

## THERE WAS WORK IN THE VALLEY

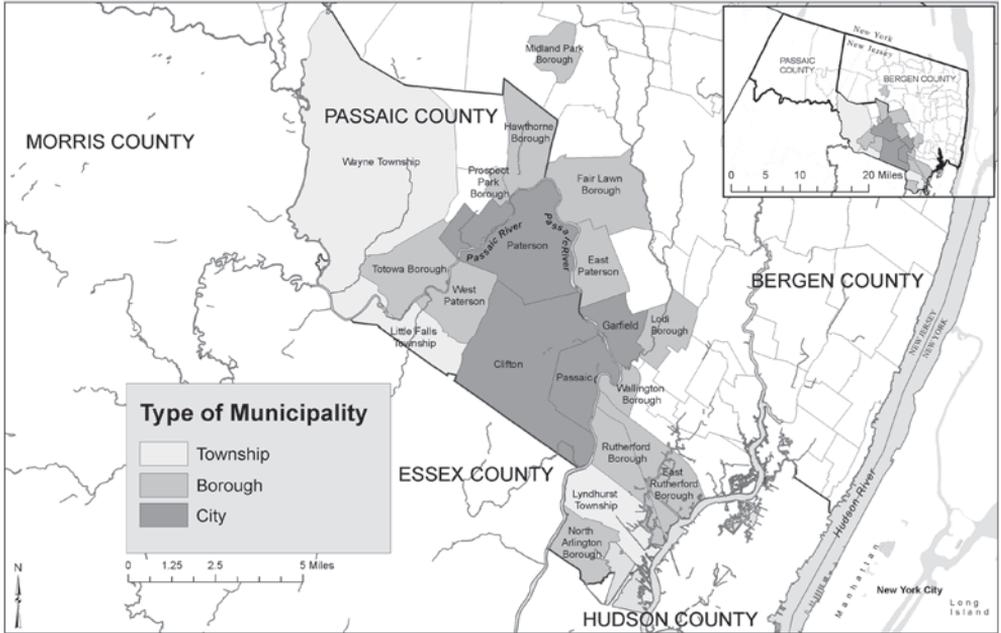
Dutch Immigration to New Jersey, 1850-1920

**Abstract — There was work in the valley:**

**Dutch Immigration to New Jersey (1850-1920)**

*Dutch immigration to the Passaic Valley of New Jersey began in the late 1840s. This particular group of Dutch Americans remained unusually isolated from their compatriots in the Midwest. But they also were influenced by the presence of the descendents of the Dutch colonists who came to the Hudson Valley in the seventeenth century. By 1910 some of the new Dutch immigrants achieved social, economic, and political prominence in the area. In particular the Dutch established themselves as significant actors in the textile, construction, and food production that drove the area's rise to the status of a very important industrial centre. But prominence came at a price, and after 1913 the region's Dutch Americans' influence retreated into the confines of their own neighbourhoods. This particular group of Dutch immigrants developed a character that distinguished it from the colonists who lived in the larger western enclaves. These peculiarities reflected the links in their chain migration from the Netherlands, their physical separation from the Dutch Americans in the West, and their relationship both to the old Dutch colonial presence in place when the first new immigrants arrived in the late 1840s and with the other immigrant groups that arrived in the Passaic Valley in the subsequent decades.*

At a place about twenty-five kilometres to the northwest of Manhattan's tip, northern New Jersey's Passaic River makes a great bend in its course to the sea. Just before the river takes this turn, the water cascades twenty-three metres over the Great Falls. The falls were a natural wonder that drew illustrious visitors from far and wide (including George Washington) who came to witness the power of nature at the fall line of the Appalachian Mountains. The federal government's first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, convinced a group of investors that the falls would be an ideal source of power for cotton mills, and so in 1793 the Society for the Promotion of Useful Manufactures received a charter from the state to harness the river's might and build a model town on the site. This was the birth of what became the city of Paterson, New Jersey, the great magnet that drew thousands of



Ill. 1 Map of the Paterson area.

Dutch immigrants to the region beginning with the Great Emigration from the Netherlands in 1847.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Dutch settlement in the Paterson area includes the nearby cities of Passaic, Lodi, and Wallington, the smaller centre of Little Falls, and the intervening agricultural sectors that after 1900 became the municipalities of Prospect Park, Hawthorne, Fair Lawn, Garfield, Clifton, and Midland Park. In a span of sixty years the Dutch presence in the area grew to such an extent that by 1920 a Dutch American served as the area's representative in the United States House of Representatives, several municipal governments were dominated by Dutch immigrants, and Dutch Americans had become notable leaders in the region's silk industry and construction trades. The Dutch were a facet of the proverbial American success story as they assimilated into the local environment, while maintaining a unique identity among the dozens of other ethnic groups that poured into the region looking for opportunities in the factories and on the farms that fed the burgeoning cities along the river.

1. William Nelson and Charles A. Shriner, *History of Paterson and its environs (The Silk City)* (New York 1920) Vol. 1, 317-372; James P. Johnson, *New Jersey: history of ingenuity and industry* (Northridge 1987) 82-83; Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York 2005) 373-374, 385-387. Charles L'Enfant, the man who designed Washington, D.C., drew the first plans for the city and the development of the falls.

Although New Jersey housed the fourth largest Dutch colony in the United States (behind only Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois), the story of Dutch Americans in that state largely has eluded the historical radar screen.<sup>2</sup> This oversight can be traced to the unique traits of the settlers: the narrowness of their points of origin in the Netherlands and insularity within the broader Dutch American world, and their failure to produce high profile founders on a par with the founders of the Michigan and Iowa colonies in the 1840s. Their arrival in the more heavily populated New Jersey was less conspicuous than the frontier settlements to the West. Yet the Dutch succeeded in forming a self-conscious subculture, both in the context of northern New Jersey and within the general cohort of Dutch American communities. Relative to the latter, the Passaic Valley settlers harboured a certain envy that surfaced as a ‘we’re just as good as you,’ a sense of being under appreciated by their western cousins. Life in the valley gave the Dutch a different accent arising as they rose to prominence in the first decades of the twentieth century in an ethnic environment their compatriots could only imagine, isolated as they often were in their exclusive colonies.

Among their non-Dutch neighbours the ‘Hollanders’ of New Jersey retained a reputation as clannish and self-righteous folks, living as they did in their tightly knit neighbourhoods with their own churches and schools. The bulk of them seemed content to lead uninterrupted lives in places like Prospect Park and Midland Park, People’s Park, Clifton’s Dutch Hill neighbourhood, and Passaic’s Northside. Their numbers rendered them both a visible presence in the community and a potent social force in the Passaic Valley. This account will examine three topics: first, why the region held a particular attraction for Dutch immigrants, second, how they achieved standing in the region through economic activity, and third, how Paterson’s greatest labour crisis reinforced the Dutch community’s social and cultural insularity. While the heritage of the New Netherland colony provided the initial attraction, the confluence of the skills the Dutch possessed upon arrival and the Passaic Valley’s developing industrial economy created an environment that produced the fourth largest Dutch enclave in the United States in 1920.

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2. Gerald F. DeJong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974* (Boston 1975) devoted twelve pages (in a 260 page monograph) to immigration to the Passaic Valley after 1850. Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America: Dutch immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950* (Grand Rapids 1989) 232. This magisterial work devotes 205 pages to the Great Emigration, but only one paragraph to New Jersey. Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America: a study of emigration and settlement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States of America* (Grand Rapids 1985). Van Hinte, who studied the immigrants from the perspective of the Netherlands, gave the Passaic Valley approximately thirty pages in his massive 1000+ page account of Dutch immigration.

