DUTCH IMMIGRATION TO THE TRI-COUNTY AREA (ESSEX, KENT, AND LAMBTON COUNTIES, ONTARIO)

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Migration from the low countries to the New World started with the formation of the New Netherlands with the capital, New Amsterdam, in 1625. The original settlers, the burghers, remained after the conquest by the British in 1664, although the colony now became New York. Many of the burghers remained loyal to the British crown and migrated to Upper Canada after the American Revolution. They were the Huyckes, the Vandevoorts, the Vandewaters, the Van Dusens, the Van Kleecks and the Van Vlacks[1], just to mention a few United Empire Loyalists.

Throughout the 19th Century, migration to Canada was rather small in numbers; there were hardly any migrants from the Netherlands. In this context, it should be stated that Netherlands is an ethnic, not a political description; both the Flemish and Dutch are counted together. After 1830 Belgium became a political unit comprising both Dutch- and French-speaking communities.

Most of the Belgians who migrated overseas were Flemings, not Walloons. Before the 20th century Flanders was primarily agricultural. Following the French system of inheritance, land holdings became increasingly smaller when the family farm was divided upon the death of the father, since each child received an equal share. Although farming became more intensive, the small farms could not support a family. As a consequence, there was emigration to the New World.

At first more Belgians than Dutch migrated to Canada. The Dutch migration was less than 100 persons per year, whereas between 100 to 300 Belgians came to Canada at the turn of the century.[2] Belgian migration increased further after 1903 to about 1,200 - 1,300 per year until 1914. At the same time, about 750 Dutch persons a year came to Canada.[3] Dutch and Belgians were preferred immigrants; there were few difficulties in gaining admission to this country. After World War I this pattern continued until 1924, when for the first time the number of Dutchmen exceeded the number of Flemings, but altogether there were less than 3,000 persons annually. during the 1930s, migration was reduced to a trickle, less than 100 persons annuallly. This pattern continued throughout the Second World War. Post-war migration began in 1946 with about 3,000 persons, gradually increasing until 1952, when about 24,000 persons came from the Low Countries. After that peak, there was a gradual decrease until 1960 when about 6,000 persons came. Thereafter, the number of migrants stabilized at about 2,500 per year.[4]

Since the 1960s, the characteristics of immigrants have changed considerably. Whereas formerly most Dutch immigrants came to Canada to stay, they now became sojourners. Their goals were to stay in Canada for sometime and return to the Netherlands or Belgium. They were urban and mobile. Expanding opportunities in Europe as a result of the European Common Market created a relatively high standard of living, whereas Canada did not offer similar chances. Since the 1960s the return rates have increased; less than 50 per cent of the landed immigrants remained in Canada after 5 years of residence.

The tri-county area, Essex, Kent and Lambton counties, reflected this general development. It may be because of the similarities between the Low Countries and this area that it attracted a fair share of the number of migrants. In general, it can be said that immigrants tend to settle in areas which bear some resemblance to their home regions. Migrants prefer to work and live in familiar environments. There are similarities in patterns of land use; however, when the adjustment process has taken place, new developments occur. Until 1920, about an even number of persons of Dutch origin resided in Essex and Kent counties, slightly over 2,000 each. Lambton county had less than 1,000 persons of Netherlands background. Yet, in all three counties, the percentage exceeded 1.56% the national average.

During the 1920s, migration from the Netherlands to the St. Clair region (the tri-county area) did not increase significantly. On the contrary, between 1921 and 1931, the Dutch population in Kent county decreased from 2,164 to 1,897 persons. One reason for this decrease was the return migration to the Low Countries as a consequence of the Great Depression. Many immigrants worked in truck gardening and in the vegetable fields. With the general downturn of the economy, opportunities for farm work decreased. In particular, young men from Flanders came to the St. Clair region to work in the cash crops and to return to Europe for the winter. These early patterns of migratory work were disrupted during the depression. From 1920 on, Canadian Immigration did not accept migratory workers to come to Canda.

It seemed surprising, therefore, that the 1941 census of Canada shows an increase in the number and percentage of persons of Dutch origin. Essex county had a small increase from 2,241 or 1.40 per cent to 2,909 or 1.67 per cent. A similar pattern could be found in Lambton county where the Dutch population increased from 998 or 1.82 per cent to 1,488 or 2.61 per cent. Kent county experienced a dramatic increase from 1,897 or 3.01 per cent in 1931 to 4,562 or 6.87 per cent in 1941. Two reasons seemed to account for this increase. The first one is the beginning of intensive agriculture in Kent county, especially sugar beets. Farmers from the Netherlands had experience

