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Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Roy Heath

Interviewer: Don van Reken

July 17, 1974

Abstract: Roy Heath [Alfred LeRoy Heath, Jr.]; Alfred LeRoy Heath, Sr.; Alfred Hale Heath; Civil War; General William Tecumseh Sherman; Betsy Hale Heath; Rose Lee Shacklett; General Blant Shacklett; Revolutionary War; Brandenburg, Kentucky; Lansing, Michigan postmaster; State of Michigan Labor Commission; Hayden Wiggem Heath; Parsons, Kansas; the Detroit Northern Railroad of Lansing (DL&N); Chicago & West Michigan Railroad (C&WM); Holland, Michigan; St. Charles Hotel; Doctor Yates; Central School; Centennial Park; De Grondwet newspaper building; Waverly yard; interurban; Macatawa Park; Ottawa Beach resort; streets; sidewalks; newspaper boy; Mr. Dogger; Standard Lumber; Bill Robinson; Mr. Whalen; Ray Hadden; Castle Park; oratorical contest; King's Basket Factory; Holland, Michigan Semi-Centennial Celebration (1897); Mr. Vanden Heuvel (cane maker); Gerrit John Diekema; Elmer Eisman; William Jennings Bryan; Avis Hall Heath; Rokus Kanters; Boone; Dinkeloo the painter; Dave Snyder; Steve Moore; Peter Smith the mason; Adam McNabb; Hufflewridder; Mr. Arendshort; Holland Dutch Rusk; Beach's Mill; Frank Dyke; Chuck VanDuren; lighting; street lights; Al Huntley and Frank Holly [electrical plant]; J. C. Post building; Model Drug store; West Michigan Park Association; Kampliner; Bill Murphy; Jenison Park; Ottawa Beach Hotel; fire; John Goode tannery; Buss Machine company.

DVR: This is 205 E. 14th Street. How old are you, Mr. Heath?

RH: Well, I'm 89.

DVR: I wonder if you could tell me of your early days. Where were you born? When were you born? Do you have information of those kinds of things?

RH: Yes, I can remember back for nearly the time I was born.

DVR: That's unusual.

RH: Well, you asked me my name. I was called Alfred LeRoy Heath, Jr. I was born in Parsons, Kansas, June 9th, 1885, at 4 a.m. I was told it happened in a tent out there on the prairie. My grandmother and my aunt acted as midwives. I weighed ten pounds. I was weighed on one of those old balancing bars like they used to weigh the hogs after

they were scraped. I don't know when they moved into the house, which I remember well.

Father's trade then was a stone mason and plasterer. Later, he got a job on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad. He was Alfred LeRoy Heath, Sr. Everybody called him Roy, and I inherited it. I remember well how mystifying it was to me to hear someone call him Roy. He was born in 1860 in South Bend, Indiana, about the time his father left to fight with [General William Tecumseh] Sherman [Union general during Civil War]. Grandfather's name was Alfred Hale Heath. He was very proud of the fact that his grandfather had married Betsy Hale, Nathan's sister. Grandfather was born in Governor, New York. My mother's name was Rose Lee Shacklett. That's a French name – S-H-A-C-K-L-E-T-T. Her father's name was Blant Shacklett, named after General Blant Shacklett of the Revolution, and came into Kentucky with Daniel Boone and settled in Brandenburg, where mother was born. He fought with the rebels. After the war, a large percentage of the plantation owners, including the Shackletts, loaded up what was left and struck out west to rebuild their fortune. Up north, as it was called, men and women were motivated by Mr. Horace Greeley's motto, "Go west, young man." And I presume my father caught the fever.

However, Michigan was loaded with opportunities, and soon after the war, Grandfather moved into the great pine forests of Michigan. He and others settled in a place named Lansing. In later years, Grandfather Heath was the postmaster in Lansing, and under Governor Lewis, was appointed to the labor commission.

Besides Father, there were three other children: two girls and a boy. In my mother's family, there were three girls and three boys. Two of the sisters married and stayed in Kentucky, and all the boys settled in Kansas.

While in Parsons, Kansas, my brother, Hayden Wiggem, was born July 7th, 1887. The folks had moved into a house by that time. That morning, is my first recollection of anything. Mother was in labor, terrible pain. Aunt Lucy and Grandma Shacklett were standing on each side of the bed, wielding large, dried palm leaves over her in that terrible prairie heat. I toddled into the bedroom. I thought they were whipping my mother. I had been unnoticed until I let out one of my bloodcurdling yells. I was sent outside so quickly, I didn't know what happened. Anyway, it was nine years before another child was born. But that's another story. I think about two years later, Father moved to Michigan.

DVR: Where did he move to?

RH: He, as far as I know, moved into Ionia.

DVR: When did he move to Holland, Michigan?

RH: He moved into Holland, Michigan, about 1891. I remember I was 6-years-old when he moved into Holland. At that time, he had been working in Ionia on the DL&N—that's the Detroit Northern of Lansing is –DL&N, we call it. He was working there on that railroad. When he came to Holland, he hired out on the old C&WM. I think there was something about the DL&N Railroad going out of business or something like that.

Anyway, he was kind of transferred over here to Holland on that old C&WM.

