

The History of the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton

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II. DESCRIPTION:

A. INTRODUCTION:

Throughout this century large numbers of Dutch men and women have immigrated from the Netherlands to Canada.(1) Quite a few of them came to Alberta,(2) and of these a sizable number settled in the city of Edmonton. This in itself did not make them members of a Dutch ethnic community. To unite them into a 'people' (Gordon, 1964) they also needed to identify, together, in their host country with something taken from their home country. Moreover, this aspect of life from their country of origin needed to play such an important role in their lives as to form the reason why they are identified as a separate ethnic group.

This cannot be said for all the Dutch immigrants who have settled in Edmonton. Some of them have followed the general tendency of Dutch immigrants to rapidly become Canadianized.(3) By far the majority of them, however, did take an aspect of their life in the Netherlands and made it central to their lives in Canada. This aspect is their Reformed religion. This religion has formed them into a 'religio-ethnic' community (Driedger, 1989) and the maintenance and promotion of this religion shapes their lives decisively, even to this day.

This is one of the reasons why we intend to explore the history of the Dutch in Edmonton by focusing exclusively on the origin, the growth and the possible decline of the Reformed Dutch in this city.(4) The other reason is that the comparison groups of Dutch settlers in the USA, discussed at this conference, are also Reformed Dutch communities.

B. THE PERIOD OF THE OLD-TIMERS (1910-1947)

The Reformed Dutch community in Edmonton came into being in 1910 with the establishment of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Ironically, it took the death of two of the children of Mr. Hendrick Kipper, one of the founders of this church, to have its members become aware of each other, and, subsequently, to join hands together in forming a congregation. As they met one another at the funeral, they realized how much they had in common with each other and they decided to form a church community (In His Soil, 1985:2).

The church's charter members consisted of recently arrived Reformed Dutch immigrants from various parts of the Netherlands, together with a smaller contingent (20%) of Reformed Dutch immigrants from Iowa, Michigan, Massachusetts, South Dakota and Montana in the USA (estimate from Soil:96-101). As we will see, this mix would soon prove to be a source of contention within the community.

It was Kipper who took the initiative in forming the church by writing Rev. VanderMey, minister of the CRC of Manhattan, Montana, with the request of coming to Edmonton to officially start the church. Classis Pacific North West of the CRC of America, mandated VanderMey to do so and on Oct. 12, 1910 he formally founded the church, which at the time counted 9 families and 1 single adult, or 19 adults and 23 children as its flock (Soil:2).

During the following years a large number of new members were added from the Netherlands and the USA, boosting its ranks to nearly 60 families. These immigrants came in response to glowing accounts of life in Alberta written by Kipper in De Heraut, a religious weekly in the Netherlands, and by VanderMey in De Wachter, the church paper of the CRC in the USA (Soil:3-5).

However, the church did not remain this large for long. By 1916 its membership was already reduced to 25 families, and, for various reasons, it was destined to stay at this level of participation for some time to come. In fact,

not until the late 1940's did the church again reach a membership of 60 families due to an influx of post-war immigrants from the Netherlands (Appendix A).

It was not as if the community lacked an influx of new immigrants from the Netherlands or the USA during the first four decades of its existence. Many came to Edmonton from outside Canada, and many more also came from other areas inside Canada, notably from Saskatchewan and other parts of Alberta, to join the church. The trouble was that, being mostly agrarians, they soon left the community in equal number. For many of them the Reformed Dutch community in Edmonton functioned as a transition point to the more outlying areas of Alberta. They only stayed long enough to scout the surrounding areas for land that might be suitable to establish a Reformed Dutch farming colony (Soil:5,71; Palmer, 1985:149).

The formation of one such colony was responsible for the earliest decline in membership. Between 1911-1915 21 families, including the Kippers, moved to an area about 100 miles north of Edmonton. There they established a Reformed Dutch colony and called it Neerlandia. In 1915 they organized their own Christian Reformed church in that place. It became the first daughter church of the Edmonton CRC (Soil:7, 77-90; A Furrow Laid Bare, 1985:36-59; Palmer:149-152).

For many years thereafter, the Edmonton church functioned as the mother church for quite a number of small Reformed Dutch settlements all over Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The pattern of involvement with these settlements was always the same. The Edmonton church would ordain one or two elders in these places and the minister of the mother church visited these settlements several times per year for pastoral care and to perform duties which only ordained ministers could perform, such as the administration of the sacraments and preaching. This pattern would continue until the outlying group was big enough to incorporate itself as a separate CR congregation, at which

point it was expected to form its own consistory and to call its own minister (Soil:13, 17-19).

With such an unstable membership and so many obligations toward the outlying colonies, the Edmonton congregation was never well to do. Nevertheless, as a result of generous donations by CR congregations all over North America, it was able to build its own church building, already in 1914. For at least four decades thereafter, life in the Edmonton Reformed Dutch community centered around this church building. During that time the community was a church community.

But what kind of church was it? What were the issues that united and divided its members the most? Initially, there were two issues, the vroegdoop and the issue concerning the name of the church (Soil:13-16). Both issues went to the heart of the community's identity and for that reason caused considerable strife among its members.

Since the issue about the name of the church is easiest to understand we will deal with it first. This issue essentially related to the composition of the community. The majority of the members, who had come to Edmonton directly from the Netherlands, favored the name, Gereformeerde Kerk of Edmonton, since this was the name of the denomination they had belonged to in the Netherlands. A minority of the members (20%), among which the minister, who had come to Edmonton from the USA, favored the name, Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton. They had good reason to suggest this name since the church was, in fact, a part of the Christian Reformed denomination. But this is precisely where the problem lay. The majority of the church members, specifically those who had immigrated from the Netherlands, while they were grateful for the help they received, preferred to keep their distance from the American CRC (Soil:16). In this they were not motivated by a sense of Canadian nationalism. They had their

reservations for theological and ideological reasons. This leads us to the other issue, the issue of the vroegdoop or 'early baptism.'

This dispute centered around the question whether or not a child should be baptized as soon as it is born, even if this meant that only the father of the child could attend the ceremony, since, because of the birth, the mother was still convalescing. Again, the majority of the members, those who had come directly from the Netherlands, favored early baptism. The minority from the USA, including the minister, did not (Soil:13).

Ostensibly, and to an outsider, both these disputes represent a storm in a teacup, which, if reason had prevailed should have been resolved in favor of the minority opinion. But the underlying issues in these disputes were far from trivial to the identity of the community. To understand this, we must briefly recount the history of the Reformed in the Netherlands.

Even though more than 50% of the inhabitants of the Netherlands are, and have always been, Roman Catholic, Dutch culture has, from the inception of the Netherlands as a nation, been ruled by two religious-ideological forces (Schama, 1988; Dooyeweerd, 1979). The first is Humanism, which finds its origin in the Christian Humanists like Erasmus, and the second, Reformed Protestantism, which is mostly based on the teachings of John Calvin. From the beginning, therefore, and next to the Humanist movement, the Reformed community was a dominant player in Dutch national life.

Ecclesiastically, Reformed Protestantism came to expression in the Hervormde Kerk, which, by the early nineteenth century had been proclaimed to be the state church of the Netherlands. With this proclamation the Hervormde Kerk had become identified with Dutch culture in general, which at the time was heavily influenced by the French Revolution of 1789.

For many Reformed Dutch Protestants of the nineteenth century, this church had lost its unique identity as a Reformed denomination, because, in their view,

it based itself more on the ideas of the French Revolution than on the authority of the Bible, the latter being historically a central tenet of the Protestant Reformation. In line with their convictions about the state church, these people seceded in 1834 and formed their own denomination, called the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk of the Netherlands. Another group of Reformed Dutch women and men, who had identical concerns about the state church, instead chose to emigrate at about the same time under the leadership of Van Raalte and Scholte, to the USA where they established Dutch Reformed colonies in Michigan and Iowa. The Christian Reformed Church of America eventually originated from out of this group. Both those who seceded in the Netherlands and those who emigrated to the USA called themselves the people of the Afscheiding or the 'Secession' (Soil:13, 14; Christelijke Encyclopaedie, First Edition, 1925, Vol. I 59-61; Bratt, 1984:3-14).

