

## The Life and Actions of Reinder Edward Werkman

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I came across R. E. Werkman as I indexed local news columns in the weekly *Holland City News*. At first I did not know Werkman, his family, or his doings. But this man, who had caught the eye of the newspaper editor and publisher, caught my eye too. From a series of facts would emerge a flesh and blood man who had a significant part in the Holland, Michigan scene. But he was never considered a hero in Holland.

In 1997 I learned that Werkman's daughter from Santa Barbara, California, had come to town and wanted to know more about him. We made contact and her notes and materials considerably enhanced my research. I have told part of Werkman's story in two articles in Calvin College's *Origins*. The first covered his career in Holland, Michigan, and the second dealt with his later career. This paper attempts to tie both segments of his life into a single story.

Long ago Mark Twain coined the phrase the "Gilded Age" for the latter decades of the nineteenth century. In the Gilded Age, just as in today's era of economic prosperity, not everyone was equally successful. Cyrus McCormick, George Pullman, and John D. Rockefeller may have been the most successful men of the era, but many lesser men also had exciting and satisfying lives. In Holland, Michigan one such man was Reinder (Ryn) E. Werkman. I think of him as a Gilded Hollander, a Hollander of the Gilded Age.

R. E. Werkman was born in the Netherlands on June 24, 1855. His family genealogy, provided by his great-granddaughter, Susan Johnson, lists eight sisters and two brothers; Rein's older brother Jan was four years his senior. The family emigrated to the United States in May 1867, and after passing through Coopersville they settled in Holland. At age thirteen Rein began delivering vegetables with a wheelbarrow. His father died a year later and his older brother two years after that. When he was fifteen years old, Rein began to work in the flourmill of the Werkman-Geerlings Company. The family farm lay a bit west of the city.

The railroads came to Holland in 1870 and 1871. In the first week of October 1871, in a period of great dryness in the Midwest, there were fires south of Holland and these, although partially stopped, came into and through the town on Sunday the 8th and into Monday the 9th of October. Rein and his mother managed to save their home. In the period after the fire Rein worked in a local foundry owned by R.K. Heald. He also worked at a local planing mill, which was a very significant business immediately after the fire. Door frames and window sashes, as well as other planed lumber, were a necessity for all the new construction underway.

The Phoenix Planing Mill (note the historical significance of this name, i.e., rising from the ashes) was right in the heart of the devastated area at 10th Street and River Avenue, just north of the Market Square. At the age of 21, in 1876, Rein reported in his *Reminiscences*: "I borrowed \$250.00 from Rev. [Roelof] Pieters [of the First Reformed Church] and bought out W. Scott's interest in the bankrupt planing mill. At that time there was not a bank in Holland from which to borrow the money."

Werkman's *Reminiscences* mention that after receiving the money: I "went to Ottawa Station [on the railroad about 10 miles north of Holland] with plenty of nerve and bought out the stock of lumber of Stacy & Van Drezer, amounting to over \$3,000, on short time. To

meet the payments I had to find a market for this lumber and shipped it, after being dressed, to Red Cloud, Nebraska. Doing such a business all at once, my competitor, the Phoenix Planing Mill, an old establishment, thought I had a lot of capital to back me. By accommodating the local carpenters, I soon had all their business, and the old firm went broke for lack of custom work. I then bought their large mill for a small consideration and did a very successful business. I started in to wholesale lumber and shingles, having a number of shipments on hand took it to Holland where it was resorted and shipped out by rail. I also started the building of homes of a more modern style, built up a whole street."

In August 1877 the newspaper noted that Rein had leased Heald's sash factory. His advertisement listed "doors, sash blinds, stair railing, scroll sawing of all kinds" as well as "planing, matching and resawing" at his factory at the corner of River and Tenth Streets. On November 1, 1878 he became a citizen of the United States in the Kent County Court in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In January 1879 the newspaper noted: "We are sorry to relate that Messrs. Werkman & Son were compelled to close their store on Thursday last. Mr. Werkman lost so much during the fire of '71 and the panic since that has thwarted his efforts to retrieve a lost fortune so effectually, that it had to culminate in the above mentioned deplorable fact." This was the other Werkman family, perhaps a relative of Rein Werkman that was also in Holland at the time.

In January 1879 Rein made one of his many railroad journeys. The newspaper reported that he went to Kansas and Nebraska, where he took up a government claim for 160 acres of land near Rotterdam, Kansas. He also stopped at Red Cloud, Nebraska. Later that year he took on a partner, Gradus Van Ark, and the company was known as Werkman, Van Ark & Co. The newspaper reported, in March 1880, "that ever since the Phoenix Planing Mill has changed hands, it has been running steadily, all through the winter--something which it has not done for a long time. The firm reports a good and increasing business, receiving a good many orders from abroad, which are promptly filled and shipped." By May 1880 it was noted that the company had rebuilt its shop and had also purchased some new machinery. A steam dry kiln was part of the improvement made at the Phoenix Planing Mill. That spring Werkman is listed as an officer of the Lyceum Hall, a building licensed for entertainment and stage activities in Holland.

Holland, like most small cities, had a volunteer fire department. There were three separate fire companies--Columbia Hose Company, Star Hook and Ladder Company, and Eagle Fire Engine Company. In early July 1881, after buying a home for himself on Eleventh Street, R. E. Werkman was elected foreman of the Eagle Company. Thirty men joined the fire department at that time. In November the same year Werkman "and thirty-one others" petitioned the Common Council for eight lamps to be placed in downtown Holland. The entire Fire Department voted Werkman as Chief and recommended his appointment to the Common Council. This was approved by the Council in May 1882 and at the same meeting Werkman took an oath of office as Building Inspector. At the same time Werkman and Van Ark of the Phoenix Planing Mill were putting up an addition to their factory.

As fire chief and chief engineer Werkman was not idle. In January 1882 the newspaper reported that he got up a petition with sufficient signatures "to lay before our city fathers the request that they procure...some expert who will give us an estimate of how much a water works will cost us."

In May 1882, he and the assistant chief entertained all the men of the Fire Department. In July all the fire companies marched together in a procession through the city down to the Harrington dock on Black Lake (now Lake Macatawa) and boarded a lake steamer to have an all-day outing and meal at the resort at Macatawa Park five miles down the lake on the shore of Lake Michigan. The Common Council later paid \$8 to Werkman for the day's refreshments.

In June 1882 Werkman resigned his position as foreman of the Eagle Fire Company in order to take on the duties of chief engineer of the Fire Department. Werkman reported to the Common Council in August 1882 on the condition of the department's wells. His first report follows:

The Chief Engineer reported having examined the fire wells in the city, and find the following in bad condition, to-wit: well north of Hummel's tannery, five inches of water; well south of Cappon's tannery, filled with tan-bark; well corner of Tenth and Pine Streets, filled with rubbish; well on Pine Street, south of Third Church, filled with rubbish; well corner of River and Thirteenth Streets, filled with rubbish; well north of T. Keppel's covered with brush, making it impossible for any fire engine to get water out of same; drive well on Eighth Street, opposite Kruisenga's store, in no condition for fire purposes. The Hook and Ladder Company are also in need of about six ladders, twelve feet in length, with two hooks on one end, so that they can be thrown on to a window-sill and hold thereon, and capable of supporting the weight of two persons. The reason for asking the same is that there are no ladders belonging to the department long enough to reach to the third stories of our hotels and by having these small ladders they could be handled easy from story to story on the outside.

