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Steketee, Clifford Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with Clifford Steketee

Conducted June 3, 1997
by Ann Paeth

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
AP: If you could just state your name for the tape and when and where you were born.

CS: My name is Clifford Steketee, born January 18, 1914, in Holland.

AP: So you’ve been in Holland all of your life? You haven’t lived anywhere else?

CS: That’s right.

AP: Could you describe your family a bit, where they came from, how long they’ve been here...?

CS: My folks, my mother and father, were born here in America. I don’t know if she [my mother] was born in the Netherlands or here. My dad was [born here].

AP: But they weren’t that far removed from the Netherlands?

AS: Oh, the Steketee’s have been here for a hundred and fifty years. We’re going to have a celebration.

AP: What did your father do?

CS: My father worked at the Shoe Factory, Holland Racine Shoe Factory. Just about all the brothers, just about all the Steketee’s, worked at the Shoe Factory. We lived on 17th Street, and the Shoe Factory was right over on 16th Street. Most all of those, they all worked in the Holland Shoe Factory.

AP: Which is not in existence anymore.

CS: No. Holland Shoes, at that time, that was a real good shoe. That was right in the class of Florshiem’s. A lot of people around, in fact, all those brothers, I think they
all worked there at the Shoe Factory.

AS: Your mother, did she come over with your grandma?

CS: I think so, yeah.

AS: Did you tell her how your grandmother came here? This is interesting, I think.

CS: My uncle played the lottery and won money in the Netherlands to pay for the trip to come over to America.

AS: I think your mom's name was DeBoer, because then your grandma married a Jager.

CS: My mother married him over here, when they got here.

AS: Your mother landed in Drenthe, somehow or other. This man lived in East Saugatuk. Then they combined families.

AP: Why don’t you tell me about the Steketee family, how long the family has been here? The name is around quite a bit.

CS: They've been here for years. I don’t know when the first bunch came here. 1848?

AS: 1847 Jan came to Zeeland, Michigan. He was instrumental in bringing a group of people over here. He was one of the leaders. He was with Rev. VanDer Meulen... then came to the New Country. Your great, great grandfather had a house on 8th Street, near Columbia Avenue. That’s where they lived for a short time.

CS: She knows more about it than I do.

AS: He was just here for a few weeks, and then he died. Then your great grandmother remarried. That’s what happened in those days.

AP: I’m not really originally from this side of the state. Is your family responsible for starting the Steketee store?
CS: No. That's a different Steketee.

AS: They're all connected somehow. We have all that information.

AP: Talk about school, where you went to school, what schools you went to.

CS: I went to Van Raalte grade school, and junior high on River Avenue, that was the junior high building, and high school. Then I went to Holland Business College for a year, after that. I ran a service station on College and 9th. I ran that for about seven to eight years. And I had a dance band. Played all around western Michigan for dances.

AP: When did you have that band?

CS: Right from high school on. My dad played the drums, and he played in the Holland Theater. When they had a movie going, in the first show, they had music playing through the intermission. Then after the second show, about in the middle, the people in the orchestra quit. Then when they had Vaudeville in Holland Theater on weekends all the time, Fridays and Saturdays, they had Vaudeville acts. Good ones. Keith circuit, they called it. They travelled, the Vaudeville acts did, went to different theaters in Grand Rapids and Holland, and to different places. They had good acts. I know, I'd go to the show, because my dad played there, I'd go on Saturday afternoon. They had Siamese twins and elephant acts. They had good acts that came through on the Keith circuit.

AS: Cliff, didn't your dad have instruments for the sound. I thought when this was silent movies, the orchestra people had to play the sound effects.

CS: My dad had a lot of the sound effects. He had a trunk full. I played drums later, but
my dad had a trunk, and there were train whistles and effects for scratching and sneezing and boat whistles and everything else. When silent movies were on, the orchestra played the music for it.

AP: So then you played the drums?

