

## THE DINNER

(Prayer offered by the Rev. Charles Boonstra, Pastor  
First Reformed Church)

Fruit Cup

Tossed Salad      Rolls & Butter      Relishes

Stuffed Pork Chops

Escalloped Potatoes      Green Beans

Apple Pie

Coffee      Tea      Milk

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## THE PROGRAM

Master of Ceremonies      Gordon H. Curtis

Group Singing      Mr. Marvin Sloane

Acknowledgements      Mr. E. LeRoy Hand

Apocryphal Anecdotes and Timely Tales

Roberts Wesleyan Freshman Girls' Trio

Keynote Speech

"Tested in Open Competition"

Marion de Velder, A.B., B.D., D.D.  
Stated Clerk, Reformed Church in America

Group Singing

Benediction

Mr. David Anderson is our pianist

## OUR SPEAKER

Marion de Velder was born in Boyden, Iowa and is a graduate of our Central College and of New Brunswick Seminary. He was awarded a doctor's degree by Central College.

He has served churches in Philadelphia, Pa. and in Holland, Michigan before being called to the office of Stated Clerk of the Reformed Church - the highest executive office of our denomination.

He is listed in "Who's Who in America"

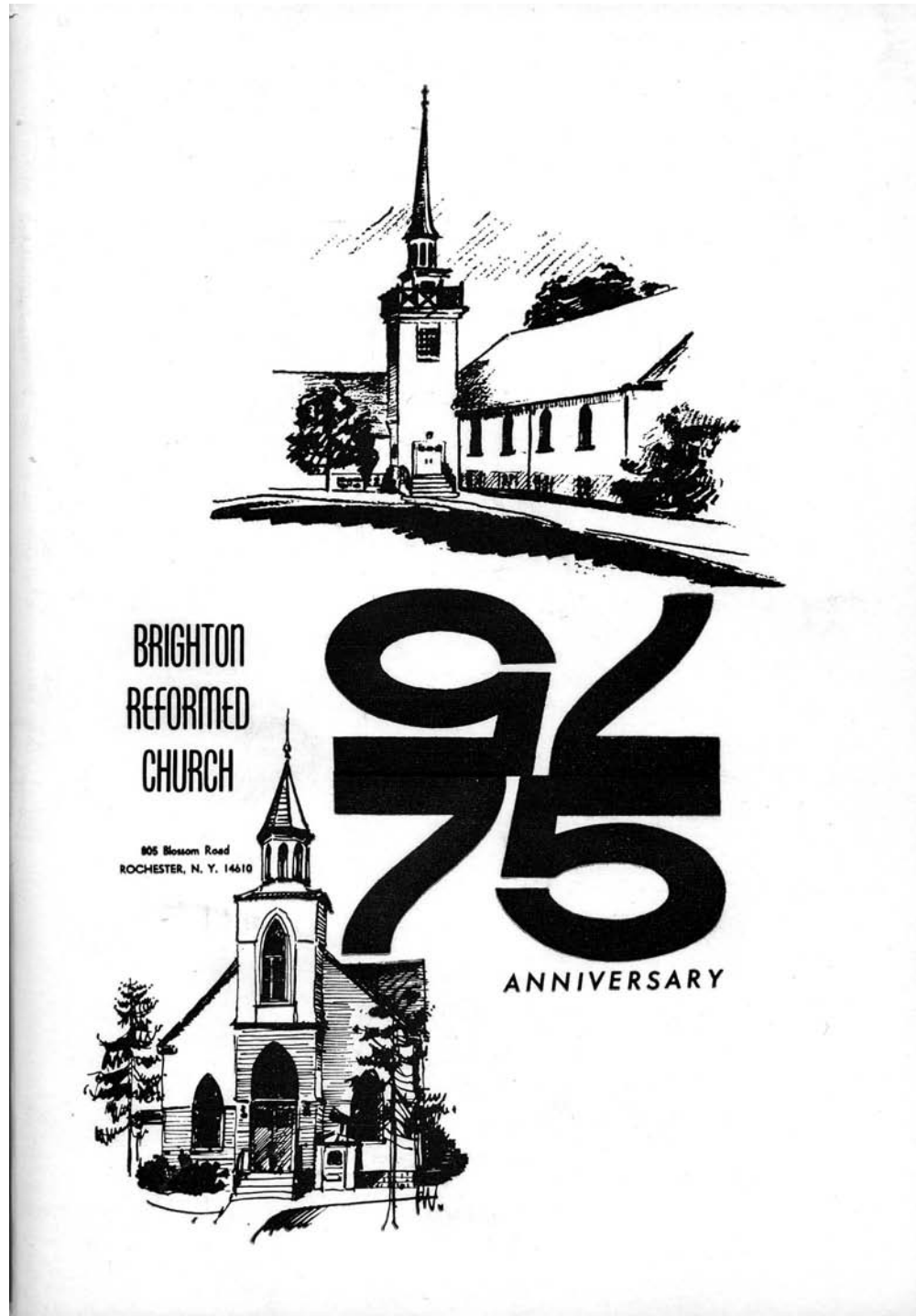
Presently Dr. de Velder represents us on the General Board of the National Council of Churches and in the World Council of Churches. He comes to us tonight from a World Council meeting at Buck Hill Falls, Pa.

He is a Rotarian, and served as president, International Convention, in 1946.

Widely travelled, Dr. de Velder has conducted tours to western Europe in 1960 and 1964 and was on a World Mission deputation in 1963 to Asia.

## A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF OUR HISTORY

Dec. 16, 1890	The Consistory of First Reformed Church received offer of land in Brighton.
Dec. 25, 1890	Elders selected lot on Blossom Road and Elm Park (now Arbordale)
July 4, 1891	Cornerstone was laid.
Nov. 15, 1891	Chapel was dedicated
Apr. 21, 1892	First Consistory elected and organized Church.
June 9, 1892	Fifty-five people, most of them from First Church, became the Charter Members of Brighton Reformed Church.
June 14, 1892	First congregational meeting held; women voted.
Oct. 1896	Church building added to Chapel.
1951	Fellowship Lodge first used.
Apr. 13, 1958	Ground-breaking for present building.
May 17, 1959	Church was dedicated.



# **A CHURCH GROWS IN BRIGHTON**

**Gordon H. Curtis**

**1967**



### THE CHAPEL

Built in 1892, at a cost of \$3300. This picture, the only one known to be in existence and given us by Mrs. Marion (Ubbink) Duffy, has never been published before this time.

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### EPILOGUE

*Cover Design by Mr. Peter Vogelaar*

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## PROLOGUE

This is the story of people, men and women who founded a church on the edge of a great and growing city. It is not history, in one sense, since the author does not claim to present an exhaustive, impartial and exact chronicle of events. Furthermore, a historian must be unbiased by interest, free from passion, devoid of affection for his subjects. This chronicle, therefore, cannot qualify as history for what pastor could write the story of his people and their families without love and affection?

Tacitus, one of the world's greatest historians, who recounted the history of Rome in the early Christian period (55 A.D. to about 120 A.D.) believed that the "office of history (was) to rescue virtuous actions from oblivion to which a want of records would consign them. . . ." This is the purpose of the present historical narrative.

The story hopefully will provide a perspective of events and people. It is necessarily selective. To record all events would be impossible while to overlook many is probable. The author must take full responsibility for that which is included and that which is omitted. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished. The great majority of events experienced by our people will be lost in the dimness of the past. Nevertheless, out of this perspective, lessons might teach us many things. We would earnestly hope that this account not only shines a light on the waves behind us but also illuminates the wide sea ahead of us.

The minutes of the Brighton Reformed Church were destroyed by the catastrophic fire that gutted a large part of the business section of Rochester on February 26, 1904. The Sibley Fire, known to some as "The Great Conflagration", leveled several buildings on Main Street, one of them being the old Granite Building where our records were kept.

It is believed that Mr. William Van OverBeeke, the Clerk of the first consistory, had been an elevator operator in that

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building and that he deposited the records there for safe keeping. With the exception of one book all records were lost. The lone surviving book contained the minutes of the first five consistory meetings, a laconic record in the Dutch. This book also contained the list of people who rented pews and the record of their rental payment.

The consistory, at a meeting held on March 18, 1904, expressed profound regret over the loss of the church records and, with commendable foresight, assumed it their duty to do everything possible to reconstruct the early history of the church before "those who are familiar with the interesting history of these early years will have passed away." Therefore the pastor, the Rev. D. L. Betten, was requested to write a history. He said, "While fully sensible of the difficulty and responsibility of such a task, I have, after receiving their promise of large help in the way of information especially concerning years before my pastorate, considered it my duty to cheerfully comply with this request."

The care and diligence with which he approached the task of recalling twelve years of the church life have provided us with a fine account of those first busy years.

The present pastor would simply echo these words of Rev. Betten. It was the wish of a few people to celebrate our 75th year with this publication since again it may be said that there are those witnesses whose memories ought to be recorded before they, too, have passed away. The writing of such a history is possible only when the very people involved are willing to share those years that cannot be retrieved.

I wish to acknowledge the large help that has been given by many of our people. They are too numerous to mention and, without being aware of it, many were helpful by simply sharing little snatches out of the past. Particularly we owe this work to the loving care given to it by Miss Sarah Cambier, Mr. Henry DeRoo, Mrs. William Dewitte, Mr. Isaac Hubregsen and Mr. E. LeRoy Hand. These people not only provided me with first-hand information but also talked with many other people who had an amazing amount of information in both mind and attic. News-

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paper clippings, old bulletins and obituaries assisted in making this narrative possible. I have read the minutes of the consistory from 1891 to 1960 and this was my primary source. Though by no means an easy task (for many of the minutes were handwritten), it has been rewarding. The mountain of minutes was beyond description. Attention to such matters as broken windows is not solely the function of deacons today; it has been their concern for 75 years! But behind all this mammoth amount of detail are concerns of deep and lasting importance to us who follow our forefathers and who enjoy the fruits which they did not live to enjoy themselves.

For any errors in fact and for any editorial comments inserted, I take full responsibility. My informants have been very faithful, but it has been necessary for me to select and reject material to be incorporated in this narrative. No one but the author can be responsible for what is used or not used. The work of this church has been the concern of hundreds of people. Who can say one is more important than another? Certainly not I. But there are some individuals who appear to have been outstanding leaders in past years whose names must be mentioned in such an account. Undoubtedly there are others whose names are not mentioned. All that can be said is that it would be impossible to assess the faithfulness of all those people who have brought the Brighton Reformed Church to its present situation. If those men who are mentioned in this story were living they would be the first to acknowledge the faithfulness of literally hundreds of men and women in this work of building the church of Jesus Christ in this community.

Here, then, is our story. The writing of it has been rewarding beyond measure. I hope the reading of it will likewise be rewarding.

Gordon H. Curtis  
Rochester, New York

November, 1966

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## CHAPTER ONE

# From Zuyder Zee to Tappan Zee

One cannot relate the history of our church without an understanding of the movement of people and the events they experienced in our nation's early years. An institution like the church never simply walks upon the stage of history to take its place in the drama of men's lives. Brawn and brain, sacrifice and struggle have moved behind the stage-set of the church's visible presence. This fact is particularly true of the Reformed Church which has had the longest continuous ministry in this country.

Where did we begin? What are the roots from which we get our strength? They are many. There is that night of Halloween in the year 1517 when Martin Luther posted his famous ninety-five theses on the Cathedral door at Wittenberg, Germany. This might be thought of as the event which sparked the Reformation that burst upon the world. Across the Rhine from Germany in the little land of Switzerland, a Zurich pastor by the name of Ulrich Zwingli preached in the Cathedral. In his formative years Zwingli began to develop his own ideas that led him to a Reformation position. The rebellion against the Roman Church had begun.

By the year 1535, the Protestant cause in Europe was precarious indeed. For one thing, those who adhered to the Reformation were overwhelmingly out-numbered; for another thing, the reform movement itself was seriously divided with its internal conflicts. And again, like many movements of social and religious change, the reformation was taken up by extremists who, in their wild excesses, brought the whole movement into disrepute. The chief reason for the disarray of the reformation forces was that no one, up to that time, had carefully thought out the great truths for which the Reformation contended. John Calvin, a law student with an inclination toward theology, began to formulate a systematic statement of reformed principles. In 1536 his Institutes of the Christian Religion appeared. This great work became the touchstone of

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Protestant theology, unifying the whole movement to a degree never before attained. Calvin worked and studied in Switzerland whose capital city, Geneva, was considered the birthplace of the Reformation.

The country of our origin was known by a number of names. Sometimes it was called the Low Countries, or the Netherlands; sometimes it was called Holland. More accurately this was really the name of the western-most province. At the time of the Reformation the Netherlands also included much of what is now Belgium. Not properly a country at all, it was seventeen separate provinces attached to the Spanish crown, a complicated story of numerous marriage arrangements that placed these provinces under Spanish rule. The custom of royal marriages will not concern us here. The important point was that the Netherlands was ruled by Spain when Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were fanning the flames of religious rebellion. Holland, however, did not get excited about this religious furor as did her neighbors. The truth is that the Dutch were as solidly Roman Catholic as any nation in Europe when the Reformation dawned. The Spanish rule was benevolent and the traditional Dutch conservatism would partially explain their disinterest. Beyond this, however, was the fact that the Netherlands was enjoying a high degree of prosperity. Historically, prosperity does not breed religious revolt. The *status quo* was much too precious to risk. Furthermore the Church in Holland was enlightened far beyond any other country of Europe. Great churchmen had worked for many years to eliminate the excesses of the Church so there was little popular interest in revolt.

The growth of Protestantism in Holland was initiated by the Anabaptists, the extremists of the Reformation. One of their leaders, Menno Simons, a native of the northern province of Friesland, was a man of high repute. Destruction overtook the Anabaptist movement in 1534 but Menno Simons undertook a reorganization along more conservative lines. The Mennonite churches are his prodigy today.

A curious fact of our history was that the Reformation in Holland started not in the homeland but among Dutch refugees in Germany and England. The last churches to become Protes-

tant were those in the homeland. Emperor Charles of Spain, alarmed with the growth of Protestantism in Germany, issued several edicts designed to root it out. The Dutch, who could, escaped by the thousands, chiefly to London where they were granted freedom to worship as they pleased. It was on July 13, 1550 that King Edward of England took these Dutch refugees under the protection of the royal crown. This Dutch Church in London continued to worship in that city until the bombardment of 1940 destroyed the building.

Thus the first Dutch Reformed Church was organized in London, not Holland! At this time another group of refugees organized a small congregation in Frankfort, Germany.

As John Calvin's work began to make itself felt throughout Europe, and as the movement began to achieve stability, its proponents appeared in the Netherlands, first among French-speaking Netherlanders known as Walloons. The number of congregations grew sufficiently to warrant the holding of a Synod in Antwerp, in 1563. By 1566 a confession of faith, the Belgic Confession, had been framed and accepted as the standard of the faith, today our most important doctrinal statement.

The Reformed faith began to spread slowly in the Low Countries. In the northern part open-air services were held in the fields and Protestant worship began to pass into the hands of the Reformed Churches. As the numbers of the faithful grew, persecution by the Spanish authorities also increased, soon bringing oppression and death. The gruesome Inquisition came to Holland. The jails were full and the executioners busy night and day. Anyone hearing a sermon, anyone singing a Psalm, anyone giving a preacher lodging was considered a Protestant and therefore punishable by death. It is reliably said that one hundred thousand people lost their lives under this Spanish reign of terror.

Meanwhile the struggle for independence was led by William, Count of Orange-Nassau. His invasion of the Netherlands in 1568 marked the beginning of a long struggle which resulted finally in the establishment of the Dutch Republic and the Dutch Reformed Church. William's original intent was simply to rid the land of the Spanish Duke of Alva, at whose hands his people had

suffered. However, it soon appeared that only complete political and religious freedom would remove the heavy oppression. Out-numbered but not out-spirited, the Dutch fought bitterly. By 1576, the Spaniards were willing to yield all claims and full independence was granted in 1609.

By this time the fight for political freedom had become inextricably linked with the fight for the Reformed faith. The Reformed Church was one of the few institutions that would not yield to Spain, so more and more the Dutch people began to swell its ranks. With the removal from Dutch soil of the Inquisition, the Reformed Church could now be fully organized.

William of Orange, whose crest had been adapted as the crest of the Reformed Church, was a man of broad vision. He wanted complete freedom of conscience for his country. He wished Holland to be a haven for the religiously oppressed of all Europe. He never desired the Reformed Church, of which he was now a member, to assume an attitude that would deny others their liberty of conscience. As someone once very aptly said, "He feared lest the Reformed pot, if it hung over the fire as long as the Roman Catholic had, would become just as full of soot!" At the height of his powers, William was assassinated in 1584.

With the coming of peace to the Netherlands, prosperity returned even in greater abundance than before. Dutch seamen sailed over all the world. Trade brought the guilders in, and exploration brought great new lands of unimaginable wealth to the attention of the tiny country.

Of particular interest to us is the story of an English sailor in the service of the Dutch. This seaman, Henry Hudson, set out to discover a northwest passage to China by way of Greenland. He sailed from Amsterdam on April 4, 1609, reaching the coast of Maine three months later in the Dutch ship, **Half Moon**. Still looking for a shortcut to China, he cruised southward along the New England shore, rounded Cape Cod and glided up Delaware Bay which he soon decided was not the place he was seeking. He turned northward again searching for a vast and mysterious river which had been described by the Indians whom he had met. On September 3, 1609 the **Half Moon** anchored inside

Sandy Hook and spent a week cruising among the waterways. Captain Hudson suddenly found himself entering the mouth of the great river that now bears his name. Another month was spent in exploring the Hudson River and gathering furs from the Indians. The **Half Moon** returned to Amsterdam with favorable reports of the land which they had seen and Dutch merchants hastened to send ships to investigate the possibilities of a new fur market.

By 1614, six years before the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, the Dutch were building cabins along the Hudson and East Rivers in New York. However, they had come as traders not as permanent settlers. They were granted exclusive rights by the Dutch government to establish trading-posts within the area explored by Captain Hudson in 1609. A fortified village named New Amsterdam had sprung up on the shore and a shipload of Dutchmen had ventured up the Hudson as far as the present city of Albany where they established another village and trading-post which they called Fort Orange.

In 1623 the ship **New Netherlands** brought some thirty families of Walloons to settle in the promising farmlands on Long Island. That same year 18 families founded the settlement at Fort Orange. By this time Dutch settlers were working westward from the Hudson River into the Delaware and Mohawk valleys, and Dutch trappers were making unrecorded ventures into the wilderness even farther west. The journal of Wentworth Greenhalgh of Albany showed that he had visited the Seneca Country in 1667 and he described the location of the village of Totiakton which is near the present Rochester Junction in the township of Mendon, Monroe County.

In 1664 the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, being hard-pressed by invading forces of British troops, determined upon a general surrender. Although the English took possession of the Dutch colony, they did not take away the Dutch names nor erase the Dutch characteristics common by long establishment in the communities of the Hudson, Mohawk, Delaware and Susquehanna valleys. In 1621, the governor of the English colony of New York dispatched a detachment of troops to build a fortified trading-post at the head of Irondequoit Bay and to bolster up the fur trade with the Seneca villages. Captain Peter Schuyler,

Jr. headed this select party. With him were Jacon and Gilley Verplanck, Johannis Van der Bergh, Peter Gronendyck and David Van der Heyden and others. It is not clear what route Captain Schuyler's party took from Albany to Indian Landing. The canoe trail from Albany to the western wilderness led through the Mohawk River to Rome and thence to Oneida Lake. Two routes were available to them at that point; one by the Oswego River and Lake Ontario to Irondequoit Bay; the other was almost due west, by the Seneca and Clyde Rivers to Mud Creek which was then navigable for canoes and flatboats as far as Canandaigua Lake.

The party remained at Irondequoit for only one year. The spot selected for the Schuyler blockhouse was at Indian Landing in the present Ellison Park. It was on a small plateau overlooking the landing which marked the head of canoe navigation in Irondequoit Bay and was also at the northern end of "the grand portage" or carrying place that led to the Seneca villages of Honeoye and Victor. The blockhouse, built of squared logs, the ground and upper floors pierced with loopholes from which its defenders could pour rifle fire, was a stout place for defense and also a safe warehouse for their stock of furs.

Captain Schuyler's party and another one that followed him in 1772 under Major Abraham Schuyler did not remain long in the Seneca country. The temper of the Iroquois Indians and the conditions that existed following the French and Indian Wars and the American Revolution caused Western New York to remain a wilderness until the end of the 18th century. For many years the site of Rochester, on the Genesee River, was considered French territory.

Meanwhile, during this time of the early 1700's the Reformed Church grew steadily and quietly. This successful growth was responsible for one great issue that arose between the immigrants from Holland. The formation of new congregations inevitably demanded more ministers. Where could they be found? There were no colleges or seminaries in America where they might be trained, and there was no ecclesiastical power in the new world that could ordain them. The Classis of Amsterdam (of the old country) still controlled the American churches. Ministers had to be educated in Holland, ordained there, and

sent to America by the Holland Classis. If a church in America wanted a minister, the consistory had to correspond with the Classis of Amsterdam and perhaps in a couple of years they might find a man on their doorsteps, Bible in hand and worldly possessions at his feet, ready to preach in the pulpit the next Sunday! This, of course, was a long and arduous way of getting a minister; and the man would most likely have no idea of colonial conditions or how to meet the needs of a new congregation of Dutch people in an English-speaking country.

A reaction against this cumbersome procedure brought about an association of American churches of the Dutch Reformed faith, called the **Coetus** (see-tus). In 1747, the Classis of Amsterdam granted full ecclesiastical powers, including ordination. Though there appeared to be little opposition to this move among the ministers in America, within a year the church became quite agitated all over again. Each application for ordination was treated differently. Soon it became apparent that the **Coetus** was more advisory than juridical, the Classis of Amsterdam still holding the ultimate authority. When two young men drowned at sea on the long trip back to Holland for ordination, dissatisfaction erupted again. This time intensified effort was made to form an American classis. The sixty-odd churches in America approved the plan and presented a strongly-worded case for its approval in Holland. Everyone fully expected overwhelming support when, suddenly, a new division among the American Dutch arose.

The largest and strongest congregation in New York City rejected the **Coetus** plan. Though its minister, Domine Ritzema, originally favored the **Coetus**, he now had a change of mind. It was assumed that the first project for the new classis would be the building of a college and seminary. Ritzema, caught between the pressures of the Presbyterians and Episcopalians both of whom sought the favor of the Dutch Reformed Church to support their new schools, did not favor a new school. The Episcopalians offered the possibility of a Dutch professorship in theology in their new school as a reward for Dutch support. Though the college was created, now Columbia University, the proposed chair of Dutch divinity in the New York college never materialized.

However the damage was done and the Dutch Reformed Church went through another agonizing period of struggle and divisiveness. Ritzema's friends who wanted to retain allegiance to the old Classis of Amsterdam met in conference from time to time (from which first came their name, the **Conferentie**). They absented themselves from meetings of the **Coetus**. The effect was tragic. At the very time when there was a clamor for English services, the Reformed Church was split into two opposing groups. Some congregations adhered to the new **Coetus**; others joined the **Conferentie**. In one New Jersey city there were two ministers, two consistories and two congregations meeting in the same building!

The **Coetus** acted with increasing independence of Holland. It finally succeeded in obtaining a charter in 1766 from the Governor of New Jersey and in 1770 a college was organized in New Brunswick called Queens College. Today it is the state educational institution, Rutgers University. Time was on the side of the **Coetus** but much bitterness clung to the church to make this an unhappy period.

By 1760 the Reformed Church was nearly one hundred and forty years old. A century had passed since the colonies had been taken over by English rule and the Dutch language was only a memory to most people. Nevertheless, the church persisted in conducting her services in that language; and because the language was incomprehensible to younger people and their children, the Reformed Church lost many families particularly to the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches. The introduction of English preaching in New York in 1764 was accompanied by a long, expensive lawsuit whose purpose it was to prevent English being spoken in church services. An indication of how long and deep a struggle this was, is clear from an entry in the Minutes of the Classis of Geneva which said —

"Resolved that it be recommended and urged upon the Holland Churches connected with this Classis to introduce preaching in the English language as rapidly as the circumstances of their Holland members will admit."

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This action was dated, October 4, 1853, nearly 100 years after the New York skirmish!

By 1772 a plan of union had been developed which had universal approval and the Reformed Church in America (as it now was called) anticipated steady growth and expansion in a ministry that would meet the needs of a Dutch people in a new land. Unfortunately another grave threat erupted, but this time the circumstances were beyond the control of the church.

In 1775 the American Revolution broke out, and many of its battles were fought in New York and New Jersey. A majority of the Dutch clergy were loyal to the American cause, therefore many had to flee. Churches were destroyed by moving armies and, in many places, the English simply took over the churches as supply depots and stables. In these critical years much church life was suspended; in some cases, congregations did not meet even on Sunday.

Once the American Revolution had burned itself out and peace settled over the troubled land, there followed a great westward migration. The wilderness of the west began to see large numbers of families moving through on their way to the promised land.