It was at this time, January 1882, that because of his concern for "a system of waterworks in Holland," the Council decided to "investigate and report as to what would be the best system to put in Holland." In this position he became the first chairman of the Board of Water Commissioners. The effectiveness of his program was noted five years later in 1887, when there was a serious fire and the various fire companies could use several hose lines from different fire hydrants to pump water. As chief of the Fire Department, Werkman was able to bring about a change in its social activity. Previously there was a bit of beer drinking at meetings but he substituted oyster suppers and other entertainment.

In October 1882 Werkman went "up north" in Michigan and purchased "a large stock of lumber, lath and shingles. Mr. Werkman informs us that their firm was now prepared to sell everything in their line at wholesale prices."

The editor of the *Holland City News* praised Werkman in February 1883 for his efforts in getting the very busy Standard Rolling Mills owned by Walsh, De Roo & Co to Holland. This company, along with Cappon & Bertsch, did much in the following years to enhance Holland's economy. The newspaper noted that "it was through the energetic and truly enterprising spirit of one man, that we secured the location of the Standard Rolling Mills in our midst, and that man was none other than Mr. R. E. Werkman.

Sometime in 1883 Werkman joined Holland's Common Council. As a member of the Fire Committee he reported on the need of a stove for the meeting rooms of the Columbia Fire Engine Company. He also reported as a member of the Committee on Water Sites, which told

about two places that were possibly suitable for new fire wells.

In April 1884 Werkman bought out his partners, H. and G. Van Ark, in the planing mill. In July 1884 the Phoenix Planing Mill closed for a few days so that new machines could be installed. At the same time Holland's new water works, pumps and pipes, were in the process of being developed. And a few weeks later Werkman was having a summer cottage built for himself at the new resort--Jenison Park--near Macatawa Park (*Holland City News*, 8-23-1884). In September 1884 Werkman ran for the office of State Representative on the Democratic ticket. Unfortunately, his Republican opponent was G.J. Diekema, an extremely talented and prominent public figure in Holland. The newspaper of November 1, 1884 carried many biographical facts about Reinder E. Werkman

On May 4, 1884 Werkman is listed as member of Board of Water Commissioners. He and two others were appointed by the Common Council. That summer the water works pumping system was being tested and completed (*Holland City News*, 7-26-1884). In May 1885 the newspaper noted that Werkman had a contract "for furnishing the [massive] square timbers for the repairs on our harbor" (*Holland City News*, 5-9-1885).

In November 1885 the *Holland City News* reported:

There is probably no man in this city that has added so much to the building "boom" Holland has enjoyed the past two years as Mr. R. E. Werkman of the Phoenix Planing Mill. Last year through his energy and enterprise nearly a whole block on Sixth Street was built up with neat and comfortable residences. This year he has erected several dwellings in various parts of the city and is just now completing three very handsome and convenient residences on Twelfth Street which are to be occupied in a short time. Mr. Werkman certainly deserves great credit for what he has done toward building up Holland in the last two years, and we are glad to say, is meeting with good financial success in disposing of his buildings.

Werkman also built a store and office building on River Street (now River Avenue) that provided him with rental income, and the Phoenix Planing Mill gave him "as fine an office as there is in the county." He closed out the year with a trip west and he took "four carloads of building material with him." Before he left on this journey he had a telephone installed in his office so that "anyone wanting building material...can call...and have their wants promptly attended to." He returned from this western jaunt in mid-January 1885.

Werkman settled into his home and soon had the Phoenix Planing Mill going. His business efforts were extensive. The newspaper reported that he shipped large quantities of lumber to Boston and New York. In one deal he "purchased 200,000 feet of lumber in Saugatuck," and then shipped it by water to his markets. He also had a contract to supply the new Ottawa County Poorhouse (Hope Haven) near Eastmanville with doors, frames, sash, etc. In another contract he provided labor and materials for the new schools at Graafschap and Zeeland. He began to build a skating rink.

In 1885 he purchased a grocery store at River and 10th Streets, which he named the Phoenix Cheap Cash Store. Among other things, it sold crockery, flour and feed. Cash sales were an interesting idea in an era when many local merchants, as a necessity and convenience, carried customer's accounts from week to week. He also built a cement walk on his premises, the first in Holland.

In February 1886, these reports were noted:

A novel procession passed through our streets last Monday at about five o'clock. Mr. R. E. Werkman of the Phoenix Planing Mill is having a large quantity of lumber drawn to this city from Saugatuck and on this occasion had formed a lot of teams drawing full loads in line and marched them down Eighth Street. The loads all bore appropriate signs and it certainly was a good "ad" for the Phoenix. On Tuesday he received another train.

One of the busiest localities in this city was in the neighborhood of the Phoenix Planing Mill. The street was filled with men and teams nearly every day. Mr. Werkman informs us that he has all the business he can attend to in his present quarters.

Besides getting raw lumber from the log cutting mills at Saugatuck, which was a harbor town, Werkman also continued to send many loads of sash and door back to Saugatuck for the extensive boat building that was done there. For the past "eight years Mr. Werkman has filled nearly all the orders for this class of material that has been used there on the boats."

Then, in April 1886, Werkman entered into a partnership with Isaac Lamoreux of Otsego to manufacture his newly patented fanning mill. Fanning mills were hand operated machines used to separate seeds from chaff and other materials. McCormick's recently developed reaper did a great job in harvesting the grain but dirt, other seeds, and chaff were in the mix. The fanning mill did the necessary clean up. The machine would take small or larger lots of grain and different varieties of grain could be sorted and cleaned as well.

The paper noted:

"Last Saturday a trial test was made between the best fanning mill sold by our agricultural dealers and the 'Indicator' mill made by Mr. I. H. Lamoreux of Otsego. The 'Indicator' is a mill that is far superior to any now on the market and which Mr. Lamoreux is to manufacture in this city. The trial resulted to the advantage of the 'Indicator' mill.

We take pleasure in announcing that on Tuesday next operations will commence for the manufacture of the "Indicator" fanning mill at this place. Mr. I. H. Lamoreux, of Otsego the proprietor of the mill, has made arrangements with Mr. R. E. Werkman...for their manufacture. It is the intention of Messrs. Werkman and Lamoreux to manufacture about five hundred mills the first year and they will employ some twenty men to do the work. They will have three teams on the road selling the mills. From appearances we should judge that the business will be vigorously pushed."

Once the production of the Vindicator Fanning Mill was under way, the marketing began. Werkman's friend Harm Te Roller made a trip to Iowa and Nebraska to sell the machines. On July 24 the *Holland City News* carried an extensive story describing all the activity surrounding this machine, its manufacture, and its marketing.

