Life History of

Mrs. Henry (Minnie Renskers)

Ten Clay

Minnie Renskers at age 80

Mrs. Henry (Minnie) Ten Clay

In 1857, Christiaan Renskers and his wife, Janna (Lemmeness) came to America, settling in Waukesha Co. Wisconsin. They left Holland with seven children. The family came by sail boat and were on the ocean seven weeks. They sailed as third class passengers. While enroute, cholera broke out on board the ship and one of their sons and a daughter died and were buried at sea. I don't know their names. The surviving children were as follows:

Jan (John) who fought under General Grant during the Civil War. He later married Annie (?). They had no children. They lived and died in Reedsburg, Wisconsin.

Beerend (Barney) married Mrs. Rademaker. They had three children. The oldest, Johanna married and moved to California. John died at 16 years. Irene married Clarence Sandfor in Baldwin, Wisconsin where they still live. Barney lived and died in Baldwin, Wisconsin.

The three others were Garret Willem, Dena and Ziena.

In 1858, Janna died of childbirth. The family lived together until 1869 when Christiaan died. The oldest two boys were on their own and remained in Wisconsin, but Will, Dena and Ziena (Cynthia) went to Minnesota where a new settlement was being started near Preston. There, Dena married Gerrit Kempers.

The went to Sioux Co., Iowa where a new settlement was being started. They had five sons named Barney, John, Simon, Gerrit and James. They became well-to-do farmers and all died where they lived in Sioux Center. The Veteran Missionary, Rev. John R. Kempers, is a son of John and his wife Annie Rozeboom Kempers. The youngest son, James, died this year (1968) at the age of 82 years. Simon and Gerret died in their teens. Barney and John married sisters, Lillian and Annie Rozeboom and had large families. James left three daughters.

Christiaan had a brother, Garret John, who was a Reformed Church minister in Clymer, New York from 1868 till 1880. There are also other Renskers in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, most likely descendants of another brother, Herman, who died in Holland. Christiaan was a tailor by trade so he met with difficulties in the Wisconsin woods., but he had ingenuity! One time he made a trough for the hogs to eat from. He cut down a tree, using the trunk. By hollowing it out with an ax and chisel. He found that the rough edges caused sore noses on the pigs. So he got a large bolt and by heating it red hot again and again, he burned off the rough edges! As a tailor, he had no machine, but did all the sewing by hand.

One day a man came to him with his good broadcloth suit. Accidently, he had dropped fire from his pipe onto his coat lapel, burning a small hole. No, no. Renskers could not put a patch on that, but by studying the situation, his ingenuity helped out! He carefully trimmed the little hole, buttonhole stitched around it, and presto! He had invented the hole for the lapel boutonniere!.

Now lets us return to Will and Cynthia in Green-leafton Minnesota. Well, Cynthia returned to Wisconsin where she married John Long, a photographer , and settled in Menominie. They had two children: Frank and Grace. Before many years, John died, leaving Cynthia with the two children. As Frank was sickly, he

died at the age of 7. Some years went by and Cynthia need surgery but she did not survive. So, Grace was left alone. The shock proved too much for her. She too died being 16 years old.

Now let's see what Gerrit William (Bill) is doing. He was 19 years old when he came to Minnesota. He did what he could foind to do to make his living. He worked for farmers, worked in the woods, on the railroad, drove for a doctor and worked with a circus. But what was most to his liking, was carpentry. So, for eight years, as he put it, "he ate his food with his knees under a strange table."

Then came the day when he was married to Hattie Wesselink, a daughter of Herman and Willemina Wesselink. (Gerritje Wesselink came to America in 1867 at 7 years of age with her parents and half brothers and sisters.) Herman Wesselink, her father, had died and her mother had remarried. He stepfather's name was Teunis Grooteboer. There were no children. Hattie had a half sister in Holland and only half brothers and sisters in Minnesota.

Mr. Groteboer, being well along in years, was resentful of Bill and Hattie burning up so much of his firewood! So Bill go the bright idea of supplying the old man with his firewood! Then all was clear sailing. They were married on March 26, 1878. Bill was 27 and Hattie , 18 years old. Bill settled down to carpentering and did that until they moved to Dakota Territory in 1886. Meanwhile, three boys were born to them. Thomas, Charles and John. By this time the Homestead Act was in operation in Dakota Territory. From various states, people were going to Dakota to make use of the government's offer to obtain free land. The bug bit Bill, so he went with others "to see what there was to see, which was mostly grass."

In the fall of that year Bill filed on a pre-emption. Nothing was required of him for 6 months, so in latter March of 1886, he went alone to Dakota leaving his family with Hattie's half brother in Minnesota. Bill bought himself a yoke of oxen and a breaking plow and soon had turned over enough of the virgin soil to build a sod house.

The plow turned over the soil in strips of 12 inches wide. As the ground was filled with grass roots which held the soil securely together, those strips were cut into 30 inch lengths for building. The walls were built like brick walls and were 30 inches thick.

No cement was used but the "chinks" were firmly filled with bits of soil. As this pre-emption was located about 14 miles east from the Missouri River, the poles used for ridge poles and rafters also standards to support the roof were made of cottonwood trees growing by the river. There was a sawmill by the river. Here cottonwood trees were cut into lumber so that it was available for floors, ceilings, partitions, etc. The river was "harnessed" so that is where the power came from to cut the lumber.

However, many homes consisted of four walls and "mother earth" served as floor! But, some houses (Renskers' was) were plastered with clay and white-washed. When well-built, a sod house would last from 6 to 10 years. The windows aere few and small and placed at the outer edge of the wall, furnishing a handy place to sit or place different things. Those buildings were warm in winter and cool in summer.

As the settlers came from various states, they were strangers to each other, so they were called by their surnames! So from now on we speak of Renskers and drop the Bill.

This new settlement consisted mostly of Hollanders, so was known as the "Holland Settlement". To the south was a Norwegian settlement. There also was a Russian settlement. North, however, there were Irish, Swedish, Scotch and what have you there also. However, they used the American language so they were called "Americans". Those living near the river were called "River Rats".

There were people living in Dakota Territory before the Homestead Act came into being. Most of them were living near the river and Spring and Beaver creeks. This Holland settlement was started in 1880 so there were 8 or 10 Holland families there when Renskers came. It was located in what now is South Central North Dakota, Emmons County.

By the beginning of April, 1886, William Renskers had his house ready to move in, so he sent for his family to come from Minnesota. The group consisted of Mrs. Renskers (Hattie), Thomas, Charles, John and Grandma, Mina Grooteboer, who was now living with her daughter and family. They would come by immigrant car which contained their furniture, some machinery, a cow, two pigs, chickens and the family. They would travel on the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, which would take them to Ipswithch, which then was the end of the road. This left them 90 miles from the sod house that Renskers had built! Renskers was in Ipswithch with a covered wagon drawn by two horses. This rig was borrowed from a man who was helping the new settlers to reach their destination by providing them transportation. The road they had to travel was a prairie trail.

I should have mentioned before that Renskers did not go to Dakota alone. Another man also from the same locality in Minnesota, John Gravink by name, was with him and together they built their "claim shanties". So together they went to Ipswitch to meet their families, each with a team and covered wagon. The Gravinks had one son, about 12 years old.

The first place they came to was known as the Black Shacks. It consisted of two sod houses but there, travelers could obtain water and food for their teams and themselves. The second day was spent just going further west, nothing in sight but grass and the wagon trail. On the third day out it happened. Renskers often said, "There was only one time in my life when I was really at my wit's end!" Out there with the blue sky overhead, the sun shining brightly, miles from anywhere, and nowhere to go, they were halted by the STORK! The situation was unusual, their timing was not right, but they were not alone and they were aware of the presence of the Great Physician. The 4 boys and Mr. Gravink went into his wagon while Renskers, His wife, His mother-in-law, and Mrs. Gravink supervised the arrival of a baby girl! Everything went fine and Mrs. Renskers often said it was the easiest delivery of their 9 children.

This was the first girl born to settlers of the Holland Settlement, even though they had not arrived yet, their home was there. Boy babies had been born to three families living there. Note the names… Bertram William to Mr. and Mrs. H.J. Heyerman, William to Mr. and Mrs. Aart Van der Vorste. Willemina was the name chosen by the Renskers for their girl. No wonder that after the organization of the territory, the county seat was named Williamsport! In reality, it was named for William Yeater on

whose land the court house was built! As you recall Renskers name was William and his mother-in-law was Willemina! What's in a name anyway? Let's get back to the family on wheels.

Renskers kew that not too far ahead there was a Russian family, so they stopped there, hoping Hattie and the baby could sleep there that night. He went to the door, but the woman could not understand a word of American so he motionsed to her to come to the wagon and she came. When she saw what the situation was, she was filled with compassion. So, they unloaded the mother and baby for the night. They were given the best of care. As Renskers knew there was a Holland family living about 10 miles from where the new home was awaiting them, they decided to load up the patients and drive on to Wagenveldts. That worked out fine, so Hattie and Minnie stayed there 10 days. The others travelled on and got home. So the family was pretty well settled by the time they were re-united.

Now Renskers started breaking up the virgin soil in preparation for seeding grain.

They had brought with them various bushes, shrubs, rhubarb, potatoes and all kinds of seed. They soon planted potatoes and a garden as well as oats, wheat, corn and flax.

Prospect for a crop was good until July 3, when a severe hailstorm hit the settlement. (Everything gone) Really a test for the settlers! Some late corn matured. There was no problem about hay as there was all the grass needed. The settlers did put up many stacks of hay where the grass was cut. When this hailstorm occurred, Renskers had not yet built a stable to shelter the animals, so in order to protect them from the hail, he first led the cow into the house. Then Jerry, the smaller of the two oxen, but Tom was too broad to come thru the door, so a quilt was taken from the bed and put over his hinder part outside the house.

Another item Renskers brought from Minnesota was a barrel of salted pork. There was no room for that in the house, so it stood outside with the washtub inverted over it and a large stone on top. One night the dog started barking furiously. So thinking that coyotes might be prowling around, Renskers grabbed his gun, opened the door, and shot up and over in the direction of the pork barrel. A few days later a settler asked Rendkers, "Do you have a gun?" Renskers said, "Yes, and it is just as handy as my cap and coat. Why?" The settler said another settler had warned him to be careful with that Renskers as he'd just as soon shoot a feller as not! So Renskers knew what had caused the dog to bark so hard.

There was no well so their water was hauled by barrel from a waterhole in a ravine a mile or so sway. Their nearest post office was in a little grocery store 14 miles away where the barest necessities could be bought. La Grace was the name, situated by the Missouri River.

One time Hattie wrote a letter on wrapping paper but had no envelope to put it in. So renskers would get one at the P.O., but they didn't have any envelopes. So, he took a little paper bag, put in the letter, put on a stamp, and that worked!

After a settler had lived on a Preemption a year and made the required improvements (living on it and breaking up a certain number of acres) he had the right to take a homestead. Now the preemption was

his property so he could borrow money from a loan Co. , secured by the preemption. As the interest rate was 10%, most of the settlers lost their preemptions to the loan companies.

Grandma Grooteboer also had the right to take a homestead, so she and Renskers chose land lying side by side. Another sod house was built consisting of a living room and a large bedroom, really two bedrooms, on either side. The west bedroom was built on the land of Grandma. So she slept there while the east one was on Renskers' land, so both were abiding by the law.

Times were hard and one wonders how the settlers stuck it out. So. Many who could leave did leave. But others who had more courage, ingenuity, grit and faith in God, stayed on and developed the territory. In 1887 the Milwaukee Railroad built up to Roscoe, the following year to Eureka and that was the end of the Railroad until 1903. Then it built to Linton where it met the N.P. In 1902 the Soo had built into Pollock which still is the end of that railroad.

After the settlers had provided homes for their families, they soon felt the need of schools. A claim shanty that was abandoned by a bachelor, John Verney, was moved on to a hill east of Renskers' home. Benches and desks were made, a teacher hired, and that need was met. Two years later a good building was erected. For many, many years, Renskers was the chairman of Union Dist. School Board. During the succeeding years, many of the teachers boarded with the Renskers family. In 1886, a Reformed Church was organized. Mr. and Mrs. G.W. Renskers and Mina Grooteboer were charter members of the Hope Reformed Church.

At the first baptismal service, Willemina (later known as Minnie), with several other babies was baptized. The services were held in a school house located near what now is Hull. This was six miles from the Renskers' home. Any times they walked to the services as travelling with oxen hitched to a farm wagon was no faster. This church was composed of all the Hollanders, but they did not all belong to the Reformed Church. Quite soon, a Christian Reformed minister, Rev. Bode, Came to preach, and the result was that the organization was divided and the result was two churches.

By this time there was a post office and store at Hull, and four miles west, another post office and store at Westfield. So, it was decided to organize a Christian Reformed Church at Hull where John Pekelder was postmaster and storekeeper, and a Reformed Church as Westfield where Henry Van Beek was storekeeper and postmaster.

Both these men had some money, so they were in a position to help some of the settlers who needed financial help. Many calves which the settlers should have kept had to go to Pekelder or Van Beek to pay their grocer bills. The people really had hard going. In looking back one marvels at how they managed as well as they did! But as a whole, they were God fearing people and they turned to God for help. There were no doctors available, so, people had to resort to "home remedies". When babies were born, a neighbor would assist and usually all went well.

I recall only one incident where both the mother and her first bably were lost. So there was another problem. Where was the coffin to come from? Seeing that Renskers was handy with tools and having a few boards that were intended for his own use, he offered to make one. But how could he make it look

like a coffin? Well, Van Beek had a bolt of white muslin and one of black cambrie in the store so some of the white was used for lining with straw for padding and the black for covering the coffin on the outside. The carpet tacks were evenly spaced so a neat looking article was made. He also "laid out" the body preparing it for burial. No, no embalming. Just keeping the body as cool as possible and covering the face with cloths dipped in a solution of carbolic acid and water to keep it from discoloring. Later on, formaldehyde was used. Renskers also was the manager in conducting the burial and regulating the funeral. Many times he was called to help with emergencies of various kinds.

He was an all around "handy man". In his own words, "A jack of all trades, but master of none." As all wooden wagons were used, many times tires needed resetting (a felloe would break). Sometimes spokes would fall out. To Renskers it would go. Perhaps a farmer's plow would not scour or the plow was not "set" right. Maybe a horse would be sweenied or have colic. Perhaps a spavin or a cow might have difficulty in calving. Everyone knew where Renskers lived! They were assured of help.

Twice, I remember, that a man (different men) who was making a well was overcome by gas while trying to get a stone out. In both cases he supervised getting the body out. Applying artificial respiration and although both cases proved fatal, Renskers was there and went about preparing the bodies for burial with the help of other neighbors. It was customary that in case of a death the relatives did not assist in any way unless for instruction in regard to the burial or in letting distant relatives know.

