FROM KOLONIE TO CITY:
MOTIVATIONS FOR MIGRATION IN WESTERN MICHIGAN

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I

Through the planting of settlements in Michigan, Dutch immigrants endured experiences which paralleled those of other pioneer groups on the American frontier. The high expectations and optimism that prevailed prior to their migration waned as the immigrants confronted the harsh realities of transforming the wilderness into a habitable environment. Clearing land for farms, chopping out roads, building log shanties, and laying out villages--tasks that were foreign to the Dutch--challenged the endurance and perseverance of the immigrants as they sought to organize their communities. Nevertheless, the Dutch pioneers clearly understood their mission--to establish the specific character of their community, to communicate its values and foundational principles to potential migrants, and to encourage fellow countrymen to come, settle, and perpetuate that community, thereby realizing their dreams and fulfilling what they perceived as God's plans for His people.

Migration was a selective process in which the participants responded differently to conditions at places of origin and destination. Potential immigrants faced serious decisions as they weighed the idealistic plans of the colonial leadership, the realities of implementing them, and the impact of their own personal choices. Those who chose to live in the new settlement experienced excessive hardships, an absence of "immediate" opportunities, and often the inability to fulfill their dreams, which convinced many individuals and families to look elsewhere for their subsistence. Some found opportunities in new territories where fertile, less-forested lands were still available at reasonable prices. Others sought the growing cities where skilled and unskilled labor was much in demand. Each group, however, emphasized the importance of community and the need for fellowship with their own people. Hence, as populations dispersed into new areas, the migrations were focused toward existing or potential immigrant communities which offered the sanctuary desired by the immigrants. Such was the case of the Netherlanders who moved from the Kolonie to the city.

II

Albertus Van Raalte reserved 5,000 acres of land in western Michigan between the Grand and Kalamazoo rivers for "settlements of Hollanders, . . . thousands and thousands on both rivers and in the space between their borders." He considered this forested western region to be ideal for dairying and farming, for "coopers, basketmakers, apprentices, tanners, carpenters, joiners, . . . indeed just about all hand work is at home in an abundance of wood. . . ."1 Furthermore, he hoped that nearby waterways would provide the necessary connections for the settlement with the emerging regional and national marketplaces. Van Raalte's overriding concern, however, was to ensure that his followers "live together [since] 'in unity there is strength.' . . . . In everything we need each other. . . ; we ought to remain together for mutual support [and] with a view of future growth. . . .My highest wish is, that where the Brothers settle, we altogether through godly piety may be a city upon a hill," serving the Lord tenderly and establishing a "center for a united and spiritual life and labor for God's kingdom."2 Thus, Van Raalte's colony was to be a unique mixture of an isolated homogeneous community of God's people, seeking economic self-sufficiency through trade and business contacts with the outside world.

In the years after 1847, the Holland settlement was the target of a focused migration of new immigrant families. Between 1850 and 1890, the population of the area increased five-fold, though the most rapid growth occurred prior to 1870 [exceeding 80 percent per decade; subsequent decennial increases were only 20 percent or less].3 Other Dutch communities also emerged as provincial groups led by their dominies congregated in the surrounding rural regions, creating the villages of Zeeland, Groningen, Overijsel, among others.

Foremost among the duties of the colony's leadership was to establish the social and economic bases to support the local population and to attract additional immigrants and investment capital into the region. The abundance of wood contributed to the formation of assorted small industries, such as making soap, potash, staves, shingles, and other wood by-products. The Grand River Eagle of 24 November 1848 reported that the Dutch were supplying the comforts of their people "with the most flattering success." One of the most impressive enterprises was a saw mill over one hundred feet high with "thirteen saws propelled by wind. It works admirably; and is, when completed, to contain sixty saws."4 The first major merchandising venture was the Colony Store which was established to sell goods from Eastern and regional markets at wholesale prices. By 1852, the village of Holland included seven stories, two hotels, a bakery, tinsmith, tailor, jeweler, blacksmith, machine maker, wagon maker, numerous farmers and agricultural workers, and one church.5 Yet, despite these initial successes of the formative years, the Dutch of the Kolonie encountered a variety of factors which influenced their perceptions of the settlement and which affected both their residential persistence within the settlement and the destinations of later immigrants into western Michigan.