By October 1886 Werkman began to plan for a new manufacturing plant for making the fanning mills. He had been promised the \$500 subscribed by the Citizens Committee to enable him to build this factory. But he continued his usual activity. "He secured the contract for

furnishing doors, sash, frames, moldings, etc. for the new County Poor House" which was built at Eastmanville, Michigan about 20 miles northeast of Holland. He was also "putting up three new houses for himself on thirteenth Street, and building several others for other parties; the second ward Engine House, the store of J. Alberti [undertaker's establishment]; the brewery and numerous private buildings." The Second Ward engine house was the fire station on Eighth Street (the site of the present police station), near River Avenue. Harm Te Roller was in charge of this particular construction project.

Plans for the new Werkman fanning mill factory went ahead. In October 1886 he "purchased two hundred thousand brick and the first loads of stone [locally excavated Waverly Stone] which he needed for footings. The factory was to be "50x100 feet, three stories high, and a basement."

In November 1886 he wrote a letter to the editor and placed an advertisement in the *Holland City News* telling of his dislike for saloons and saloonkeepers. The letter says:

I desire hereby to explain to the public my reasons for publishing in this number of your paper a "Notice to Saloon-keepers." About four months ago I took into my employ and under my roof, one of Holland's young men. He was penniless and homeless, but promised to stop drinking. I spared no efforts in trying to help him climb from the gutter, and conquer his terrible appetite. Every saloon-keeper knew what I was doing for him. On Tuesday of this week, however, one of our saloon-keepers sold him whiskey, made him beastly drunk, and in one hour destroyed the effort so the whole summer and returned him to the gutter. I am no *professional temperance talker*, but when, for the sake of a few cents, a saloon-keeper will sell whiskey to such a person, I think that it is time that the law, forbidding such sales, were executed, and trust that the people of Holland will join hands with me. R. E. Werkman Nov. 17th, 1886

And so the wheels of a local temperance organization went into motion! Werkman continued with his temperance work all his life.

Then, in December 1886, Werkman went by rail to Kalkaska, about 140 miles north of Holland, "to negotiate for the purchase of a saw and shingle mill and about four hundred acres of pine land." Meanwhile, "the side track leading down to Macatawa Bay was filled with cars loaded with brick for the new factory of Werkman on yesterday morning." The side track, used chiefly for summer passenger service for boats to Holland's resorts, was not used much in the winter. In the same month Werkman sent "a carload of horses to the scene of his lumbering operations in Kalkaska." Kalkaska was east of Traverse City and Grand Traverse Bay.

Werkman was not alone in this lumbering venture. His co-partners in this were other Holland men, Heber Walsh, Walter C. Walsh, Jan De Vries, and Gerrit J. Boone. In December 1886 these men "shipped several carloads of supplies..., seventeen men; twelve horses and a yoke of oxen" to the same lumber operations. These men formed the Werkman Lumber Company (January 11, 1887) to do "a general lumbering business at Kalkaska and Alba, Michigan" and a "general store at Alba, Michigan." Jan De Vries was the site manager, thus leaving Werkman time to pursue his other activities. "The company intends to put in 3,000,000 feet of logs this winter and will run their general store business."

All this northern lumber had to be moved to the factory in Holland, so Werkman "purchased the tug *City Of Holland* and a barge *Great Eastern*" to haul it. Werkman could thus control his own supply of lumber from the forest to the mill and also to any other construction projects. By mid-February he announced that "forty loads of hardwood logs are received at each mill per day and they will start sawing as soon as the weather will permit." At the same time Werkman contracted to sell "two thousand Vindicator Fanning Mills" to a Kalamazoo merchant, P. Poyneer, in 1887. In mid-January 1887 the Holland Business Men's Association called a public meeting to discuss Werkman's query about giving him a bonus of \$1,500 to build his new factory. After several speeches about \$1000 was raised and a few days later the \$1,500 was assured and so the factory was assured.

Early in February 1887, Harm Te Roller, as superintendent, opened the bids for construction of the new factory on River Avenue at Fifth Street. About the same time Werkman made a request to the Common Council for a rail side track from the railroad which went west across River Avenue at Fifth Street. He wanted this new side track to go behind his factory on River Avenue. This was approved and thus Werkman's factory had both lakeshore and rail access.

Werkman was active on the Black Lake waterfront almost immediately. In February 1887 he purchased 100 feet of lakefront and began building a new dock for his factory. Details of the new building were printed on June 18, 1887. It was three stories high with a basement as well. An elevator (in the days before electricity came to Holland) was used to carry materials from floor to floor. Power was created by a steam engine and was transferred to the machines by leather pulleys. The factory included four dry kilns as well as the engine and boiler room (*Holland City News* 6-18-1887). Werkman's tug and barge made "three trips per week north for timber and other material to be used in the factory." The newspaper reporting on Werkman using words like "untiring energy" and "commendable enterprise" as well as "liveliest manufacturing institution in the state."

While the new factory was being built, Werkman's sales of the fanning mill continued. One hundred were sold in two weeks in June. Lamoreux had five men with wagons "canvassing the counties north of here (Holland) and sells as many mills as the firm can manufacture with their present facilities." In the July 4, 1887 parade in Holland there was a wagon with a Vindicator Fanning Mill that was separating dust and dirt and seeds "from a mass of stuff." In the summer of 1887 Werkman "erected every house on Eleventh Street east of the Ward School on the south side of the street filling the open space between the school and the Episcopal Church then located on Pine and Eleventh (which later burned). The houses, some ten in number, were dubbed "Paradise Row" because of the architectural similarity."

Finally, in late October 1887, the Werkman Agricultural Works factory was completed. There was a test run of the steam engine and the newspaper of November 5, 1887 gives a complete account of the production activity on each floor of the factory. The same newspaper reported on Werkman's sale of the Phoenix Planing Mill to B. L. Scott of Bad Axe (the thumb area), Michigan. The sale price was about \$13,000. Scott, with a partner Luke Lugers, later formed the Scott-Lugers Lumber Company that was prominent in Holland in the decades following. The sale agreement was signed on October 31, 1887. Later this planing mill site was sold to the United States for the post office and presently it is the Holland Museum.

It was in this era of selling farm machinery that Werkman first met Geert Rankans of Coopersville, who, in the course of time became his father-in-law. R. E. Werkman married

Fannie Martha Rankans at Coopersville, Michigan on November 19, 1896.

In the previously mentioned Bonus Plan, Werkman brought the Walsh-DeRoo Milling Company to Holland. His personal narrative of this says:

I brought the Walsh-DeRoo Milling Company to Holland. When I heard that Mr. De Roo was going to build a large flour mill in Zeeland, I drove over that very night and secured an agreement with him that if I could raise a bonus of \$2,500 he would agree to build the mill in Holland. I succeeded in raising a trifle over \$2,200 and that brought the mill to Holland.

