

Interview with Mr. George Alderink
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Interviewed by Calvin Gower and John Waldron

Gower: This is an interview conducted by John Waldron and Calvin Gower for the Central Minnesota Historical Center on August 21st, 1973. Today we're interviewing Mr. George Alderink who live in Pease, Minnesota. He was a State Representative from District 55, elected in 1954 and again in 1956.

Waldron: Mr. Alderink, we'll just ask you a few general questions first like, when you were born, where you were born, and you background and educational background.

Alderink: What do you want me to say?

Waldron: When you were born, where, and your education.

Alderink: I was born in Freemont, Michigan in 1889, and we lived several places in Michigan after I was born, and when I was four years old my folks decided to go to Iowa. Missouri Ira was a brother of my mother, his name was Gerard Henry Maslink.

Gower: Where did you go in Iowa?

Alderink: Missouri.

Gower: Missouri.

Alderink: We lived there one year together on a farm, and decided to go to Renville, Minnesota and my uncle, Gerard Henry Maslink decided to go to Edgerton, Minnesota. We lived one year at Renville and my folks decided to go to Clara City, Minnesota which was about ten miles from Renville. Ten or fifteen miles. We bought a farm there from a land agent named Hong, I believe it was, and after making payments on the farm for three years we found out that this Hong had gyped us and we didn't own the farm at all. The folks were quite upset about that. We had some acquaintances that used to stay with us, they were common workers around Clara City. They were from Pease, Minnesota and after a year or so we decided to move to Pease, Minnesota. That was in 1899.

Gower: So you've lived in Pease, Minnesota since 1899?

Alderink: That's right.

Gower: What kind of education did you have then?

Alderink: I just was in the county grade school. I started that in Clara City, rather four miles east of Clara City. When we got here we were very poor and the folks had to make a living by cutting stove wood and my father hauled it to Milaca for groceries. We didn't have any money. We had bought eighty acres close to Pease several years before and had made some payments on it and that's where we moved to, the second year we were here. That was in 1901 or 1902. When I was twelve years old my brother Henry and I went back to the Praire Clara City and worked for farmers there the first year. I was twelve years old and I was hired out for ten months. My brother was four years older than I was so he got \$20.00 a month, and I got \$12.50 a month for ten months. Then we came home again and started going to school. We went to school to what they call ninth grade. Is that one?

Gower: Yes, it's one now.

Alderink: I got acquainted with some of the Brinks, they went to Northland Academy or Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. I had one dollar in my pocket after I got there and then I bought myself a comb and had 85 cents left. Mr. Kennerya, he was the president of that school. He was of the same nationality as we were and he was really good for poor people. He gave me work to do right away. We got 5 cents an hour working, hauling dirt with a wheel barrel. It was to make a dam close to school. After school I came back to Pease Christian School our Church Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I had worked in the store here that year and I had saved up \$100.00 and then my folks advised me to go to a Church School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Well on the way down there I bought a ticket to Ashland, Wisconsin and on the way down there I had to buy a suit and when I got there I started working, like I stated before.

Gower: When did you decide to go to Michigan?

Alderink: Then I went back in 1908, this was in 1907.

Gower: Back to where?

Alderink: Ashland, Wisconsin. When I got home that spring I started working in the store and I had saved up \$100.00 and then the folks advised me to go to a Church School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. So I did that and on the way down there I bought a suit. I didn't have too much left, but I paid my tuition, and went to school there one semester. I went broke and asked for work, well they said they didn't have any. "Well," I said, "I'm broke." I went to my uncle, Simon Bust, that was married to my mother's sister.

Gower: Where did your uncle live?

Alderink: In Richland, Michigan about twenty-five, no it wasn't that far, well about twenty-five miles out of Grand Rapids. I went there for a vacation for the holidays and we started that story about I went broke and I couldn't go to school any more. "Well, why don't you quit Calvin College and go with my son to Hollin Business College, that's where he's going." "You don't need any money," he said. "Oh I'm sure I'll need some money," I said. Well, he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do, if you come here to go to school I'll give you free board and free car fare." I said to him, "Well you don't have to offer me that twice, I'll take you up." "That's fine you can go to school with George," he said. That was my cousin.

Gower: His name was George also?