Life in the woods was indeed difficult for the agriculturally-oriented immigrants. Unaccustomed to the hardships of these forests, the Dutch had to carve their settlements out of the woods, working long and hard to clear the land with crude implements and unfamiliar methods. Once the land was cleared, raising crops offered new challenges, particularly with unfavorable weather and occasional invasions of small predators. Since few settlers could afford the $50 or more needed to purchase a good ox team, the Dutch often had to resort to tedious hand cultivation, which affected their productivity. At one point, conditions were so serious that Rev. Andrew Taylor of the First Reformed Church of Grand Rapids stated "There is now and has been for some time, a most powerful state of want among those devoted brethren. Their provisions have failed them, and some have been subsisting on bran."6 Food was so scarce that Dominie Van Raalte "urged the young men and women to leave and find work . . .with American farmers." Many followed his advice and walked twenty-five to fifty miles to find a job. Occasionally, they would return with the money or supplies which they had purchased for the family. However, at no time did Van Raalte recommend that families abandon their farms or the colony because of these hardships. Rather, he urged them to persevere and rely upon the additional income contributed by the employed youths.7

Transportation was yet another concern of the new settlement. Swampy and forested lands complicated the immigrants' efforts to clear trails between the communities of the colony. In an angry letter to the Grand River

Eagle, one "Deidrich Knickerbocker" stated that hundreds of Hollanders were arriving in the port of Grand Haven and "every facility should be afforded them to get in to the Colony as cheap and expeditious as possible." As conditions existed, the immigrants had to battle through the wilderness because of the "morbid apathy" of the public. Knickerbocker concluded with a plea for action: "Arouse! arouse! you drowsy soul, why sleep you so? Now is the time to commence work. Delay will endanger reputation."8

During their session of 1848, the Michigan legislature appropriated 4,000 acres of land in Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties to be used for constructing roads along "the most eligible routes from the village of Allegan in the county of Allegan, Grandville in the county of Kent, and Grand Haven in the county of Ottawa . . . to be terminated at such point or points within the limits of the present settlement of the Holland Colony."9 Businessmen from the small village of Grand Rapids also contributed to the construction of the Grandville Road, realizing "full well that the cost of building such a road would soon be amply repaid through the profits made in commerce with the colonists."10 However, until those roads were completed, "goods had to be carried from a great distance from Allegan, Saugatuck, or Singapore, some even from Grand Haven and Grand Rapids," recalled Egbert Fredericks. "A journey to any one of these places and back required one whole day. Many a person made such a journey carrying on his back a bag of flour needed to keep his flock alive."11

To insure the success of the colony, Van Raalte stressed the need for acquiring a harbor at Holland. He claimed that the site provided a "connection with the world, cheap transportation, high market prices . . . and the greatest variety of labor and occupations. . . ,an imperative necessity for such an immigration stream."12 Van Raalte hoped that revenues derived from the harbor could be designated for internal improvements in order to enhance the attractiveness of the settlement. Through consultations with government officials, Van Raalte won an $8,000 appropriation in 1852, which was promptly vetoed by President Pierce. Despite the numerous debts of the new settlements, the Dutch townships secured state approval to raise their own funds for harbordevelopment, thereby stressing the importance of the harbor issue for the survival of the Dutch community. By late 1859, the Holland Harbor was capable of accommodating Great Lakes shipping, which contributed to a vast increase in the volume of trade. The railroad however did not connect with Holland until the harbor was fully established. The Michigan Lake Shore entered in 1870, tying Holland in to other West Michigan communities and a line to Grand Rapids opened in 1871, thereby ending two decades of relative isolation.13

The editor of De Hollander wrote in 1855 that recent immigrants to the colony were looking for land. "Some of these people have given expression to their dissatisfaction over the high price of land cleared for farming and lying near the village. We do not wish to defend excessive profits, but should we not also remember that the workingman's sweat is dear?"14 These high prices and the simultaneous shortage of available land in the colony forced many individuals to purchase land from the Americans in the vicinity of Jamestown, Hudsonville, Allendale, and Grand Rapids, which thereby contributed to the dispersal of the immigrants outside the original Kolonie.