In the latter part of the nineteenth century yet another group seceded from the state church in the Netherlands. The denomination they formed is called the Gereformeerde Kerken. They also called themselves the people of the Doleantie, or the people 'who mourn' (the apostasy of the state church). Since this latter group was led by Abraham Kuyper, a charismatic figure, who later became prime minister of the Netherlands, the members of this group received yet another name. To this day they are identified as 'the Kuyperians.'

Finally, most of the people of the Afscheiding and the people of the Doleantie united into one Gereformeerde denomination in 1892. Within this denomination the two groups were henceforth to be distinguished as group 'A' and group 'B' (Soil:13, 14; Christelijke Encyclopaedie, 1925, Vol. II, 299-301; Bratt, 1984:14-33).

To make a long story short, the Edmonton Reformed Dutch community from the outset contained members of both groups. The majority of its members, who immigrated directly from the Netherlands, for the most part were Kuyperians, or

members of the B group. Those who came via the USA hailed from the Afscheiding and were members of the A group (The Banner, March 1,8,15, 1993).

Though these two groups had the essentials of the Reformed faith in common, there were also some important differences in emphasis. What were these differences?

The people of the Afscheiding viewed the Christian life as a wrestling with God to obtain the certainty of one's salvation. With Kierkegaard they held that becoming a Christian was not easy. It involved a daily awareness of one's sinfulness, a conscious decision for Christ and daily repentance in the form of personal piety. For these reasons they placed a greater importance on the sacrament of communion where the focus is more on what we promise to God, than on baptism, where the focus is more on what God promises to us. This group also had a tendency to separate itself from the outside world in order to keep itself pure, whereas, inside the church its members were expected to adhere to a strict moral code. Finally, the members of this group of Reformed Christians also exhibited a tendency toward personalism, if not individualism. In practice this meant that they did not favor organized communal Christian action beyond the church, and, perhaps, the Christian school. Whatever acts of outreach they would perform, they did as individuals, and these attempts at outreach consisted exclusively of bringing the converted into the life of the church (Soil:13; Christelijke Encyclopaedie I:59; Bratt, 1984:4).

The people of the Doleantie, the Kuyperians, had an entirely different view of the Christian life. They placed the emphasis on what God had promised. According to their understanding, in the beginning of time, God had made a covenant with his people to save them. From God's side every individual child born into the Christian community, is reborn, regenerated by virtue of being baptized, unless the conduct of this child in later life gave proof to the contrary. According to them, the free offer of salvation is the greatest

certainly a Christian can count on from the time he or she is baptized. For this reason Kuyperians typically do not worry a great deal about whether they are saved. Salvation is God's business. Parents view their children as children of the Lord and nurture and teach them as such from the beginning and not as potential converts to Christianity. When these children have achieved the age of discernment, they are expected to appropriate this free offer of salvation personally through an act of public profession of their faith. It is true that they may also decline to do so, to their individual peril, but this in no way invalidates the offer of free salvation nor God's favor toward them up to that point in their lives.

In addition, Kuyperians emphasize that God directs his redemptive grace, not merely to individuals but to the Christian community as a whole, and through the Christian community to the entire world. For them, to be saved means that one knows oneself to be a member of the body of Christ and of the Kingdom of Christ. Thus, the sense of being a 'people' (of God), or a 'nation' is much stronger among the Kuyperians than among the people of the Afscheiding, since the former regard belonging to the community as synonymous with being save.

Finally, from the point of view of the Kuyperians the task of this Christian community is not to separate itself from the outside world for fear of contamination. Rather, its task is to redeem the world, to transform its structures and its culture into a Christian direction.

In a nutshell, then, the Kuyperian view of the Christian life goes as follows: In gratitude for the free offer of salvation, given by God at baptism and appropriated by individuals when they publicly profess their faith, the members of Christ's body and Kingdom are to work together to reclaim the world for their Lord. This formulation is their rationale for forming separate organizations or institutions, such as churches, schools and a variety of other Christian action associations (Soil:14; The Banner: March 8, 1993).

There is abundant evidence that these issues were frequently debated at meetings during the early days of the Edmonton Reformed Dutch community (Soil:14). But it never went beyond discussion. The community simply lacked the critical mass to implement these dreams beyond the formation of a church. The formation of separate, culture transforming, Christian institutions, beyond the church only became a reality in the late forties when the community experienced a large influx of, mostly Kuyperian, post-war Reformed immigrants from the Netherlands.

Until that time the Kuyperian view of life could only focus on ecclesiastical issues like the vroegdoop. To the Kuyperians the issue was, that if, as they believed, God promises salvation at baptism to a child, then, the sooner that child is baptized, the better. Initially this debate about the vroegdoop raged in full force within the community. But gradually, the debate died down, particularly, when 21 families, most of them Kuyperians, left the church to settle in Neerlandia (Soil:14, 16).

With their departure the community became more preoccupied with narrowly ecclesiastical matters than with broadly cultural issues. Perhaps they began to think of themselves as a Reformed church rather than a Reformed community. In any case, it was not until 1946 that they began to think about establishing a Christian school (Soil:253), not to mention the other Christian action institutions, which did not come into existence until the 1950's, when new Reformed Dutch immigrants arrived from the Netherlands.

Until that time two major issues were discussed again and again by the community. Both these issues betray a growing awareness, over the years, by the members of the community, of the broader Canadian context in which they lived. These were the question of whether the worship service should be held in English or in Dutch, and the question of evangelism. Some feared that by switching to English the community would lose its identity. Others felt that a change to

English was necessary to keep the young people from leaving the church. This change was slow in coming and frequently evoked heated debate. Initially a third English service was instituted, in addition to the two regular Dutch services. By 1930 half of the worship services were conducted in English. In 1944 the minutes of the church council were written in English for the first time. Finally, by 1949 the services were conducted in English only. Thus, it took the community four decades to make the change (Soil:21-25). Ironically, just at the time when it had finally made the switch, it experienced a major influx of new immigrants from the Netherlands, which made it necessary to revert to Dutch again.

The issue of evangelism had less to do with the identity of the community than with the way it reached out to the surrounding Canadian community. It is never easy for an immigrant community to proselyte people from the outside. This group was no exception. It was mostly the ministers they called to lead them who pushed for some form of evangelism. But the ordinary members of the church showed more a tendency toward isolation. Thus, it was not until 1946 that an evangelization chapel was established in the city and staffed by a trained evangelist. Even thereafter church evangelism did not meet with a great deal of enthusiasm, as is witnessed by the fact that the chapel was discontinued in 1952 (Soil:29). It seems that the church viewed evangelism more as a way to boost church membership than as a service to the unchurched. For example, the church council insisted that, as soon as the chapel converted someone to Christianity, he or she would be required to become a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

C. THE PERIOD OF THE NEWCOMERS (1947-1960)

The community was soon to get a boost in membership from an entirely different source. Between 1947-1960 it experienced a veritable population

explosion, due to a massive influx of post-world war II immigrants from the Netherlands.(5) By sheer weight of their number these newcomers quickly dominated the life of the community. They also created a raft of new problems for the community.

The first major problem was to find these newcomers a job and a place to stay. Not an easy task, considering that these immigrants had no money, did not speak English and came at a time when, due to an economic slump, unemployment was high in Edmonton. Add to this the fact that the community also had to cope with the cultural shock which the newcomers experienced due to immigration and we can see what a gigantic task faced the old-timers of the community, who at the beginning of this post-war wave of immigration numbered less than 300, women and children included (Soil:331)!

In finding the newcomers a job and a place to live the community was ably led by a field man and a home missionary, both of whom were appointed and funded by the CR denomination of North America.

