

# A Record of the History of the First Fifty Years of the SIOUX CENTER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Located at 630 First Avenue S.E. in the fair town of Sioux Center, Iowa, is the completely modern and attractive \$100,000 plant known as the Sioux Center Christian School. What a lovely picture it presents! We might wish that all its history were equally glorious. But such is not the case. As in all histories we shall have to speak of ups and downs, successes and failures. Our school's history testifies of the weakness and sinfulness of men; but it also witnesses of the grace and goodness of our Almighty God whose strength is perfected in weakness. And though we are inclined to boast in human accomplishments we can present this history aright only as we follow the pattern of God's own Word, confessing "what hath God wrought!"

## Organization

It was in the cold February of 1903, that the first permanent Christian School Society west of the great Mississippi<sup>1</sup> was formed — followed closely by our twin, Orange City, which organized a society in July of the same year. To Orange City however goes the honor of being the first free Christian School this side of the Mississippi, opening its doors in September, 1904, while Sioux Center began on April 3, 1905.

The first meeting was held under the leadership of the Rev. J. Smitters having been called at the urging of many brethren who had strong convictions for a distinctive christian training for the covenant children. At this meeting a committee was chosen to study ways and means for further action, consisting of the Rev. J. Smitter, president; H. Nijman, H. Jager, Dr. H. M. Stadt, W. Van Putten, J. Kleinwolterink and G. Gesink. Early inspirational addresses were given by the Rev. J. Vander Mey

and Rev. A. Brink. The cooperation of all the local church consistories was sought from the beginning; a move was immediately made to arouse neighboring localities to also seek Christian Schools. And inasmuch as our Christian Schools are not supported by Uncle Sam, the project meant collecting the necessary funds. At this meeting nine members gave \$800, and eleven more pledged \$745. One year from the time of organization the Treasurer's Fund contained the very respectable sum of \$3,300 — and that wasn't "hay" in those days!

In the beginning the town paper had reported that there was a rumor that Sioux Center was going to have a Christian School. At the end of a year the \$3,300 meant that the "rumor" would be changed into a reality — for it was the guarantee of a new school. The closer the realization of the Christian School came, the greater the opposition increased against it. Uninformed people attacked the movement as unpatriotic, a charge the unprejudiced do not dare to make today! Others objected on the ground that we ought to let our light shine in the public school — a very sincere objection — even though the very ones raising this were supposed to be strongly behind a Christian Education Movement themselves on the higher levels: colleges and junior colleges! The giant strides in Christian Education today, not only amongst Reformed believers but also many Fundamentalist people is a vindication of the convictions and principles of the founding fathers, upon which our Christian Schools were built.

Full-well they realized that the Scripture admonishes believing parents always to be instructing their children in the fear of the Lord. By a sound distinctive Christian educational program they sought to safeguard their dear covenant children from secularism, humanism, and materialism — forces running rampant in

<sup>1</sup> Rev. A. Van Raalte of Holland, Michigan interested the people of Pella, Iowa in a parochial school which opened in 1851, supported from pew rentals in the church, which income proved inadequate so that the school closed after six years.

a country which is founded largely upon the irreligious principles of the French Revolution<sup>2</sup>.

### A Building and Its Occupation

Thirty-three hundred dollars! With this sum the project was launched. The first school was built on the South Main Street location at a cost which is not exactly known. The 30' x 40' two-story wooden structure<sup>3</sup> which most of us remember as the old delapidated building the Van Donge's pulled down in 1949, was our founding fathers' pride and joy. For four decades it served well its purpose in the training of hundreds of covenant youth of two generations. The contractor was Jacob Mouw, the architect H. Peerbolte. Money must have talked loudly in those days for the Nieuwsblad reports the cost of the bare building (without decorating, furnishings, sidewalks) at \$530.00!

By spring of 1905 all was in readiness — and at a very odd time indeed, the 3rd of April (!) classes were begun. Some pupils recall the trek from the Public School that morning to the new Christian School, which was under the tutelage of an only teacher, Principal R. Barlow from Grand Rapids, Michigan<sup>4</sup>. Fifty pupils were enrolled for those first few months.

