

BEYOND KENTUCKY: THE LOW DUTCH MIGRATION INTO INDIANA

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Welcome Dutch Cousins to my home state – the Hoosier State of Indiana! I was born in its capitol city, Indianapolis, and I've lived here my entire life, growing up in Johnson County where the largest settlements of Low Dutch were located. Tonight I want to tell you about the Low Dutch migration from Kentucky into the old Northwest Territory, especially Indiana, where they plunged deeper into the great American frontier melting pot.

Our Low Dutch ancestors rode many waves of American frontier expansion. First, they were among the earliest European settlers who made the dangerous Atlantic crossing three and a half centuries ago to new colonies along the East coast. Ours came to New Amsterdam, capitol of the Dutch colony of New Netherlands. After the British took over in 1664 and renamed it New York, our ancestors began to seek new frontiers away from the English where they could retain their Dutch language, religion and culture. First they moved into the New Jersey frontiers. A century later—in the 1760s—they moved west to the Pennsylvania frontier where they founded their Conewago colony. They also had a satellite colony in Berkeley County, Virginia at the northern head of the Wilderness Road. But they wanted more land further away from the English-speaking world where they could form their dream colony built around a Low Dutch Reformed Church Society.

Like Moses and Aaron of the Old Testament, in early 1780 "Father" Henry Banta and his brother-in-law, Samuel Duree, led the Low Dutch "out of the affliction...to a land flowing with milk and honey."¹ That land was Kentucky! In the

¹ Exodus 3:17. In many ways our Low Dutch struggled the next 40 years in the wilderness until in the 1820s they found perhaps the closest approximation of their dream of the

midst of the Revolutionary War, Father Henry Banta took the Conewago families down the dangerous Ohio River route to the Falls of Ohio while Samuel Duree took the Berkeley County families over the equally dangerous land route along the Wilderness Road to near Boonesborough.²

But Kentucky was not the land of milk and honey! Almost from the moment they arrived in Kentucky, they set their eyes on the lands northwest of the Ohio River. Our newly arrived Low Dutch ancestors signed on to two petitions that circulated in the spring of 1780. In their own words from one that was read before the Continental Congress on August 23, 1780 you can see their problem and their desire to move to the Indian side of the Ohio...

...your Petitioners hav[e]...since the commencement of the contest with Great Britain for the common cause of Liberty...ventured their lives in a wild uncultivated part of the Continent on the western waters of Ohio, called by the general name of Kentucky...but when they came [they] found almost the whole of the lands...are engrossed into the hands of a few interested men, the greater part of which live at ease in the internal parts of Virginia while your Petitioners are here with their wives and children daily exposed to the murders of the savages...

Your Petitioners, considering all their grievances, would gladly return into the settled part of the continent again, but having come 700 miles down the River Ohio...find it impracticable to return back against the stream... Your petitioners...have but three things to choose, one is to tarry in this place...and become slaves to those engrossers of land... [an]other is to remove down the River Ohio...and become subjects to the King of Spain – And the third is to remove themselves over the River Ohio with their wives and children and small effects remaining [to lands] now in possession of the savage enemy to whom they are [already] daily exposed to murders. [Since] the two former...have a tendency to weaken the United States... Humbly Pray the Honorable Continental Congress to grant them Liberty of taking the latter choice and

"promised land" in the farm community of Hopewell, in Johnson County, Indiana. Old Testament analogies are interesting and maybe even meaningful given the settlers' regard for religion. Substitute American's West for the promised land of Israel and substitute Indians for the Canaanites and you have a kind of Biblical sanction of what Roosevelt called "...the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces..." Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York: 1889), volume 1, page 1.

² For a history of the migration to Kentucky, see Vincent Akers, *The Low Dutch Company: A History of the Holland Dutch Settlements of the Kentucky Frontier* (1982 booklet containing, among other items, a series of four articles originally published in *de Halve Maen*, the quarterly history magazine of The Holland Society of New York, (Summer 1980) vol. LV, no. 2, (Fall 1980) no. 3, (Winter 1981) no. 4 and (Spring-Summer 1981) vol. LVI, no. 1).

removing...to the Indian side of the Ohio and take possession of the same in the name of the United States of America...³

Twenty-some of our newly arrived Low Dutch signed the two petitions, including Hendrick Banta and several of his sons, Jacobus Westervelt, Gerardis Rycker, Peter and John Demaree, George Seaboun, John Dorland, Simon Vanosdol and Cornelius Vorheas.⁴ You have to marvel at a people already so harassed by Indian raids that they were forced into crowded filthy stations, and yet they were willing to cross the Ohio right into Indian territory in their quest of land! But it was an unrealistic and premature request as the war raged on.

Indians were a terrible, murderous annoyance. But the real problem with Kentucky involved land—that is, finding any desirable *unclaimed* land. The land laws of Virginia created a horribly confusing situation that retarded the development of Kentucky for generations. Rich non-resident *nabobs*, as the Kentucky settlers derisively called them, had already gobbled up huge tracts of the most desirable Kentucky lands.⁵ Giant military surveys had been run before any settlers had even arrived. These surveys checker boarded Kentucky claiming the best lands. Then came the 400 and 1,000-acre "settlement" and "preemption" rights of the very earliest visitors for their so-called "improvements" seemingly made everywhere. And anyone could purchase treasury warrants for any amount of lands. But it was

³ A near-quotation, modified slightly for readability, of the Petition to Congress, read August 23, 1780, Papers of the Continental Congress, Ser. 48, 245 (microfilm M247, roll 62, Item 48), National Archives.

⁴ The other petition is dated May 15, 1780, just a couple months after the Low Dutch arrived at the Falls. Both 1780 petitions along with their signatures are in the Papers of the Continental Congress, microfilm M247, roll 62, Item 48, pages 237-48. Both petitions almost certainly circulated in the spring and were read together by Congress in August. The dated petition (page 237) asks that Kentucky and Illinois be formed into a separate state citing their main grievance against Virginia as follows:

We your petitioners being Situate in a wide Extensive Uncultivated Contry and Expos^d. on every side to incursions of the Savage Indians humbly conceive Ourselves Opressed by several acts of the General assembly of Virginia for granting large Grants for waist and unapropriated lands in the Western Waters without Reservations for Cultivation and Settling the same whereby settling the Contry is Discouraged and the inhabitants are greatly Expos^d to the Saviges by whome our wives and Childring are daly cruelly murdered...

⁵ Nearly two centuries before Spiro Agnew railed against the alliterative "nattering nabobs of negativism," Kentucky settlers were railing against the land grabbing nabobs of Virginia. Draper Mss. 26JA20 quotes a letter dated Ohio, July 24, 1780: "We have distressing news from Kentucke, which is entirely owing to a set of nabobs in Virginia taking all the lands there by office-warrants & pre-emption rights. Hundreds of families are ruined by it. In short it threatens a loss of that country. Should the English go there, and offer them protection from the Indians, the greatest part will join. It is a truth, that the people there publickly say it. Let the great men, say they, who the land belongs to, come & defend it, for we will not lift up a gun in defence of it." Despite their land problems, Kentucky settlers most certainly *did* defend the frontier against the British and their Indian allies.

entirely up to the purchaser to locate and survey those lands. Theoretically locators could search the "entry" books for the vague locations of earlier claims. Actual surveys would have been more helpful, but they were run later—often many years later—and even then were the age-old "metes and bounds" laid out with trees or other physical features as corners.⁶ Finding land in the promised land of Kentucky was not merely a dream; it was a nightmare!

The idea of removing across the Ohio to Indian territory took hold of the imagination of our Low Dutch ancestors. They needed a gigantic tract of land to fulfill their dream of a Dutch colony in the West. So in 1783 they sent their own private, very eloquent, petition to Congress asking for just such a grant on the northwest side of the Ohio River. It is undoubtedly *the* key historical document preserving the story of our Low Dutch ancestors!⁷ The petition was signed by 151 heads of families, including some widows of signers of the 1780 petitions—widows whose husbands had fallen victim to the Indians. The signers are divided between the 46 inhabitants of Kentucky and 105 "intend friends" still living in the East. Listen to our ancestors' own words...

Humbly Sheweth... That in the Spring of the Year 1780, they moved to Kentuckey with their families and effects with a view and expectation to procure a tract of land to enable them to settle together in a body for the conveniency of civil society and propogating the Gospel in their known language. When they arrived there, to their sorrow and disappointment, they were, through the dangerousness of the times, by a cruel savage enemy, obliged to settle in Stations or Forts in such places where there was the most appearance of safety. Notwithstanding all their precaution, numbers of them suffered greatly in their property—several killed and others captivated by the Enemy. Living in such distressed confined way, always in danger, frequently on military duty, it was impossible for them to more than barely support their families with the necessaries of life, by which means they are much reduced, and what adds more to their disappointment and affliction is, that contrary to their expectations, most or all the tillable land has been Located and monopolised by persons that had the advantage of your Memorialists by being acquainted with the country, and your Memorialists being strangers and confined and so reduced are rendered unable to purchase Land at the advanced price... especially in a body conveniently together agreeable to their wishes.

