Chicago's "Groninger Hoek:" The Origins and Development of the Dutch Colony on the Old West Side in the 19th Century

by

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Of the three original Dutch colonies in Chicago founded in the 1840s, the Old West Side community that became known as the Groninger Hoek or Quarter is the most interesting. It began without the group migration of a dominie and his congregation, it was culturally and religiously diverse, and economically disadvantaged. The earliest settlers hailed from all over the Netherlands. Its polyglot population included Dutch Calvinists, Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, Unitarians, liberal Socialists, and the nominally churched. All lived interspersed among other immigrant groups, notably Germans, Russian and Polish Jews, and Bohemians. Yet from such unpromising beginnings, under the leadership of Dominie Bernardus De Bey, pastor of the First Reformed Church of Chicago, the West Side community evolved into a socially homogeneous, religiously orthodox and economically prosperous settlement that has maintained an identity for more than one hundred years.

My paper describes the origins and development of the West Side Dutch community, noting particularly the change that occurred in the decade after the Civil War when the area became the Groninger Hoek. Out of cultural diversity came unity, out of spiritual indifference came Calvinist orthodoxy and intense loyalty to the Reformed churches, and out of poverty came middle class respectability and even prosperity for some. The West Side story will be placed within the broader context of the history of all of the Dutch in Chicago.

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Chicago's Groninger Hoek: The Origins and Development of the Dutch Colony on the "Old West Side" in the Nineteenth Century

Of the three original Dutch settlements in the greater Chicago area, the least is known about the Groninger Hoek, as it was called until the 1920s, or as we now say, the "Old West Side."[1] Yet, as Amry Vanden Bosch stated in his book, The Dutch Communities of Chicago (1927), the westsiders, who are the only Dutch Reformed colony in a major metropolis, are "in almost every respect the most interesting of them all."[2]

The West Side settlement did not begin with the group migration of a dominie and his congregation, such as Reverend Willem Coenraad Wust in South Holland. It even lacked a dominant lay leader such as "Meester" Pieter de Jong in Roseland, although Lucas Van der Belt (Bilt) and his son Hiram somewhat played that role.[3] The city Dutch were a polyglot population from all strata of Dutch society and from all parts of the Netherlands. They were also religiously diverse, and included Calvinists, Catholics, Lutherans, Unitarians, liberal Socialists, Jews, and the nominally churched.

From such unpromising beginnings, the west side Reformed immigrants evolved into a socially homogeneous, religiously orthodox, and economically prosperous colony that has continued for 125 years (five to six generations). Henry Stob, professor emeritus of Calvin College, who grew up in the Groninger Hoek in the twenties, recalls that it was a "tightly-knit colony of Netherlanders who spoke Dutch at home, worked hard, and harbored intense loyalties for their Dutch churches."[4] In Vanden Bosch's mixed metaphor, the colony at the time was a "handful of Hollanders in a sea of Jews."[5]

This pithy statement reminds us that the westsiders, unlike the South Holland and Roseland colonies, lived as a small minority interspersed among other immigrant peoples. But while they shared their neighborhoods and rubbed elbows on the job with "outsiders," culturally and religiously they lived their lives from the cradle to the grave within the cocoon of their families, churches, Christian schools, social organizations, and Dutch store-keepers and professionals.

My paper describes the origin and development of the West Side settlement, noting particularly the diverse beginnings and then the emergence of the Groninger Hoek in the years after the Civil War. Out of cultural diversity came unity, out of spiritual indifference came Calvinist orthodoxy and intense loyalty to the Reformed churches, and out of poverty came middle class respectability and even prosperity for some. But general prosperity took several generations. The 1900 census, for example, reveals that only 15 percent of Dutch families owned their own homes. Economic prosperity for most did not come until

after the First World War.

Origins

The first Hollander to live in Chicago is unknown but certainly Dutch immigrants arrived earlier than the 1848 date given by Professor Henry Lucas.[6] Dutch settlers drifted into the Windy City in ones and twos as early as 1839, only two years after the city's founding. The first city directory, published in 1839, listed Leonard Falch, a soapmaker and chandler on La Salle Street, who is identified in the 1850 federal population census as Dutch-born. (The 1850 census was the first to record the nationality or state of birth of all inhabitants.) Falch and his Dutch-born wife had four children, the first (Charles) was born in Chicago in 1840. Falch was worth $10,000 in 1850 and was the wealthiest Hollander in Illinois. Falch was still a soapmaker in the 1860s, living near the north city limits at Hubbard and Fullerton Streets.[7] Leonard Falch and his wife was likely the first Dutch family in Chicago and their son Charles was the first Dutch child born in the city.

Including Falch, the census marshall registered one hundred Dutch-born in 1850, including at least five families who definitely arrived in Chicago in 1847, when the city was barely ten years old. There was Henry Pelgrom with his wife and seven children from Baambrugge, Utrecht Province; Herman Van Zwol with his wife and two children from Deventer, Overijssel; R. G. Kroes and his wife from Harlingen, Friesland; Lucas Van der Belt with his wife and five children from Heerde, Gelderland; and Ale Steginga with his wife and two children from Workum, Friesland. Van Zwol was a carpenter and Kroes a blacksmith; both entered the same trades in Chicago. These two families lived north of the Chicago River between La Salle and Wolcott (now State) Streets. Van der Belt and Steginga, both bargemen in the Netherlands, were making shingles in Chicago, along with their unmarried sons. Pelgrom, who had been a merchant, was also a shinglemaker. Van der Belt lived in a houseboat moored on the River at Canal Street. Steginga and Pelgrom lived west of the River north of Randolph Street near the lumber yards and forest products factories that lined the River.

All of these "first families" had been members of the Hervormde (Reformed) Church, except Kroes who was a Seceder. Kroes, Van der Belt, and Van Zwol, along with four other men, comprised the steering committee of the First Reformed Church in 1852. When Reverend Albertus Van Raalte came to Chicago in February 1853 at their request formally to organize the church as a part of the Reformed Church in America, Kroes opened his home for the place of worship until the congregation rented an empty store at Randolph and DesPlaines Streets in 1853.[8] This choice of location indicates that the center of the small Dutch Reformed community in the early years was immediately west of the city center. Incidentally, the Chicago city directories beginning in 1856 always reported that First Reformed Church was organized in

1848, four years earlier than the church anniversary booklet indicates. Lucas, I believe, was wrong to claim that the West Side Dutch "manifested little interest in religion and church life" and that they were "different from the majority of Dutch immigrants" elsewhere.[9] The Chicago Dutch started an independent Reformed Church within the first year of their arrival, and that without the benefit of clergy.

Other early Dutch arrivals in 1848 and 1849 were Maas P. Vander Kooi, a dairyman from Tietjerksteradeel, Friesland, who painted houses in Chicago and also served as the first treasurer of First Reformed Church; William Goosen, a house painter from Goes, Zeeland, who followed the same trade in Chicago; Isaac Vanthof, a tailor from Brouwershaven, Zeeland, who also tailored in Chicago; Gosse Vierstra, a shop carpenter's hired hand from IJlst, Friesland, who advanced to become a ship carpenter; Adam Ooms, a village policeman from Krimpen a/d Yssel, Zuid Holland, who had to accept a common laborer's job in Chicago; and Jannis Schaap a workman from Stad Oostburg, Zeeland. All these emigrated with wives and children.