At two o'clock that day appropriate opening exercises were held. The dedicatory occasion

<sup>2</sup> Since most American history roots in Europe, we should go back to the land of our ancestors, the Netherlands, to find the origin of our Christian School principles. For centuries the church controlled the schools, first the Roman Catholic Church, and later the Reformed Church after the Reformation had swept the country. The guidance and direction of the church for the spiritual welfare of the school was accepted as a matter of course — religion was to have chief emphasis, and more particularly the Reformed faith: to be taught by teachers with sound Reformed principles. For three centuries the schools were considered Christian Schools with the definite Reformed stamp.

In the 19th century things changed there, the spirit of the French Revolution sweeping the universe. Domination by the church was losing out, demands of many were for "neutral" schools, where secular subjects should be taught, with some "morals," but no religious principles. Principled Reformed people could not be satisfied with this; over the land several societies worked toward Christian parental schools, first frowned on by a government which insisted that schools be kept "strictly neutral." But due to acute reaction from conservative Reformed people the "Kappeyne Cabinet" in 1877 advised legislation favorable to Christian Schools. Two years later a Union for Christian Schools was organized, and thereafter the cause flourished. When the renowned Reformed statesman and theologian, Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. was prime minister (1901-1905) still more favorable legislation was enacted. By 1920 equal financial support and recognition was given as to the public schools. Since that time the trend of politics there has been to make all elementary schools "non-public," the state paying the expenses and the parents controlling the instruction.

It is only natural that our fathers and grandfathers with such convictions pressed for our own Christian Schools in America, where the principle of "neutrality" and "religious freedom" generally means secularism and irreligion. Originally and for many years the schools in this country were organized and controlled by parents. Thus our organization of parent-controlled Christian Schools was no innovation, neither unpatriotic. It might more correctly be termed: following in the original traditions!

<sup>3</sup> An addition 10' x 40' was attached on the north side (halls and stairways) in 1907, De Stijter and Wassink contractors.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Barlow lived to the ripe age of four-score years, having passed away only a few years ago.



Picture of the first year of our school in Sioux Center, Iowa, 1905. Mr. A. Barlow, teacher and principal.

was opened with prayer and song, Ds. Van Wijk making opening remarks to a crowd which had come in their surreys through the poor weather. There was no lack of speeches as the program below suggests:

1. *"De Christelijke Vrijheid en het Christelijk Onderwijs"*<sup>5</sup>

— DS. FORTUIN

2. *"t Verband tusschen 't Lager en Hooger Onderwijs"*<sup>6</sup>

— DS. HEYNEN

3. *"Onze Verplichting jegens de Publieke School"*<sup>7</sup>

— DS. IDZERD VAN DELLEN

4. *Christian Instruction and Patriotism"*

— MR. B. MASSELINK, ORANGE CITY PRINCIPAL

5. *"Alle Begin is Moeilijk"*<sup>8</sup>

— MR. R. BARLOW

The first graduates of which we have record were the class of 1906: Lee Kiel, Andrew Barlow, Otto Van Roekel. Each received an English Bible (since always the custom) and "other prizes." The first graduation exercises were exclusively in the American language except for the songs and prayer.

In those days Theodore Roosevelt was president of these United States. Then instead of boasting about powerful and speedy automobiles men bragged about their bays, their blacks, and dapple greys. Today the "old gray mare" isn't what she used to be. Nowadays young men polish their automobiles in preparation for taking out the fairer sex, but in those days with what fervor men polished the harness brass and groomed the steed. In those days one could read in our newspaper limerick ads such as this:

<sup>5</sup> Christian Liberty and Christian Instruction.

<sup>6</sup> The Relation between Elementary and Higher Education.

<sup>7</sup> Our Obligation towards the Public School.

<sup>8</sup> All Beginning is Difficult.



"'k Zou trotseeren de stormen van  
Chilkoot pas,  
'k Zou gaan over de vlakten van  
bevroren glas,  
'k Zou laten mijn vrouw ginds over  
de zee,  
Liever dan wezen zonder Rocky  
Mountain Thee."

