PATERSON, NEW JERSEY: DUTCH IMMIGRATION'S LARGEST AFTERTHOUGHT (1846-1950)

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In October 1908, the police chief of the city of Paterson, New Jersey, assigned a squad of officers to monitor a meeting of the Holland Mutual Burial Fund's members at the city's Helvetia Hall. Riotous gatherings were commonplace in that facility, it being one of the favorite meeting places for the city's rambunctious labor unions. Rumor had it that the meeting might end in a pitched battle between rival factions with set opinions on who should oversee the Burial Fund's funds and how much they should be paid to do so. There was an insurgent faction and a status quo faction, each being very certain of their own rightness, and righteousness—resolutely. Funerals were big business among the Passaic Valley's Dutch immigrants. The Vermeulens and Vander Plaats (related by marriage) were burying people by the thousands from their establishments in Paterson and Garfield, and the Vermeulens owned the spacious new cemetery that was on the site of a defunct race track in Saddle River Township, just on the other side of the Passaic River.[1]

The idea that funeral funds could spark a riot may seem peculiar. But with the control of sixty-four thousand dollars at stake, it was very real in Paterson in 1908. This situation prompted a correspondent with the *Banner* to dolefully remark, "The spirit for which Paterson is known thruout [*sic*] our whole land seems also to have found lodgement [*sic*] in some of our Dutch people."[2] The threat of fisticuffs at Helvetia Hall coincided with a triumphant moment in the history of the region's Dutch immigrants. That same issue of the *Banner* reported that five hundred students staged a flag-bedecked march through the First Ward. They forsook the grossly overcrowded wooden Amity Street Christian School (a little Dutch school with a huge American flag) and occupied the brand new, commodious, brick, three-story North Fourth Street Christian School, an occasion marked by a solemnly festive celebration, replete with Dutch psalms, Dutch speeches, and the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."[3]

That Paterson, New Jersey, warranted notice in a Grand Rapids-based publication was a historical fluke. The "new" Dutch immigrants' presence in northern New Jersey was an accident. That their presence became so prominent, both locally and in the broader Dutch context, is even more astounding. In 1910 Paterson was the fortieth-largest city in the United States (today's equivalent is Kansas City). Fully 10 percent of the city's 120,000 residents were either new Dutch immigrants or their children.[4] By 1888 Paterson's twenty-one-year-old Sixth Reformed Church was larger than any other Reformed Church in America (RCA) congregation outside of New York City, larger than any in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Chicago; or Iowa.[5] And Sixth would

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[1] "Gag Rule Prevailed, So 'Insurgents' Said," *Morning Call* (6 March 1908), 1. *Paterson City Directory, 1907*, 94. Pat Woodruff, "History Vermeulen family-Passaic, N.J." Passaic County Historical Society Collection, Paterson, New Jersey.

[2] E. Bartson, "Eastern Notes," *The Banner* (29 Oct. 1908), 802. The *Banner* was the CRC's English-language publication.

[3] "Program van de Ingebruikneming der Christelijke School, No. 4th en Halpine Sts., Paterson, New Jersey, Zaterday, 24 October 1908." Original in Eastern Christian School Archives, North Haledon, NJ.

[4] Author's database compiled from the manuscript census schedules, 13th Census of the United States, City of Paterson, County of Passaic, State of New Jersey.

[5] *Acts and Proceedings of the Eighty-Second Regular Session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Convened at Catskill, N.Y., June 1888* (Board of Publication of the RCA, 1888), 641–74. Sixth Reformed

be the mother to two other congregations in Paterson, one of which quickly rivaled her in membership. In 1893 Paterson's First Christian Reformed Church, organized in 1856, harbored more souls than any congregation in that denomination, save one in Grand Rapids.[6] These numbers simply underscore one fact: one hundred years ago, the Paterson area housed the fourth-largest Dutch immigrant community in the United States, behind only West Michigan, Chicagoland, and Iowa. It all began with a few families who discovered on December 29, 1846, that they would be marooned in New York for the winter.

The brig *Preciosa* had docked in New York with 105 passengers from Rotterdam. They were the third and final group of God's faithful followers that had heeded Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte's call to escape the judgment to come on the Netherlands and find a better place across the Atlantic, somewhere in the Midwest. Van Raalte himself, with the first cohort, had reached Michigan that fall. The second group, which had arrived about two weeks before the *Preciosa*, made it to Albany just as the Erie Canal was closing for the season. The third group, on the *Preciosa*, would not be able to head up the Hudson until spring.[7]