After every precaution was taken to prove that no life remained, the body would be thoroughly cleaned and the "Sunday clothes" were put on. The burial service was conducted by a minster if there was one available, but if not, an elder of the church conducted it.

To go back to the church. After the second organization, a church building was erected at Westfield, near the Van Beek store. It was known as the "Cottonwood Church", as most of the material came from the Missouri saw mill. The walls consisted of the studdings boarded up on both sides and filled in with sawdust. When the church was finished, a minister was called, the Rev. Vander Meulen, who came. The minister and family lived in part of the building while a parsonage was being built. After being with us a little over a year, they left us. So the church was vacant for seven years.

About this time, the Renskers family was increased by the birth of a son. He was named Edward. Gradually on, more families came, so the community grew. Social life improved. The Milwaukee Railroad had built to Eureka, so it was easier to market products.

One of the greatest threats to the settlers was prairie fires. Some of these might be accidental, but many times they were caused by lightning. One was traced to a piece of brown glass that had become so hot by the sun shining on it that the dry grass ignited. As there were so many acres of tall dry grass, especially in late summer, a fire would get a good start before being noticed. Most homes were protected by having a strip of plowing around them. If a fire ran against the firebreak it would die out as there was no grass to burn on it. A popular way to fight an oncoming fire was to burn off a strip of grass so as to make a bare surface in front of the oncoming fire for the fire to run against. If the head fire was stopped, the side fires would be beaten out with sacks soaked in water. In one case, a fire burned over

a sod house with the family inside it. The people were unharmed. Some settlers lost everything they had.

I can remember so distinctly one fire that threatened our home. Pa (Renskers) and my older brothers were gone to help fight the fire and all the neighbors were helping with it. A neighbor lady who was at our house helped Ma (Hattie) hitch a team to the wagon, pile in the bedding and furniture, etc, then drove on to a plowed field nearby. The team was unhitched, tied to the wagon and the milk cows also were gotten from where they were picketed and tied to the wagon. There sat my mother, grandmother, Mrs. Ronhaar and we children, waiting to see the fire burn up our home. I'm sure there were prayers being offered by that little group out there. Suddenly divine providence intervened. The wind turned, steering the fire around our home and we were spared! Many others did not fare so well.

The reports of those fires spread eastward and many, many boxes of clothing, bedding, etc. were sent to the settlement. Relief boxes, they were called. Upon receipt of such a box, a committee (that had been appointed before) would investigate in the families to find out their needs, would meet usually at Renskers, as that was one of the roomiest homes, and distribute the contents of these relief boxes. Many people were very grateful for the clothing so received. Of course there was criticism and jealousy, but they did the best they could.

One man (later became my brother-in-law) I remember distinctly, a bachelor, lost everything except the clothes on his back. He was contacted by the committee. His reply was "No, no, Never mind about me. I'll get along. Just see the families with children get something to put on." The committee ignored his protest and saw to it that he got a suit so he could go to church and also other clothing. Many of those relief boxes came and the contents distributed.

At Christmas, a box came for the Sunday School. We all got something out of that. I remember getting a little purse with 15 cents in it and a little Dutch Bible, which I always cherished. In the spring, money was sent so the settlers who had no other way to get seed grain, could be helped.

About 18 or 20 miles northwest on the east edge of the Missouri river was a little town named Winona. This town was noted for everything that is wicked, drinking, gambling and immorality were rampant.

West across the river from it was Fort Yates, situated on the edge of the Sioux Indian Reservation. A company of soldiers was stationed there to keep the Indians under control, which worked out alright. They really were cavalry, so there were horses to be fed and cared for. The hay was easily gotten as there was grass in abundance, but the settlers did not raise enough oats to supply the need so oats were shipped to Eureka by rail by the government and had to be hauled by wagon from Eureka to Fort Yates. Many men, especially bachelors who had no families to care for, used their teams to haul the oats a distance of 65 or 70 miles.

There was opportunity to buy discarded military clothing, condemned by the government. The settlers made use of this, as those garments could be used, as they were, but the brass buttons must be removed. Much of this clothing was made over by the settler's wives into garments for the children. Also condemned blankets could be obtained cheaply, which all was a great help for the poor people.

Another commodity that could be gotten was Indian-made shawls. Some were really beautiful and all were in bright colors. Many little children were wrapped in the shawls.

Cattle and hogs were sold at the government agency by the farmers as well as butter and eggs. Much of this went through Henry Van Beek's store. The settlers brought their produce to his store and traded it for groceries. He then hauled it to Fort Yates and sold it at quite a profit. Here he worked out a clever scheme. Not all butter was the same quality or color so he got a large butter mixer, dumped the butter all together and mixed it well and packed it in wooden tubs. (5, 10 & 20 lbs.) Mrs. Renskers was noted for her good butter, so that was not mixed with the other butter, but Van Beek would leave a space of an inch or so empty from the top of the tubs and filled that with the Renskers' products. The cooks at the agency soon caught onto that trick and it was publicized.

The Indians were not allowed to cross the river and get to Winona as the government did not want the Indians to have liquor. Down the river about 25 miles was La Grace, mentioned before as being the first post office. Here, the Indians were permitted to cross the Missouri river under guard and bring their shawls, moccasins, beads and trinkets which they made to sell. The merchant there was Joe Trainor and could speak the Indian language. Here, there were groceries available but no liquor. I remember distinctly when my grandmother brought me my first necklace, blue glass beads from there!

In that neighborhood a few of the bachelors (River Rats) married Indian girls and raised families. However, the Indians were not too happy about that. So if there was any kind of hostility between the whites and Indians, these women were in danger as they were mistrusted. One squaw was shot in her husband's arms. He was a white man.

One time the settlers were terribly frightened as rumor was circulated that the Indians were on the warpath. Many settlers hastily loaded what they could and with their family fled toward Eureka. It so happened that my father, Renskers, was gone to Eureka and there he heard the rumor. Naturally, he cam home as fast as he could, but to make 45 miles with a team of horses took the best part of a day. As he travelled toward home, he met many families going toward Eureka and warning him to not go home. But, Renskers went home, got there in the middle of the night, and found his family sound asleep, safe! They had not heard the rumor. It was a false alarm, but several of the families that fled did not return to their claims.

The next morning Van Beek stopped at the Renskers' home on his way to Fort Yates, and asked Renskers to go along with him. He consented to go along, but didn't see any reason for it because said he, "If there is any disturbance with the Indians, Uncle Sam and the Boys in Blue will take care of it." They found everything in order at the fort. Nothing happened. The rumor was started by a white man who heard two Indians talking and misunderstood what they were saying.

As I mentioned before, the Reformed Church was without a minister for seven years after Rev. Van der Moulen left. During those summers, a Seminary student would come for 9 or 10 months to conduct worship services, teach Sunday School and catechism, etc. He would board with a family but would sleep and do his studying in the parsonage.

A Classical Missionary was called by Classis Dakota to spend two weeks four times a year with each of the vacant churches in Dakota Classis. This minister was a single man named Rev. Frederick J. Zwemer. At the time of the Indian scare, he was on vacation visiting his relatives in Holland, Michigan. One noon, as the Renskers family was eating, a team and buggy drove up. Renskers at once recognized it as a "Livery Rig" from the livery barn in Eureka. Renskers went out and to his surprise saw it was Rev. Fred Zwemer! "I though you were in Holland, Michigan." said Renskers while heartily shaking hands. "So I was," said Zwemer, "but when I heard that my people were being massacred by the Indians, I wanted to be with them." The loyalty of this man of God, who had been named "Christ's hunting dog" did much to endear him to the people and also encouraged them to remain in Dakota.

As many young men came from other states to file on a claim, there were many bachelors, which got to be a problem, as there was a shortage of marriageable girls. But, as the settlers increased, so did the schools, so teachers were needed. So, young ladies came from other places to teach. Naturally, this helped the young farmers to get a wife.

As time went on, more land was put under cultivation and the farmers realized that diversified farming was the proper way to make a success of farming. Soon wheat became the main crop, but also oats, barley, speltz and flax were raised. The season was too short for regular corn so they had to resort to Indian, or "squaw" corn. This would mature in 60 days, but did not yield heavily as the ears were small.

Marketing the wheat was quite a problem as it had to be hauled to Eureka by team and wagon. Much hardship was endured. At best the trip could be made in two big days, but that was hard on horses. So many farmers would load their wheat which had to be put in sacks holding two bushels and usually 24 sacks would make a load. Then start at 11 o'clock AM and drive to Spring Creek. There, lived a family who were prepared to take in several teams overnight. The farmers would bring blankets and sleep on the floor in the large dining room of the house. This was about 2/3 of the way to town. The next day, they would go to Eureka, unload, do their business, feed the horses, get themselves a lunch, usually consisting of crackers and bologna, and drive back to the Creek, stay overnight, and return home the following forenoon. But if the wheat did not get hauled before snow came, it was worse.

I remember one year in winter that my father spent 18 days in making three trips to Eureka because of bad blizzards. The coal had to be hauled from there too. Cord wood was available at the Missouri river and some people availed themselves of that in the summer. Fuel was a problem. The fuel for summer use consisted mostly of "cow chips". Thse were the droppings of the cattle in the prairie, which would be from 7 to 10 inches across and 1 to 2 inches thick. That was time consuming, back breaking work for us children. Corn cobs came into use when the people raised different corn and reaised more hogs. They, the hogs too, had to be hauled to Eureka. That situation lasted until 1902 when the Milwaukee Railroad came through.

Coming back to the Renskers family… On July 5, 1892, another baby boy was born who was named Samuel. By that time, the sod house was getting crowded and it was beginning to show signs of wear. So in 1893, Renskers decided to build a new house. This time, the lumber was hauled from Eureka, as the cottonwood lumber was subject to warping. But, as they wanted t use the lumber that was used in

the sod house, it was broken down and that summer, we lived in the granary. As Renskers did his own building with some help of neighbors and the boys, it was not all finished that year. But the main part was, so all the bedrooms and a large all-purpose room were plastered and finished. We found it quite a change! Yes, more roomy and cheerful, but as for warmth, it's hard to beat a sod house! Mr. and Mrs. Renskers always made room for a wayfaring man. Be it a land agent, a collecting agent, a cowboy passing through, or even a hungry tramp. They were taken in. So, now that was easier, as there was more sleeping room and I assure you, it was used and appreciated. Renskers would never charge for anyone staying overnight. "Just pass the good deed along." He'd say.

By this time, there were a few rows of cottonwood trees and berry bushes growing and always a good garden and plenty potatoes growing. Much of the credit for the vegetables was due to grandma as she was active and strong and loved to work outside. She set the hens, raised the chicks and gathered eggs. If one hand carried a pail or basket, the other hand would clasp the hand of little Minnie. With gratitude, I look back remembering so many things she taught me.

Yes, I was grandma's girl!

By this time, the boys did a lot of the work, and as Renskers was handy with tools and people were building frame houses, he did many odd jobs, including new houses. Sometimes there were houses to be moved. That was another job for Renskers to supervise.

About this time, the whole community was shocked at the tragedy that took place near Winona on the east side of the Missouri river, across from Fort Yates where a company of soldiers were stationed to keep an eye on the Indians who were living on the Indian Reservation. As I mentioned before, the government did not permit the sale of liquor to the Indians. But somehow, the Indians had gotten the taste of "firewater" and wanted it! At that time there was a man by the name of John Spicer who lived and farmed but also did the work of an evangelist. He did all that was in his power to upgrade the living conditions in the wicked town of Winona. Among other things he tried to keep liquor from the Indians.

One day a group of Indians crossed the river and demanded liquor. They were refused the liquor but apparently the dealers placed the blame on Spicer. So, five Indians went to the Spicer farm and found him in his stable working. After arguing with him, they killed him and went to the house and there, found Mrs. Spicer, her mother, Mrs. Waldron, Mrs. William Rolfe, the married daughter of Spicer's and her twin baby girls. They murdered them all! (Mr. Rolfe was working for a cattle man at the Cannon Ball River, so his family was staying with her folks)

The Indians were arrested and placed in the jail at Williamsport. However, the settlers were so angry and disturbed that they did not wait for the law to take its course, but decided on having a "necktie party" instead. About 40 men on horseback, armed with guns, and bringing their lariats, surrounded the jail. There was no electricity or street lights but they found their way around. The sheriff was overpowered and his keys taken from him. In a short time, four of the Indians were dangling from the telegraph poles. A fifth man, George Defender by name, a Frenchman who was suffering from tuberculosis, was left in the jail until he died.

After this, Dakota Territory was divided into two states, North and South Dakota. When the organization was complete, the community of which I am writing found itself in the southern part of Emmons County. The south border was South Dakota. As at that time, there were more people living in the northern part of the county, and as there was a little town there name Williamsport, it was decided to make that the county seat of Emmons County.

The Holland people as a whole were not interested in politics and were law abiding citizens. I was 18 years old before the first Hollander was mixed up in a lawsuit! But they had to be represented at the conventions and caucuses, so, some way it was Renskers who had to make all those long trips to Williamsport. However, he was very much interested and well qualified to be their representative. In those days a delegate was permitted to carry "proxies", that is people could authorize their delegates to vote for them. So, If an election or important voting was coming up, Renskers would contact the people, telling them of the situation. Many times, he carried the votes of several voters. Thus, he did not run for an office until later on when he became assessor.

By that time, there was a good sized group of Russians in Emmons County. They were German-born, but migrated to Russia before coming to America. The assessor, John Biddlecomb, was not able to get all the assessing finished in time, so he hired Renskers to help him. The assessor, Biddlecomb, also was not qualified to talk with the Russian people, as they did not understand the American language. So it became Renskers' job to do the assessing of the Russo-German people. Being a Hollander, it was not too difficult for him to make contact. He became known to them as "de taxer", and for consecutive years, this happened. Then Biddlecomb could not continue with the work, so he influenced Renskers to run for the office and he was elected.

Another son was born to the Renskers and he was named Gerrit William. Conditions were constantly improving and so the settlers could make improvements and expand their holdings.

People, as a wholes, had good wells, but mostly, the water was drawn by hand. Some erected a frame above the well with a pulley in the top over which the rope was pulled, raising the bucket full of water, which then, was poured in a watering trough. Another way of raising water was by tying a pail or bucket on each end of the rope and thus save time as one bucket, the empty one, went down into the well as the full one was drawn up. Another way was to have a roller fastened to the frame and one end of the rope fastened to this roller which was about 10 inches thick and 30 inches long. A crank was fastened to one end of the roller, so by turning the crank, the rope was wound around the roller, thus drawing the rope over the pulley which was 3 or 4 feet higher than the roller. Others (we did) hitched a horse to the end of the rope and used a large bucket.

