

# William and Rose Smith Druke Family



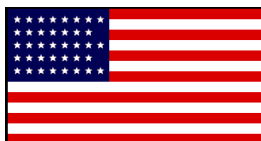
William Biggins, Coni Calligaro, Christopher Druke, Paul Druke, Richard Druke, William Druke, Mary Kay Druke Groening, James Griffin, Marilyn Hamill, Maureen Netherland, Richard Owbridge, and Emily Biggins Williams contributed to this family history.

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## William Born in 1883

- [Wilhelm Drüeke](#)  
1793-1854
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1831-1906

**Grand Rapids, 1883-1906.** William Francis Druke was born October 7, 1883, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1883, there were 38 states in the Union. [Chester A. Arthur](#) was President of the United States. Colorado was the last state admitted to the Union, in 1876.



### Y-Chromosome DNA

[DNA test results](#) for Paul Druke, a grandson of Wilhelm, show that he matches up fairly closely with people whose ancestors are from England (Arnold, Bennett, Lowder, Ozment, Scott, Self, Wooten), Wales (Ellis, Price), Scotland (Armstrong, Russell), and Ireland (Moore). Many people with English names have Germanic origins. The term Anglo-Saxon is used by some historians to designate the Germanic tribes who invaded and settled the south and east of Britain from the early 5th century up to the Norman conquest in 1066. Wilhelm is from Westphalia, which was part of Old Saxony. See [Druke Saxon Roots](#).

William Francis was known as Will. He was the first child of [William Peter and Elizabeth Berles Druke](#), who were married on November 23, 1882. Until Will was 3, they lived over the grocery store owned by his mother's family.

Will's mother Elizabeth was a second generation American of German descent. She was born in Grand Rapids, the daughter of [Franz and Regina Green Berles](#). His grandfather Franz Berles was from [Dorlar](#),



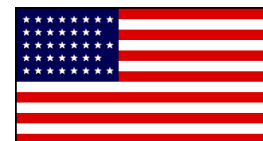
1874 Grand Rapids Directory ad for the grocery store owned by Will's maternal grandfather. Will's family lived over the store until he was 3.

Westphalia, Germany. Dorlar is 80 miles east northeast of Cologne

## Rose Born in 1882

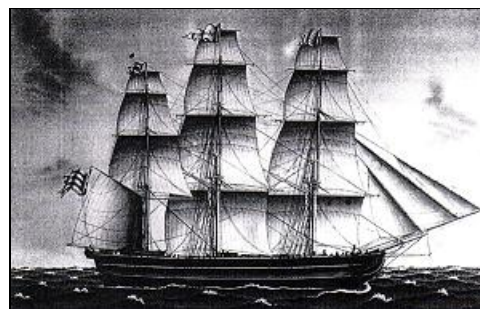
- [John Schmitt](#)  
1820-1861
- [Cris J. Smith](#)  
1852-1932
- [Mary Augusta Schickell](#)  
1828-1903
- Rose Viola Smith  
1882-1973
- [William Koch](#)  
1827-1905
- [Christine Koch](#)  
1860-1887
- [Theresa Fassnacht](#)  
1823-1888

**Grand Rapids, 1882-1906.** Rose Viola Smith was born May 23, 1882, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1882, there were 38 states in the Union. [Chester A. Arthur](#) was President of the United States. Colorado was the last state admitted to the Union, in 1876.



Rose was the only child of [Cris J. and Christine Koch Smith](#). They were married in Grand Rapids on June 17, 1880. They lived with Christine's parents at 109 California Street, at the corner of Straight Street. This was nine blocks west of the Grand River and six blocks south of Bridge Street.

Rose's father Cris was a second generation American of German descent. He worked practically his whole life as a musician. The 1882 Grand Rapids directory lists him as a musician at Smith's Opera House. The 1883 directory shows him as a partner with [James W. York](#) in Smith & York, a company that manufactured and sold musical instruments. Cris was at one time euphonium soloist with the [Patrick Gilmore Band](#), and was one of the leading theater orchestra directors of Grand Rapids and Chicago.



Ship *Johannes* by Jacob Boettger (German, 1781-1860), watercolor, 1835. Ship that brought the Schickell family from Bremen to Baltimore in 1834. Source: Deutsches Schifffahrtsmuseum ([German Maritime Museum](#)), Bremerhaven, Germany.

in a region known as the Sauerland. Franz owned a grocery store at 57 W. Bridge Street ([347 Bridge Street NW](#) after 1912). This was on the northeast corner of Bridge Street and Turner Street in a building called the Berles Block, where they also lived. Franz Berles died at age 56 of "Bright's Disease of the heart" on August 2, 1884, less than a year after William was born. Will's uncle Frank Berles continued to run the grocery store, with Adolph Wurzburg. Will's grandmother, Regina Green, was born in [Schönholthausen](#), Westphalia, about 16 miles west of Dorlar.

**DRUEKE-LYNCH CO.,** GRAND RAPIDS' LEADING LIQUOR STORE, 13-15 IONIA AVE., S.W.

1914 Grand Rapids Directory cover ad for Druke-Lynch, "Grand Rapids' leading liquor store," owned by Will's father, William Peter.

Will's father, William Peter, was a wholesaler of liquors and bar supplies. An advertisement on the front cover of the 1914 Grand Rapids City Directory proclaimed that Druke-Lynch was "Grand Rapids' Leading Liquor Store." William Peter came to America from Germany in 1871 with his sister Anna Sophia Druke and her fiancé Frederick William Wurzburg and Frederick's five children. They all lived in New York for two years, where Frederick had a dry-goods business, before all moving to Grand Rapids. William Peter was 18, his sister was 25. They took the steamship *Thuringia* from Hamburg to Castle Garden, New York. They came from [Niederhelden](#), Westphalia, Germany. Niederhelden is 58 miles east northeast of Cologne and 16 miles southwest of Dorlar. Will's paternal grandfather, Johann Wilhelm Drüeke, had died in Helden in 1854. His grandmother, Josephina Bernardina Heller Drüeke, died there in 1887.



Young Will Druke.

Will was the first of eight children.

In 1886, Will's sister Antoinette was born. That same year, Will's family moved from the Berles Block a half mile south to 122 Summer Street ([116 Summer Avenue NW](#) after 1912).

On March 17, 1887, Will's grandmother, [Bernardina Heller Drüeke](#),

Rose's paternal grandparents were [John and Mary Augusta Schickell Schmitt](#). Her grandmother had come over from Bremen to Baltimore with her parents on the sailing ship *Johannes* in 1834. They were from [Kassel](#), which is 32 miles east northeast of Frankfurt. At that time, Kassel was in the north of the Kingdom of Bavaria. Now, Kassel is in the Kinzig-Main-Kreis region in the south of Hesse. They settled in Tiffin, Ohio. Rose's grandfather John Schmitt also was from Kassel. He had come to Tiffin in 1838, married Rose's grandmother in Tiffin in 1847, and moved to Grand Rapids with her in 1851. He was listed as a saloonkeeper in the 1860 census. Rose's grandfather John died in 1861 when her father Cris was only 9.

Rose's mother Christine was a second-generation American of German descent. Her grandfather [William Koch](#), an undertaker, had immigrated in 1852 from [Andelfingen](#), Württemberg,







1875 Grand Rapids Directory ad for the undertaking business of Rose's maternal grandfather, William Koch.

now part of Baden-Württemberg. Her grandmother [Theresa Fasnacht Koch](#) had immigrated from [Königheim](#), which is 67 miles southeast of Frankfurt in Baden (now the Main-Tauber-Kreis region of Baden-Württemberg).

In 1887, Rose's mother [Christine](#) died at age 27. Rose was only five years old. Rose and her father Cris continued to live with Christine's parents, the Kochs.

In 1888, Rose's grandmother [Theresa Fasnacht Koch](#) died in Grand Rapids.

Hubert Hauser 1829-1912	
<a href="#">Charles A. Hauser</a> 1855-1946	
Mary Bohr 1833-1902	
Rose Viola Smith 1882-1973	
<a href="#">John Schmitt</a> 1820-1861	
<a href="#">Rose W. Smith</a> (Tante) 1854-1944	
<a href="#">Mary Augusta Schickell</a> 1828-1903	

In 1889, Rose and her father Cris moved in with Cris' sister [Rosa Smith Hauser](#), who was married to [Charles Hauser](#). Charles was a mason with his father during the summer and a turner in the Widdicomb furniture factory during the rest of the year. They were married on Rose's birthday, May 23, 1882. They had no children of their own. Rose called them Tante and Uncle Charlie. Tante is the German word for aunt. Tante and Uncle Charlie had moved in with Rose's grandmother, Mary Augusta Schickell Schmitt, when they were married. So, Rose's father was moving into the house he lived in before he married Christine. The house was at 105 Gold Avenue ([151 Gold Avenue NW](#) after 1912). This is the southwest corner of Gold and Sibley Street, two blocks east and two blocks north of where Rose lived with her Koch grandparents.

died in Helden, Germany. She was 75. She had been a widow for 32 years.

In 1887, Will's brother Frank was born.

In 1889, Will's sister Louise was born.

In 1893, Will's sister Bernice was born.

In 1895, Will's brother Richard was born.

In 1897, Will's brother Edwin was born.