DVR: Where did you live when you first came here?

RH: Well, we lived, when we first came, we were taken over to the St. Charles Hotel at the Ocean Bay, near the corner of what was called Land Street and 8th Street. It's now Lincoln Avenue. We lived there for several months until we found a house over on 11th Street, 11th and Lincoln. We lived there for probably a year and a half. In the meantime, Father had had an accident on the railroad there. He went to get on a foot board, which we were allowed to do in those days, and there was another man standing on the foot board. Dad happened to put his foot on the other fellow's toe, and he yanked it out from under and put a foot on the rail. The engine that they had at that time was an old road engine, instead of being built with a tank like a switch engine, it came straight down on the back and the wheels were right under the foot board. Unfortunately, his foot hit the rail while he was under the wheel, and it took all the toes except the big toe off of his right foot. He laid there nine months. I can remember Doc Yates coming in there. Doc Yates, he experimented with him nine months. I thought he never was going to get healed.

But, anyway, we went to school. There was a school here. And then afterwards, we went over to, for a while, went to school over there at Central School. We called it Central School on 10th Street, between 10th and 11th. Afterward, the high school was built right next to it. Eleventh Street, what we call Graves Place now, of course, it had Hope College on one end and the park on the other end of it. By the way, that park, when we moved in there, that park was nothing but a woods over there, right in the middle of town. Later on, when they got around to it, they removed a lot of the trees and laid it out and made a nice place there. That's our Centennial Park. Oh, I guess we must have lived around here in Holland about a year and a half. But, the railroad and the inhabitants of

this town got into a lot of trouble on account of the railroad working on Sunday here. The yard used to be from up here, right here at this switch here, what we call West 2, down to where the Home Furnace used to be down there. Of course, I don't know just how many rails had been there, but they had begun taking up a lot of the rails when we moved here. When we moved in here, I can remember my mother bringing me up this way here. The round house used to stand, oh, I'd say on 12th Street between, let's see, what is that...I guess 11th Street there, from the old De Grondwet building there—that was there at the time—down to the railroad track and then up to Land Street there. There were no streets on the other side of Land Street, then, at all.

DVR: You said that the railroad and the townspeople didn't get along. Can you give us any examples of it?

RH: Yes, they objected so strenuously that the railroad company decided to build a yard over across the river, and they called it Waverly. And they did, they made a yard in there, and it's still there. It is a junction point for Grand Haven, Muskegon, and Allegan. We used to have local _____ that worked on them each way. Along toward Muskegon there were no local freight trains. And there were Ottawa Beach trains then that rode down to Ottawa Beach. The passenger trains were run mostly in the summertime when the resorters came down, and the hotel was built there at the time. I think that Havelin (?) was one of the first ones to operate that old Ottawa Beach Hotel. There was not much on the other side at that time until later, the Macatawa Hotel was built across the harbor there. Mrs. Riley ran that for a year. She also had a place in Grand Rapids, and what's-his-name did, too. It never amounted to very much until they got the Interurban in there,

the electric line. So, I don't know. I was about fourteen, fourteen and a half, when they put the Interurban lines through. That was about 1900 or somewhere in there.

DVR: Let's go back a little bit earlier. What was the city of Holland like when you were a boy? What kind of sidewalks did they have on 8th Street, for example?

RH: There were no cement sidewalks anywhere that I can recall, because I don't think they knew how to use cement at that time. But there was plank walk and most of them on 8th Street down here, well, clear to Central Avenue, I'd say, on the side toward the building there. You can look down along the edge of that sidewalk there, and they're probably four, sometimes five feet down from the sidewalk down there to the ground. Then under the old buildings there, a lot of old buildings there. Of course, the brick buildings there were solid downtown. But it was all board sidewalk.

DVR: When they put the Interurban through, was 8th Street brick then? Was it red brick or _____ bricks?

RH: Red brick. It was a brick, a red brick, yes.

DVR: When was that put in, do you remember? Was that here already?

RH: It wasn't here. Let's see...the first thing they had, that I recall...it was not very long before they started the Interurban that they put in brick pavement. That lasted quite a while, and then when the Interurban came in, of course, I remember them tearing it out and putting ties in and one thing or another. But it never was put in right; I don't think ours were. Anyway, finally, they got to putting in, I think it was blacktop. There might have been some cement in there.

DVR: When you were a young boy, did you ever sell newspapers or something like that?

RH: Yes, I was the first newsboy to handle the Sunday paper. I'll never forget it. I never knew anything about selling papers or anything, but my folks had moved over to Waverly. The company was going back to town over there, which never came. But anyway, we lived over there. So, the Detroit Free Press started to put out a colored section on the Sunday paper, and I'm pretty sure they took over a lot of stuff of the old _____ magazine. That is, funny stuff, you know, jokes and all that kind of stuff. And they had plain black and white drawings, which they used. When they came out with the colored pictures, all the conversation all printed out there, I remember Mutt and Jeff was one of them, and the Katzenjammer Kids, and what was that, Tunerville Trolley, I think that was in there, too, about that time there. But anyway...and then Maggie and Jiggs—I'm pretty sure they were all in that paper. So, this fellow wanted me to take it. I said, "Yes, I'll try it." So I took it. Well, I picked up the papers. They used to be in packaging and they'd come in the morning at about 4:30. I didn't handle the papers; some throw the papers out there, so I grabbed my bundle of papers and I sold 4 or 5 papers right there around the depot and started up the street. I got up there a ways and looked across the street and there would come old man Dogger, who used to buy and remodeled and rags and one thing or another up here. He had about seven or eight kids there, and they were coming home from church. They all had their heads hanging down as though _____ or something, but they were all polished up and had their Sunday clothes on, and just went moseying along the street. The oldest one was following the mother, and the rest of them were down trailing along behind her. I hollered, "Sunday papers!" and everything stopped. They stopped and swung around like they were in the Army or something. Their mouths opened up and every one of them said, "Ooh," and I