Disease caused further hardships for the colonists. Both Engbertus Vander Veen and Egbert Fredericks commented on the dire effects of the surrounding swamp lands which cultivated "malarial fever" and other dreaded illnesses. "Many people became ill and what made matters worse," claimed Fredericks, "they lacked everything sick people needed. The beds were poor, food was bad, and care of the sick was inadequate. Many people died, so many that funerals sometimes could not be conducted decently. There were parents who had to bury their children with their own hands."15 Hendrik Van Eyck arrived in Holland on 22 August 1848 and noted "sick people in every home, sometimes as many as five or six in one house. Evil fevers reigned everywhere, people looked like shadows returned on earth."16 Even Van Raalte acknowledged how he had never "been so near collapse as when in those crowded log houses in which each family had to manage to live in a few square feet of space and I saw how all sorts of family activities--housekeeping, being sick, dying, and the care of the dead--had to be discharged."17 Not everyone remained in the colony to await the next bout with disease. Adrian Hage, a resident of Grandville in 1849, recalled that "as soon as the cholera ceased, many of the group went to Grand Rapids."18

The Union of 1850 in which the new immigrants affiliated with the Americanized Dutch Reformed Church of the East created some tensions within the Holland settlement. The affiliation, orchestrated by Van Raalte, brought the Netherlanders into contact with the alleged modernisms, non-Reformed doctrines, and ecclesiastical errors of the American church, causing significant cultural and theological conflicts and evoking memories of the 1834 Schism. Eventually, Dutch churches in Drenthe, Graafschap, Noordeloos, Polkton, and Grand Rapids left Classis Holland and formed the basis of the Christian Reformed denomination. Other issues including Freemasonry, temperance, public versus Christian education, revivalism, and the use of English in services kept the fires of cultural conflict burning. However, according to Elton Bruins, Van Raalte and his followers apparently "felt that the union of 1850 had been the right course of action and did not favor the new secessionist activity of 1857."19

Van Raalte's leadership became the source of some controversy because of the immense power that the dominie possessed and exercised. To establish the colony, Van Raalte secured land in his own name and required the immigrants to purchase their parcels from him. He managed all colonial relations with national, state, and local governments. While some characterized Van Raalte as a "modern Moses," others criticized him as the landlord of the colony, the dictator of the local church, the political boss of the town, and the pope of the classis.20 Many individuals countered those charges, such as Engbertus Vander Veen who wrote:

> 'Pope and Cardinals' is often repeated by worldly people and others with malcontented spirits in editorials or paper sent in for publication in The Netherlander, a weekly paper that was published only for a short time by bad men who gloried if they could publish some dirty articles.21 [Holland's own National Enquirer]

Opponents of Van Raalte accused him of sacrificing the spiritual character of the colony for material gain through his land dealings. However, Bernardus Grootenhuis defended the dominie "because in all his

considerations he looked to the desirability and virtue of all he undertook. There were numerous charges directed against him as leader and promoter of things pertaining to the colony, most of which is chargeable to ignorance of the ideals God granted him, that were beyond the grasp of the common man. However, the results, although subject to error, show that his efforts were directed toward the advancement of God's kingdom on earth."22

Albert Hyma argued in his biography of Van Raalte that the dominie was indeed a "benevolent despot" out of necessity for the welfare of his people. "If he had waited for them to buy their land and set up a suitable form of self-government," claimed Hyma, "he would have seen chaos and failure. So he deliberately forced the people to behave as they should for their own good. He was the board of trustees, the consistory of the classis, the village government, the doctor, the chief educator, the supervisor of transportation, commerce, and industry. . . .For such a man to have introduced pure democracy at the very outset would have been sheer folly. His people needed a firm hand and he gave it to them."23