Rev. Thomas DeWitt of the city's Collegiate Church, who had urged Van Raalte and Rev. Hendrik Scholte to emigrate, felt responsible for the 105 destitute Dutchmen. In the next issue of the *Christian Intelligencer*,[8] De Witt asked the faithful to provide aid to the marooned immigrants. He organized a committee of New York businessmen to look after the immigrants and contacted Reformed ministers in nearby New Jersey to seek their assistance. De Witt, the ministers, and the businessmen found homes and jobs in Bergen and Passaic counties for nine of the families; the houses were near colonial Dutch Reformed churches. The men found jobs in gristmills and on small farms. Those nine households were the beginning of northern New Jersey's community of "New Dutch" immigrants.[9]

Seven of those households would settle permanently in the Passaic Valley. They formed the vanguard for new Dutch immigration to the area. Three of the families came from Ouddorp, on the island of Goeree, one of the Netherlands' deepest poverty pockets in the 1840s. Two other families came from the village of Kappelle, Zeeland. One came from Lent, Gelderland, and the final one came from Scharnagoutum, Friesland. In classic chain migration form, those areas would become the source of the bulk of the Dutch immigrants who followed for the next thirty years. Why they might have actually wanted to remain in New Jersey can be answered in one word—language.[10]

It is hard to recapture just exactly how isolated northern New Jersey was in 1847. Back then, many of the inhabitants routinely used an archaic form of Dutch (what the locals called

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Church reported having 418 families, 443 communicants, 482 noncommunicants, 460 catechumens, and 430 Sunday school students (p. 663).

[6] *Jaarboekje voor de Holl. Christ. Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord Amerika, Voor het Jaar 1893*, 31. Kept in Heritage Hall (HH), archives for the CRC, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University, located in the Hekman Library at Calvin University.

[7] *Preciosa* passenger list at https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7488/NYM237_65-0269_2?backurl=&ssrc=&backlabel=Return (accessed 9 December 2019). *Christian Intelligencer* 17, no. 22 (31 Dec. 1846), 98; *Christian Intelligencer* 17, no. 26 (Jan. 1847), 102.

[8] The Dutch Reformed church's weekly newspaper.

[9] *Christian Intelligencer* 17, no 21 (3 Dec. 1846), 82; *Christian Intelligencer* 17, no. 31 (11 Feb. 1847), 120. Author's database compiled from the manuscript schedules 6th Census of the United States, Counties of Bergen and Passaic, State of New Jersey. "The Jelleme Family," in William W. Scott, *History of Passaic and Its Environs* (Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922), 2:96–101.

[10] On Dutch emigration patterns, see Robert P. Swierenga, *Faith and Family: Dutch Immigration and Settlement in the United States, 1820-1920* (Holmes and Meier, 2000), 1–34. Dutch Municipal Records.

"Jersey Dutch") commercially, colloquially, and maybe even most importantly, in their family devotions. A smattering of ministers, including Rev. Wilhelmus Eltinge of the Paramus Dutch Reformed Church, knew modern Dutch as well. The first new immigrant families were located conspicuously close to his church, as well as by the True Dutch Reformed Church, pastored by Passaic County native Rev. John Berdan, another Dutch speaker. Dutch colonial houses and churches built of sandstone dotted Bergen and Passaic counties. Dutch and Huguenot surnames dominated both gravestones and property deeds—to wit, Schuyler, Wortendyke, Brinkerhoff, Van Winkle, Ackerman, Van Saun, Demarest, and Van Houten.[11]

Paterson was the largest town in the northern part of New Jersey. Founded in 1792 by the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures, a corporation that could claim Alexander Hamilton as its godfather, Paterson was America's first planned industrial town. It stands by the seventy-foot Great Falls of the Passaic River, the second highest cataract on the eastern seaboard, second only to Niagara. The society hired Charles Pierre L'Enfant (who also laid out the street pattern of Washington, DC) to design a canal system to channel water from the top of the falls into millraces that would drive the wheels of factories. They first produced cotton cloth. Textiles attracted machine makers who built the looms and spinning equipment. The machinists included Samuel Colt, who began assembling his revolvers in Paterson in the 1830s. By the late 1840s, other Paterson mechanics began assembling steam locomotives to drive the nation's first railroads. The demand for metal, the presence of iron ore in the nearby hills, and coal hauled from Pennsylvania on the Morris and Essex Canal all created the Paterson Roller Mill Company and the Passaic Steel Company that produced the metals for the locomotive and textile industries.[12]

Unexpectedly dropping into this evolving environment in January 1847, the *Preciosa*'s passengers arrived without a Van Raalte or a Scholte to lead them. They came to rely on a few Dutch-speaking local ministers, especially Rev. Nicholas Marselus of New York's Greenwich Reformed Church, the elderly Rev. Wilhelmus Eltinge of the Paramus Reformed Church, and Rev. John Berdan of the True Dutch Reformed Church of Acquackanonk. Marselus led services in either a home or a church on a monthly basis.[13] A few of the early arrivals joined one of the English-speaking Reformed churches, among them Pieter Jans Jellema and his family.