## Sources

The story of the Dutch American enclave in northern New Jersey has yet to be told in monograph form. The sources are there for the taking. By far the most extensive collection of information is the federal decennial censuses of 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930. In a few more years the 1940 census will be open as well. In addition city directories exist for both Paterson and Passaic and their immediate suburbs. Each edition lists both the residents and the businesses. The Dutch enclaves received press attention in the daily newspapers of both cities. Of particular note is the wealth of Church news about the area that appeared in the publications the Christian Reformed Church distributed from its denominational headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan. These included two weekly periodicals and the annual yearbook. Sadly, only a limited number of issues of Paterson's own Dutch language newspaper, *Het Oosten*, exists. The Heritage Hall collection of the Hekman Library at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan has an extensive collection of immigrant letters, some of which were written to and from the Paterson area. One last major set of sources are the records and histories of individual congregations of the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church.<sup>3</sup>

## Historical patterns

Migration has been a major piece of the historical puzzle – the larger the piece, the bigger the generalisation. In the American immigration story the Dutch form one of the smaller segments. This is to the historian's advantage in that the numbers of people being examined are relatively modest. The disadvantage is that the Dutch are either largely ignored in looking at the big picture, or generalised in an almost cartoon-like degree. To really understand them requires a meticulous, almost microscopic analysis. There have been large-scale histories of the Dutch Americans available in English since Henry S. Lucas published his work in 1955. Thirty years later, Jacob Van Hinte's

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3. The most extensive collections of materials on Dutch Americans can be found in western Michigan at the A. C. Van Raalte Institute, Hope College, Holland, Michigan and Heritage Hall, Hekman Library, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Calvin College library houses the Archives of the Christian Reformed Church, including an extensive collection of documents related to the denomination's congregations in northern New Jersey. For the history of the Reformed Church in America, the larger collection of materials is housed at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The Paterson Public Library collection includes the city's English language newspapers dating back to the 1840s. They frequently carried articles about the city's Dutch neighbourhoods and the surrounding boroughs.

equally encyclopaedic work was translated for an American audience. Lucas's version rested very heavily on newspaper accounts, while Van Hinte added observations based on interviews conducted during his personal journey across the United States during the 1920s.<sup>4</sup> Both books offered details, Lucas from the perspective of a Dutch American scholar who had experienced, and left, life in the west Michigan heartland and Van Hinte as a journalist in search of an answer to what ever happened to those who had chosen to leave the Netherlands.

But immigration historiography took on a different colour in the years since those works first appeared. Community studies, first employed by Merle Curti in the 1950s, opened new vistas built from the bottom upward, rather than from the top downward. The story became a picture created piece by piece, the components determining the final scene. Armed with the historical techniques pioneered by micro-historians, like Emmanuel Leroy Ladurie and David Wayne Sabeau, immigration historians turned to case studies that captured nuances and subtleties that the larger canvasses had missed. Over time historians of immigration have made a convincing case that generalisations can easily slip into distortions and conclusions that are just plain wrong. The best way to examine immigrant groups is one community at a time, allowing the accumulating stories to form the picture, rather than beginning with a paint by number approach in which the pieces are assumed will eventually appear if one simply stares at the canvas with sufficient intensity. It is to the newer tradition that this essay looks for guidance in understanding the rise of the Dutch American community in New Jersey's Passaic River Valley after 1850.<sup>5</sup>

Looking at Paterson through the lenses of community studies and micro-history highlights several important facets of both the local picture and the broader landscape of immigration history. First, what happened in the Passaic Valley underscores once again that Oscar Handlin's botanical metaphor (uprooted) is not as useful as John Bodnar's (transplanted) in making sense of the immigrant experience. The decision to move to America was rarely a hasty one among the Dutch. While many of them may have been poor,

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4. Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America: Dutch immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950* (Grand Rapids 1955); Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America: a study of emigration and settlement in the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States of America* (Grand Rapids 1985).

5. Merle Curti, *The making of an American community: a case study of democracy in a frontier county*. (Stanford 1959); Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *Montaillou: the promised land of error* (New York 1978); David Warren Sabeau, *Power in the blood: popular culture and village discourse in early modern Germany* (New York 1984); David Warren Sabeau, *Property, production, and family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (New York 1990); David Warren Sabeau, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (New York 1998).

they were not driven by destitution and desperation.<sup>6</sup> Annemieke Galema has detailed the economic hardships that drove Frisians to emigrate in the 1880s, and Robert Swierenga has documented the prevalence of lower income families among the broader Dutch cohort.<sup>7</sup> But those who arrived in the United States had calculated the pros and cons of moving before walking up a gangplank in Rotterdam to board a westbound liner.

Second, the overwhelming preponderance of Dutch people moving in family units further underscores the calculated nature of their immigration. The links in this migration chain remained so durable for so long because kinship had figured so prominently in their decision making process. Except for the very earliest vanguard, most Dutch could expect to see familiar faces and hear familiar accents when they arrived in the Passaic Valley. The preponderance of Frisians from the sea clay region and Goeree-Overflakkeers in the Northern New Jersey enclave underscored the self-conscious nature of both the decision to move and the selection of a destination. Galema's anthology of Frisian immigrant letters provides insight into how these choices came to be.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the enduring family ties reflected the rural character of emigration from the Netherlands. This places the Dutch story on stage with other ethnic groups that experienced a double transformation: simultaneously moving from one country to another and from a rural to an urban setting. The same process marked the experience of the Italians who lived along side the Dutch in Paterson, or their Slovak and Hungarian neighbours in Passaic and Lodi.<sup>9</sup>

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6. Oscar Handlin, *The uprooted: the epic story of the great migrations that made the American people* (New York 1951); John Bodnar, *The transplanted: a history of immigration in urban America* (Bloomington 1985); John Bodnar, 'Immigration portrayed as an experience of transplantation', in: Jon Gjerde (ed.), *Major problems in American immigration and ethnic history* (New York 1998) 8-16.

7. Annemieke Galema, *Frisians to America, 1880-1914: with the baggage of the fatherland* (Groningen 1996) 43-93; Robert P. Swierenga, *Faith and family: Dutch immigration and settlement in the United States, 1820-1920* (New York 2000) 74-121.

8. Annemieke Galema, *Zuster, kom toch over. Belevissen van een emigrantenfamilie uit Friesland, brieven uit Amerika in de periode 1894-1933* (Winsum 1999).

9. The following is just a sampling of the literature that details the rural to urban dynamic in various ethnic communities in the United States. Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and progress: social mobility in a nineteenth century city* (Cambridge 1964); Rudolph J. Vecoli, 'Contadini in Chicago: a critique of *The Uprooted*', *Journal of American History* 51 (1964) 404-417; Stephan Thernstrom, *The other Bostonians: poverty and progress in the American metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge 1973); Virginia Yans McLaughlin, *Family and community: Italian immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Ithaca 1977); Ewa Morawska, *For bread with butter: the life-worlds of east central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940* (Cambridge 1985); Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th street: faith and community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven 1985); Robert A. Slayton, *Back of the Yards: the making of a local democracy* (Chicago 1986); Donna R. Gabaccia, *Militants and migrants: rural Sicilians become American workers* (New Brunswick 1988); Kathleen Neils Conzen, 'Mainstreams and side channels: the localization of immigrant cultures', *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11

Although the majority of the Dutch worked in the textile mills and locomotive shops of the Passaic Valley, and increasingly the building trades, their roots reached back to villages and rural places. They belonged to the world of the 'kleine luyden' (the little folks). In common with other rural groups transplanted into urban settings, the Dutch Americans' social norms, marriage patterns, clan structures, and village loyalties often survived the voyage across the Atlantic. Even their gardens and houses in New Jersey often resembled the gardens and houses they had known in Dutch villages like Middelharnis. They may have become what their neighbours called 'Hollanders' in time, but they retained habits and traits specific to particular places in the Netherlands. Their specific rendering of 'Hollander' included ingredients peculiar to the Valley, mixing a few grains of Irish with a dash of Jewishness from the Pale, a pinch of Saxon and Thuringian German-ness, a dose of Dutchness dating back to the New Netherland settlers, hints of Hungarian and Slovak in some of their neighbourhoods, and generous helping of Italian most everywhere else.

Fourth, immigrant churches often served as the first institutions the newcomers could actually control on their own terms. Timothy Smith was among the first American historians to make a serious study of how religion and ethnicity combined to create ethnic identities in the United States. Jon Gjerde's work on Norwegian Lutherans, Robert Orsi's on rural Italian immigrants in New York, and Carol Coburn's study of German Lutherans in Kansas are other notable analyses of this phenomenon. Other historians have examined this process through community studies of the Belgians, Irish, Swedes, and German Catholics.<sup>10</sup> A dozen or more Protestant groups and at least one Roman Catholic parish in Passaic and Bergen counties helped create a Dutch identity. The Calvinist tradition's emphasis on lay leadership echoed the informal vil-

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(1991) 5-20; Walter Nugent, *Crossings: the great transatlantic migrations, 1870-1914* (Bloomington 1992); Kathleen Neils Conzen, 'German Catholic immigrants who make their own America', in: Gjerde, *Major problems in American immigration*, 123-132; Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago: a history of the Hollanders in the windy city* (Grand Rapids 2002).