In 1899, Will's brother Clarence was born.

In 1901, at age 18, Will was listed for the first time in the Grand Rapids directory. He was living at home and working as a clerk for D. Lynch. In 1902, he was promoted to salesman and in 1903 to traveling salesman. In 1904, he went to work as a traveling salesman in his father's wholesale liquor business. His daughter Marian recalled that as a salesman "he traveled all of Northern Michigan by train and horse and buggy."

Will met his future wife in 1904 or earlier. In 1904, he was on a business trip 85 miles north of Grand Rapids and wrote her a [letter](#) that read as follows.

**The Crosby**  
**All Trains Stop for Meals and Lunches**  
**Best Trout Fishing in Michigan**

Baldwin, Michigan, October 18, 1904 5:30 PM

Dear Rosa,

Have just a little time so thought I would print you a few lines.

I had a little hard luck this week making connections, so I won't get home until Thursday noon and will have to leave again in the afternoon at 3 o'clock so the best I can do is to call you up.

Business so far this week has been a little quiet.

6:45 PM just finished an elegant supper--had some Beefsteak, Baked hash, Fried Oysters, Fried Lake Trout, Baked Potato, Toast and Coffee--everything tasted fine.

No more news so will close, hoping to see or at least hear your sweet voice "through the Telephone, From

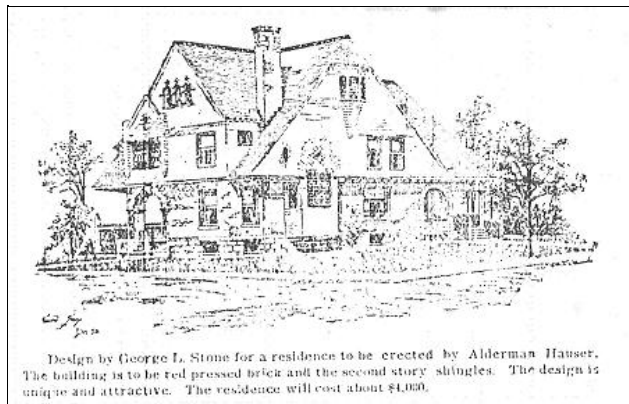
Your Will

In 1889, Rose's father Cris was listed in the Grand Rapids directory as a musician with the Redmond Grand Opera House.

In 1889, Rose's father Cris remarried. His new wife was Mary A. Hauser, Uncle Charlie's sister. In 1890, they had a son Crescenz, Rose's half brother.

In 1890, Uncle Charlie started his own construction business with William Hayden. In 1891, they were joined by [Edwin Owen](#). The company, now known as [Owen-Ames-Kimball Co.](#), continues in existence today

In 1892-93, Charles Hauser built a new house on the site of 105 Gold Avenue and 50 Sibley Street. The new address was 113 Gold Avenue ([151 Gold Avenue NW](#) after 1912).



1892 Newspaper article on the Hauser house at the southwest corner of Gold and Sibley, which replaced the Schmitt house and 50 Sibley Street.

In 1893, Rose's father Cris moved to Chicago to further his career as a musician. He took his wife Mary Hauser Smith, but Rose, age 11, and her half brother Crescenz, age 3, stayed in Grand Rapids with Tante and Uncle Charlie. In 1894, Mary Hauser Smith had a second son LeRoy. In 1896, a third son, Karl, was born in Chicago.



Photo of Rose V. Smith, her two surviving Koch and Smith grandparents, her visiting father, her "adopted" parents Tante and Uncle Charlie, and Father Zugelder. Possibly taken in 1894 at the time of Fr. Zugelder's ordination or first Mass. Standing: Cris J. Smith, Rev. Alexander F. Zugelder, Charles Hauser. Sitting: Rosa Smith Hauser, William Koch, Mary Augusta Schickell Smith. Kneeling: Rose V. Smith.

On June 19, 1894, [Alexander F. Zugelder](#), first cousin of Rose's

mother, was ordained at age 25 at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Grand Rapids. He said his first Mass at St. Mary's Church. Fr. Zugelder had immigrated from Königheim to Grand Rapids in 1888 at age 19 to study for the priesthood. Grand Rapids was a new diocese and had not yet established its own seminary, so he attended St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and the Grand Seminary at Montreal. He served as a pastor in four Michigan towns: Cadillac for eighteen months, Provemont for four years, Beaver Island for six years, and Beal City. He was transferred to Beal City in 1905.

In 1898, [Otilia Leuchtweis](#), Rose's second cousin, immigrated to Grand Rapids from Königheim at age 9 to live with her great uncle, William Koch and his second wife Elizabeth Lavo. Rose was seven years older than Otilia, but they became lifelong friends. Rose had lived with the Kochs herself and now only a few blocks away with Tante and Uncle Charlie. In the 1900 census, Otilia was living with the Kochs. In the 1910 census, she was living in Beal City with her uncle, Father Zugelder, and attending college. Otilia's mother, Mary Magdalena Zugelder Leuchtweis, had died in 1893, when Otilia was only four years old. Otilia's father, Michael Joseph Leuchtweis, remained in Königheim when Otilia emigrated.



Rose V. Smith.

In 1903, Rose's grandmother, [Mary Augusta Schickell Schmitt](#), died in Grand Rapids.

In 1905, Rose's grandfather [William Koch](#) died in Grand Rapids.



Rose V. Smith at the piano and Uncle Charlie with valve trombone in the parlor at 151 Gold Avenue. Circa 1905.

Rose was a pianist. From 1903 to 1906, at age 21 to 24, she was listed as a music teacher in the Grand Rapids directory, still living with Tante and Uncle Charlie. Eventually, she would become a member of the St. Cecilia Society and the Grand Rapids Symphony Society.



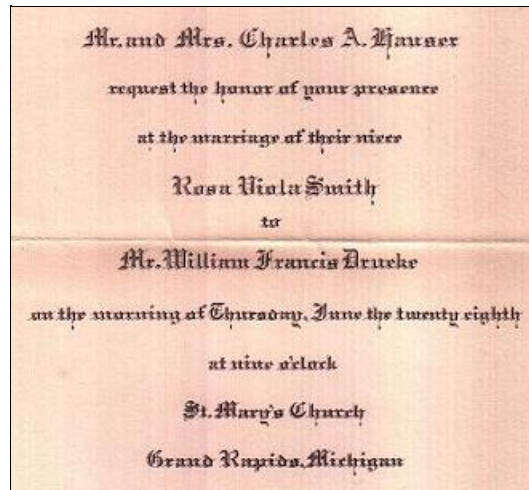
Rose V. Smith.

## William and Rose Marry in 1906, Have 6 Children

William Francis Drueke, 22, and Rose Viola Smith, 24, were married on June 28, 1906, at [St. Mary's Church](#).



Rose Smith Drueke.



Wedding Invitation.



St. Mary's Church, 1907. Source: *History of St. Mary's Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., 1907*.

**Grand Rapids, 1906-1883.** After the wedding, Will and Rose lived for a couple years at 101 Cass Avenue ([441 Cass Avenue SE](#) after 1912). Will continued to work as a traveling salesman in his father's liquor business

The first of their six children, Irene Elizabeth, was born May 1, 1907.

In 1907, [St. Mary's Church](#) celebrated its golden anniversary. St. Mary's parish was established in 1857 to meet the spiritual needs of the German population in the Grand Rapids area. The original church building, erected in 1857, was replaced in 1873 by the current building, a Gothic-style structure. The pastor in 1907, Father Joseph Schrembs, went on to become Archbishop of Cleveland. Among the founding parishioners of the church in 1857 were:

- Will's grandfather Franz Berles,
- Will's great grandfather John Green,
- Will's uncle Eberhard Drueke,

- Rose's great grandfather John Adam Schickell,
- Rose's grandfather William Koch, and
- Rose's adoptive grandfather Hubert Hauser.

Hubert Hauser was the masonry contractor for the 1873 church. The first bell for the 1873 church was a donation of John Green. Rose's mother's cousin, Father Alexander F. Zugelder, said his first Mass at [St. Mary's Church](#) in 1894.

In 1905, Rose's cousin once removed, [Father Zugelder](#), was transferred to St. Philomena's Church in Beal City, Michigan. Sometime after that, he built two cottages on Coldwater Lake, a few miles west of Beal City. The land was leased from Robert C. Hyslop, who had a store and hotel-type place at the southeast end of the lake. After the lease was up, Will and Rose bought the cottage that was on the northeast side of Coldwater Lake between the 4H Club and the [Isabella County Park](#), about 80 miles northwest of Grand Rapids. The address of the Park is now [1703 N. Littlefield Road](#) in Weidman. Father Zugelder's cottage was on the north side of the lake.

In 1908, the family moved to 96 Grand Avenue, which became [120 Grand Avenue NE](#) with the renumbering that took place in 1912. They were to live here for 45 years and raise six children.



Rose Druke and daughter Irene, 1907.



Rose Druke and Irene with dog and roses, 1908.



Will and Rose with daughters Irene and Marian at Coldwater Lake, 1909.

Rose and Will's second child, Marian, was born December 19, 1908.

