

A Dutch Immigrant's Success Story: E. J. G. Bloemendaal's Sojourns and Settlement in Northwest Iowa

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WE KNOW MOST EMIGRANTS from the Netherlands to the United States only through a sparse listing in official records. The Dutch immigrant Evert Jan Gerrit Bloemendaal, however, penned a memoir of his experiences that offers a portrait with sharp resolution and detailed nuances about the process and outcome of one emigrant's overseas relocation. Bloemendaal wrote and published his memoir in Dutch in 1911 in part as a personal reminiscence and in part "as a service to prospective emigrants in the Netherlands who contemplated going to America just prior to the First World War." It was not, however, a commercial propaganda piece similar to railroad company pamphlets or state-sponsored guidebooks and advertising circulars common in the nineteenth century.¹

The author thanks Terry Dykstra of Sioux County, Iowa, for providing the English translation of Bloemendaal's memoir and Jack Bloemendaal for the family photo. Special acknowledgment is also due Norman Beltman for serving as intermediary for these materials.

1. E. J. G. Bloemendaal, *Naar Amerika* (Arnhem, 1911); E. J. G. Bloemendaal, *My America: An Essay for Emigrants Written after 44 Years of Experience*, trans. C. R. Veenstra, copy of typescript in author's possession courtesy of Terry Dykstra of Sioux County, Iowa. The Dutch historian Jacob Van Hinte frequently quoted Bloemendaal's memoir in his standard narrative, *Netherlanders in America: A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America*, ed. Robert P. Swierenga (Grand Rapids, MI, 1985). It was curiously absent, however, from the references in American scholar Henry

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As historical source material, a memoir presents a personal perception of circumstances and events. However judicious or objective the reminiscing writer may be, a filtering process is at work, consciously or unconsciously, in producing a memoir. The result is an inherently subjective view of reality that may also include self-justification and rationalization. By definition, a memoir also reflects hindsight even as it relays factual information. Events and actions recalled, people and places remembered, are not precisely the same on replay as they were in actuality. In short, a memoir is rife with potential bias. Time, age, perspective, nostalgia, mellowing, bitterness, physical and psychological changes, altered circumstances—all these and more qualify the reliability of a memoir. Nonetheless, used with caution, reminiscences remain invaluable historical records that relate an individual's experience.

Bloemendaal's memoir focuses largely on the migratory experiences that eventually led to his permanent transplantation. At the broadest level, migration reflects social, economic, and political change on a grand structural scale. At the personal level, explanations about why and how a particular emigrant relocated can be elusive and sometimes appear to be a consequence of impulse or desperation. Evert Bloemendaal's reminiscence, however, clearly reveals the personal dimensions of the decision making that led to his emigration, the cautious and incremental execution of relocation that entailed repeated evaluation and adjustment, and the constant need for practical flexibility to achieve long-term goals. It also indicates the interrelated factors of timing, place, and availability of opportunity that necessitated measured risk-taking that could make all the difference between action and inertia, between success and failure. His experience also shows the immigrant's strong compulsion to seek out settlements populated by his own ethnic kind in order to reestablish a familiar way of life in a new land where material well-being could be enjoyed among a homogeneous, supportive ethnocultural community.

Lucas's history of Dutch American settlement, *Netherlanders in America: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950* (1955; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI, 1989), and his two-volume collection of first-person accounts, *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings* (1955; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI, 1997).

BLOEMENDAAL'S STORY of overseas relocation from the Netherlands and his sojourns and final settlement near Alton in Sioux County, Iowa, like any individual account of immigration, requires context. His voyage to America began in May 1867, during the second wave of nineteenth-century migration from the Netherlands to the United States. The Panic of 1857 and the general social and political upheaval subsequently associated with the outbreak of the Civil War resulted in a hiatus in emigration. Weak financial conditions coupled with wartime instability made the United States, temporarily at least, an unattractive destination for emigrants seeking better living conditions and socio-religious opportunities. By 1866, however, some Dutch citizens were again pulled irresistibly to consider the United States as a place for new beginnings. Peace had been restored, and the economy was poised for postwar expansion. The Homestead Act of 1862 capped a generous governmental land policy, and unbridled railroad construction reflected a general business resurgence. At the same time, in the Netherlands a scarcity of land, rising land prices, and high taxation limited social and economic opportunities pushing Dutch citizens to contemplate the prospect of emigrating as a means for personal betterment.²

Accordingly, a second stream of Dutch emigrants flowed to the United States to form a swell lasting until 1873, when economic depression in America again quelled enthusiasm for migration. During the first wave of migration from 1846 to 1857, most emigrants had migrated as part of congregations or local communities. By contrast, the second wave of migration from 1866 to 1873 was composed of nuclear families and single individuals. Both movements (and a later third wave) were largely rural transplantations; farmers from the Old Country took up farmland in the New, establishing farmsteads on the rich agricultural lands of America's interior. After the founding of ethnic enclaves in the late 1840s in Allegan and Ottawa Counties, Michigan; Marion County, Iowa; Fond du Lac and Sheboygan Counties and the Fox River Valley of Wisconsin; and in Illinois along the Calumet River south of Chicago as well as in the city proper

2. See Robert P. Swierenga, *Faith and Family: Dutch Immigration and Settlement in the United States, 1820-1920* (New York, 2000), 35-37.

in what became known as the Groningen Quarter, all of these magnets for relocation grew and sustained ethnocultural persistence, fed by the powerful influences of religious solidarity, transcontinental communication with kin, and the mechanics of chain migration.³

In 1867, a near-peak year during the second wave of Dutch emigration, out-migrants left the Netherlands at the rate of 137 per 1000, slightly less than the rate of 150 per 1000 at the crest of this surge six years later. E. J. G. Bloemendaal of Gorssel, Gelderland, was one of 4,923 Netherlanders who departed in 1867, a single rural emigrant amid that year's mix of individuals and nuclear families. According to emigration records, he was 29 years old, a farmer by occupation, a member of the "well to do" social class, and religiously affiliated with the Hervormde Church, the nation's state-sanctioned Protestant church.⁴

By 1867, most residents of Bloemendaal's home province of Gelderland were familiar with the emigration process, for they had witnessed considerable overseas out-migration for over two decades. Bloemendaal himself recalled the emigration of three families from his village congregation. They were Seceders from the national church, religious conservatives who objected to the ecclesiastical modernism of the times. For their piety, Seceders incurred much scorn and mockery; some suffered the more extreme persecution of imprisonment or loss of jobs. When the three families left Gorssel in 1847, the event made a lasting impression on the nine-year-old Bloemendaal. He recalled the "tears rolling down our teacher's cheeks" when the emigrants came to his school to bid farewell to the schoolmaster. And when they said goodbye to Bloemendaal's family, "so serious was their conversation," he wrote, "that I shall never forget what was said. With the departure of these families the spark of emigration zeal that had been kindled seemed to become dormant, although later it broke into a veritable flame."⁵

3. *Ibid.*, 37, 62, 76-79; *idem*, *Dutch Chicago: The Hollanders in the Windy City* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2002).

4. Swierenga, *Faith and Family*, 12, table 1.1; *Immigration Records: Dutch in America, 1800s*, comp. Robert P. Swierenga, available on Family Tree Maker's Family Archives CD-ROM (Genealogy.com, LLC, 2000).

5. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 2-3.