Alderink: Yes. Then I went back to Grand Rapids, where my sister was working and I happened to think about tuition. Then I went and we talked it over about the tuition and that was \$9.00 a month at Hollin Business College. It dawned on me, and my uncle, when I saw him again, "I can't go." "Why not?" he says. "Well," I says, "we didn't think about the tuition, tuition is nine dollars a month." Then we talked it over again and he said, "Why don't you ask your sister, she's working in Grand Rapids, she's getting \$3.50 a week." Of course that's just about \$9.00 a month you know, and I talked it over with her. "Sure," she says, "I'll help you." I said, "Can you live on that little bit?" "Well, I'll have to," she said. So, I went back to my uncle and I started school. She gave me some money to pay the first tuition, and she paid it all the way through. I stayed there until I finished Hollin Business School.

Gower: Then you finished in 1911?

Alderink: Yes, in 1911.

Gower: Then you came back to Pease?

Alderink: Yes. That's just precisely what I did. After I was through college, I happened to run into a little job of selling cement, mending dishes and chairs, and stuff like that. This guy was selling that on the street and I went up to him and I said to him, "Say, can't I sell that stuff?" "Sure," he says. So he gave me some cement and I went out and started selling it. Mending the dishes and chairs, and stuff, and I'd sell cement after that. I was fortunate to make it go. Then I had another aunt living at Freemont, Michigan and she lived at Remond, about eight or nine miles from Freemont. I thought well, why can't I go down there and start selling this stuff. I walked down there and made five bucks the first day.

Gower: Gosh.

Alderink: Mending dishes and selling that cement, I made quite a bit in Freemont. At night I walked back to my aunts and stayed there. I must have stayed there about a week. Then I worked with that cement business until I had enough money to get back to Pease. I was staying with an old lady in Hollin, Michigan while I was going to school and I worked for my board there at the boarding house. There also nine piano tuners staying there. I made enough money to pay her room rent and I got the board where I was working, that's Midas rooming house. When I got enough to pay rent and buy a ticket for Pease, Minnesota I went back to the boarding house and worked a few more days and then I went to pay my rent I was four dollars short. So I said, "Will, you loan me the four dollars until I get home and I'll send you the money." "No," she says, "I'll take your trunk for security." "Well," I said, "I need those clothes." I talked nice with her and she finally said, "Well, ok you can charge it until you get home." When I got home of course, I got money from my folks and I sent her the money right away. I had a cousin working in Omaha,

Nebraska by the Beacon Van and Storage and I got connected with his folks in Michigan, they were from Michigan, and they told me, "I bet you could get a job there by your cousin, Henry Alderink." I contacted him and right away he wrote me a letter. "Just come, you've got a job in Omaha, Nebraska working for the Beacon Van Storage." So I went down there and got a job and went to work. I worked there till spring, this was during the summer. I had a chance to go, and Beacon Van and Storage said, "Well, as soon as you get there you can get a job with the same company, Beacon Van and Storage, because we have correspondence warehouse there."

Gower: In California somewhere.

Alderink: In California, that's right. So I went to work there until I had enough money, I didn't get work right away. Then I'd go to the post office every day, maybe a couple of times to see if there was any mail from the folks, and every time I went to get the mail I'd see someone in the corner crying. I went up to them finally after a couple days went on, I said, "What's the matter?" "Well, we live in the so and so in the middle west," they said. "Well, what's wrong?" I said. They said, "Well one would tell ya this and another would tell you that and their brother died or something and the family got hurt." Boy, I thought, this is no place to be.

Waldron: Was this in California?

Alderink: So I worked, until I had enough money to get a ticket to St. Paul. I was short a little bit. Not on the ticket but I didn't have any food. It was really four dollars, no that was the other trip.

Waldron: That was back for the rent.