Some immediately started up their own business. Dutch names appearing in the Rochester Directory of 1827 were Viele Kierulff, grocer, Carroll Street; John Rynhart and C. A. Van Slyck, carpenters, Buffalo Street; Joseph and Samuel Van Schuyver, coopers, Washington Street; George Van Ness, wheelwright, Clinton Street; and John Van Order, laborer, Market Street.

Just prior to 1840, Jan Cappon came to western New York and made his home in Pultneyville. He and Jacob Puybrook became so enthusiastic over the possibilities of this region as a farming country that they wrote a number of letters to their friends and acquaintances in Kadzant, Holland, which resulted in "the latter immigration of 1840-1845." Conditions existing in Holland at that time tended to encourage the people to come to these American farmlands. The State Church was conducting a policy of oppression against non-conforming groups. The wounds of their own earlier oppression apparently had so healed as to cause them to forget the wishes of William of Orange. Already

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the pot had hung over the fire as to become "full of soot." Also the Napoleonic Wars, just drawn to a close, had left a restless condition that wars always leave in their wake. Many Hollanders had an urge to escape from the net of military conscription that continually awaited their sons. A large group of Cappon's friends and admirers finally took ship to America, came up the Hudson River to Albany, then traveled by the Erie Canal to Lyons and Rochester. They settled in the East Williamson area and along East Ridge Road. About 150 people disembarked at Rochester. Some who found their way into the church life of the Reformed Church were, Luitweiler, Meulendyke, Van de Werf, Van Hee, Van Horn, De Mallie, Van Curan, Van Buren, Van Arsdale, Van Doorn, De Yongh, Van Alstyne, Willink, Hallings, Pike, De Witt, Hopeman, Van Nest, and Zonneville.

The year 1872 marked the high water mark of immigration from Holland. This "second Dutch immigration" largely established itself in Michigan and Iowa. A group of churches in Michigan organized themselves into a Classis of Holland and, in 1850, were united with the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. Not all the Dutch people in the mid-nineteenth century regarded union with the Reformed Church in America favorably. They dreaded the possibility of "Americanization" and feared that they would lose much of their prized heritage. These people, who reflected the divisions in the Mother Church in the Netherlands, chose to continue the same divisions in the New World. Thus the present Christian Reformed Church was organized by people who didn't desire to be assimilated into the emerging American culture.

It might be observed that the Christian Reformed Church, grew stronger in the mid-west, than in the east. A Christian Reformed Church was organized in Rochester and a building was erected at Chatham Street. In 1877 the True Dutch Reformed Church established a work called Ebenezer. Later, in 1890, this small denomination merged with the Christian Reformed Church. Though similar in doctrine this branch of the Dutch Reformation believed intensely in the church's responsibility for the education of its children. A parochial school system was built by these Reformed Churches, complying with state laws governing the teaching standards of the public schools.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Robust Rochester Before 1890

The process of building the city of Rochester in the wilderness was too all-absorbing to leave energy for pursuit of the higher life. At the close of the Revolutionary War in 1783 most churches, including the Dutch Reformed Church, found themselves in a weakened condition. The Bishop Provost of the Protestant Episcopal Church laid down his functions in 1798 not expecting that church to continue much longer. The Methodist Episcopal Church, from 1793 to 1796, lost 4000 members per year. Anti-Christian propaganda flooded the country from France as a direct result of the French Revolution. Americans were deeply appreciative of the French contributions in pursuing the war with England, and furthermore they were attracted to French ways of life. Like a contagion, anti-clerical, anti-church feeling spread throughout the land from its European origin in a subtle, never violent, manner.

In the 30 years after the close of the Revolutionary War, a great testing time confronted all the Christian churches. Accustomed to state support in the old country, they had to learn to sink or swim as a voluntary, self-supporting institution. The final victory for a free church was won in New England with the establishment of Congregationalism. The spirit of the free church, while cherished very deeply in the 19th century, was to become, in the 20th century, a problem for churches of the Reformed faith.

The constant influx of new immigrants added new layers of theological and church opinion. Rochester was not spared the phenomenon of sectarianism that spread. Denominationalism, as we know it today, was well established before Rochester became a community. The Genesee region remained a wilderness for some time, the development of civilization in Western New York being very slow. Two reasons explain this. The Dutch Patroons of the Hudson Valley would not sell their large land holdings outright. This caused settlers to go much farther west or into Pennsylvania. A second factor in the slow development of this

area was the tenacity of the Iroquois Nation in refusing to give up "their country." In 1803 Canandaigua had the only United States Post Office in the Genesee region. Western New York was an isolated inland wilderness while over a million Americans were already west of the mountains in Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Rochesterville (incorporated as a village in 1817 and named Rochester in 1822) developed as a manufacturing city only when a way was found to harness the Genesee River as a source of power.

The first settlers brought religion to Rochester. In 1813 the first public religious service was held when the community boasted only 15 people. At a meeting in 1815 a group of people voted to organize a church. Five voted for a Presbyterian Church and two for a Congregational Church. This was a momentous decision for this city since, in the years that followed, Rochester became a very strong Presbyterian community almost to the exclusion of Congregationalism. This Presbyterian strength had its effect on our Dutch churches for, by the time the Dutch settled in Rochester, they found strong Presbyterian churches already ministering to the community. They chose to associate with these churches. Many of the early Dutch families who were to become influential citizens of Rochester in both its business and political life are still Presbyterians. Because the strength of Presbyterians in Rochester was related to the story of our Dutch churches which were to follow, it might be well briefly to sketch the growth of churches which preceded us by 50 years.

First Presbyterian Church dedicated a new stone church on the site of the present City Hall in October 1824. In 1869 it was destroyed by fire and moved to the present location on Plymouth Avenue and Spring Street. The new church was dedicated in 1872.

"First Church" became the mother of seven churches and the direct ancestor of most Presbyterian churches in this area. Eleven mayors of Rochester were members of First Church. Several ministers rose to local community leadership. But the teachings of Calvin and Knox were not long to be preached

solely from these pulpits. Brighton Congregational Church (now Brighton Presbyterian) was started in the village of Brighton on the present site of the small Brighton Cemetery at Hoyt Place. Later, when this church was destroyed by fire, a move was made to the present East Avenue location. Second Church came into existence in 1825, when a few members were unwillingly dismissed from First Church. The group could not decide on a location for the new church, so some went west of the Genesee River to organize Second Church; and some to the east side of the river to found Third Presbyterian. Second Church was weakened by internal troubles but a revival in 1830 brought new strength and the church was reorganized as the Brick Presbyterian Church.

In this same period, the Protestant Episcopal Church was busy organizing historic St. Luke's which soon "mothered" a second church, the present St. Paul's Episcopal Church on East Avenue. One prominent leader of St. Paul's Episcopal Church was Rev. John Visger Van Ingen, both of whose parents were Dutch.

The Baptists, too, were not idle in bringing their churches into Rochester, though their work was slower. Conservative and without social standing in the beginning, their growth was overshadowed by the prosperous Presbyterians and the multiplying Methodists. The Presbyterians provided a spiritual home for the men who built the city's official life; the Episcopalians, a home for leaders in the professional and business world; and the Baptists, a home for the great educators and intellectual leaders of the city. Such distinctions are now, of course, largely lost.

The story of the growth of the early churches would be incomplete if we ignored the revival spirit that swept over Western New York as the wilderness began to open up and as the numbers of settlers grew. The religious revival is essentially an American technique of propaganda, i.e., a systematic scheme or concerted movement to propagate the doctrines of the faith. Extensive revivals swept Central and Western New York as early as 1800, but "the Great Revival," during the years of 1816 and 1817, were "peculiarly years of the right-hand of the Most High." It was said forty-nine churches had revivals of power in those years. Again in 1831 there were "extraordinary displays of the power

and grace of God." It was during this year that Rev. Charles G. Finney brought to Rochester his most successful campaign.

This revival ran on for four years. The Methodists built a house of worship that would seat 2000 people, or one-fifth of the population! St. Luke's Episcopal also built to seat 1200 people, or about one-sixth of the population. Western New York came to be known as "burnt over" territory, a fact that some churchmen believe affected the churches for many years to come. Much criticism arose against the message and methods used by the evangelists. One of the points of strong criticism was the status granted women who led in prayer and even addressed exhortations to the congregations. This, it was said, was contrary to apostolic precept. In the light of present day practice of ordination of women they were just 150 years too early! Such has often been the case that heresies of one age become the orthodoxy of a later age!

Although a kindly reception was offered the immigrant Hollanders by the strong established Presbyterian Churches in Rochester, the unfamiliarity with the English language and local custom naturally led the Dutch to consider organizing their own churches where the Dutch language would be spoken and preserved. Messrs. A. Zwemer, J. Van Doorn, H. De Yongh were instrumental in forming the First Dutch Reformed Church in Rochester. This group held its meetings in a room over a blacksmith shop on Allen Street near State Street. The Rochester Directory of 1851 called this group the Holland Presbyterian Church. Later the congregation moved to another building on Atwater Street (now Central Avenue) where a school was conducted for the children of the church members. In 1868 the church again moved to Harrison and Oregon Street where it remained until April, 1904—the year of the great Sibley fire which destroyed a large section of the business section of Rochester. The First Church, although located a half mile away, caught fire from an ember that lofted into the air, drifted, and fell on the shingled roof of the frame building. The church was completely destroyed. Thus was settled an issue that long had bothered these Dutch people for they had considered how to dispose of this old church. Now the matter of decision was made

for them—they had to re-locate! They chose East Main and Alexander Street, the present site of First Church.

The close of the Civil War precipitated the most rapid material development of our nation's history. Rochester was to participate fully in all aspects of the Reconstruction Period. Exploitation was universally accepted. The big corporation was devised and given the right of way. Restraint was tossed aside. A fortune was to be made by men who had the energy and ability to do it. One writer called the years following 1865 "the most shameful decade in American history . . . a moral collapse without precedent." But action brings reaction. Soon there was to be seen the faint beginnings of liberalism which invaded the influential pulpits of Rochester. The chief proponent of the "social group" was Walter Rauschenbusch, a professor at the Rochester Seminary. The Prohibition Party appeared as a reaction to the widespread liquor traffic. The Women's Christian Temperance Union followed in 1874. This issue was to loom large in the life of all the churches right up to the beginning of the 20th century. The women began to agitate and in 1872 Susan B. Anthony was spectacularly active in Rochester pushing for women's voting privileges.

The church was not silent in these years. Rochester had a substantial number of effective preachers who helped to pilot the city through this most difficult period. Among these outstanding men one was the Rev. P. De Bruyn, pastor of the First Reformed Church from 1873 to 1891, most of the early Reconstruction period. Rev. De Bruyn was instrumental in starting the work in Brighton.

The **Union and Advertiser** of October 23, 1873 carried a small news item of an "expensive sale of real estate." J. G. Klinck, acting as an agent for a colony of Hollanders, purchased about 400 acres of farmland along the historic Landing Road, near the lost city of Tryon. For the price of \$30,000 the farms of Aurelia Crittenden, T. A. Crittenden, Philip Myers, Samuel Pike and Warren White, were acquired for some immigrants. The news item was quite vague—"How many persons comprise this colony of Hollanders we have not learned but they are evidently provided with the shining dollars." The article went on to say that the first group of Hollanders were expected in February, 1874.

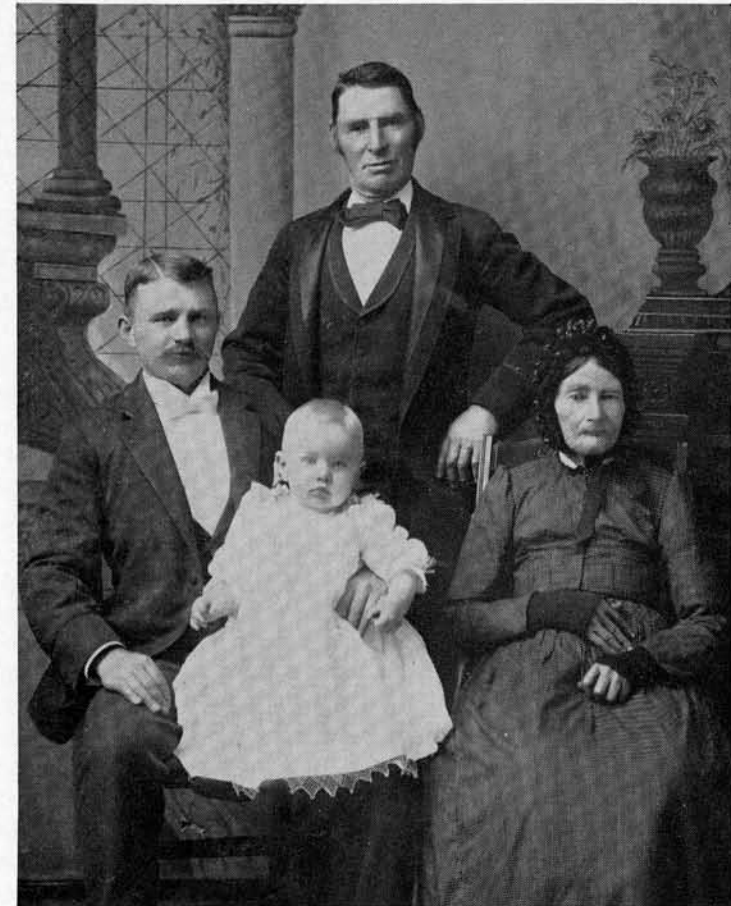
According to census statistics the Dutch population in the city of Rochester doubled in the years between 1865 and 1890, about the time when our church was founded. However, in the village of Brighton, the Dutch population was considerably larger. Monroe County statistics indicated a population of 1511 Hollanders in 1890.

One chronicler referred to the period 1881 to 1903 as the age of the laymen and youth. This period covered the formative years of our Brighton Reformed Church.

The tiny village of Rochester by 1880 had grown to a city of 90,000. The nation had passed the 50 million mark by 1880. Where one hundred years earlier 90 percent of the population were farmers, now, in 1890, only 30 percent were "down on the farm." They were feeling this change and began to rebel against the dominance of the city and of business. The industrial revolution was no mere dream. Great corporations were "riding high in the saddle." Wage earners, too, were in revolt. Violent riots sprang up over the land, climaxed by the Haymarket riots in Chicago. The American Federation of Labor, in 1890, took over the leadership of the labor movement. The temperance movement again made an attempt to curb the increasing liquor traffic, but the capital invested in this business carried the day, and the sale of liquor went on unabated. In the next thirty years, investment in the liquor business increased six hundred percent. Small wonder the records of most of our churches were so strongly anti-saloon! John Barleycorn became the Beelzebub against whom the pulpits inveighed so emotionally. Yet, the church's resistance to social evils of the age was timid and weak. On the whole capitalism became the gospel. Business men were put forward in church leadership. Though the means by which they gained their wealth was not sanctified, nevertheless their money found its way into sanctified uses. Rich laymen gave to hospitals, churches, Y.M.C.A.'s and libraries. Having money was *prima facie* evidence that they were fit to be leaders of nearly any group from trustees of colleges to treasurers of missionary societies. It was the heyday of business.

Possibly as a reaction to this godliness of fortune, perhaps as a reaction to the timidity of the orthodox churches, the na-

tion saw the beginnings of no less than twenty-five holiness denominations. In Rochester this reaction took form in the Elim Churches, the Megiddo Mission and the Bethel Full Gospel Church, a child of the evangelist Aimee McPherson.



FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE HALLINGS FAMILY - Rokus (standing) with his mother; son, Matthew; and grandson, Roy.

The laymen were not the only ones heard from in this period for the young people began to make their presence known in the churches. The Christian Endeavor, as we know it, originated in the Williston Congregational Church of Portland, Maine, in February 1881 by the Rev. Francis E. Clark, starting as a "debating society" for young people in the church. Its aim was "to promote an earnest, Christian life among its members, to increase their mutual acquaintance and to make them more useful in the service to God." It was expected that all members of the society would attend prayer meetings regularly each week; and once a month "an experience meeting" would be held at which the young people would give their testimony. The prayer meeting was the center of the Christian Endeavor movement and emphasized service, rather than inspiration or instruction. Judging from the photographs of early Christian Endeavor societies, the membership was largely young adults, not youth. Some were already established in business; many were married.

In some areas Christian Endeavor became a church. For example, in Seneca County a Christian Endeavor Temple was built near Romulus. Other churches were built in Michigan and South Dakota.

The success of the Williston group, and another one formed immediately afterward in the North Congregational Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts, sparked the formation of several groups in the New England states. These were all independent organizations for the young people of local churches. The first organization that was larger than the local society was organized in Old Orchard, Maine, in July, 1885. It was called the United Society of Christian Endeavor and became the forerunner of the present International Society. Although formal unions were not organized until 1885, conventions were being held as early as 1882, in which year six societies met. One year later, fifty-six societies met with a membership of 2850 young people. By 1885 the fourth Christian Endeavor Convention was held with 253 societies represented, totalling a membership of 14,890. It was at this fourth convention that the United Society of Christian Endeavor was formed and incorporated. This name was used until 1927 when it was changed to the International Society of Christian Endeavor.

In 1892 the convention was held in New York City with a crowd of 25,000 in attendance, largely adults, and special trains had to be mobilized into service to bring these young people into the city. Madison Square Garden overflowed and thousands lined the streets outside. Five years later, in 1897, the convention was held on the west coast in San Francisco which "brought the largest number of delegates across the mountains that ever attended a convention of any kind on the Pacific Coast." Trains were stalled for lack of motive power and food gave out in the railroad restaurants. Organizations came to the rescue by erecting lunch counters by the way. It was a convention three thousand miles long.

One delegation's slogan at the 1890 St. Louis Convention was "a school-house on every hill-top and no saloon in the valley." The fact that this one received wild acclaim and rousing cheers would indicate this was not, in the true sense, a youth convention!

Good citizenship was the keynote of the 1893 Convention further indicating that the strength of the early Christian Endeavor movement was in dedicated young adults. The slogan that year (a time when the nation was suffering a vast depression) was "Purer Politics - Aid to the Poor - Interdenominational Fellowship and Systematic Beneficence."

Though the growth of Christian Endeavor was phenomenal during the closing years of the 19th century, by the early 1900's the main line denominations had begun to withdraw. The Society of Christian Endeavor lost ground in the Methodist Episcopal Church where the Epworth League made serious inroads. The Baptist Young People's Union was formed independently of Christian Endeavor because they wished to emphasize Baptist doctrine and literature. The Lutheran Church had always had its Luther Leagues and never provided a great deal of strength for Christian Endeavor.

In reading the history of the Christian Endeavor movement it is apparent that the movement faced many obstacles. Not only was it unique to put young people in a place of importance in church life, but also there was a reluctance on the part of churches to leave their educational responsibility to an organization which was not responsible to them. The Reformed Church,

apparently, embraced the Christian Endeavor movement and provided its greatest strength. The New York State Christian Endeavor became one of the strongest of the State Unions, and in this area of the state strong local Societies were formed. The Brighton Church, being organized at nearly the same time as this new youth movement was caught up in the Christian Endeavor. The leadership of the Brighton Church for many years to come would grow from this early work in the Christian Endeavor movement.

As for the Christian Endeavor in Rochester, twenty-four societies were organized here in the late 1880's chiefly from the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches. A dozen new ones were added by 1891. Central Presbyterian Church was the center of Christian Endeavor activity. Here Christian Endeavor Conventions were held and the ministers at Central were active in the community organizing the young people to oppose such social evils as liquor, corruption in government and Sunday baseball.

Finally, in this period as the 20th century opened there was the first conscious, though unsuccessful, effort of the churches to work together in a conciliar plan. However, it is significant in this free-wheeling period of society, that even an attempt should be made. At the semi-centennial celebration of Rochester as a city, in 1884, Dr. James B. Shaw, minister of Brick Church prophesied that in fifty years (1934) "There will be but one church, all can worship in the same temple, sit down at the same table. Party names and party banners will be buried out of sight, and walls that separate the denominations will be taken down." How wrong he was! Such optimism, however, was not a fault of the clergy only. Mr. George H. Humphrey, a local Rochester lawyer, at the same semi-centennial celebration prophesied that "... diminished use of strong drink, by reducing crime to a minimum, will have done away with police courts ... a criminal case will be a rarity, and criminal justice will require for its administration no separate tribunal." And how wrong he was! Such was the robust relief in the inevitableness of progress!

A woman proved to be the better seer of the future. Susan B. Anthony, thirty-seven years before the suffrage amendment to the Constitution said, "I see women voting and being voted for, making and unmaking laws, and law makers."

In the first eighty-five years of its growth, from 1815 to 1900, Rochester founded one hundred ten Protestant churches while the population grew from 331 to 163,000. One historian observes, "It is interesting to note that of the eighty-six churches planted since 1880, not one has attained a preeminent place of leadership in the city . . ." This observation, made in 1933, would probably, with only few exceptions, hold true today in the late 1960's.

By 1890, Rochester was "burned-over territory" when the Brighton Reformed Church rose out of the flat fields in Brighton village. Like other churches of her time, in both the city and the country, she has never attained preeminence in the city's political, economic, intellectual and religious life. But, also like her peers who started at the turn of the century, she has preached the Gospel faithfully and many, hearing, have believed. As St. Paul has written:

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

He concludes that "the parts of the body which seems to be weaker are indispensable." We would like to believe this,

## CHAPTER THREE

## Beyond The Swelling Flood

So Rochester was a confident city in the early 1890's. An abundance of opportunities for social intercourse, for recreation and for cultural enjoyment were present. The political scene, while turbulent for a season, quietened considerably once elections were out of the way. The city, with a population of 133,000, expectantly looked to the future.

Electric trolleys had replaced the old horse cars; the first street car running from the city line to Charlotte was completed in 1889. The first electric car in the city limits operated on Lake Avenue in 1890. This was the year the Sibley, Lindsay and Curr block was built. A year later, in 1891, electric cars were installed on the Main Street run, extending to Glen Haven Station where the traveler could transfer to the Sodus Bay Railroad line for points east. The Empire State Express made its first run through the city on October 24, 1891.

The parks were taking shape during this time. The university launched into an extensive lecture program and the first woman student was admitted in 1893. The city was petitioning the State for annexation of new territory, expecting to reach a population of 200,000 by the turn of the century. George Eastman announced the expansion of his firm from a one million to a five million dollar enterprise. New railroads sought entry into the city, and foreign capital was readily available.

Rochester of 1890 had most of its 10,373 acres developed into residential areas. Twenty-four thousand homes graced its tree-lined streets, though not always were these homes well-constructed or gracefully designed. The Erie Canal wound its way into the city, through the little village of Brighton, on the eastern flank of the city. No longer was this waterway the delight that it had earlier been. Commerce, while welcome, often brought its problems. Taverns along the canal route sprang up and attracted the rough canal men. The city thrilled, in 1890, when the electric lights were turned on. There were not many

cities of Rochester's size that could boast of 2000 electric and 800 gas lights in 1890!

Urban problems were already rearing their nasty heads. Visitors in Rochester no longer flocked to the Genesee River, once called by its Indian name, Casconchiazon, literally meaning "river of falls upon it" or "place where you can go under the falls." No longer, 100 years later, was the river the delightful sight that it earlier had been. Land on the river front had been acquired for industrial purposes. Two railroads had pushed up to the river's edge enticing still more industry. Indeed, the river could not be seen until the opening of the Platt Street Bridge in 1891. Visitors could walk down Main Street without knowing of a river under them. Main Street Bridge, with its stores lining each side, was the only bridge in America to carry a street with its shops across a major stream.

Horse drawn carriages and wagons crowded the downtown streets, especially around the Four Corners, though some of the traffic load abated with the advent of electric trolleys. Even these came with a mixed blessing for, though there was rejoicing with their appearance on the streets, there was great concern for their hazardous operation which brought traffic fatalities.

The character of the population of Rochester in the last decade of the 19th century was significant. It was a youthful city; more than half of her population being under 25 years of age. It was a cosmopolitan city; the immigrants, Dutch, Irish, German, Russian, Canadian, English almost equalled the native-born.

Two and a half miles beyond the city limits at Goodman Street was the village of Brighton. The village gathered around the juncture of East Avenue and North and South Streets (now Winton Road). This was a busy corner for both the Erie Barge Canal (now the Outer Loop) and the New York Central Railroad crossed North Street. Up on the hill, presently the site of the Brighton Cemetery, was built the first church in the village, the Brighton Congregational Church which, later, became the Brighton Presbyterian Church when it moved to its present location.

Across East Avenue from the church, Brighton Hall was situated, a building that served several community groups. Some of our present members recall having church meetings there and at the Presbyterian Church. Around the corner, on North Street, was the Public School, abandoned in 1967 as a library facility. The village had several business establishments including the Timothy Sullivan carriage shop, two hotels, numerous stores, Caley's blacksmith shop and a coal yard — all clustered around the intersection of East Avenue and North Avenue. A product of the Caley shop was a huge carriage, the Tally Ho, with a capacity of 65 people and requiring 8 horses to pull. Frequently the Sunday School children would climb up into the high seats to take a ride on their picnics. Alongside the driver, a dog always sat alertly.