10. James P. Shannon, *Catholic colonization on the western frontier* (New Haven 1957); Timothy L. Smith, 'Religion and ethnicity in America', *American Historical Review* 83 (1978) 1155-1185; Robert Ostregren, *A community transported: the trans-Atlantic experience of a Swedish immigrant settlement in the upper middle west, 1835-1915* (Madison 1988); Joseph A. Amato, *Servants of the land: god, family, and farm, the trinity of Belgian economic folkways in south-western Minnesota* (Marshall 1990); Jon Gjerde, 'Conflict and community: a case study of the immigrant church', in: George E. Pozzetta (ed.), *The immigrant religious experience* (New York 1991) 181-198; Timothy L. Smith, 'Religious denominations as ethnic communities: a regional case study', *Church History* 35 (1966) 207-226; Carol K. Coburn, *Life at Four Corners: religion, gender, and education in a German-Lutheran community, 1868-1945* (Lawrence 1992); Jane Marie Pederson, *Between memory and reality: family and community in rural Wisconsin, 1870-1970* (Madison 1992); Jon Gjerde, *The minds of the midwest: ethnocultural evolution in the rural middle west, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill 1997).

lage social enforcement mechanisms that had defined which behaviours and individuals were good and bad, in and out, accepted and excluded.<sup>11</sup> Since ministers and elders assumed the role of social arbiters, these categories acquired the extra dimension of divine sanction. The mores of the Dutch American community became universal principles, facets of the moral order God had built into the Creation in the beginning. Defying the rules and the rulers meant banishment from the community and the Kingdom. These ties bound at least as tightly as those of kinship and regional background. To many Dutchman and Calvinist were synonymous, to the exclusion of Baptists, Catholics, socialists, Jews, and casual believers. Herbert Brinks has noted that Dutch immigrants without strong religious ties who arrived in a place like Paterson were forced to make a choice upon arrival – go it alone in the broader community, or at least outwardly conform to the social standards they found among the Dutch already in place, and gain the support needed in times of hardships and arises – sickness, death, unemployment. Presumably there were those who joined a church as entrée into a familiar community rather than conviction.<sup>12</sup>

Fifth, those who strayed the farthest from these roots tended to prosper in the new environment more readily (and gain influence in the broader society) than those who remained connected to the old patterns. Walter Kamphoefner's study of the Westfalian German community of Missouri documented this trend among his subjects.<sup>13</sup> Similar stories have been told about the Dutch immigrants in Chicago and individuals who chose to live beyond the constricted Dutch American orbits.<sup>14</sup> By 1910 an immigrant chaired the Passaic County's governing body. Although he belonged to a Reformed church, and won the votes of his compatriots, Dow Drukker's political power rested on the social clubs he joined, the corporate boards on which he sat, the newspaper he published, and the wealth he amassed from his construction business. In 1914 he won a seat in the United States Congress. Drukker was only one of a number of the Passaic Valley's Dutch American settlement to make a literal mark on the region in the construction business. They opened a two-way street on which money flowed into the community and influence extended beyond the confines of their neighbourhoods and congregations.

11. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford 1976) 357-398; Pierre-Jakez Helias, *The horse of pride: life in a Breton village* (New Haven 1978).

12. Herbert J. Brinks (ed.), *Dutch American voices: letters from the United States, 1850-1900* (Ithaca 1995) 10.

13. Walter D. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: from Germany to Missouri* (Princeton 1987).

14. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago*, 41, 392, 687-696; Cornelis A. van Minnen, 'America's most popular Dutchman: Hendrik Willem Van Loon', in: Hans Krabbendam and Larry J. Wagenaar (eds.), *The Dutch-American experience: essays in honor of Robert P. Swierenga* (Amsterdam 2000) 273-287; Hans Krabbendam, *Freedom on the horizon: Dutch immigration to America, 1840-1940* (Grand Rapids 2009) 217, 263, 333.

### The rise of the valley

Paterson's development into one of America's major industrial centres took decades. The first cotton spinning mills were financial failures, closing within a few years of their openings. New investors revived the mills during the 1810s, prompted by economic stresses connected to the Napoleonic Wars and the country's tenuous trading position on the Atlantic. This time they remained active enough to attract other mills that built equipment for the textile manufacturers. During the 1830s one of these machinery makers tried his hand at assembling steam locomotives for the nation's nascent railroad system. Paterson stood at the cutting edge of the transportation revolution that transformed the United States from a nation of farmers into an industrial giant. Meanwhile textiles remained a very important segment of the local economy, as English silk manufacturers began to appear in the valley during the 1840s, determined to avoid American tariffs and realise larger profits from the growing demand for silk thread. The silk spinners and weavers attracted dyers from France, Germany, and Switzerland, who started to arrive during the 1870s. The river's chemistry proved ideal for manufacturing high quality dyes, especially black, the most difficult colour to produce with any consistency. The dyers attracted German woollen manufacturers to the head of navigation on the river, the place that became the city of Passaic.

From Little Falls through Paterson and downstream to Passaic, Lodi, and Wallington, the area's pastoral culture retreated in the face of industrial development. Squalid wooden frame houses grew up around the red brick factories that lined the riverbanks. The mountains to the west were lost in the haze of smoke generated by the steam engines that increasingly provided power for the mills. The water that drove the first mills and provided liquid for the dyes, and entered the zone in pristine condition, exited as a *mélange* of colours, smells, and wastes. As industries grew, and the population rose, conflicts erupted, pitting the mill owners against the workers, one set of immigrants against another, and strikers against scabs. Paterson made headlines during these eruptions, and the Dutch immigrants played their role in the industrial battles.<sup>15</sup>

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15. William Nelson and Charles A. Shriner, *History of Paterson and its environs (Silk City)* (New York 1920) Vol. 1, 315-372; William W. Scott, *History of Passaic and its environs* (New York 1922) Vol. 1, 247-274; Christopher Norwood, *About Paterson: the making and unmaking of an American city* (New York 1974) 29-48; Herbert G. Gutman, 'Class, status, and community power in nineteenth-century American industrial cities: Paterson, New Jersey: a case study,' in: Herbert G. Gutman (ed.), *Work, culture and society in industrializing America* (New York 1976) 234-259; Philip B. Scranton, *Silk City: studies on the Paterson silk industry, 1860-1940* (Newark 1985) 1-6; Robert Dobson Margrave, *The emigration of silk workers from England to the United States in the nineteenth century* (New York and London 1986); David J. Goldberg, *A tale of three cities* (New Brunswick and London 1989) 19, 46-47.

## The reappearance of the Dutch in the valley (1847-1870)

Paterson was on its way to becoming America's premier silk manufacturing centre, the 'Silk City' and the 'Lyon of America' when the first Dutch families arrived in the late 1840s as the vanguard of the movement historians have called the 'Great Migration' or the 'Great Trek'.<sup>16</sup> This migration to America arose from economic hardship and religious dissent in the Netherlands. Bad harvests and economic plight signalled divine disfavour in the minds of the dissenter divines Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte and Hendrik P. Scholte; government hostility toward religious secessionists solidified the *dominees'* resolve to abandon Europe.

While the ministers looked to the American West as the best place to settle, not everyone had the means or desire to go that far into the interior. For a tiny remnant, especially those from the highly distressed Dutch island of Goeree-Overflakkee, the Passaic Valley beckoned for several reasons. Since it was close to New York getting there cost less than the trip to Michigan or Iowa. Many of New Jersey's hamlets were home to descendants of the Dutch immigrants who had settled New York's Hudson Valley during the seventeenth century, and two centuries later it was not uncommon to hear an archaic form of the Dutch language being used around tables and by firesides. Dutch Reformed churches dotted the New Jersey landscape. Some of the American ministers who encouraged and supported the Great Emigration clung to the belief that Dutch character was ideally suited to life in a democratic republic. Not only would leaving the Netherlands improve their economic and social conditions, but the new immigrants also would reinvigorate the American nation with a new infusion of Dutch virtues.<sup>17</sup>

### Dutch connections and American isolation

Not everyone who arrived in 1847 aboard the first shiploads of immigrants proceeded westward to Van Raalte's colony in Michigan or Scholte's in Iowa. Though it cannot be established by what exact means, a few families from the island of Goeree-Overflakkee in the province of Zuid-Holland came to rest along the banks of the Passaic River. They were concentrated in Acquackanonk

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16. DeJong, *The Dutch*, 129; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 109, 120; Swierenga, *Faith and family*, 123, 135.

17. Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 70-72; Pieter R. D. Stokvis, *De Nederlandse trek naar Amerika, 1846-1847* (Leiden 1977). Two ministers of the Reformed Church in America, Isaac Newton Wyckoff of Second Reformed Church in Albany, New York and Thomas DeWitt of New York City's Collegiate Church, very actively promoted these ideas in their correspondence with Van Raalte and the other leaders of the 1847 migration to the United States.

Township where a number of families lived who could still speak an archaic version of Dutch, known locally as Jersey Dutch. A number of these families belonged to the True Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Acquackanonk whose minister, John Berdan, had mastered the old language as he grew up on a farm in Passaic County's remote Wayne Township.

Goeree-Overflakkee has been described as a 'backward, self-contained island',<sup>18</sup> isolated from the Dutch mainland. Its inhabitants eked out precarious existences as petty tenant farmers and fishermen. The island's one cash crop was madder, the roots of which produced a red dye used in cotton, wool, and silk. The crop failures of the 1840s severely damaged this island's economy, driving 40 percent of the population to receive government relief in 1845.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly emigration had its advantages under these circumstances, and Flakkeers joined the Great Emigration. They first came from the municipalities of Ouddorp and Goedereede, and were mostly farmers who readily found work as labourers in rural Passaic and Bergen counties. On 1 May 1849 the bark *Anna* docked in New York with three families on board, DeBonte, Goris, and Donkersloot. They settled in three locations in northern New Jersey. James Donkersloot arrived with the capital to buy a farm, but the others became labourers. By 1850 there were eighty-seven Dutch immigrant households in the two counties, the majority of the householders working as common labourers. A few craftsmen came as well: wood workers, millers, tailors, wheelwrights, bakers, and a shoemaker. One shopkeeper rounded out the roster.<sup>20</sup>

Ten years later some zealous census takers in Bergen County went beyond the call of duty and recorded, as precisely as the language barrier allowed, where the Dutch immigrants came from in the Netherlands. While not a scientific sampling, the results are indicative of the actual trends. Of the forty-six provinces or towns listed, thirty-two refer to the province of Zuid-Holland. Fourteen of them specifically refer to municipalities on the island of Goeree-Overflakkee, with Ouddorp mentioned six times, and Goedereede three times.<sup>21</sup> This northern New Jersey link to the island never diminished during the next waves of immigration in the 1880s and 1890s. As Swierenga notes, 70 percent of the island's emigrants settled in the counties of northern New Jersey. Of the immigrants from Zuid-Holland who came to New Jersey, 97 percent came from just this one distressed island in the estuary of the Rhine River.<sup>22</sup>

18. Swierenga, *Faith and family*, 86.

19. Swierenga, *Faith and family*, 25.

20. Seventh Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Passaic and Bergen Counties, State of New Jersey.

21. Eighth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Bergen County, State of New Jersey.

22. Swierenga, *Faith and family*, 87.

The Passaic Valley's factories required two things: funds to build them and labour to operate them. While much of the capital that funded Paterson came from New York City, and overseas investors, including a few in the Netherlands, local entrepreneurs possessed the land and the vision of what the future should hold.<sup>23</sup> Many of these local notables belonged to old Dutch colonial families: the Van Blarcoms, Hoppers, Van Houtens, Wortendykes, and Zabriskies. These clans had been in the Passaic Valley since the 1670s; their churches had first appeared in the area in the 1690s. When the first Dutch newcomers arrived during the late 1840s they took up residence in close proximity to members of these old families and worked for them as farm labourers. Like the immigrants from Overflakkee, the old families tended to be theologically orthodox and culturally traditional, as demonstrated in their affiliation with the schismatic True Dutch Reformed Protestant Church that formed during the 1820s.<sup>24</sup>

The Flakkeers possessed a strong streak of religious pietism. Many had joined the 1834 secession (*Afscheiding*) from the Dutch Reformed church (*Hervormde Kerk*) that Van Raalte and Scholte led in the 1830s. The most devout embraced the experiential Calvinist teachings of Rev. Lambertus G. C. Ledebøer. Religious divisions began appearing as the newcomers acquired the means to organise their own congregations. The first was started in Paterson in 1856. It soon split over the question of denominational affiliation. By 1866 there were two rival congregations, one affiliated with the Reformed Church in America, the other with a schismatic group in Michigan that eventually called itself the Christian Reformed Church.

Dutch speaking churches proliferated during the next sixty years as the enclaves grew internally, spread over a larger area, and divided over theological issues.<sup>25</sup> Little Falls, Garfield, Lodi, Paterson, Passaic, Midland Park

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23. Amsterdam investors were among the first investors in the Society to Encourage Useful Manufactures, the chartered corporation that owned the site of Paterson and controlled the mill races that provided the water power for the first mills in the city. Dutch investors also helped finance two railroads (the Erie and the Lackawanna) that gave Paterson access to broader markets, Augustus J. Veenendaal Jr., *Slow train to paradise: how Dutch investment helped build American railroads* (Stanford 1996) 10, 239, 242.

24. Herman Harmelink III, William W. Coventry, Sharon Thoms Scholten, *The Reformed Church in New Jersey* (n.p. 1969) 30-35; Gerald F. DeJong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American colonies* (Grand Rapids 1978) 211-227; Firth Haring Fabend, *Zion on the Hudson: Dutch New York and New Jersey in the age of revivals* (New Brunswick 2000); Richard Harms, 'Piety beyond the palisades: the true reformed Dutch church, 1822-1924', in: George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam (eds.), *Morsels in the melting pot: the persistence of Dutch immigrant communities in North America* (Amsterdam 2006) 55-69.

25. For other accounts of similar schisms in Dutch enclaves in the United States see James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in modern America: a history of a conservative subculture* (Grand Rapids 1984) 37-54; Elton J. Bruins and Robert P. Swierenga, *Family quarrels in the Dutch Reformed churches of the 19th century* (Grand Rapids 1999); Richard Harms, 'Forging a reli-

all had Dutch-speaking churches. In several of these places rival congregations within walking distance of each other barely acknowledged one another. In one Paterson neighbourhood there were three Dutch-speaking congregations affiliated with three different denominations all within eyesight of one another.<sup>26</sup>

The Flakkeer prominence received a challenge when a large number of immigrants again arrived from the Netherlands during the 1880s. Of course more Flakkeers arrived from towns such as Middelharnis and Stad aan 't Haringvliet on the island's northern coast, but this time a substantial cadre from the northern Dutch province of Friesland discovered new homes in the Paterson area. They came to escape economic distress, an agricultural depression that created widespread poverty in the northern province. They also came from a relative handful of municipalities on the geographical fringe of their province; many also were dissenters. But among the Frisians political dissent was more prevalent than it had been among the Flakkeers.<sup>27</sup> However, religious dissent trumped political concerns among the majority of the newcomers. Not only did the new wave expand the Dutch community's numbers, it also brought a socially active Calvinism that inspired the Dutch to organise separate day schools in Paterson, Passaic, and Midland Park, a hospital for the mentally ill, a retirement home for the elderly, a YMCA for the largest Dutch neighbourhood in the city of Paterson, and a Christian labour union movement for the area's workers.

The Dutch assimilation trajectory reflected a pattern common to ethnic groups that defined themselves in religious terms.<sup>28</sup> Their separate schools and churches reinforced the social pressure to marry within the Dutch community. In one district of the heavily Dutch First Ward of Paterson there were 265 married couples in the 1910 census. 96 percent of these marriages involved both a husband and wife of Dutch background. Only eleven couples defied this convention and married outsiders, most often someone of English background.<sup>29</sup>

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gious identity: the Christian Reformed Church in the nineteenth-century Dutch immigrant community', in: Krabbendam and Wagenaar (eds.), *The Dutch-American experience*, 189-208; Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago*, 77-210, 295-349.

26. Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation stood at the corner of Haledon and North First Street. Second Christian Reformed Church stood a few doors down North First Street, and First Holland Reformed Church was located one block beyond, near the intersection of North First Street and East Main Street.

27. Galema, *Frisians to America*, 53-66, 164-77.

28. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th street*; Bodnar, *The transplanted*; Coburn, *Life at Four Corner*; Conzen, 'German Catholic immigrants who made their own America'.

29. Thirteenth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for District 89, First Ward, City of Paterson, Passaic County, New Jersey. 75 percent of this district's 1731 residents were of Dutch extraction.

The Dutch presence in the Passaic Valley grew almost exclusively via direct immigration from the Netherlands. Very rarely did Hollanders from other colonies in the United States deign to relocate to the Paterson area. This heightened the impact of chain migration patterns. Not only were the New Jersey settlers physically separated, and socially aloof from their close neighbours, these immigrants remained unusually isolated from the rest of the Dutch communities scattered in the United States. Particularly in the Midwestern farm communities of Iowa, the Dakotas, and Minnesota, Dutch communities routinely included settlers from various American states and Dutch provinces. For instance, in 1910 one Minnesota community included residents born in nine different states.<sup>30</sup> In Paterson however, Dutch residents born in other states were a rarity, as were immigrants from provinces other than Zuid-Holland and Friesland and the towns of Goeree-Overflakkee, reflecting the family connections in this particular migration chain. In the heavily Dutch First Ward only 24 of the 1090 Dutch American heads of household: four were born in Illinois, three in Michigan, eleven in New York and one each in Massachusetts, Maryland, Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Missouri.<sup>31</sup> In the heavily Dutch Second Ward of Passaic, only thirteen heads of household, out of 377, had been born in another state, fifteen in New York, two in Rhode Island and Michigan, and one each in Pennsylvania and Illinois.<sup>32</sup> The most common thread that produced even these meagre numbers was the arrival of ministers from the west with children in their households who married into one of the Passaic Valley families. The Dutch-American language press also reflected New Jersey's separation from the mainstream. Each year *De Volksvriend*, the newspaper with the largest circulation among Dutch Americans, published hundreds of articles on the Dutch immigrant communities of North America. Paterson appeared in its columns approximately once per decade.<sup>33</sup>

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30. Thirteenth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Holland Township, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota.

31. Thirteenth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for First Ward, City of Paterson, Passaic County, New Jersey.

32. Thirteenth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Second Ward, City of Passaic, Passaic County, New Jersey.

33. This is based on a database the author compiled for a forthcoming article on the history of *De Volksvriend* that is scheduled to appear in the *Annals of Iowa*. For about 40 years a Dutch language newspaper, *Het Oosten*, served the Dutch communities of New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts. This publication's lack of news about other Dutch enclaves only reinforced the region's isolation from the other Dutch areas. The one exception to this rule was the Dutch language periodical of the Christian Reformed Church, *De Wachter*. It regularly included church news from New Jersey, as did the English language *Banner*. Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 918-919, 921-922; Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 539.

Left largely to themselves, the Passaic Valley's Dutch immigrants became fixed in the area by finding their niches among the region's restrictions and opportunities. America was swathed in cloth spun, woven, and coloured in the valley's textile mills and dye shops. By 1900 well over half of the silk cloth produced in the United States came from looms in Paterson. A few miles down the river in Passaic and neighbouring Lodi stood woollen mills, a rubber mill, chemical plants, an oil cloth factory, and railroad equipment plants that also hired inexpensive immigrant labour. The industrial complexes along the riverbanks drew nourishment from the fertile farmland that stretched westward toward the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains as well as north and eastward into Bergen County. Yet another belt of farmland lay beyond the first range of the mountains along the Pequannock River, a tributary of the Passaic. Dutch dairy farmers operated farms that produced the milk and cheese the cities required. To the east of the river other Dutch farmers raised the produce that found its way into the markets of Paterson and Passaic. At the lower reaches of the Passaic Valley still other Dutch farmers used their flower growing skills to decorate the tables of nearby New York City.

### Field work

Lambertus C. Bobbink arrived in the United States in 1894 as a salesman for a group of Dutch nurserymen from Boskoop, Zuid-Holland. Born in 1867 in Oosterbeek, Gelderland, he had learned the plant business in Germany, France, England, and the Netherlands. He was an odd immigrant in that he travelled first class to America, rather than in steerage. Needing a place to store his merchandise, Bobbink bought a tract of land in the Borough of Rutherford in the lower reaches of the valley. In 1898 he formed a partnership with Frederick Atkins, built the first of many greenhouses and began providing much of the colour on the fashionable tables of the region. Bobbink & Atkins installed a flower exhibit on the grounds of the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Eventually the company expanded nationally via mail order catalogue sales.

Bobbink quickly adapted to his new environment. He married an American-born wife (Gertrude Schmidt), joined the Masons and the local Presbyterian Church, and became a citizen of the United States in the minimum amount of time allowed under federal law. When the United States entered the First World War in 1917 the federal government placed an embargo on imported plants from Europe. Bobbink & Atkins' greenhouses and fields contained the flower strains that were no longer available from overseas. Along with his tea rose and azalea hybrids, Lambertus Bobbink remained a renowned figure among plant aficionados until his death in 1950. His catalogues were required reading. Boasting that they sold the 'World's Choicest

Nursery & Greenhouse Products Known in America', the Bobbink & Atkins catalogue was a household name.<sup>34</sup>

Historians of immigration have noted that those who chose not to remain confined to life with their compatriots often secured a higher level of economic prosperity in a relatively short period of time. Lambertus Bobbink seems to prove this rule. Not only did he arrive as an entrepreneur, and man of means, he rapidly went to work with a non-Dutch partner. Bobbink's numerous return visits to the Netherlands enabled him to maintain unusually close face-to-face connections with his old home. And he preferred to not live in one of the larger Dutch enclaves in the Passaic Valley. He did employ Dutch newcomers in his nursery and greenhouses, but he did not associate with them in his idle hours, nor, apparently, did he worship with them in a Reformed church.<sup>35</sup> His annual guided tour of the New York Botanical Garden was a highlight of the year for gardeners. And yet there was one thing that made Lambertus Bobbink quite typical: he brought his ability to cultivate the soil from the Netherlands and used that skill to find a niche for himself in the United States. So did the Dutch dairy farmers.

Klaas Zijlstra immigrated to the United States from the village of Deinum, Menaldumadeel, Friesland in 1873. He came with his wife Grietje, four sons and a daughter and settled in Acquackanonk Township near Passaic. He remained a labourer, as he had been in the Netherlands, but with better prospects for advancement in the agricultural area that bordered a growing industrial city. Klaas endured sometimes lengthy periods of unemployment; two of his sons and a daughter supplemented the household income by working on nearby farms. As a sign that things were better in America, he promptly shucked his Frisian surname. By 1880 he had become Nicholas Sisco, and his wife and three sons had adopted anglicised names.<sup>36</sup> Three of the Sisco brothers organised Sisco Dairy Company in 1896. With a farm and bottling facility located just west of Passaic, they delivered their products door to door

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34. *New York Times*, 8 December 1950, 29; *House & Garden*, February 1918, 72. (By 1940, the editors of the *New Yorker* magazine used a cartoon caption that clearly assumed their reader viewed Bobbink and Atkins as a synonym for florists and gardeners.) Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Censuses of the United States, manuscript schedules for Boroughs of Wallington and Rutherford, Bergen County, State of New Jersey. Bobbink's brother, Arend, also came to the United States in 1909 with his wife and children. He worked with Lambertus in the nursery business. He Americanised his given name to Arthur within a year after his arrival.

35. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians*; Bernard J. Fridsma, Sr., *Never broken bond. 60 years of Frisian activity in America* (Grand Rapids 1998) 14. This author's family arrived from Friesland in 1911 and his father's first job in the United States was working for Bobbink and Atkins.