Born in 1812, in Scharnagoutum, Friesland, Pieter Jans and his wife Atje Rienstra were married in 1839. With no specific skills to market, he faced meager prospects, earning a few cents here and there, doing whatever needed to be done in his village on any particular day.[14] Then, in 1846, he heard and heeded Van Raalte's call to emigrate. Through Rev. De Witt's contacts, Pieter Jans found a place to stay in Acquackanonk Township, near the "little falls" of the Passaic. By 1850 Pieter Jans was working as a farm laborer for Rev. John Berdan of the True Dutch Reformed Church, but Peter Jans and his family actually joined the nearby (and much larger) Old Acquackanonk Reformed Church. Pieter eventually found other work as a

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[11] Scott, *History of Passaic and Its Environs*, 1:349–53. Sixth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Township of Acquackanonk, County of Passaic, State of New Jersey. The Godwinville School in Bergen County still conducted classes in Dutch during the 1850s. See *Midland Park through the Years* (Borough of Midland Park, County of Bergen, New Jersey, 1964), 27.

[12] James P. Johnson, *New Jersey: History of Ingenuity and Industry* (Windsor Publications, 1987), 82–85, 96–115, 144–48. J. Palmer Murphy and Margaret Murphy, *Paterson & Passaic County: An Illustrated History* (Windsor Publications, 1987), 59–82.

[13] "Passaic and Environs," *Christian Intelligencer* 22 (10 July 1851), 1, 2, 18; *Christian Intelligencer* 22, no. 37 (March 1852), 147.

[14] Population Register.

lumberyard laborer, a job he would hold for the next thirty-five years. Pieter Jans and Altje had four sons born in Passaic County. John, the oldest, became a carpenter and contractor, eventually serving as the building inspector for the city of Passaic. Emke and Howard learned the retail dry goods business and operated stores in New York City, and Alfred followed Pieter into the lumberyard. In 1915 Alfred bought the business. One of the Jellema daughters married a German immigrant, Thomas Sulzer, and two of their sons went on to serve in the United States House of Representatives. In 1912 one of them, William Sulzer, was elected governor of the state of New York. Unfortunately, he also holds the distinction of being the only New York governor to be impeached and removed from office.[15]

The seven families who stayed in the Passaic Valley enticed other Dutch immigrants to join them. Some came with skills, among them a barber, a shoemaker, and a tailor. Jacobus DeRooy, a barber from Hellevoetsluis, arrived in 1851. In the Netherlands, his shop had doubled as a center for religious discussions following the Afscheiding of 1834. On his off days, De Rooy, a lifelong bachelor, traveled about the islands of the Rhine estuary, preaching his version of the good news in illicit meetings in towns like Ouddorp and Kappelle. His motive for choosing to come to Paterson appears to be lost. We do know he did not stay long. But with his desire to preach outshining his desire to shave and snip, he soon headed off to Cincinnati to lead a Dutch Baptist church in the Queen City. When he fell out with the Baptists over the issue of baptism, he returned to Paterson in 1856 and requested ordination in the Dutch Reformed Church. The local classis, with Rev. Marselus concurring, gave provisional approval and installed De Rooy as pastor of the First Holland Reformed Church of Paterson. Three years later, the Classis of Paramus approved the creation of a second Dutch-speaking congregation in Lodi.[16]

Organizing congregations indicated that a number of people residing along the Passaic River intended to stay for the foreseeable future. They were finding jobs, primarily as farm laborers and factory workers, which was hard and at times loathsome work. Among the worst, a Lodi business that processed barge loads of New York City's waste materials (both animal and human) into fertilizer marketed as poudrette. Some of the farm laborers started truck and dairy farming on their own when they found the means to rent some land and secure a team of horses, a plow, and a wagon to haul their products into Paterson, Lodi, and Hackensack.[17] One thing all these workers needed was shoes, and the man who could make them arrived in Paterson from Ouddorp in May 1851.

Aart Breen and Cornelia van Hoeven sailed to America with six of their ten children. Three lay buried in Ouddorp's cemetery. Aart and Cornelia's oldest, Maria, became a twenty-four-year-old widow and single mother when her husband died during their Atlantic crossing in 1849. When her parents arrived two years later, she was living as a domestic on a farm near Paterson. Aart Breen possessed two assets—his tools and cash from the sale of his house in Ouddorp. He found a house on the north side of the Passaic River, a few blocks from the city's Second Reformed Church, an English congregation. When Rev. De Rooy started First Holland Reformed, Aart joined and served as an elder.[18]

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[15] Census Reports, Biographies in Passaic and Environs, Old Acquackanonk Reformed Church membership register.
[16] First CRC historical essay, *Christian Intelligencer* 27, no. 13 (25 Sept. 1856), 50; *Christian Intelligencer* 27, no. 18 (30 Oct. 1856), 71; *Christian Intelligencer* 30, no. 14 (29 Sept. 1859), 53; *Christian Intelligencer* 30, no. 16 (13 Oct. 1859), 62; *Christian Intelligencer* 30 no. 21 (17 Nov. 1859), 82.
[17] *Christian Intelligencer* 32, no. 2 (14 Feb. 1861), 7. Bergen County History.
[18] Passenger List, Municipal Records, City Directories.