Beyond the village center lay the residential and farm lands of Brighton township. Many of the Hollanders settled in the Main Street - Henackey Park (now Akron Street) area which became known as "North Holland" and its people as "the Northerners." Along the narrow dirt road which was Blossom Road many farms were situated, owned by Hollanders who were affluent enough (or frugal) to acquire the property upon arrival in the area.

The other major settlement of the Dutch was in the Dugway section at Landing Road. Of this area, the Rochester Historical Society, Vol. 1, says:

"Our most romantic history centers about Irondequoit Bay and its valley. In the springtime this region reveals exquisite beauty. 'Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood stand dressed in living green.' Here is spread a panorama of loveliness unsurpassed, with its lush meadows, winding creek, dome-shaped emerald hills, trees and rich garden lands. The Indians compared this valley to their Happy Hunting grounds."

(p 188)

Landing Road was the first road to be surveyed and laid out in this section between the years 1796 and 1800 by Orringh Stone, Commissioner of Highways, whose home still stands in the

shadow of the new Eastern Crossway. The road was a continuation of a road from Canandaigua and terminated in the highland which marked the end of civilization. In this section was once the "city" of Tryon, now the "lost city of Tryon." Earlier Indian trails had spun out in a web in all directions from this Road.

Most of these new-comers to the Rochester area, being tillers of the soil in their native Holland, settled in this "exquisite beauty" with its "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood" because it would permit the continuance of a way of life to which they had become accustomed. This was the area, where in 1873, J. G. Klinck had bought up a large tract for the anticipated coming of the Hollanders. By 1900 they were well settled.

Many people purchased plots on which to build homes; others bought goodly-sized farms on which they grew produce for the lucrative Rochester market. For the most part these Hollanders were not wealthy people when they came to Brighton, but many of them, through their industriousness and frugality, acquired extensive property.

For many years the Dutch contented themselves with membership in the First Reformed Church, even though it was located in the center of the city and at quite a distance from both "North Holland" and the Dugway. Some chose not to travel this distance (for the transportation facilities of the time, it was quite a distance) and joined the Brighton Presbyterian Church. Being beyond the city limits, they would have to provide their own horses and buggies - or walk, the latter being then far more extensively practiced than now.

Sometime around 1886, the Rev. P. DeBruyn, pastor of the First Reformed Church, a man of vision and initiative, could see the need of another church to serve the Dutch population. He said, "We have a large number of young people in our church who are Americanizing very fast. The number of older Dutch people is so much the larger, however, that we cannot hold one service in English and another in Dutch. We find that the younger members are inclined to stay away from us and become scattered. . . . We shall rent the Unitarian Chapel . . . for one year. There are better than 2000 or 3000 Dutch people in the city — a number amply sufficient to support two churches." On

August 10, 1886, 28 members of the First Reformed Church met and established the Second Reformed Church. A site was purchased for \$3300 and a building erected for \$12,000. The Rev. Evert Van der Hart, of Jackson, Michigan arrived in May, 1887.

Shortly it was found that even this expansion of churches serving the Hollanders was not sufficient, especially for those in the outlying areas of Brighton Village. Domine De Bruyn, highly esteemed for his kindness and graciousness, visited the people in Brighton as often as he could. He would travel from his home, at considerable inconvenience, in order to conduct preaching services in the homes of the Brighteners. At first, such gatherings were very small groups of men and women in their living rooms with Domine DeBruyn leading them in worship. As these small groups gathered new followers, the worship services were moved to Brighton Hall, and sometimes the chapel of the Presbyterian Church. Domine De Bruyn found that his own parish work was so demanding that it became necessary to seek some assistance with the extension work in Brighton. Rev. Van der Hart relieved Pastor De Bruyn on occasion. For some time, these two men brought the gospel to the Brighton people regularly every other Sunday, speaking in their native Holland language.

Though appreciated, these services could only temporarily answer the needs of the Brighton people. Coming from pious folk in Holland and from established churches, they yearned for a complete ministry. They desired a building of their own where services could be held each Sunday without the forebearance of other organizations. They wanted a church school where their children could be trained in a way to which they were accustomed. They were not alone in this desire. Domine De Bruyn, with foresight and staunch faith, began to lay the matter on the hearts of his own men of consistory.

On the 16th of December, 1890, he formally brought the matter of a new church before the men. The question how to secure ground and a building was discussed at great length. They prayed that the Lord might open a way for them. He did.

Two men with names that hardly reflect a Holland background were instrumental in getting the new church out of the vision stage to become a reality in the Hollander's life. Mr. Doyle

and Mr. Hirshberger were land speculators, who saw the potential value of land on the eastern edges of the city and proceeded to purchase tracts of land. They levelled the land around Elm Park (now Arbordale) and Birch Terrace (now Heather Street), drained the low spots, and marked off the tract in lots which they immediately offered for sale. Though motivated by the lure of profits, the two men were philanthropic at heart. It was on their initiative that negotiations were started for the new church.

Mr. Doyle and Mr. Hirshberger had made the acquaintance of Domine De Bruyn and the consistory of the First Reformed Church. They volunteered to give one lot of their new acquisition in Brighton to the people of Brighton for the purpose of erecting a chapel along with \$100 in addition to get it started. Furthermore, they promised also that they would arrange for further gifts amounting to three or four hundred dollars! It was with such a generous gift that the Brighton Reformed Church was started.

Their offer was committed to writing and signed by both parties. At the meeting of consistory of First Reformed Church on December 16, 1890, the consistory gratefully accepted the offer. It was very clear to the men of First Reformed that the Lord had answered their prayers very quickly! Now events followed closely on one another.

The very next day, December 17, 1890 another meeting of the consistory was held for the purpose of setting up a joint conference with the men of the Christian Reformed Church. We may assume that there must have been some consternation in the midst of that church at the thought of another Reformed church in the still very small community of Brighton! But the men of First Reformed seemed to be most determined. The minutes indicate they did not ask for the advice or consent of the Christian Reformed brethren. As the earliest report records it —

"... it was their intention as soon as possible to build the proposed chapel and upon its completion the members of that congregation (i.e., Christian Reformed) would be given the privilege of holding meetings there if they so desired."

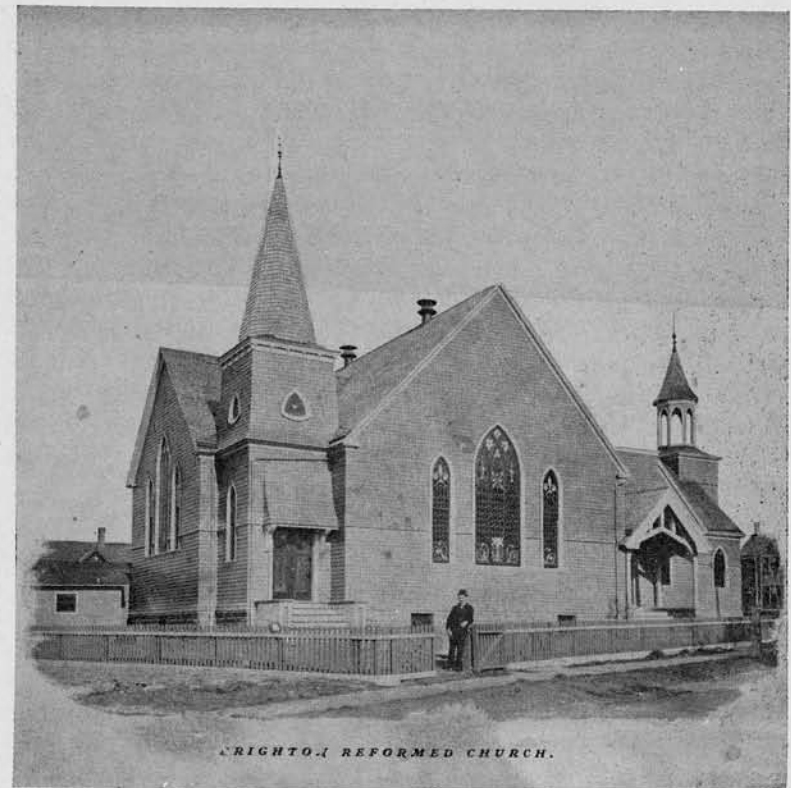
Clearly, it was the intention of the men of First Reformed Church to affiliate with the Reformed Church in America. One needs little imagination to realize the heated talk that this announcement must have sparked between the two groups of Hollanders. The appearance of a new congregation must have been interpreted as a threat to the existence of the little flock of Christian Reformed folks.

Nevertheless, the desire and dreams of the Hollanders were to be realized in a very short time. One week later, on the afternoon of Christmas Day, 1890, the first step was taken. Elders J. Van Houten and Pacaud and Messrs. Hopeman and J. B. Pike were appointed to choose an appropriate lot for the new chapel. The owners generously offered them a choice of lots. It was not easy to choose. At first it appeared that the men favored a lot on North Avenue (Winton Road). This apparently was the preferred choice of the "North Hollanders" living in the Main Street section. However the lot on which the chapel was finally built was a block off North Avenue on Blossom Road, this being the largest lot under consideration and the choice of the Dugway Dutch.

The generosity of the Messrs. Doyle and Hirshberger was conditioned only by the stipulation that a church should be built on the property and services maintained there for a period of at least ten years. In case of dissolution of the church before that time, the property would revert to the original owners. Five years later, in 1895, this condition was removed to seek an appropriation from the Board of Domestic Missions, which demanded free title to church property. The two men readily granted the request to remove the conditional clause.

The Building Committee consisted of Edward De Jong, A. W. Hopeman, J. Van Doorn and J. B. Pike. The architects selected to prepare the drawings for the chapel were Messrs. Gordon and Bragdon.

The firm of Gordon, Bragdon and Orchard, was first listed in the Rochester Directory of 1891. Apparently it was a new firm of architects that was employed to design the Brighton Chapel. However, the firm's listing disappears from the Directory in 1894, to become Bragdon and Hillman in 1897.



### THE CHURCH AFTER 1896

The original Chapel section is to the right. The picket fence is shown in its "better days." It was finally disposed of for \$10.00.

Mr. Claude F. Bragdon, who was a three-time winner of an award given by the New York Architectural League, designed such eminent buildings as the New York Central Railroad Station, one of Rochester's classic structures, the Chamber of Commerce Building, the First Universalist Church and the Central Y.M.C.A. He left Rochester and architecture to become a very famous designer of Broadway stage sets in the early 1900's.

Our chapel, a product of his early career, was almost identical to a little Italian Presbyterian Church with which Mr. Brag-

don was most pleased because "of its being cheap and so direct a solution of the given problem while breathing forth a faintly Italianate air." The sgraffito panel over the entrance to this Italian Church was done by Mr. Bragdon and was worthy of a Raphael. For economy of construction, however, it would be hard to beat the Brighton Chapel.

The contractor, Mr. J. A. De Blauwe, completed the job in 11 months and on November 15, 1891 the building was dedicated.

The chapel was a wood frame building with a small but impressive entrance on the Elm Park side. Under gables on the north and south sides were inserted two lovely arched stained glass windows. Inside the narrow room, dimly lighted with kerosene lamps, benches were placed for the worshippers.

From the wife of Rev. J. Van Ess, the oldest daughter of Rev. De Bruyn, the following interesting account of expenses was recorded:

Contract to J. De Blauwe .....	\$2,249.00
Extra Work .....	260.15
Globe Furniture (pews) .....	228.45
W. H. Glenn, (lamps) .....	45.36
John Snyder (furnace) .....	70.00
James Johnston (insurance) .....	25.00
Gordon and Bragdon (architects) .....	50.00
William Page (stained glass) .....	147.00
Surveying .....	7.00
Recording Fees .....	1.75
L. De Young (matting) .....	38.63
2 tons of coal .....	9.00
Total	\$3,131.34

The last item was interesting. Obviously these careful men were going to provide heat for the approaching winter months, though nothing is said of oil for the lamps! Maybe these joyful Hollanders could sing their Dutch psalms without light!

The good people of the First Reformed Church, under the fund raising abilities of Elder J. Van Doorn, acquired the funds to complete the chapel. Not to be indebted completely to their brethren in the city, the people of Brighton joined in giving money for their own church.

The 4th of July, 1891 was a day of great celebration in the city of Rochester, as it always has been a traditionally important day. Citizens of Rochester were tempted, through their newspapers that day, to take a trip out to Niagara Falls. The West Shore Railroad was offering round trip tickets for \$1.25. One could choose to go to Conesus Lake via the Erie Railroad for 50 cents a round trip. If one was not so daring as to board the chugging coal-burners for such a long ride, one could take the Bay Railroad to Sea Breeze. Trains were running every half hour to the big celebration where they advertised "balloon ascensions, ball games, races, hop-skip-and-jump matches, greased pole matches, fireworks both day and evening and dancing" — all without cost to the spectator. Elsewhere around the city on the 4th, patriotic speeches were being made although editorially the newspaper complained of people's "weariness in hearing political oratory."

Midst all the usual world-wide and local news, the "Union and Advertiser" of July 3, 1891, carried the tiny article:

#### BRIGHTON CHAPEL CORNER STONE

"The corner stone of the Chapel being erected in Brighton by the First Reformed Church will be laid Saturday, July 4, 1891 at 10 A.M. with appropriate ceremonies. Members and friends are cordially invited to attend the services. Rev. P. De Bruyn of the First Reformed Church of this city, Rev. R. A. Vennema of the Second Reformed Church and Rev. Mr. McCall of the Presbyterian Church of Brighton will take part."

We can assume that the "quiet folk" of North Holland and the Dugway picked their way to the corner of Blossom Road and Elm Park, by foot and buckboard and there sang their Dutch psalms and gave thanks to God for his leading. Sea Breeze with its balloon ascensions was in another world!

Less than a month after the dedication of the new chapel, Domine De Bruyn received and accepted a call to Grand Haven, Michigan. His leaving came as a deep disappointment to two congregations. He had been the pastor of First Church for 18 years, serving it with efficiency and great dedication. Further he

had endeared himself to the new Brighton church, now only a month in their new building. At such times leaders are always raised up from among God's children. The gap left by the departing Rev. De Bruyn was immediately filled by the men of the mother church. Catechetical instruction for the children was taken over by Mr. D. Pike, who met with the children each Saturday afternoon. Elders Pacaud, Van Doorn and D. Pike conducted the services of worship in the chapel on Sunday evenings when no minister was present to preach. The need of a Sunday School was urgently felt by the people and, after much reflection, John Pike agreed to act as superintendent. According to his own account, given many years later, the Sunday School was organized the first week of January, 1892. The first teachers to assist with this work in Christian education were J. W. Willink, Sr. and W. H. Rowerdink and Miss Mary Hartfeld. This was the modest beginning of the Brighton Reformed Church which now faced its first quarter century of struggle and sacrifice.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Struggle for Life

The Classis of Rochester took note of the work done by the consistory of the First Reformed Church in their Spring Meeting, April 21, 1891.

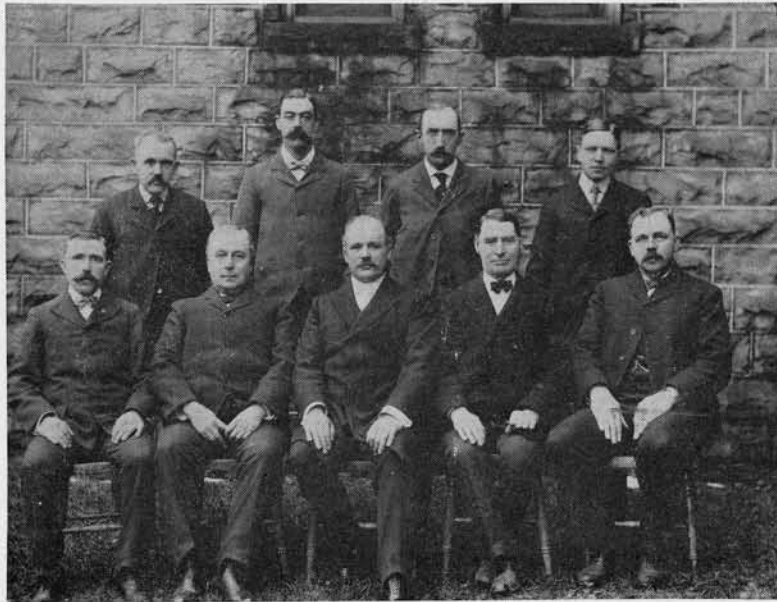
"A good work has been undertaken in the suburban village of Brighton where are 70 or 80 families of Dutch. For several years an effort has been made to reach them by occasional preaching and pastoral visitation. By the providence of God an offer has been made of a building lot and \$100.00 toward a building. Subscriptions are underway for a \$2500 edifice for this mission."

Precisely one year later, April 21, 1892, the chapel having been completed and dedicated, William Rowerdink, John B. Pike, Isaac De Roo, Isaac De Mallie, John Willink, Sr., and Abram Potter met to organize the new church. Rowerdink was elected chairman and De Mallie, secretary, for the meeting. The formal motion, "that it is the wish of the people to start a church here," was approved unanimously. It was also decided that a committee of four men would approach the consistory of First Church to get their approval which was immediately granted.

William H. Rowerdink's role in the early years of the church was unquestionably a most important one judging both from the minutes of the consistory and the memories of people who can recall those days. He was born in Brighton; he attended Allen's Creek School as a boy and then went on to Hope College, Holland, Michigan. He was a man of broad interests and fully able to devote time to many varied pursuits. In 1891 and 1892 he was supervisor of the Town of Brighton, the same years he was so active in church affairs. Apparently he ran for re-election again in 1896 but was defeated in that year. The February 5, 1896 **Union and Advertiser** carried a news item about a rousing reception tendered him by his classmates at the Allen School, who said,

"... we recognize in William H. Rowerdink all the characteristics that go to make the successful business man, able legislator and genial gentleman ..."

Of Mr. Rowerdink's business acumen there was ample evidence. He started a wagon and carriage business in the Brighton area. He was manager of the Timothy Sullivan Carriage works, manufacturers of cutters and carriages. He expanded into the manufacture of harnesses; operated his own blacksmith shop and paint shop on Cortland Street. Rowerdink sold out his wagon business in 1894 to a concern in Waterloo. Early in the 1900's he moved into the automobile accessory business and headed it for 13 years before relinquishing it to his son, Henry. It should be remembered that this astute business venture was made in the very early days of the automobile, a risky thing indeed when



### AN EARLY CONSISTORY

(Circa 1904)

Front Row, left to right: Adrian Hartsen, John B. Pike, Rev. A. Lawrence Betten, Rokus Hallings, William Rowerdink. Back Row: Paul DeBack, John DeHollander, Herman Willink, Isaac DeMallie (?)

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there was widespread belief that this "horseless carriage" would never make the grade. That Mr. Rowerdink thought it would, is obvious; and that his business became the largest accessory outlet in Western New York is evidence that he was right! At the time of his death in 1923 he was a member of the Rochester Consistory, Scottish Rite, Damascus Temple of the Shrine, a Director of the Traders Bank, a member of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce and an elder in the Central Presbyterian Church.

A long story lurks behind that last fact. At the time that Mr. Rowerdink was building up his carriage business he was an elder of First Reformed Church, then an elder in our Brighton Church. In 1892 he was one of the group of First Church men who had the vision of a church in Brighton. With the formation of our church in 1892 he transferred his membership, along with his wife and daughter, and entered wholeheartedly into the building of our little congregation. He served the church in so many key ways. He was superintendent of the Sunday School, a teacher in the school, treasurer of consistory and, on occasion, directed the choir. During this period of great activity he found time to teach religion in Grove School out on Atlantic Avenue, a rural outpost at that time. Many a time Mr. Rowerdink would come to the rescue of the congregation with some of his personal wealth that was growing with his wealthy business ventures. He took personal notes for some of the church's indebtedness; he shared the cost of building a parsonage which was rented to the church for quite a few years and which he ultimately sold to the church at a very reasonable price, throwing in a \$100 donation toward its purchase price. Many a month he, along with his associates, went without collecting a cent of rent from the church when it fell delinquent in its payments. His financial know-how and business-like manner guided the church through some very treacherous economic seas.

John B. Pike was another man of the early church whose influence was so great in the building of the Brighton Church. John Pike was a member of First Reformed Church and another of those men whose vision was the locating of a church in Brighton village. For many years his contributions as carpenter and builder, as well as spiritual leader, afforded the congregation able leadership.

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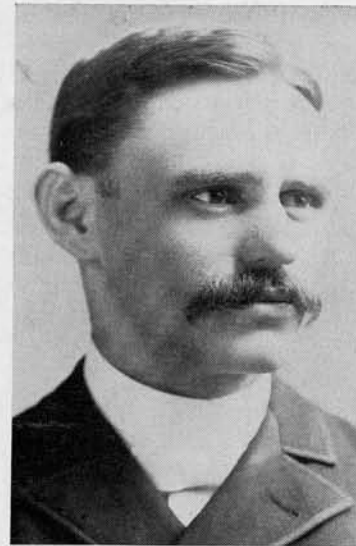
Born in Bredervoort, Holland, in 1847, John Pike came to America with his parents at the age of eleven. Originally his parents associated themselves with the Dutch in First Church. We do not know how he became a carpenter, it was not the trade of his father; but he did and with eminent success. One history of Rochester mentioned Pike as one of the most successful building contractors for over a quarter-century. Mr. Pike entered business for himself at the age of 25. He was married to Nellie Viergiver, a marriage that lasted 60 years to the time of his death in 1927. Both Mr. and Mrs. Pike were actively engaged in church business through most of these years.

Mr. Pike's company constructed such buildings in the city as the Cutler Building, Elwood Building, Security Trust Building and the Rochester Savings Bank. He did not build any part of the Brighton Chapel or church, but he did supervise all construction projects for years, serving as a faithful superintendent over the work of others. On several occasion he was called upon to finish work that others had left incompleated; and once even donated wheelbarrows for volunteers to do the work, Mr. Pike himself often pitching in.

There is one interesting anecdote which testifies to Mr. Pike's business prowess too. James G. Cutler, a one-time mayor of Rochester, had the Cutler Building constructed, a seven story building at the corner of State and Main Streets. Mr. Cutler solved the problem of depositing mail in high buildings by inventing a mail chute. Another man had built mail chutes but he was put out of business when the government found that his faulty design made it possible to lose mail that might lodge in a crevice as it descended the chute. Cutler solved this problem of design and was given the government contract. Every mail chute in the country had to be a Cutler chute—and Mr. Pike built the first chutes for Cutler, a case of where getting in on the top floor was a good thing! When fireproof buildings came to be designed Pike withdrew from this lucrative market. His was strictly a wood-working shop, and the first models of the Cutler chute had wood backs.

Like Mr. Rowerdink, Mr. Pike also was a man of wide interests. In addition to being the founder of our Sunday School, he served as superintendent and teacher for many years. Mrs.

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REV. JOHN VAN WESTENBURG

September 1892 -

December 1896

Pike was active both as a teacher and as the moving force behind all the women's work of those early years.

On June 9, 1892, a committee of the Classis met with the people of Brighton. Fifty-five individuals were present with their letters of dismission from other churches, most of them from First Reformed. Though none of these fifty-five charter members are alive now, their children are still active and in many cases, a fourth generation has already joined this church.

The charter members were:

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Albright	Mrs. John De Cook, Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. Marinus Asbroeck, Sr.	Mr. and Mrs. Jacob De Hollander
Mr. and Mrs. Abram Baart	Mr. and Mrs. Isaac De Mallie
Mr. Peter Beune	Mr. and Mrs. Adrian De Mey
Mr. Abram Cambier, Sr.	Mr. and Mrs. Abram De Potter
Miss Elizabeth De Back	Mr. and Mrs. Isaac De Roo
Mr. Josias De Back	Mr. and Mrs. John Faas
Mr. Paul De Back	Mr. Rokus Hallings
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob De Cook	Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Johnson
Mr. and Mrs. Peter De Cook	Mrs. James Le Roy

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Mr. and Mrs. Peter Le Roy	Mr. and Mrs. John Vanderlinde
Mr. and Mrs. William H. Rowerdink	Mr. and Mrs. VandeWalle
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Van Bortel	Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Van Eeden
Mr. and Mrs. Adrian VandenBroecke	Mr. Peter VerMeulen
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob VandenBroecke	Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Versluis
	Mr. and Mrs. John Willink, Sr.
	Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Zonneville, Sr.

An interesting observation about the deep loyalties of our families is that eight of these charter members have a fourth generation presently members of the church. Mr. Walter Duffy is a great-grandchild of Rokus Hallings; Miss Donna De Roo, of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac De Roo; Larry and Clark Scheerens, of Mr. and Mrs. Abram Cambier; Miss Bonnie Revier, of Mr. and Mrs. Peter De Cook; David Van Bortel, of Mr. Jacob Van Bortel and Mrs. Janna De Graff; Mrs. William Bergh, of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob De Hollander; Mrs. June Pehta, of Mr. and Mrs. Marinus Asbroeck and Mrs. Margaret Morrison and Linda Goetzman, of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Johnson. In the 75th anniversary year of 1967 Miss Nancy Duffy, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Duffy becomes the first person of the fifth generation to become a member.