36. Tenth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Acquackanonk Township, Passaic County, State of New Jersey. His sons traded Dirk, Lammert, and Jan for Richard, Lyman, and John. One son, Auke, retained his name, albeit respelled as Oaker or Acker.

in Passaic and Bergen County communities. Marketing their wares using either surnames or corporate identities, the Dutch became a major force in the Passaic Valley's dairy industry. At least 33 Dutch Americans made their living delivering milk door to door in Passaic and Bergen counties when the census takers canvassed the area in 1910.<sup>37</sup>

Other Dutch farmers specialised in truck farms and orchards, among them Peter Botbyl. He arrived in Paterson in 1852 with his father and mother and seven siblings from Zierikzee, on the island to the immediate south of Goeree-Overflakkee. Joost Botbijl had been a gardener in the Netherlands and he used those skills to farm in the United States. As the oldest son, Peter followed in his father's footsteps. In time he owned a sizeable tract of land on the eastern edge of the city, on a rise overlooking the Passaic River. He grew the vegetables that he peddled in Paterson and the nearby neighbourhoods of Hawthorne, Prospect Park, and Fair Lawn on the other side of the river. Botbyl had many competitors among the Dutch Americans of the valley. By 1910 more than thirty heads of household earned a living as produce peddlers. Other Dutch entrepreneurs, including Botbyl's brother Bartel, opened grocery stores and produce stands that sold the fruits and vegetables from more fixed locations.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, many of the Dutch took advantage of the agricultural opportunities in the Passaic Valley. The vast majority of them came from rural reaches of the Netherlands and knew how to care for animals and to raise crops. From the beginning of the Great Emigration in 1847, those who came to New Jersey gained their first foothold in the region as farm labourers. While many eventually opted for work in the factories, a significant number remained on the land, and became independent farm owners. They formed a niche in two senses: their farms and delivery systems (as dealers and peddlers) raised them to the level of entrepreneurs and also enabled them to provide

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37. Twelfth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Bergen and Passaic Counties, State of New Jersey. Passaic City Directory, 1888-1901. Philip M. Mead, *Clifton: the boomtown years* (Charleston 2007) 28. Lamring, Sikkema, Stokes, Van Peenen, and Velzen were among the surnames. Companies, such as Garden State Farms, Ideal Farms, and Sicomac Dairy were owned by Dutch immigrant families: Sanford, Tanis, and Galenkamp.

38. Tenth, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Censuses of the United States, manuscript schedules for the City of Paterson, Passaic County, State of New Jersey. Immigrant passenger lists. Marriage records for Zierikzee. Seventy-fifth Anniversary of Fourth Christian Reformed Church, Paterson, New Jersey. Peter Botbyl was actively involved in the organisation of the Fourth Christian Reformed Church in 1896. He chaired the organisational meeting and attended the meeting of Classis Hudson at which the other churches in the area consented to the formation of this congregation. Bartel Botbyl operated a grocery store in the Totowa section of Paterson and attended First Christian Reformed Church. For many years he served as the clerk of the congregation's consistory.

employment for other Dutch immigrants as they arrived in later years.<sup>39</sup> Produce peddlers and milk deliverymen fanned out beyond the immediate Dutch neighbourhoods to serve a more general population. These activities certainly aided in the accumulation of both financial and social capital as customers paid for these services while the peddlers and milk deliverymen earned the trust of their regular customers, both Dutch and non-Dutch.<sup>40</sup> Serving the food needs of the community proved to be a step in Americanisation process. Dutch prosperity and profits depended on doing business with people from different backgrounds. To serve them required that the Dutch accommodate themselves to them, at least in the marketplace.

### Construction work

Similarly industrial growth in the Passaic Valley opened opportunities for immigrants to form niches in non-agricultural pursuits. Rising population meant more housing, rising real estate values and increasing demand for carpenters, masons, plumbers, and (after 1890) electricians. Construction crews built the houses, schools, churches, roads, sidewalks, commercial blocks, and factories that rose like mushrooms from one end of the valley to the other. Given their outsized presence in construction trades, the Dutch Americans established a niche for themselves, first as common labourers and then as contractors, suppliers, architects, and engineers. By 1900 construction work was second only to employment in the textile mills among the Dutch. A disastrous fire in Paterson in 1902, and a devastating flood the following year, helped further boost opportunities in the construction trades. And those who did this work became the most visible Hollanders in the region, men such as Sam Braen and Dow Drukker.

Braen's story mirrors many of the common themes of Dutch settlement in the valley. His parents came from Goeree-Overflakkee and arrived in the Paterson area in the early 1850s, accompanying Sam's grandparents. By 1860 three more Breen families arrived from the Netherlands. They settled within walking distance of old Dutch colonial families and affiliated with the True

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39. Marlou Schrover, Joanne van der Leun, and Chris Quispel, 'Niches, labour market segregation, ethnicity, and gender', *Journal of ethnic and migration studies* 33 (2007) 529-540, 531; Marlou Schrover, 'Immigrant business and niche formation in historical perspective: the Netherlands in the nineteenth century', *Journal of ethnic and immigration studies* 27 (2001) 295-299.

40. Working the neighbourhoods in search of customers was an exclusively male endeavour among the Dutch. Women could be found behind the counter in Dutch owned grocery stores, but not on the peddler wagons. By 1920 there were instances in which women operated stores as second income sources, while their husbands worked in either the textile mills or as construction workers.

Reformed Dutch Church of Acquackanonk. His father, John, and mother, Martha Van Heest, were married in 1854 by Rev. John Berdan.<sup>41</sup> Sam, who was actually baptised as Simon, grew up on farms in both Bergen and Passaic counties. His father rose from farm labourer to farm owner by 1870 and accumulated a modest savings. During the 1870s Sam married a Dutch immigrant woman, moved into Paterson, and went to work in the mills. His first wife, Mary, died at a young age and Sam remarried yet another Dutch immigrant (and widow) Susan Trost Dale.<sup>42</sup> Sam left the mills and took up farming, not far from his father's orchard in the shadow of the First Watchung Mountain, the eastern most ridge of the Appalachian Mountains.

The hard rock face of mountain attracted the notice of northern New Jersey's contractors. Once blasted, crushed, and mixed with cement hauled by train from Pennsylvania, this stone provided the basic material for roads, bridges, and commercial structures. According to legend Sam Braen acquired his first piece of the mountain as payment for a gambling debt.<sup>43</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, there is no doubt that he exchanged farming for contracting, formed Sam Braen, Inc. in 1904, and spent the remainder of his active life operating his quarry business. His name numbered among the most visible Dutch American names in the region as trucks sporting his name delivered the materials that literally built the Passaic Valley's factories and transportation network. He counted Union Building and Construction Co., and its president Dow Henry Drukker, among his more prominent customers.

Drukker's arrival in the area in 1898 was an exception that proved the rule about New Jersey's limited contact with other Dutch colonies to the west. He came from Grand Rapids, Michigan. His uncle, Reinder Drukker, one of those rare people who arrived in the Passaic Valley from the western colonies,

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41. Sixth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Wayne Township, Passaic County, State of New Jersey. In classical chain migration fashion, Aart Breen's family arrived in 1851 two years after his brother Willem's family moved to the area. Willem, in turn, had been preceded by his daughter Maria Breen Laauwe. They all settled in Passaic County. Their names were modified at the hands of the census enumerators so that by 1860 the name was being spelled seven different ways: Breen, Braen, Brain, Brane, Brien, Brein, and Brune.

42. This sketch of Samuel Braen's life is constructed from the following sources: Dutch immigrant passenger lists, vital records available through [www.genlias.nl](http://www.genlias.nl), Eighth Census of the United States manuscript schedules for Acquackanonk Township and the City of Paterson, Passaic County, State of New Jersey, Ninth, Tenth, Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Censuses of the United States, manuscript schedules for Manchester Township, Borough of Totowa, Passaic County, State of New Jersey. Polk's Paterson Directory, 1879-80. New Jersey State Census of 1895, manuscript schedules for Wayne Township, Passaic County.

43. A summary of the company's history can be found at: <http://new.braensupply.com/get-to-know-us.html> (20 July 2009).

served as the minister of the Dutch speaking Christian Reformed Church in Passaic during the 1880s.<sup>44</sup> Reinder's oldest daughter found her husband among the parishioners, Jacob J. Van Noordt. Van Noordt's family had arrived from Oude-Tonge on Goeree-Overflakkee in 1865. Jacob learned the mason's trade, making sidewalks his specialty. Given the physical growth of the towns and cities of the valley in the 1890s, Van Noordt enjoyed a steady income. He branched out into other projects, building roads, bridges and buildings, and incorporated under the name of the Union Building and Construction Company. Van Noordt looked to the west for a financial manager and he hired his wife's cousin, Dow Henry Drukker.