felt just about an inch high; that's about what I felt like. But I went out _____ and I sold papers until I'd give it up and Fritz took it over. Yeah, that was my Sunday paper.

DVR: How far did you go through school?

RH: I went through high school.

DVR: Do you remember anything about your school days? Any good teachers or any exciting events? Any parades at that time?

RH: Well, yes, I enjoyed my high school. I was out there with athletics. I think it was in 1903, Bill Robinson started...let's see, what's the name of that outfit there that has that lumber company down on the west end here?

DVR: That's Standard Lumber.

RH: Yes. Who was the...that Dutch name I can't think of right now, but one of them in those days, he would go in high school. He was in the class ahead of me. So they were going to have an oratorical and they never had one; they never had an oratorical contest. Bill Robinson, he was some relation to old man Whalen, who used to be on the newspaper or something. He'd go at a politician, too. Bill had done very well there, in school. He made this _____ here because of... _____ got to be a preacher and he married Berta _____; I remember that. But anyway, her went over to Africa, a missionary. Anyway, the next year, I went in _____. I went, and I had a girl named Zara _____, she was in my class; Ray Hadden, and _____ McLane. I think _____ McLane lived down here at the castle, down here at Castle Park. But anyway, his father, was superintendent of school. And afterwards, when they started that sugar company, why, he went over there as a superintendent over there, and gave up the job. But anyway, I had the professor they called Clark, a man named Clark. I wrote my oration, and I passed

it very easily. I had them all beat for thought and style, one thing or another. I put on my oration and that was pie for me. So, I won it here; I won the thing there. And I went over to Allegan for the district, and I won over there. This was 1904, I think. So, I went to the state then, and I lost out there. That's one of the things that I never forgot. I should have won, but some way or another, some _____ beat me out of it.

DVR: What did you do for recreation? Was there swimming or was there fishing or sports? Did you do any of that?

RH: Well, I was into everything, I guess. I swam. We used to get a big kick out of going down to King's Basket Factory down there and getting up on the roof of their drying shed there, it's up about 20 feet there. We'd dive off into the water there and swim across the lake. They didn't have any contests or anything like that like they do now. Oh, I played football. I was captain for three years. I used to have a picture of the team here. I don't believe there's any of the boys left. No, I think all of them have passed on.

DVR: Do you remember the parade of 1897?

RH: Yes.

DVR: Were you here then or were you out of town?

RH: I lived over at Waverly at the time. They had a big archway built over 8th Street down there. They had pavement in there then. I was interested in trying to recall there. They had this big archway there. They sold a lot of souvenirs and all that kind of stuff. There's one of the souvenirs.

DVR: Mr. Heath has just given me a cane. It's about three feet long. It's got a spiral grooving all the way down. It has a brass base, a round head, and on it is the label, a brass plate, "Holland Semi-Centennial 1847-1897." A very, very nice walking cane, very thin,

maybe about an inch thick at the top and down to about a half inch on the bottom. Now who made these, Mr. Heath? Do you remember?

RH: Mr. Vanden Heuvel made those canes, and his daughter sold them down there. They stood around there at that arch and sold those canes and several other little trinkets. They had quite a parade. They had most of the dignitaries there, especially Gerrit John Diekema, and some of the other politicians were here. I can recall they had quite a parade here. I don't really think that they went to the Dutch part of it as much as they do with Tulip Time or something like that, because they were celebrating the thing here. The churches had quite a bit to do with it. It was quite a thing here. But there have been so many parades. Back in those times, every time that there was another politician come along, why, they had a parade, a torchlight parade. They'd get the party out and they'd all have a torch and _____ and come down at night on the streets and march down there. Of course, they had the old band. I don't remember all the names, but I do remember that Elmer Eisman was the drummer. One of the Van Raaltes there, I think, handled some of the music there. I don't remember what it was. But, anyway, the Van Raaltes were pretty well shown there in that parade. But later on, I was going to say now, you talk about parades, they used to have some parades now. I'm telling you, they'd have those fellows, each one of them would have a torch there, some kind of a thing about three feet long, and then have it over their head there and be going, go walking down the street there. And the silver tongued orator would get up and talk—that was Mr. Diekema, known as the silver tongued orator. Well, we had quite a time then. Us kids would run along the side of the street there and watch; of course, we'd chase alongside them. I'll never forget the time that they brought William Jennings Bryan in here on the

back end of a train that used to be down there. He gave a long talk. He was an orator, too, William Jennings Bryan. And when he was running, I remember their motto was “Sixteen to one,” I guess pre-silver stuff. My dad said, “16 to 1...That’s the same as nothing to ate,” spelled a-t-e. (laughs)

DVR: Now, when you got out of high school, what job did you get? What did you start doing? Or were you working before then also?