Other pre-1850 immigrants who I can not yet trace to their communities of origin are: J. De Glopper, a cabinet maker; Marion De Jong, a farmer with a wife and eight children; Henry Muller, a laborer; Isaac Schelling, a mechanic; William Carson, a grocer; five unmarried hired hands: Philip Van Nieuland (another of the founding seven of First Reformed), Henry Handkolk; Isaac Schryter; and the brothers Harry and John Roelofs. Finally, there was a Mr. Prins (or Primus) whose wife and two oldest children died of cholera in Chicago, leaving the widower with three young children.

In the decade of the 1950s the Dutch population of Chicago increased four-fold from 100 to 400.[10] The middle years of the decade saw the greatest influx, including the first known families from Groningen who arrived in 1853. These were Nicholas (or Harm) Ronda, with his wife and daughter, and his younger brother Henry and his wife, both farm laborers from Ulrum. The next year, 1854, three more Groningen families arrived, plus at least nine families from other provinces.[11] The 1854 arrivals from Groningen were Cornelius Bos of Ulrum, and Peter Kooi of Uithuizermeeden; both blacksmiths, and John Evenhouse from Uithuizen, a shoemaker. All practiced the same trades in Chicago. These three are family names familiar to any westsider. Thus, 1854 was the premier year for the Chicago settlement prior to the Civil War, especially for the nascent Groninger Hoek. But the number of Groningers remained few. The majority of new Hollanders in the middle fifties came from Zeeland, Friesland, Zuid and Noord Holland, Gelderland, and Utrecht.[12]

Groningers also had no hand in the founding of the First Reformed Church of Chicago. When the seven-person committee that founded the congregation met in late 1852 and formally requested Classis Holland to help them organize a church, not a single Groninger had yet settled in Chicago.[13] But this was soon to change. Although the charter members of the congregation are

unknown, it is likely that the four Groninger families--Ronda, Bos, Kooi, and Evenhouse--joined the congregation as soon as they arrived in 1853 and 1854. They were the first of many. Indeed, by the 1870s and 1880s, Groningers came to dominate the Reformed churches of Chicago.

Chicago, the "lightning city"

The infant city that received these newcomers was still very primitive but it was on the verge of a massive growth spurt. The English visitor, John Lewis Payton, who visited the city in 1848 described it in dismal terms:

> The city is situated on both sides of the Chicago river, a sluggish, slimy stream, too lazy to clean itself, and on both sides of its north and south branches, upon a level piece of ground, half dry and half wet, resembling a salt marsh, and containing a population of 20,000. There was no pavement, no macadamized streets, no drainage, and the three thousand houses in which the people lived were almost entirely small timber buildings, painted white, and this white much defaced by mud. . . . To render the streets and sidewalks passable, they were covered with deal boards from house to house, the boards resting upon cross sills of heavy timber. This kind of track is called "the plank road." Under these planks the water was standing on the surface over three-fourths of the city, and as the sewers from the houses were emptied under them, a frightful odor was emitted in summer, causing fevers and other diseases, foreign to the climate. . . .[14]

Not only was the city unhealthy, its highways were impassible and there was not a single mile of railroad track.

Nevertheless, said Payton, "a kind of restless activity prevailed which I had seen no where else in the west except in Cincinnati . . ." Within six years, Chicago had become the hub of the nation's transportation systems by water and rail; it was also a center of meat packing, grain elevators, and farm implement factories such as the McCormick Reaper works. In 1850, Chicago already had 30,000 inhabitants, half foreign-born, primarily Irish and Germans. By 1870 the population had grown ten-fold to 300,000 and more than half of the increase was foreign-born. Streets, such as State Street, extended up to 8 miles long, traversed by horse-drawn street cars in all directions. In one generation, Chicago passed from Indian territory to large metropolis. One foreign visitor called it "the lightning city." Another reported: it seems that "a great part of the west side of the city [had been] heaved out of the void by a benevolent earthquake." Chicago's location made it the market of the Midwest and the jumping off point for immigrants from Europe and the East Coast. By 1856, ten trunk rail lines ran into Chicago, with 58 passenger and 38 freight trains arriving daily.[15]

Chicago harbor also became a vital place that received 300 ships daily by the 1860s, carrying lumber from northern Wisconsin and Michigan, iron ore from Lake Superior, and manufactured goods from the East. Timber vessels choked the harbor and lumber yards extended for miles along the South branches of the Chicago River from Halsted to Western Avenues. In 1867, 50 million pine boards were sold, and the total of all wood sales was 1.5 billion feet. Chicago's seventeen grain elevators in 1870 bulged with 60 million bushels of grain. As early as 1856, some of the wheat went directly to England by ship via the Mississippi River. Already in 1865 the Union Stockyards on the southwest side sprawled over 355 acres (one-half of a square mile) and soon it became the slaughter capital of the world. On the North Branch of the River in the 1860s stood the McCormick Reaper and Mower Works and the steel works of the North Chicago Rolling Mills.[16]

Chicago's three fashionable neighborhoods in the 1860s and 1870s were south along Indiana, Prairie, Calumet, and South Park Avenues around 22nd Street, west along Washington Boulevard around Union Park and Ashland Boulevard between Monroe and Harrison Streets, and along north LaSalle and Dearborn Streets. While the wealthy lived along the avenues and boulevards, "workers districts" consisted of huddled, pine cottages in poor neighborhoods: west of Wells Street on the north side, west of Ashland from Kinzie to Harrison on the west side, and west of State Street on the south side. The West Side population quadrupled between 1863 and 1873, thanks in part to new Dutch arrivals after the Civil War. In the workers districts there were often two houses per lot--one facing the street and one on the alley. In contrast, the avenues had spacious lots.[17]

The Chicago fire of 1871 devastated the city center and north coast from Halsted Street to the Lake, because the winds were from the southwest (see map). But the Dutch westsiders were spared. Only two Dutch Reformed families suffered losses and perhaps twenty other Dutch families were burned out, according to Reverend Bernardus DeBey, pastor of the First Reformed Church at the time. Rebuilding the city, said DeBey in a letter to the homeland, created all the more job opportunities for unskilled laborers who knew how to work.[18] After the fire, Chicago became a modern metropolis--with modest skyscrapers, railroad stations, and cable cars running in all directions into new subdivisions, as Chicago became an "exploding metropolis."

But the West Side expanded outward at the slowest rate. It was always the most congested area, with the highest proportion of immigrants, the least attractive housing, and the slowest and least developed public transportation.[19] The West Side was the quintessential working class district. This was where the Dutch community formed and matured.

