

HISTORY OF MY LIFE WRITTEN BY MYSELF, 1897

(life of Jacob Holtzman, born March 7, 1851, died 1925, minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, great-grandfather of Steve, Mike, and Jerry Dean)

I Jacob Holtzman was born near Phillipsburg, Waterloo County, Willmot township, west Ontario, Canada on March 7th 1851. I lived with my parents at Phillipsburg from where my father went out to preach. My parents were Henry Holtzman and my mother's name was Christina Leuhard before she was married. Father and mother were both born in Germany (Elsas). From Phillipsburg we moved to Seberingsville. And as near as I can remember from Seberingsville to St. Jacobs. From St. Jacobs we moved to Carrick leaving St. Jacobs at night about 9 o'clock. Father got a one horse wagon, put a cover over it and thus we started off in gypsy style. The first place we stopped when we reached father's charge was at Gottwaltz, a local preacher in Hanover. Next morning the two loads and father and I started for our new home, 10th concession, Carrick. But shortly after we left town we had to cross a creek, and on both sides it was quite deep mud. Father ventured through first with the horse and buggy and myself. WE got to the other side of the creek, but before we got on dry land the horse got stuck in the mud and fell down. Father advised the drivers of the loads to try some other place. Not being acquainted with the road himself, they got into a worse place than we did. And I remember how mad one brother got and scolded father for telling him to drive that way. However, they had to unhitch their team and hitch to the back end of the wagon. And thus the two teams hitched to one wagon managed to get the loads through. Finally we reached at the new parsonage nearly completed being a log house surrounded by timber, bears, and wolves. While living here father had a very large field, and was away from home most of the time. While away from home one time, I remember one night just as we had retired. Something sounded like shoving a cradle or bedstead over the floor. Mother was sleeping downstairs with the baby and one or two of the other smaller children. My Brother George who

is 6 years old than myself and me, we slept upstairs after hearing this sound. Mother called to George (and asked) what we were pushing the bed around for. George in reply said that we was not pushing the bed, but thought she had pulled the cradle closer to her bed. Whereupon mother became uneasy. George and myself got up. George lighting the lantern went out doors, looked all around, but came in and said he could not see nor hear of anything that could cause the noise. Needless to say that mother slept very little than night--yes for several nights until father came home again. I went to school but a short time here. David Ewald was teaching our school. Here father put me out to John Wegand to board and go to school. Mr Shultize was teacher. This was in the year 1858. I remember well when Bro. Koechle came to help father serve the charge for it was too large. I also remember when brother Hank was his assistant. From here we moved to Hay township. Here I attended school 2 years and I was a successful young student. The teacher and all admired my memory. It was in the year 1860 or 61 that I felt the need of salvation. Though young still I felt that I must seek and find Jesus. I became very penitent so that I had no rest. I sought Christ everywhere. One Sunday afternoon while mother had gone to Jacob Kerchers and father was away filling his appointment, I was so overcome I went into the stable and I prayed. And it seems to me almost unconscious of what I was doing. My sister Mary came running out in the barn and worked to get me in the house. But I did not make any experience.

In 1862 Father moved to Elgin Mission or Alborough. Here we had no school privileges, went to school only a few days, not much to Sunday School. Then in 1863 Father was sent to the state of New York. I remained with my Aunt Margret Eidt. I remember how all wept when bid them farewell. I so young left behind as it were. I had it not of the very best. My cousins were not as good to me as they might have been. It was through them that I was made drunk for the first time and smoked my first pipe of tobacco. Bad company was plenty at Phillipsburg where I stayed. And in these two years I was away from home, I became a very bad boy. One Sunday afternoon as we (boys of

my age) went out to swim I came nearly being drowned. My parents got me home again after an absence from them of two years. But I was a bad boy. Father put me to school. But I got so wild that he had to take me home again. In 1865 Father hired me out to my cousin John L. Edt. I worked for him that summer. In the fall I started to learn the Miller trade. I worked one month at it. I liked the business but the foreman was an Irish cross, sulky man. Then I started for home again. Had no money--walked about half way and I found my sister Mary working in Baden. And by making up a little lie she loaned me 50 cents so I would not have all the way to walk home. Here Father wanted me to go to school but I would not. I thought I had all the education that was good for me. So I hired out to Conrad Rotharmel. I was hired out to him as a printer for 2 1/2 years for \$130.00 and a set of planes.