There are several of our families worshipping now who represent the fourth generation but their great-grandparents were not charter members, having joined a little later after our founding.

On June 14, 1892, under the chairmanship of John Pike, the first congregational meeting convened with only men present. By a vote of 29 to 10 they decided to hold morning and evening services, leaving the language of the service to the discretion of the first pastor to be called. They also decided to rent the pews, a common practice in those days for obtaining funds. A committee of four men was appointed to set the rental rates and to organize a system of collecting these rents. Abram Potter, J. Vander Brooke, W. H. Rowerdink and Isaac Zonneville were the appointed committee.

Financing the local church had always been a problem for the free churches. When the Rochester Meeting House was built

in 1817 the pews were sold in advance of the building construction. The money received was used not to pay for the building but to cover operating costs after its completion. As late as 1849 trustees of a church would give deeds to pews for a stipulated price. While these deeds were absolute in form, courts declared that the owner held no title to land, nor to the church building nor any part thereof. As a method of church financing the sale of pews was generally a failure.

Upon its demise the leasing of pews became the general practice. A lease slip, owned by one Henry Searle of Central Presbyterian Church, May 1, 1858 read, "To have and to hold . . . party of the second part for and during the term of one thousand years . . . subject nevertheless to a yearly annuity of \$23.00 . . ." A thousand years is certainly not a short term lease! Was this faith in the longevity of the church? Or was it faith in the lasting quality of men's monuments to God?

The renting of pews was no more successful than the sale of pews. As early as 1850 First Presbyterian Church instructed the sexton to give strangers as good a seat as was available. Obviously for that church this spelled the doom of discriminate seating of "dues-paying" members. Most of the city's large and influential churches had discarded pew rentals by the early 1900's. However for the new and small churches pew rental was looked upon with favor, at least for a time.

Our original records give us an interesting insight into the recommendations of the committee on pew rental. Apparently there was a reluctance then, as now, to sitting "down front." The first seat was free. Seat number 2 was rented at the rates of \$6.00 for men, \$3.00 for women, and \$1.00 for children, each seat having 7 sittings. As they moved back from the pulpit toward the center of the chapel rents were increased. Men were charged \$8.00, ladies \$4.00 and children \$2.00. The original records show that John De Mallie and E. Oudestein rented the whole seat for \$10.50. At the back of the chapel, as might be expected, lower prices prevailed.

Apparently the committee kept accurate records of payments for our original record book contains numerous entries, and even with names scratched out and new ones added. The pews were fully subscribed, even the most expensive, from the beginning.

Fifteen years later the consistory discarded the pew rental method of financing and in its place they issued pledge cards, with each pledge being examined to determine whether it was satisfactory or not.

On June 19, 1892, the committee of men selected three ministers who were presented to the congregation as candidates for the pulpit. The minutes do not indicate whether these men actually preached for the congregation. The Rev. John Van Westenburg of Pultneyville was their first choice and a call was extended to him by an overwhelming majority.

This method of selection of a minister was to be used for many years. "Setting up a trio" referred to the practice of selecting three men who were then invited to preach after which the congregation voted by ballot for their preference. If the call, i. e. an invitation to accept the pastorate, were extended and declined, a second "trio", usually containing the other two names with the addition of a new one, would be set up. The same process then would be repeated until a call had been extended and accepted. For their first minister the Brighton congregation was successful in getting the man they wanted on the first try. They never were again to do it so easily!

It is interesting to note that women were allowed to vote although that privilege was grudgingly given by a close decision of 14 in favor and 9 opposed. Apparently Susan B. Anthony's woman suffrage movement of a few years back had a salutary effect on the Dutch of Brighton. Even in the homeland of the Netherlands it was 1919 before they enjoyed that status! At this same congregational meeting it was decided that the name of the new church would be the First Reformed Church of Brighton and that the pastor's salary should be set at \$1,000 per year, payable quarterly, with a four week vacation. One might well wonder how a family could manage a home on payments of \$250 each three months, a long time between pay days! But this was 1892, not the 1960's.

Before accepting the call, Rev. Van Westenburg inquired about plans for building a parsonage and was told that once membership reached 150 they would start to build. He inquired also about the language and, upon being advised that this was his decision to make, he chose to preach the morning service in

the Holland language and the evening service in English. This was a logical decision at the time but it was to haunt the church for many years to come.

Van Westenburg was born at Brouwershaven, the Netherlands, on Christmas Day, 1866. He was graduated from Hope College in 1888 and New Brunswick Seminary in 1891. His first charge, a short one of less than two years, was in Pultneyville. What little we know about him as a person comes from a letter he wrote to his classmates in 1895 in which he referred to frail health, a near-collapse from over-work and the fear of being forced to leave the ministry. He and his wife had one adopted daughter although in his letter there was an obscure reference to "my string of 17 babies which I still have." Rev Van Westenburg was installed by the Classis of Rochester on the evening of September 22, 1892. He served until December 11, 1896.

In his letter of May, 1895 to his classmates he referred to the pleasant field at Brighton where he had by now served two and a half years as "most sadly and woefully neglected, a veritable heathendom." In this time he had received 73 members on confession and about 25 more by certificate.

One of the first steps that faced the new church was the transfer of ownership of the property, the land and the building still being owned by First Church. The matter was taken by Rowerdink and Pike to the trustees of First Church and legal steps were initiated. The transfer was made "voor de som van een dollar."

The next step to be taken was the formal election of a consistory. On December 20, 1892 those men who were instrumental in developing the mission met to draw lots and determine the terms of elders and deacons — a sound scriptural practice, it might be added. Mr. Rowerdink drew a two-year term as elder and Mr. Rokus Hallings as deacon. Mr. John Willink, Sr. drew a one year term as elder and Mr. Isaac De Mallie as deacon. Unfortunately the congregation sustained a severe loss only a month later when Mr. Willink died, the first death in the congregation. Mr. Rokus Hallings was elected to succeed Mr. Willink as elder and thus began a long and faithful ministry for him.

Evidently the work of the new church was demanding for it was soon discovered that the consistory had to be enlarged to

three elders and three deacons. There was no trouble in electing a third deacon, but something was amiss in the election of a third elder.

Mr. John Pike, who was most wanted for elder, was still a member of First Church. Therefore the vacancy was permitted to stand until some proselytizing could win him away. A "friendly struggle" ensued, for Mr. Pike was highly esteemed in First Church where he also was nominated as elder. He apparently declined that service and, with his wife, transferred to Brighton. Allegedly it was through Mrs. Pike's strong persuasion that her husband finally threw in his lot with the Brighton Church. After all, he had worked with the mission church and had taken an active part in its design and construction. On March 20, 1893 Mr. Pike was unanimously elected elder, an office he served with distinction for 14 years.

In its first report to the Classis, Spring 1893, the church showed an increase of 12 members by letter and 38 by confession of faith. Weekly prayer meetings and Sunday School classes taxed the facilities of the chapel. An afternoon service in the Holland language was attempted but shortly abandoned.

In the course of the year 1893-94 the church suffered an unpleasant experience when eleven members separated themselves from the fellowship to join the Society of the Brethren. Such a schism was serious to such a small group so soon after their organization. Rev. Betten, recalling the incident ten years later, remarked "these persons had doubtless been misled. They had much zeal but little knowledge. Their claim was that few, if any, of the church members were truly converted." He sadly noted that this harmful influence, exerted especially on the Northern part of the field, could still be felt as late as 1904. One of our present members recalls these meetings of the Brethren. "We laughed at the way they preached — always said the same thing." Notwithstanding this defection the church continued to grow and by the year's end the pastor reported an accession of 24 members received on confession and 6 by letter.

By the fall of 1894 the small congregation began to think of expansion. As early as his third consistory meeting in 1892, John Van Westenburg had discussed with the men the possible purchase of the lot to the west of the chapel. Since it was unques-

tionably beyond the ability of the people to undertake a building program, an appeal was made to the Board of Domestic Missions for a loan. On September, 1894, a loan of \$4200 was granted and the lot next to the chapel was purchased for \$400. The church was incorporated, the original condition of the land grant by Doyle and Hirshberger was removed, and the way paved for a building addition.

About the first of July, 1896, the contract was let for the building of the new church. Completed in a few months, it was formally dedicated in October of that same year. A second-hand organ had been purchased from "some church in the South" and installed.

The new addition was joined to the west end of the chapel. Of frame construction, as was the chapel, it provided a much larger space for worship, dominated by two large stained glass windows on each side, central pulpit on a raised platform with the choir loft and organ behind it. The church was lighted by several kerosene lamps setting in wall brackets, and one large central chandelier with a dozen kerosene lamps. Recalling the church of these early days, someone has said that it was "not overly bright." Where the entrance to the chapel had been on the Elm Park (Arbordale) side, now a new entrance was made from the Blossom Road side. The nave had two aisles on the side and two in the center, making three rows of pews. A small "minister's door" was located on the southwest corner, behind and slightly to the side of the pulpit. The whole property was circled with a picket fence. Horse sheds, in the rear of the church, on the Birch Terrace side (now Heather), were constructed with the stalls facing Blossom. When the buckboard was the only method of transportation in the days before the compact model, it must have been quite a parking problem. While most of the worshippers walked to the church, from both the Dugway and "North Holland," the more affluent members would drive up on a Sunday morning in their carriages. There are those who still remember the Pike's driving up in a surrey, sometimes with Mrs. Pike holding the reins. One confidante recalls seeing Mr. Michael Zonneville walking home from the Dutch services, several paces ahead of his wife. Later, in the early 1900's, many families would walk to church and return

home by trolley car at 3 cents a ride, an economical ride that will never be duplicated.

Rev. Van Westenburg had received a call from an Albany church which he declined because of the building program, but soon after its completion the call was extended a second time and accepted. The pastoral relationship was dissolved on December 11, 1896, ending four years and three months of service. Mr. Van Westenburg had found a large place in the hearts of the people. "He was an earnest preacher of the Word and faithful. When he left, the people expressed their heart-felt regret and bestowed their meed of praise upon him and his wife . . ." During his pastorate, 105 members were added to the Church Roll which, with suspensions and removals, a total of 128 members.

#### ADRIAN HARTSEN

An early portrait of the man who served with four pastors in this church for a total of 53 years.



During the last years of Rev. Van Westenburg's ministry, Mr. Adrian J. Hartsen entered the official life of the church which was to be deeply influenced by him for years to come. Born in Groede, Holland, March 11, 1868, Adrian Hartsen came to Brighton in 1888 at the age of 20. On December 14, 1893 he married Jacoba DeBryne in a ceremony performed by Rev. John Van Westenburg. Mr. and Mrs. Hartsen moved into a cottage on

a lane in a peach orchard owned by J. F. Norris which the Hartsens purchased in 1895. When the 21st ward was formed, the street was named Hartsen Street in his honor.

Mr. Hartsen succumbed to a heart attack on March 14, 1947, at the age of 79. In those years he packed an amazing life, both in business and in the church, probably paralleled by none other of the Brighton congregation.

Adrian Hartsen was ordained and installed as a deacon in the Brighton Church in 1901. He served only one term as deacon then elected to the office of elder where he served for 45 years. He was perennially elected as the vice-president of consistory, an office that he was called upon to exercise responsibly many times since he served through four pastorates. It was said that he missed only two Communion Services during all these years of service.

For thirty years Hartsen was a teacher and worker in the Sunday School, acting as its superintendent for several years. As a leader of an adult Men's and Women's Class, he taught the same persons, now as grandparents, that he had taught earlier as children.

Of Mr. Hartsen it was said that he had a "sweet disposition" — a fine embodiment of the blessedness of the peacemakers. When delicate situations came along that called for diplomacy, tact and understanding, it was always Mr. Hartsen who was called into service. Time and again the minutes of consistory mention his activities as Christian diplomat. He called on families to remind them that their pledges were in arrears. A man known to be acting contrary to a life exemplary of a Christian was visited to be remonstrated with by Mr. Hartsen. The clash of personalities in the choir called for his best peacemaking abilities as he sought to smooth the ruffled feelings worn a little ragged. Someone's work was unsatisfactory and it was Mr. Hartsen who sought to correct the situation. A sexton had to be told to clean up the church better and it was Mr. Hartsen who had to appease both the consistory and the individual. One of our members recalled the most explosive issue confronted by the church. At the time when the entire congregation was torn apart by the decision to remain with the Dutch language, it was Mr. Hartsen who pleaded, with "tears in his eyes" for unity.

A constant reader of the Bible, each night before retiring, Mr. Hartsen tried to incarnate the Gospel in his whole daily life; something that he could do without being excessively syrupy about it.

For Adrian Hartsen was marked not only by these saintly characteristics but also by some very manly attributes. He was a frugal man, in only a few years saving sufficient money to purchase his own home. When his employer died, he even borrowed money to purchase the business which mortgage he paid off in two years. Of sturdy Dutch stock, he was a well and healthy man most of his days. He was associated with Ezra Brewer with whom he operated the Brewer and Hartsen Grocery and Meat Store on the corner of East Avenue and Winton Road. He retired at the age of 63 along with Brewer, but Hartsen re-entered the meat business at 66. Finally leaving the meat market business, he spent his latter years selling insurance, although this was only moderately successful. But, as Mr. Hartsen once said, "If I hadn't done something like that, I might have bought wildcat stock and then where would I be?"

His only "vice", he said, was cigar smoking—and this he did enjoy thoroughly. He learned very early the irenic manner that marked his relationship with people. When he was 12, chopping wood for the fire, a piece flew up and struck him in the face. His father heard the sulphurous language that exploded and he took his son quickly into the house and said, "Son, if you've got to let off steam, whistle." "I've been a fair whistler since," Mr. Hartsen wryly commented many years later.

Young men went to him for advice, and were always met with understanding and patience. One person recalls talking with Adrian Hartsen about his desire to enter the butcher business. "You've got to study, and if you don't know how to cut up a cow, you won't make any money," was his sage advice. He worked all his life because, as he once said, "I'd rather wear out than rust out."

When he died it was not the material success of Adrian Hartsen that was eulogized. Of him it was said that "he retained in a profane and often careless generation a high regard for the sacredness of the name of Jesus Christ, his Saviour." His was the voice of this church for many years, in the community, in

the classis and in the wider councils of the church. Very few persons of this church were strangers to Mr. Hartsen's friendliness, his counsel and his love.

From December, 1896 to September, 1897 the church was without pastoral leadership. Four "trios" were formed and on the fourth the Rev. D. Laurence Betten accepted. He was installed by the Classis of Rochester on September 16, 1897. Born in Pella, Iowa in 1869, and graduated from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1894, Mr. Betten, a bachelor, came from the First Holland Reformed Church of Paterson, New Jersey, where he served from 1894-1897.

The church was handsomely decorated with flags and flowers and a large emblem "Welcome to Our Pastor" had been stretched across the arch back of the pulpit. A large number of beaming people greeted their new pastor and appropriate hymns were sung with special music by the choir under the direction of Mr. Rowerdink.

Mr. Betten wrote these gloomy words about his first few months at Brighton.

"When the present pastor began his labors the congregation was not in the best of condition financially and otherwise. Faithful elders had worked hard to encourage the people and keep them together, but the lack of pastoral work during the vacancy had a depressing influence upon the young church. The attendance upon the regular services was very small, contributions from the usual sources had decreased. The parsonage rent for that year, amounting to \$150, had not been paid. There was still an outstanding debt of \$125 with interest, an old debt of \$28 to lawyer Warren who had drawn up articles of incorporation. Three payments of \$75 each were still to be made on the organ, making together a total indebtedness of \$544.19."

Despite the inauspicious beginning Rev. Betten rapidly brought new life to the congregation. With the help of his faithful elders, visitation was made widely among the homes. The youth groups revived; the Women's Missionary Society grew steadily in its

support of the church; the Sunday School, under the direction of Mr. Pike, assisted by Mr. Rowerdink, flourished.



REV. D. LAWRENCE BETTEN

September 1897 -

September 1910

The whole congregation was saddened by the death of Mr. John Hartfeld on March 18, 1898. Mr. Hartfeld had joined the church right after its organization and for six years was "a great power for good" both in the church and in the Dugway Community where he lived. The congregation was further saddened by the death, June 25, 1898, of Josias De Back, one of the charter members, at the age of 86. Of Mr. De Back it was written that "... he was a faithful member of the First Church (before the organization at Brighton) and although it was a long walk from the Dugway where he lived to Oregon Street, his place in church at the Sunday services was never found empty." He understood music and loved to sing the psalms.

By the end of 1898, through the strenuous efforts of Mr. Rowerdink, treasurer, the financial condition of the congregation had improved to the point that the debt load had been appreciably reduced. For congregational purposes the people contributed \$1,765.42 in 1898 and \$188.91 for benevolences. Financial aid from the Board of Domestic Missions was still undergirding the work in Brighton.

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At a social in October, 1898 the pastor completely surprised his people by introducing to them "De juffrouw." The new Mrs. Betten received an enthusiastic welcome and the family was showered with handsome and useful gifts. The pastor's house, at first a bachelor's hall, now became a cheerful and inviting home.

At the close of 1898 the consistory again was enlarged by the addition of a fourth elder and deacon. Rowerdink continued to March, 1900, as treasurer but then requested to be relieved because of the "great stress in his business," a large and profitable carriage trade on East Avenue and then later one of Western New York's largest auto supply dealers. The office of treasurer was filled by Rokus Hallings. By September Mr. Hallings was able to pay most of the church debts which weighed so heavily on Mr. Betten's shoulders four years earlier. The records note that Mr. George Warren, the lawyer, very kindly deducted \$3.00 from his bill of \$28.00 despite his long wait for payment. The financial situation was further improved during the fall and winter of 1900 by 50 persons paying 5 cents a week extra for 20 weeks—the record of their payments being posted on a bulletin board placed in the church vestibule. No secrets here about stewardship!

Yet it was a grim struggle for the small church as evidenced by a note appearing about 1901. A \$75 payment on parsonage rent had not been made for that current year, nor was another payment of \$75 made in arrears. As Rev. Betten wrote —

"This was not quite as discouraging as it might first appear to one unacquainted with the facts. The owners of the building used as a parsonage were influential members of consistory and as they were not disposed to push a matter in which they themselves were financially concerned, it was the last thing to receive attention. But the arrears had to be paid . . ."

Mr. Rowerdink, who along with Mr. De Mallie and Mr. Pike had built the house and now rented it to the church, offered to give one dollar for every ten contributed by the members. In two weeks time the consistory and members, by united effort, raised

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the whole \$150. After payment of all debts there was a balance of 13 cents in the church treasury and Rokus Hallings was delighted!

Though it was a relief that the parsonage debt had been paid, very rapidly the congregation fell behind again. The old and faithful people who had rented their pews were falling away, and the younger ones coming into the church did not wish to rent pews. After a careful review of the situation Mr. Rowerdink proposed that small banks be placed in the homes to stimulate contributions. This, too, had little affect on the young people. Consequently the pastor proposed that the "old church," i. e., the chapel, which had been little used because of its unsuitable condition, be restored and small rooms be provided for class rooms and social functions that would provide more attractive opportunities for the young people to give expression to their Christian life. His proposition met with large favor but also with gloomy doubts as to the securing of funds. The congregation approved the venture with the stipulation that at least \$200 be on hand before work was commenced. Everyone rolled up their sleeves, solicitation was begun, volunteers came forward to help with the work and the necessary improvements were completed. A spirit of joy prevailed over the earlier gloom and it was a heartening experience for young and old. By May, 1903, bids were solicited for the work and a contract was let for \$527.50 to Viergever and Potter. The results of the solicitation exceeded even "the most sanguine expectation" and \$52.00 was left over and put in the church treasury.

The congregation was still not out of the financial jungle. The parsonage was a constant drain on energy and money. The house on Winton Road was built in 1895 and rented to the church at \$150 per year. The house had cost the owners \$3500 and they now proposed to sell it to the church for \$2500. Each of them, again coming to the rescue, promised to contribute \$100 to the purchase. The congregation therefore was called to approve a bank loan of \$2200 to take possession of the house and all twenty-five members present voted favorably on the proposition. Since the best loan obtainable was for only \$2000, it was necessary for Mr. Rowerdink and Mr. Adrian Hartsen to take

promissory notes for the difference. Church ownership of the parsonage therefore began February 1, 1904.

Again the method of raising funds had to be changed. The pew rental system had failed and the small banks apparently did not serve their purpose so Mr. Rowerdink, having again assumed the office of treasurer, proposed that each organization and Church School Class be given a quota to meet, the total of which would sustain the church budget. For several years this method worked quite well. How the organizations raised their quota is not known, except that it is remembered that the Ladies Missionary Society sold kerosene and matches, among other things, as a fund-raising device. A day of small profit margins, they cleared 1 cent on each gallon!

In August, 1904, Rev. Betten received a call from a church in Iowa but was persuaded by the Brighton consistory that his work was not finished here. At a consistory meeting, during a temporary absence of the pastor, they expressed their unanimous desire that he continue and through the good offices of Mr. Hallings, Rowerdink and Hartsen, he acceded to their request.

Mr. Betten's ministry was continuously beset with financial worries that usually confront a small and struggling church. Month by month bills were paid with meager funds at the consistory's disposal. Balances in the treasury were embarrassingly small. The acquisition of the parsonage brought upon the congregation the usual problems of a home ownership. There was a kitchen to repair, having been ignored for years. Sooty furnaces and plugged chimneys caused expenses to mount. Painting, wall-papering and other needs in the Winton Road home took much of the consistory's time and no small amount of their money.

The problems were further complicated by the intrusion of civilization. In April, 1905, Brighton village was annexed to the city of Rochester. No doubt this was cause for joy, but it did bring with it higher costs for city services.

There was the installation of water mains along Winton Road which made each property owner install new plumbing. In 1905 a contract was signed with the Lake Ontario Water Company to furnish water for the parsonage. Each member of

consistory was given a list of names to contact to raise money for this project, \$198 being raised within a few weeks. This was insufficient so the ladies came to consistory's aid. Mrs. J. B. Pike and Miss Kittie Van de Mare set themselves to the raising of funds. Much of the work that was needed in the parsonage was completed, but repairs to the church were deferred. Bathroom facilities were installed in the parsonage, but it was felt this was not necessary in the church.



REV. ANDREW STEGENGA  
February 1911 - February 1919

The city of Rochester then began to expand its sewer system. Winton Road was torn up and the large sewer pipes laid in place. This, too, brought no small amount of inconvenience and expense to the property owners. Blasting for the sewer lines caused damage to the parsonage, cracking the ceilings and bringing plaster falling upon the minister and his family. It cost the church \$8.75 to have one ceiling repaired, but the consistory was reluctant to pay the bill. It was tabled for two months, and referred to the contractor from whom they sought restitution. These were years when even a small bill of \$8.75 was challenged by the faithful guardians of the treasury.

While the parsonage enjoyed the convenience of city water, the church had to wait till 1912 for such facilities. When the Sunday School children wanted to drink, it fell upon Mr. Pike or Mr. Rowerdink to cross Blossom Road and draw water from a neighbor's well. The water pail and the traditional tin dipper were placed in the hallway of the church.

Electric lights came in 1907 in both parsonage and church, but only after a long and searching study by the consistory on the comparative costs with kerosene. It was thought that electricity would only cost the church \$3-4 a month and they decided they could afford this despite their shaky financial condition. The cost of installing electric lights was only \$158 in 1907 but a couple doubting Dutchmen were not ready to go all the way with new-fangled ideas. Two consistory men "took it upon themselves to see that lamps were put in shape in case of emergency." Even now, sixty years later we should not smile at their caution; we have known the time when a kerosene lamp would have been a great solace in the darkness of a power-failure!

Another major expense for the church was the necessity of laying sidewalks around the parsonage, a corner lot. Mr. M. A. Zonneville had a plan which he presented to consistory in March, 1906. His plan was approved, but he also was given the responsibility of soliciting funds to do the work. Apparently he did this with dispatch, for one year later, in his final report to consistory, he declared that the project had been completed and he turned over to the treasurer 50 cents which was all he had left from his solicitation! On such slim threads did most of the projects hang in those early days.

Not always was there a balance however. While much attention was being given to the parsonage, the church was going along with little or no work. Painting of the building had to be deferred time and again for lack of funds. Plumbing had to be installed. Electric wiring was done in 1907. All of these came slowly and with distressing drain on the treasury. Indeed, one interesting comment is made in the records about the installation of a water closet in the parsonage. The cost was only \$19.00, but this had to be raised by the efforts of a Bible Class, three individuals, and even Mrs. Betten, the minister's wife. This small

project went over the top when the people were able to sell an old pump for \$2.00!



### NELLIE HARTFELD'S CLASS OF GIRLS (1906)

Seated, left to right: Miss Hartfeld, Mamie Olderstein Kalsbeek, Jennie Tierson Minck. Standing, left to right: Bessie Hebbs VanBortel, Anna De-Young King, Elizabeth Dedie Miersen, Francis Chambery Mort.