Geographic Dispersion

The federal manuscript censuses of Chicago from 1850 to 1880 show that the Dutch initially settled throughout the city but over time they were concentrated more and more on the West Side

where the Reformed Churches were located. In 1850 two-thirds lived west of the Chicago River and the rest were scattered east of it, mostly north of the city center. Of those west of the River, half lived north of Randolph Street (Ward 6) and half south of it (Ward 5). By 1860 the southwest side (old Ward 5 divided into Wards 5 and 10) contained over half (53 percent) of all the city's Hollanders. Most lived in the area bounded by Harrison Street on the north, 12th Street (later Roosevelt Road) on the south, the South Branch of the Chicago River on the east, and Loomis Street on the west. The First Reformed Church, which was erected on South DesPlaines Street between Polk and Harrison in 1856, anchored the community. Another one-fifth of the Dutch lived on the northwest side and the remaining quarter were again scattered east of the River and north and south of the city center.

The 1870 Chicago census, which counted 2,095 Dutch-born and their native-born children, reveals a much greater concentration on the southwest side where the Reformed Dutch resided (old Ward 5 divided into Wards 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13). Over 60 percent of Chicago's Hollanders lived west of the River and south of Lake Street in 1870; only 20 percent were north of Lake Street. Two small areas were nuclei: one was the same region as in 1860 between Harrison and 12th Streets to Loomis (Ward 9) with 403 Dutch (20 percent); and the other was a vast newly opened region south of 16th Street to the Illinois-Michigan Canal and west to Crawford Avenue (Ward 7) with 304 Dutch (15 percent). The area in between, from 12th to 16th Streets (Ward 8), which by the 1880s was the center of the Reformed settlement, had only 194 Dutch (9 percent). West of Loomis between 12th and Lake Street (Wards 12 and 13) had another 259 (12 percent).

Apart from the west side wards, which were heavily Reformed, Dutch Jews lived in the city center and immediately west of the River (Wards 10 and 11). In the central business district they owned second-hand clothing stores and pawnshops on South Wells Street, several cigar shops on West Washington, and tailor shops on West Randolph. Henry S. Haas, a retail clothing merchant located at 718 S. Wabash Avenue, owned $37,000 worth of property in 1870 and was by far the wealthiest Hollander in Chicago. About 4 percent of the Dutch in Chicago were Jews, which was twice the percentage of Jews in the Netherlands.

Dutch Catholics were under-represented in Chicago. They comprised about 10 percent of the Dutch, whereas in the Netherlands, Catholics numbered over 36 percent of the population. Chicago's Dutch Catholics lived mostly north of the River (Wards 16-20) where they affiliated with St. Michael's German Catholic Church of the Holy Redeemer located in the Lincoln Park area on Hurlburt and Linden Streets, which was served briefly by a Dutch priest, Father Frederick Van Emstede.[20] Five other Dutch priests lived on the West Side, three in a Jesuit community, the Church of the Holy Family, located among the Reformed Dutch on West 12th at May Street, but few Dutch Catholics lived in that area. One of the priests was Arnold

Damen, the most famous of the Dutch Jesuits in America. Damen Avenue and Damen Bridge were named in honor of Father Damen's pioneering work in developing the city.[21] St. Francis Assissium Church on West 12th Street at Newberry Avenue also had two Dutch priests, Ferdinand Kalvelage and Bernard Baak, and a few Dutch Catholics lived in that locale east of Halsted Street. The largest Dutch Catholic parish in Chicago, St. Willibrord's Parish, took shape in the 1890s in Kensington on the far south side. This 200 family parish remained predominantly Dutch until the 1950s at least.[22]

Reformed Congregations

There were two Reformed congregations on the West Side by 1870--First Reformed, which worshipped in a new frame building erected in 1869 on the southwest corner of Harrison and May Streets, a mile west of their original building, and First Christian Reformed, which was founded in 1867 by fifteen families (about 75 souls) who seceded from First Reformed. It was located a short half mile away on Gurley Street at Miller, two blocks west of Halsted Street. This location was midway between the original and second sites of First Reformed (see map). Most of the Christian Reformed church members were from Groningen.[23]

The Christian Reformed Church struggled through frequent vacancies in the parsonage in the first decade, but within eight years, by 1875, the congregation had 427 souls. The major growth spurt occurred in the 1880s when mass emigration from the northern Netherlands brought many Christian Reformed (Christelijk Gereformeerde) families to Chicago. Then the congregation quickly outgrew its 40 by 60 foot sanctuary on Gurley Street and they relocated one and a half-miles south and west in a spacious building purchased from the Presbyterians located on West 14th Street between Troop and Loomis Streets. The new church building became known affectionately as "The Old Fourteenth Street Church" and it served the congregation until the 1930s. Some members, who lived north of Chicago Avenue, tried to convince the congregation to relocate around Erie Street on the near northwest side but they failed.[24] No Reformed church was ever planted in this area.

Meanwhile First Reformed flourished under the capable leadership of Reverend Bernardus DeBey who served the congregation for 23 years from 1868 to 1891. In response to a "call" from First Reformed, DeBey emigrated in the summer of 1868 from his pastorate of the Christian Reformed Church at Middelstum, Groningen, bringing along half of his congregation. A famine in the northern Netherlands the previous year prompted DeBey to accept the call to Chicago. In January of 1868 the newly-organized First Christian Reformed Church of Chicago had also extended a "call" to DeBey but he declined, believing the seceders to be misguided schismatics, "zealots without love, and makers of sects."[25]

DeBey was a wealthy man and his parsonage became the

headquarters for the resettlement of Dutch immigrants, many of whom he provided with small business loans.[26] For twenty years DeBey also wrote a series of letters for the Provinciale Groninger Courant, the major newspaper of the province, in which he urged those with "an iron will and a pair of good hands" to come to Chicago where laborers were urgently needed, especially after the Chicago Fire of 1871.[27] Those who work with their heads--clerks, bookkeepers, small merchants, teachers, and gentlemen--should stay at home, DeBey warned. "Our new Hollanders are cutters of wood and drawers of water. They perform the roughest and heaviest labors."[28] Only farm hands, day laborers, craftsmen, and maids need apply. DeBey's letter of June, 1870, catches the flavor:

> Those who belong in America are those who understand from the beginning that they are just like a tree planted in rich soil; first they have to live through a life struggle and also have the desire to do so. The ones who can and want to work and do not hesitate to take on anything, be it unusual or strange, or of little attraction, will succeed very well here. Later they have the opportunity and capability to improve themselves after they have learned the language, customs, and have obtained some financial reserves. Many, even hundreds, who were impoverished when they arrived here would not like to change their situation with the well-to-do farmers in the Netherlands. This does not happen, however, in two or three years.[29]

Needless to say, the Groninger Hoek and the Reformed Churches grew by leaps and bounds with such effective appeals from a trusted native who had himself worked as a farm laborer before entering the ministry later in life. There were 100 Groningen families in Chicago in 1869. First Reformed could seat 500 and it was overcrowded, so a new church was built with twice the seating. In 1877 alone, there were 120 confessions of faith. By 1878 the congregation had 400 communicant members and perhaps 1000 souls.[30] When DeBey retired in 1891 the church was so overcrowded and the neighborhood had become so industrialized that they decided to relocate two miles southwest, to a vacant site at 1533 West Hastings Street just east of Ashland Avenue, barely two blocks from the First Christian Reformed Church.

