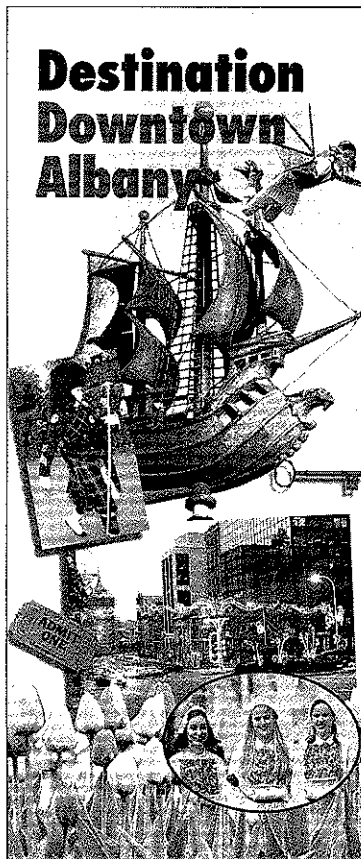
Three new festivals sprouted in the '50s. In 1953, the annual spring cleanup of Clymer, New York, turned into a Dutch Festival, combining that natural duo: Dutch and cleanliness. Also in 1953 the Christian School in Redlands, California, kicked off a Holland Festival. Two years later in 1955, the Kiwanis Club of Holland,



Whidbey Island, Washington.

New York, followed Clymer's example and organized a festival. Because of the town's historic Dutch roots—it was named for the Holland Land Company—a Dutch theme seemed appropriate.

The '60s yielded one, and the '70s two new festivals. In 1969 the citizens of Dutch origin in Oak Harbor, Washington, threw their Dutch caps into the ring and organized a Holland



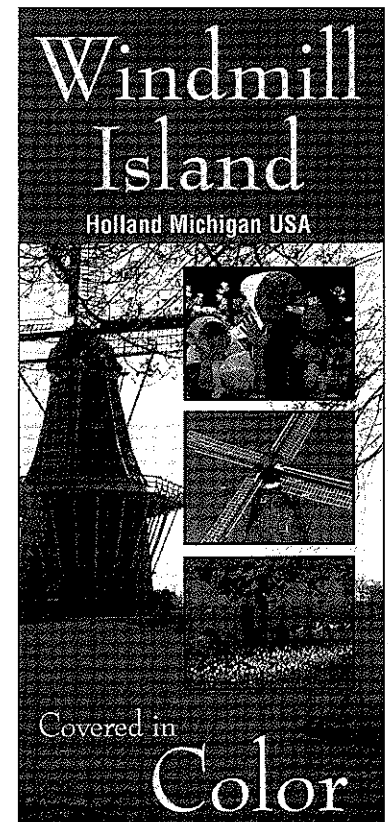
Albany, New York.

Happening Festival. In 1973 the Chamber of Commerce of Nederland, Texas, began a Heritage Festival—a subsequent action to the windmill they built in 1969 in honor of the Dutch who had settled Nederland in the late 1890s. When in 1974 the Christian School of Fulton, Illinois, needed a fund-raising project, they explored the idea of a festival with a Dutch theme and launched their Dutch Days Festival, now celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Six more towns joined the *optocht*, or parade, in the '80s. Little Chute, Wisconsin, restructured their 100-year-old fall Kirkmis Celebration to a spring Kermis Dutch Festival. Unlike Little Chute, which had a century of experience, Denver, Colorado, started their Dutch festival from scratch. Board members of the Bethesda Foundation for Mental Health traveled to Holland, Michigan, Orange

City and Pella, Iowa, for ideas. Dutch immigrants seeking relief from tuberculosis established Bethesda early in this century. Their descendants, increasingly aware of their Dutch heritage, found a splendid way to celebrate their heritage and at the same time benefit the Foundation. In 1983 Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, decided to "cash in" on its Dutch connection. Their Dutch Festival exposes the university to the town and raises funds for scholarships. Further west, Baldwin, Wisconsin, revived an existing, but flagging, festival into a lively Let's Go Dutch Days. All the way west Lynden, Washington, put on its wooden shoes in 1986 to kick off the first of its annual Dutch Days Festivals. Lynden, though not founded by Dutch immigrants, has attracted so many people of Dutch origin over the years, that it is now considered a Dutch town. Rounding out the decade is Wamego, Kansas, which held its first Tulip Festival in 1987. Like Lynden, Wamego did not have many Dutch settlers, but it only takes one to make a mark—especially if that one builds a working windmill. John Schonhoff, a Dutch immigrant, built his mill in Wamego in 1879. Today the mill is the centerpiece of Wamego's city park and the town celebrates this cultural heritage with an annual festival and by giving windmill tours. Finally, the last one to join the celebration is Palos Heights, Illinois. Their Dutch Festival, based on the Denver Bethesda festival, is organized and sponsored by the Elim Christian School for Physically and Mentally Challenged Children as a fundraiser for the school.

Four other organizations sponsor an ethnic Dutch festival; however, they are mainly for their own membership and guests.



Windmill Island, Holland, Michigan.

Structure and Components

There seems to be a consensus about what makes up an ethnic Dutch festival. The most significant component is the tulip—preferably lots and lots of them. The next most visible component is a *volks* parade complete with Dutch costumes, street scrubbers, and *klompen* dancers. Following close behind are ethnic displays such as *klompen*-making demonstrations, Delft/Hindeloopen painting, Dutch wares and/or antiques, and flower shows. Music, including organ concerts, carillons, bands, street organs, and live shows, as well as dramatizations and skits of historical happenings, such as a church service in the Dutch language, round out the events. Dutch food, though not vital, is a special attraction in a number of the festivals.

When these criteria have been met, many of the other events are geared to

the community itself. Brochures advertising the festivals mention a variety of non-Dutch events such as choosing a festival queen, flea markets, quilt shows, pony and hay rides. Jan Van Slageren Ellis, chairperson for the Oak Harbor Holland Happening festival for many years, stated in a magazine article, "We try to have such a variety of activities, from square dances, 10K runs, bonsai clinics, stirfry to fajitas, so that everyone can find something to do." Oak Harbor responded on their questionnaire, "We are a many culture (Navy) town and we like to think it draws everyone together." Participation in planning, too, ranges from people of Dutch descent to people from other ethnic backgrounds. According to Orange City, "Everyone is invited to participate—some of our best workers are from other ethnic groups."

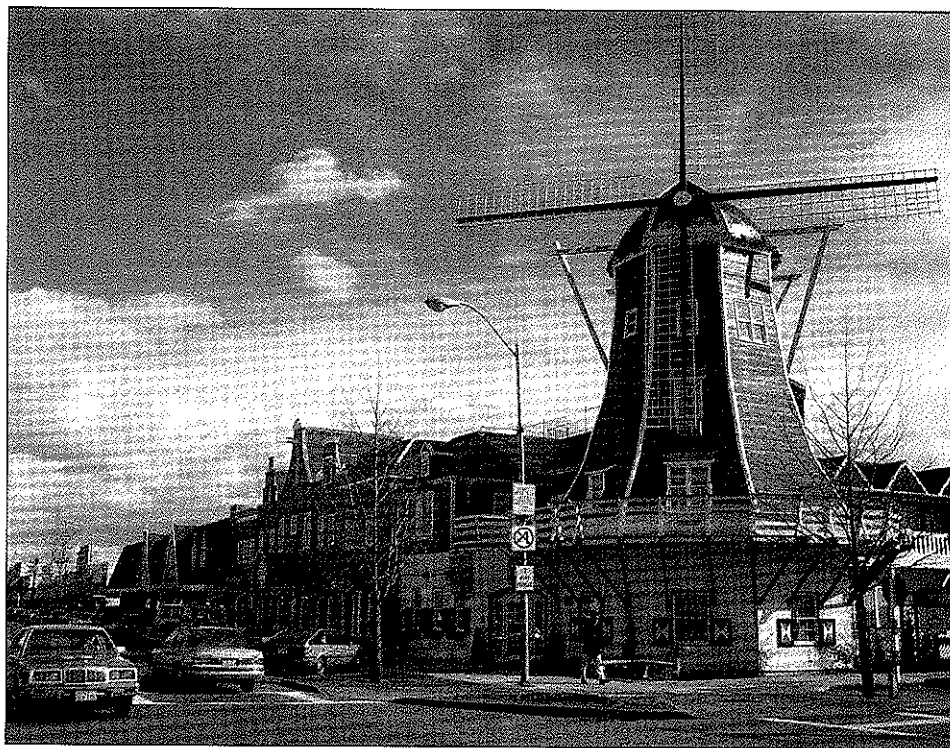
Although dignitaries of the Netherlands and the Dutch consulates are regularly invited, and many do attend, the list is not limited to only those of Dutch descent. State governors and other state and local politicians like to use the festival in their area for personal recognition. In 1999, Debbie Reynolds, Debbie Boone, and Glenn Campbell were three of the special attractions at the Holland Tulip Time. Everyone recognizes that even putting Glenn and the two Debbies in wooden shoes and Dutch costumes, they would hardly qualify as Dutch. In Palos Heights, the late Harry Caray, famed Chicago Cub baseball announcer, drew many to the Elim Dutch Festival. That is the appeal of ethnic Dutch festivals—just as the Dutch pioneers adapted their culture to new surroundings, Dutch festivals have adapted their events to today's American tastes in entertainment.

Perception by non-Dutch

What draws people to such an undisguised display of old-world stereotypes? What do people expect to see at an ethnic Dutch festival? What does the average American understand by "Dutch"? It seems at times that the typical Dutch couple has landed in a time warp: the man forever wearing baggy trousers, wooden shoes and smoking a pipe, the woman forever knitting in her Volendam costume. Every now and then they put aside the pipe and the knitting and go *klompen*-dancing, or ice-skating if it's winter. How did this stereotypical picture evolve?