MAP 1



Of all the Dutch provinces, Gelderland ranked second between 1835 and 1880 in the total number of Dutch emigrants, with 12,400 persons out-migrating, and third in the rate of emigration at 32 per 1000 residents. The poor, inland sandy soil of this area provided a sparse resource base for diversified farms and cottage textile industries. Small-scale farmers, farm laborers, and skilled artisans were barely able to eke out a marginal existence. Chronic land scarcity and sharp price increases for land during the middle decades of the nineteenth century severely limited the prospect of property ownership and forecasted a life of tenancy or perpetual rural day labor for many Gelderland. Moreover, since the 1830s Germans from West-

phalia and other northwestern Germanic provinces had poured down the Rhine for ultimate destinations in America, where many hoped to achieve landownership. These emigrants provided an example for Gelderlanders to do likewise. Many residents of the municipalities in eastern Gelderland thus decided to emigrate. During the 1840s out-migration by Seceders in some of these communities significantly depleted local, well-established congregations. General emigration caused local property values to decline by 25 to 35 percent, while the number of tenant farm leases dropped 15 to 20 percent.⁶

More than 6,300 emigrants—half of all the out-migrants from Gelderland—came from a region near Bloemendaal's hometown of Gorssel known as the Achterhoek, or "Backcorner," in the southeastern part of the province, bordering the German provinces. The community of Winterswijk, near the German border, supplied many of those emigrants. During the first two waves of Netherlandic emigration, it was the point of origin for nearly 4,400 persons, over two-thirds of the Achterhoek's 6,300 out-migrants and over one-third of the 12,400 emigrants from the entire province of Gelderland. The number of emigrants from this community was fairly constant from 1835 to 1875, except that in 1846 alone about 950 people left a commune in this municipality of 8,000 and headed for the United States.⁷

Some emigrants from Winterswijk gravitated to an enclave in Clymer, New York, founded in 1845. Clymer was not destined to become a large Dutch colony, probably because land was more expensive in New York than in the immigrant settlements farther west. Nonetheless, Clymer was a way station for westward traveling Gelderlanders in the last half of the nineteenth century.⁸ Other early emigrants from Winterswijk and other Gelderlander municipalities joined a Dutch enclave begun in 1845 by Zeelanders in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, on the

6. Swierenga, *Faith and Family*, 104–5.

7. The number of emigrants from Winterswijk per time period was as follows: 1835–1849, 1,600; 1850–1864, 1,300; 1865–1875, 1,500. During these three time periods, the remainder of the province of Gelderland accounted for, respectively, 800, 2,400, and 4,500 overseas migrants. *Ibid.*, 105–6; Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 61–62.

8. Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 39–40, 240–41; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 312.

western shore of Lake Michigan. The core settlement in Holland Township thrived under the firm leadership of the Reverend Pieter Zonne.⁹

Fifty miles inland still other immigrants planted a predominantly Gelderlander settlement at Alto in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. The Dutch pioneer in that frontier community was Albertus Meenk, who arrived there from Winterswijk in 1844. An American acquaintance had advised him that the mix of woodland and meadow in the Alto area held considerable promise as farmland. In the next two years more than 15 other Gelderlander families joined Meenk to form a growing ethnic enclave. In 1847 the Dutch pioneers erected a log meetinghouse, which served as the spiritual lodestone for the community. A year later these Seceders invited Gerrit Baay of Apeldoorn, Gelderland, to be their minister. Baay had been prepared for the ministry by Dominie Hendrik P. Scholte, the famed Seceder leader who founded the Dutch colony at Pella in Marion County, Iowa, in 1847. By 1849 the Alto community reportedly numbered 30 families; ten years later the settlement's population approached 800.¹⁰

A resident of the Alto settlement named A. Virderman, who had relocated to Fond du Lac County in the early 1850s, found the fertile prairie and forest land and excellent water supply conducive to fruitful farming operations. Alto, positioned 68 miles west of Milwaukee, a port city on Lake Michigan serving as a major transportation and market hub for southern Wisconsin, had the promise to mature into a vibrant, prosperous agricultural economy as well as a thriving Dutch enclave. Virderman believed in the potential of Alto, so much so that in 1854 he returned to his birthplace of Voorst in Gelderland to recruit more emigrants to share the American dream he was enjoying through landownership and crop and livestock production. Virderman convinced a group of Gelderlanders in Apeldoorn, Het Loo, Voorst, and Dinxperloo to return with him to the United States.¹¹

9. Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 205–10; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 151–52, 293–95.

10. Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 201–5, 264n; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 153.

11. Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 203.

When Evert Bloemendaal emigrated in 1867, his destination was Alto, by then a New World haven for fellow Gelderlandes seeking economic advancement. In his hometown of Gorssel, just six kilometers northeast of Voorst, he had met a man named "V" who had lived for a time in Alto. "V" spoke so favorably of the place and surrounding region that Bloemendaal felt a "certain magnetic power" drawing him to Fond du Lac County. We cannot know for sure whether the man Bloemendaal called "V" was Virderman, but when Virderman was recruiting in 1854, Bloemendaal was an impressionable 16 years old. At any rate, Bloemendaal noted, "Under God's influence, I owe much to 'V' and his influence which brought me to settle in America, where God has prospered me."¹²

BLOEMENDAAL LEFT THE NETHERLANDS in May 1867 at the urging of his father, who believed that better opportunities lay waiting in America. Leaving behind his parents and at least six siblings, he departed with both boundless optimism and a heavy heart, knowing that he might not see his family again. Bloemendaal's father accompanied him to the Zutphen train depot for the final farewell. As the train rolled out, Bloemendaal watched his father walking homeward on the road. "I stared after him as long as he was in sight. Then I fell into a down-cast mood thinking about the trip I had now embarked upon. I knew no English. . . . I would have no acquaintances to welcome me when I arrived in America." He found solace and courage in his trust in God "that without His will not a hair could fall from my head." He was also consoled by the thought that he would eventually be able to worship not in "a State Church, where Christ and his saving power was no longer proclaimed" but in a local meetinghouse where "God's truth" would be preached. Finally, he expected to "become rich and be very happy in America."¹³

Bloemendaal traveled through Utrecht and Gouda and on to Rotterdam, the most common port of embarkation for emigrants. There he learned that the ship he was to sail on had al-

12. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 42-44.

13. *Ibid.*, 52, 1-4.

ready departed. He was, however, able to secure passage the next morning on another ship bound for Hull, England, where he caught up with the group of 30 Netherlanders, mostly from the province of Drenthe, with whom he was originally ticketed to travel. With those ethnic colleagues he crossed England by train at "frightful speeds" and in "uncomfortable cars." After arriving at Liverpool, the group had to wait three days under the care of a Dutch "guide" who escorted them to an emigrant hotel and helped arrange passage for the transatlantic crossing. Bloemendaal marveled how Liverpool swarmed with people of German, Swedish, Norwegian, and other origins; its streets were a veritable "ant nest." He judged general treatment of emigrants "kindly" but noted that the hotel food service was "meager and of a poor quality." The guide, however, resented such complaints, and his demeanor soured. Thus, when he tried to get his clients to sign a paper evaluating their treatment positively, they generally rebuffed him.¹⁴

Aboard ship "all was bedlam" at first. Bloemendaal claimed that the vessel had "more than a thousand passengers." That number increased when a "whole company of Irishmen" joined the ship's roster at a stop at an Irish port. Bloemendaal noted that most passengers did not consider the Irish to be the "most desirable travel companions." Bloemendaal traveled in steerage or third-class passage, which cost about \$12 per adult plus incidental expenses for food. The men slept in hammocks, and six women shared a bed compartment. Food quality and quantity left "much to be desired": for breakfast, a roll; for dinner, potatoes and tough meat; for supper, a rock-hard sea biscuit and sweet molasses coffee, "a loathsome drink." On the crossing Bloemendaal endured a one-day ocean storm, his anxiety stirred when a companion asked if he could swim. Since he could not, the man offered, with "a twinkle in his eye," to hold Bloemendaal's money for safekeeping. Recognizing the tease, Bloemendaal regained his ease. He recorded that one woman and two children died on the journey; they were not buried at sea, but freighted ashore for interment. Death on the Atlantic crossing was no stranger to emigrants, but it was not an everyday occur-

14. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 6-9. See also Swierenga, *Faith and Family*, 124-26.

rence. In the 1860s, ocean passage averaged ten deaths per thousand passengers for Dutch emigrants. On the tenth day at sea, Bloemendaal sighted Newfoundland, its coastal waters teeming with fishing vessels. Thereafter the ship passed the coast of Labrador to enter the channel of the St. Lawrence River. Although about 95 percent of all Dutch immigrants came through New York City during the 1860s, Bloemendaal, after a twelve-day transatlantic voyage, disembarked at Quebec City.¹⁵

Still in company with fellow Netherlanders, Bloemendaal traveled in an emigrant coach on a train from Quebec City to Toronto, crossed the St. Clair River at Sarnia from Canada to the United States, passed though Grand Rapids, and reached Grand Haven after a four-day trip. He did not record how much that cost, but the third-class fare for the comparable thousand-mile trip from New York to Chicago was \$5. He walked the last 21 miles to the "Holland Colony."¹⁶

He was disappointed. "It looked more like a village than a city. In America every little burg is called a city." He could not understand why Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte, the colony's founder, had led his group of immigrants "to settle in such a sandy and poor region." Neither the Grand Haven nor Holland areas appealed to Bloemendaal—too much sand and sawdust, the latter a reference to the bustling timber business in post-Civil War Michigan—so he boarded a "stylish" lake steamer bound for Milwaukee. From there he journeyed by rail to Waupun in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. On the train he struck up a conversation with another Dutchman who lived in Alto and was met by his son at the Waupun depot. They offered Bloemendaal a wagon ride for his last few miles between Waupun and Alto. They also kindly let the new immigrant stay with them for four days until he found work.¹⁷

15. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 9–15. On costs, fatalities, and ports of entry, see Swierenga, *Faith and Family*, 138–40, 132–34.