In 1910, Will left his father's liquor business to become a traveling salesman for the Worden Grocery Co., wholesale grocers, importers and coffee roasters, at the northwest corner of Ottawa and Island. Island is now Weston. His daughter Marian wrote that he was the top salesman many times. They sold Quaker coffee and Morton salt -- canned goods and spices.

Their third child, Joseph William Druke was born February 4, 1911. The photo shows Joseph with his sisters, Irene and Marian, and their parents sitting in their car, a Flanders 20 Suburban in front of their house at 120 Grand Avenue. Joseph looks only a few months old, so the photo must have been taken around June 1911.

Will and Rose with their family in their [Flanders "20" Suburban](#), 120 Grand Avenue, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1911. From left: Will, 28, Irene, 4, Joe, circa 3 months, Rose, 29, and Marian, 3.

Marian wrote about their father that "about 1910, he bought his first car and he was the first salesman in Grand Rapids to use his car for business - but the country roads were so bad he did not use the car out of town." The car was a [Flanders "20" Suburban](#) built in 1910 or 1911. It was a roadster with a 100-inch wheelbase and a 20-horsepower motor. The back seat was removable so that the area behind the front seat could be used for a barrel-roofed pickup box to carry items such as a salesman's samples. The Flanders 20 was manufactured at the former DeLuxe Motor Company plant in Detroit purchased in July 1909 by the [Everitt-Metzger-Flanders Co.](#) and Studebaker. The Flanders "20" and other E-M-F/Studebaker cars were mass-produced to compete with Henry Ford's Model T, but they never were a strong competitor. The E-M-F company was started in 1908. Studebaker invested in the company shortly after it was started, retained the management and name, and sold half the cars produced as Studebakers through its distribution channel. In 1911, E-M-F produced 26,827 cars, second only to Ford, beating out Willys-Overland, Maxwell, and Buick. But Ford sold 69,762 cars. Eventually, the E-M-F cars were taken over entirely by Studebaker, the only company that was successful in making the transition from horse drawn to gasoline powered vehicles.

Rose and Will's fourth child, [William Francis Druke, Jr.](#), was born September 12, 1912. Bill's godfather was his uncle Frank Druke. Godmother was Otilia Leuchtweis, his mother's second cousin.

Three William Drukes in 1915: William Francis, 3; William Peter, 62, William Francis, 32.

In September 1912, Otilia Leuchtweis became the first Chapter president of [Theta Phi Alpha](#), a Catholic sorority started by Otilia and others at the University of Michigan.

In 1913, Will left Worden Grocery and went into a retail grocery partnership with James DeBoer and Glenn E. DeNise, called the James DeBoer Co. It was located on the west side of the river at [967 Bridge Street NW](#), on the northeast corner at the intersection with Lane Avenue.

In 1913, Tante and Uncle Charlie moved across the Grand River from [151 Gold Avenue NW](#) to [251 Union Ave NE](#), a few blocks northwest of Will and Rose. The Hauser family and the Smith family before them had lived at 151 Gold since at least 1867.

In 1914, Will left the grocery business and became President and Treasurer of Quinn Stationery Co. at [131 Ottawa Avenue NW](#). This was between Pearl and Monroe across the street from the Michigan Trust Building, where Hauser-Owen-Ames and Uncle Charlie had their office.

Will's daughter Marian wrote concerning her father that "he and Mr. Quinn bought out a stationery store that had been in business many years - it was on Monroe Avenue "downtown" - they had a big inventory to dispose of - dolls that were slightly imperfect and rum boxes." Marian went on to say that "Dad went on the road to sell rum boxes in 1914. At this time Germany and France and England were at war." She then says that "the buyer of Marshall Fields told Dad that they could not get chess sets and she gave him sample pieces of different sized sets. Dad came back to Grand Rapids and talked to Mr. Waddel about making these sets - he took his sample pieces - made in Grand Rapids - and went to New York to sell - business was so good he had Mother join him in New York. When he returned home he had to set up a factory to manufacture what he had sold."

Rose and Will's fifth child, Jane Marie, was born November 4, 1914, at St. Mary's Hospital. She was baptized at St. Mary's Church by Father Felix Vogt, first cousin of Will. Jane's godfather was her uncle Joseph Hesse, who had recently married her aunt Louise Druke. Godmother was her aunt Annette Druke [Matthews](#).

Sometime in the early 1900s, Will joined the [Peninsular Club](#) at [120 Ottawa Avenue NW](#), about a mile west of 120 Grand Avenue. The Pen Club began in 1881 as a club for local businessmen.

Peninsular Club, at the corner of Fountain Street & Ottawa Avenue in Downtown Grand Rapids. The Photo Archive of the Grand Rapids Public Library includes a 1935 picture of the [reading room](#) and a 1946 picture of the [bar](#).

By 1916, Mr. Quinn was bought out by Albert G. Dickinson, a man whom Will had gotten to know. The company name was changed to Wm. F. Druke & Co. and described in the Grand Rapids directory as a novelty manufacturer. The business grew to include backgammon, cribbage, and many other games. Albert probably was more of a financier than an active participant in the business because his name does not appear in the company name (Wm. F. Druke Co.). The 1920 census shows Albert, 50, manufacturer, born in Ohio, living at 38 Lafayette Avenue with his wife, 4 children, and 2 servants. Albert G. Dickinson and his brother, H. Randel, established Dickinson Brothers (now Dickinson Press) in 1884 in Painesville, Ohio. In 1886 they moved the company to Grand Rapids.

In 1917, Will decided that demand was great enough that he could afford to make instead of buy his products. Wm. F. Druke & Co. moved from Downtown to a small building he rented at [122 Scribner Avenue NW](#), which was back on the west side of the river. Wm. F. Druke, Jr. recounts that bought the equipment necessary to make chess and hired his own workforce. At that time Grand Rapids had a big supply of skilled woodworkers. The war in Europe was still going on, and Will got a big contract to make breech sticks to clean guns for the U.S. Army.

Cribbage set possibly manufactured by Wm. F. Druke & Co. sometime from 1914 to 1928. Included is a case, a cribbage board cut in half and fixed to the case, six pegs in a pouch, and a deck of cards. The board is made of some sort of cardboard. The backs of the cards have a Furniture City penant logo and triangles containing the initials GRM for Grand Rapids, Michigan. The faces have all different Grand Rapids city scenes and the name "Dickinson Brothers" in small print. One of the Dickinson Brothers was Albert G. Dickinson, who was associated with the Druke company. Dickinson Brothers printed catalogs for many furniture companies in Grand Rapids. The set is owned by Richard Owbridge. It was given to him circa 1970 by an Army buddy who was leaving the Army to study for the ministry.

Hudson Maxims Game of War, manufactured sometime from 1914 to 1928 by Wm. F. Druke & Co. Hudson Maxim, 1853-1927, invented the game in 1910 as an improvement on the game of chess. Beginning in 1914 Hudson vociferously argued for American rearmament. His brother Hiram, 1840-1916, invented the Maxim machine gun, and Hudson invented smokeless gun powder. See [Hudson Maxim Papers](#).

Also in 1917, [A Beginner's Book of Chess](#) was written to instruct beginning players.

Rose and Will's last child, Rosemary, was born November 20, 1916. Rose was 34. Will was 33.

On May 2, 1917, Rose's second cousin, [Otilia Leuchtweis](#), 27, married John O'Hara, 27. Otilia's uncle, Father Zugelder, presided over the marriage in Detroit. Witnesses were Edward O'Hara of Ann Arbor and Mary Smith of Grand Rapids. John was a lawyer, born in New York. His parents were Martin and Elizabeth Dean O'Hara. Otilia's parents were Carl and Magdelina Leuchtweis. In the 1920 census, Otilia and John had a child, John, and were living at [1149 Virginia Park](#) in Detroit. There is a [biography of John O'Hara](#) in the 1922 History of Detroit.

Druke Children, 1917. From left: Irene, 10, Jane, 3, William, 5, and Joseph, 6. Not shown: Rosemary, 1, and Marian, 8.

On April 30, 1918, Will's father, William Peter Druke, was forced out of business by a Michigan prohibition law that preceded the 18th



Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by almost two years. He was 65.

Wm. F. Druke, Jr. recounts that when the war ended Will was left with a big supply of breech sticks. So he decided to make toy rakes, hoes, and shovels using the breech sticks for the handles and sell them to toy departments. By 1919, the business had outgrown the small building at 122 Scribner on the west side, so Will bought a larger building back on the east side of the river at the [southeast corner of Marshall Avenue and the Pere Marquette Railroad](#). The Pere Marquette is now CSX.

Soon after moving to Marshall Avenue, Will added a furniture line of tables, desks, and other items for the home. The product line included spinet desks, secretary desks, bookshelves, and tables. Druke was one of the first companies to put an electric light in a desk. Richard Druke has 50-60 original photographic plates from the Druke furniture catalogue. The Grand Rapids Public Library has a number of them, as well as price lists.