In her recent book, *Holland Mania*, author Annette Stott explains how the American people came to adopt this view of the Dutch. In the second half of the nineteenth century, according to Stott, wealthy American industrialists began spending fortunes on Old Dutch Masters paintings. To them the Netherlands of the seventeenth century, as depicted in these paintings, reminded them of their own

American virtues and ideals. Freedom and independence had been hard won by the people of the Dutch Republic just as they had by the American people. Unlike other European art, which was in part commissioned by the church and therefore religious, and in part commissioned by royalty and therefore very ornate, Dutch art reflected the people of the Netherlands—the hard working peasant, the solid burgher. Besides the Dutch Masters, all art depicting Dutch scenes sold extremely well in America. There was, in fact, a huge demand for it, not just by the rich who could afford the original Rembrandt or Vermeer, but also by the common people who bought copies and replicas. Most American artists of any note traveled to study art in the Netherlands. Since many of these artists chose places like Volendam for their color and character, their paintings of the Netherlands featured the ever-present Dutch girl in the Volendam costume holding either a bouquet of tulips, or carrying



Lynden, Washington.

a yoke with milk pails, or knitting. So many artists spent their time in Volendam painting this particular costume that it began to represent the typical Dutch costume.

Advertising and product naming got into the "Holland mania" act as well: *Dutch Cleanser* and *Dutch Boy Paints* are names that have survived to this day. In 1909, *Harper's Bazaar* suggested a Dutch theme for a garden party. The author goes so far as to suggest building a large windmill from which "quaint maids" (I suppose she meant girls dressed in Volendam costumes) could serve Dutch treats.

America's views about the Netherlands were also influenced by books such as Motley's *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, which recounts the struggle of the Dutch people for independence from Spain, something the American people identified with. Mary Mapes Dodge's 1865 bestseller, *Hans Brinker* or *The Silver Skates* became a classic and generations of American children grew up with that image of the


Netherlands. Supporting that image were and still are the many pictures and prints for children about Holland. Whenever you see pictures of children from around the world, the Dutch boy and girl are always portrayed wearing their Volendam costume—the boy with baggy pants and the girl with blond braids peeking out from her Dutch cap.

Stott contends that this "Holland mania" lasted well into the 1920s. It is, therefore, not surprising that when

the first tourists came to Holland, Michigan, in 1928, they wanted to see the Dutch depicted as they had grown up to see them in books, prints, on calendars, advertisements, and picture postcards. And they were not disappointed. In 1941 there were some twenty performances of *Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates* in Holland, Michigan.

The Dutch in Holland, Michigan, as well as in Pella, Iowa, and other towns hosting a Dutch ethnic festival, were

perpetuated this Dutch stereotype by always shrewdly marketing itself with a pretty young girl in a Volendam costume holding a bouquet of tulips. From their tourist brochures to advertisements of Dutch products, the Dutch of the Netherlands use this picture over and over again. Photos of windmills and old church spires cleverly camouflage modern high-rises and industries. Americans of Dutch descent are behaving very much like their Dutch counterparts when it comes to giving the customer what they want.



Nederland
City of Programmed Progress

A History of Nederland
By Marie Fleming

Nederland was officially placed on the map on December 24, 1897. On that date Robert Gilham, civil engineer, filed a certificate describing finished survey of the townsite and the name Nederland was given the plat by its creator, the Port Arthur Townsite Company. Arthur Stilwell, who constructed the new railroad from Kansas City to Lake Sabine, had chosen many of the names on the route of the railroad as a result of his having received financial backing for his project in Holland. He was hopeful of Nederland becoming a transplanted Dutch settlement in Texas.

The first Hollander to arrive in Nederland was young George (Gatze) Rienstra. He arrived in late May or June in 1897 and chose what he considered the richest farm land in the barren, uninhabited country to which he had come—a vast prairie with neither a tree nor house in sight. His warranty deed for the purchase of the first land bought in Nederland was signed on July 17, 1897. This was for the purchase of 80 acres for \$800.00 cash and he was given lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 in block 15 in the area designated for business (now Boston Avenue).

In the late summer of 1897 the Port Arthur Land Company began construction of the Orange Hotel for the purpose of housing the immigrants that were being brought to the area. This hotel (built on the site where NationsBank now stands) was to furnish room and board at a reasonable rate while the newcomers were choosing their land and building their homes. The hotel was an attractive, well constructed three story building, consisting of 33 rooms. Besides the sleeping rooms, there was a combination dining and ball room and a library, which contained 1000 books. The hotel was painted a bright orange color in honor of the royal family of Holland.

While the Dutch were moving into Nederland, there were also people coming in from other parts of Texas and other sections of the United States. Many of the immigrants took temporary jobs on the railroad, working on the jetties at Sabine Pass or on farms in outlying areas. Those who were unable to adjust to the climate, the mosquitoes and the lack of physical and material conveniences moved on to other towns or states, while some returned to Holland. Of those who remained most were engaged in rice farming, truck farming and dairy farming.

Nederland Chamber of Commerce
1515 Boston • Box 89
Nederland, Texas 77627
Phone (409) 722-0279 • Fax (409) 722-0615

Photography by Gary Smith

Nederland, Texas.

Fostering Dutch Culture and Awareness

Almost all the festivals had at their inception a desire to foster awareness of their town's Dutch heritage and culture. However, authenticity occasionally fell victim to enthusiasm. A Dutch traveler visiting Pella in 1946, complained, "*er worden zogenaamde oudhollandse costuums gemaakt, naar een model, zoals men ze in Nederland zelf nooit zag*" ("so called old Dutch costumes are being made, after a

ready to give the tourists

what they came looking for. Fred and Harry Nelis, founders of Dutch Village in Holland, Michigan, believe in giving customers what they want. Harry Nelis Jr., in an article in *The Holland Herald*, is quoted as saying, "Maybe other people want to stress industrial growth [of the Netherlands], but when we here in Michigan have sold 25,000 pairs of wooden shoes for them, then we have done something for Dutch industry too, eh?"

However, the Netherlands itself has

pattern such was never seen in the Netherlands.") Holland, Michigan's first costumes—delft-blue skirts, white bodices, organdy caps and aprons—had never seen the light of day in the Netherlands either. The fact that many of the original settlers left the country because of adverse circumstances, both material and spiritual, had been forgotten after some fifty to seventy-five years and many began to feel a certain amount of nostalgia for the "old country." They, like the Israelites in the desert, began to see only the good they had left behind and began

to long for the homeland of their youth. Dutch songs and poems like *O dierbaar plekje grond, waar eens mijn wiegje stond* (Oh cherished piece of ground, where once my cradle stood) brought tears to the eyes of the old timers. Never mind that those first festivals celebrated a kind of collective old-world memory viewed through the rose-colored lenses of time gone by—they gladdened the heart of the old-timers.

Today, many committees work hard at presenting to the community and the visitors some programs and events specifically intended to educate the public about their Dutch heritage. There are slide shows, videos, and films telling the story of the community's history. Archives are opened and old photos are displayed. Certain festivals judge Dutch costumes for authentically teaching the different regions of the Netherlands they represent. Because the settlers came from different provinces, this is an important teaching tool for this generation to learn about the province their ancestors came from. At Little Chute, Wisconsin high school students research their Dutch ancestry and heritage. In Lynden, Washington a person can sign up for a Dutch-language course, while in Orange City groups have formed to promote authentic Dutch heritage. Pella's citizens revived a dormant historical society shortly after their first festival.

The fact that these festivals highlight and dramatize events from the community's own history, rather than from historical events which happened in the Netherlands, emphasizes the underlying intent of the festival—celebration of the founding and evolving of the Dutch community in America.

Religious Aspects

The same traveler from the Netherlands who bemoaned the Dutch

costumes also had a commentary on the youth of Pella in 1946. In his estimation they had forgotten their religious roots and were more interested in *klompen* dancing and street scrubbing, and in what he called the *kermis* or carnival atmosphere of Pella's festival. Other than a few

festival held on Sunday is in Hempstead, New York.

Financial Success

While almost all the committees involved stated that the festival was a way to preserve and celebrate their Dutch heritage, they freely acknowledged that their efforts were first and foremost a fundraising project for the community.

For the past seventy years, beginning with Holland, Michigan's Tulip Time, these festivals have been unqualified successes, in terms of

numbers of visitors and community involvement. Holland's Tulip Time averages a million people during the ten-day festival. The entrepreneurial spirit of the citizens exhibited itself already in the early years. In 1941, faced with half a million visitors in a town of 15,000 without motels, the festival committee leased three large lake steamers,

anchored them at Lake Macatawa and used them as floating hotels. In spite of the hard work and worries, such as weather and turnout, most of the communities consider their festivals successful. Palos Height's Dutch Festival, the last one to organize, reported a net profit of \$100,000 for



Orange City, Iowa.

church-sponsored floats in parades, religion plays a minor part. Four of the twenty respondents mentioned community-wide worship services. Since in many communities the festivals end on Saturday, the subject of Sunday activities is moot. Festivals running through the weekend, such as the one in Holland, Michigan have limited activities on Sunday morning. Two communities hold Dutch worship services during the week, but due to the language barrier, these services usually are more of a historical curiosity than actual worship. The only

1997 and \$90,000 for 1998. Only Lynden reported theirs as a mediocre success in terms of visitors. Even the three communities which decided to scrub their festival for a couple of years did so, not because the festival was not popular or profitable, but rather because of the difficulty of getting volunteers for such an enormous undertaking.

Tourism is a real incentive for most of the communities. People return to see more of the town and surroundings between festivals. Tourism also encourages the citizens to keep their community clean and up-to-date in order to welcome people. A brochure on Orange City states: "After growing up in Dallas, Texas and working in numerous cities, Clayton Korver elected to move to Orange City in 1988. He quickly became attached to the sense of pride found in his father's hometown."