Whereas Providence has been pleased to prosper and support the virtuous resistance of the United States in the glorious cause of Liberty, which has enabled them to obtain an Honourable Peace whereby they have obtained

⁶ For an early description of land laws, claims and problems see Humphrey Marshall, *The History of Kentucky* (Frankfort: 1812), 173-8.

⁷ Vince Akers, "The Finest Pioneers: The Low Dutch in Kentucky Illustrated by Eight Documents," presented Friday, September 30, 2011, for the Dutch Cousins Reunion, Harrodsburg, Kentucky. For some reason, probably simply the rush of preparation, I incorrectly dated the petition as 1782 in that speech rather than 1783.

a large extent of unappropriated Territory... Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray... the Honourable Congress would indulge them with a grant of a tract or territory of land...on the northwest side of the Ohio river... to enable them to settle in a body together, on such reasonable terms as Congress in their wisdom and prudence shall see just and reasonable... to enable them to put their intended plan and purpose in execution... they having principally in view the Glory of God, the promotion of Civil and religious society, educating and instructing their rising generation in the principals of religion and morality: hoping the Honrable Congress will give all due encouragement to such a laudable undertaking.⁸

Congress did not "indulge" our Low Dutch with any grants Northwest of the Ohio.⁹ But matters were moving in a favorable direction. The Revolutionary War officially ended about the same time the Low Dutch petition arrived in Congress. The September 1783 Treaty of Paris included the Northwest Territory within the boundaries of the United States. And within months Virginia ceded its claims to the territory to the new nation.¹⁰

Now the genius of Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, kicked in again with the Land Ordinance of 1785 setting forth how the lands in the Northwest Territory would be disposed of. Jefferson had been governor of Virginia and was well aware of the crippling confusion created by Virginia's haphazard sale and private survey of Kentucky lands. To prevent a repeat of this mess, all lands would be systematically surveyed under the direction the Geographer of the United States *before* their sale to the public. The surveyors would proceed to divide the lands into townships of six miles square by running township lines due east and west and crossing them at right angles with range lines

⁸ A near-quotation, modified slightly for readability, of the "Petition of a Number of low dutch Inhabitants of Kentucky for a grant of lands in Kentucky or on the North west side of the Ohio.—Read Sept^r 27th 1783", Papers of the Continental Congress, microfilm M247, roll 50, Item 41, pages 95-100, National Archives. The petition asks the grant be "in Kentucky settlement if the Virginia claim thereto should be made void, or otherwise on the northwest side of the Ohio river..." Virginia's claims to Kentucky had certainly not been made void despite rumors to that effect circulating in the West.

⁹ Papers of the Continental Congress, 96. The Low Dutch petition was read September 27, 1783 and referred to the Committee of the West which reported "That it would be improper for Congress to make any grants in ~~the~~ the Western country, til They ~~make~~ compleat their general arrangements as to ~~the~~ ceded territory —"

¹⁰ John J. Patrick, *Lessons on the Northwest Ordinance of 1787: Learning Material for Secondary School Courses in American History, Government, and Civics* (Indiana Historical Bureau: 1987), 8, 13, 49, 57. The Treaty of Paris was signed September 3, 1783. After three years of consideration, the Virginia Act of Cession was passed in December 1783 formally relinquishing that state's claims to the Northwest in return for reimbursement of Virginia's expenses incurred in capturing that territory from the British and maintaining it during the war. On March 1, 1784 Congress accepted the Virginia Act of Cession and on that very same day Thomas Jefferson presented a plan of government for the western territories. Jefferson's plan was passed on April 23 as the Ordinance of 1784.

running north and south. The Congressional survey townships would thus contain 36 mile-square sections of 640 acres each. Section 16 of every township would be reserved for the maintenance of public schools within the township.¹¹ Land problems solved! Well, mostly solved, with some exceptions as we will see.

The plan of government for the new territory also bears the fingerprints of Thomas Jefferson. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 ranks along with the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution as one of the great texts of American democracy. In the summer of 1787, while our Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia to write the Constitution that still governs this nation, the moribund Confederation Congress, in New York City, created a brilliant policy for governing the vast new territory north and west of the Ohio River. Settlers were given the absolute assurance of statehood on equal terms with all other states. Five states were eventually carved out of the Northwest Territory—including Ohio in 1803 and Indiana in 1816—and the Ordinance was the model by which 31 of our 50 states entered the Union as the American nation spread to the Pacific Ocean.¹²

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 also included guarantees of civil liberties and rights, many of which were not included in the U.S. Constitution until ratification of the Bill of Rights in 1791. These included freedom of religion, due process, habeas corpus, trial by jury, and protection against cruel and unusual punishment. The Ordinance also encouraged schools, abolished primogeniture and banned slavery. All in all it was an amazing charter of human freedoms and legal rights virtually nonexistent elsewhere in the world.¹³ Rights like these appealed to a people whose forefathers had enjoyed the religious freedom and enlightenment of the Dutch Republic!

On paper things were looking good, but not so much on the ground. America's Revolutionary War may have officially ended with the 1783 Treaty of Paris, but the Indians in the West remained on the war-path for more than a decade. The Indian war did not end until General "Mad" Anthony Wayne's victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August 1794 and the subsequent Treaty of Greenville a year later. The Indian raids into Kentucky during this decade-long delay prevented immediate settlement of the Low Dutch Tract finally purchased in 1786 from Daniel Boone's brother Squire. That delay left the Low Dutch in Kentucky geographically divided, pretty much evenly, between those who remained behind in the safer more

¹¹ Patrick, *Lessons on the Northwest Ordinance*, 14, 61-4.

¹² Patrick, *Lessons on the Northwest Ordinance*, vii, 1, 17, 21-2, 37. Jefferson's Ordinance of 1784 never took effect, but became the source of the core ideas which became the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Other states carved out of the Northwest Territory were Illinois in 1818, Michigan in 1837, and Wisconsin in 1848.

¹³ Patrick, *Lessons on the Northwest Ordinance*, 2, 22-3, 34, 65-8.

populated Mercer County area and those who finally settled the Low Dutch Tract in Shelby and Henry Counties.¹⁴

The August 1795 Treaty of Greenville that finally allowed our ancestors to safely settle on the Low Dutch Tract, also extinguished all Indian claims to the southern half of present-day Ohio, finally freeing the United States government to safely survey and sell lands that were attractive to settlers.¹⁵ In hopes of cheaply speeding things along in southwestern Ohio, Congress experimented with what we would today call "privatization."¹⁶

In 1787, John Cleves Symmes, a judge on the New Jersey Supreme Court, successfully lobbied Congress for a grant of two million acres between the Great and Little Miami Rivers. Symmes took on responsibility for surveying the lands according to the Ordinance of 1785.¹⁷

This was territory our Low Dutch were interested in! The land between the Miami Rivers is a 10-to-25-mile-wide swath running southwest from present-day Dayton to Cincinnati including parts of the present-day Ohio counties of Hamilton, Butler, Warren, Montgomery and Greene. Low Dutchmen had marched through and

¹⁴ The Treaty of Paris required the British to give up their posts in the Northwest Territory from which they had supplied their Indian allies. But for a variety of reasons the British refused to withdraw from the posts. This gave the Indians enough hope and encouragement to continue their war rather than seeking peace. Indian agents out of Detroit aided and abetted the Ohio Indians in their continued raids across the river into Kentucky. It was these raids in the late 1780s and early 1790s which prevented the timely settlement of the Low Dutch Tract.

¹⁵ Patrick, *Lessons on the Northwest Ordinance*, 61. The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 both required Indian claims be extinguished before lands could be surveyed and sold.

¹⁶ R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis: 1996), 148-155. Surveying had begun in 1785 at the western border of Pennsylvania and proceeded west at a painfully slow and expensive pace. Lands in eastern Ohio were not really very desirable. Early surveying was slow and expensive because there were Indian troubles since they disputed cession of the lands under questionable treaties before 1795. There were also technical troubles—like allowing for the curvature of the earth—that took time and added to expense. Some of our Low Dutch had seen these eastern Ohio lands during 1778 service under General Lachlan McIntosh and no doubt had noted the poor land quality (see Akers, *The Low Dutch Company*, notes 6, 7).