But in the fall of 1867 he took me out in the woods to cut wood, and I cut my foot, which took sometime to heal and Father and Rotharmel had some dispute. I think who should pay the Dr. Bill. And somehow Rotharmel told me to go home. From there I went to Carrick to work for my cousin Jacob Schneider in the spring, 1868. Here I soon found my equal in associates. I worked for him one summer. In the fall I went to fill Brother George's place running a threshing machine. Coming home to Carrick, father wanted me to take a teachers examination. I went to school for a few days, and got the teacher to go with me. And I succeeded in getting a permit to teach school. I tried hard to et a school in Carrick but none to be had. I taught a few days as substitute. Somehow I was not studied enough for a teacher. So I turned my face towards Hanover. And here I found a job with Knechtet brothers in a factory. Here we were a set of bad boys together. Oh could I recall the time and mean deeds, how gladly would I do so. Dancing and carousing was my greatest delight. Many of my wickedness I dare not write.

In April of 1869 I was married to Elizabeth Bechtet. This some what checked my wil career. In this year I was converted at a camp meeting. But we seen hard times, moved out of Hanover,

lived in the country a while and moved back again and worked for the Knechtets. In 1870 we lived on fathers place. Here in a protracted meeting one night while praying, I felt so impressed that I should preach. I invited Bro. P. Alles to call on me later on. He came to my house, and I related my experience to him. He gave me advice what to do and how to proceed. I moved to Part Elgin the following week after the conversation with Bro Alles which was about March. Landing in Part Elgin at night and strangers we did scarcely know what to do and where to go. The work I was expecting to was to run a boarding house for a Mr. Johnson. But it was not finished and we could not move into it. So we had to board in the Hotel. And in the meanwhile I got a misunderstanding with Mr. Johnson. And I was out of money and out of a job. Finally I found employment with Mr. Kinsey at Port Elgin in a carpenter factory. But I became dissatisfied with wages and left the factory which was a foolish step. While here but a short time I again felt troubled. First I thought I would not unite with the church. But I felt that would not do and my wife urged me to go to church and unite with them at Port Elgin. I did so, it was about this time that the election of a class leader was at hand. So out of curiosity I said to my wife, now I am going to set a sign. If God wants me to preach, I will get in as class leader. This we were too sure would not be, for we had just been there about two months. So we said they will certainly not put me in for I am a stranger to them all. Bro Elias Ely now preacher in the Canada conference was class leader, and he resigned because he left Port Elgin to attend school. The election occurred on a good Friday 1870 or 71 with C. F. Braun Pastor. I was seated behind Bro Reuben. After preaching, the ballots were taken. And to my surprise, he said that Bro Holtzman was elected for two years. My heart felt heavy. I wept. I realized the responsibility at once and also the promise I made. For two years I served as class leader. In these two years I spoke to Rev. Braun and had written to my father, who was also a preacher in the Canada conference concerning my call. They or at least Rev Braun urged me to go ahead, but father would always write back that I should be sure you do not go before you are positive that God calls you, and so on.

