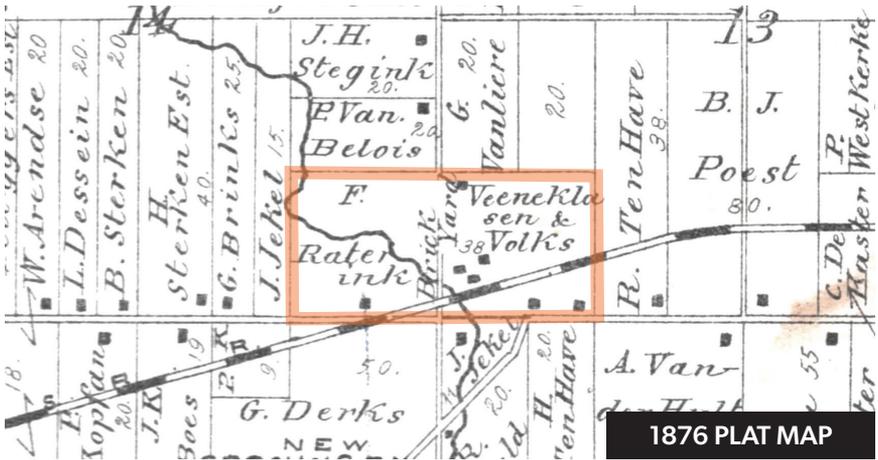




Veneklasen Brick Driving Tour





A Driving Tour of Historical Veneklasen Brick Architecture

When the Dutch immigrants arrived in West Michigan in 1847, they were greeted with forest and swamp. The first structures they built were rudimentary log cabins or “lean-tos.” As more permanent structures were built, the need for brick grew, but importing bricks from the Netherlands was difficult due to unreliable trade routes.

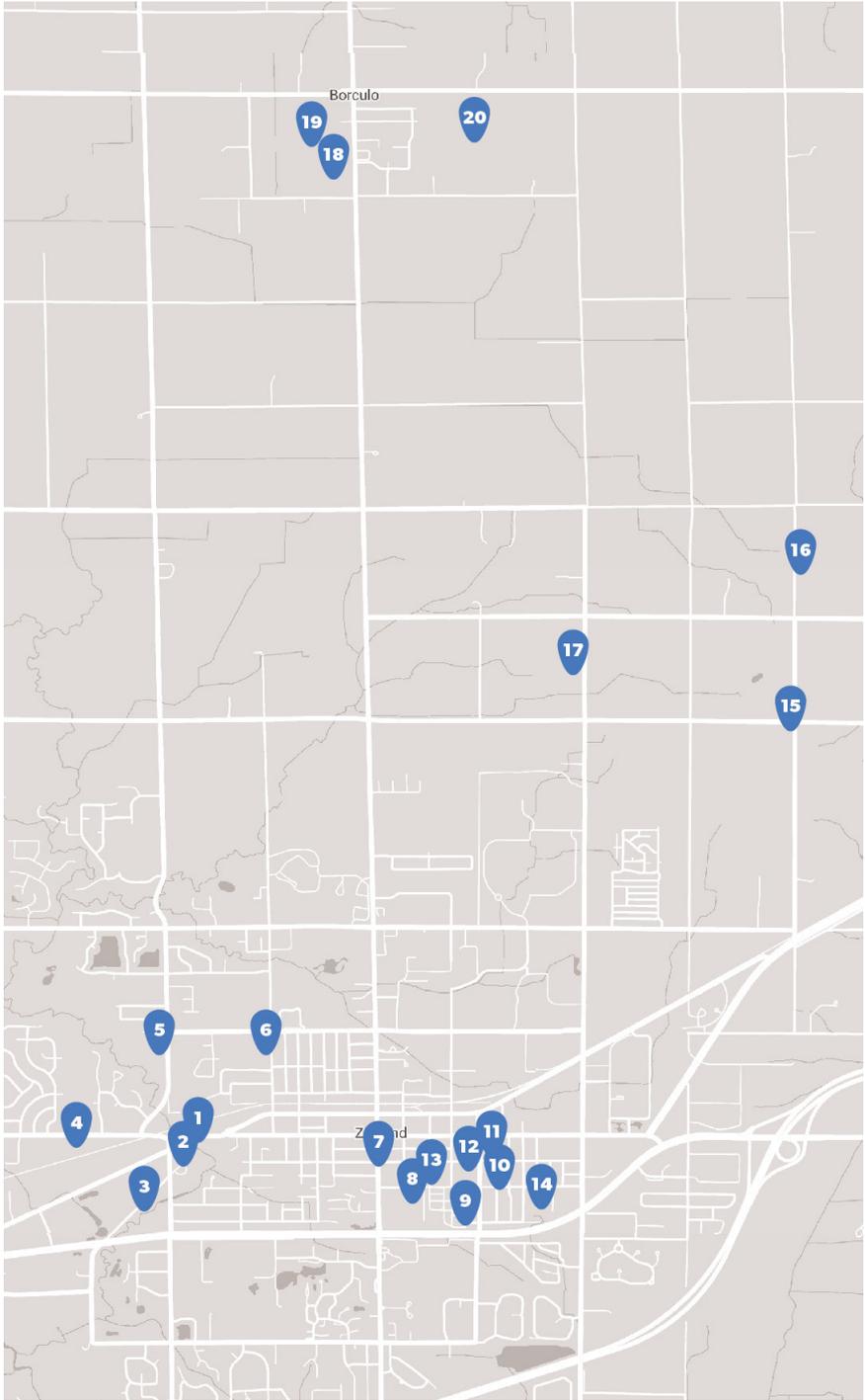
In 1848, Jan Hendrik Veneklasen and his son, Berend, founded their brickyard, the Zeeland Brick Company. With this development, settlers could