With his cash and tools, Aart Breen set about cobbling for the city's factory workers. His four sons worked on farms. In time, two of his sons moved to Marion County, Iowa, as did Maria after she remarried. John, the oldest son, farmed for the rest of his life, whereas Martin, the youngest, became a wheelwright and carpenter. The Breen daughters married Paterson factory workers.[19]

The first "new" Dutch arrivals in the Passaic Valley struggled to communicate with the region's English-speaking majority. Their surnames became the clearest evidence. Aart Breen appeared in the census reports and city directories under a variety of guises. Sometimes, he was Abraham, Abram, or Art, and other times, he was Breen, Brain, Brane, or Braen. Decades later, his oldest son John would eventually legally opt for "Braen" (one that remains locally famous). Other early Dutch surnames were either literally translated (Ruigentuin to Roughgarden, Witte to White, Engelsman to Englishman) or creatively anglicized (den Hartog to Hartley, Heerschaap to Hascup, Sandifoort to Sandford, and in a clear nod to Paterson's creation story, Hameeteman became Hamilton). The earlier the families settled in the area, the more likely their surnames were altered.[20] Quick prominence, however, did save one odd name, that of a tailor from Nieuwvliet, Zeeland—Abraham Vermeulen.

When Abraham Vermeulen died at 7:00 a.m. on February 4, 1902, his passing warranted a front-page headline in the *Paterson Morning Call*. He was lauded as an honored Passaic County official (the oft-elected coroner), a faithful father (with 21 children), and a successful businessman (an undertaker).[21] The *Passaic Daily News* named him "one of the best known Holland citizens of the county" who had served as justice of the peace (for 25 years), owned the Fairlawn Cemetery (which he developed on the site of a racetrack), and a founder of the "Holland Reformed" church on River Street in Paterson.[22] In truth, Vermeulen was the closest thing to an acknowledged leader the Paterson Dutch community would ever know. Born in 1827, he immigrated to the United States in 1854, established a tailor shop in Paterson, and sold groceries on the side. His big break came with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. The terrible war was an economic boon for the city of Paterson. The locomotive shops built the engines that carried the Union army to victory over the South. Samuel Colt's mill churned out revolvers for officers and rifles for infantrymen. The textile mills produced blue cloth. And Abraham Vermeulen's tailor shop turned the cloth into uniforms for the Union soldiers. He employed sixty seamstresses during those years and kept them all busy by his own ability to cut out all the pieces for an entire uniform in ten minutes flat. He plowed his profits into real estate in both Paterson and the surrounding countryside. On one tract, on the First Watchung Mountain, he opened a stone quarry. When that proved unprofitable, he set aside a piece of the property as a cemetery for the Dutch immigrants.[23]

Abraham Vermeulen became the indispensable man for the Dutch in the Paterson area. Since he quickly became bilingual, Vermeulen translated for those dealing with the authorities. He became a ticket agent for the Holland-America Line. He sold insurance, registered deeds, and served as justice of the peace. In time, he became an undertaker, conducting thousands of

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[19] The author's database is drawn from the manuscript schedules for the federal censuses of 1860, 1870, 1880 for Passaic and Bergen Counties. Manuscript census schedules for the same period for the townships of Pella and Summit, Marion County, Iowa.

[20] Author's population database for Passaic and Bergen counties.

[21] "Abram Vermeulen," *Paterson Morning Call* (5 Feb. 1902), 1.

[22] "Late Abraham Vermeulen [*sic*]," *Passaic Daily News* (6 Feb., 1902), 2.

[23] A walled-off section of the Goffle Hill Cemetery was sold to one of Paterson's oldest synagogues as that congregation's burial place. Vermeulen family history.

funerals. Maybe most importantly, he became a pillar of the congregation that became First Christian Reformed Church.