Alderink: But anyway I got to St. Paul. I happened to meet some German people on the train, they said, “You can eat with us, we’ve got our lunch along, and we’re going to St. Paul too.” So I did that. I didn’t eat too much of course, but they gave me enough to live. So I got to St. Paul and I was supposed to have eight dollars coming from a guy in Omaha, Nebraska. I wrote him that right away, before I started, telling him to send it to the St. Paul Post Office. I got there and I thought sure I’d get that eight bucks and lo and behold there wasn’t another letter, no money or anything. I believe I had one dollar left when I got to St. Paul. So I couldn’t stay at a hotel, so I walked up a street, Robert Street, I saw “Rooms for Rent” and told the lady my situation and she hesitated about taking me in, we talked a little “Well you can stay,” she said. I told her about that cement deal, I had some cement left and I said “I’ll go out and sell that stuff and I’ll have enough money maybe to pay you.” But I had to buy a ticket to Pease, so I started selling that cement and I got enough money to get to Pease, I thought I had enough anyway. I went to the depot to buy a ticket. “Well,” he said, “You have enough money to buy the ticket but then you got a demurrage on your trunk. I said “I haven’t got any money.”

Gower: How much was the demurrage on it?

Alderink: 75 cents.

Gower: 75 cents, because it had been stored there too long?

Alderink: Sure, that was there till I got enough money to buy the tickets.

Gower: Sure.

Alderink: The baggage man says, “You haven’t got enough money?” I said, “No I haven’t.” “I don’t believe you,” he said. I pulled out my pockets.

Gower: But the baggage man said it was ok, because you didn't have enough money, so then you came up to Pease?

Alderink: Then I came up to Pease.

Gower: What year was that?

Alderink: That was 1911. My folks, lived right on the railroad, the railroad ran right through their land here in Pease. I thought to myself, well I'd better get rid of my baggage so I threw it out the train on our land. I went home right away, when I went home, I said "I threw my baggage off, but not my trunk," so we went down there and picked it up. I stayed a few days, and folks said, "Well, you look pretty you'd better get in the sun." So I went out hoeing, and the next day ma said, "You should go to town, maybe you'll meet some old friends." I said "Ok." I took a horse and buggy and put the eggs in there and I went to town and bought my groceries, I walked up the steps and an old man met me. Old man Herberts they called him. He lived right here. "Oh," he says, "so you're back." I said "Yeah, I'm back." "Well," he says, "Where ya been?" I said I had been in Michigan and I went to Hollin Business College. He asked me if I would go along and help him hay. I said "No, I don't think I will, because my folks wanted to keep me on the farm a few days, so I would pep up a little bit and then I've got a job in Omaha, Nebraska." This old man said to me that I couldn't make him believe I had a job. I said "Sure I have." Then he talked a little bit about my education and said "You know you're too smart to work and too dumb to do anything else." Because I had turned him down with the hay. I got my groceries out of the store and got in the buggy and I went home on the hill we lived. I put the groceries on the table and went upstairs and Ma said, "Fiat, Fiat, what's wrong?" I said, "I'm pulling out." "Pulling out?" she asked, "What's wrong?" Well, I told them the story about the old man telling

me I was too smart to work and too dumb to do anything else. I said, "I'm not taking that." The next morning I left for Omaha, Nebraska. They gave me the money to buy the ticket. So, I got there and I went right to work, I had the job spoken for and like I said before I stayed there until that Pet Hase. That was in the spring, this was in the fall, and then in the spring this guy sent a Pet Hase to California so I went along with that Pet Hase. I was broke again. I bought a ticket and then I didn't have any money to buy food.

Gower: Well, when did you come back here to Pease to stay permanently?

Alderink: Oh, I worked in Omaha there for about a year and I had hardship there too, I don't know the water didn't agree with me there and I got sick. I weighed 175 pounds when I went there and I got sick and was down to 155 pounds. Then I quit that job in Beacon Van and Storage in California.

Gower: But when did you come back to Pease to stay permanently?

Alderink: That was the time when I came back from Omaha.

Gower: 1911?

Alderink: 1911.

Gower: Then what did you do, work in the store over here?

Alderink: Let's see, what did I do?

Gower: When did you start working?

Alderink: Oh, then I went to Omaha, Nebraska, then I went back to the store here, from California.

Gower: You started in the store in what year?

Alderink: 1911.

Gower: And you worked there how long in the store?

Alderink: I worked there one year and then I went to Grand Rapids, Michigan and then I went one semester to Hollin Business College.

Gower: When did you start at the store? Didn't you work there forty years or so?

Alderink: Thirty, that is in the store. I was in the store thirty years. I worked and worked.

Waldron: When did you become Postmaster?

Alderink: That was in...