Formerly, the people picked the cows, giving them a fresh place every day and insuring grass to eat. Picketing was done by taking a rope 50 feet long, fastening one end around the cow's neck. The other end was fastened to a steel, pointed stake that was 12 inches long with a swivel at the top and a head so it could be driven into the ground, usually with a wooden maul or if the ground was not too hard, it could be stamped down with the foot. But this too came to an end when the farmers made fences surrounding the prairie land where the animals formerly were picketed, and so we had pastures wherein

the stock was confined. This meant that every morning and evening one or two of the children, with the dog, had to get the milk cows into the milking yard where they were milked. If the cows were to give the most milk, the milking should be done regularly. Usually six o'clock, both morning and evening, was milking time.

While picketing the cows, we usually milked six or seven cows, but now that we had the grazing land fenced, we could handle more cows. Up to this time, there was much government land further out than where the farmers lived. So, every spring around the first of May, some cowboys would come and get the young stock and drive them to a place near a creek where there was lots of grass and there was water. They would live in a tent or a chuck wagon all summer until November 1, when the settlers would get their cattle home again from "the herd". Each farmer would have to put some kind of mark on his cattle so each one would get his own back. As Renskers had more pasture than he needed, and Van Beek had more cattle than he could handle, they made a deal. Renskers got some of Van Beek's milk cows with the understanding that Renskers would take care of them the year round, getting all them milk and half of the increase, calves. Van Beek, getting half of the increase too. This was a good deal for both and they continued this several years.

As the population was increasing much faster in the southern part of the county than the northern part, the people living in the south part got tired of going all the way to Williamsport every time they had business in the court house, so they decided the county seat should come to the center of the county! So, one night a group of the southern men went to Williamsport, picked up the records and valuable documents and took them along. But the northerners got them back! However the southerners had their minds made up, so "got smart". C.A. Patterson bought the quarter section in the exact center of Emmons County and built a large house on it. Then they went and got everything pertaining to County Records, etc. and took it all to Patterson's house where it was guarded under lock and key. So that settled it, and soon the officials moved too, and the Emmons County Record published by D.R. Streeter also moved. A couple of stores were moved in and soon there was a little town. Now what to name it?

This came to a vote and the name chosen for the town was Linton, named in honor of our State's Attorney, George W. Lynn. The post office that was at Winchester , about six miles from Linton was moved to Linton. The N.P. Railroad built a branch from McKenzie south to Linton, so it soon was a busy little town. Meanwhile the County business was taken care of in part of Patterson's house.

However, soon, a court house was built and the county business was transferred there and Patterson changed his house into a hotel and built a livery barn. Later, he started a land office and eventually, a second newspaper, The Emmons County Advocate. From then on, there was rivalry between Streeter and Patterson. After some years, the two papers were consolidated and known as The Emmons County Record, edited by Streeter. This paper is still the official newspaper for Emmons County.

Before this, there were 10 or 11 post offices in Emmons County. There was a stage line running from Eureka to Winchester with branches northeast of Winona. There were several church denominations represented in Emmons County, but this story is primarily interested in the Reformed Church as Westfield, North Dakota.

As was mentioned in the beginning, This congregation was served by the Rev. Jacob Van der Meulen from June 1889 until August 1890. From then on until 1897, the church was served by a Classical Missionary, who came 4 times a year for two weeks at a time. (Rev. Zwemer had married and settled in Michigan.) During the summer months each year, a seminary student came during vacation. On April 20th, 1892, the church had 34 families. In September of 1897 Rev. K.J. Dykema came to be our pastor. Under his supervision, the church made rapid strides in every way. In 1899 it was decided to build a new church which was done in 1900 at the cost of $2500.

The minister's salary was $700 with free use of the parsonage and other fringe benefits.

Now, coming back to the Renskers Family; In the spring of 1897, Grandma Grooteboer planted the garden, but in early summer she became sickly. When Minnie told her that the beans were starting to bloom, she said "That is good. I planted them, but I will not help to eat them." For about three months she was sick with dropsy. On October 13, 1897, she died. As Rev. Dykema had been there only about a month, this was his first funeral. As it was customary that a relative in no way assisted with the burial, her coffin was mad, not by Renskers, but by a neighbor, William Moetaggest. Her funeral was on October 15th, just two weeks before her 77th birthday.

During the following winter, a family living in Washington wanted to come to North Dakota. On the outskirts of the Holland settlement there still was land that could be filed on. But, where was the family, mother, father and 7 children, going to live while a house was built? Mr. and Mrs. Renskers, who were always ready to help new settlers who wanted to come, thought about the situation and decided they would share their home with the Van der Wal family.

The upstairs bedroom that had been shared by Grandma and Minnie was now occupied by Minnie alone. As it could hold two full sized beds, they decided Minnie, age 11, would share the downstairs bedroom with Mr. and Mrs. Renskers and Little Willie. Another room upstairs also held two beds. The third one held one bed. So, the Renskers family would live in the large livingroom, the downstairs bedroom and two rooms upstairs using the front door. The Van der Wals would live in the kitchen, a bedroom off the kitchen, the pantry, and one double room upstairs, using the kitchen door. So, we lived peaceable, happily for 2 months. Meanwhile, Renskers helped Van der Wal find a suitable homestead and helped them to build a sod house as soon as the ground was suitable to break up the sod. As the winter was mild, this was accomplished before spring's work began.

During the latter part of the winter, a severe measles epidemic broke out. At one time 11 of the 14 children were down with the measles! Some were quite sick and others, not so bad. However, Tom, the oldest of the Renskers family became very sick as the measles would not come out.

There was no doctor in Emmons County, but young Dr. L.C. Schockey had recently come to Mound City, the County seat of Campbell County, South Dakota, just south of Emmons. That was 28 miles away, but by way of the grapevine, they heard that the doctor was coming to one of the neighbors. So, Renskers got word to that family to have the doctor come there too. So, in the middle of the night, The doctor came. He had a driver and a livery team with him. As Renskers was up, he saw them drive up, and seeing they had a lantern, he did not go out to them. They drove to the stable, unhitched, and went into

the stable but did not come to the house. After waiting impatiently for awhile, Renskers went to the stable and found both men already asleep on a pile of straw! After awakening them, he told the doctor in no uncertain terms that he had not invited him to sleep but to treat his very sick boy. The doctor answered saying, "Renskers, I've been on the road for 48 hours and haven't slept in all that time. Now, I am not fit to examine or treat your boy. Please let me sleep 2 hours, then call me and I'll do my best." Realizing the situation, he did as the doctor requested. The doctor verified the fear that Tom was a very sick boy. He prescribed steam, but how would they get steam into an upstairs room? Remembering that Van Beek had a one burner kerosene stove, he lost no time in getting that stove. They soon had a kettle of water boiling in the room. The steam had the desired effect, as the measles came out and Tom recovered.

That was not the end of that siege of measles for us. When the rest of us had recovered, Willie took sick and did not recover, as on May 19, 1895, he died with after-effects of the measles, at the age of 2 years and 8 months. The epidemic hung on for a long time. On June 13, Gilbert, the oldest son of Henry Van Beek, died with the same cause. He was around twelve years of age. Willie Renskers was buried in a coffin made by William McTaggert.

By this time, ready-made caskets were available in Eureka. As Van Beek was better able financially, that most of the people, they bought the first casket that was used in that neighborhood. The following year, diphtheria came. Although not an epidemic, two children of our church died with that dread disease.

About that time, a farmer living at Dale, 9 miles west of Westfield, started a store. His name was Frank Loutzenheiser. In Van Beek's store, people had to "trade out" the produce they brought in and he had a small variety of goods. Loutzenheiser would give credit slips if a person did not need all the amount he had coming for his produce. So if anyone needed something that he did not have, he would order it. This was an inducement for the farmers to milk more cows, as they could get clothing or binder twine, harnesses, or whatever they might need. This was not good for Ben Beek's business. As Van Beek's children were growing up, he wanted them to have a high school education and there was no high school around. So, he sold his store to Andrew Boschker and moved with his family back to Sioux Center, Iowa. So, he had a sale of his property.

Another of Renskers' jobs was to "cry" sales. Van Beek's home was the only home where there was an organ except in the parsonage. Van Beek knew that Renskers was thinking of getting an organ, so before the sale, he said to Renskers, "I want you to have that organ. So it is yours for $25.00. No mater what the bids may be, you go along with them, but you pay me only $25.00". So, although there was very little musical ability in Renskers' family, there was an organ. Minnie was the only one that took lessons.

In 1902, the Soo railroad built into Pollock, S.D. In 1903, the Milwaukee Railroad built northwest from Eureka up to Linton and there connected with the Northern Pacific.

So, in that time, several towns came into being, which was a wonderful advantage to the settlers. Pollack was 11 miles southwest, Herried, 17 miles southeast. Hague was 10 miles east and Strausburg,

10 miles northeast of Westfield. Then also, the telephone came to the towns and a branch extended to Westfield. That too was worth so much and saved the farmers many miles of driving.

But we have to come back to the Renskers' home because that family still was growing. On April 3, 1899, another son was born. He was named Gerrit William, the same name that his brother that died had. Yes, we called him Willie too.

The fall of 1901, Charlie decided he wanted more of an education, so he went to school in Ellendale, North Dakota. That same year, on December 10th, a baby girl was born to Mr. and Mrs. Renskers. At Christmas, Charlie came home not feeling well. After calling Dr. Shockey, (who now was living in Pollock) they found it was typhoid Fever. We then learned that Ellendale was noted for its many typhoid Fever cases. The case lasted a month. The first day Charlie was up and around, John and Willie came down with it. As the baby girl, who had been named Hattie, then was only a few weeks old, you will realize what a strain that was on Mrs. Renskers. As typhoid fever is not contagious, but infectious, all the dishes, towels, etc. that came in contact with the patients had to be thoroughly sterilized and disinfected. Although the neighbors were good and helpful, yet they were hesitant about coming I the house. So most of the work, plus sitting up at night had to be done by the family.

Again it happened. After about thirty days, when John and Willie were getting better so they could be up and around, then Minnie and Ed came down with it. The duration of their sickness also lasted about that long. But no more cases of typhoid showed up after that. However for 90 days during the sickness, Dr. Shockey came to the Renskers' home every other day!

As Doc did not have a team himself, he hired a team and buggy at the Livery Barn in Pollock, but he did his own driving. It soon was apparent to the owner that Doc was a "Hard driver". Although a "livery rig" is not complete without a "buggy whip", Doc soon found himself on the road without a whip. But, whips were for sale in Pollock so Doc bought himself a whip, drove out to Renskers', and coming back, a couple miles from town at the state line, he laid the whip down by the marker. Next time he went out, he picked up his whip and used it until he got back to the marker and left it there until… etc. Through all those years, until Renskers' death in 1925, Shockey was their family doctor.

During this typhoid episode, our pastor, who had done so much for us as pastor, left Westfield, N.D. for another charge in Kansas. In July 1902, another minister, Rev. P. Braak, came to be our pastor. During Rev. Dykema's stay with us, many young couples were married and the church grew rapidly.

He must have been able to save quite a bit of this $700 salary. This was easy to understand as he had free housing, free feed for his ponies and many items such as milk, eggs and meat were given by the people.

When Grandma Grooteboer died, she left her homestead to Renskers with the understanding that he would pay $150 to her oldest daughter, who was still living in the Netherlands. Although this was not so much money compared to the value of the land, Renskers could not raise that much cash. He must have told Rev. Dykstra about it and he loaned him $150. By this time, Tom had become 21 years old, so he could file on a homestead, which he did.

If a person did not care to live on the land he had filed on, he could sell his right or relinquishment to some one else. So later, when Tom married a girl who also had a homestead, and they preferred to live on her land, he sold his right to Gerrit S. Huisenga for $1,000.

At that time, the threshing machines were run by horsepower. The average power had seven "sweeps" to each of which a team of horses were hitched and in the center of the machinery was a platform on which the driver stood or sat wielding a long whip. From this machine, the power was conveyed to the separator by means of a tumbling rod. This rod was attached to the gear of cog wheels in the power and the other end was attached to the gear in the separator. A full crew for stack threshing took 15 hands or men of which 2 were boys. So, imagine the expense the farmer had, feeding all these men 2 meals and two lunches. The crew of 3 that went with the machine stayed overnight, but the others, being neighbors, went home. So they had their breakfast at home.

The food was always the best, much better than we usually had. So, for us children, it was something to look forward to. Then all the hay and oats all the horses consumed was quite an item. Then the cost of the threshing was 2 cents a bushel for oats, 3 cents for wheat, and 5 cents for flax.

After steam engines came into use, the men were less because it took less time and there were many less horses to feed. But then the cost per bushel went up. Before the steam engines came in use, Renskers invested in a threshing rig but did not get much satisfaction or money out of that deal.

Much progress had been made during the 16 years since Renskers came as a pioneer. The first Van Brunt seeder had been replace by a Kentucky drill. The first high wheeled narrow tired wagon was replace by a new LaBelle wagon with lower wheels and broader tires. Instead of going to church with the wagon, we now had a one horse buggy and also a double seated spring wagon. Up to this, the milk was brought into a cave where there were many shelves. The milk was strained into tin pans, holding a gallon each. They were placed on those shelves, left for 36 or 48 hours, depending on the temperature. By that time, the cream had come to the top and was skimmed off into a crock or jar and left to "ripen" or come to the proper stage for churning. The skimmed milk then was fed to pigs and calves. Yes, many a pan of that nice clabbered milk was made into cottage cheese. And after churning we had all that good buttermilk!

The Holland people were fond of what was called buttermilk "pap". As a whole, that was the main dish for our evening meal. It usually was boiled with flour or cornmeal as thickening. This was something Minnie just could not eat! It was grandma that prepared it. Sometimes she would boil barley in water until it was tender and then add the buttermilk. Those times Minnie would coax grandma to take out a little before adding the buttermilk and I would eat that with sweet milk. Sometimes she consented and I'd be happy, but other times she'd say "Nonsense. You can eat that buttermilk and that is final."

One time, Mrs. Renskers was skimming milk in the cave and she heard an awful roaring sound and there was a slight tremor as she was underground. She came rushing out as pale as a ghost, not knowing what it might be. Perhaps the end of time had come? We lived near the Westfield road, one of the most travelled county roads around. Father was by the house too and looked east toward the school and what did he say after sizing up the vehicle? "There comes a horseless carriage!" Yes sir! The first

automobile! And it turned in at our driveway! And who was it but Charlie Lennan, whom we knew very well.

In the beginning of this story, I mentioned that many farmers took a loan, secured by their preemptions. Most of them lost their preemptions to the Colonial Loan Company. Then the farmers would rent that land and paid a part or "share" of their crop as rent. This man came around to collect their share of the crop. Also there were some who still had their land and were paying interest on their loans to the Loan Co. So, Charlie Lennan was what was called a "collecting agent" and Renskers was a kind of "sub agent" So Renskers would have to go along with Mr. Lennan to call on those people. So, if he was successful in collecting what he had coming, good! If not Renskers must call on those people later. Usually he came with a "livery rig", but now he drove a different kind of "buggy".