CS: I played the drums afterwards, and had a dance band. I played all around Holland and Western, Michigan. Across from the park, at the Masonic Temple, they had dances there. The Rainbow girls had dances there, we played for those.

AS: Do you know what the Rainbow girls are? They were the daughters of the people that belonged to the masons. Is that it?

CS: Masons. Yeah. The Rainbow girls were the daughters of the [masons].

AS: That was kind of unusual in Holland to have dances.

AP: Yes, in another interview I was reading, she was talking about when she went to Hope College, they used to go down to the Pavilion where they would dance. But they weren’t allowed to dance, so they would try to get their chaperon on the bus early so they could go down and have a couple dances. But they weren’t allowed.

CS: In the summer we played at Castle Park. We played there. They had a little dance pavilion out on the dunes, children danced there. Then we’d play at the Yacht Club on Lake Macatauwa, they had dances there, too.

AP: What years was this, approximately?

CS: I was born in 1914, so twelve years on that is... The 1930’s. I guess in the 30s.

AP: How long did you play with that band?

CS: That orchestra? Oh, I had that for quite a few years. I played in Saugatuck, at the
Crow Bar and at the Yacht Club. Here in Holland, like I say, at the Masonic Temple
Rainbow Girl dances, and then the Literary Club, they had dances there.

AS: I thought you said, honey, seventeen years.

CS: Yes, I guess so.

AP: Did people slowly become not so interested in dances? Why did you quit?

CS: Quit playing? I don’t know when I quit.

AS: Well, Gayle was born in 1940, and you still had the band then. What time did you
start the fair, if that’s why you quit?

CS: I started the fair... I don’t know. We started the fair with Al Lowman and a bunch
of guys started the fair, but I don’t know just when that was.

AP: What was the fair?

CS: The Ottawa County Fair, out at the fair grounds on Ottawa Beach Road. I started
that with Al Lowman from Meyer’s Barbecue, and myself. Some guy who started
there cleared the ground. It was solid woods. We had guys who’d come out who
were interested in starting a fair, because they had race horses. There was just a barn
near where they kept some horses, a few people did. So we cleared the solid woods
back there behind the community hall. On Saturdays and nights, we’d go out there
and clear the trees. We had a lot of donated labor. Bill’s dozer service had trucks
and cranes all come and just clear out the grounds, which is all clear now, it’s nice
grounds. That was all underbrush, we did the streets, you know. You could hardly
see that building, the community hall, because it was all grown over for years.

AP: How long did that take you?
CS: Oh gosh, you mean to clear the grounds and everything? A few months. We had a lot of help, donated help. People donated, like Bill’s dozer service came there, and guys with the cranes and stuff. They were all sort of interested in it. We’d get them to volunteer their services.

AS: You were manager of the fair for 23 years?

CS: I guess so, yes. We had a lot of big acts. We’d go to the fair convention in Detroit where all the different acts and agencies were, and you could hire the different acts that you wanted.

AP: Did you do that? You were responsible for doing that?

CS: Yes. We had good acts.

AP: What were some of your favorites?

CS: I think Bill Anderson, had him a couple of years. And Barbara Mandrell. I can’t think of some of the other ones. But if you hired pretty good acts, pretty good entertainment, you could afford to charge a little bit more at the grand stand, and you drew bigger [crowds], too, if you had good acts. The big thing, when you advertise the fair, was the entertainment you had. Then we had fire works. At the end of the fair we had a fire works display just as big as the city has now. I’d get that through American Fire Works. We had a finale at the fair. People would come from all over there, drive near there, and park over on the airport property so they could see the fire works display. I can’t think of some of the acts we had, but we had good acts. If you want good acts, you paid good money for them. It paid because then you got the people to come.
AP: Oh, now what’s this? A commemorative plaque. So 1958-1981, it says, you were Ottawa County Fair Manager.