He also brought (ca.1887) Takken & De Spelder, wagon builders, from Saugatuck to build a new plant in Holland. All those men who had recently pledged to give bonus assistance for the Werkman factory did not do so and in February 1888 Werkman planned to advertise the names of those who had paid up their pledges and the names of those who had not paid up. In December 1887 the Werkman Agricultural Works, besides its usual milk safes and cutting boxes "will begin on fifteen hundred bedsteads that have been ordered by a furniture firm in Iowa."

Some of the other firsts that Werkman wrote about are as follows: "I was one of the stock holders in the first opera, the Lyceum. I bought a few lots at Macatawa when that first started [1881] and was the first passenger who registered on the steamer *Mabel Bradshaw* to encourage Mr. Bradshaw with his steamer to Chicago."

With the completion of the factory, Werkman made a tragic discovery that changed his whole life. The newspaper never reported the matter and it was years later that he revealed some of the facts to the editor of the *Holland City News*. Late in 1887 he discovered that his title to the factory land was faulty. He wrote:

I had my abstract examined by two of the most prominent attorneys of the city... and they gave me to understand that the title to the said property was clear. I had the plans drawn up for the building of this factory, took them to Grand Rapids and made arrangement with the Grand Rapids Insurance Company for a loan of \$10,000 as soon as I had the factory completed. I built this factory being assured by my attorneys that I had a clear title and the promise of a loan of \$10,000. Having completed the factory and got it running, I needed the \$10,000 to pay up certain indebtedness to keep up my credit. I started for Grand Rapids to the Insurance Company's office with the abstract of this property. Mr. Kleinhans, then the attorney for the insurance company, looked it over and soon came to me with the information that I had no title to that property, and that the insurance company could not make a loan on the property.

Werkman now had a great dilemma, because he owed machinery manufacturers in Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin \$10,968. (I have a copy of the written document showing the lists.) He then met with Abel H. Brink of Graafschap, a village three miles south of Holland, and made an agreement with him to borrow enough money, at 10 percent interest, to pay all the machinery debts. The agreement was signed on December 6, 1887 and Werkman had eighteen months in which to repay Brink. The agreement closed with the words:



In case of the failure of said Werkman to keep and perform the agreement herein contained...said Werkman and his heirs...shall forfeit all rights to...said premises.

Werkman had up to December 6, 1889 to complete his part.

Later the document was endorsed by both men so that Werkman had two years "after December 6th AD 1889" to make his repayment. He was not able to do so and Abel H. Brink became the owner and operator of the factory that soon became known as the Ottawa Furniture Company. This company continued in Holland into the twentieth century.

It is not surprising that Werkman wanted whatever bonus money he could get. But he went on with all his other business ventures. In April 1888 Lamoreux, in the vicinity of Hull, Iowa, learned that Iowans were pleased to have a machine that could separate mustard seeds from flax seeds "which is raised there in considerable quantity." Two other sales teams were also in Iowa, namely, P. Pfanstiehl and John Vissers.

In the summer of 1888 Reinder began dating a woman in Otsego, 40 miles southeast of Holland. Rail service to Allegan began in 1870 so, except for the matter of time en route, such a social situation was not a difficult matter. Late in December 1888 Werkman married Mary (Mamie) Clock in Otsego. But tragedy followed happiness, because the new Mrs. Werkman died on March 17, 1889. In May of that year Werkman presented the Otsego Baptist Church with a silver communion service with the inscription "Presented to the Otsego Baptist Church in memory of Mamie Clock Werkman."

A January 1889 note in the newspaper states that "A. R. Brink is one of the proprietors" of the Werkman Company. In March 1889 the *Holland City News* featured a cut of the Werkman factory and noted that "last summer (i.e. 1888) the Werkman Manufacturing Company was organized of which Mr. A. H. Brink and J. Metz are members, for the purpose of manufacturing furniture making especially bedsteads."

By the summer of 1889 the Werkman Company was making entire bedroom suites. In August 1889 the factory was working 12 hours a day and, by September, was working both day and night "to keep up with its orders" which came from New York State and other places. Throughout 1889 the newspaper reported on how busy things were at the Werkman factory. The report stated the factory was "far behind on its orders for goods." In November 1889 the newspaper reported that the company had been "running their furniture factory day and night the last three months, and it will be necessary to continue night work for the next month, in order to fill the many large orders which they have received." The next month it reported that "Mr. Jas. Huntley has just completed a one story brick office, 12x20 feet, for the Werkman Manufacturing Co." The factory payroll, every two weeks, was over \$2,000.

The Holland newspaper had a few sparse notes about these days. (1) D. Kruidenier of Pella, Iowa--rumor his it that he and Mr. Werkman...will be associated in the manufacture of furniture...in Benton Harbor (*Holland City News*, 3-7-1891). (2) The *Detroit Evening News* has a picture of R. E. Werkman. It says: He came to this country without a cent. He was just as poor as anybody could be...At last put up a \$33,000 furniture factory, borrowed every cent of the amount, and today keeps 100 men at work night and day. (3) The parties from Holland interested in the new furniture factory at Benton Harbor left for that place...The following will be identified with the enterprise: R. E. Werkman and John Beukema of this city, and D.

Kruidenier of Pella, Iowa (*Holland City News*, 3-28-1891). (4) R. Werkman has resigned his position as member of the board of water commissioners.

In July 1891 the newspaper reported that "Werkman moved his personal effects to Benton Harbor to become a permanent resident there. It is generally felt that in his departure Holland loses one of its most enterprising citizens, and that much of the recent growth and development of the town are due to the vigorous manner by which Mr. Werkman managed to initiate and push matters. As Alderman and member of the Board of Water Commissioners he had served the municipality well." He was 36 years old when he moved away from Holland.

Werkman later reminisced:

"In 1890 the Benton Harbor Improvement Company offered a bonus of \$15,000 to someone to build a furniture factory there. Having lost none of my nerve I went to Benton Harbor, had a talk with the committee, landed the contract, built the factory and turned over one-third of the bonus to my Holland friends to reimburse them for the notes they had paid for me. Not having much capital to run the business with, and the panic of 1894 coming on, I had to close the factory, and lost heavily by the failure of dealers in Chicago who had the best of ratings. Result, out of business again."

At this point he went to the Netherlands, presumably in 1894. In January 1894 Holland's other English language newspaper, the *Ottawa County Times*, reported:

R. E. Werkman of Benton Harbor left New York last Friday for a trip through Holland, Belgium, France and Germany. He is there in the interests of the Illinois Central and the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Companies and may bring a colony of emigrants to the western states.

His personal narrative tells of his boat trip, the rail journey to Paris, and then to Brussels and the Netherlands, where he was looking for a large fortune which presumably had been left for his mother. While in the Netherlands he went to the capital city, The Hague, and made friends here and there and to Scheveningen wearing a buffalo overcoat and a sealskin cap. While there he "was taken for a Russian prince. I gave a number of lectures, had a good time, but could not land the fortune, so I returned to the good old U.S.A., broke once more."