Thus, the heart of the Groninger Hoek by the 1890s was at Ashland Avenue and 14th Street, and this remained the hub until the 1940s. Gradually, the more affluent and upwardly mobile moved into new neighborhoods--Englewood in the 1880s, Douglas Park in the 1890s, Lawndale after 1900. In the 1920s, the Old West Siders moved into the near western suburbs of Cicero, Berwyn, and Oak Park, and after World War Two they continued moving out to the far western suburbs, to Western Springs, Bellwood, and Maywood in the 1940s and 1950s, and in the 1960s and 1970s to Elmhurst, Lombard, and Wheaton. "Westward Ho!" was the motto of Chicago's Groningers until they had left the city

entirely for the upscale suburbs.

Work and Wealth

Peter DeVries in The Blood of the Lamb, his autobiographical novel about growing up in Chicago in the twenties, recites this street rhyme:

"Oh, the Irish and the Dutch,
Don't amount to very much."[31]

The census manuscripts provide a factual picture of the economic status of the Dutch in Chicago. Unlike most immigrant groups, they did not begin at the bottom of the job market. In 1850, almost 40 percent (10) of the Dutch breadwinners were skilled craftsmen (carpenters, cabinetmakers, blacksmith, etc.), and one, William Carson, was the first Dutch grocer in the city. Another 30 percent (8) were wooden shinglemakers, a semi-skilled job that offered ready work in the lumber industry of Chicago. Only 20 percent (6) were laborers and hands. Eight young women, ages 12 to 22, were boarding out as maids, which was a common way to augment the family's income until marriage. Only three families reported owning property, a farmer and a shinglemaker each owned $500 worth, and the ship chandler, Leonard Falch, already noted, owned $10,000. Wages in Chicago at the time ranged from 75 cents a day for unskilled labor to $2.00 a day for skilled craftsmen.

By 1860 the Dutch had considerably improved their status. Three-fourths of all households had reportable wealth ($50 or more) and the average surpassed $500 per household. Even most of the fathers who were laborers reported owning property, one had $2,000. The actual tasks of these laborers is not indicated, but it did not include teamstering. Only three Dutch were so employed in 1860. The akki-pieuws, as garbage collectors were humorously called, came later.[32] Craftsmen comprised nearly one-half of the Dutch workforce, led by carpenters (15) and painters (8). Laborers and other semiskilled jobs included another third of the workforce. Only one shinglemaker continued in that task since 1850. The others had left the city, died, and shifted to other jobs. White collar positions were held by 20 percent, such as shopkeepers, dealers and brokers, clerks, police and firemen, a physician, and a ship captain. One of these pencil pushers was Henry Hospers, 30 years old, a son of Jan Hospers of Pella, who was surveying in Chicago. Henry Hospers became a prime mover in the Orange City colony a decade later. Two other notables were Albert Malefyt and Theodore G. Kimman, both master carriage builders, who with a third partner, John D. Doyle, owned and operated a carriage factory at West Madison and Green Streets. Malefyt was worth $1,200 and Kimman $1,000 in 1860. Most of the Reformed immigrants were carpenters, painters, masons, and a few laborers.

The Civil War era brought a revolutionary change to the Dutch community. The Dutch profited from the economic build up of the war effort, along with the economy of the city generally. The total value of the real and personal property of the Chicago

Dutch in 1870 surpassed $500,000, and the average property per household had doubled in ten years to $1,013 (from $530 in 1860). DeBey slightly exaggerated when he reported that "many own a house or will soon own one," but he correctly stated that most "earn a good living."[33] In addition, hundreds of new immigrants arrived from the Netherlands as soon as the war ended in the spring of 1865. By 1870 Chicago's Dutch population had jumped five-fold over 1860 (from 400 to 2,095).

Most of the newcomers were farm laborers from northern Groningen who joined the ranks of the city's unskilled workers. Of the 655 Dutch males in the labor force in 1870, one-third were day laborers, the same proportion as in 1860. This included 19 teamsters and drivers, which type of work was destined to become the road to economic success for the Chicago Groningers, although we only catch a faint glimpse of this in 1870. Laborers earned $1.50 to $2.00 a day or $36 to $48 a month.[34] As in 1860 skilled craftsmen--carpenters, house painters, masons and bricklayers, and building contractors--comprised the largest group of Dutch workers. Such tradesmen numbered 39 percent, down 8 points from 1860. But white collar workers, especially clerks, dealers, and retailers of all kinds, had increased from 19 to 24 percent. The Dutch were clearly upgrading themselves. Only 10 Dutch were farming, market gardening, raising flowers, and dairying. By necessity or choice, the Chicago Hollanders exchanged Dutch dirt under their fingernails for Chicago soot, grime, and ash. But the trend toward teamstering reveals a love for horses and the smell of manure that enabled the Dutch to bring a bit of the farm to the city. The occupational data reveal another Dutch characteristic--the desire to be "one's own boss." Only 35 persons (5 percent) were working in factories, foundries, mills, and the like. I estimate that half the Dutch male workforce in 1870 was self-employed.

Another Dutch adage was that a "woman's place was in the home." In 1870 when census marshals for the first time were required to report the occupation of all persons in the workforce, including females, no Dutch wives were working outside the home. But 84 unmarried Dutch women were working full-time, 2 of whom were widows. Three-fourths were boarding out as servant girls, 15 were seamstresses and dressmakers, one was a professional singer, one widow ran a boarding house, another was a wash woman, one was peddling perfume ("Avon calling"?), one was a store clerk, another a hairdresser, and one worked in a factory stripping tobacco.

Intermarriage

While attending Chicago Christian High School, Peter DeVries tells of seriously dating an Italian girl, but finally he broke the relationship. Why? "Religious reasons," he says. "Our faith doesn't allow us to intermarry."[35] DeVries is correct. Among the Reformed emigrants in Chicago, the 1870 census reveals little intermarriage, but a trend in this direction was developing among the second generation. Of 114 first-generation Reformed couples

in Chicago in 1870, (which includes all whose origins were traced back to the Netherlands), all had Dutch-born and presumably Reformed spouses. But among Dutch-born children and young people who married in America, 6 out of 44 (13.6 percent) had married non-Dutch spouses. All who "outmarried" were young men, not women. The nativity of the 6 wives were Prussian (2), Irish (1), Scotch (1), New Jersey (1), and Vermont (1). The New Jersey woman probably had Dutch parents in the Paterson area since her husband had met and married her there and the couple had two children there before moving to Chicago in 1868 or 1869. Thus, only 5 of the 44 or 11.4 percent had intermarried. Nevertheless, the upward trend in outmarrying is already evident within the first 20 years. Studies of later census will likely show that this trend continued.