Vermeulen was there when the Dutch Reformed Church's Classis of Paramus ordained Jacobus De Rooy and organized the first Dutch-speaking congregation in Paterson. When De Rooy pushed to cut ties with the denomination, Vermeulen followed. When De Rooy connected the congregation to the Churches Under the Cross in the Netherlands, Vermeulen went along. When De Rooy abandoned Paterson without bothering to resign, Vermeulen traveled west to seek out the leaders of the fledgling Christian Reformed Church (CRC). In 1864 the Paterson church split; Vermeulen led one group to affiliate with the Michigan dissenters, and the rest of the group stayed with the Reformed Church. Vermeulen frequently served as an elder in the congregation, even traveling west for meetings of the denominational synod when the Paterson group lacked a minister of its own.[24]

The Passaic Valley's Dutch community grew very slowly during those first decades. By 1870 there were only three small Dutch-speaking congregations in the area. The federal census fixed the Dutch immigrants at 5.62 percent of the total population, with 40 percent of them concentrated in just three municipalities.[25] Thirty years later, the Dutch percentage in Passaic County had doubled to almost 11 percent, but it surpassed that number in 1910. The Dutch immigrant population doubled, whereas the county's population increased by a factor of five. By approximately 1910, the region hosted twenty-three Dutch-speaking churches.[26] The community already supported a home for the elderly; three schools (two Protestant, one Catholic), with two more in the offing; a society to build a psychiatric hospital; three missions (rescue missions in Passaic and Paterson, and another focused on Paterson's large Jewish population); the Christian Seaman's Home and Immigration Center, located opposite the Holland-American Line docks in Hoboken; two weekly newspapers; a Frisian cultural society; a concert band; a number of choral societies, and a Dutch YMCA.[27] Beyond these largely internal structures, the Dutch community's largest impact fell on the local economy and the Republican Party.

On the economic side, the Dutch were a major presence in Paterson's silk mills and dye houses. Being some of the earliest arrivals among the area's immigrants, the Dutch tended to have higher paying positions as weavers and loom fixers. Time also placed them in the position to become foremen and office clerks. By 1900 a few Dutch immigrants had even become manufacturers, most notably the Westerhof brothers. In the dye houses, the Dutch could be found working as the engineers who kept the machinery operating and as the dyers, who had mastered

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[24] Vermeulen's first trip to these meetings occurred in June 1872. One of the main items on the agenda that year was the ugly dispute that prompted the Paterson church's elders to oust their minister on grounds of adultery, improper preaching, intemperate language, and wife abuse. "Minutes of the Highest Assembly of the Christian Reformed Church, 1857–1880," 137–41. "First Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, New Jersey 75th Anniversary, 1856-1931, 5–13 (Paterson, NJ, First file, box 10, HH).

[25] Eighth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Bergen and Passaic Counties, State of New Jersey. By this date, the RCA included "Holland" congregations in Paterson and Lodi. The only CRC congregation was the one in Paterson.

[26] Eight CRC (Paterson: 1st, 2nd, 4th; Prospect Park; Midland Park; Passaic: Hope Ave., Northside; Lodi) nine RCA (Paterson: 1st, 6th, Union, Peoples Park); Passaic: 1st; Clifton; Lodi; Little Falls; Wortendyke; three Netherland Reformed Congregations (Paterson: Ebenezer, Peoples Park); Passaic; and Paterson Holland Baptist; Lodi Holland Presbyterian; Paterson: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

[27] *Paterson City Directory, 1910-11* (Price and Lee), 835–54, includes many of these organizations in the society and associations list. Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950* (Eerdmans, 1955), 307.

the art of producing consistent colors. Black was the most difficult color, and those who could do that were paid even more.[28]

Working in the mills lifted the Dutch out of their neighborhoods and into a world fraught with conflict. The silk and dye barons were immigrants themselves—the silk manufacturers from England, the dyers from Alsace and Switzerland, and the wool manufacturers from Germany. After 1880 the work force shifted toward immigrants from Italy and the Russian Pale. Paterson harbored a noteworthy cadre of Italian anarchists who were on the run from the authorities and plotting their next violent act against the political establishment. The Jews from the Pale of Settlement included a smattering of revolutionary socialists.[29] All the workers lived under the shadow of the whims of the mill manufacturers who were wealthy and autocratic and brooked no interference with their sovereign right to operate their businesses as they saw fit, on terms they dictated. This combination made Paterson and Passaic a battle zone between capital and labor, with frequent strikes, almost invariably violent.

At the same time, the tenor of Dutch immigration to the Passaic Valley also shifted significantly. Although the influx from villages in Zeeland and particularly from Goeree-Overflakkee continued, more newcomers began arriving from northern Friesland and from the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Two strains came from Friesland—religious dissenters and socialists. They both sought refuge from poverty but in different ways. The socialists formed their own society within the broader Dutch-immigrant community; they aligned with Paterson and Passaic's labor unions, both the American Federation of Labor craft unions and, after 1900, the Industrial Workers of the World. The religious dissenters, as could be expected, were a fractured and fractious lot. The bulk of them affiliated with either the RCA or the CRC. Between 1880 and 1910, these denominations added about dozen congregations in the area. Schisms among them produced three Netherland Reformed Congregations. In 1884 Paterson's Roman Catholic dean, William A McNulty, organized a new parish and a school, Our Lady of Lourdes, in a neighborhood heavily populated by Dutch Catholics.[30]