Even though the festivals are organized and managed by the community's Chamber of Commerce or other civic and religious committees, it takes many volunteers working together to make it happen. This spirit of cooperation extends to other areas of business as well. Large manufacturers seeing this kind of cooperation are drawn to towns whose people can work together for the good of all and who take pride in their city. A case in point again is Orange City. The same Orange City brochure quotes Korver as saying, "Moving here I could see right away that it was unique. The people are smart, hardworking and family-focused." Korver serves as the president of MEDTEC, a company that designs, manufactures and distributes medical devices to 2,000 hospitals in fifty countries worldwide. The Orange City-based company grew from five to seventy employees since it moved to Orange City from Dallas in 1989.

A number of the towns hosting festivals have altered their appearance by giving the storefronts Dutch facades, adding Dutch villages, and windmills. These changes set the community apart and draw visitors throughout the year. In some cases the festival has been the impetus in creating year-round businesses, such as Veldheer's Tulip Farms, Dutch Village, and the Zwaan Windmill Park in Holland, Michigan, and the Windmill Motel in Lynden, Washington. This 72-foot windmill opened July 1, 1987, in Lynden's Dutch Village Mall. It features an indoor miniature golf course, a two-hundred-seat theatre, and six unique hotel rooms, with such nostalgic interiors as the Friesland, Groningen, North Holland, South Holland, Overijssel, and Delft *Kamers*, or rooms. Windmill blades turn and are fully lit until ten o'clock each evening.

Lynden also welcomes its visitors with a larger-than-life wooden shoe erected at the Front Street entrance. The 6.5-foot high, 17-foot long and nearly 7-foot wide "wooden" shoe is made of fiberglass. It is difficult to decide which of these icons, the windmill or the wooden shoe, most represents the idea of "Dutchness." While the wooden shoe is more versatile when it comes to parading and dancing, the windmill is an enduring and much cherished symbol of the hard-working, resourceful, and solid Dutch. Two communities hosting Dutch ethnic festivals not yet having a windmill as backdrop are in the process of acquiring one. The State of Illinois awarded Fulton \$600,000 to erect a windmill which will serve as a tourist center. In New York, Clymer's festival receipts are earmarked for the purchase of a windmill.

Perhaps the best example of Dutch entrepreneurial endeavor comes from the small town of Holland, New York,

population 3,000 (compared to Holland, Michigan's 30,500). James and Ruth Van Splunder are one of the three or four Dutch families left in Holland, New York. James, long-time president of the local Kiwanis, along with Ruth, his wife, each year don their authentic Dutch costumes and lead the Holland Tulip Festival parade. The Van Splunders, both in their seventies wouldn't think of giving it up. "The festival is a resounding success," she writes, "even when rain washes us out! The entire community turns out, is involved, and all proceeds go to the charitable, educational and religious activities of the community."

Ja, Jan, het is wat in Amerika! \$

Sources:
Information submitted by festival committees on questionnaires.
Brochures, pamphlets and anniversary booklets produced by the various festival committees.

Grand Rapids, Michigan 2000 Street — Tom to Fuller, 1930–1960 Spoken Here

Writing this brief sketch of the Wealthy Street Dutch business community attracted my interest a few years ago when it seemed to me that much has been written about the adventures and tribulations of the early Dutch immigrants, but little has been written about the second generation and those who were brought here as children. Many in this group took advantage of the opportunities their parents provided for them, so I decided to tell some of their stories while I was still young enough to remember but not so old that I would have to invent them.

Near my home the half-mile stretch of Wealthy Street between Eastern and Fuller was occupied by many Dutch merchants, who in many cases established retail stores and trade shops in the fronts of their homes while living upstairs.

Prominent among these, Tom Vander Mey operated "Tom the Clipper" barbershop on the north side of Wealthy Street between Diamond Avenue and Donald Place. Tom was an excellent barber but prided himself even more on the intellectual atmosphere of his shop. Partly because he was a Calvin College graduate, he attracted many college and seminary professors along with teachers and other college graduates.

Tom, a bachelor for many years, married Mint Vertregt, who also had remained single and taught English at Grand Rapids Christian High School. Many wondered how this union could survive because in addition to being fixed in their ways they also adhered to opposing political views—one liberal and the other conservative. Liberal indeed—Tom knew how to dance. One hint of their marital discord was evident when Tom had the venerable seminary professor Samuel Volbeda in his chair. In the middle of the haircut Tom spread his arms apart, one hand holding the comb and the other the scissors; he bent down and looked the professor in the eye to ask, "Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?" The professor nodded consent, so Tom continued, "I presume you have been married many years and I wonder who settles the big questions and who the little ones?"

Without a smile the learned professor replied, "I settle the big ones and my wife settles the small ones."

Tom pressed further, "Could you give me an example of a big problem?"

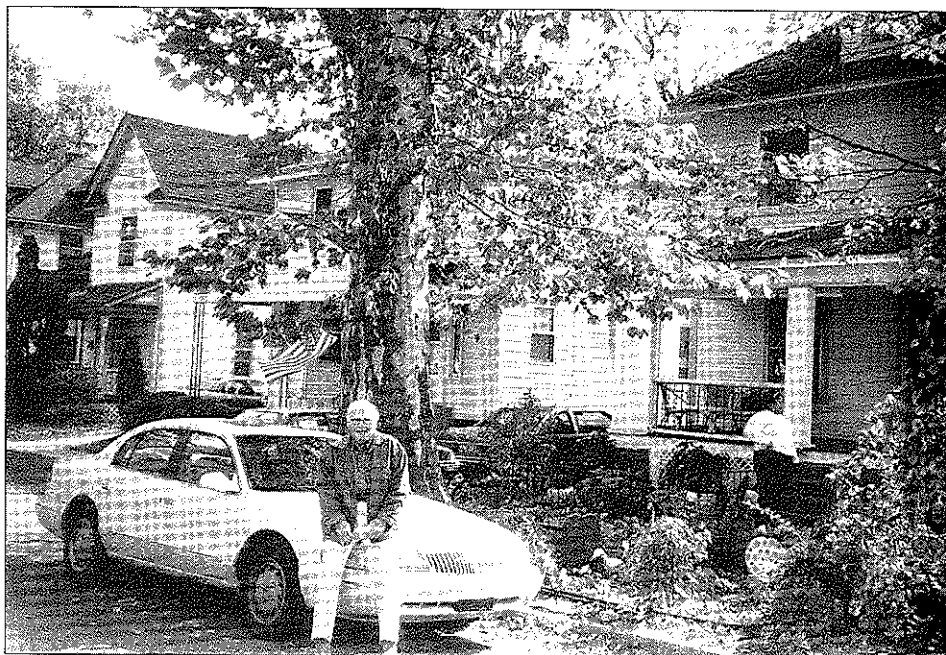
"No, I cannot, because no big problems have ever come up."

Two doors west of the barber



(above) Richard Van Dellen with his wife Ella and his sister Ann posing in front of the new Van Dellen residence on Fairmount Street, 1912.

(below) Eighty-seven years later, the author, Marvin, poses at the same location.



(1009), Peter Zylstra operated a jewelry and watch repair shop. Peter knew his trade and everyone trusted him. He was conscientious and very conservative, especially about Sabbath observance. It so happened that, when Tom married, he built a home

next door to Pete in the Sylvan Christian School area. Tom made room for his pool table in the basement and enjoyed playing even on a Sunday afternoon. One hot Sunday afternoon Tom went down for a game of pool and opened a basement

window, which happened to face Peter's back porch. Peter had just settled on his porch when the crack of the cue ball shattered his repose. As the story goes, within seconds

Tom's front doorbell rang and Peter was imploring Tom to observe the Sabbath, words were exchanged, a door closed, and there was a return to the game but not to the porch.

That was not the end of the matter. It continued on Monday morning and put Sam George, the Lebanese shoe repairman, in the middle. Sam, Peter's landlord, was afraid that he might lose a tenant over the question of Sabbath observance. Sam was Greek Orthodox and couldn't understand what this argument between these two Hollanders was all about. Meanwhile Pete's hair grew long and Tom's watch didn't get repaired, but we all knew that things had returned to normal when, one day, Pete's hair was cut.

To the east of Tom there was a store building that at one time housed Dick Vander Wal's hamburg and coffee shop and maybe a card game or two in the kitchen at slow times. Later, Herm Baker purchased the building at 1019 to begin his bookstore and publishing business. He

started buying personal libraries, cataloging and arranging them and then allowing ministers, students, and the public to browse and buy. As his business flourished he expanded. Every day at 10 AM Herm, his son Rich, Cornelius Zylstra, Ben Veldkamp, and Clare Dykhouse often walked over to Shooks's coffee shop, in such deep conversation that sometimes one of them would have a close call with a car as they crossed Wealthy Street. There was a sort of synergism between Tom's and Herm Baker's establishments. Those needing a haircut and verbal stimulation and written stimulation could have both in one stop. Herm's business grew to the point that he built a large publishing house on East Fulton and opened additional bookstores in commercial locations.

Another notable business was Huizingh's hardware store, a long narrow building with high metal ceilings and jammed with every item needed to maintain a house or yard or bicycles. Shelves were stacked to the ceiling and items were retrieved either by use of a long narrow ladder on wheels fixed on a track at the top or by use of a long rod fitted with jaws that could grip the item. In the rear and a step down was a repair shop which contained an assortment of tools and machinery that could repair almost any item found in and around the home. The proprietors of this store were father Joe and son Peter. My memory of father Joe pictures him in the back room repairing a bicycle with a wrench in hand and a cigar in his mouth. Peter was usually out front with a lit cigarette burning in the ashtray on the counter while he was waiting on a customer. Peter was the consummate salesman. He would recite every possible item you might



Dick Vander Wal's Hamburg Shop—proprietor in foreground, 1930s.

need to complete the task you were undertaking. This was a great service because you seldom had to make a return trip for a forgotten article you might need to complete the job. It was a type of service that national hardware chains are now starting to copy.