¹⁷ Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, 160. The price was \$1 per acre, reduced a third to compensate for lands that could not be farmed. From present-day Dayton, Ohio, the Great Miami flows southwest until it empties into the Ohio at the present-day boundary between Ohio and Indiana. Roughly parallel some 10 to 25 miles to the east, the Little Miami also flows south-southwest and empties into the Ohio at the eastern edge of present-day metropolitan Cincinnati.

admired these lands while serving with the Kentucky militia in Clark's 1780 and 1782 Ohio campaigns.¹⁸

Unfortunately for Low Dutch and other purchasers of Symmes, troubles began almost immediately. Symmes could not even raise the required amount for his first payment. While Congress drastically reduced the size of his grant, he continued to sell lands based on the original 2 million acre grant, thinking if he could settle people on it, Congress would grant it to him. Symmes also cut corners on his surveying. He ran only the township lines, leaving it to his purchasers to survey their own east-west boundaries.¹⁹

Once the Indian menace abated following the Treaty of Greenville settlers swarmed into the lands between the Miamis, paying Symmes for lands he didn't own. They were actually settled on public lands and faced the possibility of paying a second time for those lands. More than 30 Low Dutch were signers of several petitions to the United States Congress during 1799 through 1801 seeking relief for their situation. Listen to again their own words:

...your petitioners emigrated to this country at an early period, have risked our lives and spent our fortunes in its defense through a tedious and most cruel Indian war. Many...have...families of children, which they have brought with them from comfortable dwellings into a Perfect Wilderness and have expended all they possessed in purchasing and improving the land. We had the flattering hope that the happy period would soon arrive, when we might with safety evacuate our little fortresses and straitened villages where danger, want and almost every hardship, were pressing on us daily. This, together with the fond expectation of being in some future period put in full possession of those lands, for which we in good faith contracted Judge Symmes, were all we had to make our miseries tolerable. Your petitioners not doubting, but Judge Symmes' contract might be depended upon as legal, have bought...those lands [and made] considerable improvements. Not only dwelling houses, but also mills and several respectable villages have been erected and all of them have spent much time and labor in opening roads and erecting temporary bridges... But total change has taken place since the validity of that contract has been called in question. Nearly a total stagnation, both in our commerce and agriculture has been the consequence.²⁰

¹⁸ Margery Heberling Harding, *George Rogers Clark and His Men: Military Records, 1778-1784* (The Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort: 1981) contains payrolls of the militia on Clark's 1780 and 1782 invasions of Ohio among which are numerous Low Dutch.

¹⁹ Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, 160-1.

²⁰ The words are gathered from several petitions which may be found in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume III: The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1803* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington: 1934), 29-35, 39-45, 47-9, 114-8, 189-96.

The Low Dutch signers of petitions in 1799, 1800 and 1801 seeking relief in the land title mess created by Judge Symmes included Bantas, Cossarts, Debans, Demotts, Monforts, Shucks, Vanarsdales, Vorises and Westerfields.²¹

Congress did extend the payment terms, but the lands were paid for twice. The overlapping claims and legal battles hindered settlement of the area well into the 19th century. The federal government never again contracted with private interests to handle the sale of its lands. The Symmes fiasco also confirmed the need for the federal government to provide accurate surveys of its lands.²²

Southwestern Ohio might have been home to a mass migration of our Low Dutch had the Symmes mess not occurred. Even so, some Low Dutch families remained in the lands between the Miami rivers and others settled just west in the present-day Ohio counties of Butler, Preble and Darke along the southern Indiana border.²³ Not all came from Kentucky. A number of the 1783 "intend friends" finally came west and settled in this area.²⁴

Fortunately, more lands soon opened up north of the Ohio River. In 1800 Congress divided the Northwest Territory into two parts. On July 4th of that year, the vast territory west of Ohio became the new Indiana Territory. President John

²¹ Carter, *Territorial Papers, Volume III*, 33-4, 41, 45, 48-9, 116, 190, 192-6. Low Dutch signers were Abraham, Albert, Daniel and Peter Banta; Albert, Francis, Henry, Henry Jr., John and Peter Cossart; Joseph Debawn; Abraham Demott; Aaron, Francis, Henry and John Monfort; Andrew and George Shuck; John and William Vanosdol; Abraham, Albert, Cornelius, Daniel, Daniel Jr., Jacob, John and Luke Vorhis; and James and Samuel Westerfield.

²² Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, 161-4.

²³ Larry Michael Voreis, *Our Low Dutch Heritage* (Burr Oak Publications, Taylors, S.C.: 2003), Chapter 13, "Butler County, Ohio 1807-1818," pages 361-376, provides an excellent account of Low Dutch settlement in this area.

²⁴ Some came first to Kentucky in the years after signing the petition. Others moved direct to southwestern Ohio from the East. Lawrence Monfort, whose family produced numerous Presbyterian ministers, moved his family direct from Conewago to Warren County, Ohio, near present-day Lebanon, in 1799. *A History and Biographical Cyclopedia of Butler County Ohio* (Western Biographical Publishing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio: 1882), 160-1 (biography of Francis Monfort). It was Lawrence Monfort's family that preserved the Conewago baptism records, Judith Smith Cassidy, "Journey of One Hundred Years," *New Netherlands Connections*, volume 15 (2010), numbers 3 & 4, pages 77-8, 88, 110-7. Father Henry Banta's younger brother Albert and his sons provide other examples of some who came to Kentucky after the initial 1780 migration and also moved on to southwestern Ohio, Theodore Melvin Banta, *A Frisian Family: The Banta Genealogy* (New York: 1893), 61, 98. Another example is the Abraham Voorhees family that came from Conewago in the early 1790s building Voorhees Station and laying out Voorhees-town (present-day Reading) about 1798 north of Cincinnati in Hamilton County, Voreis, *Our Low Dutch Heritage*, 370-1.

Adams named Judge Symmes' 27-year-old son-in-law, William Henry Harrison, as governor of this new Indiana Territory.²⁵

Harrison set about securing land cessions from the Indians and in 1805 they ceded title to lands in southeastern Indiana including present-day Jefferson County.²⁶ The first of our Low Dutch had already moved here before Indian title was even cleared. Col. John Ryker came in 1804 and is credited as the first permanent settler of Jefferson County. Initially he built a cabin on the Ohio east present-day Madison, but soon moved permanently to the ridge above Eagle Hollow. That ridge terminates above the east end of present-day Madison and runs northeast to Rykers Ridge where John's brothers Samuel and Gerardus, Jr. settled sometime between 1808 and 1811.²⁷

²⁵ Andrew R.L. Clayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis: 1996), 167, 172, 176. The 1800 dividing line is not quite the same as the final Indiana-Ohio border. Rather, it was a line drawn from the mouth of the Kentucky River to Fort Recovery and then to Canada.

Earlier that year, as delegate to Congress from the Northwest Territory, Harrison had successfully obtained passage of the Harrison Land Act of 1800. The Act made it much easier for settlers to afford to buy Congressional lands. It cut the minimum purchase requirement from a whole section, 640 acres, down to 320 acres. It retained the \$2 per acre purchase price, but allowed the settler to make only a small down payment and pay off the debt within four years at six percent interest. Another Land Act in 1804 reduced the minimum purchase to a quarter section, 160 acres. Congress further lowered the minimum purchase quantities to 80 acres in 1817 and 40 acres in 1832. Clayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 179-80, 265; Patrick, *Lessons on the Northwest Ordinance*, 43.

²⁶ Patrick, *Lessons on the Northwest Ordinance*, 32. The treaty was signed August 21, 1805 at Harrison's home at Grouseland in Vincennes.

²⁷ Accounts of the first Ryker settlement are vague and confusing, but Robert Scott who has researched and written an excellent new history of Jefferson County says John Ryker is "believed to be the first European to live in Jefferson County" and "is usually credited as Jefferson County's first settler in 1804", Robert W. Scott, *The History of Jefferson County, Indiana* (Lulu Enterprises: 2012), 11, 19. John Ryker's nephew, William Robbins, said he was sent alone at age 10 (yes, ten!) in 1804 with supplies for his uncle whose cabin stood a half mile below the mouth of Indian Kentuck creek, William Robbins, "The Pioneers of Jefferson County," *Madison Daily Courier*, October 25, 1873. *Biographical and Historical Souvenir for the Counties of Clark, Crawford, Harrison, Floyd, Jefferson, Jennings, Scott and Washington, Indiana* (John M. Gresham & Co., Chicago: 1889), Part II, "Souvenir Sketches," under the sketch of William Robbins (page 249) says Robbins was 20 in 1804 when he went to John Ryker's claim in Eagle Creek Valley three miles east of Madison; and under the sketch of Jared G. Ryker (page 264) says John's brother Gerardus came about 1811. The years or range of years when the Rykers moved to Indiana can be confirmed by when they drop off the Shelby County tax lists, Franklin Alexander Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family* (typescript, revised edition: 1976), 76, 79, 83, 90. See also David Edward Ryker, *Your Place in the Line: A Ryker Genealogy, Ancestors and Descendants of John Gerardus Ryker* (typescript: 1984), 55. John Ryker was a true Kentucky Colonel having been commissioned colonel of the 18th Regiment of the Kentucky

The Rikers along with the Demarees, Smocks and Vancleaves had for 20-plus years poured their sweat and blood into trying to settle lands in the area around and west of the Low Dutch Tract in Shelby County, Kentucky. The Ryker brothers' father, Gerardus Riker, Sr., had been killed at Floyd's Defeat in September 1781. Their step-father, John Vancleave, had lost his wife the day before at the Long Run Massacre. John Vancleave's brother-in-law was Squire Boone who located much of the Kentucky lands claimed by the Low Dutch—both the giant Low Dutch Tract purchased as a company and individual farms of Low Dutch who tried to settle in the area.²⁸

It must have been incredibly painful to lose lands that had been settled and improved during 20 years of Indian war! Often the conflicting claims did not surface for years—after considerable labor had been put into clearing the lands, building cabins and making other improvements. Once conflicting claims did surface, all improvements ceased for fear of losing even more investment. This was exactly the case with the Ryker brothers who had settled on Bullskin Creek. Defect in their land titles after 20 years of bloodshed and toil led them to seek a new home in the Indiana Territory.²⁹

In addition to its land title mess, Kentucky had yet another even more profound problem which would also plague its development. A malignancy hung over state and that malignancy was slavery. The "peculiar institution" cast a morally corrupting pale over Blue Grass society. Our Low Dutch were hardly innocent. They had owned slaves in New Jersey and in Pennsylvania; and they owned them in Kentucky. Slaveholders were only a small fraction of the Low Dutch community and they generally owned only one or two, but slaveholders were the community leaders showing it was certainly an accepted practice among our Low Dutch ancestors.³⁰

Militia on April 9, 1800, G. Glenn Clift, *The "Corn Stalk" Militia of Kentucky 1792-1811* (Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky: 1957).