RH: When I got out of high school, I started on the railroad.

DVR: What was the name of the railroad?

RH: The old CWM, Chicago-West Michigan. And I worked on it...at first, I was in the office, yard clerk. Afterwards, I got on the road.

DVR: You worked on the railroad all your life?

RH: No, not all of life. I put in three years here, on the old CWM. And I was going to mention, while I was on it here, the old CWM was taken over by the Pere Marquette. And later on, it was the CH&D and the PM; that was the Chesapeake and Ohio, and the Pere Marquette. But at CH&D and PM, the boy said it stood for “cheap help and damn poor management.” (laughs) And it was, I guess. But anyway, when I left here, after three years here, I spent three years in Colorado on the Santa _____.

DVR: Which town in Colorado?

RH: Lajunta, spelled L-a-j-u-n-t-a. Then I came back here. I had married in the meantime. I came back here and married my wife, went to school with her. So, I came back here when the boy was born, the oldest boy, and I went to work.

DVR: What was your wife’s maiden name?

RH: Hall, Avis Hall.

DVR: Where was she from?

RH: She was born and raised right here. The Halls originally settled over there in Blendon Township; that's where the Halls first squatted down in the pine there. They were some of the pioneers.

DVR: What year were you married?

RH: 19...I was going to say 1919, for some reason. I haven't figured that out yet. (tape turned off and then on again) I was married in 1908 to Avis Hall.

DVR: Where were you married? Here in Holland?

RH: I was married here in Holland in the Methodist church here.

DVR: Where was the Methodist church?

RH: On 10th Street. I think the man's name...I think the preacher's name was Jennings, if I remember right.

DVR: Did you go on a honeymoon? Did you go anywhere for a wedding trip?

RH: No, not that I recall anyway.

DVR: Where did you live when you were married? Where did you establish your home?

RH: Well, I didn't have a home for a long time, but I lived with the in-laws there for some time because I went to work with them. And I went to work with them because of a peculiar incident. All of a sudden, he was given a business there. He used to work for Standards and Kanters, and then later, he worked for Standard after Kanters got out. But he was not capable of taking care of his business as far as the books were concerned, so he asked me if I would go in on it. I was out of a job at the time, so I did. I went in with him. Being a railroad man, I didn't think that I could use a shovel or a pick or anything

like that. That was beyond my capability entirely, but I learned that I can do most anything before I got through.

[End of side one]

DVR: Remember some of the things that were in and around Holland in 1891 when you came here. You were a young boy then and growing up. What do you remember about people or places?

RH: Yes, I was about 6 years old when we came here. My folks had come here from Ionia. Father went to work for the old Chicago, West Michigan Railroad. I can recall getting off from the train, and stopping at the depot there, which is located just about where the depot is now. They put a gangplank on the old platform coach and onto the platform that was built up there on the same height, and we walked out on this platform here and went down a sliding part of it, down at the end there, to get down on the ground. Now, the big depot itself was an old ramshackle building that was painted red and the paint was about worn off, but it did show that it was painted red once. It was a two-story building made of lumber. The top story had the general offices of the old Chicago, West Michigan Railroad. As we came down the incline off of the platform, we got into the road down below there, which was a dirt road, and there were no sidewalks. We walked down through the dust there and over to the St. Charles Hotel. There was another hotel up by where the Warm Friend Tavern is now, which belonged to Boone, big livery stable man. But we lived in the St. Charles Hotel. It was on the south side of 8th Street, and as we got to the other side of the road, we walked across on large cobblestone—large, flat stones—set in the road there. They were not close together. You'd step from one stone to another; I guess you'd call them stepping stones. They stuck up probably 5, 6, or 8

inches above the level of the road. This was for people that had to get across, especially in rainy weather, wet weather.

We went to the hotel. It had a big veranda on the front of it, and I used to sit out there and watch people as they went by. The sidewalk was made of plank, two-inch plank. The boards were beginning to get kind of worn and loose, with nails sticking up. They had nails sticking up here and there; one had to be very careful to keep from snagging their toe on some of it. I have to recall that I did when I was running and I caught my foot on one of them. I punctured my knee and still carry the marks of it, from having that big spike run into my knee there.

There was one little cottage and one little house, set alongside of the old St. Charles Hotel, not very far from it. It was the Dinkeloo place, it was called. Old man Dinkeloo was a painter. He had a nice little place there, and he kept it up nice. He had a nice yard there with some shrubs. On the other side of where we lived on 8th Street was a house there that belonged to Dave Snyder, an engineer. And farther up, oh, about halfway as it were, where Columbia Avenue is now, one of the Kanters, Rokus Kanters lived up there. And across the street from him was a boarding house run by a couple old maids; I can't remember their names. And Steve Moore lived up there, an engineer, across the road from them. And to come back, right across from the hotel was a little brick building there that still stands up there. It belonged to Pete Smith. Pete Smith and his father were the ones that put the foundation under the church over there, the 9th Street Church. That was the building that didn't burn during the '71 [1871] fire.