16. Swierenga, *Faith and Family*, 138. For comparative cost information, see Brian W. Beltman, "Ethnic Persistence and Change: The Experience of a Dutch-American Family in Rural Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* 52 (1993), 10–11; and idem, *Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley: The Life and Letters of Ulbe Eringa, 1866–1950* (Urbana and Chicago, 1996), 43–44.

17. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 18–44.

BLOEMENDAAL WAS A FARMER; Alto was a farm community. Supply and demand intersected effectively, and the immigrant immediately found employment as a farm laborer for \$18 per month. He judged the land there, despite being hilly and stony, as "excellent." Yet Wisconsin's cold climate delayed springtime planting and dictated a shorter growing season than Bloemendaal was accustomed to in Gelderland, where, despite being farther north, oceanic winds moderated temperature and winters did not linger as long. Bloemendaal noted that the principal crops were wheat, oats, and barley; cattle production was of secondary interest. During the 1860s, when wartime and post-war commodity prices had been high, farmers, he observed, "became rich raising wheat." The grain yield was 30 bushels per acre, and such a wheat harvest could bring a farmer an income of \$2,000. Local land values reached \$50 per acre.¹⁸

Bloemendaal took room and board in the home of a former blacksmith who, like many other aspiring Dutch tradesmen, had achieved upward social mobility by becoming a farmer and landowner. Bloemendaal noted that they never ate rye bread (common fare in the Netherlands)—only white bread, pork, beef, butter, milk, sometimes cake, and canned fruit. Besides eating well in the new country, Bloemendaal described a generally comfortable living standard as the norm. People lived in two-story houses, had excellent furniture (even organs), drove in buggies and coaches, and wore nice clothes. Churchgoers turned the service into "quite a display of fashion." Some people, Bloemendaal added disapprovingly, "have become proud . . . a serious fault."¹⁹

Bloemendaal worked in the Alto area through the summer grain harvest season and then moved to Waupun, where he hired out for the fall gathering wood for a baker for \$9 per week. His room and board expenses consumed only \$2 per week, allowing him to accumulate savings. During the winter months he fed a farmer's cattle mornings and evenings and attended school to learn English. Whenever possible, he also sought work from Americans to learn English more quickly. He took special note that wherever he roomed in the settlements in

18. *Ibid.*, 45–46, 55.

19. *Ibid.*, 53–55.

Fond du Lac County, the houses and barns of farmsteads were separate structures, not under one roof as was the native custom of the Old World he had left behind. Through 1868 and 1869 Bloemendaal continued to live and work in the Alto community—clearing trees, shearing sheep, harvesting grain, cutting and husking corn, and chopping firewood during the winter. As a hired hand during wheat harvest, he earned \$2.50 per day. Living in a pluralistic society, he labored for Scottish, Irish, English, American, and Dutch farmers. Bloemendaal summarized his financial situation: "My capital was nicely increasing which I invested at 10%. I had no difficulty in finding people who gladly loaned money at that rate especially among the farmers who invested it in land." Apparently he was investing some of his earnings in the booming mortgage business common in frontier economies.²⁰

In late March 1870, Bloemendaal, in a continuing search for economic opportunity, was ready to investigate another Dutch ethnic enclave in the Midwest. Although he was never at a loss for work and income, he may have concluded that it would be some time before he could become a landowner in the mature agricultural community of Alto, where good land was expensive and already occupied. Bloemendaal, at that stage in his life, was probably effectively closed out of the competitive bidding in Fond du Lac County's local land market. Permanent status as a farm laborer or tenant was not what he had in mind. Thus, to realize his ambitions of becoming a farmer and a landowner, he had to find a place where fertile farmland was available and less expensive. Having the luxury of mobility and no attachments as a single person, he could migrate to a new region. Accordingly, Bloemendaal and two companions traveled by train via Chicago, west across the Mississippi River at Burlington, on to Ottumwa, and thence to Pella, in Marion County, Iowa, to reconnoiter the Dutch colony established there by Dominie Scholte in 1847.²¹

The three men stayed with people they had known in the Netherlands and secured employment with an American seven miles north of Pella, "an overgrown village, hastily built."

20. *Ibid.*, 60–86.

21. *Ibid.*, 87–89.

Bloemendaal's first impression of the Pella settlement was that it was "not as good as" that in the Alto and Waupun area. With higher lumber prices in the Iowa grasslands than in the Wisconsin woodlands, housing construction appeared inferior. But he also observed that farmers in the Pella area were fully integrated into commercial agriculture through corn and hog production as well as raising beef cattle. He noted that some farmers raised sugar cane to make syrup, and others produced wine from wild grapes. Bloemendaal also acknowledged the presence of three organized Dutch congregations in the colony: Scholte's independent church, a Reformed church, and a Christian Reformed church. These were essential to the community's ethnoreligious character and served as instruments of ethnic identity and persistence. But he added cryptically, perhaps recognizing that social tensions existed even among families and neighbors, "In Pella one finds all kinds of Christians."²²

Bloemendaal's American employer was an "ultraorthodox Baptist" (Dunker) originally from Indiana with strong loyalty to the Democratic Party and open sympathy for the Confederacy. His religious and political views provoked spirited discussions between boss and workers. Bloemendaal hinted that this local Democrat had sympathized with the Copperhead faction of the party that had favored peace initiatives during the Civil War and whose lack of support for Lincoln's unionist policies earned it critical opprobrium as a group of "disloyal Northerners." Bloemendaal and his friends worked for this man for a month clearing ten acres of scrub-oak timberland. The farmer then used five yoke of oxen on the breaking plow to turn the sod. Bloemendaal earned \$82 plus room and board for this heavy labor (a fair wage in 1870 of about \$3.50 per day), but he complained that the "unbearably hot" weather in late June made him ill and left aftereffects for several more weeks. He implied that Pella was located too far south for his liking.²³

More importantly, Bloemendaal's visit to the Pella colony coincided with the most important hiving from that settlement in the late nineteenth century. By the late 1860s, socioeconomic

22. *Ibid.*, 90-92.