On November 3, 1920, [Samuel Reshevsky](#), chess prodigy, age 8, moved to the United States from Poland with his parents, where they made a living from the talent of their child. William Druke wrote [Samuel Reshevsky, a Child Prodigy](#), an account of his relationship with Sammy Reshevsky. He says that he acted as Sammy's advance agent and had Sammy "playing two games in every city west of Chicago, one in a store and one in a club. Starting in Chicago and playing at the Fair Store, it took 44 police to take care of the crowd." The playing had been done only in clubs until Will suggested trying department stores. The idea was tested at Strawbridge and Clothier in Philadelphia, and it was "a tremendous success." Will wrote that "I, being the only manufacturer of a line of Chessmen in this country at that time, became interested in him, not only as a business promotion of the game, but his ability to interest people that had never played the game." In 1924, philanthropist Julius Rosenwald made Sammy give up exhibition chess at the age of 13 so he could get an education. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 1933 with a degree in accounting. After finishing school, he worked as an accountant for a Manhattan engineering & construction firm. He never played chess professionally, but won the U.S. chess championship seven times. In 1958, he was beaten in the U.S. championship by 14-year-old Bobby Fischer, who in 1972 would become the first American to win the world chess champion. Samuel Reshevsky died April 8, 1992. The New York Times wrote at the time of his death, that he astounded the world with his feats as a boy, dominated American chess for four nearly decades, and scored spectacular victories in international tournaments.

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Flyer showing Will Druke playing chess with Samuel Reshevsky in 1919

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Will Druke and Samuel Reshevsky in the center of a U-shaped table of chess players at the Hotel Breslin at Broadway at 29th Street in New York on February 27, 1922. *American Chess Bulletin*, March 1922, p. 44.

On July 22, 1920, the [New York Times](#) reported the results of the Masters' chess tournament on the Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City. The article noted that William Druke of Grand Rapids was one of two donors of special prizes.

In 1921 Sammy met the world's most famous movie star and a posed publicity photo showed them playing chess while Charlie Chaplin was editing "The Kid" in his Hollywood studio. MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY penned by him in 1964 at age 75 recalls this encounter. The *American Chess Bulletin* for January 1922 includes a picture on page 2 and the following:

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#### PLAYING CHESS WITH CHARLIE CHAPLIN

What boy with "red blood" in his veins would not envy little Samuel Rzeschewski in the above pose, which shows him seated opposite to Charlie Chaplin? The world's most famous fun-maker is doing his best to suppress a smile the while he studies intently the position before him. It does not appear from the records that Charlie knows ought of chess, but 'tis plain he is doing his level best against the tiny wizard of the chessboard. The picture was taken while both were in Los Angeles, home of the "movie" studios. The inscription at the top is in Charlie's own hand writing. While this is not intended as a "Ad," it is only right to mention that the success of Sammy's far Western tour is due to the personal interest and effort of William F. Druke of Grand Rapids, Mich., who traveled ahead as advance agent. Close scrutiny of the picture makes it clear that Charlie and Sammy are playing with a set of the famous Druke chessmen.

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Rose Druke and daughters. Assuming 1922, Rose would be 40, Irene and Marian in the back would be 15 and 14, and Rosemary and Jane in the front would be 6 and 8. Not shown: Joseph, 11, and William, 10.

On April 11, 1926, after eight years of retirement, Will's father Willian Peter Druke died. He was survived by his wife Elizabeth. They had been married 44 years.

Irene, 19, in the center of five women dancing in the breezes, probably in the Freshman Pageant at the University of Michigan, 1926. Caption: Dancing in the breezes. Written under the caption: "Irene, I have been saving this for you. Have you seen it? Quite popular to be running in the Detroit papers." Date is based on a picture on the reverse side of the Maharaja of Indore, Yeshwantrao Holkar, after his coronation, which was February 26, 1926.

In September 1926, daughter Irene started college at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She joined [Theta Phi Alpha](#), a Catholic

sorority started in 1912 by Otilia Leuchtweis, her mother's second cousin.

Wm. F. Druke & Co., Model 677, spinet desk with electric light, clock, and perpetual calendar. "The clock is a twelve-day Guaranteed Geneva, New Haven movement, and will last a lifetime," as described on 1924 [price list](#).

On September 15, 1926, the [New York Times](#) reported that the Federal Trade Commission had accused Wm. F. Druke & Co. and 26 other furniture companies in Grand Rapids of advertising oak, maple, and walnut veneer furniture without mentioning that it was veneer. The *Furniture Manufacturer* for October 1928 reported that the FTC had dismissed its

complaint against William F. Druke & Company because of dissolution of the firm. The article said that gumwood furniture veneered with a thin covering mahogany or walnut was advertised as "walnut and gumwood" or "mahogany and gumwood" without disclosing that the mahogany or walnut in each case was only veneer.

Wm. F. Druke, Jr. recounts that, the Wm. F. Druke Co. was sold in 1926 when Will's friend, Albert Stickley offered him a job as sales manager for the much larger [Stickley Brothers Furniture Company](#) in Grand Rapids. Will's stay with Stickley Furniture was short-lived as they had a disagreement over the purchase of some Stickley stock. Will was out of a job. After that, as his son tells it, Will sold hospital furniture, steel cabinets, and whatever to keep Irene in college at the University of Michigan, Marian at the University of Illinois, and feed the rest of the family.

The Druke Company was not listed in the 1926 Grand Rapids directory. In 1927, Wm. F. Druke & Co. is listed at 1600 Bishop SE. From 1928 to 1934, the Druke company name was not included in the Grand Rapids directory.

Son Joseph played tackle on the Catholic High School football team. On Sunday, December 2, 1928, the Grand Rapids Herald named him first-team All-City Tackle. Also selected for that team was Gerald Ford, the center on the South High School football team. Gerald Ford became [President of the United States](#) in 1974. [Full Team](#).

According to son William, Will bought stock on margin in 1926 and 1927. Following the 1929 stock market crash, he lost \$7,000. In the 1930 census, Will was listed as a salesman for a furniture factory.

In 1929, daughter Irene graduated from the University of Michigan with a B.S. in Architecture (Decorative Design). Irene was a member of [Theta Phi Alpha](#), a Catholic sorority started by Otilia Leuchtweis, her mother's second cousin. The [Michiganensian for 1931](#) shows that Irene was an active participant in activities at the University. She was a member of Alpha Alpha Gamma, an honorary fraternity for women in architecture founded in 1922 and now called the [Association for Women in Architecture](#). Junior women elected Irene to Wyvern (Welsh for protecting dragons), a society started in 1910 whose goal was bring Junior women together to assist Freshman women (see Michigan Alumnus, Vol. XVII, October 1910, [page 5](#)). In addition, Irene worked on the university's yearbook, the Michiganensian. She participated in the Freshman Pageant (see photo above), the Sophomore Circus, and the Junior Girls' Play.

The *Furniture Manufacturer* for September 1931 reported in "Michigan Matters" that Irene had written a history of furniture in connection with her work for an advanced degree at the University of Michigan.

#### **[Furniture Manufacturer, September 1931](#)**

WRITES HISTORY OF FURNITURE - Miss Irene Druke, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William F. Druke of Grand Rapids, has completed a thesis on the history of furniture in connection with her work for an advanced degree at the University of Michigan. This work, the text of which obviously can not be reproduced here, is an interesting account of the development of furniture arts through the ages. It sets forth not only the historical facts, but outlines the background of the several civilizations and historical periods, showing how furniture and the particular style in vogue in each era is dependent upon the mode of living at the time and the social life of the people.

Miss Druke was awarded a degree of Bachelor of Science in Design by the university some time ago. She has had a year and a half of experience at Hesse's Interior Decorating Shop in Grand Rapids and is now employed by the J. L. Hudson Company of Detroit. Her father formerly was a Grand Rapids furniture manufacturer and is now specializing in wood hospital furniture.

[MICHIGANENSIAN 1929](#)   [MICHIGANENSIAN 1931 - 1](#)   [MICHIGANENSIAN 1931 - 2](#)

In 1931, Marian graduated from the University of Illinois.

In 1932, Joe graduated from college.

In January 1932, William, Jr., graduated from Central High School. He attended Grand Rapids Junior College (now [Grand Rapids Community College](#)) until 1933.

When Jane reached college age in 1931, the family decided not to send her to a four-year college because of the economy. Instead, Jane attended Grand Rapids Junior College from 1931 to 1933.

Rosemary attended the University of Detroit.

Three Druke brothers, three Berles sisters, and families in the backyard of 120 Grand Avenue, 1931. Adults, from left: Frank Druke, 45, and wife

Bertha Reidel Druke, 35; Clarence Druke, 33, and wife Elizabeth "Betty" Druke; Josephine Berles Druke, 65 (husband Charles had died in 1928); Paul Hake, 56, and wife Abigail Berles Hake, 59; Elizabeth Berles Druke, 73 (husband William Peter had died in 1926); and Will Druke, 48. Children of Frank and Bertha: Mary Louise Druke, 4, standing in front of Bertha; Edwin Druke, 7, standing in front of Will. The girl in the middle is unknown. Frank and Bertha Reidel Druke and children were visiting from Long Island.

In November 1932, Rose's father [Cris J. Smith](#) died at age 80 in Kansas City, Missouri, where he was living with his son Karl. He was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Grand Rapids.

In 1932, Will re-established the Druke game business in their home. He resumed making cribbage and chess sets. For a time, he imported chess pieces from France. After refinishing and repackaging them, the pieces were sold with the Druke label.