In a letter reported on March 3, 1894, Werkman wrote to his friend H.D. Post (a well-known merchant in Holland, Michigan) and reported on local European scenes and economic facts. Werkman noted that he did not "drink or smoke" and this disappointed some of his hosts from time to time.

He then went west to Seattle:

"[With a] few dollars in my pocket, and no prospect of work, as the times were so hard. I pawned my watch to get enough money to pay \$2 to an employment agency for a job. I had to walk several miles through the woods to the lumber camp and when I got there he had hired another man. I returned and got my \$2 back and got a job the next day in the heart of the city cleaning brick at \$1.50 a day. The second day, at noon, I went to the post office and to my surprise I met a banker whom I had met in the old country. He had been sent here, with a large sum of money to invest, but

conditions were such he did not dare to make any investment. He invited me to come to his room that evening, with the result that two days later I took the steamer "*City of Washington*" for Whatcomb, as a banker from Rotterdam, Holland (some difference from sitting on a stone pile), and made a number of loans on farms."

In August 1894 the *Holland City News* that "R. E. Werkman is in New Whitcom, Washington, where he is engaged as an investor of moneys." In September 1894 the *Ottawa County Times* reported from the *Daily Reveille* of New Whatcom, Washington, which stated:

R. E. Werkman, the Hollander, in his recent trip over our good roads was so impressed by our agricultural resources, that he has made investments, and expects to start some of his countrymen this way. He wants a section of as large fir tree, eight inches to a foot thick, to be quartered and sent to Holland. Anyone who can furnish such a disk 10 feet or more in diameter, can direct it to him at the Snohomo Hotel and state the price."

New Whatcom was north and west of Seattle on Whidby Island that is in Puget Sound. This island, about 40 miles long and from two to ten miles wide and at that time heavily forested, was very fertile and almost flat. Joseph Whidby had been the explorer/surveyor of the Island in 1792. Since World War II it has been an important U.S. Naval Air Station.

In November 1894 the *Holland City News* noted that Werkman had sent *De Grondwet*, Holland's Dutch language newspaper, "a box of fruit and vegetables raised in that state. Size and quality at A No.1." Later the *News* noted that "Werkman will visit Holland in a few days, in charge of a fine exhibit of the products of the State of Washington. There will be a car loaded with these articles and our people can have a sight of the big things that grow in that big state."

A history of Whidbys Island relates a few facts about Werkman's activity there in 1894. It is probably no coincidence that his former employee and friend Hein (Harm) Te Roller, was with the Home Seekers Bureau in 1895 and was involved in settling Hollanders at Oak Harbor on the Island. The Hollanders are mentioned as those "who have since by their indomitable efforts and frugal habits built up a prosperous, thriving community."

The *Holland City News* continued to follow the doings of Werkman. In early 1895 the Holland newspaper reported that "R. E. Werkman arrived from Seattle, Washington, on Monday. Another report noted that "the collection which will be here next week by R. E. Werkman as products from the state of Washington includes a Mastodon tooth of 14 1/2 pounds, very fine work made by Indians, cornstalks 13 1/2 feet long, 50 or 60 mountain views, smoked salmon, a section from a spruce tree 11 feet in diameter, 50 different varieties of lumber, different grains and fruits and hundreds of articles worth seeing."

The *Holland City News* of January 5, 1895, and subsequent dates noted:

R. E. Werkman's familiar face and form were seen upon our streets this week. He is now engaged in organizing a Holland colony in Washington and will shortly exhibit here a collection of agricultural products, fruits, cereals, minerals and lumber from that far away Pacific coast state. After giving parties in Michigan a chance to view his collection he will take it to New York and thence to the Netherlands, where he

will remain some time.

The exhibition of Washington products in the Vennema Building, by R. E. Werkman, is drawing large crowds and eliciting much favorable comment. Wednesday next has been set apart as Ladies Day. On that day women only will be admitted, and Mr. Werkman assures us they will be royally received and entertained.

Notwithstanding the elements, Wednesday was a busy day at R. E. Werkman's, at least 200 ladies calling in to examine his Washington exhibits. They were all treated to a sample of his delicious smoked salmon. Next week Mr. Werkman will take his exhibit to Grand Rapids, from which place he has received urgent calls.

Later, Werkman was still in Grand Rapids in the interest of his colony in Puget Sound. In March 1895 the paper notes:

"R. E. Werkman left here for Whidby Island Washington on Monday, March 11th. Quite a number from the surrounding country and from Grand Rapids went with him. There will also be several from Dakota who will join him at St. Paul and more are expected later."

At the end of March 1895 the Holland newspaper carried an advertisement for "Home Seekers" to settle in Yakima, Washington and Puget Sound but Werkman is not mentioned. Later, in October 1895, the *Holland City News*, under the headline **Whidby Island Wealth** copied the following from the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*:

The mammoth farm products of Whidby Island raised by the Holland Colonists are to be shown to the eastern world, and R. E. Werkman, manager of the colony with a great collection of everything, "the largest of its kind," has arrived in the city on the way east, where he will seek more colonists...[Then it lists oats, wheat, potatoes, rutabagas, parsnips, carrots, apples, canned fruits and dried prunes.]...Mr. Werkman will visit Chicago, Duluth, Waupun, Wis., Holland, Mich., Orange City, Ia, and Armour, S.D. He expects good results from his trip and already knows of many who are coming.

In November 1895 Werkman's sister, who continued with their hat and clothing business in Holland, "were the recipients...of a fine picture of their brother Reinder E., representing him as the central figure in a group of Indians...The picture is of mammoth size and the likeness is a very good one. It is on exhibition at the millinery store of the Werkman sisters.

Werkman continued to serve as a railroad immigration agent. On January 4, 1896 the newspaper reported "Werkman spent several days this week in Holland. He came with a double purpose in view, that of attending his sister's wedding and looking after the interests of his Washington colonization scheme." The January 18 newspaper reported, "Werkman will take another excursion party (of home seekers) from St. Paul, Minn. to Washington on February 25." He did not stay very long as the *Ottawa County Times* for March 13, 1896 reported:

R. E. Werkman arrived last night from Washington and expects to remain here for a short time. All parties desiring information concerning the western country will find Mr. Werkman pleased to answer any and all questions.

A later issue of the same newspaper in July 1896 carried a large display advertisement offering 30,000 acres of land at \$5.00 to \$18.00 per acre along with some terms and inducements. The ad was placed by Werkman who had addresses both in Seattle and in St Paul Minnesota. The newspaper also carried an advertisement for emigrating to the Yakima Valley in Washington.

The paper for September 18, 1896 noted:

R. E. Werkman will be in Holland about the first of October in the interest of Whidby Island, Washington, lands. He writes that wheat threshed 100 bushels to the acre and asks all that are interested to write to him. Read advertisement in this issue.