The Dutch Protestants included a significant contingent of Kuyperian Calvinists who could be found in just about all of the immigrant congregations, albeit more concentrated in the CRC congregations. Their local leader, Rev. Peter Van Vlaanderen, arrived in Paterson in 1889 in answer to a call from the First Christian Reformed Church. With his commitment to faith-based institutions, Van Vlaanderen led the push to establish a separate Christian school, which opened on Amity Street in 1893. Three years later, a separate society organized the Holland Christian Home for the Elderly, with a building located in the southern part of Paterson, closer to the Dutch neighborhoods in Passaic and Clifton. In 1899 a second Christian school opened in Paterson's Riverside section. The third institution, the Christian Sanatorium Association,

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[28] Author's database compiled from the Thirteenth Census of the United States, manuscript schedules for Counties of Bergen and Passaic, State of New Jersey. Author's interview with Dr. William Spoelhof, 26 Sept. 2007.

[29] Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*: *Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (University of Illinois Press, 2015), 49–87. George William Shea, *Spoiled Silk: The Red Mayor & the Great Paterson Textile Strike* (Fordham University Press, 2001). Anne Huber Tripp, *The I.W.W. and the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913* (University of Illinois Press, 1987), 3–16, 36–66. Robert Schoone-Jongen, "Fighting at the Borders: Dutch Americans and the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913," in *Across Borders: Dutch Migration to North America and Australia*, ed. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, Suzanne Sinke, and Robert P. Swierenga (Van Raalte Press, 2010), 199–210.

[30] Raymond J. Kopek, *Living Stones: A History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Paterson* (The Diocese of Paterson, 1987), 139, 374. Anita Zalenski and Robert J. Hazenkamp Jr., *Ecclesiastical History of Paterson, NJ: A History of Paterson's Churches, Synagogues, and Missions, 1792-1942* (Passaic County Historical Society Genealogy Club, 2011), 39–40. Annemieke Galema, *Frisians to America, 1880-1914: With the Baggage of the Fatherland* (REGIO-PRojekt Uitgevers, 1996), 164–78.

organized in 1911. In 1917 its psychiatric hospital opened on a converted farm in rural Wyckoff, away from the smoke and noise of the industrial valley. Two more Christian schools also opened—Midland Park in 1912 and in Passaic in 1916. A new high school, Eastern Academy, opened in 1919, in the hope that it could offer secretarial courses for lower tuition fees than those commanded by the local business schools.[31]

These institutions, many of which still exist, became the most visible face of Dutch Calvinism in northern New Jersey, holding the immigrant communities together in common causes. Arguably, the one that best captured the spirit of community service would be the Christian San, which accepted patients from all backgrounds. And, when one of its buildings burned to the ground in 1935, the entire region contributed heavily to the fund to build and equip the new structure. Even the chasms that generally divided Protestants from Catholics and Christians from Jews were bridged to rebuild the San. Within the Dutch community, the three institutions—the Holland Home, the Christian Sanatorium, and the Christian schools—gave each Calvinist faction a leadership position. The Christian school board presidents in the early years were CRC ministers and laymen. The Holland Home board chairs were drawn from the RCA. The early presidents of the Christian Sanatorium Association pastored Netherland Reformed congregations.[32]

It might be simple to say, as was said back then, that the Dutch were opposed to unions and deserved being called scabs, as many of them indeed were. But "simple" does not mean definitive. In truth, in Paterson's labor disputes, there were Dutch immigrants to be found on all sides of the strikes. During the largest and most famous of the strikes, in 1912, the Westerhoff brothers—Dutch immigrant manufactures—daily ran the gauntlet to get their largely female work force through the pickets to the train station and headed back to their homes. Scabs, like my formidable grandmother, charged through the blockade that often closed the Sixth Avenue Bridge between Paterson and the Borough of Prospect Park. Friesian socialists contributed to the fund that kept the soup kitchens open. One of them interpreted for Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn at the mass meetings in Helvetia Hall. The regularity of the walkouts in Paterson, Passaic, Garfield, and Lodi, and the violence that often accompanied them, gave Paterson a national reputation that led to the lament from 1908 bemoaning how some of the Dutch were succumbing to the Silk City's violent ways.[33]

That reputation received even more warrant during the first weeks of 1912. The police tried to maintain order during the church services at Passaic's Northside Christian Reformed Church as the two factions literally fought for control of the building—in the sanctuary, on the pages of the newspapers, in the chancery court in Jersey City, and in the chambers of the state supreme court in Trenton. The weekly spectacle in the Dutch Hill neighborhood caught the eye of newspaper editors as far away as Washington, DC. The flashpoint was the minister's testimony in a divorce procedure that provoked anger between those who sided with the wronged

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[31] Robert Schoone-Jongen, "Dutch Immigrants and Education: Where Winning Meant Losing," keynote address, Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS), Calvin University, Grand Rapids, MI, 14 June 2019. Cornelius Bontekoe, *An Historical Review of Eastern Academy, 1919-1944* (n.p.).