— H. J. SCHALEKAMP<sup>9</sup>

### Growth and Development

The Fall enrollment of 1905 was high above the fifty figure of June. Miss Anna Aué (Mrs. Rev. D. Hollebeek, 512 Shamrock St. S.W.,

Spring	1905.....	53
Fall	1905.....	61
	1909.....	131
	1924.....	125
	1927.....	102
	1932.....	85
	1936.....	59
	1940.....	106
	1949.....	121
	1951.....	135
	1954.....	204

It is plain from this that numerical growth was not constant, in fact it dipped considerably at one period. The reason for this was not



Left to right — BACK ROW: Art Mulder, Eibert Fikse, Seine Brandts, William Kusters, John Bosch, Winnie Van Putten, Minnie Vanden Berg, Allie Van Putten, Alida De Groot, Hendrika Campagne, Katie Lagendyk, Tillie Postma, Fannie Brandts. SECOND ROW: Simon Van Voorst, Ben Vander Hoop, Peter Proper, Henry Bosch, Richard Postma, Henry Van Voorst, Eibert Bosch, Jacob Van Ek, Percy Brandts, Mark Postma, Edward De Groot, Abraham Berghuis, ..... Bolluyt, Fred Campagne. THIRD ROW: William Goemans, Sam Sybesma, Louis Brunsting, Winnie De Groot, Alida Berghuis, Marie Bolluyt, Marie De Haan, Janet Bolluyt, Onie Aardema, Minnie Cleveringa, Gertrude Vander Veen, Coba Duim, Martha Van Muyden, Mary Van Maanen, George Van Roekel. FOURTH ROW: Bert Gesink, Jacob Lagendyk, John Vander Hoop, Jessimine Franken, Andrew Oordt, Allie Vander Berg, Ruth Cleveringa, Minnie Vander Ploeg, Rika Dolieslager, Jennie Vander Veen, Minnie Gesink, Minnie Van Voorst, Ida Bleyenbergh, Winnie Van Maanen, Edward Vander Ziel, Susan Van Muyden, Tillie Aardema. FIFTH ROW: Gerrit Brinkman, William Berghuis, Frank Feikema, Margery Gotz, Fredrika Gotz, Willie De Jong, Ida Sybersma, Martha Van Ek, Lilian Oordt, Tillie Feikema, Lizzie Proper, Ben Bleyenbergh, Cornelius Dolieslager, Chris Gesink, Jake Feikema, Ina Brandts, Anna Bolluyt, Nellie De Groot, Johanna Vander Ploeg. SIXTH ROW: Lane Koster, Henry Van Roekel, Dick Bosch, Willie Winkle, Simon Aardema, Fred Feikema, Johanna Duim, Johanna Gesink, Lizzie Vander Ziel, Richard Postma, Fronica Postma, Hattie Duim, Louisa Top, Daisy Van't Tol, Minnie De Jong, Gerrit Bleyenbergh, Lucille Brunsting.

TEACHERS: Anna Aué, Katie Aalders, Mr. Muilenberg (visitor).

Grand Rapids, Michigan) joined Mr. Barlow on the teaching staff, and there were 61 pupils. Elsewhere in this book you will find complete attendance figures. We like to list some of these figures to show the trend of development:

<sup>9</sup> 4 January, 1905 Nieuwsblad.

a financial one, but due largely to an unfortunate episode in the local Christian Reformed Church; the split of this congregation with all the ill-will did the cause of Christian instruction great harm in Sioux Center — harm from a spiritual, numerical, and financial point of view. Whatever factors account for the fact



that the First Christian Reformed Church did the lion's share for many years is not ours to judge. We deal only with facts, and this is a fact which must be recorded in the history of our school, for it explains much of the decline and struggle of our school at one period in its history. But while we record this sad page of history, we are very happy that as we write this report that the very strong and increasing support of the Second Christian Reformed Church membership in recent years is truly wonderful and inspiring, and certainly bodes well for the future.

Though a small congregation the Protestant Reformed Church membership has since 1926 helped support the school, bearing its share of the burden. Through all these years many members of the Reformed Church have worked shoulder-to-shoulder with us; though these represent a small portion of their large membership, they have given fine support, and we hope that the passing of the years will see them join the ranks of Christian School supporters in large numbers. There has also been a small representation from the Netherlands Reformed Church.

Since the addition of kindergarten February 1st, 1951, when 28 children were enrolled, the growth has been phenomenal, so that we have now reached the two-hundred mark, and prospects for the future are an increasing enrollment for many years to come.<sup>10</sup>

We started with a single teacher in 1905; the next season a second was added; in 1908, a third, and for several years beginning in 1917 we had four teachers. Then for quite a few years we had only three teachers because we could "not afford a fourth teacher." With the introduction of kindergarten a fifth teacher was added (1951), and at present we have a staff of six devoted teachers. Crowded rooms and increased enrollment means that we shall have to add a couple more teachers in the near future.