A September 2, 1896 letter from Oak Harbor, Washington also appeared in the *Ottawa County Times* for Sept. 25, 1896. It included:

This is the largest island in Puget Sound, it being about forty miles long and from two to ten miles wide. It has a few nice villages, good school houses and some fine farms, although most of it has yet to be reclaimed from the forest. To say I was astonished at the crops they raise, is putting it mildly. I hardly dare mention in detail for fear it might be doubted, for it really requires seeing to believe it.

...Here they make a fine grade of butter, which finds ready sale in Seattle market at a good price. This can be done without ice or even a cellar... The air is pure and of even temperature. [He then reports on the oat yield and the wheat yield on the farms.]...And so it is with everything: potatoes, turnips, in fact all root crops, hay, clover, etc.

Details of Werkman's activity are vague, but he did later report that he was "connected as a traveling passenger agent with the Great Northern Railway System." He went all over the United States and Europe, "in his official capacity he traveled an average of fifty thousand miles a year." His own narrative states, "I could see God's hand on what He had done for me. It resulted in my becoming acquainted with officials of the railroad companies, and I started the movement of Hollanders emigrating to the state of Washington. For eleven years my travels amounted from fifty to sixty thousand miles a year, had free transportation over eighteen different railroads, and steamship lines, so that I could travel from the Atlantic to Nome, Alaska. When I think if the thousands of people I have moved from the state of Michigan alone, I am not surprised that the Great Northern Railroad has had over sixteen hundred immigrants going out over their road in St. Paul in one day. I was not idle during these eleven years.

What was R. E. Werkman like? We've been noting his doings but what kind of man was he? The island of Whidby has a quarterly magazine, *Spindrift*, whose editor Dorothy Neil--a long time resident who has done extensive historical research--noted in September 1997 these comments about Werkman and the Hollanders:

Today, now, would be the arrival of the first of a great company of Hollanders who, under the able leadership and under the also-able promises of Mr. Werkman, were to make the Island their home. They would buy acreage, plant potatoes and prune trees and generally make a living from the soil as had their ancestors behind the dikes of The Netherlands. No raw recruits from the Old Country, were these immigrants to the Island. They had settled in America within the past ten to fifteen years, mostly in Michigan, some in the Dakotas. There they had found the going rough, the winters cold and rugged, with more timber than farms and so were ripe for the promotion of various fruit and farm companies whose main idea was to sell land, but who happened inadvertently to locate their land in a fertile area such as Puget Sound.

Mr. Werkman, a rotund gentleman whose booming voice and general geniality quite overwhelmed those who met him for the first time, and continued to overwhelm those who he insisted were "old friends" after the association had continued for three weeks, was the agent for such a land company known as the Northwest Orchard Company, (with) offices located in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Werkman's Dutch ancestry was a handy opening wedge in becoming acquainted with the others of his nationality. He was kind, loud, good natured, and a born promoter. He had traveled from the Island back to Michigan laden with the fruit of the soil...foot long white potatoes; squash, thick-meated and golden, so large it took two men to carry one; golden skinned onions the size of melons; parsnips and turnips unsurpassed. The transplanted Hollander listened spellbound, and family by family, sold all that they had, packed their belongings and set out by train for Seattle, where they were met by Mr. Werkman who loaded them onto the Island steamer for the four hour trip up Puget Sound, to Utopia.

This, then, was Werkman in his new career and calling.

Whidby Island lies in Puget Sound north and west of Seattle. It was settled slowly. The Northern Pacific Railway had purchased much of the land at \$1.25 per acre from the U.S. Government. When the railroad sold off the land after 1892, R. E. Werkman learned of it and he "advertised the fertile Island area to Hollanders who had settled in the East and Midwest." "Most had been disillusioned in other states, finding it hard to adapt to the Dakotas, Carolina and Michigan. Mr. Werkman assured them that the answer to all their dreams lay in a 50-mile-long Island in northern Puget Sound, where climate and surroundings offered an invitation to work hard and reap contentment, if not actual wealth."

We have already noted Werkman's own story of how he got into the area. A local history book states:

Mr. John (R. E.) Werkman from Michigan, agent for the investment company Judson Starr which owned considerable land in and around Oak Harbor, was one of the first Hollanders to visit here. He was so impressed by the lush vegetation and fertile soil that produced potatoes a foot long, that he took samples back to Michigan with him; Hill helped him select the produce for the display. Soon Hollanders came to both the Oak Harbor and Lynden areas. Among them were John Campaan, a bachelor who brought with him two nephews and a niece, the Elder family; the Heller family; and Ed

Vanderzicht, a skilled dairy technician who helped start a prosperous creamery here. The book continues:

North Whidbey was waiting for the "advance Guard" of Hollanders after a party of 18 arrived on the *Idaho* in March of 1894. Most were fairly well-to-do farmers from Grand Rapids. Mr. Werkman, in his self appointed role as public relations for settlement, told the *Island County Times* that in about a month 35 families would come from the Dakotas, and on May 1, 50 more would start west from Michigan.

In the fall of 1895, Werkman went to Michigan and from there to the Netherlands with an exhibition of farm products as additional enticements to the potential settlers who may be coming to Whidbey. The *Island County Times* of October 18, 1895 described the cargo: "Sheaves of oats at 125 bushels to the acre with stems almost as tall as bamboo fishing rods, wheat that 95 bushels to the acre, with heads that certainly could not be excelled for plumpness and solidity,...potatoes that weighed seven pounds, and rutabagas which in their immature state weighed thirty pounds and apples weighing one and a quarter pounds."

The success of Werkman's efforts can be judged by another article that appeared in the *Island County Times* of November 15, 1895:

Another detachment of the Holland Colony arrived at San De Fuca last Tuesday morning on the *Fairhaven* in charge of R. E. Werkman, and increases our population by something over 60 souls. The party included several well to do farmers, who could be desirable acquisitions to our producing ranks should they decide to locate here, as it is probable they will do. The party is composed of the following: R. Zylstra, D. Zylstra, E. Eerkes, R. Eerkes, R. Boerhaave, Wm. De Wilde and L. Van Dyke, all of South Dakota, M. Fakkema, Chas. Nienhuis and H. Riksen of Michigan...The majority of these are married men and have with them their wives, children and household effects and have all found comfortable temporary quarters in the unoccupied houses of San de Fuca where they will reside while looking over the country. Nearly all of them have relatives and friends in the east that will follow if they report favorably of the country.

The report goes on to say: "Many Dutch immigrants chose Whidbey because of its similarity to the "old country." Here, as in the Netherlands, the land was suitable for agriculture. And, it was close to the sea. The Island's cool summers and rainy winters were what they had known in the Netherlands. The fact that the land was heavily forested and much work would be necessary before planting could begin, presented no problem for these people had worked hard all their lives and knew the value of an honest day's labor.

For the first ten years in Oak Harbor there was no organized church but reading services were held in homes and later in... a hotel. Occasionally a visiting Presbyterian minister would lead the service. In 1904 the Christian Reformed Church was organized and a church built.