All of these issues, including the Holland fire of October 1871, certainly affected the immigrants' perceptions about the future of their settlement and consequently their persistence within that community. However, the issue of basic survival and subsistence loomed largest in the lives of the immigrants. While they were truly dedicated to building this Calvinist Zion in the wilderness, they were concerned with providing for their own basic needs and wants. The much-awaited Colony Store failed after a short time due to lack of sufficient capital. The absence of an adequate harbor facility delayed the arrival of the railroad and prevented the successful use of the colony's sailing vessel "A. E. Knickerbocker," which had been purchased to transport goods to and from market.24 Mills, workshops, and minor industries failed in the early years due to the lack of sufficient financing. Furthermore, the degree of civilization in Holland, incorporated in 1867, was often misleading for the groups arriving after the pioneers had settled. Van Raalte noted that "it is a wonder that immigrants who had been informed by letter, when they arrived in the city of Holland, were bewildered and asked where they might find the city of Holland or its storekeepers, bakers, etc., and that they were greatly disappointed to learn that everything as represented existed only in the future."25 Thus, it was clearly apparent that the community needed its own industries and commercial ventures to supply immediate needs and to furnish goods for export, which would give work to local residents and keep money in the settlement.

In his study of Holland, Gordon Kirk noted the absence of sufficient opportunity and the growing rigidity of the occupational structure as primary causes for the loss of population from the Kolonie. Those who arrived in the early years secured the best lands in the settlement, forcing later newcomers to look elsewhere for land and opportunities. While the agricultural sector expanded during the years preceding 1870, the industrial sector, such as wagon making, cooperage, tanning, and food processing, grew more rapidly in the latter decades. Consequently, the newcomers or those who could not adapt to the changes moved to other areas for employment. Sons of the early immigrants often failed to secure occupational positions comparable to their fathers', which increased the probability that the younger generation also would move elsewhere to find a more promising livelihood and future.26

Emigration from the colony increased every decade in the late nineteenth century. For each ten-year period beginning in 1850, between one-fourth and one-third of the male labor force departed the settlement (26 percent, 1850-60; 31 percent, 1870-80). The highest degree occurred among those lowest on the occupational ladder--unskilled and skilled blue collar and general agricultural workers. According to Kirk, this could be attributed to the move toward light industry which narrowed the extent of opportunity and reduced the economic resources for the lower level employees.27 Consequently, Dutch workers left the community with their eyes fixed on the emerging cities of Grand Rapids, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo in hopes that the diversity of employment would provide better wages and more amenable surroundings.

Considering the hardships endured by the immigrants and the critical delays in the internal improvements within the settlement, it is not surprising that many Dutchmen looked elsewhere to supplement their incomes or to find opportunities for advancement which the fledgling colony could not offer. The small village of Grand Rapids (population 2,600 in 1850), located twenty-five miles to the northeast along the Grand River, provided markets and menial jobs for the Netherlanders who came in search of supplies for their settlement. Children and young adults were among the numbers of immigrants who walked from the Kolonie to Grand Rapids and other cities to become laborers, domestics, and apprentices. Cornelia Van Malsen at Holland wrote in 1847: "Yesterday we sent a number of housemaids and laborers to Kalamazoo, a small town. They were immediately received with open arms [and if they understood English] there were excellent prospects for them."28 Reijer Van Zwaleuwenberg of Groningen recalled that "in May 1851 my oldest sister went to Grand Rapids to earn some money as a maid. [At that time] there were many Dutch girls serving as maids in the houses of the English [Americans] in Kalamazoo."29 Jacob Den Herder noted that "Jan Steketee's oldest sons sought employment in Grand Rapids. . . . Because of better prospects for work, Steketee and his family moved from Zeeland to Grand Rapids in 1851."30 In his work Pilgrim Fathers of the West, Dingman Versteeg reported that many of the young workers returned home on occasion with "ground meal, pork, meat, articles of clothing, pieces of furniture or even money as wages or compensation" to supplement their families' incomes and to assist in the economic sustenance of the colony.31 Sietze Bos visited home approximately every five weeks with a load of provisions--a barrel of meal costing $3.00 from a Grand Rapids mill retailed for $9.00 in the colony; pork at the farmer was $1.50 per hundred pounds, but cost $8.00 at home.32 Thus, in the ensuing years, Dutch families and individuals streamed into the small yet growing urban community to work among the Americans. While they spoke of returning to the Kolonie one day, many chose to stay along the Grand River.