In the greater Edmonton area Herman Wierenga was the field man. By all accounts he was a man gifted with the ability to get things done. His heart clearly went out to the plight of the newly arrived immigrants. He worked around the clock helping them to settle in a strange city in a foreign land. Not only did he give the first support these Reformed Dutch immigrants received in Canada, but with his exceptional drive and organizational ability he was also singularly instrumental in making contact with government agencies for them, in finding ways to establish new churches and in pushing for the formation of Christian organizations. Tragically, his productive life was cut short in 1954 when he died in a car accident while driving an immigrant family to their new home. His death left a gaping hole in the community (Soil:334/5; The Guardian:July 9, 1954).

Another person who was notably helpful to the newly arrived in and around Edmonton was the home missionary for the Edmonton region, Rev. J. Hanenburg. Like many other home missionaries in other places it was his job to establish new CR congregations in areas where the numbers warranted it. This work involved visiting individual immigrant families in their homes and helping them with whatever needs they had. Often these needs exceeded the support which ministers can normally be expected to offer. Like Wierenga he, too, was singularly important to many immigrants in easing their pain of immigration (Soil:335/6; The Young Calvinist:June, 1959).

The other problem facing the community was what to do with all the newcomers on Sunday. The increase in membership due to immigration was so rapid that the church building quickly became too small to hold them. Thus, it soon became necessary to form more congregations and to build more church buildings. To gain a sense of the magnitude of this problem, we should note that as late as 1949 the community's membership stood at only 258. In 1951 there were 688 members, in 1953 1830, in 1954 2513, in 1955 2970, in 1956 3170, in 1959 4100 and the total number in 1960 stood at 4200 (CRC Yearbook 1949-1960).(6)

After this decade of increase, immigration and, therefore, church growth slowed considerably. Nevertheless, more churches were added in the next three decades with the result that there are presently twelve CR churches in the greater Edmonton Metropolis with a combined membership of 5560 persons (1993 CRC Yearbook).

From 1950 to 1960 four churches were added to the existing one. The establishment of these new churches in less than a decade was phenomenal for more than one reason. It was first of all, a huge financial undertaking. Most of the members of these churches had come to Canada from the Netherlands only a few years ago with little more than the clothes on their backs. That they were

able to build these churches in such a short time was not only indicative of the fact that they prospered in Canada, but also of their willingness to sacrifice.

Secondly, the formation of these churches also represented quite an organizational undertaking. A multitude of decisions had to be made by a group of people who, not only came from a foreign country, but who, within that country, came from very different areas where very different customs prevailed. Moreover, they also hailed from several very different Reformed denominations in the Netherlands. How could such a heterogeneous group become united enough to make these decisions?

In spite of their diversity, these newcomers to the community had a few things in common. When they arrived in Canada, they were highly motivated to build churches, to support a Christian school system and to form Christian organizations. In the Netherlands, they had been accustomed to having their own Reformed churches, their own Reformed schools and their own Reformed organizations (Bratt, 1984:14-33). Since these institutions were lacking in Canada, they were ready to establish them without so much as a second thought. For them it was simply impossible to conceive of life without them. Consequently, during their first few years in Canada they were driven to build, to build and to build some more. They also had an abundance of energy. The problem was how to harness this motivation and energy so that it would produce concerted communal action.

This task was taken up by the ministers, whom the community called to lead the newly established congregations. Some of these ministers came to Edmonton from the USA, but the majority of them came directly from the Netherlands. Each of them was dedicated to building the community. They devoted all of their time to this task and worked tirelessly, to the point of exhaustion one surmises, in view of all the work that needed to be done.

Besides the usual tools for unifying a Christian community, such as preaching, pastoral care and church administration, these ministers also wrote extensively in a local church weekly, called The Guardian. This paper, first published in October of 1953, was read faithfully by most of the members of the community. Part of the reason for its acceptance was that it was written almost entirely in Dutch. By briefly recounting the contents of this weekly we gain some insight into the issues which moved the minds and hearts of the members of the community during the early 1950's.

Ostensibly, the paper was to be a weekly for the whole of Classis Alberta of the CRC, which had been formed only recently. But in actual fact most of the news it contained came from the Edmonton churches. As could be expected from a local church paper, The Guardian published news usually found in church bulletins. This information kept the members of one congregation informed about the activities of another congregation and in this way it promoted unity among the churches. In addition, there were reports, from time to time, from the Christian immigration society, also recently established. These reports informed the community about the services of this society, such as its health plan, the burial fund and the Christian credit union.

But the most important items in the paper were the articles which the ministers and others wrote on a variety of topics. Besides meditations on passages from the Bible, there were articles informing the new members of the community about the CR denomination they had recently joined. There were also long and involved articles about the church creeds. Each of these usually can be found in church papers. But, in addition, there were also articles about the necessity for the community of maintaining its Reformed distinctiveness in Canada, coupled with calls to reach out into the larger Canadian community in an organized manner. For instance, there were articles about the difference between Puritanism and Calvinism (Dec. 3, 1954) and there were articles about a

Reformed view of education, politics and labour relations (Dec. 10, 1954; Feb. 25, 1955; March 7, Oct. 8, Sept. 24, 1954). The expressed focus of these latter articles was that the Reformed distinctiveness of the community should not lead to its isolation from the Canadian scene but to an organized Christian witness in the areas of education, labour and politics (June 18, 1954). These articles drew the attention of the members of the community to the fact that, next to building churches for their own edification, there was a need for reaching out into the Canadian community by establishing a variety of Christian organizations. They dealt with themes with which the newly arrived immigrants were familiar. They provided them with a sense of continuity. They offered them an opportunity to continue in Canada, the work in which they had been busy in the Netherlands.

One wonders to what extent the old-timers shared the enthusiasm of the newcomers for all this building, expansion and organized outreach. A series of heated discussions in The Guardian (Oct. 1, Nov. 12, Dec. 3, 1954) about the differences between the old-timers and the newcomers regarding the task of being a Christian in the world leads one to believe that relations between these two groups of immigrants did not always run smoothly. Nevertheless, a clear consensual interest in being more than a church community was taking shape during the 1950's, and this interest was translated into action in the decades to come.

Admittedly, this new focus within the Edmonton Reformed Dutch community was more in line with the views of Kuyper and the people of the Doleantie. thus, it clearly favored the newcomers, most of whom were Kuyperians, over the old-timers, the lives of most of whom were more inspired by the Afscheiding. But, apparently, these differences did not split the community apart. Perhaps, the wisdom of its leaders prevented this from happening. Perhaps, it was the fact that the newcomers greatly outnumbered the old timers. The former were not

above applying social sanctions to those who disagreed with them. For example, as one observer has noted, those few, who, for whatever reason, chose not to send their children to the Christian school, felt the wrath of some in the community for years (personal communication). In any case, the work of building, expanding and organized outreach continued.

Next to building new churches, the community also built several Christian day schools during the 1950's. A Christian school had already been established by the old-timers and had been in existence since 1949. It began modestly as a one-room, one-teacher school in the basement of the church and it offered Christian day school education to 21 children in grades 3-6 (Soil:254).

Having a Christian school in the basement of the church was clearly a stopgap measure designed to get the school off the ground. It soon proved to be inadequate in meeting the demand for Christian education. Consequently, in 1951 a 2-room school was built in the centre of town. Total enrollment now stood at 81 (Soil:254).

However, in 1954, there were already 134 pupils, far too many for a 2-room school (Soil:255). Hence, in late 1954 a proposal was made to build another Christian school in the east end of Edmonton, where many of the immigrants were now living. To make this proposal a reality an appeal for funds went out to the members of the community. It is interesting to note that the appeal did not focus on the need, which, presumably, was clear. Rather, the point was made, that, by building Christian schools, the members of the community would be continuing the work of their forebears in the Netherlands, who, like them went through similar struggles a century ago. The appeal was an appeal for principled action (The Guardian:Dec. 10, 1954; Jan. 28, Feb. 4, Feb. 25, 1955). Building the next Christian school was presented as an act of faith. It was seen as necessary for the establishment of the church, for the protection of the children, but also as a means of reaching out into the larger Canadian

community. Or as an advertisement in The Guardian of Feb. 11, 1955 has it, "for the sake of God, the child, the church and the nation!"

