Dutch Catholics and Protestants in Wisconsin: A Study in Contrasts and Similarities

Robert P. Swierenga and Hans Krabbendam


Soon after Congress closed the "Golden Door" in the 1920s with restrictive immigration laws, American and European social historians began to document the history of immigration, with ethnic amateurs helping them.¹ Europeans generally focused on the country of origin and Americans on the country of destination. The early studies stressed the positive contributions of a particular nationality group to American society, notably in fighting its wars and shaping its democracy. After World War II, the celebration of national characteristics lost its innocence, while in the 1990s multiculturalism boosted the study of minorities, including smaller ethnic groups.²

One of the questions that migration scholars face in an era of transnationalism is whether it is still useful to consider the nation-state as a unit of research. This issue is important in immigration history, which typically uses the nation as an organizing category. There is no consensus that the nation is redundant, but the debate should encourage us to examine the nation as a category in migration research. That this conference is devoted to one nationality indicates that the nation is still a valid category. This is not just a rephrasing of the traditional question of cultural persistence versus assimilation. It looks at how the Dutch and the American nation held their grip on the immigrants and shaped their settlement processes. It combines American and European research questions and transcends borders. How strong was a national bond in the case of the Dutch?

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¹ In the summer of 2001, we made a whirlwind five-day investigation of the Dutch collections of every major historical library in eastern Wisconsin, including the universities of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Wisconsin-Green Bay; the Sheboygan Historical Society, Brown County Library, and St. Norbert’s College library. We also visited every Dutch settlement from Cedar Grove to De Pere. We wish to thank Abbot Emeritus Benjamin Mackin and the monks of St. Norbert Abby, who graciously hosted us for two days, during which Father Mackin took us on a tour of Little Chute, Hollandtown, and De Pere.

The short answer to this question is: it was weak. Dutch Catholics and Dutch Protestants lived in completely separate worlds on both sides of the Atlantic. This segregation suggests that religion trumped nationality as the dominant force for immigrant community formation. Henry Lucas stated in his book, *Netherlanders in America* (1955), that “religion determined the pattern of Dutch settlement in America.” "Lucas insisted that religious bonds were stronger then ethnic ties. “Dutch Calvinists especially,” he said, “stick together not primarily on the basis of ethnicity or nationalism but on the basis of their religion.”

Though this conclusion rings true, there is more to it. That Protestants and Catholics had few contacts in America does not mean that their nationality did not play any part. It could be fruitful to look at how weak or strong the impact of the sending and receiving nation was in the century of the mass immigration. Behavioral similarities may have led to earlier, possibly national, patterns of migration and settlement that fluctuated over time. Of course, such similarities are not necessarily caused by national background.

The case of Dutch Catholics and Protestants shows that national feelings were not the strongest factors in self-identification, although patriotic sentiment was rising after the mid-nineteenth century. National pride began among the liberal elite in the Netherlands and spread to the other classes through history textbooks, national commemorations, and celebrations of the royal House of Orange. In the cultural sense, the grip of the nation at the beginning of the mass migration was not as strong as later. That was also true for the United States, where the Civil War and the campaign to Americanize came later. Theodore Roosevelt's "True Americanism" campaign targeted the hyphenated American in the first two decades of the twentieth century. There are indirect (mental) and explicit ties to a nation, others were direct and official (usually arranged by the state, think of citizenship and naturalization) others implicit and private (use of social networks to find jobs, farming practices, mobility).

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Wisconsin is an ideal state to compare Dutch Protestants and Dutch Catholics. Of the four states bordering Lake Michigan, the Badger State had the most balanced distribution between Roman Catholics and Protestants, 43 to 57 percent. In all the other Midwestern states, with the exception of Minnesota, Protestants were strongly over-represented during the founding years 1850-1870.\(^5\)

In Wisconsin, the two ethnoreligious groups came from similar social-economic backgrounds (landless farm workers) and they emigrated in the same cyclical pattern, in a wave from 1846 to 1857 and again from 1866 to 1872, with a lull in between caused by the American financial panic of 1857 and Civil War. The two groups were roughly equal in number (10,600 Protestants to 7,900 Catholics in 1870), and they settled in separate colonies along the Lake Michigan shoreline barely fifty miles apart. That Protestants and Catholics isolated themselves from one another was to be expected; they had been regionally segmented in the Old Country for centuries, ever since the formation of the Dutch Republic in 1648. While most took up farming, some went to the rising cities of Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Green Bay, and Appleton. Both groups maintain a presence in their respective areas and reveal a comparable bond with a "Dutch" past.\(^6\)

In our presentation, we would like to examine the role of the two nations in three categories: the first phase of community settlements, social-economic features, and cultural expressions. Each category has three subcategories: the settlement phase looks at the incentive, the kind of leadership, and religion. The socio-economic section examines


the labor market, rural-urban distribution, and mixed marriages. The cultural section focuses on education, information, and leisure. In the conclusion, we compare the place of transnational contacts for Dutch Protestants and Catholics.