The contrast is striking between the Reformed Dutch and other Dutch in Chicago. In 1870, of 288 first-generation Dutch couples (excluding the Reformed) 78 percent were married to Dutch-born spouses, compared to 100 percent among the Reformed. Among the children of non-Reformed Dutch is where the Americanization process is really evident. Of 122 couples, only 25 percent had Dutch spouses. Three-quarters had outmarried. Of the mixed marriages, Dutch men married non-Dutch wives twice as often as Dutch women married non-Dutch husbands. Which nationalities did they select? Sixty percent were German-born, mainly Prussians, 14 percent were U.S. born, 7 percent English or Scottish, 6 percent Belgian, and the remaining 15 percent were scattered among 12 European nationalities from Ireland to Italy, Sweden to France. The areas of the city with the highest outmarriage rates were outside of the Old West Side Reformed hub (Wards 7, 8, 98, 12, 13). The north side (Wards 1-6) and south side wards (Wards 10, 11, 16-20) both averaged 67 percent outmarriage in 1870. The northwest side north of Lake Street, which contained both Reformed and Catholic Dutch, only had an 8 percent rate of intermarriage.

Literacy, Schooling, and Citizenship

The Dutch have always been committed to education. The 1870 census registered only 14 Dutch-born adults in Chicago who could not read and write; 10 were women and 4 men. Most school age children were in school, especially the Reformed. Of 193 Reformed children, ages 6 through 15, 72 percent attended school during the 1869-70 school year, 18 percent remained at home, and 10 percent worked full time. Only 3 of 25 five-year olds attended school but half of the six-year olds (14 of 27) and almost all seven-year olds, did so. So the normal age of beginning school was 6-7 years. Among teenagers no sixteen-year old was in school, nor were two-thirds of fifteen year olds, over half of fourteen year olds, and a third of thirteen year olds. However, all eleven and almost all twelve-year olds were in school. Most teens not in school were boys who were working part-time as apprentices, clerks, and laborers; the girls were domestics. The normal age of school leaving was thus about age

fourteen.

The Reformed community compares very favorably in school attendance with the other Dutch in Chicago. Compared to a 72 percent rate of attendance among the Reformed, the other Dutch had only a 63 percent rate, 12 points less. Correspondingly, more non-Reformed youth were working (15 percent compared to 10 percent) or staying at home (22 percent compared to 18 percent). School beginning was delayed, but school leaving was the same. Only a quarter of the six-year olds were in school, compared to half for the Reformed. Among teenagers, only half of non-Reformed youth ages 11 through 16 attended school, compared to two-thirds among Reformed teens.

The proportion of Reformed girls at school was also higher--46 percent compared to 40 percent for the other Dutch. Of the working teens, three-fourths were males in both populations, but of those "at home," 90 percent were females among non-Reformed Dutch and only 25 percent among Reformed teens. Clearly, the Reformed sent more of their teen girls to school or to work and left fewer at home. Whether this was an economic necessity, a cultural phenomenon, or a demographic factor is unclear. Dutch young women were in high demand as domestics and Dutch culture dictated that idle hands were the devil's workshop.

Another mark of socialization in America is the pace of naturalization among Dutch immigrants. The 1870 census first reported for all adult males whether they were naturalized citizens and hence potential voters. Newcomers had to reside in the United States for five years before being eligible for citizenship. In 1870 exactly half of all Dutch-born males were naturalized, but among the Reformed only 43 percent were citizens. This reflects the fact that many Reformed Groningers only arrived in Chicago after 1865 and were not yet eligible.

Summary

Dutch settlement in Chicago began as early as 1839, if not before, and by 1847 there was a Reformed community of at least five families. Although these pioneers lacked a preacher's leadership, they founded a Reformed church within a year of their arrival (1848) and as soon as feasible, in 1852, they asked Reverend Van Raalte to cross the Lake from the Holland (Michigan) colony and lead them into a formal relationship with the Reformed Church in America. This pattern of behavior suggests no lack of spiritual fervor, and indeed it indicates a strong desire to nurture the historic Reformed faith under very adverse circumstances.

The Dutch Calvinists in Chicago for the first twenty years did not live in an isolated colony of Hollanders from the same Old Country villages. They came from all over the Netherlands, and Catholics, Jews, and Lutherans accompanied them. In Chicago the Dutch Reformed felt the social distance between themselves and the rest of the inhabitants, which inclined them to preserve their Old World traditions, language, and faith. They had an alternative. In 1854 Old Dutch from the East, descendants of the

colonial Dutch who had also settled in Chicago, founded Second Reformed Church about a mile west of the immigrant church at Monroe and Sangamon Streets. John M. Farris of New York pastored this English-speaking congregation, which was disbanded in 1880.[36] Thus for 26 years the Reformed immigrants had a choice, but few joined the American church, preferring instead the Dutch way.

When Dominie DeBey arrived in 1868, the Groninger Hoek was already taking shape. His coming merely speeded up the process, already well underway, of transforming the Old West Side from a "mixed" to a "homogeneous" Dutch community. In 1870 more than 700 Groningers lived on the West Side and they comprised nearly half of the Dutch population there.[37] All of these families fortunately escaped the great fire of 1871, even though several lived on DeKoven Street, barely a block or two west of Mrs. O'Leary's cow shed.

Because of their concentrated settlement among a "sea of Jews" (and Germans, Irish, Bohemians, and others), the Groningers remained very Dutch. Their community was also nourished by a steady stream of new arrivals until World War One and even into the Twenties. Within this neighborhood, the churches were the institutional glue, the focal point of family and community life. Christian day schools soon added more cohesion. In 1893 the first Dutch school, Ebenezer Christian, began with nearly 400 students. It was located on 15th Street near Ashland Avenue, two blocks from First Christian Reformed Church. In 1910, parents in the Lawndale area founded Timothy Christian School with 120 students.[38]

The Groningers, though all of farm backgrounds, became urban-focused once in Chicago. Their work demanded that they live near the city center and few returned to farming at the city's fringe areas. When DeBey in the 1870s proposed a plan to found a Groningen farming colony near Forest Home Cemetery, 20 miles west of the city, the Old West Siders rejected it out of hand.[39] Teamstering, not farming, would bring them economic prosperity, especially if they could not afford to buy the farm land. Hauling garbage, general freight, ice and coal, and peddling produce and milk became mainstays of Groninger employment, and the early evidence of this was clear in the 1870 census.

Professors Stob and Vanden Bosch had it right. The Groninger Hoek was a tightly knit colony that was very distinctive in its work and worship. My great grandfather, Jan Swierenga, emigrated from Groningen to the Old West Side in 1893. His blood and that of several generations of my family has been nourished by and contributed to this community. So you can well understand that preparing this paper has been a self-study. I thank you for giving me the opportunity.