These were familiar words for the members of the community. As a result they responded so overwhelmingly to the drive for money that the amount raised far exceeded the expectation of the organizers (The Guardian, Feb. 25, 1955). Not only that, but as was the case with the churches, this school was built almost entirely by free labour. Clearly, the majority of the members of the community identified themselves with the need for Christian education. As was the case with the churches, the building of a Christian school unified the community.

In September of 1955 Calvin Christian School East was opened in Beverly, a suburb of Edmonton. It had 5 rooms and 5 teachers. The combined enrollment for both schools was now 240 pupils, who were taught by 7 teachers. The combined operating budget for both schools had now reached \$30,000.

But this was by no means the end of the Christian School system expansion. In 1957 yet another school was added. Calvin Christian School West was built in the west end of Edmonton. It also had 5 class rooms. Edmonton now had 3 Christian schools. The combined enrollment in all three schools stood at 409 pupils and the total operating budget was \$68,000.

Finally, in 1960 Central Christian School was sold and 4 rooms were added to the West school, whereas in 1963 an additional 4 rooms were added to the East school (Soil:256/7; Bulletin 1989/90:18/19).

So, in less than a decade the Edmonton Reformed Christian community had managed to build 4 churches and 3 fully equipped Christian day schools! Quite an accomplishment for such a small group, which consisted mostly of poor immigrants. It became difficult to doubt their resolve to stake out their own identity in the city of Edmonton.

D. THE PERIOD OF THE SETTLERS (1960-1980)

One of the unique features of the 3 Edmonton Christian schools now in existence was, that from the beginning they were part of one unified system. This desire for unified city-wide action was also characteristic of the Edmonton churches, initially. The five churches established a long range planning committee to co-ordinate the tasks which these churches had in common, such as joint worship services on special occasions and joint consistorial and diaconal conferences. This committee was also responsible for hiring a minister of evangelism for the Greater Edmonton region, whose main task it was to stimulate interest and give guidance in evangelism to the members of the community. Out of this committee grew the Edmonton council of CR churches in 1975 (The Bridge, Feb. 1974:2). A move to centralize the administration of the churches in one address was also proposed at various times from the early 1950's to as late as 1971 (The Bridge, June 1971; Soil:42, 340). But each time it was proposed, it was rejected. Perhaps, this was just a bit too much centralization for the members of the community, but the fact that it was proposed at all was a clear indication of the desire by the community to seek unity within diversity.

A more lasting success was the publication of The Bridge. Like The Guardian, which The Bridge succeeded, this monthly was established to promote unity among the Edmonton CR churches. It was first published in 1959 and lasted until 1983. This paper was the brain child of the ministers of the five churches at that time, although, there are indications that the lion share of the work went to Mr. P. Mos, who served as treasurer, administrator and printer of the paper for most of its life (Soil:41; The Bridge, April 1981). The five ministers, the Revs. Vanderiet, Piersma, Nederlof, De Jager and Knoppers were more or less affectionately known as "the gang of five." These very different individuals worked hard, first of all, to establish a good working relationship among themselves and on the basis of this they successfully promoted the unity

of the Edmonton CR churches for a time via The Bridge (The Bridge, 1974:2).

Other ministers continued this task after them.

Though The Bridge was formally a church paper, like The Guardian of earlier days, it regularly contained articles on non-ecclesiastical issues ranging anywhere from the use of leisure to homosexuality (June 1971, March 1973). For this reason, some of its articles were regularly reprinted in other Christian papers with a wider circulation, such as Calvinist Contact, a Reformed weekly which is published in Ontario and distributed all across Canada.

Not only did The Bridge stimulate discussion among the members of the Edmonton Reformed Dutch community on issues relevant at any given time in the wider Canadian community. It also reflected the energy and enthusiasm with which the members of the community threw themselves into a variety of Christian activities during the 1960's and the 1970's. For example, articles in The Bridge regularly called for the formation and support of Christian organizations in the areas of labour relations, politics, post-secondary education and Christian mercy. It also reported faithfully on the activities of such organizations, once they had become established (The Bridge, April 1981).

During the 1960's and the 1970's the Reformed Dutch community in Edmonton experienced, perhaps, its most productive phase. It was known and admired, if not always liked by other CR communities in Canada and the USA for its activism. For instance, The Bridge asked a number of leaders in this larger community to describe the Edmonton CR community. Some of the words and phrases used to describe the community in the Dec. 1977 issue were: "vibrant, robust, creative and visionary, Kuyperian, biblical in world view and life style, aggressive, driven, enthusiastic, too intellectualistic, organizational, but lacks in caring for personal needs." These words accurately described the character of the Edmonton Reformed Dutch community during the 1960's and the 1970's.

There is no question that a lot was going on in the community during that time, particularly in the formation and work of Christian action organizations. We have already recounted the activity surrounding the Christian day school movement during the 1950's. This work continued unabated during the 1960's, the 1970's and the 1980's.

In 1965 the Edmonton Christian High School was built on a property adjacent to the West school. It had 5 rooms and offered Christian high school education up to, and including grade 11.

In 1967 the Edmonton Christian School System received a per pupil grant from the Alberta government. This eventually (1992) covered about 30% of the Christian School System's operating costs (Bulletin, 1992:25). This grant eased the tuition burden somewhat, but increased the enrollment, since more people could now afford to send their children to the Christian school. The combined enrollment for grades 1-11 in all the schools during that year stood at 845. The system now employed 28 full time teachers and had an operating budget of \$261,000.

Due to increasing enrollment, the North Edmonton Christian School was added in 1969. The high school also added grade 12 during that year.

In 1984 the operating budget for the combined schools was \$2727,000. During that year the system had an enrollment of 962 pupils and a full-time and part-time teaching staff of 65 (Soil:257-260).

Currently, the Edmonton Christian School System has a combined enrollment of 985 students. These are taught by 75 full-time and part-time teachers. This figure, which includes four principals, amounts to a full-time equivalent of 65 teachers. Its budget for the coming year is \$3954,000, and the tuition per student stands at \$4300 (oral communication), a far cry from a total budget of \$2500 and a \$50 per pupil tuition fee in 1949 (Soil:253/4).

In addition to this activity in the Christian schools, several locals were added to the Edmonton branch of the Christian Labour Association which had been established earlier. Clearly, this Christian organization was now also flourishing.

In the area of politics the formation of the Christian Action Foundation is noteworthy. This organization was not intended as a political party but as an organization to help Christians promote justice. This Foundation, first begun in Edmonton, has spawned a number of Christian action foundations across North America. For example, the Christian Action Foundation of Edmonton is the birth mother of a national Canadian organization known at first as the Committee for Justice and Liberty, and more recently as the Committee for Public Justice.

In the area of post-secondary education, an Edmonton chapter of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship was formed. This association sponsors the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario, a Christian graduate institute which offers M.A. and Ph.D. level degrees in a variety of subjects.(7) Furthermore, in 1978 the King's College, a Christian Liberal Arts College opened its doors in Edmonton. It offers a course of study leading to a General B.A. degree in most of the usual areas of undergraduate studies. It now has an enrollment of about 450 students, and has recently acquired its own campus.

In the area of social services the establishment of three institutions is noteworthy. There is, first of all the Pastoral Counseling Institute, which the community established in cooperation with other churches in Edmonton to alleviate the plight of the emotionally distressed. Then there is Rehoboth, an association for the care of the mentally handicapped. Finally, there is an association for the care of the elderly, which owns and operates two senior citizens housing complexes, Immanuel Home and Summit Village. Add to these, the Christian Credit Union which was established much earlier and it can be seen

that by the end of the 1970's the Reformed Dutch community was becoming institutionally complete to a degree seldom found in ethnic communities (Breton, 1965).

All of these institutions are religiously based in the sense that they resulted directly out of the Reformed world view and life style of its members. Though established by church people, most of them are not church organizations. They were formed and are operated next to whatever institutional activities the CRC has generated during this period.