DVR: When did they put the foundation under it?

RH: When they built it.

DVR: Oh, okay.

RH: They did all the mason work and built the chimney, whatever they had to have, brick work, they did all that. Old man Smith and Pete Smith...I didn't know the old man; I never saw him as much. But I did see Pete because he, afterwards, became a mason for the railroad company, and he used to do all the brick work along the line, a maintenance man along the line. Now, next to Pete on the west side was a home up on a knoll there that belonged to Adam McNabb. McNabb was a bridge and builder superintendent on the line of C&WM. And beyond, he had built a small house for his daughter. Then there was the Huizenga building, a druggist uptown there. Then there was another building there, I remember very well. Right across from there, was a little old fellow who had a little shop on the south side of 8th Street. About the middle of the block, there was a little shop there, probably a 20 by 20 or something like that. And on the outside, probably a couple of acres, there was a red _____ out there. And in that little shop was this cobbler. His name was Hufflewridder, H-u-f-f-l-e-w-r-i-d-d-e-r, Hufflewridder. He had a real small, plaintive voice, and he was sort of crippled in a way. Father would send me out with a pair of shoes to have them half-soled, and it would be promised to be ready in a couple of days. When I'd go in there, nine times out of ten, the old man would say, [using a high, squeaky voice] "I didn't get them shoes done; I got such a headache." He sounded just about like that. "Such a headache." But finally, we got these shoes, and that was repeated practically every time I had shoes half-soled.

But next to him, a little further east, was another little building, not much bigger, but a little bit. That belonged to Mr. Arendshort. I think there was living quarters back of there a little bit. But that is where they started to make the Holland Dutch Rusk. I

often am questioned when I say that he bought Castille soap by the box. And every batch of that dough he got there had a bunch of that Castille soap mixed in it. I don't think that I will deny it either, because I know. When he mixed it, he had a box there, a good-sized bin there, and he got his dough all wet one thing or another, and he'd put on a pair of rubber boots and get in and knead it. (laughs) That is the start of the Holland Rusk Company. Well, two of the boys, William, I think, and John. I think John is still living.

DVR: What was their name?

RH: Arendshorst.

DVR: Oh, yes..

RH: I think William's boy is the optician over here, if I remember.

DVR: The doctor, yes.

RH: The doctor over here. They claim he's the best here in the state, too. He ought to be. But John, the last time I saw John was over arguing with the city over here about some stuff on the...when I took care of the Tower Clock Building here. John had that last store on the corner there on 9th and River. He rented to Goodrich, I guess somewhere in there, right across from Sears Roebuck, this side of Sears Roebuck.

Now, as I said, in the springtime, these sidewalks were up high and dry. On the street, there were maybe a foot about street level, and on the back, there was a four or five feet drop right off there. Wherever there was an open space there, why, you could see down there and it'd be four or five feet down there to the ground level there. Now, those stones, those stepping stones I was telling you about, were quite a thing. They were laid so that people could drive away and through there if you were careful. But woe unto the man that didn't stay in the groove there because he would be turned up one way and

back the other, until it pretty near took his teeth out. But, I learned, when I was a kid, after I had grown up a little bit there, I used to drive a horse and wagon down there.

I remember we'd go down to Beach's Mill. Beach's Mill was over on the east side of the _____. They made flour down there and they made feed for stock, and we always bought a good deal of bran and stuff like that for the cows and the hogs and the rest of the stuff there. We always had a couple of hogs, and we always had plenty of chickens, and mother raised turkeys. Well, we stopped in there and we'd go on down. I've seen a time when the wheels sunk right into the mud, when we were up to the hub. And the little horse would pull the wagon on through down there. I can't tell you, but shortly before the interurban came in, they put a brick pavement in, and that was wonderful. I think they put the brick pavement in there about the time that we began to get automobiles, horseless carriages. We used to say, and I heard men say it, "Well, that thing's all right on the pavement, but it'd never be any good out in the country." I don't think they knew what they were talking about, but I believed them. So that was the start for pavement in the town. The interurban pretty near ruined that pavement, and it was that way until they started the blacktop under to put something in there.

DVR: When did you get your first car, automobile?

RH: I can't tell you the year, but the first car I got was one of those jalopies with the side curtains. It was a year or two before they began to get those "showcases," they called them—sedans, with all the glass enclosure. (laughs) They called them "showcases." I can't tell you about the time or the year; I can't tell you exactly. Anybody gets to be 89, you kind of lose track of time a little bit.

DVR: Were the buildings in Holland a couple stories high at that time? Were they brick for the most part?