23. *Ibid.*, 92-98.

conditions in the Pella area mirrored the circumstances in the Netherlands that had propelled out-migration—especially the perception that scarce and high-priced land limited opportunities for new farm formation for a rising generation. Arable land was selling for premium prices of \$60 per acre. Tenants faced correspondingly high rent with little possibility of climbing the agricultural ladder to become owner-operators. The 1870 population of Marion County, predominantly although not entirely Dutch, was 4,975 and nearing a demographic saturation point relative to the rural economy and social norms of this agricultural community. All but the most marginal land was owned and under cultivation. For example, 98 percent of the land in Lake Prairie Township, the core of the Marion County Dutch colony and home to the town of Pella, was privatized. Farmers owned 56 percent of the township's land, organized into 357 individual farms. They had improved nearly 20,000 acres, or 44 percent of the township (77 percent of the potential farmland in the township, excluding the town site, wetlands, and other marginal-use land). By 1880 only 4 percent of the farmland would remain unimproved. Noting this trend, ambitious residents knew by 1870 that a defining moment was at hand: new farm-making on inexpensive, fertile land could continue only by migration to a new frontier.²⁴

AS A RESULT, in the spring of 1870, 253 Dutch Americans from Marion County transplanted to Sioux County in northwestern Iowa to create a "daughter colony" there. Forty-one family households, 10 independent persons in 7 other households, and 2 adult single males who were part of family households as hired men participated in this internal migration in May and June. A special subset of this entourage was a kinship group that had been among 16 families who, to avoid conscription and general military uncertainty during the Civil War, had traveled to Oregon and back between 1864 and 1869. Seasoned veterans of trail travel and migratory relocation, they provided

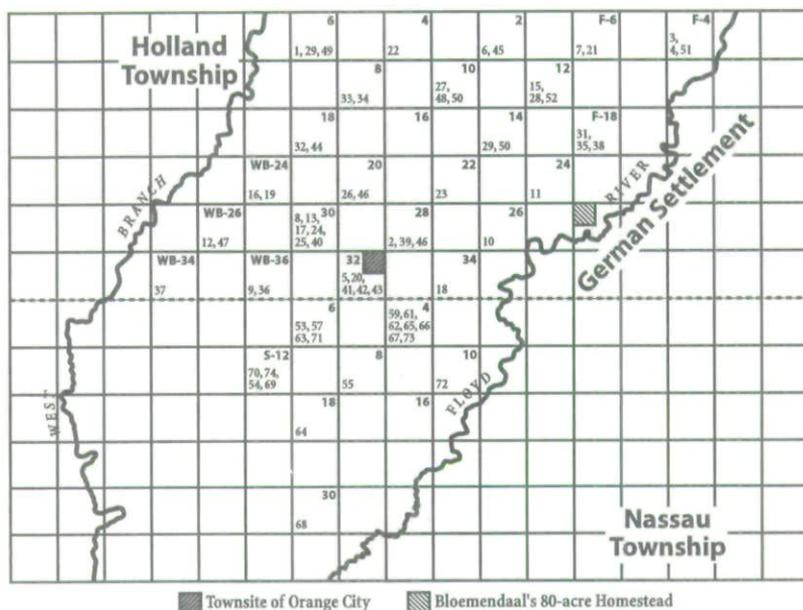
24. Richard Doyle, "The Socio-Economic Mobility of the Dutch Immigrants to Pella, Iowa, 1847-1925" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1982), 73, table 2 at 74. See, more generally, Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 330-35; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 464-66; and Jacob Van der Zee, *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Iowa City, 1912), 125-26.

invaluable experience and leadership for the transfer to Sioux County. The census-taker recorded the names of these 253 people in mid-June for the federal census of 1870. In the subsequent weeks of that summer, at least 76 more Dutch Americans from Pella joined the ethnic enclave in Sioux County. Some of these were recorded in the Marion County census counts; others were in transit crossing Iowa during the census taking and not documented in the 1870 census. Nonetheless, extant sources suggest that these 76 persons were arranged as 21 households consisting of 14 families and 7 single individuals. All of these pioneers were of modest but adequate financial resources, enabling them to exercise land options available under the Homestead Act of 1862. Without exception, they established farms by acquiring 80-acre farmsteads on 30 sections of the verdant open prairie in the V-shaped land corridor between the Floyd River and its West Branch. The rural land base for the Dutch ethnic territory in Sioux County resembled a geographic checkerboard, as farmers in the summer of 1870 staked out their homestead claims in the even-numbered sections of the government survey system (see map 2). Odd-numbered sections were owned by railroad companies as a result of congressional land grants to the state of Iowa, which conveyed them to railroads to help finance the construction of rail lines. These were eventually available for purchase, but the minimum price was \$2.50 per acre, double the price of land available for homesteading.²⁵

Some of the settlers hoped to move from tenant status to land-ownership where homesteads were available. Others wanted to acquire inexpensive and fertile new land that might be more productive. Some simply wished to start anew in an unsettled area where the prospect of farming on a comparatively larger and more prosperous scale was a realistic possibility. They were not failures drifting from an old community undergoing fragmentation, but rather opportunity-seekers who left an area where ma-

25. Brian W. Beltman, "Ethnic Territoriality and the Persistence of Identity: Dutch Settlers in Northwest Iowa, 1869-1880," *Annals of Iowa* 55 (1996), 108-9, 117, and *passim*; idem, "Civil War Reverberations: Exodus and Return among the Pella Dutch during the 1860s," in *The Dutch-American Experience: Essays in Honor of Robert P. Swierenga*, ed. Hans Krabbendam and Larry J. Wagenaar (Amsterdam, 2000), 117-42.

MAP 2
DUTCH HOMESTEADS BY SECTION IN 1870



Note: The numbers on these occupied sections are coded to correspond with the appendix, which provides the names of the individual Dutch homesteaders, their ages, the specific locations of their tracts of land, their places of origin in the Netherlands, and the dates of their emigration. Data for the map and appendix rely on the Transfer Books for Holland and Nassau Townships, Sioux County, Iowa, in the Sioux County Courthouse in Orange City as well as on information gleaned from the Federal Manuscript Population Census for 1870; K[ommer] Van Stigt, *History of Pella, Iowa* (Pella, 1897), 124–25; G. A. Stout, *Souvenir History of Pella, Iowa* (Pella, 1922), 218; Charles L. Dyke, *The Story of Sioux County* (Orange City, IA, 1942), 566; Robert P. Swierenga, comp., *Dutch Emigrants to the United States, South Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia, 1835–1880: An Alphabetical Listing by Household Heads and Independent Persons* (Wilmington, DE, 1983); and Swierenga, comp., *Immigration Records*, CD-ROM.

turity and stabilization limited prospects for success. They chose to move elsewhere to fulfill their ambitions and needs within the security of a community of kith and kin, where ethnocultural homogeneity and shared socioeconomic standards and expectations were linked to the tradition of family farming and their

Reformed religious precepts. In short, they sought to replicate the Pella Dutch community in Sioux County.²⁶

Bloemendaal happened into Pella at the cusp of this great local venture, and he recognized the opportunity at hand: cheap land available for the taking. Local reports averred that the land was fertile and beautiful in Sioux County, but some skeptics wondered whether the region was too far north for good corn crop production. Bloemendaal wrote, "It was our intention to see the area for ourselves and if we liked the territory to buy land there."²⁷ Time, space, and economics intersected for the immigrant who wanted to be a farmer in America, and flexibility in the face of favorable fortune was not an unduly risky response.

In early July 1870 Bloemendaal and his two friends traveled to northwest Iowa by train via Council Bluffs and then up the Missouri Valley to Sioux City, a trip that lasted 100 hours. Then they transferred to a hired, horse-drawn wagon and headed north for 25 miles to Le Mars and nine miles beyond. At that point their ride ended, and they had to walk the last nine miles to the site of Orange City.²⁸ As they walked, they "admired the land." What Bloemendaal beheld was the sublime grasslands of northwest Iowa, yet unbroken by a steel plow. He observed,

We were now in the midst of the prairies with not a home in sight. . . . The land was a rolling prairie with gradual inclines and declines rising and falling about forty to fifty feet over a space of a quarter of a mile. In the lower parts, streams were found which emptied into the river. On the crests of these hills the grass was shorter, but in the lower spots near the streams the grass was tall and sprinkled with wild flowers. The quality of the soil is so rich that it needs no fertilization for the first twenty years. It is neither clay nor sand. They call it muck. It is not heavy and can well be worked with a team of two horses. The soil is composed of decayed grass which has accumulated year after year for centuries and is entirely unlike that found in Europe. . . . The soil found in

26. Beltman, "Ethnic Territoriality," 113-14, 118. This source has considerably more information on the demography of the Dutch Americans in Sioux County and provides a much fuller treatment of their pattern of land acquisition, colony growth, and social and economic maturation during the 1870s.

27. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 99-100.