E. THE PERIOD OF THE NATIVE BORN (1980-1993)

Even though we should not overstress this point, the latest period of the community must be characterized as a period of decline. Not that there has been any reduction in church participation. The CR churches in Edmonton did in fact continue to grow. Neither has there been a downturn in enrollment in the Christian schools. Quite the contrary. As we saw above, the enrollment in these schools continued to increase. Moreover, membership in the Christian organizations remains strong, and several of the organizations mentioned above did not come into being until after 1980.

What seems to be lagging, though, during this latest period is the earlier enthusiasm for building, which marked the community during the 1950's through the 1970's. Perhaps this was to be expected. Already in 1977 someone wondered out loud in The Bridge whether all the members were behind the communal building for which the community was known. Perhaps, he wondered, only a select few were involved (June issue:5).

Be this as it may, these few were, nevertheless, able to give vigorous leadership and they were able to mobilize the community into concerted action during the 1960's and the 1970's. The tone of the community during this time

was Reformational and Kuyperian. The forces that originated in the Doleantie were firmly in control.

In the late 1970's, however, this began to change. The voices in The Bridge became more critical, the reactions to the editorials more negative (The Bridge, Feb. 1977; Feb. 1979). The editorial policy of The Bridge itself underwent a change. Its editorial board now wanted to revert the paper to what it felt it was supposed to be in the first place, a church paper. The value of The Bridge itself was repeatedly called into question (April 1981 issue) during this period and the paper eventually died in 1983. With the demise of The Bridge the Greater Edmonton Council, the latest organ to promote unity of action among the Edmonton churches, which had recently been the object of severe criticism (The Bridge Feb. 1983) was also soon (1984) voted out of existence (Soil:42).

What happened to the community during this last decade and a half seems to be that it has reverted to being a church community. This renewed emphasis on church activities has not necessarily diminished the level of activity in the community. Currently, for instance, a great deal is being done by the diaconal wing of the churches in helping the disadvantaged, such as single parents and Native Indian people. Nor has this shift in emphasis appeared to have damaged the cause of non-ecclesiastical Christian organizations a great deal. All of them appear to be holding their own, if not flourishing. But the shift in focus from activities in non-ecclesiastical organizations to activity in, and by the churches is real nonetheless.

What seems to have happened, is that the Edmonton CR churches have become so diverse in their approach that they presently have too little in common with one another for city-wide communal action. They seem to have become independent entities in their own right (Soil:42) and the members of a given church appear to identify themselves more with it than with the larger Edmonton Reformed Dutch

community. What has come to pass is what Rev. N.B. Knoppers warned might happen already in 1960 (The Bridge, May 1960). The church has become its members' castle.

Perhaps, this trend is all for the better. In recent years many Christian Reformed churches across North America have been racked by division about the issue whether or not women should be allowed to hold an ecclesiastical office. This debate has largely bypassed the Edmonton CR community. Relatively few members of the Edmonton congregations have left the CR church because of this issue. It may be that the very diversity that now exists allowed each church to solve the problem in its own way, and those who did not agree with the stance on this issue taken by their congregation were able to move to a congregation more in line with their convictions.

Perhaps this trend was also inevitable, given the fact that the members of this immigrant community have settled in and, by now, have become members of the Canadian establishment. But all this does warrant the judgment that the Reformed Dutch community in Edmonton is today less distinctly united than it was before.

Whether it will remain an identifiable religio-ethnic community only the future can tell. Its continued identity will depend on the views and actions of those of its younger members, who are not immigrants but native-born Canadians.

III. ANALYSIS:

A. ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION FACTORS:

After describing the history of the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton we now give a brief analysis of this community in terms of ethnic identification factors.

A number of researchers have attempted to isolate the factors which determine whether or not an ethnic group retains its identity and group cohesion (Kalish 1986; Isajiw 1981; Reitz 1982). While many of these factors help us to describe aspects of the Reformed Dutch in Canada, they fail to define the essence of this group as a religio-ethnic community.

As Van Belle and Disman (1990) have shown,

Religion, rather than language, ethnic customs, or group obligation is the identifying mark of the Reformed Dutch in Canada. Religion is the central motive of their lives. It colours everything they do, personally and communally.(8)

This characterization holds ipso facto for the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton.

We prefer to use Driedger's description of ethnic identification factors, since it is more focussed on defining religio-ethnic communities (Driedger 1989). He has isolated six factors that are "...some of the basic factors which constitute an ethnic community." There are, "...ecological territory, ethnic culture, ethnic institutions, historical symbols, ideology, and charismatic leadership" (P. 143). We will discuss the character of the Reformed Dutch community in Edmonton in terms of each of these factors.

1. Identification with Territory

A number of researchers have argued that ethnic identity retention and group cohesion are not possible unless there is a sufficiently large number of the same ethnic group concentrated in a territory (Joy 1972; Lieberman 1970). Space becomes a crucible in which ethnic activity takes place. A good example of this tendency is ethnic enclave formation.

Initially the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton did congregate together in the Fraser Flats (see appendix B for the earliest settlement pattern). Later, as they grew more affluent and as their numbers grew, they migrated to the suburbs, where at first they settled in no discernible concentration pattern. They were spread more or less evenly throughout the city, though some of them were beginning to concentrate in Beverly (see appendix C for the 1961 settlement pattern). Still later, concentrations of Reformed Dutch household appeared in three localities of Edmonton, in the east end of Edmonton in Beverly, in the west end, just west of Groat Road and just south of 111 Avenue, and in North East Edmonton (see appendix D for the 1993 settlement pattern).

However, in none of these areas can we speak of enclave formation, if we mean by this the existence of exclusively Reformed Dutch neighborhoods. Furthermore, the three localities mentioned happen to be the areas in which a Christian school is located. It appears, therefore, that the preference of some (not all) of the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton for living in these areas is dictated by pragmatic reasons, i.e. by a desire to live close to one another. Identification with a territory is not a factor of ethnic identity retention for the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton.

One might argue that their church, and school buildings form a kind of territory around which their identity is retained (see appendix D for the location of Christian schools). However, this type of identification factor is more accurately described in the next section.

2. Institutional Identification

Breton (1965:193/4) has argued for the importance of institutional completeness as a factor in ethnic identity retention and group cohesion. In particular, he considers the formation of ethnic religious, educational and welfare institutions as crucial. Joy (1972) adds to these the importance of political and economic institutions. Breton's claims in 1964 were later backed up in research by Vallee (1969) and Driedger and Church (1974).

The Reformed Dutch in Edmonton have certainly outdone themselves in terms of institutional completeness. They built churches, day schools, a college and homes for the aged. They formed labour union locals, a political action group, agencies for the emotionally disturbed and for the mentally handicapped, and, in addition, they established their own credit union. More than anything, the Reformed Dutch have a penchant for forming and maintaining organizations. This activity has reinforced their group cohesion for several decades. Without it, their community might have dispersed long ago (Palmer, 1985:166).

3. Identification with Ethnic Culture

This institutional identification factor already leads us to the next factor, identification with an ethnic culture. Driedger (1989, p. 144) states that the rationale for institutional completeness is that, when a minority can develop its own social system with control over its own institutions, then the social action patterns of its members will take place largely within the system.

He has found that six cultural factors determine an ethnic group's adherence to its culture: language use, endogamy and choice of friends, as well as participation in a religion, in "parochial" schools, and in voluntary organizations. All but one of these cultural factors is important for the cohesion of the Reformed Dutch community in Edmonton. Members of this community marry each other, they are each other's friends, they attend the same church,

the majority of them send their children to a Christian school, and much of their non-working time is spent in activities related to their organizations. The only exception in this lineup of cultural factors is language use. Unlike the French in Quebec, most of the Reformed Dutch shed their mother tongue only a few years after their arrival in Canada. This holds, at least, for the newcomers, or for those who immigrated to Canada after World War II. For them, the Dutch language is not an ethnic identification factor (Palmer, 1985:169). Since they are by far the majority in the community, this fact can be said to characterize the community as a whole.