Table 1: Dutch-born and Their Native-born Children in Chicago, Ward: 1850, 1860, and 1870

	1850			1860			1870			
Ward	Dutch	Ch.	T	Dutch	Ch.	T	Dutch	Ch.	T	Percen Gronin
1	3	0	3	13	7	20	40	21	61	0
2	2	0	2	16	8	24	12	25	37	0
3	6	0	6	11	4	15	50	38	88	0
4	1	0	1	1	1	2	11	10	21	0
5	27	0	29	43	18	61	9	10	19	0
6	34	2	36	49	35	84	48	41	89	15
7	7	0	7	7	6	13	257	47	304	46
8	9	5	14	19	8	27	135	59	194	50
9	3	0	3	4	1	5	258	145	403	10
10				112	36	148	40	28	68	0
11							18	10	28	0
12							141	70	211	80
13							33	15	48	94
14							44	13	57	78
15							214	52	266	59
16							26	30	56	0
17							24	23	47	0
18							15	8	23	0
19							27	15	42	5
20							25	8	33	18
	92	7	99	275	124	399	1,427	668	2,095	3

*Includes Groningen-born and their U.S.-born children, identified by linkage to Netherlands Emigration records and by family names.

Source: U.S. Population Censuses of Chicago, 1850, 1860, 1870.

1. The two standard histories of the Dutch in America devote only a page or less to the Groninger Hoek: Jacob Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, Robert P. Swierenga, general editor, Adriaan de Wit, chief translator (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1985), 156, 308, 309, 352; Henry S. Lucas, Netherlanders in America (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955), 231-32. Even the one book focusing on the Chicago Dutch, by Amry Vanden Bosch, The Dutch Communities of Chicago (Chicago: Knickerbocker Society of Chicago 1927), provides only a brief sketch of the West Side community (pp. 16-28, 45-46, 54-56, 96-97) and it concentrates mostly on the role of Rev. Bernardus DeBey.

2. Vanden Bosch, 5; cf. 75.

3. Van Hinte, 107, 154-156, 298; Lucas, 228. Hiram Van der Belt served as treasurer of First Reformed Church in the late 1850s.

4. Origins I, No. 1 (1983):3.

5. Vanden Bosch, 79.

6. Lucas, 231.

7. Fergus' Directory of the City of Chicago for 1839 (Chicago: Fergus Printing Co., 1876), p. 14. Falch is listed in most of the annual city directions from 1839 through 1861. He was variously a soap and candle maker, grocer and soapmaker, chandler, and soapmaker. He lived for many years on the northwest corner of Little Fort Road and Hubbard Street and his shop and factory was at South La Salle and Wells in the 1840s and North La Salle at Michigan Street in the 1850s.

8. "A Century for Christ, 1853-1953," 100th Anniversary Booklet of the First Reformed Church of Chicago, p. 3. The Chicago City Directory of 1856-1857 states that the congregation then without a pastor was worshipping in the Seeley Building at the corner of Randolph and Clinton Streets, times of worship being 9:30 AM and 2:30 PM. The directory also reports that the congregation was organized in 1848.

9. Chicago City Directory, 1856-1857; Lucas, 323.

10. Families arriving in 1851 and 1852 were Ernest Klokke, a Lutheran from the city of Utrecht who was a broker but found work as a clerk in Chicago; J. Slotboom, a weaver from Winterswijk, Gelderland, who became a railroad ticket agent; and Daniel Gordon, a bricklayer's hired hand from Ouddorp, Zuid Holland, who was a stonemason.

11. Arrivals in 1854 were the Frisians B. Postema, H. Broekema, and two Sellinga families: John Van Ballegooyen from Gelderland; John Tris, a carpenter's hired hand from Zeeland; Casper Pelgrim, a retired military officer and a Lutheran from Goedereede, Zuid Holland; and Peter Bunning, Martin Hoogeboom, Henry Nyenhuis, and William Jansen, whose origins are not yet known.

12. Arrivals in 1855 and 1856 were: Gerrit Vastenhouw, one of the first two elders of First Christian Reformed Church in 1867; Daniel Schippers, a bargeman from Yerseke, Zeeland; John Oosterwijk, a miller's hired hand and Roman Catholic from Bierum, Groningen; Henry Otte, a farmer from Zaandam, Noord Holland; Jacob Martin, a baker from Willemstad, Noord Brabant; Jacob Vander Wall, a laborer from Goedereede, Zuid Holland; and Henry Van Ouwen, Nicholas Foute, Andrew DeBoer, John Deursen, Albertus Frederick Van Duuren (both founding members of First Christian Reformed Church), and John Barestot, all of whose Netherlands origins are yet unknown.

13. The seven organizers were R. G. Kroes, Lucas Vanden Belt, Herman Van Zwol, Philip Van Nieuland, Maas P. Vande Kooi, and the Messrs. Liester and Pieters. See "A Century for Christ," 3.

14. Payton's description is quoted from Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis, 28-172 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 32. This section relies heavily on this excellent work.

15. Ibid., 30-35, quote on p. 35.

16. Ibid., 44-53.

17. Ibid., 63-64.

18. Origins, I (1983):3-9-13.

19. Mayer and Wade, 144, 171-172, quote on p. 144.

20. According to the New York ship passenger manifests, Van Emstede, aged 45, a priest, sailed on the Hermann of Baltimore from Bremen to New York City, arriving on May 12, 1853. No Chicago City Directory of the 1850s or 1860s lists Father Van Emstede but the 1860 federal census reported him as serving at St. Michael's Church in June 1860.

21. Joseph P. Conroy, S. J., Arnold Damen, S. J.: A Chapter in the Making of Chicago (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1930). Cf. Henry A. V. M. van Stekelenburg, "Dutch Catholics in the United States" in Robert P. Swierenga (ed.), The Dutch in America: Immigration, Settlement, and Cultural Change (New Brunswick, N.J., 1985), 71.

22. Lucas, 457; Van Hinte, 857.

23. Bernardus DeBey, letter in Provinciale Groninger Courant, December 10, 1869.

24. First Christian Reformed Church of Chicago, Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Booklet, p. 11.

25. Van Hinte, 373, citing G. K. Hemkes, Het Rechtsbestaan der Holl. Chr. Ger. Kerk in Amerika (1893), 67. For DeBey's view on the CRC in general and the Secession of 1857, see B. DeBeij and A. Zwemer, Stemmen uit de Hollandsch-Gereformeerde Kerk in de Ver. Staten van Amerika (1871).

26. Vanden Bosch, 17.

27. DeBey's letters about Chicago in the Provinciale Groninger Courant were published in the following issues: No. 148 December 10, 1868; No. 19 February 13, 1869; No. 69 May 20, 1869; No. 132 June 8, 1870; and No. 283 December 7, 1871 (containing DeBey's account of the Chicago Fire). The Chicago Fire letter is published in English translation in Origins I no. 1 (1983): 10-13. DeBey's subsequent letters were published in excerpt form by Petah-Ja (Orgaan, Bond Remin. Verenigingen op Gereformeerde Grondslag) June-July 1975, August-September, 1975, October 1975, and January , 1976. An English language typescript of all of these letters, by Dirk Hoogeveen of Regina, Saskatchewan, is in the writer's possession. The quote in the text is from the issue of June 8, 1870.