28. *Ibid.*, 99-101.

our Fatherland cannot compare with what is found in northwest Iowa, not even the fine clay soil of the Netherlands. . . . When we stood on the top of the prominences and viewed the area in the region surrounding Orange City, the landscape was simply bewitching. As far as the eye could see the land rolled gently. Only in the distance could be seen hills. As we gazed on this beauty spot, it seemed to dance before our eyes.²⁹

Bloemendaal was enthralled with what he saw of the fertile land in Sioux County, and pleased that a Dutch settlement was in the making by pioneers with whom he shared common ethnic bonds. The first resident of Orange City in the summer of 1870 was Abraham Lenderink and his wife and child, who originated from Zutphen, Gelderland, the depot town from which Bloemendaal had departed in 1867. Still, he thought he should investigate other possibilities in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota as well before he committed himself to landownership and a permanent rooting. Therefore, throughout the remainder of 1870 Bloemendaal visited other settlements, some predominately Dutch and others not, although his focus was always on the Dutch rural enclaves as a potential place to settle, for they offered ethnocultural continuity, security, and compatibility. As he put it, "I longed to meet some of my fellow countrymen once more." He traveled largely by rail, but sometimes by steamboat, wagon or buggy, or on foot, including a 60-mile walk between Storm Lake and Le Mars, Iowa, since the westward-advancing Iowa Falls and Sioux City Railroad was not in service west beyond Storm Lake. In order of visitation, he stopped at Ackley (with its small Dutch neighborhood), Waterloo, and Dubuque, Iowa, as well as Winona and Greenleafon, Minnesota (another Dutch settlement), before returning to Alto, Wisconsin, in the late fall.³⁰

Bloemendaal earned money during the late summer and fall harvest seasons in the Waterloo and Winona areas working for German farmers from Prussia and Hanover (the latter spoke Dutch) at a wage of \$2.75 per day and a gratuity of a glass of beer. Among the places visited, he judged favorably the Dutch

29. *Ibid.*, 101-3.

30. *Ibid.*, 103-16.

community at Greenleafston, which was settled in 1856 by Dutch Americans relocating from Alto. Some of the Alto friends he met in the Fillmore County settlement were Gelderlandes. Bloemendaal found the rural community to be an attractive farming area complete with a church congregation of 80 families, but he noted that the terrain was hilly, ground water was difficult to obtain and required windmills for pumping, and the settlement was somewhat spread out and intermingled with a heterogeneous population of folk drawn from different nationalities. His evaluation of places clearly put Sioux County at the top of the list, an assessment he shared with residents in Alto who were eager to learn about prospects for resettling in north-west Iowa and who "upon my recommendation . . . actually did take up residence there" a year or two later. He must have promoted Sioux County to the Dutch Americans in Greenleafston as well, for in the fall of 1871 five families migrated 250 miles from Minnesota to Iowa in ox-drawn wagons.³¹

IN NOVEMBER 1870, three-and-a-half years after he left the Netherlands, Bloemendaal returned to visit his family and home environs. He and five companions traveled "not as poor farmers, but as well-to-do-gentlemen, riding as first class passengers for we wanted to astonish our friends in Holland and impress them by who and what we had become in America." Bloemendaal, however, was self-critical of this bit of smugness and generally projected a more modest and conservative deportment. He journeyed by train to the East Coast via Chicago and crossed the Atlantic on a 17-day voyage. During a violent, four-day ocean storm he "prayed the Lord to spare us from the raging abyss." After stopping at Queenstone, Ireland, and Liverpool, England, he proceeded overland to Grimsby, sailed to Rotterdam, and took the train once again to the Zutphen depot for a reunion of "joy and gratitude" with his family. He stayed at his

31. *Ibid.*, 107-9, 116, 118; Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 361-62; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 548; Dyke, *Story*, 123. The five Minnesota families—the households of Jacob Koster, Willem Rensink, Lambertus Pietenpol, Gerrit Van Beek, and Gerrit Kempers—were all Gelderlandes. When Bloemendaal returned to visit Greenleafston in the early 1890s, his brother, G. I. Bloemendaal, was the pastor of the Dutch Presbyterian Church there.

parental home for five months, but by the end of April 1871 he was ready to return to America. Although leaving his family and friends a second time was "difficult, very difficult," especially since he would likely not see his parents again, he saw "no future in my fatherland." Bloemendaal concluded, "When a land becomes overpopulated and there is poverty, and there are not enough houses nor is land obtainable, people turn their back upon their fatherland and seek another country where they can earn a living and where there is room to expand."³²

In company with a group of friends and acquaintances who looked upon him "as a kind of leader," Bloemendaal made the second trip to America on the same familiar pathway as his first. But on the passage over the North Sea, amid a dense fog, a French vessel collided with his ship, and both boats sank. All passengers transferred to a third vessel, a Norwegian freighter. Although no one drowned, they lost all their baggage, which represented all of their worldly possessions. The ship's company made some financial restitution to the devastated passengers, but for many the debacle was a serious setback and caused no small anguish. Nonetheless, Bloemendaal and others continued across England, over the Atlantic to Quebec City (this time traveling aboard the *Oostenrijk* in second-class accommodations), through Canada and Michigan and on to Alto. The trip lasted three weeks.³³

Bloemendaal's first few weeks in Alto began what he characterized as a "new phase of life . . . since [he] was going to settle down to life in America." After carrying on frequent debates, pro and con, with acquaintances in the area about the new settlement in northwest Iowa, in the early summer of 1871 he and three other farmers decided on a "tour of inspection" of the Sioux County colony. Once more he took a train westward, this time on the new rail line operating from Dubuque through to Le Mars. In Orange City the four men met the colony's leader, Henry Hospers, who escorted them about the area. The three Wisconsin farmers unhesitatingly determined that the place was attractive. As landowners with property valued at \$50 per

32. *Ibid.*, 118-37.

33. *Ibid.*, 138-53; Dyke, *Story*, 37.

acre, they had assets to convert into ample capital to acquire greater acreage in frontier Sioux County than they had in Fond du Lac County. Accordingly, they each purchased 160-acre tracts for \$7 per acre from the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad, which held the alternate sections of land within the confines of the state land grant to the railroad dating from 1864. They then returned to Alto and proceeded to pass their "colony fever" along to some of their neighbors.³⁴

Unlike his Wisconsin friends who temporarily left northwest Iowa, Bloemendaal remained in Sioux County in 1871, filed a homestead claim four miles east of Orange City on 80 acres in Section 30 of Floyd Township, and lived in a claim shanty that was little more than a dugout covered with a sod roof. He settled there too late in the season to plant any crops; that had to wait for the spring of the next year. In the fall of 1871, therefore, he did harvest work for others, and through an exchange of labor common to frontier economies a neighbor who owned oxen and a breaking plow plowed eight acres of his prairie turf. Bloemendaal also helped Seine J. Menning and his family, recently relocated from the Waupun area. They had shared the experience of the shipwreck on the North Sea, which cost the Mennings most of their personal belongings, leaving them with little more than the clothes on their backs, although the financial settlement from the shipping company allowed them to continue their immigration journey and ultimately reach Sioux County. There Bloemendaal helped them build their sod house on an 80-acre homestead northwest of and diagonally adjacent to his property. The Mennings spent \$26.50 to construct and furnish their crude residence.³⁵

Bloemendaal observed with great pleasure that a crew of surveyors was working their way down the Floyd River valley

34. The three Alto farmers who relocated with their families in 1872—Bert Vande Berg, Jacob Vermeer, and Joe Kleinhesselink—settled in Section 11 of Holland Township and Section 9 of Nassau Township. Other Wisconsin Dutch who came included the Schut, Greevenhof, Franke, Waijenberg, and Lagendijk families. In 1873 still others from the Alto area—Jan Vande Berg, Gerrit Jan Harmelink, and Jan Rexwinkel—moved to Sioux County. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 118–37; Dyke, *Story*, 126; Sioux County Transfer Books; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 476.

35. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 157; Dyke, *Story*, 37; Lucas, *Netherlanders*, 335–36.

in the fall of 1871, preparing the way for construction of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad commencing the next year. The rail line passed within a mile of Bloemendaal's property and promised convenient market connections for him. "Railroads promote business," he noted. "With their arrival there comes life and activity in the community, traffic and business, and also farming and cattle raising prospers." By October 1872 train service was operating.³⁶

Bloemendaal was generally optimistic about the settlement process, but he balanced this with a realistic assessment of pioneering challenges that immigrants to a new, undeveloped rural area had to be prepared to meet.