[Alma Steketee brought out a plaque commemorating Cliff’s years at the Fair, from 1958-1981. His name was engraved, with the years, at the bottom, and the fair and the circular building he describes were also depicted on the plaque.]

What is this depicted here?

AS: He was instrumental in suggesting this flame. It’s a round building, and then the flame would show from Ottawa Beach Road, is that right?

CS: Yes. The Deleuw Lumber Company built it. The fair theme was "Follow the Flame." My idea was to build it round, so that all the exhibitors had the same exposure, because if you had it in a long building, everybody wants to be by the doorway. This way, in the round... They had the gas flame going to the torch up above. You could light it inside with an electronic lighter. That was the fair theme, "Follow the Flame." The torch would burn at night on the top of the spiral of the building. You know where the building is, you’ve seen that over by the fairgrounds.

AP: Have there been any other organizations or clubs that you’ve been involved in? That [managing and starting the fair] looks pretty time consuming, though.

CS: I was a salesman. I ran a service station on College and 9th. From there I went to Reliable Motor Supply selling whole sale automobile parts all over western Michigan, Holland mostly, but Saugatuck, Allegan, Fennville, and outlying areas, too.

AP: We’re doing this project to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Holland, which is interesting that you said it’s the 150th Anniversary of your family being over here,
too. That’s kind of neat. We’re spending a portion of time concentrating on the major changes of Holland. What are some of the big changes you think have occurred in the past 50 years?

CS: Big changes? Well, the Interurban. You know there was an Interurban line, they had street cars, but big ones. They ran from Saugatuck and down to Macatauwa Park. They’d meet the boats there. They ran into Holland and into Grand Rapids. The railroad track ran right down 13th Street, come from Macatauwa Park and up River Avenue, right down 8th Street and out through Zeeland and over to Grand Rapids. That was a big means of transportation if people didn’t have cars, they took the Interurban.

They [my grandparents] lived a little ways a way, a mile or so [in East Saugatuck]. We’d take the Interurban. My grandfather would be there waiting for us at a stop where the Interurban would stop, and pick us up. You don’t remember the big pavilion, do you? Don’t you?

When they came from Saugatuck, there’s a stop in between where they would stop if there was somebody there. But at night, if we were there and going to go home, my grandfather would light some matches and hold the match up so they’d see it. They’d put on their brakes and the brakes would squeal. We’d run maybe a block or so down the line to catch it by the time they could stop. That Interurban line ran from Saugatuck and went all the way to Grand Rapids. They had big coaches. That was electric, they got their power from above with a cable.

AP: How much did it cost?
CS: How much did it cost? Oh (laughs), I don't know. Not much, I don't think. Of course money, in a different day and age... It sure didn't cost much.

AS: Did you tell her you lived on West 17th Street, and then there was a vacant lot there, and your grandfather would come in with some fruit, and he'd tie up the horses in that lot, while he was visiting.

CS: My grandfather was coming in with peaches to sell during the season, to peddle them in Holland. He'd come in because we had an empty lot next to our house on 17th. He tied the horses there. But people knew he was going to come in with peaches to sell, and he'd peddle the peaches, or the neighbors would come over and they'd buy them. Of course, now they run through, between 16th and 17th Street, and there's still some alleys around town, but they used to come through there with what they'd call a peddle wagon. A friend of mine worked for this man on that. They'd come through the alley and ring the bell. People would come and buy all kinds of vegetables and fruit from this peddle wagon.

People didn't have refrigerators, they had an ice box. The ice man would come down the streets. We didn't have refrigerators, it was ice boxes.

AP: What else has changed? What do you think of the size of Holland now?

CS: We lived on West 17th. About 21st, south, that was about the end of where the houses were built. There were just factories. Like Dunn Manufacturing on the west end. I don't know how far out it went, but with homes, 18th, 19th Street down on the west end, is about as far as it was.