with these crops and used the period of economic recovery to settle on the land. The second reason, however, was purely cosmetic and a consequence of **Hollanderei**.[5] This practice was especially used by Mennonites, but also by persons of German ancestry. In 1940 Canada required the registration of all persons of German and Italian racial origin. This sweeping Order-in-Council affected a large number of persons who, although of German background, considered themselves Canadian. John Diefenbaker was a good example of this sentiment. Many persons of German background, especially if their names had similarities with Dutch, preferred to be considered to be of Dutch origin. Mennonites, moreover, had some claims towards Dutch ancestry. Their forefathers came from Flanders, Holland and Friesland but migrated under religious duress to the Vistula Valley of West Prussia. With the introduction of compulsory military service in Prussia during the first decade of the 19th century, a large number emigrated again to the Southern Ukraine. Starting in 1874, these Mennonites began migrating to Canada, the first groups arriving in Manitoba; a second wave came after World War I. As pacifists, they did not wish to be identified as warlike, and many feared the repetition of anti-German sentiments during the war. While the language of Mennonites is a low German dialect, it is not Dutch.[6] Arthur R. M. Lower discussed this puzzle of ethnic statistics quite extensively in 1958[7] when he observed that during both World Wars there was an increase in the census of persons claiming to be of Dutch ancestry but a significant decrease during peace time.

The planned migration of Netherlanders to Canada[8] began after World War II. The first to come were Dutch war brides who had married Canadian soldiers after the war. However, the main group of Dutch migrants consisted of strict Christian Reformed believers, primarily farmers. In many ways the Christian Reformed were the most fervent followers of Calvinism, with an orthodox theology and a desire for separation from others and the godless world. They wanted to realize in Canada the principles of "Verzuiling," the establishment of separate institutions and life styles which would clearly differentiate between themselves and other groups in this pluralistic society. In this attitude, however, they were not alone. Other evangelical groups had similar tendencies, and soon alliances of evangelical Christians superseded the narrow ethnic outlook. One consequence was that English rather than Dutch became the language of worship. Schools and associations stressed Christian Reformed groups have appeared in the St. Clair region since about 1948 with a large concentration in Kent, Lambton and Middlesex counties The greatest undertaking was the development of the Klondyke marsh settlement along the Au Sable River. Here, a lake was drained and fertile lands became available for development by vegetable growers. Subsequent arrivals were craftsmen and small businessmen who settled in the villages, towns and cities of Southwestern Ontario. Many of these were Roman Catholics from South Limburg, Gelderland and Brabant. The more secularized and urbanized Dutch immigrants preferred the big cities to the towns and the hinterland. Toronto has over 24,000 residents of Dutch origin and London, Ontario close to 12,000. In the St. Clair region, Sarnia with 3,675 Dutch-background residents is an example of this. Metropolitan Windsor has 2,875 Dutch residents and Chatham 2,450.

In many ways, Chatham is seen as the centre of Dutch life and activities in Southwestern Ontario. As a city, it serves primarily the agricultural region, not only of Kent but of Western Essex county and Western Lambton county. There are churches, schools, associations and a Dutch Vice-Consulate. Most activities are community oriented rather than directed to society at large. In the St. Clair region there is little impact of large scale Dutch enterprises, which are primarily in Toronto and Vancouver. Most of the Dutch background residents of Chatham are lower-middle to upper-middle class. As craftsmen and small businessmen, they have had moderate economic success. Most of them live in the newer sub-divisions which were often established by Dutch contractors. Among first generation Dutchmen there are few professionals. Most Dutch professionals did not participate in the post-war migration but remained in the Netherlands. Those who did come to Canada found few difficulties in getting established. The children of the immigrants, the second generation, have high education as goals and a great percentage pursue post-secondary studies. There are few poor among the Dutch; the average income exceeds that of the general Canadian public.

In Windsor[9], Dutch-background residents are concentrated in the upper-middle class sections of the city, in Sandwich South, (the part that was formerly Sandwich East), combining urban occupations with gardening, south of Cabana Road, and in old Riverside west of Lauzon Road. Working class Dutchmen live along Dougall Avenue bounded by the CPR and in old Sandwich East, south of the CN Railroad.

In contrast to other cities, the Dutch have not established a complete institutional network. While there is a Christian Reformed Church and there are attempts to establish a religiously committed primary school, the majority of the Dutch Windsorites participate in the general life of the community. Windsor lacks a focus of Dutch attention such as their club provides in Chatham; there are too many diversities based on social class and religion to form a homogeneous community. From time to time there are attempts to rally the Dutch population for specific events; in many instances these attempts are short lived. Therefore, this conference in itself may fulfill the role of a rallying point for the Windsor Dutch population. Let us hope that this is the case.