28. DeBey letter in Groninger Courant, February 13, 1869; Petah-Ja, "Church Historical Notes," October, 1975.

29. DeBey letter in Groninger Courant, June 8, 1870.

30. DeBey letter in Groningen Courant, December 10, 1869, February 13, 1869; "A Century for Christ," 5, Petah-Ja, "Church Historical Notes," August-September, 1975.

31. Peter DeVries, The Blood of the Lamb (New York: New American Library, 1961), 23.

32. Lucas, 324.

33. DeBey letter, Groninger Courant, Feb. 13, 1869.

34. DeBey letters, Groninger Courant, December 10, 1869; June 8, 1870.

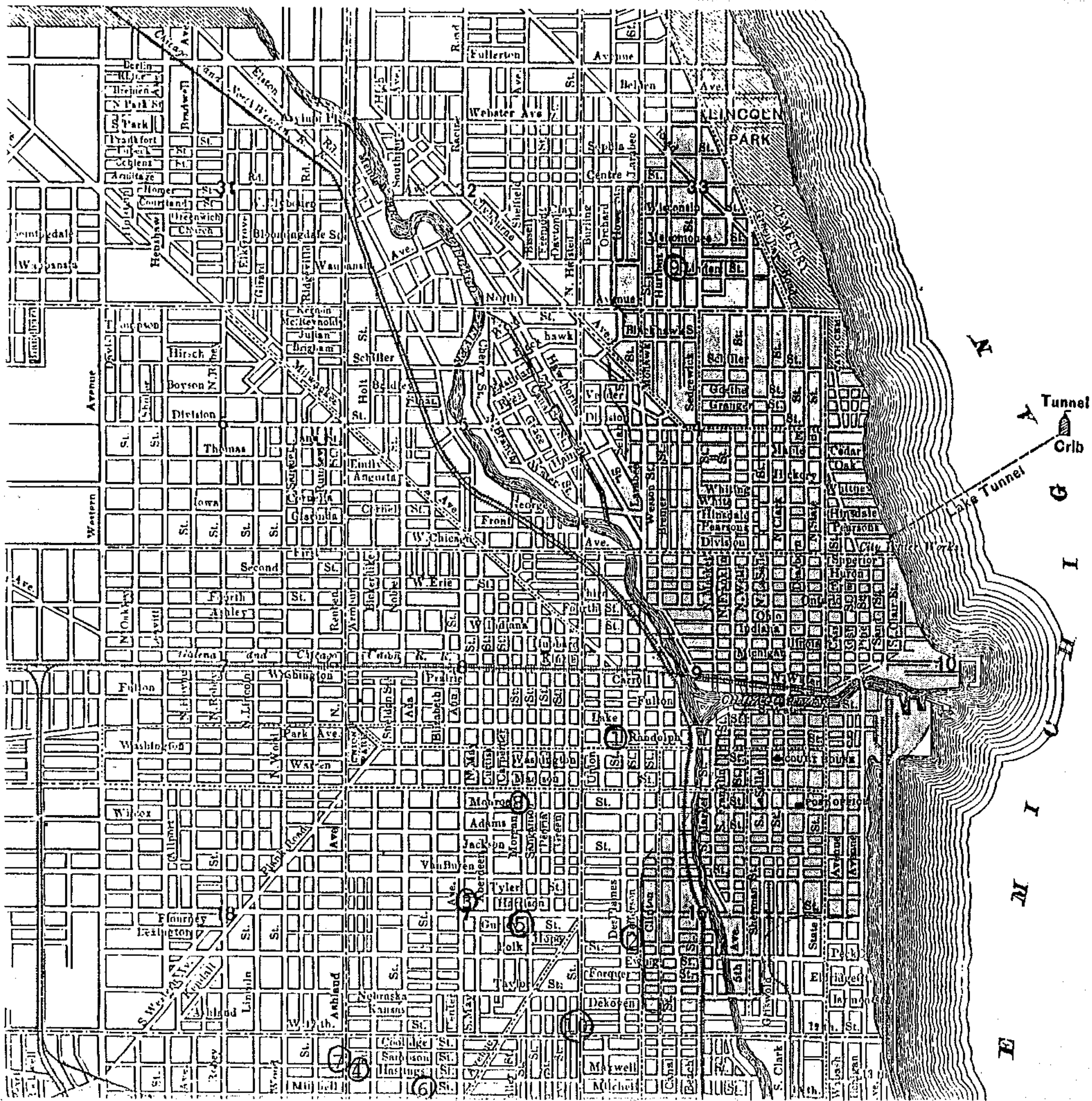
35. DeVries, 30.

36. Second Reformed was variously called American Reformed, or Livingston Reformed. It had a Sunday School following the morning service, unlike First Reformed, and it shifted the second service from the normal mid-afternoon to 7:30 PM by 1860. See Chicago City Directories, 1856-7, 1860-61; and Peter N. Vanden Berge (ed.), Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1978 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 262-263.

37. There were 713 Groningers out of a total population of 1572 (45 percent) in the west side wards 6-9, 12-15. Totals derived from Table 1.

38. Vanden Bosch, 43.

39. Vanden Bosch, 22-23.



MAP OF CHICAGO;