This first group of Hollanders in Grand Rapids sent word of growth, activity, and employment back to their families. Frans Van Driele arrived in July 1848, began work on the Grand River canal construction project for $16 per month in store pay, and later moved to the Sweet & Clements flour mill for $10 per month cash.33 Several others also found work on the canal, as reported by the Grand Rapids Enquirer of 1 August 1849:

> Any one may now see the 'Dutch Buggies' in full operation, at the foot of Canal Street. . . .the files of Dutchmen engaged in transporting the 'raw materials' are well worth watching. . . .

They are not only industrious but a very steady set of laborers.

Later, the Enquirer again noted the increasing presence of Dutch immigrants in the village:

> During the past week our streets have been 'taken by the Dutch.' The Hollanders have resorted here in uncommon numbers and their ox teams here made quite a caravan. Large supplies of provisions, stoves, tools, and goods are carried to the Colonies in Ottawa County, in preparation for the coming winter. They are a very stout, apparently healthy and frugal race, and will by patient industry, transform the wilderness they have broken into, from its unproductive solitude to a scene of fertility and busy life.34

The press avidly followed the rising tide of Dutch settlers into the Grand Rapids area. In 1852 De Sheboygan Nieuwsbode reported an influx of discouraged Hollanders to Grand Rapids, Grand Haven, and Kalamazoo, resulting from the poor agricultural conditions in the colony.35 The New York Daily Tribune told its readers that the Dutch constituencies of Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo were growing because of the failure of the Black Lake harbor and "the want of shipping facilities."36 By late 1852, the Nieuwsbode claimed "there are fully one hundred Dutch families. . .and a large number of young men and women serving as hired help or as domestics, so that the total Holland population of that city may confidently be estimated at more than 600 persons."37

Grand Rapids grew quickly in the succeeding years, doubling its population nearly every decade. The Dutch came from the nearby Kolonie and increasingly direct from the Netherlands in response to the growing demands for skilled craftsmen, machine operators, general laborers, and store clerks. Leendert D'Ooge noted a number of storekeepers and clerks who were patronized by Dutchmen and Americans alike and who were able to understand the Dutch language.38 Many immigrants responded to the letters from friends and family members who recounted their experiences in the area. Evert Wonnink claimed that "America is a good land for a worker who wishes to provide a living by the industry of his hands in an honorable manner. This has been written many times, and it is the truth. . . .In our experiences, we were completely at home here from the first moment that we set up our households."39 Grand Rapids resident Agnes Nestor recalled seeing trainloads of Dutch immigrants arrive at the Plainfield-East Leonard train depot during the 1880s. "The newcomers still wore their native costumes and clumping wooden shoes," she said. "They came to work in the Grand Rapids furniture factories, and they brought their families. . . ."40 It is no doubt that letters like Wonnink's offered the necessary comfort and reassurances to such Netherlanders who eventually relocated to the city of Grand Rapids.

While transAtlantic migration declined during hard times, the Dutch continued to move from the rural areas of western Michigan to the urban community of Grand Rapids. In 1850, there were roughly 200 Dutch people in the city. Subsequent decadal increases ranged from 360 percent (1850-60) to 141 percent (1870-80) and 40 percent (1880-90). By 1900 there were over 11,000 Dutch-born residents (second only to Chicago) and more than 23,000 of

Dutch ancestry in the city of 87,565 people (26 percent).41 Proximity to the original Holland settlement and the rapidly increasing economic and occupational incentives were partly responsible for the rapid growth of this community. It was, however, primarily the cultural affinity maintained through chain migration, the transplantation of immigrant institutions, and the communications with friends and families that attracted and united the Dutch in this location. By the turn of the century, the Dutch had established twenty-three Reformed and Christian Reformed churches, twelve newspapers, five Dutch-Christian day schools, assorted institutional associations (benevolent, mutual aid, social and political clubs, etc.) and twelve distinct neighborhoods in the city. These combined factors provided the most important incentives for the Dutch to move to the city and to perpetuate their community life in that urban location.