AS: To think your mother was brought up out in East Saugatuck, she moved to the big
city of Holland, and she learned to drive, and she had sisters in Grand Rapids, and she drove to Grand Rapids. As an example, people my age don’t even care about driving to Grand Rapids, even twenty years ago, a lot of women didn’t want to drive, but his mother, I thought, was really ahead of her time.

CS: Model T Fords then.

AS: She wasn’t driving a Model T then. Because, you had this gas station, and then while she stopped for a red light, a person jumped in her car. She was a little frightened, so she drove around and said she needed gas, she went to the gas station, and said, "I don’t want him in the car." So, Cliff went out and told the kid to get out. He says, "Well, I wanted to go to Grand Rapids, too."

CS: I said, "She didn’t ask you in." He was college age, and he was just going to get in. So she turned around and said, "I’ve got to get gas." I said, "She doesn’t want you in."

AP: So, you don’t like the size now? Is it too big?

CS: Holland? No. Holland’s still a nice town when you get around to other towns and see what they are. There’s a lot of changes, but we’re still one of the nicer towns around, I think.

AP: What about the change in industry and businesses? How has that changed?

CS: Take Haworth… coming into to town to see what size Haworth is, and what that turned out to be for him just starting out, turned out to be Haworth. Why, man alive, it used to be at the corner of 24th and Columbia there, Baker, that was Bush Lane Piano Factory. The Holland Furnace Company, the office is still there, the nice
building, that was the office. When they built that, Holland Furnace was a big employer. They made furnaces, they sold them all over the world. They’d have the convention coming to Holland from the different salesmen from the different zones. They built the hotel in town, the Warm Friend Hotel. You know why that’s called Warm Friend? Because "Holland Furnaces make warm friends," they called that the Warm Friend Hotel. The different zones of salesmen would come into town, they’d have their meetings. Then at the last night of the meeting, then they’d have their party for that group, the western group, central, southern division. I had the orchestra then. I usually played for any doings that Ted Cheff had. They’d have dances out at Hazelbank, where they lived .... The Cheff compound out there. So when they had these big meetings in town, with the groups, the last night, they’d have a party after the series business was done. We’d play for that. That was held in the hotel. They built the hotel, the Furnace Company did. That’s why it’s called Warm Friend.

AP: Did you ever have to serve in war?

CS: No. Came close. When they were ready to hit my number, because I think we only had one daughter, so it was close to where I would probably then have to go, and then the war ended, so, I didn’t make it. Which was alright to me.

AP: What was it like here during the war? How did that effect daily life?

CS: Well, I don’t really know how that changed. Oh yeah, you had stamps to get gas. I always could get plenty of stamps, because I was, at that time, selling automobile parts, and that was an important part of the economy, people getting around, so you
could get enough stamps, but everybody had to have gas stamps.

AS: During the depression people used scrip, you said you still had some scrip. Why would you get that? I know teachers and so on were paid with scrip.

CS: Well, they'd come in, they'd buy gas with scrip.

AP: What was that exactly?

AS: It was just in Holland, I think, that that was done. Because they didn't have the cash, they would give them a paper. But they'd get paid in scrip. I think it was just the Holland area. I know that he had some, unless he gave it to... But you never heard of it before? I hadn't heard of it, but I lived way out of town, about three miles (laughs), Country Club Road, it was a farm. Anyway, he talked about that. I think even people would use that for groceries, when they'd go to the grocery store. They'd be redeemed later, I guess when the economy was better in Holland.

AP: So it's kind of like a promissory note or an I.O.U?

[Clifford Steketee and his wife go to try to find the scrip notes. Cliff returns with a stack of thin wooden "money." We later reasoned out that it was a souvenir from the Centennial Celebration of Holland. He donated two pieces of it to the Archives Collection.]

AP: So is that the scrip? Gulden? They have the windmill and the tulips on here. Wooden Gulden.

CS: Says value of ten cents. A five cents and ten cents one, have you? Well you've got something. That's yours.