²⁸ Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, note 70.

²⁹ Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family*, 71, 79, 108, refers to the title defect with the Bullskin Creek lands in Shelby County, Kentucky, as cause for the Ryker family moving to Indiana. John Ryker's 100 acres on Bullskin and the evolving title dispute are touched on in the Franklin District Court case of "Josiah Boone vs. Benjamin Vancleave, Jr." which continued from May 1792 until August 1799, Franklin District Court Records, microfilm reel No. 2, Case No. 9.

³⁰ Published 1795 tax lists illustrate this, *Early Kentucky Tax Records From The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.: 1987), 176-92 (Mercer County originally in the 1927 *Register*), 228-46 (Shelby County originally in the 1926 *Register*). None of the Low Dutch then living in Shelby County (which included Henry County until 1798) owned any slaves. But in the longer settled Mercer County area there were a few Low Dutch slaveholders. The editor commented in a footnote to Albert Vorhis on one district's list that he was one of the Low Dutch "as no doubt almost all the men whose names appear in the V's were. It will be noted none of them were slaveholders." The implication is totally off base since there are at least eight Low Dutch slaveholders on the list and they were community leaders. In fact, the largest holding (six) belonged to the heirs of Abraham Banta who had been the first trustee or agent of the Low Dutch Company. Next

The practice was even defended by their pastors from the pulpit.³¹ But the practice benefited those same wealthy nabobs who had monopolized the best lands. They imported slaves to work those lands. The smaller scale farms of our Low Dutch relied upon large families for their labor. Slavery thus competed with honest manual labor in Kentucky. It created a class of men who thought themselves too good for labor. These proud, arrogant, uncontrolled whites dominated Kentucky politics. A good many of the Low Dutch found the atmosphere distasteful and were attracted to northwest side of the Ohio where slavery was prohibited.³²

Jefferson County's first settler, Col. John Ryker, was one of these. It was not only land title troubles that led him to Indiana in 1804, but also that he did not care to raise his family under the influence of a slave state. The church on Rykers Ridge was later used as a station on the underground railroad conducting runaway slaves to freedom in Canada and the Ryker family was instrumental in its operation. A blacksmith who lived at the mouth of Eagle Hollow would signal when fugitives could safely be brought across the Ohio by pounding at night on his anvil. Rykers and

largest, Garret Darland (three), and Luke Vanosdol (one) also served as agents for the Low Dutch Company.

³¹ The Switzerland County, Indiana, history referred to Kentucky as "a State in which slavery was taught to be of divine origin, preached from the pulpits as a religion, and practiced in life as a virtue." *History of Switzerland County Indiana* (Cook-McDowell Publications, Inc., Owensboro, Kentucky: 1980) reprinted from *History of Dearborn, Ohio and Switzerland Counties Indiana* (Weakey, Harriman & Co., Chicago: 1885), 1099. Pastors to our Low Dutch participated in this. Peter Van Arsdale recalled "old Archabald Cameron (from Shelby County) made a long speech in favour of the practice of Slaveholding and tryd hard to prove it to be *right* from the *Bible*." He also told of the abolitionist, James G. Birney, coming to his neighborhood where he "debated the subject of Slavery at Providenc with Dr Cleland and others at considerable length." "The Autobiography of Peter Van Arsdale" published in William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier 1783-1840, Vol. II, The Presbyterians: A Collection of Source Materials* (Cooper Square Publications, Inc., New York: 1964), 809-10. Presbyterian ministers were not all apologists for the peculiar institution. Rev. David Rice, who in 1783 preached the first Presbyterian sermon in Kentucky at the Low Dutch Station, was 40 years an opponent of slavery and tried unsuccessfully to insert an article in Kentucky's 1792 constitution providing for the gradual abolition of slavery, Robert H. Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky...Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice* (Art Guild Reprints, Inc., Cincinnati: 1968 [originally published 1824]), xi, 95-6, 412. Yet Rev. David Rice himself owned two slaves according to the 1795 Mercer County tax rolls, *Early Kentucky Tax Records*, 190.

³² Peter Van Arsdale was one of these and left several interesting comments on slavery and other subjects. He repeatedly visited and checked out Indiana lands, but did not make the move because of "the difficulties of Making a farm in a very heavey timbered country...Especialy as I had no help of boys..." "The Autobiography of Peter Van Arsdale," 804-5. Early Indiana's evolving attitudes toward slavery are discussed in Clayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 187-93.

other prominent members of the church would help in feeding and hiding the slaves, often taking them to the church and hiding them in the garret.³³

There was another less progressive deviation from traditional Dutch beliefs on Rykers Ridge. Col. John Ryker, first settler of Jefferson County, did not believe in educating his children! This was directly at odds with the Calvinist belief in, not only educated ministers, but also educated church members. Col. John is described as "a tall, bony, muscular man of commanding presence and considerable intelligence. But he conceived the strange idea that education made rogues, and consequently he refused to educate his children. Quite a family of boys and girls of good natural intellects were brought up without even being taught to read. His son Gerardus went to school and learned to read and write after he was married."³⁴

When I hear "education made rogues" I cannot help but think Colonel John may have seen education in those slaveholding nabobs whose lawsuits took his Kentucky lands. How long and to what degree his colorful exception to education prevailed on Rykers Ridge is hard to say. But Rykers Ridge is thought to have provided the basis for Edward Eggleston's beloved novel, *The Hoosier School-Master*. I highly recommend the book as a vivid portrait of rural Indiana in the first half of the nineteenth century. It describes the experiences of a young man who engages to teach—or rather tame—a one-room school where "the meanest boy in school" was none other than "Hank" (Henry) Banta.³⁵

The Rykers were joined by many of their close Low Dutch kin. Another of the earliest settlers here in Jefferson County was Samuel Smock. The Smock family had also suffered terribly during their attempt to settle on Bullskin Creek in Kentucky

³³ Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family* (with 1977 and 1982 addendums) 79, 86, 100-1 – 100-3. Robert W. Scott, *The History of Jefferson County, Indiana*, 84, says Levi Coffin called the Madison area one of the three major routes in the Midwest. Scott further says one of the Madison routes "led from Eagle Hollow, across Ryker's Ridge, down Wolf Run to Manville and up the Indian-Kentuck to Brushy Fork Creek, and north through the Scottish settlement and Canaan."

³⁴ David Ryker, *Your Place in the Line: A Ryker Genealogy*, 54-5. David Ryker says his source is a newspaper clipping apparently from the Madison Courier sometime in the period 1840 to 1875 written by J.W. Lanham who lived and preached in the area for over 50 years. Ryker cites Mary Stella Carr, *History of Ryker's Ridge Baptist Church* (mimeograph by the church, 1966), 12.

³⁵ Edward Eggleston, *The Hoosier School-Master* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis: 1984 [reprinted from the original 1871 edition with an introduction by B. Edward McClellan]), introduction, 30. Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family*, 82, 85 and David Ryker, *Your Place in the Line: A Ryker Genealogy*, 54-A, both include an excellent map by Franklin Ryker overlaying the US topographic map with the location of school taught by Eggleston's brother along with other historic sites in the Rykers Ridge and Manville area of Jefferson County, Indiana. *History of Switzerland County Indiana*, 1062, 1135-6, includes an interesting discussion of Eggleston referring to an incident that occurred "while old Elder [Henry] Banta was preaching, and Mr. Eggleston was present."

during the 1790s. Samuel Smock's mother, Catherine Demaree, was a sister to the Ryker clan's matriarch, Rachel Demaree. Samuel Smock married his first cousin, Rachel Ryker. It was her third marriage. She'd been twice widowed by young husbands killed by the Indians. Samuel Smock's sister Leah Smock also married her first cousin, Gerardus Ryker, Jr., brother of Samuel's wife. In one of the attacks on the Smock family in Kentucky Leah Smock was scalped and left for dead, but she recovered, lived until 1858 and had at least 14 children, raising 10 to adulthood on Rykers Ridge.³⁶

By the way, marriages between cousins were not all that unusual 200 years ago, but our ancestors in their attempt to preserve their Low Dutch culture on the western frontier may have taken it to excess. I'm reminded of Eleanor Vanosdal Banta who was born in May 1786 at Ketchum's Station during the first unsuccessful attempt to settle the Low Dutch Tract. She too married a first cousin and at age 87 had this to say about the matter:

It was one of the rules of the society of our relatives, and those who came from the Old Country, in those days that it was wrong to marry out of the family, and almost all of the persons who married in those days, married cousins. In fact it was almost a law with us that such should be the case.³⁷

³⁶ "The Pioneers of Jefferson County, Reminiscences of John Smock, of Hanover Township," *Madison Daily Courier*, Madison, Indiana, vol. 26, no. 49, June 26, 1874. John was a son of Samuel and Catherine. He does not refer to Leah Smock's scalping which is mentioned in *The Demarest Family* (1964 edition), under the children of 5-196 – Lea Smock who married Gerardus Ryker, Jr. "was captured by Indians, scalped, escaped, married, and raised a large family." Leah's death date and children are from Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family*, 109-10. I have not located a more reliable source for Leah's scalping. J.W. Lanham said of Col. John Ryker's younger brother and his wife, "Gerardus was a good man, quiet, peaceable and religious, but did not possess the same force of character as his older brother. His wife, Leah, however, supplied the deficiency to this respect, so that their descendants are by no means wanting in this particular." David Ryker, *Your Place in the Line: A Ryker Genealogy*, 55.