Changes in the city's occupational structure and the diversification of industries were significant attractions for the Dutch. While the earliest group of immigrants obtained primarily unskilled jobs, those workers of later years found a variety of doors open to them. Between 1850 and 1900, there was a noticeable shift away from ordinary unskilled menial labor to more skilled crafts and trades. While smithing and tailoring were common pursuits in many young cities, wood-processing and crafting developed as two of the most significant occupational pursuits of Grand Rapids laborers. Among the Dutch employed at a skilled trade in 1860, 29 percent worked at a wood-related occupation (primarily carpentry), a rate which increased to 45 percent by 1870. During the 1870s, when the city's furniture industry acquired its world-wide reputation, Dutch involvement increased substantially until 60 percent of Dutch skilled laborers in 1880 worked in a wood-related job; by 1900, this rate had risen to 62 percent.42

The Dutch also improved their ability to attain nonmanual white-collar positions. Grocers, peddlers, and assorted storekeepers opened businesses in or near Dutch neighborhoods to provide essential services and to insure a supporting clientele. The independence, prosperity, and status associated with nonmanual occupations inspired many individuals to strive for such an accomplishment. If a laborer could succeed in establishing his own business, he could then easily justify his emigration from the Netherlands or the nearby colony and demonstrate that he had "made it" in America. Consequently, the assorted jobs which the Dutch secured in Grand Rapids demonstrated their ability to permeate the city's labor force and to participate actively in skilled labor and the emerging white-collar proprietary sector.

The rewards of employment were clearly evident among the Dutch in Grand Rapids and served as still further incentives to move to the city. C. De Smit penned in his portfolio of sketches about America that "working in a factory is a good thing for the laborer; a person can, if he is handy, earn a great deal of money."43 Workers at the Widdicomb Furniture Factory in Grand Rapids earned between $1.25 and $2.50 per day for a 68 to 70 hour work week in 1884. Daily wages of $1.00 to $1.25 were common for general laborers; skilled cabinet makers averaged upwards of $8.00 per week. However, compared to other nationalities in the city, the Dutch averaged nearly $60 less annually than Americans, Swedes, Germans, and Canadians. Despite this disadvantage, 48 percent of the Dutch households in 1900 owned their homes. The Dutch even possessed a higher proportion of homeowners

among those who worked in the furniture factories, surpassing even the American workers. Thus, not only were the Dutch able to attain a certain level of economic "success" in the city, but they also developed a good reputation for their dedication and hard work, which earned them an expanding role in the industrial and commercial life of Grand Rapids.

Upon entering Grand Rapids, the Dutch did not comprise one unified ethnic settlement in a corner of the city, but they inhabited all parts of the municipality, creating distinct neighborhoods in the process. Their enclaves were distinguishable primarily on the basis of provincial or gemeenten origins, denominational affiliations, and year of settlement. Zeelanders dominated the city's Dutch population, comprising nearly 40 percent of the households between 1850 and 1900. They emigrated primarily from Dreischor, Oud Vossemeer, Goes, Zieriksee, and Sint Philipsland. Groningers grew from 10 percent to 25 percent of the Dutch households by 1900, and originated in the gemeenten of Grijpskerk, Ulrum, and Groningen. The appearance of Groningers in Grand Rapids coincided with their increased emigration from the homeland after 1880 and culminated in the formation of small outlying neighborhoods such as Clyde Park, Oakdale Park, and Wealthy-East Street. Though constituting small proportions of the Dutch households, a group of Frisians clustered in the vicinity of West Leonard and Alpine streets while Overijselers settled in the West Fulton-Straight streets neighborhood. Periods of emigration also affected the location of Dutch enclaves in Grand Rapids. Immigrants from the earliest periods tended to reside in and remain a part of the central city neighborhoods. More recent immigrants to Grand Rapids settled on the developing periphery and in the newly annexed regions.