I tried to work it off and I succeeded to a certain extent. But I grew cold and indifferent. I would not act as class leader any more when my two years were expired. I had lots of work, but the gracious Father gave me to understand that I am in his hands. So I had to pass through sever trials, sickness, loss in property, etc. And I actually got into debt that I did not know how to help my self. Now it came to me anew, If I would have been obedient to the call I would not have gotten into this loss, etc. I tried to work my way out. But I could not. God had to put his hand in it. So he did after I promised Him to obey. My brother Gabriel was was running a planing mill in Zurich Ontario wanted me to come and work for him. But I said I could not until me debts were straightened out in Port Elgin, so I could leave the place honesty. So my father paid my debts amounting to \$300.00. I moved to Zurich to work for my Bro. But alas I regretted the moved I made the very first day I was there. Dissatisfaction all around. No house to move in, no wages as I was promised, no situation that I was promised, so I became discouraged. But what to do. I did the best I could, worked for my brother, with the intention of going again as soon as I could. I did not unite with the church. So I got cold again. And the Lord God came heavier upon me than ever before. My wife took sick. The children took sick. One died. And worst of all I met with an accident getting my hand into the knives of the sticker machine, which laid me up for 3 months. Now what to do. I left Zurich one bright summer morning in spring 1878, started on foot to Port Elgin. And I again found work at J. H. Cress factory at \$1.00 per day. Times began to be very dull and I was continually dissatisfied with myself and now still more so because I was called to preach, did not obey, and financially, I ran behind. So I concluded, being the times were so hard in Canada, that I would go to Grand Rapids, Mich., work some time there, pay off may debts, and do the best I can. So on April 11th 1880 I left my dear family, started off for Grand Rapids Mich. Landed there Sunday noon. Monday I struck out for work. I succeeded. In May the 24th 1880 my family came to Michigan. My wife sold all she could, paid as much as she could on debts and thus we lived

in Grand Rapids. In 1881 in September my father died. And I went to Canada to attend the funeral in Carrick 10th concession. I came in time to see him before they took him out to burial. After returning home from funeral I tried to settle down again to work. But continually I was troubled with the thought of preaching. I had made up my mind to speak to the Methodist preacher about my trouble. We had joined the M. E. church when we first came to Grand Rapids because we had no church there. But I was not successful, the preacher had been away from home, when I went to see him. So I made up my mind that the Lord is through with me now. But before we were members of the M. E. church a year, Rev. C. Ude from Calidonia, Michigan got acquainted with me. And he soon took up an appointment at Grand Rapids. And I was glad for this for the M. E. had a number of Evangelical Members and they mostly all came with me. But oh what a fire that kindled with the Methodist. Rev. Ude succeeded in organizing a class. I was elected class leader. Also Sunday School was soon organized. I was elected Superintendent. Thus we worked along. Finally I became convinced more than ever that the Lord wanted me. I made all excuses. But in 1883 in November, I was awakened from me sleep hearing a voice saying, Now or death. I could not rest. I got up at midnight and walked the floor. My wife asked me what the matter was, I could not or did not want to tell her. She got up and she said you are as white as a sheet. What is the matter. Oh I said if I lived till Christmas I would tell her. However after spending a restless night I told her the next morning. I felt now assured if I would not submit now that my time would be short in this life. So I concluded I would surrender, but not until I had made another effort to free myself. The way I tried the Lord once more was in this wise. Rev. John Miller was our Pastor serving Grand Rapids from Maple Hill, Michigan. He started a protracted meeting, keeping it up for a week. He had to go home. He announced prayer meeting for Friday night and Tuesday night. He would be back by Monday night. I of course was to lead the meeting. All day long while I was at work I prayed. And this text came to me. It is appointed for man once to die but after that the judgment. I also prayed God if it is his will that I must preach the Gospel, he