In all we have had 19 principals, 62 teachers, with a total of 500 graduates, including the prospective graduates of our fiftieth year of operation — 1955.

The first bus ran in 1940, a second was added in 1945, and a third in 1953. This helped to increase enrollment, as well as to largely expand our budget.

The annual budgets have ranged from \$1,470 in 1933, to \$3,197 in 1941, to \$20,533.80 for 1953-54. This last figure represents both a

<sup>10</sup> There was a primary class numbering six pupils in 1940, but then it was discontinued until 1951.

wonderful growth as well as a tremendous inflation!

Principals during these fifty years have been: R. Barlow, Miss Katie Aalders, Albert Bratt, Miss Anna Van Otterloo, George De Vries, M. Wyngaarden, Wm. Van Vliet, Henry Van Der Riet, A. S. De Jong, Peter De Groot, G. Keuning, J. Keuning, L. R. Haan, Gary Vreeman, Harold Ver Hulst, Mrs. Ernest Geritsma, George Pals, Dewey Westra, A. J. Boersma.

Board presidents during these years have been: W. Bierma, J. Visser, Wm. Tamminga, A. Ten Harmsel, J. Broek, Hans Faber, Cy Hogan, George Bierma, and E. J. Duistermars. Several of these men served as president of the School Board for many years, notably W. Bierma, A. Ten Harmsel, J. Visser, and John Broek.



Picture of the First President of the Sioux Center Christian School, Mr. Watse Bierma.

### Years of Struggle

In America, unlike in the Netherlands where the State supports all schools, it costs money to have Christian Schools. And money did not always come easy. The liberal and sacrificial spirit of the founders of our school was not always evident through all these years. The depression years were especially hard ones, when many parents were without employment, thus unable to support themselves decently, let alone pay tuition for schooling. For many years the Board was "at wit's end" to take care of the costs.

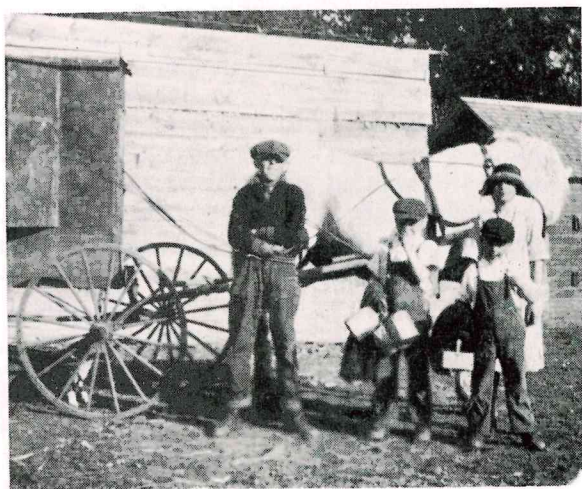
The years 1932 and '33 were the hardest, when the proposed annual budgets were only \$1,660.60 and \$1,470 respectively. Once the Board proposed that those having more than one share of creamery or elevator stock should set that aside for the benefit of the school. A



"bonus corn-and-hog plan" brought some relief. All kinds of proposals were made in a frantic effort to "keep going." They had to



Picture of method of transportation years back.  
On picture: Henry, Joe, Herman, Gerrit, Abe; Benjamin inside cab.  
Sons of Mr. and Mrs. Chris Schiebout.



Picture of method of older transportation to and from school.  
On picture: Clarence, Anna, William and Louis Cleveringa.

finally let the "teacherage" go to the mortgage holder. The unemployed who were unable to pay tuition were asked to gather wood supplies for the furnace, in this way paying part of their tuition. In 1932 Janitor Schiebout offered his services for nothing, and ever so many more made sacrifices for their beloved school. Well may we remember today some of the teachers in those depression years who sacrificed many months of pay; they sacrificed much in devotion to the cause of Christian Education! At one time the Board decided to ask the teachers "whether they desired the old salary or that of this year," and it hardly behooved these Christian teachers to say, "Both!" There was a special committee for "achterstallige salaris."<sup>11</sup> If only some of the rich,

<sup>11</sup> "back pay"

who were able to do it, had given such looked-for help! Time and again the School Society after long discussions would vote unanimously to keep the Christian School open. Often it came near to closing! This was not always because of lack of money, but lack of principle and fervor on the part of many, for had the shoulder and heart of more been behind the school, the history would have been a lot different and less to our shame. It behooves us to give thanks to God for the courage and ardent spirit of those "old faithfuls" who amidst trying hardships did not abandon ship! We salute them today. We cannot name them; a look at the list of board members gives us some of their names; what others did, including those widows who gave their mites, is in God's book of remembrance. They shall not be without their reward.