The Demarest Family (both the 1938 and 1964 editions) incorrectly listed Rachel Demaree Riker Vancleave as the daughter of Joost Demarest rather than his brother Samuel. However, court papers discovered in the Shelby County, Kentucky, Circuit Court Records prove she was a daughter of the Kentucky pioneer Samuel Demaree, Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, note 70. Most of the numerous Riker/Ryker descendants very happily accepted this correction; but a few at their 1982 reunion at Clifty Falls could not seem to believe *The Demarest Family* could have made a mistake. The numerous Smock family references to Catherine and Rachel being sisters and their children being cousins is additional proof of the error. Perhaps conclusive proof was so obviously available as to be overlooked. Franklin Ryker had Gerardus Ryker, Jr.'s family Bible which gives Rachel Demaree's birth date as November 19, 1743, Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family*, 109. Rachel Demaree, daughter of Joost, was baptized ten months before that date on January 9, 1743 whereas Rachel Demaree, daughter of Samuel, was baptized four months after on April 1, 1744, *The Demarest Family* (1964 edition), 5-194, 5-202.

³⁷ Affidavit of Eleanor Banta, December 14, 1873, in Mabel Boyce Spell, *Twelve Conewago*

Back to the Smocks... In yet another Kentucky raid in March 1794, Samuel's 14 and 12-year-old brothers Peter and John were taken prisoners. The Indians took their prisoners across the Ohio just below the mouth of Clifty Creek, near south entrance of this state park. The Indians then moved up the river and camped at the root of a giant poplar tree that once stood where the Jefferson County Courthouse now stands in Madison. They remained there three days singing and dancing before starting north for their town on Flat Rock River in central Indiana.

Old Chief Winamac of the Potawatomis took a liking to Peter Smock and adopted him into his family in place of a son he had lost. Winamac's old squaw, with some young ones, took Peter into the river to scrub the white blood out of him to make an Indian of him. He got one of them down and was about to drown her, but the others rescued her. It pleased Winamac to see him outdo the squaws. Peter and John were with the Indians more than a year until ransomed for a keg of rum in June 1795 preparatory to the Treaty of Greenville. Thus the two young Smock brothers, albeit unwillingly, were two of the first Low Dutch to experience life in Indiana! Both brothers lived to raise families and later removed to southern Marion County, Indiana, near Southport.³⁸

Indian title to what is now Jefferson County was cleared by treaty in 1805 and Samuel Smock was ready to move. That spring he put up a cabin at Smock's Big Spring, about three miles southwest of present-day Hanover. He enclosed about three acres of ground with a rude brush fence and rails where he planted corn which

Families That Later Moved To Kentucky (Typescript presented to the Indiana State Library, August 1957), 32-3. Mrs. Banta also left very interesting recollections published in *The Vevay Reveille*, Vevay, Switzerland County, Indiana, May 16, 1878, Vol. 61, No. 20; these also appear under her husband's record in Theodore M. Banta, *A Frisian Family: The Banta Genealogy* (New York: 1893), 175-6. D.D. Banta also remarked that the families were much given to "hanging together" and that outsiders said, "Everyone is akin." Letter dated September 29, 1883 from D.D. Banta in Rev. Dr. J.K. Demarest, *History of the Low Dutch Colony of Conowago* (Series of newspaper articles appearing in the Gettysburg Star Weekly beginning January 8, 1884). Of course, it is both true and an exaggeration, as an examination of any of the genealogies or county marriage records will show. Marriage within the Low Dutch names predominated, but new non-Dutch family names were steadily creeping in.

³⁸ "Reminiscences of John Smock," *Madison Daily Courier*, June 26, 1874, and continued in vol. 26, no. 55, July 3, 1874, provide a very detailed account of the attack and captivity of his uncles. Samuel Smock's brother Mathew was killed in this same raid and a cousin, Isaac Robins, was tomahawked, scalped and left for dead, but survived. Another account of the boys' captivity is under the biographical sketch of William C. Smock in Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis, Vol. II* (The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago: 1908), 778-80. William C.'s parents were second cousins, his mother being a daughter of John Smock, one of the captured boys. William C. also married a second cousin in 1860. The family stories are well confirmed by captive release information preserved in the Draper Manuscripts which provide us with their age, date taken by the Potawatomis and when released, Draper Mss. 16S179, 207.

made a good crop, yielding 80 bushels per acre—the first corn crop in Jefferson County. Indiana was looking good!³⁹

Late in the fall of 1805 Samuel Smock moved his family to their new Indiana home. The move from Shelby County required two wagon teams. It was late in the evening when they got to the top of the hill overlooking the Ohio River on the Kentucky side. If you've crossed the bridge at Madison and driven up the Kentucky side, you know how steep the hill is. That steep overlooking hill winds along the river for miles. Next morning one of the teamsters refused to tackle the hill, dropped his load and headed back to Shelby County. The other teamster was Smock's brother-in-law Samuel Ryker. He chained the brushy top of a large beech sapling under the wagon to serve as a brake to keep it from crowding the horses in their descent to the river. With the loss of one of the wagons, each of the children big enough to carry anything down the hill had to carry something. Five year-old John Smock was given a large bread tray to carry. There was a heavy white frost on the ground and the boy put the tray down, got on it and rode it down the hill like a sled until it crashed into a tree. Our Low Dutch were not ones to spare the rod and spoil the child. Seventy years later John Smock recalled that for that adventure and piece of fun, he collected the last *back* rations he ever got in Old Kentucky!⁴⁰

In 1805 there was only one other family of whites nearer than fourteen miles on this side of the river. That was the family of Mason Watts a half mile south of Hanover. Watts' wife, Debbie Ryker, was a sister of Samuel Smock's wife and of John Ryker who had settled just the year before fourteen miles away on the other side of present-day Madison which would not have its first settler for at least another year.⁴¹

The lands were not yet surveyed. Settlers like Ryker and Smock staked their claims, started improving their farms and waited for the surveyors. There was some danger in this as Samuel Smock discovered. The Big Spring where he originally settled proved to be a 16th section, reserved by Congress for school purposes. Consequently, he could not purchase it and had to rent it many years before he entered another 160 acres up the creek. Samuel Smock's home at the Big Spring was at the junction of two old Indian trails which soon became roadways for the settlers. The place became known as Smockville and in July 1813 the first post

³⁹ "Reminiscences of John Smock," *Madison Daily Courier*, June 26, 1874. This being the first crop in Jefferson County is based on "A History of Jefferson County 1801-1876" in *Jefferson County Indiana Plat Maps 1876* (Jefferson County Historical Society, Madison: 1999), 13, which claims "Jesse Vawter raised the first crop of corn, which he did not succeed in planting till late in June, 1806." Smock's crop was a year earlier.

⁴⁰ "Reminiscences of John Smock," *Madison Daily Courier*, June 26, 1874.