Then he would stay overnight and that meant that Minnie slept on the floor in pa and ma's reeom and lennan slept in her bed. That happened frequently, but usually it worked out for my good. One time another man weighing 225 pounds came with Lennan and my bed was not used to so much weight so one slat fell out on the floor. Pa heard the noise, went upstairs, and helped them fix the bed. But the nixt morning the man apologized for breaking my bed and he gave me a silver dollar!. Another time the same man was with him. It was in the summer and the window was raised with a "plaster of Paris" hair brush set under it to keep it up. He wanted the window higher, so he pushed it way up but did not set anything under it and left the hair brush where it was. During the night, the window came down, smashing the brush to bits. Again he gave me a dollar. Another time I chose to sit by him at the table rather than to sit by a school teacher, who was boarding with us. He took that as a compliment and another dollar was my reward. That man's name was Mr. Adams.

Coming back to the milk pans in the cave… In 1903 that too was changed , as then the cream separator came on the market and Renskers bought one. What a change that was! Not only a labor saver, but as the milk was separated right from the cow, the calves got sweet fresh milk which was better for them. But also less cream remained in the milk. Then, soon another improvement came. We could put the cream in 10 gallon cans and sell the cream. So, that did away with churning butter, except for our own use. First we sold the cream to local buyers, but later we shipped directly to companies, thus cutting out the local buyer's income, so more profit for the farmers.

It was in the early spring of 1903 that John was afflicted with swelling of the glands. Although several doctors were consulted, affording temporary relief, no cure was affected. The doctor had predicted, to a neighbor, we later heard, that if John would reach March first, he would be well. That year, 1904, was leap year and on February 29th, John passed away. The doctor pronounced it Hodgin's disease. He then was 20 years and 4 months and 3 weeks. The funeral was to be on March 3, but it was a dense blizzard, so it was postponed until March 5, 1904. His coffin was a nice, ready made one.

Time was passing and children were becoming young people and Minnie was no exception. She matured very young and, being large, appeared older and further advanced than her age warranted. So, she was attending young peoples meetings and parties before being 14! A certain young man named Henry had been paying attention to Minnie for quite some time. At first Renskers didn't mind, but when

he sensed Henry was getting serious, he objected. Although he really had nothing against Henry personally, yet he felt that Henry's age was too far advanced for him to be Minnie's husband. Besides, Renskers had the man chosen who he'd like to have for his son-in-law. In spite of all the opposition, the courtship flourished and Henry popped the question and Minnie said yes. So, after an engagement of eleven months, the date was set for April 20th, 1904. Because of John's death so shortly before they were quietly married by Rev. P. Brock.

Henry had a homestead with a claim shanty on it and 20 acres of land under cultivation. All that was needed to fulfill the requirements of the law. However, most of his time the last couple of years had been devoted to well digging. He, with the Groen brothers, owned a well digging machine, but Henry did most of the work. But, he now sold his share and made farming his business.

As he had been raising several colts through the years, he now owned 13 horses. Five of those were mature work horses. His claim shanty was a 12 by 12 drop siding structure with ship lap flooring. Henry had bought a house from a man who was going to move to Montana in the spring, so temporarily, we would live in the shanty. There was a homemade table, four chairs, and a small cookstove. After moving in the bed that Minnie inherited from Grandma Grooteboer, the organ her father bought for her, Henry's trunk, and the eight sacks of seed wheat stacked in one corner, plus shelves against the wall for dishes etc., there was a vacant space in the middle of the room, perhaps 4 by 6. Oh, yes, there was a big wooden box set on its side. On it was our water pail, washbasin, etc. Inside it were the kerosene can, etc. It had a curtain hanging in front and a piece of oil cloth on the top of it. Yes, it was a compact set-up, but everything we needed was there. However, the tragic part was that the man did not move until in July, so, boy oh boy, was it hot in that shanty.

As Henry had been a hired man for many years, there were some things he was not going to do when he was "his own boss". One of those was milking cows! Minnie knew by experience what milking cows had done for her parents, so she knew there would be no cash income, only from the crop and that would never do! Fortunately, we thoroughly discussed this matter before we were married! It was a disgusted Henry that left the Renskers' home one evening after Minnie took a firm stand, telling him if that's the way you want it, I'm not sure I'm going along with it. But, after considering the matter, he decided to talk to his brother-in-law about it. After telling him what the situation was, Nol said, "Minnie is right, Hank." So next time he came, he had a better insight into the matter. I then promised I would do all I could toward the milking, helping whenever possible. We could proceed in making plans.

As the winter of 1903 – 1904 had been a hard winter, many farmers were short of feed. So, Henry was fortunate in that he had put up a lot of hay, so he had hay for sale. He even traded hay for one cow to Albert Haun. He traded one horse for three cows to Albert Haak, and bought two from Abel Compaan on time. Six was our goal, but one did not have a calf, so we milked only five that year.

As there were many things to buy, we could not afford a cream separator. So, as there was no cellar under the shanty, Henry dug a small cave for our milk pans. So, Minnie skimmed the cream off the milk and churned the butter, putting it in a gallon jar, and selling it, or rather trading it for groceries in the store. I assure you that butter was not as good as mother used to make!

Shortly after we were married we went to visit at M. Van Soest. Well, they gave us 5 hens. Later, visiting at Anna Bakker, we were given a rooster. Then Ma came, bringing us a hen setting on a clutch of eggs. That was our start in poultry, 17 head the first winter. Then we bought two small sows from Albert Haak, at $2 each. That was our start by way of live stock, except for a cat and a dog later on that summer.

Henry already had constructed a small dam near his shanty, so we relied on that pond for water for the stock. However, there was a shallow well too. Henry had some machinery but he bought a new disk drill to put in the crop. There was 20 acres under cultivation near Hull. This was the homestead belonging to Henry Wester, deceased. His wife was Henry's sister, Minnie.

After her husband died, she married Arnold Int Veldt. She then had three children; George, Maggie and Henry. However, Int Veldt did not adopt the children, so they were known by the Wester surname. Mr. Int Veldt was a very kind stepfather to them and cared for them just as well as for his own children who were born to him and his wife, Minnie, after they were married. They were; Dora, Dick, Vinnie and Maggie. That family was a tremendous help to us in many ways.

By now, we had a pretty good plan worked out and things were going well. But tragedy struck in the Renskers' home. On June 30th a messenger came, telling us that little Hattie, who was then 2 ½ years old, had fallen into the stock tank. "Is she dead?" was our question. "I don't know. The doctor is coming!"

In all haste, I went there, although it seemed an eternity before I got there. It was 5 miles from the Ten Clay farm to the Renskers' home, and that took time for the horse, at her fastest, to make it. When I arrived, the doctor still was there but our little Daisy was gone!

At the time of her birgh, we older children wanted her to have a nice name. According to custom, she would be named Hattie after our mother. My father already had his namesake, Willie. But we children did not like to have their special bably sister named Hattie. So, we did a lot of picking and choosing to find a nice name. My choice was Cynthia Azalea. Finally, Pa spke up saying, "Children, stop your bickering. During my life, I've know and dated many girls, but only one did I love. Her name was Hattie." That settled it, or at least it should have. But she seldom, was referred to as Hattie. Pa usually called me "Sis" and it was not long until my precious little sister became "Sissy". But that was not satisfactory to Minnie! So, in her stubborn 16 year old mind, she called her Daisy. Soon the boys, and occasionally pa too, would use that name. I'm sure if she had grown up that name would have been used. My darling little Daisy. This is 65 years ago, but I still treasure a little apron she proudly wore the last time Ma and she visited us.

In July, finally, we moved the house we had bought onto our yard. It was 16 by 22, had two bedrooms and a general living room… one story. There was a cellar underneath. That fall, we moved the claim shanty against the house to be used as a summer kitchen. However, that first winter it served as a grainary although there was a space reserved for an entry in the northeast corner right by the door that lead into the house. When we moved into the house, we needed more furniture. A china closet, a range, and a bed were ordered from T.M. Roberts, a catalog house in Minneapolis. Six sturdy kitchen

chairs were bought in Pollock at $1.25 each. One of them is still in good condition in the basement now, after 65 years of use! So, with some home made cupboards etc. We were doing fine.

Now it was harvest time. Henry used Int Veldt's binder to cut his oats and he worked with Albert and John Haak, who owned a header, working for them with a team, and they in turn cut our wheat crop. John Haak and Ed P. Niewsma owned a threshing rig run by horse power. Albert Haak was driver.

By this time, the machine was equipped with an elevator that dumped the grain by half bushel dumps into the grain wagon. This eliminated the measurer and sack holder. As the oats were cut with a binder, the band cutters were still needed, but not for header cut grain. So, the crew was getting smaller than at first.

During the summer, Henry, with the help of George Wester, had built a stable for the cattle and work horses. The young horses stayed outside as grass was plentiful in the pasture. During this summer the horses had increased by 4 colts and the cattle by 5 calves. As one cow did not get a calf, she was in good condition for butchering. As the folks didn't have a "beef" to butcher, we traded that one for another milk cow.

After the crop was in that spring, Henry broke up 25 acres of virgin soil and put that into flax. No corn that year as we had only the two pigs, so they ate barley. As Henry had a sod stable before we married, that was used for pigs and chickens.

Henry had put up plenty of hay during the summer. He stacked that in two long stacks, side by side, with the ends against the stable. No. He hauled and pitched it on the stack, but Minnie did the stacking! Sure, she had the muscle and the weight to pack it down! T'was lots of fun working together whole heartedly with one end in view. Yes. We came a long way that summer.

Coming back to the hay stacks, side by side between the two, was a door into the stable and a roof was made with poles hauled from the river and covered with hay. This roof was over the space between the stacks. Starting to feed from the farthest end, Henry could carry the forks full of hay into the stable without going into the cold. The oats had been threshed on the yard, so we had a nice straw pile for bedding, not only for the stock, but for ourselves also! No, we did not sleep outside, but our beds did not have springs or mattresses. Instead, we had straw ticks made of cloth as large as the bedstead. These were filled with straw and served as mattresses laid on the slats. Yes, we had my grandmother's feather bed on top of the straw ticks on our bed, but the other bed didn't have that.

The young people had not forgotten that we did not have a wedding party when we were married. The reason for this was John's recent death, but they did not consider that a good enough reason, so they decided to "take it out" on us at Halloween. And they really made a job of it! The buggy was astride the stable roof, the cultivator on top of the straw stack. The stable doors were carried across the line and set up on the end of Johnny Haak's claim shanty, which had been set on end. The harnesses had been taken apart and scattered far and wide!

The next day was Sunday, so things were left as they were for the world to wee and we walked to church on Sunday morning, 3 miles. We stayed with friends for dinner near the church and afternoon service. After church, we rode home with Tone Ver Hoeven and family. That meant a busy day on Monday!

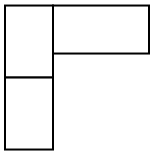
By now, we were pretty well set for winter, having lots of hay and feed for the animals and having raised our potatoes and vegetables, all we needed was meat. John Millenaar had butchered a 400 pound sow, so we bought half of that. So, all was fine. Our cows had all been bred by taking them to William Groen (who had a bull) in time of heat. So in January, we ran out of milk as the cows were going dry. Good Uncle Nol, realizing the situation, offered us one of his cows to milk until one of ours freshened.

But now we were looking forward to an important happening in our lives. On February 4, our first baby was born, a little girl, weighing 7 pounds. No, no doctor. Henry got Mrs. William Groen who was doing many of these jobs of helping to usher babies into the world. So, Our family life was different from then on.

Of course, a name had to be chosen. We had already decided to not follow the old Dutch custom of naming our children after their grandparents. That brought its problems, as when Aunt Minnie (Henry's sister) heard of this she gave us to understand that we didn't have to think that our daughter was any better than others.

Grandma TenKley's name was Margje, so Maggie was the name for her granddaughters thus far, but we revolted. We named our daughter Margaret, shortened to Margie, so more like Margje. As Henry wanted her to have two names, he chose Theodora, meaning gift of God. Our President at that time was Theodore Roosevelt.

As our family now was on its way, we felt our homestead alone was not enough for a farm. West of it was a quarter for sale, but Henry was not quite sure that we were ready for such a move, as it meant going into debt for $1,200, as that was the price. But after talking it over with Pa Renskers, who encouraged him to go ahead, the deal was made. Ernie Crain, who had been a clerk in Joe Trainor's Indian Trading Post and general store at LaGrace, was the owner and now was president of the bank at Linton, N.D. So, in buying the land we went into debt to that bank for $1,200. This was March 1905 and by 1909 the final payment was made. So now our farm was 320 acres in this shape.



Henry had broken up 25 acres more on our homestead in 1904, making it 45 acres now, and he again rented the Wester quarter near Hull, our acreage in cropland was increasing. He also wanted to break up some of the ground we bought, so Minnie had more chores to do, especially the evening milking and there was little Margie to care for.

In the spring of 1904 we had bought two shoats and they were bred so we were going to have little pigs now. One day in early June Henry was seeding flax on new breaking when a shower came up quite rapidly. So Minnie started chores, going out to feed the two hogs. She found the one lying outside going to have pigs, one having arrived already. Minnie knew she must get her inside but to move a farrowing sow is not easy!

In desperation she got a feed pail, grabbed the little pig, put it in the pail and ran with the angry sow in pursuit. But she got the little pig inside, put it down and climbed the partition, then ran and shut the door! That was an exciting adventure! But it worked. There were 10 more little pigs, making 11, and they all lived. The other sow had 12 pigs, so we raised 23 little pigs! That was a record breaking experience!

As the little sod building was not so good anymore, Henry built a new sod hen house and again hauled the oats home to thresh so there again, was a large straw stack. However, before threshing, Henry had gotten a load of poles from the river and built a frame for a straw shed. So there was a shed under the straw pile for the pigs.

Nothing special happened that summer. In harvest Henry again worked with the Haak brothers with their header. We did build a new granary that summer. Brother Charlie did most of the carpenter work. That building still is in use on that farm after 64 years of use.

Our livestock increased by 6 calves and 4 colts that year, plus the pigs and 37 chickens. That fall Henry hauled several loads of oats to Linton, selling it to Charlie Patterson at 25 cents per bushel! Those were long days to make that 20 miles up and back with horses.

We made one trip with the buggy though. Although we were married 20 months and had a baby of 9 months old, Henry still insisted he wanted a wedding picture taken. So our wedding picture and Margie's baby picture were taken the same day!

Late that fall, when the pond was dry, George Wester helped to build the dam some higher. On March 23, 1906 of the next year, brother Thomas was married to Cora Ver Hoeven, settling on her homestead about 4 miles N. E. of Westfield.