RH: Yes, they were brick. Several of them, most of them were brick. You see, they had very good access to brick because the brick company [Zeeland Brick Company, owned Veneklasen] by there in Zeeland and over here in Hamilton made all kinds of brick. You see a lot of those brick houses built around the country out here in the rural districts today that were made in that brick yard there in Zeeland. I am trying to think of that family's name there, but they made a fortune over there on the brick. Then there was a time when, before cement became useable the way it is today, they quarried stone in a quarry [Waverly] over here on Waverly Road, or 120th Avenue it's called now, just across the river, on the lower side of the river. I think the old quarry belongs to Mrs. Van Duren. They quarried that quarry. I've been down in there, and it's all of 100 feet deep. These stones were brought out, sandstone, a sample of which you can find if you look at the Tower Clock building, the first two stories there. They used to saw out windowsills and doorsills and caps and one thing or another, or they were building this _____ brick building. Then there was the De Vrieses who started another stone quarry over here, right at the end of the Waverly yard. It wasn't this big and probably oh, I'd say about 100 feet square. But they went down there about 50 or 60 feet. That was the case of both of these here places, had to keep a pump or two running all the time in order to keep the water running because water came through those different veins in that rock. But the sandstone is not very substantial. With time, it decays with the wind and the storms and the sun. There was a time when the foundation of that Tower Clock building began to get pretty soft. Frank Dyke and his crew went in there and held up that stone building with

hundreds of jacks underneath there. They supported at least part of that building at a time while they poured cement in there and made a cement foundation. And now, the whole foundation of that old bank building is a great big solid cement wall. Now, there were two industries that...anyway, that was the big quarry, owned by Mrs. VanDuren, Chuck VanDuren's widow.

DVR: You said that the buildings were two stories, for the most part. What kind of plumbing did they have in those buildings? Was there water to the second floor? Were there toilets?

RH: Most of those buildings had some kind of plumbing in there. It wasn't as fancy as it is today. There was a time when I first got into the plumbing business, there were very few houses around the country here that were supplied with an indoor bathroom, a place in the inside of the house. At first, people were wondering about having such a thing inside of the house, but it finally grew on them, so Trane began to put out a lot of fixtures. Who's the other that followed Trane? Kohler was another one that followed up. So, as the plumbing business grew, I learned to do plumbing. I got examinations done. We knew how to wipe a joint—that was a great stunt according to most of the plumbers, to wipe a joint. We have found out since then that it is poor practice to use a lead pipe. Then the rats get in there or mice get in there and chew the lead, and they go _____. So, we started to use galvanized iron. And now, as the galvanized iron and the cast iron were coated with tar, now we're using copper, copper tubing. And we're using a mixture of, what do they call it, they've got a name for it, it's made out of some ground-up composition of stuff there, and they make pipe out of that now. Now you've got a plastic

pipe. Plastic pipe is used in the ground mostly for sprinkling and stuff underground. It doesn't rot and it doesn't rust, and it's pretty hard to freeze it because it gives a little.

DVR: What about lighting? What kind of lighting did you have in 1891 when you came to Holland? And what do you know about the changes in lighting, the improvements?

RH: Well, in 1891, a lot of people still had candles. Some of them were still used with a saucer and _____ and a wick sticking out there. I'm trying to think what they called them. But the next thing they had was kerosene oil. I can remember there was kerosene oil. Then we got a sort of a business where we put it under pressure and they used a little thing like a sack here, and that got vapor off of that kerosene oil and it lit up and made a nice bright light.

DVR: Oh, that's a mantle.

RH: Mantle, that's what I'm trying to think of. Now, the next thing they put in to make gas here.

DVR: Where?

RH: Right here in Holland.

DVR: Where? How?

RH: Right here between 13th and 12th Street, on the east side of the track. There's a little park behind it there now. I guess they got some parking in there now. Anyway, they used to take coal, put it in the oven, convert it into gas, and cook. There were two big tanks set right here on 13th Street, between 13th and 12th, on the east side of the track. They kept pumping this gas in there, and they were arranged so that they would keep the pressure about so by raising or lowering the top part of the thing. The weight of the air was pumped in there; the gas was pumped in there to operate, so they kept a certain

pressure. Well, then we had a little gas burner for a light, two little white _____, in the shape of a “y” that had holes in and so that they brought the flame in it together and made a nice, flat flame about two inches wide. That was very bright, too. The old adage was “don’t blow out the light.” So, I can remember when on Land Street out here, Lincoln Avenue now, there were posts. Somebody kind of shaped them up and put a glass cage on top there. They started out with kerosene oil lamps. The old man that took care of them walked around every morning and he took the chimney off and wiped it clean, cleaned the chimney. And he waxed the wick very carefully, filled the reservoir, put the chimney back up. At night, you’d see him go around and he’d take a match and then a lucifer, as we called it, one of those sulfur matches that would choke you to death when you lit it. He’d stick that in there and light the light, put the chimney back on, and go on about his way. Then _____ got the gas lights and the next thing, they had a kind of an arc-like there, they called it – two arcs, two carbon that go together here and form a little arc. They used that for street lights and had a lot of trouble with them. Then, we got electricity, or electric lights, like Edison invented.

DVR: When did electricity come to Holland?

RH: Well, the first electricity that came here was brought in here by Al Huntley and Frank Holly. They were machinists and they had the machine shop over there on 7th Street. They met at _____, or at least bought one together. The first wiring they did was run a wire over to the second story of the J. C. Post building, which is now the drugstore.

DVR: The drugstore? Model Drug?