Ed Freyling's greenhouse and landscape business occupied the entire block between Barth and Callins avenues. From Wealthy Street a path led along a fountain and through a musty atmosphere heavy with the fragrance of flowers in bloom. At the end of this path wide

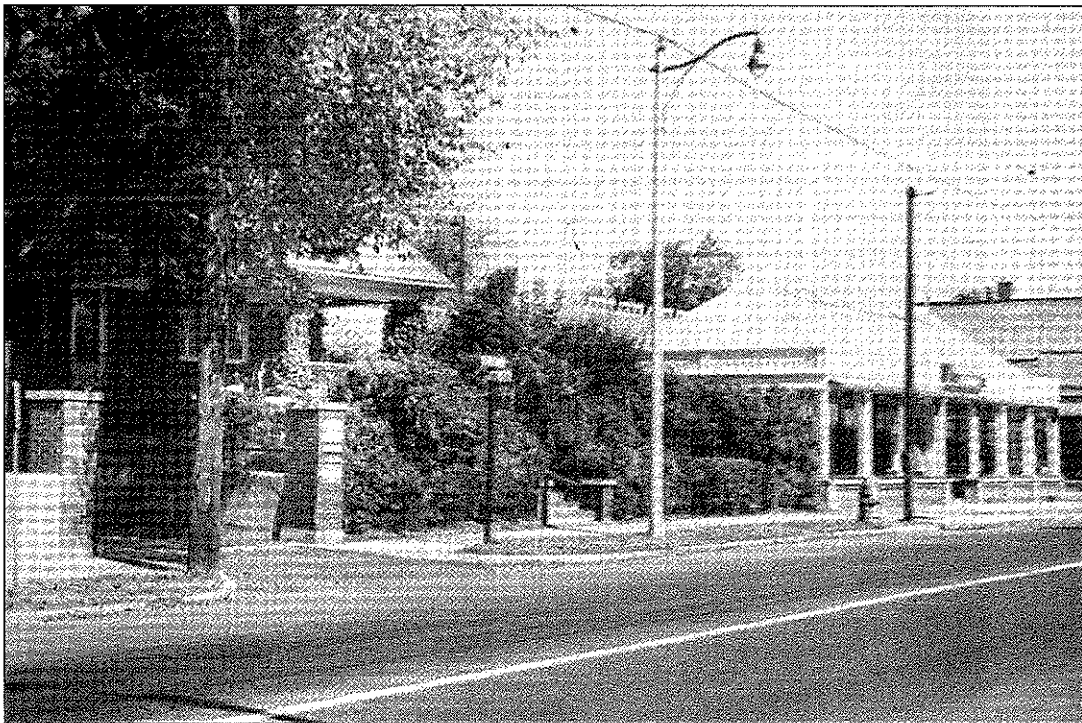
concrete stairs led to Ed Freyling sitting on a high stool in front of the cash register with a broad smile and a cigar all functioning at the same time. My mother recalled that in the early days, weather permitting, there would be a parrot in a cage out front who would call to the passersby, "Come in and see the pretty, pretty flowers." In later years, the business was continued by Ed's son, a very competent landscape architect known to all of us as Bub.

Huizingh's Furniture Store stood to the east on the block next to Freyling's greenhouse. Huizingh's

was a large store for its day with plate glass windows fronting on the street and an inside stairway leading to professional offices. The store displayed furniture for every room in the house including the best sellers of the day, chrome kitchen sets, baby buggies, and collapsible playpens that would pinch your fingers when you set them up. The proprietors were two brothers, Henry and John Huizingh. Henry was quiet and reserved. John was outgoing, and focused, with fixed ideas. John took leadership in the Wealthy Business

an enclosed stairway of exceptional length. The two offices were separated by a shared waiting room. Henry Walkotten, D.D.S., assisted by Clarice Kramer, occupied the west suite and Henry Kooistra, M.D., the east one. Dr. Kooistra was a tall man with a ready smile and Lincolnesque face. He had a busy practice and was respected as one of the leading cancer surgeons in Grand Rapids. Dr. Walkotten was a man of slight build with an air of competency about him accented by a very carefully groomed pencil mustache. The good doctor

using the front door and those who did. For those who did, there was a back door which could be reached from a small parking lot in the rear or by driving to the little street off Fuller Avenue, parking there, and cutting through a small driveway. In later years Lindy's was sold and for a number of years was called the White Rabbit. After several altercations in and around the premises incited neighborhood outrage, the White Rabbit was demolished. The oil station next to it was also removed and has been replaced by a Dollar Store.



Freyling & Mendel Floral with family residence on the left, 1950s.

Association, particularly with regard to off-street parking. John became known as the "parking man" both downtown at city hall and in the neighborhood. He worked hard to obtain city parking lots behind the stores. Ironically, when the parking lots came they were built behind the stores across the street.

The offices above were reached via

was not partial to the use of Novocaine and so having a tooth drilled and filled was, in the words of Tom Vander Mey, "enervating."

Lindy's Bar and Beer Garden, the kind of business not generally highlighted in pious Dutch communities, was located at 1141 Wealthy Street. Lindy's had two kinds of clientele, the kind who had no qualms about

Across Wealthy Street on the corner of Fuller Avenue was Klein's Drug Store. Mr. Klein was a pharmacist as were most drugstore owners at that time. I do remember that he had a game you could play for a nickel. It was enclosed in a glass case. You would manipulate a small handle which in turn would move a set of claws. The object was to remove one of the small prizes from the bottom of the case. I spent my nickel on an ice cream cone.

Next door was a little watch and clock repair shop operated by Mr. Kuiper. He slowly lost his sight and had to close. It

was a sad day for all the merchants on the street. Next door, L.V. Eberhard operated his first store at 1142 Wealthy where he and his wife worked long hard hours, and they opened many more stores in western Michigan later on. My contacts with L.V., and the reports of others, indicate that he was not the most pleasant person, particularly if you

were his employee. However, he had another side. He was very interested in animals and gave large sums of money to our local John Ball Park Zoo. For some time the Princess Bake Shop operated in that row of stores alongside the Eberhard store. Later Eberhard vacated his store, which became the U.S. Post Office, Station C. Presently it is occupied by Handicap Sign Incorporated.

Number 1134 was the *Deutsche Bierstube* operated by Hans Heinz and Herman Gloe, with their wives. Mrs. Heinz and her sister ran the kitchen. Herman presided over the bar, the beer taps, and the cash register. Hans, dressed in a white shirt and tie with an apron folded in half and tied at the waist, greeted, seated, bussed, and managed. Rene and Peggy waited tables with perfect efficiency. Hans was open for lunch and dinner and you almost always had to wait. In those days a cup of lentil soup, a meatloaf sandwich on rye with Dutch mustard, and a cup of coffee was \$1.50, including tip.

The *Bierstube's* neighbor (1130 Wealthy) was the Wealthy Theater with its glowing billboards of "Com-

ing Attractions." When young, I was told to avoid walking past this place, and somehow I thought the Devil would reach out and pull me into this dark place. Often I would cross to the other side of the street. In later years, I found that it had to be dark inside to show the movies and that there was no devil there to pull me in. Later on it showed art films like *The Moon is Blue*, *Never on Sunday*, and *The Graduate*, along with a mix of old classics and musicals. Recently renovated, it has become a handsome meeting place and theater.

John Niemeyer's Clothing Store, where we bought our Sunday suits, remained in the area for many years. It was operated by John Niemeyer with assistance from Paul Spoelhof and John's sons. John's son operated the store for some time and later moved to one of the area's first shopping malls. Next to Niemeyer's was a 5 & 10 Cent Store owned by Chet De Graaf. Chet was second-generation Dutch. His store was an excellent addition to the commercial mix of Wealthy Street.

On a wide driveway and back from the street on #1030, Ebling located his

blacksmith shop. It was a busy place when horse-drawn wagons delivered most of the goods and services to our homes. After the advent of motorized delivery, he survived by branching out to make trailer hitches and repairing anything made of iron. According to news reports, his was the last blacksmith shop operating in Grand Rapids. It remained in operation until just a few years ago.



The Hondorps operated their meat market at number 956. The quality of their meat was known all over the east side. They knew their customers so well that when a customer would leave word, by phone, that they wanted the usual order for the weekend, they could make up the order and it was delivered by their deliveryman, Henry Waanders. Next to the Hondorps, Henry Koning operated a used car lot. Henry had a good reputation and his business flourished. Eventually he purchased the corner, raised the buildings and expanded his lot.

At the first Hoekstra Printing Company, house number 915, the Hoekstra family lived upstairs while the printing operation occupied the basement. You reached the print shop via a walkway cut through the embankment and down two steps to the door of the shop. Once inside you were greeted with the clatter of the printing presses and a ready smile from sons Rich and Ted and father Tony. I can't remember a time, when entering the shop, that Tony didn't have a fresh cigar in his mouth. For some reason, I believe that



John Niemeyer's Clothing Store, 1950s.



Bierstube restaurant with proprietor, Hans Heinz. Note the Eberhard store at the far left. It was the original of the Eberhard's chain.

paint them and then sell them. The neighborhood began to recognize that Dad knew values and could advise them as to price and could also market their properties for them. As his reputation grew, he began to expand to the sale of land and farms. It was at this point that he acquired a

Rich or Ted never smoked. The Hoekstras also had two daughters, Florence and Betty, who, like their mother, played a strong role in the family and in their husbands' endeavors. The Hoekstra Printing Company is another example of Dutch entrepreneurship that started as a small shop in the house and grew to a state-of-the-art major printing operation.

On the northeast corner of Wealthy and Eastern stood the Wealthy Street Baptist Church where Dr. David Otis Fuller preached an uncompromising message of firm opinion and faith. Some Sunday evenings my father would take me to hear him. This was a real jolt for me because I was used to the sermons of Rev. Herman Hoeksema who extolled the biblical proofs of predestination. When I was young I concluded that the members of this church were not Dutch because after church they would walk across the street and buy the Sunday

newspaper at the drugstore.