It is also true that winters are hard on the recently arrived immigrants who are spending their first year in the colony. Even though they practice extreme economy and are ambitious, yet the first years are years of sacrifice and suffering. They lack many things at first. An immigrant has to live without any appreciable income the first year and a half. His house is usually of the poorest, feed for his horses is scarce and firewood likewise. Besides one must make his trips afoot to obtain supplies. . . . Usually these pioneers were people of great courage, indeed they had to be if they were ever going to succeed. I thought myself to be a man of good courage. But what was beyond my comprehension was what the first settlers suffered, what worries they had and what hardships they endured, and how great the difficulties were they had to overcome.³⁷

Bloemendaal then catalogued the classic hardships typical of frontier settlement: living in a sod house, conserving rainwater in a cistern during a drought, securing firewood on the treeless prairie (a few willow trees "the size of bean poles" along the banks of the Floyd River vanished quickly from the landscape), coping with rampant summer winds and raging winter blizzards, wolf packs and prairie fires, sudden thunderstorms with violent winds, lightning, and drenching downpours, and more. Beginning in 1873 and continuing for five of the next seven years, Sioux County endured harvest-time inva-

36. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 157; Beltman, "Ethnic Territoriality," 114-15, 125; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 480.

37. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 159-60.

sions by "an army of grasshoppers." Bloemendaal admitted, "This was a period of adversity" when "we could scarcely eke out an existence, and many became very discouraged." Some years he got only a half crop or a third, and one year he reaped no wheat or oats, but managed to harvest some corn. "That year our daily fare was cornbread and pork."³⁸

Bloemendaal and other observers agreed that despair drove some settlers to give up and relocate back east to Pella and other places. Some undoubtedly did, but how many? The 1875 state census of Sioux County, relying on data collected in 1874, enumerated a total of 1,835 persons in Holland (1,021), Nassau (568), and Floyd (246) Townships. The first two locales were populated solidly by Dutch Americans; the latter held slightly more German-born than Netherlanders-born. Five years later the federal census of the same spatial area, now divided into six townships, counted 3,006 persons. Precise data on immigration and natural increase reduced by mortality and out-migration specific to the last five years of the decade is not available. But the population increase of 1,171 people in the face of the adverse agricultural conditions of the 1870s suggests that little out-migration occurred. And when the enumerator for the federal census of 1880 recorded the names of those living in the ethnic colony, he listed exactly 2,222 Dutch names. About 800 German Catholics occupied the land east of the Floyd River in southeast Sioux County. Thus, Dutch historian Jacob Van Hinte's estimate that about one-third of the Dutch population left Sioux County because of grasshoppers seems hyperbolic.³⁹ In sum, few Dutch pioneers voted with their feet to leave their lands and crops to devouring insects.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE CHALLENGES, Bloemendaal, at the age of 34, began his own farming operations in earnest. As a single, ambitious farmer he had enjoyed the independence, resilience, and adequate capital resources to prepare for this step over five years and to take care in selecting a location.

38. *Ibid.*, 160-67, 177, 181-83, 186. On the season-to-season tribulations and alternating outlooks of pessimism and optimism, see generally Van der Zee, *Hollanders*, 160-78, 183-85.

39. Beltman, "Ethnic Territoriality," 134, table 4; Federal Manuscript Population Census for 1880; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders*, 490-97.

Now he also benefited from the economic boon of the nearly "free land" policy of the United States as well as the initial advantage offered by pioneering on fertile prairie land. In the spring of 1872 he sowed wheat on the eight acres that he had broken the previous fall. About that time, too, he purchased a yoke of oxen and a plow for \$180 as well as a cow that cost \$40. With his oxen he continued turning the sod to create an additional field of 40 acres in which he planted corn.⁴⁰

Bloemendaal soon realized that in the rural society of the nineteenth century, with the demands of field work and domestic chores, survival was best served by being part of a family unit. By mid-summer he was convinced that he needed a spouse. He promptly put his livestock under the care of a neighbor and took a train to Holland, Michigan, where "after spending a week . . . , I had found my life partner. We did not make much ado about our wedding day." Indeed, the newlyweds left immediately for Sioux County and the pressing need to attend to the cornfield and harvest the wheat. Bloemendaal's selection of a spouse was not, however, quite as chancy as his glib description intimated, for he had met Johanna Ten Cate on the 1871 voyage to America, and they had shared the trauma of the shipwreck on the North Sea. That experience may well have forged a bond that time and communication strengthened until it was made permanent by marriage in the summer of 1872.⁴¹

Once again on the farm in northwest Iowa, Bloemendaal was happy to harvest his eight acres of wheat, which yielded 125 bushels of grain. His wife, "somewhat disappointed" with the rude hut for a home, proved to be a tenacious survivor and "did not chide" Bloemendaal about her new surroundings; he had honestly described them to her prior to arrival as predictably raw befitting a frontier. The next item on his agenda, therefore, after the wheat harvest, was to build a new house of cut lumber before winter set in. He insulated the exterior with sod.⁴²

With a wife, a house, and land to crop, Bloemendaal persisted through the lean years of the 1870s. The Bloemendaals' social life revolved around ethnoreligious activities associated

40. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 169-70.

41. *Ibid.*, 169-70, 175-76.

42. *Ibid.*, 176-79.

with the Reformed church. During the summer of 1870, in the first weeks of the colony's founding, devout laypersons had gathered to worship in Martin Ver Huel's sod house in Section 10 of Holland Township. In May 1871, 39 Dutch farmers formally organized a congregation that became the First Reformed Church of Orange City. They worshiped in the schoolhouse in the "church village" until 1874, when the congregation, by then numbering 265, built a permanent edifice with seating capacity for 800. The Bloemendaals found a church home essential for their spiritual sustenance and social interaction.⁴³

Just as the church and community grew, Bloemendaal's farming operations progressed. He completed his five-year residency to gain clear title to his 80-acre homestead. Thereafter, as he put it, "one eighty acres after another was added" in the years to follow. The 1880s was "a period of great prosperity," and his landholdings increased from 80 to 640 acres with a "couple of thousand of dollars invested in buildings." He also purchased a hay mower for \$225, a corn planter for \$80, a grain seeder, a reaper-binder, and more, all serving to increase the efficiency of his agricultural operations. He stated that "the investment is an economy"; "the new invention makes the farmer rich, increases the population, fills freight trains, makes wheat cheaper, provides the poor with bread."⁴⁴

By 1908, Bloemendaal's personal landed property totaled 1,038.5 acres, with 240 more owned jointly with other family members. He and his wife had eleven children; that large household in time provided an ample family work force to assist with the farming operations. The couple also rebuilt or enlarged their house twice to create what he called a "mansion." Bloemendaal ranked among the largest of the Sioux County Dutch agriculturalists. Yet in his memoir he did not want to appear too boastful or give the impression that the immigrant experience was all sweetness and light. He acknowledged that not all farmers grew rich in Sioux County. Although he did not report on the

43. Beltman, "Ethnic Territoriality," 121-22, 125. Van Hinte uses the term *church village* to distinguish a church-centered townsite from an *elevator town*, a more commercially oriented townsite with a grain elevator usually built along a rail line. See his *Netherlanders*, 509-17.

44. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 183-84, 187-88.