**Origins and Timing**

In timing, background, and areas of origin, the two groups were comparable. They came in the early phase of mass migration in the 1840s, prodded by the economic hardships caused by the potato blight and subsequent depression, coupled with suppression of their religious freedoms by the government. Dutch Catholics were reluctant emigrants, because their parish priests advised against it. In 1846, a "Catholic citizen" published a brochure in s’ Hertogenbosch (the capital of the province of Noord Brabant), under the ominous title: "Look before you leap: A friendly word to my fellow countrymen, about the rampant disease in our Fatherland called Emigration." Americans despise foreigners, the writer warned, and life is "hard and lonely.”

Dutch Catholics left in comparatively small numbers, mostly after the American Civil War, and settled mainly in large cities. Catholics made up only 18 percent of all emigrants up to 1880 (11,400 persons) but they comprised 36 percent of the Netherlands population in 1849. By comparison, Dutch Seceders, who broke with the national Hervormde Kerk in 1834, made up 20 percent of the emigrants (12,500), while they comprised 1 percent of the population in 1849. Considering only the first immigrant wave, 1846-1857, Seceders outnumbered Catholics 7,500 to 4,600 (1.6 to 1). The Hervormden and a few other Protestants (Lutherans and Mennonites) totaled 12,500. The Catholics came the predominately Catholic provinces of Noord Brabant and Limburg, with a smattering from Gelderland, Zuid Holland, and Zeeland.

The immigrants fit into a national Dutch emigration pattern with regional differences. The Dutch government did not interfere in the migration process, but American authorities increased their grip on the immigrant flow. At the receiving end, the Protestants were welcomed for both practical and emotional reasons as part of the

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9 Swierenga, *Faith and Family*, Table 5.1, 156.
American nation (as the Pilgrim Fathers of the West), while Catholics clearly came as outsiders and were victims of the xenophobic Know-Nothing Party in the 1840s and 1850s. Some Protestant immigrants were also smeared by these nativists, notably in the Pella, Iowa colony.¹⁰

*Catholic Leadership*

A remarkable difference between Dutch Catholics and Protestant is the impetus for the first group migrations. The Protestant push came from the home country, the Catholic push came from the receiving country, as part of a campaign to strengthen overseas missionary endeavors. The American Catholic Church needed priests, and with the Rome’s active encouragement, sixty-five Dutch Jesuits and dozens of Crosiers, Capucians, and Dominicans, answered the missionary call. Several went before the start of Dutch emigration in 1845-47.¹¹

One of the first was Fr. Theodorus (Theodore) Johannes Van den Broek (1783-1951), a Dominican priest from Uden (province of Noord Brabant) who had ministered to the Menominee Indians at Little Chute for fourteen years (1834-1847) and founded the St. John Parish there in 1836. In 1843, the Menominee Indian Nation gave up their lands for white settlement under a treaty forced on them by the U.S. government. They ceded four million acres for $700,000 in the 1836 Treaty of the Cedars. Thereafter, Van den Broek served the mainly German and Irish settlers in Little Chute. In 1847, then in his mid-sixties, he returned to Uden to obtain an inheritance after the death of his widowed mother. Upon arrival, he was shocked to learn that the Amsterdam notary who was to take care of his interests had absconded with the entire inheritance of 10,000 guilders ($4,000).¹²

In Uden and the smaller neighboring villages of Boekel and Zeeland, nearly all the 6,000 inhabitants were ardent Catholics. All were suffering from the severe potato blight and high taxes on land or rents, and on breadwinners, farm animals, and equipment. Within a year, Van den Broek recruited 350 families for the first and only

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Dutch Catholic colony in North America, at Little Chute, Wisconsin. The most effective tool was his pamphlet, *De Reize naar Noord-Amerika* (The Journey to North America), published in 1847, which described his earlier career in America and gave a glowing picture of the beauty, fecundity, and healthfulness of Wisconsin. The pamphlet was so popular that it sold out in three months.\(^{13}\)

Van den Broek's pamphlet ended with a forceful warning to Catholic immigrants not to "be scattered" and settle among the heretical Methodists. Rather, they must "remain together, and choose no other place except where they find spiritual leaders, for wolves force themselves among the sheep everywhere."\(^{14}\)

This is why the good Father in early 1848 personally led his flock to Wisconsin. He leased three ships from the Rotterdam shipping firm of Hugo and Blokhuizen to ensure that the immigrants would not scatter. The Van den Broek parties sailed from Rotterdam bound, respectively, for Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Scheduling problems for such a large group probably dictated ships with various ports of arrival, but everyone was headed to the same destination--Little Chute in Brown County. Van den Broek's followers paid an exceptionally low fare of 56 guilders ($22), because Cornelius Vandehey (van de Hei) and several other well-to-do farmers contributed 9,000 guilders ($3,600) to help the poor.\(^{15}\)

Van den Broek enlisted fellow clerics to lead the other groups to Wisconsin. Fr. Adriannus Dominicus Godthardt (Godhart, Godhard, Godthard), a Haarlem native ordained in the Franciscan Order, took charge of eighty persons (thirteen families) on the *Libra* bound for Boston. The ship was the first to leave, embarking on March 14, 1848. It arrived in Boston on May 5, the same month that Wisconsin became a state. After fifty-

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\(^{14}\) Van den Broek, "Journey to America," English typescript, p. 25.