The *Seattle Times* in 1896 printed a story by R. E. Werkman who was instrumental in bringing Dutch settlers to Whidbey, "There are estimated to be about 200 Hollanders, most of

them belonging to families, with only a few bachelors." Werkman wrote that most of the people were going into the dairy business, but that first year, about 8,000 pounds of potatoes were produced, and the price of potatoes had risen from \$5 to \$10, an encouraging sign.

Many of the new Islanders came with little besides their families and the clothes on their back. Others had sold lands in other parts of the United States and had a "stake" with which to invest until they could produce a crop or a salary. Schools were in neighborhoods as all children walked to school. When the Fakkema family moved to Crescent Harbor from Clover Valley, Pete, Paul, Chris and Ed all walked three-and-one-half miles to school in Oak Harbor.

In further news items the local newspaper noted on April 3, September 11 and October 23, 1896:

"Te Roller came down from Seattle Friday to locate three families of Holland colonists. This party consisted of R. Zylstra, wife and eight children and Y. Zylstra and wife of South Dakota and F. Dekker from Michigan. Mr. Dekker came West with the intention of locating in Yakima Valley, but after looking the ground over decided to settle on Whidbey Island. He went to Seattle yesterday afternoon where he will meet his family. The Zylstra represent 15 males of that name, Mr. Werkman is expected from the east next week with another party. The Great Northern Railway Company has issued a special edition of its "Bulletin," the official periodical published by its passenger department, devoted exclusively to Whidbey Island, and the Holland Colonization project pushed by R. E. Werkman. It is filled with numerous half tone engravings. Among the latter are a portrait of R. E. Werkman; views of Oak Harbor...

R. E. Werkman came down to Oak Harbor Saturday with Ben Lewis and family whom he recently brought from South Dakota to join the Holland Colony. Mr. Werkman reports that he has worked up a party of two carloads who will be out as soon as they get their crops in.

The January 31, 1896 Island newspaper carried an advertisement by Werkman:

Anyone wishing to sell improved places will find it to their advantage to consult R. E. Werkman, Seattle, Wash. Many of the newly arrived Hollanders have already been making permanent improvement. The Island Manufacturing Company's mill has been busy for a week or two getting out lumber and shingles for them. Lovejoy Brothers towed a raft of 11,000 feet to Oak Harbor Tuesday...The Holland colony in the vicinity of Oak Harbor numbers close to 100 souls...They are the kind of settlers needed to make a prosperous community--industrious, patient and frugal, and if they are given a chance they will do their part toward making the wilderness blossom as the rose.

In Gerald F. De Jong's book, *The Dutch In America*, (page 162) he tells a bit about Werkman and his activities. "A Netherlands-born real estate agent, Werkman was particularly active in promoting Washington as a mecca for discontented Dutchmen. In 1894, he persuaded a Netherlands banking firm, S. Ellens and Company, to purchase eighteen thousand acres on



Whitby Island near the entrance to Puget Sound. As an agent of this firm, Werkman and a close associate, Hein Te Roller, who was also Holland-born, traveled throughout the midwest to entice Dutchmen into moving to Whitby Island. They were so successful that within two years there were about two hundred Hollanders, most of whom were engaged in vegetable gardening, dairying, and poultry farming. About a third of them were Holland-born."

Periodic bad harvests in parts of the Middle West during the 1890s and overcrowding in several Dutch settlements, together with extensive advertising and the general success of the Whidbey Island settlement, led to the founding of additional Dutch colonies in Washington. The Yakima Valley, in the south central part of the state, soon began attracting Dutch settlers, especially from northwest Iowa, as did also the area around Everett.

Henry S. Lucas in his *Netherlanders in America* also had comments and facts about Werkman and his efforts (p. 416-423)

The real beginnings of Dutch immigration to Washington were the result of the succession of crop failures in the Dakotas and Montana during the 1890's, and of the ever-present desire to secure good farm lands in an area where rainfall, climate, and market conditions were also favorable... The crop failures provided an opportunity for the Northern Pacific Railroad to draw the attention of Hollanders in the Dakotas to the excellent lands in the Puget Sound area and in the Yakima Valley. Early in 1893 the railroad company issued two pamphlets entitled *West Washington* and *East Washington*, as well as a third called *Golden Montana*. These illustrated the very good prospects that there awaited farmers who had been impoverished by drought and other misfortunes.

W. E. Werkman, who later promoted Dutch settlement in Montana, appears to have been the first person to succeed in interesting Hollanders in Washington. In what was perhaps his first real-estate venture, Werkman spent July and August 1894 in Seattle, gathering information about the nature of the farm lands of the state, and securing priority titles for the founding of a Dutch settlement. Firmly convinced of the great advantages offered by the state, he wrote a flattering report in *De Grondwet*. Since his arrival as an immigrant in the United States, he declared, he had traveled through twenty-eight of its states, but nowhere had he found such extensive natural resources. Potentially, he said, the farm lands here were the best in all of America, as fertile as the polders of the Netherlands. He visited Whidbey Island, where he learned that on some farms wheat had been threshed at the rate of eighty-one bushels per acre. The climate, he noted, was mild and the soil of the best quality. But it should be noted that he had also warned readers not to be misled by the representatives of the railway company.

It is not clear what financial arrangements Werkman was able to make. In a letter dated August 15, he stated he was working with, or for, a *Nederlandsche Hypotheek Bank*, in order to secure a loan. This bank cannot have been other than the Netherlands American Mortgage Bank of Uithuizen. Later in the year Werkman described himself as "agent of the Netherlands banking firm S. Ellens and Company," stating that since April 1894 he had been busy in Seattle in an effort to bring Dutch people to the Puget Sound region. On behalf of S. Ellens and Company, who were Seattle agents of the Netherlands American Mortgage Bank,

he purchased 18,000 acres of land on Whidbey Island. The company's reason for making so large a purchase was indicated by Werkman's remark in a letter: "Thousands of Hollanders in Dakota, Michigan and other states are dissatisfied with their condition and eager to go to the western parts of Washington."

To support his statements about the excellence of the soil, Werkman collected samples of Whidbey Island products, including rutabagas weighing over thirty pounds, mangel-wurzels weighing and much as twenty-two pounds, and potatoes weighing six and one-half pounds. He intended to place these on exhibition in Kalamazoo for a period of two months, then in some New York community, and finally in Groningen, in the Netherlands.

The firm of S. Ellens and Company offered Hollanders land in the Yakima Valley at \$40 an acre, claiming that it would produce from six to ten tons of alfalfa an acre. During 1894 the Hollanders in the Midwest began to show considerable interest in the Puget Sound region. At the end of 1894 some Dutch farmers were said to be leaving Dakota to settle in the Puget Sound area. Hein Te Roller, an old friend and associate of Werkman's, asked the Northern Pacific Railroad to grant Kuipers (a Dakota man who was thinking of moving to Washington) a free round-trip ticket to evaluate the Washington lands. The railway at first rejected the idea but later yielded. Kuipers did go and gave a good report on the lands, but he never did move to Washington.