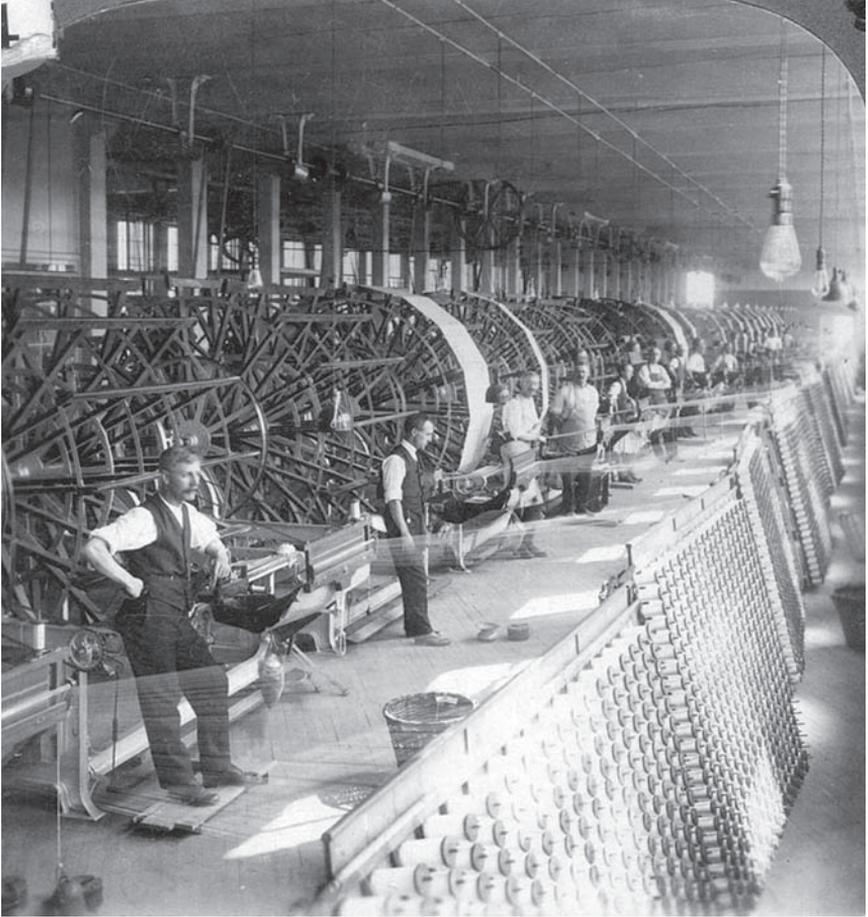
Born in Sneek, the Netherlands, in 1872 and immigrating as a child, Drukker grew up in the nation's largest Dutch enclave; Grand Rapids, Michigan.<sup>45</sup> As a teenager he began working in a downtown department store and in eleven years rose from cashier boy to office manager. He arrived in Passaic at the age of 26 and quickly became a very well known person in both that city and the surrounding area. Van Noordt retired from the company in 1901, apparently for health reasons, and Drukker assumed command of the entire operation as president. He looked to other (non-Dutch) Passaic businessmen for additional capital and took the owners of the city's largest brewery as partners. Soon Drukker sat on the board of a bank and purchased an interest in the city's largest newspaper. He belonged to the right clubs and fraternal organisations. Since his construction business involved government-funded projects, Dow Drukker was a familiar person in city halls and the Passaic County Court House in Paterson. He caught the eye of the leaders of the local Republican Party and in 1906, only eight years after his arrival in the area, they successfully ran him as a candidate for a seat on the Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders. In this position he supervised the county's public works projects, as well as the sheriff's department, poor fund, and public health facilities.

Drukker quickly earned a reputation for fiscal responsibility that prompted his colleagues to name him director of the board in 1910. He retired as a freeholder at the end of 1913, intending to pay more attention to his business interests. When the local seat in the U.S. House of Representatives became open, Drukker ran for the seat and handily defeated an opponent who enjoyed

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44. This congregation was organised in 1875 and was located on the corner of Washington Street and Columbia Avenue until 1894, when it moved to Hope Avenue. The congregation sold their first building to a Jewish congregation. The Christian Reformed Church remained on Hope Avenue until 1925 when it moved to the north part of the city where it became the Summer Street Christian Reformed Church.

45. This account of Drukker's career has been assembled from several sources, most notably federal census records, city directories for Grand Rapids and Passaic, and two biographical sketches of him. *Het Oosten* 3 July 1914, 5; Scott, *History of Passaic and its environs*, 24-25.



*Ill. 2 Paterson, New Jersey silk workers operating warping machines, circa 1905; picture from a set of stereopticon cards produced by the Keystone View Company of Meadville, Pennsylvania, New York, Chicago, and London.*

President Woodrow Wilson's public endorsement. For the next six years this Dutch American contractor served as Passaic County's voice in Congress.<sup>46</sup>

Dow Drukker and Sam Braen may have been the most prominent Dutch Americans in the Passaic Valley's construction business, but a more anonymous group of crafts left an even greater mark on the region's landscape: the army of Dutch immigrant carpenters and masons who built the houses and

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46. *Het Oosten* 3 July 1914, *New York Times* 25 March 1914, 9 April 1914, 4 November 1914, Scott, *History of Passaic and its environs*, 24-25. Upon his retirement from Congress in 1919, Drukker returned to Passaic where he continued to live until his death on 24 January 1963. He became a bank president and newspaper publisher. His relatives maintained ties to Union Building and Construction for many decades.

neighbourhood stores that served the factory workers whose toil generated the funds that fuelled the building boom from which people such as Braen and Drukker profited. At the turn of the twentieth century, the city directories of Paterson and Passaic included 222 carpenters, contractors, and masons in the listings of professional services. The 82 Dutch American immigrants among them constituted fully 37 percent of the total. Given that Dutch Americans constituted 10.5 percent of the population of the two cities, their rate of involvement in construction exceeded their presence in the population by a factor of three. As their Dutch cousins in Chicago were doing in the garbage hauling business, and increasingly the Italians and Jews were doing in Paterson's silk trades, the Passaic Valley settlers created a niche for themselves in the construction business, one that employed family connections and other ethnic loyalties, similar to the situation that prevailed in the silk industry that dominated both the landscape and economy of Paterson.<sup>47</sup>

### Factory work

Westerhoff Brothers and Napier Silk Company was not the largest operation in the city in 1913, but it did stand at the centre of the great drama that placed Paterson on the front pages of the nation's newspapers during the first half of that year. Strikes were commonplace in Paterson, but no other work stoppage rivalled the impact that the strike of 1913 had on the history of Paterson and its Dutch community. Dow Drukker chaired the Board of Freeholders during the strike; another Dutch American, George W. Botbyl (Peter's son) served as clerk to the Board. A Dutch American bailiff maintained order in the county's courtrooms during trials. Some Dutch Americans were agitators who supported the Industrial Workers of the World, the union that led the strike. Others steadfastly opposed it from beginning to end and became strike-breakers. And the climax of the strike took place on the sidewalks outside a mill, when Dutch American silk manufacturers escorted their Dutch American workers through a picket line that included Dutch Americans, who were arrested by Dutch American city police officers.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Summary of information assembled from Twelfth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for the cities of Paterson and Passaic, Passaic County, New Jersey. *Griffith's Paterson and Passaic directory, 1899* (Paterson 1899); *Griffith's Passaic directory, 1900* (Paterson 1900); Steven Golin, *The fragile bridge: Paterson silk strike, 1913* (Philadelphia 1988) 29-32, 85-86; David J. Goldberg, *A tale of three cities: labor organization and protest in Paterson, Passaic, and Lawrence, 1916-1921* (New Brunswick 1989) 27-29; Swierenga, *Chicago*, 576-649.

48. The two most extensive accounts of the 1913 silk strike are Golin, *The Fragile Bridge*; Anne Huber Tripp, *The I.W.W. and the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913* (Urbana 1987).

More Dutch Americans worked in the silk industry than in any other trade in the Passaic Valley. In 1913 fully 10 percent of the 24,000 silk workers in Paterson were Dutch Americans. They worked as weavers, dyers, winders, finishers, loom fixers, and warpers in the mills. By 1913 they were among the best paid workers in the silk mills, largely because they had been working in the industry longer than the more recently arrived labourers from Italy and Russian Poland.<sup>49</sup> In addition some of the Dutch dye workers had learned the essential art of mixing the colours. Representatives of the second generation were making their way into the offices as clerks, bookkeepers, stenographers, and owners, like the Westerhoff brothers.