build chimneys and foundations for their dwellings and, eventually, more permanent brick structures.

Patterned brickwork was popular in the Netherlands, and the tradition continued in West Michigan when the Veneklasens gained access to different colored clay.

The Zeeland Brick Company was unique because it had brickyards in multiple areas that produced different brick colors. At the New Groningen brickyard, they made a red brick which later evolved into a more orange color. In Zeeland, they made a white-colored brick. At their Holland, Kalamazoo, Cloverdale, and Hamilton brickyards, they made primarily red brick.

The Zeeland Brick Company operated from 1848 to about 1923. Many of these Veneklasen brick houses remain a testament to this popular architectural movement inspired by traditions of the Netherlands and unique to West Michigan.





FUN FACT

The first brickyard established by the Veneklasens was in Holland on 16th St. across from the Van Raalte Farm. In 1853 they opened a brickyard in Groningen and another in Zeeland in 1872. Eventually, the company opened brickyards in Cloverdale, Hamilton, Kalamazoo, and Grand Rapids. Once the clay ran out at one of their brickyards, they would find a new clayspit to source.

1 10283 Chicago Dr.

Here are three Veneklasen brick structures; one to the west and two to the east. **All belonged to the Veneklasen family.** The house at 10283 was built in 1873 by Berend J. and Alice Veneklasen. Originally the home featured patterned brickwork with the base in red and the inlaid pattern in cream. It had a sizeable west wing and one and a half stories.

In 1910, Henry and Dena Veneklasen acquired and remodeled the home to fit changing styles. The patterned brick was eliminated in favor of a solid color. The west wing was demolished, and a second story was added, making it completely symmetrical.

To the east, the house and carriage house were also constructed of Veneklasen brick. These properties were all built for family members and were conveniently located across from their Zeeland brickyard. This area came to be known as “Brickyard Hill.”

2 Veneklasen Brick Historical Marker

Located on Paw Paw Dr. heading NE, just past Brickyard Lane toward the dead end.

3 10537 Paw Paw Dr.

The New Groningen Schoolhouse, built in 1882, is a two-room schoolhouse that features cream-colored brick with red patterned details around the arches over doorways and windows. Decorative brickwork is also incorporated beneath the gable and rooflines. *To schedule a tour of the schoolhouse, call (616) 772-4079.*

4 10720 James St.

Built in 1885 for the Sterken family. The base is red brick with cream-colored patterned designs at the roofline and above the four light windows.

5 2791 104th Ave.

Constructed in 1866 for J. Stegink, this impressive country home has several unique features, including restored six-light windows and a porch roof.

6 376 N. Franklin St.

Skilled masons built Veneklasen brick houses, not brick makers. However, this home built in 1887 was designed and **constructed by Steven Buter, who worked briefly at the Zeeland Brick Company.** The design of the patterned brick is quite elaborate, and its fieldstone foundation is unique for this area.

7 37 S State St.

Built in 1882 for Peter Elenbaas and his wife. It's built of yellow-buff Veneklasen brick in a vernacular style, with red Veneklasen brick creating a pattern under the roofline and above the arched windows.

8 120 S Church St.

This Italianate-style home was constructed in 1872 **for Zeeland's first physician and village president Dr. Daniel Baert.** It was built of Veneklasen red brick three rows deep with air space in between to provide natural cooling. The extensive front porch and the fountain were added in 1880 when Baert added the custom-made windows of arched beveled glass imported from Paris.