Delays are not always a bad thing, or so at least the consistory found out when they invited bids finally for the church building. Over a year had elapsed when the painting was finally undertaken and the bid of \$165 for the church and \$10.00 for the horse sheds, was lower than any previous bid.

The "quota system" having failed to raise sufficient money, in 1907 pledge cards were introduced with the proviso that consistory would examine each pledge to make certain that it was a



Rev. Stegenga (standing), Jacob DeGraff (seated left), and Adrian Hartsen (seated, right). Mr. DeGraff was treasurer for 14 years.

"worthy gift." Betten introduced the envelope system, which is currently in use, in January, 1909.

Not all of Mr. Betten's ministry was marked by a dismal financial crisis. One event, the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary, was recorded with glorious optimism and unfeigned joy.

Services on Sunday, June 16, 1907 were filled beyond capacity. Decorations were profuse and beautiful. The pulpit platform was banked with greenery with here and there large floral bouquets. "Old Glory" was well represented and the flag of Holland, reminding the people of their Dutch ancestry. On a green background, over the front of the organ was a white arch having the words "Eendracht maakt macht" — "in union there is strength" — a part of the historic Reformed Church coat-of-arms. Special music was brought by the choir under the direction of Mrs. John Willink, and the congregation sang a number of their favorite Dutch psalms. Rev. Betten preached an appropriate sermon on a text from I Samuel — "hitherto the Lord has helped us."

During the Sunday School hour that followed this exhilarating worship, Mr. Rowerdink and Mr. Pike, who had organized the school in 1892 spoke of the early days. Mr. Adrian Hartsen, then

superintendent, was most optimistic of the future of this "nursery to the church." The school had grown considerably in those 15 years. Twenty officers and 250 scholars were on the rolls.

The evening service, with even the standing room filled, featured the children in singing and speaking, with vocal selections by William and John Willink.

There was reason for joy on this 15th anniversary. The church, despite the growing financial drain caused by its property, had become self-sustaining, the loans from the Board of Domestic Missions having been paid in full. From the 55 charter members the church had grown to 250 members.

Citations were read in appreciation for those who had rendered continuous service, Mr. and Mrs. Pike, Mr. and Mrs. Rowerdink, Mrs. J. W. Willink, Mr. Rokus Hallings and Miss Nellie Hartfeld.

Nellie Hartfeld was one of these dedicated teachers. She was a maiden lady, living with her parents in the Dugway. Miss Hartfeld ran a millinery business on Atlantic Avenue and University. Her mother often proudly said in broken English "My daughter is a 'millionaire'." She could not distinguish between the two words "millionaire" and "milliner", though her businesslike daughter undoubtedly knew the difference!

The note of cautious optimism, growing from this 15th anniversary, continued for some time. The church was growing in both numbers and in stewardship. The consistory was a forward-looking group even though many of their dreams were frustrated by the economies that were forced upon them. In 1910, Mr. Pike attempted to promote the purchase of the lot on the west side of the church. The consistory approved unanimously but then, later, changed their minds. At a congregational meeting the matter was thoroughly aired and in the discussion several consistorymen changed their vote. The people were reminded of the debt on the parsonage, and necessary sidewalk costs around the church. Because of the slimness of the congregational attendance and the obvious division within the consistory, the whole matter was dropped. One can imagine with a sigh of relief! This was the first of many futile attempts to buy this lot over the next 50 years.

Shortly after this time, August 22, 1910, Rev. Betten resigned to accept a call to the First Reformed Church of Marion, New York. Mr. Rowerdink, chosen chairman of consistory, expressed the reluctance with which the consistory joined in dissolving this pastorate of 13 years. Mr. Betten had earned the highest respect, admiration and love of his people.

He was a man characterized by zeal and thoroughness and breadth of outlook with a thoroughness of business management which served the congregation well. It was through his efforts and careful scholarship that we have the early history of this church, remembering that the records of the first twelve years were destroyed in the Sibley fire. We owe D. Laurence Betten all that we know about those first years.

Immediately following Mr. Betten's departure the congregation became involved in an unfortunate controversy that was to rock the church for seventeen years. Privately and otherwise conversations were being held concerning the advisability of changing from the Dutch language to English. On October 10, 1910, the congregation convened in a special meeting to discuss the matter officially. Mr. Rowerdink, Mr. Pike, Mr. Hartsen and Mr. OverBeeke urged the congregation to move toward services in the English language. They pointed out that it was not their desire to eliminate the Dutch language altogether, but simply to move it to a four o'clock service. Although it is not clear how their former pastor became involved, the Rev. Van Westenburg was present and he spoke of several churches where he knew that such a change had been made. He said, as English-speaking churches, "they prospered quite well." Two of the consistory spoke most strongly in favor of continuing the Dutch language. In the restrained language of the consistory minutes, it was recorded that "a heated discussion followed." We can believe that nothing in this church's experience so shook the foundations! By a vote of 25 to 56 the motion to change the language of the service was defeated, and the Dutch continued. Mr. Rowerdink and Mr. Pike expressed their keen disappointment.

That this disappointment cut very deep was almost immediately shown for, on October 24, consistory was again convened

by Mr. Rowerdink who had been elected vice-president for the period between pastors and at this meeting he submitted his resignation from consistory, requesting a letter of dismission for him and Mrs. Rowerdink and their daughter, Mamie, to Central Presbyterian Church. Members of consistory very earnestly pleaded with Mr. Rowerdink to reconsider his decision and to stay with the church where he had invested so much of his time and wealth. He refused. Obviously it was a principle on which he could not compromise. Even Mr. Hartsen's emotional plea could not change Rowerdink's mind, so, reluctantly, the letters of dismission were granted.

Mr. Jacob DeGraff was elected to fill the vacancy caused by Mr. Rowerdink's resignation and Mr. DeGraff administered the office of treasurer for over a decade. He was a faithful churchman and a responsible citizen of his community, having served as one of the pioneer trustees of Indian Landing School when it was but a one-room institution.

At this same fateful meeting Mr. J. B. Pike tendered his resignation also. Apparently the pleas of the consistory swayed Mr. Pike for he did not insist on his letter of dismission. His request for a letter of dismission was received by the consistory in January, 1911 and was tabled. It was the decision of consistory to leave this matter to the new pastor when he came. We do not know whether the men were unwilling to face up to this very difficult decision or whether they thought a new man might have a perspective that could heal the breach. At any rate, it was no easy matter for a new minister to step into! He probably was not aware of the internal strife caused by this serious breach over language.

While these internal stresses were tearing at the congregation, they were still faced with the necessity of finding a new minister. A "trio" again was set up and three men were invited to preach at Brighton. The congregation did not have the quick success that they had earlier. The first two men declined, necessitating three special congregational meetings before there was an acceptance. It is unlikely that all candidates were heard for despite the fact that three trios were formed, the whole matter consumed only a little over a month. On December 18, 1910,

the Rev. Andrew Stegenga of Clymer Hill, New York accepted the call at a salary of \$1,000 per year. He was installed by the Classis of Rochester on February 23, 1911.

His ministry was marked throughout by the internal struggle within the church centering on the language problem. Pastor Stegenga's ministry had to be one of reconciliation, a task for which he was singularly well prepared. He was born in North Holland, Michigan in 1881. His early years were spent in a bilingual congregation. He graduated from Hope College in 1906 and continued his studies at Western Theological Seminary. His experience in churches with a Dutch constituency and his keen awareness of the needs of young people made him a qualified spiritual leader during these years. However, it must be noted in retrospect that Mr. Stegenga never did clearly resolve the issue of Dutch versus English language. Possibly the fact that the First World War intervened — the concern of the congregation turning from parochial matters to world-wide matters—precluded a solution to the language problem.

Within two months after taking the pastorate of this church the Rev. Stegenga was faced with another, and totally unexpected, challenge. Not only did he have to find some sort of peaceable solution to the Pike resignation and the language problem, but now the church came under surprise pressure from the Classis of Rochester. In April, 1911, the Church Extension Committee of Classis met with the consistory and made known that "it was the intention of the Classis of Rochester to organize an English Reformed Church in the vicinity." With one voice the consistory of this church opposed such an invasion, arguing that it would injure the church and, furthermore, they did not see the necessity of another Reformed Church "if there were more English language in our own church." Obviously the pressures, both from within and without, were building up for a change that could only be a deeply disturbing one to many of the devout native Hollanders, still trying to maintain a vestige of their old-country heritage.

In the early years of Rev. Stegenga's ministry the same old problems cropped up. The church membership was growing slowly, the quarters were inadequate, real estate property was

continually depreciating, requiring more and more extensive repairs. The congregation was assembled many times to make decisions for the consistory.

One special congregational meeting gave consistory the authority to sell the old organ for \$1.00! Another congregational meeting approved the digging of a basement under the old chapel for the installation of inside bathroom facilities. Apparently the membership thought that the time had come for such modern conveniences! A week after the decision was made, the congregation again was assembled to give authority to the consistory to sell the old picket fence to Jacob Johnville for \$10.00. From 1896 to this date the Brighton Church presented a very lovely view of a white clap-board church surrounded by a white picket fence. But such fences are notoriously difficult to maintain in neat, trim shape, so it must have been with relief that finally they were able to get rid of it. Of course, their frugality would demand that some income be derived from its disposal. There still remained, on the back of the property behind the church, the horse-sheds, now becoming obsolete with the increasing use of the automobile.

The work on the basement was contracted but, for some reason, the contractor reneged on his commitments. Mr. John B. Pike stepped into the breach and finished the job. Apparently, by skillful diplomacy, the matter of his letter of dismissal was quietly dropped. He never again served on consistory yet at many times he did step in to assist the consistory in building projects. Mrs. Pike continued for many years in her active role as church woman.

During this time the women continued to play an important role, especially in financial matters. The Ladies Aid had done innumerable small services for the church by providing furnishings such as rugs, linoleum, kitchen appliances, etc. Now, at the annual congregation meeting in 1912, Miss Nellie Hartfeld, one of the Sunday School teachers, and Mrs. Rokus Hallings, presented the treasurer with a gift of \$100 to apply on the parsonage mortgage. Financial aid came in other forms of cooperation. Mr. Johnville's class was given permission to outfit one of the class

rooms in the basement, and a few months later the Sunday School was requested to take a special offering to provide chairs for Mr. Johnville's new class room.



### AN EARLY CONSISTORY

(Circa 1915)

Front Row, left to right: Jacob Scheerens, Rev. Andrew Stegenga, Rokus Hallings, Jacob DeGraff. Back Row, left to right: Frank DeWolf, Frank Ghysels, Peter Tiersen, John Willink, Jacob Van Bortel, Adrian Hartsen.

The congregation was slowly creeping up on their financial burdens. The consistory voted to receive only one offering on a Sunday (apparently they had been receiving two each Sunday) and at the end of 1914 the decision was made to begin the use of duplex envelopes, "one side for us and one side for others." The duplex envelope system was inaugurated in 1915 and, from the very beginning, \$10 to \$15 each month was received for overseas mission work. The new method of receiving contributions was introduced with an every-member-canvass, a procedure that has succeeded down through the years to become standard steward-

ship practice. Mr. Stegenga was the father of this idea in the Brighton Church although the plan was not original with him.

Being infectious, optimism was growing now. When the Classis of Rochester held its stated meeting in the Brighton Church in the fall of 1916, the delegate hopefully expressed the belief that the parsonage would be paid off by spring of 1917. To this end special offerings were received and the membership mobilized for action. As the records stated, "a good spirit was in every heart and all saw that it needed about \$300 . . . the ladies took the matter in hand . . ."

Perhaps it was the general optimism that was sweeping the nation at the close of the World War; possibly relief from the rigors of those difficult years of death and destruction. Whatever its cause the Brighton Church was demonstrably radiant at the close of the year 1918.

At 7 o'clock in the evening on December 31, 1918, the members met at the church for a supper. The business meeting was opened with prayer by Elder Rokus Hallings, the oldest member of the church. Several songs were sung in both English and Dutch and the meeting proceeded to elect officers for the ensuing year. Rev. Stegenga made an urgent plea to do something bold about the improvements that were necessary and which were causing a steady drain on the treasury. Moved by the plea, and responding immediately, the people at that meeting subscribed \$270.50 to start a new thrust toward financial security. After this glorious response, a Midnight Watch service was held and prayers were offered by men and women, "general hand-shaking and wishing each other Godspeed in the New Year ended this remarkable and successful meeting."

This was Rev. Stegenga's last exhortation to service. Two weeks later he tendered his resignation to accept a call in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The dissolution of the pastorate was immediately, but regretfully, consummated.

Not only was this the close of Mr. Stegenga's ministry in Brighton, but tragically, it was the end of his ministerial career. Only six months after his installation in the Grand Rapids church, he was killed in an explosion in the parsonage. A

memorial service for him was held in the Brighton Church on September 3, 1919.

This marked the close of the first quarter century of the First Reformed Church in Brighton. So deeply involved were the Hollanders that there apparently was little note taken of the larger movements of history. For example, in this first quarter the nation was involved in two wars—the Spanish American War and the First World War—yet no mention is made of the former, and very little of the latter.

On February 15, 1898 the battleship Maine was destroyed in Havana harbor by an explosion that precipitated the war with Spain. So far as we know, none of our families was touched by this conflict though Rochester did send quite a few men to fight on both land and sea.

The story of the First World War was quite different. By the Armistice of 1918 the church had 23 men in the services, though there is no mention in the consistory minutes of either the war nor of special memorial services. In April, 1919 a Mrs. Van der Mallie did request consistory for a memorial service for her son who died in France, and the request was granted. Members of the church who served the nation were:

John Anderson	Peter Ghyzell
Edward Chambery	Jacob Johnville
Jacob De Brine	Howard Minck
Peter De Brine	Cornelius Olderstein
Charles De Hollander	George Rapp
John De Roo	Henry Tallie
George De Roo	Peter Watermeulen
Anthony De Die, Jr.	Clarence Willink
Abram De Witt	Edward Zonnevylle
Abraham Ghyzell	

Four men lost their lives in France; Edward Bowman, Isaac Scheerens, Isaac Tierson and Michael Zander Zell. Isaac Tierson, a member of Company H, 108th Infantry, Twenty Seventh Division, was killed in the drive on the Hindenburg Line on September 29, 1918. A memorial service was held at the church.

Isaac Scheerens sailed for France, August, 1918, and was wounded on November 11, 1918—the day of the Armistice. He died on December 14, 1918.

Michael Vander Zell entered the service in April, 1918, at the age of 25 and was killed six months later in the battle of the Argonne.

This first quarter century was characterized by the concern for building both of real property and of membership in the fellowship of the church. It was a period of intense struggle to keep the buildings in good repair, little thought being given to expansion of teaching facilities.

By the year 1917 there were 129 families associated with the church consisting of 241 individuals or communicant members. The Sunday School enrollment was 300 students and staff.

The financial statement of that year showed an income of \$3,405 for current expenses of the church, including an \$1100 salary for the minister, \$145 per year for the sexton and \$45 per year for the organist. One-half of that income for current expenses was designated for the payment of the mortgage and the maintenance of the parsonage. Three hundred sixty-one dollars was contributed to various benevolent objects from foreign mission work to prison work (a gift of \$11.80 was sent to a convict #1122).

Growth was not spectacular during that first quarter, but it was steady. From 55 charter members to 241 hardly kept up with the population increase in the city of Rochester. Stewardship growth was even more modest. The congregation had not yet felt the call to wider Christian service that it was to hear and respond to in later years.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# A Time of Peaceful Loyalty

Life in the Brighton Church at the beginning of the second quarter century was characterized by Pastor Henry C. Jacobs as "a time of peaceful loyalty to the church activities." Though a period of internal growth, there was also a new and exciting consciousness of the community. The people of Brighton Church were increasingly turning their eyes outward and seeking to serve the larger community.

This was a critical time for the nation. World War I had ended with the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918. People were returning to normal pursuits while industry had to gear itself to peace-time production. Into this critical post-war era the church journeyed with timid steps.

The consistory, desiring to honor the returning veterans, set aside a modest sum to treat the men to a supper, an oversubscribed affair that left a balance of \$8 which was transferred to an organ fund! To perpetuate the memory of the men who lost their lives the consistory thought it appropriate to erect an outside bulletin board. In an interesting exchange of ideas for financing this project, it was finally decided that the Pastor should canvass the returning veterans for a gift of five dollars apiece. If they were unwilling to pay it, the minister was authorized to proceed anyway, using church funds. Apparently this was more of a task than at first appeared for the bulletin board was not purchased until three years later!

In 1919, after two unsuccessful attempts to get a minister, consistory's third call was accepted by the Rev. Henry C. Jacobs who came from a two-year pastorate in Albany, New York. Henry Christian Jacobs was born in Newkirk, Iowa, July 13, 1889. He was graduated from Hope College in 1914 and Western Seminary in 1917. He received his Master's degree the same year.

A Rochester Historical Society publication credited this church, under his direction, with pioneer work in the area of religious education. Weekday classes in religious instruction were conducted for elementary school students from School 28 and

later School 46. A paid staff of teachers provided the instruction for which tuition was charged. This was a part of a city-wide program conducted by the Rochester Federation of Churches in which Brighton became increasingly active under the constant efforts of Adrian Hartsen and Rev. Jacobs.

Slowly the church began to launch into activities that we take for granted now. Prior to 1920 there was, for example, no attempt to publicize church activities, no worship bulletins, no secretary and no office equipment. Mr. Jacobs, however, owned a duplicator and the consistory agreed to have him print church bulletins for which they would pay him. Annual reports began to appear in printed form and even a monthly news bulletin appeared.

A new and vigorous interest grew in church music. In 1920 a major fund drive was launched by Mr. Hartsen to make possible the purchase of a large pipe organ. A thorough canvass of members who were solicited by him netted over \$3,000 in pledges. Late in the year a Moller pipe organ was purchased for \$4,225 and dedicated with a recital at which a free-will offering netted over \$700 more. Still the frugal people as ever, the consistory



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advertised the old organ for \$150. There apparently were no takers so the organ was broken down, stored in the basement for some time, and finally the wood was disposed of for \$5.00. While in the mood for getting rid of obsolete equipment, the consistory also sold the wagon sheds, the last evidence of the horse and buggy age, for \$65.00.

Increasing demands for space forced the consistory to seek more efficient use of the building. A major project took shape in 1922 when the men proceeded with the digging of a basement under the church mainly with volunteer labor and the assistance of a horse and wagon to carry away the shale. This additional space permitted class rooms for the school and a place for social activities. A little over six months later the job was done, the first building project undertaken almost exclusively with volunteers including the Rev. Jacobs who rolled up his sleeves and did his part.

Mr. Jacobs was well liked by his people and apparently had attracted the attention of other churches in the denomination. He had received two calls both of which he declined. In appreciation the congregation raised his salary, gave him a gift of \$200 and even agreed to buy him a new Ford sedan "if he was willing to turn in the old machine."

In these early years of the decade there was a rising consciousness of social problems and community morality. A committee was formed to see that prohibition laws were enforced and the anti-Saloon League was given several audiences on a Sunday morning along with financial support. The consistory exerted its influence to get a library in the area and cooperated in many ways with the Rochester Christian School operated by the Christian Reformed Church. Consistory even wrote the mayor of Rochester complaining about the condition of the old Corinthian Theater. Delegates, usually Mr. Hartsen, were sent regularly to the Rochester Federation of Churches and the congregation supported the many "tent meetings" which were being held in the 1920's. The evangelistic zeal was apparently burning brightly in these post-war years for the pastor promoted the wearing of "Go To Church" buttons in an attempt to encourage church attendance.

The emphasis upon Christian education that characterized the times was further illustrated by the procedures adopted in receiving new members. Before the 1920's it was usually a casual event to receive new people; often times the individual did not even appear before consistory. Now a new plan was instituted and followed for a few years. Elders and deacons participated in an evening of instruction for adults. At one session Mr. Edward Vanderlinde talked about church attendance; Mr. Hartsen on "reverence for, in and about the House of God"; Mr. Herbert DeBlik on "Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon" and Mr. Scheerens on "How to Live an Unselfish Life by Helping Others." The deacons explained the financial requirements. Church membership, with its attendant responsibilities, was finally being taken seriously.

In these early days the consistory also took seriously their responsibility for the discipline of their members. Though discipline is still exercised today, formerly it was a matter of discussion among all elders how the church deported itself. One man was denied membership because "of a lack of spiritual understanding and things." What these "things" were that fell short of the Christian profession of faith we will never know! Another man was admonished to close his store on the Lord's day; still another was reprimanded for "abusing his daughter." Several times individuals were admonished about keeping their pledges current or their membership would be terminated. All of these disciplinary actions were taken in fine Christian spirit of reconciliation, and usually it was the peacemaker, Mr. Adrian Hartsen, upon whom fell the task of confronting the individuals with their responsibility of Christian witness. Consistory, during one period of our church life, gave the minister authority to suspend certain members who did not attend worship services during a specified four-week period.

Further interest in worship was shown by the growing concern about music. After the purchase of the Moller Organ, more attention was given to choir problems. Mr. Harry Remein, an excellent organist, had been employed and he took this ministry with great seriousness. He urged members to sing in the choir; he pleaded for more sopranos; he petitioned consistory to "do

something" about choir attendance at rehearsals. He even was able to convince the parsimonious consistory to pay a weekly fee for a lead soprano. Remein continued as organist until late in the 1920's, although his duties as choir director had been taken over by Mr. John Johnville, who served many years faithfully and well in that capacity.

Several abortive attempts were made to organize junior choirs but none were successful for very long.

In the meantime, attention again was given to expanding the physical plant. Serving on consistory during these years was Mr. Edward Vanderlinde, a man with the needed business knowledge to provide capable leadership.

Mr. Vanderlinde started in the electrical contracting business in his home, 971 Winton Road, in 1921, one year after he was first elected to consistory. The first two men that he employed were Thomas Chambery and Marene Asbrook, both of whom were members of the church. Mr. Asbrook still is. Despite the large demands of the business on his time, he was able to serve on consistory most effectively. Particularly during the latter years he was faithful in attendance and gave capable service in the several responsibilities thrust upon him. Mr. Vanderlinde taught a class of young men and, for several years, he was superintendent of the church school. His greatest contribution to church life was in financial matters. He served on the Building Committee for the new parsonage in 1928 and was a "kind of fellow who took hold". From 1933 to 1935 he served as vice-president of consistory.

Because the aging parsonage was causing immediate headaches it was decided to dispose of it and to purchase a new home. A minimum sales price was established but no buyer was found. It was to be quite a financial burden for many years yet. Then, too, there was still concern for more space around the church building. Someone came up with an interesting idea of forming among the laymen a corporate partnership to purchase the lot on the west side of the church and to rent parking space for cars at 25 cents a Sunday. When the lot had been paid off ownership was to revert to the church. Nothing ever came of this ingenious proposal. This particular property figured in many

discussions over the years but lack of interest always killed any thought of expansion until 20 years later.

The new basement, while providing much needed space, also brought its problem in housekeeping. Apparently, unruly and capricious youngsters (we have them in every generation) were abusing their privileges downstairs and the consistory found it necessary to appoint a "Police Committee" whose duty it was to "watch the basement" each Sunday evening. Undoubtedly much of the trouble grew out of a rapidly expanding number of youth which taxed even this new addition.

Rev. Jacobs resigned on May 23, 1927 to accept a call to a church in Iowa. His pastorate of seven years had seen substantial growth in the church school and in many improvements in the worship of the congregation. As he rightfully said "It was a period of quiet loyalty" with more emphasis on spiritual rather than financial matters. It was, in retrospect, a breathing time before the tremendous surge that was to follow in the next two decades.

The Rev. Richard Blocker was called by the consistory to be the fifth minister of the church. His installation, heralded by



REV. RICHARD J. BLOCKER  
September 1927 - May 1929

what was then a massive mailing effort, took place on September 20, 1927. The church was slowly learning the value of widespread news coverage. Mr. Blocker spent less than two years in Brighton. On May 21, 1929, he resigned to return to Owasco, New York, the church from which he had come only 18 months earlier. It is said that he had frequent visits from old friends in that church and the pressure grew until he decided to go back.

His short stay in Brighton was the prelude to another period of bustling activity. In 1929 consistory decided to build a new parsonage, having given up the idea of a quick sale of the old Winton Road property. A lot was purchased and a new house built at 219 Arbordale Avenue. It was ready for the new pastor who came very shortly.

On March 13, 1930, the Rev. Anthony Luidens was installed by the Classis of Rochester as pastor of this church, commencing the longest pastorate in the history of the church, a ministry of twenty-five years.

Anthony Luidens was born in New Holland, Michigan, December 6, 1885. He received an A. B. degree from Hope College in 1912 and was graduated from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1915 with a Bachelor of Divinity degree. In 1928, Mr. Luidens received a Master of Theology degree from New Brunswick and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Hope College in 1941. He served the Reformed Church of Highland Park, New Jersey for eleven years before accepting the call to Brighton in 1930.