Neighborhoods were clearly important to the immigrants. For those households that remained through subsequent censuses ("persisters"), roughly two-thirds of them remained within the same sector of the city, though they often changed residences to accommodate family size or community developments. Nearly one-fourth of the households moved across town, usually into another Dutch neighborhood. The importance of established enclaves was also apparent as the decennial persistence of Grand Rapids' Dutch population increased from 26 percent (1850-60) to 51 percent (1870-80) during the years when the neighborhoods were forming and when Holland's rate of persistence was in fact declining (61 to 55 percent).44

Dutch neighborhoods provided the social and cultural amenities that were essential to the survival of immigrant culture and tradition. Churches were often located at the center of the neighborhoods and offered the spiritual refuge for immigrants and their children. Mutual aid societies helped to finance the emigration costs of fellow countrymen. The ethnic press kept the local Dutch population informed of events in the motherland and in other Dutch-American settlements. The Dutch-Christian day school preserved the religious, cultural, and social traditions within the educational framework. In essence, these institutions transmitted the ethnocultural and religious values that comprised the life blood of the Dutch community in Grand Rapids.

From the time of their arrival in western Michigan, the Dutch relied upon a network of familiar associations and relationships to sustain their communities. While the settlers of the Kolonie found comfort amidst

homogeneous rural enclaves, those who moved to the city of Grand Rapids did not immediately experience the intimacy of a Dutch community. However, as years passed, the Dutch were able to reestablish those institutions essential to the survival of their growing community and to attract fellow Netherlanders directly to the city along the Grand River.

III

What can we conclude then about the inter-community migration of the Dutch in western Michigan? While we can confirm that such activity occurred, we are uncertain at this point about the number of families and individuals that left the colony to live in Grand Rapids. We also know that immigrants left the rural regions in response to hardships and economic failures (note the Ravenna community) and to seek employment in the urban center. Except for occasional references in immigrant letters to disease and land shortages, we are unsure about the impact of other forces, such as religious turmoil and Van Raalte's leadership, on the immigrants' decisions to relocate.

On the basis of developments in western Michigan in relation to the Dutch migration, I believe that the attraction of Grand Rapids far outweighed the particular expelling forces of the Kolonie. The initial Dutch migration was focused on the Holland settlement because of Van Raalte's planned Calvinist community. It was there that the immigrants found fellowship and commonality. Grand Rapids at the time was a small but growing New Englander and Canadian village, possessing a variety of milling ventures and a Dutch Reformed church without any Dutch members. The village served as an early source of supplies for the colonists and as a market outlet for their goods. However, as the Netherlanders encountered the economic turmoils and hardships of founding a new settlement, many individuals, primarily the youth and young adults, left their homes in search of employment and supplemental income for their families. Thus, it was through these individuals and their experiences as communicated in letters and visits home that the reputation of Grand Rapids became known. By responding to the opportunities in the city, the Dutch transplanted the institutions and relationships that were essential to sustain a growing immigrant concentration there.

Grand Rapids eventually possessed the necessary amenities for a Dutch community, thereby encouraging immigrants of later years to travel directly to the city. There was a diversifying industrial sector, including the renowned furniture industry in which the Dutch dominated the skilled labor force after the Civil War. Grand Rapids became the home of the Christian Reformed Church which maintained strong ties with the Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerk and encouraged the retention of Dutch culture in America. Furthermore, Grand Rapids possessed several distinct neighborhoods, comparable to the provincial communities of the Kolonie, which attracted fellow countrymen directly to a particular enclave in the city and embraced them within a framework of familiar relationships. Consequently, the Valley City emerged as an attractive alternative for segments of the first migration and a promising and accommodating home for new Netherlanders arriving in later years.

Scholars of past years have concluded that immigrants generally settled in urban areas because of their economic aspirations and the convenience of local employment opportunities. While the Dutch were initially attracted to Grand Rapids for economic reasons, it was their "congregational instinct" and their bonds of community--whether provincial/gemeente origins, denominational affiliations, or other cultural factors--that preserved their existence in the heterogeneous city. Despite the increased industrialization of Grand Rapids, Dutch neighborhoods did not disintegrate, but they became more pronounced and more densely populated.