From this location, there are many walkable Veneklasen brick homes to see.

9 338 Lincoln Ave.

1885 Barend Kamps home built by Dirk Poest in a vernacular, Gothic Revival style with red and yellow patterned brickwork.



FUN FACT

The 1870s through the 1880s were a prosperous time for the Zeeland Brick Company. There was a housing boom during this time because of a growing population and the affordable cost of construction.



FUN FACT

Vernacular architecture is a modest style of building that is specific to a region and period. It relies on the use of local materials and knowledge to construct buildings that often reflect local traditions, and it's usually done without the supervision of a professional architect.

10 119 S Maple

The John D. Werkman home was built in 1895 in the Queen Anne style with red Veneklasen brick.

11 59 S Maple

The interesting history of this home is how it came to rest in its present location. Built by Johannes Van Haitsma on his farm in Drenthe, MI. In 1885, Van Haitsma became angered that the church in Drenthe, located adjacent to his farm, decided to move. Van Haitsma was so upset that he decided to move to Zeeland, house and all (A whopping four miles away). **The house was disassembled brick by brick and rebuilt at its current location** at 59 S. Maple. When Central Ave. was extended to the east, the house was not to be moved a second time, which is why it does not align with the other houses on the street.

12 336 E Central

1885 Anthony Baert home, made of red Veneklasen brick in the Gothic Revival style mixed with Dutch influences that can be seen in the window designs.

13 214 E Central

Queen Anne-style home made of Veneklasen brick, built in 1899.

The driving tour continues, leaving Zeeland.

1 644 E Lincoln

Built in 1889 by Albertus C. Van Hees, it was built at the peak of the popularity of patterned brickwork. This home has a bay window on the east side and originally had 11 rooms.

14 8015 Quincy St.

This 1892 Veneklasen brick building was originally the Huyser School, a two-room school for students K-12. Built in a Neoclassical, vernacular style of Veneklasen brick, it originally had a cupola and a bell that have since been removed. **It served as a school through the late 1960s and eventually converted into a single-family home.** Many of the original features on the outside are still intact, including beautiful brick patterning circling the roundel above the front door and above the arched windows. The large front-facing gable is typical of the Dutch style of architecture.

15 4570 80th Ave.

This house was most likely built in the 1860s and is a prime example of the patterned brick, vernacular style of Veneklasen brick architecture.

16 4181 88th Ave.

This red Veneklasen brick home exemplifies the style that was popular during the 1890s. Notice the use of one color of brick and attention to symmetry in this stately two-story home.

17 6091 96th Ave.

Built in 1880 by Jacobus Klanderma, the man responsible for naming the town of Borculo, which he aptly named after his hometown of Borculo in the Netherlands. He built this 1.5-story home of red Veneklasen brick on his farmstead to replace a previously built log cabin, and the exterior has not changed much. **This property is also certified by the State of Michigan as a centennial farm.**



FUN FACT

The shift away from the patterned brick style happened around the 1890s. This style shift happened mostly within the cities of Holland and Zeeland, where solid brick was seen as statelier.



FUN FACT

The Veneklasens began closing their brickyards in 1923. This was due in part to a declining demand for brick, staffing shortages, no one in the family to take over the business, shipping difficulties, and exhausted clay pits. By 1925, all their brickyards were sold.

18 6297 96th Ave.

Built in 1888 by Geert Moeke, who designed this large house with a north wing to accommodate his growing family. The north wing was eventually replaced with a porch, but the Veneklasen brick pattern is still intact.

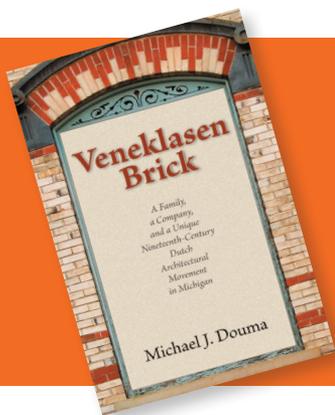
19 9194 Port Sheldon St.

Built in 1885 by Marlink A. Weersman in the patterned brick style under the roofline and above the four light windows.

20 3741 64th Ave.

The original brick portion of stately solid red brick with arched brick details around its windows was built in 1879.

To continue the driving tour towards Drenthe, continue on 64th and take a left on Byron Rd., a right on 56th, and another right onto Adams St., noting the Veneklausen brick homes at 5970, 6154, & 8475 Adams St.



Want to know more?

Check out Veneklasen Brick by Michael Douma to learn additional information.