RH: Model Drug. They put a light in there, several lights. They kept on, they put in lights in several different places until the city decided that they would take it over. So they bought

them out, and they started an electric light plant. From then on, we've been having electricity, and I don't know what you call it, but it seems to me that there are a dozen different kinds of electricity or something when it comes to lights. You have the regular electric lights that Edison invented in the first place, and then we got a gas that lights up, and I don't know what it's all about. But now I'd say in the city, we've got some wonderful bright lights now. What they are, I don't know. I don't know enough about electricity. But, I've seen it come. I've seen the street light change a good many times. They seem to be better every time.

DVR: Going back to your father now...Did your father ever have any opinions that he thought about the city of Holland, or about the government of the city of Holland, or about the Hollanders here in Holland? Did he ever have any opinions or anecdotes that you remember?

RH: Well...

DVR: Or do you want to save that for another day?

RH: I wouldn't dare to give you his opinions for some things. My father worked nights, and he wasn't much of a man to talk. I don't know why. He knew he was smart enough. But, he liked the place. He worked in the yard there seventeen years, in Waverly yard, and most of his time was put in at night. Oh, he was yardmaster there several different times. This yard that's here, this railroad yard, has been kind of a thorn in the side to the railroad companies. It's a junction for Allegan, Hamilton, and that branch from over there which they've abandoned now, and for Grand Haven and for Muskegon. Then it's for the towns between here and Grand Rapids...Hudsonville, Vriesland, Zeeland, all of them there, Grandville, Jenison. Grandville and Jenison rolled out of Grand Rapids, as

far as I could see. There's something that I don't think most people know—there was a railroad on the north side of the lake, and the railroad lies right where it was, up to the Chris-Craft Boat Company. At the end of that track, there's a little stub there, and from then on, followed the highway clear into Ottawa Beach. At that time, there was no road there; there was no highway. But there was a railroad in there, and it used to go down through the brush, and I'm telling you, there was brush on both sides of the woods. There's a little pine creek down there, just a little ways farther, and around the _____, and around into the Ottawa Beach Hotel. But before we got to Ottawa Beach Hotel, they had what's called a car ferry. Now, that was quite a large building built out on piling out into the water there, the deep part there. That's about where the Coast Guard is located right now. This track ran out into this here building and would hold two or three cars. The _____ were number 3 and number 4, Pere Marquette number 4 and number 3. They would come in and lay up there to the dock, and the cars would be opened and the stuff transferred onto the boat, and then the stuff taken across to Milwaukee or to Racine or any city in there. Those boats would run back and forth. Then the goods would be put in boxcars when they got on the other side and away they drove, across the west somewhere. So, that is what they called a car ferry then. Then after you got by the boat dock there, the car ferry, there were three or four tracks, side tracks...

[End of tape one; begin tape two]

DVR: Railroad, that used to run out to Ottawa Beach...

RH: There were three or four tracks in the _____, at least 20-25 cars a piece. There was a train that ran down during the week; it ran from Grand Rapids to Ottawa Beach. I think it ran down there about every two hours. It wasn't the same train, but there was a train in

there about every two hours. I know there were two different crews that would run the train, _____, the conductor, and the... There were two conductors, I know. On Sunday, there would be about four excursion trains go down there, and they would go down there _____, those coaches. Well, those coaches are nothing the size of what we see today. They were platform coaches; they didn't know what _____. But people would be in there and be standing on the platform, just hanging on. They'd go down there to Ottawa Beach, and they had a little bathing house down there, a place where they could then get some bathing suits and changing, one thing or another. They'd go down there and lay on that beach. Go out there swimming; they'd spend a Sunday down there. Now they got it built into this here a park over here—Holland State Park, I guess they call it. I don't know. But anyway.

DVR: Was the beach privately owned at the time, or was it a state park?

RH: It belonged to the West Michigan Park Association. Then there were people who had cottages up along there, in the hills. That is the way they amused themselves down there and that's about the only thing—just lay around that sand and go in swimming. They'd have their lunches. I don't know whether the hotel then...was run by old man Pantlind. Pantlind, of course, had a hotel in Grand Rapids, and then afterwards they built the _____ Hotel, where it is there now. The old man who runs it, he was a nice little fellow. We used to see him quite often and talk with him. They had a few cottages in there, but years later, there were quite a few more. But, when I was a kid, I used to go down there. I'd ride down—I could get on any of the trains. Mother got that, what they call, Waverly House, so that she fed about 30 men every day. There were about 5 or 6 rooms upstairs they rented. The Waverly House it's called. That Ottawa Beach crew

slept there in the roundhouse—crew there, there was water maker in there and the machinist. The roundhouse foreman there, old man Kampliner; he was the foreman. There was, oh, maybe a half dozen or a dozen men working on the repair track, or rip track we called it. They had quite a place there with they had repair cars. Most of it was putting in a drawbar. The drawbar used to be set in there with a timber on each side of it and bolted down when they got knocked out every little while. But, _____ they got them know so they don't knock them out. Just break them off. The Ottawa Hotel, it had at least 300 rooms, and then across they can go overhead, over the tracks over to the annex. That housed all the help in there, which was mostly n----- . When that thing burned up, I was working. I was at work there. But they told me that it burned up long in the evening. We could see the lights from the yard over there and see down there to Ottawa Beach. Bill Murphy was caretaker over there. He was a guard and everything else, I guess. He did the renting of cottages and everything that had to be done around there. He was a very, very good friend of mine, and I used to be over there sometimes to help him if he needed help. But, he just babied that hotel. He called me...in wintertime we'd calcimine those rooms that were, well, 300 of them, and _____ and get up there _____. I had some muscle, then. (laughs) Makes me mad when I think about it. Get used to getting all of her rope and then going up like this.