These have been fifty years of struggle, of hardship and glorious victory. The Lord answered fervent prayers, and the cause for Christian Schools goes on!

### Dutch Instruction

Many Christian Schools in the East, organized long before ours, had as a purpose besides giving distinctive covenantal education also the preservation of the Holland language. As a result they were stigmatized as "Dutch schools." This was not the case in Sioux Center. It appears that in the beginning some Holland courses were taught; however the consensus of opinion among the living original scholars seems to be that practically all the teaching was in the American language<sup>12</sup>. Since we do not possess the minutes of the Board or Society meetings before 1914, a bit of mystery enshrouds some of these years. In 1914 there was a debate on a Society meeting on "Hollandsch moet onderwezen op ons Christelijke School";<sup>13</sup> at a Board meeting on January 20, 1919, it was "decided that during this school term one hour per week Dutch instruction be given." On the January 17, 1920, meeting the principal reported that the State did not allow teaching foreign language courses in the elementary grades. So that must have been that.

### Higher Education

For a few years our school boasted a 9th grade! It was begun as early as 1908 when

<sup>12</sup> Mr. Barlow conducted a summer school during July, 1905, in which 125 children were taught some Holland language, history, and literature.

<sup>13</sup> The Holland language must be taught in our Christian Schools.

Mr. A. H. Bratt taught grades 7, 8 and 9, teaching such subjects as Latin, Algebra, English and Bible. The specific purpose was to train those who could later be called on to teach the lower grades. This ninth grade was discontinued after a few years, but was revived in 1919. After 1920 it was decided to cancel the 9th grade once again. Even a 10th grade had been planned, for as concerned "middelbaar onderwijs"<sup>14</sup> the Board decided on August 4, 1919, "to teach the same subjects in grades 9 and 10 as in the Hull Academy, that a partition be put in the 4th room, to have it on the south side. . . ." Our fathers had dreams and visions!

### The Hope School

We mention this school briefly because supporters of it later joined our ranks. The Hope School was located only five miles west of town, and existed sixteen years. It opened in 1910 with 17 pupils. Mr. S. Altena who provided the grounds and one-third of the complete building costs (including a barn, coal shed, and water closet), was its first president. Teachers were Miss Johanna Riemersma, Miss Etta Vander Burg, Mr. Edward Englesma, and Miss Bessie Groenendyk. In 1926 it closed, money being borrowed to pay off the debts — but who will say that they ran short of funds because they had to pay "little Sam Altena" ten cents every time he started the stove during the winter?

First officers were: S. Altena, president; the Rev. P. Van Wijk, honorary president; E. Voortman, secretary, and H. W. Duistermars, treasurer.

Many children from this locality are now in our Sioux Center Christian School.



School picture of the Sioux Center Christian School — 1946. Geo. Pals, principal; teachers: Rose Nobel, Geneva Roetman, and all the pupils.

<sup>14</sup> Secondary education.

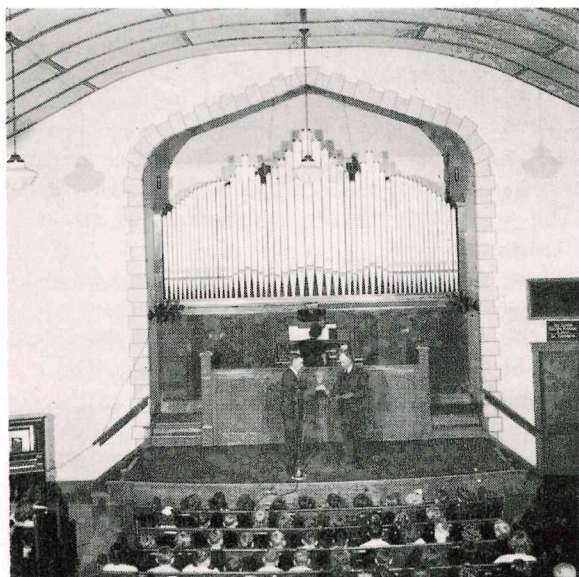


New Method Transportation  
Sioux Center Christian School bus and driver, Sam Holtrop.