[32] On the Holland Home, see "Fortieth Anniversary: Holland Home for the Aged, 1895-1935." On the Christian Sanatorium (now the Christian Healthcare Center), see "Christian Sanatorium, Silver Anniversary, Nineteen Eleven, Nineteen Thirty-six" "Commemorating 50 Years of Service in the Master's Name, 1961-1962" "Celebrating A Century of Service," *Center Life* (Fall 2011). "Reflections on a Century," *Center Life* (Winter 2011). On the Christian schools, see Richard D. Ostling, "In Thy Light We See Light: Eastern Christian Schools, 1892-1992," *Yearbook of the Free Christian Schools in America* (National Union of Christian Schools, 1923-24), 123–31.

[33] Schoone-Jongen, "Borders," *Banner* (29 Oct. 1908).

wife and those who supported the influential husband. Underneath it all simmered discontent with a rather heavy-handed dominee, economic envy at a prosperous dairyman suspected of believing his influence should rise with his income, and the minister's insistence that the immigrants needed to accept American notions, such as hymns and a Sunday school taught in English. Looking back, we can see something else happening, as well. The Dutch immigrants in the Passaic Valley had achieved a social standing that arose from their rising standard of living.

Despite the strikes and the deplorable environmental problems the factories had created, the Passaic Valley was an industrial juggernaut for decades after the Civil War. Paterson's population doubled every twenty years, and Passaic's grew at an even faster rate. Both cities spawned factory-worker suburbs. A few miles to the north, in Bergen County, wealthy suburbs for New York's growing elite arose. But both barons and factory workers needed housing, which gave the Dutch their greatest opportunity. What garbage collection was for the Dutch in Chicago,[34] construction was for their Paterson cousins. Although the Dutch accounted for approximately 10 percent of the area's population, they accounted for almost 25 percent of the army of contractors, carpenters, and masons raising the houses and paving the streets of North Jersey.[35] The largest-volume construction company east of the Mississippi River was Union Building and Construction Company of Passaic, and its president was Dow Henry Drukker.

Dow Drukker was born in Sneek, Friesland, in 1869. His family immigrated to Grand Rapids, Michigan, when he was but an infant. At eleven, he was a cash clerk in a dry goods store. At eighteen, he was the assistant manager. That same year, he and a friend started a firewood business with a siding along the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad tracks. In 1897 Dow visited two relatives who lived in the Paterson area—Uncle Roelof Drukker, who pastored Paterson's Second Christian Reformed Church, and Uncle Jacob J. Van Noordt, a stone mason in Lodi who made a living building sidewalks. Drukker joined Van Noordt's construction business and began experimenting with using concrete as a paving material. He found that crushed blue stone—first quarried in Pennsylvania and then found in abundance in the First Watchung Mountain that rose to the west of Passaic and Paterson—when fused with Portland cement, made a durable paving material. Soon Drukker succeeded Van Noordt as the head of Union Building and Construction Company and began paving the streets of Passaic and other municipalities in New Jersey and New York.[36] His regional competitors included the grandson and great-grandsons of the Ouddorp shoemaker Aart Breen, doing business as Samuel Braen's Sons. Another would be Paul L. Troast who grew up in Passaic and joined his brother-in-law in Mahony-Troast Construction Company. Then there were the hundreds of independent carpenters and partnerships that kaleidoscopically appeared and disappeared. When there was a church or a school to build, Dutch architects designed them, and Dutch contractors built them.[37]

Dow Drukker's success as a contractor gave him the leisure to enter politics as a loyal Republican. He won election to the Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders, first from his home ward in Passaic and then county wide. He chaired the board for four years. In 1914, when the local congressman died suddenly, Drukker won the vacant seat and headed for Washington.

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[34] See Larry Vanderleest, *Garbio: Stories of Chicago, Its Garbage, and the Dutchmen Who Picked It Up* (Schuler, 2011).

[35] Robert Schoone-Jongen, "There Was Work in the Valley: Dutch Immigration to New Jersey, 1850-1920," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 7 (no. 2), 56–81. City directories for Paterson Passaic. On Passaic's environmental reputation, see Harry Emerson Wildes, *Twin Rivers: The Raritan and the Passaic* (Farrar & Rinehart, 1943).

[36] "Beautiful in Simplicity," *Passaic Herald-News* (15 Jan. 1963), 1–2.

[37] Schoone-Jongen, "There Was Work in the Valley."