William, Jr., recounts that the basement was used for chess dipping, boxing, and other assembly work, which was done after school by Jane, 16, and Rosemary, 14. The attic was used for an office, which was run by Marian, 24. William, Jr., hooked up a phone line from the basement to the attic. The Grand Rapids Chair Co. cut, shaped, and sanded the cribbage boards. The Sterling Brush Co. drilled the peg holes, put in a peg pocket in the bottom, and buffed a wax finish on the boards. The John Seven Co. supplied the shellac. Imperial Metals made the pegs. The Grand Rapids Box Co. made the boxes.

Around 1932, [Druke's Chess Primer](#) was written to instruct beginning players. The primer was composed by William A. Shinkmann (1847-1933), a life and fire insurance agent who was in business with Peter Schickell, a son of [John Adam and Maria Eva Schumm Schickell](#), and whose brother Joseph had married Emiline Boxheimer, a granddaughter of [John Adam and Maria Eva Schumm Schickell](#). The primer is similar to [A Beginner's Book of Chess](#), prepared in 1917 for the original Druke game company. Both booklets were obtained by William Biggins on eBay.

Druke Family, backyard of 120 Grand Avenue, Christmas 1935. From left, Bill, 23; Marian, 28; Jane, 21; Will, 52; Rose, 53; Rosemary, 19; Irene, 28; and Joe, 24.

By 1935, the business was doing well enough to rent space in the Shaw Building at [640 Front Avenue NW](#), on the west side of the Grand River. The company added poker chips and pipe racks, dice, dominoes, roulette racks, gavels and a variety of small hand games. The company was listed in the Grand Rapids directory as Wm. F. Druke, Inc. Wm. F. Druke was listed as

President, Joseph W. Druke as Vice President, Jane M. Druke as Secretary, and William F. Druke, Jr., is Treasurer.

During the Great Depression, in 1935, Rose's brother, Crescenz L. Smith, 45, went to Detroit to look for work. He left his wife Ethel and three young children and never returned. A private investigator was hired but never found him. Ethel and the children went to live with [Charles and Rosa Smith Hauser](#), who had raised Crescenz. Social Security records indicate that he joined Social Security in New York City in 1937. His [1942 WWII draft registration](#) shows his residence as the S.S. Nimba and his employer as ALCOA Steamship Lines, New York City. Social Security records indicate that he died in New York in 1962.

From 1936 to 1941, Will's brother Clarence worked for the Druke company. Clarence's wife Elizabeth also worked for the Druke company in 1936 and 1937.

The [Winter 1937](#) edition of *The Compass*, official publication of Irene's sorority, [Theta Phi Alpha](#), had an article about interesting Detroit alumnae that featured Will and Rose's daughter Irene. The article was written by Ruth Brady (who later married Harvey Russell Wickes of the Wickes Corporation and has a public library named after her in Saginaw). The article noted that Irene had graduated from the University of Michigan in 1931 with a degree in decorative design and went on to say "most of us wouldn't have had the courage to attempt a career in this field, knowing its limitations, but this did not concern Irene. Coming as she does from a Grand Rapids family that had long been associated with the finest traditions in furniture design and craftsmanship, she had learned much that was necessary to her training long before she began her college course." The article said Irene took a position at J. L. Hudson Co. Department Store and eventually was made decorating consultant for the store with headquarters in their model home. "It is her job to help plan the furnishings and decorating for all types of homes, from mansion to cottage, and she is called upon to give advice on every kind of interior decorating problem from period designs in furniture to harmonizing rag rugs, or as Irene puts it, she is sought as an authority on everything from where to build a stairway in a house to the correct shade to paint a bathroom scales."

On August 3, 1937, Will and Rose's daughter Irene Elizabeth married Philip Edward Cowan of Detroit in Grand Rapids. Because Philip was not a Catholic, they were married in the Irene Druke Cowan, August 3, 1937. rectory of St. Andrew's Cathedral. Jane's sister Marian was maid of honor. Philip and Irene established their home in Detroit. Philip was a graduate of the University of Michigan, as was Irene. They were married by [Father Andrew F. Zugelder](#), who was a first cousin of Jane's grandmother Christine Koch.

On Friday, November 12, 1937, Will and Rose's daughter Jane married [Al Biggins](#), a corrugated box salesman for Container Corporation of America.

On Thursday, November 4, 1937, Jane's birthday, and a week before Al and Jane were married, Irene was killed in a car being driven by Al. They were on their way to a rehearsal dinner. Irene had been married just two months earlier. The accident was in the headlines of both Grand Rapids dailies. Following are excerpts.

[The Grand Rapids Press, Friday, November 5, 1937](#)

Mrs. Philip E. Cowan, 29, married here in August and since that time a resident of Detroit, was killed outright and her sister, Miss Jane Druke, 23, of 120 Grand-av., N. E., and J. Alfred Biggins, 27, Chicago, whom she was to marry Saturday, were severely injured when their automobile crashed into a stalled trailer on US16, a mile and one-half east of Coopersville in Ottawa county, Thursday evening. At St. Mary's Hospital, where the two injured persons were taken, it was reported Friday their injuries were severe but that both probably would recover. Miss Druke suffered a fracture of her right arm and head injuries. Biggins received head injuries, hospital attendants said. Miss Druke and Biggins had planned their wedding for Saturday morning at St. Andrew's cathedral. Funeral services for Mrs. Cowan will be held at St. Andrew's cathedral Monday. Biggins and his guests were en route to Coopersville to attend a prenuptial dinner in honor of Miss Druke and Biggins at the home of Dr. and Mrs. J. M. Wenger. Driving behind the car which struck the trailer was a car containing Mr. and Mrs. William F. Druke of 120 Grand-av., N. E., Grand Rapids, parents of Mrs. Cowan and Miss Druke. Also in the Druke car were William, jr., Joseph, Marian and Rosemary Druke, brothers and sisters of Mrs. Cowan and Jane Druke.

#### **The Grand Rapids Herald, Friday, November 5, 1937**

Collision of an auto with a heavily loaded truck Thursday evening one and one-half miles east of Coopersville on US-16 while en route to a birthday party brought death to Mrs. Philip Cowan, 29, of 8634 Dunbarton ave., Detroit; critical injury to her sister, Miss Jane Druke, 23, of 120 Grand ave., NE., and lesser injuries to the latter's fiance, John A. Biggins, 27, of Chicago, whose local address is 1310 Lake dr., SE. Mrs. Cowan, a bride of last August and Miss Druke, who was to have been married Saturday at St. Andrew's church to Mr. Biggins are daughters of Mr. and Mrs. William Druke. The trailer truck which had gone into the ditch at the side of the highway Wednesday night had been pulled onto the highway and the driver, Floyd Woodward, 41, of 8722 Brandt st., Detroit, had gone to Coopersville to get some flares, to place around the truck, according to state police and Ottawa county sheriff's officers. Woodward left Jack Blonshine, Coopersville, the only witness to the accident, standing about 70 paces from the truck with a burning flare in his hand to ward traffic. According to Blonshine who, it was reported, waved his warning flare, the car driven by Biggins came along at a rapid speed bound west. As the Biggins car neared the truck on the north side of the road another going east passed the disabled trailer at the same time. In an instant the Biggins auto had struck the trailer killing Mrs. Cowan almost instantly. Mr. and Mrs. Druke, closely following the ill fated car, were soon at the scene and gave every aid possible. The trailer truck carried a heavy load of bottled beer and was being driven to Muskegon by Woodward.

The funeral for Irene Druke Cowan, 1907-1937, was held on Monday, November 8. Father Zugelder, Rose's cousin who married Irene and Philip, said the Mass at St. Andrew's Cathedral, assisted by Monsignor D. E. Malone and Father Felix Vogt of Saginaw, Will's cousin. Irene was buried in [Mount Calvary Cemetery](#) in Grand Rapids.

Tombstone at Mt. Calvary Cemetery: Irene Druke Cowan, 1907-1937.

Philip E. Cowan, 1906-1981, moved to Highland Park, Michigan, in 1939 and remarried. Children were born in 1944 and 1949. He was active in the community. In 1954, while he was general manager of a pharmacy on Woodward Avenue, he was appointed to complete the unexpired term of the mayor of Highland Park, who had moved to another city.

Al and Jane were married by Monsignor D. E. Malone on Friday November 12, 1937, at [St. Stephen's Church](#) in Grand Rapids. It must have been a somber event because of Irene's death. Originally, the wedding was to be on Saturday [November 6](#) at St. Andrew's Cathedral.

Al and Jane lived in Grand Rapids after they were married, and their first child, Emily Jane, was born there. In 1939, Al and Jane moved to Kalamazoo. Their second and third children Peter and James were born there. In 1942, Al was transferred to St. Louis, where their fourth child, Sarah Jane, was born. From 1944 to 1946, Al served as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Supply Corps. The family lived in Chicago and Lake Bluff, Illinois. After the war, the family moved back to St. Louis, where their last child William was born in 1947. In 1948, Al and Jane moved to Wilmette, Illinois. In 1963, they bought and operated a motel in the Florida Keys.

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Four generations at 120 Grand Avenue in 1939: Elizabeth Berles Druke, 81; Emily Jane Biggins, 1; Jane Druke Biggins, 25; William Francis Druke, 56.