AP: 1847-1947. Oh, this was issued for the Centennial. What was this used for?
AS: Maybe you had to buy them. This wasn’t scrip then. But I thought you had scrip, because I thought you gave some to Randy. I bet this was done to raise money [the Wooden Gulden].

AP: This was some sort of promotion. It looks like you could use it at participating Holland stores, kind of, seems how it’d be used.

CS: What’s the value, ten cents?

AS: Look at the money you wasted. It was just sitting there. (laughs)

CS: I’ll have to ask Randy tomorrow.

AP: That’s funny, look at the tulips on it.

CS: Souvenir of what, a hundred years?

AP: So those are from fifty years ago, because we’re at the 150th anniversary. Wow.

CS: I just found them down there, so... But they paid people with that [scrip].

AP: I’ll have to ask the archivist, he might know... Have there been any other big changes? There’s been a lot of different ethnicities coming into Holland. How do you think that’s affected the city?

CS: Do you mean with the Mexicans?

AP: Yes, the Hispanic and the Asian population.

CS: When I lived on 17th Street, there was one family, Trinidad was his name. He lived on 15th Street, right off Harrison. I think he worked at the Pickle Factory, or at the Sugar Beet. That was the first. That was quite something, if you knew Trinidad or talked to him or something. He was the only one at school that wasn’t [white]. He was a foreigner, you know? That was the only family. That was something. Yeah.
I know that. I guess we played with him.

The Shoe Factory, that was there, Heinz was there, and the Sugar Beet Factory. That’s right off of Kollen park, now. Kollen Park, that was built up mainly from washing sugar beets that came in, they’d wash them off as soon as they’d come into the plant. That water, they’d run it into a basin. That’s where Kollen Park is now. It was all mostly from cleaning the sugar beets...

AP: Your mother worked at the basket factory?

CS: That was on 8th Street where the Civic Center is now. Kollen Park, like I say, that was built up from where the Sugar Beet Factory was, the water from there. I don’t know where the basket factory was.

AP: How has the role of women changed?

CS: Well, they worked years ago. My mother worked at the Shoe Factory, because my dad did. In fact, all the Steketee’s did. She worked there because they had machines there that they did stitching. I know that when they were busy, they wanted her to work, and she didn’t want to go to the factory and work all the time. They brought a machine over to our house and my mother would sew the parts that had to be sewed. Guys would bring the shoes over to the house and she’d sew them there.

AP: So she’d work out of the home. That must have been lucky that she could do that and stay at home. Something we haven’t talked much about is the church and the role of the church in Holland.

CS: Well, I don’t know if it’s changed that much. It’s always been a strong church community. But I think that some of the Reformed Church’s events have changed. It
used to be much stronger Christian Reformed than it is now. What’s that one over here now? That Presbyterian Church, just that little church on 9th Street at the corner of River Ave. It seems that was a Presbyterian Church. Or Episcopal?

AS: A big change in Holland, I feel, was when G. E. came here, because a lot of educated people arrived, a lot of engineers and so on. They found that there was no Presbyterian Church here. But you were raised, until you were quite old, in the Christian Reformed Church, right?

CS: That was quite a thing, the break up. We went to Reformed Church from a Christian Reformed, with the Steketee family, that was kind of a big break. Some never changed over. They still go to a Christian Reformed Church. A few others went to a Reformed Church, but that was almost a split in the family at that time.

AS: The incident, supposedly, was that my father-in-law was the sheriff of Ottawa County, and he belonged to the Fraternal Order of Police. The Christian Reformed Church did not allow anybody to belong to the masons or a lodge. So, those people [in the church] called that a lodge, and it was not. The Christian Reformed Church thought the Fraternal Order of Police was a secret societies. Well, the Fraternal Order of Police was not, that’s just a collection of policeman. So, he was called before the consistory, my father-in-law, who was a Steketee, also.