While serving, he bought the local newspaper, the *Passaic Herald-News*, but stayed out of the editor's office. His only demand—that the Christmas Eve edition print only happy news on the front page. After serving three terms, Drukker surrendered his seat in the House, returned to Passaic, added two banks to his portfolio, and spent the rest of his life doing civic good, making money, and attending the Old First Reformed Church in Passaic.[38]

Dow Drukker's time in public office coincided with the high watermark of Dutch political clout in the Passaic Valley. During his tenure, the clerk of the Board of Freeholders was the son of Dutch immigrants. Dutch immigrant children sat on the Paterson Board of Aldermen, and several served as elected officials in the surrounding boroughs as well. The Dutch could also be found in the ranks of the paid police departments and fire engine companies. Even the janitors at both Paterson City Hall and the Passaic County Courthouse were Dutch immigrants. One of Abraham Vermeulen's sons served several terms in the State Assembly. In 1919 Paterson voters elected Frank J. Van Noort, the son of a Dutch Catholic immigrant, as mayor and reelected him two years later. For the next few decades, that political influence continued in both Passaic and Bergen Counties. Statewide, Paul L. Troast, the contractor from Passaic, chaired the New Jersey Turnpike Authority as that highway was being built. In 1953 Troast secured the Republican nomination for governor, only to lose in November. Four fifteen years, under three governors from both parties, yet another Abraham Vermeulen served as the New Jersey state budget director.[39]

When the First World War ended mass immigration to the United States and the federal government instituted the national quota system in the 1920s, the Passaic Valley Dutch community first plateaued and then began a long, slow decline in both prominence and influence. The Dutch-language newspapers disappeared in the 1920s. Dutch-language church services ended, finally, in 1949. The presence of the regional Christian high school by Paterson, acted as a drain on the Dutch presence in the Passaic area. By the 1960s, the former Dutch congregations began moving to the newer suburbs the Dutch carpenters had built after the Second World War, often with lumber purchased from Dutch dealers. Holland Home abandoned Paterson in 1961 to make way for an interstate highway. The Reformed and Christian Reformed churches that remained saw their numbers dwindle, even after they consolidated with other struggling congregations. Increasingly, retirement meant moving either south to warmer climes or west for cheaper housing. Service in the Second World War had the same impact on the Passaic Valley as in many other ethnic enclaves—breaking down the sense that being exclusive was essential.

The baby boom helped postpone the numerical decline of the Dutch in the Passaic Valley, but shifting housing patterns took a toll. Paterson and Passaic's changing racial profiles also pushed outmigration from the old neighborhoods, as did the switch from walking to driving. Parking became a chronic issue for churches built in walking neighborhoods. Changing marriage patterns played a role in diluting ethnic consciousness. Since church affiliations heavily influenced higher education choices, the Paterson area would see hundreds of young people head

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[38] Scott, *History of Passaic and Its Environ*s, 3:24–25. "Former Congressman Dow H. Drukker Dies," *Passaic Herald-News* (12 Jan. 1963), 1–3. Later that year, the city of Passaic dedicated a park in Dow Drukker's honor with a ceremony that featured Governor Richard J. Hughes and Paul L. Troast. "City Accepts Dow H. Drukker Plaza at Impressive Patriotic Service," *Passaic Herald-News* (15 June 1963), 1–2, 8.

[39] On Frank J. Van Noort, see "Dr. Van Noort Dies Suddenly, Rites Saturday," *Paterson Morning Call* (27 May 1954), 1–2. "Dr Van Noort Dies at Home," *Paterson Evening News* (26 May 1954), 1, 39. On Paul L. Troast, see "First Pike Chief Paul Troast Dies," *Asbury Park Press* (22 July 1972); "Paul Troast Ran for Governor," *Sunday Record* (23 July 1972), D23, 1, 4; "Paul Troast Dies At 76, Directed Turnpike Work," *Paterson News* (22 July 1972), 1–2. On Abram Vermeulen, see the *Record* (19 July 1994), A21.

west to Michigan, many of them never to return. In short, assimilation did much to erase the actual Dutch presence on Dutch Hill in Passaic and Clifton, the First Ward, Bunker Hill, Peoples Park, Riverside in Paterson, and in the boroughs like Midland Park and Prospect Park.

But even an erasure leaves traces and residue behind. History never disappears, not even under the layers of time. In many ways, the old story of what the "new" Dutch immigrants who happened upon the Passaic Valley early in 1847 is still being written. Still newer immigrant waves now live in the houses and occupy the schools and church buildings that the Flakkeers, Zeelanders, and Frisians had built in the same location back when these places were their new homes in America.

But if you know what to look for and are familiar with ethnic surnames, the power that was once the skilled hands and strong arms of the Dutch contractors and construction workers who built so much of Passaic and Bergen counties one hundred years ago, is still there to be seen, even if only as an afterthought.