At the northeast corner of Wealthy and Diamond Avenue is a little plot of ground about 26x80 feet which was where my father grew up and later built his offices and an oil station. My father grew up in the little house set back from Wealthy Street and started in the real estate business there about 1900. As he prospered he built an office building in front of the home facing the corner of Wealthy Street and Diamond Avenue. It was a small office with a large reception room and two private rooms all heated with a coal stove standing in the center of the reception room. Facing Wealthy Street was a large plate glass window with gold lettering advertising "R. Van Dellen Real Estate, Insurance, Loans and Notary Public, Open Saturdays til 9 PM."

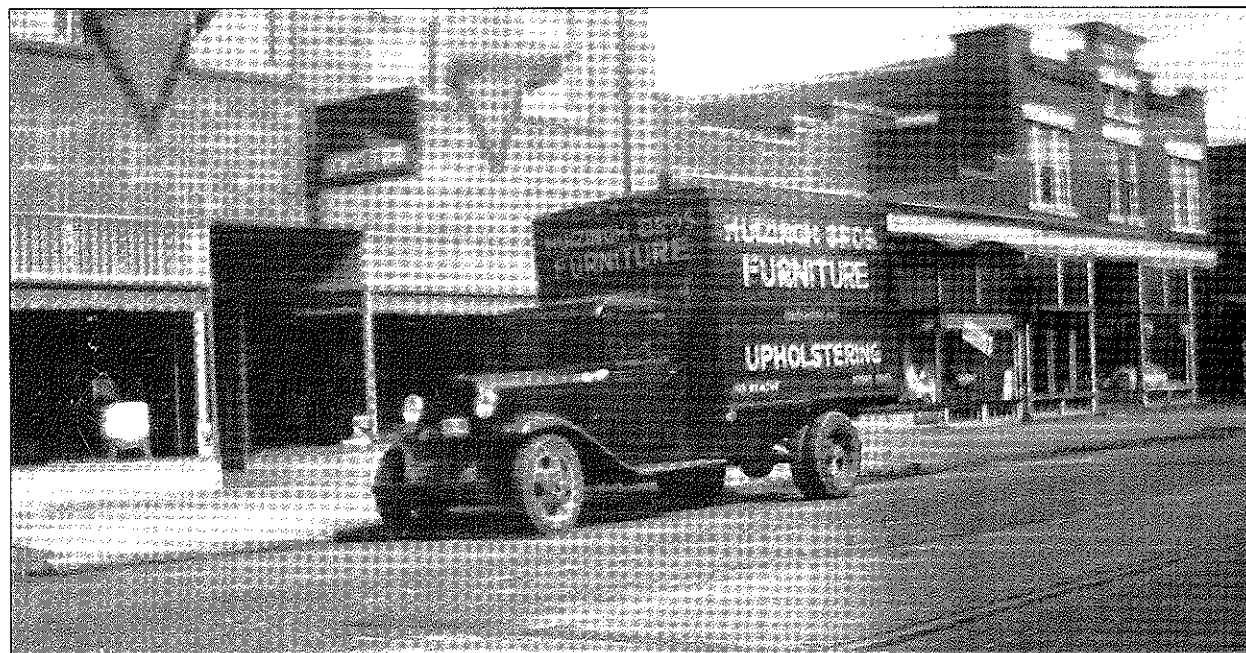
Dad started out painting houses and worked up to buying houses that needed repair. He would repair and

horse named Nancy. Nancy was a tall horse, a Hamiltonian Trotter, that could trot with a buggy over to the Ada covered bridge and back in a morning. It was about twelve years later that Dad and Mom married and settled in a new house on Fairmount Street. Mother was very fond of Nancy and when Dad came home for coffee in the morning Mother would take a lump of sugar out to the porch. Nancy would pull the buggy over the curb to the porch, retrieve the sugar, and return to the street with the buggy, perfectly parked at the curb. Dad was typical of all the Dutch entrepreneurs who started businesses in their homes and expanded by building in front of their homes. Wealthy Street became a viable commercial street servicing the surrounding area.

After the Depression hit, my oldest brother, Chester, graduated from Christian High School. Against my



Huizingh Brothers' Furniture and Upholstering, with doctors Kooistra and Walkotten on the second floor.



parents' wishes, he decided not to go on to college. There were no gasoline stations in the area and so my father determined that one should be built and that Chet would be the one to

operate it. Dad razed the office and the old family home behind it and built an oil station on the corner and a new office for himself next to it on Diamond Avenue. The station had

four gasoline pumps, two on each side of the drive, a small station house about 8x10 feet in size and an open grease pit next to it. Everything done to a car was done out in the open. On winter days this was a cold business. The attendants would dash into the station house for a few minutes to get warm and then go on greasing cars and filling gas tanks. The station opened at 6 AM and closed with the last customer, Dr. Henry Kooistra, at 12 PM. After a long cold day Chet would come home and sink into a warm bathtub. Sometimes my mother would find him fast asleep in the tub at 3 o'clock Sunday morning. The station prospered. In fact, on opening day cars were lined up on both Wealthy Street and Diamond Avenue to receive a pencil flashlight with a fill-up.

My dad's new office building reused the front window and door of his first office. At about the same time Mr. Wolf closed his jewelry store next to the Wealthy Theater and Dad bought his safe with the idea of installing it in his new office. It was a huge safe with doors a foot thick. While trying to move it in place it fell into the basement.

After much effort it was raised and installed. The building stands today with the safe still in place. It was a modest building and served its

purpose well until the neighborhood changed and the Dutch population in the surrounding area began to move east. 6



Southwest corner of Wealthy and Diamond streets looking west down Wealthy Street in 1913. The boy off the curb is Daniel De Vries, who became a physician and a prominent leader in the CRC. Photo courtesy of Ruth Holkeboer.

Wealthy Street Businesses as of 1950-1960

- | | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|
| 800 | Tesseine Pharmacy | 801 | Wealthy St. Baptist Church |
| 804 | Holland-America Food Company | 857 | Crystal Flash Service Station |
| 806 | Wealthy Body Shop | 901 | Langham Heating Company |
| 846 | Stone Mill Products, health foods | 923 | State Insurance Agency |
| 900 | Freeman's Sunoco Service | 937 | East End Plumbing |
| 912 | Indian Trails Candy Company | 947 | Blodgett of Grand Rapids |
| 916 | Hoekstra Printing Company | 957 | Blodgett Packing & Storage |
| 926 | Kramer-Peters Brake Company | 1005 | Two Stan's Bar |
| 930 | Battle Creek Clinic, physiotherapy | 1007 | Hertel Electric Company |
| 946 | John W. Holwerda, sheet metal | 1009 | Zylstra Jewelry |
| 950 | Koning Auto Sales | 1011 | Samuel George, shoe repair |
| 956 | Hondorp Meats | 1015 | Thomas Vander Mey, barber |
| 958 | Barth Pharmacy | 1019 | Baker Book House |
| 1002 | Troy's Service Station | 1031 | Fred Wright, barber |
| 1012 | A & P Food Stores | 1035 | Peter Huizingh, hardware |
| 1030 | Ebling & Son, welders | 1059 | Freyling & Mendels Floral |
| 1040 | Holwerda Heating & Plumbing | 1109 | Muller's Shoe Store |
| 1044 | National Dry Cleaners | 1117 | Sherwin-Williams Paint |
| 1050 | Fisher's Grill, restaurant | 1119 | Heyboer's Dry Goods |
| 1106 | Dennis Sullivan, variety store | 1121 | The Penny Shop, gifts |
| 1108 | Nick's Hamburger Shop | 1135 | Whitford Ice Cream |
| 1110 | Niemeyer's Men's Clothing | 1137 | Verhey Carpet |
| 1122 | Watkins Quality Products | 1141 | Lindy's Bar |
| 1126 | Wealthy Bar | 1157 | Slocum's Gulf Service Sta. |
| 1130 | Wealthy Theatre | | |
| 1134 | Deutsche Bierstube, restaurant | | |
| 1142 | U.S. Post Office | | |
| 1144 | Princess Bake Shop | | |
| 1146 | Bon Ton Beauty Salon | | |
| 1150 | Barney Swierenga, jewelry | | |
| 1158 | Hughes Pharmacy | | |

Hollandale, Minnesota

The Hollandale, Minnesota, Christian Reformed Church dates from 1922 when a cluster of twenty-two early residents gathered for worship in the home of Peter Louters. These and others who joined them chartered their congregation in 1935 with about sixty-five members. By 1944 they replaced the wooden structure they had been using with a basement church but the superstructure was not completed until 1962.

This settlement which attracted Dutch settlers to Southern Minnesota had been organized by the Payne Investment Company which published a glossy brochure in 1924 to attract farmers to the region. This publication, titled Hollandale Colony, included the testimonials of about twenty Dutch settlers who praised the development company and the region. The booklet's clear black and white photography is so impressive that we are duplicating several of its pages without comment.

Editor

HOLLANDALE COLONY

What settlers say:
What they have done.
What they plan to do.
What the soil will do.
What scientific experts think of it.

PAYNE INVESTMENT CO.
Omaha, Neb.

HOLLANDALE COLONY

Freeborn County, Southern Minnesota
 The Garden Spot of the Mid-West
 Dairying, Sugar Beets, Celery
 Potatoes, Onions
 And All Kinds of General Farming Crops
 The Best Intensive Farming Community in the West

**55 Farms Sold and Now Occupied
 100 Will Be Sold in 1924**

*Terms so easy that any one with a little savings can
 quit working for a landlord and be a home owner.*
 A minimum of

Only 10% Cash

Balance 20 Annual Installments at 6%, but purchasers
 must satisfy us that they have sufficient funds
 to erect improvements.

A Discount of 5% will be allowed on all cash paid over and above
 10% down.