\(^{15}\) The transoceanic ship fare was 56 guilders ($22) per person, but the journey inland to Green Bay cost 80 guilders ($32), one-third more than the ocean voyage. See Van den Broek, "Journey to America," typescript, p. 24; Van Hinte, *Netherlands in America*, 179; and Yda Schreuder, *Dutch Catholic Immigrant Settlement in Wisconsin, 1850-1905* (New York: Garland, 1989), 98.
two days at sea, Godthardt’s group traveled by train from Boston to Buffalo, by lake steamer over Mackinaw Island to Green Bay, by a scow (or flatboat) up the Fox River to Kaukauna, and finally, by ox carts to Little Chute, arriving on May 22. Godthardt chose a fertile site fifteen miles east and just across the county line in Outagamie County, which he called Hollandtown (later Holland). Godthardt originally named the place Franciscus Bosch, meaning "St. Francis of the Woods."\(^\text{16}\)

Godthardt founded the St. Francis Bosch Church (originally called St. Francis Seraph), which by 1850 had 160 parishioners; one hundred Dutch lived on one side of the church and sixty Irish on the other side. Due to a shortage of priests in northern Wisconsin, the parish had no resident priest for the first decade and had to rely on lay leadership, especially Henry Van de Hey, who recited the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross and read the Gospel of the day. Visiting priests from Green Bay, notably Crozier Fathers Wilhelms De Jonge and Hubertus Nuyts fresh from the seminary in Uden, brought the sacraments from time to time. Thanks to Godthardt’s detailed diary, which has been published in English translation, we know much about the founding of this first Dutch Catholic colony in America.\(^\text{17}\)

Fr. Van den Broek personally led the second party, on the Maria Magdalena, which left Rotterdam on March 18, 1848 with 147 followers, waited eight days at Hellevoetsluis, and arrived at New York harbor on May 8. From New York, the group went by train to Buffalo, where they followed the same route as Godthardt’s party to Little Chute, arriving June 18, eighty-three days en route. Van den Broek’s St. John Nepomucen Church anchored the Dutch Catholic colony at Little Chute.\(^\text{18}\)

The third party of ninety-four persons, led by Fr. Van der Poel, left Rotterdam on March 28 on the ship America bound for Philadelphia, and arrived after forty-eight days at sea on May 15, 1848. The party proceeded by rail to Albany, N.Y. and by Erie Canal barge to Buffalo, and Great Lakes steamer to Green Bay.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{16}\) Vandehey, Wooden Shoes West, 23-24, 33 (quote). See pages 22-32 for a list of all three ships.


\(^{18}\) Vandehey, Wooden Shoes West, 26-28.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 28-31.
A year after the initial colonization, in 1849, Fr. Gerard Van den Heuvel, the chaplain at Boekel (province of Noord Brabant), led a second emigrant wave from Boekel to Little Chute of two hundred parishioners. They traveled from Rotterdam to New York City. At Buffalo, they split into two groups for the Great Lakes passage to Green Bay. Van den Heuvel became Van den Broek’s assistant in the St. John parish in Little Chute, and ministered to Dutch, German, Irish, and American Indian families in the Green Bay region. Van den Heuvel’s ministry was cut short by death from typhoid fever in April 1851. The aged Van den Broek died six months later and Fr. De Jonge was assigned to the parish. The first years had been difficult for the elderly priest, because the desperately poor parishioners blamed their pastor for not meeting their high expectations.20

Thanks to the ethnic policies of the Midwestern Catholic hierarchy, Dutch-speaking clergy served the young colonies: In 1853, Fr. Francis Edward Daems was reassigned from the Bay Settlement parish to Little Chute. The Belgian-born Daems, was the first of three Crozier Fathers, all trained in Uden, to minister at St. John Church. In 1855, Daems returned to Bay Settlement, a parish with more than eighty Hollanders, and Willem Verhoef succeeded him. Daems also served Hollandtown in 1855 and 1856. In 1868, he became vicar-general of the Green Bay Diocese.21

From 1860 to 1915, St. John Church was served by eight priests born and trained in the Netherlands—Egbert Spierings (1860-65), Anthony Verberk (1865-69), Eleazer De Wilt (1969-74), Albert Wubbels (1974-79), Cajetan De Louw (1879-81), Theodore Knegtel (1890-1915), Cornelius Van den Borne (1909-14), and John De Wild (1914-15). Between duties at Little Chute, these Dutch priests also ministered at Bay Settlement, Appleton, Duck Creek, Wrightstown, and Hollandtown, all in the Diocese of Green Bay.22 Van den Broek’s initiative for the Catholic group migration was a pragmatic win-win situation. From the beginning they settled in ethnically-mixed but religiously homogeneous colonies, led by native clergy.