Will's mother Elizabeth Berles Druke celebrated her 80th birthday on January 13, 1838. Her children gave a big party for her at the Peninsular Club in Grand Rapids.

In 1939, the Druke company was listed in the Grand Rapids directory as Druke Novelty Co., novelty manufacturers.

On May 8, 1939, Will and Rose's son Joseph, age 28, married Joan Pike, age 24, at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Grand Rapids. Joe worked for the Druke company, focusing on sales, and also had his own game company. Joe and Joan lived in Grand Rapids their whole life. In 1940, their first child Irene was born. In 1942, their second child Joseph was born. In 1943, their third child Kathleen was born. Kathleen was professed in 1968 as Sister Mary Joseph, a Carmelite nun. In 1945, their fourth child Frederick was born. In 1948, their fifth child Susan was born. And in 1952, their sixth child Paul was born.

In 1940 and 1941, the Druke company was listed in the Grand Rapids directory as Druke Brothers (Jos. W. and Wm. F., Jr.), toy manufacturers.

Will and Rose's daughter Rosemary entering the rectory of St. Andrew's Cathedral with her sister Jane as maid of honor on June 22, 1940, for her marriage to James Griffin.

On June 22, 1940, Will and Rose's daughter Rosemary, age 23, married James Griffin, age 27, in Grand Rapids. Rosemary's sister Jane was maid of honor. They were married in the rectory of St. Andrew's Cathedral because Jim was not a Catholic. Jim's father Langford was manager of the [Peninsular Club](#) and a close friend of Rosemary's father. Following their wedding, Jim and Rosemary moved to Detroit, where Jim had a job working for the Statler Hotel in the Food and Beverage department. In 1941, their first child Mary Gretchen was born. In 1942, their second child James was born. In 1943, Jim joined the Navy, and Rosemary moved back to Grand Rapids and rented an apartment around the corner from 120 Grand. In 1945, Marian bought a house at 326 Benjamin SE in Grand Rapids and sold it to Jim and Rosemary. When Jim returned from the Navy he eventually went to work for Sealtest Ice Cream. In 1945, their third child Robert was born. In 1948, their fourth child Thomas was born. In 1951, their fifth child Marian was born. In 1954, their sixth child Christopher was born.

On January 25, 1941, Will and Rose's son William, age 27, married Doris McLaughlin, age 20, at Sacred Heart Church in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. Bill met Doris in the Summer of 1940. While staying at the cottage at Coldwater Lake that summer, he spent some time in nearby Mt. Pleasant, where he met Doris. Bill worked for the Druke company, focusing on manufacturing, and eventually became president of the company. Bill and Doris spent their whole married life in Grand Rapids. In 1941, their first child Betsy was born. In 1943, their second child Bill was born. In 1944, their third child Carole was born. In 1946, their fourth child David was born. In 1949, their fifth child Mary Kay was born. In 1951, their sixth child Richard was born. In 1954, their seventh child Rose was born.

On December 27, 1941, Will's mother, Elizabeth Berles Druke, died at age 83 in Grand Rapids. On the same day, Elizabeth Druke was born to William and Doris McLaughlin Druke.

Druke factory at [601 Third Street NW](#), Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Israels family purchased the vacant Druke factory at in 2008 and completed a total renovation in 2010. The old factory is now the [Druke Building](#), a 24,000 square foot office building. The factory had been occupied by the Grand Rapids Casket Co. before Druke purchased it in 1941.

In 1941, the Druke factory was moved a few blocks west to a building purchased for \$15,000 at [601 3rd Street NW](#). The building had formerly been occupied by the Grand Rapids Casket Co.

On December 3, 1943, the [New York Times](#) ran an advertisement for Esquire Magazine promoting its Holiday Issue for Christmas 1943 and listing its advertisers, including Wm. F. Druke & Sons.

From 1941 to 1946, Will and his sons Joe and Bill applied for and received patents for the design of eight games. Click on the patent number in the table below to see the file at the U. S. Patent Office.

Patent	Year	Applicant	Game
<a href="#">D128794</a>	1941	William F. Druke	Chessmen
<a href="#">D134812</a>	1943	William F. Druke	Chessmen (Play A Way game)
<a href="#">D135239</a>	1943	William F. Druke, Jr.	Game Board (Play A Way game)
<a href="#">D135240</a>	1943	William F. Druke, Jr.	Game Board (Play A Way game)
<a href="#">D135706</a>	1943	Joseph W. Druke	Game Device (Play A Way Roulette)
<a href="#">D135707</a>	1943	William Francis Druke Jr.	Game Device (Play A Way Gin Rummy)
<a href="#">D135848</a>	1943	Joseph W. Druke	Puzzle (Tree Puzzle)
<a href="#">D2395174</a>	1946	William F. Druke	Game Apparatus (Play A Way game)

Druke ad in Playthings magazine, March 1946. [Larger image.](#)

Printing block for Druke logo. 5/8 x 1 3/16 inches. Old copper face mounted on hardwood. Source: eBay, July 2007.

Drawing for patent [D128794](#), issued to William F. Druke in 1941 for chessmen.

Travel games, called Play A Way, were shipped overseas to servicemen in the armed forces during World War II. These included chess sets and cribbage boards, roulette, and other games.

Beginning in 1942, the Druke company was listed in the Grand Rapids directory as "Wm. F. Druke & Sons (Wm. F., Wm. F., Jr., Jos. W and Marian L.)." Druke cribbage sets included a brochure on [How to Play Cribbage](#) with a list of Pocket Games available at dealers. It also promotes Druke Pocket Games as the ideal gift for men in service. The brochure was obtained by William Biggins on eBay.

Druke letterhead from a [1947 letter](#) to U. S. Sporting Goods Co., Van Wert, Ohio. Source: Marvin P. Gardner Jr., Centerville, Ohio, via eBay, January 2013.

In 1944, Rosa Schmitt Hauser (Rose's "Tante") died at age 90. In 1946 Charles A. Hauser (Rose's "Uncle Charlie") died at age 91.

The March 1946 edition of Playthings magazine contains an advertisement for Druke products and an invitation to stop by the Druke's room at the McAlpin Hotel in New York during the Toy Fair.

Sometime in the late 1940s, Will and Rose acquired Father Zugelder's cottage at Coldwater Lake and had it moved across the frozen lake during the winter to a new foundation built up the hill from their cottage. This second cottage accommodated their growing number of grandchildren.

In March 1950, Will and Rose had their children and grandchildren with them for a reunion at 120 Grand Avenue. The following pictures were taken at the reunion.

[Druke Grandchildren](#) Back row: Bill Biggins, Gretchen Griffin, Peter

**Will, Rose, Children, and Spouses** Back row: Al Biggins, Jane Druke Biggins, Joe Druke, Joan Pike Druke, Bill Druke, Jr., Doris McLaughlin Druke. Front row: Marian Druke, Will Druke, Rose Druke, Rosemary Druke Griffin. Not shown: Jim Griffin. March 1950. *Photo by Robinson Studio*

Biggins, Bob Griffin, Irene Druke, Emily Biggins, Jim Biggins, Joe Druke, Bill Druke. Middle row: Carole Lynn Druke, Betsy Druke, Jim Griffin, Kathleen Druke, Sarah Biggins, Fred Druke, David Druke. Front row: Tom Griffin, Mary Kay Druke, Susan Druke. Not yet born: Paul Druke, Dick Druke, Rose Druke, Chris Griffin, Marian Griffin. March 1950. *Photo by Robinson Studio*

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Joe Druke, Bill Biggins, Jim Biggins, Bill Druke, Fred Druke, Carole Lynn Druke.

Several months later in 1950, Will and Rose took a vacation to Europe. They brought home [Omega](#) watches from Switzerland for their grandchildren. The photo of Will and Rose feeding the pigeons was taken in front of the Milan Cathedral, which was built from 1366 and 1485. While on this trip to Europe, Will and Rose went to Helden, in the Westphalia section of Germany, to visit Emma Henze.

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Rose and Will Druke feeding the pigeons in front of the Milan Cathedral in 1950.

Will's father, William Peter, had an older sister, Anna Maria Klementina Druke, who married Clemens Henze in 1867. So, Emma was Will's first cousin. Here is a letter Rose wrote about their visit with Emma Henze.

Brussels, Belgium - Sunday, July 16, 1950

My dear Family:

Tuesday, July 11 - we checked most of our baggage at the Excelsior hotel, Koln and left at 11 A.M. to go to Niederwenigen. We changed trains at Hagen to get to Hattingen, had lunch there and then taxi to Niederwenigen. We had wired Victor and Anna so they were at a window waiting for us.

Their uncle, a bachelor, owns a little tavern and they live with him. You should have seen the food on the table for us - we were so sorry we had eaten. They are so hospitable! Their children, Ursula, age 4, and Mathew, age 9 months old, are darling. Had dinner with them at 6 o'clock and then went back to Hattingen to sleep.

Wed. July 12: Took an early train to Helden to see Emma Henze. Took a taxi to her grand big home high upon a hill. Her son and his wife were glad to see us but Emma was in a hospital. She had caught her finger in a sausage machine two weeks before, had to have it amputated and was having a bad time of it. They gave us a grand meal and then we taxied to the hospital to see Emma.