### A New Era

The school was having very "rough sledding." But a new era began about ten years ago when the Board called in the various supporting consistories and others to discuss frankly the problem of maintaining our school. The Board wanted suggestions and advice, but especially the undivided support of the consistories in promoting interest in Christian Education and in bolstering our institution financially. Three of the consistories immediately decided upon monthly collections for the school. The Lord signally blessed this meeting, as the results have shown. We have purposely refrained from mentioning very many names in this history, but we feel constrained to mention the person whom the Lord used more than any others in spearheading endeavors toward progress — the Rev. B. J. Haan. By his inspiration and counsel great forward strides have been made. The remembrance of the old building with its creaking steps and broken floors, and the sight of the new building, tell the story of progress. It speaks of noble support from people whose hearts have been rekindled for the cause of distinctive Reformed instruction for the covenant youth. When Rev. Haan suggested a new building, there was laughter! As if we could ever do that! But it was done! The Lord moved old and young to give liberally, and in a few years a \$50,000 building and a \$10,000 property was as good as paid for. Some of the De Stigter Brothers, Ernest Gerritsma and Arend Wasink built a structure which bespeaks excellent workmanship, even though every effort was made to keep the cost at a minimum.



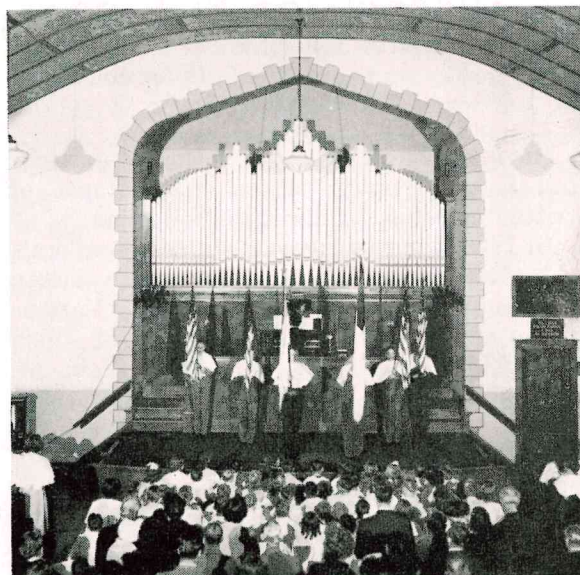


Handing over the Keys  
Mr. J. Broek to Pres. Sy Hogan.

Architect was Wm. Beuttler of Sioux City. Hans Faber was president of the Board. The Messrs. J. Broek, J. Tamminga, Ben Bleyenbergh, Tim Rens and A. Kraayenbring were the Building Committee. Many of the school supporters furnished "donated labor," representing quite a few pounds of "elbow grease!" The Building Fund had begun in 1946, and the new building was occupied on February 20, 1949. Appropriate dedicatory exercises were held on February 17, 1949, in the First Christian Reformed Church. Phonographic records have been kept of this dedication. At that time we said, "What hath God wrought!"

The new modern four-room structure was soon too small, so that by the summer of 1952 the latest addition was built — two completed rooms, and shell for two more rooms which will probably be finished in a year or two. The cost of this addition without furnishings, which were for the most part provided by the Christian School Guild and various church societies, was \$28,482. De Stigter Bros. were the contractors. The \$7,000 debt which remained on this was reduced to \$1,600 in the June, 1954, drive.

We have experienced the truth of the prophet Azariah to Asa, II Chron. 15:7: "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded." God has indeed blessed us. We have been prospered with a school of 200 pupils, six consecrated Christian teachers, a \$100,000 plant, efficient



Dedication picture of the Sioux Center Christian School, February 17, 1949 — at the First Christian Reformed Church.  
"Honoring the flag."



Dedication picture of the Sioux Center Christian School, February 17, 1949 — at the First Christian Reformed Church.  
"Entire school body singing as a chorus."

management, a treasury which does not groan under stress as in the past.

Our history however is not written in largeness of brick structure or of numbers, but is rather written in the hearts of beloved sons and daughters whom we teach to serve Jesus Christ with lives which are dedicated to the praise and glory of our covenant God.

SOLI DEO GLORIA  
— By REV. J. W. VAN WEELDEN