A housewarming was scheduled in June, 1930 but was postponed "because the grass was not hardy enough". In October nearly 300 people came to visit their new pastor and his family and to inspect the new parsonage.

Immediately upon Mr. Luidens' arrival, changes were made. He reorganized the consistory, established several committees to supervise more efficiently the growing areas of concern, and encouraged the use of more laymen in this work of governance. The consistory was enlarged and a three-year term established. Complete records of consistory meetings were kept, typed by a part-time secretary. This was the first time that the church

began to think about a staff to carry on the increasing administrative responsibilities of the ministry.

Shortly after his arrival, Rev. Luidens reopened the discussion about enlarging the church facilities. A congregational meeting was called in March, 1931, to air the problem again before the whole congregation. Because consistory had not done its homework, no action was taken. Only one site, at Winton Road and Juniper, was offered and this was not acceptable to many people. They wanted an alternate location and none was offered. Clearly something had to be done, however, because the city streets were being widened and the Blossom Road project was about to take a few precious feet from a plot that was already crowded. Though nothing came of this renewed attempt to get moving, nevertheless an application was made with the Board of Domestic Missions for a \$25,000 loan against the day when the idea would be more acceptable. Hopes of building were dimmed by the crushing economic disaster of 1929-1933. Income from pledges fell alarmingly in these depression years. Money had to be borrowed from members to take care of repairs; rent from the old parsonage was in arrears. Volunteers came forward to help with maintenance. James DeGraff's Sunday School class made an extra room under the Blossom Road steps with a mere \$25.00 advance from consistory. A number of men under John De Roo contracted to paint the church at 50 cents an hour with the consistory providing the material. The men, however, had to pay their own liability insurance. Once more the Brighton Church went through a period of spartan economy.

Despite the difficult depression-heavy days, congregational life continued with ever-increasing concern for Christian education and particularly youth work.

In 1934 a group of boys, junior and senior high age, approached Mr. Carl Pearson requesting him to be their leader and teacher. Out of this came the Better Boy Builders Class which continued for several years until the young men had left for school. One of the impressive contributions of this group was the publication of a monthly magazine, the Brighton-er.

John Olyslager served as its editor and Edwin Luidens as the business manager. The entire publication was the responsi-

bility of these young men. News of church life was gathered, edited, sent to an out-of-town publisher and circulated among the members of the church. The cost was met entirely by advertising and by subscriptions, both of which were obtained by men of the class. This publishing venture was truly an ambitious one for young men, and that it met with considerable success is indicated by the number of years that the Brighton-er appeared.

Another aspect of youth work was the organization of Troop 74, Boy Scouts of America. Rev. Luidens is credited with getting this started, but our success in Scouting may be attributed to the serious work of Carl Pearson who served many offices in the



DR. ANTHONY LUIDENS

March 1930 - December 1954

scouting movement. Troop 74's charter has never been terminated, now covering a period of nearly fifty years.

During all these years work with the youth continued through the Sunday School and the Christian Endeavor under the superb leadership of many individuals. The youth groups had shone brightly and then dimmed, but always there was a resurgence as the leaders kept alert. In the Sunday School there were such devoted and dedicated teachers as Mrs. Mae Hubregsen, who has the most impressive length of service in

this educational work, and her sister Mrs. Frances Tait. It was Mrs. Hubregsen who devised the name of one of the women's organizations — the Golden Rule Class. Another woman's class, the King's Workers, of about the same time, was taught for a while by Mrs. Blanche Selner and then for the next twenty years by Mrs. Luretta Howell. Bertha Easely Bacon and Grace DeHollander Antes were teachers in the Junior Department who brought inspiration to many of their young "protéges" who, in later years, themselves became youth leaders. Miss Janna De Graff was one of these who provided long service in the Christian Endeavor movement.

However, one individual stood out because of her wide interests and long service—Miss Sarah Cambier. Her contributions to this church were unique. Born of Abram and Dina Cambier, she was baptized by Rev. Van Westenburg at the first celebration of the sacrament after the church was organized. Through the past 50 years she has been very active in the educational work of the church, having begun teaching in 1920. Her "girls" grew up with her as the years passed. In April, 1930, the Golden Rule Class was formed and Sarah taught this group until 1958, at which time it was merged with all other women's groups to form the Women's Guild for Christian Service. Few are the people in this church today who have not come under her Christian example and concern.

Parenthetically, it might be added that in addition to Miss Cambier there are four others still active in our church life who were baptized in that first class of Rev. Van Westenburg's. Cora (DeCook) Vanderlinde, John De Roo, Elizabeth (Bodine) Lash and Marinus Vander Brooke were also baptized in 1892.

The fiftieth anniversary, closing out the second quarter century, was celebrated in dignified simplicity with a communion service which marked, also, the departure of the Rev. Roland Pickhardt who had been brought to Brighton to assist Rev. Luidens in the pastoral work while he was on leave of absence for denominational fund raising. The choir, under the leadership of H. Maxwell Ohley, organist and director, offered a spring concert as a part of the celebration. Guest soloist for that occa-

sion was one William Warfield. Apparently we must have caught Mr. Warfield on the way up for he has since become one of the most outstanding basses of the Metropolitan Opera.

The personal magnetism of Mr. Luidens, his compassionate interest in people and his boundless energy took him into many community activities. His whole ministry was marked by frequent assignments by the Rochester Federation of Churches and various fraternal organizations. In all his professional and business contacts he never failed to remind people of the church which he served at the corner of Blossom and Arbordale.

One little story that illustrated Dr. Luidens frequent references to his church had as its main character a bottle of Italian wine. Dr. Luidens and Henry De Roo were looking for an apartment for an immigrant Dutch family. They discovered that an acquaintance of theirs owned an apartment above his cobbler shop. The three men discussed the rental of the apartment. At its conclusion the owner, wishing to seal the deal, gave Dr. Luidens a bottle of fine wine. Both Dr. Luidens and Mr. De Roo, being tee-totalers, didn't quite know what to do. Finally, after the bottle had passed embarrassed hands several times, Mr. Luidens handed the bottle back to the owner and asked him to give it to one of his friends as a gift from the pastor in the church down on the corner. The owner often said what a fine priest "Father" Luidens was!

But a sign of the times appeared in the mid-thirties that was to be prophetic of the future of this "little church on the corner". A small notice appeared in the Brighton-er, November, 1935, thanking the Property Committee for a new street sign "Do Not Park During Worship". It was hailed as an improvement. But the problems that accompanied growing pains in the church were not to be solved by a sign. Pressures were growing for more space, new buildings, better facilities. All this was to consume much energy and money during the next quarter century.

## CHAPTER SIX

## A Seventeen-year Problem

The story of the first half-century of the Brighton Reformed Church has been told, at least that part of it that deals with brick, mortar, lumber, roof repairs, financial drives and the myriad of matters that focus on property and buildings. But this is only a part of the narrative. A church is people, families worshipping together, boys and girls studying together; this is a large story only part of which can ever be recorded. There were some events that had considerable bearing on the life of the church. One of these was the slow transition from the Dutch to the English language. Because it loomed so large in the deliberations of the congregation many years ago, the story bears telling. Let us, first, turn back to the early years and sketch the growth of a worshipping fellowship of Christians as they labored over the problems of a tiny group of people struggling to worship in a culture quite different from their childhood days in the old country.

There is little difference between the way our congregation worships in the 1960's and the way our fathers worshipped seventy five years ago. Surely the Word, which is at the center of Protestant worship, has not changed. The Holy Scriptures, though in newer translations now, remain the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. The ordained minister is called to preach the word for the "equipping of the saints" who, as the church in the world, become the "priesthood of all believers." If the Word remains the same, the world does not. So we would expect the topics of sermons and the 19th century prose to have been superseded by more timely topics and a different vocabulary.

The contrast in ways of worshipping lies in the environment, not in the service itself. Now we are accustomed to many sounds from the sonorous 16 foot diapason to the light reeds and the brassy trumpet of the "queen of instruments" — the organ. We expect to see a robed choir in church services. Often, in the larger churches, we expect to hear two or even three choirs during a single service. We use spotlighting on the communion

table and the pulpit; we raise and dim the lights in the nave for the convenience of the congregation. A public address system makes hearing easy in the last pew and even pipes the service into other areas of the church for those who cannot attend worship services. All these modern attributes of worship are largely taken for granted. We drive cars to church, park them conveniently nearby, and hurry off with the intonation of the benediction. But imagine walking two, maybe three, miles down a dirt road, in winter and summer alike, to go to church. Imagine sitting on hard benches, in an unevenly heated room, sparingly lighted with kerosene lamps nestled in wall brackets. In the early worship services there was no choir, although a small organ was obtained secondhand and used for many years. The austerity of that age is in sharp contrast with today.

True to the Reformation principle the old church was a pulpit-centered church. Even in the first chapel the pulpit with the open Bible was the worship center. When, in 1896, the addition was put on, the centrality of the preached Word was emphasized by placing the pulpit in the center of the nave. Behind the pulpit the organ was situated and a place for the choir.

Though the organ was a small one, nevertheless it required two people to operate it! The organist, of course, played the instrument, but without air the organist would be helpless. So the church employed a bellows boy, sometimes called organ pumper, to sit in a little alcove at the side of the organ where he pushed back and forth on a vertical lever that operated a bellows which in turn provided air for the instrument. One of our members, who was a bellows boy for a time, remembered what a time they had when the organist was playing a particularly lively hymn. It took a lot of air, and a lot of air took a lot of energy from a young lad! Often the sweating bellows boy could be seen through a gap in the curtains, pushing back and forth, much to the amusement of the children in the pews. For these services the young men were paid up to \$15.00 a year, although some of them never saw the money! One boy's mother made him turn back most of the money as his offering! Possibly this was intended to be an apprentice program for the young lads who were bellows boys eventually assumed much larger responsibilities in the church, even to serving on consistory.

If, in the early days, there was no choir, the lack was apparently made up by hearty congregational participation in the hymn singing. One lady said, "I was impressed with the singing of the congregation. Sometimes I was late and would come hurrying down the street back of Blossom Road. The little church, I thought, would surely burst its sides with the joyful songs of worship." Apparently these Hollanders knew how to use their Dutch psalm books!

The offering, for many years, was received by pushing a cloth bag, tied to the end of a long pole, in front of the worshippers sitting in the pews. Many a button found its way into the secret recess of these bags. Deacons were responsible for the receiving of the offering in these days before ushers. There were no bulletins giving the order of worship. Everyone seemed to know the direction of worship and sensed its movement without printed instructions.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion was observed, prior to 1918, with the passing of a common cup. A change in this came about in an interesting way.

In the 1890's, in response to a public health movement, the question of the use of the common cup at communion services was raised in the churches of Rochester. Dr. Stebbins, pastor of Central Presbyterian Church, had asked a doctor friend to present a paper before the Rochester Pathological Society on "the danger attending the prevalent custom of passing the cup." The Society passed pertinent resolutions in December, 1893, and the Session of Central Church took favorable action to use "a small individual tumbler, about sixty of which could be placed on a tray of convenient size." On May 13, 1894, communion was celebrated in Central Church with individual cups, the first time in modern history in any church.

The Brighton Church was slow to follow. The matter did not receive any attention until 1918 when the consistory debated the use of individual cups. An action was taken by the consistory to make the change, but two months later, this action was rescinded until the matter could be referred to the congregation at their annual meeting. Again, early in December, the consistory reconsidered the matter and, this time, decided not to

leave it to a congregational vote. Apparently the men decided that this was a matter for the elders to take the lead. At any rate, the change was made without evidence of even a little stir.

Recalling those days of the common cup, one member exclaimed "It seemed to us kids an odd thing to pass that cup among those men with their mustaches!"

The care of the new communion ware was left to the elders and it seems that for years, Elder Hartsen and his family took care of the preparation of the elements and the cleaning of the cups after communion.

During these first years the care of the sanctuary was given to the sexton who was employed by the consistory. An interesting pattern was set very early in the selection of this man. In the spring of each year, bids were invited from members of the congregation who were interested in doing the work. An announcement would be made on a Sunday, the bid would be received shortly thereafter, and one month later the appointment would be made. Always the job was given to the lowest bidder, a fact that led to some interesting situations. Mr. Corteville was the first sexton and he held the job for many years, at an unknown salary. He resigned on account of illness and age somewhere around 1906, followed somewhat later by Jacob Bodine who was sexton for many years. The monthly salary, which, for years had been \$12.00, now was raised to \$15.00. However, one consistoryman thought it could be done cheaper so he submitted a bid of \$12.00 and was immediately awarded the job, thus displacing a man who had done the work for many years. Down through the years this bidding procedure was followed, and usually the same two men would be bidding, each within a dollar of each other! One year the low bidder stipulated that his bid should be considered only if the church was willing to get a vacuum cleaner! They didn't, so he lost the job. By the time the church had expanded its facilities to include basement classrooms in the early 1920's the salaries had been increased to \$45.00 a month.

No problem was so vexing to the congregation of the Brighton Reformed Church as was the delicate matter of what language to use in the worship services. It plagued the members and

consistory from 1910 to 1927, a period of 17 years during which numerous polls were taken, heated discussions marked the consistory meetings and probably innumerable private conversations were sparked among individuals who felt very strongly on this matter.

The Brighton Church, being a child of First Reformed Church and organized by some of her Dutch members, would be expected to follow the Dutch customs. Some members were strongly opposed to Americanization. The Holland culture that they had left behind was not to be sacrificed in their new life in this country. Because this church had always been a strong family-oriented church and because most of the families were still speaking Dutch, their native tongue was found most natural in the worship services.

Though it was a vain defense of their Holland language, it took thirty-five of the first seventy-five years to resolve the problem completely, and then it came about in a strange manner.

To understand the deep emotional disturbance that was created it is necessary to remind ourselves of the background of our members. Most of them were born in Holland, having come to this country by sailboat with their parents. In a strange land and starting with almost nothing in the way of worldly goods these people naturally formed a closely-knit sociological group, bound by the one common denominator of language. Though they spoke Dutch in the home and in private conversations, most of the children of these families spoke English in the schools. This was the beginning of the erosion of the Dutch language, but it was to take many years to bring about change.

The Rev. Van Westenburg, the first minister, chose to preach the morning service in the Holland language and the evening service in English. This apparently was accepted without much overt opposition for 18 years. However, in an eventful congregational meeting of October 10, 1910, the subject of language came to the boiling point. The consistory referred the matter to a congregational vote. Their proposal was carefully worded. They did not want to remove the Holland language entirely. They did propose to use English in the morning service and hold an after-

noon service in the Dutch for those who still spoke the mother tongue and enjoyed singing the familiar Dutch psalms. The proposal of consistory was voted down by a 25 to 56 decision. It appeared that the mind of the congregation was swayed by an emotional and urgent plea of two consistorymen whose arguments carried the day. This precipitated the resignation and the request for dismissal of the Rowerdink family and the resignation of Mr. Pike. John Pike's resignation was never acted upon.

Only six months after this action by the congregation the church was under pressure by the Classis of Rochester who sent a special committee to Brighton advising them that it was the Classis' intention of organizing an English-speaking church in the community. The consistory's response was "that they did not see the necessity of another church if more English services were offered here." However, they took few steps, if any, to move in that direction. The intention of Classis was never implemented since they were too concerned with new churches being organized in the Sodus and Williamson area. With Classis' attention directed elsewhere, this church continued its policy of emphasizing the Dutch service.

Yet there was an under-current of concern for ministering to the English-speaking people in the community, a concern that was probably strengthened by the desire to hold the younger people. Many youngsters would come to church with their parents and, with feet dangling loosely from the seat and eyes staring out the windows or hands busy drawing pictures, they would waste away the time till the benediction. Such childish pursuits were usually summarily reprimanded with a slap on the hand or an intense whispered warning. However, the lesson to be learned was plain. Something had to be done about making the worship hour meaningful to all people.

In October, 1912, two years after this painful matter had been opened, the consistory acted to increase the English services. After many private discussions with the members, the consistory proposed to have English services on the first and third Sundays and the Holland services on the second and fourth. To indicate how grudgingly this skirmish was fought, the men even made arrangements for those months that had five Sundays!

The first five-Sunday month of the year would be in Dutch, and then the minister would alternate with English on other five-Sunday months.

The proposal was brought to the members who ratified it by a vote of fifty-one to thirty. The new plan was instituted immediately and presumably was followed for the next four years. Again in 1916 consistory was faced with the tensions growing out of increasing pressure for more English services. This time, with grim determination, several committees sought to find out the will of the whole membership. They talked about it privately and then, in January, 1917, put the question to a vote for the third time. Eighty-two members chose to continue with the Holland language on alternate Sunday mornings and fifty-seven voted in favor of dropping the Dutch language completely. The matter was thought to be resolved by this forthright frontal attack on the problem, but it wasn't.

Only six months later the consistory felt that it was necessary to warn the members that unless attendance were to increase at the Dutch services they would be terminated. Obviously the newer members in the church, born in this country and educated in the city schools, were beginning to strengthen the case for English services. No action was ever taken, however, and the congregation continued for another four years, almost as two congregations.

During this time special appeals for funds were taken both to the English group and the Dutch group. When committees were assigned, two groups were organized, one for the English and another for the Dutch membership. During these years there was little evidence of dissension or lack of unity. It was simply a matter of part of the congregation worshipping in a Dutch service and part, usually the younger ones, worshipping in the only language they knew.

A little flurry of excitement came again in 1921 when consistory discussed the dropping of the native tongue. Though a motion was made, it was tabled, re-opened for discussion, but no decision ever came from the discussion.

In January, 1923, careful preparations again were made to resolve this issue. The minister was instructed to appoint a committee of three people not on consistory, to be present at the counting of ballots. Mr. Brough, Isaac De Roo and William Tier-son were appointed to represent the congregation. Two days were to be allowed for balloting and on February 5, 1923, the committee in the presence of the consistory tallied ballots. The vote, after being confirmed by a re-count, stood at ninety-four in favor of English and ninety-three in favor of Dutch. What could you do with a score like that? Well, the consistory did about all that could be done. They threw the ballots out and declared them void! Apparently Mr. Brough, Mr. De Roo and Mr. Tier-son could see no use in their getting any deeper into this so Mr. Brough moved that on the next ballot consistory be empowered to act. By this time the interest of the congregation had become so intense that six men attended the meeting to observe the counting of the ballots. The roll-call vote was made a part of the minutes and we still have the names of those voting and how they voted. From observation of the list there is little doubt that painstaking care was taken in recording the wishes of the members. One name was disqualified because the person was not a member and another because he voted twice.

This attempt at democratic procedures having failed to give a clear decision, the consistory decided to have still another ballot three months later, but it never materialized. No reference was made again to the issue of the language for four years. It was not until January 3, 1927, that the minutes abruptly ended the issue with the statement that "it was decided that the Dutch service should be discontinued . . . on account of the rapid falling off of interest and attendance."

Thus closed a very long and painful struggle in the Brighton Church. It took nearly 17 years to resolve, and even then, after many fruitless ballots, the issue simply withered and died. By that time so many people had come to use English fluently that the matter was allowed a quiet demise.

As we look back in retrospect it is easy to wonder what all the fuss was about. We must remember that most Europeans,

once they had arrived in America, were faced with a very difficult adjustment to American ways. "Americanization" was precisely what many of them feared. They loved their old ways and wanted, dearly, to hang onto them. But the eventual outcome could be no other way. If the church was to minister to its community, it certainly would have to speak the language of the community. There are very few churches in the city today that cling to the native tongue of their founders.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Crossing the Street

The third quarter century of the Brighton Church found the congregation facing situations quite dissimilar to any other period. The nation was engaged in a World War. Once before, in 1918, the people of Brighton had to go through this ordeal, but this time it touched many more homes and families. Eighty young men and women from this church went into the armed services in this conflict. Many wives who remained at home went into industry to feed the unlimited hunger of a large war machine. Children were often left without any parental supervision. The church came to realize its role in providing for families who were separated and whose children were without supervision. The emphasis was on religious education, vacation schools, and any other forum that would provide a moral undergirding to a nation caught in the clutches of total war. Church life itself was changed when gas rationing curtailed travel, and food rationing made social functions difficult if not impossible.

Four of the sons of the church gave their lives in World War II. They were Laurence Backus, Frederick Koopman, H. Ward Lampman and Bernard Barney.

The period commencing in the early 1940's was characterized by an increasing sense of corporate responsibility. No longer did one or two men stand out as leaders. Now was the time when whole groups of men would pool their time and abilities to become vitally involved in the work of the church. Furthermore, this period stood as the flood-tide of building and expansion into wider areas of the ministry. In this period Brighton Church literally spilled out of its four walls and launched into ambitious plans for building. And the program was launched, as it was in 1892, with a gift of considerable magnitude.

In August, 1942, Miss Mattie Guenther, who lived in the old family homestead across the street from the church, opened negotiations to make available her 3½ acres of land to the church. She wrote to the consistory "for many years I have been watching the changes and growth in your church and the

hard, conscientious hours given to it by your minister. . . . I have wished so often that I might do something for you. . . . (Now) I would like to transfer . . . my property to your church to be used as you see fit for Christian work." Though not a member of the church, she was the girlhood playmate of many of our young women.

The city of Rochester was widening Blossom Road and had assessed her property for these improvements. She signified her willingness to deed the property to the Brighton Church for the amount of the assessment, a mere \$2,800.

Though the congregation had long dreamed of a new church, it was not quite ready to accept this bold new venture. Again, as before, people began earnestly to debate the matter. Some were enthusiastically in favor; other dubious. The matter of decision was left to the consistory with the understanding that their decision would be sustained. In their judgment it was time to start building in earnest, not simply to dream and talk about it. Their decision was ratified by the congregation with a vote of 46 to 2.

It was a move that was fraught with grave difficulties. There was little question about the price; a thousand dollars an acre within the city limits was truly a generous offer. There still remained a question in some minds of the need for that much land. After all, it was several times larger than the small triangular lot where the church had worshipped since 1892. After many discreet and diplomatic maneuvers by the men of the church and the lawyers for both parties, the transfer was made, the only stipulation being that Miss Guenther was to have life-long occupancy of the house. Later a surprise difficulty appeared when it was discovered that a sewer easement went through the property and negotiations had to be made with the City Council to permit a building which would straddle this sewer.

In the closing years of her life Miss Guenther had graciously opened the house to church use. Sunday School groups met in her dining room and living room. Upon her death the church was given possession of the home. A nursery was set up on the second floor. A pastor's study was furnished, for the first time



### AN AERIAL VIEW

Showing the "Guenther property" with its improvements after 1959. In center is the present church, with Fellowship Lodge to the upper right. To the lower left is the Medical Building that now stands on the site of the old church.

allowing that facility to move from the dingy basement under the old church across the street. A church office was provided for the first time. Even partial occupation of the home helped eliminate some of the over-crowding in the church.

In December, 1942, Mr. E. LeRoy Hand, Chairman, and his committee of James DeGraff, Clarence DeLyser and Jacob DeVuyst, began to plan the broader use of the large property. By 1946 their ideas had congealed, and one-third of the financial goal had been reached. Imaginative uses had been envisioned for this parcel of land as soon as Miss Guenther had made the first overture. However many months, even years, were to pass before the ideas were embodied in actual achievement. The land

was spotted with lovely trees, oaks, firs, Lombardy and tulip poplars. Two huge, bronze beech trees stood sentinel on Blossom Road. It was ideal for outdoor playground activities. The first project that was considered was a baseball diamond. A secluded clearing in the south-east corner was provided for Scout use. An outdoor Chapel was planned and picnic grounds for church groups. Though all this was effective use of the natural resources of the plot, yet there was still a lack of facilities for indoor activities. Plans got underway for the construction of a social hall for both community and church use. Indeed, the community, Catholic, Jews and Protestants, rallied with considerable support. Two exciting fiestas were held in Searles Park in the summers of 1949 and 1950, one of these netting over \$4,000 to the building fund. The church was in the anomalous position of urging her people to spend freely on a variety of rides, food and concessions for the good cause!

The development of Fellowship Lodge, as it came to be known throughout the southeast section of Rochester, was complicated by more than lack of funds, the usual stumbling block for a church's building hopes. Detailed plans were ready just as the war was coming to an end. Material shortages were critical in the country about 1945, and steel was impossible to come by. After much study, and much patience awaiting government clearance for materials, approval was given to a quonset hut construction, with a masonry face giving it the appearance of stability and beauty.

An even more serious obstruction was the cloud of uncertainty that had hung over the future of the Brighton Church in this particular area of Rochester. For many years the people were never certain where the roads were going. The City Planning Commission was engaged in designing a future highway system to take care of the anticipated traffic increase resulting from a population movement to the suburbs. The Outer Loop and the Sea Breeze Expressway were to join in an intricate design of overpasses, curves and railroad bridges. Originally the city plan called for the interchange to be located on the north side of the New York Central tracks and thus would remove some of the Atlantic Avenue section and would obliterate much

of the Guenther property. The alternative was to displace the more valuable East Avenue buildings and locate the interchange on the south side of the tracks. The State engineers favored the latter and it was their plan that prevailed. In 1947 the decisions were made for the Eastern Crossway, familiarly known as the "can of worms," and the future of the Brighton location was assured. Whether this was wise from the engineering point of view will be left to the technical experts; it certainly was providential for the church.