Portrait of the Bloemendaal family, courtesy of Jack Bloemendaal.

economic dislocation of the mid-1890s that fed the Populist protest nationally (for, in truth, given his landed wealth, he likely suffered only moderate, if any, stress), he admitted that some immigrants remained poor and continued in tenancy status. Renters typically paid one-third of their crops to the landowner or a cash rent of \$2.50 per acre. Day laborers generally earned a dollar a day; hired farmhands drew \$20 per month for an eight-month working or "summer" season and \$10 per month for the four "winter" months. Artisans such as carpenters earned about \$2.50 per day.⁴⁵

45. *Standard Historical Atlas of Sioux County, Iowa* (Chicago, 1908), maps for Floyd, Holland, and Lynn Townships; Bloemendaal, *My America*, 187-88. The

BLOEMENDAAL COMMENTED on other aspects of the rural society in northwestern Iowa—the human interchange that continually knit together the Dutch ethnic enclaves scattered across the upper Midwest. His accounts of both common activities and special events provided a more complete picture of life in America for Netherlanders considering emigration. He offered a practical description of fieldwork, farm machinery, small grain and corn production, and livestock operations, with the pointed remark that “hog raising has been profitable.” Interestingly, he noted that flax, a crop that Dutch farmers were familiar with and that supported Netherlandic production of fine linen, proved to be of short-term popularity among Sioux County farmers. During the grasshopper plagues, some turned to flax as an alternative to small grains, since the pest did not devastate that fiber as they did grain. But flax fell out of favor with local farmers because the crop died easily in the hot summers and hence produced small harvests. Flax also greatly impoverished the soil.⁴⁶

Bloemendaal described several trips to Sheboygan County, Wisconsin (where his brother was a minister); Pella, Iowa (where his uncle and aunt lived); and Holland, Michigan (where his wife’s mother resided) to visit relatives and friends. He detailed three excursions into Minnesota in 1890 and 1891 to investigate potential farmland investment; the last was sponsored by the Great Northern Railroad and included a visit to the bonanza farms in the Red River Valley of North Dakota. Significantly, he chose not to make risky financial outlays in any of these cases. Bloemendaal told his readers about the Corn Palace Festival held annually in Sioux City, the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in Orange City in 1895, and the fiftieth anniversary commemoration in 1897 of the founding of Pella. He sketched a trip he took in 1900 to visit his homeland again. By that time his parents had died, but he reunited with his two brothers and three sisters

average size of a farm in Sioux County in 1910 was 175 acres. See Beltman, “Ethnic Persistence,” table 1 at p. 28. According to the *Standard Historical Atlas*, fewer than a dozen farmers in the Dutch colony owned more than a section of land (640 acres) in 1908.

46. Bloemendaal, *My America*, 192–200.

who lived in Arnhem and Steenderen. And he made a nostalgic stop in Vorden, where he had gone to school as a child.⁴⁷

Finally, he summarized information drawn from contemporary sources about immigration prospects in Canada and south Texas. In the summer of 1911 Bloemendaal visited a struggling Dutch settlement near Port Arthur, Texas, where truck garden farming was developing. He prudently cautioned those considering relocating to Texas, "I would not dare to recommend to people to move there, nor would I advise against. Rather I would say, decide for yourself, but look before you leap."⁴⁸

THROUGH HIS DESCRIPTIVE MEMOIR, Bloemendaal tried to show both "the sunny and shadowy side of America." "America is a good land!" he wrote.

But I have not only sung its praises. There are two sides to this record. I have also mentioned obstacles which must be overcome. It is also true that at present [1911] it is not as easy to get started, or let me say, to climb the ladder of success, as it was formerly. . . . [Still,] the more Hollanders come, the better I like it, and the better they fare, the more pleased I will be.⁴⁹

Bloemendaal's experience, as presented in his reflective reminiscence at the age of 73, offered a backward-looking story from the long view of mature hindsight. That story was, of course, an inspirational model of immigrant success. And it was verified by his ultimately extensive landholdings in prosperous Sioux County during the "golden age of agriculture" in the years preceding World War I. His story was, however, only one portrait among many that collectively defined the mosaic of social and economic life in an ethnic enclave in America's heartland. During those years, the nation witnessed great material expansion fed, in part, by immigrants migrating in, taking up land, and striving for a better life for themselves and their posterity. Countless other immigrants imitated Bloemendaal's venture, and many others lived out variations, for better or worse, on the themes of

47. *Ibid.*, 201-8, 214-15, 218-34, 238-41, 243-45, 263-66.

48. *Ibid.*, 270-85.

49. *Ibid.*, 291-92.

endurance and success inherent in his personal history.⁵⁰ The conditions affecting the immigrant experience in America have changed over the years, yet the contours of Bloemendaal's sojourns and settlement stand as historic precedents to this day.

50. For the story of another individual rural Dutch immigrant to the Midwest in the late nineteenth century who farmed and raised a family into the mid-twentieth century amid a Frisian ethnic enclave in South Dakota, see Beltman, *Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley*.

APPENDIX

THE DUTCH PIONEERS OF SIOUX COUNTY IN 1870

The following list derives from several sources. A list of 64 names is recorded in K[ommer] Van Stigt, *History of Pella, Iowa*, trans. Elisabeth Kempkes (Pella, 1897), 124-25; G. A. Stout, *Souvenir History of Pella, Iowa* (Pella, 1922), 218; and Charles L. Dyke, *The Story of Sioux County* (Orange City, 1942), 566. I supplemented this list with ten more names, some obtained from the Federal Manuscript Population Census of 1870 (names marked with *) and some from Dyke, *Story*, 29 (names marked with **). Homestead location by section came from the Transfer Books in the Sioux County Courthouse. Everyone but Tjeerd Heemstra, who migrated from Michigan, relocated from Marion County, Iowa. The column labeled "Origin" identifies the Dutch residency (by municipality and province where possible) of the pioneers prior to family emigration to the United States. This information came from Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Emigrants to the United States, South Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia, 1835-1880: An Alphabetical Listing of Household Heads and Independent Persons* (Wilmington, DE, 1983).

HOLLAND TOWNSHIP

| Name | Age | Section ^a | Origin | Emigration Date |
|----------------------------|-----|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Beukelman, Eliza | 65 | 6 | ? | 1869 |
| 2. Beyer, Gerrit | 21 | 28 | (?)Gendringen, Gelderland | 1857 |
| 3. Boersma, Harke | 28 | F-4 | Kollumerland ¹ , Friesland | 1867 |
| 4. Boersma, Lubbert G. | 31 | F-4 | Kollumerland ¹ , Friesland | 1869 |
| 5. Breuklander, Willem** | 55 | 32 | Uithoorn, Noord Holland | 1856 |
| 6. Brouwer, Tjeerd (Thijs) | 44 | 2 | ? | 1855 |
| 7. Caufrid, Bart* | 43 | (?)F-6 | ? | pre-1858 |
| 8. De Haan, Wopke | 53 | 30 | Dantumadeel, Friesland | 1847 |