They told us how the American soldiers came to their house and ransacked everything and how they stole everything - all their jewelry wedding rings and all at the point of their guns. It didn't sound very good. They have beautiful dishes and silverware which they saved as they buried it in their cellar.

Then we took the train to Siegen and planned to stay there overnight. There were three hotels. But found the town was all shot to pieces. Couldn't get a room for love or money. We phoned several nearby towns and taxied miles and when we got to one and I saw the rickety patched walls, I told Dad I was afraid to stay there. We went back to Siegen and called Dr. Padberg where we were going to stay the next morning. It was 10:00 P.M. and he said "you come right over here". So we taxied back in the other direction.

They were grand people and we visited late that night and they got us up at 5:30 the next morning as we had to taxi back to Siegen and take an early train back to Koln.

It was Thursday July 13. We stayed in Koln that night to rest. Friday, July 14, we left Koln at noon and were soon out of Germany and arrived in Brussels at 6 P.M. Found the letter Marian wrote on July 11th. Also a business letter to Dad.

Love from Mother and Dad

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Postcard of S.S. *America* by Steeolograph Co.

Will and Rose took the S.S. *America* back in First Class. They left Southampton, England, on July 24, 1950, and arrived in New York City six day later on July 30. The ship was operated by the Untied States Lines. The fare to Southampton in 1951 was \$295 and up in First Class, \$200 in Cabin, and \$160 in Tourist.

In 1953, Will, age 70, and Rose, age 71, built a new one-story brick house so that they would not have to climb stairs. The house was 2.5 miles southeast of 120 Grand Avenue SE, at [1624 Seminole Road SE](#) in St.

Stephen's parish in Grand Rapids. Their grandson Jim Griffin recalls that

Will and Rose had the house built on Seminole because they were in a serious auto accident in Mt. Pleasant. Some teenage boy hit them broadside knocking Will out of the car and Rose almost lost her life. The vehicle hit them on her side of the car. Rose was told she would never walk again. A one-story house was built to accommodate a wheel chair. Rose fully recovered, however, and used her legs for many years after that.

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Will and Rose in front of mirror in living room at 1624 Seminole Road, 1953-56.

In 1954, the Druke company purchased the first of three plastic injection molding machines to manufacture plastic game parts for interlocking poker chips, chess pieces, and cribbage pegs. Prior to that, plastic game parts were contracted out.

On October 16, 1954, Marian, age 45, married John Ederer, age 47, in Grand Rapids at [St. Stephen's Church](#). They lived in Saginaw and owned a cottage on Saginaw Bay at Fish Point. They rented a cottage on Drummond Island off the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, about 50 miles east of the Mackinac Bridge, where they fished a lot. Marian had land and a small home called Cherry Lane contiguous to her brother William's home on Plymouth Road. Because her property could not be sold for zoning reasons, she gave it to her brother when she moved to Saginaw.

In 1955, the Grand Rapids directory listed the officers of Wm. F. Druke & Sons as Wm. F. Druke, President; Jos. W. Druke, Vice President; Mrs. Marian L. Ederer, Secretary, and Wm. F. Druke, Jr., Treasurer.

## William Dies in 1956 at age 72

Tombstone at Mt. Calvary Cemetery: William F. Druke, 1883-1956.

On January 18, 1956, William Francis Druke, died at age 72 of an [abdominal aortic aneurism](#) at [Berea College Hospital](#) in Berea, Kentucky. He and Rose were driving to Florida for a two-month vacation. Following a funeral mass at [St. Stephen's Church](#) in Grand Rapids, he was buried at [Mount Calvary Cemetery](#).

### **The Grand Rapids Herald, Thursday, January 19, 1956** **W. F. Druke, Manufacturer, Is Dead at 72**

GR Civic Leader Was Pioneer of Chess Games in U.S.  
William F. Druke Sr., of 1624 Seminole SE., manufacturer of chess and other adult games and a civic leader, died in Berea Ky., Wednesday, while on his way to Florida. He was 72.

Mr. and Mrs. Druke left Grand Rapids Monday for a two-months trip. He had a physical examination before leaving and was believed in good health. Tuesday afternoon he complained of not feeling well and when examined by a physician in Berea was ordered to College Hospital there. Wednesday, at 11 a. m., he suffered a heart attack which proved fatal.

Mr. Druke was a native of Grand Rapids. He was a furniture manufacturer and in 1914 began manufacturing a line of chess games. In this project he was a pioneer in America. Before that time all chess games were imported from Europe until their importation was stopped by World War I.

In 1932 he and his sons established the William F. Druke and Sons Company, manufacturer of adult games. The plant is located at 601 Third NW.

Mr. Druke was a member of St. Stephen's Church and Holy name Society. He also was a member, one of the earliest, of the Peninsular Club.

Beside his wife Rose, Mr. Druke is survived by two sons, William F. Jr. and Joseph W. of Grand Rapids; three daughters, Mrs. James L. Griffin of Grand Rapids; Mrs. John E. Ederer of Saginaw and Mrs. J. Alfred Biggins of Wilmette, Ill.; a brother Clarence A. of Grand Rapids; three sisters, Mrs. Joseph A. Hesse, Mrs. Claude R. Cheney and Mrs. George A. Matthews of Grand Rapids, and 24 grandchildren.

The body will arrive at O'Brien's Colonial Home late Thursday. Funeral services will be in St. Stephen's Church at 10 a. m. Saturday. Burial will be at Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

**The Grand Rapids Press, Thursday, January 19, 1956**  
DIES ON VACATION--Funeral services for William F. Druke, sr., 72, of 1624 Seminole dr., SE, will be held at 10 a. m. Saturday at St. Stephen's church. Owner of a games - manufacturing firm here, he died of a heart attack Wednesday in Berea Ky., while on his way to

## Rose Widowed at Age 73

**Grand Rapids, 1956-1973.** With Will's death in 1956, Rose was widowed after 49 years of marriage. Will and Rose missed their 50th wedding anniversary by five months.

In the 1956-1960 Grand Rapids directory listings for Wm. F. Druke & Sons, Inc., William was President, Joseph was Vice President and Treasurer, and Marian was Secretary. In the 1967 directory, there is no company listing, but in their personal listings, Joseph was President and William was Vice President and Treasurer. In the 1968 directory listing for the company, William was President, Marian was Vice president and Secretary, and Willetta Potter was Treasurer. In their 1968 personal listings, William was President, and Joseph was Treasurer.

On July 13, 1963, Rose's second cousin [Otilia Leuchtweis O'Hara](#) died after a long illness. A tribute appeared in the [Fall 1963](#) issue of *The Compass* of Theta Phi Alpha, the sorority that Otilia helped found at the University of Michigan in 1912. Otilia was 73, seven years younger than Rose. Both Otilia and Rose had had their mothers die when they were young girls. Otilia was survived by her husband Judge John P. O'Hara, three sons, and 14 grandchildren.

In July and August of 1972, American Bobby Fischer beat the Russian chess champion Boris Spassky in Reykjavik, Iceland. Druke Games received a priceless promotion when photos showed Bobby Fischer practicing with Druke chessmen. The match in Iceland between Fischer and Boris Spassky doubled orders for Druke chess sets. An [article on July 9, 1972](#), in the Sunday New York Times, mentioned increased demand for chess sets as a result of the match. The article mentioned that the William F. Druke Company's Players Choice set was available for \$9.50 by mail from the United States Chess Federation.

## Rose Dies in 1973 at Age 91

Tombstone at Mt. Calvary Cemetery: Rose V. Druke, 1882-1973.

On August 13, 1973, Rose Viola Druke, died at age 91 in her home. She had been a widow for 17 years. Following a funeral mass

Florida vacation with his wife. Burial will be at Mount Calvary cemetery.

### **The Grand Rapids Herald, Friday, January 20, 1956** **Druke Rites Will Be Held on Saturday**

Funeral services for William F. Druke Sr., civic leader and manufacturer of chess and other adult games, will be held in St. Stephen's Church at 10 a. m. Saturday. Burial will be in Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

Mr. Druke died in Berea, Ky., Wednesday, while on his way to Florida. The body, which had been expected Thursday, will be at the O'Brien Colonial Home Friday.

Pallbearers will be his nephews Joseph J. Hesse Jr., William E. Hesse, Thomas E. Matthews, James Matthews, Francis J. DePauw and Robert F. Hake.

Honorary pallbearers will be Dr. A Verne Wenger, Jay W. Linsey, Roland M. Shivel, Langford H. Griffin, James L. McInerney, A. Bonny O'Brien, William L. Berner, John E. Frey and Raymond F. Knape.

Mr. Druke was 72 and lived at 1624 Seminole SE.

### **Obituary in Grand Rapids Paper in January 1956**

Druke--William F. Druke sr., aged 72, of 1624 Seminole rd., SE, passed away Wednesday morning at Berea, Ky. Surviving are his widow, Rose; two sons, William, jr., and Joseph of Grand Rapids; three daughters, Mrs. James L. Griffin, of Grand Rapids, Mrs. John Ederer of Saginaw and Mrs. A. J. Biggins of Wilmette, Ill.; a brother, Clarence of Grand Rapids; three sisters, Mrs. Claude Cheney, Mrs. J. A. Hesse and Mrs. George Matthews of Grand Rapids, and twenty-four grandchildren. Requiem Mass will be sung Saturday morning at 10 o'clock at St. Stephen's church. Interment Mt. Calvary cemetery. Relatives and friends will recite the Rosary Friday evening at 8:30 at O'Brien's Colonial Home, where Mr. Druke reposes.

at [St. Stephen's Church](#), she was buried at [Mount Calvary Cemetery](#) next to her husband Will.