⁴¹ "Reminiscences of John Smock," *Madison Daily Courier*, June 26, 1874. Sometime later Watts apparently moved to the Canaan area closer to the Rykers according to his wife's nephew, William Robbins, "The Pioneers of Jefferson County," *Madison Daily Courier*, October 25, 1883. Robert Scott, *The History of Jefferson County, Indiana*, 33, indicates the first riverfront inhabitants of Madison arrived between 1806 and 1808.

office in Jefferson County was located there with Samuel Smock the first postmaster.⁴²

After the lands were surveyed there was steady emigration into this area until the War of 1812 curtailed the flow for a few years. The Demaree family came around that time. Samuel Demaree, Jr. settled on Indian Kentuck Creek about six miles northeast of Madison, and not far from Ryker's Ridge. Within a few years Samuel Demaree had acquired most of the land on both sides of Indian Kentuck for a distance of 8 or 10 miles and had built water-powered saw, grist and paper mills. Samuel Demaree, Jr. was an uncle of the Ryker brothers and Samuel Smock. His family also paid the blood price attempting to settle on lands near the Low Dutch Tract. In August 1790, Samuel Demaree's step-children were attacked by Indians while out working in a field. Twelve-year old Daniel Cozine was killed and his 9-year old sister was carried off. Sarah Cozine was held captive by the Potawatomi Indians for five years, being released in September 1795 to her stepfather. Sarah Cozine married Jesse Blanton in 1800 and they accompanied the Demarees to Jefferson County about 1812. As a widow in her later years—she was still living in 1855—she was known to all as Aunt Sally and was regarded as eccentric for following habits learned during her Indian captivity like the way she kindled her fire and her moving during the summer into a tent or wigwam.⁴³

⁴² "Reminiscences of John Smock," *Madison Daily Courier*, June 26, 1874 and July 3, 1874. Reports of the treasurer of the Smockville School Section for rental of the lands 1818-1822 are in the Jefferson County Will Book A, 418, 421, per Naomi Keith Sexton, ed., *The Hoosier Journal of Ancestry, The Jefferson County Special No. 1*, 10. John D. Gabel, "Smockville and Samuel Smock" (typescript prepared for the Jefferson County, Indiana, Historical Society: 1956) also says Smockville was the county's first post office and Samuel Smock the first postmaster. Robert Scott, *The History of Jefferson County, Indiana*, 36, 175, however, indicates Madison's post office was established in 1812 and its first postmaster appointed January 1813 while a post office was at Smockville from July 1813 through November 1838. Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume VIII: The Territory of Indiana, 1810-1816* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington: 1939), 233-4, 422, however, indicates Smockville and Madison were running neck and neck in the race for having the first post office. A February 5, 1813 letter from the Postmaster General forwarded paperwork for establishment of post offices at both Smockville and Madison and indicated the same paperwork had been sent the previous October, but was apparently lost (in the mail no doubt!) since neither of the bonds had been received. By May 1816 the Postmaster General was writing to Samuel Smock at Smockville approving Smock's suggestion regarding post-riders. John Gabel's typescript has a fascinating description of a controversy that raged before the Hanover Presbyterian Church Session in 1824-25 which may have prompted Samuel Smock to move off the Smockville tract.

⁴³ *The Demarest Family* (1938 edition), 109-10, 506-7. Family stories of Sarah Cozine's captivity are verified by a statement of her step-father, Samuel Demaree, and release details in the Draper Manuscripts, Draper Mss. 16S176-7, 180. See also Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, note 103. Mabel Boyce Spell, a tireless researcher in the 1950s, wrote that family legend also held that Sarah was scalped and that her captors took her as far away as Colorado, Spell, *Twelve Conewago Families*, 28.

Fortunately, so far as I can determine, there were no Low Dutch lives lost to the Indians here in Indiana, nor were there any taken captive. There were, however, a number of scary years leading up to and during the War of 1812. Supplied and encouraged by the British from Canada, the brothers Tecumseh and the Prophet tried to unite the Indians. Much of the dangerous drama played out between the brothers and William Henry Harrison took place here in Indiana. This erupted in November 1811 in the Battle of Tippecanoe near present-day Lafayette fought more than six months before war with Great Britain was declared.⁴⁴

As had been done in Kentucky a generation before, Low Dutch in the Indiana Territory joined their neighbors in forming militia companies. All able-bodied men between 18 and 45 were subject to duty. Samuel Smock was a captain and ultimately a colonel in the militia.⁴⁵ As another precaution, the settlers built blockhouses strategically located to provide refuge in case of attack. Even so, threats were so severe at times that settlers abandoned their farms and temporarily moved south of the Ohio until the threat passed. The Rykers went back three times because of Indian uprisings.⁴⁶ Certainly it was a dangerous area. In September 1812, twenty-some settlers, more than half of them children, were killed in the Pigeon Roost Massacre just 14 miles southwest of the Smocks. As soon as news of Pigeon Roost spread, many settlers immediately fled across the river leaving food on the table and livestock in the fields. Several families, including the Smocks, went that night to Anderson's fort a little south of where Hanover now is. Court had been sitting that day in Madison and Samuel Smock was one of the judges. He returned home to an empty house—and, I assume, a note telling where the family had gone. He simply put up his horse, ate his supper and went to bed, "keeping the fort" at home until surrendered the next morning to his wife when she returned with the family.⁴⁷

Early in 1815 when news arrived in Madison of the treaty ending the war, the small population celebrated in the usual manner of American citizens by firing off guns and yelling. The residents of Rykers Ridge above the town, hearing the noise,

⁴⁴ Clayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 220-5.

⁴⁵ Smock was commissioned captain in the Clark County militia November 29, 1809 (Jefferson had not yet been formed), major in the Jefferson County militia March 7, 1811 and colonel of the militia's 7th Regiment August 18, 1813, *Executive Journal of Indiana Territory 1800-1816* (Indiana Historical Society: 1985), v, 67, 81, 112.

⁴⁶ Blockhouses built as early as 1806 are mentioned in the *History of Switzerland County Indiana*, 1001, 1146. John Smock said, "In 1812, the time of the Indian troubles a good many of the settlers left the country and went across the river to Kentucky. My father and others stayed, and built block houses and forts." "Reminiscences of John Smock," *Madison Daily Courier*, June 26, 1874. The Rykers going back three times is from Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family*, 74, 85, 108.

⁴⁷ "Reminiscences of John Smock," *Madison Daily Courier*, July 3, 1874. Alarmed by the Pigeon Roost Massacre, the Demarees also hastened back to Kentucky, *Demarest Family* (1938 edition), 110. The Pigeon Roost numbers are from the monuments at the site of the massacre.

supposed it was an Indian attack on Madison. After placing their families in the block-house at Col. John Ryker's farm, the men went down the ridge to help their neighbors repel the Indians. When they arrived in town and heard the news, they stayed and helped celebrate; and, as whiskey was "pretty plenty and entirely free," they became very drunk and delayed their return home till after dark. As they returned along the ridge, whooping and yelling, the women, supposing they were Indians after scalps, closed and barricaded the door and prepared for a fight. When the men sought admission, the women at first refused to let them in. But no attack was made and luckily the women did not open fire. Once the men were recognized, they were admitted amidst great rejoicing. And so ended the last Indian scare in the settlements of Jefferson County.⁴⁸

Our Low Dutch ancestors were becoming "acculturated" as the academic historians would say—out drinking with the neighbors and coming home late!⁴⁹ The frontier melting pot was doing its work and our Low Dutch were also taking on prominent roles as they mixed in the larger community—postmaster, militia officers and justices of the peace. Samuel Smock sat as a judge at the first court held in Madison in early 1811. And in 1816 he was a delegate to Indiana's first Constitutional Convention.⁵⁰

Samuel Smock also carried on the Low Dutch traditional interest in education. As a ruling elder of the Hanover Presbyterian Church he supported his pastor, Dr. John Crowe, when he established the Hanover Academy which became Hanover College. Smock served as an active trustee until his death. His son David was one

⁴⁸ *Biographical and Historical Souvenir for the Counties of Clark, Crawford, Harrison, Floyd, Jefferson, Jennings, Scott and Washington, Indiana* (John M. Gresham & Co., Chicago: 1889), Part I, "History of Jefferson County" by W.P. Hendricks, 165. The account has the event occurring in the summer of 1815, but news of the war's end surely traveled faster than that (Congress ratified the treaty in February 1815). The account has part of the women at the house of old John Thomas and the barricading actually occurring there. I claim speaker's license to edit here!

⁴⁹ Webster says acculturation is the cultural modification of an individual or group by borrowing and adapting traits from another culture. Given the Dutch enjoyment of a social drink, acculturation in this case may have been quite easy!

⁵⁰ Samuel Smock was commissioned J.P. in the Clark County November 3, 1807, J.P. in Jefferson County December 6, 1810, judge of the Jefferson County Court December 18, 1810 and judge of the Circuit Court January 3, 1814, *Executive Journal of Indiana Territory*, 54, 76, 78, 115. His name is given as James in the 1807 record, but it must be Samuel since he is credited with performing five marriages in 1808 including the first in Jefferson County, Robert Scott, *The History of Jefferson County, Indiana*, 42. Regarding the Constitutional Convention, see Gabel, "Smockville and Samuel Smock" and Charles Kettleborough, *Constitution Making In Indiana, Vol. 1 1780-1852* (Indiana Historical Commission, Indianapolis: 1916), xix, n. 23, 124.

of the first students in Crowe's tiny log house and graduated to be one of the first ministers raised up for the West.⁵¹

After the conclusion of peace in 1815, our Low Dutch ancestors began settling in northwestern Switzerland County, Indiana. In 1816 Peter Demaree laid out the town of Allensville, a little burg that still exists, the first town to be laid out in Cotton Township. It was about 15 miles east of the Rykers and Demarees over in Jefferson County.⁵²

The big Low Dutch settlement in Switzerland County started the next year—1817—in Pleasant Township.⁵³ The crossroad burg of Pleasant lies just a mile east of the Jefferson-Switzerland County line. This was truly the first settlement by an entire group of Low Dutch. Up to this point the Low Dutch migrations into Indiana were by individual families—the Rykers, Smocks and Demarees—but the settlement around Pleasant was a large community representing numerous Low Dutch surnames.⁵⁴ The community was known as the "Dutch Settlement." They came in a steady migration principally from Kentucky—mostly from the Low Dutch Tract. The Switzerland County history says our Low Dutch "brought with them their peculiar characteristics of industry, sobriety and frugality."⁵⁵

The "Dutch Settlement" had a church building by 1823, the first in Pleasant Township. It was a hewed log house one and half stories high, with a gallery. It had no fireplace or other source of heat other than the sermon. Repeating a pattern set more than 150 years before on the New Jersey frontier, for a few years their patriarchs held services without formal organization until in October 1829 they were organized as the Pleasant Township Presbyterian Church by striking off the eastern

⁵¹ "Pioneer Preacher of Jefferson Co., Extract from the Autobiography of Rev. D.V. Smock, Dec'd," *Madison Daily Courier*, February 6, 1879. A similar version is in Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family*, 94-6, from a Presbyterian paper in Iowa, dateline December 16, 1858.