SHOWING THE

Parks, Boulevards,

AND

Burnt District,

ACCOMPANYING

CHICAGO

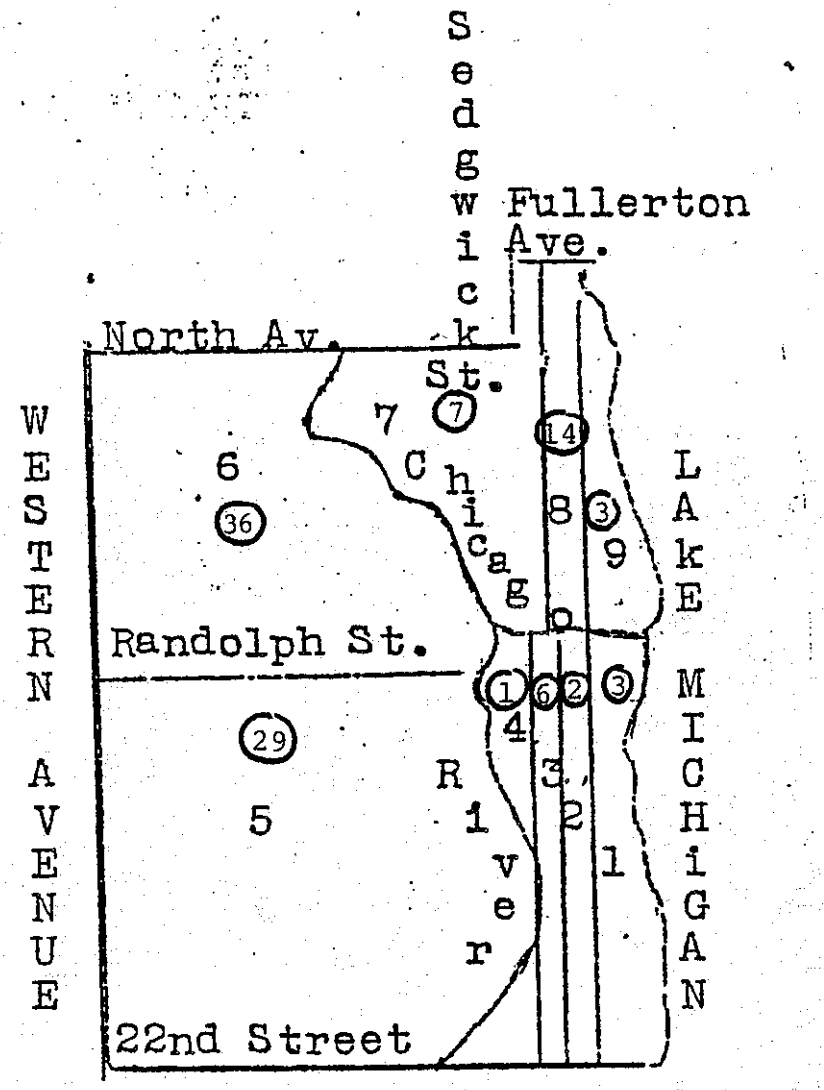
AND THE

Great Conflagration,

BY

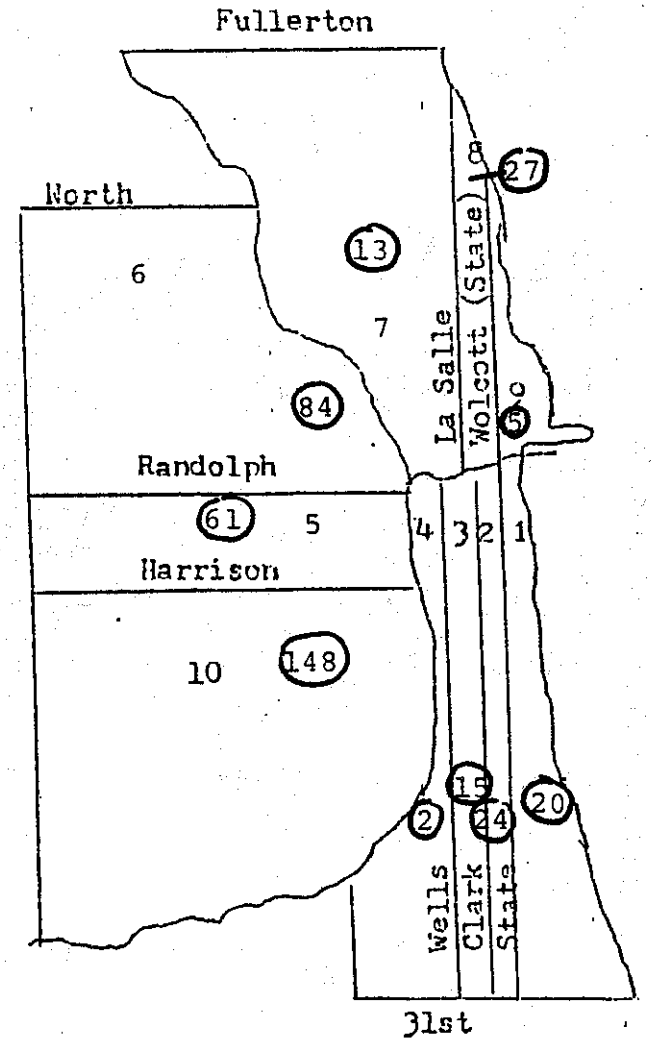
COLBERT & CHAMBERLIN.

1 First Reformed 1853-56
2 First Reformed 1856-69
3 First Reformed 1869-94
4 First Reformed 1894-1944
5 First Chr. Ref. 1867-83
6 First Chr. Ref. 1883-1923
7 First Chr. Ref. 1923-46
8 Second (American) Ref 1854-80
9 St. Michael's Roman Catholic
10 St. Francis Roman Catholic



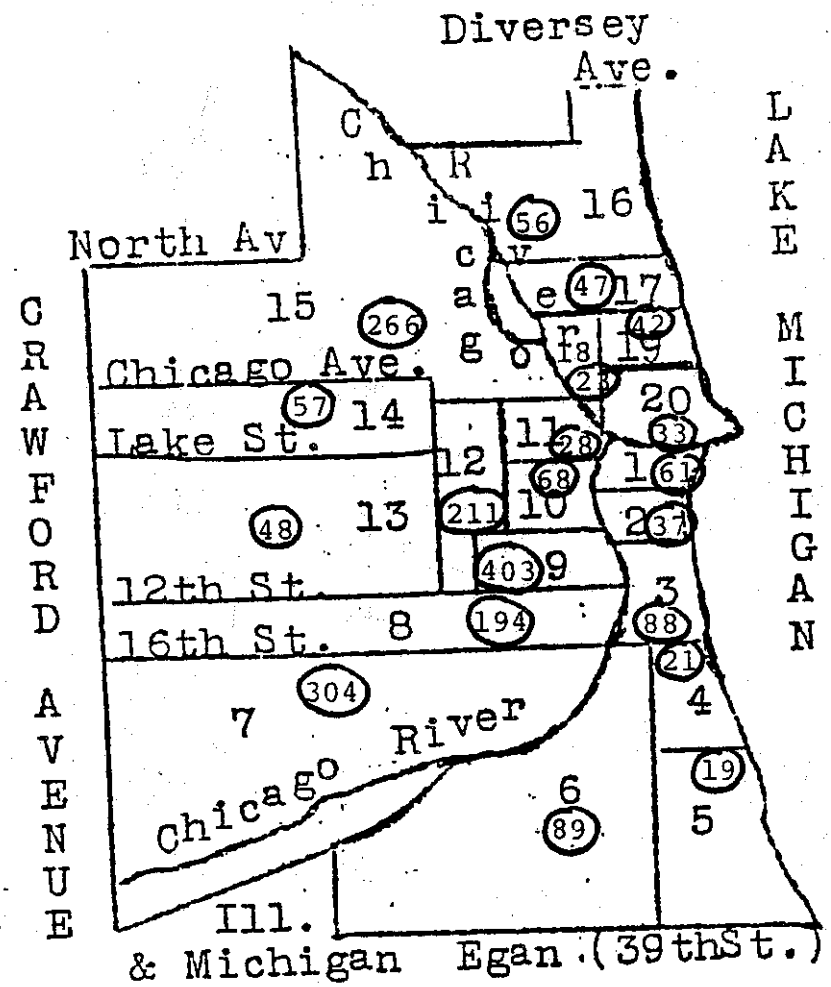
Number of Dutch stock per ward circled

Map of Chicago
in 1850



Number of Dutch stock per ward circled

MAP OF CHICAGO IN 1860



Map of Chicago in 1869

Number of Dutch stock per ward circled