*Better a SMALL Investment and BIG Returns
 Than a BIG Investment and SMALL Returns!*

Albert Lea Farms Co.
 Owners
 Hollandale, Minnesota

Payne Investment Co.
 Selling Agents
 Omaha, Nebraska

Hollandale, Minnesota

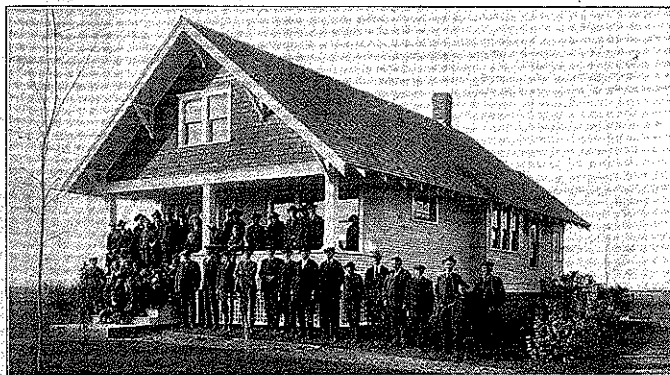
The Town of Hollandale

January 1, 1923, there was not a man, woman or child living in the village of Hollandale, and there were no buildings except the chapel. During the summer and fall of 1923 the following buildings were completed in Hollandale:

- A \$15,000 stone store building.
- An \$18,000 16-room hotel building.
- An electric light plant.
- A water works plant.
- A stone warehouse with capacity of 30,000 bushels of potatoes and onions.
- A lumber yard with a \$25,000 stock of lumber.
- An artificial stone plant making cement bricks.
- A little chapel building which is intended for a parsonage as soon as the new church is built.



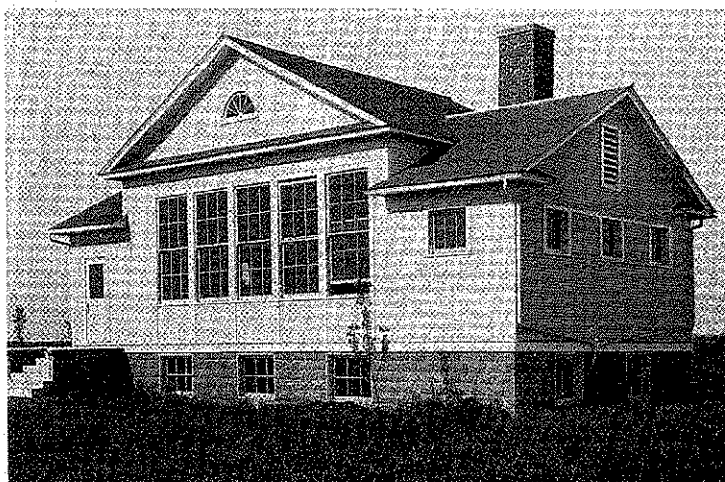
AIRIE VER DORN'S BOYS.



TEMPORARY CHAPEL.
Dutch Reformed Church, finished in 1922, only one-third large enough to hold the people.

Plans have been made for a bank building, which we hope to have erected in 1924, and plans are also completed for a creamery. Plans are also made for a large garage and machine shop, to be built of brick, and indications point to the erection of twenty buildings in 1924 in the village.

Thirty new sets of buildings on the farms have been started since December 1st, several of which are now completed and plans are being made for several additional sets for late purchasers. When these buildings are completed a supplement to this booklet will be gotten out showing these new farm houses together with the buildings in the town of Hollandale.



First school house built in Hollandale Colony, on the west side, in 1923. Watch for the picture of the new \$30,000 school building now being erected in the town of Hollandale.

Hollandale, Minnesota



Mr. Henry Posthumus' Celery Farm

No. 1 shows a field of celery that cannot be excelled in any state in the union. Celery is making Hollandale more famous than beer ever made Milwaukee.

No. 2 is Mr. Posthumus' seven-room, all-modern home.

No. 3 is a party of young folks just starting for a boat ride on Lake Geneva, which borders Hollandale Colony on the west.

Mr. Posthumus had years of experience in raising celery at Kalamazoo, Mich. Read what he says about raising celery and other crops.

No Better Celery Soil

Hollandale, Minn., March 6, 1924.

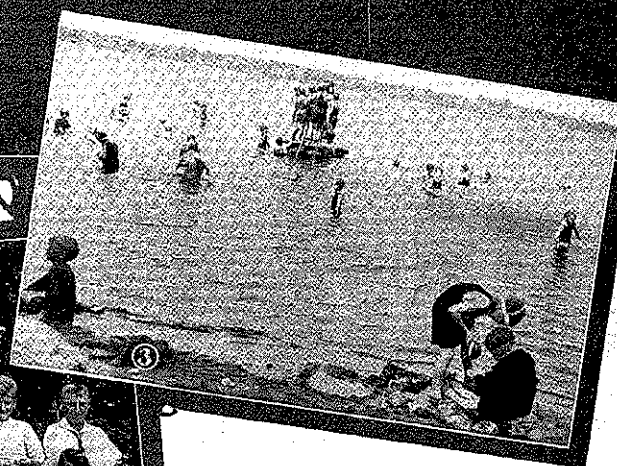
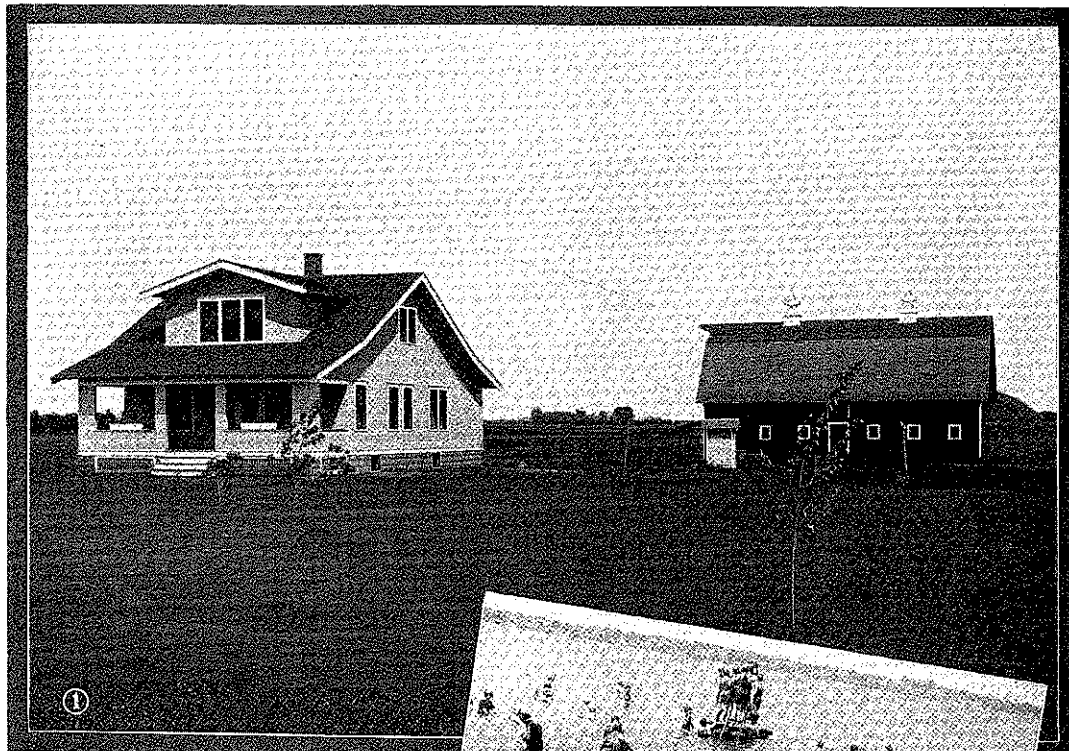
I moved to Hollandale last year from Kalamazoo, Michigan. I have a fine house with a flowing well in Hollandale and my celery land is right next to town. I have succeeded in raising a fine crop of celery and I find a ready market for all that I can grow, at fine prices.

I have never seen better soil for raising celery than the muck we have here at Hollandale. The community is building up fast and I find Hollandale a fine place to live.

I believe this will develop into one of the biggest celery growing districts in the country.

(Signed) HENRY POSTHUMUS.

Hollandale, Minnesota



No. 1—Mr. Hoogland's fine dwelling house and barn. Since this picture was taken, Mr. Hoogland has added a garage for two cars, a splendid hog house and an up-to-date poultry house. His house has hot and cold water, bath and electric lights. Water is piped to the building from a flowing well.

No. 2—Part of the Hoogland family, one of the boys being absent.

No. 3—Children bathing in Lake Geneva, which is only a mile from the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hoogland.

The Ideal Place

My first visit here was in August, 1923, and after thorough investigation, I was fully convinced that Hollandale was the ideal place for me to make my future home. I moved here in September, 1923, during the harvest of the crops, which I saw growing during my first visit and the yield of

each and every crop was far beyond my expectations. I surely can recommend Hollandale and honestly believe the man that is willing to do his part, will be very successful and prosperous. Come and see my crops in 1924.

(Signed) DIRK HOOGLAND.

Hollandale, Minnesota

Would Not Trade

Hollandale, Minn., March 6, 1924.

I have been here one year, and have raised a good crop of celery. I am a celery grower from Kalamazoo, Michigan. This is the best soil for raising celery, onions, cabbages, etc. I have had much experience in this line of work and know what kind of soil is best adapted to the above crops. Nowhere in Michigan can you find any better muck than we have here.

I know I will make out big here because we can raise celery of A-1 quality, and it brings the highest market price.

I am very well satisfied with my purchase here and I would not trade for any piece of muck land in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I recommend the Phyne Investment Company as a company who wants to do what is right. They are doing their best to make Hollandale the most attractive Holland settlement in America.

(Signed) HENRY VOSS.



No. 1—The land as it appeared in 1919, before reclaimed. No. 2—Mr. Voss' dwelling and barn.
No. 3—Mr. Voss in his celery field, July, 1923. Same location as No. 1.