⁵² *History of Switzerland County Indiana*, 1002, 1143-4. Peter Demaree, an older brother of Samuel Demaree, was married to Mary Allen—inspiration possibly for the naming of Allensville. He too had tried to settle Shelby County lands. *Demarest Family* (1938 edition), No. 350, page 108.

⁵³ *History of Switzerland County Indiana*, 1006-7, 1153.

⁵⁴ The Pleasant cemetery is filled with Low Dutch names found in the Kentucky cemeteries at Old Mud or Pleasureville in the Low Dutch Tract: Banta, Carnine, Demaree, Shuck, Vandever, Vannuys, Vanosdal, Voris, Wykoff; Wanda L. Morford, *Switzerland County, Indiana, Cemetery Inscriptions 1817-1985* (Cincinnati, Ohio: 1986), 327-39.

⁵⁵ The county history also says in a few years "the farmers from the locality began to supply the citizens of Vevay with butter, eggs and chickens during the summer, and pork, venison, oats, wheat, flax, etc., in the fall and winter." *History of Switzerland County Indiana*, 1007, 1159-60.

jurisdiction of the Jefferson Church where their Ryker-Demaree relations worshiped.⁵⁶

The "Dutch Settlement" in Switzerland County, Indiana, was reaction to continued disappointment over Kentucky's stifling land disputes which were directly affecting the Low Dutch Tract. In 1812 the Low Dutch Company was sued over a conflicting claim that seemed to surface from nowhere. The overlapping land in dispute was not huge, but it was in the very heart of where the most improvement had been made—near Bantatown, present-day North Pleasureville. The suit dragged on 10 years with losses, appeals and further losses. A second Henry Circuit Court decision against the Low Dutch in 1817 coincides with the first migrations to the Switzerland County "Dutch Settlement."⁵⁷

Many factors working together—those large Dutch families, Kentucky's incredible land title mess, the depletion of its soil, its atmosphere of slavery—fueled a burning desire of the second and third generation Kentucky Low Dutch to migrate. That burning desire intensified just as vast new lands opened up for settlement in central Indiana. In October 1818 the Indians ceded what was called the "New Purchase" which opened much of the middle section of the state to government survey and sale. Indiana appointed a commission to ride into the New Purchase to select a central location for the state capital. Their choice was approved by the legislature in January 1821 and given the name Indianapolis.⁵⁸

The Kentucky Low Dutch likewise formed commissions of sorts to ride into the New Purchase to select what was in a way their own new capital. Men from both the Henry-Shelby County Low Dutch Tract and from the Mercer County settlements traveled north in 1820, '21 and '22 to have a good careful look at this New

⁵⁶ *History of Switzerland County Indiana*, 1007, 1153, 1159.

⁵⁷ George Calhoun vs. Abraham Banta's Heirs &c, Henry County Circuit Court Order Books 1811-1822. Adding to the general Kentucky land mess was another acrimonious dispute of their own making. Formal title to the Low Dutch Tract was in the name of the original Low Dutch Company agent, Abraham Banta, a son of Father Henry. Abraham Banta had his fingers in lots of pies and when he died unexpectedly in 1794 without a will, his estate was sheer chaos. It took decades to settle. The new trustees or agents of the Low Dutch Company had to sue Banta's heirs in both Henry and Shelby Counties to obtain title to the Low Dutch Tract so it could finally be deeded in the 1830s to the individual families who had drawn their lots 50 years before. Albert Voorhis, Andrew Carnine & others vs. Heirs of Abraham Banta's & others, Henry County Circuit Court Order Books 1818-1821 and Abraham Banta's heirs vs. George Bergen, Bundle 190, No. 28, Shelby Co. Circuit Court Records.

⁵⁸ R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period 1815-1840* (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis: 1950), vol. I, 37; also D.D. Banta, *A Historical Sketch of Johnson County Indiana* (J.H. Beers & Co., Chicago: 1881), 15-6. The Indians had a two-year period to vacate the New Purchase.

Purchase.⁵⁹ Their consensus decision is shown by the vast Low Dutch migration over the next few decades to Johnson County, Indiana, the county immediately south of Indianapolis. George King from Henry County, Kentucky, whose wife was Eleanor Voorhies, successfully lobbied the legislature to form Johnson County in 1823. He then donated land on which to locate the county seat, Franklin.⁶⁰

The still thriving City of Franklin was one of several Low Dutch settlements in Johnson and neighboring counties. North of Franklin, Greenwood was founded by Smocks, Brewers and other Low Dutch from Mercer County.⁶¹ A little further north, Smocks were also early settlers of Southport, Indiana, just over the county line in Marion County.⁶² West of Franklin was the flourishing farm community of Hopewell and yet further west was another farm community called Shiloh. Just southwest of Johnson County, Low Dutch also settled the town of Georgetown (now Bean Blossom) in Brown County. At all of these places our Low Dutch founded Presbyterian Churches, still clinging to the Calvinist faith they had brought with them to Kentucky.⁶³

Our Low Dutch ancestors were broadening their gene pool beyond cousins and their ranks now included more and more English surnames like that of Franklin's founder, George King. Another was Thomas Henderson, founder of Hopewell, who married Mary Demotte in Mercer County in January 1821.

There is a story related to the founding of Hopewell that provides another example of the caution needed even with the government land surveys. In 1824 Thomas Henderson went to Johnson County to visit his friend Simon Covert who was among the first settlers. They rode to a big spring Covert had discovered and Henderson spotted three knolls to the south that he visualized as sites for a church,

⁵⁹ In his 1881 history D.D. Banta said it was in the fall of 1822 that George King, Garrett C. Bergen and Simon Covert came from Kentucky to look at lands in this part of the New Purchase, Banta, *A Historical Sketch of Johnson County Indiana*, 24. In his 1888 history, Banta said that was King's third visit; that his first was in October 1820 with Simon Covert, Samuel and Cornelius Demaree, Peter A. Banta and others all from Henry and Shelby Counties in Kentucky making a tour of parts of Indiana to "look at the country" and the second was the next fall through Johnson County to attend the sale of lots in Indianapolis, D.D. Banta, *History of Johnson County, Indiana* (Brant & Fuller, Chicago: 1888), 307-8. Peter Van Arsdale gives some rich detail about accompanying a group of ten men from Mercer County including Smocks and Demotts who went to the Indianapolis sale in October 1821 and met up with the George King group, "The Autobiography of Peter Van Arsdale" in Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, The Presbyterians*, 809-10.

⁶⁰ Banta, *Historical Sketch of Johnson County* (1881), 24-8.

⁶¹ Banta, *Historical Sketch of Johnson County* (1881), 39.

⁶² Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis, Vol. II*, 778-80.

⁶³ Extract of an article by B.F. Bedinger titled "An Early Kentucky Church" appearing in the *Christian Observer*, Louisville, Kentucky, July 18, 1883, quoted in Rev. Dr. J.K. Demarest, "History of the Low Dutch Colony of Conowago" (Series of newspaper articles appearing in the *Gettysburg Star Weekly* beginning January 8, 1884).

a school and a cemetery. Based on the preliminary government survey of the area, Henderson entered the land and in 1825 brought his young family up from Kentucky. They arrived on a Sunday and as they looked at the spring and the knolls, Thomas said to Mary, "Here we will build the church; there...we will build the school and, yonder to the south, we and ours will, by and by be buried."⁶⁴

Not long afterwards the final survey was run through the area and Thomas Henderson along with a man named Moore were assistants. They discovered that Henderson's original entry lay just west of the spring and knolls he thought he owned. Moore boasted to fellow workers that he would own the Big Spring before sundown the next day and he planned to locate a whiskey distilling operation at the spring. But Henderson was told of the boast, slipped away and rode to Franklin where he borrowed money from George King and then rode north all night in the darkness to the Land Office in Indianapolis where he entered the correct 80 acres that included the Big Spring and the sites for Hopewell's future church, school and cemetery. As Henderson left the Land Office, Moore was coming up the steps!⁶⁵

In some ways the thriving farm community that grew up around those three hills and the Big Spring at Hopewell was the closest our Low Dutch may have come to realizing their dream of a Low Dutch Reformed Church Society. A large rural farm community with an active church and school for children at its center was the dream that had led them to Kentucky. The seeming fulfillment of that dream 40-some years later in Johnson County led to another massive migration, this time from Kentucky to Indiana.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ The story first appears, with a slightly different quote, in the "Historical Address" by Rev. E. Black, pastor of the church in *The Semi-Centennial of Hopewell Church, Johnson County, Indiana, May 23d, 1881* (F.C. Williams, Franklin, Indiana: 1881), 9. As quoted here the story is from Robert Allen Brown, *The Hopewell Herald*, August 1913, republished in book form by the Hopewell United Presbyterian Church for its May 1981 sesquicentennial, 7.