20 Ibid., 35-38; Centennial of St. John Congregation, 22.
22 Centennial of St. John Congregation, 25-43.
Readership among Wisconsin's Calvinists

Orthodox Calvinists in Wisconsin came from the provinces of Gelderland (all the "ink" names) and Zeeland. The emigration was instigated by a few Seceders from the Winterswijk area of Gelderland and several from Zeeland, who in 1844 and 1845 settled in and around Milwaukee. Roelof Sleyster, the Seceder scout who reached Milwaukee in the summer of 1846, reported to Rev. Albertus Van Raalte that the Hollanders there had work and ate well. Sleyster had been a deacon in the Seceder church at Velp, which stood barely six miles from Uden, the Catholic emigration center. Sleyster's letter convinced Van Raalte to lead the first group of Seceder immigrants to America. Van Raalte intended to settle at Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, on the shores of Lake Winnabago. But Michigan boosters at Detroit and Kalamazoo induced him to plant his colony in the western part of that state. Then his associate Rev. Hendrik P. Scholte selected southcentral Iowa for his Pella colony. These decisions redirected the Dutch Protestant immigration away from Wisconsin.23

The Dutch Calvinists clergymen in Wisconsin seemed to be less effective leaders than the priests. Only a few had a larger vision. The popular but phlegmatic Seceder preacher Pieter Zonne, a disciple of Scholte, might have been his Wisconsin counterpart, but Zonne lacked the patience and tact for the work. He arrived in December 1847 with 160 followers and formed the "Zonne Settlement" in Sheboygan County's Town(ship) Holland. Within five years, Zonne's Oostburg Reformed Church fell into turmoil and he founded the rival First Presbyterian Church in Sheboygan. Rev. Koenraad Vander Schuur came in 1852 to salvage the Oostburg church and he stayed fourteen years, making the congregation one of the few Reformed congregations to experience stability in the pulpit.24

Rev. Huibertus Budding organized a congregation at Town Eight (later Bethlehem), but he soon departed for Buffalo, New York, leaving the body in the hands of Elder Gerard Brand. Rev. Gerrit Baay accepted the call of the infant Alto Reformed Church in 1848, but he died within eighteen months and the congregation had to wait

eight years before securing another pastor. The Reformed Church in Milwaukee, organized in 1849, had able leadership under Revs. Hendrik Klyn and Seine Bolks, both had first served churches in Van Raalte's Colony. By 1853, the three congregations, numbering 365 souls, joined the Classis of Holland in West Michigan. In 1855, the Wisconsin churches formed their own Classis of Wisconsin.  

Apart from these church leaders, there were also civic leaders who acted as promoters and shapers of the Protestant communities, such as newspaper editor Jacob Quintus in Sheboygan (see below) and lawyer Gijsbert van Steenwijk in Milwaukee.

**Geographic Developments**

The Little Chute and Hollandtown immigrants farmed marginal five- to ten-acre plots. They settled along village lines, as in the mother country. Those from Uden and Zeeland went to Hollandtown, and those from Boekel went to Little Chute. The Little Chute settlement gradually spread into the nearby village of Kaukauna and surrounding townships of Freedom (1852) and Buchanan (1858). Many settlers also moved to the growing city of Appleton to the west. Little Chute in the 1850s was a purely Dutch town, but it was surrounded by Irish, German, French, and English settlers, unlike the Van Raalte and Scholte colonies, which took up the land for miles around.

After the Civil War, Dutch Catholic immigrants from the northeastern part of Limburg settled in De Pere, Belleview, and Scott, all near Green Bay. No Limburgers settled in Hollandtown or Little Chute. De Pere also had many French-speaking Walloons from Belgium who joined the French St. Francis Xavier parish. The village stood at the head of navigation on the Fox River five miles upstream from Green Bay, and offered good business prospects. At first the Dutch joined the French parish, but in 1869, Fr. William A. Verboort organized the Dutch Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin parish, which took up the land for miles around.

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A few years before, Verboort had helped institute St. Willibrord Parish in Green Bay for Dutch Catholics there. The name of this church was an explicit reference to Dutch church history: St. Willibrord was one of the first missionaries in the Low Countries. Another sign was the name of another parish church: Holy Martyrs of Gorkum, in Preble (later absorbed into Green Bay). The name referred to the nineteen Catholic martyrs who were put to death by Dutch Protestants in 1572 in Gorkum and canonized in 1867 by Pius IX. The Preble church was founded that same year.

Just like the Dutch Calvinists in Holland and Pella, the Fox River Dutch Catholics planted new colonies on the frontier, and for the same reason—land scarcity had driven farmland prices up beyond the reach of sons and newcomers. In 1874, a group of Dutch farmers from Brown and Outagamie counties, led by the Verboort and Vandehey families, planted a colony in eastern Nebraska along the Niabrara River (at the village of Center in Butler County). Family members followed in a typical chain migration. The next year, 1875, six Dutch families left De Pere and planted the colony of Verboort in Oregon's Willamette Valley. In the next fifteen years, several dozen related Vandehey and Verboort families from Wisconsin joined them, as did fresh immigrants from Noord Brabant. There they intermarried and developed as an isolate community far away from "home."28

Rural-Urban Symbiosis

Historian Jacob Van Hinte noted in 1928 that the Dutch Catholics in Wisconsin resembled the Dutch Protestants in Michigan more than the Protestants in their own state. There are certainly parallels in leadership and settlement patterns, but before accepting Van Hinte's thesis, it is necessary to study the Dutch Catholics in the Badger State. Henry Lucas began this task. He corrected the misrepresentation of the colonies of Little Chute and De Pere as being small and unsuccessful. The dissertations by Henry Van Stekelenburg and Yda Schreuder further clarified the character of these colonies. The settlers were a homogenous group from the same region (De Peel) in Noord Brabant, mostly small farmers and day laborers who were experienced in cultivating rough lands.