Oeds Kuiper's 1882 Travels to Buffalo, New York

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

In Robert P. Swierenga's *Alphabetical List of Groningen Emigrants 1881-1901* there is an intriguing entry under the Ks. Kuiper, Oeds, age 17, NH (Dutch Reformed) no occupation, destination: Buffalo, New York. Who is this young man, and why is he going to America by himself?

Oeds Kuiper's immigration experience did not follow the usual pattern. First, there was the matter of his age. When Oeds left the city of Groningen, the Netherlands for Buffalo, New York in July 1882, he was only seventeen and still considered a minor. Second, unlike many of

And finally, he traveled steerage—not the expected place on board for a person of his class. What caused this youngster to set off on his own into the unknown? The circumstances leading up to his sojourn in Buffalo tell the story.

Oeds Kuiper was born on January 18, 1865, in Beerta, in the province of Groningen, the Netherlands, to Tonko Kuiper and Catharine de Leeuw. His mother's people, the de Leeuws, were well-to-do. Oeds's grandfather, Okke de Leeuw, managed Ennamaborg, a manored estate, just north of Winschoten in the



Castle, De Ennamaborg, front.

his compatriots who traveled with family or in-groups, Oeds traveled alone. Third, he belonged to a well-established, highly respected family, not the kind that usually emigrated.

province of Groningen. The Kuipers also belonged to the wealthy Groninger farming class. At the time of his marriage and Oeds's birth, Tonko Kuiper's occupation was listed

as farmer; however, by the time their second son Geert was born in 1868, the Kuipers had moved to the city of Groningen where Tonko listed his occupation as chief inspector of the grain import and export trade for the province. One more son, Okke, was born in 1881. Living in Groningen Catherine adopted the same lifestyle to which she had been accustomed while living at Ennamaborg, complete with a large home and a maid. That that kind of lifestyle required a hefty salary never occurred to her.

In April 1882 disaster struck the young family. Tonko Kuiper died suddenly leaving his wife a widow at

strongly discouraged by her family which seemed to regard working out and taking in boarders as being beneath their particular class. What to do? Concerned about the rental lease due that May, and which she could not pay, she rented a one-room apartment for ten guilders per month. To cut her living expenses still further she dismissed her maid and sold most of the expensive household items, such as her beloved piano and porcelain collection.

Women in Catherine's day and of her rank depended on the men in their life to support them—first their fathers, and then their husbands, and

totally unexpected source—America. Mr. Havinga, a business acquaintance of Tonko, lived in Buffalo, New York, where he was engaged in the grain business. Buffalo was at the time the largest grain port on the Great Lakes, with huge silos to store the grain. Businessmen from all over the world came to Buffalo to buy grain for their respective customers back home. It is not surprising that Oeds's father, being an inspector of import/export grains, would have an acquaintance in the United States. Upon hearing of Tonko's death, Havinga wrote to Catherine suggesting that if Catherine would allow Oeds to emigrate to America, he would take him in. Oeds could work in America learning the bookkeeping and accounting trade. Additionally, he would also send Oeds to high school for two years so that upon his return to Holland he would be able to support Catherine and his two younger brothers. Havinga was willing to supply Oeds's room and board for the two years, but Oeds had to pay his own way to Buffalo.

One can only imagine what an effect the news had on Oeds. The situation had seemed so hopeless after his father's death when suddenly an opportunity, not only for adventure but to help his family as well, opened up. Since Oeds was more than willing to go, plans for his emigration were immediately put into action. With an eye to economy, Catharine insisted Oeds travel steerage—a one-way ticket cost only 60 guilders, compared to a second-class ticket which cost 200 guilders. Barely three months after his father's death, in July 1882, Oeds Kuiper embarked on the *Edam* to America.

On August 2, 1882 he wrote to his grandfather de Leeuw at Ennamaborg that traveling steerage left a little something to be desired. It was probably his first interaction with the



City center of Groningen about 1920.

age forty-one. Although the family had lived well, there were no savings, and without Tonko's income Catherine was immediately reduced to poverty. In a time when welfare and social security were unknown, a penniless widow had no choice but to go to work or take in boarders. But Catherine still had baby Okke to care for, so working out was not an option. Besides, both options were

finally their sons. In Catherine's case, her father advanced her a 10,000-guilder loan, interest free, to meet her immediate expenses. But her son Oeds was still too young to support her. In fact, he was a drain on her budget—he not only took up room, but also still required large portions of food, not to mention clothes and education.

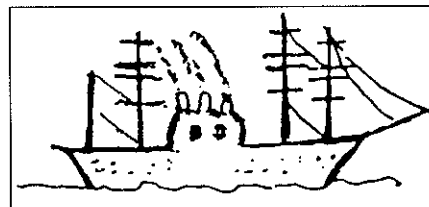
Help, however, arrived from a

hoi polloi of his country. He noted that the trip from New York to Buffalo only took twenty-four hours, but the bread he was given to eat was "as hard as peat and sour as duckweeds. We arrived here exceedingly tired," he added. He did not burden his mother with these observations. To her he wrote:

20 August 1882, Buffalo

Dear Mother, and Geert,

... Buffalo is a much larger city than Groningen. This city is approximately four hours (walking) in length, and more than three hours across. In New York right now the temperature is 106 degrees; in Chicago 112 degrees, while here in Buffalo it is 96 degrees. Here we are not suffering too much from the heat as there is almost always a refreshing breeze from the lake, but in Chicago it is stifling hot because that city is situated entirely in the mountains and hardly gets any wind. Yesterday Havinga bought a beautiful alarm clock, not a round one like you have, but a square one with a copper front, a steel back and with glass sides, and the whole thing for only three dollars. From about two to six o'clock yesterday afternoon I explored the city, walking the whole time. I have a map of the city in my pocket so that I cannot get lost, because on the map are all the street names and on the lantern posts are all the street signs. You knew already on Monday that the *Edam* arrived in New York on Saturday. A telegram sure is quick. The *Edam* is five hundred feet long. Mulder can tell you about how much that is. There was enough room for a thousand passengers and since there were only about 250, we had plenty of room. The weather was beautiful everyday so that I spent a great deal of my time on deck. A couple of times I saw flying fish. They are a rare sight. They are a bit bigger than herring, brown on top and white underneath. When we sailed through the channel between France and England we saw both coastlines with their cities and fishing villages. The channel teemed with boats, including very large ones which sail to the East Indies and Brazil. A few days before we arrived in New York we passed the second largest steamship in the



Sketch of the steamship described in Kuiper's August 20 letter.

world. It is 1200 feet in length, has four masts, three steam pipes and sails between New York and Liverpool carrying only first- and second-class passengers. This boat can do the journey in six days. We saw it loom up behind us on the horizon and after forty minutes it had disappeared

into the horizon in front of us, so you can imagine the speed of that ship. Here is a small sketch of what it looks like. I hope that you may receive this letter in good health and greet you all.

Your loving son,
O. T. K.

30 August 1882

Dear Mother, and Geert,

[After the usual opening statement he inquires after his baby brother Okke who seems to have been ill.] You wrote that he is not very robust. I hope that soon he will pick up and start growing. Life, on the whole, is more expensive here than in Holland, but earnings are higher here as well. Havinga earns fifteen dollars per week or rather sixty per month. Saturday we placed an advertisement for me in the paper for me to find employment in an office. Yesterday I could get a job in an iron foundry but we did not take that because it is very unhealthy and very heavy work. So, I hope that something will come of the advertisement. On Friday twelve men were lost due to a large grain elevator fire here. Five bodies have been found so far. Here in Buffalo we have electric lanterns along the main streets and they give just as much light as in Carree's horse shows and when those ladies danced afterwards. These lanterns are about eighty [eighteen?] feet high so one can see them at a great distance. The stores near these lights don't have to have their gas lights on because you can't see whether they have them on or not. With these electric lanterns it is just as light at night as a noon. Here in America you see the occasional Black person in the city and now and then you see an Indian or Redskin. The tavern keepers may not serve whiskey to the Indians because if they get drunk they act like wild men which the police have a hard time controlling. Such a tavern keeper could get a \$300 fine and a week in jail. We pay \$10 per month rent but then we have a house with three rooms and an upstairs.

The advertisement for work appeared in the *Buffalo Daily Courier* of August 28, 1882. It showed him living at 216 Locust Street. The *New York Times* of Friday, August 25,

Situations Wanted

Male

By a young man seventeen years of age in an office, to learn any business. The first two months no salary; writes a good hand and will make himself generally useful. O.K. 218 Locust Street

1882, carried the story of the explosion in the Erie Railway Elevator—Three Lives Lost, and the *New York Times* of Saturday and Sunday, July 28 and 29, 1882, report on the "torrid temperatures to which the city is exposed."

In spite of the newspaper advertisement, the office job was still not a reality in October, for in a letter to her father Catherine wrote, "Oeds will start high school in Buffalo in October so that he can learn English and Havinga is looking for an office job for him." She also mentioned that Geert had been enrolled in a trade school to learn carpentry. "He comes home very tired each evening with his hands and arms full of scratches. Little Okke's health remains poorly."

Any additional letters Oeds undoubtedly wrote have been lost. Although we do not know how long Oeds sojourned in America, we do know that he lived out his adult life

in the city of Groningen. His mother Catherine became ill and may have wished him to come home to support her. She passed away in 1893, only eleven years after her husband. Okke, the youngest child, died in 1899 at age 18. Back in the Netherlands, Oeds, like his brother Geert, learned the carpentry trade and on his marriage registration to Johanna Agatha Siertsma on the January 18, 1900, at age 34, he was listed as furniture maker. His youthful stay in America was only a distant memory. \$

Sources

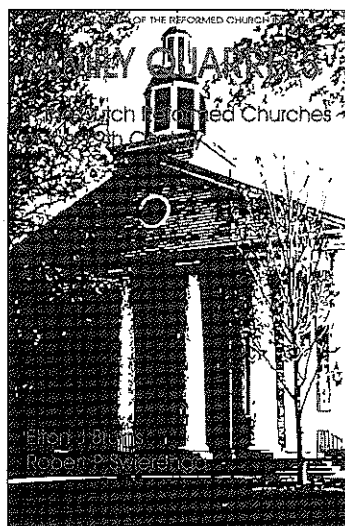
Private papers of the de Leeuw and Scuttevaer families, used with permission.