DVR: Let's move forward a little bit. When did you start working for your father-in-law, for Mr. Hall? You said you started working for him. He was in the plumbing business and you went into the office. When was that? Around 1911?

RH: About 1909. Yes, 1909.

DVR: You stayed with him for 15 years?

RH: Yes.

DVR: What things were you involved in? Now, you've been telling me about Ottawa Beach.

Were you involved in Macatawa at all in this period?

RH: Oh, Macatawa started. You might say it started. I think there was some of the...the hotel had been there before, but I don't know they _____. About the time that they put the interurban in. When they put the interurban in Macatawa...of course, the interurban went down to the boat dock, and it supplied and took passengers to the boat docks and cargo to Chicago and back to Grand Rapids, or wherever they wanted to go from there. The interurban runs from Grand Rapids to Battle Creek and from other there over to Detroit, and from Grand Rapids down here to Holland and down to Macatawa and over to Saugatuck. That was the interurban. They had a freight and they had passengers. Remember the old *Puritan* and the *City of Holland* and, what was the other one? There were three of them, but anyway, when they were running they handled freight, but they always had a bunch of passengers. The interurban back in there and let them off right there. Then they'd go on down to Jenison Park. They had a pier out there, and they would land at Jenison Park. I had a ferry. I run that ferry there for the afternoon. I was captain of that ferry, hauling people from the boat dock over to the Ottawa Beach Hotel. Now, these people got off there at Jenison Park, and they either went to Macatawa or they went and stayed there in Jenison Park or they went across to Ottawa Beach. So, when the boat would land over there at Jenison, they'd load up over there. Well, afterwards, they ran a pier out from Macatawa right straight out to right alongside the channel. They used to run right there and they'd load in freight over there. They'd run those street cars right out on that thing...the interurban...would run them out there, unload freight, they'd run

out there and unload passengers right there, _____ over there at Macatawa. Then, they'd be on their way to Chicago. Well, the interurban kind of... well, it didn't bother Ottawa Beach too much. But, finally, the hotel burned down. Old Bell...this was after the season was over...and Bell and a couple of his friends there wanted to go hunting over there in Houghton Lake. Duck hunting. So they went out. _____ . While he was there, that thing caught on fire. Nobody knows how it caught fire, and the whole cussed thing burned down. If Bill had been there, it never would've burned down. But, he was gone. It broke his heart. That was his baby, you know?

DVR: What did you do during World War I, in the period from 1914 to 1918?

RH: World War I, I was steam cutting at the time. I was working over here for the north side tannery. I met John Good there. I was working under...Art White was...he wasn't superintendent, but he had charge of the maintenance there. So, it was quite a bit a job in there. And then afterwards, I took a contract over there for the Buss Machine Works. They put in a new office building and remodeled the building and put a heating plant in over there. So, I put a heating plant in over there for them during about the end of the war there. I didn't get into the Army at all. I had _____. Of course, the tannery was getting out leather, you know, for the government. The Buss Machine Company was making some outfit, there, looked like part of a gun, something smoothed out inside. So, I was working for the Army there. You know, we don't get any credit now. Railroad men don't get any credits for helping the Army any, you know, moving the stuff when _____. And there is pretty near as many of them gotten killed doing their work

as there was soldiers killed. If you want to look it up, I think you'll find it just about evens up. We didn't get any bonus. We didn't get any praise. We didn't get anything.

DVR: How many children did you have?

RH: Children? Five. Three girls and two boys.

DVR: Are they alive yet?

RH: _____ was killed when he was about 16-years-old. A train hit him over there in Chicago, Indiana Harbor. One of the girls lives next door to me here. She's had six girls. They're all grown now. The other one is a widow now. Her husband died two or three years ago. She had two girls and a boy. My oldest boy is retired from the railroad last summer or last fall. Then the other boy is over here in Hastings, the superintendent of the Viking Sprinkling Company. It's the oldest sprinkling company in the country. It's owned by the family, and they wanted a superintendent. They heard about him, so he went over, and came home and got it. So, he's been with them now about three or four years.

DVR: Well, I guess we've about run out of ideas for the present time.

RH: There's a lot of things that you can't think of here. When you sit here, you try to think what it is, but if I get something written down to get started, I run off.

DVR: I think if you get a lot of other ideas, I'd be glad to come over and make another tape on what you are saying.

RH: I'm going to see if I can write this up. You might think of something today, and go ahead and write something. What I do is I make about three spaces, see. I don't have _____. Then, if other ideas come up, you can always fill in between there.

DVR: Okay, thank you, Mr. Heath.

RH: Oh, that's ok. I'm glad you came over. Kind of interesting, isn't it?

[End of interview]