CS: Yeah, my uncle.

AS: So that caused the split in the family. They left the Christian Reformed Church because of that. A group, maybe about half, went to the Reformed Church then. There’s 13 kids in the Steketee family, so that was the cause of the split. He can
remember, he tells that, they had a get together after church, at one point, and it was at my father-in-law and mother-in-law’s house. That was before my time. There was so much arguing. He remembers, as a kid, what a lot of noise and commotion and so on, and that was the split. Although, it wasn’t that they didn’t ever speak to each other.

CS: No, but we had a big fight that time between the Reformed and Christian Reformed Church.

AP: From talking with others, another big change is the size of the churches, that you don’t have so many little churches, but churches keep consolidating. Has that happened with you church? I don’t know where you go.

CS: Yeah. See, we go to Christ Memorial. (laughs)

AP: OK. So that’s very large.

CS: Everybody says that’s not right, that you’re taking members away from all these other churches. We don’t take members away from other churches. You can’t say, you can’t come. When people come you don’t say, "Oh, no, you can’t come." So they do. It grows. It keeps on growing all the time. Some of these other churches, they’re not lively with their doings and such, there’s nothing doing in proportion, so that’s why I think the small ones are closing up.

AP: What’s beneficial about the bigger size?

CS: They can do so much more. I think our offering, what they can do according to just a small church, they can do a whole lot more and they can do for the young people with different events, they can contribute a whole lot more than what everybody in
their own smaller little church can do. They can’t accomplish as much, I don’t think, because of the resources that they have. At Christ Memorial, they come from Hudsonville, Jennison, Grand Haven, all over. Some of the events they put on, and what they can do, they’ve got the money to do it and they’ve got the personnel to do it. The same way with the ministers. We’ve got... How many ministers have we got? Five, I guess.

[My wife’s] a pastoral care elder, but we’ve got a bunch of them. In that way, you’ve got a little more contact and personal relationship with people than you do the other way. Because I know when we went to church when I was a kid, we had a house visitation once a year, somebody came over, and kids were scared about the questions they might ask.

AP: It sounds very well organized, which is probably crucial to maintaining it. That’s something I remember when we have gone out there. It’s very well run and organized as far as busing from the campus and having people meeting you and directing you in. It was almost like a professional show or something!

AS: That is a point, too. My daughter moved here from Grand Rapids. She planned on joining Christ Memorial, but now she’s not so sure because some of those things, like you say, it’s like a performance, versus a worship.

CS: There’s some advantages to it. Like the choir. We’ve got John Bright with the choir. The music alone, a lot of people come just for that because the choir is really... Well, how many are in the choir. 150 choir with John Bright. Man alive. That’s just something in itself. In that way, there’s advantages. There’s always
advantages and disadvantages to everything.

AP: Where are your children now? One just came to Grand Rapids?

CS: My daughter, she lives in town now. I have a great grandchild now.

AP: Are they in the area?

CS: Yes, they live here. My grandson is a physical therapist. He works at the hospital. My granddaughter is a teacher in Hamilton, first grade teacher, I guess.

AP: We could just conclude to talk a little bit more about Holland and what sets it apart. My question is, Holland has just been named an All-American City. I’m curious to know what qualities Holland has that you think earns it that honor.

CS: One thing, I think, as clean as it is, the whole area, there really is no blighted area that I know of. That, I think, is good. I think they have good industry, between Haworth and some of the other ones here, that employment is high, and the town is well kept, as far as clean. But I think they’ve got good industry. Of course Haworth, that’s probably the biggest new one that came in. It didn’t come in. It started here.

AS: I’ll probably add this. If it wasn’t for Ed Prince, this city would look a lot different. It’s so important, I think, to have the down town, and besides the Evergreen Commons, which is a draw, and consider how many people are members. We’re members, but I’m sorry to say, we don’t use it much, if at all, but we still support it. But all of the buildings that are being remodelled. Especially because they had to go through that series of the street being torn up that whole summer, to think that those stores could keep operating, it’s just amazing that they could stay in business. I think
that’s one of the biggest reasons that Holland has stayed.