Another way of highlighting the importance of cultural factors for ethnic identity retention and group cohesion is to describe the social communication practices of the members of the community in terms of categories developed by Lenski (1961). Lenski distinguishes between associational involvement and communal involvement. By the former he means the extent to which members of an ethnic or religious group participate in ethnic or religious organizations, such as churches and other associations. By the latter he means the extent to which the primary-type relations of the members, i.e. relations with friends and relatives, are limited to persons of their own ethnic or religious group (1961, p. 21).

It will be clear by now that the Reformed Dutch show a high degree of associational involvement. They show an even higher degree of communal involvement. For instance, the current directories of the Christian Reformed churches in Edmonton list very few non-Dutch names, perhaps no more than 105. Note that this is so four decades, or more, after the members of these churches immigrated to Canada. Even today, the CR churches of Edmonton are Dutch ethnic churches. Furthermore, the members of these churches also intermarry a lot. Finally, most telling is the fact that members of a CR congregation tend to socialize almost exclusively with other members of their congregation. In many

ways, the churches, and the Christian organizations owned and operated by the members of these churches, are at the centre of their social lives. These represent their heritage (Palmer, 1985:166; Tersmette:1992).

4. Identification with Historic Symbols

These social interaction patterns appear to be presently perpetuated for their own sake, without much knowledge of their origin. In particular the members of the younger generation, born and raised in Canada, seem to know very little about the history of these patterns. Nor do they show a great deal of interest in the struggle of the Reformed in the Netherlands 100 years ago (Personal communication). Driedger considers this knowledge of one's origins and pride in one's heritage to be essential for a sense of purpose and direction, particularly among ethnic urbanites. Without such knowledge and pride, he predicts, the desire to perpetuate the tradition will rapidly diminish (1989, p. 145).

5. Identification with a Religious Ideology

Each of the foregoing identification factors may lose their influence on the community as generations come and go, and yet the identity of a community may be retained, the group may continue to exist as a coherent whole, if the religious ideology of the group remains alive.

The Reformed Dutch in Edmonton have certainly excelled in inculcating a Reformed view of life into their children, via education in their schools and churches. As a result, most of the younger members of the group have a clear understanding of what they stand for, even though their awareness of a Reformed ideology is not immediately linked with the history of the group. In fact these young Dutch-Canadians may consider their identity to be much more a religious identity, than an ethnic identity. The difference is that, in their mind, a

religion is transportable across cultural and geographic boundaries, whereas ethnicity is not (Personal communication). In this regard they are not that far removed from their elders, who, from the start, were far more interested in being Reformed in Canada, than in being Dutch. (See, for example, what was written in Dutch (!), in The Guardian, June 18, 1954, regarding their view about the relation between ethnicity and religion.)

6. Identification with a Charismatic Leader

There is little evidence that the identification with (at least, a current) leader is an important factor for the cohesion of the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton. In the past, of course, they readily called themselves Calvinists and Kuyperians, but even that practice is waning today as a way of identifying themselves, in favor of the less exclusive term Christian. There is no charismatic leader today, with whom to identify. In fact, there presently appears to be a dearth of any leadership in the CR denomination as a whole, and in the CR churches of Edmonton in particular. This lack adds to the danger that the community may become more and more fragmented.

B. SACRED CANOPY AND STAKES

Because the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton are a religio-ethnic community it is insufficient just to describe how they have formed and maintained institutions, intermarried, or interacted socially with one another after they emigrated from the Netherlands. We must necessarily also deal with what they believed, with their Reformed religion, and its importance for their continued existence as a group. In this way we may come to know, not only how they formed and maintained themselves as a religio-ethnic minority group in the city of Edmonton. We may also come to know why.

In describing the place of religion in the life of the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton we may fruitfully utilize Peter Berger's image of the "sacred canopy" (1967). We need not agree with Berger that "religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established" (p. 25). Nor do we need to agree with him that religion "dichotomizes" (p. 26) really into sacred and profane spheres. The Reformed Dutch do not experience their religion as a cultural product. Nor do they split life into a religious and a non-religious realm. For them all of life is religion.

But we can agree with Berger that the religion of a group integrates the life of its members, maintains their experience of the world and legitimizes the way they live together (p. 29-34, p. 51). For this is exactly how religion functions in the life of the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton. It functions as an overarching canopy which gives meaning to their lives.

Driedger (1989:202) has neatly inverted the functional relationship between the sacred canopy and the rest of life by adding "stakes" to the image of the canopy. For Berger the canopy, once it has been constructed, supports (i.e. maintains, legitimizes, gives meaning to) the rest of the life of the group. Driedger, on the other hand, notes that the other areas of the group's life, as stakes, serve to hold up the canopy, and thus determine the extent to which a religion is able to function as a canopy.

Driedger distinguishes four stakes to support a religion: 1) a religious ideology, 2) an ethnic community, 3) an ethnic culture, and 4) land or territory in which the group resides (1980, p. 341). According to him, all four stakes must function in a symbiotic relationship for the canopy to stay aloft. The land acts as a crucible in which the community and culture are formed, and the religious ideology is moulded by these outer circumstances and is the driving force that in turn shapes the culture (1989, p. 202). In short, he views the canopy and the stakes as integrally connected.

Nevertheless, his differentiation of the life of a group into four distinct stakes allows us to ask which of the four stakes is the most important for the perpetuation of a community. In the case of the Reformed Dutch it is the stake of their religious ideology that has driven the formation and the maintenance of the community's culture and institutions the most. The perpetuation of the Reformed religion has been the raison d'être of the community's existence.

Whether it will continue to be the most important stake is open to question. Driedger chose the image of the canopy and the stakes to highlight the fact that the religions of ethnic groups are transportable across cultural, and geographic boundaries. They are that, in the same way that the stakes of a canopy can be pulled up, or discarded, and a canopy can be folded, transported to another place, and erected again with the support of other stakes.

Stakes can be replaced. Canopies can be transported. The Reformed Dutch successfully transported their religion when they immigrated to Edmonton. They also took along a number of Dutch stakes and used them in erecting the canopy in Canada. Some of these stakes, like their Dutch language, they readily discarded without seriously endangering their identity or group cohesion. Changed cultural circumstances required new ways to achieve the same goals. Throughout their journey, however, they remained identifiably themselves. The canopy stayed aloft.

Canopies can also be transported across age boundaries and stakes, used by the previous generation, can be discarded by a succeeding generation. Perhaps, in the near future, the stakes will once again be pulled up, and the canopy will be folded and transported elsewhere. This may happen when the leadership of the community will be handed to the next generation of community members, who are not immigrants, but native-born Canadians. This transfer of responsibility may change the community. Some of its features may become more prominent than others. The community may become more Reformed than Dutch. One thing the next

generation cannot do, however, if it expects to remain an identifiable group, is to forsake the Reformed religion. For the heart filled commitment to this religion is the identifying mark of the Reformed Dutch in Edmonton and the rejection of this religion spells the demise of this religio-ethnic community.