The Dutch who came to Grand Rapids made great strides in the city. They constituted nearly one-third of the population. They dominated the skilled furniture labor force. They organized numerous supporting institutions. They also exhibited a set of values that earned them a reputation for honesty, thrift, and werkkracht. Ultimately, it was the assurance that the Dutch could reside together, take advantage of growing economic opportunities, participate in familiar institutional affiliations, experience a fellowship that would provide friends and future spouses for their children, and perpetuate a distinct identity which inspired the Dutch immigrants to emigrate from the Kolonie and the Netherlands to live in the city along the Grand.

NOTES

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3. Gordon W. Kirk, Jr., The Promise of American Life: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century Immigrant Community, Holland, Michigan, 1847-1894 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978), p. 22.
4. Grand River Eagle, 24 November 1848.
5. Hyma, p. 177
6. Henry S. Lucas, Netherlanders in America (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1955), p. 93.
7. Aleida J. Pieters, A Dutch Settlement in Michigan (Grand Rapids: The Reformed Press, Eerdmans-Sevensma Co., 1923), pp. 71-72; Adrian Keizer as quoted in Henry S. Lucas, Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Company, 1955), p. 261.
8. Grand River Eagle, 23 June 1848.
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10. Dingman Versteeg, De Pelgrim Vaders van het Westen. . . .(Grand Rapids: C. M. Loomis and Co., 1886), p. 88.
11. Lucas, Dutch Immigrant Memoirs, pp. 70-71
12. Albertus Van Raalte speech, 9 November 1875.
13. Randall M. Miller, "Pilgrimage to Paradox: The Holland Harbor Question," Inland seas 24 (1968):285-96.
14. De Hollander, 17 October 1855.
15. Lucas, Dutch Immigrant Memoirs, p. 69.
16. Lucas, Netherlanders in America, p. 103.
17. Ibid., p. 103.
18. Lucas, Dutch Immigrant Memoirs, p. 350.

19. Elton Bruins, The Americanization of a Congregation: A History of the Third Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 13-15.
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22. Adrian Van Koevering, Legends of the Dutch: The Story of a Mass Movement of Nineteenth Century Pilgrims (Zeeland: Zeeland Record Co., 1960), p. 536.
23. Hyma, pp.253-54.
24. Lucas, Netherlanders in America, p. 100.
25. Henry s. Lucas, Ebenezer: Memorial Souvenir of the Centennial Commemoration. . .(New York: Netherlands Information Bureau, 1947), p. 27.
26. Kirk, pp. 58-112.
27. Ibid., pp. 48-49.
28. Van Hinte, 2:549-550.
29. Lucas, Dutch Immigrant Memoirs, 423-25.
30. Ibid., p. 222.
31. Versteeg, p. 93; Lucas, Dutch Immigrant Memoirs, p. 334.
32. Van Koevering, p. 424.
33. Lucas, Dutch Immigrant Memoirs, p. 336.
34. Grand Rapids Enquirer, September 1849.
35. De Sheboygan Nieuwsbode, 18 May 1852.
36. New York Daily Tribune, 26 October 1853.
37. De Sheboygan Nieuwsbode, 25 October 1853.
38. De Sheboygan Nieuwsbode, 28 April 1857.
39. Evert Wonnink to Berend Peterkamp, 28 December 1872, Colonial Origins Collection, Calvin College.
40. Agnes Nestor, quoted in Z. Z. Lydens, ed., The Story of Grand Rapids (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1966), p. 43.
41. David Grodon Vanderstel, "The Dutch of Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1848-1900: Immigrant Neighborhood and Community Development in a Nineteenth Century City." (Ph.D. dissertation, Kent State University, 1983), p. 50, Table 2.2
42. Vanderstel, pp. 349-350.
43. C. De Smit, To America? Sketches from the Portfolio on the trip to and through the New World (n.p., 1881), p. 60.
44. Vanderstel, p. 416, Table 8.1; Kirk, p. 51.