Their father, Jacob, left the Netherlands with his family in the spring of 1871 and settled down to farm in Bergen County, about six miles to the north of Paterson. As teenagers Peter and Henry started working in textile mills. As adults they both moved to Paterson; Peter became a loom fixer while Henry toiled as an ordinary labourer. In a case of familial and ethnic solidarity, Peter's skills, Henry's brawn, and some capital provided by Stephen Keyser, a Dutch immigrant grocer from Goeree-Overflakkee, combined to create the firm of Westerhoff Brothers and Co. in 1889. Within a few years the company adopted the loftier name of South Paterson Silk Co. Thomas S. Napier joined the firm in 1895.<sup>50</sup> Westerhoff Brothers and Napier Silk Company found a permanent home one block from the train station Peter used for his daily commute to bucolic Bergen County. Following the example of their competitors, the company set up more looms in eastern Pennsylvania, prompting Henry to permanently relocate to the town of Ephrata.

When the strike shut down Paterson's mills during February 1913, production continued in Pennsylvania. Gradually Paterson's silk producers decided to defy the pickets and restart the looms in the city. Peter Westerhoff was among the first to reopen, and his employees paid for their decision to resume work. Each day Peter and his son Benjamin escorted their female employees from the mill to the station, running a gauntlet of fists, rocks, and epithets hurled by the strikers. Each day the city police appeared in force to keep the picketers at bay, as they shouted insults through the factory's window during work hours. During April, as tensions and insults rose exponentially, the police began to arrest strikers, 124 in all.

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49. *Reports of the immigration commission, immigrants in industry* (Washington 1911) Vol. 11, 15-93.

50. Thomas S. Napier was an immigrant from Scotland. He lived in Brooklyn, New York. The Westerhoffs were the manufacturers and Napier served as the firm's chief salesman. The partnership lasted for about twenty years, eventually being organised as a corporation with \$100,000 in capital. But Napier also filed suits against the Westerhoffs alleging that they had breached various terms of the contractual agreements made over the years.

The trials were held in the Passaic County courthouse, in a room just down the hall from the chamber in which Dow Drukker presided over the Board of Freeholders. The Freeholders routinely approved supplemental appropriations to pay for the additional manpower the county sheriff needed to maintain order when the strikers pursued their opponents over municipal lines, particularly into the Dutch dominated Borough of Prospect Park. That town was the most visible source of strike-breakers willing to cross the picket lines, and acquired the nickname of 'Scab Hill'. Three Dutch American women workers testified under oath about the intimidation they had endured at the behest of the strikers. Peter and Benjamin testified as witnesses for the prosecution, while the bailiff, Bernard Westerhoff, struggled to maintain a suitably solemn atmosphere during the tumultuous proceedings. Two of the defendants were Dutch Americans who also acted as orators on behalf of the Industrial Workers of the World.

The Paterson Silk Strike of 1913 ended in a defeat for the strikers, as production resumed fully during the last weeks of July. The Westerhoff Brothers and Napier Silk Company remained active for years, but the silk industry began a steady decline as synthetic fabrics and cheaper labour costs in Pennsylvania and the South sapped the economic energy that had propelled Paterson to the top of the industrial pyramid during the nineteenth century. Hollanders from Goeree-Overflakkee and Friesland had been among the first immigrant groups to arrive in the nineteenth century, just as the region's transformation from farms to factories began. With time, and rising numbers, the Dutch parlayed their opportunities into a certain prominence that for a time belied their percentage of the whole. With Dutch Americans serving in official capacities, and Dutch Americans among the first to cross the picket lines during the 1913 silk strike, they earned a lasting reputation as politically conservative and socially aloof immigrants. Yet, first on farms, then in factories, and finally as skilled artisans, they left a lasting imprint on the landscape. As was the case with their ethnic neighbours, and for immigrants in general, the Dutch collectively needed to make choices, whether to retain a self conscious identity that distinguished them from the other groups in the area, or forego vital aspects of that identity in winning the favour (or lessening the hostility) of the other social groups among whom they lived. While the Dutch presence in the Passaic Valley did not disappear with the decline of the textile mills, it assumed a more insular form in the years following the strike. They stuck together.

## Conclusion

In 1920 every tenth person in the Passaic Valley was of Dutch extraction. In certain places the Dutch constituted an overwhelming majority of the popula-

tion.<sup>51</sup> There were twenty Dutch Calvinist churches in Lodi, Passaic, Paterson, Little Falls, and Midland Park, and a Dutch Catholic parish in Paterson. There were four Calvinist elementary schools and a high school; the Catholic parish had its own school. The Calvinists had built a hospital for the mentally ill on the ridge and a home for the aged in the valley, established a mutual burial fund, and often buried their dead in a cemetery of their own. In a few more years Dutch American investors would open the Prospect Park National Bank. But interestingly, many of the wooden churches that had housed the first Dutch immigrant congregations gave way to red brick fortresses designed by Dutch architects and built by Dutch contractors. The old wooden school houses erected before 1900 were replaced by brick structures. Though the Dutch remained loyal to the Republican Party, Dow Drukker remained the only Dutch American immigrant elected to Congress from New Jersey and one of the very few to serve on the Board of Freeholders. And after 1920 he retreated from public office to wield influence from corporate boardrooms instead.

Although they were certainly Dutch Americans, the Passaic Valley's Hollanders were hardly clones of their western cousins. A unique set of influences had left distinct marks on them. While their clusters were clearly visible in the region, they constituted a minority of the general population. They were immigrants, but of a different character from the other immigrants who surrounded them – political conservatives with political connections amid the radicals without friends in high places. In the Passaic Valley the Hollanders lived among old colonial Dutch families and churches that, by turns, embraced, rejected, or ignored the newcomers. In common with their Irish and Italian neighbours, religion was an important aspect of Dutch identity.

Not all of the Dutch Americans chose to remain planted in places like Prospect Park or Dutch Hill. Severing at least some of the neighbourhood bonds could lead to prominence in the region, and even the nation. Lambertus Bobbink, Sam Braen, and Dow Drukker clearly demonstrated the reality that those who remained least confined to the ethnic enclaves rose to greater prominence.<sup>52</sup> And there were others (peddlers, such as Peter Botbyl, and the dairymen, like the Sisco family) who thrived both in the enclaves in the surrounding non-Dutch neighbourhoods.

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51. In 1920 the population of Paterson's First Ward and the neighbouring Borough of Prospect Park was approximately 70 percent Dutch. In Paterson's Third Ward and the adjacent Borough of Hawthorne, the population was about 30 percent Dutch. Along the municipal boundary between the cities of Passaic and Clifton the majority of the population was of Dutch immigrant stock.

52. Kamphoefner, *Westfalians*, 199-200. Dow Drukker's home stood along one of Passaic's most fashionable streets, an area of the city in which Dutch Americans comprised less than 3 percent of the population. Lambertus Bobbink's neighbourhood was 7 percent Dutch. Only 4.5 percent of Sam Braen's neighbours were of Dutch extraction.

The community that Dutch immigrants developed along the Passaic River and its tributaries in northern New Jersey remains a largely unexplored tract of the historical landscape. But the evidence justifies a closer look. The Dutch who began arriving in the 1840s heralded the beginning of an immigrant influx that manned the mills and built the towns and cities of America's first great industrial complex. The colony's newspaper carried a masthead that declared itself as the journal of record for the immediate Paterson area and satellite communities centred in West Sayville, New York, Whitinsville, Massachusetts, Rochester, New York, and 'their environs'. This constellation in the Dutch American universe may not have shined as brightly as its inhabitants believed it did, but the work they did in the valley deserves a fuller accounting.

### **About the author**

Robert Schoone-Jongen was born in Paterson, New Jersey in 1949. For twenty-six years he taught high school history classes in Edgerton, Minnesota. In 2003 he was appointed to the faculty of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He teaches courses on world history, American history, and methods for teaching social studies in secondary schools. His recent article on the construction of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Newark, Delaware will appear in *Delaware History* in the Fall of 2010.

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