CS: Ed Prince. I mean, really, downtown. How many cities have a snow melt? I go up town and go to coffee every morning and you get out of your car up on 8th Street, everything, the street’s bare. He did a lot for this town, Ed Prince.

AP: Do you get downtown to do much shopping?

CS: We do all of our shopping usually downtown, try to patronize the local merchants. I guess the mall out there is what we call Holland, too. I still prefer going to Lokker-Rutgers myself. I figure I owe that to them, too. I think they’ve got good quality, so why not? I think the downtown is getting better now. Who’s going to be in there? Talbot’s going to be right across from the Windmill Restaurant. The Art Center is going to be in the old building near Columbia Avenue. That’s going to be a plus downtown, too, I think.

AP: Are there any other big things that we haven’t talked about that we should talk about yet?

CS: Gosh, I know when you’re gone, I will think of it. I don’t know. She comes through with things that I don’t think of. Well the size. Like Brooks Bottling now, you know where they are, and what size it was. That was with Jim Brooks, and that was a building on North River Avenue, just across from Padnos. When I look what that’s growing to with all the different brands they’ve got and everything else, it’s quite a thing. Haworth and Brooks, they started from nothing, practically. I thought about that the other day when I turned there by 24th Street, Baker Furniture. That used to be the Piano Factory, they called that. Now it’s Baker Furniture. That’s one
of the best lines of furniture in the country, I guess. They've got good craftsman here. Some of the older Dutchmen. A friend of mine, his dad worked there. They were actually real artists with wood.

AP: This used to be a major center for furniture manufacturing. Grand Rapids, the whole area, is really well known for that.

We're trying to think if there's any las things we haven't talked about that we really should.

AS: I'm not running the show. You'd think I was, but...

CS: Well, you think of things I don't think of.

AS: As far as, I think we're getting to more things about Holland, verses about you. I think the growth of Holland is just extreme, myself. Frankly, I'd rather have the malls in the big city. Soon, you have the strip malls that are deteriorating. We're just having that right now. On Washington Avenue where Family Fare used to be, a drug store wants to build right near Family Fare so you can walk over right there. That's one of the bad things, I think, about progress.

CS: Yeah, then you get a blighted area, at least business district. Now where Family Fare was there, so they changed and opened a great big store, now I read in the paper, Rite Aid drug store is going to move from that corner because they want to be where the traffic is. So you're going to have the one area there of commercial [property] that's going to be dead.

AP: Nobody's going down there anyway. The road's all torn up.

CS: Oh man, that's something now, isn't. That's rough now. Where do you live?
AP: Well, I just moved. We were, during the school year, renting a cottage from one of our roommate’s grandmothers in Castle Park. Since it’s their summer cottage, obviously they’re going to start using it, so then we moved into a house close to campus.

CS: That’s nice there, Castle Park is a nice area.

AP: Well, I think we’ve gotten around to a lot of stuff. Thank you.
Cliff's Great Grandfather was the immigrant, Cornelis C. Steketee, who came to Holland, Michigan, arriving June 1, 1854. The Jan Steketees (brothers) arrived in 1847 with a group of Zeeland Neth people. Jan led a group in 1847.

It was Cliff's Great Grandfather who lived in Holland, Michigan only a few weeks.

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Cliff didn't mention that when he was a kid, he and his friends walked along with the night watchman at Holland Shoe Company. The boys also shot sparrows, which were in the vines at the company. They also could just walk in the factories, like the Sugar Beet Factory, and help themselves to lumps of sugar. Imagine doing that today.

Yes, you may use my input. When I was talking about my father-in-law: I have been married to two Steketees. Cliff and my first husband were cousins.

--Alma Steketee