There were a few odd pieces of government land available, so brother Charles filed on 80 acres, 3 or 4 miles west from the Renskers' farm home. This tract joined a quarter that Ranskers had previously bought. Although Charlie met the requirements of the law, he did not take to farming. So, he got himself a job, clerking in the store of Frank De Van in Pollock, S.D.

Another minister had come to Westfield. Rev. B. W. Lammers. His oldest son was 14years. There still was no high school so Mr. Lammers decided that Will better work for some farmer. When Henry heard that, he could find work enough for Will (Henry still didn't enjoy milking) so, he hired him and he proved to be a handy boy to have around. Now Henry could put in longer days in the field as he didn't have to do chores.

An important event took place in our home that spring as our first son was born on May 20, 1906. He weighed 11 pounds. Seeing that we had submitted to the Dutch custom of naming Margaret after Henry's mother, now was Minnie's turn, so our son was named Gerrit William after his grandpa Renskers, but was known as William.

1906 was an all around good year for us. That summer Henry decided we were too crowded for room as we had only two bedrooms. Minnie thought we could get along but by now Henry had his mind made up that he wanted a hired man during the summers especially. As our farm had many stones, there already were some stone piles that Henry had dug out of the prairie that he had broken up. This summer more were dug out, as Henry did more breaking. These were (and some from the piles) hauled home for the walls of the cellar and foundation for the new house.

That was a nice fall so the man who was to build the house suggested starting the building as he might get it enclosed before winter set in. But although the cellar had not been dug or the foundation been laid, Wolterink said he could place stones under the sills and the cellar and foundation put under after the house was built. Henry fell for his suggestion, but it turned out to be unwise planning. The house that was being built was 26 x 26 feet with 10 feet studding and a square roof. As Wolterink was a farmer, he did not work at it steadily so it was a slow deal. In July we moved in, but it was not completely finished.

Meanwhile the old house was sold to Charlie, who moved it to his homestead.

The first part of this year we had a boy working for us but due to a disagreement between Henry and he (Al de Vries) on the morning of July 4th, he quit, leaving us without a man. During that summer, we had various transients working for us, even a couple of Russian Jews. To add to the confusion, we realized that they had carried vermin, so we had that to get rid of. Uncle Nol again came to the rescue by supplying sheep dip!

Shortly after this, we were blessed with another daughter. On August 4, 1907, weight: 7 ½ pounds. She was named Hattie Lucilla. Hattie after Grandma Renskers. Lucilla supplied the second name.

The harvest was pretty good this year, so Henry bought a new binder and cut all the grain with it. We were fortunate to get a very fine young man to do the shocking. He recently had lost his wife, after being married only one year, so came west hoping to get away from his sorrow. Henry spoke highly of his work and his speed. He made it a point to catch the last bundle before it hit the ground.

After harvest, with the help of George Wester and a mason named Grover, the cellar was dug and set up with stones and the foundation put under the house. The following winter Henry Kleinhesselink, the local school teacher, boarded with us. That winter Int Veldt went to Holland to visit his aged parents. Coming back he met a young man on the boat who wanted to go to America to work, but he had no idea where he was going or what kind of work. So Int Veldt brought him along thinking he could work for us. He was a decent man but didn't know a thing about anything on the farm and was afraid of livestock. So, he stayed until the crop was in and then Arend Hasker wanted a man, so he went there. When

school was out that summer the second son of Rev. Lammers wanted a job so, Bernie worked for us until school began. He was a fine boy and helped us a great deal.

When harvest time came, the usual number of transients came looking for work. We were fortunate to get a fine young man named Rob Tanis from Holland, Michigan to work for us. He was an all around fine fellow and Henry tried hard to get him to come back and work for us the next year. But Rob had seen the west, so he had no desire to come back and he had a girl in Michigan. However, he and Henry corresponded for several years. Later years when Henry Jr. went to seminary, he met Rob, and acquaintances were renewed. Many years later when our grandson, Lowell, was attending high school in Hamilton, Michigan, he had a classmate by the name of Rob Tanis. Upon investigation, this Rob was a grandson of the Rob we knew. One day Rob Sr. in looking over some old papers found a letter written to him by Henry so many years before. Rob had that letter sent to me to read, but he wanted it back. As Henry had gone to his reward a couple years before, it seemed to me like a voice from the dead! The letter was returned to Rob. This should have been a footnote as I'm running ahead of my story.

Going back to 1908… On October 17, a dark, dreary, misty evening after coming in from outside, Henry said, "Mama, I won't go out tonight, even if you give me $10." But during the night, the stork called and Henry had to go out and get Mrs. Groen, who assisted us on those occasions. As it was so dark and misty, and just a prairie road to follow, he lost his way but soon got straightened out. But when they arrived, they were greeted by the sound of a crying infant. Yes, our Elsie had arrived and everything was "just fine and dandy". She weighed 10 pounds and was named Willemina Elsje, after her mother and two of Henry's sisters. This gave us 3 girls and 1 boy.

The following winter, everything went fine. Nothing special happened, but the livestock had increased considerably and the stable and a cattle shed we had built both, ere overfull. So a lot of talking, planning and figuring was done by us in the evenings with a new born in mind. But we decided to wait and see what kind of crop 1909 would bring.

This winter, Henry and Int Veldt bought a young full blood Durham bull in company. He was to be with our cattle part and with Int Veldt's part time. We named him Jim, but to the children he was "Jimmy Bossy".

Toward spring Henry started looking for a hired man and he found Albert Kuilema, known by his friends as "Fat Al". Yes, he was overweight, but a good worker. Minnie had been doing her share of the milking and was pretty good at it, but in Fat, she found her match, as he had learned how to milk as a boy in Holland. He was also handy with the horses, so a good hired man.

The crop turned out pretty good, so during the summer, Henry and Al hauled a lot of stones for the foundation of the new barn. The barn was to be 56 feet long with a cupola for ventilation. There would be rooms enough in this barn for our cattle and workhorses and a feed bin. The young horses were left outside with a straw pile for shelter, coming home to drink.

Gradus Wolterink laid the foundation. John Jellema contracted to build the barn for $275, having it done by New Years. This meant a lot of trips to Strasburg to haul all that lumber. Henry usually hauled a

load of wheat to town and bringing lumber home, but the wheat was hauled long before the lumber was home. It was load, after load, after load!

Jellema started building in October and with the help of his sons, Will and Albert, the work progressed fairly well until about Thanksgiving, when the frame work was up, but not all the bracing was in yet. One night there was a severe blizzard and when we got up the next morning, the whole structure was leaning over at least 3 feet at the top. With horses to pull it back in place, they got it straightened up, but every nail in the building had been move a bit. Extra braces were added but its firmmers had been destroyed.

After the first blizzard, there were many more to follow as it turned out to be a very hard winter with much snow and banks 8 feet high. So, very little was accomplished until spring and it was late April before it was finished. He then had hired more men so that meant more cooking for Minnie. Meanwhile, we were expecting an addition to our family, which was slow in arriving.

It stormed so much so the roads were not passable. So, several nights before we went to bed, Minnie got everything ready so that if the stork would come, we could manage by ourselves with the help of the Great Physician. But when Dick finally came, the fifth of March, much of the snow had disappeared, so Henry could get Mrs. Groen. But, again, when they came they were greeted by the lustily crying of the baby. Yes, Dick was a born singer alright! So, now we had two sons, and this one was named after his paternal grandfather, Derk Ellard. He too was a 10 pounder.

After this, the men really started making headway as there were several men working and I had a hired girl to help me. This hay stairs would hold 60 tons of hay and was equipped with hay slings to pull the hay upstairs. From the ground to the peak of the barn was 32 feet.

That summer, our hired man was John De Boer, not long from Holland, but a good man. He and Henry painted the building that summer and when they finished, there were lots of 5 gallon paint pails available for feed pails etc. and all the nail kegs! As there was a considerable amount of lumber left from building the barn, we decided to build a summer kitchen on the south side of the house. This was done in 1911. That spring, we did not have a hired man. The spring was normal until June fifth.

Again Henry was sowing flax when a thunder shower came up very rapidly. He had a couple of sacks of seed flax lying in the wagon and that must not get wet. Realizing he could not get home before the rain, he laid the sacks of flax on the ground an dumped the wagon box over it. Then came home at top speed riding on the reach of the wagon! That was a terrible strom! Some windows in the house were broken as there was so much hail. The crop that was up was totally destroyed and the prairie grass was hailed out of the ground! That was the only rain we had that summer so there was no crop, but only weeds, mostly Russian thistles! We hen were milking 10 cows and they lived on weeds among which was mustard that gave a terrible taste to the milk.

As there had not been much snow the previous winter, there was no water in the pond. So, what to do about water? We already had sold the young stock, but if we sold the cows, we would have no income! So, after much praying, we decided to sell the cows and trust the Lord to provide for us. This was

Monday evening and we would sell the cows on Friday. We must both have prayed ourselves to sleep that night and we slept well. Next morning, Minnie woke up with a definite plan in her mind. She woke Henry and eagerly asked him, "Is there a low place on the northeast corner of our land?" Henry answered, "Yes, there is right by the road. Why do you ask?" "You must dig a well there." Minnie said. Apparently, he realized this was no passing thought, so he went to Int Veldt to get his test auger and set out to see what he could accomplish.

He bored down 14 feet and there the ground was wet! He, at once went back to Int Veldt to see if George could help him to dig a well. Sure, he could, so together they dug a hole square about 3 ½ feet across. When they got down 15 feet, they were sure there was water, so they went down to 16 feet deep. Then Henry went to Strasburg to get boards to make a curbing. Of course this took time and the next Monday, July 11, court would convene and Henry was on the jury and we welcomed that as the jurors earned $3 a day! So, by Saturday evening, they had it ready to go. A tank had been brought up and a pump put in. Our hearts were filled with gratitude as we did not need to sell our cows! (later, we put a windmill on the well which still stands, although not in use, but there is water there today after 58 years. Truly, answered prayer! There was a little well near the house that provided water for the house use.) On Sunday, Henry pumped the water so he knew it worked and on Monday morning he went to Linton and was gone the whole week. Meanwhile, a girl was staying with us that week, so Minnie went to the well three times every day, and every time when the tank was full, the well was empty, so it needed more reservoir. They dug it three feet deeper. Then it was good. Later we got rain, so a good crop of pigeon grass grew which was put up for hay. So the Lord really provided!

That fall our little Margaret started school. Our schoolhouse consisted of one room which was too small. So a room was rented in the John Haak home, for the little ones had a separate teacher; William Lammers. Yes, the same Bill that worked for us was teaching the grade school and boarded with us. So, That was a little cash income.

On December 20, 1911, we again were blessed with the arrival of our fourth daughter. She weighed 10 pounds and was named Joanne Edna after my brothers, John and Edward.

Nothing special happened in 1912 that I can think of, but Henrys ledger shows that we harvested 1,037 bushels of wheat, 739 bushels of barley, 225 bushels of oats. The ledger says our crop amounted to: Wheat 739 bushels, Oats 305 bushels, Barley 133 bushels. So, evidently the crop was not too good.

On April 30th we were blessed with our third son. He weighed 11 pounds and was named Henry James after his father.

That summer, and important thing happened to our Holland Settlement in that Peter Borr Sr. got the idea that our community should have telephone service and he worked hard to put it across. He was successful and he became the president of the Overland Telephone Company. It was serviced through local capital. The switch board was located in Westfield but service was provided for the surrounding territory. The community was divided into party lines of as many as 17 families on one line. Oh, the rubbering! The rent was $18 per year. A clever arrangement, much appreciated, was that every Saturday evening at 7 o'clock the operator rang 5 shorts so everyone had the right time on Sunday.

This also was done in emergencies, but in case of death of fire, 7 shorts were rung and the name of the deceased and the time for burial then were announced.

This summer also brought sorrow to several homes, as a very severe epidemic of whooping cough prevailed and quite a few children, mostly babies, died. Little Henry had it so badly and such severe coughing spells, that he almost choked, so we did not leave him alone for a minute. Many remedies were used by different people, but finally Doctor Poort came up with Pertussin and he came along alright. It still is advertised on TV.

When I started writing this story, someone said to me, "You will remember the things concerning the pioneer days better than those when you sere raising your own family". And how true that is! Those pioneer stories were told so often by my father that I couldn't forget them, but when I became a wife and mother, we were so busy living our life as a family that many times things didn't really "sink in" because much was routine.

In 1914, perhaps nothing special happened but the ledger shows: Cream sold was 318.98, Wheat 515 bu., Oats 265, Rye 310, Speltz 104, and Barley 41 bu. Spelz was grain brought from Russia, almost like barley.

However, in that year, on December 29, 1914, our fourth son was born. He was a plump little curly head, weighing 9 ½ pounds. We named him John Raymond. So now we had four boys as well as four girls. John likes to refer to himself as the "hub of the wheel"! At the end of this story you can figure out why.

In 1915, John Fenelon, the banker in Pollock, became interested in Holstein cattle, so Renskers bought some heifers and through that way Henry became interested. By this time, Henry knew that there was money in milking cows, so he too would like to build up our herd. However, he had to think it over for as a whole the people were not in favor of Holsteins. Henry had gotten over his dislike for milking and with the children growing up, the future looked pretty good and so in 1916 we got a Holstein bull to head our herd.

Before that time, however, we went through what might have been a tragedy, but God was good to us again. It had been a hard winter (1915 – 1916) with much snow and it was breaking up. On Begruary 26th, Minnie hemoraged very badly. The doctor was called, but the roads were terrible. Although he had a car, the road was not fit to use it, so he got a livery rig with driver, but it took them over four hours to make the 20 miles. When he arrived, my lips were blue and no pulse beat left. But, prayers were answered. Dr. Wolverton said if another half hour had passed before he got there it would have been too late. The doctor soon found the trouble and under the guidance and supervision of the Great Physician, the trouble was over. If the Lord's will had been different, Henry would have been left alone with 8 young children. But, thanks to Him, all went well and our hearts were filled with gratitude. The result of this case was a great change in our lives.

Although Henry and Minnie both were raised in Christian homes, there was a great deal of difference in the attitude of giving for the cause of Christ and His Kingdom. Where the Renskers were generous in

their giving, Henry's parents were not, so there was some friction in our home due to this situation. As the children grew up and attended church, Sunday school, catechism, etc., there was always the call for an offering, so that ran into money. Minnie had prayed that the Lord would some way help us to see eye to eye in this matter. Sometimes the Lord uses us to answer our own prayers and He did this time. Some days after this sickness occurred, Henry took some hogs to town. When he cam home, he was in good spirits as it had been a good day in a financial way and his heart overflowed with gratitude, especially for my recovery. The next day was Sunday and Mission offering. So, in view of his gratitude on Saturday, I suggested that we prove our gratitude to God by giving a special gift in this Mission offering. It appealed to Henry at once, and he said to me, "How much?" I left that to him, and he made it a very generous gift. After he came home, he was very happy and glad that he had made the gift. The Lord was working with him I was sure. After more praying about it, we were led to discuss this more, and tithing our income was brought up. To cut a long story short, in May of that year, we decided to give 1/10th of our cash income. This would mean that when we sold any produce, grain, cattle, cream, eggs, etc., we would give one tenth of that gross income to the Lord. That decision was a bit difficult to make, but we felt the Lord was guiding us and no other decision has given us the real joy that this one did. The result was that there always was tithing money on hand for whatever religious cause that came along. No more bickering and we never regretted making the decision, even though we went through difficult situations, the Lord got his tithe and as a family, we were richly blessed.