These qualities set them apart from the bulk of Dutch Catholic immigrants, who left as isolated families or single individuals and settled in American cities.\textsuperscript{29}

Schreuder explored the secular trends in the Dutch Catholic enclaves in Outagaumie and Brown counties, which allows one to see how changing economic conditions affected these communities. Between 1847 and 1860, the immigrants were pulled to the Fox River, which offered jobs, thanks to waterpower facilities. The Dutch Catholic settlements had good connections already in the late 1840s—a plank road and a telegraph line between Little Chute and Green Bay. A canal leading south to Kaukauna provided the necessary waterpower for milling and offered work for 110 Dutchmen. The economy expanded, thanks to the canalization of the Fox River, which connected rural settlements to urban centers, until the railroad linked Green Bay with Chicago and the canal lost its transport function. Initially, Fox River Valley farmers shipped wheat via the canal to Green Bay to markets in the East, but after 1870 cheaper wheat from the northern plains forced them to diversify. The growth in industrial production, especially in paper mills, attracted new Dutch Catholics and their population increased by 70 per cent.\textsuperscript{30}

This phenomenon explains the shift after 1870 when urban centers overshadowed rural ones. The producers specialized their products for the market; smaller towns became less dependent on the regional center of Green Bay and were connected to national markets. Exhaustion of available lands and new jobs in industry stimulated mobility. The Dutch Catholics were much more part of this urban development than their Protestant neighbors.

A comparison of the Protestants in Alto and Catholics in the Fox River Valley between 1850 and 1870 illustrates these different trajectories. The farming community of Alto was more homogeneous than urban Green Bay (i.e., the Dutch Catholic settlement area) and enjoyed greater prosperity and population growth in the early years. Alto was also less literate than Green Bay. These circumstances prepared each community for


developments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: Green Bay had a much more varied occupational structure, in business, crafts, and services, and especially in the lumber industry.\(^{31}\)

Schreuder shows that among the three immigrant groups—Dutch, Germans, and Irish, in Outagamie and Brown counties, the number and proportion of merchants, manufacturers, and artisans was a stable 15 per cent between 1850 and 1870 (from 9 out of 59 to 43 out of 304). The notable interaction between De Pere and Green Bay likely developed after the Civil War.\(^{32}\)

In the mid 1850s, thousands of Belgians were drawn to Wisconsin, many of them from the French-speaking Walloon territory. In 1860 the census in Wisconsin counted 4,674 Belgians, almost equal to the number of Dutch-born. But after 1880 the majority of Belgians settled in Illinois and Michigan, pulled by jobs in the cities of Moline and Detroit, respectively.\(^{33}\) This leads to intriguing questions about parallel developments between groups that had different connections, either by nationality, religion, or language. Were they all part of the same rural to urban movement or did they act differently?

A rough indication is the slate of business leaders. For the area around Green Bay, the 1895 county history listed thirty-five leaders from Belgium and forty-three from the Netherlands; most were farmers, but one also finds priests, merchants, teachers, and physicians. All were members of the De Pere or Green Bay parishes.\(^{34}\) Did these parishes attract both Dutch and Flemish settlers? Sheboygan county histories may offer comparative materials for Protestants, as would census and genealogy records for the 1880-1920 period.

Milwaukee served as a growing market and hub for Dutch Reformed immigrants in the early years, but the city failed to evolve into a Dutch center like Grand Rapids.\(^{35}\)


\(^{32}\) Schreuder, Dutch Catholic Immigrant Settlement, 114


\(^{34}\) Commemorative Biographical Record of the Fox River Valley Counties of Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1895).

Milwaukee insurance agent, surveyor, and school supervisor, Anson W. Buttles, reported in 1892 that the Dutch Reformed Church, where his Dutch wife occasionally worshiped, was dying. Families for years had sold out and moved to stronger Dutch settlements. By 1902, only three families were left.\textsuperscript{36}

Sheboygan could have become a Dutch hub, and it did serve that purpose somewhat, but it remained a relatively small city. The Sheboygan Falls Reformed Church, organized in 1856, had 20 communicant members in 1860 and 140 in 1900. Sheboygan had no Reformed congregations until First Christian Reformed Church in 1889 and Hope Reformed Church in 1891. Today the city and neighboring Sheboygan Falls have four Reformed congregations with 2,600 souls, and two Christian Reformed congregations with 500 souls (plus a large Hmong congregation). Steve Vander Weele, a Sheboygan native who was raised in the First Christian Reformed, reminisced how the "pietistic habit" of the pioneers served as "an important barrier to getting to know their world." Except for sharing a factory workbench or talking with neighbors over the back fence or in the park, they lived their lives isolated within the church community. They and their children, according to Vander Weele, continued to "hold at bay the brash, hedonistic, restless American way of life."\textsuperscript{37}

Sheboygan had weaker connections to its hinterland than did Green Bay, which developed close ties with De Pere, Little Chute, and Hollandtown. But Sheboygan did serve as a market center for county farmers, and entrepreneurs developed a furniture industry, kitchenware and shoe factories, and notably the plumbing and china dynasty--the Vollrath-Kohler Company, the largest employer, which was located just outside the city limits.\textsuperscript{38}

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\textsuperscript{36} Notes from the Anson W. Buttles Papers (1821-1906), Golda Meir Library, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
\textsuperscript{38} Vander Weele, "Growing Up," 17-18.
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**Interrmarriage Patterns**

Dutch Catholics had more potential marriage partners outside their ethnoreligious group than did Protestants. Schreuder found that in the rural areas the Dutch intermarried less, and when they did, they preferred Germans to Irish and Flemish (Dutch-speaking) Belgians. Schreuder calculated from the 1870 population census the rate of "mixed marriages," i.e., Dutch with non-Dutch. The rates were fairly low in the farming communities, from 9 to 23 percent, but in Green Bay the rate reached 41 percent.