Most of the back-breaking ground work was done with volunteers under a skilled building foreman. Water lines, sewer connections, electrical conduit, footings and one very large floor slab were constructed under the supervision of Arthur Stickney. Mr. Stickney, a partner in a Rochester architectural firm, designed the lodge. The erection of the superstructure was done by contractor.

While one segment of the congregation was giving itself to the expansion of the physical plant, another group concerned itself with internal growth. One new idea was born in the year 1942 that has shown very healthy growth ever since. On the initiative of two men, Mr. James DeGraff and Mr. Adrian Hartsen, the Brighton Memorial Fund was established under the direction of the consistory, with Mr. DeGraff as the chairman of the Memorial Committee. A month later the congregation heartily approved the Memorial Fund to be used for the purchase of such items as suggested by the donors or their heirs. Over the years this fund was to undergo many refinements and changes as money flowed constantly into it. Now the emphasis is on the fund, not on the designation of single gifts. The Memorial Fund has accumulated substantial sums through small gifts of money and it is disbursed for purposes which promote the spiritual growth of the church. The fund has been swelled by those thoughtful individuals who have remembered the church in their wills. The furnishings of the Chancel in the present church were acquired through memorial gifts.

Another event of high significance in the early 1940's was the first ordination service held in this church. Mr. Edwin

Luidens, son of the pastor, was ordained by the Classis of Rochester to the gospel ministry in May, 1943. He had graduated from Hope College and New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and had chosen to accept a commission as missionary to Arabia where he and his wife served from 1945 to 1964. Part of that time Rev. Luidens directed a prodigious radio program beamed from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, into all the Near-East. In 1964, he was appointed General Secretary to the Board of World Missions, a position that he presently holds.

Just four years later another young man of the church entered the gospel ministry. William E. Vanden Berg, who had been confirmed in this church in 1929 and who had married Cathleen Ford, also a member of the church, was graduated from Hope College and Western Seminary. He was ordained by the Classis of Muskegon in 1947 and is presently serving the Reformed Church in Leighton, Iowa. An interesting anecdote about Rev. Vanden Berg is that he was born in the church. At the time of his birth Holland was flooded. The church was used as a maternity ward; the pews were cribs.

In 1952, a seed, as tiny as the proverbial mustard seed, was sown by two men with wisdom and faith. Mr. Henry De Roo and Mr. Isaac Hubregsen opened a new bank account with the small sum of \$25.00 apiece. This was the birth of the New Sanctuary Fund.

For years some members had talked about a new church; others had talked less and dreamed more. These two men of action started to roll the stone uphill with this modest deposit of \$50.00, augmented by an infinite amount of faith.

The Fund, shortly strengthened by large gifts from the women's organization and a gift from the DeHollander family estate swelled the balance to \$3,573.56 by year's end. Three years later, after much intensive cultivation of the members in a quiet drive for building money, the New Sanctuary Fund had increased to \$61,195 in cash and pledges.

In the meantime changes were coming in other areas of church life. In 1954, Dr. Anthony Luidens retired from the min-

istry after serving the longest single period in Brighton's life. For a quarter century, through depression, war years and prosperity, he had been the congenial and compassionate leader of the congregation. Hardly a home in this parish had not been touched by his loving concern. Even beyond the parish, Dr. Luidens had befriended rich and poor alike in the Rochester community. Upon relinquishing the active pastorate, he was declared Minister Emeritus by the consistory and served two additional years to December, 1956. When he left Rochester with Mrs. Luidens to take up residence in Holland, Michigan, he had served in the ministry for 41 years. He is still serving the church through a radio and visitation ministry in Michigan.



REV. WILLIAM C. HILLEGONDS

January 1955 - June 1960

It was in January, 1955, that the congregation voted to extend a call to the Rev. William Hillegonds, a graduate of Hope College and Western Seminary. Mr. Hillegonds came from Chatham, New York where he had served four years after completion of his theological studies. Within a year after this change in pastors the tempo accelerated for new building facilities.

On January 13, 1956, the Great Consistory held a historic meeting to consider a bold, new approach to the question of new

facilities. Thirty-three men, former elders and deacons, with the active consistory heard a report of the New Sanctuary Fund from Mr. De Roo, one of its originators. The Fund had reached nearly \$72,000 by December, 1955! Such was the growth from that original deposit of \$50.00. At this meeting a well-conceived plan for study was adopted.

Three study groups were organized. One group developed a means of creating interest in the proposed building program; another considered ways of sustaining that concern till the project had been completed. A third group made an intensive study of architectural design and facilities to be incorporated. These three commissions gathered information, digested it, and formulated tentative plans before the consistory had appointed a Building Committee.

In the winter of 1956 the church took possession of Guenther house which opened the final door to full expansion. By a vote of 117 to 59 the congregation approved the employment of a fund raising organization to help raise the balance needed to pay for the new structure. As the professional fund raisers started to organize a campaign, the consistory appointed its Building Committee which immediately came to grips with the myriad details which comprise a major expansion such as was going to come. A Steering Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Chester Engler, comprised of Jacob DeVuyst, Carl Pearson, Isaac Hubregsen, Clarence DeLyser, E. LeRoy Hand, John Olyslager and Ray Tell, coordinated the work of seven sub-committees. These sub-committees were to deal with such matters as architecture and construction, finance, chancel design, music, church school needs, interior decorating, landscaping and publicity. Over thirty men and women were appointed to work on these sub-committees.

The financial goal of \$100,000 was set. The period of Lent, 1957, was designated for the intensive canvass of the congregation. The goal was exceeded when total three-year pledges came to \$130,000. This surprising accomplishment brought both shock and rejoicing to the Brightoners.

When bids were received and the contracts let, the total cost of the new building, with furnishings, was \$269,000. It was a fortunate time to build with slack building activity and everyone was well pleased with the amount of building that was obtained for such a price.

The building program came none too soon. The condition of the old church was rapidly deteriorating. The sexton reported water seepage in the basement, and grime all over. Sunday School classes were meeting in three different buildings, one location being in the kitchen with the pots and pans. Another class room was referred to as the "cold room" where comfort for the children was provided by a small space heater. The congregation was in turmoil each Sunday morning at worship with an overcrowded nave and it was impossible to provide a worshipful atmosphere. Classes were separated by portable room dividers that divided nothing but physical presence, certainly not the sound of young voices! The old church, built in 1896 and renovated in the 1920's, was simply inadequate for modern needs.

To provide a fine new structure the committee dove into their researches with care and precision. An example of the keen attention to minutest details is the story of the organ selection. Mr. Harold Harper, the organist at the time, favored a pipe organ, believing that only a good, full pipe organ could rightly play "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God". Nevertheless he agreed to hear the electronic organ at First Church which he visited one evening. At the end, he took the sexton aside and privately made arrangements to revisit the church another time, but alone. This time he really gave the organ a thorough test and came away convinced that a good electronic organ would provide him with the sound that he liked. When the new church was ready an Allen organ, costing \$12,000, was specified. The personal gift from Mrs. Alice Zonneville made it possible to install an echo organ making a more complete installation.

April 13, 1958, was the big day in the history of this church when the first step was taken toward an exciting new building. It was bright and sunny when the maroon-robed choir led the worshippers across Blossom Road to the field where the first

shovel of sod was turned in the ground-breaking ceremony. Rev. Hillegonds officiated at the ceremony in which Mrs. Jacob DeGraff, the oldest member, and Miss Bonnie Revier, the youngest member, participated. Mrs. DeGraff, the only living charter member, now aged 91, had been active in women's work ever since the founding of the church. Even Bonnie Revier, though only received into the church a few weeks before, had a tie with the past. She was the fourth generation, being the great-granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peter DeCook, also charter members.

Participating in the ceremonies were Mr. Chester Engler, the chairman of the Building Committee which would soon become the focal point of much work, long discussions and interminable meetings. Mrs. Clarence DeLyser and Mr. Frank Elliott also took part in the ground-breaking ceremony, representing the women's and men's groups.

Construction was started shortly after this under the direction of the architectural firm of Walzer and Miller. The general contractors were Cooper and Craib, Inc. A modern adaptation of the colonial design was chosen by the building committee, using the new design of laminated wood arches most effectively. The financing of this expansion testified to the unity, cohesiveness and drive of the congregation. In 1959, before the building was completed, it was expected that less than a \$50,000 mortgage would be necessary to complete the whole project.

Two months after breaking ground the cornerstone was laid in a ceremony presided over by Mr. Walter Blakley, vice-president of the consistory. The contents of the cornerstone included church documents, Sunday school material, newspapers, the Brighton-er and several documents transferred from the old cornerstone laid on July 4, 1892.

Through the winter contractors labored and by spring 1959, the building was completed and furnished. A sign of the changing times was the provision for a parking lot with a 23,000 sq. ft. area, quite a contrast to the old wagon sheds across the street. The building having been completed by spring and beautifully landscaped with lovely trees and shrubs given by Mr. Isaac

DeVisser, a long-time member engaged in the nursery business, the way was clear now to move into the new quarters. Like many major moves as this, there were those last-minute uncertainties. The large area of the nave was covered with its red carpet in the small hours of the night just before the service.

The dedication took place on the evening of May 17, 1959 and was the occasion for the reunion of former pastors and the gathering of large numbers of members and friends. Dr. Norman Edwin Thomas, pastor of First Reformed Church, Albany, one of the oldest Reformed pulpits in the nation, preached the sermon. The symbolic service of the presentation of the keys took place at the community service the following Wednesday evening when Mr. Engler relinquished his arduous responsibilities as Building Chairman by giving the keys of the building to Mr. Jacob DeVuyst, vice-president of consistory. Thus came to an end the most intensive and certainly the most ambitious progressive step in the seventy-five years of this church's life.

Rev. Hillegonds served the church for only a few months after the completion of the building. He resigned in 1960 to accept a call to Hope Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan. So the mid-west claimed another of our pastors.

One facet of church activity was overshadowed by the surge in building activity. True to our heritage, having its roots in Holland, many people responded to a call by the World Council of Churches in 1956 to sponsor Dutch families and enable them to make a new start in this country. There had been a general exodus from crowded Holland to Australia, Africa, Canada and the United States. Now this new immigration touched Rochester. It was through the good offices of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Talsma, themselves natives of Holland, that several families found homes, jobs, furniture and a church fellowship awaiting them when they arrived in the city. The Talsma's garage took on the appearance of a second-hand store when stoves, refrigerators, beds and articles of furniture were stored there awaiting an apartment. Finding a place to live was no easy task and moving heavy furniture up flights of stairs, and again moving it out, provided much back-breaking work. Then, as was true fifty years before,

there was the obstacle of language. Some of these Dutch families knew little or no English making more difficult their task of finding work in the city.

Most of the Dutch families joined the church, taking an active part in various organizations, until their jobs took them away to other parts of the country. The Vogelaar family, who came first to Canada and then to Rochester, not only entered fully into church life but one of their sons has begun study for the Christian ministry at New Brunswick Seminary.



REV. GORDON H. CURTIS

December, 1960

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In December, 1960, the consistory called the Rev. Gordon H. Curtis to serve the Brighton church, its eighth minister. Mr. Curtis had studied engineering at the University of Michigan and had been employed 13 years as a chemical engineer before entering the ministry. He studied at Rutgers University, where he obtained a degree in psychology and finished his theological studies three years later at New Brunswick Seminary. While attending seminary he served as a student pastor in a small rural church for two years. Upon graduation he accepted a call to the Cambria Heights Community Church in New York City where he served four years before coming to Brighton.

These years of the present pastorate could be likened to the period of Mr. Jacob's ministry. The excitement of great building activity had died down. Now it remained to formulate a program that would bring the cutting edge of the Christian church against the problems of the latter 1960's, and to employ the new facilities to their greatest advantage in this Christian ministry.

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## Epilogue

The church is one of the most ordinary and obvious of institutions. Even if people rarely attend it or are doubtful about the validity of the faith it professes, the old church with its spire against the sky is likely to be as familiar and its activities as calculable as any of the other institutions we associate with our childhood years.

Yet immediately it must be said that there is a strangeness about the church for it stands in the midst of the everyday world, making unusual claims for itself and displaying a remarkable quality of survival. Never before has the church come under so heavy a barrage of criticism as it faces today. While the intensity of its critics may have increased, much of the content of their criticism is the same now as it was 100 years ago. For example, the charge of irrelevancy today could surely have been levelled in the early days of the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, men have "hardened their hearts" since the dawn of history to the revelation of God either through His prophets or through Jesus Christ.

What is truly strange about the church is that power within itself which appears to bring renewal in each age. No nation has been able to find, within the circumference of its own self, the power of self-renewal. The mighty empires of centuries ago decayed and fell. The church, with all its faults, has sought through self-examination, re-appraisal and re-dedication, to minister to its society, dynamically changing in each generation.

As the Brighton Church looks forward, having first looked at our past, there must be an awareness of the changing society and a sensitivity as to how to communicate to this changing society. There are typical moods of which we must be aware; some new, some old.

The first obvious mood is one that seeks consensus. From the teen-ager who cannot decide what to wear until first checking with his friends to the parents who asks "how much time should Tommie spend on his homework?", this mood seeks a guide to conduct by counting heads. The menace in this tendency to "average out" is that more and more the normal descends to lower and lower levels. What we used to call "rugged individual-



**BRIGHTON'S FIFTY YEAR MEMBERS**

Nearly Fifteen Hundred Years of Association

Front Row, left to right: Alice Dibble Zonneville, Jeannie Tierson Minck, Elizabeth Jennejohn Ross, Isaac Van Meenen, Maria Heyboer Van Meenen, Elizabeth Bodine Lash, Jacoba Van Riezen Keymel, Elizabeth Herman Buckley. Middle Row: Mamie Zonneville Smith, Nellie Tierson Menne, Jennie Van Der Brooke DeHollander, Anna Anderson Baart, Isaac VanBortel, Maria Merson DeKoker, Mary Bodine DeWitte, Nettie Bodine Brandt. Back row: Peter Woffiez, Cornelius Baart, Helen Harlsen Trost, Beatrice Bronson Baart, Sarah Cambier, Marie Vande Putt Blakley, Cora DeCook Vanderlinde, Helen Bigg DeHollander, Peter DeBrine.

ism" is now associated only with those who are "way out" and who are not usually identified with the church.

Another mood is one of the retreat from idealism that appears in segments of our society. There is a turn from crusading to a search for security. A young man is more interested in retirement features of a prospective job than he is in the development of his potential in the job. The church had recoiled from the social gospel of the late 19th century, finding it a hard competitive world to speak to. There was far more security within Zion's walls. A tension exists today between those who cherish a view of the church as a compact, exclusive people and those who cherish the vision of functional responsiveness to the needs of the world.

Our forefathers were men of rock-ribbed faith and strong dedication. They persevered over the years in building this church, overcoming times of depression and prosperity, war and peace. They built with painstaking care and they maintained a diligence over the purity of the faith. We must do no less. As we go forward toward our centennial, we shall succeed gloriously if we are found faithful as they were faithful.

We are a part of a continuous stream. We affirm, as our confession of faith, the articles of the Apostles' Creed, the ground of the church in every age. We believe that God is Lord alone, free to act wherever and whenever He chooses. He is not bound by our traditions, cherish them though we may. This is the Reformation principle of the sovereignty of God.

The Reformed faith which we confess is Christ-centered. We start with Christ; our goal is Christ. We can permit nothing to come between us and His great power. We believe God is in Christ reconciling us to Himself.

The Reformed faith which we confess is rooted in the activity of the Word and Spirit in human relationships. As Dr. Livingstone, the father of our Reformed Church in America said, "Never separate the Word and the Spirit of the Lord." To do so leads to wild excess of enthusiasm on the one hand or the hide-bound legalism on the other hand. The Bible is the living Word of God, made alive for us by the Holy Spirit. It is fresh every morning. In this freshness the Brighton Church must continue to move confidently into the future.

Upon the foundations built by our fathers and grandfathers we shall continue, by the grace of Almighty God, to strengthen the fellowship of committed Christians that it may invade and defeat the evil in the world and construct and preserve the good in the world.

The voice of an American poet cries out in anger and frustration against an America of "unspeakable loneliness", against a "death of the heart" which has replaced the "miracle of love". Of this love he wrote:

It is a mighty heritage, it is the human  
heritage, and it is all there is to trust.  
And I learned this through descending, as  
it were, into the eyes of my father and  
mother. I wondered, when I was little, how  
they bore it — for I knew that they had much  
to bear. It had not yet occurred to me that  
I also would have much to bear; but they knew  
it, and the unimaginable rigors of their  
journey helped them to prepare me for mine.  
This is why one must say Yes to life and em-  
brace it wherever it is found — and it is found  
in terrible places; nevertheless, there it is;  
and if the father can say, "Yes, Lord", the child  
can learn that most difficult of words, AMEN.

For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and  
forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always  
shifting,

the light is always changing,  
the sea does not cease to grind down the rock.

Generations do not cease to be born, and we are  
responsible to them because we are the only witnesses  
they have.

The sea rises,  
the light fails,  
lovers cling to each other,  
and children cling to us.

The moment we break faith with one another,  
the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.\*

That the light may never go out, the light of the "miracle of  
love", let us carry on in the "faith of our fathers."

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\* Reprinted from "Nothing Personal" by Richard Avedon and James Baldwin.

By permission of the publishers.

Memo to: G. H. C.

Re: Dr. L.

I called 3/5/P.M. and found all doing nicely.

His doctor has not given him clearance on extra travel as yet.

He hopes to see the doctor within the week and will drop me a line giving the results.

Should the doctor deny the privilege of extra travel, he suggests that he make a 15 minute tape recording around which you might wish to build.

Scripture references - Acts - Story Philip and Ethiopian  
Subject of sermon Home & Foreign Mission.

His voice is strong. Still shows much energy at 81. Really wants to make the trip. Has a radio message this p.m. & mid-week service this Wednesday. Wants to thank the two who sent him copies of the "History" and to thank you for the excellent work it contains.

He indicates that Mrs. Stegenga (age 84) enjoyed one of his copies before she received one of her own.

Mrs. L. well and active

Edwin L. due back from Asian mission stations during this week.

4-22-67

## Recap 75th Anniversary Receipts and Expenses

Dutch Festival (Reported by Elinore DeVuyt) - Income	\$241.25	Bal. on
Expense	<u>106.59</u>	Hand
Profit Oct. 8, 1966 (Given to R. Hand)		\$134.66
Holland Service Offering (Given to R. Hand)	\$ 78.41	213.07
Printing 75th Anniversary Banquet Tickets (Fine Arts Press)	12.50	
Rental - Opaque Projector - Historical Night	<u>15.00</u>	
Total	<u>27.50</u>	185.57
Ticket Sale to 4/16/67 - Cash Rec'd by R. Hand = 164 @ 2.50 =	410.00	595.57
(63 more reported sold + 10 complimentary + 7 entertainment + 18 services)		
+Cookies and coffee for Homecoming Sunday (11.70 + 1.18)	12.88	582.69
Deposited in Personal Checking Acct.		<u>578.22</u>
*(Actually 2 \$5.00 checks to B.R.C. instead of \$4.47) (Working Cash)		4.47*
Check to Karl Boeyink for table and kitchen service (15 @ 8.00 = 120.00) (2 @ 14.00 = 28.00)		<u>148.20</u>
(Amount calculated @ 247 tickets @ 60¢)		<u>430.02</u>
Balance of ticket sales (Except Church Office) 12 @ 2.50 =	30.00	460.02
<u>Anticipated</u> Receipts - Church Office - 55 tickets @ 2.50 =	137.50	597.52
Johnson's Bakery - Check for 265 dinners @ 1.90 =	503.50	94.02
Add 2 \$5.00 checks *		104.02
Purchased by Ruth DeWitte (Linen \$14.00 Napkins 1.53 Geraniums 36.00 Candles 12.37 = Candle Holders 2.00 Misc. 2.07)	67.97	36.05
Purchased by Martha DeRoo (Bananas 2.90 Peaches 2.40 Corsages 1.20) =	6.50	29.55
Purchased by E.L.H. (Cherries 2.37 10 # coffee 3.16 Atlantic Supply 18.41 = 10 qts. milk 2.50 3 "No Smoking" 1.50)	27.94	1.61

+ 5# cookies and 1# coffee given to R. DeLyser for Libby's Reception  
 \* 3# coffee given to R. DeLyser for Libby's Reception

E.L.H.

## Brighton Church Due to Observe 75th Milestone

Rev. Marion de Velder, D.D., stated clerk of the Reformed Church in America, will speak at the 75th anniversary dinner of the Brighton Reformed Church on Friday.

The event will be held at First Baptist Church, Penfield.

As the highest executive officer of his denominations, Dr. de Velder is its representative to the World Council of Churches. He formerly served pastorates in Pennsylvania and Michigan.



Rev. Marion de Velder

Rev. Gordon H. Curtis is pastor of the church organized April 21, 1892, by Dutch settlers. Its original house of worship was located on the northwest corner of Blossom Road and Arbordale Street. In 1959 the congregation dedicated its new edifice at 805 Blossom Road.

ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

March 2, 1966

The first exploratory meeting was held on March 2, 1966 at 8 p.m. Present were Ruth DeWitte, Roy Hand, Isaac Hubregsen and Gordon Curtis.

Subject to acceptance of involved persons, the following areas of responsibility were assigned.

Co-Chairmen	Roy Hand
	Gordon Curtis
Exhibit Chairman	Ruth DeWitte
Business Manager	Henry DeRoo
Resource Chairmen	Sarah Cambier
	Isaac Hubregsen

Further responsibilities will be assigned as they are developed.

The following matters were discussed:

- A. Anniversary Banquet to be held on or about April 21, 1967 at a place yet to be selected. Agreed that large dining facilities would be necessary. Agreed that a nationally-known speaker be invited. Curtis to investigate and make recommendations.
- B. Duration of Celebration - Discussion centered on possibility of commencing in the Fall of 1966 and concluding with Banquet in April 1967. (How about commencing with World Wide Communion, October 2?) OK
- C. Publication - Agreed that we might consider publication of a history of the church. Now under preparation by Curtis. Printers to be considered either National Religious Press of Grand Rapids, or local printing shops.

Agreed that cost could be underwritten by donors solicited in community. DeRoo to organize solicitation and enlist help. No details discussed; left for future consideration.

Agreed that this should take priority because of time involved in publishing.

- D. Minister's Participation - Agreed that former pastors be invited to preach Sunday services, spaced throughout Fall, Winter, and Spring. Luidens, Blocker, Jacobs, Hillegonds. (How about "sons" of the church - Ed Luidens, Hans Vogelhaar?) Beet Chanden Berg -
- E. Guild Participation - Agreed that DeWitte would present subject to Executive Committee of Women's Guild to explore their participation.

*Dave*

## ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE - Page 2

- F. Youth Participation - Agreed that the formation of a Bell Ringers Choir would not only augment our on-going music ministry but also provide an opportunity for a unique way for youth to participate in several events, including morning worship. Agreed, unanimously, that the Finance Committee be requested to obtain Consistory's approval to finance Hand Bell Set out of Memorial Funds. Cost approximately \$800. Curtis to present proposal to Finance Committee.
- G. Historical Talk - Agreed that material used in Anniversary publication be presented with illustrations, on same evening to be designated. Curtis to be responsible for preparation.
- H. Miscellaneous - Several possibilities were briefly discussed re: social events by Guild or other organizations.
- I. Next Meeting - Agreed to meet on March 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. with each Committeeman being prepared to offer concrete suggestions and begin to take action.
- J. Official Sanction - Curtis will seek Consistory approval in matters concerning finance at March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting and will act as liaison until better arrangements are made.

3/3/66

Gordon H. Curtis

## ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

August 4, 1966

The second meeting of the Anniversary Committee was held on August 4, 1966. Present were Ruth DeWitte, Roy Hand, Sarah Cambier, Isaac Hubregsen and Gordon Curtis.

The following matters were discussed:

- A. Mr. Curtis informed the Committee that he had been able to make arrangements for two speakers. The Rev. Edwin Luidens will preach on October 30, 1966 and the Rev. Hillegonds will preach on November 20, 1966. It was the suggestion of Ed Luidens that we delay a bit before making arrangements for his father, Dr. Anthony Luidens, to come to Rochester and he further suggested that it might be preferable to make it in the spring rather than winter because of age and travel difficulties. The Committee agreed that Mr. Curtis should immediately communicate with the Reverends Blocker, Jacobs and Luidens to complete the roster of minister participation. It was further agreed by the Committee that we would not invite "sons" of the church.
- B. Mr. Hand has agreed to contact someone in the Brighton Presbyterian Church to see if we may use their hall for the Anniversary Banquet which is scheduled for April 21, 1967. No arrangements have been made yet for a speaker at that Banquet. The Committee agreed that Mr. Curtis should communicate with the following men to determine their availability: Dr. Marion DeVelder, Dr. Howard Hageman and Dr. Norman Thomas.
- C. Mr. Curtis discussed with the Committee the work that had been done thus far in preparation for a publication of the History of the Church. After considerable discussion the Committee reaffirmed its desire to publish a history and suggested that Mr. Curtis proceed to complete this project.
- D. Mr. Hand acted as Chairman for the balance of the meeting.
- E. It was decided that publicity should be commenced as early as possible for the first event of our Anniversary Celebration which is scheduled for October 8, 1966. Chairmen for this meeting will be selected. The discussion for this event centered on the idea of a supper, featuring Dutch food, sponsored and supervised by the Women's Guild for Christian Service. Other suggestions included the presentation of four skits and the use of suitable costumes.
- F. A suggestion was made that the matter of electrifying the area north of Fellowship Lodge be referred to the Property Chairman.

## ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE - Page 2

- G. The Committee discussed another event in January or February which would be a historical presentation by the Pastor, assisted by Martha DeRoo. A part of this event would include the arrangement of a display of photographs and other items to be set up for a nine day period in the Chapel. Mrs. DeWitte will take the responsibility and select her Committee to accomplish this project.
- H. The next meeting of the Committee will be August 30, 1966 at 7:30 p.m.

8/15/66

Gordon H. Curtis

ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

August 30, 1966

*Ludens Oct 30  
Hillegonds Nov 20*

The third meeting of the Anniversary Committee was held on August 30, 1966. Present were: Ruth DeWitte, Roy Hand, Sarah Cambier, Isaac Huhregsen, Henry DeRoo and guest John DeRoo.

Old Business:

*1st Sun. Apr. No answer. Mar.*

A. Mr. Curtis informed the Committee that letters had been written to A. Ludens, R. Blocker, and H. Jacobs. No responses as yet.

B. Mr. Hand has advised that Brighton Presbyterian may be available to us for the Banquet with seating capacity of 250 in one room and an additional 100 in an adjoining room. He will investigate possibility of using Twelve Corners or Brick Church. Planned capacity of 400 is goal. *Brick Church Mr. Nichols R. Hand re- contacting for range of Catering prices.*

Dr. DeVelder has not yet been approached for speaking engagement.

C. The history is progressing slowly. *(Give GHC - any notes this week)*

D. Discussion covered details of the October 8 Guild Project. Committee so far consists of Ruth DeLyster, Grace Hebing and Helen Trost, under general supervision of Ruth DeWitte.

Ruth DeWitte is to advise Roy Hand of the formal title, now tentatively set as the "75th Anniversary Dutch Festival". Tickets will be printed and sold through Guild. Price \$1.00 for adults and 50¢ for children under twelve. Dutch food is to be featured. Time 5:00 to 7:00 o'clock with continuous servings. Jake DeVuyt will take responsibility for musical entertainment. North side of Fellowship Lodge, on parking lot has been selected. Lighting to be provided by Bergh of Building Committee.

*Food*

New Business:

*Has been written to No answer*

E. Curtis suggested a religious service in the Holland language. Committee approved. Sarah Cambier will work on details of worship. Curtis will write Ben DeYoung about preaching a Dutch Service. Date will be January 8, a Sunday evening. Kaffee Klatch to follow. Curtis volunteered as interpreter for English-speaking worshippers.

F. Discussion on advisability of inviting old members as "guests" for Communion Services. October 2 service will honor members of 1892-1917 group. If this seems to work satisfactorily, we shall follow up with a January 1 service for 1917-1942 members and a March 1 service for 1942-1967 members. *Move to January*

Letters will be mailed at once to oldest members.

G. Next meeting will be September 11 at 8 o'clock.

H. Have Rhida contact Memorial Arts Gallery & Rundel Library to supply Dutch art exhibit from Ren --- to date. *Gordon Curtis*

9/1/66

I. Have exhibit - historical - Reformed Church in Am. - By youth dept.

J. HOME SUNDAY

## ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

September 18, 1966

The 4th meeting of the Anniversary Committee was held on Sunday evening, September 18, 1966. Present were: Ruth DeWitte, Roy Hand, Sarah Cambier, Isaac Hubregsen, Henry DeRoos and Gordon Curtis.

## Old Business:

- A. Mr. Curtis informed the Committee that we have received two more acceptances. The Rev. Anthony Luidens has accepted for the date of April 2, 1967. Also the Rev. Henry Jacobs has accepted the date of February 26. The Rev. Blocker has not yet responded.
- B. Mr. Hand has tentatively reserved Brighton Presbyterian Church for April 21 for a maximum of 250 people. He also has reserved Brick Church for a maximum of 400 people. Once we have determined approximately how many plan to attend the Banquet one or the other of these churches will be released. The Rev. Marlow is the contact person at Brighton Presbyterian and Mr. Nichols at Brick Presbyterian.  
  
Mr. Hand advised that there would be a hall fee of \$42 at Brick Church and forms have been received to make the final arrangements which must be completed one month prior to the date.  
  
Mr. Hand has agreed to get further information from Brick Presbyterian on the approximate cost of a meal so that we can establish the ticket price very quickly.  
  
Should we require only 250 places a third possibility is under consideration at Twelve Corners Presbyterian Church. Mr. Walton Ross (GR 3-5165) is the contact person.
- C. Again Mr. Curtis reports the history is progressing slowly. Since our last meeting nothing has been written but several interviews were held. The Committee promised to set down on paper several matters that they consider important that occurred in this church in the last 25 years. These were to be handed to the minister by the end of September.
- D. All seems to be well with the October 8 Guild Festival. Mary Ruth Blakley and Sybil Miller have been added to the Food Committee. It was noted that the Vogelhaar's are to be contacted for food donations. We now await with interest this first event.
- E. The religious service in the Holland language is still under consideration. The Rev. Ben DeYoung has been contacted by the Pastor but no response has been received as yet. Sarah Cambier has agreed to find a Dutch song book which we can use for the musical portion of the service.
- F. The proposal to invite, as honored guests, members who joined the church between 1892 and 1917 for the October 2 Communion Service did not work out. Time simply did not permit gathering the names and addresses of these people, many of whom are scattered widely, and so the Pastor had to beg off temporarily. At the suggestion of Mr. Hand it was the consensus of the Committee that this emphasis be delayed until the Communion Service in the first of January.

**New Business:**

- G. Mr. Curtis made one further suggestion for an additional emphasis during the Anniversary Celebration. The suggestion was that we have an exhibit in the Chapel some time during the winter featuring Dutch artists from the Renaissance period down to the present day. Mrs. Curtis will investigate the possibilities. The Committee approved the idea and suggested developing it further.
- H. Mr. Henry DeRoos suggested an Old Home Week emphasis which will be considered at our next meeting.

Gordon H. Curtis

## ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

October 30, 1966

The 5th meeting of the Anniversary Committee was held on Sunday evening, October 30, 1966. Present were: Roy Hand, Sarah Cambier, Isaac Hubregsen, Henry DeRoo and Gordon Curtis. Mrs. Ruth DeWitte was unable to be present.

## Old Business:

- A. Mr. Hand reported that he had received \$134.66 from the Guild which represented the profits from the 75th Anniversary Festival held in October. It was the decision of the Anniversary Committee to retain this money until the matter could be referred to the Finance Committee as to how we should handle expenditures for the Anniversary Celebration. G. Curtis agreed to present it to the Finance Committee this week.
- B. No decision has been made yet on the place for the April 1967 Banquet. Mr. Hand agreed to contact the First Baptist Church on Clover Street to find out if their facilities would handle our group. He is to find out whether they want to cater the meal or whether we might be permitted to get our own caterers.
- C. Mr. Curtis advised that he had not yet heard from the Rev. Blocker and it was the consensus of the Committee that an effort again be made to reach him, this time by phone.
- D. Mr. Curtis advised the Committee that Dr. Marion DeVelder had accepted our invitation to be the Keynote Speaker on the April 21, 1967 Banquet occasion.
- E. Considerable time was spent in reviewing the history which is now rapidly coming to completion. Mr. Curtis read snatches of the history and outlined the material that was to be covered in the various chapters. A long discussion ensued on the names of individuals that ought to be mentioned. It was agreed that Mr. Curtis would prepare the copy and submit it to the Committee for their reactions and changes.
- F. Mr. DeRoo and Mr. Hubregsen spoke about their desire to have an "Old Home Week". The Committee being in agreement on this, established the date of March 12 for this occasion. Mr. DeRoo and Mr. Hubregsen will take the responsibility of publicizing this event to encourage the attendance of many of our old members.

The next meeting of the Committee will be on Sunday evening, <sup>Dec 4</sup> November 20, 1967 at 7 P.M.

Gordon H. Curtis

## ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

December 5, 1966

The 6th meeting of the Anniversary Committee was held on Sunday evening, December 4, 1966. Present were: Roy Hand, Sarah Cambier, Isaac Hubregsen, Henry DeRoc, Ruth DeWitte and Gordon Curtis.

## Old Business:

A. A lengthy discussion centered on the publication of the history that has now been completed and made ready for the printers. At a special meeting of November 13<sup>th</sup> the Committee agreed to employ the National Religious Press to do the publishing. Costs have been obtained from this company. It is estimated that the cost of the printing will be approximately \$500.00 plus \$56.00 for a cover in two colors, plus approximately \$70.00 for photographs. On the publisher's recommendations the booklet will be printed in 9 point ienic type. Photographs were reviewed by the Committee and the following are to be used:

- (1) A center page spread having the portraits of the eight ministers.
- (2) The original chapel.
- (3) The old church.
- (4) The new church.
- (5) An aerial view of the property.
- (6) The 1904 consistory.
- (7) The Hallings family.
- (8) The picture of Stegenga-DeGraff-Hartsen.
- (9) An early photograph of Hartsen.
- (10) Nellie Hartfelt's Class.
- (11) The 50 Year Class.

Mr. Curtis read several excerpts from the history to get verification of the facts. It was decided to contact Dr. Juidens in regard to one paragraph involving him personally.

- B. The exhibit, under the direction of Mrs. Josephine Dalrine, will be opened on Sunday, February 26, in the chapel. It will be on display there until Sunday, March 12.

On Sunday evening, the 26th, the first "historical lecture" will be given by Mr. Curtis. This will involve parts of the book along with other matter that is not printed.

This happens also to be the same day when the Rev. Jacobs will be the guest preacher in our pulpit.

"Film Night", under the direction of Roy Eand and Martha DeRoo, has been scheduled for Friday, March 10. This will be presented in the sanctuary as will the historical lecture.

- C. Mr. Roy Eand presented a proposal from the Penfield Baptist Church which the Committee accepted. The Annual Banquet on April 21, 1967 will be held in the Penfield Church with details on the cost of the dinner, etc., to be settled later.

- D. No report was made on the Dutch Service which is scheduled for January 8<sup>th</sup> or Old Home Week which is scheduled April 16<sup>th</sup>. At our next meeting we must discuss these details.

No date was set for the next meeting. The Committee will be advised very shortly.

Gordon H. Curtis

# memo

to The Anniversary Committee

from Gordon H. Curtis

January 4, 1967

Friends,

It is about time that we had a meeting of the Anniversary Committee since some time has passed and several things have popped up that will change the course of our Anniversary observance for the next few months.

I am suggesting that we meet this Sunday evening, January 8, at 7 o'clock. If this is too inconvenient for many of you, please let me know quickly so that the time can be rearranged.

*Copies to Sarah Campbell  
Ray Hand  
Henry DeRo  
Ruth DeWitte  
Isaac Hubregsen,*

Roy Hand

1/28/67

G.H.C.

Re: Anniversary Events

I would like to change the date of our "Historical Night" from February 26th to February 17th. This will necessitate cancelling one of our films which was scheduled for the 17th.

The reason for the change is that I had plotted a series of Lenten discussions which usually come on a Sunday evening. To break up the series with this one anniversary event, I thought, would be unwise. What do you think? Do you want to poll the committee and let me know? We had planned on opening our exhibit on the same evening, but I am sure that Jo De Brine will not be able to get ready as early as the 17th. However there is no organic unity here that needs to be maintained.

I still do not know whether our booklets will be here by the 17th, but very possibly they might. Again, I don't think these two are tied together either.

Please let me know what you think about it?

G.



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517-525 OTTAWA AVENUE, N.W.  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49502

January 26, 1967

Rev. Gordon H. Curtis  
Brighton Reformed Church  
Rochester, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

The credit for cover design has been placed on the Contents page at the bottom. It seemed to be a suitable place for it.

The replacement cut for the fifty year members has now been made and the final printing phase will begin late this week. The booklet has 108 pages plus cover, and you have ordered 500 copies. Normally we keep type set up only until shipment has been completed. Even though we do keep type at times in galleys the charge for reprints is the same as for a new order. On the other hand the cost of an additional 500 printed at the same time is relatively modest.

500 copies 108 pages -----	\$ 577.00	
and 2 color Heavy EnamelCovers ----	56.00	
	<u>\$ 633.00</u>	
1000 copies as above - - - - -	\$ 712.00	
Covers - - - - -	112.00	
	<u>824.00</u>	
Other charges to date		
Cost of 21 cuts -----	112.30	112.30
Postage on proofs and pictures ----	2.00	2.00
Estimated PREPAID Bus Transportation	13.50	25.00
	<u>760.80</u>	<u>963.30</u>
Received remittance -----	300.00	300.00
BALANCE DUE -----	either <u>460.80</u> OR	663.30
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	<u>500 copies</u>	<u>1000 copies</u>

VCE:FW

Yours, very truly,

Vernon C. Evans

**m e m o**

January 26, 1966

**to** Roy Hand  
**from** Rev. Gordon H. Curtis

Dear Roy,

Will you please give a call sometime and let us set up a meeting, convenient to both of us, to discuss the matter of a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration? Although Martha insists that this is not going to involve the minister very deeply, I am sure that it will and I am not at all unhappy to be involved. I have started to read some of the old history of the church and am terribly intrigued by it and would like to write a good historical account of our church. Nothing has been done yet of the scope that I would hope to achieve.

Incidentally, the cornerstone of the Chapel was laid on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1891, in a service conducted by the Rev. DeBruin of the First Reformed Church. The Chapel was dedicated on Sunday, November 15, 1891. Actually the first organizational meeting was dated June 9, 1892. This explains my understanding of the 1892 date and your understanding of the 1891 date. It looks like we could have a whing-ding of a celebration through the fall and winter of 1966-67.

I am sure that you have guessed by now that I will want you to be co-chairman with me of a committee to make arrangements.

Let's talk it over.

# Brighton Reformed Church

805 BLOSSOM ROAD • ROCHESTER 10, NEW YORK

CHURCH OFFICE  
TELEPHONE BU 8-3649



REV. GORDON H. CURTIS, MINISTER  
219 ARBORDALE AVENUE  
TELEPHONE OLYMPIC 4-8169

July 27, 1967

Dear Members and Friends:

HEAR YE!!!! HEAR YE!!!!

You are invited to a church picnic sponsored by the 75th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

Thursday, August 10th  
Webster Park  
(Corner Holt Road & Lake Road)  
Park View Cabin

Serving PROMPTLY at 6:30 P.M. (Come as early as you wish)

BRING: A dish to be passed and your own silver service

Rolls and hots and dessert will be provided. Paper plates, napkins, milk, cold and hot drinks (coffee) will also be provided.

Please, please make reservations by August 7th so the Committee can plan properly

Your Anniversary Committee

Henry DeRoo	-	381-2973
Ike Hubregsen	-	482-8283
Mervin Baker	-	288-4160
Roy Hand	-	381-5888
Ruth DeWitte	-	442-2068
Sarah Cambier	-	482-7065
Josephine DeBrine	-	544-6845

Tear off and return or mail this to the Church Office by Monday, August 7th or contact a committee member with your reservation.

COUNT ON \_\_\_\_\_ ADULTS (over 12) \_\_\_\_\_ CHILDREN

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if transportation is needed \_\_\_\_\_

Times-Union  
Jan. 7, 1967

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Church of the  
Five Mile Line  
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## Service in Dutch For Anniversary

A service in the Dutch tradition of a century ago and in the Dutch language will be held at 3 p.m. tomorrow to mark the 75th anniversary of Brighton Reformed Church, 805 Blossom Road.

The church, third in the Rochester vicinity to be organized by Dutch immigrants, was formed in April 1892 in what was then Brighton village. Some of the founding families left the city for farms in Wayne County more than 50 years ago and their descendants have been invited, according to Rev. Gordon H. Curtis, minister.

The minister estimated that about 20 per cent of his 600-member congregation can speak Dutch. About 75 per cent are of Dutch extraction.

He said that in developing a history of the congregation, he found that a number of the original church families moved to farms in Wayne County following a recession in the late 1890s. He said there is a "heavy concentration" of Hollanders along Ridge Road as far as Williamson. Members of all the Reformed churches in the area have all been invited to the service.

Rev. Benjamin DeYoung of Akron, an immigrant from Holland who has served in the Rochester area for more than 50 years, will give tomorrow's sermon in Dutch. In the simple tradition of the early Reformed church, there will be no choir singing nor prayer responses. The congregation will sing psalms and there will be readings from the Scriptures.

*Copy to Janna De Graff Friend A.L.*

Holland Michigan, 78 East 21st St.  
April 17, 1967

*Dear Grand: The Story Letter is neither perfect & complete. I thought Harriet & James would like to read it. RB*

The Reverend Gordon Howard Curtis  
219 Arbordale Ave.  
Rochester, 10, N. York

Dear brother Curtis:

Greetings from the Luidens family, Mae, Edwin and Anthony, at this happy occasion of the 75th Anniversary Dinner commemorating the founding of the Brighton Reformed Church of Rochester.

You will find enclosed a historical letter written for reading at the historical dinner. The letter includes bits of history and memories of our twenty five years at Brighton.

If agreeable to yourself and the committee may I request that Janna De Graff be asked to read the historical letter. She was my secretary at different times and knows my style of speaking and writing. Besides having a good voice she has lived an exemplar Christian life of inspiration to many.

The entire letter should not take more than eight or ten minutes. If the program is too full for such a length of time then please ask her to read the last half. I feel the closing two pages are messageful.

Please accept my thank again for the historical account of the Brighton Reformed Church.

Please extend, also, our cordial greetings to Dr Marion De Volder the banquet speaker and a friend and faithful comrade in Christian service.

Cordially your comrades in Christ's Church and Fellowship  
Mae, Edwin and Anthony Luidens

*Mae Luidens  
Edwin Luidens*

Holland, Michigan 78 East 21st Street

April 14, 1967

Dear friends in the Brighton Reformed Church:

Mae and I thank you, heartily, for your invitation to share in the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations. We looked forward, eagerly, to meet with you and to share the fellowship of your happy occasion.

We regret that we cannot be with you. Our doctor feels that the strain of travel, the climbing of stairs, the emotional excitement that goes with reunions, constitutes a risk at this time. We do hope to meet and to greet you all later.

C  
O  
P  
Y  
We have read Pastor Curtis' history of the Reformed Church at Brighton with deep interest and delight. It is a comprehensive story of the seventy-five years. The history is unusually rich in background information. There are human interest stories and touches of humor that add a touch of flavor and zest. We join you all in thanking Rev. Gordon Curtis for his story of the years.

In this history there are many items of interest to us personally. Since Mae and I could still understand the Dutch Language and speak it moderately well we were accepted by the older generation as if we were their own children. Our comparative youth gave us freedom to work with the younger generation.

We came to Rochester at the close of a high prosperity period to discover that the after effects of a war, the associated business depression, and the recession in employment and income was upon us. The stories of those depression years will ever remain with us.

Our Brighton Church shared in stresses and strains of depression years. We entered the new parsonage on Arbordale Avenue as its first occupants. The failure of the A and P Company to keep its promises to purchase our old parsonage left the consistory with a new parsonage almost entirely a debt burden. Everyone suffered in the depression. We all shared the poverty of those years. We did it as Christians should. The things men did to earn money to keep their families from running into debt were many. One elder cut down old trees in neighboring woods to have fuel for his furnace. Another sold baked goods by his customer to customer trips by auto. Another gathered wood and half-burned coal from the city dumps on North Winton Road. One church member had bins of half-burned coal which he sold to his neighbors. A very respected gentleman was glad to earn five dollars by doing yard work. Two social workers from our congregation were kept busy in Relief ministries. How wonderfully well that hymn was lived out - "We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear."

But these bitter years proved to be blessed years. Our needs and our faith and our daily fellowship welded us together. These proved to be fruitful years for the Brighton Church.

We learned to do meaningful things with one another. Some of these enterprises stand out. May I mention a few of them. Many of you shared in these adventures in living together.

We continued the Vacation Church Schools so well organized by Pastor Jacobs. Our enrollment, for many Summers, was over 150. We operated the school for five weeks at that time.

We began week-day Bible Schools. The children were released from School 46 and 28. They were brought by bus from the schools to the church. The attendance ran well over 125 for these Wednesday classes. Frank and Irene Boland arranged for the transportation. Frank served as police guard for loading and unloading the buses.

The Boy Scout and Girl Scout Activities were begun with a continuously developing program of interests and service. The students from the German Baptist seminary, finding themselves closer in blood to the Brighton people, as of Dutch origin, came to Brighton for fellowship and help.

The choirs of the church developed a well rounded program of music and inspiration. Brighton's senior choir was always an inspiration. I should like to mention several soloists at this point. That would be unfair to the other faithful singers. A Junior choir was started that served for many years. Wilmott Fisher, deceased, instilled a love of good music in our Church and community. This, too, was a post depression activity of creative effects.

With closer fellowship our congregational prayer life also developed. Car fares and bus fares were an expense. We, therefore, set up neighborhood prayer meetings that were spiritual power units as well as warm neighborly fellowships.

Always the women of the church were alert. They were ready to sacrifice and serve. Their innumerable service projects brought us, not only money, but, a united women's association that is still a power house. The Women's Missionary Society, the Far and Near Circle, with their Missionary thrust, the Golden Rule Class with its big heart and ready hand, the Ladies' Aid, ever a first helper to the consistory, gave a weighty thrust to the strength of the Brighton Church as we know it today. How can we thank all these women enough?

As we began to be called "The Friendly Church" more people attended Sunday worship. We found that two morning services were needed. These, with the Evening Service, made a heavy drain on the minister's reserve. But a mother's or father's work, nor a preacher's is too much when we love one another. And it is true, I believe, "as congregation so preacher."

C  
O  
P  
Y

Our ten years of struggle to recover from the depression has been well described in the history of the church written by Pastor Curtis.

May I stress this tribute also. The Brighton Reformed church has a splendid record of producing nurses, public school teachers and social workers of different types. I believe that this impulse to serve arose from our Christian fellowship in the depression years when we all needed one another very much. Our men, too, have served with distinction in civic affairs. Many have held and are holding positions of trust in banks and industries and in service type of business. Christ's love and light and leading were the secret of the success of these men and women who were the pastor's co-laborers in the Kingdom's work for 25 years.

COPY  
May I add, in these closing moments, my personal deep joy at finding so many of our young men entering fulltime Christian service. Daniel De Graff was in the vanguard of this band of leaders. Though death stopped his full career his inspiration lives on. I think of one young man who wanted to become a minister but his widowed mother needed his help. We are glad for the work William and Cathleen Vandenberg are doing in their church in the West. We think of Donald De Braal serving a church in the city of Del Monte, California. We find Kenneth Stickney as a minister today of the West Shore Baptist church in Holland, Michigan. Hans Vogelaar is a middler at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. There is also Rev. Edwin Luidens, Ex Secretary of our Board of World Missions. And now recently, a Senior at Hope College came to me to talk about the Inner City Ministry. Surely the unfilled hope of the church in sending Daniel De Graff to Hope College is finding a rich fulfillment in these later years in the sons of the church serving in the Christian ministry.

Y The oak pulpit in the chapel room of our new Brighton Reformed Church unfolds the secret of the power of a true Christian church. This pulpit was designed by the late Leo A Waasdorp, a distinguished architect and friend of our church. In this pulpit the architect exalts the Bible to its preeminent place. In the front panel of the pulpit he engraved two symbols, The Cross of Christ and a Lighted Torch. This pulpit was designed to commemorate the lives of two members of one of the pioneer families of Brighton. "The Cross" symbolizes the life of Daniel De Graff who had hoped to enter the Christian ministry. He, being dead, yet speaketh. "The Lighted Torch" commemorates the life of Edwin VanderLinde, about to graduate from Columbia University with a PH degree in economics. In these two symbols of "the Cross" and "the burning Torch" the architect expressed the high purpose of two sons of Brighton who are our congregation's abiding inspiration. The inscription, where all may read, is "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation." That we all, members and friends of Brighton Reformed, will exalt the Bible as God's revelation, the Cross of Christ as the symbol of salvation by grace alone, and that we may be led by the torch of learning into all truth and into an abundant life in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, is the hope and prayer of your former pastor and his family. Abidingly your friends and co-workers for Christ and His Church,

*Anthony and Mae Luidens*  
Anthony and Mae Luidens