was to verify it by giving me a soul that night. The Spirit of God came upon me, and I preached (and they say) a powerful sermon. I gave an invitation to come to the altar. And to my surprise 2 souls came forward. My calling was sealed. Still I did not yield. Rev. John Miller however called a meeting for the purpose of getting out a recommendation for me. And I had no trouble in getting that. Just before the annual conference of 1884 we had our Quarterly Meeting and all was ready for me to appear before the P.E. Rev. J. M. Hank at the Quarterly Conference. But I refused feeling my unworthiness to such an extent that I thought I could not go and preach the Gospel. So they questioned me if I intend to go the Annual Conference. I said No. I had no money to go to that. I was somewhat content however all day Sunday. My wife and I talked the matter over on Sunday following our Quarterly Conference. I said now one more test. If God wants me to go to the conference and preach, he will open away so I can go. Surely enough after Sunday night services, a Brother, Bro N. Acker, 45 Springfield Ave, Grand Rapids, Michigan said here is \$5.00. I think that will pay your fare. You go to the conference now and do as the Lord wants you or things may go worse, etc. I had no other way the Lord was pushing me right through seemingly. I went to the Michigan Conference held at Portage Prairie, April 1884. Bishop Bowman was chairman, and F. Klump was Secretary. I did not feel as though I should or rather as though I could take work that spring as I had some things to straighten up. (Debts I refer to.) And most of all because the society just started in Grand Rapids was small and needed my help. But here I missed it in not taking work. For some reason or other the P. E. never had work for me after that. My experience was as a local preacher. I preached occasionally. REv. V. L. Soldau was our first pastor. We builded a church that year. He was young and inexperienced and the work did not go along as it ought to have went. However through many trials I finished the church. In 1885 I attended the Conference held in Ionia Michigan. With the expectation of getting work. But at the P.E. Rev J. M. Hand had some favorites that spring and they must have work. And I claim that he told me a falsehood that spring. As I was informed of afterwards. He stated we must give men

work that have no families because their charges were poor. I found out afterwards that that young man had as large a family as I had. And worse of all that pet of his brought reproach on our church and ministry. Rev. N. Wunderlich was our next pastor in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This year I worked hard. I preached nearly every two weeks at Fisher station 6 1/2 miles from Grand Rapids, 8 miles from my home. I walked it most of the time. Rev. Wunderlich and I worked up the appointment. But somehow people did not take well to Wunderlich. They would not let him baptize their children. They wanted me to do it. But I did not dare to so they go the P.E. Ed Weise through me. This was a Lutheran settlement. No preaching for years they were wild and lived in a wilderness as it were. But somehow the year before we started to preach their the Congregationalists started to build a church under the pretense a Union church. But they could not finish it. So after I preaching there for 6 months organized a Sunday School. They concluded to finished the church, that is the people. In or during this time however the Lutheran preacher Rev. Franklin in Grand Rapids got a hearing of me preaching to his lost sheep and he was not slow in coming out to visit his people and persuade them to keep away from my meetings. So they called a meeting and discussed the matter as to who should be there preacher. A motion was made they would engage me for \$100 a year but it was voted down. Next motion was the Mr. J. Meier was to inform me that they have engaged Rev. Franklin, Pastor of their own faith to preach for them and I need not come out anymore. As no one would come to hear me preach anymore. Besides that they were plastering the church, but he did nt inform me of this, and well that he did not. For the sabbath was near when I got his letter and my appointment was for that afternoon. I walked out 8 miles. And I felt bad when I came to the church, no one there, everything upside down. There I stood. I walked down to Mr. Meiers house. And he looked downcast, I thought ashamed. He said did you not get my letter. Yes I said. But this is my appointed time and the church is a union church and I am going to preach here. Mrs. Meiers said that is right. I wish you would preach this afternoon. I says where! No place only here. And the people don't know it.