By this time, we had 5 children attending school. The building was old and much too small. In 1917, February 20th, our fifth son was born. Nine and a half pounds and we named him Albert Harold for his father's brother, Albert. This was during World War 1.

During this summer, Emmons County had its first County Agent. So, in order to get him and the people acquainted, a series of community picnics were held, conducted by the County School Superintendent and County Agent. They were held at various school houses. Everyone was welcome. The one I have in mind was held at the Renskers' school, in Union township. We lived 5 miles from there in Bakker District. A new school house had been built there but the old building was still there in Union.

During the course of the day, Minnie visited with the School Superintendent and during the conversation Minnie said, "It seems to me this rejected building is better than the one in Bakker where our children go. How come?" "It is" he said, "but no one has even made a complaint against it, so it continues to be used." Minnie said, "What is required to have it condemned?" He Answered. "Some one must circulate a petition through your district and get a certain number of signatures and then present it to the school board at their meeting."

Henry and Minnie talked it over that evening. The next morning was rainy, so Henry said, "I can't work in the field. Why don't you write out a petition and I'll go around today." The result was that the following year we had a nice two room new building. The one room was for the lower 6 grades and the other for the 7, 8, 9 and 10 grades. So, we had the grades plus a junior high school. There was a time when we had 7 children attending that school.

By this time we had quite a bunch of milk cows and we needed more pasture. As John Haak, who had filed on the quarter south and east of our land in the same section, had now "proved up" on his homestead and not desiring to live on it, it was for sale. We had, for some time, been looking forward for this to happen as we wanted to buy it, and this we did. We paid $4,000 for it. So, now we owned three quarters of section 35, 130 – 76, making our farm rectangular, one mile north and south and ¾ of a mile east and west. Now there was a big job ahead as a fence must be built around it but that too was accomplished, so now we had one of the finest pastures around. As part of the west quarter was included, it covered 190 acres.

Meanwhile, the war continued, although we did not get much news as we had neither radio or TV. But the telephone was a big help as news flashes came into the towns by telegraph and went out by telephone. Where we felt it the most was in the food rationing, especially sugar and white flour, and coffee. For our family, it was not bad, as a child was allowed just as much sugar and flour as an adult and as we had 9 children, it was not bad at all. However, we did not buy all the sugar we were allowed but some people even suggested that we buy our full allowance and they would pay us double price for all we did not use. This we refused to do. Much unfair selling was done on the black market.

Because of the war, many young men had gone to service, so there arose a labor shortage, but farmers helped each other and so managed. Henry's ledger shows that in 1917, we threshed 388 bushels of wheat, 680 bushels of rye, 419 bushels of oats, 63 bushels of flax and 34 bushels of barley.

I can think of nothing special happenings in the early part of 1918, so in turning to Henry's ledger we find that during that year we threshed 442 bushels of wheat, 258 bushels of rye, 329 bushels of oats and 184 bushels of barley. Also, we find that hogs were sold for $410.25. Cream sold for $527.73.

Meanwhile, the war continued. One young man of our community was killed; William Hollar.

In the fall, we heard of Spanish Influenza breaking out in the east, especially in training camps. It travelled west, and in November, the situation became alarming in our vicinity. Churches, school, all public meetings were closed. Whole families were sick at one time, so neighbors had to help. Doctors were overworked. The doctor in Herried died. I think there were 14 funerals in Westfield. One family, Rokus Bieshewel, both parents were taken, leaving 6 children who were given homes by relatives.

In the Renskers family, three members were seriously ill at the same time. Sam, who was to be called for induction, was at home being cared for by his mother. Charlie, who then had four children, was at home, being cared for by his father. And Tom and his wife and four children all were in bed at the same time. Neighbors did the chores. Her father went there every day, although there were some of his family sick. Our family was spared so we felt it our duty for me to go to Tom's so in spite of neighbors begging me not to go, I went there a day to help. I wore a mask while caring for them. I had taken a kettle of chicken soup, the first hot food they had for days. Two days later I went there again. Tom's family all recovered, so did Sam, but Charlie died.

The second day I was there while talking to my mother on the telephone (party line) a lady "butt in" saying, "do you know the war is over?" Yes, this was on November 11, 1918. What rejoicing that caused! An Armistice had been signed!

That message came by telegram to the town and sent to the people by telephone. At that time, we had no minister, so brief graveside rites were conducted by Chuck Eldeer.

In latter December after the "flu" epidemic was over, Rev J.D Dykstra and his family came to be our pastor. He found many sorrowful homes and by New Years church services were again held and schools were again in session.

On January 9, 1919, we attended the wedding of our niece, Dora Int Veldt to Gerrit Huisinga at the Int Veldt home. It was customary then, to have the ceremony at 11:30, then congratulations. At 12:00 a big dinner was served to all the guests. As there were no bakeries, all the food including the bread was prepared at the bride's home. Aunt Minnie (Mrs. Int Veldt) planned on serving some of her delicious homemade currant bread as well as other dainties, but the bread refused to rise so she couldn't serve it! In desperation, she went to the telephone and asked me whether I had baked bread recently? Fortunately, I had, so "would I please bring along a few loaves when we came to the wedding?" Well, we did, so no one suffered, but for me to be put on the spot like that was not pleasant. So, unknowingly, I baked the bread for Dora's wedding! They observed their 50th anniversary in January at Bismark.

All those years we had wanted a good well on the yard. Although the well of 1911 was good, it was too far from the yard for the winter watering of the cattle. So, we decided to try again, but with no success.

On May 31st, our family was increased with another son. By this time, people engaged a doctor when a baby was expected, so we fell in line too. Doctor Wolverton at Linton was spoken for , but for some reason that telephone line was out of order, so Henry called Doctor Shockey at Pollock. There had been a heavy rain so Doc, got stuck in the mud, so when he finally arrived, the baby was there. He weighed 9 pounds and we named him Charles for my brother who had passed away and as the second name we chose Marion. So now we had four girls and six boys. Yes, Henry was gaining on me! When Tom and Cora came to see our new baby, they were showing off a grand ne Jeffries Nash automobile! The best!

By this time, our milking herd was increasing and milking was no problem as there now were 5 children old enough to milk cows. Henry's ledger shows that the amount of cream sold was $1,054.21, so double of last year. Hogs sold $763.85. The grain crop was equal to 1918. Yes, the Lord was blessing us in every way. Not only in family increase and the health of our family, but financially also. But the Lord was planning a test period for us.

We now had six children in school. All had good attendance, but the first of December, Elsie was not feeling well, so Henry took her to the doctor who diagnosed her ailment as appendicitis and surgery must be performed. After the surgery, doctor told Henry that although the appendix was not yet ruptured, it was a pus case, and her abdominal condition was unusual as there was not partition of

division between the organs. To, the pus was already through her whole abdomen, so he held out very little hope for her recovery. But, he said if she holds on till Sunday noon, there is hope.

This was Thursday evening. By Sunday noon the condition had not changed, so we hoped. Henry stayed with her at the hospital as I could not leave the children, although I went to see her. Her mind was good and I talked to her and felt she should know her condition, so I gently told her that she might not recover. With no hesitation, she calmly said, "Well then I'm going to Jesus!" She clearly specified that the little money she had in her purse we must send to the Mission so other children could learn to know Jesus. Much to the doctor's surprise, she lived until the next Thursday when she quietly passed away. Henry and I were at her bedside watching her as she opened her eyes and looked up and in a moment, her face was transfigured and her eyes showed that she saw something we did not see and she was gone to be with Jesus. It was December 11th. She had been 11 years old on October 17, 1919.

Later that winter, the influenza again broke out, although in a milder form. Then our whole family, except Dick, came down with it. He then was 9 years old. What a help that boy was, as he could bring water to drink and many other things. Again, the schools were closed. A teacher that was boarding with the Renskers family came to help us, but after a few days, she took sick, so Pa came to get her, but brought Myrna Instead. I failed to mention that Sam married Myrna Carrol on July 2, 1919. They lived with the folks, so the Myrna referred to above was Sam's wife. So, she helped us for a few days and she too, came down with it. Again Pa came to get her. Neither one of the girls were very sick. Then Uncle Nol came and stayed with us until we were able to help ourselves. George had been coming every day to do the chores, but did not come in. After we were up, no one cared for my regular food. I wanted sauerkraut, some wanted dill pickles, but what worked the best was pickled herring!

Well, we all recovered and when it was time for field work, we were alright. As I had helped Tonis when they were sick, they came and got our stack of dirty clothes, washed them and helped that way.

Then in the latter part of May, an epidemic of measles broke out and our children all got them. Charlie was the baby. He could walk nicely before he got sick. But when he got over the measles, he had to learn all over again. Due to being weak, he developed the worst case of "bow legs" I ever saw, but eventually, he outgrew that again and there were no other ill effects.

I can think of nothing special that happened in 1920. It must have been a good year as Henry's ledger says; Wheat 741 bushels, Barley 477 bushels, Rye 215 bushels and Oats 315 bushels. Hogs sold for $286, Cattle $423, Cream $1,038.83.

Yes, everything was going well. By now, or before, we had bought a header so Henry could harvest his crop with no outside help. The Westfield church had another pastor, Rev. R.D. Doewstra.

On March, 15, 1921, another son was born to us. He weighed 12 pounds and we named him Ralph Gerald. Our pastor wrote up the community news for the Volksvriend. In writing about Ralph's birgh, he commented on it by saying, "Now Henry stands even with Job: seven sons and three daughters. We wonder whether his patience is equal to Job's."

In October of that year, Henry Wester was married to Katie Wolf. At that wedding people made many comments about Ralph, having pretty hair, a nice baby, but mostly his size as he was so large.

Apparently the crop was not so good that year as there was only 275 bushels of wheat and 170 of barley. The cream was down to $695.14 and cattle sold $296.00. Hogs $635.48.

By 1922, our number of cattle was increasing, so we needed more room. That year we built an addition to the barn, which would be for the milk cows with room for 17 cows and the bull. There was a room for the separator, a table and pails. We were milking 24 cows, but some of them were in the regular barn with the calves and the horses.

Again, it was a good year. That fall, November 6th, the night before election, another son was born to us, weighing 9 ½ pounds. We named him Ellsworth Milton after his sister Elsie who died, and his mother.

No doubt, some important things happened that year, but they don't come to my mind. In 1923, Will reached the age of 18, so his father made him an offer. As there was more of our farm that could be broken up but there were stones to dig, so if Will wanted to do the work but using our horses and machinery, we furnishing the seed, Will might have the entire flax crop that would be raised on that land that year. Will did a lot of hard work, but made out good. That fall, he worked as pitcher for Joe Nieusema and Ike Hollaar's threshing machine. The crop was good that year as Henry's ledger says: Oats 1,093, Wheat 837, Barley 326, Millet 17, Cream sold $820.25, hogs $70.70, cream $200.25. One thing Henry did not put in his ledger was a record of the horses sold. As I mentioned in the beginning, he had several horses and through the years we raised many fine horses, which were sold to eastern buyers. The most he got for a team was $315.00.

As Margaret desired further education, she went to Northwestern Classical Academy in Orange City. This did not prove out to be too good, so she went only one year.

Grandma Grooteboer, in the early years saw a vision of a train going in a northwestern direction over the hill northeast of the Renskers farm, which turned out to be the direction of the railroad built years later, so too did Minnie. Being outdoors on a dark night, suddenly she saw a bright light coming from the North, going to the cemetery, turning east and turning in a southeast direction. This light came past the east edge of our land where then was just a wagon trail. In 1923, a start was made to build highway 83 and in 1924, it was built past our farm going in the same direction Minnie had seen the bright light go.

Automobiles were quite general then, so we saw much travel going over that road. But it cost us much inconvenience, as so many cars got stuck in the snow drifts. As our lights were visible from the highway, many travelers came for help. Some cars were easily pulled out with our team, but many wayfarers had to stay at our house sometimes for days, until the road was open.

Before this time, there were gasoline washing machines, irons and lamps etc. How Minnie longed for a Maytag Multi-Motor washing machine, but Henry was afraid of gasoline! But in the fall of 1923, Minnie insisted we get a gasoline lamp. Well, it worked! What a transformation!

As Will had made out good, he decided to buy a Ford Touring car! So, there was gas on the yard. That summer he worked for Andy Rodenburg.

On May 15, another son was born to us. He weighed nine pounds and we named him Thelmar Stanly, after my brothers Tom and Sam. Several of our babies were tongue tied and so was he. Doctor took care of that.

Nothing special happened this year further along. The ledger does not show the bushels of grain harvested, but the hogs sold amounted to $396.40, cattle $247.50, cream $1,050.01. I forgot to mention that on May 18, 1924, Henry's father passed away with appendicitis. Doctors did not operate for that then yet. He then was 88 years old. As Thelmar then was only a few days old, Henry did not attend the funeral at Sioux Center where they lived.

By this time, sleeping room was at a premium as our family now numbered 15. However, the oldest three worked for others quite a bit, so were away part of the time. So, we started planning on enlarging and remodeling the house. As we wanted to keep the house, it took a lot of studying. So, already in the fall, loads of stones were hauled to use in the cement walls and floor of the basement under the new part.

The new part was to extend 12 feet east of the old house. The studding were to be 12 feet. That would provide 4 bedrooms upstairs and leaving the downstairs bedroom. A wing was built to the northeast which became Grandma's room. The planning was done in 1924, but the building was done in 1925.

In order to make good connections, we must go back many years. In the first part of my story, I told about Renskers' helpfulness and generosity. How he would work for others, leaving his own work undone, and he did not charge for what he did nor kept records. He did not hesitate to buy what he wanted and buying on time, so he was deeply in debt. It was customary that when a son got married, the father provided a farm for them. Tom, Charlie and Ed had their farms, so when Will got married, Pa wanted him to have a farm, although Will did not care to have it. But in spite of that, Pa bought a farm, tec., and mortgaged his own farm to do it. So with all the other debts he had, he found himself very deeply in debt.

As will and Ann didn't do well on the farm, they went through bankruptcy, moved to Pollock, leaving Pa holding the bag.

Sam and Myrna lived in with the folks while Sam worked the land. Pa's health had not been too good for some time and that winter it worsened, so it became necessary for him to go to a hospital, but he didn't have the money.