### **Grand Rapids Press, Monday August 13, 1973**

#### **Mrs. W. F. Druke, Industrialist's Widow**

Mrs. William F. (Rose) Druke, 91, of 1624 Seminole Rd. SE, past board member of William F. Druke & Sons, Inc., died Sunday at Villa Elizabeth.

She was the widow of William F. Druke, founder of the corporation. Born in Grand Rapids, and a piano teacher many years ago, she was an active member of St. Cecilia Society, Grand Rapids Symphony, Women's City Club, Mary Free Bed Guild and the Grand Rapids Rose Society.

Surviving are three daughters, Mrs. John E. (Marian) Ederer of Saginaw, Mrs. J. Alfred (Jane) Biggins of Long Beach, Calif., Mrs. James L. (Rosemary) Griffin of Grand Rapids; two sons, William F. and Joseph W. of Grand Rapids; 24 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be at 10 a.m. Tuesday in St. Stephen's Church. Burial will be in Mount Calvary Cemetery. The body is at Metcalf Mortuary.

### **Obituary in Grand Rapids Paper in August 1973**

Druke--Mrs. Rose V. Druke, aged 91, of Seminole Rd. SE, passed away Sunday night. Mrs. Druke was a native and lifelong resident of Grand Rapids, the widow of William F. Druke Sr., founder of William F. Druke and Sons, Inc., a longtime member of the St. Cecilia Society, the Women's City Club, the Grand Rapids Symphony Society, the Mary Free Bed Guild and a member of Rose Society. Surviving are three daughters, Mrs. John E. (Marian) Ederer of Saginaw, Mrs. J. Alfred (Jane) Biggins of Long Beach, Calif., Mrs. James L. (Rosemary) Griffin; two sons, William F. Druke, Joseph W. Druke, all of Grand Rapids; 24 grandchildren, and 30 great-grandchildren. Mrs. Druke was taken to the Metcalf Mortuary where the family will receive friends Monday 7 to 9 p.m. The Rosary will be recited at 8 p.m. Funeral Mass at 10 a.m. Tuesday in St. Stephen's Church. Interment Mount Calvary Cemetery.

## **William and Rose Smith Druke: 6 children, 24 grandchildren**

[Irene Elizabeth Druke](#) 1907-1937 m. 1937 Philip Cowan 1906-1998

[Marian Louise Druke](#) 1908-1991 m. 1964 John Elmer Ederer 1907-1980

[Joseph William Druke](#) 1911-1994 m. 1939 Joan Elizabeth Pike 1914-1997

- Irene Druke b. 1940
- Joseph Druke b. 1942 m. 1979 Ann McDonald b. 1942
- Kathleen Joan Druke 1943-1995 professed 1968 Sister Mary Joseph
- Frederick Druke 1945-2004 m. 1981 Susan Stephens b. 1945
- Susan Druke b. 1948 m. 1977 Ned Wernette b. 1949
- [Paul Druke](#) b. 1952 m. 1978 Mary Jo Roys b. 1953

[William Francis Druke](#) 1912-2000 m. 1941 Doris McLaughlin 1920-1997

- Elizabeth Druke b. 1941 m. 1963-1979 Michael Mabin b. 1944
- [William Francis Druke](#) b. 1943 m. 1964 Bertha Tucker b. 1948 m. 1967 Mary Bialecki b. 1948 m. 1992 Mary Jo Erxleben b. 1942
- Carole Druke b. 1944 m. 1964 Stanley Gohl b. 1948 m. 1980 Richard Klein b. 1951
- David Druke b. 1946 m. 1970-1979 Pamela Knutson b. 1949 m. 1988 Maureen Wysocki b. 1962
- [Mary Kay Druke](#) b. 1949 m. 1970-1987 Leo Parks b. 1950 m. 2000 Carl E. Groening b. 1949
- Richard Druke b. 1951 m. 1972 Margie Lindgrove b. 1953 m. 1992 Victoria "Corey" Payne b. 1957
- Rose Druke 1954-2003

On May 1, 2000, [William F. Druke](#) died in Grand Rapids of pneumonia. He was 87, the last of the Druke children to die. Following mass at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, he was buried at [Woodlawn Cemetery](#) in Grand Rapids. William learned photography as a young boy from his favorite uncle, Crescence Smith. Many of his photos were donated to the [Grand Rapids Public Library](#). The photos are in The Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center, Collection No. 212. William bought a computer in 1985 and used it to record the Druke family tree, a valuable source of information for this Web site.

[Jane Marie Druke](#) 1914-1998 m. 1937 [John Alfred Biggins](#) 1910-1979

- [Emily Jane Biggins](#) b. 1938 m. 1962 [John David Williams](#) b. 1937
- [Peter Alfred Biggins](#) b. 1939 m. 1964 [Marilyn Kathryn Carroll](#) b. 1940
- James Alfred Biggins b. 1941 m. 1969 Anne Roarty b. 1944
- [Sarah Jane Biggins](#) b. 1943 m. 1969 Elroy John Kelzenberg b. 1938
- William Alfred Biggins b. 1947 m. 1986 Christie Ann Mays b. 1948

[Rosemary Druke](#) 1916-1983 m. 1940 [James Griffin](#) 1913-1990

- Mary Gretchen Griffin b. 1941 m. 1962 Doug Dart m. Buth
- James L. Griffin II b. 1942 m. 1963 Heidi m. 1998 Ruth
- Robert W. Griffin b. 1945 m. 1969 Jane Raubinger b. 1947
- Thomas P. Griffin b. 1948 m. 1972 Mary Masalkoski b. 1948
- Marian L. Griffin b. 1951
- Chris Griffin b. 1954 m. 1978 Sharon

## **58 great grandchildren**



Information on great grandchildren has been excluded. A version of this page without the exclusion is available upon request. Contact Peter or Marilyn Carroll Biggins:

Email	Phone	Address
Peter: <a href="mailto:pabiggin@optonline.net">pabiggin@optonline.net</a>	203-655-3694	<a href="#">230 Old Kings Highway North</a>
Marilyn: <a href="mailto:marilynbiggins@yahoo.com">marilynbiggins@yahoo.com</a>		Darien, CT 06820 USA

## The Druke Building

Druke factory at [601 3rd Street NW](#), prior to renovation by the Israels family. The factory had been occupied by the Grand Rapids Casket Co. before Druke purchased it in 1941.

Carrom's Druke logo.

Druke Building at 605 Seward Avenue NW ([601 3rd Street NW](#)), after renovation by the Israels family, including a new layer of brick on the outside and the addition of a clocktower. Photo by Paul Druke.

The Druke game company was founded in 1914 by William F. Druke. In 1941, needing more space, he bought a factory at [601 3rd Street NW](#) that had been occupied by the Grand Rapids Casket Co.

Upon his death in 1957 at age 72, the Druke company continued to be run by his son Bill. In 1987, when Bill was age 75, the Druke company was sold to the Low Tec Co. In 1990, the Low Tec Co. sold the company to the [Carrom Company](#), which moved manufacturing operations to its home in Ludington, Michigan, but continues to use the [Druke](#) name. See [Ludington Daily News, July 15, 1992](#).

Robert Israels purchased the vacant Druke factory in 2008 and completed a \$7 million renovation in 2010. The renovated factory is called the [Druke Building](#), a 24,000 square foot office building. The primary tenant is [Open Systems Technologies](#), a privately-held IT company with 100 employees, founded in 1997.

In an interview published in the *Commercial Quarterly*, February 1, 2010, David Israels explained why they were keeping the Druke name on the renovated building: "The Druke family and the Druke game company are part of the history of Grand Rapids, and we still have Drukes living in the city. So, it is important for us to maintain that and showcase that as we go forward. It's amazing how many people we've talked to who have a story about a Druke game. That's why we want to keep that name as part of the community."

In an article in *The Grand Rapids Press*, July 13, 2010, Dan Behm, President of Open Systems Technologies, mentions that they have named their conference rooms in the former Druke Company building after board games once made on-site, like backgammon and cribbage. The conference room inside the clocktower is named after the Druke game, "Shoot the Moon." Druke games are made available in the rooms named after them. The games are intended to make employees feel at home, along with a gym and locker rooms, a small library, comfy chairs near a fireplace, and two kitchens.

**Druke Salad.** The nearby [Fourth Street Deli](#) makes a delicious *Druke Salad* named after the Druke Building: The deli is located a block north of the Druke Building, at [528 4th Street NW](#).

### Druke Salad

4th Street Deli's Chris Sommerfeldt and Scott Schultz debut a northwest Grand Rapids location. Photo by Michael Buck. Source: [Grand Rapids Business Journal](#).

- shrimp salad,
- roasted chicken,
- apple smoked bacon,
- white cheddar,
- green onions,
- cherry tomatoes,
- croutons, spring mix, and
- lemon pesto vinaigrette.

Druke Salad at 4th Street Deli. Photo by Paul Druke.