From the beginning of their settlement in 1895, the Hollanders were well pleased with their purchases, and no serious complaints against the methods employed by Werkman and Te Roller are on record. The newcomers, with some exceptions, secured small farms of forty or eighty acres and began clearing the soil of the stumps left by loggers. The crops they could plant immediately yielded well, so that in 1896 they produced better wheat, oats and barley than they had ever seen in Iowa. Yields of wheat averaging fifty bushels per acre, and of oats averaging seventy-five bushels per acre were very encouraging.

By 1899 Werkman had become land agent for the Great Northern Railroad, with an office in St. Paul, and had begun to advise Hollanders to settle in Montana, as related earlier. Nevertheless he continued his efforts to bring more Hollanders to Whidbey Island. The Island County community of Oak Harbor and various scattered individuals and families continued to progress. A few families arrived directly from the Netherlands, but most came from the older Dutch settlements in the Midwest.

Later, when vacant houses, good land and at very reasonable prices, were noted in the Lynden area some of the folk moved from Whidbey Island to Lynden on the mainland.

The *Ottawa County Times* included the following letter taken from the Great Falls, Montana newspaper (10-17-1903) in its January 1, 1904 issue:

Agreeable to a presentation made to you by Mr. Werkman in the *Dakota Free Press*... to exhibit at Menno, S.D. on October 17th, an assortment of samples of farm products from Montana, I wish to advise you that Mr. Werkman has fulfilled his promises. He has shown us wheat, oats, potatoes (weighing 4 3/4 pounds), onions cabbage, cauliflower, alfalfa seven feet long, timothy hay eight feet long, also wheat and oats in the sheaf just as the grain was bound by the harvester. All the best quality and all number 1. All these samples were brought by Mr. Werkman direct from Montana to Menno and every one who has seen them will agree that Mr. Werkman has told the truth. These samples speak for themselves and for that section of Montana.

The state which can produce such products must certainly guarantee and leave no doubt but what any honest, industrious person can make a home there for himself, and also a good thing with the advantage of working and saving money, and becoming independent.

This letter demonstrates that Werkman was active in Montana early in the century. In *De Grondwet* of May 13, 1907 Werkman had an advertisement, in Dutch, telling of the available federal land in Billings, Montana. His business address was the Kent Realty and Investment Corp. of St. Paul, Minnesota. He sold some land to Jac. van der Pol, Johannes van der Giessen and Jan Hoogland. One customer, Cornelius Van der Voorden lived at 743 W 13th Street, Chicago, Illinois. At this time he was also arranging a settlement with Father Vermatt of Red Lodge, Montana, on land which the U.S. Government was trying to settle. In 1909 Fred and Hilda Rozema, Nick and Carrie Koster, Peter Straatman, H. Bakker, Jake Hennink, and Jacob Verburg purchased land through R. E. Werkman.

Lucas (p. 372) mentions Werkman's efforts in Montana in the next decade. In 1914 "R. E. Werkman, a real-estate agent who had been active in Montana and Washington during the 1890's, tried to interest Hollanders in the possibilities of Crookston {Minnesota}.... Werkman, who advertised in the Dutch papers, met Hollanders at the Crookston station in his automobile, and showed them the surrounding countryside." The Hollanders in question came from Iowa, the Dakotas and Minnesota, as well as from the Netherlands. Werkman's efforts included persuading "Catholic Hollanders to settle near Crookston" but with little success.

In 1929 Werkman was still advertising farms "for sale."

Lucas again, on pages 407-409 tells about Werkman's efforts in Montana. "Excursion rates from Chicago, at \$36.50 for a round trip, were arranged with the Northern Pacific Railroad. R. E. Werkman, the Dutch real-estate dealer already mentioned, served as the Company's agent. He had an office in St. Paul and also advertised extensively in *De Grondwet* and other papers. Through his efforts the proposed settlement at Farmington, in the Teton River Valley, was begun.... Many Hollanders did come to the area of Farmington.

Readers of Werkman's advertisements could not really evaluate his statements. Men like Werkman, who acted on behalf of the railroads, may have been honest enough, but they were unwise, since their claims had been based on an inadequate study of the Montana climate.

When Werkman went to Crookston, Minnesota in late 1915 or early 1916 he already knew, as a passenger agent for the Northern Pacific Railway, the town and the area. He was a salesman from the start. He connected, almost at once, with the Wheeler Land and Loan Company and reestablished his connections with the widespread Dutch community. He placed advertisements and letters in the Dutch language newspapers *De Grondwet* of Holland, Michigan, and the *Vrije Hollander* of Orange City, Iowa. When he went there he had a daughter Reona, born in 1901, who would have been 15 years old.

Werkman also worked for the Wheeler Company. Other correspondents of *De Grondwet*, George Hamstra and John Hamstra of Indiana, and Mr. J. M. Huisman of Sioux County, Iowa confirmed these findings. Werkman, in discussing the advantages of living at Crookston added: "Now here is your chance, a free trip to Crookston and return." Every visitor to the area who saw Werkman wrote notes of appreciation and he used these letters in his advertisements in the Sioux Center *Nieuwsblad* in September and October 1916. Werkman did all that he could for his Dutch speaking visitors. He took them to church. He took them

around the area. He encouraged their move to Crookston. Letters to the editors of Dutch language newspapers endorsed Werkman's help in real estate matters.

Werkman continued in the Christian faith and had his church membership in the Crookston Presbyterian Church. In May 1918, in response to a Presidential request for a day of prayer, he wrote to the editor of the Crookston *Daily Times* to ask that people come to the Presbyterian Church for such a prayer service. The pastors of the town asked the editor not to print this notice or request. And this, as could be expected, greatly offended Werkman. In May 1922, he again wrote a letter to the editor of the Crookston *Daily Times* protesting a Sunday speed carnival and suggesting a Saturday affair that would be of more benefit to the local merchants.

In July 1923 Werkman purchased 150 shares of the Wheeler land and Loan Company which had a stated value of \$100 each i.e. a \$15,000 investment. In August 1923 the Holland *Evening Sentinel* reported that Werkman, who had been at Crookston for eight years (since 1915) had purchased the entire holdings of S. W. Wheeler. This included, besides the offices, "Two thousand acres of the best improved farms in the vicinity of Crookston."

R. E. Werkman died at Crookston, Minnesota on March 9, 1931 at 75 1/2 years of age. He left one married daughter, Reona Schafer, at that place and four sisters who lived in Holland, Michigan. There was a visitation in Holland at a local mortuary and the funeral took place on Saturday, March 14. His grave is in the family plot, just north of 16th Street, in Holland's Pilgrim Home Cemetery. At the time of his death he was an elder of the Presbyterian Church at Crookston and that Church Council noted in its minutes "his constant devotion to every interest of this church, and to his unexampled faithfulness in attendance upon all its services. That we bear testimony to his sterling character both as a citizen and a Christian gentleman whose voice was ever raised on behalf of all things pure, lovely, and of good report." It closed with a special tribute to his memory as of one who ever contended for the purity and simplicity of the faith, being especially well grounded in the Scriptures.