On the other hand, it could be argued that Dutch Canadians experienced few difficulties in establishing themselves in the new land. They have become so much a part of the mainstream of Canada that they are hardly noticed for their unique

patterns. Those of us who advocate cultural pluralism and the preservation of a unique heritage might deplore this, but the majority of the population accepts this assimilation. The preservation of cultural heritages is primarily a responsibility of the group affected. What Canada sees as a contribution must be a commitment for the minority group.

DUTCH BACKGROUND RESIDENTS
ST. CLAIR REGION, ONTARIO

	1921	1931	1941
Essex County	T 102,575	T 159,780	T 174,230
	N 2,072	N 2,241	N 2,909
	2.02%	1.40%	1.67%
Kent County	T 58,796	T 62,865	T 66,346
	N 2,164	N 1,897	N 4,562
	3.68%	3.01%	6.87%
Lambton County	T 52,102	T 54,674	T 56,925
	N 914	N 998	N 1,488
	1.75%	1.82%	2.61%

	1951	1961	1971
Essex County	T 217,150	T 258,218	T 306,400
	N 3,495	N 4,539	N 4,360
	1.61%	1.76%	1.42%
Kent County	T 79,128	T 89,427	T 101,120
	N 4,403	N 6,581	N 7,040
	5.56%	7.35%	6.96%
Lambton County	T 74,960	T 102,131	T 114,315
	N 2,662	N 6,219	N 6,865
	3.55%	6.09%	6.01%

Sarnia - 3,675

Windsor - 2,875

Chatham - 2,450

1961 Census of Canada, Series SP, Population, Ethnic group, Counties and Subdivisions, Bulletin SP-2. 7-8-1963.

Essex Total 258,218

Ethnic Groups
Netherlands 4,539

Table 27

Census of Canada 1921

Total	102,575		
Belgian	488		
Dutch	1,584	2.02%	
	2,072		Essex County
4,448 T			
137 B			
68 D			
205		4.6%	
			Mersea
38,591 T			
37 B			
558 D			
7,058 T		1.54%	Windsor
4 B			
121 D			
2,427 T			
47 B		1.77%	Walkerville
282 D			
329			
		1.38%	Gosfield

1971 Census of Canada Vol. 1, Part 3
Population

Table 4

Essex	T	306,400	Netherland	T 4,360	
	M	152,825		M 2,220	1.42
	F	153,575		F 2,135	
Kent	T	101,120	Netherland	T 7,040	
	M	50,450		M 3,650	6.96
	F	50,665		F 3,395	
Lambton	T	114,315	Netherland	T 6,865	
	M	57,580		M 3,560	6.01
	F	56,730		F 3,310	
Chatham			Netherland		
Town.	T	35,325		T 2,450	
	M	17,625		M 1,290	6.94
	F	18,060		F 1,210	
Sarnia			Netherland		
City	T	57,625		T 1,915	
	M	28,650		M 965	
	F	28,935		F 945	
Windsor			Netherland		
Metropolitan	T	258,655		T 2,875	
	M	128,770		M 1,470	
	F	129,885		F 1,410	
City	T	203,370		T 2,060	

Kent	T	58,726	
	B	1,258	
	D	906	3.68
		2,164	
Dover Twp.	T	4,345	
	B	285	
	D	201	11.19
		486	
	T	4,952	
	B	178	
	D	56	4.73
		234	
Raleigh	T	4,343	
	B	238	
	D	42	
		280	6.45
Chatham City	T	13,256	
	B	12	
	D	172	1.40
		184	
Lambton	T	52,102	
	B	267	
	D	647	1.75
		914	
Sarnia	T	14,877	
	B	1	
	D	211	1.42
		212	

FOOTNOTES

1 William F. E. Morley, **Pioneer Life in the Bay of Quinte**, Belleville, Ontario, Mika Reprints, 1972.

2 Immigration data from Appendix A-1, Ethnic Origin of Immigrants - Canada, 1900-1965. Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Book IV, **The Cultural Contributions of the Other Ethnic Groups**, Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1969.

3 Daniel Kubat and David Thornton, **A Statistical Profile on Canadian Society**, McGraw Hill-Ryerson, 1974.

4 **Employment and Immigration Canada, Quarterly Immigration Statistics.**

5 Frank H. Epp, **Mennonites in Canada**, 1786-1902, Toronto: McMillan of Canada, 1974, 0. 335.

6 Frank H. Epp, **Mennonite Exodus**, Altona, Man., D. W. Frieser, 1962, p. 368.

7 Arthur R. M. Lower, **Canadians in the Making: The Social History of Canada**, Toronto, Longemans Green, 1958.

8 William Peterson, **Planned Migration, The Social Determinants of the Dutch-Canadian Movement**, Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955.

9 Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, **Ethnic Directory of Windsor and Essex County**, 1976, pp. 151-152.