| | | | | |
|--|-------|--------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 9. Den Hartog, Heiman | 35 | WB36 | Vianan, Zuid Holland | 1855 |
| 10. De Jong, Koenraad | 21 | 26 | Schoonhoven, Zuid Holland | 1847 |
| 11. De Jong, Pieter H. | 23 | 24 | Schoonhoven, Zuid Holland | 1847 |
| 12. De Zeeuw, Gysbert | 36 | WB-26 | Heukelum, Zuid Holland | 1866 |
| 13. Groen, Jan | 45 | 30 | Mijdrecht, Utrecht | 1854 |
| 14. Hoekstra, Peter* | 25 | ? | Friesland | 1855 |
| 15. Jansma, Anne | 35 | 12 | Friesland | 1855 |
| 16. Jongewaard, Cornelius | 42 | WB-24 | ? | 1847 |
| 17. Klein, Johannes | 49 | 30 | Asperen, Zuid Holland | 1847 |
| 18. Korver, Willem** | 30 | 34 | Uithoorn, Noord Holland | 1856 |
| 19. Lakeman, Cornelius | 54 | WB-24 | ? | 1847 |
| 20. Lenderink Abraham | 40 | OC-32 | Zutphen, Gelderland | 1858 |
| 21. Logterman, Jacob | 42 | F-6 | Westdongeradeel, Friesland | 1868 |
| 22. Luymes, Hermanus | 45 | 4 | Elst, Gelderland | 1854 |
| 23. Muilenburg, Jacob | 22 | 22 | Vuren, Gelderland | 1848 |
| 24. Nieuwendorp, Christian | 40 | 30 | Kapelle, Zeeland | 1847 |
| 25. Noteboom, Arie ² | n/a | 30 | BerkelenKodenrijs, Zuid Holland | n \ a ³ |
| 26. Pos, John | 40 | 20 | ? | ? |
| 27. Pelmulder, Jelle | 53 | 10 | Westdongeradeel, Friesland | 1855 |
| 28. Schippers, Arie | 30 | 12 | Vianen, Zuid Holland | 1855 |
| 29/30. Sipma, John ² & Richard* | 19/21 | 6 & 14 | Westdongeradeel, Friesland | n \ a ³ |
| 31. Van Iperen, Bastiaan | 42 | F-18 | Leerdam, Zuid Holland | 1870 |
| 32. Van Mare, Arie | 25 | 18 | ? | pre-1860 |
| 33. Van Pelt, Dirk | 22 | 8 | Charlois, Zuid Holland | 1855 |
| 34. Van Pelt, Leendert | 50 | 8 | Charlois, Zuid Holland | 1855 |
| 35. Van Rooijen, Wouter | 35 | F-18 | Kockengen, Utrecht | 1856 |
| 36. Van Steenwijk, Abraham | 40 | WB-36 | Utrecht | 1847 |
| 37. Van Zanten, Dieles | 40 | WB-34 | Herwijnen, Gelderland | 1854 |
| 38. Van (der) Zijl, Bastian | 45 | F-18 | S'HeerArtsburg, Zuid Holland | 1856 |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|---------|---------------------------|------|
| 39. Van de Steeg, Gerrit | 50 | 28 | Ede, Gelderland | 1857 |
| 40. Van den Bos, Dirk | 35 | 30 | Geervliet, Zuid Holland | 1849 |
| 41. Van der Meer, Dirk | 43 | 32 | Overschie, Zuid Holland | 1849 |
| 42. Van der Meer, Izaak | 69 | 32 | Overschie, Zuid Holland | 1849 |
| 43. Van der Meer, Leendert | 39 | 32 | Overschie, Zuid Holland | 1849 |
| 44. Van der Meide, Arie | 21 | 18 | Sommelsdijk, Zuid Holland | 1866 |
| 45. Van der Ploeg, Ipe | 21 | 2 | (?)Friesland or Groningen | 1869 |
| 46. Van der Waa, Henry | 28 | 28 & 20 | Gelderland | 1847 |
| 47. Van der Zalm, Willem | n\A | WB-26 | Pouderoijen, Gelderland | 1867 |
| 48. Ver Heul, Martin | 40 | 10 | Naaldwijk, Zuid Holland | 1852 |
| 49. Ver Steeg, Arie | 22 | 6 | Vuren, Gelderland | 1853 |
| 50. Werkhoven, Arie | 30 | 10 | Numansdorp, Zuid Holland | 1854 |
| 51. Wieringa, Klaas | 31 | F-4 | Kollumerland', Friesland | 1869 |
| 52. Windhorst, Henry | 56 | 12 | ? | 1853 |

NASSAU TOWNSHIP

| Name | Age | Section | Origin | Emigration Date |
|----------------------|-----|---------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 53. Brinks, Jan | 40 | 6 | Emmen, Drenthe | 1867 |
| 54. De Jong, Otto P. | 46 | S-12 | Steenwijk, Overijssel | 1868 |
| 55. De Raad, Arie | 35 | 8 | ? | 1847 |
| 56. De Reus, Peter* | 29 | ? | Leerdam, Zuid Holland | 1850 |
| 57. Dieleman, Peter | 56 | 6 | Axel, Zeeland | 1847 |
| 58. Faber, Bouwke* | 31 | ? | (?)Friesland or Groningen | ? |
| 59. Fennema, Jan | 40 | 4 | Kollumerland', Friesland | (?)1869 |
| 60. Franke, Willem* | 37 | ? | (?)Zierikzee, Zeeland | (?)1853 |
| 61. Gorter, Jacob R. | 59 | 4 | Oostdongeradeel, Friesland | 1857 |
| 62. Heemstra, Tjeerd | 50 | 4 | Ferwerderadeel, Friesland | 1847 |

| | n\ a | 6 | Gelderland | (?)1847 |
|----------------------------------|-------|------|----------------------------|---------|
| 63. Kraai, Evert** | 50 | 18 | Grootevast, Groningen | 1868 |
| 64. Pool, Stephenanus | 45 | 4 | Leek, Groningen | 1867 |
| 65. Ruisch, Duije | 24/28 | 4 | Utrecht, Utrecht | 1855 |
| 66/67. Rijsdam, Gerrit & Wijnand | 38 | 30 | Menaldumadeel, Friesland | 1867 |
| 68. Sinnema, Jacob | 30 | S-12 | Menaldumedeel, Friesland | 1869 |
| 69. Talsma, Rein | 56 | S-12 | Vuren, Gelderland | 1853 |
| 70. Van Horssen, Pieter | 58 | 6 | Oudorp, Zuid Holland | 1848 |
| 71. Van Wijk, Johannes | 40 | 10 | Neuzen Stad, Zeeland | 1849 |
| 72. Van den Berge, Adriaan M. | 29 | 4 | Klaaswaal, Zuid Holland | 1856 |
| 73. Vos, Andries** | 40 | S-12 | Hennaarderadeel, Friesland | 1869 |
| 74. Wijnia, Ulbe | | | | |

Notes:

? indicates unknown; (?) indicates uncertainty

a. F=Floyd; OC=Orange City; S=Sherman; WB=West Branch. The two original townships of Holland and Nassau formed in 1870 were subsequently subdivided into three townships each. To distinguish repetitive section numbers in the original townships in which Dutch pioneers homesteaded, a letter prefix corresponding to the subsequent township subdivision is used. Orange City was the first municipality, with only one resident in 1870.

1. Full name is Kollumerland en Nieuw Kruisland.

2. Both were minors, but secured homesteads when they turned 21.

3. Their parents came in 1848 and 1847, respectively.

Historians are well aware that pioneer groups often contained linked kinship relations. Similar surnames indicated blood ties existing between some of the individuals listed above, such as the family network of the Van Pelts (a father and son), the Van der Meers (a father and two sons), and threepairs of brothers: the Boersmas, Notebooms, Rijsdams, and de Jongs. Numerous other family interconnections existed as well among these Dutch pioneers, but were masked by different last names. Still, some kinship relations among these are known; more may have existed as well. The elder

Van der Meer had four sons-in-law on the list (Van den Bos, Nieuwendorp, Klein, and De Haan); Arie Noteboom was his grandson. Gerrit Beyer (Beijer) and Henry Van der Waa were the sons-in-law of Gerrit Van de Steeg. Willem Breuklander was the father-in-law of Andries Vos and the stepfather of Willem Korver. Jacob Muilenburg and Wouter Van Rooijen were brothers-in-law. Arie Werkhoven was the son-in-law of Jelle Pelmulder. Apparently Richard and John Sipma were not brothers but cousins, and Richard was married to a daughter of Martin Ver Heul. Jan Groen, Adriaan Van den Berge, and Arie de Raad were brothers-in-law, married to three Rijsdam women, all sisters of Gerrit and Wij-nand Rijsdam.

Linking the information from this table with Map 2 shows how propinquity of kinship and settlement intersected so that relatives often resided in proximity to each other for mutual support and family closeness. Thus, the homesteaders in Sections 8, 10, 28, 30, and 32 of Holland Township as well as 4 in future Floyd of eastern Holland and 4 in Nassau contained kinship groups of, respectively, Van Pelt, Pelmulder, Van de Steeg, Van der Meer (in 30 and 32), Boersma, and Rijsdam. Ver Huel and Sipma were in diagonally juxtapositioned sections 10 and 14 of Holland. The De Jong brothers were in diagonally adjacent sections 20 of Holland and 24 of future Floyd. All members of the Rijsdams connection, except for Jan Groen, were in the diagonally adjacent sections 8, 4, and 10 of Nassau Township.

The table also reveals the distribution of provincial origins for the pioneers:

| | | | | | |
|--------------|----|---------------|---|------------|---|
| Zuid Holland | 21 | Zeeland | 4 | Groningen | 2 |
| Friesland | 17 | Noord Holland | 3 | Drenthe | 1 |
| Gelderland | 11 | Utrecht | 3 | Overijssel | 1 |

A pattern of adjacent residency by similar provincial origins is not so evident for this small sample of Dutch Americans in a very finite area. Although section 4 of future Floyd Township contained three homesteaders (two brothers and a friend who emigrated in the late 1860s) all born in Kollumerland en Nieuw Kruisland, Friesland, generally neighbors were randomly mixed with respect to places of origin.

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