Civil registrations for the city and province of Groningen.

New York Times and *Buffalo Courier*.

Advertisement printed in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, August 28, 1882.

book notes



Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Churches in the Nineteenth Century

Robert P. Swierenga and Elton J. Bruins

The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, No. 32
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI
158 pages, \$18.00

In 1997 the lectures in this volume were sponsored by the Pillar Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, as a part of the sesquicentennial celebration of the founding of the Holland Settlement in 1847. Robert Swierenga and Elton Bruins, both affiliated with the A.C. Van Raalte Institute and Hope College, dedicated the scholarly presentations found here to their grandchildren whom they consider "... the future of the church." Swierenga's contributions include the Introduction, Lectures I and III, Bibliographic Essay, and the

Index. Extensive annotated footnotes accompany remarks made by both Swierenga and Bruins.

"1834—Afscheiding and Emigration" (Lecture I) contains Swierenga's detailed treatment of religious, social, and economic conditions which stimulated migration to America in the late 1840s and beyond. The seceders who broke away from the Hervormde Kerk during the years 1830-1856 were, he asserts, a quarrelsome lot made up of contending factions each with its own leader or leaders, often ministers, who personified the notions tenaciously held by all members of a particular group about such subjects as Calvinistic dogma, the true nature of the church, Christian conduct of life and the importance of the proclamations of the Synod of Dort held in 1618-19. To describe the religious and social characteristics of the two major seceder groups Swierenga writes the following candid and almost clever words:

The northern faction had steel in their bones while the southern party had rubber. p. 34

According to Swierenga, knowledge of the birth pangs of the Christian Seceded Church in the Netherlands formed by the Secession in 1834 is essential for those of us who wish to learn more about our seceder heritage because it constitutes an integral part of our past and present denominational strife. The Reformed Church, the Christian Reformed Church and kindred groups, though sharing an ever-present seceder heritage, embody a rich Reformed religious way of life in

America where even today members in these denominations face the never-absent challenges of assimilation and accommodation.

Found in "1857—Secession Again: Origins of the Christian Reformed Church" (III) are Swierenga's thoughts and those of other scholars he mentions concerning why some of the immigrants who came to Michigan considered the Reformed Church of the early 1850s an apostate church. Though Swierenga's stated purpose is to consider the 1857 Secession historically and not theologically, this is an almost impossible task. Swierenga's unraveling of history from theology makes a complicated narrative even more complex which for even the most scholarly reader, blurs the narrative a bit. Swierenga's synthesis of the elements contributing to the Secession include varying points of view held by immigrants about American culture, differing opinions of Van Raalte, and somewhat hazy suppositions about church polity as practiced during the very early years of the Holland settlement.

Add to these factors the problem of understanding just how regionalism in the Netherlands effected the immigrants' mindsets, together with an almost inbred penchant for schism and you may begin to understand the behavior of a pastor like Jacob Duim who carried notions of conventicle worship across the water and founded his own church at North Holland, Michigan. There he condemned both the CRC and the RCA. Swierenga echoes the thoughts of many scholars when he theorizes that

Americanization then and now among the adherents of each denomination explains many aspects of the secession impulse both before and after the 1857 secession. Nonetheless the chaotic religious ferment exhibited in the Colony's first ten years cannot be understood as a single rope of controversy leading to the formation of the Christian Reformed Church in 1857.

Among the final remarks in Elton Bruins's "1850—The Union of 1850: The Classis of Holland Joins the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church" (II) are the following which succinctly summarize his point of view.

The RCA has always considered that the union of the Classis of Holland with the Reformed Church in America in 1850 was a good move on the part of the Classis of Holland: it brought many benefits to the Holland colony, and the Holland Classis churches brought much to the RCA. p. 60

Though some may have considered this decision for union rather hasty, Bruins compares it to a domestic situation familiar to many of us. He writes,

One can always, of course, raise the question how long the courtship should have been between Classis of Holland and the RCA, just as we who are parents wonder how long our children should be in courtship before they marry. p. 58

Van Raalte, an ardent proponent of this union, is for Bruins a man of heroic proportions with few faults and with a thorough knowledge of the Reformed Church in the East. Immigrants arriving a few years after the initial founding of the Holland Settlement were not always overly fond of Van Raalte's leadership nor did they have a great deal of appreciation for the financial help the Reformed Church in the East had given the impoverished Holland Settlement during its very early years. After 1850,

and until almost recent times, the Reformed Church continued as a independent denomination. This, Bruins asserts, came about because those in the Reformed Church in the Midwest who are descendents of the Afscheiding had little desire to merge with other denominations. Perhaps their ecumenical coolness resulted from observing the consequences of the 1850 merger, i.e., the establishment of both Reformed and Christian Reformed congregations in virtually every Midwestern community.

Bruins traces the origins of Masonry in both Europe and America in "1882 Secession Yet Again: The Masonic Controversy" (IV). Also, he explains in detail why ministers in the Reformed Church in the East, often Masons themselves, had no theological problems with simultaneous lodge and church membership. The Masonic controversy tore apart the immigrant church in the West and many folk left the Reformed Church. To make matters worse for the Reformed Church, most new immigrants from the Netherlands who arrived during the era when this controversy flourished affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church. Old World theological hostility toward secret societies was the reason for their preference even though, as Bruins mentions, both Van Raalte and later Abraham Kuyper shared the same position concerning Masonry. Bruins asserts that for these two influential leaders, lodge membership and church membership were not incompatible, and he sums up the situation in this way,

It is also clear that if the CRC had not been organized in 1857, it would have been organized in 1882. By 1882 it was no longer possible to avoid a definite decision about what adaptation could be made to the American scene. The CRC insisted that its policy was the safest and purest. Americanization was to be resisted as much as possible in denominational life. It saw

accommodation to the American scene as a threat to its doctrinal position and purity as a denomination. p. 132-3

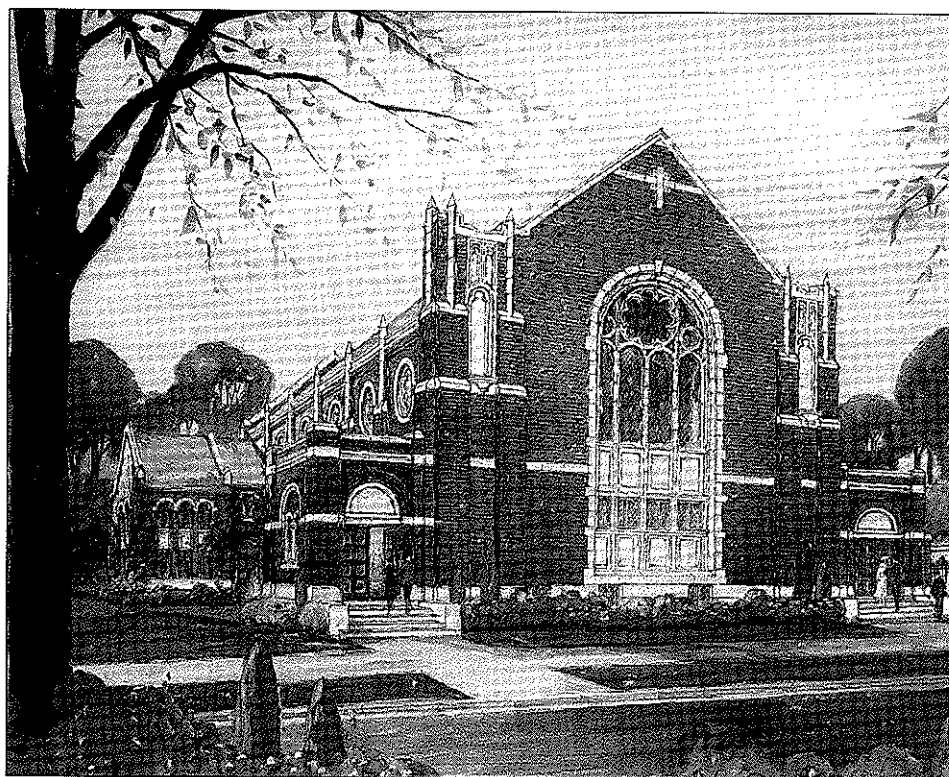
Because the Christian Reformed Church was more Dutch and isolationist it experienced a growth spurt during the last quarter of the nineteenth century which was a direct result of its opposition to lodge membership.

These illustrated scholarly lectures will appeal most to those who have previously studied or read about these denominational controversies, but there is food for thought here for anyone interested in Reformed denominational history. Still, this volume is not casual reading. The constant procession of relevant facts and lengthy annotated footnotes will challenge almost all readers. This volume will serve as both a source book and reference tool for anyone desiring to know more about what happened in the history of the two denominations. Bruins and Swierenga credit other scholars who, like themselves, have attempted to analyze the secessionist history of the two denominations. Even today the ministers and many of the parishioners of these denominations maintain some loyalty to their old-world inheritance and betray a lingering uneasiness about what it means to be Reformed in an increasingly overwhelming American cultural setting.

reviewed by Conrad Bult

for the future

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



Architect's drawing of Lombard, Illinois CRC.

Selections from J. Marion Snapper's
Memoirs

The Free Reformed Church by John Knight

Recollections of Bill Colsman

Day of Deliverance, March 30, 1945 by
Henry Lammers

*For the Humblest Worshiper: Architectural
Styles* by Richard Harms

*Odyssey of Lambert and Maria Ubels—
the Netherlands to California*

*Wilhelmina Bolier Pool's Whistlestops
1920s* by Janet Sheeres

*From Pella, Iowa to the California Gold
Fields* by Brian Beltman

Development of the Chinese CRC, by
Peter Szto

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