She said I will send the children out in the neighborhood. And soon the people came in filled the house, and we had a good service. Rev Franklin would preach there every 4 weeks, I every 2 weeks. He would always preach about me and my church, and told the people to stay away from my meetings. I would preach the Gospel, and in my opening prayers I would always remember my co-laborer Rev. Franklin. And in a very short time I held the congregation and Rev. Franklin was informed not to come any more. We had good meetings and several were converted. In 1886 they made up a petition and handed it to the P.E. requesting him to send me there as their preacher. This was unknown to me till after the conference. When the P.E. did not grant their request, Rev. H. Schneider was then stationed to Grand Rapids in 1887 and to serve Fisher Station also. It seems the more the people liked me, the more the P.E. and Rev Wunderlich disliked me. I tried for six years to get work but No. So finally I moved to what is called South Grand Rapids and was now about 3 to 4 miles from our church. We than attended the United Brethren in Christ. This was in 1890. And in the fall I united with them at their conference held in Bengal. Bishop Kephant being chairman, Rev Stratton secretary. I was stationed to South Lowell. But oh my! Radical! All Radical! They lock the church and oh! What a time we had! I'll never forget. In 1891 I was assigned to Woodland Circuit, Michigan. This charge was a little better, not much. In 1892 September, I got my transfer from the Michigan Conference to the Illinois Central or Central Illinois Conference. Here the conference was in session in Teheran. I was assigned to Custer Park Mission, two appointments, Wiring and Custer Park. Here my wife was sick most of the time. I build a parsonage, and got a little trouble with some of the members. So I was changed in the fall. September Conference convened at Decatur, Illinois, September 1893 and I was assigned to Arrowsmith. At this conference I was ordained. Elder Bishop Hott presided. But by this time I found out I was in the wrong church. They had trouble everywhere, small salary, poor charges. So in spring of 1894, I consulted or corresponded with Rev. Weitz, P.E. living at Washington. I attended the Evangelical Conference held at Naperville 1894, two

days. I was assigned to Rochelle Circuit. Bishop Horn being the presiding officer.

rochelle was a very extended work and my wife sickly all the time made it very hard for us both, because I had to be away from home so much. In 1895 Conference held at Sheffield Ave church. Bishop Esher in the chair. I presented my credentials to the conference and was received into the conference and was again assigned to Rochelle Circuit. In 1896 Conference was held in Mendota, Bishop Bowman in the chair. I was transferred to Perkins Grove. We liked this charge all right. I did a lot of repairing on Parsonage. Before the year was ended the P.E. spoke as though he would like to change me again in the Spring. I did not consent. My was sick most of the time. In spring 1897 conference in Washington Bishop Breyfogle President at this conference. Mr. Weitz P.E. had to resign and Messerschmidt was elected in his place. Messerschmidt spoke to me and said they thought they would have to move me to Forreston. I said I would not consent to move unless I could get better school privileges. I was assigned to Forreston. But oh such experiences I made this time. People at Perkins Grove did not know what to make of it. And we did not like the change but it was made and we had to go. In this year 1897 I went through deep waters of tribulations. In July 14th my dear wife died and was buried in Forreston. Such a sad time, left with 3 small children. But the members of the church was just as good as can be. Took charge of everything. P.E. Messerschmidt had charge of the funeral. He Prof. Kickhoefer from Naperville to preach English. Oh what a sad time. Here I got in trouble with some members of our church. Billig and Diehl. Owing to this trouble I was again changed in 1898 Conference held in Geneseo. Bishop Horn in the chair. At this time I considered to locate because P.E. Messerschmidt was bout to send me to Winslow Mission. And he succeeded. I served Winslow two years. My Predecessor Osterland had such a dirt and fuss that he got the P.E. into it and he would not stay any longer. So I got into trouble also. The St. Peters Society had a quarreling reputation. While there we repaired the Winslow church. But I am doubtful if we will gain anything. In 1900

conference held in Freeport, I was again assigned to Perkins Grove.

After 3 years at Perkins Grove I was assigned to Sterling Mission. Here I found the church in awful condition. Those that lived here at the time know of the affair of Rev. Ebert and some of the female characters. However we held out under great distress and trials here. March 1904 I was married to Sringa Johnson, and in the years of evil and labor we built up a nice congregation. From here we went to Davis. My P.E. Shutte had to make room for an incoming preacher from the Kansas Conference who wanted the school privilege. One year spend at Davis we were assigned to Sherrard Mission spending 5 years on this charge we came to Mt. Pulaska and Springfield Mission. After a years service my health failed me and I resigned and retired. Moved to Sterling started in business.

God Almighty knows how many souls I led to Christ during my ministry. If I could write better I would give some strange incidents in my ministry. One time attended a meeting not of our church. I was surprised when 2 gave their testimony that they were convicted by my preaching. In 1916 I served Sterling church another year. This makes 30 years in the active ministry.