These patterns become more pronounced in the second generation, according to Schreuder’s analysis of the 1905 Wisconsin State census. Out-marriage rates ranged from 35 to 50 percent, double the first generation. Rural townships again had lower rates than city residents. In the mother colony of Little Chute, the rate remained low at 10 percent, and the non-Dutch spouses were Flemish. But second-generation Dutch Catholics elsewhere intermarried with Germans, especially among skilled workers, small proprietors, and professionals. As yet, no scholar had calculated similar Protestant out-marriage rates in Sheboygan and Fond du Lac counties, but we suspect it would be below 5 percent, or less than half that in Little Chute.

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40 Schreuder, Dutch Catholic Immigrant Settlement, 120-21 (Table 5.7). The specific rates are: Little Chute (Outagamie County) 9 percent (34 of 148), Buchanan (Outagamie County) 23 percent (34 of 149), and Hollandtown (Brown County) 22 percent (23 of 103). In outlying rural townships, where the Dutch joined diverse communities, the rates were similar: Bellevue (Brown County) 11 percent (8 of 70), Scott (Brown County) 17 percent (12 of 70), De Pere (Brown County) 20 percent (8 of 40 couples), Freedom Township (Outagamie County) 21 percent (20 of 96), and Grand Chute Township (Outagamie County) 20 percent (8 of 40), Green Bay (Brown County) 41 percent (31 of 75 couples), and Appleton (Outagamie County) 19 percent (12 of 64).
41 Ibid., 155 (Table 7.5), 151-52 (Figure 7.3). In Outagamie County, the rate doubled (43 first-generation Dutch had German spouses compared to 82 second-generation Dutch), in Kaukauna Township it more than doubled (from 20 to 45 percent), in Freedom Township it nearly quintupled (from 10 to 45 percent), and in Buchanan Township it nearly doubled (from 22 to 35 percent).
The Dutch-speaking Catholics were part of a comprehensive social network, just like the Calvinists. Churches and parochial schools provided the meeting places for matchmaking. Dutch and Belgian clergy circulated among the largely integrated Dutch and Flemish parishes, which spoke the same language, albeit with distinctive dialectic differences. A realistic estimate in 1909 of the number of Dutch Catholics in the Fox River settlements is 9,000. Adding the Flemish might double this number. These years were the apex of immigration, and a group of thirty-eight priests organized an association to protect Belgian and Dutch immigrants. This suggests that they were considered as one group, similar to the Germans in Milwaukee, who developed a strong cohesion and provided jobs and contacts on all socio-economic levels.  

Educational Initiatives

In the early years of colonization, both Calvinists and Catholics enrolled their children in public school while the pastors and priests focused on catechetical instruction, the Heidelberg and Baltimore catechisms, respectively. The Calvinists also adopted the quintessential American institution, the Sunday school. By the 1870s, however, Catholic leaders were increasingly dissatisfied with public education that was essentially Protestant civil religion, and the churches established parochial schools wherever possible. St. Francis Parish in Hollandtown founded its parochial school in 1871. St. John Parish in Little Chute founded St. John Catholic School in 1889 and Little Chute Catholic High School in 1928. St. Mary Parish in De Pere established St. Mary Elementary and Middle School.  

Little Chute Catholic High School closed in 1972, when the parish could no longer support it. This was an unexpected reversal of the previous five decades. From 1930 to 1966, the Little Chute public high school was closed because it was not viable.

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Almost all the youths attended the Catholic high school, which had an enrollment of 745 in 1940. After 1972, graduates of the Catholic elementary schools in southern Outagamie and Brown counties could enroll in Xavier Catholic High School in Appleton, which served the entire region.\footnote{Sesquicentennial of St. John Nepomucene, Little Chute, 1836-1986 (St. John Parish, 186), 64-69; Little Chute: A Century of Progress, 240-52; Krabbendam, Freedom on the Horizon, 247-49.}

The Calvinists remained committed to public education until the Christian Reformed contingent fell under the influence of the Dutch theologian and Christian school advocate, Dr. Abraham Kuypers. Beginning in the 1880s, Christian Reformed churches in West Michigan and the Chicago area started parochial schools that evolved into parent (society)-controlled schools. In Wisconsin, the First Sheboygan Christian Reformed Church founded Sheboygan Christian School in 1898. The instigator was a layman, Martin Zwemer, who invited the Christian school-minded cleric, Rev. Klaas Kuiper of the Second Christian Reformed Church of Roseland, to come and drum up support. Roseland Christian School was already fifteen years old. So convincing was Kuiper that before the year was out, the Sheboygan church basement had been remodeled into a classroom. The school met there for fourteen years, until 1912, when a new building was erected. Sheboygan Christian High School began in 1969.\footnote{Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, Oostburg Christian Reformed Church, 1868-1943 (Oostburg, 1943), 4-5.}