NOTES:

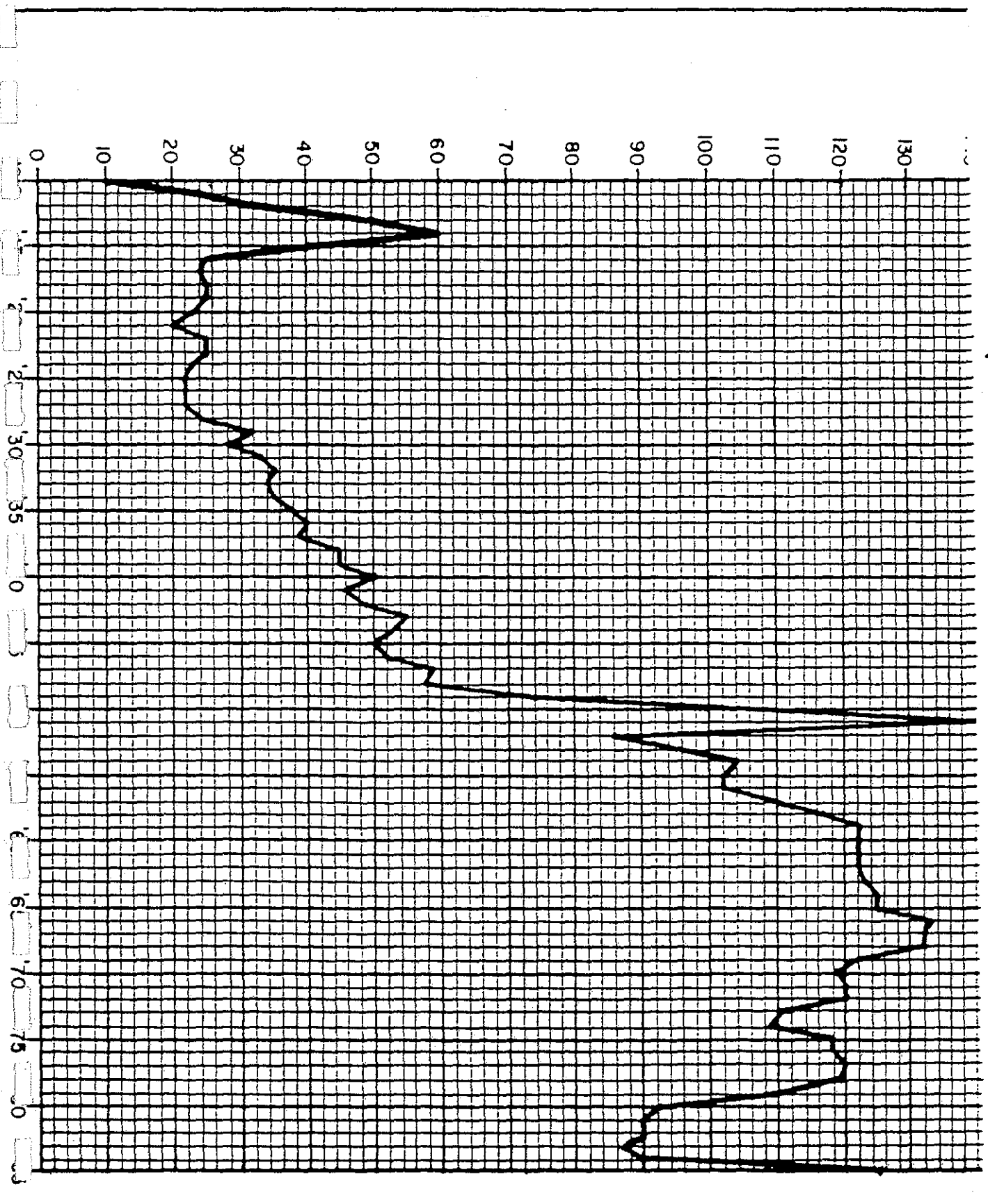
1. 184, 150 Dutch immigrants came to Canada between 1946-1982. (To All Our Children, 1983:53)
2. The total Dutch population in Alberta in 1981 was 65,060. (Statistics Canada Census, 1981)
3. There is a Dutch Canadian Club in Edmonton. It was started in 1970. It has its own building and it has about 700 members. It is a social club which promotes Dutch folk culture by holding regular dances, an annual Dutch market and Dutch festivities, such as the Sint Nikolaas celebration on Dec. 5. The club is located on 13312 142 St. in Edmonton, Alberta. See also Palmer, 1985:169.
4. For practical purposes we restrict our focus even further to members of the Christian Reformed Church, since these form by far the largest group of Reformed Dutch immigrants in Edmonton. Strictly speaking, the title of this article should read: "The History of the Christian Reformed Dutch in Edmonton." However, this title defeats the point of this article, which is that the Reformed Dutch community is more than a church community. For more information about the other Reformed denominations, see Palmer, 1985:166-169.
5. See note 1.
6. Yet another way to measure the magnitude of this increase is to review a parallel situation in the whole of Canada: In 1947, there were 13 CR churches in Canada. In 1954 there were 110. (The Guardian Jan. 1, 1954)
7. One observer pointed out that the A.A.C.S. was actually started in Edmonton, in the sense that the two founding fathers of this organization, the Revs. H. Venema and F. Guillaume were both ministers of the CRC in Edmonton at the time of its founding.
8. See also Van Belle, 1991 a); Van Belle, 1991 b).