The minister we then had, Rev. Douwstra, had a very keen business mind. He called his consistory together and laid down his plans. He suggested to them that the congregation be canvassed, thus raising a fund to send Renskers to the hospital. This was very successful as the people now remembered how Renskers had helped them when they needed help and now they were willing to help him. Many people gave generously and said "Now if this isn't enough, just come again." The result was that Rev.

Douwstra personally made arrangements in the Aberdeen hospitaol. (That is were most of our people went as there were no hospitals nearer.) He not only arranged for father Renskers to be admitted to the hospital but also for his wife, my mother, to be with him continually, having a cot in the room with him.

So, in the latter part of January, Will with his Ford, took his grandpa and grandma to Hague, where they took the train to Aberdeen. Upon examination, the doctors found prostate gland trouble in an advanced stage. They first performed minor surgery, hoping to have advanced surgery later on, but the incision did not heal. The real trouble was cancer, although the cause of his death was pneumonia. On March 23, Pa passed away and was buried on March 26, the day on which they were married 48 years before. His friends provided abundantly the money for their two months stay in the hospital plus burial expenses and quite a little left over. No, Renskers was not a success financially, but in line of need, he did not lack for want of money.

Many years later, I remarked to one of our sons that I regretted that my father died on charity. He said emphatically, "Mama, don't you ever say or think that again. Grandpa did not die on Charity! Grandpa died on gratitude!" He was right!

Not too far along in this story, I mentioned about a family by name, Peter Van Der Wal, coming from Washington and living in part of the Renskers' home. When I was back in Westfield last August, a man said to me in speaking of the wealthiest man in Westfield, who is a son of Peter Van der Wal, as saying "If it had not been for Renskers, the way he helped my folks, they would never have made a go of it in Westfield!"

Father did not approve of tombstones, so there was no marker on the lot where the seven relatives were buried. In 1961 I was back at that cemetery and saw tombstones on the graves of the people who were neighbors of my parents, but no marker on my parents' lot. My heart ached to think that they who had done so much for that church and community had no marker showing where they were buried. I could not take it. So after all those years, we, the remaining children had a large slab made of cement, whereon were all the manes of Father, Mother, Grandma Grooteboer, my three brothers, Charles, John, Willie and sister Hattie. This we had placed on a cement base on their lot.

AS I said, Pa had mortgaged his farm, and that mortgage was forclosed, so Mother stayed on the place with Sam and Myrna until November 1925. The question now was where must grandma go? So, we, Henry and I, talked things over, praying for guidance and we decided even though we had a large family, we would invite Grandma to stay with us. This she gratefully agreed to do. As we were building, we added a bedroom for grandma. So, in November, she came to our home, as one of our family. She never had been robust, so at the funeral, Rev. Douwstra prayed for the widow "who was tottering on the edge of the grave". Many people said "It is fine of you folks to take your mother in, but it won't be for long." But they were wrong.

When she came, we were agreed that she should not work, but that did not meet with Grandma's approval. She wanted to help. Our family was pretty well organized in that the children each had their work to do, so as she was good at sewing, we decided that the mending would be Grandma's

responsibility. That was good except she insisted she was going to wash the dishes too. Okay, then one of the children could wipe them. So everything worked out satisfactorily!

By November, when she came to live with us, the house was ready and she brought her bedroom set, etc. to furnish her room. We now had 6 bedrooms, a living room 12 x 17 feet, a dining room 14 x 20 with a bay window, a kitchen 12 x 14, a pantry, and entry, plus closets and two porches, a basement 12 x 24, and a cistern, so we had soft water pumped in the kitchen.

We had a carpenter, John Van Nice by name, to supervise the building, although others worked with him. As Grandpa Renskers had done carpenter work, he had some tools, so before he died he said to Will, our son, "Will, I want you to have my carpenter tools." So, he worked with Van Nice and he did the finishing work. That started Will off in carpentry and eventually, he specialized in building churches. Being his own architect, he contracted the building and worked on a percentage basis, saving the people much money. Again, I'm running ahead of actual happenings.

On December 6, 1922, we were saddened by the death of Elliot, the six year old son of Will and Anna Renskers. Later, in February of 1925, one night when Sam was in Aberdeen visiting his father in the hospital, Myrna awoke and found their month old baby, Harry, had passes away suddenly in his sleep.

Meanwhile the Renskers' farm had been sold so Sam had to move. There was absolutely no way of getting started near Westfield, although he was permitted to stay until 1927.

The crop in 1925 had been pretty good. Wheat 1.752, oats 1,238, barley 511, hogs sold $420.30, cream $1,260, cattle $200. But 1926 was a different situation.

The first part of the summer was normal, but no rain while the grain was setting. In August, Henry Jr. got pneumonia and was very sick and doctors were not available right away. When Dr. Wolverton came and treated him, he improved after the crisis, but did not snap out of it. So, the doctor said, "Bring him in and we'll take x-rays." The result was fluid in his lung. That meant , take him to the hospital in Bismark. He was there several days but got over it alright. That was my first introduction to being away from home and lodging with strangers as I was with him while he was there.

During the early part of the summer, we decided to have an automobile, but it was hard to decide how, on what, as an ordinary car could not hold our family. However, a 7 passenger car, a Chandler, was available so we bought it and we were glad. Then we had it as Bismark was 80 miles away.

When we got home from Bismark, it was very plain that we would have to do something about feed as we had very little. Some people were selling their cattle but this we did not want to do, as our stock was pretty well bred up. So, we wanted to keep them. As we heard that there was feed available around Bowdel, we drove up there with the Chandler, Dick driving. We were fortunate in finding a Mr. Heilman who had a field of flax that because of the drought had turned out to be mostly pigeon grass, so would be good feed. So, we bought the whole field, but this was 60 miles from home! When there was no crop, Will and Ed Van Vugt went to Minot looking for work by a threshing machine, but it rained so much that they came home.

We hired George Wester, so he and Dick, with two teams and two mowers and rake went to Bowdel to mow the feed and get it ready for shipping by rail to Hague. But how to get the bales from the field to the depot in Bowdel? The same party we bought the Chandler from had a truck, so we rented that. When Will came home he went with the truck to Bowdel. So, it all worked out good although Dick had a runaway with his team and had the sickle run over him and still bears the scar, but was not seriously hurt. So, with the pigeon grass and wild mustard that grew in our fields, after the fall rains came, we made out fairly good and in the spring we had our own cows yet, and during that winter we had our milk and cream to sell, $1,314.69 in 1926.

Although there was not much rain in the summer, it did rain in the fall, so there was water in the pond. This of course froze over and needed holes chopped in the ice for the cattle to drink. In January, Dick got pneumonia as he caught cold chopping the ice. That meant several visits from the doctor. Now there was the highway, so he could come by car.

Before Dick was over his pneumonia, the doctor had to be called as the stork was due. This was to be a dreadful experience, as the baby was overdue, so had grown to much more than normal size. Remember, this birth took place in a farm home. The doctor was not as skillful then as now, so don't blame the doctor. He did all he possibly could, but the baby was stillborn. That baby boy tipped the scale at 15 pounds! We were sorry to lose the baby, but thanked God that my life was spared. This happened on January 29, 1927, and it was so cold.

Meanwhile, Sam and Myrna had decided to move across the river to Mahto, South Dakota, and they had persuaded Will to go with them. So, in February, Sam took his horses, machinery, household goods and cattle (which went by rail) and moved away, crossing the Missouri over the ice at Kenal, but arrived at their destination in spite of many difficulties. Dick Bieshavel drove one team, Will, the other, and trailed one team. Sam sent with the cattle on the train and while he slept, someone took his billfold containing $60.00, all the money they had. I won't go into their experience now, but Margaret went with Myrna by train to help them get settled. They then had 3 little boys. Margaret's boyfriend, Ed Van Vugt, got her later by car.

Dick tells me that the tractor was bought in 1928, as the first year, we worked the Int Veldt farm, we still were using horses.

Nothing special comes to mind for 1927. The crop was good as the ledger shows: Wheat threshes 1,199 bushels, Oats 1,091 bushels, Barley 354 , Cream sold $1,52.92.

All these years the work had been done by horse power, but now we decided to have a tractor, so a brand new John Deere was bought from Keller Implement. What a proud family we were when Dick drove that new tractor on the yard.

So, now we could handle more land. In 1928, we rented the Int Veldt land as they had retired and moved to Strasburg. Uncle Nol had passed away and I see in Henry's ledger, it speaks of Aunt Minnie's share. As the threshing bill came pretty high, we decide to buy a second hand threshing rig. From now

on farming was different, as there are accounts of gas bills, oil, etc., and the grain records are not so plain.

On August 18, 1928, Margaret was married to Myrel A. Dilly, of Linton, so they lived there. This was the same date on which Henry's parents were married 64 years before in the Netherlands. The crop was good this year, although I can't give the actual bushels, cattle sold $415.70, hogs $436.13, cream $1,347.58.

The farming venture in Mahto did not work out as desired above, for Will had to undergo an appendectomy in Mobridge and then came home. Later, he took on some carpentry, but in the fall of 1928, he with some others, went to Iowa to pick corn. He did not take his car along, as he planned on coming back. Later in the winter, a couple of his cousins came to visit and one of them drove Will's car back. From then on he chose carpentry as his life work. So, our family was scattering and going on their own. But our farm home was a busy place, but working with the tractor broke up our regular hours and we never knew when Dick would call it a day and come home.

Oh, yes, much farm work was still being done with horses. Several machines had been bought through the years and many colts had been broken to the harness.

One of the most important deals that was made was when Minnie insisted that Henry buy a manure spreader. Those barn cleaning days meant misery to Henry as his back pained him so much. When he did not have to spread the manure by hand, that job became much easier. That was several years before this already.

Well, 1929 was an important year for us, as on April 18th we became grandparents! A fine big boy was born to Myrel and Marge. They named him Charles Myrel. Yes, that year brought a new beginning but also an ending, as on August 17th another son was born to us, a nine pound baby boy, and we named him Eugene Luverne. No, not after a relative, so this name we picked. From then on for many years, there were 14 seated around that big dining table.

It was an all around good year for us. I think we hit the peak as far as cream sold is concerned, at least, while we milked by hand. $1,513.45. Cattle and hogs, $535.15. From now on, I can't go into detail anymore, as more land was rented and share had to be reported separately.

However, in 1930, the depression began to be felt in North Dakota. That fall, Dick, with three other boys, went to Iowa to pick corn too. Even as young men from further east came to Dakota to work in the harvest field and with the threshing machine to earn money, so the Dakota boys, after threshing was finished, went to Iowa to pick corn. At that time, still much was done by hand.

In November of this year, John fell off a horse he was riding and broke his shoulder. That meant 4 weeks in the Bismark hospital. When the final doctor bill came, we wrote a check for the $400 or plus, but that check "bounced"! Yes. The Security State Bank at Strasburg was bankrupt! That was our first experience in that line, but those depression years caused much misery!

In 1932 we had a double crop but the price of wheat was only 28 cents, so did not cover expenses.

Another thing was that the elevators had no money to pay for the wheat but would take it in storage. So one day Henry took a load of wheat to town and after unloading (he didn't get the money) he went to get a load of coal. This ordinarily, he could have gotten on time, but it so happened that the president of the elevator company was there and told the manager he could not sell coal unless cash for it was paid. The manager, John Schear, knew Henry very well, so he called him outside and gave Henry a $10 bill saying, "Now you go inside, pay for your coal and give that guy the worst bawling out you can!"

We had bought a new threshing machine that fall, but as money was not available, it took years before that debt was paid.

On December 8, 1932, Will married Tillie Dykstra and settled in Iowa permanently at Archer, but later at Sheldon.

Through the years, various minsters served the Westfield Church. In August of 1933, Rev. and Mrs. C.J. De Bruin came. They were missionaries to India but home on furlough. When the time came for them to return to India, there was no money available, so the board permitted them to serve a pastorate.

On September 4, 1933, Hattie was married to a young farmer, Henry Van Bruggen, by name. His home was in North Marion, North Dakota, about 160 miles northeast, so that is where they settled on a farm.

The crop was not very good that year, and cash was hard to come by, so Henry Van Bruggen brought potatoes to pay the wedding fee to the minister!

The next 7 years, crops were varied, but feed was not sufficient for the cattle. Some people sold their stock, others took them further north to winter. As our herd was pretty well built up to Holstein, we disliked to sell them, but by selling the young stock, we managed to get feed for the milk cows. As a result, we always had cream to sell, so although living was skimpy, we never resorted to taking "relief".

Yes, we continued to tithe our income even if there wasn't much and we did at times "borrow" some of the tithing money to meet emergencies, but always paid it back, when the income was better.

Under the guidance of Rev. De Bruin, Henry Jr. felt the urge to go into the gospel ministry. He was taking a high school course by correspondence but had not completed it yet. However, the faculty of Central College in Pella, Iowa agreed to permit him to enter college under those conditions. It seemed impossible to us as there was no money available, but Henry was determined to go and said to us, "I'm not asking for money. All I ask is your permission to go. I feel the Lord is calling me, and He will provide the money." The going was rough, but he made it.

As we did not insist that our children take Junior High in Hull, not all of them did. However, Albert took it and decided he wanted to go further. Here, again, was a problem as the only High School near enough for him to attend was a Roman Catholic school in Strasburg. We hesitated, as we did not like to place him where he would be under the influence of the Roman Catholics as the principal and teachers were Roman Catholic nuns. But after much prayer and discussion, we let him go. This was the same year that Henry went to college. Both of them were first in each case for our family and our church. Albert felt no pressure in any way and got along fine, although he tired of going on horseback the 6 ½ miles every day.

When he graduated in 1935, he wanted to go further, but decided he wanted to earn some money first. As there was an opening in the County Agents office, he got a job there and worked there two years and then he too went to Central College in 1937.

During the past 5 years, Dick had been working in Iowa off and on so he too found a girl that pleased him. So, on April 15, 1937, he was married to Jennie Dykstra, a sister of Will's wife. So, they too settled in Iowa.

As crop conditions still were uncertain, John too started working in Iowa part time. As Charles did not care to go to High School, he now was the "main-stay" on the farm. The younger boys, who were attending school, were there to help with the chores and during vacations, but our family was undergoing quite a change.

As Ralph went through High School at Strasburg, he graduated in 1939. He then taught school two years. Then, he too went to Central College, beginning in September, 1941.

Albert was graduated from Central College and that same year he went on the Western Theological Seminary. Henry had already been there two years.

John too, found the girl he wanted, so on November 15, 1939, he was married to Irene Mastbergen. They chose farming as their vocation, first as hired man, but soon went on their own.

Conditions now were much better in North Dakota as the depression had passed and conditions in nature were back to normal, so, farmers were again enjoying prosperity.

As Ellsworth too, was graduated from High School in Strasburg, he too, taught school for three terms. This enabled him, as it had done Ralph, to lay up some money for college.