Other Christian Reformed communities could not muster the courage to found Christian schools until after the Second World War. Oostburg Christian School opened in 1947 and served families in nearby Cedar Grove and Gibbsville. Fifty miles west, in Waupun, the First Christian Reformed Church founded Waupun Christian School in 1949 and on the same campus in 1957, the Central Wisconsin Christian High School, which draws graduates of Christian schools in Randolph and Friesland, and from families throughout Fond du Lac and Dodge counties.\footnote{Oostburg Wisconsin: Haven of Hope in a New Land (Oostburg: Oostburg Historical Society, 2001), 74-75; Nancy Van Der Puy, History of the Reformed, Christian Reformed and Dutch Reformed Schools in Sheboygan County (Research Center: Sheboygan Falls, WI, 2000); websites of the various schools.}

The history of higher education is also instructive. The Reformed community founded the Wisconsin Memorial Academy in 1901, which in the next twenty-five years had 260 graduates. But the Wisconsin churches failed to sustain the academy through the Great Depression, and it closed in 1937. The Michigan and Iowa Dutch Calvinists, in
contrast, founded academies that evolved into Dutch Reformed colleges that continue to thrive today. The Holland Academy became Hope College (1866), the Grand Rapids Academy became Calvin College (1876), Central College evolved in 1916 from a Baptist university (1853), and the Northwestern Classical Academy became Northwestern College (1930). The Norbertine Order founded St. Norbert College in De Pere in 1898, but the school never nursed an explicit Dutch-Catholic identity, as did the Calvinist colleges. This again shows the differing role of religion; Catholicism was multi-ethnic, Calvinism mono-ethnic.

Newspapers and Politics

Dutch-American newspapers were a very important carrier of transnational ideas and news, since they always carried news of the fatherland. The Calvinist press appeared more than thirty years before the Catholic press. In 1849, Jacob Quintus launched De Sheboygan Nieuwsbode (1849-61) the next year Rev. Van Raalte co-founded the Hollander (1850-95). The Nieuwsbode lasted for only twelve years but the Hollander had a run of forty-five years. In 1860, came De Grondwet of Holland, Michigan, which served a national Dutch-language readership for nearly eighty years (1860-1938). Pella’s Weekblad (1861-1942) and De Volksvriend of Orange City (1874-1951) also connected Dutch immigrants from the Great Lakes to the Pacific.

The first Catholic newspapers were published in De Pere: De Standaard (1878-96) and De Volksstem (1890-1919). Two Flemish immigrants, John Heyrmans and Eduard Van de Casteele, began the Standaard in 1878. In 1890, Heyrmans sold out to his partner and began the Volksstem, targeting the same readership, but this time in association with a Hollander, Anton Kuypers. The Volksstem only reached half the circulation of the Standaard, but when the Standaard folded in 1907, the Volksstem snagged some of its subscribers. For three decades the Volksstem was the channel for all Catholic Dutch speakers. A declining readership forced the paper to sell out in 1919 to

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47 Yearbook Wisconsin Memorial Academy. Cedar Grove, Wisconsin. An Academy of the Reformed Church of America (1929-1930), 22-29. Richard Dykstra’s books do not give the impression that any tensions between groups from different Dutch provinces lasted into the twentieth century.
49 Conrad Bult, "Dutch American Newspapers: Their History and Role," in Swierenga, Dutch in America, 273-93; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 529-41.
the Flemish Belgian Gazette de Moline (Illinois)(1907-40), but it had very few Dutch subscribers. The Gazette van Moline closed in 1940. Its companion, De Gazette van Detroit, founded in 1914, continues as the "only Belgian bi-weekly in America.\textsuperscript{50}

Nineteenth-century newspapers were usually political mouthpieces of the major parties. Generally, the Dutch Protestant immigrants joined the Republican Party and Dutch Catholics the Democratic Party, except for the 1840s and 1850s when xenophobic Whig/Republicans drove all immigrants into the arms of the Democrats. The Whig moves to extend the naturalization period to fourteen (from five) years and push prohibition laws, beginning with the Maine Law in 1851, was evidence enough that nativism ran rampant in that party. All Dutch immigrants supported the North in the Civil War and many young men, both Protestant and Catholic, volunteered.\textsuperscript{51}

\textit{Leisure: Festivals and Feast Days}

Dutch Catholics carried in their cultural baggage the traditional festival of the "schut," which they first celebrated in Hollandtown prior to Lent in 1849, led by the St. Francis Society. Following Mass at St. Francis Church, the priest led participants and observers to Schut Acre, a shooting park with a 100-foot tower with a manmade bird fixed on top. Shooters from a semicircle around the tower and fire on the target, after the priest took the first shot. The others shoot in turn, with the one taking down the last piece of the bird crowned "king of the schut." The king is robed with a purple cape and he and the queen are feted at the three-generation Van Abel's family restaurant. Since 1957, the king also receives a silver medal picturing a parrot wearing a crown that Queen Juliana gave to the St. Francis Society, after she learned that the festival had been celebrated for more than a century.