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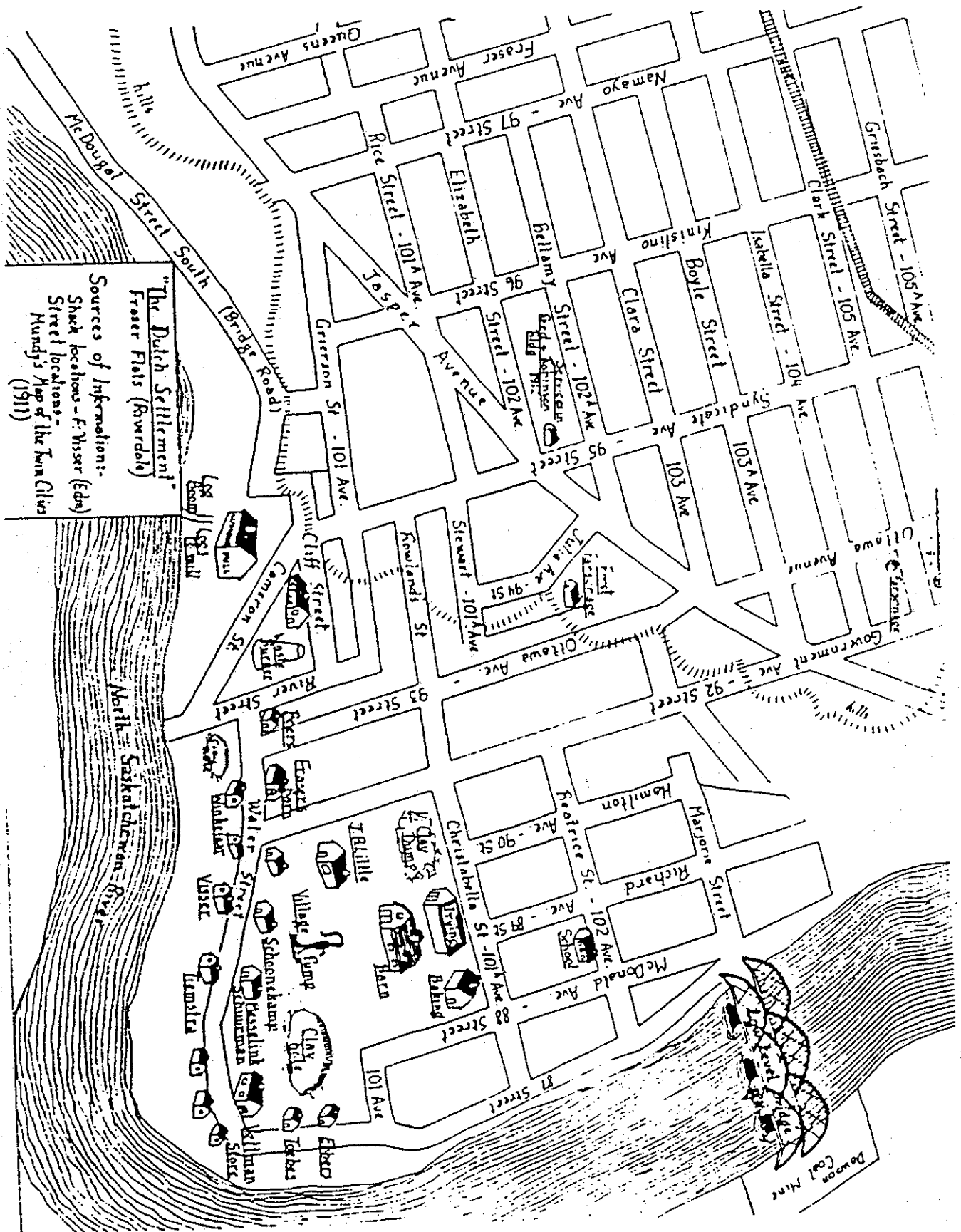
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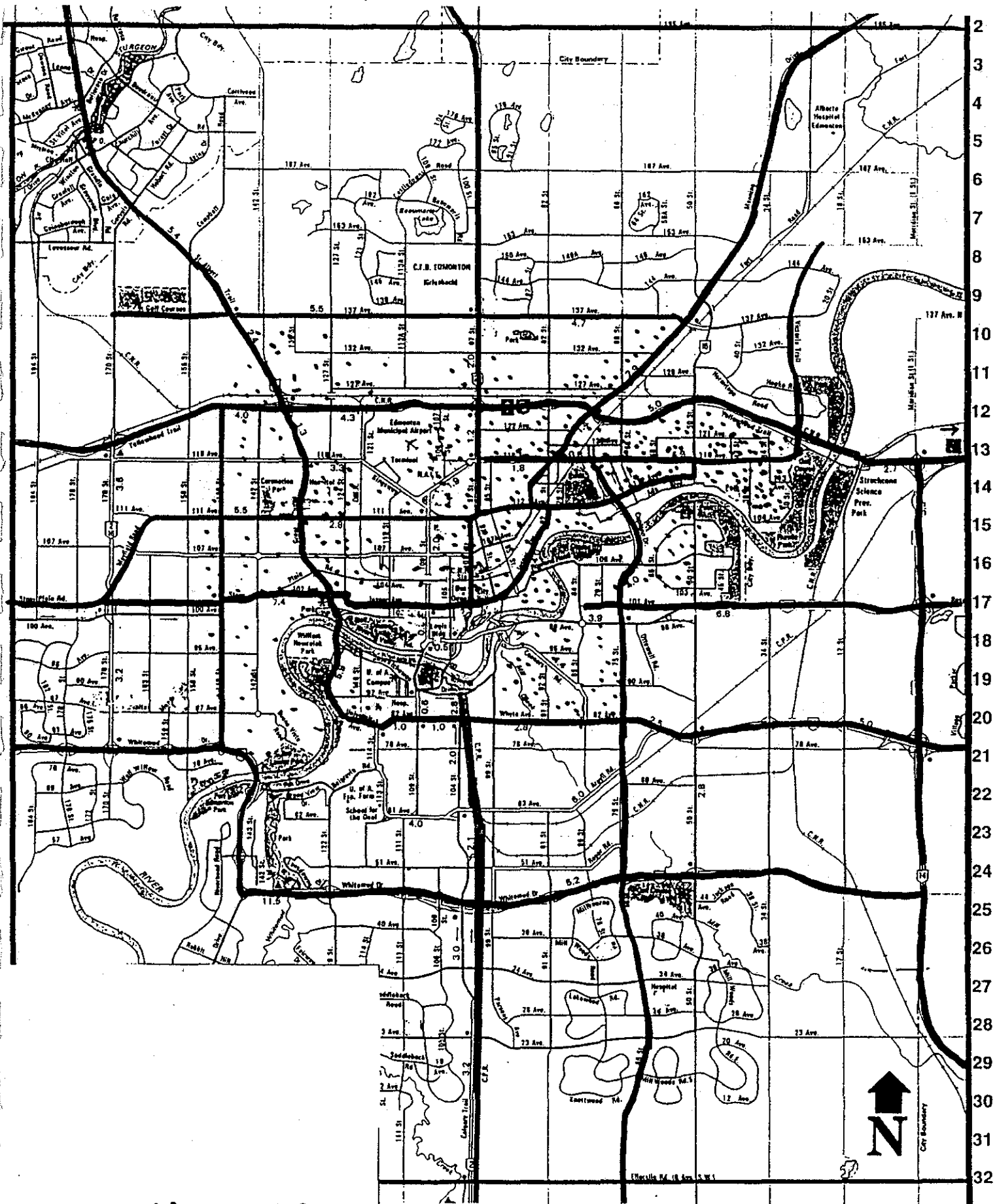
Appendix A
Family Membership First CRC, Edmonton



Appendix B
Location CRC members 1911



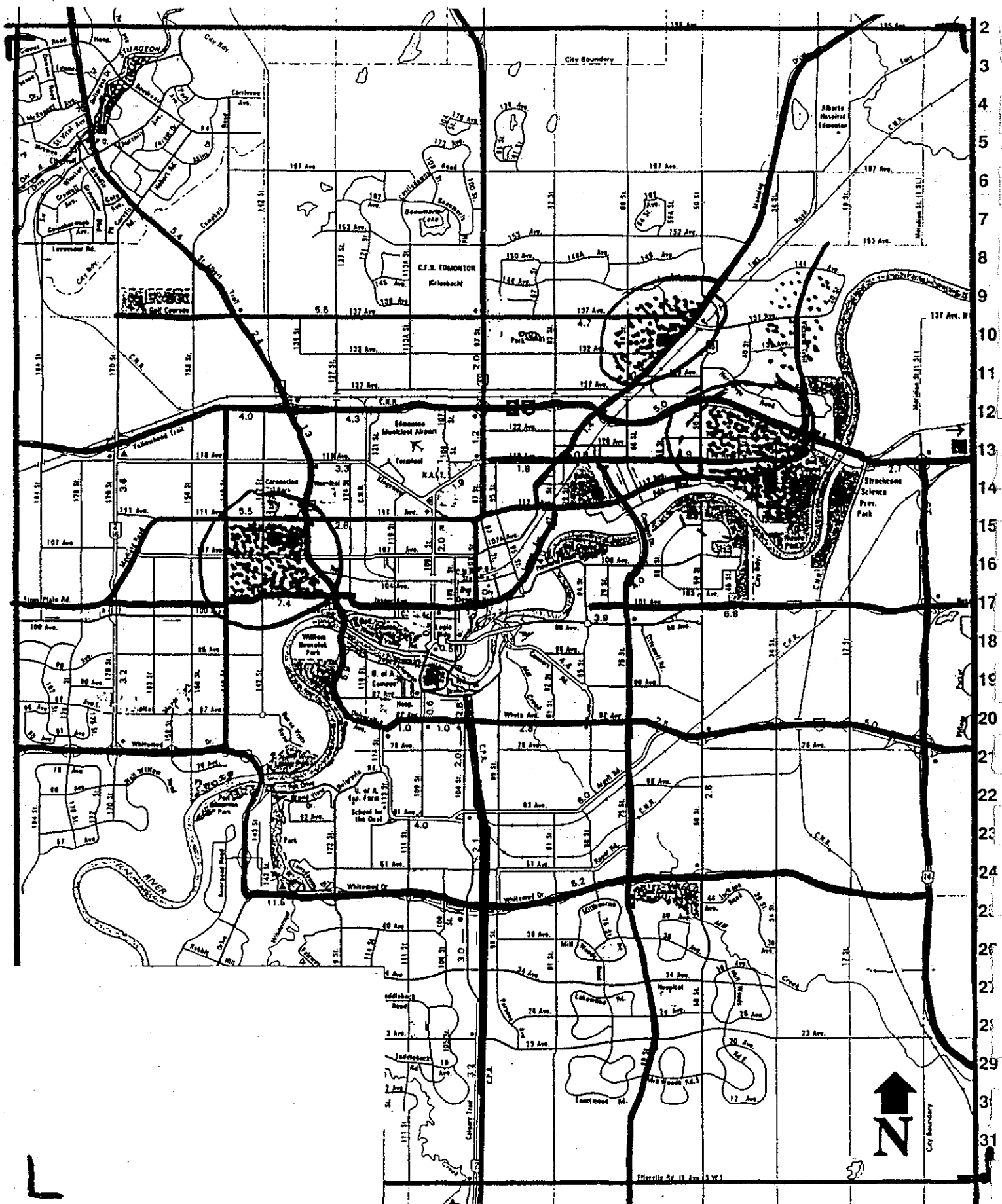
Appendix C



Location ERC members

1961

Appendix D



Location CRC members 1993