⁶⁵ This story first appears in Robert Allen Brown, *The Hopewell Herald*, November 1913, republished 1981, 10. The story was behind the title of a booklet, *Historic Hopewell or... a Whiskey Distillery* (published by Hopewell—Big Spring Community, Inc.: 2002). That booklet was expanded a few years later into a book of over 600 pages detailing the interesting history of Hopewell up to the present, Kathleen O. Van Nuys, *The Hopewell Journey: 350 Years from Immigrant Religion to Hoosier Faith: Hopewell Presbyterian Church 1831-2006* (Author-House, Bloomington, Indiana: 2006).

⁶⁶ Herriott Palmer in her excellent 1946 history of the Franklin Presbyterian Church has this to say under the heading "Reason for Hopewell" about formation of that rural church from the church in the town of Franklin: "There were without doubt material conditions, such as the locations of their farms and the difficulties in travel, which made the creation of the Hopewell church a wise decision. But there were other and perhaps stronger reasons. The majority of the forty-one persons, who constituted the body of charter members at Hopewell, had come from one of three religious centers in Kentucky. The centers were New Providence and Cane Run (Harrodsburg) churches in Mercer County and the Six Mile Creek or Pleasureville church in Henry County in Kentucky. It is evident they had chosen their land entries in Johnson county with the formation of a community center in mind where they

At the very start of the movement, in 1823, Dr. Thomas Cleland, pastor at the Old Mud Meetinghouse and New Providence Churches in Mercer County, tried to talk sense into his congregations. Learning that a number of his church families were about to move to the new country, he said to Simon Covert, "What do you mean, so many of you going away? The devil will get you, out there in the woods." Covert replied, "We are going to take our religion with us and have a church there." To which Cleland cautioned, "The devil won't let you, he'll scatter you too far apart." But Covert was emphatic, "We intend to do it and we intend to settle together and have a church."⁶⁷

Leaders in Shelby and Henry Counties similarly tried to stem the tide by finally, in 1824, building a large meetinghouse in the heart of their Low Dutch Tract. But it was not enough and far too late. Migration away from the Henry-Shelby County Low Dutch Tract and surrounding area was so great it was called "The Exodus."⁶⁸ The Low Dutch Company by necessity had to wind up its affairs and finally deed its lots to their individual holders. Tunis VanNuys was one of the two final trustees who spent ten years closing out the company business. VanNuys himself moved to Hopewell half way through the process.⁶⁹

The rural farm community versus towns was the preferred pattern of settlement for the hearty Dutch farmers ever since their arrival in the new world.⁷⁰ Hopewell drew Low Dutch not only from Mercer and Henry/Shelby Counties in Kentucky, but from everywhere, even direct from New Jersey.⁷¹ Hopewell's early pastors illustrate the wide draw. David V. Monfort, its first pastor, was born in the Conewago colony. His parents had bypassed Kentucky and settled among the Low

could locate a church and a school." Herriott C. Palmer, *The First Presbyterian Church of Franklin: One Hundred and Twenty Years 1824-1844* (Wm. Mitchell Printing Co., Greenfield, Indiana: 1946), 75.

⁶⁷ Again, the story first appears in Rev. Black's address in *The Semi-Centennial of Hopewell Church*, 9. It is also told by Palmer, *The First Presbyterian Church of Franklin*, 75. Simon Covert and George King were brothers-in-law, their wives being sisters—Mary Voorhees Covert and Eleanor Voorhees King.

⁶⁸ Maude Johnston Drane, *History of Henry County Kentucky* (1948), 39, 103-4.

⁶⁹ Vince Akers, "Henry County's Low Dutch Company" (paper prepared for the Henry County Historical Society, 1979), page 9, in Akers, *The Low Dutch Company*; also Akers, "Henry County's Low Dutch Meetinghouse: Window Into the Past" (speech to the Henry County Historical Society, October 16, 2006). VanNuys' removal to Johnson County is apparent from the numerous Henry and Shelby County deeds 1831-1841 dividing up the Low Dutch Tract.

⁷⁰ Henri and Barbara van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land: The Story of Dutch New York* (Viking Press, N.Y.: 1978), 91.

⁷¹ In 1838 Garrett Ditmars came to Shiloh, the rural farm community adjoining Hopewell. Shiloh grew directly out of Hopewell and later reabsorbed by Hopewell. Ditmars and his wife Sarah Verbryke in 1830 moved from Somerset County, New Jersey, to Warren County, Ohio, then in 1836 to Franklin, Indiana. D. D. Banta, *Making A Neighborhood, Delivered at the Shiloh Reunion, May 26, 1887* (Republican Print, Franklin, Indiana: 1887), 27.

Dutch in southwestern Ohio.⁷² Another early Hopewell pastor was David V. Smock who was born in Jefferson County, Indiana, and was one of the first ministers produced by Hanover College.⁷³

Hopewell remains today a large very active rural Presbyterian Church while the Six Mile Meetinghouse and the Old Mud Meetinghouse—both of which we will visit on Sunday—have no congregations, but rather are physical/historical reminders of the large Low Dutch communities they once served in ol' Kentucky.

Indiana was certainly not the end of the line for western migration. The very large families of our prolific ancestors meant the next generation kept up the tradition of moving further west—or, as they put it, "the hives continued to swarm again." The next generation Rykers of Jefferson County moved on to Missouri in the 1840s⁷⁴ and wagon trains left Hopewell and other Johnson County communities in the 1850s headed for Kansas and Iowa.⁷⁵

Our family names soon reached the Pacific Coast.⁷⁶ But they were no longer in the clannish exclusive Dutch groups. They were American through and through! Somewhere in Kentucky and Indiana they lost their Dutch identity. The frontier *melting pot* had done its work! They had added their sturdy Dutch habits to the mix,

⁷² David V. Monfort served as pastor at Franklin for 20 years (1830-1850), part of that time jointly at Hopewell (1831-1838) where he was the first pastor. He also preached the organization sermon in 1832 at Shiloh. Palmer, *The First Presbyterian Church of Franklin*, 89-94; Black, *The Semi-Centennial of Hopewell Church*, 13; and Banta, *Making A Neighborhood*, 12.

⁷³ Smock served as Hopewell's pastor 1842-1849, Black, *The Semi-Centennial of Hopewell Church*, 18; "Pioneer Preacher of Jefferson Co., Extract from the Autobiography of Rev. D.V. Smock, Dec'd," *Madison Daily Courier*, February 6, 1879.

⁷⁴ A caravan of people left Jefferson County, Indiana, in 1848 bound for Lawrence County, Missouri. These included the Rykers, Seberns, Wheats and Woodfills. Aurora, Lawrence County, Missouri, was their home until the next migration. Very few remained in the Aurora area after the 1920s. Franklin Ryker, *History and Genealogy of the Ryker Family*, 97-100. Switzerland County's "Dutch Settlement" continued to grow up to around 1850, but about that time the population grew restless and there was a constant flow of emigration out, and very few coming in, *History of Switzerland County Indiana*, 1154.

⁷⁵ Black, *The Semi-Centennial of Hopewell Church*, 21-2; Palmer, *The First Presbyterian Church of Franklin*, 84-6. Vinton in Benton County, Iowa, seems to have been the next large settlement area for Low Dutch and other Johnson County families.

⁷⁶ For a very interesting account of Banta's move across the United States and settlement in California, I highly recommend Theodore M. Banta, *Conquest of a Continent: Nine Generations on the American Frontier* (Xlibris Corporation: 2000). For an interesting first-hand account of a very early trek West and settlement at Astoria, Oregon, by a Low Dutch descendant, see Howard M. and Edith M. List, editors, "John M. Shively's Memoir," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (Spring 1980) Vol. LXXXI, No. 1, 4-29 and (Summer 1980) Vol. LXXXI, No. 2, 180-95. On vacation in the 1980s, passing through Visalia, California, I was pleased to cross Akers Street followed by the next big intersection at Demaree Road!

strengthening the territories to which they migrated with their love for community, church and education. And I am grateful to say they adapted to their new American culture—broadening their gene pool beyond cousins and allowing me to be speaking to you here tonight in English, giving you yet another chapter in the history of our Dutch ancestors!⁷⁷

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⁷⁷ The term "melting pot" was still popular 50 years ago when I was a lad studying American history in middle school. It was a metaphor for the different elements of Old World society "melting together" into a harmonious new whole with a common culture. In the 1970s the term fell into disfavor with the more "politically correct" academics. The desirability of assimilation was challenged by proponents of "multiculturalism" who seem to think all cultural differences within society are valuable and should be preserved. For discussion of the evolution of the terms "melting pot" and "multiculturalism" check Wikipedia.