In the fall of 1981, Little Chute promoters revived a second festival, the three-day Kermis (literally "after mass"), a Catholic tradition in the southern Netherlands, replete with costumed klompen dancers and street sweepers, and much eating and drinking. New world additions include a fish boil, three-on-three basketball games, and, of course, bingo.

\textsuperscript{50} Kristine Smets, “The Gazette van Moline and the Belgian-American Community, 1907-1921” (M.A. Thesis, Kent State University, 1994), 14-17.
and a raffle. Instead of a schut or kermis, the Dutch Protestants held tulip festivals, beginning in 1928 in Holland, Michigan. The Little Chute Kermis of 1981 mimicked much of Holland’s renowned flower festival, but with a Catholic flavor.

The nickname of sports teams shows similarities, as well. Hope College basketball teams since the early 1900s were called the "Dutchmen." The Little Chute semipro football team, nicknamed "The Flying Dutchmen," was a squad "to be reckoned with" in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1958, a sports writer for the Hope College student newspaper called the basketball team the "Flying Dutchmen" and the name stuck. The Green Knights of St. Norbert College remind one of the Calvin College (maroon) Knights.52

Ethnoreligious Disharmony

The Dutch Reformed immigrants were plagued by more discord and disunity than the Catholics, despite the Dutch-Flemish cultural differences. For example, at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the First Reformed Church of Milwaukee, the Rev. Henry Terkeurst noted that the early history of his congregation was ridden with quarrels, especially between Zeelanders and Gelderlanders. The two groups could not live together under one religious roof and they split the church. Paradoxically, the infighting among Dutch Calvinists over praxis and theology may have given them more staying power. The squabbling among the brethren had the effect of shutting out outsiders, who did not understand the fine points of Calvinist theology and the splitting of hairs over the seventeenth century Church Order of Dort (1618-19).53

The Wisconsin Dutch Calvinists in the pioneering years also lacked mutual support from the Michigan Classis of Holland. In 1855, the Wisconsin churches separated from Holland and formed the Classis of Wisconsin. Perhaps it is too strong to define this action as internal discord, but Wisconsin churches had more internal divisions and less support than the Michigan churches. The presence of a number of Dutch Presbyterian churches in Wisconsin further weakened cooperation. The Presbyterian churches

52 Little Chute: A Century of Progress, 187, 201, 216-17.
welcomed a number of Dutch ministers who were unhappy in the Reformed Church, for whatever reasons, sometimes harking back to church affairs in the Netherlands.\(^{54}\)

**Conclusion**

Wisconsin Dutch Protestants and Catholics both deviated from the majority of their compatriots elsewhere in the United States. Catholics had a homogeneous rural presence in the state, but urban settlements were predominant. The opposite was true for the Dutch Protestants; they formed strong farming communities but weak urban settlements. This was not so much a conscious choice as a lack of group planning. With no strong leaders like Van Raalte and Scholte, the Protestant immigrants had a loosely structured settlement pattern and suffered more religious fragmentation. In this respect, the Wisconsin Dutch Catholics, with strong priests in the lead, more closely resembled the Protestants in Michigan than those in Wisconsin.

This lack of cohesion also hurt the local economies of the Wisconsin Protestants and some ambitious entrepreneurs moved to Michigan. In contrast, the Catholic colonies were better prepared for developing integrated economies, connecting rural and urban areas, and nurturing substantial business communities. The Protestant settlements lacked the fruitful symbiosis that the Holland and Zeeland colonies enjoyed with Grand Rapids and the county seat cities of Grand Haven (Ottawa County), and Allegan (Allegan County), and the flourishing trade in Chicago of wood products in exchange for manufactured goods.

These different patterns became clear after 1860 and the newspapers symbolized the shifts. The demise of the *Nieuwsbode* in 1858 may count as a sign of the limits of growth, whereas the flourishing after 1890 of the *Volksstem* showed the vitality of the Dutch-Belgian community in Wisconsin. Apart from a more sophisticated statistical analysis of Protestants in Sheboygan and Fond du Lac counties along the lines of Schreuder's study of the Catholics in Brown and Outagamie counties, there is a need to explore the newspapers and church records more extensively.

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In 1980, more than 130 years after the founding in the 1840s, the proportion of Dutch Calvinists and Catholics in Wisconsin remained much the same. The census that year asked residents to self identify their primary ("single") ancestry. Of 43,700 Dutch statewide, 15,000 lived in the Calvinist counties (Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Dodge, Columbia, and Milwaukee) and 12,500 in the Catholic counties (Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago, and Appleton City). The ratio of 1.2:1 in 1980 was close to the 1870 ratio of 1.3:1.

For the Wisconsin Catholics, the initiative for settlement came from the United States. This hardly changed the orientation of the rural settlements, but it fostered cohesion and explicit references to Dutch church history. Their transnational contacts were fostered by the flow of priests and monks from the Netherlands. The interaction with other European immigrant groups was higher, especially with Germans, thanks to the Catholic Church. That the Wisconsin story is not unique is clear from the chapter on the urban Dutch in New Jersey (chapter XX). Other examples of transnational contacts (or the lack of them) are noted in other chapters. This book sheds light on the question of the importance of nationalism in Dutch immigration.

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