As Edna had visited her brothers in Iowa at different times, she found a man that, after a few trips to North Dakota persuaded her to come to Iowa too, so on September 4, 1940, she was married to John Haack Jr. The wedding took place in our home. The ceremony was performed by Rev. William Wolbrink who recently had become the pastor at Westfield. After a wedding trip through the Black Hills, Yellowstone Park and visiting with Myrel and Margaret in St. Regis, Montana, they too, went to Iowa, making their home at Hospers. They built a little house on the yard by John's folks and he worked the home farm. Edna's leaving made a tremendous change in our home, as now the housework rested on Mama alone. However, as Ralph and Ellsworth both boarded at home while they were teaching, they both helped me a great deal with the house work.

Yes, Grandma still washed the dishes and did the dusting, so it was not too bad.

The year of 1941 was a time of testing for us. The crop looked very promising, but on July 1, a hailstorm came over our farm, taking our small grain crop while the neighbors had very little loss. We consoled ourselves as the corn and millet were left, so we still would have feed for the cattle and pigs. That year we had 58 pigs, the largest number we ever had.

The following week another hailstorm centered on our farm and destroyed the feed. At this time, my brother, Ed, took sick. I went there to help care for him, but when they took him to the hospital, I came home. When I got home, Henry said to me, "Mama, there is something wrong with the pigs." And there really was. Hog cholera had not yet come to our part of the country, so we called the veterinary and he declared that is what it was. He vaccinated the best ones, but it was too late. Well, they all died except two, and they had better died too, as they were not at all thrifty.

Brother Ed passed away, and on July 22, his wife's birthday, was the funeral. Bill, Dick, Edna, John and Albert, who was working for Bill, all came for the funeral. Those four boys sang together as a male quartet. So with Edna accompanying them they sang two numbers at their favorite Uncle's funeral.

After all this, one morning, one of the cows was dead in the pasture. We said to each other, "Isn't this enough? Must the cows go too yet?"

Many times when I was troubled, I would open the Bible at random and found advice or comfort there. This time the Bible fell open and my eyes focused on Mal.3, vs. 6, where is written. "For I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." God spoke to me through that verse, and I took courage from that thought and shared my feelings with Henry.

That was the end of our losses that year. There was enough growth in the fields to provide feed for the cattle the next winter. Our financial loss was great, but spiritually, the Lord's chastening was good for us.

So, there was no threshing done on our farm that year, although Charlie took out the machine and threshed for other farmers. In this way, we had some income, so at least we could pay the interest on the debt we still had. Cream sold that year was $868.21.

By this time World War II was causing every one much concern, as many young men were being called into service, and our turn came too. On April 1, 1942, Charlie left for military service. He was sent to Camp Barkely near Abilene, Texas, where he was for 2 years.

This again, was quite a problem, as Thelmar was only 18, and he had to take over all the field work. Yes, Papa could advise him in many ways, but not in operating the tractor and the other big machinery.

Eugene then was 13, the only one going to grade school anymore, but he could help with the chores. So things went pretty well.

This year, Henry was graduated from the Western Theological Seminary and ordained to the gospel ministry. On June 17th he was united in marriage to Lucile Kleinjan. She was a graduate from Central College. Her home was in Sanborn, Iowa, so another Iowa girl was added to our family. Their first church was at Maplewood, near Holland, Michigan.

The previous year he had worked with the people there with the result that a new congregation was organized there, and he was called to be their first pastor.

Albert now was in Seminary. Ralph was in college. Charlie was in the army and Ellsworth was teaching school.

One thing I omitted was when we made a pit silo. That was a very good move, as ensilage proved to be not only very good feed, but much green stuff could be made into silage. One year, for lack of anything better, green Russian Thistles and sunflowers were used. This however, caused the cattle to urinate profusely, causes much water in the gutters. As horses were being used very little now, the addition built to the barn in 1922 now was taken down and the lumber was used to build an upright silo on top of the concrete lined pit silo. The barn also was remodeled into a real dairy barn during the thirties.

Early in 1943, the military called Ralph from college to go into service. He was sent to California where, on the eighth day of training his neck was broken. Although it was not fatal, he was in traction for a long time after which he was put in various casts and was in Palm Springs for months. Finally, at the end of 5 months he was transferred to the Veteran's hospital in Fargo, North Dakota for another month and finally came home, still in a cast. And so, wearing a cast, he returned to college that fall. Although his neck is a bit stiff yet, after 26 years, no serious inconvenience has resulted. Yes, he did receive a compensation which he still gets.

Later that same year, Thelmar's name was coming up. Because Ellsworth was teaching school, he was being deferred. As Thelmar now was running the machinery on the farm, Ellsworth felt he would have to take over the farm job if Thelmar went into service. So he volunteered to go in Thelmar's place. As Thelmar was accustomed to farm work, this was a good idea, and the draft board approved it. So, in June, Ellsworth left for service.

He landed in Camp McClellan, in Alabama. In November, he came home on furlough and while home, he got appendicitis, so had surgery in Bismark. He came through this alright and went back to camp. But later on, while out on bivouac, his ear drum was ruptured and against his will, he was discharged. Under the influence of the Chaplain, who he had assisted while in service, he decided to prepare for the gospel ministry. So, a fourth Ten Clay went to Central College.

During the summer we again suffered a loss in that a storm took the roof off the barn. As carpenters were scarce, Charlie was permitted to come home on an emergency furlough. Although the roof was not replaced then, the lower part was repaired. As the haystairs was intact, that fall we threshed flax and put the straw on the stairs, making a good covering. So, the winter of 43-44 there was no roof on the barn, but in 1944, Will came and, with help from others, the roof again was put on.

In 1944, Albert graduated from the Seminary and was ordained in the ministry. Through the years, he was having correspondence with Arlyne De Vries from Archer and on June 15th they were married at Archer. Albert's first pastorate was in El Monte, California, so that was their home for the next 4 years.

Things were going pretty well and we were buying war bonds to help win the war.

Ralph had graduated from college and also desired to enter the ministry, so he too, went to Seminary.

In November of 1945, Charlie was released from the army after serving 43 months, including the Normandy invasion, going through Germany without getting a scratch, although he saw his buddy blown to bits. When he returned home, Thelmar was planning to get married, so Charlie took his place on the farm again and with the help of Eugene, things would go on.

So on December 21st, Thelmar was married to Flora High and they went to Washington to live.

Now Henry and I decided it was time for us to retire. Although we had intended to leave North Dakota when that time came, but as Grandma still was with us, we did not feel it was fair to her to take her away from the church and community where they had lived and labored for 60 years. So, we built a house in Westfield right across the road from the church and in plain view of the cemetery where our loved ones were laid to rest. But apparently our plans did not bear the approval of our heavenly Father.

Before we moved, there were two important events. While Ralph was in college, he had become acquainted with Jane Rozendaal. They corresponded while he was in the hospital in California. During this time they decided to go as missionaries to China. On June 14, 1946, they were united in marriage at Harrison, South Dakota where Jane's father was pastor. He (Ralph) graduated from Seminary in 1948 and was ordained as a missionary at Westfield, North Dakota. After this they went to Berkley, California for language study.

We must go back to July 15th of that year when we had a family reunion at Paulina Park in Iowa. All our children, in laws and grandchildren, except Myrel's children were present and we had a grand time.

While Charlie was in service, he had been corresponding with Ruth Den Hartog, so on July 23, 1946 they were united in marriage at Sheldon, Iowa. After a honeymoon, they came to our home which was to be their future home. On October 11, 1946, Henry and I left the farm which had been our home for 42 years. All our children were born and raised there, but as we came there alone, now we left it alone, leaving Charlie, Ruth and Eugene to take over.

Just two weeks later, our barn went up in smoke! In it was 60 tons of alfalfa, 400 bushels of oats, 250 bushels of ground feed, a tractor, complete milking equipment, 17 cows, 1 bull, 5 calves and many other things. Also the windows, doors and finishing lumber for the new house in Westfield. What a loss! The cause of the fire is not known, although it is thought that it was caused by the tractor. I will not dwell on this experience as it is too painful. However, through this loss, we found that we had many friends.

The consistory decided to canvass the congregation and the result was that we were given over $1,800. As Charlie was remodeling the house, which was not yet finished, it really was a mess. To add to our problem, Charlie and Ruth could not endure the situation and decided to go to Iowa. So on December 12th, we had sale of the young cattle, horses and machinery etc.

But what to do now? We could rent the land, but Henry was not capable of taking that responsibility. We could sell the farm, but without a barn, it would not bring much of a price. After some discussion and much prayer, we decided to dispose of it on an annuity plan. The matter was taken up with the

American Bible Society, but they did not take farms. Through Ralph's contact with Western Theological Seminary, they decided to take it, the first time they had made such a venture.

On March 1, 1947, and agreement was made with Doctor John R. Mulder, president of the Seminary. So, valuing the farm at $23,800, they agreed to pay us 6% interest on that amount as long as we both lived. At the time of death of either one of us, we would receive only 4%. This agreement has worked out well through the years.

After Charlie and Ruth left there was a new problem. What could Eugene now do as he was to have worked with Charlie? There was no work available, but he tried various things, including running a skating rink in Linton. This was not a profitable venture, so after working around here and there, on August 15, 1949, he left for Aberdeen where he found work to do.

On that same day, we received word that Myrel Dilly, Margaret's husband, had been killed in a bridge building accident. Will, Dick, Edna and Charlie came from Iowa, stopping in Westfield to pick me up, to go to St. Regis to attend the funeral.

That same year, in the fall, Eugene started attending college at Northwestern. The following year, he attended Hope for a while, but there, he met a young lady and they were married on November 8, 1950. They lived in Holland, Michigan.

Ellsworth now was attending Seminary. While attending Central College, he had become acquainted with Betty Jo Van de Geest and on August 23, 1949, they were married at Pella, Iowa. They lived in Holland, Michigan while he took his final year at the Seminary. After his graduation, they moved to North Holland, where his first pastorate was.

So, the children all had their own homes and Grandma Renskers was living with us in Westfield and things were going well. On April 20, 1954 we had been married 50 years, so it was decided that we should observe it, having the "doings" in the church basement. All the children were home for the occasion. Margaret came early to help get things ready. Everything went fine. A nice program had been prepared by the children. A very enjoyable time was had by all. Many relatives and friends were present. However, we were disappointed of one thing. The previous Thanksgiving day, a baby girl was born to Margaret's daughter and her husband, so we were looking forward to having five generations present, but to our sorrow, she suddenly died on Valentines Day. However, it was a privilege to have Grandma Renskers with us, who then was 94 years old. Another privilege and blessing was that we had with us Eileen, little daughter of Charlie and Ruth. Their first born after having been married almost 7 ½ years.

Our children, all together gave us a new refrigerator and many lovely gifts were received from friends and relatives. What a grand experience it was! It really was a time for gratitude and thanksgiving! For 50 years with ups and downs, times of rejoicing and of sorrows, but we felt certain that our Lord and Master had always been with us.

Nothing special happened later that year. Although Grandma never had been robust, by being careful about her food, she had been quite well through the years. However, in the spring of 1955, she was becoming weaker. Although there was no evidence really of any disease, her body was worn out. After one week in bed, she quietly passed away on May 4th. Now she was with the Lord and her Savior, whom she loved so dearly and served so faithfully through the years. She was laid to rest in the same lot where her mother, husband and four children were buried. Her son, Thomas was buried at Strasburg and Edward, at Pollock where they lived and were members of the church.

The house seemed strangely empty without Grandma, after having been with us 29 ½ years. Although Henry was not really sick, but because of hardening of the arteries, his mind was not too good at times. We were 20 miles from a doctor or hospital and dependent on our neighbors, so the children thought we should come where some of our children were.

So, under the Lord's guidance we decided to move to Sheldon, Iowa, where four of our children were living. For me it was very hard to leave the church and community of which I had been a part for the first 70 years of my life and where I still was an active member, but by God's grace and guidance it became possible for me.

So, under Will's supervision, a new house was being built for us in Sheldon. Henry became impatient to move, so on May 22, 1956 the move was made. Although our house was not ready yet, arrangements had been made for us to live in Albert's trailer house, which had been moved on the back end of our lot. Will and Tillie came with his station wagon to get us and for 10 weeks we lived in the trailer house. This was not bad at all as Henry enjoyed watching the men working.

A garden spot was waiting so after arriving on May 22ne, the next day we planted potatoes and the following day, we put in the garden! At Henry's request, Will, here known as Bill, but with many as G.W., got 4 trees which Henry planted. To the surprise of our neighbors, our garden grew so well, where for years had been only a weed patch. The reason for that was that a truck load or more of good alfalfa loam had been hauled onto it. Everything went fine and in spite of many warnings about how hard it is to transplant old trees, it worked fine. Personally, I feel the Lord was directing this move and in His Divine providence, he caused Henry to forget what we left behind and completely applied himself to the new surroundings. To the best of my knowledge, he never mentioned the name of our former neighbors and friends.

Later, a house was moved close to us which looked much like the Westfield parsonage, and more than once he asked, "When will they move the church her too?"

One thing that always bothered him was that in Westfield, the road running in front of our house ran east and west, whereas here, it runs north and south. So, he was mixed up in directions. He always enjoyed singing and often he would sit outside in the shade singing at the top of his voice.

There wasn't a weed in the garden as long as he was able to take care of it. As long as he was fairly well, he was satisfied and proud of our new home.

Through the years, he had difficulty with the skin on his nose getting sunburned easily. This developed into skin cancer. This was successfully removed by the use of radium in 1959. But the hardening of his arteries was getting worse, so at times, he was hard to care for. Also, his hearing was bad. No other disease set in, but gradually, he failed, until March 31, 1961, when he passed away at the age of 90 years and almost 7 months. This was on Good Friday. It meant so much to me that I could take care of him until the end. Margaret was with me to help the last month. The funeral was the following Tuesday.

All the children were home for the funeral. His passing was quiet and peaceful. For a long time, he had desired to go "home". "There remaineth a rest for the people of God " were the words upon which the funeral message was based. The hymns sung were O! Think of the Home Over There and Close to Thee. His passing was not a shock, but it left an empty place that never will be filled until we meet again.

We were in for a shock when on May 3, a good month later, Will, our oldest son, suddenly died of a heart attack. Although he was aware that he had a heart condition and had slowed up, the end came unexpectedly in the hospital.

Two days ago, June 26, 1969, we as a family all were together. One son-in-law, Henry Van Bruggen, could not be here, but all the children were. The number now has increased to 101, but many grandchildren were missing.

The Lord has blessed us all so far and He will be with us we know if we keep our eyes fixed on Him. Eugene and Thelmar are here yet. The others have returned home. By Monday, I will be here alone, yet never alone. My Lord is with me.

June 28, 1969… Minnie Ten Clay

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. May He be with us till we meet again.

Henry and Minnie Ten Clay

50th Wedding Anniversary

April 20, 1954

Minnie is wearing her original wedding gown